



Fiscal Year 2026 Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund Grant Guidelines and Criteria: Rural Regional Planning and Development Councils

Overview: The objective of the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) 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 cultural heritage 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.

Regional Councils: The General Assembly has established five regional planning and development councils to concentrate on the needs of specific rural regions and ensure that those areas are not overlooked in public policy discussions. Each council serves a three-county area that is geographically, culturally and socio-economically similar. By working together and ignoring jurisdictional lines when need be, the rural regions have become stronger and more effective in finding solutions to the challenges before them.

The regional councils have brought elected, civic, and business leaders in their regions together to help create economic development strategies, preserve and assist agricultural and resource-based industries, obtain federal funding for infrastructure improvements, coordinate and sometimes even manage regional transportation projects (including public transit services), and develop support for a diverse set of public policy initiatives.

Rural regional planning and development assistance will provide grants specifically for projects and activities of the five rural regional planning and development councils and for other multi-county rural improvement efforts. The Councils have established strategic needs within the rural communities which will be reflected in the approved grant agreements.

Fiscal Year 2026: For Fiscal Year 2026, the State has budgeted \$1,925,000 in General Funds for the Regional Planning and Development Council's portion of the RMPIF program. *Grant awards are contingent on funding availability.*

Guidelines and Criteria for FY2026 Regional Council RMPIF Grant Applications

Eligible Applicants: Tri-County Council of Western Maryland, Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland, Upper Shore Regional Council, Mid-Shore Regional Council, Tri-County Council of the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland, and multicounty efforts serving rural communities in areas not served by the regional councils.

Grant Amounts: GRANT AWARDS ARE SUBJECT TO FUNDING AVAILABILITY. Each regional council is eligible to receive \$385,000 in FY2026 for rural regional planning and development assistance. The Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund Grant Review Board will review any applications that may be received from a multicounty effort (Frederick, Carroll, and Harford Counties) in areas not served by an existing regional council.

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 15, 2026. The Grant Review Board may give consideration to assignments and reallocations of approved grants to additional partners.

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

Record keeping: Grantees are required to record expenditures and file an interim by January 15, 2026, and a final report by July 31, 2026, with the RMC. Reporting guidelines are included in Attachment B.

Application Process:

- **Rolling Application Process from Monday, April 21, 2025 to Monday, August 1, 2026**
- **Access to the Regional Councils grant portal is available here:**
<https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=ruralmaryland>
- **A special Access Code is required to access the Regional Council application. Please contact RMC for the Access Code if applicable.**

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



RURAL MARYLAND COUNCIL GRANT AGREEMENT FOR DISBURSEMENT OF FISCAL YEAR 2026
[INSERT RMC GRANT PROCESS] AWARD

Project Name: Project Name

Grantee Name: «Organization_Name»

Address: «Organization_Address_1» «Organization_Address_2»
«Organization_City», «Organization_State» «Organization_Postal_Code»

Federal ID Number: «Organization_TaxId»

Grantee Contact Information			
Fiscal Contact:	Fiscal Point of Contact Person	Project Contact:	Project Point of Contact Name
Title:	Fiscal Point of Contact Title	Title:	Project Point of Contact Title
Organization:	«Organization_Name»	Organization:	«Organization_Name»
Address:	«Organization_Address_1» «Organization_Address_2»	Address:	«Organization_Address_1» «Organization_Address_2»
City:	«Organization_City»	City:	«Organization_City»
State:	«Organization_State»	State:	«Organization_State»
Zip Code:	«Organization_Postal_Code»	Zip Code:	«Organization_Postal_Code»
Phone:	«Organization_Phone»	Phone:	«Organization_Phone»
Email:	Fiscal Point of Contact Email	Email:	Project Point of Contact Email

The [Insert RMC Grant Process] (the “Fund”) provides funding to rural regional planning and economic development organizations, rural community development programs and advanced technology centers at community colleges, as described in State Finance and Procurement Article, Section 2-206 Annotated Code of Maryland (the “Act”). Under the Act, the Rural Maryland Council (“RMC”) (the “Grantor”) has designated the Maryland Department of Agriculture (the “Administering Agency”) to administer the grant with the above named organization. The Administering Agency has designated the following to be its official contact: Charlotte Davis, Executive Director, Rural Maryland Council, 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis, MD 21401 or charlotte.davis@maryland.gov. The following conditions apply.

