

# RURAL MARYLAND COUNCIL

# 2024

*Fiscal Year*

## ANNUAL REPORT



**RMC**  
Rural Maryland Council

## Letter from the RMC Chair and Executive Director



Governor's Buy Local Cookout - Image courtesy of the Maryland State Archives-RMC Intern Ezekiel Nosiri, Governor Wes Moore, RMC Executive Director Charlotte Davis and Board Chair Susan O'Neill

### *We are pleased to share with you the Rural Maryland Council's Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Report.*

As an independent state agency, the Rural Maryland Council (RMC) must report each year to the Governor, our budget leaders, and the Maryland General Assembly on our activities and grant expenditures. The state's Fiscal Year began on July 1, 2023, and ended on June 30, 2024. This report documents all grant expenditures as well as the activities of the Council during this time.

Thanks to the support of Governor Wes Moore, President Bill Ferguson, Speaker Adrienne Jones, and the legislators of the Maryland General Assembly, the Rural Maryland Council received historic funding from the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund in the amount of \$9,050,000 in the Fiscal Year 2024 State's Operating Budget along with the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund, which received \$118,485. We also received an additional \$300,000 for non-emergency medical transportation programs. These programs invest in our state's rural communities, create economic opportunities and improve the quality of life. A full list of grant awards is included in this report.

In Fiscal Year 2024, the Council awarded ninety-eight grants, and a total of \$8,714,679 was distributed. Under the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund, the Council distributed five grants to the regional councils in the amount of \$3,000,000; seventeen health care grants in the amount of \$1,541,120; four grants for non-emergency medical transportation in the amount of \$191,803; twenty-two entrepreneurship grants in the amount of \$1,516,156; and eleven Infrastructure grants in the amount of \$1,537,599. The Council awarded \$969,121 to thirty-nine grants under the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund.

The Council received \$750,000 for general operating expenses, the majority of which was spent on staff salaries and benefits (\$421,897.98).

### LOOKING AHEAD

**Cybersecurity in Agriculture** - The Council plans to host a Cybersecurity in Agriculture Forum on July 17, 2024, at Cecil College. This event will feature expert speakers, insightful discussions, and networking opportunities focused on protecting our agricultural systems. Cybersecurity is critically important in protecting Maryland's food and agriculture industry. This forum will provide farmers, agricultural entrepreneurs, and relevant stakeholders the opportunity to learn about the cybersecurity and privacy threats and challenges that come with the use of modern information technology in food production, transportation, and agriculture.

**Strategic Plan Update** - RMC's current strategic plan expires at the end of calendar year 2024. In order to have a new plan in place before the current plan's expiration, RMC will hire a consultant to interview stakeholders and RMC members. A board retreat was held in Caroline County on June 27, 2024, to begin work on the updated plan.

**Reconvening the Youth Engagement Committee** Rural areas and their populations, overall, are generally older demographically due to the attraction of retirees to rural communities and the out migration of youth for education or economic opportunities. From 2014 to 2016, the Rural Maryland Council hosted youth engagement activities in four counties—Kent, Queen Anne's, Cecil, and Allegany. The committee will reconvene in 2025 to identify ways to engage youth in civic strategies, apprenticeships, and workforce development.

As a collaborative partnership, the RMC operates in a nonpartisan and nondiscriminatory manner. Policymakers and managers from stakeholder agencies and organizations at all levels of government and the private sector are valued participants. Where practical, the decision-making undertaken by the RMC is made by reaching a consensus.

Real change only happens when an organization makes a strategic decision to go directly to the source to discover the real issues and works with the people who really understand what's going on to solve problems. Consider being part of this important work and become an RMC member today by visiting our website [rural.maryland.gov](http://rural.maryland.gov). RMC meetings and events are open to anyone who is interested in improving rural communities.

Sincerely,

**SUSAN O'NEILL**  
RMC Board Chair

**CHARLOTTE DAVIS**  
RMC Executive Director

# Recognizing RMC Board Members *and* Staff

## OFFICERS

**Susan O'Neill**  
Chair, *Executive Director of Upper Shore Regional Council*

**Greg Padgham**  
First Vice-Chair, *Executive Director of Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland*

**Dr. Heidi Anderson**  
Second Vice-Chair, *President of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore*

## REPRESENTING MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

The Honorable **Sheree Sample-Hughes** – *Delegate*  
The Honorable **Brian Crosby** – *Delegate*

## REPRESENTING MARYLAND SENATE

The Honorable **Katie Fry Hester** – *Senator*

## STAFF

**Charlotte Davis** – *Executive Director*  
**Megan D'Arcy** – *Program Administrator*  
**Molli Cole** – *Program Coordinator*  
**Amanda Clevenger** – *Administrative Assistant*

*We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to **Amanda Clevenger** for her dedicated years of service as the Administrative Assistant to the Rural Maryland Council from 2017 to 2024. Her commitment and hard work have been invaluable to our mission and greatly appreciated by all.*

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**Mike Thielke**  
Joint Planning and Development Committee, *Executive Director of Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center*

**Lindsay Thompson**  
Legislative Committee, *Thompson Ag Consulting*

**Matthew Tefteau**  
Agriculture Committee, *Government Affairs Manager of Choptank of Electric Cooperative*

**Scott Warner**  
Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund Chair, *Executive Director of Mid-Shore Regional Council*

**Daniel Rider**  
Representing Rural Maryland Foundation, *Maryland Forest Program Director of Maryland Department of Natural Resources*

**John Hartline**  
Immediate Past Chair, *Executive Director of Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland*

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

**Machelle Dwyer**  
Representing District 1 (Garrett, Allegany, and Washington Counties), *Washington County Economic Development*

**Elizabeth Chung**  
Representing District 2 (Frederick, Carroll, and Harford Counties), *Asian American Center of Frederick*

**Chris Kaselemis**  
Representing District 3 (Charles, Calvert, and St. Mary's Counties), *St. Mary's County Office Department of Economic Development*

**Dan Schneckenberger**  
Representing District 4 (Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's Counties), *Quantico Creek Sod Farm and Baywater Farm*

**Debbie Bowden**  
Representing District 5 (Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot Counties), *Caroline County Economic Development*

**D'Shawn Doughty**  
Representing For Profit Organizations, *Green Street Housing, LLC*

**Bill Valentine**  
Representing State At-Large, *Retired, Allegany County Commissioner*

**Mollie Byron**  
Representing the Governor's Office, *Director, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs*

**Cassie Shirk**  
Representing Maryland Department of Agriculture, *Assistant Secretary*

**Lori Ratzburg**  
Representing Maryland Department of Commerce, *Senior Director*

**Cindy Stone**  
Representing Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, *Director*

**Sara Seitz**  
Representing Maryland Department of Health, *Director, Office of Rural Health*

**Jinhee Kim**  
Representing University of Maryland Extension, *Professor and Assistant Director*

**Leanne Mazer**  
Representing Tri-County Council for Western Maryland, *Executive Director*

**Craig Hartsock**  
Representing Western Maryland Resource Conservation and Development Council, *President*

**John Kinnaid**  
Representing the Maryland Municipal League, *Mayor, Town of Thurmont*

**Zack Tyndall**  
Representing the Maryland Municipal League, *Mayor, Town of Berlin*

**Jack Wilson**  
Representing the Maryland Association of Counties, *Board of Commissioners, Queen Anne's County*

**Keasha Haythe**  
Representing the Maryland Association of Counties, *Council Member, Talbot County*

**Elizabeth Hulett**  
Representing Maryland Association of Public Library Administration, *Director, Western Maryland Regional Library*

**Santo Grande**  
Representing Maryland Association of Community Action Agencies, *Executive Director, Delmarva Community Services*

**Ashton Shipley**  
Representing Maryland Farm Bureau

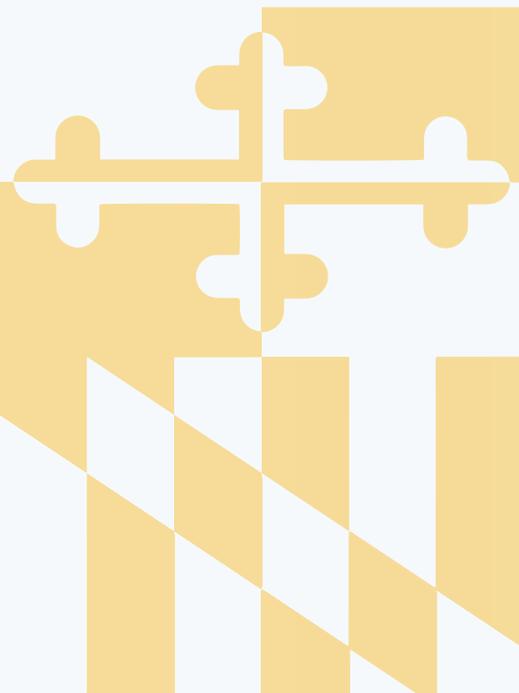
**Grayson Middleton**  
Representing Delmarva Chicken Association, *Government Affairs Manager*

**Beth Hill**  
Representing Maryland Forest Association, *Executive Director*

**Steve McHenry**  
Representing Special Appointment, *Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO)*

**Jerry McLaurin**  
Representing Special Appointment, *People for Change*

**Andrew Dinsmore**  
Representing United States of Agriculture Rural Development, *State Director*



# History, Mission, Vision

*In 1994, the Rural Maryland Council (RMC) was initiated by the Governor as the Maryland Rural Development Council (Executive Order 01.01.1994.14) and then codified by statute in 1995 as the FORVM for Rural Maryland. In July 2003, the FORVM was restructured as the Rural Maryland Council.*

**OUR 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. The RMC is an independent state agency located within the Maryland Department of Agriculture. We provide a venue for members of the agriculture and natural resource-based industries, healthcare facilities, educational institutions, businesses, economic and community development organizations, nonprofit entities, and government agencies to cross traditional boundaries, share information, and address the special needs and opportunities in rural Maryland in a holistic way.

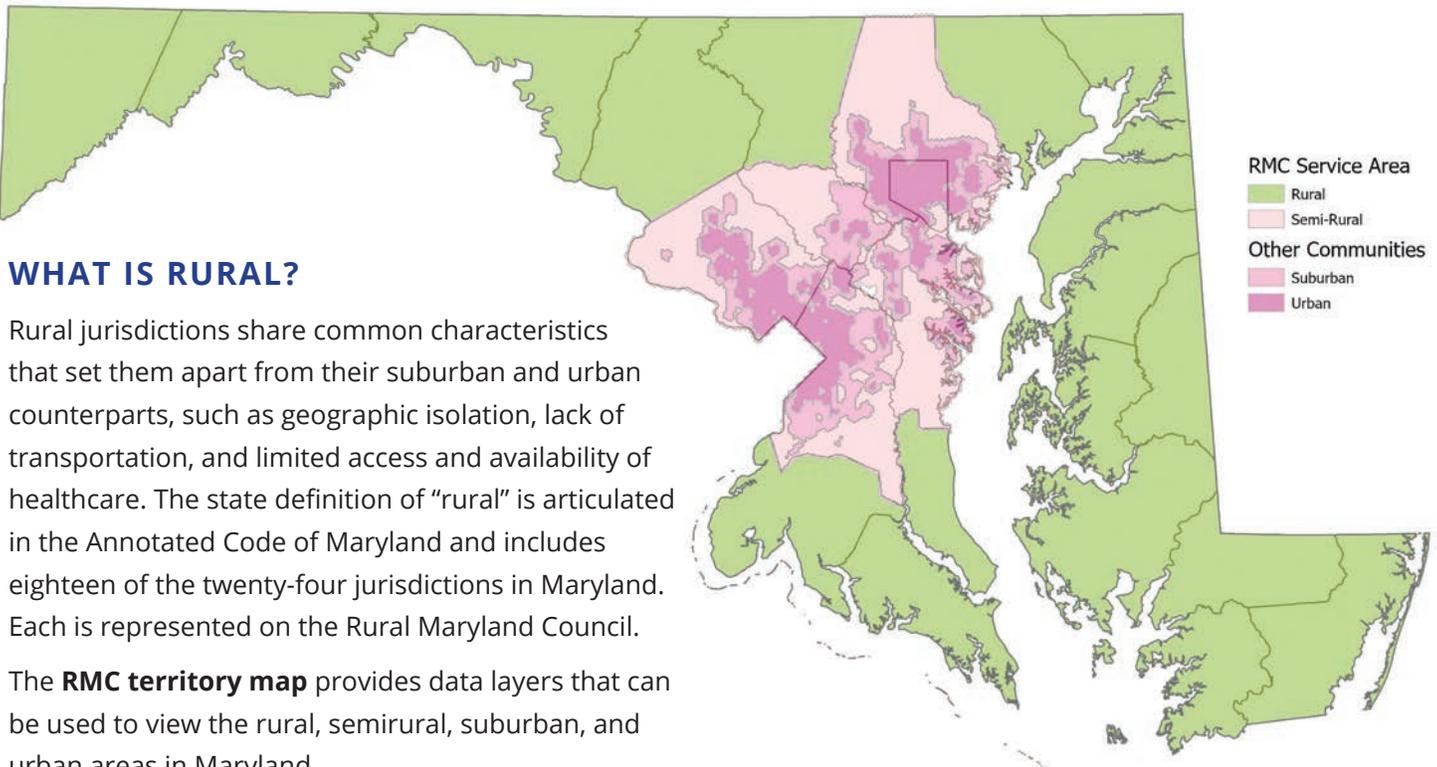
**OUR VISION** is a future where all of Rural Maryland is prosperous with thriving resources, vibrant economies, and healthy, connected communities.

## OUR GOALS

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



Maryland Municipal League Summer Conference - Image courtesy of the Maryland State Archives-RMC Program Coordinator Molli Cole and Governor Wes Moore



## WHAT IS RURAL?

Rural jurisdictions share common characteristics that set them apart from their suburban and urban counterparts, such as geographic isolation, lack of transportation, and limited access and availability of healthcare. The state definition of “rural” is articulated in the Annotated Code of Maryland and includes eighteen of the twenty-four jurisdictions in Maryland. Each is represented on the Rural Maryland Council.

The **RMC territory map** provides data layers that can be used to view the rural, semirural, suburban, and urban areas in Maryland.

# RURAL MARYLAND OUTLOOK ONLINE TOOL

Rural Maryland Outlook is an interactive dashboard designed to showcase key demographics for each of the state's eighteen designated rural communities, as well as the six rural regions. This tool communicates to policymakers and lawmakers how rural regions in Maryland are performing individually, both currently and over time.



## ACCESS OUTLOOK ONLINE

Scan the QR code or visit our homepage to learn more at [rural.maryland.gov](http://rural.maryland.gov).



# 2023 Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony

*The Rural Maryland Council and its membership convened at the Crowne Plaza in Annapolis on Monday, November 13, 2023, at 6 pm for its Executive Board Meeting and Rural Impact Awards Ceremony. This annual meeting provides an overview of upcoming events and activities for 2024 and honors advocates for Rural Maryland communities. Board Chair Susan O'Neill was the master of ceremonies for the evening and said, "It was an honor to meet and award our Rural Community Advocates, each of whom works to uplift others, and each inspires us to continue our vision where all of Rural Maryland is prosperous with thriving resources, vibrant economies, and healthy, connected communities."*

**This year, five award recipients were honored for their leadership, dedication, and noteworthy achievements in our communities. The awards were presented at the 2023 Rural Impact Award Ceremony:**

**Outstanding Rural Community Volunteer** to *Walter Chase* for his outstanding volunteer achievements beyond the call of one's professional duties—helping to improve the community.

**Outstanding Rural Community Development** to *Caroline School House's Culinary Arts Center's Shore Gourmet Curbside Market* for improving rural communities.

**Outstanding Rural Economic Development** to *Hardwire, LLC* for increasing economic development opportunities in rural communities.

**Rural Champion** to *Delegate Kenneth Kerr* for his outstanding leadership and public service in promoting legislation and policy solutions to benefit rural communities.

**Rural Legacy Award** to *Duane Yoder* for his extraordinary efforts in combating the causes and effects of poverty by supporting families and individuals—allowing them to gain economic security and a better quality of life throughout Rural Maryland.



## Pre-2023 Rural Summit Forestry Focused Bus Tour

**Monday, November 13, 2023, 1:00 to 5:00 PM**

The forestry-focused tour offered participants an in-depth exploration of Maryland's timber industry, sustainable forestry practices, and innovative wood production applications. The tour began with a visit to the Garman Brothers, Inc. sawmill in Crownsville, where attendees learned about the site's history, daily operations, and its vital role in processing and supplying quality timber for the region. The Garman Brothers team demonstrated the sawmill process, from log intake to the creation of finished wood products, while discussing the challenges and benefits of sourcing local, sustainably harvested timber.

The next stop on the tour was the Home Innovations Research Lab in Upper Marlboro, a cutting-edge facility dedicated to advancing sustainable building practices. Here, attendees explored research and testing areas that focus on eco-friendly wood applications in construction—emphasizing energy-efficient, resilient, and sustainable design.

The tour provided a comprehensive view of the lifecycle of wood products, from harvest to homebuilding, and underscored the importance of innovation and sustainability in Maryland's forestry and construction industries.

# 2023 Rural Summit

More than 200 rural community leaders and other stakeholders came together for the “Pathways to Prosperity” Rural Summit that was held on Tuesday, November 14, 2023. Keynote speaker Becky McCray gave a special address, as did Maryland Secretary of Agriculture Kevin Atticks and Maryland Comptroller Brooke Lierman. One message was clear across each of the speaker sessions: rural communities have an inherent ability to pivot, respond, and recover during hard times.

The breakout sessions focused on Rural Maryland’s ability to dig deep and come up with creative solutions, a quality that rural communities can share with their suburban and urban counterparts so that all of Maryland can tackle the tough issues and come out the other end more resilient and sustainable.

“Housing is an economic development issue,” said Andy Bauer, Vice President for the and Baltimore Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, during the lunch plenary. “The housing issue is something that is going to be with us for a while. It is going to take a lot of innovation in order to provide, or make it easier, for more supply to come online in either the form of greater density or and more single-family units. It’s going to have to be intentional. At the end of the day, everybody in those communities is going to have to be on board,” he added.

Finding balance and leveraging challenges for the better was the message that Secretary Atticks conveyed to Summit attendees. “Agriculture has to be profitable. Our farmers and our agricultural land are under so much pressure from development and from our clean energy goals,” he said. He didn’t stop there, adding a message about resource



Rural Summit - Maryland Department of Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks, Image Credit Remsberg, Inc.

conservation. “We are farming in the context of the Bay. That’s a pressure. We need to protect and preserve the land, preserve the land, to make sure the land is working for the Bay, not just being profitable,” he adds.

The Summit closed with a message of hope and encouragement. The last session inspired attendees to tackle the challenges that lie ahead and to continue to break barriers—a message given by someone who is knows a lot about doing just that, Maryland’s first female Comptroller, Brooke Lierman. “We are focused on a new vision under our current leadership, and that is to be a partner in creating a state that is more equitable, more resilient, and more prosperous so that every Marylander can reach their full potential,” said Lierman. “There are still barriers to break, but by working together, we can keep breaking them,” she added.

RMC Chair Susan O’Neill made the closing remarks, saying, “As we close this year, we’ll take a moment to appreciate our successes and then quickly roll up our sleeves as we know that the challenges facing our rural communities continue to be numerous and complex. We encourage all our stakeholders to join us and draw on their resilience and ability to innovate so together we can build a stronger future for all Marylanders.”



Rural Summit - Keynote Speaker Becky McCray Image Credit Remsberg, Inc.

Rural Summit- Maryland Comptroller Brook Lierman, Image Credit Remsberg, Inc.

# 2024 Legislative Sessions

*The Maryland General Assembly adjourned sine die on April 8, 2024, after the final passage of the Fiscal Year 2025 Operating Budget and bills concerning crime and juvenile crime reform, alterations to the Blueprint, transportation needs, and housing reform. The Rural Maryland Council and its associated grant programs—the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) and the Maryland Agricultural Education Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF)—received level funding of \$9,010,479 in FY2025.*

The Rural Maryland Council was allocated level funding of over \$9,000,000 in the Fiscal Year 2025 Operating Budget. In July 2024, the Council experienced a \$2.25 million budget reduction to their competitive grant programming due to the State's fiscal situation.

## RMC BUDGET PRIORITIES ACHIEVED UNDER SENATE BILLS 360 AND 362

RMC secured \$9 million for the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund and its operations.

Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MD DNR) Local Program Open Space will receive approximately \$32 million. The MD DNR State Program Open Space will receive \$17.6 million.

Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) will receive \$36.5 million.

Rural Legacy Program funded at \$15.3 million.

The Department of Housing and Community Development receives \$172.7 million for broadband assistance in the state.

The University of Maryland Eastern Shore will receive \$4.4 million for its new Agriculture Research Building.

MD DNR will receive \$5 million for its Community Parks and Playgrounds program.

## Legislative Highlights

# 4

### EVENTS HELD

Welcome Breakfast, 1/12  
Legislative Lunch, 1/26  
Virtual Rural Maryland Day, 2/8  
Maryland Day Mocktails & Munchies, 3/25

# 10

### LEGISLATIVE MEETINGS

The Legislative Committee met this session to discuss bills, testimonies, and other legislative matters

# 58

### POSITION STATEMENTS

Position statements submitted to the legislators in support of bills

# 215

### BILLS MONITORED

Total bills monitored throughout the legislative session



Legislative Breakfast - from left to right Dr. Jinhee Kim, Isaias Tesfalidet, Reza Jafari, Delegate Jay Jacobs, and Delegate Bill Wivell



Maryland Day - Senator Nancy King and RMC Program Administrator Megan D'Arcy

Legislative Luncheon - RMC Board Chair Susan O'Neill, The Honorable Francis Gray, and Senator Ben Cardin

## LEGISLATIVE OUTREACH EVENTS

### Legislative Breakfast

RMC hosted the Legislative Welcome Breakfast on January 12, 2024, to welcome new and returning legislators back for a new session. This event was held at the Maryland Inn and had a successful turnout with 140 participants. Several notable legislators from across the state joined the event and met with numerous several participants to learn about RMC's legislative priorities for the 2024 Session. The event was sponsored by the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF), the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Maryland, and the Community Development Network of Maryland (CDN).

### Legislative Luncheon

The Quarterly Executive Board Meeting and Legislative Luncheon was held on January 26, 2024, at the Rams Head Live venue with approximately ninety-nine participants in attendance. Senator Ben Cardin made a surprise visit and addressed the audience. Guest speakers included Maryland Department of Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks and Tribal Chair of the Piscataway Conoy Tribe Francis Gray. The business highlight was Bill and Christina Schindler of Modern Stone Age Kitchen in Chestertown.

### Rural Maryland Day

Rural Maryland Day was celebrated virtually this year on February 8, 2024. The event allowed over eighty rural advocates to meet with forty key legislators to discuss the strengths and challenges of living in Rural Maryland.

### Maryland Day Mocktails and Munchies

Maryland Day was held on March 25, 2024. RMC held a "Maryland Day Mocktails and Munchies" event for the Legislators on the Lawyer's Mall in Downtown Annapolis. A total of 200 snack boxes were distributed. The event was sponsored by the Maryland Broadband Cooperative, Horizon Farm Credit, South Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC), Maryland Department of Agriculture, Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO), Maryland Heritage Areas Coalition, the Southern Maryland National Heritage Area, and the Maryland Horse Industry Board.



