

Greetings!







AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY OFFICE OF SMALL, MINORITY & WOMEN BUSINESS AFFAIRS

DANIELLE DAVIS

VSBE Compliance Manager

Mistress of Ceremonies





WELLNESS. EMPOWERMENT. LEADERSHIP



Powerful Impact

NATIONAL

- Nearly 14.5 million Women-Owned businesses in the U.S.
- Represent 39.2% of all U.S. Firms
- Generated \$3.3 Trillion in sales
- Employed 12+ million workers
- 9.3% are Employer Firms
- 90.7% are Non-Employer Firms

MARYLAND

- Approx. 697,000+ small businesses in Maryland, 99.6% of all businesses
- 48.7% of workers are Women
- 46.1% of Women are Business Owners
- 9% are Employer Firms
- 91% are Non-Employer Firms



Sources of original data: American Community Survey, 2022 5-Year Data (Census); Annual Business Survey, 2022 (Census); Nonemployer Statistics by Demographics, 2022 (Census)

 Welcoming Remarks from our host, Live! Casino & Hotel

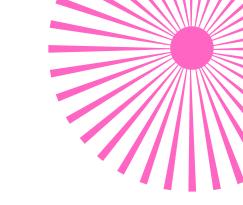
- Opening Remarks Special Secretary Maria Martinez
- 4 amazing speakers!
- Moderated Q&A Panel
- Citation Ceremony
- Closing
- Overview of Resources
- Open Networking







COLLABORATING PARTNERS





To learn more about how to do business with Live! Casino & Hotel, connect via the link below:

MDPurchasingTeam@livech.com

THANK YOU!



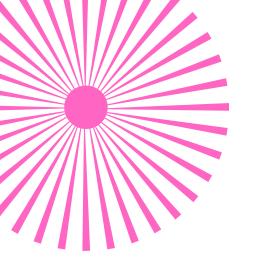
CASINO · HOTEL MARYLAND

Welcome!



Renee Mutchnik
Vice President of Communications





Opening Keynote



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY OFFICE OF SMALL, MINORITY & WOMEN BUSINESS AFFAIRS



Maria Martinez

Special Secretary



Marm Regards!



Wes Moore Governor

Aruna Miller Lt. Governor















UNDERSTANDING THE JOURNEY





THE SETBACKS!

THE CONNECTIONS!

THE COLLABORATIONS!



THE PATH FORWARD



RESOURCES

TRAINING







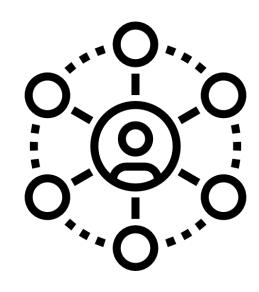
THE COMMITMENT!
THE OPPORTUNITIES!
THE TRIUMPTH!







Implement
Maryland's 3
socioeconomic
procurement
programs across
70+ purchasing
units



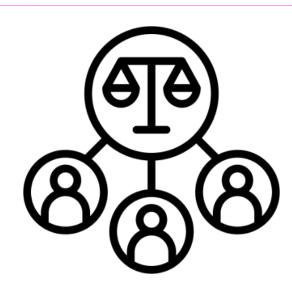
Connect small, minority, women, & veteran business owners to opportunities in the state contracting arena



Host free small business training webinars and business development events



Curate online resources at the federal, state, and local levels



Home of the newly-formed MBE
Ombudsman
Unit

goMDsmallbiz.maryland.gov

T.I.P.S.

SMALL BUSINESS

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TRAINING & INSIGHTS for PROCUREMENT SUCCESS



2 free webinars monthly



10 a.m. – 12 p.m.



Subject Matter Experts

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- 2 free webinars every month
- No cost to attend
- Register in advance to receive the participation link
- Download the presenter's slide deck
- Access video recordings of all classes on our YouTube playlist











New & Upcoming Changes

What to expect from Maryland's Landmark Procurement Reform Act



Expanded Small Business Reserve (SBR)

Contracts up to \$1M reserved for certified small businesses



Faster Payments

Reduces payment timelines under SBR contracts



More Flexibility

Contract adjustments expand opportunities for MBEs and VSBEs



Simplified Process

Makes secondary competitions faster and more efficient for certain procurements



Oral Presentations

Facilitates clearer communication between vendors and State evaluation committees







New & Upcoming Changes

As of August 29, 2025:

A certification for a small business will be referred to as a Certified Small Business (CSB)

Recertifications & new certifications for both VSBE and CSB will be every 3 years, instead of every year.

As of October 1, 2025:

New definition of a Veteran in the state of Maryland will now be:

An individual who is verified as having served on active duty in the "Uniformed Services" of the United States, other than for training, and was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.

Amendments to State Finance and Procurement Articles (SFP §§ 14-302 and 14-602) now allow for:

- a) <u>Modification of Participation Goals</u>. Procurement Officers may now modify MBE and VSBE participation goals. Modifications are possible both before and after contract execution, in certain circumstances.
- b) Correction of Deficiencies on Participation Forms.

 Bidders/Offerors will now be able to correct deficiencies in Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) and Veteran-Owned Small Business Enterprise (VSBE) forms. Updates to the MBE and VSBE forms and instructions are forthcoming and will reflect these Procurement Reform Act changes.



Upcoming VSBR (Veteran-Owned Small Business Reserve) Program:

We are working to roll out this new veteran prime contracting program. Vendors must be a certified VSBE in order to automatically qualify for this new designation program.









To advance social and economic mobility for all Marylanders by removing barriers, investing in inclusive opportunities, and aligning state resources to support historically underserved communities and businesses.

Vision

A Maryland where every resident—regardless of race, geography, or background—can access the tools, networks, and systems needed to thrive and contribute to a more equitable and prosperous state.



Maryland Department of Social and Economic Mobility

Building Opportunity and Mobility for all Marylanders

https://economicmobility.maryland.gov

The Department of Social and Economic Mobility integrates three existing offices:

Office of Minority Business Enterprises

Search Certified Businesses

MBE Events Calendar

Get your MBE / DBE/ ACDBE Certifications

Office of Small, Minority & Women Business Affairs

Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)

Program

Small Business Reserve (SBR) Program

Veteran-Owned Small Business Enterprise

(VSBE) Program

MBE Ombudsman Unit

Procurement Forecasts

Office of Social Equity

Programs and Resources

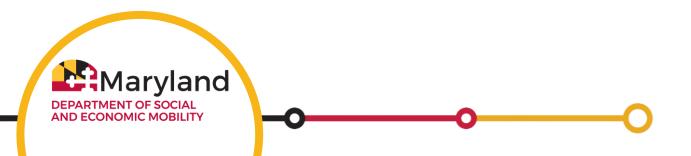
Events

Press Releases

https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso

https://gomdsmallbiz.maryland.gov

https://ose.maryland.gov



The power of the "Hankerchief" by Special Secretary Maria Martinez

It has served as a touchstone of resilience, a symbol of care, and a reminder that no matter what life brings, we are never alone. My mother gifted me my first handkerchief as a young girl, just as her mother had done before her.

it's this legacy that keeps me grounded and focused, especially when facing difficult decisions or uncertain times.

Let's honor the traditions, lessons, and legacies that shape us—not just in business, but in life. Let's uplift and support one another, recognize our collective strength, and continue to create a future where all entrepreneurs thrive.

Just like the handkerchief carries a message of resilience, OSBA is here to help carry your business through challenges, ensuring that businesses have access to the resources, opportunities, and connections you need to grow.

https://gomdsmallbiz.maryland.gov



Discovering Your Strengths





THRIVE TOWARDS A BETTER FUTURE





Sharing Grace In Action: Investing In A Culture of Strategic Thinking (Thinkers)

By

Catherine Horta-Hayden
Chair & Professor
Department of Dance
Towson University

What is Leading with Grace?

According to Dean James Ryan of Harvard University's Graduate School of Education:

"Grace is about gratitude. It's about elegance and confidence in movement, which is what we usually mean by the term "graceful", and it's about empathy and inclusion, which is to me the true meaning of gracious. Grace is about authentic style and courage, and it's about forgiveness".

Grace in Action

- Steer a workplace culture that supports & contributes to a safe and equitable environment
 - Allows leaders to reflect & think compassionately, rather than react in the moment
 - It provides guidance to leaders as they navigate human experiences to achieve thriving & sustainable units









Leadership Models Are Personal

- Often aligned with management styles or dictated by administration, policies, or output demands
- Leading with Grace becomes a personal choice, creating an environment that values & honors all voices, through community and communication
- Embracing an active model that can lead to innovation & contribute positively to change



Negative Impacts of Change

- Growing concerns for the individuals in your unit and the health & viability of the team
- Being thrusted into survival mode due to significant changes
- Increased pressure on time, impacting much needed communication with all stakeholders
- Decreased morale
- Decrease time and attention to self-care & wellness





Positive Impacts of Change

- Being thrusted into having to address current realities & begin to plan for all of the unknowns
- A culture of strategic thinking emerges through the common bonds & experiences shared by the team
- Increased self-awareness, reflection, and compassion for those experiencing the changes with you
- Opportunity to build greater trust, transparency, and equity within the unit

3 Principles of Grace in Action

As I engaged with GRACE as a leadership model, there were 3 principles that provided the foundations in creating a culture of Strategic and Empowered thinkers.

Grace as...

Self-awareness: working on self first

 Intentional: creating emotional – intellectual – creative connections with others

 Inclusiveness: owning & helping others with personal habits/doubts/limitations







Self-Awareness: Working on self first

- Recognizing and Understanding my own emotions was pivotal before I tried to understand and best support others and their needs
- Actively listening, in order to respond, without judgement & preconceived notions, instead of only reacting
- Leaders that are self aware, and invest in themselves are better equipped to guide their team through periods of change

Intentional: Creating emotional – intellectual – creative connections

 During times of great change & uncertainty -- How does a leader navigate and respond to the unstable environment while ensuring that the unit, not only survives, but thrives?

Owning & Helping Others with personal habits/doubts/limitations

- Recognizing personal habits, doubts, and limitations takes Humility, while embracing them takes Integrity & Courage
- Leading Through GRACE has taught be that Vulnerability is actually a strength that can help Women Leaders build more authentic connections
- Promoting Wellness through these connections, allows us to reframe productivity, support boundaries, and prioritize mental well-being through a culture of mindfulness & support.

In Conclusion...

Investing in a Culture of Strategic Thinking (Thinkers) through Grace In Action Creates:

- A thriving ecology with a shared reciprocity of trust, respect, and empathy
- An opportunity for all involved to positively engage with each other through honest critical thinking & problem solving
- An inclusive environment where individuals understand that their input matters and their voices are heard
- Greater insight and accountability among team members in creating positive change for the health & success of the unit
- Creates a culture of wellbeing, with leaders demonstrating desired behaviors, fostering open communication, and creating opportunities for the team to rise together in excellence and authenticity











LEADERSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT Lessons from My Journey

Maryland 2025 Women's Small Business Celebration: Wellness/Empowerment/Leadership

October 14, 2025

Bel Leong-Hong

President and CEO, Knowledge Advantage, Inc.







Greetings

- ➤ Focus: Leadership and Empowerment self and others
- > Setting the Stage
- ➤ Lessons Learned: the Good, the Bad and the Ugly
- > Advice for success



Setting the Stage: About My Journey

- My professional journey had 5 stages:
 - 1. Young, eager, idealistic, highly productive, highly technical slow to advance
 - 2. Journeyman... Technical and program management much faster to rise
- Lesson: Specialize, produce, excel, and ready for change!
 - Senior Management people management; greater impact, and greater responsibilities ... and many more challenges
- Lesson: senior managers don't do anything technical; learn to delegate!!!
 - 4. Retirement: ...Nahhhh! maybe later! (I FLUNKED RETIREMENT!!!)
 - 3. New journey: Entrepreneurial different challenges ...Finally I get back to my "data" roots!!! ...maybe!!



