Web Leads monthly meeting

May 14, 2025

Welcome and kickoff

Marcy Jacobs - marcy.jacobs@maryland.gov

Agenda

- Welcome and kickoff
- Feedback pilot: leveraging your dashboard
- Usability Testing
- Spotlights:
  - LABOR UI
  - DHCD website improvements
- DNS migration update
- Maryland CMS update

MDDS / DoIT Presenters

Marcy Jacobs: DoIT Dep. Sec., CDXO
Amy Behrens: IA, Content Strategist
Andrew White: Information Architect
Carrie Hane: MDDS CMS Adviser
Chad Smith: Service Designer
David Holmes: Sr. Dir., Engineering
Emily Ianacone: UX Research, Content Strategist
Jeffrey Pass: Sr. Dir., Web Experience
Lilly Madigan: Sr. Dir., UX, Service Design
Nathan Miller: Communications Specialist

Guest Presenters

DHCD: Priya Rebello, Dir. Web & UX, Digital Accessibility Officer

Qualtrics: Hailey Smith, and Maddie Rosenberg

Walker: Hannah Warren, Courtney Adkins, Troy Powell

Feedback pilot: leveraging your agency dashboard

Qualtrics
Hailey Smith
Maddie Rosenberg

Walker
Hannah Warren
Courtney Adkins
Troy Powell

Accessing your site’s dashboard

- Dashboard access will require Qualtrics credentials
- Scan this QR code to request access to your agency dashboard ➜
- Walker will create an account on your behalf; you will finalize the process by creating a password

Link: https://marylandcx.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6S6M8ITIGZSUET4

Usability Testing

Lilly Madigan lilly.madigan@maryland.gov
Chad Smith chad.smith1@maryland.gov
Nathan Miller nathan.miller1@maryland.gov

What is usability testing?

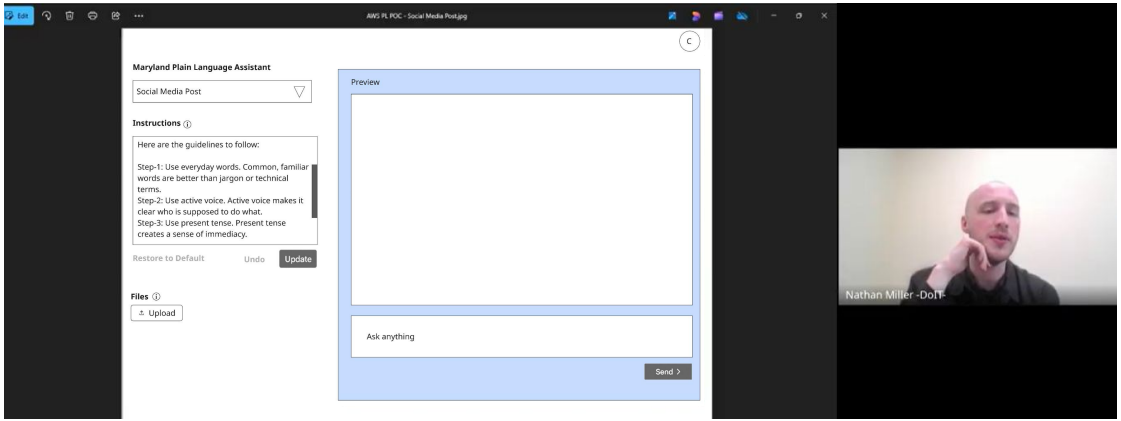
What is usability testing?

- A common research approach to assess how well potential end-users can understand what is being shown to them

How can usability testing help when making product decision?

- This technique can help to identify what is unclear and provide ideas on how to remove confusion

Plain Language AI Proof of Concept



Interview dates: 5/7 - 5/9
Number of sessions: 9

Session duration: 30 mins

Logistics:

- Google appointment scheduler
- Google Hangout

Outcomes

What did we learn?

- Participants wanted clearer guidance on how certain sections were intended to be used
- Priorities for what was critical for the first release verses future releases were clarified

How did the information change the design?

- Created language for tooltips and placeholder text
- Began shifting the design to help users become better plain language writers, not just rewrite their content

How did the information change the development?

- Critical features for the first release were identified, helping limit scope

Spotlight:
LABOR UI

Emily Ianacone - emily.ianacone@maryland.gov
Amy Behrens - amy.behrens@maryland.gov

Labor Unemployment (LABOR UI)

The problem we're solving for

- Overgrown IA & outdated content
- Unclear answers for common questions
- No consistency across three websites (Labor UI site, BEACON portal, Maryland Workforce Exchange)

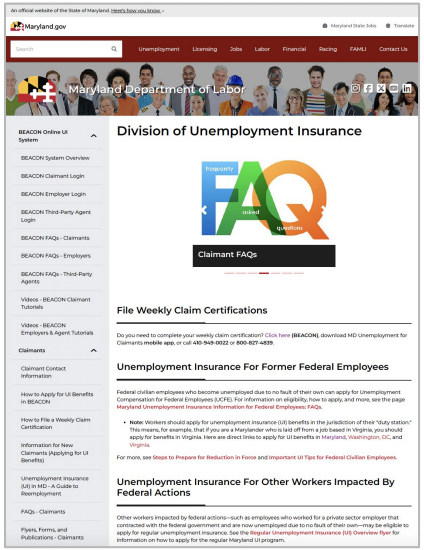
What we've done so far

- Completed sprint 1: Discovery and user research
- Completed sprint 2: Sitemap and key wireframes

Where we're headed

- Addressing "quick wins" now
- Content writing and design
- Unemployment insurance style guide for use online and by claims agents

Current Landing Page



Wireframe Landing Page

Help support LABOR UI usability testing

We’re looking for feedback on the new unemployment insurance website design and content.

If you or someone you know has previous experience applying for unemployment insurance in Maryland and want to participate in a **30-minute usability test**, sign up using the QR code below or use this Google forms link (https://forms.gle/XUAihEqt8NzrTBHr6).

