

**MARYLAND STATE
RETIREMENT AGENCY**

BUSINESS PLAN

FISCAL YEAR 2026



INTRODUCTION

The Maryland State Retirement and Pension System's Business Plan for fiscal year 2026 was developed with collaborative input of all senior staff and is presented by the Executive Director for approval by the Board of Trustees. Its purpose is to outline key business initiatives continued from prior fiscal years and any new initiatives to be undertaken in fiscal year 2026 that elevate the Agency's mission, goals, and established performance measures. The Business Plan has been developed in accordance with the Business Planning Policy adopted by the Board of Trustees, which mandates an annual review and update. This plan is aligned with the System's Strategic Plan.

OVERVIEW

The Business Plan comprises four key sections:

Customer Service: Agency divisions provide customer service internally and externally, in support of both the mission and vision of the Retirement System.

Collaboration: Each Agency division outlines how they continue to collaborate and provide methods of breaking down silos within the organization.

Team Development: Agency divisions present ongoing staff developments practices (e.g., onboarding, succession plans, strategic feedback, etc.)

Major Initiatives: Fiscal Year 2026 initiatives, in accordance with Section 3.c. of the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System Governance Policies.

Customer Service

Mission-Driven Service Commitment

At the Maryland State Retirement Agency (SRA), delivering exceptional customer service is not confined to a single department – it is a shared commitment embraced across the organization. Whether supporting members and retirees, assisting participating employers, advising policymakers, or collaborating with internal stakeholders, the Agency strives to provide timely, clear and effective service at every level.

Member and Beneficiary Support

One of the cornerstones of this commitment is providing members and beneficiaries with reliable, accurate, and responsive support. The Agency communicates regularly through secure messages, letters, emails, and phone calls to address a broad range of member needs – from service credit and disability inquiries to direct deposit, tax withholding and retirement processing. Special attention is given to survivors, who are supported through a dedicated phone line and personal contact with trained staff during difficult times.



To enhance efforts to proactively engage with members and more effectively and efficiently address their concerns, a separate Member Services unit was established.

The Agency hired and onboarded a new Member Services Administrator to oversee the unit and lead the transformation of the service model to better meet members' needs.

Empowering Members Through Digital Tools

The Agency's digital resources and secure online portal further enhance service delivery, enabling members to access account information, submit documentation, request updates, and retrieve essential forms. Outreach efforts also extend to those members nearing retirement eligibility, ensuring they are aware of their options and supported in taking their next steps.

Customer Service

Engaging Employers as Strategic Partners

For Maryland's employers, the Agency provides proactive and timely support on matters such as payroll reporting, salary certifications, enrollments, and deductions. Ongoing messaging through the employer portal helps streamline communication and reinforces deadlines and updates. This ensures a smooth and compliant partnership with over 800 participating employers statewide.

Technology-Enabled Internal Support

Customer service also extends into the technical backbone of the Agency. Information Systems plays a vital role in supporting both internal staff and external users by maintaining high system availability, responding to technical issues, and deploying essential software updates. Help Desk support is available through phone, chat, and ticketing systems, and is backed by user training, a knowledge base, and incident -response capabilities that protect the integrity and security of agency systems.

Modernization Through Automation and Feedback

As customer expectations evolve, the Agency continues to modernize its operations.



Recent efforts have focused on reengineering business processes and automating manual systems to reduce response times and eliminate inefficiencies. Newly developed applications are designed with the end user in mind and are backed by product management support, ongoing training, and continuous improvement based on user feedback.

Public Policy and Legislative Services

The Agency also serves the broader public interest by offering timely information to elected officials and constituents. Legislative Affairs provides the Governor's Office and the Maryland General Assembly with timely, accurate data and analysis on proposed pension legislation and constituent issues. Agency staff also respond to direct requests from legislative offices and provide expertise on the potential impacts of pension-related proposals. This close coordination ensures that policy decisions are informed by real world implications for members and retirees.

Customer Service

Informing Through Strategic Communications

Support for transparency and education is evident in how the Agency engages with the media, prepares public-facing materials, and collaborates with other state offices. The Communications Office produces newsletters, videos, and web content to help members and retirees understand their benefits and the retirement system's policies. It also manages internal messaging to keep staff informed, aligned, and empowered to deliver consistent service.

Community Engagement and Financial Literacy

Financial literacy and community outreach further reflect the Agency's values. SRA staff mentor students in financial education programs such as DIME and Stocks in the Future, while internal experts help guide discussions about investing in Maryland's local economy. This reflects a deep-rooted belief that customer service includes educating and supporting future generations.



Assurance Through Audit Oversight

Finally, the Agency's Internal Audit function provides a unique form of customer service—one rooted in trust, accountability, and assurance. Through its audits and evaluations, the Agency ensures that risks are managed, resources are protected, and processes operate efficiently and lawfully. These efforts offer peace of mind to the public, policymakers and participants alike.

Service as a Core Organizational Value

In every corner of the Agency, customer service is more than a goal – it's an embedded practice that upholds the structural integrity of our mission. Whether serving a new employee just entering the System or a retiree enjoying the benefits of a lifetime of public service, the Agency strives to deliver respectful, accurate and proactive support that reflects its mission and values.

Collaboration



Fostering a Collaborative Culture

Collaboration is fundamental to the Maryland State Retirement Agency's ability to deliver on its mission. In FY2025, the Agency continued to foster an environment where knowledge is shared, communication is prioritized, and cross-functional partnerships drive innovation and progress. Across all levels, from strategic planning to daily operations, collaborative practices have strengthened relationships, aligned goals, and improved outcomes for members, retirees, and stakeholders.

Cross-Divisional Innovation and Shared Ownership

A culture of collaboration is reflected in the way teams coordinate early and often. Cross-functional planning sessions, weekly and biweekly update meetings and integrated project teams have become routine practice. These engagements ensure that technical, legal, financial and operational perspectives are aligned from the start – whether the Agency is launching new software, reviewing legislative proposals or refining internal policies.

One example is the Agency's enterprise-wide commitment to digital transformation. The implementation of tools like Microsoft CoPilot, a new Teams-based phone system, and the expansion of mobile computing and AI-driven features were not isolated IT projects.

Instead, they involved extensive collaboration among technical teams, administrative units, and customer-facing staff to ensure that new solutions meet user needs and integrate smoothly with existing business processes.

Project planning increasingly incorporates shared ownership, with stakeholders from multiple divisions contributing to solution design and implementation. Agency-wide initiatives such as business process reengineering, the development of new member communication tools, and system enhancements have benefited from this model, fostering buy-in and breaking down traditional silos.

Integrated Daily Operations

Collaborative problem-solving is not limited to major projects. Everyday operations demonstrate the value of shared accountability. Legal, finance and administrative teams work together to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations, coordinate vendor contracts and respond quickly to evolving requirements. Internal communication flows seamlessly across divisions, with regular check-ins among leadership to assess business needs and adjust priorities.

Collaboration



Collaborative Risk Oversight

Operational continuity and risk mitigation are also strengthened through collaboration. Audit processes often involve multiple divisions, especially when reviewing workflows that span more than one division. These engagements not only identify compliance risks but also present opportunities to enhance coordination and streamline interdepartmental processes. Recommendations from internal audits have led to measurable improvements in efficiency and operations.

Strategic Legislative Coordination

Legislative coordination is another area where collaboration plays a pivotal role. Agency staff contribute expertise to the development and implementation of pension-related legislation, while also ensuring that member communications, budget considerations, internal operations and IT systems reflect any enacted changes. This collaborative legislative process ensures the Agency can act swiftly, with unity and clarity, when supporting members and responding to elected officials.

Unified Messaging and Public Engagement

External communication efforts also benefit from proactive internal partnerships. Staff work together to develop clear, accessible materials that prepare members and retirees for upcoming events, policy changes or system enhancements.

