

Establishing the Beyond 2025 Small Topical Groups

Purpose of Small Topical Groups

The purpose of the small groups is to guide the Beyond 2025 Steering Committee in thinking about, discussing, and ultimately forming recommendations around cross-cutting, high-level topics that have arisen in the Executive Council (EC) Charge and partnership reports. The recommendations that the small groups draft, based on full Steering Committee feedback, will be integrated into the Steering Committee's final product.

- The small groups should be small enough to be nimble in meeting and planning, but inclusive of experts outside of the Steering Committee's formal membership such as members from the Goal Implementation Teams and Advisory Committees working on a relative topic.
- Each primary and alternate is encouraged to participate on one small group and to consider the overall small group makeup to ensure silo-breaking and diversity of viewpoint.
- The small groups will be responsible for scheduling their own meeting times, agendas, and goals. A point person should be designated for staying in communication with the Steering Committee Chairs.
- Some guiding questions (regarding vision, value, and vanguard ideas) and cross-cutting considerations will be provided, but small groups are encouraged to adjust these questions to reflect their topic and to add more questions as they deem helpful.

Proposed Workplan for Each Small Group

Refer to Appendix C to review how this proposed workplan is reflected in a monthly schedule.

- **Form small group to guide full committee discussion**
 - Small group considers guiding questions and cross-cutting considerations discussed and refined by Steering Committee.
 - Small group/Chairs identify speakers, presentations, questions, and/or resources to guide full committee discussion of topic.
 - Note: There are resources already available on the Beyond 2025 Steering Committee [webpage](#) to help guide discussion on some topics.
- **Full committee discussion on topic**
 - Led by small group with help of Chairs.
 - Two-day symposium in January is proposed, considering the number of topical groups and the time required for effective presentations and discussion.
- **Provisional recommendations on what changes are needed to the Program**
 - Drafted by small group based on full committee discussion and guiding questions.

- Shared with full committee for consideration and feedback in January/February.
- Edited by small group/Chairs based on feedback received.
- **Final recommendations**
 - Reviewed by full committee and offered for consensus.
 - Organized by deliverable.

High-Level Topics

Each small group would be organized by one of the topics below (Steering Committee members can also identify other topical areas for consideration). Each group would be responsible for addressing, at a minimum, the three Guiding Questions and three Cross-cutting considerations immediately following this topical list. Topics identified stem from individual conversations with Steering Committee members and chairs and have also been pulled from the EC Charge and from a multitude of partnership reports, including CESR, Rising Temperatures, Reaching 2025, and the SRS Biennial Report (see Appendix A – Background Information; examples not exhaustive of full list).

→BREAKOUT SESSION DISCUSSION: Steering Committee members will be asked to discuss, refine, and confirm the list of topics during its October 26 meeting.

- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice
- Shallow Waters
- Non-Point Sources of Pollution
- Habitat / Land Conservation
- Water Quality / Bay TMDL
- Public Engagement and Participation (how is the Program doing with outreach to communities throughout the watershed)

Guiding Questions for All Topical Groups

→BREAKOUT SESSION DISCUSSION: Steering Committee members will be asked to discuss, refine, and confirm the list of Guiding Questions (three “V’s” and three Cross-Cutting Considerations) during its October 26 meeting.

The Three “Vs” – Vision, Value, and Vanguard with associated EC Charge Connections to be addressed, where applicable

- **VISION:** Where Do We Want To Be – What does success for the Bay and the watershed look like with relation to this topic?

EC Charge Connection

- *Science: Identify new and emerging scientific data and studies which could modify our progress reporting and adaptive management approach, as well as the goals and outcomes under the Watershed Agreement.*
- *Partnership: Focus on moving beyond 2025 by seeking ways in which restoration can be relevant to all communities within the watershed.*
- **VALUE:** What We Do and How We Work –What learnings from resource materials (i.e., CESR, Rising Water Temperature Workshop Report, Lessons Learned, Biennial Report, PSC Monitoring Report) align with your small group topic and should be considered for informing decision-making? What changes would help us attain our vision or incorporate the learnings effectively and efficiently?

EC Charge Connection

- *Partnership: Assess the overall partnership to determine whether we*
 - *Are effectively hearing from and listening to all stakeholders, and*
 - *Have systems of evaluation and decision-making to enable meaningful action and allocation of partnership resources.*
- *Science: Define the existing and emerging challenges (e.g., climate change conditions, increasing growth, diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice considerations) to accomplishing the partnership’s work under the Watershed Agreement, and how addressing those challenges might alter our collective restoration priorities, including the possibility of extending the target date for completing restoration of water quality beyond 2025.*
- *Science: Enhance our monitoring and reporting capabilities to improve our understanding of existing conditions and trends.*
- **VANGUARD** – What idea would be transformational for the future of the Bay and its watershed, and what would it take to implement that idea?

