

Political Will

*How the Elizabeth River Project Uses
Collective Impact to Restore One of
Our Nation's Greatest Rivers*

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Collaborative Purpose

Collaborative Purpose:

- Historically polluted river, large port industry & Military presence
- Mission to restore the River to the highest practical level of environmental quality through partnerships



Dolphins were sighted in all branches of this harbor river in 2020. Photo: Robert Holland.

Solutions



Collective Impact Model utilizing four pillars:

- Motivation
- Capacity
- Effective Process
- Evaluation



PILLAR 1 - MOTIVATION: The Elizabeth River is The Common Thread Motivating our Community.



PILLAR 2 – CAPACITY

- Trust is one of the most important factors for building capacity in the community.
- The community is willing to do more and be part of the effort if they know we are working together collectively.
- Builds a “family” atmosphere where you trust the partner, but might not see the same point of view.
- Developing personal relationships will result in greater capacity and thus greater results.



Pillar 3 – EFFECTIVE PROCESS

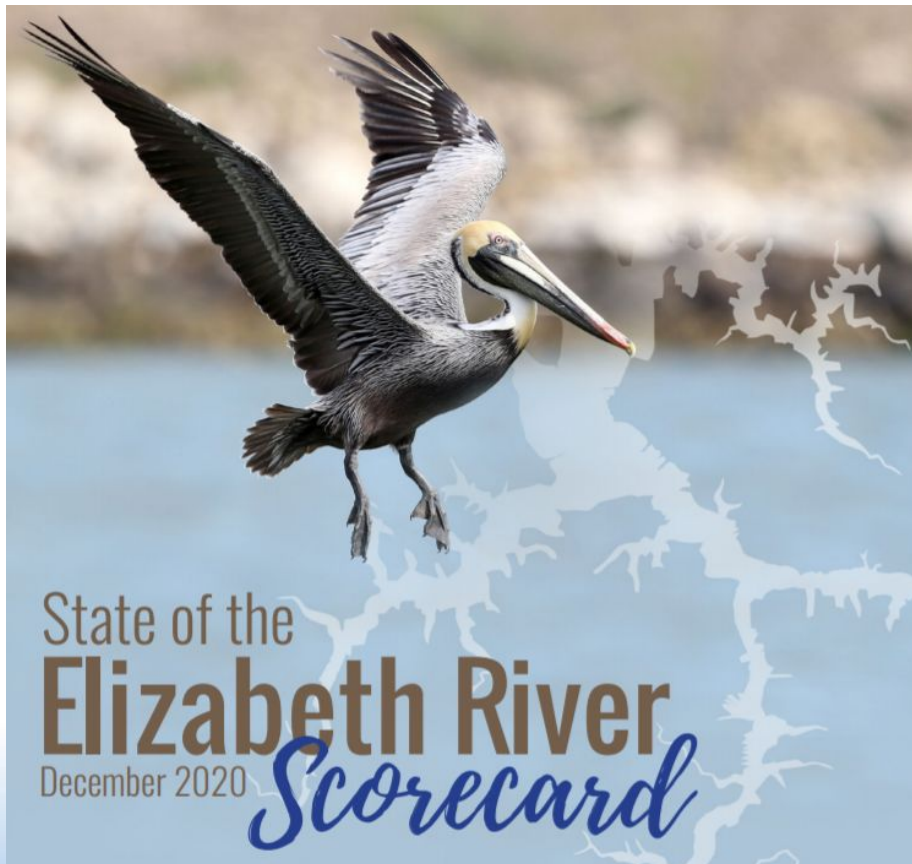
Collective Impact Used to Develop and Implement a Watershed Plan

- Over 100 diverse stakeholders
- Independently facilitated
- Plan developed with input from river wide data
- Developed for the community by the community
- The plan keeps us focused on the river's most significant needs



PILLAR 4 – EVALUATION

Monitoring results are critical and need to be provided to the community to show progress.



Elizabeth River Project
Making restoration a reality



Top Challenges

Top Challenges:

- Engaging Diverse Communities and expanding representation of Black, Indigenous and People of Color in Environment Sciences
- Representation matters in this field, and fair education and outreach is vital to engaging with historically underserved communities

Lessons Learned

- Continually work on building trust, without community trust success is limited.
- Stakeholders and partners are your most important asset in urban restoration, empower them.
- Develop a community plan; a plan developed by the community will have more success during implementation.
- Celebrate successes with the community, acknowledge and learn from mistakes.
- Monitoring results for progress needs to be easily understood.

Best Tools

- Direct engagement with community members and leaders – meetings, luncheons, outreach events
- Experiences on and near the river
- During pandemic – Social Media, weekly & bi-weekly newsletters to engage the public
- Environmental Justice Screening Tool – [Elizabeth River Environmental Justice Information Tool \(vims.edu\)](#)

Thank you

- Learn more at elizabethriver.org
- Find our latest State of the River Scorecard [Here](#)
- Contact me at bgavin@elizabethriver.org or 757-399-7487