

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2361

To amend the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 to establish the Rural Innovation and Partnership Administration and to amend the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act to establish the Rural Future Partnership Fund to invest in the rural areas of the United States to achieve their preferred future while maximizing their contribution to the well-being of the United States, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 5, 2021

Mr. DELGADO (for himself, Mrs. BUSTOS, Ms. SPANBERGER, and Ms. CRAIG) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture, and in addition to the Committees on Financial Services, and Energy and Commerce, 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 Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 to establish the Rural Innovation and Partnership Administration and to amend the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act to establish the Rural Future Partnership Fund to invest in the rural areas of the United States to achieve their preferred future while maximizing their contribution to the well-being of the United States, 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 “Rebuild Rural America
5 Act of 2021”.

6 **SEC. 2. PURPOSES.**

7 The purposes of this Act are—

8 (1) to create the scale and capacity that enables
9 rural areas to achieve their preferred future while
10 maximizing their contribution to the well-being of
11 the United States;

12 (2) to recognize the significant contributions of
13 rural areas of the United States to the success of
14 the United States, including the leading role that
15 the rural areas play in addressing the critical threat
16 of climate change and building a resilient United
17 States;

18 (3) to make a national commitment to the rural
19 communities and regions of the United States to en-
20 sure that the rural United States benefits from and
21 contributes to the prosperity of the United States;

22 (4) to establish a partnership with rural areas
23 of the United States that provides flexible, long-
24 term, and annual Federal investment for comprehen-
25 sive, collaborative, and locally driven community and

1 economic development that improves quality of life
2 and economic competitiveness;

3 (5) to strengthen rural population centers
4 through collaboration with neighboring rural areas
5 that ensures economic integration and regional de-
6 velopment;

7 (6) to strengthen connections between rural and
8 urban areas of the United States for mutual success
9 and for the benefit of the economy of the United
10 States and the quality of life of the people of the
11 United States;

12 (7) to support asset-based development, maxi-
13 mizing the cost-effectiveness of existing infrastruc-
14 ture;

15 (8) to ensure economic opportunities that create
16 pathways to high-quality, family-sustaining jobs for
17 all individuals in rural areas of the United States,
18 including efforts to address population loss, to pro-
19 mote the use of cooperatives and other forms of pub-
20 lic and employee ownership, and to expand and im-
21 prove access to training, infrastructure, and invest-
22 ment to adapt to technological change, such as auto-
23 mation, for success in the digital economy;

24 (9) to provide for the evolution and expansion
25 of the role of the Department of Agriculture in en-

1 suring that rural communities have a dedicated
2 agency and a new delivery system for Federal assist-
3 ance for disaster recovery and proactive mitigation
4 and resiliency efforts;

5 (10) to rebuild and modernize infrastructure
6 and expand investment to support local and regional
7 food systems, sustainable agriculture production,
8 and value added agricultural industries;

9 (11) to support infill development, preserve un-
10 developed land, and remediate brownfields and other
11 contaminated properties for re-use; and

12 (12) to support public health and improve qual-
13 ity of life in rural communities by delivering—

14 (A) universal access to clean air and water;

15 (B) healthy foods available through local
16 and regional food systems;

17 (C) quality, affordable, and accessible
18 health care services in the rural communities,
19 including access to primary and emergency
20 medical services, mental health care, and treat-
21 ment for substance abuse;

22 (D) affordable and reliable clean energy
23 systems; and

24 (E) quality, affordable, and energy-effi-
25 cient housing choices in the rural communities.

1 **SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF RURAL INNOVATION AND**
2 **PARTNERSHIP ADMINISTRATION.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subtitle C of the Department of
4 Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6941
5 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

6 **“SEC. 237. RURAL INNOVATION AND PARTNERSHIP ADMIN-**
7 **ISTRATION.**

8 “(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall estab-
9 lish in the Department a Rural Innovation and Partner-
10 ship Administration (referred to in this section as the ‘Ad-
11 ministration’).