EC Charge Connection

- *Science: Identify new and emerging scientific data and studies which could modify our progress reporting and adaptive management approach, as well as the goals and outcomes under the Watershed Agreement.*
- *Science: Identify opportunities to leverage action across multiple goals and outcomes of the Watershed Agreement.*
- *Partnership: Focus on moving beyond 2025 by seeking ways in which restoration can be relevant to all communities within the watershed.*

Cross-cutting Considerations

- **Climate Considerations:** How does climate change interact with your topic, and how can we develop and implement approaches to account for it?

- **People Considerations:** How to be more effective at centering people in Bay conservation/restoration efforts for the future?
- **Living Resources Considerations:** How to maximize with your topic the impact of management efforts for living resource response?

Appendix A - Background / Supporting Information

Excerpt from October 11, 2022 Executive Council Charge (with Beyond 2025 Steering Committee products inserted; see Appendix B for full summary)

“...this Executive Council charges the Principals’ Staff Committee (PSC) in recommending a critical path forward that prioritizes and outlines the next steps for meeting the goals and outcomes of the Watershed Agreement leading up to and beyond 2025 [**SC product: Recommendation on what to do with the Watershed Agreement post-2025**]. The PSC is to report back to the Executive Council at our 2023 annual meeting with recommendations on how to best address and integrate new science and restoration strategies leading up to 2025 [**Addressed through Reaching 2025 Committee and Report**]. At our 2024 annual meeting, the PSC is to prepare recommendations that continue to address new advances in science and restoration [**SC Product: Impact assessment of 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and Recommendation on what to do with the Watershed Agreement post-2025**], along with a focus on our partnership for going beyond 2025 [**SC Product: Assessment of and recommendations for our overall partnership and Current Partnership Vision – Reaffirm? Refine?**].

In undertaking such a process, the PSC should address the following considerations:

Science

- Identify new and emerging scientific data and studies [**Topics: Shallow Waters, Non-Point Sources**] which could modify our progress reporting and adaptive management approach, as well as the goals and outcomes under the Watershed Agreement.
- Enhance our monitoring and reporting capabilities [**Topics: Shallow Waters, Non-Point Sources, Water Quality, Habitat and Land Conservation**] to improve our understanding of existing conditions and trends.
- Define the existing and emerging challenges (e.g., climate change conditions [**Consideration: Climate Change**], increasing growth [**Topics: Non-Point Sources, Habitat and Land Conservation**], diversity, equity, inclusion and justice considerations [**Topic: DEI**]) to accomplishing the partnership’s work under the Watershed Agreement, and how addressing those challenges might alter our collective restoration priorities, including the possibility of extending the target date for completing restoration of water quality beyond 2025.
- Identify opportunities to leverage action across multiple goals and outcomes of the Watershed Agreement **Consideration: Living Resources**].

Restoration

- Develop and begin to implement a communication strategy that identifies key partnership successes, associated ecosystem improvements and areas where more effort is needed.

- Provide snapshots of outcome attainability under the Agreement (e.g., which outcomes are likely to be met by the date(s) set by the partnership, which won't, and why) and options for communicating these snapshots to demonstrate progress in achieving our outcomes and the remaining work to be done, including gaps to be addressed.