Spring Quarterly Board Meeting - Wild Kid Acres Tour: Steve McHenry, Gerardo Martinez and Jessica Mendoza

# Quarterly Board Meetings

**Friday, September 22, 2023**

**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, ANNAPOLIS**

The Council hosted its Fall Quarterly Board Meeting on Friday, September 22, 2023, at the Maryland Department of Agriculture in Annapolis, Maryland. The guest speaker for this meeting was Karama Neal, the Administrator of the United States Department of Agriculture - Rural Development. There were forty-three registrants in attendance.

**Monday, November 13, 2023**

**CROWN PLAZA, ANNAPOLIS**

According to the Council's bylaws, the last assembly of the calendar year serves as the organization's Annual Meeting. In Fiscal Year 2024, the Annual Meeting and Rural Impact Awards were held on Thursday, November 13, 2023, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Annapolis, Maryland. There were sixty-five participants in attendance.

**Friday, January 26, 2024**

**RAMS HEAD TAVERN**

The Winter Quarterly Executive Board Meeting and Legislative Luncheon took place on Friday, January 26, 2024, at Rams Head on Stage in Downtown Annapolis, Maryland. During this meeting, the RMC Committee shared updates and events for the new year. The business spotlight featured Bill and Christina Schindler of Modern Stone Age Kitchen in Chestertown, Maryland, and the guest speaker was Francis Gray, Tribal Chair of the Piscataway Conway Tribal Council. Senator Ben Cardin made an unexpected appearance, spoke directly to the audience and shared insight on key issues. There were over one hundred participants in attendance.

**Friday, April 5, 2024**

**BANNEKER-DOUGLASS MUSEUM**

The Spring Quarterly Executive Board Meeting was held on Friday, April 5, 2024, at the Banneker Douglass Museum in Downtown Annapolis, Maryland. Secretary of Agriculture Kevin Atticks served as the guest speaker, and the business spotlight highlighted Gerardo Martinez of Wild Kids Acres, a farm in Edgewater, Maryland. There were forty-two registrants in attendance. Members toured Wild Kids Acres farm following the meeting.



## Rural Maryland Foundation

### Mission

To support the efforts of citizens and government to meet the economic and social needs of Rural Maryland; to serve as the Maryland Rural Development Council if the Rural Maryland Council ceases to function in that role and to support the efforts of the Rural Maryland Council.



LEAD Maryland Class XII seminar - Image Credit Remsburg, Inc.

### Projects

- Transfer of Wealth Study
- Rural Maryland Philanthropic Development Strategy
- We Are Maryland and Aspire Maryland videos
- LEAD Maryland Foundation Fellowships

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Dan Rider**, *President*

**Kurt Fuchs**, *Vice President*

**Charlotte Davis**, *Secretary*

**Andrew Cassilly**

**Steve McHenry**

**Rick Pollitt**

**Scott Warner**

**Roseanna Vogt**

**Jennifer Walsh**

**Mel Litter**

**Susan O'Neill**

# Partnering Events

## PARTNERS FOR RURAL AMERICA – VERMONT TRIP, SEPTEMBER 2023

### State's Rural Development Committee

The Rural Maryland Council serves at the State's Rural Development Committee under the National Rural Development Partnership as authorized in the 2018 Farm Bill and is a member of the Partners for Rural America (PRA). PRA was founded in 1988 to support the efforts of its member State Rural Development Councils (SRDCs). SRDCs across the country work in their states to conduct research, work with state and federal government officials, partner with other community and economic development organizations, and serve as leaders representing the perspective and needs of rural communities throughout their states. The SRDCs meet annually to share insights and strategies for improving community and economic development. Their collaborative efforts focus on areas such as education, workforce training, infrastructure development, and access to broadband, transportation, and quality healthcare, among other priorities.



In September 2023, RMC Board Chair Susan O'Neill and Program Administrator Megan D'Arcy traveled to Vermont to explore innovative approaches the Vermont Council on Rural Development is using to support their communities. During the bus tour, held on Thursday, September 7, 2023, PRA members visited four sites that focused on working lands, community visits, food systems, and town infrastructure and revitalization. Additional highlights included keynotes by Sarah Waring, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development (USDA RD) Director for Vermont and New Hampshire, and Rhiannon Hampson, USDA RD Director of Maine. Matt Dunne with the Center for Rural Innovation provided closing remarks about the future of rural communities.

## THE FEDERAL RESERVE OF RICHMOND - RURAL INVESTMENT COLLABORATIVE™ WORKGROUP

The Rural Investment Collaborative™ brings together community leaders in small towns and rural areas from Maryland, North and South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C. The leaders participate in shared learning and programming that helps them improve their access to capital so their communities thrive.

A signature focus of the Collaborative is to provide training and guidance to assist community leaders with developing viable proposals for their community projects. The Richmond Federal Reserve partners with rural hubs, like the Rural Maryland Council, to make this happen. RMC staff members Charlotte Davis and Megan D'Arcy support the Collaborative and serve on workgroups that met on November 1-2, 2023, in Charlotte, North Carolina, to help guide the Collaborative's work and review applications for the 2024 Investment Training cohort.

## THERE'S A CO-OP FOR THAT! WEBINAR – THURSDAY, MAY 9, 2024

On Thursday, May 9, 2024, RMC and the Keystone Development Center (KDC) provided an engaging one-hour virtual presentation on the basics of cooperative development and how it helps rural communities and business development. Participants walked away with an increased knowledge of how co-ops can solve common situations for farmers, businesses, and residents.

KDC is the USDA Cooperative Center for Pennsylvania, Maryland, and New Jersey. KDC embraces cooperative values and a mission to sustain communities, economies, and resources through cooperatively owned businesses. A "co-op," or cooperative, is a user-controlled and -owned enterprise. People voluntarily form a cooperative to meet common needs and benefit from the products or services of the co-op they create.

## RMC SPONSORED EVENTS

### Buy Local Picnic

July 20, 2023, Maryland Department of Agriculture, Annapolis, MD

### Maryland Commodity Classic

July 27, 2023, Queen Anne's County 4-H Park, Centreville, MD

### Maryland Folk Festival

September 22-24, 2023, Salisbury, MD

### J. Millard Tawes Crab and Clam Bake

September 27, 2023, Somers Cove Marina, Crisfield, MD

### Forever Maryland Conference

October 4-5, 2023, Crowne Plaza Annapolis, Annapolis, MD

### Harford Land Trust: Party to Preserve

October 7, 2023, Monkton, MD

### Delmarva Chicken Festival

October 7, 2023, Arthur W. Perdue Stadium, Salisbury, MD

### Maryland Rural Health Association Conference

October 22-24, 2023, Princess Royale Oceanfront Resort, Ocean City, MD

### Chesapeake Charities: Celebration of Charity

November 16, 2023, Chesapeake Bay Beach Club, Stevensville, MD

### Maryland Farm Bureau Conference

December 2-5, 2023, Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Golf Resort, Spa, and Marina, Cambridge, MD

### 2024 Buyer Grower Expo

January 9, 2024, Navy-Marine Corps Stadium, Annapolis, MD

### 2024 Mountain Maryland PACE Event

January 18-19, 2024, Westin Annapolis, Annapolis, MD

### 2024 Taste of Maryland Agriculture Dinner

February 1, 2024, Live! Casino & Hotel Maryland, Hanover, MD

### Taste of the Eastern Shore

February 8, 2024, Graduate Annapolis Hotel, Annapolis, MD

### Southern Maryland Reception

February 29, 2024, Graduate Annapolis Hotel, Annapolis, MD

### DelFest

May 23-26, 2024, Allegany County Fairgrounds, Cumberland, MD

## Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund

### MAERDAF OVERVIEW

MAERDAF was established in 2000 with the purpose to increase the overall capacity of rural-serving non-profit organizations and community colleges to meet a multitude of rural development challenges and to help them establish new public and private partnerships for leveraging non-state sources of funding. This grant has the following focus areas: **Agriculture & Forestry Education; Community & Economic Development; Rural Broadband; Energy; Youth Engagement; and Leadership Development.**

The Maryland Agriculture Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF) grant funding provides capacity-building funds to rural-serving non-profit organizations and community colleges. The cap for this grant program in Fiscal Year 2024 was \$45,000, and while a match was not required, it is highly preferred due to the competitiveness of the grant program. The MAERDAF program is funded through the State of Maryland's Annual Operating Budget. In Fiscal Year 2024, the MAERDAF budget received \$118,485 (PCA 39101) in its line-item appropriations and \$750,000 from the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF-PCA 38101), totaling \$868,485. Due to the high demand in MAERDAF grant applications, the Grant Review Board approved an additional allocation of \$100,636 from RMPIF for a total of \$969,121 in MAERDAF grant awards.

In Fiscal Year 2024, this program received 98 applications totaling \$3,374,140 in requests. Of these requests, 39 grants totaling \$969,121 were awarded.

### GRANT DECISIONS

The Rural Maryland Council serves as the administrative agency in receiving the applications and disbursing the funds. Grant award determinations are made by the independent 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. Fiscal Year 2024 Grant Review Board Members were: **Mindie Burgoyne**, Senior Regional Business Development Representative, Commerce; **Karen Fedor**, Senior Agricultural Marketing Specialist, Maryland Department of Agriculture; **Dan Rider**, Forest Stewardship & Utilization Program Manager, Maryland Department of Natural Resource Forest Service; **Sara Seitz**, Director, State Office of Rural Health, Maryland Department of Health; **Dona Sorce**, Project Manager, Division of Neighborhood Revitalization, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development; and **Joyce Bowlsbey**, RMC Board Chair Designee. **Charlotte Davis** is the MAERDAF Coordinator and Rural Maryland Council Executive Director.

### MAERDAF FISCAL YEAR 2024 AWARDS AT-A-GLANCE

| Focus Area                                | Number of Awards | Amount Awarded   |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| Agriculture and Forestry                  | 13 grants        | \$386,000        |
| Community Development                     | 12 grants        | \$245,930        |
| Economic Development                      | 8 grants         | \$191,241        |
| Energy                                    | 2 grants         | \$71,100         |
| Broadband                                 | 0 grants         | \$0.00           |
| Youth Engagement & Leadership Development | 4 grants         | \$74,850         |
| <b>Total:</b>                             | <b>39 grants</b> | <b>\$969,121</b> |

**MAERDAF AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY EDUCATION: 13 GRANTS = \$386,000**

| Awardee  | Total Award |
|--|-------------|
| Allegany College of Maryland                                 | \$45,000    |
| Around The Bay Farmer's Alliance                             | \$45,000    |
| Chesapeake Culinary Center                                   | \$10,000    |
| Delmarva Chicken Association                                 | \$27,000    |
| Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center                        | \$30,000    |
| Evergreen Heritage Center Foundation                         | \$25,000    |
| Future Harvest   | \$33,000    |
| Ladies of Charity Calvert County, Inc.                       | \$6,000     |
| LEAD Maryland Foundation, Inc.                               | \$30,000    |
| Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation                   | \$40,000    |
| Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education | \$35,000    |
| Maryland Food Bank - Eastern Shore                           | \$30,000    |
| MPT Foundation, Inc.   | \$30,000    |

**MAERDAF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: 12 GRANTS = \$245,930**

| Awardee  | Total Award |
|--|-------------|
| Aaron's Place, Inc.  | \$8,803     |
| Adkins Arboretum, Ltd.   | \$20,000    |
| Bay Community Support Services, Inc.                               | \$44,000    |
| Community Development Network of Maryland                          | \$15,000    |
| Diakonia   | \$12,627    |
| Habitat for Humanity Choptank, Inc.                                | \$950       |
| Mid-Shore Community Foundation                                     | \$10,000    |
| Mid Shore Community Mediation Center                               | \$8,950     |
| Mid-Shore Pro Bono, Inc.   | \$30,800    |
| Moving Dorchester Forward  | \$34,800    |
| Rebuilding Together Kent County                                    | \$30,000    |
| Queen Anne's County Department of Economic and Tourism Development | \$30,000    |

**MAERDAF DECLINED AWARD FUNDS**

| Organization              | Project Name                              | Amount Declined | Reason for Decline  |
|---------------------------|---|-----------------|---|
| Pure Play Every Day, Inc. | Volunteer Maryland and Capacity Expansion | \$10,350        | The returning Volunteer Maryland Coordinator was hired for a full-time position through the organization. |

**MAERDAF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: 8 GRANTS=\$191,241**

| Awardee  | Total Award |
|--|-------------|
| Ann's Circle, Inc. (DBA Annmarie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center) | \$45,000    |
| Allegany College of Maryland                                     | \$45,000    |
| Beach to Bay Heritage Area                                       | \$26,200    |
| Eastern Shore Land Conservancy                                   | \$30,000    |
| Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, Inc.                       | \$10,000    |
| Lower Shore Land Trust   | \$17,765    |
| Mid-Atlantic Gigabit Innovation Collaboratory                    | \$6,926     |
| Pure Play Every Day, Inc.  | \$10,350    |

**MAERDAF ENERGY: 2 GRANTS = \$71,100**

| Awardee  | Total Award |
|--|-------------|
| Maryland Rural Development Corporation                           | \$40,500    |
| The Benedictine School for Exceptional Children Foundation, Inc. | \$30,600    |

**MAERDAF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: 4 GRANTS = \$74,850**

| Awardee                                  | Total Award |
|--|-------------|
| Building African American Minds, Inc.    | \$44,500    |
| Fair Hill Environmental Foundation, Inc. | \$15,000    |
| Junior Achievement of the Eastern Shore  | \$5,000     |
| The Parents' Place of Maryland           | \$10,350    |

## MAERDAF AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY EDUCATION

### Allegany College of Maryland

**Amount Awarded: \$45,000**

**Project Name:** *Forestry Education in Rural Western Maryland: Portable Sawmill*

**Project Summary:** Allegany College of Maryland's Forestry Program provides innovative training opportunities for students to learn the latest techniques and utilize industry-standard equipment for felling operations which would be enhanced by the addition of a portable sawmill. This critical technology has significantly enhanced the existing technical training opportunities for forestry applications at the college.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support the purchase of a portable sawmill.

### Around the Bay Farmer's Alliance

**Amount Awarded: \$45,000**

**Project Name:** *A Green Aggregation Approach to Food Security, Economic Opportunities, and Environmental Outcomes*

**Project Summary:** Around The Bay Farmers Alliance, supported by the University of Maryland Eastern Shore Small Farm Program, is an independent farmers' organization dedicated to producing fresh produce on a large scale. The organization delivers aggregated produce from local farms to multiple institutions and local markets in Denton, Washington D.C., Baltimore, and Philadelphia. This project will expand their operations by providing support for equipment, education, time, and materials.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, will be expended to support: a) the purchase of machinery to include a forklift and an electric walkie pallet jacks IP-65, a pallet wrapper; b) equipment to include one large standing scale, ten digital scales, small- to large-sized boxes; c) technology to include a ULINE printer labeling system, an electric bar code printer Zebra Zt 610, a computer, and software package; d) a structure to include a greenhouse for starting seeds; and e) wages for an aggregator and truck driver time. Around the Bay Farmer's Alliance was approved for a six-month extension.

### Chesapeake Culinary Center

**Amount Awarded: \$10,000**

**Project Name:** *Composting in Schools*

**Project Summary:** Chesapeake Culinary Center is a community-driven organization that focuses on creating healthy, economical families through job

creation and training, food security, and driving our local economy by keeping farmers farming. This project will focus on the creation of a composting program in the Caroline County school system. The Culinary Center will work with the Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Department of the Environment, and other school systems to create a compost program that all counties can utilize. The program consists of signage, receptacles needed, morning announcement prompts, flyers, and training of cafeteria staff to execute the program. The program planning is still underway in Caroline County, and they plan to roll out the program in January 2025. The middle and high schools plan to roll out their program in the 2025-2026 school year.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, has been expended to support: a) the purchase of materials to include composting receptacles and cleaning supplies; b) marketing to include print signage and educational brochures; and c) contractor for poster design, to create marketing Standard Operating Procedures, and morning announcements.

### Delmarva Chicken Association

**Amount Awarded: \$27,000**

**Project Name:** *Delmarva Chicken Festival: Growing for 100 Years*

**Project Summary:** Delmarva Chicken Association is the 1,500-member trade association working for the common good of the meat chicken industry in Delaware, the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and Virginia's Eastern Shore. DCA celebrated the chicken industry's 100th anniversary in 2023 and embarked on a yearlong campaign of agricultural education and celebration. The effort highlighted the chicken industry's advances in the 20th and 21st centuries, producing more chicken with fewer resources; profiled diverse, representative Maryland chicken growers; and detailed how Maryland farmers have reduced nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment in the Chesapeake Bay. DCA hosted the Delmarva Chicken Festival at Perdue Stadium in Salisbury, Maryland, on October 7, 2023. The project supported the building of a "Walk Through History" tent at the festival, displayed photo exhibits of past festivals and historic images of the industry, and included a portable diorama of a chicken farm to highlight best practices.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support: a) materials and supplies to include the tent, table and chair rentals, signage, displays for the event, and a premium giveaway to commemorate the 100th anniversary; b) marketing the event on broadcast, print, display, and/or social media advertising channels; c) the cost of the custom-made chicken farm diorama.

## Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center

**Amount Awarded: \$30,000**

**Project Name:** CAIC AgriBiz Hub

**Project Summary:** The Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center administers and implements the Chesapeake Agriculture Innovation Center (CAIC), a program-based initiative that provides access and delivers technical assistance to value-added producers, helping them start and scale their business, increasing acquisition of customers, sales, revenue, production, and investment. This project provided practical on-demand business solutions and guidance to farmers and value-added producers, enabling them to overcome challenges and grow their agricultural businesses. The platform, named "AgriBizHub," was created and hosted on the Chesapeake Ag Innovation Center's website (caic.org). CAIC produced 389 minutes of video content across four courses and twenty-eight learning units. The units included the following:

- Defining Your Vision as a Farmer or Value-Added Producer (87 minutes, seven learning units)
- Foundations of Agricultural Marketing (109 minutes, eight learning units)
- First Profits and Growing at Scale (116 minutes, eight learning units)
- Financial Structuring in Agriculture (77 minutes, five learning units).

The platform also hosts fifty resources categorized into six different areas: industry events; service providers; financing; vendors; business software; and other resources.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support: a) subcontractors that include a video editor, social media manager, and content creation; b) marketing to include social media advertisements on Facebook and Instagram, newspaper advertisements, and West Maryland WCBC radio advertisements; c) Learn Dash software; and d) online platform development.

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## Evergreen Heritage Center Foundation

**Amount Awarded: \$25,000**

**Project Name:** The Forest Garden Project

**Project Summary:** The Evergreen Heritage Center (EHC), a Farm for education, conservation, and preservation serving Garrett and Allegany counties established a Forest Garden project. This project reclaimed a one-acre hillside forest plot accessible from the EHC's new 4.5-mile Forest Evolution Trail (a Great Allegheny Passage spur). The plot was an active garden until the 1920s, when it gradually entered the stages of forest succession, became plagued by invasive species, and then was devastated by a severe storm. This garden yields edible and non-edible farm goods while demonstrating best

practices in sustainable agriculture and forestry. Through both in-person and online tours, 1,722 students and visitors have walked the winding trail past patches of dye and medicinal plants, wood product trees, firewood sources, tying and basketry materials, nuts, seeds, edible mushrooms, cane products, and fruits, as well as pollinator and woodland habitat. This nature trail includes benches and interpretive signage so that it may serve as both an educational tool and a heritage tourism attraction for thousands who visit the EHC and walk the Great Allegheny Passage annually.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds was expended to support: a) contractual services to complete the garden design, planning, and management that will include plot removal, cleanup, planting, fence and gate installation, and pathway development; and b) materials that include trees, plants, garden gates and signage, lumber, native plants and garden tools.

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## Future Harvest

**Amount Awarded: \$33,000**

**Project Name:** Pick-Your-Own Consultant

**Project Summary:** Future Harvest, a membership organization advancing sustainable agriculture in the Chesapeake region, provides the Pick-Your-Own Consultant program. This program links Maryland farmers with the consultant of their choice, providing them with the opportunity to strengthen their business and address challenges with the support of in-depth, free-for-the-farmer discussions with experts. Most participants have been running their farm businesses for between five and ten years, which is a critical period of growth and vulnerability. The program provided \$1,000 vouchers to twenty-four farmers that were used to hire accounting, legal, logistics, insurance, and agricultural consultants. Future Harvest believes that for agriculture to be truly sustainable, the goals of a healthy profit, planet, and people must advance together.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support: a) consultant services for twenty-four farmers; b) twenty-five \$300 scholarships for farmers to attend the Future Harvest conference; and c) meeting supplies for the Future Harvest Conference and caucus gatherings.

## **Ladies of Charity Calvert County, Inc.**

**Amount Awarded: \$6,000**

**Project Name:** *Capacity Aids*

**Project Summary:** The Ladies of Charity Calvert County (LOCCC) ministry focuses on the nutritional, financial, emotional, and spiritual needs of their community by operating a food pantry located in North Beach and serving Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties. LOCCC has seen an increase in the number of families they serve since the COVID-19 SNAP supplemental benefits ended in February 2023. In 2022, they served 1,032 families, and in 2023, they have seen a 38% increase and are now serving 1,423 families. This project adapted a secondary building on site to expand their storage capacity by using more vertical space. Inventory as of June 30, 2024, was 10,876 pounds (product onsite and at off-site storage was weighed and tabulated.) For FY 2024, 233,650 pounds of food was distributed to 5,959 families.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support: a) the purchase of a mini split air conditioner and heat pump system; b) shelving/storage units and accessories; and c) U-Boat platform truck and Skatewheel conveyor system accessories.

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## **LEAD Maryland Foundation, Inc.**

**Amount Awarded: \$30,000**

**Project Name:** *Building Powerful Leaders for Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Rural Communities*

**Project Summary:** LEAD Maryland Foundation (LEAD), in partnership with the University of Maryland Extension, administers the LEAD Fellowship Program. The Fellowship Program works to increase the numbers and capacities of people serving rural Maryland. Program participants, called Fellows, complete a two-year educational program to increase skills and knowledge to address rural community needs. Fellows learn to consider issues from new perspectives and gain a greater understanding of public issues. LEAD provides networking opportunities and expands meaningful civil discourse among leaders serving Rural Maryland, and leaders working in natural resources and agricultural industries.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support four multi-day seminars for Fellows Class XII and Class XIII and include: a) a Class XII three-day training in September 2023; and b) Class XIII nine days of training through seminars in February, April, and June 2024.

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## **Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation**

**Amount Awarded: \$40,000**

**Project Name:** *Maryland Ag Education & Literacy FY24*

**Project Summary:** The Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF) is a non-profit organization dedicated to increasing agricultural literacy and opportunities for agricultural education. The Maryland Agriculture Education

and Literacy project is focusing on four agricultural projects that include the following: 1) Development of a Middle School Introductory Agriculture curriculum to increase agricultural career exploration by middle school students; 2) utilize the Microsoft FarmBeats program to offer opportunities for high schoolers to use agriculture technology to make agronomic decisions; 3) provide laptops for Maryland Future Farmers of America (FFA) State Officers, who take a "gap" year of service between high school and college or their career; and 4) support the Frederick Career and Tech Center Landscape Program by purchasing hose trolleys to help increase safety and adjust students to real-world greenhouse conditions.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support: a) FarmBeats microbit kits, STEM Ag Kits, and middle school curriculum textbooks; b) lunch, supplies, and printing for FarmBeats training expenses; c) travel costs for MAEF staff and teachers to attend FarmBeats training; d) MAEF salary and wages to provide oversight on the middle school curriculum development, FarmBeats logistics and training and the administration of the grant; and four hose trolleys for Frederick Career and Tech Center. MAEF was approved for a one-year extension to complete the Middle School curriculum and purchase six laptops for the Maryland FFA State Officers.

