

DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY
ACTION PLAN
FOR TRIBAL CONSULTATION AND COLLABORATION

Plan submitted pursuant to
Presidential Memorandum dated January 26, 2021

Introduction and Background

The Delta Regional Authority (DRA) is an executive agency of the U. S. Government, established in 2000 by Congress, to make strategic physical and human infrastructure investments throughout its eight state region. Through financial assistance awards, DRA helps to improve transportation and basic public infrastructure and to strengthen distressed communities' workforce development systems, local business environments, support job creation and economic development.

Contained within this document is DRA's Action Plan in response to the Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation to Nation Relationships executed January 26, 2021.

(a) DRA's 90 day Report

The January 26, 2021 Memorandum directed each agency to submit to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), within 90 days, a detailed plan of actions to implement the policies of Executive Order 13175 and that the plan be developed after consultation with Tribal Nations and Tribal Officials. Dr. Corey Wiggins, was confirmed by the U. S. Senate on or about March 9, 2022 and sworn into office on March 11, 2022 as the Federal Co-Chair of the Delta Regional Authority (DRA). As part of his transition into office, he immediately began conducting an assessment of administration, fiscal management, programs, and legal compliance of DRA. The initial assessment has revealed that many of the Executive Orders and Office of Management and Budget Memorandum which were issued in the early days of the Biden-Harris Administration had not been adhered to in the absence of an appointed Federal Co-Chair and without the benefit of the continuity of an Executive Director or Chief of Staff. Federal Co-Chairman Wiggins has in no way willfully failed to comply with the U. S. Code, Executive Orders nor with OMB Guidance and is working feverishly to implement policies and protocols which bring DRA into compliance with all requirements of Presidential Memoranda.

(b) DRA's 270 day Report

The President's Memorandum on Tribal Consultation reiterates the Administrations respect for Tribal sovereignty and self governance, commitment to fulfilling Federal trust and robust consultation with Tribal nations. Delta Regional Authority shares the same commitment. As Federal Co-Chair, Dr. Corey Wiggins has been intentional about his engagement of all communities within the eight state region about the challenges

and sharing with those communities the mission and purposes of the Delta Regional Authority. Consistently, Dr. Wiggins has mentioned the strategic goals core to fulfillment of these purposes:

- 1) Equitable community engagement
- 2) Increasing community capacity to receive federal support
- 3) Efficiently and expeditiously reinvesting taxpayer dollars in the communities we are established to serve
- 4) Establishment of a sustainable organization for continued support to rural communities

Central to each of these priority goals is the need to support minority majority community leaders, encourage equity and inclusion in very intentional ways. Tribal consultation as well as the outreach efforts to reach more minority communities shall be prioritized. By reaching for these goals in the Tribal context, DRA can play a critical role in improving Tribal economic development self-sufficiency by addressing critical infrastructure issues, improve transportation and water and sewer systems within Tribal communities as well as help in the development of small businesses as a tool towards rural economic vitality. To that end and in compliance with the guidance of the 2021 memorandum, DRA has taken initial steps to engage and strengthen our relationships with Tribal Nations within our eight state region.

DRA's initial actions include:

- Consultation with the United States Department of Interior
- An initial consultation outreach for engagement with Tribal leaders
- A request to amend our statutory language to expressly include "tribes" as an eligible entity for financial assistance awarded through DRA.

DRA's Action Plan

- a) Designated Tribal Consultation Official: DRA's Strategic Partnerships Program Manager, Mr. Matthew Campbell

Mr. Campbell, in coordination with the Chief Administrative Officer of DRA, responsible for compliance reporting to OMB, shall submit reports to the Assistant of the President for Domestic Policy (APDP) and the Director of OMB.

- b) Progress Report

DRA's Tribal Consultation Plan will be directly align with DRA's Equity Action Plan and a dynamic document.

DRA's Equity Action Plan identifies three barriers to equitable outcomes and commits to undertaking strategic actions to minimize these barriers in the near to mid-term (2-4 years) and long-term (5-8 years).

- Action #1: Revise programmatic guidelines to increase engagement with HBCUS and federally-recognized tribes.

- action #2: Devise a more inclusive stakeholder outreach strategy and revise programmatic guidelines to increase engagement with BIPOC, LGBTIQQ+, faith-based organizations, and other marginalized groups.
- action #3: Revise programmatic guidelines to increase investment in persistent poverty counties.

