

DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROGRAM

NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY





Delta Regional Authority
Strategic Planning Program
Notice of Funding Availability

2024 Strategic Planning Program: Notice of Funding Availability

The Delta Regional Authority (DRA) is publishing this Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) to provide guidelines and requirements for the 2024 Strategic Planning Program.

Proposals Due: Proposals are accepted on a rolling basis.

DRA will accept and review applications until funds are expended.

Funding for this program has been made available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, PL 117-58) signed by President Biden. For questions about the program, please email strategy@dra.gov.



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DRA Overview

DRA was established by Congress in 2000 as a formal framework for joint federal-state collaboration to serve the eight-state Mississippi River Delta and Alabama Black Belt regions. DRA promotes economic growth and opportunity by investing in critical infrastructure projects in economically distressed communities. 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 that comprise DRA's region include Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee.

Program Overview

Many communities across the eight-state Mississippi River Delta and Alabama Black Belt regions lack the capacity and resources for strategic planning. Strategic planning is a collaborative process that involves actors from multiple sectors that plan, implement, and evaluate projects that address immediate needs and the overall progression of a community. Unforeseen events, like the COVID-19 pandemic, illustrate the importance of communities being able to respond to and mitigate challenges. DRA's Strategic Planning Program will award funds across the region to help communities identify and develop strategic plans to address issues such as infrastructure, industry growth, workforce pipelines, and small business development. Through planning, communities are better positioned to seek and secure resources from DRA, other federal agencies, and state and philanthropic sources. DRA's intent is to give communities access to planning resources that will lead to more solution-based outcomes and greater economic resilience.

Program Objectives

The overall goal of the Strategic Planning Program is to provide economically distressed, isolated areas of distress, and persistent poverty communities in the Mississippi River Delta and Alabama Black Belt



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regions with the resources necessary to develop plans that will help alleviate prolonged issues and guide economic growth. The following objectives were developed to specify desired program outcomes.

- To help revitalize local and regional economies by providing economically distressed communities across the region access to planning resources that aid problem-solving.
- To enhance the resilience of underserved communities experiencing social and economic vulnerability, such as high poverty rates, aging infrastructure, and economic downturns.
- To establish partnerships that reflect the collaborative nature of planning and problem-solving.

Program Priorities

Applicants are strongly encouraged to include the following priorities in their proposals. DRA will give special consideration to proposals that reflect these priorities.

- Proposals that demonstrate goals to improve economic development in economically distressed, isolated areas of distress, or persistent poverty communities, such as plans that address workforce development, improving infrastructure like water and sewer, and small business development.
- Proposals that incorporate input from community members and underserved groups. For example, focus groups or community meetings that measure community challenges and needs. (Please reference [DRA's Equity Action Plan](#) or the Appendix to learn more about underserved groups).
- Proposals that demonstrate local or regional collaboration. For example, a local government applying with an institution of higher education or a multi-county/parish proposal that addresses regional economic development.
- Proposals that demonstrate alignment with [DRA's Regional Development Plan IV](#).

DRA will prioritize planning activities that demonstrate a regional approach, engage historically underserved communities, and are anticipated to improve or strengthen economic development in DRA communities.

Eligibility Information

Eligible Applicants

The following entities are eligible to apply for funds through the Strategic Planning Program. The program is designed to assist public entities in developing and implementing plans. Private entities are not eligible applicants.



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- Local units of government
- Federally Recognized Tribes
- Public authorities and associations
- Nonprofit organizations (business incubators and other nonprofits offering workforce development services and programs)
- Local Development Districts (Local Development Districts will be required to apply alongside a member of government)
- Metropolitan planning organizations
- Institutions of higher education

Applicants must reside in an economically distressed county/parish or an isolated area of distress in a non-distressed county/parish in DRA's region. To see if your community is in an economically distressed county/parish or an isolated area of distress in a non-distressed county/parish, click [here](#).

