



# Community Infrastructure Fund Notice of Funding Availability Executive Summary

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**NOFA Release Date:** January 6, 2025

**Proposal Due Date:** Annual Rolling Cycle

The Delta Regional Authority (DRA) is publishing this Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) to request applications for the 2025 Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF).

The CIF targets federal resources to communities in the Mississippi River Delta and Alabama Black Belt regions. CIF provides direct investment into community-based and regional projects that address the DRA's congressionally mandated infrastructure funding categories (Basic Public Infrastructure and Transportation Infrastructure) and flood control projects.

Under federal law, at least 75 percent of DRA funds must be invested in [economically distressed counties and parishes](#) and isolated areas of distress in the region.

This NOFA is organized to provide a general overview of the grant program as well as the specific requirements needed to complete an application. Additional background information on CIF is available here: [Critical Infrastructure - Delta Regional Authority \(dra.gov\)](#).

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## A. DRA OVERVIEW

The Delta Regional Authority is a federal agency that helps communities grow and expand their economies across eight states and 252 counties/parishes. Created by Congress in 2000, the DRA uses federal investments across the Delta region to support critical and human infrastructure projects. The DRA includes the governors of the eight states and a Federal Co-Chair chosen by the president and approved by the Senate. Local participation comes through 45 Local Development Districts (LDD). The DRA helps more than 10 million people across parts of Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee. (A map of the DRA region can be found [here](#).)

## B. CIF PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

### *Program Overview*

The Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF) makes strategic investments across its 252 counties and parishes to improve quality of life and create economic opportunity. CIF directly funds community and regional projects that center on its Congressionally mandated areas of:

- **Basic Public Infrastructure** in distressed counties and isolated areas such as water system improvement and electrical infrastructure.
- **Transportation Infrastructure** for the purpose of economic development such as road improvements.
- **Flood Control Projects** such as Building or reinforcing levees and/or Installing drainage systems
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By working with community stakeholders and its LDD partners, the DRA ensures investments create locally driven impact. All submitted applications will be reviewed and checked for eligibility. Those that meet the application criteria will be scored.

Technical questions about the NOFA should be sent to [sedap.cif@dra.gov](mailto:sedap.cif@dra.gov) with the subject line "CIF NOFA" and should include the contact's name, organization, and phone number. All applicants must follow DRA's general funding rules, the requirements of this NOFA, and DRA's Regional Development Plan IV ([RPD IV](#)).

## *Background on DRA's Strategic Investment Goals*

The Delta Regional Authority advances four key objectives: improving infrastructure, creating jobs, expanding businesses, and supporting local placemaking and capacity-building. These goals strengthen communities, support workers, create economic growth, and build a foundation for long-term success throughout the DRA footprint.

## *2025 CIF Priorities, Objectives, and Funding Principles*

The DRA's aim is to strengthen Delta communities while driving economic growth across the region. The Community Infrastructure Fund focuses on supporting local and regional investments that are industry-driven and community centered. CIF projects must be located within the Delta region. Projects may help improve job skills and training to make local industries more competitive.

This 2025 CIF Opportunity places a strong emphasis on promoting equity through data transparency. The DRA is committed to tracking outcomes across its investments. The DRA uses data to make sure that its projects effectively meet the needs of its communities and contribute to their long-term well-being.

Collaboration is encouraged across states, business, municipalities, community stakeholders, labor unions, industries, and educational institutions – including K-12 and four-year higher education institutions. By encouraging cross-sector partnerships, the DRA brings together collective local expertise and Federal resources. These partnerships help create impactful projects that align with DRA's strategic objectives.

CIF prioritizes projects that have strong potential for community impact and sustainability, address immediate infrastructure needs, and contribute to the long-term economic resilience and prosperity of the Delta region.

## **C. AWARD & ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

All projects supported by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law must report relevant data outcomes. DRA will evaluate project outcomes using both quantitative and qualitative

measures, with support from the USDA-funded Delta Research Program and the Monitoring and Compliance Program.

### **Availability of Funding**

Projects must benefit part of the [Delta region](#), which includes counties and parishes in Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi, and Tennessee, as defined by the Delta Regional Authority Act of 2000. If a project extends beyond this region, only the part within the Delta region can receive DRA funding.

The final dollar amount available for funding will be determined by the amount appropriated and allocated to DRA. The Delta Regional Authority may elect to award additional funds to applications received under this NOFA. Any selection and award under this NOFA is subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

Most project award amounts will range from \$500,000 to \$2,000,000, based on the project type and application score. DRA reserves the right to negotiate with applicants to adjust their budgets, including adjusting or removing certain proposed costs.