Staff routinely draft public announcements in advance and coordinate across divisions to reinforce a consistent and unified message and ensure the Agency is prepared for media coverage or legislative developments.

Strengthening a Unified Workplace

Social connection is also valued as a key driver of collaboration. The Agency encourages team-building events, from community fundraisers and holiday celebrations to shared learning experiences like “Bring Your Child to Work Day.” These moments foster interpersonal relationships that translate into stronger professional cooperation and a more unified workplace culture.

Looking Ahead Together

As the Agency looks ahead to FY2026, collaboration will continue to drive our initiatives such as expanded video counseling for members, the introduction of AI-powered customer service features, and ongoing infrastructure improvements, all of which draw upon the strengths of multidisciplinary teams. Through shared leadership, open communication, and a commitment to collective success, the Maryland State Retirement Agency is not only delivering better outcomes—it is building a stronger, more agile organization for the future.

Team Development

Positioning Employees for Success

At the Maryland State Retirement Agency, investing in people is just as vital as managing financial assets. A well-supported, highly capable workforce is essential to achieving our mission of delivering retirement security to Maryland's public employees. Over the past year, the Agency has expanded its commitment to employee development, leadership cultivation, and workforce planning to ensure both current excellence and future readiness.

A Deputy Retirement Administrator was promoted to serve as the new Deputy Executive Director. In this role, the Deputy Executive Director is currently focused on onboarding the newly established Human Resources team, which is led by a highly recommended and experienced Human Resources Director. A new Human Resources Manager, specializing in ADA and EEO matters, has also joined the team to provide focused support in these areas. Additionally, the newly created Member Services unit now reports directly to the Deputy Executive Director, ensuring enhanced attention to the needs of our members.

Building Leadership and Strengthening Skills

Leadership development is a central focus of team growth across the Agency. SRA has partnered with outside consultants to create custom leadership training tailored to each employee's level of experience, confidence and skill. These programs foster personal accountability, strategic thinking, and cooperative skills essential to high-performing teams.

The agency has offered project-based leadership opportunities that allow emerging leaders to manage real Agency initiatives. Managers across divisions meet regularly to share experiences, coordinate strategies, and mentor team members, reinforcing a collaborative and growth-oriented leadership culture.

The Agency also promotes continual learning through conference participation, online courses, and professional development programs. Specialized certifications such as the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA), Chartered Alternative Investment Analyst (CAIA), and Continuing Professional Education (CPE) hours are encouraged and financially supported, helping staff stay on the leading edge of their professions.

Team Development

Structured Onboarding and Knowledge Transfer

A consistent and thoughtful onboarding process ensures that new employees are set up for success. The Agency has developed onboarding programs that include detailed checklists, structured 100-day plans, and division-specific training. Internal Audit and other units also provide targeted training on department policies, audit software, and standard practices. These foundations build early confidence and clarity, accelerating integration and productivity.

In Member Services and other customer-facing areas, training programs include lunch-and-learn sessions, quarterly briefings on relevant topics, and call monitoring to support continuous learning. These sessions often involve collaboration with other units, such as Legislative Affairs, to ensure staff are informed about policy changes and can relay accurate information to members and retirees.

Succession Planning and Career Pathways

Preparing the next generation of leaders and specialists is a top priority. The Agency has developed formal succession plans to ensure continuity and preserve institutional knowledge. These efforts include identifying critical roles, cross-training team members, and documenting key procedures to prepare for inevitable transitions.

In parallel, divisions have introduced structured career ladders that reflect both technical and leadership paths. These frameworks acknowledge that professional growth is not one-size-fits-all – some employees seek management opportunities, while others prefer to deepen their expertise in specialized areas. This dual-track approach, supported by revised position classifications and updated compensation benchmarks, helps staff envision long-term careers at SRA.

Fostering a Supportive Work Environment

SRA is also committed to creating an environment where employees feel supported and empowered. Updates to internal policies on telework, leave and operational procedures have been guided by feedback from managers and staff to ensure they align with the Agency's developing workplace needs.

