

Chesapeake Bay Program

Strengthening Partnerships with
Underrepresented Stakeholders

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Agenda

- Project Background
- Methodology
- Discussion themes
- Commendations
- Observations
- Leadership Workshop
- Community Forum
- Final Recommendations

Background

Project Goals:

- Understand the needs, barriers, and priorities of organizations led by and serving underrepresented and underserved communities such as communities of color.
- Gather important voices and feedback from the Chesapeake community
- Define what meaningful community engagement means for the CBP Partnership and how it will function across the Partnership.

Methodology

Chesapeake Conservancy hosted 6 “Sensing Conversations” sessions with 43 people to gather feedback on engagement of underrepresented communities within CBP

- Session 1 & 2 - CBP GIT Chairs, Staffers and Coordinators
 - 25 participants
- Session 3 - People of color who are no longer active with CBP (staffers, coordinators, interns, workgroup members)
 - 7 participants
- Session 4 & 5 - Community leaders, representing communities of color
 - 10 participants
- Session 6 - Tribal partner interview
 - 1 participant

Methodology

Sensing Conversations

Goal: develop an open, baseline understanding of where we came from, how we view the current status, and visions for the future. Each person's contribution was recorded anonymously by notetakers.

Process:

- Encourages listening and trust
- Is not highly linear
- Individual expression is encouraged
- Contributions are used together with the whole to inform a broader picture of the questions we ask ourselves as a collective.
- Conversations are grounded in mutual respect, and building trust, community, and bonding.

Asset Mapping & Needs Assessment

Categories Explored:

Social Capital

- Connectedness
- Networks
- Memberships
- Groups
- Communities

Financial Assets:

- Resources
- Opportunities
- Access

Stories:

- Culture and history
- Told and untold stories
- Tangible and intangible

Discussion Themes Across Groups:

Internal CBP Discussions:

1. Community representation and values of engagement
2. Communications and commitment
3. Health and wellbeing
4. Capacity and assets

Commendations

Internal CBP Discussions

- CBP staff show high levels of interest in engaging underrepresented for value driven purposes
- CBP partnership entities possesses many assets identified through an “Asset Mapping” activity
- Staff show interest in learning and shifting practices to be more inclusive of underrepresented voices in the Bay Program

Strong interest in knowing what is top of mind for folks—probably not water quality, etc. but there may be creative connections

Rather than doing a better job, doing things differently.

Observations

Internal CBP Discussions

- Need communication and clear expectations to reduce confusion amongst staff and community members as to the purpose of CBP community engagement
- Workplace culture affects the ability to create long-term, trusting relationships with diverse communities
- Lower level staff seek clear direction from leadership in defining community engagement for the Bay program

It was hard to do anything that needed funding... Conversations would end shortly if there was no funding to follow... Not much authority or resources or money besides GIT funding.

Noticed higher turn over in diversity workgroup coordinator and staffer positions

Discussion Themes Across Groups:

Community Group Discussions

1. Conservation ethic and intersectionality
2. Funding and capacity
3. Participation and partnership
4. Accountability

Commendations

Community Group Discussions

- Communities see value in Chesapeake Bay Restoration and are eager for meaningful involvement
- Communities see potential for resources from entities such as the Bay program Partnership at grassroots levels

Being given the chance to take part in stewardship would be a step in the right direction. All of us means all of us. "There needs to be a greater effort to ensure that all of us impacted [can] also have the opportunity to contribute and help."

Observations

Community Group Discussions

- The intent of community engagement and integration of community feedback are unclear to community members
- Concern about the lack of value in engaging when community voices seem to go unheard and un-integrated into policies

This is not just science and water quality, [engagement] needs to take into account the people.

Why are the community contributions and input not valued. We have spent years giving feedback. Why does the program need community input? If it does, what is the purpose?

Chesapeake Bay Program Leadership Workshop

- Establish values around community engagement, starting with intrapersonal work, self-examination, and reflection
- Activities designed to define and understand the Bay Program's values around community engagement
- A conversation on intent and impact to inform a strategy for community engagement
- Deep dive into the Spectrum of Community Engagement and the continuum of racial equity

CBP's Public Declarations of Commitment to Engagement



REPRESENT THE INTERESTS
OF PEOPLE



PRODUCE RECOGNIZABLE
BENEFITS TO LOCAL
COMMUNITIES



ENGAGE CITIZENS



PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE



STRENGTHEN PUBLIC
CONFIDENCE IN OUR
EFFORTS



EFFORT TO EMPOWER NON-
SIGNATORY PARTNERS IN THE
DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Inclusion

*Foster a culture of
inclusion, respect and
mutual learning*

Collaboration

*Develop long-term
relationships,
partnerships and
increased collaborative
planning.*

Equity

*Ensure the benefits of our
science, restoration and
partnership programs are
distributed in a fair and
equitable manner
without adverse,
disproportionate impacts
on vulnerable
populations*

Spectrum of Community Engagement

INFORM

Provide public with information

Preparation or Placation:

“We will keep you informed”

CONSULT

Obtain public feedback on analysis and/or decisions

Limited Voice or Tokenization:

“We care what you think”

INVOLVE

Ensure public concerns are consistently understood and considered

Voice:

“You are making us think (and therefore act) differently about the issue”

COLLABORATE

Partner with community in each aspect of the decision

Delegated Power:

“Your leadership and expertise are critical to how we address the issue”

EMPOWER

Place final decision-making in the hands of the public

Community Ownership:

“It’s time to unlock collective power and capacity for transformative solutions”

Exploring the Systemic Problems: Community Comments & Recommendations

...revisit the authorizing language of funding mechanisms, which seems to be at the root of some of the systemic issues

"Don't assume everyone is starting their nature/environment journey with the same positive experiences you have had."

"Current staff have expanded goals [but] are operating on outdated and biased structures...in some cases built into authorizing language"

"Meet in the evenings and offer meetings via zoom/conference call...Conduct surveys to see what the communities are interested in...offer small stipend \$25..."

"You are the wrong messenger...members of the community are the right messengers. Work to support them. Help them achieve their goals and you will achieve yours."

"Tweaking legislative language can help loosen restrictions.."

Community Forum

Goal: Foundational trust building and relationship building with Chesapeake Bay watershed communities with Bay Program staff, leadership, and community leaders

Presentation, facilitated panel discussion, and group activities

Recommendations

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Action #1: Explore Mechanism for Funding Equitable Participation

- Develop compensation mechanisms for community participation as at large members
- Consider barriers to participation in having at-large members participate in GITs, and offer solutions for participation
- Consider alternative meeting schedules for community members (ie meet in the evenings, and offer virtual options)

Action #2: Determine How Community Organizations Can Benefit from CBP

- CBP to develop a prescriptive mechanism for receiving community input and incorporating community voices into decision making and science needs
- Create a more regular platform for bringing community voices to management board and other groups at CBP
- Create opportunities and means for staff to participate in community led events
- Engage at the local level by empowering local governments and working with jurisdictions to engage communities meaningfully and ensure relevance to community groups
- Determine what are the benefits State, Federal agencies receive from CBP and translate those to not only equal but equitable benefits to organizations trying to reach through DEI work.

Action #3: Explore Equitable Grantmaking Solutions

- Develop and support low barrier funding mechanisms
- Explore revisiting the authorizing language of funding mechanisms, which are at the root of some of the systemic issues

Questions?

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