

Chesapeake Bay Program.

Communications Audit + Strategy - Final Report

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Overview.

The Chesapeake Bay Program engages in an extraordinary range of activities to preserve and restore the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. But the value of its work is not necessarily apparent to many members of the public, and the breadth of its impact is often not always clear. This is true even for stakeholders who might appreciate a particular aspect of that work, but who are often largely unaware of the many other things the Bay Program does. Our brief was to establish a clear brand identity, and brand guidelines for staff and partners, so as to help build recognition for their collective work and for the value of the partnership that is at the core of all that the Chesapeake Bay Program is.

ChangingMedia conducted a comprehensive brand and strategy analysis with the Bay Program, including a kick-off session with program staff and an in-depth branding visioning workshop. Separately, we conducted surveys and multiple in-depth interviews with Chesapeake Bay Program partners, watershed “end users,” members of the media, and environmental educators. We also conducted a messaging and content analysis across all of Chesapeake Bay Program’s main communications channels.

What we found most strikingly was a consistent difficulty in articulating the value of Chesapeake Bay Program’s unique attributes in terms a broader public would understand. And that, unfortunately, apathy or lack of awareness on the part of the region’s residents — particularly of why the Bay Program’s collaborative and cross-jurisdictional make-up and approach is so important and superior to the alternative — poses an ongoing threat to the program’s existence.

Having a broader audience recognize, understand, and value the Chesapeake Bay Program and its work means many more people will participate in restoring the watershed, whether through working with the Bay Program directly, or with other organizations, or simply by changing their own everyday behaviors. But most crucially it means that more residents of the Chesapeake Bay watershed jurisdictions will support continued and adequate funding at state and federal levels for the Chesapeake Bay Program specifically, and favor ongoing participation by their state or district in the collaborative process that defines the program and makes it uniquely effective.

This target audience would not be all of the general public, that is to say all residents of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. That would simply be too broad an audience for effective communications, given limited resources. For a person to care about the Chesapeake Bay Program, they first have to care about the Chesapeake Bay. Educating the broader public about the importance of the Bay and its watershed is a crucial part of the Bay Program's mission, but in raising awareness of the importance of the program itself, the focus should be on those members of the public who are already aware of and interested in the Chesapeake Bay, however limited their knowledge and understanding may be at present.

Another audience that requires attention is the program's many partners. While it would seem that partners should be best placed to be its most effective champions, we found in our research that many were often confused as to how to speak about the Bay Program and define its value, and in some cases lacked the motivation to be advocates, whether because of disillusionment, a sense of disconnection, or a rejection of the premise that there was an urgent need to communicate about the program to the public at all. The issue is both one of confusion over how best to communicate, but also, crucially, one of buy-in.

Overall, the Bay Program faces a tough communications challenge. Its value is not obvious in the way that most people understand that something is valuable. Whereas the cognitive bias for processing that something is worthwhile runs to the concrete, immediate, local, and vivid, the Bay Program's operations and impact — indeed the qualities that make it uniquely effective and valuable — are abstract, long-term, distant and cross-jurisdictional, and diffuse.

The program's greatest value is in a type of impact that emerges from networked collaboration in a way that is difficult to define or grasp, but it is precisely that element that constituents must recognize and champion so as to safeguard its existence. In something of a similar way to the many species of wildlife the Bay Program's work defends, people need to be able to name it, recognize it, and value it to demand it be preserved.

While being able to speak more clearly (and in greater unison) about who Chesapeake Bay Program is and what it does will be helpful, the traditional elements of branding — logo, tagline, brand promise and so on — have their limits in communicating that particular kind of value. That is unless one broadens the definition of branding to mean storytelling about that value proposition — storytelling that takes on many forms, through many communications channels, and is consistently reinforced. The need is to make that abstract notion of networked emergent impact vivid, visceral, relevant, and tangible, and to keep driving it home again and again. This would amount to an ongoing campaign that gives people very specific examples of what collaboration provides and has provided that is so beneficial; and shows what would happen if it all went away.

In this report, we present the finalized brand promise and values statements developed through our branding process, as well as full communications kits for partners and for the media. Together, these comprise a “brand manual” for the Bay Program, but one specifically targeted to its most pressing needs. We also explore some ideas and suggestions for what a broader campaign might involve, breaking these down by “internal” audience — partners and stakeholders — versus “external” audience — the interested public we believe should be the target for outward facing communications designed to build a sense of connection and value.

INTERNAL.

To speak meaningfully to outside audiences, the Chesapeake Bay Program needs to know exactly who it is, what it does, and what it stands for. Our branding process was designed to achieve as much clarity and consensus as possible on those questions, and we present the final versions of the Bay Program's brand promise and value statements below. These are not necessarily intended as statements to be made publicly but rather as a core internal understanding of what the Chesapeake Bay Program's narrative is. Once this is established, they can be used as building blocks to tell that story to the outside world.

Included in this section are also suggestions for creating buy-in among partners so that they might be motivated to become effective champions for the program in their interactions with the public. This would essentially be a kind of internal campaign aimed at making a broad array of partners the powerful communications channel they can and should be. Finally, moving forward to a scenario where partners are bought in, we include the elements of a partner communications kit to help them talk about the Chesapeake Bay Program and engage members of the public on its behalf in a clear, compelling, and meaningful way.