### **Period of Performance**

Applicants decide how much time they need to complete their project. However, the project must be completed within 24 months, starting from the date listed on the *Notice to Proceed*.

*Eligible Applicants include:*

- Counties/parishes, cities, or other local government subdivisions and municipalities
- Public or private nonprofit organizations, including special purpose districts
- Regional and economic development organizations,
- Workforce boards, labor unions, community and faith-based organizations
- Colleges, trade schools, and minority-serving institutions (including HBCUs)
- Federally recognized Tribes

Cost-sharing funds must come from non-federal sources, except in cases where another Federal program specifically allows funds to be counted as non-Federal cost share. Projects that provide transportation or basic public services to populations in distressed counties or isolated areas are exempt from the cost-sharing requirement. Projects that

offer more cost-sharing funds will be prioritized for CIF funding.

## D. APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND GENERAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Project applications must be submitted electronically via the [CIF Portal](#). Funding decisions will be made monthly. Potential applicants are encouraged to contact DRA [programs staff](#) or their Local Development Districts [office](#) for application assistance and additional information about the 2025 CIF application submission requirements. In addition to the requirements described in this NOFA, all applications must meet the general requirements for DRA funding and be consistent with the [DRA Strategic Plan](#).

DRA staff are available to discuss pre-award eligibility concerns, as well as post-award requirements. The DRA will provide technical assistance to unfunded applicants who send a request to [sedap.cif@dra.gov](mailto:sedap.cif@dra.gov) at the conclusion of the funding cycle. Local Development Districts may also serve as technical assistance providers for DRA funding programs.

## E. APPLICATION SCORING CRITERIA AND PROMPTS

The Delta Regional Authority has instituted a technical review process to provide for an objective review of applications. The evaluation criteria are based on CIF program priorities, objectives, and funding principles as laid out in [RDPIV](#). DRA recommends no more than a total of 8 pages (project narrative section, not including attachments).

### **A. Project Description & Alignment**

<p><b>Description of Project and Community Needs</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Describe your unique community, how your community will be directly affected by the project, and the critical infrastructure challenge for your community.</li></ol> <p>Specifically, applicants should include information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Community:</b> Describe their unique community, highlighting its characteristics, demographics, and any relevant socioeconomic factors.</li></ul>	<p><b>15 Points</b></p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Infrastructure Challenge:</b> Describe the infrastructure challenges faced by their region, such as outdated transportation systems, inadequate water and sewer systems, or insufficient flood control measures.</li> <li>• <b>Data:</b> Illustrate their infrastructure challenges by including relevant data and statistics, along with a narrative that demonstrates the potential impact on the community’s well-being, economic development, public health, or quality of life.</li> <li>• Examples of data and statistics include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Due to the failure of the water system, the city is experiencing 50% water loss in the distribution system.</li> <li>b) With improved rail infrastructure, shipping costs will be reduced by 20%.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p><b>Project Design and Implementation Plans</b></p> <p>2. How do these challenges affect the community’s well-being, economic development, public health, or quality of life? How does your project present a feasible solution?</p> <p>Specifically, applicants should include information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Project design:</b> Describe a clear design that illustrates a feasible approach to addressing their identified infrastructure need and ensure the desired outcome.</li> <li>• <b>Project goals:</b> Define the scope and objectives, outlining specific goals and detailing all major activities and components.</li> <li>• <b>Results:</b> Explain how their project design incorporates strategies to achieve measurable outcomes, including whether any innovative solutions, evidence-based interventions, or best practices will be utilized.</li> <li>• <b>Documentation:</b> For projects involving specific infrastructure types, such as water and sewer projects, applicants must include all required documentation as outlined in Appendix II, ensuring compliance with all technical and regulatory requirements.</li> </ul>	<b>10 Points</b>
<p><b>Alignment with Strategic Goals and Plans</b></p> <p>3. Detail how your project aligns with DRA goals, CIF priorities, and/or regional development strategy. What statistics or data can you provide to illustrate this alignment?</p>	<b>10 Points</b>

<p>Specifically, applicants should include information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>CIF alignment:</b> How their project aligns with and contributes to specific goals or priorities. To receive full points, applicants should use relevant research evidence, data or statistics to illustrate how their project supports relevant CIF priorities, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ promoting equitable access to essential infrastructure,</li> <li>○ fostering sustainable development, or</li> <li>○ enhancing regional connectivity</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Alignment with local plans:</b> Explain how their project aligns with existing local, regional, or state infrastructure plans or economic development strategies. This should note if their project advances specific goals, addresses infrastructure needs, or fulfills action items outlined in these plans.</li> <li>• <b>Collaboration:</b> Demonstrate collaboration with regional planning commissions, transportation authorities, utility providers, or economic development organizations. Successful applications will demonstrate how these project outcomes align with long-term development goals for the DRA region.</li> </ul>	
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## Community Benefits Plan

<p><b>Evidence of Community and Employer Demand for Proposed Project</b></p> <p>1. How have you engaged with your local community and stakeholders to gather input for your project? Can you provide examples of how their feedback influenced your project?</p> <p>Specifically, applicants should include information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stakeholder Engagement:</b> Applicants must demonstrate strong community demand by demonstrating meaningful, two-way engagement with residents, community organizations, and stakeholders.</li> <li>• <b>Feedback:</b> Applicants should provide specific examples of how and where community feedback has influenced the project.</li> </ul>	<p><b>10 Points</b></p>
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<p><b>Demonstration of Realistic and Attainable Outcomes</b></p> <p>1. What are the specific, measurable outcomes you will achieve with this project and how will you reach them?</p> <p>Specifically, applicants should include information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Project Activities:</b> This should contain details about the key activities, including whether they are evidence-based, and the strategies that will achieve their goals.</li><li>• <b>Timelines:</b> Applicants are expected to include a feasible implementation plan and timeline of key milestones that demonstrate, demonstrating how the project will be executed successfully within the proposed timeframe.</li><li>• <b>Sustainability:</b> Strategies that promote environmental resilience and sustainable infrastructure are especially important.</li><li>• <b>Evaluation:</b> Applicants should also outline plans for monitoring and evaluating progress.</li></ul>	<p><b>10 Points</b></p>

<p><b>Evidence of Community Impact and Quality of Life Improvements</b></p> <p>1. How will your project positively impact both your community and the Delta region? How will your intervention contribute to local workforce, economic, or community development?</p> <p>Specifically, applicants should detail how their project will positively impact their community by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to resources: Applicant should detail how the project will improve access to clean water or reliable transportation;</li> <li>• Sustainability: The project should foster sustainable social and economic development by supporting local business; or creating community spaces.</li> <li>• Overall Benefit: Applicants must show their project plan’s overall benefit to their community and the Delta more broadly.</li> </ul>	<p><b>10 Points</b></p>
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**Project Management and Team Partners**

**A comprehensive overview of your project will address the following sections:**

<p><b>Evidence of Project Team and Organizational Capacity</b></p> <p>1. Who are the key members of your project team and what are their roles and responsibilities? Does your organization have the capacity to manage and implement the project well?</p> <p>Specifically, applicants should include information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant Experience: Highlight your team’s relevant experience and organizational capacity to manage and implement the project effectively. Previous experience with managing federal grants may be highlighted but is not a requirement to submit a competitive application.</li> </ul>	<p><b>10 Points</b></p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resumes and Job Descriptions: Please include staff résumés and/or job descriptions for any positions to be filled using grant funds as attachments to the application.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Local and Regional Collaboration with Public and Private Partners</b></p> <p>1. Who are your local and regional partners on this project and how are you collaborating with them? Please describe their roles and any leveraged resources or services they provide.</p> <p>Specifically, applicants should include information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Development Districts: Applicants may consider partnering with their Local Development Districts to benefit from their regional development expertise. Having project partners who are well-versed in these areas may strengthen your proposal and ensure that the project is carried out smoothly and that grant funds are managed responsibly.</li> <li>• Local Partners: Applicants may demonstrate partnerships with local government, community colleges, unions, nonprofits, and similar institutions. Applicants should show how these partnerships bring diverse expertise, resources, and community perspective, which are crucial to ensure that benefits are fully and fairly distributed throughout your community.</li> <li>• Letters of Support: Applications may include letters of support showcase how your local partnerships have created full community benefits.</li> </ul>	<p><b>5 Points</b></p>

<p><b>Evidence of Institutional Partnerships Grounded in Collaboration</b></p> <p>How will your project impact the Delta region? In what ways do your partnerships with entities such as women-owned businesses or HBCUs contribute to community growth?</p> <p>Specifically, applicants should include information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inclusive Partnerships:</b> Applicants are encouraged to establish partnerships with organizations that make their projects more inclusive of all members of their community. For example, collaborating with HBCUs and minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses can help reduce barriers and ensure that the project benefits are equitably distributed.</li> </ul>	<p><b>5 Points</b></p>
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**Budget, Implementation, and Impact**

<p><b>Budget and Funding Request and Description of Matching Funds</b></p> <p>1. What is the total amount of funding you are requesting from the DRA? Please submit a detailed categorical budget narrative for both DRA and non-DRA funds.</p> <p>Specifically, applicants should include information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Amount Requested:</b> Applicants must provide the total amount of funding requested from the Delta Regional Authority.</li> <li>• <b>Matching Funds:</b> Applicants must disclose any matching funds from non-DRA sources, unless the project is an infrastructure initiative in a distressed county or parish within the DRA region. Information about the sources of matching funds must be included, along with letters of commitment or supporting documentation from each source.</li> <li>• <b>Budget Narrative:</b> To maximize their score, applicants should</li> </ul>	<p><b>5 Points</b></p>
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<p>submit a detailed categorical budget narrative for both DRA and non-DRA funds, explaining how these costs align with the proposed project. Projects that offer more cost-sharing funds will be prioritized for CIF funding</p>	
<p><b>Detailed Budget Narrative and Resource Allocation</b></p> <p>1. Have you completed the proper budget narrative form? (SF424A for non-construction or SF424C for construction projects) Describe any leveraged resources.</p> <p>Specifically, applicants should include information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Budget Narrative Forms:</b> A budget narrative must be completed using either Budget Form SF424A (for non-construction projects) or SF424C (for construction projects). This narrative should provide a concise explanation supporting the budget request and detailing costs associated with each line item on the budget form.</li> <li>• <b>Leveraged Resources:</b> The Budget narrative form should also describe any leveraged resources—both cash and in-kind—that exceed the requested award and will support grant activities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Budget Categories:</b> Each budget category (such as personnel, travel, equipment, supplies, and other expenses) should include the total estimated cost for the entire period of performance and demonstrate how the cost contributes to project completion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Resource Allocation:</b> Applicants must demonstrate that their resource allocation will lead to effective planning and management. Applicants’ budget narrative must align with their project timeline so that each budget category corresponds to specific milestone and phase of the project.</li> </ul>	<p><b>5 Points</b></p>

<p><b>Realistic Project Timeline and Risk Management</b></p> <p>1. Describe how your project timeline ensures each phase of the project will be executed in a timely and accountable way. Explain how your timeline aligns with your budget narrative.</p> <p>Specifically, applicants should include information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Project Timeline:</b> Applicants must include a realistic project timeline starting from the award announcement through the completion of all proposed project activities.</li> <li>• <b>Roles and Responsibilities:</b> Applicants must detail specific responsibilities to team members or partners, including contractors, engineers, or consultants.</li> <li>• <b>Success Factors:</b> Applicants must detail factors that may impact project success—such as regulatory approvals, environmental concerns, or supply chain disruptions—and describe strategies to mitigate these risks.</li> </ul>	<p><b>5 Points</b></p>
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## F. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

All applications submitted to the DRA for the 2025 CIF funding cycle will undergo an initial pre-screening to verify eligibility and completeness. Eligible submissions will then undergo a preliminary review by DRA program staff to ensure alignment with the program guidelines outlined in this NOFA. Following this, each application will be thoroughly reviewed and scored based on the criteria specified in Section E Application Review Information.

DRA reserves the right to negotiate budget costs with selected applicants, which may include adjusting proposed expenses, modifying project objectives, or requesting additional information. The DRA may also reject applications if concerns arise regarding applicants' ability to successfully fulfill the grant's objectives and requirements. Ultimately, DRA holds full discretion to award some, all, or none of the applications received under this competitive solicitation. All award decisions made by DRA are final.

## G. AWARD ADMINISTRATION

### I. Build America, Buy America Act Requirements

All grantees must comply with the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and the Build America, Buy America Act (the Act), Pub. L. No. 117-58, §§ 70901-52, including the implementing requirements at 2 CFR Part 184 and M-24-02, as summarized here. None of the funds provided under this award may be used for an infrastructure project unless:

- a) All iron and steel used in the project are produced in the United States. This means all manufacturing processes, from the initial melting stage through the application of coatings, occurred in the United States.
- b) All manufactured products used in the project are produced in the United States. This means the manufactured product was manufactured in the United States, and the cost of the components of the manufactured product that are mined, produced, or manufactured in the United States is greater than 55 percent of the total cost of all components of the manufactured product, unless another standard for determining the minimum amount of domestic content of the manufactured product has been established under applicable law or regulation.
- c) All construction materials are manufactured in the United States. This means that all manufacturing processes for the construction material occurred in the United States. The construction material standards are listed in the definitions section below.

Incorporation into an infrastructure project - The Buy America preference only applies to articles, materials and supplies that are consumed in, incorporated into, or affixed to an infrastructure project. As such, it does not apply to tools, equipment, and supplies, such as temporary scaffolding, brought to the construction site and removed at or before the completion of the infrastructure project. Nor does a Buy America preference apply to equipment and furnishings, such as movable chairs, desks, and portable computer equipment, that are used at or within the finished infrastructure project but are not an integral part of the structure or permanently affixed to the infrastructure project.