Weekly and biweekly check-ins among division leaders help surface concerns early and ensure alignment across the organization. Performance reviews have evolved into two-way conversations that emphasize feedback, mutual expectations, and developmental goals. In some areas, quarterly reviews are used to track progress against both behavioral competencies and technical performance.

Team Development

Cross-training is increasingly used to expose staff to interconnected processes across units, fostering a broader understanding of the Agency's operations and improving collaboration. These efforts not only increase operational resilience but also open up new pathways for career growth.

Staying Relevant and Modern

The Agency has continued to modernize by adopting new technologies, exploring innovations, and staying active in professional networks. Participation in national associations helps staff stay informed about trends and best practices specific to public pension systems.

Strategic reclassifications and the introduction of electronic documentation processes further reflect the Agency's commitment to modernizing the employee experience, making work more efficient and adaptable to the needs of a dynamic workforce.

As part of a broader national ecosystem, SRA recognizes that engaging with and learning from fellow leaders across the country is essential to staying at the forefront of the industry. These connections not only enhance our internal capabilities but also ensure we remain aligned with evolving standards and innovations in public pension administration.

Looking Ahead

As the Agency prepares for FY2026 and beyond, team development remains a strategic priority. Whether through structured training, thoughtful succession planning, or fostering an inclusive culture of growth and accountability, the Maryland State Retirement Agency is building a workforce that is equipped, inspired and prepared to meet the evolving needs of its members and the State of Maryland.



Major Initiatives: FY2026

The Maryland State Retirement Agency continues to implement strategic projects that strengthen service delivery, enhance operational efficiency and modernize systems to support long-term sustainability and transparency. In FY2026, the Agency will focus on technological innovation, process transformation, investment governance, and member engagement, while advancing its core mission of securing retirement benefits for public servants.

Strategic Performance Improvement

To strengthen organizational performance and alignment, the agency has engaged a consultant to facilitate the implementation of the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS).

EOS is a set of simple, practical tools and concepts designed to help leadership teams clarify their vision, gain traction through disciplined execution, and foster a healthier, more cohesive organizational culture.

Through this initiative, we aim to improve focus, accountability, and operational consistency across the agency as we pursue our strategic goals.

Leadership Training and Development

In FY2026, the Agency will work with the Dr. Nancy Grasmick Leadership Institute to conduct separate two-day training workshops.



These sessions will target executive leadership through supervisory levels, including emerging leaders identified as prime candidates for future leadership roles. The workshops will cover effective leadership styles, emotional intelligence for enhanced management, conflict resolution, and other essential leadership skills.

Enhanced Member Services

Proactive member outreach and communications focus on engaging our members through personalized updates, timely resources, and consistent touchpoints across digital and in-person channels. These efforts helped strengthen relationships, increase participation, and ensure alignment with members' evolving needs and priorities.

Major Initiatives: FY2026

To better serve active members, retirees, and employers, the Agency is continuing its digital transformation with a focus on user-friendly, secure and efficient service delivery via the following procedures:

- **mySRPS Modernization and Paperless Processing:** The Agency is expanding functionality in its secure portal, mySRPS, to support critical business transactions including:
 - **Member Enrollment** via an intuitive Enrollment Wizard launching in August 2025
 - **Refund Requests** through a revitalized, secure self-service feature for withdrawing contributions
 - **Retirement Applications** using a guided Retirement Wizard that is currently in development

These initiatives will eliminate paper forms, streamline workflows and enhance staff efficiency while improving the member experience.

- **ID Proofing Enhancements:** A new identity verification process will allow for secure, remote authentication by matching a government-issued ID with a user's selfie or verifying identity through a knowledge-based quiz. This enhanced security measure protects personal information and helps prevent fraud during sensitive transactions.

Modernizing Member Support and Outreach

The Agency is taking bold steps to modernize its communication platforms and enhance member support.

A major upgrade to the Maryland State Retirement Agency's member support center will integrate phone, web chat and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems. Leveraging cloud-based infrastructure and AI tools, SRA will provide members with seamless, multichannel support – accessible from anywhere, even during disruptions or emergencies.

