



Rural Readiness Program Guidelines and Application Criteria

The Rural Readiness Program is aimed at supporting community place-based economic development and capacity building in rural Maryland

Program Overview: The Rural Readiness Program is designed to foster sustainable economic development and strengthen community capacity in rural Maryland. By supporting place-based initiatives, the program aims to empower local communities to develop tailored solutions that promote economic resilience, improve infrastructure, and enhance quality of life.

Program Goals:

- Promote economic diversification and growth in rural areas.
- Strengthen community organizations and leadership capacity.
- Support innovative, community-driven projects aligned with local needs.
- Facilitate partnerships among community stakeholders, businesses, and government agencies

Eligibility Criteria:

Applicants who live or work within Maryland's 18 designated rural areas and represent:

- community-based non-profit organizations,
- local government entities,
- tribal groups, or
- other community groups operating within rural Maryland.

Applicants should have a Program/Project Focus. Proposed projects or programs must directly contribute to place-based economic development or capacity building within the community.

Geographic Scope: Projects should be located in or serve designated rural areas of Maryland, as defined by Maryland's rural designation.

Partnerships: Preference will be given to applicants demonstrating collaboration with local stakeholders, including businesses, educational institutions, or other community organizations.

Application Requirements:

A letter of interest from interested individual with resume.

Letters of interest should include:

Project or Program Narrative: A description of the project or program, including objectives, activities, expected outcomes, and alignment with Rural Maryland Council grant priorities.

Community Impact: Evidence of how the project or program will benefit the targeted rural community(s) and promote sustainable development.

Capacity Building Plan: Outline of how the project or program will strengthen local capacity, including leadership development, organizational infrastructure, or technical assistance

Supporting Documentation: Letters of support from partners, community endorsements, or relevant statistical data demonstrating community needs.

Selection Criteria:

Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

- Relevance and clarity of project or program goals.
- Potential for long-term community impact.
- Feasibility and sustainability of the project or program plan.
- Strength of partnerships and community involvement.
- Innovation and alignment with rural development priorities.

Duration:

Cohort training will be held covering 6 to 8 sessions between September and December 2026. Projects and programs should typically be completed within Fiscal Year 2028 (July 2027-June 2028).

Application Submission:

Submission Deadline: August 1, 2026

Format: A letter of interest and resume must be submitted electronically at rmc.mda@maryland.gov.

Contact for Inquiries: Charlotte Davis
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Note: Applicants are encouraged to review all guidelines carefully and contact program staff with any questions prior to submission.