

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1586

To amend the National Telecommunications and Information Administration Organization Act to establish a digital network technology program, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 7, 2019

Mr. BUTTERFIELD introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Education and Labor, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To amend the National Telecommunications and Information Administration Organization Act to establish a digital network technology program, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Building Resources
5 Into Digital Growth and Education Act of 2019” or the
6 “BRIDGE Act of 2019”.

1 **SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.**

2 The National Telecommunications and Information
3 Administration Organization Act (47 U.S.C. 901 et seq.)
4 is amended by adding at the end the following:

5 **“PART D—DIGITAL NETWORK TECHNOLOGY**
6 **PROGRAM**

7 **“SEC. 171. PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.**

8 “The Secretary shall establish, within the Technology
9 Opportunities Program of the NTIA, a digital network
10 technology program through which the Secretary awards
11 grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts to eligible
12 institutions to assist such institutions in acquiring, and
13 augmenting use by such institutions of, broadband inter-
14 net access service to improve the quality and delivery of
15 educational services provided by such institutions.

16 **“SEC. 172. ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED.**

17 “An eligible institution shall use a grant, contract,
18 or cooperative agreement awarded under this part—

19 “(1) to acquire broadband internet access serv-
20 ice, digital network technology, and infrastructure to
21 further the objective of the program described in
22 section 171;

23 “(2) to develop and provide training, education,
24 and professional development programs, including
25 faculty development, to increase the use of, and use-
26 fulness of, broadband internet access service;

1 “(3) to provide teacher education, including the
2 provision of preservice teacher training and in-serv-
3 ice professional development at eligible institutions,
4 library and media specialist training, and preschool
5 and teacher aid certification to individuals who seek
6 to acquire or enhance technology skills in order to
7 use broadband internet access service in the class-
8 room or instructional process, including instruction
9 in science, mathematics, engineering, and technology
10 subjects;

11 “(4) to obtain capacity-building technical assist-
12 ance, including through remote technical support,
13 technical assistance workshops, and distance learn-
14 ing services;

15 “(5) to foster the use of broadband internet ac-
16 cess service to improve research and education, in-
17 cluding scientific, mathematics, engineering, and
18 technology instruction; or

19 “(6) to create or support centers at the eligible
20 institution designed to support innovation, oppor-
21 tunity, and advancement for entrepreneurs and
22 start-ups.

23 **“SEC. 173. APPLICATION AND REVIEW PROCEDURES.**

24 “(a) IN GENERAL.—To be eligible to receive a grant,
25 contract, or cooperative agreement under this part, an eli-

1 gible institution shall submit an application to the Sec-
2 retary at such time, in such manner, and containing such
3 information as the Secretary may require. Such applica-
4 tion, at a minimum, shall include a description of how the
5 funds will be used, including a description of any digital
6 network technology to be acquired, and a description of
7 how the institution will ensure that broadband internet ac-
8 cess service will be made accessible to, and employed by,
9 students, faculty, and administrators. The Secretary, in
10 consultation with the advisory council established under
11 subsection (b) and consistent with subsection (c), shall es-
12 tablish procedures to review such applications. The Sec-
13 retary shall publish the application requirements and re-
14 view criteria in the Federal Register, along with a state-
15 ment describing the availability of funds.

16 “(b) ADVISORY COUNCIL.—The Secretary shall es-
17 tablish an advisory council to advise the Secretary on the
18 best approaches to encourage maximum participation by
19 eligible institutions in the program established under this
20 part, and on the procedures to review applications sub-
21 mitted to the program. In selecting the members of the
22 advisory council, the Secretary shall consult with rep-
23 resentatives of appropriate organizations, including rep-
24 resentatives of eligible institutions, to ensure that the
25 membership of the advisory council includes representa-

1 tives of minority businesses and eligible institution com-
2 munities. The Secretary shall also consult with experts in
3 digital network technology to ensure that such expertise
4 is represented on the advisory council.

5 “(c) REVIEW PANEL.—Each application submitted
6 under this part by an eligible institution shall be reviewed
7 by a panel of individuals selected by the Secretary to judge
8 the quality and merit of the proposal, including the extent
9 to which the eligible institution can effectively and success-
10 fully utilize the proposed grant, cooperative agreement, or
11 contract to carry out the objective of the program de-
12 scribed in section 171. The Secretary shall ensure that
13 the review panels include representatives of eligible insti-
14 tutions and others who are knowledgeable about eligible
15 institutions and technology issues. The Secretary shall en-
16 sure that no individual assigned under this subsection to
17 review any application has a conflict of interest with re-
18 gard to that application. The Secretary shall take into con-
19 sideration the recommendations of the review panel in de-
20 termining whether to award a grant, cooperative agree-
21 ment, or contract to an eligible institution.

22 **“SEC. 174. AWARDS.**

23 “(a) LIMITATION.—An eligible institution that re-
24 ceives a grant, cooperative agreement, or contract under
25 this part that exceeds \$2,500,000 shall not be eligible to

1 receive another grant, cooperative agreement, or contract
2 under this part.

3 “(b) CONSORTIA.—Grants, cooperative agreements,
4 and contracts under this part may only be awarded to eli-
5 gible institutions. Eligible institutions may seek funding
6 under this part for consortia, which may include other eli-
7 gible institutions, States or State educational agencies,
8 local educational agencies, institutions of higher edu-
9 cation, community-based organizations, national nonprofit
10 organizations, or businesses, including minority busi-
11 nesses.

12 “(c) COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIP WITH PRI-
13 VATE PROVIDERS.—In seeking funding under this part,
14 eligible institutions are encouraged, where feasible, to co-
15 ordinate and partner with qualified private providers of
16 the services and activities supported under section 172.

17 “(d) INSTITUTIONAL DIVERSITY.—In awarding
18 grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts under this
19 part to eligible institutions, the Secretary shall ensure, to
20 the extent practicable, that awards are made to all types
21 of institutions eligible for assistance under this part.

22 “(e) NEED.—In awarding grants, cooperative agree-
23 ments, and contracts under this part, the Secretary shall
24 give priority to the eligible institution with the greatest
25 demonstrated need for assistance.

1 **“SEC. 175. INFORMATION DISSEMINATION.**

2 “The Secretary shall convene an annual meeting of
3 eligible institutions receiving grants, cooperative agree-
4 ments, or contracts under this part to foster collaboration
5 and capacity-building activities among eligible institutions.

6 **“SEC. 176. MATCHING REQUIREMENT.**

7 “The Secretary may not award a grant, contract, or
8 cooperative agreement to an eligible institution under this
9 part unless such institution agrees that, with respect to
10 the costs to be incurred by the institution in carrying out
11 the program for which the grant, contract, or cooperative
12 agreement was awarded, such institution will make avail-
13 able (directly or through donations from public or private
14 entities) non-Federal contributions in an amount equal to
15 25 percent of the amount of the grant, contract, or cooper-
16 ative agreement awarded by the Secretary, or \$500,000,
17 whichever is the lesser amount. The Secretary shall waive
18 the matching requirement for any institution or consor-
19 tium that, as of the date of the submission of the applica-
20 tion for the grant, contract, or cooperative agreement, has
21 no endowment or an endowment the value of which is less
22 than \$50,000,000.

23 **“SEC. 177. ANNUAL REPORT AND EVALUATION.**

24 “(a) ANNUAL REPORT REQUIRED FROM RECIPI-
25 ENTS.—Each eligible institution that receives a grant,
26 contract, or cooperative agreement under this part shall

1 provide an annual report to the Secretary on its use of
2 the grant, contract, or cooperative agreement.

