01

Meet the Maryland State Innovation Team

The Innovation Team develops and tests new solutions, collaborating across agencies and sectors, to address complex challenges – starting with childhood poverty and economic mobility.

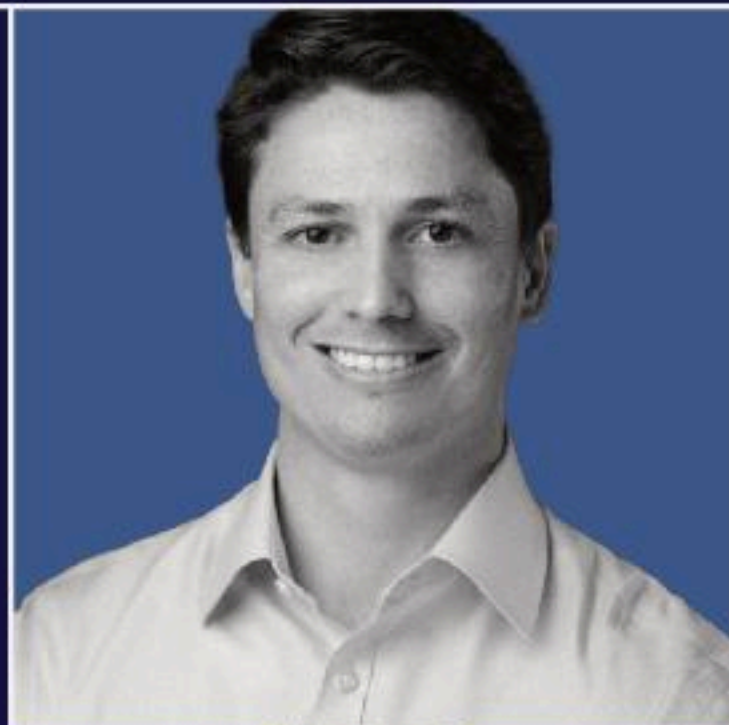**Francesca Ioffreda**
Chief Innovation Officer

Charlie Rixey
Deputy Director

Aria Miles
Project Manager

Martha Marrazza
Project Manager

Alex Miller
Data Scientist

Sahee Abdelmomin
Senior Data Analyst

Kayla Edwards
Community Engagement Liaison

Sabrina Martin
Civic Designer

We use a layered approach to research and design to understand community needs and create impactful solutions.

RESEARCH

Data Analysis: We turn complex Maryland-specific data into meaningful community indicators to better understand the dynamics and conditions shaping the lives of residents.

Contextual Fieldwork: We attend community gatherings and learning workshops to conduct immersion, observations, and engagements — gaining insights on resident challenges across the state and supporting resident-led solutions.

In-Depth Interviews: We conduct deep-dives with residents and conversations with stakeholders across the public and private sector to explore experiences in detail and create journey maps.

Focus Groups and Roundtables: We guide conversations with small groups to learn from the dialogue that unfolds between participants.

DESIGN

Ideation Sessions: We convene stakeholders to conceptualize innovative solutions to identified problems — engaging in exercises such as "brain writing" to expand our collective imaginations of the possible.

Co-design: We facilitate sessions to shape ideas with residents, as well as our public and private sector partners — tailoring solutions to the insights and experiences Marylanders.

User Testing: We show our work — testing our progress and beta versions of solutions with others to sharpen ideas, improve functionality, and deliver impact.

Reach and Engagement

600+
residents engaged

12
agencies partnered with to co-design and implement initiatives against the State's strategic priorities

02 The Compass
Locate the Opportunity

Explore business-relevant data for locations across Maryland to help you decide where to build your business.

- **Complex Data Landscape:** Market research often feels intimidating or out of reach for small business owners because data sources are confusing to navigate or inaccessible

- **Awareness Gaps:** Many entrepreneurs are unaware of what market research tools exist or how to use them

- **Research Challenges:** Small business owners struggle with structuring market research and may lack the knowledge to narrow down to their target market, leading to inaccurate demand expectations

"**We would just kind of call several businesses in the area** and do that to collect information as well. And that would kind of help us understand whether or not there was a lot of demand for childcare."

— Child Care Business Owner

"[Businesses] need to dig into their target market. They think 'oh everybody would want this,' but often **there are many different factors you'd need to consider, which are hard to pull together.**"

— Small Business Consultant

We interviewed a small business owner who described the intensive startup phase, which required reading **hundreds of pages of community plans** to understand the neighborhood context.

AFTER

- **Community Voices:** Surface quotes from local planning documents which highlight what community members have to say about their local needs

- **Insights Mode:** Users can walk through guided research questions to focus their research without getting overwhelmed

- **Unified Data View:** Consolidate multiple sources into one map, enhanced with novel scores to better estimate community needs

DID YOU KNOW...

9,400+
child care & food retail locations mapped

TRY IT OUT

"And I do want to make the point that with that neighborhood view [demand] score, I do like it more than a city view...so I do want to just highlight that [the] approach you guys are taking, I actually really like it!"

— Child Care Business Owner

"This is a great tool. The location specific data is very useful."

