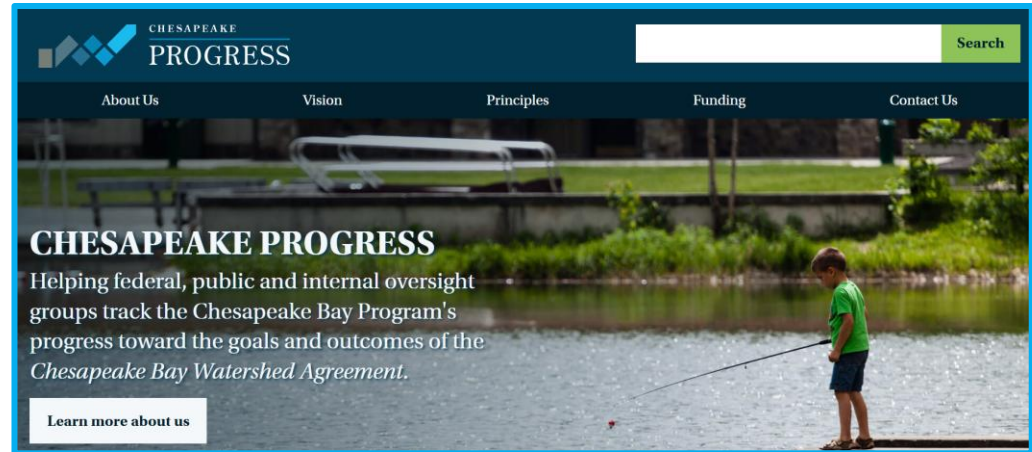January 29, 2026

Chesapeake Bay Program Indicators

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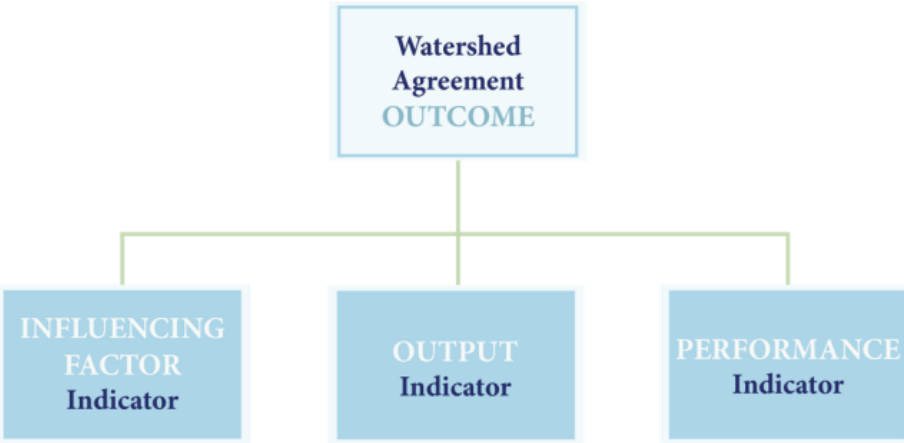
Indicators Foundational Documents

The **Indicators Framework (2015)** is a conceptual model that demonstrates the relationships between indicators and describes how they will be used. The Framework is aligned with the Agreement at the Outcome level and includes the information needed to communicate progress towards these outcomes.

CBP Indicator SOP (2025): internal document that defines procedures for updating existing Indicators, annual planning and workflow, and publishing to ChesapeakeProgress.
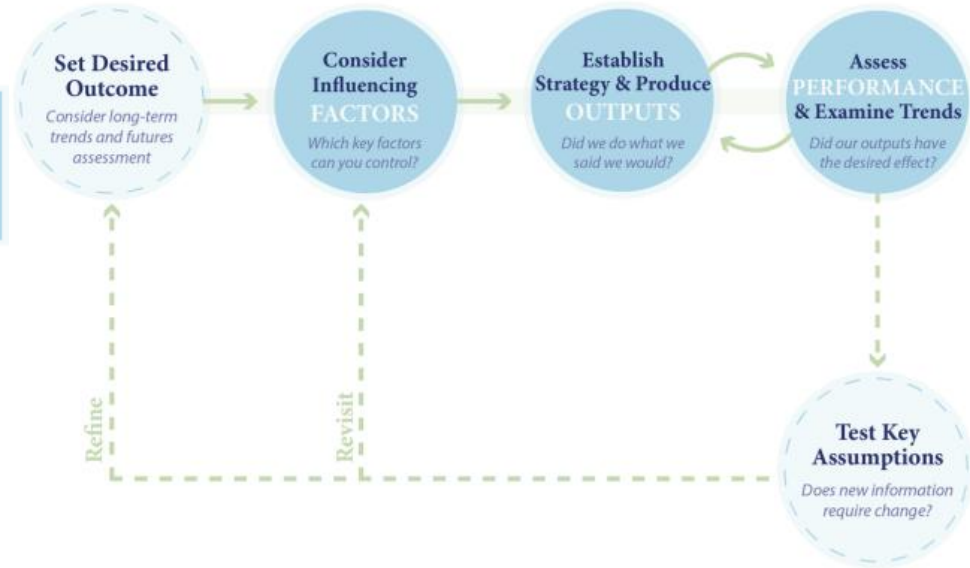
Current Indicators Framework

