

Background

The Rural Infrastructure Fund (RIF) is a reimbursement grant program within the Florida Department of Commerce (FloridaCommerce), created to facilitate the planning, preparing, and financing of infrastructure projects in rural communities, which will encourage job creation, capital investment, and the strengthening and diversification of rural economies. The Florida Legislature appropriated \$5 million in state funds to the Rural Infrastructure Fund for Hurricane Idalia Impacted Communities.

Eligible Applicants and Technical Assistance

RIF Hurricane Idalia Appropriation funds are available to the following counties and all municipalities within their boundaries:

- Columbia County
- Dixie County
- Gilchrist County
- Hamilton County
- Jefferson County
- Suwannee County
- Lafayette County
- Madison County
- Levy County
- Taylor County

FloridaCommerce staff are available to provide support throughout the application process. Applicants are strongly encouraged to attend all scheduled webinars and trainings provided by FloridaCommerce. Applicants can find current information about the RIF program at www.FloridaJobs.org/RIF. Questions regarding the RIF program should be sent to RIF@Commerce.fl.gov.

Eligible Activities

Eligible activities for Hurricane Idalia impacted communities include planning and construction projects for roads or other remedies to transportation impediments, stormwater systems, water or wastewater facilities; and telecommunications facilities, including:

- Improvements to public infrastructure for industrial or commercial sites;
- Upgrades to or development of public tourism infrastructure;
- Improvements to inadequate infrastructure that has resulted in regulatory action.

Grant Categories and Maximum Award Amounts

Total Project Participation Grants

To facilitate access and maximize the use of state, federal, local, and private resources, grants may be awarded for up to 75 percent of the total infrastructure project costs or up to 100 percent of the total infrastructure project cost for a project located in a rural community as defined in s. 288.0656(2), F.S. which is also located in a fiscally constrained county as defined in s. 218.67(1), F.S., or a rural area of opportunity as defined in s. 288.0656(2), F.S.

Project Planning and Preparation Grants

FloridaCommerce may award grants of up to \$300,000 for infrastructure feasibility studies, design and engineering activities, or other infrastructure planning and preparation activities. Grants awarded under this category may be used in conjunction with Total Project Participation grants.

Preclearance Review Grants

To enable rural communities to access the resources available under the Expedited Permitting – Preclearance

Review Process (Section 403.973(18), F.S.), grants may be awarded for surveys, feasibility studies, and other activities related to the identification and preclearance review of land which is suitable for preclearance review. Grant application criteria includes the extent to which administrative and consultant expenses are minimized.

Maximum amounts and local match requirements:

- Projects located outside a Rural Area of Opportunity - \$75,000 with 50 percent local funds match;
- Projects located within a Rural Area of Opportunity - \$300,000 with no local funds match; and
- Projects located within a catalyst site (as defined in Section 288.056, F.S.) - maximum amounts same as above depending on RAO status. However, the local funds match requirement may be waived pursuant to the process in s. 288.06561, F.S., for projects located outside of a RAO.

Job Creation and Capital Investment

The purpose of RIF funding is to attract job creation and capital investment in rural economies. Applications submitted under all grant categories should demonstrate the need of the infrastructure project in attracting job creation and capital investment.

Application Evaluation Review Criteria

RIF grant applications should clearly demonstrate the economic benefit of the project and its long-term viability. In evaluating RIF grant applications, FloridaCommerce will consider factors including, but not limited to:

- An evaluation of the economic benefit of the project and its long-term viability.
- The project's potential for enhanced job creation or increased capital investment.
- The demonstration and level of local public and private commitment.

Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring may be conducted to ensure that the recipient has systems in place to properly comply with program requirements.

Recipients will be required to submit quarterly status reports that detail the progress that has been made on the project and to detail what steps will be taken in the next quarter.

Compliance

Conflicts of Interest

Pursuant to Section 112.3143, F.S., the following people or their immediate family members shall not have any direct or indirect financial interest in any contract, subcontract, or the proceeds thereof for work to be performed in connection with the grant during their tenure or for one year thereafter:

- 1) employees or agents of the recipient who exercise any function or responsibility for the RIF project and
- 2) officials of the recipient, including members of the governing body.

Additional Information

The RIF Hurricane Idalia Specific Appropriation grant funds may not be used to pay for administrative fees or costs. At FloridaCommerce's discretion, funding may be approved for a lower amount than requested in the



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application. Additional resources and other RIF program information can be found on the FloridaCommerce website at www.FloridaJobs.org/RIF.

Questions or requests for technical assistance regarding the RIF program, proposed projects, or how to complete and submit an application should be addressed to: RIF@Commerce.fl.gov or call 850-717-8486.