—Business Support Organization Executive Director
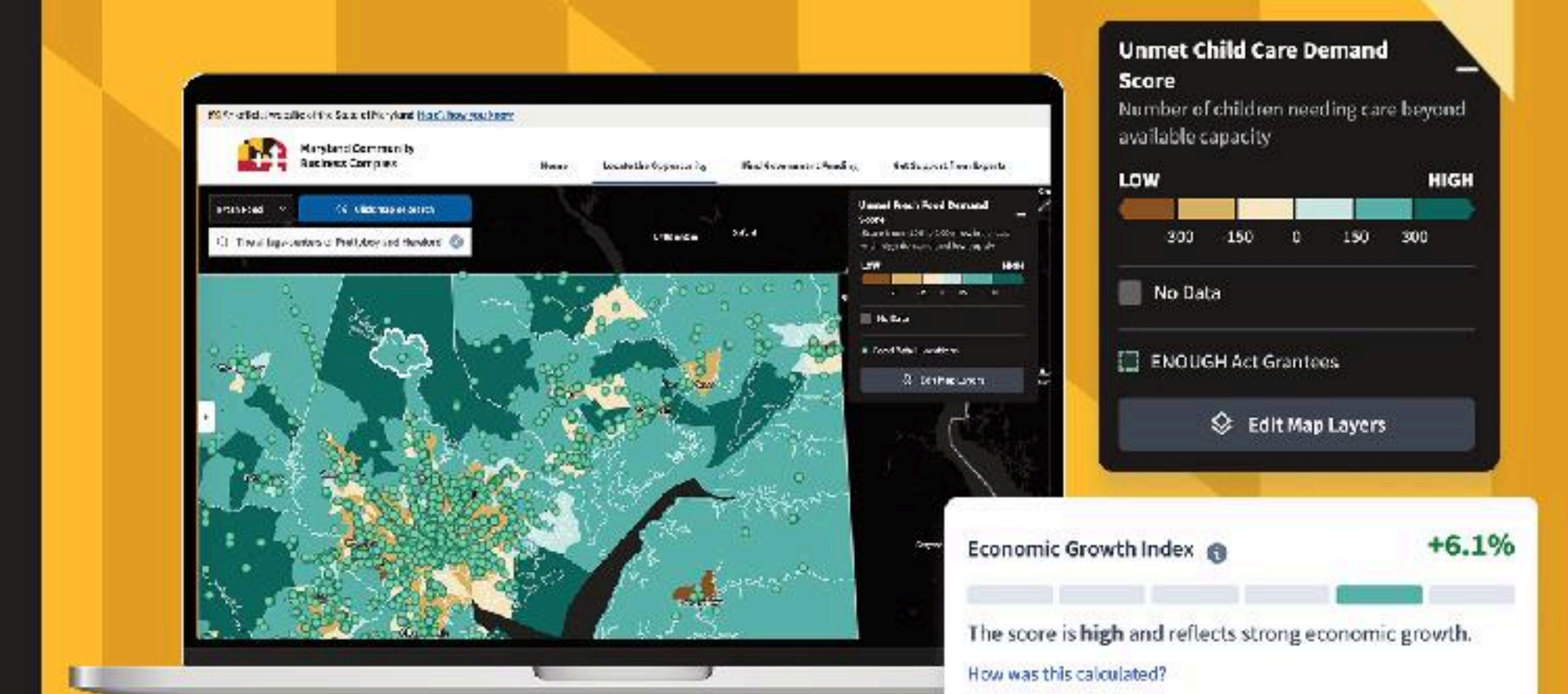
Quick Facts

33
unique metrics and map layers

POPULATION CHANGE POPULATION UNDER 5
ENOUGH ACT GRANTEES MAIN STREET AREAS
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME
NOURISHMD ELIGIBILITY ZONE
OPPORTUNITY ZONES +26 MORE

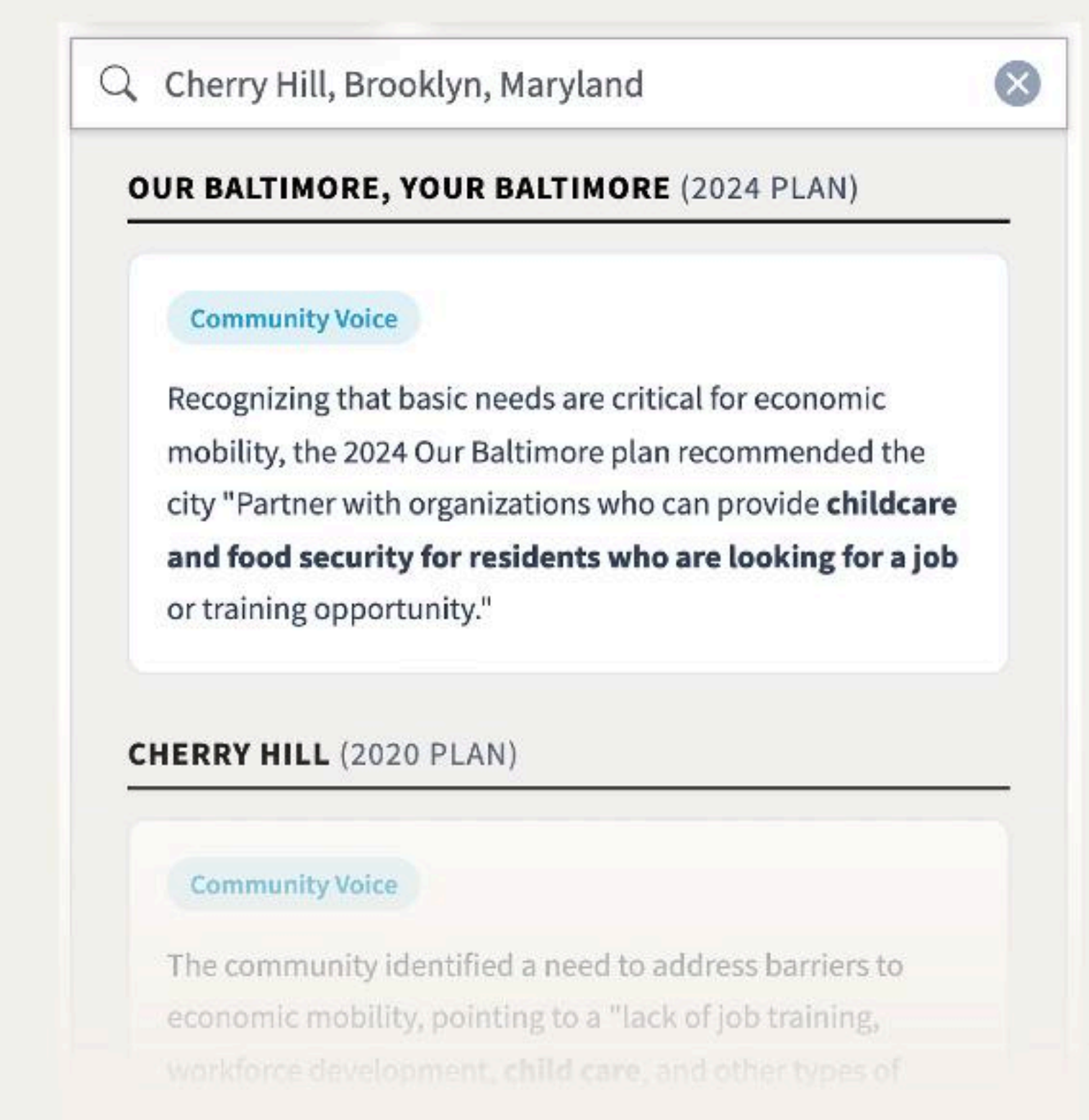**7**
novel scoring methodologies

Including:
- **Fresh Food Gap Score:** measures the intersection of high food insecurity and low physical access, highlighting areas where the need for fresh food is critical yet unaddressed.
- **Unmet Demand for Child Care:** the number of children under 6 with all parents working without an available licensed seat within reasonable distance.