Grantor and Grantee agree as follows:

The purpose of this Agreement is to provide a grant of Amount Awarded Written dollars (Amount Awarded) to Grantee to assist in achieving the overall project and/or programmatic goals set forth in the Grantee’s Fiscal Year 2026 [Insert RMC Grant Process} Grant Application and referenced in the Scope of Work and Deliverables (“Exhibit 1”) attached to this Agreement and incorporated herein. Specifically, these funds are to be used for those Deliverables as outlined in Exhibit 1.

Significant changes in the scope of work are not permitted. Minor changes that adhere to the original intent of the grant and maintain the essential integrity of the grant’s purpose may be allowed provided the Grantor and the Administering Agency agree that such changes are consistent with the Board’s intent.

Performance under this Agreement commences on **August 1, 2025** and continues until agreed upon services are completed, but in any case no later than **June 30, 2026**.

Upon execution of this Agreement and receipt of "Request for Disbursement" ("Exhibit 2"), the Administering Agency will approve **100 percent** of the Grant funds to Grantee.

Reporting: The Grantee shall provide an interim programmatic and financial report no later than **January 31, 2026** to the Administering Agency. The Grantee shall provide a final programmatic and financial report to the Rural Maryland Council and the Administering Agency Representative no later than **July 15, 2026**. [Regional Councils Grant Agreement will be dated July 31, 2025]

- Interim and final reports shall include **original documentation or certification verifying all grant fund expenditures**, to date. Interim reports shall include a forecast of expenses for the remainder of the grant period. Any overpayment or unspent funds shall be returned to the Grantor in conjunction with the final grant report.
- Interim and final reports must be submitted through the Grant Portal located here <https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=ruralmaryland>.

By signing this agreement, the Grantee certifies that it:

- Complies with all applicable federal, state, and local law, including laws relating to discrimination in employment; and,
- Complies with Maryland's policy concerning drug and alcohol-free workplaces, as set forth in COMAR 01.01.1989.18 and 21.11.08 and shall remain in compliance throughout the term of this agreement.

General Provisions:

1. If Grantee's annual revenue exceeds \$750,000.00 during the preceding fiscal or calendar year, Grantee shall provide to the RMC and the Administering Agency a copy of a certified financial audit report. If Grantee's annual revenue does not exceed \$750,000.00 during the preceding fiscal or calendar year, Grantee shall provide a detailed statement of annual revenues and expenditures.
2. **Inspection of Records.** Grantee shall allow any duly authorized representative of the Administering Agency or the State of Maryland (the "State") to inspect and audit, at reasonable times, all records and documents of the Grantee relating to this Grant, which records shall be retained by Grantee for at least three years after the termination of this Agreement. Grantee shall also submit such other reports or information as the Administering Agency requires.
3. **Acknowledgement.** Grantee shall use the RMC logo to credit and acknowledge the RMC in all programs and promotional materials relating to activities of the project supported by this Grant Funding Agreement to include publications and ads on the web and in print. Any organization receiving funds from the RMC shall give credit to the RMC whenever and wherever credit is being given, including written, oral, broadcast and internet. To ensure proper credit to the RMC Grantees shall:
 - (a) Use the RMC's name and logo on printed materials related to the grant;
 - (b) Link to the RMC website from your organization's website;
 - (c) Include the RMC logo on event signage or publications at your events;
 - (d) Acknowledge our support in Power Point presentations, videos or reports;

