

TALENT INNOVATION PROGRAM AND FUND ANNUAL REPORT

2025

The Honorable Wes Moore, Governor
State House, 100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Aruna Miller, Lieutenant Governor
State House, 100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Bill Ferguson, President
Senate of Maryland
State House, H-107
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk, Speaker
Maryland House of Delegates
State House, H-107
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Talent Innovation Program and Fund Annual Report, Labor & Employment Article § 11-1604(b) (MSAR # 15479)

Dear Governor Moore, President Ferguson, and Speaker Jones:

I am pleased to share the 2025 annual report for the Talent Innovation Program. The Moore-Miller Administration, in strong partnership with the Maryland General Assembly, created the Talent Innovation Program in 2024 to increase access to high-quality occupational training to meet demand in the state's high priority growth and emerging sectors.

Recognizing the need for a stronger talent pipeline of highly-skilled cybersecurity professionals, *Accelerating Cyber Careers* launched as the program's inaugural initiative. Launched in August 2024, the \$1.8M *Accelerating Cyber Careers* initiative supports the expansion of cyber ranges, which are hands-on training environments that provide hyperrealistic experiential learning opportunities.

The grantee – Maryland Association of Community Colleges, in partnership with BCR Cyber and the Maryland Workforce Association – was awarded funding to expand cyber ranges at Maryland's community colleges. In 2025, key accomplishments include the deployment of a Secure Operations Center Operations Analyst course and certification, engaging employers to inform the development of a new Secure Operations Center Registered Apprenticeship program, and enrolling more than 400 participants in training. As of October 1, 2025, 157 participants have completed the SOC Operations Analyst course, and 98 participants earned the corresponding industry-recognized credential.

The Department looks forward to providing updates on the progress and successes of *Accelerating Cyber Careers* initiative in future reports. We will have more to share in the coming months on new initiatives supported by the Talent Innovation Program in high-demand industries across the State.

Best Regards,



Portia Wu
Secretary

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Report Purpose

This report summarizes the activities of the Talent Innovation Fund (TIF) from January 1, 2025 through October 31, 2025, pursuant to LE § 11-1604(b) HB 1128/Ch. 421, 2024:

On or before January 1 each year, beginning in 2025, the Department [of Labor] shall report to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State Government Article, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Delegates on [Talent Innovation] Program activities and use of the Fund.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

BCR Cyber	Baltimore Cyber Range LLC
CCBC	Community College of Baltimore County
Commerce	Department of Commerce
CWA	Cyber Workforce Accelerator
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
MACC	Maryland Association of Community Colleges
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MWA	Maryland Workforce Association
SNAP E&T	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training
SOC	Security Operations Center
SOCOA I	Security Operations Center Operations Analyst I
TIF	Talent Innovation Fund

Program Summary

The [Maryland Association of Community Colleges](#) (MACC) is leading the *Accelerating Cyber Careers* program in partnership with [Baltimore Cyber Range LLC](#) (BCR Cyber) and the [Maryland Workforce Association](#) (MWA) to provide foundational cybersecurity skills training to Marylanders. This project builds on the success and infrastructure of an existing initiative – *the Cyber Workforce Accelerator* (CWA) – which has leveraged state and federal funding to launch cyber ranges at Maryland community colleges.

The implementation of the *Accelerating Cyber Careers* program includes several integrated training and workforce development components. Training on the cyber ranges, which are immersive, simulated digital environments that provide hands-on, realistic training for cyber security professionals, consists of 40 hours of pre-study followed by an eight-hour instructor-led cyber range session. The curriculum covers key areas such as Security Operations Center (SOC) operations, IT and cyber tools, enterprise network operations, responding to threats and cyberattacks, and identifying system and network vulnerabilities. Upon completing the training, participants can earn an industry-recognized SOC credential. Another goal of the program is to develop a new SOC Registered Apprenticeship program, with MWA serving as the sponsor organization.

2025 Accomplishments

In 2025, *Accelerating Cyber Careers* made progress on several key activities, including deploying cyber ranges, finalizing the Security Operations Center Operations Analyst (SOCOA) training and certification, enrolling and training participants, establishing infrastructure for support services, strengthening relationships with Maryland's community colleges, engaging employers, developing the apprenticeship program, and monitoring overall program progress.

Cyber ranges

Cyber ranges were deployed across Maryland community colleges, and 96 remote workstations were installed. In April, the CWA Scheduler, a proprietary web-based application, was developed and deployed. The scheduler automates the entire cyber range scheduling process between the community colleges, instructors, and students.

SOCOA I training and certification

The SOCOA I training and certification are the primary training components of the *Accelerating Cyber Careers* program. This year, the SOCOA I curriculum was finalized and successfully passed the Community College of Baltimore County's (CCBC) Quality Matters course audit. The result of this quality review affirms that the SOCOA I course exceeds institutional standards, validating the rigor

and quality of the training model. Additionally, BCR Cyber's SOCOA certification was officially recognized by the Maryland State Department of Education as an Industry-Recognized-Credential.

