

The Delta Regional Authority: A Black Belt Regional Perspective

By: Veronica L. Womack, Ph.D.



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The Delta Regional Authority (DRA) was created to address generational inequity and underdevelopment within the Mississippi Delta region. The region's history of enslavement, persistent poverty and marginalization has resulted in a present need for intentional strategies to correct centuries of neglect and inaction. The Southern region, with the Mississippi Delta within, also includes a cluster of Black Belt counties that are in significant need of federally-focused economic development action. This report highlights the importance of regional development strategies that are reflective of the unique challenges facing the Black Belt region and that are flexible enough to address the distinct differences of participating communities. General or one-size-fits all approaches have traditionally served Black Belt counties poorly.

Too often, while these communities may qualify for programs or services, they do not have financial or technical capacity to participate. Typically, many place-based development programs and services require technical and financial resources that are often barriers to the neediest communities. In addition, there is little focus on the historical inequities in hierarchical leadership structures and decision making that have plagued these communities. Little effort has been made to move away from exclusionary approaches to regional, state and local economic development that often give limited voice to marginalized populations and communities beyond performative listening sessions with little accountability measures. In summary, it is essential that rural economic development practices are accountable to those they serve and are tailored to the unusual circumstances of the Black Belt region.

The recommendations in this report will support those Black Belt counties within the Delta Regional Authority that have significant barriers to participation in DRA programs and services. Focused on some of the nation's most underdeveloped communities, the DRA was established to foster regional approaches to advancement. Therefore, the authority must be organizationally and programmatically accessible to these unique communities. Directed by this objective, it is recommended that the following steps be taken:

- Revisions to the eligibility requirements for the DRA's States' Economic Development Assistance Program (SEDAP)
- Increased DRA funding to better address region-specific challenges
- Elimination of matching requirements for grant funding
- Modifications to the criteria for DRA funding to include the designation of persistent poverty county or below poverty rate census tract designation
- Revision of DRA governing structure to include additional representatives from the sectors of education, labor, business, civil rights organizations, community-based organizations and representatives of diverse communities for a more inclusive planning and decision-making process
- Formation of a state advisory board comprised of representatives from Black Belt communities
- Additional support for local technical assistance for persistent poverty counties for greater participation in SEDAP
- Creation of a state DRA coordinator position to develop, organize, implement and evaluate DRA activities annually within the state

A Partial Timeline of the Creation of the Delta Regional Authority:

1987: Former Arkansas Senator Dale Bumpers introduced S.2246 and former Mississippi Congressman Mike Espy (MS) introduced H.R. 4373 in the 100th Congress to create The Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission.

1988: Congress enacted *Public Law 100460*, establishing the Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission to study the Lower Mississippi Delta region. Former Arkansas Governor and future President Bill Clinton served as chair of the commission.

1989: The Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission developed recommendations for economic development of the region, by creating a 10-year plan. The first report, *Body of the Nation: The Interim Report of the Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission*, was published.

1990: The final report, entitled *The Delta Initiatives: Realizing the Dream...Fulfilling the Potential*, was released. The report called for the development of a permanent regional planning and development entity in the Delta region to address its needs.

1995: The Federal Highway Administration released, *Linking The Delta region With The Nation and The World*, under the leadership of Rodney Slater, Administrator for the U. S. Federal Highway Administration, to provide an update on transportation efforts and highlighted the connection between highway improvements and economic progress.

1998: U. S. Transportation Secretary Rodney E. Slater sponsored “The Delta Beyond 2000” Conference in Memphis, Tennessee. Federal agencies signed an MOU to fulfill the goals and recommendations of the 1990 report.

1999: The federal agency MOU was expanded to include additional agencies.

1999: *The Mississippi Delta: Beyond 2000 Interim Report*, assessed the progress of the 1990 report in completing the 400 recommendations, was released by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

1999: Former Arkansas Senator Blanche Lincoln (AR) sponsored S. 1622 Delta Regional Authority Act of 1999 and Former Arkansas Congressman Marion Berry (AR) sponsored H.R. 2911 Delta Regional Authority Act of 1999 to establish a Delta Regional Authority.

2000: Secretary Rodney Slater, head of President Clinton’s Delta Initiative, released the *Delta Vision, Delta Voices* report by the U.S. Department of Transportation. The report supported a Delta regional entity for development.

2000: The Delta Regional Authority (DRA) was authorized by Title V of the FY 2001 Omnibus Appropriations Act (PL106-554).¹

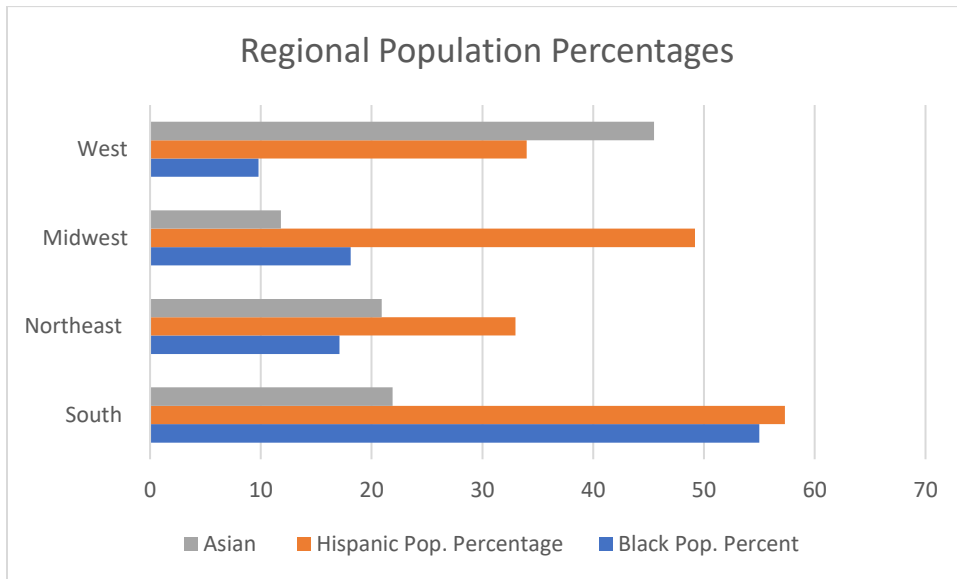
¹ Sources: Delta Grassroots Caucus/Economic Equality Caucus www.mdgc.us/delta_vision_delta_voices; Appendix B Chronology of Events, http://mdgc.us/delta_vision_delta_voices_appendices#chronology Legislation accessed at www.congress.gov

Introduction

The South and the Black Belt region

The importance of the southern region cannot be overlooked in national assessments of development and growth. Historically, the American South has been an influential factor in the development of the socioeconomic and political landscape of the country. This region currently houses the largest and fastest growing population in the nation. Chart 1 below reveals the importance of the South’s growing population in comparison to the percentage of the overall U.S. population and the diversity of its population within. In addition, it highlights the importance of regions and population distribution.² The dispersal of populations tell a unique story of American history, immigration and migration. However, the uniqueness of the Southern region and the African American experience within is amplified by the large Black population housed within the region itself.³ The geographic residence of the Black or African American population is reflective of the unique experience of enslavement and distinct migratory patterns of the racial group. In addition, this history also encompasses experiences of social, economic and political exclusion, defacto and de jure segregation and suppression. Chart 1 shows that no other racial or ethnic group is so heavily concentrated in one region as Blacks are in the Southern region. Successful economic development strategies will reflect these extraordinary factors and circumstances.

Chart 1.



² The South census region includes Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. The Northeast census region includes Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The Midwest census region includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The West census region includes Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

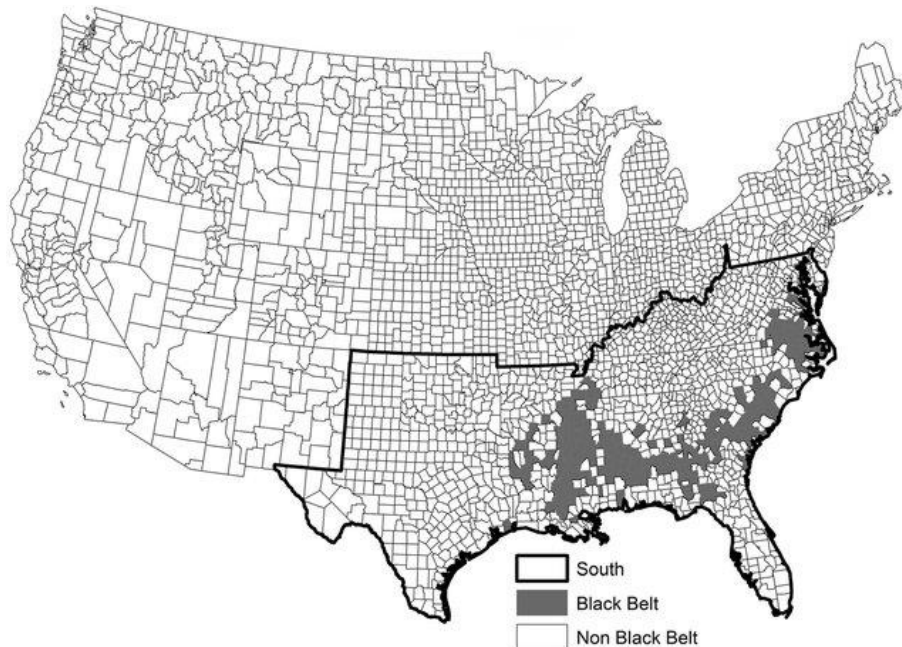
³ The terms Black and African American will be used interchangeably.

Sources: Definitions of regions accessed at https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/maps-data/maps/reference/us_regdiv.pdf. The Asian Population: 2010, 2010 Census Briefs, By Elizabeth M. Hoeffel, Sonya Rastogi, Myoung Ouk Kim, and Hasan Shahid, C2010BR-11 Issued March 2012 accessed at <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-11.pdf>. The Hispanic Population: 2010, 2010 Census Briefs, By Sharon R. Ennis, Merarys Ríos-Vargas, and Nora G. Albert, C2010BR-04 Issued May 2011; accessed at <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-04.pdf>. The Black Population: 2010, 2010 Census Briefs, By Sonya Rastogi, Tallese D. Johnson, Elizabeth M. Hoeffel, and Malcolm P. Drewery, Jr. C2010BR-06 Issued September 2011, accessed at <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-06.pdf>; The White Population: 2010, 2010 Census Briefs, By Lindsay Hixson, Bradford B. Hepler, and Myoung Ouk Kim, C2010BR-05 Issued September 2011 accessed at <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-05.pdf>

Black Belt Definition

The Southern region also houses the Black Belt region, a crescent-shaped cluster of counties that stretches from eastern Texas to the Eastern Shore of Virginia. While there are varying definitions, most researchers agree that the region encompasses over 300 rural counties with similar histories, socioeconomic and political cultures and a large Black or African American population. In addition, the Black Belt South has a rich history of individual and community resilience, ingenuity and fortitude as it houses many of our nation's economically poor people and communities. However, this region has many assets including rich natural amenities, strong community and familial relations, a tradition of both individual and communal economic enterprises, influential cultural contributions of regional foodways and music heritage, and strong humanitarian and civil rights legacies. Map 1 below highlights the Black Belt region within the Southern region.

Map 1.

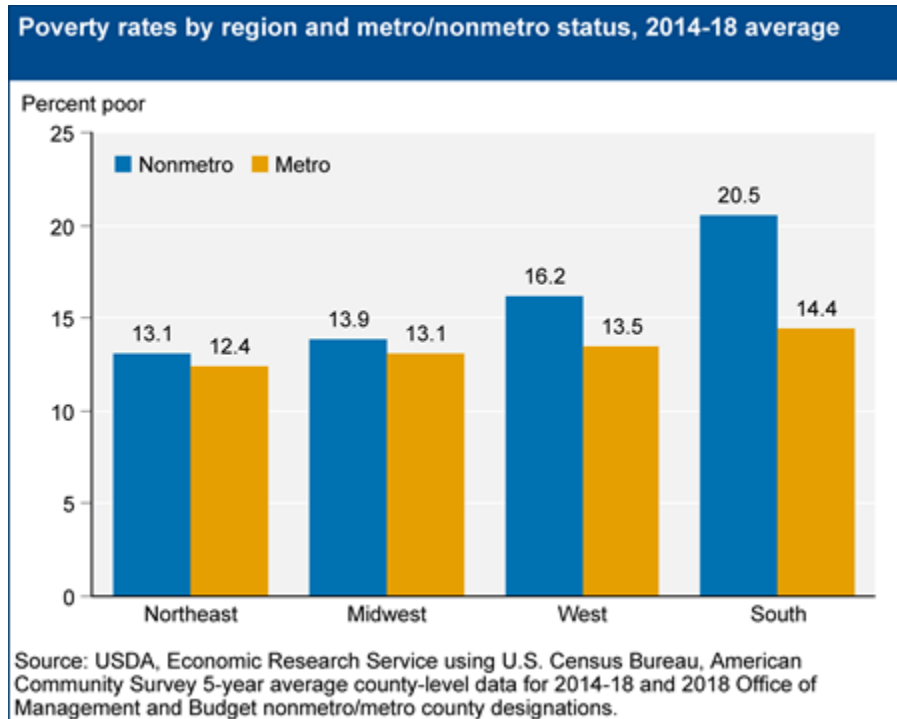


Source: Shrinidhi Ambinakudige, Domenico Parisi and Steven M. Grice, An Analysis of Differential Migration Patterns in the Black Belt and the New South, December 2011, *Southeastern Geographer* 52(2):146-163; p151.

Persistent Poverty as a Factor of funding

Chart 2 reveals that the Southern region's nonmetro counties have the highest rates of poverty in the country. The designation of nonmetro would encompass the selected Black Belt parishes and counties highlighted in this report. Nonmetro counties have an average poverty rate of 20.5 percent compared to 14.4 percent poverty rate in metro counties.⁴ The definition of nonmetro can be found in the footnote 11.

Chart 2. Metro and nonmetro poverty rates



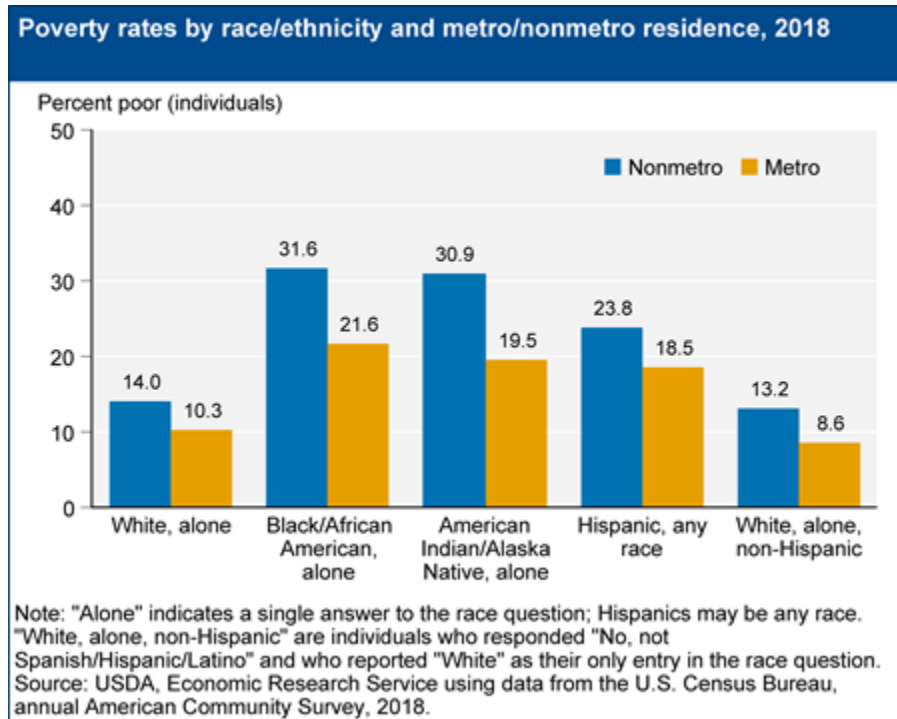
Source: What is Rural? Accessed at <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-classifications/what-is-rural.aspx#:~:text=Nonmetro%20counties%20are%20outside%20the%20boundaries%20of%20metro,the%20same%20criteria%20used%20to%20define%20metro%20areas.>

Chart 3 reveals that Blacks who live in nonmetro Southern communities have the highest poverty rate of any group with 31.6 percent. Even when compared to Blacks living in metro counties who have a poverty rate of 21.6 percent, Blacks who live in the nonmetro South have a greater level of poverty. Native Americans and Alaskan Natives are a close second with 30.9 percent poverty rate in nonmetro communities and 19.5 percent poverty rate in metro areas.

