



Investing in the Territories

Tracking Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Spending

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Key Takeaways

- While Puerto Rico received far more BIL funding than other U.S. territories, it has a low level of investment per capita. The amount of BIL funding per capita among the territories varies more than in the Southeast.
- The territories have received a greater proportion of funding from competitive grants compared to the states of the Southeast, which received a greater proportion of their funding from formula grants. This is particularly notable given the significant capacity required to develop competitive grant applications, which may be a barrier to funding access.
- Funding composition varies significantly in the U.S. territories, with Puerto Rico receiving a greater proportion of funding for ground transportation and commerce, while the other territories received a larger share for pollution control.

Introduction

Federal funding dedicated to climate, energy, and environmental initiatives has significantly increased since 2021. The landmark Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) mark the largest investments in climate mitigation in American history. While the resources available through these laws provide unprecedented opportunities for communities across the United States, additional steps are needed to ensure that this funding is accessible to all communities in our region, particularly those who have been previously underserved by federal resources.

We have reviewed federal funding awards across the U.S. Island Territories to understand where funds are going and what they are funding. This information supports decision-makers applying for funding and supporting under-resourced communities across the region. While this whitepaper focuses on the BIL, we plan to address additional sources of funding, including the IRA, in future updates as more funding is allocated.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL): An Overview

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), passed in November 2021. The law allocates \$1.2 trillion, of which \$550 billion is new federal spending, over ten years for infrastructure projects, including roads, public transit, broadband, and electric grid upgrades. This law goes beyond previous conceptions of what constitutes infrastructure by making significant investments in the infrastructure needed to hasten the clean energy transition, including investments in the electric grid, improving the quality and energy efficiency of homes, training the next generation of energy workers, and supporting the deployment of cutting-edge clean energy technologies.

Almost half of the new funding, about \$274 billion, will be allocated by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT). Other agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Energy (DOE), the Department of Commerce (DOC), and the Department of Interior (DOI) will award smaller amounts of funding, between \$28 and \$67 billion each.¹ Federal agencies will use the funding for operations, award funds through direct payments, competitive grants, or cooperative agreements, or allocate it based on formulas that provide pre-determined amounts for each state/territory. Current funding opportunities can be found on The White House website.²

Key Trends

- While Puerto Rico received far more BIL funding than other U.S. territories, it has a low level of investment per capita. The amount of BIL funding per capita among the territories varies more than in the Southeast.

¹ Senate Amendment 2137 to H.R. 3684, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, as Proposed on August 1, 2021, Congressional Budget Office, last modified August 9, 2021, https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2021-08/hr3684_infrastructure.pdf.

² Bipartisan Infrastructure Law: Opportunities You Can Apply for Today, The White House, last modified July 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/build/resources/nofos-to-know/>.

- The territories have received a greater proportion of funding from competitive grants compared to the states of the Southeast, which received a greater proportion of their funding from formula grants. This is particularly notable given the significant capacity required to develop competitive grant applications, which may be a barrier to funding access.
- Funding composition varies significantly in the U.S. territories, with Puerto Rico receiving a greater proportion of funding for ground transportation and commerce, while the other territories received a larger share for pollution control.

BIL Spending in the U.S. Territories

Federal agencies had committed about \$940 million in BIL funding to the U.S. territories, about \$262 per person, as of January 22, 2024. This represents about 0.5% of BIL funding committed nationally. Each U.S. territory has received between \$46 and \$651 million each, with Puerto Rico receiving significantly more than the other territories. While Puerto Rico has a larger population than the other territories, it received less funds on a per capita basis. The same is true of grants and cooperative agreements alone, for which Puerto Rico has over seven times more committed funding than any other territory.

About \$12.6 million in BIL funding has been deobligated in Puerto Rico. Deobligated funds have been awarded to a recipient and later reduced or revoked, which can happen for many reasons. While the deobligation of funds is not the focus of this report, these funds are not included in the committed funding figures. Most of the funding deobligated in Puerto Rico was in project grants for ground transportation, with only about \$20,000 deobligated for general commerce from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), which typically funds broadband infrastructure. Each of the other territories has had less than \$600 deobligated.

