

MARYLAND PUBLIC TELEVISION

2026 – 2029 Strategic Plan



For more than five decades, Maryland Public Television has served as Maryland's storyteller, bringing people together through compelling programs, trusted journalism, and innovative education.

Today's changing media landscape presents new opportunities to deepen this vital work. As Maryland's only statewide public media network, we are uniquely positioned to strengthen connections between communities, amplify diverse voices, and create lasting impact across our state, viewing area, and beyond.

This is our strategic plan for the next three fiscal years.

- Steven J. Schupak
President & CEO
July 1, 2025



Emcee Frank Sesno sets the stage for the in-studio *Chesapeake Bay Summit*.



Preamble

A strategic plan is a statement of where we are today and where we'll work to go in the future. As MPT kicks off its 2026-2029 plan, we start from this place:

- We are governed by an 11-member, gubernatorially appointed commission and supported by a 501(c)(3) foundation.
- We operate four separate 24/7 channels, the two primary ones garnering 7.4 million monthly gross impressions.
- In a single fiscal year, we produce upwards of 200 separate local and national TV productions.
- MPT operates on an approximately \$44 million budget.
- The state's annual investment in MPT comes in the form of an appropriation which breaks down to \$1.79 per Marylander per year.
- We employ 144 men and women who work full-time as State of Maryland employees,

and we engage roughly 55 others as contractual and freelance staff.

- Our 17-acre campus is crowned by the 8,480-sq. ft. Irene and Edward H. Kaplan Production Studio, among the region's largest soundstages.
- The quality of MPT programs is underscored by more than 200 regional Emmy Awards.
- MPT has a comprehensive online, digital, and social media presence that adds accessibility to our viewers, members, and audiences.

Who we are

Maryland Public Television is the state's only commercial or public broadcaster reaching every community – all 23 counties and Baltimore City – through six transmitters and an expanding digital presence. Our service is free of charge and free from commercial interruptions and influence. What's more, our broadcast reach includes audiences in the District of Columbia and portions of contiguous

states. As Maryland's trusted storyteller since 1969, we have a special ability to advance communities, bridge differences, and strengthen our shared civic life.

Certainly, we've demonstrated our reach and our strength by our traditional broadcasts of award-winning documentaries and acclaimed series for more than 55 years. We've specialized in public affairs, arts programming, natural history content, drama, and more, but our current-day impact extends far beyond traditional broadcasting and streaming.

For instance, under the new Maryland Center for Media Literacy & Education, we foster essential skills for navigating today's intricate media terrain. Our Center for Maryland History Films reaches back through the years to tell significant stories from Maryland history and explain their relevance to today. Through the Maryland State Ad Agency, we enhance public communication that serves the greater good.

But we are more than our programs and services. We are a catalyst for connection, a platform for dialogue – and we entertain our audiences along the way. Our strength lies in our deep roots in Maryland's communities.

Our mission

Maryland Public Television enriches lives and strengthens all communities through the power of media.

Our task

Irrespective of decades of history, the years ahead demand that MPT *meet people where they are* – a shorthand phrase for the necessary work to understand and respect the current status, needs, and perspectives of those we serve. Today – and going forward – our task is active listening and then tailoring how we approach our work. The mission is still service, but the tactics are new for a 21st century world.

But *meeting people where they are* also means delivering our product on any device and at whatever time our audiences choose. MPT is “always on,” and the network must promote that fact. Yes, we provide tried-and-true linear TV telecasts, but our audiences now also engage with us via streaming, social media, and digital deliveries as well as through in-the-community outreach. Further, in the years ahead, we must engage in these nontraditional channels even more.

Community as our center

Community isn't just part of our mission. It's the axis of our work. Grounded in timeless principles of integrity, respect, servant leadership, innovation, and collaboration, we're committed to making community voice and participation even more integral to our public media enterprise.

In the plan years ahead, we'll be purposeful in:

- Forging new or leveraging existing partnerships with community groups and institutions – even with other media outlets
- Finding ways to encourage community dialogue and participation
- Focusing our content on matters that impact our state and its people
- Involving community members not just as audiences but as advisors and, at times, co-creators
- Measuring our success by the tangible benefits we bring to Maryland communities

The spirit of MPT

As we craft a new, three-year roadmap to guide the work ahead, we seek to refresh several fundamental attitudes that have characterized our organization over the decades:

- Entrepreneurship – our culture of innovation and resourcefulness

- Stewardship – our careful use of the resources entrusted to us
- Collaboration – our recognition that both internal and external relationships are vital to our best work and to the most fruitful outcomes
- Adaptability – our willingness to evolve our approaches based on feedback and changing conditions

Four essential paths

To bring our community-centered approach to life, we'll focus on four essential paths:

Content that matters

Stories have the power to inform, inspire, and unite. By capturing authentic Maryland voices and experiences, we create content that resonates deeply with our communities. Through innovative local programming and trusted journalism, we tell the stories that bring Marylanders together.

Harnessing the digital future

Media companies today have unprecedented opportunities to connect with and serve communities by embracing both current

and emerging platforms. With this in mind, we'll advance our efforts to reach and engage Marylanders wherever they are. We'll do this by utilizing on-demand streaming, digital distribution, and social media, to cite three examples, while maintaining our traditional broadcast excellence. Recognizing that the digital world is undergoing rapid growth, we see opportunity in this evolution. Harnessing the power of digital will thus enable deeper engagement and broader reach.

Elevating Maryland

Our success is measured by the real difference we make in people's lives. As a trusted convener of meaningful civic dialogue and engagement, we bring together disparate voices, perspectives, and organizations to address issues that shape our future. Through strategic partnerships, we help create positive change and help build a stronger, more unified Maryland.

Financing the enterprise

To provide the best possible service and to be realistic in our pursuit of the paths enumerated above, MPT must identify and make as secure as possible the funding it receives from governmental, philanthropic, corporate, and individual sources. This

funding should both rely on traditional sources – membership and grants, to name only two – but should derive from new and as-yet-untapped sources as well. While money is a tool and an enabler – and not a goal in itself – serious attention must be given to earning and keeping financial support.



On-demand streaming for deeper viewer engagement

These paths reinforce and support one another: compelling content drives digital engagement, expanded digital reach increases our impact, and deeper community engagement inspires more meaningful content. Funding makes it all possible.



Strategic plan priorities

- Gather community input
- Expand local stories
- Engage statewide communities
- Create short-form content
- Strengthen MPT journalism
- Connect with classrooms

- Build digital capacity
- Enable multi-platform delivery
- Expand digital engagement
- Organize content verticals
- Analyze community data
- Support emergency preparedness
- Integrate AI tools



- Diversify revenue sources
- Explore digital revenue
- Optimize facility use

- Leverage MPT centers
- Expand citizen participation
- Measure community impact
- Support workforce development

Content that matters: key priorities

- Develop/implement plans to gather genuine, trustworthy community input that can become central to MPT's content development process, ensuring our programming reflects bona fide community needs and voices.
- Create a plan to research and increase production of local stories that emanate from all areas of the state to highlight our varied experiences and environments.

- Launch an initiative that will send MPT statewide (via surveys and in-person visits) to enlist community partners, offer localized engagement, and ultimately yield fresh, appealing content.
- Increase production of short-form video, interstitial (nonpromotional) story content, and audio formats to extend MPT's traditional storytelling to new platforms. Establish goals/metrics to track our achievement.

- Develop/launch a plan to invest in and strengthen MPT journalism via news cooperative ventures, independent reporting, expanded State House coverage, and other tactics.
- Ensure that MPT's high-quality productions maintain a path into classroom instructional settings to make authentic Maryland education connections for students.

Harnessing the digital future: key priorities

- Develop/launch a plan to assess the need for and fund the building of additional digital production and distribution capacity at MPT.
- Create methodologies whereby those responsible for creating content include nontraditional delivery (streaming and other digital avenues) along with broadcast distribution.

