

A Local Government Guide to the Chesapeake Bay

KEYS TO ENGAGING YOUR COMMUNITY ON SUSTAINABILITY

A Local Government Guide to the Chesapeake Bay is an eleven-module series created to support decision making by local officials. As a local leader, your decisions set the course for your community. Your actions determine the health and vitality of your jurisdiction, as well as that of local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay. You can achieve win-win outcomes by prioritizing local economic development, infrastructure resiliency, public health, and education while also protecting your environment. This fact sheet accompanies a module about community engagement, including best practices to maximize the impact of your efforts.

YOUR COMMUNITY

Effective community engagement takes planning and resources. However, there are many benefits to having an engaged constituency, including those summarized below. View the full module for more information.



In 2020, local governments spent **\$146.6 billion** on protecting the environment¹. Community engagement can make those investments more effective and increase return on investment.



Hearing from your community can bring up public health and safety issues that were previously unknown. Education campaigns about topics like litter can also help your community better understand health and safety risks and motivate them to change behavior.



Involving the community can help you come up with publicly-supported, innovative ideas for how to fund and maintain your community's infrastructure.



Community engagement efforts and training volunteers educates constituents of all ages about environmental issues and can change behavior, like encouraging them to be better stewards.

¹[2020 Annual Survey of State and Local Government Finances](#)

BEST PRACTICES

To maximize your impact, consider the following best practices.

- 1 Understanding your community's needs and perceptions.
- 2 Build relationships rather than check boxes.
- 3 Time your communications properly.
- 4 Actively engage diverse voices.
- 5 Manage expectations.
- 6 Take time to reflect and learn.

Photo by W. Parson (Chesapeake Bay Program)

PROTECT YOUR COMMUNITY

WHAT YOU CAN DO



Build authentic community connections. You want to build trust, but remember, it takes time! Have patience, be present, and continue to show up for your community.



Provide a neutral space to interact with community members. When your community feels like they can show up in a safe, welcoming environment it leads to more genuine interactions.



Discuss challenges and opportunities. By talking through the pros and cons it allows for different perspectives to be shared and to problem solve. It also gives insight into how difficult the decision-making process can be.

A FEW RESOURCES

Beyond this module, here are a few other resources you may find useful.

Authentic Community Engagement in the Chesapeake Bay

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/7e967483e05040b98a46b8b6c9f853c1>

Explore this GIS StoryMap which highlights lessons on diversity and inclusion in the outdoors and provides recommendations on how to do more.

National Recreation and Park Association

Community Engagement Guide

<https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/best-practice-resources/community-engagement-resource-guide/>

Read about specifics of the community engagement process and learn tips and tricks on how to better connect with your community members.

Chesapeake Bay Trust's Community Engagement Mini Grant

<https://cbtrust.org/grants/community-engagement/>

View the specifics and check your eligibility for up to \$5000 to support community enhancing projects, like tree planting, rain garden installations, and more!

Chesapeake Bay Trust's Community Engagement and Restoration Mentorship Program

<https://cbtrust.org/grants/community-engagement/mentorship-program/>

Learn more about how you can apply to the mentorship program to grow engagement with your residents and work alongside your community on small projects.

NOAA's Chesapeake Bay Office NAAEE's
Community Engagement Guidelines

<https://cbexapp.noaa.gov/course/view.php?id=5597>

Explore the resource and review a set of videos that teach you how to better engage with your community. This guideline follows 5 steps to help you become more community centered.