

115TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2569

To amend the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to award grants to benefit the Appalachia region, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 19, 2018

Mr. WARNER (for himself, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. MANCHIN, and Mr. WICKER) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

A BILL

To amend the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to award grants to benefit the Appalachia region, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Appalachia Oppor-
5 tunity Grants Act of 2018”.

1 **SEC. 2. APPALACHIA INNOVATION GRANTS.**

2 Subtitle D of the Consolidated Farm and Rural De-
3 velopment Act (7 U.S.C. 1981 et seq.) is amended by add-
4 ing at the end the following:

5 **“SEC. 379I. APPALACHIA INNOVATION GRANTS.**

6 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

7 “(1) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligible en-
8 tity’ means a unit of local government in the region.

9 “(2) REGION.—The term ‘region’ means the
10 Appalachian region (as defined in section 14102(a)
11 of title 40, United States Code).

12 “(b) GRANTS.—The Secretary may award grants to
13 eligible entities to convene groups of public and private
14 entities to collaborate in carrying out regional projects to
15 accomplish positive economic and community impacts in
16 the region.

17 “(c) COLLABORATIVE GROUPS.—

18 “(1) IN GENERAL.—To be eligible to receive a
19 grant under subsection (b), an eligible entity—

20 “(A) shall convene as part of the collabo-
21 rative group representatives of each of—

22 “(i) a local economic development
23 board or office in the region;

24 “(ii) a private company or association;

25 and

1 “(iii) an institution of higher edu-
 2 cation (as defined in section 101 of the
 3 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
 4 1001)) in the region; and

5 “(B) may convene as part of the collabo-
 6 rative group representatives of other entities
 7 (such as venture capital firms, nonprofit organi-
 8 zations, and philanthropic organizations) that
 9 the eligible entity determines are important to
 10 the goal of the regional project described in
 11 subsection (d)(2).

12 “(2) REFERRAL PROCESS.—

13 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may
 14 assist in the formation of a collaborative group
 15 under paragraph (1) by establishing a referral
 16 process under which a private company or asso-
 17 ciation seeking to invest in a particular area in
 18 the region is matched with an eligible entity lo-
 19 cated in that area.

20 “(B) DATABASE OF POTENTIAL INVES-
 21 TORS.—In carrying out subparagraph (A), the
 22 Secretary may—

23 “(i) establish and maintain a database
 24 of private companies and associations seek-
 25 ing to invest in the region; and

1 “(ii) coordinate with other Federal
 2 agencies, including the Department of
 3 Commerce, to register inquiries—

4 “(I) that are made to those agen-
 5 cies by private companies and associa-
 6 tions seeking to invest in the region;
 7 and

8 “(II) in the database described in
 9 clause (i).

10 “(d) PROJECT REQUIREMENTS.—A regional project
 11 carried out by a collaborative group under subsection (b)
 12 shall—

13 “(1) involve not fewer than 2 municipalities
 14 that share a border; and

15 “(2) complete a specific activity that has as a
 16 goal—

17 “(A) job creation in the region;

18 “(B) expansion of the capacity of post-sec-
 19 ondary education in the region;

20 “(C) growth of tourism in the region;

21 “(D) improving public health in the region;

22 or

23 “(E) upgrading regional infrastructure.

24 “(e) APPLICATIONS.—

1 “(1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity that has
2 convened a collaborative group described in sub-
3 section (c)(1) and identified an activity for a re-
4 gional project described in subsection (d)(2) may
5 submit to the Secretary an application that in-
6 cludes—

7 “(A) a detailed description of—

8 “(i) a timeline for the completion of
9 the regional project; and

10 “(ii) the responsibilities of each mem-
11 ber of the collaborative group in carrying
12 out the regional project;

13 “(B) evidence that the collaborative group
14 is a public-private partnership;

15 “(C) evidence that the collaborative group
16 will maintain intermunicipality cooperation;