⁴ Nonmetro counties are outside the boundaries of metro areas and are further subdivided into two types:

1. Metropolitan (micro) areas, which are nonmetro labor-market areas centered on urban clusters of 10,000-49,999 persons and defined with the same criteria used to define metro areas.
2. All remaining counties, often labeled "noncore" counties because they are not part of "core-based" metro or micro areas

Chart 3. Poverty rates by race and ethnicity



Source: Rural Poverty and Well-Being <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-poverty-well-being/#demographics>

Research has suggested that areas for which the poverty rate reaches 20 percent experience systemic problems that are more acute than in lower-poverty areas. Persistent poverty counties are counties with poverty rates of 20 percent or greater for at least 30 years.⁵ Korbett Mosesly identifies seven factors of persistent poverty and while prevalent throughout the country, several factors have been emblematic of the Southern region. Particular to the Black Belt region are the decline of labor unions, social oppression, institutional racism, rural isolation and the narrative of poverty. All have been influential in the furtherance of persistent poverty within the region. Limited collective bargaining power is reflected in lower wages and benefits. The historical oppression of Black people is exemplified through systematic mistreatment and marginalization and demonstrated through a legacy of institutional racism and unfair distribution of resources and privileges. Also, the rural residence of Blacks results in their distance from community infrastructure, services, economic activity and decision making. Finally, a prevailing narrative of dependence and poverty is interpreted without context, by others.⁶

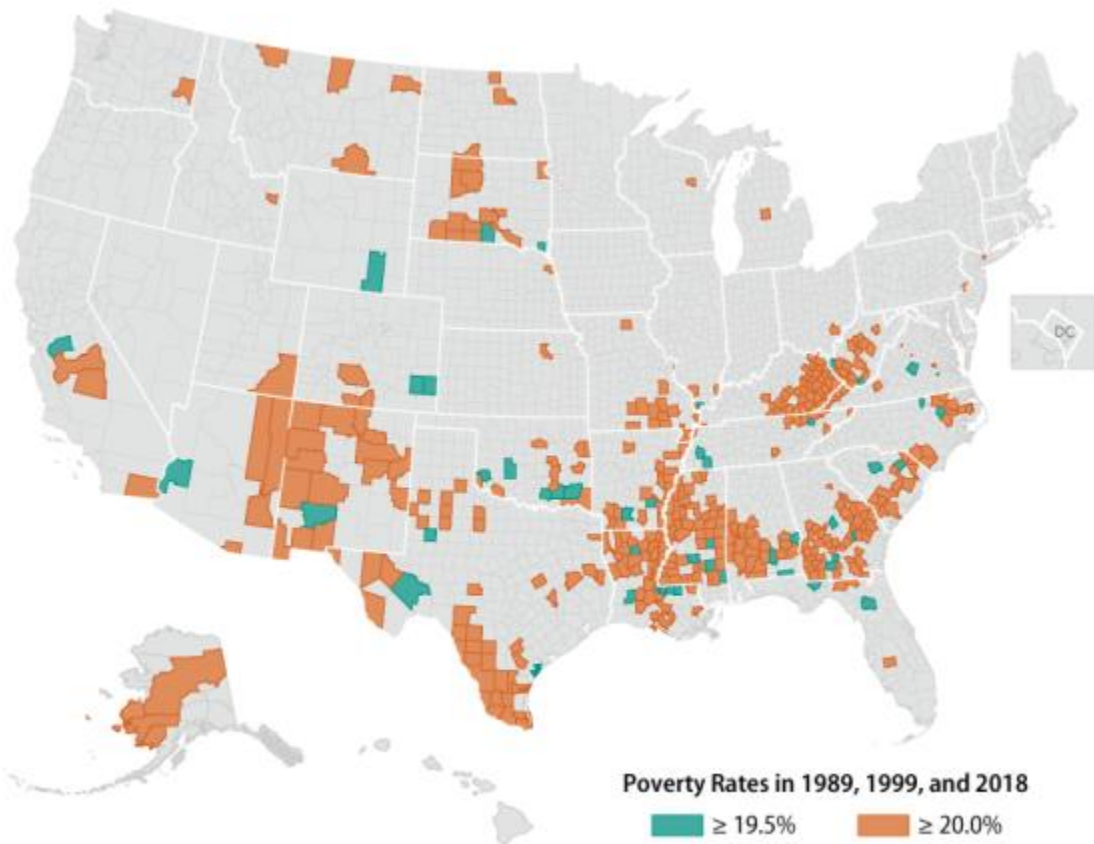
Each of these factors have been major influencers of underdevelopment within the Black Belt region and the counties and parishes selected for this report. Map 2 highlights those counties and parishes that exhibit 30 years of 20 percent persistent poverty, exhibiting the unusual and

⁵ Source: The 10-20-30 Provision: Defining Persistent Poverty Counties, February 3, 2020 CRS Report. Accessed <https://crsreports.congress.gov> R45100.

⁶ Sources: Korbett Mosesly, 7 Systemic Factors of Poverty: Economic and Social Exclusion, October 3, 2018 <https://korbettmosesly.com/blog/f/top-7-causes-of-persistent-us-poverty>.

generational economic plight of the people within the Delta and Black Belt counties and parishes

Map 2 Persistent Poverty Counties Using Two Rounding Methods, Based on 1990 Census, Census 2000, and 2018 Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates



Source: The 10-20-30 Provision: Defining Persistent Poverty Counties, February 3, 2020 CRS Report. Accessed <https://crsreports.congress.gov> R45100. CRS-22.

Chris Masingill, who served as federal co-chairman of the Delta Regional Authority, from 2007 until 2017, saw the agency as a vehicle for creating “climates of opportunity”. He states, “DRA is able to tackle issues facing rural parents, like the lack of workforce training opportunities, job creation and retention, and access to clean water and sewer systems. This dual-generational approach is a comprehensive plan that will ensure those lifted out of poverty are not at risk of returning”.⁷

While persistent poverty has defined much of the economic circumstances of the Delta for generations, the absence of persistent poverty as a primary qualifying factor for DRA resources

⁷ Masingill: Poverty hinders South’s ability to compete, by Chris Masingill, July 9, 2015 accessed at <https://www.clarionledger.com/story/opinion/2015/07/09/masingill-poverty-hinders-souths-ability-competes/29916995/>

is notable and highlights the shortcomings of many place-based approaches of development. Both the DRA and the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) target distressed counties for resources without a specific qualification of persistent poverty status. For example, the DRA defines distressed counties as counties with an unemployment rate of one percent higher than the national average for the most recent 24-month period and a per capita income of 80 percent or less than the national per capita income. The ARC defines distressed counties, since 2007, using a county economic index that includes median family income and an ARC calculated poverty rate.⁸ It is important to note that the ARC does include poverty rate as an important factor in defining a geographic area as distressed; including using census tract data, but the DRA does not. Yet, persistent poverty has been a tenacious issue within the rural South for many generations and many of the aforementioned advocacy efforts that resulted in the DRA included the eradication of persistent poverty as an important catalyst for change in the region. An important question as we observe the 20-year anniversary of the authority is how has persistent poverty in Black Belt counties/parishes within the Delta region been impacted by DRA membership. The implication of persistent poverty designation is often overlooked and undervalued. Persistent poverty status encompasses a wide-range of associating factors that make it difficult to overcome. These include the lack of healthcare, child care, and social services, lack of educational opportunity and attainment, lack of transportation and employment opportunities, along with limited political power, food insecurity and inadequate and unhealthy housing stock, and environmental injustices that are associated with long-term persistent poverty status. The generational impact of persistent poverty within the Black Belt region should not be overlooked when assessing the viability of policy prescriptions for development as it is a pivotal piece in combatting systemic underdevelopment.

In spite of the abundance of potential within the Black Belt region, it remains one of the economically poor regions in the country. There has not been a federally focused and funded, regional remedy to address the needs of the entire Southern region, nor the entire Black Belt region within. However, targeted regional development has been a part of our federal strategic development efforts since the creation of the Appalachia Regional Commission (ARC), in 1965. Thirty-five years later the DRA was created, targeting the Mississippi Delta region but not the whole South and excluding communities east of Alabama and west of Louisiana. Created in 2000 and modeled after the ARC, the agency was to address physical infrastructure, workforce, and economic underdevelopment within the region. In 2008, federal lawmakers revisited the federal agency model of development in the Farm bill.⁹ Three new federal regional bodies were created: the Northern Border Regional Commission, the Southwest Border Regional Commission and the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission. Particular to the Black Belt region, the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission was established to address economic disparity in some counties within the states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida. Like the DRA, these commissions were organized based on the ARC regional development model.¹⁰

⁸ Source: Since 2007, the ARC designates as “distressed areas,” those census tracts in at-risk and transitional counties that have a median family income no greater than 67 percent of the U.S. average and a poverty rate 150 percent of the U.S. average or greater. Information accessed at <https://www.arc.gov/distressed-areas-classification-system/>.

⁹ The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, or P.L. 110-627, also known as the 2008 Farm bill.

¹⁰ [Federal Regional Commissions and Authorities: Overview of Structure and Activities \(fas.org\)](#); In Focus March 18, 2019 Congressional Research Service accessed at www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/IF11140.pdf

While the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission has yet to be fully funded, there are some counties/parishes within the Southern region that have benefited from regional development efforts of the DRA and the ARC. The majority of those counties/parishes are served by DRA programs and services. According to the DRA, the Delta region encompasses over 250 counties/parishes within the states of Alabama, Mississippi, Missouri, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, and Tennessee. These counties/parishes have benefited from two decades of targeted federal investment by the DRA and the ARC development model. Many of these are also Black Belt counties/parishes, historically plagued by generational persistent poverty prior to the creation of the DRA. How these counties and parishes have fared under the DRA may provide some important insight on the effectiveness of the ARC development model in Black Belt communities and parishes. Important to note, there were varying initiatives that created the momentum for the DRA and these were led by a diverse constituency of governmental officials and agencies, community-based organizations, and individuals. Appendix H shows a more extensive history of the Delta Regional Authority.

Both the Appalachia and the Delta regions are distinctly known and recognized for their cultural heritage and history and coordinated economic development approaches. However, the lack of regional recognition for the Black Belt region results in the inability to galvanize regional advocacy and optimize regional assets. In addition, the Black Belt region lacks a coordinated effort that encompasses the entire region and addresses its unique challenges, such as exclusive and racialized decision making and inequitable economic power distribution, the basic lack of broadband and physical infrastructure, high levels of digital illiteracy and the lack of technical assistance, lack of adequate water and sewage systems, low income housing shortages, limited job creation and growth, and a decreasing population with high out-migration. However, with a region-focused and reflective strategic initiative, the Black Belt region and the counties/parishes within could indeed play an active role in 21st century opportunities.

This report focuses on the Black Belt region, the region's historically large Black population, persistent poverty and investments and outcomes of the DRA and the ARC model, for 2018 and 2019. Specifically, the report examines States' Economic Development Assistance Program (SEDAP) investment in selected Black Belt counties and parishes within the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee. These counties and parishes provide insight into the accessibility of DRA programs for Black Belt parishes and counties that have been historically underserved by most economic development activities. Although the DRA has several programs, this report concentrates on the States' Economic Development Assistance Program (SEDAP), the most funded DRA economic development program. Current strategies of SEDAP focus on four broad categories:

- 1) Basic Public Infrastructure,
- 2) Transportation Infrastructure ,
- 3) Business Development with an emphasis on Entrepreneurship, and
- 4) Workforce Development.

While this research by no means attempts to generalize the DRA role in all Black Belt counties and parishes, it does highlight one DRA program in the most rural counties with the largest

Black populations. This analysis should be viewed as a beginning discussion of the best approach to develop the most marginalized and economically vulnerable communities within the region. The full methodology can be found in Appendix G.

This report compares DRA investments and outcomes in selected Black Belt counties and parishes along with the persistent poverty rate before and after the creation of the DRA. For this report, investments are defined as those DRA resources provided to the counties and parishes to carry out economic development activities. Outcomes are the results of those DRA investments in the Black Belt. If there are measurable differences in investment and outcomes between these selected Black Belt communities and other counties, the DRA should have a compelling interest to create more access to its programs for Black Belt counties and parishes.

Modeled after the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), the DRA focuses most of its resources and programs in building the physical infrastructure of the communities, with the primary goal of job creation. While these are certainly needed objectives within the region, are these goals attainable, as outlined by the DRA, for the selected parishes and counties of the Black Belt region? Are these selected rural, Black Belt counties and parishes, with large Black populations and extraordinary histories of exclusion, receiving investment from the DRA?

The year 2020 presents a unique opportunity to assess the 20-year success of the Delta Regional Authority (DRA) and its work using the ‘one size fits all’ model. This report allows for an opening discussion of whether the existing structure of the Delta Regional Authority is best designed to address challenges of underdevelopment within the Black Belt region. In addition, it also addresses whether the agency has the capacity to do the work with the resources allocated. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 funded the Delta Regional Authority at \$25 million.

DRA Funding

In 1938, President Roosevelt commissioned a study on the Southern region and deemed it the nation’s number one economic problem.¹¹ Yet, federal development intervention for the Southern region did not occur until the creation of the DRA, over sixty years after. Even then, the DRA did not encompass the Southern region in its entirety. With its significant historical underdevelopment and persistent poverty, any federal agency that could serve as a catalyst for significant change in the South would require an investment comparable to the challenge. Yet, when looking at the funding history of the DRA, there is no evidence that the funding provided the authority allowed for any real comprehensive and regional approach to development and change. While modeled after the ARC, the DRA has not received comparable funding and the early years of the authority were plagued by significant underfunding. Table 1 highlights the contrast between requested and actual spending for the authority during its first years of existence.

¹¹ Report on Economic Conditions of the South. (1938). National Emergency Council. The U.S. Government Print Office, Washington, DC.

Table 1. DRA Funding Request and Actual Appropriations: FY2001 to FY 2006¹²

Fiscal Year	2001 request	2001 actual	2002 request	2002 actual	2003 request	2003 actual	2004 request	2004 actual	2005 request	2005 actual	2006 request	2006 actual
	\$30.0	\$20.0	\$20.0	\$10.0	\$10.0	\$8.0	\$2.0	\$5.0	\$2.1	\$6.0	\$6.0	\$12.0

Source: Federal Regional Authorities and Commissions: Their Function and Design, Eugene Boyd, September 21, 2006, CRS Report RL 33076, page 21.

Actual funding requests fell as low as a \$2 million request and a \$5 million actual funding amount for FY 2004. Low levels of funding for the DRA has not allowed for the changes necessary to prepare these communities for sustainable growth.

While both the ARC and the DRA were created to address some of the nation’s longest standing persistent poverty and underdevelopment, the funding of the two is vastly different as shown in Table 2 below. In contrast to the anemic funding of the DRA during FY 2004, the ARC requested \$33 million and received over \$65 million in actual funding. It is important to note that currently, the DRA serves 10 million people, 252 counties/parishes in eight states and the ARC serves 420 counties, in 13 states and 25 million people.¹³ While there is both a population difference and geographic size difference between the regions, there is no difference in immediate and compelling need of the people and communities that reside within these federal entities.

Table 2. ARC Funding Request and Actual Appropriations: FY 2001 to FY 2006 (in millions of dollars)¹⁴

Fiscal Year	2001 request	2001 actual	2002 request	2002 actual	2003 request	2003 actual	2004 request	2004 actual	2005 request	2005 actual	2006 request	2006 actual
	\$71.4	\$77.0a	\$66.3	\$71.3	\$66.4	\$71.3	\$33.1	\$65.6	\$66.0	\$65.5	65.5	65.0

Source: Federal Regional Authorities and Commissions: Their Function and Design, Eugene Boyd, September 21, 2006, CRS Report RL 33076, page 12. a Includes \$11 million in emergency appropriations.

