



# Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Rural Infrastructure Fund Application Overview Webinar

September 19, 2023

Division of Community Development  
Bureau of Small Cities and Rural Communities



# Agenda

- Rural Infrastructure Fund Program Overview
- FY 2023-2024 RIF Statutory Changes Summary (House Bill 1209)
- FY 2023-2024 RIF Appropriations
- FY 2023-2024 RIF Grant Categories
- Program Application Review Factors
- FY 2023-2024 Application Cycle Information
- Application Development Tips
- Online Application Submission Process
- Questions

# Rural Infrastructure Fund (RIF) Overview

- State-funded grant program administered by FloridaCommerce's Bureau of Small Cities and Rural Communities.
- An economic development, workforce, and business development tool that provides funding assistance for 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.
- Intended to facilitate access of rural communities to other state and federal infrastructure funding programs:
  - Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
  - U. S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development (USDA-RD)
  - U.S Economic Development Administration (EDA)
- Governed by Section 288.0655, Florida Statutes.

# FY 23-24 RIF Statutory Changes Summary

- House Bill 1209 increased maximum award amount to 75 percent of total infrastructure project cost, or 100 percent for infrastructure projects located in a rural community defined as a fiscally constrained county or a rural area of opportunity.
- Removed requirement that eligible projects must be related to specific job creation/retention opportunities.
- Removed improvements to broadband internet service or facilities from eligible uses of funds.
- Allows for maximum award amount of \$300,000 for planning projects with no local match requirements.
- Removes local funds match requirement for planning projects related to preclearance review within a rural area of opportunity.
- Requires that review of applications include an evaluation of the economic benefit and long-term viability.



# House Bill 1209 (Chapter 2023-202 Laws of Florida) – Direct Payments

- Provides that an eligible grantee may receive direct payment for performance under its agreement with FloridaCommerce without being required to spend its own cash first.
  - Eligible grantees are rural communities or rural areas of opportunity as defined by 288.0656(2)
- All agreements with eligible grantees will include language to allow for this option.
- Procedure for exercising the direct payment option:
  - A rural community or rural area of opportunity must demonstrate financial hardship.
  - A rural community or rural area of opportunity which is located in a fiscally-constrained county, as defined in section 218.67(1), F.S., is deemed to have demonstrated a financial hardship
  - In either case, the grantee must request in writing to exercise the direct payment option.
- Payment request documentation requirements will be the same as previous reimbursement requests, except that proof of payment will not be required.



# FY 2023-2024 RIF Appropriations

- The 2023 Legislature appropriated a total of \$25 million for the RIF Program.
  - \$20 million – RIF Statewide Funding
    - Eligible applicants include 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.
      - List of eligible local governments is included in the FY 2023-2024 RIF Program Guidelines
  - \$5 million – Florida Panhandle Specific Appropriation
    - Eligible applicants include Calhoun, Gadsden, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, and Washington counties, and all municipalities within their boundaries.

# Rural Infrastructure Fund Grant Categories

- Total Project Participation Grants
  - Maximum award amount
    - 75 percent of the total infrastructure project costs for projects located in a rural community.
      - Other project funding sources must be secured prior to executing the RIF grant agreement.
    - 100 percent of the total infrastructure project costs for projects located in a rural community within a fiscally-constrained county or a rural area of opportunity.
  - Application should clearly demonstrate the need of the infrastructure project in attracting job creation and capital investment.
    - While a Participating Party (job creator) is no longer required, projects that include a Participating Party should provide Participating Party documentation to strengthen the application.

# Rural Infrastructure Fund Grant Categories

- Total Project Participation Grants (continued)
  - Eligible uses of funds include:
    - Improvements to public infrastructure for industrial or commercial sites.
    - Improvements to inadequate infrastructure that has resulted in regulatory action.
  - Authorized infrastructure may include the following public-private partnership facilities:
    - Storm water systems
    - Telecommunications facilities
    - Roads or other remedies to transportation impediments
    - Other physical requirements to facilitate economic development activities in the community

# Rural Infrastructure Fund Grant Categories

- Project Planning and Preparation Grants
  - Maximum award amount \$300,000 with no local fund match requirements.
  - Funds may be used 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.

# Rural Infrastructure Fund Grant Categories

- Preclearance Review Grants
  - Maximum amounts and match requirements:

Projects Located	Maximum Amount	Required Match
Outside a Rural Area of Opportunity	\$75,000	50% local funds
Within a Rural Area of Opportunity	\$300,000	No match required
Within a catalyst site (Section 288.0656, F.S.)	\$300,000	May be waived

- Enables rural communities to access the resources available under the Expedited Permitting – Preclearance Review Process (Section 403.973(17), Florida Statutes).
- Funds may be used for surveys, feasibility studies, and other activities related to the identification and preclearance review of land which is suitable for preclearance review.



# Program Application Review Factors

- Application Review will include, but may not be limited to:
  - Evaluation of the economic benefit of the project and its long-term viability
  - Project's potential for enhanced job creation or capital investment
  - Demonstration and level of public and private commitment
- Additional consideration will be given to projects located within counties impacted by Hurricane Idalia, as listed in the Governor's Executive Order 23-175.
- Grant administrative and consultant expenses should be minimized to the extent possible.



# FY 2023-2024 RIF Application Cycle

- Application cycle opened on September 13, 2023, and will close on November 6, 2023.
- Applications may be submitted electronically through the FY 2023-2024 RIF application portal, or mailed to:
  - FloridaCommerce
  - Bureau of Small Cities and Rural Communities
  - RIF Program
  - 107 East Madison Street, MSC 400
  - Tallahassee, FL 32399-6508
- Mailed or electronic applications **must be received by 5:00 p.m., Eastern Time on November 6, 2023.**
- Application submission requirements and instructions, program guidelines, and other relevant information is available at [www.FloridaJobs.org/RIF](http://www.FloridaJobs.org/RIF)



# Application Development Tips

- Part I – Applicant Profile
  - Applicant Project Contact – the person who can respond to specific questions regarding the application or proposed project.
- Part II – Project Description and Timeline
  - Project description should begin with a clear statement of what RIF funds will be used for.
  - Read application instructions for specific information that should be included in the project description.
- Part III – Economic Narrative
  - Important in the required evaluation of economic benefit and long-term viability
  - Focus on demonstrating and documenting the need for the infrastructure in attracting business/industry that will create jobs and increase capital investment.



# Application Development Tips

- Part IV – Project Budget
  - Include **total** infrastructure project costs, not just the portion to be funded through RIF award.
  - Double check the math before submission
  - Provide a clear explanation of how project costs were determined/estimated.
- Part V – Sources and Uses of Non-RIF Funds
  - List sources of funds for all costs listed in the “Other Funding Source” column of the Project Budget.
- Part VI – Participating Party Information
  - No longer required – but can provide the clearest demonstration of economic benefit and specific job creation/capital investment.
- Part VII – Application Authorization
  - Application must be signed by the chief elected official or delegated representative.
    - Applications signed by delegated representative must include a letter of delegation signed by the chief elected official



# Application Submission Portal Tips

- Register for individual link to application submission portal.
  - Link for registration is available at [www.FloridaJobs.org/RIF](http://www.FloridaJobs.org/RIF).
- Registration must include name and contact information of local government representative.
  - Individual link to application submission portal will be emailed within 2 business days.
- Download the application form and instructions from [www.FloridaJobs.org/RIF](http://www.FloridaJobs.org/RIF).
- Complete the application form, gather all supporting documents and save in PDF format before you begin submission through the application portal.
  - Note that some application information is also requested to be completed in the application portal – complete all relevant sections and upload all relevant supporting documents.
  - The application portal autosaves as you go – there is no “save” button.
  - You may leave the portal site at any time prior to completing submission and return using the individual link provided.



# Application Submission Portal Tips

- When you see the following message, you are at the end of the application. Once you click the “Next” button at the bottom of this page – the application is submitted.

Please review your response summary to ensure all required documentation has been uploaded prior to submission. You may download a copy of your application submission by clicking the "Download PDF" link below.

## **IMPORTANT:**

- 1. You must scroll to the bottom of this page and click the "Next" button to submit your application.**
- 2. Once you click the "Next" button at the bottom of this page, your application is submitted, and you cannot return to the application or go back to make edits/corrections.**



# Question & Answers



# Contact Us

## Thank You.

If you have questions or comments about this presentation, please contact us.

[www.FloridaJobs.org/RIF](http://www.FloridaJobs.org/RIF)



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