

# DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY

FY 2025 BUDGET JUSTIFICATION  
MARCH 11, 2024





# Table of Contents

**Letter from the Federal Co-Chair  
About the Delta Regional Authority**

**Section I: Budget**

- FY 2025 Budget Justification
- Administration
- Federal Partnerships and Initiatives

**Section II: Legislative Requests**

- Authorizing Language Proposals
- Appropriations Language

**Section III: DRA Administrative**

- 2024 Designated Areas
- 2024 State Allocation Formula
- Regional Development Plan IV
- DRA Strategic Goals

**Section IV: DRA Critical Infrastructure Programs**

- States' Economic Development Assistance Program
- Community Infrastructure Fund

**Section V: DRA Human Infrastructure Programs**

**Section IV: DRA Capacity-Building Programs**



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

**LETTER FROM THE FEDERAL CO-CHAIR**

March 11, 2024

On behalf of the Delta Regional Authority (DRA or Authority), I am pleased to present the attached Budget Justification for Fiscal Year 2025.

The 2025 Budget requests \$30.1 million to support the Authority's grant-making activities and operations. Since its establishment in 2000, the DRA's mission has remained unchanged – to strengthen the economic development of distressed and rural communities throughout an eight-state region and 252 counties and parishes by making strategic, equitable investments.

In February 2023, the Authority approved and released *Navigating the Currents of Opportunity: DRA Regional Development Plan IV*. This plan is not just a statement of our priorities, but a driver of the actions we will embark on from 2023 through 2027 to capitalize on tremendous opportunities, focus on rural and distressed communities, and to strengthen regional economic development. The *DRA Regional Development Plan IV* presents our roadmap for creating jobs, building communities, and improving the lives of the 10 million people who reside in the 252 counties and parishes of the eight-state Mississippi River Delta and Alabama Black Belt regions. Building on our previous successes, the plan establishes ambitious new goals, strategies, action steps, and guiding principles to achieve our vision for the future.

Since my appointment as federal co-chair, I have led efforts to structure and staff DRA to fulfill its statutory purposes and ensure sustainable impact. As outlined in the FY 2025 Budget, more than \$27 million of the funds will be allocated to financial assistance programs to make available grants to eligible entities throughout the Mississippi River Delta Region. The Authority will leverage its FY 2025 Budget with funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and interagency partnership programs to expand DRA's reach into the distressed, rural, and historically marginalized communities within our region.

I look forward to fulfilling the statutory intent of DRA and stewarding the resources in the FY 2025 Budget with integrity with an emphasis on equitable access, data-informed decision-making, and quantifiable outcomes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Corey Wiggins".

Dr. Corey Wiggins  
Federal Co-Chair



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

**ABOUT THE DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY**

The DRA was established in 2000 as a formal framework for joint federal-state collaboration to promote and encourage the economic development of the lower Mississippi River Delta and Alabama Black Belt regions. DRA invests in projects supporting transportation infrastructure, basic public infrastructure, workforce training, and business development. DRA works to create jobs, build communities, and improve the lives of those who reside in the region. DRA's region encompasses 252 counties and parishes in parts of Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee.

**State Members: Board of Governors**

Governor Kay Ivey, State of Alabama  
Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders, State of Arkansas  
Governor JB Pritzker, State of Illinois  
Governor Andy Beshear, Commonwealth of Kentucky  
Governor Jeff Landry, State of Louisiana  
Governor Tate Reeves, State of Mississippi  
Governor Michael L. Parsons, State of Missouri  
Governor Bill Lee, State of Tennessee



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

**SECTION I: BUDGET**

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**FY 2025 BUDGET JUSTIFICATION**

**Introduction**

This narrative serves as justification for DRA’s FY 2025 Budget. DRA’s eight member states (Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee) pay for 50 percent of DRA’s administrative Budget, less the expenses of the Office of the Federal Co-Chair (100 percent federal) through their annual state assessments. This Budget Justification presents the full Budget, including the federal appropriation and state assessments.

**Source and Use of Appropriations**

The attached Budget table indicates the source and uses of DRA’s federal appropriation and a detailed presentation of its expenditures as follows:

- FY 2023 Enacted Budget
- FY 2024 Enacted Budget
- FY 2025 Budget Request

**Format and Content**

DRA’s Budget is presented in three sections:

1. **Source:** where funding is sourced from (i.e., federal appropriation and state assessments)
2. **Uses:** how the funding is used (i.e., grant programs and administration)
3. **Administration:** administrative expenses shown by classification

**Table 1: FY 2025 Budget Summary**

	<b>FY 2023 Enacted (Actual)*</b>	<b>FY 2024 Annualized Continuing Resolution</b>	<b>FY 2025 Budget **</b>	<b>Change (FY 2024 to FY 2025)</b>
<b>Source</b>				
Federal Appropriation	\$30,100,000	\$30,100,000	\$30,100,000	\$0
<b>Uses</b>				
States’ Economic Development Assistance Program	\$12,278,214	\$12,268,988	\$12,268,988	\$0



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

Community Infrastructure Fund	\$15,000,000	\$15,000,000	\$15,000,000	\$0
Local Development Districts	\$554,000	\$554,000	\$554,000	\$0
<b>Administration</b>	\$2,267,786	2,277,012	2,277,012	\$0
<b>Total Federal Appropriations</b>	<b>\$30,100,000</b>	<b>\$30,100,000</b>	<b>\$30,100,000</b>	\$ -

\*This table includes information on DRA’s annual appropriations and does not include resources provided by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act). See the following Budget table for information on BIL funding.

\*\*This table does not include discretionary collections of user fees for the Delta Doctors Program, as proposed in the 2025 President’s Budget and discussed in Section II: Legislative Requests. If the proposal is enacted, the user fees would be collected and spent on the Delta Doctors Program in FY 2025. The Budget estimates collections at \$352,000 in FY 2025.

BIL provided \$150 million for DRA programs. DRA’s proposed spend plan increases the funding availability for three existing grant programs, including the States’ Economic Development Assistance Program, Community Infrastructure Fund, and Delta Workforce Grant Program. The proposed spend plan also incorporates capacity-building initiatives such as the LDD Community Pilot Program, Strategic Planning Grant, and Research and Data Analytics. Finally, DRA proposes to use approximately 4 percent of BIL funds for administrative expenses. DRA’s proposed BIL spend plan is subject to change to reflect the priorities of the new administration.

**Table 2: BIL Spend Plan Summary**

	<b>FY 2023 BIL Budget</b>	<b>FY2024 BIL Budget</b>	<b>FY 2025 BIL Budget</b>	<b>Change</b>
<b>Source</b>				
BIL Appropriation (FY 2022)	\$31,782,000	\$31,782,000	\$31,782,000	\$ -
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$31,782,000</b>	<b>\$31,782,000</b>	<b>\$31,782,000</b>	\$ -
<b>Uses</b>				
States’ Economic Development Assistance Program	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$ -
Community Infrastructure Fund	\$15,000,000	\$15,000,000	\$15,000,000	\$ -
Delta Workforce Grant Program	\$6,000,000	\$6,000,000	\$6,000,000	\$ -
Local Development Districts Community Pilot Program	\$2,970,000	\$2,970,000	\$2,970,000	\$ -
Strategic Planning Grant Program	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$ -
<b>Administration</b>	<b>\$1,312,000</b>	<b>\$1,312,000</b>	<b>\$1,312,000</b>	\$ -



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

<b>Total</b>	<b>\$31,782,000</b>	<b>\$31,782,000</b>	<b>\$31,782,000</b>	<b>\$ -</b>
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Note: This table includes information on resources provided by the BIL/Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and only reflects a proposed spend plan, subject to change. DRA’s proposed spend plan was developed over a five-year time span to obligate the \$150 million provided in the BIL.

**Table 3: Summary of Resources**

	<b>Enacted/Requested</b>	<b>Carryover</b>	<b>Supplemental/ Rescission</b>	<b>Total Resources</b>	<b>Obligations</b>	<b>Net Outlays</b>
<b>2023 Appropriation</b>	\$30,100,000	\$148,515,975	-	178,615,975	73,438,648	28,130,453
<b>2024 Appropriation</b>	30,100,000	125,174,906	-	155,274,906	55,000,000	34,000,000
<b>2025 President's Budget</b>	30,100,000	109,000,000	-	139,100,000	55,000,000	49,000,000
<b>Change from 2024</b>	-	(16,174,906)	-	(16,274,906)	0	15,000,000

**ADMINISTRATION**

Administrative funds necessary to support the Office of the Federal Co-Chair and carry out Authority programs and initiatives are presented below. Salary levels below reflect the 5.2 percent average federal civilian wage increase.

The Office of the Federal Co-Chair consists of two presidentially appointed positions: federal co-chair and alternate federal co-chair, along with special advisor to the federal co-chair.

**Table 4: FY 2025 Budget: Office of the Federal Co-Chair**

Salaries	\$ 429,806
Fringe Benefits (30 percent)	128,942
Travel	100,000
Telephone, postage, office equipment rentals	3,000
Professional Services/Contractual	5,000
Leases, printing, graphics	93,840
Vehicle Operations	3,000
Training/Professional Development	10,000
Capital Equipment	0
Supplies	19,199



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

<b>Total</b>	<b>\$792,787</b>
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Administrative funds necessary to carry out the Authority’s programs and initiatives are presented below.

**Table 5: FY 2025 Budget: The Authority**

Salaries	\$1,255,800
Fringe Benefits (30 percent)	376,740
Travel	220,800
Professional Services/Contractual	770,000
Leases	57,840
Telephone, postage, office equipment rentals	36,200
Printing/Graphics/Photos	45,000
Training/Professional Development	57,840
Supplies	158,300
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,968,450</b>

**Salaries**

Salaries consist of payroll for 22 non-federal positions.

**Fringe Benefits**

The effective fringe benefit rate is 30 percent of salaries, representing both mandatory and voluntary salary-related expenditures.

**Travel**

Travel includes mileage and/or fuel, rental vehicles, hotels, airfare, meals and incidentals, taxis, parking fees, etc., consisting primarily of trips to small rural towns, communities, and counties and parishes without access to major modes of public transportation (i.e., air, rail) throughout 200,000 square miles, 252 counties and parishes, and more than 500 cities and towns in DRA’s eight-state region. DRA’s service area presents logistical challenges that often necessitate multiple modes of travel (i.e., air and vehicle).

**Professional Services/Contractual**

Professional services/contractual include expenses for specialists that provide unique services that are otherwise unavailable to be provided by DRA staff.

**Leases/Furnishings**



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

Leases/furnishings consist of long-term leases for the regional headquarters in Clarksdale, Mississippi, and the federal office in Washington, D.C., and related furnishings.

**Telecommunications/Utilities**

Telecommunications/utilities consist of internet, business phones, basic utilities, and related items.

**Meetings/Events**

Meetings/events consist of venues, materials, and food and beverages (non-alcoholic) related to the meeting or event.

**Equipment**

Equipment consists of computers, printers, external monitors, accessories, and related items.

**Supplies**

Supplies consist of stationery, writing utensils, binders, folders, and related items.

**Communications**

Communications consist of graphic design, publications, printing, advertisements, marketing, community outreach, and related software.

**Professional Development**

Professional development consists of training for staff that is aligned with essential job duties and the mission of the Authority, including program-specific education, management development, and leadership training.

**FEDERAL PARTNERSHIPS AND INITIATIVES**

DRA is able to increase its capacity to make investments throughout the lower Mississippi River Delta and Alabama Black Belt regions with the support of other federal agencies. DRA receives the following support in 2023:

<b>Federal Agency</b>	<b>FY 2023</b>
USDA – Rural Community Advancement Program (RCAP)	\$3,000,000
EDA	\$3,000,000
DOL – Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities (WORC)	\$425,000



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

## **SECTION II: LEGISLATIVE REQUESTS**

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DRA requests the following legislative proposals for changes to appropriations language and authorizing language.

### **AUTHORIZING LANGUAGE PROPOSALS**

The 2025 President’s Budget includes the following:

Deletion of Sunset Provision: DRA requests appropriations language to amend DRA’s authorizing statute to remove section 382N of the Delta Regional Authority Act of 2000, which sunsets the agency on October 1, 2023. Language in DRA’s annual appropriations has authorized DRA to continue operating despite the sunset date.

DRA’s continued authorization is vital to the DRA region and the United States’ economic stability. DRA’s region is home to 252 counties and parishes, 136 of which are in persistent poverty and 227 of which are economically distressed. In addition to the DRA region states’ more than 200 federally declared disasters in the last five years, the COVID-19 pandemic more acutely surfaced what we already knew to be true of our region: limited infrastructure that connects us; inequitable access to economic opportunities; health resources are stretched thin; and fragile regional systems that support community capacity. Yet this region’s beauty, resources, and people speak to its unmistakable economic, cultural, and historical contribution to the surrounding states and to the country.

Since 2000, DRA has pursued its vision of the region as a place where people and businesses have access to economic opportunities in vibrant, sustainable, and resilient communities. To realize this vision, DRA has embraced its mission of applying innovative ideas and strategies to foster inclusive communities, strengthen regional collaboration, and achieve sustained economic development. Within this context, DRA’s initiatives work to combat persistent poverty, assist distressed communities, and enhance community capacity through the development of basic and transportation infrastructure, creation of jobs, expansion of business, and development of entrepreneurial local economies.

Authority to collect and spend discretionary user fees: DRA requests authority to collect and spend discretionary user fees in conjunction with the Delta Doctors J-1 Visa Program. The Budget estimates user fee collections of approximately \$350,000 in FY 2025 and on an annual basis.

The Delta Doctors Program increases the number of doctors serving Delta residents. The program allows foreign physicians who are trained in the United States to work in medically underserved areas for three years by providing those physicians with J-1 Visa waivers. Participants in the Delta Doctors program do not take jobs away from U.S.-born physicians. Instead, they provide services in areas where there would otherwise be a shortage of physicians. The impact of Delta Doctors in the region can be realized by the access to quality, affordable health care and the economic impact the doctors make on the community in which they reside and practice. On average, each “Delta Doctor” is estimated to create five full-time



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

jobs within their clinics and offices and an additional 3.4 full and part-time jobs within the communities where they work.

Under the proposed authority, DRA would collect user fees from healthcare institutions and spend the collections on the operation and staffing of the Delta Doctors Program.

**Authorizing Language Proposals**

The 2025 President’s Budget includes the following:

Add “Indian Tribes” to Eligible Grantee Entities: DRA requests an amendment to expressly include “tribes” in DRA’s statute as an eligible entity.

Expand Grantmaking Language to Align with Other Commissions: DRA requests that its statute be amended to align its authority for making grants for certain purposes with the language of Southeast Crescent Regional Commission, Southwest Border Regional Commission, and Northern Border Regional Commission, so that it has express authority for grantmaking in the areas of health care, conservation, renewable energy, and related areas. Specifically, DRA requests that the language in subsections (a)(5), (a)(6) and (a)(7) of section 15501 of title 40, United States Code, be added to DRA’s statute.

**APPROPRIATIONS LANGUAGE**

The 2025 President’s Budget proposes the following appropriations language for DRA.

Delta Regional Authority  
SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For expenses necessary for the Delta Regional Authority and to carry out its activities, as authorized by the Delta Regional Authority Act of 2000, notwithstanding sections 382F(d), 382M, and 382N of said Act, \$30,100,000, to remain available until expended. Provided, That notwithstanding section 3302 of title 31, United States Code, for fiscal year 2024 and each fiscal year thereafter, the Delta Regional Authority may assess and collect fees to cover the costs of operating a visa sponsorship program for medical professionals in the States that are participating members of the Delta Regional Authority: Provided further, That any funds collected pursuant to the preceding proviso shall be credited to this appropriation and shall remain available until expended for the costs of operating such program: Provided further, That section 382N of the Delta Regional Authority Act of 2000 (7 U.S.C. 2009aa-13) is hereby repealed.

Note.--A full-year 2024 appropriation for this account was not enacted at the time the Budget was prepared; therefore, the Budget assumes this account is operating under the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2024 and Other Extensions Act (Division A of Public Law 118-15, as amended). The amounts included for 2024 reflect the annualized level provided by the continuing resolution.



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

### **SECTION III: DRA ADMINISTRATIVE**

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DRA funds core agency positions, functions, and other core expenses, such as office space necessary to carry out the duties of the DRA as specified by 7 U. S. C. Section 2009aa- 1(d) with annual appropriations pursuant to the administrative expense sharing as provided by 7 U. S. C. Section 2009aa -1(g).

Other statutory administrative requirements include the designation of areas eligible for support, conferring with state members during an annual Quorum meeting and other Authority meetings as necessary, and publication of Regional Development Plans every five years and an annual report describing the activities carried out.

#### **2024 DESIGNATED AREAS**

U.S.C.A. §2009aa-5(a) requires DRA to annually designate counties and parishes within the Delta region as distressed and non-distressed and isolated areas of distress. DRA, by using the formula of the U.S. Economic Development Administration, has presented and proposed the designation of the counties and parishes within the Delta region as distressed and non-distressed and isolated areas of distress as independently prepared by the Central Mississippi Planning and Development District.

The following lists are the 2024 designated distressed/non-distressed counties/parishes and isolated areas of distress.

#### **2024 Distressed Counties/Parishes in DRA's Region**

**Alabama:** Barbour, Bullock, Butler, Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Dallas, Escambia, Greene, Hale, Lowndes, Macon, Marengo, Monroe, Perry, Pickens, Russell, Sumter, Washington, Wilcox

**Arkansas:** Ashley, Baxter, Bradley, Calhoun, Chicot, Clay, Cleveland, Craighead, Crittenden, Cross, Dallas, Desha, Drew, Fulton, Grant, Greene, Independence, IZard, Jackson, Jefferson, Lawrence, Lee, Lincoln, Lonoke, Marion, Mississippi, Monroe, Ouachita, Phillips, Poinsett, Prairie, Randolph, St. Francis, Searcy, Sharp, Stone, Union, Van Buren, White, Woodruff

**Illinois:** Alexander, Franklin, Gallatin, Hardin, Jackson, Johnson, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Randolph, Saline, Union, Williamson

**Kentucky:** Ballard, Caldwell, Calloway, Christian, Crittenden, Fulton, Graves, Henderson, Hopkins, Livingston, Lyon, McLean, Marshall, Muhlenberg, Todd, Trigg, Union, Webster

**Louisiana:** Acadia, Allen, Avoyelles, Beauregard, Bienville, Caldwell, Catahoula, Claiborne, Concordia, East Carroll, East Feliciana, Evangeline, Franklin, Grant, Iberia, Iberville, Jackson, Jefferson Davis, Lafourche, La Salle, Lincoln, Livingston, Madison, Morehouse, Natchitoches, Ouachita, Richland, St.



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

Bernard, St. Helena, St. John the Baptist, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, Tangipahoa, Tensas, Union, Vermillion, Washington, Webster, West Carroll, West Feliciana, Winn

**Mississippi:** Adams, Amite, Attala, Benton, Bolivar, Carroll, Claiborne, Coahoma, Copiah, Covington, DeSoto, Franklin, Grenada, Hinds, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Jasper, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lafayette, Lawrence, Leflore, Lincoln, Marion, Marshall, Montgomery, Panola, Pike, Quitman, Sharkey, Simpson, Smith, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tippah, Tunica, Union, Walthall, Warren, Washington, Wilkinson, Yalobusha, Yazoo

**Missouri:** Bollinger, Butler, Cape Girardeau, Carter, Crawford, Dent, Douglas, Dunklin, Howell, Iron, Madison, Mississippi, New Madrid, Oregon, Ozark, Pemiscot, Perry, Phelps, Reynolds, Ripley, Scott, Shannon, Ste, Genevieve, St. Francois, Stoddard, Texas, Washington, Wayne, Wright

**Tennessee:** Benton, Carroll, Chester, Crockett, Decatur, Dyer, Gibson, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Henry, Lake, Lauderdale, Madison, McNairy, Obion, Tipton, Weakley

**2024 Non-Distressed Counties/Parishes in DRA’s Region**

**Alabama:** None

**Arkansas:** Arkansas, Pulaski

**Illinois:** Hamilton, White

**Kentucky:** Carlisle, Hickman, McCracken

**Louisiana:** Ascension, Assumption, Cameron, De Soto, East Baton Rouge, Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, Pointe Coupee, Rapides, Red River, St. Charles, St. James, West Baton Rouge

**Mississippi:** Madison, Rankin

**Missouri:** None

**Tennessee:** Fayette, Shelby

**2024 Isolated Areas of Distress**

**Arkansas**

<b>Arkansas County</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
4802, 4804, 4805, 4806, 4807, 4808



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

<b>Pulaski County</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
5, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20.01, 20.02, 21.02, 21.03, 22.08, 22.11, 24.03, 24.05, 24.06, 24.09, 24.10, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30.01, 30.02, 31, 32.02, 32.07, 32.08, 33.05, 33.06, 33.07, 33.08, 34.04, 34.05, 34.06, 36.04, 36.05, 36.06, 36.07, 36.08, 36.09, 37.04, 37.11, 38, 40.01, 40.05, 40.06, 40.07, 41.03, 41.04, 41.05, 41.06, 41.07, 41.08, 42.01, 42.20, 42.26, 43.02, 43.07, 43.09, 43.10, 45, 46, 9802, 9803, 9804

**Illinois**

<b>Hamilton County</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
9731, 9732, 9733

<b>White County</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
9580, 9581, 9582, 9583, 9584

**Kentucky**

<b>Carlisle County</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
9602, 9603

<b>Hickman County</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
NA

<b>McCracken County</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 309, 310, 313.01, 315.01, 315.02

**Louisiana**

<b>Ascension Parish</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
302.15, 304.03, 304.05, 305.02, 309, 310.01, 310.02

<b>Assumption Parish</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
502.02, 503, 504, 505, 506



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

<b>Cameron Parish</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
9701.01, 9702.02, 9702.03

<b>De Soto Parish</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
9501.01, 9502, 9503, 9504, 9505, 9506, 9507

<b>East Baton Rouge Parish</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.01, 6.02, 7.01, 7.02, 9, 10, 11.02, 11.03, 11.04, 18, 22, 24, 25, 28.01, 28.02, 30, 31.04, 32.01, 32.02, 33, 34, 35.01, 35.04, 35.05, 35.06, 35.07, 36.01, 36.03, 36.04, 37.02, 37.03, 38.04, 38.11, 39.07, 39.10, 39.11, 39.12, 40.13, 40.17, 40.18, 40.23, 40.24, 40.28, 40.29, 40.30, 40.31, 42.01, 42.03, 42.04, 42.05, 45.03, 45.04, 45.09, 45.11, 45.12, 45.13, 46.03, 46.06, 47, 52, 53

<b>Jefferson Parish</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
202.05, 205.02, 205.05, 205.07, 205.12, 205.13, 205.16, 205.18, 206, 210, 211, 212, 213, 215, 216.01, 216.02, 226.01, 235, 236, 237, 242.02, 246.01, 249, 250.02, 250.03, 250.04, 250.05, 251.02, 251.03, 251.04, 252.01, 252.02, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 275.01, 275.02, 276.01, 276.02, 277.01, 277.03, 278.03, 278.06, 278.10, 278.12, 278.15, 278.16, 278.19, 278.20, 279.03, 279.04, 280, 282, 283, 287, 291, 296, 298, 299, 302

<b>Orleans Parish</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
2, 3, 4, 6.01, 6.02, 6.03, 6.04, 6.05, 6.07, 6.11, 6.12, 6.16, 6.17, 6.19, 6.20, 7.01, 7.02, 8, 9.01, 9.02, 9.03, 9.04, 11, 13.02, 14.01, 14.02, 15, 17.01, 17.02, 17.20, 17.23, 17.24, 17.36, 17.37, 17.39, 17.40, 17.41, 17.43, 17.44, 17.45, 17.46, 17.48, 17.49, 17.50, 17.51, 17.52, 17.53, 17.54, 17.55, 17.56, 17.57, 17.58, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.01, 24.02, 25.01, 25.02, 25.03, 25.04, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33.01, 33.03, 33.04, 33.08, 34, 35, 36, 37.01, 39, 40, 41, 44.01, 44.02, 45, 48, 49, 50, 60, 63, 65, 69, 70, 71.01, 72, 75.01, 75.02, 76.05, 76.08, 83, 85, 86, 92, 94, 96, 97, 100, 101, 102, 103, 109, 111, 112, 121.01, 121.02, 122, 126, 128, 130, 131, 135.01, 135.02, 136, 137.01, 137.02, 138, 139, 140, 141.01, 141.02, 143, 144, 145, 9800

<b>Plaquemines Parish</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
501, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

<b>Point Coupee Parish</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
9519, 9520, 9521, 9522.01, 9523, 9524

<b>Rapides Parish</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
101.02, 103, 105.01, 105.02, 106, 107.01, 110, 115.01, 115.02, 116, 117, 120, 121, 122, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132.02, 133, 135.01, 135.02, 137, 138, 139

<b>Red River Parish</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
9601, 9603

<b>St. Charles Parish</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
621, 622, 623.01, 624, 627, 628, 629, 630

<b>St. James Parish</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
401, 402, 404, 405, 406

<b>West Baton Rouge Parish</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
201, 202, 203.01, 204.01

**Mississippi**

<b>Madison County</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
301.04, 301.05, 301.08, 301.11, 301.12, 305.01, 305.02, 306, 309, 310, 311

<b>Rankin County</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
201.04, 201.05, 202.13, 202.16, 202.17, 203.01, 203.03, 204.01, 204.02, 205, 206.01, 206.02, 207.03, 207.05, 209.01, 210.01, 210.03

**Tennessee**

<b>Fayette County</b>
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**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

Distressed Census Tracts
603, 605.01, 606, 608

<b>Shelby County</b>
Distressed Census Tracts
2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 27, 28, 30, 32, 34, 37, 38, 39, 45, 46, 50, 53, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 62, 64, 65, 67, 68, 69, 70, 73, 74, 75, 78.10, 78.21, 78.22, 79, 80, 81.10, 81.20, 82, 87, 88, 89, 91, 97, 98, 99.01, 99.02, 100.01, 100.02, 101.20, 101.21, 101.22, 102.10, 102.20, 103, 105, 106.10, 106.20, 106.30, 107.10, 107.20, 108.10, 108.20, 110.10, 110.20, 111, 112, 113, 114.01, 114.02, 115, 116, 117, 118, 201.01, 202.10, 202.21, 202.22, 203.01, 203.02, 204, 205.21, 205.23, 205.24, 205.31, 205.32, 205.41, 205.42, 205.43, 205.44, 206.10, 206.21, 206.22, 206.32, 206.35, 206.51, 206.58, 208.35, 210.22, 211.11, 211.12, 211.13, 211.22, 211.24, 211.38, 211.39, 211.41, 211.43, 212, 213.34, 213.54, 213.56, 216.20, 217.10, 217.21, 217.24, 217.25, 217.31, 217.44, 217.45, 217.46, 217.47, 217.51, 217.52, 217.54, 217.55, 217.56, 217.57, 217.58, 217.59, 217.60, 219, 220.23, 220.24, 220.25, 220.26, 221.11, 221.21, 221.22, 221.30, 221.31, 221.32, 222.10, 222.20, 223.10, 223.21, 223.22, 223.30, 224.10, 225, 226, 227, 9804.01

**STATE ALLOCATION FORMULA**

U.S.C.A. §2009aa-1(c)(2)(c) requires a quorum of the state members of the DRA be present to vote on any allocation of funds among the states.

Delta Regional Authority adopted the States’ Economic Development Assistance Program 2024 allocation formula. The proposed allocation is based upon the formula below used in the past by the Delta Regional Authority.

Several factors are used in the allocation methodology and carry specific weight including the following:

- Equity Factor: 50 percent
- Distressed Population: 20 percent
- Distressed County Area: 20 percent
- Population Factor: 10 percent
- Total: 100 percent

It is anticipated that the same allocation formula will be utilized in FY 2025.

**REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN IV**

DRA, an independent federal agency that works to promote economic and community development in the Delta region, adopted its fourth Regional Development Plan (RDP IV) in February of 2023 as an assessment of and response to the region’s myriad opportunities, assets, and challenges. *Navigating the Currents of Opportunity: DRA Regional Development Plan IV (2023 – 2027)* charts a path toward realizing the DRA’s vision, executing its mission, and supporting economic progress over the next five years in



## **Delta Regional Authority 2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

concert with the region's residents, businesses, communities, and other DRA partners. The full RDPIV can be found on DRA's website.

In formulating Regional Development Plan IV and its goals and strategies, DRA analyzed quantitative local, state, and regional data, along with qualitative inputs from collaborators. DRA engaged a range of stakeholders – community residents, business leaders, DRA partners, Delta Leadership Institute (DLI) alumni, local development district (LDD) members, and government representatives, among others. Through surveys and collaboration sessions, these parties generously provided views and ideas related to the challenges facing the region and ways in which DRA can best pursue its vision and mission.

### **Vision**

The DRA Region is home to 252 counties and parishes, 136 of which are in persistent poverty and 227 of which are economically distressed. In addition to the DRA region states' more than 200 federally declared disasters in the last five years, the COVID-19 pandemic more acutely surfaced what we already knew to be true of our region: limited infrastructure that connects us; inequitable access to economic opportunities; health resources are stretched thin; and fragile regional systems that support community capacity. Yet the beauty, resources, and people of this region speak to its unmistakable economic, cultural, and historical contribution to the surrounding states and the country.

Since 2000, DRA has pursued its vision of the region as a place where people and businesses have access to economic opportunities in vibrant, sustainable, and resilient communities. To realize this vision, DRA has embraced its mission of applying innovative ideas and strategies to foster inclusive communities, strengthen regional collaboration, and achieve sustained economic development.

### **Mission**

DRA's initiatives work to combat persistent poverty, assist distressed communities, and enhance community capacity through the development of basic and transportation infrastructure, creation of jobs, expansion of business, and development of entrepreneurial local economies.

### **Management Goal**

DRA is committed to enhancing its operations and funding processes to align more closely with the objectives of federal programs, such as the Justice40 Initiative, and to increase engagement with historically marginalized groups.

### **Guiding Principles**

Several guiding principles help to keep DRA's initiatives and its operational and administrative processes on course. Key among these principles is to engage in initiatives that advance greater equity, elevate rural communities, apply innovative practices, and enhance collaboration among stakeholders.



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

DRA seeks and supports new and proven economic development solutions that not only address specific problems but also accelerate regional progress toward its vision.

**DRA STRATEGIC GOALS**

The DRA’s strategic goals reflect the Authority’s fourfold commitment to advancing infrastructure, job creation, business expansion, and local economies. These goals and their supporting strategies have been carefully conceived to achieve progress toward realizing the DRA’s vision and fulfilling its mission, and to demonstrate the broad range of opportunities, initiatives, and activities that the DRA may consider funding.

**GOAL 1. We invest in public infrastructure.**

DRA will expand and invest in the resiliency of the region’s public infrastructure to improve residents’ quality of life and increase economic opportunity. This includes utilities (e.g., water, sewer), digital communications, (e.g., broadband, cellular), and transportation (e.g., roads improvements, public transit).

**GOAL 2. We promote business growth and entrepreneurship.**

DRA will strengthen the competitiveness of the region’s employers and attract new employers to the region. Support the long-term growth of micro and small businesses, especially those that promote local industries such as tourism.

**GOAL 3. We nurture local workforce ecosystems.**

DRA will improve networks of agencies, organizations, businesses, and educational institutions providing workforce development opportunities. It will promote access to services, funding, and programs that enable career stability, including health care, housing, education, and food security.

**GOAL 4. We support community placemaking and capacity-building.**

DRA will expand efforts to enhance sustainable and inclusive local placemaking, quality of life, and community capacity. This includes enabling community connectedness, increased efficacy, leadership development, and the ability to receive federal support, especially with under-resourced groups.



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

## **SECTION IV: DRA CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMS**

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### **STATES' ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SEDAP)**

#### **FY 2025 Budget:**

#### **FY 2025 Budget: \$12,268,988**

(In addition to the \$12,267,988 requested in annual appropriations, DRA anticipates allocating \$5 million in BIL resources to the program in FY 2025.)

SEDAP is DRA's primary investment program. Since 2002, DRA has leveraged over \$255.8 million of its appropriations with more than \$4.2 billion in other public and private sector dollars. SEDAP investments are subject to Federal Priority Eligibility Criteria and must help improve the following in Delta communities:

- Basic Public Infrastructure
- Transportation Infrastructure
- Workforce Training and Education
- Business Development and Entrepreneurship

At least 50 percent of SEDAP funds must be invested in basic public infrastructure and transportation infrastructure.

At least 75 percent of SEDAP funds must be invested in economically distressed counties and parishes.

#### **Application and Selection Process**

Applications are submitted through an online portal and can be reviewed by Local Development Districts (LDDs) to ensure eligibility and completeness at the discretion of the applicant. Once applicants formally submit the final applications through the portal, DRA staff review each application in its entirety to determine eligibility, tier status, and follow-up questions (as needed to request project-relevant documentation). The board of governors, through their designees and alternates, are provided with a list of eligible projects with pertinent information to make project selections. Once the federal co-chair and governors concur on the project selections for each state, a formal vote is requested to approve the projects then a grant agreement, notice to proceed letter, and grant manual are provided to the grantees after that.

#### **State Allocations**

As approved by the board of governors each year at DRA's annual Quorum meeting, each state is allocated a specific amount of funding in accordance with DRA's state allocation formula. For FY 2024, the state allocations are shown below.



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

<b>Alabama</b>	\$1,737,855	10.26%
<b>Arkansas</b>	\$2,468,119	14.58%
<b>Illinois</b>	\$1,370,671	8.10%
<b>Kentucky</b>	\$1,540,051	9.10%
<b>Louisiana</b>	\$3,336,555	19.71%
<b>Mississippi</b>	\$2,629,301	15.53%
<b>Missouri</b>	\$1,984,801	11.72%
<b>Tennessee</b>	\$1,863,289	11.01%
	<b>\$16,930,642</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

In FY 2025, the state allocations will be calculated using the pre-approved formula, as demonstrated above, and may include carryover funds from the previous fiscal year.

**Grant Range**

SEDAP is a competitive grant program designed to stimulate and support economic development activities throughout the lower Mississippi River Delta and Alabama Black Belt regions. SEDAP grants do not have a pre-established award floor nor award ceiling; however, DRA will incrementally integrate BIL funding with annual appropriations over a five-year period. Generally, awards range between \$50,000 to \$500,000.

**COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FUND (CIF)**

**FY 2025 Budget**

**FY 2025 Budget: \$15,000,000**

(In addition to the \$15 million requested in annual appropriations, DRA anticipates allocating \$15 million in BIL resources to the program in FY 2025.)

