Resilience Coordination Working Group

Meeting Summary August 25, 2023

Opening remarks

Matthew Wells, Director, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)

Working Group Charge, workplan, and introduction to recommendations feedback process

Presented by the Center for Public Policy (CPP)

This Working Group was 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 has 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 CPP restated the working group scope of work and plan/schedule for the remaining work including opportunities for all members to review a revised draft of the report to be provided by September 13. The feedback provided via tracked changes of the earlier draft will be reviewed and where appropriate, integrated into the report that will be distributed. The recommendations in the upcoming draft will reflect the discussion from the meeting today along with guidance from the steering committee.

A summary of the results of the "Recommendations Straw Poll" was reviewed and it was noted there was a 45% response rate from all the members of the working group and when considering the responses at the member organization level, 66% of the organizations represented in the working group provided responses.

The straw poll highlighted several recommendations where at least four members indicated further discussion was needed. The poll responses showed that 8 out of 32 total

recommendations received 4 or more votes for "More Discussion Needed" and 1 of these recommendations was in the Legislative Action section. There were also 2 Administrative Action recommendations (E.4 & F.2) that received 1 vote each for "Serious Disagreement." Where comments were provided, they were grouped into themes which were presented to the working group. Only recommendations that were rated as needing more discussion by four or more members were presented for discussion during the meeting and they are summarized below.

It is anticipated a second straw poll will be used to capture feedback prior to the meeting on September 26. At that meeting, it was noted that each organization will be asked to vote on each of the final draft of recommendations (one vote per organization per recommendation).

Recommendations Needing More Discussion

Presented by CPP

Recommendation	Notes
A.1: Create a new Office of the CRO managing and coordinating all resilience efforts across the Commonwealth.	Director Wells started the discussion by sharing that the new Office will not be a huge office and the expectation it will likely start with the CRO and 2-3 professional staff. Services will be supported by leveraging existing resources and focusing on improving coordination. He shared that it is important that the recommendations proposed by the working group establish a framework/foundation and are not overly prescriptive so the Office can develop based on needs and goals. Director Wells stated that recommendations should focus on goals and desired outcomes of the proposed Office as opposed to specific details, e.g., staffing levels.
	A discussion followed with members suggesting an initial step would be to identify necessary initial core functions along with what functions will be implemented later. The number of staff should be based on core functions and it would be appropriate to survey resilience efforts in other agencies to help inform the functions of the CRO office(both initial and long-term).
	Some members expressed concern about starting with a small office based on their experience; it was noted effective collaboration requires more staff than one would think. Starting with a small office may make it difficult for the office to be effective.

Recommendation	Notes
	It was discussed there is likely value in establishing the leadership role and eliminating the current confusion of the CRO and SACAP roles. It was also noted that staff could be supplemented by external consultants.
	It was suggested that establishing an advisory committee to assess non-core functions/objectives of the office along with metrics for measuring the effectiveness of the CRO office would be appropriate.
	Overall, many working group members agreed with the sentiments expressed by Director Wells while some cautioned against removing too much detail from the recommendations.
B.5: State funds should be distributed with appropriate oversight to ensure that projects and activities funded deliver meaningful results, perhaps via establishing a board.	Members discussed that state funds need to result in tangible results, ensure accountability and a demonstrated benefit. Legislation can ensure transparency of funds accountability, etc. through a new board that could also help with identifying policy and data needs as well as investments across agencies.
	There was a discussion about whether or not this recommendation should be considered a legislative recommendation. If so, clarity is likely needed on state funds and the board. For the board, clarity is needed regarding composition, technical expertise, and focus (e.g., just flood resilience?) and what is meant by oversight. For clarity of "state funds," Director Wells stated the scope is the Revolving Fund and CFPF.
	There was a question about whether or not this recommendation falls under the charge of the working group with some members considering it essential to ensuring funds are appropriately used and will therefore remain available.
	The working group agreed additional information about the proposed board is needed, e.g., clarification of scope and membership, but the majority does see value in having one.
C.2: Use state funding to support the use of resilience tools, including the collaborative state university "boots on the ground" tool highlighted in Virginia's Coastal	The working group proposed new wording: ***Use state funding to support the use of resilience tools, including the collaborative state university "boots on the ground" tool highlighted in Virginia's Coastal Resilience Master Plan for supporting under-resourced local governments and federally and state recognized Tribes across the Commonwealth, known as the RAFT,***