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## **Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education**

**Amount Awarded: \$35,000**

**Project Name:** *Exploring Forestry and Agricultural Careers in the 21st Century*

**Project Summary:** The 2019 Maryland Green Schools Act ensures that the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE) staffing is available to increase the number of Green Schools by 50% by 2028 with priority areas in Eastern and Western Maryland. Through the Maryland Green Schools program, MAEOE supports environmental literacy by strengthening teacher capacity and understanding of local green careers and builds youth knowledge of these careers and their importance in Rural Maryland. This project has provided a professional development opportunity for high school teachers to build their knowledge of forest literacy and green careers. Teachers received resources and materials that support college and career readiness and build student knowledge of agriculture, ecosystems, forestry, natural resource careers, and local issues and priorities. During the green career event, high school teachers and their students met with career professionals and explored the variety of green career opportunities available that support rural communities.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, will be expended to support: a) the salary and fringe benefits of the MAEOE Communications Coordinator for communication, registration, and development of promotional materials for the three events; b) consultant and outside facilitator to support the planning and implementation of the three events

and facilitation of professional development; c) MAEOE staff and consultant travel to the Green Career Fair in Allegany County; d) materials and supplies to include Project Learning Tree Green Jobs Exploring Forest Career guides and tools to support professional development; e) video and photography for three events; f) lunch and beverage service for three events; g) teacher stipend for attending a two-hour virtual professional development and for attending the career event; h) substitute teacher reimbursement; i) bus fees for sixteen schools to attend the career event; j) facility rental for three events; and k) MAEOE Career Fair promotional items. MAEOE has been approved for a six-month extension because they have completed only two of the three student career events. They will host the third career fair with Mobilize Frederick County in the fall of 2024.

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### **Maryland Food Bank - Eastern Shore**

**Amount Awarded: \$30,000**

**Project Name:** *Supporting MFB's Farm to Food Bank and Culturally Inclusive Crops Programs*

**Project Summary:** Officially founded in 1979 as the first food bank on the East Coast, Maryland Food Bank (MFB) serves Marylanders from branches in Baltimore, Hagerstown, and Salisbury. The food bank currently works with 352 Network Partners at nearly 1,200 distribution points to ensure they maximize their reach to diverse communities across the state. While their network partners distribute a great deal of the food sourced, MFB also distributes food through a variety of innovative programs to support their food-insecure neighbors. This project supported their Farm to Food Bank and Culturally Inclusive Crop programs that provide neighbors in rural or underserved communities with access to nutritious produce. The truck will be used to haul equipment and crops required to efficiently conduct the operations of these programs.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support a slightly used 2024 Chevy 2500 heavy-duty truck with four-wheel drive and three-quarter-ton hauling capacity. The truck has a diesel engine for increased pulling power, a 3500 suspension for hauling more weight, and an eight-foot bed to haul two pallets at a time. To date, the truck has helped to facilitate an estimated 10,000 pounds of produce in the first week of July; this means that by working with MFB farming partnerships, MFB was able to assist with helping approximately 500 households get access to fresh fruits and vegetables. The Farm to Food Bank Program supported at least eleven partners with facilitating produce: Amy Cawley, Aaron's Place, Meals Til Monday, Vienna Grace Baptist Church, Hurlock Seton Center, Princess Anne Food Bank, Millington Crumpton Haven Ministries, St Vincent de Paul Easton, Neighborhood Service Center, Martins Barn, and St. Michael's Community Center.

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### **MPT Foundation, Inc.**

**Amount Awarded: \$30,000**

**Project Name:** *Maryland Farm & Harvest*

**Project Summary:** Maryland Public Television's (MPT) programming includes the Maryland Farm & Harvest (MF&H) program—a half-hour public TV series developed to help people learn about and more deeply appreciate Maryland's number one industry: agriculture. The series accomplishes its educational and entertainment goals by telling the stories of the people who maintain the state's vast and diverse agriculture organizations. From digging into the science of soil health to exploring how farming affects the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay, episodes show viewers the cutting-edge technology that powers modern agriculture and illustrate how the changing business environment presents new challenges to farmers every day. Viewers learn about science, conservation, horticulture, economics, history, cooking, and more.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support the production of season eleven of the Maryland Farm and Harvest television series programming. Since the premiere of season eleven in November, episodes of MF&H have been viewed nearly 700,000 times on MPT and MPT2. This demonstrates the program's sustained popularity and the increasing interest in local food production and ecologically sound farming.

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## **MAERDAF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

### **Aaron's Place, Inc.**

**Amount Awarded: \$8,803**

**Project Name:** *Soup Kitchen Hood Extension*

**Project Summary:** Aaron's Place, Inc. provides services to underserved communities located on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Their clients include children, families, senior citizens, homeless, mentally ill, working poor, domestic violence victims, and anyone else who faces food insecurity that can benefit from the services they offer. They currently serve approximately 24,000 people annually through their food and assistance programs which include, but are not limited to, housing and utility assistance, English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, senior meal delivery, job readiness training, and computer literacy. They also operate a food rescue from local farms and food stores program, collecting donated foods from establishments to distribute to local pantries. In 2022, they completed the buildout of their soup kitchen but were not able to open it due to fire safety permits related to the hood range system. This phase of the project provided the safety features for the operation of the hood range system that is required for operational purposes. Once completed, Aaron's Place, Inc. was able to open the kitchen for cooking classes and cooking demonstrations and aided twenty new and aspiring entrepreneurs.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds was expended to support: a) the upgrade and installation of the fire protection system for the hood range; b) install the new grease trap; and c) upgrade electrical for the hood range and fire system.

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### **Adkins Arboretum, Ltd.**

**Amount Awarded: \$20,000**

**Project Name:** *Nature for All Fleet!*

**Project Summary:** Adkins Arboretum is a 400-acre native preserve located on Maryland's Eastern Shore in scenic rural Caroline County, whose mission is to provide exceptional experiences in nature. The Arboretum strives to engage a broad audience through education, recreation, the arts, and community events. Over 30,000 people visit the Arboretum annually. Signature community events attract more than 400 visitors each day. In addition, the Arboretum hosts more than thirty group tours and fifty-five school field trips annually. Many of these visitors have mobility issues and need more access to nature. This project provided funding for a six-passenger golf cart and made security improvements to the parking enclosure for the cart. The golf cart ensures guests with mobility issues can travel with their partner, caretaker, or friends.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support: a) the purchase of a 2024 EZGO Express L6 Elite electric six-passenger golf cart; and b) materials to improve security in the parking area for the golf cart. As of June 30, 2024, the cart has provided transportation to over seventy-five individuals.

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### **Bay Community Support Services, Inc.**

**Amount Awarded: \$44,000**

**Project Name:** *Home Repair and Modifications for Intellectually Disabled Individuals Living in Two Rural Counties*

**Project Summary:** Bay Community Support Services provides personalized services to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities living in Southern and Central Maryland for over thirty years. Independence, personal success, and life enrichment are the cornerstones of their services. This project rejuvenated, repaired, and modified five residential group homes across Charles and St. Mary's counties. Each group home houses four to six individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to complete: a) interior painting of five residential homes; b) removal and replacement of current flooring with water-resistant vinyl plank flooring in three homes in both St. Mary's County and Charles County; c) siding replacement on a residential home to prevent continued dry rot of building materials and to preserve newly installed windows; d) replacement of soffit, fascia, and installation of gutters to prevent future water damage from pooling water; e) replacement and remodeling of a kitchen in Charles County

and St. Mary's counties foundation repair due to constant and consistent water intrusions due to cracks and improper gutter systems; and f) remodeling of back bedroom heavily affected by water damage due to a foundation leak that led to prolonged water damage, dry rot, and mold growth.

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### **Community Development Network of Maryland**

**Amount Awarded: \$15,000**

**Project Name:** *Building Capacity for Community Development Projects*

**Project Summary:** The Community Development Network of Maryland (CDN) is the voice for Maryland's community development sector and serves more than 150 member organizations. CDN focuses on community-based nonprofits, housing counseling agencies, and small affordable housing developers across the state of Maryland. In the past three years, CDN has communicated with a variety of partners and local governments from rural counties in Maryland who want help to attract affordable housing development and community revitalization projects in their communities. Unfortunately, many of these organizations do not have the technical skills or experience to even begin projects. This project helps to build the overall capacity of rural serving non-profit organizations and to help form strategies for public and private partnerships to address the need for investment in rural communities.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, has been expended to support consultants to assist work with organizations to build plans for affordable housing in their community. CDN has been approved for a six-month extension to complete the project.

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### **Diakonia**

**Amount Awarded: \$12,627**

**Project Name:** *Apricot Project*

**Project Summary:** For over fifty years, Diakonia has been providing homeless solutions in the tri-county region of Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore. From food pantry and emergency financial assistance to emergency shelter, Diakonia endeavors to provide the highest level of compassionate care in a vastly rural area—where resources are limited and agency partnerships are stretched operationally and geographically. As part of the Continuum of Care that serves Worcester, Wicomico, and Somerset counties, Diakonia shares information with other agencies through a Homeless Management Information System database. Unfortunately, this shared database cannot handle the high amount of internal communication needed for their programs to provide a multi-disciplinary approach to client care. This project supported a new case management information system, Apricot Core (a product of Social Solutions), to create a more efficient and effective platform to better support Diakonia's work.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support the purchase the Apricot Case Management software.

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### **Habitat for Humanity Choptank, Inc.**

**Amount Awarded: \$950**

**Project Name:** *Housing Counseling Capacity Building*

**Project Summary:** Helping families become more resilient and empowered to build a better future is at the core of Habitat for Humanity Choptank, Inc.'s (HFHC's) mission. Financial education and housing counseling create the foundation needed for families disproportionately affected by high poverty rates and substandard housing conditions to improve their housing stability. In Fiscal Year 2023-2024, HFHC projects serving a minimum of seventy-five households through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development approved group education workshops and one-on-one counseling that will focus on a variety of homeownership topics that range pre- and post-purchase Homebuyer Education to Financial Literacy.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support: a) the travel and conference registration for HFHC staff to attend the Habitat for Humanity International conference in Atlanta, Georgia in April 2024; b) HFHC staff participation in professional development training through NeighborWorks America; and c) gas expenses for travel to and from one-on-one appointments with participants.

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### **Mid Shore Community Mediation Center**

**Amount Awarded: \$8,950**

**Project Name:** *Volunteer Development and Retention Program*

**Project Summary:** Mid Shore Community Mediation Center provides no-cost conflict resolution services to residents in Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot counties. This project will focus on building capacity for the Center by covering the stipend for AmeriCorps Volunteer Maryland Coordinator. Their responsibilities will include building the organization's capacity to meet community needs by recruiting, developing, and managing their volunteers. They will also help develop and implement long-term, sustainable volunteer management systems for the Center to use into the future.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support the stipend of the AmeriCorps Volunteer Maryland Coordinator.

### **Mid-Shore Community Foundation**

**Amount Awarded: \$10,000**

**Project Name:** *Project Period Pilot*

**Project Summary:** The Women and Girls Fund of the Mid-Shore Community Foundation Collaborative has developed an approach to address issues surrounding "period poverty," or issues surrounding the affordability of menstruation hygiene products, on the Mid-Shore. Through a test project that includes public engagement and awareness as well as wholesale purchase and distribution of products, the collaborative has developed a long-term, sustainable solution to the problem. They have built a regional network of eighteen interested partners that included health departments, Choptank Community Health, Meals Til Monday, the Salvation Army, and local government management boards. A name (Dignity Period Project) and a logo was developed to differentiate their project from others. They are currently working on developing a communications strategy to continue to pursue donations to that fund, as well as other stakeholders to join the effort.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, is being expended to support the purchase of hygiene products. RMC Staff are working with the Mid-Shore Community Foundation to determine if an extension is needed.

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### **Moving Dorchester Forward**

**Amount Awarded: \$34,800**

**Project Name:** *Getting Ahead in Caroline and Dorchester*

**Project Summary:** Getting Ahead (GA) in Caroline and Dorchester counties is a partnership of Moving Dorchester Forward and Caroline Human Services Council, the Local Management Boards for their respective counties, working with Shore Strategies, LLC. The goal of Getting Ahead Dorchester and Caroline is to engage local residents living in poverty in identifying solutions to community problems while also creating individual plans that will support their efforts to create and sustain stability within their households. Moving Dorchester Forward (MDF) and Caroline Human Services Council (CHSC) continue to work with Shore Strategies, LLC, to provide two sixteen-session workshops in each county for a total of four workshops. These workshops will be led by certified Getting Ahead co-facilitators and will each enroll ten to twelve participants. Workshop participants are referred to as Investigators. MDF, HSC, and Shore Strategies will partner with local faith-based and community organizations to act as hosts for each workshop series. Host organizations will provide the space, meals, and childcare that are integral to the success of the program. Investigators will build plans and strategies to address personal issues and mental health, improving quality of life and self-sustainability.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, continues to be expended to support: a) participant stipends; b) a certified facilitator; c) Aha Process Workbooks; and d) marketing and promotional material. Moving Dorchester Forward was approved for a six-month grant extension to complete the third and fourth sessions in September-October 2024.

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### **Queen Anne's County Department of Economic and Tourism Development**

**Amount Awarded: \$30,000**

**Project Name:** *Community Revitalization through Adaptive Reuse: Former Sudlersville Middle School Building*

**Project Summary:** Queen Anne's County Economic and Tourism Development and Sudlersville Volunteer Fire Company will engage the services of Maryland Economic Development Corporation (MEDCO) to assist with real estate-related consulting services in support of their efforts to adaptively reuse the former Sudlersville Middle School Building in Sudlersville, Maryland. MEDCO directly performed the services to assist with certain feasibility and analytical real estate, development, design, and financing efforts, including but not limited to market analysis, cost estimating, financial modeling, design considerations, site due diligence, and management of professional firms, development planning, and conceptual forecasting in furtherance of informing project approach, scope, and next steps.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support consulting services by MEDCO to complete the market analysis, financial proforma, cost estimating, redevelopment strategy (research, developer testing, and renderings), site planning, and due diligence.

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### **Rebuilding Together Kent County**

**Amount Awarded: \$30,000**

**Project Name:** *Safe and Healthy Homes*

**Project Summary:** Rebuilding Together Kent County and Rebuilding Together Queen Anne's County worked in partnership with community volunteers and local contractors to provide free, critical home repairs and accessibility modifications, as well as links to other community resources, to keep income-eligible homeowners living safely and independently in their homes. These neighbors may be seniors, veterans, those living with disabilities, and families with children—often, they fall into more than one of those categories. Rebuilding Together is committed to helping community members who do not have the physical or financial resources to cover the extraordinary costs of critical home repair and maintenance.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support the construction materials needed to complete critical repairs to six homes.

### **Shore Legal Access**

**Amount Awarded: \$30,800**

**Project Name:** *Access to Legal Services Rebranding and Marketing Campaign*

**Project Summary:** Shore Legal Access (formerly Mid-Shore Pro Bono) connects Eastern Shore individuals and families in need of legal representation with civil legal matters including family law, consumer debt, housing, life planning, and criminal record expungement. Shore Legal Access (SLA) staff and volunteers serve Eastern Shore residents with a household income of 50% of Maryland's median income or less to obtain life-changing legal advice and representation in court. The Access to Legal Services Campaign advanced SLA's name change and rebranding strategy aimed at reaching people who need legal services but don't know how to get help, engaging and respecting residents of all backgrounds, and positioning Shore Legal Access as the "go-to" community resource for legal information. The campaign centered on a comprehensive update to the organization's website, development of reimagined and more accessible information about how to access services, and launch of the new name through a series of grand re-opening events. The impact of the rebranding effort increased client intakes by 27% (from a projected 5%).

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support: a) consultant services to update their website (launched on July 15, 2024, as shorelegal.org); b) printing and purchasing Shore Legal Access promotional materials to include service flyers, rack cards, pens, magnets, and notepads; c) catering and supplies for two re-opening events; and d) postage to mail postcards to local communities to promote re-opening events.

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## **MAERDAF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **Allegany College of Maryland**

**Amount Awarded: \$45,000**

**Project Name:** *Welding the Workforce: Robotic Welding Training at ACM Western Maryland Works*

**Project Summary:** Allegany College of Maryland's (ACM) Western Maryland Works Training Center and Makerspace supports a variety of large-scale and innovative workforce and economic development programs. Community events are constantly underway. The 33,000-square-foot satellite ACM campus facility is located at 37 Lane Avenue in LaVale, Maryland, and contains over \$5 million dollars of state-of-the-art equipment. The space and equipment are used to train the current workforce, displaced workers from the region, and tomorrow's workforce. An area of large growth in the manufacturing space over the past decade is automation—an area of particular focus for Western Maryland Works, as requested by local employers and manufacturers. Robotic welding is an automated process that utilizes programmable mechanical tools that weld and handle equipment across several industries (auto and manufacturing primarily). The addition of the robotic welding technology to the Makerspace

would add to the existing technical training opportunities for manufacturing applications and small business incubation.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support the purchase of a Robotic Welding Trainer tool and associated educational starter package.

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**Ann's Circle, Inc.  
(DBA Annmarie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center)**

**Amount Awarded: \$45,000**

**Project Name:** *Dowell Peninsula History Project*

**Project Summary:** Annmarie Sculpture Garden and Arts Center is committed to connecting people to art and nature. Through a wide variety of engaging exhibits, programs, classes, public projects, and annual events, Annmarie opens up opportunities for creativity, collaboration, and reflection. The Dowell Peninsula History Project at Annmarie Sculpture Garden and Arts Center is a community-based endeavor that will include conducting oral history interviews and collecting photographs, land records, and other ephemera related to the history of the Dowell Peninsula, where Annmarie is located. The research is being guided by Kristi Uunila in collaboration with Annmarie Garden Senior Staff and a diverse committee of citizens from the Dowell Peninsula. Ten outdoor interpretive panels will be designed to provide a broad exploration of the geological, ecological, and cultural history of the Dowell Peninsula—the first-ever of their kind at Annmarie and on the peninsula.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, will be expended to support a) consultant services for the graphic designer; b) ten cantilever interpretive style panels; and c) documentation copywriter for the ten panels. Grantee was unable to complete the project and grant award funds were returned to RMC.

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**Beach to Bay Heritage Area**

**Amount Awarded: \$26,200**

**Project Name:** *StoryMapping of the Beach to Bay Heritage Area*

**Project Summary:** The Beach to Bay Heritage Area (BBHA) is a state-certified Heritage Area serving Maryland's lower eastern shore. BBHA worked closely with the GIS staff at Salisbury University to create a StoryMap outlining heritage assets in the region to make available to the visiting public. ArcGIS StoryMaps are a digital storyteller product that adds narrative to enhance data and inform an audience. The narrative and other media in the StoryMap create a stronger sense of place and illustrate spatial relationships all in one visually appealing product. In addition, BBHA hired a half-time AmeriCorps volunteer to help with the project as well as to assist with public outreach for the organization.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support: a) storyboard development by Salisbury

University that will include the following tasks 1) data identification and data development, 2) design and content development, 3) deployment, hosting, and maintenance; b) AmeriCorps member stipend; c) printing 1,000 postcards; and d) social media marketing.

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**Eastern Shore Land Conservancy**

**Amount Awarded: \$30,000**

**Project Name:** *Research on Land Use Values: Informing Local Governments on Sustainable Growth*

**Project Summary:** Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC) has worked for over thirty years to help preserve the unique rural character of Maryland's Eastern Shore through conservation easements, restoration projects, public outreach, and land use advocacy. ESLC will support the Research on Land Use Values: Informing Local Governments on Sustainable Growth project by contracting with Urban3 to collect and analyze land use data to inform Eastern Shore local governments. This data compares property tax revenues with public investments in infrastructure to create a value-per-acre metric, showing the connection between healthy communities, fiscally sustainable local governments, and land use practices protecting habitat, farmland, and water quality. This would allow for the strategic planning and adoption of land use practices that inform sustainable developments and housing that is affordable.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support: a) contractual services of Urban3 to complete the project; b) ESLC staff travel costs to targeted meetings across the Eastern Shore; c) lunch and beverages for two events; and d) management of the grant. ESLC has been approved for a six-month extension to complete the event components of the project. The events are scheduled for October 22, 2024, at The Packing House in Cambridge, Maryland, and Chesapeake College in Wye Mills, Maryland.

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**Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, Inc.**

**Amount Awarded: \$10,000**

**Project Name:** *Convening Partners and Catalyzing U.S. 250th Anniversary Planning*

**Project Summary:** The Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, with its partners, preserves and promotes the historic sites, towns, cultural landscapes, and diverse stories in Carroll County, Frederick County, and Washington County, Maryland. The Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area convened their county partners to catalyze regional planning for the United States' 250th anniversary. Their project includes toolkits, learning opportunities, a free program by Clint Smith, a nationally known speaker and author, and both in-person and remote gatherings to maximize collaboration and creative approaches to the full and ongoing sweep of American history as reflected in our three rural counties. This effort assures that municipal and county governments, Main Street communities, Destination Marketing Organizations, and

visitor-serving organizations that are connected to historical, natural, and cultural resources in our three-county heritage area will have the information necessary to make the most of this major milestone.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, supported the speaker fee for Clint Smith at the November 1, 2023, regional event that was attended by 548 people at the Weinberg Center of the Arts in Frederick, Maryland.

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### **Lower Shore Land Trust**

**Amount Awarded: \$17,765**

**Project Name:** *Birding is Business on Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore*

**Project Summary:** Lower Shore Land Trust (LSLT) protects and restores natural resources, wildlife habitat, and working lands to support and connect healthy and vibrant communities in Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester counties. LSLT is in the process of creating a birding tour by promoting birding attractions and ecotourism activities on the Lower Eastern Shore by highlighting critical investments from the state that help to conserve the habitat necessary to support bird populations. The project will strengthen the partnership between conservation, heritage, and tourism groups through a series of field trips and the development of marketing tools and interpretation that foster a deeper understanding of the Lower Shore's natural resources.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, is being expended to support: a) community conservation consultant services for birding tour event management and promotion; b) a design contractor; c) 3 interpretive signs by IZONE for birding sites; d) printing and postage costs for brochures, newsletters, and postcards; and e) concrete for signage installation. LSLT has been approved for a six-month extension to complete the project.

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### **Mid-Atlantic Gigabit Innovation Collaboratory**

**Amount Awarded: \$6,926**

**Project Name:** *Cross-County Cybersecurity Program*

**Project Summary:** The Mid-Atlantic Gigabit Innovation Collaboratory (MAGIC) is a nonprofit organization located in Westminster, Maryland that supports STEM education- and technology-based workforce development in Carroll County. This project launched a cross-county cybersecurity program that provided hands-on skills training by hosting two Capture the Flag competitions for rural students in Carroll and Allegany counties.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support: a) Information Technology services for the Capture the Flag competitions and hosting the virtual platform; b) Capture the Flag competition t-shirts and stickers; c) event advertisement; and d) event refreshments.