Puerto Rico Received Much More Funding Than the Other U.S. Territories

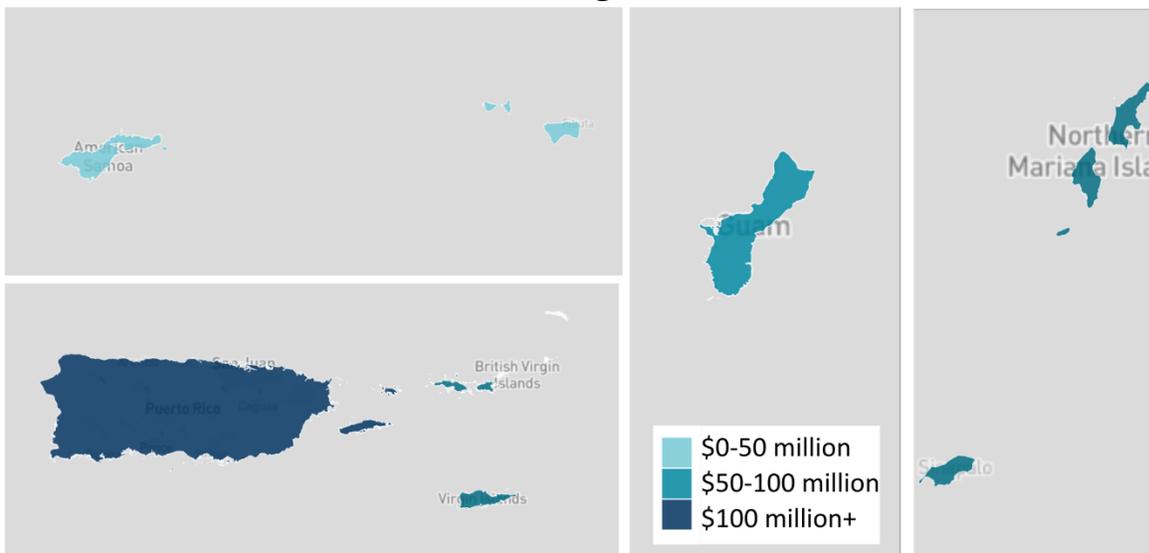


Figure 1.

Most Territories Have Received \$60-80 Million in Grant Funding, Their Primary Source of Funding

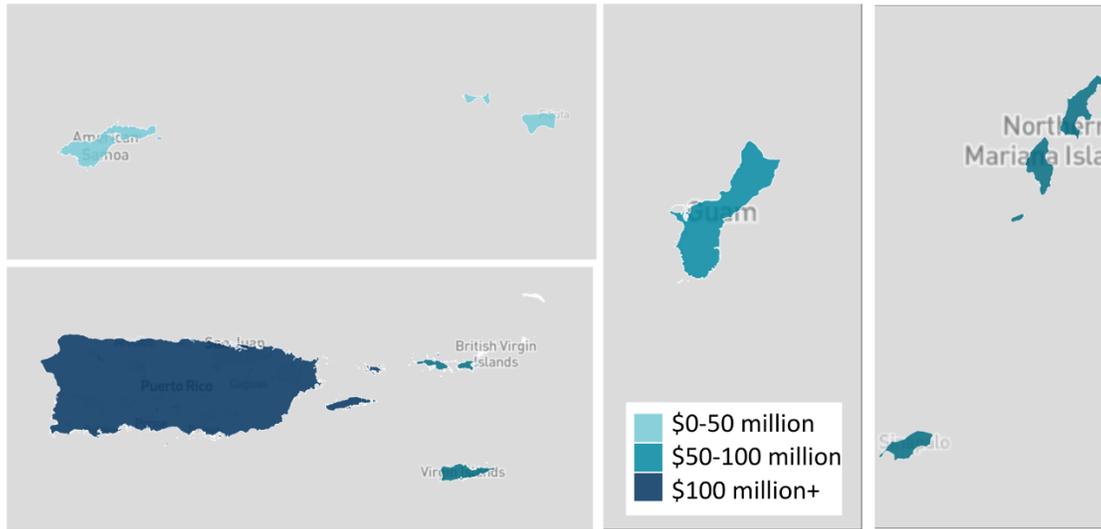


Figure 2.

Puerto Rico Received Seven to Fourteen Times More Than Any Other Territory

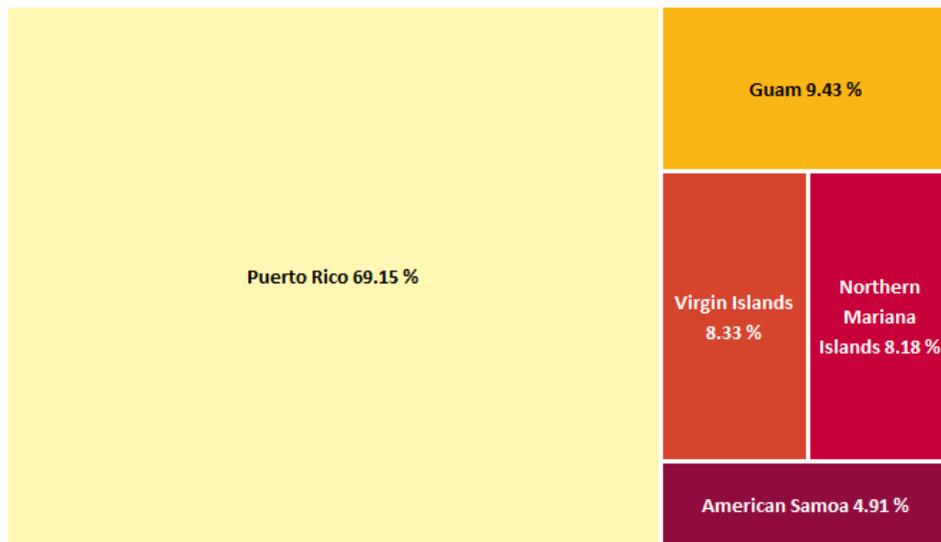


Figure 3.

Funding by Territory

Territory	Funding	Total Per Capita	Grant Funding	Grants Per Capita
Puerto Rico	\$650,690,000	\$202	\$343,040,000	\$106
Guam	\$88,725,000	\$517	\$79,836,000	\$465
U.S. Virgin Islands	\$78,373,000	\$743	\$67,294,000	\$638
Northern Mariana Islands	\$76,972,000	\$1,553	\$69,245,000	\$1,397
American Samoa	\$46,220,000	\$1,044	\$37,024,000	\$836

Figure 4: While Puerto Rico has received the most total and grant funding, the other territories have received more on a per capita basis.

Type and Function of BIL Funding in the U.S. Territories

The mix of award types in the territories is different than in the Southeast. Competitive project grants comprise the largest type of committed funding at 42.2%, followed by formula grants at 27.5%, cooperative agreements at 21.2%, and direct payments at 8.7%. Competitive project grants and formula grants fund a diverse set of initiatives. Cooperative agreements are like grants but typically involve substantial involvement of federal agency staff. BIL cooperative agreements that were awarded to the territories include restoration projects with nonprofits and drinking water system upgrades with territory governments. Direct payment funding is generally from the FCC for broadband infrastructure.

