

Chesapeake Bay Program DEIJ Strategy Implementation Plan

Draft (February 18th, 2021)

Introduction and Background:

In April 2020, a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) Strategy developed by an independent consultant for the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) was finalized. This strategy provided a visionary framework to be used by the partnership to inform activities in biennial workplans and integrate DEIJ in the implementation of management strategies to help achieve the outcomes of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.

In August of 2020, the CBP Principals' Staff Committee (PSC) released a DEIJ Action Statement, which included several time-bound commitments. One of these commitments was to draft, with direct outreach to underrepresented communities for input and feedback, a plan describing how the CBP would implement the recommendations of the DEIJ Strategy. Following release of the statement, in October 2020, the CBP leadership formed a 45-member Action Team to the PSC composed of Bay Agreement signatories, leadership, tribes, and different CBP components (e.g., Goal Implementation Teams) to oversee development of the plan and lead outreach with underrepresented communities. Action team members were selected to ensure representation from across the partnership, reflect the diversity of the people living within the Bay watershed, and include members knowledgeable of DEIJ and Environmental Justice matters.

This draft DEIJ Strategy Implementation Plan represents that collaborative effort of the Action Team. Substantial steps are required to finalize the DEIJ Strategy Implementation Plan, as detailed in the attached schedule. These steps include vetting the draft plan with the CBP GITs and workgroups, advisory committees, state and local jurisdictions, partners organizations, and watershed stakeholders.

Purpose and Vision

The purpose of the DEIJ strategy and this implementation plan is to help the CBP to:

- Grow racial and ethnic diversity from 13% to 25% (including 15% of leadership).
- Help partners to develop as DEIJ leaders who understand, respect, and embrace cultural diversity.
- Provide partners with the tools to continually assess progress toward diversity goals.

Based on the outcomes of a DEIJ Readiness Assessment, the strategy outlined a series of recommendations to help CBP build on its strengths and further advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and environmental justice. These recommendations are grouped into four framework focus areas:

- Create an authorizing environment for DEIJ
- Advance DEIJ internally
- Advance DEIJ through watershed restoration work
- Advance DEIJ through thought leadership and partnerships

Each focus area includes an Action Plan which outlines a set of tasks, general measures of success, roles, and potential resources, which if taken would advance DEIJ and environmental justice at the CBP and guide near-term implementation efforts. The vision for the DEIJ Strategy Implementation Plan is to develop a roadmap for implementing the Action Plans which identifies the additional actions, steps, task owners, due dates, and resources needed to ensure implementation by 2025.

Next Steps

Recognizing that accountability is key to success, the Action Team will seek input from the CBP staff, partners, implementation teams, and suggested task leads to secure buy-in and obtain feedback on plan feasibility, priority, utility, and potential resource needs. This plan is intended to be a living workplan that is regularly tracked, evaluated, and revised based on feedback and the latest available information. The Action Team, therefore, will seek partnership input on a management framework and a review, reporting, and update cycle.

Further, meaningful engagement with historically underrepresented communities in the development of this plan is a core objective of the Action Team and will be vital for building a plan that is actionable, relevant, and impactful. The Action Team will strive to use this outreach process as a foundation for organizational change and meaningful and long-term engagement with these communities. The attached Outreach and Communications Plan outlines a basic strategy and schedule which will guide Action Team engagement efforts in the coming months.

Following the engagement efforts, a Final Draft DEIJ Implementation Plan will be developed that reflects the input received from stakeholders and presented to the PSC for review and approval.