

DEI Readiness Assessment: Key Themes

The recent adoption of the diversity goal in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and the diligent planning work and actions of key CBP staff, the Diversity Workgroup and other committed leaders throughout the organization have laid a strong foundation for advancing DEI at CBP. This advanced planning, along with the readiness of the staff, demonstrate that the organization is poised to make great strides in advancing DEI.

This assessment sets a baseline for some ambitious goals. The integrated assessment process of survey results, document review, interviews and focus groups indicates that while CBP has established a strong foundation for advancing DEI there is much work yet to do to advance DEI within CBP. Many actions have not been started or are not yet meeting objectives; however, CBP has a framework that can be used to prioritize both near- and long-term actions to improve DEI across the eight objectives over time.

Key Themes from Survey Results

Survey results show that 88-97% of survey respondents from across the organization believe that DEI practices will benefit CBP on the following measures:

- Ability to better serve the public,
- Broaden our partnerships,
- Advance our mission,
- Encourage diversity, equity and inclusion in decision-making,
- Expand our supporters, and
- Improve hiring and retention of diverse staff.

Survey results also show that respondents are not yet convinced that CBP is actively demonstrating a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. Only 25-35% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that CBP actively demonstrates a commitment to each one of these three factors.

These survey results reflect a common experience in organizations who are building momentum to advance DEI – while attitudes towards DEI are favorable and staff tend to believe DEI can help the organization achieve its goals, they also recognize that demonstrating an active commitment means moving beyond individual positive beliefs or attitudes to institutionalized action and change.

Key Themes from Document Review

The perceptions of survey respondents should be balanced with an understanding of the groundwork that has been diligently laid to prepare CBP for institutionalized action and change. Much of this groundwork has been captured in key CBP guiding documents. For example:

- The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement includes a diversity goal, and environmental justice is one of the guiding principles of the agreement.
- The Diversity Outcome Management Strategy includes a 22-page table documenting the status of diversity policies and programs in Chesapeake Bay Watershed Jurisdictions. The table includes documentation of existing policies and programs, existing funding and current gaps. This information will be an invaluable resource as CBP moves forward with implementation of the findings and recommendations of the DEI Readiness Assessment. CBP is to be commended for developing such a detailed resource to support institutionalized action and change.

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Through review of the following four documents, the project team identified the following additional themes that provide a foundation for advancing diversity, equity and inclusion and environmental justice:

- ***Diversity Outcome Management Strategy (2015-2025)***: Connects the Diversity goal to decision-making around conservation and restoration efforts. Offers six factors influencing success:
 1. Successfully targeting communications and outreach efforts.
 2. Reaching diverse communities to create employment and professional engagement opportunities.
 3. Engaging underrepresented communities that face environmental justice challenges.
 4. Creating metrics and tracking tools.
 5. Accounting for impacts from climate change, flooding and extreme weather.
 6. Incorporating diversity as a key component of other management strategies.

Captures current efforts and gaps related to these efforts as well as management approaches for the first four factors above.

- ***Diversity Workgroup Outcome Logic Table and Workplan (2018-2019)***: Describes the actions supporting the DWG's four key management approaches:
 1. Communications and Outreach,
 2. Employment and Professional Engagement,
 3. Promote Environmental Justice, and
 4. Tracking and Assessment.
- ***Governance and Management Framework for the Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership (September 13, 2018)***: Outlines the organizational structure of CBP, including leadership/membership of various bodies within CBP, and describes the process for decision-making through consensus-building. Document does not include specific mention of DEI factors that might influence leadership/membership of the various bodies within CBP or be included as drivers in the decision-making process.
- ***Chesapeake Progress – Diversity (April 30, 2019)***: Documents the baseline and goal for the diversity indicator as well as steps CBP is taking to reach that goal. Connects the diversity goal to spreading the benefits of conservation and restoration outcomes to all communities.

Key Themes from Interviews and Focus Groups

Interviews and focus group discussions covered a range of topics including the operations and culture of the groups interviewed, what participants were most and least proud of at CBP, perceptions of DEI and feedback on a draft version of the DEI framework.

