

Department of Budget and Management
Office of Budget Analysis
FY 2027 Evidence-based Budgeting Report

Using Evidence to Deliver Results for Marylanders

Maryland is taking steps to ensure that public dollars are invested in programs and services that deliver results. Through the budget process and agency grantmaking, the State is strengthening how data, research, and evidence inform funding decisions and help agencies focus resources on approaches that work for Marylanders.

The Department of Budget and Management's Office of Budget Analysis, in partnership with the Governor's Office and Results for America, incorporated definitions of "evidence-based" and "evidence-building" into the State's budget development process. Maryland defines "evidence-based" as there is evidence from an experimental or quasi-experimental study that a key program component has been effective in improving a relevant outcome with similar populations or in similar settings. Maryland defines "evidence-building" as a program planning to conduct an experimental or quasi-experimental study on a key program component in the coming fiscal year. As part of this capacity building effort, training and other resources were developed for agencies and their fiscal staff to support consistent use of these definitions and to help agencies identify evidence as part of their budget submissions.

Beginning with the FY 2026 budget cycle, DBM requested agencies provide evidence information for over-the-target enhancement requests, meaning expansions of existing programs or proposals to create new programs. For FY 2027, agencies whose enhancement requests lacked evidence were asked to acknowledge the gaps in data and explain why they were still pursuing the proposed approach. The Office of Budget Analysis also has a dedicated field in the State's enterprise budgeting system to capture this information. Evidence submitted through this process helps inform budget discussions and strengthen the State's ability to understand which investments are backed by research, which investments are designed to build evidence, and where additional learning may be needed.

This work supports a results-focused budget process. By asking agencies to identify whether proposed investments are evidence-based or evidence-building, Maryland is creating a clearer connection between budget decisions and measurable outcomes. It also recognizes that responsible budgeting includes both investing in proven approaches and building the evidence needed to improve programs over time.

Highlighting Evidence-Based Investments in the FY 2027 Budget

Maryland's FY 2027 budget included a range of investments that use evidence to protect Marylanders, expand opportunity, and strengthen communities. These examples show how the State is using research, data, and proven approaches to inform funding decisions across policy areas.

The budget included a record \$32 million investment in the ENOUGH Grant Program, bringing the total State investment in ENOUGH grants to \$69 million since FY 2025. Signed into law by Governor Wes Moore on May 9, 2024, the Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments and Households (ENOUGH) Initiative reflects the Administration's commitment to ending child poverty and ensuring that all Marylanders have what they need to live healthy and successful lives. The grant program is designed as an evidence-based, community-centered program to reduce child poverty by helping communities improve access to quality health care, safer neighborhoods, good schools, and good jobs. The grant structure supports communities over time in using the best available evidence, including local data, to select and strengthen proven strategies.

Maryland continued to invest in the Children's Cabinet Interagency Fund, with \$26.3 million to support locally led, community-centered services for children, youth, and families through Local Management Boards. Grant applicants are required to identify which proposed interventions, programs, and models are informed by research and reflect evidence-based practices.

Further illustrating the state's commitment to Maryland families, the budget allocated \$434 million in state funds to support the Child Care Scholarship (CCS) program to help families enroll their young children in high-quality child care. This historic level of funding has grown from just \$59 million as recently as FY 2023. The CCS program ensures that Maryland's children and families can access affordable child care through financial support. Studies have shown these types of programs help families in need gain access to child care services, allow parents, particularly mothers, to return to work, and promote sufficient household and family resources.

Maryland invested \$3.2 million in general funds, helping leverage the over \$73 million in federal SUN bucks nutrition benefits to ensure that approximately 600,000 children have access to essential meals in the summer months when schools are closed and free or reduced-price meals programs are unavailable. Studies, including multi-site randomized controlled trials, have shown that Summer EBT programs like SUN Bucks reduce food insecurity among low-income children, improve household access to nutritious food, and help close the summer meal gap left when school-based nutrition programs are unavailable.

The budget also included \$10.9 million for the first year of the Academic Excellence Program to support literacy and math coaches in Maryland public schools. The Academic Excellence Program is designed to accelerate student learning by deploying highly trained state-hired instructional coaches to support educators and improve instruction. The program applies evidence-based design principles by taking a centralized approach and investing directly in job-embedded teacher development, including the state-led hiring, training, and deployment of instructional coaches at the district and school levels.

Maryland also invested \$10.6 million for the Department of Juvenile Services Enhanced Services Continuum, bringing the total investment to \$30 million under the Moore-Miller Administration. This initiative is grounded in research on community-based and developmentally appropriate services for youth, with programming including Credible Messenger Mentoring, Detention Diversion Alternative, and Multi-Systemic Therapy.

The budget maintains funding of \$3.75 million for Thrive Academy, a gun violence prevention program launched through the Governor's Safe Summer Initiative, bringing the total investment in the program to \$12.4 million. Thrive is based on the Group Violence Reduction Strategy and targets outreach and support to youth identified as being at highest risk of gun violence.

Maryland also invested \$3.25 million for the Department of Juvenile Services portion of Safer Stronger Together, a cross-agency public safety initiative involving DJS, the Department of Human Services, and the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. The initiative is grounded in research on crime concentration, peer support, reducing administrative burden, and collective efficacy. It focuses services and supports in selected communities with high need and uses community boards to support participatory budgeting and local ownership.

