

By Senator Montford

3-01588-18

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1                                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to regional rural development grants;  
3           amending s. 288.018, F.S.; providing that regional  
4           rural development grants may be used to hire regional  
5           economic development organization professional staff;  
6           authorizing the use of matching grant funds to provide  
7           technical assistance to certain entities; increasing  
8           the annual maximum amount of grant funding that  
9           specified economic development organizations may  
10          receive; revising the amount of nonstate matching  
11          funds required; requiring that contracts or agreements  
12          involving the expenditure of grant funds be placed on  
13          a certain website for a specified time period;  
14          requiring that certain information be included in a  
15          contract or agreement involving the expenditure of  
16          grant funds; requiring that a plain language version  
17          of certain contracts or agreements be placed on a  
18          certain website; deleting a provision authorizing the  
19          Department of Economic Opportunity to contract for the  
20          development of certain enterprise zone web portals or  
21          websites; amending s. 288.0655, F.S.; providing that  
22          improving access to and availability of broadband  
23          Internet service may be included in a project that is  
24          eligible for rural infrastructure grant funds;  
25          extending the date by which the department is required  
26          to reevaluate certain guidelines and criteria;  
27          revising the factors that the department must consider  
28          when awarding grant funds; requiring that contracts or  
29          agreements involving the expenditure of grant funds be

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30 placed on a certain website for a specified time  
31 period; requiring that certain information be included  
32 in a contract or agreement involving the expenditure  
33 of grant funds; requiring that a plain language  
34 version of certain contracts or agreements be placed  
35 on a certain website; providing an effective date.  
36

37 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:  
38

39 Section 1. Subsections (1) and (3) of section 288.018,  
40 Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

41 288.018 Regional Rural Development Grants Program.—

42 (1) The department shall establish a matching grant program  
43 to provide funding to regional ~~regionally based~~ economic  
44 development organizations representing rural counties and  
45 communities to build ~~for the purpose of building~~ the  
46 professional capacity of such regional economic development  
47 ~~their~~ organizations. Building the professional capacity of  
48 regional economic development organizations includes hiring  
49 professional staff to develop, facilitate the delivery of, and  
50 directly provide needed economic development professional  
51 services, including technical assistance, education and  
52 leadership development, marketing and project recruitment, and  
53 other services that are important for rural economic  
54 development. ~~Such~~ Matching grants may also be used by a regional  
55 ~~an~~ economic development organization to provide technical  
56 assistance to local governments, local economic development  
57 organizations, and existing and prospective businesses within  
58 the rural counties and communities that it serves. The

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59 department is authorized to approve, on an annual basis, grants  
60 to such regional ~~regionally based~~ economic development  
61 organizations. The maximum amount an organization may receive in  
62 any year ~~is will be~~ \$50,000, or \$250,000 for each of the three  
63 regional economic development organizations serving rural areas  
64 of opportunity designated pursuant to s. 288.0656. The three  
65 regional economic development organizations include the North  
66 Florida Economic Development Partnership, Opportunity Florida,  
67 and Florida's Heartland Regional ~~\$150,000 in a rural area of~~  
68 ~~opportunity recommended by the Rural Economic Development~~  
69 Initiative, Inc. Grant funds received by a regional economic  
70 development organization and designated by the Governor, and  
71 must be matched each year by an equivalent amount of nonstate  
72 resources in an amount equal to 25 percent of the state  
73 contribution.

74 (3) (a) A contract or agreement that involves the  
75 expenditure of grant funds provided under this section must be  
76 placed on the contracting regional economic development  
77 organization's website for review at least 14 days before  
78 execution.

79 (b) A contract or agreement that involves the expenditure  
80 of grant funds provided under this section, including a contract  
81 or agreement entered into between another entity and a regional  
82 economic development organization, a unit of local government,  
83 or an economic development organization substantially  
84 underwritten by a unit of local government, must include:

- 85 1. The purpose of the contract or agreement.
- 86 2. Specific performance standards and responsibilities for  
87 each entity.

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88       3. A detailed project or contract budget, if applicable.

89       4. The value of any services provided.

90       5. The projected travel and entertainment expenses for  
91 employees and board members, if applicable.