Brand Promise + Values.

BRAND PROMISE

A brand promise should reflect the core of your organization. It is the beacon that guides you no matter how your organization or the times change. It distills the core values identified above into a single, easily communicated statement, that clearly reflects the value you promise to an individual, your stakeholders, and the world. The brand promise below succinctly describes the values, work, and mission of the Chesapeake Bay Program.

Solutions to sustain a thriving Chesapeake Bay watershed, fueled by science, driven by partnership.

CORE VALUES

Commitment to the Bay

This is, not surprisingly, the core value that guides your work. Your goal is to communicate the value of the bay as a crucial natural resource for everyone in the watershed, not just those who live on its shores. You believe in the reciprocal benefits of protecting and restoring the Chesapeake Bay. Ensuring it is abundant and thriving serves as an economic engine and increases the health and wellbeing of people who live in the region.

A Trusted Authority

The Chesapeake Bay Program has a long track record of success and expertise that it brings to every project. It relies on rigorous science to ensure it is making the desired impact on the Chesapeake Bay watershed. With this science based approach, the Chesapeake Bay is able to be responsive to changing needs and local differentiators. The Program can evolve as the needs of the Chesapeake Bay and the communities in its watershed change as well. It can be relied on to offer solutions that are effective and well implemented.

Collaboration

Above all else, the Chesapeake Bay Program is a partnership. It brings together everyone at the table, local, state, and federal decision makers to work together. The Chesapeake Bay watershed is a large and diverse region, and so it takes a big-picture vision in order to protect and sustain it. The Chesapeake Bay Program helps partners see the effect their work has on the overall health of the bay. It provides a space for collaboration that maximizes the impact of individual projects through sharing resources and ideas.

Creative Content.

There is a limit to what a communications strategy can do in creating partner buy-in. Partner motivation is ultimately a question of organizational structure and psychology; It is *not* only clearer or more engaging communication that is needed to get partners more fully on board.

What we can say, however, is that the impression we received from many partners was a frustration about how to communicate what the Chesapeake Bay Program is and does, and in many cases a confusion on the part of the partners themselves about how to answer those questions. The process of clarifying the core brand and values may itself go a long way to addressing this problem.

Another set of responses showed disillusionment with the direction the Chesapeake Bay Program has taken, reflecting a sentiment that the program has grown so much in scope that its mission has become incoherent. It's unclear what communications tactic could address these kinds of misgivings. Providing partners with an opportunity to voice these concerns might help, though we can't say for certain how willing they are to share them at present or whether they feel stifled or pressured not to be vocal about their objections. Certainly a consistent theme that emerged from interviews and surveys was that the Chesapeake Bay Program comes off as deeply bureaucratic, to both outsiders and insiders, and that for some, it is almost as if the goals have been forgotten in a morass of process.

One other significant sentiment was the feeling voiced by some partners — even those with leadership roles in the program — that reaching out to the broader public in order to communicate the value of the Chesapeake Bay Program was unnecessary, possibly even disruptive. They did not believe there was any real threat to the program's model or its funding and were content with having its work continue in the background (indeed that this might be better altogether).

To counter this point of view, it may be worth speaking frankly about how other government and government-related programs have been diminished over time to the point of becoming essentially defunct, in part because of the same mentality. The demise of important regulatory and collaborative mechanisms can come gradually, not just suddenly. The complacency that comes with assuming that things will be fine because they have been so far invites death by a thousand cuts.

It may also be worth pointing out that the perception that there is nothing to be concerned about is precisely the mentality that many partners struggle against in their efforts to counter climate change and other environmental threats. Even more to the point, it is the mentality that prevailed before the creation of the Chesapeake Bay Program and was one of the main reasons its establishment was, and remains, necessary.

Along with urgency, there should also be pride. Building Chesapeake Bay Program's brand should mean building something partners are proud to be a part of. AmeriCorps, for example, created an "[AmeriCorps Gets Things Done](#)" campaign with a Rosie the Riveter-like mascot. The design was so compelling that partners hung them in their offices. Getting partners involved in a campaign they find inspiring may be as valuable, or more, as having them work through a set of branding standards.

It may also be the case that partners will be more easily convinced to buy into the value of branding if they are shown how communications can make the work of the organization more effective through increased participation by the public, rather than relying solely on the argument that branding is needed to help safeguard funding or survival. Finding stories through interactions with the public that demonstrate this value will be the most effective way to convince partners — the testimonial or spotlight from a community member that essentially says "I never knew how important the work the Chesapeake Bay Program is doing in my backyard was until I saw X. Now I'm determined to help the cause of restoration by doing Y."

In the end, of course, partners are also looking out for the interests of their own organizations, institutions, or projects. It may be worth creating profiles of partners, mapping out precisely what each is most interested in and motivated by. This can then form the basis of mapping external outreach that goes through the partners, identifying opportunities to coordinate and best distribute resources. The more tailored the outreach the better, rather than always asking every partner to push precisely the same content and message. Calls-to-action should be specific to audiences and areas of expertise. The more relevant those messages for a partner's given audience, the more buy-in there will likely be from the partner.

Asking partners what they want and need, whether through surveys or more informally, will be a useful way to understand their preferences, but the very act of asking is itself important. Partners need to feel that they are supported and their own needs will be met before they feel fully comfortable supporting the Chesapeake Bay Program and being part of that larger effort and brand.

A few more ideas

Show Appreciation: Whether through blogs, social media posts, personal thanks, etc., find ways to spotlight the work your partners are doing even if it is not being done as an official Chesapeake Bay Program project. People are more likely to share their own story or something involving them. It is a great way to get the Chesapeake Bay Program's name out there while also showing your partners that you value them.

Awards: Create an annual awards event for best partners, best projects, etc. This can be a great way to get press for your organization but also highlight the important work your partners are doing, which increases both cohesion and visibility.

Social Media Takeovers: Give partners the reigns to one of your social media accounts. During that day or week they can submit posts that show how their improving the Bay in their backyard. This will help personalize the efforts of the Chesapeake Bay Program and give others the opportunity to share why they have chosen to be a champion of the Chesapeake Bay Program.

Quotes: Spotlight good quotes from partners about the value of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the specific impact it has had locally where they are.

Power of Partnership: Create a running feature that provides in-depth stories about what the program is doing and how it is making an impact. This should not be general coverage about the Chesapeake Bay but specific stories that highlight what the Chesapeake Bay Program does and why its model of science-driven partnership is impactful.

Partner Kit.

BRAND PROMISE

Solutions to sustain a thriving Chesapeake Bay watershed, fueled by science, driven by partnership.

The Chesapeake Bay Program is committed to bringing organizations across the Chesapeake Bay watershed together to invest in impactful solutions. We are able to convene a wide variety of stakeholders at the table to work collaboratively toward cleaner streams and rivers and a healthier future for all. We are invested in promoting science-based approaches that produce measurable results for the Chesapeake Bay.

CORE VALUES

Commitment to the Bay

The Chesapeake Bay is a crucial natural resource for everyone in the watershed, not just those who live on its shores. We believe in the reciprocal benefits of protecting and restoring the Chesapeake Bay. Ensuring it is abundant and thriving serves as an economic engine and increases the health and wellbeing of people who live in the region.

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Collaboration

Above all else, the Chesapeake Bay Program is a partnership. We bring together everyone at the table, local, state, and federal decision makers to work together. The Chesapeake Bay watershed is a large region and so it takes a large vision in order to sustain it. The Chesapeake Bay Program helps partners see the effect their work has on the overall health of the bay. We provide a space for collaboration that maximizes the impact of individual projects through sharing resources and ideas.

HOW TO TALK ABOUT THE CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM

The brand promise and core values above provide a guide for talking about the most essential parts of the Chesapeake Bay Program. When speaking to individuals or audiences about the Chesapeake Bay Program, here are a few highlights to touch on:

- **Partnership:** The Chesapeake Bay Program is unique partnership comprised of local governments, scientists, citizens, and other stakeholders working together to develop, implement, and measure strategies for ensuring a thriving Chesapeake Bay. They work across the watershed to create local solutions that are part of a holistic plan to create healthier waterways from your backyard to the Chesapeake Bay.
- **Results Driven:** The Chesapeake Bay Program is driven by science-based goals and strategies. They serve as a resource to help their partners track the effectiveness of their interventions and the changes in the health of the Chesapeake Bay.
- **Your Involvement:** Finally, make it personal by adding stories about why the Chesapeake Bay is important to you. Talk about how you and your organization work with the Chesapeake Bay Program and the benefit you have seen from that partnership.

POWER OF PARTNERSHIP: SOME EXAMPLES

While the best examples will be those from your own experience, here are a few sample projects and achievements illustrating the kind of impact that's most effective to highlight. The goal is to bring across not just that there have been successes, but that those successes are meaningful in a way an interested but not necessarily technically knowledgeable audience can understand and relate to, and that they came about *because of* the unique collaboration and partnership the Chesapeake Bay Program creates and cultivates:

History of Water Quality - Before the Chesapeake Bay Program was created, state and local jurisdictions had to tackle pollution on their own. There was no plan of action, no common standards, and no consistent monitoring for the Chesapeake Bay region. That's exactly what the Chesapeake Bay Program provides. Through the power of partnership, everyone benefits. States keep their sovereignty but work together, setting targets for the region while program staff conduct unbiased scientific monitoring and research, and develop tools and best practices so that everyone can fight pollution more effectively.

The Pollution "Diet" - Implemented in 2010, the Chesapeake Bay Program's Total Maximum Daily Load, or "pollution diet," limits pollution levels so as to restore the health of the Bay and its waterways. Thanks to the program's unique partnership model, the diet is working: nitrogen levels have dropped by almost a quarter, along with reductions in other pollutants, leading to a record resurgence of the natural ecosystem. Natural grasses, a key indicator of the Bay area's health, have increased fourfold since the diet was instituted, the most regrowth ever observed not just in the Chesapeake Bay, but the entire world.

