
DIGEST

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HB 648 Original

2021 Regular Session

Deshotel

Abstract: Creates a grant program to allow municipalities to expand broadband.

Proposed law establishes the "Granting Unserved Municipalities Broadband Opportunities" (hereinafter GUMBO) program.

Proposed law provides that the Office of Broadband Development and Connectivity (hereinafter "office") shall administer the GUMBO program.

Proposed law defines "agriculture", "broadband service", "cooperative", "eligible parishes", "eligible project", "eligible grant recipient", "household", "infrastructure", "infrastructure costs", "office", "partnership", "prospective broadband recipient", "director", and "unserved area".

Proposed law establishes the GUMBO fund in the state treasury and provides the procedure and monies relative to the fund.

Proposed law allows an applicant to access the grant, despite being outside the bounds of an eligible parish, by providing information regarding the census block and individual addresses of the unserved area within that parish. Proposed law refers to this as area protection.

Proposed law provides a listing of 14 items, required to be addressed in the application, and delegates the office with the responsibility of creating the application.

Proposed law requires applications to be made public, and allows a 30 day period for interested parties to submit public comment and protest where applicable. Proposed law provides the procedure to be followed in case of a protest, including the burden of proof and the evidentiary requirements.

Proposed law allows the office to consult with the La. Dept. of Economic Development regarding the GUMBO program.

Proposed law requires the office to create a procedure for point scoring of applications and determining which applicants receive grants, but requires the office to award points based upon partnership involvement; fund matching, the estimated number of unserved households that will be affected; the percentage of unserved homes in the parish to be served; the number of unserved business to be affected; and the price to the consumer.

Proposed law requires fund matching and provides details for how the funds can be acquired.

Proposed law requires grant recipients to offer the speed and cost, as indicated in the application, for 5 years.

Proposed law requires an applicant to provide evidence of compliance at annually.

Proposed law provides that a grant recipient who fails to perform is required to forfeit all matching funds and pay interest. The number of subscribers is not to be considered in a determination of failure to perform.

Proposed law designates the office as the agency for receipt and distribution of federal grant funds.

Proposed law requires grant recipients to provide an annual report to the office and provides the information to be included in the report.

Proposed law requires the office to submit a report to various house and senate committees and provides the information to be included in the report.

Proposed law allows the office an administrative fee of 1% of the federal funds.

Proposed law requires the legislative auditor to approve the plan submitted by the office before the office can begin administering the GUMBO program.

Proposed law outlines the information the office is to include in the plan.

Proposed law requires the office to promulgate rules to carry out proposed law.

(Adds R.S. 51:2370.1-51:2370.15)