Spotlight:
DHCD website improvements

Priya Rebello - priyarosita.rebello@maryland.gov

Progress and best practices

With support from DoIT, we're updating our agency website to make it easier for everyone to use.

We're excited to switch to the Drupal CMS. As we prepare for this change, we're focusing on:

- Accessibility compliance
- ROT analysis
- Navigation improvements
- Consistency and standardization
- Plain language implementation
- Data-driven design

Accessibility compliance

Working with the Office of Accessibility and MDOD to make sure our content is accessible to everyone.

Main Street Site Accessibility Review

Total of Pages: 52

Total of Issues: 175

Issues

Common Issue	Urgency	Description	Guidelines	Suggested Remediation
Website not fully responsive	Critical	The layout of the website remains the same but the text is too small to read.	Responsive design should adjust its layout and content based on screen size.	Optimize website for smaller screens by updating CSS to change page layout to single column layout on mobile devices to allow content to scales properly.
Slideshow not accessible	Critical	Text not focusable	Images in a slideshow need to be focusable so users who rely on keyboard navigation or screen readers can interact and understand the content.	Ensure images are focusable and provide alt text
Accessibility issues with search bar	Required	Unlabeled form control and empty button. This affect all pages	Label form controls and buttons to ensure screen reader users can identify the purpose of the button and locate the input field.	Add <label> and value=""
Broken links	Critical	Several broken links	Broken links negatively impact visitor experience and SEO	Update URL address
Low Color Contrast	Required	White text on yellow background on slide show and event dates on main page and news page	Poor color contrast and certain color combinations can impact readability for people who have color blindness or low vision, making it difficult to distinguish text from its background.	Change text and arrow color
Skipped heading levels	Required	Two levels (H2, H3) skipped on right sidebar on most pages	Skipped heading levels can create a confusing and bad experience for screen reader users who depend on heading structured to navigate content.	Use Heading 2 for right sidebar main header and Heading 3 for news post
Missing alternative text	Required	Most linked images open up to a higher resolution version and some to identical image.	Linked images should include alt text to let screen reader know the destination.	For decorative images, remove link and add alt text
Inconsistent link text for identical destinations	Required	Links on footer do not match link text on other sections such as sidebar, main menu, and logo. Also, event adjacent links: heading, image, and "continue reading" same destination.	Links with same destination must use same link text in order to avoid confusion and affecting user experience	Update link text
Page banners alternative text create redundancy	Concern	Some page banners alternative text duplicate the main heading (Heading 1) creating redundancy for screen readers and affecting user experience.	Alt text should descripe the image content or purpose	If decorative image, leave empty alt=" "

ROT analysis

- Review content to find and remove anything that’s no longer useful.
- Refresh and update outdated material.
- Consolidate similar information.
- Use the Content Workbooks to guide our review.

ROT = Redundant, Outdated, Trivial

DHCD website content report

DHCD Website Report

Updated March 13, 2025

Filtering Options

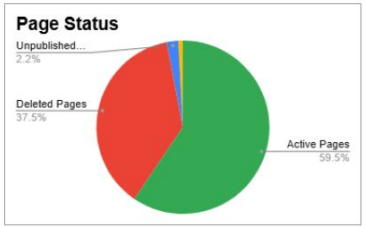
Page Status	Active	(*do not leave blank)
Features		(*leave empty to show all)
Page Layout	Program Page Layout	(*leave empty to show all)
Upsate Status		(*leave empty to show all)

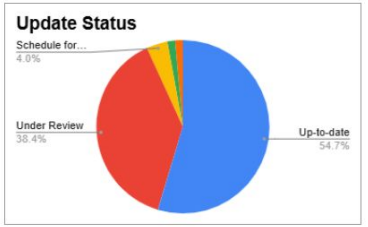
For changes, please submit a request. Do not edit directly.

Submit Request

Page Status	Total
Active Pages	276
Deleted Pages	174
Unpublished Pages	10
Test Pages	4

Update Status	Total
Up-to-date	151
Under Review	106
Schedule for update	11
Waiting for approval	4
Schedule to be deleted	4





Web Page Status	Page Heading or Name	URL	Description	Page Layout	Features Implemented	Contact/Owner	Concerns / Suggestions	Update Status	Final notes
Active	Main Street Improvement Program Grant	https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Pages/MIP.aspx	New page 2024 - MIP was removed from the TAG page (previously Operating Assistance Grant page)	Program Page Layout	RSS feed, Subscribe, Button	NR / Christine McPherson		Up-to-date	
Active	Baltimore Regional Neighborhood Initiative	https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Pages/programs/BRNI.aspx	(map image)	Program Page Layout	Map, RSS feed, Subscribe, Button	NR / SRP / Olivia Ceccarelli		Up-to-date	
Active	Community Investment Tax Credits Program	https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Pages/programs/CITC.aspx	(details tag)	Program Page Layout	RSS feed, Subscribe, Button	NR / CITC / Barbara Kearney		Up-to-date	
Active	Community Legacy Program	https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Pages/programs/CL.aspx		Program Page Layout		NR / SRP / Olivia Ceccarelli		Up-to-date	
Active	Strategic Demolition Fund	https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Pages/programs/SDF.aspx		Program Page Layout		NR / SRP / Olivia Ceccarelli		Up-to-date	
Active	State Revitalization Programs	https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Pages/StateRevitalizationPrograms/default.aspx	(details tag, red notice)	Program Page Layout	Expand sections (details tag), Red notice	NR / SRP / Olivia Ceccarelli		Up-to-date	
Active	National Capital Strategic Economic Development Fund	https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Pages/StateRevitalizationPrograms/NationalCapitalStrategicEconomicDevelopmentFund.aspx	(map image)	Program Page Layout	Map, RSS feed, Subscribe, Button	NR / SRP / Olivia Ceccarelli		Up-to-date	