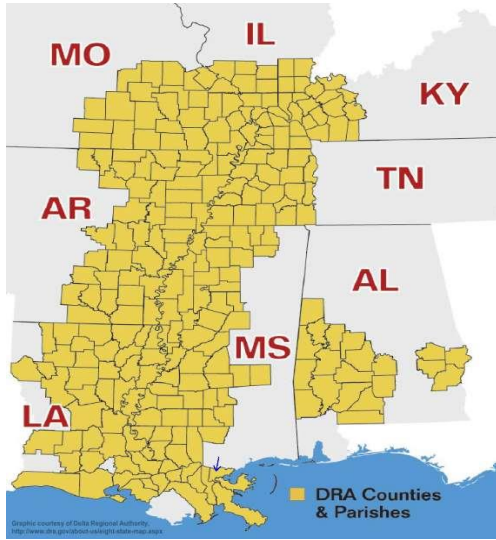
¹² Federal Regional Authorities and Commissions: Their Function and Design, Eugene Boyd, September 21, 2006, CRS Report RL 33076.

¹³ Delta Regional Authority accessed at www.dra.gov. Appalachian Regional Commission accessed at www.arc.gov.

¹⁴ Federal Regional Authorities and Commissions: Their Function and Design, Eugene Boyd, September 21, 2006, CRS Report RL 33076.

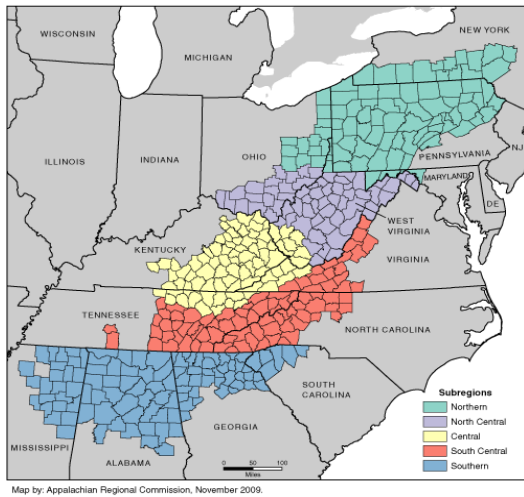
Both Map 3 and Map 4 portray the DRA and ARC regions respectively.

Map 3. Delta Regional Authority Counties



Sources: <https://www.astate.edu/news/delta-regional-authority-and-a-state-leading-in-formation-of-8-state-research-consortium>

Map 4. Appalachian Regional Commission Counties



Source: https://www.arc.gov/research/MapsofAppalachia.asp?MAP_ID=31

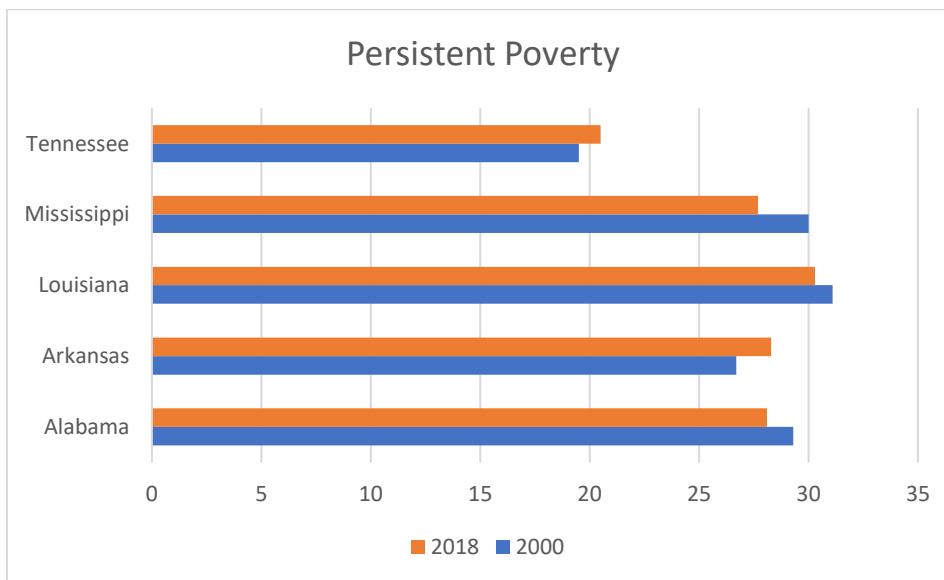
Findings

Demographics

The selected Black Belt counties and parishes reveal continued persistent poverty as a decisive and influencing factor in the lives of citizens. An explanation of the sample selection can be found in Appendix F. Persistent poverty has been an ever-present and negative influence in the history of the rural Southern region and is highlighted in Appendix A for the selected Black Belt counties and parishes. These selected counties and parishes include sixteen Alabama counties, ten Arkansas counties, five Louisiana parishes, five Mississippi counties, and one Tennessee county. Several of these had increases in persistent poverty rates after the creation of the DRA. These include Barbour, Bullock, Clarke, Monroe counties in Alabama; Chicot, Lincoln and Ouachita, Phillips, St. Francis counties in Arkansas, East Carroll parish in Louisiana; Grenada and Tallahatchie counties in Mississippi, and Haywood county, Tennessee.

Chart 4 shows the continued condition of persistent poverty in these selected Black Belt counties and parishes, despite being participants of the DRA and the ARC additionally, in some instances. In fact, collectively Arkansas and Tennessee counties had slight increases in poverty between 2000 and 2018. While collectively Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas counties and parishes have lower levels of poverty than in 2000, although all of the selected counties and parishes still exhibit alarmingly high poverty rates.

Chart 4. Persistent Poverty Profile for selected Black counties and parishes



Source: The 10-20-30 Provision: Defining Persistent Poverty Counties, February 3, 2020, CRS Report accessed <https://crsreports.congress.gov/R45100>. CRS-22. Created by the author.

The Next Twenty Years: A Path Forward for the Delta Regional Authority

Recommendations:

The Delta Regional Authority began as a regional effort that was promoted by many regional players to address underdevelopment within the region. Many years of organizing and advocating by various groups for a regional focus, the Delta Regional Authority was created with the hopes of utilizing public policy to channel federal resources to a region that had been largely bereft of strategic federal funding and attention. If the Delta Regional Authority and the SEDAP are to make the changes so needed within member communities, there will need to be structural and funding improvements in order to achieve this goal. Based on information gathered of the selected counties and parishes, DRA annual reports and assessment of investments and outcomes of the DRA, persistent poverty data and information shared by economic development officials from the region, recommendations for more Black Belt county and parish participation include:

- Revisions to the eligibility requirements for the DRA's States' Economic Development Assistance Program (SEDAP)
- Increased DRA funding to better address region-specific challenges
- Elimination of matching requirements for grant funding
- Modifications to the criteria for DRA funding to include the designation of persistent poverty county or below poverty rate census tract designation
- Revision of DRA governing structure to include additional representatives from the sectors of education, labor, business, civil rights organizations, community-based organizations and representatives of diverse communities for a more inclusive planning and decision-making process
- Formation of a state advisory board comprised of representatives from Black Belt communities
- Additional support for local technical assistance for persistent poverty counties for greater participation in SEDAP
- Creation of a state DRA coordinator position to organize annual state-level strategic efforts

Revisions to the eligibility requirements for the DRA's States' Economic Development Assistance Program (SEDAP)

As the signature program of the DRA, the SEDAP has very limited criteria for participation including: 1) job creation and/or retention utilizing a participation agreement, 2) include other sources of public and/or private funds, and 3) have a regional impact. These criteria are simply too narrow to include all of the development challenges within the region. Particularly stringent is the requirement of the participation agreement for companies. This may serve as a barrier to participation by some in the business sector, particularly from small rural communities. In addition, the limited focus on job creation often limits the focus of possible economic development approaches at the expense of more experimental or less traditional approaches such as cluster or small-scale regional entrepreneurship or the local cultivation of small-scale

entrepreneurs. The lack of flexibility may result in less participation by many smaller communities or companies with limited capacity. It may also deter communities from trying nontraditional approaches to development that are better suited for smaller, less developed communities. Small scale regional entrepreneurship opportunities should be considered as a viable job creation strategy for Delta and Black Belt communities. In addition, the need for additional sources of public and private funds to access resources should be revisited as this requirement may result in barriers to participation in the SEDAP. Many see this as a show of “skin in the game” but for many communities it can serve as a barrier.

Increased DRA funding to better address region-specific challenges

Limited funds available from the agencies and limited matching resources at the local level are the primary barriers. Arkansas Development Official, August 5, 2020

The DRA was the culmination of many regional and national efforts to develop a regional entity to coordinate development within the Delta region. However, the DRA has not received the funding necessary to develop and implement a consistent regional strategy. Additional funding must be invested into the DRA to address the long-standing persistent poverty and need within the region. More funding is necessary for bold and innovative approaches to addressing the generational challenges that face the Delta region. Current funding does not allow for ingenuity and varying approaches necessary for impactful change. By increasing the funding of the DRA, the agency would be better resourced to serve additional communities and build the capacity of the agency to achieve its goals. Additional funding would support the necessary human resource infrastructure essential to supporting this region by providing the necessary personnel to assist participating communities through technical assistance and other needed support. Building the physical infrastructure of a historically underdeveloped region and developing a 21st century workforce through training and development programs must not be simply determined by a grant competition, but through a well-funded and planned regional plan of action. An expanded scope of DRA work and responsibilities require the support of additional personnel and resources to foster more creative approaches to regional development. So, DRA funding opportunities must be more reflective of the diverse needs within the region, such as expanding the definition of job creation to include small scale job creation. DRA funding opportunities must support the diverse needs of local communities in its pursuit of regional development. Local efforts of developing community entrepreneurship opportunities and community capacity, as well as supporting existing businesses beyond job creation and retention, are also needed. Delta and Black Belt communities need the flexibility to also support efforts that will employ smaller numbers of workers and not have the burden of competing for resources with larger, more established companies or communities. These smaller opportunities can also be deemed as regional approaches to development. However, under the current DRA structure, they would most often be viewed as noncompetitive. The inherent barriers to resources of the SEDAP for the least resourced communities and companies must be changed. DRA funding must reflect the diversity within the region and flexible to the varying needs and capacities of the region. Communities, hardest hit by generational poverty and underdevelopment must be recognized as such and additional funding is necessary to change their development forecast.

Elimination of matching requirements for grant funding

According to DRA criteria, successful applicants must include other sources of public and/or private funds. These criteria can certainly become a barrier to many small rural communities. In fact, many of the communities in most need of DRA assistance do not have the necessary resources to be competitive for DRA investment or have limited opportunity to identify additional investment opportunities. However, they are in most need of the DRA resources. Many Delta and Black Belt region communities need the chance to access DRA resources without securing matching funds. This requirement has an inherent barrier for the most under-resourced and marginalized communities. The ability to leverage public and private investments should not be a criterion for critical funding for economic development.

These communities are looking for grants but don't have matching funds. DRA highlights "skin in the game" but this doesn't apply to all communities because many BB communities don't have the resources to participate. DRA don't want to have 100 percent grant match. Alabama Development Official August 13, 2020

Two barriers I can think of would be matching funds and business interest. Sometimes parishes don't have matching funds or a company/industry that is willing to move or expand their organization in that area. DRA is heavily focused on job creation and/or job retention. Louisiana Development Official August 3, 2020

Generational persistent poverty was certainly a major factor in the creation of the DRA. Currently, the agency's place-based development approach is based on building the public and transportation infrastructure, business growth, job creation and workforce development. Yet, any successful remedy for the ills of the Delta and Black Belt regions must have generational persistent poverty as a major focus as well.

Many Black Belt and Delta counties and parishes are consistently designated as persistent poverty counties. Persistent poverty counties house not only some of the poorest populations in the country, the designation also is linked to communities with high levels of institutional oppression, exclusive decision making, unequal power distribution and unfair distribution of resources. By using persistent poverty and census tract designation as eligibility factors of DRA funding, the neediest residents and communities will have a greater opportunity to be among the recipients of DRA funding. This structural change in the DRA is needed in order to make significant impact on these communities.

Revision of DRA governing structure to include additional representatives from the sectors of education, labor, business, civil rights organizations, community-based organizations and representatives of diverse communities for a more inclusive planning and decision-making process

You need an advocate when it goes up for federal review. You need a state advocate when it goes up for state review. You need a relationship with a congressman, people on state level make the decision but the federal level is influential. Former Alabama Mayor, May 13, 2020

The socio-economic and political culture of the Delta and Black Belt communities make it necessary to create a more inclusive governing structure for the DRA. Currently, the decision-making structure is very hierarchically designed with a federal appointee and governors as primary actors. Allowing diverse voices to participate in regional planning efforts will foster a more representative structure, reflective of the communities of the region. In addition, it will also allow for a more inclusive process for decision making that extends beyond political representation and affiliation. In addition, a diverse governing structure could also facilitate the development of a more comprehensive regional strategy that encompasses the perspectives of varying constituencies within the impacted region. Using the Denali Commission model as a reference, this new governing structure would provide a more comprehensive approach to developing the region that does not revolve around electoral systems and political parties.

Formation of a state advisory board comprised of representatives from Black Belt communities

In addition to reconfiguring the governing structure, each state should create a state advisory board comprised of representatives from Black Belt communities and persistent poverty communities. The advisory board would serve the governor by developing a five-year strategic plan for Black Belt counties and economic development, using DRA services and submit an annual progress report of Black Belt county and parish participation. This board would assist in supporting DRA accountability to Black Belt communities and other persistent poverty communities. In addition, a more focused, multi-year, strategic effort would provide consistency and direction to efforts specific to the Black Belt region: something that is needed under the current structure and would not be hindered by election cycles and outcomes.

Additional support for local technical assistance for persistent poverty counties for greater participation in SEDAP

Participation in these programs require knowledge expertise such as grant writing, budget development and research. Most of these counties don't have full-time professional staff dedicated to development. These are barriers to the most vulnerable communities' participation in the SEDAP. Technical assistance at the local level is needed to ensure that persistent poverty counties are provided the support needed to successfully navigate the application process and if awarded, support through the implementation process. Most local development districts or other economic development officials have very limited staff and do not have the human resources to work with all communities who may be eligible for the SEDAP. Additional technical assistance must be leveraged to allow for equitable participation. Currently, support provided to community is often reflective of a community's probability of success due to limited staff and

resources. However, often this leaves the most vulnerable communities with limited opportunities and/or access. Providing technical assistance will assist in accessibility and success of the grant application and programs and services.

It's my opinion that most barriers can be tied back to the limitations on budgets and time of the local elected officials. Most DRA programs are geared towards Economic Development and job creation. Those communities without local dedicated Economic Development staff are at a disadvantage when it comes to business retention and expansion, not to mention recruitment. Distressed communities lack the funds for economic development staff and (many times) lack the matching fund requirement for many other programs (not necessarily DRA funds). Often, small-town cities have a part-time Mayor who has to hold down another full-time job to support their families. Their limitations on time occasionally restricts their ability to collect needed information for grant applications. Arkansas Economic Development Official, August 3, 2020

Local Development Districts don't have enough money to do the jobs they are given. Several NGOs are competitors for money as well as economic development districts. They need more staff for the areas they cover. They need more people on the ground. We also need to promote regionalism amongst these communities without a history of that type of work. There is a culture of competition not collaboration. In the current environment there should be a focus on sustaining and growing the capacity for economic competitiveness.

What we need:

• We need flexibility • Interagency cooperation • Resources • Don't need all of the agencies • There is no institutional capacity • No administrative support • No money to hire expertise • No good elected official training • Local staffing has no training and development

Louisiana Development Authority Official, August 3, 2020

Creation of a state DRA coordinator position to develop, organize, implement and evaluate DRA activities annually within the state

Finally, in order to create regional plans and stimulate regionalism, there is a need for a state coordinator for each participating state to work closely with the Governor and advisory board to successfully develop strategic plans that effectively implement the goals of the DRA. In addition, the coordinator would assure the progress of the plan within the funded county and

serve as a liaison to the Governor, the Federal co-chair and proposed advisory board. The state coordinator would also work to promote necessary interagency coordination, support and funding opportunities. The added coordination that this staff position could provide would be invaluable to the success of these underresourced communities.

Conclusion

As the nation attempts to rebuild its economy, it is imperative that we extend this effort to the Delta and Black Belt regions, with deliberate intention and speed. The economic conditions within the Delta and the Black Belt regions continue to negatively impact the lives of the people there and the nation's overall economic health. Underdevelopment and limited investment in the Delta region is deeply rooted in its history; stifled by racism and oppression and disadvantaged by exclusive and hierarchical decision making. Also, the region's inequitable socioeconomic and political influence and power often negatively impacts its citizens, particularly the poor and/or Black community.

