



Fiscal Year 2027 – Application Instructions **Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund**

The **Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF)** is administered by the Rural Maryland Council (RMC). 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. RMPIF has the following focus areas:

FOCUS AREA #1: 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.

FOCUS AREA #2: RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP, RURAL AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT, RURAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, AND RURAL COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT

RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: RMPIF promotes entrepreneurship and assists efforts that provide training and technical assistance to entrepreneurs who can help build prosperous and sustainable rural communities by creating jobs, raising incomes, creating wealth, and improving the quality of life. Rural entrepreneurship development would provide matching grants for entrepreneurial development activities of rural-serving nonprofit organizations and higher education institutions. Entrepreneurship, a key economic development strategy, supports existing rural business sectors (including agriculture and tourism), as well as innovation in technology and other economic development areas.

RURAL AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT: Agriculture remains Maryland’s largest commercial industry and is particularly important to rural communities. Maryland’s agricultural and resource-based industries generate more than \$20 billion in economic activity, support over 70,000 jobs, and contribute hundreds of millions of dollars annually in state and local tax revenue. The sector also includes growing opportunities in value-added agriculture and agritourism, which strengthen rural economies and support farm viability.

RURAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: The Council supports apprenticeships, transitioning programs, and community colleges so adults can stay in rural areas and become part of the rural workforce. Efforts to improve career and technology education through the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, including specifically agriculture education. Examples include but may not be limited to apprenticeship programs, STEM education, and summer enrichment programs. *Note – The FY2027 grant period may run from August 1, 2026, to June 30, 2027. The Council understands that programs that take place during the summer months may fall outside this designated time frame and special consideration will be made to accommodate these programs.*

In alignment with statewide priorities, RMC encourages the development and expansion of agricultural apprenticeship programs that create career pathways for students and adults into both on-farm and agricultural support occupations. These efforts aim to strengthen the agricultural workforce pipeline by supporting hands-on training opportunities in fields such as agronomy, agricultural engineering, veterinary services, conservation, and agribusiness. Projects that address barriers to establishing or scaling agricultural apprenticeships, including partnerships with industry, educational institutions, and workforce entities, are strongly encouraged.

RURAL COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT: The Council supports programs that improve the economic conditions of rural areas by helping individuals and businesses start, expand, or improve rural cooperatives and other mutually-owned businesses.

FOCUS AREA #3: RURAL HEALTH

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 about the following:

- Improving access to health and medical/dental/behavioral health care
- Recruitment and retention of health care and public health professionals
- Behavioral and mental health
- Chronic disease prevention and management
- Oral and dental health

REGIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT 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.

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.

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
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Fact Sheet and Guidelines for FY2027 RMPIF Grant Applicants

- The RMPIF grant process is a **TWO-PHASE ONLINE APPLICATION PROCESS**. Phase 1 consists of a Letter of Intent (LOI) format. The Grant Review Board will review these LOIs and determine whether an applicant may move forward into Phase II. Phase II is by invitation only. Grant awardees will be announced in August.
- **GRANT ELIGIBILITY**
 - **INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT ELIGIBILITY:** 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. Project must be intergovernmental (meaning two units of government).
 - **ENTREPRENEURSHIP GRANT ELIGIBILITY:** 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.
 - **RURAL HEALTH GRANT ELIGIBILITY:** 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.
 - **REGIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS' ELIGIBILITY:** 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. *A special Access Code is required to access the Regional Council application. Please contact RMC for the Access Code if eligible.*
- **ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS** must be in "Good Standing" with the State of Maryland. To check your status, go to <https://egov.maryland.gov/BusinessExpress/EntitySearch>.

