



I. Introduction

The Chesapeake Bay watershed is home to diverse communities with rich variation in culture, demographics and perspectives. Despite this diversity, federal, state, and non-profit environmental organizations have historically not adequately considered diversity, equity and inclusion in the work to restore the Bay, leading to environmental justice disparities in the implementation of conservation and restoration programs. As such, the Chesapeake Bay Program’s (CBP) Diversity Workgroup was formed in 2014 and tasked with increasing the diversity of people providing input and making decisions related to watershed conservation and restoration. The Diversity Workgroup also leads efforts to intentionally incorporate equity, inclusion and justice in addition to diversity—known collectively as diversity, equity, inclusion and justice (DEIJ)—into the implementation of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*. It is only by applying a DEIJ lens to all conservation and restoration activities and decisions that we will achieve healthy lands, local streams and a vibrant Chesapeake Bay that is shared by all people.

II. Goal, Outcome and Baseline

This management strategy identifies approaches for achieving the following goal and outcome:

Stewardship Goal



Increase the number and the diversity of individual stewards and local governments that actively support and carry out the conservation and restoration activities that achieve healthy local streams, rivers and a vibrant Chesapeake Bay.

Diversity Outcome

Identify stakeholder groups that are not currently represented in the leadership, decision making and implementation of conservation and restoration activities, and create meaningful opportunities and programs to recruit and engage them in the partnership's efforts.

In our work to achieve the diversity outcome, we use the following definitions of diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, social justice and environmental justice from the CBP DEI Strategy. Unless otherwise noted, they are adapted from or developed by the D5 Coalition¹:

- *Diversity: The demographic mix of a specific collection of people, taking into account elements of human difference. For example: racial and ethnic groups, income, spectrum of built environment settings (rural to urban), faith communities, LGBTQ+ populations, people with disabilities, gender, relationship to the natural environment.*
- *Equity: Improving equity is to promote justice, impartiality and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the underlying or root causes of disparities within our society.*
- *Inclusion: Refers to the degree to which diverse individuals are able to participate fully in the decision-making processes within an organization or group. While a truly "inclusive" group is necessarily diverse, a "diverse" group may or may not be "inclusive."*
- *Justice – the quality of being just, impartial, or fair.*²
- *Social Justice—equal access to wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society.*³ *This may mean addressing the present-day impacts of past inequities in order to achieve equity going forward.*
- *Environmental Justice—the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies, and refers to "decisions [that]*

¹ Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. D5 Coalition. 2014. Retrieved from: <https://www.d5coalition.org/about/dei/>.

² Merriam-Webster: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/justice>

³ Pachamama Alliance: <https://www.pachamama.org/social-justice/what-is-social-justice>

support sustainable communities where people can interact with confidence that their environment is safe, nurturing, and productive...”⁴

Baseline and Current Condition

In 2016, a diversity survey was distributed to the CBP partnership, which includes members and interested parties of Goal Implementation Teams (GITs), workgroups, the Management Board, the Principals’ Staff Committee and the three Advisory Committees. The survey found that 13.7% of respondents identified as people of color. Among those who identified as CBP leadership, 9.1% identified as people of color. In 2018, the CBP set a target to increase the percentage of people of color in the partnership to 25%, with 15% in leadership, by 2025. The diversity survey was repeated in 2019 and showed a statistically insignificant increase to 14.6% people of color participating in the CBP partnership, with 10.3% in leadership. More information on the diversity survey results can be found on the [Chesapeake Progress](#) website.

The results of the diversity surveys are congruent with findings from the Green 2.0 report, “The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations: Mainstream NGOs, Foundations & Government Agencies.”⁵ This 2014 report found that, despite increasing racial diversity in the U.S., the racial and ethnic composition in environmental organizations and agencies has not broken the 12% to 16% “green ceiling” that has been in place for many years. All in all, the current composition of the CBP partnership does not reflect the diversity of our population in the watershed. Thirty-two percent of the population in the watershed identifies as people of color.

A separate survey, conducted in 2019 by a DEIJ consultant, was distributed to members of the CBP as part of a DEIJ readiness assessment of the CBP. 88-97% of survey respondents indicated that DEIJ practices will benefit CBP on the following measures: ability to better serve the public; broaden our partnerships; advance our mission; encourage diversity, equity and inclusion in decision-making; expand our supporters; and improve hiring and retention of staff. However, only 25-35% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that CBP actively demonstrates a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

A lot has changed since then. CBP has indicated the intent to foster a deeper and program wide commitment to DEIJ through the Executive Council and PSC letters and then DEIJ implementation plan.