Watershed Agreement OUTCOME

INFLUENCING FACTOR Indicator

OUTPUT Indicator

PERFORMANCE Indicator

Information Support

Three information types are needed to support adaptive management and communication needs.

Influencing Factors – What KEY influencing factors are impacting the achievement of an outcome?

Outputs – Are we doing what we said we would do in our work plans and management strategies?

Performance – Are we achieving the outcome?

Using Indicators in a Simplified Decision Framework

Indicators support several steps within the Decision Framework. The blue circles denote steps within the Decision Framework that need indicators and metrics to guide implementation work.

Set Desired Outcome
Consider long-term trends and futures assessment

Consider Influencing FACTORS
Which key factors can you control?

Establish Strategy & Produce OUTPUTS
Did we do what we said we would?

Assess PERFORMANCE & Examine Trends
Did our outputs have the desired effect?

Refine

Revisit

Test Key Assumptions
Does new information require change?

Types of Indicators and their Users

- **Influencing Factor:** factor that impacts achievement of an Outcome (Watershed Population)
- **Output:** reflect actions taken or implemented (Oysters, Fish Passage, Tree Canopy planting BMPs)
- **Performance (most common):** effects of outputs or response to actions (Blue Crab Abundance, SAV, Protected Lands, WIPs, Tree Canopy cover)

ChesapeakeProgress Audiences

Internal Partnership Groups	**Public Groups**	**Federal Groups**
Visual snapshot of quantitative data; why progress is being made or not made	Use data to explain, inform, and justify decisions to constituents; why do we care?	Use data to see where and how funding is spent to achieve goals; identify potential obstacles

Questions to Consider when Developing Indicators

1. **How does this metric tie to larger Bay Program goals?** (Thriving Habitat, Fisheries, and Wildlife; Healthy Landscapes; Clean Water; Engaged Communities)
2. **How can we connect this indicator to something people are familiar with and support?**
3. **Who needs to know about this indicator?** (e.g., watershed organizations, media, interested public, local governments, teachers)
4. **When do we expect to see significant progress being made related to this indicator?** Is this something that we can reasonably track and report on?

What Makes an "Indicator" on ChesapeakeProgress?

- **Core Criteria:**
  - ✓ Must tie directly to an Outcome or Outcome Target and illustrate measurable progress over time.
  - ✓ Must identify available funding to support data/information collection, monitoring, reporting, and maintenance.
  - ✓ Must identify lead partner(s) responsible for data/information collection, monitoring, reporting, and maintenance (e.g., surveys, sampling, geospatial data).
  - ✓ Must be either an Output or Performance Indicator in the Framework.

  Not every Outcome or Target will need or have a clear Indicator.
  Groups may need track their Outcome progress in other ways.

Indicator Documentation: Future Changes

GOAL: Reduce redundancy and reframe questions to be concise, while still providing key information for multiple audiences.

- **Data File**: Excel template with multiple tabs (Read Me, ChesapeakeProgress Summary, Data); contains fields for CBPO metadata requirements; may contain tables, formulas, charts, text boxes.

- **Analysis & Methods**: Reduce number of questions; contains mainly narrative and communication information.

There will be opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the "new" data file and A&M templates after the 2026 cycle and make subsequent changes, if needed.

Things We're Working On

1. Survey sent to Outcome/Indicator leads on anticipated 2026 Indicator status. (January 2026)

2. Revising data file and Analysis & Methods templates for 2026 Indicator updates. (complete by end of February 2026)

3. Updating Indicators Framework to better define types of Indicators and the process for developing new Indicators. (complete in Spring 2026)

Reminder: *ChesapeakeProgress is under construction. To access specific Indicator materials, visit https://data.chesapeakebay.net/.*

Questions?

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