



# Office of Rural Development Rural Readiness Grant Program (RRGP) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

*This document will be regularly updated to reflect additional questions.*

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## Definition of “Rural”:

### What is the definition of “Rural”?

For the purposes of the RRGF, eligible rural areas are defined as follows:

Communities may apply as a

1. Rural Readiness Grant Program (RRGP) Eligible Rural Area -or-
2. A self-identified rural area.

**RRGP Eligible Rural Area:** Communities located in an eligible rural area, as defined in the [guidance available online here](#), **are not** required to reference additional programs or definitions.

**Self-Identified Rural Area:** Communities may self-identify as rural if they can provide an example of another state or federal program that classifies them as rural. Applicants must specifically reference the state or federal program in their Letter of Intent.

## Eligibility Based on Type of Organization:

### Who is eligible to apply?

The following entities are 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 organization

### If we provide regional services to ten counties - can we be the applicant or does that need to be county specific?

The regional organization can be the applicant for these grant funds if the project serves an eligible rural area.

### What criteria do communities need to meet to receive services/grants?

Eligible activities, eligible geography, and match requirements are included in the RRGP grant guidelines, which are available on the Office of Rural Development (ORD) webpage at: <https://www.michigan.gov/mdard/business-development/grantfund/rural-readiness-grant-program>.

## Available Funding, Funding Maximums/Minimums and Match Requirements:

### What are the *maximum* and *minimum* grant requests?

The maximum grant request is \$50,000. The minimum grant request is \$10,000.

### Are matching funds required?

Yes, a 20 percent minimum match (of the total requested *grant amount*) is required. This can be in-kind or cash, or a combination thereof. For more information about calculating an in-kind match, please see the RRGP Grant Guidelines at: <https://www.michigan.gov/mdard/business-development/grantfund/rural-readiness-grant-program>.

### Can volunteer time be included as match?

Yes, volunteer time can be included as a form on in-kind match to an RRGP grant request.

### Will there be additional funding cycles for the Rural Readiness Grant Program?

The program is currently funded by a one-time appropriation. We are releasing two rounds of funding in 2023. Future cycles will be dependent upon the availability of funds and partnerships in the future.

## Eligibility Based on Project Type:

### **Beyond the types of projects mentioned in your grant guidelines, could you provide a few more examples of types of projects that may be competitive for funding?**

The Rural Readiness Grant Program is focused on activities that are preparing your community or organization for longer term solutions, future investment, or larger funding opportunities for priority issues in your community. A list of eligible project types is available online at:

<https://www.michigan.gov/mdard/business-development/grantfund/rural-readiness-grant-program>.

Some examples of potential projects for this funding include:

- Plans or feasibility studies for a community/business incubator
- leadership development or governance programs
- A shared grant writing or project management model supported by/available to multiple organizations.
- planning for infrastructure or housing needs within a particular neighborhood or community.

This is not an exhaustive list and is based on project concepts that have been identified by communities to date.

### **Can a community apply for a grant with a concept? How fully-developed does the project need to be to apply?**

Yes, you can apply with a concept, but the proposed concept and the project should have a clear focus and outcomes. The program is intended to support planning for early phase development activities, understanding that concepts can sometimes require additional organization and collaboration around it to move forward.

If you have questions about whether your project is ready for an application, please feel free to reach out to ORD to talk through your idea. If additional support is needed to further develop a concept, ORD staff is available for discussion on possible resources or next steps to help clarify a potential project or future application.

### **Are you focused primarily on planning for rural economic development, or are projects focused on conservation, land use, and/or climate resilience planning also welcome?**

The RRGP is intended to help communities address locally- and regionally-identified priorities, which may also include activities like conservation, land use, and climate resiliency planning.

## **Eligibility Based on Geographic Location:**

### **My organization/community is located outside the listed eligible areas, but has a rural focus: are we still eligible?**

Yes, your organization/community may be eligible by self-identifying as rural. Communities may self-identify as rural if they can provide an example of another state or federal program that classifies them as rural. Applicants must specifically reference the state or federal program in their Letter of Intent.

### **Can a project span multiple counties?**

Yes. Collaboration and regional/multi-jurisdictional planning and partnerships are a strong emphasis of the program.

## **Letter of Intent:**

### **What are the requirements for the Letter of Intent? Number of pages, font, font size, margins, etc.**

Please consult the grant guidelines. The Letter of Intent is a very simple form – a little over one page. There are no minimum or maximum requirements. There are no requirements specific to number of page(s), font, font size, margins, etc. When completing the Letter of Intent, please focus on ensuring that the project and its intended outcomes are *clear* and *focused*.

### **We did not submit a Letter of Intent during the Letter of Intent phase. Are we still eligible to submit a full application?**

No, but you could consider applying in a future grant round.

### **If we submit a letter of intent, does this automatically mean we can submit a grant application?**

No. ORD staff will be reviewing submitted letters of intent for eligibility and competitiveness. Submitters will be notified, via e-mail, if they have been recommended to submit a full grant application or not.

### **Are we required to submit letters of support with the Letter of Intent, or should we wait until we are invited to submit a full application?**

Letters of support are not required to be submitted with a Letter of Intent. If you are selected and invited to submit a full application, then letters of support are required.

**After the Letter of Intent is submitted will you send the full application?**

Yes, but only to applicants who are invited to submit a full application. We will notify all applicants as to the status of their application and whether they've been selected to move forward with a full application or not. If they are selected for that next round of consideration, we will provide the full application to those applications.

**For the Letter of Intent should we include letters of support as "co-applicant/partner organizations"?**

Please identify co-applicants in the Letter of Intent. Letters of support are required for the full application, but not for the Letter of Intent.

**Reimbursement Grant Program:**

**Can you clarify what is meant by a "reimbursement grant program" in the grant guidelines? Can we seek funds for work that is already completed?**

A reimbursement grant program is one where the grant funds are a reimbursed for the work completed under the grant. Grant recipients pay for the up-front costs/activities in an approved grant application and would be reimburse per a grant agreement between MDARD and your organization.

Please note that the program cannot provide a grant for work that has already been completed outside of the grant program and where an agreement doesn't already exist. Under a grant agreement, your organization completes specified activities, and the grant is provided once invoices and receipts are received showing that the work was done for the grant according to a specified grant agreement.

**Collaborations/Multiple Application Submission(s):**

Can a community receive more than one grant, even if there are multiple applicants...as an example can an Intermediate School District (ISD) receive one, and the city government receives another grant for the same community?

Multiple organizations within a community could submit for multiple grants for different projects, but because the program includes a strong focus on collaboration across organizations and communities, there is the potential that it could be a stronger application if those organizations work together (versus submitting individual applications). There is not a requirement to collaborate, but it is strongly encouraged.

**When collaborating with another organization, can Organization A and Organization B apply individually with the funding used for the same project (i.e., each request \$50,000 to total \$100,000 for the overall project)? Thank you.**

Because of the limited amount of funding available through the program, two grants will not be awarded to a single project.

**Can one organization, working in multiple rural areas, apply for multiple grants with different regional partners? Ex. Otsego with X partners and Y org and then Lake with Z partner and Y org.**

Yes. Multiple partners can act as an applicant or co-applicant in multiple projects. Because some regional partners work with and provide some capacity to multiple counties on multiple projects, ORD expects that they may appear on multiple applications because of those partnerships.

**What types of partnerships are preferred?**

Different communities have different types of relationships between organizations, and the program is open to partnerships that present important opportunities for communities and region.

## **Grant Application Selection/Scoring:**

**How are grantees selected? Is there a scoring system or other criteria to keep in mind when choosing your project to apply for?**

Yes. There is a scoring system, and it is included in the grant guidelines, available online at: <https://www.michigan.gov/mdard/business-development/grantfund/rural-readiness-grant-program>.

## **Grant Application:**

**What is the difference between a co-applicant and a partner?**

A co-applicant is an organization or entity that will be making a financial or other formal commitment and is listed on the application as such. There could be multiple organizations/entities that meet this definition. Partners are those that are involved in the project but may not be committing funding or some other type of formal commitment.

**Can we provide a more detailed (more than 300 words) written description of our project under the Budget Narrative, in addition to the cost table details?**

Most project details should be in the Project Summary and Project Information/Impact sections that precede the Budget Narrative. There are several questions in the Project Information/Impact section that allow applicants to provide information on how they will implement the project.

When reviewing the project summary and specific activities, reviewers will not be looking at the Budget Narrative to provide that information. The Budget Narrative will be explaining where costs are estimated to come from and provide high level information in reviewing the application.

**If the funding is part of a larger capacity program, will we be penalized if the project goes past the initial grant period? For example, using funds to hire and increase capacity for our organization and then finding additional funding to continue the position beyond the grant period.**

It should be clear how the position and capacity will be sustained long term. We encourage you to find committed funding sources to ensure the position and the initiative(s) that are part of your project are stable and sustainable in the long term.

**We are not sure if we are hiring a consultant or using our own staff. How should I reflect that in the budget narrative?**

If you're unsure at this time, it's acceptable to list the position as a "TBD" and provide an explanation of the applicants' decision-making factors on this question should the grant be awarded.

**For the work of contractors, the budget narrative asks for proof of the customary charges for such services. What might that look like? Are quotes needed?**

Please provide an *estimate* of charges. If working with a contractor, you are not required to release a Request for Proposals to obtain a quote from a contractor for the purposes of the application.

**Our match is coming through local community philanthropic contributions. Our confidentiality policy and donor bill of rights does not allow us to disclose each of those names of individuals for this purpose. How can we simply list "local philanthropic contributions" to demonstrate match without comprising confidentiality?**

You can list "local philanthropic contributions" as the source of your match. You can also make a note in the Budget Narrative portion of the application that, for confidentiality reasons, you cannot disclose the actual match source.

**Is documentation needed for an in-kind match commitment?**

We ask that you explain the source(s) of an in-kind match commitment in the budget narrative.

**Is it possible that a grant award would be awarded at a lower amount than what is requested?**

It will depend on the total amount of grant requests versus available funding. It is possible some applications could be funded at a lower award amount, but the RRG is striving to fund applicants at the requested their requested amount(s).

## **Grant Timeline/Implementation:**

### **When will Round 1 awards be announced?**

The last week of September.

### **Can we submit the RRGP application early to speed up the grant period timeline?**

We have a process in place to review all grant applications at the same time, so an early submission will not provide an advantage.

### **How long do grant recipients have to complete their project/use funds?**

The grant period is for 18 months. For round one RRGP agreements starting in January 2024, the grant period will last until June 30, 2025.

## **Grant Funding Rounds:**

### **If our full RRGP application is not awarded funding in the first round, and we choose to re-apply in the second round, will we be required to submit another Letter of Intent?**

No. If your full RRGP application is not funded in the first round, you can re-apply for RRGP funding by re-submitting your full application.

## **Reporting Requirements:**

### **Are there reporting requirements attached to this grant? What will grant reporting look like for awardees?**

There will be reporting requirements for grantees. ORD will work with grantees to customize the reporting requirements per individual grant agreements and to make the process as streamlined as possible.

### **What is the reimbursement schedule? Are there specific dates for reports due for reimbursement? For a salaried position, would we report gross income or after-tax income?**

Both reimbursement requests and progress reports will be due on a quarterly basis. For example, if the agreement start date is January 1, 2024, the first quarterly reimbursement request and progress report (covering January 1, 2024, to March 31, 2024) is due April 30, 2024. Regarding the salary question, that is something that can be discussed during the grant agreement process.



## **ORD Staff and Resources:**

**Is ORD staff available to meet with potential applicants to discuss project scope(s)? (coaching) Especially applicants with limited capacity may need some back and forth on fleshing out a competitive project.**

Yes. Please contact the MDARD Office of Rural Development at:  
[MDARD-ORD@michigan.gov](mailto:MDARD-ORD@michigan.gov) to make arrangements for a meeting.