III. Participating Partners

The below agencies and organizations have participated in the development of this strategy.

State and Federal Agencies:

- State of Delaware
- District of Columbia
- State of Maryland
- Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

⁴ Bunyan Bryant, PhD., Professor Emeritus, former Director of the Environmental Advocacy Program at University of Michigan School for Environment and Sustainability.

⁵ Green 2.0: The Challenge <https://www.diversegreen.org/the-challenge/>

- Commonwealth of Virginia
- Chesapeake Bay Commission
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- National Park Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Non-Profits, Nongovernmental Organizations, Universities and CBP Committees:

- Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
- Alliance for Aquatic Resource Monitoring (ALLARM)
- Anne Arundel County Watershed Stewards Academy
- Baltimore National Aquarium
- Baltimore Green Space
- Bowie State University
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- Chesapeake Bay Trust
- Chesapeake Conservancy
- Chesapeake Research Consortium (CRC)
- Choose Clean Water Coalition
- Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)
- EcoLatinos
- First Alliance Consulting LLC
- Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC)
- Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs
- Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, Inc. (SERCAP)
- University of Maryland School of Public Health
- Virginia State University

Local Engagement

The Diversity Workgroup includes membership and interested parties who represent local nonprofit, environmental justice and grassroots organizations. The perspectives and involvement of such groups has been instrumental in better understanding what tools and resources are needed to advance DEIJ in the work to protect and restore local waters and the Bay. Looking ahead, the workgroup will continue to build relationships with such groups. The workgroup will lead efforts within the CBP to prioritize developing long-term relationships with organizations run by and primarily serving communities of color and other underrepresented communities (in addition to, and distinct from organizations that engage communities of color and other underrepresented communities but are not led by representatives of these communities).

Among the workgroup's efforts to increase diversity in the environmental field, another key audience for engagement includes students and professionals of color and from other underrepresented communities. To reach this audience, the workgroup will continue to build relationships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and community colleges. The workgroup will specifically target Career Centers and certain departments, professional associations

and clubs that attract and support students of color as well as students from other underrepresented groups. Additionally, the workgroup will continue to work with CRC to develop and improve Chesapeake-Student Recruitment, Early Advisement, and Mentoring (C-StREAM), a fellowship program for college students.

IV. Factors Influencing Success

The Diversity Workgroup has determined the following factors have the greatest influence on our ability to meet the diversity outcome:

1. Adequate, Sustained and Equitable Funding

Programs that exist to create entry ways into the environmental field, such as the Chesapeake-StREAM internship program, DC's Green Zone Environmental Program, River Corps Green Infrastructure training program for young adults 18-24 years old, and the Living Classrooms workforce development programs, require sustained funding. With more funding, these programs can be also replicated, expanded, and made more accessible.

In addition, funding is not always allocated equitably. Many grant programs awarding funding to nonprofits for watershed restoration activities use complicated grant application processes that are typically beyond the skills of local community groups. The small size or lack of 501©3 status can prevent grassroots and community organizations from receiving grants and other opportunities for capacity building. Grant-making organizations are beginning to incorporate more equitable practices by changing proposal requirements and providing capacity-building grants that do not require funding matches, for instance. To address current disparities in funding, grant-making organizations should promote non-discriminatory policies among applicant organizations, encourage restoration investments in environmental justice communities and projects that align with community-identified needs, as well as encourage capacity building investments and partnerships with underrepresented communities.

2. Inclusive Hiring, Recruitment and Retention Practices

To successfully meet our DEIJ goals, the DWG must undertake inclusive outreach approaches to find qualified diverse individuals from communities and academic institutions. This outreach must include a targeted recruiting effort in historically black colleges and universities, community colleges, Hispanic serving institutions and other educational institutions, professional associations and groups, to create a pipeline or bridge of prepared recent graduates entering full-time staff and leadership positions in Chesapeake Bay organizations.

The Diversity Workgroup is a small component of the larger Chesapeake Bay community. Therefore, trainings related to DEIJ and hiring, recruitment and retention must be promoted widely. We must measure our progress on improving in this area, and work to share best practices, trainings and resources related to hiring, recruitment and retention.

3. Advance DEIJ in All Aspects of Organizational Culture and Work

It is important to build organizational cultures that welcome and celebrate diversity. Reports by Green 2.0 and others indicate that the environmental field remains highly exclusive. Further, there is often a race-silent, gender-silent culture in many organizations where diversity issues are not

spoken or intentionally addressed. Everybody, and especially leadership, needs to be a part of the goal to create an inclusive organizational culture.

A Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Implementation Plan for the Chesapeake Bay Program was completed in December 2021. It includes actions to advance DEI within the CBP, such as: updating governance documents and management strategies to include language that reflects DEI priorities; building a common understanding of and expanded capacity for DEI; institutionalizing efforts to advance DEI internally; and developing and distributing guidance on including DEI and in grant targets and evaluations, communications, and tracking and reporting. The Diversity Workgroup will serve lead and supporting roles in the implementation of these recommendations that will help to advance DEI in all aspects of CBP organizational culture and work.

4. Develop and Maintain Partnerships

To reach our diversity goals, CBP must prioritize building long-term relationships with organizations run by and primarily serving communities of color and other underrepresented communities (in addition to, and distinct from, organizations that engage communities of color and other underrepresented communities but are not led by representatives of these communities.) Further, CBP incorporate input from leaders of such communities, organizations and groups into decision-making and implementation efforts.

Our work must be connected with the history, culture and traditions of underrepresented groups, as well as issues that are faced locally by such groups. In addition, CBP must expand efforts to build capacity of underrepresented organizations. Underrepresented organizations and grassroots groups must receive timely information on grant funding opportunities, and be provided with added capacity to apply for funding opportunities if needed.

Within the CBP, DEI does not live solely in the Diversity Workgroup; it is essential to each GIT, workgroup and leadership team. The Diversity Workgroup continues to collaborate with other GITs and workgroups to increase DEI in all efforts to meet outcomes of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.

5. Account for Impacts from External Factors

Many underserved communities are in watershed areas that are subject to sea level rise, flooding and other impacts from climate change. Studies have shown that some diverse communities face an increased vulnerability because of the compounded stresses of ongoing heat, poor air quality, flooding and mental health stress.⁶ Other policy, public health and economic factors must be considered. For example, the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic has disproportionately affected African American and other vulnerable populations

V. Current Efforts and Gaps

The Diversity Workgroup has identified the following efforts that are addressing the factors identified in the previous section. The workgroup has also identified the following gaps that need to be addressed in order to achieve the Diversity Outcome:

⁶ See 2014 National Climate Assessment, available at <http://nca2014.globalchange.gov>.

Funding and Promoting of Career Pathway Programs

The Diversity Workgroup has played a supportive role in the development of internship and employment programs that provide entry pathways for underrepresented individuals to enter the conservation and restoration field. Workgroup members, within their own organizations, have spearheaded the creation of such programs by identifying and leveraging funding opportunities.

The Chesapeake Research Consortium (CRC), for instance, created C-StREAM summer internship program for undergraduate students who identify as a person of color and/or first-generation student. The CRC works with successful applicants to match them with meaningful internships and mentors at universities and government agencies (e.g. EPA, NOAA) within the Chesapeake watershed. Other organizations and agencies have also created summer internship positions to bring greater diversity to the environmental field.

Promoting Equitable Grant Processes

Efforts must also be made to apply an equitable lens to grants and other funding opportunities. Some organizations within the CBP partnership or the larger Chesapeake Bay community have begun adjusting their guidelines and grant processes to address these inequities. The Chesapeake Bay Trust and other organizations that make up the Chesapeake Bay Funders network have also done a lot to incorporate DEIJ into their grant programs. NFWF, a major funder within the Chesapeake Bay, is actively engaging a team to improve DEIJ considerations in their competitive grants, and ensure they are able to measure success.

Gaps

Look holistically at existing pathway/bridge programs to fully evaluate the funding needs for such programs and identify opportunities including existing or future matching dollars. Further, there is more work to be done to make grant processes and funding equitable. The CBP partnership would benefit from measuring their performance in this area so funder can identify where more work is needed and where progress has been made.

Developing Inclusive Employment Practices

Eliminating bias and promoting inclusiveness in recruitment, hiring, and retention practices is critical to increasing diversity in organizations and agencies. Within the Chesapeake Bay partnership, some organizations have made changes to their recruitment and hiring practices to promote greater inclusiveness. In their job descriptions, for instance, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay encourages applicants that meet 75% of the qualifications to apply.

In addition to changing internal practices, organizations can broaden their recruitment networks by engaging with HBCUs, MSIs, and other groups and associations that attract and support underrepresented individuals. For example, the EPA CBP Office has established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Virginia State University. The MOU includes goals to strengthen staff and student connection to Chesapeake Bay through interaction with CBP partners or hands on learning experiences.

