



## STRATEGIC PLANNING GUIDELINES FOR WORKGROUP LEADERS.

### **Background**

In 2009, VASG is continuing the strategic planning process it began in the spring of 2008 with meetings of its External Advisory Committee (EAS) and the VASG extension staff. Over the next 6-months until June 2009, VASG is committed to broadly engaging the coastal and marine stakeholders of our region, reflect upon VASG's programming, focus on making a real difference, and set strategic direction for VASG for 2009-2013. The Executive Management Team (EMT) (Troy Hartley, Lee Larkin, Tom Murray) and Margaret Pizer (Communication) will have overall coordinating and oversight responsibilities for the assembly of the strategic plan. The EMT seeks to ensure that the strategic planning process will obtain input and engagement of a broad array of stakeholders, to promote integration across our institutions and functions, and to position VASG to respond to the critical coastal and marine concerns and needs of the Commonwealth, region and nation. VASG staff will contribute directly to the design, implementation and management of the strategic planning process. The preliminary meetings with External Advisory Committee (EAC) and VASG extension staff members in spring 2008 produced the following guiding principles for the strategic plan:

- Align closely with national Sea Grant priorities and be responsive to the Commonwealth's particular needs and opportunities.
- Build on current strengths, while exploring new directions to address emerging challenges and opportunities.
- Emphasize integration of research, outreach, and education.
- Demand demonstrable impacts that make a real difference.
- Collaborate with partners to be effective and efficient.
- Pursue regional and national approaches for issues that cross state boundaries.
- Increase collaboration with minority-serving institutions.
- Seek to increase funding availability.

### **Workgroups**

Workgroups are being established in the following topic areas and a Virginia Sea Grant (VASG) staff member will chair each workgroup:

- Safe & Sustainable Seafood – Fisheries & Aquaculture (*Proposed chair: Mike Oesterling., Proposed co-chair: Chris Hager*)
- Safe & Sustainable Seafood – Seafood safety, processing, health (*Proposed chair: Vicki Clark, Proposed co-chair: Abigail Villalba*)
- Sustainable Coastal Development and Hazard Resilience in Coastal Communities (*Proposed chair: Tom Murray, Proposed co-chair: Anne Smith*)
- Healthy Coastal Ecosystems (*Proposed chair: Troy Hartley, Proposed co-chair: Carl Hershner/someone from CCRM*)
- Coastal and Ocean Literacy (*Proposed chair: TBD educator, Proposed co-chair: Margaret Pizer.*)

## DRAFT

The workgroups are charged with generating the text detailing the context, issues, and strategic goals and objectives for each topic area. As workgroup leader, you are charged with facilitating the production of this document, based upon the format guidelines and the overall strategic planning objectives. The exact methods of managing the workgroup are up to each individual workgroup, although the EMT will provide a number of resources to assist the workgroups. Some workgroups may elect to use SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis, some may have multiple authors and use a wiki to coordinate the drafting of text, and others may use approaches they have found helpful from their own past experiences. The critical outputs are the text that addresses the content laid out in the format section below and a process that engages a broad array of stakeholders – beyond that, we leave it to the discretion of the workgroup chairs.

VASG will be maintaining web pages dedicated to the development of the strategic plan. This will include updates on progress, opportunities to provide comments, links to existing plans and resources, and a workgroup-only page where workgroups can share information, review and comment on draft documents, and coordinate workgroup activities. The web site will maintain a central calendar of workgroup meetings and activities. Further, it will provide access to a wide range of electronic tools and resources that can enhance the reach and engagement of the strategic planning process (e.g., blog, wiki, survey monkey, etc.).

Below are further details on workgroup composition and operations, expectations for the workgroups' final product and timeline, and available resources.

### **Workgroup Composition**

Each workgroup will be chaired by a VASG staff member and the chair should nominate members to the workgroup. A co-chair will also be selected for most workgroups. Membership should include: a second VASG staff member, a REAC member, a past or current research PI, an External Advisory Committee member, and 1-2 additional stakeholders. The membership should have diverse interests—please avoid having one specific interest area over-represented on any given workgroup. Workgroups may range from 5 to 10 members, depending on the working model to be used (which is at the discretion of the group). For example, if all workgroup members are going to collaborate closely on the writing, a smaller group may function best, whereas if a small subgroup is going to do the writing and then look to others for feedback, a larger group could function well.

The EMT will review nominees and extend an invitation to each nominee. The EMT will also identify the REAC member for each workgroup. Please submit your nominees by **January 16<sup>th</sup>**. In addition to meetings of the core workgroup, each workgroup chair will organize broader meetings with stakeholders and other opportunities to obtain stakeholder input as needed.

