



Rural
Maryland
Council

Growing Rural Maryland Together

Grant Information Session

Fiscal Year 2027 Grant Cycle

Investing in healthy communities,
strong economies, and a **thriving**
Rural Maryland.



Healthy
Communities



Vibrant
Economies



Natural Resource
Stewardship



Strong
Partnerships





Who We Are

MISSION is to bring together citizens, community-based organizations, federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to collectively address the needs of rural Maryland.

VISION is a future where all of Rural Maryland is prosperous with thriving resources, vibrant economies, and healthy connected communities.

GOALS

- Encourage **healthy, connected communities** throughout Rural Maryland through convening of stakeholders, education, public relations and advocacy
 - Support the development and growth of **vibrant economies** in Rural Maryland
 - Foster stewardship of Maryland's natural resources
 - Maximize RMC outreach, resources and mission through financial and organizational development
-



About RMC

Established

- Created in **1994** by Executive Order
- Codified in **Maryland law (1995)**

Structure

- Independent State agency housed within the Maryland Department of Agriculture
- Governed by a **40-member Executive Board**
- Operates in a **nonpartisan, nondiscriminatory** manner

Role

- Maryland's **federally designated rural development council**
- Serves as the **voice of rural Maryland**

Funding

- Supported through the **State's Operating Budget**

Fiscal Year 2027 Budget

\$6,047,464

- RMC's Operating Funds- \$697,464
- Grant programs funded at **\$5,350,000**

With appreciation to Governor Moore and the Presiding Officers of the Maryland General Assembly for their continued support.

