



Fiscal Year 2024 Rural Health Care Organizations: Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund Grant Guidelines and Criteria

Overview: The objective of the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund is to help raise the overall standard of living in rural areas to a level that meets or exceeds statewide benchmark averages by 2030, while preserving the best aspects of a pastoral cultural and rural way of life. Resources provided to the Fund are designed to facilitate significant targeted investments in important economic and community development programs and promote regional and intergovernmental cooperation. These investments will also enable local and regional public and nonprofit organizations to leverage additional non-state financial and human resources to facilitate the realization of sustainable rural development objectives. The Fund will serve the interests of the entire State by:

- Encouraging the increase of entrepreneurial activity and commerce and a balanced economy in the State;
- Relieving conditions of unemployment and underemployment in rural areas;
- assisting in the retention of valuable farm and forest land for productive use by present and future generations;
- Promoting intergovernmental cooperation and public sector/private sector partnerships in and between rural and other areas;
- Enhancing the deployment of housing, transportation, water, wastewater, and broadband communications infrastructure and services in rural areas;
- Supporting rural commercial center redevelopment and community revitalization efforts; and,
- Generally promoting the health, happiness, safety, employment opportunity, and general welfare of the residents of each of the rural counties and municipal corporations of the State.

Health Care: Health care access and delivery is a major problem in the State's rural areas. Residents often need to travel great distances to seek health care services due to health workforce shortages. This problem is in primary care, and is particularly acute in specialty care such as surgical specialties, dentistry, mental health and other medical specialty areas.

Eligible health care projects will range from health care planning, to health program implementation and evaluation, and will include projects pertaining to the following:

- 1) Improving access to health and medical/dental/behavioral health care
 - Tele-medicine and telehealth networking
 - Programs that focus on planning and/or coordination of health care
 - Programs that address rural population health needs
 - Programs that ensure health care insurance and treatment enrollment
 - Programs that implement and measure accomplishment of components of the state's rural health plan
- 2) Recruitment and retention of health care and public health professionals
 - Programs to aid recruitment of health care providers
 - Rural residency programs in primary care and medical/surgical specialties and dentistry
 - Housing projects to support rural rotations of medical students/ health professions students
 - Pipeline and pathway programs for future and existing health care workers
- 3) Behavioral and mental health

Programs to address:

- Substance use disorder, including alcohol, opioids and prescription drugs
- Depression and counseling, suicide prevention
- Domestic abuse and violence

4) Programs that implement and measure components of the Maryland Rural Health Plan (<http://mdruralhealthplan.org/>)

- a. Access to care: reduce barriers/remove gaps – primary care, specialists, behavioral health, oral health, and urgent/emergency facilities
- b. Care coordination: explore mechanisms to link health care consumers to services and improve coordination and collaboration between health care providers
- c. Health literacy and health insurance literacy: explore ways to increase individual health literacy and health insurance literacy of consumers
- d. Outreach and education: work with community-based services and health care infrastructure to provide outreach and education to citizens on relevant and emergent health issues

5) Chronic disease prevention and management

- Health education on diabetes, obesity, heart disease, cancers prevalent in rural Maryland, hypertension/high blood pressure
- Disease management programs
- Research and treatment of health impacts on minority populations, and in particular, prenatal care

6) Oral and dental health

Special FY2024 RMPIF Health Care Addition: Projects to support the Rural Nonemergency Medical Transportation Pilot Program. Current healthcare research indicates that one out of five healthcare appointments are missed due to lack of reliable transportation (Syed, 2013). Research indicates that there are as many as 73,000 to 82,000 adult Marylanders who miss at least one or more medical appointments each year. Compared to the rest of the U.S. population, the transportation disadvantaged, the target population, is poorer, more female, includes more minority population groups and suffers more disease co-morbidity.