Entrepreneurial

- ➤ New Journey: Started Knowledge Advantage Inc in March 1999 to do things I enjoyed;
 - Today: 26 years later- I AM Still in business... and still looking for business opportunities – and constantly reinventing myself!
 - Focus of Company is on Program Management, Leadership Development, IT and KM and Workforce development
- > Key lessons learned:
 - FLEXIBILITY Cannot be rigid! Don't fight the raging tide!
 - PERSEVERANCE "Don't let the turkeys get you down"
 - IMAGINATION Always think of what is in the art of the possible
 - RISK TAKING Don't be afraid to try new things, explore new frontiers
 - PIVOT SMARTLY Reinvent your business and seek new horizons





Recap

- Each stage was different: –different challenges, different opportunities
- Faced Real and Perceived Challenges: a double whammy being a woman and an Asian American and Pacific Islander in an environment that favored Males and White
- > Hard fought Successes
- Important to remember: Skills are transferrable between sectors
- HAD: Strong networks, great mentors, great support system, great opportunities
- Many lessons to share





Lessons and Advice to Share

I want to share with you some life lessons from my perspective as an AAPI, a Woman professional, Woman small business owner

- 1. External Perceptions that can hurt us
- 2. Internal Challenges we must overcome
- 3. Personal attributes count
- 4. Always be prepared for when opportunity knocks!
- 5. Communication is key!
- 6. Find a mentor, look for a role model
- 7. Build networks, form alliances,
- 8. ...and remember, when you are in the pinnacle of success, ALWAYS reach back, and bring somebody up



1. External Perceptions

- What other people think of us can have impact on our future
- > Perceptions that can hurt us, as professionals:
 - We are good technical experts, we don't make good managers;
 - We can follow, but we cannot lead;
 - We lack communication skills;
 - We lack management skill
- ➤ As Business owners, it manifests itself a little differently: casting doubt as to whether we can deliver; and not take us seriously as business peers
- Recognize that these perceptions can hurt us, and we must change those perceptions through actions





2. Internal Challenges

- > Internal challenges: ingrained cultural, self-inflicted, or just excuses: We can be our own worst enemy
 - We expect recognition without boasting—This is part of our culture,
 - We lack the self confidence to go for a stretch goal
 - We are afraid to take risks
 - We are afraid of failing
 - We don't know how to create a roadmap for ourselves
 - We don't have role models
 - We don't have mentors to guide us
 - We don't have a professional network or support system
- We must change that: we have to give ourselves permission to succeed





3. Personal Attributes Count

- > Self Confidence Give yourself permission to succeed
- > Competence the knowledge and ability to do the job well
- Flexibility and Adaptability—Situations in job, in business, or in life change—must be flexible and be able to adapt to a new situation;
- Risk taking-- willingness to try new things, a new job, a new approach, Allow opportunity to pivot, reinvent...
- > willingness to risk failing
- Perseverance "if at first you don't succeed, try, try again" do not let an obstacle stop you in your tracks
- Curiosity Have the curiosity to explore uncharted territory



4. Be prepared

- > Professionally: this means you should be prepared for when opportunity knocks:
 - Certifications or additional degrees
 - Ask for rotations or temp assignments to learn other roles
- ➤ In Business: always be on lookout for opportunities
 - Unexpected encounters
 - Be a good listener; adapt and pivot as needed
 - Always explore what is in the art of the possible



5. Communication is KEY

- ➤ This is my greatest lesson learned: Communication was KEY in every job I held
- Articulate point of view, position, findings... If I don't do it well, I lost an opportunity to succeed
- > Communication is key to success in selling your ideas
- If you cannot articulate and communicate your position, you cannot advance or win that business



6. Find a Mentor

- ➤ Mentors played a strong role in my career and in business too— it can help you too
- > Mentoring is a means of building alliances, grooming a successor, guiding a career
- > A mentor IS NOT a casual relationship
- > A mentor is...
 - A teacher, an advisor, a connector,
 - A sponsor, a protector, a cheerleader
 - A long term relationship
 – two way street
- ➤ In Business: Mentor Protégé program- see if it is for you!
- > Bottom line: if you don't have one, get one





