

**CREATING JOBS.
BUILDING COMMUNITIES.
IMPROVING LIVES.**



Alabama | Arkansas | Illinois | Kentucky | Louisiana | Mississippi | Missouri | Tennessee



Delta Leadership Institute



DELTA LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

The Delta Leadership Institute (DLI) was created to empower leaders with the tools, experiences, and networks to address local and regional challenges. The DLI Executive Academy trains leaders from diverse backgrounds, sectors, and industries to improve the economic competitiveness and social viability of the Mississippi River Delta and Alabama Black Belt regions.



DELTA LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE EXECUTIVE ACADEMY



Tools

Develop skills and knowledge in policy areas relevant to economic and community development and competencies that enhance your ability to improve your community.



Experiences

Visit different locales and learn from numerous communities the strategies that are helping to grow local economies and explore opportunities in diverse cities and towns throughout the region.



Networks

Connect with fellow community leaders, practitioners, and experts to develop a strong network for regional collaboration, information sharing, and continued learning.

DELTA LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Planning Team



Program Lead

Sea Talantis, Director of Human Infrastructure, Delta Regional Authority

Tineciaa Harris, Program Manager, Delta Regional Authority



Administration & Logistics

Mandy Keller, Facility Sales & Event Coordinator, Executive Education



Executive Education

Dr. Bevalee Vitali, Director, Institute for Leadership Development, Professor of Management

2026 EXECUTIVE ACADEMY PROGRAM

Session I (Orientation)

Poplar Bluff, MO - March 23-26, 2026

Session II

Monroe, W. Monroe, LA - April 27- April 30, 2026

Session III

Washington, DC - June 8-11, 2026

Session IV

Marion, IL - July 27-30, 2026

Session V

Memphis, TN - September 14-17, 2026

Session VI (Graduation)

New Orleans, LA – October 19-22, 2026



DELTA LEADERSHIP NETWORK

The Delta Leadership Network (DLN) is now almost 700 members strong. Like the Executive Academy, the DLN focuses on promoting action-oriented leadership in the Delta region. Through our alumni, we continue to build awareness of DRA priorities.







Anna Lee
Montgomery, Alabama

Taylor Clark
Miner, Missouri

James Carlson
Nashville, Tennessee













ASHWOOD BRIDGE TALLAHATCHIE RIVER

BUILT IN 1954 BY LEFLORE COUNTY WITH
FEDERAL AID, STATE AID, AND COUNTY FUNDS.

LEFLORE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

L. W. ELY, PRESIDENT
RUFUS FREEMAN
W. J. LIPSCOMB

B. T. TERRY
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DANIEL E. KELLY
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R. H. SWANZY

CHANCERY CLERK
ATTORNEY
COUNTY ENGINEER
CONSULTING ENGINEER
ASST. COUNTY ENGINEER

U.S. BUREAU OF PUBLIC ROADS

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G. P. PATTON

DISTRICT ENGINEER
BRIDGE ENGINEER

STATE AID DIVISION

B. T. COLLIER
RALPH ROBINSON

STATE AID ENGINEER
DISTRICT ENGINEER

CONTRACTOR

JOHN H. MOON AND SON-PORT GIBSON
BRIDGE JANUARY
SUPERINTENDENT















2027 DLI TIMELINE

Applications Open	June 17, 2026
Applications Due	August 14, 2026
Application Review	August – October 2026
Notification to Applicants	October 2026
2027 DLI Press Release	November 2026
Orientation/Session I	Jan/Feb 2027
Graduation	September 2027



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QUESTIONS?



Health Programs Overview



Health Programs Staff

Christina Wooden,
Health Programs Manager

Anita Stasher,
Health Programs Analyst

Health Programs

- Delta Doctors
- Innovative Readiness Training
- Delta Region Community Health Systems Development Program

Delta Doctors Program

Purpose

- Ensures the workforce within DRA's footprint has access to quality health care.
- Provides medical services in health professional shortage areas and medically underserved areas.

Delta Doctors

J-1 Visa Waiver Program

- Approximately 1 in 4 physicians practicing in the United States were born in and graduated from medical school in foreign countries.
- There are currently more than 203,500 foreign physicians practicing in the U.S.
- International Medical Graduates enter the U.S after graduation on J-1 Visas (Foreign Exchange Visa) to complete residencies.
- In 2022, 7,864 IMG's entered post graduate training in the United States.

Delta Doctors

J-1 Visa Waiver Program

- J-1 Visa holders must return to their home country after residency is complete for at least 2 years.
- The J-1 Visa is not a work visa.
- Delta Doctors Programs is a path to waive the “two-year requirement” and obtain a H1-B work visa.

Delta Doctors

J-1 Visa Waiver Program:

Commitments

- Employer must advertise for an American physician for at least 45 days.
- Employer must show a need for physician. Physician to patient ratio must meet 1:1,200.
- Physician must serve in health professional shortage areas or medically underserved areas.
- Employment term must be 3 years.
- Physician must be paid at least prevailing wage.

Delta Doctors

J-1 Visa Waiver Program:

Process

- DRA recommends a waiver of the 2-year home requirement to the Department of State.
- Department of State approves the recommendation and confers with US Citizen and Immigration Services.
- USCIS approves DOS' recommendation.
- Final waiver granted by USCIS.
- Physician's immigration status is changed from J-1 to H-1B to commence employment.

Delta Doctors

J-1 Visa Waiver Program:

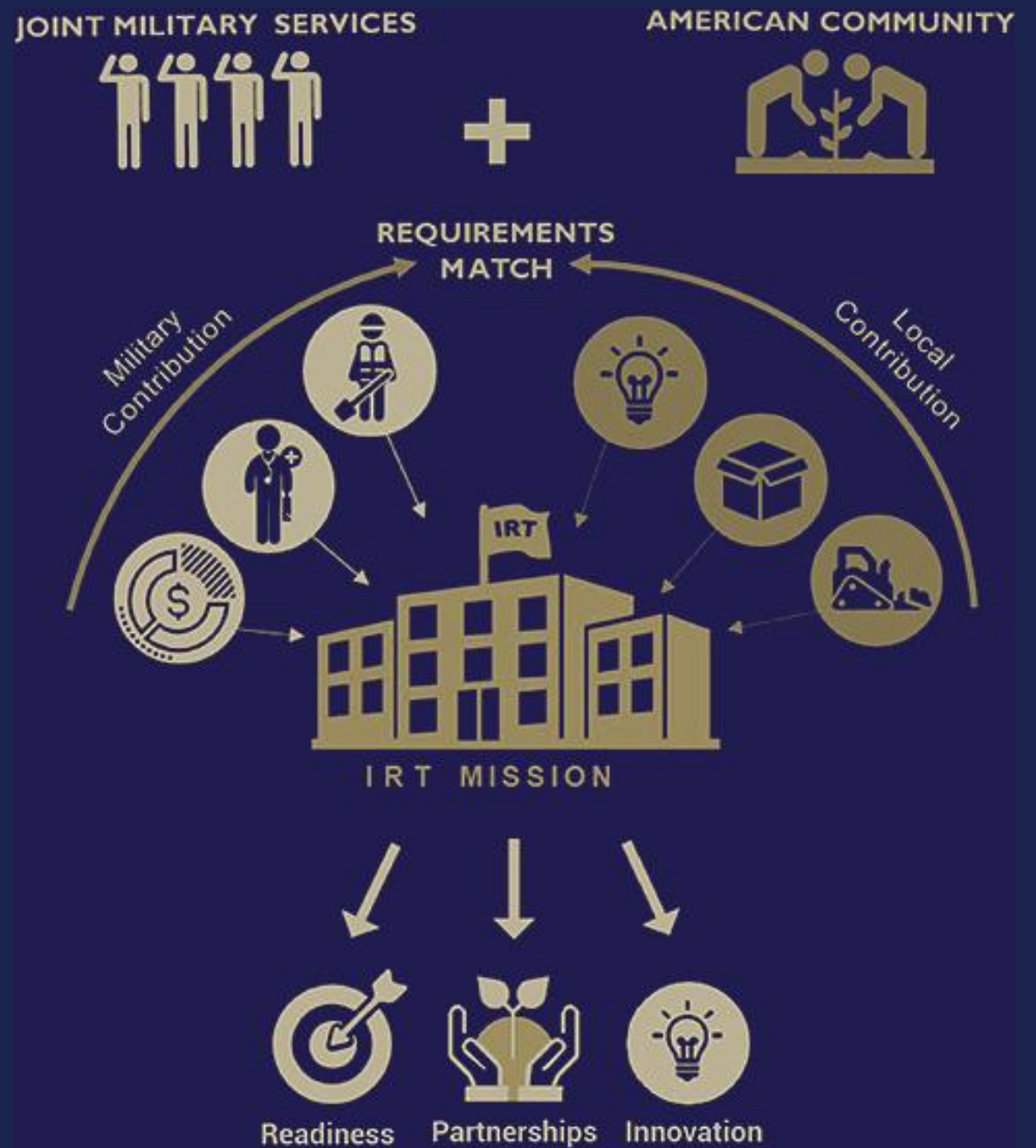
Compliance

- Employment Verification Form must be received within 1 week of employment.
- Bi-Annual Employee Survey (301 Active Physicians)
- Bi-Annual Employee Survey
- Final Closing Survey
- Program Completion Letter

Innovative Readiness Training

Active and Reserve Military Forces work in partnership with the Delta Regional Authority to provide no-cost medical services to the community while receiving training in medical mission command, mission command for health service support, and mission command for force health protection support.

Innovative Readiness Training



Innovative Readiness Training

- Applications submitted by DRA to the Department of Defense September 2024.
- Applications approved by the Department of Defense July 2025.
- Mission Planning Begins October/November 2025.
- Mission Execution Occurs June/July 2026 (Two Week Medical Mission).

Innovative Readiness Training:

Preparation

- On Site Survey
- Initial Planning Meeting
- Mid Planning Meeting
- Final Planning Meeting
- Bi-Weekly Comms Calls
- Weekly Comms Calls
- Continuous Community Coordination

Delta Region Community Health Systems Development Program

The DRCHSD Program helps rural Delta communities to address health care needs and strengthen the local health care system through comprehensive technical assistance.

Delta Region Community Health Systems Development Program

- The DRCHSD Program is funded through HRSA's Federal Office of Rural Health Policy.
- 10 participants are selected each year for the 3-year program.

Delta Region Community Health Systems Development Program

The National Rural Health Resource Center provides selected health care organizations and their communities with expert technical assistance to make in-depth health system enhancements.

Delta Region Community Health Systems Development Program

- Applications for the DRCHSD Program are accepted on a rolling basis.
- Applications are evaluated based on:
 - How well each applicant organization's technical assistance needs coincide with the program's purpose and goals.
 - The commitment of the organization's leadership to participate fully in the program.

Delta Region Community Health Systems Development Program

Technical Assistance

- Improving financial performance
- Delivering quality health care
- Coordinating care
- Strengthening the local health care system
- Improving emergency medical services
- Recruiting and retaining healthcare workforce

Delta Region Community Health Systems Development Program

2023 Performance Measures

- 83% of hospitals improved financial performance.
- 100% of hospitals improved quality of care.
- 100% of hospitals reduced medical errors.
- 10 new telehealth service lines were added to fill gaps in local health care.
- Over \$1 million invested to enhance telehealth equipment and systems in rural hospitals and clinics.



DRA's Delta Workforce Program Overview

<https://dra.gov/programs/human-infrastructure/workforce/delta-workforce-grant-program/>



**Delta
Workforce
Program Staff**

Sea Talantis

Director of Human Infrastructure

Daniel Musgrave

Workforce Program Manager

Cheyton Pendley

Workforce Program Analyst

Delta Workforce Programs



Delta Workforce Grant Program (DWP)



Workforce Opportunities for Rural Communities (WORC)

Delta Workforce Program



- In 2018, the Delta Regional Authority launched the Delta Workforce Program, an initiative designed to build long-term community capacity and increase economic competitiveness across the Mississippi River Delta and Alabama Black Belt regions.
- Trades (welding, electrical, plumbing, construction, etc), Technology, Culinary, and Healthcare.



A photograph of three construction workers in safety gear (hard hats, safety harnesses, and high-visibility clothing) working on a large, dark steel beam. One worker in the foreground is using a large hammer. Another worker is visible in the background. The scene is outdoors with a hilly landscape in the background.

DWP

Delta Workforce Grant Program

- 74 Current Active Grantees
- Total Investment of about \$28.4 Million
- Projected Outcomes:
 - Jobs Created: 5,193
 - Jobs Retained: 5,062
 - Individuals Trained: 8,797
 - Industry Recognized Certifications: 3,584

A photograph of three construction workers in safety gear (hard hats, safety harnesses, and high-visibility clothing) working on a large, dark steel beam. One worker in the foreground is using a long-handled tool, possibly a hammer or pry bar, on the beam. Another worker is behind him, and a third is further back. The background shows a hazy, overcast sky and some greenery in the distance.

DWP

Delta Workforce Grant Program

Total Program Funding:	~\$4,000,000 in FY25
Award Funding Range:	\$50,000 - \$300,000
Cost Share / Match:	10 % Cost Share (Cash and/or in-kind) No Cost Share Requirements for Economically Distressed Counties/Parishes
Period of Performance:	24 months
Application closed at 11:59 PM on May 15th	

A photograph of three construction workers on a large steel beam. One worker in the foreground is wearing a yellow hard hat, a grey and blue jacket, and orange pants, and is using a large hammer. Another worker in a yellow hard hat and blue jacket is standing behind him. A third worker in a yellow hard hat and orange pants is further back. They are all wearing safety harnesses. The background shows a hilly landscape under a cloudy sky.

DWP

Delta Workforce Grant Program

- 153 applications received and reviewed for FY26
- Total ask of ~ \$41.2 million
- Potential Projected Outcomes:
 - Jobs Created: 7,096
 - Jobs Retained: 4,894
 - Individuals Trained: 19,935
 - Industry Recognized Certifications: 12,659
 - DOL Recognized RA's: 2,035



What we look for in a strong application

- Sustainability
- Engaged Community Partners
- Engaged Employer Partners
- Participant Focused
- Training Focused
- "Shovel Ready"





Eligible Entities



- Counties/parishes, cities, or other political subdivisions of a state, including a special purpose district of a state or local government engaged in economic or community development activities, or a consortium of political subdivisions,
- Public or Private nonprofit organizations or associations,
- Regional development organizations,
- Economic development organizations,
- Workforce Investment boards,
- Community and Faith based organizations
- Institutions of higher education or a consortium of institutions of higher education,
- Trade/technical schools



Eligible Participants



- **New Entrants to the Workforce** – refers to those who have never worked or have been out of the workforce long enough to make it as if they are entering the workforce for the first time.
- **Dislocated Workers** – refers to individuals who were terminated or laid off, or have received a notice, or were self-employed but are now unemployed.
- **Incumbent Workers** – refers to individuals who are employed but need employment and training services to secure full-time employment, advance in their careers, or retain their current occupations.



Mississippi Coding Academies



- MCA provides advanced skills in technology to address growth needs in Agriculture, Geo Sciences, Manufacturing, Medical, and general job markets, in an area that has no advanced technical training to fit the need of these job markets.
- 11-month program simulating a workplace and produce entry-level full-stack computer coders/developers prepared for careers in tech.
- ~ 89% success rate of those who have secured tech jobs or entered/returned to college since 2017.
- Anticipated 40 individuals trained per session.
- With DRA's investment toward full-time instructors, MCA has recently made expansions to other campuses and locations.





South Alabama AHEC



- Southern Alabama Rural Training Program
- Implementation of a proven coordinated approach involving a multi-sector program to improve healthcare delivery in rural areas by training future and current health professionals, for good paying jobs in the rural counties and address the ongoing need in healthcare facilities for trained health professionals in rural communities in Alabama.
- Most grant funds go towards participant support services (Stipends Incentives, Scholarships, and educational material costs) and contractual services for employment navigators and wrap around services.
- Final outcomes: 5 communities served, 11 jobs created, 8 jobs retained, 55 individuals trained, 12 industries/businesses served, and 49 industry recognized certifications earned.



The Collective Blueprint



- Most grant funds are used for supportive services and scholarships for participants.
- Collaboration program consisting of two streamlined training pathways: a Medical Assistant (MA) program and a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) to Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) program.
- Participants receive tried and tested personal and professional development training from TCB, including wraparound support through monthly stipends, access to free therapy, one-on-one coaching, and more.
- Achieved Outcomes:
 - 135 Individuals Served
 - 122 Entered Industry Recognized Pathways
 - 82 Completed Program – 31 Still Participating
 - 60 Jobs Created
 - 62 Industry Recognized Certificates Received



Ozarka College



- Renovation of a newly acquired technical center building to prepare space for startup of the Skilled Trades program and a welding lab expansion. Space also reconfigured to house two classrooms for in-class learning.
- Skilled Trades lab spaces were outfitted with a variety of industry-informed and industry-adaptive training equipment in HVAC, Electrical, Plumbing, and Construction.
- Final outcomes: 10 communities served, 90 individuals trained, 45 jobs created, 40 jobs retained, 10 industries/businesses served, 90 industry-recognized certificates received.
- Sustainable beyond the DRA investment period.

Green River Area Development District



Hire to Operate

- Collaboration with state and local partners to address the shortage of certified Water & Wastewater Operators in Western Kentucky through a Registered Apprenticeship Program.
- Addresses identified need of operator shortage throughout the GRADD region by providing on the job training.
- Anticipated Outcomes: 17 communities served, 17 individuals trained, 10 jobs created, 15 jobs retained, 17 industry-recognized certificates received, & 17 USDOL Registered Apprenticeships earned.





Hopkinsville Community College



- Workforce program that will expand job training opportunities in electrical, construction, air conditioning technologies
- Participants are given access to lab facilities, real-world simulations, and fieldwork opportunities to gain real experience that translates to their respective fields.
- Grant funds were also used to purchase a transport trailer to allow on the job training with Habitat for Humanity to build homes within the community.
- Anticipated Outcomes: 3 communities served, 30 individuals trained, 3 industries/businesses served, 30 industry-recognized certificates received.
- Sustainable beyond the DRA investment period.





Workforce Opportunities for Rural Communities (WORC)



Workforce Opportunities for Rural Communities



In partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA), the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), and the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC), approximately \$49.2 million in grants are available under the Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities (WORC) initiative to support workforce training and education in rural communities across the Delta, Appalachian, and Northern Border regions.

To complement this federal partnership, DRA facilitates pre-award technical assistance workshops and webinars, as well as post-award technical assistance to grantees.

Workforce Opportunities for Rural Communities

A photograph of three construction workers in safety gear (hard hats, safety harnesses, and high-visibility clothing) working on a large steel beam. One worker is using a sledgehammer. The background shows a hilly landscape under an overcast sky.

WORC

Total Program Funding:	\$49,200,000
Award Funding Range:	\$2,000,000 to \$8,000,000
Cost Share / Match:	None
Period of Performance:	36 months

Application closed July 23rd and is now with the DOL for review.



▶ 60 WORC projects Rounds 1-5

- ▶ 8 Round 1
- ▶ 13 Round 2
- ▶ 12 Round 3
- ▶ 13 Round 4
- ▶ 14 Round 5

▶ 15 WORC projects R6

- ▶ Arkansas Rural Health Partnership
- ▶ Community Partnership of Southeast Missouri
- ▶ Delta Health Alliance Inc.
- ▶ electrical training ALLIANCE
- ▶ Floor Covering Education Foundation Inc.
- ▶ NextOp Inc.
- ▶ Reid State Technical College
- ▶ Save the Children Federation Inc.
- ▶ SHRM Foundation Inc.
- ▶ St. Landry Parish Government
- ▶ The GradUS Project
- ▶ The University of Tennessee Health Science Center
- ▶ Tunica County Administrators Department
- ▶ University of Louisiana at Lafayette
- ▶ Young Men's Christian Association of Memphis and the Mid-South

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Workforce Program Analyst







THANK YOU!