Web Report | Submit Request | Master sheet | Lists

Detailed DHCD website page inventory

Site/F	Web Page Status	Page Heading or Name	URL	Description	Page Layout	Features Implemented	Contact/Owner	Concerns / Suggestions	Update Status	Final notes
DHCD Website										
	Active	HB 90 - AFFH Compliance Form	https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Pages/AFFH-Compliance-Form.aspx	Active Wufoo form	Inner page	Form	Research / Bernice Mensah	New page (2023)	Up-to-date	
	Active	NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY: Assisted Housing Relief Program	https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Pages/AHRP-NOFA.aspx	NOFA	NOFA page		OPA?	Orphan page. Application period is CLOSED	Under review	
	Active	Rental Security Deposit Calculator information	https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Pages/CalculatorInfo.aspx		Inner page		OPA	Delete? Orphan and empty page	Under review	
	Active	Consolidated Plan	https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Pages/ConsolidatedPlan.aspx	Details tag - Use to create expand/collapse section to shorten page length	Inner page	Expand sections (details t...	Research / Bernice Mensah	Bernice wanted old documents to be added to zip folder.	Up-to-date	Had meeting with Bernice 10/11/2(show how created zip folders and documents.
	Active	Contact Us	https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Pages/Contact-Us.aspx	Wufoo form Embedded	Inner page	Form	OPA	Web part has extra padding	Up-to-date	
	Active	Homepage	https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Pages/default.aspx	DHCD homepage	Homepage	Button RSS feed images	OPA		Up-to-date	
	Active	DHCD Sponsorship Request Form	https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Pages/DHCD-Sponsorship-Request-Form.aspx	Embedded Wufoo form	Inner page	Form	Community Engagement		Up-to-date	
	Active	Event Request Form: DHCD Community Engagement	https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Pages/EventRequestForm.aspx	Embedded Wufoo form	Inner page	Form	Community Engagement		Up-to-date	
	Active	google225b516ba9d4d7af.html	https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Pages/google225b516ba9d4d7af.html				OPA	Not a page - Html file. Should it be moved out of the "page" folder?	Under review	
	Active	(GovDelivery Subscription Snippet)	https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Pages/GovDeliverySubscriptionSnippet.aspx	Used by Subscribe page		External app	OPA / Priya		Under review	
	Active	Green and Healthy Task Force	https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Pages/GreenHealthyTaskForce.aspx	Table	Task Force	Table	OS / Robyne Chaconas		Up-to-date	
	Active	How Can We Help You?	https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Pages/Help.aspx	(details tag replaced DoIT's accordion) - yellow banner - button	Contact page	Expand sections (details t... Gold banner	OPA		Up-to-date	
	Active	Información en Español	https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Pages/informacionenespanol.aspx	Active Wufoo form	Inner page	Form	OPA	SPANISH orphan page (only linked to landing pages through hidden section) - don't know how users navigate to this page - appears in search results - 183 views in the las 12 months	Under review	
	Active	Community Engagement Mailing Request Form	https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Pages/MailingRequestForm.aspx	Embedded Wufoo form	Inner page	Form	Community Engagement		Up-to-date	

Web Report | Submit Request | Master sheet | Lists

380 of 568 rows displaye

Navigation improvements

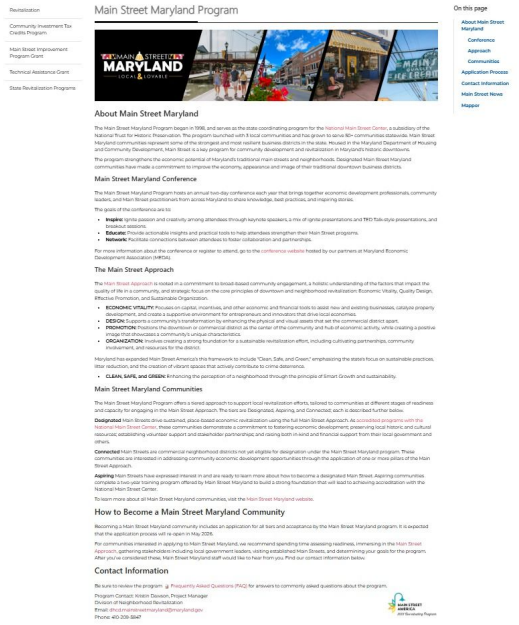
- Made menus easier to understand and use.
- Added a sticky menu on the left for related content and in-page navigation on the right to help users move around the page more easily.

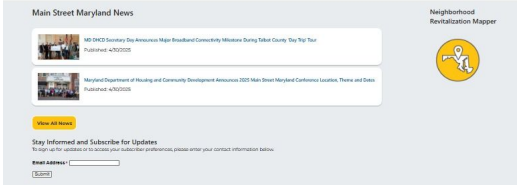
Consistency and standardization

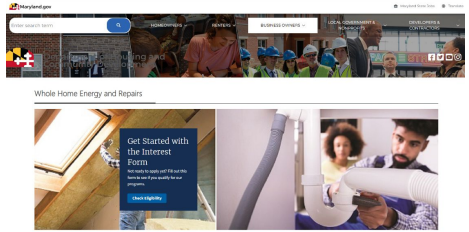
We are working on templates to keep design and content consistent across our pages. Each template will match a specific page or content type.

