



Chesapeake Bay Program
SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
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Cover Note: Governance & Decision-Making in the Chesapeake Bay Program

September 22, 2025

Dear Management Board Members,

This document was prepared by the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) to support ongoing discussions within the Chesapeake Bay Program on governance and decision-making.

The framework presented here is a tool for discussion, not a final product. It reflects how governance currently functions in the partnership by showing the flow of technical information, partner input, and state and federal actions into Management Board decisions, and the accountability and adaptive management loops that guide progress.

STAC developed this one-pager to provide a clear picture of how the partnership operates today, with the understanding that the framework that captures the CBP's present functioning is not necessarily the framework that will best achieve the desired outcomes for the Bay and its watershed. This is a starting point, not an endpoint.

By sharing this framework, STAC aims to seed conversation and reflection, recognizing that future discussions will need to explore where gaps exist and how governance might evolve to meet the challenges ahead.

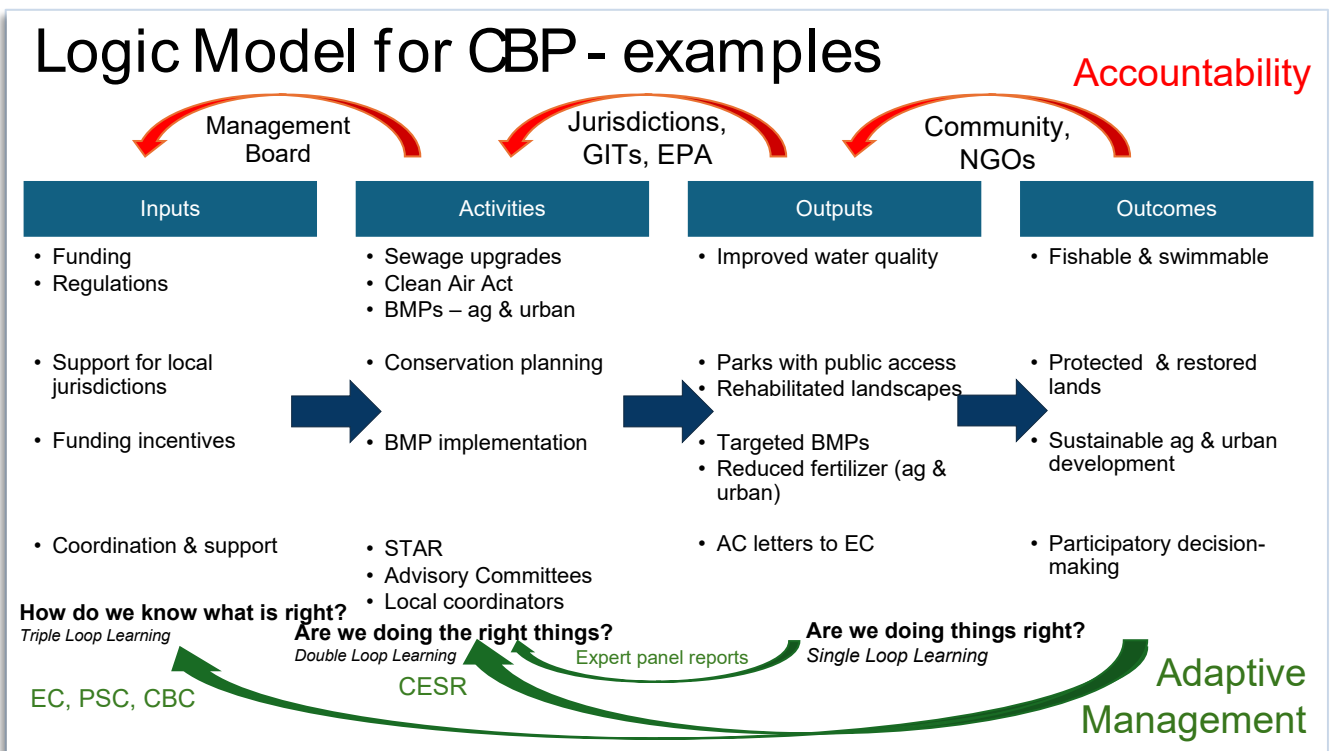
Respectfully,

Meg Cole
Coordinator and Interim Executive Secretary, Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee
Chesapeake Research Consortium



Governance & Decision-Making in the Chesapeake Bay Program

This framework below illustrates how governance and decision-making function within the Chesapeake Bay Program. It is intended as a discussion tool rather than a final product. It shows how technical information, partner input, and state and federal actions feed into the Management Board’s decisions, and how feedback loops support accountability and adaptive management across the partnership.



- Governance is structured around multiple loops of learning: *Are we doing things right? Are we doing the right things? How do we know what is right?*
- Consensus is the default, but decision-making requires flexibility when tradeoffs or impasses emerge.
- Adaptive management and accountability mechanisms (CAST updates, CESR, annual reviews) help track progress and guide adjustments.
- STAC provides independent science and synthesis through expert panels and reports, strengthening transparency and decision-making.

This framework should be seen as a starting point, not an endpoint; it represents the current functioning of the CBP partnership, which may not be the framework that will ultimately best achieve the desired outcomes for the Bay and its watershed.