Training

The program began accepting applications on June 24, 2025, after the first two colleges (College of Southern Maryland and Carroll Community College) completed their digital registration pages. To date, 14 of Maryland's 16 community colleges have completed and published their CWA digital registration pages. BCR Cyber launched a [registration map](#) to help prospective participants identify training locations.

After receiving 100 applications within the first week, CWA Workforce Development Program launched on July 1, 2025. In total, 631 applications have been received and 415 participants have enrolled. Demographic information and training progress have been provided for the 368 participants who enrolled before October 1st.

Out of the 368 participants, 129 identify as female (35%) and 322 identify as a person of color (88%). Participants registered through 13 community colleges, representing 16 Maryland counties. As of this report, all participants received hands-on training on a cyber range, with 157 participants completing the entire SOCOA I training (43%). Ninety-eight participants, or 62% of completers, earned their SOCOA I industry-recognized credential. As many of the enrolled students are still actively enrolled in training, it is expected these numbers will increase over time. As training just began in July 2025, employment outcomes are not available as of this report. MD Labor looks forward to reporting robust employment outcomes in the future.

Additionally, the program partnered with Per Scholas, an EARN Maryland grantee, to provide continued workforce support for individuals who completed prior Per Scholas training programs, but encountered challenges securing employment. Through this collaboration, 50 Per Scholas alumni are now participating in the training program to strengthen their technical skills and improve job readiness.

The program's early success in enrollment (over 400 participants within 3 months) has positioned *Accelerating Cyber Careers* to exceed its proposed target of training 1,100 Marylanders across the period of performance.

Students enrolled in the community colleges are able to rely on established supportive services, including assistance with tuition and fees, across the MACC system. BCR Cyber provides case management, and through MWA, local workforce boards offer additional support services to reduce barriers to participation.

Strengthening relationships with community college partners

This year, the *Accelerating Cyber Careers* program engaged in several activities to foster stronger relationships with Maryland's 16 community colleges. Program staff developed a *Cyber Workforce Accelerator Playbook* that acts as a program operational guide for the program's Infrastructure, Academic and Workforce Development components. MACC and BCR Cyber also worked with members of the community colleges' Workforce Development teams to establish a recruitment method where the community colleges will actively recruit both credit and non-credit students into the program. Additionally, the program finalized an MOU with all 16 institutions that enables the colleges to count a student's participation in the cyber range and SOC training toward Full Time Equivalency (FTE) credits.

On June 18, MACC and BCR Cyber held the first Academic Committee meeting with representatives from all 16 community colleges. BCR Cyber demonstrated how cyber range training can be incorporated into academic schedules. Community College representatives also had the opportunity to ask questions. MACC also convened a Maryland Community College Association of Continuing Education and Training meeting with representatives from all 16 colleges and BCR Cyber. At this meeting, BCR Cyber addressed questions about the SOCOA I training, and CCBC confirmed the program's successful Quality Matters audit.

Employer engagement



On May 23, BCR Cyber hosted an employer consortium meeting attended by more than 40 representatives from consortium employers, including from Advantage Tech, Baltimore Urban League, RSM, Sidekick, Skyline, and Swish Data. BCR Cyber continues to engage regularly with its employer consortium to ensure training and curriculum remains up-to-date and relevant.

Apprenticeship sponsor development

In addition to the employer consortium meeting, the *Accelerating Cyber Careers* program leadership worked to find sponsors for their forthcoming SOC Analyst Registered Apprenticeship program. BCR Cyber secured meetings with Accenture, Deloitte, Edwards Performance Solutions, Greater Baltimore Urban League, Northrop Grumman, Sepio, and Sidekick. Based on these meetings and other engagements, MWA has identified two employer sponsors for the Registered Apprenticeship.

Program monitoring

Key performance indicator (KPI) dashboards were finalized and distributed to community colleges actively registering students. These dashboards track enrollment, completions, demographics, and credential outcomes. The KPI dashboards are now live and being actively used to inform program oversight.

Looking Ahead

The *Accelerating Cyber Careers* program is well-poised to continue its strong momentum. Upcoming activities include:

- Managing the enrollment and training of additional cohorts.
- Submitting the application for the SOC Analyst Registered Apprenticeship program to the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Council.
- Connecting program completers to employment opportunities at consortium member employers and apprenticeship sponsors.
- Launching the two remaining community college digital registration pages, ensuring that all 16 Maryland community colleges are fully integrated into the CWA enrollment process.
- Continuing weekly meetings between MACC, BCR Cyber, and all 16 community colleges to monitor progress, troubleshoot challenges, and share best practices.
- Expanding participant outcome reporting through Salesforce and KPI dashboards, with particular focus on completions, credentialing, and the initial phases of employment placement.

After a productive first year, the Department looks forward to sharing continued success of the *Accelerating Cyber Careers* program throughout 2026 and beyond.

Looking beyond this innovative cyber initiative, the Department, in consultation with the Governor's Workforce Development Board, is finalizing plans for its next round of Talent Innovation Program investments. Workforce development is at the center of economic competitiveness. The Talent Innovation Fund is delivering on its promise to creatively nurture home-grown talent by responding to industry demand with workforce solutions, and more activities and announcements to support other key sectors are on the horizon.