

Endorsement Statement

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice Strategy for the Chesapeake Bay Program

The Chesapeake Bay watershed is home to diverse communities with rich variation in culture, demographics and perspectives. It is important to embrace this diversity and promote the meaningful involvement, treatment and inclusiveness of all people in the implementation of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*. In doing so, we will be better able to achieve healthy local streams and lands, as well as a vibrant Chesapeake Bay that is shared by all people throughout the watershed.

The Chesapeake Bay Program partners acknowledge that individually, each partner jurisdiction is currently implementing environmental justice programs with the goal of advancing environmental and public health protection for all. Through these programs, the seven Bay jurisdictions, EPA, other federal agencies and partners have done much to address and advance diversity and environmental justice issues. We also recognize that there is more we can all do, especially when we do so as a united partnership, and for this reason we are explicitly and tangibly committed to diversity, equity, inclusion and environmental justice.

Recognizing this, the Chesapeake Bay Program accepts the report and recommendations in the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice Strategy - or DEIJ Strategy - developed by an independent consultant (Skeo Solutions) for the Chesapeake Bay Program Diversity Workgroup of the Stewardship Goal Implementation Team and finalized in 2020. To the extent consistent with state and federal law and policy, the Principals' Staff Committee members will strive to implement the recommendations of the DEIJ Strategy. The Chesapeake Bay Program Diversity Workgroup, which was formed in 2014, started working with an independent DEIJ consultant in 2018 to conduct a DEIJ readiness assessment of the partnership and developed a tailored DEIJ Strategy that recommends the partnership:

- Grow racial and ethnic diversity in staff and leadership .
- Help partners to develop as DEIJ leaders who understand, respect and embrace cultural diversity.
- Provide partners with the tools to continually assess progress towards diversity goals.

The DEIJ Strategy contains recommendations that are grouped into four DEIJ framework focus areas. The consultant developed these recommendations based on interviews with Chesapeake Bay Program teams and leadership, a DEIJ readiness survey, two focus groups, a review of key partnership policy documents and input from the Diversity Workgroup. They provide a visionary framework to be used by the partnership as a guide to help integrate DEIJ into the implementation of management strategies and inform biennial logic and action plan activities that achieve the outcomes of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.

1. Strengthen the Authorizing Environment of the Chesapeake Bay Program:

By adopting a succinct DEIJ statement for the partnership and updating governance documents and management strategies to include language that reflects DEIJ priorities.

2. Advance DEIJ Internally

By increasing diversity and inclusion for staff, appointees and volunteer bodies; building a common understanding of, and expanded capacity for, DEIJ; and institutionalizing efforts to advance DEIJ internally.

3. Advance DEIJ through Mission-Related Work

By building relationships with communities of color, low income neighborhoods and other underrepresented groups; incorporating community leaders' input into decision-making and implementation; advancing DEIJ in management strategies and logic and action plans; implementation of restoration activities and grantmaking; and strengthening DEIJ in watershed restoration outreach, materials, activities and events.

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Commented [PT1]: Shawn Garvin (Secretary, DE DNREC) shared that DE's biggest concern is that the CBP DEIJ Strategy is a 50-page document outlining things that states are already trying to do. DE is concerned that this effort will require deliverables and reports, etc. However, if it is something that can be used as a guide to help states' efforts, that would be great.

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4. Advance DEIJ Performance of Partners

By sharing the Chesapeake Bay Program’s DEIJ statement with all partners, including the larger Chesapeake Bay watershed community; increasing access to DEIJ training and capacity building; **developing and distributing guidance on including DEIJ and environmental justice criteria in grant targeting and evaluations;** developing and sharing DEIJ communication and distribution guidance; and developing and sharing tracking and reporting guidance.

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The recommendations in this DEIJ Strategy are provided to the CBP to be used by CBP leadership, Goal Implementation Teams, Workgroups, and other components of the CBP to inform the activities in the biennial workplans (i.e. Logic and Action Plans) and integrate DEIJ in the implementation of management strategies to help achieve the outcomes of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*. Continuing our path toward embracing the human diversity in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and promoting diversity, equity, inclusion and justice in our work to restore the Bay, **we hereby strive to implement the recommendations in the Chesapeake Bay Program DEIJ Strategy to the extent consistent with applicable state and federal law and policy.**

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As Chesapeake Bay Program Partners, we acknowledge that this Endorsement Statement is voluntary and subject to the availability of appropriated funds. This Endorsement is not a contract or an assistance agreement. We also understand that this Endorsement does not pre-empt, supersede or override any other law or regulation applicable to each signatory.

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