Potomac River Clean-Up - According to Potomac Conservancy's State of the Nation River Report, the Chesapeake Bay Program is the "driving force" behind the continued improvement of the Potomac River year after year. The source of drinking water for over five million residents of the Bay watershed, the river has improved from a D grade in 2011 to a B in 2018. The changes have also ushered in a "golden age" for wildlife, says Bryan Watts, Director of the Center for Conservation Biology of The College of William and Mary & the Virginia Commonwealth University. With thousands of eagles, and tens of thousands of heron and osprey, "the Bay is a crowded place that now supports waterbirds in numbers likely not seen since colonial times."

Two Billion Oysters - how do you get two billion water-cleaning oysters into 350 acres of Harris Creek? Through collaboration and partnership. The Chesapeake Bay Program brought together government officials, scientists, and community members from the State of Maryland, along with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Each brought their unique knowledge, capabilities and resources to developing and implementing a plan that will mean a brighter future for residents throughout the Chesapeake Bay area.

TALKING POINTS

What do you do?

We develop solutions to sustain a thriving Chesapeake Bay watershed. Our work is fueled by science and driven by partnership, bringing together leaders from state, federal and local government, as well as academia and our many communities, to collaborate on creating the best strategies and tools for cleaning up the Bay and the rivers and streams that flow into it. That means that we coordinate, educate, and provide the unbiased scientific data from in-depth research to help figure out if we're meeting our goals.

How are you funded?

We are grateful to be funded by the residents of the Chesapeake Bay watershed through budget appropriations at the federal and state level.

Why is it called a "program"?

CBP was created as a "program" by the federal government and the states in our watershed to restore and protect the Bay. You may, however hear us say "partnership" as well because bringing people together to create solutions is so much of what we do.

Are you the EPA?

While our efforts are led by administrators and scientists at the Environmental Protection Agency, the Chesapeake Bay Program is made up of a much broader set of staff members and partners from state and local governments, organizations and institutions. Our unique approach to restoration brings these many talented contributors together across state and municipal lines. Find out more about who's who at the Chesapeake Bay Program here:

<https://www.chesapeakebay.net/who/staff>

What's the difference between you and other organizations with Chesapeake or Chesapeake Bay in their name?

[In responding to questions like these, it's best to talk about what CBP does, not what other organizations do or what CBP doesn't do. It could reinforce confusion otherwise.] The Chesapeake Bay Program is the only organization that brings all the players in the region together to collaborate and create solutions that work for us all. That includes federal, state, and local government along with advocates, scientists, and residents of the Bay area. Many other organizations with Chesapeake Bay in their name work in partnership with us. We're here to make sure all efforts at every level are working together to create the best results for our communities.

What's your connection to CBP?*

The Chesapeake Bay Program is made up of many different organizations working in partnership for the Bay. I work for [] and we partner closely with the Chesapeake Bay Program to/with a focus on []. My work benefits from that partnership by [] and my work in turn helps them [].

Why should I care about the Chesapeake Bay?

Water affects every one of us, from what we drink and eat to how we make our living. The Chesapeake Bay watershed connects us across borders and boundaries, meaning what happens in one place can impact us all. The good and the bad flows our way, just as water flows to the Bay. We need the Bay to thrive so we can thrive. *[Vivid examples depending on the audience (i.e. what networked connection would resonate most with that particular audience)?]*

**This is where partners would explain their specific connection to Chesapeake Bay Program - i.e. what aspect of CBP's work are they involved in, and to what end (CBP staff might want to map this out; it could be a good exercise in getting better understanding of what might motivate partners.)*

Can I get involved in your programs?

There are many ways to get involved with the work of cleaning up the Bay and helping it thrive, from picking up trash to planting a rain garden. Go to www.chesapeakebay.net and take a look at the Take Action page for a whole range of activities you can be a part of whether at home, on the road, in school, or at work.

There's water pollution near me - can you do something about it?

[Unclear if there's any mechanism for reporting pollution, or if CBP can address it. Maybe offer a hotline that then reports to the relevant local or state authority (and tracks reports), just to make it easier for people who might be confused. Could be another branded element.]

Do you have anything to do with drinking water?

While we don't monitor or regulate drinking water directly, the quality of the water we drink is ultimately connected to the health of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Our rivers and streams become our drinking water and groundwater pollution and other challenges can certainly impact drinking water systems in the region. Learn more here: https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/tag/Clean_Water_Act

Where can I see if we're making progress on the stuff you're talking about?

A major part of the Chesapeake Bay Program's work is conducting rigorous scientific research and testing to make sure we're meeting our goals for restoring the Bay. We also make sure to make this information accessible in a way everyone can understand, from the region as a whole to your backyard. See the State of the Chesapeake section of our site for more information: <https://www.chesapeakebay.net/state>. Go even deeper with our Maps & Data library: https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/publications_and_data

Are You Political?

The Chesapeake Bay Program is a coordinating body established by the governments of the states in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and the District of Columbia. We are a non-partisan and non-political organization.

Are You a Regulatory Agency?

While our primary mission is coordination and partnership of state and local water clean-up efforts, the Chesapeake Bay Program also provides oversight of the EPA's Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load - a "pollution diet" that sets limits on the amount of nutrients and sediment that can enter the Bay from all jurisdictions in the Bay area.

What's a Watershed?

A watershed is a word used to describe an area of land where all water flows to the same place, such as the Chesapeake Bay. Just as water flows down into a basin, so all the rivers and streams in a watershed flow down and collect in that one body of water, whether a bay or a lake. The Chesapeake Bay watershed stretches across 64,000 square miles and parts of six states, as well as all of the District of Columbia.

