

MEDA

2025 Annual Conference

Maryland's North Star: Regions Coming Together

2025 MEDA Annual Conference

April 27 – April 29, 2025

Hyatt Regency, Chesapeake Bay, Cambridge, Maryland

THEME: Maryland's North Star: Regions Coming Together

Sponsors:

AT&T

Bay Crossing Consulting

Bay One Group, LLC

BGE

Caroline County Economic Development

Carroll County Department of Economic Development

Cecil County Office of Economic Development

Charles County Economic Development Department

Dorchester County Economic Development

City of Annapolis

Edwards Performance Solutions

Frostburg Outdoor Recreation Economy Institute (FOREI)

The City of Frederick

FSC First

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Kent County Economic and Tourism Development Commission

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MNCREDA

Maryland World Class Consortia

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Queen Anne's County Economic & Tourism Development

Rockville Economic Development, Inc.

TEDCO

Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore

Talbot County Economic Development & Tourism

Tides at River Marsh

The Daily Record

Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland

Upper Shore Regional Council

Washington College Center for Environment & Society

Washington County Business and Economic Development

West North Avenue Development Authority

Western Governors University

We will explore collaboration across Maryland's regions, highlighting ways to strengthen regional partnerships, leverage collective resources, and develop innovative strategies that benefit the state as a whole.

Sunday, April 27, 2025

- 10:30 AM – 3:00 PM DISPLAY TABLE SET UP**
Location: Foyer outside Chesapeake Ballroom
- 10:30 AM – 2:00 PM MAIN STREET TOUR: Discover Salisbury's Revitalization**
Location: Salisbury City Headquarters
Sponsored by: Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development

- 11:45 AM – 4:30 PM MEDA ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT – shotgun start at 11:45 AM**
Location: River Marsh Golf Club
Sponsored by: Baltimore Gas and Electric
Co-Chairs: Chris Moyer & Randy Baynes

- 4:00 PM HOTEL CHECK-IN BEGINS**

- 4:00 PM CONFERENCE REGISTRATION OPENS**
Location: Foyer outside Chesapeake Ballroom

- 5:00 – 6:00 PM WELCOME EARLY BIRD RECEPTION**
Sponsored by: Carroll County Department of Economic Development

Celebrate and welcome the members who have joined in the past year. All registrants have an opportunity to mix and mingle with new members, the MEDA Board of Directors, conference speakers, and sponsors. Open to all conference registrants!

- 6:00 – 8:00 PM WELCOME TO THE EASTERN SHORE NETWORKING DINNER**
Location: River's Edge (weather permitting)
Sponsored by: Caroline County Economic Development, Cecil County Office of Economic Development, Dorchester County Economic Development, Kent County Economic and Tourism Development, Mid Shore Regional Council, Queen Anne's County Economic & Tourism Development, Tri County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore, Talbot County Economic Development, Upper Shore Regional Council, Worcester County - Maryland's Coast

Welcome: The Honorable Thomas Hutchinson, Delegate, State of Maryland

- 8:30 – 10:00 PM Young Leaders S'mores Networking Session**
- The MEDA Young Leaders are invited to a S'mores Networking Session to end the first day of the MEDA Annual Conference! Gather 'round the fire to enjoy s'mores while spending time with your fellow Young Leaders!

Monday, April 28, 2025

- 8:00 – 8:30 AM OPENING BREAKFAST**
Location: Chesapeake Ballroom
Sponsored by: Dorchester County Economic Development Department
Welcome: Pamela Ruff, Executive Director, MEDA
Richard Griffin, CECd, MEDA President
The Honorable Lajan Cephas, Mayor, City of Cambridge, Maryland
The Honorable Johnny Mautz, Senator, State of Maryland

