



Diversity Workgroup Meeting Minutes

March 17, 2021 – WebEx Meeting

Meeting Objectives

- Hear a new update on the work of the DEIJ Action Team and recent feedback from CBP leadership, specifically the Principals' Staff Committee(PSC)
- Hold space for candid discussion, reaction, and feedback via breakout group discussion
- Continue collecting feedback after this meeting to take back to the CBP leadership

Meeting Attendees (* indicates Steering Committee members):

Name	Organization	Name	Organization
Wendy O' Sullivan	Workgroup Vice-Chair, NPS	Annabelle Harvey	STAC Coordinator; CRC
Tuana Phillips	Coordinator, EPA	Bre'Anna Brooks	Chesapeake Bay Trust
Bo Williams	EPA	Caitlyn Johnstone*	Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
Briana Yancy	Diversity Staffer, CRC	Brittany Hall	NPS Chesapeake
Sherry Witt	GDIT	Erin Sullivan*	EPA
Trena Ferrell	NASA	Katie Darr	CAC Coordinator with Lake Champlain Basin Program
Kevin Newman	District Department of Energy & Environment	Jeffry Seltzer	DOEE
Nora Jackson	CRC HWGIT Staffer	Jackie Pickford	CRC WQGIT Staffer
Rico Newman	Choptico Band of Piscataway-Conoy Indians	Gabrielle Roffee*	Chesapeake Conservancy
Britt Slattery	NPS	Julie Lawson	Mayor's Office of the Clean City (DC)
Clare Sevik*	DNREC	Brittany Smith	USEPA
Jennifer Star	LGAC Coordinator	Bruce Vgot	NOAA
Katherine Stahl	FWS	Mariah Davis*	Choose Clean Water Coalition
Jess Blackburn	Alliance for Chesapeake Bay, CAC Coordinator	Melisa Fagan	CRC



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Carmena Thomas	Chesapeake Bay Foundation	Ola Imani Davis*	Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
Kirsten Jackson	MD State Department of Education	Shannon Sprauge	NOAA
Ross Cooper	Alexandria Renew Enterprises	Michelle Ramierz	MD DNR
Max Fairweather	Chesapeake College	Trystan Sill*	Maryland DNR
Jason Swartz	PA DCNR	Elder Jacqueline V Norris	Prince George's Environmental Justice/ Equity Marginalized & Low Income Collaborative
John Brakeall	PA DEP	Frank Rodgers	Cacapon Institute
Edgar Freeman	MD DNR	Allison Acevedo	PA DEP

Welcome and Introductions

Wendy O'Sullivan provided welcoming remarks, shared the meeting objectives, and introduced our facilitator Sherry Witt.

Diversity Workgroup members were asked to introduce themselves in the chat and respond to a Mentimeter question asking what organization or group are you representing here today. [Live Results for Mentimeter.](#)

Sherry Witt introduced herself and shared a little about her role in this meeting. She worked with the Diversity work group back in November 2019 on the Strategic Plan. So many things have impacted the work that we do and the importance of that work. Her role is to help facilitate this agenda and help get honest input from everyone in this meeting.

Setting the Intention

Wendy O'Sullivan set the intention for the meeting. The DEIJ action team is working to create the DEIJ Strategy implementation plan and working to consider one of the recommendations from the strategy which is to create a community advisory board or a similar entity or other method to incorporate EJ and community leaders' feedback into the structure of the CBP. The intention of this meeting is to engage you all in these two components.

The DEIJ Action Team is working on collecting internal and external feedback on their work. The Diversity work group is fundamental in the creation of the strategy. It is really important for us to weigh in on the implementation plan because in several places the diversity workgroup is identified as the lead. What is our role in moving these critical pieces forward? Please use the next two weeks to capture more of our thoughts and feedback so we can step into our role as advisors and help influence how the implementation plan moves forward.



The second important component is how to meaningfully and effectively include EJ leaders and community members from underrepresented organizations and communities in the Bay Program structure. The DEIJ Action Team presented to the PSC and now we have time to take a little time to give our thoughts on this fundamental piece of our strategic plan. The PSC expressed concerns about a standalone community advisory board and discussed if the voice of EJ leaders and community members should be weaved into the existing advisory committees or another mechanism.

We can take advantage of this time and step into our own power.

