Chesapeake Bay Program Meeting Best Practices – Consolidated Feedback

Reviewers provided comments and tracked changes suggestions to a draft version of the Meeting Best Practices Appendix to the CBP Governance document, which was shared on June 12, 2025. Feedback was requested on the appendix, as well as the agenda and minutes templates, by July 4, 2025. This document compiles feedback received from GIT 6 members, coordinators, and staffers. Suggested changes were incorporated where feasible into the meeting best practices appendix, agenda template, and minutes template. The updated versions of these documents are attached separately for Management Board review and feedback.

General Comments on Appendix:

Section	Comment
Meeting Roles and Responsibilities	For the Coordinator role, coordinators also support facilitation of meetings, recruiting members, ensuring work plan progress, project management, seeking funding for work plan actions, and strategic planning. Coordinator roles may vary though depending what agency they are an employee of.
	There is a definition for members (voting) and members (non-voting), what if a group does not distinguish between voting and non-voting members? Is there guidance on how to identify voting members? Perhaps, (if applicable) could be added next to the definitions to show that some groups don't make a distinction within members.
Engagement and Interaction	Under ground rules, revise "limit the use of phones and laptops..." to " "Limit emailing or doing other tasks during meetings to minimize distractions." Majority of the CBP meetings are remote and in person meetings are usually hybrid, so people will be on their laptops and at times are encouraged to log in to the meeting even if they are in person to interact with virtual participants.
	Under ground rules, rethink including, "silence is agreement." Most facilitation training I have attended have stated this is not a good practice since it is up to the meeting organizers and facilitators to create a space where input can be received from everyone. Sometimes our meetings don't do this adequately. Also, for decisional items, it should be a best practice that there is a representative to vote and if absent that the organizer will reach out to them after the meeting.

	Ground Rules: This may not be the correct place to spell out ground rules for meetings. It seems too "in the weeds" for this document. Might be more effective if each group creates their own set of ground rules, that way there is buy-in from group members. Perhaps this could be titled "guidelines" that groups can use as a model to create the system that works best for them. - Revise 'limit the use of phones and laptops'- most meetings are hybrid or virtual. Instead we can limit activities such as email or other work tasks during meetings. - Revise 'silence is agreement'- needs some specification. For decisional items, either the staffer or coordinator can reach out after the meeting for an answer from silent parties. Silence as agreement can be helpful to move non-decisional items forward, but clarity is needed on decisional items. - Addition of a rule/guideline on regular breaks, including how often these breaks should take place to align with Section IV (i).
Meeting Planning and Logistics	Regarding Section A (ii), we recommend the addition of "or need for disseminating information/tools."
	Staffers should be listed in the agenda development process in the document. While it depends on the workgroup, staffers are very involved in this process and should be listed.
Time Management	For meeting duration: How will this be enforced and who does it apply to? While this is an amazing idea, we are not sure how well it would work in practice. Some workgroups only meet twice a year or quarterly, therefore they would need longer meetings. We propose more general language for this section, for example "keep meetings only as long as necessary."
Documentation and Communication Standards	I think it would be a best practice to upload all materials to the website as PDFs.
	It states that meeting minutes would be due within 1 week after the meeting. We feel that this is unrealistic for the amount of time that is needed to create meeting minutes and the workload staffers are balancing at any given time. In our original document, we didn't recommend a deadline for minutes because it is so variable between workgroups. We take anywhere from one day to two weeks to finish meeting minutes, with average time being 1-1.5 weeks. This depends on the meeting, our workload, and the depth of the subject matter. After minutes are finished, they are sent to the workgroup coordinator(s)/chair(s) for review. This step takes anywhere from one day to multiple weeks, depending on the coordinator(s)/chair(s). Therefore, staffers and workgroup coordinator(s)/chair(s) would both have to sign onto this item. Taking this into account, we believe that two weeks, if not longer, would be the minimum deadline that could be placed for minutes submission, with the understanding that if they are completed earlier, they will be posted then, and multi-day meetings

	will likely take even longer. My recommendation would be a three-week deadline to take into consideration the schedule of the staffers and chairs/coordinators.
	In meeting minutes template, move attendance to the bottom since large meetings will make this a long list and the actual notes will start far down, depending on the length of discussion allow for an Actions and Decisions section at the top so people see the important items otherwise they will get lost, and add an optional acronym list section at the bottom.
	HGIT has started to add an "appendix" to agendas with resources provided by the bay program (see example here). These resources are a great way the Bay Program provides value to our partners and this is a convenient way for them to access these resources.
Decision Making Processes	It would be helpful to include a list of decisional language examples, as well as more clear guidelines about when the consensus continuum should be used. Should we adopt this for all decisions, across all workgroups? Additionally, is there an opportunity to provide some sort of decisional hierarchy for when decisions need to go to a higher level (GIT, MB, PSC)? This is pertinent to meeting guidelines, but is also perhaps part of the greater governance discussion. From our perspective, it seems like all workgroups need clarity on this process.
Technology Guidelines	Include, "or platform that the coordinating agency of the workgroup has access to." NOAA cannot use Microsoft Teams or Zoom to run meetings.
	Who is establishing clear guidance on AI use during meetings? Is this a placeholder in this appendix to be updated by GIT6 or is this directing workgroups to individually establish their own guidance? This also may be a conversation that has to happen at the agency level before it can become standard practice at meeting level. The immediate need is guidance on whether to allow participants with AI notetakers (e.g. Fireflies.ai) to join the meeting, which sends a message in the chat and sometimes incorrect action items to all participants.

Appendix: Best Practices for Effective Meetings

To Support the Chesapeake Bay Program Governance and Management Framework

Introduction

Effective meetings are pivotal for successful governance and organizational frameworks, helping optimize collaboration, decision-making, engagement, and time management. This appendix provides standardized best practices and guidance to support effective meetings across all levels of the Chesapeake Bay Program's organizational structure. These practices are designed to enhance coordination among program units while building trust and aligning goals throughout the partnership.

Purpose

These meeting best practices collectively emphasize purposeful planning, time stewardship, comprehensive engagement, transparent documentation, accessibility, and continuous capacity building. Their formal incorporation into the Chesapeake Bay Program Governance and Management Framework will strengthen the efficacy of meetings, align with adaptive management goals, and support the well-being and productivity of all participants.

I.   **Meeting Roles and Responsibilities**
     Clearly assign and communicate roles for Chairs, Coordinators, Staffers, Members, and Interested Parties, specifying participation rights and decision authority. Maintain consistent representation to preserve continuity.

     Participative Leadership: Chairs and facilitators are encouraged to adopt diplomatic, facilitative styles, managing contributions and turn-taking to foster reasonable participation.

     Shared Leadership: Delegate meeting tasks such as facilitation and follow-up assignments among members to distribute workload and build collective ownership.

     A.   **Chairs:** Lead meeting facilitation and agenda management; ensure adherence to meeting objectives and timelines; guide decision-making processes; coordinate with other leadership as needed.
     B.   **Coordinators:** Support meeting logistics and preparation; facilitate communication between meetings; maintain group records and follow-up actions; serve as primary point of contact for group members.
     C.   **Staffers:** Provide technical and administrative support; prepare meeting materials and documentation; assist with logistics and platform management: support follow-up and action item tracking; take minutes or summary notes from meeting.
     D.   **Members (Voting):** Participate actively in discussions and decision-making; prepare for meetings by reviewing materials in advance; follow

> **Commented [A1]:** Coordinators also provide agenda management and planning.

through on assigned action items; represent their organization or jurisdiction's interests.

    E. **Members (Non-Voting):** Contribute expertise and perspectives to discussions: provide input on relevant topics within their area of knowledge; support implementation of decisions within their capacity.

    F. **Interested Parties:** Observe proceedings and provide input when appropriate; respect decision-making authority of voting members: contribute specialized knowledge when requested.

II. Engagement and Interaction

    A. **Foster Psychological Safety:** Encourage a respectful meeting culture where varied viewpoints are welcomed, and participants feel safe to contribute without fear of dismissal or reprisal.

    B. **Promote Active Participation:** Use engagement tools and structured facilitation to enable collaborative dialog, preventing dominance by few and disengagement by many.

    C. **Build Positive Meeting Relationships:** Incorporate appropriate humor and trust-building activities to enhance team cohesion and meeting satisfaction.

Ground Rules:
- Meetings will start and end on time.
- Participants should come to the meeting having reviewed any materials and with necessary information at hand.
- If you can't attend, send an appropriate, informed delegate instead.
- Participants respect the agenda but are free to check process and ground rules.
- Participants engage in active listening and avoid interrupting others.
- Participants are responsible for taking personal notes and following up with Coordinator, if needed.
- Participants bear individual responsibility for contributing actively to a constructive group process. Everyone participates.
- Participants show a willingness to reach consensus on decision issues.
- Only one person talking at a time.
- Limit the use of phones and laptops to minimize distractions unless they are necessary for the meeting.
- Limit side conversations.
- Different opinions are valued and considered.
- No discussion of ideas until all ideas heard.
- Keep discussion on topic, and focused.
- Respect the privacy of the discussion, especially if sensitive topics are covered.
- Silence is agreement.

