



**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT of
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

FLORIDA COMMUNITIES QUARTERLY

Division of Community Development
Florida Department of Economic Opportunity

Summer 2020

A Letter from Division Director Mario Rubio

The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) Division of Community Development has been working diligently to assist Florida communities impacted by COVID-19. We know you all are doing the same to help your community during these unprecedented times.

In addition to activating DEO's Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program, we have also been preparing for funding opportunities through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act to assist Florida communities and their residents. In May, we facilitated application cycles for the Community Planning Technical Assistance (CPTA) grant program and the Competitive Florida Partnership grant program. Learn more about the recipients of the [CPTA](#) and [Competitive Florida Partnership](#) communities for Fiscal Year 2020-2021.

On July 1, 2020, the [Office of Broadband](#) was established within DEO to facilitate the expansion of broadband internet services in the state. The Office of Broadband works with local governments and state agencies, businesses and community organizations to increase the availability and effectiveness of broadband internet throughout the state, specifically in small and rural communities.



We encourage you to remain engaged with the Office of Community Partnerships and reach out to us with any needs you have as we work together to build more resilient Florida communities.

Mario Rubio
Director, Division of Community Development

Community Development Block Grant - Coronavirus Funding (CDBG-CV)

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided \$5 billion in Community Development Block Grant - Coronavirus (CDBG-CV) funding to assist the nation's low-income families and most vulnerable citizens. Of the \$5 billion provided, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has allocated \$3 billion nationwide for communities to prevent, prepare for and respond to COVID-19. The state of Florida will administer \$79.8 million in funding of which \$63.1 million will be administered in entitlement and non-entitlement communities and an additional \$16.7 million will be administered in non-entitlement communities through the Small Cities CDBG program. Also, HUD provided

\$75 million directly to entitlement communities to be locally administered. A total of \$154.8 million in CDBG-CV funding was allocated to assist Florida communities.

DEO will administer the CDBG-CV grant program. A public comment period was held in July and DEO will submit the required substantial amendment to the CDBG Action Plan to include CDBG-CV funding. DEO will continue to share more information as it becomes available about application processes, guidelines and eligible activities at www.floridajobs.org/CDBG-CV. If you wish to be added to the distribution list regarding this funding, please email CDBG@deo.myflorida.com.

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Spotlight on Jay

The Town of Jay is an agricultural community in northwest Santa Rosa County. Incorporated in 1951, Jay's history stretches back to the beginning of the 20th century. Jay has long been a major producer of cotton and peanuts. In the 1970s, oil was discovered and wells were dug in and around Jay, which diversified the town's economic portfolio. Oil production has slowed down, but its agricultural roots stay strong and cotton gins in the area are still operational. For years, the Town of Jay has hosted an annual Jay Pro Rodeo that draws thousands of residents and visitors and is held in the spring. Also, Jay is known for its 4th of July fireworks display, its "Trick or Treat" event on Commerce Street and its "Joy in Jay" Christmas parade and celebration. The Town of Jay recently renovated a former Livestock Market into a local Farmers Market to draw visitors to the town for locally grown produce, meat and other goods. In the 2018-2019 Fiscal Year, the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity awarded Jay with a Competitive Florida Partnership Grant to assist the community with planning their future economic development strategy. The Town of Jay's hard work and preparation during its Competitive Florida Partnership grant year paid off and the community was awarded a \$1.5 million United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development grant to replace cast iron pipes throughout the city. As a town of under 600 and with city government staff in the single digits, the Town of Jay demonstrates to rural communities across Florida that hard work, good planning and some assistance from DEO, can make even the smallest communities in Florida great places to live, work and play.



Rural Infrastructure Fund - Fiscal Year 2020-21

The 2020 Florida Legislature passed legislation amending certain sections of the Rural Infrastructure Fund (RIF) statute (Section 288.0655, Florida Statutes) and appropriated a total of \$8.6 million for state fiscal year (SFY) 2020-2021. This includes \$3.6 million in RIF funding and \$5 million for the RIF Florida Panhandle Specific Appropriation. The statutory changes require updates to the RIF program guidelines and application forms, which are currently being prepared.

DEO anticipates that the opening of the application cycles for the RIF Fiscal Year 2020-2021 will be announced in September for both the RIF base funding (\$3.6 million) and the Florida Panhandle Specific Appropriation. Eligible applicants for the Florida

Panhandle Specific Appropriation (\$5 million) include Calhoun, Gadsden, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty and Washington counties and the municipalities within those counties. RIF staff will reach out to all eligible rural communities and other interested parties to provide specific information on statutory changes, program updates and application submission requirements for both programs.

Information and updates on the SFY 2020-2021 RIF program will be posted on the DEO website at www.floridajobs.org/RIF. If you wish to be added to the distribution list regarding this funding, please email RIF@deo.myflorida.com.

The State of Florida Rural Designation

The Competitive Florida Partnership works with small and rural communities across the state to utilize their unique assets to set realistic goals to advance their economic development visions. But how is the term “rural” being defined in this context?

The term “rural” can mean different things. In section 288.0656, Florida Statutes, a very specific definition is used for the State of Florida programs dealing with community and economic development. A rural community is defined as a(n):

1. county with a population of 75,000 or fewer.
2. county with a population of 125,000 or fewer which is contiguous to a county with a population of 75,000 or fewer.
3. municipality within a county described in subparagraph 1 or subparagraph 2.
4. unincorporated federal enterprise community or an incorporated rural city with a population of 25,000 or fewer and an employment base focused on traditional agricultural or resource-based industries, located in a county not defined as rural, which has at least three or more of the following economic distress factors:
 - a. low per capita income;
 - b. low per capita taxable values;
 - c. high unemployment;
 - d. high underemployment;
 - e. low weekly earned wages compared to the state average;
 - f. low housing values compared to the state average;
 - g. high percentages of the population receiving public assistance;
 - h. high poverty levels compared to the state average; and
 - i. a lack of year-round stable employment opportunities.

The designation of “rural” provides numerous advantages to an eligible community including:

1. The possibility of waiver of financial match requirements in state grant programs;
2. Access to preferential programs designed only for rural communities such as the Rural Infrastructure Fund grant and the



Wachula City Hall: The Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) meeting was held in Wauchula in February 2020.

3. Additional points in scoring for competitive state grant applications such as those in the Community Development Block Grant program; and
4. Intensive technical assistance on economic development projects and initiatives.

Eligibility for the designation is established by the following process:

1. The community provides documentation to DEO that it meets the geographic, statistical and demographic requirements set forth in Statute. This package should include a letter requesting consideration of the designation submitted by an authorized local official (Mayor, Council Chair, City Manager or County Administrator).
2. DEO’s Office of Community Partnership reviews the package to certify that all requirements have been met.
3. DEO issues a letter of designation which expires two years from the date of the letter.

In terms of securing funding for local infrastructure projects or receiving economic development technical assistance, having a rural designation can be a valuable asset. If a community does not hold a rural designation, but would be interested in requesting consideration for one, please contact Sean Lewis, Community Program Manager, at sean.lewis@deo.myflorida.com for assistance.

Calendar *of* Events



Florida Association of Counties Innovation & Policy Conference

September 9-10, 2020 | Learn more: www.fl-counties.com/conferences

Florida Redevelopment Association Annual Conference

October 14-16, 2020 | Learn more: www.redevelopment.net/2020-annual-conference/

Institute for Elected Municipal Officials

October 23-23, 2020 | Learn more: [www.flcities.com/institute-for-elected-municipal-officials-\(iemo\)#](http://www.flcities.com/institute-for-elected-municipal-officials-(iemo)#)

Florida Rural Economic Development Association Summit

October 25-27, 2020 | More information will be available soon.

Florida League of Cities Legislative Conference

November 12-13, 2020 | Learn more: www.floridaleagueofcities.com/education-and-events/calendar-of-events

Florida Association of Counties Legislative Conference

December 2-4, 2020 | Learn more: www.fl-counties.com/conferences

Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Application Cycle

Non-entitlement units of local government are eligible to apply for the Florida Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program for Federal Fiscal Year 2019. Funding is available for the Neighborhood Revitalization, Housing Rehabilitation, Commercial Revitalization and Economic Development program areas. The application cycle opened on August 19, 2020, and will close at 5 p.m. Eastern Time on October 5, 2020. Learn more about the Small Cities CDBG program at www.FloridaJobs.org/SmallCitiesCDBG. Information for applicants and the application forms are available at www.FloridaJobs.org/CDBGApplicantInfo.

Connect with the Office of Community Partnerships Today!

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