8:30 – 9:00 AM

MEDA MEMBERSHIP BUSINESS MEETING

Location: Chesapeake Ballroom

Year in Review: Richard Griffin, CEcD, MEDA President

Approval of Minutes: Kelly Robertson- Slagle, Secretary

Treasurer's Report: Renée Winsky, Treasurer

Membership Report: Denise Beaver, CEcD/Ebony Stocks, CEcD Membership Co-Chairs

Election of Officers: Danny Thompson, Past MEDA President

9:00 – 10:00 AM

OPENING KEYNOTE

Location: Chesapeake Ballroom

Speaker: Fran Weld, Co-Founder, Canopy Team

Sponsored by: TEDCO

Introduction: Renée Winsky, Bay One Group

Fran Weld is Co-Founder and CEO of Baltimore based, Canopy Team, a sports advisory group that specializes in design, development and operations of venues from youth to professional teams. A national leader in urban investment and policy, Fran has created a platform for sports teams to collaborate with their civic partners on economic development and community-oriented growth. She will share her insights on the power of regional collaboration, drawing on her time as Chair of the Board of San Francisco Urban Planning and Research (SPUR) during the Bay Area's Regional Plan, and her time as Sr. Vice President of the San Francisco Giants in charge of the \$2.6 billion Mission Rock project. She will share stories from her recent experience co-founding a start-up in Baltimore, illustrating how strategic partnerships and investment in place can drive long-term prosperity across Maryland.

10:00 – 10:15 AM

BREAK

10:15 – 11:15 AM

REGIONAL INDUSTRIES IN FOCUS

Location: Chesapeake Ballroom

Sponsored by: Center for Environment & Society Washington College, City of Annapolis, FSC First, and MARBIDCO

Ted-Talk style presentations:

- **Advancing Health Access: How Autonomous Technology and UAS Are Connecting Maryland's Regions**
Explore how Maryland's growing UAS sector uses autonomous technology to deliver vital health services, demonstrating multi-regional impact and driving innovation in connectivity, healthcare access, and economic development.
 - John Slaughter, Director, UAS Research and Operations Center, University of Maryland
- **Reviving Maryland's Forestry Sector: Regional Strategies for Wood Energy and Sustainable Growth**
Discover how regional initiatives in Mountain Maryland and the Eastern Shore are advancing a modern wood energy sector to promote economic development, support healthy forests, enhance outdoor recreation, and achieve shared renewable energy goals.
 - Beth Hill, Executive Director, Maryland Forest Administration
- **Propelling Innovation: Maryland's Aerospace Industry Driving Regional Growth and Global Impact**
Discover how Maryland's dynamic aerospace sector—spanning research, manufacturing, and

space exploration—is fostering regional economic development, advancing cutting-edge technologies, and strengthening the state’s position as a global leader in aerospace innovation.

- Georgie Brophy, Co-Founder, Maryland Aerospace Alliance

- **Transforming Healthcare Delivery: Leveraging Montgomery County’s Life Sciences and the UM Institute for Health Computing**

Learn how the University of Maryland Institute for Health Computing is harnessing Montgomery County’s life sciences ecosystem and a \$70M statewide initiative to drive health innovation, advance equity, and fuel economic growth through cross-campus collaboration, industry partnerships, and cutting-edge healthcare technologies.

- Dr. Bradley Maron, MD, FAHA, Co-Executive Director, University of Maryland Institute for Health Computing

11:15 – 11:30 AM

BREAK

11:30 – 12:15 PM

RESOURCE ADEQUACY: HOW UTILITIES SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY IN AN ELECTRIFYING ERA

Location: Choptank Ballroom

Sponsored by: AT&T

A panel discussion about the present and future of regional electricity transmission and distribution throughout the State of Maryland. From Main Street retail to hyperscale data centers, electricity is a necessity among all businesses and communities. Hear about how utilities are preparing for the increasing demand for electrification, supporting state goals towards greenhouse gas reduction, and responding to the surge in interest from large load data centers.

