

2026250e1

A bill to be entitled  
An act relating to rural communities; reenacting and amending s. 20.60, F.S.; revising the list of divisions and offices within the Department of Commerce to conform to changes made by the act; revising the annual program reports that must be included in the annual report of the Department of Commerce; amending s. 163.3168, F.S.; requiring the state land planning agency to give preference for technical assistance funding to local governments located in a rural area of opportunity; requiring the agency to consult with the Office of Rural Prosperity when awarding certain funding; amending s. 201.15, F.S.; requiring that a certain sum be paid to the credit of the State Transportation Trust Fund for the exclusive use of the Florida Arterial Road Modernization Program; amending s. 202.18, F.S.; redirecting the transfer of certain communication services tax proceeds; amending s. 212.20, F.S.; revising the distribution of sales and use tax revenue to include a transfer to fiscally constrained counties; amending s. 215.971, F.S.; providing construction regarding agreements funded with federal or state assistance; requiring a state agency to expedite payment requests from a county, municipality, or rural area of opportunity for a specified purpose; requiring each state agency to report to the Office of Rural Prosperity by a certain date with a summary of certain information; requiring the office to summarize

2026250e1

30 the information it receives for its annual report;  
31 amending s. 218.67, F.S.; revising the conditions  
32 required for a county to be considered a fiscally  
33 constrained county; authorizing eligible counties to  
34 receive a distribution of sales and use tax revenue;  
35 revising the sources that the Department of Revenue  
36 must use to determine the amount distributed to  
37 fiscally constrained counties; revising the factors  
38 for allocation of the distribution of revenue to  
39 fiscally constrained counties; requiring that the  
40 computation and amount distributed be calculated using  
41 certain methods; authorizing specified uses for the  
42 revenue; conforming a cross-reference; amending s.  
43 288.001, F.S.; requiring the Florida Small Business  
44 Development Center Network to use certain funds  
45 appropriated for a specified purpose; authorizing the  
46 network to dedicate funds to facilitate certain  
47 events; amending s. 288.007, F.S.; revising which  
48 local governments and economic development  
49 organizations seeking to recruit businesses are  
50 required to submit a specified report; creating s.  
51 288.013, F.S.; providing legislative findings;  
52 creating the Office of Rural Prosperity within the  
53 Department of Commerce; requiring the Governor to  
54 appoint a director, subject to confirmation by the  
55 Senate; providing that the director reports to and  
56 serves at the pleasure of the secretary of the  
57 department; providing the duties of the office;  
58 requiring the office to establish by a specified date

2026250e1

59 a certain number of regional rural community liaison  
60 centers across this state for a specified purpose;  
61 providing the powers, duties, and functions of the  
62 liaison centers; requiring each regional rural  
63 community liaison center, to the extent possible, to  
64 coordinate with certain entities; requiring the  
65 liaison centers to engage with the Rural Economic  
66 Development Initiative (REDI); requiring at least one  
67 staff member of a liaison center to attend the monthly  
68 REDI meetings in person or by means of electronic  
69 communication; requiring the director of the office to  
70 submit an annual report to the Administration  
71 Commission within the Executive Office of the  
72 Governor; specifying requirements for the annual  
73 report; requiring that the annual report also be  
74 submitted to the Legislature by a specified date and  
75 published on the office's website; requiring the  
76 director of the office to attend the next  
77 Administration Commission meeting to present detailed  
78 information from the annual report; requiring the  
79 Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government  
80 Accountability (OPPAGA) to evaluate the effectiveness  
81 of the office and submit a report of its findings to  
82 the Legislature by a certain date annually until a  
83 specified date; requiring OPPAGA to submit its report  
84 to the office at specified intervals; requiring OPPAGA  
85 to review certain strategies from other states;  
86 requiring OPPAGA to submit a report of its findings to  
87 the Legislature at certain intervals; creating s.

2026250e1

88 288.014, F.S.; providing legislative findings;  
89 requiring the Office of Rural Prosperity to administer  
90 the Renaissance Grants Program to provide block grants  
91 to eligible communities; requiring the Office of  
92 Economic and Demographic Research to certify to the  
93 Office of Rural Prosperity certain information by a  
94 specified date; defining the term "growth-impeded";  
95 requiring the Office of Economic and Demographic  
96 Research to certify annually that a county remains  
97 growth-impeded until such county has positive  
98 population growth for a specified amount of time;  
99 providing that such county, after 3 consecutive years  
100 of population growth, is eligible to participate in  
101 the program for 1 additional year; requiring a county  
102 eligible for the program to enter into an agreement  
103 with the Office of Rural Prosperity in order to  
104 receive the block grant; giving such counties broad  
105 authority to design their specific plans; prohibiting  
106 the Office of Rural Prosperity from determining how  
107 such counties implement the block grant; requiring  
108 regional rural community liaison center staff to  
109 provide assistance, upon the county's request;  
110 requiring participating counties to report annually to  
111 the Office of Rural Prosperity with certain  
112 information; providing that a participating county  
113 receives a specified amount from funds appropriated to  
114 the program, or an equal share of the funds  
115 appropriated if the total of such appropriated funds  
116 is insufficient to provide that amount; requiring

2026250e1

117 participating counties to make all attempts to limit  
118 the amount spent on administrative costs; authorizing  
119 participating counties to contribute other funds for  
120 block grant purposes; requiring participating counties  
121 to hire and retain a renaissance coordinator;  
122 providing that funds from the block grant may be used  
123 to hire the renaissance coordinator; providing the  
124 responsibilities of the renaissance coordinator;  
125 requiring the regional rural community liaison center  
126 staff to provide assistance and training to the  
127 renaissance coordinator, upon request; requiring  
128 participating counties to design a plan to make  
129 targeted investments to achieve population growth and  
130 increase economic vitality; specifying requirements  
131 for such plans; requiring participating counties to  
132 develop intergovernmental agreements with certain  
133 entities in order to implement the plan; requiring the  
134 Auditor General to conduct an operational audit every  
135 2 years for a specified purpose; requiring the Office  
136 of Economic and Demographic Research to provide an  
137 annual report on a specified date of renaissance block  
138 grant recipients by county; specifying requirements  
139 for the annual report; requiring that the report be  
140 submitted to the Legislature; providing that funds  
141 appropriated from the program are not subject to  
142 reversion; providing for expiration; creating s.  
143 288.0175, F.S.; creating the Public Infrastructure  
144 Smart Technology Grant Program within the Office of  
145 Rural Prosperity; defining terms; requiring the office

2026250e1

146 to contract with one or more smart technology lead  
147 organizations to administer the grant program for a  
148 specified purpose; providing the criteria for such  
149 contracts; requiring that projects funded by the grant  
150 program be included in the office's annual report;  
151 amending s. 288.018, F.S.; requiring the office,  
152 rather than the Department of Commerce, to establish a  
153 grant program to provide funding for regional economic  
154 development organizations; revising who may apply for  
155 such grants; providing that a grant award may not  
156 exceed a certain amount in a year; providing  
157 exceptions to a provision that the department may  
158 expend a certain amount for a certain purpose;  
159 amending s. 288.019, F.S.; revising the program  
160 criteria and procedures that agencies and  
161 organizations of REDI are required to review; revising  
162 the list of impacts each REDI agency and organization  
163 must consider in its review; requiring REDI agencies  
164 and organizations to develop a proposal for  
165 modifications which minimizes the financial and  
166 resource impacts to a rural community; requiring that  
167 ranking of evaluation criteria and scoring procedures  
168 be used only when ranking is a component of the  
169 program; requiring that match requirements be waived  
170 or reduced for rural communities; providing that  
171 donations of land may be treated as in-kind matches;  
172 requiring each agency and organization that applies  
173 for or receives federal funding to request federal  
174 approval to waive or reduce the financial match

2026250e1

175 requirements, if any, for projects in rural  
176 communities; requiring that proposals be submitted to  
177 the office, rather than the department; requiring each  
178 REDI agency and organization to modify rules or  
179 policies as necessary to reflect the finalized  
180 proposal; requiring that information about authorized  
181 waivers be included on the office's online rural  
182 resource directory; requiring the rural liaison from  
183 the related regional rural community liaison center  
184 districts to assist the rural community to make waiver  
185 or reduction requests; conforming a cross-reference;  
186 amending s. 288.021, F.S.; requiring, when  
187 practicable, the economic development liaison to serve  
188 as the agency representative for REDI; amending s.  
189 288.065, F.S.; defining the term "unit of local  
190 government"; requiring the office to include in its  
191 annual report certain information about the Rural  
192 Community Development Revolving Loan Fund; conforming  
193 provisions to changes made by the act; amending s.  
194 288.0655, F.S.; revising the list of grants that may  
195 be awarded by the office under the Rural  
196 Infrastructure Fund; deleting the authorization for  
197 local match requirements to be waived for a catalyst  
198 site; revising the list of departments the office must  
199 consult with to certify applicants; requiring the  
200 office to include certain information about the Rural  
201 Infrastructure Fund in its annual report; conforming  
202 provisions to changes made by the act; amending s.  
203 288.0656, F.S.; revising legislative intent; providing

2026250e1

204 legislative findings; providing that REDI is created  
205 within the Office of Rural Prosperity, rather than the  
206 department; deleting the definitions of the terms  
207 "catalyst project" and "catalyst site"; requiring that  
208 an alternate for each designated deputy secretary be a  
209 deputy secretary or higher-level staff person;  
210 requiring that the names of such alternates be  
211 reported to the director of the office; requiring at  
212 least one rural liaison to participate in REDI  
213 meetings; requiring REDI to meet at least each month;  
214 deleting a provision that a rural area of opportunity  
215 may designate catalyst projects; requiring REDI to  
216 submit a certain report to the office, rather than to  
217 the department; specifying requirements for such  
218 report; conforming provisions to changes made by the  
219 act; making technical changes; repealing s. 288.06561,  
220 F.S., relating to reduction or waiver of financial  
221 match requirements; amending s. 288.0657, F.S.;  
222 requiring the office, rather than the department, to  
223 provide grants to assist rural communities; providing  
224 that such grants may be used for specified purposes;  
225 requiring the rural liaison to assist those applying  
226 for such grants; providing that marketing grants may  
227 include certain funding; amending s. 288.1226, F.S.;  
228 revising required components of the 4-year marketing  
229 plan of the Florida Tourism Industry Marketing  
230 Corporation; repealing s. 288.12266, F.S., relating to  
231 the Targeted Marketing Assistance Program; amending s.  
232 288.9961, F.S.; revising the definition of the term

2026250e1

233 "underserved"; requiring the office to consult with  
234 regional rural community liaison centers on  
235 development and update of a certain strategic plan;  
236 requiring rural liaisons to assist rural communities  
237 with providing assistance in coordination with the  
238 regional rural community liaison centers; requiring  
239 the office to submit reports with specified  
240 information to the Governor and the Legislature within  
241 certain timeframes; repealing s. 290.06561, F.S.,  
242 relating to designation of rural enterprise zones as  
243 catalyst sites; amending s. 319.32, F.S.; revising the  
244 disposition of fees collected for certain title  
245 certificates; amending s. 334.044, F.S.; revising the  
246 powers and duties of the Department of Transportation;  
247 amending s. 339.0801, F.S.; revising the allocation of  
248 funds received in the State Transportation Trust Fund;  
249 amending s. 339.2816, F.S.; requiring, rather than  
250 authorizing, that certain funds received from the  
251 State Transportation Trust Fund be used for the Small  
252 County Road Assistance Program; requiring the  
253 department to use other additional revenues for the  
254 Small County Road Assistance Program; providing an  
255 exception to the prohibition against funding capacity  
256 improvements on county roads; amending s. 339.2817,  
257 F.S.; revising the criteria that the Department of  
258 Transportation must consider for evaluating projects  
259 for County Incentive Grant Program assistance;  
260 requiring the department to give priority to counties  
261 located either wholly or partially within the

2026250e1

262 Everglades Agricultural Area and which request a  
263 specified percentage of project costs for eligible  
264 projects; specifying a limitation on such requests;  
265 providing for future expiration; amending s. 339.2818,  
266 F.S.; deleting a provision that the funds allocated  
267 under the Small County Outreach Program are in  
268 addition to the Small County Road Assistance Program;  
269 deleting a provision that a local government within  
270 the Everglades Agricultural Area, the Peace River  
271 Basin, or the Suwannee River Basin may compete for  
272 additional funding; conforming provisions to changes  
273 made by the act; making a technical change; amending  
274 s. 339.68, F.S.; providing legislative findings;  
275 creating the Florida Arterial Road Modernization  
276 Program within the Department of Transportation;  
277 defining the term "rural community"; requiring the  
278 department to allocate from the State Transportation  
279 Trust Fund a minimum sum in each fiscal year to fund  
280 the program; providing that such funding is in  
281 addition to any other funding provided to the program;  
282 providing criteria the department must use to  
283 prioritize projects for funding under the program;  
284 requiring the department to submit a report to the  
285 Governor and the Legislature by a specified date;  
286 requiring that such report be submitted every 2 years  
287 thereafter; providing the criteria for such report;  
288 requiring the Department of Transportation to allocate  
289 additional funds to implement the Small County Road  
290 Assistance Program and amend the tentative work

2026250e1

291 program for a specified number of fiscal years;  
292 requiring the department to submit a budget amendment  
293 before the adoption of the work program; requiring the  
294 department to allocate sufficient funds to implement  
295 the Florida Arterial Road Modernization Program;  
296 requiring the department to amend the current  
297 tentative work program for a specified number of  
298 fiscal years to include the program's projects;  
299 requiring the department to submit a budget amendment  
300 before the implementation of the program; requiring  
301 that the revenue increases in the State Transportation  
302 Trust Fund which are derived from the act be used to  
303 fund the work program; creating s. 341.0525, F.S.;  
304 creating a rural transit operating block grant program  
305 to be administered by the Department of  
306 Transportation; limiting rural transit block grant  
307 funds to certain public transit providers; requiring  
308 the annual allocation of certain funds from the State  
309 Transportation Trust Fund for the program; providing  
310 for the distribution of funds to each eligible public  
311 transit provider in at least a certain amount;  
312 providing authorized uses of grant funds; prohibiting  
313 state participation in certain costs above a specified  
314 percentage or amount; prohibiting an eligible provider  
315 from using block grant funds in a certain manner;  
316 providing an exception; prohibiting the state from  
317 giving a county more than a specified percentage of  
318 available funds or a certain amount; providing  
319 eligibility requirements; requiring an eligible

2026250e1

320 provider to return funds under certain circumstances;  
321 authorizing the department to consult with an eligible  
322 provider before distributing funds to make a certain  
323 determination; requiring an eligible provider to repay  
324 to the department funds expended on unauthorized uses  
325 if revealed in an audit; requiring the department to  
326 redistribute returned and repaid funds to other  
327 eligible providers; amending s. 381.402, F.S.;  
328 revising eligibility requirements for the Florida  
329 Reimbursement Assistance for Medical Education  
330 Program; revising the proof required to make payments  
331 for participation in the program; amending s.  
332 420.9073, F.S.; revising the calculation of guaranteed  
333 amounts distributed from the Local Government Housing  
334 Trust Fund; reenacting and amending s. 420.9075, F.S.;  
335 authorizing a certain percentage of the funds made  
336 available in each county and eligible municipality  
337 from the local housing distribution to be used to  
338 preserve multifamily affordable rental housing;  
339 specifying what such funds may be used for; providing  
340 an expiration; amending s. 1001.451, F.S.; revising  
341 the services required to be provided by regional  
342 consortium service organizations when such services  
343 are found to be necessary and appropriate by such  
344 organizations' boards of directors; revising the  
345 allocation that certain regional consortium service  
346 organizations are eligible to receive from the General  
347 Appropriations Act; requiring each regional consortium  
348 service organization to submit an annual report to the

2026250e1

349       Department of Education; requiring that unexpended  
350       amounts in certain funds be carried forward; requiring  
351       each regional consortium service organization to  
352       provide quarterly financial reports to member  
353       districts; requiring member districts to designate a  
354       district to serve as a fiscal agent for certain  
355       purposes; providing for compensation of the fiscal  
356       agent district; requiring regional consortium service  
357       organizations to retain all funds received from grants  
358       or contracted services to cover indirect or  
359       administrative costs associated with the provision of  
360       such services; requiring the regional consortium  
361       service organization board of directors to determine  
362       products and services provided by the organization;  
363       requiring a regional consortium service organization  
364       board of directors to recommend the establishment of  
365       positions and appointments to a fiscal agent district;  
366       requiring that personnel be employed under specified  
367       personnel policies; authorizing the regional  
368       consortium service organization board of directors to  
369       recommend a salary schedule for personnel; authorizing  
370       regional consortium service organizations to purchase  
371       or lease property and facilities essential to their  
372       operations; providing for the distribution of revenue  
373       if a regional consortium service organization is  
374       dissolved; deleting a provision requiring applications  
375       for incentive grants; authorizing regional consortium  
376       service organization boards of directors to contract  
377       to provide services to nonmember districts; requiring

2026250e1

378 that a fund balance be established for specified  
379 purposes; deleting a requirement for the use of  
380 certain funds; authorizing a regional consortium  
381 service organization to administer a specified  
382 program; creating s. 1001.4511, F.S.; creating the  
383 Regional Consortia Service Organization Supplemental  
384 Services Program; providing the purpose of the  
385 program; authorizing funds to be used for specified  
386 purposes; requiring each regional consortium service  
387 organization to report the distribution of funds  
388 annually to the Legislature; providing for the  
389 carryforward of funds; creating s. 1009.635, F.S.;  
390 establishing the Rural Incentive for Professional  
391 Educators Program within the Department of Education;  
392 requiring the program to provide financial assistance  
393 for the repayment of student loans to eligible  
394 participants who establish permanent residency and  
395 employment in rural areas of opportunity; providing  
396 eligibility requirements; providing that eligible  
397 participants may receive up to a certain amount in  
398 total student loan repayment assistance over a certain  
399 timeframe; requiring the department to verify certain  
400 information of participants in the program before it  
401 disburses awards; providing that the program is  
402 administered through the Office of Student Financial  
403 Assistance within the department; requiring the  
404 program to develop procedures and monitor compliance;  
405 requiring the State Board of Education to adopt rules  
406 by a certain date; amending s. 1013.62, F.S.; revising

2026250e1

407 the calculation methodology used to determine the  
408 amount of revenue that a school district must  
409 distribute to each eligible charter school; amending  
410 s. 1013.64, F.S.; revising conditions under which a  
411 school district may receive funding on an approved  
412 construction project; providing appropriations for  
413 specified purposes; amending ss. 163.3187, 212.205,  
414 257.191, 257.193, 265.283, 288.11621, 288.11631,  
415 443.191, 571.26, and 571.265, F.S.; conforming cross-  
416 references and provisions to changes made by the act;  
417 reenacting s. 288.9935(8), F.S., relating to the  
418 Microfinance Guarantee Program, to incorporate the  
419 amendment made to s. 20.60, F.S., in a reference  
420 thereto; reenacting ss. 125.0104(5)(c), 193.624(3),  
421 196.182(2), 218.12(1), 218.125(1), 218.135(1),  
422 218.136(1), 252.35(2)(cc), 288.102(4), 403.064(16)(h),  
423 589.08(2) and (3), and 1011.62(1)(f), F.S., relating  
424 to authorized uses of tourist development tax revenue;  
425 applicability of assessments of renewable energy  
426 source devices; application of exemptions of renewable  
427 energy source devices; appropriations to offset  
428 reductions in ad valorem tax revenue in fiscally  
429 constrained counties; offset for tax loss associated  
430 with certain constitutional amendments affecting  
431 fiscally constrained counties; offset for tax loss  
432 associated with reductions in value of certain citrus  
433 fruit packing and processing equipment; offset for ad  
434 valorem revenue loss affecting fiscally constrained  
435 counties; Division of Emergency Management powers;

2026250e1

436 one-to-one match requirement under the Supply Chain  
437 Innovation Grant Program; applicability of provisions  
438 related to reuse of reclaimed water; land acquisition  
439 restrictions; and funds for operation of schools,  
440 respectively, to incorporate the amendment made to s.  
441 218.67, F.S., in references thereto; reenacting s.  
442 403.0741(6)(c), F.S., relating to grease waste removal  
443 and disposal, to incorporate the amendments made to  
444 ss. 218.67 and 339.2818, F.S., in references thereto;  
445 reenacting s. 163.3177(7)(e), F.S., relating to  
446 required and optional elements of comprehensive plans  
447 and studies and surveys, to incorporate the amendment  
448 made to s. 288.0656, F.S., in a reference thereto;  
449 reenacting s. 288.9962(7)(a), F.S., relating to the  
450 Broadband Opportunity Program, to incorporate the  
451 amendment made to s. 288.9961, F.S., in a reference  
452 thereto; reenacting s. 215.211(1), F.S., relating to  
453 service charges and elimination or reduction for  
454 specified proceeds, to incorporate the amendment made  
455 to s. 319.32, F.S., in a reference thereto; reenacting  
456 s. 339.66(5) and (6), F.S., relating to upgrades of  
457 arterial highways with controlled access facilities,  
458 to incorporate the amendment made to s. 339.68, F.S.,  
459 in references thereto; reenacting ss. 420.9072(4) and  
460 (6), 420.9076(7)(b), and 420.9079(2), F.S., relating  
461 to the State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program,  
462 adoption of affordable housing incentive strategies  
463 and committees, and the Local Government Housing Trust  
464 Fund, respectively, to incorporate the amendment made

2026250e1

465 to s. 420.9073, F.S., in references thereto; providing  
466 an effective date.

467

468 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

469

470 Section 1. Paragraph (a) of subsection (3) and paragraph  
471 (c) of subsection (10) of section 20.60, Florida Statutes, are  
472 amended, and paragraph (a) of subsection (5) of that section is  
473 reenacted, to read:

474 20.60 Department of Commerce; creation; powers and duties.—

475 (3) (a) The following divisions and offices of the

476 Department of Commerce are established:

477 1. The Division of Economic Development.  
478 2. The Division of Community Development.  
479 3. The Division of Workforce Services.  
480 4. The Division of Finance and Administration.  
481 5. The Division of Information Technology.  
482 6. The Office of the Secretary.  
483 7. The Office of Rural Prosperity.

484 8. The Office of Economic Accountability and Transparency,  
485 which shall:

486 a. Oversee the department's critical objectives as  
487 determined by the secretary and make sure that the department's  
488 key objectives are clearly communicated to the public.

489 b. Organize department resources, expertise, data, and  
490 research to focus on and solve the complex economic challenges  
491 facing the state.

492 c. Provide leadership for the department's priority issues  
493 that require integration of policy, management, and critical

2026250e1

494 objectives from multiple programs and organizations internal and  
495 external to the department; and organize and manage external  
496 communication on such priority issues.

497       d. Promote and facilitate key department initiatives to  
498 address priority economic issues and explore data and identify  
499 opportunities for innovative approaches to address such economic  
500 issues.