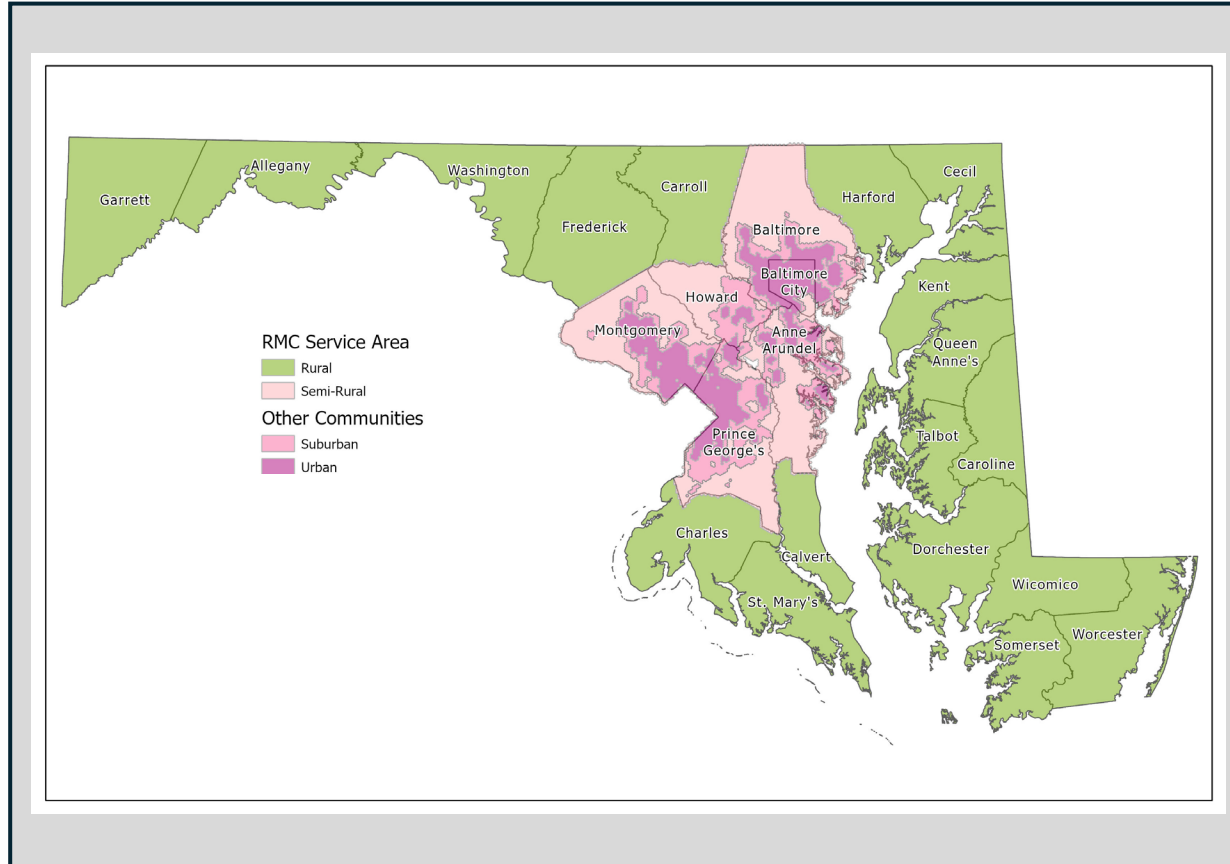
Why We Work

Key Challenges in Rural Maryland

- **High** Unemployment Rates
- **High** Poverty Rates
- **Limited** Access to transportation
- Education **Barriers**
- Healthcare **Disparities**
- **Limited** broadband and Connectivity
- Aging or **Inadequate** Infrastructure
- Economic **Pressure** on Agriculture

Rural Maryland comprises 75% of the State's land area, but only 25% of its population.

Where We Work



- Service Territory
- Allegany
 - Calvert
 - Caroline
 - Carroll
 - Cecil
 - Charles
 - Dorchester
 - Frederick
 - Garrett
 - Harford
 - Kent
 - Queen Anne's
 - Somerset
 - St. Mary's
 - Talbot
 - Washington
 - Wicomico
 - Worcester



How We Work

EDUCATION

- Neutral convener for rural issues (Summits, roundtables, forums)

LEGISLATION

- Advocate for rural priorities
- Support policy development
- Connect communities to government

GRANTS

- Administers key grant programs:
 - MAERDAF – *Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund*
 - RMPPIF – Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund





Grant Programs

- **RMPIF** - Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund
- **MAERDAF** - Maryland Agricultural Education & Rural Development Assistance Fund



MAERDAF

About the program

- Established in 2000
- Supports rural-serving nonprofit organizations
- Focus areas include:
 - Agriculture & Forestry
 - Energy
 - Rural Broadband
 - Youth Engagement & Leadership Development
 - Economic Development
 - Community Development

\$14M+ Invested Since 2002 in rural Maryland

FY2026 Grant Cycle







87 applications received

\$3M requested

\$670,126 awarded

24 organization funded

MAERDAF Focus Areas

 Agriculture & Forestry	 Energy	 Rural Broadband	 Youth Engagement & Leadership Development	 Economic Development	 Community Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural Education • Value Added Food Systems • Forest Industry Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combined Heat Power • Energy Efficiency • Biomass 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Broadband Expansion Efforts, including municipal broadband 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career Technology Centers • Youth Enrichment Programs, including summer programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Development • Education & Workforce Development • Regional Marketing Efforts & Tourism Projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Transportation • Housing repairs • Housing counseling • Poverty Alleviation Efforts



MAERDAF Program Requirements & Eligibility

Purpose

Supports rural-serving nonprofits and community colleges to address key development challenges and build public-private partnerships.

