



952426

576-03502-18

Proposed Committee Substitute by the Committee on Appropriations  
(Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism, and  
Economic Development)

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to regional rural development grants;  
amending s. 288.018, F.S.; providing that regional  
rural development grants may be used to hire regional  
economic development organization professional staff;  
authorizing the use of matching grant funds to provide  
technical assistance to certain entities; increasing  
the annual maximum amount of grant funding that  
specified economic development organizations may  
receive; revising the amount of nonstate matching  
funds required; increasing the amount the Department  
of Economic Opportunity may expend each fiscal year  
for the program; requiring that contracts or  
agreements involving the expenditure of grant funds be  
placed on a certain website for a specified time  
period; requiring that certain information be included  
in a contract or agreement involving the expenditure  
of grant funds; requiring that a plain language  
version of certain contracts or agreements be placed  
on a certain website; deleting an obsolete provision  
authorizing the Department of Economic Opportunity to  
contract for the development of certain enterprise  
zone web portals or websites; amending s. 288.0655,  
F.S.; increasing the maximum percent of total  
infrastructure project costs for which the department  
may award a grant; repealing a provision for increased



952426

576-03502-18

27 maximum percent of total infrastructure project costs  
28 that may be awarded for a catalyst site; providing  
29 that improving access to and availability of broadband  
30 Internet service may be included in a project that is  
31 eligible for rural infrastructure grant funds;  
32 providing that grants for improvements to broadband  
33 Internet service and access must be conducted through  
34 certain partnerships; extending the date by which the  
35 department is required to reevaluate certain  
36 guidelines and criteria; requiring that contracts or  
37 agreements involving the expenditure of grant funds be  
38 placed on a certain website for a specified time  
39 period; requiring that certain information be included  
40 in a contract or agreement involving the expenditure  
41 of grant funds; requiring that a plain language  
42 version of certain contracts or agreements be placed  
43 on a certain website; providing an effective date.  
44

45 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:  
46

47 Section 1. Subsections (1), (3), and (4) of section  
48 288.018, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

49 288.018 Regional Rural Development Grants Program.—

50 (1) (a) The department shall establish a matching grant  
51 program to provide funding to regional ~~regionally based~~ economic  
52 development organizations representing rural counties and  
53 communities to build ~~for the purpose of building~~ the  
54 professional capacity of such regional economic development  
55 ~~their~~ organizations. Building the professional capacity of



952426

576-03502-18

56 regional economic development organizations includes hiring  
57 professional staff to develop, facilitate the delivery of, and  
58 directly provide needed economic development professional  
59 services, including technical assistance, education and  
60 leadership development, marketing and project recruitment, and  
61 other services that are important for rural economic  
62 development. ~~Such~~ Matching grants may also be used by a regional  
63 an economic development organization to provide technical  
64 assistance to local governments, local economic development  
65 organizations, and existing and prospective businesses within  
66 the rural counties and communities that it serves.

67 (b) A regional economic development organization may apply  
68 to the department for a matching grant each year. The department  
69 is authorized to approve an application for a grant up to, ~~on an~~  
70 annual basis, grants:

71 1. Fifty thousand dollars to a regional economic  
72 development organization;

73 2. One hundred fifty thousand dollars to an organization  
74 located to ~~such regionally based economic development~~  
75 organizations. ~~The maximum amount an organization may receive in~~  
76 any year will be \$50,000, or \$150,000 in a rural area of  
77 opportunity designated pursuant to s. 288.0656; or

78 3. Two hundred fifty thousand dollars to any of the three  
79 regional economic development organizations that serve an entire  
80 region of a rural area of opportunity designated pursuant to s.  
81 288.0656 and that are recognized by the department as serving  
82 such regions.

83 (c) Grant funds received by a regional economic development  
84 organization ~~recommended by the Rural Economic Development~~



952426

576-03502-18

85 ~~Initiative and designated by the Governor, and must be matched~~  
86 ~~each year by an equivalent amount of nonstate resources in an~~  
87 ~~amount equal to 25 percent of the state contribution.~~

88 (3) (a) A contract or agreement that involves the  
89 expenditure of grant funds provided under this section must be  
90 placed on the contracting regional economic development  
91 organization's website at least 14 days before execution.

92 (b) A contract or agreement that involves the expenditure  
93 of grant funds provided under this section, including a contract  
94 or agreement entered into between another entity and a regional  
95 economic development organization, a unit of local government,  
96 or an economic development organization substantially  
97 underwritten by a unit of local government, must include:

- 98 1. The purpose of the contract or agreement.  
99 2. Specific performance standards and responsibilities for  
100 each entity.  
101 3. A detailed project or contract budget, if applicable.  
102 4. The value of any services provided.  
103 5. The projected travel and entertainment expenses for  
104 employees and board members, if applicable.

