

DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

*CREATING JOBS.
BUILDING COMMUNITIES.
IMPROVING LIVES.*



DRA.GOV





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ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

The Delta Regional Authority (DRA) presents its 2023 Annual Report, which serves as the agency’s annual report to the U.S. Congress. This publication highlights DRA’s strategic investments and priority programs in the past year. You will find details about the many programs and initiatives DRA supported in 2023.

The federal programs and region-wide initiatives included in this report are part of DRA’s mission to help create jobs, build communities, and improve the lives of the 10 million residents in the 252 counties and parishes of the eight-state DRA region.

2023 Annual Report Highlights

- Key investments in each state that support basic public infrastructure and transportation infrastructure to rural residents, provide quality workforce training and education for job seekers, and improve opportunities for entrepreneurs and small businesses to grow and thrive in the DRA region
- Strategic programs and initiatives and region-wide initiatives that are increasing workforce competitiveness and community capacity, such as the Delta Workforce Grant Program and the Delta Leadership Institute
- Two new capacity-building programs designed to enhance the region’s resiliency and ability to compete for and leverage resources
- Agency efforts to invest in targeted and economic and community development projects driven by outcomes and supported by public-private partnership that are essential for DRA communities to compete in the modern economy



DRA LEADERSHIP

Dr. Corey Wiggins,
Federal Co-Chairman

Board of Governors, Designees and Alternates

ALABAMA

Governor Kay Ivey

Designee - Kenneth Boswell
Alternate - Crystal Talley

ARKANSAS

Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders

Designee - Clint O’Neal
Alternate - Amy Williams

ILLINOIS

Governor JB Pritzker,
2023 States’ Co-Chair

Designee - Brandi Bradley
Alternate - Lynne Chambers

KENTUCKY

Governor Andy Beshear

Designee - Dennis Keene

LOUISIANA

Governor Jeff Landry

Designee - Karen White

MISSISSIPPI

Governor Tate Reeves

Designee - Sam Andrews

MISSOURI

Governor Michael L. Parson

Designee - Lesley Rone
Alternate - Robert J. Knodell

TENNESSEE

Governor Bill Lee

Designee - Brooxie Carlton



BACKGROUND

DRA is an independent federal agency of the U.S. government. 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 and Alabama Black Belt regions. To fulfill this purpose, DRA invests in projects supporting transportation infrastructure, basic public infrastructure, workforce training and business development. DRA works to create jobs, build communities and improve the lives of those that reside in the region. DRA's region encompasses 252 counties and parishes in parts of Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri and Tennessee.

Congress mandated (7 U.S.C. §2009aa) that DRA shall provide funding for the following four categories:

- Basic public infrastructure in distressed counties and isolated areas of distress;
- Transportation infrastructure for the purpose of facilitating economic development in the region;
- Business development, with emphasis on entrepreneurship; and
- Job training or employment-related education, with emphasis on the use of existing public educational institutions located in the region.

Congressional stipulations include:

- The authority will allocate at least 75% of its funds for use in distressed counties; and
- The authority shall allocate at least 50% of any funds for transportation and basic public infrastructure projects.



FISCAL YEAR 2023 COUNTIES & PARISHES

DRA calculates distress criteria on an annual basis. To be deemed distressed, counties and parishes must meet the following criteria:

1. An unemployment rate of one percent higher than the national average for the most recent 24-month period.
 2. Have a per capita income of 80 percent or less of the most recent national per capita income level.
- DRA's enabling legislation requires the authority to update its distressed and non-distressed counties as well as isolated areas designation annually. The tabulation for fiscal year 2023 resulted in 224 distressed counties and parishes, 28 non-distressed counties and parishes, and 240 isolated areas within non-distressed counties and parishes (see list below).

2023 DISTRESSED COUNTIES & PARISHES

DRA's region encompasses 252 counties and parishes across eight states. Enabling legislation dictates that at least 75% of DRA's funds must be invested in economically distressed counties and parishes and isolated areas within non-distressed counties and parishes.

ALABAMA

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

ARKANSAS

Ashley	Grant	Phillips
Baxter	Greene	Poinsett
Bradley	Independence	Prairie
Calhoun	Izard	Randolph
Chicot	Jackson	St. Francis
Clay	Jefferson	Searcy
Cleveland	Lawrence	Sharp
Craighead	Lee	Stone
Crittenden	Lincoln	Union
Cross	Lonoke	Van Buren
Dallas	Marion	White
Desha	Mississippi	Woodruff
Drew	Monroe	
Fulton	Ouachita	



ILLINOIS

Alexander	Saline	Hopkins
Franklin	Union	Livingston
Gallatin	Kentucky	Lyon
Hardin	Ballard	McLean
Jackson	Caldwell	Marshall
Johnson	Calloway	Muhlenberg
Massac	Christian	Todd
Perry	Crittenden	Trigg
Pope	Fulton	Union
Pulaski	Graves	Webster
Randolph	Henderson	

LOUISIANA

Acadia	Grant	St. Mary
Allen	Iberia	Tangipahoa
Assumption	Iberville	Tensas
Avoyelles	Jackson	Union
Bienville	Jefferson Davis	Vermilion
Caldwell	LaSalle	Washington
Catahoula	Lafourche	Webster
Claiborne	St. Bernard	West Baton Rouge
Concordia	St. Charles	West Carroll
East Carroll	St. Helena	West Feliciana
East Feliciana	St. James	Winn
Evangeline	St. John the Baptist	
Franklin	St. Landry	
	St. Martin	

MISSISSIPPI

Adams	Humphreys	Sharkey
Amite	Issaquena	Simpson
Attala	Jasper	Smith
Benton	Jefferson Davis	Sunflower
Bolivar	Lafayette	Tallahatchie
Carol	Lawrence	Tate
Claiborne	Leflore	Tippah
Coahoma	Lincoln	Tunica
Copiah	Marion	Union
Covington	Marshall	Walthall
Desoto	Montgomery	Warren
Franklin	Panola	Washington
Grenada	Pike	Wilkinson
Hinds	Quitman	Yalobusha
Holmes	Rankin	Yazoo

MISSOURI

Bollinger	Madison	Scott
Butler	Mississippi	Shannon
Cape Girardeau	New Madrid	Ste. Genevieve
Carter	Oregon	St. Francois
Crawford	Ozark	Stoddard
Dent	Pemiscot	Texas
Douglas	Perry	Washington
Dunklin	Phelps	Wayne
Howell	Reynolds	Wright
Iron	Ripley	

TENNESSEE

Benton
Carroll
Chester
Crockett
Decatur
Gibson
Hardeman
Hardin
Haywood
Henderson
Henry
Lake
Lauderdale
Madison
McNairy
Obion
Shelby
Tipton
Weakley



2023 NON-DISTRESSED COUNTIES & PARISHES

U.S.C.A. §2009aa-5(a) requires DRA to annually designate counties and parishes within its eight-state service area as distressed and non-distressed and isolated areas of distress. Using the formula of the U.S. Economic Development Administration, DRA designates counties and parishes within the Delta region as distressed, non-distressed, and isolated areas of distress.

