

ACTION PLAN TO IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

INNOVATIVE NEW IDEAS

Create a Delaware River Watershed Initiative Academy

The Delaware River Watershed Initiative Academy (Watershed Academy) would improve capacity among municipal officials and professionals to implement effective policies and on-the-ground actions to protect water quality.

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Introduction

A group of professionals from many different types of organizations will come together under the Watershed Academy to coordinate, enhance, and brand educational and networking programs on municipal best practices for improving water quality, and match technical assistance (TA) providers with receptive municipalities.

Background

Effectively implementing water quality improvements at the local level requires expertise from both municipalities and TA providers. Municipal representatives and decision makers, including elected officials, appointed officials, and staff, benefit from educational and networking programs that expose them to best practices in water quality actions. Water quality TA providers, including planners, engineers, landscape architects, attorneys, advocates, and other conservation professionals, also benefit from keeping up to date on best practices and sharing experiences on what does or does not work. Building more receptivity and discernment on improving water quality, and matching receptive municipalities with expert TA providers, will increase implementation of effective municipal actions to improve and maintain water quality. Targeting activity to municipalities that are most vulnerable to water quality degradations, but receptive to action, will maximize program effectiveness. Tracking TA activity and implementation will measure performance of this program and guide future activity.

Program Concept

The overall concept is to create a Watershed Academy that provides highly valued and sought-after training and TA for municipal officials and professionals and results in implementation of effective measures to improve water quality. Watershed Academy-branded programs, events, and TA providers will demonstrate a high level

Anticipated Outcomes

Municipalities engage in training and are matched with TA providers.

Improve capacity among municipal officials and professionals to implement effective policies and on-the-ground actions to protect water quality.

Implement practices that conserve and improve water quality in the Delaware River Watershed.

of expertise and effectiveness in delivering water quality policies and tools, such as plans, land use regulations, and open space funding programs that impact water quality. The program will be coordinated by an existing regional organization in partnership with other content experts. Academy-trained professionals will have access to a peer network, continued educational opportunities, and all regional municipalities that seek TA. Incentives for municipalities to engage with Watershed Academy TA providers, programs, tools, and networks will be publicized. Municipalities that utilize the Watershed Academy on a continuum will gain access to additional incentives for future actions, possibly including more expensive acquisition and restoration activities. The Watershed Academy will assess where municipal actions are most needed, which municipal actors are most receptive to implementation, and steer TA providers to interact with these officials. Tracking activities will measure Watershed Academy performance and guide future approaches.

Funding

Execution of the Watershed Academy is dependent on securing funding to subsidize the municipalities' TA work and for partner organizations to administer the program. With success, additional funders, including government-funded programs for municipalities, would be solicited to join forces to further channel and support a concerted focus on municipal actions to improve water quality.

STEPS:

1. Establish criteria for the Watershed Academy brand.
2. Promote brand and recruit existing programs and TA providers.
3. Conduct watershed-wide assessment of municipal vulnerability (geographic information system analyses based on science) and receptivity (subjective based on local knowledge).
4. Match Watershed Academy TA providers with vulnerable and receptive municipalities (Strike Force approach).
5. Coordinate with existing programs, offering continued education and networking for both TA providers and municipal officials.
6. Evaluate effectiveness and adjust approach accordingly.

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