A bill to be entitled
An act relating to broadband Internet; amending s. 364.0135, F.S.; requiring the Florida Office of Broadband’s strategic plan to include short-term and long-term goals for increasing the availability of and access to broadband Internet service in this state; providing requirements for the development of the plan; requiring the updated plan to be submitted to the Governor, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and the Legislature by a specified date; requiring the plan to be updated biennially; requiring the office to provide technical and planning assistance related to broadband infrastructure to rural communities; providing an appropriation; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Subsection (4) of section 364.0135, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

364.0135 Promotion of broadband adoption; Florida Office of Broadband.—

(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 the state. The office, in the performance of its duties, shall do all of the following:

(a) Create a strategic plan that has short-term and long-
term goals and strategies for increasing and improving the availability of and access to 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 include a process to review and verify public input regarding transmission speeds and availability of broadband Internet service throughout the state. The plan must also identify available federal funding sources for the expansion or improvement of broadband. The strategic plan must be submitted to the Governor, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, 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.

(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 organizations, economic development organizations, local governments, tourism, parks and recreation, and agriculture.

(c) Provide technical and planning assistance related to broadband infrastructure to rural communities.

(d) Encourage the use of broadband Internet service, especially in the rural, unserved, or underserved communities of the state through grant programs having effective strategies to facilitate the statewide deployment of broadband Internet service.
service. For any grants to be awarded, priority must be given to projects that:

1. Provide access to broadband education, awareness, training, access, equipment, and support to libraries, schools, colleges and universities, health care providers, and community support organizations.

2. Encourage the sustainable adoption of broadband in primarily underserved areas by removing barriers to entry.

3. Work toward encouraging investments in establishing affordable and sustainable broadband Internet service in underserved areas of the state.

4. Facilitate the development of applications, programs, and services, including, but not limited to, telework, telemedicine, and e-learning to increase the usage of, and demand for, broadband Internet service in the state.

(e)(e) Monitor, participate in, and provide input in proceedings of the Federal Communications Commission and other federal agencies related to the geographic availability and deployment of broadband Internet service in the state as necessary to ensure that this information is accurately presented and that rural, unserved, and underserved areas of the state are best positioned to benefit from federal and state broadband deployment programs.

Section 2. For the 2021-2022 fiscal year, the sum of $1.4 million in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the State Economic Enhancement and Development Trust Fund to the Department of Economic Opportunity for the purpose of commissioning a broadband feasibility study and developing a strategic plan as required in s. 364.0135, Florida Statutes.
Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2021.