Kevin Newman spoke on his role and Julie Lawson's role as co chairs on the Community Advisory Board subgroup of the DEIJ Action Team. The task at hand was to look at the options of creating a stand alone advisory board. When they presented to PSC they received feedback that they would like to look at integrating existing advisory committees and provide stipends. This feedback was a curve ball but they have had those conversations in the subgroup already. They accomplished the task they set to do and now asked to look at other options.

Stay encouraged. When it comes to DEIJ there is always this focus that we have to get it right the first time, but that is not always the case. Be comfortable in the fact that we might not get it right the first time. Keep focused and keep working and you'll get it right.

Jeff Seltzer said that we should absolutely view the implementation plan as a living document. Continue to evolve and adjust as we get feedback. He also asked the Diversity Workgroup question who really owns this for the long term. He hopes the workgroup has a critical role in the tracking and accountability.

Breakout Discussions

Sherry Witt discussed the structure of the breakout rooms and the topics. Participants went into breakout rooms in groups of four or five to discuss two important topics:

1. Implementation Plan: The DEIJ Action Team is a temporary team that will sunset sometime in the future; therefore, what will be the role of our workgroup in helping achieve this plan?
2. Incorporating EJ and Community Leaders into the CBP: What are the outcomes and benefits of incorporating EJ and community leaders into the CBP structure? Based on the discussion from the question above, what do you think of integrating EJ and community leaders into the existing advisory committees, or is there another path forward to meet our broader purpose and outcomes?

Report Outs from Breakout Groups

A presenter from each breakout room briefly presented the group's response to each discussion topic. The feedback from the breakouts will be summarized and presented to the PSC.

Group 1 Bre'Anna Brooks reported out

On the Implementation Plan:

- Let's name the actual process of transition
- How could workgroup would track actions as well as progress



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- At what point do we renew the plan.
- Good that it is not siloed
- Is the Diversity Workgroup prepared to own and lead it?

On Incorporating EJ and Community Leaders

- There is potential for this to be so impactful but it has to be done right
- Center authenticity and practice inclusion. give them space to be there.
- Current structure of advising committees are set up to be successful but maybe not used to their fullest potential yet
- maybe having liaisons to push work forward

Group 2 Carmera Thomas reported out.

On the Implementation Plan:

- Makes sense to dissolve action team once framework and CAB are established
- Integrate leaders into other teams

On Incorporating EJ and Community Leaders

- Intention of CAB to revise documents and existing structure to incorporate EJ values and projects
Also to advise other groups
- Should not be in a stand alone group because looks like tokenism
- Get word out about bay program and what partners are trying to achieve
- Actually address issues and concerns Ej board raises
- need training on how to actually incorporate EJ in goals and framework

Group 3 Jeff Seltzer reported out

On the Implementation Plan:

- Made sense for this WG to own the metrics and make sure all things are implemented
- This workgroup should provide guidance to other CBP teams

On Incorporating EJ and Community Leaders

- All agreed that increasing in existing committees made sense and is essential and important
- Not just having people at table but make space in the portfolio and missions of those committees to intentionally include DEIJ

Group 4 Ola -Imani Davis reported out

On the Implementation Plan:

- Collaboration among other workgroups and GITs is key because this task is too big for just one workgroup
- Responsibility and accountability should be taken into account

On Incorporating EJ and Community Leaders

- What are the outreach methods? danger in wanting to increase diversity just because.
- Meaningful and intentional outreach is needed.
- The importance of having EJ and community leaders at the table so they are the ears to their communities along with collaboration of Bay Program
- Question: when we go to them what can we offer?
- Don't have diversity to meet a quota. bringing comm leaders to the table to integrate in a meaningful way and having those identifiers, common and relatable. having strategies integrated amongst advisory committees in certain capacity as well

Group 5 Kevin Newman reported out

On the Implementation Plan:



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- DWG responsibilities are to use networks to get feedback and encourage our networks to participate and move forward with the Action Team's efforts. and also to hold the action plan accountable.

On Incorporating EJ and Community Leaders

- Trystan Sill believes we should have both. standalone CAB for DEIJ issues but should also integrate existing advisory committees with time. bring them on, train them, let them learn the acronyms before having them involved in other ACs. concern that if automatically sprinkled in it will be hard for them to be that voice
- Also Trystan: I am suggesting a CAB as well as integration but not necessarily the same members. Don't want to burden someone too much by expecting them to do it all and be the one voice

Group 6 Mariah Davis reported out

On the Implementation Plan:

- Role of DEIJ Action Team but also role as larger workgroup. overall needs to be more integration between the workgroup and DEIJ Action team with other GITs.
- Action team and this group should be holding EC accountable that they agreed to this strategy and statement and I think we can be working with them better to define needs to get this done.

