



## Council Connections

**Bridging Allegany, Garrett and Washington Counties**

**April 30, 2026**



Your voice  
crafts our vision.



TAKE THE SURVEY

Share your experience building a business in Western Maryland.

### **Western Maryland Entrepreneurial Landscape Survey**

The **TCCWMD** is committed to strengthening our regional economy by better supporting the entrepreneurs and organizations that make it thrive. To do this effectively, we need to hear directly from you.

We have partnered with an **independent nonprofit organization**, [Bridging Innovation Institute](#), to conduct a comprehensive survey of our entrepreneurial ecosystem. Your feedback is essential to helping us understand current challenges and inform a broader strategy to ensure our community has access to accurate, actionable information.

**Your Privacy is Our Priority:** To ensure an objective and impartial assessment, this survey is being managed entirely by our independent partner. All results will be provided back to the TCCWMD only as **aggregate, non-identified data**. Your individual responses will remain confidential and will not be linked to your identity.

[Take the Survey Here](#)

*The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete and will close on **May 15**.*

Whether you are an active business owner or a support organization, your voice is a critical foundation for our future strategy. Thank you for your time and your dedication to our community.



[The One Big Beautiful Bill Act \(OBBBA\)](#) signed into law on July 4, 2025 made [Opportunity Zones \(OZs\)](#) a permanent feature of the tax code. First introduced in 2017, OZs are federally designated, economically distressed census tracts where investors can receive special tax incentives for putting capital into local development projects. The next round of zone designations kicks off July 1, 2026, when state governors begin a 90-day nomination window. New zones will subsequently take effect January 1, 2027 and last through December 31, 2036.

There are some key changes from OZ 1.0 to OZ 2.0. The biggest are that the program is now permanent, with zones redesignated every ten years, and eligibility has been tightened.

These resources, provided by [NADO](#) (*National Association of Development Organizations*), include a variety of information on Opportunity Zones, including background information, updates on the designation process, mapping and data tools to support informed planning and decision making, and materials about local planning and implementation considerations.

Review the [Opportunity Zone 2.0 Resource Guide](#)

# Amazon Web Services AI Pitch Competition

Sponsored by AWS & PREDICTif



**Thursday, May 14, 2026, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm**

Western Maryland Works,  
37 Lane Ave., LaVale, Maryland 21505.

**Hosted by Maryland SBDC and Frostburg State University**

*Serving Garrett, Allegany and Washington Counties in Maryland*

This isn't your typical pitch competition. The AI Showcase is a curated experience designed to spotlight visionary organizations doing extraordinary things. Handpicked for their innovation and potential, each participating team will present a challenge or concept - ranging from fully formed AI initiatives to early-stage ideas in need of technical support.

In front of a panel of AWS industry experts, showcase participants receive real-time feedback, guidance, and up to \$50,000 in AWS and PREDICTif services to help bring their vision to life. Up to 10 finalists will compete for up to \$50K in AWS & PREDICTif services. Join top AI innovators as they present their groundbreaking solutions to a panel of expert judges. Experience the future of AI in Maryland. Free to attend: Registration is required and limited to 110 attendees.

**Register to attend: <https://mdsbdc.ecenterdirect.com/events/18502>**

**Applications are open from April 1 to April 30, 2026.**

**Entry deadline is April 30th at 11:59 p.m. (EST).**

*Email full application materials to [jdbroadwater@frostburg.edu](mailto:jdbroadwater@frostburg.edu)*



The Maryland SBDC Program is funded in part through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Visit the [SBDC Training Calendar](#) for more Event Opportunities

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