An intergovernmental and cross-sector liaison and ‘front door’ for rural communities

Strategize and advocate for rural needs in policy and program decisions
Help rural communities navigate to partners and resources
Build a strong rural network to keep rural communities connected to each other and resources
Aging and declining populations create immediate, acute needs for workforce in essential positions.

The largest single demographic in rural MI is those age 65+

Housing shortages create local/regional challenges in attracting population to new jobs and other opportunities

Forecasted population declines will impact health outcomes, educational attainment, and future income of rural residents

New solutions needed for meeting immediate community needs

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**Michigan Population Change (2010-2020)**

Decennial data provided by the Department of Technology, Management and Budget’s (DTMB) Michigan Labor Market Information located at milmi.org/population
Rural Readiness grants are building a pipeline of projects and plans that will add housing, health access, infrastructure, grant writing capacity, non-motorized infrastructure, childcare, and more.

A growing rural network is fostering connections, partnerships, and funding opportunities.

Feedback from thousands of rural residents and leaders is informing statewide strategies, policy changes, and funding programs.

6 Roundtables
Rural Priority Issues
Attended 6 Regional Rural Leadership Summits

350 Leaders
200+ Conversations
With local and regional leaders

$9+ Million
Rural Readiness Dollars Requested

$1.8 Million
Rural Readiness Dollars Awarded

40 Projects
Funded by Rural Readiness Grants

2,300+ Subscribers
Office of Rural Prosperity Newsletter

2,400+ Responses
Rural Perspectives and Priorities Survey
2400+ respondents with broad representation identified key resident and workforce values, concerns, and rural assets in the 2023 Rural Preferences & Priorities Survey

‘Place’ – location, recreation, schools, community connections – was a key driver for decisions to stay or relocate to rural areas

Two-thirds thought their community was moving in the right direction

Community planning initiatives were seen as a catalyst for improvements/positive change in direction
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
A strategy for resilient, connected communities, businesses, residents, and natural environments

Informing policy, funding, and collaboration across state government

Michigan.gov/ORP
Grow and diversify the workforce across sectors by increasing labor force participation, retaining or reskilling workforce, and attracting out-of-state talent in rural-conscious ways that allow rural businesses to launch, grow, and evolve.

**Improve individual health and economic well-being** by overcoming rural-specific barriers to accessing quality services including healthcare, education, childcare, high-speed internet, and transportation to allow residents to reach their full potential.

Support local and regional capacity to deliver services by increasing resource supports, building cross-sector and multi-jurisdictional partnerships, and developing capacity to meet immediate demands and evolving future needs of residents, businesses, communities, and natural environments.

**Expand quality and attainable housing opportunities** by increasing investments in housing, enhancing tailored technical support, and continuing to foster policies that facilitate new housing options for current and future rural residents.

Build and maintain resilient infrastructure by empowering effective planning and multi-jurisdictional coordination with resources that address rural realities and meet the evolving needs of residents, businesses, and communities.

Enhance regionally driven and place-based economic development efforts by building on uniquely rural attributes and resources, empowering regions through flexible funding, and fostering a supportive rural business climate to ensure rural residents, businesses, and communities thrive.

**Protect, conserve, and be a responsible steward of natural assets** by carefully balancing development and land preservation, offering resources and supports to preserve natural environments, and encouraging environmentally conscious practices to support the health and well-being of future generations.
Build rural health/education workforce, with strategic considerations to attract EMTs/paramedics, medical assistants, nurses, home healthcare aides, teachers, and behavioral and mental health providers to rural communities.

Expedite the expansion of high-speed internet infrastructure to increase opportunities for telehealth and education.

Build capacity and infrastructure for organizations to successfully deliver critical community services, including health/behavioral health, food access, emergency response, and other services.

Address funding concerns for EMS and its workforce, including consideration of EMS as an “essential service” in Michigan.

Identify innovative models and pilot programming to diversify rural health services beyond telehealth, increase healthy food access, and address the unique needs of aging and vulnerable rural populations.

Integrate and build support around Community Health Workers (CHWs) to broaden the reach of healthcare services and providers in rural communities.

Identify, support, and scale innovative and successful models for financial, health, and social services that provide support for Michigan’s growing senior population and vulnerable individuals and families.
Advocate for more state, federal, and philanthropic funding opportunities that offer technical assistance, planning, and capacity building support for rural communities.

Create statewide infrastructure to attract and connect rural communities to greater state and national philanthropic funding and corporate donors to help scale local and regional solutions.

Create a rural financial match program to allow underserved rural communities to identify and access financial match sources for state and federal programs.

Explore policy changes to increase and sustain revenue and efficient distribution of resources for local governments and counties.

Provide resources and support for regional planning and economic development organizations to build shared regional capacity and provide enhanced resources and services.

Support and scale successful examples of cross-sector and multi-jurisdictional partnerships that facilitate innovative solutions and allow communities to efficiently deliver services.

Build and expand multi-year fellowship opportunities in rural communities to help fill immediate staffing capacity gaps and attract new talent.

Invest in leadership/governance training and continuing education to equip communities with best practices and connect to peers.

Support and provide leadership development programs to cultivate diverse leadership in local, county, tribal, and nonprofit governance.
Housing is consistently identified as a top challenge – often ‘the’ top challenge. The Rural Readiness Grant Program offers

- Housing strategies, including identification and packaging of priority development sites, local government/community education, and partnership building
- Multi-jurisdictional planning/zoning efforts
- Contractual or staff support for capacity building related to grant planning and applications
- Added capacity to coordinate housing or economic development
- Collaborative behavioral health initiatives
- Emergency response planning

$50,000 (20% match, in-kind or cash) awards to local governments and tax-exempt organizations are eligible

$2.5 million recommended by Gov. Whitmer for FY25 budget to continue the program
Reimagining Rural: National Rural Trends & Opportunities
Tony Pipa, Brookings Institute

Rural Insights from the MI Public Policy Survey
University of Michigan

Community Resiliency: Coming Together Post-Disaster
Panel Discussion with Gaylord Community Partners

From Vision to Reality
Panel Discussion with Village of Cassopolis

State Leadership & the Roadmap to Rural Prosperity
LEO, DNR, MEDC, MDARD, MSHDA Leadership

Insights on Talent Attraction and Retention
Panel Discussion with Young Rural Champions

Capacity Building: New Models & Best Practices
Panel Discussion with Rural Readiness Grantees

MI Funding Hub
Michigan Municipal League

Michigan.gov/ORP