- (e) Make an announcement at one of your regular/special events or meetings;
 - (f) Mention the RMC's support in print, radio or television interviews you give about the organization, program or project; and,
 - (g) Grantee shall notify local and state legislators of grant award received, and consider participating in, or sending an organization representative, to the annual legislative event, Rural Maryland Day in February 2026.
4. Grantee's Certifications. As an inducement to Administering Agency to make the Grant, Grantee hereby certifies and warrants that:
- (a) Grantee has all requisite power and authority to enter into this Agreement.
 - (b) This Agreement has been executed and delivered by Grantee in such manner and form as to comply with all applicable laws to make this Agreement the valid and legally binding act and agreement of Grantee.
5. Amendment. This Agreement, or any part hereof, may be amended from time to time only by written instrument executed by the Grantee, the RMC and the Administering Agency.
6. Assignment. Without the prior written approval of Administering Agency, the Grantee may neither assign all or any of the benefits of, nor delegate all or any of the duties imposed by this Agreement.
7. Default. A default shall consist of any breach of any of Grantee's covenants, agreements, warranties or certifications in this Agreement.
8. Remedies Upon Default.
- (a) Upon the occurrence of any default, the Administering Agency shall have the right to terminate this Agreement by written notice to Grantee. In the event of termination, Grantor may require Grantee to repay to [Insert RMC Grant Process] within thirty days of receipt of written notice of default all Grant funds which have been disbursed to Grantee, and Grantee shall have no right to receive any undisbursed Grant Funds.
 - (b) In addition to the rights and remedies contained in this Agreement, the Administering Agency may at any time proceed to protect and enforce all rights available to Administering Agency by suit in equity, action at law, or by any other appropriate proceedings, which rights and remedies shall survive the termination of this Agreement.
9. Indemnification. Grantee releases the Administering Agency, Grantor and the State, and its employees or agents from, agrees that the Administering Agency, Grantor and the State, and its employees or agents shall not have any liability for, and agrees to protect, indemnify and save harmless the Administering Agency, Grantor and the State, and its employees or agents from and against any and all liabilities, suits, actions, claims, demands, losses, expenses and costs of every kind and nature incurred by, or asserted or imposed against, all or any of them, as a result of or in connection with the Grant. All money expended as a result of such liabilities, suits, actions, claims, demands, losses, expenses or costs, together with interest at a rate not to exceed the maximum interest rate permitted by law, shall constitute an indebtedness of Grantee and shall be immediately and without notice due and payable by Grantee to Grantor, Administering Agency, or the State, and/or its employees or agents, as their interests may appear.
10. Entire Agreement. This Agreement represents the complete, total and final understanding of the parties and no other understanding or representations, oral or written, regarding the

subject matter of this Agreement shall be deemed to exist or to bind the parties hereto at the time of execution.

WITNESS: «Organization_Name»

_____	By: _____
Witness Signature	Organizational Representative Signature
_____	Printed Name: _____
Witness Printed Name	Title: _____

WITNESS: Rural Maryland Council

_____	By: _____
Witness Signature	Organizational Representative Signature
_____	Printed Name: <u>Charlotte Davis</u>
Witness Printed Name	Title: <u>Executive Director</u>

**Fiscal Year 2026 [Insert RMC Grant Process]
Grant Agreement**

Exhibit 1

Name of Grantee Organization: «Organization_Name»

Amount Awarded: Amount Awarded

Amount Requested: Amount Requested

Scope of Work Summary:

Scope of Work summary

Deliverables:

Funded deliverables

Exhibit 2: Request for Disbursements

Federal Tax I.D.#: «Organization_TaxId»

Send Check To: Fiscal Point of Contact Person
Fiscal Point of Contact Title
«Organization_Name»
«Organization_Address_1» «Organization_Address_2»
«Organization_City», «Organization_State» «Organization_Postal_Code»

Grant Period: 08/01/2025 to 06/30/2026
Period Covered: Fiscal Year 2026

Grantee Representative	RMC Representative
	Charlotte Davis
Name (please print above)	Name (please print above)
	Executive Director
Title	Title
Date	Date
Signature	Signature
	PCA
	Obj

Grant Portal

Grant Reporting Guidelines

- All grant items must be submitted through RMC's Grant Portal, found here: <https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=ruralmaryland>
- There are two reports due during the grant cycle. The interim is due January 31 and the final report is due July 15.
- A report is in the form of a 'Follow-up' in the RMC grant system. You will be assigned these 'Follow-ups' by email once your grant agreement is processed. You will receive email notices before the report is due. To Access the report, simply log into your grantee dashboard and scroll down to the application. A Follow-up with the associated report will be available in this section by clicking the word 'edit' to the right of the report form.

Interim Report Narrative

The purpose of the Interim Report is to assess your organization's status of project timelines and completion of the awarded project by June 30. We understand that grant awards are still being processed and project outcomes may be minimal. Please complete the Interim report to the best of your ability by January 31.

This report asks that you refer to the *Goals and Anticipated Outcomes* and the *Table of Goals and Measurable Objectives* outlined in your organization's initial LOI and referenced in the *Scope of Work and Deliverables* (Exhibit 1) of your Grant Agreement to answer the following questions.

1. Do you think you need an extension for this project? RMC staff can approve extensions for up to 6 months. If you do need an extension, please reach out to RMC staff by phone and email closer to the June 30 end date.
2. What progress have you made toward achieving the results you described in your proposal during this period? What evidence do you have to demonstrate your success? If you are experiencing difficulty in your progress, please explain?
3. Have there been any significant changes in your organization or the project since the grant was awarded (i.e., executive leadership, staff, facilities, location)?