Our *Community Voice* feature uses AI to surface and elevate resident needs from:

200 community plans with over

18,000 pages

Cherry Hill, Brooklyn, Maryland

OUR BALTIMORE, YOUR BALTIMORE (2024 PLAN)

Community Voice

Recognizing that basic needs are critical for economic mobility, the 2024 Our Baltimore plan recommended the city "Partner with organizations who can provide **childcare and food security for residents who are looking for a job or training opportunity.**"

CHERRY HILL (2020 PLAN)

Community Voice

The community identified a need to address barriers to economic mobility, pointing to a "lack of job training, workforce development, child care, and other types of..."
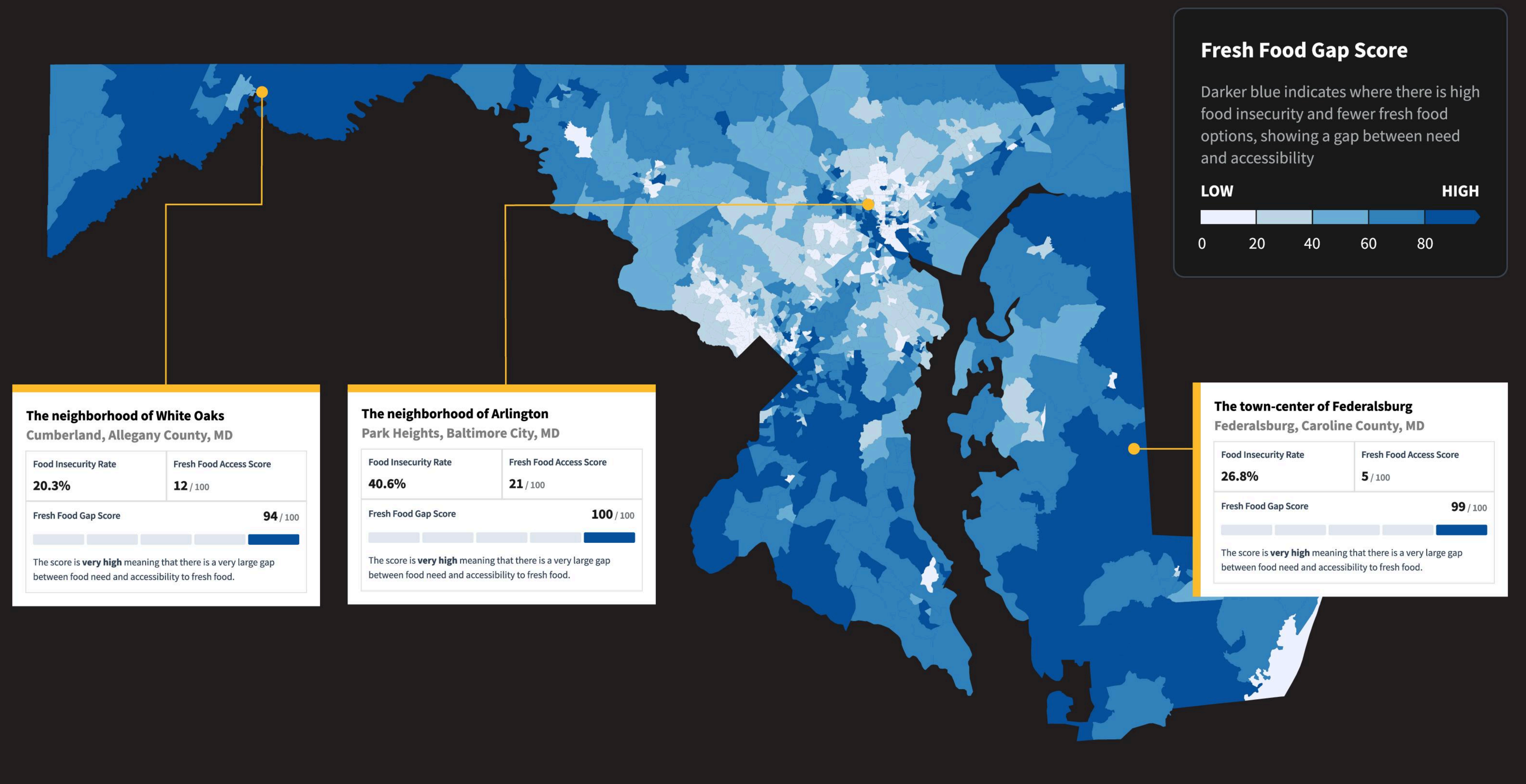
02 The Compass
Locate the Opportunity

Fresh Food Gap Score: Measures the intersection of high food insecurity and low physical access, highlighting areas where the need for fresh food is critical yet unaddressed.
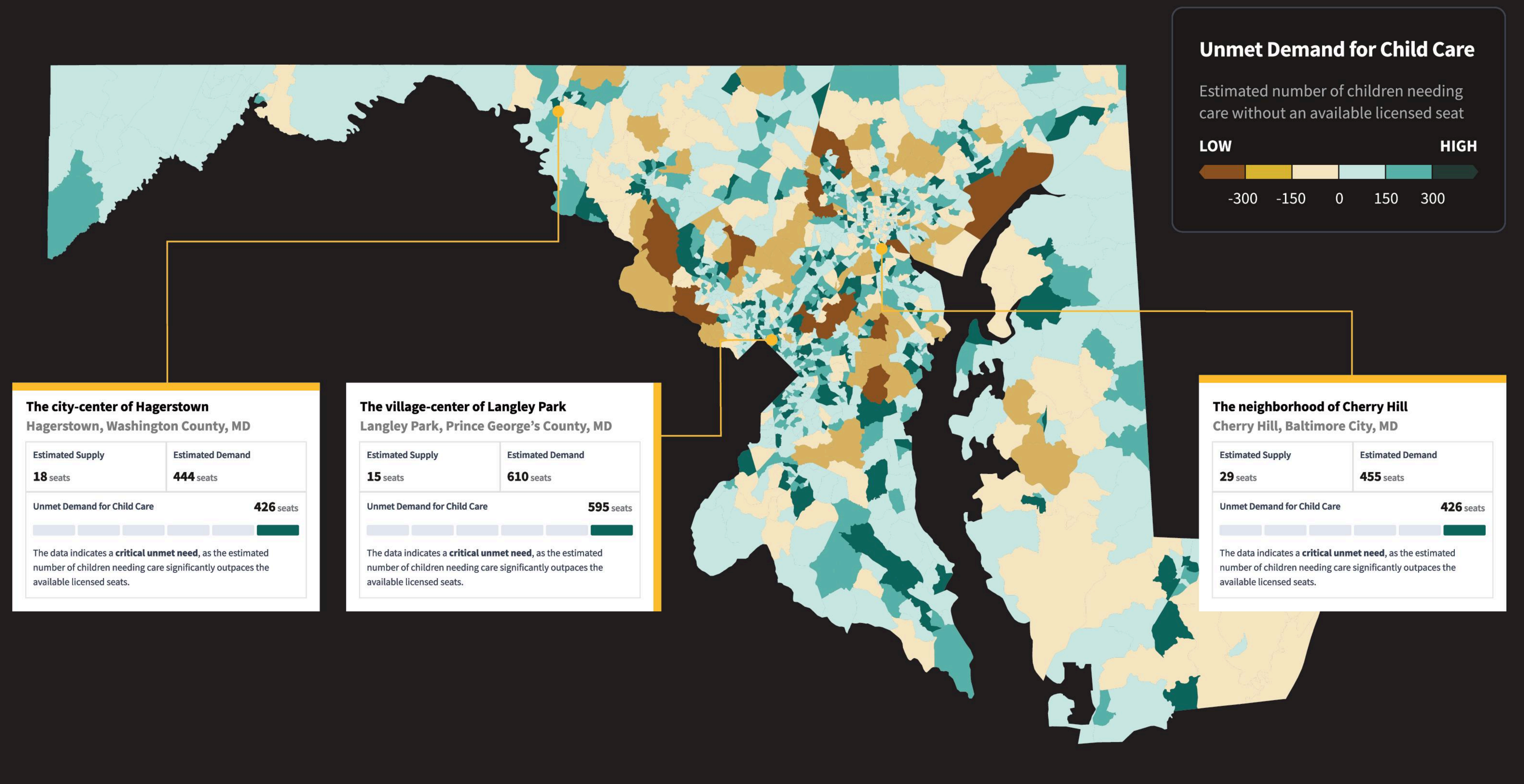
Where are communities facing <u>high food insecurity</u> and <u>fewer fresh food options</u>?

