

Hospitality Collaborative Impact Report



Message from the Chairperson

More than 29,000 jobs in Anne Arundel County are supported by visitors—accounting for more than 10 percent of the county's total employment. That's a significant portion of the overall workforce in the county, yet it's still 2,000 positions short of where we stood in 2019.

By all measures, travel trends are on the rise and demand is growing—but we're starting from behind. With a smaller workforce than before the pandemic, ripple effects are still being felt throughout the tourism and hospitality sectors as hotels are capping occupancy, restaurants are limiting seating, and attractions are reducing hours of operation.

We must move quickly to catch up if we want to sustain this momentum and collectively continue driving economic impact for our county. The Hospitality Collaborative took a hard look at the state of our workforce, and more importantly, listened to the people doing the

work every day. What we heard was clear: while the challenges are real, there is a deep, shared commitment to building something better.

During National Travel and Tourism Week in May, the Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County Foundation—working in partnership with the Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation—launched the inaugural Hospitality Job Fair at the Maritime Conference Center in Linthicum Heights. The event brought together nearly 100 job seekers and more than 20 employers, forging valuable connections that will help shape the future of our local workforce. This successful event marks the beginning of what will be an ongoing partnership dedicated to expanding opportunities and supporting the future growth of our region's hospitality industry.

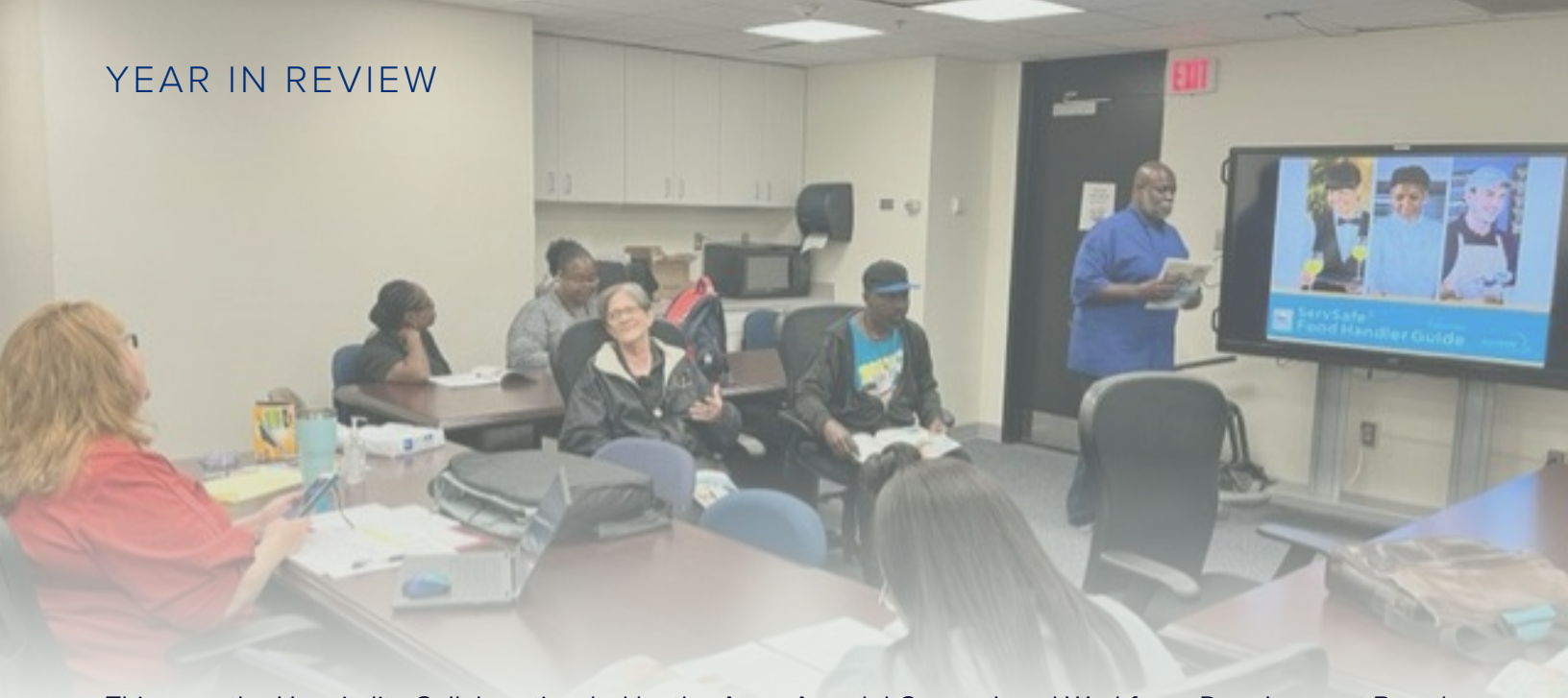
The Hospitality Collaborative continues to focus on attracting, training, and retaining talent. This year, we launched the

Collaborative Chairpersons' meeting, breaking down silos and fostering cross-sector partnerships between hospitality, healthcare, and technology. What emerged was a powerful insight: our workforce challenges aren't unique. They're shared across industries. By uniting our efforts, we can drive systemic change within our respective sectors that will have a more comprehensive and far-reaching impact across the county.

As chair of the Collaborative, I'm proud of the conversations we've sparked and the connections we've strengthened. But more than that, I'm hopeful. The work ahead won't be easy, but we're facing it together—with urgency, with creativity, and with the belief that the future of hospitality depends on how we invest in its people.

Kristen Pironis

CEO of Visit Annapolis &
Anne Arundel County



This year, the Hospitality Collaborative, led by the Anne Arundel County Local Workforce Development Board and supported by Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation (AAWDC), brought together local businesses, workforce partners, and community organizations to take on some of the industry's most pressing workforce challenges. Conversations consistently pointed to one central issue—staffing shortages—and members worked collectively to identify practical strategies for attracting, retaining, and supporting employees.

Discussions emphasized the importance of making hospitality jobs more appealing and sustainable. Ideas ranged from enhancing benefits beyond traditional offerings to addressing transportation barriers. The group also explored ways to engage untapped labor pools, including youth, justice-impacted individuals, and individuals with disabilities.

One major outcome of the year was the decision to prioritize language access. Members recognized that language barriers create challenges in communication, training, and customer service, often leading to disengagement and high turnover. To address this, the collaborative is pursuing resources and partnerships that can support translation services and bilingual training programs for both staff and managers.

In addition, members began planning for stronger coordination and knowledge-sharing across the industry. The collaborative plans to introduce subcommittees to focus on transportation, student outreach, and language services, as well as tools such as a newsletter and shared resource site to highlight member businesses and collaborative progress. Members also expressed a strong interest in organizing more community outreach, boot camps, and workshops to build awareness and training opportunities in the industry.

What Businesses are Saying...

“Staffing has always been a major challenge for us. I met someone from AAWDC at a BWI Partnership Breakfast. We needed hiring and pipeline support through access to job fairs and the ability to speak to high schools about the industry. AAWDC was able to provide us with the ability to promote ourselves and our industry to the right audience through speaking to students and attending industry and job fair events.”

