

# FY26 Baltimore Vacants Reinvestment Initiative (BVRI)

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

April 30, 2025

### **Is a match required?**

A funding match is not required.

### **Is the application on a first come first serve basis?**

No, this funding round is not on a first come, first serve basis. A group of awardees will be identified through a competitive process. Those awardees will then receive a not to exceed amount of financial assistance that will be deployed on a “pay for performance” basis. Awardees can draw more funds from their award as they complete projects in an efficient manner.

### **Can we fundraise privately if the funds awarded don’t account for all of the proposed expenses?**

Yes, and that is encouraged if it would aid a community in completing a project.

### **Is this a reimbursement grant?**

No. Awardees will receive a portion of the allotted funds as an initial disbursement. Additional funds will be disbursed based on readiness to proceed with additional eligible activities, such as acquisition or rehabilitation.

### **If my organization is a small non-profit that doesn’t have the capacity to redevelop vacant properties, can I still apply?**

Any eligible CDO applicant may partner with another non-profit or for-profit developer to demonstrate sufficient capacity to receive funding.

### **What is the equity framework used for this program?**

BVRI’s equitable funding priorities are noted in the application and are consistent with Secretary Day’s focus on righting the wrongs of the past, as demonstrated through the new Just Communities division of the Department, which is responsible for developing, implementing, and accelerating strategies to lift up communities that have experienced historical and ongoing socio-economic marginalization.

**Must a vacant property have a Vacant Building Notice (VBN) at time of application or at grant agreement?**

Listed properties do not need to have a VBN to be included in the application. However, as stated in the [program guide](#), one of the goals of BVRI is to rapidly expedite reduction of properties with city-issued VBNS.

**How long does a place-based non-profit organization have to be in existence to be eligible to apply?**

There is no minimum amount of time the nonprofit has to be in operation to apply. Keep in mind that applications will be scored based on the organization's demonstrated ability to complete vacant property rehabilitation projects.

**Can an awardee apply funds to a vacant property that is outside the typical geography they serve?**

Yes, but all listed properties should be inside the target area submitted with the application. If a target area includes blocks outside your organization's typically served geography, address the rationale for working outside your target area in the application.

**What is a Sustainable Community?**

Local governments apply for this designation from Maryland DHCD which, when determined, offers eligibility for a comprehensive package of resources for community development, revitalization and sustainability. Read more about [designated Sustainable Communities](#). View Baltimore City's Sustainable Communities, which are highlighted in orange [on this map](#).

**Why do vacant properties have to be in a designated Sustainable Community for BVRI?**

The [Sustainable Communities Act of 2010](#) established a shared geographic designation to promote strategic targeting of State resources based to reinvest in communities with greatest need.

**My nonprofit has not yet received our IRS determination letter, can we still apply?**

No. A non-profit must have an IRS determination letter at the time of application.

**Can the funds be used for new construction on a vacant lot?**

Yes. Infill construction on a vacant lot is an eligible use of BVRI funds.

**Can the funds to an applicant be combined with other grant funds (e.g. Community Legacy, BRNI, Maryland Historic Trust)?**

Yes. Grant funds from different Maryland DHCD programs can be stacked together to complete a project.

**Must awarded funds be divided equally across each vacant property?**

Awarded organizations should divide the funds as needed to achieve the intended redevelopment outcome for each property.

**What if I don't expend the grant funds by the end of the grant term?**

Grant funds will be disbursed as awardees demonstrate performance. Organizations that can scale up their production will gain more ongoing BVRI investment over time as DHCD aims to pay for performance. Awardees should not expect to be holding significant grant funds above their immediate needs.

**Can an organization have multiple logins for the BVRI application?**

Yes. Any applicant organization may create a Survey Monkey account and be invited as a collaborator to an application another member has started.

**How large can files submitted on the online application be?**

Uploaded files may not be bigger than 1000 mb.

**Will you be reviewing applications on a rolling basis?**

No. All applications will be reviewed after the deadline, which is May 23rd at 11:59 pm EST.

**Will all applications submitted be awarded funds?**

No. This is a competitive grant process. All applications will first be reviewed for threshold eligibility. Then, all applications meeting the threshold will be reviewed and scored by a team, including staff from DHCD and our partner, the Maryland Community Investment Corporation. More information about application scoring can be found in the [program guide](#).

**Can funds be used for new construction expenses if we already own the lots? If yes, how will it be scored in comparison to rehabs?**

Yes, funds can be used for new construction expenses. While these expenses are eligible for BVRI funding, new construction on vacant lots do not abate VBNs. Projects that abate VBNs will score higher than projects that do not.

**Are we using geographical boundaries as they are used in appraisals?**

The request for geographic boundaries is for the borders of the target area of your proposal. Your target area(s) should be clusters of contiguous blocks targeted for BVRI funding.

**Can these funds be used in conjunction with other grant funding? If our project has received other DHCD funds is it eligible for these funds?**

Yes, you are able to apply for these funds if you've received DHCD funding.

**Does the developer fee include CDO developer fee option or just a private developer partner fee**

Yes, CDO developers who apply or are a partner are able to receive the developer fee.

**What would you define as rapidly? What is your expected timeframe for completion?**

We understand that groups that already own properties will be able to remediate VBNs more quickly, but generally we are expecting once acquisition is complete that properties should be rehabilitated in a matter of months.

**Will you consider applications for multiple projects? Or more than one application per organization?**

Yes, organizations can submit more than one application. You will need to create a second SurveyMonkey account, as the platform only allows one application per account.

**Are commercial or mixed use properties eligible?**

Yes, commercial properties are eligible. However, the Department's investment priority will be the renovation of residential properties with a city-issued vacant building notice (VBN) as well as redeveloping vacant land for new housing opportunities, both with an emphasis on homeownership outcomes. For non-residential properties, address why redeveloping the commercial property is important in your target area revitalization strategy.

**Are holding costs eligible expenses?**

Yes, holding costs are eligible as a standard development cost. Awarded organizations are expected to be nimble, efficient, and fast in the abatement of VBNs and the redevelopment of vacant property with BVRI funds, so holding costs should be minimal.

**Has there been any agreements with Baltimore City to prioritize city owned acquisitions for community based organizations?**

Maryland DHCD staff are in constant coordination with our counterparts in Baltimore City government.

**Are there grants and loans available or just loans?**

BVRI funds will mostly be disbursed as forgivable loans by the [Maryland Community Investment Corporation](#) (MCIC). Awardees will repay the forgivable loans with proceeds of the eventual sale of properties or with the proceeds of a mortgage if refinancing rental properties. For homeownership projects, we expect that the price at the time of resale will be less than the cost to rehabilitate the property. This difference is known as the appraisal gap. Since organizations will not pay it back, the amount of the loan equal to the appraisal gap becomes a grant.

**Is rental new construction an eligible activity under the grant program?**

Yes, if your organization currently owns, acquires, or demolishes buildings to create a vacant lot, you may use BVRI funds for new construction rental or homeownership projects. As noted in the application, homeownership outcomes are a higher priority than rental outcomes.

**If we have vacant lot(s) with Adopt a Lot / Care a Lot designations, can we purchase them through BVRI?**

Yes, BVRI funds may be used to purchase vacant land. Your application must demonstrate your intended purpose for the vacant lot(s) as part of your target area revitalization strategy and the creation of whole block outcomes.

**Does the property have to be sold after rehab or can they be rented out?**

Rental is allowed, though funding will prioritize projects with a homeownership outcome.

**Do community land trusts fall into eligible CDO applicants?**

Yes, a nonprofit land trust with a community focus would qualify.

**How flexible is the timeline for project completion once funding is awarded?**

Our expectation is that after acquisition, a renovation should proceed efficiently. As we review the pace of work of the cohort of CDO awardees, we may determine an acceptable maximum per project timeline. The more efficient and fast CDO's will be able to apply for additional funding.

**What are the allowed developer fees?**

Up to 15% of approved development costs

**What is the max amount of years? Is there a timeline you feel is desirable?**

There is no max number of years, but speed is of the essence. Slow production may reduce access to future funding. You should describe a multi-year strategy for remediating all VBNs in the target area you've defined in your application. Your application's property pipeline should include all the vacant properties in your defined target area and specify your intended acquisition and redevelopment plan for each.

For those acquisitions you cannot purchase through private transaction, indicate if the property needs to go through the in rem foreclosure or receivership process. Efficiency and production will be prioritized in your application so if there are properties in your target area that you already own or for which you can negotiate a purchase through a private owner, please identify those properties in the vacant property pipeline list.

**Is the whole block strategy that BVRI funds complete both sides of the street, corner to corner, a threshold item or a scoring item? If the project is on one side of the street, is the project still eligible?**

Applicants are expected to demonstrate that they can create whole block outcomes, abating every vacant property on a block through BVRI or other funding. This will be a scoring item. A project on one side of the street is eligible, but your application should also address how you will remediate any other vacant properties on that same block.

**If we own the lots and are awarded this grant/loan, would we have to return funds based on the sale proceeds or can it be forgiven based on the use of the funds?**

Proceeds from a home sale that exceed the appraisal gap subsidy needed for the project will be repaid to MCIC.

**What's the total amount of funds available? Since there's no max award amount.**

There will be approximately \$30 million available for FY26 BVRI

**Are there any Area Median Income resale restrictions?**

There will be no Area Median Income resale restrictions, but we encourage applicants to find ways to provide access to homeownership opportunities at various price points.

**Can you submit multiple properties (e.g., some rehab and some new construction) in a single application or should you file multiple applications for different projects?**

You should submit multiple properties in a single application as long as those properties are within the application's defined target area, which is a contiguous cluster of blocks.

**If you have something that you plan to hold as a rental, how would the loan get paid back?**

You would obtain a mortgage on the rental property and use the proceeds to pay back the forgivable loan.

**Can the grant be used for reimbursement for costs associated with acquiring or rehabbing a vacant property already incurred?**

The award may reimburse for reasonable costs already in the project, such acquisition or renovation. The grant will cover the cost of the appraisal gap.