



# Regional Infrastructure Accelerators Summit Summary

November 29, 2023 - University of Maryland, College Park Campus

On November 29, 2023, the Build America Bureau (Bureau) held the first-ever Regional Infrastructure Accelerators (RIA) Summit in College Park, Maryland. The Summit convened over 70 people, including representatives from 19 of the 21 RIA grant awardees, the Bureau, University of Maryland staff, Global Infrastructure Investor Association staff, and USDOT operating administration staff.

The RIA program was established by the FAST Act to assist entities in building capacity and providing technical assistance to accelerate the development of projects using innovative financing. Over three funding cycles, the Bureau has awarded \$34 million dollars to 21 public entities.

## Objectives

The purpose of the RIA Summit was to:

- Share information about tools and resources to advance innovative project finance and delivery.
- Create networking opportunities for RIA grant recipients to learn from each other and USDOT staff.
- Provide opportunities for RIA grant recipients to learn from partners attending the Thriving Communities Program Convening at USDOT Headquarters in Washington, DC, from November 30 to December 1, 2023, which included several overlapping communities and topics of interest.

## Program Overview

The Summit program included:

- Two panel discussions focused on lessons learned from Round 1 Accelerators: TradePort California, SANDAG, CMAP, and PNWER

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From top to bottom: Attendees at UMD Samuel Riggs IV Alumni Center, Bureau Executive Director Dr. Morteza Farajian, attendees during plenary session, Bureau Innovative Finance and Delivery Lead Maritza Mercado Pechin.



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## Program Overview (cont.)

- Three presentations about innovative finance tools by the Build America Bureau, the Global Infrastructure Investor Association, and the Build America Center
- Three collaborative roundtables where RIA recipients 1) shared successes and challenges they experience or anticipate they will experience; 2) discussed performance metrics, governance models, coalition building, project selection, launching the RIA, and maintaining RIA momentum; and 3) met with Thriving Communities Capacity Builders working with many communities in some of the RIA areas.

## Key Takeaways

Over the course of the day, Bureau staff identified several key takeaways that attendees shared during presentations and roundtable discussions.

- Building relationships with other RIA recipients is very valuable. It is good to have a sounding board.
- Leverage and build relationships across the region to advance innovative approaches to project delivery.
- Use “Regional Infrastructure Accelerator” as a designation that sets the region apart.
- Bring partners on early to have discussions about program development.
- Look at a system of projects, not just one project in isolation.
- Be persistent because building a successful RIA program takes time and patience.
- Use the RIA to push ahead stalled projects.
- Build staff knowledge of TIFIA and RRIF programs.
- Be innovative with how to use TIFIA and RRIF.
- Use the RIA as a platform to share knowledge and train local staff.

## Feedback

*“This has been a really great learning opportunity. I didn't realize there were so many similarities between some of the RIA programs and the issues we've been working on ... It's nice to be able to compare notes and brainstorm and learn what worked for other RIA programs.” - Betz Mayer, PNWER RIA*

The Bureau received 29 evaluation forms that provided feedback on the Summit. Overall, the respondents gave all the sessions an average rating of 4 out of 5 (with 5 being the best). Attendees stated the Summit was a valuable event with overwhelmingly positive feedback. Still, several attendees suggested hosting the event over two days in the future because the one-day agenda was packed, and the day was long. The RIA attendees enjoyed meeting each other, getting to know USDOT staff and programs, and sharing information.