Eligible Use

Applicants who are awarded funds through the Strategic Planning Program will be allowed to conduct plans, including, but not limited to, the following: comprehensive economic development master plans, capital improvement plans, workforce development plans, preliminary engineering reports, transportation plans, broadband deployment plans, feasibility studies, and utility rate studies.

Ineligible Use

Funds will not be allowed to use toward any project activities not related directly to planning. The hiring of a contractor by a local unit of government or other entities will be permitted, but the contractor will be required to work solely on the recipient's planning priorities.

Application Information

Applications for the Strategic Planning Program are available on [DRA's Program Application Portal](#). For any applicants that experience issues, please email strategy@dra.gov.

Application Content

The following section will have to be filled out by all applicants for your application to be considered complete by DRA.



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Application Information

Applicants will be required to list information such as location. The applicant's service area must overlap with DRA's service area. Multiple applicants can also submit a joint application. Examples include cross-state or multi-jurisdictional strategic planning projects.

Project Information

Applicants are required to describe the type of strategic plan they are proposing, planning goals, and planning objectives. Applicants are also required to describe the communities that will be impacted by their strategic plan, community engagement practices that will be deployed to encourage public input, and partners involved in the planning process. Examples of community engagement practices include community town hall meetings, focus groups, and surveys. Partners can include any local or regional entity that can help the applicants devise and execute planning goals and activities.

Program Objectives

Applicants are required to describe project outcomes. DRA will grade the applicant's desired project outcomes based on their alignment with DRA's program objectives.

Work Plan

Applicants will be required to describe the tasks necessary to complete the project, including key personnel assigned, time period for completion, and deliverables.

Budget

Applicants are required to list each budget item. Budgetary items should align with the proposed project and the work plan.

Budget Narrative

Applicants are required to complete a Budget Narrative. The Budget Narrative must provide a description of costs associated with each budget item. Each category should include the total estimated costs for the period of performance. The Budget Narrative should also include each section as described below (as applicable to the applicant's proposed project):

1. **Leveraged Resources:** The Budget Narrative should include a section describing any leveraged resources provided to support grant activities. Leveraged resources are all resources, both cash and in-kind, in excess of this award.



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2. **Personnel:** List all staff positions by title (both current and proposed), including the roles and responsibilities. For each position, give the annual salary, the percentage of time devoted to the project, and the amount of each position's salary funded by the grant.
3. **Fringe Benefits:** Provide a breakdown of the amounts and percentages that comprise fringe benefit costs such as health insurance, FICA, retirement, etc.
4. **Travel:** For grantee staff only, specify the purpose, number of staff traveling, mileage, per diem, estimated number of in-state and out-of-state trips, and other estimated costs for each type of travel.
5. **Equipment:** Identify each item of equipment you expect to purchase that has an estimated acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit (or if your capitalization level is less than \$5,000, use your capitalization level) and a useful lifetime of more than one year (see 2 CFR 200.1 for the definition of "equipment"). List the item, quantity, and the unit cost per item. Items with a unit cost of less than \$5,000 are supplies, not "equipment." In general, we do not permit the purchase of equipment during the last year of funding for the grant.
6. Identify the cost of supplies (e.g., general office supplies, desks/chairs, laptops/printers, and other specialty items) in the detailed budget per category. Except for general office supplies, list the item, quantity, and unit cost per item. Supplies include all tangible personal property other than "equipment."
7. **Contractual:** Under the Contractual line item, delineate contracts and subawards separately. Contracts are defined, according to 2 CFR 200.1, as a legal instrument by which a non-federal entity purchases property or services needed to carry out the project or program under a federal award. A subaward, defined by 2 CFR 200.1, means an award provided by a pass-through entity to a subrecipient for the subrecipient to carry out part of a federal award received by the pass-through entity. It does not include payments to a contractor or payments to an individual who is a beneficiary of a federal program.
8. For each proposed contract and subaward, specify the purpose and activities to be provided and the estimate cost.
9. **Other:** Provide clear and specific details, including costs, for each item so that we can determine whether the costs are necessary, reasonable, and allocable. List items not covered elsewhere, such as stipends or incentives.