Commented [A2]: I would suggest rephrasing. All meetings are publicly available and they are allowed to share their thoughts throughout the meeting. While we do want interested parties to respond when requested, there is more inclusivity for them in the meetings.

Commented [A3]: Suggest rephrasing. I don't really understand what this means.

- Clearly define tasks and responsibilities, ensuring everyone knows what is expected post-meeting. If you agree to do something, do it.

III. **Meeting Planning and Logistics**
    A. **Agenda Development:** Involve Chairs, Coordinators, and members in collaboratively setting agendas, ensuring agendas articulate clear meeting objectives and next steps.
        i. Utilize Chesapeake Bay Program standard agenda template.
        ii. Meetings should generally be held only when there is a task that requires a group effort.
        iii. Focus intent on decisions and actions that advance priorities.
        iv. Utilize survey form to poll for agenda topics from group members.
    B. **Advance Distribution of Materials:** Circulate agendas and supporting documents at least 1-2 weeks in advance through the <u>Chesapeake Bay Program Meetings Calendar</u> to allow thorough preparation, enabling efficient, focused discussions.
        i. **Decisional items** must be announced with agendas to ensure appropriate parties are present at meetings.
        ii. **In-Person Meeting Logistics:** Send RSVP surveys to estimate headcount; provide an 'In-Person Meeting Details' document (e.g., parking, lunch, contact info); post signage outside the meeting room and have an attendance sheet and Wi-Fi info available.
    C. **Effective Meeting Size:** Choose meeting size based on <u>purpose</u>; smaller groups for decision-making, larger for information sharing.
        i. Encourage delegation to reduce participant overload.
        ii. Ensure participants reflect expertise needed for discussion.
    D. **Manage Meeting Load:** Regularly assess and rationalize the number of meetings to avoid unnecessary convenings and reduce participant fatigue, acknowledging the "<u>meeting load paradox</u>" whereby excessive meetings decrease engagement and creativity.
    E. **Meeting-Free Periods:** Promote blocks of meeting-free time to protect participant productivity and well-being.

IV. **Time Management**
    A. **Punctuality:** Start and end meetings on time without delay to respect participants' schedules and ensure maximum productivity.
    B. **Limit Wasted Time:** Avoid off-topic discussions, side conversations, and counterproductive behaviors to maintain meeting focus and achieve objectives efficiently.
    C. **Meeting Duration:** Keep meetings concise and under two hours; consider 30-minute segments or multiple shorter sessions rather than extended meetings.

Commented [A4]: And discussion.

Commented [A5]: I think you should remove this. Not all decision-making meetings are small - i.e. MB meetings.

Commented [A6]: I suggest removing this or maybe rephrasing to say something like review CBP meetings calendar prior to setting up workgroup meeting to reduce overlap and heavy meeting day. It is hard to promote the text written now because one member could be on so many different groups that the Coordinator doesn't know about.

Commented [A7]: "consider under two hours." If we are being asked to have less meetings, some meetings may need to be longer. Also GIT meetings are longer than 2-hours because they hear from all the workgroups which can be up to 8 or more workgroups.

i. Schedule appropriate breaks, especially for meetings longer than one hour.

V. Documentation and Communication Standards
A. Standardized Meeting Documentation
i. Follow standard CBP agenda format with key information: meeting location/virtual links, purpose, timed discussion points, presenter roles, action and decision items, next steps, breaks and breakout sessions for longer meetings, and hyperlinks to relevant materials.

ii. Include consistent elements in all meeting records: date, time, participants, decisions, action items with assigned responsibilities and deadlines, key takeaways.

iii. Maintain editable documents or running notes accessible to all group members to track deliverables and their status.

iv. Assign clear owners and deadlines to tasks.

v. Send reminder emails and conduct periodic check-ins.

B. Chesapeake Bay Program Meetings Calendar
The Chesapeake Bay Program's Meetings Calendar is the home for public meetings hosted by GITs, Workgroups, Action Teams, and other Chesapeake Bay Program groups. In this way, the Meetings Calendar supports the program's commitment to hosting open meetings, with advance notification of the date, time, location, agenda, and materials, and—after the meeting—a summary of actions and decisions.

The Meetings Calendar does **not** contain meetings hosted by Chesapeake Bay Program partners, or non-public meetings between office staff.

For more guidance, see A Staffer's Guide to the ChesapeakeBay.net Content Management System (CMS).

i. Post all meeting information with 1-2 weeks advance notice.

ii. Document and distribute summary minutes with actions and decisions within 1 week after meeting. Utilize Chesapeake Bay Program minutes template.

iii. Content for Calendar Events
- **Date and Time:** Event date, start time, and end time.
- **Event Title:** Always include the event's month and year in the title. The event title directly informs the event page's URL, and including the month and year makes it more likely the URL will be descriptive and unique. Use a hyphen to separate the month and year from the event name (e.g., Management Board Meeting – September 2025). Avoid commas or parentheses.

- **Purpose:** A short description of your meeting's goals or primary discussion topics. At a minimum, recurring GIT and Workgroup meetings should include the following statement: "This is the [monthly] [quarterly] [annual] meeting of the [GIT or Workgroup name]."
- **Event Location:** Select the appropriate meeting room, conference platform, or other location from the **Location drop-down menu**. Use **Location Description** to share call-in details or instructions for finding or accessing a building. **When including call-in details, use one of the templates below.**
  - Template for Microsoft Teams:
    Join the meeting via Microsoft Teams.
    Meeting Id: 218 619 354 17 | Passcode: QVyyfq
    Call: +1 469-208-1525 | Phone Conference ID: 212 050 145#
  - Template for Google Meet:
    Join the meeting via Google Meet or call (US) +1 530-481-6051 (PIN: 357 866 716#).
- **Meeting Files:** Documents that support the event. Files names should be clear and descriptive. Files should be uploaded into one of four categories:
  - Agenda
  - Presentations
  - Supporting Documents, or miscellaneous files
  - Meeting Minutes, or the official notes from the event
- **Related Videos:** Webinar recording(s) or other video(s) related to the event. The Video Description field should include a short description of your video, as well as any required credits.
- **Sidebar Tab:** Contains point of contact information for the event, often a staffer or coordinator; meeting host(s), such as GITs or Workgroups.
- **Remove a Calendar Event:** When an event has been canceled, you may choose to 1) add CANCELED: to the meeting title or 2) Remove it from the CMS.

C. **Website and Group Information Management**
  i. Update group page information and membership rosters at least every 6 months.
  ii. Maintain accurate email distribution lists for group members.
  iii. Ensure current contact information and group descriptions.

VI.   **Decision-Making Processes**
    A. Follow unanimous or consensus-based decision making whenever possible.
    B. Allow adequate time for discussion and consideration of different perspectives.
    C. Ensure comprehensive stakeholder input in decision-making processes.
    D. Balance scientific expertise with practical implementation considerations.

VII.   **Technology Guidelines**
    A. **Meeting Platforms:** Microsoft Teams (primary recommendation), Zoom (alternative)
    B. **File Sharing:** Google Drive (primary recommendation) or Microsoft Teams/SharePoint for collaborative document management
    C. **Engagement Tools:** Mentimeter for real-time polling and feedback; Miro Board for collaborative brainstorming and visualization; Google Forms for structured input collection.
    D. **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use:** Establish clear guidance on AI use during meetings; ensure AI tools enhance rather than replace human collaboration; maintain transparency about AI assistance in meeting processes.
    E. **Accessibility Measures:** Plan and conduct meetings to accommodate participants' accessibility needs, including disability accommodations, multilingual support where feasible, and attention to time zones. See Accessibility Best Practices, pages 21 to 24.

VIII. **Training and Continuous Improvement**
    A. **Regular Assessment:** Periodically evaluate meeting effectiveness and participant satisfaction; gather feedback on meeting practices and adjust as needed.
    B. **Skills Development:** Provide ongoing training for meeting leaders and participants on facilitation, consensus-building, conflict management, cultural competence, and technology use.
    C. **Integration with Strategic Goals:** Align meeting practices with Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement goals and outcomes; ensure meeting outcomes support broader program coordination and success.

Reference to Governance Framework Integration

These best practices are intended to complement and reinforce existing governance structures, decision-making processes, and adaptive management cycles outlined in the Chesapeake Bay Program Governance and Management Framework. Implementation of this guidance is expected to enhance transparency, accountability, and collaborative effectiveness across all partnership meetings.

These best practices should be implemented immediately across all Chesapeake Bay Program meeting structures, with regular review and updates as the program evolves beyond 2025. Groups should adapt these guidelines to the specific needs while maintaining consistency with overall program objectives.

_____

This appendix serves as a living resource to be updated as the Chesapeake Bay Program continues to evolve its governance and meeting practices. Regular feedback and refinement will ensure these practices remain effective and relevant to program needs. See Meeting Facilitation Support page for additional reference materials.