- **ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS** must be registered with the Maryland Secretary of State Maryland, if applicable. To check your status, go to https://onestop.md.gov/list_views/62f3e1797f7e3200016a3dab
- **STATE DESIGNATED RURAL COUNTIES:** Allegany, Calvert, Caroline, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Dorchester, Frederick, Garrett, Harford, Kent, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Somerset, Talbot, Washington, Wicomico, and Worcester.
- **GRANT AMOUNT:** *Grant awards are subject to funding availability.*
 - **INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT AMOUNT:** There is no maximum grant amount: The State has budgeted \$981,250 in General Funds for the infrastructure portion of the RMPIF program.
 - **ENTREPRENEURSHIP GRANT AMOUNT:** There is no maximum grant amount: The State has budgeted \$981,250 in General Funds for the infrastructure portion of the RMPIF program.
 - **RURAL HEALTH GRANT AMOUNT:** There is no maximum grant amount: The State has budgeted \$981,250 in General Funds for the infrastructure portion of the RMPIF program.
 - **REGIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS AMOUNT:** Each of the five Rural Regional Councils is eligible to receive \$385,000
- **MATCH REQUIREMENTS:**
 - **INFRASTRUCTURE MATCH REQUIREMENTS:** Applicants must have secured at least **75% cash match** funds from non-state sources. A match is required for infrastructure projects. Federal funds are considered matching funds. Local, private, and federal funds for the required match are preferred.
 - **ENTREPRENEURSHIP MATCH REQUIREMENT:** Applicants must secure a minimum **25% 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.
 - **RURAL HEALTH 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.
 - **REGIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS MATCH REQUIREMENT:** No match requirement.
- **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 before July 15, 2027.
- **PAST AND CURRENT GRANTEEES ARE ELIGIBLE** for an FY2027 grant if they have met all the requirements of their previous grant agreements, including reporting deadlines.
- **THE MAERDAF GRANT REVIEW BOARD** comprises representatives appointed by six state agencies. Decisions are final and binding. Those agencies are the Rural Maryland Council Board Chair, the Maryland Department of Agriculture, Commerce, the Department of Health, the Department of Housing & Community Development, and the Department of Natural Resources.

Application Process

❖ Phase 1: Letter of Intent Proposals – Due Friday, May 15, 2026, 11:59 pm

- (1) Phase 1 of the RMC grant process consists of a Letter of Intent (LOI). The purpose of the LOI component is to summarize a project proposal from the organization that is applying for the grant.
- (2) Grant Applications will only be accepted through the RMC online grant portal, located by clicking this link- <https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=ruralmaryland>. You can also access the portal from the RMC website under the Grant Opportunities Page. Simply click on the RMC logo icon to access the grant portal and create an account or access an existing account. Please have the following information on hand to create your organization's account.
- (3) An email address will act as your username and you can make up your password. Please retain a record of your login information as you will need it in the future to access your in-progress applications and your online application history. If at any time you forget your password, simply click 'Forgot Password' and you can easily generate a new one.
- (4) It is recommended that you work on your project summary in Word or Google Docs and copy and paste it into the document once finalized. An application can be saved throughout the process.
- (5) The information needed for the LOI is the following:

Phase I

- a. Grant Opportunity Selection – Choose the RMPIF Grant Program
 - i. 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 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 RMPIF are designed to facilitate significant targeted investments in important economic and community development programs and promote regional and intergovernmental cooperation.
- b. Choose your grant program focus area:
 - Eligible Project Categories**
 - **Infrastructure**
 - **Entrepreneurship (General)**
 - Agricultural Development
 - Workforce Development
 - Cooperative Development
 - **Rural Health**
- c. Organization Mission Statement

- d. Is your organization a 501(c)3 as designated by the IRS?
 - e. SDAT Organization Status Check
 - f. Maryland Secretary of State Registration Check
 - g. Organization's Jurisdiction
 - h. Has your organization received grant funding from RMC in the past 5 years?
 - i. If your organization has received grant funding in the past 5 years, you will select the awarded years.
 - j. Organization's legislative district
 - k. Project name, project point of contact name, project point of contact email, fiscal point of contact name, fiscal point of contact title, fiscal point of contact email, fiscal address
 - l. Grant amount requested – no funding cap
 - m. Total match
 - n. Total project budget (grant amount + total match = project budget)
 - o. Project start date and end date
 - p. Project narrative (575 words or 1 page single-spaced)
 - q. Project goals and anticipated outcomes
 - r. Partnerships
 - s. Rural geographic area
 - t. Region served
 - u. Population served
- (6) Forms to complete and upload
- a. **Tentative Goals & Measurable Objectives Chart** - The purpose of this chart is to provide a clear and concise summary of the project's goals and measurable objectives, assisting both the applicant in planning and the reviewer in evaluation.
 - b. **Tentative Budget Submission** - The purpose of this form is to provide reviewers with a general understanding of the financial scope and key expenses associated with your proposed project.

