

By Senator Montford

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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.; revising the purpose of the
4 Regional Rural Development Grants Program; revising
5 the entities an economic development organization may
6 assist with a grant; providing a maximum amount for
7 grants received by specified economic development
8 organizations; deleting a provision authorizing the
9 Department of Economic Opportunity to contract for the
10 development of certain enterprise zone web portals or
11 websites; increasing the maximum amount the department
12 may expend from funds appropriated to the Rural
13 Community Development Revolving Loan Fund for certain
14 expenses; providing an effective date.

15
16 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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18 Section 1. Subsections (1), (3), and (4) of section
19 288.018, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

20 288.018 Regional Rural Development Grants Program.—

21 (1) The department shall establish a ~~matching~~ grant program
22 to provide funding to regionally based economic development
23 organizations representing rural counties and communities for
24 the purpose of building the professional capacity of the
25 regional economic development ~~their~~ organizations. Building the
26 professional capacity of these organizations shall include the
27 hiring and compensating of professional staff to develop,
28 directly provide, or facilitate the delivery of necessary
29 economic development services, including technical assistance,

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30 education and leadership development, marketing and project
31 recruitment, and other professional services deemed important
32 for rural economic development. Such ~~matching~~ grants may also be
33 used by an economic development organization to provide
34 technical assistance to local governments, local economic
35 development organizations, and existing and prospective
36 businesses within the rural counties and communities that it
37 serves. The department is authorized to approve, on an annual
38 basis, grants to such regionally based economic development
39 organizations. The maximum amount an organization may receive in
40 any year ~~is will be~~ \$50,000, or \$250,000 for each of the three
41 regional economic development organizations serving the rural
42 areas of opportunity as defined by executive order of the
43 Governor. The three organizations include the North Florida
44 Economic Development Partnership, Opportunity Florida, and
45 Florida's Heartland ~~\$150,000 in a rural area of opportunity~~
46 ~~recommended by the Rural Economic Development Initiative, Inc~~
47 ~~and designated by the Governor, and must be matched each year by~~
48 ~~an equivalent amount of nonstate resources.~~

49 ~~(3) The department may also contract for the development of~~
50 ~~an enterprise zone web portal or websites for each enterprise~~
51 ~~zone which will be used to market the program for job creation~~
52 ~~in disadvantaged urban and rural enterprise zones. Each~~
53 ~~enterprise zone web page should include downloadable links to~~
54 ~~state forms and information, as well as local message boards~~
55 ~~that help businesses and residents receive information~~
56 ~~concerning zone boundaries, job openings, zone programs, and~~
57 ~~neighborhood improvement activities.~~

58 ~~(3)-(4)~~ The department may expend up to \$1 million ~~\$750,000~~

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59 each fiscal year from funds appropriated to the Rural Community
60 Development Revolving Loan Fund for the purposes outlined in
61 this section. The department may contract with Enterprise
62 Florida, Inc., for the administration of the purposes specified
63 in this section. Funds released to Enterprise Florida, Inc., for
64 this purpose shall be released quarterly and shall be calculated
65 based on the applications in process.

66 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2017.