The following lists are the 2023 distressed, non-distressed, and isolated areas of distress counties and parishes in DRA's eight-state service area.

ALABAMA

None

ARKANSAS

Arkansas
Pulaski

ILLINOIS

Hamilton
White
Williamson

KENTUCKY

Carlisle
Hickman
McCracken

LOUISIANA

Ascension
Cameron
DeSoto
East Baton Rouge
Jefferson
Plaquemines
Pointe Coupee
Rapides
Red River
St. Charles
West Baton Rouge

MISSOURI

None

MISSISSIPPI

Madison

TENNESSEE

Dyer
Fayette





CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF) investments strengthen the economic viability of our Delta communities. In FY 2023, DRA invested over \$34 million in 35 projects to address flood control, basic public infrastructure, and local transportation infrastructure improvements that enhance local and regional economies throughout the DRA region. These investments are expected to create or retain 6,900 jobs and affect over 11,700 families.

STATES' ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The States' Economic Development Assistance Program (SEDAP) is DRA's primary investment tool. In FY 2023, DRA invested over \$18 million in 45 projects that will improve water and sewer systems, boost business development, enhance infrastructure, and support job training in communities throughout the Delta region. These investments were matched by \$53.3 million and will attract an additional \$62 million in private investments. These investments are expected to create or retain nearly 1,100 jobs, train over 1,700 individuals, and affect more than 5,800 families.

PUBLIC WORKS AND ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE

The Economic Development Administration, an agency in the U.S. Department of Commerce, made \$3 million of its FY 2023 Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance (PWEAA) program available to DRA. This program supports rural communities by investing in projects that leverage existing regional assets and the implementation of community development strategies that advance economic prosperity in distressed regions.

In 2023, two projects were approved by EDA for funding:

- Wallace Community College Regional Maintenance Training Equipment in Alabama at \$694,870
- Winrock Innovation Fundamental I-Fund in Arkansas at \$521,004



“ THE DRA HAS BEEN AN AMAZING PARTNER TO KENTUCKY FOR YEARS. INVESTMENTS LIKE THESE SUPPORT OUR GROWING WORKFORCE AND SET WESTERN KENTUCKY UP FOR CONTINUED ECONOMIC PROSPERITY. SO MANY COMPANIES ARE INVESTING BIG IN KENTUCKY, AND THESE DRA-SUPPORTED PROJECTS ARE ENSURING WE HAVE THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND WORKERS TO KEEP UP WITH THE PROGRESS WE’RE SEEING ACROSS OUR STATE.

- Gov. Andy Beshear



ALABAMA STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

FY 2023 SEDAP INVESTMENTS

5 Total DRA Projects
 DRA Investment: \$1,299,935
 Public Investment: \$1,174,623
 Private Investment: \$23,000,000

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

82 Jobs Created & Retained
 36 Individuals Trained
 77 Families Affected

FY 2023 CIF INVESTMENTS

8 Total DRA Projects
 DRA Investment: \$6,101,297
 Project Investment: \$2,680,597
 Capital Investment: \$146,708,000

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

195 Jobs Created & Retained
 274 Families Affected



ARKANSAS STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

FY 2023 SEDAP INVESTMENTS

6 Total DRA Projects
 DRA Investment: \$2,353,614
 Public Investment: \$13,615,560
 Private Investment: \$50,000

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

87 Jobs Created & Retained
 774 Individuals Trained

FY 2023 CIF INVESTMENTS

7 Total DRA Projects
 DRA Investment: \$5,757,124
 Project Investment: \$12,864,652
 Capital Investment: N/A

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

60 Jobs Created & Retained
 5,500 Families Affected

FY 2023 INVESTMENTS

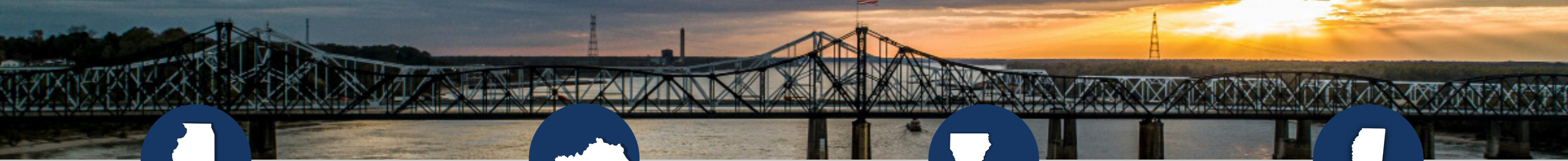
DRA measures the impact of its investments through four main outcomes: jobs created, jobs retained, individuals trained, and families with improved access to infrastructure and services. The following are outcomes for DRA investments in FY 2023.

80 Total DRA Projects

DRA Investment: \$52,690,613
 Public Investment: \$137,118,237
 Private Investment: \$317,219,291

Anticipated Outcomes

7,993 Jobs Created & Retained
 1,763 Individuals Trained
 17,507 Families Affected