If selected to move forward to the Phase II application process, you will be required to complete and submit these forms again.

❖ **Applicants of submitted proposals will be notified the week of June 8, 2026, by email of their grant status (accepted or declined). Accepted applicants will have access to the Phase II - Full application process only. Grant Review Board decisions are final and binding.**

- (7) The Grant Review Board and RMC staff understand that changes may occur between Phase I and Phase II of the grant application process. For example, your budget may have changed, or maybe your focus area. You can make these changes on the full application.

PHASE II

- (8) Information needed for the Phase II – Full Application is the following:
- a. Amount requested
 - b. Total cash match
 - c. Total project budget

- d. Project narrative – Full application: Your LOI submission will carry over into the full application. Space is provided to expand on the narrative provided in the LOI. (1,600 words or 3.5 pages single-spaced). It is recommended that you expand your narrative for the full application.
- e. Return on Investment (ROI) – Provide tangible benefits and value that the RMC investment will bring the project
- f. Project Summary - The project summary will be used to highlight your project in RMC grant related reporting. This should be one paragraph and contain information about your organization (e.g. mission statement), information about your project, and the project goals and outcomes.
- g. Managing For Results (MFR) - MFR is a strategic planning, performance measurement, and budgeting process that focuses on utilizing resources effectively to achieve measurable outcomes, accountability, efficiency, and continuous improvement in state government programs.

RMC has been reporting on Grantee MFR accomplishments since 2019. While grant projects are not required to meet every listed MFR, applicants are expected to provide information on those that are applicable. If an MFR does not apply to the project, entering "0" (zero) is an acceptable response.

- 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
- h. Project start date and end date
 - i. Population served
 - j. Rural geographic area served
 - k. Forms to upload – Applicants must use forms provided by RMC
 - i. Board I Commission I Town Councils Resolution Letter
 - ii. Goals and Measurable Objectives Chart
 - iii. Proposed Operational Budget and Linee-Item Budget
 - iv. Vendor/Cost Documentation Form

- v. Evidence of Matching Funds
- vi. Project Readiness Documentation
- vii. Form 990
- viii. W-9 Form (the address on this form must match the address on the application for your organization)
- ix. IRS Determination Letter
- x. Strong Letters of Support and Materials – At least one current letter of support that is related to the proposal are recommended.
- l. Matching funds explanation
- m. Population served

❖ **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 through the RMC grant portal.
- Email notifications that the form has been received will be submitted to the Applicant Point of Contact (POC) email addresses, provided on the form, upon submission. The POC should check their email regularly the week of June 8, 2026, for the RMC grant decision notification.

❖ **Administrative Requirement**

- The Rural Maryland Council will accept one application per organization for this grant cycle.
- 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.

❖ **Application Resources**

- Visit RMC's Grant Opportunities website to access the grant portal, program instructions, and sample documents.
- 'Collaborator' Feature: The Collaborator feature allows applicants to work together on a single request. Once an applicant has started the grant process, they will see the Collaborate button at the top of the page. This can be used to invite other people to work on this request. Please see the tutorial on the online platform once the user creates an account. A tutorial is available on the application. Note that a "Collaborator" cannot submit the application.
- RMC Grant Writing Workshop – click [here](#) for the recording.

If you have any questions, please contact **Megan D'Arcy, Program Administrator at the Rural Maryland Council** at: megan.darcy@maryland.gov or 410-841-2744 (O) and 667-458-9101 (M).

Thank you for applying!