



2024 BUDGET CONGRESSIONAL JUSTIFICATION

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March 13, 2023

LETTER FROM THE FEDERAL CO-CHAIR

On behalf of the Delta Regional Authority (DRA or Authority), I am pleased to present the attached budget justification for Fiscal Year 2024.

The 2024 Budget requests \$30.1 million to support the grant-making activities and operations of the Authority. Since its establishment in 2000, 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 2024 Budget, more than \$16 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 2024 Budget with supplemental appropriations, such as 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 2024 Budget with integrity with an emphasis on equitable access, data informed decision making, and quantifiable outcomes.

Sincerely,

Dr. Corey Wiggins
Federal Co-Chair

ABOUT THE DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY

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 region and Alabama Black Belt. DRA invests in projects supporting transportation infrastructure, basic public infrastructure, workforce training, and business development. DRA's mission is to help create jobs, build communities, and improve the lives of those who reside in the 252 counties and parishes of the eight-state region. DRA seeks to help create jobs, ensure job retention, support opportunities to train workers and positively impact communities throughout the DRA footprint

State Members - Board of Governor

Governor Kaye Ivy, State of Alabama
Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders, State of Arkansas
Governor JB Pritzker, State of Illinois
Governor Andy Beshear, Commonwealth of Kentucky
Governor John Bel Edwards, State of Louisiana
Governor Tate Reeves, State of Mississippi
Governor Micahel L. Parsons, State of Missouri
Governor Bill Lee, State of Tennessee



Section I Budget

FY 2024 CONGRESSIONAL JUSTIFICATION

Introduction

This narrative serves as justification for the Delta Regional Authority's FY 2024 Budget. DRA's eight member states (Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee) pay for 50% of DRA's administrative budget, less the expenses of the Office of the Federal Co-Chair (100% Federal), through their annual state assessments. This budget justification presents the full budget, including the Federal appropriation and state assessments.

Source and Uses 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 2022 Enacted Budget
- FY 2023 Enacted Budget
- FY 2024 Budget Request

Format and Content

DRA's administrative budget is presented in three sections:

1. **Source:** where funding is sourced from (i.e. Federal appropriations 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 2024 Budget Summary

	FY 2022 Enacted (Actual)*	FY 2023 Enacted	FY 2024 Budget **	Change
<u>Source</u>				
Federal Appropriations	\$30,100,000	\$30,100,000	\$30,100,000	\$0
<u>Uses</u>				
States' Economic Development Assistance Program	\$12,831,106	\$12,278,214	\$12,278,214	0
Community Infrastructure Fund	\$15,000,000	\$15,000,000	\$15,000,000	0
Local Development Districts	\$554,000	\$554,000	\$554,000	0
Administration	\$1,714,894	2,267,786	2,267,786	0
Total Federal Appropriations	\$30,100,000	\$30,100,000	\$30,100,000	\$ -

*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 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 2024 President's Budget and discussed in Section II: Legislative Proposals of this Congressional Justification. If the legislative proposal is enacted, the user fees would be collected and spent on the Delta Doctors Program in FY 2024. The Budget estimates collections at \$352 thousand in FY 2024.

Table 2: Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Spend Plan Summary

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) provided \$150 million for DRA programs. DRA’s proposed spend plan increases the funding availability for three existing grant programs, including SEDAP, CIF, and the Delta Workforce Grant Program. Additionally, the proposed spend plan incorporates capacity-building initiatives such as an LDD Pilot Program, Strategic Planning Grants, and Research & 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 priorities of the new administration.