3 “(b) INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENTS.—

4 “(1) CONTRACT TO CONDUCT ASSESSMENTS.—

5 Not later than 6 months after the date of the enact-
6 ment of this part, the Secretary shall enter into a
7 contract with the National Academy of Public Ad-
8 ministration to conduct periodic assessments of the
9 program established under this part. The assess-
10 ments shall be conducted once every 3 years during
11 the 10-year period following the date of the enact-
12 ment of this part.

13 “(2) EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.—

14 The assessments described in paragraph (1) shall in-
15 clude—

16 “(A) an evaluation of the effectiveness of
17 the program established under this part in im-
18 proving the education and training of students,
19 faculty, and staff at eligible institutions that
20 have been awarded grants, cooperative agree-
21 ments, or contracts under this part;

22 “(B) an evaluation of the effectiveness of
23 the program in improving access to, and famili-
24 arity with, digital network technology and

1 broadband internet access service for students,
2 faculty, and staff at all eligible institutions;

3 “(C) an evaluation of the procedures estab-
4 lished under section 173(a); and

5 “(D) recommendations for improving the
6 program, including recommendations con-
7 cerning the continuing need for Federal sup-
8 port.

9 “(3) REVIEW OF REPORTS.—In carrying out
10 the assessments under this subsection, the National
11 Academy of Public Administration shall review the
12 reports submitted to the Secretary under subsection
13 (a).

14 “(c) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Upon completion of
15 each assessment under subsection (b), the Secretary shall
16 transmit the assessment to Congress along with a sum-
17 mary of the plans of the Secretary, if any, to implement
18 the recommendations of the National Academy of Public
19 Administration.”.

20 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

21 Section 102(a) of the National Telecommunications
22 and Information Administration Organization Act (47
23 U.S.C. 901(a)) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
24 lowing:

25 “(6) The term ‘eligible institution’ means—

1 “(A) an institution of higher education
2 that is—

3 “(i) an institution described in section
4 371(a) of the Higher Education Act of
5 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1067q(a));

6 “(ii) an institution described in sec-
7 tion 326(e)(1) of such Act (20 U.S.C.
8 1063b(e)(1));

9 “(iii) a minority institution (as de-
10 fined in section 365 of such Act (20
11 U.S.C. 1067k)) that has an enrollment of
12 needy students (as defined in section
13 312(d) of such Act (20 U.S.C. 1058(d)));
14 or

15 “(iv) an institution determined by the
16 Secretary, in consultation with the Sec-
17 retary of Education, to have a substantial
18 enrollment of minority students who are el-
19 igible to receive Federal Pell Grants under
20 subpart 1 of part A of title IV of such Act
21 (20 U.S.C. 1070a et seq.); or

22 “(B) a consortium of institutions described
23 in subparagraph (A).

24 “(7) The term ‘digital network technology’
25 means computer and communications equipment and

1 software that facilitates the transmission of informa-
2 tion in a digital format.

3 “(8) The term ‘minority’ means an American
4 Indian, Alaskan Native, Black (not of Hispanic ori-
5 gin), Hispanic (including persons of Mexican, Puerto
6 Rican, Cuban, and Central or South American ori-
7 gin), or Pacific Islander individual.

8 “(9) The term ‘State’ has the meaning given
9 such term in section 8101 of the Elementary and
10 Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

11 “(10) The term ‘State educational agency’ has
12 the meaning given such term in section 8101 of the
13 Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
14 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

15 “(11) The term ‘institution of higher education’
16 has the meaning given such term in section 101 of
17 the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C.
18 1001).

19 “(12) The term ‘local educational agency’ has
20 the meaning given such term in section 8101 of the
21 Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
22 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

23 “(13) The term ‘broadband internet access
24 service’ means a mass-market retail service by wire
25 or radio that provides the capability to transmit data

1 to, and receive data from, all or substantially all
2 internet endpoints, including any capabilities that
3 are incidental to, and enable the operation of, the
4 communications service, but excluding dial-up inter-
5 net access service. Such term also includes any serv-
6 ice the Commission finds to be providing a func-
7 tional equivalent of such service.”.

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