

IT Collaborative Impact Report

Message from the Chairperson

Information Technology and Cybersecurity form the backbone of Anne Arundel County's economy. These industries power innovation, safeguard critical systems, and sustain careers across the private sector and federal contracting community. Yet, demand for skilled workers continues to outpace supply. For businesses, the number one challenge remains finding qualified talent. For job seekers, the challenge is earning the credentials, clearances, and experience to enter and advance in the field.

Over the past year, the IT Collaborative, along with the Fed/Gov sub-collaborative we launched, has taken bold steps to close this gap. Together, we built hiring pipelines, launched training cohorts, and strengthened partnerships between employers, educators, and policymakers. The impact has been measurable. During the last program year, 38 open positions were posted, generating 683 applicants. From that pool, 240 candidates were referred to businesses, 32 secured interviews, and 17 were hired into roles critical to the county's tech economy.

Training programs delivered equally strong results. Across multiple cohorts, 40 participants enrolled, 32 completed, 10 earned credentials, and 30 secured employment—a 75 percent employment rate. The Cyber Foundations cohort was a standout: 11 participants entered, 10 graduated, and nearly all pursued CompTIA certifications. Within weeks, several had already landed new jobs or promotions. Employers such as CTRLPlus also stepped up, offering resume guidance, career pathway insights, and direct networking opportunities that connected graduates with cleared career tracks.

Beyond outcomes, the Collaborative has become a hub for shared problem-solving. Employers and workforce leaders are addressing challenges such as CMMC compliance costs, AI's impact on the workforce, transitioning military service members into civilian IT roles, and closing the soft skills gap among entry-level workers. Sub-collaboratives have emerged to tackle the most pressing needs, from building a cleared candidate pipeline to advocating for clearance reform and helping small businesses leverage tax credits and compliance resources.

On-the-job training, internships, and incumbent worker upskilling are no longer ideas but proven pathways—this year alone helping 30 individuals move into or advance within the IT workforce. As Chair, I am proud that our Collaborative has shifted from discussion to action, demonstrating the power of partnership.

None of this would be possible without the dedication of Collaborative members and the staff of AAWDC. Their time, expertise, and behind-the-scenes work ensured our initiatives succeeded and our progress was measurable. Looking ahead, we must sustain this momentum with urgency and creativity. By investing in people and strengthening partnerships, we can continue to build a resilient IT, Cybersecurity, and Tech ecosystem that supports a stronger economy and community for years to come.

Christopher Barber

Chief Nerd at Cheaper Than A Geek

Year in Review



This year, the Information Technology (IT) Collaborative brought together key partners from the Anne Arundel County workforce system to address critical challenges in the technology sector. The Collaborative is led by the Anne Arundel County Local Workforce Development Board and supported by Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation (AAWDC). Conversations this year consistently emphasized talent shortages, the high costs of compliance, and the need for stronger pipelines of entry-level and cleared candidates. Members worked collectively to identify solutions that support both local employers and job seekers while positioning Anne Arundel County as a leader in IT and cybersecurity workforce innovation.

Key themes throughout the year included the expansion of training and internship opportunities, improved support for transitioning service members and veterans, and strategies to address soft skills gaps among younger workers. Members also highlighted the importance of building career pipelines through programs such as FutureSuccess, NextSuccess, and the UMBC Cyber Foundations Cohort, which help connect emerging talent with employers. Additionally, the group stressed the importance of networking, peer learning, and shared resources to help small and mid-sized businesses navigate challenges like CMMC compliance and cybersecurity certification requirements.

A significant advancement was the launch of specialized sub-collaboratives, including the Cleared Candidate Pipeline and the Legislative Clearance Process group, both chaired by industry leaders. These subgroups are focused on identifying and connecting cleared candidates to employers, advocating for improvements in the security clearance process, and addressing policy and legislative barriers that impact the local workforce. Another sub-collaborative centered around federal and government employment in the IT industry, provided a space for government contractors and small businesses to exchange resources and collaborate on shared challenges such as cloud migration, compliance costs, and access to tax credits.

Looking ahead, the collaborative is committed to strengthening its mission and vision while deepening employer engagement and expanding opportunities for talent development. Planned initiatives include hosting networking events, growing apprenticeship and internship models, developing a centralized resource guide, and expanding advocacy with policymakers. With continued collaboration and innovation, members are building a stronger, more resilient IT and cyber workforce that meets the evolving needs of Anne Arundel County's businesses and communities.

What Businesses are Saying...

“Working with the AAWDC team, especially Kimberly Ferrara, has been an absolute pleasure. Kimberly and her team consistently keep us informed about eligible programs and go out of their way to simplify what could otherwise be a complicated process. In an environment where barriers often feel routine, AAWDC has made things seamless. What we’ve built with Kimberly and her team is more than support. It’s a true partnership.”

- Jeremiah Finch
COO of Omnyon LLC

What Businesses are Saying...

“Because of AAWDC, we were able to source and hire an incredible administrative marketing coordinator through the OJT program that has helped us rebrand our company and redo our website. Without AAWDC we would not have taken the leap to finally hire an administrative marketing assistant to help grow our company.”

