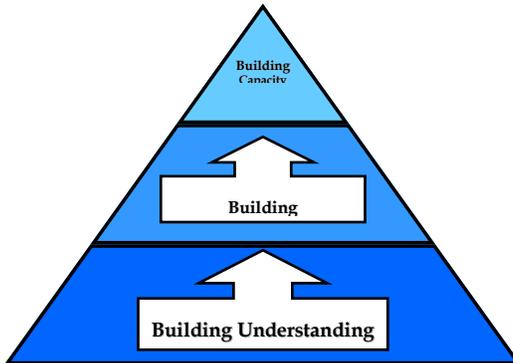


Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions Strategic Plan: 2011-2012



VISION: To become the preferred provider of regional solutions to local challenges.

MISSION: To bring diverse resources together at the regional level in partnership with local, state, and federal entities to strengthen all regions and the Commonwealth.

TAGLINE: PDCs: Virginia's Regions

Core Values (CV)

1. Transparency in operations.
2. Integrity and ethical behavior
3. Embrace diversity
4. Innovative and proactive
5. Responsive to Member PDC needs
6. Embrace broad professional expertise and backgrounds
7. Excellence in what we do

Key Competitors

1. Consultants
2. Localities
3. Micro Loan Programs
4. Non-Profits
5. Regional Chambers of Commerce
6. Colleges & Universities

Key Success Factors (KSF)

1. Understanding from the State on the role and value of PDCs
2. Improve the image and presence of PDCs as strong state policy providers
3. Provide regional framework for addressing local challenges
4. Strong leadership dedicated to furthering the role of regionalism
5. Funding necessary to carry out organizational mission

Key Collaborators

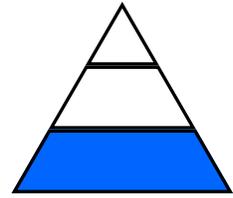
1. Key state agencies, DHCD, VDOT, DCR, DEQ, VEDP, Health, Social Services
2. Key Non Profits
3. Local Economic Development Agencies
4. Chambers of Commerce
5. Colleges & Universities
6. All local governments

Key Customers

1. PDC Members
2. All Local Governments
3. State Agencies
4. Federal Agencies
5. MPO's

Building Understanding

Key Strategic Goal #1: Establish the identity of PDCs as the essential organizations that bring regional solutions to local challenges.



- **Action #1:** Internally determine the “brand” identity of PDCs. What is it that we do?

Why: PDCs are viewed by policymakers as having very diverse missions, capabilities and objectives. Are PDCs regional planning agencies or regional service agencies?

What: The VAPDCs must have a single identity and united message (brand) in order to communicate effectively.

- Objective 1: Establish, as part of the strategic planning process, the future goal of the Association of PDCs as a united identity.
- Objective 2: Adhere to a united communication effort in all communications by VAPDC members to collaborators, competitors and customers on what that mission is.

Who: Strategic Planning Committee

When: Immediately

- **Action#2:** Identify, compile and publish a summary of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for PDCs specifically highlighting the role that PDCs can play.

Why: Communicating to collaborators, customers and key policymakers is aided by concrete examples of PDC work and even further buttressed by successful examples of regional solutions to local challenges.

What: Develop a communications document on how PDCs have helped solve regional challenges in the past.

- Objective 1: Develop a clearly established set of BMPs to assist in communicating with collaborators, customers and key policymakers.
- Objective 2: Build an internal set of BMPs for sharing information among PDCs to improve all potential work efforts.

Who: DecideSmart with assistance from VAPDC. VAPDC will survey their membership and DecideSmart will compile the document

When: Immediately

- **Action #3:** Conduct a “communications audit” of all means by which collaborators, customers and key policymakers receive information regarding PDCs. (Note: Could be combined with action 5 below)

What: Through a survey, interviews and institutional knowledge gain an understanding of how collaborators, customers and key policymakers gain their opinion and facts about the role PDCs play in governing.

- Objective 1: Establish, an understanding of how collaborators, customers and key policymakers receive their information regarding PDCs.
- Objective 2: Refine and incorporate, based upon results of the survey, the VAPDC “brand” in all future communications adhering to a united communication effort in all communications by VAPDC members to collaborators, competitors and customers on what that mission is.

Who: DecideSmart with assistance from VAPDC

When: Immediately

- **Action #4:** Compile, if not already completed, a single history of the role of PDCs to be summarized, understood and utilized in future communications with collaborators, customers and key policymakers.