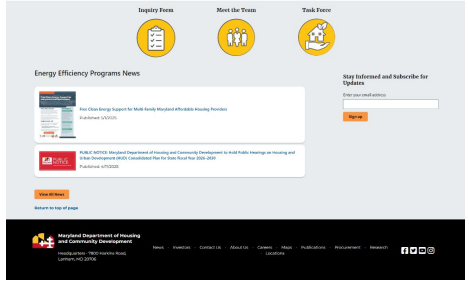
- Homepage
- Division-level page
- Sub-division page
- Program page
- Campaign page
- Contact page
- Resource page
- Team page

Program page template



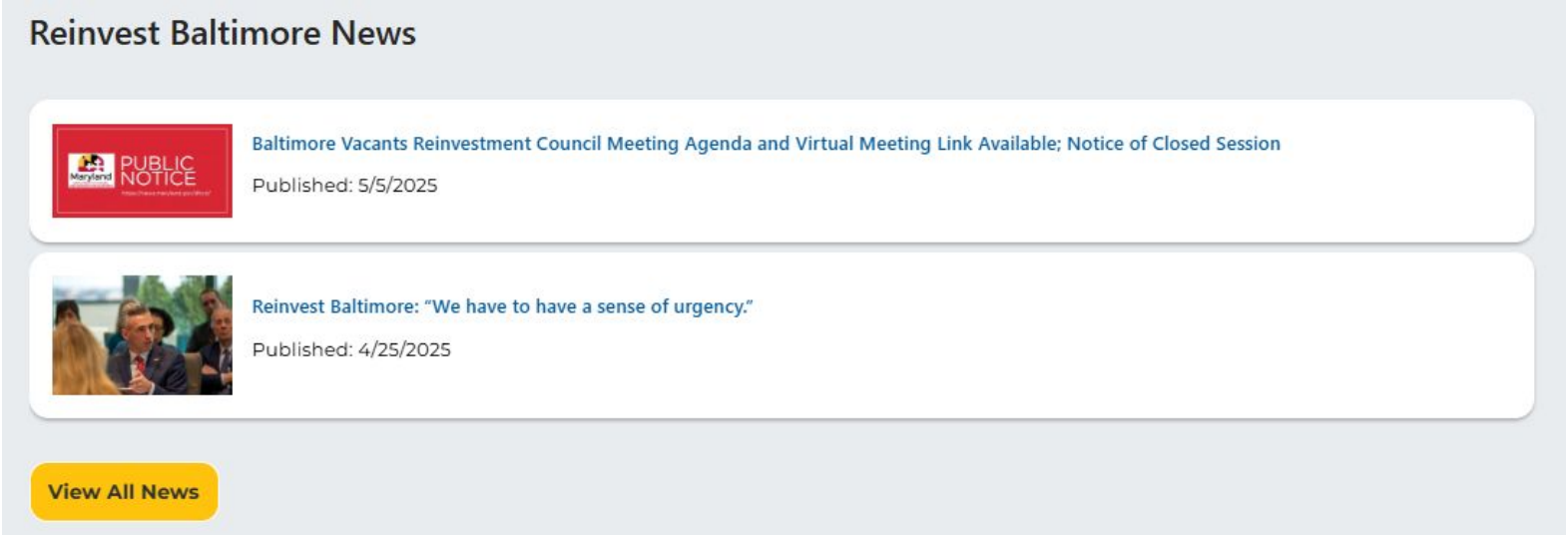






Real-time updates

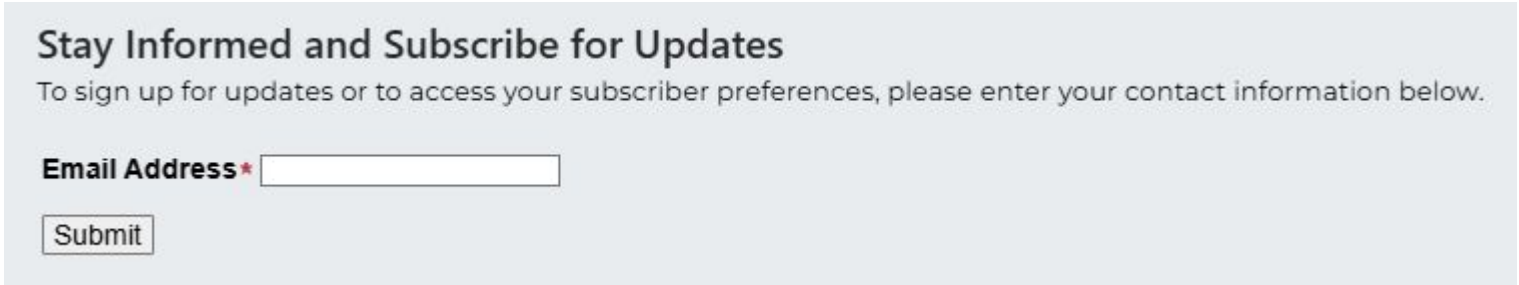
- An integrated dynamic news feed directly into multiple program pages. This integration keeps content fresh and enables news cross-pollination across the site.
- Previously, public information was siloed. Now, it appears instantly on the page when a press release is published; no manual updates needed.
- It also supports better communication and engagement by allowing news to be shared more widely.



