

# Web Leads monthly meeting

January 15, 2025

**Note:** we'll be using Miro during today's meeting. New to Miro? Create a free account with your Maryland email and check out our [Miro 101](#).

**Miro 101 link:** <https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVLusxHTg=?moveToWidget=3458764613064286809&cot=10>

# Welcome and kickoff

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Marcy Jacobs - [marcy.jacobs@maryland.gov](mailto:marcy.jacobs@maryland.gov)

# Agenda

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- Welcome and kickoff
- Maryland Design Community of Practice
- Maryland Plain Language Standards
- Maryland CMS update
- Reminder: Transparent Government Act

## Presenters

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### **Marcy Jacobs**

Deputy Secretary, DoIT  
Chief Digital Experience Officer

### **Carrie Hane**

DoIT CMS Selection Adviser

### **Jeffrey Pass**

Sr Director, Web Experience

### **Lilly Madigan**

Sr Director, UX & Service Design

# Design Community of Practice

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Lilly Madigan - [lilly.madigan@maryland.gov](mailto:lilly.madigan@maryland.gov)

# Design Community of Practice (COP)

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**Mission:** Empower designers across the State with a place to learn and grow their design skills. Provide camaraderie, tools and resources, and guidance.

## Who should join?

- People who work day-to-day in design fields such as; UX, UI, Research, Service Design, Product Design, Graphic Design, Marketing, etc.
- Friends of design! Engineers, Business Analysts, Project Managers, etc.

**How do I join?** Add yourself to the [Maryland Design Community of Practice Google Chat space](#).

Google Chat space link: <https://chat.google.com/room/AAAAP-pCkpY?cls=Z>

# Maryland Plain Language Initiative

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Lilly Madigan - [lilly.madigan@maryland.gov](mailto:lilly.madigan@maryland.gov)

# Plain Language Standards

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## What is plain language?

Plain language means writing that is clear, concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject matter and the intended audience.

The Plain Language Standards include the use of:

- Everyday words that convey meanings clearly and directly
- Present tense and active voice
- Short sentences
- Definitions only for words that cannot be explained in the text
- Layouts and design that help the reader understand the meaning of the document

Standards link: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1W2y-24Z4Teq8rMvjwh\\_Lkc8D5-Q0R50TCTdaWMARVws/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1W2y-24Z4Teq8rMvjwh_Lkc8D5-Q0R50TCTdaWMARVws/edit?usp=sharing)

# Part One: Write for your audience

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**Be Concise:** Use everyday words in active, present tense, short sentences.

**Define and Explain Technical Terms:** Use definitions and examples to help the reader understand.

**Organize Information:** Start with the most important idea and delete unnecessary text.



# Part Two: Design for reading

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**Organize Information:** Use headings and bullet points.

**Use Blank Space and Visual Elements:**

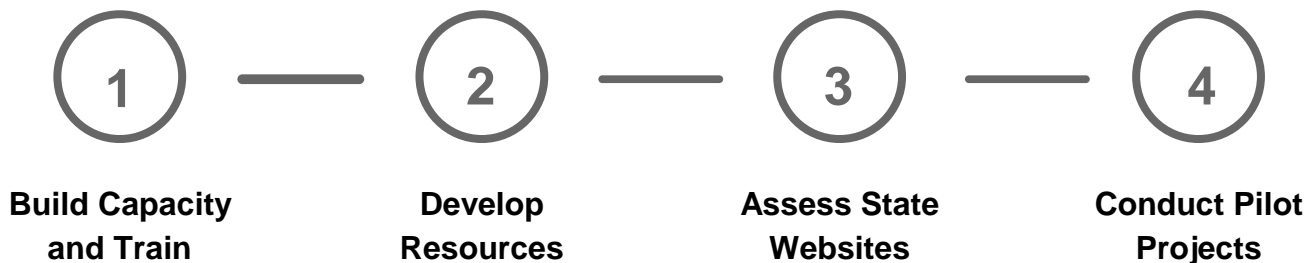
- Use wide margins to create black space.
- Use images, charts, and infographics with alt text.

**Use Accessible Fonts and Colors:**

- Use fonts from the Maryland Web Design System in size 14 or larger
- Use high-contrast text and background colors.