Fresh Food Gap Score

Darker blue indicates where there is high food insecurity and fewer fresh food options, showing a gap between need and accessibility

LOW   HIGH

0   20   40   60   80

The neighborhood of White Oaks
Cumberland, Allegany County, MD

Food Insecurity Rate	Fresh Food Access Score
20.3%	12 / 100

Fresh Food Gap Score   **94** / 100

The score is **very high** meaning that there is a very large gap between food need and accessibility to fresh food.

The neighborhood of Arlington
Park Heights, Baltimore City, MD

Food Insecurity Rate	Fresh Food Access Score
40.6%	21 / 100

Fresh Food Gap Score   **100** / 100

The score is **very high** meaning that there is a very large gap between food need and accessibility to fresh food.

The town-center of Federalsburg
Federalsburg, Caroline County, MD

Food Insecurity Rate	Fresh Food Access Score
26.8%	5 / 100

Fresh Food Gap Score   **99** / 100

The score is **very high** meaning that there is a very large gap between food need and accessibility to fresh food.

The Compass
Locate the Opportunity

Unmet Demand for Child Care: The number of children under 6 with all parents working without an available licensed seat within reasonable distance.

Where are communities experiencing <u>high unmet demand for child care?</u>

Unmet Demand for Child Care

Estimated number of children needing care without an available licensed seat

LOW   HIGH

-300   -150   0   150   300

The city-center of Hagerstown
Hagerstown, Washington County, MD

Estimated Supply	Estimated Demand
18 seats	**444** seats

Unmet Demand for Child Care   **426** seats

The data indicates a **critical unmet need**, as the estimated number of children needing care significantly outpaces the available licensed seats.

The village-center of Langley Park
Langley Park, Prince George's County, MD

Estimated Supply	Estimated Demand
15 seats	**610** seats

Unmet Demand for Child Care   **595** seats

The data indicates a **critical unmet need**, as the estimated number of children needing care significantly outpaces the available licensed seats.

The neighborhood of Cherry Hill
Cherry Hill, Baltimore City, MD

Estimated Supply	Estimated Demand
29 seats	**455** seats

Unmet Demand for Child Care   **426** seats

The data indicates a **critical unmet need**, as the estimated number of children needing care significantly outpaces the available licensed seats.

03 The Compass
Connect to Experts

Get connected with people and organizations who can guide you through the process of starting and running a small business.

BEFORE

- **High Barrier to Entry:** First-time business owners don't know what they don't know, making it difficult to identify where to start. This uncertainty and intimidation discourages many potential entrepreneurs from ever starting a business.

- **Learning the Hard Way:** Without guidance, entrepreneurs who tackle challenges alone go through a costly trial and error process.

- **Untapped Resources:** Many small business owners don't know that support organizations exist.

Interviewer: "Have you ever reached out to a small business development center or an economic development organization?

Child Care Business Owner: "No, I've never heard of that."

"Having, like, some type of mentorship because you... **You hardly ever know what you're doing at first**, and it's just a bunch of trial and error. But it's scary, and it's probably the reason most people don't go into business for themselves."

— Child Care Business Owner

"**Who do you call...to start the conversation?** Data just leads to questions and they'll want to talk to someone, probably an economic development office."

— Economic Development Officer

AFTER

- **Searchable Help Categories:** Lets users identify their specific challenge and quickly discover who can help, removing the confusion of "where do I even start?"

- **A Clear Path Forward:** Get entrepreneurs from "I need help" to "here's who to contact." We surface support organizations like SBDCs and economic development centers, unlocking a clear path forward to get personalized help.

TRY IT OUT

"I think it looks really easy to navigate and it gets people to resources that are otherwise difficult to navigate. **Nothing but praise for what you've accomplished.**"

