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# COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FUND (CIF) ADMINISTRATIVE PROGRAM MANUAL

## FY 2016

*Creating Jobs. Building Communities. Improving Lives.*

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# INTRODUCTION

## Introduction

### BACKGROUND

The Delta Regional Authority works to improve regional economic opportunity by helping to create jobs, build communities, and improve the lives of the 10 million people who reside in the 252 counties and parishes of the eight-state Delta region. Led by the Delta Regional Authority Board-comprised of the Federal Co-Chairman, Chris Masingill, who was appointed by President Obama and confirmed by the U.S. Senate in 2010, and the governors of the eight states-the Delta Regional Authority fosters local and regional partnerships that address economic and social challenges to ultimately strengthen the Delta economy and the quality of life for Delta residents.

Established by Congress in 2000, the Delta Regional Authority makes strategic investments with its federal appropriations into the physical, digital and human infrastructure of Delta communities. In fact, since its initial investment cycle in 2002, DRA has invested more than \$138 million into 934 projects, leveraging \$2.9 billion in public and private investments. These investments are helping to yield:

- 46,537 total jobs being created and retained;
- 100,940 total families accessing safe water and/or services; and
- 28,728 total individuals being trained for jobs in their area.

As a recent adjunct to DRA's primary investment program – SEDAP, DRA now offers the [Community Infrastructure Fund](#), referred to as CIF (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 90.201), and its investments shall be used for:

- flood control;
- basic infrastructure development; and
- transportation improvements.

All of which will benefit rural communities with the greatest infrastructure needs. The 252 counties and parishes served by the Delta Regional Authority make up the most distressed area of the country. According to the USDA, the most severe rates of poverty are historically found in the South, especially in the Mississippi River delta region. In fact, four of the ten most impoverished counties and parishes in the country, based on median household income, are located within the DRA footprint.

### PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

This manual outlines for all interested parties when the CIF funding cycle begins, what is considered an eligible project, where to go to apply for funding and how to manage a project from application preparation through project close-out. Copies of all necessary forms are included separately (please see dra.gov).

# INTRODUCTION

With the addition of the CIF to DRA's portfolio of funding opportunities, DRA will have increased flexibility to support states and communities as they address the unmet infrastructure needs in the region. The key concepts for this funding opportunity include: 1) an Open Application Cycle and 2) a direct connection to the federal priorities outlined below, to assist with project prioritization. These elements, combined with a continuously improving web portal, serve to align the DRA's fiduciary responsibilities to maximize the impact of funds appropriated by Congress.

Briefly, the Open Application Cycle will serve to:

- alleviate choke points;
- increase application quality;
- allow for enhanced DRA technical assistance;
- get CIF dollars working more quickly;
- provide additional opportunities to conduct media outreach;
- allow award recipients to better match up to other funding partner cycles; and,
- meet the real-time needs of the individual projects.

# PROCESS OUTLINE

## Process Outline

1. Eligible Entities
  - a. Participating Member States
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2. Eligible Projects
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    - iii. GOAL 3. INCREASED COMMUNITY CAPACITY - Facilitate local capacity building within Delta communities, organizations, businesses, and individuals.

# TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

## Table of Abbreviations

### ABBREVIATIONS FOUND WITHIN THIS DOCUEMNT

ABBREVIATION	DEFINITION
<b>DRA</b>	Delta Regional Authority
<b>LDD</b>	Local Development District
<b>CIF</b>	Community Infrastructure Fund
<b>OMB</b>	The President's Office of Management & Budget
<b>SF</b>	Standard Form (e.g. SF425: Financial Status Report)
<b>RDP</b>	Regional Development Plan
<b>GIS</b>	Geographic Information System
<b>EPEF's</b>	Existing Public Educational Facilities
<b>IRS</b>	Internal Revenue Service
<b>GSA</b>	General Services Administration
<b>ACH</b>	Automated Clearing House
<b>SAM</b>	Systems Award Management

# 2016 CIF TIMELINE

## 2016 CIF Timeline

### MAY 5<sup>TH</sup>

CIF funding opportunity will be announced.

### MAY 5<sup>TH</sup> THROUGH AUGUST 31<sup>ST</sup>

Applications are submitted as they are developed:

- DRA Federal Co-Chairman, in concert with DRA staff, will review for eligibility in real-time (within three weeks) and work with each LDD to provide appropriate appeal documentation for those projects deemed ineligible;
- Projects found to be eligible will be reviewed and approved by the Federal Co-Chairman in an expedited fashion (within two weeks);
- Award documents will be issued through the DRA's online funding portal; and
- DRA communication staff will coordinate project announcements.

### MAY 5<sup>TH</sup> THROUGH AUGUST 31<sup>ST</sup> – IN CONJUNCTION WITH PROJECT SELECTION

CIF funding announcements will be made.

# ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

## Eligibility Guidelines

### PREAMBLE

The Delta Regional Authority (DRA) follows a concise set of guidelines when determining the eligibility of projects submitted for funding consideration. This document provides DRA staff with the necessary guidance to make the required recommendations and ultimately official determinations of eligibility by the Federal Co-Chairman.

Potential applicants for DRA funding should familiarize themselves with this document and demonstrate, within the application package, how the project meets the standards outlined within this section. Any eligible application must be consistent with the definitions and/or concepts found below and must be reinforced with proper supporting documentation.

Applicants must demonstrate through a sound, comprehensive plan, based on hard data, proven methodology and reasonable forecasts acceptable to DRA that the applicant is capable of maintaining the project after DRA funding to assure the sustainability of the project and achievement of the level of service outlined in the project description. DRA intends to support projects, programs and entities which can display a pattern of success without the need for ongoing, long-term financial support from currently uncommitted funding sources.

