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## Harford County Public Library and MEDCO Host Build the Future Over Breakfast

June 25 event focused on advancing collaboration with Aberdeen Proving Ground, MEDCO and the State of Maryland.

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*Tom Sadowski of MEDCO (right), served as moderator of Build the Future Over Breakfast, which included (from left) Nicole Funk from Deloitte; MD Commerce Secretary Harry Coker, Jr., & Kimberly G. Ploskonka, of Army Research Directorate, ARL, DEVCOM. (Amber Shrodes/Harford County Public Library)*

Harford County Public Library, in partnership with the Maryland Economic Development Corporation (MEDCO), hosted Build the Future Over Breakfast on June 25 at the Abingdon Library. The inspiring event featured a distinguished panel discussion and brought together more than 60 influential leaders from defense, education and economic development sectors for a morning of strategic discussion.

Tom Sadowski, Executive Director of MEDCO, served as the moderator for the panel, which included Secretary Harry Coker, Jr., Maryland Department of Commerce; Kimberly G. Ploskonka, Director (A), Army Research Directorate, ARL, DEVCOM; and Nicole Funk, Managing Director, Deloitte.

Discussions centered on strategies to amplify and support the groundbreaking innovations at Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG) and the Army Research Laboratory (ARL), develop and strengthen public-private partnerships, attract and retain top talent and inspire and engage the next generation of STEM professionals. Panelists also discussed how to advance Maryland's Lighthouse Sectors, target industries identified for strategic investment, including life sciences/computational biology; information technology/AI/quantum computing, advanced materials; and Positioning, Navigation and Timing (PNT) technologies.

"Our Build the Future over Breakfast event sparked the kind of meaningful conversations and connections that truly drive change," said Mary Hastler, CEO of Harford County Public Library. "When leaders come together with shared purpose, the result is powerful momentum. At Harford County Public Library, we're proud to serve as a connector and catalyst for innovation and opportunity."

At the event attendees had the opportunity to explore interactive displays of the Library's cutting-edge STEM resources, including the Innovation Lab, 3D printing, coding games, LEAP kits and other hands-on technology tools. With the support of generous sponsors, Harford County Public Library continues to expand these dynamic experiences that inspire curiosity, open doors to promising futures and help fuel the STEM talent pipeline.

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"MEDCO was honored to sponsor thought leaders from both the federal and state government, as well as industry, to discuss the tremendous opportunities emerging at APG," said Sadowski. "MEDCO specializes in identifying these opportunities and applying innovative public/private partnership solutions to fuel valuable economic growth."

This fall, Harford County Public Library and MEDCO will host a follow-up gathering to build on the success of the event.

The Library is currently seeking partners for a number of STEM and workforce development efforts including STREAMWorks, a makerspace at the Bel Air Library; the BlueCareer Skilled Trades Database, an online resource that connects users with information on more than 100 skilled trades, trade schools and employer and resume-building resources; a Podcast

Lab at the Abingdon Library; and sponsors for a business breakfast featuring economist Anirban Basu. To learn more about these opportunities, contact Amber Shrodes, Director of Philanthropy and Community Engagement with Harford County Public Library, at [shrodes@hcplonline.org](mailto:shrodes@hcplonline.org) or 410-273-5600 x 6513.

Harford County Public Library operates 11 branches located throughout Harford County, offering access to ideas that inform, entertain and inspire. Last year, the Library interacted with its residents more than 12 million times – borrowing free materials, visiting branches and the website, using free WiFi and attending classes and events. In 2024, Harford County Public Library received the Maryland Library Association Excellence in Marketing Award for graphic excellence for the second time. [For more information, visit HCPLonline.org.](https://www.hcplonline.org)