# Plain Language Initiative (PLI) implementation plan

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# PLI implementation plan

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## Part One: Build Capacity and Train

- Grow the PLI Community of Practice with web leads
- Provide a curated combination of new and existing training

# PLI implementation plan

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## Part Two: Develop Resources

- How to write in plain language
- How to assess content
- How to test content

# PLI implementation plan

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## Part Three: Assess State Websites

- Content Workbook
- Website Playbook
- Discovery Sprint Guide
- ReciteMe
- AI Pilot

# PLI implementation plan

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## Part Four: Conduct Pilot Projects

- Pilot the training, resources, and assessment tools with 3-5 agencies starting in July
- Learn from the pilot projects and update Parts 1-3

# PLI-COP timeline

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## Jan - March 2025

- Join the Plain Language Community of Practice as a point of contact for your agency
- Write the MD Style Guide
- Test out plain language assessment tools
- Kick-off an AI pilot

## Up Next

- Identify plain language training for state employees
- Pilot with 3-5 agencies starting in July

# When's the best time to begin writing in plain language?

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Now. You can use the Plain Language Standards as a guide for writing emails, documentation, flyers, content for your website, any written communication you are working on right now.



# When's the best time to begin writing in plain language?

<https://hemingwayapp.com/> - Unvetted, part of the Tools Assessment this quarter.

The screenshot shows the Hemingway Editor web application. The browser address bar displays 'hemingwayapp.com'. The application header includes the text 'Hemingway's classic desktop app. Save/load files and work offline. No AI. [Learn more](#)'. The main interface features a toolbar with buttons for 'File', 'Fix Grammar', 'Rewrite', 'Paragraph', 'B', 'I', and a link icon. A sidebar on the left promotes 'AI Tools - Try Free' and 'Hemingway Editor Plus'. The central text area contains the sentence: 'Now. You can use the Plain Language Standards as a guide for writing emails, documentation, flyers, content for your website, any written communication you are working on right now.' The right sidebar displays 'Readability' as 'Grade 10' with a note 'OK. Aim for 9.', 'Words: 29', and two feedback items: '1 of 2 sentences is very hard to read.' and '0 of 2 sentences are hard to read.'

# When's the best time to begin writing in plain language?

Now! The Plain Language Standards are ready for you to use. Start with things that you are working on right now, like emails, or project documentation.

Now! The Plain Language Standards are ready for you to use. Start with things that you are working on right now, like emails, or project documentation.

Write Edit Feedback

Readability ⓘ



Grade 5

Good.

Words: 26

Show more stats ▼

# How do I fit in plain language into my timeline?

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It's built in! Writing in plain language is already part of the MDDS Website Playbook.

Other tools and resources help make writing in plain language part of your day-to-day.

# Who should be writing in plain language?

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Everyone! Writing in plain language takes practice. It is all of our responsibility to write clear accessible content.

For large scale content projects, consider hiring a content writer to your staff. MDDS and the PLI-COP can help.

# Maryland Content Management System (CMS) update

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Carrie Hane - [carrie.hane@maryland.gov](mailto:carrie.hane@maryland.gov)

# What is a CMS?

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## **content management system (*n*)**

A tool that allows you to create, edit, and manage web content without having to know code or be a designer.



# Pilot CMS – content type

Create Person ☆

Published Save Preview

Title \*  
Please enter the title of the person. For example, Secretary of Information Technology

Person Name \*

Photo \*

Add a new file \*  
Choose File No file chosen  
One file only  
3 MB max  
Allowed types: jpeg, gif, png, webp

Email \*  
Please enter the email for the person

Phone \*

Summary \*  
Provide a brief summary of the individual's background, role, and key contributions. This will appear in lists or previews, highlighting their most relevant details in 1-2 sentences.

Bio \*  
B I L T U P Paragraph Source

## About Department of IT

### Mission

To provide vital technology solutions that allow the Executive Branch, State Agencies and Coordinating Offices to provide Marylanders with services that enable them to live and work more safely, efficiently and productively.

### Leadership



**KATIE OLSON SAVAGE**

Secretary of Information Technology

[View Bio](#)



**Patrick Mulford**

Chief of Staff, Executive Affairs Team

[View Bio](#)

### Vision

The vision of the Department is to lead the State in the creation and implementation of information technology solutions that improve IT infrastructure and government services and keep Maryland current within IT industry trends.

development of a mobile tracking application used by 200 during and delivery as part of Operation Warp Speed. She also in the DOD to expedite visa applications for 100 thousand s in Federal IT by FedScoop, and in 2022 for Government e University of Pennsylvania, and a BA from American

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**Department of Information Technology**

Home Services

Secretary of Information Technology

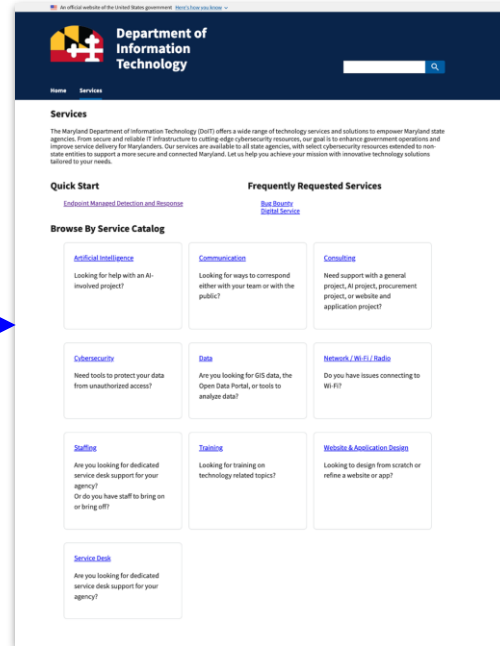
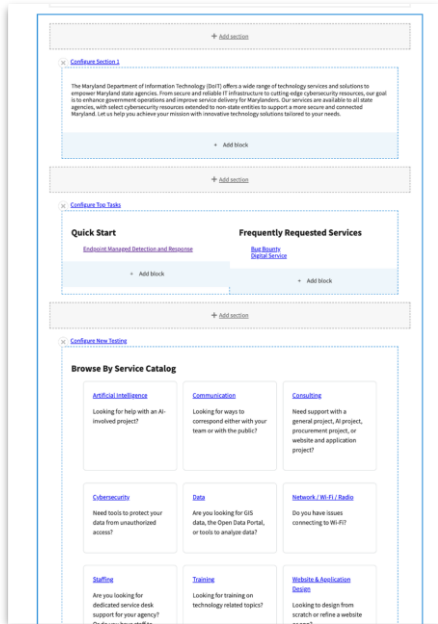
**KATIE OLSON SAVAGE**  
Secretary of Information Technology

**Biography**

Katie is a visionary leader in IT who has led successful teams in the federal, local, and nonprofit sectors. Secretary Savage became a technologist as a means to serve the community. She first earned a Master's degree in City Planning after serving two years in the United States Peace Corps in order to learn human-centered and participatory design. She then used that experience to develop data and applications for the City of Chicago and then the Department of Defense.



# Pilot CMS – landing page



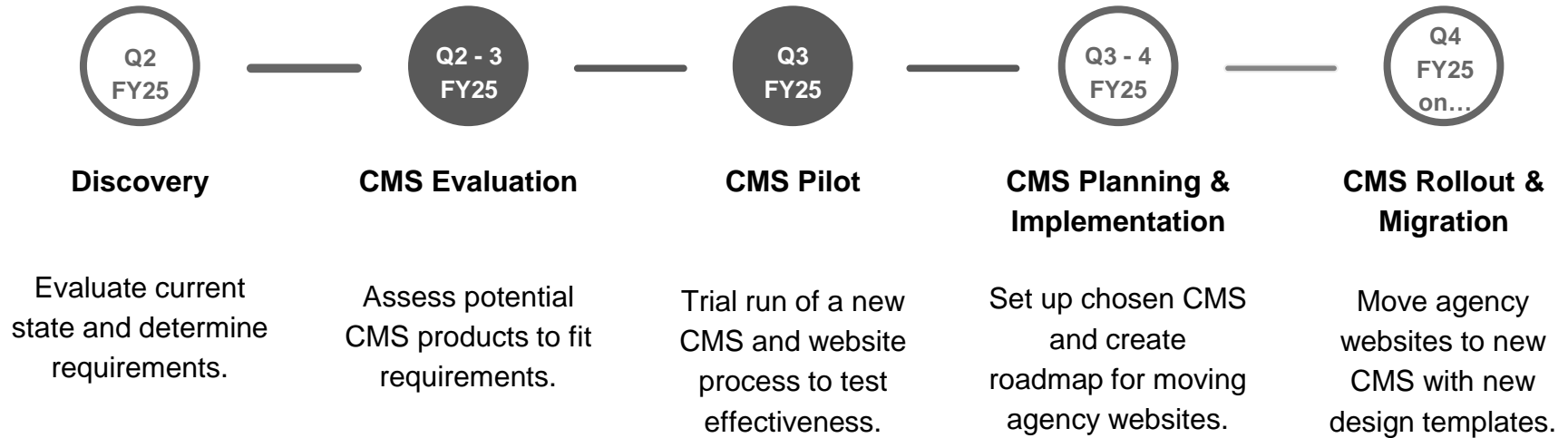
# Why move to a new CMS?

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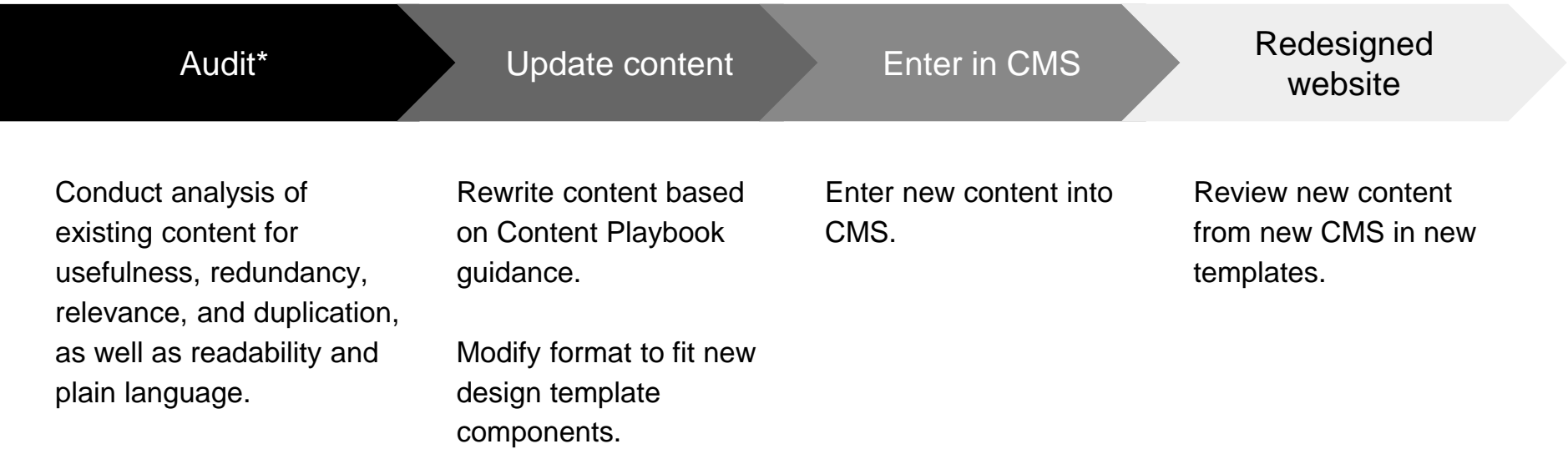
- SharePoint Server 2019 reaches end of support in July 2026
- Easier and faster for you to use
- Deliver services more effectively with greater flexibility and adaptability
- Additional capabilities:
  - Incorporates Maryland Web Design System (MDWDS)
  - Use the new web templates and components
  - Accessibility built in
- More adaptable for future needs
- More straightforward for DoIT to support

# How we'll get from here to there

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# Individual site migration process



\* do not request workbook until you are ready to get to work on the audit

# Activity: Let's hear from you

# Q1: Who is on your web team (including contractors)?

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- A. Just me
- B. 2–5 people work on the website
- C. 6–10 people work on the website
- D. 11–20 people work on the website
- E. More than 20 people work on the website

## Q2: How often is your website updated?

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- A. Daily
- B. At least once a week
- C. A few times a month
- D. A few times a quarter
- E. A few times a year
- F. Hardly ever

# Q3: If it were easier to update the website, would you update it more often?

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- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Maybe



## Q4: What kind of updates do you make?

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Select the most complex kind of update listed. We'll assume you make all the updates above it.

- A. Text updates to existing web pages
- B. Add new web pages with same formatting as existing ones
- C. Create new web pages from scratch
- D. Update the site navigation (labels, dropdown menus)
- E. Design new sections of the website

## Q5: What kinds of updates do you want to make but can't?

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Select the most complex kind of update listed.

