



UPPER SHORE
Regional Council

2023-2025

IMPACT REPORT

Uniting Strategic Resources for Communities

www.usrcmd.org



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Message from **Susan O'Neill**, Executive Director, and **Ron Fithian**, Chair, Upper Shore Regional Council

Over the past several years, collaboration has been the Upper Shore's greatest advantage. Together with regional leaders, county economic development departments, educators, businesses, nonprofits, and residents, we aligned around shared priorities and turned planning into progress. This 2023–2025 Impact Report shows how working across communities has uplifted Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's counties and positioned the Upper Shore for lasting, inclusive growth.

During this period, the Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund (RMEDF) supported a range of initiatives that reflect both local needs and regional vision, strengthening infrastructure, entrepreneurship, and opportunities for our workforce and business ecosystem. In Queen Anne's County, the QAC 4-H initiative supported tourism and workforce development for youth; in Kent County, the Millington Mixed-Use Project advanced horizontal infrastructure that sets the stage for private investment; in Cecil County, the Farm Museum and Regional Agricultural Center preserved agricultural heritage while providing space for producers and small businesses.

USRC's Business Mentorship Program and Project Bright Future also exemplify the power of our partnerships, pairing entrepreneurs with advisors and connecting students to CTE pathways, internships, and careers. Our three county economic development directors have deepened coordination on data, land use, workforce, and industry priorities, proving that regional coordination here is an everyday practice. The Eastern Shore ESG collaboration, including the Delmarva Index and the GIS Circuit Rider, shows how shared tools lead to smarter decisions.

Thank you to our partners and communities for the trust you place in USRC and for the teamwork that defines our region. The pages ahead reflect your dedication and the tangible outcomes it creates. We are proud of what we have achieved together and excited for what comes next.

Sincerely,



Susan O'Neill

Susan O'Neill
Executive Director, Upper Shore
Regional Council



Ron Fithian

Ron Fithian
Chair, Upper Shore Regional Council

Mission and Vision

The mission of the Upper Shore Regional Council is to foster regional planning and development for Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's counties; to afford federal, state, county, and local governments a regional forum to identify issues and opportunities; and to provide leadership in planning and implementing programs to improve the quality of life in the Upper Shore Region of Maryland.

Through collaboration with county, regional, and state partners, the Upper Shore Regional Council broadens opportunities for all by developing funds and programs to serve the region's interests. These initiatives offer a competitive advantage, bolstering community and economic development strategy.

2025 Executive Board

- **Ron Fithian**, Chair
- **Bob Meffley**, 1st Vice Chair
- **Jack Wilson**, 2nd Vice Chair
- **Albert Nickerson**, 3rd Vice Chair
- **Donna Culberson**, Secretary
- **Chris Corchiarino**, Treasurer

List of 2025 Full Council Members

- **Senator Steve Hershey**, District 36
- **Delegate Jay Jacobs**, District 36
- **Delegate Steve Arentz**, District 36
- **Delegate Jeff Ghrist**, District 36
- **Senator Jason Gallion**, District 35
- **Delegate Teresa Reilly**, District 35A
- **Delegate Kevin Hornberger**, District 35B
- **Delegate Mike Griffith**, District 35A
- **Adam Streight**, Cecil County Executive
- **Bob Meffley**, Cecil County Councilman
- **Dawn Branch**, Cecil County Councilwoman
- **Al Miller**, Cecil County Councilman
- **Rebecca Hamilton**, Cecil County Councilwoman
- **Donna Culberson**, Cecil County Councilwoman
- **Rich Taylor**, Mayor, Chesapeake City
- **Ron Fithian**, Kent County Commissioner
- **Albert Nickerson**, Kent County Commissioner
- **John Price**, Kent County Commissioner
- **Don Sutton**, Mayor, Betterton
- **Chris Corchiarino**, Commissioner, Queen Anne's County
- **Jack Wilson**, Commissioner, Queen Anne's County
- **Jim Moran**, Commissioner, Queen Anne's County
- **Patrick McLaughlin**, Commissioner, Queen Anne's County
- **Phil Dumenil**, Commissioner, Queen Anne's County
- **Charlie Rhodes**, Commissioner, Church Hill