Where Can I Go and Find Out More?

There is a wealth of information about the Chesapeake Bay and Chesapeake Bay Program available at www.chesapeakebay.net, including more about our science, education, and partnership initiatives, as well as lots of resources to help you be a part of our clean-up efforts. You can also keep up-to-date on what's happening on Facebook or Twitter *[links]* or contact us with any questions or suggestions by getting in touch with *[who is designated public information/resource liaison?]*

Can I Make A Donation?

As a federal and state coordinating body, we are grateful to be funded by the residents of the Chesapeake Bay watershed through appropriations. We don't accept financial contributions, but we do encourage you to get involved and contribute any time and energy you can to helping us clean the Bay. See the many ways you can help at www.chesapeakebay.net

EXTERNAL.

The Chesapeake Bay Program must make the complex process of cross-jurisdictional collaboration that makes it uniquely effective clear and compelling to a broader audience of the interested public. As noted above, these are residents of the Chesapeake Bay watershed who know and care about the health of the Bay and its waterways, but may know little about the subject beyond that and may also have never heard of the Chesapeake Bay Program, or have only the vaguest knowledge of it.

Our core recommendation is to move beyond the essential elements of branding, to an ongoing campaign footing that brings all of Chesapeake Bay Program's communications channels to bear in making the case — from web and social, to earned media, to leveraging partners and face-to-face interactions with the public. In this section, we lay out some ideas for what that might consist of, along with versions of the core branding language framed for an external audience, and a media kit to help with outreach and understanding for press and broadcast news outlets.

Goals.

1) Communicate the Value of the Chesapeake Bay Program

The Chesapeake Bay Program plays a crucial role in the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. The primary communication goal is to create a strategic framework that allows the Chesapeake Bay Program to describe what it does and its impact succinctly and effectively. This will help the partners, stakeholders, and the interested public more easily grasp the value of the Chesapeake Bay Program, making it easier to recruit them as supporters willing to champion CBP and ensure it continues its important work.

2) Illustrate the Unique Role the Chesapeake Bay Program Plays in the Region

The Chesapeake Bay Program is not alone in its mission to ensure the Chesapeake Bay thrives. There are several organizations working to improve this important watershed with similar names and missions to the Chesapeake Bay Program. Therefore one of the primary goals is to distinguish CBP from its peers and educate the public about its unique role in the ecosystem of nonprofits, government agencies, programs, and projects that make up the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort. The Chesapeake Bay Program needs to easily convey the value of having an organization that provides a base for collaboration among local, state, and regional governments and stakeholders.

3) Turn Partners into Champions of the Chesapeake Bay Program Brand

As a collaborative organization, the Chesapeake Bay Program's partners are a major communication asset. Much of the communication about the Chesapeake Bay Program and what it does, will be done by the organization's partners and stakeholders on the ground. Thus a secondary goal is to make sure the communication framework is something that is easy for partners to use.

In addition, there needs to be an incentive for partners to become de facto spokespeople for the Chesapeake Bay Program. They have to feel that they are getting benefit from linking their work and their organization to the Chesapeake Bay Program. The brand and platform for the Chesapeake Bay Program has to be one that partners perceive as prestigious, valuable, and integral to their work. The goal then is to create a plan where partners understand the value of the Chesapeake Bay Program and are incentivized to champion the program among their network.

MEASURING GOALS

While general awareness campaigns like this can be difficult to track, we recommend the following metrics to determine the success of this brand strategy:

- Increased traffic and social media shares on articles that meaningfully describe the Chesapeake Bay Program's actions;
- Increased media stories that accurately mention the Chesapeake Bay Program;
- Increased social media mentions from partner organizations and the general public;
- Number of partners who display or mention the Chesapeake Bay Program on site or on their website.

Audience Analysis.

As far as maintaining the Chesapeake Bay Program's own sustainability, the key audiences are those essential to ensuring that funding and support continues for the program. This means turning both partners and the broader interested public into champions for the Chesapeake Bay Program and its work. Based on our analysis, we believe that reaching the interested public — i.e. those residents of the Chesapeake Bay region already aware of and interested in the Chesapeake Bay (though not necessarily the Program) and related issues of water, nature, and environment — should be a greater strategic priority than reaching the broader general public. To understand the value of the Chesapeake Bay Program, one first has to understand the value of the Chesapeake Bay.

A great deal of this work is already happening through various outreach and education efforts, and we make recommendations below for more clearly connecting the Program's brand to those initiatives. But given limited resources, we do not recommend focusing branding and campaigns on convincing the broadest range of the general public of both the benefits of the Bay *and* the value of the program. That simply seems too heavy and complex a communications lift, especially when there is an audience of the interested public that can be more easily and effectively engaged.

Partners***Channel for: General Public, Decision Makers***

Partners should have a vested interest in ensuring the Chesapeake Bay Program continues and thrives. Internal communication will help your partners easily communicate about your organization but they may need to be further incentivized to put the Chesapeake Bay Program in the forefront of their work. And they also have to be shown the need for, and benefit of, communicating the program's value themselves, which means the Chesapeake Bay Program has to be a strong brand that can elevate *their* work. These partners are a great way to access especially those members of the public passionate about the Chesapeake Bay and already activated on issues related to its protection and restoration.

