



PENNSYLVANIA CLEAN WATER PROGRESS TEAMS:

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES
FOR SUCCESS



Pennsylvania
**Department of
Environmental Protection**

DECEMBER 2024

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An important outcome of the October 2023 Clean Water Gathering, which included more than 80 county, state, and federal program leaders, and policymakers was the formation of three Clean Water Progress Teams. Since January 2024, this diverse and collaborative group of more than 60 people have dedicated nearly 1,000 hours across the three teams to identify ways to tackle three challenge areas identified at the Gathering.

Gathering participants agreed that challenges in these areas slow or prevent success and need to be addressed:

- Technical and Administrative Assistance
- Staff Building/Staff Retention
- Funding and Multi-Grant Coordination

Working together, the Clean Water Progress Teams brainstormed and refined strategies for overcoming these challenges. DEP's Bureau of Watershed Restoration and Nonpoint Source Management (BWRNSM) worked with each team to finalize a list of "Strategies for Success". The Progress Teams' Strategies for Success recommend steps for addressing each action item, who should/may be engaged, and when the steps should/could be taken.

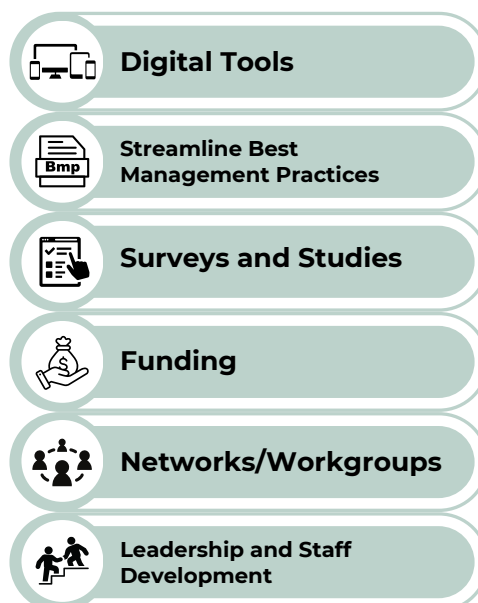
This effort has been the ultimate "win-win-win" between partners at every level, as this type of multi-level, collective approach is needed to sustain the momentum driving PA's clean water progress. Through our Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) and Countywide Action Plan (CAP) work together, we have demonstrated that diverse and broad partnerships help us to be mutually accountable and build on progress together that benefits the Commonwealth, its people, and its waters.

As efforts continue to expand, we continue to grow, learn, and adapt together. We look to share our successes and strategies with a broader audience who can further support our work here in PA.

In total across the three Progress Teams, there are 25 unique recommendations. This document provides an overview of the recommended strategies to help guide policymakers, program action leaders, and federal, state, and county partners in decision-making that can move the recommendations into action.



The 25 unique recommendations are grouped into six themes:



LIST OF ACRONYMS

BMP - Best Management Practice

BWRNSM - Bureau of Watershed Restoration and Nonpoint Source Management

CACAT or Center - Center for Agricultural Conservation Assistance Training

CAP - Countywide Action Plan

CC - Chesapeake Conservancy

CD - Conservation District

CDFR - Conservation District Field Representative

CODE Team - Commonwealth Office of Digital Experience

CWQE - Center for Water Quality Excellence

DCED - Department of Community and Economic Development

DCNR - Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

DEP - Department of Environmental Protection

EPA - Environmental Protection Agency

HRG - Herbert, Rowland & Grubic, Inc.

NFWF - National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

NFWF INSR - National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grant

NFWF SWG - National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Small Watershed Grant

NGO - Non-governmental Organization

NRCS - Natural Resources Conservation Service

PA - Pennsylvania

PACD - Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts

PAS - Practice Approval System

PDA - Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

PENNVEST - Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority

PR - Public Relations

PSU - Pennsylvania State University

RFP - Request for Proposal

SCC - State Conservation Commission

SRBC - Susquehanna River Basin Commission

TAG - Technical Assistance Grants

USDA - United States Department of Agriculture

WIP - Watershed Implementation Plan

CLEAN WATER PROGRESS TEAMS

Heartfelt thanks go to the members of the three Clean Water Progress Teams listed below. The recommendations within this document are a result of their enthusiasm for clean water in Pennsylvania. Generously sharing their collective knowledge and experiences, each team worked diligently to coalesce around the actions needed to support continued clean water progress in Pennsylvania. The teams, and their respective members, are catalysts for innovation, utilizing forward-thinking perspectives that will continue to be instrumental in our collective success.