The DRA is certainly positioned to play an important role in the country's rebuilding efforts, specifically those within the Delta. The agency was created to address the dire economic circumstance of the Delta region, including many Black Belt counties and parishes within. Yet, the agency has not been provided the resources necessary to correct centuries of neglect and underutilization. The organizational structure of the DRA and its implementation of policy highlights a hierarchical and often exclusionary approach with little accountability to the citizens it was created to serve. It is necessary that immediate changes occur in to the DRA's organizational structure, staffing, funding, scope of work, and decision-making practices in order to successfully advance the region and the communities within.

As this region houses some of our poorest and most marginalized communities and individuals, the consequences of generational persistent poverty and decades of limited development and growth have hindered the opportunities for individuals and communities alike. Now is the time to refocus federal efforts in the Delta and Black Belt regions and use the DRA as a new innovative model for regional development and innovative change. With each passing generation, the cumulative effect of disparities on the citizens of the Delta and Black Belt regions, with particular focus for this report on the most rural and diverse communities, becomes more dire. However, with opportunities for additional funding and inclusive and participatory planning and decision making, the DRA can successfully work with its citizens as partners to develop the region to benefit all of its residents.

Particularly, these recommendations highlight the changes necessary to make the DRA and the SEDAP more reflective of the needs of the Delta and Black Belt communities. Recognizing these communities will require both public and private strategic development, the design and implementation of public policy is critical to achieving its goals. Former President Bill Clinton played a critical role in the creation of the DRA and he recognized that public-private investment must be accompanied with effective policy.

He stated, “there is never going to be enough government money to take a poor region of America out of the dumps all by itself. You’ve got to have private-sector growth. Number two, in order to have private -sector growth, you’ve got to have good government policy.”¹⁵

Good governmental policy will mean creating a more inclusive and reflective DRA for 21st century needs. Refining eligibility requirements and focus, additional funding, a more diverse decision-making approach and a renewed focus on regionalism and accountability as important measures. With these changes the DRA and the SEDAP programs could fulfill the hopes of those who worked so hard to establish it and those who so desperately need for it to be successful. In addition, funding and support of regional commissions/authorities based on populations and need will go a long way to promote fairness and generate new opportunities and growth.

State Profiles of DRA Investments and Outcomes

The following section uses DRA annual reports for 2018 and 2019 to examine DRA investments and outcomes for selected Black Belt counties and parishes in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee. The selected parishes and counties have the largest Black populations in the region and are the most rural as shown in Appendix F.

Precisely, this report looks at the SEDAP investments and outcomes. The DRA reports the primary outcomes for the SEDAP program are jobs created and retained, individuals trained and families that have been impacted by the program. The SEDAP investments must adhere to Federal Priority Eligibility Criteria with at least 50% used for transportation and basic public infrastructure and at least 75% in economically distressed counties and parishes.¹⁶

Alabama DRA Profile

The Alabama Black Belt counties have a combined population of 255,029, including a 58.9 percent Black population, in a state with a Black population of 26.8 percent. The counties’ average Black poverty rate is 37.6 percent compared to a White poverty rate of 13.9 percent, as shown in Table 4. In addition, these counties had an average persistent poverty rate of 29.3 percent, in 2000, and an average persistent poverty rate of 28.1 percent in 2018. Table 3 highlights the reported DRA investments and outcomes for 2018 and 2019 for the state of Alabama, revealing a significant difference in funding between 2018 and 2019. While the number of DRA projects were similar, the number of jobs created and retained and individuals trained decreased, in 2019.

¹⁵ President Clinton’s Great In-Person Presentation to Delta Caucus, May 2, 2013.
http://www.mdgc.us/articles/2013/5/13/president_clintons_great_inperson_presentation/

¹⁶ Source: Delta Regional Authority Year-In-Review 2018 and 2019

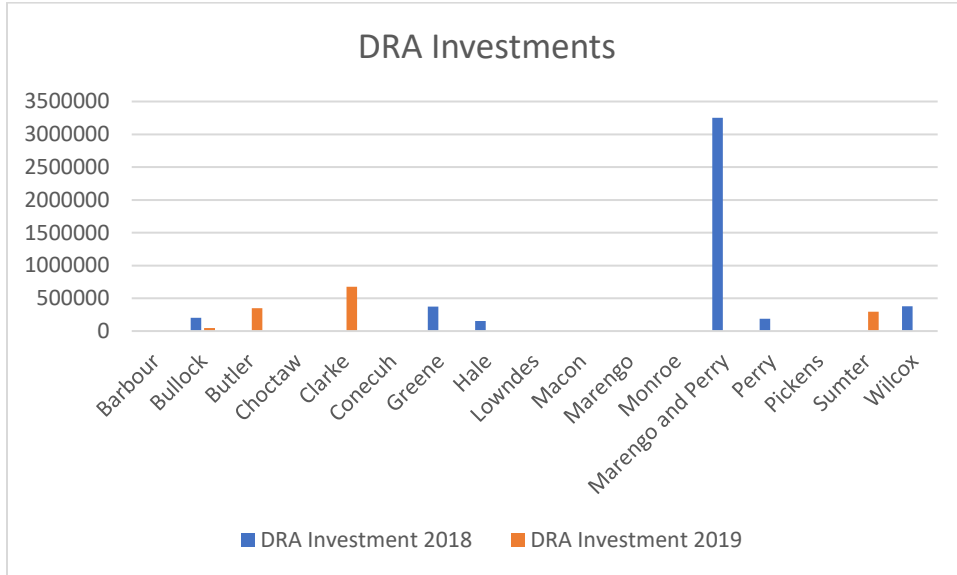
Table 3. Cumulative Delta Regional Authority Resources for ALABAMA 2018-2019

	2018	2019
<i>DRA Investment</i>	\$5,031,488	\$2,335,005
<i>Total Number of Alabama DRA Projects</i>	11	10
<i>Jobs created and retained</i>	193	150
<i>Individuals trained</i>	400	254
<i>Families affected</i>	3,404	3,095

Sources: Delta Regional Authority Year-In-Review 2018 and 2019.

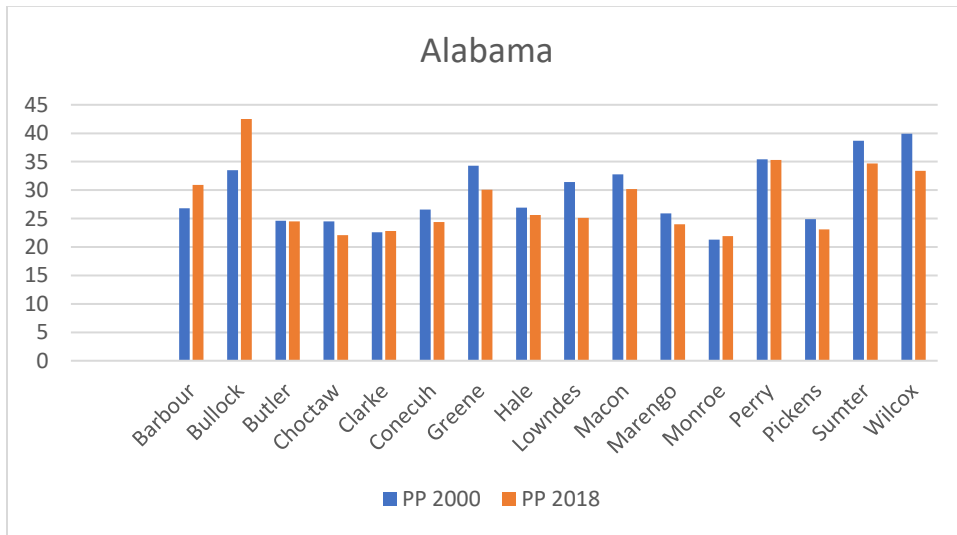
Table 4 provides a profile of DRA investments and outcomes, in selected Alabama Black Belt counties. In 2018, Bullock, Greene, Hale, Marengo, Perry and Wilcox counties received investments from SEDAP. In 2019, Bullock, Butler, Clark and Sumter was reported to have received investments and Chart 5 demonstrates the SEDAP investment in these Black Belt counties during the two years. The total investment in Alabama, in 2018, was over \$5 million dollars and in 2019, the investment was over \$2 million dollars. The total investment in each selected county is highlighted in Table 4. In 2018, these counties received 90 percent of Alabama DRA investments. During this same year, the state of Alabama, as a whole, received 19.6 percent of all DRA investments. In 2019, these selected counties received 59 percent of Alabama investments, while the state of Alabama received just 11.9 percent of all DRA investments. Therefore, these selected Black Belt counties, in Alabama, received a large percentage of the DRA investments in Alabama and highlights Alabama’s strategic focus on a distinctly defined Alabama Black Belt region. The outcomes for the state include seven projects, in 2018, and six projects, in 2019. The seven projects, in 2018, include five water and sewage projects, one transportation infrastructure project, and one healthcare infrastructure project as shown in Appendix I. In 2019, the six projects include three water and sewage projects, one physical infrastructure, one job creation project and one public infrastructure project that encompassed both water and sewage and job training. There were 43 new jobs created and 320 families impacted from these counties in 2018, as shown in Appendix D. In 2019, these projects provided 65 new jobs, 250 individuals trained, and 7,988 impacted individuals as shown in Appendix E. It is important to note that all counties covered by the DRA in Alabama are Black Belt counties. Chart 6 shows persistent poverty in Black Belt counties in Alabama, before the creation of the DRA, and in 2018. Remarkably, even when comparing these counties with regional poverty rates and other nonmetro counties, these counties have higher than average rates of poverty.

Chart 5. Alabama DRA Investments in 2018 and 2019 in selected counties



Sources: Created by Author. Delta Regional Authority Year -In-Review 2018 and 2019

Chart 6. Alabama Persistent Poverty Counties



Sources: Created by Author. The 10-20-30 Provision: Defining Persistent Poverty Counties, February 3, 2020, CRS Report accessed <https://crsreports.congress.gov> R45100. CRS-22.

Notably, the SEDAP investments in the Alabama Black Belt region did not always coincide with those counties with the greatest percentages of persistent poverty. In fact, persistent poverty within the Alabama Black Belt is at alarming rates even with DRA participation and investments

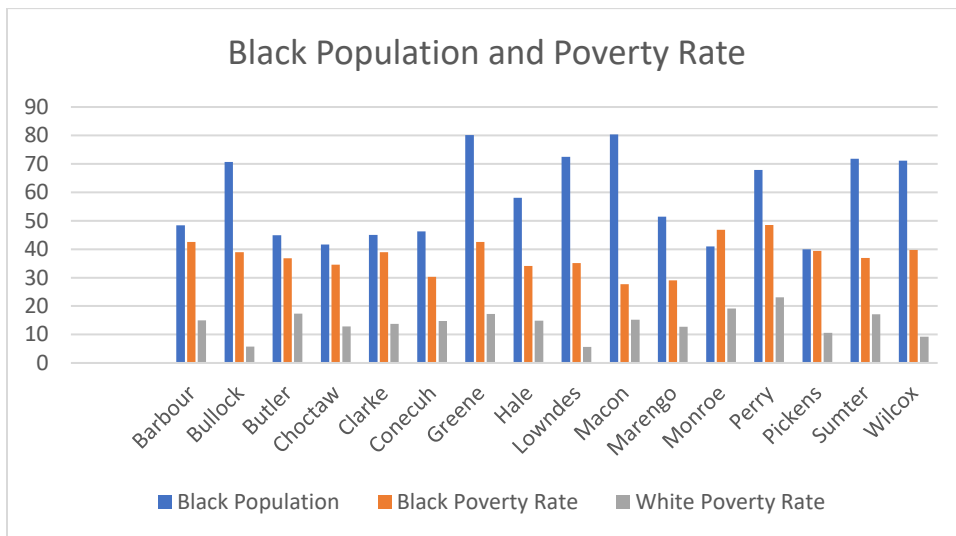
and in the cases of Hale and Macon counties, which have membership in both the DRA and ARC, both report higher than 20 percent persistent poverty rates. With job creation cited as a primary objective of the DRA, many smaller, rural persistent poverty counties simply do not have the physical infrastructure or workforce to facilitate larger scale job creation and compete for DRA’s limited resources. For many of the selected counties and parishes, there must be a focus on developing the community infrastructure and community development before they can participate in economic development activities.

Rural areas need things on a much smaller scale. They need community development before they can get to the economic development. Even monies for community maintenance.

Local Alabama Development official

Chart 7 also highlights the historically amassed Black population within the selected Alabama Black Belt counties. While the Black population nationwide is 13.4 percent and 26.8 percent in Alabama, some counties in the Alabama Black Belt region house Black populations that are over three times that percentage. These counties have generational marginalization, underdevelopment and political and social obstructions that have often impeded collective vision and economic progress, highlighting the systemic factors associated with persistent poverty.

Chart 7. Demographics of Poverty Alabama



Sources: Created by Author. United States Census Bureau Quickfacts accessed www.census.gov. US. Census Poverty Status in Past 12 month, 2018. U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table ID. S1701.

Table 4. Alabama Select County Investments and Outcomes Profile

County	DRA Investments and Outcomes 2018	DRA Investments and Outcomes 2019	Population	Black Population	Black Poverty	PP 2000	PP 2018	White Poverty
Barbour	0	0	24,686	48.4	42.6	26.8	30.9	15.0
Bullock	200,000	47,250	10,101	70.7	39.0	33.5	42.5	5.8
Butler	0	350,430	19,448	44.9	36.8	24.6	24.5	17.3
Choctaw	0	0	12,589	41.7	34.6	24.5	22.1	12.8
Clarke	0	676,625	25,833	45.0	39.0	22.6	22.8	13.8
Conecuh	0	0	12,067	46.3	30.3	26.6	24.4	14.8
Greene	372,425	0	8,111	80.1	42.5	34.3	30.1	17.2
Hale	155,000	0	14,651	58.1	34.1	26.9	25.6	14.9
Lowndes	0	0	9,726	72.5	35.1	31.4	25.1	5.7
Macon	0	0	21,452	80.4	27.7	32.8	30.2	15.2
Marengo	0	0	18,863	51.4	29.0	25.9	24.0	12.7
Monroe	0	0	23,068	41.0	46.8	21.3	21.9	19.2
Marengo and Perry	3,250,000	0						
Perry	185,936	0	10,591	67.9	48.5	35.4	35.3	23.1
Pickens	0	0	19,746	40	39.4	24.9	23.1	10.6
Sumter	0	295,183	12,427	71.8	36.9	38.7	34.7	17.1
Wilcox	376,997	0	11,670	71.1	39.7	39.9	33.4	9.3
Total Black Belt	\$4,540,358 (90%)	\$1,369,488 (59%)	255,029	58.9	37.6	29.3	28.1	13.9
Total Alabama Investment	\$5,031,488	\$2,335,005						
Total DRA investment	\$25,673,382	\$19,628,456						
Outcomes	7 projects	6 projects						

Sources: Created by Author. Delta Regional Authority Year-In-Review 2018 and 2019. United States Census Bureau Quickfacts accessed www.census.gov. US. Census Poverty Status in Past 12 months. Survey American Community Survey Estimates 5-year Table ID. S1701.

Arkansas DRA Profile

The selected Black Belt counties in Arkansas had a cumulative population of 140,311 people and a Black population of 43.4 percent, in a state with a 15.7 percent population. Unlike Alabama, the state of Arkansas received more funding, in 2019, than in 2018, and created more jobs, in 2019. Table 5 shows the cumulative resources and outcomes of DRA investments in the state of Arkansas. According to DRA reporting, the agency invested over 3 million dollars, in 2018, and over 3.3 million dollars, in 2019 in the state of Arkansas.

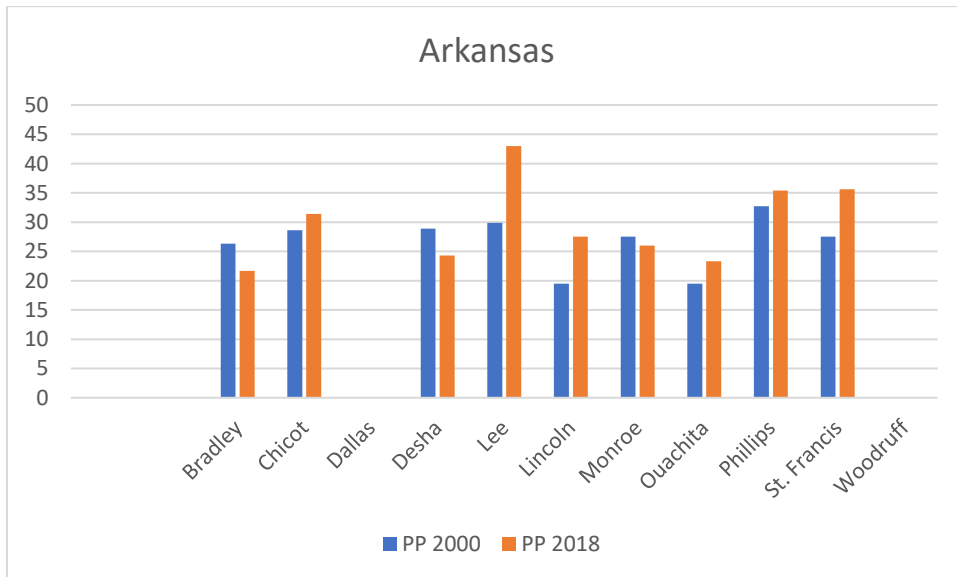
Table 5. Cumulative Delta Regional Authority Resources for ARKANSAS 2018-2019

	2018	2019
<i>DRA Investment</i>	\$3,071,309	\$3,398,866
<i>Total Number of Arkansas DRA Projects</i>	15	11
<i>Jobs created and retained</i>	179	331
<i>Individuals trained</i>	241	150
<i>Families affected</i>	6,414	255

Sources Delta Regional Authority Year-In-Review 2018 and 2019.

Chart 8 shows persistent poverty rates in selected Black Belt counties in Arkansas and highlights two selected counties, Dallas and Woodruff that did not have persistent poverty status, in 2000, and 2018. However, the rest of the selected counties were persistent poverty counties, with Lee county having a disturbing persistent poverty rate of 43 percent, in 2018.

Chart 8. Arkansas Persistent Poverty Counties

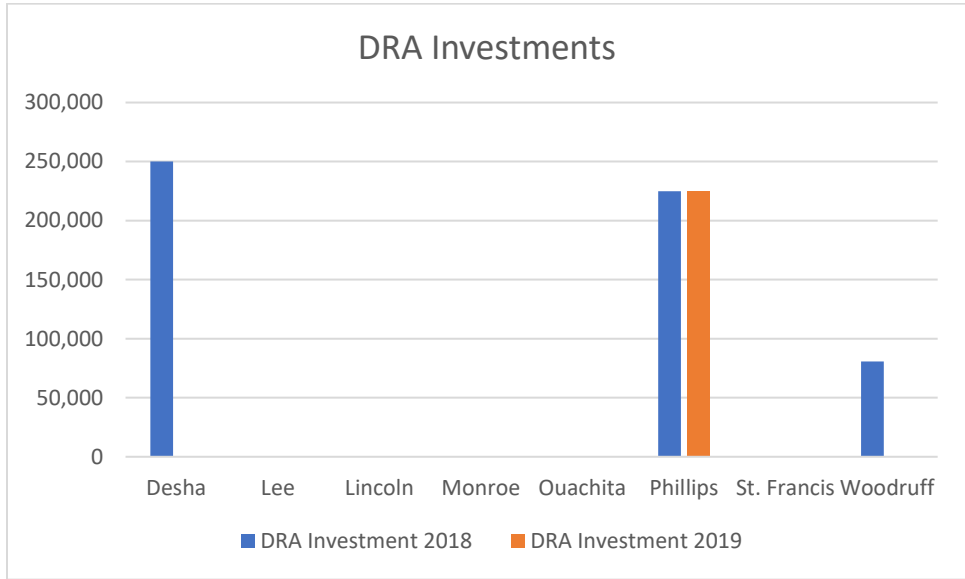


Sources: Created by Author. The 10-20-30 Provision: Defining Persistent Poverty Counties, February 3, 2020, CRS Report accessed <https://crsreports.congress.gov> R45100. CRS-22.

Chart 9 shows DRA investment in the aforementioned selected Black Belt counties in Arkansas. In 2018, DRA made investments in Desha, Phillips and Woodruff counties. Only Phillips received DRA investments, in 2019. These selected counties received just 18.1 percent of DRA Arkansas investments, in 2018, and only 7 percent, in 2019, as shown in Table 6. Unlike the state of Alabama, Black Belt counties in Arkansas received very little investment from DRA in 2018 and 2019. The selected counties in Arkansas had three projects, in 2018, and one project in 2019. The projects, in 2018, include a water and sewage projects, a workforce development project and a healthcare infrastructure project and 127 jobs retained as shown in Appendix D.

The single-funded project, in 2019, was a transportation infrastructure project and is exhibited in Appendix E, highlighting 19 new and 38 retained jobs.

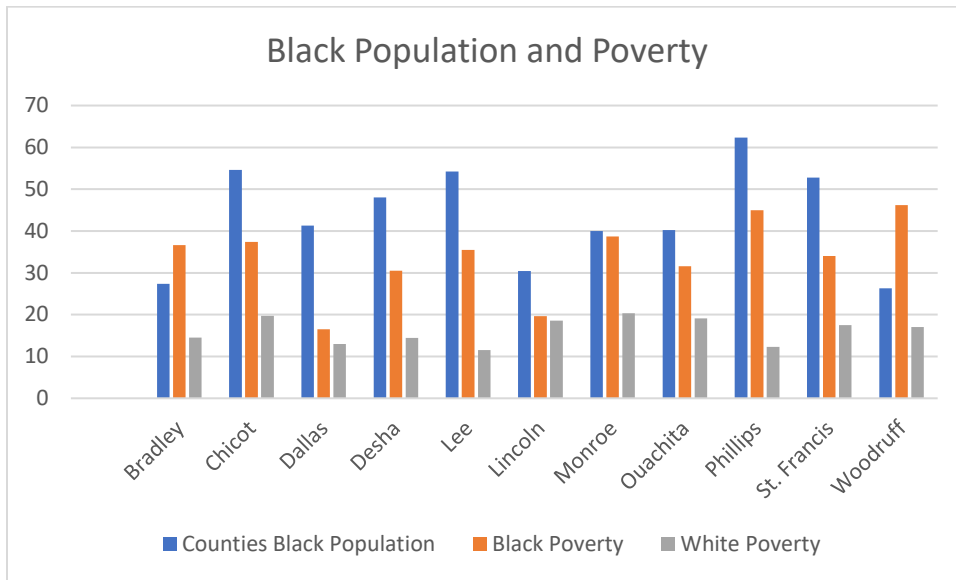
Chart 9. Arkansas Investments in 2018 and 2019



Sources: Delta Regional Authority Year-In-Review 2018 and 2019.

The historically large Black population in these selected counties is highlighted, in Chart 10 and reveals poverty as a relentless factor in the Arkansas Black Belt. In fact, Black poverty within these counties averaged 34 percent, while white poverty averaged 16 percent as presented in Table 6. Unlike Alabama counties, Arkansas counties do not define themselves as Black Belt counties and instead are commonly referred as Delta counties. Yet, even as members of the Delta region and the Black Belt region, they still have unique characteristics that call for unique remedy.

Chart 10. Demographics of Poverty Arkansas



Sources: Created by Author. United States Census Bureau Quickfacts accessed www.census.gov. US. Census Poverty Status in Past 12 month, 2018. U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table ID. S1701.

Table 6. Arkansas Select County Investment and Outcomes Profile

Counties	DRA Investments and Outcomes 2018	DRA Investments and Outcomes 2019	Population	Black Population	Black Poverty	PP 2000	PP 2018	White Poverty
Bradley	0	0	10,763	27.4	36.6	26.3	21.7	14.5
Chicot	0	0	10,118	54.6	37.4	28.6	31.4	19.7
Dallas	0	0	7,009	41.3	16.5	X	X	13.0
Desha	250,000	0	11,361	48.0	30.5	28.9	24.3	14.4
Lee	0	0	8,857	54.2	35.5	29.9	43.0	11.5
Lincoln	0	0	13,024	30.4	19.6	19.5	27.5	18.6
Monroe	0	0	6,701	40.0	38.7	27.5	26.0	20.3
Ouachita	0	0	23,382	40.2	31.6	19.5	23.3	19.1
Phillips	225,000	225,000	17,782	62.3	45	32.7	35.4	12.3
St. Francis	0	0	24,994	52.8	34	27.5	35.6	17.5
Woodruff	80,750		6,320	26.3	46.2	X	X	17
Total Black Belt	\$555,750 (18%)	\$225,000 (7%)	140,311	43.4	34	26.7	28.3	16.1
Total Arkansas Investment	\$3,071,309	\$3,398,866						

Total DRA Investment	\$25,673,382	\$19,628,456						
Outcomes	3 projects	1 project						

Sources: Created by Author. Delta Regional Authority Year-In-Review 2018 and 2019. United States Census Bureau Quickfacts accessed www.census.gov. US. Census Poverty Status in Past 12 months. Survey American Community Survey Estimates 5-year Table ID. S1701.

Louisiana DRA Profile

The selected Black Belt parishes have a total of 77,979 residents with a 45.7 percent African American population, in a state with a 32.8 percent Black population. The state of Louisiana received slightly more DRA investment in 2019 than, in 2018, as shown in Table 7. In addition, significant cumulative increases in job creations, in 2019, were exhibited as shown below. In 2018, DRA invested over 4 million dollars in the state of Louisiana and over 4.1 million, in 2019. In addition, over 5,000 individuals were trained in 2018, drastically more than the 148 individuals, as reported, in 2019 by the DRA.

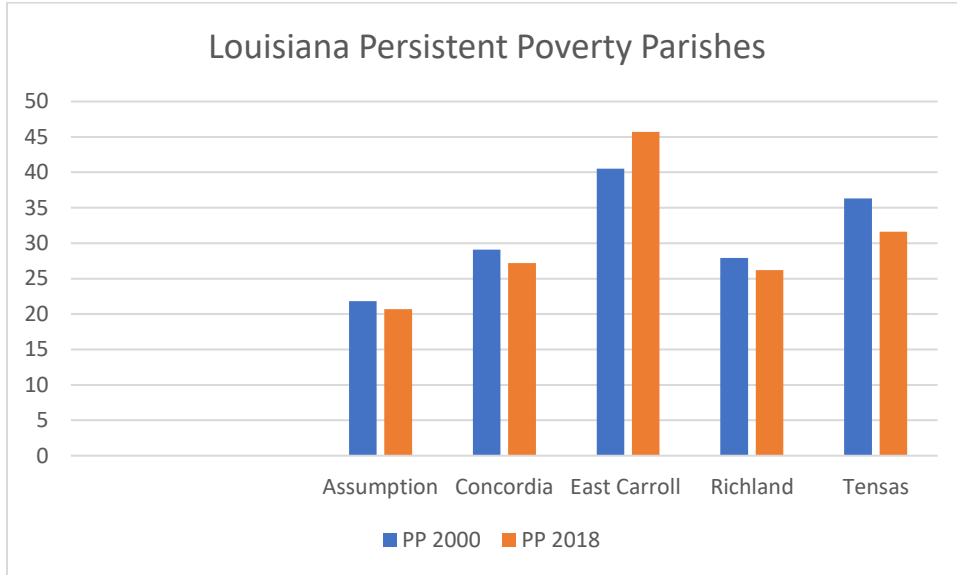
Table 7. Cumulative Delta Regional Authority Resources for LOUISIANA 2018-2019

	2018	2019
<i>DRA Investment</i>	\$4,055,528	\$4,173,887
<i>Total Number of Louisiana DRA Projects</i>	18	21
<i>Jobs created and retained</i>	204	1,257
<i>Individuals trained</i>	5145	148
<i>Families affected</i>	138,105	8,639

Sources: Delta Regional Authority Year-In-Review 2018 and 2019.

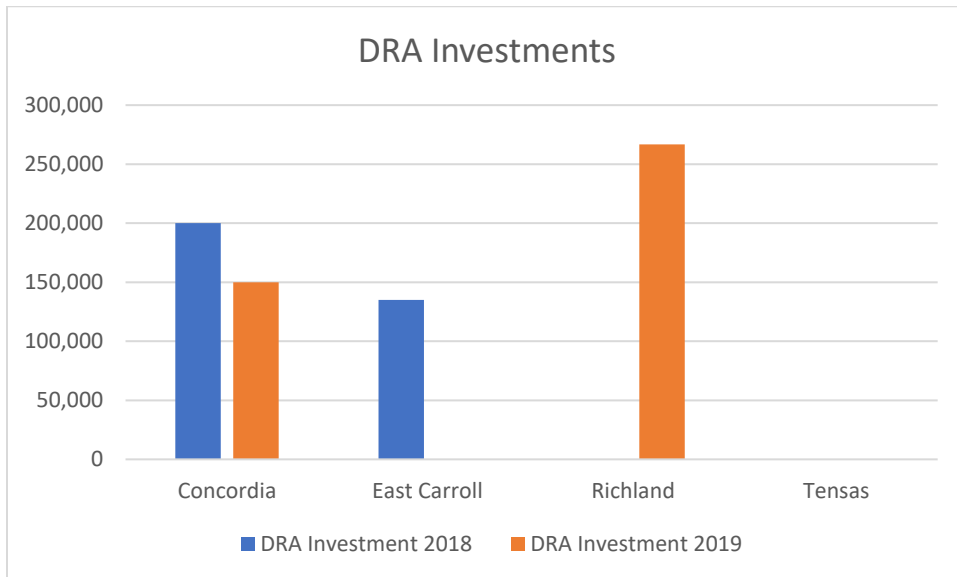
Chart 11 reveals that these parishes have an average persistent poverty rate of 31.1 percent in 2000 and 30.3 percent in 2018. These percentages highlight the large numbers of impoverished people in these parishes and the need for varying strategies of development and a focus on solutions for persistent poverty. The DRA made SEDAP investments in the parishes of Concordia and East Carroll, in 2018, and Concordia and Richland in 2019. Table 8 shows that these selected Black Belt Louisiana parishes received 8 percent of DRA investments in 2018 and 10 percent, in 2019. Chart 12 shows the amounts of SEDAP investment in these parishes for both years. These parishes had two funded projects, in 2018, and two funded projects in 2019. In 2018, there was a water and sewage project and a physical infrastructure project and, in 2019, there was a healthcare infrastructure project and a water and sewage project, as shown in Appendices D and E. No information was given on jobs created or retained, individuals trained or families affected for 2018. Appendix E reveals 5 new jobs and 175 retained jobs, in 2019, with 1,106 families affected. These parishes reveal, like Alabama and Arkansas, that there are significant differences in poverty rates based on race, with a recorded 45.7 percent Black poverty rate and an 18.8 percent White poverty rate, as shown in Table 8.

Chart 11. Louisiana Persistent Poverty Parishes



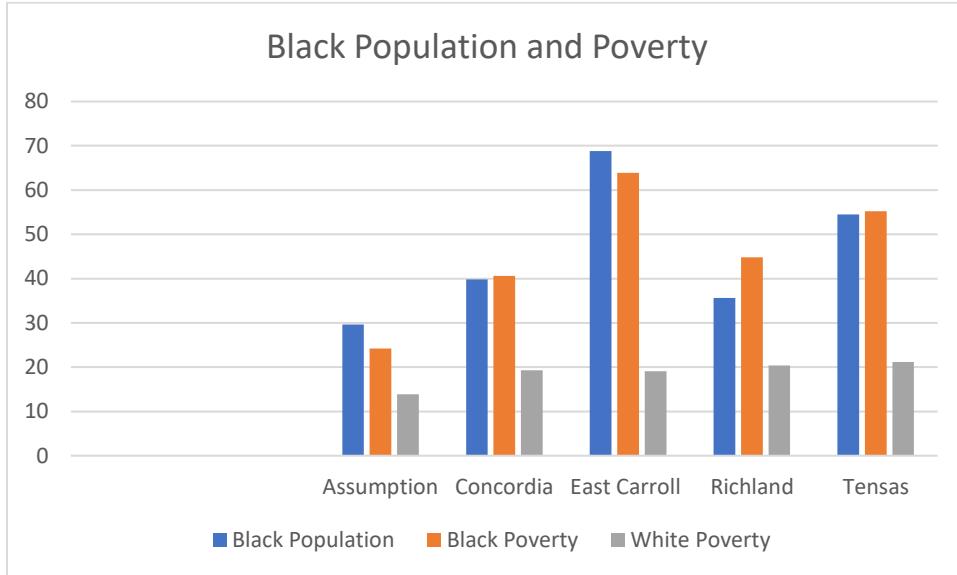
Sources: Created by Author. The 10-20-30 Provision: Defining Persistent Poverty Counties, February 3, 2020, CRS Report accessed <https://crsreports.congress.gov> R45100. CRS-22.

