# Resilience Coordination Working Group

## Meeting Summary April 28, 2023

### Opening Remarks

Secretary Travis Voyles, Natural and Historic Resources

Matt Wells, Director, Department of Conservation and Recreation

### Welcome & Working Group Charge and Workplan Review

Presented by the Performance Management Group (PMG)

This Working Group is being established by the Chief Resilience Officer in furtherance of Governor Youngkin's goal of addressing challenges related to flooding and resilience, and in the spirit of engaging collaboratively with the General Assembly on this important issue. The Working Group will have the following purposes:

- To consider and assess strategies and policies for the Commonwealth to improve intergovernmental and interagency coordination; and
- To maximize the procurement of federal and private funding opportunities in planning for and implementing flood resilience throughout the Commonwealth.

Facilitators from PMG restated the working group scope of work and plan/schedule for the remaining work including opportunities for all members to review drafts of the final report before it is finalized. It was highlighted that all proposed recommendations within the final report will be developed by the working group during monthly meeting discussions.

### Information Sharing & Discussion: Working Group Observations for Drafting Recommendations

Presented by the Performance Management Group (PMG)

Three observations about resiliency planning and coordination in Virginia were shared based on themes from working group meeting discussions and background research conducted by PMG with ongoing direction and guidance from the steering committee and working group members. Key findings from a preliminary review of peer states were also presented for each observation followed by small group discussion prompts.

Peer state selection included: Colorado as a non-coastal resilience example, Louisiana as a recipient of large federal grants and developer of innovative programs, and Maryland and North Carolina for their similarity in climate threats due to proximity.

Observation 1: Resiliency Data and Resources

A one-stop source for resilience information, including an authoritative source resiliency data, is critical for effective planning and decision making.

Proposed Idea:

- Establish a Resiliency Data Trust or Portal with authoritative, centralized, and comprehensive information on statewide risks, vulnerabilities, and resources that can be used to inform planning and decision making for state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, and community members.

Small Group Discussion Considerations:

- What legislative action is required?
- What administrative action is required?
- What entity can/should manage the data trust or portal?

Observation 2: Locality Readiness

The ability of localities to support resiliency planning varies widely across Virginia.

Proposed Ideas:

- Develop resiliency planning best practices for localities to use to meet floodplain and coastal flooding risks and incentivize creation and adoption of resilience plans
- Implement a "sister city" model between localities needing guidance and those with resilience skills

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- Create a "Grants Management" position at the state level that supports grants administration for both the State and the localities

Small Group Discussion Considerations:

- What legislative action is required?
- What administrative action is required?

Observation 3: Coordinating Structure

There is currently no single coordinating entity to support resilience efforts across state agencies, academia, localities, nonprofit organizations, private sector, and community members.

Proposed Idea:

- Establish a structure within state government that can support the coordination of resiliency planning, strategies, programs, and funding.

Small Group Discussion Considerations:

- If a structure were to be established, what would the goal of this governance be?
- How would it function?

**Reports From Each Small Group Discussion to the Working Group**

**Observation 1: Resiliency Data and Resources**

*Group 1 Presented by Grace Tucker, Environmental Defense Fund (EDF)*

- Suggested that the Office of Data Analytics serve as a clearing house for data including
    - Data management including established protocols and best practices for use
    - Localities will have transparent access to data needed for resiliency planning
- Advisory group of key stakeholders could provide input on most recent data requirements for grants and create limitations

- o The Coastal Technical Advisory Group should be included for coastal issues but more perspectives needed. Qualified representatives from the organizations in this working group should be included in the stakeholders.
- Survey all agencies, localities, and planning districts to understand what data they need and what they already are required to use

  - o Data varies by localities and there are major differences in scale such as the resolution of GIS data, etc.
  - o Universities have same data in different formats
  - o Grant programs require data standards but availability of these data is dependent upon locality resources and limitations
  - o Capacity for completing and submitting grant applications is a key gap for many localities

*Group 2 Presented by Matt Wells, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (VDCR)*

- Supports one-stop source for data and resources starting with state programs and working down to local activities (Hampton Roads area has robust datasets)
- Opportunity for staff to look at data across agencies and their different uses
- Needs before implementing a one-stop source include:
  - o Data consistency and improvements to access improvements
  - o Curation of data for appropriate uses (people would know that a data set is useful for and not useful for), need setting of ground rules, need good metadata, need a range of data that's available
  - o an inventory to find out what data is out there
- Process for developing site should be transparent

*Group 3 Jay Ford, Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF)*

- Current challenges include:
  - o Standardized data doesn't always translate cleanly for all uses and users depending on context and needs
  - o There is a need for iterative data sets
  - o Different agencies have different data asks depending on the program
- These challenges can be solved with more flexible program guidelines for required data:
  - o If central clearing house is put in place, metrics and data should be aligned with state funding sources and program needs
  - o Focus should be on state funding sources first and then capturing additional funding sources
  - o Focusing on locality-scale data as well as state programs

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- There is a need for GIS expertise within agency or office managing the resiliency data, as localities need GIS information in order to acquire federal funding.
- Flood data that includes time cycles would help communities gauge the degree and size of impact

A common theme among the groups was the need to survey state agencies on their data needs as well as inventory existing data before building a one-stop resource.

