



Overview: The objective of RMPF 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 strengthening rural economies, supporting agricultural viability, conserving working lands and natural resources, and sustaining the quality of life and community character that are central to rural areas, including open spaces, farms, forests, and the shared values of rural residents. 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, Tele-pharmacy 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 the accomplishment of components of the state's rural health plan
 - Rural Nonemergency Medical Transportation: Projects could include the following components 1) better coordination (between industries, funding sources/coverage), 2) provides inter-regional transportation, and 3) on-demand response.
- 2) Recruitment and retention of health care and public health professionals, inclusive of Peer Recovery Specialist and Community Health Workers

- 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) Chronic disease prevention and management
- Health education on diabetes, obesity, heart disease, cancers prevalent in rural Maryland, hypertension/high blood pressure
 - Disease management programs
- 5) Oral and dental health
- Support awareness around the importance of establishing a dental home
- 6) Maternal and Child Health
- Research and treatment of health impacts on minority populations, and in particular, before, during and after pregnancy
 - Support of school-based access to care

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 2027 Funding Availability: For Fiscal Year 2027, the RMC has allocated \$981,250 in General Funds for rural health projects under the rural health portion of the RMPIF program. *Grant awards are contingent on funding availability.*

Important Dates:

- Grant Process Opening: Monday, April 20, 2026
- Call for Letter of Intent Deadline: Friday, May 15, 2026
 - *Grantees will be notified the week of June 8, 2026, on the Phase 1 decisions.*
- Full Application Deadline: Friday, July 10, 2026
- Awards announced the week of August 17, 2026

Guidelines and Criteria for FY2027 RMPIF 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.

All applicants must include an official IRS-issued W-9 form with their application, allowing RMC to verify the organization's name, address, and tax identification number. The address on the W-9 must match the organization's grant award address. If they do not match, payment processing may be delayed.

The State Rural Recognized Regional Councils are eligible entities to apply for RMPIF 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. To check your organization's status, visit [Maryland Business Express](#). We do not require a copy of the certificate; it is sufficient to provide a screenshot 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.

If applicable, applicants must be registered with the Maryland Secretary of State. To verify your organization's registration status, please visit [Maryland OneStop](#). Applicants are required to upload a screenshot of their registration status. If your organization is not registered, you will be asked to provide a brief explanation of your status and any steps being taken to resolve it as part of the application.

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, 2026 and June 30, 2027.

Application Limit: The Rural Maryland Council will accept one application per organization for this grant cycle.

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 an FY2027 grant if they have met all the requirements of their previous grant agreements, including reporting deadlines.

Eligible Expenditures:

- 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 15%.

Ineligible Expenditures:

- Contributions, donations, or subsequent sub-awards 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 that 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.
- Grant funds may not be used to purchase live animals, as the Rural Maryland Council cannot assume responsibility for their care and well-being.

Match Requirement: Applicants must secure a minimum 50% cash match funds from non-state sources for the entire project proposed in the application. 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 15, 2026.

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 an 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 (newspaper 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. The grant agreement must be fully executed and returned to the Rural Maryland Council (RMC) within ninety (90) days of the date it is initially issued to the Grantee for review. Grant agreements not received within this timeframe will be considered abandoned, and the award may be rescinded. A sample grant agreement is available on the RMC grant opportunities webpage.

Record keeping: Grantees are required to record expenditures and file an interim and final report with the RMC. Reporting guidelines are available on the RMC grant opportunities webpage.

Application Process:

- **Phase 1: Letter of Intent – Due Friday, May 15, 2026, at 11:59 pm**
- Access to the online grant platform:
<https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=ruralmaryland>
- **Submitted Proposals will be notified the week of June 8, 2026, 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 17, 2026
- 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 Grant Staff: Executive Director, Charlotte Davis at (410) 841-5772 or charlotte.davis@maryland.gov for any administrative guidance or questions.