

Mayors Advisory Council on Coastal Resilience Working Group Descriptions

May 2022

In 2021, the Cities Initiative's Mayors Advisory Council on Coastal Resilience explored coastal resilience challenges and developed recommendations for supporting shoreline municipalities in this area. Recommendations were completed in early 2022 and provide the foundation for action in the year ahead. The following working groups will mobilize action around the recommendations and will be supplemented by two research teams. Working groups will meet on a quarterly basis to take steps toward implementing recommendations, while research teams will meet at strategic times throughout the year to provide insights and help advance research opportunities. The working groups will likely refine their topics over the coming year.

Working Groups

- Binational – Public-Private Collaboration
- Canada – Funding and Advocacy
- Canada – Data and Knowledge Gaps
- U.S. – Funding and Advocacy
- U.S. – Coastal Resilience Networks

Supplemental Research Teams

- Binational – Coastal Resilience Needs Assessment Survey
- U.S. – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study

BINATIONAL WORKING GROUPS

1. PUBLIC-PRIVATE COLLABORATION

Objective: Explore and inform best practices for collaborative solutions to coastal resilience issues between public entities and private property owners and influence related policies where appropriate.

Description: Public and private entities have not typically been united in their approach to resolve coastal resilience issues and many efforts have occurred in a disjointed and uncoordinated fashion. With a large portion of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River shoreline being privately owned, municipalities must find ways to effectively engage with private property owners to ensure solutions are cost-effective and resilient over the long-term. This working group will explore collaborative solutions and work with senior levels of government and binational organizations to inform the development of best practices, resources, and programs to improve and guide collaboration and coordination on coastal projects between municipalities and private landowners.

Potential Action Items:

- **Case Studies** – Research and learn from case studies of communities that have completed projects through successful engagement between public and private entities (e.g., Euclid, OH). This could also include exploring model programs and policies related to buy-out programs; hazard disclosures in the real estate and insurance industries; zoning and general planning approaches for managing waterfront development.
- **Best Practices** – Leverage case study findings to advocate for and inform the creation of a municipal guide or tool kit of actions that could be taken at a community scale to enhance collaboration between municipalities and private entities.
- **Policy Influence** – Develop messaging and advocacy efforts for policies and programs that promote resilient approaches on both public and private shoreline property (e.g., hazard disclosures).

CANADA WORKING GROUPS

1. FUNDING AND ADVOCACY

Objective: Develop and support the promotion of detailed proposals for federal/provincial funding that will help municipalities better prepare their shorelines for the impacts of climate change.

Description: Access to funding for both planning and implementation of coastal resilience projects in Canada is, when available, spread across disparate ministries and agencies at the provincial and federal levels. This working group will survey the existing funding resources, identifying which ones are most successful and the reasons why. We will also identify the barriers for municipalities to apply to existing programs, along with what funding gaps exist that limit their ability to take action to protect their shores. In addition, this working group will provide feedback to Cities Initiative staff on a funding proposal to implement elements of the organization's Resilient Coastal Projects Initiative in Canada.

Potential Action Areas:

- **Funding Programs** – Identify existing funding programs that support coastal resilience work and member municipalities that have applied for these programs.
- **Funding and Implementation Needs** – Using the coastal needs assessment survey and anecdotal evidence from participating working group members, explore what the funding gap is that would allow Great Lakes/St. Lawrence municipalities to protect their coasts if addressed, along with identifying the barriers for municipalities to access existing programs and implement coastal resilience projects (i.e., regulatory burden).
- **Resilient Coastal Projects** – Provide advice on the best elements of the current Resilient Coastal Projects Initiative that would be relevant for Canadian municipalities and provide the most impact for small funding opportunities.
- **Advocacy** – Based on the working group's findings, work on advocacy strategies to engaged elected and non-elected officials and identify potential champions, at the federal and provincial government levels, to help advance coastal resilience priorities and recommendations developed by the Advisory Council and working group. We will also leverage other government consultation opportunities (e.g., National Adaptation Strategy) to inform decision-makers about municipal challenges in this area, as well as participate in an Ottawa Day in the fall.

2. DATA AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS

Objective: Identify which data, information and knowledge gaps exist at the local level that prevent municipalities and their partners from making appropriate long-term decisions to protect their shorelines and develop pathways to address these gaps by working with other partners.

Description: The Advisory Council identified that persistent data and information gaps at the municipal level are an ongoing challenge that prevents municipalities from planning for the long-term resilience of their shorelines. These gaps are a combination of a lack of data discoverability (i.e., where to find it) and accessibility (i.e., how it can be accessed and understood). In some cases, the data and information are simply non-existent or not made available to the public. At the same time, the Advisory Council found that municipal staff, along with their partners (e.g., Conservation Authorities in Ontario, consultants) are often not equipped with the knowledge and skills to handle complex coastal resilience issues. Addressing both these challenges will enable municipalities to better manage dynamic and complex shoreline issues.

Potential Action areas:

- **Data Gaps** – Identify current data and information gaps that could help municipalities address coastal resilience issues along with the organizations best able to develop and/or make the data and information available.

- **Data Partnerships** – Engage stakeholders identified in the data gaps assessment that have or should have responsibility for addressing those gaps and work together to address them.
- **Knowledge Gaps** – Once data and information gaps have been identified and addressed as a working group, the next step will be to identify the knowledge and skills gaps that exist at the local level which act as a barrier for addressing the many dimensions of coastal resilience (i.e., financial, technical, environmental, social etc.). The working group will develop the ideal “profile” that local staff, consultants and/or teams as a whole would possess to properly address coastal resilience issues.
- **Post-Secondary Sector Engagement** – Once the working group has identified knowledge gaps and developed a coastal resilience knowledge and skills “profile,” universities and colleges will be engaged to identify or develop programs that could help build those skills.