Grants are the Primary Source of Funding in the Territories

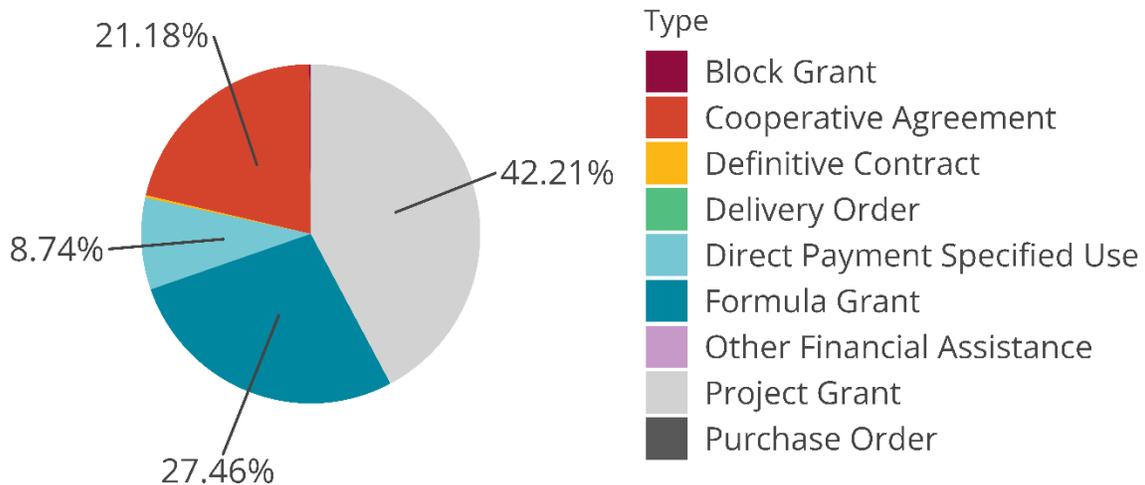


Figure 5.

The distribution of funding categories varies by territory, though funding is committed in fewer categories in the territories compared to states. Since Puerto Rico received significantly more funding than other territories, we have separated it out in the pie charts below. In Puerto Rico, ground transportation makes up the largest percentage of total funding in the territories at 58.9%, followed by pollution control at 16.5% and other advancement of commerce at 14.4%. In the rest of the territories, funding for pollution control and ground transportation are the most significant categories, at 59.4% and 24.2%, respectively.

Ground Transportation is the Largest Category in Puerto Rico

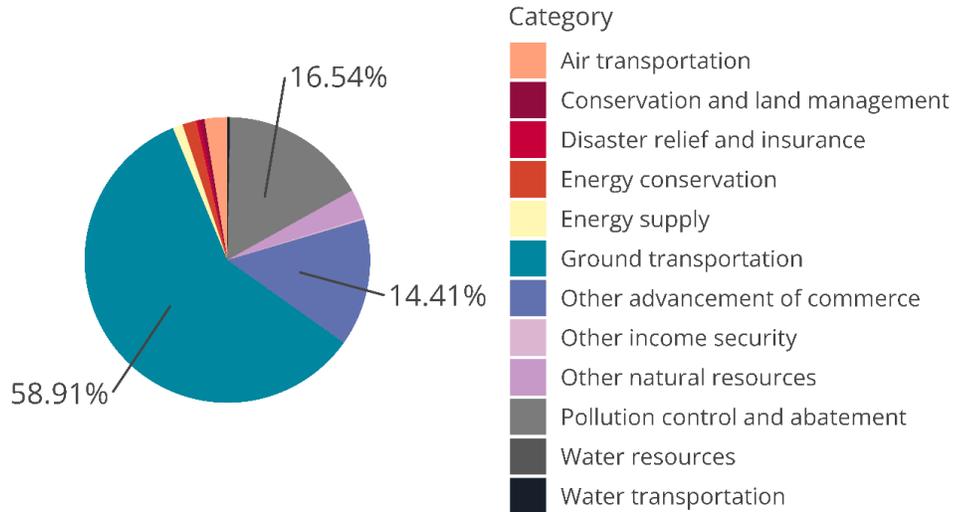


Figure 6.

Pollution Control is the Largest Category among American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the Virgin Islands

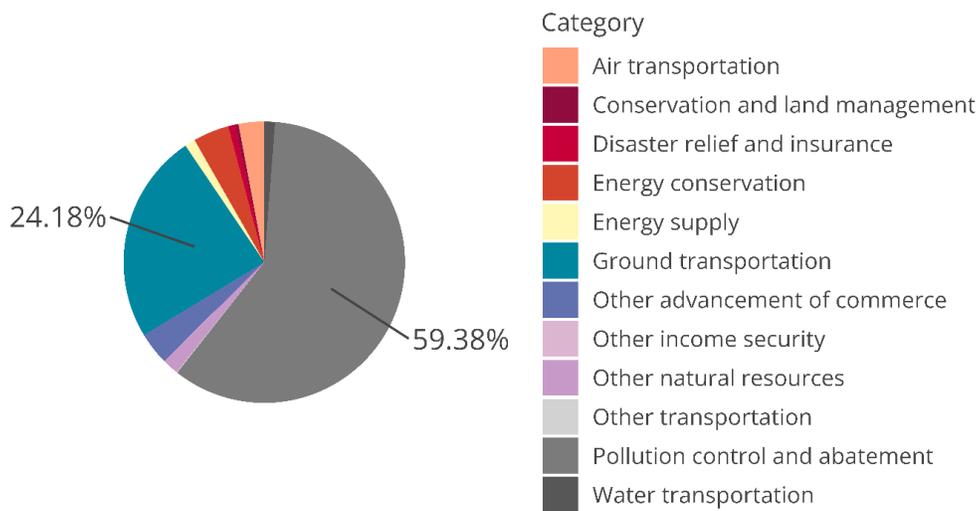


Figure 7.

Energy Funding in the U.S. Territories

Energy conservation makes up about 2.4% of funding, \$22.4 million total, in the territories. Energy conservation funding is dominated by the State Energy Program (SEP) and the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP). WAP funds home improvements such as insulation, caulking, and replacement of inefficient heating and cooling systems for eligible income-qualified households, with the goal of improving health, affordability, and safety for people who cannot afford the upfront capital needed for weatherization. State Energy Program funding can be used for a variety of applications, including energy efficiency, renewable energy, alternative fuels, electric vehicles, and more.

There is significant variation in how much WAP funding each territory has received, with Puerto Rico receiving nearly nine times as much as any other territory. SEP funding is more consistent, with most territories receiving around \$2.5 million each and Puerto Rico receiving \$4.7 million. These commitments do not necessarily reflect the entirety of WAP and SEP funding that will be committed to these territories from the BIL, and the territories are likely to spend these funds over several years.

Territories also have some flexibility in how to use this funding. With past WAP funds, Puerto Rico installed six PV-battery systems in remote locations that lacked power for over six months following Hurricane Maria in 2017. Altogether, the territories have weatherized over 23,000 buildings with WAP funds since 2010. In the past, SEP funding in the territories has been used to increase renewable energy production, provide household rebates for ENERGY STAR appliances, and train employees in energy efficiency skills.³

Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) Funding

Recipient	Funding
Departamento de Desarrollo Económico y Comercio (Puerto Rico)	\$5,686,900
Guam Energy Office	\$651,560
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	\$457,260
American Samoa Government	\$411,880
Office of the Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands	\$248,730

Figure 8: WAP funding varies significantly in the U.S. territories.

