

**§ 143B-472.127. Programs administered.**

(a) The Rural Economic Development Division shall be responsible for administering the program whereby economic development grants or loans are awarded by the Rural Infrastructure Authority as provided in G.S. 143B-472.128 to local government units. The Rural Infrastructure Authority shall, in awarding economic development grants or loans under the provisions of this subsection, give priority to local government units of the counties that have one of the 80 highest rankings under G.S. 143B-437.08. The funds available for grants or loans under this program may be used as follows:

- (1) To construct critical water and wastewater facilities or to provide other infrastructure needs, including, but not limited to, natural gas, broadband, and rail to sites where these facilities will generate private job-creating investment. The grants under this subdivision shall not be subject to the provisions of G.S. 143-355.4.
- (2) To provide matching grants or loans to local government units located in either (i) a development tier one or tier two area or (ii) a rural census tract in a development tier three area that will productively reuse or demolish buildings and properties or construct or expand rural health care facilities, with priority given to towns or communities with populations of less than 5,000. The development tier designation of a county shall be determined as provided in G.S. 143B-437.08. For purposes of this section, the term "rural census tract" means a census tract having a population density of less than 500 people per square mile according to the most recent decennial federal census.
- (3) Recipients of grant funds under this Part shall contribute a cash match for the grant that is equivalent to at least five percent (5%) of the grant amount. The cash match shall come from local resources and may not be derived from other State or federal grant funds.
- (4) In awarding grants under this Part, preference shall be given to a project involving a resident company. For purposes of this Part, the term "resident company" means a company that has paid unemployment taxes or income taxes in this State and whose principal place of business is located in this State. An application for a project that serves an economically distressed area shall have priority over a project that does not. A grant to assist with water infrastructure needs is not subject to the provisions of G.S. 143-355.4.
- (5) Under no circumstances shall a grant for a project be awarded in excess of twelve thousand five hundred dollars (\$12,500) per projected job created or saved.

(b) In addition to the duties under subsection (a) of this section, the Rural Economic Development Division shall also be responsible for (i) administering the program whereby local government units are awarded funds by the Rural Infrastructure Authority from the Utility Account under G.S. 143B-437.01 and (ii) administering the program whereby local government units are awarded funds by the Rural Infrastructure Authority for economic development projects from community development block grant funds.

(c) The Rural Economic Development Division may make recommendations to the Rural Infrastructure Authority as to any matters related to the administration of the programs under subsections (a) and (b) of this section. (2013-360, s. 15.10(a); 2013-363, s. 5.13(a); 2014-90, s. 6; 2014-100, s. 15.10; 2018-5, s. 15.2(c).)