

By: Lucio

S.B. No. 1485

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1
2 relating to the establishment of the Texas Rural Development Fund
3 and to the establishment, operation, and funding of certain
4 programs for rural economic development.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

6 SECTION 1. Section 487.001, Government Code, is amended by
7 adding Subdivision (3) to read as follows:

8 (3) "Rural area" means a rural area as defined by the
9 office.

10 SECTION 2. Chapter 487, Government Code, is amended by
11 adding Subchapters Q, R, S, T, U, V, and W to read as follows:

12 SUBCHAPTER Q. TEXAS RURAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

13 Sec. 487.751. TEXAS RURAL DEVELOPMENT FUND. (a) The Texas
14 Rural Development Fund is an account in the general revenue fund.
15 The account is composed of:

16 (1) legislative appropriations;

17 (2) gifts, donations, grants, and matching funds
18 received under Subsection (b); and

19 (3) other money required by law to be deposited in the
20 account.

21 (b) The office may solicit and accept gifts, donations,
22 grants, and matching funds of money from the federal government,
23 local governments, private corporations, or other persons to be
24 used for the purposes of Subchapters R, S, T, U, V, and W.

1 (b) An eligible business or entrepreneur may apply for a
2 loan under the program on an application form prescribed by the
3 office.

4 (c) To be eligible for a loan, a loan applicant must provide
5 at least five percent of the equity for each project. The office
6 may consider the amount of equity provided by an applicant in
7 scoring a loan application. An eligible business or entrepreneur
8 is not eligible for more than one loan for each created or retained
9 job.

10 (d) The office shall make a loan to an eligible business or
11 entrepreneur under the program in the following order of
12 preference:

13 (1) microenterprises;

14 (2) small businesses;

15 (3) businesses dependent on natural resources in
16 developing value-added products;

17 (4) tourism or recreation businesses;

18 (5) entrepreneurs and businesses that expand
19 broadband service access for rural areas; and

20 (6) projects to develop infrastructure for the benefit
21 of entrepreneurs and businesses in rural areas.

22 (e) The maximum loan amount to be made by the program is
23 \$35,000 for each eligible employee position retained or created.

24 (f) A loan made by the program is based on the following
25 schedule:

26 (1) up to \$14,000 for each eligible employee position
27 retained or created with wages greater than or equal to 170 percent

1 and less than 200 percent of the minimum wage;

2 (2) up to \$21,000 for each eligible employee position
3 retained or created with wages greater than or equal to 200 percent
4 and less than 250 percent of the minimum wage;

5 (3) up to \$28,000 for each eligible employee position
6 retained or created with wages greater than or equal to 250 percent
7 and less than 300 percent of the minimum wage; and

8 (4) up to \$35,000 for each eligible employee position
9 retained or created with wages greater than or equal to 300 percent
10 of the minimum wage.

11 (g) The maximum number of loans made by the program each
12 biennium must be determined based on the total amount appropriated
13 by the legislature during the biennium to the Texas Rural
14 Development Fund established under Subchapter Q.

15 (h) After job creation, the office may forgive up to 25
16 percent of the total amount of a loan made under this section.

17 (i) A loan may not be used to attract a business from another
18 location in this state, unless the office determines that the
19 business would otherwise leave the state.

20 Sec. 487.804. LOAN TERMS. (a) Loan interest rates must be
21 based on the capacity of the borrower and the risk of the project,
22 as determined by the office.

23 (b) Loan interest rates may be as low as zero percent.

24 Sec. 487.805. SUPPORT SERVICES. The office may contract to
25 provide services to entrepreneurs or businesses for purposes of
26 implementing the program.

27 [Sections 487.806-487.850 reserved for expansion]

1 SUBCHAPTER S. RURAL AREA REGIONAL PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

2 MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM

3 Sec. 487.851. DEFINITION. In this subchapter, "program"
4 means the rural area regional planning and implementation matching
5 grant program established under this subchapter.

6 Sec. 487.852. RURAL AREA REGIONAL PLANNING AND
7 IMPLEMENTATION MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM. (a) The office shall
8 create the rural area regional planning and implementation matching
9 grant program to foster regional collaboration for community and
10 economic development in rural areas.