## **MAERDAF ENERGY**

### **Maryland Rural Development Corporation**

**Amount Awarded: \$40,500**

**Project Name:** *Emergency Repairs for LMI Owner-Occupied Homes to Facilitate Energy Efficiency Upgrades.*

**Project Summary:** Maryland Rural Development Corporation (MRDC) is a private non-profit organization that has been providing services in response to the needs of rural, low-income households and communities since 1979. Since 2018, MRDC's Health, Housing, and Energy program has assisted hundreds of low- and moderate-income rural homeowners to access millions in local, state, and federal funding to complete emergency repairs, undergo weatherization, and energy efficiency upgrades. The program also often finds families needing accessibility modifications to help family members live more full lives and age in place.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was partially expended to support the emergency repair contractors to implement program offerings for thirty-eight homes as of April 2024. The project is currently on hold due to unforeseen circumstances and RMC staff are actively collaborating with MRDC to explore the most effective solutions moving forward.

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### **The Benedictine School for Exceptional Children Foundation, Inc.**

**Amount Awarded: \$30,600**

**Project Name:** *Energy Efficient HVAC Upgrades*

**Project Summary:** The Benedictine School for Exceptional Children Foundation, Inc. helps children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, multiple disabilities, and autism achieve their greatest potential. Benedictine provides educational, vocational, and job support programs that assist people in living and working as fully as possible in the community. The school provides residential services and include campus residential suites and twenty-two group homes on Maryland's Mid-shore. This project replaced four heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) units at their main campus that are over twenty years old and replaces them with updated, energy-efficient models that will provide cost savings and be more environmentally conscious.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, has been expended to purchase and install four HVAC units and associated components that include coolant, filter, drain pan, pan switch, easy trap, slight glass, solenoid and coil, accumulator, and thermostat of each unit at the Jake Lee Devin Building located on the Benedictine School's main campus located at 14299 Benedictine Lane in Ridgely, Maryland.

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## MAERDAF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

### Building African American Minds, Inc.

**Amount Awarded: \$44,500**

**Project Name:** Youth Workforce Development Program

**Project Summary:** Building African American Minds (BAAM), Inc. partnered with ALL4LOVE, a new non-profit organization in Dorchester County, and provide a Youth Workforce Development Program to seventy-nine academically, socially, and emotionally disadvantaged middle and high school youth. The program focused on Math and English Language Arts (ELA) assessment and career-related services to ensure that each student receives the support, mentoring, and internship opportunities and, ultimately, job placements to reach the students' optimum goals. An increase was seen in the students' GPAs from a starting point of 2.4 to an average of 2.8 by the end of the school year. BAAM and ALL4LOVE continued to partner with organizations such as Chesapeake College, Workforce Investment Board (WIB), employers, and other community organizations such as Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce, public libraries, public schools systems, Choptank Community Health, local health departments, and the local Department of Social Services to deliver services to program participants.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support: a) contractual tutoring services for students, b) materials and supplies; c) program marketing; and d) fuel for vans to transport students to college visits and outreach events.

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### Fair Hill Environmental Foundation, Inc.

**Amount Awarded: \$15,000**

**Project Name:** Volunteer Engagement and High School Stewards

**Project Summary:** The Fair Hill Nature Center is dedicated to environmental education. Located in the historic DuPont fox hunting lodge within 5,600 acres of the Fair Hill Natural Resources Management Area in Cecil County, the Nature Center immerses youth and adults in remarkable environmental education opportunities through field trips, summer camps, after-school programs, and professional development for educators since 1990. This project supported the second year of their full-time Volunteer Maryland AmeriCorps Volunteer Coordinator. The coordinator recruited volunteers to support their organization and developed programming focusing on high school students in Cecil and Kent counties on the topic of conservation.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support the stipend for the AmeriCorps Volunteer Maryland Coordinator.

### Junior Achievement of the Eastern Shore

**Amount Awarded: \$5,000**

**Project Name:** JA Inspire

**Project Summary:** Junior Achievement of the Eastern Shore is dedicated to inspiring and empowering all students. As liaisons between the business community and education, they immerse themselves in local business industries, identify the needs, and develop innovative curriculum that is brought to life by volunteers. Junior Achievement programs teach concepts that equip and inspire our students to live within their means, build wealth, identify fulfilling career pathways, and explore entrepreneurial thinking. As partners to school districts in Kent, Queen Anne's, Caroline, Dorchester, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico and Worcester counties in Maryland, and Accomack County in Virginia, Junior Achievement of the Eastern Shore works with district educators to plan and implement programs. Junior Achievement programs are implemented grade-level-wide, including students of all gender, race, cultures, and socioeconomic status. This mission aligns with the objectives of JA Inspire, inspiring and preparing students for the demands of the workforce, hoping to 1) display career opportunities in students' backyards, 2) showcase the education and skillset required to succeed in each industry, and 3) eliminate the misconception students must leave the eastern shore to find career success.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support: a) a three-day student event that hosted 4,500 students from ten different counties at the Wicomico Youth and Civic Center; and b) Inspire Curriculum student workbooks.

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### The Parents' Place of Maryland

**Amount Awarded: \$10,350**

**Project Name:** The Parents' Place of Maryland and Volunteer Maryland AmeriCorps Member

**Project Summary:** The Parents' Place of Maryland's (PPMD) mission is to empower families as advocates and partners in improving education and health outcomes for children with disabilities and special healthcare needs with a commitment to diversity and equity. The Parents' Place of Maryland partnered with Volunteer Maryland to host a part-time Volunteer Maryland Coordinator. The coordinator helped train, coordinate, and develop a formal volunteer program for PPMD.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support: a) the Volunteer Maryland stipend; b) a laptop and database licenses; c) materials and supplies; and d) management of the grant.

# Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund

## RMPIF OVERVIEW

The Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) was authorized by the Maryland General Assembly in 2006. In 2016, RMPIF received funding for the first time in the amount of \$2 million, and support has increased since then to \$9 million in Fiscal Year 2024. The RMPIF program is funded through the State of Maryland’s Annual Operating Budget. In FY 2024, the Grant Review Board awarded fifty-four grants totaling \$4,745,558.

The goal 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 preserving the best aspects of a pastoral heritage and rural way of life. Resources provided to RMPIF are designed to facilitate significant, targeted investments in important economic and community development programs and promote regional and intergovernmental cooperation. These investments 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 supports the Rural Maryland Council’s operations and activities (\$750,000), the state’s five rural Regional Councils at \$3,000,000 (\$600,000 per council), as well as grant projects awards that focus on rural entrepreneurship development, healthcare, and infrastructure projects. Rural entrepreneurship was expanded under House Bill 695 from 2023 to include workforce, cooperative, and agricultural development. In FY 2024, RMC received an additional \$300,000 for a Rural Health Care-Nonemergency Health Transportation Pilot Program. Additionally, RMPIF supports the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF). MAERDAF provides capacity-building grant funds to rural nonprofit service providers and community colleges. Refer to the FY 2023 MAERDAF Annual

Report for a list of grant projects funded by RMPIF. Due to the high demand in MAERDAF grant applications, the Grant Review Board approved an additional allocation of \$100,636 from RMPIF for a total of \$969,121 in MAERDAF grant awards.

In Fiscal Year 2024, the RMPIF program received eighty-nine applications totaling \$14,389,524 in requests. Fifty-four applications were awarded, totaling \$4,745,558.

## GRANT DECISIONS

The Rural Maryland Council serves as the administrative agency in receiving the applications and disbursing the funds. Grant award determinations are made by the independent 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. Fiscal Year 2024 Grant Review Board Members were: **Mindie Burgoyne**, Senior Regional Business Development Representative, Maryland Department of Commerce; **Karen Fedor**, Senior Agricultural Marketing Specialist, Maryland Department of Agriculture; **Dan Rider**, Forest Stewardship and Utilization Program Manager, Maryland Department of Natural Resource Forest Service; **Sara Seitz**, Director, State Office of Rural Health, Maryland Department of Health; **Dona Sorce**, Project Manager, Division of Neighborhood Revitalization, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development; and **Joyce Bowlsbey**, RMC Board Chair Designee. **Charlotte Davis** serves as the MAERDAF Coordinator and Rural Maryland Council Executive Director.

## RMPIF FISCAL YEAR 2024 AWARDS AT-A-GLANCE

| Focus Area  | Number of Awards | Amount Awarded     |
|---|------------------|--------------------|
| Entrepreneurship  | 22 grants        | \$1,516,156        |
| Health Care   | 17 grants        | \$1,500,000        |
| Health Care – Nonemergency Medical Transportation Pilot Program | 4 grants         | \$191,803          |
| Infrastructure  | 11 grants        | \$1,537,599        |
| <b>Total:</b>   | <b>54 grants</b> | <b>\$4,745,558</b> |

**RMPIF HEALTH CARE-NONEMERGENCY  
MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION PILOT PROGRAM:  
4 GRANTS = \$191,803**

| Awardee                                 | Total Award |
|---|-------------|
| Caring Carroll, Inc.                    | \$45,000    |
| LifeStyles of Maryland Foundation, Inc. | \$30,000    |
| Partners In Care Maryland, Inc.         | \$75,000    |
| The Arc Southern Maryland               | \$41,803    |

**RMPIF INFRASTRUCTURE: 11 GRANTS = \$1,537,599**

| Awardee  | Total Award |
|--|-------------|
| African American Resources-Cultural and Heritage Society, Inc. | \$313,928   |
| Charles County Military Alliance Council                       | \$238,000   |
| City Of Crisfield  | \$110,000   |
| Maryland Deaf Community Center                                 | \$125,000   |
| County Commissioners for Somerset County                       | \$235,735   |
| Sport & Entertainment Corporation of Maryland                  | \$62,763    |
| St. Mary's Nursing Center                                      | \$45,000    |
| The Arc Central Chesapeake Region                              | \$200,000   |
| The Federated Charities Corporation of Frederick               | \$47,173    |
| Town of Keedysville  | \$10,000    |
| Town of Middletown   | \$150,000   |

**RMPIF HEALTH CARE: 17 GRANTS = \$1,500,000**

| Awardee   | Total Award |
|---|-------------|
| Asian American Center of Frederick                            | \$25,500    |
| Atlantic General Hospital                                     | \$206,160   |
| Carroll County Youth Service Bureau                           | \$100,000   |
| Chesapeake Housing Mission, Inc.                              | \$22,260    |
| For All Seasons, Inc.   | \$30,000    |
| For All Seasons, Inc.   | \$125,000   |
| Fort Ritchie Community Center, Inc.                           | \$45,393    |
| Frederick Health, Inc.  | \$332,185   |
| GRMC, Inc., DBA Garrett Regional Medical Center               | \$85,000    |
| Health Partners, Inc.   | \$79,000    |
| Hospice of the Chesapeake Foundation                          | \$30,000    |
| Hospice of the Chesapeake Foundation                          | \$150,000   |
| Ivy and Pearls of Southern Maryland Community Charities, Inc. | \$10,000    |
| Martin's House & Barn   | \$19,067    |
| Maryland Diaper Bank  | \$15,750    |
| The Frederick Center  | \$15,260    |
| TidalHealth   | \$209,425   |

**RMPIF ENTREPRENEURSHIP (Includes  
Workforce, Cooperative, and Agricultural  
Development): 22 GRANTS = \$1,516,156**

| Awardee   | Total Award |
|---|-------------|
| Affiliated Sante Group  | \$53,300    |
| Asian American Center of Frederick  | \$120,000   |
| Carroll Technology & Innovation Council   | \$63,000    |
| Carroll Technology & Innovation Council   | \$15,000    |
| Crisfield Area Chamber of Commerce  | \$60,000    |
| Ferry Cove Shellfish  | \$80,000    |
| Frostburg State University  | \$75,000    |
| Garrett County Arts Council, Inc.   | \$54,986    |
| Habitat for Humanity, Susquehanna   | \$30,000    |
| Habitat For Humanity of Wicomico County, Inc.   | \$240,000   |
| People for Change Coalition   | \$70,000    |
| Somerset County Economic Development  | \$8,500     |
| Somerset County Health Department   | \$55,000    |
| The Greater Cumberland Committee  | \$203,834   |
| The Interfaith Service Coalition, Inc.  | \$28,000    |
| True Oyster Restoration Initiative, Inc.  | \$100,000   |
| University of Maryland Baltimore Graduate School, Physician Assistant Leadership & Learning Academy | \$37,500    |
| University of Maryland, College Park  | \$80,000    |
| University of Maryland Eastern Shore  | \$45,000    |
| University of Maryland Extension - Calvert County 4-H   | \$41,036    |
| Vehicles for Change, Inc.   | \$45,000    |
| Wholesome Harvest Co-op   | \$11,000    |

**REGIONAL COUNCILS:  
5 GRANTS = \$3,000,000**

*Per statute, one-third of the RMPIF is distributed to the state's five rural regional planning and development councils:*

| Awardee  | Total Award |
|--|-------------|
| Mid-Shore Regional Council                     | \$600,000   |
| Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore | \$600,000   |
| Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland       | \$600,000   |
| Tri-County Council for Western Maryland        | \$600,000   |
| Upper Shore Regional Council                   | \$600,000   |

## RMPIF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

*(Expanded to include Workforce, Cooperative, and Agricultural Development)*

### Ferry Cove Shellfish

**Amount Awarded: \$80,000**

**Project Name:** *Developing a Soft-Shell Clam (*Mya arenaria*) Aquaculture Industry in Maryland*

**Project Summary:** Ferry Cove Shellfish is committed to the long-term viability of the commercial shellfish industry and a thriving Chesapeake Bay. They collaborate with scientists, watermen, business owners, and policymakers to address the current and future needs of this fast-growing industry. Their facility, located in Sherwood, MD (Talbot County), is designed to produce shellfish and to study, implement, and demonstrate innovative techniques and processes needed to advance the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the aquaculture community. This project plans to further facilitate the growth of the state's commercial aquaculture sector, both public and private, by expanding its current product offering by introducing soft-shell clam seed in order to give the industry another high-demand shellfish species to grow. Ferry Cove has the capabilities and partnerships with the commercial industry, State of Maryland, and universities to conduct hatchery and field studies to evaluate the feasibility and performance metrics required to build a successful market for hatchery-produced soft clams and generate all the seed needed to support an annual clam harvest of tens of thousands of bushels.

The RMPIF grant award, along with matching funds, is expended to support a) the salaries, wages, and fringe benefits for five members of the hatchery team, including a Project Manager, Hatchery Manager, two Hatchery Technicians, and the Field/Data Collection Technician; and b) contractual support in the form of a waterman to assist with the project vessel chartering, oyster diver to plant clams, and extra field/industry support.

Ferry Cove Shellfish has been approved for a one-year grant extension, as soft-shell clams typically spawn in the early spring and fall, necessitating more time to produce enough juvenile seed for Ferry Cove Shellfish to conduct the grow-out studies needed to complete the feasibility study.

### University of Maryland, College Park

**Amount Awarded: \$80,000**

**Project Name:** *Technical Service Support for Entrepreneurship in Rural Maryland*

**Project Summary:** The start of the pandemic exposed Maryland's lack of local food production and processing capabilities. In the past few years, the

state has made concerted efforts to address these issues. The Maryland Food System Resiliency Council (MFSRC) made a number of recommendations that would build resiliency into Maryland's food and agriculture system, including four suggestions that emphasize entrepreneurial activities in rural communities. The University of Maryland Extension Agriculture and Food Systems (AgFS) Program is uniquely suited to address the needs MFSRC identified. The newly funded position will provide a state specialist with expertise in entrepreneurship, local foods, and marketing who can leverage the AgFS educator and collaborator network across Maryland to facilitate educational programs for current and aspiring entrepreneurs. The overarching goal is to promote and support agricultural and food business creation and expansion in Rural Maryland. Due to the time needed to complete the grant agreement, the term of performance has been adjusted to May 1, 2024, through May 30, 2025. Recruitment for the position ended on October 2, 2024, and the hiring committee is currently evaluating the applicants.

The RMPIF award, along with matching funds, will be expended to support a) the salary and fringe benefits for a full-time, professional-track faculty member; b) travel to conduct educational programming while providing grower and agribusiness consultations; c) operating funds for the faculty member's program; and d) indirect cost for grant management.

### Wholesome Harvest Co-op

**Amount Awarded: \$11,000**

**Project Name:** *Wholesome Harvest Food Co-op: Farm Fresh Food Bag Distribution*

**Project Summary:** Wholesome Harvest Co-op (WHC) is a consumer cooperative grocery store and commercial kitchen that serves the rural multi-county region of Western Maryland, designated as low-income and lacking food access by the USDA Economic Research Service. Their mission is to expand market opportunities for local farmers, increase access to affordable, locally grown food, and generate jobs and revenue streams for their local economy. Their Healthy Food Bag Program (HFBP) is a collaboration with health providers, farmers, and regional produce distributors to provide bags of fresh, nutritious produce and whole grains to hundreds of community residents. This program has been running efficiently for a full year, and they are currently working on expanding. This project focused on conducting a Food Delivery Feasibility Study (FDFS) of the existing program to research and understand the untapped markets for grocery delivery in the area. It is through a grocery delivery service to non-vulnerable populations that WHC feels they can make a sufficient profit to sustain their programming.

The study found two challenges: a) WHC needs to attract more shoppers; and b) raise the average sale price point. The feasibility study provided a marketing strategy to build a greater customer base targeting four markets, suggesting window signage to capture commuters in their cars and a means to develop more SNAP beneficiaries as shoppers. The Co-op would benefit from technical support to implement the plan, guide the Co-op staff into execution, and provide tracking and accountability for the project. Implementation of a strategic plan will help meet the challenge of attracting new shoppers. The second most significant challenge for the Co-op is the low average sale of \$21. At that price point, the number of deliveries necessary to achieve profitability is prohibitive. If the Co-op increased sales by 25%, as recommended in the Opportunities for Growth report, delivery service would be a more achievable goal. The FDFS illustrates how different models of delivery would be sustained at price points up to \$50.

The RMPF award, along with matching funds, were expended to support the Food Delivery Feasibility Study to project the growth and expansion of their program to non-vulnerable populations/markets.

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### **Crisfield Area Chamber of Commerce**

**Amount Awarded: \$60,000**

**Project Name:** *National Hard Crab Derby*

**Project Summary:** The National Hard Crab Derby is an annual event hosted by the Crisfield Area Chamber of Commerce and will be celebrating its 76th year. Over the decades, this event has become one of the most premier events in the City of Crisfield. This community event recaps much of Crisfield's history and hosts many events throughout the duration of Labor Day weekend. Designated as the "Crab Capital of the World," events such as the crowning of Miss Crustacean, Little Miss, and Mister Crustacean, cooking and picking contests, crab races, boat docking, and more, all display the importance of Crisfield's heritage set to carry on for years to come. The National Hard Crab Derby makes Crisfield a destination not only for the locals but for visitors from all over the surrounding areas.

The RMPF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support the purchase of bleachers for use by the attendees of the event.

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### **Garrett County Arts Council, Inc.**

**Amount Awarded: \$54,986**

**Project Name:** *Grantsville A&E District \$MART ART Space*

**Project Summary:** The mission of the Garrett County Arts Council (GCAC) is to aid, encourage, advise, and coordinate activities dedicated to the promotion of cultural arts in Garrett County and to integrate such activities into the life of their community. With the success of GCAC's \$MART ART spaces, technology, and programming in Oakland, Maryland, GCAC decided to replicate its successful program in Grantsville. Grantsville lies twenty-four miles north of Oakland and is the most rapidly growing town in the county. The Grantsville Arts and Entertainment District \$MART ART Space will be an ADA-accessible retail storefront and business workspace for innovation, education, and training of artists, artisans, and rural entrepreneurs. Having a new location near I-68 and the National Road will increase economic activity and tourism growth throughout the region.

The RMPF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to: a) support the workspace conversion to retrofit the new space to include American Disability Act (ADA) accessible restrooms and fixtures; b) purchase workspace utilities to include internet, Wi-Fi, and telephone; c) equipment software in the form of Clover Point of Sales Hand-Held System and traveling case, and Zoom Teleconference capabilities; and d) purchase workspace furniture that will include two mobile four- by eight-foot heavy-duty tables with casters, four H-frame artist easels for workshops and display purposes, a Walker Display hanging system for thirty feet of wall space, and a dehumidifier.

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### **Somerset County Economic Development**

**Amount Awarded: \$8,500**

**Project Name:** *Geofencing- Database Collection*

**Project Summary:** The Somerset County Economic Development Commission's goal is to increase the economic viability and vitality of the business community by creating a positive vision for economic growth. The Geofencing-Database Collection project is a marketing and advertising tool to attract customers to brick-and-mortar locations. Geofencing allows tracking of foot traffic, dwell time, and routes customers take to offer competitive insight. Through collecting cell phone data, this tool will aid tourism, economic development, and local government in targeting marketing efforts for business retention and attraction to grow the local economy.

The RMPF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support the purchase of the Placer.ai location analytics data.

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## **The Greater Cumberland Committee**

**Amount Awarded: \$203,834**

**Project Name:** *Growing the Outdoor Recreation Economy in Mountain Maryland and the I-68 Region*

**Project Summary:** The Greater Cumberland Committee (TGCC) is focused on projects of regional relevance in the areas of transportation infrastructure, education, workforce development, energy and natural resources, and next-generation leadership. TGCC and Frostburg State University (FSU) are leading the creation of the Outdoor Recreation Economy Institute (FOREI) at FSU to strategically position “Mountain Maryland” and the I-68 Region as a place where outdoor businesses and recreation ecosystems can thrive by creating a regional hub to coordinate and lead regional economic and community development; support education, training, and workforce development; foster entrepreneurialism and small business development; and provide academic research and reporting, all within one regionally focused organization. FOREI achieved the goals of this project by supporting the region’s outdoor economy through local collaboration with key partners like the I-68 Regional Alliance, Western Maryland Small Business Development Center, Offices of Outdoor Recreation, nearby colleges, and K-12 institutions, business development support organizations, and outdoor recreation businesses and communities who rely on a richly diverse outdoor recreation landscape.

The RMPIF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to: a) support consulting activities that will include the development of a board book, creation of project management system, management of files, creation of brand materials, development of a website, production of business support network programming, creation of a feasibility study design for incubation and acceleration, technology program discovery, organizational development, database and dashboard design, application programming, testing, reporting and monitoring; and b) support TGCC salaries for the Executive Director and the Program Manager.

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## **Oyster Institute**

**Amount Awarded: \$100,000**

**Project Name:** *Wild-Caught Chesapeake Bay Blue Catfish—Harvesting and Transporting*

**Project Summary:** For years, there has been support for a public and private venture focused on addressing the threat to the Chesapeake Bay and tributaries caused by an invasive species, the Blue Catfish, which now ranges the entire length of the waterway. True Oyster Restoration Initiative (True Oyster), dedicated to restoring the Bay, has partnered with Tilghman Island Seafood, a recently USDA-approved processing facility, to develop and implement the Wild-Caught Chesapeake Bay Blue Catfish project. This project will establish a series of hubs designed to facilitate communication, collection, and pickup by allowing fishermen regionally to cooperate, making the process more convenient

and reliable as well as providing the equipment necessary to support the fishermen, harvesting, transporting, processing, packaging, and sale of the Blue Catfish.