92       (c) A plain language version of a contract or agreement  
93 with a private entity, a municipality, or a vendor of services,  
94 supplies, or programs, including marketing, or for the purchase  
95 or lease or use of lands, facilities, or properties which  
96 involves the expenditure of grant funds provided under this  
97 section and which is estimated to exceed \$35,000 must be posted  
98 on the contracting regional economic development organization's  
99 website ~~The department may also contract for the development of~~  
100 ~~an enterprise zone web portal or websites for each enterprise~~  
101 ~~zone which will be used to market the program for job creation~~  
102 ~~in disadvantaged urban and rural enterprise zones. Each~~  
103 ~~enterprise zone web page should include downloadable links to~~  
104 ~~state forms and information, as well as local message boards~~  
105 ~~that help businesses and residents receive information~~  
106 ~~concerning zone boundaries, job openings, zone programs, and~~  
107 ~~neighborhood improvement activities.~~

108       Section 2. Subsection (5) of section 288.0655, Florida  
109 Statutes, is redesignated as subsection (6), paragraph (b) of  
110 subsection (2) and subsection (4) of that section are amended,  
111 and a new subsection (5) is added to that section, to read:

112       288.0655 Rural Infrastructure Fund.—

113       (2)(b) To facilitate access of rural communities and rural  
114 areas of opportunity as defined by the Rural Economic  
115 Development Initiative to infrastructure funding programs of the  
116 Federal Government, such as those offered by the United States

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117 Department of Agriculture and the United States Department of  
118 Commerce, and state programs, including those offered by Rural  
119 Economic Development Initiative agencies, and to facilitate  
120 local government or private infrastructure funding efforts, the  
121 department may award grants for up to 30 percent of the total  
122 infrastructure project cost. If an application for funding is  
123 for a catalyst site, as defined in s. 288.0656, the department  
124 may award grants for up to 40 percent of the total  
125 infrastructure project cost. Eligible projects must be related  
126 to specific job-creation or job-retention opportunities.  
127 Eligible projects may also include improving any inadequate  
128 infrastructure that has resulted in regulatory action that  
129 prohibits economic or community growth or reducing the costs to  
130 community users of proposed infrastructure improvements that  
131 exceed such costs in comparable communities, which includes  
132 improving access to and the availability of broadband Internet  
133 service. Eligible uses of funds shall include improvements to  
134 public infrastructure for industrial or commercial sites, and  
135 upgrades to or development of public tourism infrastructure, and  
136 improvements to broadband Internet service and access in  
137 unserved or underserved rural communities. Authorized  
138 infrastructure may include the following public or public-  
139 private partnership facilities: storm water systems;  
140 telecommunications facilities; broadband facilities; roads or  
141 other remedies to transportation impediments; nature-based  
142 tourism facilities; or other physical requirements necessary to  
143 facilitate tourism, trade, and economic development activities  
144 in the community. Authorized infrastructure may also include  
145 publicly or privately owned self-powered nature-based tourism

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146 facilities, publicly owned telecommunications facilities, and  
147 broadband facilities, and additions to the distribution  
148 facilities of the existing natural gas utility as defined in s.  
149 366.04(3)(c), the existing electric utility as defined in s.  
150 366.02, or the existing water or wastewater utility as defined  
151 in s. 367.021(12), or any other existing water or wastewater  
152 facility, which owns a gas or electric distribution system or a  
153 water or wastewater system in this state where:

154 1. A contribution-in-aid of construction is required to  
155 serve public or public-private partnership facilities under the  
156 tariffs of any natural gas, electric, water, or wastewater  
157 utility as defined herein; and

158 2. Such utilities as defined herein are willing and able to  
159 provide such service.

160 (4) By September 1, 2019 ~~2012~~, the department shall, in  
161 consultation with the organizations listed in subsection (3),  
162 and other organizations, reevaluate existing guidelines and  
163 criteria governing submission of applications for funding,  
164 review and evaluation of such applications, and approval of  
165 funding under this section. The department shall consider  
166 factors including, but not limited to, the project's potential  
167 for enhanced job creation or increased capital investment, the  
168 demonstration and level of local public and private commitment,  
169 whether the project is located ~~in an enterprise zone~~, in a  
170 community development corporation service area, or in an urban  
171 high-crime area as designated under s. 212.097, the unemployment  
172 rate of the county in which the project would be located, and  
173 the poverty rate of the community.

174 (5) (a) A contract or agreement that involves the

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175 expenditure of grant funds provided under this section must be  
176 placed on the department's website for review at least 14 days  
177 before execution.

178 (b) A contract or agreement that includes the expenditure  
179 of grant funds provided under this section, including a contract  
180 or agreement entered into between an entity and a regional  
181 economic development organization, a unit of local government,  
182 or an economic development organization substantially  
183 underwritten by a unit of local government, must include:

- 184 1. The purpose of the contract or agreement.
- 185 2. Specific performance standards and responsibilities for  
186 each entity.
- 187 3. A detailed project or contract budget, if applicable.
- 188 4. The value of any services provided.
- 189 5. The projected travel and entertainment expenses for  
190 employees and board members, if applicable.

191 (c) A plain language version of a contract or agreement  
192 with a private entity, a municipality, or a vendor of services,  
193 supplies, or programs, including marketing, or for the purchase  
194 or lease or use of lands, facilities, or properties which  
195 involves the expenditure of grant funds provided under this  
196 section and which is estimated to exceed \$35,000 must be posted  
197 on the department's website.

198 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2018.