Standing Left to Right:
Albert Nickerson, Jack
Wilson, Ron Fithian
Seated Left to Right: Bob
Meffley, Donna Culberson
Missing: Chris Corchiarino

USRC Staff

- **Susan O'Neill**, Executive Director
- **Janice Palmer**, Executive Assistant

2024 Executive Board

- **Ron Fithian**, Chair
- **Jackie Gregory**, 1st Vice Chair
- **Jack Wilson**, 2nd Vice Chair
- **Albert Nickerson**, 3rd Vice Chair
- **Chris Corchiarino**, Secretary
- **Bob Meffley**, Treasurer

List of 2024 Full Council Members

- **Senator Steve Hershey**, District 36
- **Delegate Jay Jacobs**, District 36
- **Delegate Steve Arentz**, District 36
- **Delegate Jeff Ghrist**, District 36
- **Senator Jason Gallion**, District 35
- **Delegate Teresa Reilly**, District 35A
- **Delegate Kevin Hornberger**, District 35B
- **Delegate Mike Griffith**, District 35A
- **Danielle Hornberger**, Cecil County Executive
- **Bob Meffley**, Cecil County Councilman
- **Jackie Gregory**, Cecil County Councilwoman
- **Al Miller**, Cecil County Councilman
- **Rebecca Hamilton**, Cecil County Councilwoman
- **Donna Culberson**, Cecil County Councilwoman
- **Rich Taylor**, Mayor, Chesapeake City
- **Ron Fithian**, Kent County Commissioner
- **Albert Nickerson**, Kent County Commissioner
- **John Price**, Kent County Commissioner
- **Don Sutton**, Mayor, Betterton
- **Chris Corchiarino**, Commissioner, Queen Anne's County
- **Jack Wilson**, Commissioner, Queen Anne's County
- **Jim Moran**, Commissioner, Queen Anne's County
- **Patrick McLaughlin**, Commissioner, Queen Anne's County
- **Phil Dumenil**, Commissioner, Queen Anne's County
- **Charlie Rhodes**, Commissioner, Church Hill



Standing Left to Right:
Albert Nickerson, Ron
Fithian, Chris Corchiarino,
Jack Wilson
Seated: Bob Meffley,
Jackie Gregory

Business & Workforce Development



In partnership with Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's counties, USRC drives economic growth while preserving the region's character. As the region's planning and development agency, USRC helps communities secure funding, expand operations, connect employers with talent, and build skills—strengthening local businesses and the workforce.

Since its launch, the Incentive Fund has awarded

13
GRANTS

totaling
\$121,985

supporting a range of agricultural projects across the Upper Shore Region.

“This partnership with the Upper Shore Regional Council has proven to be an effective way to increase access to capital for farmers in the region,” said MARBIDCO Executive Director Steve McHenry. “By combining our loan programs with the Upper Shore Agricultural Equity Incentive Matching Fund, we’ve been able to leverage an additional **\$4.5 million in commercial lending**, which gives more producers, especially young and beginning farmers, a stronger chance to succeed in the Upper Shore Region.”

Scan to Learn More



Upper Shore Agricultural Equity Incentive Matching Fund

The Upper Shore Agricultural Equity Incentive Matching Fund (the Incentive Fund), created by the USRC, seeks to support the growth of established and emerging agricultural enterprises in the Upper Shore Region by providing a 5% equity contribution toward projects financed through the Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) loan program.

In collaboration with local and regional economic development offices, the Incentive Fund is designed to help farmers bridge financing gaps, strengthen credit quality, and meet project down payment requirements, supporting farmland preservation, rural economic development, and the long-term viability of agriculture in Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's counties. Together, the region's 1,400+ farms generate more than \$294 million in annual revenue.

Micro Ag Grant Program

The USRC's Micro Ag Grant Program, in partnership with the Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's counties economic development departments, provides a financial grant opportunity to support agricultural businesses. Each year, selected recipients use these grants to fund projects that promote growth, expansion, and collaboration among Upper Shore farms and agribusinesses.