12 “(b) ADMINISTRATOR.—

13 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administration shall
14 be headed by an Administrator of Rural Innovation
15 and Partnerships (referred to in this section as the
16 ‘Administrator’), who shall be appointed by the Sec-
17 retary.

18 “(2) REPORTING TO UNDER SECRETARY.—The
19 Administrator shall report to the Under Secretary
20 for Rural Development.

21 “(c) FUNCTIONS.—The Secretary shall carry out
22 through the Administration the functions of the Rural Fu-
23 ture Partnership Fund established under subtitle I of the
24 Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act.

25 “(d) REQUIREMENT FOR STATE OFFICES.—In car-
26 rying out the functions of the Administration, the Sec-

1 retary shall ensure that each State office of the rural de-
2 velopment mission area is staffed with not less than 3 new
3 employees to implement the Rural Future Partnership
4 Fund established under subtitle I of the Consolidated
5 Farm and Rural Development Act, including providing—

6 “(1) technical assistance;

7 “(2) support for capacity building;

8 “(3) financial controls; and

9 “(4) performance oversight.

10 “(e) COORDINATION WITH COUNCIL ON RURAL COM-
11 MUNITY INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.—

12 In carrying out the functions of the Administration, the
13 Administrator shall coordinate with the Council on Rural
14 Community Innovation and Economic Development estab-
15 lished by section 6306 of the Agriculture Improvement Act
16 of 2018 (7 U.S.C. 2204b–3).”.

17 (b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

18 (1) Section 296(b) of the Department of Agri-
19 culture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C.
20 7014(b)) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
21 lowing:

22 “(11) The authority of the Secretary to estab-
23 lish and maintain in the Department the Rural In-
24 novation and Partnership Administration under sec-
25 tion 237.”.

1 (2) Section 6306(f) of the Agriculture Improve-
2 ment Act of 2018 (7 U.S.C. 2204b–3(f)) is amend-
3 ed—

4 (A) in paragraph (4), by striking “and” at
5 the end;

6 (B) in paragraph (5)(B), by striking the
7 period at the end and inserting “; and”; and

8 (C) by adding at the end the following:

9 “(6) give priority to coordinating with the Ad-
10 ministrator of Rural Innovation and Partnerships in
11 carrying out the Rural Future Partnership Fund es-
12 tablished under subtitle I of the Consolidated Farm
13 and Rural Development Act.”.

14 **SEC. 4. RURAL FUTURE PARTNERSHIP FUND.**

15 The Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act
16 (7 U.S.C. 1921 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end
17 the following:

18 **“Subtitle I—Rural Future**
19 **Partnership Fund**

20 **“SEC. 385A. DEFINITIONS.**

21 “In this subtitle:

22 “(1) COUNCIL.—The term ‘Council’ means a
23 rural partnership council established under para-
24 graph (1)(A)(i), (2)(A)(i), or (3)(A)(i), as applicable,
25 of section 385C(a).

1 “(2) ELIGIBLE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PRO-
2 VIDER.—The term ‘eligible technical assistance pro-
3 vider’ means an entity—

4 “(A) with a demonstrated national or re-
5 gional structure or capacity to deliver and sup-
6 port multiple rural planning activities across
7 the United States or within a region of the
8 United States; and

9 “(B) that is—

10 “(i) a federally recognized Indian
11 Tribe;

12 “(ii) an institution of higher edu-
13 cation;

14 “(iii) a nonprofit organization; or

15 “(iv) a private organization.

16 “(3) FUND.—The term ‘Fund’ means the Rural
17 Future Partnership Fund established under section
18 385B.

19 “(4) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—

20 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The term ‘institution
21 of higher education’ has the meaning given the
22 term in section 101 of the Higher Education
23 Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

24 “(B) INCLUSIONS.—The term ‘institution
25 of higher education’ includes—

1 “(i) land-grant colleges and univer-
2 sities (as defined in section 1404 of the
3 National Agricultural Research, Extension,
4 and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C.
5 3103)); and

6 “(ii) associated cooperative extension
7 services.