Chart 12. Louisiana Investments in 2018 and 2019



Sources: Delta Regional Authority Year-In-Review 2018 and 2019.

Chart 13. Demographics of Poverty Louisiana



Sources: Created by Author. United States Census Bureau Quickfacts accessed www.census.gov. US. Census Poverty Status in Past 12 month, 2018. U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table ID. S1701.

Table 8. Louisiana Select Parish Investments and Outcomes Profile

Parishes	DRA Investments and Outcomes 2018	DRA Investments and Outcomes 2019	Population	Black Population	Black Poverty	PP 2000	PP 2018	White Poverty
Assumption	0	0	23,421	29.6	24.2	21.8	20.7	13.9
Concordia	200,000	150,000	20,822	39.8	40.6	29.1	27.2	19.3
East Carroll	135,000	0	7,759	68.8	63.9	40.5	45.7	19.1
Richland	0	266,822	20,725	35.6	44.8	27.9	26.2	20.4
Tensas	0	0	5,252	54.5	55.2	36.3	31.6	21.2
Total Black Belt	335,000	416,822	77,979	45.7	45.7	31.1	30.3	18.8
Total Louisiana Investment	\$4,055,528 (8%)	\$4,173,887 (10%)						
Total DRA Investment	\$25,673,382	\$19,628,456						
Outcomes	2 projects	2 projects						

Sources: Created by Author. Delta Regional Authority Year-In-Review 2018 and 2019. United States Census Bureau Quickfacts accessed www.census.gov. US. Census Poverty Status in Past 12 months. Survey American Community Survey Estimates 5-year Table ID. S1701.

Mississippi DRA Profile

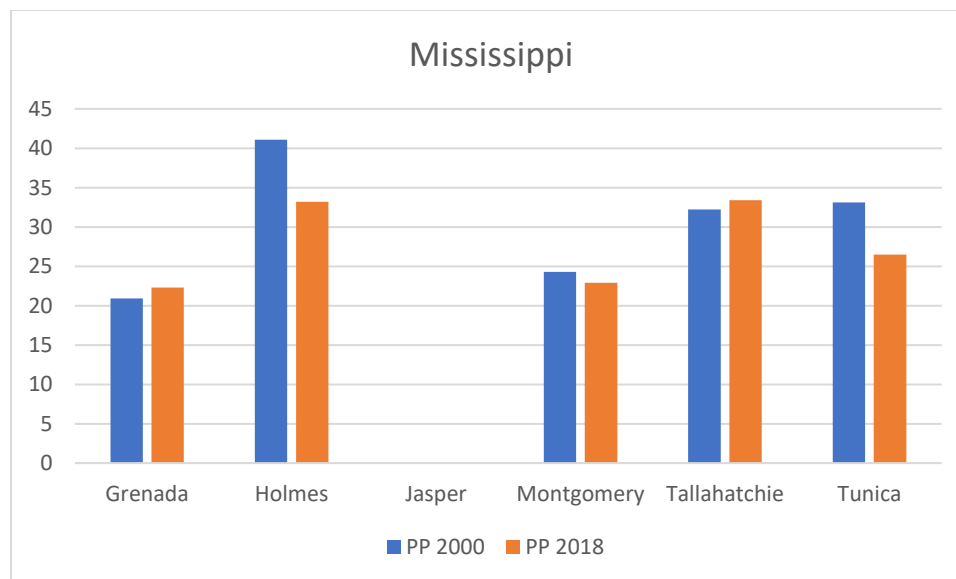
The selected Black Belt counties in Mississippi have a population of 88,132 and have a 53 percent Black population, in a state with a 37.8 percent Black population. According to DRA reporting, in 2018, DRA investments created and retained 543 jobs and 185 jobs, in 2019 for the state of Mississippi. The state of Mississippi, as a whole, received 18.8 percent of the DRA investment, in 2018, and 17.9 percent, in 2019. The selected Black Belt counties received 59.4 percent of DRA Mississippi investments, in 2018, as shown in Table 10. Persistent poverty in these selected Mississippi counties revealed a slight reduction, in 2018. Also, these counties had a 30 percent persistent poverty rate, in 2000, and 27.7 percent in 2018, as shown in Chart 14. Jasper County was the only selected county without persistent poverty status, in 2000, and 2018.

Table 9. Cumulative Delta Regional Authority Resources for MISSISSIPPI 2018-2019

	2018	2019
<i>DRA Investment</i>	\$3,532,653	\$3,515,228
<i>Total Number of Mississippi DRA Projects</i>	15	14
<i>Jobs created and retained</i>	543	185
<i>Individuals trained</i>	1,350	591
<i>Families affected</i>	1,735	11,862

Sources: Delta Regional Authority Year-In-Review 2018 and 2019.

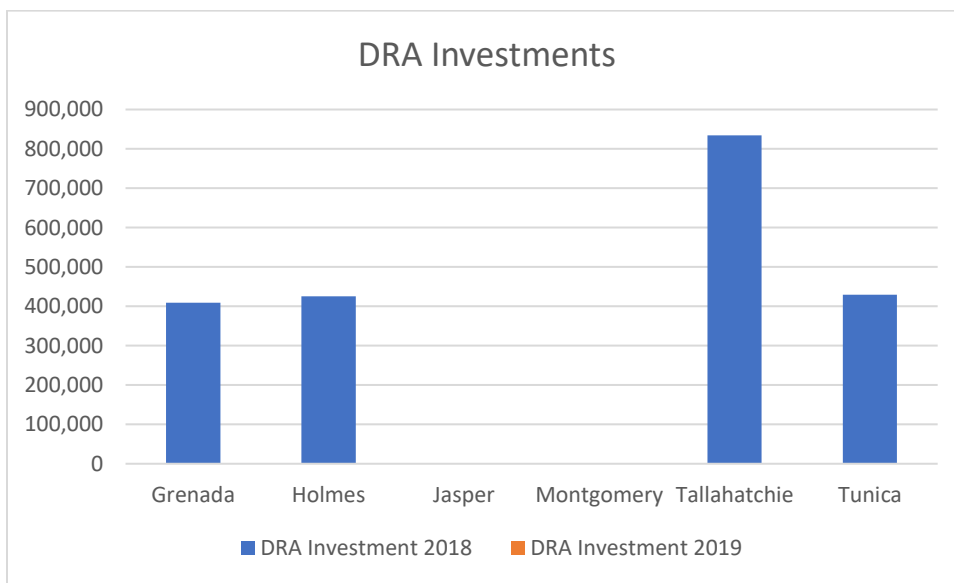
Chart 14. Mississippi Persistent Poverty Counties



The DRA invested in Grenada, Holmes, Tallahatchie, and Tunica counties, in 2018. There was no investment in selected Black Belt counties in 2019. Chart 15 shows SEDAP investment in these selected Mississippi counties, in 2018, and 2019. Of the five projects funded in 2018, two were physical infrastructure projects, two job creation projects and one water sewage project. As highlighted in Appendix D, 110 new jobs and 287 retained jobs came from these projects. In addition, 21 families were affected. There were no investments in these counties in 2019 according to DRA reports.

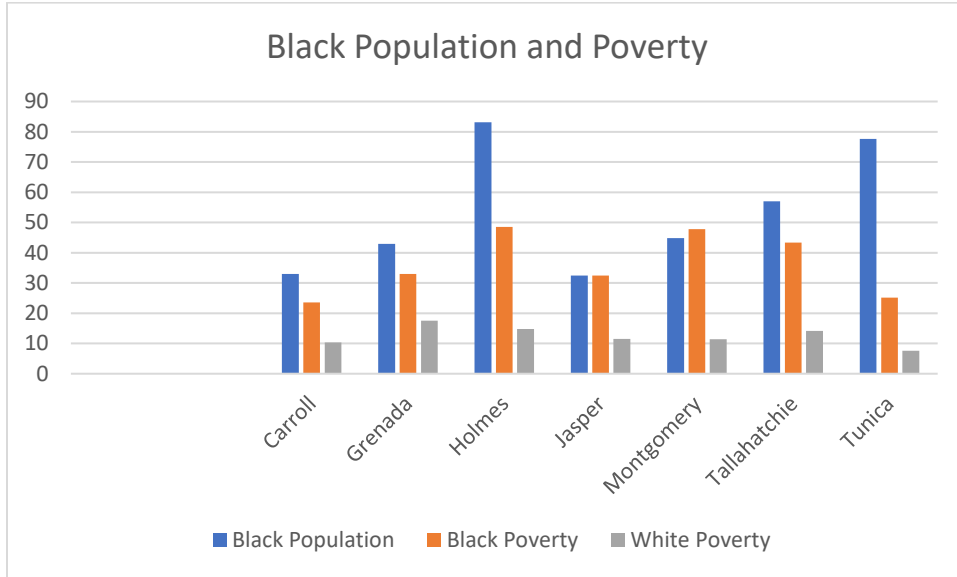
Collectively, these selected Black Belt counties have a 35 percent Black poverty rate compared to a 12.1 percent White poverty rate, as highlighted, in Chart 16.

Chart 15. Mississippi Investments in 2018 and 2019



Sources: Created by Author. Sources: Delta Regional Authority Year-In-Review 2018 and 2019.

Chart 16. Demographics of Poverty



Sources: Created by Author. United States Census Bureau Quickfacts accessed www.census.gov. U.S. Census Poverty Status in Past 12 month, 2018. U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table ID. S1701.

Table 10. Mississippi Select County Investments and Outcomes Profile

County	DRA Investments and Outcomes 2018	DRA Investments and Outcomes 2019	Population	Black Population	Black Poverty	PP 2000	PP 2018	White Poverty
Carroll	0	0	9,947	33	23.6	x	x	10.3
Grenada	392,665	0	21,906	42.9	33	20.9	22.3	17.5
Holmes	425,000	0	19,198	83.1		41.1	33.2	
Jasper	155,555	0		32.4		x	x	11.5
Montgomery	0	0	10,925	44.8	47.8	24.3	22.9	11.4
Tallahatchie	0	0	15,378	57	43.3	32.2	33.4	14.1
Tunica	429,262	0	10,778	77.6	25.2	33.1	26.5	7.6
Total Black Belt	\$1,402,482 (40%)	0	88,132	53	34.6	30	27.7	12.1
Total Mississippi Investment	\$3,532,653	\$3,515,228						
Total DRA Investment	\$25,673,382	\$19,628,456						

Outcomes	5 projects	0 projects						
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Sources: Created by Author. Delta Regional Authority Year-In-Review 2018 and 2019. United States Census Bureau Quickfacts accessed www.census.gov. US. Census Poverty Status in Past 12 months. Survey American Community Survey Estimates 5-year Table ID: S1701.

Tennessee DRA Profile

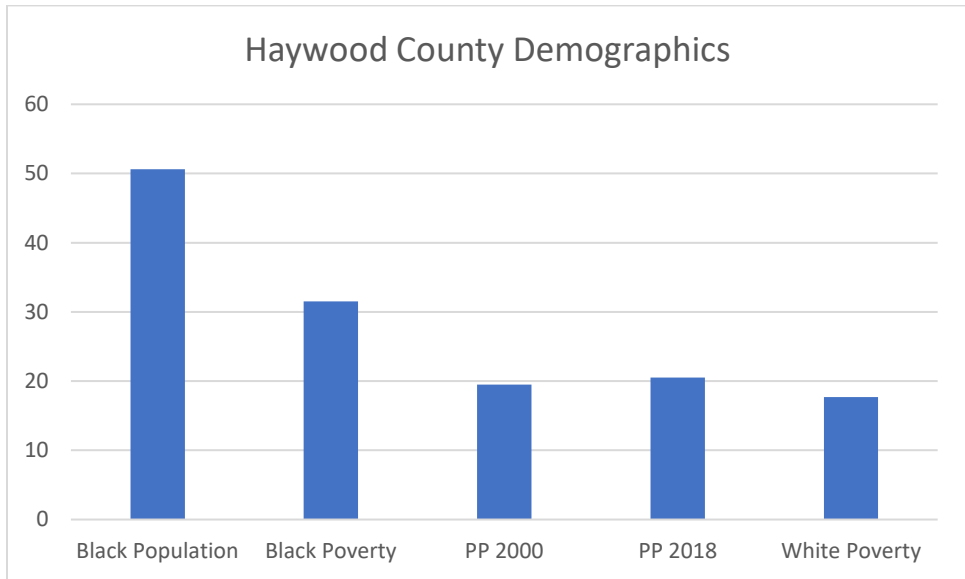
Tennessee had a very different profile than the other states in the report and only had one county to qualify as part of this report. Haywood county, the only selected county, has a population of 17,304 and has 51 percent Black population, in a state with a 17.1 percent Black population. The state of Tennessee received 13.2 percent of DRA investments in 2018 and 5.9 percent in 2019. The persistent poverty rate for this county, in 2000, was 19.5 and 20.5, in 2018. The Black poverty rate within Haywood county was 31.5 percent with a White poverty rate of 17.7 percent, as shown in Table 12. While Tennessee received over 3.3 million in 2018 from DRA and over 1 million dollars, in 2019, no funds were spent in Haywood county. It did not receive SEDAP funds for 2018 or 2019.

Table 11. Cumulative Delta Regional Authority Resources for TENNESSEE 2018-2019

	2018	2019
<i>DRA Investment</i>	\$3,390,000	\$1,154,467
<i>Total Number of Tennessee DRA Projects</i>	7	5
<i>Jobs created and retained</i>	3,228	73
<i>Individuals trained</i>	0	15,983
<i>Families affected</i>	0	4,576

Sources: Delta Regional Authority Year-In-Review 2018 and 2019.

Chart 17. Haywood County Demographics



Sources: Created by Author. United States Census Bureau Quickfacts accessed www.census.gov. US. Census Poverty Status in Past 12 month, 2018. U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table ID. S1701. The 10-20-30 Provision: Defining Persistent Poverty Counties, February 3, 2020, CRS Report accessed <https://crsreports.congress.gov> R45100. CRS-22.

Table 12. Tennessee Select County Investments and Outcomes Profile

County	DRA Investments and Outcomes 2018	DRA Investments and Outcomes 2019	Population	Black Population	Black Poverty	PP 2000	PP 2018	White Poverty
Haywood	0	0	17,304	50.6	31.5	19.5	20.5	17.7
Total Black Belt	0	0						
Total Tennessee	\$3,390,000	\$1,154,467						
Total DRA Investment	\$25,673,382	\$19,628,456						
Outcomes	0 projects	0 projects						

Sources: Created by Author. Delta Regional Authority Year-In-Review 2018 and 2019. United States Census Bureau Quickfacts accessed www.census.gov. US. Census Poverty Status in Past 12 months. Survey American Community Survey Estimates 5-year Table ID. S1701.

Appendix A. Persistent Poverty Counties in the Selected Black Belt Region

State	County/Parish	1990	2000	2018	ARC	More pp
Alabama						
	Barbour	25.2	26.8	30.9		x
	Bullock	36.5	33.5	42.5		x
	Butler	31.5	24.6	24.5		
	Choctaw	30.2	24.5	22.1		
	Clarke	25.9	22.6	22.8		x
	Conecuh	29.7	26.6	24.4		
	Greene	45.6	34.3	30.1		
	Hale	35.6	26.9	25.6	x	
	Lowndes	38.6	31.4	25.1		
	Macon	34.5	32.8	30.2	x	
	Marengo	30.0	25.9	24.0		
	Monroe	22.7	21.3	21.9		x
	Perry	42.6	35.4	35.3		
	Pickens	28.9	24.9	23.1		
	Sumter	39.7	38.7	34.7		
	Wilcox	45.2	39.9	33.4		
Arkansas						
	Bradley	24.9	26.3	21.7		
	Chicot	40.4	28.6	31.4		x
	Desha	34.0	28.9	24.3		
	Lee	47.3	29.9	43.0		
	Lincoln	26.2	19.5	27.5		x
	Monroe	35.9	27.5	26.0		
	Ouachita	21.2	19.5	23.3		x
	Phillips	43.0	32.7	35.4		x
	St. Francis	36.6	27.5	35.6		x
	Woodruff	34.5	27.0	23.7		
Louisiana						
	Assumption	28.2	21.8	20.7		
	Concordia	30.6	29.1	27.2		
	East Carroll	56.8	40.5	45.7		x
	Richland	33.2	27.9	26.2		
	Tensas	46.3	36.3	31.6		
Mississippi						
	Grenada	22.3	20.9	22.3		x
	Holmes	53.2	41.1	33.2		
	Montgomery	34.0	24.3	22.9	x	
	Tallahatchie	41.9	32.2	33.4		x
	Tunica	56.8	33.1	26.5		
Tennessee						
	Haywood	27.5	19.5	20.5		x
Average		34.9	28.1	27.9		
U.S. Average						

Source: The 10-20-30 Provision: Defining Persistent Poverty Counties, February 3, 2020 CRS Report. Accessed <https://crsreports.congress.gov> R45100.

