

113TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3692

To authorize a competitive grant program to implement and evaluate digital learning in rural locales.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 10, 2013

Mr. LOEBACK introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

A BILL

To authorize a competitive grant program to implement and evaluate digital learning in rural locales.

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 “Schools of the Future
5 Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds the following:

8 (1) Digital learning technology holds the prom-
9 ise of transforming rural education by removing bar-
10 riers of distance and increasing school capacity.

1 (2) While many large urban local educational
2 agencies are at the forefront of implementing new
3 digital learning innovations, it is often harder for
4 smaller and more rural local educational agencies to
5 access these tools. Smaller local educational agencies
6 with less capacity may also find it more difficult to
7 provide the training needed to effectively implement
8 new digital learning technologies.

9 (3) Despite the potential of digital learning in
10 rural areas, these advancements risk bypassing rural
11 areas without support for their implementation.
12 Rather than having schools and local educational
13 agencies apply digital learning innovations designed
14 for urban environments to rural areas, it is impor-
15 tant that digital learning technologies be developed
16 and implemented in ways that reflect the unique
17 needs of rural areas.

18 (4) Digital learning is rapidly expanding, and
19 new tools for improving teaching and learning are
20 being developed every day. A growing demand for
21 digital learning tools and products has made rig-
22 orous evaluation of their effectiveness increasingly
23 important, as this information would allow school
24 and local educational agency leaders to make in-
25 formed choices about how best to use these tools to

1 improve student achievement and educational out-
2 comes.

3 (5) High-quality digital learning increases stu-
4 dent access to courses that may not have been avail-
5 able to students in rural communities, increasing
6 their college and career readiness.

7 **SEC. 3. PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.**

8 (a) GRANTS TO ELIGIBLE PARTNERSHIPS.—From
9 the amounts appropriated to carry out this Act, the Sec-
10 retary of Education is authorized to award grants, on a
11 competitive basis, to eligible partnerships to carry out the
12 activities described in section 6.

13 (b) DURATION OF GRANT.—A grant under subsection
14 (a) shall be awarded for not less than a 3-year and not
15 longer than a 5-year period.

16 (c) FISCAL AGENT.—If an eligible partnership re-
17 ceives a grant under this Act, a school partner in the part-
18 nership shall serve as the fiscal agent for the partnership.

19 **SEC. 4. APPLICATION.**

20 An eligible partnership desiring a grant under this
21 Act shall submit an application to the Secretary at such
22 time, in such manner, and containing such information as
23 the Secretary may require, which shall include the fol-
24 lowing:

1 (1) A description of the eligible partnership, in-
2 cluding the name of each of the partners and their
3 respective roles and responsibilities.

4 (2) A description of the technology-based learn-
5 ing practice, tool, strategy, or course that the eligi-
6 ble partnership proposes to develop or implement
7 using the grant funds.

8 (3) An assurance that all teachers of record
9 hold the relevant license and are otherwise qualified
10 to implement any technology-based practice, tool,
11 strategy, or course using the grant funds.

12 (4) An assurance that all students in a class or
13 school implementing a practice, tool, strategy or
14 course using the grant funds will have access to any
15 equipment necessary to participate on a full and eq-
16 uitable basis.

17 (5) An assurance that the proposed uses of
18 smartphones, laptops, tablets, or other devices sus-
19 ceptible to inappropriate use have the informed con-
20 sent of parents or guardians and are not incon-
21 sistent with any policies of the local educational
22 agency on the use of such devices.

23 (6) Information relevant to the selection criteria
24 under section 5(c).

1 (7) A description of the evaluation to be under-
2 taken by the eligible partnership, including—

3 (A) how the school partner and the evalua-
4 tion partner will work together to implement
5 the practice, tool, strategy, or course in such a
6 way that permits the use of a rigorous, inde-
7 pendent evaluation design that meets the stand-
8 ards of the What Works Clearinghouse of the
9 Institute of Education Sciences; and

10 (B) a description of the evaluation design
11 that meets such standards, which will be used
12 to measure any significant effects on the out-
13 comes described in paragraphs (1) through (3)
14 of section 7(a).

15 (8) An estimate of the number of students to
16 be reached through the grant and evidence of its ca-
17 pacity to reach the proposed number of students
18 during the course of the grant.

19 (9) An assurance that the school partner in the
20 eligible partnership will ensure that each school to
21 be served by the grant under this Act is designated
22 with a school locale code of Fringe Rural, Distant
23 Rural, or Remote Rural, as determined by the Sec-
24 retary.

1 (10) Any other information the Secretary may
2 require.

3 **SEC. 5. APPLICATION REVIEW AND AWARD BASIS.**

4 (a) PEER REVIEW.—The Secretary shall use a peer
5 review process to review applications for grants under this
6 Act. The Secretary shall appoint individuals to the peer
7 review process who have relevant expertise in digital learn-
8 ing, research and evaluation, standards quality and align-
9 ment, and rural education.

