

BAY ADAPT | Regional Strategy for a Rising Bay

Working Group Results to Date (July 2020)

Updated: 7/24/2020 10:20:00 PM

Overview

This memo outlines the initial conceptual organization resulting from the first six Working Group meetings (two meetings for each of the three Working Groups). This memo offers a complex and technical look at the suite of potential topic areas that could be addressed in the Joint Platform. These initial Working Group meetings identified a range of barriers, issues, and potential actions to address adaptation in the region at three scales, driven by the following questions:

- **Regional Consistency** – What are the necessary steps to ensure that Bay Area jurisdictions plan together toward shared regional outcomes?
- **Local Planning** – How can we support local adaptation planning in a way that is consistent and accessible to resource-constrained local jurisdictions?
- **Project Implementation** – How can we expedite the delivery of high-quality adaptation projects?

Many common themes or topic areas emerged across these three scales, often offering relevant and complementary perspectives on the same larger issue. Recognizing these commonalities, BCDC staff developed a conceptual framework for organizing the main topics *across* scales rather than *by* scale. By discussing these topics *across* scale, actions and solutions can better reflect the spectrum of needs and solutions identified by all stakeholders and create cooperative buy-in across the region.

The topics outlined in this memo are conceptual topics, not specific suggestions or actions. Each topic description includes some ideas and concepts that emerged from the Working Groups that can serve as starting points for discussing and developing the actions that will make up the Joint Platform. The details that will take each topic from concept to action will be worked out over the next few months. **Significant conversation, debate, and decision-making by the Working Groups, Leadership Advisory Group, EJ Caucus, CBOs, elected officials, youth, and other community stakeholders still needs to occur to take each topic and identify all of the options and desired outcomes for each topic area.** It is important to note that the framework outlined here is intended for a technical audience – BCDC staff and the Environmental Justice (EJ) Caucus will work to refine the concepts and language to make these topics accessible to a wider audience to ensure that engagement is not exclusionary, but that all voices are able to participate in the conversation.

The **Guiding Principles** should always guide discussion and serve as an evaluation tool for identifying desirable outcomes for each of these topic areas. It is especially critical that each topic area is evaluated through the following equity lenses:

1) are the people who will be impacted by this topic area educated, empowered, and included in the development of the actions? If not, who else should be at the table?

2) does discussion center around how these topics and actions will impact vulnerable populations who are most at risk?

3) how do solutions mitigate risk to the most vulnerable populations, including those who may not be directly impacted?

The conceptual framework is organized around three interconnected “big ideas” that represent umbrella concepts under which many topics could be explored and coordinated. These “big ideas” are represented by three potential “consortiums.” The term “consortium” in this memo is used to represent the idea of some coordinated organizing structure that is yet undefined in its degree of formality. It is critical to note that these consortiums would be deeply interconnected, involving many of the same stakeholders and working together towards common goals. Additionally, the same questions posed in the previous paragraph about equity would be especially critical to consider as these concepts are explored and developed.