Funded initiatives range from equipment upgrades and efficiency improvements to direct marketing, online sales platforms, home delivery of farm-fresh food, animal health, conservation practices, and more. By supporting these projects, the program continues to strengthen a vibrant and economically sustainable rural community throughout the region.

During the 2024-25 period **83** grants were awarded for a total of **\$249,000**

2024 amount of matched funds:	2025 amount of matched funds:
\$72,000+	\$86,000+

Since 2021, a total of **156** agribusinesses have received **\$841,266**.

Scan to Learn More



The Upper Shore Regional Council is happy to spotlight some of our past grant recipients and highlight their successes:



Bonnie Hutton, Executive Director of After the Races

"Thanks to the funding from the Upper Shore Micro Ag Grant, After the Races was able to install much-needed hospital paddocks and a full-size training pen. The hospital paddocks decrease stress and enrich the lives of horses who are otherwise confined due to injuries. The training pen directly impacts both the retraining and marketing of the horses seeking adoptive homes, decreasing the average length of stay of all horses in the program, allowing us to serve more racehorses retiring in Maryland each year. The pen will also serve as a space for future educational demonstrations, clinics, and fundraising activities on the farm."

Bryan Williams, Owner of Red Acres Hydroponics

"The Micro Ag Grant was a great help to upgrade the plastic and shade cloth on our three greenhouses. It allows us to maximize production and still keep our lettuce pesticide-free and safe from any outdoor activity."



Mitchell Quillen, Owner of Quillen Farms

"The grant we received allowed us to take an important step forward for our farm and our animals. The new shelter we built for our cattle has directly improved their welfare, leading to healthier, stronger calves. It gives us the confidence that we are raising them in the best possible conditions. We're grateful for this support—an investment that strengthens both our farm and the future of local agriculture."



Project BRIGHT FUTURE



Photos by Justinian DeSpensa

Project Bright Future has remained a key program of focus for the USRC, steadily progressing behind the scenes to lay the groundwork for stronger career readiness across the region. Over the past two years, USRC advanced the initiative through a competitive RFP process to select a web development partner. Juicebox Interactive, a nationally recognized digital agency, was chosen to design the platform, and PPR Strategies, a Maryland-based communication and consulting firm with expertise in economic development and marketing, was engaged to develop content.

To complement the website, USRC also created a new Project Bright Future logo through a partnership with Octavo Designs that is bright, innovative, and forward-moving, designed to resonate with students, parents, and businesses while remaining closely tied to USRC's brand identity.

The website will serve as a central hub to connect students, parents, and businesses with career readiness opportunities across Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's counties. The platform will highlight CTE programs, internships, and apprenticeships; explain the key differences between these pathways; and provide insights on anticipated career earnings. The website and branding will give Project Bright Future a clear and accessible presence when it launches.

CTE Equipment Scholarship

Launched in Fall 2022, the CTE Equipment Scholarship Pilot Program supports Upper Shore high school students enrolled in CTE pathways and those in regional internships or apprenticeships by providing a one-time grant to purchase the tools and equipment they need to complete coursework, earn industry certifications, and succeed regardless of financial means. Identified by the USRC Board as a practical step to address the region's middle-skills workforce needs, the program keeps the focus on removing barriers so students can finish training and transition smoothly into in-demand careers.

FY23

Applicants: **39**
 Awarded: **38**
 Amount Awarded:
\$9,653

Most Awarded Trades:

Cecil County:
 Automotive
Kent County:
 Health Occupations
Queen Anne's County:
 Welding

Most Awarded Item:

Cecil County:
 Digital Multimeter
Kent County:
 Nursing Kits
Queen Anne's County:
 Welding Helmet

FY24

Applicants: **57**
 Awarded: **55**
 Amount Awarded: **\$7,481**

Most Awarded Trades:

Cecil County:
 Automotive
Kent County:
 Health Occupations
Queen Anne's:
 Masonry

Most Awarded Item:

Cecil County:
 Digital Multimeter
Kent County:
 Nursing Kits
Queen Anne's County:
 Work boots