— State Agency Leader
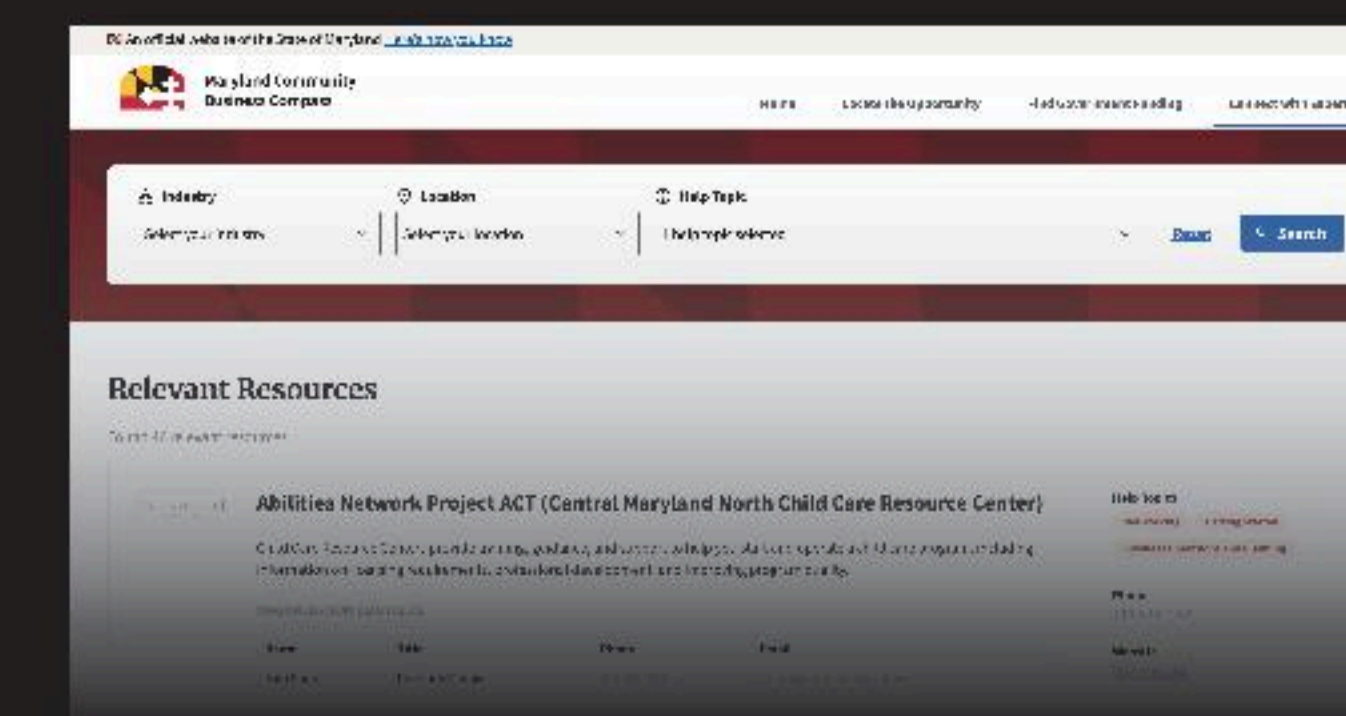
Quick Facts

287
warm contacts from

133
unique organizations

Get Help on a Wide Range of Topics

GETTING STARTED   FINDING FUNDING   NETWORKING

FINDING A SITE/LOCATION   PERMITTING AND LICENSING

BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND PLANNING

Listed Experts Include

Maryland STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MARYLAND FAMILY NETWORK

Baltimore Development Corporation

AMERICA'S **SBDC** MARYLAND

WASHINGTON COUNTY CHAMBER *of* **COMMERCE** WCC

GARRETT COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

04 The Compass
Find Government Funding

Discover state and local incentive programs and learn how to apply, all in one place. Explore government grants, loans, tax credits, and more.

BEFORE

- **Untapped Opportunities:** Small business owners don't know where to look for funding opportunities or have to scour multiple sources to find them.

- **Complex Application Processes:** applications are often confusing to navigate, with outdated or unclear requirements adding to the challenge.

