

# Rural Maryland Council Grants Workshop 4-30-2021

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**MAERDAF Purpose:** 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.

**RMPIF Primary goal** is to provide targeted investments to various regional, nonprofit and educational entities to bring Rural Maryland's standards of living up to statewide averages. Job creation, entrepreneurship, infrastructure.

**Regional Councils Purpose:** to provide grants specifically for projects and activities of the five regional planning and development councils and for other multi-county rural improvement efforts.



# Your Nonprofit's Revenue

% earned revenue (memberships, registration fees)

% individual contributions

% grants and/or contracts

% event proceeds

% endowment revenue

What else?

Where do grants fit into your big picture?

If you are a very young organization, don't expect to look at grants as a potential revenue source until you can show a track record.



## Is a grant free money?

No – a grant is a contract. The funder wants to achieve a certain goal, and you are applying for some of their money to partner with them to help them achieve their goal.

For Rural Maryland MAERDAF and RMPIF grants – the funder is the State. Their goals are to keep rural Maryland communities thriving, to increase economic development across rural Maryland (and increase associated state tax revenues.) They also want to use state tax dollars as efficiently as possible to leverage outside funding from other sources to meet their goal of continued thriving rural communities.

What does Maryland want from you as a partner in helping them achieve their goals?

Proof that you spent state dollars in a way that helped meet their goals. You need to show them that you:

- created new jobs
- retained existing jobs
- provided education
- trained workforce members
- increased your org's capacity
- served citizens
- invested in infrastructure
- created a tool for community use
- increased health of citizens



## The Grant Process –

Funder sends out RFP – you usually have 30 – 60 days to complete the application.

If the funder offers a webinar – always take it.

Prepare your application and submit (early if possible.)

Funder usually tells you when you will hear back from them. Rural Maryland Council grants have two steps –

LOI step and you may be invited to submit a final application.

If you are awarded a grant, they will send you a grant agreement for you to sign, and know you will be held accountable to that agreement.

Start the work as per your plan. If there is a problem, call your funder right away – no surprises!

Expect to submit a mid-term report.

Expect to submit a final report at the end of the grant period.



# Your Cash Flow

## How will the grant pay you?

- Is the grant a reimbursement grant? Will it be 30-60-90-120 days till payment?
- What are you asking for in the grant? If personnel costs, can you swing a delay?
- An immediate check for the full amount? (thank you!)

**You need to know how the grant pays before you decide to apply for it.**

**Rural Maryland MAERDAF and RMPHF grants come in the form of a single check after signing your grant agreement.**



# Think about using grant funding for:

- New initiatives
- Pilot projects – test out a program idea
- Equipment
- Upgrades – capital, infrastructure, etc.
- Special training for staff
- Initiatives with an obvious beginning, middle and end
- Operating funds when allowed. It used to be easier to get grant funding for general operations.



# How to tell if a grant is a good match for you

- One way to evaluate if a grant is a good match for you is to determine how much work it will be.
- If the application process is daunting, the grant is competitive, it pays on a reimbursement method and is hard to track – do you want it? Do you have the back office capacity to handle it?
- Of those items, worry less about the daunting application process, worry more if it's very competitive, and most important is if you can manage the tracking and reporting.
- Local MD grants that are easiest to deal with are those that send you a check up front and don't require onerous reporting. These include:
- Community Foundations, some United Way Organizations, Rural MD Council MAERDAF and RMPIF.





# Typical components of a grant proposal:

- History of your organization, mission statement (short)
- Problem statement (use local data)
- Project description (make your ask here)
- Goals, Objectives (why and what you'll do) and Performance Measures that you will track – answer the questions: how much did we do, how well did we do it, is anyone better off?
- Your management team's backgrounds (bios) – brief
- Project Budget
- Project Budget Justification
- Attachments (IRS letter, letters of support, board list, 990, organizational budget etc.)



# Data Sources

- Local Needs Assessments
- Census info – quick links
- Google
- Local newspapers
- State departments of labor, housing & CD, health & mental hygiene.
- Be JUDICIOUS in how much data you provide. Show visually if possible.
- Make your point once. Don't beat it into the ground.
- Tell them exactly how your intervention is going to impact that particular problem.
- Rural Maryland Council doesn't need much here.



