



HOUSE BILL 387: Growing G.R.E.A.T.

2019-2020 General Assembly

Committee:		Date:	December 11, 2019
Introduced by:		Prepared by:	Jennifer McGinnis Staff Attorney
Analysis of:	S.L. 2019-230		

OVERVIEW: *S.L. 2019-230 makes various changes to the Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) program that provides grants for expansion of broadband access in rural areas of the State.*

This act has various effective dates. Please see the full summary for more detail.

BILL ANALYSIS: S.L. 2019-230 does all of the following:

Section 1: Makes various definitional and procedural changes to the GREAT program. Among other changes, the act:

- Requires that a broadband provider with a reserved federally funded project area submit documentation to the Broadband Infrastructure Office (Office) to demonstrate that the project has commenced or completed.
- Requires that an applicant submit specific data to the Office to identify specific locations that are proposed to be served in the grant application.
- Provides that the applicant bears the burden of proof that the proposed technology to be employed can serve the proposed number of households at the proposed minimum download and upload speeds.
- Allows the Office to provide an applicant information relating to ineligible areas, however that information is not considered a public record under G.S. 132-1.
- Clarifies procedures for the Office to receive and hear protests, including the ability to conduct speed tests.
- Makes changes to the scoring model to enable the Office to maximize the number of unserved households that will be served by awarded grants.
- Allows multiple projects within the same county if funds remain after top applications have been awarded a grant. The sum of all projects within a single county cannot exceed \$2 million.

Sections 2, 3, & 4: Expands the GREAT program to tier two counties, beginning in July 1, 2020. No more than one-third of funds appropriated to the GREAT program in a fiscal year can be awarded to a tier two county. Beginning in July 1, 2021, no more than half of funds appropriated to the GREAT program in a fiscal year can be awarded to a tier two county.

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Section 5: Allows the Office to utilize up to 1% of funds appropriated to the GREAT program in a fiscal year for administrative purposes.

Section 6: Directs the Department of Administration and the Broadband Infrastructure Office, in collaboration with the Office of the Attorney General, the land grant universities, and various industry stakeholders, to develop a streamlined approval process for collocation of broadband equipment on State-owned property pursuant to G.S. 146-29.2. The Department of Administration is directed to report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Information Technology and Fiscal Research on or before December 1, 2019.

Section 7: Transfers and appropriates the sum of \$15 million for the GREAT program.

Section 8: Provides that in the event that [H966 \(2019 Appropriations Act\)](#) becomes law, the provisions of this act will be superseded and repealed.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Sections 2 and 3 of this act become effective July 1, 2020. Section 4 of this act becomes effective July 1, 2021. The remainder of this act became effective July 1, 2019.

Matt Meinig, Staff Attorney with the Legislative Drafting Division, substantially contributed to this summary.