	FY 2022 BIL Budget	FY2023 BIL Budget	FY 2024 BIL Budget	Change
Source				
BIL Appropriation	\$28,812,000	\$31,782,000	\$31,782,000	\$ -
Total	\$28,812,000	\$31,782,000	\$31,782,000	\$ -
Uses				
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 Pilot Program	0	\$2,970,000	\$2,970,000	\$ -
Strategic Planning Grants	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$ -
Administration	\$1,312,000	\$1,312,000	\$1,312,000	\$ -
Total	\$28,812,000	\$31,782,000	\$31,782,000	\$ -

Note: This table includes information on resources provided by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) / Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), and only reflects a proposed spend plan which is 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

		Carryover	Supplemental/ Rescission	Total Resources	Obligations	Net Outlays
	Enacted/Requested					
2022 Appropriation	\$30,100,000	\$33,427,021	\$150,000,000	183,427,021	65,030,224	18,243,126
2023 Appropriation	30,100,000	148,515,975	-	178,615,975	35,000,000	47,000,000
2024 President's Budget	30,100,000	109,000,000	-	139,100,000	55,000,000	59,000,000
Change from 2023	-	(39,515,975)	-	(39,515,975)	20,000,000	12,000,000

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% Federal civilian wage increase. DRA does not reside in the federally approved jurisdictions to qualify for the 0.5% locality pay adjustment. DRA does not plan any reallocations within the fiscal year.

Office of the Federal Co-Chair

The Office of the Federal Co-Chair consists of two presidentially appointed positions: the Federal Co-Chair (PAS) and Alternate Federal Co-Chair (PA).

FY 2024 Budget: Office of the Federal Co-Chair	
Salaries	\$ 341,912
Fringe Benefits (30%)	102,574
Travel	60,000
Telephone, postage, ofc equipment rentals	2,800
Professional Services/Contractual	47,240
Leases, printing, graphics	113,697
Vehicle Operations	28,600
Training/Professional Development	15,000
Capital Equipment	33,500
Supplies	7,700
Total	\$753,023

The Authority

Administrative funds necessary to carry out Authority programs and initiatives are presented below.

FY 2024 Budget: The Authority	
Salaries	\$1,319,072
Fringe Benefits (30%)	395,722
Travel	233,000
Professional Services/Contractual	545,089
Leases, printing, graphics	43,210
Telephone, postage, office equipment rentals	40,200
Printing/Graphics/Photos	47,000
Training/Professional Development	42,770
Supplies	163,463
Capital Equipment	200,000
Total	\$3,029,526

Salaries

Salaries consist of payroll for 22 non-Federal positions.

Fringe Benefits

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

Travel

Travel includes mileage and/or fuel, rental vehicles, hotels, airfare, meals & incidentals, taxis, parking fees, etc., consisting primarily of trips to small rural towns, communities, and counties/parishes without access to major modes of public transportation (i.e. air/rail) throughout 200,000 square miles, 252 counties/parishes, and more than 500 cities/towns in the eight-state

region. DRA's service area presents logistical challenges that often necessitates multiple modes of travel (i.e. air and vehicle travel).

Professional Services/Contractual

Professional Services/Contractual includes expenses for specialists that provide unique services that are otherwise unavailable to be provided by DRA staff.

Leases/Furnishings

Leases/Furnishings consists of long-term leases for the Regional Headquarters (Clarksdale, MS) and Federal Office (Washington, DC) as well as related furnishings.

Telecommunications/Utilities

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

Meetings & Events

Meetings and Events consists 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 consists of stationary, writing utensils, binders, folders, and related items.

Communications

Communications consists 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 Partnership and Initiatives

With the support of other federal agencies DRA is able to increase its capacity to make investments throughout the Delta Region and Alabama Blackbelt. DRA receives the following support:

Federal Agency	FY 2023
USDA – Rural Community Advancement Program (RCAP)	\$3,000,000
EDA	\$3,000,000
DOL - Workforce Opportunities for Rural Communities (WORC)	\$425,000
DOD – Innovative Readiness Training (IRT)	0
HRSA	0



Section II: Legislative Requests

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

Appropriations Language Proposals

The 2024 President's Budget includes the following:

- Deletion of Sunsetting 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.