Requirements

- Must serve **2+ rural counties** or statewide
- Project must be completed in **1 year**
- Project timeframe: **Aug 1 – June 30**

Funding & Preferences

- Maximum award: **\$45,000**
- FY2027 funds available: **\$599,735**
- Preference for **secured matching funds**
(*cash preferred over in-kind*)

Eligible Applicants

- 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations
- Regional councils
- Community colleges
- Libraries



Habitat for Humanity Choptank

MAERDAF Eligible Expenditures

What MAERDAF Funds

- Construction & renovation projects
- Equipment and vehicles
- Consultant services
- Meals (*with justification*)

Key Guidelines

- No ongoing staff positions
- Indirect costs capped at **15%**
- Staff time allowed as indirect
- Quotes required for major purchases
- Projects should be **shovel-ready**



Pickering Creek, Talbot County



MAERDAF Ineligible Expenditures

✘ Not Allowed

- Donations, contributions, sub-awards
- Gift cards
- Fundraising activities
- Advocacy & lobbying

⊘ Also Not Allowed

- Purchase of live animals
- Purchase of commodities

MAERDAF Grant Projects

Examples of funded projects across Rural Maryland

Community Development

Aaron's Place

Soup Kitchen Hood

\$44,803

Wor-Wic Community College

Driver Education Program

\$45,000

Salisbury Neighborhood Housing Services

Pear Street Project

\$45,000

Agriculture

Around the Bay Farmer's Alliance

Food Security

\$45,000

Workforce & Education

Building African American Minds

Youth Workforce Development

\$44,500

Allegany College of Maryland

Robotic Welding Training Tool

\$45,000

Vehicles for Change

Mechanics Program

\$45,000

Tourism & Marketing

Beach to Bay Heritage Area

Beach to Bay Indian Trail

\$22,911

Evergreen Heritage Center

Appalachian Coal Camp Project

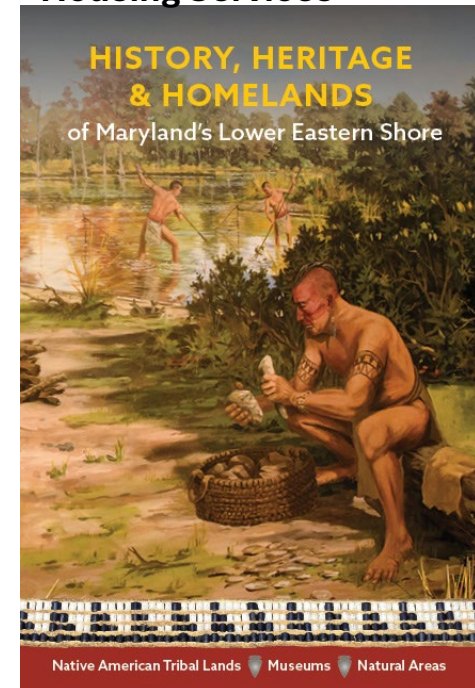
\$25,000



Heart of the Civil War



Salisbury Neighborhood Housing Services



Beach to Bay Heritage Area

Native American Tribal Lands Museums Natural Areas

RMPIF Grant Program

Investing in Rural Maryland's Growth

WHAT IT IS

Authorized in 2006 by the Maryland General Assembly
State-funded grant program supporting rural communities

PURPOSE

Provides **targeted investments** to regional, nonprofit, and educational partners

GOAL

Bring rural living standards closer to **statewide averages**

Amount: \$6M funding secured for FY2027

With support from Governor Moore and the Presiding Officers of the Maryland General Assembly

FY2026 IMPACT

- **78 applications** | \$19.2M requested
- **\$7.8M awarded** to 38 organizations

PRIORITY AREAS

Infrastructure

Entrepreneurship Development

- **Agricultural Development**
- **Cooperative Development**
- **Workforce Development**
 - **Agricultural Apprenticeships**

Rural Health

Regional Councils

RMPIF Focus Area

Entrepreneurship, Agriculture, Workforce & Cooperative Development

Eligible Projects

- Regional (**2+ counties**)
- Intergovernmental (**2+ government partners**)

Match Requirement

- 25% cash match required**
- Federal funds may be used

Funding

- No maximum grant amount
- \$981K available**
- ~10 projects funded

Timeline

- August 1 – June 30

Who Can Apply

- Nonprofit organizations
- Local governments
- Regional councils
- Community colleges
- Institutes of Higher Learning



