OFFICE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Opportunities & Investment for Rural Michigan
MDARD’s Office of Rural Development was established by Gov. Whitmer in 2022

Rural markets, natural assets, tourism, and workforce are vital to Michigan’s economic success

Many rural challenges are similar to those in urban areas – but solutions might be implemented differently
Figure 2.9: Population Change in Rural Districts, 2009 to 2019

Figure 2.10: Percent of Population 65 or Older in Rural Districts, 2019

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community 5-year Survey
Housing
• Rising development costs and subsidy needs
• Infrastructure expansion and costs
• Regulatory barriers
• Limited local capacity
• Communications

Infrastructure & Broadband
• Reduced revenue has led to deferred infrastructure maintenance
• Costs are barrier to private and public providers
• Accurate maps needed to show biggest gaps for federal funding

Workforce & Economic Development Barriers
• Childcare costs, availability
• Transportation needs and access
• Skills mismatch and training needs
Opportunities for Rural Michigan

Recent disruptions can reverse – or exacerbate – long-standing population and economic trends that impact health outcomes, educational attainment, and future income of rural residents

Remote work allows for relocation

Climate migration forecasts opportunity for population growth

Outdoor recreation amenities/industry are key quality of life and economic assets

21 universities are located in Michigan's rural areas
Capturing opportunity in rural Michigan requires strategic and coordinated investment in people and place.

Resources are available, but rural areas face staff, procedural, and financial challenges in accessing programs and funding.
Successful communities invest in planning and collaborate across sectors.

- Rural communities have unique and valuable assets that can be activated and leveraged.
- Regional perspectives, solutions, and collaboration can help to overcome geographic and capacity barriers.
- Investment requires organizational capacity and infrastructure.
Interagency coordination
• Identify opportunities for policy and program changes that will positively impact rural outcomes
• Ensure rural input on policy and programs

Increase statewide engagement & action on rural priorities
• Connect communities to share rural best practices and successes
• Improve coordination and collaboration
• Build regional and statewide preparedness and economic competitiveness

Staff & resources to support communities
• Build local capacity – act as information resource and partner for local programs and projects
• Fill in financial and other gaps needed to kickstart local initiatives
Virtual Rural Roundtables & Regional Leadership Summits
Build connections, share best practices & success stories from around the state, and participate in discussion on priority issues with regional and statewide peers and partners.

Rural Readiness Grants
Grants of up to $50,000 to support development readiness, cross-sector collaboration, and capacity building activities with broad regional impact and demonstrate innovative, systems-based solutions.

Rural Readiness Program
Community support for local and regional solutions with workplans, connections, and resources to support next steps.

Rural Resource Connections
Connections and information on policy initiatives, partners, funding opportunities, and events to help rural stakeholders raise awareness, communicate, plan, fund, and implement their priorities.

ORD staff and programming to build rural readiness

Sarah Lucas
Director

Payton Heins
Policy Specialist

Lisa Miller
Engagement & Outreach Specialist

Matt Wiitala
Capacity & Grant Program Specialist
Growing commitment to & understanding of rural needs

New programs and resources
- Missing Middle Housing & Community Development Fund
- MI Hope Regional Child Care Innovation Funds
- TriShare
- USDA, BEAD, ROBN Infrastructure & Jobs Investment Act (BIL)
- Local and regional appropriations

New procedural considerations
- Rural set-asides in new funding programs
- Navigators and technical assistance
- Outreach and communication
- Planning and mapping
January 31 supplemental invests in rural priorities

$150 million for Affordable housing tax credit gap financing program

Additional $50 million for Missing Middle Housing Program with expanded eligibility and removal of subsidy cap; 30% of funding reserved for rural communities

Additional $100 million for Revitalization and Placemaking Grants to turn space into affordable housing, community spaces, and other placemaking-focused activities.

Additional $75 million for Blight Elimination Grants to land banks and local governments for the rehabilitation or demolition of vacant and blighted properties, and the remediation of vacant land for future redevelopment.

$25 million for Transportation Economic Development Fund Category B program construction or preservation of streets in cities and villages with populations of 10,000 or less, including, but not limited to, reconstruction, replacement, rehabilitation, and capital preventive maintenance.

$75 million for Michigan Strategic Fund to create and operate programs for small businesses disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
Governor Whitmer’s Executive Budget includes important resources for rural communities

New and Added Funds for Housing
Housing & Community Development Fund, Missing Middle expansion, migrant housing, attainable homeownership and apprenticeship training

Talent and Workforce Development Tools
Retraining & Retooling Program, expanded Reconnect program, student support and college success programs, talent expansion and retention in key industries

Regional Empowerment & Economic Development
Support for regional initiatives, new economic development incentives, placemaking, Michigan Main Street, Pure Michigan, small business support, outdoor recreation business development,

Education and Childcare
Pre-K, Tri-share, per pupil funding increase, new teacher training and teacher, student support, mental health and safety

Local Government & Infrastructure
Revenue sharing increase, reimbursements for federal infrastructure grants, bridge repair and replacement, EV infrastructure

Michigan.gov/budget
Increased financial commitment to housing, broadband, infrastructure, childcare

*Housing funds and projects, infrastructure match programs, childcare set-asides*

Emerging partnerships and growing capacity with employers, universities, and nonprofit partners

*Housing and childcare projects, internships and apprenticeships, technical assistance*

Local and regional plans for high-priority issues

*Broadband surveys, housing action plans and needs assessments, childcare strategies, community awareness*
Rural Readiness Grant Program

Eligible Activities
- Capacity Building
- Partnerships & Planning
- Cross-Sector Collaboration
- Development Readiness

Awards, Applicants, and Deadlines
- Maximum $50,000 (20% match, in-kind or cash)
- Local governments and tax-exempt organizations are eligible
- Grant webinar **Friday, April 21**
- Letters of Intent due **May 25**
- Full applications due **August 3**
- Eligible community map online

Rural Readiness Grants

Eligible Rural Areas

- Non-metropolitan counties, including micropolitan statistical areas
- Census tracts with Rural-Urban Community Area (RUCA) codes between 4-10

Michigan.gov/mdard/business-development/grantfund/rural-readiness-grant-program
Thank you!

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