STAFF BUILDING/STAFF RETENTION TEAM

Erin Vesey
Team Coordinator
(Department of Environmental Protection)

Kristen Wolf
(Department of Environmental Protection)

Teddi Stark
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Karen Books
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Doug Wolfgang
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(HRG, Inc. / Countywide Action Plan Coordinator)

Erin Trouba
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Elizabeth Grant
(Cumberland County Planning Commission)

TECHNICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANCE TEAM

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Team Coordinator
(Department of Environmental Protection)

Jay Patel
(Department of Environmental Protection)

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Alexa Bixel
(Clinton County Conservation District)

Harry Campbell
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Kate Bresaw
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Matt Kofroth
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Josh Longmore
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Jenn Fetter
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Chris Canfield
(Center for Agricultural Conservation Assistance Training)

Tyler Neimond
(Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission)

Mike Roth
(State Conservation Commission)

Jason Fellon
(Department of Environmental Protection)

FUNDING AND MULTI-GRANT COORDINATION TEAM

Jim Spatz
Team Coordinator
(Department of Environmental Protection)

Natahnee Miller
(Department of Environmental Protection)

Devin Gray
(Department of Community & Economic Development)

Carl DeLuca/Shane Kleiner
(Department of Environmental Protection)

Rob Boos
(PENNVEST)

Justin Challenger
(State Conservation Commission)

Teah Gray
(Larson Design Group / Countywide Action Plan Coordinator)

Megan Blackmon
(Lancaster Clean Water Partners)

Marel King
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Adrienne Hobbins
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Rachel Stahlman
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Lane (Gary) Whigham
(Department of Conservation & Natural Resources)

Matt Royer
(Penn State University)

Miranda McCleaf
(Franklin County Conservation District)

Stephen Schelander
(Department of Community & Economic Development)

Mary Matscavage
(Department of Community & Economic Development)

Stephanie Shirk
(Department of Agriculture)

Eric Cromer
(State Conservation Commission)

BACKGROUND

In October 2023, DEP's Bureau of Watershed Restoration and Nonpoint Source Management (BWRNSM) hosted the first Clean Water Gathering of State Program Action Leaders and Countywide Action Planning (CAP) leaders. Over 80 partners, representing county, state, and federal organizations, came together to celebrate successes and discuss high level needs, issues, and challenges to continue accelerating progress on Pennsylvania's Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) and Countywide Action Plan (CAP) clean water nutrient reduction goals.

The issues and challenges discussed in the meeting were combined into three focused challenge areas that the partners agreed upon:

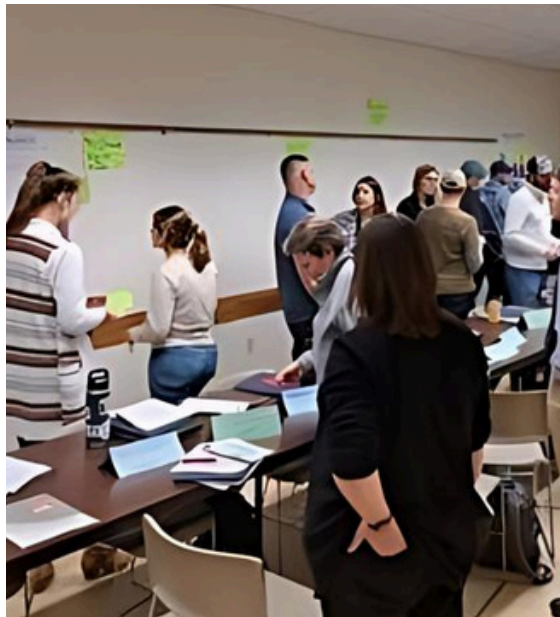
- **Technical and Administrative Assistance**
- **Staff Building/Staff Retention**
- **Funding and Multi-Grant Coordination**

These priority challenge areas hinder or prevent partners from being more successful and hinder progress toward cleaner waters in Pennsylvania. A multilevel, collective approach is needed to address these issues.

Following the Clean Water Gathering, BWRNSM's Chesapeake Bay Watershed Restoration Division team took action. In early 2024, they brought together a diverse group of partner volunteers to address the priority challenge areas raised at the Clean Water Gathering, and to build on the success of Pennsylvania's collective Phase 3 WIP and CAP efforts

Three collaborative Clean Water Progress Teams were formed: Technical and Administrative Assistance, Staff Building/Staff Retention, and Funding and Multi-Grant Coordination. The teams met throughout 2024, developing robust recommendations around the priority actions generated at the Clean Water Gathering.

