Background

Contracted core services with the Engineers and Surveyors Institute (ESI)

- Minimum Submission Review (MSR)
- Team Peer Review (TPR)
- Educational Program Services (EPS)
- Designated Plans Examiner (DPE) and Professional Review Specialist (PRS) Certification Program

Purpose of the contracted core services

- Reduce plan review effort by the county;
- Increase the predictability in overall review/approval times; and
- Ensure quality submission reviews by County Staff.

Assessment Goals
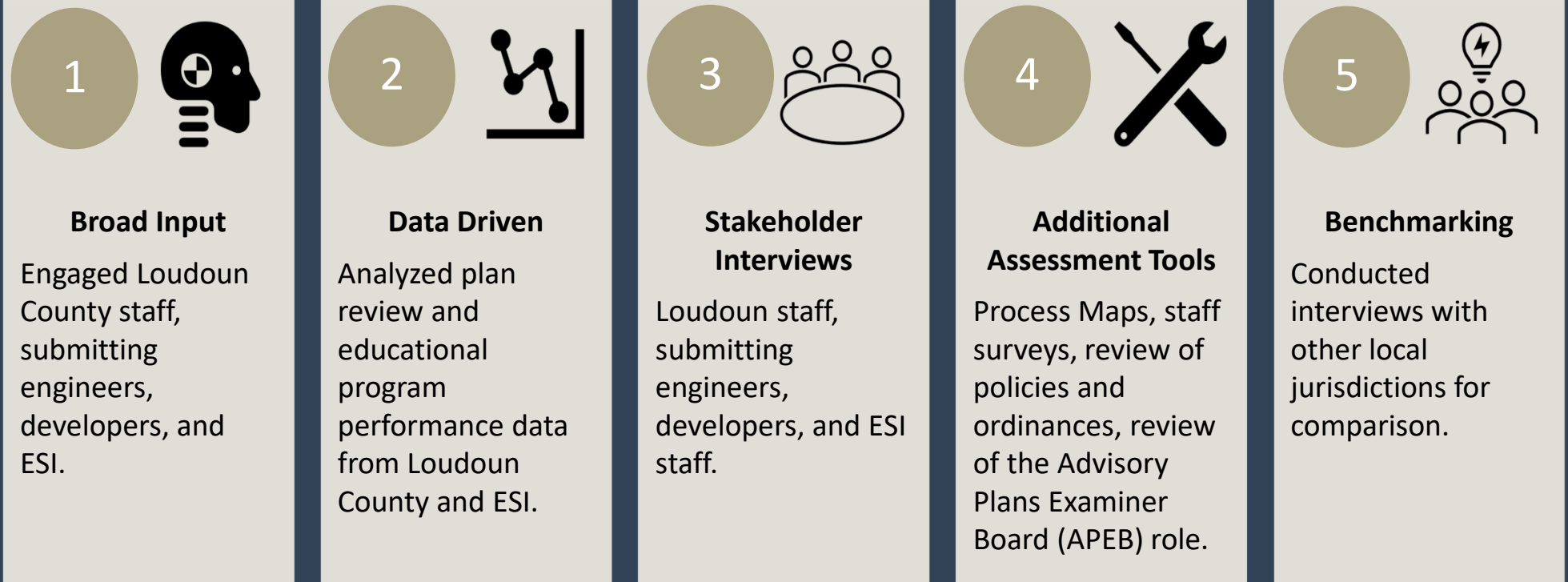
Assess the effectiveness of services (MSR, TPR, EPS)

Provide recommendations for improvement

Evaluate alternative approaches

Assessment Approach

1 Broad Input

Engaged Loudoun County staff, submitting engineers, developers, and ESI.

2 Data Driven

Analyzed plan review and educational program performance data from Loudoun County and ESI.

3 Stakeholder Interviews

Loudoun staff, submitting engineers, developers, and ESI staff.

4 Additional Assessment Tools

Process Maps, staff surveys, review of policies and ordinances, review of the Advisory Plans Examiner Board (APEB) role.

5 Benchmarking

Conducted interviews with other local jurisdictions for comparison.