7. Build Networks Form Alliances

- Networking is a critical tool for success— Professionally and in business
- Building a personal network– actually many personal networks-- is critical
 - Members of the network share common bonds
 - Best channel for informal communication
 - Your networks can also help build your business
 - Excellent informal means of getting things done
- > Call on your network for help
- ➤ It is a two way street-- Remember to help when members of your network calls on you





FINALLY-- Remember:

- > I will leave you with this final thought:
- >The strongest asset WE have is each other
- >When you have attained your pinnacle of success, remember to always reach back and lend a helping hand to those that follow-whether personally or in business
- >THANK YOU











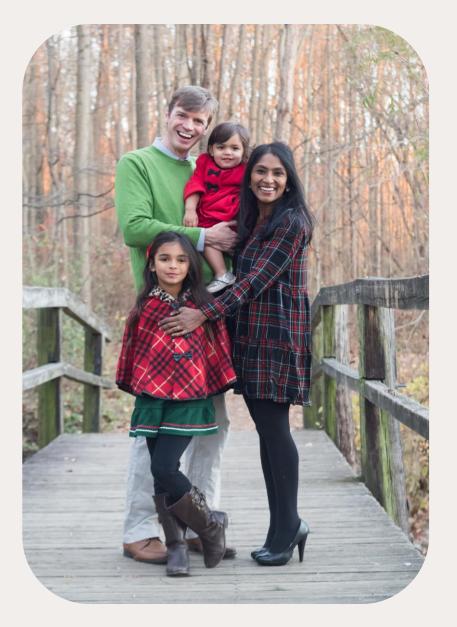




Celebrating Maryland's Women Trailblazers

Krish O'Mara Vignarajah President & CEO Global Refuge

My Story











The Reality for Women Leaders Today







Bias and stereotypes

 Only 11% of Fortune 500 companies are led by women

Work-life balance pressures

 73% of women have taken leave for family needs vs 42% of men

Access to capital and opportunities

3% of venture capital goes
 to women founders;
 <1% to women of color







Lessons in Leadership

Know your why

Empowerment is the foundation of equality

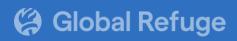
Mentorship matters

None of us succeed in isolation

Define success on your terms

Thank you!

Visit globalrefuge.org to learn more





The Power to Pivot: Shift With the Shift

Maryland 2025 Women's Small Business Celebration:
Wellness/Empowerment/Leadership
October 14, 2025

Dr. Zina C. Pierre



AGENDA

- What is Pivoting?
- Knowing Your Season
- Accepting Your Season
- Leading Through Seasonal Storms
- The Pivot Process

((2))

The 5 C's to Pivoting With Power

What is Pivoting?

Pivoting is not quitting, it's repositioning.

It's learning how to stay rooted in your purpose while moving with strategy.

Being flexible enough to adjust, faithful enough to trust, and focused enough to finish.

Knowing Your Season

Ask yourself — what season am I in right now?



Annual

Quick to bloom but short to last, chasing validation and immediate immediate results.



Perennial

Deeply rooted, weathering weathering storms, and returning stronger each year.



Cut Flowers

Admired but disconnected disconnected from your your source, shining outwardly, yet fading inwardly.

Accepting Your Season



Planting Season — doing the quiet work that no one sees.

Watering Season — nurturing what you've already started.

Harvest Season — reaping what you've sown and walking in the fruit of your of your faith.







Leading Through Seasonal Storms: Finding Peace in Pressure

Purpose is **POWER**

Stillness is **STRATEGY**

Clarity is **CURRENCY**

My Journey of Transferable Skills



The Pivot Process: From Disruption to Destiny

Disruption

Something changes. A door closes. A client leaves. A season shifts.

Discernment

You pause, you pray, and you ask, "What is this season trying to teach me?"

Design

You start to reimagine, to plan, to sketch out new vision.

Discipline

You show up consistently, even when the excitement fades.