Final Report Narrative

The purpose of the Final Report is to show the completion of the grant project and to help us understand how it has benefited your organization. Please refer to the *Goals and Anticipated Outcomes* and the *Table of Goals and Measurable Objectives* outlined in your organization's application and referenced in the *Scope of Work and Deliverables* (Exhibit 1) of your Grant Agreement to answer the following questions.

1. Did you achieve the results you described in your proposal during this grant period? What evidence do you have to demonstrate your success?

2. What do you consider to be the greatest strength(s) of your work? What do you consider to be the most important concern(s) – apart from finances – currently facing your organization (or project, if you received project support)?
3. What are the organization's two (2) most significant financial challenges and how are you planning to address them?
4. Have there been any significant changes in your organization or the project since the grant was awarded (i.e., executive leadership, staff, facilities, location)?
5. As applicable, describe any plans for moving forward. What, if anything, will you do differently?

The report narrative should tie back to the scope of work outlined in your original application and referenced in the Scope of Work and Deliverables ("Exhibit 1") listed in your Grant Agreement. It should also address the "Table of Goals and Measurable Objectives" outlined in your original application. An example of a previously submitted *Goals and Measurables Objective Table* is provided below.

Goal	Measurable Objectives
Connect with X number of new individuals	Conducted three (3) community information sessions (give dates of number of individuals in attendance). How many have continued in the program?
Reduce attrition from program	No less than 85% attend at least 8 of 10 sessions
Achieve diverse participation in program	A minimum of 50% women, 25% minority Maryland demographics: 49% Male, 51% Female 76% White, 20% Black, 3% Hispanic, 1% Asian/Other
Establish new businesses in the region	3 new businesses per course, 6 total for year
Create new jobs in the region	6 new jobs per course, 12 total for year
Return on investment	1 new job per ≈ \$5,000.00 spent on program overall 1 new job per \$1,243.54 of MAERDAF funding

Managing for Results (MFR) is a strategic planning, performance measurement, and budgeting process that emphasizes use of resources to achieve measurable results, accountability, efficiency, and continuous improvement in the State's government programs. RMC has been reporting on Grantee MFRs accomplishments since 2019. While grant projects are not required to meet each MFR listed below, we ask that grantees complete those that are applicable, typing 0 (zero) is an acceptable answer. *New for FY2026, we are requesting that applicants complete the MFRs during the Phase II application process to provide the Grant Review Board with better insight into the project's goals and expected outcomes. If awarded, the Grantee will be asked to complete the MFRs in the final report as well.*

- Matching Funds Secured
 - Match Breakdown: State Dollars Secured
 - Match Breakdown: Private Dollars Secured
 - Match Breakdown: Local Dollars Secured
- Number of Jobs Created or Retained

- Number of Loans Made
- Number of Individuals Trained
- Number of Individuals Served
- Number of Individuals Reached
- Number of Instructional Hours Delivered
- Number of Research Projects
- Number of Tools Created (e.g., survey and assessment instruments; training modules; toolkits and guides; data dashboards; software or applications; templates and checklists)
- Number of Services Delivered
- Amount of Funds Invested in Capital Items

Financial Information and Attachments

As outlined in the grant agreement, interim and final reports shall include **original documentation or certification verifying all grant fund expenditures, to date**. Interim reports shall include a forecast of expenses for the remainder of the grant period. Any overpayment or unspent funds shall be returned to the Grantor in conjunction with the final grant report.

For general support grants:

- Organization budget as submitted in the original proposal and actuals for this period. Explain any significant variances
- List the organization's three largest funding sources during this period

For project support grants:

- Organization and project budgets as submitted in the original proposal and actuals for this period. Explain any significant variances
- List other funding sources and amounts received for this project during this period

Attachments

Feel free to include copies of press releases, articles, event announcements that demonstrate or support the information outlined in the report narrative. These can be uploaded through the Grant Portal.

Additionally, as outlined in the original Grant Agreement, interim and final reports should provide documentation to demonstrate the Grantee has acknowledged funding by the RMC. Refer to item number three Acknowledgement under the section titled General Provisions, which states in part, "...the Grantee shall use the RMC logo to credit and acknowledge the RMC in all programs and promotional materials relating to activities of the project supported by this Grant Funding Agreement ..."

Please call our offices at (410) 841-5772 with any questions or comments