# Create a file of common attachments:

- Organization address, contact name for grant, phone, email address
- EIN
- History, mission, program descriptions
- Current annual budget for organization (best – comparison with last year, current year and projected next year)
- Most recent financial statements – last fiscal year – rev & expense, balance sheet and/or audited financials
- Current Board of Directors list with contact info (mailing address, phone, email)
- Staff list with brief description of role
- 501(c)(3) letter from IRS
- Most recent 990 or signed MOU with fiscal agent
- DUNS# and SAM.gov expiration date for government grants
- Copies of news clippings, annual reports, newsletters in pdf or links
- Secretary of State annual registration



# When starting a grant, do these things in this order:

- Identify the due date and calendar it.
- Check for the grant period and make sure that works for you. When will you hear about it? How does it pay?
- Decide if you need letters of support and ask for them right away.
- Make a list of all the attachments you'll need and ask for them right away – financial, corporate, and give people a due date to get things to you.
- Start with the budget.
- Talk with your program staff to make sure you understand their goals, objectives and performance measures. How will you track progress on the grant?
- Do the easy part first – history of the org, etc.
- Project Description next. Goals and objectives.
- Decide if you need data to support your request and find it.
- The rest.



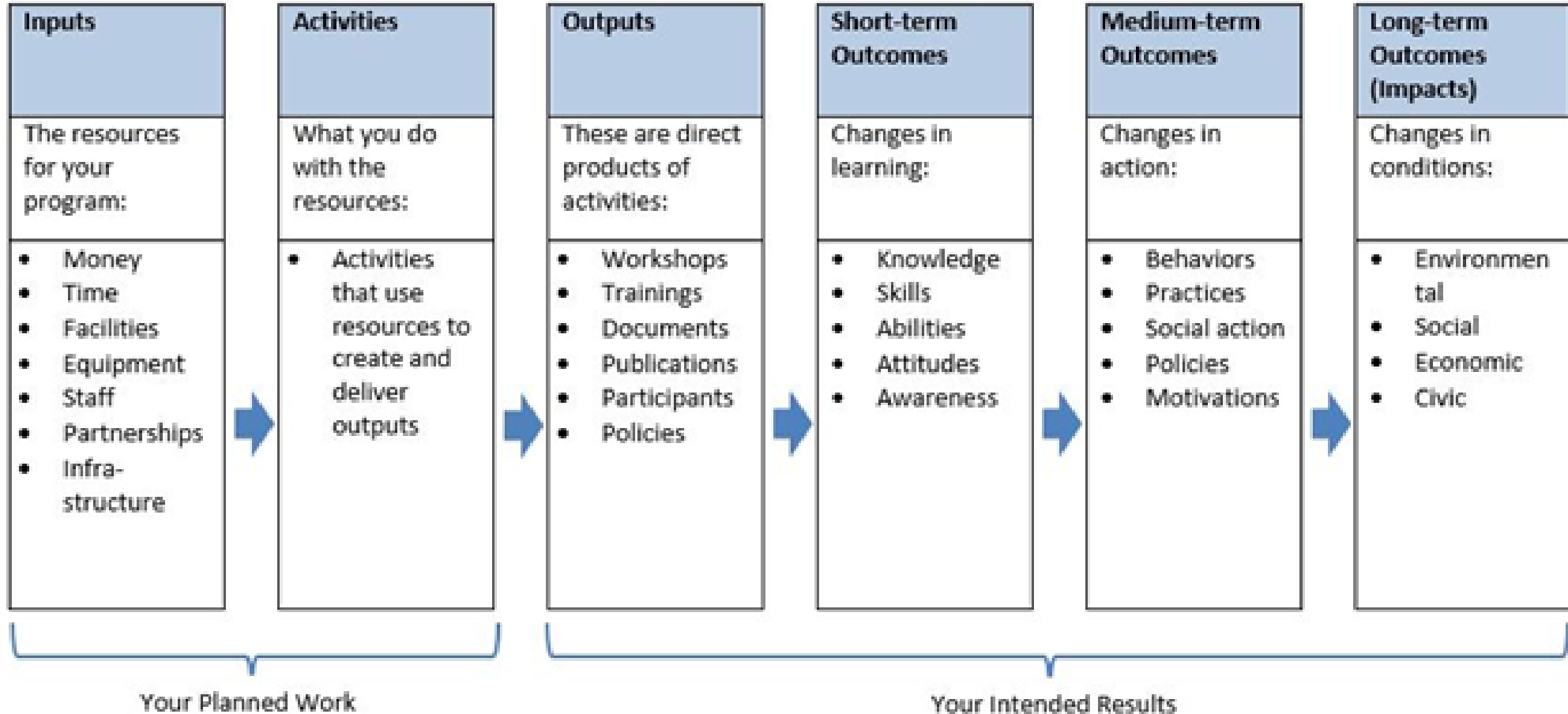
**MAERDAF and RMPIF Grants** both start with an initial, short summary of your project – called an LOI (Letter of Intent) – 1<sup>st</sup> of two phases

In this phase, you are asked to present your project idea as succinctly as possible. It includes:

- Your name and your organization's name
- The total funds you are requesting
- Your matching funds (not required for MAERDAF, but it helps)
- Your total project budget
- Your project start date and end date (within Aug 1 – June 30)
- Your focus area (Ag and Forestry Education, Community & Economic Development, Health Care, Regional Planning)
- Project Narrative with Maximum Character Count of 2,500 characters. The narrative is your chance to describe what you are going to do. For Rural Maryland Grants, there's less need to spend a lot of time describing the problem – focus on your solution.
- In developing a solution, use a “logic model” as a guide. Look for model examples, evidence-based programs that exist out there in the world.



