



2023 Office of Rural Development Rural Readiness Grant Guidelines

Grant Overview

The Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD) Office of Rural Development (ORD) is offering the Rural Readiness Grant Program, a funding opportunity designed to empower community-specific solutions that build capacity and readiness in rural communities and regions across Michigan. This reimbursement grant program provides eligible communities with up to \$50,000 to support collaborative planning and capacity initiatives.

Eligible Areas

Rural communities and tax-exempt organizations serving rural communities are eligible to apply for grant funds designed to **support collaborative planning and capacity building initiatives** that advance efforts to address local needs including, but not limited to, housing, broadband, placemaking, energy, transportation, health, infrastructure, economic development, and workforce. Multi-jurisdictional and multi-sector projects are encouraged.

Organizations or communities outside of eligible rural areas may apply if 1) their application includes a formal partnership with an organization or community in an eligible rural area, **and** 2) if the outcome of the project will address issues in eligible rural areas. For example, an applicant located in an area not listed below may submit a joint application with an applicant located within an eligible rural area listed below for a project that serves multiple jurisdictions or communities.

Eligible rural counties are defined as follows (**see list below**):

- Counties designated by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) as non-metropolitan counties, including those located within micropolitan statistical areas.
- Outlying counties in Metropolitan Statistical Areas that do not include an urbanized area as defined by the Census.

Alcona	Charlevoix	Grand Traverse	Keweenaw	Menominee	Otsego
Alger	Cheboygan	Gratiot	Lake	Missaukee	Presque Isle
Allegan	Chippewa	Hillsdale	Leelanau	Montcalm	Roscommon
Alpena	Clare	Houghton	Lenawee	Montmorency	St. Joseph
Antrim	Crawford	Huron	Luce	Newaygo	Sanilac
Arenac	Delta	Ionia	Mackinac	Oceana	Schoolcraft
Baraga	Dickinson	Iosco	Manistee	Ogemaw	Tuscola
Barry	Emmet	Iron	Marquette	Ontonagon	Van Buren
Benzie	Gladwin	Isabella	Mason	Osceola	Wexford
Branch	Gogebic	Kalkaska	Mecosta	Oscoda	

In addition to rural counties, census tracts with Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) codes between 4-10 are considered rural areas in the following metropolitan counties (**see attached list of eligible rural areas and map for eligible census tracts**):

Bay	Cass	Monroe	Shiawassee
Berrien	Ingham	Muskegon	Washtenaw
Calhoun	Lapeer	Saginaw	

Statewide organizations are also eligible to apply for projects as long as the project serves one or more eligible rural areas.

Grant Program Timeline

Tuesday, April 4, 2023: Release of grant guidelines and invitation to submit Letter of Intent (LoI) described below.

Thursday, May 25, 2023, 3 p.m. EST: Letter of Intent due

Week of June 12, 2023: ORD issues invitations to submit full grant applications based on LoI review. All applicants will receive guidance as to the status of their LoI and project resources regardless of invitation status.

Thursday, August 3, 2023, 3 p.m. EST: Full applications due

Tuesday, September 26, 2023: ORD notifies applicants of award status

Eligible Activities

Funding will be focused on the following types of projects in rural areas:

- **Rural Capacity Building.** Eligible activities include new, enhanced, or scaled fellowship programs or community-based internship programs, development of training curricula, leadership development programs, and shared services or staff dedicated to specific project or planning needs. Projects must demonstrate an innovative, collaborative approach to building long-term capacity.
- **Development Readiness.** Projects include activities that prepare communities or key properties for development or investment, including development of property inventories, site development studies, site material development, site implementation or land assembly activities, feasibility, or market studies, and more.
- **Partnerships and Planning.** Activities include development of plans and implementation structures that build readiness for future projects, collaborative initiatives, development, and investment.
- **Cross-sector Collaboration.** Activities include different forms of community and stakeholder engagement that foster planning and dialogue across sectors, governments, and agency types.

Eligible Applicants

- Tax-exempt organizations/nonprofits, including community foundations and statewide associations.

- Local units of government (county, city, township, village, school district; any authority composed of counties, cities, townships, villages and school districts or combination of these entities). NOTE: Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) and Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESAs) are eligible.
- Federally Recognized Tribes
- Educational institutions (i.e., universities, community colleges). Note: while the educational institution applying for funding may be in an urban area, the project itself must serve one or more eligible rural areas.
- Regional planning agencies and economic or workforce development organizations

Lol Criteria

- A Letter of Intent (LoI) is required before grant applications will be accepted (see Appendix for LoI form). The LoI must contain a basic summary of the proposed project, how the proposed project meets the ORDs Rural Readiness Grant goals, and a total estimated project cost. LoIs determined to be eligible and competitive for grant funding will be invited by the ORD to submit a full grant application.
- Letters of Intent (LoIs) must be submitted via email to WiitalaM@michigan.gov by 3:00 p.m. (EST) on **Thursday, May 25, 2023**. The confirmation emails are manually sent, so you will not receive an instant confirmation. If you do not receive a confirmation of receipt from our office within 48 hours, please call 517-927-5847, or e-mail WiitalaM@michigan.gov.

Grant Criteria

- The maximum limit on grant fund requests is \$50,000. (Please submit budget in whole dollar amounts and round to the nearest \$100.). Applicants must provide a minimum 20% match.
 - The match is 20% of the grant amount you are requesting. For example, if you are requesting a \$50,000 grant, you must provide a match amount of at least \$10,000, despite the total project cost. Overmatch is encouraged.
 - Match can be cash or in-kind contributions or a combination thereof. The funds being provided under this grant require the Grantee to provide a funding match in order to secure a disbursement of funding. Project costs, grant amount, and match amount committed by the Grantee are identified in the Project Budget included in the Grant Agreement. If a Grantee fails to provide the match amount identified in the Grant Agreement, or if the total project cost for a completed project is less than the amount identified in the Grant Agreement, which leads to a reduction of the match amount, the Grantor may reduce the grant amount. The amount of this reduction will be communicated to the Grantee before a final grant payment is made to the Grantee. If total project costs are less than what is included in the Project Budget in the Grant Agreement, the Grantor will typically reduce the grant payment amount to a level that equals the percentage of the project identified in the proposed Project Budget that would have been funded by the grant payment. Under no circumstances will a grant payment be made if the Grantee fails to provide at least a 20% match.
- Projects must benefit eligible rural areas, as defined above.

- Preference will be given to projects that demonstrate multi-jurisdictional collaboration and partnerships between local governments and community organizations. Your organization may be a partner on more than one application.
- Applicants must use the provided application form, and all sections must be complete in order to be considered for review.
- Applicants must include a detailed budget in the application. For a sample budget, please see the Appendix.
- A minimum of three support letters demonstrating local and/or regional support for the project are required in the application.
- This grant is a cost-reimbursement program. Grantees are responsible for costs until proper reports/invoices/receipts are received and reviewed. Grantees are required to show proof of payment.
- Grantees will be eligible for reimbursement up to three (3) times, at specified dates, during the 18-month grant cycle, with the final reimbursement provided at the completion of the project.
- Each grantee will be required to submit written reports and appropriate financial documentation to MDARD for payment.
- All Grantees must be in compliance with applicable state laws.

Funding Restrictions

- State agencies are not eligible.
- Indirect costs are not allowed under this grant program. Indirect costs are defined as the expenses of doing business that are not readily identified within the project but are necessary for the general operation of the organization and activities related to the proposal.
- These grant funds may not be used to reimburse employee salary & wages or benefits of applicant organizations, **unless** such activities are specifically related to the project wherein grant funds are awarded. The grantee is responsible for keeping detailed records to document this and submit them in order to be reimbursed for such cost(s).

Project Criteria and Review

In addition to meeting the grant guidelines, projects will be scored upon a 100-point scale based on demonstration of the following criteria in applications:

Category	Possible Points	Review Points
Clearly defined and focused project goals, timelines, and benchmarks	15	
Overall impact of the project on local and regional needs in the eligible rural area, including <u>but not limited to</u> , workforce development, housing, economic development, infrastructure, and public health	20	
Ability of the project to prepare communities for future investment and grant funding	15	
Demonstrated community need and long-term commitment	10	
Financial viability of the project	10	
Long-term sustainability of the project	15	

Degree of collaboration between organizations, local/county governments, and other agencies and stakeholders	15	
Total Score	100	

Bonus Points

Bonus points will be awarded to applicants demonstrating the below criteria in their applications.

	Possible Bonus Points	Actual Bonus Points
Preference will be given to projects demonstrating multi-jurisdictional collaboration and/or cross-sector partnerships	5	
Preference will be given to communities with capacity below the national median as measured by the Headwaters Economics Rural Capacity Index, available online at https://headwaterseconomics.org/equity/rural-capacity-map	5	
Preference will be given to communities with households categorized as asset-limited income constrained households above the statewide rate of 38% by the 2019 ALICE report, available online at https://uwmich.org/alice-report	5	
Preference will be given to projects serving an area(s) that has experienced any decrease in population from the 2010 Decennial Census to the 2020 Decennial Census	5	
Total Score	20	

Total Overall Score

Category Points + Bonus Points	Total Points	Total Actual Points
	120	

Review Process

Following MDARD review of LoIs and invitations to submit a full application, MDARD will convene a Joint Evaluation Committee comprised of representatives from state agencies with an interest in, and knowledge about, Michigan rural community needs. The committee will score proposals, and recommendations will be made to the Office of Rural Development and the MDARD Director, who will make the final determination. All applicants will be notified when final decisions are made. MDARD may ask for additional information or clarification of a proposal and may award funding at a lesser amount than requested in a grant application. All communications and inquiries concerning applications should be sent via e-mail to: WiitalaM@michigan.gov.

MDARD reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to reject an application if it:

- Does not meet the program requirements including scope, eligibility, and allowable grant dollar use.
- Is received after the deadline.

- Is incomplete or missing any of the required forms, narrative, and budget.
- Does not follow the outlined application requirements.

For more information on the program, please go to www.michigan.gov/mdardgrants.

Equal Opportunity

The State of Michigan and the Department of Agriculture & Rural Development prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, height, weight, marital status, partisan considerations, or a disability or genetic information that is unrelated to the person's ability to perform the duties of a particular job or position.

To file a complaint of discrimination, please contact: MDARD Office of Legal Affairs, 525 West Allegan, Lansing, MI 48909, or call 517-284-5729. You may also contact the Michigan Department of Civil Rights at: Phone: 313-456-3700 Fax: 313-456-3701 Toll-Free: 800-482-3604 TTY: 877-878-8464 Email:

MDCRServiceCenter@michigan.gov

Appendix A
Sample Budget

Project Title	Increasing Community Capacity Study
Organization	Any City, Michigan

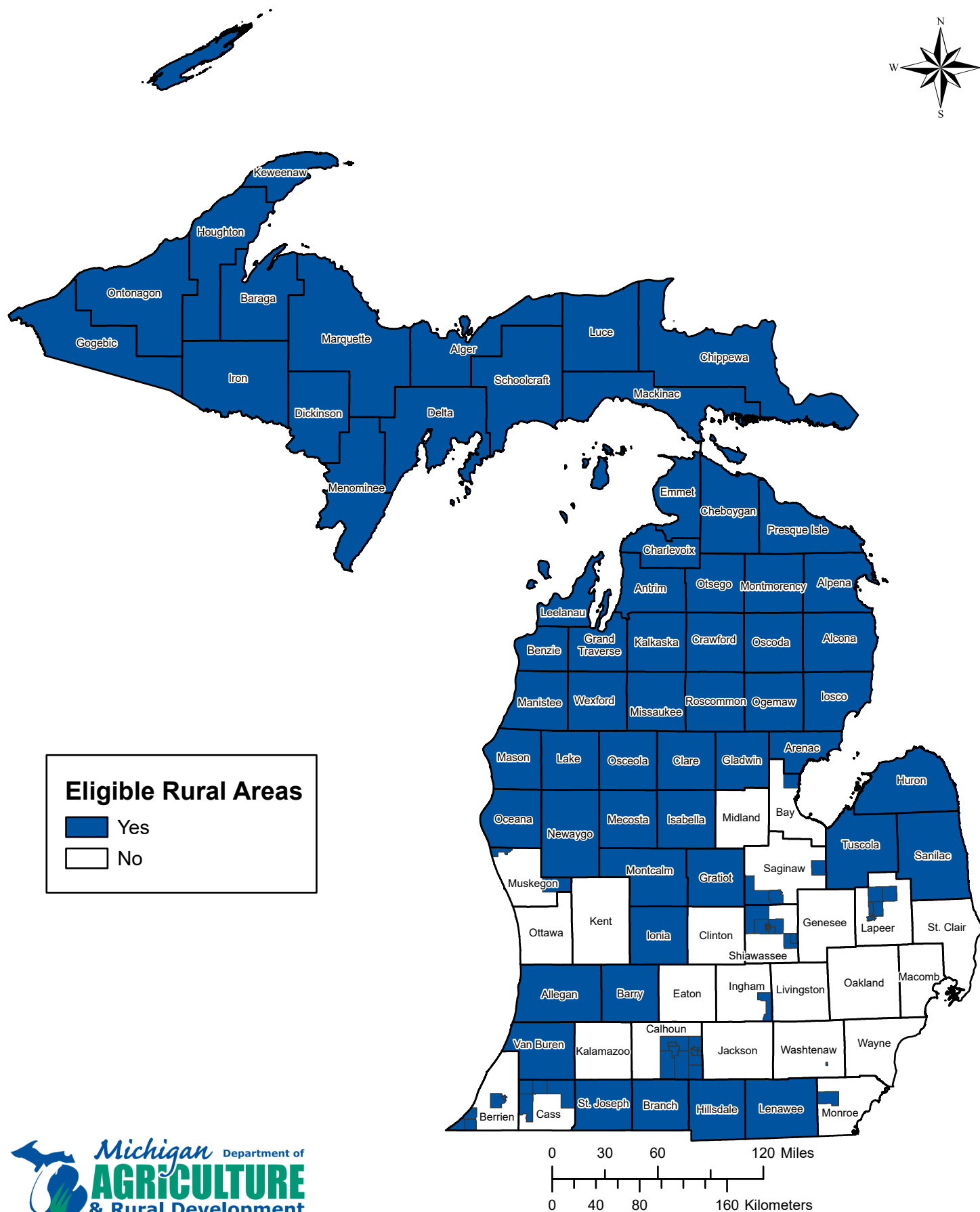
EXPENSES	ITEM(S)	RATE/HR or COST/UNIT	# OF HOURS OR UNITS	TOTAL COST
	Salary	\$30.00/HR	40	\$1,200
	Fringes	\$10.00/HR	40	\$400
	Consultant (ABC Consulting, Any City, MI, 49999)	\$25,000	1.0	\$25,000
	Travel	\$400.00	1.0	\$400.00
			TOTAL PROJECT COST	\$27,000

INCOME	SOURCE	SECURED Y/N		AMOUNT
	MDARD ORD	N		\$22,500.00
	Any City, MI	Y		\$2,500.00
	XYX Foundation	Y		\$2,000.00
			TOTAL PROJECT INCOME	\$27,000.00

[illegible]

TOTAL PROJECT COST (inclusive of the below Rural Readiness funding request and 20% match)	\$	ANTICIPATED SOURCE(S) OF MATCH:
RURAL READINESS FUNDING REQUEST	\$	
TOTAL MATCH	\$	

Eligible Rural Areas for Rural Readiness Grants





2023 Office of Rural Development Rural Readiness Grants:

Eligible Rural Areas

For the purposes of the 2023 Rural Readiness Grant Program, eligible rural counties are defined as follows (**see list below**):

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- Outlying counties in Metropolitan Statistical Areas that do not include an urbanized area as defined by the Census.

Alcona	Charlevoix	Grand Traverse	Keweenaw	Menominee	Otsego
Alger	Cheboygan	Gratiot	Lake	Missaukee	Presque Isle
Allegan	Chippewa	Hillsdale	Leelanau	Montcalm	Roscommon
Alpena	Clare	Houghton	Lenawee	Montmorency	St. Joseph
Antrim	Crawford	Huron	Luce	Newaygo	Sanilac
Arenac	Delta	Ionia	Mackinac	Oceana	Schoolcraft
Baraga	Dickinson	Iosco	Manistee	Ogemaw	Tuscola
Barry	Emmet	Iron	Marquette	Ontonagon	Van Buren
Benzie	Gladwin	Isabella	Mason	Osceola	Wexford
Branch	Gogebic	Kalkaska	Mecosta	Oscoda	

In addition to rural counties, 2010 census tracts with Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) codes between 4-10 are considered eligible rural areas in the following metropolitan counties, as follows (see attached map for census tract boundaries):

County	Eligible Census Tracts
Bay	26017286300
Berrien	26021011200 26021011300 26021011400 26021021300 26021021400
Calhoun	26025002900

	26025003000 26025003100 26025003200 26025003300 26025003400 26025003500 26025003600 26025003800 26025003900 26025004000
Cass	26027001700 26027001900 26027002000 26027002200
Ingham	26065006002
Lapeer	26087332000 26087332500 26087333500 26087334000 26087336500 26087337000 26087337500
Monroe	26115830800
Muskegon	26121003000 26121003900
Saginaw	26145011300 26145012500 26145012700
Shiawassee	26155030200 26155030300 26155030400 26155030500 26155030600 26155030700 26155030800 26155031600 26155031700 26155031800 26155031900
Washtenaw	26161422900

Eligible census tracts are based on 2019 Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) Codes data provided by the United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Rural Service (USDA-ERS) located at <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/rural-urban-commuting-area-codes>