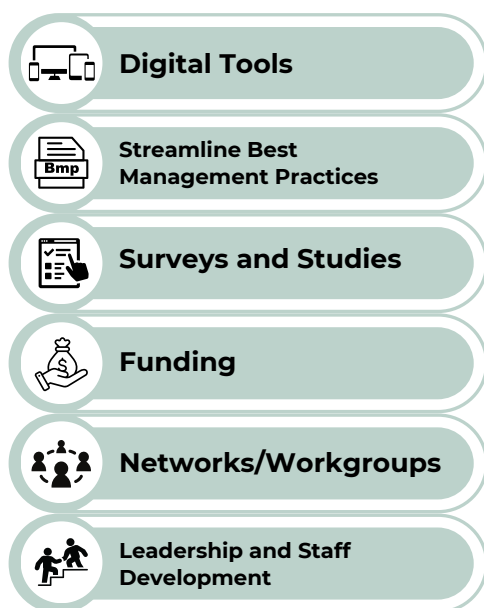
After nearly 1,000 people hours of effort throughout 2024, a total of 34 recommendations came out of the teams' collective work together. BWRNSM staff grouped similar recommendations together, resulting in a total of 25 unique recommendations.



HOW TO USE THIS SUMMARY

This Strategies for Success summary document is the next step in the process. It can guide policymakers, program action leaders and federal, state and county partners in decision-making that can move the recommendations into action.

The 25 unique recommendations are grouped into six themes:



Within each thematic group, each recommendation is explored in more detail through the following categories:

Recommendation – Provides a short overview of the recommendation, as well as provides the number of the recommendation in the Strategies for Success Matrix.

Priority Level and Timing – Identifies potential timelines for the recommendation, and if it is a low, mid, or high priority for action.

Identified Action Partners – Agencies/organizations/individuals who have already been engaged by the Progress Teams.

Potential Action Partners –

Agencies/organizations/individuals who the Progress Team anticipates will be needed for action on the recommendation to take place.

Action Areas – Action by partners and leaders is required to complete the recommendation. Each recommendation may have multiple action areas, as seen in the Strategies for Success Matrix.

- **Legislative/Regulation** – action will/may require legislative, legal, or regulatory change.
- **Policy** – action will require policy and/or programmatic change.
- **Reporting** – action will require change to current reporting practices or requirements.
- **Networks/Workgroups** – action will require the creation of a network of individuals or groups that will focus on addressing key issues.
- **Database** – action will require the creation, or improvement of, existing digital databases.
- **Studies** – action will require the creation and distribution of surveys and/or studies to identify specific missing information needed to inform recommendations and paths forward.
- **Education Tools** – action will focus on the creation of needed educational tools and materials for existing programs, projects, trainings, etc. that currently do not have these tools.
- **Outreach** – action will focus on needed outreach to and engagement with different partners to support advancement of the recommendation.
- **Marketing/Public Relations** – action will require marketing and public relations to specific audiences to support advancement of the recommendation.
- **Funding** – action will require funding in order for the recommendation to be completed.

Detailed Recommendations – References and links to the original recommendations formed by the Progress Teams that includes in-depth details. Recommendations marked “F” relate to work by the Funding and Multi-Grant Coordination Progress Team. Recommendations marked “S” relate to the Staff Building/Staff Retention Progress Team. Recommendations marked “T” relate to the Technical and Administrative Assistance Progress Team. The number and letter correspond to priority action and the individual recommendation. The link will take the reader to the corresponding Progress Team tracking spreadsheet.

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS BY THEMED GROUPINGS

Theme 1: Use digital tools to support funding decisions and streamline grant application and administration.

Partners report that obtaining funding for projects is challenging. Digital tools offer an opportunity to simplify and streamline the steps it takes to find funding, apply for it, receive payment, and submit reports. The digital tools described in the recommendations below could help users find available sources of funding and suggest ways they can be used together. Also included are recommendations for tools that help simplify and streamline the grant application process, including invoicing and reporting.

Recommendation 1 - Develop a centralized funding decision support tool:

Create a database of local, state, and federal funding that utilizes geographic information systems and artificial intelligence to provide users with best funding options for a particular clean water project.

The Commonwealth Office of Digital Experience (CODE) is currently working on a searchable tool for all PA state funds. CODE's efforts will help users quickly navigate state funds and determine eligibility and how to apply. The Chesapeake Conservancy is also developing a federal funding navigator tool. The Chesapeake Conservancy's efforts could be further supported to deliver this information on an accessible digital platform to a wider audience.

Priority Level and Timing – This is a high priority. CODE's tool was released in late 2024.

Action Areas –

- Legislative/Regulation
- Policy
- Networks/Workgroups
- Database
- Outreach
- Funding

Identified Action Partners –
Members of the CODE Team and Chesapeake Conservancy.

Potential Action Partners –
Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), and Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) staff with specific input/insights into the CODE tool.

Detailed Recommendations – [Fla](#)

Theme 1: Use digital tools to support funding decisions and streamline grant application and administration.

Partners report that obtaining funding for projects is challenging. Digital tools offer an opportunity to simplify and streamline the steps it takes to find funding, apply for it, receive payment, and submit reports. The digital tools described in the recommendations below could help users find available sources of funding and suggest ways they can be used together. Also included are recommendations for tools that help simplify and streamline the grant application process, including invoicing and reporting.