Overall Key Findings

- General support for ESI and the importance of stakeholder relationships.

- DPE plans show a significant benefit in review time.

- Overall plan quality needs to be improved.

- ESI programs need to keep pace with changes in regulations, technology, and the nature of development.

- Loudoun County's approach to MSR and TPR processes has relaxed over the last 5 years and this approach needs to be reconsidered.

- The County Expedited Plan Review Program needs to be evaluated.

- System Accountability and Program Governance need to be improved.

Overall Key Recommendations

Recommit to a strengthened ESI Program and a culture of quality and accountability from and for all participants.

Improve governance and oversight of the ESI program.

Annually assess program performance and make necessary adjustments.

Re-evaluate the County's Expedited Plan Review Program.

ESI MSR and TPR Findings
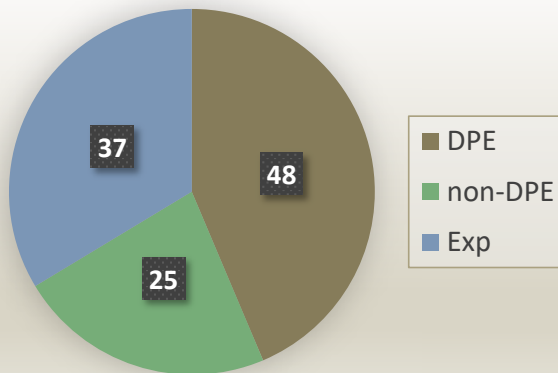
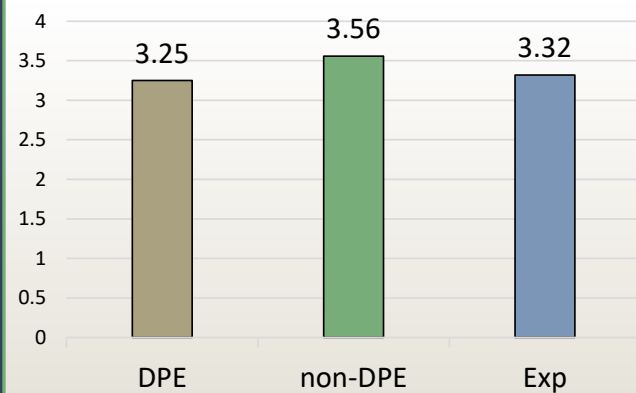## Table 1 – Total Plans (by Plan Type) 110 Plans Total

- DPE: 48
- non-DPE: 25
- Exp: 37

Table 2 – Average # of Calendar Days until Approval (by Plan Type)

	ESI Review	Engineer	County	Bond/ Other
DPE 331 days		139	100	92
Non-DPE 454 days		184	128	142
Exp 308 days		119	69	120
DPE @ 2 240 days		49	75	116

Table 3 – Average # of Submissions per Plan Type

- DPE: 3.25
- non-DPE: 3.56
- Exp: 3.32
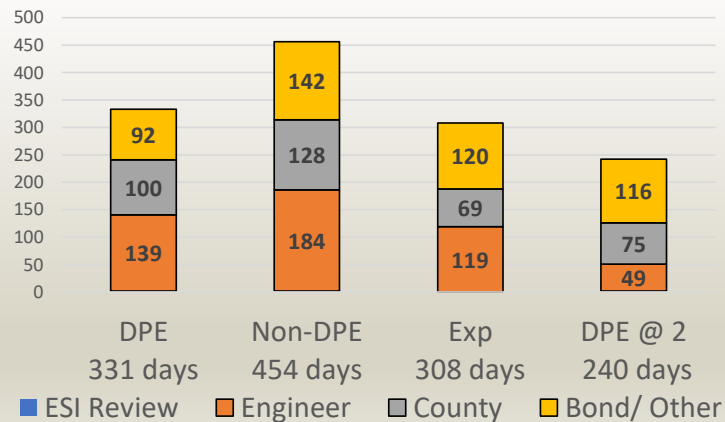
Table 4 – Average # of Review Comments per Plan Type