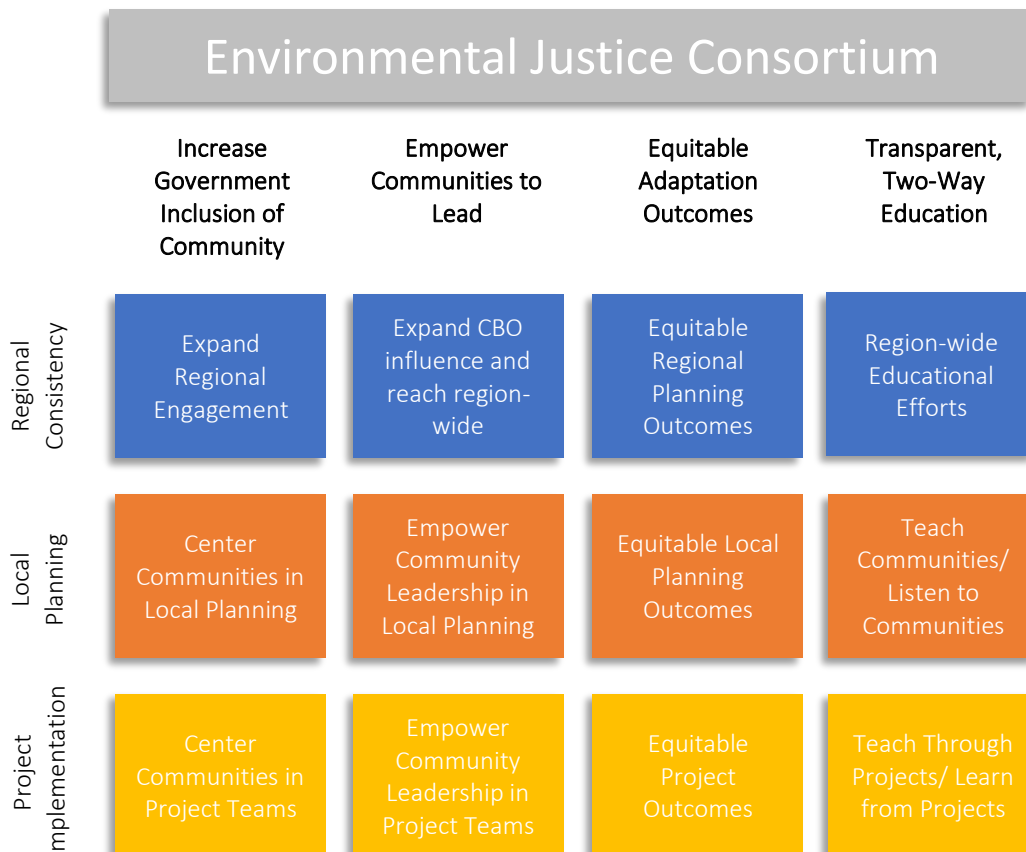
BIG IDEAS / CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Environmental Justice Consortium

Local-Regional Adaptation Consortium

Data and Technical Assistance Consortium

Topics



Support an Environmental Justice Consortium to Empower and Expand Community-Led Adaptation

This consortium, which could be based on or grow from similar grassroots initiatives already underway, such as the Resilient Communities Initiative, is a mechanism to bring together a variety of community-based organizations (CBOs) to improve the capacity of the region to conduct equitable, community-driven adaptation planning. This could range from a group of CBOs across the region that are under an umbrella contract and can perform on-call fee-based consulting services to regional and local agencies all the way to a standing body of CBOs and region-wide EJ representatives that work under a shared agreement and are paid for their expertise and work. Under any scenario, this entity could help develop the capacity of local governments and communities to do equitable planning through consulting on process, conducting trainings, developing materials, and maintaining relationships and connections across the region to local community groups to ensure ongoing engagement and community-led decision-making. It is critical that this consortium is large and diverse enough that it can include voices throughout the region as well as have the ability to connect **local** governments with their own **local** CBOs. This consortium would also play a critical role in the organization, membership, and “charge” of the other two consortiums (described on the following pages). Some primary topics the consortium could address are below.

Increase Government’s Inclusion of Community Voices in Adaptation

A critical component of improving community engagement is increasing the capacity of regional and local planners and project implementers to include, elevate, and center decision-making around local voices. This could entail a complete reorganization of how local planning is done to make it community-led rather than planner-led and would require resources to provide guidance, training, and support for changing these processes. Education and training would be critical for government staff to understand the benefits and objectives of equitable community engagement and leadership, leading to prioritization and optimization of equity at every level of the decision-making process. It may also include additional support for hiring new roles, such as an engagement or EJ lead/team as well as expanding the diversity of staff to be more representative of the communities it serves.

Empower the Community to Lead Adaptation Decision-Making

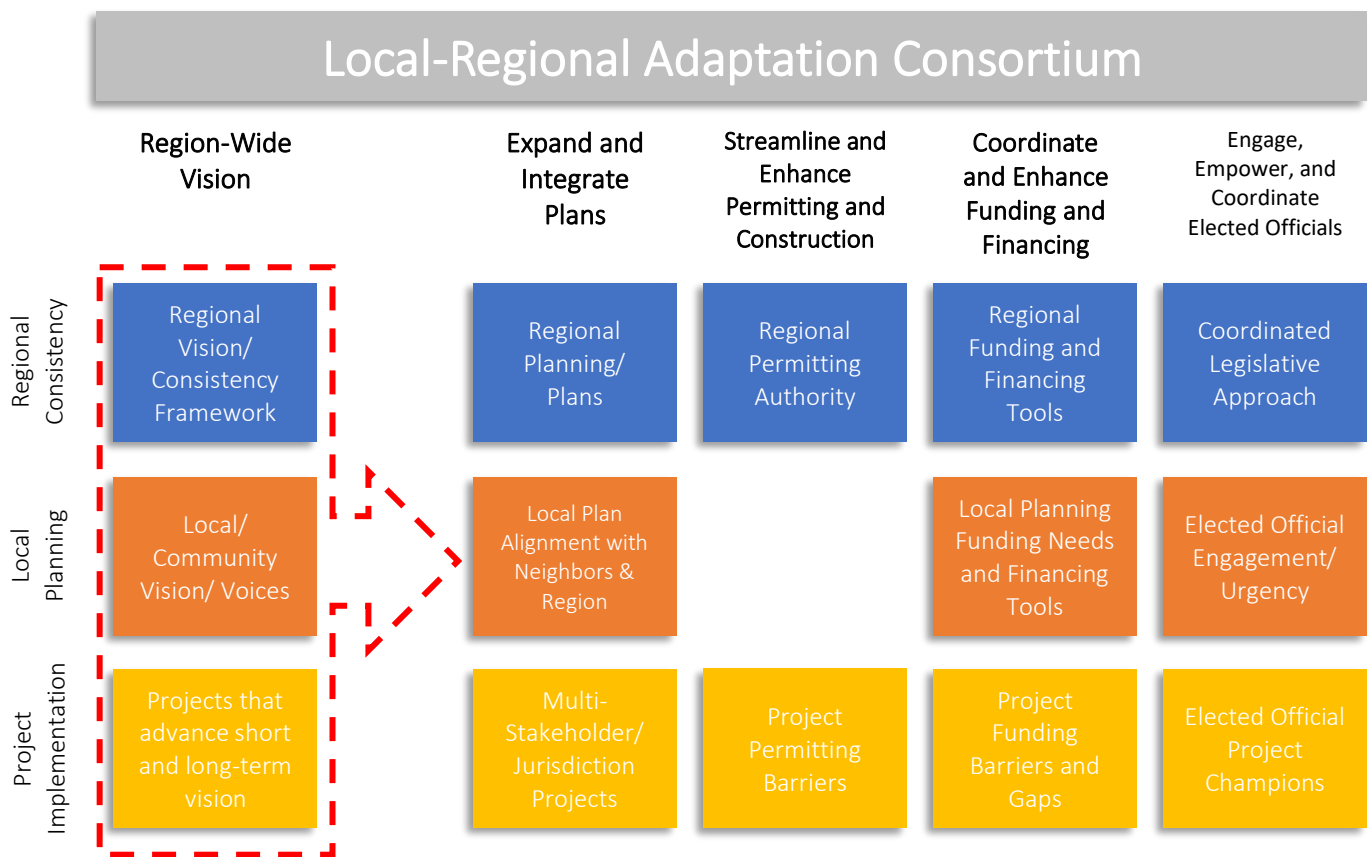
In addition to building government capacity, there is a great need to build the capacity of community members and local organizations to be active leaders in adaptation planning. This could be done through compensating people appropriately for their expertise and time; creating planning processes that are driven by community needs; educating the community on local issues, and decision-making processes, and engaging them more deeply with their elected officials.

Ensure Equitable Outcomes in all Adaptation Actions

This topic focuses not just on planning processes but planning outcomes. This topic could cover evaluation of projects to ensure that they provide multiple benefits to the community, reduce unwanted tradeoffs to vulnerable communities such as loss of housing, gentrification, or loss of income/net worth, and focus on equity, such as through the use of equity checklists. This may also include innovative pilot projects to test unproven benefits.