**Observation 2: Locality Readiness**

*Group 1 presented by Grace Tucker, EDF*

- In order to support localities, each agency must assess their own resilience awareness and vulnerabilities and have that trickle down to localities.
  - Look to Louisiana self-vulnerability assessment
- The RAFT process has shown that capacity is huge driver of whether localities can even begin to think about resilience work and planning
- Prioritization of funding needs and levels – including housing, health care, etc. - could help localities focus on critical needs infrastructure and show overlap and interconnectedness to resilience work
- One recommendation could be "grant circuit writers" assigned to one or more Planning District Commissions to support grant application process
- An effective strategy is to have regional representatives from state agencies working in the field to provide technical and grant support to localities– this exists for VDOT and VDEM currently.
- State agencies and localities have different priorities
  - VDOT uses SMART SCALE metrics
- One recommendation is to implement prioritization levels to help organize funding based on critical infrastructure needs in community
  - Funding mechanisms are impacted by financial markets

*Group 2 Presented by Darryl Glover, VDCR*

- Acknowledged there is no one-size fits all approach to readiness as not all localities are starting from the same place
- There is a significant need to leverage existing expertise and make existing resources more accessible to localities
- Must establish a baseline of readiness and then metrics for getting localities to that point
- The group wants to learn more about North Carolina's Coastal Resilience decision-making tool
- Planning District Commissions (PDC) should be the support for localities, with the state supporting PDCs and Virginia Association of Counties (VaCo) – this model is more appropriate than establishing "sister cities"

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- Any new Grants position should help localities identify the appropriate grants that meet their needs and assist with removing roadblocks during the application process. This would be more of a liaison or grants support position, not a grants manager.
- Another potential role is a Risk Management position that could help leverage existing hazard mitigation plans

*Group 3 Presented by Jay Ford, CBF*

- While there is a need for both incentives with punitive approaches (carrot and stick), previous legislation mandates have been continuously "watered down"
- The more money that is available, the more investment and committee we'll see from localities
- Important questions that need to be answered are: *how do we take data sets and make them locally relevant? How do we articulate climate threats as threats to the tax base?*
  - Universities can play an important role of helping translate resiliency data to economic and local impact
- Reimbursable dollars create a structural hurdle for many localities as the money moves through different levels of government - federal to state to local
  - We need legislative changes that allow dollars to flow more smoothly and set better deadlines for money to be received by localities
  - Need loan to pulldown grants and access programs as well as greater administrative staffing to receive, manage, and report on funds
- One recommendation would be to create a grants ombudsperson to help localities apply for state and federal resiliency grants

**Large Group Follow-up**

Facilitators from PMG asked the larger working group whether it was realistic and practical to require localities to create and adapt a specific resiliency plan. There was a shared agreement from members that there aren't enough available resources for localities to create their own plans. Rather there was interest in discussing what a potential "path to a resiliency plan" could look like with appropriate benchmarks for funding and resources. One suggestion included a phased approach that starts with emergency planning and is then scaled down. A question was asked as to whether the states included in the peer state review required municipalities to create and adopt resiliency plans. PMG facilitators said they would research and share findings at the next meeting.

**Observation 3: Coordinating Structure**

*Group 1 Presented by Grace Tucker, EDF*

- Regarding the current Chief Resilience Officer (CRO) model, dual-hatted positions can be challenging and the Special Assistant to the Governor's Office has not been filled since last year.
  - One recommendation would be to place the CRO position outside of the cabinet but still reporting to the Governor.
- There is a current need for resources, funding, and staff to provide high level guidance and coordination across other agencies and groups. Establishing resilience coordinators in each agency, similar to Louisiana's model, could be beneficial.
- It is imperative that the CRO role maintains a high-level of expertise and to remains outside of political influence Need rationale why this role is so important.
- It is not currently ideal for the CRO to work with a new administration every four years.

*Group 2 Presented by Darryl Glover, VDCR*

- Adopting a "Hub and Spoke" model for resiliency in Virginia would be ideal. In this structure, the CRO would serve as the hub by coordinating with agency resilience coordinators. Here, programs would remain within their existing agencies to ensure continuity during administration turnover.
- A proposed structure would include all grants and data positions serving under the CRO with the CRO reporting to the Governor outside of secretariat
- The CRO will likely need to be political appointee with current bodies for coordination, such as the Technical Advisory Committee, continuing and possible expanding across the state.
- Additionally, local government and universities could serve as advisors within an interagency working group that the CRO's office would lead
- Still need to determine how private industry can and should be involved
- Group consensus was there is no need to create a new agency but should instead reassign and/or expand responsibilities of existing positions
- Regardless of what resilience structure forms, there is a need for greater transparency through annual reports and public meetings

*Group 3 Jay Ford, CBF*

- Need for greater transparency with funding, especially federal dollars coming into the state.
  - This could be achieved with creation of a new entity that oversees funds and serves as data clearing house with the purpose of maximizing funding for state resiliency needs.
  - New entity would not be regulatory but able to make recommendations to agencies for improvements – would house potential grants ombudsperson

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## Public Comment

After the group discussions, there was an opportunity for public comment. No public comment was received.