In order to elevate any eligible project's priority status, applicants must also clearly demonstrate how the project would meet the following three Federal Priority criteria: 1) job creation/retention codified with a Participation Agreement, 2) having regional impact, and 3) including other funding partners; in addition to having already met at least one of the DRA Regional Development Plan goals, summarized below. Each application will be reviewed on its own merit.

# ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

## DRA INVESTMENTS SHALL NOT BE USED BY OR FOR THE FOLLOWING:

- Activities which would constitute a conflict of interest or be considered less than an arm's length transaction
- Projects which do not conform to the project state's bid, procurement or contract laws
- Private university-led projects or programs
- For-profit entities or individuals
- Unsustainable projects
- Spec-buildings
- Marketing or feasibility studies or plans
- Community initiatives
- Emergency vehicles, equipment or accessories
- Local government facilities or equipment
- Water meters, as a stand-alone project
- Work performed on private property
- Seasonal or part-time jobs
- Indirect cost rate in excess of 10%
- Operating costs, as a stand-alone project
- Project administration fees
- Eligible entity exceptions

## DRA INVESTMENTS SHALL BE USED BY AND FOR THE FOLLOWING:

- Agencies or entities
- Category 1: Flood Control
- Category 2: Basic Public Infrastructure
- Category 3: Transportation Infrastructure
- Basic residential infrastructure

# ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

## DRA INVESTMENTS SHALL NOT BE USED BY OR FOR THE FOLLOWING:

- ***Activities which would constitute a conflict of interest or be considered less than an arm's length transaction*** – Any such potential circumstances must be disclosed to DRA, in writing, prior to the application approval phase. DRA will review the discloser on a case by case basis and determine the proper course of action moving forward. Perceived conflicts, identified after funds have been awarded, will result in the delay of payments until evidence can be provided to clarify the relationship(s). Actual conflicts identified after funds have been awarded may result in forfeiture of awarded funds, the repayment of expended funds and/or legal action as deemed appropriate and necessary by DRA.
- ***Projects which do not conform to the project state's bid, procurement or contract laws*** – Lack of familiarity with the bid, procurement or contract laws in your state will not constitute a defense argument should DRA determine the laws were ignored or not appropriately adhered to.
- ***Private university-led projects or programs*** – DRA will not consider private universities to be eligible to receive federal funds directly or through a pass-through relationship. If a project is determined to be managed and directed by a non-profit foundation, affiliated with the private university, then the foundation could be considered the eligible recipient.
- ***For-profit entities or individuals*** – DRA will not consider for-profit entities to be eligible to receive federal funds directly or through a pass-through relationship. Eligible entities may not be conduits for private sector entities. Property purchased with DRA funding cannot, in turn, be sold or given to a private entity beneficiary. However, DRA is able to indirectly assist and support the development of for-profits by improving public infrastructure or providing needed workforce training, implemented or delivered by eligible entities.
- ***Unsustainable projects*** – Unsustainable, as defined by DRA, for the purposes of its funding programs shall mean: the entity conducting the project is and will be dependent upon future federal or state grants, donations, or any other (currently non-committed) funding sources for the entities' normal operating costs, including salaries, program-related travel, etc. Entities which may prove to be sustainable over time may be eligible to receive DRA funding as "seed capital" and/or "bridge capital" for a singular project. Continuing DRA support, should the project receive funding and subsequent funding, would be limited to three (3) consecutive funding cycles. Consideration would be given to continuing the partnership with the same entity, beyond three years, if the project scope applied for was substantially different from the original project's scope.
- ***Spec-buildings*** – Industrial building(s) constructed, by eligible entities, for the purpose of attracting unidentified and/or uncommitted tenants as an incentive to locate will be deemed speculative and ineligible to received DRA funding. Likewise, new business/entrepreneurial incubator sites or new incubator expansion projects, must demonstrate the commitment of some tenants or provide the plausible methodology for determining the number of unserved potential clientele, all of which is acceptable to DRA.
- ***Marketing or feasibility studies or plans*** – Research and/or studies for the purposes of promoting an area or industry, or gathering data necessary for implementing future plans will be deemed speculative and ineligible to receive DRA funding. Studies, plans nor planning activities

# ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

will be considered as part of an implementation process in projects, programs, campaigns or initiatives.

- **Community initiatives** – Activities with no logical (direct) connection to the economic development efforts of a community such as: gardens, parks, entertainment venues, sidewalks, walking trails, beautification projects, etc. will be deemed speculative and ineligible to receive DRA funding.
- **Emergency vehicles, equipment or accessories** – Applications for the singular purpose of purchasing emergency vehicles such as: ambulance, fire truck, police car, city/county/municipal personnel vehicles, boats, airplanes, etc. or equipping said vehicles or emergency workers will be deemed ineligible to receive DRA funding. An exception shall be made for purchases which can be directly tied to a specific economic development project within the community and the purchase will meet the explicit needs of the identified industry partner(s). DRA reserves the right to identify other potential funding, for which, these type expenses may be allowable.
- **Local government facilities or equipment** – Activities including the construction or renovation of a City Hall, courthouse, library or any facility with the singular purpose of housing local (city/county/parish) government offices or the purchase of general use equipment for these type facilities, including voting machines, PCs/laptops, furnishings, etc.
- **Water meters, as a stand-alone project** – DRA will not consider applications eligible for funding which places a major emphasis on the replacement of unreliable, inoperable water meters. Consideration will be given to project applications which include water meter replacement as a minor part of an overall water system upgrade or extension, provided all work is completed on public property or right-of-way.
- **Work performed on private property** – Project activities conducted on privately held property will be deemed ineligible to receive DRA funding. To be considered an allowable expense, the property owner would be required to grant an easement or right-of-way to the eligible entity and proper access to said property.
- **Seasonal or part-time jobs** – Project applications which create or retain only seasonal or part-time jobs will not be considered eligible for DRA funding.
- **Indirect cost rate in excess of 10%** - DRA's limited resources, when committed to a project, are best utilized for allowable direct programmatic expenses. As a result, DRA has made the determination to discourage indirect costs altogether. However, consideration may be given to allow indirect expenses and/or an approved indirect cost rate, not to exceed 10% of the total DRA investment.
- **Operating costs, as a stand-alone project** – DRA will not consider applications eligible for funding which only include standard operating costs. DRA investments must also be tied to other direct programmatic expenses, which can be deemed eligible under the other funding categories.
- **Project administration fees** – Fees paid to consultants or other outside parties for the express purpose of preparing the DRA application or administering the DRA project funds shall not be considered an allowable expense. However, Local Development Districts (LDDs) are identified

# ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

within DRA's enabling legislation as the principal technical assistance providers and program partners for DRA supported programs.

- **Eligible entity exceptions** – 1) entities normally deemed to be eligible, but due to prior award history are barred from receiving DRA funding; and 2) eligible entities owing any type of federal debt are precluded from applying for DRA funding until such time as the federal debt is paid in full. Should a scenario arise where a federal debt is incurred after a DRA award has been made, any disbursement of award funds will be “swept” by the federal agency and applied toward the debt. In this circumstance no further DRA funds would be disbursed and the awardee would be responsible for repaying the “swept” amount and, potentially, any other DRA funds previously received.

## DRA INVESTMENTS SHALL BE USED BY AND FOR THE FOLLOWING:

- **Agencies or entities** – The eligible entity must be organized and legally recognized as either a non-profit, public institution of higher learning, local form of government or other local/state entity, which is eligible to receive federal funds. The entity should work closely with the LDD servicing the project area while developing and submitting the online application. The LDDs certify the project applications are complete and for eligible purposes as part of their role as the authorized technical assistance provider.
- **Category 1: Flood Control** – Projects for the purpose of alleviating flooding of economic development thoroughfares and supporting community viability. These projects include but are not limited to levee/dam projects and dredging of inland ports where there is a strong connection to economic development efforts.
- **Category 2: Basic Public Infrastructure** – Projects located in distressed counties/parishes and isolated areas of distress, these projects are defined as follows: Basic Public Infrastructure shall mean water and waste water facilities, electric and gas utilities, all of which are fundamental services necessary to promote growth and/or attract business(es), which have a useful life of 20 years or more.
- **Category 3: Transportation Infrastructure** – Projects for the purpose of facilitating economic development in the region, these projects are defined as follows: Transportation Infrastructure shall mean basic physical structures needed to support and/or create a transportation system, which shall include roadways, bridges, rail, port facilities, airports and other structures deemed central to an overall transportation system.
- **Basic residential infrastructure** – Projects for communities in distressed counties/parishes, or isolated areas designated distressed in non-distressed counties/parishes may be considered, provided they meet the program requirements set out in other applicable eligibility guidelines. “Isolated areas of distress” shall mean, areas of distress identifiable by census tract (based on the current DRA distressed criteria) within a non-distressed county or parish.

This list of eligible and ineligible activities is not intended to be exhaustive, it is merely provided as a guide to assist in determining typical funding scenarios.

# ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

## ADDITIONAL AREAS OF INVESTMENT FOCUS

In addition to the above referenced funding categories, concepts and associated clarification notes, it is also important to clearly demonstrate how the project would meet at least one of the goals and priorities from each of these additional areas of investment focus, in order to achieve “priority status”. Priority projects will be considered a more competitive application for DRA funding as compared to other projects.

## FEDERAL PRIORITY ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

1. **Innovation and Small Business** – Projects that include business and industry prospects committed to creating, retaining or maintaining jobs, through the execution of a DRA Participation Agreement. The Participation Agreement is a common “claw-back” instrument used in economic development to guarantee outcomes. As stewards of public resources, it is advantageous to provide outcome metrics which are validated through the protection this document provides.
2. **Regional Impact** – Projects that provide benefit to constituents in multiple counties or parishes, or multiple municipalities within a single county or parish. Applications for regional water and/or waste water systems will be considered more competitive than stand-alone municipal systems.
3. **Multiple Funding Partners** – Applications for projects that include multiple funding sources (both public and/or private) and significantly leverage DRA dollars to other federal or non-federal dollars will be considered more competitive than applications that only include DRA funding or minimal investment leverage.
4. **Emergency Funding Need** – Projects that can clearly demonstrate, but for DRA funding, the negative implications of inaction would result in the immediate and detrimental health and/or safety issues for the constituents served. Projects posing an immediate health or safety risk which have already met at least one of the four funding categories (listed above) will be considered for funding ahead of all other applications. Sufficient documentation must be provided from the appropriate state or federal agency (DEQ, EPA, etc.), specifically stating the cause or reason for the issue and the agency’s concurrence that an immediate health or safety concern exists.
5. **Funding Partner Initiatives** – As DRA establishes federal partnerships, through program initiatives, designed to provide supplemental funding support, DRA will give additional consideration to applicants, such as communities receiving the Investing in Manufacturers Community Partnership, a Promised Zone designation, or other awards and program designations as identified by the Federal Co-Chairman.
6. **Small Business & Entrepreneurship Policy Framework** – Must clearly demonstrate how the project aligns with the policy set forth in the Small Business & Entrepreneurship Policy Framework document, found on [dra.gov](http://dra.gov).
7. **Incorporated Resiliency Planning** – Projects located in communities or service areas that have incorporated disaster and resiliency planning into the local planning efforts.

# ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

## DRA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN GOALS (ABBREVIATED)

GOAL 1. IMPROVED WORKFORCE COMPETITIVENESS - Advance the productivity and economic competitiveness of the Delta workforce.