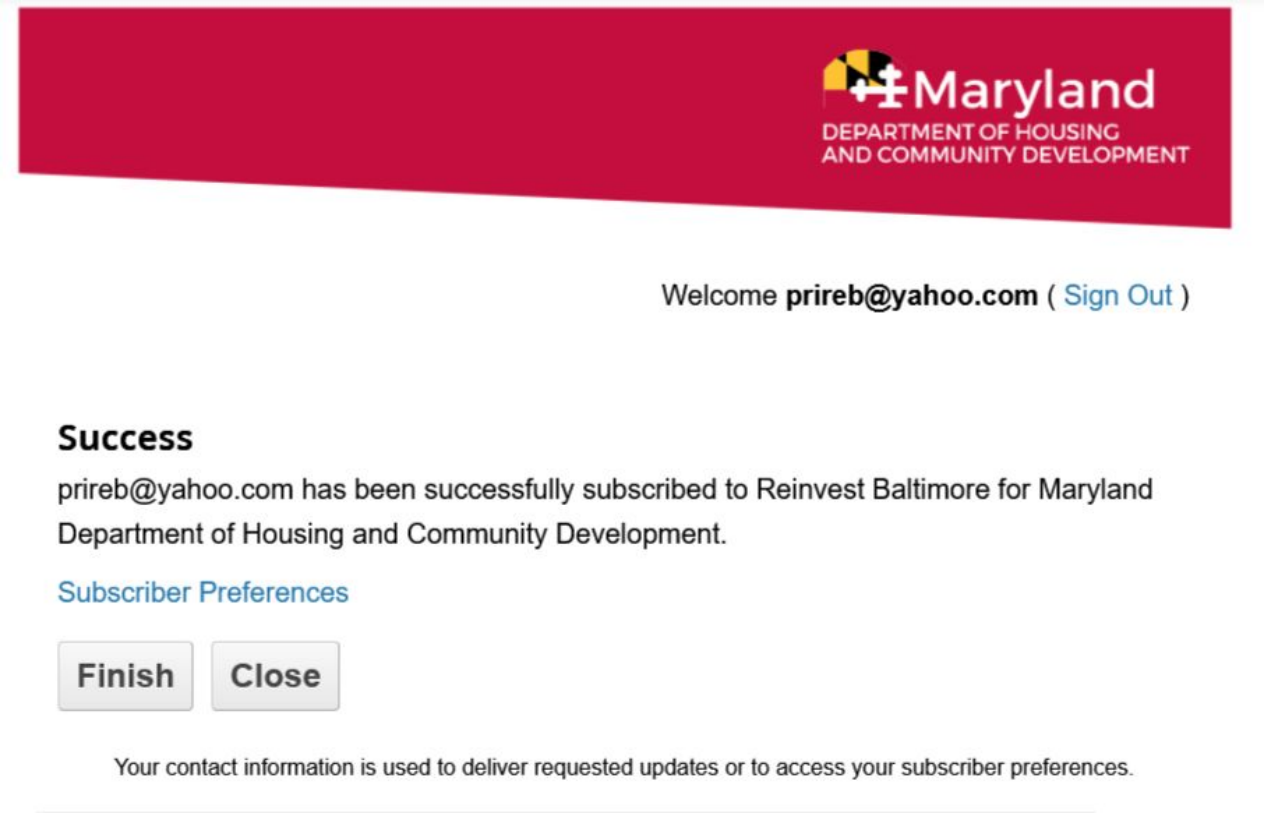
Subscribe by topic

Let users sign up for email updates about the program.

- This helps increase sign-ups and keeps people interested and engaged.
- Give users another chance and an easy way to subscribe.



Subscription confirmation message



Plain language implementation

Rewriting content to make it easier to understand by following the Maryland Plain Language Standards.

Sustainable Communities page prior to implementing the Plain Language Standards:

Sustainable Communities: Enhancing Maryland Communities by Prioritizing Investment

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development's Sustainable Communities Program is a place-based designation offering a comprehensive package of resources that support holistic strategies for community development, revitalization and sustainability. Led by the Department, Sustainable Communities has provided local governments with a framework for promoting environmentally, economically and socially responsible growth and development in existing older communities.

List of Approved Sustainable Communities

Sustainable Communities Act of 2010

The Sustainable Communities Act of 2010 established a shared geographic designation to promote efficient use of scarce State resources based on local sustainability and revitalization strategies. The Sustainable Communities program consolidated geographically targeted resources for historic preservation, housing and economic development under a single designation. The designation places special emphasis on infrastructure improvements, multimodal transportation and development that strengthens existing communities. The legislation designated the Governor's Smart Growth Subcabinet as the body charged with final approval of Sustainable Communities designations.

What are Sustainable Communities?

The 2010 Sustainable Communities Act defines Sustainable Community Areas as places where public and private investments and partnerships achieve:

- Development of a healthy local economy;
- Protection and appreciation of historical and cultural resources;
- A mix of land uses;
- Affordable and sustainable housing, and employment options;
- Growth and development practices that protect the environment and conserve air, water and energy resources, encourage walkability and recreational opportunities, and where available, create access to transit.

Plain language implementation

Sustainable Communities page after the Plain Language revisions:

Sustainable Communities

Program Overview

Sustainable Communities: Enhancing Maryland Communities by Prioritizing Investment

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development's Sustainable Communities Program provides a specific designation for local areas.

The program supports community development, revitalization, and sustainability through coordinated strategies. It gives local governments resources to improve older communities and promote growth that is environmentally, economically and socially responsible.

Sustainable Communities Act of 2010

The Sustainable Communities Act of 2010 created a shared geographic designation to promote the efficient use of State resources. This designation uses local sustainability and revitalization strategies.

The Sustainable Communities program combines resources for:

- Historic preservation
- Housing and economic development under a single designation

The program focuses on:

- Infrastructure improvements
- Multimodal transportation
- Development that strengthens existing communities

The legislation gives the Governor's Smart Growth Subcabinet final approval over Sustainable Communities designations.

What are Sustainable Communities?