The Rural Maryland Flower Cooperative

Eligible Project Areas

Entrepreneurship, Agriculture, Workforce & Cooperative Development



Entrepreneurship

Supports small business **growth** through training, technical assistance, and job creation



Agriculture Development

Strengthens agricultural **production** and supports agritourism



Cooperative Development

Helps communities start and grow **cooperative** owned businesses



Workforce Development

Expands apprenticeships and **training** to build the rural workforce

RMPIF Focus Area - Infrastructure

Strengthening essential systems that support rural communities and economic growth

Eligible Projects

- Must be **intergovernmental** (2+ government partners)

Purpose

Supports up to **25% of total project costs** for:

- Broadband, water & wastewater
- Transportation
- Workforce housing
- Commercial/industrial facilities

Match Requirement

- **75% match required** (non-state funds)
- Federal funds may be used

Timeline

- August 1 – June 30

Funding

- No maximum grant amount
- **\$981K available**
- **5–8 projects funded**

Eligible Applicants

- Local Governments
- Regional Councils
- Nonprofits (501c3)
- Community Colleges
- Career Tech Centers
- Institutions of Higher Education
- Libraries

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RMPIF Guidelines - Rural Health

Improving access, workforce, and health outcomes in rural communities

Eligible Projects

- Regional (**2+ counties**)
- Intergovernmental (**2+ government partners**)

Match Requirement

- 50% cash match required**
- Federal funds may be used

Timeline

- August 1 – June 30

Funding

- No maximum grant
- \$981K available**
- 10–15 projects funded**

Focus Areas

- Access to care (medical, dental, behavioral)
- Workforce recruitment & retention
- Behavioral & mental health
- Chronic disease prevention
- Oral health
- Maternal & child health

Eligible Applicants

- Local Governments
- Regional Councils
- Nonprofits (501c3)
- Health Centers & Clinics
- Institutions of Higher Education
- Other rural-serving health organizations

RMPIF Focus Area – Rural Regional Councils

Supporting coordinated regional planning and development across rural Maryland

Who Can Apply

- Regional Councils (5 statewide)
- Multi-county partnerships in unserved areas

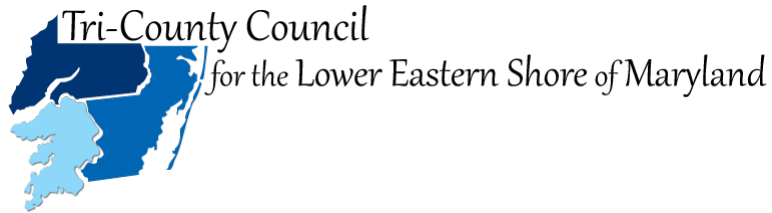
Purpose

- Funds projects led by regional planning & development councils
- Supports **regional coordination and strategic growth**

Funding

- Up to **\$385K per regional council**
- Supports regional & multi-county efforts

Regional Partners



RMPIF Grant Program – Expenditures

Know what can - and cannot - be funded

Eligible Expenses

- Salaries & wages (*with sustainability plan*)
- Construction & renovation (*no land purchase*)
- Equipment & vehicles
- Permitting costs
- Indirect costs (*up to 15%*)

 Must include quotes for major purchases and construction projects

Not Eligible

- Donations, sub-awards, or gift cards
- Fundraising or capital campaigns
- Advocacy or lobbying
- Supplanting existing funding

RMPIF Grant Projects

Infrastructure

Habitat for Humanity of Wicomico County, Inc.

Workforce Housing-Affordability
\$321,360

Adkins Arboretum

Septic System Upgrade
\$49,025

Maryland Broadband Co-op

Connectivity – Building Rural Resilience
\$102,248

Entrepreneurship

Maryland Rural Water Assoc.