General Public***Channel for: Decision Makers***

There are many in the interested public who care about the Chesapeake Bay but cannot identify the Chesapeake Bay Program. A strong brand is essential with this audience because understanding the value of the Chesapeake Bay is not enough; they need to know specifically that the Chesapeake Bay Program is essential to the conservation effort.

This does not mean this audience needs to know everything the Chesapeake Bay Program does, but they do need to make some sort of connection with the program and its tangible benefit. They should come to understand that if the program went away tomorrow some program, project, or impact that they care about will be affected. This can turn them into advocates for Chesapeake Bay Program's unique collaborative structure and approach, and grow the constituency willing to voice their concerns to decision makers on the Program's behalf.

Decision Makers

Decision makers encompass the wide variety of stakeholders and government officials who the Chesapeake Bay Program relies upon for funding and support. By creating strong champions out of your partners and from the interested public, it should become easier to make a stronger case to decision makers.

Media

Channel for: Partners, General Public, Decision Makers

The media can be a key channel to getting word out about your success and amplifying your message. They are an important channel for all of the above audiences. Not only should the Chesapeake Bay Program cultivate its own press contacts, but should also work with partners to develop and push collaborative stories to their local media contacts. Having consistent talking points and language will help the Chesapeake Bay Program better tell its story of the power of partnership and its value to the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

External Brand Promise.

BRAND PROMISE

Solutions to sustain a thriving Chesapeake Bay watershed, fueled by science, driven by partnership.

The Chesapeake Bay Program is committed to bringing a wide variety of stakeholders and organizations across the Chesapeake Bay watershed together to work for impactful solutions. Our ability to create collaborative plans and the tools to implement them means cleaner streams and rivers and a healthier future for all. We are deeply committed to promoting science-based approaches that produce measurable results for the Chesapeake Bay.

CORE VALUES

Expanding from the brand promise are three core values at the heart of the Chesapeake Bay Program. These are three elements that makes our organization a powerful force in ensuring a healthier future for the Chesapeake Bay.

Commitment to the Bay

The Chesapeake Bay is a crucial natural resource for everyone in the watershed, not just those who live on its shores. We believe in the reciprocal benefits of protecting and restoring the Chesapeake Bay. Ensuring it is abundant and thriving serves as an economic engine and increases the health and well-being of people who live in the region.

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Collaboration

Above all else, the Chesapeake Bay Program is a partnership. We bring together everyone at the table, local, state, and federal decision makers to work together. The Chesapeake Bay watershed is a large region and so it takes a large vision in order to sustain it. The Chesapeake Bay Program helps partners see the effect their work has on the overall health of the bay. We provides a space for collaboration that maximizes the impact of individual projects through sharing resources and ideas.

Content Ideas.

GENERAL

- *Narrative:* Create a campaign with a strong narrative people want to be part of. Create a single action that everyone especially partners and the interested public can get involved in and post on their personal social media. This can serve as a vehicle for cohesion because people will want to get involved if they know there is a good outlet for promoting their organization. An example is the [Serving Here](#) or [Unselfie](#) campaign.
- *Calendar:* Create a digital or print calendar that features a new animal each month whose life and prospects have been improved by the Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts. This can be connected to social media where content is shared about that animal throughout the month. Feature fun facts about the animal, ways people can help in the conservation effort, and research from the Chesapeake Bay Program about how their welfare has been impacted by the collective work of the program and their partners.
- *Graphic Novel:* Create a graphic novel that turns the Bay Barometer data into a larger story about the heroic conservation efforts of the Chesapeake Bay Program and its partners. A blue crab home is being threatened by pollution until the Chesapeake Bay Program steps in and gets the community to come together to reduce pollution. There could be several storylines following threats and interventions in a heroic setting. [See this example.](#)

- *Mock Detergent Ad:* A parody of a detergent ad showing how the Chesapeake Bay Program gets your rivers and streams the cleanest. Talk about its unique power to bond organizations together for maximum effectiveness. You could even compare it with other “brands” out there to show how the Chesapeake Bay Program is different from the rest.
- *Podcast:* Create a podcast spotlighting the stories of collaborative efforts of the Bay. This format would allow you to dive deep into a specific story and show how the Chesapeake Bay Program brings all the different pieces together for meaningful change. It would also be a great avenue to share partner stories and successes.
- *Citizens Advisory Board:* Spotlight these stakeholders and prominently share their stories so you can enlist them as ambassadors across all channels possible. In order to get the interested public to feel connected you have to make them feel that they are truly part of this organization. Show how citizens have a stake and can be in on the decision making.

EVENTS

- *Action Day:* Have an action day to encourage people to share their work on a specific day. Provide social media messages and images for partners to share and possible actions they can take to spread the message of Chesapeake Bay Program’s work and your collective impact with your partners. You could even work on getting mayors or governors to declare the day officially and it is also a good source for press and social media coverage.
- *Awards:* Create an annual awards event for best partners, projects, etc. This can be a great way to get press but also highlight the great work your partners are doing which increases both cohesion and visibility.
- *Bay Banquet:* Create an annual banquet made from various foods from the Chesapeake Bay to show the abundance of the region. Each dish could have a card next to it describing how the Chesapeake Bay Program and its partners are helping to conserve the key ingredients in the dish and what people can do to ensure the Bay continues to be bountiful.