The RMPIF award, along with matching funds, is being expended to purchase: a) twenty-five Bonar Plastic insulated fish bins; b) a 10,000-pound flake ice machine; c) a refrigeration unit, tractor-trailer; and d) a refrigerated truck. The Oyster Institute has been approved for a six-month extension to complete the project.

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## **Affiliated Sante Group**

**Amount Awarded: \$53,300**

**Project Name:** *Eastern Shore Crisis System Internship Program Expansion*

**Project Summary:** Affiliated Sante Group’s mission is to work in partnership with communities, public health departments, mental health agencies, law enforcement, and others to promote a wide array of tailored treatment options to help people who experience emotional health challenges receive the support services they need to heal and recover. Affiliated Sante Group has enhanced its Eastern Shore Crisis Response Internship program by expanding to include four teams, with each team consisting of two behavioral health interns and an experienced behavioral health care crisis professional to respond to individuals in the community facing emotional distress. The enhancement of this program has attracted more internship applicants, supplied funding for competitive intern stipends, and provided incentive pay for intern trainers and the designated Intern Coordinator. This program worked to augment the number of new behavioral health professionals in the field, as well as those with a wider array of experience in serving individuals across the lifespan and addressing various behavioral health issues.

The RMPIF grant award, along with matching funds, is being expended to support the salaries and wages for eight intern stipends, an intern trainer, and the Intern Coordinator incentive pay. Affiliated Sante Group was approved a six-month extension to ensure the full scope of the project is able to be carried out as the winter semester interns will not complete their program until December 2025.

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## **Asian American Center of Frederick**

**Amount Awarded: \$120,000**

**Project Name:** *Achieving Tri-County Community Health Workforce Initiative*

**Project Summary:** The Asian American Center for Frederick’s vision is equity with a mission to enhance, empower, and enrich cultural diversity. The project, Achieving Tri-County Community Health Workforce Initiative (ATCHWI), successfully drove workforce, economic, and community development by developing infrastructure to support a healthcare workforce to serve rural residents in Frederick, Washington, and Carroll Counties. ATCHWI will emphasize services for

ethnic minorities where cultural competency and language interpretation is critically absent in these rural communities. Trainings and apprenticeships will be provided to the targeted workforce candidates, including entry-level workers, graduating high school students, gap year college students, community college students, re-entry citizens, newly arrived refugees, immigrants, and underemployed rural residents. Rural residents who are identified as having health risk factors were reached with expected outcomes of improved access to healthcare services. Overall during the program, ATCHWI conducted ninety-six community information sessions from August 2023-August 2024. One hundred forty-five applications were submitted for the Community Health Work (CHW) training program. Twenty-five were submitted for their inaugural Community Nursing Assistant (CNA) training cohort. The program graduated 113 individuals eligible for a State CHW Certification and upskilled twenty workers to CNAs, Geriatric Nursing Assistants (GNA), and Medical Interpreters (MT)/Technicians. Another fourteen upskilled to become Certified Nursing Assistants.

The RMPIF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support: a) the salaries, wages, and fringe benefits of a Project Coordinator and a Data Coordinator; b) local travel to partner agencies and outreach events by project staff; c) job coaching consultant services; d) CNA, GNA, and MT curriculum training and certification for students; and e) community outreach and facilities rental.

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### **Carroll Technology & Innovation Council**

**Amount Awarded: \$15,000**

**Project Name:** *Rural Innovation and Cyber Education*

**Project Summary:** Carroll Technology and Innovation Council's mission is to assist in the advancement of technology and business innovation in Carroll County, Maryland. The Rural Innovation and Cyber Education project is an educational program geared toward 4-H members and middle schoolers that aims to create excitement about the future of farming, expose participants to available and evolving farming technologies and financial management tools, foster cyber resilience, and inspire continued exploration of digital tools. The program a) created a sixteen, multi-week programs for thirty-five rising ninth and twelfth graders to educate students on the importance of cybersecurity using robotics, drones, information technology, and presentation skills in agriculture; 2) partnered with local 4-H clubs to create a summer enrichment program that will focus on empowering participants with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to procure and protect their technology assets; and 3) developed and deployed drone training and operation.

The RMPIF award, along with matching funds, were expended to: a) support curriculum development by Carroll Community College, and b) purchase supplies.

### **Carroll Technology & Innovation Council**

**Amount Awarded: \$63,000**

**Project Name:** *Veterans Transition to Tech*

**Project Summary:** Providing veterans with personal electronic devices and digital skills training is crucial to shrinking the distance between this group and necessary personal and professional resources. The Carroll Technology & Innovation Council aims to bridge this gap by offering veterans free software, hardware, and instruction on to use tools effectively. By addressing veterans' technological needs, the program supports digital inclusion efforts, fosters workforce development, and promotes individual growth. With Information Technology certifications and contextualized training, veterans gain marketable skills and the confidence to navigate the digital landscape. The program successfully distributed 107 laptops and offered twenty-five hours of instructional training to veterans in Carroll, Allegany, Cecil, Frederick, and Garrett counties, further connecting veterans with employers, job search tools, and career guidance to strengthen the labor force and empower individuals for meaningful employment. Graduates of the program possessed the necessary digital tools and training to succeed in the tech-driven workplace, benefiting both veterans and the organizations invested.

The RMPIF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to support a) staff salaries dedicated to the program, and b) the purchase of 107 laptops.

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### **Frostburg State University**

**Amount Awarded: \$75,000**

**Project Name:** *Summit Station at Innovation Park*

**Project Summary:** Frostburg State University's Summit Station at Innovation Park is a vibrant hub for businesses, fostering sustainable growth and economic development in the Western Maryland region. Summit Station provides affordable and scalable office spaces, networking events, workshops, and training programs. The station also empowers displaced workers and supports a workforce reentry program, offering support and opportunities for employment or self-employment through initiatives like skills development. Through this project, the center plans to increase the number of remote workers and businesses utilizing its services by 20%, promote active member engagement and foster collaboration by hosting networking events, provide opportunities for continuous learning by offering monthly professional development workshops and access to online courses, and contribute to the economic growth and development of the local community through the remote work center's activities.

The RMPIF award, along with matching funds, is being expended to support: a) the salary and fringe benefits for an administrative assistant to provide essential support to Summit Station members; b) supplies and materials to facilitate effective functions such as software tools and

subscriptions, Xerox machine contract, phone service, and stationary supplies; c) cleaning service to ensure the Center remains clean and well-maintained; and d) management of the grant award. Frostburg State University has been approved for a six-month extension in order to ensure administrative coverage for September 2024.

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### **Habitat For Humanity Of Wicomico County, Inc.**

**Amount Awarded: \$240,000**

**Project Name:** *Building for the Future*

**Project Summary:** Habitat for Humanity of Wicomico County served 174 individuals with their three key programs: Community Building, Critical Home Repair, and Habicorps Workforce Development. Seven homes were sold as owner-occupied to first-time homebuyers, fifty-four older adults received critical home repairs (twenty-three projects), 144 people received financial literacy services, fifteen people lived in affordable rentals, twenty youth had meaningful work experiences with their ReStore Thrift shop or at the construction site and dozens more volunteered. Additionally, Habitat for Humanity of Wicomico County moved into their new offices located at 105 N. Dulany in Fruitland, Maryland and opened their second ReStore with the grand opening held on July 11, 2024. The ReStore Thrift shop, the sustainability engine of the organization, accepts donations and resells those items to the public to fund the mission of building homes, communities, and hope. Ten new employees were hired to work in the ReStore. An additional ten staff, two interns, and four Americorp members served in the office side of the building.

The RMPIF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support renovations and construction costs of the new office building and ReStore located at 105 N. Dulany in Fruitland, Maryland.

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### **Habitat for Humanity Susquehanna**

**Amount Awarded: \$30,000**

**Project Name:** *Develop Rural Communities and Workforce; Promote Leadership; and Engage Youth Through "Habi-Tech" Program*

**Project Summary:** Habitat for Humanity Susquehanna serves low-income families in Harford and Cecil counties through their Home Ownership, Home Repair, and Financial Literacy programs. Habitat for Humanity Susquehanna has partnered with Harford Technical High School and Cecil County School of Technology, to develop the "Habi-Tech" homes program. This program expands Habitat for Humanity Susquehanna's capacity to provide affordable, energy-efficient homes for rural low-income families in both counties while also giving students an education in the latest construction technology. Through this exciting and meaningful program, 335 students

will remain engaged in school as they receive real-world experience to acquire necessary workplace skills, earn certifications, and create impressive portfolios—becoming marketable in their fields. After graduation, students may begin working or continue to a four-year college to study mechanical engineering, architecture, or other related fields.

The RMPIF award, along with matching funds, were expended to support the construction materials for two "Habi-Tech" homes in Cecil County and Harford County, respectively.

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### **People for Change Coalition**

**Amount Awarded: \$70,000**

**Project Name:** *Summer Career Enrichment Program*

**Project Summary:** The People for Change Coalition (PFC Coalition) is a membership organization representing over 300 nonprofit and minority businesses in Prince George's County, Southern Maryland, and throughout the state of Maryland. Incorporated in November 2011, their mission is to develop the nonprofit and minority business sector by providing assessment, support, and expansion services. The PFC Coalition implemented a four-week summer career enrichment (SCEP) program in partnership with the Dorchester Career and Technology Center (DCTC) to provide middle school students from Dorchester, Caroline, and Talbot counties with hands-on activities, exposing them to career professionals and entrepreneurs, and helping to boost their confidence, self-esteem, critical thinking, and interaction with peers. SCEP training included classwork in media arts, technical animation, chess playing, robotics, and drone technology.

The RMPIF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support: a) the salaries and wages for the Project Manager and Project Assistant; b) instructional contractors; c) Mad-Learn and Adobe Creative Cloud software; d) materials and supplies to include flash drives and paper; e) printing costs for presentations, instructional materials, and certificates; f) hotels and meals for instructors; and g) travel costs for instructors, project team, and students.

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### **Somerset County Health Department**

**Amount Awarded: \$55,000**

**Project Name:** *Healthy Somerset Garden Project*

**Project Summary:** The Healthy Somerset Garden Project is a partnership between multiple community partners connecting the residents of Somerset and Wicomico counties with locally grown vegetables. Each year, funding is given to the Eastern Correctional Institution (ECI) located in Somerset County for the development of a community garden. The garden is grown, maintained, and harvested by ECI inmates.

From the first week in June to the last week of September, staff from the Somerset County Health Department pick up and distribute the vegetables into vulnerable communities once a week. Different community partners agree to be host sites for the vegetable giveaways. This year, partners will include the Crisfield and Princess Anne Libraries, Deal Island Volunteer Fire Department, Manokin Church, Adopt-a-Block, Inc., and Somerset County Recreation, Parks, and Tourism.

The RMPiF award, along with matching funds, were expended to: a) purchase a GMC Sierra 1500 truck to transport the produce; b) vehicle branding; c) bags to distribute the produce; d) marketing; e) seeds and garden supplies for Eastern Correctional Institution program; and f) fuel costs for the truck.

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### **The Interfaith Service Coalition, Inc.**

**Amount Awarded: \$28,000**

**Project Name:** *Martha's House Youth Center*

**Project Summary:** The Interfaith Service Coalition, Inc.'s mission is to assist individuals and families in the Town of Hancock and surrounding communities during times of physical, emotional, financial, or spiritual need. Martha's House is their newest project, which focuses on helping working-class individuals secure affordable housing, provides a youth center, and offers a free communal feeding site throughout the year. This project will expand their summer camp programming from two one-week camps to five one-week camps, with additional summer opportunities. For example, they offered science, technology, engineering, and math projects programming and a successful virtual reality program.

The RMPiF award, along with matching funds, were expended to support the: a) purchase of materials and supplies for the camps that include t-shirts, gel packs, lunch boxes, camping whistles, tackle boxes, large first aid kit, anesthetic wipes, first aid kits and literature, rolling cooler, water bottles, drawstring backpacks, wildlife posters, insect repellent, printer ink and paper, notebooks, name tags, card stock, sketch pads, art pencil kits, paint tray palettes, paint brushes, craft aprons, easels, fabric markers, yoga mats, pillow cases, pillows, disinfecting wipes, virtual reality space lab activity sets, gear bot kits, electricity/magnet experiment kits, microscopes, and printed materials; b) camp counselor stipends and presenter speaker fees; c) food costs for camp participants and summer family programming; d) travel costs for summer camp program; e) camp-related activities, such as field trips and trainings; f) technology costs that include information technology support, applications, software, and equipment; g) utilities; and h) janitorial services.

### **University of Maryland Baltimore Graduate School, Physician Assistant Leadership & Learning Academy**

**Amount Awarded: \$37,500**

**Project Name:** *Rural Preceptor Development Academy: Recruit, Retain, and Re-imagine the Rural Healthcare Workforce.*

**Project Summary:** The Rural Preceptor Development Academy: Recruit, Retain, and Re-imagine the Rural Healthcare Workforce project is focusing on developing an innovative preceptor development academy, coupled with a state-wide mentorship program for rural-based college and high school students. Funding will be used to support apprenticeships of young adults who may be interested in healthcare careers in their rural communities. The awardee will 1) develop a coordinating center, recruit, and train preceptors through a six-month formalized fellowship program focusing on effective precepting and mentorship, 2) deploy health professional students in rural areas under the mentorship of our trained preceptors, 3) recruit pre-health aspiring future health professions from rural communities and 4) match them with rural preceptors for ongoing mentoring and shadowing. This initiative will leverage existing partnerships and new collaborations. Key outcomes will include a number of preceptors and trainees recruited and retained in rural settings.

The RMPiF grant award, along with matching funds, will be expended to support: a) salaries, wages, and fringe benefits of the Principal Investigator, Project Director, Clinical Partnerships Coordinator, Co-Investigator, and program evaluation and data analytics expert; b) travel costs to cover outreach to recruit and retain rural preceptors and outreach to pre-health college students in rural settings; c) supplies in the form of instruction materials and program evaluation software; and d) preceptor recruitment and training costs. The University of Maryland Baltimore Graduate School, Physician Assistant Leadership & Learning Academy has been approved for a six-month extension to complete their project.

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### **University of Maryland Eastern Shore**

**Amount Awarded: \$45,000**

**Project Name:** *Summer Youth Enrichment and Engagement for the Lower Shore*

**Project Summary:** The University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) is a historically Black College and University (HBCU) located in the rural town of Princess Anne. UMES is located in Somerset County, one of the poorest counties in the state. This project seeks to create and expand upon a summer youth engagement and enrichment experience for high school students in Dorchester, Worcester, Wicomico, and Somerset counties. The program will add ten rising tenth- to twelfth-graders to the already established three-week residential summer experience and then create the opportunity for a one-week engagement and enrichment experience for twenty rising ninth-graders.

The RMPHF grant award, along with matching funds, will be expended to support: a) the salaries, wages, and fringe benefits for three Residential Assistants and two faculty members; b) travel costs; c) supplies in the form of textbooks, workbooks, paper, pens; and d) marketing materials for community sessions.

The University of Maryland Eastern has been approved a one-year extension due to timing and receiving the grant award. The FY 2024 funding will support their camp program during the summer of 2025.

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### **University of Maryland Extension - Calvert County 4-H**

**Amount Awarded: \$41,036**

**Project Name:** *The Science of Cooking with Calvert County 4-H*

**Project Summary:** The University of Maryland-Calvert County 4-H offers youth cooking and kitchen safety classes throughout Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties. A short-term, high-quality six-week workshop series will be offered to youth ages eight and up. Lessons are organized for two age groups: eight to twelve and thirteen to eighteen. Workshops focus on teaching youth kitchen safety, making healthy choices, creating budget-friendly meals, minimizing food waste, utilizing locally grown foods, encouraging youth to become curious about food as opposed to restrictive, and developing important skills for successful independent living after high school. Each lesson incorporates science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Educators will use a small, self-contained kitchen on wheels known as a "Charlie Cart" to demonstrate and lead the lessons while the youth follow along and cook independently using a cooking kit.

The RMPHF award, along with matching funds, were expended to: a) purchase two "Charlie Carts"; b) ten portable cooking kits (each kit will include a storage tote, two-burner induction cooktop, ten-quart air fryer, induction cookware, knives, cutting boards, measuring cup and spoon set, digital kitchen scale, digital meat thermometer, kitchen towels, basic plate and bowl, dishwashing bag, gray water bucket set, cooking utensils, basic spices, digital timer, liquid measuring cup set, mixing bowls, blender, and a power strip); and c) travel costs.

The University of Maryland Extension – Calvert County 4-H has been approved for a six-month extension to expand their program offering.

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### **Vehicles for Change, Inc.**

**Amount Awarded: \$45,000**

**Project Name:** *Vehicles for Change - Lower Eastern Shore Division*

**Project Summary:** In 1999, Vehicles for Change (VFC) opened outside of Baltimore, Maryland, with the mission to address the main barrier to employment for low-income families: transportation. Since then, VFC has become the largest low-income car ownership program in the country, awarding cars to worthy families in Maryland and Virginia. Since 1999, VFC has awarded almost 8,000 cars to low-income families—positively impacting more than 26,000 lives. In June 2015, VFC established the Full Circle Auto Repair and Training Center, a Prisoner Reentry and Auto Mechanic Training Program. This advanced training program is a four-month, employer-driven paid internship social enterprise. The Salisbury location opened in August 2022 and is currently serving its second training cohort. This project enrolled forty-one individuals, graduated twenty-nine, and has employed sixteen graduates. The program achieved an 85.29% graduation rate—showing strong retention and completion—and expanded to include the Haitian community while overcoming language barriers.

The RMPHF award, along with matching funds, were expended to: a) support twenty-nine interns for training eight hours a day, five days a week, over a four-month period; and b) purchase thirty basic tool kits, uniforms, books, and training materials for each intern.

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## **RMPHF HEALTH CARE**

### **Asian American Center of Frederick**

**Amount Awarded: \$25,500**

**Project Name:** *Building Capacity with AmeriCorps Expansion in Carroll, Frederick, and Washington County (BCAE)*

**Project Summary:** The Asian American Center of Frederick (AACF) is a non-profit agency, whose vision is equity with a mission to enhance, empower, and enrich cultural diversity. AmeriCorps's ASTAR (Appalachian Service Through Action and Resources) is a state-wide AmeriCorps national service program that is administered by Frostburg State University, which places AmeriCorps members with community services organization in Maryland. AmeriCorps members provide direct service to build capacity within the organizations where they serve. AACF hosted eight full-time AmeriCorps ASTAR members who focused on addressing social determinants of needs in Carroll, Frederick, and Washington counties. The AmeriCorps volunteers provided at least 6,654 hours of volunteer services to isolated low-income, seniors, and disabled persons by providing companionship, meals and groceries, telehealth, and by communicating with physicians, neighbors, government entities, and others during home visits, email, phone, and internet communications.

The RMPF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support the stipend of three (out of the eight) AmeriCorp ASTAR volunteers.

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### **Atlantic General Hospital**

**Amount Awarded: \$206,160**

**Project Name:** *Expansion of Primary Care Pediatrics in Worcester County*

**Project Summary:** Atlantic General Hospital (AGH) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit hospital is the only hospital in Worcester County, Maryland. Founded in 1993, AGH is a state-of-the-art, full-service, acute care, and inpatient and outpatient hospital. AGH has a medical staff of more than 260,46 primary care providers and specialists at seventeen physician offices in Worcester County, Maryland, and Sussex County, Delaware. In response to the growing demand for primary care pediatric services in Worcester County, AGH recruited Christian Salgado, MD, to join the already established medical practice of Dr. Laura Stokes and Dr. Anita Pascucci. Dr. Salgado has helped support the growing demand for pediatric and adolescent health services, thereby improving timely access to acute care and lessening inappropriate utilization of the AGH emergency department. Dr. Salgado is multilingual with an interest in supporting underserved populations and bringing improved health equity to minority populations.

The RMPF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support: a) the salary and fringe benefits for one physician and one registered nurse; b) lease for office space; c) office utilities; d) malpractice insurance; and e) medical and office supplies.

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### **Carroll County Youth Service Bureau**

**Amount Awarded: \$100,000**

**Project Name:** *CCYSB Building Addition*

**Project Summary:** Carroll County Youth Service Bureau (CCYSB) has provided outpatient mental health services in Carroll County since 1972 and has grown into a multi-disciplinary behavioral health practice. CCYSB offers a wide range of outpatient treatment and prevention services that are designed to support children, adolescents, transition-age youth, adults, and families. This project is addressing the agency's insufficient space by building an approximately 16,000-square-foot addition to the existing facility so that both programs and services may operate at maximum efficiency. Additional space equates to not only more people served, but also to more services themselves—such as the ability to operate a mobile treatment program, increasing availability in the outpatient clinic, as well increasing the number of therapy groups. As a result, CCYSB's clientele is experiencing improved mental health outcomes, ultimately living fuller and more productive lives and contributing to a healthier Carroll County community.

The RMPF grant award, along with matching funds, will

be expended to support Phase Two of the Design Services project and will be utilized for the architectural/engineering fees. Carroll County Youth Service Bureau has requested a one-year extension due to a turnover in key project staff and delayed receipt of deliverables from contractors.

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### **Chesapeake Housing Mission, Inc.**

**Amount Awarded: \$22,260**

**Project Name:** *Steps to Safety - A Falls Prevention and Health Care Access Project*

**Project Summary:** Chesapeake Housing Mission (CHM) provides vital housing repair services to low-income families living in the Chesapeake Region. CHM's Steps to Safety Fall Prevention project increased the organization's pool of volunteers and teams that perform critical home repairs. These projects were designed to prevent falls and enable frail homeowners to safely exit and enter their homes to access health care. Overall, twelve wheelchair ramps were constructed and twelve new volunteer teams were recruited during the project period. Volunteer hours for these projects totaled 648, exceeding the proposed 300 hours.

The RMPF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support: a) wages for 16 hours of contractual employee services for volunteer recruitment, management, and supervision; and b) materials and supplies for ten projects that will include lumber, hardware, drywall, flooring, roofing materials, and other supplies needed for home repair jobs and ramp builds.

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### **For All Seasons, Inc.**

**Amount Awarded: \$30,000**

**Project Name:** *Mid-Shore First!*

**Project Summary:** For All Seasons, Inc.'s mission is to provide therapy, advocacy, education, and psychiatric care in a safe environment that nurtures wellness. For All Seasons, Inc. is the largest licensed behavioral health and rape crisis center serving the five counties of Maryland's Mid-Shore without regard to one's ability to pay. Founded in 1986, they have offices in seven sites in the five counties, and eighty-nine employees in the region. All services are provided in both English and Spanish. Mid-Shore First! brings trauma education and mental health peer support to First Responders in responder departments across the Mid-Shore. This program embeds training, peer support, and a deep understanding of trauma and its impacts into rural first responder departments including law enforcement, fire, and EMS. First responders in Talbot County were the most receptive to this programming. The group of responders from Talbot Emergency Management Services, the Easton Police Department, and the Talbot County Sheriff's Department has been named "Talbot First!" This group has continued to meet regularly to develop ongoing strategies to incorporate conversations about responders' mental health as a matter of course in their officer development. A demonstration

of how this effort will bring change in the culture of first responders was evident in a report of an older, experienced officer talking with a younger recruit about how self-care and mental health are a core part of their job. This simple concept represents a transformational change in First Responder culture.