FY25

Applicants: **138**
 Awarded: **121**
 Amount Awarded:
\$14,400

Most Awarded Trades:

Cecil County:
 Cosmetology
Kent County:
 Automotive
Queen Anne's County:
 Carpentry

Most Awarded Item:

Cecil County:
 Truslow Kit
 (Cosmetology)
Kent County:
 Safety Glasses
Queen Anne's County:
 Work boots

Resource Development

USRC advances resource development by funding tools and technologies that strengthen industries and support growth across the Upper Shore. From digital platforms to technical programs, these investments give local communities and businesses the capacity to innovate, adapt, and thrive in a changing economy.



Maryland Agricultural Reporting Tool

The Upper Shore Regional Council was proud to support the creation of the new Maryland Agricultural Reporting Tool, developed by the Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC) at Salisbury University. This free, user-friendly, and secure platform streamlines record keeping and simplifies compliance with state and federal reporting requirements for agricultural producers. Replacing paper and Excel-based systems, the tool allows farmers to create farm profiles, enter field-level details, and generate automatic calculations and visualizations to track crops, yields, nutrient applications, and trends over time. These features support long-term decision-making for farm management. Ultimately, the tool reduces administrative burdens, enhances efficiency, and provides valuable insights for producers across the Upper Shore Region.



GIS Circuit Rider Program and Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative

USRC has continued its support of the Eastern Shore Regional GIS Circuit Rider Program, recognizing the importance of providing Upper Shore communities with access to specialized technical expertise that they would not otherwise have in-house. Many municipalities across the region rely on this program to modernize their data systems, improve decision-making, and deliver more efficient services to residents. This kind of targeted, technical support strengthens local governments' ability to plan, grow, and respond to community needs. By investing in these technical solutions, USRC helps its communities build capacity, embrace innovation, and align with broader statewide priorities to make Maryland's future more connected, inclusive, and prepared.



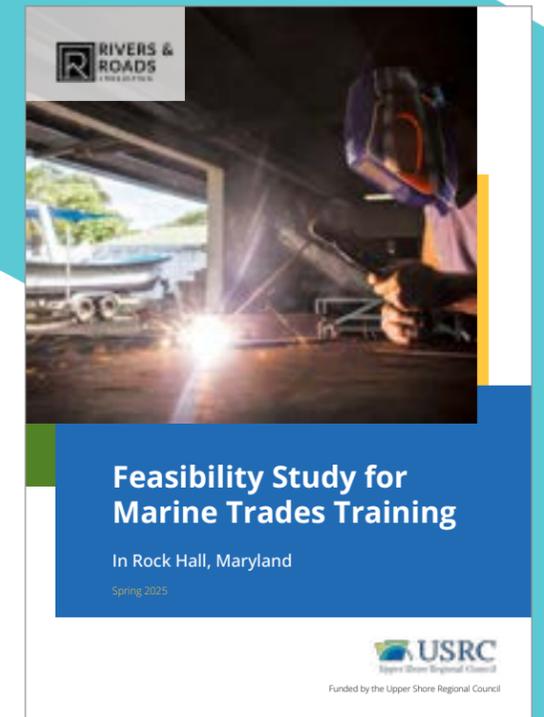
Municipal Development Consulting Program

The Upper Shore Regional Council's Municipal Development Consulting Program (MDCP) provides incorporated municipalities in Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's counties with access to a consulting firm for technical assistance on community development initiatives, such as facade programs, workforce training, real estate projects, and preparation for designations like Main Street or Arts & Entertainment Districts. The MDCP Program awards on a first-come, first-served basis, and a preference is given to applicants who can secure additional sources of funding and demonstrate clear metrics on quality of life.

To date, the program has produced two outcomes:



Charlestown Regional Economic Development Impact Analysis



Feasibility Study for Marine Trades Training in Rock Hall





\$10M Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund Grant

The State of Maryland awarded the Upper Shore Regional Council (USRC) \$10,000,000 through the Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund to stimulate economic activity, encourage private investment, and expand job opportunities across the Upper Shore.

Working with county partners and institutions, USRC deployed funds to infrastructure, workforce training, entrepreneurship, broadband, and community facilities that strengthen the region's economic base and quality of life.

RMEDF Regional Initiatives

Upper Shore Business Mentoring Program

The USRC Business Mentoring Program connects entrepreneurs and small business owners in Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's counties with a network of experienced, volunteer mentors at no cost. In partnership with each county's economic development office, the program matches participants with mentors who understand their industry or stage of growth. Local entrepreneurs in Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's counties were asking for practical, place-based guidance from people who know the Upper Shore market. While national resources exist, business owners and startups in the region needed mentors who understood rural main streets, seasonal demand, permitting and procurement nuances, and the realities of hiring and financing in smaller communities.

Mentors and mentees craft a practical business plan that sets priorities, timelines, and clear measures of progress, while offering guidance on operations, finance, and marketing. Mentorship is free and confidential, and support continues beyond the initial plan so businesses have a trusted sounding board as they navigate decisions and opportunities.



Zane Carter, USRC Business Mentor with Business Mentee Brianna Schindler, Director of Strategic Development & Founder of Rise by Brianna

Working with my USRC business mentors has been nothing short of transformative for my husband and me. As entrepreneurs juggling multiple business ventures, we were overwhelmed by the complexities of structuring and organizing our operations. They brought clarity, strategy, and a practical approach to the table that helped us not only streamline our businesses but also unlock new opportunities for growth.

They listened carefully to our goals, understood our vision even when we didn't, and provided insightful guidance. Thanks to their mentorship, we now have a solid foundation, clear direction, and the confidence to manage our ventures effectively.

We're deeply grateful for their expertise, professionalism, and support. The financial expertise that one mentor brought to the table, combined with the creativity of the co-mentor, was truly invaluable. Together, their unique blend of skills creates a dynamic partnership that delivers exceptional results and innovative solutions."

— Stacy and Chris Kendall, Kendall Properties

RMEDF CECIL COUNTY INITIATIVES

Marine Trades (Cecil College)



Cecil College inaugurated its new Marine Service Technician program and state-of-the-art shop at Bohemia Vista Marina, including \$100,000 in RMEDF support and donated equipment.

Addressing a critical skills gap, the program provides hands-on training and dual credentials from Cecil College and the American Boat and Yacht Council to prepare graduates for in-demand careers.

Cecil County Farm Museum & Regional Agricultural Center



RMEDF funding is supporting the construction of a new facility with ADA-compliant restrooms

and a commercial kitchen, replacing temporary amenities and expanding educational capacity. The upgrades will enable field trips, public events, and programming such as cooking and canning classes that engage residents and visitors.

RMEDF KENT COUNTY INITIATIVES

Millington Senior Village



RMEDF funding is catalyzing the redevelopment of the former Millington Elementary School site into a cottage-style senior community and economic hub. The project's new roadway

system and shared infrastructure will serve seven parcels, including a repurposed building for workforce, childcare, and health services. The plan, shaped by input from regional organizations and the public, aims to boost Millington's economic vitality and provide a prime location for businesses.

RMEDF QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY INITIATIVES

Minority Entrepreneurship Training Accelerator (META) — Award-Winning Program



Queen Anne's County Economic & Tourism Development, with USRC and Maryland Department of Commerce support, launched META to equip five minority-owned

businesses with coaching, mentorship, and microgrants. The cohort model is designed to increase revenues, strengthen business resilience, and create jobs.



Town of Church Hill: Cell Tower Construction Project



The Town of Church Hill used RMEDF funds to construct a 195-foot cell tower on wastewater treatment plant property. The project improves wireless coverage, including internet and broadband, for residents and businesses in Church Hill and surrounding areas.

Queen Anne's County 4-H Park Improvements



RMEDF resources helped replace aging barns and upgrade electrical, plumbing, and stormwater systems at the 4-H Park ahead of the county fair. The improvements enhance safety, event capacity, and long-term usability of a key community asset.