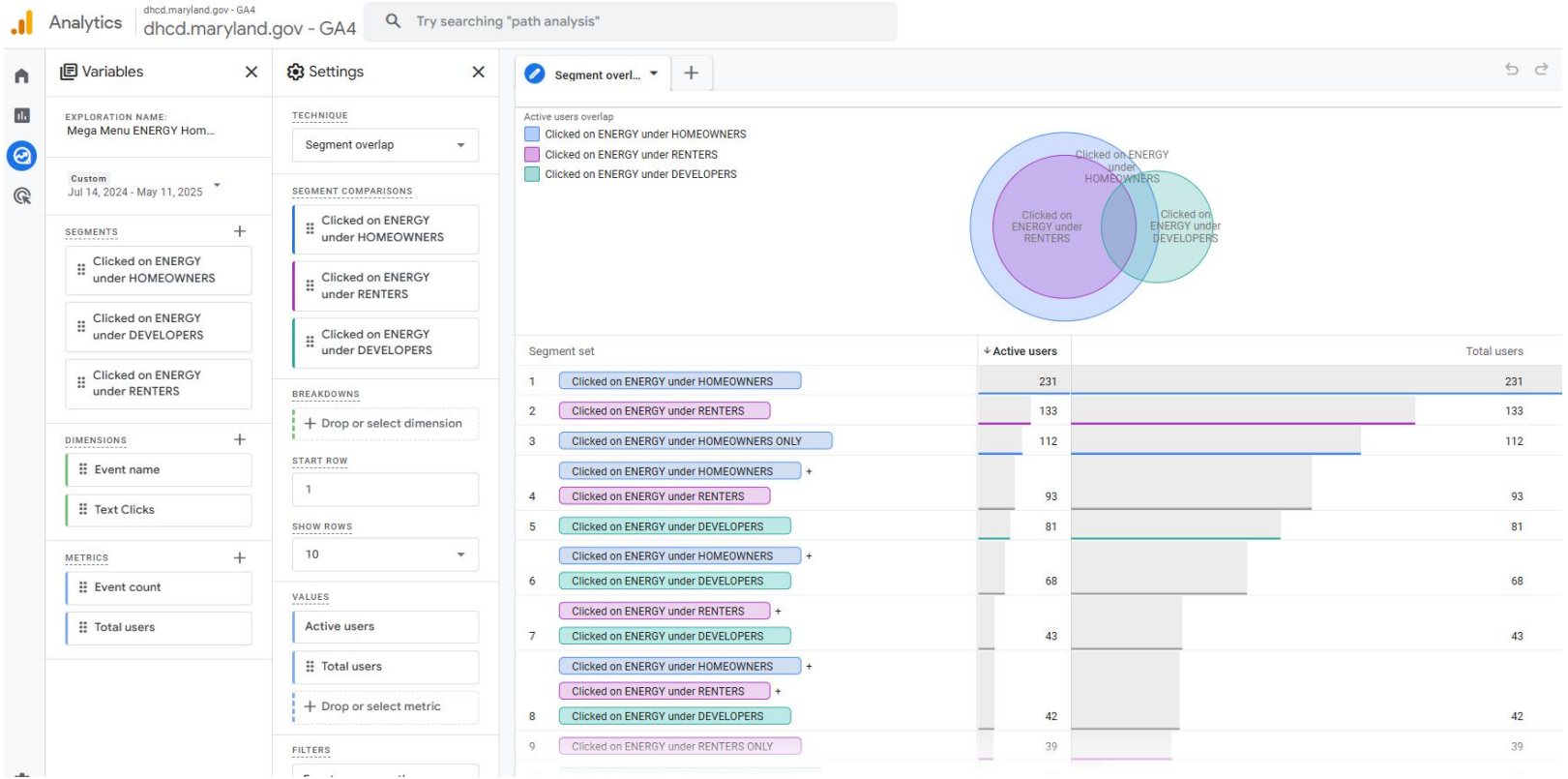
The 2010 Sustainable Communities Act defines Sustainable Community areas as places where public and private investments work together to achieve:

- Development of a healthy local economy
- Protection and appreciation of historical and cultural resources
- A mix of land uses
- Affordable and sustainable housing, and employment options
- Growth and development practices that:
  - Protect the environment
  - Conserve air, water and energy resources
  - Encourage walkability and recreational opportunities
  - Create access to transit where available

Data-driven design

- Using data from Google Analytics and the Qualtrics dashboard to make better design choices.
- The following is an example of Google Analytics data from the past ten months, showing user interactions with the ‘Energy’ menu item across three sections of our website’s mega menu.

