

Maryland Digital Service

Impact Report

January 2026



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Foreword

Two years ago, the Maryland Digital Service (MDDS) embarked on a mission to fundamentally transform how our state government serves its residents—making services simpler, more accessible, and truly centered on the user. As we mark our second anniversary, this Impact Report offers a moment not just for reflection, but for recognizing the tangible progress we've achieved through dedication, collaboration with agencies across the state, and a relentless focus on making government services easier for the people of Maryland.

Like most states, we face the common challenges of government technology: legacy systems, complex bureaucratic processes, and a need for new digital skill sets. Our response is grounded in best practice from modern digital delivery: focus on talent, build momentum with small wins, partner with agencies to drive lasting change, and direct efforts to the biggest impact for Marylanders.

This report highlights how we have successfully partnered with agencies across the state, built foundational tools and services, and taken some big steps to improve digital government in Maryland. These aren't just technical achievements; they are improvements that translate into less frustration, faster service delivery, and a more trustworthy relationship between government and the public it serves.

Our success belongs to the talented, mission-driven professionals of MDDS, our partners across Maryland agencies, the visionary DoIT leadership and the Moore-Miller Administration that created the space for this vital work.

Looking ahead, the work is far from over. We are expanding our reach, tackling even more complex challenges, and continuing to build a sustainable, in-house digital capability for the state of Maryland. We remain committed to our founding promise: to deliver excellent government services, simply and equitably, for everyone in our state.

Thank you for being part of this journey.



Marcy Jacobs

Chief Digital Experience Office & Deputy Secretary
Maryland Digital Service
Department of Information Technology

Introduction

The Maryland Digital Service under the Department of IT was created by Governor Moore in 2024 to “focus on well-designed and user-centered digital experiences to increase trust in government, decrease the cost to serve, and support agencies in delivering on their critical missions” ([Governor Moore](#)). We’ve done a lot in 2025 to support this objective and our corresponding mission and vision.

Our Mission

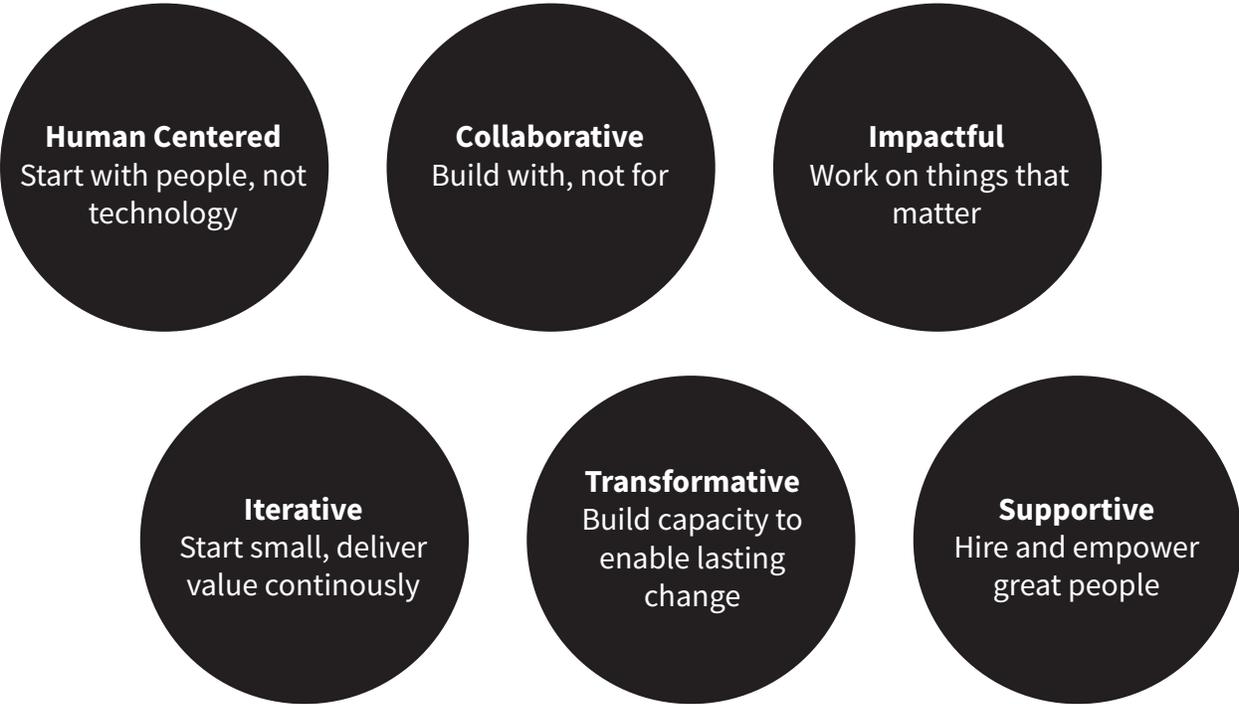
Maryland residents will have a digital experience that is equal to top private sector experiences.

Our Vision

Maryland is a leader in digital government service delivery with simple, secure, and equitable online experiences.

Our Values

As we endeavor towards these ambitious goals, we are guided by our values:



Achievements

Our work is centered on improving the experiences Marylanders have when accessing government services. This past year saw continued investment in foundation building while accelerating our focus on high-impact project delivery. Our achievements are organized into three primary, interconnected areas of work, each demonstrating significant progress across the state.

1. Improving Access to Critical Information and Benefits

- a. Redesigned Maryland.gov
- b. Launched the Maryland Web Design System (MDWDS)
- c. Established the Maryland Drupal Theme Content Management System
- d. Launched digital.maryland.gov
- e. Strengthened Options to Promote Accessibility
- f. Created an AI Plain Language Writing Tool for State Employees
- g. Continued Building Out a Robust Web Leads Community of Practice
- h. Partnered with Multiple Agencies to Redesign Their Websites
- i. Established Broad Website Analytics
- j. Improved Web Security Posture with Cloudflare
- k. Released a Domain Name Policy

2. Expanding Access to Talent

- l. Scaling our Capacity for Impact
- m. Established the ADEPT Contract Vehicle
- n. Deployed Teams to State Agencies