Provide Transparent Information and Education to the Community and Empower the Community to Educate Government

Public education could help to elevate and expand many other topics previously identified. At a regional, local, or project/community level, education can raise awareness, empower residents, and increase capacity to engage in informed decision-making. Education is also a two-way street – residents and communities can better educate staff and elected officials on the issues that are important to them, their vision for their community, and the assets that already exist in their communities. Education could also include practitioner education such as through the use of pilot projects and ongoing project monitoring.



Develop a Local-Regional Adaptation Consortium to Coordinate Sea Level Rise Response

This overarching regional body links together a number of existing local, regional, sub regional and state agencies to better coordinate various adaptation carrots and sticks. This could range from informal coordination (ie, standing meetings, partnering on projects, etc) to a consortium with a formal agreement outlining priorities and terms of partnership to a new authority like the Restoration Authority or BRRIT that is created through a legislative act and has a specific charge but utilizes existing staff from multiple agencies. This consortium would work closely, or possibly support, the Environmental Justice Consortium to ensure that it’s processes, representation, and outcomes reflect equity. It could also be the home of the Data and Technical Assistance Consortium. This consortium could influence the following areas.

Establish a Long-term Bay Area Vision to Guide Adaptation Planning and Decision-Making

Many people brought up the idea of an overarching regional vision, goals, guiding principles, or objectives for adaptation. It is critical that local jurisdiction's voices as well as community member's voices are considered when developing this vision. This vision should be sufficiently long-term and include the involvement of a wide variety of people. Another term that was used for this concept is "consistency framework." This concept would provide a set of criteria for evaluating adaptation decisions and a means to make sure that local and regional decisions are consistent with region consensus. Many decisions could flow from this vision. For example, incentives (financial, permitting, etc) could be provided to projects that fit within the vision/consistency framework.

Expand Regional Planning and Integrate Local Plans with Neighbors and the Region

Significant conversation for this topic centered around how local planning can be better aligned and streamlined within cities amongst various mandated or voluntary planning documents, as well as how plans align or mesh with neighbors, who will be critical partners for adaptation planning. There was a strong emphasis here on shared learning as cities do adaptation planning and can learn from their neighbors who are farther along than they are. It was also unclear how regional plans connect to local planning documents and/or state planning requirements, such as SB 379 or the proposed AB 2621. At a regional level, plans that provide or advance a shared vision, such as Plan Bay Area, the region's Sustainable Communities Strategy/Regional Transportation Plan, were identified as potentially being stronger tools to advance adaptation throughout the region. However, it was unclear to people exactly what the regional planning toolbox looks like (what plans do we have aside from Plan Bay Area, and what are they authorized or able to do?) and also how coordinated various regional plans actually are. This topic could cover how the region better utilizes, coordinates, and aligns regional plans.

Streamline and Enhance Permitting and Construction Processes to Facilitate Project Implementation

Permitting for shoreline projects is a quagmire of requirements from different authorities that do not coordinate, creating sometimes conflicting requirements as well as creating a complex and time-consuming permitting process. Improving permitting at the local, state, or federal level could consist of expediting or streamlining permitting for adaptation projects, expanding or changing the authorities of existing permitting agencies or permitting tools such as the Bay Plan to include a greater breadth of adaptation actions, strengthening existing adaptation permitting requirements, improving the permitting process to partner with applicants earlier in the permit process, and coordinating permit requirements across different agencies. At a local level, this topic could cover the regulatory tools that cities have for development, such as zoning laws.

Project construction issues include lack of skilled construction workers and specialized equipment, construction impacts to communities, access to shoreline sites, and environmental working windows.