ILLINOIS STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

FY 2023 SEDAP INVESTMENTS

6 Total DRA Projects
 DRA Investment: \$1,259,854
 Public Investment: \$908,604
 Private Investment: N/A

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

267 Jobs Created & Retained
 29 Individuals Trained
 20 Families Affected

FY 2023 CIF INVESTMENTS

2 Total DRA Projects
 DRA Investment: \$2,732,481
 Project Investment: \$961,005
 Capital Investment: \$67,211,000

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

138 Jobs Created & Retained
 122 Families Affected



KENTUCKY STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

FY 2023 SEDAP INVESTMENTS

3 Total DRA Projects
 DRA Investment: \$1,665,344
 Public Investment: \$2,272,585
 Private Investment: N/A

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

8 Jobs Created & Retained
 415 Individuals Trained

FY 2023 CIF INVESTMENTS

1 Total DRA Projects
 DRA Investment: \$1,826,783
 Project Investment: \$210,000
 Capital Investment: N/A

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

500 Families Affected



LOUISIANA STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

FY 2023 SEDAP INVESTMENTS

9 Total DRA Projects
 DRA Investment: \$3,338,367
 Public Investment: \$7,522,172
 Private Investment: N/A

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

322 Jobs Created & Retained
 80 Individuals Trained
 4,407 Families Affected

FY 2023 CIF INVESTMENTS

7 Total DRA Projects
 DRA Investment: \$8,184,056
 Project Investment: \$56,997,223
 Capital Investment: \$41,250,000

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

907 Jobs Created & Retained
 2,381 Families Affected



MISSISSIPPI STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

FY 2023 SEDAP INVESTMENTS

7 Total DRA Projects
 DRA Investment: \$2,553,441
 Public Investment: \$3,812,279
 Private Investment: \$1,250,000

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

96 Jobs Created & Retained
 14 Individuals Trained
 1,289 Families Affected

FY 2023 CIF INVESTMENTS

8 Total DRA Projects
 DRA Investment: \$5,686,749
 Project Investment: \$1,928,149
 Capital Investment: N/A

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

100 Jobs Created & Retained
 3,081 Families Affected

STATE INVESTMENT IMPACT

While home to 10 million residents, the DRA region is among the most economically distressed parts of the United States. Among the DRA region's 252 counties and parishes, most are characterized as distressed and persistently in poverty. Despite these economic conditions, millions of Americans across the country rely on the DRA region for agriculture, manufacturing, textiles, and supply chain logistics, as well as natural resources.

Throughout its history, DRA has responded effectively to the region's challenges through its programs and investments. The DRA invests in a broad range of initiatives that support the four overarching goals of the DRA: investing in public infrastructure, developing local workforces, promoting business growth and entrepreneurship, and supporting sustainable communities.

DRA is essential to economic development in the 252 counties and parishes within our eight-state region. As noted by the Southern Economic Advancement Project, "[t]he economic conditions within the Delta and the Black Belt regions continue to negatively impact the lives of the people there and the nation's overall economic health." The investments made via DRA for basic public infrastructure, transportation infrastructure, business development, and workforce development are vital to the economic development of those areas.



MISSOURI STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

FY 2023 SEDAP INVESTMENTS

6 Total DRA Projects
DRA Investment: \$2,220,074
Public Investment: \$2,658,483
Private Investment: \$3,750,291

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

57 Jobs Created & Retained
415 Individuals Trained
8 Families Affected

FY 2023 CIF INVESTMENTS

1 Total DRA Projects
DRA Investment: \$876,287
Project Investment: \$30,000
Capital Investment: N/A

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

74 Families Affected



TENNESSEE STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

FY 2023 SEDAP INVESTMENTS

3 Total DRA Projects
DRA Investment: \$3,335,207
Public Investment: \$21,342,305
Private Investment: \$34,000,000

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

174 Jobs Created & Retained

FY 2023 CIF INVESTMENTS

1 Total DRA Projects
DRA Investment: \$3,500,00
Project Investment: \$8,140,000
Capital Investment: N/A

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

5,500 Families Affected





HUMAN INFRASTRUCTURE

DELTA WORKFORCE GRANT PROGRAM

The Delta Workforce Grant Program (DWP) targets federal resources toward communities in the DRA region that have been hit hard by industrial downsizing, business closures, and job losses as a result of the public health and economic crisis. DWP supports projects and initiatives that create a more vibrant economic future for the region by expanding job training and re-employment opportunities; aligning workforce and economic development strategies; creating sustainable talent pipelines; establishing or enhancing locally or regionally significant public-private partnerships; and supporting enhanced workforce productivity through investments in innovative programming.

DRA announced 28 DWP projects in all eight states, totaling \$11.7 million. As a result of this investment, nearly 3,800 individuals are projected to receive industry-driven skills training for high-demand jobs in their communities. See the snapshot below:



ALABAMA

Alabama Department of Commerce was awarded over \$434,000 for the Macon County Workforce Development Initiative. The program will provide work readiness and employment training for residents in Macon County for careers in advanced manufacturing; agriculture and construction; health care; information technology; and transportation, distribution, and logistics.

Marion Military Institute (MMI) was awarded \$400,000 for the Marion Military Institute First Responder Program. The program will expand its training capability, allowing MMI Fire Cadets to acquire the national Emergency Vehicle Operator certification and earn the Fire Apparatus: Pumper certification on site.

West Central Alabama Area Health Education Center, in coordination with partners across Hale,

Marengo, and Perry Counties, was awarded \$450,000 for the Longleaf Outreach Project. This innovative, community-based workforce development project aims to increase the health care workforce pipeline in rural Alabama.

Town of Fort Deposit, in collaboration with the cities and towns of Yellow Bluff, York Linden, and Clayton, was awarded \$450,000 to implement a comprehensive plan to increase the number of certified water and wastewater workers across the five communities.

Southern Alabama Area Health Education Center was awarded \$450,000 for the Southern Alabama Rural Training Program. The program aims to improve health care delivery in rural areas and address the need for trained health professionals in rural communities.



**THESE INVESTMENTS
CREATE OPPORTUNITIES
FOR RESIDENTS TO
ENTER AND REMAIN
IN THE WORKFORCE,
HELPING TO NURTURE
LOCAL WORKFORCE
ECOSYSTEMS
AND SUPPORT
REGIONAL ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT IN
SOME OF THE MOST
PERSISTENTLY
IMPOVERISHED AREAS
OF THE COUNTRY.**

- Dr. Corey Wiggins,
Federal Co-Chairman,
Delta Regional Authority



ARKANSAS

Southeast Arkansas Community Action Corporation (SEACAC) was awarded over \$229,000 for the SEACAC Certified Caregiver and Nursing Assistant Workforce Development Program. The program will provide access to certification and continuing education for health care workers throughout the South Arkansas Delta and prepare individuals to care for patients in diverse settings.

East Arkansas Community College, in collaboration with Southeast Arkansas College,

was awarded over \$449,000 for the Arkansas Delta Trucking Academy to increase training capacity for commercial drivers.

Women’s Foundation of Arkansas was awarded \$375,000 for the Tjuana Byrd Internship Program. The program will provide Arkansas young women of color, ages 18-22, opportunities to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and math industries with leading Arkansas companies.

ILLINOIS

Mentoring Mission, in partnership with the Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University’s Gaetz Aerospace Institute and John A. Logan College, was awarded nearly \$449,500 to establish an aviation maintenance pipeline through the Aviation Maintenance Technical Pipeline Focused Initiative.

KENTUCKY

Madisonville Community College was awarded over \$436,000 to expand the capacity for its electrical technology and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning degree programs.

Green River Area Development District was awarded \$450,000 for its H2O project. The project will enable water and wastewater operator apprentices in the Green River region of Western Kentucky to participate in the Kentucky Rural Water Association’s Registered Apprenticeship Program.

LOUISIANA

Baton Rouge North Economic Development District, in partnership with Southern University, ExxonMobil, and Linde plc, was awarded \$450,000 for the HBCU Decarbonization Workforce Development Program. The program aims to build a strategic black, indigenous, and people of color workforce that is focused on decarbonizing energy and industrial processes.

NOVAC was awarded \$450,000 for its Growing Film Production in Southeast Louisiana project. The project will provide training and support for job placement within the film industry through a public-private partnership with the government, employers, and labor unions in film production.

Reconcile New Orleans, Inc., was awarded over \$405,000 to provide work readiness training, career technical education, and other vocational training, internships, and on-the-job training in the hospitality industry to Opportunity Youth in Orleans Parish.

New Orleans Business Alliance, in collaboration with the City of New Orleans’ Office of Workforce Development, YouthForce NOLA, Thrive New Orleans, Urban League of Louisiana, Delgado Community College, and the University of New Orleans, was awarded \$450,000 to expand opportunities for entry-level positions within clean infrastructure.

South Louisiana Community College was awarded nearly \$420,000 to expand its welding, maritime structural fitter, and machine tool program cohort to five campuses throughout the Acadiana region.

DWP MAKES TARGETED INVESTMENTS THAT SUPPORT WORKFORCE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING NEEDS AND HELPS CREATE PATHWAYS TO HIGH-QUALITY CAREERS.

- Dr. Corey Wiggins,
Federal Co-Chairman,
Delta Regional Authority



MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi Community College Board

was awarded \$450,000 for its Enhanced Delta Aviation Project. The project will build upon and supplement the Delta Aviation Project efforts, in which participants train to become aviation maintenance technicians, address the potential need for COVID-related distance learning, and support underserved participants in its service area.

Mississippi Delta Community College (MDCC)

was awarded over \$346,000 for its Navigating the Economy and Workforce through Creativity, Revitalization, Education, and Science of Technology (NEW CREST) project. NEW CREST will implement a computer network technology program, targeting underserved new, incumbent, and dislocated workers in MDCC's service area, and offer training in telecommunications, network technologies, administration, hardware maintenance, operating systems, network planning, and implementation.

Rust College was awarded nearly \$255,000 for the Rust College Rural AgriTech Program. The program will produce viable economic development strategies for small, rural communities; create a sustainable talent pipeline; and establish locally and regionally significant public-private partnerships between underrepresented

students, farmers, and aeronautical professionals.

Jackson State University was awarded nearly \$450,000 to develop an online cybersecurity and information systems management certificate program. The program will train new entrants to the workforce, incumbent workers, and distance learners for cybersecurity and information technology careers.

City of Natchez was awarded over \$443,000 for the Natchez-Adams County Workforce Initiative. The initiative will develop and implement a workforce training system to align workforce development initiatives with current and future employment trends. Dislocated workers, new entrants to the workforce, and incumbent workers residing in Natchez-Adams County and surrounding areas will be upskilled or will be trained and placed in quality, in-demand jobs.

Mississippi Coding Academies was awarded \$450,000 to provide career training as computer coders and developers in the tech field.

MISSOURI

Three Rivers College was awarded over \$402,000 for the Workforce Ready Project. The project will enable four Southeast Missouri regional learning institutions to establish training programs for new entry and incumbent workers in health care, transportation, construction, manufacturing, or technology-related fields.

Missouri State University-West Plains was awarded over \$437,000 to engage unemployed or underemployed adults, veterans, high school youth, incumbent workers, and other underrepresented groups through education and career training within the manufacturing and construction sections.

IN FY 2023, DRA INVESTED MORE THAN \$1.2 MILLION IN THREE PROJECTS IN MISSOURI THAT SUPPORT WORKFORCE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING NEEDS OF ITS WORKFORCE.

TENNESSEE

Agricenter International was awarded nearly \$450,000 to expand AgTech career pathways for new entrants and for dislocated and incumbent workers through its GradTech program. The program will expand to year-round service delivery to meet the needs and availability of incumbent and dislocated workers by providing a skills- and work-based learning experience.

ProGeny Startups, in collaboration with the GradUS Project, was awarded nearly \$443,000 to implement Project E.A.T. - Food as an Economic Mobility Tool 2.0. The project will serve dislocated and unemployed workers, with an emphasis on serving domestic violence victims in Shelby, Gibson, and Madison counties, who will be enrolled in a job training program supporting food-based manufacturing.

Memphis Chamber Foundation was awarded over \$447,000 as part of a collaborative effort to build a sustainable talent pipeline of STEM-focused, job-ready individuals to fill the increasing demand for advanced manufacturing jobs in the Memphis region, retain existing advanced manufacturer clusters, and competitively attract additional advanced manufacturers to the region.

WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITY FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

In partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Appalachian Regional Commission, and Northern Border Regional Commission, approximately \$44 million in grants were awarded in fiscal year 2023 under the Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities (WORC) initiative to support workforce training and education in rural communities across the Delta, Appalachian, and Northern Border regions.

The fifth round of WORC grants was announced on September 14, 2023. See the snapshot below.

RECIPIENT	STATE	AMOUNT
American Indian Center of Arkansas	AR	\$1,498,810
Heartland Forward Inc.	AR	\$1,499,931
Arkansas Rural Health Partnership	AR	\$1,500,000
Vienna Township High School 13-3	IL	\$1,415,000
KCTCS Madisonville Community College	KY	\$591,343
Murray State University	KY	\$1,499,268
Northshore Technical Community College	LA	\$1,499,839
Southeastern Louisiana University	LA	\$1,499,893
University of Louisiana at Monroe	LA	\$1,499,983
Jackson State University	MS	\$1,284,238
Delta Health Alliance Inc.	MS	\$1,500,000
ProGeny Startups Inc.	TN	\$1,323,217
Universtiy of Tennessee	TN	\$1,469,794
Agricenter International	TN	\$1,493,684
TOTAL		\$19,575,000



THE WORC INITIATIVE IS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT TO STRENGTHENING LOCAL WORKFORCE ECOSYSTEMS AND ECONOMIC VITALITY THROUGHOUT OUR REGION. DRA'S PARTNERSHIP WITH THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR ENSURES THAT RESIDENTS RECEIVE INDUSTRY-DRIVEN SKILLS TRAINING FOR HIGH-DEMAND JOBS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES, HELPING TO CREATE PATHWAYS TO HIGH-QUALITY CAREERS AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY IN SOME OF THE MOST PERSISTENTLY IMPOVERISHED AREAS OF THE UNITED STATES.

- Dr. Corey Wiggins,
Federal Co-Chairman, Delta Regional



DELTA DOCTORS

In partnership with the U.S. Department of State, DRA's Delta Doctors program helps address the health disparities and high levels of health professional shortages by granting J-1 visa waivers for physicians who are willing to provide medical services in DRA communities. The program allows foreign physicians who are trained in the United States to work in medically underserved areas for three years, although most doctors in the program continue to serve their communities beyond their three-year commitment. Physicians participating in the Delta Doctors program do not take jobs away from native physicians, but instead provide services in areas where there would otherwise be a shortage of physicians, increasing access to affordable, quality health care.

In FY 2023, DRA received 62 J-1 Visa Waiver applications. A breakdown by state is below.

J-1 RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY

OCTOBER 2022 - SEPTEMBER 2023

STATE	AMOUNT
Alabama	0
Arkansas	1
Illinois	7
Kentucky	5
Louisiana	21
Mississippi	11
Missouri	4
Tennessee	13
TOTAL	62

DELTA REGION COMMUNITY HEALTH SYSTEMS PROGRAM

DRA, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration, provides the Delta Region Community Health Systems Development - Technical Assistance Program (DRCHSD) to enhance health care delivery in the Delta region. Through intensive technical assistance, health care providers in select rural communities receive help to identify and address health care needs while strengthening the local healthcare system.

The following 11 health care facilities were selected for the DRCHSD Cohort 2022 (to begin the program in 2023):

ALABAMA

Washington County Hospital and Nursing Home | Chatom, AL

Washington County Hospital & Nursing Home is a 25-bed, critical access hospital that serves Washington County.

ARKANSAS

Bradley County Medical Center | Warren, AR

Bradley County Medical Center is a 25-bed, critical access hospital that serves Bradley County.

Cross Ridge Community Hospital | Wynne, AR

Cross Ridge Community Hospital is a 15-bed, critical access hospital that serves Cross County.

Five Rivers Medical Center | Pocahontas, AR

Five Rivers Medical Center is a 50-bed, prospective payment system hospital that serves Randolph County and surrounding areas.

Lawrence Memorial Health Foundation, Inc. | Walnut Ridge, AR

Lawrence Memorial Health Foundation, Inc., is a 25-bed, critical access hospital that serves Lawrence County.

Mainline Health Systems | Dermott, AR

Mainline Health Systems is a federally qualified health center that serves Chicot County and surrounding areas.

Ouachita County Medical Center | Camden, AR

Ouachita County Medical Center is an 82-bed, prospective payment system hospital that serves Ouachita County.

ILLINOIS

Community Health & Emergency Services, Inc. | Cairo, IL

Community Health & Emergency Services, Inc., is a federally qualified health center that serves Alexander County.

LOUISIANA

Family Health Care and Wellness Center | Hammond, LA

Family Health Care and Wellness Center is a rural health clinic that serves Tangipahoa Parish.

Hood Memorial Hospital | Amite, LA

Hood Memorial Hospital is a 25-bed, critical access hospital that serves Tangipahoa Parish.

Oakdale Community Hospital | Oakdale, LA

Oakdale Community Hospital is a 49-bed, prospective payment system hospital that serves Allen Parish.

DELTA REGION RURAL HEALTH WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAM

Through a partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration, the Delta Region Rural Health Workforce Training Program addresses the ongoing need in health care 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 student placement. This program aims to provide 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.

In November 2021, **Louisiana Tech University**

was awarded \$600,000 to create a sustainable pipeline of trained rural health professionals and assist in retaining current health care staff in nine rural parishes with opportunities for training and education in critical positions. The strategic network of partners for this project includes Bossier Parish Community College, BetaFlix, Inc., North Louisiana Medical Center/Allegiance Health Management, and Jackson Parish Hospital.

In August 2022, three additional applicants were selected for program participation: **Alabama Southern Area Health Education Center, Arkansas Rural Health Partnership, and Jackson State Community College.**

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

NAME	LOCATION	PHASE
Louisiana Primary Care Association	Baton Rouge, LA	Implementation Phase, Year 2
Alabama Southern Area Health Education Center	Butler County, AL	Planning Phase, Year 1
Arkansas Rural Health Partnership	Lake Village, AR	Planning Phase, Year 1
Jackson State Community College	Jackson, TN	Planning Phase, Year 1



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DRA IS PROUD TO COLLABORATE WITH THE HEALTH RESOURCES AND SERVICES ADMINISTRATION TO DEVELOP AND SUPPORT THE DELTA REGION RURAL HEALTH WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAM, WHICH FUNDS SPECIALIZED TRAINING TO ADVANCE THE SKILL SETS OF HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS, SECURING THE VIABILITY OF RURAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS IN THE DELTA.

- Dr. Corey Wiggins,
Federal Co-Chairman, Delta Regional Authority

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INNOVATIVE READINESS TRAINING

DRA partners with the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) and the U.S. military's reserve forces to host Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) medical missions, bringing medical, dental, and optical care to Delta residents in need of quality health care at no cost to the patients. IRT is a DOD military training opportunity that delivers joint training opportunities to increase deployment readiness while simultaneously providing key health care services with lasting benefits for Delta communities. By utilizing their extensive resources, the military is able to meet some of the region's most urgent health care needs. Among the services provided during IRT missions are basic medical and wellness exams; vision exams and single lens, glasses; and dental exams and extractions.

In 2023, DRA hosted the Northwest Arkansas Wellness Mission. The clinic site was conducted at Yellville High School in Yellville, Ark. Lodging and command operations were conducted at Mountain Home Junior High School in Mountain Home, Ark.

Additional training was conducted at the Mountain Home Emergency Training Center and Baxter Hospital in Baxter, Ark.

Medical Care: The team saw 1,520 patients, consisting of 13,268 procedures and 490 eyeglasses fabricated and distributed, producing a fair market value of services totaling \$713,724.

Training: The total number of training days was 16, with 10 days of clinical care. A total of 22,263 hours of training was conducted, consisting of 11,276 hours of clinical proficiency.

Dental: The dental clinic provided 2,082 procedures, resulting in a total of \$405,346 saved for the community.

Veterinary: The veterinary clinic saw over 200 patients and performed 834 procedures, saving the local community pet owners \$35,070 in medical expenses.



SNAPSHOT

In 2023, DRA also conducted the Monroe/West Monroe, Louisiana Wellness Mission. Highlights from the mission are below.

12
TRAINING DAYS

10
CLINICAL DAYS

157
SERVICE MEMBERS TRAINED

576
EYEGLASSED MANUFACTURED

4,244
PROCEDURES

1,240
PATIENTS SEEN

\$9,149
PHARMACY PRODUCTS

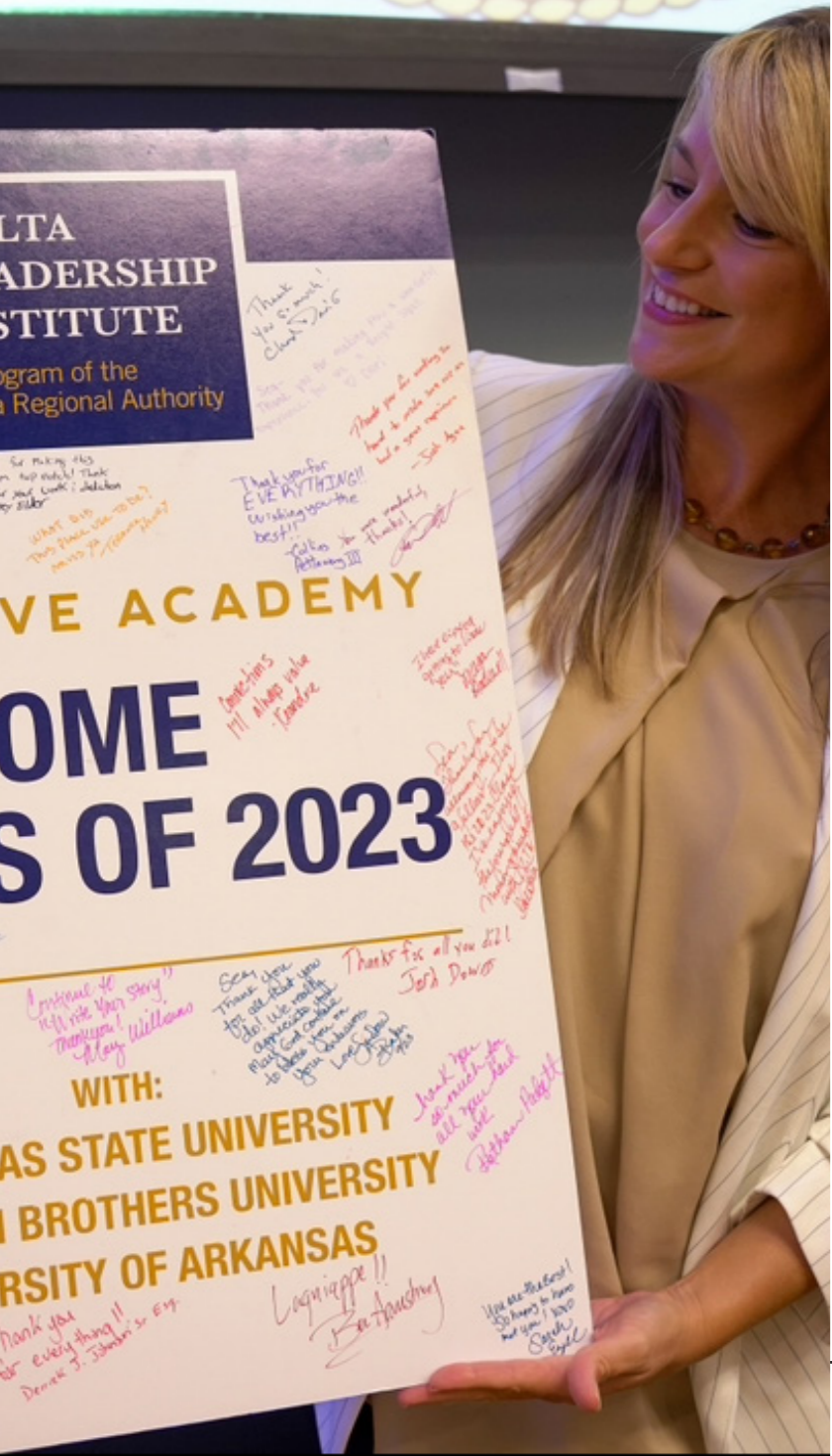
31,946
WEIGHT (LBS.) OF EQUIPMENT TRANSPORTED

18
FLIGHT HOURS

18,797
TOTAL TRAINING HOURS

2
NUMBER OF SORTIES FLOWN (VIA C-130)

\$862,729.21
FAIR MARKET VALUE OF SERVICES PROVIDED



DELTA LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

The Delta Leadership Institute (DLI) Executive Academy is an extensive, nine-month executive leadership development program that brings together public, private, and nonprofit sector leaders from all eight DRA states.

In September 2023, DLI graduated 37 fellows from its 19th class. The graduates participated in six training sessions over the past year, learning best practices employed throughout the Delta region for economic and community development in order to catalyze innovative solutions in their own community and region. DLI fellows learned from subject matter experts in infrastructure and transportation, small business and entrepreneurship, workforce development, public health, and other fields necessary to facilitate economic growth.

2023 DLI EXECUTIVE ACADEMY GRADUATES

ALABAMA

Megan Blackwell
Development Assistant,
Alabama Tombigbee Regional Commission

Mandy Guin
Special Projects Coordinator,
Delta Regional Authority

Collins Pettaway, III
Senior Consultant, The Pettapull Firm

ARKANSAS

Joshua Agee
Mayor, City of Paragould

Kristi Hopper
Executive Director, Main Street Osceola

Ronald Hunt
Attorney, Arkansas Fair Housing Commission

Kendra Phillips
Consultant, Phillips Consulting Firm

Aaron Pilkington
Vice President of Strategic Communications,
ARcare

Brendan Spaulding
Field Representative,
U.S. Representative Bruce Westerman

ILLINOIS

Dori Bigler
City Administrator, City of Anna

Terri Bryant
Illinois State Senator, Illinois General Assembly

Josh Downs
Mayor, City of Du Quoin,
Deputy Director of Outreach & Community Affairs,
Illinois Comptroller's Office

Quianya Enge
Research Assistant/Small Business Advisor, Illinois
Small Business Development Center at Southern
Illinois University Carbondale

Terance Henry
IT Director, City of Marion



KENTUCKY**Corey Elder**

Field Representative,
U.S. Representative James Comer

Ruthann Padgett

Vice President, Madisonville Hopkins County
Economic Development Corporation

LOUISIANA**Ben Armstrong**

Director of Strategic Partnerships & Outreach,
NextOp

Lindora Baxter

CEO, Xtreme Measures Women Business Center

Bryan Creekmore

Attorney, Guerriero and Guerriero

April Hawthorne

Executive Director,
Baton Rouge North Economic Development District

Mark Herbert

Government & Community Relations,
Louisiana Department of Public Safety

Derrick Johnson

Mayor, Town of Cheneyville

**MISSISSIPPI****Otis Anthony, II**

Mississippi State Representative, Mississippi
House of Representatives

Edmund Buckner

Dean & Director of Land-Grant Programs,
Alcorn State University

Whitney S. French

Director of Healthcare & Community Engagement,
Teen Health Mississippi

Keandre Haywood

Financial Management Coordinator,
Delta Regional Authority

Shelley Ritter

Executive Director, Delta Blues Museum

Tracey Rosebud

Mississippi State Representative, Mississippi
House of Representatives

Alfonzo White

Director of Television Studio/Instructor,
Mississippi Valley State University

Mary Williams

CEO, Urgent & Primary Care of Clarksdale

MISSOURI**Kelly Brueggen**

Director of Grants & Marketing, Washington County
Memorial Hospital

Sara Ezell

Project Director, SEMO Health Network

Morgan McIntosh

Executive Director of Downtown Poplar Bluff, Inc.,
City of Poplar Bluff

Jeremy Tanz

Executive Director, Southeast Missouri Regional
Planning and Economic Development Commission

TENNESSEE**R. Chad Davis**

Owner, Davis Wealth Services

Amity Schuyler

Senior Vice President Workforce Development,
Greater Memphis Chamber

Waletha Wasson

Program Director, A 21st Century Initiative: Oral-
Systemic and Population-Based Health for All,
University of Tennessee Health Science Center
College of Dentistry

CAPACITY BUILDING

In 2023, two capacity-building programs were created to address capacity needs among Local Development Districts and strategic planning needs across the DRA footprint.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT (LDD) COMMUNITY SUPPORT PILOT PROGRAM

The LDD Community Support Pilot Program is a noncompetitive grant program open to the 45 LDDs in DRA's service area. This program targets capacity-building and community support resources to local development districts that are helping economically distressed, isolated areas of distress, and persistent poverty communities navigate federal, state, and other resources that impact economic and community development. The program is designed to enhance the region's resiliency and ability to compete for and leverage resources. The program is funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law signed by President Biden.

The LDD Community Support Pilot Program awarded almost \$2.3 million in FY 2023 to 34 of the 45 LDDs in DRA's footprint. LDDs are using funds from this program to support existing staff, hire new staff, and increase overall engagement and the grant writing and other technical assistance support provided to economically distressed communities.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROGRAM

Communities across DRA's eight-state region lack the capacity and resources to strategically plan. This program gives public entities access to strategic planning funds to address long-standing issues and develop a roadmap for economic growth and opportunity. Applicants for this program have the autonomy to apply for a plan that fits the unique needs and challenges in their community. Eligible plans include, but are not limited to, economic development plans, utility rate studies, transportation plans, workforce development plans, and broadband deployment plans. The program is funded through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law signed by President Biden.

The Strategic Planning Program awarded almost \$2.3 million in FY 23 to 18 recipients across seven of the eight DRA states. Funded plans in FY 2023 included comprehensive economic development plans, feasibility studies, master plans, preliminary engineering reports, and workforce development plans.



ALABAMA

The **Craig Field Airport and Industrial Authority** has been awarded \$150,000 for a strategic plan to renovate Hangar 205 and utilize it as a source of business attraction and job creation.

ILLINOIS

The **Alexander-Cairo Port District** has been awarded \$150,000 for the development of a master plan that will identify the scope for port development and the future of the riverport.

The **City of Sesser** has been awarded over \$45,000 for a video-assisted sewer inspection and planning report that will position Sesser to identify sewer lines in need of repair or replacement and leverage funding sources that will lead to improved critical infrastructure.

The **City of Carbondale** has been awarded \$150,000 for a master plan to address climate resiliency and flooding that has negatively impacted public services and underserved communities in the city.

The **City of Mounds** has been awarded \$150,000 for a preliminary engineering report to address infrastructure issues, such as flooding, that have negatively impacted economic activity and business growth in the city.

KENTUCKY

The **Webster County Fiscal Court** has been awarded \$150,000 for a comprehensive economic development plan that will focus on creating an economically- and climate-resilient community that has experienced a decline in coal-industry jobs.

ILLINOIS SNAPSHOT



IN FY 2023, DRA INVESTED NEARLY

\$645,000

TO ENHANCE SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE LOCAL PLACEMAKING, QUALITY OF LIFE, AND COMMUNITY CAPACITY IN ILLINOIS.



LOUISIANA

The **City of Minden** has been awarded \$135,000 for a comprehensive economic development plan that will assess basic public infrastructure and strategies that will enhance workforce and small business development.

The **Lake Providence Port Commission** has been awarded \$150,000 for a master plan that will focus on financial resourcing for infrastructure upgrades at logical hubs such as ports and railways.

The **City of Abbeville** has been awarded \$150,000 for a strategic plan that will allow the city to develop effective strategies to address job creation, entrepreneurship, and equity.

The **Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana** has been

awarded \$145,000 for a comprehensive economic development plan focusing on economic resiliency and developing a market-driven economic development strategy to provide a 10-year vision for the Coushatta Tribe.

The **Delta Agriculture Research and Sustainability District** has been awarded \$150,000 for a strategic plan that will focus on creating micro-business hubs that will be supported by a developing transportation network in the region.

The **North Louisiana Growth and Development Foundation** has been awarded \$150,000 for a workforce development plan that will focus on building a talent pipeline in Northeast Louisiana for career opportunities in the microelectronics industry.

MISSISSIPPI

The **City of Crystal Springs** has been awarded \$46,000 for a comprehensive economic development plan that will serve as a long-range policy guide to assist the city with future economic development decisions.

The **Jackson Redevelopment Authority** has been awarded \$150,000 for a master plan focusing on the redevelopment of Union Station and its potential as a catalyst for job creation, small business development, tourism, and improved infrastructure.

The **Leflore County Board of Supervisors** has been awarded \$150,000 for a strategic plan that will address challenges faced by health care systems in the Mississippi Delta, including the closures of hospitals and clinical education sites.

MISSOURI

The **South Central Ozark Council of Governments**, in collaboration with Howell, Oregon, Ozark, Douglas, Texas, Wright, and Shannon counties, has been awarded \$150,000 for the development of a feasibility study that will focus on the development of a regional industrial incubator that will offer financing, mentoring, administrative support, and physical space to businesses.

The **City of Poplar Bluff** has been awarded more than \$72,500 for a comprehensive economic development plan that will allow the city to address infrastructure issues such as an aging water-wastewater system.

The **City of Rolla** has been awarded \$50,000 for a comprehensive economic development plan to develop a roadmap of economic growth and address issues such as infrastructure and transportation.

DELTA REVITALIZATION THROUGH INNOVATION, VISION & EQUITY (DRIVE)

The Delta Revitalization through Innovation, Vision, and Equity (DRIVE) pilot program, in partnership with the University of Memphis' Division of Research and Innovation, was created to help distressed and underserved communities build capacity and drive community-centered economic growth in the Mississippi River Delta region. As identified in DRA's Regional Development Plan IV, the DRIVE pilot program is a fundamental component of DRA's efforts to enhance sustainable and inclusive local placemaking and community capacity across its eight-state region.

Through an intensive year-long, cohort-based program, the DRIVE pilot program brings together eight small towns to increase local capacity in economic and workforce development that will support long-term economic opportunity in rural communities. The participating towns include: Eudora, Arkansas; Helena-West Helena, Arkansas; Osceola, Arkansas; Hazlehurst, Mississippi; Port Gibson, Mississippi; Tunica, Mississippi; Brownsville, Tennessee; and Whiteville, Tennessee.

DRIVE SNAPSHOT

WHILE RANGING IN
POPULATION FROM UNDER
**1,000 TO JUST OVER
10,000 RESIDENTS,**
THESE COMMUNITIES SHARE
A STRONG SENSE OF PRIDE IN
THEIR HISTORY AND CULTURE.



WHITE HOUSE INITIATIVES

JUSTICE40

President Biden’s Justice40 initiative aims to deliver 40% of the overall benefits of climate, clean energy, affordable and sustainable housing, clean water, and other investments to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized, overburdened, and underserved. The Justice40 initiative is a directive created through Executive Order 14008 and supports the Biden-Harris Administration’s comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all as designated through Executive Order 13985.

DRA is participating in Justice40 through its grant-making activities, including Bipartisan Infrastructure Law-funded initiatives.

BUILD AMERICA, BUY AMERICA

The Build America, Buy America Act was signed into law in 2021 by President Biden as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The act requires that federal agencies ensure that funds for a federal financial assistance program for infrastructure are obligated only to projects that use iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials that are produced in the United States. Federal agencies are required to include a Buy America preference in the terms and conditions of each award for applicable infrastructure projects.



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WITH RESOURCES MADE AVAILABLE THROUGH PRESIDENT BIDEN’S INVESTING IN AMERICA AGENDA, AGENCIES LIKE DRA ARE INVESTING IN OUR RURAL COMMUNITIES, ENSURING THAT THOSE WHO LIVE AND WORK IN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES CAN THRIVE FOR GENERATIONS TO COME AND HAVE A STANDARD QUALITY OF LIFE.

”

- Dr. Corey Wiggins,
Federal Co-Chairman, Delta Regional Authority

WHITE HOUSE STRATEGY ON HUNGER, NUTRITION & HEALTH

In September 2022, the Biden-Harris Administration announced more than \$8 billion in new commitments as part of the call to action for the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. The Biden-Harris Administration hosted the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health on September 28, 2022, which catalyzed the public and private sectors around a coordinated strategy to accelerate progress and drive transformative change in the United States to end hunger, improve nutrition and physical activity, and close the disparities surrounding them. To learn more about the work being done, visit health.gov.

President Biden's goal is to end hunger and increase healthy eating and physical activity by 2030, so that fewer Americans experience diet-related diseases like diabetes, obesity, and hypertension. DRA is proud to join with the White House and other federal partners to support this initiative.

DRA's stated commitment is to implement prioritization criteria in its grant programs to support initiatives with a direct connection between economic development and healthy food access.



EXECUTIVE ORDER ON RACIAL EQUITY

DRA is proud to join over 90 other federal agencies in releasing a historic Equity Action Plan to support the Biden-Harris Administration's whole-of-government equity agenda. Visit www.dra.gov to learn more about DRA's efforts to prioritize meaningful community engagement and increase investments in persistent poverty counties.

The White House has launched a new federal equity microsite that includes the findings from the year-long equity process that agencies have conducted, and the executive summaries of the equity action plans submitted by the largest federal agencies.

On February 16, 2023, President Biden signed a second executive order on equity to reaffirm the administration's commitment to equity-centered governance and outcomes.



ACCOUNTABILITY & OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

DRA is committed to being a good steward of taxpayers' dollars. DRA recognizes its institutional focus to be fiscally responsible and effective in making investments to economic and community development projects while working to help create jobs, build communities, and improve lives in the Mississippi River Delta and Alabama Black Belt regions.

DRA conducts annual audits with a certified audit firm to ensure compliance and accountability. DRA will continue to ensure strong accountability, transparency, and operational excellence.

THANK YOU

We deeply appreciate your steadfast support for the DRA. In continuing our mission, we are passionate about advancing our accomplishments and reinforcing our dedication to Delta communities. Our focus on strategic investments, place-based initiatives, and innovative programs drives our commitment to creating opportunities and catalyzing positive transformations for our residents.

Through collaborative efforts with partners, stakeholders, and governmental bodies at all levels, we remain unwavering in our pursuit of bolstering economic prosperity, fostering community progress, and improving the lives of individuals in the Delta region. Your support fuels our resolve in making a meaningful impact.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cory Wynn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.



DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

*TRANSFORMING
POTENTIAL
INTO PROSPERITY*

DRA.GOV