Apprenticeship Program
\$55,000

Shore Legal Access

Second Chance – Workforce Program
\$60,000

Rural Health

Cecil Transit

Promoting Access to Health
\$34,310

Shore Legal Access

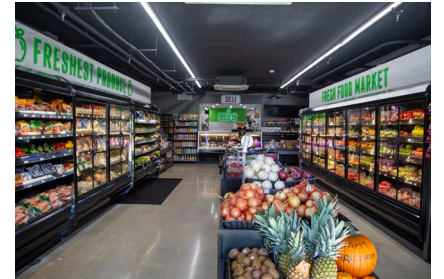
Second Chance – Workforce Program
\$60,000

University of Maryland, School of Medicine

Rural Scholars Program
\$172,500

The Jude House

Health Systems Stabilization
\$45,000





RMC
Rural Maryland Council

Maryland Rural Health Transformation Program

Transforming Rural Health Through Food Systems

About the Program

- Federal initiative to improve rural health through system-wide change
- Maryland awarded **\$168M+** from Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)
- Rural Maryland Council investing **\$4.6M** in local food access projects
- Focus: better health + stronger rural economies

Two Funding Opportunities

Opportunity #1



Food Aggregation (Supply Side)

Build systems that connect farmers to large-scale buyers

Food hubs & aggregation centers

Cold storage & transportation

Processing & packing equipment

Digital ordering/logistics platforms

Opportunity #2



Purchasing Strategy (Demand Side)

Help institutions buy more local, healthy food

• Procurement systems & policies

• Menu planning & kitchen upgrades

• Staff training & nutrition education

• Data tracking systems



Rural Health Transformation Program



Key Grant Dates

- Opens: April 20, 2026
- Deadline: May 15, 2026
- Awards: August 2026

✓ What We're Looking For

Projects that:

- Increase access to healthy, local food
- Support small to mid-size farmers
- Improve community health outcomes
- Build sustainable, scalable systems



Why This Matters

This program is part of a statewide effort to:

- Improve rural health outcomes
- Strengthen local food systems
- Support Maryland farmers
- Build long-term community resilience

👥 Who Should Apply

- **Public Sector:** Local governments, school systems, regional councils
- **Nonprofits:** Community-based organizations, food banks, food councils
- **Education:** Colleges, universities, and training institutions
- **Food System Partners:** Producers, cooperatives, and aggregators
- **Institutions:** Hospitals, childcare centers, and other large-scale food purchasers

- 💰 **Funding Snapshot**
- **\$4.6M Available (FY2027)**
- No maximum award
- Projects: Aug 2026 – Sept 2027
- Match encouraged (not required)

📁 Eligible Expenses

Infrastructure & Equipment

- ✓ Aggregation, storage, and processing equipment

Examples: cold storage units, refrigeration, packing lines, wash stations

- ✓ Vehicles and transportation systems

Examples: refrigerated trucks, delivery vans, mobile market vehicles

Operations & Staffing

- ✓ Project staff salaries and wages

Examples: program managers, coordinators, drivers, food hub staff

- ✓ Program delivery and coordination

Examples: logistics coordination, food safety compliance, outreach support

Systems & Planning

- ✓ Technology platforms and data systems

Examples: online ordering systems, inventory tracking, procurement dashboards

- ✓ Planning, training, and technical assistance

Examples: feasibility studies, food safety training, procurement training

Facility Improvements

- ✓ Minor renovations (up to 20%)

Examples: upgrading packing areas, installing food-safe surfaces, small facility improvements

🚫 Ineligible Expenses

Food & Direct Purchases

- ✗ Purchase of food or produce

Examples: buying fruits, vegetables, or prepared meals

Property & Construction

- ✗ Purchase of property or land

- ✗ New building construction or major expansion

Examples: buying land, constructing new facilities, large-scale renovations

Financial Incentives & Fundraising

- ✗ Gift cards or incentives

- ✗ Fundraising activities or donations

Examples: raffles, sponsorship giveaways, fundraising campaigns

Existing Costs & Pre-Award Expenses

- ✗ Replacing existing funding (supplanting)