### **Strategic Plan Outline**

The EMT, working with the VASG communicator, will have the lead on compiling the complete Strategic Plan and producing the draft introductory and concluding materials. A draft outline is listed below, although this too will be discussed with stakeholders and is subject to modification:

#### *Draft VASG 2010-2013 Strategic Plan Outline*

##### Introductory Sections

- Overview: Coastal and marine challenges and opportunities in the commonwealth.
- Mission and Value Statement: VASG's mission statement and functional principles.
- Planning Process: Commitment to broad-based stakeholder engagement.

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**Goals & Objectives by Focus Area:** This is where content generated by each workgroup will appear.

## Concluding Sections

- Integration: How we achieve more than the sum of our parts.
- Impacts: How we know we are making a difference.
- Conclusion: How we are an adaptive organization, committed to continued improvement.
- Addenda: Staff list, EAC members, REAC members, POB members.

Draft mission and value statements crafted by the EMT and the VASG communicator, in consultation with VIMS leadership and REAC members, will be circulated to all the workgroups for review and comment at least twice.

## Planning Timeline

General milestones include:

Task	Due Date	January	February	March	April	May	June
Workgroup members nominated.	Jan 16	█					
Meetings with stakeholders. Please announce them on the web site and notify the EMT.	ongoing	█	█	█	█		
Outline with headers for goals and objectives.	Feb 13		█				
First draft text.	Feb 27			█			
Feedback from EMT and revisions work with the VASG communicator.	Feb 27-Jun 19			█	█	█	█
Survey monkey questions from workgroups submitted to EMT.	Mar 6			█			
First draft text posted on web.	Mar 16			█			
Ongoing feedback from stakeholders on first draft. Be creative in seeking input.	Mar 16-Jun 1			█	█		
Survey monkey administered by EMT.	Mar 19-Apr 10			█	█		
Second draft of text, after integrating stakeholder input.	Apr 17				█		
Second draft posted on web.	Apr 30					█	
Solicit input on second draft.	Apr 30-Jun 12					█	█
Final plan complete.	Jun 19						█

## Plan Sections

The workgroup is charged with developing text for the strategic plan.

Workgroups should continually record emerging questions on which the workgroup would like additional input from a broader sample of stakeholders. These questions should be forwarded on to the EMT as they are generated, but a final list of questions should be submitted for the development of a survey monkey to be administered by the EMT. The survey will be administered for several weeks in March and April.

To ensure continuity and flow to the strategic plan, we are proposing the following format guidelines. Please draft text in adherence to the guidelines, although we do envision variability in the length of each focus area in the final strategic plan since VASG does not have equal strengths and capacities in all focus areas.

### *Context (350 words max)*

Describe the Commonwealth-specific challenges and opportunities relative to the assigned focus area, plus relationship between state and the regional and national context. Consider the following questions:

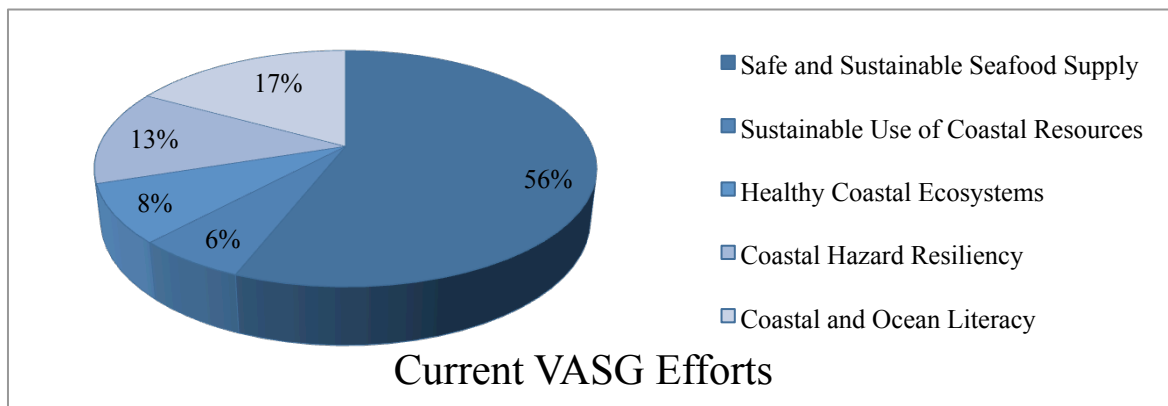
- What challenges and opportunities does Virginia face in this focus area?

- How does Virginia fit into the regional and national context relating to this focus area?
- Who is already working in this focus area and what are the opportunities to add value or to form partnerships?
- What strengths does VASG bring to bear on these issues?

