

CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED TREE CANOPY POLICY AND FUNDING ROUNDTABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

In March 2023, 125 local and state leaders from across the Chesapeake Bay Watershed gathered at the two-day, virtual **Chesapeake Bay Watershed Tree Canopy Funding and Policy Roundtable** to discuss challenges and opportunities in advancing tree canopy goals. Centered around the themes of equity, climate resilience, and tree loss, this event featured expert presentations as well as facilitated discussions to identify data, tools and approaches to strengthen tree canopy outcomes.

Through the Roundtable's four hours of facilitated breakout group discussions, event participants identified a suite of funding, policy and programmatic solution pathways, which were prioritized by the project steering committee into the top ten recommendations for the Chesapeake Bay Program to consider in their near-term priorities and actions. Summarized below, these recommendations are discussed in more detail in the full [Roundtable Report](#).

1. Amend regional and state tree canopy grant funding programs to prioritize equity and maintenance.

Communicate to funders that grant programs should (1) be simple to access even for less-experienced applicants; (2) include flexible requirements for matching funds; (3) consider the need for many applicants to access upfront funding, (4) allow for longer timeframes for grants and contracts, (5) pay for community outreach and engagement, (6) continue to prioritize projects in and applicants from underserved communities, (7) pay for ongoing, operational work as well as maintenance for at least three years after trees are planted.

2. Dedicate adequate state and local funding for tree maintenance on public and private property.

Ensure sufficient funding to implement tree care strategies, including training utility and maintenance crews, hiring more town arborists, and providing technical assistance and financial incentives for homeowners.

3. Invest in target communities through workforce development: hire tree care coordinators and tree maintenance staff from the communities served; provide training, mentorship, and support.

Hire workers from underserved and low-canopy neighborhoods. Increase vocational training at the high school and community college level, invest in professional development for new workers in green infrastructure jobs, and build relationships between economic development and forestry agencies to find overlapping goals.

4. Share models and best practices for effective incentive-based and regulatory approaches to protect urban tree canopy.

Assemble and distribute models and case stories of regulatory, incentive, and market-based tree protection approaches, especially model comp plan and state statutory language; examples of pooling conservation funds at a regional level; urban tree canopy carbon credit trading; state tax incentives for preservation on private land; market-based approaches for tree preservation.

5. Strengthen local codes and ordinances to protect trees, especially during development and redevelopment. Where necessary, amend state policy to enable localities to enact ordinance improvements.

Support local governments in adopting tree-protective ordinances, zoning codes, erosion sediment control measures, and regulations affecting impervious surfaces.

6. Integrate trees for climate resilience into comprehensive plans (and other local plans) with specific goals; include climate resilience strategies in urban forest plans and projects.

Showcase benefits of integrated, cross-sector solutions and the ways that trees can be an effective part of climate resilience initiatives; share climate-and-trees data and material such as resilient tree species lists.

7. Improve utilization of data on tree canopy coverage and economic value of trees, including through the provision of technical assistance.

Share and provide technical assistance on the use of tree canopy datasets and methodologies; provide guidance on communicating data and embedding it into decision-making.

8. Provide communities with technical assistance to implement policy and ordinance changes and to apply for and manage funding and financing opportunities.

Support match-making between technical assistance providers and communities that would benefit from assistance, especially in the areas of accessing funding and auditing and amending local ordinances to protect tree canopy.

9. Develop consistent, customizable, multilingual messaging regarding the benefits of trees, including guidance on how to address competing priorities.

Share CBP tree canopy educational modules; make it easy for audiences to use and adapt the material, including to reach non-English-speakers. Create a marketing toolkit with customizable material such as flyers, social media posts, slide decks, infographics, and messaging points. Develop pointers on addressing conflicting priorities, especially forest preservation and solar utility development.

10. Proactively identify and meaningfully partner with trusted community voices in areas targeted for tree canopy initiatives.

Support implementation of community engagement best practices through (1) building a funding program to directly support community engagement, (2) holding listening sessions with community advocates to learn how to operationalize practices; (3) offering trainings for tree program staff related to meaningful community partnership.

For more discussion about potential opportunities to accelerate equitable, climate-resilient tree canopy implementation throughout the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, see the [Roundtable Report](#).