



Local Development District Community Support Pilot Program Manual

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Introduction

The Delta Regional Authority (DRA) was established by Congress 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 promotes economic growth and opportunity by investing in human and critical infrastructure in economically distressed communities within the agency’s eight-state service region. DRA’s investment priorities include transportation infrastructure; other basic public infrastructure like water and sewer; small business development with an emphasis on entrepreneurship; and job training. DRA invests in these areas through grant programs and strategic partnerships that are open to local units of government, tribal entities, nonprofits, and public institutions of higher learning. DRA evaluates the impact of these investments by gauging four basic metrics:

- Jobs Created
- Jobs Retained
- Individuals Trained
- Families Affected

The eight states DRA encompasses include Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee.

Program Overview

The [Local Development District \(LDD\) Community Support Pilot Program](#) targets capacity-building and community support resources to the [45 LDDs within DRA’s service area](#). DRA recognizes the importance of LDDs and their connection to local communities across the region. The services LDDs provide — from grant writing, planning and project implementation — are invaluable services that local communities with limited capacity can rely on. However, with the recent increase in federal funds available to local communities, LDDs now face an increased workload to reach and assist as many communities as possible. The purpose of this program is to provide LDDs with additional resources to help the communities they serve develop, implement and evaluate projects. The COVID-19 pandemic delayed economic development projects and exacerbated issues that many under-resourced communities faced. Nevertheless, federal funds that have been appropriated in its wake, such as the CARES Act, American Rescue Plan, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Inflation Reduction Act, disaster supplemental appropriations, and annual appropriation laws, have the potential to be transformative for communities across the region by helping them address issues such as decaying infrastructure. This program, ultimately, will enhance the region’s ability to compete for and leverage resources.



Priorities

DRA’s program priorities align with the [enabling statute](#), the [Equity Action Plan](#), the [Regional Development Plan IV](#) and initiatives implemented by the Biden-Harris Administration. Priorities for the program include:

1. Provide support to economically distressed, isolated areas of distress and persistent poverty areas.
2. Facilitate partnerships and provide support to underserved groups like, but not limited to, rural communities and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).
3. Provide support to disadvantaged communities with longstanding critical and human infrastructure needs like water, sewer, and workforce development.

LDDs are encouraged to submit proposals that reflect these priorities. They also have the autonomy to submit proposals that speak to unique challenges and needs in economically distressed, isolated areas of distress, or persistent poverty communities in their service area.

Eligibility

1. Eligible Organizations
 - a. This program is only open to the 45 LDDs in DRA’s service area.
2. Eligible Use of Funds*
 - a. Hiring of new staff
 - b. Salary and fringe benefits for new or existing staff
 - c. Travel expenses
 - d. Marketing expenses
 - e. Staffing and contracting costs associated with developing applications for federal grant programs, including, but not limited to, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law grant programs

** Costs must be directly associated with this program, and funds cannot be used for anything outside of the program’s scope (e.g., hiring new staff or contractors who are working primarily on projects in non-distressed communities).*

Award Process

1. Upon DRA’s approval of the scope of work and budget, LDDs will be able to begin project activities.
2. LDDs will be required to sign a Memorandum of Agreement.



Frequently Asked Questions

1. How do I submit an application?
 - a. To access the application, please visit dra.communityforce.com. Applicants who do not have an active account in the Grants Management System will need to create one.
2. What is the total award amount?
 - a. DRA uses a funding formula that calculates the number of economically distressed counties and parishes and isolated areas of distress that each LDD serves within DRA's footprint. The amount each LDD receives will vary.
3. Is there a cost-share/matching requirement?
 - a. There is no cost-share/matching requirement to participate in this program.
4. What is the period of performance?
 - a. The period of performance for this program is up to 24 months.
5. How do I determine if my area is economically distressed?
 - a. Information about economically distressed counties and parishes; isolated areas of distress in non-distressed counties and parishes; and persistent poverty counties and parishes can be found [here](#).
6. How will grantees be paid?
 - a. Grantees will be paid upon approval of requests for reimbursement or advance payments submitted via the Grants Management System.
7. What are the grantee reporting requirements?
 - a. Awardees will be required to submit reports annually, one year from the date of the award. Reports should reflect program objectives and priorities through the following metrics:
 - i. Total number of applications and program investments directed to economically distressed, isolated areas of distress, and persistent poverty counties and parishes
 - ii. Total number of program investments directed to underserved communities. LDDs can also include partnerships that have emerged or strengthened through funding from this program
 - iii. Total number of program investments in economically distressed communities for critical and human infrastructure projects
8. Who do I contact if I have any questions?



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- a. If your LDD is located in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana or Mississippi, please contact Tineciaa Harris, strategic partnerships program coordinator, at tharris@dra.gov.
- b. If your LDD is located in Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri or Tennessee, please contact Jakob Marsh, capacity-building programs analyst, at jmarsh@dra.gov.