Review Process

After applications are submitted, they will undergo a validation process. Any application that is incomplete or deemed ineligible will be rejected. Once applications are validated, they will be reviewed using the criteria in the following section.



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Criterion	Total Points: 100
Applicant Information	-
I. Acknowledgements	-
II. Applicant/Co-Applicant Name	-
III. Project Service Area	-
Project Information	Total Points: 30
II. Type of Plan	0
III. Project Description	15
IV. Plan Rationale	10
V. Planning Collaboration	5
Program Objectives	Total Points: 30
I. Description of the Desired Project Outcomes	30
Work Plan	Total Points: 30
I. Description of the Project Deliverables	15
II. Description of the Project Timeline	15
Budget	Total Points: 5
Budget Narrative	Total Points: 5

Selection Process

After review, DRA staff will make recommendations to the Federal Co-Chairman (FCC). The FCC will make the final determination of which applications will be selected for awards.



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Technical Assistance

DRA will offer technical assistance to applicants and grant recipients. Technical assistance will be in the form of workshops, webinars, and one-on-one virtual office hours. DRA will provide technical assistance to any successful applicant that would like guidance on strengthening future applications. For technical assistance, please email strategy@dra.gov.

Award Information

DRA will award approximately \$1.8 million through the program for Fiscal Year 2024. Funding was provided by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, PL 117-58). Awards will range from \$25,000-\$150,000. Grantees will be required to sign a participation agreement. The period of performance is up to 24 months.

Cost-Sharing Information

There will be no match associated with this program.

Reporting

Grant recipients will be required to report annually during the period of performance. Reports will cover the initial stages of your planning activities and implementation. DRA will provide grantees with a questionnaire to report progress. The first report will be due in exactly 12 months after the date of the award. For grantees still working on planning activities, the second report will be due once planning activities have been completed or exactly 24 months after the date of the award.

Administrative Program Requirements

All grantees will be subject to all applicable federal laws and regulations, including the OMB Uniform Guidance, and the terms and conditions of the award. The grant(s) awarded under this Notice of Funding Availability will be subject to the following administrative standards and provisions.

- I. Nonprofit Organizations, Educational institutions, For-profit entities, and State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments—2 CFR Part 200 (Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards)
- II. All recipients must comply with the applicable provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Public Law No 113-328, 128 Stat. 1425 (codified as amended at 29 U.S.C.



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3101 et. seq.) and the applicable provisions of the regulations at 20 CFR Part 675 et. seq. Note that 20 CFR Part 683 (Administrative Provisions) allows unsuccessful applicants to file administrative appeals.

- III. All entities must comply with 29 CFR Part 93 (New Restrictions on Lobbying), 29 CFR Part 94 (Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)), 2 CFR Part 180 (OMB Guidance to Agencies on Government-wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-procurement)), and, where applicable, 2 CFR Part 200 (Audit Requirements).
- IV. All entities must comply with the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and the Build America, Buy America (the Act), Pub. L. No. 117-58 §§ 70901-52, as well as the Executive Memorandum M-22-11, dated April 18, 2022, Initial Implementation Guidance on Application of Buy America Preference in Federal Finance Assistance Programs for Infrastructure.

DRA will follow the consultation policies established through Executive Order 13175, Consultation and Coordination and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments, and consistent with policies set forth in the Presidential Memorandum of January 26, 2021, on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-Nation Relationships.

- I. Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Handicap in Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance.
- II. Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Age in Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance from the DRA pursuant to the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended. The Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of age by recipients of Federal Financial Assistance and in federally assisted programs or activities but permits the use of certain age distinctions and factors other than age that meet the requirements of the Act and this part.
- III. Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance pursuant to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended (except sections 904 and 906 of those Amendments) ([20 U.S.C. 1681](#), [1682](#), [1683](#), [1685](#), [1686](#), [1687](#), [1688](#)), which is designed to eliminate (with certain exceptions) discrimination on the basis of sex in any education program or activity receiving Federal Financial Assistance, whether or not such program or activity is offered or sponsored by an educational institution as defined in these Title IX regulations.
- IV. Implementation of the Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
- V. Labor Standards for the Registration of Apprenticeship Programs and Equal Employment Opportunity in Apprenticeship and Training, as applicable.
- VI. DRA will follow the procedures outlined in the agency's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) policy. If DRA receives a FOIA request for your application, the procedures in DRA's FOIA policies for



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responding to requests for commercial/business information submitted to the government will be followed as well as all FOIA exemptions and procedures. See generally 5 U.S.C. § 552.

- VII. DRA programs are covered programs under the Biden Administration's Justice40 Initiative. As part of Justice40, DRA will identify the benefits of covered programs, determine how covered programs distribute benefits, and calculate and report on reaching the 40-percent goal of the Initiative. Benefits include direct and indirect investments (and program outcomes) that positively impact disadvantaged communities. Therefore, all entities must comply with reporting, data collection, and evaluation involved with the Justice40 Initiative.

Other Legal Requirements

I. Religions Activities

DRA notes that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), 42 U.S.C. § 2000bb, applies to all federal law and its implementation. If an applicant organization is a faith-based organization that makes hiring decisions on the basis of religious belief, it may be entitled to receive federal financial assistance under this grant solicitation and maintain that hiring practice. Religious organizations are eligible, on the same basis as any other organization, to seek DRA support or participate in DRA programs for which they are otherwise eligible.

II. Lobbying

Lobbying or Fundraising the U.S. Government with Federal Funds in accordance with Section 18 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 (Public Law 104-65) (2 U.S.C. § 1611), nonprofit entities incorporated under Internal Revenue Service Code section 501(c)(4) that engage in lobbying activities are not eligible to receive federal funds and grants. No activity, including awareness-raising and advocacy activities, may include fundraising for, or lobbying of, U.S. federal, state, or local governments (see 2 CFR 200.450 for more information).

III. Transparency Act Requirements

You must ensure that you have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the reporting requirements of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (Pub. Law 109-282, as amended by the Government Funding Transparency Act of 2008, Pub. Law 110-252, Title VI, Chap. 2, Sec. 6202), as follows.

1. Except for those excepted from the Transparency Act under sub-paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 below, you must ensure that you have the necessary processes and systems in place to



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comply with the subaward and executive total compensation reporting requirements of the Transparency Act, should you receive funding.

2. Upon award, you will receive detailed information on the reporting requirements of the Transparency Act, as described in 2 CFR Part 170, Appendix A, which can be found at <https://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-22705.pdf>.

The following types of awards are not subject to the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act.

1. Federal awards to individuals who apply for or receive federal awards as natural persons (e.g., unrelated to any business or nonprofit organization he or she may own or operate in his or her name);
2. Federal awards to entities that had a gross income, from all sources, of less than \$300,000 to the entities' previous tax year; and
3. Federal Awards, if the required reporting would disclose classified information.

IV. Safeguarding Data Including Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

Applicants submitting applications in response to this NOFA must recognize that confidentiality of PII and other sensitive data is of paramount importance to the DRA and must be observed except where disclosure is allowed by the prior written approval of the Grant Officer or by court order. By submitting an application, you are assuring that all data exchanges conducted through or during the course of the performance of this grant will be conducted in a manner consistent with applicable federal law and TEGL 39-11 (issued June 28, 2012). All such activity conducted by the recipient(s) will be performed in a manner consistent with applicable state and federal laws.

By submitting a grant application, you agree to take all necessary steps to protect such confidentiality by complying with the following provisions that are applicable in governing the handling of confidential information: You must ensure that PII and sensitive data developed, obtained, or otherwise associated with DRA funded grants is securely transmitted.

1. To ensure that such PII is not transmitted to authorized users, all PII and other sensitive data transmitted via email or stored on CDs, DVDs, thumb drives, etc., must be encrypted using a Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) 140-2 compliant and National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) validated cryptographic module. You must not email unencrypted sensitive PII to any entity, including DRA or contractors.
2. You must take the necessary steps to ensure the privacy of all PII obtained from participants and/or other individuals and to protect such information from unauthorized



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disclosure. You must maintain such PII in accordance with the DRA standards for information security and any updates to such standards we provide to you. Grantees who wish to obtain more information on data security should contact their federal project officer.

3. You must ensure that any PII used during the performance of your grant has been obtained in conformity with applicable federal and state laws governing the confidentiality of information.
4. You further acknowledge that all PII data obtained through your DRA grant must be stored in an area that is physically safe from access by authorized persons at all times, and the data will be processed using recipient-issued equipment, managed information technology (IT) services, and designated locations approved by DRA. Accessing, processing, and storing of DRA grant PII data on personally owned equipment, at off-site locations (e.g., employee's home), and non-recipient managed IT services (e.g., Yahoo email) is strictly prohibited unless approved by DRA.
5. Your employees and other personnel who will have access to sensitive/confidential/proprietary/ private data must be advised of the confidential nature of the information, the safeguards required to protect the information, and that there are civil and criminal sanctions for noncompliance with such safeguards that are contained in federal and state laws.
6. Before being granted access to PII, you must have the policies and procedures in place under which your employees and other personnel acknowledge their understanding of the confidential nature of the data, as well as the fact that they may be liable to civil and criminal sanctions for improper disclosure.
7. You must not extract information from data supplied by DRA for any purpose not stated in the grant agreement.
8. Access to any PII created by the DRA grant must be restricted to only those employees of the grant recipient who need it in their official capacity to perform duties in connection with the scope of work in the grant agreement.
9. All PII data must be processed in a manner that will protect the confidentiality of records/documents and is designed to prevent unauthorized persons from retrieving such records by computer, remote terminal, or any other means. Data may be downloaded to, or maintained on, mobile or portable devices only if the data are encrypted using NIST-validated software products based on FIPS 140-2 encryption. In addition, wage data may be accessed only from secure locations.



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10. PII data obtained by the recipient through a request from DRA must not be disclosed to anyone but the individual requestor, except as permitted by the grant officer or by court order.
11. You must permit DRA to make onsite inspections during regular business hours for the purpose of conducting audits and/or conducting other investigations to ensure that you are complying with the confidentiality requirements described above. In accordance with this responsibility, you must make records applicable to this agreement available to authorized persons for the purpose of inspection, review, and/or audit.
12. You must retain data received from DRA only for the period of time required to use it for assessment and other purposes or to satisfy applicable federal records retention requirements, if any. Thereafter, you agree that all data will be destroyed, including the degaussing of magnetic tape files and deletion of electronic data.

V. Record Retention

You must follow federal guidelines on record retention, which require that you maintain all records pertaining to grant activities for a period of at least three years from the date of submission of the final expenditure report. See 2 CFR 200.333-.337 for more specific information, including information about the start of the record retention period for awards that are renewed quarterly and annually and when the records must be retained for more than three years.

VI. Use of Contracts and Subawards

You must abide by the following definitions of contract, contractor, subaward, and subrecipient.

Contract: Contract means a legal instrument by which a non-federal entity (defined as a state or local government, Indian tribe, institution of higher education, nonprofit organization, for-profit entity, foreign public entity, or a foreign organization that carries out a federal award as a recipient or subrecipient) purchases property or services needed to carry out the project or program under a federal award. The term as used in this NOFA does not include a legal instrument, even if the non-federal entity considers it a contract, when the substance of the transaction meets the definition of a federal award or subaward (see definition of subaward below).

Contractor: Contractor means an entity that receives a contract as defined above in “Contract.”

Subaward: Subaward means an award provided by a pass-through entity (defined as a non-federal entity that provides a subaward to a recipient to carry out part of a federal program) to a subrecipient for the subrecipient to carry out part of a federal award received by the pass-through entity. It does not include payments to a contractor or payments to an individual that is a



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beneficiary of a federal program. A subaward must be provided through any form of legal agreement, including an agreement that the pass-through entity considers a contract.

Subrecipient: Subrecipient means a non-federal entity that receives a subaward from a pass-through entity to carry out part of a federal program but does not include an individual that is a beneficiary of such program. A subrecipient may also be a recipient of other federal awards directly from a federal awarding agency.

You must follow the provisions of 2 CFR 200.330-.332 regarding subrecipient monitoring and management. Also, see 2 CFR 200.308(c)(6) regarding prior approval requirements for subawards. When awarding subawards, you are required to comply with provisions on government-wide suspension and debarment found at 2 CFR Part 180 and codified at 2 CFR Part 2998.

VII. Closeout of Grant Award

Any entity that receives an award under this Announcement must close its grant with DRA at the end of the final year of the grant.

Other Administrative Standards and Provisions

Except as specifically provided in this NOFA, our acceptance of an application and an award of federal funds to sponsor any program(s) does not provide a waiver of any grant requirements and/or procedures. For example, the OMB Uniform Guidance requires that an entity's procurement procedures ensure that all procurement transactions are conducted, as much as practical, to provide full and open competition. If an application identifies a specific entity to provide goods or services, the award does not provide the justification or basis to sole source the procurement (i.e., avoid competition).

Special Program Requirements

I. DRA Evaluation

As a condition of grant award, grantees are required to participate in an evaluation if undertaken by DRA. The evaluation may include an implementation assessment across grantees, as well as impact and/or outcomes analysis or assessment of return on investment. Conducting an impact analysis could involve random assignment (which involves random assignment of eligible participants into a treatment group that would receive program services or enhanced program services or into control group(s) that receive no program services or program services that are not enhanced). We may require applicants to collect data elements to aid the evaluation. As part of the evaluation, as a condition of award, grantees must agree to:



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1. Make records available to the evaluation contractor or participants, employers, and funding;
2. Provide access to program operating personnel, participants, operational and financial records, and any other relevant documents to calculate program costs and benefits;
3. In the case of an impact analysis, facilitate the assignment of a lottery of participants to program services, including the possible increased recruitment of potential participants; and
4. Follow evaluation procedures as specified by the evaluation contractor under the direction of DRA.

II. Performance Goals

Please note that applicants will be held to the outcomes provided, and failure to meet these outcomes may result in technical assistance or other interventions by DRA and may also have a significant impact on the decisions about future grants with DRA.

Definitions

Construction Materials: Construction materials include an article, materials, or supply – other than an item of primarily iron or steel; a manufactured product; cement or cementitious materials; aggregates such as stone, sand, or gravel; or aggregate binding agents or additives that is or consists primarily of:

- Non-ferrous metals;
- Plastic and polymer-based products (including polyvinylchloride, composite building materials, and polymers used in fiber optic cables);
- Glass (including optic glass);
- Lumber; or
- Drywall.

Domestic content procurement preference means all iron and steel used in the projects are produced in the United States; the manufactured products used in the project are produced in the United States; or the construction materials used in the project are produced in the United States.

Infrastructure: Infrastructure includes, a minimum, the structure, facilities, and equipment for in the United States: (1) roads, highways, and bridges, (2) public transportation, (3) dams, ports, harbors, and other maritime systems, (4) intercity passenger and freight railroads, (5) freight and intermodal facilities, (6) airports, (7) water systems, including drinking water and wastewater systems, (8) electrical



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transmission facilities and systems, (9) utilities, (10), broadband infrastructure, (11) buildings and real property. Infrastructure includes facilities that generate, transport, and distribute energy.

Project: Project means the construction alteration, maintenance, or repair of infrastructure in the United States.

Appendix

Disadvantaged Communities

Pursuant to [M-21-28](#) and [M-23-09](#), issued by the White House Office of Management and Budget, White House Council on Environmental Quality, and White House Office of Domestic Climate Policy, DRA recognizes disadvantaged communities as the census tracts that are identified as disadvantaged by [CEJST](#), as well as all Federally Recognized Tribes and Tribal entities. Established by [Executive Order 14008](#) titled “Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad,” the [Justice40 Initiative](#) sets a goal that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain federal investments in climate, clean energy, and other areas flow to disadvantaged communities.

Distressed Communities

DRA defines, pursuant to its statute, 7 USC 2009aa-5, a distressed community as a county, parish, or an isolated area of distress located in non-distressed counties or parishes, which are “the most severely and persistently distressed and underdeveloped and have high rates of poverty or unemployment.” This definition is applicable to all of DRA’s covered programs. A complete list of economically distressed counties and parishes and isolated areas of distress in non-distressed counties and parishes can be found [here](#).

Persistent Poverty

DRA applies the USDA Economic Research Service’s definition of persistent poverty to identify persistent poverty counties and parishes across the region. Persistent poverty counties and parishes are counties and parishes that have experienced a poverty rate of 20 percent or greater for at least 30 years.

There are 109 persistent poverty counties and parishes across DRA’s eight-state region:

Alabama

Barbour County, Bullock County, Butler County, Choctaw County, Clarke County, Conecuh County, Dallas County, Escambia County, Greene County, Hale County, Lowndes County, Macon County, Marengo County, Monroe County, Perry County, Pickens County, Sumter County, Wilcox County



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Arkansas

Bradley County, Chicot County, Crittenden County, Desha County, Jefferson County, Lee County, Mississippi County, Monroe County, Phillips County, Poinsett County, St. Francis County, Searcy County, Woodruff County

Illinois

Alexander County, Jackson County, Pulaski County

Kentucky

Fulton County

Louisiana

Acadia Parish, Avoyelles Parish, Bienville Parish, Catahoula Parish, Claiborne Parish, Concordia Parish, East Carroll Parish, East Feliciana Parish, Evangeline Parish, Franklin Parish, Lincoln Parish, Madison Parish, Morehouse Parish, Natchitoches Parish, Orleans Parish, Ouachita Parish, Red River Parish, Richland Parish, St. Helena Parish, St. Landry Parish, Tangipahoa Parish, Tensas Parish, Washington Parish, West Carroll Parish, Winn Parish

Mississippi

Adams County, Amite County, Attala County, Benton County, Bolivar County, Claiborne County, Coahoma County, Copiah County, Covington County, Franklin County, Grenada County, Holmes County, Humphreys County, Issaquena County, Jasper County, Jefferson County, Jefferson Davis County, Lafayette County, Leflore County, Marion County, Marshall County, Montgomery County, Panola County, Pike County, Quitman County, Sharkey County, Simpson County, Sunflower County, Tallahatchie County, Tunica County, Walthall County, Washington County, Wilkinson County, Yalobusha County, Yazoo County

Missouri

Carter County, Dunklin County, Mississippi County, New Madrid County, Oregon County, Pemiscot County, Reynolds County, Ripley County, Shannon County, Texas County, Washington County, Wayne County, Wright County

Tennessee

Lake County



Delta Regional Authority
Strategic Planning Program
Notice of Funding Availability

Underserved Communities

DRA applies the definition of underserved communities used in Executive Order (E.O.) 13985, titled “Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government.” This E.O. defines underserved communities as, “populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life...” The E.O. lists individuals that belong to underserved communities as “Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.”



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