³ State and Community Energy Programs Project Map – American Samoa. U.S. Department of Energy, Office of State and Community Energy Programs, last modified November 4, 2022, <https://www.energy.gov/scep/articles/state-and-community-energy-programs-project-map-american-samoa>; State and Community Energy Programs Project Map – Guam. U.S. Department of Energy, Office of State and Community Energy Programs, last modified November 4, 2022, <https://www.energy.gov/scep/articles/state-and-community-energy-programs-project-map-guam>; State and Community Energy Programs Project Map – Northern Mariana Islands. U.S. Department of Energy, Office of State and Community Energy Programs, last modified November 4, 2022, <https://www.energy.gov/scep/articles/state-and-community-energy-programs-project-map-northern-mariana-islands>; State and Community Energy Programs Project Map – Puerto Rico. U.S. Department of Energy, Office of State and Community Energy Programs, last modified November 4, 2022, <https://www.energy.gov/scep/articles/state-and-community-energy-programs-project-map-puerto-rico>; State and Community Energy Programs Project Map – U.S. Virgin Islands. U.S. Department of Energy, Office of State and Community Energy Programs, last modified November 4, 2022, <https://www.energy.gov/scep/articles/state-and-community-energy-programs-project-map-us-virgin-islands>.

State Energy Program (SEP) Funding

Recipient	Funding
Departamento de Desarrollo Económico y Comercio (Puerto Rico)	\$4,670,800
Guam Energy Office	\$2,600,900
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	\$2,590,800
American Samoa Government	\$2,524,100
Office of the Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands	\$2,514,800

Figure 9: The Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, and Puerto Rico cannot receive more funding until they complete State Energy Security Plans.

Spotlight on Projects:

American Samoa Government Department of Commerce: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration committed \$203,000 to American Samoa for wetland delineation, wetland monitoring, training, and community outreach, as well as to create recommendations for permitting policies and nature-based restoration projects.⁴

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation: The Environmental Protection Agency committed \$20.6 million to improve the drinking water system on the Northern Mariana Islands, including replacing and upgrading water mains and pressurizing the transmission and distribution system. These projects will aid in providing reliable, potable drinking water to every customer.⁵

Institute for Socio-Ecological Research: The Department of Commerce will commit \$10.6 million to construct five acres of coral reef at three locations in Puerto Rico. The project will reintroduce slow-growing, reef-building coral species, including threatened species.⁶

Island Conservation: The Department of Interior committed \$250,000 to Island Conservation to aid in invasive species eradication and create a refuge for the endangered Virgin Islands tree boa.⁷

Teleguam Holdings: The Department of Agriculture committed \$29 million to Teleguam Holdings to provide internet connection to 8,000 households in Guam.⁸

⁴ Award NA23NOS4730120, USA Spending, accessed August 15, 2023, https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_NA23NOS4730120_1330.

⁵ Award 98T47823, USA Spending, accessed August 15, 2023, https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_98T47823_6800.

⁶ Award NA23NMF4630076, USA Spending, accessed August 15, 2023, https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_NA23NMF4630076_1330.

⁷ Award D22AP00235, USA Spending, accessed August 15, 2023, https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_D22AP00235_1409.

⁸ President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Will Deliver in Guam, The White House, last modified June 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Guam-Fact-Sheet-June.pdf>.

Methods

The BIL funding data in this report is from the federal government’s USA Spending website, managed by the U.S. Department of Treasury, Bureau of the Fiscal Service. The data includes all committed funding awards associated with the BIL, which was filtered to include U.S. territories. The award data was joined to spatial data via the State Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) based on the award recipient’s state. This is significant because the recipient’s location is not always the same as the place of performance. Many companies operate on a large scale. Although their project may be in the territories, if their headquarters is in New York, that award will not appear in this analysis.

Federal agencies are required to update USA Spending on a monthly or quarterly basis, and the website itself is updated bi-weekly, so committed funding amounts should be considered a minimum as funding continues to be allocated. Notable shortcomings with USA Spending include overdue submissions (agencies submit data after government deadlines), incomplete records, and ambiguous data, e.g., awards associated with an “unknown” activity.⁹ As discussed above, the most relevant shortcoming for this report is that awards largely lacked an associated place of performance. Addressing these issues is critical to a completely representative analysis of federal spending.

Acknowledgments

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⁹ See U.S. Government Accountability Office, Federal Spending Transparency: Opportunities to Improve USAspending.gov Data, GAO-24-106214, November 7, 2023.