501       e. Promote strategic planning for the department.

502       (5) The divisions within the department have specific  
503 responsibilities to achieve the duties, responsibilities, and  
504 goals of the department. Specifically:

505           (a) The Division of Economic Development shall:

506            1. Analyze and evaluate business prospects identified by  
507 the Governor and the secretary.

508            2. Administer certain tax refund, tax credit, and grant  
509 programs created in law. Notwithstanding any other provision of  
510 law, the department may expend interest earned from the  
511 investment of program funds deposited in the Grants and  
512 Donations Trust Fund to contract for the administration of those  
513 programs, or portions of the programs, assigned to the  
514 department by law, by the appropriations process, or by the  
515 Governor. Such expenditures shall be subject to review under  
516 chapter 216.

517            3. Develop measurement protocols for the state incentive  
518 programs and for the contracted entities which will be used to  
519 determine their performance and competitive value to the state.  
520 Performance measures, benchmarks, and sanctions must be  
521 developed in consultation with the legislative appropriations  
522 committees and the appropriate substantive committees, and are

2026250e1

523 subject to the review and approval process provided in s.  
524 216.177. The approved performance measures, standards, and  
525 sanctions shall be included and made a part of the strategic  
526 plan for contracts entered into for delivery of programs  
527 authorized by this section.

528 4. Develop a 5-year statewide strategic plan. The strategic  
529 plan must include, but need not be limited to:

530 a. Strategies for the promotion of business formation,  
531 expansion, recruitment, and retention through aggressive  
532 marketing, attraction of venture capital and finance  
533 development, domestic trade, international development, and  
534 export assistance, which lead to more and better jobs and higher  
535 wages for all geographic regions, disadvantaged communities, and  
536 populations of the state, including rural areas, minority  
537 businesses, and urban core areas.

538 b. The development of realistic policies and programs to  
539 further the economic diversity of the state, its regions, and  
540 their associated industrial clusters.

541 c. Specific provisions for the stimulation of economic  
542 development and job creation in rural areas and midsize cities  
543 and counties of the state, including strategies for rural  
544 marketing and the development of infrastructure in rural areas.

545 d. Provisions for the promotion of the successful long-term  
546 economic development of the state with increased emphasis in  
547 market research and information.

548 e. Plans for the generation of foreign investment in the  
549 state which create jobs paying above-average wages and which  
550 result in reverse investment in the state, including programs  
551 that establish viable overseas markets, assist in meeting the

2026250e1

552 financing requirements of export-ready firms, broaden  
553 opportunities for international joint venture relationships, use  
554 the resources of academic and other institutions, coordinate  
555 trade assistance and facilitation services, and facilitate  
556 availability of and access to education and training programs  
557 that assure requisite skills and competencies necessary to  
558 compete successfully in the global marketplace.

559 f. The identification of business sectors that are of  
560 current or future importance to the state's economy and to the  
561 state's global business image, and development of specific  
562 strategies to promote the development of such sectors.

563 g. Strategies for talent development necessary in the state  
564 to encourage economic development growth, taking into account  
565 factors such as the state's talent supply chain, education and  
566 training opportunities, and available workforce.

567 h. Strategies and plans to support this state's defense,  
568 space, and aerospace industries and the emerging complementary  
569 business activities and industries that support the development  
570 and growth of defense, space, and aerospace in this state.

571 5. Update the strategic plan every 5 years.

572 6. Involve CareerSource Florida, Inc.; direct-support  
573 organizations of the department; local governments; the general  
574 public; local and regional economic development organizations;  
575 other local, state, and federal economic, international, and  
576 workforce development entities; the business community; and  
577 educational institutions to assist with the strategic plan.

578 7. Coordinate with the Florida Tourism Industry Marketing  
579 Corporation in the development of the 4-year marketing plan  
580 pursuant to s. 288.1226(13).

2026250e1

581       8. Administer and manage relationships, as appropriate,  
582 with the entities and programs created pursuant to the Florida  
583 Capital Formation Act, ss. 288.9621-288.96255.

584       (10) The department shall, by November 1 of each year,  
585 submit an annual report to the Governor, the President of the  
586 Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives on the  
587 condition of the business climate and economic development in  
588 the state.

589       (c) The report must incorporate annual reports of other  
590 programs, including:

591       1. A detailed report of the performance of the Black  
592 Business Loan Program and a cumulative summary of quarterly  
593 report data required under s. 288.714.

594       2. ~~The Rural Economic Development Initiative established~~  
595 ~~under s. 288.0656.~~

596       3. A detailed report of the performance of the Florida  
597 Development Finance Corporation and a summary of the  
598 corporation's report required under s. 288.9610.

599       3.4. Information provided by Space Florida under s.  
600 331.3051 and an analysis of the activities and accomplishments  
601 of Space Florida.

602       Section 2. Subsection (5) is added to section 163.3168,  
603 Florida Statutes, to read:

604       163.3168 Planning innovations and technical assistance.—  
605       (5) When selecting applications for funding for technical  
606 assistance, the state land planning agency shall give preference  
607 to local governments located in a rural area of opportunity as  
608 defined in s. 288.0656. The state land planning agency shall  
609 consult with the Office of Rural Prosperity when awarding

2026250e1

610 funding pursuant to this section.

611       Section 3. Paragraph (i) is added to subsection (4) of  
612 section 201.15, Florida Statutes, to read:

613       201.15 Distribution of taxes collected.—All taxes collected  
614 under this chapter are hereby pledged and shall be first made  
615 available to make payments when due on bonds issued pursuant to  
616 s. 215.618 or s. 215.619, or any other bonds authorized to be  
617 issued on a parity basis with such bonds. Such pledge and  
618 availability for the payment of these bonds shall have priority  
619 over any requirement for the payment of service charges or costs  
620 of collection and enforcement under this section. All taxes  
621 collected under this chapter, except taxes distributed to the  
622 Land Acquisition Trust Fund pursuant to subsections (1) and (2),  
623 are subject to the service charge imposed in s. 215.20(1).  
624 Before distribution pursuant to this section, the Department of  
625 Revenue shall deduct amounts necessary to pay the costs of the  
626 collection and enforcement of the tax levied by this chapter.  
627 The costs and service charge may not be levied against any  
628 portion of taxes pledged to debt service on bonds to the extent  
629 that the costs and service charge are required to pay any  
630 amounts relating to the bonds. All of the costs of the  
631 collection and enforcement of the tax levied by this chapter and  
632 service charge shall be available and transferred to the extent  
633 necessary to pay debt service and any other amounts payable with  
634 respect to bonds authorized before January 1, 2017, secured by  
635 revenues distributed pursuant to this section. All taxes  
636 remaining after deduction of costs shall be distributed as  
637 follows:  
638       (4) After the required distributions to the Land

2026250e1

639 Acquisition Trust Fund pursuant to subsections (1) and (2) and  
640 deduction of the service charge imposed pursuant to s.

641 215.20(1), the remainder shall be distributed as follows:

642 (i) A total of \$30 million shall be paid to the credit of  
643 the State Transportation Trust Fund, which funds are exclusively  
644 for the use of the Florida Arterial Road Modernization Program  
645 as provided in s. 339.68.

646 Section 4. Paragraph (c) of subsection (2) of section  
647 202.18, Florida Statutes, is amended, and paragraph (b) of  
648 subsection (2) of that section is republished, to read:

649 202.18 Allocation and disposition of tax proceeds.—The  
650 proceeds of the communications services taxes remitted under  
651 this chapter shall be treated as follows:

652 (2) The proceeds of the taxes remitted under s.  
653 202.12(1)(b) shall be allocated as follows:

654 (b) Fifty-five and nine-tenths percent of the remainder  
655 shall be allocated to the state and distributed pursuant to s.  
656 212.20(6), except that the proceeds allocated pursuant to s.  
657 212.20(6)(d)2.b. shall be prorated to the participating counties  
658 in the same proportion as that month's collection of the taxes  
659 and fees imposed pursuant to chapter 212 and paragraph (1)(b).

660 (c)1. After the distribution required under paragraph (b),  
661 the remainder During each calendar year, the remaining portion  
662 of the proceeds shall be transferred to the Local Government  
663 Half-cent Sales Tax Clearing Trust Fund and Seventy percent of  
664 such proceeds shall be allocated in the same proportion as the  
665 allocation of total receipts of the half-cent sales tax under s.  
666 218.61 and the emergency distribution under s. 218.65 in the  
667 prior state fiscal year. Thirty percent of such proceeds shall

2026250e1

668 ~~be distributed pursuant to s. 218.67.~~

669       2. The proportion of the proceeds allocated based on the  
670       emergency distribution under s. 218.65 shall be distributed  
671       pursuant to s. 218.65.

672       3. In each calendar year, the proportion of the proceeds  
673       allocated based on the half-cent sales tax under s. 218.61 shall  
674       be allocated to each county in the same proportion as the  
675       county's percentage of total sales tax allocation for the prior  
676       state fiscal year and distributed pursuant to s. 218.62.

677       4. The department shall distribute the appropriate amount  
678       to each municipality and county each month at the same time that  
679       local communications services taxes are distributed pursuant to  
680       subsection (3).

681       Section 5. Paragraph (d) of subsection (6) of section  
682       212.20, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

683       212.20 Funds collected, disposition; additional powers of  
684       department; operational expense; refund of taxes adjudicated  
685       unconstitutionally collected.—

686       (6) Distribution of all proceeds under this chapter and ss.  
687       202.18(1)(b) and (2)(b) and 203.01(1)(a)3. is as follows:

688       (d) The proceeds of all other taxes and fees imposed  
689       pursuant to this chapter or remitted pursuant to s. 202.18(1)(b)  
690       and (2)(b) shall be distributed as follows:

691       1. In any fiscal year, the greater of \$500 million, minus  
692       an amount equal to 4.6 percent of the proceeds of the taxes  
693       collected pursuant to chapter 201, or 5.2 percent of all other  
694       taxes and fees imposed pursuant to this chapter or remitted  
695       pursuant to s. 202.18(1)(b) and (2)(b) shall be deposited in  
696       monthly installments into the General Revenue Fund.

2026250e1

697        2. After the distribution under subparagraph 1., 8.9744  
698 percent of the amount remitted by a sales tax dealer located  
699 within a participating county pursuant to s. 218.61 shall be  
700 transferred in two parts:

701        a. The total amount of \$50 million of the communications  
702 services taxes remitted pursuant to s. 202.18(1)(b) and (2)(b),  
703 in any fiscal year, shall be distributed by the department by a  
704 nonoperating transfer to the Department of Commerce in monthly  
705 installments to the Grants and Donations Trust Fund within the  
706 Department of Commerce for the Utility Relocation Reimbursement  
707 Grant Program created in s. 337.4031; and

708        b. The remainder shall be transferred into the Local  
709 Government Half-cent Sales Tax Clearing Trust Fund. Beginning  
710 October 1, 2025, the amount to be transferred shall be reduced  
711 by 0.1018 percent, and the department shall distribute this  
712 amount to the Public Employees Relations Commission Trust Fund  
713 less \$5,000 each month, which shall be added to the amount  
714 calculated in subparagraph 3. and distributed accordingly.

715        3. After the distribution under subparagraphs 1. and 2.,  
716 0.0966 percent shall be transferred to the Local Government  
717 Half-cent Sales Tax Clearing Trust Fund and distributed pursuant  
718 to s. 218.65.

719        4. After the distributions under subparagraphs 1., 2., and  
720 3., 2.0810 percent of the available proceeds shall be  
721 transferred monthly to the Revenue Sharing Trust Fund for  
722 Counties pursuant to s. 218.215.

723        5. After the distributions under subparagraphs 1., 2., and  
724 3., 1.3653 percent of the available proceeds shall be  
725 transferred monthly to the Revenue Sharing Trust Fund for

2026250e1

726 Municipalities pursuant to s. 218.215. If the total revenue to  
727 be distributed pursuant to this subparagraph is at least as  
728 great as the amount due from the Revenue Sharing Trust Fund for  
729 Municipalities and the former Municipal Financial Assistance  
730 Trust Fund in state fiscal year 1999-2000, no municipality shall  
731 receive less than the amount due from the Revenue Sharing Trust  
732 Fund for Municipalities and the former Municipal Financial  
733 Assistance Trust Fund in state fiscal year 1999-2000. If the  
734 total proceeds to be distributed are less than the amount  
735 received in combination from the Revenue Sharing Trust Fund for  
736 Municipalities and the former Municipal Financial Assistance  
737 Trust Fund in state fiscal year 1999-2000, each municipality  
738 shall receive an amount proportionate to the amount it was due  
739 in state fiscal year 1999-2000.

740 6. After the distributions required under subparagraphs 1.-  
741 5., the greater of \$50 million or 0.1412 percent of the  
742 available proceeds shall be transferred in each fiscal year to  
743 fiscally constrained counties pursuant to s. 218.67.

744 7. Of the remaining proceeds:

745 a. In each fiscal year, the sum of \$29,915,500 shall be  
746 divided into as many equal parts as there are counties in the  
747 state, and one part shall be distributed to each county. The  
748 distribution among the several counties must begin each fiscal  
749 year on or before January 5th and continue monthly for a total  
750 of 4 months. If a local or special law required that any moneys  
751 accruing to a county in fiscal year 1999-2000 under the then-  
752 existing provisions of s. 550.135 be paid directly to the  
753 district school board, special district, or a municipal  
754 government, such payment must continue until the local or

2026250e1

755 special law is amended or repealed. The state covenants with  
756 holders of bonds or other instruments of indebtedness issued by  
757 local governments, special districts, or district school boards  
758 before July 1, 2000, that it is not the intent of this  
759 subparagraph to adversely affect the rights of those holders or  
760 relieve local governments, special districts, or district school  
761 boards of the duty to meet their obligations as a result of  
762 previous pledges or assignments or trusts entered into which  
763 obligated funds received from the distribution to county  
764 governments under then-existing s. 550.135. This distribution  
765 specifically is in lieu of funds distributed under s. 550.135  
766 before July 1, 2000.

767 b. The department shall distribute \$166,667 monthly to each  
768 applicant certified as a facility for a new or retained  
769 professional sports franchise pursuant to s. 288.1162. Up to  
770 \$41,667 shall be distributed monthly by the department to each  
771 certified applicant as defined in s. 288.11621 for a facility  
772 for a spring training franchise. However, not more than \$416,670  
773 may be distributed monthly in the aggregate to all certified  
774 applicants for facilities for spring training franchises.  
775 Distributions begin 60 days after such certification and  
776 continue for not more than 30 years, except as otherwise  
777 provided in s. 288.11621. A certified applicant identified in  
778 this sub subparagraph may not receive more in distributions than  
779 expended by the applicant for the public purposes provided in s.  
780 288.1162(5) or s. 288.11621(3).

781 c. The department shall distribute up to \$83,333 monthly to  
782 each certified applicant as defined in s. 288.11631 for a  
783 facility used by a single spring training franchise, or up to

2026250e1

784       \$166,667 monthly to each certified applicant as defined in s. 785 288.11631 for a facility used by more than one spring training 786 franchise. Monthly distributions begin 60 days after such 787 certification or July 1, 2016, whichever is later, and continue 788 for not more than 20 years to each certified applicant as 789 defined in s. 288.11631 for a facility used by a single spring 790 training franchise or not more than 25 years to each certified 791 applicant as defined in s. 288.11631 for a facility used by more 792 than one spring training franchise. A certified applicant 793 identified in this sub-subparagraph may not receive more in 794 distributions than expended by the applicant for the public 795 purposes provided in s. 288.11631(3).

796       d. The department shall distribute \$15,333 monthly to the 797 State Transportation Trust Fund.

798       e. Beginning July 1, 2023, in each fiscal year, the 799 department shall distribute \$27.5 million to the Florida 800 Agricultural Promotional Campaign Trust Fund under s. 571.26, 801 for further distribution in accordance with s. 571.265.

802       8.7. All other proceeds must remain in the General Revenue 803 Fund.

804       Section 6. Paragraph (h) of subsection (1) of section 805 215.971, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

806       215.971 Agreements funded with federal or state 807 assistance.—

808       (1) An agency agreement that provides state financial 809 assistance to a recipient or subrecipient, as those terms are 810 defined in s. 215.97, or that provides federal financial 811 assistance to a subrecipient, as defined by applicable United 812 States Office of Management and Budget circulars, must include

2026250e1

813 all of the following:

814 (h)1. If the agency agreement provides federal or state  
815 financial assistance to a county or municipality that is a rural  
816 community or rural area of opportunity as those terms are  
817 defined in s. 288.0656(2), a provision allowing the agency to  
818 provide for the payment of invoices to the county, municipality,  
819 or rural area of opportunity as that term is defined in s.  
820 288.0656(2), for verified and eligible performance that has been  
821 completed in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth  
822 in the agreement. This provision is not intended to require  
823 reimbursement to the county, municipality, or rural area of  
824 opportunity for invoices paid, but to allow the agency to  
825 provide for the payment of invoices due. The agency shall  
826 expedite such payment requests in order to facilitate the timely  
827 payment of invoices received by the county, municipality, or  
828 rural area of opportunity. This provision is included to  
829 alleviate the financial hardships that certain rural counties  
830 and municipalities encounter when administering agreements, and  
831 must be exercised by the agency when a county or municipality  
832 demonstrates financial hardship, to the extent that federal or  
833 state law, rule, or other regulation allows such payments. This  
834 paragraph may not be construed to alter or limit any other  
835 provisions of federal or state law, rule, or other regulation.

836 2. By August 1, 2027, and each year thereafter, each state  
837 agency shall report to the Office of Rural Prosperity on the  
838 implementation of this paragraph for the preceding fiscal year.  
839 The Office of Rural Prosperity shall summarize the information  
840 received pursuant to this paragraph in its annual report as  
841 required in s. 288.013.

2026250e1

842       Section 7. Section 218.67, Florida Statutes, is amended to  
843 read:

844       218.67 Distribution for fiscally constrained counties.—

845       (1) Each county ~~that is entirely within a rural area of~~  
846 ~~opportunity as designated by the Governor pursuant to s.~~  
847 ~~288.0656 or each county for which the value of a mill will raise~~  
848 no more than ~~\$10~~ ~~\$5~~ million in revenue, based on the taxable  
849 value certified pursuant to s. 1011.62(4)(a)1.a., from the  
850 previous July 1, ~~is shall~~ be considered a fiscally constrained  
851 county.

852       (2) Each fiscally constrained county government that  
853 participates in the local government half-cent sales tax shall  
854 be eligible to receive an additional distribution ~~from the Local~~  
855 ~~Government Half-cent Sales Tax Clearing Trust Fund,~~ as provided  
856 in s. 212.20(6)(d)6. ~~s. 202.18(2)(e)1.~~, in addition to its  
857 regular monthly distribution provided under this part and any  
858 emergency or supplemental distribution under s. 218.65.

859       (3) The amount to be distributed to each fiscally  
860 constrained county shall be determined by the Department of  
861 Revenue at the beginning of the fiscal year, using the prior  
862 fiscal year's sales and use tax collections from the most recent  
863 fiscal year that reports 12 months of collections July 1 taxable  
864 value certified pursuant to s. 1011.62(4)(a)1.a., tax data, the  
865 population as defined in s. 218.21, and the most current  
866 calendar year per capita personal income, as initially reported  
867 by the Bureau of Economic Analysis of the United States  
868 Department of Commerce millage rate levied for the prior fiscal  
869 year. The amount distributed shall be allocated based upon the  
870 following factors:

2026250e1

871       (a) The contribution-to-revenue relative revenue raising  
872 ~~capacity factor for each participating county must equal 100~~  
873 ~~multiplied by a quotient, the numerator of which is the county's~~  
874 ~~population and the denominator of which is the state sales and~~  
875 ~~use tax collections attributable to the county shall be the~~  
876 ~~ability of the eligible county to generate ad valorem revenues~~  
877 ~~from 1 mill of taxation on a per capita basis. A county that~~  
878 ~~raises no more than \$25 per capita from 1 mill shall be assigned~~  
879 ~~a value of 1; a county that raises more than \$25 but no more~~  
880 ~~than \$30 per capita from 1 mill shall be assigned a value of~~  
881 ~~0.75; and a county that raises more than \$30 but no more than~~  
882 ~~\$50 per capita from 1 mill shall be assigned a value of 0.5. No~~  
883 ~~value shall be assigned to counties that raise more than \$50 per~~  
884 ~~capita from 1 mill of ad valorem taxation.~~

885       (b) The personal-income local effort factor must equal a  
886 quotient, the numerator of which is the median per capita  
887 personal income of participating counties and the denominator of  
888 which is the county's per capita personal income shall be a  
889 measure of the relative level of local effort of the eligible  
890 county as indicated by the millage rate levied for the prior  
891 fiscal year. The local effort factor shall be the most recently  
892 adopted countywide operating millage rate for each eligible  
893 county multiplied by 0.1.

894       (c) Each eligible county's proportional allocation of the  
895 total amount available to be distributed to all of the eligible  
896 counties must ~~shall~~ be in the same proportion as the sum of the  
897 county's two factors is to the sum of the two factors for all  
898 eligible counties. The proportional rate computation must be  
899 carried to the fifth decimal place, and the amount to distribute

2026250e1

900 to each county must be rounded to the nearest whole dollar  
901 amount. The counties that are eligible to receive an allocation  
902 under this subsection and the amount available to be distributed  
903 to such counties do shall not include counties participating in  
904 the phaseout period under subsection (4) or the amounts they  
905 remain eligible to receive during the phaseout.

906 (4) For those counties that no longer qualify under the  
907 requirements of subsection (1) after the effective date of this  
908 act, there shall be a 2-year phaseout period. Beginning on July  
909 1 of the year following the year in which the value of a mill  
910 for that county exceeds \$10 ~~\$5~~ million in revenue, the county  
911 shall receive two-thirds of the amount received in the prior  
912 year, and beginning on July 1 of the second year following the  
913 year in which the value of a mill for that county exceeds \$10 ~~\$5~~  
914 million in revenue, the county shall receive one-third of the  
915 amount received in the last year that the county qualified as a  
916 fiscally constrained county. Following the 2-year phaseout  
917 period, the county is shall no longer be eligible to receive any  
918 distributions under this section unless the county can be  
919 considered a fiscally constrained county as provided in  
920 subsection (1).

921 (5) (a) The revenues received under this section must be  
922 allocated ~~may be used~~ by a county to be used for the following  
923 purposes:

924 1. Fifty percent for public safety, including salary  
925 expenditures for law enforcement officers or correctional  
926 officers, as those terms are defined in s. 943.10(1) and (2),  
927 respectively, firefighters as defined in s. 633.102, and  
928 emergency medical technicians or paramedics as those terms are

2026250e1

929 defined in s. 401.23.

930 2. Thirty percent for infrastructure needs.

931 3. Twenty percent for any public purpose.

