

116TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 9066

To direct the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information to establish a pilot program to provide innovation grants to established State broadband offices, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 31, 2020

Ms. SCHRIER (for herself and Mr. BUDD) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

A BILL

To direct the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information to establish a pilot program to provide innovation grants to established State broadband offices, 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 “State Broadband Of-
5 fice Innovation Pilot Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. INNOVATION PILOT PROGRAM.**

7 (a) ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.—

1 (1) REQUIREMENTS.—Not later than 30 days
2 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the As-
3 sistant Secretary shall establish a pilot program to
4 provide grants to eligible State broadband offices for
5 new projects to increase broadband connectivity, ac-
6 celerate deployment of broadband, or establish af-
7 fordable broadband access to underserved popu-
8 lations that includes any of the following:

9 (A) Mapping and data collection of areas
10 of connectivity, underserved areas, and
11 unserved areas to improve efforts to map, col-
12 lect data, and supplement ongoing efforts.

13 (B) Planning and program evaluation of
14 broadband to establish or incentivize affordable
15 options.

16 (C) Engaging unserved or underserved
17 farms for the purpose of enabling precision ag-
18 riculture or other purposes.

19 (D) A project that makes networks more
20 reliable and resilient to natural disasters.

21 (E) Any State, local, or Tribal project that
22 engages in creative solutions to ensure more un-
23 derserved populations have access to affordable,
24 high-quality broadband and a latency that is

1 sufficiently low to allow real-time, interactive
2 applications.

3 (2) PARTNERSHIPS.—An eligible State
4 broadband office may engage in partnerships with
5 public, private, or other entities (including public
6 utilities districts) in a project described under para-
7 graph (1).

8 (b) SOURCE OF FUNDING.—Any grant made under
9 this section shall be in addition to any other grant made
10 by the Federal Government and shall not be a violation
11 of any other grant requirement restricting or prohibiting
12 the Federal Government as a source of funding.

13 (c) PUBLIC OUTREACH.—The Assistant Secretary—

14 (1) shall notify the public about the pilot pro-
15 gram under this section by—

16 (A) publishing a description of the pro-
17 gram, including when and how to apply, on the
18 NTIA website; and

19 (B) disseminating such description through
20 social media or other means; and

21 (2) shall notify State broadband offices and
22 offer those offices technical assistance for applying
23 for a grant under this section.

24 (d) APPLICATION AND DEADLINE TO APPLY.—To be
25 eligible to participate in the pilot program under this sec-

1 tion, an eligible State broadband office shall submit to the
2 Assistant Secretary an application that describes how any
3 funds granted will be used, in such a form and in such
4 a manner as the Assistant Secretary may require not later
5 than 60 days after the date on which the program is estab-
6 lished pursuant to subsection (a).

7 (e) DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS.—Not later than 5
8 months after the date on which the program is established
9 pursuant to subsection (a), the Assistant Secretary shall
10 disburse funds to those eligible State broadband offices se-
11 lected by the Assistant Secretary to receive grants under
12 this section.

13 (f) REPORT REQUIRED.—

14 (1) PROJECT ESTABLISHMENT AND FIRST YEAR
15 REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the receipt of
16 any grant made under this section, the eligible State
17 broadband office shall commit funds for any project
18 funded with the grant and submit to the Assistant
19 Secretary a report that includes the following:

20 (A) An accounting of how grant funds
21 were used.

22 (B) A summary of—

23 (i) the completed project; or

24 (ii) progress made on the project and
25 a detailed timeline for completion.

1 (C) A description of whether the project
2 was successful, including if goals were met, and
3 the following information, if applicable:

4 (i) The number of previously under-
5 served or unserved households now served.

6 (ii) The percentage of households in
7 State connected to broadband.

8 (iii) Any project improvements that
9 would increase the affordability of
10 broadband.

11 (D) Any recommendations for further im-
12 provements on the project.

13 (2) REPORT ON COMPLETION.—With regard to
14 any project not completed by the submission of the
15 report required pursuant to paragraph (1), not later
16 than 30 days after the date on which the project is
17 completed, the eligible State broadband office shall
18 submit to the Assistant Secretary a report that in-
19 cludes the information described under subpara-
20 graphs (A), (B)(i), (C), and (D).

21 (g) TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND OVER-
22 SIGHT REQUIRED.—

23 (1) IN GENERAL.—In implementing this sec-
24 tion, the Assistant Secretary shall adopt measures to
25 ensure sufficient transparency, accountability, and

1 oversight to provide the public with information re-
2 garding the award and use of grant funds under this
3 section, and to deter waste, fraud, and abuse of
4 grant funds.

5 (2) REVIEW OF REPORT.—The Assistant Sec-
6 retary shall review any report submitted pursuant to
7 subsection (e) and consider any new ideas from
8 those reports for future NTIA projects.

9 (3) REQUEST FOR INFORMATION.—The recipi-
10 ent of any grant made under this section shall re-
11 spond to any request made by the Assistant Sec-
12 retary for more information or documentation re-
13 lated to the project funded through the grant.

14 (4) MISUSE OF FUNDS.—The Assistant Sec-
15 retary may prohibit any grant recipient from other
16 grants made by NTIA if the Assistant Secretary de-
17 termines there has been a misuse of funds under
18 this section.

19 (5) RECOVERY OF UNAUTHORIZED USE OF
20 FUNDS.—To the extent that the Inspector General
21 of the Department of Commerce determines that an
22 eligible entity expended grant funds received under
23 this section in violation of this section, the Assistant
24 Secretary shall recover the amount of funds that
25 were so expended.

1 (h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
2 are authorized to be appropriated to the Assistant Sec-
3 retary to carry out this section \$50,000,000 for the fiscal
4 year in which grants are disbursed pursuant to subsection
5 (d). Funds shall remain available until expended.

6 (i) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

7 (1) ASSISTANT SECRETARY.—The term “Assist-
8 ant Secretary” means the Assistant Secretary of
9 Commerce for Communications and Information.

10 (2) BROADBAND.—The term “broadband” has
11 the meaning given the term “broadband internet ac-
12 cess service” in section 8.1(b) of title 47, Code of
13 Federal Regulations, or any successor regulation.

14 (3) ELIGIBLE STATE BROADBAND OFFICE.—
15 The term “eligible State broadband office” means
16 an office located in a State with at least one em-
17 ployee whose salary is funded with State resources
18 and whose primary focus is broadband build out and
19 monitoring.

20 (4) NTLA.—The term “NTLA” means the Na-
21 tional Telecommunications and Information Admin-
22 istration.

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