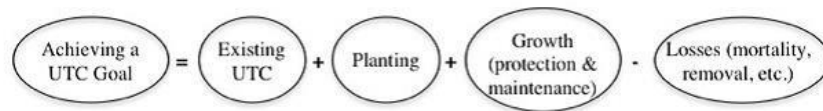## Elected Officials Watershed Education Program Outline – Tree Canopy Discussion Draft

Goal: Develop a tree canopy chapter of the newly elected officials handbook introducing the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Keep to <10 pages with a lot of visuals and graphic representation of information.

1. **Introduction**
   a. As an elected official within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, you are the steward of your community's tree canopy, which provides benefits not only to your residents but to the watershed as a whole. Here's what you need to know:
      i. What is tree canopy and why does it matter
      ii. How is tree canopy managed at the local level
         1. Tree canopy data, planning and goal-setting
         2. Introduce basics of tree canopy equation (create better graphic version)

      iii. What are the biggest Challenges
         1. Lack of local funding/capacity to manage, plant, maintain
         2. Many drivers of canopy loss – development, storms, pests/diseases (EAB), utility clearing, aging trees, etc.
         3. Public attitudes/awareness – removing or damaging trees unnecessarily, improper pruning/maintenance, etc.

      iv. What are the greatest Opportunities
         1. Many people value and want trees – communities have lots of areas of turf/impervious that can be enhanced with more trees (schools, parks, streets, yards, places of worship, etc.)
         2. Lots of partners, data, tools, best practices, models from other communities to help (resources section below)
         3. Local ordinances/policies are the most important tools to help

2. **Local priorities and opportunities**
   a. How your community can **address local priorities through tree canopy efforts**
      i. Insert table/infographic linking research-based tree canopy benefits to a focused list of local priorities (to be fleshed out...)
         1. Environmental:
            a. Flooding
            b. Regulatory
            c. Stream restoration
            d. Wildlife habitat (land and water)
            e. Climate resilience
            f. etc. etc.
         2. Non-environmental:

a. Economic Development
    b. Recreation
    c. Public health
    d. Public safety
    e. Property values
    f. etc. etc.
 ii. Here is a possible way of grouping/honing down categories:
    1. Public health and safety – air quality/asthma, disease reduction, urban heat island, crime reduction, mental health
    2. Economics – property values, energy savings, businesses/shopping draw, etc.
    3. Flooding/water quality – reduce flooding, trees are a BMP to help meeting water quality goals like TMDL, MS4
    4. Education – data on how trees/nature helps children focus, perform better, etc.

3. **What are the ways in which you, as elected officials, can address these priorities?**
    a. Serving as the champion/supporting local efforts
    b. Working closely with your staff to:
        i. Support, strengthen or create local tree canopy goals and plans
        ii. Align ordinances, codes, policies with tree canopy goals and strategies
        iii. Get different departments/units working together on tree canopy (public works, stormwater, parks/recreation, public health, community development, etc.)
        iv. Implement projects on the ground (from planning and design phases to maintenance) - ensure the right people are involved
    c. Budgeting/leveraging resources and growing the investment – see guide Financing Urban Tree Canopy Programs
    d. Build collaboration with your community's tree board/commission and other community partners – or help get one started if you don't have one
    e. Provide opportunities for staff training
    f. Educate yourself (Chesapeake Tree Canopy Network – community spotlight stories, other forums)

4. **Baywide and state-specific resources (add direct links)**
    a. Regional – Chesapeake Tree Canopy Network; summarize key resources
        i. Why Tree Canopy – hub of tree benefits info
        ii. Understand your Canopy – where to find tree canopy data and how to use it
        iii. Expand your Canopy –
            1. [Funding – Guide and links to grant programs](#)
            2. [Community Spotlight](#) – read innovative examples from around the watershed
            3. Outreach strategies
            4. And more…

              iv.   Maintain your Canopy
                     1. [CWP Ordinance Review guide](#), and other resources

b. State – list key programs/partners providing grants, technical assistance, training etc. – is this needed? Could just direct to [partners page](#) of website…