

RÉSUMÉ DIGEST

ACT 383 (HB 653)

2023 Regular Session

Deshotel

New law establishes the "Granting Unserved Municipalities Broadband Opportunities 2.0" (GUMBO 2.0) program.

New law defines certain terms including "broadband service", "eligible grant recipient", "project", "infrastructure", "shapefile", "underserved location", and "unserved location".

New law authorizes the office of broadband development and connectivity (office) to use up to 1% of appropriated funds to administer GUMBO 2.0. New law further authorizes the office to use 1% of funds to hire 3rd party contractors to administer the program. New law prohibits the use of the funds for compensation of any new or existing positions within the office.

New law gives the office the authority and responsibility to promulgate rules at least 90 days prior to a grant round and provides that the rules must be consistent with state law and federal guidelines pertaining to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and new law.

New law exempts the GUMBO 2.0 program from the provisions of existing law, the La. Procurement Code and the Public Bid Law.

New law provides that, unless stated otherwise in new law, all records related to GUMBO 2.0 are public records, but a broadband service provider's trade secret and proprietary information are not subject to the Public Records Law.

New law requires the office to treat any information submitted with a protest that is not publicly available as confidential.

New law requires grant recipients to provide matching funds. Requires a grant recipient to contribute from its own funds a minimum of 25% of the total estimated cost of the project. Provides that a written waiver to this requirement can be granted by the office.

New law authorizes a local government to contribute in-kind contributions for an eligible project. Provides that such contributions shall not be considered a partnership for providing a covered service in accordance with existing law, the Local Government Fair Competition Act.

New law authorizes the office to promulgate rules with regard to the grant process.

New law requires the challenge process start before a future grant round is launched. Provides that the state is required to use the Broadband DATA Maps and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA), Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Model Challenge process to conduct the process. New law requires broadband service providers to submit challenges within 30 days of mapping information being released publicly.

New law provides that NTIA is the final arbiter of availability challenges.

New law requires the office to keep confidential challenge details.

New law requires that the office keep a grant round open for a period of at least 30 days but not longer than 60 days.

New law requires the office to identify eligible locations for grant funding using the Broadband DATA Maps.

New law requires the office to release eligible locations at least 30 days prior to the start of a grant round.

New law requires application information used for scoring purposes to be made publicly available, subject to confidentiality protections provided in new law. Provides that such

information is required to be posted on the office's website or the division of administration's website for at least seven days prior to the grant award.

New law requires a grant applicant to define its proposed project area. New law requires the office of broadband to award grants to eligible grant recipients according to the priorities established in federal law.

New law requires the office to promulgate application minimum requirements and scoring rules at least 90 days prior to a grant round.

New law provides the procedure for a party to protest an award and requires such party to do so within 14 days. Requires a party that submits a protest to attest that the information in the protest is accurate and that the protest is submitted in good faith.

New law allows a local governing authority to submit to the office an objection to any provider that seeks to deploy broadband service in the local governing authority's area if the provider has received a letter grade rating of "D" or "F" from the Better Business Bureau.

New law gives the director of the office the authority to settle and resolve a protest.

New law requires the director of the office to provide a written decision, within 14 business days, when a protest cannot be resolved by mutual agreement. New law provides the requirements for the written decision and requires the decision to be provided to a party to the protest immediately. New law provides that the office's decision is final and conclusive with exceptions.

New law allows a party to a protest to file an appeal with the commissioner of administration within 14 business days. New law gives the commissioner the authority to review and determine any appeal by a party to the protest.

New law allows a party to the protest to file an appeal, within seven business days of receipt of a decision from the commissioner, with the 19th Judicial District Court. New law also gives a party to the protest the right to appeal to the 1st Circuit Court of Appeal or the La. Supreme Court.

New law requires the office to conduct an implementation meeting with a grant recipient within 30 days of execution of a grant agreement.

New law requires a grant recipient to submit to the office an annual report for each funded project during an agreement period. New law provides requirements for the report. New law further requires an entity receiving federal funds for broadband infrastructure development to submit to the office a quarterly report for each project during an agreement period and the necessary information for the report.

New law requires the office to submit annually, on or before Sept. 30th, a report to the House and Senate commerce committees and the Joint Legislative Committee on Technology and Cybersecurity. New law provides the necessary elements for the report.

New law requires eligible grant recipients to submit a quarterly report for each funded project located in the state and provides the required elements for the report. New law provides that if a grant recipient does not submit quarterly reports for two consecutive quarters, the office may consider locations within the awarded area unserved.

New law provides that the division of administration shall be the designated agency for receipt and disbursement of state and federal funds received to implement the BEAD program.

New law provides that reimbursements shall be made at certain points of a project. New law provides that the final 15% of a grant shall not be paid without an approved completion report.

New law provides that a grant recipient forfeits the amount of a grant if the recipient fails to perform, in material respect, its obligations. New law provides that grant agreements shall

last, at a minimum, for the duration of broadband project construction and five years after construction completion.

New law provides that a grant recipient is not required to forfeit the amount of a grant if the recipient fails to perform due to circumstances beyond its control.

New law provides that a grant recipient could be required to reimburse the state the actual cost to finish a project if the recipient fails to complete the project in a material respect.

Existing law, the Public Records Law, provides that unless there is an exception, records are subject to public review and examination.

Existing law provides exceptions to the Public Records Law.

New law creates an exception to the Public Records Law for the limitations contained in New law, R.S. 51:2370.25 and 2370.27, for information identified as confidential, trade secret, or proprietary.

New law authorizes the La. State Law Institute to make certain technical changes to the law regarding GUMBO 1.0 to conform with new law.

Effective August 1, 2023.

(Adds R.S. 51:2370.21-2370.33; Amends R.S. 44:4.1(B)(35))