Recommendation 2 - Develop a single grant application and management portal for state and federal grants:

Create a single application portal where all stages of grant funding and administration, from application to close-out, could be managed. This would streamline invoicing and reporting requirements while reducing administrative burden. Ideally, this portal would work for both state and federal funding sources, allowing entities like conservation districts to use a single system for all reporting. CODE is currently working on a common application portal for all PA state funds.

Priority Level and Timing – The Phase 2 of CODE’s work involving the common application portal is expected for delivery in 2026.

A draft set of common application questions has already been developed by the Chesapeake Conservancy and reviewed by several other applicants. The Staff Building/Staff Retention Team has noted this as a high priority to start immediately. The Technical and Administrative Team noted that a common reporting system would be informed from the outcome of Recommendation 13. Annual review will be needed to keep common questions relevant.

Action Areas –

- Legislative/Regulation
- Policy
- Reporting
- Networks/Workgroups
- Database
- Outreach
- Funding

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – CODE PA, Grantors (federal and state) including specifically DEP Growing Greener and CAP, DCNR Forest Buffer, NFWF INSR and SWG, and EPA 319, Chesapeake Conservancy, Office of Administration, program staff, and CD staff.

Detailed Recommendations – [F2a](#), [F2b](#), [S4b](#), [S5a](#), [T2c](#)

Theme 1: Use digital tools to support funding decisions and streamline grant application and administration.

Partners report that obtaining funding for projects is challenging. Digital tools offer an opportunity to simplify and streamline the steps it takes to find funding, apply for it, receive payment, and submit reports. The digital tools described in the recommendations below could help users find available sources of funding and suggest ways they can be used together. Also included are recommendations for tools that help simplify and streamline the grant application process, including invoicing and reporting.

Recommendation 3 - Use a public-facing website to educate and assist applicants and sub-awardees on federal and state funding requirements and other project resources:

Use a public-facing website to educate and assist the public, applicants and sub-awardees on federal and state funding requirements and other project resources.

Priority Level and Timing – This is a high priority. The Center for Water Quality Excellence (CWQE) website was a public platform that ceased to be funded and functional after December 2024.

Action Areas –

- Database
- Education Tools
- Funding

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – Lancaster Clean Water Partners, Chesapeake Conservancy, CACAT, HRG, PennBid, and EPA to view and vet educational materials regarding funding along with state and federal grant program staff to vet material; sub-awardees and subcontractors to use the tools; DEP program staff to review PENNVEST RFP around CWQE and determine viability as public-facing website (Land Logic would also need to be involved); communication networks/partners to publicize website including CAP Coordinators, Conservation District Field Representatives (CDFRs) with associated roundtables, Office of Environmental Justice staff, regional directors at DCED, Governor's Commissions, Local Government Commission of the PA General Assembly, and the Pennsylvania Municipalities Authorities Association.

Detailed Recommendations – [F4b](#), [F5a](#)

Theme 2: Streamline best management practices.

The following recommendation addresses verification of clean water best management practices (BMPs) by entities outside of the PA Department of Environmental Protection's purview.

Recommendation 4 - Streamline and standardize re-verification of best management practices:

Coordinate best management re-verification among the various entities responsible for BMP re-verification. A variety of sources for BMP information exists outside of the PA Department of Environmental Protection. Re-verification should be standardized and streamlined with information collected in a single location (i.e., PracticeKeeper).

Priority Level and Timing – This is a high priority.

Action Areas –

- Legislative/Regulation
- Policy
- Reporting
- Network/Workgroups

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – BWRNSM and all data reporters to develop individualized re-verification plans for each data reporter.

Detailed Recommendations – [T2a](#)

Theme 3: Research ways to improve programs, partnerships, project support and hiring.

The following recommendations rely on conducting surveys, studies and other forms of background research to inform targeted improvements to programs, partnerships, project support and hiring. The studies cover a diverse range of topics, and all seek the additional information needed to make meaningful changes. Topic areas include funding program flexibility, engineering providers, successful partnerships, workforce and hiring analyses, training resource availability, and reporting expectations.

Recommendation 5 - Survey funding agencies on program flexibility:

Survey funding agencies to determine what parts of their program could be changed to improve flexibility or streamline the program. If programs can be adjusted, work to adjust those pieces that are flexible and improve program funding or administration. Where those programs are not flexible, develop educational materials to help partners navigate complexities.

Action Areas –

- Legislative/Regulation
- Policy
- Networks/Workgroups
- Studies
- Outreach
- Funding

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Priority Level and Timing – This is a high priority. The 2025-2026 fiscal year.

Potential Action Partners – DEP and SCC would be needed for financial support, and a consultant to conduct gap assessment.