Moderator: Jerry Sanford, Managing Director, Business and Economic Development Officer, Harbor Bank of Maryland

Panelists:

- Alexander Núñez, SVP of Governmental, Regulatory & External Affairs, Baltimore Gas and Electric
- George Anas, Director of External Affairs, Berkshire Hathaway Energy GT&S
- Jason Schwartzberg, President & Co-Founder, MD Energy Advisors
- Michael Richard, Commissioner, Maryland Public Service Commission

12:15 – 2:00 PM

LUNCHEON AND ECONOMIC OUTLOOK: MONETARY MASALA

Location: Chesapeake Ballroom

Speaker: Anirban Basu

Introduction: Tom Sadowski, Executive Director, MEDCO

Sponsored by: MEDCO

With the presidential and congressional elections of 2024 in the rearview, our eyes turn to 2025. Has the Federal Reserve engineered a soft landing, or is stagflation on the way? Can America continue to pace the advanced world, or will expanding indebtedness, policy uncertainty, and over-extended asset values prove our collective undoing? This presentation focuses on US and regional economic performance with an eye toward discussing emerging risks to what has thus far been an economy that has surprised to the upside.

Anirban Basu is Chairman & CEO of Sage Policy Group, Inc., a Baltimore-based economic and policy consultancy he founded in 2004. He serves the Chief Economist function for many organizations, including the Maryland Bankers Association and Associated Builders and Contractors. The Baltimore Business Journal named him one of the region’s 20 most powerful business leaders in 2010. In 2022, he entered the Daily Record newspaper’s Circle of Influence.

He is the Distinguished Economist in Residence at Goucher College, where he teaches History of Economic Thought. He holds four graduate degrees, including a J.D. and a Ph.D.

2:15 – 3:30 PM

SECRETARIES ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Location: Choptank Ballroom

Sponsored by: The City of Frederick and Tides at River Marsh

Join us for this dynamic post-lunch session featuring Maryland's Cabinet Secretaries in a unique, interactive format. We'll kick off with brief opening remarks from each Secretary as they share their top priorities, followed by a roundtable exchange where attendees can engage directly in small-group discussions. This is your chance to ask questions, spark dialogue, and connect 1:1 with the state's top leaders shaping Maryland's economic future.

Panelists:

- Secretary Kevin Atticks, Maryland Department of Agriculture
- Deputy Secretary Ricardo Benn, Maryland Department of Commerce
- Secretary Jake Day, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
- Deputy Secretary Kristin Fleckenstein, Maryland Department of Planning
- Special Secretary Maria Martinez, Maryland Office of Small, Minority, & Women Business Affairs
- Secretary Serena McIlwain, Maryland Department of the Environment
- Assistant Secretary Erin Roth, Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning, Maryland Department of Labor
- Secretary Paul Wiedefeld, Maryland Department of Transportation

3:30 – 5:30 PM

BREAK

Network with fellow attendees and visit the display table vendors.

5:30 – 6:15 PM

BANQUET RECEPTION

Location: Foyer outside Chesapeake Ballroom

Sponsored by: Charles County Economic Development Department and Maryland World Class Consortia

6:15 - 8:00 PM

MEDA Annual Dinner

Location: Chesapeake Ballroom

Sponsored by: Maryland Department of Commerce, Maryland Housing and Community Development, TEDCO, and West North Avenue Development Authority

Welcome Remarks by: Tammi Thomas, MEDA President & the Honorable Keasha Haythe, CECD, Talbot County Council

8:00 – 9:00 PM

MEDA ANNUAL BANQUET

Location: Chesapeake Ballroom

Sponsored by: Miles & Stockbridge P.C.

Individual Award Sponsored by: Bay Crossing and Cecil County Office of Economic Development

Awards Presented by: Jeremy Scholtes, Principal, Miles & Stockbridge, and Jimmy Spaly, Vice President, Relationship Manager, PNC Bank

Individual Awards Presented by: Dawn Medley & Destiny Mitchell, MEDA Awards Committee Co-Chairs; Katie Stevens, 2024 Rising Star

Tonight's awards ceremony will honor standouts in the field of economic development and the professionals who foster MEDA's success today. Recognizing the 2025 MEDA Award winners.

