

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 has established policies and programs with the goal of advancing environmental and public health protection for all. Through these programs, the seven Bay jurisdictions, EPA, other federal agencies, the Chesapeake Bay Commission and partners are working to address and advance diversity and environmental justice issues. We also recognize that there is more we must do as a united partnership, and for this reason we explicitly and tangibly commit to diversity, equity, inclusion and environmental justice. Partners will continue to build on this work, sharing best practices, and with the acknowledgement that this work may indeed look different across the jurisdictions and space represented as a partnership, we will move forward together. Further, we recognize the importance of addressing racism and other forms of discrimination in our efforts, structures and acts of daily practices.

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~~ Increase racial and ethnic diversity ~~among~~ in Partnership staff and leadership.
- Help ~~P~~partners ~~to d~~develop as DEIJ leaders who understand, respect and embrace cultural diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice.
- Provide ~~P~~partners with the tools to continually assess progress towards diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice 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 and values.

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 values and practices internally.

3. **Advance DEIJ through Mission-Related Work**

By building relationships with underrepresented groups that include communities of color, low income neighborhoods and other ~~underrepresented groups~~ underserved populations; 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 ~~prioritizing strengthening~~ elevating and DEIJ in watershed restoration outreach, materials, activities and events.

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.

The recommendations in the 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..

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.