- DPE: 85
- non-DPE: 89
- EXP: 91
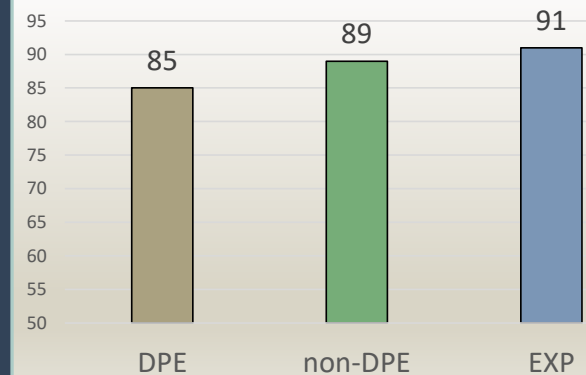
ESI MSR and TPR Recommendations

- DPE Plans: Two submissions plus a signature set for approval.
  - Evaluate adequacy of review timelines.
  - ESI to review all plans – no exceptions.
  - Quality control for County comments.
  - Quality control for DPE submissions (beyond MSR).
  - TPR's scheduled for all projects – waived only by exception.
- Address poor performance: Establish disciplinary actions for repeated errors by DPEs or DPE firms.
- Reviewer Independence: DPE reviewer should differ from plan preparer, except in cases of small firms.
- County Expedited Plans Review Program: Don't exempt from ESI MSR and re-evaluate the threshold for qualification to this program.