11 (b) The office may award matching grants for the planning
12 and implementation of regionally identified objectives in a rural
13 area.

14 Sec. 487.853. ELIGIBLE ENTITIES. (a) To be awarded a
15 matching grant under the program for a proposed project, an
16 application, including a description of the project proposal, must
17 be jointly submitted by two or more of the following entities in the
18 form prescribed by the office:

- 19 (1) a municipality;
- 20 (2) a county;
- 21 (3) an economic development corporation;
- 22 (4) a community foundation;
- 23 (5) a faith-based organization;
- 24 (6) a hospital; or
- 25 (7) an institution of higher education, as defined by

26 Section 61.003, Education Code.

27 (b) Entities that jointly submit an application under

1 Subsection (a) must be physically located in at least:

2 (1) two or more adjacent rural counties; or

3 (2) two or more municipalities or census-designated
4 places in a rural county.

5 Sec. 487.854. GRANT AWARDS; CRITERIA. (a) The office shall
6 give preference to eligible applicants that demonstrate an
7 inclusive planning and implementation process over other eligible
8 applicants for an award of a matching grant under the program.

9 (b) The executive committee by rule shall develop criteria
10 for eligible projects and for the awarding of matching grants under
11 the program.

12 [Sections 487.855-487.900 reserved for expansion]

13 SUBCHAPTER T. RURAL CAPACITY AND LEADERSHIP ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

14 Sec. 487.901. DEFINITION. In this subchapter, "program"
15 means the rural capacity and leadership enhancement program.

16 Sec. 487.902. PROGRAM. The office shall create the rural
17 capacity and leadership enhancement program to assist
18 municipalities and unincorporated communities with a population of
19 less than 10,000 to:

20 (1) develop leadership capacity;

21 (2) improve the business practices of municipal
22 government;

23 (3) increase awareness of the benefits of renewable
24 energy;

25 (4) identify community assets that can be used to
26 enhance community and economic development; and

27 (5) provide assistance for emergency services

1 districts.

2 Sec. 487.903. RURAL LEADERSHIP CURRICULUM. The office
3 shall coordinate with an interested public junior college or public
4 technical institute, as those terms are defined by Section 61.003,
5 Education Code, that is located in a rural area or a consortium of
6 those colleges or institutes to develop a rural leadership
7 curriculum to implement the program.

8 Sec. 487.904. LEADERSHIP TRAINING. The office may award a
9 stipend under the program to an individual who completes training
10 based on the curriculum developed under Section 487.903.

11 [Sections 487.905-487.950 reserved for expansion]

12 SUBCHAPTER U. RURAL COMMUNITY ASSET STUDY MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM

13 Sec. 487.951. DEFINITION. In this subchapter, "program"
14 means the rural community asset study matching grant program.

15 Sec. 487.952. RURAL COMMUNITY ASSET STUDY MATCHING GRANT
16 PROGRAM. (a) The office shall create the rural community asset
17 study matching grant program to assist communities in rural areas
18 in identifying community assets.

19 (b) The office may issue matching grants to fund community
20 asset studies in accordance with criteria established by rule of
21 the executive committee.

22 Sec. 487.953. ELIGIBLE ENTITIES. (a) To be awarded a
23 matching grant under the program for a proposed project, an
24 application, including a description of the project proposal, must
25 be jointly submitted by two or more of the following entities in the
26 form prescribed by the office:

- 27 (1) a municipality;

1 (2) a county;

2 (3) an economic development corporation;

3 (4) a community foundation;

4 (5) a faith-based organization;

5 (6) a hospital; or

6 (7) an institution of higher education, as defined by
7 Section 61.003, Education Code.

8 (b) The office shall give preference to eligible applicants
9 that demonstrate an inclusive planning and implementation process
10 over other eligible applicants for an award of a matching grant
11 under the program.

12 (c) The executive committee by rule shall develop criteria
13 for eligible projects and for the awarding of matching grants under
14 the program.

15 [Sections 487.954-487.1000 reserved for expansion]

16 SUBCHAPTER V. TEXAS RURAL YOUTH CORPS PROGRAM

17 Sec. 487.1001. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

18 (1) "Executive director" means the executive director
19 of the Office of Rural Community Affairs.

20 (2) "Program" means the Texas rural youth corps
21 program.

22 Sec. 487.1002. TEXAS RURAL YOUTH CORPS PROGRAM. (a) The
23 office shall create the Texas rural youth corps program to
24 encourage youth participation in civic improvement activities in
25 rural areas. The program shall:

26 (1) provide youth in rural areas with opportunities to
27 acquire job skills while participating in community service

1 activities; and

2 (2) create opportunities for youth that allow rural
3 communities to enhance existing community resources and improve
4 economic conditions.

5 (b) The office may designate personnel as necessary to
6 administer the program.

7 Sec. 487.1003. RULES. The executive committee shall adopt
8 rules as necessary to implement the program, including rules for
9 auditing and accountability.

10 Sec. 487.1004. GRANTS. The executive director may award
11 grants under the program to eligible entities for projects that
12 meet the requirements of this subchapter.

13 Sec. 487.1005. ELIGIBLE ENTITIES. (a) Except as provided
14 by Subsection (b), the following entities are eligible to submit an
15 application as provided by Section 487.1007 to receive a grant for a
16 proposed project under this subchapter:

17 (1) a nonprofit organization;

18 (2) a public agency that operates a community-based
19 youth employment training program;

20 (3) a community housing development organization
21 certified by this state;

22 (4) a youth organization;

23 (5) a corps-based community service organization; or

24 (6) another entity authorized by rule of the executive
25 committee.

26 (b) Each eligible applicant that submits an application
27 under Subsection (a) must demonstrate that the applicant has at

1 least three years of successful experience operating programs for
2 the benefit of youth, in particular disadvantaged or at-risk youth
3 populations.

4 Sec. 487.1006. ELIGIBLE PROJECTS. To receive a grant under
5 the program, a proposed project of an eligible applicant must
6 provide, by using the services and skills of youth participants who
7 are at least 12 years of age but younger than 19 years of age, at
8 least one of the following services to the rural community in which
9 the project is located:

10 (1) rehabilitation or construction of
11 energy-efficient, affordable housing for:

12 (A) elderly individuals;

13 (B) veterans of the United States armed forces;

14 or

15 (C) low-income individuals and families;

16 (2) sustainable construction or rehabilitation of:

17 (A) historic properties;

18 (B) community facilities;

19 (C) business incubators;

20 (D) health care facilities;

21 (E) cultural districts; or

22 (F) parks owned by public or nonprofit entities;

23 (3) increased access to information on new technology
24 and technological advances, including communications or renewable
25 energy technologies;

26 (4) documentation of community history;

27 (5) identification and analysis of community assets

1 through a community asset study; and

2 (6) marketing services of community assets,
3 amenities, and history identified in a community history
4 documentation or community asset study.

5 Sec. 487.1007. GRANT APPLICATION. A grant application for
6 a proposed project must be filed with the office in a form
7 prescribed by the office. Each application must include:

8 (1) the amount of grant money requested;

9 (2) a description of the proposed project;

10 (3) a description of the applicant's qualifications,
11 including the applicant's experience with youth, educational
12 groups, and community groups;

13 (4) a list of proposed sites for construction or
14 rehabilitation of housing or other buildings, if applicable;

15 (5) a description of proposed sustainable
16 construction or rehabilitation activities, including an
17 implementation schedule, if applicable;

18 (6) a description of the applicant's proposed
19 procedures for recruiting and selecting participants in the
20 project;

21 (7) a proposed budget;

22 (8) a description of proposed financing, if
23 applicable;

24 (9) a list of relevant contracts or other arrangements
25 between the applicant and public agencies to facilitate project
26 implementation;

27 (10) a list of prospective donations, grants, or

1 in-kind contributions that will supplement grant money received
2 under the program; and

3 (11) other criteria as considered necessary by the
4 office.

5 Sec. 487.1008. PROJECT SELECTION; CRITERIA. (a) The
6 executive committee by rule shall establish criteria for selecting
7 projects for the awarding of a grant under this subchapter.

8 (b) In establishing criteria under Subsection (a), the
9 executive committee shall:

10 (1) give preference to an applicant who can document
11 the existence of matching contributions from other sources and
12 support from local organizations, community leaders, and elected
13 officials; and

14 (2) give preference to projects that provide
15 participants with an opportunity to earn scholarship awards towards
16 college tuition expenses.