Appendix: Best Practices for Effective Meetings
To Support the Chesapeake Bay Program Governance and Management Framework

Introduction
Effective meetings are pivotal for successful governance and organizational frameworks, helping optimize collaboration, decision-making, engagement, and time management. This appendix provides standardized best practices and guidance to support effective meetings across all levels of the Chesapeake Bay Program's organizational structure. These practices are designed to enhance coordination among program units while building trust and aligning goals throughout the partnership.

Purpose
These meeting best practices collectively emphasize purposeful planning, time stewardship, comprehensive engagement, transparent documentation, accessibility, and continuous capacity building. Their formal incorporation into the Chesapeake Bay Program Governance and Management Framework will strengthen the efficacy of meetings, align with adaptive management goals, and support the well-being and productivity of all participants.

I. **Meeting Roles and Responsibilities**
    Clearly assign and communicate roles for Chairs, Coordinators, Staffers, Members, and Interested Parties, specifying participation rights and decision authority. Maintain consistent representation to preserve continuity.

    Participative Leadership: Chairs and facilitators are encouraged to adopt diplomatic, facilitative styles, managing contributions and turn-taking to foster reasonable participation.

    Shared Leadership: Delegate meeting tasks such as facilitation and follow-up assignments among members to distribute workload and build collective ownership. [It is critical to clearly articulate expectations of the assignments and check for understanding if necessary (meaning do not assume they are known and understood). It's also wise to assign based on strengths or skills.]

    A. **Chairs:** Lead meeting facilitation and agenda management; ensure adherence to meeting objectives and timelines; guide decision-making processes; coordinate with other leadership as needed.
    B. **Coordinators:** Support meeting logistics and preparation; facilitate communication between meetings; maintain group records and follow-up actions; serve as primary point of contact for group members.
    C. **Staffers:** Provide technical and administrative support; prepare meeting materials and documentation; assist with logistics and platform management: support follow-up and action item tracking; take minutes or summary notes from meeting.

D. **Members (Voting):** Participate actively in discussions and decision-making; prepare for meetings by reviewing materials in advance; follow through on assigned action items; represent their organization or jurisdiction's interests.

E. **Members (Non-Voting):** Contribute expertise and perspectives to discussions: provide input on relevant topics within their area of knowledge; support implementation of decisions within their capacity. [Include "respect decision-making authority of voting members."]

F. **Interested Parties:** Observe proceedings and provide input when appropriate; respect decision-making authority of voting members: contribute specialized knowledge when requested.

II. **Engagement and Interaction**

A. **Foster Psychological Safety** [This wording is confusing. Is there a clearer way to state this intention? You cannot be too clear.]**:** Encourage a respectful meeting culture where varied viewpoints are welcomed, and participants feel safe to contribute without fear of dismissal or reprisal.

B. **Promote Active Participation:** Use engagement tools and structured facilitation [what is meant by "structured facilitation" and how will these skills be ensured?] to enable collaborative dialog, preventing dominance by few and disengagement by many.

C. **Build Positive Meeting Relationships:** Incorporate appropriate humor and trust-building activities to enhance team cohesion and meeting satisfaction. [This provides great value but is not easily facilitated if not experienced or skilled.]

Ground Rules:

- Meetings will start and end on time.
- Participants should come to the meeting having reviewed any materials and with necessary information at hand.
- If you can't attend, send an appropriate, informed delegate instead.
- Participants respect the agenda but are free to check [replace with "ask questions of"] process and ground rules.
- Participants engage in active listening and avoid interrupting others.
- Participants are responsible for taking personal notes and following up with Coordinator, if needed.
- Participants bear individual responsibility for contributing actively to a constructive group process. Everyone participates.
- Participants show a willingness to reach consensus on decision issues.
- Only one person talking at a time.
- Limit the use of phones and laptops to minimize distractions unless they are necessary for the meeting.
- Limit side conversations.
- Value and consider Ddifferent opinions. are valued and considered.

- No discussion of ideas until all ideas heard.
- Keep discussion on topic, and focused.
- Respect the privacy of the discussion, especially if sensitive topics are covered.
- Silence is agreement.
- Clearly define tasks and responsibilities, ensuring everyone knows what is expected post-meeting.
- If you agree to do something, do it. [make this its own bullet]

III. **Meeting Planning and Logistics**
   A. **Agenda Development:** Involve Chairs, Coordinators, and members in collaboratively setting agendas, ensuring agendas articulate clear meeting objectives and next steps.
      i. Utilize Chesapeake Bay Program standard agenda template.
      ii. Meetings should generally be held only when there is a task that requires a group effort.
      iii. Focus intent on decisions and actions that advance priorities.
      iv. Utilize survey form to poll for agenda topics from group members.
   B. **Advance Distribution of Materials:** Circulate agendas and supporting documents at least 1-2 weeks in advance through the Chesapeake Bay Program Meetings Calendar to allow thorough preparation, enabling efficient, focused discussions.
      i. **Decisional items** must be announced with agendas to ensure appropriate parties are present at meetings. [Do decision makers need to be named?]
      ii. **In-Person Meeting Logistics:** Send RSVP surveys to estimate headcount; provide an 'In-Person Meeting Details' document (e.g., parking, lunch, contact info); post signage outside the meeting room and have an attendance sheet and Wi-Fi info available.
   C. **Effective Meeting Size:** Choose meeting size based on purpose; smaller groups for decision-making, larger for information sharing.
      i. Encourage delegation to reduce participant overload.
      ii. Ensure participants reflect expertise needed for discussion.
   D. **Manage Meeting Load:** Regularly assess and rationalize the number of meetings to avoid unnecessary convenings and reduce participant fatigue, acknowledging the "meeting load paradox" whereby excessive meetings decrease engagement and creativity.
   E. **Meeting-Free Periods:** Promote blocks of meeting-free time to protect participant productivity and well-being.

IV. **Time Management**

Commented [A1]: This can only be true if other items are true first. For example, different opinions are valued and considered. The space needs to be opened for that utilizing other best practices and that currently does not always happen. Must foster an atmosphere of trust where folks don't feel bullied when offering thoughts. Additionally, if it is not a decisional item, folks are allowed to contemplate things. Suggest removing this one until a lot of these other things are fully addressed.

Commented [A2]: Final documents

Commented [A3]: Iii. Suggestion: Announce updates to agenda or attachments when they are posted. Announce if posted items are not final and indicate that further updates will be made prior to meeting

A. **Punctuality:** Start and end meetings on time without delay to respect participants' schedules and ensure maximum productivity.
B. **Limit Wasted Time:** Avoid off-topic discussions, side conversations, and counterproductive behaviors to maintain meeting focus and achieve objectives efficiently.
C. **Meeting Duration:** Keep meetings concise and under two hours; consider 30-minute segments or multiple shorter sessions rather than extended meetings.
    i. Schedule appropriate breaks, especially for meetings longer than one hour.

V. **Documentation and Communication Standards**
    A. **Standardized Meeting Documentation**
        i. **Follow standard CBP agenda format with key information:** meeting location/virtual links, purpose, timed discussion points, presenter roles, action and decision items, next steps, breaks and breakout sessions for longer meetings, and hyperlinks to relevant materials.
        ii. **Include consistent elements in all meeting records:** date, time, participants, decisions, action items with assigned responsibilities and deadlines, key takeaways.
        iii. Maintain editable documents or running notes accessible to all group members to track deliverables and their status.
        iv. Assign clear owners and ~~deadlines~~ [due dates] to tasks.
        v. Send reminder emails and conduct periodic check-ins.

    B. **Chesapeake Bay Program Meetings Calendar**
    The Chesapeake Bay Program's Meetings Calendar is the home for public meetings hosted by GITs, Workgroups, Action Teams, and other Chesapeake Bay Program groups. In this way, the Meetings Calendar supports the program's commitment to hosting open meetings, with advance notification of the date, time, location, agenda, and materials, and—after the meeting—a summary of actions and decisions.

    The Meetings Calendar does **not** contain meetings hosted by Chesapeake Bay Program partners, or non-public meetings between office staff.

    For more guidance, see A Staffer's Guide to the ChesapeakeBay.net Content Management System (CMS).
        i. Post all meeting information with 1-2 weeks advance notice.
        ii. Document and distribute summary minutes with actions and decisions within 1 week after meeting. Utilize Chesapeake Bay Program minutes template.
        iii. **Content for Calendar Events**

- **Date and Time:** Event date, start time, and end time.
- **Event Title:** Always include the event's month and year in the title. The event title directly informs the event page's URL, and including the month and year makes it more likely the URL will be descriptive and unique. Use a hyphen to separate the month and year from the event name (e.g., Management Board Meeting – September 2025). Avoid commas or parentheses.
- **Purpose:** A short description of your meeting's goals or primary discussion topics. At a minimum, recurring GIT and Workgroup meetings should include the following statement: "This is the [monthly] [quarterly] [annual] meeting of the [GIT or Workgroup name]." [… where we will …..] Purpose needs to explain why the meeting is being held and what the desired outcomes are.]
- **Event Location:** Select the appropriate meeting room, conference platform, or other location from the **Location drop-down menu**. Use **Location Description** to share call-in details or instructions for finding or accessing a building. **When including call-in details, use one of the templates below.**
    - Template for Microsoft Teams:
      Join the meeting via Microsoft Teams.
      Meeting Id: 218 619 354 17 | Passcode: QVyyfq
      Call: +1 469-208-1525 | Phone Conference ID: 212 050 145#
    - Template for Google Meet:
      Join the meeting via Google Meet or call (US) +1 530-481-6051 (PIN: 357 866 716#).
- **Meeting Files:** Documents that support the event. Files names should be clear and descriptive. Files should be uploaded into one of four categories:
    - Agenda
    - Presentations
    - Supporting Documents, or miscellaneous files
    - Meeting Minutes, or the official notes from the event
- **Related Videos:** Webinar recording(s) or other video(s) related to the event. The Video Description field should include a short description of your video, as well as any required credits.
- **Sidebar Tab:** Contains point of contact information for the event, often a staffer or coordinator; meeting host(s), such as GITs or Workgroups.