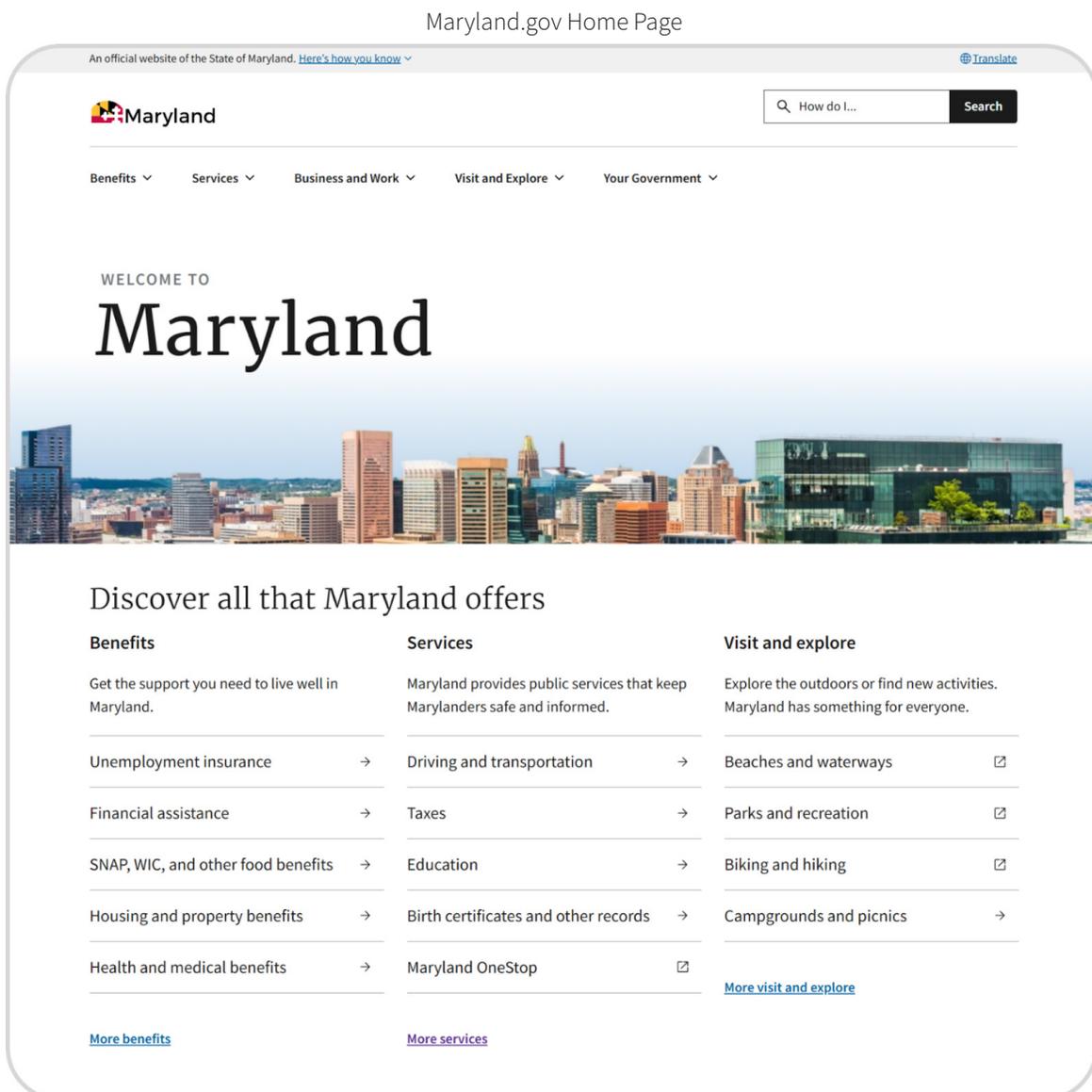
3. New Oversight to Improve Major IT Development Project Delivery

- o. Reformed Oversight to Set Up Projects for Success

1. Improving Access to Critical Information and Benefits

A) Redesigned [Maryland.gov](https://www.maryland.gov)

We wanted Marylanders to be able to visit one website to access and learn about the State’s most used and most critical benefits, services, and information. For this large-scale project, we conducted discovery research, created a new site architecture to better promote new content, and collaborated with agency subject matter experts to create 50+ new pages. As part of this project, our vendor, Lullabot, helped us build out the designs and information seen on the new [Maryland.gov](https://www.maryland.gov) site.



As a result of all this work, we have:

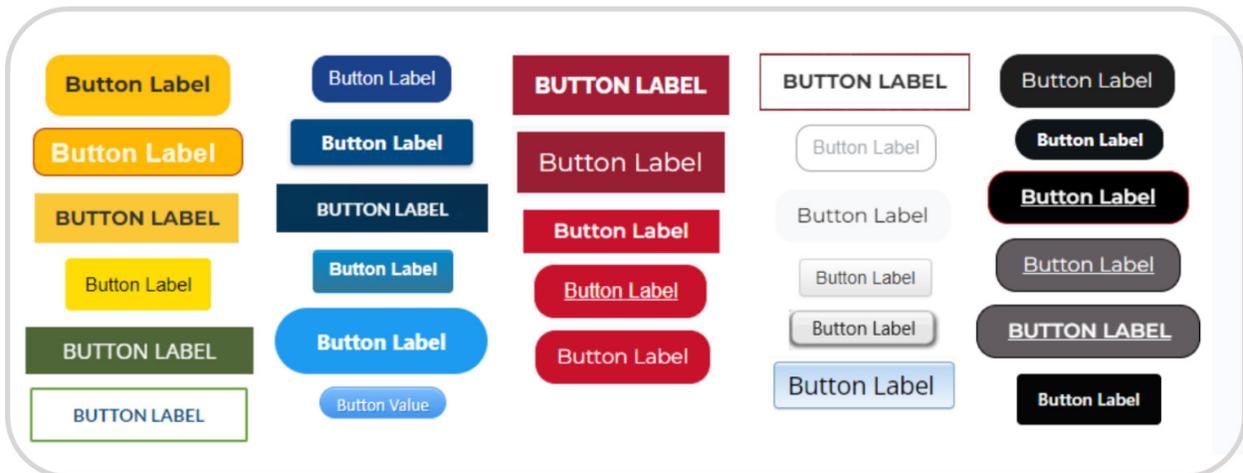
- A more accessible, modern, and comprehensive “front door” to Maryland digital government.
- A website with plain language descriptions of benefits and services that provide users with clear next steps.
- Drupal templates, based off of Lullabot’s work, which offer State agencies design flexibility within an organized structure to guide their own redesign efforts.

B) Launched the Maryland Web Design System (MDWDS)

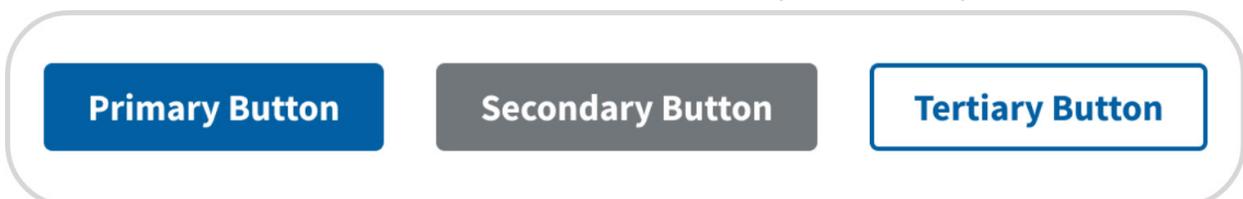
To systemically combat inconsistencies and improve accessibility, we focused on creating a Maryland-specific design system consisting of reusable web components.

The published design kit and code documentation help designers and developers quickly design, test, and implement modern, consistent, and accessible websites and applications. Instead of spending their time redesigning minute details of a webpage, technologists can focus on solving bigger service design challenges unique to their agency websites and platforms.

29 Different Ways Buttons Appear



The New MDWDS Button Styles
with Additional Accessible Variants for Flexibility and Consistency



C) Established the Maryland Drupal Content Management System

With a CMS that no longer served the state’s design, accessibility, security, and scalability needs, we chose Drupal as a more suitable CMS for our modernization efforts. The selection process included research, evaluation, and consultation with state and federal partners. The new Drupal platform is easier for agencies to use and creates a secure and scalable environment to accelerate agency site migrations.

D) Launched digital.maryland.gov

This year, we launched digital.maryland.gov as a hub for Maryland’s digital standards and guidelines. This website documents MDWDS and official state standards for plain language, accessibility, usability, and content. This comprehensive repository makes it easier for State agencies to understand relevant policies and tools to accelerate design and user-centered efforts.

Digital.maryland.gov’s Content Evaluation Guidelines: Earlier in 2025, we asked agency members to audit their websites’ content. This page helps them figure out how to do that.

The screenshot shows a web page with a left sidebar and a main content area. The sidebar includes a back arrow and the text 'Digital Standards', followed by a list of categories: 'Standards for Accessibility', 'Standards for Forms', 'Content Evaluation', 'How to Do a Content Evaluation', 'Website Links', and 'Website Snapshots'. The main content area has a heading 'On this page' with a list of links: 'Overview', 'Purpose of a Content Evaluation', 'Value of a Content Evaluation', 'How to Conduct a Content Evaluation', and 'Get support'. Below this is the 'Overview' section, which contains a paragraph about website growth and a list of notes. The notes include a definition of 'Electronic document' and a definition of 'content evaluation' (also called a 'ROT analysis').

< Digital Standards

Standards for Accessibility

Standards for Forms

Content Evaluation

How to Do a Content Evaluation

Website Links

Website Snapshots

On this page

- [Overview](#)
- [Purpose of a Content Evaluation](#)
- [Value of a Content Evaluation](#)
- [How to Conduct a Content Evaluation](#)
- [Get support](#)

Overview

Over time, websites grow organically and can become outdated, unwieldy, or no longer serve your audience effectively. To combat this, regular review of your website content, including all public-facing electronic documents, is critical.

- **Note:** “Electronic document” refers to any file linked to your website that is not an HTML file. This includes PDFs, Word documents, spreadsheets, PowerPoint documents, and images.

A “content evaluation” is sometimes called a “ROT analysis.” Both involve identifying content that is

- **Redundant:** Duplicate or repeated content or data
- **Obsolete:** Content or data that is longer accurate or useful to end users

E) Strengthened Options to Promote Accessibility

This year, the MDDS Office of Accessibility increased support for agencies to improve accessibility. Our achievements include:

- **Updated the state’s first-ever comprehensive digital accessibility policy:** We wanted to ensure the policy was both aligned with the [US Department of Justice’s Americans with Disabilities Act Final Rule](#) and human-centric. To this end, we partnered with multiple national advocacy organizations (e.g., National Federation of the Blind) and improved the policy with input from people with disabilities.
- **Tested every MDWDS component and template for accessibility:** This ensures an accessible web kit that helps web designers and developers implement accessible design at the outset.
- **Built accessibility into technology procurement:** We worked with the Office of State Procurement to include accessibility language in our procurement templates to ensure state purchased software or development has accessibility included at the earliest stage.
- **Established an accessibility officer in each Maryland cabinet-level state agency:** These officers have been trained to support their agencies’ compliance with state accessibility requirements. They meet monthly to learn new skills (e.g. document remediation) to help them take action at their own agencies.
- **Trained several hundred state employees on how to make PDFs accessible:** This is important for tackling one of the biggest challenges in making the state ADA-compliant: the backlog of thousands of inaccessible PDFs across state agencies.
- **Maintained an active community of practice:** Every month, folks from all across Maryland meet to discuss and learn about a variety of topics (e.g., best practices around coding)
- **Continuing to build out an internship program:** These interns help agencies directly with testing mobile apps and websites, facilitating training, document remediation, and more.
- **National leader and collaborator:** Represented the Maryland Digital Service as part of a six-state accessibility advisory committee on ADA Title II compliance. NASCIO’s IT

Accessibility Working Group provides a collaborative learning space for states as they prepare for compliance with DOJ's Final Rule on Web and Mobile App Accessibility.

F) Created an AI Plain Language Writing Tool for State Employees

In our efforts to rewrite public-facing digital content into plain language, MDDS Engineering and MDDS Design have partnered with DoIT's AI team and AWS to create and pilot an AI writing tool specifically for Maryland. This tool is trained on official Maryland Plain Language Standards and gives actionable and specific feedback on submitted drafts to help State employees make their written content more easily understood by constituents while retaining quality and accuracy. Currently, the tool has 83 registered users.

G) Continued Building Out a Robust Web Leads Community of Practice

Our Web Leads community of practice, with 300+ members from across different state agencies, meets monthly to discuss upcoming web initiatives (e.g., accessibility updates, new CMS). This meeting and monthly office hours provide a venue for any agency member who works on a website—developers, designers, senior leadership, content writers, communications specialists—to learn about available resources and learn from the community.

H) Partnered with Multiple Agencies to Redesign Their Websites

The team has been hard at work launching new websites with a variety of Maryland state agencies. In these projects, we've worked on:

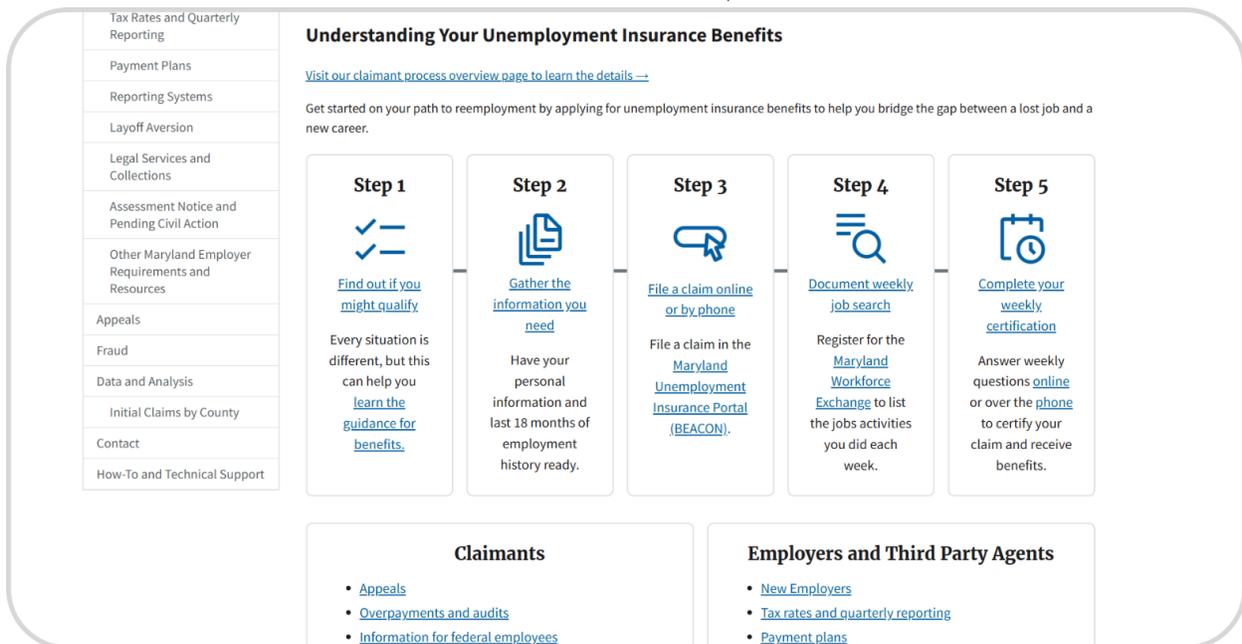
- Applying Maryland web standards and MDWDS
- Improving accessibility, usability, and content findability
- Improving content clarity with plain language principles
- Replacing aging websites with more modern, accurate, and accessible websites

Unemployment Insurance

The Unemployment Insurance (UI) website was struggling to effectively help Marylanders understand how to learn about, qualify for, apply for, track, and manage their claims. Content and site structure needed to be updated for accuracy and to better connect constituents to answers for common questions and allow them to more easily understand and complete their top tasks. Additionally, the Unemployment portal user interface was confusing and difficult to navigate.

