

Rural Infrastructure Fund Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Program Guidelines



Overview

The Rural Infrastructure Fund (RIF) is a reimbursement grant program 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.

Total RIF Program Funding Available for FY 2021-2022 - \$7.5 million

- \$2.5 million – Available to rural communities statewide.
- \$5 million – Available to rural communities within Calhoun, Gadsden, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, and Washington counties.

Program Summary

The RIF program is intended to facilitate access of rural communities to infrastructure funding programs, such as those offered by the Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), U.S. Department of Agriculture - Rural Development (USDA-RD), and the U.S. Department of Commerce - Economic Development Administration (EDA). Additionally, the RIF program funds are provided to assist and encourage local government and/or private entities to fund economic development infrastructure projects.

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

- The project's potential for enhanced job creation or increased capital investment;
- Whether the project is located in a community development corporation service area;
- The [unemployment rate](#) of the county in which the project is located; and
- The poverty rate of the community.

Grant Categories

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 50 percent of the total infrastructure project costs related to specific job-creation or job-retention opportunities. Applicants will be required to provide information from the job-creator (Participating Party) that includes the number of new jobs and the amount of capital investment provided by the job-creator. Applications should demonstrate the need of infrastructure projects to attract job creation and capital investment in their communities.

Eligible uses of funds include:

- Improvements to public infrastructure for industrial or commercial sites;
- Upgrades to or development of public tourism infrastructure;
- Improvements to access and availability of broadband internet service; or
- Improvements to inadequate infrastructure that has resulted in regulatory action.

Project Planning and Preparation Grants: To facilitate a timely response and induce the location or expansion of specific job creating opportunities, grants may be awarded for infrastructure feasibility studies, design and engineering activities, or other infrastructure planning and preparation activities. Grant application criteria includes the extent to which administrative and consultant expenses are minimized. Grants awarded under this category may be used in conjunction with Total Project Participation grants, provided the total amount of both grants does not exceed 30 percent of the total project cost.

Maximum amounts of grants:

- **\$50,000** for an employment project with a business committed to create at least 100 jobs;
- **\$150,000** for an employment project with a business committed to create at least 300 jobs; and
- **\$300,000** for a project in a Rural Area of Opportunity.

Preclearance Review Grants: To enable rural communities to access the resources available under the Expedited Permitting – Preclearance Review Process ([section 403.973\(18\), Florida Statutes](#)), 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 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 33 percent local funds match
- Projects located within a catalyst site (as defined in section 288.0656, Florida Statutes): maximum amounts are the same as above with the local funds match requirement waived.

FY 2021-2022 Grant Application Submission Requirements

The competitive application cycles will open in November 2021 and will close on January 7, 2022. A Notice of Funding Availability will be published in the Florida Administrative Register and posted on the DEO website at www.FloridaJobs.org/RIF prior to the opening of the application cycle. Applications will be reviewed upon closing of the application cycle and awards will be recommended based on application completeness, eligibility, and statutory factors for funding consideration. Any remaining funds will be made available for additional application cycles, if necessary.

- \$2.5 Million:

Eligible applicants are units of local government within an area designated as a Rural Area of Opportunity or a rural county or community as defined by [section 288.0656, Florida Statutes](#).

- \$5 Million Florida Panhandle Specific Appropriation:

Eligible applicants are local governments of Calhoun, Gadsden, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, and Washington counties, and all municipalities within their boundaries.

Additional Information

The RIF grant may not be used to pay for administrative fees or costs. At DEO's discretion, funding may be approved for a lower amount than requested in the application. Additional resources and other RIF program information can be found on the DEO 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:

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