Interviews included representatives from the following groups:

- Citizens' Advisory Council (July 13, 2018)
- Goal Implementation Team Coordinators and Staffers (July 19, 2018)
- Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (August 13, 2018)

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- Goal Implementation Team Chairs (September 6, 2018)
- Management Board (October 18, 2018)
- Diversity Workgroup (November 13, 2018)

Focus groups dug deeper on two DEI topics and included:

- CBP's Internal Culture around DEI: a facilitated discussion with program staff (March 5, 2019)
- Incorporating DEI into Decision-Making at CBP: a facilitated discussion with staff, Management Board and GIT members (March 5, 2019)

Characteristics of CBP that interviewees were most proud of included:

- *Lifting up the Chesapeake Bay Watershed*: CBP focuses on the great natural resource that the CB Watershed community is entrusted with and makes sure this issue does not lose focus of country's top leaders.
- *A culture of collaboration and partnerships*: CBP approaches the work in the spirit of partnership. CBP works with other agencies and freely shares information and resources.
- *The desire to increase diversity and inclusion*: There are a lot of voices in the CB Watershed, and there are more voices to be heard. While CBP has room for improvement on diversity of voices, interviewees are proud that there is a desire for improving in this area.
- *Science-based decision-making and policy-making*: CBP uses science-based decision-making, emphasizes scientific rigor and turns science into policy.
- *Transparent and accountable*: CBP's influences measures to ensure accountability, transparent decision-making and use of tax-payer dollars in an open, honest and efficient manner.
- *Connecting goals/priorities to outcomes at the state and federal levels*: CBP sets goals and achieves outcomes that run all the way up to the Governors and the federal government. CBP is able to identify priorities and integrate them into policies at the state level.
- *Technical expertise*: CBP's Goal Implementation Teams have outstanding technical expertise.

Characteristics of CBP that interviewees were least proud of included:

- *When decision-making bows to politics*: Decisions can become influenced by politics rather than science.
- *The gap in social-science expertise*: STAC is not often asked to respond to social science questions. STAC used to have cultural anthropologist, but currently is composed primarily of scientists and a few economists.
- *Need for increased diversity and inclusion*: Examples included:
 - Principle Staff Committee's demographics; especially that there are no people of color in leadership. Participants noted that several women are now a part of leadership, but there is still room to grow.
 - CBP tends to be complex, and long-term players speak in shorthand. This makes it difficult for newer folks to get included. There is a steep learning curve and it can be difficult to join the conversation.
 - There is a need for greater inclusion of the voices that are already in the room, in addition to expanding who is in the room.

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- *CBP's reputation*: The reaction CBP staff get from other people when they share that they work for the CBP varies. For example, CBP is easily confused with other entities. There is also a healthy degree of skepticism for what CBP does from outsiders.
- *The slow pace of institutional change*: Examples include:
 - CBP can be process-heavy and highly bureaucratic.
 - CBP's goals are water quality centric, and building the institutional momentum of STAC to shift direction is a slow process. CBP has been very slow to do substantive work in trying to gauge water quality on fisheries. It has only been in the last couple of years that CBP has begun to turn this corner, but progress is starting to happen.
- *Ability to prioritize*: CBP could improve its ability to strategically set priorities. The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement has a lengthy list of goals and all of them are priorities, which makes it difficult to identify and advance high priority goals.

Perceptions of DEI included:

- *Positive DEI work within CBP*:
 - DEI was added as an outcome in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, with some resistance, but participants consider it to be a big win for DEI.
 - The Diversity Workgroup is continuing to keep the DEI discussion at the forefront for CBP leadership.
 - DEI is a part of continued discussions with Coordinators/Staffers. They utilize mapping tools such as EJ Screen to bring DEI information forward with other data layers that affect their work. This helps to keep the conversation going.
 - A recent DEI survey helped CBP set staff diversity targets that match the racial and ethnic demographics of the watershed.
- *Increasing DEI in operations and decision-making will require capacity building within CBP*:
 - DEI is an important issue that currently comes up in meetings topically. Participants are interested in seeing DEI embedded into CBP's operations throughout, but to make this happen, it will take consistent champions in leadership at the top levels of the organization.
 - There are different levels of understanding and interest in DEI topics across the Chesapeake Bay Program; sometimes, the resistance to ideas or proposals related to DEI can be palpable within the room.
 - Resources and tools are needed to create a common understanding of DEI, especially resources that can help bring along members of CBP who may not understand why DEI issues are important to achieving the goals of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement.
 - There is concern that DEI does not currently factor into many decision-making process at CBP.
- *Barriers to increasing diversity*:
 - Folks who largely look the same are making decisions about the Chesapeake Bay population, which looks very different from the people who are in the room at CBP. More diverse communities need to be at the table and included in the decision-making process. This reality may lead to some of the skepticism about CBP.
 - The federal hiring process presents barriers to increasing diversity of CBP staff.
 - The volunteer nature of other groups within CBP can also present barriers to increasing diversity. For example, membership in the STAC is based on voluntary participation and

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- scientific expertise. The pool is a short list of people through nominations. STAC is not incentivized monetarily, which may be prohibitive to increasing diversity.
- *Ownership of DEI varies*: Some groups within CBP are supportive of DEI and increased diversity, but view it as the responsibility of groups other than their own to promote and make these changes.