"There are people selling lists of grants. If I didn't have the background I did, **if I didn't have the resources I did, I wouldn't have done it. The barriers are too high.**"

— Independent Grocery Store Owner

"**We don't have a database of state grants.** I know [from] my experience that it is so confusing, and so frustrating, and [it] changes a lot."

— Community Organization CEO

"We normally will look online to see if there's anything available....**and then we'll ask amongst the daycare community** if anybody has any suggestions."

— Child Care Business Owner

AFTER

- **One Centralized Database:** All state and local incentives across Maryland, gathered in a single searchable place

- **Up-to-Date and Easy-to-Read Format:** We flag outdated details and surface the most current eligibility, deadlines, and requirements into clear, readable overviews so users can quickly find what matters
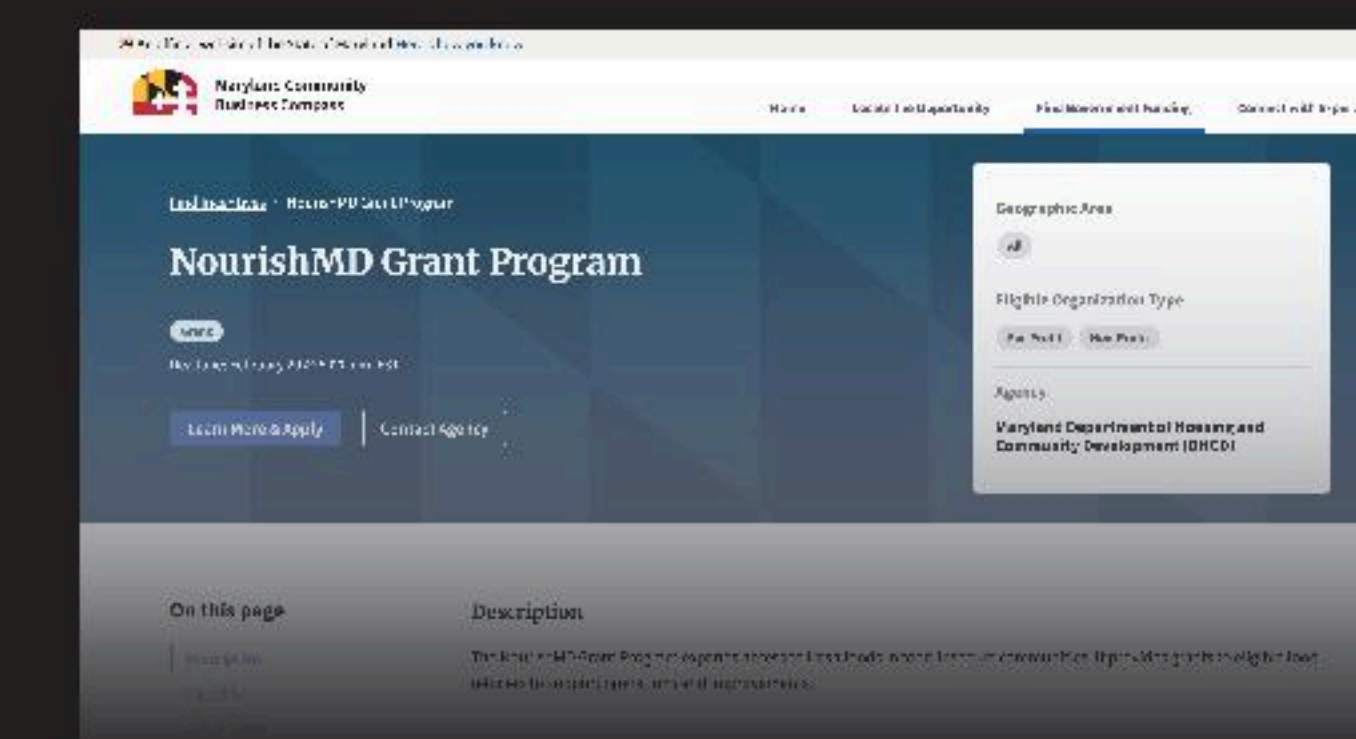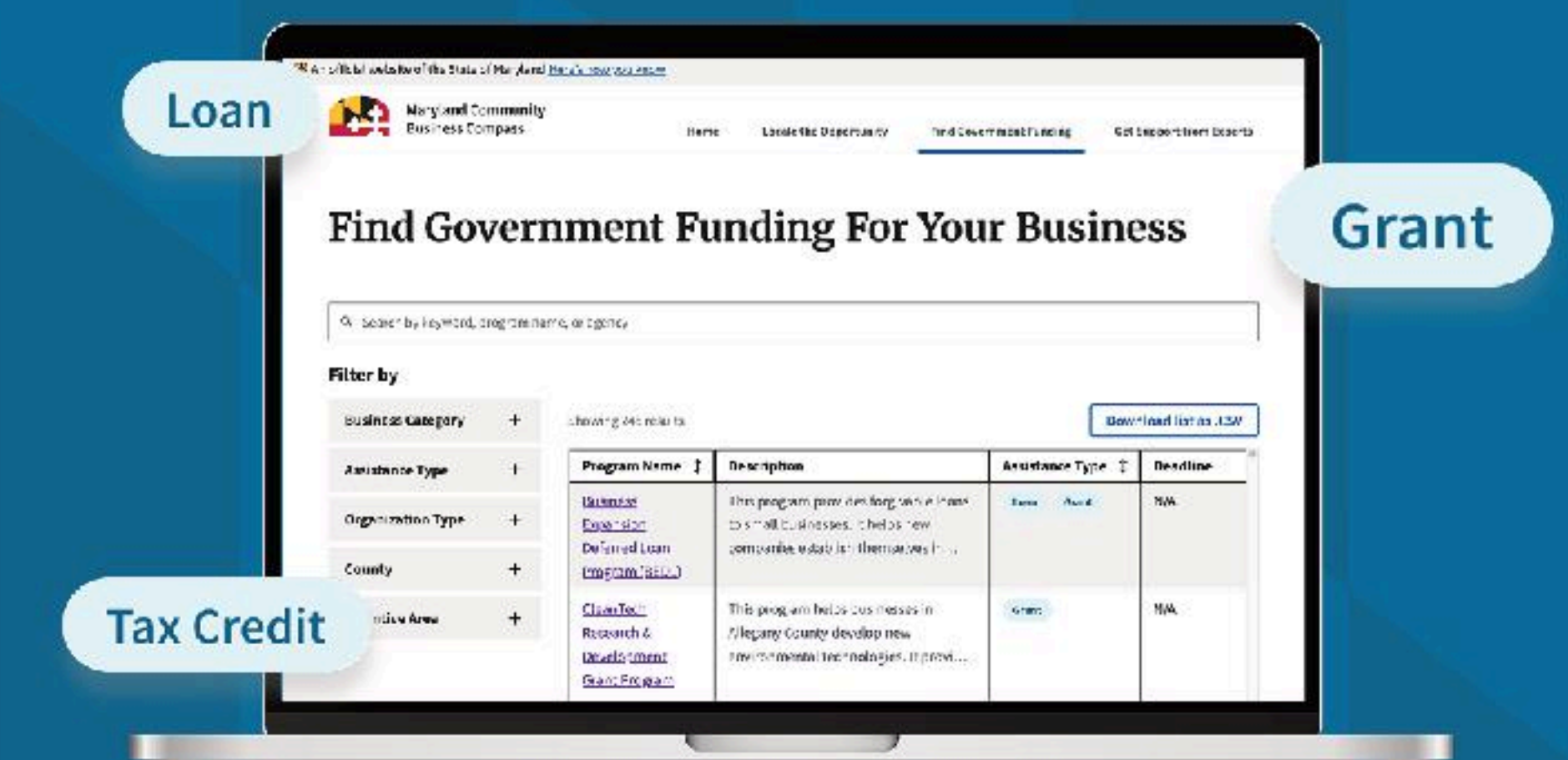
"I can see ourselves sending lots of people here, in particular... this looks super, super easy to navigate!"