9:00 - 9:30 PM

Awards Celebration Reception - SILENT AUCTION ENDS at 9:30 PM

Sponsored by: The Daily Record and MNCREDA

Tuesday, April 29, 2025

8:30 – 9:30 AM

OPENING BREAKFAST & KEYNOTE: THE BETHLEHEM STORY

Location: Chesapeake Ballroom

Sponsored by: Frostburg Outdoor Recreation Economy Institute (FOREI) and
Western Governors University

Speaker: Donald Cunningham, President & CEO, Lehigh Valley Economic Development

As the former Mayor of Bethlehem, PA, Don Cunningham led his city through one of its most challenging economic transitions—the closure of Bethlehem Steel. His leadership helped forge the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, a regional collaboration that continues to drive economic growth today. Don will share this powerful story, highlighting lessons in resilience, partnership, and redevelopment—offering valuable insights that resonate with Maryland’s own transformation at Tradepoint Atlantic.

9:30 – 9:45 AM

BREAK

9:45 – 11:00 AM

REGIONAL INITIATIVES: IGNITE-STYLE PRESENTATIONS

Location: Chesapeake Ballroom

Sponsored by: Ghost Writer, LLC, Oxford Chase Development, Rockville Economic Development, Inc., Tri County Council for Southern Maryland, and Washington County Department of Business and Economic Development

- Powerline Worker Pre-Apprenticeship (PWPA) program (Wor-Wic & Choptank Electric) - Dr. Rhonda Banks, Director of Skills Trade & Manufacturing Training, Wor-Wic Community College
- Workforce Architecture - Antionette Forte, Director of Talent Management, Fearless
- Maryland's Main Street: Connecting Regions - Christine McPherson, Assistant Director, Division of Neighborhood Revitalization, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
- Maryland Works for Wind - Dwayne Murphy, Trainer / MWW Project Manager, Maryland New Directions
- Chesapeake Bay Passenger Ferry Feasibility Study - Kristen Pironis, Executive Director, Visit Annapolis
- Farm Retail Innovation Center – Katie Stevens, Director, Frederick County Office of Agriculture
- Building the Future of Healthcare: Connecting Youth to Careers in Medicine - Lisa Widmaier, Executive Director, Area Health Education Center

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

CLOSING KEYNOTE: NAVIGATING YOUR WAY TO REGIONAL SUCCESS

Location: Chesapeake Ballroom

Sponsored by: Edwards Performance Solution

Speaker: Julie Lenzer, Chief Innovation Officer at the Advanced Regenerative Manufacturing Institute (ARMI)

Explore what it takes to drive successful regional collaboration—from national trends to local wins. This session will highlight proven models, key success factors, and actionable strategies for aligning partners, communicating with stakeholders, and leveraging infrastructure to move your region forward.

Julie Lenzer is the Chief Innovation Officer at the Advanced Regenerative Manufacturing Institute (ARMI), where she leads efforts to build the ecosystem for startups advancing cell-, tissue-, and organ-based therapies. Previously, she served as Chief Innovation Officer at the University of Maryland, where she oversaw tech transfer, launched the Quantum Startup Foundry, and supported entrepreneurs across the state. An award-winning serial entrepreneur and former Director of Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the U.S. Department of Commerce, Julie brings deep experience in regional innovation, technology commercialization, and driving inclusive economic growth.

12:00 - 12:15 PM CLOSING REMARKS & DRAWING

Sponsored by: PNC Bank

Speakers: Tammi Thomas, MEDA President & Richard Griffin, CEcD, MEDA Past President

“This event is recognized by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) as a professional development event that counts toward the recertification of Certified Economic Developers (CEcD).”



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