Specific to DRA's Tribal Consultation Plan, DRA has taken steps necessary to:

1. Revise programmatic guidelines to increase engagement with federally recognized tribes.

A. Barrier to Equitable Outcome(s)

DRA has historically underinvested federally-recognized tribes throughout the Delta Region. There are five federally-recognized tribes in the eight states, yet DRA has only made one grant to these federally-recognized tribes during its 20 year existence. Although federally-recognized tribes are eligible to apply for all DRA grant programs, the Authority does not specifically identify federally-recognized tribes as eligible entities nor prioritize their applications within programmatic criteria under every program. This lack of recognition in statutory programmatic guidelines has likely deterred federally recognized tribes from applying for and receiving DRA funding with any regularity.

B. Action and Intended Impact on Barrier

In an effort to engage federally-recognized tribes in a more meaningful way, DRA will revise the programmatic guidelines and request an amendment to statutory language to expressly include the word tribes as an eligible entity for financial assistance awards.

Add a new criterion to the "Federal Priority Eligibility Criteria" to emphasize strategic partnerships with institutions of higher education, such as HBCUs, and federally-recognized tribes.

Add federally-recognized tribes under the recommended list for "Project Team Composition";

Add a new scored criterion for "Demonstration of Strategic Partnership with one or more federally-recognized tribes".

Request speakers from federally recognized tribes to highlight their economic and community development efforts, such as workforce training initiatives and/or research during DRA sponsored convenings

Host federally recognized tribes for roundtable discussions about how the Authority can improve its inclusion of their organizations in agency programs and initiatives as well as provide a DRA program briefing to federally-recognized tribes.

C. Tracking Progress

For each of the sub-actions listed above, DRA will track progress in the near- to mid-term (2-4 years) and long-term (5-8 years) using the following performance measurements:

o Near- to Mid-term:

Number of applications submitted by federally-recognized tribes;

Number of applications demonstrating strategic partnerships with federally-recognized tribes.

Number of applications demonstrating strategic partnerships with federally-recognized tribes as part of the project team.

Number of individuals from federally recognized tribes speaking at DRA sponsored convenings.

o Long-term:

Number of awards made to federally-recognized tribes;

Number of awards made to organizations demonstrating strategic partnerships with federally-recognized tribes.

DRA will experience the most success if the Authority realizes an increase in each of the outcomes listed above.

D. Accountability

DRA will incorporate its programmatic goals related to inclusion of federally-recognized tribes in its forthcoming Regional Development Plan IV (RDP IV) – the Authority’s strategic plan which governs its priorities and key actions for a five-year period. Additionally, DRA will encourage the Board of Governors to align their DRA state plans with these provisions. DRA will also measure its performance for the outcomes listed above in its annual Performance and Accountability Report (PAR) submitted to the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

2. Devise a more inclusive stakeholder outreach strategy and revise programmatic guidelines to increase engagement with Tribal Nations.

A. Barrier to Equitable Outcome(s)

DRA has not meaningfully conducted outreach to and/or strategically engaged with Tribal Nations.

Although DRA incorporates a non-discrimination clause into its programmatic guidelines and related documents, the Authority does not clearly demonstrate inclusivity for all people in its programs and initiatives. A lack thereof possibly

deters individuals representing marginalized groups from engaging with DRA and benefiting from the federal resources the Authority has to offer.

B. Action and Intended Impact on Barrier

In an effort to execute more inclusive stakeholder outreach and increase engagement with Tribal Nations DRA will revise the following programmatic guidelines:

- **Delta Leadership Institute:** In the Executive Academy application, specifically encourage submissions from individuals representing Tribal Nations. Applicants will be provided the option to self-identify themselves in one or more of the aforementioned categories, but will not be required to report this information to protect the privacy of all applicants.
- **DRA Sponsored Convenings:** Request individuals representing Tribal Nations to participate in respectful and meaningful capacities at DRA sponsored convenings.

Intentionally increase meaningful engagement with each federally recognized tribe within our region to determine how the Authority can facilitate more inclusive engagement.

C. Tracking Progress

For each of the sub-actions listed above, DRA will track progress in the near- to mid-term (2-4 years) and long-term (5-8 years) using the following performance measurements:

o Near- to Mid-term:

Number of Executive Academy applications submitted by individuals representing Tribal Nations.

Number of individuals representing Tribal Nations invited to speak at the DRA sponsored convenings

o Long-term:

Number of individuals representing Tribal Nations selected to participate in the Executive Academy.

DRA will experience the most success if the Authority realizes an increase in each of the outcomes listed above.

D. Accountability

DRA will incorporate its programmatic goals related to engaging with Tribal Nations in its forthcoming RDP IV. Additionally, DRA will encourage the Board of Governors to align their DRA state plans with these provisions. DRA will also

measure its performance for the outcomes listed above in its annual PAR submitted to OMB.