- Explore ways to use digital capabilities (including artificial intelligence – or AI – and social media) for audience engagement beyond already well-adopted virtual events, screenings and presentations.
- Organize content into clearly defined content verticals for digital distribution allowing for easier marketing, discovery, cross-promotion, and with an eye toward driving loyalty and membership.
- Gather and analyze data to enhance MPT's understanding of the communities it serves for content development and distribution purposes.
- Maintain MPT's portion of the state's emergency preparedness and management infrastructure to document and promote our public safety role.
- Explore avenues for appropriate AI use to aid efficiency of station operations.

Elevating Maryland: key priorities

- Adopt a plan to use existing centers of expertise – the Maryland Center for Media Literacy & Education, the Center for Maryland History Films, and the Maryland State Ad Agency – to elevate the stature of the state and contribute to the common good.
- Create/launch a plan to engage Maryland citizens for activities large and small, possibly ranging from expanded volunteer roles to meaningful advisory groups.
- Develop a comprehensive feedback system that captures both quantitative data and qualitative community input to measure our impact beyond traditional viewership metrics.



Maryland Farm & Harvestfield shoot



- Research and participate in statewide workforce development efforts in ways appropriate to MPT's education and engagement strengths.

Financing the enterprise: key priorities

- Perform a top-to-bottom review of all existing and prospective funding sources and earned income revenue lines to ensure that MPT taps all possible revenue resources (MSAA revenue, studio and tower rental income, for example). Likewise review major and recurring expenses to seek economies.
- Explore revenue opportunities within the context of next-generation ATSC 3.0 broadcast system as well as in digital messaging, data networks, and related possibilities.
- Review the physical plant with a view toward ensuring it directly supports MPT revenue goals by providing the infrastructure necessary for operations and, in some cases, income generation

itself. Recognizing our well-maintained physical plant ensures efficient operations, perform an audit of facilities to include their role in attracting/retaining employees (further contributing to revenue generation) and confirming energy efficiency.

How? The path forward

We acknowledge that resources are finite. Prioritization and strategic allocation of our human and financial assets will be essential as we pursue our strategic plan initiatives. We will regularly evaluate our efforts against measurable outcomes to ensure we're investing our limited resources where they can create the greatest impact for Maryland and its people.

Accordingly, MPT will:

- Create/implement a plan to increase financial support of MPT and diversify funding sources while deepening relationships with current supporters across generations and communities.

- Grow the reach and impact of MPT's newest centers (Maryland Center for Media Literacy & Education, Center for Maryland History Films) via concrete marketing steps against specific goals/metrics.
- Expertly and professionally measure the outcomes of all initiatives to validate what activities should be retained and which should be retired. Adopt a procedure for such evaluations and timetable for their launch.
- Seek revenue opportunities inherent in national programs and projects whose production is fully funded but whose nationwide distribution can significantly enhance annual revenue via underwriting, sponsorships, and grants.
- Enhance human resources recruitment and retention by developing strategies to make MPT more attractive to the next generation of employee talent. Adopt these strategies and establish goals/metrics to document their success.
- Create a focal point for AI use at MPT to ensure safe, productive use of this technology. Establish/share a methodology for tracking and documenting AI's penetration of MPT operations.
- Foster entrepreneurship and innovation by developing an MPT culture that promotes, recognizes, and rewards those efforts.

A word of thanks

MPT thanks the members of the Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission and the directors of the MPT Foundation, Inc., for the tangible guidance that these individuals provide in support of our mission. Likewise, we express gratitude to our alumni who have laid the groundwork over five decades for the organization we are today. Finally, we offer appreciation to the State of Maryland for its financial investment in MPT and to the donors and members who endorse our work with their gifts.

~ The Staff of Maryland Public Television

July 1, 2025



MPT Owings Mills headquarters



On the cover:

When the dedication of new flagpoles on the MPT plaza took place in 2022, for the first time we proudly displayed four flags of great importance to our organization. Old Glory, the flag of the United States, was joined by the official Maryland state flag; the POW/MIA flag honoring those who served the United States in the Vietnam War; and the United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration flag.

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