

Background

The Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) is established in Section, 288.0656, Florida Statutes. REDI recognizes the struggles rural communities and regions face due to economic distress and encourages and facilitates the location and expansion of major economic development projects of significant scale in rural communities.

The Rural Analysis aims to identify and determine all rural counties and municipalities in Florida to determine which counties and municipalities are eligible for REDI funding.

The project consists of four phases. Phases 1 and 2 identify rural counties in Florida. Phase 3 identifies municipalities found in the counties identified in Phases 1 and 2. Phase 4 identifies rural municipalities that are in nonrural counties.

Rural Identification Breakdown (Phases 1-4)

Phase 1: A County with a Population of 75,000 or fewer

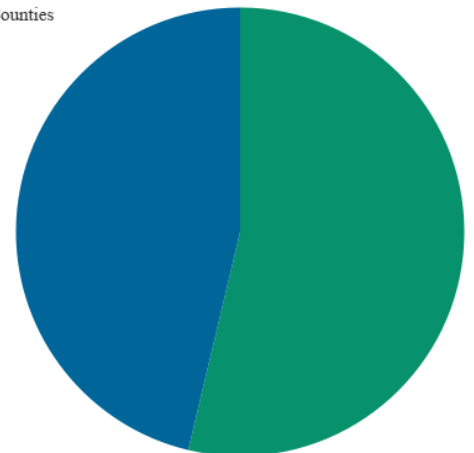
In Phase 1, 27 counties in the state were classified as rural.

Phase 2: A County with a population of 125,000 or fewer which is contiguous to a county with a population of 75,000 or fewer.

In Phase 2, 4 counties were classified as rural:

- Highlands County (contiguous to Desoto, Glades, and Hardee)
- Nassau County (contiguous to Baker)
- Putnam County (contiguous to Bradford)
- Walton County (contiguous to Washington)
- After Phase 2, 31 total counties were identified as rural, and 36 counties were identified as non-rural.
- As a result of population increases, Flagler County (136,310 residents as of April 1, 2024, population estimate) is no longer identified as a Phase 2 rural county.

■ Nonrural Counties
■ Rural Counties



Phase 3: A municipality found in any of the counties that were identified as rural.

In Phase 3, 92 municipalities were classified as rural. 79 of the municipalities are in counties identified in Phase 1, and the remainder 13 are in counties identified in Phase 2.

Phase 4: An unincorporated federal enterprise community or an incorporated rural city with (1) a population of 25,000 or fewer and (2) an employment base focused on traditional agricultural or resource-based industries, located in a county not defined as rural, (3) which has at least three or more of the economic distress factors.

4.1: identifying municipalities with a population of $\leq 25,000$ located in nonrural counties

- 213 municipalities (in nonrural counties) were identified.

4.2: identifying which counties have employment bases in agricultural or resource-based industries using 2023 state-level agricultural employment data from the American Community Survey (ACS).

- Municipalities above the state average of .79% agricultural or resource-based employment meet this requirement.
- From the 213 municipalities in 4.1, 61 have a resource or agricultural employment base.

4.3: Economic distress factors - Communities must meet at least three economic distress factors to be considered a rural community. The parameters for economic distress were determined by using 2023 ACS Census Data.

- A municipality meets the Per Capita Income and Median Housing Value distress factors if its value falls below the thresholds, and meets the Unemployment Rate, Households Receiving Assistance, Poverty Level, and Percent of Population Without Internet Access distress factors if it exceeds the thresholds.
- Per Florida Statutes, the Median Housing Values, and Poverty Level are based off the Florida average.
- For the Per Capita Income, Unemployment Rate, Households Receiving Assistance, Percent of Population Without Internet Access distress factors the thresholds are based off national bottom quartile data.
 - Low per capita income
 - Bottom quartile: \$38,688.50 and less
 - Florida: \$41,902
 - Low housing values compared to state average.
 - Using median values rather than averages due to a lack of relevant data
 - Bottom quartile: \$220,700
 - Florida: \$325,000
 - High unemployment
 - Bottom quartile: 5.65%
 - Florida: 4.8%
 - High percentages of the population receiving public assistance
 - Bottom quartile: 3.3% and greater
 - Florida: 2.4%
 - High poverty levels compared to the state average.
 - Bottom quartile: 10.25% and greater
 - Florida: 12.6%
 - High population without internet access
 - Bottom quartile: 8.91% and greater
 - Florida: 6.79%
 - High under employment
 - Difficult to measure due to lack of microdata.
 - Low per capita taxable values
 - Difficult to measure, counties would have access to local taxable values.
 - Low weekly earned wages compared to state average.
 - Due to a lack of microdata on the small municipalities that are being analyzed, preparing proper estimates for low weekly earned wages would be a difficult process.
- Phase 4 Result: From the 61 municipalities identified in Phase 4.2, 31 municipalities were identified to be in economic distress and determined to be rural.

Updates

FloridaCommerce implemented a few updates from the 2024 Analysis into the 2025 Analysis.

- To determine whether a community has an agriculturally or resource-based industry FloridaCommerce switched the data source from OnTheMap to the ACS.
- The 2025 Analysis uses unemployment rate instead of unemployment.
 - The percentage for unemployment looks at unemployed individuals against the population, while unemployment rate looks at just the labor force.
- FloridaCommerce also identified a metric for percentage of households without internet access, which will replace percentage of households without an internet subscription as an economic distress factor in the 2025 Analysis.

Implementation

The 2025 Rural Analysis is effective as of May 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025. FloridaCommerce will conduct the 2026 Analysis throughout the fall of this year and will publish in December 2025.

- FloridaCommerce will share the results with the communities identified in the Analysis to ensure they are aware of their rural status.
- FloridaCommerce will share the results with stakeholders including: REDI agencies, Rural Areas of Opportunity, Executive Office of the Governor, Office of Planning & Budget, the House, and Senate, as well as the Florida League of Cities, and Florida Association of Counties.
- The results will be available on the Office of Rural Initiatives website.
- A community not identified in the Analysis may request the Rural Community designation if it meets the criteria in 288.0656.
 - The community will need to show that it has an employment base focused on traditional agricultural or resource-based industries.
 - The community must show it meets three economic distress factors not included in the Analysis or can demonstrate they meet at least three factors with newer data.

Rural Counties

All the counties that meet the definition of “rural community” are included within one of the three Governor’s designated Rural Areas of Opportunity (RAO), **except for** Nassau County and the southern part of Walton County. Text in **orange shading** indicates a county that contains a population of 125,000 or fewer and is contiguous to a county with a population of 75,000 or fewer.

Northwest RAO

- Calhoun
- Franklin
- Gadsden
- Gulf
- Holmes
- Jackson
- Liberty
- Wakulla

Walton north of the
Choctawhatchee Bay and
Intercoastal Waterway
Washington

South Central RAO

- DeSoto
- Glades
- Hardee
- Hendry

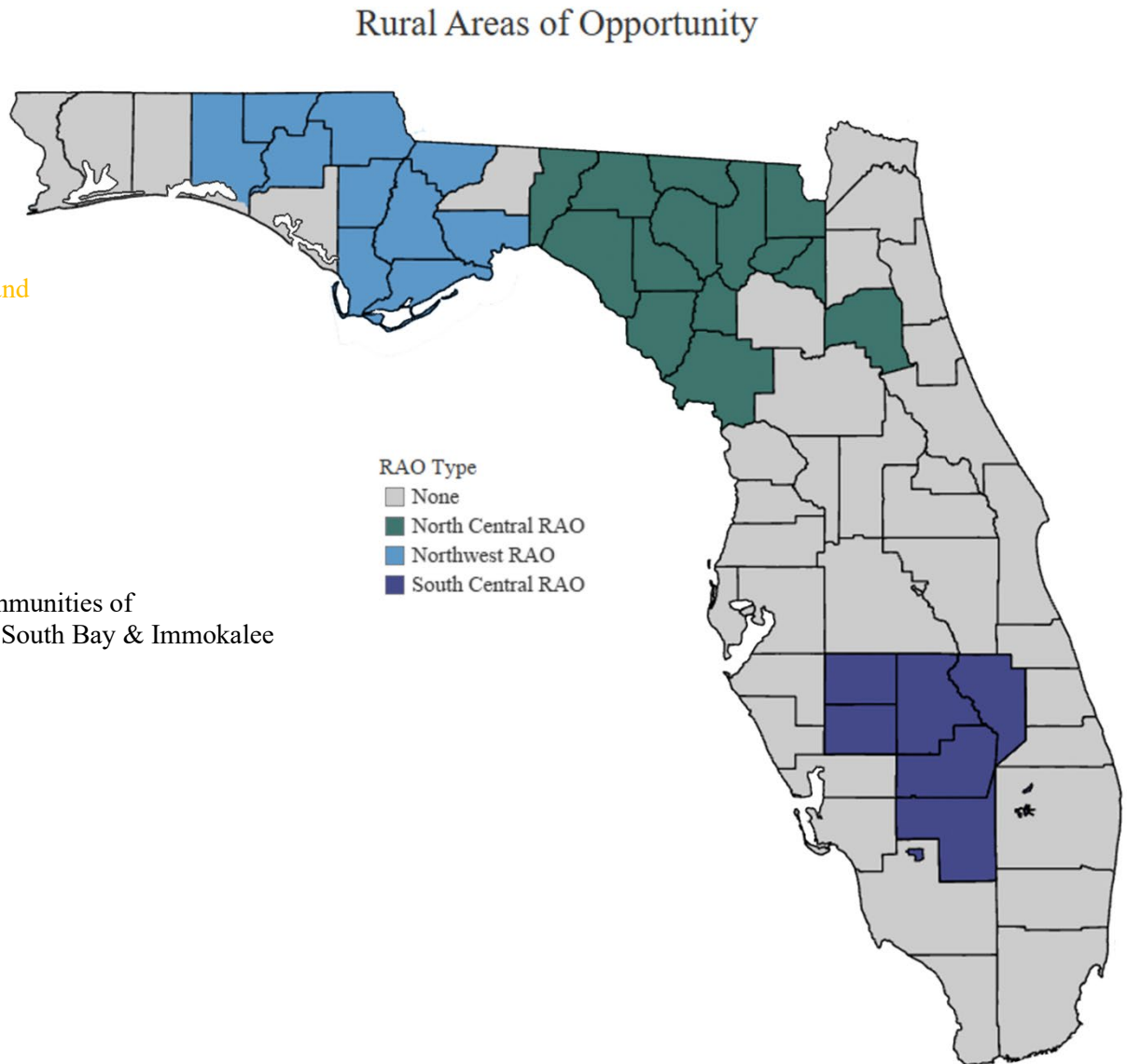
Highlands
Okeechobee & the communities of
Belle Glade, Pahokee, South Bay & Immokalee

