

By: Bernal

H.B. No. 4748

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the creation of regional broadband advisory groups.

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

SECTION 1. Chapter 490I, Government Code, is amended by adding Section 490I.01051 to read as follows:

Sec. 490I.01051. REGIONAL BROADBAND ADVISORY GROUPS. (a)

The broadband development office may designate regions of the state and appoint for each region a regional broadband advisory group.

The office shall appoint members of each regional broadband advisory group to represent:

(1) public and private entities from eligible areas as designated under Section 490I.0105(a) in the region; and

(2) at least one political subdivision in the region.

(b) The office shall designate a representative from the office to serve as an ex officio member of each regional broadband advisory group.

(c) A regional broadband advisory group shall:

(1) gather suggestions and recommendations from the public regarding issues that should be addressed in the state broadband plan under Section 490I.0107 for the region;

(2) create plans to address broadband service needs identified under the state broadband plan under Section 490I.0107 in the region;

(3) provide information to the office to be used for

1 long-range federal and state funding forecasts for the development
2 of broadband service in the region;

3 (4) engage in outreach to communities in the region
4 regarding the expansion, adoption, affordability, and use of
5 broadband service; and

6 (5) coordinate efforts in the region to form
7 partnerships and joint funding opportunities for broadband
8 development.

9 (d) Annually, a regional broadband advisory group shall
10 submit a report to the office identifying:

11 (1) the progress of broadband development in
12 designated areas in the region; and

13 (2) barriers to broadband deployment in designated
14 areas in the region.

15 (e) The office may provide technical and financial
16 assistance to a regional broadband advisory group for the
17 development of a report described by Subsection (d).

18 SECTION 2. Chapter 490I, Government Code, is amended by
19 adding Section 490I.01061 to read as follows:

20 Sec. 490I.01061. FUNDING FOR REGIONAL BROADBAND ADVISORY
21 GROUPS. (a) The broadband development office may enter into a
22 contract with a political subdivision that is part of a regional
23 broadband advisory group under Section 490I.01051 to pay all or
24 part of the cost of performing the group's duties.

25 (b) A political subdivision may submit, either individually
26 or jointly with another representative of a regional broadband
27 advisory group, a written application to the office for the

1 purposes described in Subsection (a).

2 (c) The application must be in the manner and form required
3 by the comptroller.

4 (d) The office may award the applicant all or part of the
5 requested funds that the office considers necessary for the
6 political subdivision to carry out the purposes described in
7 Subsection (a).

8 (e) If the office grants an application under this section
9 and awards funds, the office shall enter into a contract with the
10 political subdivision that includes:

11 (1) a detailed statement of the purpose for which the
12 money is to be used;

13 (2) the total amount of money to be paid by the office
14 under the contract; and

15 (3) any other terms and conditions required by the
16 comptroller's rules or agreed to by the contracting parties.

17 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2023.