Detailed Recommendations – F4c, S4c

Theme 3: Research ways to improve programs, partnerships, project support and hiring.

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Recommendation 6 - Conduct a gap assessment of engineering providers to determine areas of improvement:

Determine where gaps exist related to engineering providers. A lack of available engineers currently impedes delivery of clean water projects.

Priority Level and Timing – The Staff Building/Staff Retention Team viewed this as a high priority.

Action Areas –

- Studies
- Outreach
- Funding

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – Multiple project partners need to be engaged to list common decision points affecting their use of funding, and various funding program administrative staff are needed to respond.

Detailed Recommendations – [T1a](#)

Theme 3: Research ways to improve programs, partnerships, project support and hiring.

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Recommendation 7 - Assess partnerships in PA's Chesapeake Bay watershed region for potential private-public partnership:

Create a framework of key elements that are needed to make a successful partnership. Conduct a market analysis to inventory existing partnerships in PA's Chesapeake Bay watershed region, then conduct a gap assessment to identify any inhibiting factors with the goal of fostering productive partnerships in areas where that collaboration is lacking.

Priority Level and Timing – This is a medium priority.

Action Areas –

- Network/Workgroups
- Studies
- Outreach
- Funding

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – Agencies that fund these types of partnership projects; a dedicated staff employee for this work; a representative steering group; state government agencies, local government, NGOs, non-profits, for profit companies, and a hired consultant.

Detailed Recommendations – [T3a](#), [T3b](#)

Theme 3: Research ways to improve programs, partnerships, project support and hiring.

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Recommendation 8 - Analyze environmental workforce:

Analyze patterns and trends in the current clean water workforce and understand where new employees are coming from. Use this information to aid in recruiting efforts where lack of applicants/high vacancies impede clean water project implementation. The PA Department of Labor & Industry could be a partner in conducting a robust workforce analysis.

Priority Level and Timing – Medium priority; long-term project; begin immediately.

Action Areas –

- Studies
- Outreach
- Funding

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – EPA; United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS), Office of Administration Chief Diversity Officer, and DEP Office of Environmental Justice, PA Department of Labor and Industry.

Detailed Recommendations – S2a

Theme 3: Research ways to improve programs, partnerships, project support and hiring.

The following recommendations rely on conducting surveys, studies and other forms of background research to inform targeted improvements to programs, partnerships, project support and hiring. The studies cover a diverse range of topics, and all seek the additional information needed to make meaningful changes. Topic areas include funding program flexibility, engineering providers, successful partnerships, workforce and hiring analyses, training resource availability, and reporting expectations.

Recommendation 9 - Analyze environmental job advertisements:

Analyze content and placement of job advertisements to understand how to broaden potential applicant pool where appropriate. This could increase the volume and diversity of applicants, including those with unconventional job experiences or educational backgrounds that could be appropriately incorporated into environmental project development. Human Resource professionals could be partners in this effort.

Priority Level and Timing – Medium priority; long-term project; begin immediately.

Action Areas –

- Studies
- Outreach
- Marketing/PR
- Funding

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – Individual conservation organizations and entities can self-evaluate; guidance can be provided by key oversight organizations and Human Resource professionals.

Detailed Recommendations – [S2b](#)

Theme 3: Research ways to improve programs, partnerships, project support and hiring.

The following recommendations rely on conducting surveys, studies and other forms of background research to inform targeted improvements to programs, partnerships, project support and hiring. The studies cover a diverse range of topics, and all seek the additional information needed to make meaningful changes. Topic areas include funding program flexibility, engineering providers, successful partnerships, workforce and hiring analyses, training resource availability, and reporting expectations.

Recommendation 10 - Analyze hiring practices at the organizational level:

Analyze hiring at the level of individual organizations to identify broader target audiences. This could also inform where these organizations conduct general outreach, how they use social media, and/or participate in job fairs. Human Resources professionals could be partners in this effort.

Priority Level and Timing – Medium priority; long-term project; begin immediately.

Action Areas –

- Studies
- Outreach
- Funding

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – Individual conservation organizations and entities can self-evaluate; guidance can be provided by key oversight organizations and Human Resource professionals.

Detailed Recommendations – S2c

Theme 3: Research ways to improve programs, partnerships, project support and hiring.

The following recommendations rely on conducting surveys, studies and other forms of background research to inform targeted improvements to programs, partnerships, project support and hiring. The studies cover a diverse range of topics, and all seek the additional information needed to make meaningful changes. Topic areas include funding program flexibility, engineering providers, successful partnerships, workforce and hiring analyses, training resource availability, and reporting expectations.

Recommendation 11 - Survey existing educational resources:

Explore available resources that address management training or employee onboarding. Where applicable, organize these resources in a format that is accessible for a broad range of users (potentially across programs and across agencies) and expand upon trainings as needed. Human Resources professionals could be partners in this effort, and management trainings outside of the environmental sector could potentially be applicable as well in supplying relevant material.

