



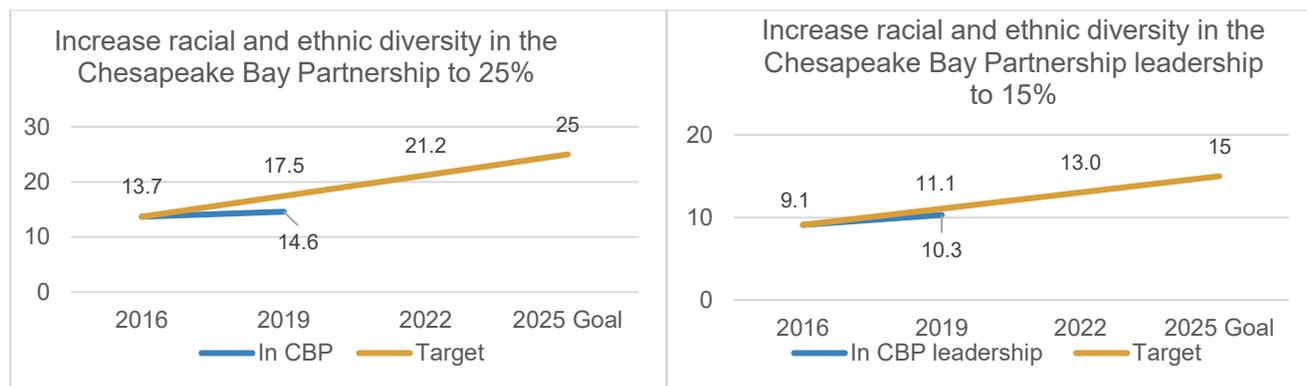
# Narrative Analysis

## DIVERSITY OUTCOME, FEBRUARY 2022

**ABSTRACT:** Successes include progress in developing an implementation plan for increasing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice in the Bay program and increasing awareness of stakeholder perceptions and needs through our intern and GIT-funding projects. Yet, as a partnership, it is uncertain whether we are making progress at a rate that is necessary to achieve the Diversity outcome. There have been significant changes in policy related to the diversity outcome within the federal government, state agencies, and other organizations, which seek to improve progress on this outcome. In addition, the Bay program has incorporated a question about diversity into the SRS process, which will ensure all GITs/Workgroups identify ways to support the outcome through their work. Challenges persist: adequate indicators of success need to be established and measured, systematic strategies for incorporating stakeholder groups in the decision-making process of the Bay program need to be developed and implemented, and overall, the Bay program needs to better explain how it functions to community groups previously not part of the Bay restoration.

### 1. Are we, as a partnership, making progress at a rate that is necessary to achieve this outcome?

As a partnership, it is uncertain whether we are making progress at a rate that is necessary to achieve this outcome. In 2018, the partnership set important internal targets for this outcome to increase the percentage of people of color in the partnership to 25% and percentage in leadership positions to 15% by 2025. Data was collected via the Diversity Survey distributed in 2016 and 2019. There are concerns with the reliability of the data due to the low response rate for both collections, particularly for the 2019 survey. The survey instrument was not distributed as scheduled in 2021 because of the COVID-19 disruptions and the cumbersome federal Information Collection Request (ICR) approval process. Before it is distributed again, the survey will be evaluated and a strategy developed to improve response rates and ensure comparability of the data. We hope to collect information in the near future to assess progress toward our current indicator.



It is also important to note that while measuring the participation of racial and ethnic diversity of participants and leadership of the Bay Program are critical pieces of the DEIJ puzzle, the Partnership needs to also begin to set metrics and track progress related to key actions called for in the Diversity Outcome language, restated here:

*“Identify stakeholder groups that are not currently represented in the leadership, decision making and implementation of current conservation and restoration activities and **create meaningful opportunities and programs** to recruit and engage them in the Partnership’s efforts.” (emphasis added)*

**2. Looking back over the last two or more years, describe any scientific (including the impacts of climate change), fiscal, and policy-related developments that impacted your progress or may influence your work over the next two years. Have these resulted in revised needs (e.g., less, more) to achieve the outcome?**

**Scientific:** Scientific data have revealed that there are discrepancies among community exposure to environmental risk. Communities of Environmental Justice concern are more likely to be at risk of flooding due to climate change, more susceptible to heat island effect, in closer proximity to pollutants and contaminants, etc. As the Bay Program implements its management strategies, it should consider how to maximize benefits of implementation (e.g., increased resilience, job creation, protection of public health) for communities that have been historically underserved or overburdened. *Our social science needs include: improving our survey methodology to collect information on our current internal targets/indicators; and developing new metrics/indicators to better understand the Bay Program's ability and opportunity to implement practices in underserved communities (rural and urban), both in terms of BMP installation as well as grant dollars spent (and who is able to benefit from the resources).*

**Fiscal needs and developments:** Over the past two years, turnover in the positions supporting Diversity Workgroup activities has caused roadblocks. Those currently holding these positions are enthusiastic and trying to rebuild momentum in a thoughtful, intentional way. The development of the [DEIJ Implementation Plan](#) and Performance Tracking and Accountability Framework will produce several new initiatives. The Bay Program is in the process of finding a DEIJ consultant who can lead that effort and support DEIJ growth across the partnership. *Fiscal need: The consultant can work with other GITs and Workgroups on DEIJ integration in close coordination with DWG. This will allow the Diversity Workgroup to focus on implementing other priority actions in the plan, especially those more "outward-facing" that will benefit stakeholder audiences.*

**Policy-related developments:** There have been significant policy-related developments that impact the Diversity Outcome. Over the past two years, the federal government has established new Executive Orders (DEIA, Environmental Justice, and Climate Change) and passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which includes provisions about ensuring funds are spent in historically underserved communities; over the same period, the CBP Executive Council has signed the [DEIJ statement](#) and the Management Board, Principals' Staff Committee, and Executive Council have expressed support for the [DEIJ implementation plan](#). It has become clear that stakeholder engagement needs to be the focus of the Diversity Workgroup moving into the next SRS cycle, and that more work is needed to clarify an approach that is appropriate for the Bay Program partnership and effective at achieving desired results. Our work is made more urgent given the social context in which we live today, with numerous racially motivated incidents and associated public unrest, and additional importance placed on addressing DEIJ issues in all areas of work at all levels of government. One policy challenge is that historically, the Diversity WG has been the voice of DEIJ for the CBP; now we understand that DEIJ must be integrated into all elements of CBP's work, including how, when, what, and to whom we communicate. Overall, the partnership still has much to learn about how to approach different DEIJ issues and needs. *Our policy-related need: All GITs and Workgroups must begin to develop meaningful, long-term engagement with stakeholders that results in benefits to the stakeholder communities, with closer coordination between the Communications team and the Diversity Workgroup.*

**3. Based on the red/yellow/green analysis of the actions described in your logic and action plan, summarize what you have learned over the past two years of implementation.**

**Grants:** While we were successful at influencing the Chesapeake Bay Program Office and jurisdictions to incorporate DEIJ into Requests for Applications, GIT funding applications and the [current grant guidance](#) for CBPO, it was difficult to evaluate whether changes to grants expanded funding to underrepresented communities, primarily because we do not have a baseline against which to measure the impact of changes or a clear methodology for collecting that information. There continue to be concerns from grant-makers that

underrepresented communities do not have the capacity to do the work required by certain funding opportunities. However, technical assistance grants can provide funding, time, and expertise to work with communities to build capacity within their own organizations to later apply for larger projects. It may take more time to do the work, and it may occur at a smaller scale, but projects will be more sustainable because the impacted communities are invested. These challenges have informed a new GIT- funding project for 2022 that will develop a baseline, connect funders and community-facing organizations, and present workshops to help prepare community-serving organizations to apply for funding.

**Diverse Workforce:** It was not possible to track the number of positions that recruited and retained underrepresented individuals, and we need to improve our methodology/definitions if we want to collect this information in the future. Several organizations that do work with and for the Chesapeake Bay Program have established clear statements in support of diversity, equity, and inclusion in their hiring practices. The entry level positions offered through Chesapeake Research Consortium (CRC) are time-bound; retention continues to be a concern, especially with entry level positions. We also learned that sending out job announcements in our newsletter may be exclusive rather than inclusive, so the workgroup will merge its mailing list with CBP's Bay Brief, which contains a more comprehensive list of job opportunities.

**Partnering with Education Institutions:** We also learned that it takes concerted effort to establish and maintain a relationship with HBCUs, even when we have an MOU in place. Moving forward we will establish an annual workplan to meet the identified goals and objectives of the interested parties included in the MOU.

**Engaging with Stakeholders:** We have learned that individuals within the Bay Program are gaining confidence with DEIJ topics, although some still feel they lack expertise in implementing/incorporating DEIJ into their work. We still have more to learn about the economic and societal benefits of incorporating DEIJ considerations into restoration and conservation activities, but it is clear that stakeholder engagement needs to be integrated through every part of the implementation of the Watershed Agreement.

Through the 2021 GIT funding project, "Cultivating and Strengthening Partnerships with Underrepresented Stakeholders" (Scope 11), focus groups indicated confusion about CBP's structure, hierarchy, and overall purpose. There is a sense that resources are spread thin; some participants felt the Bay Program, though funded by taxes, is not doing enough to make those funds available to the whole public, and would like to see more grants going to smaller organizations, with fewer barriers to resources. More work is needed to clarify appropriate roles and approaches for effective CBP engagement with or service to community partners, to increase and improve the effort to provide more community-centered programs and other resources.

Through the EPA-funded Habitat Goal Implementation Team's project, "Targeted Outreach for Green Infrastructure" (TOGI), the Diversity Workgroup learned that teaming with other workgroups/GITs can be effective but it takes time and effort to ensure success. The project seeks to create valuable wildlife habitat while working with communities facing EJ issues and weather extremes. The team held listening sessions with one community each in PA, MD and VA and hosted a green infrastructure workshop combining the communities' needs with green infrastructure and helping them find sources to implement those projects.

**4. Based on what you have learned through this process and any new developments or considerations described in response to question #2, how will your work change over the next two years? If we need to accelerate progress towards achieving our outcome, what steps are needed and, in particular, what specific actions or needs are beyond the ability of your group to meet and, therefore, you need the assistance of the Management Board to achieve?**

Achieving this Outcome requires buy-in and participation from throughout the CBP. To contribute to and support progress related to the current Diversity indicator, we request assistance of the Management Board to improve the Diversity Survey collection process and assistance in considering other means to collect demographic data of signatory and partners staff, participants, and leadership working with the Partnership. We request assistance

from the Management Board to: (1) report the demographic information of individuals from each signator\* who participate in the Bay Program or support the Partnership and (2) determine an effective strategy and timeframe for further diversifying the representation of participants and leadership of the Partnership including the Management Board itself. We understand this effort will be challenging given the limitations on of how staff are assigned by agencies to serve on the various workgroups, teams, boards and councils of the Partnership. However, those in the position to make appointments should consider our overall DEIJ implementation plan when making those decisions, for example, revising the governance documents to allow workgroup or goal team cochairs to be emerging leaders or already in a leadership capacity at their organizations.

In addition, the Diversity Outcome requires a mechanism to collect data, track progress, and identify gaps where more work needs to be done to increase engagement with diverse stakeholders. As part of the Bay Program's annual reporting requirements, we request MB assistance in the development of a new tracking element to collect information from each of the signatories on their activities and progress toward achieving the Outcome language, such as efforts to address Environmental Justice concerns, in 2022 (and annually thereafter using the current reporting schedule and system). By collecting these narrative responses, the Diversity workgroup seeks to learn how these efforts impact decision making. An alternate option is for signatories\* to report out semi-annually at MB meetings on their efforts to address DEIJ.

The benefits of collectively working on our internal targets and actions called for in the Diversity Outcome are twofold: first, meaningfully engaging with unrepresented stakeholders and diversifying the Partnership participants and leadership will bring valuable perspectives and represent voices from important communities and stakeholders; and second, the Management Board will demonstrate its support for and leadership of efforts toward this Outcome and the EC's DEIJ statement. This will achieve a lot! The MB will be exemplary of the DEIJ ideals we are trying to implement and set the precedent for others throughout the CBP.

In addition, over the next 2 years, the Diversity workgroup will work closely with the potential DEIJ Coordinator to monitor progress on the DEIJ Implementation Plan. The Management Board can expect regular updates on progress toward completing the activities on the plan over the next two years and beyond. DWG will take the lead on tracking activities across the jurisdictions by the signatories associated with the Outcome, especially those related to creating meaningful opportunities and programs to recruit and engage stakeholders not currently represented in the leadership, decision making and implementation of conservation and restoration activities of the partnership. We also recommend the Management Board representatives share information with each other regularly about their organizations' efforts and progress toward achieving this outcome.

**5. What steps are you taking, or do you recommend, to ensure your actions and work will be equitably distributed and focused in geographic areas and communities that have been underserved in the past?**

We are taking a number of steps, as outlined in our logic and action plan. We are currently in the process of expanding our steering committee to ensure it has representatives from all Bay Watershed jurisdictions. Furthermore, we plan to increase our outreach to organizations by partnering with other entities to offer opportunities for learning and exchange of ideas on a variety of Diversity topics; work with Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority Serving Institutions to recruit interns and new employees; develop stronger relationships with EJ communities and underrepresented organizations; and develop feedback mechanisms to ensure our efforts are inclusive, effective, and culturally sensitive.

One particular stakeholder group that has been underrepresented in the past is individuals previously incarcerated, so we would like to partner with an organization working with this population to pilot a project in the watershed during the next two years. We envision the Diversity Workgroup as leading the charge of including stakeholder groups that were previously underrepresented, and this is one example. While some of the other GITs/workgroups have been or are beginning to engage with traditionally underserved communities such as low-income, people of color, etc., we believe that the Bay Program has not yet engaged with this sector of the population.

\*For the purpose of this document, signatories includes the tri-state legislative Chesapeake Bay Commission, Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and federal agencies included in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement