



Network Planning Grant – FY2020

External Environmental Scan: SCANNING TOOL

Maryland Rural Health Planning Consortium
May, 2021
Eastern Shore Area Health Education Center
Cambridge, MD

Responses should reflect those factors and conditions *external to your Network organization* that have the potential to impact the types of services/programs you provide and/or your Network’s operations and sustainability. **When considering which factors to include in the final analysis, think about how these factors have changed over time; consider both the potential to materialize (e.g., what is the likelihood this will happen?) and the potential impact (e.g., will this cause a meaningful change?)**

Domain	Influencing Factors	Opportunities	Threats
	The influencing factors listed below are included as prompts for your reflection and conversations. You may identify others.	What are the factors that may create favorable conditions for the work of our Network?	What are factors that may negatively impact the work of our Network?
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government leadership Government budgets/spending priorities Sufficient health care workforce Access to health services Population demographics Population health indicators Economic environment Access to social services Social context (crime and violence, environmental conditions, availability of food and housing, transportation, etc.) Impacts related to COVID 19 pandemic 	The revitalization of the Local Health Improvement Coalition (LHIC) on Maryland’s Eastern Shore provides an opportunity for partnership development related to the activities of our Network.	Rural areas suffer from a lack of technological and transportation infrastructure that complicates the work of the MRHPC. Furthermore, rural areas in Maryland suffer from a scarcity of healthcare providers and specialists, due in part to a lack of marketing work related to the appeal/quality of life available in our region.
State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government leadership Government budgets/spending priorities Medicaid, Behavioral Health, Aging/Long Term Care, and other health policies Health professions policies and practices Private insurance reimbursement policies Healthcare marketplace Economic environment Impacts related to COVID 19 pandemic 	<p>As in many other states, Telehealth rules were relaxed in Maryland during the pandemic. This provides MRHPC an opportunity to advocate for continued expansion and reimbursement for telemedicine.</p> <p>Maryland’s sustained financial health presents unique opportunities for funding the work of the MRHPC. For example, the Community Health Resource Commission will oversee a new Health Equity Community Program</p>	Within the state, the region served by the MRHPC is often viewed as a “land bridge” to other more populated, tourism-centric areas of the state such as the Atlantic coast. This view obscures the issues in our region and presents a threat to legislative buy-in from state legislators.

		leveraging over \$45 million. This is an excellent opportunity for the MRHPC to unify a request or leverage those dollars to support the efforts of the MRHPC.	
Federal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government leadership • Government budgets/spending priorities • Medicare, Medicaid, Behavioral Health, Aging/Long Term Care, other health policies • Healthcare marketplace • Economic environment • Impacts related to COVID 19 pandemic 	The MRHPC members agreed that most of the opportunities in the federal domain are in the form of competitive grants. One other opportunity that was highlighted was the federal authorization of Maryland’s Total Cost of Care Model.	<p>Federal funding opportunities have been directed toward COVID relief efforts and other public health initiatives.</p> <p>Furthermore, federal funding often focuses on health equity factors that largely impact urban populations. Rural populations are more likely to need assistance with basic public health functions.</p>

External Environmental Scan: Summary

Part 1. Data Description

Towards the beginning of the consortium strategic planning process, a data collection presentation was prepared using several relevant data sources. These sources include: the 2018 Maryland Rural Health Plan (www.mdruralhealthplan.org), the 2019 Mid-Shore Community Health Needs Assessment, as well as the most up-to-date Robert Wood Johnson Foundation county data. For the SWOT process, digital worksheets were utilized to collect written feedback pertinent to the Scan. Responses from worksheets supplemented with qualitative data from live interviews with an external evaluator.

Part 2. Process Description

Digital worksheets were completed by members of all six member organizations of the MRHPC. Member organizations were instructed to convene several key staff in order to complete these worksheets. An external evaluator examined the written feedback and conducted follow-up interviews to clarify the feedback given on the worksheets. Interviews were transcribed and added to the worksheet feedback. After these interviews, the evaluator conducted a thematic analysis to extract themes from member organizations’ worksheets and interviews. These themes are summarized in the table above.

Part 3. Opportunities for Our Network

The revitalization of the Mid Shore Local Health Improvement Coalition (LHIC) is one of the most significant opportunities to pursue the work of the MRHPC. By participating in the LHIC, the MRHPC has the opportunity to unify industry partners in the messaging of rural health needs. Collaboration with other organizations in the LHIC also presents an opportunity to collectively apply for grant funding opportunities that come from the State.

Part 4. Threats to Our Network

The competition for local resources is high in rural areas, given the relative lack of investment. The MRHPC has at least two strengths to meet this challenge: 1) its regional social capital (i.e., reputation, trust) and 2) its strength in communication. By utilizing these skills, the MRHPC will address the threat of local competition for resources by strategically collaborating with other local organizations who are invested in outcomes related to the work of the MRHPC. The MRHPC will carefully identify funding opportunities that will appeal to several organizations, who can share the burden of both applying for and administering these funds.