The RMPPIF grant award, along with match funds, were expended to support: a) the salaries and fringe benefits of For All Seasons, Inc. staff to conduct the training; b) travel reimbursement for ten trips; c) educational and support materials; and d) administration of the grant.

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### **For All Seasons, Inc.**

**Amount Awarded: \$125,000**

**Project Name:** *Revolutionizing Community-based Mental Health Care Through Open Access*

**Project Summary:** For All Seasons, Inc.'s mission is to provide therapy, advocacy, education, and psychiatric care in a safe environment that nurtures wellness. For All Seasons, Inc. is the largest licensed behavioral health and rape crisis center serving the five counties of Maryland's Mid-Shore without regard to one's ability to pay. Founded in 1986, they have offices in seven sites in the five counties, and eighty-nine employees in the region. All services are provided in both English and Spanish. The project, Revolutionizing Community-Based Mental Health Care Through Open Access, implemented a new way of delivering community-based mental health services across the rural Mid-Shore. The Open Access program provided immediate and short-term integrated behavioral health services that allowed for quicker access to services, streamlined mental health assessments, provided more efficient client care, and minimized waiting lists. This new system has resulted in the organization's ability to serve 50% more people this year (from 2,462 to 3,693 clients.) Additionally, staff productivity increased by 20% over the last year, which also helped the organization achieve a \$50,000 per full-time employee increase in revenue—a significant new revenue stream to increase our sustainability into the future.

The RMPPIF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support: a) the salaries and fringe benefits of one Case Manager and one Client Services Specialist; b) unfilled Open Access appointments; c) website expansion to include updates to make their site more accessible to the visually impaired; d) outreach and promotion to include print, radio, and advertisements; and e) administration of the grant.

### **Fort Ritchie Community Center, Inc.**

**Amount Awarded: \$45,393**

**Project Name:** *Rural Health Initiative 3.0*

**Project Summary:** The Rural Health Initiative 3.0 aims to improve the quality of life for rural residents of Washington and Frederick counties through fitness programs, health screenings, and a focus on overall well-being. This program offered more than 300 free blood pressure and pre-diabetes screenings at thirteen events, hosted a "walktober" walking group with over forty participants, hosted four fitness challenges, purchased three exercise machines, and conducted physical fitness tests for youth.

The RMPPIF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support: a) the salary, wages, and fringe benefits of the Rural Health Coordinator; b) travel costs for the Coordinator to attend meetings and educational events; c) one seated elliptical machine; d) health-related tools such as home blood pressure kits and pulse oximeters; and e) supplies that will include nutrition planning items, food and exercise journals, promotional materials for events, fitness-related curriculums, and motivational signage.

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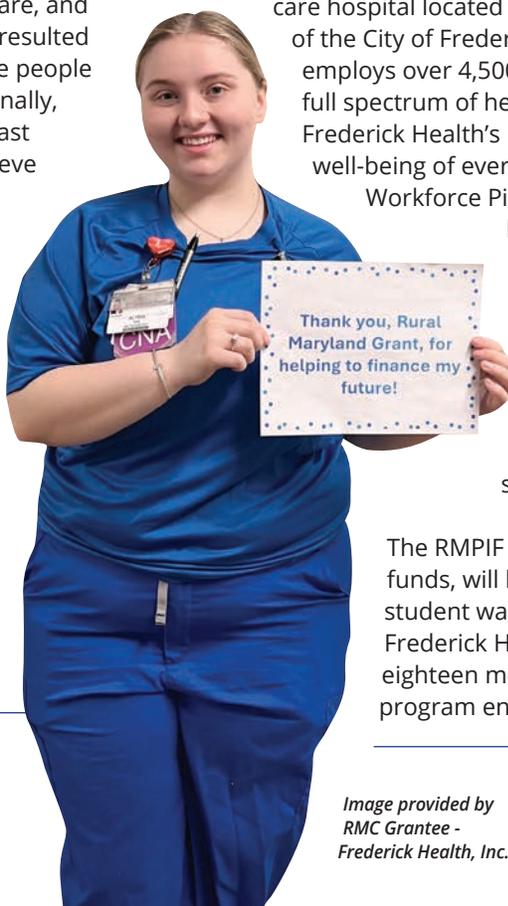
### **Frederick Health, Inc.**

**Amount Awarded: \$332,185**

**Project Name:** *Workforce Pipeline Initiative*

**Project Summary:** Frederick Health is a private, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation that offers a 257-bed acute care hospital located in Frederick, Maryland, and is the only acute care hospital located within a twenty-five-mile radius of the City of Frederick. The Frederick Health System employs over 4,500 team members who provide a full spectrum of healthcare and wellness services. Frederick Health's mission is to positively affect the well-being of every individual in our community. The Workforce Pipeline Initiative helps to provide health career opportunities for Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) and Frederick Community College (FCC) students to pursue their education and build a solid foundation toward their careers while helping Frederick Health deliver enhanced healthcare services to their community.

The RMPPIF grant award, along with matching funds, will be expended to support the student wages that enroll in the program. Frederick Health, Inc. has requested an eighteen month extension due to difficulties program enrollment.



*Image provided by  
RMC Grantee -  
Frederick Health, Inc.*

## **GRMC, Inc., DBA Garrett Regional Medical Center**

**Amount Awarded: \$85,000**

**Project Name:** *Implementing Comprehensive Opioid Addiction Treatment*

**Project Summary:** Garrett Regional Medical Center (GRMC) is a fifty-five-bed acute care hospital located in Garrett County. Its service area in Garrett and Allegany counties is very rural, with some of the most remote communities in the state served by GRMC. GRMC provides a strong stable of specialty services not often found in rural communities—including behavioral health—through its affiliation with the West Virginia University Health System. In 2021, GRMC added Medication Addicted Treatment (MAT) to its behavioral health program, prescribing Suboxone. In serving patients with opioid use disorder, GRMC recognized the need to address the needs of this population more thoroughly. The decision was made to implement WVU Medicine's Comprehensive Opioid Addiction Treatment (COAT) program in conjunction with MAT. COAT is a long-term recovery program rooted in group therapy. The addition of COAT will strengthen GRMC's ability to holistically treat people with opioid use disorder, increasing the likelihood of patient success and productive recovery.

The RMPIF grant award, along with matching funds, were not expended to support the salaries of a .63 full-time equivalent (FTE) social worker to facilitate the group activities under the direction of the physician and .63 FTE graduate counselor to facilitate group activities and work with individual patients as needed.

The project, Implementing Comprehensive Opioid Addiction Treatment, was unable to be implemented and grant award funds were not spent due to the inability to fill the position to run the program. Grant award funds returned to RMC.

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## **Health Partners, Inc.**

**Amount Awarded: \$79,000**

**Project Name:** *Expanding Access to Care in Southern Maryland*

**Project Summary:** Health Partners, Inc. is dedicated to serving the community with quality healthcare through their commitment to excellence in patient services and by providing compassionate care for those most in need, with a specific focus on serving the uninsured and underinsured. The Expanding Access to Care in Southern Maryland project increased access to care through the addition of a full-time nurse practitioner, care coordination, outreach services, and provide financial assistance to patients. Financial assistance broadens a patient's experience beyond basic or emergent care to include preventative screenings, lab work, and prescriptions. Through this expansion, the organization

welcomed 260 new patients and provided 2,319 primary care patient visits. This project improved chronic health conditions as 48% of patients diagnosed with hypertension are currently considered under control, and 65.8% of patients with diabetes have an A1C under nine are considered controlled. The organization hosted six in-clinic outreach events and attended six community events, reaching over 800 individuals.

The RMPIF grant award, along with matching funds were expended to support: a) the salaries for one 0.8 FTE Nurse Practitioner and 1.0 FTE Care Coordinator; b) patient financial assistance; and c) marketing materials, including rack cards and branded items for outreach.

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## **Hospice of the Chesapeake Foundation**

**Amount Awarded: \$150,000**

**Project Name:** *Continuum of Care—Dignity, Care, and Support Through the Journey of Life—Limiting and Chronic Illness*

**Project Summary:** Hospice of the Chesapeake Foundation (HOC) is an independent, community-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission of caring for life throughout the journey of illness and loss. HOC's Continuum of Care—Dignity, Care, and Support Through the Journey of Life—Limiting and Chronic Illness, is a commitment across the organization to provide robust hospice and supportive care with logistical convenience, improved communications, enhanced care efficiencies, continuous remote care, and more, including enriched caregiver training and support in rural communities of our four-county service area, regardless of someone's inability to pay.

The RMPIF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support: a) medical supplies and equipment; b) medical services and therapies; c) nursing home services; d) pharmacy services; e) food and food supplements; and f) inpatient services.

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## **Hospice of the Chesapeake Foundation**

**Amount Awarded: \$30,000**

**Project Name:** *Ladders Build Bridges—Developing a Sustainable Workforce*

**Project Summary:** Hospice of the Chesapeake Foundation (HOC) is an independent, community-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission of caring for life throughout the journey of illness and loss. HOC understands a robust workforce is necessary to accomplish expansion in the rural regions they serve and plans to implement a clinical ladder program. The Ladders Build Bridges program is designed to support nurse retention and professional development while incorporating evidence-based pillars for the sustainability of their workforce. These pillars are: 1) hands-on skills training and ongoing professional

development; 2) address recruitment and retention challenges with advancement incentives; and 3) provide wellness, including behavioral and mental health supports, for all staff. Ladders Build Bridges initiatives graduated 100% of enrollees and participants. The program also saw participants maximize 100% of the new cohort registrations in late 2023 and anticipates participants maximizing 100% of the next cohort registrations in August 2024. Participants reported 90% or higher satisfaction with the program, while 100% committed to additional Ladder rung goal setting. Current nurse aides and new hires in that role reported time to complete preceptors as a constraint for applying to the Ladders Program.

The RMPPIF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support the salaries, wages, bonuses, and incentives for the Hospice of Chesapeake Foundation nursing staff.

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### **Ivy and Pearls of Southern Maryland Community Charities, Incorporated**

**Amount Awarded: \$10,000**

**Project Name:** *Addressing Mental Health and Chronic Disease Disparities in Minority Communities*

**Project Summary:** Ivy and Pearls of Southern Maryland Community Charities, Incorporated is committed to increasing breast health and breast cancer prevention behaviors in the African American women and underserved women of Charles and St. Mary's counties in Southern Maryland. The goal of their project, "Addressing Mental Health and Chronic Disease in Minority Communities," is two-fold: first, they addressed the mental health stigma in minority communities by raising mental health awareness and providing resources to the community; second, they provided programming addressing various chronic diseases impacting minority groups with special emphasis on diabetes, lupus, sickle cell anemia, and high blood pressure related diseases. Along with this programming, they offered resources for community residents on chronic disease prevention and treatment. Overall, this organization reached 1,475 individuals through their programming.

The RMPPIF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support: a) three venue event rentals; b) consultant services in the form of panelists, dietitians, chefs, and instructors for events; c) catering services and food for the events; d) marketing and event promotion; and e) materials and supplies.

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### **Martin's House & Barn**

**Amount Awarded: \$19,067**

**Project Name:** *Poverty is Not A Choice—The Campaign for Martin's House & Barn Shelter Consultation Rooms*

**Project Summary:** Martin's House and Barn (MH and B) is a dedicated non-profit organization that has been serving the homeless population on the Mid-Shore for the past forty years as a safe haven for countless families, providing them with essential resources and support during their challenging times. Martin's House Shelter constructed and furnished two consultation rooms. The consultation rooms are equipped with the necessary amenities, such as privacy, comfortable seating, computers for video meetings and appointments, and appropriate lighting to ensure an atmosphere conducive to healing and meaningful conversations. These rooms facilitate essential therapy sessions, individual counseling (both live and remote sessions), case management, and other consultations necessary for addressing the complex issues faced by families experiencing homelessness. The availability of these rooms increased access to mental health services for shelter clients by 50% for twenty shelter clients per year.

The RMPPIF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support: a) the construction of two consultations rooms to include demolition and disposal, framing, electrical, drywall, trim, flooring, windows, doors, paint, and materials costs; b) three laptop computers with double monitor setup to facilitate video and telehealth appointments, video meetings, or classes; c) furnishing to include six lamps, three loveseat sofas, four end tables, one thirty-six-inch, round multipurpose conference table, six accent chairs, one six-foot meeting room table, and twelve waiting room chairs.

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### **Maryland Diaper Bank**

**Amount Awarded: \$15,750**

**Project Name:** *Diaper Distribution Expansion*

**Project Summary:** The Maryland Diaper Bank provides basic diaper needs to stimulate health, growth, and good hygiene for babies in Maryland. The Diaper Distribution Expansion Program is a comprehensive initiative designed to meet the growing diaper needs of families in the Southern Maryland Tri-County region. The program will provide support to an additional 200 children each month and ensure their well-being through access to a consistent supply of diapers. By expanding the distribution efforts, the program seeks to bridge the diaper gap and alleviate the financial burden faced by families struggling to afford this essential item for their infants and toddlers.

The RMPPIF grant award, along with matching funds, will be expended to support the purchase of diapers. The Maryland Diaper Bank was approved a two-month extension as they needed additional time to distribute diaper essentials supplies effectively.

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## The Frederick Center

**Amount Awarded: \$15,260**

**Project Name:** *Peer-led Intersectional HIV Trainings*

**Project Summary:** The Frederick Center exists to support and advocate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) people and their families so they thrive—accepted and affirmed—in the broader Frederick community. The Center is working with healthcare professionals and community stakeholders to identify and train volunteer Peer Health Educators (PHEs) who can work within four vulnerable demographics identified by our Coalition: Youth, Black Women, the Deaf Community, and the Latine Community. These PHEs will be able to address the HIV Epidemic through a culturally specific lens, breaking down the barriers of language, cultural values, and social dynamics that affect how these populations discuss HIV prevention and stigma and helping Maryland take one step closer to the national goal to end the HIV Epidemic by 2030.

The RMPHF grant award, along with matching funds, is being expended to support: a) salary and fringe benefits for the HIV Coalition Director overseeing the Frederick County HIV Coalition; b) travel to out-of-state to HIV Centers to learn best practices and travel within the state to hold listening sessions; c) food for roundtables and during travel to out-of-state centers; d) materials and supplies that includes the purchase of a projector, a screen, microphone, and associated AV equipment; e) design and printing of promotional materials; f) filming and editing of accessibility videos for American Sign Language (ASL) speakers; g) contractual interpreting services; h) project evaluation; and i) rental space and utilities. The Frederick Center was approved for a one-year extension due to emergency needs for peer HIV programs after an existing program was cut at an affiliate organization.

## TidalHealth

**Amount Awarded: \$209,425**

**Project Name:** *SWIFT Expansion*

**Project Summary:** TidalHealth, in partnership with the Salisbury Fire Department, City of Salisbury, and Wicomico County will implement a mobile integrated health program called Salisbury-Wicomico Integrated FirstCare Team (SWIFT). The program takes an innovative approach to improve access to health care while also addressing the social determinants of health, driving high emergency department utilization and poor health outcomes. SWIFT is an approved Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems Mobile Integrated Health Community Paramedicine Program. This project expands the program to add services of per diem occupational therapists to the interdisciplinary team for

patients at risk of falls. The nurse-practitioner-led, evidence-based mobile integrated health program is proven to prevent and reduce EMS transports and hospital utilization by bringing coordinated care to the highest-risk patients in their homes. The team works with community health workers to assess and address needs such as transportation, food, housing, and access to primary care.

The RMPHF grant award, along with matching funds, will be expended to support: a) salaries, wages, and fringe benefits 100% Full Time Equivalent (FTE) for a paramedic to support the program, per diem occupational therapist, per diem nurse practitioner, and .3 FTE registered nurse; b) equipment for vehicles supported by the Salisbury Fire Department and equipment for staff and for patient care; and c) administration of the grant. TidalHealth was approved for a three-month extension in order to spend down the remaining funds for home repairs for patients.

## RMPHF HEALTH CARE-NONEMERGENCY MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION PILOT PROGRAM

### Caring Carroll, Inc.

**Amount Awarded: \$45,000**

**Project Name:** *Caring Carroll Senior Nonemergency Regional Medical Transportation Pilot Program*

**Project Summary:** Caring Carroll is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in 2007 that provides volunteers to help older adult residents of Carroll County who have limited financial and social resources. Caring Carroll expanded volunteer services to provide the community's seniors (sixty years of age and older) with ambulatory, nonemergency medical appointment trips from Carroll County to Baltimore, Frederick, and Howard counties and Baltimore City for required specialized medical care that is not currently available in Carroll County. During this grant period, Caring Carroll added twenty new volunteers and thirty-nine new "Care Receivers." Their current Care Receiver enrollment is 136. Volunteers provided 1,975 one-way Care Receiver trips, of which forty-six were to out-of-county destinations. The out-of-county trips were to medical destinations in Baltimore County (twenty trips), Frederick County (eight trips), and Howard County (eighteen trips). This compares to FY 2023, when Caring Carroll provided 1,783 Care Receiver trips none of which were out-of-county, a 10% increase from FY 2023 to FY 2024.

The RMPHF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support the salary and wages for the Program Services Coordinator and the Program Director.

### **LifeStyles of Maryland Foundation, Inc.**

**Amount Awarded: \$30,000**

**Project Name:** *Bridging the Gap*

**Project Summary:** LifeStyles is a community-based non-profit organization whose goal is to provide both crisis and self-sufficiency services to vulnerable households throughout Southern Maryland. LifeStyles's "Bridge the Gap" Workforce Development program has expanded its workforce development training and placement services for persons ages eighteen to sixty-five who are homeless in Southern Maryland. The addition of a handicap-accessible minivan will assist individuals getting to and from their place of employment. The goal is to assist people in increasing their employment income within a ninety-day period to further support the goal of the individual being able to transition to permanent housing.

The RMPiF grant award, along with matching funds, will be expended to support the purchase of one handicap-accessible minivan. LifeStyles of Maryland Foundation, Inc. was approved for a one-year extension due to challenges in procuring the approved vehicle from the Maryland Transit Administration.

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### **Partners In Care Maryland, Inc.**

**Amount Awarded: \$75,000**

**Project Name:** *Ride Partners*

**Project Summary:** Partners In Care's (PIC) Ride Partners Program has provided no-cost, door-through-door, arm-in-arm transportation for seniors sixty years old and over to medical appointments, dental appointments, grocery stores, pharmacies, and for running errands, to name just a few examples. The program allows seniors to age in place and remain an active part of their communities. Without PIC's Ride Partners Program, most of these seniors go without medical care and are not able to get to the grocery store, becoming isolated and experiencing other negative impacts of lack of transportation. PIC's goal is to provide services to even more of the fast-growing aging population, fill gaps in transportation for seniors, and help Maryland's older adults maintain active, healthy, and dignified lifestyles in the homes and communities they love. During the funding period, PIC fulfilled 97% of all requests for transportation, exceeding their goal/objective of 95%. In addition, they achieved a 1:1.3 ratio of ride providers to ride receivers!

The RMPiF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support the salary, wages, and fringe benefits of seven full-time staff for Program management for PIC's four sites serving five counties (Washington, Frederick, Caroline, Talbot, and Anne Arundel counties).

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### **The Arc Southern Maryland**

**Amount Awarded: \$41,803**

**Project Name:** *Ability Cab: Providing Transportation to Enrichment Activities for People With Disabilities*

**Project Summary:** For forty-eight years, the Arc Southern Maryland has supported people with disabilities through a broad range of programs and services. Today, they serve over 1,100 people and their families in Southern Maryland. Their project Ability Cab consisted of purchasing a handicap-accessible van to serve their clients in both St Mary's and Calvert counties. The Ability Cab is available on two weeknights and on weekends to provide reserved accessible transport to scheduled enrichment activities, events, and off-hours employment in the community. A part-time driver and dedicated support professional were hired to assist clients.

The RMPiF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support: a) the purchase of a used handicap-accessible van; b) salaries, wages, and fringe benefits for the part-time driver and dedicated support professional; c) fuel costs; d) technology such as two phones, iPad, and annual subscription to sign-up genius; and e) marketing materials in the form of vehicle wrapping and flyers.

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## **RMPiF – INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **African American Resources—Cultural and Heritage Society, Inc.**

**Amount Awarded: \$313,928**

**Project Name:** *Renovate Neglected Property into African American Heritage Center*

**Project Summary:** In partnership with the City of Frederick and Frederick County Government, the African American Resources Cultural Heritage (AARCH) Society is renovating a long-vacant, city-owned property and converting it into an exciting new African American Heritage Center in the heart of Downtown Frederick's Historic District. The AARCH Society seeks to establish a 3,200-square-foot facility that will offer exhibits, a family history center, and a variety of programs and events to convey the experience of people of African descent who have lived here at least since the 1730s—persevering and thriving in the face of ever-shifting legal, social, economic, political, educational barriers. The Center will add another prime attraction for heritage tourism and expands the cultural vibrancy and diversity of experiences and destinations available in Downtown Frederick.

The RMPiF grant award, along with matching funds, will be expended to support: a) the Amaze Design exhibit development, production package, associated audiovisual programs, and presentation systems; b) construction costs; c) equipment and furnishings; d) architectural and exhibit

lighting design; e) architectural and engineering consultants; and f) exhibit and media production. AARCH Society has been approved for a one-year extension due to changes in the Frederick City building code, which has impacted the construction schedule and pushed back the installation date for exhibits.

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### **Charles County Military Alliance Council**

**Amount Awarded: \$238,000**

**Project Name:** *Indian Head Grocer Initiative*

**Project Summary:** The Charles County Military Alliance Council (MAC), through collaborative efforts with the Town of Indian Head, Charles County Government, and the Naval Support Facility Indian Head (the Base), work together to bring revitalization, community development, cohesiveness, and regional prosperity to both the Town and the Base. Indian Head is a United States Department of Agriculture certified food desert, and this project will focus on building an independent grocery store to serve Indian Head residents and the surrounding community. The grocery will offer fresh local produce, meats, and seafood from area farmers and agricultural cooperatives as well as locally prepared foods from local area businesses. The store will be fully accessible and will support the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and other social programs related to food acquisition.

The RMPIF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support the purchase of: a) product displays, produce and vegetable bins and storage shelving; and b) refrigeration, including in-store display and storage walk-in freezers to keep food safe.

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### **City Of Crisfield**

**Amount Awarded: \$110,000**

**Project Name:** *City of Crisfield Engineering for Wastewater and Community Center Infrastructure*

**Project Summary:** The Jersey Island Wastewater Pump is the oldest wastewater pump in Crisfield, and the only one of three wastewater pumps that is without funding identified for complete replacement. This project will provide the required engineering services to replace the 1970s Jersey Island Wastewater Pumping Station. Funding this project will result in the engineering of a wastewater pumping station at Jersey Island that is resilient to flooding with a greatly reduced likelihood of sewage overflows and a reduction in the cost of

operations through a more efficient pumping station.

The RMPIF grant award, along with matching funds, will be expended to support the engineering services related to the project that include preliminary engineering, survey services, design and permitting, bid procurement services, contract administration services, and resident project representative services. The City of Crisfield has been approved for a one-year extension due to the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) funding requirements and the need for a Coast Smart Report and Preliminary Engineering Report, the Crisfield Jersey Island Wastewater Pumping Station project will not be completed summer of 2024. The Coast Smart report has been approved. The Preliminary Engineering Report is near completion with submission to MDE scheduled for June 2024. Final design, permitting, bidding, and construction will take the project into the summer of 2025.