ESI Educational Program Findings

Q2 Years of Experience in the Field of Land Development

Table 5: Educational Program Quality Staff Survey Rating from 1 to 5
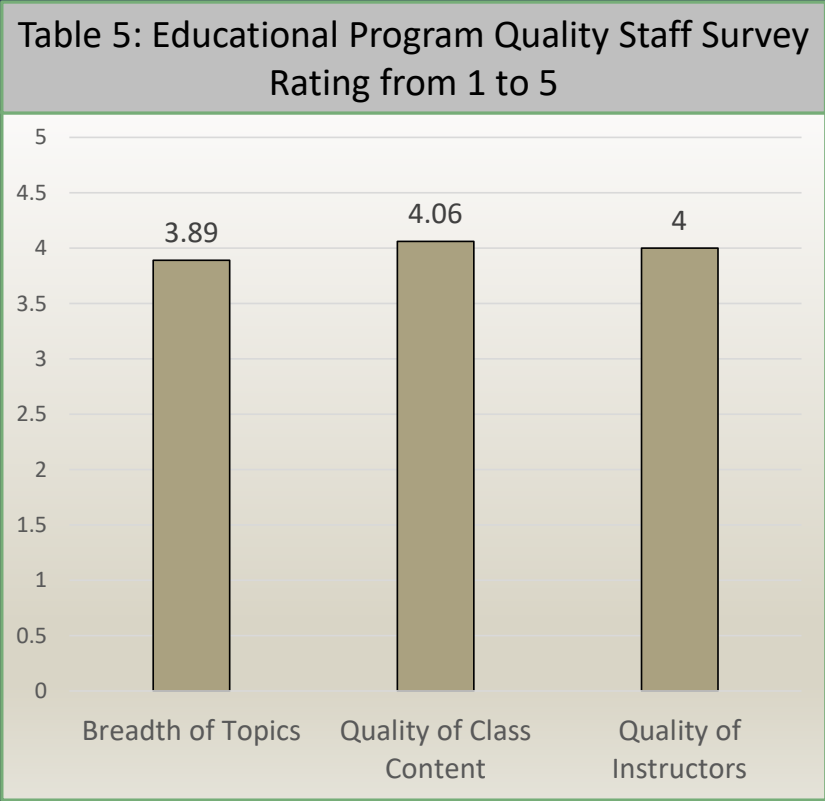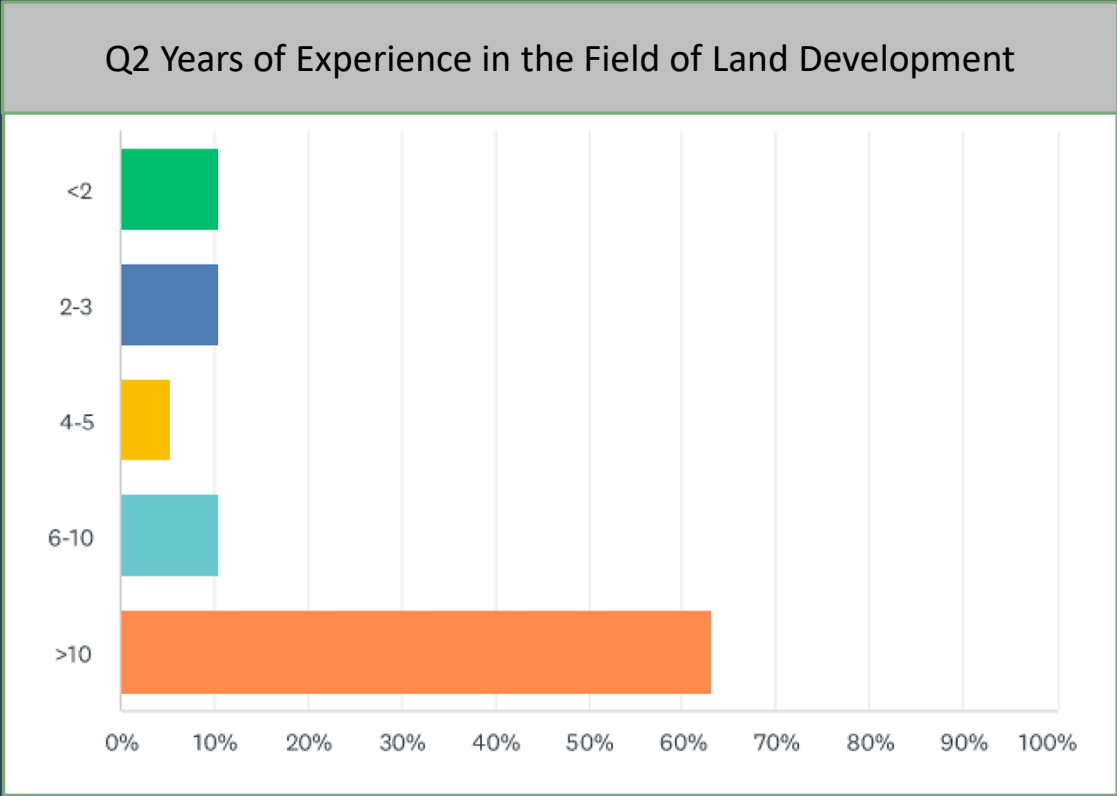
ESI Educational Program Recommendations

Enhance	Online Learning.
Provide	Class options that target all levels of experience.
Improve	Accessibility for class participants.
Expand	Shared learning experience.