Priority Level and Timing – This is a high priority project that could begin immediately.

Action Areas –

- Studies
- Education Tools
- Outreach
- Funding

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD), SCC, DEP, DCNR, Office of Administration (tiered approach with each agency or program organizing their own resources, then one organization takes on the larger administrative task of coordinating across programs).

Detailed Recommendations – [SLa](#)

Theme 3: Research ways to improve programs, partnerships, project support and hiring.

The following recommendations rely on conducting surveys, studies and other forms of background research to inform targeted improvements to programs, partnerships, project support and hiring. The studies cover a diverse range of topics, and all seek the additional information needed to make meaningful changes. Topic areas include funding program flexibility, engineering providers, successful partnerships, workforce and hiring analyses, training resource availability, and reporting expectations.

Recommendation 12 – Survey county conservation districts to find what kind of regional staff would be the most helpful:

Explore possible responsibilities for a regional staff position. This survey could be distributed to conservation districts virtually, discussed during a scheduled webinar, and/or discussed during a regional district manager meeting.

Priority Level and Timing – High priority - near term project to start immediately.

Action Areas –

- Studies
- Outreach
- Funding

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – DEP, SCC, County Conservation Districts, Program Areas, CAPs, Planning Commissions, DCNR, and Department of DCED staff.

Detailed Recommendations – [S3a](#)

Theme 3: Research ways to improve programs, partnerships, project support and hiring.

The following recommendations rely on conducting surveys, studies and other forms of background research to inform targeted improvements to programs, partnerships, project support and hiring. The studies cover a diverse range of topics, and all seek the additional information needed to make meaningful changes. Topic areas include funding program flexibility, engineering providers, successful partnerships, workforce and hiring analyses, training resource availability, and reporting expectations.

Recommendation 13 - Review program specific reporting requirements:

Review reporting requirements and expectations tied to Commonwealth programs relevant to conservation districts. Currently, conservation districts must adhere to reporting expectations that vary across programs; in some cases, those reporting requirements or expectations have not been reviewed for several years.

Priority Level and Timing – This is a medium priority: This could be done with every delegation agreement/contract cycle.

Action Areas –

- Legislative/Regulation
- Policy
- Reporting
- Networks/Workgroups
- Studies

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – DEP, PDA, program staff to complete the directive.

Detailed Recommendations – T2b

Theme 4: Advocate for adequate and consistent funding to support clean water project implementation.

The following recommendations focus on providing stable funding for existing efforts that support clean water project implementation. Long-term, stable funding enables project partners to more effectively budget for and plan high-quality projects, and fund staff in both engineering and administrative positions to support those projects.

Recommendation 14 - Provide stable, multi-year funding for project installation:

Advocate for clean water project implementation funding that is consistent over several years. Project funding should take into account the full life cycle of clean water projects, from planning to installation to maintenance. This will enable project partners to better plan and phase projects. Providing funding for the complete lifecycle of a project, including maintenance, will ensure long term viability of clean water interventions.

Priority Level and Timing – This is a high priority.

Action Areas –

- Legislative/Regulation
- Policy
- Outreach
- Funding

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – NGOs, Funders (SRBC, DEP, NFWF, DCNR).

Detailed Recommendations – T4b

Theme 4: Advocate for adequate and consistent funding to support clean water project implementation.

The following recommendations focus on providing stable funding for existing efforts that support clean water project implementation. Long-term, stable funding enables project partners to more effectively budget for and plan high-quality projects, and fund staff in both engineering and administrative positions to support those projects.

Recommendation 15 - Provide stable funding to support engineering programs:

Advocate for continued funding of existing programs providing engineering services. These engineering services keep the pipeline of clean water projects moving from design into construction, allowing for more efficient implementation. Some examples of these existing programs include Chesapeake Bay engineers and technicians, Technical Assistance Grants (TAG), Practice Approval System (PAS) (funded by the State Conservation Commission and administered by the Center for Agricultural Conservation Assistance Training), and the Technical Assistance Program (funded and administered by PA DEP).

Priority Level and Timing – This is a high priority.

Action Areas –

- Legislative/Regulation
- Policy
- Funding

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – DEP and SCC.

Detailed Recommendations – [T1d](#)

Theme 4: Advocate for adequate and consistent funding to support clean water project implementation.

The following recommendations focus on providing stable funding for existing efforts that support clean water project implementation. Long-term, stable funding enables project partners to more effectively budget for and plan high-quality projects, and fund staff in both engineering and administrative positions to support those projects.

Recommendation 16 - Provide additional funding to county partners for grant-related administrative staff:

Advocate for additional funding used to hire additional administrative staff to help reduce the burden of grant administration and reporting on conservation districts and other clean water project partners. Funding could be administered through a state agency to a contractor who would provide administrative support directly, similar to how technical assistance has been provided through other programs.

