

## Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice

Guided by the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, the Chesapeake Bay Program recognizes the importance of embracing the diverse communities, cultures, demographics and perspectives throughout the watershed in ensuring a vibrant, healthy and restored Bay is shared by all. Since its formation, the Chesapeake Bay Program has considered diversity, equity, inclusion and justice (DEIJ) in its work. From acknowledging the importance of outreach to underrepresented populations and forming an environmental justice taskforce in [Chesapeake 2000](#) to hosting a Chesapeake Bay Environmental Justice Forum in 2003, the partnership was well-positioned to formally include a [Diversity Outcome](#) in the most recent [Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement](#).

### Diversity Outcome

Despite the above-referenced actions, partners felt that DEIJ was not adequately considered in the restoration and conservation work of the Bay Program. As such, the Diversity Workgroup was formed to meet the goals of the Diversity Outcome, which seeks to identify stakeholders not currently represented in the leadership, decision-making or implementation of Bay conservation and restoration activities. Additionally, the Workgroup looks for ways to create meaningful opportunities and programs to recruit and engage underrepresented organizations and individuals in the Bay Program.

### Diversity Survey

In 2016, a diversity survey was distributed to approximately 750 people who work for or with the Chesapeake Bay Program. The data collected from this survey became the baseline for the Diversity Outcome. In 2018, set a target to increase racial and ethnic diversity representation in the partnership to 25% by 2025. Another survey was taken in 2019, which indicated a slight increase in the percentage of respondents who self-identified as people of color in the Chesapeake Bay Program from 13.7% to 2016 to 14.6% in 2019. Surveys will be conducted every two years.



*Swimming in the Patapsco River at Patapsco Valley State Park in Howard County, Maryland. Photo by the Chesapeake Bay Program.*

## Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice Strategy

In April 2020, an independent contractor conducted a DEIJ Readiness Assessment of the partnership to inform a DEIJ Strategy that would help the Bay Program to grow their racial and ethnic diversity to meet the 25% by 2025 target; help partners develop into strong DEIJ leaders who respect, understand and embrace cultural diversity; and provide the necessary tools to continually assess the partnership's progress toward diversity goals.



*Kids in Kayaks Program at Middle Branch Park in Baltimore, Maryland. Photo by the Chesapeake Bay Program.*

The first recommendation in [Restoration from the Inside Out: A DEIJ Strategy for the Entire Organization](#) was for the partnership to adopt a clear and succinct statement that commits to the advancement of DEIJ in helping to meet the Bay Program's goals. At their annual meeting that year, the [Chesapeake Executive Council](#) signed a statement reconfirming its commitment to embracing DEIJ in all areas of the partnership, while directing the Chesapeake Bay Program to fully implement the DEIJ Strategy. The [Principals' Staff Committee](#) signed a companion statement that detailed specific actions to be taken to advance DEIJ in the Chesapeake Bay Program. A [Diversity Action Team](#) was formed to develop an implementation plan for putting the recommendations outlined in the strategy into place.

## The Implementation Plan

The [Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice Strategy Implementation Plan](#) outlines the actions, tasks, roles and resources that are critical to advancing DEIJ and environmental justice within all areas of the Chesapeake Bay Program. To help achieve the goals laid out in the DEIJ Strategy, the implementation plan is divided into four focus areas, each containing several activities.

- **Strengthen the Chesapeake Bay Program's authorizing environment for DEIJ:** Developing action statements that are formally endorsed by the leadership of the Bay Program, allows for all formal organizational documents to recognize the importance of and build in activities that advance DEIJ throughout the partnership.
- **Advance DEIJ internally:** Prioritizing efforts to increase DEIJ in hiring practices, volunteer engagement and internal training methods, will develop a more culturally aware and diverse workforce.
- **Advance DEIJ through mission-related work:** Building DEIJ considerations into how the partnership develops its opportunities for funding—including grants and contracts—as well as how it communicates and engages with underrepresented communities and organizations will assist in developing lasting and trusting relationships with these previously unengaged groups and individuals.
- **Advance DEIJ of CBP partners:** Ensuring that all communities of color, low-income communities and other underrepresented groups have a voice in the activities of the Bay Program will help the partnership incorporate meaningful DEIJ practices that will drive organizational change.