

116J.395 BORDER-TO-BORDER BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROGRAM.

Subdivision 1. **Establishment.** A grant program is established under the Department of Employment and Economic Development to award grants to eligible applicants in order to promote the expansion of access to broadband service in unserved or underserved areas of the state.

Subd. 2. **Eligible expenditures.** Grants may be awarded under this section to fund the acquisition and installation of middle-mile and last-mile infrastructure that support broadband service scalable to speeds of at least 100 megabits per second download and 100 megabits per second upload.

Subd. 3. **Eligible applicants.** Eligible applicants for grants awarded under this section include:

- (1) an incorporated business or a partnership;
- (2) a political subdivision;
- (3) an Indian tribe;
- (4) a Minnesota nonprofit organization organized under chapter 317A;
- (5) a Minnesota cooperative association organized under chapter 308A or 308B; and

(6) a Minnesota limited liability corporation organized under chapter 322B for the purpose of expanding broadband access.

Subd. 4. **Application process.** An eligible applicant must submit an application to the commissioner on a form prescribed by the commissioner. The commissioner shall develop administrative procedures governing the application and grant award process. The commissioner shall act as fiscal agent for the grant program and shall be responsible for receiving and reviewing grant applications and awarding grants under this section.

Subd. 5. **Application contents.** An applicant for a grant under this section shall provide the following information on the application:

- (1) the location of the project;
- (2) the kind and amount of broadband infrastructure to be purchased for the project;
- (3) evidence regarding the unserved or underserved nature of the community in which the project is to be located;
- (4) the number of households passed that will have access to broadband service as a result of the project, or whose broadband service will be upgraded as a result of the project;
- (5) significant community institutions that will benefit from the proposed project;
- (6) evidence of community support for the project;
- (7) the total cost of the project;
- (8) sources of funding or in-kind contributions for the project that will supplement any grant award; and
- (9) any additional information requested by the commissioner.

Subd. 6. **Awarding grants.** (a) In evaluating applications and awarding grants, the commissioner shall give priority to applications that are constructed in areas identified by the director of the Office of Broadband Development as unserved.

(b) In evaluating applications and awarding grants, the commissioner may give priority to applications that:

(1) are constructed in areas identified by the director of the Office of Broadband Development as underserved;

(2) offer new or substantially upgraded broadband service to important community institutions including, but not limited to, libraries, educational institutions, public safety facilities, and healthcare facilities;

(3) facilitate the use of telemedicine and electronic health records;

(4) serve economically distressed areas of the state, as measured by indices of unemployment, poverty, or population loss that are significantly greater than the statewide average;

(5) provide technical support and train residents, businesses, and institutions in the community served by the project to utilize broadband service;

(6) include a component to actively promote the adoption of the newly available broadband services in the community;

(7) provide evidence of strong support for the project from citizens, government, businesses, and institutions in the community;

(8) provide access to broadband service to a greater number of unserved or underserved households and businesses; or

(9) leverage greater amounts of funding for the project from other private and public sources.

(c) The commissioner shall endeavor to award grants under this section to qualified applicants in all regions of the state.

Subd. 7. **Limitation.** (a) No grant awarded under this section may fund more than 50 percent of the total cost of a project.

(b) Grants awarded to a single project under this section must not exceed \$5,000,000.

History: 2014 c 312 art 3 s 3