Over the past year, the Rural Maryland Council and the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland planned and conducted a series of Roundtable meetings to identify existing gaps in health and human services transportation. The purpose of the Roundtable meetings was to facilitate a dialogue between the Maryland transportation, healthcare industries, and public health to develop healthcare transportation coordination and expansion. The findings from these meetings and associated research show rural Maryland needs flexible programs that bring transportation and healthcare together. Specific components of such programs may include: 1) better coordination (between industries, funding sources/coverage), 2) provides interregional transportation, and 3) on demand response transportation options.

Within this year's RMPIF budget, there is an additional \$300,000 dedicated to projects that support the Rural Nonemergency Medical Transportation Pilot program. These proposals are to address nonemergency health and human services transportation projects that must include at a minimum interregional transportation. As with all RMPIF projects, applicants must be able to measure the impact of the project, including populations served and improved health outcomes.

Decisions: Grant award determinations for entrepreneurship, infrastructure and health care applications are made by the independent Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF) Grant Review Board set by law and consisting of the Secretaries (or their designee) of the Departments of

Agriculture, Commerce, Health, Housing and Community Development and Natural Resources as well as the Chair (or the designee) of the Rural Maryland Council. Decisions by the MAERDAF Grant Review Board are final and binding. At the discretion of the Grant Review Board, RMC staff may reach out to applicants for additional information.

Fiscal Year 2024 Funding Availability: For Fiscal Year 2024, the RMC has budgeted \$1,500,000 for health care projects in the General Funds for the health care portion of the RMPHF program.

Special FY2024 Only RMPHF Health Care Addition: Additional \$300,000 for nonemergency medical transportation projects.

Grant awards are subject to funding availability.

Important Dates:

- Grant Process Opening: Monday, April 24, 2023
- Call for Letter of Intent Deadline: Friday, May 19, 2023
 - *Grantees will be notified the week of June 12, 2023 on the Phase 1 decisions.*
- Full Application Deadline: Friday, July 14, 2023
- Awards announced the week of August 14, 2023

Guidelines and Criteria for FY2024 RMPHF Grant Applications

Eligible Applicants: Applicants must be a local government, institute of higher education, regional council, or be a 501(c)(3) IRS tax designation or similar and **serve a regional or statewide rural constituency**. Eligible applicants include federally qualified health centers, area health education centers, local health clinics and other rural-serving health organizations. The applicant does not have to be located in a rural area or in the area it serves.

An official W-9 form furnished by the IRS will be required by all applicants to include in their application. This allows RMC to verify an organization's name, address, and tax identification number. It is important that the address included on the W-9 form matches the address of the organization receiving the grant award.

The State Recognized Regional Councils are eligible entities to apply for RMPHF competitive funds. These projects are encouraged to have co-applicants and multiple sources of funds.

For non-profits, applicants must be in "Good Standing" with the State of Maryland. Go to <https://egov.maryland.gov/BusinessExpress/EntitySearch> to determine if your organization is in good standing with the State of Maryland. We do not require a copy of the certificate; it is sufficient to provide a screen shot and attach it with your application AS LONG AS IT SHOWS WHETHER THE ENTITY IS CURRENTLY IN GOOD STANDING. An explanation for an entity not in good standing must be included with the application otherwise, the application will be rejected.

Eligible Projects: To be eligible, **proposals must be regional (two or more counties) or statewide or intergovernmental (meaning two units of government)** and be completed between August 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024.

Rural Counties: State-determined rural counties are Allegany, Calvert, Caroline, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Dorchester, Frederick, Garrett, Harford, Kent, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Somerset, Talbot, Washington, Wicomico and Worcester. Regional projects may include non-rural counties; the majority of project programming must be provided in rural areas.

Grant Amounts: *GRANT AMOUNTS ARE SUBJECT TO FUNDING AVAILABILITY.* There is no maximum grant amount; however, the Grant Review Board is optimally seeking to fund up to ten to fifteen projects. Past and current RMPIF grantees are eligible for a FY2024 grant if they have met all the requirements of their previous grant agreements, including reporting deadlines.

Eligible Expenditures: The Grant Review Board considers each expenditure as it is detailed in the Application Attachment A.