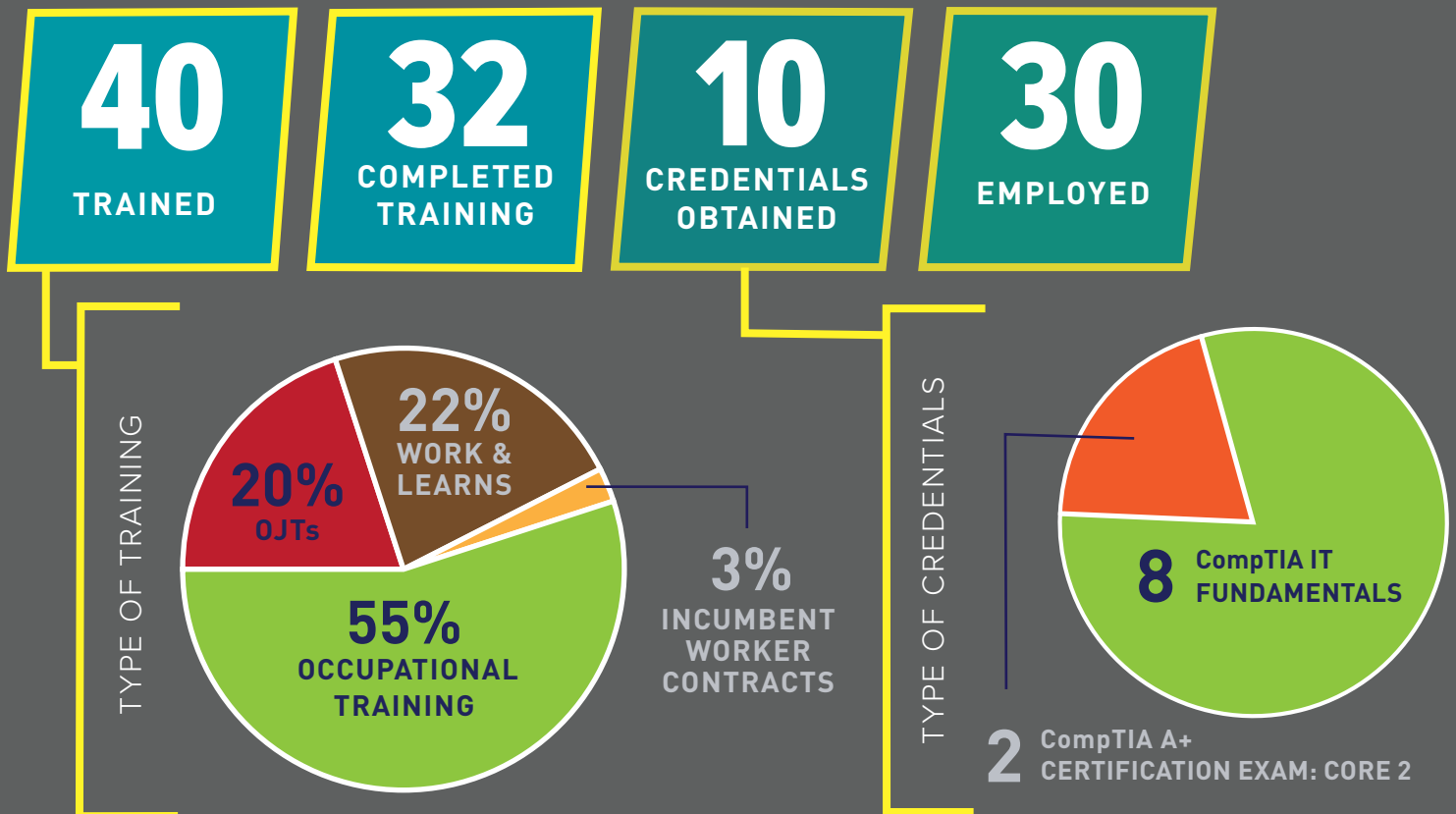
- Natalie Kneisly

Program Manager at University Technical Services

Recruiting



Training (by Occupation)



Hiring & Recruiting Success



The IT Collaborative, which includes a Federal/Government sub-collaborative, is stepping up efforts to strengthen the region's IT, Cybersecurity, and Technology workforce. By combining employer-driven collaboratives, targeted training cohorts, and high-impact hiring events, the IT Collaborative is helping businesses fill critical vacancies while preparing local talent for long-term career success.

The IT Collaborative has ramped up recruitment support by providing businesses with both cleared and uncleared candidate pipeline lists, distributing resumes directly from its applicant tracking system, and posting open positions across its professional networks. These efforts are supported by On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Work-and-Learn (W&L) programs, funded through EARN Cyber. For employers, this means direct access to qualified candidates and the resources to onboard them effectively, while job seekers gain clear entry points into high-demand careers.

Training has been a centerpiece of the Collaborative's success. The most recent Cyber Foundations cohort enrolled 11 participants, 10 of whom graduated successfully. Nearly all are now pursuing CompTIA certifications—an industry standard that strengthens employability and wage potential. Several graduates quickly secured new jobs or promotions, showcasing the program's impact. Mock interview sessions and a dedicated hiring event gave participants the confidence, connections, and real-world practice needed to step directly into the cyber workforce.

Employers like CTRL+ added value by guiding candidates on cleared career pathways, aligning resumes with federal labor categories (LCATs), and highlighting free regional training resources. CTRL+ also invited graduates to a networking event in Odenton, expanding their cleared-industry connections.

“...AAWDC has been a big part of our ability to grow the way we have. They've helped us offset some of the heaviest costs of hiring and training, which let us stay competitive against much bigger companies. More importantly, they've been a true partner, giving us the tools and resources we need to invest in our team while also winning new work and building for the future.”

- Lauren Choiniere

Director of Talent Acquisition at CTRL+

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN JOINING THE IT COLLABORATIVE?

Please reach out to us at IT@aawdc.org.

www.annearundelworks.com