10 (b) AWARD BASIS.—In awarding grants under this
11 Act, the Secretary shall ensure, to the extent practicable,
12 diversity in the type of activities funded under the grants.

13 (c) SELECTION CRITERIA.—In evaluating an eligible
14 partnership’s application for a grant under this Act, the
15 Secretary shall consider—

16 (1) the need for the proposed technology-based
17 learning practice, tool, strategy, or course;

18 (2) the quality of the design of the proposed
19 practice, tool, strategy, or course;

20 (3) the strength of the existing research evi-
21 dence with respect to such practice, tool, strategy, or
22 course;

23 (4) the experience of the eligible partnership;
24 and

1 (5) the quality of the evaluation proposed by
2 the eligible partnership.

3 **SEC. 6. USE OF FUNDS.**

4 (a) REQUIRED USE OF FUNDS.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible partnership re-
6 ceiving a grant under this Act shall use such funds
7 to implement and evaluate the results of technology-
8 based learning practices, strategies, tools, or courses,
9 including the practices, strategies, tools, or courses
10 identified under paragraphs (2) through (6).

11 (2) TOOLS AND COURSES DESIGNED TO PER-
12 SONALIZE THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE.—Tech-
13 nology-based tools and courses identified under this
14 paragraph include the following types of tools and
15 courses designed to personalize the learning experi-
16 ence:

17 (A) Technology-based personalized instruc-
18 tional systems.

19 (B) Adaptive software, games, or tools,
20 that can be used to personalize learning.

21 (C) Computer-based tutoring courses to
22 help struggling students.

23 (D) Games, digital tools, and smartphone
24 or tablet applications to improve students' en-
25 gagement, focus, and time on task.

1 (E) Other tools and courses designed to
2 personalize the learning experience.

3 (3) PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES DESIGNED TO
4 AID AND INFORM INSTRUCTION.—Technology-based
5 practices and strategies identified under this para-
6 graph include the following types of practices and
7 strategies designed to aid and inform instruction:

8 (A) Adaptive software, games, or tools that
9 can be used for the purpose of formative assess-
10 ment.

11 (B) Web resources that provide teachers
12 and their students access to instructional and
13 curricular materials that are—

14 (i) aligned with high-quality stand-
15 ards; and

16 (ii) designed to prepare students for
17 college and a career, such as a repository
18 of primary historical sources for use in his-
19 tory and civics courses or examples of de-
20 velopmentally appropriate science experi-
21 ments.

22 (C) Online professional development oppor-
23 tunities, teacher mentoring opportunities, and
24 professional learning communities.

1 (D) Tools or web resources designed to ad-
2 dress specific instructional problems.

3 (E) Other practices and strategies de-
4 signed to personalize the learning experience.

5 (4) TOOLS, COURSES, AND STRATEGIES DE-
6 SIGNED TO IMPROVE THE ACHIEVEMENT OF STU-
7 DENTS WITH SPECIFIC EDUCATIONAL NEEDS.—
8 Technology-based tools, courses, and strategies iden-
9 tified under this paragraph include the following
10 types of tools, courses, and strategies designed to
11 meet the needs of students with specific educational
12 needs:

13 (A) Digital tools specifically designed to
14 meet the needs of students with a particular
15 disability.

16 (B) Online courses that give students who
17 are not on track to graduate or have already
18 dropped out of school the opportunity for accel-
19 erated credit recovery.

20 (C) Language instruction courses, games,
21 or software designed to meet the needs of
22 English language learners.

23 (D) Other tools, courses, and strategies de-
24 signed to personalize the learning experience.

1 (5) TOOLS, COURSES, AND STRATEGIES DE-
2 SIGNED TO HELP STUDENTS DEVELOP 21ST CEN-
3 TURY SKILLS.—Technology-based tools, courses, and
4 strategies identified under this paragraph include
5 peer-to-peer virtual learning opportunities to be used
6 for the purposes of project-based learning, deeper
7 learning, and collaborative learning, and other tools,
8 courses, and strategies designed to help students de-
9 velop 21st century skills, such as the ability to think
10 critically and solve problems, be effective commu-
11 nicators, collaborate with others, and learn to create
12 and innovate.

13 (6) TECHNOLOGY-BASED OR ONLINE COURSES
14 THAT ALLOW STUDENTS TO TAKE COURSES THAT
15 THEY WOULD NOT OTHERWISE HAVE ACCESS TO.—
16 Technology-based or online courses identified under
17 this paragraph include courses or collections of
18 courses that provide students access to courses that
19 they would not otherwise have access to, such as the
20 following:

21 (A) An online repository of elective
22 courses.

23 (B) Online or software-based courses in
24 foreign languages, especially in languages iden-
25 tified as critical or in schools where a teacher

1 is not available to teach the language or course
2 level a student requires.

3 (C) Online advanced or college-level
4 courses that can be taken for credit.

5 (b) AUTHORIZED USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible part-
6 nership receiving a grant under this Act may use grant
7 funds to—

8 (1) develop the technology for technology-based
9 learning strategies, practices, courses, or tools to be
10 carried out under the grant;

11 (2) purchase hardware or software needed to
12 carry out such strategies, practices, courses, or tools
13 under the grant, except that such purchases may not
14 exceed 50 percent of total grant funds;

15 (3) address the particular needs of student sub-
16 groups, including students with disabilities and
17 English-language learners;

18 (4) provide technology-based professional devel-
19 opment or professional development on how to maxi-
20 mize the utility of technology; and

21 (5) address issues of cost and capacity in rural
22 areas and shortage subjects.

23 **SEC. 7. DATA COLLECTION AND EVALUATION.**

24 (a) IN GENERAL.—Each eligible partnership receiv-
25 ing a grant under this Act shall require its evaluation

1 partner to complete an independent, comprehensive, well-
2 designed, and well-implemented evaluation that meets the
3 standards of the What Works Clearinghouse after the
4 third year of implementation of the grant to measure the
5 effect of the practice, tool, strategy, or course on—

6 (1) student achievement, as measured by high
7 quality assessments that provide objective, valid, re-
8 liable measures of student academic growth and in-
9 formation on whether a student is on-track to grad-
10 uate ready for college and career;

11 (2) costs and savings to the school partner; and

12 (3) at least one of the following:

13 (A) Student achievement gaps.

14 (B) Graduation and dropout rates.

15 (C) College enrollment.

16 (D) College persistence.

17 (E) College completion.

18 (F) Placement in a living-wage job.

19 (G) Enhanced teacher or principal effec-
20 tiveness as measured by valid, reliable, and
21 multiple measures of student achievement and
22 other appropriate measures.

23 (b) EVALUATION.—The Secretary shall—

24 (1) acting through the Director of the Institute
25 of Education Sciences—

1 (A) evaluate the implementation and im-
2 pact of the activities supported under the grant
3 program authorized under this section; and

4 (B) identify best practices; and

5 (2) disseminate, in consultation with the re-
6 gional educational laboratories established under
7 part D of the Education Sciences Reform Act of
8 2002 and comprehensive centers established under
9 the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002,
10 research on best practices in school leadership.

11 (c) IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION.—An evaluation
12 partner may use funds under this Act to carry out an im-
13 plementation evaluation designed to provide information
14 that may be useful for schools, local educational agencies,
15 States, consortia of schools, and charter school networks
16 seeking to implement similar practices, tools, strategies,
17 or courses in the future.

18 (d) PUBLICATION OF RESULTS.—Upon completion of
19 an evaluation described in subsection (a), (b), or (c) the
20 evaluation partner shall—

21 (1) submit a report of the results of the evalua-
22 tion to the Secretary; and

23 (2) make publicly available such results.

24 **SEC. 8. DEFINITIONS.**

25 In this Act:

1 (1) ELIGIBLE PARTNERSHIP.—The term “eligi-
2 ble partnership” means a partnership that includes
3 a school partner and not less than 1—

4 (A) digital learning partner, except that in
5 a case in which a school partner or evaluation
6 partner demonstrates expertise in digital learn-
7 ing to the Secretary; and

8 (B) evaluation partner.

9 (2) SCHOOL PARTNER.—The term “school part-
10 ner” means a—

11 (A) local educational agency;

12 (B) a charter school network that does not
13 include virtual schools;

14 (C) a consortium of public elementary
15 schools or secondary schools;

16 (D) a regional educational service agency
17 or similar regional educational service provider;
18 or

19 (E) a consortium of the entities described
20 in subparagraphs (A) through (D).

21 (3) DIGITAL LEARNING PARTNER.—The term
22 “digital learning partner” means an organization
23 with expertise in the technology required to develop
24 or implement the digital learning practices, tools,
25 strategies, or courses proposed by the school partner

1 with which the digital learning partner will partner
2 or has partnered under this Act, such as—

3 (A) an institution of higher education;

4 (B) a nonprofit organization; or

5 (C) an organization with school develop-
6 ment or turnaround experience.

7 (4) EVALUATION PARTNER.—The term “evalua-
8 tion partner” means a partner that has the expertise
9 and ability to carry out the evaluation of a grant re-
10 ceived under this Act, such as—

11 (A) an institution of higher education;

12 (B) a nonprofit organization with expertise
13 in evaluation; or

14 (C) an evaluation firm.

15 (5) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The
16 term “institution of higher education” has the
17 meaning given the term in section 102 of the Higher
18 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002).

19 (6) LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY.—The term
20 “local educational agency” has the meaning given
21 the term in section 9101 of the Elementary and Sec-
22 ondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

23 (7) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
24 the Secretary of Education.

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