*Objectives for each focus area goal*

Create a prioritized list of VASG objectives for this focus area, organized by function (research, outreach/education, extension) where appropriate—there will be some ideas that cross all functions. Include both short-term (2-4 years or less) goals and objectives and “stretch goals” that are outside the box and are longer term. Stretch goals should be ambitious, push VASG, but are likely beyond current and projected organizational capacity levels. Use the objectives of the national strategic plan as guideline. You may want to reword the national objectives to be Virginia-specific if that makes sense. VASG does not need to address every national objective and other objectives not covered by the national plan can be added. In fact, the national Sea Grant strategic plan is broad and there are insufficient resources for state Sea Grant programs to contribute significantly to all objectives.

Each objective should be stated in one sentence, as succinctly as possible. Try to focus the workgroup’s deliberation to creating 2-5 objectives and 1-3 stretch goals per focus area. These are general targets, although it is expected that certain focus area goals may have more objectives and stretch goals, while others less. For example, a recent analysis of the allocation of federal Sea Grant dollars in 2009 by focus areas demonstrates the distribution of VASG’s strengths, as well as areas where we currently invest less effort:



For each objective, please include the following bullet points (limit to a few sentences per bullet—50 words or less). These bullet points may end up contributing more to the implementation plan than the strategic plan, but we want to get the workgroups thinking about them now.

- Strategies and tactics—What specific actions and opportunities are needed to complete the objective?
- Capacity—What staff capabilities and other resources are needed to get the job done? Are these resources available currently in VASG or with its partner organizations? Where? Does additional capacity need to be developed?
- Measures—How will we know when we have achieved this objective? How will we know when the situation or context has changed? In addition to performance measures, we need to identify context monitoring measures, so that we can know when we need to adapt our programming to changes in the problem/issue.

## DRAFT

*Integration (limit to a few sentences—50 words or less)*

How can we integrate across functions or across goals to achieve more?

### **Cross-cutting ideas**

There are issues that will likely emerge from all the workgroups (e.g., communication and literacy objectives, social science and other human dimensions of the topics, partnership and specific leverage tactics). It is important that workgroup leaders make regular updates to the web and keep the EMT informed of such issues as they arise in discussion so that we can effectively identify and consider these cross-cutting ideas and themes.

### **Resources Available to Workgroups**

Each workgroup has a budget of \$500 to hold public meetings with stakeholders and to facilitate additional input from stakeholders. For example, meetings can be held in specific areas of the state and/or with particular stakeholder interest groups. We encourage you to obtain a broad range of input, including input from those who have not worked with VASG before. If you have a good idea for a way to solicit feedback that will cost more than this budget allows, please contact the EMT to discuss supplemental funding opportunities.

Opportunities to discuss VASG strategic planning and solicit input can be added to agendas of existing meetings. In addition, dedicated listening sessions will be arranged by the EMT and workgroup chairs are encouraged to participate in those opportunities as well. We will review calendars shortly and target listening session dates and locations.

A number of web-based resources will be available to help your workgroup navigate the strategic planning process. More details will be made available about these resources as the planning process continues.

### **Online tools that all workgroups will be expected to use:**

*Planning Blog*—VASG will maintain a blog dedicated to strategic planning. This will be a central location online for updates on progress, opportunities to provide comments, links to existing plans and resources, links to additional pages where workgroups can share information, review and comment on draft documents, and coordinate workgroup activities. The blog will include a strategic planning calendar with events sponsored by the workgroups. Workgroup chairs will be expected to post updates on the blog and to keep workgroup members and stakeholders aware of the availability of this resource.

*Survey Monkey*—each workgroup will have the opportunity to contribute questions to a survey tool that can be used to get a broader range of opinions about critical issues. The EMT will administer a survey monkey in the late winter/early spring. This provides an opportunity to obtain broader, general input from the Commonwealth. Each workgroup will be expected to submit questions, but the format and content of questions is up to the group.

### **Optional online tools:**

*Wikis*—if your group wants a more interactive means of exchanging information, we can create wikis that will allow each group to collaborate in posting objectives, supporting documents, or other information. Wiki use is optional, and each wiki can be tailored to the individual workgroup's working style and needs.

*Google Docs*—this service from Google can be used to edit shared documents without anyone having to manage the drafts. Use of Google Docs is also optional.

### **In closing**

## DRAFT

Strategic planning is an adaptive process and in addition to helping VASG prioritize and identify critical coastal and marine needs in the Commonwealth, it will set the tone of openness, transparency, inclusivity and integration that VASG aims to achieve. This strategic planning effort seeks to advance an organizational culture of a learning, reflective organization. VASG needs to be nimble, responsive to needs, and to make a real, measurable difference in order to thrive in the challenging budgetary environment ahead.

Staff leadership in the workgroups and in setting the tone for VASG's strategic planning with all end-users, stakeholders, PIs, partner institutions, and other key audiences will be critical to the success of the 2010-2013 Virginia Sea Grant Strategic Plan.