- Salaries and Wages are allowable expenses. It is strongly encouraged to include a statement on sustainability for future years.
- Administrative costs including construction, leasing and renovation of buildings are eligible expenses. Acquisition of land is not. The purchase or rental of vehicles are eligible expenses. The purchase of equipment is an eligible expense. These administrative expenses should not exceed more than 25% of the grant request. Quotes for purchases and construction work should be included.
- Meals are allowable if the costs are reasonable and a justification is provided that such activity maintains the continuity of the meeting and to do otherwise will impose arduous conditions on the meeting participants.
- Indirect administrative costs are capped at 10%.

Ineligible Expenditures:

- Contributions, donations or subsequent subawards to third parties are ineligible expenses.
- Gift cards are ineligible expenditures.
- Organized fundraising including financial campaigns, solicitation of gifts or bequests, or similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions regardless of the purpose for which the funds will be used are ineligible. Advocacy and lobbying activities are also ineligible.
- Replacement of existing operational costs necessary for the regular business of the applicant is not allowable. Funds must be used to supplement existing funds and not replace (supplant) funds which have been appropriated for the same purpose. Grant funds may not be used to pay for program activities that an applicant is already obligated to pay or has already funded. Grant funds must be used to increase the total amount of funds available to deliver program services.

Match Requirement: Applicants must secure a minimum 50% cash match funds from non-state sources. Federal funds are considered matching cash funds. A stronger cash match will result in a higher score on the grant evaluation. RMPIF funds will not be released until proof of a match is submitted.

Changes and Unused Funds: Only very minor changes in scope are allowed after a grant has been awarded. Some project timelines can also be modified. Unused grant funds must be returned to the Rural Maryland Council no later than July 14, 2024.

Ranking Criteria: The Grant Review Board uses the following criteria in reviewing applications:

1. Basic Criteria: Applicant meets all basic eligibility requirements – it serves a regional (multi-county) or statewide rural constituency (or is a community college).
2. Applicant has clearly identified a well substantiated need and developed a Scope of Work that clearly describes specific project activities and how a RMPIF grant will be used.
3. Proposal will significantly impact the quality of living in rural Maryland. Proposal demonstrates substantial value and lasting impact by providing information which includes relevant background research, opportunities for replication, and a statement of impact.

4. Specific goals and measurable objectives were clearly stated and appear to be achievable. Goals are specific, measurable, achievable, reasonable and time-bound. Its Mission Statement is included and lends itself to the activities and goals addressed in the proposal.
5. The organization has the experience, expertise and resources to deliver on this scope of work. Operational and line-item budgets were included and seem reasonable.
6. The applicant has 50% cash match funds from non-state sources.
7. Other organizations, businesses, agencies and/or other community-based entities have expressed strong support for the organization's work and planned grant activities. Letters of support and other supportive materials (newspapers articles, etc.) were included.
8. Project/proposal falls under one or more of the following priorities (entrepreneurship, infrastructure or health care) and clearly defines a designated benchmark and outcome associated with the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund.

Grant agreements: Awardees are required to execute a grant agreement. A sample blank grant agreement is included as Attachment A.

Record keeping: Grantees are required to record expenditures and file an interim and final report with the RMC. Reporting guidelines are included as Attachment B.

Application Process:

- **Phase 1: Letter of Intent – Due Friday, May 19, 2023 at 11:59pm**
- Access to the online grant platform:
<https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=ruralmaryland>
- **Submitted Proposals will be notified the week of June 19, 2023 of acceptance status.** An invitation to submit a full application and materials to Phase 2 will be provided to accepted proposal applicants only.
- Awards will be announced the week of August 14, 2023.
- Don't let your proposal be declared ineligible on a technicality:
 - Proposals received after the deadline *will not be accepted* and will be deemed ineligible.
 - Proposals must be submitted electronically to be received.

Please contact the RMC Executive Director, Charlotte Davis at charlotte.davis@maryland.gov or (410) 841-5772 for any administrative guidance or questions.