Chesapeake Bay Business Park Broadband Expansion



The expansion project at the Chesapeake Bay Business Park brought underground fiber to every site, funded through RMEDF and delivered by Choptank

Fiber. Reliable, high-speed service supports business attraction, retention, and operational growth within the park.

Agritourism Feasibility & Strategy Study



Queen Anne's County Economic & Tourism Development (QACETD), in collaboration with the Queen Anne's County Department of Planning and Zoning and

University of Maryland Extension – Queen Anne's County, used RMEDF support to benchmark the county's agritourism sector and develop a strategic framework. The study offers policy and infrastructure recommendations to unlock new revenue opportunities for farms and related businesses.

Chesapeake College – Future Works (Advanced Manufacturing Program)



With RMEDF support, Chesapeake College launched an eight-week Advanced Manufacturing Program leading to the Certified Manufacturing Associate credential. New lab

investments (CNC, 3D printers, robotics, laser marking) and a Business & Industry Navigator strengthen hands-on training and industry alignment for in-demand skilled trades.



Watermen/Oyster Spat Restoration



RMEDF funds supported new techniques and equipment to restore oyster bars, including a custom dredge to recover buried shell and prepare sites for seven million larvae. The work bolsters

local oyster populations, sustains watermen's livelihoods, and adds value to the county's seafood and hospitality economy.

Queen Anne's County Strategic Asset & Competitive Industry Analysis

Queen Anne's County Economic & Tourism Development will complete a Strategic Asset & Industry Competitiveness Analysis to assess priority sites, strengthen site-visit materials, and evaluate the county's competitiveness in target industry subsectors. Expected outcomes include a highest-and-best-use business case, prioritized investment recommendations, and a roadmap that supports business attraction and long-term momentum.

High School Career Centers (QACPS Career Awareness & Development Initiative)

Queen Anne's County Public Schools, partnering with Queen Anne's County Economic & Tourism Development, established staffed Career Centers at both high schools to expand career awareness, connect students with internships/apprenticeships, and align pathways with local workforce demand. The initiative aims to grow CTE concentrators by 10%, increase industry credentials, and expand youth apprenticeship participation.

These are a sampling of projects funded in the Upper Shore Region through the RMEDF program. For a full list of projects, contact the Upper Shore Regional Council.

County-Specific Initiatives



Collaboration is at the heart of USRC's work, advancing progress across the Upper Shore Region.

Through county-specific programs and regional partnerships, USRC works alongside Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's counties to implement strategies that enhance quality of life. These efforts focus on creating pathways to expand employment opportunities, empower existing businesses, attract new enterprises, and nurture emerging agricultural ventures.

Millington Preliminary Architectural Feasibility Report

The USRC partnered with the Town of Millington to prepare a Preliminary Architectural Feasibility Report, the first step toward transforming the former Millington Elementary School, closed in 2017, into a community hub. The project envisions revitalizing the site with affordable senior housing, community gathering spaces, a resource center, and other amenities. This redevelopment supports Kent County's strategy to spur growth along the U.S. Route 301 Corridor by attracting new families, expanding services for residents, and providing affordable options for the county's aging population. By breathing new life into the space, the project will strengthen Millington for both current and future residents.



Agriculture Awareness Day



USRC is a proud sponsor of the annual Agriculture Awareness Day in Queen Anne's County and Agriculture Education Days in Cecil County. Each year at the Queen Anne's County 4-H Park, seventh-grade students explore modern agriculture through hands-on activities led by over 100 local educators and volunteers. Students engage with farming technology, crop science, aquaculture, food safety, and career pathways, gaining a deeper appreciation for agriculture's vital role in their community. Since 2018, Agriculture Awareness Day in Queen Anne's

County has introduced **2,851 students** to the region's agricultural heritage and opportunities.

In Cecil County, seventh-grade students participate annually in Agriculture Education Days, a similar hands-on experience connecting them with local agriculture and future career opportunities. Together, these events foster agricultural awareness, sustainability, and workforce readiness across the Upper Shore. In 2024 alone, Cecil County's Agriculture Education Day reached over **1,000 seventh-grade students**.