932 (b) The revenues received under this section any public  
933 ~~purpose, except that such revenues~~ may not be used to pay debt  
934 service on bonds, notes, certificates of participation, or any  
935 other forms of indebtedness.

936 Section 8. Present paragraphs (d) and (e) of subsection (7)  
937 of section 288.001, Florida Statutes, are redesignated as  
938 paragraphs (e) and (f), respectively, and a new paragraph (d) is  
939 added to that subsection, to read:

940 288.001 The Florida Small Business Development Center  
941 Network.—

942 (7) ADDITIONAL STATE FUNDS; USES; PAY-PER-PERFORMANCE  
943 INCENTIVES; STATEWIDE SERVICE; SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS; BEST  
944 PRACTICES; ELIGIBILITY.—

945 (d) Notwithstanding paragraphs (a), (b), and (c), the  
946 network shall use funds directly appropriated for the specific  
947 purpose of expanding service in rural communities as defined in  
948 s. 288.0656, in addition to any funds allocated by the network  
949 from other sources. The network shall use the funds to develop  
950 an activity plan focused on network consultants and resources in  
951 rural communities. In collaboration with regional economic  
952 development organizations as defined in s. 288.018, the plan  
953 must provide for either full- or part-time consultants to be  
954 available for at least 20 hours per week in rural areas or to be  
955 permanently stationed in rural areas. This may include  
956 establishing a circuit in specific rural locations to ensure the  
957 consultants' availability on a regular basis. By using the funds

2026250e1

958 to create a regular presence in rural areas, the network will  
959 strengthen community collaboration, raise awareness of available  
960 resources to provide opportunities for new business development  
961 or existing business growth, and make professional experience,  
962 education, and business information available in these essential  
963 communities. The network may dedicate funds to facilitate local  
964 or regional events that focus on small business topics, provide  
965 consulting services, and leverage partner organizations, such as  
966 the regional economic development organizations, local workforce  
967 development boards as described in s. 445.007, and Florida  
968 College System institutions.

969 Section 9. Section 288.007, Florida Statutes, is amended to  
970 read:

971 288.007 Inventory of communities seeking to recruit  
972 businesses.—By September 30 of each year, a county or  
973 municipality that has a population of at least 25,000 or its  
974 local economic development organization, and each local  
975 government within a rural area of opportunity as defined in s.  
976 288.0656 or its regional economic development organization as  
977 defined in s. 288.018 or other local economic development  
978 organization, shall must submit to the department a brief  
979 overview of the strengths, services, and economic development  
980 incentives that its community offers. The local government or  
981 its local economic development organization also shall must  
982 identify any industries that it is encouraging to locate or  
983 relocate to its area. Unless otherwise required pursuant to this  
984 section, a county or municipality having a population of 25,000  
985 or less fewer or its local economic development organization  
986 seeking to recruit businesses may submit information as required

2026250e1

987 in this section and may participate in any activity or  
988 initiative resulting from the collection, analysis, and  
989 reporting of the information to the department pursuant to this  
990 section.

991 Section 10. Section 288.013, Florida Statutes, is created  
992 to read:

993 288.013 Office of Rural Prosperity.—

994 (1) The Legislature finds that the unique characteristics  
995 of the rural communities in this state are integral to making  
996 Florida an attractive place to visit, work, and live. The  
997 Legislature further finds that fostering a prosperous rural  
998 economy and vibrant rural communities serves the best interests  
999 of this state. Rural prosperity supports this state's  
1000 infrastructure, housing, agricultural, and food-processing needs  
1001 and advances the overall health of Florida's economy. It is  
1002 essential that rural areas be able to grow and thrive, whether  
1003 independently or through regional partnerships. To better serve  
1004 rural communities, and in recognition of the unique challenges  
1005 and opportunities they face, the Office of Rural Prosperity is  
1006 established to ensure that state efforts to support rural  
1007 Florida are coordinated, focused, and effective.

1008 (2) The Office of Rural Prosperity is created within the  
1009 Department of Commerce to support rural communities by helping  
1010 rural stakeholders navigate available programs and resources and  
1011 by representing rural interests across state government.

1012 (3) The Governor shall appoint a director to lead the  
1013 office, subject to confirmation by the Senate. The director  
1014 shall report to the secretary of the department and shall serve  
1015 at the pleasure of the secretary.

2026250e1

1016 (4) The office shall do all of the following:

1017 (a) Serve as the state's point of contact for rural local

1018 governments.

1019 (b) Administer the Rural Economic Development Initiative

1020 (REDI) pursuant to s. 288.0656.

1021 (c) Provide training and technical assistance to rural

1022 local governments on a broad range of community and economic

1023 development activities. The training and technical assistance

1024 may be offered using communications technology or in person. In

1025 addition, the office shall post a recorded training and

1026 technical assistance video to the office's website which covers

1027 all of the required topics. The training and technical

1028 assistance must include, at a minimum, the following topics:

1029 1. How to access state and federal resources, including

1030 training on the online rural resource directory required under

1031 paragraph (d).

1032 2. Best practices for comprehensive planning, economic

1033 development, and land development in rural communities.

1034 3. Strategies to address staffing shortages and strengthen

1035 management functions in rural local governments.

1036 4. Requirements of, and updates on recent changes to, the

1037 Community Planning Act under s. 163.3161.

1038 5. Updates on other recent state and federal laws affecting

1039 rural local governments.

1040 (d) Create and maintain an online rural resource directory

1041 to serve as an interactive tool for users to navigate state and

1042 federal resources, tools, and services available to rural local

1043 governments. The office shall ensure the directory is regularly

1044 updated and, to the greatest extent possible, includes current

2026250e1

1045 information on programs, resources, and services that address  
1046 the needs of rural communities in all areas of governance. Each  
1047 state agency shall routinely provide information and updates to  
1048 the office to support maintenance of the directory. The  
1049 directory must allow users to search by indicators, such as  
1050 agency name, resource type, or topic, and include a notification  
1051 feature that alerts users when new or updated resources are  
1052 available. To the greatest extent possible, the directory must  
1053 identify any financial match requirements associated with listed  
1054 programs.

1055 (5) (a) By October 1, 2026, the office shall establish and  
1056 provide staff for seven regional rural community liaison centers  
1057 across this state to provide specialized in-person state support  
1058 to rural local governments located in rural areas of opportunity  
1059 as defined in s. 288.0656. The department shall, by rule, divide  
1060 the state into seven regions and assign a liaison center to each  
1061 region. Each liaison center shall serve the local governments  
1062 within its geographic area and shall be staffed with at least  
1063 two full-time department employees. At a minimum, each liaison  
1064 center has the following powers and duties:

1065 1. Assist local governments in planning and achieving goals  
1066 related to local or regional growth, economic development, and  
1067 rural prosperity.

1068 2. Facilitate access to state and federal resources,  
1069 including grants, loans, and other available assistance.

1070 3. Advise local governments on available program waivers,  
1071 including financial match waivers or reductions for projects  
1072 using state or federal funds through REDI under s. 288.0656.

1073 4. Coordinate technical assistance needs with the

2026250e1

1074 department and other state or federal agencies.

1075 5. Promote model ordinances, policies, and strategies  
1076 related to economic development.

1077 6. Assist local governments with regulatory and reporting  
1078 compliance requirements.

1079 (b) To the greatest extent possible, each regional rural  
1080 community liaison center shall coordinate with local and  
1081 regional governmental entities, regional economic development  
1082 organizations as defined in s. 288.018, and other appropriate  
1083 entities to establish a network that fosters community-driven  
1084 solutions promoting viable and sustainable rural communities.

1085 (c) Each regional rural community liaison center shall  
1086 regularly engage with REDI established in s. 288.0656, and at  
1087 least one staff member from each liaison center shall attend the  
1088 monthly REDI meeting, either in person or by means of electronic  
1089 communication.

1090 (6) By December 1, 2026, and each year thereafter, the  
1091 director of the office shall submit to the Administration  
1092 Commission within the Executive Office of the Governor a written  
1093 report describing the office's operations and accomplishments  
1094 for the preceding year. The report must include the REDI report  
1095 required by s. 288.0656(8). In consultation with the Department  
1096 of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the office shall also  
1097 include in the annual report recommendations for policies,  
1098 programs, and funding initiatives to further support the needs  
1099 of rural communities in this state. The office shall also submit  
1100 the annual report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker  
1101 of the House of Representatives by December 1 of each year and  
1102 publish it on the office's website. At the next scheduled

2026250e1

1103 meeting of the Administration Commission following submission of  
1104 the report, the director shall, in person, present detailed  
1105 information from the report required under this subsection.

1106 (7) (a) The Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government  
1107 Accountability (OPPAGA) shall evaluate the effectiveness of the  
1108 office and submit a report of its findings, including any  
1109 recommended policy or statutory changes, to the President of the  
1110 Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by  
1111 December 15, 2027, and each year thereafter through 2029.  
1112 Beginning in 2032, the report must be submitted every 3 years.

1113 (b) OPPAGA shall review strategies implemented by other  
1114 states for rural community preservation, enhancement, and  
1115 revitalization and evaluate their effectiveness and potential  
1116 applicability in this state. OPPAGA shall submit a report of its  
1117 findings to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the  
1118 House of Representatives by December 15, 2028, and every 5 years  
1119 thereafter.

1120 Section 11. Section 288.014, Florida Statutes, is created  
1121 to read:

1122 288.014 Renaissance Grants Program.—

1123 (1) The Legislature finds that it has historically provided  
1124 programs to assist rural communities with economic development  
1125 and to enhance their ability to attract businesses and that, by  
1126 providing that extra component of economic viability, rural  
1127 communities are able to attract new businesses and grow existing  
1128 ones. However, the Legislature further finds that a subset of  
1129 rural communities has decreased in population over the past  
1130 decade, contributing to a decline in local business activity and  
1131 economic development. The Legislature therefore determines that

2026250e1

1132 state assistance must evolve to support these communities in  
1133 achieving the foundation necessary for economic viability. The  
1134 intent of the Renaissance Grants Program is to reverse economic  
1135 deterioration in such rural communities by retaining and  
1136 attracting residents by giving them a reason to stay, which will  
1137 stimulate natural economic growth, business opportunities, and  
1138 improved quality of life.

1139 (2) The Office of Rural Prosperity within the department  
1140 shall administer the Renaissance Grants Program to provide block  
1141 grants to eligible counties. By October 1, 2026, the Office of  
1142 Economic and Demographic Research shall certify to the Office of  
1143 Rural Prosperity which counties are growth-impeded. For the  
1144 purposes of this section, the term "growth-impeded" means a  
1145 county that, as of the most recent population estimate, has  
1146 experienced a declining population over the previous 10 years.  
1147 After the initial certification, the Office of Economic and  
1148 Demographic Research shall annually certify whether the county  
1149 remains growth-impeded, until the office certifies the county  
1150 has had 3 consecutive years of population growth. Upon such  
1151 certification of population growth, the county remains eligible  
1152 for the program for 1 additional year to prepare for the end of  
1153 block grant funding.

1154 (3) (a) Each participating county shall enter into an  
1155 agreement with the Office of Rural Prosperity to receive block  
1156 grant funds. Counties have broad authority to design their  
1157 specific plan to achieve population growth consistent with this  
1158 section. The Office of Rural Prosperity may not determine the  
1159 manner in which a county implements its plan. However, regional  
1160 rural community liaison center staff shall provide assistance in

2026250e1

1161 developing the county's plan, upon the county's request.

1162 (b) Each participating county shall submit an annual report  
1163 to the Office of Rural Prosperity detailing program activities,  
1164 intergovernmental agreements, and other information as required  
1165 by the office.

1166 (c) Each participating county shall receive \$1 million from  
1167 the funds appropriated to the program, or an equal share of the  
1168 funds appropriated if insufficient to provide that amount.  
1169 Counties shall make all attempts to limit expenses for  
1170 administrative costs, consistent with the need for prudent  
1171 management and accountability in the use of public funds.  
1172 Counties may supplement the block grant with other funding  
1173 sources, including local, state, or federal grants, and may seek  
1174 public or private contributions or in-kind support to advance  
1175 program activities.

1176 (4) (a) Each participating county shall hire and retain a  
1177 renaissance coordinator, who may be funded from block grant  
1178 proceeds. The renaissance coordinator is responsible for:

1179 1. Ensuring that block grant funds are used as provided in  
1180 this section;

1181 2. Coordinating with other local governments, school  
1182 boards, Florida College System institutions, and other partners;  
1183 and

1184 3. Reporting as necessary to the state, including  
1185 information necessary pursuant to subsection (7).

1186 (b) The Office of Rural Prosperity regional rural community  
1187 liaison center staff shall, upon request, provide assistance and  
1188 training to the renaissance coordinator to support successful  
1189 implementation of the block grant.

2026250e1

1190        (5) Each participating county shall design a plan for  
1191        targeted community investments designed to achieve population  
1192        growth and increase the economic vitality. The plan must include  
1193        the following key features for use of the state support:

1194        (a) Technology centers located within schools or on school  
1195        premises, administered by the local school board, providing  
1196        extended hours and access for students.

1197        (b) Facilities that collocate adult day care with child care  
1198        facilities. The site-sharing facilities must be managed to also  
1199        encourage interaction between generations and increase the  
1200        health and well-being of younger and older participants, reduce  
1201        social isolation, and create cost and time efficiencies for  
1202        working families. The regional rural community liaison center  
1203        staff of the Office of Rural Prosperity shall, upon request,  
1204        assist the county with bringing recommendations to the Rural  
1205        Economic Development Initiative or the appropriate state agency  
1206        to streamline all required state permits, licenses, regulations,  
1207        or other requirements.

1208        (c) Technology labs operated in partnership with the  
1209        nearest Florida College System institution or a career center  
1210        under s. 1001.44. Repurposed vacant industrial sites or existing  
1211        office space must be given priority in the selection of lab  
1212        locations. Each local technology lab must be staffed and open  
1213        for extended hours with the capacity to provide:

1214        1. Access to trainers and equipment necessary for earning  
1215        certificates or online degrees in technology;

1216        2. Hands-on assistance in securing remote work  
1217        opportunities; and

1218        3. Studio space equipped for remote technology-based work

2026250e1

available for graduates and other qualifying residents. Participating counties may determine which residents receive priority access. Collaboration with community partners, including the local workforce development board as described in s. 445.007, to provide training opportunities, in-kind support such as transportation to and from the lab, financing of equipment for in-home use, or basic maintenance of such equipment is required.

(6) In addition to hiring a renaissance coordinator, each participating county shall develop intergovernmental agreements for shared responsibilities with its municipalities, school board, and Florida College System institution or career center and enter into necessary contracts with providers and community partners in order to implement the plan.

(7) (a) Every 2 years, beginning in 2027, the Auditor General shall conduct an operational audit as defined in s. 11.45 of each county's grant activities.

(b) On December 15, 2027, and every year thereafter, the Office of Economic and Demographic Research shall submit a report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives summarizing renaissance block grant recipients by county. The report must provide key economic indicators that measure progress in reversing long-term trends in the county. The Office of Rural Prosperity shall, upon request, provide any data necessary to complete the report.

(8) Notwithstanding s. 216.301, funds appropriated for the purposes of this section are not subject to reversion.

(9) This section expires June 30, 2041.

Section 12. Section 288.0175, Florida Statutes, is created

2026250e1

1248 to read:

1249 288.0175 Public Infrastructure Smart Technology Grant  
1250 Program.—

1251 (1) The Public Infrastructure Smart Technology Grant  
1252 Program is established within the Office of Rural Prosperity  
1253 within the department to fund and support public infrastructure  
1254 smart technology projects in communities located in rural areas  
1255 of opportunity, subject to legislative appropriation.

1256 (2) As used in this section, the term:

1257 (a) "Public infrastructure smart technology" means systems  
1258 or applications that use connectivity, data analytics, or  
1259 automation to improve public infrastructure by increasing  
1260 efficiency, enhancing public services, and promoting sustainable  
1261 development.

1262 (b) "Rural area of opportunity" has the same meaning as in  
1263 s. 288.0656.

1264 (c) "Smart region" means a geographic area that uses  
1265 technology and innovative ideas to improve the quality of life  
1266 for its citizens by addressing regional challenges through  
1267 collaboration among government, businesses, and communities.

1268 (d) "Smart technology lead organization" means a not-for-  
1269 profit corporation organized under s. 501(c) (3) of the Internal  
1270 Revenue Code which has been in existence for at least 3 years  
1271 and specializes in smart region planning.

1272 (3) (a) The Office of Rural Prosperity shall contract with  
1273 one or more smart technology lead organizations to administer  
1274 the grant program for the purpose of deploying public  
1275 infrastructure smart technology in rural communities. Under such  
1276 contracts, the smart technology lead organization shall award

2026250e1

1277 grants to counties and municipalities located within a rural  
1278 area of opportunity for eligible public infrastructure smart  
1279 technology projects.

1280 (b) Each contract must specify deliverables, reporting  
1281 requirements, timeframes, and any other term the office deems  
1282 necessary. At a minimum, the contract must require the smart  
1283 technology lead organization to:

1284 1. Collaborate with counties and municipalities in rural  
1285 areas of opportunity to identify cost-effective smart technology  
1286 solutions for improving public services and infrastructure.

1287 2. Provide technical assistance to counties and  
1288 municipalities located in rural areas of opportunity in  
1289 developing public infrastructure smart technology project plans.

1290 3. Facilitate connections between rural communities and  
1291 other entities, including companies and regional partners to  
1292 maximize the impact of funded projects.

1293 (4) The Office of Rural Prosperity shall include a summary  
1294 of projects funded under this section in its annual report  
1295 required by s. 288.013(6).

1296 Section 13. Subsections (1), (2), and (4) of section  
1297 288.018, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

1298 288.018 Regional Rural Development Grants Program.—

1299 (1) (a) For the purposes of this section, the term "regional  
1300 economic development organization" means an economic development  
1301 organization located in or contracted to serve a rural area of  
1302 opportunity, as defined in s. 288.0656 ~~s. 288.0656(2)(d)~~.

1303 (b) Subject to appropriation, the Office of Rural  
1304 Prosperity department shall establish a grant program to provide  
1305 funding to regional economic development organizations for the

2026250e1

1306 purpose of building the professional capacity of those  
1307 organizations. Building the professional capacity of a regional  
1308 economic development organization includes hiring professional  
1309 staff to develop, deliver, and provide needed economic  
1310 development professional services, including technical  
1311 assistance, education and leadership development, marketing, and  
1312 project recruitment. Grants may also be used by a regional  
1313 economic development organization to provide technical  
1314 assistance to local governments, local economic development  
1315 organizations, and existing and prospective businesses.

1316 (c) A regional economic development organization may apply  
1317 annually to the office department for a grant. The office  
1318 department is authorized to approve, on an annual basis, grants  
1319 to such regional economic development organizations. The office  
1320 may award a maximum amount of \$50,000 in a year to an  
1321 organization may receive in any year will be \$50,000, or  
1322 \$250,000 each to for any three regional economic development  
1323 organizations that serve an entire region of a rural area of  
1324 opportunity designated pursuant to s. 288.0656(7) if they are  
1325 recognized by the office department as serving such a region.

1326 (2) In approving the participants, the office department  
1327 shall require the following:

1328 (a) Documentation of official commitments of support from  
1329 each of the units of local government represented by the  
1330 regional organization.

1331 (b) Demonstration that the organization is in existence and  
1332 actively involved in economic development activities serving the  
1333 region.

1334 (c) Demonstration of the manner in which the organization

2026250e1

1335 is or will coordinate its efforts with those of other local and  
1336 state organizations.

1337 (4) Except as otherwise provided in the General  
1338 Appropriations Act, the office department may expend up to  
1339 \$750,000 each fiscal year from funds appropriated ~~to the Rural~~  
1340 ~~Community Development Revolving Loan Fund~~ for the purposes  
1341 outlined in this section.

1342 Section 14. Section 288.019, Florida Statutes, is amended  
1343 to read:

1344 288.019 Rural considerations in grant review and evaluation  
1345 processes; financial match waiver or reduction.—

1346 (1) Notwithstanding any other law, and to the fullest  
1347 extent possible, each agency and organization ~~the member~~  
1348 ~~agencies and organizations~~ of the Rural Economic Development  
1349 Initiative (REDI) as defined in s. 288.0656 ~~s. 288.0656(6)(a)~~  
1350 shall review:

1351 (a) All grant and loan application evaluation criteria and  
1352 scoring procedures to ensure the fullest access for rural  
1353 communities ~~counties~~ as defined in s. 288.0656 ~~s. 288.0656(2)~~ to  
1354 resources available throughout this ~~the~~ state; and

1355 (b) The financial match requirements for projects in rural  
1356 communities.

1357 (2) ~~(1)~~ Each REDI agency and organization shall consider the  
1358 impact on and ability of rural communities to meet and be  
1359 competitive under such criteria, scoring, and requirements. Upon  
1360 review, each REDI agency and organization shall review all  
1361 evaluation and scoring procedures and develop a proposal for  
1362 modifications to those procedures which minimize the financial  
1363 and resource impact to a rural community, including waiver or

2026250e1

1364 reduction of any required financial match requirements impact of  
1365 a project within a rural area.

1366 (a) (2) Evaluation criteria and scoring procedures must  
1367 provide for an appropriate ranking, when ranking is a component  
1368 of the program, based on the proportionate impact that projects  
1369 have on a rural area when compared with similar project impacts  
1370 on an urban area. Additionally,

1371 (3) evaluation criteria and scoring procedures must  
1372 recognize the disparity of available fiscal resources for an  
1373 equal level of financial support from an urban county or  
1374 municipality and a rural county or municipality.

1375 (a) The evaluation criteria must should weight contribution  
1376 in proportion to the amount of funding available at the local  
1377 level.

1378 (b) Match requirements must be waived or reduced for rural  
1379 communities. When appropriate, an in-kind match must should be  
1380 allowed and applied as a financial match when a rural community  
1381 county is experiencing economic financial distress as defined in  
1382 s. 288.0656 through elevated unemployment at a rate in excess of  
1383 the state's average by 5 percentage points or because of the  
1384 loss of its ad valorem base. Donations of land, though usually  
1385 not recognized as an in-kind match, may be treated as such. As  
1386 appropriate, each agency and organization that applies for or  
1387 receives federal funding must request federal approval to waive  
1388 or reduce the financial match requirements, if any, for projects  
1389 in rural communities.

1390 (3) (4) For existing programs, The proposal developed under  
1391 subsection (2) modified evaluation criteria and scoring  
1392 procedure must be submitted delivered to the Office of Rural

2026250e1

1393 Prosperity department for distribution to the REDI agencies and  
1394 organizations. The REDI agencies and organizations shall review  
1395 and make comments and recommendations that. ~~Future rules,~~  
1396 ~~programs, evaluation criteria, and scoring processes must be~~  
1397 ~~brought before a REDI meeting for review, discussion, and~~  
1398 ~~recommendation to allow rural communities counties fuller access~~  
1399 to the state's resources.

1400 (4) Each REDI agency and organization shall ensure that  
1401 related administrative rules or policies are modified, as  
1402 necessary, to reflect the finalized proposal and that  
1403 information about the authorized waiver or reduction is included  
1404 in the online rural resource directory of the Office of Rural  
1405 Prosperity required in s. 288.013(4)(d).

1406 (5) The rural liaison from the related regional rural  
1407 community liaison center district shall assist the rural  
1408 community to make waiver or reduction requests.

1409 Section 15. Subsection (3) is added to section 288.021,  
1410 Florida Statutes, to read:

1411 288.021 Economic development liaison.—

1412 (3) When practicable, the staff member appointed as the  
1413 economic development liaison shall also serve as the agency  
1414 representative for the Rural Economic Development Initiative  
1415 pursuant to s. 288.0656.

1416 Section 16. Section 288.065, Florida Statutes, is amended  
1417 to read:

1418 288.065 Rural Community Development Revolving Loan Fund.—

1419 (1) The Rural Community Development Revolving Loan Fund  
1420 Program is established within the Office of Rural Prosperity  
1421 ~~department~~ to facilitate the use of existing federal, state, and

2026250e1

1422 local financial resources by providing local governments with  
1423 financial assistance to further promote the economic viability  
1424 of rural communities. These funds may be used to finance  
1425 initiatives directed toward maintaining or developing the  
1426 economic base of rural communities, especially initiatives  
1427 addressing employment opportunities for residents of these  
1428 communities.

1429 (2) (a) The program shall provide for long-term loans, loan  
1430 guarantees, and loan loss reserves to units of local  
1431 governments, or economic development organizations substantially  
1432 underwritten by a unit of local government.<sup>r</sup>

1433 (b) For purposes of this section, the term "unit of local  
1434 government" means any of the following:

1435 1. A county within counties with a population populations  
1436 of 75,000 or less. fewer, or within any

1437 2. A county with a population of 125,000 or less fewer  
1438 which is contiguous to a county with a population of 75,000 or  
1439 less. fewer

1440 3. A municipality within a county described in subparagraph  
1441 1. or subparagraph 2.

1442 4. A county or municipality within a rural area of  
1443 opportunity designated under s. 288.0656.

1445 For purposes of this paragraph, population is determined in  
1446 accordance with the most recent official estimates pursuant to  
1447 s. 186.901 and must include those residing in incorporated and  
1448 unincorporated areas of a county, based on the most recent  
1449 official population estimate as determined under s. 186.901,  
1450 including those residing in incorporated areas and those

2026250e1

1451 ~~residing in unincorporated areas of the county, or to units of~~  
1452 ~~local government, or economic development organizations~~  
1453 ~~substantially underwritten by a unit of local government, within~~  
1454 ~~a rural area of opportunity.~~

1455 (c) ~~(b)~~ Requests for loans must ~~shall~~ be made by application  
1456 to the office department. Loans must ~~shall~~ be made pursuant to  
1457 agreements specifying the terms and conditions agreed to between  
1458 the applicant and the office department. The loans are ~~shall be~~  
1459 the legal obligations of the applicant.

1460 (d) ~~(e)~~ All repayments of principal and interest must ~~shall~~  
1461 be returned to the loan fund and made available for loans to  
1462 other applicants. However, in a rural area of opportunity  
1463 designated under s. 288.0656 ~~by the Governor~~, and upon approval  
1464 by the office department, repayments of principal and interest  
1465 may be retained by the applicant if such repayments are  
1466 dedicated and matched to fund regionally based economic  
1467 development organizations representing the rural area of  
1468 opportunity.

1469 (3) The office department shall manage the fund,  
1470 establishing loan practices that must include, but are not  
1471 limited to, procedures for establishing loan interest rates,  
1472 uses of funding, application procedures, and application review  
1473 procedures. The office has ~~department shall have~~ final approval  
1474 authority for any loan under this section.

1475 (4) Notwithstanding ~~the provisions of~~ s. 216.301, funds  
1476 appropriated for this loan fund ~~may purpose~~ shall not be subject  
1477 to reversion.

1478 (5) The office shall include in its annual report required  
1479 under s. 288.013 detailed information about the fund, including

2026250e1

1480       loans made during the previous fiscal year, loans active, loans  
1481       terminated or repaid, and the amount of funds not obligated as  
1482       of 14 days before the date the report is due.

1483       Section 17. Subsections (1), (2), and (3) of section  
1484       288.0655, Florida Statutes, are amended, and subsection (6) is  
1485       added to that section, to read:

1486       288.0655 Rural Infrastructure Fund.—

1487       (1) There is created within the Office of Rural Prosperity  
1488       department the Rural Infrastructure Fund to facilitate the  
1489       planning, preparing, and financing of infrastructure projects in  
1490       rural communities which will encourage job creation, capital  
1491       investment, and the strengthening and diversification of rural  
1492       economies by promoting tourism, trade, and economic development.  
1493       Grants under this program may be awarded to a unit of local  
1494       government within a rural area of opportunity or a rural  
1495       community as those terms are defined in s. 288.0656 or to a  
1496       regional economic development organization, a unit of local  
1497       government, or an economic development organization  
1498       substantially underwritten by a unit of local government for an  
1499       infrastructure project located within an unincorporated area  
1500       that has a population of 15,000 or less, has been in existence  
1501       for 100 years or more, is contiguous to a rural community, and  
1502       has been adversely affected by a natural disaster or presents a  
1503       unique economic development opportunity of regional impact.

1504       (2) (a) Funds appropriated by the Legislature must shall be  
1505       distributed by the office department through grant programs that  
1506       maximize the use of federal, local, and private resources,  
1507       including, but not limited to, those available under the Small  
1508       Cities Community Development Block Grant Program.

2026250e1

(b) To facilitate access of rural communities and rural areas of opportunity as defined by the Rural Economic Development Initiative to infrastructure funding programs of the Federal Government, such as those offered by the United States Department of Agriculture and the United States Department of Commerce, and state programs, including those offered by Rural Economic Development Initiative agencies, and to facilitate local government or private infrastructure funding efforts, the office department may award grants for up to 75 percent of the total infrastructure project cost, or up to 100 percent of the total infrastructure project cost for a project located in a rural community as defined in s. 288.0656(2) which is also located in a fiscally constrained county as defined in s. 218.67(1) or a rural area of opportunity as defined in s. 288.0656(2). Eligible uses of funds may include improving any inadequate infrastructure that has resulted in regulatory action that prohibits economic or community growth and reducing the costs to community users of proposed infrastructure improvements that exceed such costs in comparable communities. Eligible uses of funds include improvements to public infrastructure for industrial or commercial sites and upgrades to or development of public tourism infrastructure. Authorized infrastructure may include the following public or public-private partnership facilities: storm water systems; telecommunications facilities; roads or other remedies to transportation impediments; nature-based tourism facilities; or other physical requirements necessary to facilitate tourism, trade, and economic development activities in the community. Authorized infrastructure may also include publicly or privately owned self-powered nature-based

2026250e1

1538 tourism facilities, publicly owned telecommunications  
1539 facilities, and additions to the distribution facilities of the  
1540 existing natural gas utility as defined in s. 366.04(3)(c), the  
1541 existing electric utility as defined in s. 366.02, or the  
1542 existing water or wastewater utility as defined in s.  
1543 367.021(12), or any other existing water or wastewater facility,  
1544 which owns a gas or electric distribution system or a water or  
1545 wastewater system in this state when:

1546 1. A contribution-in-aid of construction is required to  
1547 serve public or public-private partnership facilities under the  
1548 tariffs of any natural gas, electric, water, or wastewater  
1549 utility as defined herein; and

1550 2. Such utilities as defined herein are willing and able to  
1551 provide such service.

1552 (c) The office department may award grants of up to  
1553 \$300,000 for infrastructure feasibility studies, design and  
1554 engineering activities, or other infrastructure planning and  
1555 preparation or site readiness activities. Site readiness  
1556 expenses may include clearing title, surveys, permitting,  
1557 environmental studies, and regulatory compliance costs. Grants  
1558 awarded under this paragraph may be used in conjunction with  
1559 grants awarded under paragraph (b). In evaluating applications  
1560 under this paragraph, the office department shall consider the  
1561 extent to which the application seeks to minimize administrative  
1562 and consultant expenses.

1563 (d) The office department shall participate in a memorandum  
1564 of agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture  
1565 under which state funds available through the Rural  
1566 Infrastructure Fund may be advanced, in excess of the prescribed

2026250e1

1567 state share, for a project that has received from the United  
1568 States Department of Agriculture a preliminary determination of  
1569 eligibility for federal financial support. State funds in excess  
1570 of the prescribed state share which are advanced pursuant to  
1571 this paragraph and the memorandum of agreement must ~~shall~~ be  
1572 reimbursed when funds are awarded under an application for  
1573 federal funding.

1574 (e) To enable local governments to access the resources  
1575 available pursuant to s. 403.973(17), the office department may  
1576 award grants for surveys, feasibility studies, and other  
1577 activities related to the identification and preclearance review  
1578 of land which is suitable for preclearance review. Authorized  
1579 grants under this paragraph may not exceed \$75,000 each, except  
1580 in the case of a project in a rural area of opportunity, in  
1581 which case the grant may not exceed \$300,000. Any funds awarded  
1582 under this paragraph must be matched at a level of 50 percent  
1583 with local funds, except that any funds awarded for a project in  
1584 a rural area of opportunity do not require a match of local  
1585 funds. ~~If an application for funding is for a catalyst site, as~~  
1586 ~~defined in s. 288.0656, the requirement for local match may be~~  
1587 ~~waived pursuant to the process in s. 288.06561.~~ In evaluating  
1588 applications under this paragraph, the office department shall  
1589 consider the extent to which the application seeks to minimize  
1590 administrative and consultant expenses.

1591 (3) The office department, in consultation with the  
1592 ~~Department of Transportation Florida Tourism Industry Marketing~~  
1593 ~~Corporation~~, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the  
1594 Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, as  
1595 appropriate, shall review and certify applications pursuant to

2026250e1

1596 s. 288.061. The review must include an evaluation of the  
1597 economic benefit and long-term viability. The office has  
1598 ~~department shall have~~ final approval for any grant under this  
1599 section.

1600 (6) The office shall include in its annual report required  
1601 under s. 288.013 detailed information about the fund, including  
1602 grants made for the year, grants active, grants terminated or  
1603 complete, and the amount of funds not obligated as of 14 days  
1604 before the date the report is due.

1605 Section 18. Subsection (1), paragraphs (a), (b), and (e) of  
1606 subsection (2), subsections (3) and (6), paragraphs (b) and (c)  
1607 of subsection (7), and subsection (8) of section 288.0656,  
1608 Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

1609 288.0656 Rural Economic Development Initiative.—

1610 (1) (a) Recognizing that rural communities and regions  
1611 continue to face extraordinary challenges in their efforts to  
1612 significantly improve their economies, specifically in terms of  
1613 personal income, job creation, average wages, and strong tax  
1614 bases, it is the intent of the Legislature to encourage and  
1615 facilitate ~~the location and expansion of major economic~~  
1616 development projects ~~of significant scale~~ in such rural  
1617 communities. The Legislature finds that rural communities are  
1618 the essential conduits for the economy's distribution supply,  
1619 manufacturing supply, and food supply.

1620 (b) The Rural Economic Development Initiative, known as  
1621 "REDI," is created within the Office of Rural Prosperity  
1622 ~~department, and all the participation of state and regional~~  
1623 ~~agencies listed in paragraph (6) (a) shall participate in this~~  
1624 ~~initiative is authorized.~~

2026250e1

(2) As used in this section, the term:

(a) "Catalyst project" means a business locating or expanding in a rural area of opportunity to serve as an economic generator of regional significance for the growth of a regional target industry cluster. The project must provide capital investment on a scale significant enough to affect the entire region and result in the development of high-wage and high-skill jobs.

(b) "Catalyst site" means a parcel or parcels of land within a rural area of opportunity that has been prioritized as a geographic site for economic development through partnerships with state, regional, and local organizations. The site must be reviewed by REDI and approved by the department for the purposes of locating a catalyst project.

(c) (e) "Rural community" means:

1. A county with a population of 75,000 or less fewer.
2. A county with a population of 125,000 or less fewer which is contiguous to a county with a population of 75,000 or less fewer.

3. A municipality within a county described in subparagraph 1. or subparagraph 2.

4. An unincorporated federal enterprise community or an incorporated rural city with a population of 25,000 or less ~~fewer~~ and an employment base focused on traditional agricultural or resource-based industries, located in a county not defined as rural, which has at least three or more of the economic distress factors identified in paragraph (a) (e) and verified by the Office of Rural Prosperity ~~department~~.

2026250e1

1654 For purposes of this paragraph, population must ~~shall~~ be  
1655 determined in accordance with the most recent official estimate  
1656 pursuant to s. 186.901.

1657 (3) REDI shall be responsible for coordinating and focusing  
1658 the efforts and resources of state and regional agencies on the  
1659 problems which affect the fiscal, economic, and community  
1660 viability of Florida's ~~economically distressed~~ rural  
1661 communities, working with local governments, community-based  
1662 organizations, and private organizations that have an interest  
1663 in the growth and development of these communities to find ways  
1664 to balance environmental and growth management issues with local  
1665 needs.

1666 (6) (a) By August 1 of each year, the head of each of the  
1667 following agencies and organizations shall designate a deputy  
1668 secretary or higher-level staff person from within the agency or  
1669 organization to serve as the REDI representative for the agency  
1670 or organization:

- 1671 1. The Department of Transportation.
- 1672 2. The Department of Environmental Protection.
- 1673 3. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
- 1674 4. The Department of State.
- 1675 5. The Department of Health.
- 1676 6. The Department of Children and Families.
- 1677 7. The Department of Corrections.
- 1678 8. The Department of Education.
- 1679 9. The Department of Juvenile Justice.
- 1680 10. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.
- 1681 11. Each water management district.
- 1682 12. CareerSource Florida, Inc.

2026250e1

1683 13. VISIT Florida.

1684 14. The Florida Regional Planning Council Association.

1685 15. The Agency for Health Care Administration.

1686 16. The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS).

1687 (b) An alternate for each designee must shall also be

1688 chosen, who must also be a deputy secretary or higher-level  
1689 staff person, and the names of the designees and alternates must  
1690 shall be reported sent to the director of the Office of Rural  
1691 Prosperity. At least one rural liaison from each regional rural  
1692 community liaison center must participate in the REDI meetings  
1693 Secretary of Commerce.

1694 (c) REDI shall meet at least each month but may meet more  
1695 frequently if necessary. Each REDI representative, or his or her  
1696 designee, shall be physically present or available by means of  
1697 electronic communication for each meeting.

1698 (d) (b) Each REDI representative shall must have  
1699 comprehensive knowledge of his or her agency's functions, both  
1700 regulatory and service in nature, and of the state's economic  
1701 goals, policies, and programs. This person shall be the primary  
1702 point of contact for his or her agency with REDI on issues and  
1703 projects relating to ~~economically distressed~~ rural communities  
1704 and with regard to expediting project review, shall ensure a  
1705 prompt effective response to problems arising with regard to  
1706 rural issues, and shall work closely with the other REDI  
1707 representatives in the identification of opportunities for  
1708 preferential awards of program funds, contractual or other  
1709 agreement provisions which meet the requirements of s. 215.971,  
1710 and allowances and waiver of program requirements when necessary  
1711 to encourage and facilitate rural growth, including, but not

2026250e1

1712 limited to, long-term private capital investment and job  
1713 creation.

1714 (e) The REDI representatives shall work with REDI in the  
1715 review and evaluation of statutes and rules for adverse impact  
1716 on rural communities and the development of alternative  
1717 proposals to mitigate that impact.

1718 (f) Each REDI representative shall be responsible for  
1719 ensuring that each district office or facility of his or her  
1720 agency is informed quarterly about the Rural Economic  
1721 Development Initiative and for providing assistance throughout  
1722 the agency in the implementation of REDI activities.

1723 (7)

1724 (b) Designation as a rural area of opportunity under this  
1725 subsection is shall be contingent upon the execution of a  
1726 memorandum of agreement among the Office of Rural Prosperity  
1727 department; the governing body of the county; and the governing  
1728 bodies of any municipalities to be included within a rural area  
1729 of opportunity. Such agreement must shall specify the terms and  
1730 conditions of the designation, including, but not limited to,  
1731 the duties and responsibilities of the county and any  
1732 participating municipalities to take actions designed to  
1733 facilitate the retention and expansion of existing businesses in  
1734 the area, as well as the recruitment of new businesses to the  
1735 area.

1736 (c) Each rural area of opportunity may designate catalyst  
1737 projects, provided that each catalyst project is specifically  
1738 recommended by REDI and confirmed as a catalyst project by the  
1739 department. All state agencies and departments shall use all  
1740 available tools and resources to the extent permissible by law

2026250e1

1741 to promote the creation and development of each catalyst project  
1742 and the development of catalyst sites.

1743 (8) REDI shall submit a report to the Office of Rural  
1744 Prosperity department on all REDI activities for the previous  
1745 fiscal year as a supplement to the office's department's annual  
1746 report required under s. 288.013 ~~s. 20.60~~. This supplementary  
1747 report must include:

1748 (a) A status report on every project ~~all projects~~ currently  
1749 being coordinated through REDI; ~~;~~ the number of preferential  
1750 awards and allowances made pursuant to this section in detail by  
1751 award, allowance, or match type; ~~;~~ the dollar amount of such  
1752 awards; ~~;~~ and the names of the recipients.

1753 (b) A description of all waivers of program requirements  
1754 granted, including a list by program of each waiver that was  
1755 granted. If waivers were requested but were not granted, a list  
1756 of ungranted waivers, including reasons why the waivers were not  
1757 granted, must be included.

1758 (c) Detailed information as to the economic impact of the  
1759 projects coordinated by REDI.

1760 (d) Recommendations based on the review and evaluation of  
1761 statutes and rules having an adverse impact on rural communities  
1762 and proposals to mitigate such adverse impacts.

1763 (e) Legislative recommendations for statutory waivers or  
1764 reductions of specified economic development or other program  
1765 requirements, including financial match waivers or reductions,  
1766 for applicants within rural areas of opportunity.

1767 (f) Outcomes of proposals submitted pursuant to s. 288.019.

1768 Section 19. Section 288.06561, Florida Statutes, is  
1769 repealed.

2026250e1

1770       Section 20. Subsections (2), (3), and (4) of section  
1771 288.0657, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:  
1772       288.0657 Florida rural economic development strategy  
1773 grants.—  
1774       (2) The Office of Rural Prosperity shall provide department  
1775 ~~may accept and administer moneys appropriated to the department~~  
1776 ~~for providing~~ grants to assist rural communities to develop and  
1777 implement strategic economic development plans. Grants may be  
1778 provided to assist with costs associated with marketing a site  
1779 to business and site selectors for an economic development  
1780 project that is part of an economic development plan, either as  
1781 part of funding to develop and implement a plan or related to an  
1782 already adopted plan.  
1783       (3) A rural community, an economic development organization  
1784 in a rural area, or a regional organization representing at  
1785 least one rural community or such economic development  
1786 organizations may apply for such grants. The rural liaison for  
1787 the rural community shall assist those applying for such grants.  
1788       (4) The office department shall establish criteria for  
1789 reviewing grant applications. These criteria must shall include,  
1790 but are not limited to, the degree of participation and  
1791 commitment by the local community and the application's  
1792 consistency with local comprehensive plans or the application's  
1793 proposal to ensure such consistency. Grants for marketing may  
1794 include funding for advertising campaign materials and costs  
1795 associated with meetings, trade missions, and professional  
1796 development related to site preparation and marketing. The  
1797 office department shall review each application for a grant. The  
1798 ~~department may approve grants only to the extent that funds are~~

2026250e1

1799 ~~appropriated for such grants by the Legislature.~~

1800       Section 21. Paragraph (a) of subsection (13) of section  
1801 288.1226, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1802       288.1226 Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation;  
1803 use of property; board of directors; duties; audit.—

1804       (13) FOUR-YEAR MARKETING PLAN.—

1805       (a) The corporation shall, in collaboration with the  
1806 department, develop a 4-year marketing plan. At a minimum, the  
1807 marketing plan must discuss the following:

1808       1. Continuation of overall tourism growth in this state.  
1809       2. Expansion to new or under-represented tourist markets.  
1810       3. Maintenance of traditional and loyal tourist markets.  
1811       4. Coordination of efforts with county destination  
1812 marketing organizations, other local government marketing  
1813 groups, privately owned attractions and destinations, and other  
1814 private sector partners to create a seamless, four-season  
1815 advertising campaign for the state and its regions.

1816       5. Development of innovative techniques or promotions to  
1817 build repeat visitation by targeted segments of the tourist  
1818 population.

1819       6. Consideration of innovative sources of state funding for  
1820 tourism marketing.

1821       7. Promotion of nature-based tourism, including, but not  
1822 limited to, promotion of the Florida Greenways and Trails System  
1823 as described under s. 260.014 and the Florida Shared-Use  
1824 Nonmotorized Trail Network as described under s. 339.81.

1825       8. Coordination of efforts with the Office of Greenways and  
1826 Trails of the Department of Environmental Protection and the  
1827 department to promote and assist local communities, including,

2026250e1

1828 but not limited to, communities designated as trail towns by the  
1829 Office of Greenways and Trails, to maximize use of nearby trails  
1830 as economic assets, including specific promotion of trail-based  
1831 tourism.

1832 9. Promotion of heritage tourism.

1833 10. Development of a component to address emergency  
1834 response to natural and manmade disasters from a marketing  
1835 standpoint.

1836 11. Provision of appropriate marketing assistance resources  
1837 to small, rural, and agritourism businesses located in this  
1838 state. Such resources may include, but are not limited to,  
1839 marketing plans, marketing assistance, promotional support,  
1840 media development, technical expertise, marketing advice,  
1841 technology training, and social marketing support.

1842 Section 22. Section 288.12266, Florida Statutes, is  
1843 repealed.

1844 Section 23. Paragraph (f) of subsection (2) and paragraphs  
1845 (a), (b), and (c) of subsection (4) of section 288.9961, Florida  
1846 Statutes, are amended, and subsection (6) is added to that  
1847 section, to read:

1848 288.9961 Promotion of broadband adoption; Florida Office of  
1849 Broadband.—

1850 (2) DEFINITIONS.—As used in this section, the term:

1851 (f) "Underserved" means a geographic area of this state in  
1852 which there is no provider of broadband Internet service that  
1853 offers a connection to the Internet with a capacity for  
1854 transmission at a consistent speed of at least 100 megabits per  
1855 second downstream and at least 20 ~~10~~ megabits per second  
1856 upstream.