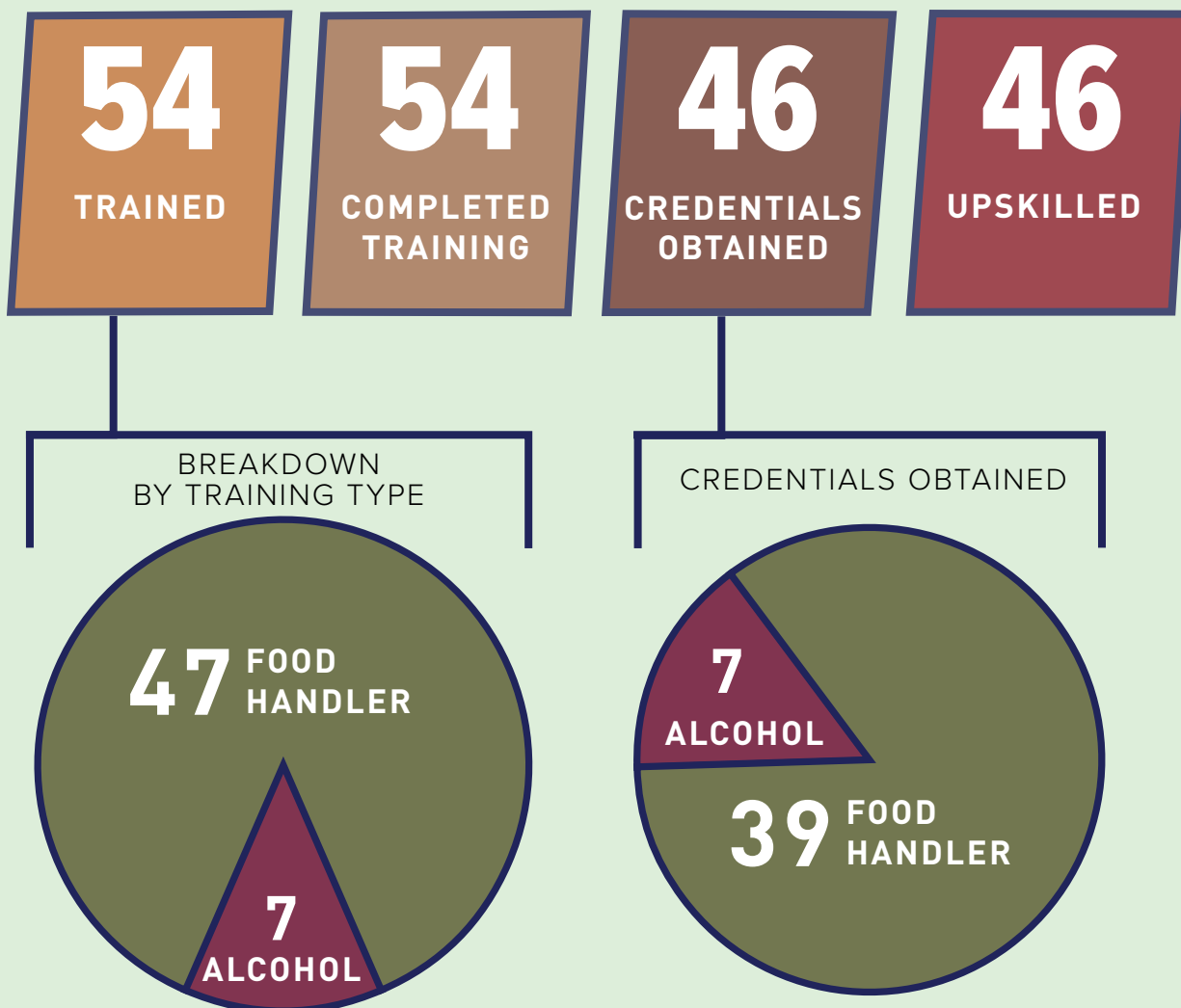
- April Richmond

General Manager at The Hotel at Arundel Preserve

Recruiting



Training (by Occupation)



FEATURED COLLABORATIVE PROJECT



ESL Initiative

To help foster a more inclusive environment within the local hospitality industry, the Hospitality Collaborative introduced a meaningful initiative focused on English as a Second Language (ESL). Recognizing that many hospitality workers speak languages other than English, this effort aimed to promote better communication and employee engagement across all levels of the workforce.

The project highlighted free ESL training resources available throughout Anne Arundel County and encouraged businesses to share these opportunities with their staff. In addition, the Collaborative promoted the idea that language learning can be mutual—encouraging managers to consider learning basic Spanish to strengthen relationships with multilingual employees.

As part of the effort, bilingual posters were developed and shared with hospitality employers to display in break rooms and other common areas. These posters provided accessible information about local ESL training options and reinforced the message that language skills can help build stronger teams and improve customer service.

The initiative reflects the Collaborative's ongoing commitment to workforce inclusion and practical support for both workers and employers. By helping to make resources more visible and encouraging open communication, the project offered a simple but valuable step toward a more connected and supportive hospitality community.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN JOINING THE HOSPITALITY COLLABORATIVE?

Please reach out to us at **Hospitality@aawdc.org**.

www.annearundelworks.com

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