Commented [A5]: Perhaps there is an agreed upon naming convention that could be implemented for meeting files. For example: "GIT_Subject_Presenter_MM.DD.YYYY"

- **Remove a Calendar Event:** When an event has been canceled, you may choose to 1) add CANCELED: to the meeting title or 2) Remove it from the CMS.

   C. **Website and Group Information Management**
- i. Update group page information and membership rosters at least every 6 months.
- ii. Maintain accurate email distribution lists for group members.
- iii. Ensure current contact information and group descriptions.

VI. **Decision-Making Processes**
- A. Follow unanimous or consensus-based decision making whenever possible. [What happens when consensus cannot be reached? And who decides when that is?]
- B. Allow adequate time for discussion and consideration of different perspectives. [Ensure the "space" is open to hearing from different perspectives. For example "What other perspectives have we not heard from?"]
- C. Ensure comprehensive stakeholder input in decision-making processes.
- D. Balance scientific expertise with practical implementation considerations.

VII. **Technology Guidelines**
- A. **Meeting Platforms:** Microsoft Teams (primary recommendation), Zoom (alternative)
- B. **File Sharing:** Google Drive (primary recommendation) or Microsoft Teams/SharePoint for collaborative document management
- C. **Engagement Tools:** Mentimeter for real-time polling and feedback; Miro Board for collaborative brainstorming and visualization; Google Forms for structured input collection.
- D. **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use:** Establish clear guidance on AI use during meetings; ensure AI tools enhance rather than replace human collaboration; maintain transparency about AI assistance in meeting processes. [Who is responsible for these decisions? How will consistency across groups be ensured?]
- E. **Accessibility Measures:** Plan and conduct meetings to accommodate participants' accessibility needs, including disability accommodations, multilingual support where feasible, and attention to time zones. See Accessibility Best Practices, pages 21 to 24.

VIII. **Training and Continuous Improvement**
- A. **Regular Assessment:** Periodically evaluate meeting effectiveness and participant satisfaction; gather feedback on meeting practices and adjust as needed. [Surveys are very helpful for this.]
- B. **Skills Development:** Provide ongoing training for meeting leaders and participants on facilitation, consensus-building, conflict management,

Commented [A6]: One issue is that A,B,C,D does not describe or tell us how to actually do/implement these processes. What are the implementable best practices? This is where professional facilitation would be helpful. For example- how do we "balance scientific expertise with practical implementation considerations"? Can we list pros/cons for decisions and identify consequences for decisions, create visualizations to assist, etc. What are the steps to actually "do" these things.

Commented [A7]: Also need to identify "who"

Commented [A8]: Acknowledging that some partners may have internal policies/guidance for AI use in meetings and attending meetings with AI.

cultural competence, and technology use. [Who will be responsible for this objective and the quality control of the training?]

 C. **Integration with Strategic Goals:** Align meeting practices with Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement goals and outcomes; ensure meeting outcomes support broader program coordination and success.

Reference to Governance Framework Integration
These best practices are intended to complement and reinforce existing governance structures, decision-making processes, and adaptive management cycles outlined in the Chesapeake Bay Program Governance and Management Framework. Implementation of this guidance is expected to enhance transparency, accountability, and collaborative effectiveness across all partnership meetings.

These best practices should be implemented immediately across all Chesapeake Bay Program meeting structures, with regular review and updates as the program evolves beyond 2025. Groups should adapt these guidelines to the specific needs while maintaining consistency with overall program objectives.

_____

This appendix serves as a living resource to be updated as the Chesapeake Bay Program continues to evolve its governance and meeting practices. Regular feedback and refinement will ensure these practices remain effective and relevant to program needs. See Meeting Facilitation Support page for additional reference materials.

Appendix: Best Practices for Effective Meetings

To Support the Chesapeake Bay Program Governance and Management Framework

Introduction

Effective meetings are pivotal for successful governance and organizational frameworks, helping optimize collaboration, decision-making, engagement, and time management. This appendix provides standardized best practices and guidance to support effective meetings across all levels of the Chesapeake Bay Program's organizational structure. These practices are designed to enhance coordination among program units while building trust and aligning goals throughout the partnership.

Purpose

These meeting best practices collectively emphasize purposeful planning, time stewardship, comprehensive engagement, transparent documentation, accessibility, and continuous capacity building. Their formal incorporation into the Chesapeake Bay Program Governance and Management Framework will strengthen the efficacy of meetings, align with adaptive management goals, and support the well-being and productivity of all participants. Partnership groups are not constrained to operate strictly within all practices described here, provided they are communicative to their members and still adhere to approved governance procedures. Partnership groups are encouraged to experiment or innovate in collaboration with their leadership and membership, as that may farther expand or enhance our collective sense of best practices.

I.   **Meeting Roles and Responsibilities**
      Clearly assign and communicate roles for Chairs, Coordinators, Staffers, Members, and Interested Parties, specifying participation rights and decision authority. Maintain consistent representation to preserve continuity.

      Participative Leadership: Chairs and facilitators are encouraged to adopt diplomatic, facilitative styles, managing contributions and turn-taking to foster reasonable participation.

      Shared Leadership: Delegate meeting tasks such as facilitation and follow-up assignments among members to distribute workload and build collective ownership.

      A. **Chairs:** Lead meeting facilitation and agenda management; ensure adherence to meeting objectives and timelines; guide decision-making processes; coordinate with other leadership as needed.
      B. **Coordinators:** Support meeting logistics and preparation; facilitate communication between meetings; maintain group records and follow-up actions; serve as primary point of contact for group members.

Commented [A1]: I know this is framed as guidance but it will set expectations and I think we want to empower improvements and experiments, or modifications that just make more sense for certain groups and to be mindful of neurodiverse coordination/planning needs.

C. **Staffers:** Provide technical and administrative support; prepare meeting materials and documentation; assist with logistics and platform management: support follow-up and action item tracking; take minutes or summary notes from meeting.

D. **Members (Voting):** Participate actively in discussions and decision-making; prepare for meetings by reviewing materials in advance; follow through on assigned action items; represent their organization or jurisdiction's interests.

E. **Members (Non-Voting):** Contribute expertise and perspectives to discussions: provide input on relevant topics within their area of knowledge; support implementation of decisions within their capacity.

F. **Interested Parties:** Observe proceedings and provide input when appropriate; respect decision-making authority of voting members: contribute specialized knowledge when requested.

II. **Engagement and Interaction**

A. **Foster Psychological Safety:** Encourage a respectful meeting culture where varied viewpoints are welcomed, and participants feel safe to contribute without fear of dismissal or reprisal.

B. **Promote Active Participation:** Use engagement tools and structured facilitation to enable collaborative dialog, preventing dominance by few and disengagement by many.

C. **Build Positive Meeting Relationships:** Incorporate appropriate humor and trust-building activities to enhance team cohesion and meeting satisfaction.

Ground Rules:
- Meetings will start and end on time.
- Participants should come to the meeting having reviewed any materials and with necessary information at hand.
- If you can't attend, send an appropriate, informed delegate instead.
- Participants respect the agenda but are free to check process and ground rules.
- Participants engage in active listening and avoid interrupting others.
- Participants are responsible for taking personal notes and following up with Coordinator, if needed.
- Participants bear individual responsibility for contributing actively to a constructive group process. Everyone participates.
- Participants show a willingness to reach consensus on decision issues.
- Only one person talking at a time.
- Limit the use of phones and laptops to minimize distractions unless they are necessary for the meeting.
- Limit side conversations.
- Different opinions are valued and considered.

- No discussion of ideas until all ideas heard.
- Keep discussion on topic, and focused.
- Respect the privacy of the discussion, especially if sensitive topics are covered.
- Silence is agreement, when given adequate time to note concerns or objections.
- Clearly define tasks and responsibilities, ensuring everyone knows what is expected post-meeting. If you agree to do something, do it, and be communicative if or when issues arise.

