

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

26 eligible for rural infrastructure grant funds;
27 revising factors that the department must consider
28 when awarding grant funds; requiring that contracts or
29 agreements involving the expenditure of grant funds be
30 placed on a certain website for a specified time
31 period; requiring that certain information be included
32 in a contract or agreement involving the expenditure
33 of grant funds; requiring that a plain language
34 version of certain contracts or agreements be placed
35 on a certain website; providing an effective date.
36

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

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

41 288.018 Regional Rural Development Grants Program.—

42 (1) The department shall establish a matching grant
43 program to provide funding to regional ~~regionally based~~ economic
44 development organizations representing rural counties and
45 communities to build ~~for the purpose of building~~ the
46 professional capacity of such regional economic development
47 ~~their~~ organizations. Building the professional capacity of
48 regional economic development organizations includes hiring
49 professional staff to develop, facilitate the delivery of, and
50 directly provide needed economic development professional

51 services, including technical assistance, education and
52 leadership development, marketing and project recruitment, and
53 other services that are important for rural economic
54 development. ~~Such~~ Matching grants may also be used by a regional
55 ~~an~~ economic development organization to provide technical
56 assistance to local governments, local economic development
57 organizations, and existing and prospective businesses within
58 the rural counties and communities that it serves. The
59 department is authorized to approve, on an annual basis, grants
60 to such regional ~~regionally based~~ economic development
61 organizations. The maximum amount an organization may receive in
62 any year will be \$50,000, or \$250,000 for each of the three
63 regional economic development organizations serving rural areas
64 of opportunity designated pursuant to s. 288.0656. Grant funds
65 received by a regional economic development organization
66 ~~\$150,000 in a rural area of opportunity recommended by the Rural~~
67 ~~Economic Development Initiative and designated by the Governor,~~
68 ~~and must be matched each year by an equivalent amount of~~
69 nonstate resources in an amount equal to 25 percent of the state
70 contribution.

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

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

- 82 1. The purpose of the contract or agreement.
- 83 2. Specific performance standards and responsibilities for
 84 each entity.
- 85 3. A detailed project or contract budget, if applicable.
- 86 4. The value of any services provided.
- 87 5. The projected travel and entertainment expenses for
 88 employees and board members, if applicable.

89 (c) A plain language version of a contract or agreement
 90 with a private entity, municipality, city, town, or vendor of
 91 services, supplies, or programs, including marketing, or for the
 92 purchase or lease or use of lands, facilities, or properties
 93 which involves the expenditure of grant funds provided under
 94 this section and which is estimated to exceed \$35,000 must be
 95 posted on the contracting regional economic development
 96 organization's website. ~~The department may also contract for the~~
 97 ~~development of an enterprise zone web portal or websites for~~
 98 ~~each enterprise zone which will be used to market the program~~
 99 ~~for job creation in disadvantaged urban and rural enterprise~~
 100 ~~zones. Each enterprise zone web page should include downloadable~~

101 ~~links to state forms and information, as well as local message~~
102 ~~boards that help businesses and residents receive information~~
103 ~~concerning zone boundaries, job openings, zone programs, and~~
104 ~~neighborhood improvement activities.~~

105 Section 2. Subsection (5) of section 288.0655, Florida
106 Statutes, is renumbered as subsection (6), paragraph (b) of
107 subsection (2) and subsection (4) are amended, and new
108 subsection (5) is added to that section, to read:

109 288.0655 Rural Infrastructure Fund.—

110 (2)(b) To facilitate access of rural communities and rural
111 areas of opportunity as defined by the Rural Economic
112 Development Initiative to infrastructure funding programs of the
113 Federal Government, such as those offered by the United States
114 Department of Agriculture and the United States Department of
115 Commerce, and state programs, including those offered by Rural
116 Economic Development Initiative agencies, and to facilitate
117 local government or private infrastructure funding efforts, the
118 department may award grants for up to 50 ~~30~~ percent of the total
119 infrastructure project cost. ~~If an application for funding is~~
120 ~~for a catalyst site, as defined in s. 288.0656, the department~~
121 ~~may award grants for up to 40 percent of the total~~
122 ~~infrastructure project cost.~~ Eligible projects must be related
123 to specific job-creation or job-retention opportunities.
124 Eligible projects may also include improving any inadequate
125 infrastructure that has resulted in regulatory action that

126 prohibits economic or community growth or reducing the costs to
127 community users of proposed infrastructure improvements that
128 exceed such costs in comparable communities, which includes
129 improving access to and the availability of broadband Internet
130 service. Eligible uses of funds shall include improvements to
131 public infrastructure for industrial or commercial sites, ~~and~~
132 upgrades to or development of public tourism infrastructure, and
133 improvements to broadband Internet service and access in
134 unserved or underserved rural communities. Authorized
135 infrastructure may include the following public or public-
136 private partnership facilities: storm water systems;
137 telecommunications facilities; broadband facilities; roads or
138 other remedies to transportation impediments; nature-based
139 tourism facilities; or other physical requirements necessary to
140 facilitate tourism, trade, and economic development activities
141 in the community. Authorized infrastructure may also include
142 publicly or privately owned self-powered nature-based tourism
143 facilities, publicly owned telecommunications facilities, and
144 broadband facilities, and additions to the distribution
145 facilities of the existing natural gas utility as defined in s.
146 366.04(3)(c), the existing electric utility as defined in s.
147 366.02, or the existing water or wastewater utility as defined
148 in s. 367.021(12), or any other existing water or wastewater
149 facility, which owns a gas or electric distribution system or a
150 water or wastewater system in this state where:

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

155 2. Such utilities as defined herein are willing and able
156 to provide such service.

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

171 (5) (a) A contract or agreement that involves the
172 expenditure of grant funds provided under this section shall be
173 placed on the department's website for review at least 14 days
174 before execution.

175 (b) A contract or agreement that includes the expenditure

176 of grant funds provided under this section, including a contract
177 or agreement entered into between an entity and a regional
178 economic development organization, a unit of local government,
179 or an economic development organization substantially
180 underwritten by a unit of local government shall include:

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

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

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