**Indicators Framework Action Team: Draft Charter**

***To be presented to the Management Board on May 28, 2015***

**Mission:** To recommend an updated indicators framework to the Management Board with the goals of (a) better aligning our environmental indicators with the work of the Chesapeake Bay Program (including, but not limited to, the vision, goals and outcomes of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement),* and (b) creating a framework that helps the Bay Program adaptively manage our work and communicate our progress.

**Background:** The Chesapeake Bay Program uses a suite of environmental indicators to continually refine system understanding, evaluate and demonstrate our progress, and adjust our actions as needed to achieve our goals, outcomes and commitments. These indicators are published on our websites and used throughout the year in print and web communications.

While our use of indicators began in the early 1990s, the current indicators framework is based on the commitments of Chesapeake 2000 and was established a decade ago. Its structure was based on a communications need and consisted of four functional groups (Bay health, watershed health, restoration and protection efforts, and factors influencing Bay and watershed health) and a hierarchy within these groups, as individual indicators were deemed “reporting” or “related.”

As new commitments have been made (e.g., the Chesapeake Bay TMDL, Executive Order 13508), system understanding has evolved and monitoring priorities have adjusted the distribution of resources, changes to our suite of tracking indicators have been made. The framework has never been reevaluated, nor has it evolved to support the Decision Framework that helps us manage our work to reach our outcomes, ensure these outcomes are meeting our goals and ensure these goals are addressing our vision.

**Objectives:**

1. Evolve the Chesapeake Bay Program’s indicators framework to (a) better align our environmental indicators with the work of the Chesapeake Bay Program (including, but not limited to, the vision, goals and outcomes of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*), and (b) help the Bay Program adaptively manage our work and communicate our progress.

For this effort, the Action Team must consider indicators already in place and indicators that need to be developed. The Action Team must also consider indicators that can be used to 1) track multiple outcomes, 2) show relationships between and among outcomes, and 3) provide information on changing environmental conditions that drive factors affecting progress and explaining change. This framework will provide flexibility in supporting the design and development of Bay Program products, including ChesapeakeProgress and ChesapeakeDecisions, both part of a suite of ChesapeakeStat websites.

1. Consider how an updated indicators framework will help achieve the implementation of the Chesapeake Bay Accountability and Recovery Act, particularly in providing accurate and transparent information to the independent evaluator.
2. Establish a process to approve and update indicators and adjust the framework as needed.

Managing the indicator framework has involved a process of addition, deletion or revisions to the tracking and reporting indicator suite through approval by ad hoc teams, Goal Implementation Team (GIT) workgroups, the Scientific, Technical Assessment and Reporting team (STAR), the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), and finally by the Management Board. Once approved, the appropriate GIT (with assistance from STAR as needed) has collected and reported tracking or monitoring information and data to the Indicators Coordinator. The Indicators Coordinator has updated and reviewed the data, charts and metadata. The GIS Team has updated relevant data and maps. Information has been published on the Chesapeake Bay Program’s flagship website and on ChesapeakeStat, as appropriate. The Communications Team has determined whether, when and how to promote the information based on their editorial calendar and the newsworthy nature of the information. While an indicator’s release may be embargoed on a case-by-case basis, these cases are rare, with the Bay Program erring on the side of transparency and timeliness.

**Timeline:**

* Seek approval of charter and work plan at May 28, 2015 Management Board meeting.
* Develop a timeline and process for developing framework, which will include identifying appropriate outreach to partners and reporting progress to the Management Board at future meetings.
* Submit final recommendations that provide a structure to the Chesapeake Bay Program tracking and reporting indicator framework and a process document that provides guidance on managing the framework to the Management Board at the September 2015 meeting.

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