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### **County Commissioners for Somerset County**

**Amount Awarded: \$235,735**

**Project Name:** *Princess Anne Road Connectivity Project*

**Project Summary:** The purpose of the Princess Anne Road Connectivity project is to build a backbone fiber network that will provide Princess Anne and other parts of northern Somerset County with the infrastructure needed to serve areas not covered by current fiber-optic solutions. This backbone will be built from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore Boulevard to Westover, MD, along Old Princess Anne Road. From that anchor, the fiber network will splinter off, targeting local nonprofits, municipal buildings, low-income and student housing, and many more residents and businesses.

The RMPIF grant award, along with matching funds, will be expended to support the purchase of 73,920 feet of ninety-six strand fiber optic cable, 73,920 feet of two-inch High-Density Polyethylene underground conduit, and 143 seventeen-by-thirty-inch Tier 22 polymer concrete handholes. The County Commissioners for Somerset County have been approved for a one-year extension due to the extensive construction work and permitting process working within the critical areas boundary.

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## **Maryland Deaf Community Center**

**Amount Awarded: \$125,000**

**Project Name:** *Maryland Deaf Community Center*

**Project Summary:** Maryland Deaf Community Center (MDCC) began in 2018 as a concept shared by several Frederick County Deaf citizens who longed for a centralized, barrier-free space where all Deaf and hard of hearing people would be welcomed to meet their social, emotional, and informational needs. By 2019, they formed a new non-profit organization, MDCC, which received 501(c)(3) status in March 2020. MDCC purchased land located at 720 N. East Street, Frederick, MD, in 2022. They have completed the design and site preparation for construction. This project focuses on Phase Three of the project that entails construction of the MDCC.

The RMPIF grant award, along with matching funds, will be expended to support the construction of the Maryland Deaf Community Center. Construction includes concrete work, masonry, special construction, mechanical needs, and electric work. Materials to be purchased include concrete, structural steel, wood and plastics, thermal protection, specialties, doors, frames, and hardware. The Maryland Deaf Community Center was approved for a six-month extension to complete Phase Three of the Center.

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## **Sport and Entertainment Corporation Of Maryland**

**Amount Awarded: \$62,763**

**Project Name:** *Cross Country Course and Stabling Improvements*

**Project Summary:** The Sport and Entertainment Corporation of Maryland (Sport Corp) was created to enhance and grow sport-based tourism in Maryland through events recruited and secured by the Maryland Sports Commission. The Maryland 5 Star at Fair Hill is the first event under Sport Corp. Improvements are of paramount importance to not only the Maryland 5 Star at Fair Hill and Sport Corp, but also for the sustainability of the Fair Hill Special Event Zone within the Maryland Horse Park System (MHPS). As one of three venues within the MHPS and the sole venue with a large outdoor footprint capable of hosting English and Western events and riders, the Fair Hill Special Event Zone must maintain its place within the system. The project ensures elite competition for current Concours Complet International Long (CCI-L) and future Concours Complet International Short (CCI-S) events, as well as other types of competitions, can continue to take place at Fair Hill.

The RMPIF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support: a) contractual staff positions to manage the project prior to, and or after, the 2023 Maryland 5 Star; b) contractual staff housing; c) equipment rental such as water trucks, water, lawn mowers, tractors, and fencing; d) material and supplies; e) stabling for CCI5 and CCI3 entries and temporary buildings; and e) cross country course designer.

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## **St. Mary's Nursing Center**

**Amount Awarded: \$45,000**

**Project Name:** *St. Mary's Nursing Center—Fuel Oil Tank Replacement*

**Project Summary:** St. Mary's Nursing and Rehabilitation Center is a long-term care, short-term rehabilitation, and respite facility. They have a 160-bed center located in St. Mary's County. The Center recently learned that they need to replace their twenty-five-year-old 10,000-gallon underground fuel oil tank with a new 10,000 above-ground tank. This oil tank is vital to their operations as it provides fuel for their heating system in the winter months and heats their water year-round.

The RMPIF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support the abandonment of the old 10,000-gallon fuel oil tank and replacing it with a new 10,000-gallon above-ground tank.

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## **The Arc Central Chesapeake Region**

**Amount Awarded: \$200,000**

**Project Name:** *Pathway to Equity for People with Disabilities—The Arc at Port Street*

**Project Summary:** The Arc Central Chesapeake Region (the Arc) serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities across nine counties, eight of which are rural counties on Maryland's Eastern Shore. To better serve the Eastern Shore, the Arc is building Port Street Commons in Easton, a first-of-its-kind 24,000-square-foot community space that incorporates universal design and accessibility to provide space for mental health counseling, room for innovative services, and nine affordable housing units. Construction for the commons began in August 2023, and the project is ahead of schedule with 65% completed. The project should be completed by fall 2024 with the ribbon cutting scheduled for November 7, 2024. The organization will start providing services from the property in January 2025.

The RMPIF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support the construction costs that include site work, materials, and equipment of the Port Street Commons building located at 480 Port Street, Easton, Maryland.

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## **The Federated Charities Corporation of Frederick**

**Amount Awarded: \$47,173**

**Project Name:** *Federated Charities Nonprofit Center Conditional Assessment Repairs*

**Project Summary:** The mission of Federated Charities is to provide collective operational space and strategic support to non-profit organizations. Their services include reduced-cost rental space for nonprofits, meeting and event space, access to cost savings on IT, printing and copying, professional development, fiscal sponsorship, and technical support to the non-profit sector. Their original building was constructed in 1820 and gifted to them in 1930. They purchased an adjacent property in the late 1990s (approximately the same construction era) and combined the two buildings into 23,000 square feet of commercial space, of which 85% is leased below market to other nonprofits. A building conditional assessment was completed in 2019, and it identified several key areas of maintenance that need to be addressed to maintain a unique structure in the heart of Frederick's historic district.

The RMPIF grant award, along with matching funds, were expended to support: a) the installation of five security readers at each stairwell floor; b) replace HVAC unit on rooftop; c) repair windowsills and parapet molding on the front façade of the property; d) install updated sensor system to alleviate power surges; and e) complete concept project for front garden, entrance and walkways. The Federated Charities Corporation of Frederick has been approved for a six-month extension to complete the project.

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## **Town of Keedysville**

**Amount Awarded: \$10,000**

**Project Name:** *Bedrock Water Line Project- Engineering Phase*

**Project Summary:** The Bedrock Water Line project in the Town of Keedysville aims to assess the quality and efficiency of the existing waterline infrastructure. The primary objective of the project is to evaluate the capacity of the waterline to adequately serve the homes currently connected to it. Additionally, it aims to determine the feasibility of expanding the system to accommodate future growth and increased demand. The project will likely involve various activities to assess the quality and efficiency of the waterline. Based on the findings of these evaluations, the Town of Keedysville can make informed decisions regarding necessary repairs, upgrades, or expansions to the waterline system. The project will provide valuable information for maintaining the current service levels and planning for the future water needs of the community.

The RMPIF grant award, along with the matching funds, will be expended to support one consultant to examine the Town of Keedysville waterline infrastructure. The consultant will be responsible for conducting the water quality testing, flow rate measurement, pressure testing, leak detection, and complete a system capacity assessment. The Town of Keedysville has requested a one-year extension for their project due to timing and permitting.

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## **Town of Middletown**

**Amount Awarded: \$150,000**

**Project Name:** *Springline Water Main Replacement and Lead Components Removal*

**Project Summary:** The Springline Water Main Replacement and Lead Components Removal project will update the aging infrastructure of Middletown's drinking water distribution system. The current system presents several issues that limit the town's potential for growth, create excessive operating costs and reactive maintenance, and has the potential to affect water quality and residents' health. At the time the system was built, cast iron pipes were sealed at each joint with asbestos and molten lead. The EPA banned the use of lead in drinking water systems in 1986, and the town is seeing the negative impacts that legacy infrastructure components are creating. Removing all lead from the water system is a top priority for Middletown. The project will result in improved water quality for 1,615 Maryland households, as well as a number of businesses, and will mitigate the potential negative impact to public health, resulting from lead contamination in the drinking water.

The RMPIF grant award, along with matching funds, will be expended to support the: a) materials; and b) labor required to complete the Springline water main replacement and lead component removal. The Town of Middletown has been approved for a six-month extension as the pipeline runs through farm fields, and the replacement will occur after harvest to limit impact to farmers.

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## REGIONAL COUNCILS

### Mid-Shore Regional Council

**Amount Awarded: \$600,000**

The Mid-Shore Regional Council (MSRC), a cooperative regional planning and development agency that serves Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot counties, utilized the RMPF award to implement the following collaborative projects:

#### 1. Project: Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC):

**Objective 1:** Employment support of an Executive Director to provide leadership and administrative management for the operation of ESEC and its programs and projects.

*Reported Outcomes:*

- ESEC is currently in discussion with a past F3 Tech portfolio company relocating to Maryland's Eastern Shore from Pennsylvania.
- ESEC has been awarded \$500,000 from Talbot County as well as \$750,000 from other federal grants. ESEC has been awarded \$500,000 from EDA.
- The Food Safety program is underway, and the organization applied for additional USDA grant funding to expand the program in additional years.
- ESEC awarded \$1 million to continue and expand the program.

**Objective 2:** Technical Assistance – provide mentoring and coaching to entrepreneurs and startups.

*Reported Outcome:*

- ESEC, through its programs, has mentored 138 entrepreneurs during the grant period.

**Objective 3:** Plan, schedule, recruit, and execute Business Model Mapping programs.

*Reported Outcome:*

- Program scheduled for spring 2024 was canceled due to lack of registrations

**Objective 4:** Plan, schedule, recruit, and execute Investor Pitch training programs.

*Reported Outcome:*

- Program delivered to eighteen companies in spring 2024.

**Objective 5:** Plan, schedule, recruit, and execute SBIR/STTR workshops.

*Reported Outcome:*

- Program delivered to four entrepreneurs

**Objective 6:** Assist in planning and execution of Shore Hatchery investment competition at Salisbury University.

*Reported Outcome:*

- Shore Hatchery event held for seventeen companies

**Objective 7:** Assist in execution of Bernstein Competition at Salisbury University.

*Reported Outcome:*

- Participated as a Gull Cage judge at the Bernstein Competition on April 25, 2024.

**Objective 8:** Manage and promote ESEC's portfolio of Revolving Loan Funds.

*Reported Outcome:*

- Received three loan applications and granted one, a \$200,000 loan.

#### 2. Project: Shore Gourmet/Chesapeake Culinary Center (CCC)

**Objective 1:** Improving value-added food product development and marketing in the region by building a food business network with other nonprofit, businesses, and government entities.

*Reported Outcomes:*

- Over 8,000 ready meals have been purchased from Shore Gourmet with local produce or products as available added.
- 40,000 ready meals were served through the USDA non-congregate meal program for youth.
- A bid for Upper Shore Aging was submitted but the award went for the lower bid in Baltimore.
- Chesapeake Culinary Center is serving meals for the Senior Center in Denton, MD.
- Shore Gourmet has reached out to both wholesale and retail customers for spirulina, resulting in sales to local retail stores and providing wholesale to a business in New York. VerLina was engaged in the CAIC start-up program and was referred to the Small Business Development Center.
- A monitored mushroom chamber was installed with Mycologic and sales for the mushrooms have been to local restaurants, farmers markets and consumers.
- Developing a substrate chamber with Bay Mushrooms and Mycologic to increase their business output and for regional farmers to purchase their mushroom crops.
- Fifty-four potential small businesses toured the incubator kitchen and were given the resources for starting with insurance, the health department and their counties business development center. The Small Business Development Center toured the incubator kitchen to encourage more referrals for starting food entrepreneurs. Thirteen food trucks are presently using the Chesapeake Culinary Center Incubator Kitchen.
- A new restaurant opened in Ridgley, MD, from the CCC and another is developing their own health department-approved kitchen.

**Objective 2:** Improving the development of agritourism and direct marketing opportunities in the region.

*Reported Outcomes:*

- Nine tours were conducted at the Repurposed Poultry House in Ridgley, MD, that included farmers, local and state government representatives, potential investors, and Mycologic (ultimately, a mushroom chamber has been erected and is being monitored by Mycologic).
- Savor Maryland gift boxes were promoted to local businesses like Choptank Transport and through Shore Gourmet Market. Local producers like Bespoke Chocolates, Bee George Honey, Jill's Jams, The Gluten Free Bakery, Chapel Cheeses, and Bubba's Spices have been just a few of the local products showcased.

**Objective 3:** Research the economic feasibility and agricultural viability of growing niche products to diversify local crops. Improving strategic planning and management among agriculture businesses in the region.

*Reported Outcomes:*

- New producers have been added to the Shore Gourmet Market, including Bespoke Chocolates, Grandma's Jams, Beltway Merchandise, Berg Bites, Oksana's Fermented Foods, and NightCraft, to name a few.
- Educational workshops on teas, canning, creating healthy meals on a budget, and tours of the incubator kitchen for local businesses were promoted.
- Mushrooms are growing in consumer need domestically, with different varieties being incorporated as a value-added product to coffees, chocolates, and other food products. Lion's Mane has been researched and are being grown.
- Energy usage has been a barrier for small- to mid-sized controlled environment agriculture. Mushrooms are the most energy-efficient to grow, but the cost of substrate being transported from other states needs to be addressed. Bay Mushrooms has been doing their own substrate and increasing efficiency for the growing business. Supplying regional farms with different varieties and smaller quantities has begun to address the issue.
- Freeze dried and dehydrated mushroom jerky and powdered mushrooms for a local coffee processor have been proven. Developing a market for these products has begun.

**Objective 4:** Work with the local extension offices, farmers markets, farm bureaus, and other food-based organizations to recruit potential users.

*Reported Outcomes:*

- VerLina, NightCraft LLC, Bay Mushrooms, Evelin's Antojitos Latinos (a food truck that is now a restaurant), and Croppers Farm have received information and assistance on starting a business out of the incubator kitchen and developing value-added products.
- Fifty-four potential new users to the incubator kitchen have occurred since July 2023.
- The aggregation warehouse has been completed to put Savor MD boxes with local producers as a centralized hub for products and produce.

**Objective 5:** Problem-solving the extraction of the invasive blue catfish (BC) in the bay

*Reported Outcomes:*

- With Tilghman Island Seafood at capacity and with an over \$2 million business forecasted, the Maryland Governor and Secretary of Agriculture made a video on cooking with BC and Maryland's Best is promoting venues to source BC. Maryland Agriculture is now discussing the waste and large blue catfish being used as fertilizer. The skin and by-products of BC are being sold for additional purposes in the cosmetic and pet food market industry. Shore Gourmet had tested BC with a local composter to determine its validity as a fertilizer. Harry's Seafood worked with a company for a pilot liquid fertilizer. A great potential alternative for farmers with the high cost and shortage of fertilizer that has been ongoing.

- A USDA Child Nutrition Certified label has now been accepted on BC cakes for schools and institutions.
- A "Wild Caught" campaign with Maven and Smith has begun to take the negative connotations of invasive species that consumers might have and brand and promote BC as a delicious, sustainable fish. The new Maryland Agriculture Seafood Marketing Manager, Matthew Scales, is promoting the fish through Maryland's Best in that way. There are recipes and a survey on where Marylanders have eaten BC. Those places are identified on the Maryland Best website.
- In conjunction with Harry's Seafood, a seafood cake that meets Child Nutrition label has been completed. Several school systems (New York, Maryland, and Virginia) have shown interest.
- Fresh filets have been packaged by JJ Seafood and Tilghman Island Seafood for the Maryland Food Bank. A breaded filet has been created at Harry's Seafood and is being sold wholesale.
- In collaboration with the Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team of NOAA, we have been working with a diverse group of scientists, recreational and commercial fishermen, Maryland and Virginia DNR and Maryland Agriculture to come up with a systems approach to reducing the amount of BC, increasing the economic and environmental impact that harvesting the fish can accomplish.
- Tilghman Island Seafood has outgrown its facility, and several sights have been considered to grow. Waterman continues to harvest BC for Tilghman since they are paying a consistent price per pound which is profitable to waterman.

**Objective 6:** Tracking the number of new products developed, viable opportunities for niche products, number of meals produced with local resources, pounds of produce processed for farm to school and increased employment of all objectives.

*Reported Outcomes:*

- Monthly reports reflect what is being accomplished but areas that need further project development, like energy for controlled environment agriculture, are underway. The need to address energy conservation is key for many agricultural buildings not only CEA.
- 18,000 pounds were processed for CCPS in the summer of 2023.
- 40,000 USDA Ready Meals were distributed in the summer of 2023 on the Mid-Shore.

**Objective 7:** Development and implementation of Farm to Freezer Project and Aggregation Center to build food resiliency in the region and food equity and security for our community.

*Reported Outcomes:*

- Beth Brewster worked with Mike Thielke to research Farm to Freezer for the Eastern Shore. Presently, a food distributor has been identified to take on the project and increase regional profitability.
- Teddy Bear Fresh is working with ESEC to develop this Farm to Freezer aggregation system.

### 3. Project: Delmarva Index

**Objective:** Support and further develop the Delmarva Index website to include more functionality and updated resources.

**Reported Outcomes:**

- Engagement with stakeholders and user community via presentations.
- Hosted and maintained Mid-Shore Hires website.
- Hosted, maintained, and updated data on the Mid-Shore CEDS website.
- Hosted, maintained, and updated data on the Eastern Shore Economic Resiliency Toolkit.
- Workforce Infographics updates complete.
- Economic Snapshots updates complete.
- Health Facilities updates complete.
- State Parks Dashboard updates complete.
- Public Safety Dashboard updates complete.

### 4. Project: GIS Circuit Rider

**Objective:** Provide on-location Geographic Information Systems (GIS) assistance to Mid-Shore counties and jurisdictions.

**Reported Outcomes:**

- The ESRGC is supporting the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy and other regional organizations with an Eastern Shore trail mapping project. The project includes all Eastern Shore of Maryland counties, excluding Cecil County. The ESRGC worked with partners to collect existing trail data, planned trail data, and future trail data. The product of this effort is a publicly accessible web map of the Eastern Shore Regional Trails Network.
- The ESRGC responded to a request from a development company in Cambridge and provided a spreadsheet of all road names in Dorchester County.
- The ESRGC responded to a request from the Town of Trappe by developing and providing a printed site map of parcels and various years of imagery.
- The ESRGC responded to a request for a GIS internship in Caroline County using RMPPIF funding. The intern is supporting the GIS Coordinator with various data updates and organizational tasks. The ESRGC interviewed Salisbury University GIS students and recommended a student for this opportunity in Caroline County. The intern worked 216 hours supporting Caroline County GIS.
- The ESRGC updated the Delmarva Chicken House and Operation Status viewer and data. This data represents the operation status of chicken houses in Delmarva. Chicken houses were digitized using imagery for Maryland (2022), Delaware (2022), and Virginia (2021). An operational determination (i.e., in operation, not in operation, unknown, or house removed) was made based solely on the condition of the structure and its immediate surroundings.

- The ESRGC supported Dorchester County GIS with a review of existing sewer infrastructure data. This included contacting Maryland agencies and contacts for access to data, reviewing delivered as built, and comparing the as-built data to existing GIS sewer data.
- The ESRGC began developing a regional ditch dataset, starting with digitizing ditches in Dorchester County. This project will continue to include all counties in the mid and lower shore.
- The ESRGC responded to a data request from CWDI for City of Cambridge GIS data.
- The ESRGC designed and delivered a printed map for the Town of Trappe.
- The ESRGC began development on a web viewer for the Town of St. Michaels.
- The ESRGC presented the Circuit Rider Program at local and regional meetings.

### 5. Project: Agriculture Reporting Application

**Objective:** Support the agricultural producer community with record-keeping and reporting tools known as the Maryland Agricultural Reporting Application (MARA).

**Reported Outcomes:**

- Engagement with stakeholders.
- Research into application requirements.
- Mockups of application and database design.
- Database development complete
- Development of ten application pages where users can enter and view farm data. Pages include the capability to add farms, fields, crops, harvest information, members, crop nutrients, and manage account settings.
- Development of supplemental information (user guides, videos, FAQs).

### 6. Project: MUST Bus Website Redesign and Redevelopment

**Objective:** Redevelop and redesign the Maryland Upper Shore Transit (MUST Bus) website.

**Reported Outcomes:**

- Engagement with stakeholders.
- Research into other similar transit websites and tools.
- Extensive outreach to transit partners and others to gather required supporting data.
- Data Development to support transit organizations.
- Content development for the website.
- Website design mockups.
- Development of seven informational pages: How to Ride; Fares and Passes; Accessibility; Title VI; Resources; and Security.
- Development of trip tools: service alerts; routes and schedules; and a system map

## 7. Project: Annie's Project

**Objective 1:** Conduct a farm tour visiting three farms in the region.

*Reported Outcomes:*

- Thirty-two participants. Photos and a press release.

**Objective 2:** Convene planning committee.

*Reported Outcomes:*

- Met with full planning committee on conference and program details.

**Objective 3:** Conducted two workshops on recordkeeping and QuickBooks.

*Reported Outcomes:*

- Workshop #1: conducted on January 25, 2024, with forty-six participants
- Workshop #2: conducted on June 9, 2024, with fifty-eight participants

**Objective 4:** Conduct Annie's Project.

*Reported Outcomes:*

- Twenty-five participants and three FSA Borrowers.

**Objective 5:** Administration

*Reported Outcomes:*

- Created marketing pieces.
- Communication with participants.
- Follow up with presenters to include thank you cards, evaluations, and class materials.

## 8. Project: Summer Career Enrichment Program

**Objective 1:** Recruit and enroll 150 middle school students to participate in the program

*Reported Outcomes:*

- Designed a flyer to promote the program and also created a presentation in Canva.
- Hosted three Zoom sessions with Dorchester, Caroline, and Talbot Public Schools personnel to highlight the program.
- Enrolled a total of 124 students.
- Developed online database in Access to track students.
- Provided two sessions each on cyber, drones, application development, and robotics for all enrolled students

**Objective 2:** Equip students with skills and knowledge to increase their awareness of cybersecurity, robotics, application development, and drone technology

*Reported Outcomes:*

- Designed a two-week curriculum in cyber, drones, application development, and robotics.
- Each student took a survey at the beginning of the session.
- Students engaged in online exercises, researched cyber terms, learned about computer hardware, network security, cyber threats, and how to stay safe online.
- Students took apart and rebuilt nine computers.

**Objective 3:** Reduce attrition from program.

*Reported Outcomes:*

- Dorchester, Talbot, and Caroline County Public School Systems enrolled a total of 124 students with actual attendance of: twenty-one in application development, seventeen in cyber, twenty-four in drones, and twenty-

two in robotics for a total of eighty-four students who attended.

- 68% attendance rate.

**Objective 4:** Expose students to careers in computer science, engineering, programming, cyber, robotics, aviation, and construction.

*Reported Outcomes:*

- Students researched cyber, engineering, and aviation careers online.
- Students met with a network engineer.
- Students interacted with one IT company, two members of the Chamber of Commerce, three small businesses, three school superintendents, as well as nonprofit and community leaders, and a host of elected officials at the local, state, and federal levels.

