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119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 9101

To improve transparency, accessibility, and accountability in the administration of rural development grant programs at the Department of Agriculture, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 2, 2026

Ms. LETLOW introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture

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A BILL

To improve transparency, accessibility, and accountability in the administration of rural development grant programs at the Department of Agriculture, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Rural Grants Transparency Act''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds the following:

(1) Rural communities often lack staff capacity and technical expertise to navigate complex Federal grant programs.

(2) Applicants routinely report difficulty understanding eligibility for, application steps for, timelines under, evaluation criteria under, and reasons for rejection from rural development programs.

(3) Providing clear, consistent, and centralized information improves access to such programs for small towns, rural nonprofits, cooperatives, and persistent-poverty counties and parishes.

(4) Increasing transparency in Federal grant processes can be achieved without additional appropriations.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) COVERED PROGRAM.—The term ''covered program'' means any grant program administered by the Secretary of Agriculture through Rural Development, including programs administered by—

(A) the Rural Utilities Service;

(B) the Rural Housing Service; or

(C) the Rural Business–Cooperative Service.

(2) QUARTERLY.—The term ''quarterly'' means not less frequently than once every 90 days.

(3) ROADMAP.—The term ''Roadmap'' means, with respect to a covered program, the Rural Grant Transparency Roadmap developed for the program under section 4.

(4) RURAL DEVELOPMENT STATE OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION.—The term ''rural development State office contact information'' means, with respect to a covered program, to the appropriate division or program contact within each State rural development office that is responsible for administering the covered program, and is not solely a general hotline or switchboard number.

(5) SECRETARY.—The term ''Secretary'' means the Secretary of Agriculture.

SEC. 4. RURAL GRANT TRANSPARENCY ROADMAP.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall develop, publish, and maintain a publicly accessible Rural Grant Transparency Roadmap for each covered program.

(b) REQUIRED COMPONENTS.—The Roadmap for a covered program shall include—

(1) a plain-language description of the program;

(2) a step-by-step explanation of application requirements;

(3) a standardized checklist of materials required in applications;

(4) in the case of a competitive program, a summary of the evaluation criteria used under the program;

(5) common reasons for ineligibility for the program, or rejection of an application;

(6) electronic links to forms and guidance documents;

(7) rural development State office contact information relevant to the program; and

(8) a quarterly-updated list of open and upcoming funding opportunities.

(c) FORMAT AND ACCESSIBILITY.—The Roadmap for a covered program shall—

(1) be accessible through a single, consolidated webpage on the Rural Development website;

(2) be written in plain language suitable for small, resource-limited rural communities; and

(3) be available in formats accessible to individuals with disabilities in compliance with section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

(d) LIMITATIONS.—This Act shall not be interpreted to—

(1) require the Secretary to create new evaluation criteria for any program; or

(2) alter eligibility, priorities, or requirements established in statute or regulation.

(e) UPDATES.—The Secretary shall update the Roadmap quarterly and revise component descriptions as necessary.

SEC. 5. STANDARDIZED GRANT APPLICATION NOTIFICATIONS.

(a) REQUIREMENT.—The Secretary shall provide each applicant to a covered program with standardized notifications regarding—

(1) confirmation of receipt of the application;

(2) notice of completeness of, or deficiency in, the application;

(3) notice of advancement of the application to review;

(4) a grant award or a denial of an application; and

(5) if an application is denied, information on whether the applicant may reapply.

(b) DENIAL EXPLANATION.—Each denial of an application submitted to a covered program shall include—

(1) a plain-language summary of the evaluation criteria most determinative to the outcome; and

(2) guidance on how to strengthen future submissions.

(c) USE OF EXISTING SYSTEMS.—The Secretary shall provide notifications under this section using existing electronic or administrative systems, and this section shall not be interpreted to require the development of new information technology systems.

SEC. 6. RURAL GRANT AWARD DATA ACCESSIBILITY.

(a) DATABASE.—The Secretary shall maintain a publicly accessible, searchable database of awards made under a covered program, updated quarterly, containing—

(1) the name of the award recipient;

(2) the county or parish in which the awarded project is located;

(3) the amount of the award;

(4) the name of the program and

(5) a brief description of the awarded project.

(b) PROTECTION OF SENSITIVE INFORMATION.—The Secretary may not disclose, or authorize the disclosure of personally identifiable or confidential business information under this Act.

(c) USE OF EXISTING RESOURCES.—The Secretary shall utilize existing Department of Agriculture resources to carry out this section.

SEC. 7. PUBLICATION OF SCORING CRITERIA.

(a) REQUIREMENT.—For each competitive covered program, the Secretary shall publish—

(1) all scoring factors;

(2) the weight assigned to each factor;

(3) tie-breaker rules; and

(4) any statutory or regulatory priority areas.

(b) LIMITATION.—This Act shall not be interpreted to authorize the Secretary to create new scoring factors or modify existing statutory requirements.

SEC. 8. TRAINING FOR STATE AND LOCAL USDA OFFICES.

(a) ANNUAL TRAINING.—The Secretary shall ensure that State, parish, and county rural development offices receive annual training on—

(1) the Rural Grant Transparency Roadmap for each covered program;

(2) the common challenges faced by applicants for each covered program; and

(3) the procedures for providing accurate, consistent information to applicants for a covered program who are located in a rural area.

(b) USE OF EXISTING RESOURCES.—This section shall be carried out by existing personnel of the Department of Agriculture.

SEC. 9. NO ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATIONS.

This Act shall not be interpreted to authorize or require the appropriation of any funds to carry out this Act.

SEC. 10. DEADLINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION.

The Secretary shall implement all requirements of this Act within 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

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