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LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate	.	House
Comm: RCS	.	
01/23/2020	.	
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The Committee on Appropriations (Montford) recommended the following:

**Senate Amendment (with title amendment)**

Delete everything after the enacting clause  
and insert:

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

288.018 Regional Rural Development Grants Program.—

(1) (a) For the purposes of this section, the term "regional  
economic development organization" means an economic development  
organization located in or contracted to serve a rural area of



330518

11 opportunity, as defined in s. 288.0656(2) (d).

12 (b) The department shall establish a matching grant program  
13 to provide funding to ~~regional~~ regionally based economic  
14 development organizations ~~representing rural counties and~~  
15 ~~communities~~ for the purpose of building the professional  
16 capacity of ~~those~~ ~~their~~ organizations. Building the professional  
17 capacity of a regional economic development organization  
18 includes hiring professional staff to develop, deliver, and  
19 provide needed economic development professional services,  
20 including technical assistance, education and leadership  
21 development, marketing, and project recruitment. ~~Such~~ Matching  
22 grants may also be used by a regional ~~an~~ economic development  
23 organization to provide technical assistance to local  
24 governments, local economic development organizations, and  
25 existing and prospective businesses ~~within the rural counties~~  
26 and ~~communities that it serves.~~

27 (c) A regional economic development organization may apply  
28 annually to the department for a matching grant. The department  
29 is authorized to approve, on an annual basis, grants to such  
30 ~~regional~~ regionally based economic development organizations.  
31 The maximum amount an organization may receive in any year will  
32 be \$50,000, or \$250,000 for any three regional economic  
33 development organizations that serve an entire region of a rural  
34 area of opportunity designated pursuant to s. 288.0656(7) if  
35 they are recognized by the department as serving such a region.

36 (d) Grant funds received by a regional economic development  
37 organization ~~\$150,000 in a rural area of opportunity recommended~~  
38 by the Rural Economic Development Initiative and designated by  
39 the Governor, and must be matched each year by an equivalent



330518

40 ~~amount of nonstate resources in an amount equal to 25 percent of~~  
41 ~~the state contribution.~~

42 (3) (a) A contract or agreement that involves the  
43 expenditure of grant funds provided under this section,  
44 including a contract or agreement entered into between another  
45 entity and a regional economic development organization, a unit  
46 of local government, or an economic development organization  
47 substantially underwritten by a unit of local government, must  
48 include:

- 49 1. The purpose of the contract or agreement.  
50 2. Specific performance standards and responsibilities for  
51 each entity under the contract or agreement.  
52 3. A detailed project or contract budget, if applicable.  
53 4. The value of any services provided.  
54 5. The projected travel expenses for employees and board  
55 members, if applicable.

56 (b) At least 14 days before executing a contract or  
57 agreement, the contracting regional economic development  
58 organization shall post on its website:

59 1. Any contract or agreement that involves the expenditure  
60 of grant funds provided under this section.

61 2. A plain-language version of any contract or agreement  
62 that is estimated to exceed \$35,000 with a private entity, a  
63 municipality, or a vendor of services, supplies, or programs,  
64 including marketing, or for the purchase or lease or use of  
65 lands, facilities, or properties which involves the expenditure  
66 of grant funds provided under this section and which is  
67 estimated to exceed \$35,000 ~~The department may also contract for~~  
68 ~~the development of an enterprise zone web portal or websites for~~



330518

69 ~~each enterprise zone which will be used to market the program~~  
70 ~~for job creation in disadvantaged urban and rural enterprise~~  
71 ~~zones. Each enterprise zone web page should include downloadable~~  
72 ~~links to state forms and information, as well as local message~~  
73 ~~boards that help businesses and residents receive information~~  
74 ~~concerning zone boundaries, job openings, zone programs, and~~  
75 ~~neighborhood improvement activities.~~

76 (4) The department may expend up to \$1 million ~~\$750,000~~  
77 each fiscal year from funds appropriated to the Rural Community  
78 Development Revolving Loan Fund for the purposes outlined in  
79 this section. The department may contract with Enterprise  
80 Florida, Inc., for the administration of the purposes specified  
81 in this section. Funds released to Enterprise Florida, Inc., for  
82 this purpose shall be released quarterly and shall be calculated  
83 based on the applications in process.

84 Section 2. Present subsection (5) of section 288.0655,  
85 Florida Statutes, is redesignated as subsection (6), a new  
86 subsection (5) is added to that section, and paragraph (b) of  
87 subsection (2), subsection (4), and present subsection (6) are  
88 amended, to read:

89 288.0655 Rural Infrastructure Fund.—

90 (2)

91 (b) To facilitate access of rural communities and rural  
92 areas of opportunity as defined by the Rural Economic  
93 Development Initiative to infrastructure funding programs of the  
94 Federal Government, such as those offered by the United States  
95 Department of Agriculture and the United States Department of  
96 Commerce, and state programs, including those offered by Rural  
97 Economic Development Initiative agencies, and to facilitate



330518

98 local government or private infrastructure funding efforts, the  
99 department may award grants for up to 50 ~~30~~ percent of the total  
100 infrastructure project cost. ~~If an application for funding is~~  
101 ~~for a catalyst site, as defined in s. 288.0656, the department~~  
102 ~~may award grants for up to 40 percent of the total~~  
103 ~~infrastructure project cost.~~ Eligible projects must be related  
104 to specific job-creation or job-retention opportunities.  
105 Eligible projects may also include improving any inadequate  
106 infrastructure that has resulted in regulatory action that  
107 prohibits economic or community growth, ~~or~~ reducing the costs to  
108 community users of proposed infrastructure improvements that  
109 exceed such costs in comparable communities, and improving  
110 access to and the availability of broadband Internet service.  
111 Eligible uses of funds shall include improvements to public  
112 infrastructure for industrial or commercial sites, upgrades to  
113 or development of public tourism infrastructure, and  
114 improvements to broadband Internet service and access in  
115 unserved or underserved rural communities. Improvements to  
116 broadband Internet service and access must be conducted through  
117 a partnership or partnerships with one or more dealers, as  
118 defined in s. 202.11(2), and the partnership or partnerships  
119 must be established through a competitive selection process that  
120 is publicly noticed and ~~upgrades to or development of public~~  
121 ~~tourism infrastructure.~~ Authorized infrastructure may include  
122 the following public or public-private partnership facilities:  
123 storm water systems; telecommunications facilities; broadband  
124 facilities; roads or other remedies to transportation  
125 impediments; nature-based tourism facilities; or other physical  
126 requirements necessary to facilitate tourism, trade, and



330518

127 economic development activities in the community. Authorized  
128 infrastructure may also include publicly or privately owned  
129 self-powered nature-based tourism facilities, publicly owned  
130 telecommunications facilities, and broadband facilities, and  
131 additions to the distribution facilities of the existing natural  
132 gas utility as defined in s. 366.04(3)(c), the existing electric  
133 utility as defined in s. 366.02, or the existing water or  
134 wastewater utility as defined in s. 367.021(12), or any other  
135 existing water or wastewater facility, which owns a gas or  
136 electric distribution system or a water or wastewater system in  
137 this state where:

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

142       2. Such utilities as defined herein are willing and able to  
143 provide such service.

144       (4) By September 1, 2021 ~~2012~~, the department shall, in  
145 consultation with the organizations listed in subsection (3),  
146 and other organizations, reevaluate existing guidelines and  
147 criteria governing submission of applications for funding,  
148 review and evaluation of such applications, and approval of  
149 funding under this section. The department shall consider  
150 factors including, but not limited to, the project's potential  
151 for enhanced job creation or increased capital investment, the  
152 demonstration and level of local public and private commitment,  
153 whether the project is located ~~in an enterprise zone~~, in a  
154 community development corporation service area, or in an urban  
155 high-crime area as designated under s. 212.097, the unemployment



330518

156 rate of the county in which the project would be located, and  
157 the poverty rate of the community.

158 (5) (a) A contract or agreement that involves the  
159 expenditure of grant funds provided under this section,  
160 including a contract or agreement entered into between another  
161 entity and a regional economic development organization, a unit  
162 of local government, or an economic development organization  
163 substantially underwritten by a unit of local government, must  
164 include:

- 165 1. The purpose of the contract or agreement.  
166 2. Specific performance standards and responsibilities for  
167 each entity.  
168 3. A detailed project or contract budget, if applicable.  
169 4. The value of any services provided.  
170 5. The projected travel expenses for employees and board  
171 members, if applicable.

172 (b) At least 14 days before execution, the contracting  
173 regional economic development organization shall post on its  
174 website:

- 175 1. Any contract or agreement that involves the expenditure  
176 of grant funds provided under this section.  
177 2. A plain-language version of a contract or agreement that  
178 is estimated to exceed \$35,000 with a private entity, a  
179 municipality, or a vendor of services, supplies, or programs,  
180 including marketing, or for the purchase or lease or use of  
181 lands, facilities, or properties which involves the expenditure  
182 of grant funds provided under this section.

183 ~~(6) For the 2019-2020 fiscal year, the funds appropriated~~  
184 ~~for the grant program for Florida Panhandle counties shall be~~



330518

185 ~~distributed pursuant to and for the purposes described in the~~  
186 ~~proviso language associated with Specific Appropriation 2314 of~~  
187 ~~the 2019-2020 General Appropriations Act. This subsection~~  
188 ~~expires July 1, 2020.~~

189 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2020.

190

191 ===== T I T L E A M E N D M E N T =====

192 And the title is amended as follows:

193 Delete everything before the enacting clause  
194 and insert:

195 A bill to be entitled

196 An act relating to regional rural development grants;  
197 amending s. 288.018, F.S.; defining the term "regional  
198 economic development organization"; specifying that  
199 the concept of building the professional capacity of a  
200 regional economic development organization includes  
201 the hiring of professional staff to perform specified  
202 services; providing that matching grants may be used  
203 to provide technical assistance to local governments  
204 and economic development organizations and to existing  
205 and prospective businesses; increasing the maximum  
206 amount of annual grant funding that specified economic  
207 development organizations may receive; revising the  
208 required amount of nonstate matching funds; requiring  
209 that certain information be included in contracts or  
210 agreements involving grant funds; requiring that  
211 contracts or agreements involving the expenditure of  
212 grant funds, and a plain-language version of certain  
213 contracts or agreements, be placed on the contracting





330518

214 regional economic development organization's website  
215 for a specified period before execution; deleting an  
216 obsolete provision; increasing the amount of funds the  
217 Department of Economic Opportunity may expend each  
218 fiscal year from the Rural Community Development  
219 Revolving Loan Fund for certain purposes; amending s.  
220 288.0655, F.S.; revising the maximum percentage of  
221 total infrastructure project costs for which the  
222 department may award grants; specifying that improving  
223 access to and availability of broadband Internet  
224 services is an eligible project for certain grant  
225 funds; providing that grants for improvements to  
226 broadband Internet service and access must be  
227 conducted through certain partnerships; requiring the  
228 department to reevaluate certain guidelines by a  
229 specified date; requiring that certain information be  
230 included in contracts or agreements involving grant  
231 funds; requiring a regional economic development  
232 organization to post contracts or agreements involving  
233 the expenditure of grant funds, and a plain-language  
234 version of certain contracts or agreements, on the  
235 organization's website for a specified period before  
236 execution; providing an effective date.