

**Utilize an independent expert on equitable and collaborative partnerships to oversee the implementation of recommendations identified in the ERG report to make the governance, structure, accountability framework and decision-making process of the Chesapeake Bay Program more efficient and effective.<sup>1</sup> (Recommendation 1)**

Centering people requires a concerted effort to evaluate how best to represent their voices in the governance structure of the Chesapeake Bay Program. While advisory committees are essential, these groups do not have the power within the partnership to make decisions, direct resources and otherwise affect the change represented in their recommendations. This work will require an independent, outside consultant who explores existing evaluations<sup>2</sup>, regional models, listens to outside perspectives and thinks broadly about potential changes.

**Impact to how we work:** Streamline the way the partnership advances the goals and outcomes with a broader group of leaders and a more distributed power dynamic.

- **Overarching governance structure:** Engage a broader set of leaders responsible and accountable for each goal area, ensuring that all outcomes have decisionmakers at the table. This would likely change the make-up of the Management Board and/or center leadership at the level of the partnership.
- **Ensure representative signatories<sup>3</sup>:** Ensure stakeholders with significant investments - those representing lead federal agencies, indigenous governance bodies,<sup>4</sup> non-profits, and/or local government representatives -- have a role in determining goals and outcomes.<sup>5</sup>
- **Advisory Committees:** The primary mechanism for receiving input from key constituent groups is currently the advisory committees. The recommendations of these groups need to factor more heavily into agenda setting and conversation for the Principals Staff Committee meetings.
- **Goal Implementation Teams:** The GIT level of the partnership has subject matter expertise for the goals and outcomes. The GIT level could be better activated for primary decision-making, resource making, and problem-solving.

**Impact on Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement:** The preamble and principles should be updated to better align with new learning on community engagement and reflect any changes to the governance structure that have been adopted.

**General Level of Effort:** Medium

- Much of this work should be accomplished by an independent expert on equitable and collaborative partnerships and should not require significant time from CBP staff. It will, however, require a financial investment to support the work of the expert.

**How to Strategies (Phase 2 Actions):**

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<sup>1</sup> This has been changed from "...to reimagine the governance, structure, accountability framework and decision-making process of the Chesapeake Bay Program" to "...to oversee the recommendations identified in the ERG report to make the governance, structure, accountability framework and decision-making process of the Chesapeake Bay Program more efficient and effective."

<sup>2</sup> "Existing evaluations" has been added.

<sup>3</sup> This has been changed from "Broadening signatories" to "Ensure representative signatories."

<sup>4</sup> This has been changed to include "indigenous governance bodies."

<sup>5</sup> This has been changed from "have a voice starting with the decision-making process of determining the goals and outcomes" to "have a role in determining goals and outcomes."

- Revisit and synthesize recommendations of past and current program reviews (e.g., NAS 2011, Reaching 2025 report, CESR 2024, ERG 2025) to identify successful changes made post evaluations and define persistent challenges.<sup>6</sup>
- Hire a contractor to focus on external partner, stakeholder, and community input to the governance, structure, accountability framework, and decision-making processes.
- Gather information and create summaries of other existing regional governance structures from around the county with a focus on lessons that could be applied.
- Identify a project team to develop a strategy that explores innovative approaches to shared leadership a broader community of diverse representatives to participate in decision-making and ensure accountability.
- Develop recommendations that support public transparency, establish a participatory priority and budget setting process, and strengthen power-sharing with an expanded group of collaborators as appropriate from input received.
- Codify a government structure that empowers a broader group of partners and communities with an emphasis on indigenous representation.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> This portion was added.

<sup>7</sup> "...with an emphasis on indigenous representation" was added.

**Ensure the priorities of the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership reflect the needs of people and the impacts of a changing environment at the most local level.  
(Recommendation 2)**

The Chesapeake Bay Program's measures of success should be developed through community engagement and should reflect the priorities of the communities who live within the watershed. The Program's goals, outcomes, metrics and messaging must resonate with and meet the relative needs of watershed residents whose health and livelihoods depend on a healthy environment and sound governmental policy.

**Impact to how we work:** Approach the goals and outcomes of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Agreement with an eye toward the impact on local communities and people.

- Reframe how the Chesapeake Bay Program measures success and creates and implements evaluation schemes
- Increased focus on goals and outcomes that resonate with and are tangible to the public, but have co-benefits with water quality, such as:
  - Land use change, including impacts on private land and impacts on cultural resources
  - Climate change and resilience; climate adaptation and planning
  - Recreation and public access
  - Environmental education, environmental literacy and workforce development
  - Public health and quality of life
- Creates a long-term outreach and engagement strategy for connecting with the public and stakeholders.