U.S. WORKING GROUPS

1. FUNDING AND ADVOCACY

Objective: Collaborate with federal agencies to guide and influence funding streams for municipalities to address coastal resilience issues. Explore innovative financing mechanisms for coastal resilience solutions.

Description: The funding landscape for coastal resilience can be complex and difficult to navigate. The Advisory Council identified barriers related to both funders and applicants that require solutions tailored to both audiences. This group will partner with key federal funders to address barriers such as cost-share requirements; efficiency and equity of funding distribution and selection; type of projects eligible for funding; and limitations within existing technical assistance programs. This group will also explore solutions that improve municipal resources and support that ensures communities have the capacity to prepare for and navigate these funding processes. Finally, where possible, this group will also explore opportunities around innovative financing mechanisms that could expand municipal financing portfolios and incentives around coastal resilience solutions.

Potential Action Areas:

- **Federal Collaboration** – Partner with federal agencies to improve the current landscape of federal funding programs and address barriers where feasible. Collaboration will also focus on promoting and expanding technical assistance for key funding programs that support coastal resilience.
- **Congressional Advocacy** – Develop critical messages to Congress that convey funding needs for coastal resilience programs. Advocate for appropriate policy and regulatory changes to minimize funding barriers and ensure programs are responsive to unique coastal needs in the Great Lakes region.
- **Case Studies** – Explore communities with funding success and glean lessons learned from navigating federal funding sources. Additionally, explore examples of innovative financing mechanisms for coastal solutions and apply to advocacy efforts.

2. COASTAL RESILIENCE NETWORKS

Objective: Improve coordination and cohesion in coastal areas through the organization or enhancement of sub-regional coastal resilience networks to ensure appropriate resources, technical support, and relationships are accessible for municipalities.

Description: Coastal coordination across the basin is varied, with some areas making significant strides to establish coastal resilience networks, whereas others are still lacking progress. This group will work with key partners to catalyze strong coastal resilience networks across the basin. We will take lessons learned from existing frameworks, such as the Collaborative Action for Lake Michigan (CALM) Coastal Resilience in Wisconsin, and advocate that each region has a collaborative network of regionally-relevant partners.

Leading partners could include Sea Grant programs or state Coastal Management Programs, and could be advanced in collaboration with established Councils of Government, regional planning commissions and similar bodies. The goal of developing these networks will be to ensure greater coordination among coastal strategies and actions across larger stretches of shoreline, including collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries, sectors, and levels of government.

Potential Action Areas:

- **Existing Networks** – Identify and connect with existing coastal resilience networks to understand existing approaches and frameworks. Apply lessons learned from successful networks to establish or expand similar networks in other parts of the Great Lakes basin.
- **Expanding Networks** – Identify areas with limited network collaboration and work with local and regional partners to identify and convene key coastal leaders around a holistic network concept designed to serve municipalities. Leverage existing efforts and relationships established through the Cities Initiative’s Resilient Coastal Projects Initiative.
- **Leadership Advocacy** – Advocate for funding that supports not only coastal resilience projects, but also organizations that act as the “connective tissue” to ensuring municipalities are engaged with relevant resources and support (e.g., Sea Grant, Coastal Management Programs, etc.).

SUPPLEMENTAL RESEARCH TEAMS

1. COASTAL RESILIENCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Objective: Inform and guide development of the annual Coastal Resilience Needs Assessment Survey to ensure the survey collects information on the most pressing municipal needs. Additionally, provide support for survey marketing and distribution.

Description: In 2021, the Cities Initiative, in partnership with the University of Illinois, launched the first-ever Coastal Resilience Needs Assessment Survey. With great success in its first year, the Cities Initiative has decided to conduct the survey on an annual basis. This team will guide survey development by informing survey questions and topic areas. Team members will also provide support with marketing the survey and encouraging other municipalities to participate. This team will meet as needed during critical times in the survey process.

Potential Action Areas:

- **Survey Development** – Convene on the front end of survey development to refine questions and topic areas that best address current and future coastal conditions and associated needs among shoreline municipalities.
- **Survey Marketing and Distribution** – Once the survey is ready for distribution, the team will help market the survey to coastal municipalities and key stakeholders using a variety of avenues and platforms. High participation rate will encourage results that are as accurate and representative as possible.

2. U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS GREAT LAKES COASTAL RESILIENCY STUDY

Objective: Advocate for and facilitate municipal engagement in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study and leverage the Cities Initiative’s network as an access point for municipal participation.

Description: The Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study will move forward in the next year and it is imperative that municipalities be engaged to ensure that study results are scalable to local solutions, fill data gaps, and

respond effectively to needs facing coastal municipalities. This team will be an advocate for this engagement and will leverage current partnerships with USACE to influence a municipal engagement plan.

Potential Action Areas:

- **Engagement Plan** – Collaborate with USACE to develop a municipal engagement plan for the upcoming study process.
- **Framing Municipal Issues** – Outline key issues, needs, barriers and related items relevant for coastal resilience planning at the municipal level to be addressed in the USACE coastal resiliency study.
- **Engagement and Recruitment** – Advise USACE on focus groups, workshops, and other mechanisms to secure input on the coastal resilience study and recruit municipalities to participate.
- **Advisory Committee** – Provide a forum for advising USACE and receiving ongoing reports as the coastal resiliency study progresses, and to assist in disseminating results to shoreline municipalities, Congress and other parties.