8 “(5) PLAN.—The term ‘Plan’ means a rural
9 partnership plan established under section 385E(a).

10 “(6) RESERVATION.—

11 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The term ‘reservation’
12 has the meaning given the term ‘Indian coun-
13 try’ in section 1151 of title 18, United States
14 Code.

15 “(B) INCLUSION.—The term ‘reservation’
16 includes land held by a Native group, a Re-
17 gional Corporation, or a Village Corporation (as
18 those terms are defined in section 3 of the Alas-
19 ka Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C.
20 1602)).

21 “(7) RURAL PARTNERSHIP BLOCK GRANT.—
22 The term ‘rural partnership block grant’ means a
23 rural partnership block grant awarded under this
24 subtitle.

1 “(8) SECRETARY.—The term ‘Secretary’ means
2 the Secretary, acting through the Administrator of
3 Rural Innovation and Partnerships.

4 “(9) WORKFORCE HOUSING.—The term ‘work-
5 force housing’ means, with respect to housing for a
6 family, housing the cost of which does not exceed 30
7 percent of—

8 “(A) subject to subparagraph (B), 120
9 percent of the median income in the area in
10 which the family lives, as determined by the
11 Secretary, with appropriate adjustments for the
12 size of the family; or

13 “(B) if the Secretary determines that there
14 are unusually high- or low-family incomes in the
15 area in which the family lives, such other per-
16 centage, as the Secretary determines to be ap-
17 propriate, of the median income in the area in
18 which the family lives.

19 **“SEC. 385B. ESTABLISHMENT.**

20 “The Secretary shall establish a program, to be
21 known as the ‘Rural Future Partnership Fund’, under
22 which the Secretary shall award rural partnership block
23 grants in accordance with this subtitle.

24 **“SEC. 385C. ELIGIBILITY.**

25 “(a) IN GENERAL.—

1 “(1) MICROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREAS.—

2 “(A) IN GENERAL.—To be eligible to re-
3 ceive a rural partnership block grant—

4 “(i) one or more units of local govern-
5 ment that govern a micropolitan statistical
6 area, as defined by the Director of the Of-
7 fice of Management and Budget, shall es-
8 tablish a rural partnership council in ac-
9 cordance with subsection (b); and

10 “(ii) that Council shall submit an ap-
11 plication to—

12 “(I) not later than 180 days
13 after the date of enactment of the Re-
14 build Rural America Act of 2021—

15 “(aa)(AA) the applicable
16 State; or

17 “(BB) the applicable States,
18 if the micropolitan statistical
19 area spans more than 1 State;
20 and

21 “(bb) the applicable State
22 offices of the rural development
23 mission area; or

24 “(II) after the date described in
25 subclause (I), the Secretary.

1 “(B) REGIONAL COLLABORATION.—

2 “(i) IN GENERAL.—On receipt of an
3 application under subparagraph (A)(ii)(I),
4 the 1 or more States, in coordination with
5 the applicable State offices of the rural de-
6 velopment mission area, shall advise the
7 applicant on the inclusion in the Council, if
8 practicable, of 1 or more contiguous census
9 tracts or counties that—

10 “(I) fall outside of a micropolitan
11 or metropolitan statistical area; and

12 “(II) demonstrate evidence of
13 economic, social, and cultural coopera-
14 tion that enhances the potential for
15 comprehensive, asset-based regional
16 development.

17 “(ii) DECISION.—After receipt of ad-
18 vice under clause (i), the applicant shall—

19 “(I) decide whether to include 1
20 or more of the applicable contiguous
21 census tracts or counties in the Coun-
22 cil; and

23 “(II) modify the application, as
24 appropriate.