**Objective 5:** Program Evaluation

*Reported Outcomes:*

- At the end of each session, the students were given a test to assess their knowledge of cyber, drone technology, application development, and what they learned in the workshop.
- Feedback from students included that they wanted more hands-on learning, asking how to hack the white house, and if there would be any advanced classes.

## 9. Project: Regional Marketing

**Objective:** Promote government and business entities to a statewide audience.

*Reported Outcomes:*

- Worked with TCCLES to promote event.
- Assisted TCCLES, as requested, in organizing event.

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## Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland

**Amount Awarded - \$600,000**

The Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland (TCCLESMD), a cooperative regional planning and development agency that serves Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester counties, will utilize the RMPIF award to implement the following collaborative projects:

### 1. Project: Worcester County STATT (Skilled Trades, Agriculture, Technology, and Tourism)

Worcester Co. Skilled Trades, Agriculture, Technology, and Tourism (STATT) is a work-based learning experience that will provide high school students and recent graduates from Worcester County an opportunity to explore Skill Trades, Agriculture, Technology (STEM) or Tourism-related careers via paid in-and-out of school internships for motivated students. STATT aims to support local employers in the skilled trades agriculture, technology, and tourism sectors of Worcester County's economy by sponsoring these students for subsidized employment positions. This program also includes a summer academics component for middle and high school students to explore various aspects of these industries and get hands-on experiences.

*Outcomes:*

- Three high school students accepted out-of-school internship positions.
- STATT Camp offered twelve individual camps, serving 112 students. Each student was given a Skills Assessment at the end of the camp. Scores are: 3D Printing, 67%; Ag Science, 100%; Biomedical Engineering, 67%; Carpentry, 100%; Coding, 100%; Culinary, 100%; Digital Arts, 100%; Drones/Robotics, 93%; Fire Science, 100%; Laser cutting, 100%; Make-up Artistry, 100%; and Welding, 100%.
- The Afterschool Academies extended the 3D Printing STATT Camp pathway to an entire new group of students that were unable to attend the camps. Sessions were held at Stephen Decatur Middle School, Pocomoke High School, and Snow Hill High School. The teacher at the Stephen Decatur Middle School session was a Stephen Decatur High School and Worcester Technical High School student that took the STATT Camps for two summers (supervised by a teacher).
- Due to the Intern Program process changes, the program was not allowed to secure any interns with NASA. Changes were then made to incorporate a Forestry Internship that aligns with the goals of the RMPiF grant, learning technology aspects as well as skilled trades and agriculture. The Forestry intern is a college student and will seek employment upon graduation with the Maryland Forest Service. This internship activities included: reviewing public comments made on annual work plans for both Chesapeake and Pocomoke State Forest Land from 2001-2023; exposure to the process of forest thinning and measures taken when loggers move into a site; mapping of the logging job including buffers and protected areas; and valuable interaction with key representatives in the forestry industry on the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland.

## **2. Project: Somerset County Technical High School (SCTHS)**

Student Growth Opportunities supports Career and Technology Education (CTE) experiences. Student growth opportunities included the following:

- Five driver education cohort classes were successfully completed. 100% of the students passed the final exam and course. The MDOT offered the learner's permit test at SCTHS twice during the year. Of the students that took the exam, 100% of the students passed and earned their learner's permit.
- One student is on a formal apprenticeship with the Somerset County Board of Education Maintenance Department. One student with special needs began a work-based learning experience, which is not a formal apprenticeship, but allowed the student work experience that has helped the individual become more independent and is currently on the custodian substitute list.

- Thirty students are enrolled in in the SkillsUSA organization. At the Fall Leadership conference, nineteen students were able to attend—all earned their Statesmanship pin and recognition. Twenty-eight students attended the State SkillsUSA competition. Five students attended the National SkillsUSA competition, and one of the five students was selected as a Maryland State SkillsUSA State Officer.

## **3. Project: Lower Shore Workforce Alliance**

- The school systems in Somerset, Worcester, and Wicomico counties offered summer work experiences to a combined total of seventy-nine students. Among them, forty-five students were supported by RMPiF funds. Additionally, thirty-three RMPiF students participated in the SYEP last year, indicating a stable and recovering enrollment trend post-COVID. This growth in numbers is a positive sign for the program.
- Two IT students in Wicomico County continued to work after the official CREW season ended on Friday, August 11, 2023. The students are current seniors this year. They were able to attend their home school for their academic course then assist the IT department for the remainder of the school day. The other IT students will complete the CREW program next summer.
- Tidal Health Childcare Center partner with the Summer CREW program this summer, offering an opportunity for one student to complete additional training, which will make her eligible for employment once she reaches the age of eighteen within their Childcare Center.
- Delaware Elevator extend an opportunity for an entry-level employee within their business as an Office Associate. The student was given several time-sensitive projects using Microsoft Office Suite to complete during the six-week period. Delaware Elevator wishes to have her return next summer to work.
- Partnership with Pocomoke State Park to replicate the Conservation Job Corps (CJC) program, which was on hold for FY 2023. This was a win-win as the State Park was relying on workers to assist with several large projects, such as building a fish tank and turtle enclosure.

## **4. Project: Project Opportunity**

Project Opportunity is a free entrepreneurship training program for veterans, active duty, and reserve/guard personnel who wish to start a small business.

- Completed seven courses held across the state and delivered 210 instructional services to veterans during these courses that focused on developing comprehensive business plans, business coaching, and counseling.
- The number of applications for our Annual Business Pitch Competition increased from fifteen in 2023 to twenty-three for the 2024 event.

- The number of veterans and military spouses participating in professional development activities increased by twelve (160 in 2023 to 172 in 2024).

### 5. Project: Delmarva Makerspace

This Maker Space provides Science, Technology, Environment, and Mathematics (STEM) oriented education and training to youth and adults that included but was not limited to providing a mobile “makerspace” to introduce STEM Careers to K-12 during the school period; provided hands-on educational activities in STEM technologies during after school and summer periods; and, provided training to appropriate use as well as skill training on STEM technologies to adults.

- Currently open to full capacity, serving approximately forty-five members.
- Completed eight outreach events (OC Comicon, Third Fridays).
- Three homeschool classes took place in the spring.
- Completed ten courses in DIY and maker education (woodworking, laser cutting, and vinyl cutting).
- Continued to complete four trade skills courses a month (woodworking safety, laser training, introduction to CNC, and 3D printing).

### 6. Project: Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative

A series of GIS-related tools to assist economic development professionals in Lower Shore planning.

- DelMarVa Index. Continued maintenance and upgrades to delmarvaindex.org to include three new dashboard tools: State Park Dashboard, Health Care Facilities Map, and County Economic Snapshots. These tools are in addition to the previously created Economic Dashboard, Workforce Infographics, Eastern Shore Economic Recovery, and Business Sentiment Survey.
- Circuit Rider. A Continuation of GIS Circuit Rider program to provide GIS resources to under-funded local jurisdiction planning departments in rural areas of the Lower Eastern Shore counties.

### 7. Project: Maintaining Active Citizens (MAC)

MAC’s Aging and Dementia Training Program provides the latest research and care strategies, with emphasis on Alzheimer’s and dementia care inclusive of continuing education units for licensed professionals (social work and other related).

- Data tracking showed a decrease in the stress levels of participants, particularly while caring for clients with dementia. Pre- and post-evaluation scores showed a 23% decrease in caregiver stress levels after on-the-job training, and a 14% decrease in anxiety about providing care to persons with dementia.
- Program participants received increased guidance and instruction during on-the-job training and individualized feedback regarding their performance. Post-evaluation results showed 83% of completers were extremely satisfied with their experience, while the remaining 17% were satisfied.

### 8. Project: Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore Administration and Marketing

- Begun work on updating the full color, thirty-six-page Lower Eastern Shore, Maryland, (LESMD) Regional Economic Development Guide. Once completed, the guide will be made available in both print and online. The guide is formatted as a magazine publication with content centered around showcasing the Lower Eastern Shore’s regional assets.
- Attended the following conferences: Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) 2023 Summer Conference, 2023 J. Millard Tawes Crab & Clam Bake, 2023 Rural Maryland Summit, 2024 Ocean City Spring Trade Expo, and the 2024 Maryland Municipal League Summer Conference. Each event provided an opportunity to interact with hundreds of individuals, promote the LESMD region, distribute the updated Regional Economic Development Guide, and field questions for the regional economic development offices.
- Continued updates to LESMD.net with the addition of a Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF) projects page. The page lists details for each FY 2024 RMPIF-funded project, including the recipient, award amount, and a synopsis of the associated program.
- Serving as project manager for Shore Transit, creating a brand-new website set to include features to better connect residents on the Lower Eastern Shore to affordable transportation options.
- Assisted with planning, organizing, and executing the Tri-County Council-sponsored 2024 Taste of the Eastern Shore legislative event in Annapolis, Maryland. With responsibilities including design and print coordination for all event artwork, vendor and sponsor support, website and social media maintenance, and event photography.
- Completed collaboration with Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative (ESRGC) to migrate the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) pdf document to an engaging website. Provided feedback, content, and artwork guidance to ensure the new website is user-friendly and functional.
- Ongoing creative support for the Tri-County Council and its divisions (Lower Shore Workforce Alliance and Shore Transit) in the way of website updates and ongoing maintenance, brand design, photography, and photo editing, both pre- and post-production videography, written press release, creative project management, and print design as needed.

## Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland

Amount Awarded - \$600,000

The Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland (TCCSMD), a cooperative regional planning and development agency serving Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties, will utilize the RMPiF award to implement the following collaborative projects:

### 1. Project: Workforce Programs

- **Skillup® Southern Maryland.** Job seekers explored career pathways, view local job postings, register for free online learning, and receive workforce services. Employers searched for qualified candidates, post jobs, and receive in-depth consulting to address hiring and training needs. Registered users increased by 10%. Completed courses will increase by 10%. The average score will be at least 90%.
- **JobSource.** Entered into a maintenance agreement with the vendor that created the JobSource website, southernmarylandjobsource.org, to update and maintain the site.
- **JobSource Retreat.** Built and branded effective community networks to buttress the relevance of the workforce system for individuals, businesses, vendors, and partners. Held a facilitated staff retreat to collectively develop a vision for community networks, strategize action plans, define desired outcomes, and maximize buy-in of all workforce team members.
- **Grant Writer Services.** Sustained and grew programs that were created with ARPA funding to find and compete for new discretionary grant funding streams. Contract with a grant writer to research new opportunities and compete for at least two discretionary grants.
- **Workforce Branding and Outreach.** Contracted with a professional to assist with the branding of several programs through logo design and publication, and enhance outreach strategies to saturate the community with newly branded programs and partnership opportunities.
- **Regional Hiring Event.** Hosted two regional hiring events. At least fifty hiring businesses participated and 300 jobseekers attended, with twenty interviews conducted.
- **Youth and Young Adult Work Experience.** Provided work experience for ninety-two young people to move them along on the path to employment or education. Twelve young people received an eleven-week assignment with a local business.
- **Atlas Virtual File Room.** Created paperless files for WIOA Title I and ARPA participants. Participants were enrolled as of October 1, 2023, and now have paperless files.

### 2. Project: Southern Maryland National Heritage Area:

- Development of a management plan for the Southern Maryland National Heritage Area in partnership with federal and local representatives. Plan will establish goals and timeline.
- Engaged with designated marketing and public relations firms to craft a social media and public relations strategy. Public relations to include print, radio, and television; integrate strategy with membership groups, including established archeological, museum, and university forums; create a Facebook private membership group dedicated to collecting individual unpublished historical stories by the members of the group.
- Destination Southern Maryland hired one intern.

### 3. Project: Southern Maryland Piscataway Cultural Center:

- Secured stage two funding for planning and implementation of Southern Maryland Piscataway Cultural Center; established funding and regional partnerships for the Southern Maryland Piscataway Cultural Center; strengthened partnership with Piscataway Conoy Tribe and related Piscataway bands; stewarded all funding awards and fulfill all reporting requirements.

### 4. Project: Southern Maryland Agriculture Development Commission:

- **Farmer Workshop Series:** Hosted four three-hour evening workshops with dinner. Five to fifteen farmers attended the workshops. Participants received one booklet of take-home materials for each workshop reiterating resources and skills provided by the workshop. Through these workshops, participants stayed informed about the latest advancements, best practices, and industry trends.
- **SMADC Joint Leadership Retreat:** a retreat was held between SMADC and Southern Maryland Farm Bureaus. The goal of the retreat was to foster a stronger relationship that enhanced their ability to collaboratively serve local farms, farmers, and small agricultural businesses. Participants received one booklet of take-home materials to further the goal of the meeting and provide participants with long-term strategies.

### 5. Project: Transportation

*FY 2024 Van Pool Incentive Program:*

- Supported the subsidy to create an additional seven van pools.
- Developed an extensive guide for van pool owners and operators that will enable the operators to determine if they want to conduct for-hire transportation services and, or, simply commuter-friendly van pools not seeking a profit.

- Aided commuters through various outreach efforts and maintained the Commuter Connections Commuter Assistance and the Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) Transportation Demand Management (TDM) database.
- Assisted with the education of the public to utilized new web-based commuter assistance programs tools such as the TDM database. Educated the public and local employers on the benefits of using alternative modes of travel by marketing and promoting “Commute With Confidence.”
- Coordinated and participated in meetings with public- and private-sector stakeholders and partners throughout the tri-county region. Attended commuter fairs in the Washington D.C. metro area that reached and promoted alternative modes of transportation.
- Promoted Maryland Commuter Tax Credit Program to the Southern Maryland employers who offer Transit Benefits.
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure Advisory Committee (BIAC): Provided ongoing technical and administrative support to the BIAC, that included establishing goals, processes, responsibilities, membership, and logistical support and research. Collected and disseminated information on local and statewide bicycle and pedestrian accidents. Discussed recommendations to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety. Reviewed alternative transportation needs of all three counties with requirements and identified top regional priorities, infrastructure improvements, and regionally significant projects.
- Broadband Planning: Provided ongoing technical and administrative support to the BDAC by establishing goals, processes, responsibilities, membership, and logistical support and research. Collected and disseminated information on local and statewide broadband activities. Discussed recommendations to improve access to rural broadband. Advocated and supported county projects to deploy high-speed broadband throughout Southern Maryland.

## 6. Project: Wheels to Wellness

- Increased the number of clients and miles by 10%. (114 clients to 125 clients) mileage increased from 10,729 to 11,902. CRISP information was utilized to track program success for patience.
- Coordinated and attended monthly scheduled meetings with Arc of Southern Maryland, The Center for Life Enrichment, Calvert Health, University of Maryland Charles Regional Medical Center, Medstar St. Mary's Hospital, and a software provider to monitor progress of implementation of the Wheels to Wellness (W2W) non-emergency medical transportation program.
- Developed quarterly reports and attended meetings with the Wheels to Wellness Steering Committee.
- Developed, coordinated, and presented the Wheels to Wellness program to other agencies, service groups, elected officials, and interested parties.
- Evaluated and identified transportation service gaps found in non-emergency health transportation for the region.
- Evaluated and identified transportation service gaps found in rural transportation for the region.

## 7. Project: Regional Planning

- Regional Infrastructure Advisory Committee (RIAC): Provided ongoing technical and administrative support to the RIAC that included establishing goals, processes, responsibilities, membership and logistical support, and staff research information. Reviewed transportation needs of all three counties in accordance with the Chapter 725 requirements and identified three project types: top regional priorities, county projects of regional significance, and multi-jurisdictional.

## 8. Project: Administration, Marketing, and Communications:

- Supported the contract services of Platinum PR (now PPR Strategies) to assist with functionality of the website and assist with press releases, social media, and email communications on an as-needed basis.
- Provided fiscal support to manage new programs and partnerships.

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## Tri-County Council for Western Maryland Amount Award - \$600,000

The Tri-County Council for Western Maryland, Inc. (TCCWMD) operates as a regional planning and economic development agency. TCCWMD focuses on improving economic conditions in the rural areas of the State of Maryland, in particular the Western Region, which is comprised of Allegany, Garrett, and Washington counties. TCCWMD has several key initiatives and partnerships and utilized the RMPF award to implement the following projects:

- The Council approved a total of eleven loans and denied an additional three. The total amount lent was \$1,975,056, which leveraged an additional \$1,044,558. From these loans, ninety-eight jobs will be created and fifteen retained.
- The Council received 101 inquiries for lending which resulted in fourteen completed applications, of which eleven were approved. Over this period, staff visited nine different lending institutions. There was a slight increase in the lending database with a current listing of 106 persons. A total of forty-five electronic newsletters were distributed.

- Agriculture Reporting Application: Supported the Eastern Shore GIS Cooperative in the development of the Maryland Agricultural Reporting Application (MARA) application. MARA will provide an alternative workflow to producers that will streamline and enhance record-keeping and compile information for State and Federal reporting requirements. Learn more about MARA at [ag-reporting.vercel.app](https://ag-reporting.vercel.app).
- The Technical Assistance Program received eight inquiries which resulted in three applications and a total request of \$13,525 for professional services. To date, TCCWMD has paid \$5,787 towards these services. Payments are made as services are rendered.
- Office Renovation: main roof (slate) was repaired with new copper gutters and broken slate replaced. The chimney was lowered and stabilized. Both porch roofs were replaced with comparable materials and gutters on the entire building were replaced.
- Paid salaries for six staff in support of economic development activities related to TCCWMD and Summit Development Corporation, including fringe benefits.
- Supported travel and training costs associated with professional development. Training included Abila, Portfol, and Sageworks. The training for the MIP Fund Accounting software will take in October 2024.
- Provisions made for indirect costs relative to the Council's office and overhead, which included utilities, office maintenance, insurance, audit, supplies, postage, travel, and training. These indirect charges are calculated each month utilizing a third-party consultant for financial services.
- Sponsored the Innovative Readiness Training for the United States Military to provide medical, dental, and vision services to the public in Western Maryland. The results were the following:
  - o 4,033 patients were provided services through the mission
  - o 28,463 procedures were provided to the patients
  - o Total cost savings to the community was \$1,194,504
- Created a micro-grant and a micro-loan program for the new small business mentoring program.
- Aided ten agricultural businesses per county for a total of thirty for the region utilizing the Upper Shore Micro Ag-Grant program.
- Supported small commercial watermen restoration of silt-covered oyster bars project by allowing oyster larvae to attach to clean shells to increase the oyster population.
- Supported the Upper Shore Agricultural Equity Incentive Matching Fund by: attending at least one meeting with the Farm Bureau in each of the three counties; meeting with Economic Development staff in each county; meeting with each of the Chambers of Commerce in the three counties.
- Completed four successful loan applications submitted by the end of FY 2024.

## 2. Project: Address the Workforce Needs of the Upper Shore Region

- Ten students visited five agriculture businesses.
- Held three successful MD Ag Days in the spring of 2024 for seventh graders in each of the USRC's three counties.

## 3. Project: Regional Planning

- Updated USRC's DataStory.
- Updated Kent/Queen Anne's Counties DataStory.
- GIS Circuit Rider program will assist with at least one project per county.
- Continue to support neighboring Regional Councils to assist in extending the reach of the ESRGC program.
- Assisted Kent County Office of Economic Development with upgrading a website dedicated to transportation and marketing the program in Kent County.
- Provided gap funding to the Town of Rock Hall and Kent County to help provide a shuttle during the tourism season.
- Attended and supported the Maryland Upper Shore Transportation meetings.
- Developed an application that will provide an alternative workflow to producers that will streamline and enhance record keeping and will help compile information for state and federal reporting requirements.

## 4. Project: Upper Shore Regional Council Coordination and Advocacy

- Provided administrative support and held meetings related to the USRC initiatives, including sessions with the Council, Executive Board, economic development staff, and pertinent partners.
- Provided presentations to the three County Commissions and Councils.
- Fostered relationships with individual elected representatives to assist with regional matters.
- Engaged in legislative-related events and delegation meetings during the legislative session.
- Actively attended and participated in Rural Maryland Council meetings and work.

## Upper Shore Regional Council

**Amount Awarded: \$600,000**

The Upper Shore Regional Council (USRC) is a cooperative regional planning and development agency serving Cecil, Queen Anne's, and Kent counties. In FY 2024, the Upper Shore Regional Council completed the following projects:

### 1. Project: Business Development, Retention, and Expansion:

- Created marketing pieces and conducted website updates for the new small business mentoring program.

# A COLLECTIVE VOICE *for* RURAL MARYLAND

**EVERGREEN**  
Heritage Center

**FOREST GARDEN**



**PURPOSE**  
To establish a diverse habitat forest and address the genetic and production and preservation of the new Forest Evolution Trust.

**BACKGROUND**  
The Forest Garden will provide seed and genetic diversity to the forest and be a model for other regions and regions for forest restoration and genetic diversity. The area will be a permanent nature for the Forest Evolution Trust.

**RESULTS**  
The Forest Garden will serve as an educational tool and a heritage forest for future generations. The Forest Garden will provide a model for other regions and regions for forest restoration and genetic diversity. The area will be a permanent nature for the Forest Evolution Trust.

**FEATURES**

- Working demonstration tool
- Forest garden includes blue holly & medicinal plants
- Wood product trees such as black cherry, black locust, green ash, white oak, black locust, black maple,...
- Edible mushrooms and medicinal herbs, apple and rose products
- Study tools for families, groups and plants
- Production and secondary habitat
- Benefits for observation and interpretive signage to explain to wild and cultivated habitats and their value.

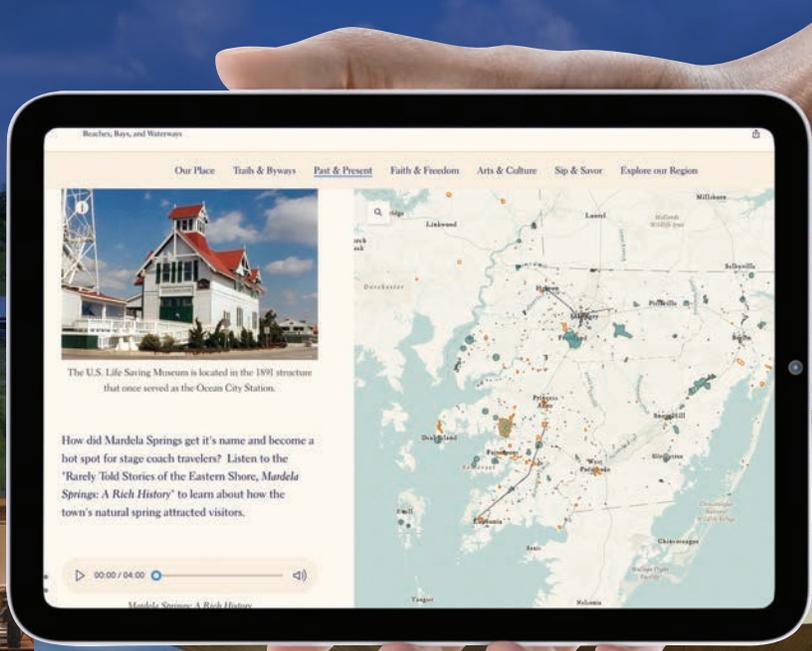


**Welcome to AgriBiz Hub**

An on-demand training and networking platform designed for farmers, value-added producers, and food and beverage manufacturers.




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50 Harry S. Truman Parkway  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-5772 | rural.maryland.gov



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