Recommendation	Notes
Resilience Master Plan for supporting local governments, known as the RAFT, as well as other resilience tools that may complement the RAFT and/or help localities advance their resilience.	***as well as other resilience tools that will help localities and recognized Tribes advance their resilience.*** The group discussed if this recommendation belongs in the CRO office or would it be more appropriate as a DCR responsibility. Or, as some proposed, should the recommendation start with "The State should" rather than implying this is a function the CRO office should focus on. This would encourage the state to leverage its funds to get a "bigger bang for its buck" to create outcomes at the ground level in a way that agencies are not equipped to provide as resilience planning benefits from incorporating different skills sets and resources. It was noted this recommendation proposes to "use state funding" which is unlike other recommendations. Would it be appropriate to strike "Use state funding to " and have the recommendation begin with "Support" instead? There was also a discussion about whether this was appropriate as a legislative action and the group was reminded that if a recommendation has budget implications, it is a legislative action.
E.3: Provide a holistic view of what grant funding applications are submitted and report on grants awarded where the Office collaborated (or had awareness) and the implementation was successful.	There were concerns regarding the open-endedness of this recommendation and a narrowing of scope is needed due to capacity of the Office It was suggested changing the recommendation to begin with "The Office should provide a holistic view…" There is likely value in reviewing the entire report with a focus on clarifying responsibility of both the Office and the State. It was also suggested that where "grants" is used, it should be changed to "funding." It was proposed the recommendations be presented in one of two groups: 1) establishing the CRO Office with a focus on leadership and coordination and 2) supporting resilience at the local level. The recommendations could be highlighted where complementary and having similar funding needs. A member shared that the importance of effective data science/management (e.g., "a complete census") needs to be incorporated when implementing this recommendation.

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Recommendation	Notes
F.4: Obtain and distribute start-up funds and/or short-term loans to qualified localities to enable them to initiate resilience projects.	There was a discussion on how localities were defined. The consensus of the group after some discussion was to change it to "Local and regional political subdivisions" or ideally, match the definition in the State code. (CPP: Per code, ""Locality" or "local government" shall be construed to mean a county, city, or town as the context may require. [§ 15.2-102. Definitions (virginia.gov)](#)) There was a recommendation to combine recommendations F3 and F4. Recommendations F5 and E5 could be combined if F5 was scoped to "state agencies consider structuring" as it would then be similar to E5. It was recommended that state grant programs should be administered in a way to maximize opportunities to match federal programs while it was noted that often matching requirements are set by the federal programs giving the grant.
F.6: Seek grant opportunities for improving resilience, apply for opportunities when appropriate (including when the Office of Resilience may be the appropriate lead grantee rather than an individual agency), manage projects based on grants received, and complete all grant requirements.	For consistency within the report, it is recommended that "grants" be changed to "funding." Given the size of the proposed Office, there was a discussion about the capacity to implement this recommendation. The working group recommended a clarification of responsibility, for the Office, agencies, etc. and that the CRO will need to be empowered to do this. The mechanisms for coordination need to be clearly articulated, e.g., who are the "spoke agencies?" It was suggested that in Section G of the recommendations, there is clarification needed on who has the authority to implement administration recommendations. If it is DCR, wouldn't only the legislature or the Governor have that authority?
H.2: Convene a data management working group consisting of knowledgeable representatives from agencies, universities, NGOs, the private sector, and end users and informed by the results of an agency survey of resilience to	It was noted that members of this proposed group need to be data experts and support the CRO as needed. A member shared, there is an expectation in the United States that CROs know all the things in depth. In reality the best CROs know a little bit about a comprehensive variety of things, and have a really good contact list with subject matter experts in all of those things. There is already language in the CRO statute that supports this recommendation, e.g., "6. Coordinate the