To support housing stability for Marylanders, the budget included \$5 million to launch a new Permanent Supportive Housing initiative for Marylanders facing chronic homelessness, as well as \$10 million in continued funding for the Statewide Rental Assistance Voucher Program to provide more than 10,000 months of rental assistance. Permanent Supportive Housing is highlighted as an evidence-based approach that pairs permanent housing with supportive services to improve housing stability and reduce homelessness.

Maryland's budget supports healthcare access to coverage as a proven, evidence-based strategy. The budget included \$2.9 million in State funding for vaccines for uninsured and underinsured adults. This investment is highlighted as an evidence-based public health strategy that helps prevent avoidable illness, strengthen community resilience, and support better health outcomes regardless of income or insurance status.

The FY 2027 budget also provided resources for workforce development investments, such as \$12.3 million for the Employment Advancement Right Now (EARN), which incorporates several evidence-based program design elements such as sector-specific occupational training, employer collaboration, as well as job placement assistance and wraparound support services. The Department of Labor's 2025 Annual Report noted over 30,000 Marylanders have been positively impacted by the program since its inception in 2014, with more than 12,000 individuals obtaining employment, and close to 17,000 incumbent workers participating in upskilling opportunities. And a recent study on the economic impact of EARN from the Business Economic and Community Outreach Network (BEACON) at Salisbury University found that for every dollar the state invests into the program, an additional \$19.32 in economic activity is created.

Together, these FY 2027 investments show how Maryland is using evidence not as a stand-alone requirement, but as a practical tool for making budget decisions that can improve outcomes for residents.

Strengthening Evidence in Grantmaking

Maryland is also embedding evidence into grantmaking so that public funds support effective programs and services across communities. Across agencies, solicitations increasingly define

evidence, prioritize proven approaches, and award points to applicants that use evidence-based or evidence-informed strategies.

The Maryland State Department of Education embedded evidence-based standards, aligned with the ESSA evidence tiers, into their *FY27 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program*, a \$19 million investment. In addition to defining "evidence-based" using the ESSA tiered framework, the grant guide requires applicants to cite experimental or quasi-experimental research for each proposed academic activity, restricts curriculum purchases to evidence-meeting interventions, and updates the scoring rubric to reward proposals grounded in cited evidence.

The Governor's Office for Children's ENOUGH grants include a clear definition of "evidence-based" and states explicitly in its grant expectations that applicants use data and evidence to understand impact and guide continuous improvement. Children's Cabinet Interagency Fund Notices of Funding Availability direct Local Management Boards to invest in evidence-based models and identify specific eligible interventions.

The *Maryland Department of Health's Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention*, established in 2024, embeds evidence into its grantmaking by funding evidence-based and evidence-informed approaches and requiring applicants to incorporate evidence into program design, implementation, and evaluation.

The *Firearm Safe Storage Awards for Local Health Departments* directs funding toward firearm safe storage, an evidence-based strategy to reduce firearm injuries and deaths. Applicants must use public health data to demonstrate need, describe how proposed activities will reduce firearm violence, and report performance measures throughout implementation.

The *Reducing Gun Violence in Maryland Through Prevention, Assessment, Intervention, and Response* grant requires applicants to implement evidence-based or evidence-informed strategies to reduce firearm violence. The solicitation identifies a range of eligible interventions with established evidence, including hospital violence intervention, community violence interruption, focused deterrence, and cognitive behavioral approaches, and requires applicants proposing other models to demonstrate how they are supported by research or evidence. It also supports assessment and evaluation activities to strengthen future policy and program decisions.

The *Maryland Department of Health's Behavioral Health Administration Housing First Program* directs funding toward Housing First, an evidence-based approach that prioritizes permanent housing with voluntary supportive services for individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The solicitation requires applicants to demonstrate knowledge and experience with Housing First principles and includes performance measures to monitor housing stability, service connections, and other participant outcomes.

The *Maryland Community Health Resources Commission's Promoting Health Equity and Expanding Health Care Access* grant program embeds evidence throughout program design and review. The program prioritizes evidence-based interventions while allowing innovative or practice-based approaches when applicants provide a compelling rationale, closely monitor implementation, and collect data to demonstrate impact. Applicants must also document community need using reliable data sources, develop logic models and workplans, and propose measurable outcomes to support evaluation and continuous improvement.

Together, these grantmaking practices help direct funding toward solutions with a stronger likelihood of improving outcomes. They also give applicants clear expectations and encourage agencies to use evidence as part of program design, funding decisions, and implementation.

Building a Stronger Foundation for What Works

Maryland's work to embed evidence in budgeting and grantmaking reflects a broader commitment to making government more effective and focused on results. By incorporating evidence definitions into the budget process, training agency leaders and fiscal staff, and capturing evidence information in the State's budgeting system, Maryland is building the infrastructure needed to use evidence more consistently across government.

The State's FY 2027 budget highlights this approach in action across child poverty, nutrition, education, workforce development, public safety, housing, and health. These investments demonstrate how evidence can help guide choices about where to invest, how to improve programs, and how to strengthen outcomes over time.

The State's grantmaking practices extend this commitment by encouraging agencies and partners to prioritize programs that are supported by research or that include a clear plan to build evidence. These steps help Maryland make better use of limited resources, strengthen programs over time, and support investments that deliver meaningful results for Marylanders.