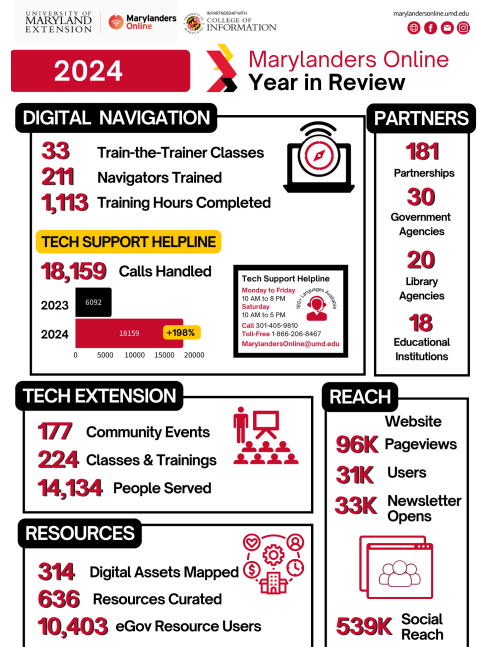


## Marylanders Online 2024 Year in Review

Marylanders Online, a state-funded digital literacy initiative led by the University of Maryland Extension (UME) in partnership with the College of Information, entered its third year in 2024. Leading several of the state’s digital literacy efforts, Marylanders Online focused the year on resource curation, grassroots community engagement, and capacity-building. These efforts, added to the program’s expanding portfolio of digital classes and programs, have made 2024 a year of notable growth and achievements for Marylanders Online.

### 2024 Highlights

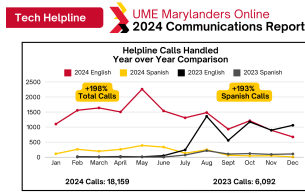
Key achievements in 2024 include reaching **14,134** individuals through **224** digital skills classes and **177** community events, training **211** digital navigators, and cultivating a robust network of **181** partners in digital equity. These strategic collaborations have enabled the program to effectively reach underserved communities, most notably immigrant and disabled populations, and limited-English language, rural, and low-income populations. The program's dedicated tech support helpline handled **18,159** calls, providing essential tech support and bilingual assistance to 9% of callers, further demonstrating Maryland’s commitment to digital inclusivity. The program has successfully adapted programming, services, and targeted outreach to meet the unique needs of diverse communities across Maryland.



### Digital Navigation

#### Tech Helpline

The Marylanders Online Helpline is a valuable resource for Marylanders. This free service is staffed by a team of skilled digital navigators providing callers with tech support, computer help, or assistance with finding devices, resources, and information about affordable internet options. [Meet the Marylanders Online Digital Navigators](#) or [contact the helpline](#) by calling toll-free 1-866-206-8467.



In 2024, the Helpline had handled **18,159** calls, a 198% increase over 2023. **83%** of callers requested information about device distributions and nearly **71%** required assistance with their Chromebook device.

## Digital Navigator Training

To support digital literacy at a localized level, Marylanders Online partnered to offer **33** Digital Navigator trainings to develop community-based digital navigation programs.



In partnership with the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA), the program facilitated **4** free, virtual digital navigation trainings that had 341 attendees throughout the four sessions. Added to the **30** training hours from the **Talk, Text, and Train** series and the **60** training hours from the **Pratt Adventure & Beyond** cohort, Marylanders Online trained **211** digital navigators and facilitated a total of **1,113** digital navigation training hours in 2024.

## Tech Education

Leaning into strategic partnerships developed with community-based anchor institutions, Marylanders Online has experienced continued success in offering culturally and regionally relevant digital programming that meets the needs of traditionally harder-to-reach communities. In 2024, Tech Educators supported **177** community events and provided **224** digital skills classes - reaching **14,134** people. The program has also built a robust network of **181** partners at county, statewide, and national levels.

## Baltimore City: 17 Partners



In collaboration with Enoch Pratt Free Library, Marylanders Online graduated 18 new Baltimore City-based digital navigators from the **Pratt Adventure and Beyond** program. The program consisted of two parts: 10 online training modules and 10 live instruction sessions. The success of the Pratt program has led to the development of the **Marylanders Online Navigator Training Toolkit** (MONET), a comprehensive and adaptable digital navigation train-the-trainer curriculum available for public use.

## Eastern Shore: 14 Partners



On the Eastern Shore, Marylanders Online has developed partnerships with 14 organizations. In collaboration with Worcester County 4-H, UME tech educators offered local youth and families a series of digital skills classes covering entrepreneurship-related topics like coding, marketing, budgeting, website building, Excel, and AI.

## Central Maryland: 9 Partnerships



In Montgomery County, three recurring courses have demonstrated sustained success in partnership with the Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Center, reaching an estimated 200 individuals in 2024. The courses include an eight-week introductory digital skills class, an eight-week intermediate course, and a one-hour anti-scam class. While Gilchrist is open to the public, these classes primarily attract immigrants and individuals with limited English proficiency.



### Success Story

A single Marylanders Online course with a capacity for 25 participants received over 600 registrations without any marketing. This response reveals an overwhelming desire for digital literacy and an unmet demand for digital skills. By partnering with trusted community anchor institutions in communities with high immigrant and limited English proficiency populations, word-of-mouth recommendations can compensate for reduced marketing efforts for digital skill programming.



In Prince George's County, a partnership with CASA, a local non-profit serving immigrant, Spanish-speaking, and English language learners, has seen high engagement in a multilingual audience composed of English, Spanish, and French speakers with limited English proficiency. The classes are taught across three locations, with an average attendance of **15** per session.



At St. Mark's Church in Hyattsville, a Marylanders Online tech educator set up **26** computers for a new community computer lab and is providing the community with ongoing, no-cost digital skills training. The church has dozens of additional computers in storage, which may be reallocated to other locations for future community labs.



### Success Story

Twenty-five Spanish-speaking students have been learning the computer basics in a new program developed in partnership with El Centro Latino de Frederick. After completing the program, one older participant went from not being able to turn on his computer to successfully typing up his life story to leave behind for his grandkids.

## Southern Maryland: 25 Partnerships



In Southern Maryland, four senior center cohorts completed the six-week AARP Senior Planet training course. In 2024, Marylanders Online tech educators facilitated **72** Senior Planet classes, reaching **234** older adults aged 55 and above. The Senior Planet curriculum helps participants overcome their apprehension and become confident and connected users of digital technology.



### Success Story:

Thomas Widmer, a lead nuclear physicist for the Apollo 12-17 missions, attended a Marylanders Online digital skills class in Southern Maryland to learn how to use a computer for the first time.

[Watch the full testimonial video.](#)

## Western Maryland: 19 Partnerships



Marylanders Online played a crucial role in Western Maryland's Chromebook distribution efforts. Without Marylanders Online's support, thousands of devices may have gone undistributed due to the county's limited capacity to coordinate events. Marylanders Online further enhanced outreach efforts in the region by strategically placing stickers with the Tech Support Helpline number and website QR code on each of the **12,500** Chromebook boxes distributed in Western Maryland.



### Success Stories:

Chromebook recipients were asked what they would use their new device for:

"I will finally be able to video call my grandkids in Wisconsin!"

"I'll be video chatting with my son, who is overseas in the military."

"I will be using this to complete my paralegal classes."

"I will be able to sell items for my small business."

## Statewide: 25 Partnerships

### Maryland Digital Equity Coalition



Initiated in 2023, the [Maryland Digital Equity Coalition \(MDEC\)](#) is a statewide digital equity network that connects organizations and government agencies in the mission of digital equity. In 2024, MDEC convened to strategize for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) NOFO. With the support of Marylanders Online, MDEC’s network has grown to **189** members. The primary MDEC working group continues to develop goals as a digital inclusion community of practice.

## Pilot Projects: 10 Programs

### Digital Skills for Incarcerated Individuals Nearing Release

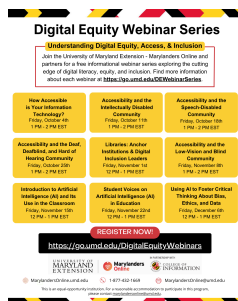


This pilot program funded by UME Marylanders Online has achieved remarkable success at a northern Maryland county prison. After learning business and economic concepts like accounting and market dynamics, inmates were trained in Microsoft Office Suite to prepare for future employment upon release. Twenty-one inmates completed an intensive six-week curriculum, building their digital literacy, entrepreneurship knowledge, and vocational readiness.

**Success Story:** The Digital Skills for Incarcerated Individuals Nearing Release pilot program culminated with **21** graduates developing an Excel-based business plan. This pilot program's success underscores the transformative potential of digital skills in fostering successful reintegration into society and overall workforce development.

## Events & Trainings

### Digital Equity Webinar Series



Marylanders Online and MDEC partners hosted a nine-part collaborative [Digital Equity Webinar Series](#) in 2024 which saw **492** attendees and an average of **50** participants per session from diverse sectors. Webinar topics explored anchor institutions, AI, and digital inclusion for individuals with disabilities. Session recordings are available [on YouTube](#), and slide decks have been provided [on the website](#).

## 2024 Maryland Statewide Digital Equity Summit



In October, UME Marylanders Online hosted the second annual **2024 Maryland Statewide Digital Equity Summit** at the National Federation of the Blind in Baltimore. The event attracted **160** digital inclusion advocates from Maryland and beyond to address best practices and collaborative strategies in digital equity. To ensure digital inclusion, braille programs were printed and three ASL interpreters and two CART captioners were onsite to provide live transcription. **Maryland Digital Equity Awards** were presented to three champions and two honorable mentions. The Summit received news coverage in **AfroNews** and **NERCRD**.



Maryland **Governor Wes Moore** and Maryland Senate President **Bill Ferguson** offered pre-recorded opening remarks at the Digital Equity Summit, emphasizing Maryland's track record of becoming a nationally recognized model for digital inclusion and acknowledging the critical role of digital literacy in economic progress.

## 2024 Cultivating Innovation in Maryland's Agriculture and Technology Conference



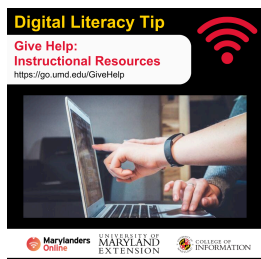
In partnership with the Agriculture and Food Systems and Precision Agriculture Lab, UME hosted the **2024 Cultivating Innovation in Maryland's Agriculture and Technology Conference** in Annapolis in December. The conference received 74 attendees and sponsorships from 11 businesses. Seventeen individuals received Nutrient Management CEUs and/or Pesticide Application CEUs.

Program staff also attended 18 conferences throughout the year and were invited to present at several conferences, including 2024 Net Inclusion, the 2024 National Extension Technology Community (NETC), the 2024 Annual Human-Computer Interaction Lab (HCIL) Symposium, the Spring Association of Research Libraries (ARL) Meeting, the 2024 Health Literacy in Action Conference, and the 2024 IEEE Learning Engineering Conference.



## Capacity Building

### New Curricula & Resources



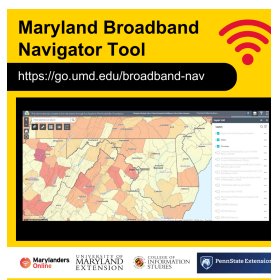
The Marylanders Online INFO curriculum team has curated **636** resources, including **499** self-guided **Get Help Resources** designed to connect learners with free training and tutorials and **137** **Give Help Resources** to help digital navigators and anyone interested in teaching others to build their digital literacy.

### Maryland Digital Asset Mapping



An enhanced **Maryland digital asset mapping initiative** is underway to promote digital inclusion across the state by leveraging the sharing of community resources. Data points about these resources are **shared via Google form** for inclusion in Maryland's digital asset map. **314** resources have been aggregated into the map so far.

### Post-ACP Broadband & ISP Support



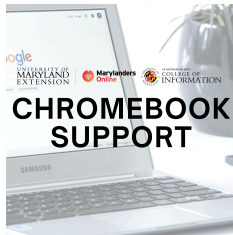
When the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) concluded in 2024, Marylanders Online published **resources and answers** to frequently asked questions concerning the end of ACP. Partnering with Penn State Extension, Marylanders Online developed the **Maryland Broadband Navigator tool**. UME is the first institution outside of Penn State to implement this tool, which is available to the public at no cost and funded by The Rockefeller Foundation.

### eGovernment Resources



Collaborative efforts between UME Marylanders Online and INFO produced a collection of learner-centric **eGovernment resources**, which received publicity from **MarylandToday**, **INFO**, and **UME**. The eGov website pages had nearly 15K views in 2024 and may serve as a replicable model for other states aiming to advance digital equity.

## Chromebook Support



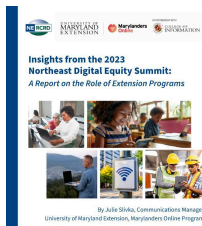
In response to an influx of calls citing issues with Chromebook devices, Marylanders Online digital navigators started offering in-person and virtual **Chromebook support** appointments. The team partnered with Science Leaf to create a four-part instructional video series for performing the **Chromebook OS recovery process** to help users troubleshoot this error independently. In addition to developing an **English** and **Spanish** Chromebook User Guide, digital navigators assisted with nearly 70 OS recoveries.

## Program Communications



Marylanders Online has worked to ensure that the program's marketing toolkit is available in multiple languages and accessible to screen readers. **Program flyers** have been translated into 10 languages, including English, Spanish, Korean, Amharic, Chinese, French, Russian, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Haitian Creole.

## Publications



Marylanders Online was credited in the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development report, **Insights from the 2023 Northeast Digital Equity Summit: A Report on the Role of Extension Programs**. This report explores the capacities and opportunities that land-grant universities have in the advancement of digital equity.



The National Digital Inclusion Alliance cited UME Marylanders Online's digital inclusion work in their 2024 **Digital Inclusion Program Manual**. The manual references Marylanders Online's successful tech support helpline on page 41 and robust marketing toolkit with collateral translated into multiple languages on page 68.



Maryland Today published two articles featuring the Marylanders Online program: **UMD, State Combine to Get 'Marylanders Online'** (April 25, 2024), and **UMD Launches Guides for Marylanders to Navigate Online Government Services** (May 29, 2024).





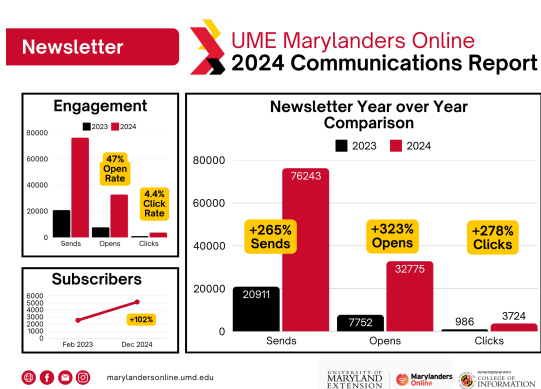
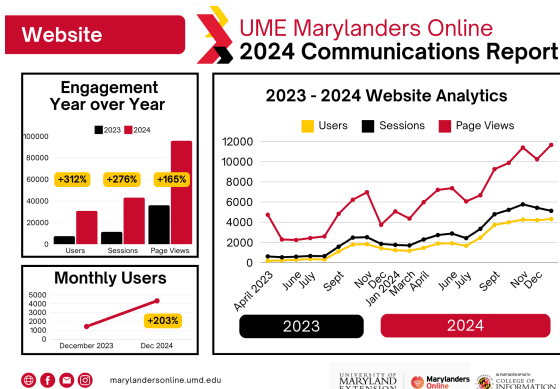
To support the findings and research presented at the [2024 Cultivating Innovation in Maryland's Agriculture and Technology Conference](#), UME partnered with the University of Maryland College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (AGNR) [Precision Agriculture Lab](#) to produce a [fact sheet](#) addressing the importance of digital privacy and security in farming operations.

## Website

Year over year, in 2024, the [Marylanders Online website](#) experienced a 165% increase in page views (**95,841**), a 276% increase in sessions (**43,158**), and a 312% increase in users (**30,907**). This notable increase is attributable to the growth of website resources, programs, partnerships, and marketing efforts. Nearly **79%** of website traffic reached the website directly or through Google search, while approximately **3%** of traffic was redirected from partner agency websites, notably Montgomery County and Baltimore City. **14%** of all website page views were for the [Schedule an Appointment at the Department of Motor Vehicle](#) resource, demonstrating that Marylanders Online has become a trusted source for finding information about eGovernment services.

## Newsletter

UME Marylanders Online distributed **17 newsletters** in 2024, with an average open rate of **47%** (32,775 opens) and a click rate of **4.4%**. Year over year, the Marylanders Online newsletter experienced a **323%** increase in opens, a **278%** increase in clicks, and a **70%** increase in subscribership.



## 2024 Reflections & 2025 Strategic Direction

Marylanders Online extends gratitude to program staff, community members, partners, funders, and all contributors for their pivotal roles in the numerous accomplishments

achieved in 2024. These digital literacy initiatives and partnerships have laid a strong foundation for Maryland's digital future, empowering present and future generations to thrive in an increasingly connected world.

## **Key Strategic Focus for 2025**

### **Expanding Programs**

- Launch new digital skills workshops tailored to specific demographics
- Develop a variety of courses in emerging technologies like AI and cybersecurity
- Leverage Maryland Digital Equity Coalition (MDEC) assessment findings to create targeted programs

### **Enhancing Resources**

- Create more self-paced digital literacy modules and eGovernment resources
- Produce multilingual digital literacy materials
- Develop a centralized resource hub for digital equity initiatives
- Incorporate plain language best practices into resource development efforts.

### **Expanding Strategic Partnerships**

- Collaborate with local tech companies for mentorship and internship opportunities
- Partner with UMD and community colleges to offer digital skills certifications
- Strengthen ties with public libraries
- Deepen partnership with MDEC to coordinate statewide digital inclusion efforts
- Develop a program with the Maryland Department of Service and Innovation

### **Securing Sustainable Funding**

- Explore public-private partnership models
- Apply for federal and state grants focused on digital equity
- Pursue joint funding opportunities with MDEC

By focusing on these strategic areas, Marylanders Online aims to create a more digitally inclusive Maryland, ensuring that all residents have the skills and resources needed to participate fully in the digital economy and society.