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Recommendation	Notes
identify and address data needs, availability, and data clearinghouse maintenance and management.	dissemination of the best available science, legal guidance, and planning strategies to the public."
	It was shared by Director Wells that ODGA has expressed interest in supporting this initiative.
	There was a discussion regarding whether or not establishing a working group was too prescriptive. It might be better to defer to the CRO on how to collect and utilize the data? The focus should be on the goal rather than the mechanism.
	Some members believe the recommendation should remain and include the appropriate language to ensure the data portal, data needs and management are fully supported as the General Assembly will need to provide the funds for implementing this recommendation.
H.3: Establish a data mechanism for resilience planning. Consider opportunities to leverage the Virginia Office of Data Governance and Analytics for this purpose.	It was noted that proposed revisions to Recommendation H2 may enable the deletion of this recommendation.
	If the recommendation needs to remain, it was suggested the recommendation could be worded as "Ensure resilience planning is data-driven and leverage ODGA resources to assist. Ensure the data mechanism is coordinated and streamlined for ease of use by agencies and end users, perhaps by convening a data management working group including representation from the ODGA."
	It is noted there is a list of agencies participating in the RCWG in the report, but it is not clear whether that list is consistent with the list of agencies that should have a resilience coordinator. It was discussed that in the August 1 meeting, the need to clarify that list was highlighted and it should include RCWG working group agencies, the TAC and the ODGA.

Public Comment

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

Next Steps

The next meeting will be on September 26th at the Patrick Henry Building, 1111 E Broad St, Richmond, VA 23219. The group will receive the updated draft recommendations and draft report no later than September 13th. They are encouraged to submit comments on the draft recommendations before the meeting.

Adjournment

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Working Group Members and Alternates All Attending Via Zoom

Organization	Representative	Alternate
Center for Coastal Studies	Wendy Stout	
Chesapeake Bay Commission	Adrienne Kotula	
Chesapeake Bay Foundation	Jay Ford	
City of Alexandria	Sarah Taylor	
Clark Nexsen	Chris Stone	
Environmental Defense Foundation	Emily Steinhilber	Grace Tucker
Hampton Roads PDC	Whitney Katchmark	
Home Builders Association of Virginia		Speaker Pollard
Institute for Coastal Adaptation and Resilience	Jess Whitehead	Carol Considine
Institute for Engagement & Negotiation	Tanya Denckla Cobb	
Middle Peninsula PDC	Lewis Lawrence	Curt Smith
Port of Virginia		Scott Whitehurst
Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs		Asst. Secretary Jordan Stewart
Soil and Water Conservation Board	Chuck Arnason	
Treasurer of Virginia	Brian Parker	
The Nature Conservancy	Nikki Rovner	
University of Virginia IEN	Tanya Denckla Cobb	
Virginia Agribusiness Council	Brad Copenhaver	
Virginia Association of Counties		
VA Association of Soil and Water Districts	Robert Pickett	
Virginia Coastal Policy Center (W&M)	Elizabeth Andrews	
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation	Matthew Wells	
Virginia Department of Emergency Management		Robert Coates
Virginia Department of Energy	David Hawkins	
Virginia Department of Environmental Quality	Sharon Baxter	
Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development	Bill Curtis	Lee Hutchinson
Virginia Department of the Treasury	Bryan Chamberlain	
Virginia Department of Transportation		Chris Swanson
Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources		
Virginia Economic Development Partnership	Lindsay Akers	
Virginia Farm Bureau		Katelyn Jordan
Virginia Institute of Marine Science		
Virginia Marine Resources Commission	Jamie Green	
Virginia PACE Authority		Ellen Dickson
Virginia Resources Authority	Shawn Crumlish	Peter D'Alema
VA Association of Soil and Water Districts	Kendall Tyree	

Department of Conservation & Recreation		Center for Public Policy at VCU	
Matthew Dalon	Carolyn Heaps-Pecaro	Gina Barber	Wheeler Wood
Darryl Glover	Andrew Smith	Sarah Jackson	