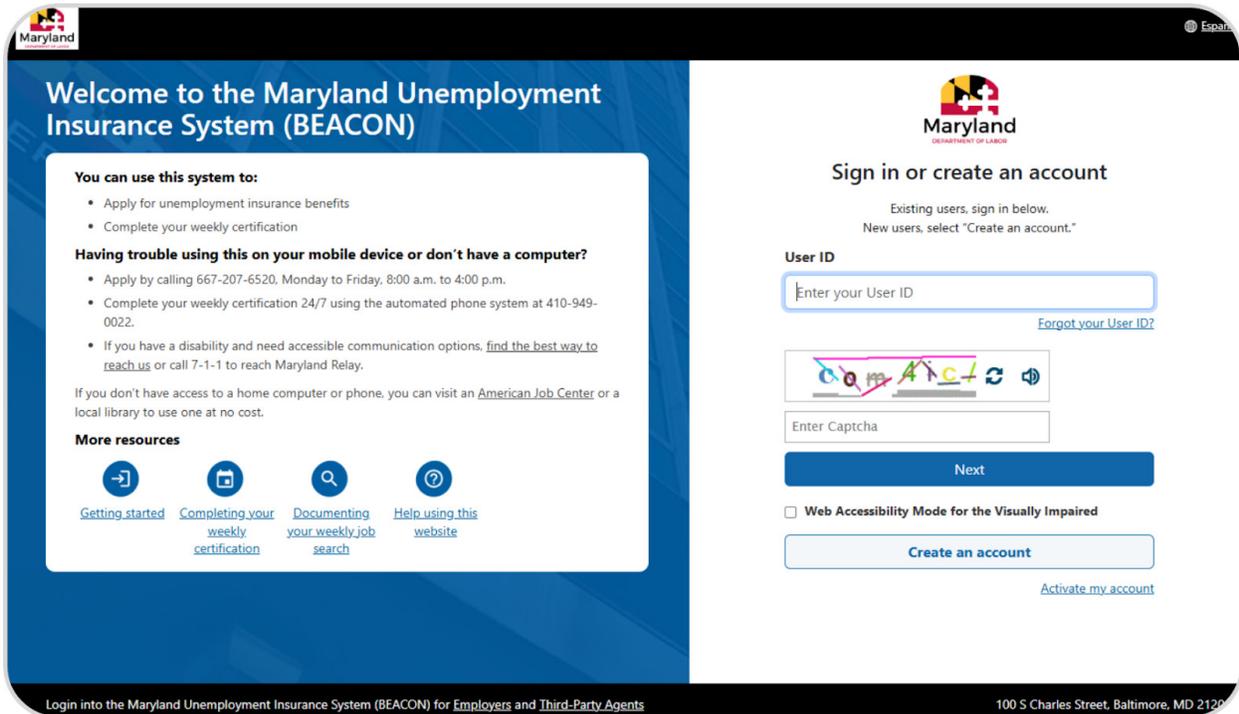
The unemployment insurance website launched in September 2025, with changes informed by discovery, user research, site mapping, wireframing, content writing, design, and usability testing. The new site has a 40% decrease in page count and a 15% increase in task completion rate. In November 2025, the new application portal user interface launched after the team's design was implemented by a third party vendor.

The [new Unemployment Insurance](#) website visualizes a complex process as 5 simple steps, making it easier for constituents to meet their requirements



While the unemployment insurance website and application portal were not part of the Drupal migration, our team used the Maryland Web Design System to design and build both to ensure claimants would have a consistent digital experience.

The [new application portal](#) user interface has a more intuitive layout with a clearer call-to-action, plain language content, and simpler login workflow.



Secretary of State (SoS) COMAR Launch

After discovery, procurement, and implementation work, Maryland successfully launched a new Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) website (regs.maryland.gov) and publishing process, replacing the legacy ELF system. The legacy system was poorly designed, frequently broke, and significantly increased manual work for COMAR editing staff. Staff hadn't had a non-working vacation in years and routinely worked nights and weekends. System failures made ELF frustrating to both COMAR staff and executive users from many Maryland agencies.

With SoS staff, we conducted extensive discovery efforts and helped select and implement a new solution. We've been providing product oversight and project management between COMAR staff, the vendor, and SoS leadership, while also maintaining the current ELF system.

The new COMAR, powered by Open Law Library, is built around a single source of truth, requires significantly less manual work by SoS staff, and features a much-improved public website that makes finding and reading regulations significantly easier. It also radically increases accessibility and transparency through open-source code on GitHub, while implementing strong security frameworks to avoid accidental or malicious tampering.

New COMAR website (regs.maryland.gov)



Maryland State Police (MDSP)

MDSP recognized the need for a large-scale site clean up. The MDDS Web team worked with MDSP to conduct stakeholder research, update the information architecture using tree testing, create wireframes, and conduct a deep review of site copy and rewriting.

As a result of this collaboration, MDSP's website has been reduced by at least 28% (180 pages compared to 250) and is being rebuilt in Drupal.

MDSP website

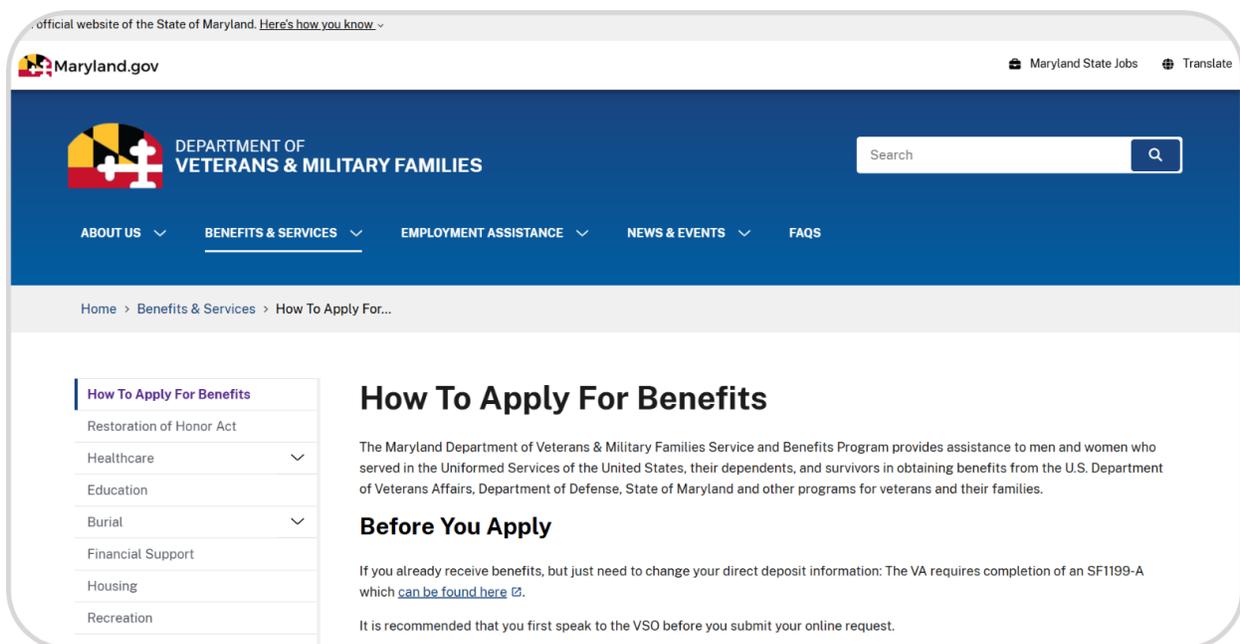
The screenshot shows the homepage of the Maryland State Police website. At the top, there is a search bar and a navigation menu with links for Firearms and Permits, Careers and Internships, State Fire Marshal, News, Organization, and Contact Us. The main header features the Maryland State Police logo and the text "MARYLAND Department of State Police". Below the header, there are two main columns. The left column contains a "Citizen Services" dropdown menu, an "About MDSP" dropdown menu, an "AMBER ALERT" logo, a link to "Learn About AMBER Alerts", a "Metro CRIME STOPPERS OF MARYLAND" logo, and a link to "Submit an Anonymous Tip". The right column features a "Welcome" heading, a large photograph of police officers in uniform standing in a line with flags, and a "How can we help?" section. This section is divided into two columns: "Firearms and Permits" and "Safety and Enforcement". Under "Firearms and Permits", there are links for "Purchase a Regulated Firearm", "Handgun Qualification License", "Wear and Carry Permit", and "View All Firearm and License Services". Under "Safety and Enforcement", there are links for "Fire Safety and Enforcement", "Vehicle Theft Prevention", "Vehicle Safety and Inspections", and "Crash and Crime Dashboards". At the bottom of the right column, there is a section titled "Serve your community. Join the Maryland State Police." with a sub-headline "At the Maryland Department of State Police, you can pursue a wide range of career opportunities where you can use your unique strengths and talents to serve the citizens of Maryland." and a blue button labeled "Learn More about MDSP Careers".

Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF)

The MDDS team partnered with DVMF and the [U.S. Digital Response](#) to make DVMF’s website content more accessible with plain language and to center the website around a benefits-first focus.

As a result, the new DVMF website was launched with 50% of its original content. Note that it was launched in a newer SharePoint template and will soon be migrated to Drupal.

New DVMF website

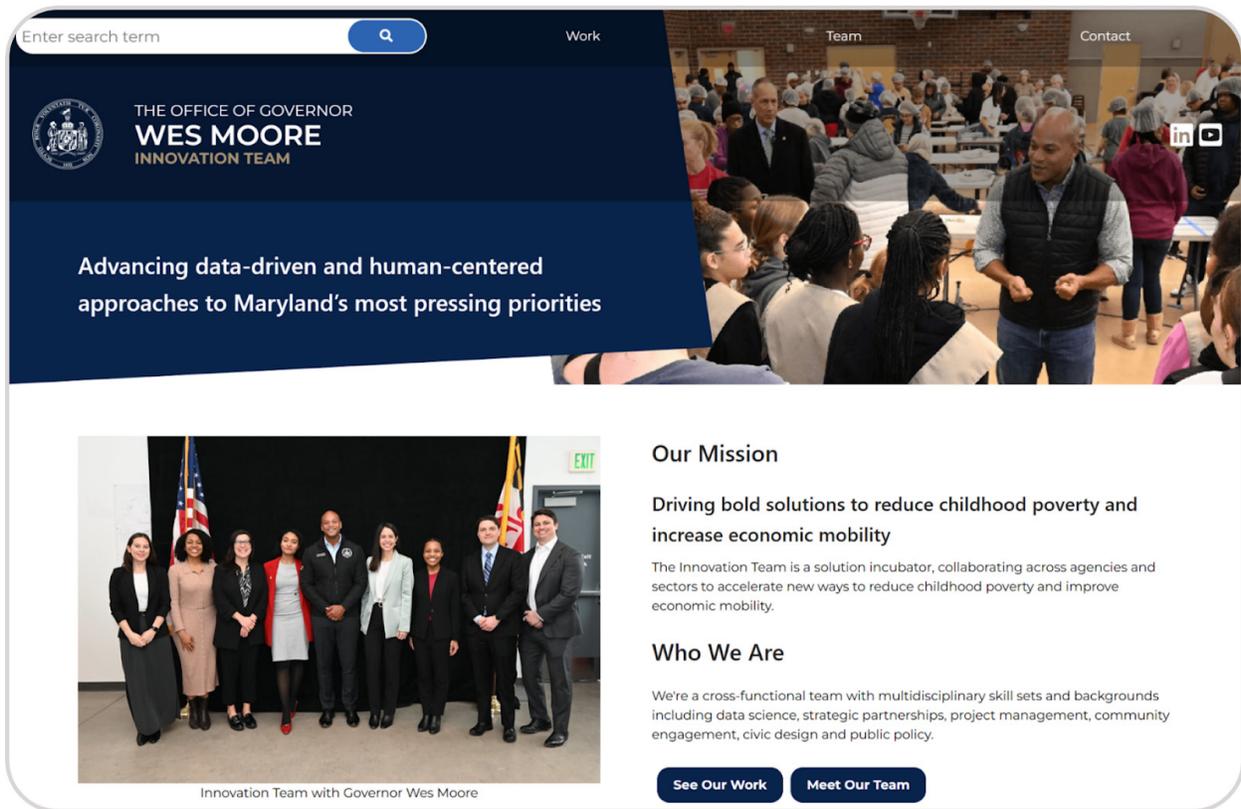


Governor's Office of Innovation

The newly formed Governor's Office of Innovation Team needed a new site to correspond with their launch.

The MDDS team supported the Innovation team in architecting, designing and building a new website that highlights mission, vision, and project spotlights (including the Maryland Business Compass).

New Innovation Website



The screenshot displays the homepage of the Governor's Office of Innovation website. At the top, there is a search bar with the placeholder text "Enter search term" and a magnifying glass icon. To the right of the search bar are navigation links for "Work", "Team", and "Contact". The main header features the state seal of Maryland on the left and the text "THE OFFICE OF GOVERNOR WES MOORE INNOVATION TEAM" in white on a dark blue background. Below this, a large banner image shows a group of people in a meeting. The banner text reads: "Advancing data-driven and human-centered approaches to Maryland's most pressing priorities". Below the banner, there is a photograph of the Innovation Team standing with Governor Wes Moore. To the right of the photo, the "Our Mission" section is titled "Our Mission" and states: "Driving bold solutions to reduce childhood poverty and increase economic mobility". Below this, a paragraph describes the team as a solution incubator. The "Who We Are" section is titled "Who We Are" and describes the team as cross-functional. At the bottom of the page, there are two buttons: "See Our Work" and "Meet Our Team".

Enter search term [Work](#) [Team](#) [Contact](#)

 THE OFFICE OF GOVERNOR
WES MOORE
INNOVATION TEAM

Advancing data-driven and human-centered approaches to Maryland's most pressing priorities



Innovation Team with Governor Wes Moore

Our Mission

Driving bold solutions to reduce childhood poverty and increase economic mobility

The Innovation Team is a solution incubator, collaborating across agencies and sectors to accelerate new ways to reduce childhood poverty and improve economic mobility.

Who We Are

We're a cross-functional team with multidisciplinary skill sets and backgrounds including data science, strategic partnerships, project management, community engagement, civic design and public policy.

[See Our Work](#) [Meet Our Team](#)