### *Strategies & Actions*

- Build on the momentum of the Reimagining the Delta Workforce initiative to create a strong pipeline of skilled workers that will support and attract current and future employers in the Delta region.
- Improve the workforce readiness of the region's K-12 students and adult population by increasing the number of internships, apprenticeships, work co-op programs, and other initiatives, with a focus on soft skills and employability.
- Create awareness of opportunities in Delta communities to attract talent from outside of the region.
- Continue initiatives to improve the health and wellness of the Delta workforce to elevate the productivity and competitiveness of the region's employers.
- Pursue strategic initiatives to better leverage and connect the Delta region's higher education institutions for workforce development and economic development.

GOAL 2. STRENGTHENED INFRASTRUCTURE - Strengthen the Delta's physical, digital, and capital connections to the global economy.

### *Strategies & Actions*

- Build and strengthen the region's basic infrastructure (water, wastewater, electricity, and gas) to stimulate job growth and capital investment.
- Make strategic investments in the region's transportation infrastructure (e.g. highways, railroads, ports, waterways, and airports) to support the growth of key industries.
- Expand and improve access to affordable digital infrastructure (e.g. broadband internet, cellular, and satellite access) across the region, especially in areas where it is currently deficient.
- Support state and local economic development organizations and local development districts in their efforts to put in place deal-ready sites for business recruitment and expansion projects.
- Improve capital access throughout the Delta, especially in non-urban areas where it is lacking most.

# ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

GOAL 3. INCREASED COMMUNITY CAPACITY - Facilitate local capacity building within Delta communities, organizations, businesses, and individuals.

## *Strategies & Actions*

- Develop new strategic initiatives and continue existing programs that build capacity among local leaders in Delta communities.
- Emphasize programs and investments to advance entrepreneurship and high-growth business development in Delta communities, ensuring the unique innovation assets found within the region's urban areas are leveraged to benefit the entire region, including rural areas.
- Continue to work with the White House Rural Council to support and expand initiatives that further the DRA's and the Administration's shared priorities.
- Enrich the quality of place of Delta communities through creative place-making.
- Encourage initiatives centered on social innovation, social entrepreneurship, and social equity to address critical challenges facing Delta communities while also providing opportunities to attract and retain talent.

To access the DRA Regional Development Plan III and to find complete listings of the objectives listed under the plan, go to: [www.dra.gov/rdp3](http://www.dra.gov/rdp3).

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## Program Guidance

### **Who can apply and receive funding?**

Entities which are eligible to apply for and receive DRA funding include: state and local governments (state agencies, city and county/parish), other public bodies and non-profit entities with projects in the DRA region. Eligible entities owning any type of federal debt are precluded from applying for DRA funding until such time as the federal debt is paid in full. Should a scenario arise where a federal debt is incurred after a DRA award has been made, any disbursement of funds will be “swept” by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and applied toward the debt. In this circumstance, no further DRA funds would be disbursed and the awardee would be responsible for repaying these funds to the DRA.

For-profit entities, while not eligible to apply directly, are a key component of economic development and in many circumstances the ultimate beneficiary of the project funding. However, an eligible entity, who owns the property, may rent or lease the property to a for-profit for the entity’s benefit. DRA will move to acquire property liens where it is in the best interest of DRA to do so. Should the awardee ever decide to dispose of the property purchased, in whole or in part, with DRA project funds, it is the awardee’s responsibility to seek DRA’s approval prior to disposal. At the DRA’s discretion, the return of project funds may be required after the sale of said property.

### **How does the CIF process work?**

DRA will announce the opening of the CIF cycle April 1<sup>st</sup>. However, funding for projects will depend upon the receipt of DRA’s appropriation and passage of the DRA budget at the annual Governor’s Quorum Meeting which takes place in late February each year. CIF funding shall be made available for eligible projects within a state, provided the state assessed dues have been remitted in full.

Eligible applicants should work with Local Development District (LDD) offices to prepare and submit applications to the Authority. DRA will then review, recommend and make final determinations of project eligibility, at which point, projects are then grouped into priority status ranking. Any applicant whose project is found to be ineligible will be allowed to appeal this decision by working with the LDD and/or the DRA to provide additional documentation to address the material issue(s) cited.

The months of September through November each year will be considered an “administrative dead period” for CIF application activity. Other funding opportunities and the associated eligibility reviews may continue during this time.

### **How are CIF projects selected for funding?**

The actual determination of eligibility for CIF investments is made by the Federal Co-Chairman, who bases the decision on the Eligibility Guidelines. With the Chairman’s approval, projects can receive funding. This document will provide the framework from which all funding decisions are made and

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the Federal Co-Chairman will ensure all federal priorities are given due consideration and fully funded projects result from the process.

## **What role do the LDDs play?**

All projects, including CIF investments, are developed in coordination with the appropriate LDD. Projects are submitted electronically either by or through the LDD whose territory includes the home county/parish of the applicant and/or the county/parish being served.

LDD staff will review and certify that each project is legitimate and meets the parameters of the DRA program. Ultimately, the DRA makes the final determination of eligibility. However, LDDs will also acknowledge their role and responsibility as project managers for each project and ensure each project is implemented and regulations adhered to in a timely manner. In the event an application is deemed ineligible by the DRA, the LDD also serves as the local economic development agency that should also be knowledgeable of other state and federal funding sources. Applicants are encouraged to work closely with the LDD in identifying the best available resources for the project.

In order to compensate the LDDs for the administrative work performed, project administrative fees will be paid from the awarded funds. The formula for determining project administration fees is five percent (5%) of the first \$100,000 and one percent (1%) of all dollars in excess of \$100,000. By example, a \$200,000 award would include \$6,000 in LDD project administration fees, thereby making \$194,000 available for the purpose of the award. Further details of this arrangement and other alternatives can be found in the LDD Memorandum of Agreement.

