

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2017

H

1

HOUSE BILL 639

Short Title: DIT/COG Technical Assistance/Funds. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Corbin, Hardister, and B. Richardson (Primary Sponsors).
For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: Appropriations

April 10, 2017

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS TO THE STATE'S SIXTEEN REGIONAL COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENTS FOR PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND TO IMPROVE THE ADEQUACY AND AFFORDABILITY OF BROADBAND ACCESS IN UNSERVED AND UNDERSERVED RURAL AREAS OF THE STATE.

Whereas, many areas of North Carolina still lack adequate broadband access; and

Whereas, high-speed broadband is now a necessity for the development of resilient and successful communities; and

Whereas, the approaching switch to digital textbooks in public schools in 2017 makes this challenge critical to our rural areas; and

Whereas, improved broadband is the minimal baseline for existing businesses to thrive, and ultra-high-speed broadband is absolutely critical to become globally competitive in research and innovation; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1.(a) There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Information Technology (DIT) the sum of nine hundred thousand dollars (\$900,000) for the 2017-2018 fiscal year and the sum of nine hundred thousand dollars (\$900,000) for the 2018-2019 fiscal year, to be allocated in the amount of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) in each fiscal year to each of the State's 16 regional Councils of Government (COG). These funds shall be used by each regional COG to provide, in accordance with this act, technical assistance in economic and community development and broadband deployment planning to the unserved and underserved rural areas within the respective region. The DIT may retain up to the sum of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) during the 2017-2019 fiscal biennium to cover administrative costs related to this act.

SECTION 1.(b) Each regional COG shall implement a plan of work for use of these appropriated funds that includes, but is not limited to, the following plan components:

(1) Development of one or more multijurisdictional broadband deployment plans in cooperation with their respective local governments and key broadband providers, user stakeholders, and the Department of Information Technology's Broadband Office, based on the broadband needs as appropriate to the region.

(2) Convening coalitions of local governments, private sector broadband providers, and users in the respective regions to set strategies for adequate



- 1 broadband access and services necessary to support sound economic and
2 community development to create new jobs.
- 3 (3) Implementation of multijurisdictional projects and activities that address
4 broadband deployment plans in cooperation with the private sector providers
5 and users.
- 6 (4) Identification of opportunities for connections between local governments,
7 businesses, and broadband providers to achieve efficiencies and make
8 broadband more available in unserved and underserved rural areas of the
9 region.

10 **SECTION 1.(c)** The funds appropriated by this act shall be disbursed by DIT to the
11 regional COGs on a conditional basis in two equal installments, with the first payment made
12 only after compliance with subdivision (1) of subsection (b) of this section and the subsequent
13 second payment to be made only after compliance with subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of this
14 section.

15 **SECTION 2.** Each regional COG that receives funding under this act shall:

- 16 (1) By September 1, 2017, submit its goals, objectives, and proposed
17 expenditures for those program funds to the DIT and the Fiscal Research
18 Division and to any other legislative entity as may be required by the COG's
19 annual plan of work.
- 20 (2) Make a first progress report to the Broadband Infrastructure Office due in
21 the first quarter after the first year of funding and a final report due in the
22 first quarter after the second year of funding
- 23 (3) By June 30, 2019, submit a report to the DIT and the Fiscal Research
24 Division on its actual expenditure of the funds appropriated by this act and
25 its accomplishments achieved through use of those funds during the previous
26 fiscal year.

27 **SECTION 3.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2017.