SOCIAL MEDIA

- *Social Media Takeovers:* Give members of your Citizens Advisory Board the reigns to one of your social media accounts. During that week they can submit posts that show how their improving the Bay in their backyard. This will help personalize the efforts of the Chesapeake Bay Program and give others the opportunity to share why they have chosen to be a champion of the Chesapeake Bay Program.
- *Infographic:* Develop an interactive unifying image that represents Chesapeake Bay Program's work. This would allow people to easily see the parts of the organization's work. This might be a branching set of connecting lines like the connecting waterways of a watershed, all flowing together toward a better future. Or perhaps simply a color-coded chart of the different things the organization does, such as scientific research and partnership.
- *I Am the Chesapeake Bay Program:* Create an easily printable frame to show what the Chesapeake Bay Program does in their community. Partners or individuals can use the frame to capture selfies with volunteers, pictures of their waterways, or images that encapsulate what a healthy watershed means to them. This is an easy way to show the many hands and faces that go into keeping the Chesapeake Bay thriving. This can be used to share on social media and tell the story of your work. [Here's an example.](#)
- *Social Media Profile Banner:* Create a social media banner people could put at the bottom of their social media profile with a catchy saying about the Chesapeake Bay. This could be used in conjunction with the action day or photo frame above. This would be an easy way to co-brand with partners. You can easily do this with [Twibbon](#) or [Facebook Frames](#).
- [Thunderclap](#): Thunderclap is a tool that allows people to sign up for a particular movement. Those who sign on will then share a common message at the same time automatically. It is a great tool for getting partners and individuals involved in a galvanising campaign to share the work or an inspiring message from the Chesapeake Bay Program.

WEBSITE + BLOG

- *Footer:* Create a footer for all websites that shows the Chesapeake Bay Program “Toolbox” with linked icons for the associated websites of the Chesapeake Bay Program such as the Backpack and Chesapeake Progress.
- *Gateway:* Create a gateway tool similar to the Chesapeake Bay Program’s How-To’s and Tips section that helps direct users to Chesapeake Bay Program resources. People could sort by audience (e.g. teacher, journalist, local government), area of the watershed, or interest (e.g. research, policy). The website is rich with resources but it can sometimes be hard to find what you are looking for or discover what might be helpful from the top navigation.
- *Before/After:* Feature some before and after images of the Chesapeake Bay Program where people can concretely see what the effect of the restoration efforts have been. This would give users a concrete view of the value of the Chesapeake Bay Program. [Here’s an example of a striking before and after feature.](#)
- *Power of Partnership:* (see above - *Internal*) Create a running feature that provides in depth stories about what the program is doing and how it is making an impact. This shouldn’t just be about the Chesapeake Bay in general, but specific stories that highlight what the Chesapeake Bay Program does and why its model of science-driven partnership is impactful.
- *Bay in Your Backyard:* Create a narrative series that tracks pollution from a specific part of the watershed and shows how it affects the Bay. Then show an intervention someone can easily do or get involved in. Show how the impact that changing something in your literal back yard or town can have a snowball effect in changing the Chesapeake Bay.
- *From You to the Bay:* Create an online tool where people can find their local waterway and follow it to the Chesapeake Bay. They can use the tool to explore the watershed and see how it all is a part of the same system.

Media Kit.

What does the Chesapeake Bay Program do?

We develop solutions to sustain a thriving Chesapeake Bay watershed. Our work is fueled by science and driven by partnership, bringing together leaders from many communities to collaborate on creating the best strategies and tools for cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay and the rivers and streams that flow into it. We coordinate, educate, and provide the unbiased scientific data from in-depth research to help figure out if we're meeting our goals for a cleaner Chesapeake Bay.

How is Chesapeake Bay Program funded?

We are grateful to be funded by the citizens and residents of the Chesapeake Bay watershed through budget appropriations at the federal and state level.

What are the goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program?

We are working toward an environmentally and economically sustainable Chesapeake Bay watershed with clean water, abundant life, conserved lands, and access to the water. We celebrate the Bay watershed's vibrant cultural heritage and strive for a diversity of engaged citizens and stakeholders. The Chesapeake Bay Program is guided by the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, which outlines ten goals to advance the restoration and protection of the Bay watershed. These goals focus not only on the health of the Chesapeake Bay, but all of the communities contained in its watershed.

What makes the Chesapeake Bay Program different?

The Chesapeake Bay Program is the only organization that brings all the players in the region together to collaborate and create solutions that work for us all, including federal, state, and local government along with advocates, scientists and residents of the Bay area. Many other organizations with Chesapeake Bay in their name work in partnership with us. We're here to make sure all the efforts at every level mesh together to create the best results for our communities.

TERMINOLOGY

TMDL - the total maximum daily load is the amount of pollution that a body of water can acquire before a jurisdiction is considered in violation of water quality standards. The EPA sets TMDLs for the Chesapeake Bay watershed and the Chesapeake Bay Program works with state and local governments to meet this "pollution diet" most effectively.