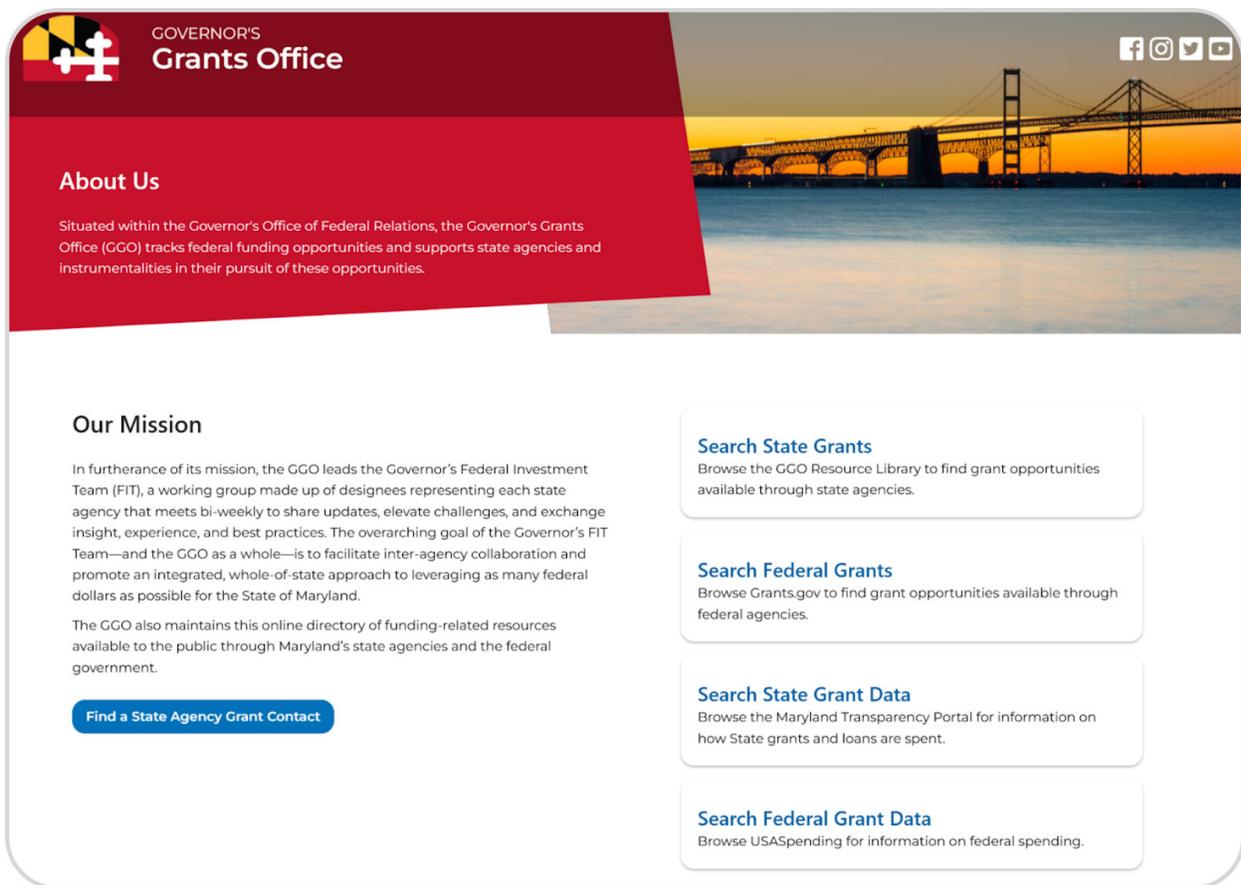
The Governor's Grants Office

In preparation for launching the Governor's Grants Office website in Drupal in 2026, we worked with them to significantly cut back on old content (85% of the old content has been removed from public access).

As a result, the website:

- Better highlights access to grant opportunities across the state
- Empowers organizations to contact Agencies for available funding, with a master state-wide contact list

Home Page for Grants Website

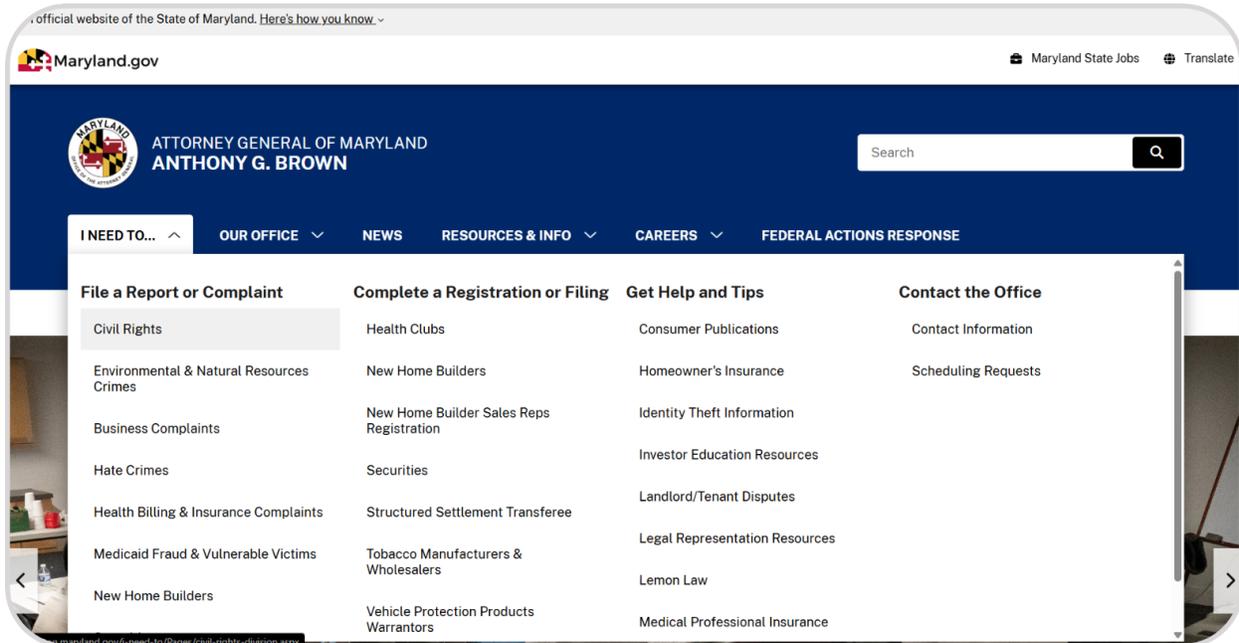


Office of the Attorney General (OAG)

Marylanders were struggling to navigate OAG’s website for help with top agency tasks like filing a complaint. Additionally, people frequently submitted requests or called in about issues unrelated to what the agency could help with or about difficulties completing forms online. The site had about 250 pages and 2,000 PDFs, many of which were out-of-date or filled with highly technical language.

The MDDS team collaborated with OAG to reduce the site to about 120 pages and convert hundreds of PDF press releases to accessible HTML pages. We also reorganized the site around users’ top tasks to enable Marylanders to more easily access the help they needed.

New OAG Website



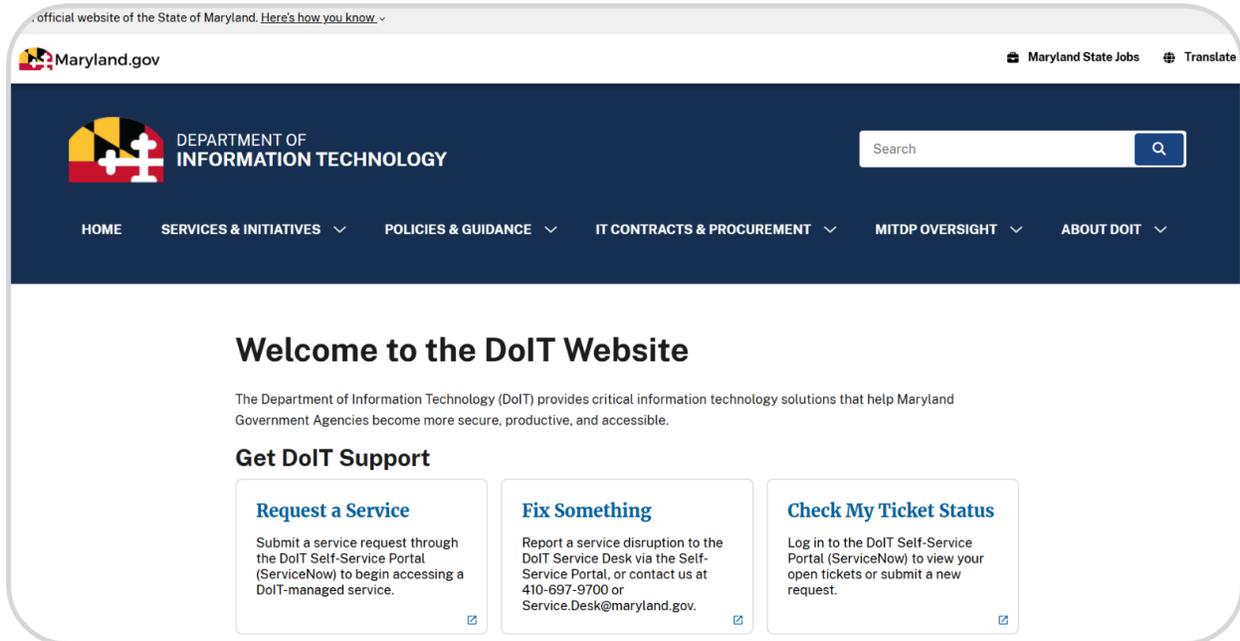
Department of IT (DoIT)

The old DoIT website had outgrown its original navigation structure and had become bloated with outdated content.

The project involved extensive user testing, design, development, and collaboration with agency subject matter experts. The result: a 40% increase in task completion rates.