**Impact on Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement:** Potential changes and amendments to the non-water quality goals or additions to the water-quality goals.

**General Level of Effort:** Medium

- Level of effort is associated with the Partnership time to review and evaluate the current Agreement for alignment with public interest. This may require new data, but most likely can be determined using current and existing data.
- There may be more effort involved should new outcomes be identified for a revised agreement. This would require more research into measures of success.

**How to Strategies (Phase 2 Actions):**

- In creating Goals and Outcomes, work closely with People-focused groups and communities. Utilize existing networks to gather existing data on public concern and interest to inform what priorities are currently missing.
- Identify current Agreement outcomes that have a high public interest and increase investment and expansion. Provide increased communications and capacity around those outcomes, especially if they were not achieved by 2025. If the outcome was achieved in the last Agreement, work to identify a new goal for that outcome.
- Identify issues that have a high public interest that are not currently reflected in the 2014 Agreement and determine a path forward for potential inclusion of those issues in a future iteration. Determine the issues the most appropriate for the Partnership, the metrics for measuring progress and success, existing work on the issue area, etc.
- Implement a long-term, sustainable, partnership-wide outreach and engagement strategy.

## **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) must be a key lens<sup>1</sup> through which the Chesapeake Bay Program's work is established and carried out.<sup>2</sup> (Recommendation 3)**

The Chesapeake Bay Program must institutionalize and activate the DEIJ [Implementation Plan](#) throughout the partnership's structure and efforts. This will require the Chesapeake Bay Program to provide the necessary capacity and financial resources for the effective and sustained implementation of the plan.

### **Impact to how we work:**

- Placing DEIJ within the foundation<sup>3</sup> of the Chesapeake Bay Program's work will require all Goal Implementation Teams, workgroups, action teams, advisory committees and leadership to adopt and employ DEIJ best practices in their work where relevant.<sup>4</sup>
- Commitment to hiring and retaining full time staff to provide coordination across the Partnership is necessary. A position is needed to coordinate the Diversity Workgroup itself and serve as a senior-level DEIJ director to ensure DEIJ is ingrained in the partnership and the actions in the DEIJ Implementation Plan Strategy are codified.
- Enhanced partnership structure will improve stakeholder engagement. This includes working alongside and through trusted sources and ensuring the necessary funding and staffing resources are in place.

### **Impact on *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*:**

- If there is opportunity to revise the Agreement, the Diversity Outcome language will need to be updated, clarified, and made more actionable and appropriate to CBP's function, with forethought given to desired, measurable results.
- Ensure that advancement of the commitments in the DEIJ Implementation Plan are considered when creating new Outcomes, as a means to achieve multiple goals and outcomes at the same time.

### **General Level of Effort:** Medium/High

- Funding and intention to hire a permanent Diversity Coordinator at EPA is already in place.
- Many GITs, workgroups and advisory committees have already embraced the idea of integrating DEIJ considerations in their work, but several lack support, capacity, and resources to do so.
- Significant effort is needed to bring all jurisdictions and other partners along in the process of embedding DEIJ into our work.
- Dedicated staff time and other resources are needed to implement the DEIJ Implementation Plan and build meaningful relationships with organizations and individuals that previously have not been engaged with the partnership.

### **How to Strategies (Phase 2 Actions):**

- Fully activate and work to accomplish the four focus areas of the DEIJ Implementation Plan, which is based on four focus areas.

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<sup>1</sup> This has been changed from "a central frame" to "a key lens."

<sup>2</sup> This has been changed from "from which all work of the Chesapeake Bay Program flows" to "through which the Chesapeake Bay Program's work is established."

<sup>3</sup> This language has been changed from "Centering DEIJ at the foundation" to "Placing DEIJ within the foundation."

<sup>4</sup> "...where relevant," has been added.

- Hire a permanent Diversity Workgroup Coordinator and a senior level Diversity Director.
- Leadership embeds DEIJ actions into their own workplans and priorities. Leadership embeds DEIJ knowledge building among their workplans.<sup>5</sup>
- Funding and resources are prioritized to sustain implementation of the DEIJ Implementation Plan and workforce and workplace culture matters are addressed to ensure employee retention.