"As the career station coordinator, I had the pleasure of hearing numerous students say they never knew about many of these careers represented, or how to know what job skills they are good at - or not," said Connie Dean, the county's workforce development administrator. "It is hands-on experiences like these, as well as this direct connection between students and our workforce/businesses, that make such an impact on career awareness of our youth, and their career decision-making journey."

Upper Shore STRT1UP

The Upper Shore STRT1UP celebrates entrepreneurial talent from across Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's counties and provides a platform for startups to showcase their innovative business ideas. In 2024, a total of \$5,500 in cash prizes was awarded to the winner, The Naked Embrace, and runner-up, Beyond Words Tutoring, helping them turn their ideas into reality.

In 2025, Crezia Coffee earned first place, Sandy's Garden was named runner-up, and a Fan Favorite award, voted on by attendees, was presented to Woven Dreams by Emily. Through these events, the Upper

Shore STRT1UP continues to foster innovation, support local entrepreneurs, and strengthen the region's business community.



The Upper Shore Regional Council, in partnership with Kent County Economic & Tourism Development, Queen Anne's County Economic & Tourism Development, Cecil County Economic Development, and in collaboration with Startup Maryland and Washington College, presented the first and second annual Upper Shore STRT1UP at Washington College in 2024 and 2025.



Cybersecurity in Agriculture Forum



Cecil County:

On July 17, 2024, the Upper Shore Regional Council—together with TEDCO, Bay Crossing Consulting, and the Rural Maryland Council—sponsored the Cybersecurity in Agriculture Forum at Cecil College. The program equipped farmers, agricultural entrepreneurs, and industry stakeholders with practical insight into cybersecurity and privacy risks across modern information technology used in production, transportation, and on-farm operations. Following the forum, attendees could join an optional tour of SunMed Growers, Maryland's largest cannabis facility, to see advanced technologies in practice.



Kent and Queen Anne's Counties:

On October 25, 2023, USRC and partners (TEDCO, Bay Crossing Consulting, and the Rural Maryland Council) delivered the Cybersecurity in Agriculture Forum for Kent and Queen Anne's counties. The session provided local producers and industry stakeholders with guidance on identifying, managing, and mitigating cybersecurity and data-privacy risks in today's digitally enabled agriculture.



Community Partnerships

Partnerships are essential to meeting community needs. They serve as catalysts for change, creating mutual benefits for the partners involved while strengthening the broader Upper Shore Region.

At their core, the partnerships USRC has built with like-minded organizations share common goals, perspectives, and strengths, addressing shared challenges that drive growth and opportunity across Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's counties.



Photos provided by: WKHS

WKHS

WKHS, the radio station owned and operated by the Kent County Board of Education, is recognized as a Maryland Department of Education Career and Technical Education (CTE) program. Serving primarily as a hands-on training ground, WKHS provides high school students with real-world broadcasting experience during the school day. Many alumni have gone on to build successful careers in the industry. In support of CTE programs and expanded opportunities across the Upper Shore Region, USRC contributes to WKHS through ongoing sponsorships that fund equipment, training, and resources, ensuring students continue to have WKHS as a professional growth opportunity.



Photo Credit: Wags Media

Winter Lights! Cecil Nights

Each year, the USRC is proud to sponsor Winter Lights! Cecil Nights, a January–February initiative that brings festive light displays and activities to Cecil County while supporting local businesses during the slower winter months. With USRC’s grant funding, the project launched in 2021 and has grown into a signature seasonal attraction in Cecil County, recently celebrating its 5th year in 2025. Through continued partnerships with participating towns, including Cecilton, Charlestown, Chesapeake City, Elkton, North East, Perryville, and Port Deposit, USRC helps cover the costs of lights, decorations, and winter-friendly programming. In 2025, Winter Lights! Cecil Nights welcomed new activities, including a snowman sprint in Chesapeake City, a fire & ice festival in Port Deposit, a winter bach & glow dance party at the VFW in North East, a winter movie night in Perryville, bundle up line dancing at North East Community Park, and “back by popular demand” activities around Cecil County. This effort not only brightens the cold, winter months but also boosts tourism and provides vital support to small businesses across Cecil County.



