

Assessing Policies and Programs

History is one damn thing after another.

Robert Sherrill, Twentieth Century American Investigative Journalist

Always, always, always have a plan. And always, always change it.

John Rollwagen, Chief Executive Officer, Cray Research, 1985-1993

*The shift in thinking that is needed across local government departments should be from **reacting** to stormwater problems to **preventing** them, thus making problem sharing part of problem solving.*

Borough and Township Staff, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, 2013

Congratulations! You have implemented a stormwater management innovation. Your work – as you would expect, however – is not over.

In the next phase of the policy cycle, you will review the policies and programs that you implemented to decide if they should be maintained, altered, or terminated. Various causes may prompt you to change course:

1. Insufficient resources may have been budgeted for the program by local authorities or granted from external governments or other resource providers. If additional resources cannot be obtained, the program will need to be altered or trimmed.
2. The stormwater problem may have changed. For example, with the warming of the earth's atmosphere, stormwater events are likely to become more frequent and severe. Sea level rise will also increase baseline risks for flooding in coastal communities. For some local jurisdictions, these long run risks may not have been considered adequately in the initial formulation of the problem.
3. The paradigm shift underway in stormwater management – based on new scientific evidence of the impacts and opportunities that stormwater creates for communities, added regulatory requirements by state and federal authorities, and increased citizen interest in stormwater as an environmental factor – will require significant organizational reforms within local governments and among jurisdictions located in the same watersheds. Learning new and effective ways to work together will involve trial, error, and, perhaps, adjustment.
4. The regulatory environment is dynamic. NPDES permits will be extended to more Phase II communities. In some watersheds, such as the Chesapeake Bay, TMDL requirements will be enforced by federal and state authorities.

Benefits and a Method

The main benefit of assessing the stormwater policies and programs you are implementing is that you will maintain responsiveness to your jurisdiction's stormwater problem. Also, with the paradigm shift in stormwater management, undoubtedly you will need to solve internal and

external organizational challenges. A third benefit is that effective assessment will help maintain the appetite and energy in your government for stormwater policy renewal.

Your assessment will involve meeting with a review group, likely to include individuals from the group you created when you gained the initial agreement to reform your stormwater management policies and programs. The group will discuss indicators of effectiveness, drawn from your implementation plans, including the indicators of success developed during the forward mapping exercise and behavioral indicators identified during the exercise in backward mapping.

Lessons Learned

- Real impact comes only from a comprehensive approach to watershed management. **Borough and Township Officials, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania**
- For the long term, data management – particularly the integration of data sets, auditing the system for errors, and backing up all components of the system – is and will continue to be a large concern for the department. **Water Department Officials, City of Lynchburg, Virginia**
- Information can be gathered using HOBOS to monitor water conditions such as temperature and the presence of chemicals. **Borough and Township Officials, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania**
- A significant challenge in our jurisdictions is getting homeowner associations (HOAs) to adequately maintain stormwater BMPs on their property. **Borough and Township Officials in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania; Town Officials of Bel Air, Maryland; Water Department Officials in the City of Lynchburg, Virginia**

Conclusion

We are the leaders we have been looking for.

John M. Bryson and Barbara C. Crosby, Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs,
University of Minnesota, 1992

Communicating often and with accurate information is critical.

Water Resources Department Staff, City of Lynchburg, Virginia, 2013

Local government staff officials who work on stormwater management in the context of the paradigm shift now underway will face a variety of challenges – some of which have been outlined in this manual. In responding to those changes, consider the following suggestions:

1. **Build your knowledge base.** You will want to keep abreast of changes in the underlying science, the technology of gray and green infrastructure, and the regulatory climate of stormwater. Also, you will want to build strong relationships so as to understand the perspectives held by people involved at every level – colleagues and stakeholders in your jurisdiction, officials from other communities that are responding to similar challenges, and people in related state, federal, and regional organizations. The resulting knowledge base will make you a more effective participant in the stormwater policy cycle, and it will enhance your credibility among your jurisdiction’s elected officials and appointed staff.
2. **Assess your personal leadership qualities.** Think through your capabilities, particularly what will motivate and sustain your effort through challenging times.
3. **Cultivate relationship within your initiating group.** This is the group that will: gain an initial agreement to work on stormwater; reach an understanding about the essence of the problem; help develop a solution and advocate for its adoption; and help to do the detailed work of implementing and evaluating a new approach. At every phase of the process, the quality of group relationships will be essential to move the process forward.
4. **Articulate compelling reasons to move forward.** As you reach out to people beyond your initial group, think about what motivates them and will compel them to join your cause.
5. **Think about the process.** You are invited, of course, to apply the policy change model described in this manual to your situation and community. Do not think of the model as cookbook recipe, however. Because every community differs by its physical, economic, political, and social qualities, your community is unique. Adapt the policy model insofar as it is appropriate, and improve on it as needed.
6. **Keep in mind the benefits of your work.** As was noted in the introduction to this manual, as you effectively tackle stormwater issues during this time of paradigm shift,

you will benefit your professional work, your home jurisdiction, and the people and natural resources found in your watershed.

The Environmental Finance Center at the University of Maryland (www.efc.umd.edu/) has a broad mission to work with local governments to solve stormwater and other environmental finance problems. We know about your challenges and welcome your questions, ideas, and invitations to work together.