— Small Business Consultant

"That is very important to people, that is an incredible resource."

— Economic Development Officer

TRY IT OUT

Quick Facts

246
total incentives featured

70
unique state and local web pages consolidated

$10M
announced at launch

Featured Funding Opportunities

NourishMD Grant Program

Grants of up to $150,000 to support capital-related needs for grocery stores and markets in areas with limited healthy food options.

Child Care Capital Support Revolving Loan Fund

No-interest loans for capital expenses to child care providers who participate in the Child Care Scholarship Program.

04 The Compass
Find Government Funding

Use the Compass to confirm your eligibility and access Maryland's robust funding network. Discover where you fit into key programs like the ENOUGH Act and start driving community change today.
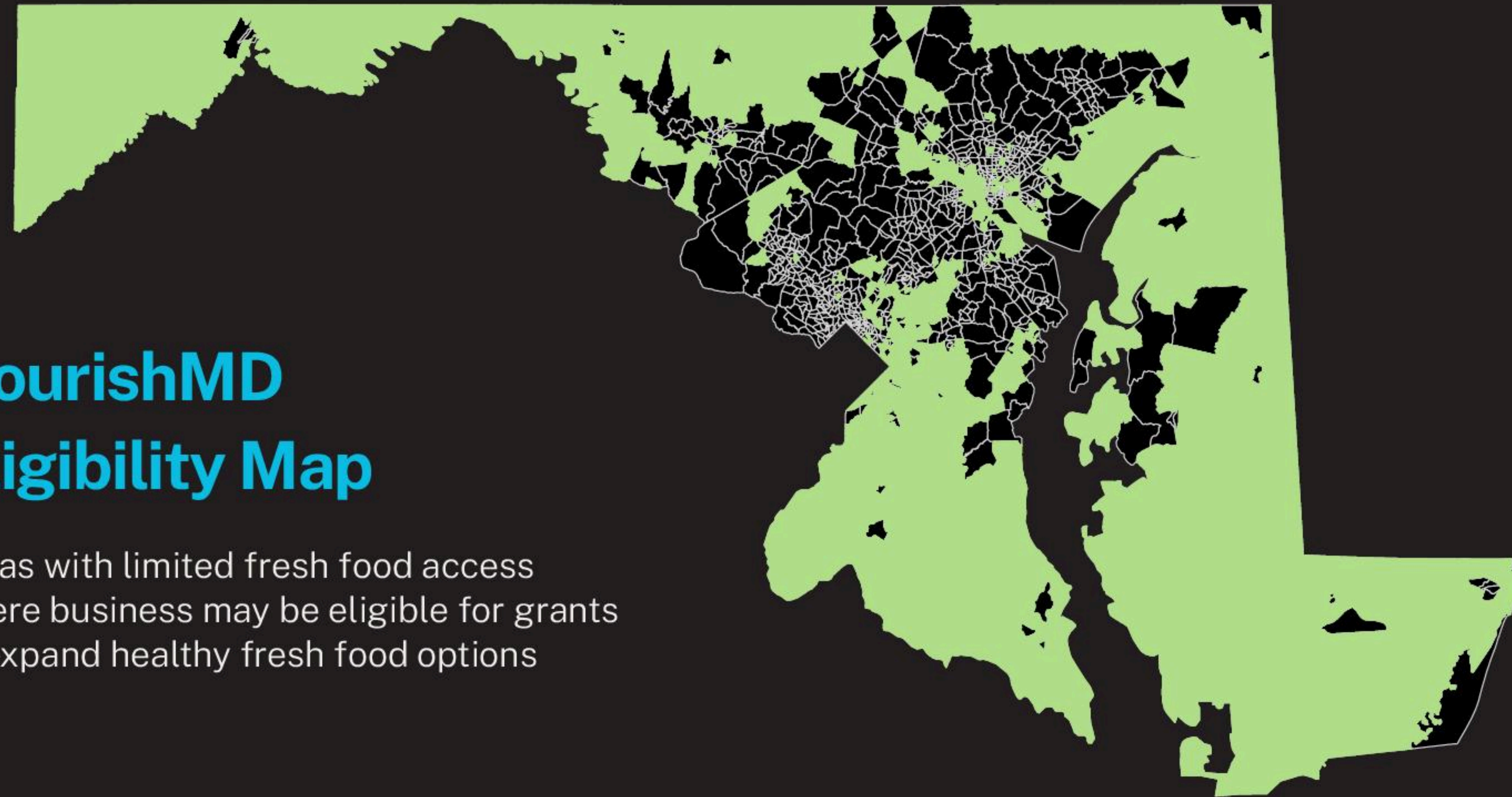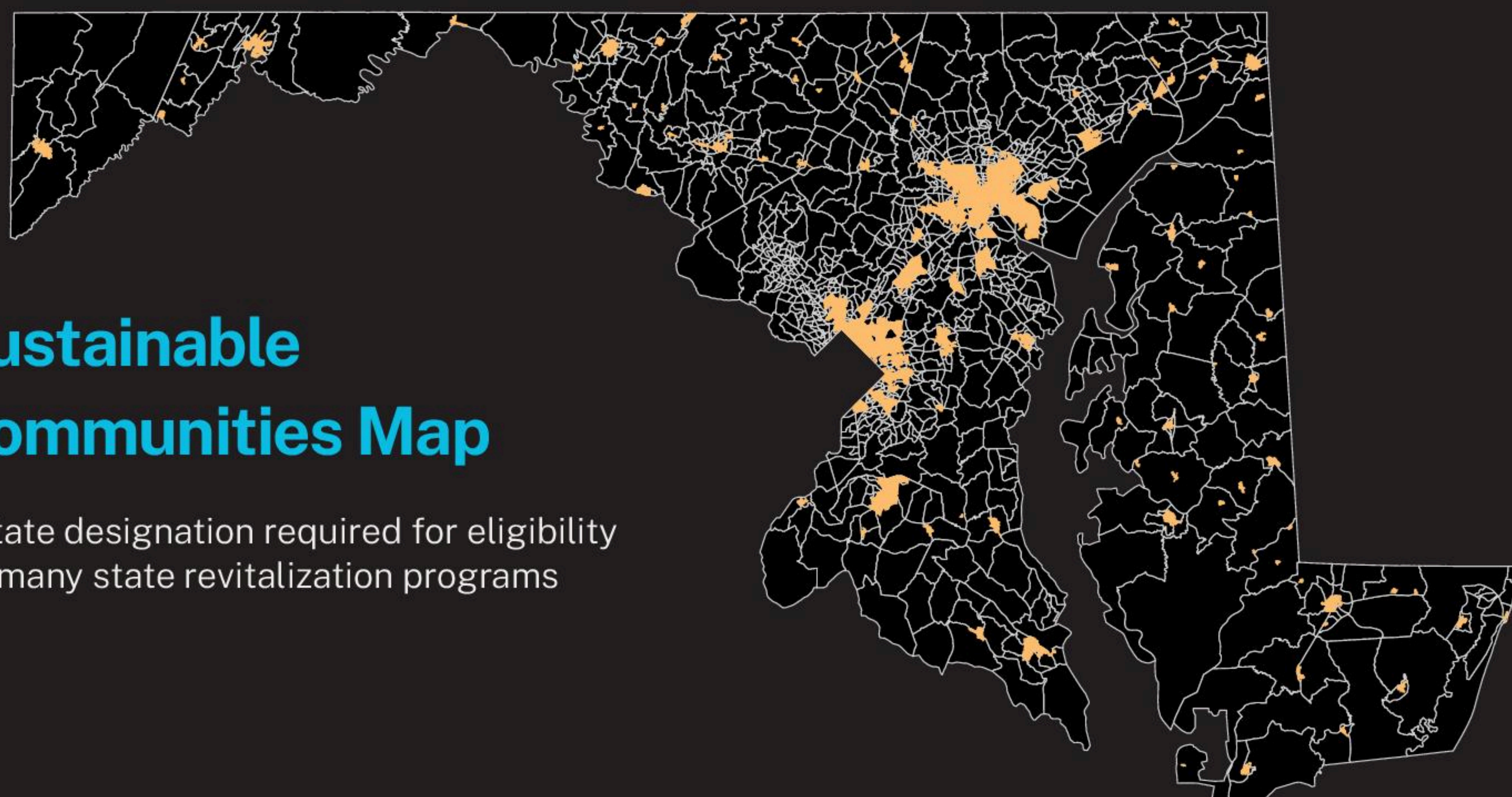
NourishMD Eligibility Map