DRA continued authorization is vital to the DRA Region and to the economic stability of the United States. DRA Region is home to 252 counties and parishes, 221 of which are in persistent poverty and 232 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 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 2024 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 US-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 healthcare 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 5 full-time 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 **health care institutions** and spend the collections on the operation and staffing of the Delta Doctors Program.

Authorizing Language Proposals

The 2024 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 healthcare, 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 2024 President's Budget includes proposed changes in the appropriations language listed below. New language is italicized, and language proposed for deletion is bracketed.

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.*

(Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2023.)



Section II: DRA Administrative

DRA funds core agency positions, functions, and other core expenses, such as office space necessary to carryout the duties of the Delta Regional Authority 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.

DESIGNATED AREAS

U.S.C.A. §2009aa-5(a) requires the Delta Regional Authority to annually designate counties and parishes within the Delta Region as distressed and non-distressed; and isolated areas of distress. Delta Regional Authority, by using the formula of the 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 tables are the 2023 designated distressed/non-distressed counties/parishes and isolated areas of distress.

2023 Distressed Counties and Parishes within the DRA Region

Alabama	Arkansas	Lee
Barbour	Ashley	Lincoln
Bullock	Baxter	Lonoke
Butler	Bradley	Marion
Choctaw	Calhoun	Mississippi
Clarke	Chicot	Monroe
Conecuh	Clay	Ouachita
Dallas	Cleveland	Phillips
Escambia	Craighead	Poinsett
Greene	Crittenden	Prairie
Hale	Cross	Randolph
Lowndes	Dallas	St. Francis
Macon	Desha	Searcy
Marengo	Drew	Sharp
Monroe	Fulton	Stone
Perry	Grant	Union
Pickens	Greene	Van Buren
Russell	Independence	White
Sumter	Izard	Woodruff
Washington	Jackson	
Wilcox	Jefferson	Illinois
	Lawrence	Alexander

Franklin
Gallatin
Hardin
Jackson
Johnson
Massac
Perry
Pope
Pulaski
Randolph
Saline
Union

Kentucky

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

Louisiana

Acadia
Allen
Assumption
Avoyelles
Beauregard
Bienville
Caldwell
Catahoula
Claiborne
Concordia
East Carroll
East Feliciana

Evangeline
Franklin
Grant
Iberia
Iberville
Jackson
Jefferson Davis
LaSalle
Lafourche
St. Bernard
St. Charles
St. Helena
St. James
St. John the Baptist
St. Landry
St. Martin
St. Mary
Tangipahoa
Tensas
Union
Vermilion
Washington
Webster
West Baton Rouge
West Carroll
West Feliciana
Winn

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

Mississippi

Adams
Amite
Attala
Benton
Bolivar
Carol
Claiborne
Coahoma
Copiah
Covington
Desoto
Franklin
Grenada
Hinds
Holmes
Humphreys
Issaquena
Jasper
Jefferson Davis
Lafayette
Lawrence
Leflore Lincoln
Marion
Marshall
Montgomery
Panola
Pike
Quitman
Rankin
Sharkey
Simpson
Smith

Sunflower
Tallahatchie
Tate
Tippah
Tunica
Union
Walthall
Warren
Washington
Wilkinson
Yalobusha

Yazoo
Tennessee
Benton
Carroll
Chester
Crockett
Decatur
Gibson
Hardeman
Hardin

Haywood
Henderson
Henry
Lake
Lauderdale
Madison
McNairy
Obion
Shelby
Tipton
Weakley

2023 Non-Distressed Counties and Parishes within the DRA Region

Alabama

None

Arkansas

Arkansas

Pulaski

Illinois

Hamilton

White

Williamson

Kentucky

Carlisle

Hickman

McCracken

Louisiana

Ascension

Cameron

De Soto

East Baton Rouge

Jefferson

Plaquemines

Pointe Coupee

Rapides

Red River

St. Charles

West Baton Rouge

Missouri

None

Mississippi

Madison

Tennessee

Dyer

Fayette

2023 List of Isolated Areas within Non-Distressed Counties and Parishes within the DRA Region

Arkansas

Arkansas County

Distressed Census Tract Numbers:

4801, 4802, 4803, 4804, 4805, 4806, 4807, 4808

Pulaski County

Distressed Census Tract Numbers:

5, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20.01, 20.02, 21.02, 21.03, 22.09, 24.03, 24.05, 24.09, 24.1, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30.01, 30.02, 31, 32.02, 32.07, 32.08, 33.03, 33.05, 33.06, 34.04, 34.05, 34.06, 36.04, 36.05, 36.06, 36.07, 36.08, 36.09, 37.04, 37.11, 38, 39, 40.01, 40.04, 40.05, 40.06, 41.03, 41.04, 41.05, 41.06, 41.07, 41.08, 42.01, 42.2, 42.26, 43.02, 43.07, 43.1, 45, 46, 47, 9802, 9803, 9804

Illinois

Hamilton County

Distressed Census Tract Numbers:

9731, 9732, 9733

White County

Distressed Census Tract Numbers:

9580, 9582, 9583, 9584

Williamson County

Distressed Census Tract Numbers:

201, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208.01, 208.02, 210.01, 211, 214

Kentucky

Carlisle County

Distressed Census Tract Numbers:

9602, 9603

Hickman County

Distressed Census Tract Numbers:

9701

McCracken County

Distressed Census Tract Numbers

301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313.01, 314.01, 315.01, 315.02

Louisiana

Ascension Parish

Distressed Census Tract Numbers

302.08, 302.15, 304.03, 304.04, 304.05, 305.02, 309, 310.01, 310.02

Cameron Parish

Distressed Census Tract Numbers:

9702.03

De Soto Parish

Distressed Census Tract Numbers:

9501.01, 9502, 9503, 9504, 9505, 9506, 9507

East Baton Rouge Parish

Distressed Census Tract Numbers:

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, 38.04, 38.11, 39.07, 39.1, 39.11, 39.12, 40.13, 40.17, 40.18, 40.23, 40.24, 40.28, 40.29, 40.3, 40.31, 42.01, 42.03, 42.04, 42.05, 45.03, 45.04, 45.09, 45.12, 45.13, 46.03, 46.06, 47, 51, 52, 53

Jefferson Parish

Distressed Census Tract Numbers

202.05, 203.04, 205.02, 205.05, 205.07, 205.13, 205.16, 206, 210, 212, 213, 215, 216.01, 216.02, 226.01, 233, 235, 236, 237, 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, 278.1, 278.11, 278.12, 278.16, 278.19, 278.2, 279.03, 279.04, 280, 282, 283, 287, 291, 296, 297, 298, 299, 302

Plaquemines Parish

Distressed Census Tract Numbers:

501, 502.02, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508

Pointe Coupee Parish

Distressed Census Tract Numbers:

9519, 9520, 9521, 9522.01, 9523, 9524

Rapides Parish

Distressed Census Tract Numbers:

101.02, 103, 105.01, 105.02, 106, 107.01, 110, 113, 115.01, 115.02, 116, 117, 120, 121, 122, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132.01, 133, 135.01, 135.02, 136, 137, 138, 139

Red River Parish

Distressed Census Tract Numbers:

9601, 9603

St. Charles Parish

Distressed Census Tract Numbers:

621, 622, 623.01, 624, 627, 628, 629, 630

West Baton Rouge Parish

Distressed Census Tract Numbers

201, 202, 203.01, 204.01

Mississippi

Madison County

Distressed Census Tract Numbers

301.05, 301.08, 301.12, 305.01, 305.02, 306, 309, 310, 311

Tennessee

Dyer County

Distressed Census Tract Numbers:

9640.01, 9640.02, 9643, 9644.01, 9644.02, 9645, 9646, 9648

Fayette County

Distressed Census Tract Numbers:

603, 604.03, 605.01, 605.02, 606, 608

STATE ALLOCATION FORMULA

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

During its 2023 Quorum Meeting in February of 2023 Delta Regional Authority adopted the States' Economic Development Assistance Program 2023 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%
- Distressed Population 20%
- Distressed County Area 20%
- Population Factor 10%
- Total 100%

It is anticipated that the same allocation formula will be utilized in FY2024

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN IV

The Delta Regional Authority (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 a 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 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, 221 of which are in persistent poverty and 232 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 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.