It should be noted, the appropriate time to consider the project administration fee is when the application is being prepared. This should be discussed with the applicant and the fee included in the DRA requested amount. If the award is made for a lesser amount, all parties should be aware that the awarded amount (project funds) also includes the project administration fee. The administration fee is ONLY paid to the LDD and will not be allowed for consultants or other project managers. Should the LDD choose to waive their administration fee, all funds will be considered project funds.

## **In an emergency situation, when time is critical, how quickly can DRA complete the process?**

All CIF applications will be treated expeditiously during the eligibility review process and when making funding decisions. In certain situations, there may be legitimate reasons for heightened confidentiality and need to respond immediately to ensure the success of a project. DRA's process can be completed within 48 hours after receipt of an application.

The DRA Communications staff will contact awardees to coordinate potential project press events. It is vital that no press announcements are released without the prior approval of the DRA. This includes,

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but is not limited to, newspaper articles, television or radio interviews, or any other printed, electronic or recorded media.

## **What other types of funding are available?**

DRA reserves the right to consider CIF applications for any of the other funding programs available at the time.

## **Which federal priorities enhance an application's competitiveness the most?**

- i. **Innovation and Small Business:** Projects include business and industry prospects committed to job creation and/or retention through the execution of a DRA Participation Agreement. This category also includes projects addressing healthy workforce solutions as a component of Business Development which can clearly demonstrate measurable results in health metrics and improved employment data for a specific employer or business sector.
- ii. **Multiple Funding Partners:** Projects that achieve desired outcomes through a collaborative effort with other funding sources, thereby increasing the leverage ratio of DRA dollars to other project dollars. In-kind contributions can be considered leverage.
- iii. **Regional Approach:** Projects providing benefits to constituents in multiple counties or parishes, or multiple municipalities within a single county or parish.
- iv. **Emergency Funding Need:** Projects must clearly demonstrate with supporting documentation provided by the appropriate state or federal agency, but for the DRA funding, the negative implications of inaction would result in immediate and detrimental health and/or safety issues for the constituents served. This type project will carry the highest priority and also the highest threshold for meeting this guideline.
- v. **Funding Partner Initiatives:** As DRA establishes federal partnerships, through program initiatives designed to provide supplemental funding support, DRA will give additional consideration to applicants such as communities receiving an "Investing in Manufacturers Community Partnership" (IMCP) designation, a Promise Zone designation, or other awards and program designations as identified by the Federal Co-Chairman.
- vi. **Small Business:** Projects which can clearly demonstrate how it aligns with the policy set forth in the small business framework document. For more information on this, see <http://www.dra.gov/smallbiz>.
- vii. **Incorporating Resiliency Planning:** Projects located in communities or service areas which have incorporated disaster and resiliency planning into the local planning efforts.

## **How do you ensure the project meets the overall goals and priorities of the DRA and State development plans?**

### **DRA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN GOALS**

Please refer to the DRA Regional Development Plan III (RDPIII) for a complete listing of the objectives listed for each of the three (3) goals below. Visit <http://www.dra.gov/rdp3> and download the RDPIII

# PROGRAM GUIDANCE

to help ensure project applications are successful. The following list provides a summary of the RDPIII goals:

- **GOAL 1. IMPROVED WORKFORCE COMPETITIVENESS** - Advance the productivity and economic competitiveness of the Delta workforce.
- **GOAL 2. STRENGTHENED INFRASTRUCTURE** - Strengthen the Delta's physical, digital, and capital connections to the global economy.
- **GOAL 3. INCREASED COMMUNITY CAPACITY** - Facilitate local capacity building within Delta communities, organizations, and businesses.

## How can an application be completed and submitted?

### ONLINE PROJECT APPLICATION PROCESS

DRA has taken a proactive role in bringing accountability, compliance and transparency to the project application process. The Authority has developed a new application portal which helps simplify the process. Information is entered once, with appropriate fields populated throughout. The site is an interactive resource that all groups can utilize as an invaluable management tool.

The bullet points below provide a brief tutorial on the new DRA funding portal. As previously stated, eligible applicants include state and local governments (state agencies, city and county/parish), public bodies, and non-profit entities with projects in the DRA region.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to work with and through the LDD, whose territory covers the applicant's home county/parish, to fill out the online application materials. All applications will be electronically transmitted to the appropriate LDD, if not generated by the LDD, for review and approval prior to being sent to DRA for eligibility review. The LDD is committed to manage and provide technical assistance to the applicant/awardee during this phase of the application process.

After logging in to [funding.dra.gov](http://funding.dra.gov), the applicant and/or LDD will follow the steps below:

- Establish a login with secure credentials;
  - Applicants will be able to view project information and track the progress of the application process;
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    - LDDs will have access to all projects within their district and will manage the flow of information from within the site;

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- Other parties granted access to the site will be able to view general information about projects within each state or the region;
- Submitted applications are electronically directed to the appropriate LDD office for review and certification (certification means the application is in substantial compliance with the eligibility guidelines, as noted within this manual). Application can also be prepared by the LDD on behalf of an applicant.
- Certified applications are kept in an electronic database for viewing, editing and/or printing;
- Electronic notification is sent to DRA indicating completed/certified projects are ready for DRA review;
- DRA staff will review for eligibility and priority designation. Using the online management tools, DRA staff will indicate opinion(s) of eligibility and priority declaration;
- The Chairman will make the final determination of eligibility and priority designation;
- Electronic notification is then sent to the LDD and applicant;
- Upon the approval of DRA, eligible projects may be selected for funding at this time;
- Ineligible projects and projects lacking priority designations are provided an appeal opportunity. By providing additional/supplemental information, DRA will again review and provide opinion(s) and final determination;
- The LDD and applicant are again notified electronically of the final determination with no further recourse;
- Any appeal reversals may be immediately considered for funding by the DRA;
- Upon approval of the Chairman, award documents are generated for each selected project and electronically sent to the LDD and/or applicant;
- LDDs will work with the pre-awardees to provide necessary technical assistance;
- Award documents will be printed, signed and uploaded to DRA via the funding portal;
- Once the award documents are received, DRA will utilize the funding portal to date/time stamp the receipt of documents; DRA staff will review and (if complete) will issue a Notice to Proceed to the LDD and/or awardee;
- Project events, such as Notice to Proceed signings may take place during this time; DRA communications staff will coordinate these events or determine, on a project per project basis, that an event is not necessary; and
- Upon receipt of the Notice to Proceed, awardees may now begin incurring expenses for the project or DRA portion of the project, if so structured.