III. **Meeting Planning and Logistics**
   A. **Agenda Development:** Involve Chairs, Coordinators, and members in collaboratively setting agendas, ensuring agendas articulate clear meeting objectives and next steps.
      i. Utilize Chesapeake Bay Program standard agenda templates.
      ii. Meetings should generally be held only when there is a task that requires a group effort.
      iii. Focus intent on decisions and actions that advance priorities.
      iv. Utilize survey form to poll for agenda topics from group members.
   B. **Advance Distribution of Materials:** Circulate agendas and supporting documents at least 1-2 weeks in advance through the Chesapeake Bay Program Meetings Calendar to allow thorough preparation, enabling efficient, focused discussions.
      i. **Decisional items** must be announced with agendas to ensure appropriate parties are present at meetings.
      ii. **In-Person Meeting Logistics:** Send RSVP surveys to estimate headcount; provide an 'In-Person Meeting Details' document (e.g., parking, lunch, contact info); post signage outside the meeting room and have an attendance sheet and Wi-Fi info available.
   C. **Effective Meeting Size:** Choose meeting size based on purpose; smaller groups for decision-making, larger for information sharing.
      i. Encourage delegation to reduce participant overload.
      ii. Ensure participants reflect expertise needed for discussion.
   D. **Manage Meeting Load:** Regularly assess and rationalize the number of meetings to avoid unnecessary convenings and reduce participant fatigue, acknowledging the "meeting load paradox" whereby excessive meetings decrease engagement and creativity.
      i. Setting personal expectations: The sum of ongoing partnership meetings will likely always exceed any individual's ability to attend or engage in all partnership activities. Signatory partners and all other interested partners are their own gatekeepers of their time and participation.

Commented [A6]: There's better ways to frame this than what I did here. I don't think we can say it's agreement, but it at least does not prevent consensus when calling a question for decision.

Commented [A7]: Insert link to template.

Commented [A8R7]: Please, please, please, we need more than 1 template. We can have 1 standard template, but there are other needs or uses for agendas and we should not be overly prescriptive.

Commented [A9]: I'm not sure I understand this component when our meetings are all public. We set the agenda and aside from in-person space we don't have controls on the size.

Commented [A10]: Is that a real paradox that will be linked to something? People have to do their own triage, and communicate.

Commented [A11R10]: My initial thoughts added as a strawman.

  ii. Every partner has the ability and responsibility to monitor their meeting load and commitments, and to make choices for their attendance.

  iii. Partnership groups, for their part, will strive to minimize conflicts and provide accommodations to signatory or other partners that experience conflicts, overload, or other issues that discourage or prevent participation.

  iv. Some conflicts between events are unknown at the time of scheduling, or unavoidable.

  ~~D.~~**v.** **Communication is key**. Communication of conflicts, overload, or other issues to the appropriate Chair and Coordinator will help inform assessment of meeting fatigue for the group. Communication will also enable the exploration of accommodations when possible for key decisions or activities.

 E. **Meeting-Free Periods:** Promote blocks of meeting-free time to protect participant productivity and well-being.

IV. **Time Management**

 A. **Punctuality:** Start and end meetings on time without delay to respect participants' schedules and ensure maximum productivity.

 B. **Limit Wasted Time:** Avoid off-topic discussions, side conversations, and counterproductive behaviors to maintain meeting focus and achieve objectives efficiently.

 C. **Meeting Duration:** Keep meetings concise and under two hours; consider 30-minute segments or multiple shorter sessions rather than extended meetings.

  i. Schedule appropriate breaks, especially for meetings longer than one hour.

V. **Documentation and Communication Standards**

 A. **Standardized Meeting Documentation**

  i. **Follow standard CBP agenda format with key information:** meeting location/virtual links, purpose, timed discussion points, presenter roles, action and decision items, next steps, breaks and breakout sessions for longer meetings, and hyperlinks to relevant materials.

  ii. **Include consistent elements in all meeting records:** date, time, participants, decisions, action items with assigned responsibilities and deadlines, key takeaways.

  iii. Maintain editable documents or running notes accessible to all group members to track deliverables and their status.

  iv. Assign clear owners and deadlines to tasks.

  v. Send reminder emails and conduct periodic check-ins.

Commented [A12]: Not sure this is a partnership-wide option...at best we could try this out as the CBP Office, but not something practical across our whole partnership.

Commented [A13R12]: I am a fan of the idea...I've talked about it a lot with some people and just never saw a way it could be put in place without full support and implementation from the top.

Commented [A14]: Let's avoid depictions of these as "wasted time" when sometimes these are the things that built trust and community in the proper context. Maybe just remove this bullet or change the framing to be about "distractions" instead of "wasted time"

B. **Chesapeake Bay Program Meetings Calendar**

The Chesapeake Bay Program's Meetings Calendar is the home for public meetings hosted by GITs, Workgroups, Action Teams, and other Chesapeake Bay Program groups. In this way, the Meetings Calendar supports the program's commitment to hosting open meetings, with advance notification of the date, time, location, agenda, and materials, and—after the meeting—a summary of actions and decisions.

The Meetings Calendar does **not** contain meetings hosted by Chesapeake Bay Program partners, or non-public meetings between office staff.

For more guidance, see A Staffer's Guide to the ChesapeakeBay.net Content Management System (CMS).

   i. Post all meeting information with 1-2 weeks advance notice.
   ii. Document and distribute summary minutes with actions and decisions within 1 week after meeting. Utilize Chesapeake Bay Program minutes template.
   iii. **Content for Calendar Events**
   - **Date and Time:** Event date, start time, and end time.
   - **Event Title:** Always include the event's month and year in the title. The event title directly informs the event page's URL, and including the month and year makes it more likely the URL will be descriptive and unique. Use a hyphen to separate the month and year from the event name (e.g., Management Board Meeting – September 2025). Avoid commas or parentheses.
   - **Purpose:** A short description of your meeting's goals or primary discussion topics. At a minimum, recurring GIT and Workgroup meetings should include the following statement: "This is the [monthly] [quarterly] [annual] meeting of the [GIT or Workgroup name]."
   - **Event Location:** Select the appropriate meeting room, conference platform, or other location from the **Location drop-down menu**. Use **Location Description** to share call-in details or instructions for finding or accessing a building. **When including call-in details, use one of the templates below.**
     - Template for Microsoft Teams:
       Join the meeting via Microsoft Teams.
       Meeting Id: 218 619 354 17 | Passcode: QVyyfq
       Call: +1 469-208-1525 | Phone Conference ID: 212 050 145#
     - Template for Google Meet:

[**Join the meeting via Google Meet**](#) or call (US) +1 530-481-6051 (PIN: 357 866 716#).

- **Meeting Files:** Documents that support the event. Files names should be clear and descriptive. Files should be uploaded into one of four categories:
  - Agenda
  - Presentations
  - Supporting Documents, or miscellaneous files
  - Meeting Minutes, or the official notes from the event
- **Related Videos:** Webinar recording(s) or other video(s) related to the event. The Video Description field should include a short description of your video, as well as any required credits.
- **Sidebar Tab:** Contains point of contact information for the event, often a staffer or coordinator; meeting host(s), such as GITs or Workgroups.
- **Remove a Calendar Event:** When an event has been canceled, you may choose to 1) add CANCELED: to the meeting title or 2) Remove it from the CMS.

C. **Website and Group Information Management**
   i. Update group page information and membership rosters at least every 6 months.
   ii. Maintain accurate email distribution lists for group members.
   iii. Ensure current contact information and group descriptions.

VI. **Decision-Making Processes**
   A. Follow unanimous or consensus-based decision making whenever possible.
   B. Allow adequate time for discussion and consideration of different perspectives.
   C. Ensure comprehensive stakeholder input in decision-making processes.
   D. Balance scientific expertise with practical implementation considerations.

VII. **Technology Guidelines**
   A. **Meeting Platforms:** Microsoft Teams (primary recommendation), Zoom (alternative)
   B. **File Sharing:** Google Drive (primary recommendation) or Microsoft Teams/SharePoint for collaborative document management
   C. **Engagement Tools:** Mentimeter for real-time polling and feedback; Miro Board for collaborative brainstorming and visualization; Google Forms for structured input collection.
   D. **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use:** Establish clear guidance on AI use during meetings; ensure AI tools enhance rather than replace human

collaboration; maintain transparency about AI assistance in meeting processes.

    E. **Accessibility Measures:** Plan and conduct meetings to accommodate participants' accessibility needs, including disability accommodations, multilingual support where feasible, and attention to time zones. See <u>Accessibility Best Practices</u>, pages 21 to 24.

VIII. Training and Continuous Improvement

    A. **Regular Assessment:** Periodically evaluate meeting effectiveness and participant satisfaction; gather feedback on meeting practices and adjust as needed.

    B. **Skills Development:** Provide ongoing training for meeting leaders and participants on facilitation, consensus-building, conflict management, cultural competence, and technology use.

    C. **Integration with Strategic Goals:** Align meeting practices with Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement goals and outcomes; ensure meeting outcomes support broader program coordination and success.

Reference to Governance Framework Integration

These best practices are intended to complement and reinforce existing governance structures, decision-making processes, and adaptive management cycles outlined in the Chesapeake Bay Program Governance and Management Framework. Implementation of this guidance is expected to enhance transparency, accountability, and collaborative effectiveness across all partnership meetings.