Recipients must certify or provide equivalent documentation for proof of compliance that a good faith effort was made to solicit bids for domestic products used in the infrastructure project under this award.

Recipients must also maintain certifications or equivalent documentation for proof of compliance that those articles, materials, and supplies that are consumed in, incorporated into, affixed to, or otherwise used in the infrastructure project, not covered by an approved waiver or an exemption provided in 2 CFR 184.8, are produced in the United States. The certification or proof of compliance must be provided by the suppliers or manufacturers of the iron, steel, manufactured products and construction materials and flow up from all sub

awardees, contractors and vendors to the recipient. Recipients must keep these certifications with the award/project files and be able to produce them upon request from the DRA, auditors or Office of Inspector General.

Waivers – When necessary, recipients may submit a written waiver request to DRA to waive the Buy America Preference. Waiver requests are subject to public comment periods of no less than 15 days and must be reviewed by DRA and the Office of Management and Budget Made in America Office.

When [Agency] has determined that one of the following exceptions applies, a final determination of the waiver request will be made:

- i) applying the Buy America Preference would be inconsistent with the public interest.
- ii) the types of iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction materials are not produced in the United States in sufficient and reasonably available quantities or of a satisfactory quality; or
- iii) the inclusion of iron, steel, manufactured products, or construction materials produced in the United States will increase the cost of the overall project by more than 25 percent.

Before applying a Buy America preference to a covered program that will affect Tribal Communities, DRA will follow the consultation policies established through Executive Order 13175, Consultation 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.

See the definitions section of Buy America terms.

#### Definitions

- i. Construction materials means articles, materials, or supplies that consist of only one of the items listed in paragraph (1) of this definition, except as provided in paragraph (2) of this definition. To the extent one of the items listed in paragraph (1) contains as inputs other items listed in paragraph (1), it is nonetheless a construction material. (1) The listed items are: (i) Non-ferrous metals; (ii) Plastic and polymer-based products (including polyvinylchloride, composite building materials, and polymers used in fiber optic cables); (iii) Glass (including optic glass); (iv) Fiber optic cable (including drop cable); (v) Optical fiber; (vi) Lumber; (vii) Engineered wood; and (viii) Drywall. (2) Minor additions of articles, materials, supplies, or binding agents to a construction material do not change the categorization of the construction material. “Buy America Preference” means the “domestic content procurement preference” set forth in section 70914 of the Build America, Buy America Act, which requires the head of each Federal agency to ensure



that none of the funds made available for a Federal award for an infrastructure project may be obligated unless all of the iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials incorporated into the project are produced in the United States.

- ii. Infrastructure means public infrastructure projects in the United States, which includes, at a minimum, the structures, facilities, and equipment for roads, highways, and bridges; public transportation; dams, ports, harbors, and other maritime facilities; intercity passenger and freight railroads; freight and intermodal facilities; airports; water systems, including drinking water and wastewater systems; electrical transmission facilities and systems; utilities; broadband infrastructure; and buildings and real property; and structures, facilities, and equipment that generate, transport, and distribute energy including electric vehicle (EV) charging

## H. DRA CONTACT INFORMATION

**DRA collaborates with the region’s LDDs to offer interested applicants and awardees technical assistance, application support and review and post-award assistance. Applicants may choose to work the LDD within their district. DRA strongly encourages interested applicants to contact DRA programs staff and/or their respective LDDs with any questions they have about CIF in general, as well as with any specific questions they have about the use of agency funds to support projects in Delta communities and regions. Applicants with additional questions are encouraged to submit these to [sedap.cif@dra.gov](mailto:sedap.cif@dra.gov).**

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## I. GENERAL DISCLOSURES

The 2024 CIF program awards will be made only to the extent that funds are available. Publication of this NOFA does not obligate DRA to award any specific grant or cooperative agreement or to obligate all or any part of available funds. Applicants intending to contract with a specific individual, consulting group, or organization with DRA funding must have a competitive procurement policy in place. This NOFA does not commit DRA to award a contract, procure or contract for services or supplies. Notwithstanding any other provisions of the NOFA, DRA reserves the right to award grants, cooperative agreements, or contracts to communities or regions that best meet the requirements of the NOFA and not necessarily to the lowest-cost proposers. DRA reserves the right to accept or reject any or all responses received as a result of this NOFA, to negotiate with all qualified sources, or to cancel in part or in its entirety this NOFA if it is in the interests of DRA to do so.