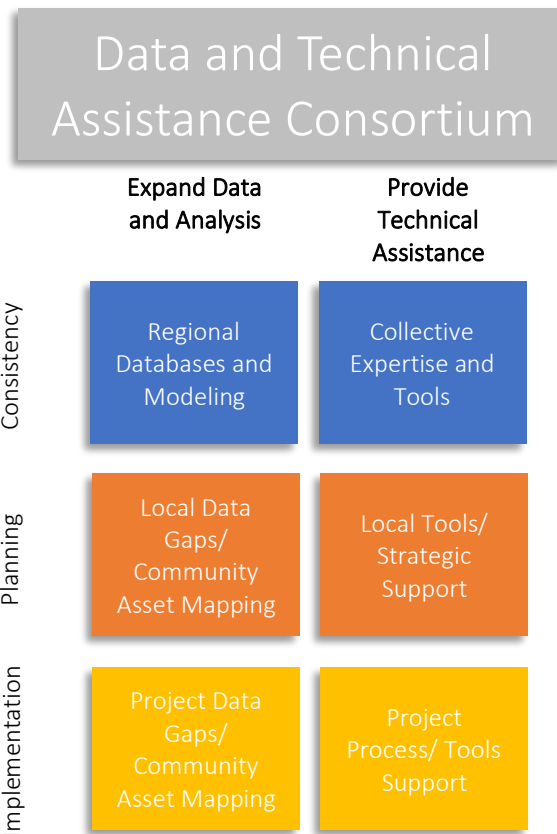
Fill issues include design standards and monitoring for use of fill in habitat restoration projects, challenges identifying adequate amounts of fill, cleanliness of contaminated fill, moving fill to where it is needed and when, and balancing the economics of fill.

Coordinate, Advocate for, and Expand Funding and Financing for Adaptation Plans and Projects

Many people brought up the idea of a centralized entity that advocates for, consolidates, passes through/issues, and/or raises money for adaptation at a regional level. This could be adapted from MTC's Regional Transportation Plan process or the Integrated Regional Water Management process for delivering funding. Models for financing authorities such as the Restoration Authority or ABAG's Finance Authority for Nonprofit Corporations were also mentioned. The Coastal Conservancy was also identified as a model for providing grants that meet the region's goals. A coordinated entity could help to clarify priorities for funding (tied to visioning/consistency framework) and reducing the competition that occurs when cities apply for funding on a case-by-case basis. Other ideas that were identified that this topic could address include developing standards for how costs are shared between stakeholders (i.e. how much locals pay vs. region/state, distributing costs across all residents vs. most at risk, etc) as well as the need for more flexible money, such as money for meaningful community engagement, planning, environmental or engineering studies, or long-term operations or monitoring, which are challenging to find funding for currently. At a local level, there was also discussion about how cities decide which financing tools are most appropriate for their needs. Insurance issues could also be explored under this topic.

Engage, Empower, and Coordinate Elected Officials to Advocate Locally, in Sacramento, and in Washington

At a regional level, many people mentioned the need for a more coordinated legislative approach to advocate as a region to Sacramento and Washington. Such an approach could advocate for funding, State policy, such as expand or creating new authorities or influencing state-legislated planning mandates, and federal policy. At a local level, many people discussed the need for greater involvement from local elected officials, including the need for greater education of these officials about the impacts of sea level rise on their communities, to create a sense of urgency to support adaptation priorities as well as to cultivate political champions. One way to do this is to ensure that commissioners and board members from regional agencies are involved in both Bay Adapt as well as any Regional Adaptation Consortium that is created. This is also essential for local projects that may need elected official champions as well.



Develop a Data and Technical Assistance Consortium to Enhance Data and Science Transparency and Ease

This last “big idea” covers the concept of a regional database, data host, or think tank that manages, organizes, hosts, and/or analyzes data and science for planning as well as project design. This could range from an online data portal that links to existing datasets to make them more accessible to an entity that not just collects but creates, analyses, and models data related to adaptation and provides hands-on support and assistance for users of this data. This consortium could also provide other technical assistance, such as assistance on processes ranging from highly technical to conceptual. This may be under the same entity as the Regional Governance Consortium or may be separate.

