



DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

DELTA LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Questions concerning this RFP must be received by email to Sea Talantis at dli@dra.gov no later than 12:00 p.m. CST on May 27, 2022. DRA reserves the right to not answer questions received after that time.

Proposals are due on or before June 10, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. CST.

dli@dra.gov

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Section I: Program Summary

The mission of the Delta Leadership Institute (“DLI”) is to recognize, train, and develop in its participants the leadership skills needed for the 21st Century in order to face the global challenges of the future. The Delta Regional Authority (“DRA” or “the Authority”) has initiated various programs to help the residents of the Delta reach these goals. One of the priorities of the DRA is to improve the skillsets of the Region’s current and future leaders. The DLI is the vehicle through which the DRA will pursue these efforts. The outcome obtained from the implementation of the DLI programs will be the creation of a cadre of leaders that will work for future improvements in the Region by “thinking and acting regionally.”

This Request for Proposals (“RFP”) solicits proposals from organizations within the DRA region, including non-profits, institutions of higher education, and other stakeholders, (“Organizations”) to work in partnership with the DRA to create a nationally recognized leadership development program that will prepare state and local leaders to work for future improvements in the region by “thinking and acting regionally.” The DLI will include but not be limited to:

- A nine month-long executive academy (“Executive Academy”) aimed at key leaders from the public, non-profit, and private sectors, which will focus on regional leadership with sessions located in the Region; and
- An active alumni program known as the Delta Leadership Network (“DLN”) to encourage ongoing networking and collective action.

The purpose of this RFP is to expand and build upon the DLI. DRA has previously held eighteen years of the DLI Executive Academy program. The focus of the Executive Academy is on regional leadership and topics important to DRA and the Region, such as economic and community development, workforce training and education, small business development and entrepreneurship, public health, and culture and tourism. DRA will require the Organization to secure prominent speakers on subject matters vital to the Region at each of the sessions to be held in the DRA footprint, where the participants of DLI will be exposed to the economic history of the cities where the sessions are held. A field experience or business excursion, relevant to economic development, must also be provided at every location. Upon the completion of the Executive Academy, the participants should possess the knowledge and skills necessary to make a direct impact in their community, county/parish, and state.

Additionally, DRA will expect the Organizations to continually maintain active contact and work with the alumni of the Executive Academy through the DLN. DRA deems the DLN as one of the most important aspects of the program, and as such, a strong emphasis will be placed on DLN and how alumni can be advocates for the economic advancement of the Delta region.

DRA encourages responders to bring forth innovative service delivery models that will train local leadership through substantive exercises and learning modules. Resulting outputs should empower DLI participants to take action towards positively impacting the future of the Delta by developing collaborative solutions to our Region’s greatest challenges.

DRA is soliciting competitive proposals because it has determined that this process best serves the needs and interest of DRA and the public. As such, all potential applicants will be afforded full opportunity to submit proposals in response to this RFP. No Organization or person shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, color, citizenship status, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, creed, physical or mental disability, marital status, veteran status, political affiliation, or any other factor protected by law in consideration for an award issued pursuant to this RFP. DRA is committed to the principles of equal opportunity and the elimination of all vestiges of discriminatory practices that might exist.

Section II: Background

Delta Regional Authority

DRA was created by Congress by the *Delta Regional Authority Act of 2000*, as amended, as a federal/state partnership comprised of 252 counties and parishes within the eight states of Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee. DRA is designed to remedy severe and chronic economic distress by stimulating economic development and fostering partnerships that will have a positive impact on the Region's economy by improving the health of our citizens, training a competitive workforce, investing in 21st century infrastructure, and supporting our small businesses and entrepreneurs. The Authority's enabling legislation can be found in the *Delta Regional Authority Act of 2000*, as amended.

DRA's mission is to innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth in the Delta region. DRA funds projects to address the three goals identified in the Authority's Regional Development Plan III (RDP III):

1. Improved Workforce Competitiveness: Advance the productivity and economic competitiveness of the Delta workforce.
2. Strengthened Infrastructure: Strengthen the Delta's physical, digital, and capital connections to the global economy.
3. Increased Community Capacity: Facilitate local capacity building within Delta communities, organizations, businesses, and individuals.

Each year, DRA provides funding for nearly one hundred projects in the Delta region in areas such as transportation infrastructure, basic public infrastructure, workforce development, and small business development, community development, and entrepreneurship. These projects are estimated to create and retain thousands of jobs; improve local water and sewer systems; enhance talent pipelines through industry-driven workforce development; expand access to healthcare; improve the movement of goods and services; and provide technical and managerial assistance to emerging businesses and entrepreneurs.

Additional information about the Delta region and DRA can be found at www.dra.gov.

Delta Leadership Institute

DLI will focus on promoting action-oriented leadership in the Delta region. Key objectives include, but are not limited to:

- Instilling in leaders the importance of regional action across jurisdictional boundaries, be they municipal, county, or state lines;
- Building awareness of DRA priorities in key areas such as public infrastructure, transportation, workforce development, small business development and entrepreneurship, public health, and cultural heritage and tourism;
- Ensuring that those participating in the Executive Academy leave with a body of leadership knowledge and skills that can be applied for community and regional action;
- Developing a strong network of leaders who can work together across the Delta region;
- Promoting action that will make a difference in the region;
- Development of case studies during the sessions detailing the strengths and weaknesses of the Delta region that can be replicated and remedied in their own communities; and
- Issuance of certificates to participants acknowledging and commending completion of DLI with each participant receiving up to two certificate trainings per year that will contribute to a participants' expertise and can serve as professional continuing education.

Section III: Roles of the Organizations & Delta Regional Authority

Key roles and responsibilities of responding Organizations will include but not be limited to:

- Collaborate with DRA to help guide the work of the Organization;
- When available during sessions, use the resources of universities and colleges in the area by bringing them in as a partner;
- Publicly promote the program in the DRA region, as approved by DRA;
- Develop and deliver curriculum, as approved by DRA;
- Maintain and expand the DLN, subject to approval by DRA;
- Incorporate program feedback from participants as well as DRA;
- Provide briefings to the DRA staff and other interested parties, as requested;
- Notify DRA concerning any organizational changes, including significant personnel providing the leadership development programming for DRA;
- Provide quarterly reports to DRA staff on 1/10, 4/10, 7/10, 10/10 for each year of the program until it is closed out; and
- Provide adequate support and accommodate DRA staff members during audits and management assistance visits and coordinate visits to the Organization's premises.

Key roles and responsibilities of the DRA will include but not be limited to:

- Provide and fund a DRA staff member as an on-site program manager whose job duties will include, but not be limited to:
 - Assist with scheduling to ensure that session dates align with the DRA calendar;

- Manage the application and selection process for the Executive Academy, including distribution to DRA Board members and Federal Co-Chairman for selection; and
- Attend sessions to oversee progress and manage the overall program.
- Assist in securing speakers for initiative events;
- Build and maintain the website for The Institute;
- Provide feedback and guidance on program design and related issues; and
- Provide ongoing funding support, subject to satisfactory performance, under any contract resulting from this RFP.

Section IV: Request for Proposals

Submission Requirements

The Organization shall propose to administer one or more elements of the program under the DLI umbrella to include one, or multiple components as follows:

- **PROGRAM LEAD**: Organization shall be primarily responsible for developing the main curricular components of an Executive Academy aimed at approximately 30-40 key leaders from the public, non-profit, and private sectors. Considering the program's existence for the previous eighteen years, the proposal should expand upon ideas the Organization has to improve DLI and move this program to the next level of leadership development. Specifically, by:
 - Developing new and innovative subject delivery methods;
 - Developing case studies and field experiences that reflect both opportunities and strategies in the Region;
 - Collaborating with other institutions and/or organizations in the Region during the year to expand upon the program; and
 - Designing a program that incorporates an accredited certificate in an appropriate subject matter that will contribute to the fellows' expertise.
- **EXECUTIVE EDUCATION WORKSHOPS**: Organization shall develop executive-level training modules for leadership and management to be incorporated in each session.
- **ADMINISTRATION**: Organization shall be responsible for managing the administrative operations of the program to include payment of all program expenses, managing the program budget, submitting detailed documentation of program-approved expenses to DRA for reimbursement, and handling all program planning and logistics, including, but not limited to, hotel negotiations and contracts, tour bus reservations, meal planning and selection, ordering program supplies, paying all vendors, invoices, and participant reimbursements.
- **DELTA LEADERSHIP NETWORK**: Organization shall be responsible for managing an active alumni program (DLN) to encourage continued networking and partnership cultivation. The DLN consists of approximately 700 members, therefore proposals must include innovative ways in which to leverage the strength of DLN to the benefit of its membership. Proposals shall include the following to meet the minimum requirements:
 - Strategies to increase collective action among the DLN membership to continue alumni engagement and productive activity to the benefit of communities within the Region.
 - Social media strategy to increase engagement and attract followers.
- **OTHER**: Organization is encouraged to submit a proposal in another innovative area of leadership skills development to be included in the Executive Academy.

Submission Instructions

Based upon the programmatic element(s) (from the list above) chosen by the Organization to be included in the proposal, the narrative descriptions shall provide the following information for each component:

1. Program Strategy

The proposal should describe the organization's strategy for promoting action-oriented leadership in the Delta region.

Where applicable, the narrative should include discussion of instructional strategies and methods, and linkages between the various program components. Innovative approaches are expected and will be required.

2. Experience and Expertise

The proposal should describe the Organization's experience in designing and delivering leadership development programming. The qualifications of staff/faculty that will be involved in program design and delivery shall also be provided.

3. Budget/Funding

The proposal should present a budget for each proposed component of the initiative, including a breakdown of costs for program management, instructional personnel, and materials.

Given the mission of the program to reach rural and distressed communities, Organizations are encouraged to include funding for program scholarships as part of their budget, which can include commitments for contributions from the Organization or outside sources.

The Authority desires to minimize submission of superfluous RFP material. Therefore, responding Organizations are instructed to organize their responses according to the following format:

- The proposal narrative should not exceed 10 typewritten pages tabbed by category. Font must be Times New Roman and can be no smaller than 10 typeset.
- Supplemental information or background material, if any, must be restricted to appendices following the narrative placed in chapters. Up to additional ten (10) pages per chapter of supplemental material may be submitted, including curriculum vitae of key personnel and materials from prior leadership development programs.
- Pages should be numbered consecutively and identify the Organization on each.
- Each proposal should be accompanied by a title page specifying the name of the RFP being responded to ("Delta Leadership Institute") followed by a submittal letter signed by an authorized officer of the responding Organization.

Section V: Submission Procedures

The deadline for submissions in response to this RFP is 5:00 p.m. CST, Friday, June 10, 2022.

Please submit a PDF copy of your response to qli@dra.gov.

Each Organization must submit a complete response (answer every information request) to this RFP, as failure to do so will result in immediate disqualification and cause the response to not be scored. Further, the response must be signed by an authorizing officer of the responding Organization, and the response must include a statement as to the period for which the response remains valid, which must be at least 90 days from the date responses to the RFP are due.

Additionally:

- Telephone or fax responses will not be accepted for this RFP;
- Submissions **MUST** be sent via email (qli@dra.gov);
- Responses or unsolicited amendments will not be accepted after the closing date and time; and
- Requests for time extensions past any deadlines will not be considered.

SECTION VI: Review and Evaluation Process

The Authority's selection committee ("the Committee") will review and evaluate only the responses that meet the following threshold items:

- The Organization's willingness to explicitly follow the Authority's guidelines in this RFP;
- The experience and qualifications of both the Organization and its staff to be assigned to provide these services, regarding its described ability to successfully deliver the DLI;
- Involvement and accessibility of the Organization's staff to be assigned to these services;
- The Organization's commitment to the Delta region;
- The Organization's location within the DRA eight-state region; and
- The Organization's answers to the information requests outlined in "submission requirements" above.

Subsequent to the Committee's evaluation, and at the sole discretion of the Committee, certain institutions may be selected for interviews. Those Organizations selected will be given not less than fifteen (15) business days' notice, along with the date, time, and place for these presentations.

Each Organization selected for an interview will be allotted 30 minutes for its presentation, yet additional time may be allotted to answer any questions it may pose, to ensure the Organizations are evaluated on the basis of the criteria set forth in this RFP.

DRA may then select the Organization based on the demonstrated competence, experience, knowledge, and qualifications of the Organization, as evaluated and proffered by the Committee.

DRA fully reserves the right to make this decision and the Authority's decision on this matter is final.

SECTION VII: RFP Terms and Conditions

This RFP is for the purpose of soliciting responses from organizations within the DRA region, including non-profits, institutions of higher education, and other stakeholders, qualified to design and deliver a leadership initiative, on a region wide basis, for the Authority.

No claim for adjustment of any provision of the RFP shall be honored after the proposal has been submitted on the grounds that the proposer was not fully informed as the existing conditions or circumstances or any other related matter. However, by this RFP, the Authority has not committed itself to employ an Organization for these services for any or all of the herein-described matters and the Authority reserves the right to decide such after receipt, review and evaluation of all responses.

Additionally, the Authority reserves the right to:

- Waive or amend any portion of this RFP by written notice to all Organizations;
- Negotiate all elements that comprise the information with the Organization (s) to ensure that the best possible considerations are afforded to all concerned;
- To waive any irregularities;
- Reject any and all responses to this RFP;
- Select Organization(s) for specific purposes or for any combination of specific purposes; and
- Defer the selection of any Organization(s) to a time of the Authority's choosing.

Additionally, DRA encourages responses utilizing joint ventures of any two or more Organizations, or sub-contractors by a single Organization, as long as the response clearly:

- Identifies the lead principal who will bear the responsibility for the contract for services with the Authority; and
- Describes its proposed measures of quality control for itself and its joint-venture partners and/or its sub-contractors sufficiently to satisfy the Authority.

Warranty and Independence

Organizations must warrant that no sums or anything of value has been or will be paid directly or indirectly to any officer or employee of DRA such as wages, compensation, or gifts in exchange for acting as officer, agent, employee, subcontractor, or consultant to the institutions in connection with any work compensated or performed.

DRA cannot and does not make any representatives or warranties with regard to the information, data, documentation, and material conveyed in this RFP or otherwise provided by DRA. Organizations shall conduct their own independent investigations and analysis and make their own assessments, judgments, and decisions regarding this opportunity.

Board and Staff Communication

Under no circumstances shall any entity intending to respond to this RFP contact any member of the Authority or DRA staff with the purpose of influencing the RFP process. All RFP related

communication should be directed to Sea Talantis, the point of contact, during this process. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in immediate disqualification.

Period of Contract

While the contract will be offered for a term of one year, with a renewal option for two one-year terms subject to DRA approval, it is the intent to continue the contract on an ongoing basis, contingent upon, among other things, availability of funds, continued need, and satisfactory performance of services. At all times, the Organization will serve at the will and pleasure of the Authority.

Cost of Developing and Submitting Response

DRA shall not, under any circumstances, be liable or responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by any Organization in preparing and/or submitting a response associated with proposals including, but not limited to, research, investigation, development, preparation, transmittal, or presentation of proposals or any related information, data documentation, and material. All costs and expenses incurred by the proposers in connection with these proposals submitted shall be the sole responsibility of the proposers.

Acceptance of RFP Content

Some of the contents of this RFP and the response submitted may be incorporated by reference in any final contract resulting from this RFP.

Facilities

DRA reserves the right to inspect each Organization's facilities at any time without prior notice.

Assignment and Delegation

Any contract issued pursuant to this RFP is not assignable, nor may be delegated, except with the prior written approval of the Authority.

Property

All responses become the property of DRA upon receipt. DRA has the right to use any and all ideas or adaptations of the ideas contained in any response received in this RFP. Selection or rejection of the response will not affect this right.

Proprietary Information

If an Organization does not desire certain proprietary information in its response disclosed, the Organization is required to identify all proprietary information in the response, which identification shall be submitted concurrently with the response. If the Organization fails to identify proprietary information, it agrees by submission of its response that all parts of all responses shall be deemed non-proprietary and will become public documents upon completion of the RFP process.

Governing Law

The contract created as a result of this RFP and the accepted response will be made under, and shall be governed by, and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Mississippi.

APPENDIX A

Draft Program Structure

Each DLI cohort will meet for six (6) in-person sessions during the program year (typically January through September). Each session will be 2-4 days. Locations will rotate throughout the Region and include Washington, D.C.

Session I: Orientation

Session II: TBD

Session III: TBD

Session IV: Washington, D.C.

Session V: TBD

Session VI: Graduation