Complementary to SEDAP grants, CIF provides increased flexibility to support states and communities as they address unmet infrastructure needs in the region. CIF is a competitive grant program designed to catalyze and strengthen regional economic development activities throughout the lower Mississippi River Delta and Alabama Black Belt regions. CIF is an existing grant program that will incrementally integrate BIL funding with annual appropriations over a five-year period.

Generally, awards range between \$500,000 to \$2 million.

The CIF application cycle coincides directly with SEDAP.

**Eligible Applicants:**



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

- State and local government (including state agencies, cities, counties/parishes)
- Other public entities (including local development districts)
- Nonprofit organizations

We propose amendment, specifically and exclusively, to 7 U S Code Section 2009aa-2 Economic and Community Development Grants to add “Indian Tribes” to Eligible Entities.

DRA requests the following amendment, (a) In General “The Authority may approve grants to States and public and nonprofit entities for projects, approved in accordance with section 2009aa–8 of this title” to read The Authority may approve grants to States and local governments, *Indian tribes*, and public and nonprofit organizations for projects, approved in accordance with section 2009aa–8 of this title.”

**Eligible Uses/Activities:**

- Basic public infrastructure (ex. water and sewer systems, stormwater drainage, broadband)
- Transportation infrastructure
- Flood control

**Period of Performance:** Up to 24 months

**Award Process:** Applications are submitted through an online portal and can be reviewed by LDDs to ensure eligibility and completeness at the applicant’s discretion. Once the applicants formally submit the final applications through the portal, DRA staff review each application in its entirety to determine eligibility, tier status, and follow-up questions (as needed to request project-relevant documentation). The board of governors, through their designees and alternates, are provided with a list of eligible projects with pertinent information to make project selections. Once the federal co-chair and governors concur on SEDAP project selections, the federal co-chair reviews the remainder of the project list to select additional projects to be funded through CIF. Generally, the federal co-chair approves CIF grants in proportion to the amount awarded to each state through CIF (for example, if Alabama receives 10 percent of SEDAP, the federal co-chair will aim to provide Alabama with 10 percent of CIF dollars). Once projects are selected by the federal co-c, a grant agreement, notice to proceed letter, and grant manual are provided to the grantees after that.

CIF projects are selected for award by the federal co-chair. Generally, awards are announced in September through November each year.

**Grant Range**

CIF grants do not have a pre-established award floor nor award ceiling; however, grants generally range between \$500,000 and \$1,500,000.



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS**

**FY 2025 Budget**

**FY 2025 Budget: \$554,000**

DRA partners with 45 LDDs to help administer SEDAP grants and manage SEDAP projects. LDD staff review and certify SEDAP applications before submission to DRA to confirm the projects meet the eligibility requirements and program criteria. Ultimately, DRA determines if an application meets the eligibility requirements; however, LDDs serve as front-line project managers for DRA to provide technical assistance to prospective applicants, administer grant funds, and oversee DRA-funded projects during the period of performance. LDDs also assist prospective applicants with identifying other federal and state funding opportunities when and where appropriate. All DRA applicants are encouraged to work closely with their LDD to identify appropriate resources for their projects.

To compensate LDDs for their technical assistance and administrative duties, DRA provides administrative funds to the LDD for each awarded project. The formula used for determining administrative funds is as follows: five percent (5%) for the first \$100,000 and one percent (1%) of all dollars in excess of the original \$100,000. For example, a \$200,000 grant would include \$6,000 in LDD administrative funds, making available \$194,000 for the project award.



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

## **SECTION V: DRA HUMAN INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMS**

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DRA has made significant human infrastructure investments through our workforce, health, and leadership programs. These programs are administered with interagency support from other federal partner agencies, specifically the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development, the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), and the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) as presented below.

DRA administers several programs under the Human Infrastructure division and include:

### **Workforce Grant Programs**

- o Delta Workforce Grant Program (DWP) – *supported by funds from the BIL and DOL*
- o Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities (WORC) – *in partnership with and supported by the DOL*

### **Delta Health Collaborative Programs**

- o Delta Region Community Health Systems Development Program (DRCHSDP) - *Supported by USDA RCAP funds*
- o Delta Doctors - *Currently supported by USDA RCAP funds. However, the Budget includes a legislative proposal to allow DRA to collect discretionary user fees specifically to support the Delta Doctors Program. See Section II Legislative Requests.*
- o Delta Region Rural Health Workforce Training Program - *Supported by USDA RCAP funds*
- o Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) - *Supported by USDA RCAP funds*

Delta Leadership Institute (DLI) - *Supported by USDA RCAP funds*

### **Delta Capacity-Building Programs**

- Delta Research- *Supported by USDA RCAP funds*
- Delta Summit – *Supported by USDA RCAP funds*
- LDD Community Pilot Program - *Supported by funds from BIL*
- Strategic Planning Program- *Supported by funds from BIL*

Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities (WORC) Initiative provides funding to eligible applicants proposing projects that address the employment and training needs of the local and regional workforce created in collaboration with community partners and aligned with existing economic and workforce development plans and strategies.

The Delta Health Collaborative administers programmatic activities related to several critical initiatives including, but not limited to, Delta Doctors Program, IRT, DRCHSD Program, and Delta Region Rural Health Workforce Training Program. For each of these initiatives, DRA collaborates with other federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of State (DOS), U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), and U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

**DRCHSD Program**

The DRCHSD Program enhances healthcare delivery in the Delta region through intensive technical assistance to providers in select rural communities, including critical access hospitals, small rural hospitals, rural health clinics and other healthcare organizations. Fifty-four (54) facilities have participated in the program.

The entities listed below were selected for the 2023 Cohort.

***Alabama***

**Atmore Community Hospital, Atmore, Alabama**, is an acute care hospital that serves Escambia County.

***Arkansas***

**Baptist Health Medical Center Stuttgart, Stuttgart, Arkansas**, is a prospective payment system hospital that serves Arkansas County.

***Louisiana***

**DeSoto Regional Health System, Mansfield, Louisiana**, is a prospective payment system hospital that serves DeSoto Parish.

***Mississippi***

**Aaron E. Henry Community Health Services, Clarksdale, Mississippi**, is a federally qualified health center that serves Coahoma County.