17 “(D) a description of the reasons that the
18 eligible entity requires Federal funds;

19 “(E) evidence that the eligible entity has
20 previously sought funding from State, local, or
21 private programs;

22 “(F) a description of the source of non-
23 Federal funds for the regional project;

1 “(G) a description of the positive economic
2 or community impact (including relating to edu-
3 cation) of the regional project;

4 “(H) an assessment of the assets and
5 weaknesses of the community in which the re-
6 gional project will be implemented;

7 “(I) a regional strategic plan that—

8 “(i) takes into account the assessment
9 described in subparagraph (H); and

10 “(ii) includes an analysis of the align-
11 ment of the regional project with the re-
12 gional strategic plan; and

13 “(J) evidence, with full transparency and
14 credibility, of minimal obstruction to the com-
15 pletion of the project design phase described in
16 subsection (f)(2)(A) by not later than 1 year
17 after the date on which the eligible entity re-
18 ceives the grant.

19 “(2) PRIORITY.—The Secretary shall give pri-
20 ority to applications submitted under paragraph (1)
21 that describe a positive, measurable economic im-
22 pact.

23 “(f) GRANT FUNDS.—

1 “(1) LIMITATION ON GRANT AMOUNT.—A grant
2 for a regional project under subsection (b) shall be
3 not more than \$2,000,000.

4 “(2) PHASES.—A grant under subsection (b)
5 shall be awarded in the following 2 phases:

6 “(A) PROJECT DESIGN.—An eligible entity
7 may use 50 percent of the grant during the pe-
8 riod beginning on the date on which the eligible
9 entity receives the grant and ending not later
10 than 1 year after that date to continue the
11 planning and design of the regional project, in-
12 cluding activities such as—

13 “(i) workforce training;

14 “(ii) building design;

15 “(iii) permit approvals; and

16 “(iv) real estate arrangements.

17 “(B) PROJECT DEVELOPMENT.—An eligi-
18 ble entity that completes the planning and de-
19 sign of the regional project under subparagraph
20 (A) may use the remaining grant funds for the
21 completion of the construction and implementa-
22 tion of the regional project.

23 “(3) MATCHING FUNDS REQUIREMENT.—An el-
24 igible entity that receives a grant under subsection

1 (b) shall provide non-Federal funding equal to not
 2 less than 10 percent of the amount of the grant.

3 “(4) RESERVATION OF GRANT FUNDS.—The
 4 Secretary shall reserve 20 percent of the funds made
 5 available under subsection (h) for each fiscal year to
 6 award grants to eligible entities that convene col-
 7 laborative groups that include a representative of a
 8 private company or association that is located in the
 9 region.

10 “(g) REVIEW OF GRANT PROGRAM.—

11 “(1) GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE
 12 REVIEW.—The Comptroller General of the United
 13 States shall conduct a review of the implementation
 14 of this section for—

15 “(A) the 2-year period beginning on the
 16 date on which the Secretary begins to accept
 17 applications for grants under this section; and

18 “(B) each 4-year period thereafter.

19 “(2) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—The Secretary
 20 shall submit to Congress an annual report describ-
 21 ing—

22 “(A) funding decisions under this section;

23 “(B) a justification for each grant awarded
 24 under this section; and

1 “(C) with respect to each regional project
 2 that has received a grant under this section, the
 3 extent to which—

4 “(i) benchmarks for the project have
 5 been met in accordance with the timeline
 6 for the project; and

7 “(ii) the project may be considered an
 8 example to other municipalities desiring a
 9 grant under this section.

10 “(h) FUNDING.—Of amounts made available for the
 11 Dislocated Worker National Reserve fund under section
 12 132(a)(2)(A) of the Workforce Innovation and Oppor-
 13 tunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3172(a)(2)(A)), \$100,000,000 shall
 14 be used to carry out this section for each of fiscal years
 15 2018 through 2027.”.

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