Expand, Amplify, and Facilitate Community, Local, and Regional Data and Analysis

This topic area addresses the need to expand the type of data people use for adaptation decision-making, including citizen-led data and filling data gaps, as well as how to make the data more accessible and organized for users. Citizen-led data involves including community members in data collection through community-based asset mapping and storytelling, using the community to collect data, prioritizing data points that are important to the community but possibly not previously valued by cities (such as cultural or personal histories), and making data much more accessible to the community.

At a regional level, there is significant data and science that provides benefit if it is available consistently across the region, such as the shoreline flood data provided by the Bay Shoreline Flood Explorer. Additionally, MTC/ABAG already performs significant regional modeling for transportation and demographic data that could be a model for how regional shoreline or adaptation data could be modeled, such as modeling the impacts of specific shoreline projects or impacts from loss of regional assets. This entity might also conduct original data collection or technical research or partner with academic or scientific organizations to influence their studies. Data gaps have been identified based on local and project needs, such as the need for better regional data on groundwater rise, contamination, and fluvial flooding. Some data cannot be aggregated or collected at a regional level, such as data on local underground infrastructure, creek flooding, or site-specific wave or soils analysis, but the region could support best practices and guidelines for this type of more localized data gathering, perhaps through partnering with a third-party, neutral science organization.

Provide Technical Assistance to Communities, Cities, and Counties

Technical assistance could be provided around tools, processes, and best practices for adaptation. There is so much information available on adaptation that it would be beneficial for experts to vet, summarize, and provide support for how to best use this information as well as provide guidance on its consistent application throughout the region. This could be in support of data, analysis, and technical research but should not be limited to technical or scientific data. Technical assistance could also come in the form of facilitating shared learning by identifying, evaluating, and sharing best practices as well as convening practitioners, subject matter experts, and users to share knowledge. This topic could also connect to the services provided by the Environmental Justice Consortium as well as topics under the Regional Adaptation Consortium, such as planning, permitting, or financing assistance.

Local and Project-Level Topics

Certain topic areas emerged in the Working Groups that do not necessarily cross scales or include regional agencies but could benefit from a coordinated approach across the region. Some, or all, of these topic areas could be included in the technical assistance concept described previously by providing a forum for facilitating shared learning and aggregating and making available best practices, guidance, and local support.

Local Planning Working Group

Align and Streamline Local Planning Processes and Documents

While this topic could be covered under the Planning topic, but also is a big enough topic that it could stand alone. Additionally, internal plan alignment does not necessarily connect to the regional scale, aside from the benefit of having common guidance or practices throughout the region. This topic addresses how local cities and counties coordinate their internal plans, such as general plans, climate adaptation plans, local hazard mitigation plans, and others to be consistent, aligned, and reduce redundant planning work.

Rethink Local Governance Structures to Enhance Adaptation

Local Governance topics that emerged in the Working Groups included de-siloing local departments such as planning, public works, flood management, and others to ensure that adaptation efforts permeate throughout all decision-making, perhaps by creating cross-discipline/departmental adaptation teams or by creating or repurposing a new agency, such as the San Mateo County Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District, as well as new job titles and roles to address new kinds of work. Identifying best practices for local decision-making around adaptation also came up, such as understanding how to plan with deep uncertainty.

Project Implementation Working Group

Organizing and Advancing Project Planning and Implementation

This topic covers dealing with complexity in project planning processes, such as managing CEQA and regulatory processes and engaging with a large number of stakeholders and best practices for managing the decision-making process, legal authorities, and funding processes such as through the use of a JPA or other type of special district.

Next Steps

Each of these topic areas may be addressed by Working Group sub-groups that include members from all three original Working Groups. Notes and comments from all three Working Groups will be organized across these topic areas to present the variety of options and thoughts from all Working Group members. BCDC staff will also conduct a second round of research, which may include expert briefings, to ensure that topic-specific background research is available to each of the sub-groups. These actions, organized by topic, will be reviewed by the Leadership Advisory Group, presented to the public at the next Public Forum, vetted by the EJ Caucus and other CBOs, and finally move forward into the Joint Platform.