- ✗ Pre-award costs

Examples: ongoing operational expenses already budgeted, costs incurred before award date

Unallowable or Duplicate Costs

- ✗ Duplicate payments or services covered elsewhere

- ✗ Costs not directly tied to the approved project

Examples: billing for services reimbursable by insurance, unrelated expenses

The Maryland Rural Health Transformation Program is supported by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award to the Maryland Department of Health totaling \$168,180,837.61 with 100 percent funded by CMS/HHS. The contents of this RFA are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by CMS/HHS, or the U.S. Government.



Grant Administration and Expectations





Grant Decisions

- Grant award determinations for both programs are made by the independent MAERDAF Grant Review Board set by law and consisting of the Secretaries (or their designee) of:
 - Department of Agriculture
 - Department of Commerce
 - Department of Health
 - Department of Housing and Community Development
 - Department of Natural Resources
 - Rural Maryland Council Chair (or a designee)
- *Decisions by the MAERDAF Grant Review Board are final and binding*



Ranking Criteria

- **Eligibility:** Serves a regional (multi-county) or statewide rural population (*or is a community college*) and holds appropriate IRS designation or is intergovernmental
- **Clear Need & Plan:** Demonstrates a well-defined need with a clear Scope of Work and use of funds
- **Goals & Outcomes:** Includes specific, measurable, and achievable objectives
- **Impact (RMPIF Only):** Shows strong potential to improve quality of life in rural Maryland with lasting, replicable results
- **S.M.A.R.T. Goals:** Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound
- **Mission Alignment:** Mission statement is included and supports the proposed activities

Ranking Criteria

Additional Considerations

- **Matching Funds:** Demonstrates equal match from non-state sources *or* strong ability to leverage additional funding
- **Priority Given:** Applications with both financial and in-kind match support
- **Partnerships & Support:** Strong backing from organizations, businesses, or community partners
- **Supporting Materials:** Includes letters of support and relevant documentation (e.g., articles, publications)
- **Project Alignment:** Falls within one or more eligible focus areas

MAERDAF

- Agriculture & Forestry
- Energy
- Rural Broadband
- Youth Engagement & Leadership Development
- Economic Development
- Community Development

RMPIF

- Infrastructure
- Entrepreneurship
 - Agricultural Development
 - Workforce Development
 - Cooperative Development
- Rural Health



Eligible Entities

- **Good Standing (Required)**

Must be in good standing with the State of Maryland

→ Check: egov.maryland.gov/BusinessExpress/EntitySearch

- **Verification**

Submit a screenshot showing current good standing

(Certificate not required)

- **If Not in Good Standing**

Include an explanation or application may be rejected

- **Registration**

Must be registered with the Secretary of State

- **Required Documents**

- Form 990 *(if applicable)*

- IRS W-9 Form

Outputs/Outcomes/Impact

Program Logic Model

A roadmap that shows how your program's resources and activities lead to meaningful change.



Outputs/Outcomes/Impact

Healthcare

- Patients served & services delivered
- Access improvements (*transportation, telehealth, equipment*)
- Workforce & training outcomes
- Community-based services & health outcomes

Economic Development

- Jobs & businesses created
- New products, industries & innovation
- Capital investment & loans
- Workforce training & entrepreneurship
- Tourism & community engagement

Education

- Training programs & courses created
- Individuals trained
- Capital investments in learning tools & facilities
- Workforce & leadership development

Infrastructure

- Environmental & water quality improvements
- Broadband access & connectivity
- Community facility investments
- Transportation & access solutions



Two-Phase Grant Process

Phase 1: Letter of Intent (LOI)

500 words or less | Due May 15, 2026

What You'll Submit:

- Organization overview (*mission, 501(c)(3), prior funding*)
 - Basic project details (*name, contacts, timeline, budget, match*)
 - Project summary (*focus area, narrative, goals, outcomes*)
 - Partnerships & population served
 - Budget + Goals & Measurable Outcomes Chart
-

Phase 2: Full Application (Invitation Only)

1,500-word narrative | Due July 10, 2026

- Expanded project narrative
- Detailed budget & supporting documentation
- Full goals, outcomes & partnerships



Grantee Award Requirements

Administration

- Execute grant agreements
- Maintain recordkeeping
- Provide evidence of expenditures

Reporting

- **Interim Report:** January 31, 2027
- **Final Report:** July 15, 2027

Engagement & Compliance

- Acknowledge RMC funding
- Participate in site visits
- Share project photos



Changes, Extensions & Unused Funds

Key Policies

- Grant Review Board decisions are **final**
- Minor changes are permitted
- Scope and timeline changes require **RMC approval**

Project Extensions

- Up to **6 months** may be approved by RMC staff
- Beyond 6 months requires **Grant Review Board approval**
- Projects extending into the next cycle **should not reapply**
- Complete current projects before applying for new funding

Unused Funds

- Must be returned to RMC by **July 15, 2027**



Tips for a Strong Application

- **Define Your Scope**

Clearly outline your project and how funds will be used

- **State Your Goal**

What are you trying to achieve? Be specific

- **Use a Clear Structure**

Actions – Strategies – Outcomes – Timelines

- **Keep It Simple**

Avoid jargon—write for a general audience

- **Strengthen Your Application**

Include letters of support and supporting materials (*start early!*)

- **Draft Before You Apply**

Use Word or Google Docs to track word/character limits

- **Use Available Resources**

- Watch RMC's Grant Writing Workshop
- Visit: rural.maryland.gov
- Explore: grants.maryland.gov



Key Grant Dates

- **Application Opens:** April 20, 2026
 - **Phase 1 (LOI) Due:** May 15, 2026
Notification: Week of June 8, 2026
 - **Phase 2 (Full Application) Due:** July 10, 2026
 - **Awards Announced:** Week of August 17, 2026
-

Awards & Disbursement

- Agreements finalized: **Sept – Nov**
- Award checks mailed: **Oct – Dec**
- Funding is **forward-funded**
- **30–60 day** turnaround for disbursement

How to Apply

Start Here

<https://rural.maryland.gov/grant-opportunities/>

Create Your Grantee Portal Account

Have ready:

- Email address (*username*)
- Contact information
- Organization or fiscal sponsor details (*EIN/Tax ID*)
- Organization website
- Executive Officer contact

Important Reminder

- Save your login information
- Applications can only be accessed through the account used to start them

Click this on
rural.Maryland.gov to access
the Grant Portal





Application Reminder

- **One Application Per Applicant**
- **Collaborator Tool (Grant Portal)**
Invite team members to help complete your application (*Video and written tutorials available in the portal*)
- **W-9 Form Required** - Name and address must match the information submitted in your application



FY2027 Grant Information Session Dates and Locations

Date	Location	Address
Wednesday, April 22, 2026 10:00 am to 12:00 pm	Zoom Teleconference	Zoom Teleconference
Friday, April 24, 2026 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm (Lunch Provided)	Southern Maryland Southern Maryland Association of Realtors	8440 Old Leonardtown Rd Hughesville, MD 20637
Wednesday, April 29, 2026 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm (Lunch Provided)	Western Maryland Garrett County Community Action Committee	104 East Center St. Oakland, MD 21550
Friday, May 1, 2026 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm (Lunch Provided)	Northeastern Maryland Harford County Ag Center	3525 Conowingo Rd. Suite, 700 Street, MD 21154



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rural.maryland.gov

THANK YOU
QUESTIONS? We're here to help.

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