2026250e1

(4) FLORIDA OFFICE OF BROADBAND.—The Florida Office of Broadband is created within the Division of Community Development in the department for the purpose of developing, marketing, and promoting broadband Internet services in this state. The office, in the performance of its duties, shall do all of the following:

(a) Create a strategic plan that has goals and strategies for increasing and improving the availability of, access to, and use of broadband Internet service in this state. In development of the plan, the department shall incorporate applicable federal broadband activities, including any efforts or initiatives of the Federal Communications Commission, to improve broadband Internet service in this state. The plan must identify available federal funding sources for the expansion or improvement of broadband. The strategic plan must be submitted to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by June 30, 2022. The strategic plan must be updated biennially thereafter. The plan must include a process to review and verify public input regarding transmission speeds and availability of broadband Internet service throughout this state. The office shall consult with each regional rural community liaison center within the Office of Rural Prosperity on the development and update of the plan.

(b) Build and facilitate local technology planning teams or partnerships with members representing cross-sections of the community, which may include, but are not limited to, representatives from the following organizations and industries: libraries, K-12 education, colleges and universities, local health care providers, private businesses, community

2026250e1

1886 organizations, economic development organizations, local  
1887 governments, tourism, parks and recreation, and agriculture. The  
1888 local technology planning teams or partnerships shall work with  
1889 rural communities to help the communities understand their  
1890 current broadband availability, locate unserved and underserved  
1891 businesses and residents, identify assets relevant to broadband  
1892 deployment, build partnerships with broadband service providers,  
1893 and identify opportunities to leverage assets and reduce  
1894 barriers to the deployment of broadband Internet services in the  
1895 community. The teams or partnerships must be proactive in rural  
1896 communities as defined in s. 288.0656 fiscally constrained  
1897 ~~counties~~ in identifying and providing assistance, in  
1898 coordination with the regional rural community liaison centers  
1899 within the Office of Rural Prosperity, with applying for federal  
1900 grants for broadband Internet service.

1901 (c) Provide technical and planning assistance to rural  
1902 communities in coordination with the regional rural community  
1903 liaison centers within the Office of Rural Prosperity.

1904 (6) BROADBAND REPORTING.—

1905 (a) The office shall submit to the Governor, the President  
1906 of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a  
1907 quarterly report detailing the implementation of broadband  
1908 activities in rural, unserved, and underserved communities. Such  
1909 information must be listed by county and include the amount of  
1910 state and federal funds allocated to and expended in the county  
1911 by program; the progress toward deploying broadband in the  
1912 county; any technical assistance provided; the activities of the  
1913 local technology planning teams and partnerships; and the  
1914 fulfillment of all other duties of the office required by this

2026250e1

1915 part.

1916 (b) By December 31 of each year, the office shall submit to  
1917 the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of  
1918 the House of Representatives an annual report on the office's  
1919 operations and accomplishments for that calendar year and the  
1920 status of broadband Internet service access and use in this  
1921 state. The report must also incorporate the quarterly reports on  
1922 rural, unserved, and underserved communities required by  
1923 paragraph (a).

1924 Section 24. Section 290.06561, Florida Statutes, is  
1925 repealed.

1926 Section 25. Paragraph (a) of subsection (5) of section  
1927 319.32, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1928 319.32 Fees; service charges; disposition.—

1929 (5) (a) Forty-seven dollars of each fee collected, except  
1930 for fees charged on a certificate of title for a motor vehicle  
1931 for hire registered under s. 320.08(6), for each applicable  
1932 original certificate of title and each applicable duplicate copy  
1933 of a certificate of title shall be deposited as follows: into  
1934 ~~the State Transportation Trust Fund. Deposits to the State~~  
1935 ~~Transportation Trust Fund pursuant to this paragraph may not~~  
1936 ~~exceed \$200 million in any fiscal year, and from any collections~~  
1937 ~~in excess of that amount during the fiscal year,~~

1938 1. The first \$30 million collected shall be deposited into  
1939 the Highway Safety Operating Trust Fund; and

1940 2. Any remaining collections shall be paid into the State  
1941 ~~Transportation Trust General Revenue Fund.~~

1942 Section 26. Subsection (40) is added to section 334.044,  
1943 Florida Statutes, to read:

2026250e1

1944        334.044 Powers and duties of the department.—The department  
1945 shall have the following general powers and duties:

1946        (40) To provide technical assistance and support from the  
1947 appropriate district of the department to counties that are not  
1948 located in a metropolitan planning organization created pursuant  
1949 to s. 339.175.

1950        Section 27. Section 339.0801, Florida Statutes, is amended  
1951 to read:

1952        339.0801 Allocation of increased revenues derived from  
1953 amendments to s. 319.32(5)(a) ~~by ch. 2012-128.~~—

1954        (1) The first \$200 million of funds that result from  
1955 increased revenues to the State Transportation Trust Fund  
1956 derived from the amendments to s. 319.32(5)(a) made by s. 11,  
1957 chapter 2012-128, Laws of Florida, ~~this~~ act must be used  
1958 annually, first as set forth in paragraph (a) subsection (1) and  
1959 then as set forth in paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) subsections  
1960 ~~(2)-(4)~~, notwithstanding any other provision of law:

1961        (a)1.(1)(a) Beginning in the 2013-2014 fiscal year and  
1962 annually for 30 years thereafter, \$10 million shall be for the  
1963 purpose of funding any seaport project identified in the adopted  
1964 work program of the Department of Transportation, to be known as  
1965 the Seaport Investment Program.

1966        2.(b) The revenues may be assigned, pledged, or set aside  
1967 as a trust for the payment of principal or interest on revenue  
1968 bonds, or other forms of indebtedness issued by an individual  
1969 port or appropriate local government having jurisdiction  
1970 thereof, or collectively by interlocal agreement among any of  
1971 the ports, or used to purchase credit support to permit such  
1972 borrowings. Alternatively, revenue bonds shall be issued by the

2026250e1

1973      Division of Bond Finance at the request of the Department of  
1974      Transportation under the State Bond Act and shall be secured by  
1975      such revenues as are provided in this subsection.

1976      3.(e) Revenue bonds or other indebtedness issued hereunder  
1977      are not a general obligation of the state and are secured solely  
1978      by a first lien on the revenues distributed under this  
1979      subsection.

1980      4.(d) The state covenants with holders of the revenue bonds  
1981      or other instruments of indebtedness issued pursuant to this  
1982      subsection that it will not repeal this subsection; nor take any  
1983      other action, including but not limited to amending this  
1984      subsection, that will materially and adversely affect the rights  
1985      of such holders so long as revenue bonds or other indebtedness  
1986      authorized by this subsection are outstanding.

1987      5.(e) The proceeds of any revenue bonds or other  
1988      indebtedness, after payment of costs of issuance and  
1989      establishment of any required reserves, shall be invested in  
1990      projects approved by the Department of Transportation and  
1991      included in the department's adopted work program, by amendment  
1992      if necessary. As required under s. 11(f), Art. VII of the State  
1993      Constitution, the Legislature approves projects included in the  
1994      department's adopted work program, including any projects added  
1995      to the work program by amendment under s. 339.135(7).

1996      6.(f) Any revenues that are not used for the payment of  
1997      bonds as authorized by this subsection may be used for purposes  
1998      authorized under the Florida Seaport Transportation and Economic  
1999      Development Program. This revenue source is in addition to any  
2000      amounts provided for and appropriated in accordance with ss.  
2001      311.07 and 320.20(3) and (4).

2026250e1

2002        (b) (2) Beginning in the 2013-2014 fiscal year and annually  
2003 thereafter, \$10 million shall be transferred to the  
2004 Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund, to be used as specified  
2005 in s. 427.0159.

2006        (c) (3) Beginning in the 2013-2014 fiscal year and annually  
2007 thereafter, \$10 million shall be allocated to the Small County  
2008 Outreach Program to be used as specified in s. 339.2818. These  
2009 funds are in addition to the funds provided for the program  
2010 pursuant to s. 201.15(4)(a)1.

2011        (d) (4) After the distributions required pursuant to  
2012 paragraphs (a), (b), and (c) subsections (1)-(3), the remaining  
2013 funds shall be used annually for transportation projects within  
2014 this state for existing or planned strategic transportation  
2015 projects which connect major markets within this state or  
2016 between this state and other states, which focus on job  
2017 creation, and which increase this state's viability in the  
2018 national and global markets.

2019        (2) The remaining funds that result from increased revenue  
2020 to the State Transportation Trust Fund derived pursuant to s.  
2021 319.32(5)(a) must be used annually, notwithstanding any other  
2022 law, beginning in the 2026-2027 fiscal year and annually  
2023 thereafter, for the Small County Road Assistance Program as  
2024 prescribed in s. 339.2816.

2025        (3) (5) Pursuant to s. 339.135(7), the department shall  
2026 amend the work program to add the projects provided for in this  
2027 section.

2028        Section 28. Subsection (3) and paragraph (a) of subsection  
2029 (4) of section 339.2816, Florida Statutes, are amended, and  
2030 paragraph (c) of subsection (4) of that section is reenacted, to

2026250e1

2031 read:

2032 339.2816 Small County Road Assistance Program.—

2033 (3) Beginning with fiscal year ~~1999-2000 until fiscal year~~  
2034 ~~2009-2010, and beginning again with fiscal year 2012-2013, up to~~  
2035 \$25 million annually from the State Transportation Trust Fund  
2036 must ~~may~~ be used for the purposes of funding the Small County  
2037 Road Assistance Program as described in this section. In  
2038 addition, beginning with the fiscal year 2026-2027, the  
2039 department must use the additional revenues allocated by s.  
2040 339.0801 for the program.

2041 (4) (a) Small counties shall be eligible to compete for  
2042 funds that have been designated for the Small County Road  
2043 Assistance Program for resurfacing or reconstruction projects on  
2044 county roads that were part of the county road system on June  
2045 10, 1995. Capacity improvements on county roads are ~~shall~~ not be  
2046 eligible for funding under the program unless a safety issue  
2047 exists or the department finds it necessary to widen existing  
2048 lanes as part of a resurfacing or reconstruction project.

2049 (c) The following criteria must be used to prioritize road  
2050 projects for funding under the program:

- 2051 1. The primary criterion is the physical condition of the  
2052 road as measured by the department.
- 2053 2. As secondary criteria the department may consider:
  - 2054 a. Whether a road is used as an evacuation route.
  - 2055 b. Whether a road has high levels of agricultural travel.
  - 2056 c. Whether a road is considered a major arterial route.
  - 2057 d. Whether a road is considered a feeder road.
  - 2058 e. Whether a road is located in a fiscally constrained  
2059 county, as defined in s. 218.67(1).

2026250e1

2060       f. Other criteria related to the impact of a project on the  
2061 public road system or on the state or local economy as  
2062 determined by the department.

2063       Section 29. Subsection (3) of section 339.2817, Florida  
2064 Statutes, is amended, and subsection (6) is added to that  
2065 section, to read:

2066       339.2817 County Incentive Grant Program.—

2067       (3) The department shall ~~must~~ consider, but is not limited  
2068 to, the following criteria for evaluation of projects for County  
2069 Incentive Grant Program assistance:

2070       (a) The extent to which the project will encourage,  
2071 enhance, or create economic benefits;

2072       (b) The likelihood that assistance would enable the project  
2073 to proceed at an earlier date than the project could otherwise  
2074 proceed;

2075       (c) The extent to which assistance would foster innovative  
2076 public-private partnerships and attract private debt or equity  
2077 investment;

2078       (d) The extent to which the project uses new technologies,  
2079 including intelligent transportation systems, which enhance the  
2080 efficiency of the project;

2081       (e) The extent to which the project enhances connectivity  
2082 between rural agricultural areas and market distribution  
2083 centers;

2084       (f) The extent to which the project helps to maintain or  
2085 protect the environment; and

2086       (g) ~~(f)~~ The extent to which the project includes  
2087 transportation benefits for improving intermodalism and safety.

2088       (6) Beginning in the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the department

2026250e1

2089 shall give priority to a county located, either wholly or  
2090 partially, within the Everglades Agricultural Area as defined in  
2091 s. 373.4592(15) which, notwithstanding subsection (4), requests  
2092 100 percent of the project costs for an eligible project that  
2093 meets the criteria established in subsection (3). Requests under  
2094 this subsection are limited to \$15 million annually. This  
2095 subsection expires July 1, 2032.

2096 Section 30. Subsections (1), (2), (3), (6), (7), and (8) of  
2097 section 339.2818, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

2098 339.2818 Small County Outreach Program.—

2099 (1) There is created within the department of  
2100 ~~Transportation~~ the Small County Outreach Program. The purpose of  
2101 this program is to assist small county governments in repairing  
2102 or rehabilitating county bridges, paving unpaved roads,  
2103 addressing road-related drainage improvements, resurfacing or  
2104 reconstructing county roads, or constructing capacity or safety  
2105 improvements to county roads.

2106 (2) For the purposes of this section, the term "small  
2107 county" means any county that has a population of 200,000 or  
2108 less as determined by the most recent official population census  
2109 determination estimate pursuant to s. 186.901.

2110 ~~(3) Funds allocated under this program, pursuant to s. 4,~~  
2111 ~~ch. 2000-257, Laws of Florida, are in addition to any funds~~  
2112 ~~provided pursuant to s. 339.2816, for the Small County Road~~  
2113 ~~Assistance Program.~~

2114 ~~(5)-(6) Funds paid into the State Transportation Trust Fund~~  
2115 ~~pursuant to ss. 201.15, 320.072, and 339.0801 s. 201.15~~ for the  
2116 purposes of the Small County Outreach Program are hereby  
2117 annually appropriated for expenditure to support the Small

2026250e1

2118 County Outreach Program.

2119 (6) (7) Subject to a specific appropriation in addition to  
2120 funds annually appropriated for projects under this section, a  
2121 municipality within a rural area of opportunity or a rural area  
2122 of opportunity community designated under s. 288.0656(7)(a) may  
2123 compete for the additional project funding using the criteria  
2124 listed in subsection (3) (4) at up to 100 percent of project  
2125 costs, excluding capacity improvement projects.

2126 ~~(8) Subject to a specific appropriation in addition to  
2127 funds appropriated for projects under this section, a local  
2128 government either wholly or partially within the Everglades  
2129 Agricultural Area as defined in s. 373.4592(15), the Peace River  
2130 Basin, or the Suwannee River Basin may compete for additional  
2131 funding using the criteria listed in paragraph (4)(c) at up to  
2132 100 percent of project costs on state or county roads used  
2133 primarily as farm-to-market connections between rural  
2134 agricultural areas and market distribution centers, excluding  
2135 capacity improvement projects.~~

2136 Section 31. Section 339.68, Florida Statutes, is amended to  
2137 read:

2138 (Substantial rewording of section.)

2139 See s. 339.68, F.S., for present text.)

2140 339.68 Florida Arterial Road Modernization Program.—

2141 (1) The Legislature finds that increasing demands continue  
2142 to be placed on rural arterial roads in this state by a fast-  
2143 growing economy, continued population growth, and increased  
2144 tourism. Investment in the rural arterial roads of this state is  
2145 needed to maintain the safety, mobility, reliability, and  
2146 resiliency of the transportation system in order to support the

2026250e1

movement of people, goods, and commodities; to enhance economic prosperity and competitiveness; and to enrich the quality of life of the rural communities and the environment of this state.

(2) The Florida Arterial Road Modernization Program is created within the department to make capacity and safety improvements to two-lane arterial roads or connect existing arterial roads located in rural communities. For purposes of this section, the term "rural community" has the same meaning as in s. 288.0656.

(3) Beginning in the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the department shall allocate from the State Transportation Trust Fund a minimum of \$50 million in each fiscal year for purposes of funding the program. This funding is in addition to any other funding provided to the program by any other law.

(4) The department shall use the following criteria to prioritize projects for funding under the program:

(a) Whether the road has documented safety concerns or requires additional safety and design improvements. This may be evidenced by the number of fatalities or crashes per vehicle mile traveled.

(b) Whether the road has or is projected to have a significant amount of truck tractor traffic as determined by the department. For purposes of this paragraph, the term "truck tractor" has the same meaning as in s. 320.01(11).

(c) Whether the road is used to transport agricultural products and commodities from a farm to the market or other sale or distribution point.

(d) Whether the road is used to transport goods to or from warehouses, distribution centers, or intermodal logistics

2026250e1

2176 centers as defined in s. 311.101(2).

2177 (e) Whether the road is used as an evacuation route.

2178 (f) Whether the physical condition of the road meets  
2179 department standards.

2180 (g) Whether the road currently has, or is projected to have  
2181 within the next 5 years, a level of service of D, E, or F.

2182 (h) Any other criteria related to the impact of a project  
2183 on the public road system or on the state or local economy as  
2184 determined by the department.

2185 (5) By January 3, 2028, and every 2 years thereafter, the  
2186 department shall submit to the Governor, the President of the  
2187 Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a report  
2188 regarding the use and condition of arterial roads located in  
2189 rural communities, which report must include all of the  
2190 following:

2191 (a) A map of roads located in rural communities which are  
2192 designated as arterial roads.

2193 (b) A needs assessment that must include, but is not  
2194 limited to, consideration of infrastructure improvements to  
2195 improve capacity on arterial roads in rural communities.

2196 (c) A synopsis of the department's project prioritization  
2197 process.

2198 (d) An estimate of the local and state economic impact of  
2199 improving capacity on arterial roads in rural communities.

2200 (e) A listing of the arterial roads and the associated  
2201 improvements to be included in the program and a schedule or  
2202 timeline for the inclusion of such projects in the work program.

2203 Section 32. (1) The Department of Transportation shall  
2204 allocate the additional funds provided by this act to implement

2026250e1

the Small County Road Assistance Program as created by s. 339.2816, Florida Statutes, and amend the current tentative work program for the 2026-2027 through 2032-2033 fiscal years to include additional projects. In addition, before adoption of the work program, the department shall submit a budget amendment pursuant to s. 339.135(7), Florida Statutes, requesting budget authority necessary to implement the additional projects.

(2) The department shall allocate sufficient funds to implement the Florida Arterial Road Modernization Program as created by s. 339.68, Florida Statutes, develop a plan to expend the revenues as specified in s. 339.68, Florida Statutes, and, before its adoption, amend the current tentative work program for the 2026-2027 through 2032-2033 fiscal years to include the program's projects. In addition, before adoption of the work program, the department shall submit a budget amendment pursuant to s. 339.135(7), Florida Statutes, requesting budget authority necessary to implement the program as specified in s. 339.68, Florida Statutes.

(3) Notwithstanding any other law, the increase in revenue to the State Transportation Trust Fund derived from the amendments to ss. 201.15 and 319.32, Florida Statutes, made by this act and deposited into the trust fund pursuant to ss. 201.15 and 339.0801, Florida Statutes, must be used by the department to fund the programs as specified in this section.

Section 33. Section 341.0525, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

341.0525 Rural transit operating block grant program; administration; eligible projects.-

(1) There is created a rural transit operating block grant

2026250e1

2234 program to be administered by the department. Rural transit  
2235 block grant funds are available only to public transit providers  
2236 not eligible to receive public transit block grants pursuant to  
2237 s. 341.052.

2238 (2) At least \$3 million must be allocated annually from the  
2239 State Transportation Trust Fund for the program. At least  
2240 \$20,000 must be distributed to each eligible provider if  
2241 application of the following formula provides less than that  
2242 amount for any such provider:

2243 (a) One-third must be distributed according to the  
2244 percentage that an eligible provider's nonurbanized county  
2245 population in the most recent year official population estimate  
2246 pursuant to s. 186.901 is of the total population of all  
2247 counties served by eligible providers.

2248 (b) One-third must be distributed according to the  
2249 percentage that the total nonurbanized revenue miles provided by  
2250 an eligible provider, as verified by the most recent National  
2251 Transit Database report or a similar audited report submitted to  
2252 the department, is of the total rural revenue miles provided by  
2253 eligible providers in the state in that year.

2254 (c) One-third must be distributed according to the  
2255 percentage that the total nonurbanized passengers carried by an  
2256 eligible provider, as verified by the most recent National  
2257 Transit Database report or a similar audited report submitted to  
2258 the department, is of the total number of passengers carried by  
2259 eligible providers in the state in that year.

2260 (3) Grant funds must be used to pay public transit  
2261 operating costs. State participation in such costs may not  
2262 exceed 50 percent of such costs or an amount equal to the total

2026250e1

2263 revenue, excluding farebox, charter, and advertising revenue and  
2264 federal funds, received by the provider for operating costs,  
2265 whichever amount is less.

2266 (4) (a) An eligible provider may not use block grant funds  
2267 to supplant local tax revenues made available to such provider  
2268 for operations in the previous year; however, the Secretary of  
2269 Transportation may waive this provision for public transit  
2270 providers located in a county recovering from a state of  
2271 emergency declared pursuant to part I of chapter 252.

2272 (b) The state may not give any county more than 39 percent  
2273 of the funds available for distribution under this section or  
2274 more than the amount local revenue sources provide to that  
2275 county for its transit system.

2276 (5) To remain eligible to receive funding under the  
2277 program, eligible providers must comply with s. 341.071(1) and  
2278 (2).

2279 (6) (a) Any funds distributed to an eligible provider  
2280 pursuant to subsection (2) which cannot be expended within the  
2281 limitations of the program must be returned to the department  
2282 for redistribution to other eligible providers.

2283 (b) The department may consult with an eligible provider,  
2284 before distributing funds to that provider, to determine whether  
2285 the provider can expend its total block grant within the  
2286 limitations of the program. If the department and the provider  
2287 agree that the total block grant amount cannot be expended, the  
2288 provider may agree to accept a block grant amount of less than  
2289 the total amount, in which case the funds that exceed such  
2290 lesser agreed-upon amount must be redistributed to other  
2291 eligible providers.

2026250e1

2292       (c) If an audit reveals that an eligible provider expended  
2293 block grant funds on unauthorized uses, the provider must repay  
2294 to the department an amount equal to the funds expended for  
2295 unauthorized uses. The department shall redistribute such  
2296 repayments to other eligible providers.

2297       Section 34. Paragraph (b) of subsection (3) of section  
2298 381.402, Florida Statutes, is amended, and paragraph (h) is  
2299 added to subsection (2) of that section, to read:

2300       381.402 Florida Reimbursement Assistance for Medical  
2301 Education Program.—

2302       (2) The following licensed or certified health care  
2303 practitioners are eligible to participate in the program:

2304       (h) Medical doctors or doctors of osteopathic medicine who  
2305 are board certified or board eligible in emergency medicine and  
2306 employed by or under contract with a rural hospital as defined  
2307 in s. 395.602(2)(b) or a rural emergency hospital as defined in  
2308 s. 395.607(1)(a) to provide medical care in the rural hospital's  
2309 or rural emergency hospital's emergency department.

2310  
2311 Primary care medical specialties for physicians include  
2312 obstetrics, gynecology, general and family practice, geriatrics,  
2313 internal medicine, pediatrics, psychiatry, and other specialties  
2314 which may be identified by the Department of Health.