ESI Policies, Procedures, and Processes Findings

DPE Process Loudoun County
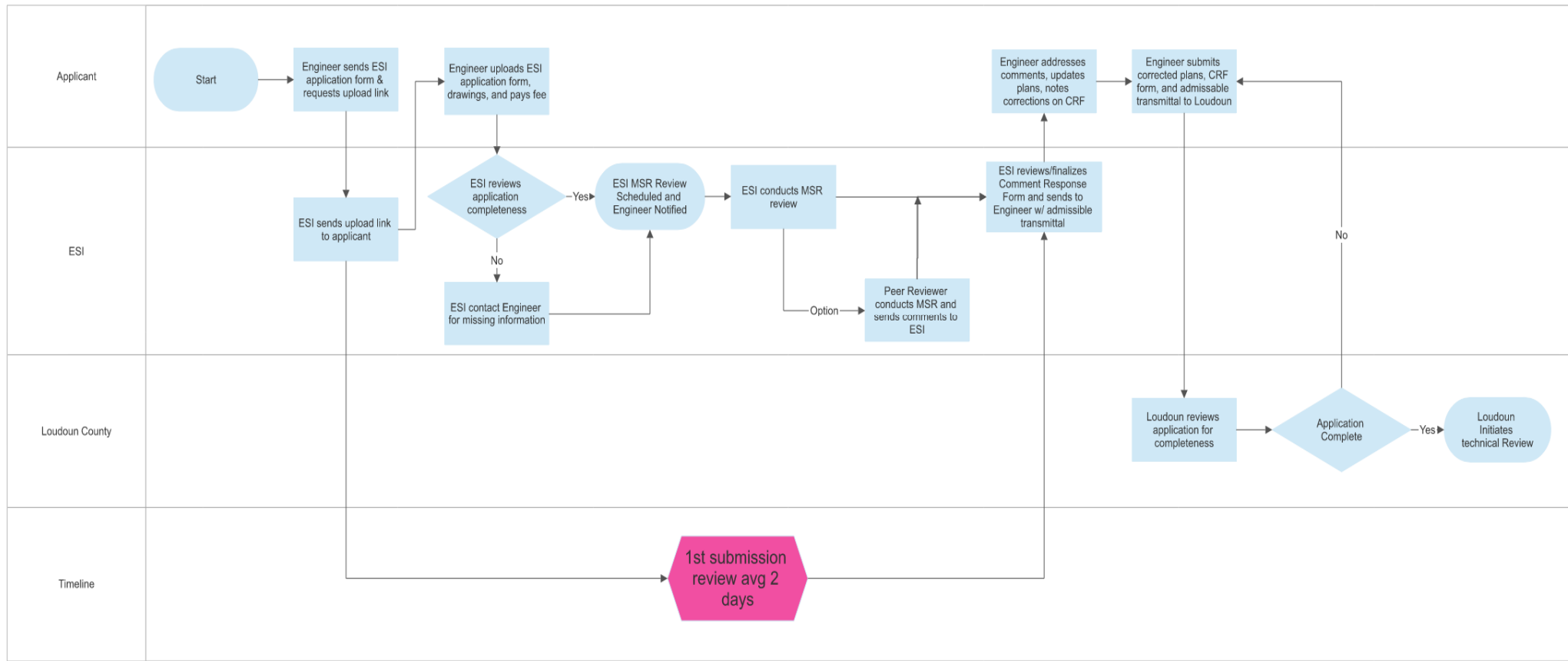
- Implement rigorous change management process.
- Clearly document, maintain current, and make readily available all processes, policies, and procedures.
- Establish performance management program in collaboration with Loudoun County.
- Ensure transparency in program requirements and performance.

ESI Policies, Procedures, and Processes Recommendations

Advisory Plans Examiner Board (APEB) Findings

APEB's role is to advise Loudoun County on:

Program operations	Participant qualifications	Educational programs	Program administration

APEB's recent focus: Reviewing DPE certifications without broader evaluation of program operations or performance metrics.

Accountability: Current bylaws do not address accountability for poor performance which are allowed in the state enabling legislation.

Advisory Plans Examiner Board (APEB) Recommendations

Collect and report on	Conduct	Develop and implement
Key performance metrics from ESI and the County.	An annual program review and report findings with any recommendations to the County Board and public.	Accountability measures.

Alternative NON-ESI Approaches

- Alternative 1 – Maintain a DPE Expedited Review Program and perform MSR/TPR process internally

- Alternative 2 – Eliminate the DPE Expedited Plans Review Program and treat all submissions the same

