Regional Commissions: Brief History & Overview

- Establish unique intergovernmental partnership among federal and state leaders to target areas with chronic and severe poverty or economic distress
- Focus on building fundamental community building blocks needed to support economic development
- Provide gap financing/matching funds for projects

Federal-State Regional Commissions

Authorized and Funded

- Appalachian Regional Commission (1965)
- Delta Regional Authority (2000)
- Denali Commission in Alaska (1998)

Authorized

- Northern Great Plains Regional Authority (2002)
- Northern Border Regional Commission (2008)
- Southeast Crescent Regional Commission (2008)
- Southwest Border Regional Commission (2008)

New Federal-State Regional Commissions

Farm Bill Authorizes 3 New Regional Commissions:

- Northern Border Regional Commission
    - Parts of Maine, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont
- Southeast Crescent Regional Commission
    - Parts of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia
- Southwest Border Regional Commission
    - Parts of Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas

Authorization Funding Levels:

- $30 million annually for FY2008-2012 for each commission
- However, funding levels for each commission are subject to the annual federal appropriations process

Governance:

Voting leadership composed of:

- Federal Co-Chairperson, who is appointed by the President and confirmed by the US Senate
- Governors of each state in the region

Policy, funding and operational decisions all require the affirmative vote of the Federal Co-Chair and majority approval of the region's governors

Core Functions of Each Regional Commission:

- Assess the needs and assets of the region
- Develop economic and infrastructure strategies and provide grants to support development
- Encourage private investment
- Develop priorities in a regional plan with 5-year goals
- Work with states and locals to develop model development legislation
- Encourage interstate cooperation

Project Funding:

- 40 percent of funding reserved to develop transportation infrastructure, basic public infrastructure or telecommunications infrastructure
- 50 percent of overall funds are reserved for "distressed" counties and "isolated areas of distress"

Project Share:

- Commission's share of a project cost will generally be no more than 50 percent
- In "distressed" counties or "isolated areas of distress" the Commission share may rise to 80 percent
- Regional projects involving three or more counties or more than one state is no more than 60 percent
- Commission share for planning and administrative grants to LDDs is no more than 80 percent
- Commission funds may be used as local match for other federal programs, but combined share capped at 80 percent

Project Selection:

- Project and grant proposals will originate at the local level and then be submitted to the state for approval
- Approved projects are then forwarded to the Commission for certification and approval of the Federal Co-Chair
- Finally, projects must receive majority approval from the Commission (meaning at least a simple majority of the region's Governors)

Commission Meetings:

- Each commission must have an initial meeting within 180 days of enactment and annually thereafter
- Representatives from each regional commission must meet together every two years to discuss issues confronting regions suffering from continuous distress as well as successful strategies for promoting regional development

Northern Border Regional Commission Counties

- ***Maine*** – the counties of Androscoggin, Aroostook, Franklin, Hancock, Kennebec, Knox, Oxford, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset, Waldo, and Washington
- *New Hampshire* – the counties of Carroll, Coos, Grafton, and Sullivan
- *Vermont* – the counties of Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille, and Orleans
- *New York* – the counties of Cayuga, Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Oswego, Seneca, and St. Lawrence.