These best practices should be implemented immediately across all Chesapeake Bay Program meeting structures, with regular review and updates as the program evolves beyond 2025. Groups should adapt these guidelines to the specific needs while maintaining consistency with overall program objectives.

_____

This appendix serves as a living resource to be updated as the Chesapeake Bay Program continues to evolve its governance and meeting practices. Regular feedback and refinement will ensure these practices remain effective and relevant to program needs. See <u>Meeting Facilitation Support</u> page for additional reference materials.

Appendix: Best Practices for Effective Meetings

To Support the Chesapeake Bay Program Governance and Management Framework

Introduction

Effective meetings are pivotal for successful governance and organizational frameworks, helping optimize collaboration, decision-making, engagement, and time management. This appendix provides standardized best practices and guidance to support effective meetings across all levels of the Chesapeake Bay Program's organizational structure. These practices are designed to enhance coordination among program units while building trust and aligning goals throughout the partnership.

Purpose

These meeting best practices collectively emphasize purposeful planning, time stewardship, comprehensive engagement, transparent documentation, accessibility, and continuous capacity building. Their formal incorporation into the Chesapeake Bay Program Governance and Management Framework is intended to~~will~~ strengthen the efficacy of meetings, align with adaptive management goals, and support the well-being and productivity of all participants.

I. **Meeting Roles and Responsibilities**

Clearly assign and communicate roles for Chairs, Coordinators, Staffers, Members, and Interested Parties, specifying participation rights and decision-making authority. Maintain consistent representation to preserve continuity.

Participative Leadership: Chairs and facilitators are encouraged to adopt diplomatic, facilitative styles, managing contributions and turn-taking to foster reasonable participation.

> **Commented [A1]:** What does this look like in this context? Coordinators facilitating meetings?

Shared Leadership: Delegate meeting tasks such as facilitation and follow-up assignments among members to distribute workload and build collective ownership.

> **Commented [A2]:** Overall meeting facilitation should be within the purview of the Chair/Co-chair, but for specific topics, there should be a lead to present the materials and facilitate discussion.

A. **Chairs:** Lead meeting facilitation and agenda management; ensure adherence to meeting objectives and timelines; guide decision-making processes; coordinate with other leadership as needed.

B. **Coordinators:** Support meeting logistics and preparation; facilitate communication between meetings; maintain group records and follow-up actions; serve as primary point of contact for group members.

> **Commented [A3]:** I believe several staffers serve in this role, as well as facilitating communication between meetings. Perhaps have these specific roles be flexible between staffers and coordinators? Or, keep it under coordinators but include here "unless delegated to staffers" or "can be delegated to staffers."

C. **Staffers:** Provide technical and administrative support; prepare meeting materials and documentation; assist with logistics and platform management: support follow-up and action item tracking; take minutes or summary notes from meeting.

D. **Members (Voting):** Participate actively in discussions and decision-making; prepare for meetings by reviewing materials in advance; follow

through on assigned action items; represent their organization or jurisdiction's interests.

    E. Members (Non-Voting): Contribute expertise and perspectives to discussions: provide input on relevant topics within their area of knowledge; support implementation of decisions within their capacity.

    F. Interested Parties: Observe proceedings and provide input when appropriate; ~~respect decision-making authority of voting members:~~ contribute specialized knowledge when requested of voting and non-voting members.

II. **Engagement and Interaction**

    A. Foster ~~Psychological Safety~~Supportive Environment(s): Encourage a respectful meeting culture where varied viewpoints are welcomed, and participants feel safe to contribute without fear of dismissal or reprisal.

    B. Promote Active Participation: Use engagement tools and structured facilitation to enable collaborative dialog, preventing dominance by few and disengagement by many.

    C. Build Positive Meeting Relationships: Incorporate appropriate humor and trust-building activities to enhance team cohesion and meeting satisfaction.

Ground Rules:

- Meetings will start and end on time.
- Participants should come to the meeting having reviewed any materials in advance and with necessary information at hand to make informed decisions and/or actively engage in the discussions.
- If the primary (voting) member cannot ~~you can't~~ attend, send an appropriate, informed delegate instead.
- Participants respect the agenda but are free to check process and ground rules.
- Participants engage in active listening and avoid interrupting others.
- Participants are responsible for taking personal notes and following up with the Coordinator and/or Staffer, if needed.
- Participants bear individual responsibility for contributing actively to a constructive group process. Everyone participates.
- Participants show a willingness to reach consensus on decision issues.
- Only one person talking at a time.
- Limit the use of phones and laptops to minimize distractions unless they are necessary for the meeting.
- Limit side conversations.
- Different opinions are valued and considered.
- No discussion of ideas until all ideas heard.
- Keep discussion on topic, and focused.

- Respect the privacy of the discussion, especially if sensitive topics are covered.
- Silence is considered agreement.
- Clearly define tasks and responsibilities, ensuring everyone knows what is expected post-meeting. If you agree to do something, the expectation is that it will be done~~do it~~.

III. **Meeting Planning and Logistics**
   A. **Agenda Development:** ~~Involve~~ Chairs, Coordinators, Staffers, and members involved in collaboratively setting agendas, ensuring agendas articulate clear meeting objectives and next steps.
      i. Utilize Chesapeake Bay Program standard agenda template.
      ii. Meetings should generally be held only when there is a task that requires a group effort.
      iii. Focus intent on decisions and actions that advance priorities.
      iv. Utilize survey form to poll for agenda topics from group members on a periodic basis. At a minimum, the draft agenda will be shared with members for input. Approval of the final agenda is at the discretion of the Chair/Co-chair.
   B. **Advance Distribution of Materials:** Circulate agendas and supporting documents at least 1-2 weeks in advance through the Chesapeake Bay Program Meetings Calendar to allow thorough preparation, enabling efficient, focused discussions.
      i. **Decisional items** must be announced with agendas to ensure appropriate parties are present at meetings.
      ii. **In-Person Meeting Logistics:** Send RSVP surveys to estimate headcount; provide an 'In-Person Meeting Details' document (e.g., parking, lunch, contact info); post signage outside the meeting room and have an attendance sheet and Wi-Fi info available.
   C. **Effective Meeting Size:** Choose meeting size based on purpose; smaller groups for decision-making, larger for information sharing.
      i. Encourage delegation to reduce participant overload.
      ii. Ensure participants reflect expertise needed for discussion.
   D. **Manage Meeting Load:** Regularly assess and rationalize the number of meetings to avoid unnecessary convenings and reduce participant fatigue, acknowledging the "meeting load paradox" whereby excessive meetings decrease engagement and creativity.
   E. **Meeting-Free Periods:** Promote blocks of meeting-free time to protect participant productivity and well-being.

IV. **Time Management**
   A. **Punctuality:** Start and end meetings on time without delay to respect participants' schedules and ensure maximum productivity.

B. **Limit Wasted Time:** Avoid off-topic discussions, side conversations, and counterproductive behaviors to maintain meeting focus and achieve objectives efficiently.
C. **Meeting Duration:** Keep meetings concise and under two hours; consider 30-minute segments or multiple shorter sessions rather than extended meetings.
    i. Schedule appropriate breaks, especially for meetings longer than one hour.

V. **Documentation and Communication Standards**
  A. **Standardized Meeting Documentation**
    i. **Follow standard CBP agenda format with key information:** meeting location/virtual links, purpose, timed discussion points, presenter roles, action and decision items, next steps, breaks and breakout sessions for longer meetings, and hyperlinks to relevant materials.
    ii. **Include consistent elements in all meeting records:** date, time, participants, decisions, action items with assigned responsibilities and deadlines, key takeaways.
    iii. Maintain editable documents or running notes accessible to all group members to track deliverables and their status.
    iv. Assign clear owners and deadlines to tasks.
    v. Send reminder emails and conduct periodic check-ins.

  B. **Chesapeake Bay Program Meetings Calendar**
The Chesapeake Bay Program's Meetings Calendar is the home for public meetings hosted by GITs, Workgroups, Action Teams, and other Chesapeake Bay Program groups. In this way, the Meetings Calendar supports the program's commitment to hosting open meetings, with advance notification of the date, time, location, agenda, and materials, and—after the meeting—a summary of actions and decisions.

The Meetings Calendar does **not** contain meetings hosted by Chesapeake Bay Program partners, or non-public meetings between office staff.

For more guidance, see A Staffer's Guide to the ChesapeakeBay.net Content Management System (CMS).
    i. Post all meeting information with 1-2 weeks advance notice.
    ii. Document and distribute summary minutes with actions and decisions within 1 week after meeting. Utilize Chesapeake Bay Program minutes template.
    iii. **Content for Calendar Events**
      • **Date and Time:** Event date, start time, and end time.