Areas with limited fresh food access where business may be eligible for grants to expand healthy fresh food options
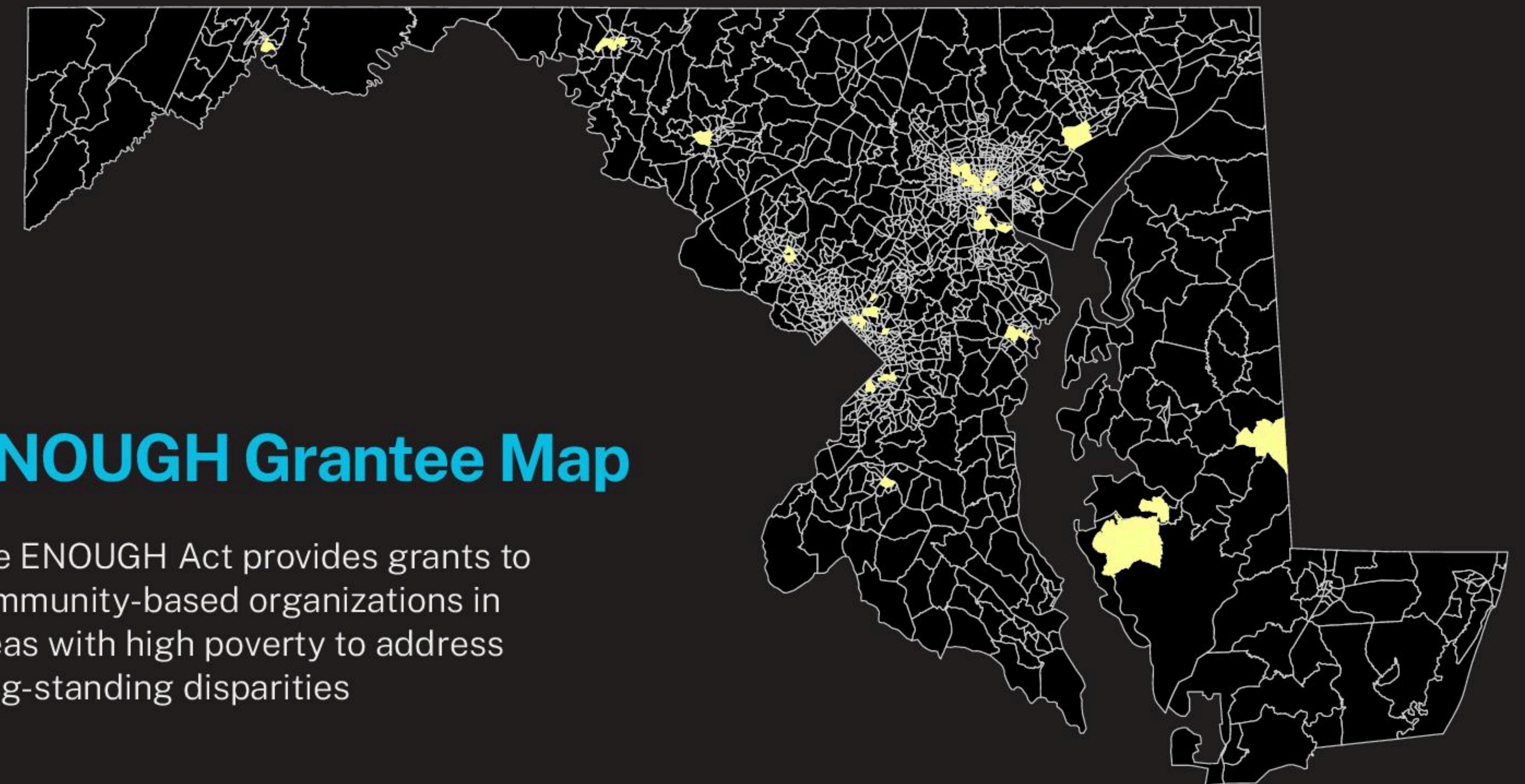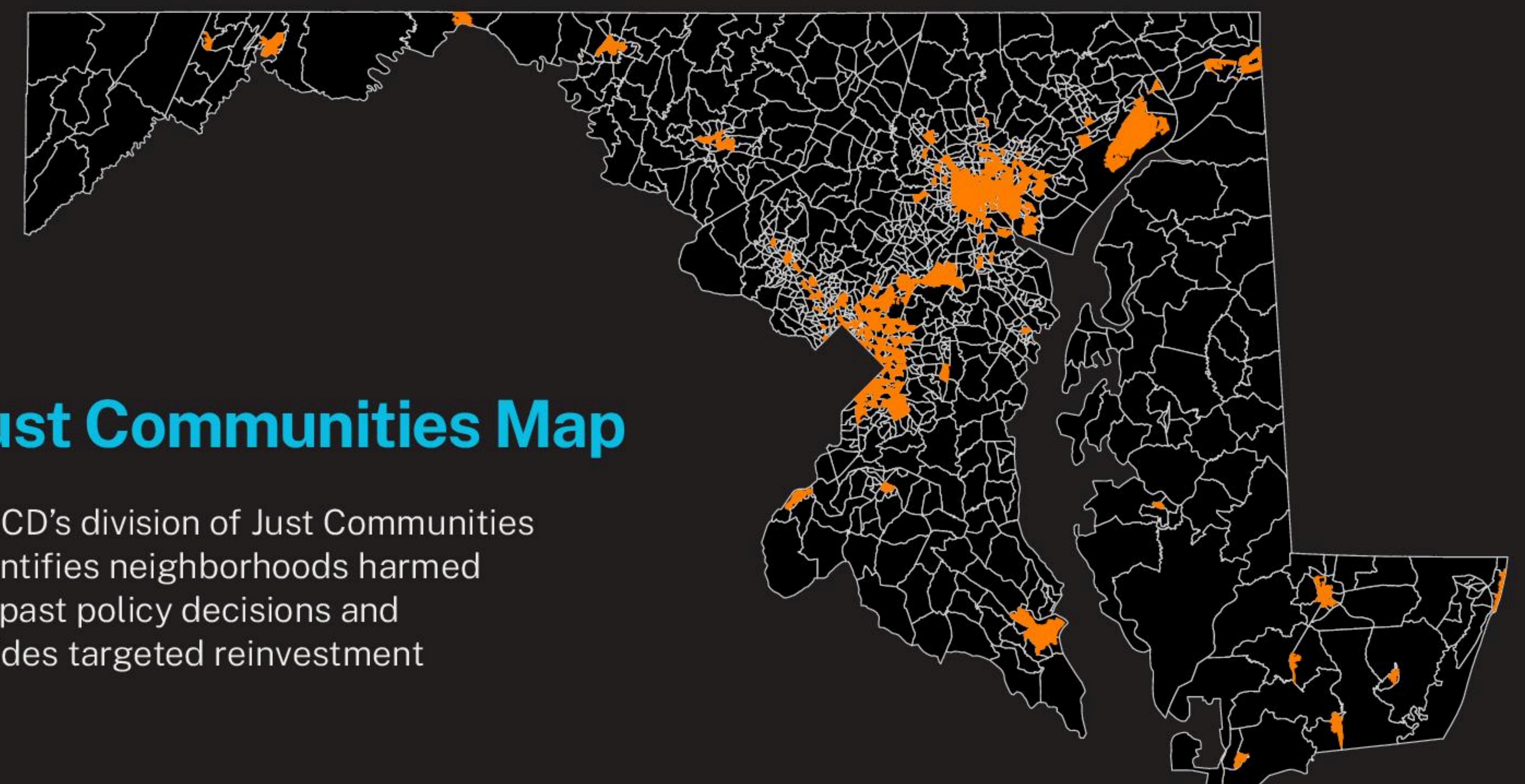
ENOUGH Grantee Map

The ENOUGH Act provides grants to community-based organizations in areas with high poverty to address long-standing disparities

Sustainable Communities Map

A state designation required for eligibility for many state revitalization programs

Just Communities Map

DHCD's division of Just Communities identifies neighborhoods harmed by past policy decisions and guides targeted reinvestment