

By Senator Montford

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1                                   A bill to be entitled  
2       An act relating to the Regional Rural Development  
3       Grants Program; amending s. 288.018, F.S.; defining  
4       the term "regional economic development organization";  
5       specifying that the concept of building the  
6       professional capacity of a regional economic  
7       development organization includes the hiring of  
8       professional staff to perform specified services;  
9       providing that matching grants may be used to provide  
10      technical assistance to local governments and economic  
11      development organizations and to existing and  
12      prospective businesses; specifying that a regional  
13      economic development organization that provides  
14      taxpayer-funded incentives is not eligible to  
15      participate in the matching grant program; increasing  
16      the maximum amount of annual grant funding that  
17      specified economic development organizations may  
18      receive; revising the required amount of nonstate  
19      matching funds; requiring that certain information be  
20      included in a contract or agreement involving the  
21      expenditure of grant funds; requiring that contracts  
22      or agreements involving the expenditure of grant  
23      funds, and a plain-language version of certain  
24      contracts or agreements, be placed on the contracting  
25      regional economic development organization's website  
26      for a specified period before execution; deleting an  
27      obsolete provision; increasing the amount of funds the  
28      Department of Economic Opportunity may expend each  
29      fiscal year for certain purposes; providing an

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30 effective date.

31  
32 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

33  
34 Section 1. Subsections (1), (3), and (4) of section  
35 288.018, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

36 288.018 Regional Rural Development Grants Program.—

37 (1) (a) For the purposes of this section, a "regional  
38 economic development organization" means an economic development  
39 organization located in or contracted to serve a rural area of  
40 opportunity, as defined in s. 288.0656.

41 (b) The department shall establish a matching grant program  
42 to provide funding to regional ~~regionally based~~ economic  
43 development organizations representing rural counties and  
44 communities to build for the purpose of building the  
45 professional capacity of those ~~their~~ organizations. Efforts to  
46 build the professional capacity of regional economic development  
47 organizations include the hiring of professional staff to  
48 develop, facilitate the delivery of, and directly provide needed  
49 economic development professional services, including technical  
50 assistance, education and leadership development, marketing, and  
51 project recruitment. Such Matching grants may also be used by a  
52 regional ~~an~~ economic development organization to provide  
53 technical assistance to local governments, local economic  
54 development organizations, and existing and prospective  
55 businesses within the rural counties and communities that it  
56 serves. A regional economic development organization that  
57 provides taxpayer-funded incentives to existing or prospective  
58 businesses is not eligible to participate in the matching grant

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59 program.

60 (c) A regional economic development organization may apply  
61 annually to the department for a matching grant. The department  
62 is authorized to approve an application for a grant of:, ~~on an~~  
63 ~~annual basis, grants~~

64 1. Up to \$150,000 to an organization located ~~to such~~  
65 ~~regionally based economic development organizations. The maximum~~  
66 ~~amount an organization may receive in any year will be \$50,000,~~  
67 ~~or \$150,000 in or~~ contracted to serve a rural area of  
68 opportunity designated pursuant to s. 288.0656(7).

69 2. Up to \$250,000 to any of the three regional economic  
70 development organizations that serve an entire region of a rural  
71 area of opportunity designated pursuant to s. 288.0656(7) and  
72 that are recognized by the department as serving such a region.

73 (d) Grant funds received by a regional economic development  
74 organization ~~recommended by the Rural Economic Development~~  
75 ~~Initiative and designated by the Governor,~~ and must be matched  
76 each year by an equivalent amount of nonstate resources in an  
77 amount equal to 25 percent of the state contribution.

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

85 1. The purpose of the contract or agreement.

86 2. Specific performance standards and responsibilities for  
87 each entity.

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88       3. A detailed project or contract budget, if applicable.

89       4. The value of any services provided.

90       5. The projected travel expenses for employees and board  
91 members, if applicable.

92       (b) At least 14 days before execution, the contracting  
93 regional economic development organization shall post on its  
94 website:

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

97       2. A plain-language version of a contract or agreement with  
98 a private entity, a municipality, or a vendor of services,  
99 supplies, or programs, including marketing, or for the purchase  
100 or lease or use of lands, facilities, or properties which  
101 involves the expenditure of grant funds provided under this  
102 section and which is estimated to exceed \$35,000 ~~The department~~  
103 ~~may also contract for the development of an enterprise zone web~~  
104 ~~portal or websites for each enterprise zone which will be used~~  
105 ~~to market the program for job creation in disadvantaged urban~~  
106 ~~and rural enterprise zones. Each enterprise zone web page should~~  
107 ~~include downloadable links to state forms and information, as~~  
108 ~~well as local message boards that help businesses and residents~~  
109 ~~receive information concerning zone boundaries, job openings,~~  
110 ~~zone programs, and neighborhood improvement activities.~~

111       (4) The department may expend up to \$1 million ~~\$750,000~~  
112 each fiscal year from funds appropriated to the Rural Community  
113 Development Revolving Loan Fund for the purposes outlined in  
114 this section. The department may contract with Enterprise  
115 Florida, Inc., for the administration of the purposes specified  
116 in this section. Funds released to Enterprise Florida, Inc., for

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117 this purpose shall be released quarterly and shall be calculated  
118 based on the applications in process.

119 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2020.