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PRESS RELEASE

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RURAL MARYLAND COUNCIL NOW ACCEPTING FY2015 MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FUND GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Rural Maryland Council will accept grant applications to the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF) through midnight July 11, 2014. For Fiscal Year 2015, the RMC will receive \$167,000 to provide grants to rural-serving nonprofit organizations that promote statewide and regional planning, economic and community development, and agricultural and forestry education. Also eligible are rural community colleges that support small and agricultural businesses through enhanced training and technical assistance.

The Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF) is administered by the Rural Maryland Council. MAERDAF's goal is to increase the overall capacity of rural-serving nonprofit organizations and community colleges to meet a multitude of rural development challenges and to help them establish new public/private partnerships for leveraging non-state sources of funding.

The RMC has been instrumental in improving economic and rural development. When rural-serving nonprofit organizations noted that they lacked access to philanthropic dollars they need to undertake important community and economic development projects, the RMC led the effort to establish MAERDAF, which provides small grants to rural-serving nonprofits and community colleges. Between FY 2001 and FY 2014, MAERDAF awarded nearly \$3 million in grants to rural organizations leveraging this funding into a total of \$11 million.

The RMC is the *only entity in state government* specifically designed to convene rural leaders across the state and across disciplines to identify economic development challenges common to rural areas and to develop and implement realistic, workable solutions. The RMC is an independent state agency and federally designated State Rural Development Council under the USDA's National Rural Development Partnership. Our mission is to bring together federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic or regulatory solutions. As a collaborative partnership, the RMC operates under the guidance of a 40-member Executive Board, in a nonpartisan and nondiscriminatory manner.

For more information and an application, visit the RMC website: www.rural.maryland.gov

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