- **Event Title:** Always include the event's month and year in the title. The event title directly informs the event page's URL, and including the month and year makes it more likely the URL will be descriptive and unique. Use a hyphen to separate the month and year from the event name (e.g., Management Board Meeting – September 2025). Avoid commas or parentheses.
- **Purpose:** A short description of your meeting's goals or primary discussion topics should be provided. At a minimum, recurring GIT and Workgroup meetings should include the following statement: "This is the [monthly] [quarterly] [annual] meeting of the [GIT or Workgroup name]."
- **Event Location:** Select the appropriate meeting room, conference platform, or other location from the **Location drop-down menu**. Use **Location Description** to share call-in details or instructions for finding or accessing a building. **When including call-in details, use one of the templates below.**
    - Template for Microsoft Teams:
      Join the meeting via Microsoft Teams.
      Meeting Id: 218 619 354 17 | Passcode: QVyyfq
      Call: +1 469-208-1525 | Phone Conference ID: 212 050 145#
    - Template for Google Meet:
      Join the meeting via Google Meet or call (US) +1 530-481-6051 (PIN: 357 866 716#).
- **Meeting Files:** Documents that support the event. Files names should be clear and descriptive. Files should be uploaded into one of four categories:
    - Agenda
    - Presentations
    - Supporting Documents, or miscellaneous files
    - Meeting Minutes, or the official notes from the event
- **Related Videos:** Webinar recording(s) or other video(s) related to the event. The Video Description field should include a short description of your video, as well as any required credits.
- **Sidebar Tab:** Contains point of contact information for the event, often a staffer or coordinator; meeting host(s), such as GITs or Workgroups.

Commented [A9]: Do we want to include something for Zoom?

- **Remove a Calendar Event:** When an event has been canceled, you may choose to 1) add CANCELED: to the meeting title or 2) Remove it from the CMS.

C. **Website and Group Information Management**
  i. Update group page information and membership rosters at least every 6 months. This entails:
     ~~ii.~~ • Maintaining accurate email distribution lists for group members.
     ~~iii.~~ • Ensuring current contact information and group descriptions.

VI. **Decision-Making Processes**
  A. Follow unanimous or consensus-based decision making whenever possible.
  B. Allow adequate time for discussion and consideration of different perspectives.
  C. Ensure comprehensive stakeholder input in decision-making processes.
  D. Balance scientific expertise with practical implementation considerations.

VII. **Technology Guidelines**
  A. **Meeting Platforms:** Microsoft Teams (primary recommendation), Zoom (alternative)
  B. **File Sharing:** Google Drive (primary recommendation) or Microsoft Teams/SharePoint for collaborative document management
  C. **Engagement Tools:** Mentimeter for real-time polling and feedback; Miro Board for collaborative brainstorming and visualization; Google Forms for structured input collection.
  D. **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use:** Establish clear guidance on AI use during meetings; ensure AI tools enhance rather than replace human collaboration; maintain transparency about AI assistance in meeting processes.
  E. **Accessibility Measures:** Plan and conduct meetings to accommodate participants' accessibility needs, including disability accommodations, multilingual support where feasible, and attention to time zones. See Accessibility Best Practices, pages 21 to 24.

VIII. **Training and Continuous Improvement**
  A. **Regular Assessment:** Periodically evaluate meeting effectiveness and participant satisfaction; gather feedback on meeting practices and adjust as needed.
  B. **Skills Development:** Provide ongoing training for meeting leaders and participants on facilitation, consensus-building, conflict management, cultural competence, and technology use.

Commented [A10]: Please replace with, "following the CBP's governance protocols."

Commented [A11]: These two seem to read more like principles. Putting it into practice is something we can talk through.

Commented [A12]: I don't believe EPA can host Google Drive.

Commented [A13]: We'll probably need to include something that the use of AI should follow Agency policy.

C. **Integration with Strategic Goals:** Align meeting practices with Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement goals and outcomes; ensure meeting outcomes support broader program coordination and success.

Reference to Governance Framework Integration

These best practices are intended to complement and reinforce existing governance structures, decision-making processes, and adaptive management cycles outlined in the Chesapeake Bay Program Governance and Management Framework. Implementation of this guidance is expected to enhance transparency, accountability, and collaborative effectiveness across all partnership meetings.

These best practices should be implemented immediately across all Chesapeake Bay Program meeting structures, with regular review and updates as the program evolves beyond 2025. Groups should adapt these guidelines to the specific needs while maintaining consistency with overall program objectives.

_____

This appendix serves as a living resource to be updated as the Chesapeake Bay Program continues to evolve its governance and meeting practices. Regular feedback and refinement will ensure these practices remain effective and relevant to program needs. See Meeting Facilitation Support page for additional reference materials.

Appendix: Best Practices for Effective Meetings
To Support the Chesapeake Bay Program Governance and Management Framework

Introduction
Effective meetings are pivotal for successful governance and organizational frameworks, helping optimize collaboration, decision-making, engagement, and time management. This appendix provides standardized best practices and guidance to support effective meetings across all levels of the Chesapeake Bay Program's organizational structure. These practices are designed to enhance coordination among program units while building trust and aligning goals throughout the partnership.

Purpose
These meeting best practices collectively emphasize purposeful planning, time stewardship, comprehensive engagement, transparent documentation, accessibility, and continuous capacity building. Their formal incorporation into the Chesapeake Bay Program Governance and Management Framework will strengthen the efficacy of meetings, align with adaptive management goals, and support the well-being and productivity of all participants.

I. **Meeting Roles and Responsibilities**
Clearly assign and communicate roles for Chairs, Coordinators, Staffers, Members, and Interested Parties, specifying participation rights and decision authority. Maintain consistent representation to preserve continuity.

Participative Leadership: Chairs and facilitators are encouraged to adopt diplomatic, facilitative styles, managing contributions and turn-taking to foster reasonable participation.

Shared Leadership: Delegate meeting tasks such as facilitation and follow-up assignments among members to distribute workload and build collective ownership.

A. **Chairs:** Lead meeting facilitation and agenda development and management; ensure adherence to meeting objectives and timelines; guide decision-making processes; coordinate with other leadership as needed.

A.B. **Vice chair: Supports the chair, is expected to take over as chair after their term ends.**

B.C. **Coordinators:** Support meeting logistics and preparation; facilitate communication between meetings; maintain group records and follow-up actions; serve as primary point of contact for group members; manage meeting attendance.

C.D. **Staffers:** Provide technical and administrative support; prepare meeting materials and documentation; assist with logistics and platform

management: support follow-up and action item tracking; take meeting attendance minutes or summary notes from meeting.

D.E. **Members (Voting):** Participate actively in discussions and decision-making; prepare for meetings by reviewing materials in advance; follow through on assigned action items; represent their organization or jurisdiction's interests, including by coordinating with and meeting as needed with their respective Management Board member, per the CBP governance document.

E.F. **Members (Non-Voting)[EC, PSC, MB, advisory committees only]:** Contribute expertise and perspectives to discussions: provide input on relevant topics within their area of knowledge; support implementation of decisions within their capacity.

F.G. **Interested Parties:** Observe proceedings and provide input when appropriate; respect decision-making authority of voting members: contribute specialized knowledge when requested.

II. **Engagement and Interaction**

A. **Foster Psychological Safety:** Encourage a respectful meeting culture where varied viewpoints are welcomed, and participants feel safe to contribute without fear of dismissal or reprisal.

B. **Promote Active Participation:** Use engagement tools and structured facilitation to enable collaborative dialog, preventing dominance by few and disengagement by many.

C. **Build Positive Meeting Relationships:** Incorporate appropriate humor and trust-building activities to enhance team cohesion and meeting satisfaction.

Ground Rules:
- Meetings will start and end on time.
- Participants should come to the meeting having reviewed any materials and with necessary information at hand.
- If you can't attend, send an appropriate, informed delegate instead.
- All signatories that sign up for an outcome are expected to attend all workgroup and Goal Team meetings related to that outcome, as well as all Management Board, Principal Staff Committee, and Executive Council meetings. Attendance may be taken at meetings to track regular attendance
- Signatories should send their principal to all meetings (ex. Governor, Management Board member, workgroup voting member, etc.), except in rare circumstances necessitating a designee.
- Participants respect the agenda but are free to check process and ground rules.
- Participants engage in active listening and avoid interrupting others.
- Participants are responsible for taking personal notes and following up with Coordinator, if needed.

