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PRESS RELEASE

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RURAL MARYLAND COUNCIL NOW ACCEPTING FY2016 MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FUND GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) will accept grant applications to the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF) through midnight July 10, 2015. For Fiscal Year 2016, 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. Rural community colleges that support small and agricultural businesses through enhanced training and technical assistance are also eligible. **During this grant cycle, the RMC is particularly interested in proposals that address the following: Agriculture, Energy, Rural Broadband, Healthcare, Youth Engagement and Workforce/Economic Development.** Regardless, the Grant Review Board will give full consideration to any application that is submitted.

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 2015, MAERDAF awarded over \$3 million in grants to rural organizations leveraging this funding into a total of \$11 million.

Since its inception in 1994, the Rural Maryland Council has been working to advance the interests of rural Marylanders across the State. The 40-member Board represents each rural region, the rural for-profit and nonprofit communities, elected officials from the State and local levels and federal, state and local agencies. As a collaborative partnership, our mission is to bring these diverse groups together to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic or regulatory solutions. We do this work in a nonpartisan and nondiscriminatory manner.

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. We are an independent state agency and are the State's federally designated State Rural Development Council under the USDA's National Rural Development Partnership.

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

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"A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland"