

**Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) Eligible Counties and Communities**

The counties and communities listed below qualify for assistance from REDI agencies and organizations as defined in s. 288.0656(6)(b).

A county or community may request a Waiver or Reduction of Match, for grant programs, in writing by using the appropriate form supplied by the awarding agency. Completed forms must be submitted to the awarding agency, or district office of the awarding agency, for review and approval.

**Rural Areas of Opportunity (RAO – previously referred to as RACEC)**

Per s. 288.0656(7)(a), F. S., REDI may recommend to the Governor up to three rural areas of opportunity. The Governor may by executive order designate up to three Rural Areas of Opportunity (RAO). Rural Areas of Opportunity (RAO) are priority assignments for REDI. All state agencies and departments shall use all available tools and resources to the extent permissible by law to promote the creation and development of each catalyst project and the development of catalyst sites.

The following counties and communities are designated as Rural Areas of Opportunity.

- **Northwest Rural Areas of Opportunity** – re-designated by Executive Order 20-170
  - All communities within Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Wakulla, Washington, **and** the area within the city limits of Freeport, and Walton County north of the Choctawhatchee Bay and the intercoastal waterway.
- **South Central Rural Areas of Opportunity** – re-designated by Executive Order 21-149
  - All communities within, DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, and Okeechobee Counties, **and** the Cities of Pahokee, Belle Glade, and South Bay (Palm Beach County), and Immokalee (Collier County).
- **North Central Rural Areas of Opportunity** – re-designated by Executive Order 18-158
  - All communities within, Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Putnam, Suwannee, Taylor and Union.

**Note:** During the 2014 Legislative Session HB 7023, approved by Governor Scott on 6/20/14, renamed “Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern” to "Rural Areas of Opportunity." The change went into effect 7/1/2014. Rural Area of Opportunity designation only applies to the counties and communities as noted above.

**Economically Distressed Rural Counties**

“Economically distressed” counties with a population of 75,000 or less, or an “economically distressed” county with a population of 125,000 or less which is contiguous to a county with a population of 75,000 or less.

**Qualified counties:**

Baker, Bradford, Calhoun, Columbia, DeSoto, Dixie, Flagler, Franklin, Gadsden, Gilchrist, Glades, Gulf, Hamilton, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Liberty, Madison, Nassau, Okeechobee, Putnam, Suwannee, Taylor, Union, Wakulla, Washington and Walton.

**Designated Rural Communities Located in an Urban County:**

A “community” not located in a designated rural county must meet **all** the following criteria to be eligible for a waiver or reduction of match:

- 1) Have an **employment base** focused on traditional agriculture or a resource-based industry (**Please Note:** land designated as agriculture does not qualify) **AND**
- 2) Be an unincorporated federal enterprise community **OR** an incorporated rural city with a population of 25,000 or fewer; **AND**
- 3) Be located in a county not defined as rural.

**Upon verification of the top three qualifiers, communities must:**

- 4) Have at least three or more of the economic distress factors identified in paragraph (c) and verified by the department.

The following communities meet the criteria as stated above and are designated as “rural” communities under s. 288.0656(2) (e) 4, F.S. **Designation for the following communities expires on the corresponding dates shown below:**

<b>Cities/Towns (County):</b>	<b>Expiration Date:</b>	<b>Cities/Towns (County):</b>	<b>Expiration Date:</b>
Astatula (Lake)	May 27, 2022	Indiantown (Martin)	March 27, 2023
Dundee (Polk)	March 3, 2023	Jay (Santa Rosa)	November 6, 2023
Fellsmere (Indian River)	April 10, 2023	Lake Wales (Polk)	November 25, 2022
Fort Meade (Polk)	February 6, 2022	Pierson (Volusia)	June 8, 2022
Frostproof (Polk)	April 29, 2022	Umatilla (Lake)	April 22, 2023
Hawthorne (Alachua)	July 7, 2023	Webster (Sumter)	May 27, 2022
High Springs (Alachua)	January 9, 2023		