## **What happens to a project deemed ineligible?**

### APPEALS PROCESS

Should a project be determined ineligible, the following steps will occur:

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- Contact will be made with the LDD and/or applicant, outlining reasons for ineligibility, pursuant to the Eligibility Guidelines; other comments and necessary information will be included by DRA staff to assist applicants with strengthening the application;
- Applicants will have time to submit additional documentation or supplemental information for review by DRA staff, which will satisfy all eligibility requirements;
- Upon receipt of the additional information the DRA project development team will review and provide an opinion of eligibility;
- Projects will then be sent to the Chairman for review and determination of final eligibility; and,
- Within five working days from the time the additional information is received a notification will be sent back to the applicant and team members with the appeal results.

## **What happens next after a project is funded?**

Once projects are funded, official announcements are coordinated through DRA's communication staff and press events may be held in person or via conference call. Award documents will be issued according to the type of project being funded. As the award document signature page is returned, via upload through the funding portal and all documentation is found to be in order, a Notice to Proceed will be issued and the awardee will be authorized to begin accruing expenses toward the project.

However, the DRA reserves the right to select any awarded project for individual press events. DRA communications staff will contact the awardee and LDD directly to make each party aware of the special event. Until such time as the Notice to Proceed has been issued, no local press coverage is allowed. No expenses accrued prior to the date of the Notice to Proceed will be allowed unless prior approval was obtained in writing from DRA.

Quarterly reports will also commence on the first calendar quarter after the date of the Notice to Proceed. Reports are due each calendar quarter thereafter whether project funds have been expended or not. Quarterly reports consist of a financial status report (SF-425) and a comprehensive report narrative (SF-PPR). This report can be completed and submitted online through the funding portal.

Project start and end dates are derived from the information provided in the form SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance). Receipt of the Notice to Proceed shall determine the actual start date, for all projects. For example, a project has requested an 18-month completion time; the project must be completed within 18 months of the Notice to Proceed date.

## What can an award recipient expect as a result of DRA's compliance requirements?

### COMPLIANCE

By executing the award documents, the awardee is affirming he or she will be accountable for the way the funds are spent and for meeting the target outcome measures. When a private entity is involved in the project, with the creation and/or retention of jobs, DRA requires the company (or some responsible party) to be held accountable for attaining those metrics through the use of the Participation Agreement (PA). At every level, accountability is vital to the success of the project and ultimately the resurgence of this region. The DRA award agreement provides for a number of other DRA-specific requirements for submitting reports, contracting procedures and disbursements of funds to name a few.

LDDs play a key role in ensuring accountability at the local level. As part of the technical assistance provided by LDDs, each district shall ensure awardee compliance with the various DRA award requirements as well as state laws. Some federal requirements such as the Civil Rights Act and Americans with Disabilities Act are mandatory for all federal funding.

The federal and DRA-specific requirements pertain to all counties and parishes. State laws, however, are specific to each state and when necessary may supersede DRA-specific requirements. It is the responsibility of the awardee to follow all state laws during the bidding and contracting portion of the project. This is an area where LDDs can provide essential compliance oversight as part of the technical assistance package.

### MONITORING

DRA Project Monitors will work with and through the LDD to schedule site visits. These monitoring visits will be similar to mini-audits, as the Project Monitor will be looking for evidence of compliance and accountability. The visit will include such items as a review of financial records, procedures, contracts and overall awardee capabilities. If deficiencies are found, DRA and LDD staff will work to improve the awardees abilities where possible.

In an effort to implement these visits in a timely and efficient manner, the Authority has developed the Site Visit Monitoring and Compliance Checklist (see dra.gov). Typically, the LDD will be notified that a project has been selected for a site visitation. The awardee will then receive no less than 10 business days to compile all requested information and return it to DRA, prior to the pre-scheduled visit by DRA staff. Upon return of the required information, the actual visit will commence and a written appraisal will be forwarded to both the LDD and awardee within 30 days.

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## REPORTING

The most important aspect of the monitoring process is providing timely, accurate and comprehensive quarterly reports. It is the responsibility of the awardee to provide this information, although some LDDs include this activity as part of the technical assistance package. The reports shall follow the DRA approved format and include a form SF-425 (financial status report) and form SF-PPR (report narrative). This information can be completed and submitted online through the funding portal.

Quarterly report narratives shall include current information and reflect back on the tasks, timeline, and output/outcome measures described in the award application. Relevant information should include activities which occurred during the previous quarter, any problems or disruptions which prevented the project from being completed on time, and what tasks are expected to occur in the coming quarter. Quarters are described as calendar quarters and reports are due to DRA by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month following the end of each quarter. (Due by: January 15<sup>th</sup>, April 15<sup>th</sup>, July 15 and October 15<sup>th</sup>).

These reports and the information therein are vital to helping DRA and LDD staffs understand the status of each project. There should never be an instance where a project reports “no activity”. If for that quarter, there was “no activity” there must be an explanation as to why there was no activity and what tasks are expected to occur next quarter. Further, the report shall state how the awardee expects to meet the approved timeline. Project monitors need this information in order to make sound decisions regarding change of scope requests, timeline extensions and project site visits.

Final reports are due at project closing and should reflect the actual outcomes of the project as compared to the outcomes projected in the application materials. An introspective assessment of the project’s perceived success or failure is also required. If a printed document is produced with DRA funding, an electronic copy should be included.

DRA provides management tools on [funding.dra.gov](http://funding.dra.gov) which will assist all parties in meeting compliance and monitoring requirements. Reminders and templates will ease some of the paperwork burden. LDDs will be able to review at a glance, each project’s status as it relates to reporting, as well as, disbursements in the future. This repository of online information and real-time communication will increase the effectiveness of project development in the region. By developing partnerships, DRA looks to strengthen relationships at all levels. This can be accomplished while ensuring integrity in the program by focusing on accountability.

## REIMBURSEMENTS

Funds are reimbursed to awardees for eligible expenses as determined by 2 CFR 200. The required documentation includes form SF-270, the DRA Worksheet and all other supporting documents.

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Supporting documents could include itemized bills, invoices and receipts, detailed accounting of personnel costs, copies of contracts and/or a contractor's partial pay estimate. As outlined in the DRA Worksheet, there could be DRA costs as well as non-DRA costs; invoices should be provided for ALL costs. All funding sources should be drawn down at their pro-rata share as determined in the application material, unless prior approval has been awarded in writing by DRA to do otherwise.

Upon receipt, review and approval of the request funds will be transferred electronically to the account established for the project by the awardee and as identified in the Automated Clearing House (ACH) form (SF-3881), provided by DRA. The information provided on all ACH forms must match the banking information which is registered in SAM.gov. Further information for SAM.gov is listed below. The reimbursement process generally takes seven to ten business days to complete. However, if errors in the documentation are found or there is a lack of sufficient supporting details, the DRA staff will work with and through the LDD to make necessary corrections. Copies of all forms and worksheets are provided on [www.dra.gov](http://www.dra.gov).

## SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMNET (SAM.GOV) AND CENTRAL CONTRACTOR REGISTRATION (CCR)

It is imperative that awardees keep information in the System for Award Management, better known as SAM.gov updated. Awardee information, in SAM.gov, must be updated yearly. Failure to update information in SAM.gov will result in the return of payments by the U.S. Treasury. It is the responsibility of the awardee to update all information. Neither the DRA nor LDD has access to the awardee's SAM.gov information. Step by step instructions can be found on [www.dra.gov](http://www.dra.gov). There are several important items to remember for SAM.gov registration. They are as follows:

- Registration is FREE at [www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov). Beware of imposter sites or companies that will complete your registration for a fee.
- An active SAM.gov registration is required in order to be awarded a contract with the federal government and to be paid for work performed.
- If you had an active record in CCR, you have an active record in SAM.gov. To update or renew your records in SAM.gov you will need to follow the instructions in the guide. Your CCR log-in will NOT work in SAM.gov.
- You must have a DUNS number to register in SAM.gov. If you already have a DUNS number and need to update information on file with Dunn and Bradstreet, do so at least 24 hours prior to updating information in SAM.gov.
- You must have a Tax Identification Number (TIN or EIN) in order to register a business.
- Your business is referred to as an "entity" by SAM.gov.
- If your CCR profile is linked to an email address that is no longer active within your firm: contact the Federal Help Desk after completing the migration, contact the SAM.gov hotline to submit your registration. You must review and save the entire SAM.gov record in one sitting.

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- Due to IRS validation, it will take 3-5 business days for your registration to become active.

## CHANGE OF SCOPE REQUEST

Occasionally, an awardee would like to make subtle changes to the original project scope, which will require prior written approval from DRA. A written request should be submitted to DRA detailing the proposed request (see form DRA-216 on [www.dra.gov](http://www.dra.gov)). Upon receipt, DRA staff will review and make the appropriate administrative decisions within five business days.

Change of Scope requests include but are not limited to the following examples: budget modification within budget categories, timeline extension, size of the overall project, expansion/reduction of services, etc. Any change in the size of a project, due to other funding sources withdrawing from the project, must result in a viable, fully funded and eligible project.

Any request which would result in a different project or project purpose than, rather than originally approved would not meet the guidelines for a change of scope. CIF funds are made available for specific project purposes, not to awardees to use until expended. Requests determined to be more than a change of scope will be declined and an explanation of the decision will be provided to the awardee.

## PROJECT CLOSEOUT

DRA recognizes that de-obligation of funds is occasionally required at the end of a project, which may occur upon completion of all necessary work or when an awardee does not live up to the expectations to which they committed. De-obligation can occur in one of two ways: 1) administratively, or 2) by rescission of funds.

Administrative de-obligations occur upon the successful completion of a project. Once the final report is received and all administrative payments have been made, any remaining funds shall be de-obligated. The awardee should provide written notice to DRA that the project is complete and remaining funds are no longer needed for the project. When fully approved, these funds will be de-obligated with the U.S. Treasury and applied to DRA's Emergency/Contingency account.

Rescission of funds occurs when an awardee allows 12 months to pass without a reimbursement request for eligible expenses, not including LDD administrative fees. When this occurs, the following measures will be enacted:

- On the first day of the 13<sup>th</sup> month awardees and all interested parties will be provided a copy of an Administrative Notice, DRA 11.003, allowing awardees 30 days to provide the necessary documentation to successfully request DRA funds for eligible, reimbursable expenses.