Why: Having a common understanding of the history of PDCs will assist in communicating to others, especially those involved with the history of PDCs

What: Complete a single unified understanding of the history of PDCs (Is what they intended to happen what actually occurred?)

- Objective 1: Inventory all previous policy studies and findings on the role of PDCs.
- Objective 2: Inventory and compile all previous recommendations of policy studies on PDCs and enumerate recommendations that were not implemented with and view toward analyzing why no action was taken and whether or not the actions are still relevant.
- Objective 3: Establish, an understanding of how collaborators, customers and key policymakers have viewed these past reports and how it has formulated their opinion regarding PDCs.

Who: DecideSmart

When: Immediately

- **Action #5:** Conduct an educational survey of collaborators, customers and key policymakers in order to gain a better understanding of how they view PDCs.

Why: Surveying collaborators, customers and key policymakers will provide insight into where informational gaps exist and where PDCs must concentrate their communications efforts.

What: Survey of collaborators, customers and key policymakers

- Objective 1: By conducting a survey of collaborators, customers and key policymakers the VAPDCs can both educate these key influencers and at the same time gain valuable insight into how to best shape their future direction.

Who: DecideSmart with assistance of the VAPDC. DecideSmart will develop the survey and VAPDC will distribute and compile the results

When: Immediately

- **Action #6:** Develop a plan to market the VAPDC united message to collaborators, and customers utilizing various media outlets and face to face meetings.

Why: The VAPDCs must have a single identity and united message in order to communicate effectively.

What: Utilizing the information gained in actions 1-5 above, develop a united communications marketing plan ("brand").

- Objective 1: Establish a comprehensive marketing plan for the VAPDCs with a united identity.
- Objective 2: Adhere to a united communication effort in all communications with collaborators, competitors and customers what the PDC mission is.

Who: VAPDC with assistance from DecideSmart

When: Completion should be set for late October, early November in time to be used for General Assembly meetings prior to the 2012 Session (This effort would be especially helpful to newly elected members of the General Assembly).

- **Action #7:** Develop a curriculum for use in Virginia schools of higher education with public policy/planning programs.

Why: Virginia higher education institutions do not fully understand, nor do they adequately prepare public policy/planning students in the basics of Virginia's regional planning capabilities.

What: VAPDC has a long term obligation to ensure that future public policy and planning students are well versed in their capabilities and roles.

- Objective 1: Develop and deliver lessons on the role and operations of Virginia PDCs to future public policy and planning professionals.
- Objective 2: Insure that all future public policy and planning professionals, whether they will work in regional planning agencies or elsewhere, will have a firm understanding of basic roles and functions of PDCs.

Who: VAPDC; it is recommended that a "curriculum" committee of the VAPDC be established for this purpose

When: Long-term (1-2 years)

Building Relationships

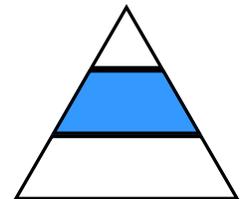
Key Strategic Goal #2: Through relationships, achieve maximum utilization and recognition of Virginia's PDCs as regional resources to local challenges.

- **Action #1:** Build relationships with local government officials.

Why: Strong relationships with member jurisdictional leaders are the key to all aspects of future collaboration and functionality.

What: Use every opportunity to strengthen local government relationships.

- Objective 1: Meet at least annually with each member of your commission in a non-crisis mode to brief them on operations and capabilities of your agency.
- Objective 2: Seek feedback from each commission member separately following the completion of any major project. Debrief them on what they liked about the process/outcomes and what they disliked.
- Objective 3: Utilizing the materials completed under "Key Strategic Goal #1," brief all newly appointed members of your commission on the operations and capabilities of your agency.



Who: Individual PDCs

When: As needed, but utilizing the results obtained in "Key Strategic Goal #1"

- **Action #2:** Strengthen relationships with state agencies.

Why: While a local government by law, PDCs must rely upon the actions of key state agencies for support (both financially and programmatically).

What: Nurture existing relationships and create new ones with state agencies.

- Objective 1: The Department of Housing and Community Development is the most important agency for PDCs.
 - Without exception, the Director of DHCD should be an integral part of every major meeting of the VAPDC.
 - At least semi-annually, VAPDC leadership should seek to meet with the Director of DHCD to update him on PDC activities.