2315       (3) From the funds available, the Department of Health  
2316 shall make payments as follows:

2317       (b) All payments are contingent on continued proof of:  
2318        1.a. Primary care practice in a rural hospital as defined  
2319        in s. 395.602(2)(b) or an underserved area designated by the  
2320        Department of Health, provided the practitioner accepts Medicaid

2026250e1

reimbursement if eligible for such reimbursement; or  
b. Emergency medicine practice in a rural hospital as  
defined in s. 395.602(2) (b) or rural emergency hospital as  
defined in s. 395.607(1) (a), provided the practitioner accepts  
Medicaid reimbursement if eligible for such reimbursement; or

c. For practitioners other than physicians, practice in other settings, including, but not limited to, a nursing home facility as defined in s. 400.021, a home health agency as defined in s. 400.462, or an intermediate care facility for the developmentally disabled as defined in s. 400.960. Any such setting must be located in, or serve residents or patients in, an underserved area designated by the Department of Health and must provide services to Medicaid patients.

2. Providing 25 hours annually of volunteer ~~primary care~~ services within the practitioner's scope of practice in a free clinic as specified in s. 766.1115(3) (d)14. or through another volunteer program operated ~~by the state~~ pursuant to part IV of chapter 110 and approved by the department. In order to meet the requirements of this subparagraph, the volunteer hours must be verifiable in a manner determined by the department.

Section 35. Subsection (3) of section 420.9073, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

420.9073 Local housing distributions.—

(3) Calculation of guaranteed amounts:

(a) The guaranteed amount under subsection (1) shall be calculated for each state fiscal year by multiplying \$1 million ~~\$350,000~~ by a fraction, the numerator of which is the amount of funds distributed to the Local Government Housing Trust Fund pursuant to s. 201.15(4) (c) and the denominator of which is the

2026250e1

2350 total amount of funds distributed to the Local Government  
2351 Housing Trust Fund pursuant to s. 201.15.

2352 (b) The guaranteed amount under subsection (2) shall be  
2353 calculated for each state fiscal year by multiplying \$1 million  
2354 ~~\$350,000~~ by a fraction, the numerator of which is the amount of  
2355 funds distributed to the Local Government Housing Trust Fund  
2356 pursuant to s. 201.15(4)(d) and the denominator of which is the  
2357 total amount of funds distributed to the Local Government  
2358 Housing Trust Fund pursuant to s. 201.15.

2359 Section 36. Paragraph (n) of subsection (5) of section  
2360 420.9075, Florida Statutes, is amended, paragraph (o) is added  
2361 to that subsection, and paragraph (b) of subsection (13) of that  
2362 section is reenacted, to read:

2363 420.9075 Local housing assistance plans; partnerships.—

2364 (5) The following criteria apply to awards made to eligible  
2365 sponsors or eligible persons for the purpose of providing  
2366 eligible housing:

2367 (n) Funds from the local housing distribution not used to  
2368 meet the criteria established in paragraph (a), ~~or~~ paragraph  
2369 (c), or paragraph (o) or not used for the administration of a  
2370 local housing assistance plan must be used for housing  
2371 production and finance activities, including, but not limited  
2372 to, financing preconstruction activities or the purchase of  
2373 existing units, providing rental housing, and providing home  
2374 ownership training to prospective home buyers and owners of  
2375 homes assisted through the local housing assistance plan.

2376 1. Notwithstanding ~~the provisions of~~ paragraphs (a) and  
2377 (c), program income as defined in s. 420.9071(26) may also be  
2378 used to fund activities described in this paragraph.

2026250e1

2379       2. When preconstruction due-diligence activities conducted  
2380 as part of a preservation strategy show that preservation of the  
2381 units is not feasible and will not result in the production of  
2382 an eligible unit, such costs must ~~shall~~ be deemed a program  
2383 expense rather than an administrative expense if such program  
2384 expenses do not exceed 3 percent of the annual local housing  
2385 distribution.

2386       3. If both an award under the local housing assistance plan  
2387 and federal low-income housing tax credits are used to assist a  
2388 project and there is a conflict between the criteria prescribed  
2389 in this subsection and the requirements of s. 42 of the Internal  
2390 Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, the county or eligible  
2391 municipality may resolve the conflict by giving precedence to  
2392 the requirements of s. 42 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986,  
2393 as amended, in lieu of following the criteria prescribed in this  
2394 subsection with the exception of paragraphs (a) and (g) of this  
2395 subsection.

2396       4. Each county and each eligible municipality may award  
2397 funds as a grant for construction, rehabilitation, or repair as  
2398 part of disaster recovery or emergency repairs or to remedy  
2399 accessibility or health and safety deficiencies. Any other  
2400 grants must be approved as part of the local housing assistance  
2401 plan.

2402       (o) Notwithstanding paragraphs (a) and (c), up to 25  
2403 percent of the funds made available in each county and eligible  
2404 municipality from the local housing distribution may be used to  
2405 preserve multifamily affordable rental housing funded through  
2406 United States Department of Agriculture loans. These funds may  
2407 be used to rehabilitate housing, extend affordability periods,

2026250e1

2408 or acquire or transfer properties in partnership with private  
2409 organizations. This paragraph expires on June 30, 2032.

2410 (13)

2411 (b) If, as a result of its review of the annual report, the  
2412 corporation determines that a county or eligible municipality  
2413 has failed to implement a local housing incentive strategy, or,  
2414 if applicable, a local housing incentive plan, it shall send a  
2415 notice of termination of the local government's share of the  
2416 local housing distribution by certified mail to the affected  
2417 county or eligible municipality.

2418 1. The notice must specify a date of termination of the  
2419 funding if the affected county or eligible municipality does not  
2420 implement the plan or strategy and provide for a local response.  
2421 A county or eligible municipality shall respond to the  
2422 corporation within 30 days after receipt of the notice of  
2423 termination.

2424 2. The corporation shall consider the local response that  
2425 extenuating circumstances precluded implementation and grant an  
2426 extension to the timeframe for implementation. Such an extension  
2427 shall be made in the form of an extension agreement that  
2428 provides a timeframe for implementation. The chief elected  
2429 official of a county or eligible municipality or his or her  
2430 designee shall have the authority to enter into the agreement on  
2431 behalf of the local government.

2432 3. If the county or the eligible municipality has not  
2433 implemented the incentive strategy or entered into an extension  
2434 agreement by the termination date specified in the notice, the  
2435 local housing distribution share terminates, and any uncommitted  
2436 local housing distribution funds held by the affected county or

2026250e1

2437 eligible municipality in its local housing assistance trust fund  
2438 shall be transferred to the Local Government Housing Trust Fund  
2439 to the credit of the corporation to administer.

2440 4.a. If the affected local government fails to meet the  
2441 timeframes specified in the agreement, the corporation shall  
2442 terminate funds. The corporation shall send a notice of  
2443 termination of the local government's share of the local housing  
2444 distribution by certified mail to the affected local government.  
2445 The notice shall specify the termination date, and any  
2446 uncommitted funds held by the affected local government shall be  
2447 transferred to the Local Government Housing Trust Fund to the  
2448 credit of the corporation to administer.

2449 b. If the corporation terminates funds to a county, but an  
2450 eligible municipality receiving a local housing distribution  
2451 pursuant to an interlocal agreement maintains compliance with  
2452 program requirements, the corporation shall thereafter  
2453 distribute directly to the participating eligible municipality  
2454 its share calculated in the manner provided in ss. 420.9072 and  
2455 420.9073.

2456 c. Any county or eligible municipality whose local  
2457 distribution share has been terminated may subsequently elect to  
2458 receive directly its local distribution share by adopting the  
2459 ordinance, resolution, and local housing assistance plan in the  
2460 manner and according to the procedures provided in ss. 420.907-  
2461 420.9079.

2462 Section 37. Subsections (1), (2), and (5) of section  
2463 1001.451, Florida Statutes, are amended, and subsection (6) is  
2464 added to that section, to read:

2465 1001.451 Regional consortium service organizations.—In

2026250e1

2466 order to provide a full range of programs to larger numbers of  
2467 students, minimize duplication of services, and encourage the  
2468 development of new programs and services:

2469 (1) School districts with 20,000 or fewer unweighted full-  
2470 time equivalent students, developmental research (laboratory)  
2471 schools established pursuant to s. 1002.32, and the Florida  
2472 School for the Deaf and the Blind may enter into cooperative  
2473 agreements to form a regional consortium service organization.  
2474 Each regional consortium service organization shall provide any,  
2475 ~~at a minimum, three of the following services determined~~  
2476 necessary and appropriate by the board of directors:

2477 (a) Exceptional student education;  
2478 (b) Safe schools support teacher education centers;  
2479 ~~environmental education;~~  
2480 (c) State and federal grant procurement and coordination;  
2481 (d) Data services processing; health  
2482 (e) Insurance services;  
2483 (f) Risk management insurance;  
2484 (g) Professional learning;  
2485 (h) College, career, and workforce development;  
2486 (i) Business and operational services staff development;  
2487 (j) Purchasing; or  
2488 (k) Planning and accountability.

2489 (2) (a) Each regional consortium service organization  
2490 ~~composed that consists~~ of four or more school districts is  
2491 eligible to receive, through the Department of Education,  
2492 subject to the funds provided in the General Appropriations Act,  
2493 an ~~allocation incentive grant of \$150,000~~ \$50,000 per school  
2494 district and eligible member to be used for the delivery of

2026250e1

2495 services within the participating school districts. The  
2496 determination of services and use of such funds must ~~shall~~ be  
2497 established by the board of directors of the regional consortium  
2498 service organization. The funds must ~~shall~~ be distributed to  
2499 each regional consortium service organization no later than 30  
2500 days following the release of the funds to the department. Each  
2501 regional consortium service organization shall submit an annual  
2502 report to the department regarding the use of funds for  
2503 consortia services. Unexpended amounts in any fund in a  
2504 consortium's current year operating budget must be carried  
2505 forward and included as the balance forward for that fund in the  
2506 approved operating budget for the following year. Each regional  
2507 consortium service organization shall provide quarterly  
2508 financial reports to member districts.

2509 (b) Member districts shall designate a district to serve as  
2510 a fiscal agent for contractual and reporting purposes. Such  
2511 fiscal agent district is entitled to reasonable compensation for  
2512 accounting and other services performed. The regional consortium  
2513 service organization shall retain all funds received from grants  
2514 or contracted services to cover indirect or administrative costs  
2515 associated with the provision of such services. The regional  
2516 consortium service organization board of directors shall  
2517 determine the products and services to be provided by the  
2518 consortium; however, in all contractual matters, the school  
2519 board of the fiscal agent district shall act on proposed actions  
2520 of the regional consortium service organization.

2521 (c) The regional consortium service organization board of  
2522 directors shall recommend establishment of positions and  
2523 individuals for appointment to the fiscal agent district.

2026250e1

2524 Personnel must be employed under the personnel policies of the  
2525 fiscal agent district and are deemed to be public employees of  
2526 the fiscal agent district. The regional consortium service  
2527 organization board of directors may recommend a salary schedule  
2528 and job descriptions specific to its personnel.

2529 (d) The regional consortium service organization may  
2530 purchase or lease property and facilities essential for its  
2531 operations and is responsible for their maintenance and  
2532 associated overhead costs.

2533 (e) If a regional consortium service organization is  
2534 dissolved, any revenue from the sale of assets must be  
2535 distributed among the member districts as determined by the  
2536 board of directors Application for incentive grants shall be  
2537 made to the Commissioner of Education by July 30 of each year  
2538 for distribution to qualifying regional consortium service  
2539 organizations by January 1 of the fiscal year.

2540 (5) The board of directors of a regional consortium service  
2541 organization may use various means to generate revenue in  
2542 support of its activities, including, but not limited to,  
2543 contracting for services to nonmember districts. The board of  
2544 directors may acquire, enjoy, use, and dispose of patents,  
2545 copyrights, and trademarks and any licenses and associated ~~ether~~  
2546 rights or interests ~~thereunder or therein~~. Ownership of all such  
2547 patents, copyrights, trademarks, licenses, and associated rights  
2548 or interests ~~thereunder or therein~~ shall vest in the state, with  
2549 the board of directors having full right of use and full right  
2550 to retain associated ~~the~~ revenues ~~derived therefrom~~. Any funds  
2551 realized from contracted services, patents, copyrights,  
2552 trademarks, or licenses are ~~shall~~ be considered internal funds

2026250e1

2553 as provided in s. 1011.07. A fund balance must be established  
2554 for maintaining or expanding services, facilities maintenance,  
2555 terminal pay, and other liabilities ~~Such funds shall be used to~~  
2556 ~~support the organization's marketing and research and~~  
2557 ~~development activities in order to improve and increase services~~  
2558 ~~to its member districts.~~

2559 (6) A regional consortium service organization is  
2560 authorized to administer the Regional Consortia Service  
2561 Organization Supplemental Services Program under s. 1001.4511.

2562 Section 38. Section 1001.4511, Florida Statutes, is created  
2563 to read:

2564 1001.4511 Regional Consortia Service Organization  
2565 Supplemental Services Program.—

2566 (1) There is created the Regional Consortia Service  
2567 Organization Supplemental Services Program to increase the  
2568 ability of regional consortium service organizations under s.  
2569 1001.451 to provide programs and services to consortia members  
2570 through cooperative agreements. Program funds may be used to  
2571 supplement member needs related to transportation; district  
2572 finance personnel services; property insurance, including  
2573 property insurance obtained from any source; cybersecurity  
2574 support; school safety; college, career, and workforce  
2575 development; academic support; and behavior support within  
2576 exceptional student education services.

2577 (2) Each regional consortium service organization shall  
2578 annually report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker  
2579 of the House of Representatives the distribution of funds,  
2580 including members awarded and services provided.

2581 (3) Notwithstanding s. 216.301 and pursuant to s. 216.351,

2026250e1

2582 funds allocated for this purpose which are not disbursed by June  
2583 30 of the fiscal year in which the funds are allocated may be  
2584 carried forward for up to 5 years after the effective date of  
2585 the original appropriation.

2586 Section 39. Section 1009.635, Florida Statutes, is created  
2587 to read:

2588 1009.635 Rural Incentive for Professional Educators  
2589 Program.—

2590 (1) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Rural Incentive for Professional  
2591 Educators (RIPE) Program is established within the Department of  
2592 Education to support the recruitment and retention of qualified  
2593 instructional personnel in rural communities. The program shall  
2594 provide financial assistance for the repayment of student loans  
2595 for eligible participants who establish permanent residency and  
2596 employment in rural areas of opportunity.

2597 (2) ELIGIBILITY.—An individual is eligible to participate  
2598 in the RIPE Program if he or she does all of the following:

2599 (a) Establishes permanent residency on or after July 1,  
2600 2026, in a rural area of opportunity as designated pursuant to  
2601 s. 288.0656. The address on an individual's state-issued  
2602 identification card or driver license is evidence of residence.

2603 (b) Secures full-time employment as a teacher or  
2604 administrator in a private school as defined in s. 1002.01, or  
2605 as instructional or administrative personnel as those terms are  
2606 defined in s. 1012.01(2) and (3), respectively, in the public  
2607 school district located within the same rural area of  
2608 opportunity as he or she resides.

2609 (c) Holds an associate degree, bachelor's degree,  
2610 postgraduate degree, or certificate from an accredited

2026250e1

2611 institution earned before establishing residency.

2612 (d) Has an active student loan balance incurred for the  
completion of the qualifying degree or certificate.

2613 (3) LOAN REPAYMENT.—Eligible participants may receive up to  
\$15,000 in total student loan repayment assistance over 5 years,  
disbursed in annual payments not to exceed \$3,000 per year.  
Payments must be made directly to the lender servicing the  
participant's student loan.

2614 (4) AWARD DISTRIBUTION.—Before disbursement of an award,  
the department shall verify that the participant:

2615 (a) Has maintained continuous employment with the school  
district in an instructional or administrative position;

2616 (b) Has received a rating of effective or highly effective  
pursuant to s. 1012.34; and

2617 (c) Has not been placed on probation, had his or her  
certificate suspended or revoked, or been placed on the  
disqualification list, pursuant to s. 1012.796.

2618 (5) ADMINISTRATION.—The program shall be administered by  
the Office of Student Financial Assistance within the Department  
of Education, which shall:

2619 (a) Develop application procedures requiring documentation,  
including proof of residency, verification of employment,  
official academic transcripts, and details of outstanding  
student loans; and

2620 (b) Monitor compliance with program requirements.

2621 (6) RULEMAKING.—The State Board of Education shall adopt  
rules no later than January 31, 2027, to administer this  
section.

2622 Section 40. Subsection (3) of section 1013.62, Florida

2026250e1

2640 Statutes, is amended to read:

2641 1013.62 Charter schools capital outlay funding.—

2642 (3) If the school board levies the discretionary millage  
2643 authorized in s. 1011.71(2), the department must shall use the  
2644 following calculation methodology to determine the amount of  
2645 revenue that a school district must distribute to each eligible  
2646 charter school:

2647 (a) Reduce the total discretionary millage revenue by the  
2648 school district's annual debt service obligation incurred as of  
2649 March 1, 2017, which has not been subsequently retired, and:

2650 1. Beginning in the 2026-2027 fiscal year, for any district  
2651 with an active project or an outstanding participation  
2652 requirement balance, any amount of participation requirement  
2653 pursuant to s. 1013.64(2)(a)8. that is being satisfied by  
2654 revenues raised by the discretionary millage; or

2655 2. For construction projects for which Special Facilities  
2656 Construction Account funding is sought beginning in the 2026-  
2657 2027 fiscal year, the value of 1 mill from the revenue generated  
2658 pursuant to s. 1013.64(2)(a)8.b.

2659 (b) Divide the school district's adjusted discretionary  
2660 millage revenue by the district's total capital outlay full-time  
2661 equivalent membership and the total number of full-time  
2662 equivalent students of each eligible charter school to determine  
2663 a capital outlay allocation per full-time equivalent student.

2664 (c) Multiply the capital outlay allocation per full-time  
2665 equivalent student by the total number of full-time equivalent  
2666 students of each eligible charter school to determine the  
2667 capital outlay allocation for each charter school.

2668 (d) If applicable, reduce the capital outlay allocation

2026250e1

2669 identified in paragraph (c) by the total amount of state funds  
2670 allocated to each eligible charter school in subsection (2) to  
2671 determine the maximum calculated capital outlay allocation. The  
2672 amount of funds a school district must distribute to charter  
2673 schools shall be as follows:

2674 1. For fiscal year 2023-2024, the amount is 20 percent of  
2675 the amount calculated under this paragraph.

2676 2. For fiscal year 2024-2025, the amount is 40 percent of  
2677 the amount calculated under this paragraph.

2678 3. For fiscal year 2025-2026, the amount is 60 percent of  
2679 the amount calculated under this paragraph.

2680 4. For fiscal year 2026-2027, the amount is 80 percent of  
2681 the amount calculated under this paragraph.

2682 5. For fiscal year 2027-2028, and each fiscal year  
2683 thereafter, the amount is 100 percent of the amount calculated  
2684 under this paragraph.

2685 (e) School districts shall distribute capital outlay funds  
2686 to eligible charter schools no later than February 1 of each  
2687 year, as required by this subsection, based on the amount of  
2688 funds received by the district school board. School districts  
2689 shall distribute any remaining capital outlay funds, as required  
2690 by this subsection, upon the receipt of such funds until the  
2691 total amount calculated pursuant to this subsection is  
2692 distributed.

2693  
2694 By October 1 of each year, each school district shall certify to  
2695 the department the amount of debt service that and participation  
2696 ~~requirement that complies with the requirement of paragraph (a)~~  
2697 and can be reduced from the total discretionary millage revenue.

2026250e1

2698    Each school district shall also certify the amount of the  
2699    participation requirement that complies with paragraph (a) or  
2700    certify the value of 1 mill from revenue generated pursuant to  
2701    s. 1013.64(2)(a)8.b. that can be reduced from the total  
2702    discretionary millage revenue, as applicable. The Auditor  
2703    General shall verify compliance with the requirements of  
2704    paragraph (a) and s. 1011.71(2)(e) during scheduled operational  
2705    audits of school districts.

2706       Section 41. Paragraph (a) of subsection (2) of section  
2707    1013.64, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

2708       1013.64 Funds for comprehensive educational plant needs;  
2709    construction cost maximums for school district capital  
2710    projects.—Allocations from the Public Education Capital Outlay  
2711    and Debt Service Trust Fund to the various boards for capital  
2712    outlay projects shall be determined as follows:

2713       (2) (a) The department shall establish, as a part of the  
2714    Public Education Capital Outlay and Debt Service Trust Fund, a  
2715    separate account, in an amount determined by the Legislature, to  
2716    be known as the "Special Facility Construction Account." The  
2717    Special Facility Construction Account shall be used to provide  
2718    necessary construction funds to school districts which have  
2719    urgent construction needs but which lack sufficient resources at  
2720    present, and cannot reasonably anticipate sufficient resources  
2721    within the period of the next 3 years, for these purposes from  
2722    currently authorized sources of capital outlay revenue. A school  
2723    district requesting funding from the Special Facility  
2724    Construction Account shall submit one specific construction  
2725    project, not to exceed one complete educational plant, to the  
2726    Special Facility Construction Committee. A district may not

2026250e1

2727 receive funding for more than one approved project in any 3-year  
2728 period ~~or while any portion of the district's participation~~  
2729 ~~requirement is outstanding~~. The first year of the 3-year period  
2730 shall be the first year a district receives an appropriation.  
2731 The department shall encourage a construction program that  
2732 reduces the average size of schools in the district. The request  
2733 must meet the following criteria to be considered by the  
2734 committee:

2735 1. The project must be deemed a critical need and must be  
2736 recommended for funding by the Special Facility Construction  
2737 Committee. Before developing construction plans for the proposed  
2738 facility, the district school board must request a  
2739 preapplication review by the Special Facility Construction  
2740 Committee or a project review subcommittee convened by the chair  
2741 of the committee to include two representatives of the  
2742 department and two staff members from school districts not  
2743 eligible to participate in the program. A school district may  
2744 request a preapplication review at any time; however, if the  
2745 district school board seeks inclusion in the department's next  
2746 annual capital outlay legislative budget request, the  
2747 preapplication review request must be made before February 1.  
2748 Within 90 days after receiving the preapplication review  
2749 request, the committee or subcommittee must meet in the school  
2750 district to review the project proposal and existing facilities.  
2751 To determine whether the proposed project is a critical need,  
2752 the committee or subcommittee shall consider, at a minimum, the  
2753 capacity of all existing facilities within the district as  
2754 determined by the Florida Inventory of School Houses; the  
2755 district's pattern of student growth; the district's existing

2026250e1

2756 and projected capital outlay full-time equivalent student  
2757 enrollment as determined by the demographic, revenue, and  
2758 education estimating conferences established in s. 216.136; the  
2759 district's existing satisfactory student stations; the use of  
2760 all existing district property and facilities; grade level  
2761 configurations; and any other information that may affect the  
2762 need for the proposed project.