**Delta Health System Medical Center, Greenville, Mississippi**, is a prospective payment system hospital that serves Washington County.

**Jefferson County Hospital, Fayette, Mississippi**, is a rural emergency hospital that serves Jefferson County.

**Quality Family Medical Clinic, Greenville, Mississippi**, is a rural health clinic that serves Washington County.

**Tallahatchie General Hospital, Charleston, Mississippi**, is a critical access hospital that serves Tallahatchie County.

***Missouri***

**Texas County Memorial Hospital, Houston, Missouri**, is a prospective payment system hospital that serves Texas County.

**Delta Doctors Program**

DRA began implementing the Delta Doctors program in 2003 to increase the number of doctors serving Delta residents. The program allows foreign physicians trained in the United States to work in medically underserved areas for three years by providing those physicians with J-1 Visa Waivers. Most choose to stay far longer once they develop a patient base. The Delta Doctors program participants do not take jobs away



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

from U.S.-born physicians. Instead, they provide services in areas where there would otherwise be a shortage of physicians.

The impact of Delta Doctors in the region can be realized by the access to quality, affordable health care and the economic impact the doctors make on the community in which they reside and practice. On average, each “Delta Doctor” is estimated to create five full-time jobs within their clinics and offices and an additional 3.4 full- and part-time jobs within the communities where they work.

DRA estimates that it will process at least 120 applications during FY 2024 with the same amount in FY 2025.

In collaboration with HRSA, the Delta Region Rural Health Workforce Training Program addresses the ongoing need in healthcare facilities for trained administrative support or business operations professionals in rural communities by developing strategic networks that support recruitment, formal training, certification, and placement of students. This program aims to provide academic training and pathways to professional certifications to current administrative support professionals working in rural DRA-region healthcare facilities, new entrants to the workforce, and dislocated workers.

**IRT**

Throughout nine years of partnership, DRA and the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) have collaborated to bring the IRT program to the Mississippi River Delta and Alabama Black Belt regions. IRT medical missions deliver quality medical care to residents of rural communities with little to no access to quality health care provided by licensed medical professionals in our reserve forces. All these services are provided at no cost to the community and patients. IRT clinics operate temporarily (i.e., typically 10-14 days), during which patients can receive general medical, dental, and optical care for themselves and their family members, all of which are high-demand healthcare needs in the Delta. No proof of identification, income, residency, or insurance is required.

Each mission will provide medical services, including, but not limited to, general medical, dental, and optical care. Services will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis, with each location providing services that benefit those in underserved communities and need of medical attention. The expectation is that each mission will provide care to between four and five thousand patients in the region. So far, in nine years of partnership, DRA and DoD are proud to have delivered free medical care to more than 90,000 patients in Delta communities.

**Delta Leadership Institute (DLI)**

DLI serves to build leadership skills among Delta residents and foster collaboration with partners in the public and private sectors to improve the economic and social viability of the Delta as well as the overall quality of life in the Delta region. DLI is a body of fellows and alumni leaders who have participated in the year-long Executive Academy program. They focus daily on improving the decisions made by community leaders across the Delta. They are equipped with a regional and national perspective of the Delta, a toolkit



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

of resources for addressing local community issues, and the training and professional development needed to extend the pipeline of skilled local leadership within our rural communities.

The Executive Academy and the Delta Leadership Network (DLN) were created to empower community leaders who understand and are well-equipped to combat local and regional issues. Over the course of the Executive Academy academic year, participants attend six sessions and engage in training, case study discussion, and on-the-ground field studies of priority issue areas, including workforce training and education, small business and entrepreneurship, transportation and public infrastructure, health care, and policy and governance. Upon graduation, these fellows become members of the DLN, where they engage community leaders both within their state and across the Delta to continue the learning and collaboration instilled through the Executive Academy. Having become a powerful voice for the region with over 600 alumni, the DLN commits time, talent, service, and often financial resources to various initiatives across the region.



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

## **SECTION VI: Capacity-Building Programs**

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### Delta Capacity-Building Programs

Delta Research Program- *Supported by USDA RCAP funds*

Delta Summit – *Supported by USDA RCAP funds*

LDD Community Pilot Program - *Supported by funds from BIL*

Strategic Planning Program- *Supported by funds from BIL*

In 2023, DRA launched three new additional programs with the increased resources available through BIL:

The Delta Workforce Grant Program (DWP) is an initiative designed to build long-term community capacity and increase economic competitiveness by providing grants to support workforce training and education programs throughout the lower Mississippi River Delta and Alabama Black Belt regions. DWP supports projects and initiatives that create a more vibrant economic future for the Delta region by expanding opportunities to recruit, train, and retain a diverse and local workforce, aligning workforce and economic development strategies, creating sustainable talent pipelines, establishing or enhancing locally/regionally significant sector-based partnerships, and supporting enhanced workforce productivity through investments in innovative programming or services.

The LDD Community Support Pilot Program is a non-competitive grant program to build the capacity of the 45 LDDs in the lower Mississippi River Delta and Alabama Black Belt regions. The LDD Pilot Program will make-fixed amount grants to LDDs in FY 2023 and FY 2024 to advance planning and technical assistance activities in their respective regions. This two-year pilot program is designed to increase the region's competitiveness to take advantage of the federal funding being made available through the CARES Act, American Rescue Plan Act, BIL, disaster supplemental bills, and the annual appropriations process.

DRA will use a portion of BIL funds to develop and administer a Strategic Planning Program to support strategic planning activities, including, but not limited to, the following: comprehensive plans, master plans, capital improvement plans, economic development plans, workforce development plans, broadband deployment plans, utility rate studies, feasibility studies, transportation plans, preliminary engineering reports, and more. DRA will prioritize planning activities that demonstrate local or regional collaboration, underserved groups, and are anticipated to improve or strengthen economic development in economically distressed and persistent poverty communities.



**Delta Regional Authority  
2025 Budget Congressional Justification**

