

Strengthening Rural Maryland Families

*Direct Services Grants Program An Initiative of the Rural Maryland Council
with funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation*

2007-08 Grant Scoring Criteria

Needs Assessment (10 points)

- Does the applicant clearly define their target population?
- Does the applicant demonstrate knowledge of the circumstances facing the target population and services that can help them succeed?

Aims/Objectives (10 points)

- Are the aims/objectives responding to needs identified in the needs assessment?
- Are the aims/objectives SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-limited)?
- To what extent are the applicant's goals realistic in light of historic and current conditions
- affecting the targeted families--jobs, housing, economic well-being, formal and informal supports, safety, transportation, civic engagement, etc.?

Program Description (20 points)

- Is the program clearly described?
- Is it consistent with the needs and aim/objectives outlined in the previous sections?
- To what extent are the aims/objectives, and program activities aligned such that their achievement is likely within the available time frame, finances and other resources for this grant?

Family-Strengthening Orientation (35 points)

- *Family-strengthening orientation overall:* Applicants will clearly demonstrate a family strengthening orientation. This orientation is captured in the statement that children do well when their families do well; families do better when they live in supportive communities. To what extent does the applicant's proposed project place visible emphasis on helping vulnerable families become self-reliant and succeed over the long-haul?
- *Families matter:* Applicant views families as the focus and see families as partners, seeking to help families acquire the confidence, capacity and opportunities they need to achieve their aspirations for themselves and their children. To what extent does the applicant appear to embrace parents as partners and help parents achieve the goals they have for their family? To what extent has the applicant demonstrated the involvement of targeted rural families in planning, executing, reporting and evaluating the proposed initiative?

- *Place matters.* Applicant addresses the circumstances and conditions in which rural families live, including the availability and access to appropriate opportunities, supports and services. To what extent is the applicant “place-based” – located in, or clearly tied to, the rural, low-income community(ies) it seeks to serve?
- *Connections count.* Applicant emphasizes helping families connect to economic opportunities and to jobs that provide income, assets, and an economic future; to the social networks of kin, neighborhood groups, and other informal ties; and to high-quality, effective services and formal supports. To what extent does the applicant's proposed project help families build themselves a solid base of support and a web of connections to the range of formal and informal supports that can help them be self-sustaining?

Organizational Capacity (10 points)

- *Track Record:* Applicants should have accumulated a significant record of demonstrable success over a long period of time, as reflected in:
 - *Tangible results:* To what extent is there clear evidence that the applicant achieves meaningful, measurable results with low-income rural families and/or communities?
 - *Longevity and stability:* To what extent does the applicant: 1) have strong and stable staff and board leadership; 2) raise sufficient funds from multiple sources for its work (though organizations can always use more!), and 3) have strong fiscal and organizational health, all over a sustained period of time.

Evaluation (15 points)

- To what extent does the applicant demonstrate ability to evaluate results of the project? Is there a dissemination plan in place?

Overall Assessment:

- Taking everything into account, is this a **stand-out** applicant? A stand-out applicant has demonstrated the capacity to respond to identified needs in the community. The goals are reasonable and attainable during a 6 months grant period. The proposed program will help strengthen disadvantaged families.