Destiny

You step into what was waiting for you all along.

The Five C's: How to Pivot With Power



Clarity

See your next step, even when the full path isn't clear. clear. Clarity gives you vision. vision.



Courage

Move forward, even when you're afraid. Courage gives gives you motion.



Creativity

Reimagine the route, not the the goal. Creativity opens doors.



Consistency

Keep showing up, even when it's hard. Consistency builds momentum.



Collaboration

Build with others; purpose multiplies through partnership. Collaboration multiplies opportunities.



"Train the Pause and Trust the Pivot"

- → Pivot with purpose.
- Protect your peace and pace.
- Discern your season.
- → Utilize your transferable skills.
- → Keep Blooming!



Thank You!

Zina C. Pierre, Ph.D.

President & CEO

Reyarp Strategies Group zpierre@reyarpllc.com www.reyarpllc.com

Connect with me:

@ZinaCPierre (LinkedIn)





WELLNESS





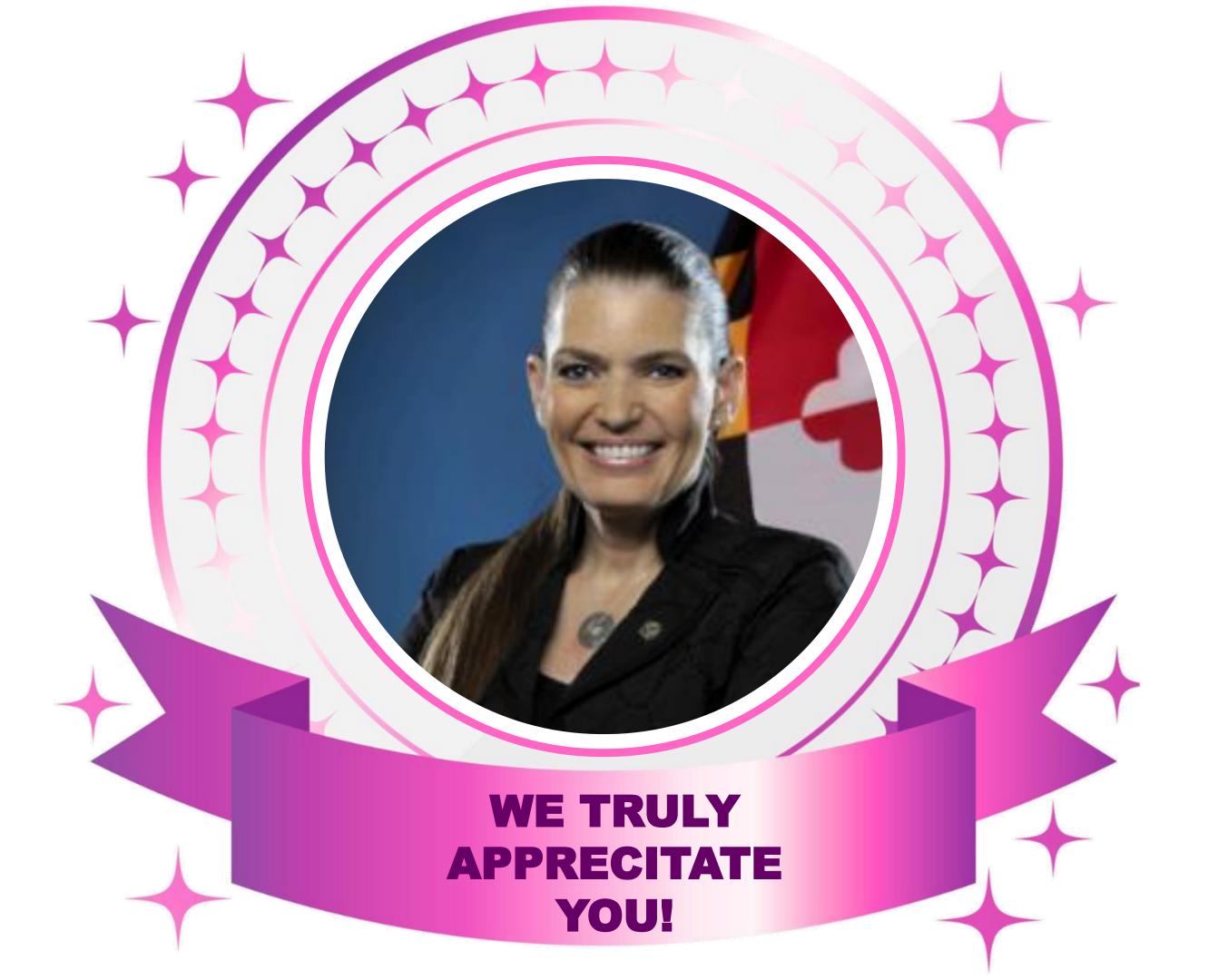
EMPOWERMENT



LEADERSHIP

















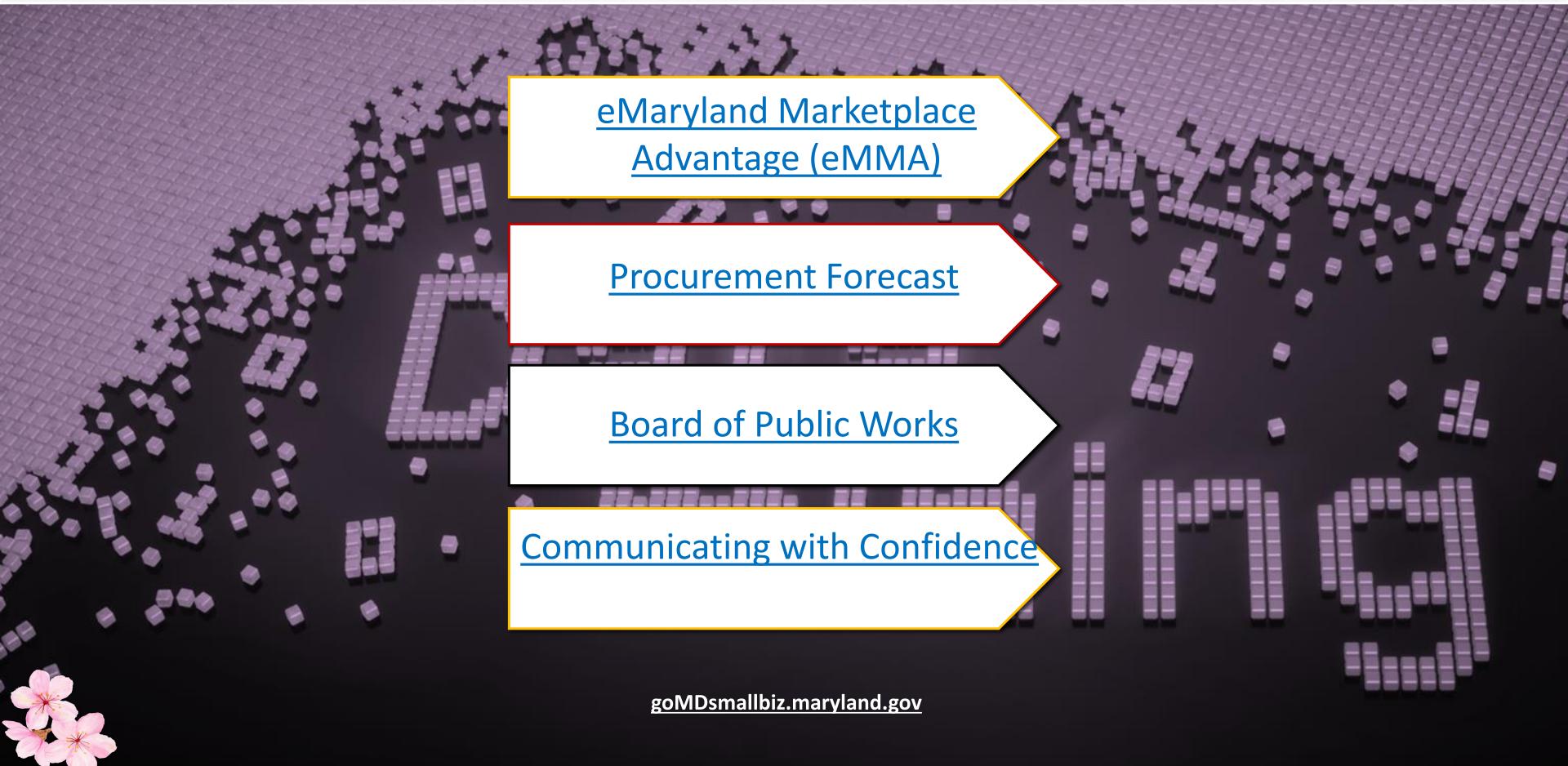








Mining Public Data Techniques



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Partners

Maryland APEX Accelerators https://www.marylandapex.org/

Greater Baltimore SCORE
https://greaterbaltimore.score.org/