DRA will also celebrate the diversity of the Delta Region in Authority-related publications, including the Delta Current and in op-eds written by its presidentially appointed leadership.

3. Revise programmatic guidelines to increase investment in persistent poverty counties.

A. Barrier to Equitable Outcome(s)

DRA recognizes that “[a]reas with high incidence of poverty often reflect the low income of their racial/ethnic minorities. . . . [N]onmetro American Indians . . . had the second highest rate (29.6 percent)” of poverty in 2019¹. DRA has not traditionally prioritized making investments into persistent poverty counties under all agency programs nor regularly assist impacted communities with leveraging Authority programs and related federal resources. Out of the 252 counties and parishes located in the Authority’s region, 116 or 46.03% are designated persistent poverty counties.

DRA administers five grant programs including SEDAP, Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF), Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Program (PWEAA), Delta Workforce Grant Program (DWP), and Rural Community Advancement Program (RCAP). Only two of these programs – DWP and RCAP – prioritizes and/or mandates grantmaking in persistent poverty counties. Currently, SEDAP, CIF, and PWEAA do not prioritize nor mandate grantmaking in persistent poverty counties.

B. Action and Intended Impact on Barrier

In an effort to be more inclusive of Tribal Nations and supportive of investments in persistent poverty counties which directly correlate to the poverty rate in these communities in a more meaningful way, DRA will revise the following programmatic guidelines:

- States’ Economic Development Assistance Program/Community

Infrastructure Fund/Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance:

Add a new criterion to the “Federal Priority Eligibility Criteria” to emphasize investments in persistent poverty counties.

- Delta Workforce Grant Program: Increase the number of points received in the scoring criterion for “Demonstration of Inclusion in a Persistent Poverty

¹ USDA ERS – Rural Poverty & Well Being, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-poverty>

County/Parish” from two to three points.

- Delta Leadership Institute: In the Executive Academy application, specifically encourage submissions from individuals residing in persistent poverty counties.
- Innovative Readiness Training Program: Within the Community Readiness Checklist, encourage eligible Tribal entities located in persistent poverty counties to apply for an IRT mission.
- Delta Summit: Provide scholarships in the form of waived registration fees for a specified number of individuals, including Tribal nation representatives, residing in persistent poverty counties.

Additionally, DRA’s Federal Co-Chair will meet with stakeholder coalitions located in persistent poverty counties to discuss how the Authority can strategically invest into regionally-significant projects that impact the economic development of their communities. DRA will also promote special programmatic provisions, designed to increase engagement with individuals and organizations located in persistent poverty counties, through various media.

C. Tracking Progress

For each of the sub-actions listed above, DRA will track progress in the near- to mid term (2-4 years) and long-term (5-8 years) using the following performance measurements:

o Near- to Mid-term:

Number of applications submitted by organizations residing in persistent poverty counties.

Number of Executive Academy applications submitted by individuals residing in persistent poverty counties.

Number of eligible entities residing in persistent poverty counties that submit an application for an IRT mission.

Number of Tribal Nation representatives residing in persistent poverty counties that register to attend a DRA sponsored convening.

o Long-term:

Number of awards made to applicants residing in persistent poverty counties.

Number of Tribal Nation representatives residing in persistent poverty counties selected to participate in the Executive Academy.

Number of IRT missions hosted by Tribal entities in persistent poverty counties.

Number of Tribal Nation representatives residing in persistent poverty counties that receive a scholarship to attend a DRA sponsored convening.

DRA will experience the most success if the Authority realizes an increase in each of the outcomes listed above.

D. Accountability

DRA will incorporate its programmatic goals related to making investments into persistent poverty counties and assisting impacted communities with leveraging Authority programs and related federal resources in its forthcoming RDP IV.

Additionally, DRA will encourage the Board of Governors to align their DRA state plans with these provisions. DRA will also measure its performance for the outcomes listed above in its annual PAR submitted to OMB. Lastly, DRA will publicize its performance measurements related to the number of DRA-funded projects located in persistent poverty counties as well as the amount of funding invested into persistent poverty counties by dollar figure and percentage in its annual report.

The initiatives contained within this Action Plan will serve as a starting point and will undergo continuing review and evaluation in order to improve consultation efforts and adapt to changing missions within the agency and/or its changing programs and authorities. The Action Plan is designed to reflect the mission of the Delta Regional Authority with respect to American Indian tribes within its eight state region and to comply with Legislative and Executive Branch mandates. Most importantly, by bringing the efforts contained within the Action Plan to fruition, DRA hopes to improve the lives of American Indian tribes to help revitalize, and more effectively fulfill the solemn trust responsibility of the Federal government.