105 (c) A plain language version of a contract or agreement  
106 with a private entity, a municipality, or a vendor of services,  
107 supplies, or programs, including marketing, or for the purchase  
108 or lease or use of lands, facilities, or properties which  
109 involves the expenditure of grant funds provided under this  
110 section and which is estimated to exceed \$35,000 must be posted  
111 on the contracting regional economic development organization's  
112 website ~~The department may also contract for the development of~~  
113 ~~an enterprise zone web portal or websites for each enterprise~~



952426

576-03502-18

114 ~~zone which will be used to market the program for job creation~~  
115 ~~in disadvantaged urban and rural enterprise zones. Each~~  
116 ~~enterprise zone web page should include downloadable links to~~  
117 ~~state forms and information, as well as local message boards~~  
118 ~~that help businesses and residents receive information~~  
119 ~~concerning zone boundaries, job openings, zone programs, and~~  
120 ~~neighborhood improvement activities.~~

121       (4) The department may expend up to \$1,000,000 ~~\$750,000~~  
122 each fiscal year from funds appropriated to the Rural Community  
123 Development Revolving Loan Fund for the purposes outlined in  
124 this section. The department may contract with Enterprise  
125 Florida, Inc., for the administration of the purposes specified  
126 in this section. Funds released to Enterprise Florida, Inc., for  
127 this purpose shall be released quarterly and shall be calculated  
128 based on the applications in process.

129       Section 2. Subsection (5) of section 288.0655, Florida  
130 Statutes, is redesignated as subsection (6), paragraph (b) of  
131 subsection (2) and subsection (4) of that section are amended,  
132 and a new subsection (5) is added to that section, to read:

133       288.0655 Rural Infrastructure Fund.—

134       (2)(b) To facilitate access of rural communities and rural  
135 areas of opportunity as defined by the Rural Economic  
136 Development Initiative to infrastructure funding programs of the  
137 Federal Government, such as those offered by the United States  
138 Department of Agriculture and the United States Department of  
139 Commerce, and state programs, including those offered by Rural  
140 Economic Development Initiative agencies, and to facilitate  
141 local government or private infrastructure funding efforts, the  
142 department may award grants for up to 50 ~~30~~ percent of the total



952426

576-03502-18

143 ~~infrastructure project cost. If an application for funding is~~  
144 ~~for a catalyst site, as defined in s. 288.0656, the department~~  
145 ~~may award grants for up to 40 percent of the total~~  
146 ~~infrastructure project cost. Eligible projects must be related~~  
147 ~~to specific job-creation or job-retention opportunities.~~  
148 Eligible projects may also include improving any inadequate  
149 infrastructure that has resulted in regulatory action that  
150 prohibits economic or community growth or reducing the costs to  
151 community users of proposed infrastructure improvements that  
152 exceed such costs in comparable communities, which includes  
153 improving access to and the availability of broadband Internet  
154 service. Eligible uses of funds shall include improvements to  
155 public infrastructure for industrial or commercial sites, and  
156 upgrades to or development of public tourism infrastructure, and  
157 improvements to broadband Internet service and access in  
158 unserved or underserved rural communities. Improvements to  
159 broadband Internet service and access must be conducted through  
160 a partnership or partnerships with one or more dealers of  
161 communications services, as defined in s. 202.11(2), and the  
162 partnership must be established by a publicly noticed and  
163 competitively selected process. Authorized infrastructure may  
164 include the following public or public-private partnership  
165 facilities: storm water systems; telecommunications facilities;  
166 broadband facilities; roads or other remedies to transportation  
167 impediments; nature-based tourism facilities; or other physical  
168 requirements necessary to facilitate tourism, trade, and  
169 economic development activities in the community. Authorized  
170 infrastructure may also include publicly or privately owned  
171 self-powered nature-based tourism facilities, publicly owned



952426

576-03502-18

172 telecommunications facilities, and broadband facilities, and  
173 additions to the distribution facilities of the existing natural  
174 gas utility as defined in s. 366.04(3)(c), the existing electric  
175 utility as defined in s. 366.02, or the existing water or  
176 wastewater utility as defined in s. 367.021(12), or any other  
177 existing water or wastewater facility, which owns a gas or  
178 electric distribution system or a water or wastewater system in  
179 this state where:

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

184 2. Such utilities as defined herein are willing and able to  
185 provide such service.

186 (4) By September 1, 2019 ~~2012~~, the department shall, in  
187 consultation with the organizations listed in subsection (3),  
188 and other organizations, reevaluate existing guidelines and  
189 criteria governing submission of applications for funding,  
190 review and evaluation of such applications, and approval of  
191 funding under this section. The department shall consider  
192 factors including, but not limited to, the project's potential  
193 for enhanced job creation or increased capital investment, the  
194 demonstration and level of local public and private commitment,  
195 whether the project is located ~~in an enterprise zone~~, in a  
196 community development corporation service area~~7~~ or in an urban  
197 high-crime area as designated under s. 212.097, the unemployment  
198 rate of the county in which the project would be located, and  
199 the poverty rate of the community.

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



952426

576-03502-18

201 expenditure of grant funds provided under this section must be  
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203 execution.

204 (b) A contract or agreement that includes the expenditure  
205 of grant funds provided under this section, including a contract  
206 or agreement entered into between an entity and a regional  
207 economic development organization, a unit of local government,  
208 or an economic development organization substantially  
209 underwritten by a unit of local government, must include:

- 210 1. The purpose of the contract or agreement.  
211 2. Specific performance standards and responsibilities for  
212 each entity.  
213 3. A detailed project or contract budget, if applicable.  
214 4. The value of any services provided.  
215 5. The projected travel and entertainment expenses for  
216 employees and board members, if applicable.

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

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