Chesapeake Bay Program[1] Priority Setting Framework

The Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) identifies partnership goals, outcomes, and targets within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement (Agreement). This Priority Setting Framework builds on the Agreement's foundation by outlining a process by which the CBP's Policy Steering Committee (PSC), goal teams, and workgroups can accelerate Agreement implementation by identifying and elevating specific priorities for focused partnership attention. These priorities, informed by Chesapeake Executive Council (EC) direction as well as advisory committee, goal team, and workgroup recommendations, will strengthen the partnership by:

- **Aligning partners around shared strategic direction and initiatives:** Biennial priority setting ensures federal agencies, states, and other partners are accelerating outcome achievement by working on the highest-impact or most urgent activities while operating within their respective authorities and missions.
- **Focusing resources**: A curated list of top priorities may help direct funding, staff time, and policy attention toward actions likely to advance restoration goals while avoiding potentially redundant activity.
- **Supporting adaptive management**: Biennial priorities allow the partnership to respond to new science, emerging risks, and implementation challenges.
- **Clarifying expectations and accountability**: Clear and immediate priorities provide a reference point for workgroups, goal teams, and leadership to measure progress and report results.
- **Signaling leadership intent internally and externally**: A unified list of leadership priorities communicates to implementing partners, funders, Congress, and the public where their support may matter most.

Priority criteria – To ensure consistency with the priorities already identified by the partnership in the Agreement and its goals and outcomes, priority initiatives identified through this biennial process must have an anticipated and articulable impact on accelerating Agreement implementation. In addition, initiatives should generally be scoped and screened with the following criteria in mind:

1. **Time-sensitive**: The priority initiative requires focused collaborative effort to accomplish because of near-term factors.

[1] As CBP has not previously implemented and managed this prioritization process, the partnership will conduct a biennial review of the process and will adapt it based on feedback from those involved in identifying, promoting, managing or tracking priorities.

2. **Major shared barriers**: The priority initiative represents a significant obstacle to outcome attainment for multiple jurisdictions and requires enhanced coordination.
3. **Emergent in nature**: The priority initiative targets challenges, needs, and/or opportunities that have been newly identified by or are of rising urgency to the partnership.
4. **Enhanced collaboration**: The priority initiative demands engagement from multiple goal teams and/or requires enhanced collaboration amongst technical and implementation bodies and/or specific support from program leadership to take on the work.
5. **Beyond annual deliverables**: The priority initiative can be unique from the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership's existing deliverables (e.g., annual monitoring or technical reports, such as the Chesapeake Bay Blue Crab Advisory Report).
6. **Short-term implementation:** The priority initiative should be scoped with a one- to three-year implementation period in mind.

While these scoping criteria are important for consideration, they are not meant to be dispositive. An initiative does not necessarily need to meet every element for introduction and consideration.

Biennial priority-setting process – Priority setting will be conducted on a biennial schedule and will follow a multilateral prioritization process.

1. **Priority Identification**: PSC members, advisory committees, goal teams and workgroups identify and rank potential priority initiatives for the partnership using the priority criteria. The Governance and Operations Team (GO Team) will collect and maintain a list of potential priority initiatives for PSC review and consideration.
2. **Priority Introduction**: PSC voting members, in consultation with their delegations, introduce motions to move identified priority initiatives forward for development and possible approval. The PSC delegation that makes a motion to develop a priority is considered that priority's "development champion" and commits to being an active participant in its development process. A priority may have multiple "development champions" but must have at least one to move on to development.
3. **Priority Development**: Goal teams coordinate with relevant groups and PSC members to further develop priority initiatives moved forward by the PSC. This includes identifying how this initiative will accelerate achievement of Agreement goals and outcomes, which group(s) should be responsible for overseeing the initiative, whether this initiative fits within existing workplans or would supplant previously planned work, what resources are available or may be needed for implementation, how progress will be assessed throughout implementation, and any recommended actions to be taken by

the PSC and other partnership groups, as appropriate. The GO Team ensures that developed priority initiative proposals are compiled and posted at least two weeks prior to final consideration by the PSC.

4. **Priority Approval**: At the designated PSC meeting, voting members, in consultation with their delegations, nominate priority initiative proposals for approval. A priority proposal's "development champion" speaks to the initiative's development and potential but is not required to nominate the priority proposal for approval. Any PSC delegation may choose to nominate any of the developed proposals for approval. Once the final list of partnership priority initiatives is approved, PSC members should identify and discuss the opportunities their organizations will explore to advance the priority. This may include resource mobilization (financial or staff) and/or enhanced CBP leadership or attention.
5. **Priority Presentation**: The package of priorities approved for implementation will be presented to the EC.
6. **Priority Implementation**: Approved partnership priority initiatives are implemented by the relevant goal team(s), workgroups, and partners.
    a. The goal team responsible for implementing each priority initiative develops an implementation plan that is submitted to the PSC at the next meeting.
    b. PSC receives written updates (or oral if needed) at subsequent PSC meetings until the implementation plan has been completed.
7. **Priority Evaluation:** The GO Team will maintain a publicly available list of all proposed priorities, which will include information on whether the priority was approved by the PSC along with any rationale offered by the PSC at the time of consideration of why a priority was not accepted. The GO Team is responsible for tracking PSC-approved priorities and coordinating with the implementing goal team chairs to track progress and ensure timely reporting to the PSC. The GO Team is also responsible for posting implementation status of priorities with existing partnership tools or managing a spreadsheet that enables full transparency to the partnership so PSC members and their designees can monitor ongoing and completed priority initiative.

Off cycle priorities – This priority setting framework does not prevent the PSC from approving a priority initiative at any time outside of the biannual process in accordance with the Governance and Management Framework.