With a page count reduction of 84% and incorporation of MDWDS elements, this new site makes it easier for people to find accessible and accurate content about DoIT's services and offerings.

New DoIT Website



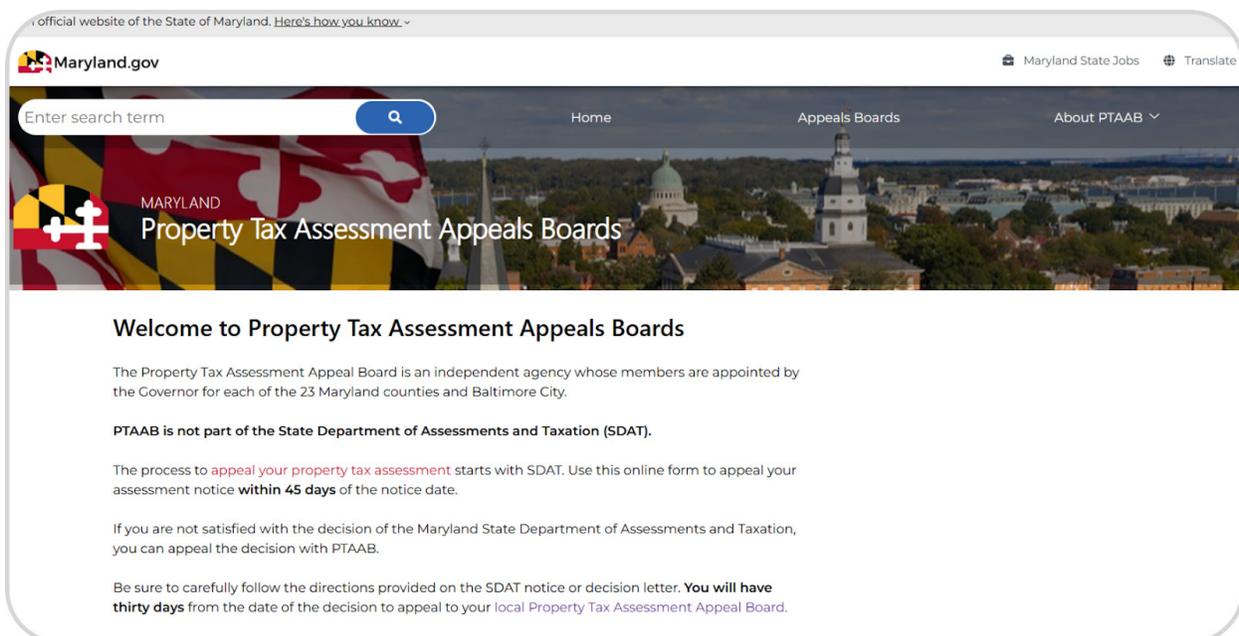
Maryland Property Tax Assessment Appeals Boards (PTAAB)

Early 2025, we received an urgent request to develop a website for PTAAB. A web presence was important for them to provide:

- Information to help the public appeal their property tax assessments
- Information on appeals-related regulations
- Answers to frequently asked questions
- Contact information

MDDS Web Services was able to design and develop the site within a month to help them accomplish those goals.

New PTAAB Website



I) Established Broad Website Analytics

To effectively redesign websites, it's important to know how those websites are currently performing and how users interact with them. Unfortunately, there was no comprehensive system of measuring site analytics in Maryland. Only DoIT-managed websites (100+) were using Google Analytics.

MDDS Engineering implemented Microsoft Clarity and Google Analytics for most of Maryland's digital properties this year. This allows us to:

- Use Google Analytics to understand traffic, top tasks, search behavior, and where users drop off

- Use Microsoft Clarity to see how users actually interact with pages through heatmaps and session recordings
- Identify usability and accessibility issues that aren't visible through metrics alone
- Validate design and content changes with quantitative data
- Prioritize improvements that directly impact resident outcomes
- Share usage data on analytics.maryland.gov that Marylanders and stakeholders

J) Improved Web Security Posture with Cloudflare

For years, website traffic came in largely unfiltered. To mitigate associated risks, the MDDS Engineering team collaborated across the Department of IT (DoIT) to move 200+ zones to the cloud-based platform Cloudflare (with minimal downtime and user impact).

As a result, we're now able to monitor and fix security issues broadly, easily, and quickly. We've also expanded our pool of monitored websites beyond the 100+ that DoIT manages.

K) Released a Domain Name Policy

On July 1, 2025, DoIT launched a new policy that requires official Maryland government websites to use the maryland.gov domain, moving away from .org, .com, .net and .state.us domains, making it easier for constituents to know which sites to trust.

2. Expanding Access to Talent

L) Scaling our Capacity for Impact

Our ability to improve the lives of Marylanders through digital services and support existing agency needs depends on the strength of our team. To meet the growing demands for accessible, reliable government, we're prioritizing building a team capable of tackling the state's biggest challenges.

In 2025, we transformed our recruiting pipeline, growing our workforce from 22 to 49 members (a 122% increase). By targeting specialized roles such as Service Designers, Engineers, and Technical Product Managers, we are ensuring the state has the in-house talent required to build modern, user friendly services. This expansion includes 17 former federal experts, bringing national experience to the state government to accelerate the delivery of services that residents can rely on. In turn, these teams have impacted agency projects across the state.

A few of our members at the Maryland state house



M) Established the ADEPT Contract Vehicle: Efficiently Leveraging Vendor Teams for Scale

The Agile Digital Experience Product Transformation (ADEPT) contract vehicle, approved late summer of 2025, enables the State to more quickly staff digital service-related agency projects (modernization, transformation, and customization). Before this contract vehicle, it was difficult for Agencies to bring on a team of contractors for digital technology needs. ADEPT provides a team-based model that, as compared to previous staff augmentation contracts, facilitates faster access to vetted teams with expertise in digital service design, development, and delivery.

N) Deployed Teams to State Agencies

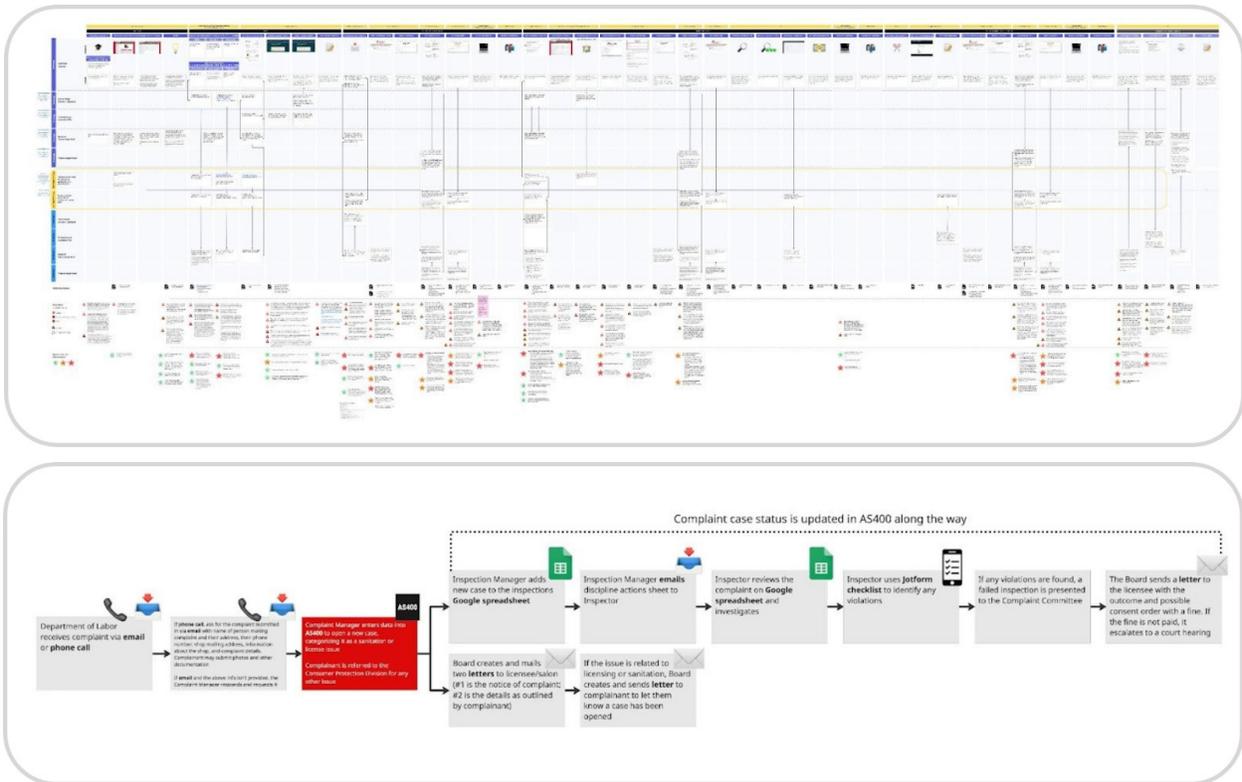
We are “deploying” staff to agencies to provide critical skills and support agency leadership in new approaches and modern ways of working. We are especially grateful to our early state partners who are leaning in to changes and helping us improve our operating model.

