

A NEW ECONOMIC MODEL

RETHINKING THE

DELTA

LOUISIANA'S FIVE-YEAR REGIONAL

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

APRIL 2009

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A Vision for a New Louisiana



When I was sworn in as Governor, I shared my vision for creating a New Louisiana. I told you that together we would create a New Louisiana that would be a place “where success is shared by all Louisianans” because every community - from the Delta to the Bayou - deserves a vibrant economy and high-performing schools.

Our goal to create a New Louisiana plays a key role in our state’s membership in the Delta Regional Authority. As a member of the Delta Regional Authority, we work in partnership with the federal government and other member states to improve the quality of life for every resident in the region.

The Delta region is blessed with an abundance of natural resources, including rich agricultural lands, timber resources, and a vibrant oil and natural gas industry. However, I’ve always believed that the number one resource of Louisiana and the Delta region is the resilient people that have made it their home. Over the years, our people have endured devastating storms and economic hardships, but we have always bounced back to make our state and the region a better place for our children and grandchildren. Today, we’re in the midst of a national economic downturn, and while Louisiana’s economy continues to outperform the country, we aren’t immune

from what is happening nationally. A critical part of the Delta Regional Authority’s mission is to provide a boost to economically distressed communities as well as funds for infrastructure improvements.

Our state plan to work in partnership with the entire Delta Regional Authority is outlined in the following pages. I look forward to working with our federal partners and the Delta Regional Authority as we meet these goals. Together we can transform Louisiana and our region into an area that leads the nation in economic opportunity and is a quality place to live and raise a family.

Governor Bobby Jindal

Acknowledgements



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2009 Delta Regional Authority Regional Development Plan for Louisiana

Executive Summary

Louisiana is one of eight (8) states with parishes (counties) that comprise the Delta Regional Authority (DRA). This Mississippi River Delta region is predominantly rural with the highest concentration of disadvantaged populations in the United States. As a part of this region, Louisiana faces profound concerns related to persistent poverty, out-migration, health, education, and income levels. These economic factors indicate that Louisiana must utilize non-traditional community and economic development strategies in the future. Community and economic development in Louisiana must be readdressed in order to be successful.



In recognition of these challenges, Louisiana has implemented some of these non-traditional strategies, including a comprehensive workforce development plan, improved governmental ethics laws, and an aggressive evaluation and elimination of unorthodox

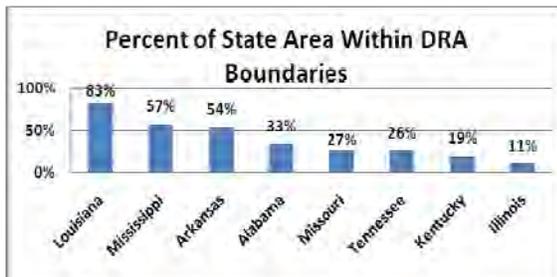
taxes related to business development. Louisiana's 2009 *DRA Regional Development Plan* proposes a new direction for community and economic development in Louisiana. Louisiana's plan proposes to enhance state and local economic competitiveness; and to cultivate economic development assets; including business retention, recruitment, and expansion; and, small business development and entrepreneurship. This plan provides a realistic approach as to what Louisiana's community and economic development goals will be in its combined efforts with DRA for future development of the Mississippi River Delta region.

Louisiana/DRA Overview

Louisiana participates in the activities of the Delta Regional Authority (DRA), as authorized under the Delta Regional Authority Act of 2000. The DRA serves as a unifying voice for community and economic development in the Mississippi River Delta. Led by a Federal co-chairman and the governors of each participating state, including Louisiana's Governor Bobby Jindal, the DRA seeks to leverage resources and focus attention on the region. The DRA and Louisiana accomplish their missions by fostering partnerships with public, private, and non-profit entities.

Encompassing 252 counties and parishes in portions of eight (8) states, including 56 parishes in Louisiana, the DRA region has deep historical and cultural roots and is home to more than 9.5 million people. Louisiana has 3,556,241 people within the region. Compared to that of the United States, the overall

economic well being of the DRA region continues to experience pervasive economic distress. Even though many areas of the American South have prospered in the modern economic growth, the DRA region, including Louisiana, remained largely behind in all categories. Of the 240 counties and parishes in the DRA region, only ten (10) are not defined as economically distressed.



Under federal law, at least 75 percent of DRA’s funds must be invested in economically distressed counties and parishes. Additionally, DRA earmarks half of the funds for transportation and basic infrastructure projects. The DRA grant program provides an effective, accountable mechanism for federal investment in the region. The program doesn’t duplicate other federal programs in the region. Instead, the DRA funds are used to leverage other federal funds along with state, local, and private funds.

Even though the DRA is a relatively young federal agency, since its first board meeting on February 23, 2002, it has invested over \$47 million in the region through its federal grant program. These DRA funds have leveraged over \$254 million in other public funds and over \$480 million of private funds. This is a ratio of 10.09 to 1.



In Louisiana, DRA has funded \$12,568,770 for 91 projects since 2002. These DRA funds in Louisiana were matched by other public investments totaling \$64,546,161 and other private investments of \$467,795,000. This major investment totals \$544,909,931 and represents thirty percent (30%) of the total investment in the DRA region.

Louisiana is truly supportive of DRA’s commitment to serve as a focal point for resources and an as originator of ideas. Louisiana recognizes that for the DRA to be an effective agency, its mission cannot be limited to reducing unemployment and poverty in failing communities. Louisiana and DRA realize they must concentrate on developing the assets needed to sustain long-term growth.

On this basis of understanding, Louisiana, in conjunction with the DRA, will work with its partner states, as well as regional, local, and private-sector partners to build “critical mass” in communities throughout the region. Critical mass is central to this strategic plan and represents the potential for sustainable growth and private sector investment.



Vision for Louisiana

A snapshot of Louisiana's economy suggests the state is doing relatively well today, especially compared to the United States overall. Louisiana's unemployment rate is well below that of the nation. Per capita income growth in Louisiana has been higher than in much of the country. Louisiana's economy has been growing faster than that of the nation as a whole. Billions of dollars of construction projects are underway in a variety of sectors, including industrial modernization projects, new manufacturing facilities, commercial office space and various transportation investments. Major bond-rating agencies like Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor's have recently upgraded our state debt rating. In addition, Louisiana has avoided the worst of the national real estate crunch. Although volumes have slowed, prices are stable or up in most of Louisiana's communities.

When compared to the rest of the nation, Louisiana's economy seems to be doing relatively well. Since the start of the recession in December 2007, the national economy has lost 3.6 million jobs. About one-half of this decline occurred in the past three months.

However, at the end of 2008, Louisiana was the only state in the nation to gain nonfarm jobs with 3,700 citizens being employed during November 2008. From the Louisiana Public Square February 2009 "Economic Development in Louisiana 2009", we find other recent successes include:

- During 2008, Louisiana had a net gain of 8,500 jobs, a 0.4 percent increase from 2007. For the same 12-month period, the nation experienced a 1.4 percent decrease in jobs while the southern states experienced a 0.4 percent decrease;



- All regions of Louisiana have seen job growth over the last year:
 - Southeast +1.3%
 - Central +1.3%
 - Capital +1.2%
 - Bayou +1.2%
 - Southwest +1.2%
 - Northeast +0.9%
 - Acadiana +0.9%
 - Northwest +0.8%

According to Louisiana Economic Development (LED), the addition of twenty-four (24) company expansion projects and ten (10) new organizations to the state in 2008 will generate \$2.5 billion in capital investment and 17,249 new jobs over the next several years.

Despite the positive news, Louisiana has not been immune from the national recession. While the construction industry sector is growing at 3.3 percent and education and health services are up by 1.3 percent, manufacturing jobs have fallen by 3.5 percent.

Some of the biggest employment challenges facing the state are in Northeast Louisiana, which has lost three major employers over the last four years. In 2004, the State Farm regional headquarters in Monroe, Louisiana closed and terminated 1,100 jobs paying an average of \$45,000 per year. In 2006, Guide Corporation closed its Monroe, Louisiana headlight plant, which had a \$50 million dollar payroll. Lastly, in December 2008, International Paper, Morehouse Parish's largest private employer, announced the closure of its paper mill in Bastrop, Louisiana. This plant employed 550 workers and had a \$30 million dollar payroll.

However, beneath this attractive veneer is a reality with which Louisiana residents have become far too familiar: our greatest export today is not our agricultural products, not our wood products, not even our oil, gas or chemicals. Louisiana's greatest export too often is our people, particularly our young people, who frequently believe they must leave Louisiana for greater economic opportunities in such places as Houston, Atlanta or Dallas.

Dramatically changing this reality, or more specifically, repositioning Louisiana as the next great American state for business investment, quality of life and economic opportunity, is the new vision of Louisiana. To successfully fulfill this vision, Louisiana will need to advance from "good" to "great" in community, business, and economic development, as well as to cultivate new capabilities in product development, such as public-policy efforts designed to increase the attractiveness of Louisiana as a place in which to invest. In the process, Louisiana expects to become one of the top states in economic development in the country over the next two to four years.

Louisiana's plan represents its movement toward non-traditional community and economic development strategies. The implementation of this plan will reposition Louisiana as a great state for business investment, quality of life, and economic opportunity. The strategies offered in this plan provide a new perspective that embraces the vision of Louisiana as a region where people, communities, and businesses flourish. The plan contains prioritized goals, strategies, and actions that focus the DRA's mission.

The challenge of this plan is to create a single vision that integrates non-traditional strategies with existing programs while taking into account traditional performance measures. The challenge is met by a focus on the economic competitiveness and business development in Louisiana and its communities.

Committing to a shared vision, one embraced not only by Louisiana, but also the DRA, its member

states and their communities, is essential. However, it is not enough. Louisiana feels it is increasingly obvious to all economic development agencies that a healthy and educated workforce is a precondition of overall economic competitiveness. More important, is how the plan addresses the most critical question: “How can Louisiana’s workforce be retained?” When reviewing the out-migration of young and talented people, one begins to understand competitiveness. It is not enough to improve health, transportation, communications, infrastructure, and broadband access. Without the ability to retain and attract talent, Louisiana will continue to decline. The solution to the continued decline is in the factors for critical mass. These factors add up to quality of place. This plan addresses these factors and embodies a blueprint to attract talent.

Louisiana’s goals and strategies presented here are built on the above foundation. Louisiana will support its communities that commit to quality of place that establish themselves as a magnet for talent.



Goal 1

Advance the productivity and economic competitiveness of the Louisiana workforce.

This goal encompasses the vision of the plan with an aggressive State agenda. Governor Jindal and the Louisiana Legislature successfully completed a comprehensive workforce development reform plan to improve the effectiveness of Louisiana’s community and technical colleges. The plan will further provide turnkey workforce solutions to expanding and relocating businesses, and insure that Louisiana’s workforce programs are driven by real business needs. It also supports existing initiatives related to health, workforce training, and regional partnerships.

Finding qualified employees is one of the top obstacles to business growth for companies in Louisiana. According to Governor Jindal, “workforce issues are among the top two concerns for roughly 70 percent (70%) of business development prospects for the state.” Data from 2008 indicate that more than 95,000 job slots in Louisiana were vacant because the state lacks qualified workers to fill them. These vacancies continue due to a “skills gap”, where the training and education of our citizens does not meet the requirements of available jobs. The recently enacted legislation to adopt a comprehensive workforce development reform plan has provided for turnkey workforce solutions to expanding and relocating businesses through the “Louisiana Fast Start” program.

Goal 2

Strengthen Louisiana’s physical and digital connections to the global economy.

This goal encompasses the vision of the plan with an aggressive approach exemplified by Governor Jindal’s effort to expand information technology, including broadband; transportation, including roadways, airports, river ports, and railroads; and energy producing capacity. Expanded physical and digital connections to the global economy will further improve upon the development of Louisiana’s workforce.

Goal 3

Create critical mass within Louisiana communities.

The concept of “critical mass” reinforces what every economist and every resident already knows: growth requires jobs and investment. Louisiana must prepare for success in the increasingly competitive world of community and economic development. To do this means each parish, community, and region in Louisiana must have a strong community and economic development plan; adequate, stable funding; assertive, professional staff; and coordinated, active engagement from the public and private sectors in order to be successful.

Conclusion

Louisiana cannot focus its efforts and simultaneously retain a broad programmatic approach. Louisiana feels the only realistic approach is to align its programs towards a common objective. That

objective is the economic competitiveness and business development in Louisiana and its communities.

The need for economic competitiveness and business development does not require extensive documentation and is the watchword of every business in Louisiana. To make this the focus of this strategic plan, however, is to recognize that the myriad of issues facing citizens throughout Louisiana will require cooperative efforts from a multitude of partners, including DRA. It means that health, information technology, and transportation are part of a common challenge, not goals themselves. Of equal importance to Louisiana, is that economic competitiveness and business development meet the performance measures set for the state and provide specific direction for all of Louisiana’s programs. Louisiana hopes that the approach presented in this plan will serve as a template for the parish and communities’ plans and their programs directed toward distressed rural areas in general.

The Challenge for Louisiana

The economic challenges facing Louisiana are serious. Out-migration has continued. This can be attributed to loss of jobs in general. However, the situation has been exacerbated by continued fallout from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, as well as Hurricanes, Ike and Gustav. There was a temporary increase in employment immediately following Hurricane Katrina and Rita due to disaster recovery funds received by Louisiana as a part of the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) and the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) Disaster Recovery Program. Shrinking opportunities to earn decent salaries have caused Louisiana

residents, with marketable skills, to migrate elsewhere in search of better paying jobs. Louisiana's continued dependence on a declining industrial and agricultural base is the most compelling of challenges.



Louisiana has previously adhered to economic models that were based on conditions that have changed substantially. These changes require new approaches. Louisiana has redirected its vision toward the challenge of keeping its residents with marketable skills as productive citizens in the state.

Louisiana's Response to the Challenge

Louisiana recognizes the DRA's highly successful federal grant program and intends to build upon the base provided by DRA. The State's Investment Strategy will also be organized around the DRA philosophy of building critical mass within its Delta communities.

1. Health as an economic engine.

Louisiana will support the "Healthy Delta" campaign and other employer based disease

prevention, education, and screening initiatives.

2. Information Technology.

Louisiana will pursue implementation of the iDelta plan and the goals of the Louisiana Delta Initiatives Program created by Act 347 of the 2007 Louisiana Legislature. These initiatives are designed to bring broadband to all of the DRA parishes in Louisiana.

3. Transportation.

Louisiana will place priority on the "Delta Development Highway System".

4. Workforce Education and Leadership.

Governor Jindal and the Louisiana Legislature have worked together to adopt a comprehensive workforce development reform plan to improve the effectiveness of Louisiana's community and technical colleges; and to provide turnkey workforce solutions for business expansion and recruitment projects.

5. Traditional localized projects.

Louisiana will follow the priorities of the DRA regarding basic physical infrastructure projects, transportation projects, workforce training, and business development projects. Louisiana will make every effort to provide matching funds, wherever possible, in support of these projects. Louisiana will also utilize DRA and other federal agencies in coordinated projects. The majority of Louisiana's DRA parishes are considered to be "distressed counties." Since DRA is mandated to spend 75 percent of its total

funds in “distressed counties,” the statistical makeup of Louisiana parishes will maximize the impact of DRA funds.