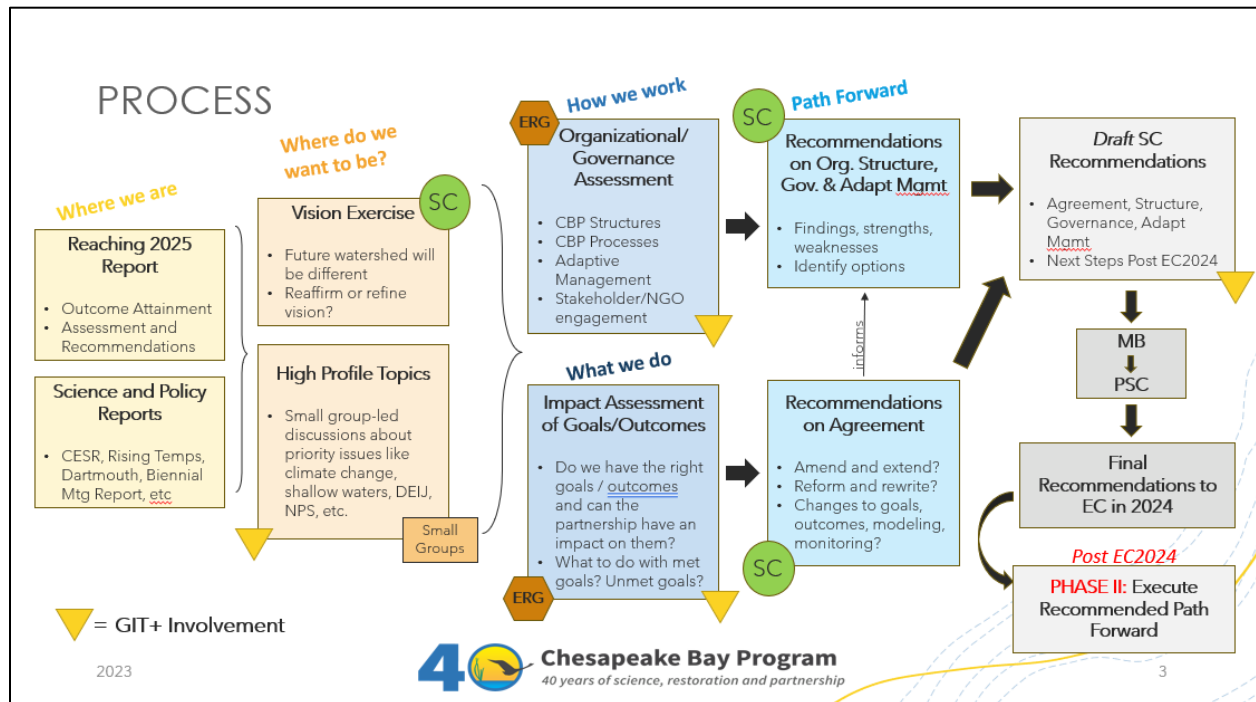
Partnership

- Focus on moving beyond 2025 by seeking ways in which restoration can be relevant to all communities within the watershed. ***[Topics: DEIJ, Public Engagement]***
- Assess the overall partnership to determine whether we
 - Are effectively hearing from and listening to all stakeholders ***[Topic: Public Engagement]***, and
 - Have systems of evaluation and decision-making to enable meaningful action and allocation of partnership resources ***[Topics: All]***.
 - Based on this assessment, develop recommendations for potential improvement.

Appendix B – Steering Committee Framework, Deliverables, and Process

STEERING COMMITTEE PROPOSED PRODUCT BY EC2024

Where we are	<p>Summary of where we are with the 2014 Watershed Agreement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reaching 2025 Report CESR, Rising Temperatures, Forest Buffers & Wetlands Conference Reports, SRS meeting report, report, Advisory Committee Recommendations, and more. Crosswalk of common themes.
Where do we want to be	<p>Vision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current Partnership Vision – Reaffirm? Refine?
What we do	<p>Impact assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the ability of our Partnership to positively impact each goal and outcome? Do we have the right outcomes for our goals and the right goals for our vision?
How we work	<p>Assessment of our overall partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership Structure Governance and Adaptive Management
Path Forward	<p>Recommendation on what to do with the Watershed Agreement post-2025</p> <p>Recommendations on the Partnership</p>



Appendix C – Schedule of Milestones [DRAFT]

October 20, 2023

Components of Small Group Workplan

	Steering Committee	ERG
June 22	Review EC Charge; establish steering committee leadership and process; discuss stakeholder participation	Present proposed evaluation process
July 27	Briefed on evaluation process; discuss and agree upon process to gather input from partnership on questions, documents, etc.	Present details of evaluation process
August 24	Introduce proposed questions and high-profile topics for committee discussion	Summarize and present small group feedback and draft evaluation questions
September 21	Discuss and agree on final evaluation plan; confirm initial high-level topic schedule	Present proposed evaluation plan
October 26	Small Group Thematic/Topics Virtual “Workshop” and Public Engagement Discussion	Execute Evaluation Plan Attend/Facilitate Meetings as Needed January: Present Content Analysis March: Report out on Interviews and Discussions
November 30	Monthly meetings would be cancelled to allow for small groups to convene and plan for Steering Committee presentations and discussions.	
December 21		
2024		
January 25	During October Meeting, determine best framework for thematic/topical discussions – use monthly meetings in Jan/February, two-day workshop, etc.	
February 29		
March 28	TBD - Initiate drafting strategy for Committee recommendations report to EC; ERG Update	
April 25	TBD	
May 30	Discuss ERG Evaluation findings	Present draft results of evaluation, facilitate discussion
June 27	Discuss provisional recommendations from ERG findings and small group recommendations	
July 25	Discuss and refine SC report recommendations	Submit final Evaluation Report, facilitate discussion
August 29	Agree on SC report recommendations	Facilitate discussion
September	Present findings to MB	
September 26	Agree on final changes	Facilitate discussion
October	Present findings to PSC	
October	Present Findings and Recommendations to EC	