Data-driven design



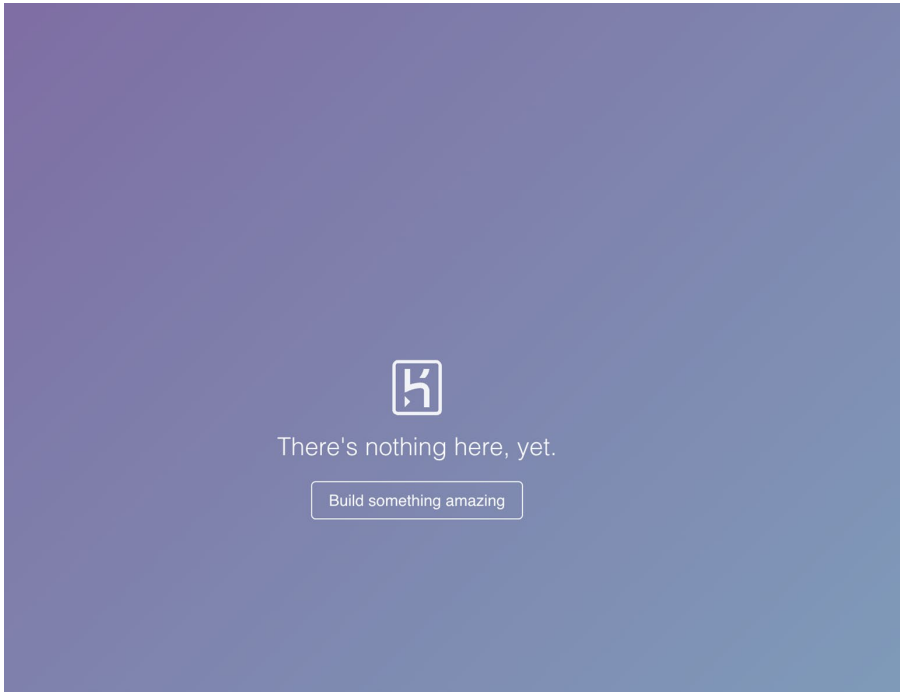
DNS migration effort

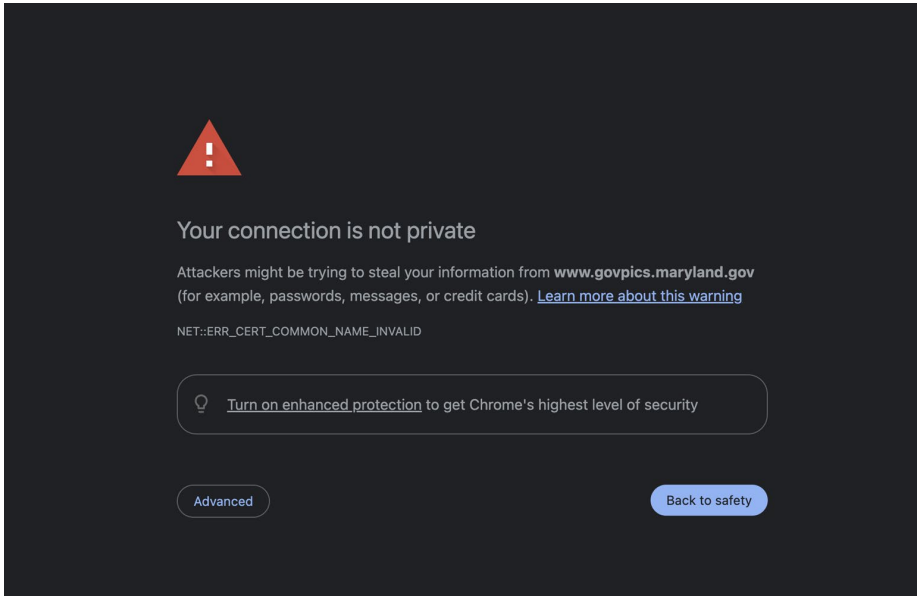
David Holmes - david.holmes@maryland.gov

Our Current DNS environment

- 14,077 DNS records across 254 zones
- Aging and Outdated Infrastructure
- No Disaster Recovery Plan
- Security risks from unmanaged DNS records
  - mappingmaryland.com, .net, .org
  - 2019health.maryland.gov
  - https://vendorpayment.maryland.gov/

Examples


There's nothing here, yet.
Build something amazing

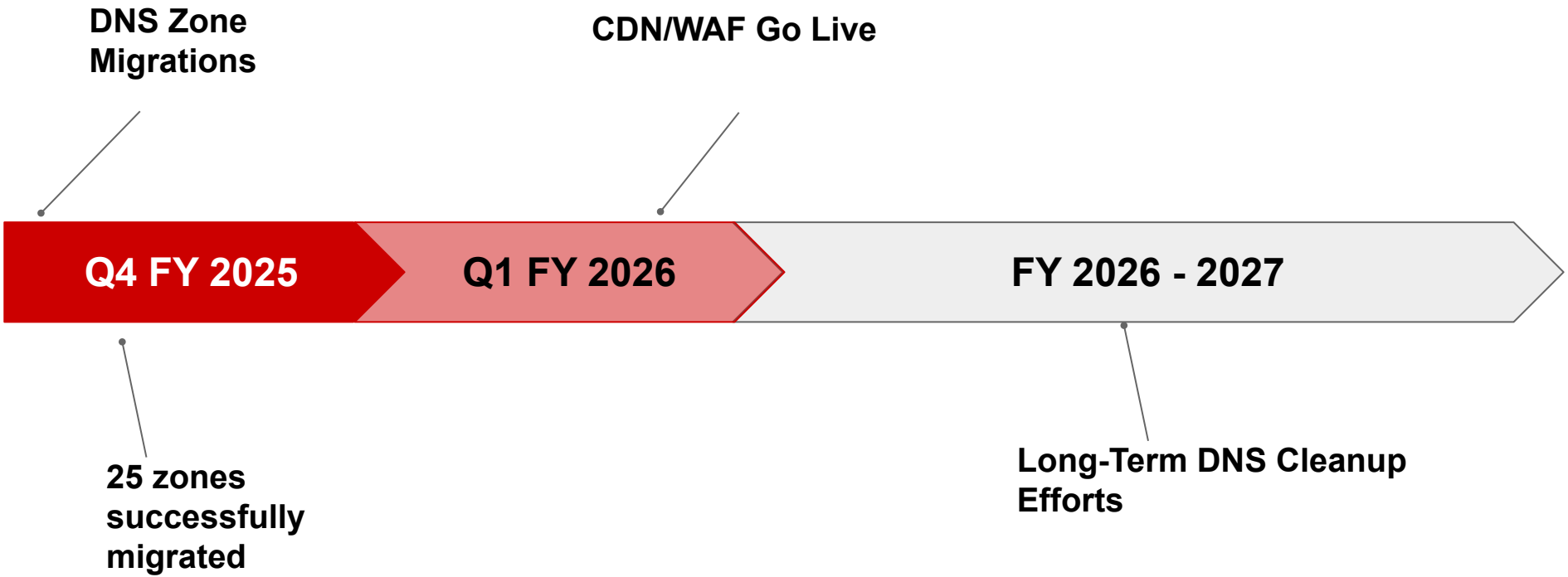

Your connection is not private
Attackers might be trying to steal your information from www.govpics.maryland.gov (for example, passwords, messages, or credit cards). Learn more about this warning
NET::ERR_CERT_COMMON_NAME_INVALID
Turn on enhanced protection to get Chrome's highest level of security
Advanced
Back to safety

New DNS Provider

Cloudflare

- Cloud Based
- Web Application Firewall
- SSL Certificate Management
- Content Delivery Network / Caching
- Analytics

Timeline for the new DNS Migration



What do agencies need to do?