25 “(C) APPROVAL.—

1 “(i) STATES.—The 1 or more States
2 that receive an application under subpara-
3 graph (A)(ii)(I)(aa), in coordination with
4 the applicable State offices of the rural de-
5 velopment mission area, shall approve the
6 Council as eligible to receive a rural part-
7 nership block grant if the requirements
8 under subsection (b) for the composition of
9 the membership of a Council are satisfied.

10 “(ii) SECRETARY.—Not less fre-
11 quently than once each year, the Secretary,
12 in coordination with the applicable State
13 offices of the rural development mission
14 area, may approve applications received
15 under subparagraph (A)(ii)(II) if the re-
16 quirements under subsection (b) for the
17 composition of the membership of a Coun-
18 cil are satisfied.

19 “(2) AREAS OUTSIDE OF MICROPOLITAN AND
20 METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREAS.—

21 “(A) IN GENERAL.—To be eligible to re-
22 ceive a rural partnership block grant—

23 “(i) 1 or more entities described in
24 subsection (b)(1) that are located in, or
25 represent, 2 or more contiguous census

1 tracts or counties in an area that is not
2 within a micropolitan statistical area or a
3 metropolitan statistical area, as defined by
4 the Director of the Office of Management
5 and Budget, and are not represented by a
6 Council established under paragraph
7 (1)(A)(i) or (3)(A)(i), shall establish a
8 rural partnership council in accordance
9 with subsection (b); and

10 “(ii) that Council shall submit an ap-
11 plication to—

12 “(I) not later than 180 days
13 after the date of enactment of the Re-
14 build Rural America Act of 2021—

15 “(aa) the 1 or more applica-
16 ble States; and

17 “(bb) the applicable State
18 offices of the rural development
19 mission area; or

20 “(II) after the date described in
21 subclause (I), the Secretary.

22 “(B) APPROVAL.—

23 “(i) STATES.—The 1 or more States
24 that receive an application under subpara-
25 graph (A)(ii)(I)(aa), in coordination with

1 the applicable State offices of the rural de-
2 velopment mission area, shall approve the
3 Council as eligible to receive a rural part-
4 nership block grant if—

5 “(I) the requirements under sub-
6 section (b) for the composition of the
7 membership of a Council are satisfied;
8 and

9 “(II) the area to be represented
10 by the Council—

11 “(aa) is of practicable geo-
12 graphic size; and

13 “(bb) demonstrates evidence
14 of economic, social, and cultural
15 cooperation that enhances the po-
16 tential for comprehensive, asset-
17 based regional development.

18 “(ii) SECRETARY.—Not less fre-
19 quently than once each year, the Secretary,
20 in coordination with the applicable State
21 offices of the rural development mission
22 area, may approve applications received
23 under subparagraph (A)(ii)(II) if the re-
24 quirements described in clause (i) are sat-
25 isfied.

1 “(3) INDIAN RESERVATIONS.—

2 “(A) IN GENERAL.—To be eligible to re-
3 ceive a rural partnership block grant—

4 “(i) an Indian Tribe that has jurisdic-
5 tion over a reservation shall establish a
6 rural partnership council in accordance
7 with subsection (b); and

8 “(ii) that Council shall submit an ap-
9 plication to the Secretary.

10 “(B) APPROVAL.—

11 “(i) IN GENERAL.—On receipt of an
12 application that was submitted under sub-
13 paragraph (A)(ii) not later than 180 days
14 after the date of enactment of the Rebuild
15 Rural America Act of 2021, the Secretary,
16 in coordination with the applicable State
17 offices of the rural development mission
18 area, shall approve the Council as eligible
19 to receive a rural partnership block grant
20 if the requirements under subsection (b)
21 for the composition of the membership of
22 a Council are satisfied.

23 “(ii) SUBSEQUENT APPLICATIONS.—
24 Not less frequently than once each year,
25 the Secretary, in coordination with the ap-

1 applicable State offices of the rural develop-
2 ment mission area, may approve applica-
3 tions submitted under subparagraph (A)(ii)
4 later than 180 days after the date of en-
5 actment of the Rebuild Rural America Act
6 of 2021 if the requirements under sub-
7 section (b) for the composition of the mem-
8 bership of a Council are satisfied.