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<sup>5</sup> This “Leadership embeds DEIJ knowledge building among their workplans” has been added.

**Create intentional partnerships with networks focused on issues related to Watershed Agreement goals to learn from those networks and accelerate outcome attainment in collaboration with their members. (Recommendation 4)**

The Bay Program should embrace its role as a capacity builder of partners and work to identify shared priorities, best practices, and recognizing network partner's voice in CBP management actions and decision-making. The Program should also identify opportunities for building the capacity of these existing networks through increased funding. The Chesapeake Bay Program must ensure that communities of color and other underrepresented groups have a voice in shaping the future.

The Chesapeake watershed is very large, and includes a variety of people, geographies, demographics, interests, and environmental issues. It is nearly impossible for the Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership to meaningfully engage with all of the communities and people that call this watershed home. In order to successfully engage people from across the watershed, the Partnership should evolve to better coordinate and engage with the growing number of existing networks, partnerships, and coalitions. These organizations are already connected to and have trusted relationships with key demographics of people (farmers, restoration practitioners, community leaders, local governments, etc.) and can help to not only engage these audiences in the restoration effort more but serve as a feedback loop to the Partnership on their needs and concerns (see recommendation 2).

**Impact to how we work:** Restructure opportunities for engagement and collaboration with networks across the watershed.

- Create capacity within existing activities for deep listening and investment in audience research.
- Create new participatory budgeting and priority setting strategies.
- Existing networks of stakeholders are considered as a partner of the Program rather than an outside entity.

**Impact on Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement:** There is no impact to the 2014 Agreement.

**General Level of Effort:** Low/Medium

- Level of effort is associated with the partnership time and additional resources to review current Chesapeake Bay Program structure to identify opportunities for increased engagement and collaboration with stakeholders through networks.
- Staff time dedicated to managing and fostering the relationships with these networks in meaningful and authentic ways.

**How to Strategies (Phase 2 Actions):**

- Research all of the existing networks across the watershed. Identify their role, their audience, operating area, etc. Identify gaps in the existing networks.
- Determine the capacity needs of the existing networks to support the work of the Partnership and foster connections at the local level.
- Provide funding to support existing local liaison programs through trusted networks.
- Provide technical assistance for trusted messenger outreach.
- Support realization of the DEIJ Implementation Plan.

## **Create a budget and staffing allocation plan to support the strategic application of social science best practices, research, and synthesis to advance goal achievement and ensure partnership impact. (Recommendation 5)**

Ecological problems are social problems. Social science helps us to understand human behavior, effective policy and governance structures, community engagement, conflict and resolution among stakeholders, and the economic valuation of ecosystems services critical to developing effective conservation strategies. Social science must be applied where it can have the greatest overall impact and applied strategically rather than opportunistically. Resources are currently inadequate and spread too thinly across many goals and some easy-to-address issues are getting repeated attention at the expense of more fundamental, difficult problems. spread too thinly across many goals and some easy-to-address issues are getting repeated attention at the expense of more fundamental, difficult problems.

### **Impact to how we work:**

- Increase ability to achieve outcomes by shaping approaches to restoration and conservation that are derived from local context and evidence-based research. Understand why goals are lagging and provide framework to co-design and implement solutions to lagging goals with communities.
- Increase in literacy and capacity needed within the partnership to effectively apply social science.
- Increase ability to adaptively manage efforts to understand why certain engagement and institutional practices do not yield desired results.
- Improve partnership governance and decision making through use of institutional and policy sciences that reveal reasons for lack of effective response across partners and identify alternative methods of meeting partner needs.
- Understand social, economic, and cultural contexts to enhance outcomes of conservation by creating institutional data and information that can increase efficiency and effectiveness of policies and programs.

### **Impact on Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement:**

- Ensure execution of the current commitment in the [Watershed Agreement Principles](#), “Explore using social science to better understand and measure how human behavior can drive natural resource use, management and decision-making.”
- Increased achievement of Watershed Agreement outcomes when programs and policies are designed with evidence based social science research.

### **General Level of Effort:** High

- Social science integration will not happen without people who have primary responsibility and expertise to facilitate research and implementation of social science best practices.

### **How to Strategies (Phase 2 Actions):**

Engage all partners in creating a detailed strategic plan for social science that sets priorities, allocates resources, identifies appropriate expertise needed, and develops partnerships and funding sources to address gaps in social science capacity on topics including outcome achievement, and partnership impact, governance, and decision making, etc.