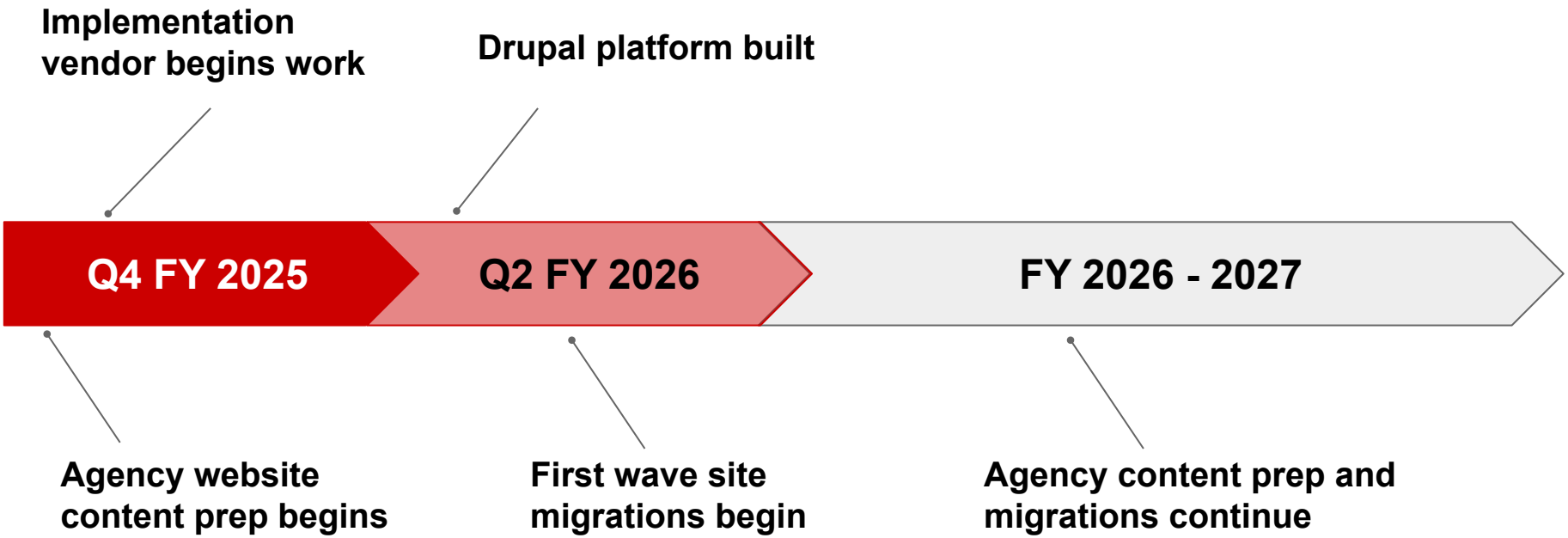
- Most agencies don’t need to take any action
- OSM will reach out to agency that do need to make updates

Questions on DNS?

Maryland CMS update

Carrie Hane - carrie.hane@maryland.gov
Jeffrey Pass - jeffrey.pass@maryland.gov
Andrew White - andrew.white1@maryland.gov

Timeline for the new CMS



Migration Roadmap

We are planning the migration of the ~100 DoIT-hosted sites, using **both qualitative and quantitative data**, including traffic volume, site complexity, an agency's self-sufficiency, and more.

MDDS will reach out in the coming weeks and months to discuss immediate next steps.

Your migration could look like:

Small Sites, In-progress Redesigns

Supported by MDDS

Medium-Large Sites

Supported by MDDS, vendor partner, or combo

Very Large Sites

Taken on a case-by-case basis

What does a website redesign look like?

All projects will follow a similar process that scales to site's size and complexity.

Discovery & strategy → **User experience & content** → **Implementation, content migration, and training**

Who are your target audiences?

What information do they need?

What do we want them to do on the site?

What challenges are we looking to address?

How will content on the site be organized and labeled?

How will visitors navigate from page to page? How will key pages work?

What copy and content will go into the new site?

What content will be retired, rewritten in plain language or made accessible?

What types of pages will need to be created to handle my site's content?

How can my agency take advantage of the new user-friendly CMS?

What new components, if any, will need to be built?

What best practices are available to manage content long term?

Small Scale

Large Scale

How might the process change?

Sample process

Discovery & strategy	User experience & content	Implementation, content migration, and training
Kickoff survey and/or stakeholder interviews	Sitemap, homepage mockup, limited content support, limited user research	New Drupal site + hosting, Drupal training, limited migration support, no custom development
Kickoff survey, user interviews, strategy workshops, and/or other research activities	Sitemap, homepage + other mockups, moderate content support, some user research	New Drupal site + hosting, Drupal training, some migration support, limited custom development

A quick note on PDFs and files

All PDFs and files must be made accessible prior to moving to Drupal, unless an exemption has been issued.

MDDS will provide guidelines to create accessible PDFs, but the responsibility of auditing and remediating digital files will fall to your agency.

Design for everyone. Accessible design is good design.

—MDDS Design Principles

What can my agency do now?

- **Review your team's workload.** Reworking content can be time consuming, so begin planning who can help in your redesign.
- **Request a Content Workbook from MDDS.** Keep in mind this is a snapshot in time.
- **Identify any content to archive, delete, or must be kept by legislative mandate.**
- **Keep track of all new content added following your audit.**

Anything else I need to know?

Get Excited!

- Modernized site builder capabilities
- Accessibility improvements
- Consist, streamlined templates
- An easy-to-use experience to make site edits yourself

We’re partners in this journey.

Your success is our success.

Q&A and discussion

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

Web Leads Meeting

June 10th, 12:30-2 (in person, Crownsville)

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

August 12th, 12:30-2 (in person, Crownsville)

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

October 14th, 12:30-2 (in person, Crownsville)

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

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

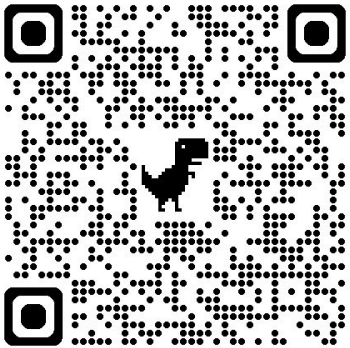
MDDS/Web Leads Open Office Hours

May 27th, 9-10 AM (virtual)

Thank you

See you in person in Crownsville on June 10th

[Feedback Survey]



Survey link https://forms.gle/gn6WvfitXAMVKMpu9