Rooted In Our Community

The USRC proudly celebrated the Cecil County Office of Economic Development’s 5th annual Rooted In Our Community event. Each year, the event highlights a timely theme that reflects current trends and challenges in the agricultural industry. What began as an opportunity to connect the farming community with the public, showcasing where food comes from, how it is produced, and how farmers navigate a changing economy, has evolved into a multi-faceted event. In 2025, the event focused on Community Supported Agriculture, featuring a speaker, a panel discussion, and ag-themed vendors. Attendees learned more about locally grown and raised products and the nonprofit organizations supporting the region’s agricultural community. USRC has been a steadfast supporter since the event’s inception and continues to celebrate its ongoing success and growth.



Voices of Hope Volunteers at Cecil Cares 2025

Cecil Cares

The USRC proudly supports Cecil Cares, the county-wide day of service organized by the Cecil County Department of Community Services (DCS). The initiative encourages residents to meet community needs through acts of service, fostering connections among organizations, volunteers, and businesses, while promoting a sense of pride and community spirit. Since the pandemic, participation has steadily increased, both in the number of volunteers and in the range of organizations and projects involved. In 2023, **203 volunteers** partnered with **13 organizations** to complete 11 projects, including hands-on activities and donation drives. During Cecil Cares 2024, **250 volunteers** took part in 11 projects across the county. The 2025 event marked the 10th anniversary of Cecil Cares, engaging **242 volunteers** in 15 community projects.

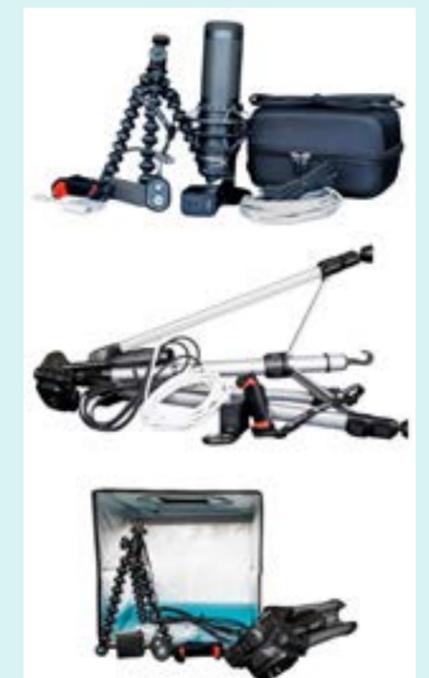
Creator Studio Kits

The USRC, in collaboration with the Cecil County Office of Economic Development and Kent County Economic Development, has supported the Cecil County Public Library’s and the Kent County Public Library’s Creator Studio Kits through funding and partnership. The kits are available in Portrait, Still Photography, and Podcasting, and provide all the equipment and technology needed to create high-quality photos, videos, or audio using a patron-provided smartphone. The kits are key for business owners and entrepreneurs looking to produce content, capture product photos, or take professional headshots, as well as for tech enthusiasts eager to explore new creative tools. Each kit also includes helpful tips, QR codes linking to instructional videos, and recommended reading to support ongoing learning and exploration. By supporting these kits, the USRC is empowering residents to develop digital skills, grow their businesses, and engage with innovative technology.



Taste of the Eastern Shore

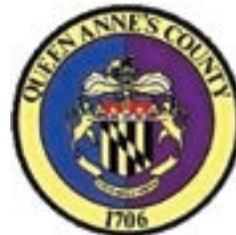
Each year, the USRC partners with the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland and the Mid-Shore Regional Council to organize Taste of the Eastern Shore in Annapolis. Hosted at the Graduate Annapolis Hotel, this annual networking event highlights local vendors, showcases regional businesses, and fosters connections among entrepreneurs, elected officials, and the community. The event regularly attracts Maryland senators, delegates, cabinet secretaries, staff members, and other officials representing the Eastern Shore, providing a unique platform to celebrate and support the region’s economic and cultural vitality.



Partners of



UPPER SHORE
Regional Council



Tri-County Council
For Western Maryland



Tri-County Council for the
Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland