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- If there are no eligible, reimbursable expenses successfully requested at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> month, the state will then have 30 days to identify a replacement project that utilizes the remaining funds obligated to the original project.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Find answers to common questions asked by applicants and awardees:**

**1. *Who is eligible to apply?***

Any person representing a legally organized non-profit or local/state government entity who is recognized by that entity, through a board resolution, to apply for DRA project funding; this representative would also be bonded and/or insured by the applicant entity against employee theft.

**2. *How do I apply?***

First contact the Local Development District (LDD) office that covers the county/parish of the project's location. Working with the LDD and through [funding.dra.gov](http://funding.dra.gov), an online application can be completed and submitted.

Applications completed by the applicant will be submitted to and approved by the LDD before the DRA eligibility and priority review. LDDs can also submit applications on behalf of applicants who may not have access to internet service.

**3. *What is an LDD?***

Local Development Districts (LDDs) are sub-regional organizations DRA works with to provide technical assistance to applicants and awardees. These organizations go by different names in different states (i.e. Planning and Development Districts, Planning Commissions, Regional Commissions, etc.). They can cover one or more counties or parishes. DRA works with 44 different LDDs in the eight state region. A complete list can be accessed on the DRA website at [www.dra.gov](http://www.dra.gov).

LDDs are a great resource for project development. In addition to the assistance they provide with DRA funding, LDDs can also provide guidance on other funding opportunities and impart invaluable practical knowledge on moving your project forward.

**4. *What forms and documents are required to be completed for a construction project?***

Standard forms (424c and 424d) are the only unique forms required for construction projects during the application phase. The online funding portal will automatically provide the appropriate forms based on the answers to the appropriate questions.

When an award has been made, copies of all contracts and engineering reports shall be provided to DRA for review and inclusion into the award file.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**5. *What forms and documents are required to be completed for a non-construction project?***

Standard forms (424a and 424b) are the only forms required for non-construction projects during the application phase. The online funding portal will automatically provide the appropriate forms based on the answers to the appropriate questions.

**6. *Are awardees required to contribute matching funds?***

Awardees are required to contribute at least a 10% match in non-distressed counties or parishes. However, in order to increase the competitiveness, additional funds would help to raise the priority ranking of the application.

**7. *Can DRA funds be used as the local match for other federal funds?***

Not technically; as stated in DRA's enabling legislation, the Federal Co-Chairman may increase the federal share of a project to 90% in non-distressed counties or parishes and only in distressed counties or parishes may that be increased to 100%. In effect, a match is no longer required.

**8. *Which activities are not allowable and cannot be funded?***

Reference the DRA Eligibility Guidelines on [www.dra.gov](http://www.dra.gov) or within the Administrative Program Manual.

Eligible entities may NOT be conduits for private sector entities. Property purchased with DRA funding cannot, in turn, be sold to the private entity beneficiary.

NO financial assistance will be authorized to assist any relocation from one area (of the region) to another, except as authorized, to attract businesses from outside the DRA region to the DRA region, or to prevent a business from leaving the DRA region.

DRA funding CANNOT be used to "supplant" existing funding streams. Other funding sources shall not be reduced with the addition of DRA funding.

All other listed activities found within the Eligibility Guidelines.

**9. *How do I determine the actual start date of my project?***

The funding portal will ask "how long it will take to complete the project". When the award documents are signed and uploaded to DRA, a Notice to Proceed will be issued to the awardee. The actual start date will be the date of this notice and will last the length of time provided in the application.

**10. *What is the maximum amount of time I have to begin spending award funds?***

DRA reserves the right to withdraw funds from projects that have not begun within 12 months of the award. Awardees are encouraged to begin and end their projects on time. If, due to unforeseen

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circumstances, the project is no longer feasible, the awardee should contact DRA to de-obligate the awarded funds and apply again at a later date.

**11. *If an awardee does not complete its project within the stated project end date, may an extension be awarded?***

Yes; DRA should be able to discern from quarterly reports that the project has experienced unforeseen problems which would necessitate a no-cost timeline extension. The awardee should prepare and submit a letter to DRA requesting the extension which is based on reasonable forecasts for completing the project.

**12. *How do awardees collect their award funds?***

The awardee should complete an ACH form SF-3881 and submit to DRA. Funds will be electronically transferred to the bank account listed on this form, so long as, this number matches the account number registered in SAM.gov.

Actual requests for reimbursement/advance should include form SF-270 and all supporting documentation. Supporting documents could include itemized invoices, time accounting for personnel, contracts, receipts, etc.

**13. *When may an awardee begin charging against the award?***

Funds may be expended after a Notice to Proceed has been issued, unless written prior approval was obtained from DRA.

**14. *What is the CFDA number for DRA?***

The CFDA, or Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance, number for DRA is 90.201. Each federal program has a unique CFDA number.

**15. *What is the purpose of the Participation Agreement?***

The Participation Agreement was developed to demonstrate the private entity's commitment to creating and/or retaining jobs and injecting capital investment into a project. Congress looks to DRA to track certain metrics which include jobs created, jobs retained, families affected and people trained. DRA also tracks private leveraged investments in addition to the other public investments (other project funds).

When DRA reports to Congress the results of the prior fiscal years, there needs to be a certain level of confidence in the metrics being reported. In the case of a project that benefits a private entity and allows that entity to expand or locate a facility, DRA is asking that partner to show its commitment by agreeing to the terms of this "claw-back" document.

There are provisions within the document which protect DRA's investment, as well as provisions which protect the private entity. It is not DRA's intention to burden a business during an

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

unforeseen economic downturn by leveling financial penalties against the firm. However, depending on the circumstances and the economic climate in the area at the time, DRA may exercise its right to enforce the terms of the agreement.

**16. *What type of documentation can be provided to demonstrate a federal debt has been paid?***

The IRS (or other agency) can provide an account statement showing a zero balance. Please contact the debtor agency to discuss options.