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 are to engage in initiatives that advance greater equity, elevate rural communities, apply innovative practices, and enhance collaboration among stakeholders.

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 healthcare, 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.



Section III

Critical Infrastructure Programs

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM INVESTMENTS

STATES' ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

FY 2024 Budget: \$12,278,214

(In addition to the amount requested in annual appropriations, DRA anticipates allocating \$5,00,000 in BIL resources to the program in FY 2024)

The States' Economic Development Assistance Program (SEDAP) is DRA's primary investment program. Since 2002, DRA has leveraged more than \$255.8 million of its own 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% of SEDAP funds must be invested in basic public infrastructure and transportation infrastructure.

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

Application and Selection Process

Applications are submitted through an online portal and reviewed by Local Development Districts (LDD) to ensure eligibility and completeness. Once the LDDs 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 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 is provided to the grantees shortly thereafter.

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 2022, the State Allocations are shown below.

FY 2023 State Allocations*		
State	Allocation (\$)	Allocation (%)
Alabama	1,184,959.65	10.03%
Arkansas	1,653,981.56	14.00%
Illinois	915,596.94	7.75%
Kentucky	1,045,552.63	8.85%
Louisiana	2,345,109.57	19.85%
Mississippi	1,794,569.99	15.19%
Missouri	1,339,725.06	11.34%
Tennessee	1,534,658.60	12.99%
DRA Region	11,814,154.00	100.00%

In FY 2024, 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 Mississippi River Delta Region and Alabama Black Belt. 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 \$350,000.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

FY 2024 Budget: \$15,000,000

(In addition to the amount requested in annual appropriations, DRA anticipates allocating \$15,00,000 in BIL resources to the program in FY 2024)

Complementary to SEDAP grants, the Community Infrastructure Fund (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 Mississippi River Delta Region and Alabama Black Belt. CIF is an existing grant program, which will incrementally integrate BIL funding with annual appropriations over a five-year period.

Generally, awards range between \$100,000 to \$1,500,000.

The CIF application cycle coincides directly with SEDAP.

Eligible Applicants:

- State and local government (including state agencies, cities, counties/parishes)
- Other public entities (including local development districts)
- Non-profit 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 request 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 reviewed by Local Development Districts (LDD) to ensure eligibility and completeness. Once the LDDs 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 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% of SEDAP, the Federal Co-Chair will aim to provide Alabama with 10% of CIF dollars). Once projects are selected by the Federal Co-Chair, a grant agreement, notice to proceed letter, and grant manual is provided to the grantees shortly thereafter.

CIF projects are selected for award by the FCC. 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.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS
FY 2024 Budget: \$554,000

DRA partners with 45 local development districts (LDD) to 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.

FY 2024 Budget: Local Development Districts	
LDD Technical Assistance	\$554,000
Total	\$554,000



Section IV

Human Infrastructure Programs

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 and U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), the Department of Labor (DOL), the Department of Defense (DOD), and U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) as presented below.

DRA administered several programs under the Human Infrastructure division to include:

Workforce Grant Programs

- o Delta Workforce Grant Program (DWP) – *supported by funds from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funds and Department of Labor*
- o Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities (WORC) – *in partnership with and supported by the Department of Labor*

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 JI Visa Waiver 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 Pilot Project - *Supported by funds from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funds*
- Strategic Planning Program- *Supported by funds from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funds*

Workforce Opportunities 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 initiative which administers programmatic activities related to several critical initiatives including, but not limited to, Delta Doctors, Innovative Readiness Training (IRT), Delta Region Community Health Systems Development (DRCHSD) program, and Delta Region Rural Health Workforce Training (DRRHWT) 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). I

The Delta Region Community Health Systems Development Program enhances health care 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 Forty-Two (42) facilities have participated in the program.

The entities listed below were selected for the 2022 Cohort.

#	Name	Location	Type
1	Bradley County Medical Center	Warren, Arkansas – Bradley County	CAH – 25 beds
2	Mainline Health Systems	Dermott, Arkansas – Chicot County	FQHC
3	Oakdale Community Hospital	Oakdale, Louisiana – Allen Parish	PPS Hospital – 49 beds
4	Hood Memorial Hospital	Amite, Louisiana – Tangipahoa Parish	CAH – 25 beds
5	Ouachita County Medical Center	Camden, Arkansas – Ouachita County	PPS hospital – 82 beds
6	Cross Ridge Community Hospital	Wynne, Arkansas – Cross County	CAH – 15 beds
7	Washington County Hospital & Nursing Home	Chatom, Alabama – Washington County	CAH - 25 beds
8	Lawrence Memorial Health Foundation Inc.	Walnut Ridge, Arkansas – Lawrence County	CAH – 25 beds
9	Five Rivers Medical Center	Pocahontas, Arkansas – Randolph County	PPS Hospital – 50 beds
10	Community Health & Emergency Services, Inc.	Cairo, Illinois – Alexander County	FQHC
	Family Health Care & Wellness Center	Hammond, Louisiana – Tangipahoa Parish	RHC

Delta Doctors Program.

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 US-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 healthcare 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 5 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 FY2023 with the same amount in FY2024.

Delta Region Rural Health Workforce Training Program.

In collaboration with Health Resources and Services Administration, 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 through the development of 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 as well as new entrants to the workforce and dislocated workers.

Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) Program.

Delta Regional Authority and the Department of Defense (DoD) have collaborated to bring the Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) program to the Mississippi River Delta and Alabama Black Belt regions. IRT medical missions deliver quality medical care, provided by licensed medical professionals serving in our reserve forces, to residents of rural medically underserved communities. The expectation is that each mission provides care to between four and five thousand patients in the region. 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) Program.

The Delta Leadership Institute (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. 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, healthcare, and policy and governance. DRA has produced over 600 DLI alumni.



Section V

Capacity Building Programs

Capacity Building Program Investments

Delta Capacity Building Programs

Delta Research- *Supported by USDA RCAP funds*

Delta Summit – *Supported by USDA RCAP funds*

LDD Pilot Project - *Supported by funds from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funds*

Strategic Planning Program- *Supported by funds from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funds*

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

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 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 projected amount of DWP funding that will be obligated minus the cost necessary to administer the program in FY2023 is \$12,000,000. This amount reflects a carry-over from FY2022. The estimated projected amount of DWP funding that will be obligated minus the cost necessary to administer the program in FY2024 is \$6,000,000.

LDD Pilot Program.

DRA will use a portion of BIL funds to develop and administer a new, non-competitive grant program to build the capacity of the 45 LDDs in the Mississippi River Delta Region and Alabama Black Belt. 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.

The projected amount of LDD Pilot Project funding that will be obligated minus the cost necessary to administer the program in FY2023 is \$ 2,970,000. The estimated projected amount of LDD Pilot Project funding that will be obligated minus the cost necessary to administer the program in FY2024 is \$ 2,970,000.

Strategic Planning Grants Program.

DRA will use a portion of BIL funds to develop and administer a new competitive grant 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 DRA communities.

The projected amount of Strategic Planning Grants Program funding that will be obligated minus the cost necessary to administer the program in FY2023 is \$ 3,000,000. This amount reflects a carry-over from FY2022. T The estimated projected amount of Strategic Planning Grants Program funding that will be obligated minus the cost necessary to administer the program in FY2024 is \$1,500,000.