Priority Level and Timing – This is a high priority, near-term project to start immediately.

Action Areas –

- Policy
- Networks/Workgroups
- Outreach
- Marketing/PR
- Funding

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – Create a focus group with members from DEP, SCC, Conservation Districts, PACD, etc.

Detailed Recommendations – [S5b](#)

Theme 4: Advocate for adequate and consistent funding to support clean water project implementation.

The following recommendations focus on providing stable funding for existing efforts that support clean water project implementation. Long-term, stable funding enables project partners to more effectively budget for and plan high-quality projects, and fund staff in both engineering and administrative positions to support those projects.

Recommendation 17 - Partner with banks to provide capital in advance to partners:

Engage local banks to partner with PENNVEST on their link deposit program. This program would provide capital to clean water project partners at a low interest rate subsidized by PENNVEST for qualifying best management practices planned for installation. This program would be available to individual landowners or conservation organizations. Project partners may be more willing to accept funds from a familiar local bank rather than directly from a government agency.

Priority Level and Timing – High priority. Once a local bank partner is found, this recommendation can be enacted.

Action Areas –

- Networks/Workgroups
- Funding

Identified Action Partners – PENNVEST

Potential Action Partners – PENNVEST, local bank, and project partners.

Detailed Recommendations – [F41](#)

Theme 5: Form a workgroup or develop a network to support clean water project implementation.

Bringing clean water professionals together to support local and statewide clean water efforts is an efficient way to find solutions to challenges and share innovative ideas that can be put into action. The following recommendations focus on connecting professionals to brainstorm, network, and exchange ideas/information to improve upon clean water project implementation. This may take the form of workgroups with a limited scope or problem-solving mission and timeline, or the networks may be set up to operate in the long-term as part of the clean water project implementation landscape.

Recommendation 18 - Form a workgroup to evaluate changes in Act 367:

Explore possible changes to Pennsylvania's Engineer, Land Surveyor, and Geologist Registration Law (Act 367), providing a license exemption for federal employees (see if it can be expanded to include state employees). This would allow for flexibility in using trained professionals to design and engineer clean water projects. These professionals would have adequate training but may just be lacking licensure. Legislation may be necessary.

Priority Level and Timing – This is a medium priority. Dependent on lawmakers.

Action Areas –

- Legislative/Regulation
- Policy
- Networks/Workgroups
- Studies
- Outreach

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – Lawmakers, government organizations, and PACD.

Detailed Recommendations – [The](#)

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Recommendation 19- Create new regionalized county conservation district staff positions:

Create regional staff positions for conservation district professionals to help with both technical and administrative tasks. These positions could be “floating” positions alleviating interruptions in progress caused by vacancies and turnover at district offices. Regional or statewide offices could provide technical, administrative, legal, or human resource assistance across all counties.

Priority Level and Timing – This is a high priority. Start immediately, will take time to progress.

Action Areas –

- Policy
- Networks/Workgroups
- Funding

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – Create a focus group with members from DEP, SCC Program Areas, CAP Coordinators, Planning Commissions, Conservation Districts, and PACD.

Detailed Recommendations – [S3a](#), [S4a](#)

Theme 5: Form a workgroup or develop a network to support clean water project implementation.

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Recommendation 20 - Form a workgroup to address block permitting:

Convene a group of practitioners and policy experts to evaluate the feasibility of block permitting or the expansion of general permits. Increasing efficiency in permit review would help to expedite environmentally beneficial clean water projects.

Priority Level and Timing – This is a high priority. Start immediately, will take time to progress.

Action Areas –

- Legislative/Regulation
- Policy
- Networks/Workgroups

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – DEP, Conservation Districts, Practitioners, and Potential Project Sponsors.

Detailed Recommendations – T5a

Theme 5: Form a workgroup or develop a network to support clean water project implementation.

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Recommendation 21 - Create a consistent knowledge base across state agencies and local/regional partners for project funding:

Develop a “Funding Network” made up of funding program professionals and a “Partner Network” made up of clean water project partners. Coordinate information exchange between the two networks. The Partner Network would provide the Funding Network with high-impact prioritized projects for funding and feedback on program experience while the Funding Network would provide the Partner Network with brainstorming related to potential funding sources and options best suited to fund identified high-impact priority projects. A designated coordinator would likely be needed to facilitate coordination between these two networks and ensure robust exchange.

Priority Level and Timing – This is a high priority. This is a near-term priority to create a “coordinator” position interacting with both networks. The “Funding Network” would meet quarterly to review high-impact water quality projects in need of funding.