## Next Steps

PMG will send post-meeting materials, including updates to the presentation and handouts, as well as potential inter-session work to the working group members. The next Resilience Coordination Working Group meeting will be May 31st at the Clark Nexsen office in Virginia Beach (4525 Main Street).

## Adjourn

### Recommendation Themes from Meeting Discussions

- There is a need for a data clearing house and a state and regional survey to build an inventory of existing data
- Localities need greater support in capacity specifically related to funding and procurement of grants – the reimbursement process must be improved
- While a coordinating entity is supported greater discussion around how to include and organize key staffing positions at the state level is needed

## Small Groups

### Group 1

Bill Curtis, VDHCD

Bryan Chamberlain, VDT

Chris Swanson, VDOT

Grace Tucker, EDF

Katelyn Jordan, VFBF

Madison White, Port of Virginia

Robert Pickett, VASWD

Speaker Pollard, VMA; HAV

Deputy Secretary Tom Crabbs, SVDA

Secretary Travis Voyles, SNHR

### Group 2

Ethan Betterton, VCC

Martha Moore, VFBF

Matt Wells, VDCR (accompanied by Darryl Glover, VDCR)

Paige Wernig, VMA

Scott Whitehurst, Port of Virginia

Shawn Talmadge, VDOT

Whitney Katchmark, HRPDC

### Group 3

Abigail Johnson, C-PACE

Brad Copenhaver, VAC

Carol Considine, ODU-ICAR

David Hawkins, VDE

Jay Ford, CBF

Louis Lawrence, MPPDC

Peter D'Alema, VRA

Sharon Baxter, VDEQ

Wendy Stout, VT

## Working Group Members and Alternates in Attendance

| Organization | Workgroup Representative | Alternate |
|---|---|---|
| **William and Mary - VCPC (W&M)** | Elizabeth Andrews | |
| **Soil and Water Conservation Board (SWCB)** | Chuck Arnason | |
| **Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ)** | Sharon Baxter | |
| **Virginia Chamber of Commerce (VAChamber)** | | Ethan Betterton |
| **Home Builders Association of Virginia (HBAV)** | | Speaker Pollard |
| **Virginia Agribusiness Council (VAC)** | | |
| **Virginia Resources Authority (VRA)** | | Peter D'Alema |
| **Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development (VDHCD)** | Bill Curtis | |
| **Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)** | | Chris Swanson |
| **University of Virginia - IEN (UVA)** | Tanya Denckla Cobb | |
| **Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF)** | Jay Ford | |
| **Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC)** | | Rachael Peabody |
| **Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (VDWR)** | | |
| **Virginia Department of Energy (VDE)** | David Hawkins | |
| **Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP)** | Angie Jenkins | |
| **Virginia PACE Authority (VPA)** | | |
| **Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC)** | | |
| **Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC)** | Whitney Katchmark | |
| **Chesapeake Bay Commission (CBC)** | | |
| **Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission (MPPDC)** | Lewis Lawrence | |
| **Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS)** | | |
| **Virginia Farm Bureau (VFB)** | Martha Moore | |
| **Virginia Department of the Treasury (VDT)** | | Bryan Chamberlain |
| **Virginia Association of Soil and Water Districts (VASWD)** | Robert Pickett | |
| **The Nature Conservancy (TNC)** | | |
| **Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs (SVDA)** | Deputy Secretary Tom Crabbs | |
| **Mount Rogers Planning District Commission (MRPDC)** | | |
| **Environmental Defense Foundation (EDF)** | | Grace Tucker |
| **Clark Nexsen** | Chris Stone | |
| **Virginia Tech - CCS (VT)** | Wendy Stout | |

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| Organization | Workgroup Representative | Alternate |
|---|---|---|
| **Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM)** | Shawn Talmadge | Robbie Coates |
| **City of Alexandria** | | |
| **Virginia Manufacturer's Association (VMA)** | | Paige Wernig |
| **Port of Virginia (Port of Virginia)** | | Scott Whitehurst |
| **Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources (SNHR)** | Secretary Travis Voyles | |
| **Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission (CPPDC)** | | Debbie Milton |
| **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (VDCR)** | Matthew Wells | |
| **Old Dominion University (ODU)** | | Carol Considine |
| | | |
| **VCU Performance Management Group Facilitators** | | |
| **Gina Barber** | | |
| **Sarah Jackson** | | |
| **Wheeler Wood** | | |

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