



**RMC**  
Rural Maryland Council

## Fiscal Year 2027 Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund Grant Guidelines and Criteria: Regional Infrastructure Project

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**Overview:** The objective of 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 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.

**Infrastructure:** Infrastructure improvement – from traditional public facilities like roads and sewage treatment plants to such increasingly important amenities as workforce housing – is vital to healthy, flourishing communities. For instance, about half of the State’s major sewage treatment facilities and 90 percent of small community wastewater systems are located in rural areas, and many of these are experiencing difficult problems associated with aging collection and treatment infrastructure.

Rural regional infrastructure projects would provide matching grants for projects that involve two or more units of local government and are related to broadband, water, wastewater, transportation, workforce housing, and commercial/industrial facilities up to 25 percent of the total project cost. Workforce housing is defined as housing targeted to 80 to 120 percent of the median income of the community in which the employees work. Other potential projects could include GIS services to modernize and improve utility infrastructure data and renewable energy facilities such as biomass, solar or wind electricity, or thermal heat generators.

**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:** For Fiscal Year 2027, the RMC has allocated \$981,250 in General Funds for infrastructure projects under the infrastructure 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 Infrastructure 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. Community Colleges, Career Technology Centers, Regional Councils, and Libraries are eligible applicants. 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.

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.

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 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 service must be provided in rural areas.

**Grant Amounts:** *GRANT AWARDS ARE SUBJECT TO FUNDING AVAILABILITY.* There is no maximum grant amount designation; however, the Board is optimally looking to fund up to seven to eight infrastructure projects. Past and current RMPIF and MAERDAF 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.
- Construction and renovation of buildings are eligible expenses. Acquisition of land is not. Permitting costs are eligible expenses. Please include quotes of expenditures and ensure that the project is immediately ready for implementation.
- The purchase or rental of vehicles is an eligible expense. The purchase of equipment is an eligible expense.
- Indirect administrative costs are capped at 15%.

**Ineligible Expenditures:**

- Contributions, donations, or subsequent sub-awards to third parties are ineligible expenses.
- Gift cards are also ineligible.
- 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.
- RMPIF funds are not to supplant existing funding from other sources.
- 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 Requirements:** Applicants must have secured at least **75% matching funds** from non-state sources for the entire project proposed in the application. **A match is required for infrastructure projects.** Federal funds are considered matching funds. Local, private, and federal funds for the required match are preferred.

**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, 2027.

**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. The proposal will significantly impact the quality of living in rural Maryland. The proposal demonstrates substantial value and lasting impact by providing information that 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 must be 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 significant matching funds of at least 75% of the total project cost 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 complement the project narrative. Letters of support and other supportive materials (newspaper articles, etc.) were included.
8. The 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 Executive Director, Charlotte Davis at [charlotte.davis@maryland.gov](mailto:charlotte.davis@maryland.gov) or (410) 841-5772 for any administrative guidance or questions.