2763 2. The construction project must be recommended in the most  
2764 recent survey or survey amendment cooperatively prepared by the  
2765 district and the department, and approved by the department  
2766 under the rules of the State Board of Education. If a district  
2767 employs a consultant in the preparation of a survey or survey  
2768 amendment, the consultant may not be employed by or receive  
2769 compensation from a third party that designs or constructs a  
2770 project recommended by the survey.

2771 3. The construction project must appear on the district's  
2772 approved project priority list under the rules of the State  
2773 Board of Education.

2774 4. The district must have selected and had approved a site  
2775 for the construction project in compliance with s. 1013.36 and  
2776 the rules of the State Board of Education.

2777 5. The district shall have developed a district school  
2778 board adopted list of facilities that do not exceed the norm for  
2779 net square feet occupancy requirements under the State  
2780 Requirements for Educational Facilities, using all possible  
2781 programmatic combinations for multiple use of space to obtain  
2782 maximum daily use of all spaces within the facility under  
2783 consideration.

2784 6. Upon construction, the total cost per student station,

2026250e1

2785 including change orders, must not exceed the cost per student  
2786 station as provided in subsection (6) unless approved by the  
2787 Special Facility Construction Committee. At the discretion of  
2788 the committee, costs that exceed the cost per student station  
2789 for special facilities may include legal and administrative  
2790 fees, the cost of site improvements or related offsite  
2791 improvements, the cost of complying with public shelter and  
2792 hurricane hardening requirements, cost overruns created by a  
2793 disaster as defined in s. 252.34(2), costs of security  
2794 enhancements approved by the school safety specialist, and  
2795 unforeseeable circumstances beyond the district's control.

2796       7. There shall be an agreement signed by the district  
2797 school board stating that it will advertise for bids within 30  
2798 days of receipt of its encumbrance authorization from the  
2799 department.

2800       8.a.(I) For construction projects for which Special  
2801 Facilities Construction Account funding is sought before the  
2802 2019-2020 fiscal year, the district shall, at the time of the  
2803 request and for a continuing period necessary to meet the  
2804 district's participation requirement, levy the maximum millage  
2805 against its nonexempt assessed property value as allowed in s.  
2806 1011.71(2) or shall raise an equivalent amount of revenue from  
2807 the school capital outlay surtax authorized under s. 212.055(6).

2808       (II) Beginning with construction projects for which Special  
2809 Facilities Construction Account funding is sought in the 2019-  
2810 2020 fiscal year, the district shall, for a minimum of 3 years  
2811 before submitting the request and for a continuing period  
2812 necessary to meet its participation requirement, levy the  
2813 maximum millage against the district's nonexempt assessed

2026250e1

2814 property value as authorized under s. 1011.71(2) or shall raise  
2815 an equivalent amount of revenue from the school capital outlay  
2816 surtax authorized under s. 212.055(6).

2817 (III) Beginning with the 2026-2027 fiscal year, any  
2818 district with an a-new or active project or an outstanding  
2819 participation requirement balance, funded under the provisions  
2820 of this subsection, shall be required to budget no more than the  
2821 value of 1 mill per year to the project until the district's  
2822 participation requirement relating to the local discretionary  
2823 capital improvement millage or the equivalent amount of revenue  
2824 from the school capital outlay surtax is satisfied.

2825 b. For construction projects for which Special Facilities  
2826 Construction Account funding is sought beginning in the 2026-  
2827 2027 fiscal year, the district shall, for a minimum of 3 years  
2828 before submitting the request and for the initial year of the  
2829 appropriation and the 2 years following the initial  
2830 appropriation, levy the maximum millage against the district's  
2831 nonexempt assessed property value as authorized under s.  
2832 1011.71(2) or shall raise an equivalent amount of revenue from  
2833 the school capital outlay surtax authorized under s. 212.055(6).  
2834 The district is not required to budget the funds toward the  
2835 project, but must use the funds as authorized pursuant to s.  
2836 1011.71 or s. 212.055(6), as applicable.

2837 9. If a contract has not been signed 90 days after the  
2838 advertising of bids, the funding for the specific project must  
2839 shall revert to the Special Facility New Construction Account to  
2840 be reallocated to other projects on the list. However, an  
2841 additional 90 days may be granted by the commissioner.

2842 10. The department shall certify the inability of the

2026250e1

2843 district to fund the survey-recommended project over a  
2844 continuous 3-year period using projected capital outlay revenue  
2845 derived from s. 9(d), Art. XII of the State Constitution, as  
2846 amended, paragraph (3)(a) of this section, and s. 1011.71(2).

2847 11.a. For projects funded before the 2026-2027 fiscal year,  
2848 the district shall have on file with the department an adopted  
2849 resolution acknowledging its commitment to satisfy its  
2850 participation requirement, which is equivalent to all  
2851 unencumbered and future revenue acquired from s. 9(d), Art. XII  
2852 of the State Constitution, as amended, paragraph (3)(a) of this  
2853 section, and s. 1011.71(2), in the year of the initial  
2854 appropriation and for the 2 years immediately following the  
2855 initial appropriation.

2856 b. For projects funded during the 2026-2027 fiscal year,  
2857 and thereafter, the district shall have on file with the  
2858 department an adopted resolution acknowledging its commitment to  
2859 comply with the requirements of this paragraph.

2860 12. Phase I plans must be approved by the district school  
2861 board as being in compliance with the building and life safety  
2862 codes before June 1 of the year the application is made.

2863 Section 42. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of \$1  
2864 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is  
2865 appropriated to the Florida Small Business Development Center  
2866 Network under s. 288.001, Florida Statutes, to expand services  
2867 in rural communities. The funds shall be allocated to the Office  
2868 of Rural Prosperity budget entity within the Department of  
2869 Commerce in the Special Categories-SBDCN Rural Services specific  
2870 appropriation category.

2871 Section 43. (1) For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sums of

2026250e1

2872 \$1,827,591 in recurring funds and \$652,327 in nonrecurring funds  
2873 are appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Department  
2874 of Commerce.

2875 (2) The recurring general revenue funds shall be allocated  
2876 to the Office of Rural Prosperity budget entity in the following  
2877 specific appropriations categories: \$1,585,823 in Salaries and  
2878 Benefits, \$175,961 in Expenses, \$50,000 in Contracted Services,  
2879 \$10,000 in Operating Capital Outlay, and \$5,807 in Transfer to  
2880 the Department of Management Services/Statewide Human Resources  
2881 Contract.

2882 (3) The nonrecurring general revenue funds shall be  
2883 allocated to the Office of Rural Prosperity budget entity in the  
2884 following specific appropriations categories: \$92,327 in  
2885 Expenses and \$560,000 in Acquisition of Motor Vehicles.

2886 (4) The Department of Commerce is authorized to establish  
2887 17.00 full-time equivalent positions with associated salary rate  
2888 of 1,060,000 in the Office of Rural Prosperity for the purpose  
2889 of implementing this act. The following specific positions,  
2890 classifications, and pay plans are authorized: 1.00 Director of  
2891 General Operations, Class Code 9327, Pay Grade 940; 15.00  
2892 Government Analyst II, Class Code 2225, Pay Grade 026; and 1.00  
2893 Administrative Assistant II, Class Code 0712, Pay Grade 018.

2894 Section 44. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the recurring  
2895 sum of \$7 million from the General Revenue Fund is appropriated  
2896 to the Office of Rural Prosperity within the Department of  
2897 Commerce to implement the Renaissance Grants Program created by  
2898 s. 288.014, Florida Statutes. Funds may not be used by the state  
2899 for administrative costs.

2900 Section 45. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the recurring

2026250e1

2901 sum of \$500,000 from the Grants and Donations Trust Fund within  
2902 the Department of Commerce is appropriated to the Office of  
2903 Rural Prosperity within the Department of Commerce to implement  
2904 the Public Infrastructure Smart Technology Grant Program created  
2905 by s. 288.0175, Florida Statutes.

2906 Section 46. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sums of \$4  
2907 million in nonrecurring funds and \$1 million in recurring funds  
2908 from the General Revenue Fund are appropriated to the Office of  
2909 Rural Prosperity within the Department of Commerce to implement  
2910 the Rural Community Development Revolving Loan Fund under s.  
2911 288.065, Florida Statutes, as amended by this act.

2912 Section 47. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sums of \$40  
2913 million in nonrecurring funds and \$5 million in recurring funds  
2914 from the General Revenue Fund are appropriated to the Office of  
2915 Rural Prosperity within the Department of Commerce to implement  
2916 the Rural Infrastructure Fund under s. 288.0655, Florida  
2917 Statutes, as amended by this act.

2918 Section 48. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of  
2919 \$250,000 in recurring funds from the Grants and Donations Trust  
2920 Fund within the Department of Commerce is appropriated to the  
2921 Office of Rural Prosperity within the Department of Commerce to  
2922 implement s. 288.0657, Florida Statutes, as amended by this act.

2923 Section 49. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of \$30  
2924 million in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is  
2925 appropriated to the Florida Housing Finance Corporation to be  
2926 used to preserve affordable multifamily rental housing in rural  
2927 communities funded through United States Department of  
2928 Agriculture loans. The funds provided in this appropriation must  
2929 be used to issue competitive requests for applications for the

2026250e1

2930 rehabilitation or acquisition of such properties to ensure  
2931 continued affordability. By October 1, 2027, the Florida Housing  
2932 Finance Corporation shall submit a report to the President of  
2933 the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives on  
2934 projects funded pursuant to this section, which report must  
2935 include the number of units preserved and the financing  
2936 portfolio for each project.

2937 Section 50. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sums of  
2938 \$193,075 in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund and  
2939 \$244,538 in recurring funds from the Medical Care Trust Fund are  
2940 appropriated to the Agency for Health Care Administration to  
2941 establish a Diagnosis-Related Grouping (DRG) reimbursement  
2942 methodology for critical access hospitals, as defined in s.  
2943 408.07, Florida Statutes, for the purpose of providing inpatient  
2944 reimbursement to such a hospital in amounts comparable to the  
2945 reimbursement the hospital would receive for inpatient services  
2946 from the federal Medicare program. The 2026-2027 fiscal year  
2947 General Appropriations Act shall establish the DRG reimbursement  
2948 methodology for critical access hospital inpatient services as  
2949 directed in s. 409.905(5)(c), Florida Statutes. Health plans  
2950 that participate in the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care program  
2951 shall pass through the fee increase to providers in this  
2952 appropriation.

2953 Section 51. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sums of  
2954 \$7,741,492 in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund and  
2955 \$9,804,954 in recurring funds from the Medical Care Trust Fund  
2956 are appropriated to the Agency for Health Care Administration to  
2957 establish an Enhanced Ambulatory Patient Grouping (EAPG)  
2958 reimbursement methodology for critical access hospitals, as

2026250e1

2959 defined in s. 408.07, Florida Statutes, for the purpose of  
2960 providing outpatient reimbursement to such a hospital in amounts  
2961 comparable to the reimbursement the hospital would receive for  
2962 outpatient services from the federal Medicare program. The 2026-  
2963 2027 fiscal year General Appropriations Act shall establish the  
2964 EAPG reimbursement methodology for critical access hospital  
2965 outpatient services as directed in s. 409.905(6)(b), Florida  
2966 Statutes. Health plans that participate in the Statewide  
2967 Medicaid Managed Care program shall pass through the fee  
2968 increase to providers in this appropriation.

2969 Section 52. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of \$3.6  
2970 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is  
2971 appropriated to the Department of Education to implement s.  
2972 1001.451, Florida Statutes, as amended by this act.

2973 Section 53. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of \$25  
2974 million in recurring funds is appropriated from the General  
2975 Revenue Fund to the Department of Education to be distributed to  
2976 regional consortium service organizations under s. 1001.451,  
2977 Florida Statutes, in order to provide funds pursuant to s.  
2978 1001.4511, Florida Statutes. These funds shall be allocated as  
2979 follows: \$5,555,149 to the Heartland Educational Consortium;  
2980 \$11,912,923 to the North East Florida Educational Consortium;  
2981 and \$7,531,928 to the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium. The  
2982 funds must be distributed to each regional consortium service  
2983 organization no later than 30 days following the release of the  
2984 funds to the department.

2985 Section 54. For the 2026-2027 fiscal year, the sum of \$7  
2986 million in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund is  
2987 appropriated to the Department of Education to implement the

2026250e1

2988 Rural Incentive for Professional Educators (RIPE) Program, s.  
2989 1009.635, Florida Statutes, as created by this act.

2990       Section 55. Subsection (3) of section 163.3187, Florida  
2991 Statutes, is amended to read:

2992       163.3187 Process for adoption of small scale comprehensive  
2993 plan amendment.—

2994       (3) If the small scale development amendment involves a  
2995 site within a rural area of opportunity as defined under s.  
2996 288.0656 s. 288.0656(2)(d) for the duration of such designation,  
2997 the acreage limit listed in subsection (1) must ~~shall~~ be  
2998 increased by 100 percent. The local government approving the  
2999 small scale plan amendment shall certify to the state land  
3000 planning agency that the plan amendment furthers the economic  
3001 objectives set forth in the executive order issued under s.  
3002 288.0656(7), and the property subject to the plan amendment  
3003 shall undergo public review to ensure that all concurrency  
3004 requirements and federal, state, and local environmental permit  
3005 requirements are met.

3006       Section 56. Section 212.205, Florida Statutes, is amended  
3007 to read:

3008       212.205 Sales tax distribution reporting.—By March 15 of  
3009 each year, each person who received a distribution pursuant to  
3010 s. 212.20(6)(d)7.b. and c. s. 212.20(6)(d)6.b. and c. in the  
3011 preceding calendar year shall report to the Office of Economic  
3012 and Demographic Research the following information:

3013       (1) An itemized accounting of all expenditures of the funds  
3014 distributed in the preceding calendar year, including amounts  
3015 spent on debt service.

3016       (2) A statement indicating what portion of the distributed

2026250e1

3017 funds have been pledged for debt service.

3018 (3) The original principal amount and current debt service  
3019 schedule of any bonds or other borrowing for which the  
3020 distributed funds have been pledged for debt service.

3021 Section 57. Section 257.191, Florida Statutes, is amended  
3022 to read:

3023 257.191 Construction grants.—The Division of Library and  
3024 Information Services may accept and administer library  
3025 construction moneys appropriated to it and shall allocate such  
3026 appropriation to municipal, county, and regional libraries in  
3027 the form of library construction grants on a matching basis. The  
3028 local matching portion shall be no less than the grant amount,  
3029 on a dollar-for-dollar basis, up to the maximum grant amount,  
3030 unless the matching requirement is waived pursuant to s. 288.019  
3031 ~~by s. 288.06561~~. Initiation of a library construction project 12  
3032 months or less prior to the grant award under this section does  
3033 ~~shall~~ not affect the eligibility of an applicant to receive a  
3034 library construction grant. The division shall adopt rules for  
3035 the administration of library construction grants. For the  
3036 purposes of this section, s. 257.21 does not apply.

3037 Section 58. Subsection (2) of section 257.193, Florida  
3038 Statutes, is amended to read:

3039 257.193 Community Libraries in Caring Program.—

3040 (2) The purpose of the Community Libraries in Caring  
3041 Program is to assist libraries in rural communities, as defined  
3042 in s. 288.0656(2) and subject to the provisions of s. 288.019 ~~s.~~  
3043 ~~288.06561~~, to strengthen their collections and services, improve  
3044 literacy in their communities, and improve the economic  
3045 viability of their communities.

2026250e1

3046       Section 59. Subsection (17) of section 265.283, Florida  
3047 Statutes, is amended to read:

3048       265.283 Definitions.—The following definitions shall apply  
3049 to ss. 265.281-265.703:

3050       (17) "Underserved arts community assistance program grants" means grants used by qualified organizations under the Rural  
3051 Economic Development Initiative, pursuant to s. 288.0656 and  
3052 subject to s. 288.019 ~~ss. 288.0656 and 288.06561~~, for the  
3053 purpose of economic and organizational development for  
3054 underserved cultural organizations.

3055       Section 60. Paragraphs (a) and (d) of subsection (3) of  
3056 section 288.11621, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

3057       288.11621 Spring training baseball franchises.—

3058       (3) USE OF FUNDS.—

3059       (a) A certified applicant may use funds provided under s.  
3060 212.20(6)(d)7.b. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.b.~~ only to:

3061       1. Serve the public purpose of acquiring, constructing,  
3062 reconstructing, or renovating a facility for a spring training  
3063 franchise.

3064       2. Pay or pledge for the payment of debt service on, or to  
3065 fund debt service reserve funds, arbitrage rebate obligations,  
3066 or other amounts payable with respect thereto, bonds issued for  
3067 the acquisition, construction, reconstruction, or renovation of  
3068 such facility, or for the reimbursement of such costs or the  
3069 refinancing of bonds issued for such purposes.

3070       3. Assist in the relocation of a spring training franchise  
3071 from one unit of local government to another only if the  
3072 governing board of the current host local government by a  
3073 majority vote agrees to relocation.

2026250e1

(d)1. All certified applicants must place unexpended state funds received pursuant to s. 212.20(6)(d)7.b. s.  
~~212.20(6)(d)6.b.~~ in a trust fund or separate account for use only as authorized in this section.

2. A certified applicant may request that the Department of Revenue suspend further distributions of state funds made available under s. 212.20(6)(d)7.b. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.b.~~ for 12 months after expiration of an existing agreement with a spring training franchise to provide the certified applicant with an opportunity to enter into a new agreement with a spring training franchise, at which time the distributions shall resume.

3. The expenditure of state funds distributed to an applicant certified before July 1, 2010, must begin within 48 months after the initial receipt of the state funds. In addition, the construction of, or capital improvements to, a spring training facility must be completed within 24 months after the project's commencement.

Section 61. Paragraph (c) of subsection (2) and paragraphs (a), (c), and (d) of subsection (3) of section 288.11631, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

288.11631 Retention of Major League Baseball spring training baseball franchises.—

(2) CERTIFICATION PROCESS.—

(c) Each applicant certified on or after July 1, 2013, shall enter into an agreement with the department which:

1. Specifies the amount of the state incentive funding to be distributed. The amount of state incentive funding per certified applicant may not exceed \$20 million. However, if a certified applicant's facility is used by more than one spring

2026250e1

3104 training franchise, the maximum amount may not exceed \$50  
3105 million, and the Department of Revenue shall make distributions  
3106 to the applicant pursuant to s. 212.20(6)(d)7.c. s.  
3107 ~~212.20(6)(d)6.e.~~

3108 2. States the criteria that the certified applicant must  
3109 meet in order to remain certified. These criteria must include a  
3110 provision stating that the spring training franchise must  
3111 reimburse the state for any funds received if the franchise does  
3112 not comply with the terms of the contract. If bonds were issued  
3113 to construct or renovate a facility for a spring training  
3114 franchise, the required reimbursement must be equal to the total  
3115 amount of state distributions expected to be paid from the date  
3116 the franchise violates the agreement with the applicant through  
3117 the final maturity of the bonds.

3118 3. States that the certified applicant is subject to  
3119 decertification if the certified applicant fails to comply with  
3120 this section or the agreement.

3121 4. States that the department may recover state incentive  
3122 funds if the certified applicant is decertified.

3123 5. Specifies the information that the certified applicant  
3124 must report to the department.

3125 6. Includes any provision deemed prudent by the department.

3126 (3) USE OF FUNDS.—

3127 (a) A certified applicant may use funds provided under s.  
3128 212.20(6)(d)7.c. s. 212.20(6)(d)6.e. only to:

3129 1. Serve the public purpose of constructing or renovating a  
3130 facility for a spring training franchise.

3131 2. Pay or pledge for the payment of debt service on, or to  
3132 fund debt service reserve funds, arbitrage rebate obligations,

2026250e1

3133 or other amounts payable with respect thereto, bonds issued for  
3134 the construction or renovation of such facility, or for the  
3135 reimbursement of such costs or the refinancing of bonds issued  
3136 for such purposes.

3137 (c) The Department of Revenue may not distribute funds  
3138 under s. 212.20(6)(d)7.c. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.e.~~ until July 1,  
3139 2016. Further, the Department of Revenue may not distribute  
3140 funds to an applicant certified on or after July 1, 2013, until  
3141 it receives notice from the department that:

3142 1. The certified applicant has encumbered funds under  
3143 either subparagraph (a)1. or subparagraph (a)2.; and

3144 2. If applicable, any existing agreement with a spring  
3145 training franchise for the use of a facility has expired.

3146 (d)1. All certified applicants shall place unexpended state  
3147 funds received pursuant to s. 212.20(6)(d)7.c. ~~s.~~  
3148 ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.e.~~ in a trust fund or separate account for use  
3149 only as authorized in this section.

3150 2. A certified applicant may request that the department  
3151 notify the Department of Revenue to suspend further  
3152 distributions of state funds made available under s.  
3153 s. 212.20(6)(d)7.c. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.e.~~ for 12 months after  
3154 expiration of an existing agreement with a spring training  
3155 franchise to provide the certified applicant with an opportunity  
3156 to enter into a new agreement with a spring training franchise,  
3157 at which time the distributions shall resume.

3158 3. The expenditure of state funds distributed to an  
3159 applicant certified after July 1, 2013, must begin within 48  
3160 months after the initial receipt of the state funds. In  
3161 addition, the construction or renovation of a spring training

2026250e1

3162 facility must be completed within 24 months after the project's  
3163 commencement.

3164 Section 62. Subsection (1) of section 443.191, Florida  
3165 Statutes, is amended to read:

3166 443.191 Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund; establishment  
3167 and control.—

3168 (1) There is established, as a separate trust fund apart  
3169 from all other public funds of this state, an Unemployment  
3170 Compensation Trust Fund, which shall be administered by the  
3171 Department of Commerce exclusively for the purposes of this  
3172 chapter. The fund must consist of:

3173 (a) All contributions and reimbursements collected under  
3174 this chapter;

3175 (b) Interest earned on any moneys in the fund;

3176 (c) Any property or securities acquired through the use of  
3177 moneys belonging to the fund;

3178 (d) All earnings of these properties or securities;

3179 (e) All money credited to this state's account in the  
3180 federal Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund under 42 U.S.C. s.  
3181 1103;

3182 (f) All money collected for penalties imposed pursuant to  
3183 s. 443.151(6)(a);

3184 (g) Advances on the amount in the federal Unemployment  
3185 Compensation Trust Fund credited to the state under 42 U.S.C. s.  
3186 1321, as requested by the Governor or the Governor's designee;  
3187 and

3188 (h) All money deposited in this account as a distribution  
3189 pursuant to s. 212.20(6)(d)7.e. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.e.~~

2026250e1

3191 Except as otherwise provided in s. 443.1313(4), all moneys in  
3192 the fund must be mingled and undivided.

3193 Section 63. Section 571.26, Florida Statutes, is amended to  
3194 read:

3195 571.26 Florida Agricultural Promotional Campaign Trust  
3196 Fund.—There is hereby created the Florida Agricultural  
3197 Promotional Campaign Trust Fund within the Department of  
3198 Agriculture and Consumer Services to receive all moneys related  
3199 to the Florida Agricultural Promotional Campaign. Moneys  
3200 deposited in the trust fund shall be appropriated for the sole  
3201 purpose of implementing the Florida Agricultural Promotional  
3202 Campaign, except for money deposited in the trust fund pursuant  
3203 to s. 212.20(6)(d)7.e. ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.e.~~, which shall be held  
3204 separately and used solely for the purposes identified in s.  
3205 571.265.