North Central RAO

- Baker
- Bradford
- Columbia
- Dixie
- Gilchrist
- Hamilton
- Jefferson
- Lafayette
- Levy
- Madison
- Putnam**
- Suwannee
- Taylor
- Union

Outliers

Nassau
Walton south of the Choctawhatchee Bay and Intercoastal Waterway



List of All Municipalities in Rural Counties

Baker	Glen St. Mary	Jackson	Cottondale
Baker	Macclenny	Jackson	Graceville
Bradford	Brooker	Jackson	Grand Ridge
Bradford	Hampton	Jackson	Greenwood
Bradford	Lawtey	Jackson	Jacob City
Bradford	Starke	Jackson	Malone
Calhoun	Altha	Jackson	Marianna
Calhoun	Blountstown	Jackson	Sneads
Columbia	Fort White	Jefferson	Monticello
Columbia	Lake City	Lafayette	Mayo
DeSoto	Arcadia	Levy	Bronson
Dixie	Cross City	Levy	Cedar Key
Dixie	Horseshoe Beach	Levy	Chiefland
Franklin	Apalachicola	Levy	Inglis
Franklin	Carrabelle	Levy	Otter Creek
Gadsden	Chattahoochee	Levy	Williston
Gadsden	Greensboro	Levy	Yankeetown
Gadsden	Gretna	Liberty	Bristol
Gadsden	Havana	Madison	Greenville
Gadsden	Midway	Madison	Lee
Gadsden	Quincy	Madison	Madison
Gilchrist	Bell	Nassau	Callahan
Gilchrist/Levy	Fanning Springs	Nassau	Fernandina Beach
Gilchrist	Trenton	Nassau	Hilliard
Glades	Moore Haven	Okeechobee	Okeechobee
Gulf	Port St. Joe	Putnam	Crescent City
Gulf	Wewahitchka	Putnam	Interlachen
Hamilton	Jasper	Putnam	Palatka
Hamilton	Jennings	Putnam	Pomona Park
Hamilton	White Springs	Putnam	Welaka
Hardee	Bowling Green	Suwannee	Branford
Hardee	Wauchula	Suwannee	Live Oak
Hardee	Zolfo Springs	Taylor	Perry
Hendry	Clewiston	Union	Lake Butler
Hendry	LaBelle	Union	Raiford
Highlands	Avon Park	Union	Worthington Springs
Highlands	Lake Placid	Wakulla	St. Marks
Highlands	Sebring	Wakulla	Sopchoppy
Holmes	Bonifay	Walton	DeFuniak Springs
Holmes	Esto	Walton	Freeport
Holmes	Noma	Walton	Paxton
Holmes	Ponce de Leon	Washington	Caryville
Holmes	Westville	Washington	Chipley
Jackson	Alford	Washington	Ebro
Jackson	Bascom	Washington	Vernon
Jackson	Campbellton	Washington	Wausau

Rural Municipalities in Nonrural Counties

The municipalities in below are the 31 municipalities identified in Phase 4.2 as having an agricultural or resource-based employment and in Phase 4.3 as having at least three or more of the economic distress factors identified in paragraph (c) and verified by the department. Each of these municipalities meets the population, employment, and geographic parameters of the statute. Therefore, there are 31 total identified rural municipalities that are located in nonrural counties.

Alachua	High Springs	Pasco	Dade City
Alachua	La Crosse	Polk	Auburndale
Broward	West Park	Polk	Bartow
Clay	Keystone Heights	Polk	Eagle Lake
Duval	Baldwin	Polk	Fort Meade
Indian River	Fellsmere	Polk	Frostproof
Lake	Astatula	Polk	Lake Hamilton
Lake	Eustis	Polk	Lake Wales
Lake	Tavares	Polk	Mulberry
Manatee	Palmetto	Santa Rosa	Jay
Marion	Bellevue	Sumter	Center Hill
Marion	Dunnellon	Sumter	Coleman
Martin	Indiantown	Sumter	Webster
Miami-Dade	Florida City	Volusia	Orange City
Miami-Dade	West Miami	Volusia	Pierson
Palm Beach	Mangonia Park		

**There are legacy designations in Loxahatchee Groves (expires October 20, 2025), and Hawthorne (expires June 28, 2025).*