Action Areas –

- Networks/Workgroups
- Funding

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – A dedicated staff coordinator; a funding network made up of funding agencies (examples: NFWF, EPA, SCC, PENNVEST, DEP, DCNR, DEP, PDA). A partner network using CDFRs, regional representatives from the Office of Environmental Justice, DCED, and the Center for Local Government.

Detailed Recommendations – [F3a](#)

Theme 5: Form a workgroup or develop a network to support clean water project implementation.

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Recommendation 22 - Strengthen peer to peer knowledge sharing:

Improve peer to peer knowledge exchange through existing structures and new tools. Encourage CAP County Coordinators to meet with each other in person or virtually to discuss project management and implementation techniques. This could occur through a monthly webinar platform or through conservation district support staff initiating introductions. Facilitate the flow of ideas between county conservation districts so that they can gain knowledge about potential costs, estimates, project ideas, and prioritization of regionally significant projects. A digital tool or database may be needed to facilitate information exchange between conservation districts.

Priority Level and Timing – This is a high priority. This would be a near-term initiative. The digital tool or database used to share information between Conservation Districts could start to be developed in 2025.

Action Areas –

- Networks/Workgroups
- Database
- Education Tools
- Funding

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – CAP Coordinators, CDFRs, Conservation District staff, DEP Program Administration, SCC, CACAT, and conservation partners.

Detailed Recommendations – [F5b](#), [T4a](#)

Theme 5: Form a workgroup or develop a network to support clean water project implementation.

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Recommendation 23 - Expand network of engineers capable of working in the field of conservation and agricultural engineering:

Outreach to engineers in other fields with the goal of increasing engineering capacity for agricultural engineering project design and development. This involves learning from engineers who have made the transition to an agricultural-focused career, and it could also involve reaching out to near term engineering graduates to educate them on the conservation and agricultural engineering field. This could also involve developing connections to post-secondary civil and engineering programs to develop a talent pipeline.

Priority Level and Timing – This is a high priority, near-term initiative.

Action Areas –

- Networks/Workgroups
- Education Tools
- Outreach
- Marketing/PR
- Funding

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – DEP, SCC and CACAT.

Detailed Recommendations – [11b](#), [11c](#)

Theme 6: Enable and encourage leadership and staff development.

The following recommendations place heavy emphasis on leadership development and staff capacity-building, with a specific focus on county conservation district staff. This can be accomplished through refocusing and rebranding existing leadership development tools, using new tools, as well as through resetting expectations on cross training and making it a priority.

Recommendation 24 - Refresh and update current leadership modules from the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD):

Re-title, update, and expand the current PACD leadership.org module. This tool for staff development is currently under-utilized and could be expanded to improve functionality. It could also be re-branded and refreshed; and better advertised across the conservation district offices.

Priority Level and Timing – This is a high priority, near-term initiative that could begin immediately.

Action Areas –

- Education Tools
- Outreach
- Marketing/PR
- Funding

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – PACD's Leadership Development Program Committee, and SCC.

Detailed Recommendations – [S1b](#)

Theme 6: Enable and encourage leadership and staff development.

The following recommendations place heavy emphasis on leadership development and staff capacity-building, with a specific focus on county conservation district staff. This can be accomplished through refocusing and rebranding existing leadership development tools, using new tools, as well as through resetting expectations on cross training and making it a priority.

Recommendation 25 - Prioritize cross training at county conservation districts:

Encourage a mindset shift among conservation district managers to prioritize cross training among staff. Eliminate administrative hurdles to cross training for conservation district staff.

Priority Level and Timing – This is a high priority that could begin immediately.

Action Areas –

- Legislative/Regulation
- Policy
- Education Tools
- Outreach
- Funding

Identified Action Partners – To Be Determined

Potential Action Partners – DEP, BWRNSM, SCC, and Dirt & Gravel Road Program staff (to allow more flexibility within the programs to allow for cross training).

Detailed Recommendations – S4c

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Recommended Strategies for Success

- [Strategies for Success Matrix](#)

Clean Water Gathering and Progress Teams Handouts

- [Clean Water Gathering Summary and Next Steps](#)
- [Clean Water Gathering Update and Next Steps](#)
- [Clean Water Progress Teams; Strategies for Success](#)
- [Clean Water Progress Teams; Technical and Administrative Assistance](#)
- [Clean Water Progress Teams; Funding and Multi-Grant Coordination](#)
- [Clean Water Progress Teams; Staff Building/Staff Retention](#)

Progress Teams Tracking Spreadsheets

- [Funding and Multi-Grant Progress Team Tracking Spreadsheet](#)
- [Technical and Administrative Assistance Progress Team Tracking Spreadsheet](#)
- [Staff Building/Staff Retention Progress Team Tracking Spreadsheet](#)



**If you want to go fast, go alone. If you
want to go far, go together.**

- African Proverb



Pennsylvania
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