ELMo: Electronic Licensing Modernization for Occupational and Professional Licensing

The Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing (O&P) at the Maryland Department of Labor uses a 30 year old system to process licensing applications and renewals. The system has limited functionality for staff that can cause inefficiency in application processing, and outdated instructions that cause confusion and lag time for applicants

Our team led service design discovery with Labor staff and the public to understand the holistic licensing process, identifying opportunities for improvement inside and outside of the licensing system for an initial effort focused on electrician and cosmetology licenses. We presented our holistic service blueprints and findings report to O&P leadership in October, led a prioritization working session in November, and conducted follow up research with staff that we synthesized and documented in December 2025. The Department of Labor is using this research to evaluate their current modernization strategy and make plans for improvements.

ELMo Service Design Blueprints



Maryland Department of Environment (MDE) Service Center

MDE's current environmental permitting process relies on a mix of mail and email submissions, PDFs, and paper checks, which can lead to delays in processing and reconciliation, and contributes to user frustration.

We deployed design and product experts to assist with prioritization, design, and building a culture of iterative product improvements, supporting MDE's January 2026 launch of several new features—an online payment system, online form submission, and application status tracking. These improvements are projected to save weeks of application processing time associated with paper checks. Here's what one user said: "If a check gets lost today, I won't know about it [until] 3-4 weeks go by....The fact that I [now] know that the credit card went through immediately, and that it is paid for, is nice." Future improvements are planned to convert PDF applications into web forms.

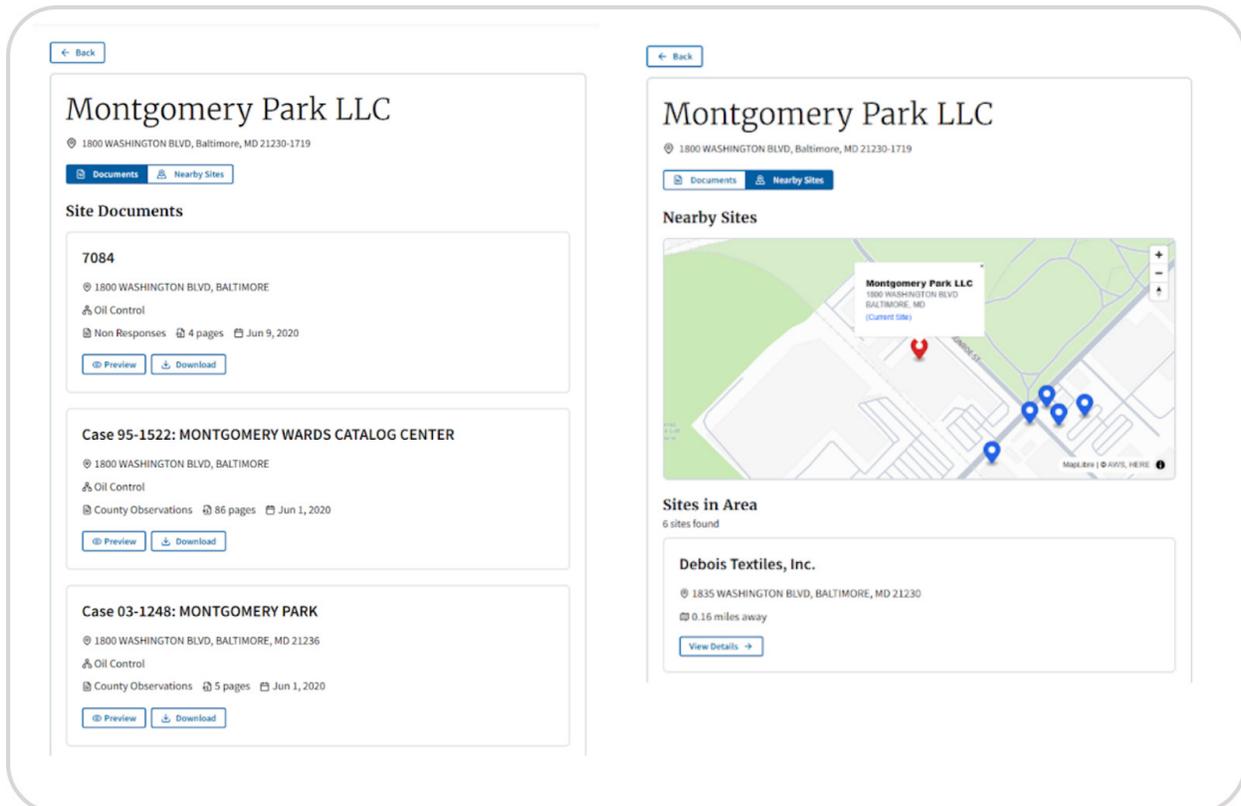
MDE Site Selection Tool

Real estate developers who are trying to select an appropriate site for

development are required to evaluate environmental incidents to understand impact and liability. Historically, this has been accomplished through a lengthy public information act (PIA) process. Turnaround time to get that information can be up to 30 days, and MDE employees can spend up to 2 hours per request.

Through funding from the Rockefeller Foundation to accelerate permitting and licensing, we worked with MDE and our partner Percepta to develop a 12-week pilot for a self-service portal to be used by real estate developer consultants to search, view, and download documents by address or location without the need to file PIA requests. This tool has seen overwhelmingly positive results in user testing and internal use. The self-service portal is set to launch in 2026. It's projected to reduce total PIA requests by 50% and save MDE employees about 300 hours per month.

MDE Site Search Results and Nearby Mapping Feature



3. New Oversight to Improve Major IT Development Project (MITDP) Delivery

O) Reformed Oversight to Set Up Projects for Success

Issued New Staffing Requirements for MITDPs: After gaining a deep understanding of the State's MITDPs, it became apparent that many agencies lacked modern software development skillsets to lead MITDP efforts. Instead of requiring only a project manager and a business analyst, like in times past, MITDPs must now have leaders with skills in product management, user experience, and modern software development.

Founded a Discovery Team: To support State product development, we established a discovery team to work directly with Agencies to establish a shared understanding of the problems they need to solve, who their users are, and opportunities to reach success.

Established a Deployed Teams Model: Deployed teams are partnerships between agencies. We recruit and hire digital service experts from leading industry and federal backgrounds and assign these staff to agency projects. Our first deployed teams were launched this year to support MITDPs across several Maryland state agencies.

Together, these changes lay the foundation for the next phase of reforms for the State's major IT projects, kicking off in early 2026.