- Pros and Cons of a non-ESI approach
  - Pros – Loudoun County has full control and accountability of the development review process; one stop shop for customers.
  - Cons – Costs incurred for the addition of County Staff would be required to replace the loss of an independent agent who 1) acts as an arbitrator on issues, 2) focuses on building shared competency in land development matters, and 3) delivers an effective educational program.
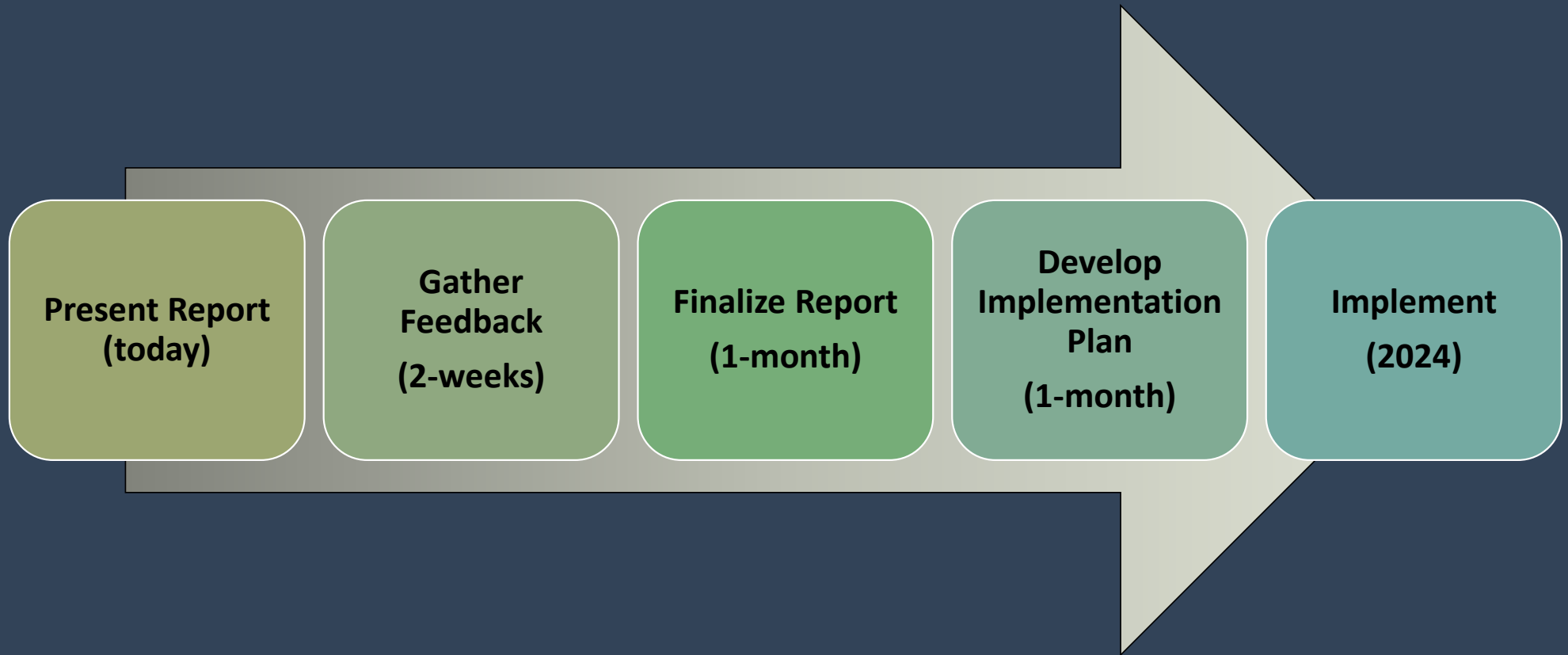
Other Process Considerations and NAIOP Study

Other Process Considerations

- Integrate Outside Agency Reviews: Conduct a work session with key stakeholders like Loudoun Water, ESI, and Loudoun County to improve the integration of external reviews into the plan process and establish ongoing meetings for continuous coordination.

- Regular Coordination with VDOT and Others: Schedule regular meetings with VDOT and other outside agencies to ensure consistent and effective regulatory coordination.

NAIOP Study

- The NAIOP Research Foundation's Development Approvals Index rates local approval processes in terms of transparency, accountability, and consistency.

- Loudoun County ranked 8th overall in the index, indicating a strong building review, permitting, and inspection process.

- The report suggests areas for improvement such as greater transparency in approval requirements and better publicized timeline targets for reviews.

Next Steps

Present Report (today)

Gather Feedback (2-weeks)

Finalize Report (1-month)

Develop Implementation Plan (1-month)

Implement (2024)

Comments

- Due by December 22, 2023
- The presentation and report will be on the County website.
- An email with links to the website and comment form will be provided.

Q & A