Gaps

Further promote best practices and resources for recruitment, hiring, and retention. Continue building relationships with HBCUs, MSIs and community college, targeting career centers and certain departments, clubs, and professional associations that attract and support students of color as well as students from other underrepresented communities.

Advancing DEIJ in All Aspects of Organizational Culture and Work

DEIJ is becoming a prevalent discussion point in meetings and initiatives throughout the partnership and the larger Chesapeake Bay watershed community. In addition, some staff and partners have received DEIJ-related training. Still, members of the Diversity Workgroup in November 2019 identified organizational culture as a major barrier to successfully integrating DEIJ within their own organizations as well as within the CBP structure.

Gaps

There is much work yet to be done to fully integrate DEIJ in all aspects of organizational culture and work. Cultural humility, unconscious bias, and allyship trainings have been developed for all staff and leadership to establish a shared understanding of DEIJ and foster an inclusive culture, but not everyone has attended and intermittent or one-time trainings are not sufficient to change culture.

Forming Partnerships with Underrepresented Stakeholder Groups

Members of the Diversity Workgroup will continue to attend conferences such as the Taking Nature Black and Naturally Latinos, which offer an excellent opportunity to connect with people of color and environmental justice leaders with whom we have not previously connected. The CBP's Habitat GIT, in collaboration with the Diversity Workgroup, Climate Resiliency Workgroup, and Local Leadership Workgroup, did targeted local outreach in underrepresented communities that are especially vulnerable to climate change impacts. The project team worked closely with community leaders to find green infrastructure solutions that meet community needs and provide habitat and climate resiliency benefits.

Individual organizations within the partnership have implemented additional initiatives to engage with underrepresented stakeholder groups. The Choose Clean Water Coalition and Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, for instance, have both offered scholarships for individuals who identify as a person of color to attend their respective annual conferences. The National Park Service has also taken an initiative to build intentional relationships with Latinx groups.

Forming Partnerships with other GITs, Workgroups and Teams of the CBP

The Diversity Workgroup has worked with several teams and workgroups of the CBP. For example, the workgroup has worked with the Forestry Workgroup to promote equity and environmental justice in efforts to increase tree canopy cover in the watershed. The workgroup has worked with the Toxic Contaminants Workgroup and the CBP Communications Team to develop a Fish Consumption Advisory infographic and guide. The workgroup has also supported the Environmental Literacy and Public Access Workgroups in their efforts to ensure environmental education and public access for all communities in the watershed.

The Diversity Workgroup worked with others in the Bay Program to develop the Chesapeake Bay Diversity and Equity Dashboard has also proven to be a useful geospatial tool in which users can overlay

watershed restoration layers (e.g., restoration potential, location of public access sites) with environmental justice demographic and environmental data.

Gaps

Develop a better understanding of overburdened communities and underrepresented organizations. Meet with their leaders and explore meaningful ways to engage them in the partnership's efforts. Prioritize long-term relationships with communities of color and underrepresented groups. Better connect leaders of underrepresented stakeholder groups to other teams and workgroups of the CBP. Explore options that increase accessibility and enable participation in other workgroups and teams.

Accounting for External Factors

Within the CBP partnership, there is increased awareness of the importance of external factors, and there seems to be a slow but real shift to better incorporate social science, public health, and climate change considerations across the board in CBP's work.

Gap

Improve process for accounting for external factors in our work to advance DEI, especially since many external factors (e.g. climate change, student debt, COVID-19) disproportionately affect underrepresented communities.

VI. Management Approaches

The CBP's Diversity Workgroup will work to carry out the following actions and strategies to achieve the Diversity outcome under the Stewardship goal of the *Chesapeake Watershed Agreement*. Our four management approaches seek to address the factors affecting our ability to meet the goal and the gaps identified above.

We will work to develop, implement and track progress in addressing the four focus areas of our diversity management strategy which are:

1. Enhance communication, education, and outreach with underrepresented stakeholders.
2. Create and expand employment opportunities for underrepresented individuals and communities by strengthening connections to existing resources and creating new avenues for career building.
3. Promote environmental justice through the meaningful involvement and fair treatment of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin or income, in the implementation of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.
4. Advance diversity, equity, inclusion and justice in all aspects of organizational culture and work.

1. Enhance Communication, Education, and Outreach..

Key Actions for 2022-2023

- Continue inviting guest speakers to in-person and virtual meetings and webinars to elevate local work and make connections with underrepresented individuals.