Maryland Women's Business Center (MWBC)

https://marylandwbc.org/

Baltimore-Metro Women's Business Center (Balt-Metro WBC)

https://www.baltmetrowbc.org/

Maryland Small Business Development Center (SBDC)

https://www.marylandsbdc.org/

Resources

Governor's Office of Small, Minority & Women Business Affairs

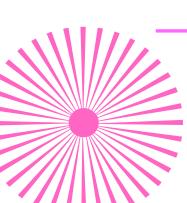
https://gomdsmallbiz.maryland.gov/Pages/default.aspx

Maryland's Office of Minority Business Enterprise (OMBE) https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/Index.aspx?P ageId=90

Maryland Department of Commerce
Maryland Financial Incentives for Business
https://commerce.knack.com/maryland-funding-incentives

Maryland Entrepreneur HUB

https://marylandentrepreneurhub.com/



State Agencies and Resource Partners

Live! Casino & Hotel

Maryland Department of General Services

Maryland Department of Health

Maryland Lottery & Gaming

MDOT – Maryland Aviation Administration

MDOT – Maryland Port Administration

MDOT – Motor Vehicle Administration

MDOT – State Highway Administration

MDOT – The Secretary's Office

Maryland State Police

Maryland Department of Veterans & Military Families
Baltimore City Mayor's Office of Small and Minority

Business Advocacy & Development

What the Sprout, LLC

Colliding Into Place Coaching Services