A system-wide initiative to revamp the Agency's public website is underway to:

- Improve accessibility for all users
- Optimize mobile functionality
- Migrate to a modern content management system
- Simplify navigation and content to improve self-service and reduce routine inquiries
- Reinforce the Agency's commitment to transparency and accountability

Agency-Wide Operational Improvements

In conjunction with member-facing upgrades, SRA is improving the Employer Portal to facilitate smoother communication and reporting between the Agency and Maryland employers.

Major Initiatives: FY2026

These initiatives are being executed through deep coordination across divisions – especially among Investments, IS, BOO, Administration, Communications and Member Services. Weekly check-ins, project steering committees and inter-departmental workgroups help ensure seamless execution and shared accountability.

Accounts Payable

The Agency will implement a centralized system to streamline invoice receipt, ensure timely payments, and track all payment activities. The Finance team will oversee this process, collaborating with contract monitors as needed to complete necessary forms and obtain required approvals.

Procurement

The Agency will hire a Chief Procurement Officer to strategically enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of our procurement processes, driving greater value and operational excellence.

Positioning Investment Team for Strategic Growth

Onboarding of the new CIO to enhance performance by engaging and empowering the investment team, while continuing to address ongoing initiatives, such as:

- **Addressing Climate Risk and Identifying Investment Opportunities:** A newly established panel will support the Board in setting long-term sustainable investment strategies.

Working alongside the Corporate Governance Manager, this panel will help integrate climate risk into investment decisions to protect the portfolio and ensure it continues to meet its assumed rate of return while identifying investment opportunities related to the energy transition.

- **Enhancing the Terra Maria Program:** The Terra Maria program, which promotes inclusion of small and emerging managers, will receive dedicated staffing in FY2026. These resources will improve program structure, reporting, and engagement. A virtual Terra Maria Day in May 2025, along with an in-person event planned for later this year, will expand opportunities for emerging asset managers.
- **Improved Reporting for Terra Maria:** Staff are developing more streamlined, transparent methods for reporting performance and exposure within the Terra Maria program, particularly for private markets, to ensure better Board oversight and decision-making.
- **Asset Allocation Policy Implementation:** The Agency will begin transitioning to the Board's newly adopted asset allocation policy. This effort will require a coordinated approach to shift assets, update benchmarks and maintain alignment with investment performance goals.

Major Initiatives: FY2026

- **Technology Evaluation and Planning:**

The Agency is reviewing its investment technology framework to develop a technology plan that improves data integration and operational efficiency.

Information Systems Leadership

The Agency will onboard a Chief Information Systems Officer to consolidate administration, network services, system development, project management, and help desk functions.'

Moving Human Resources In-House

The Agency is building an internal Human Resources team to better address its unique needs and priorities. This new dedicated team will provide more focused, responsive support tailored specifically to our workforce.

This shift will enhance employee engagement, streamline HR processes, and strengthen overall organizational effectiveness.

Emergency Preparedness and Continuity Planning

In the coming fiscal year, the Agency is undertaking a comprehensive review and overhaul of its Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) to ensure that essential functions can continue with minimal disruption during and after emergencies.

In addition, the Agency is developing two critical plans:

Emergency Operations Plan (EOP):

While the COOP focuses on maintaining and restoring vital operations during a crisis, the EOP outlines the broader strategy and coordination needed to respond to various types of emergencies.

Emergency Action Plan (EAP):

The EAP, by contrast, provides specific guidance for immediate response actions, such as evacuation or shelter-in-place procedures, aimed at protecting the safety of personnel during an emergency event. Together, these plans strengthen our agency's resilience and readiness.

Looking Ahead

These major initiatives represent a strategic shift toward a more modern, transparent and member-centered retirement system.

FY2026 will be a pivotal year as the Maryland State Retirement Agency not only strengthens its technical infrastructure and reporting practices but also reinforces its long-term commitment to operational excellence, member satisfaction and fiduciary responsibility.