## Program Logic Model Description





**Example** – A rural agricultural organization wants to support small farms in the region to expand their markets and become more successful. They decide to offer food safety training so small farmers can sell to larger distributors that require food safety certification.

<b>Inputs</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Short term outcomes</b>	<b>Medium term outcomes</b>
Staff or Consultants	Develop & execute training program	12 week training 20 participants	Farmers gain knowledge	Farmers start new practices

**Long term Outcomes** – Farmers become food safety certified, reach new markets, earn more income, improved economic development for the region.



**Example** – A regional mental health provider wants to improve its capacity by implementing an electronic health record system to become more efficient, better track client progress and streamline their billing system.

<b>Inputs</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Short term outcomes</b>	<b>Medium term outcomes</b>
Purchase system	Train staff to use it	Develop implementation plan	Enhanced organizational knowledge & skills	More efficient organizational operations & capacity

**Long term Outcomes** – More citizens can have access to mental health care & the community is healthier as a result.





# Goals, Objectives and Outcome Measures

GOAL – Big Broad Picture

Objectives – The steps you will take towards meeting that goal – the activities.

S.M.A.R.T. Outcome measures – How do you measure success?

- Specific (who will do exactly what?)
- Measurable (how will you measure & what's the target?)
- Achievable (can you do it in the time frame?)
- Relevant (to the outcomes you seek)
- Time-bound (exactly when?)

[**Who**] will do [**what**] resulting in [**measure**] by [**when**].

Outputs – the things you can track

- how many people participated in your program
- what were their demographics (did you reach your intended audience?)

Outcomes – is anyone better off as a result of your efforts?



# Writing tips for grants

- Always create a new Word document, save it in its own folder. Never write directly in the online application - only copy and paste from your Word document – if you don't, it will disappear and you will lose it all.
- Simple language – 8<sup>th</sup> grade level.
- Make it skimmable – be kind to the grant reviewers. You need them to like your proposal.
- Short sentences.
- Shorter paragraphs – plenty of white space on the page.
- NO jargon.
- No abbreviations/acronyms (except *maybe* your organization's name.)
- Don't assume the readers knows anything about the problem, the need, your organization or the local landscape.
- Don't utilize "utilize" when you can simply use "use."
- Never repeat a point (unless you can say it differently.)
- You don't have to tell them EVERYTHING that your organization does, just what's relevant to them or your project.
- Always use their language – give it right back to them.
- Put your ask in bold type in an obvious place like the first sentence of the Project Description.
- Make it easy for the reader to scan your application to know who you are, what you're asking for and **why**.



# The Sustainability Question

- Every grant application asks it.
- They want to remind you that you won't be getting their funding forever, maybe not even next year, and they want to know that you have a plan for that. No funder wants to be a line item in your budget, and no one wants to see you hire someone, and have to discontinue the job next year.
- Good answers include:
  - --- This program is central to our mission and we know we will always need to raise funds for it. Our Board is committed to continuing this program and to find funding for it.
  - --- This is a once and done project – once we seed this program with staffing and supplies, it can pay for itself by the third year, etc.
  - --- With your investment in this software system, we will achieve efficiencies that will cover the ongoing costs for future fees.
  - --- We're continuing to build our fundraising ability through board participation, sending staff to fundraising workshops, etc.
  - --- We've recently hired/found a Development Director/Volunteer with development experience.

## Main points

- MAERDAF & RMPIF have two steps – LOI step and final application.
- Rural Maryland Council wants you to succeed. They want to help you solve the problem in your community.
- Describe your problem and solution in simple language, written on an 8<sup>th</sup> grade level.
- Show support from your stakeholders and community partners.
- Describe your solution in a logical format – Goals, objectives and how you'll track performance.
- Focus on what you'll deliver to the state – new or retained jobs, educated citizens, healthy people, investments in infrastructure.
- Show matching dollars (must for RMPIF.)
- Share any struggles with Rural Maryland Council early, not late.
- Put yourself in the shoes of the reviewers – only need to tell them enough to evaluate the merits of your solution. You can show that through well defined objectives and outcome measures.
- Start thinking about letters of support early – you do not need them for Phase I, but if you're asked to submit a final application, be ready to ask for letters of support right away.

Your Questions?

Happy Friday! Have a good weekend!