On Incorporating EJ and Community Leaders

- Relationship with communities needs to be better defined. What are our relationships, why is it good for them to be joining but what are some of the co-benefits that we have there.

Group 7 Frank Rodgers reported out

On the Implementation Plan:

- Change is not easy, do not expect leadership to accept suggestions of change

On Incorporating EJ and Community Leaders

- DEIJ in 1985 was called special interest and the US EPA had a directive to mandate a look at special interests
- So this effort is not new, yet we still see white men leading all of programs and don't see leadership that reflects values and needs of local constituents. and in general, when the working group is gone, how will we know there is change, follow the money, and does the leadership start to reflect the people that are being served.
- Elder Norris said "we either implement and do or use a check box." Make sure not making metrics to check off the box and there really is no change.

Group 8 - Allison reported out

On the Implementation Plan:

- Role of workgroup to provide guidance, really challenging to see work happen and not keep it in check.
- Diversity Workgroup needs to have authority to provide guidance and focus on implementation. Hard without having authority.

On Incorporating EJ and Community Leaders

- The organization should not just focus community leaders but DEIJ broad and inclusive concept not just tokenism but really think about incorporating DEIJ within the framework of the CBP
- in particular considering both the existing committees and leading with the race issue to really think about race and also to think about rationale for community board.



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- if look at board, whether or not have inclusive group of boards that include decision makers from diff races and ethnicities. are there people who are aquatic scientists, biologists, etc.

The Way Forward & Closing Remarks

Wendy provided closing remarks. Tuana shared action items and next steps.

Action: Workgroup members please provide feedback on the draft implementation plan for the DEIJ Strategy using this [google spreadsheet](#). Feedback is due by COB April 2nd. Feedback will be collected and presented to the Principals' Staff Committee at their meetings in May and September. This is really important work that will guide our workgroup's and the larger CBP partnership's work moving forward. We appreciate your thoughts and feedback!

Questions to consider while reviewing:

- What is the role of the workgroup in helping meet actions/subtasks/steps in this implementation plan?
- Are the actions that list us as a lead/supporting entity feasible and achievable through our collective efforts?
- How likely are they to be implemented? What are the barriers to implementation, if any?
- Will we be successful in accomplishing our diversity outcome and goals for the DEIJ Strategy if all actions in this plan are met?
- What gaps exist?
- What additional actions and/or tasks are necessary for implementation and meeting the goals of the CBP partnership?
- Are action/task timelines (i.e., due date) reasonable and/or accurate?
- Are additional resources necessary to implement the action/task? If yes, please provide suggestions.
- Workgroup members may also continue to provide feedback on the outcomes and benefits of and potential pathways for incorporating EJ and community feedback into the CBP structure. There is a "Comments" sheet on the google spreadsheet where members can add more comments related to this.

Action: Over the next few months, workgroup members who are on the DEIJ Action Team or who volunteered to help during our February meeting will support the DEIJ Action Team in outreach and messaging efforts to seek additional feedback from community and external stakeholders.

Timeline of Key Events & Future Dates

March 17-April 2nd: Workgroup members will provide feedback on the draft implementation plan and ideas on integrating EJ and community leaders' feedback using the google spreadsheet.

March 26th, 1-2 PM: DEIJ Action Team meeting. Diversity Workgroup members are welcome to join for a conversation on how we can engage meaningfully with communities and external stakeholders in seeking feedback on the work of the DEIJ Action Team. Please contact Bo Williams (williams.james@epa.gov) for meeting details.



Late March or early April: the workgroup GIT Funding project “cultivating and strengthening relationships with underrepresented stakeholders” will start and include focus groups with representatives from organizations led by and serving communities of color and/or other underrepresented communities. For more information about this project, see Scope 11 in [this RFP document](#).

April-May: DEIJ Action Team, with support from Diversity Workgroup members, to seek additional feedback from community and external stakeholders on the draft implementation plan and ideas on purpose and benefits of and potential pathways for incorporating EJ and community leaders into the CBP structure.

May/June (exact date TBD): next Diversity Workgroup meeting