17 (c) In establishing criteria under Subsection (a), the
18 executive committee may:

19 (1) give preference to an applicant who has experience
20 in providing the services proposed to be provided under the
21 project; and

22 (2) give preference to projects that assist youths who
23 are at least 12 years of age but younger than 19 years of age who:

24 (A) are not attending high school and have not
25 received a high school diploma or high school equivalency
26 certificate; or

27 (B) attend high school or a program leading to a

1 high school equivalency certificate, but have been identified as
2 being at risk of dropping out of high school or the program leading
3 to a high school equivalency certificate.

4 Sec. 487.1009. ADVISORY BOARD; PARTICIPANT COUNCIL. On
5 receipt of a grant under the program, the successful grantees shall
6 establish:

7 (1) an advisory board for the project that includes:

8 (A) senior staff that manage and operate the
9 project;

10 (B) employers and business and community leaders
11 of the community; and

12 (C) project participants; and

13 (2) a project participant council to provide comments
14 and suggestions regarding project policies.

15 Sec. 487.1010. ASSISTANCE FOR GRANTEES. On receipt of a
16 grant under the program, the office shall provide successful
17 grantees with access to curriculum materials created under Section
18 487.903, in particular materials that are designed to develop:

19 (1) leadership ethics;

20 (2) active citizenship;

21 (3) a sense of personal responsibility;

22 (4) critical thinking skills;

23 (5) decision-making skills;

24 (6) problem-solving skills; and

25 (7) negotiation skills.

26 Sec. 487.1011. OTHER FUNDING SOURCES REQUIRED. More than
27 50 percent of a proposed project's budget must be derived from a

1 source other than the award of a grant or other incentive from the
2 office.

3 Sec. 487.1012. LIMIT ON ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES. A grantee
4 may not spend grant money for more than 15 percent of a proposed
5 project's administrative costs.

6 Sec. 487.1013. REPORTING. The office must include the
7 following information regarding the program in its biennial report
8 to the legislature under Section 487.056:

9 (1) the total number of grants and the total amount of
10 grant money awarded under the program;

11 (2) the geographical distribution of grants awarded;
12 and

13 (3) the number of youth and other persons
14 participating in program-funded projects.

15 [Sections 487.1014-487.1050 reserved for expansion]

16 SUBCHAPTER W. RURAL WEALTH CREATION AND RETENTION PROGRAM

17 Sec. 487.1051. DEFINITION. In this subchapter, "program"
18 means the rural wealth creation and retention program.

19 Sec. 487.1052. RURAL WEALTH CREATION AND RETENTION PROGRAM.
20 The office shall create a rural wealth creation and retention
21 program to assist rural communities in:

22 (1) identifying community wealth;

23 (2) educating residents about the benefits of
24 charitable giving; and

25 (3) encouraging the creation of community foundations
26 in those areas to build sustainable local wealth and decrease
27 long-term dependence on state and federal resources.

1 Sec. 487.1053. CONTRACT FOR SERVICES; CRITERIA. (a) The
2 office may contract with other entities to provide services under
3 the program.

4 (b) In making a decision to contract with an entity under
5 Subsection (a), the office shall give preference to an entity with a
6 proven history of providing assistance to community foundations.

7 Sec. 487.1054. SUPPORT SERVICES. The office, or a
8 contracting entity under Section 487.1053, may provide support
9 services for the implementation of the program, including financial
10 management, strategic development, and education training.

11 Sec. 487.1055. FEE. The office, or a contracting entity
12 under Section 487.1053, may charge a fee for services provided
13 under the program. The amount of the fee shall be determined by rule
14 of the executive committee.

15 SECTION 3. Not later than March 1, 2008, the executive
16 committee of the Office of Rural Community Affairs shall adopt
17 rules for the programs established under Subchapters R, S, T, U, V,
18 and W, Chapter 487, Government Code, as added by this Act.

19 SECTION 4. Implementation of the programs established under
20 Subchapters R, S, T, U, V, and W, Chapter 487, Government Code, as
21 added by this Act, is contingent on appropriation of funding by the
22 legislature.

23 SECTION 5. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
24 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
25 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
26 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
27 Act takes effect September 1, 2007.