

MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND RURAL
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FUND
FISCAL YEAR 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Rural Maryland Council

October 2024



Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund Fiscal Year 2024 Awards Annual Report

MAERDAF OVERVIEW: MAERDAF was established in 2000 with the purpose to increase the overall capacity of rural-serving nonprofit organizations and community colleges to meet a multitude of rural development challenges and to help them establish new public/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 nonprofit 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 FY2024, 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, **Joyce Bowsbey**, 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 & 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
Total:	39 grants	\$969,121

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 Economic Development: 8 Grants=\$191,241

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 Declined Award Funds:

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

MAERDAF Agricultural and Forestry Education

Allegany College of Maryland

Amount Awarded: \$45000

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 1 large standing scale, 10 digital scales, small to large sized boxes; c) technology to include a u-line 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 a 6 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 could 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 school 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 is 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 and 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 28 learning units. The units included the following: - Defining Your Vision as a Farmer or Value-Added Producer (87 minutes, 7 learning units); Foundations of Agricultural Marketing (109 minutes, 8 learning

units); First Profits and Growing at Scale (116 minutes, 8 learning units); and, Financial Structuring in Agriculture (77 minutes, 5 learning units). The platform also hosts 50 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.

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 invasives 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. Via 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, garden signage, lumber, native plants and garden tools.

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 24 farmers that was used to hire accounting, legal, logistics, insurance, and

agricultural consultants. Future Harvest believes that for agriculture to be truly sustainable, the goals of healthy profit, healthy planet, and healthy people must be advanced 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 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 lbs (product onsite and at off-site storage was weighed and tabulated.) For the Fiscal Year 2024, 233,650 lbs 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/heat pump system; b) shelving/storage units and accessories; and, c) U-Boat platform truck and Skatewheel conveyor system accessories.

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 3 day training in September 2023 and, b) Class XIII 9 days of training through seminars in February, April, and June 2024.

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 nonprofit 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 ag 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/career; and 4) Support the Frederick Career & 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 text books; 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 4 hose trolleys for Frederick Career and Tech Center. *MAEF was approved a 1 year extension to complete the Middle School curriculum and purchase 6 laptops for the Maryland FFA State Officers.*

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 explore 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/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 16 schools to attend the career event; j) facility rental for three events; and k) MAEOE Career Fair promotional items. *MAEOE has been approved a 6 month extension because they have completed only 2 of 3 student career events. They will host the third career fair with Mobilize Frederick County in the Fall 2024.*

Maryland Food Bank - Eastern Shore

Amount Awarded: \$30,000

Project Name: Supporting MFB's Farm to Food Bank & 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/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 4-wheel drive and 3/4 ton hauling capacity. The truck has a diesel engine for increased pulling power, 3500 suspension for hauling more weight, an 8' bed to haul two pallets at a time. To date, the truck has helped to facilitate an estimated 10,000 lbs. of produce in the first week of July; this means that by working with MFB farming partnerships, MFB was able assist with helping approximately 500 households get access to fresh fruits and vegetables. The Farm to Food Bank Program supported at least 11 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.

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 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.

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, and can benefit from the services they offer. They currently serve approximately 24,000 people annually through their food and assistance programs which includes but is not limited to, housing and utility assistance, English as a Second Language 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, Aarons Place 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 hood range and fire system.

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 55 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 the a) 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 75 individuals.

Bay Community Support Services, Inc.

Amount Awarded: \$44,000

Project Name: Home Repair & 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 30 years. Independence, personal success, and life enrichment are the cornerstones of their services. This project rejuvenated, repaired, and modified 5 residential group homes across Charles and St. Mary's Counties. Each group home houses 4 to 6 individuals with intellectual and development disabilities.

The MAERDAF grant award, along with matching funds, was expended to complete the following: interior painting of 5 residential homes; removal and replacement of current flooring with water-resistant vinyl plank flooring in 3 homes in both St. Mary's and Charles County; siding replacement on a residential home to prevent continued dry rot of building materials and to preserve newly installed windows; replacement of soffit, fascia, and installation of gutters to prevent future water damage from pooling water; 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, 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.

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 non-profits, 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 nonprofit organizations and to help form strategies for public/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 a 6 month extension to complete the project.*

Diakonia

Amount Awarded: \$12,627

Project Name: Apricot Project

Project Summary: For over 50 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 an 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.

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's (HFHC's) mission. Financial education and housing counseling creates 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 75 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 home ownership 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/from one-on-on appointments with participants.

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” on the Mid-Shore – issues surrounding affordability of menstruation hygiene products. 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 18 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 and 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.*

Moving Dorchester Forward

Amount Awarded: \$34,800

Project Name: Getting Ahead in Caroline & Dorchester

Project Summary: Getting Ahead (GA) in Caroline & Dorchester 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 & 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), continues to work with Shore Strategies, LLC to provide two 16-session workshops in each County for a total of 4 workshops. These workshops will be led by certified Getting Ahead co-facilitators and will each enroll 10-12 participants. Workshop participants are referred to as Investigators. MDF, HSC and Shore Strategies will partner with local faith-based organizations 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 their 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 a 6 month grant extension to complete the third and fourth session in September-October 2024.

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 & 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 Sudlerville, Maryland. MEDCO performed directly 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 the MEDCO to complete the market analysis, financial proforma, cost estimating, redevelopment strategy (research, developer testing, and renderings), the site planning, and, due diligence.

Rebuilding Together Kent County

Amount Awarded: \$30,000

Project Name: Safe & 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 those members of their community 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 (6) homes.

Shore Legal Access

Amount Awarded: \$30,800

Project Name: Access to Legal Services Re-Branding 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 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 re-branding strategy aimed at reaching people who need legal services but don't know how to get help; engaging and respect 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 re-imagined 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 7/15/2024 – 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.

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 development, 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.

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, 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) 10 cantilever interpretive style panels; and c) documentation copywriter for the 10 panels. Grantee did not complete project. *RMC staff are working with Grantee to discuss an extension, scope of work change, or return grant funds*

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.

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 conserve 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 Urban 3 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 Urban 3 to complete the project; b) ESLC staff travels 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 a 6 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.*

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, Frederick, 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 gathering 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.

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; e) concrete for signage installation. *LSLT has been approved a 6 month extension to complete the project.*

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 competition 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/or 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 38 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.

The Benedictine School for Exceptional Children Foundation Incorporated

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 (22) 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 20 years old and replace 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 (4) 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.

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, internship opportunities and ultimately job placements to reach the students optimum goals. An increase was seen in the students GPA from a starting point of 2.4 to an average 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 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.

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' backyard, 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) three-day student event that hosted 4,500 students from 10 different counties at the the Wicomico Youth and Civic Center and b) Inspire Curriculum student workbooks.

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, coordinated, and developed 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.