- Participants bear individual responsibility for contributing actively to a constructive group process. Everyone participates.
- Signatories are responsible for acting as "ambassadors of added value" on behalf of their respective non-CBP colleagues, and "snowballing" the impact of attending meetings to inform their signatory colleague's work
- Participants show a willingness to reach consensus on decision issues.
- Only one person talking at a time.
- Limit the use of phones, ~~and~~ laptops, etc. to minimize distractions unless they are necessary for the meeting.
- Limit side conversations.
- Different opinions are valued and considered.
- No discussion of ideas until all ideas heard.
- Keep discussion on topic, ~~and~~ focused, and professional.
- Respect the privacy of the discussion, especially if sensitive topics are covered.
- Coordinators and staffers may not act as chairs, vice chairs, or voting members. Chairs, co-chairs, and vice chairs may also serve as voting members
- Chairs, co-chairs, vice chairs should serve time-limited terms
- Silence is agreement.
- All Chesapeake Bay Program meetings should seek to add value to their members, rather than "meeting just to meet". If a meeting does not add value for its members, it should be cancelled or postponed. Ensuring each meeting adds value is the responsibility of every voting participant.
- All CBP groups shall have a chair and vice chair, or co-chairs, as well as a coordinator and staffer (the leadership team). Groups with a leadership vacancy for at least 6 months or groups that have not met publicly in the previous 14 months shall be recommended by the existing members of that group's leadership team to the Management Board for consideration for dissolution.
- Clearly define tasks and responsibilities, ensuring everyone knows what is expected post-meeting. If you agree to do something, do it.
- Avoid all financial and other conflicts of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest, and abstain from speaking and/or voting if appropriate.
- Accountability in a voluntary partnership is up to the members of the Chesapeake Bay Program at every level

III. **Meeting Planning and Logistics**
   A. **Agenda Development:** Involve Chairs, Coordinators, and members in collaboratively setting agendas, ensuring agendas articulate clear meeting objectives and next steps.
      i. Utilize Chesapeake Bay Program standard agenda template.
      ii. Meetings should generally be held only when there is a task that requires a group effort.

      iii. Focus intent on decisions and actions that advance priorities.

      iv. Utilize survey form to poll for agenda topics from group members.

B. Advance Distribution of Materials: Circulate agendas and supporting documents at least 1-2 weeks in advance through the <u>Chesapeake Bay Program Meetings Calendar</u> to allow thorough preparation, enabling efficient, focused discussions.

      i. **Decisional items** must be announced with agendas to ensure appropriate parties are present at meetings. <u>The group must obtain consent from voting members to vote on an item with less than a week's notice</u>

      ii. **In-Person Meeting Logistics:** Send RSVP surveys to estimate headcount; provide an 'In-Person Meeting Details' document (e.g., parking, lunch, contact info); post signage outside the meeting room and have an attendance sheet and Wi-Fi info available.

C. Effective Meeting Size: Choose meeting size based on <u>purpose</u>; smaller groups for decision-making, larger for information sharing.

      i. Encourage delegation to reduce participant overload.

      ii. Ensure participants reflect expertise needed for discussion.

D. Manage Meeting Load: Regularly assess and rationalize the number of meetings to avoid unnecessary convenings and reduce participant fatigue, acknowledging the "<u>meeting load paradox</u>" whereby excessive meetings decrease engagement and creativity.

E. Meeting-Free Periods: Promote blocks of meeting-free time to protect participant productivity and well-being.

IV. Time Management

A. Punctuality: Start and end meetings on time without delay to respect participants' schedules and ensure maximum productivity.

B. Limit Wasted Time: Avoid off-topic discussions, side conversations, and counterproductive behaviors to maintain meeting focus and achieve objectives efficiently.

C. Meeting Duration: Keep meetings concise and under two hours; consider 30-minute segments or multiple shorter sessions rather than extended meetings.

      i. Schedule appropriate breaks, especially for meetings longer than one hour.

V. Documentation and Communication Standards

A. Standardized Meeting Documentation

      i. **Follow standard CBP agenda format with key information:** meeting location/virtual links, purpose, timed discussion points, presenter roles, action and decision items, next steps, breaks

and breakout sessions for longer meetings, and hyperlinks to relevant materials.

ii. **Include consistent elements in all meeting records:** date, time, participants, decisions, action items with assigned responsibilities and deadlines, key takeaways.

iii. Maintain editable documents or running notes accessible to all group members to track deliverables and their status.

iv. Assign clear owners and deadlines to tasks.

v. Send reminder emails and conduct periodic check-ins.

B. **Chesapeake Bay Program Meetings Calendar**

The Chesapeake Bay Program's Meetings Calendar is the home for public meetings hosted by GITs, Workgroups, Action Teams, and other Chesapeake Bay Program groups. In this way, the Meetings Calendar supports the program's commitment to hosting open meetings, with advance notification of the date, time, location, agenda, and materials, and—after the meeting—a summary of actions and decisions.

The Meetings Calendar does **not** contain meetings hosted by Chesapeake Bay Program partners, or non-public meetings between office staff.

For more guidance, see A Staffer's Guide to the ChesapeakeBay.net Content Management System (CMS).

i. Post all meeting information with 1-2 weeks advance notice.

ii. Document and distribute summary minutes with actions and decisions within 1 week after meeting. Utilize Chesapeake Bay Program minutes template.

iii. **Content for Calendar Events**

- **Date and Time:** Event date, start time, and end time.
- **Event Title:** Always include the event's month and year in the title. The event title directly informs the event page's URL, and including the month and year makes it more likely the URL will be descriptive and unique. Use a hyphen to separate the month and year from the event name (e.g., Management Board Meeting – September 2025). Avoid commas or parentheses.
- **Purpose:** A short description of your meeting's goals or primary discussion topics. At a minimum, recurring GIT and Workgroup meetings should include the following statement: "This is the [monthly] [quarterly] [annual] meeting of the [GIT or Workgroup name]."
- **Event Location:** Select the appropriate meeting room, conference platform, or other location from the **Location drop-down menu**. Use **Location Description** to share call-

in details or instructions for finding or accessing a building. **When including call-in details, use one of the templates below.**

- Template for Microsoft Teams:
  Join the meeting via Microsoft Teams.
  Meeting Id: 218 619 354 17 | Passcode: QVyyfq
  Call: +1 469-208-1525 | Phone Conference ID: 212 050 145#
- Template for Google Meet:
  Join the meeting via Google Meet or call (US) +1 530-481-6051 (PIN: 357 866 716#).

- **Meeting Files:** Documents that support the event. Files names should be clear and descriptive. Files should be uploaded into one of four categories:
  - Agenda
  - Presentations
  - Supporting Documents, or miscellaneous files
  - Meeting Minutes, or the official notes from the event

- **Related Videos:** Webinar recording(s) or other video(s) related to the event. The Video Description field should include a short description of your video, as well as any required credits.

- **Sidebar Tab:** Contains point of contact information for the event, often a staffer or coordinator; meeting host(s), such as GITs or Workgroups.

- **Remove a Calendar Event:** When an event has been canceled, you may choose to 1) add CANCELED: to the meeting title or 2) Remove it from the CMS.

C. **Website and Group Information Management**
   i. Update group page information and membership rosters at least every 6 months.
   ii. Maintain accurate email distribution lists for group members.
   iii. Ensure current contact information and group descriptions.

VI. **Decision-Making Processes**
   A. Follow unanimous or consensus-based decision making whenever possible.
   B. Allow adequate time for discussion and consideration of different perspectives.
   B.C. Before voting, the chair should call the question of a motion to proceed to vote
   C.D. Ensure comprehensive stakeholder input in decision-making processes.

      ~~D.~~E.   Balance scientific expertise with practical implementation considerations.

VII.   **Technology Guidelines**
    A. **Meeting Platforms:** Microsoft Teams (primary recommendation), Zoom (alternative)
    B. **File Sharing:** Google Drive (primary recommendation) or Microsoft Teams/SharePoint for collaborative document management
    C. **Engagement Tools:** Mentimeter for real-time polling and feedback; Miro Board for collaborative brainstorming and visualization; Google Forms for structured input collection.
    D. **Technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use:** Establish clear guidance on AI use during meetings; ensure AI tools enhance rather than replace human collaboration; maintain transparency about AI assistance in meeting processes. Ex. No AI note takers are permitted at CBP meetings
    E. **Accessibility Measures:** Plan and conduct meetings to accommodate participants' accessibility needs, including disability accommodations, multilingual support where feasible, and attention to time zones. See Accessibility Best Practices, pages 21 to 24.
    ~~E.~~F. **Security:** All meeting attendees are responsible for ensuring the digital security of materials, meeting attendance, and follow-up messages. For example, calling into meetings from outside the United States is prohibited unless under extreme circumstances

VIII.   **Training and Continuous Improvement**
    A. **Regular Assessment:** Periodically evaluate meeting effectiveness and participant satisfaction; gather feedback on meeting practices and adjust as needed.
    B. **Skills Development:** Provide ongoing training for meeting leaders and participants on facilitation, consensus-building, conflict management, cultural competence, and technology use.
    C. **Integration with Strategic Goals:** Align meeting practices with Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement goals and outcomes; ensure meeting outcomes support broader program coordination and success.

Reference to Governance Framework Integration

These best practices are intended to complement and reinforce existing governance structures, decision-making processes, and adaptive management cycles outlined in the Chesapeake Bay Program Governance and Management Framework. Implementation of this guidance is expected to enhance transparency, accountability, and collaborative effectiveness across all partnership meetings. They are not intended to, nor do they overrule the Governance and Management Framework document or any federal, state, or local law or policy.

These best practices shall~~ould~~ be implemented immediately across all Chesapeake Bay Program meeting structures, with regular review and updates by the CBP Management Board as the program evolves beyond 2025. Groups should adapt these guidelines to the specific needs while maintaining consistency with overall program objectives.

_____

This appendix serves as a living resource to be updated regularly as the Chesapeake Bay Program continues to evolve its governance and meeting practices. Regular feedback and refinement will ensure these practices remain effective and relevant to program needs. See Meeting Facilitation Support page for additional reference materials.