Appendix B. DRA member states and counties and parishes

DRA serves 252 counties and parishes across its eight-state region:

Alabama: Barbour, Bullock, Butler, Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Dallas, Escambia, Greene, Hale, Lowndes, Macon, Marengo, Monroe, Perry, Pickens, Russell, Sumter, Washington, Wilcox

Arkansas: Arkansas, Ashley, Baxter, Bradley, Calhoun, Chicot, Clay, Cleveland, Craighead, Crittenden, Cross, Dallas, Desha, Drew, Fulton, Grant, Greene, Independence, Izard, Jackson, Jefferson, Lawrence, Lee, Lincoln, Lonoke, Marion, Mississippi, Monroe, Ouachita, Phillips, Poinsett, Prairie, Pulaski, Randolph, Searcy, Sharp, St. Francis, Stone, Union, Van Buren, White, Woodruff

Illinois: Alexander, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jackson, Johnson, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Randolph, Saline, Union, White, Williamson
Kentucky: Ballard, Caldwell, Calloway, Carlisle, Christian, Crittenden, Fulton, Graves, Henderson, Hickman, Hopkins, Livingston, Lyon, Marshall, McCracken, McLean, Muhlenberg, Todd, Trigg, Union, Webster

Louisiana: Acadia, Allen, Ascension, Assumption, Avoyelles, Beauregard, Bienville, Caldwell, Cameron, Catahoula, Claiborne, Concordia, De Soto, East Baton Rouge, East Carroll, East Feliciana, Evangeline, Franklin, Grant, Iberia, Iberville, Jackson, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, La Salle, Lafourche, Lincoln, Livingston, Madison, Morehouse, Natchitoches, Orleans, Ouachita,
Louisiana (cont.): Plaquemines, Pointe Coupee, Rapides, Red River, Richland, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. Helena, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, Tangipahoa, Tensas, Union, Vermillion, Washington, Webster, West Baton Rouge, West Carroll, West Feliciana, Winn

Mississippi: Adams, Amite, Attala, Benton, Bolivar, Carroll, Claiborne, Coahoma, Copiah, Covington, DeSoto, Franklin, Grenada, Hinds, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Jasper, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lafayette, Lawrence, Leflore, Lincoln, Madison, Marion, Marshall, Montgomery, Panola, Pike, Quitman, Rankin, Sharkey, Simpson, Smith, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tippah, Tunica, Union, Walthall, Warren, Washington, Wilkinson, Yalobusha, Yazoo

Missouri: Bollinger, Butler, Cape Girardeau, Carter, Crawford, Dent, Douglas, Dunklin, Howell, Iron, Madison, Mississippi, New Madrid, Oregon, Ozark, Pemiscot, Perry, Phelps, Reynolds, Ripley, Scott, Shannon, Ste. Genevieve, St. Francois, Stoddard, Texas, Washington, Wayne, Wright

Tennessee: Benton, Carroll, Chester, Crockett, Decatur, Dyer, Fayette, Gibson, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Henry, Lake, Lauderdale, McNairy, Madison, Obion, Shelby, Tipton, Weakley¹⁷

Appendix C. Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) member states and counties

Alabama: Bibb, Blount, Calhoun, Chambers, Cherokee, Chilton, Clay, Cleburne, Colbert, Coosa, Cullman, De Kalb, Elmore, Etowah, Fayette, Franklin, Hale, Jackson, Jefferson, Lamar, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Macon, Madison, Marion, Marshall, Morgan, Pickens, Randolph, St. Clair, Shelby, Talladega, Tallapoosa, Tuscaloosa, Walker, and Winston

Georgia: Banks, Barrow, Bartow, Carroll, Catoosa, Chattooga, Cherokee, Dade, Dawson, Douglas, Elbert, Fannin, Floyd, Forsyth, Franklin, Gilmer, Gordon, Gwinnett, Habersham, Hall, Haralson, Hart, Heard, Jackson, Lumpkin, Madison, Murray, Paulding, Pickens, Polk, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union, Walker, White, and Whitfield

¹⁷ Delta Regional Authority counties and parishes accessed at www.dra.gov; Appalachian Regional Commission accessed at www.arc.gov

Kentucky: Adair, Bath, Bell, Boyd, Breathitt, Carter, Casey, Clark, Clay, Clinton, Cumberland, Edmonson, Elliott, Estill, Fleming, Floyd, Garrard, Green, Greenup, Harlan, Hart, Jackson, Johnson, Knott, Knox, Laurel, Lawrence, Lee, Leslie, Letcher, Lewis, Lincoln, McCreary, Madison, Magoffin, Martin, Menifee, Metcalfe, Monroe, Montgomery, Morgan, Nicholas, Owsley, Perry, Pike, Powell, Pulaski, Robertson, Rockcastle, Rowan, Russell, Wayne, Whitley, and Wolfe

Maryland: Allegany, Garrett, and Washington

Mississippi: Alcorn, Benton, Calhoun, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Clay, Itawamba, Kemper, Lee, Lowndes, Marshall, Monroe, Montgomery, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Panola, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Tippah, Tishomingo, Union, Webster, Winston, and Yalobusha

New York: Allegany, Broome, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Otsego, Schoharie, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga, and Tompkins

North Carolina: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Cherokee, Clay, Davie, Forsyth, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, McDowell, Macon, Madison, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Stokes, Surry, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, Yadkin, and Yancey

Ohio: Adams, Ashtabula, Athens, Belmont, Brown, Carroll, Clermont, Columbiana, Coshocton, Gallia, Guernsey, Harrison, Highland, Hocking, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Lawrence, Mahoning, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, Perry, Pike, Ross, Scioto, Trumbull, Tuscarawas, Vinton, and Washington

Pennsylvania: Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Bedford, Blair, Bradford, Butler, Cambria, Cameron, Carbon, Centre, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Columbia, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Fayette, Forest, Fulton, Greene, Huntingdon, Indiana, Jefferson, Juniata, Lackawanna, Lawrence, Luzerne, Lycoming, McKean, Mercer, Mifflin, Monroe, Montour, Northumberland, Perry, Pike, Potter, Schuylkill, Snyder, Somerset, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, Union, Venango, Warren, Washington, Wayne, Westmoreland, and Wyoming

South Carolina: Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens, and Spartanburg

Tennessee: Anderson, Bledsoe, Blount, Bradley, Campbell, Cannon, Carter, Claiborne, Clay, Cocke, Coffee, Cumberland, De Kalb, Fentress, Franklin, Grainger, Greene, Grundy, Hamblen, Hamilton, Hancock, Hawkins, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Knox, Lawrence, Lewis, Loudon, McMinn, Macon, Marion, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Overton, Pickett, Polk, Putnam, Rhea, Roane, Scott, Sequatchie, Sevier, Smith, Sullivan, Unicoi, Union, Van Buren, Warren, Washington, and White

Virginia: Alleghany, Bath, Bland, Botetourt, Buchanan, Carroll, Craig, Dickenson, Floyd, Giles, Grayson, Henry, Highland, Lee, Montgomery, Patrick, Pulaski, Rockbridge, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise, and Wythe

The following independent cities in Virginia are also within the Appalachian Region and are merged with an adjacent or surrounding county for the purposes of data analysis and grant management: Bristol (Washington County), Buena Vista (Rockbridge County), Covington (Alleghany County), Galax (Carroll County), Lexington (Rockbridge County), Martinsville (Henry County), Norton (Wise County), and Radford (Montgomery County).

West Virginia: *All counties:* Barbour, Berkeley, Boone, Braxton, Brooke, Cabell, Calhoun, Clay, Doddridge, Fayette, Gilmer, Grant, Greenbrier, Hampshire, Hancock, Hardy, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson, Kanawha, Lewis, Lincoln, Logan, Marion, Marshall, Mason, McDowell, Mercer, Mineral, Mingo, Monongalia, Monroe, Morgan, Nicholas, Ohio, Pendleton, Pleasants, Pocahontas, Preston, Putnam, Raleigh, Randolph, Ritchie, Roane, Summers, Taylor, Tucker, Tyler, Upshur, Wayne, Webster, Wetzel, Wirt, Wood, and Wyoming

Appendix D. DRA Investment Report in 2018

States’ Economic Development Assistance Program (SEDAP)

The States’ Economic Development Assistance Program is DRA’s primary investment program. In 2018, DRA had \$12 million in available funding to invest in combination with more than \$975 million in other public and private sector dollars.

SEDAP INVESTMENTS

- At least 50% must be used for transportation and basic public infrastructure.
- At least 75% must be made in counties and parishes that are economically distressed.

2018 TOTAL DRA PROJECTS: 90
 DRA INVESTMENT: \$25,673,382
 PUBLIC Investment: \$108,679,206
 Private Investment: \$ 881, 793, 259
 Jobs created & retained: 5,228
 Individuals trained: 8,857
 Families affected: 160,640

2018 Rural Investment Report

Population	Dollars invested	Percent of dollars invested
1-2,500	8.8 million	37.2%
2,501 – 10,000	6.9 million	29.3%
10,001 – 30,000	5.5 million	23.4 %
30,001 – 50,000	955 thousand	4.0%
50,000+	1.4 million	6%

Sources: Table from DRA Year-in-Review 2018

State FY 2018 Investments

ALABAMA 2018 INVESTMENTS STATES’ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Alabama

TOTAL DRA PROJECTS 11
 DRA INVESTMENT: \$5,031,488
 PUBLIC Investment: \$19,441,784
 PRIVATE Investment: \$1,080,000
 Jobs created & retained 193
 Individuals trained 400
 Families affected 3,404

Selected Black Belt DRA Projects: 7

Selected Black Belt DRA investments: \$4,340,358
Selected Black Belt DRA Jobs created and retained: 43 new jobs
Selected Black Belt Individuals trained: x
Selected Black Belt families affected: 320

Hale County: AKRON, AL: **Water/Sewage** Wastewater Infrastructure Improvements DRA Investment: \$155,000 | Total Investment: \$160,000 DRA's investment will provide sanitary sewer service to 185 families by upgrading deteriorating equipment and infrastructure.

Wilcox County CAMDEN, AL: **Transportation Infrastructure** Infrastructure Improvements DRA Investment: \$251,997 | Total Investment: 251,997 DRA's investment will rehabilitate and expand transportation infrastructure to city-owned property.

Wilcox County CAMDEN, AL: **Water/Sewage** Infrastructure to Provide Safe Drinking Water DRA Investment: \$125,000 | Total Investment: \$140,000 To get safe drinking water today, families have to travel to neighbors' homes or to a roadside faucet to fill up containers with water. This investment will deliver safe drinking water to 10 Camden families who live along Willie Powell Road.

Greene County EUTAW, AL: **Water/Sewage** Infrastructure for New Travel Stop DRA Investment: \$372,425 | Total Investment: \$872,425 The City of Eutaw will extend public sewer infrastructure to exit 40 of I-20/59 to facilitate construction of a new 84-truck facility and create 43 jobs.

Perry County MARION, AL: **Water/Sewage** Household Water Line Hook-ups DRA Investment: \$185,936 | Total Investment: \$6,085,936 DRA's investment will deliver safe drinking water to 125 families in the Perry County community. Area residents now get their drinking water from wells that are susceptible to contamination.

Bullock County MIDWAY, AL: **Health Infrastructure** Merritt Community Complex DRA Investment: \$200,000 | Total Investment: \$200,000 The Town of Midway will revitalize and improve the old Merritt School and include a medical clinic and pharmacy to increase access to healthcare and promote wellness.

PERRY AND MARENGO COUNTIES, AL: **Water/Sewage** Sewer Improvements DRA Investment: \$3.25 million | Total Investment: \$11.2 million The project involves sewer system collection upgrades.

ARKANSAS 2018 INVESTMENTS STATES' ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Arkansas

TOTAL DRA PROJECTS 15
DRA INVESTMENT: \$3,071,309
PUBLIC Investment: \$4,863,606
Private Investment: \$ 11,050,000
Jobs created & retained 179
Individuals trained 241
Families affected 6,414

Selected Black Belt DRA Projects: 3
Selected Black Belt DRA investments: \$555,750

Selected Black Belt DRA Jobs created and retained: 127 retained
Selected Black Belt Individuals trained: 0
Selected Black Belt families affected: 0

Phillips County HELENA-WEST HELENA, AR: **Water/Sewage** Sewage Treatment Facility Emergency Restoration & Safety Project DRA Investment: \$225,000 | Total Investment: \$250,000 The sewage treatment facility is in urgent need of repairs to the exterior levee walls of the treatment ponds to prevent failure that would dump untreated sewage into the Mississippi River.

Woodruff County, MCCRORY, AR: **Workforce Development** McCrory Lift Station DRA Investment: \$80,750 | Total Investment: \$90,750 McCrory will upgrade its lift station, an improvement that will help retain 127 jobs and improve life for 436 families. The current lift station is deteriorating and threatens to expose residents and businesses to raw sewage.

Desha County, MCGEHEE, AR: **Healthcare Infrastructure** Digital Radiography Equipment for McGehee Hospital DRA Investment: \$250,000 | Total Investment: \$250,000 McGehee Hospital seeks to replace its analog radiography equipment with a digital radiography system that is fully compatible with the hospital's EMR system and equipment in the McGehee Family Clinic.

LOUISIANA 2018 INVESTMENTS STATES' ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Louisiana

TOTAL DRA PROJECTS 18
OUTCOMES DRA INVESTMENT: \$4,055,528
PUBLIC Investment: \$11,763,131
PRIVATE Investment: \$22,627,500
Jobs created & retained 204
Individuals trained 5,145
Families affected 138,105

Selected Black Belt DRA Projects: 2
Selected Black Belt DRA investments: \$335,000
Selected Black Belt DRA Jobs created and retained: x
Selected Black Belt Individuals trained: x
Selected Black Belt families affected: x

East Carroll Parish LAKE PROVIDENCE, LA: **Water/Sewage** Lake Providence Sewer Treatment Project DRA Investment: \$135,000 | Total Investment: \$1,132,000 This project will consist of modifications to the South Pond Sewer Treatment Facility.

Concordia Parish VIDALIA, LA: **Physical Infrastructure** Vidalia Industrial Park - Utilities Infrastructure Extensions DRA Investment: \$200,000 | Total Investment: \$20,277,034 DRA investment will be used to extend municipally-owned utilities infrastructure to the Vidalia Industrial Park for a new industrial tenant and future capacity.

MISSISSIPPI 2018 INVESTMENTS STATES' ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Mississippi

TOTAL DRA PROJECTS: 15
DRA INVESTMENT: \$3,532,653
PUBLIC Investment: \$26,044,568
Private Investment: \$34,445,000
Jobs created & retained 543
Individuals trained 1,350
Families affected 1,735

Selected Black Belt DRA Projects: 5
Selected Black Belt DRA investments: \$2,098,272
Selected Black Belt DRA Jobs created and retained: 110 new jobs and 287 retained jobs
Selected Black Belt Individuals trained: 0
Selected Black Belt families affected: 21

Jasper County BAY SPRINGS, MS: **Physical Infrastructure** Industrial Road Improvements DRA Investment: \$155,555 | Total Investment: \$683,606 The City of Bay Springs is proposing to make mandatory improvements to Commerce Drive, an industrial road, that serves two industries.

Holmes County DURANT, MS: **Job Creation** Existing Business Expansion DRA Investment: \$425,000 | Total Investment: \$15,070,000 A local manufacturing business will add two new product lines, which will result in creation of 60 new jobs and retention of the 203 workers now employed at the manufacturing facility, which exports products across the globe.

Grenada County GRENADA, MS: **Job Creation** Existing Business Expansion DRA Investment: \$392,665 | Total Investment: \$7,290,388 A freight company will create 50 new jobs and retain 84 existing jobs with an expansion that includes construction of a new building and purchase of new equipment.

Tunica County, ROBINSONVILLE, MS: **Water/Sewage** Tunica County Sewer Line Improvements Project DRA Investment: \$320,000 | Total Investment: \$320,000 A new sewer system will be added to homes in the Orchard Park subdivision, protecting 21 families from unsanitary conditions.

Tunica County, TUNICA, MS: **Physical Infrastructure** Tunica Lagoon Levee Stabilization DRA Investment: \$109,262 | Total Investment: \$175,402 This project will install sheet piling at the lagoon to stabilize the lagoon's levee and stop erosion.

TENNESSEE 2018 INVESTMENTS STATES' ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
Tennessee

TOTAL DRA PROJECTS 7
DRA INVESTMENT: \$3,390,000
PUBLIC Investment: \$2,925,000
PRIVATE Investment: \$457,840,000
JOBS created & retained 3,228
Individuals trained 0
Families affected 0

Selected Black Belt DRA Projects: 0
Selected Black Belt DRA investments: \$0

Selected Black Belt DRA Jobs created and retained: 0
Selected Black Belt Individuals trained: 0
Selected Black Belt individuals affected: 0

Source: Delta Regional Authority 2018 Year-In-Review accessed at www.dra.gov

Appendix E. DRA Investment and Outcomes Report in 2019 for the States' Economic Development Assistance Program (SEDAP)

The States' Economic Development Assistance Program is DRA's primary investment program.

In 2019, DRA had \$13 million in available funding to invest in combination with more than \$84 million in other public and private sector dollars.

SEDAP INVESTMENTS • At least 50% must be used for transportation and basic public infrastructure. • At least 75% must be made in counties and • parishes that are economically distressed.

Total 2019 DRA Projects: 87
DRA INVESTMENT: \$19,628,456
PUBLIC Investment: \$34,905,644
PRIVATE Investment: \$67,788,000
Jobs created and retrained: 3,100
Individuals trained: 20,775
Families affected: 33,547

Source: Delta Regional Authority Year-In-Review 2019. www.dra.gov

ALABAMA 2019 INVESTMENTS:

DRA Projects: 10
DRA Investment: 2,335,005
Public investment: 1,582,100
Jobs created and retained: 150
Individuals trained: 254
Families affected: 3,095

Selected Black Belt DRA Projects: 6
Selected Black Belt DRA investments: 1,322,238
Selected Black Belt DRA Jobs created and retained: 65 new jobs
Selected Black Belt Individuals trained: 250
Selected Black Belt individuals affected: 7,988

Butler County: **Water/Sewage** Georgiana Water System Improvements | Georgiana, AL DRA Investment: \$350,430 The City of Georgiana will use DRA funds to replace their deteriorating water transmission mains throughout the downtown area. This investment is projected to impact 1,470 individuals who will benefit from improved water and sewer services.

Sumter County: **Water/Sewage** York Water Tank Improvements | York, AL DRA Investment: \$295,183 The City of York will use DRA funds to address deficiencies and make improvements to the 200,000-gallon Oswald Elevated Water Tank. This investment is projected to impact 2,538 individuals who will benefit from improved water and sewer services.

Clarke County: **Physical Infrastructure** Thomasville Regional Medical Center Transportation Infrastructure | Thomasville, AL DRA Investment: \$240,239 The City of Thomasville will use DRA funds to install streetlights and traffic signalization to service the Thomasville Regional Medical Center. This investment is projected to create 65 new jobs.

Clarke County: **Job Creation** Coastal Alabama Community College VR Training Program | Thomasville, AL DRA Investment: \$224,541 Coastal Alabama Community College will use DRA funds to purchase technical equipment to provide virtual reality job training simulations for students pursuing industrial careers in the regional area. This investment is projected to train 250 individuals for in-demand careers.

Clarke County: **Water/Sewage** Jackson Flood Control Improvements | Jackson, AL DRA Investment: \$211,845; Total Project Investment: \$261,845 The City of Jackson will use DRA funds to rehabilitate the drainage system along the main thoroughfare in the city to prevent frequent flooding that affects local businesses and residences.

Bullock County: **Public Infrastructure** Union Springs GIS System for Public Utilities | Union Springs, AL DRA Investment: \$47,250 The City of Union Springs will use DRA funds to develop a comprehensive GIS map of the water and sewer system in Union Springs and train their staff to effectively use GIS mapping tools for improved public infrastructure management. This investment is projected to impact 3,980 individuals who will benefit from improved water and sewer services and train four individuals with improved technical skills.

ARKANSAS 2019 INVESTMENTS STATES' ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Arkansas

DRA Projects: 11

DRA Investments: \$3,398,866

Jobs created and retained: 331

Individuals trained: 150

Families affected: 255

Selected Black Belt DRA Projects: 1

Selected Black Belt DRA investments: \$225,000

Selected Black Belt DRA Jobs created and retained: 19 new retained 38

Selected Black Belt Individuals trained: 0

Selected Black Belt Families affected: x

Phillips County: **Transportation Infrastructure** Helena-West Helena Transportation Improvements | Helena-West Helena, AR DRA Investment: \$589,000; Total Project Investment: \$10,589,000 The City of Helena-West Helena will use DRA funds to improve the transportation infrastructure on Washington Street to support the operations for existing industry and increase safety for local residents. This investment is projected to create 19 new jobs and retain 38.

LOUISIANA 2019 INVESTMENTS STATES' ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Louisiana

DRA Projects: 21
DRA Investments \$4,173,887
Job created and retained: 1,257
Individuals trained: 148
Families affected: 8,639

Selected Black Belt DRA Projects: 2
Selected Black Belt DRA investments: \$416,822
Selected Black Belt DRA Jobs created and retained: 5 new jobs and 175 retained
Selected Black Belt Individuals trained: 0
Selected Black Belt Families affected: 1,106

Richland Parish: **Healthcare infrastructure** Richardson Medical Center HVAC System Replacement | Rayville, LA DRA Investment: \$266,822 Richardson Medical Center will use DRA funds to replace condensation pumps, electrical and control wiring, fan coils, air ducts, and piping insulation to improve their heating and cooling system and continue to provide residents with critical medical services. This investment is projected to create five new jobs and retain 175.

Concordia Parish: **Water/Sewage** Concordia Parish Sewer System Consolidation | Vidalia, LA DRA Investment: \$150,000; Total Project Investment: \$523,412 The Concordia Parish Police Jury will use DRA funds to construct new hook-ups, collection lines, and treatment plant for Washington Heights to consolidate with the Concordia Parish Sewer District No. 1. This investment is projected to impact 1,106 families who will benefit from improved water and sewer services.

MISSISSIPPI 2019 INVESTMENTS STATES' ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Mississippi

DRA Projects: 14
DRA Investments: \$3,515,228
Jobs created and retained: 185
Individuals trained: 591
Families affected: 11,862

Selected Black Belt DRA Projects: 0
Selected Black Belt DRA investments: \$0
Selected Black Belt DRA Jobs created and retained: 0
Selected Black Belt Individuals trained: 0
Selected Black Belt Families affected: 0

TENNESSEE 2019 INVESTMENTS STATES' ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Tennessee

DRA Projects: 5
 DRA Investments: 1,154,467
 Jobs created and retained: 73
 Individuals trained: 15,983
 Families affected: 4,576

Selected Black Belt DRA Projects: 0
 Selected Black Belt DRA investments: \$0
 Selected Black Belt DRA Jobs created and retained: 0
 Selected Black Belt Individuals trained: 0
 Selected Black Belt Families affected: 0

Source: Delta Regional Authority 2019 Year-In-Review accessed at www.dra.gov

Appendix F. Sample Selection

This analysis of the Black Belt region and DRA investments and outcomes focuses on Black Belt counties and parishes with Black populations of 25 percent or more. These counties have a significantly higher Black population than other counties and the nation (13.4). In addition, the selected counties and parishes are those with less than 25,000 population and are eligible for DRA programs and services in the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee. These counties are more rural and have historically suffered from high levels of systemic factors associated with persistent poverty such as lack of healthcare, child care, and social services, lack of educational opportunity and attainment, lack of transportation and employment opportunities, along with limited political power, and environmental injustices that are associated with long-term persistent poverty status.

Alabama Counties	Population	Black Population
Barbour	24,686	48.4
Bullock	10,101	70.7
Butler	19,448	44.9
Choctaw	12,589	41.7
Clarke	25,833	45.0
Conecuh	12,067	46.3
Greene	8,111	80.1
Hale	14,651	58.1
Lowndes	9,726	72.5
Macon	21,452	80.4
Marengo	18,863	51.4
Monroe	23,068	41.0
Perry	10,591	67.9
Pickens	19,746	40
Sumter	12,427	71.8
Wilcox	11,670	71.1
Arkansas Counties		
Bradley	10,763	27.4
Chicot	10,118	54.6
Dallas	7,009	41.3
Desha	11,361	48.0

Lee	8,857	54.2
Lincoln	13,024	30.4
Monroe	6,701	40.0
Ouachita	23,382	40.2
Phillips	17,782	62.3
St. Francis	24,994	52.8
Woodruff	6,320	26.3
Louisiana Parishes		
Assumption	23,421	29.6
Concordia	20,822	39.8
East Carroll	7,759	68.8
Richland	20,725	35.6
Tensas	5,252	54.5
Mississippi Counties		
Carroll	9,947	33
Grenada	21,906	42.9
Holmes	19,198	83.1
Jasper		32.4
Montgomery	10,925	44.8
Tallahatchie	15,378	57
Tunica	10,778	77.6
Tennessee County		
Haywood	17,304	50.6

Source: Table created by author. U.S. Census Bureau accessed at <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219>

Appendix G. Methodology

This analysis focuses on several factors including the percentage of black population, persistent poverty status for 2000 and 2018, black poverty rate, white poverty rate, and DRA investments and outcomes.

DRA is currently celebrating its twenty-year mark. The authority’s creation was closely connected to the historical persistent poverty found in the Delta region. Persistent poverty is a factor of systemic issues historically found in the Delta and the Black Belt regions such as the limited ability to collectively bargain for higher wages and benefits, significant oppression of enslaved Black people and/or poor agricultural workers after Emancipation, rule by violence, generational institutional racism that historically promoted unequal distribution of public resources and privileges and suppression of civil, human rights, and voting rights, and political participation. In addition, Delta and Black Belt counties and parishes are geographically isolated communities with very limited physical infrastructure and services. Economic activity in these communities is typically limited and controlled. Civic decision-making and opportunities are also often centralized, limited and historically hierarchical in nature. In addition, the narrative of socioeconomic growth and progress has been told exclusively by those who held power within the community. These communities practiced de jure segregation pre-Civil Rights Act of 1964 and defacto segregation post-Civil Rights Act of 1964 in educational institutions, residential areas and most social and religious organizations. Historically these communities supported a

small elite well-established power structure in local government. These local power structures led local governments that were small in scope with limited service provision and tightly controlled. In many communities, these norms still exist today. Most economic development activities rely on non-elected, often unrepresentative bodies that result in inequitable distribution of power and resources. These factors have historically resulted in very insular communities that are unwilling or unable to progress or provide adequate services to all of its community members. Many of these factors are emblematic of persistent poverty counties and serve as impediments to economic competitiveness and growth. Persistent poverty status is often an indicator of tremendous systemic inequity. So, this analysis considers various factors such as the percentage of black population, status of persistent poverty before and after the creation of the DRA, a comparison of Black and White poverty rates, and DRA investment and outcomes in these counties and parishes. The total investments in these counties and parishes will be compared to the overall DRA investment in the respective state. Only states with Black Belt counties and parishes will be assessed. In addition, the outcomes of DRA investments will also be examined for selected Black Belt counties and parishes to assess the participation of these distinct communities in the SEDAP.

Appendix H. History of the Delta Regional Authority

History of the Delta Regional Authority

In 1988, Congress enacted *Public Law 100460*, establishing the Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission. The goal of the Commission, chaired by Arkansas governor Bill Clinton, was to perform an assessment of the quality of life for people living in the Lower Mississippi Delta region. The region was defined at the time as 219 counties and parishes within the states of Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee. The Commission developed recommendations for advancing the region and a 10-year economic development plan. In addition, two reports on the work of the commission were created. The first report was entitled, the *Body of the Nation: The Interim Report of the Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission*, in 1989, and the final report, in 1990, was entitled, *The Delta Initiatives: Realizing the Dream, Fulfilling the Potential*. The final report focused on the substantive areas of transportation, human capital development (education, job training, health and housing), natural and physical assets (agriculture and natural resources), private enterprise (entrepreneurial development, technology development and tourism) and the environment and included 400 recommendations and 68 goals for regional development.¹⁸

Under the leadership of Secretary of the United States Department of Transportation Rodney Slater, *The Mississippi Delta 2000 Initiative*, was launched to ensure that all federal agencies promoted community and economic development efforts in the Delta, continuing the work of the Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission.¹⁹ On July 11, 1998, The Department of Transportation, The United States Department of Agriculture, Department of Housing and Urban Development, The Department of Commerce, the Department of Health and Human Services, The Department of Labor, The Department of Education, The Department of the Interior, the

¹⁸ "Delta Vision, Delta Voices" The Mississippi Delta Beyond 2000, Executive Editor, Lee Riley Powell, http://mdgc.us/delta_vision_delta_voices

¹⁹ Source: Rural Voices: Initiatives in the Mississippi Delta. The Magazine of the Housing Assistance Council: Spring 2000, Vol. 57 Number 2. <http://www.ruralhome.org/storage/documents/rural-voices/00-rv-spring.pdf>

Small Business Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency signed the Lower Mississippi Delta Region Interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to foster cooperative approaches for regional development. In 1999, the MOU was expanded to include the Department of Defense, the Department of Justice, the Department of Treasury, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Energy and the National Office of Drug Control Policy. Each of these agencies agreed to provide assessments on the agency's accomplishments toward carrying out the recommendations of the 1990 report.²⁰

A quote from Jill Long Thompson, then Under Secretary for Rural Development highlights the vision of the DRA at the time, during a special hearing during the 106th Congress. She stated,

“The goal of the Delta Regional Authority is to increase the amount of resources and also to improve the effectiveness by which those resources are used to address the present development needs in the Delta. The authority would provide for the long-term continuing coordination of resources in the local community. Creation of a new Federal agency will allow us to meet this goal by strengthening the Federal-State partnership and will provide an on-going targeted Federal presence in the region. As members of the authority, the Governors of the seven Delta States, and the Federal members will identify the projects that the authority will fund. Half of the authority's resources will be targeted to the most distressed counties in the region, and we expect the authority will actively work with existing economic development organizations to help identify and prioritize needs. Community-based organizations as well as State and local governments will be eligible to receive authority funding. We believe that it is very important that the families in the counties of the Delta have the same kinds of opportunities that families elsewhere enjoy, the opportunity to work, provide for their families, and to build financial security.”²¹

On December 21, 2000, Congress passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY2001, amending Section 4(2) of the Lower Mississippi Delta Development Act to include the state of Alabama as a full member of the Delta Regional Authority and Title V of the act authorized the creation of the Delta Regional Authority (DRA). The legislation mandated that the Delta Regional Authority Board, encompass a Federal co-Chair that is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate and all governors of the eight participating states.²²

²⁰ Eugene Boyd, September 21, 2006. Federal Regional Authorities and Commissions: Their Function and Design. <http://congressionalresearch.com/RL33076/document.php>

²¹ From prepared statement of Jill Long Thompson, Under Secretary for Rural Development, Senate Hearing 106-825, Economic Development in the Mississippi Delta, Hearing before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, One Hundred Sixth Congress, Second Session, Special Hearing. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-106shrg63943/html/CHRG-106shrg63943.htm>

²² Eugene Boyd, September 21, 2006. Federal Regional Authorities and Commissions: Their Function and Design. <http://congressionalresearch.com/RL33076/document.php>.

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MISSISSIPPI DELTA: BEYOND 2000 INVENTORY Based on issues discussed in the 1990 Report, The Delta Initiatives

<file:///C:/Users/veronica.womack/Documents/Rural%20Studies%20Institute/DRA%20research/delta%20report.pdf>

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