Coordination with Local Development Districts

Local Development Districts (LDDs) are regional planning councils that are recognized and administratively funded by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and regional development authorities, such as the DRA. The purpose of the LDDs is to address economic development and quality of life issues on a multi-jurisdictional basis. Of the 44 established LDDs in the DRA region, eight (8) of them are in Louisiana and have governing boards made up of appointed representatives of local communities and state government.

As part of DRA, Louisiana relies heavily on the LDDs as its regional frontline partner in economic development, particularly in the delivery of its federal grant program. Both DRA and Louisiana have found that the LDD delivery system can provide an effective mechanism for transforming the DRA region’s economic vitality. The LDDs promote DRA

programs and provide technical assistance to grant applicants. Accordingly, the LDDs are responsible for ensuring the suitability, completeness, and quality of grant applications, and sign their own federal grant application agreeing to do so for compensation. It is, therefore, critical that the regional economic development strategic plans of the LDDs also reflect Louisiana’s and DRA’s investment priorities. Under federal law, each DRA member state is required to submit a development plan that corresponds to the 2002 DRA Comprehensive Action Plan. The 2008 DRA Regional Development Plan significantly departed from its previous plan. This new direction allowed for each state, including Louisiana, to conform to goals, objectives, and strategies established in the 2008 DRA plan. DRA requested each state to prepare a five-year regional plan and the LDDs in Louisiana played a vital role in this effort.

Each LDD provided their Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDs) and allowed the use of them in establishing this five-year plan for Louisiana.

Local Partners

Louisiana must work in concert with its local partners in order to promote sustainable community and economic growth in Louisiana. This strategic plan has identified the primary factors driving job growth. It is up to local and regional partners to identify and implement the specific programs that address these issues. Key to this process are the eight (8) LDDs; the eight (8) economic alliances; eight (8) small business development centers; state economic development organizations; state and regional municipal associations; state and regional parish associations; regional economic development groups;

local chambers of commerce; and local governments. All of these organizations promote the DRA federal grant program in Louisiana to local and regional organizations. Louisiana will work with all of these local partners to incorporate the components of economic competitiveness and business development in Louisiana and its communities.

Additional Considerations

All strategic plans face difficulties and obvious hurdles to implementation. Louisiana's goal is that this plan will be unfettered by these concerns. As a consequence, it bears addressing what this plan does not propose to do. Each of the points below is held by strong constituencies and must be taken seriously. Plan changes and revisions must be addressed annually.

- The plan does not recommend industrial recruitment as the sole solution to unemployment.

Industrial recruitment has been a long-time traditional course of action to solve unemployment. Even though industrial recruitment has had some success, changing economic models are being developed and require new directions. Therefore, communities must address their economic competitiveness and business development to solve unemployment.

- The plan does not assume that training workers, or advancing leadership, can ensure that the talented young people of Louisiana will remain in their communities. *It is a fact, historically ignored by workforce training organizations, that workforce*

development and training must be reformed to motivate individuals to acquire skills and education in order to remain in their communities' workforce.

- The plan does not recommend actions that compromise the efforts of organizations already operating in Louisiana.

The DRA is not the only federal or state agency investing in Louisiana. From health to transportation, from technology to education, from housing to economic development, federal and state agencies continue to spend heavily in Louisiana.

The success of DRA in Louisiana will continue to lie along two paths: creative approaches and cooperative planning.

- While the plan narrows the focus of Louisiana, it respects the importance of continuity and support for existing initiatives.

Louisiana has a constituency whose needs must be recognized.

Finally, this five-year plan further recognizes that while poverty is not unique to Louisiana, the mix of historical economic factors pose enormous burdens. These burdens, however, cannot be resolved by any governmental agency in Louisiana. The resolution requires private investments and individual initiative.

Summary of Initiatives

In addition to the LDD's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDs), The Governor's Goals for Louisiana, as shown in Appendix A on

page 20; and An Overview of Louisiana Economic Development (LED) New Priorities, as indicated in Appendix B on page 23 were vital in developing the initiatives, objectives and strategies for this five-year plan.

Goal 1

Advance the Productivity and Economic Competitiveness of the Louisiana Workforce

This goal utilizes Goal 2 – Health Care Reform; and Goal 3 – Economic Reform from Governor Jindal’s Goals for Louisiana, as noted in Appendix A on page 18. In addition the goal considers Priority 2 – Enhance the Competitiveness of Our Local Communities; Priority 3 – Cultivate Our Top Regional Economic Development Assets; and Priority 4 – Provide New Leadership for Business Retention and Expansion from Louisiana Economic Development’s An Overview of Louisiana Economic Development (LED) New Priorities, as shown in Appendix B on page 21. The objectives and the strategies to meet these objectives are as follows:

Objective 1.1: Work with other regional partners to improve the employability and productivity of Louisiana Delta residents.

Strategies

1. Louisiana’s Local Development Districts will work with DRA to address employability and productivity issues on a multi-jurisdictional basis.

2. Louisiana’s investment strategy will be that of the DRA philosophy of building critical mass within its Delta parishes.
3. Coordinate efforts between local governments, non-profit economic development groups, and industry in order to develop effective partnerships.
4. Encourage energy efficiency through school, non-profit and community based organizations.

Objective 1.2: Strengthen workforce and professional skills programs.

Strategies

1. Conduct seminars and workshops for training providers.
2. Enhance the scorecard component of Louisiana Occupational Information System by communicating with training providers and/or government entities to encourage participation in the scorecard system.
3. Create a labor market information system that will provide information on training opportunities, available employment opportunities, job growth and demand projections and economic wage data.
4. Provide supportive services to businesses and job seekers through a network of workforce centers throughout the Delta parishes in order to develop a diversified

skilled workforce with access to better paying jobs.

5. Provide basic skill programs in the public school system and promote specific competitive requirements.

Objective 1.3: Improve the health of the workforce within the Louisiana Delta parishes.

Strategies

1. Louisiana will support the improvement of rural healthcare services utilizing Federally Qualified Healthcare Clinics, mobile healthcare providers, and development of telemedicine facilities and services. This strategy will help to provide more primary health services throughout the Delta parishes.
2. Louisiana will emphasize the providing of access to safe drinking water and wastewater facilities.
3. Promote and develop mechanisms to provide programs that educate and train health care professionals that will remain in the DRA region.
4. Support programs to prevent teen pregnancy.
5. Support programs to strengthen prenatal and neonatal healthcare.
6. Provide education programs to reduce infant mortality rates.

Goal 2

Strengthen Louisiana’s Physical and Digital Connections to the Global Economy

This goal utilizes Goal 3 – Economic Reform; Goal 4 – Social Service Reform; and Goal 6 – Education Reform; and Goal 8 – Transparent and Accountable Government from Governor Jindal’s Goals for Louisiana, as noted in Appendix A on page 18. In addition the goal considers Priority 1 – Increase Our State Economic Competitiveness; and Priority 2 – Enhance the Competitiveness of Our Local Communities from Louisiana Economic Development’s An Overview of Louisiana Economic Development (LED) New Priorities, as shown in Appendix B on page 21. The objectives and the strategies to meet these objectives are as follows:

Objective 2.1: Advance the iDelta initiative.

1. Louisiana’s Local Development Districts (LDD’s) will cooperate with DRA to implement Global Information System (GIS) systems. These systems will be compatible and used in planning and economic development activities in Louisiana.
2. Coordinate with the Louisiana Delta Initiatives and DRA to improve the awareness of all citizens and businesses in the Delta parishes of the value of technology to their economic future.
3. Louisiana will participate in support of enhancing distance education in all schools.

4. Louisiana will utilize local and regional career and business solutions centers to improve workforce development by providing access for all adults and enrolled youth to training in computer literacy, workforce skills, resume' writing and business practices relating to e-commerce.
5. Encourage efforts to link new and existing telecommunication networks in rural areas.

Objective 2.2: Support the Delta Development Highway System

Strategies

1. Louisiana will work with DRA, the Federal Highways Administration, and the Federal Transit Administration to prioritize and seek funding for the planning and construction of the major corridors of the DDHS.
2. Louisiana will incorporate transportation improvements into its top regional economic development assets where they are located within the DRA designated parishes. As an example, Louisiana has allocated funds for transportation improvements for the Franklin Farm Mega-Site in Northeast Louisiana.
3. Build capacity with local partners to help identify the critical transportation requirements in the parishes.

Objective 2.3: Expand intermodal and multi-modal transportation needs and networks.

Strategies

1. Louisiana will support the DRA multi-modal transportation plan.
2. Louisiana will promote funding, wherever possible, for creating new multi-modal facilities and expanding existing ones.
3. Analyze potential industrial sites to develop rail spurs, with priority on sites that serve multiple industries.
4. Examine the feasibility of an intermodal facility at the junction of Interstate 20, U.S. Highway 65 and the Mississippi River.

Objective 2.4: Expand the region's energy infrastructure and production capacity.

Strategies

1. Louisiana will support planning and policies that increase the Delta's capacity to produce, transport, and refine energy resources.
2. Louisiana will work with funding sources such as USDA, DRA and others to provide funds for alternative fuel development and production.

**Goal 3
Create Critical Mass within Louisiana Communities**

This goal utilizes Goal 1 – Hurricane Recovery and Emergency Preparedness; Goal 2 – Health Care Reform; and Goal 3 – Economic Reform; Goal 4 –

Social Service Reform; Goal 5 – Natural Resource Preservation; Goal 6 – Education Reform; Goal 7 – Crime and Safety Reform; and Goal 8 – Transparent and Accountable Government from Governor Jindal’s Goals for Louisiana, as noted in Appendix A on page 18. In addition the goal considers Priority 1 – Increase Our State Competitiveness; Priority 2 – Enhance the Competitiveness of Our Local Communities; Priority 3 – Cultivate Our Top Regional Economic Development Assets; and Priority 4 – Provide New Leadership for Business Retention and Expansion; Priority 5 – Develop National-Caliber Business Recruitment and Expansion; Priority 6 – Cultivate Small Business and Entrepreneurship; and Priority 7 – Aggressively Tell the Story of the Louisiana Renaissance from Louisiana Economic Development’s An Overview of Louisiana Economic Development (LED) New Priorities, as shown in Appendix B on page 21. The objectives and the strategies to meet these objectives are as follows:

Objective 3.1: Enhance the quality of place of Delta Communities.

Strategies

1. Louisiana will support downtown revitalization efforts through the use of the state Mainstreet Program, USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) Program, and Federal Highways Enhancement Program.
2. Louisiana will conduct an evaluation of the housing stock within the DRA parishes.

3. Louisiana will support the construction of local/regional medical facilities within DRA communities.
4. Louisiana will work to protect the area’s environmental assets.
5. Encourage industrial development that takes advantage of area natural resources in a responsible manner.
6. The Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism will support the development and marketing of local entertainment, recreation, cultural and tourism assets in the DRA communities.
7. Louisiana will support the development of “green” technologies throughout the Delta parishes.
8. Louisiana will promote and support partnerships and regional efforts in infrastructure development.

Objective 3.2: Promote innovation and diversification within local and regional economies.

Strategies

1. Louisiana will develop a robust state strategy to capitalize on local and regional efforts to recruit and retain companies which employ advanced processes and technologies.

2. The State will assist existing business in adopting new technologies and processes.
3. Louisiana will encourage the development and use of broadband infrastructure.

Objective 3.3: Support growth oriented entrepreneurship.

Strategies

1. Louisiana will work with its partners and the Small Business Development Centers to support entrepreneur education and training.
2. The State will support joint efforts to bring together entrepreneurs, potential investors, and service providers.
3. Louisiana will promote the use of venture capital to assist entrepreneurs.
4. Louisiana will promote a “bricks to clicks” program, which will educate and encourage entrepreneurs and existing business to utilize broadband to market and sell their products.
5. The State will support programs that teach youth entrepreneurship.

Objective 3.4: Foster local leadership.

Strategies

1. Louisiana will continue to participate in the Delta Leadership Institute (DLI).

2. The State will continue to encourage DLI graduates to participate in DLI alumni networks and events.
3. Louisiana and regional partners will support local training initiatives.
4. The State will support initiatives that promote life living learning.

Objective 3.5: Build and augment basic infrastructure.

Economic development specialists say poor infrastructure is a barrier to business expansion and recruitment. Governor Jindal made state aid for roads and bridges one of his top priorities in his second special session in 2008. The bill that won final approval will gradually move sales tax dollars from car and truck sales that now pay for a wide range of state services into a transportation-only fund over seven years. It will gradually increase state transportation spending by \$255 million per year in five years.

Strategies

1. The State and its partners will continue to support the construction and extension of basic infrastructure and services in rural areas which show the potential to augment nearby growth areas.
2. Louisiana will use state, federal, local, and private investment to develop and improve water and wastewater systems in distressed parishes in the DRA region. Louisiana will continue to support funding of projects

where health and safety is in question, and it is believed that DRA represents an essential portion of the funding.

3. The state will continue to support the construction of the last mile infrastructure and transportation linkages to local economic development assets.
4. Louisiana will give priority to wastewater projects that serve areas with documented health problems and will coordinate with all state and federal agencies, such as CDBG, USDA, and DEQ, to resolve these problems.
5. Support the development and construction of strategic community facilities that will enhance opportunities for job creation and retention.
6. The State will encourage the formation of regionally coordinated public transportation systems.

7. Louisiana will support the concept of walkable neighborhoods and communities; including sidewalks, jogging trails, and bike paths.

With the five-year plan initiatives, objectives and strategies now developed, Louisiana will continue to utilize the DRA programs along with other federal, state, local and private investments to achieve the goals set forth. The LDD's in Louisiana will continue to implement the DRA uniform application process. This process and its instructions are accessible to all participating parties through the DRA website www.dra.gov under "State Grant Funding". To apply for financial assistance through the DRA programs, a guide, including instructions and timelines, is provided in Appendix C beginning on page 29.

APPENDICES

Appendix A



Goals for Louisiana



1. Hurricane Recovery and Emergency Preparedness

Rebuild our coast and improve our defense against future hurricanes by implementing a comprehensive coastal protection program making property insurance more attainable, affordable and reliable and better prepare for the next emergency.

2. Health Care Reform

Create a sustainable system of quality healthcare by moving away from the one-size-fits-all system and use the assets we have more efficiently to help those in need get the care they deserve.

3. Economic Reform

Expand innovation, investment and opportunity for all Louisianans by eliminating roadblocks that stifle investment and develop new incentives to expand our economy, using our higher education institutions to prepare Louisiana's students for the economy of tomorrow, and improving our transportation system to attract jobs and improve our quality of life.

4. Social Service Reform

Provide needed services to vulnerable populations by using best practices and innovative technological solutions while maintaining a high level of accountability to provide services in a cost effective manner.

5. Natural Resource Preservation

Maintain and protect Louisiana's environment and natural resources for this generation and future generations through aggressive monitoring and active management using the best practices while allowing those resources to be used in a responsible and efficient manner.

6. Education Reform

Improve education opportunities for Louisiana's children by attracting and retaining qualified educators by giving them the resources they need, helping students succeed in today's curriculum and prepare them for tomorrow's opportunities, helping schools meet effective accountability standards, and partnering with communities to improve their education options.

7. Crime and Safety Reform

Bring security to all Louisiana citizens by protecting our children from violence and sexual predators, targeting the heart of most crimes and aggressively pursue gangs and drug dealers, giving local law enforcement and prosecutors the tools they need to put criminals behind bars, improve communication with law enforcement to know the specific needs of each community, and stop the “turnstile effect” and prevent repeat offenders from becoming recurring problems in our communities.

8. Transparent and Accountable Government

Reform Government and control spending by targeting and eliminating wasteful spending and adopting measures that increase efficiency, productivity and customer service including pursuing and expanding new technologies and best practices to provide improved services at reduced cost while responsibly managing and accounting for the hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

Appendix B



LOUISIANA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Creating the Next Great American State for Business Investment and Economic Opportunity: An Overview of LED's New Priorities

A snapshot of Louisiana's economy suggests we are doing relatively well today, especially compared to the United States overall. Louisiana's unemployment rate is well below that of the nation. Per-capita income growth in Louisiana has been higher than that in much of the country. Louisiana's economy has been growing faster than that of the nation as a whole. Billions of dollars of construction projects are under way in a variety of sectors, including industrial modernization projects, new manufacturing facilities, commercial office space and various transportation investments. Major bond-rating agencies like Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor's have recently upgraded our state debt rating. In addition, Louisiana has avoided the worst of the national real estate crunch -- although volumes have slowed, prices are stable or up in most of our communities.

However, beneath this attractive veneer is a reality with which Louisiana residents have become far too familiar: our greatest export today is not our agricultural products, not our wood products, not even our oil, gas or chemicals -- our greatest export too often is our people, particularly our young people who frequently believe they must leave Louisiana to find greater economic opportunities in such places as Houston, Atlanta or Dallas.

Dramatically changing this reality -- or more specifically, repositioning Louisiana as the next great American state for business investment, quality of life and economic opportunity -- is the new vision of the Louisiana Department of Economic Development (LED).

To successfully fulfill this vision, LED will need to go from good to great in business development, as well as to cultivate new capabilities in product development (i.e., public-policy efforts designed to increase the attractiveness of our state as a place in which to invest). In the process, we expect to become one of the top state economic development agencies in the country over the next two to four years.

This document describes the following seven major priorities that will be LED's primary focus over the next few years, as well as selected initiatives associated with each of them.

1. Increase our state economic competitiveness
2. Enhance the competitiveness of our local communities
3. Cultivate our top regional economic development assets
4. Provide new leadership for business retention and expansion
5. Develop national-caliber business recruitment capabilities
6. Cultivate small business and entrepreneurship
7. Aggressively tell the story of the Louisiana Renaissance

PRIORITY 1 INCREASE OUR STATE ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

Our marketing and business development efforts at the state and local levels are important in securing new investment and job creation for our state. But the vast majority of business location decisions are driven by fundamentals, such as labor quality, availability and cost; the tax and regulatory environment; quality-of-life factors (e.g., public education, crime and recreational amenities); and transportation assets. Accordingly, the most important thing we can do to create a brighter economic future for our state is to increase our state economic competitiveness -- to make Louisiana a more attractive place in which to invest.

Gov. Bobby Jindal and the Louisiana Legislature already have taken several constructive steps in this regard. The first step was adopting new governmental ethics laws that catapulted Louisiana from near the bottom to the top in the country. The second step was eliminating unorthodox business taxes, including the sales tax on natural gas and business utilities, the sales tax on manufacturing machinery and equipment and the franchise tax on corporate debt. More recently, Gov. Jindal and the Legislature worked together to adopt a comprehensive workforce development reform plan to improve the effectiveness of our community and technical colleges, provide turnkey workforce solutions to expanding and relocating businesses, and ensure that our workforce programs are driven by real business needs.

As significant as these recent reform efforts have been, we have much work left to do to increase our state's economic competitiveness to a level at which businesses around the country routinely choose Louisiana as their preferred location for investment and growth. Accordingly, LED's budget for Fiscal Year 2009 (FY09) includes a new State Economic Competitiveness (SEC) Group with dedicated staff to develop public policy recommendations designed to make Louisiana a much more attractive place in which to invest, as well as funding for Louisiana Fast Start, a program providing turnkey workforce solutions for business expansion and recruitment projects.

Selected short-term initiatives

- Hire an outstanding group of individuals to lead LED's new SEC Group
- Launch the Louisiana Fast Start program
- Conduct a comprehensive review of Louisiana's economic development incentives, benchmarking them against those of other southern states (e.g., structure, eligibility, paperwork requirements), and recommend a comprehensive set of enhancements
- Conduct a comprehensive review of Louisiana's competitiveness for the automotive industry, with a particular focus on General Motors and the Franklin Farm Mega Site, and develop recommendations to improve our attractiveness at both locations for advanced manufacturing
- Develop strategic plans for cultivating Louisiana's rapidly growing entertainment industries, including and in particular, film productions and digital interactive media
- Develop an in-depth understanding of the impacts of potential greenhouse gas legislation at the federal level, as well as how Louisiana should respond
- Determine the market feasibility of creating a world-class center of excellence for shipbuilding research and testing that serves Louisiana's existing resident industry and catalyzes growth in this important industry segment

Selected long-term initiatives

- Develop industry-specific plans to improve the competitiveness of Louisiana's traditional industries (e.g., oil and gas) and emerging growth sectors (e.g., nuclear energy)
- Benchmark state public policies associated with major business-climate factors (e.g., workers' compensation laws, tort system, energy) to identify gaps and how to close them
- Develop prioritized recommendations for dramatically improving Louisiana's position in major national rankings associated with business and/or economic development
- Develop a robust state strategy to capitalize on trade-related economic opportunities associated with the upcoming expansion of the Panama Canal
- Benchmark the service levels of selected state agencies that interact with business against those of other states and identify improvement opportunities
- Recommend strategies to increase commercialization potential of technology-transfer activities in higher education
- Develop strategies for improving access to workforce housing in high-need areas
- Develop plans to improve our ports, airports, transportation and other public infrastructure, including creative financing strategies, with a focus on economic development

PRIORITY 2

ENHANCE THE COMPETITIVENESS OF OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Although companies certainly consider a variety of state-level issues (e.g., business taxes or tort system) when selecting locations for new business investment, they primarily consider local and regional issues, such as the quality, cost and availability of trained workers and quality-of-life factors (e.g., the perceived quality of public school options). Moreover, they consider issues associated with a specific site, not just a state as a whole. Accordingly, our overall success in economic development in the state of Louisiana will be as much about cultivating strong local and regional economic development efforts as it will be about creating a more effective LED.

More directly, we must improve the competitiveness of our local communities -- the effectiveness of local and regional business development efforts, as well as the quality of the local product we offer companies -- to create more jobs and diversify our economy.

Each of our local communities and regions in Louisiana must prepare for success in the increasingly competitive world of economic development. That means each parish and region must have a strong economic development plan; adequate, stable funding; assertive, professional staff; and coordinated, active engagement from the public and private sectors to be successful.

Because much of this relies on local leadership in 64 unique parishes, LED cannot increase the competitiveness of each of our local communities acting in isolation. What we can and will do is provide technical resources; training, matching grants and benchmarking support to help each of our communities position themselves to compete. We have already taken several positive steps in this regard, including the recent launch of the Louisiana Community Network, a web-based suite of educational modules focused on increasing local economic development capacity.

Selected short-term initiatives

- Continuing LED's partnership with the Louisiana Municipal Association, along with regional and local economic development partners, identify and incorporate improvements to our new Louisiana Community Network website, including new modules
- Launch a certified sites program with matching grants from LED to encourage the identification of development-ready sites around the state

Selected long-term initiatives

- Complete and publish a comprehensive review of funding and organizational models for local and regional economic development organizations to assist local communities in their efforts to strengthen their economic development efforts
- Prioritize and help fund expanded training opportunities for local economic development professionals to build local capacity

PRIORITY 3

CULTIVATE LOUISIANA'S TOP REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSETS

Northwest Louisiana is as different from the New Orleans Region as the Bayou Region is different from Acadiana. As LED fulfills its mission of leading economic development for the state of Louisiana, we will do so with an overall approach that recognizes that each of our state's eight economic regions is unique, and each region has its own unique assets.

LED primarily focuses on eight economic regions in our state, each of which is anchored by a significant city (or cities): Northwest Louisiana (Shreveport/Bossier), Northeast Louisiana (Monroe), Central Louisiana (Alexandria), Southwest Louisiana (Lake Charles), Acadiana (Lafayette), the Capital Region (Baton Rouge), the Bayou Region (Houma/Thibodaux) and the New Orleans Region.

Each of these eight economic regions has at least one unique economic asset that could create a thousand or more high-paying jobs with the right level of leadership and targeted investment. In the near future, LED will develop a regional economic development asset program to identify targeted investment opportunities that can create new jobs for our state. We will treat these projects just as seriously as we do attracting a new business to Louisiana, in part because these projects allow us to build on our existing strengths.

Examples of regional economic assets include: NASA's Michoud Assembly Facility (New Orleans area), Cyber Command at Barksdale Air Force Base (Northwest Louisiana), Pennington Biomedical Research Center (Capital Region), Chennault International Airport (Southwest Louisiana), England Airpark (Central Louisiana), Franklin Farm Mega Site (Northeast Louisiana), several shipbuilding and oil service opportunities (Bayou Region), and the Louisiana Immersive Technologies Enterprise or LITE (Acadiana Region).

PRIORITY 4

PROVIDE NEW LEADERSHIP FOR BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION

The vast majority of new job growth -- and 100 percent of our job losses -- will come from the businesses already located in Louisiana. Too often we have taken these companies for granted, with relatively little focus on understanding and addressing their needs.

In this administration, business retention and expansion (BRE) efforts will be prioritized over business recruitment efforts. Accordingly, our FY09 budget includes a new business retention and expansion team, as well as funding to provide resources to our regional economic development organizations to support an expanded statewide focus on business retention and expansion.

In the next few months, we will recruit an outstanding business retention and expansion team, develop a state and local action plan for reaching out regularly to the roughly 1,000 top economic- driver companies in the state and make plans to include small business development centers in our BRE efforts.

We will manage BRE projects just as aggressively as we do business recruitment projects, and we will incorporate feedback from our business retention calls into our state competitiveness efforts as we identify opportunities to make Louisiana a better place in which to do business.

PRIORITY 5 DEVELOP NATIONAL-CALIBER BUSINESS RECRUITMENT CAPABILITIES

Although most job-creation opportunities will come from cultivating businesses already located in Louisiana, our state will still execute an aggressive business recruitment program to capture a disproportionate share of the relatively few large projects that locate in the United States each year, as well as to attract investment in new, high-growth industry sectors that can diversify our economy.

Over the last few years, LED's business recruitment capabilities have been strengthened thanks to increased funding for marketing/advertising and deal-closing funds, including the Governor's Rapid Response Fund and the Mega Projects Development Fund. Nevertheless, we need to make the transition from good to great.

Over the next few months, we will benchmark our business recruitment efforts for each stage of the process -- from lead generation to service after the sale -- to clarify what represents national- caliber execution and identify gaps that we need to close to ensure we are consistently executing at a national-caliber level. Additionally, we will look for opportunities to improve our level of collaboration with our regional and local partners around the state, with a particular focus on our process for coordinating prospect management and associated communications. Our overall goal is to become one of the top two to three business recruitment organizations in the country. We will know we have achieved that objective when top executives and site-selection consultants agree that Louisiana's economic development professionals are among the most responsive and most professional in the country.

Selected short-term initiatives

- In partnership with LED's regional and local economic development partners, adopt a standard prospect protocol agreement to clarify roles and communications for LED and its local/regional economic development partners to ensure seamless handling of prospects
- Implement best-practice processes and guidelines to achieve national-caliber prospect and project management
- Enhance incentive evaluation, approval and communications processes to consistently yield optimal and timely results

- Develop a bullet-proof approach for delivering on financial commitments made by LED to companies
- Develop capability to consistently deliver A+ presentation books in response to Requests for Proposals (e.g., verbiage, supporting data, description of incentives and programs, workforce responses, look and feel, Q&A)
- Update and promulgate incentive and other program rules for improved clarity and consistency
- In partnership with Entergy, launch a web-enabled statewide database leveraging GIS technology to provide a comprehensive inventory of available sites and buildings, along with key demographic information

Selected long-term initiatives

- Identify and develop plans to cultivate new, high-growth, industry sectors with the potential to diversify Louisiana's economy over time (e.g., digital interactive media, nuclear energy, advanced manufacturing, other alternative energy technologies)
- Complete the placement of all business-incentive application processes online
- Develop and implement aggressive international marketing strategy to increase foreign direct investment
- Cultivate strong relationships with top 100 site-selection consultants in the United States
- Cultivate relationships with senior executives of Fortune 500 companies

PRIORITY 6

CULTIVATE SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

So much of Louisiana's economic success historically has been derived from our geographic assets (e.g., oil and gas deposits, Mississippi River) and branch plants of large corporations (e.g., Dow, ExxonMobil, General Motors) that we haven't done enough as a state to cultivate small business and entrepreneurship. We lack sufficient access to early-stage capital to catalyze new business formation, and we have fallen behind in our support for small business and entrepreneurship in our state.

Over the next few months, LED will develop a multiple-year plan to reposition Louisiana as one of the best places in the country in which to start and grow a small business, as well as to create a more vibrant entrepreneurial culture in our state.

This plan likely will include a variety of components related to increasing support for small-business development centers, improving access to early-stage capital (e.g., strengthening the angel-investor tax credit), cultivating technology-based businesses, expanding minority business development services, and reducing tax and regulatory burdens (e.g., review of capital gains tax) that hold back the growth of small businesses in our state. We expect to recommend that components of this plan be implemented with funding and enabling legislation to be considered in the 2009 regular session of the Louisiana Legislature.

PRIORITY 7 AGGRESSIVELY TELL THE STORY OF THE LOUISIANA RENAISSANCE

One of the greatest challenges facing economic development in our state is the relatively negative perception of Louisiana held by some business executives in the United States and around the world. Often these perceptions are based on outdated or completely inaccurate views of our state.

To create a brighter economic future for Louisiana, we must not only increase our state economic competitiveness (Priority 1) and improve our business development activities (Priorities 4 and 5), we must also convey to business executives around the country and around the world that Louisiana is positioning itself to become the next great American state for business investment, quality of life and economic opportunity. Although we can't solve all of our problems overnight, we can continue to build momentum in a positive direction and foster confidence that we are getting there quickly.

Public policy changes enacted earlier this year, including governmental ethics reform, elimination of unorthodox business taxes and comprehensive workforce development reforms, already have built positive momentum and an improving image for our state. These moves have been bolstered by a variety of business recruitment wins, including the relocation of Albemarle's corporate headquarters (Louisiana's fifth Fortune 1000 firm), EA's North American Test Center at Louisiana State University, the new Shaw/Westinghouse nuclear module manufacturing facility in Lake Charles and the Coca-Cola manufacturing relocation from Hattiesburg to Baton Rouge. Moreover, Fortune 250 steel producer Nucor has indicated that it favors St. James Parish for its new, multibillion dollar iron plant.

Although fresh new marketing and advertising strategies, including a new website and marketing collateral, will play a significant role, our primary approach to telling the story of the Louisiana Renaissance will be securing earned media by continuing to enact bold public policy reforms and deliver impressive business development wins. In addition, we will launch a quarterly economic development publication targeted at in-state and out-of-state business executives that will communicate economic development progress in Louisiana.

This document outlines LED's overall priorities for the next few years. Although not specifically articulated herein, LED is executing a separate action plan for addressing hurricane recovery issues, which will remain a significant priority for some time to come. While we are implementing each of the strategies outlined in this document, we will take special care to address the ongoing economic recovery needs of those communities impacted by hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav and Ike.

Appendix C

Application Processing and Timelines



The following guidance is provided for potential applicants in Louisiana to utilize in the DRA application processing. In addition, the guidance will provide estimated timelines for potential applicants.

Local Development Districts

Local Development Districts (LDDs) are regional planning councils. They are recognized and administratively funded by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and regional development authorities, such as the DRA, to address economic development and related issues on a multi-jurisdictional basis. The governing bodies of LDDs are primarily composed of local elected officials and appointed representatives of local communities and state government. There are forty-five (45) established LDDs within the DRA territorial footprint. These regional entities have a proven record of helping small cities and parishes improve basic infrastructure and stimulate growth. Louisiana has eight LDDs, as noted in the Acknowledgements section of this strategic plan. These eight LDDs will be the “front-line” facilitators within their districts, to publicize, educate and provide technical assistance for the DRA Federal Grant Program’s application process.

The LDDs in Louisiana serve as a liaison between the DRA and local governments, non-profit organizations, the business community, and citizens interested in working with DRA. In addition, they identify, develop, and implement programs and activities that educate local stakeholders about the DRA and its economic and community development programs through public hearings or input forums. In Louisiana, the LDDs engage in multifaceted tasks directly related to regional planning. Of utmost importance among these activities are community and economic planning, GIS, business development financing, grant writing and administration, waste management, data collection and dissemination, workforce development, and transportation planning.

The LDDs are a ready source of professional and technical information and network extensively with state and federal resource agencies. All are proficient in understanding the requirements of all state and most federal funding sources including the Delta Regional Authority, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Small Business Administration, United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Development Administration, Federal Emergency Management Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Justice, etc.

Most importantly, the LDDs are responsible for ensuring the suitability, completeness, eligibility, and quality of grant applications, as well as ensuring they are representative of the priorities set forth by the Governor and the DRA.

Additional services set out for the LDDs may include:

- Identifying and recommending to the Governor a list of priority projects for DRA consideration
- Providing a semiannual report of its activities to the DRA's Federal Program Coordinator
- Assisting the approved grantees by conducting the actual grant closing process including document explanation, execution, and dissemination

DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAM

The Delta Regional Authority (DRA), consisting of the Federal Co-Chairman and the Governors of the eight participating member states will make available to its Members of Congress, the DRA's forty-five (45) LDDs and the general public its pre-application package for the DRA Federal Grant Program.

The DRA's "Uniform Pre-application Package" will include the:

1. Cover Letter;
2. Simplified Process and Timeline;
3. DRA Uniform Grant Pre-Application Form;
4. Application for Federal Assistance – Standard Form 424 and, 424a & 424b for non-construction projects, or 424c & 424d for construction projects;
5. "Attachment A.1 – Distressed Counties" -- Determined by the Delta Regional Authority on June 26, 2008.

If the project assists a private entity to locate and create jobs or an existing entity is involved in the retention of jobs, then a completed **Participation Agreement is required**. The Participation Agreement is posted as a document on the DRA website www.dra.gov under the Federal Grant Program. Failure to provide the Participation Agreement will result in an incomplete pre-application and disqualification.

The DRA "Uniform Pre-Application Package" can also be accessed through:

- DRA's web site, www.dra.gov, "DRA Federal Grant Program, or by
- Calling: 1-888-GO TO DRA

- Writing: DRA Federal Grant Program – Pre-Application Team
Delta Regional Authority
236 Sharkey Avenue – Suite 400
Clarksdale, Mississippi 38614
- Your Local Development District: For a list of the DRA LDD contacts, please refer to www.dra.gov “DRA Federal Grant Program” or the Acknowledgements section of this plan on page v.

Please note: as DRA will periodically update its site with new information, clarification, etc., it is important to frequently refer to www.dra.gov “DRA Federal Grant Program” to learn of these updates.

The following is an outline of the Simplified Process and Timeline provided each funding year by DRA.

Local Development Districts – Publicize, Educate and Assist

The Local Development Districts (LDDs) in Louisiana, will be the “front-line” facilitators to publicize, educate and provide technical assistance for the DRA Federal Grant Program’s pre-application process. Specifically, commencing as soon as the funding timeline is released by DRA, each LDD will begin publicizing the DRA Federal Grant Program through their hosting of public-information forums plus all other means appropriate to their respective client bases.

Each LDD will be the principal contact for the provision of technical and pre-application assistance to the pre-applicants in its area throughout this sixty-day period, from announcement to pre-application deadline.

On a separate but important note, most DRA Federal Grant Program projects will be administered by agencies other than the DRA. These agencies are referred to as “Administering Agencies”. If either USDA Rural Development or the Economic Development Administration is a participant in the project, then DRA will have a supplement grant and the applicable for mentioned Agency will administer the DRA supplement grant. Otherwise, the LDD will administer the DRA portion of the project.

Please note: these services (publicity, education and technical assistance for pre-application preparation) to be provided by the DRA LDDs will be provided at no cost to the public, as the Delta Regional Authority has allocated the funds to, and has an agreement with, each LDD specifically for these purposes.

All LDDs Host Public Forums

The LDDs will hold public forums to educate and assist the public concerning the DRA Federal Grant Program.

Pre-applications Due at Local Development District

All pre-application packages must be received by the LDD on the established deadline. The LDD will screen the pre-applications for completeness. Pre-applications received after the established deadline will automatically be deemed ineligible for DRA Federal Grant funds, with no recourse.

Pre-Applications will only be accepted through your Local Development District, which must be listed on the LDD transmittal cover letter.

In Louisiana, the DRA/Renewal Communities Coordinator at the statewide level in Louisiana is also in place to provide an extra level of review. The LDD shall forward a copy of *all* pre-applications to the DRA/Renewal Communities Coordinator as early as possible before forwarding to DRA.

All submitted pre-application packages **MUST** include both the completed “Uniform Pre-Application Form” and the appropriate Federal Standard Form 424 and (424a & 424b non-construction or 424c & 424d construction).

Please include in your submission to DRA:

1. One set of originals for DRA review;
2. One set of copies, which DRA will send to the participating state member; and,
3. One set of copies, which DRA will send to the (prospective) Administering Agency.

In Louisiana, please send the packages to your LDD office. The address can be found at www.dra.gov “DRA Federal Grant Program” or the Acknowledgements section of this plan on page v.

Local Development Districts Forward Pre-Applications

The LDDs will package complete Pre-applications and send original plus one copy to DRA. LDDs will also send a copy to the DRA/Renewal Communities Coordinator at the same time.

Please note: Failure to submit complete pre-application packages and/or the requisite number of copies will automatically render the submission ineligible for DRA Federal Grant funds, with no recourse.

Project Eligibility Shall Be Determined

Project eligibility for the DRA Federal Grant Program will be determined within the established deadline by the Federal Co-Chairman, based on:

1. The eligibility guidelines as prescribed by the U.S. Congress in the “Delta Regional Authority Act of 2000”, as amended (Attachment A -- Eligibility);

2. Delta Regional Authority policy promulgations (Attachment A.1 – Distressed Counties); and,
3. The “Clarification Notes” described both on the “Uniform Pre-Application Form” and which may subsequently be described online and in this plan (please check for any updated “Clarifications”).

Upon completion of his eligibility determinations, the Federal Co-Chairman will forward that list to each participating state member, and he will also notify the pre-applicants and the Administering Agencies.

Participating State Member Select Approved Projects and Notify the Federal Co-Chairman

Each state’s Governor will select his projects for DRA Federal Grant funding from the Federal Co-Chairman’s list of eligible pre-applications.

With the singular independence as prescribed by the “Delta Regional Authority Act of 2000”, as amended, each Governor will select his projects for funding, and will do so within the context of his own Authority-approved state plan and priorities.

When the Governors have selected their projects, these selections basically become “pre-certified” for DRA funding, needing now an application (“business plan”) sufficient to satisfy the Authority and the (if needed) Administering Agency that the project will work as described and be able to comply with all appropriate federal regulations.

As Governors make their selections, they will forward their lists to the Federal Co-Chairman, who will in turn, invite these full applications for these “pre-certified” projects.

As stated above, in the main, projects funded through the DRA Federal Grant Program may be administered by other agencies. Specifically, each Federal Administering Agency’s involvement will be:

1. Federal Administering Agencies will receive the Federal Co-Chairman’s list of the eligible projects, which the Federal Administering Agency may be requested to administer, when he forwards this list to the participating state members.
2. The Federal Administering Agency will certify that it will administer such projects according to their identified programs.

Please note: When projects have been:

1. ***Deemed eligible by the Federal Co-Chairman,***
2. ***Pre-certified by the Governors and***

3. Accepted by Administering Agencies, the applicants basically become “pre-grantees”.

Accordingly, the DRA staff will proceed to work collaboratively and collegially with these “pre-grantees” to best insure their applications are sound, all contingencies are satisfied, before the State Certification and Board vote takes place -- all to best insure each project will be successful.

Federal Co-Chairman Issues “Invitations to Apply” to Governors’ Selections

Using the DRA Federal Grant “Uniform Grant Application Form”, which will include DRA’s required checklists and format, the Federal Co-Chairman will invite a full application from each participating state’s lists of eligible and pre-certified projects.

Applications Must be Prepared and Received by DRA

Using the packages provided by the Federal Co-Chairman, and the 28 days allowed, each applicant must complete such application packages and have the DRA receive their application packages by the deadline provided:

1. One set of originals for DRA review,
2. One set of copies, which DRA will send to the participating state member and
3. One set of copies, which DRA will send to the (prospective) Federal Administering Agency

Applicants shall send their packages to:

DRA Federal Grant Program – Review Team
Delta Regional Authority
236 Sharkey Avenue – Suite 400
Clarksdale, MS 38614

During approximately the seventh month of the funding cycle, all applications shall be received to the DRA Central Office, and the DRA staff will conduct a final review of the details, while working collaboratively and collegially with each applicant.

DRA Staff Review of Applications Completed and Reviews Forwarded to Governors

By the end of the eighth month, DRA staff will have forwarded all the completed application reviews to each Governor for the state’s “evaluation and certification” as prescribed by the “Delta Regional Authority Act of 2000”, as amended.

Governors Will Evaluate and Certify Projects

Upon receiving each application for their state, each participating Governor shall evaluate and certify each application through his appropriate review process. Governors will then forward their lists of evaluated and certified applications to the Federal Co-Chairman.

The Delta Regional Authority Votes on Funding Year's Projects

The Delta Regional Authority then votes on funding that year's projects. Each application will be voted on and approved by the participating state members and the Federal Co-Chairman, together, the Delta Regional Authority. Once projects are approved, the administration of each project will proceed in accordance with the "Memorandum of Agreement" between DRA and the appropriate Administering Agencies.

The Region's Members of Congress Notified

By the end of the ninth month, the Members of Congress from the DRA region will be notified by the Federal Co-Chairman of all projects funded in their states and districts.

The Region's Governors are Notified

By the end of the ninth month, the Governors of the DRA region will be notified by the Federal Co-Chairman of all projects funded in their states.

Applicants will be notified as to their application status

By September 30, applicants will be notified of their board approval and that grant documents will be prepared for applicant execution. Upon receipt of properly executed documents plus any additional information requested with the documents, authorization to proceed with the project will be given to grantees.

DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY

Federal Grant Program Eligibility Clarification Notes (2009)

1. Applicants must demonstrate through a sound, comprehensive business plan based on hard data, proven methodology and reasonable forecasts acceptable to the DRA that the applicant is capable of maintaining the project after DRA funding to assure the sustainability of the project and achievement of the level of service outlined in the project description.

A project will NOT be deemed sustainable if it is dependent on future grants to meet its normal operating expenses.

Sustainability, by definition, includes all costs associated with management, operation and maintenance necessary to maintain an acceptable level of service.

2. Eligible entities may NOT be conduits for private-sector entities. The DRA federal grant program is ONLY available to participating member states, public and non-profit entities.
3. Basic Public and Transportation Infrastructure: to be deemed eligible, projects shall demonstrate job-creation or job-retention impact or demonstrate that a reasonable expectation of an impending sanction exists.
4. Workforce and Business Development: to be deemed eligible, projects shall demonstrate job-creation or job-retention.
5. “Workforce Development” means: job training or employment-related education for a specific employer to fill immediate job openings or retain current jobs, which are documented as such by that specific employer.
6. Delivery of such training shall be through the use of existing public educational facilities (EPEFs) located in the Region. However, if, the pre-applicant demonstrates (1) sufficient documentation demonstrating an EPEF’s inability (as examples, insufficient capacity, curriculum, and/or accessibility) to satisfy the defined need, and the pre-applicant (2) demonstrates a compelling need to use a non-EPEF for such training, then the Federal Co-Chairman can waive this requirement and deem a project eligible.
7. Business Development – For eligibility purposes, this category refers to those areas of business development which include entrepreneurship, the creation of new businesses or the retention or expansion of existing businesses in the local communities.
8. Local, state and/or federal road, highway and/or bridge maintenance projects will NOT be eligible for DRA funding. However, projects involving development of access roads for industrial parks or economic development project sites (as examples) would be deemed eligible, if such are considered to be “basic public infrastructure”.
9. Other than for “Workforce Training” projects as described above, normal operating costs (including but not limited to, salaries, vehicles, equipment and maintenance) will NOT be deemed eligible.

10. Government-facility construction and/or improvements (including but not limited to, local/state government offices, libraries, fire stations, multi-purpose buildings and public education buildings/schools) will NOT be eligible unless project leads to creation or retention of private sector jobs.
11. “Indirect Cost Allocations” are eligible but will be carefully assessed for reasonableness.
12. “Isolated Areas of Distress” means: Areas of distress identifiable by census track (distressed county criteria) within a non-distressed county.
13. DRA 2007 federal grant funds will NOT be used for projects deemed to be “Speculative”, “Maintenance” or “Deferred Maintenance”.
14. Typically, “On-going Operating Costs”, will NOT be deemed eligible. However, for such costs to be considered, the project MUST be documented as a “Workforce Development” project.
15. NO financial assistance will be authorized to assist any relocation from one area (of the region) to another, except as authorized, to attract businesses from outside the DRA region to the DRA region.
16. DRA 2007 federal grant funds CAN NOT be used to “supplant” existing funding streams.
17. DRA funds can be used as the “first-dollar in” to attract additional funds, if needed. However, if this project will require other funds to work, please document or describe the source(s) of those additional funds.
18. Allow expansion of existing business incubators and industrial parks, river ports and airports; only allow funding start-up facilities if a committed economic development project or committed business incubator tenants.
19. All programs and activities will be carried out in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and other federal laws prohibiting discrimination, and in such a manner that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age or disability be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination with respect to any such programs or activities.
20. Delta Regional Authority reserves the right to withdraw grants for projects not under contract within 18 months of approval.
21. Business incubation is a business support process that accelerates the successful development of start-up and fledgling companies by providing entrepreneurs with any array of targeted resources and services. A business incubator’s main goal is to produce successful firms that will leave the program financially viable and freestanding. These incubator graduates have the potential to create jobs, revitalize neighborhoods, commercialize new technologies, and strengthen local and national economies. (Incubators typically graduate companies within three years) – National Business Incubator Association – www.nbia.org
22. Geographic Information System (GIS) and Broadband projects (not to include speculative or feasibility-type studies – rather, complete and sustainable projects) will be considered

technological infrastructure, a subpart of “basic public infrastructure”, and will be deemed eligible for State, County/Parish, or Municipal government entities, if they do not directly subsidize for-profit entities.

23. Feasibility/marketing type studies will be considered non-sustainable and speculative, therefore will not be considered eligible.