- Objective 2: At least annually meet with key state agency (VDOT, DCR, DEQ, VEDP, Health, Social Services) leadership in a non-crisis mode to brief them on operations and capabilities of PDCs.
- Objective 3: Emerging trends in state government administration should be monitored for opportunities to build new relationships.

Who: VAPDC Executive Committee

When: Immediately, but utilizing the results obtained in “Key Strategic Goal #1”

➤ **Action #3:** Nurture relationships with key federal and state legislative officials and staff.

Why: Both federal and state legislators play a key role in directing the use of state agency resources and can often strongly impact the direction of program administration.

What: Develop a more aggressive stance to reaching out to, and educating key federal and state legislative officials.

- Objective 1: At least annually meet with local legislative delegation in a non-crisis mode to brief them on operations and capabilities of your agency.
 - Special attention should be paid to legislative staff and members of the finance committees.
 - Strong effort should be made to present a united front on message and requests.
- Objective 2: Utilizing the materials completed under “Key Strategic Goal #1,” brief all newly elected legislators on the operations and capabilities of your agency.
- Objective 3: Develop and maintain a list of legislators who are former PDC members.

Who: Individual PDCs but with coordination with the VAPDC Executive Committee for legislative staff and members of the finance committees

When: Immediately, upon completion of “Key Strategic Goal #1”

➤ **Action #4:** Develop an annual “legislators” of the year award to encourage legislative action on key PDC issues.

Why: To strengthen relationships with legislators and promote incentives for legislators to support PDC legislative issues.

What: Develop a more aggressive stance to reaching building legislative relationships.

Who: VAPDC Executive Committee

When: Immediately, upon completion of “Key Strategic Goal #1”

Building and Marketing Capacity

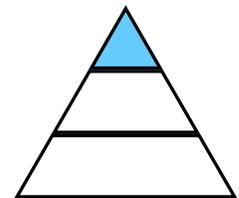
Key Strategic Goal #3: Building expertise and resources needed to be the leaders in identifying and addressing regional issues.

➤ **Action #1:** Develop an inventory of capacity and assets.

Why: There is hesitancy on the part of key state policymakers to call upon PDCs to assist in statewide initiatives because their view is that not all PDCs have the same capabilities.

What: Develop a stronger understanding of PDC capabilities and a network for sharing assets for application to regional solutions.

- Objective 1: Inventory existing capabilities of PDCs and conduct a “gap” analysis of areas where improvements may be needed.



- Objective 2: Formalize and strengthen the network for rapidly being able to respond to requests for assistance by PDCs even where capacity is limited, by “sharing” resources when applicable.

Who: VAPDC with assistance from DecideSmart (perhaps a separate committee of the VAPDC could be formed to address this issue)

When: Near term, 6 months to 1 year

➤ **Action #2: Improve the capabilities of professional staff.**

Why: Longer term development of professional staff is a key component of any leader’s responsibility. In addition, it is in the best interest of the organization to develop a talent pool not only within each PDC but within the entire PDC network.

What: Establish a professional development framework for joint improvement of professional talent.

- Objective 1: Develop a forward thinking program for incorporating joint training opportunities for professional staff.
- Objective 2: Improve the networking opportunity for professional staff, whereby a greater understanding of shared capacity could be obtained.

Who: VAPDC (perhaps a professional development committee could be established)

When: Near term, 6 months to 1 year

➤ **Action #3: Develop and place educational pieces for publication in Virginia local government publications (VML/VACo).**

Why: To increase the understanding of local government officials of the capacity of PDCs to address their challenges.

What: Development of a systematic method of communicating the capabilities of PDCs to key decision makers.

- Objective 1: Improve the understanding of key local government officials of the breadth and scope of activities at PDCs.
- Objective 2: Secondarily, to inform state agencies that regularly review such publications of the breadth and scope of PDC activities as well.

Who: VAPDC Program Committee

When: Near term, 6 months to 1 year

➤ **Action #4: Develop an educational program for incoming PDC Board members**

Why: To provide an “independent” training program for new PDC members that transcends the local perspective

What: Development of a professional a sustainable training program for PDC members administered at the statewide level.

- Objective 1: Improve the understanding of key local government officials of the breadth and scope of activities at PDCs.
- Objective 2: Secondarily, to involve state agencies that regularly interact with PDCs to begin building longer term relationships.

Who: VAPDC Executive Committee

When: Near term, 6 months to 1 year