3206 Section 64. Subsection (2) of section 571.265, Florida  
3207 Statutes, is amended to read:

3208 571.265 Promotion of Florida thoroughbred breeding and of  
3209 thoroughbred racing at Florida thoroughbred tracks; distribution  
3210 of funds.—

3211 (2) Funds deposited into the Florida Agricultural  
3212 Promotional Campaign Trust Fund pursuant to s. 212.20(6)(d)7.e.  
3213 ~~s. 212.20(6)(d)6.e.~~ shall be used by the department to encourage  
3214 the agricultural activity of breeding thoroughbred racehorses in  
3215 this state and to enhance thoroughbred racing conducted at  
3216 thoroughbred tracks in this state as provided in this section.  
3217 If the funds made available under this section are not fully  
3218 used in any one fiscal year, any unused amounts shall be carried  
3219 forward in the trust fund into future fiscal years and made

2026250e1

3220 available for distribution as provided in this section.

3221       Section 65. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment  
3222 made by this act to section 20.60, Florida Statutes, in a  
3223 reference thereto, subsection (8) of section 288.9935, Florida  
3224 Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3225       288.9935 Microfinance Guarantee Program.—

3226       (8) The department must, in the department's report  
3227 required under s. 20.60(10), include an annual report on the  
3228 program. The report must, at a minimum, provide:

3229       (a) A comprehensive description of the program, including  
3230 an evaluation of its application and guarantee activities,  
3231 recommendations for change, and identification of any other  
3232 state programs that overlap with the program;

3233       (b) An assessment of the current availability of and access  
3234 to credit for entrepreneurs and small businesses in this state;

3235       (c) A summary of the financial and employment results of  
3236 the entrepreneurs and small businesses receiving loan  
3237 guarantees, including the number of full-time equivalent jobs  
3238 created as a result of the guaranteed loans and the amount of  
3239 wages paid to employees in the newly created jobs;

3240       (d) Industry data about the borrowers, including the six-  
3241 digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)  
3242 code;

3243       (e) The name and location of lenders that receive loan  
3244 guarantees;

3245       (f) The number of loan guarantee applications received;

3246       (g) The number, duration, location, and amount of  
3247 guarantees made;

3248       (h) The number and amount of guaranteed loans outstanding,

2026250e1

3249 if any;  
3250       (i) The number and amount of guaranteed loans with payments  
3251 overdue, if any;  
3252       (j) The number and amount of guaranteed loans in default,  
3253 if any;  
3254       (k) The repayment history of the guaranteed loans made; and  
3255       (l) An evaluation of the program's ability to meet the  
3256 financial performance measures and objectives specified in  
3257 subsection (3).

3258       Section 66. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment  
3259 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a  
3260 reference thereto, paragraph (c) of subsection (5) of section  
3261 125.0104, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3262       125.0104 Tourist development tax; procedure for levying;  
3263 authorized uses; referendum; enforcement.—

3264       (5) AUTHORIZED USES OF REVENUE.—

3265       (c) A county located adjacent to the Gulf of America or the  
3266 Atlantic Ocean, except a county that receives revenue from taxes  
3267 levied pursuant to s. 125.0108, which meets the following  
3268 criteria may use up to 10 percent of the tax revenue received  
3269 pursuant to this section to reimburse expenses incurred in  
3270 providing public safety services, including emergency medical  
3271 services as defined in s. 401.107(3), and law enforcement  
3272 services, which are needed to address impacts related to  
3273 increased tourism and visitors to an area. However, if taxes  
3274 collected pursuant to this section are used to reimburse  
3275 emergency medical services or public safety services for tourism  
3276 or special events, the governing board of a county or  
3277 municipality may not use such taxes to supplant the normal

2026250e1

3278 operating expenses of an emergency medical services department,  
3279 a fire department, a sheriff's office, or a police department.  
3280 To receive reimbursement, the county must:

3281 1.a. Generate a minimum of \$10 million in annual proceeds  
3282 from any tax, or any combination of taxes, authorized to be  
3283 levied pursuant to this section;

3284 b. Have at least three municipalities; and

3285 c. Have an estimated population of less than 275,000,  
3286 according to the most recent population estimate prepared  
3287 pursuant to s. 186.901, excluding the inmate population; or

3288 2. Be a fiscally constrained county as described in s.  
3289 218.67(1).

3290

3291 The board of county commissioners must by majority vote approve  
3292 reimbursement made pursuant to this paragraph upon receipt of a  
3293 recommendation from the tourist development council.

3294 Section 67. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment  
3295 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a  
3296 reference thereto, subsection (3) of section 193.624, Florida  
3297 Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3298 193.624 Assessment of renewable energy source devices.—

3299 (3) This section applies to the installation of a renewable  
3300 energy source device installed on or after January 1, 2013, to  
3301 new and existing residential real property. This section applies  
3302 to a renewable energy source device installed on or after  
3303 January 1, 2018, to all other real property, except when  
3304 installed as part of a project planned for a location in a  
3305 fiscally constrained county, as defined in s. 218.67(1), and for  
3306 which an application for a comprehensive plan amendment or

2026250e1

3307 planned unit development zoning has been filed with the county  
3308 on or before December 31, 2017.

3309       Section 68. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment  
3310 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a  
3311 reference thereto, subsection (2) of section 196.182, Florida  
3312 Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3313       196.182 Exemption of renewable energy source devices.—

3314       (2) The exemption provided in this section does not apply  
3315 to a renewable energy source device that is installed as part of  
3316 a project planned for a location in a fiscally constrained  
3317 county, as defined in s. 218.67(1), and for which an application  
3318 for a comprehensive plan amendment or planned unit development  
3319 zoning has been filed with the county on or before December 31,  
3320 2017.

3321       Section 69. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment  
3322 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a  
3323 reference thereto, subsection (1) of section 218.12, Florida  
3324 Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3325       218.12 Appropriations to offset reductions in ad valorem  
3326 tax revenue in fiscally constrained counties.—

3327       (1) Beginning in fiscal year 2008-2009, the Legislature  
3328 shall appropriate moneys to offset the reductions in ad valorem  
3329 tax revenue experienced by fiscally constrained counties, as  
3330 defined in s. 218.67(1), which occur as a direct result of the  
3331 implementation of revisions of Art. VII of the State  
3332 Constitution approved in the special election held on January  
3333 29, 2008. The moneys appropriated for this purpose shall be  
3334 distributed in January of each fiscal year among the fiscally  
3335 constrained counties based on each county's proportion of the

2026250e1

3336 total reduction in ad valorem tax revenue resulting from the  
3337 implementation of the revision.

3338       Section 70. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment  
3339 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a  
3340 reference thereto, subsection (1) of section 218.125, Florida  
3341 Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3342       218.125 Offset for tax loss associated with certain  
3343 constitutional amendments affecting fiscally constrained  
3344 counties.—

3345       (1) Beginning in the 2010-2011 fiscal year, the Legislature  
3346 shall appropriate moneys to offset the reductions in ad valorem  
3347 tax revenue experienced by fiscally constrained counties, as  
3348 defined in s. 218.67(1), which occur as a direct result of the  
3349 implementation of revisions of ss. 3(f) and 4(b), Art. VII of  
3350 the State Constitution which were approved in the general  
3351 election held in November 2008. The moneys appropriated for this  
3352 purpose shall be distributed in January of each fiscal year  
3353 among the fiscally constrained counties based on each county's  
3354 proportion of the total reduction in ad valorem tax revenue  
3355 resulting from the implementation of the revisions.

3356       Section 71. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment  
3357 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a  
3358 reference thereto, subsection (1) of section 218.135, Florida  
3359 Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3360       218.135 Offset for tax loss associated with reductions in  
3361 value of certain citrus fruit packing and processing equipment.—

3362       (1) For the 2018-2019 fiscal year, the Legislature shall  
3363 appropriate moneys to offset the reductions in ad valorem tax  
3364 revenue experienced by fiscally constrained counties, as defined

2026250e1

3365 in s. 218.67(1), which occur as a direct result of the  
3366 implementation of s. 193.4516. The moneys appropriated for this  
3367 purpose shall be distributed in January 2019 among the fiscally  
3368 constrained counties based on each county's proportion of the  
3369 total reduction in ad valorem tax revenue resulting from the  
3370 implementation of s. 193.4516.

3371       Section 72. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment  
3372 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a  
3373 reference thereto, subsection (1) of section 218.136, Florida  
3374 Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3375       218.136 Offset for ad valorem revenue loss affecting  
3376 fiscally constrained counties.—

3377       (1) Beginning in fiscal year 2025-2026, the Legislature  
3378 shall appropriate moneys to offset the reductions in ad valorem  
3379 tax revenue experienced by fiscally constrained counties, as  
3380 defined in s. 218.67(1), which occur as a direct result of the  
3381 implementation of revisions of s. 6(a), Art. VII of the State  
3382 Constitution approved in the November 2024 general election. The  
3383 moneys appropriated for this purpose shall be distributed in  
3384 January of each fiscal year among the fiscally constrained  
3385 counties based on each county's proportion of the total  
3386 reduction in ad valorem tax revenue resulting from the  
3387 implementation of the revision of s. 6(a), Art. VII of the State  
3388 Constitution.

3389       Section 73. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment  
3390 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a  
3391 reference thereto, paragraph (cc) of subsection (2) of section  
3392 252.35, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3393       252.35 Emergency management powers; Division of Emergency

2026250e1

3394 Management.—

3395 (2) The division is responsible for carrying out the  
3396 provisions of ss. 252.31-252.90. In performing its duties, the  
3397 division shall:

3398 (cc) Administer a revolving loan program for local  
3399 government hazard mitigation projects.

3400 Section 74. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment  
3401 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a  
3402 reference thereto, subsection (4) of section 288.102, Florida  
3403 Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3404 288.102 Supply Chain Innovation Grant Program.—

3405 (4) A minimum of a one-to-one match of nonstate resources,  
3406 including local, federal, or private funds, to the state  
3407 contribution is required. An award may not be made for a project  
3408 that is receiving or using state funding from another state  
3409 source or statutory program, including tax credits. The one-to-  
3410 one match requirement is waived for a public entity located in a  
3411 fiscally constrained county as defined in s. 218.67(1).

3412 Section 75. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment  
3413 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a  
3414 reference thereto, paragraph (h) of subsection (16) of section  
3415 403.064, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3416 403.064 Reuse of reclaimed water.—

3417 (16) By November 1, 2021, domestic wastewater utilities  
3418 that dispose of effluent, reclaimed water, or reuse water by  
3419 surface water discharge shall submit to the department for  
3420 review and approval a plan for eliminating nonbeneficial surface  
3421 water discharge by January 1, 2032, subject to the requirements  
3422 of this section. The plan must include the average gallons per

2026250e1

3423 day of effluent, reclaimed water, or reuse water that will no  
3424 longer be discharged into surface waters and the date of such  
3425 elimination, the average gallons per day of surface water  
3426 discharge which will continue in accordance with the  
3427 alternatives provided for in subparagraphs (a)2. and 3., and the  
3428 level of treatment that the effluent, reclaimed water, or reuse  
3429 water will receive before being discharged into a surface water  
3430 by each alternative.

3431 (h) This subsection does not apply to any of the following:

3432 1. A domestic wastewater treatment facility that is located  
3433 in a fiscally constrained county as described in s. 218.67(1).

3434 2. A domestic wastewater treatment facility that is located  
3435 in a municipality that is entirely within a rural area of  
3436 opportunity as designated pursuant to s. 288.0656.

3437 3. A domestic wastewater treatment facility that is located  
3438 in a municipality that has less than \$10 million in total  
3439 revenue, as determined by the municipality's most recent annual  
3440 financial report submitted to the Department of Financial  
3441 Services in accordance with s. 218.32.

3442 4. A domestic wastewater treatment facility that is  
3443 operated by an operator of a mobile home park as defined in s.  
3444 723.003 and has a permitted capacity of less than 300,000  
3445 gallons per day.

3446 Section 76. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment  
3447 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in  
3448 references thereto, subsections (2) and (3) of section 589.08,  
3449 Florida Statutes, are reenacted to read:

3450 589.08 Land acquisition restrictions.—

3451 (2) The Florida Forest Service may receive, hold the

2026250e1

3452 custody of, and exercise the control of any lands, and set aside  
3453 into a separate, distinct and inviolable fund, any proceeds  
3454 derived from the sales of the products of such lands, the use  
3455 thereof in any manner, or the sale of such lands save the 25  
3456 percent of the proceeds to be paid into the State School Fund as  
3457 provided by law. The Florida Forest Service may use and apply  
3458 such funds for the acquisition, use, custody, management,  
3459 development, or improvement of any lands vested in or subject to  
3460 the control of the Florida Forest Service. After full payment  
3461 has been made for the purchase of a state forest to the Federal  
3462 Government or other grantor, 15 percent of the gross receipts  
3463 from a state forest shall be paid to the fiscally constrained  
3464 county or counties, as described in s. 218.67(1), in which it is  
3465 located in proportion to the acreage located in each county for  
3466 use by the county or counties for school purposes.

3467 (3) The Florida Forest Service shall pay 15 percent of the  
3468 gross receipts from the Goethe State Forest to each fiscally  
3469 constrained county, as described in s. 218.67(1), in which a  
3470 portion of the respective forest is located in proportion to the  
3471 forest acreage located in such county. The funds must be equally  
3472 divided between the board of county commissioners and the school  
3473 board of each fiscally constrained county.

3474 Section 77. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment  
3475 made by this act to section 218.67, Florida Statutes, in a  
3476 reference thereto, paragraph (f) of subsection (1) of section  
3477 1011.62, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3478 1011.62 Funds for operation of schools.—If the annual  
3479 allocation from the Florida Education Finance Program to each  
3480 district for operation of schools is not determined in the

2026250e1

3481 annual appropriations act or the substantive bill implementing  
3482 the annual appropriations act, it shall be determined as  
3483 follows:

3484 (1) COMPUTATION OF THE BASE FLORIDA EDUCATION FINANCE  
3485 PROGRAM.—The following procedure shall be followed in  
3486 determining the base Florida Education Finance Program funds for  
3487 each district:

3488 (f) *Small district factor.*—An additional value per full-  
3489 time equivalent student membership is provided to each school  
3490 district with a full-time equivalent student membership of fewer  
3491 than 20,000 full-time equivalent students which is in a fiscally  
3492 constrained county as described in s. 218.67(1). The amount of  
3493 the additional value shall be specified in the General  
3494 Appropriations Act.

3495 Section 78. For the purpose of incorporating the amendments  
3496 made by this act to sections 218.67 and 339.2818, Florida  
3497 Statutes, in references thereto, paragraph (c) of subsection (6)  
3498 of section 403.0741, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3499 403.0741 Grease waste removal and disposal.—

3500 (6) REGULATION BY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.—

3501 (c) Fiscally constrained counties as described in s.  
3502 218.67(1) and small counties as defined in s. 339.2818(2) may  
3503 opt out of the requirements of this section.

3504 Section 79. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment  
3505 made by this act to section 288.0656, Florida Statutes, in a  
3506 reference thereto, paragraph (e) of subsection (7) of section  
3507 163.3177, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3508 163.3177 Required and optional elements of comprehensive  
3509 plan; studies and surveys.—

2026250e1

3510 (7)

3511 (e) This subsection does not confer the status of rural  
3512 area of opportunity, or any of the rights or benefits derived  
3513 from such status, on any land area not otherwise designated as  
3514 such pursuant to s. 288.0656(7).

3515 Section 80. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment  
3516 made by this act to section 288.9961, Florida Statutes, in a  
3517 reference thereto, paragraph (a) of subsection (7) of section  
3518 288.9962, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3519 288.9962 Broadband Opportunity Program.—

3520 (7) (a) In evaluating grant applications and awarding  
3521 grants, the office must give priority to applications that:

3522 1. Offer broadband Internet service to important community  
3523 institutions, including, but not limited to, libraries,  
3524 educational institutions, public safety facilities, and health  
3525 care facilities;

3526 2. Facilitate the use of telemedicine and electronic health  
3527 records;

3528 3. Serve economically distressed areas of this state, as  
3529 measured by indices of unemployment, poverty, or population loss  
3530 that are significantly greater than the statewide average;

3531 4. Provide for scalability to transmission speeds of at  
3532 least 100 megabits per second download and 10 megabits per  
3533 second upload;

3534 5. Include a component to actively promote the adoption of  
3535 the newly available broadband Internet service in the community;

3536 6. Provide evidence of strong support for the project from  
3537 citizens, government, businesses, and institutions in the  
3538 community;

2026250e1

3539       7. Provide access to broadband Internet service to the  
3540 greatest number of unserved households and businesses;

3541       8. Leverage greater amounts of funding for a project from  
3542 private sources; or

3543       9. Demonstrate consistency with the strategic plan adopted  
3544 under s. 288.9961.

3545       Section 81. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment  
3546 made by this act to section 319.32, Florida Statutes, in a  
3547 reference thereto, subsection (1) of section 215.211, Florida  
3548 Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3549       215.211 Service charge; elimination or reduction for  
3550 specified proceeds.—

3551       (1) Notwithstanding the provisions of s. 215.20(1) and  
3552 former s. 215.20(3), the service charge provided in s. 215.20(1)  
3553 and former s. 215.20(3), which is deducted from the proceeds of  
3554 the taxes distributed under ss. 206.606(1), 207.026,  
3555 212.0501(6), and 319.32(5), shall be eliminated beginning July  
3556 1, 2000.

3557       Section 82. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment  
3558 made by this act to section 339.68, Florida Statutes, in  
3559 references thereto, subsections (5) and (6) of section 339.66,  
3560 Florida Statutes, are reenacted to read:

3561       339.66 Upgrade of arterial highways with controlled access  
3562 facilities.—

3563       (5) Any existing applicable requirements relating to  
3564 department projects shall apply to projects undertaken by the  
3565 department pursuant to this section. The department shall take  
3566 into consideration the guidance and recommendations of any  
3567 previous studies or reports relevant to the projects authorized

2026250e1

3568 by this section and ss. 339.67 and 339.68, including, but not  
3569 limited to, the task force reports prepared pursuant to chapter  
3570 2019-43, Laws of Florida.

3571 (6) Any existing applicable requirements relating to  
3572 turnpike projects apply to projects undertaken by the Turnpike  
3573 Enterprise pursuant to this section. The Turnpike Enterprise  
3574 shall take into consideration the guidance and recommendations  
3575 of any previous studies or reports relevant to the projects  
3576 authorized by this section and ss. 339.67 and 339.68, including,  
3577 but not limited to, the task force reports prepared pursuant to  
3578 chapter 2019-43, Laws of Florida, and with respect to any  
3579 extension of the Florida Turnpike from its northerly terminus in  
3580 Wildwood.

3581 Section 83. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment  
3582 made by this act to section 420.9073, Florida Statutes, in  
3583 references thereto, subsections (4) and (6) of section 420.9072,  
3584 Florida Statutes, are reenacted to read:

3585 420.9072 State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program.—The  
3586 State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program is created for the  
3587 purpose of providing funds to counties and eligible  
3588 municipalities as an incentive for the creation of local housing  
3589 partnerships, to expand production of and preserve affordable  
3590 housing, to further the housing element of the local government  
3591 comprehensive plan specific to affordable housing, and to  
3592 increase housing-related employment.

3593 (4) Moneys in the Local Government Housing Trust Fund shall  
3594 be distributed by the corporation to each approved county and  
3595 eligible municipality within the county as provided in s.  
3596 420.9073. Distributions shall be allocated to the participating

2026250e1

3597 county and to each eligible municipality within the county  
3598 according to an interlocal agreement between the county  
3599 governing authority and the governing body of the eligible  
3600 municipality or, if there is no interlocal agreement, according  
3601 to population. The portion for each eligible municipality is  
3602 computed by multiplying the total moneys earmarked for a county  
3603 by a fraction, the numerator of which is the population of the  
3604 eligible municipality and the denominator of which is the total  
3605 population of the county. The remaining revenues shall be  
3606 distributed to the governing body of the county.

3607 (6) The moneys that otherwise would be distributed pursuant  
3608 to s. 420.9073 to a local government that does not meet the  
3609 program's requirements for receipts of such distributions shall  
3610 remain in the Local Government Housing Trust Fund to be  
3611 administered by the corporation.

3612 Section 84. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment  
3613 made by this act to section 420.9073, Florida Statutes, in a  
3614 reference thereto, paragraph (b) of subsection (7) of section  
3615 420.9076, Florida Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3616 420.9076 Adoption of affordable housing incentive  
3617 strategies; committees.—

3618 (7) The governing board of the county or the eligible  
3619 municipality shall notify the corporation by certified mail of  
3620 its adoption of an amendment of its local housing assistance  
3621 plan to incorporate local housing incentive strategies. The  
3622 notice must include a copy of the approved amended plan.

3623 (b) If a county fails to timely adopt an amended local  
3624 housing assistance plan to incorporate local housing incentive  
3625 strategies but an eligible municipality receiving a local

2026250e1

3626 housing distribution pursuant to an interlocal agreement within  
3627 the county does timely adopt an amended local housing assistance  
3628 plan to incorporate local housing incentive strategies, the  
3629 corporation, after issuance of a notice of termination, shall  
3630 thereafter distribute directly to the participating eligible  
3631 municipality its share calculated in the manner provided in s.  
3632 420.9073.

3633 Section 85. For the purpose of incorporating the amendment  
3634 made by this act to section 420.9073, Florida Statutes, in a  
3635 reference thereto, subsection (2) of section 420.9079, Florida  
3636 Statutes, is reenacted to read:

3637 420.9079 Local Government Housing Trust Fund.—

3638 (2) The corporation shall administer the fund exclusively  
3639 for the purpose of implementing the programs described in ss.  
3640 420.907-420.9076 and this section. With the exception of  
3641 monitoring the activities of counties and eligible  
3642 municipalities to determine local compliance with program  
3643 requirements, the corporation shall not receive appropriations  
3644 from the fund for administrative or personnel costs. For the  
3645 purpose of implementing the compliance monitoring provisions of  
3646 s. 420.9075(9), the corporation may request a maximum of one-  
3647 quarter of 1 percent of the annual appropriation per state  
3648 fiscal year. When such funding is appropriated, the corporation  
3649 shall deduct the amount appropriated prior to calculating the  
3650 local housing distribution pursuant to ss. 420.9072 and  
3651 420.9073.

3652 Section 86. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.