Watershed - A word used to describe an area of land where all water flows to the same place, such as the Chesapeake Bay. Just as water flows down into a basin, so all the rivers and streams in a watershed flow down and collect in that one body of water, whether a bay or a lake. The Chesapeake Bay watershed stretches across 64,000 square miles and six states, including all of the District of Columbia.

Chesapeake Bay Program - A collaborative body established by Bay water quality agreements, the Chesapeake Bay Program brings state, federal, and local governments together with academia and community members to create the best strategies and tools for cleaning up the Bay and the rivers and streams that flow into it.

Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement - A landmark accord signed in 2014 committing the Bay watershed states to specific goals and outcomes for Bay restoration, as well the collaborative steps and strategies needed to achieve them.

Algae Bloom - dense growths of algae created by there being too much of certain chemicals in the water. The blooms block sunlight from reaching underwater grasses and rob the water of oxygen when they decompose, choking marine life.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) - the most effective ways to control pollutants and meet water quality standards, such as building rain gardens, as demonstrated by scientific study and experience.

Biodiversity - the variety of life in all forms in a given area, including diversity of ecosystem, species, and genetics.

Carrying Capacity - the maximum number of organisms that a habitat can support before the social or environmental strain becomes unsustainable.

Clean Water Act - officially the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, this law aims to restore the integrity of the nation's waters by authorizing the EPA to set water quality standards that states must meet.

Dead Zone - A place in the water where no oxygen is present, making it impossible for many forms of life to survive. "Hypoxia" describes a situation in which oxygen levels are very low; "anoxia" is when there is little to no oxygen in the water at all, essentially synonymous with a dead zone.

Heavy Metals - metallic chemicals that are toxic.

Keystone Species - a species whose survival is crucial to that of other organisms in an ecosystem and whose removal would drastically change that ecosystem.

Native Species - A species of plant or animal native to the Chesapeake Bay region, that evolved on the North American continent and was present when European colonizers arrived. Species that are not native can pose risks and threats to the stability and balance of an ecosystem.

Nutrients - chemicals that plants and animals need to grow and survive but that can harm aquatic environments if too much is present.

Pesticides - substances used to destroy insect or plant pests that nonetheless carry are washed into rivers and streams, often at levels that are toxic.

Salinity - how salty the water is, higher salinity meaning water that's saltier and lower salinity meaning fresh water. Polluted runoff and other discharges into Bay area rivers and streams can negatively impact salinity.

Smog - a mix of ozone and other pollutants in the air that mix together and reduce visibility.

Stormwater (Runoff) - water from rain and storms that does not evaporate or soak into the ground but instead sweeps pollution into storm drains, rivers, and streams.

Sustainability - keeping an ecosystem in balance so that it sustains life and maintains its natural resources.

Turbidity - the cloudiness of water caused by the suspension of sediment particles. A key indicator of water cleanliness.

Wastewater - water that has been used by people in their homes, businesses, or in industry. This water can only be reused if treated by a wastewater treatment facility.

Wetland - a marsh, swamp, or bog that is periodically flooded. Wetlands are both crucial elements of the ecosystem and "natural sponges" that form important barriers to coastal flooding.

Watershed Implementation Plan - roadmap documents for how Bay jurisdictions, in partnership with federal and local governments, will achieve their Total Maximum Daily Load targets.

Adaptation/Resiliency - the capacity for an ecosystem to absorb stresses and adapt, reorganize or evolve in a way that leaves it better prepared for future threats. These concepts are most closely related to impacts from climate change.

Public Access - the right of the public to enjoy the cultural and ecological treasure that is the bay, whether by hiking, camping, swimming, fishing, boating, watching wildlife etc. The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Public Access Plan requires Bay area jurisdictions to expand watershed public access.

Tree Canopy - the top layer of a forest that shades and protects the plants and animals below it. The canopy acts like an umbrella, slowing rainfall to the ground and so preventing flooding and runoff.

(Forest) Buffer - trees and other vegetation by the edge of rivers and streams that filter pollution, prevent erosion, and provide habitats for wildlife.

EXPERTS

Agriculture:

Kelly Shenk, Nutrient Coordinator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Water Quality:

Scott Phillips, Scientific, Technical Assessment and Reporting Team Co-Chair, Chesapeake Bay Coordinator, U.S. Geological Survey

Stormwater/Wastewater:

Stormwater: Tom Schueler, Urban Stormwater Workgroup Coordinator, Executive Director, Chesapeake Stormwater Network

Wastewater: Tanya Spano, Wastewater Treatment Workgroup Chair, Chief, Regional Water Quality Management, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

Marine Life:

Blue Crabs and Oysters: Bruce Vogt, Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team Coordinator, Ecosystem Science Manager, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Economic/Business:

Economics: Dan Nees, Budget and Finance Workgroup Chair, Senior Research Associate, University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center

Businesses: Corinne Stephens, Business for the Bay Manager, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Development/Land Use: Peter Claggett, Land Use Workgroup Coordinator, Research Geographer, U.S. Geological Survey

Chesapeake Bay Program Overview/History:

Carin Bisland, Co-Chair, Enhance Partnering, Leadership and Management Goal Implementation Team, Associate Director for Partnerships and Accountability, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Chesapeake Bay Program