- Continue to send monthly workgroup newsletter with funding, conferences, , professional development, other opportunities and updates.
- Reach out to and build relationships with leaders of underrepresented organizations who are not yet connected to the CBP partnership in some way.
- Increase visibility of DEIJ implementation, the tools CBP identifies or develops on inclusive practices for recruitment, hiring and retention, racial equity, and EJ issues.

2. Create and expand employment opportunities for underrepresented individuals and communities by strengthening connections to existing resources and creating new avenues for career building.

Key Actions for 2022-2023

- Establish and leverage relationships with HBCUs, MSIs and community colleges in the watershed, intentionally connecting with university/college career centers and science, agriculture, and additional departments, as well as sororities, fraternities, clubs, and professional associations that attract and support students of color as well as students from other underrepresented groups at such universities and colleges.) to strengthen HBCU/MSI staff and student connection to the Chesapeake Bay.
- Provide resources to help facilitate student/entry level engagement and support for career development for underrepresented individuals.
- Facilitate a semi-annual Management Board discussion to exchange information on progress, best practices, and ideas for increasing diversity of the CBP staff and partners.

3. Promote Environmental Justice through the meaningful involvement and fair treatment of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin or income, in the implementation of the CB Watershed Agreement.

Key Actions for 2020-2023

- Connect leaders of stakeholder groups with the CBP leadership, GITs, workgroups, and other relevant parties to identify specific decision points and other milestones within the GIT workplans and processes supporting the development and implementation of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, where communities of color, low income communities and other underrepresented groups can influence the implementation of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.
- Following the adoption of the DEIJ statement, work with CBP leadership and other relevant parties to clarify language in authorizing CBP documents to reflect a priority on developing long-term relationships with organizations run by and primarily serving communities of color and other underrepresented communities (in addition to, and distinct from organizations that engage communities of color and other underrepresented communities but are not led by representatives of these communities).
- Develop a better understanding of effects from external factors such as climate change, public health and economic inequity. By understanding the implications, we can then take steps to mitigate them.

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- Develop a better understanding of the economical and societal benefits of incorporating DEIJ considerations in restoration and conservation activities, and provide this information to funders and others involved in decision-making.

4. Advance DEIJ in All Aspects of Organizational Culture and Work of the Chesapeake Bay Program and its partners

Key Actions for 2022-2023

- Clarify Diversity workgroup roles and responsibilities.
- Work with funders to improve equitable distribution of grant funds.
- Implement high priority elements of the DEIJ implementation plan as identified in the plan.
- Prominently advertise, incentivize and recruit for the 2022 Allyship trainings. Ensure participation from CBPO staff, Management Board and membership across all GITs and Advisory Committees.
- Improve reliability and analysis of the Diversity Survey and indicator.
- Partner with GITs, workgroups, and other teams of the CBP to advance DEIJ goals in the work of the other *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* outcomes.

VII. Monitoring Progress

Accompanying this management strategy is our two-year (2022-2023) logic and action plan. This plan has been updated with actions that address the gaps in our current efforts. It includes information on how we will measure or observe to determine progress in filling identified gaps.

We will also monitor our progress through the diversity survey indicator; as noted above we will work to improve the reliability of our indicator when the survey is next distributed in 2022. Based on the 2019 diversity survey, 14.6% people of color currently participate in the CBP partnership, with 10.3% in leadership. We will use the results to monitor our progress toward meeting our long-term target of 25% people of color participating in the partnership, with 15% in leadership, by 2025.

VIII. Assessing Progress

In the next two years, the Diversity Workgroup will work to implement the actions in our 2022-2023 logic table and action plan. We will assess our progress at the end of our two-year period and discuss any newly identified challenges in our work to implement the planned actions.

IX. Adaptively Manage

The Diversity Workgroup will meet at least four times a year to discuss and review progress on actions identified in the Diversity Management Strategy and two-year logic and action plan. At the end of the next two years, the team will determine whether any changes need to be made to the overall strategy, the diversity outcome, metrics or any of the planned actions.

X. Biennial Logic and Action Plan

A biennial logic and action plan has been developed for this Management Strategy. It includes the following information:

- Key actions
- Timeline for the action
- Expected outcome
- Partners responsible for each action
- Estimated resources

List of Acronyms

CBP- Chesapeake Bay Program

DEIJ-Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

EJ- Environmental Justice

GIS- Geographic Information System

GIT- Goal Implementation Team

HBCU- Historically Black Colleges and University

MSI- Minority Serving Institution