- A. Text updates to existing web pages
- B. Add new web pages with same formatting as existing ones
- C. Create new web pages from scratch
- D. Update the site navigation (labels, dropdown menus)
- E. Design new sections of the website

# Open ended questions

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Q6: What questions do you have about this transition?

Q7: What do you look forward to about a new CMS?

[https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVLusxHTg=/?share\\_link\\_id=670392068084](https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVLusxHTg=/?share_link_id=670392068084)

**Note:** if you do not have a free Miro account, you'll have to create one using your Maryland state email address.

# Q7: Are you interested in being part of a CMS test group?

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## Requirements:

- Willingness to try a new way of working and working through process challenges
- Have time to do some activities in the pilot CMS and provide feedback on your experience throughout the spring

Email [carrie.hane@maryland.gov](mailto:carrie.hane@maryland.gov) and [jeffrey.pass@maryland.gov](mailto:jeffrey.pass@maryland.gov)

# Reminder: Transparent Government Act

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Jeffrey Pass - [jeffrey.pass@maryland.gov](mailto:jeffrey.pass@maryland.gov)

# TGA Web Publishing Requirement

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Many Maryland state agencies have yet to update their Transparent Government Act (TGA) Compliance Tracker with the required information about credentials they issue.

- Original deadline for web updates was December 2, 2024
- This initial round of compliance reporting is very manual so the deadline has not been strictly enforced; but tracker updates needed ASAP

# TGA Compliance Reporting Process

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- Visit the [Compliance Tracker Google Drive](#) folder
- Find your agency's compliance tracker spreadsheet
  - If your agency does not have a spreadsheet, you are not subject to TGA
- Answer the prompts for each credential
  - For detailed instructions see Marcy Jacob's January 6 email (subject: Message from Brad Fallon on TGA compliance reporting)
- Once complete, send a confirmation to [brad.fallon@maryland.gov](mailto:brad.fallon@maryland.gov)
- Email [brad.fallon@maryland.gov](mailto:brad.fallon@maryland.gov) with any questions or issues

Google Drive link: [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1oHrsvNYiZe2S4lfVI8brXISS\\_Uvb5Dp1?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1oHrsvNYiZe2S4lfVI8brXISS_Uvb5Dp1?usp=sharing)

# Q&A and discussion



# Future meeting schedule (subject to change, bold indicates in person)

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**February 11th, 12:30-2 (in person, Crownsville)**

March 10th, 2-3:30 (virtual)

**April 8th, 12:30-2 (in person, location TBD)**

May 14th, 12-1:30 (virtual)

**June 10th, 12:30-2 (in person, location TBD)**

July 9th, 2-3:30 (virtual)

**August 12th, 12:30-2 (in person, location TBD)**

September 17th, 12-1:30 (virtual)

**October 14th, 12:30-2 (in person, location TBD)**

November 19th, 12:30-2 (virtual)

**December 9th, 12:30-2 (in person, Crownsville)**

Thank you  
See you February 11th,  
in person, in Crownsville!

[Feedback Survey](#)

Survey link: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdzt9aFttrravSTTI-WrN6MuaQ6xksf1GU-zlcSC\\_3J6G-vA/viewform?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdzt9aFttrravSTTI-WrN6MuaQ6xksf1GU-zlcSC_3J6G-vA/viewform?usp=sharing)

# Appendix: Plain Language Resources

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## Federal Resources:

1. [plainlanguage.gov](https://www.plainlanguage.gov) A resource of GSA and the Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN).
2. [Writing for the Accessible Web](https://www.digital.gov) Digital.gov accessible video presentation.
3. [Content Creation - Authoring Meaningful Alternative Text](https://www.section508.gov) from Section508.gov.
4. [Page Titles](#), [Headings](#), [Hidden Content](#), [Language](#), and [Writing guide](#) from 18F.

## Maryland Consumer Health Information Hub:

1. Online plain language training, recorded, free, and on [the Maryland Consumer Health Information Hub website](https://sph.umd.edu/research-impact/research-centers/horowitz-center-health-literacy/consumer-health-information-hub/hub-events)  
<https://sph.umd.edu/research-impact/research-centers/horowitz-center-health-literacy/consumer-health-information-hub/hub-events>