ACE Orthopedic Services, LLC

Baltimore Metropolitan Women's Business Center

Maryland Women's Business Center

MCE-Women's Business Center

Meridian Management Group

NAWBO Greater DC

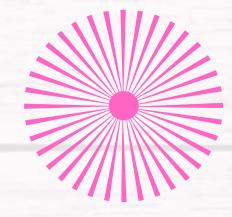
W.E.W. Women Elevating Women

Mindset Quality

IMPACKT Fitness®

Dynastic Wealth® | Concept Creative Group, LLC

DP Love Enterprises, LLC





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Upcoming

Thursday October 23, 2025

9:30 a.m.

Veterans Manufacturing & Innovation Showcase

Tuesday October 24, 2025

10:00 a.m.

Small Biz Resource Connections Webinar Series:

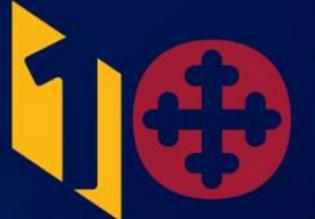
IRS Tools & Resources for Small Businesses

Tuesday October 28, 2025

10:00 a.m.

T.I.P.S. Small Business
Webinar Series:

Using AI in Operations, Marketing, Sales & Services



GOVERNOR'S
SMALL BUSINESS
OUTREACH
SUMMIT



November 11, 2025 Live! Casino & Hotel Maryland Hanover, MD

Future-Ready:

Preparing Maryland Businesses for Tomorrow's Challenges

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2025 | 8 A.M. - 4 P.M.

Live! Casino & Hotel Maryland, Hanover, MD 21076

JOIN US!

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!









https://gomdsmallbiz.maryland.gov

Thank You!



Open Networking