9 “(b) MEMBERSHIP.—Each Council—

10 “(1) shall include 1 or more representatives
11 of—

12 “(A) a District Organization (as defined in
13 section 300.3 of title 13, Code of Federal Regu-
14 lations (or successor regulations)) or a com-
15 parable regional planning organization if there
16 is no applicable District Organization;

17 “(B) 1 or more units of local government,
18 or 1 or more entities designated by a unit of
19 local government, within the applicable area;
20 and

21 “(C) a public or nonprofit organization;

22 “(2) may include 1 or more representatives
23 of—

24 “(A) an economic development or other
25 community or labor organization;

1 “(B) a financial institution, including a
2 community development financial institution (as
3 defined in section 103 of the Community Devel-
4 opment Banking and Financial Institutions Act
5 of 1994 (12 U.S.C. 4702));

6 “(C) a philanthropic organization;

7 “(D) a rural cooperative;

8 “(E) an entity with experience in the de-
9 velopment of cooperatives;

10 “(F) an institution of higher education;

11 “(G) elementary or secondary education;

12 “(H) a private entity;

13 “(I) a Tribal organization;

14 “(J) a metropolitan planning organization
15 (as defined in section 134(b) of title 23, United
16 States Code);

17 “(K) any other regional planning organiza-
18 tion; or

19 “(L) any other entity, as determined to be
20 appropriate by the Council; and

21 “(3) shall be composed of an odd number of
22 members.

23 “(c) REVISIONS.—

24 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Not more frequently than
25 once every 5 years, a Council may submit to the 1

1 or more applicable States, or to the Secretary in the
2 case of a Council established by an Indian Tribe, an
3 application to revise the geographic boundary of the
4 applicable area represented by the Council.

5 “(2) FINAL APPROVAL BY SECRETARY.—An ap-
6 plication submitted to 1 or more States under para-
7 graph (1) shall be subject to final approval by the
8 Secretary.

9 **“SEC. 385D. RURAL PARTNERSHIP BLOCK GRANTS.**

10 “(a) ALLOCATION OF FUNDS.—

11 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in para-
12 graph (2), the Secretary shall allocate rural partner-
13 ship block grant funds to Councils proportionately
14 based on the population of each area represented by
15 a Council.

16 “(2) HIGH POVERTY RATES.—The Secretary
17 shall allocate to a Council an amount equal to 3
18 times the applicable amount under paragraph (1)
19 with respect to each individual residing in a census
20 tract, or a group of contiguous census tracts, that—

21 “(A) has a poverty rate of 20 percent or
22 greater; and

23 “(B) is within or comprises the applicable
24 area.

1 “(b) DISTRIBUTION.—The Secretary shall distribute
2 rural partnership block grant funds annually to each
3 Council during the term of the rural partnership block
4 grant.

5 “(c) TERM.—A rural partnership block grant—

6 “(1) shall be for a term of 5 years; and

7 “(2) may be renewed.

8 “(d) GRANT AGREEMENTS.—

9 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Each Council shall enter
10 into an agreement with the Secretary, under which
11 the Council, in coordination with the Secretary, shall
12 establish performance measures and reporting re-
13 quirements that shall be met by the end of each year
14 for which the Council receives funds under the
15 Fund.

16 “(2) VIOLATIONS.—If the Secretary determines
17 that a Council has failed to meet any requirements
18 of the applicable agreement under paragraph (1), is
19 not making reasonable progress towards meeting
20 that requirement, or is otherwise in violation of that
21 agreement, the Secretary may—

22 “(A) withhold funds under the Fund until
23 the Council remedies the applicable violation; or

24 “(B) terminate the agreement.

1 **“SEC. 385E. RURAL PARTNERSHIP PLANS.**

2 “(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Each Council shall estab-
3 lish, maintain, evaluate, and report to the Secretary
4 progress on a rural partnership plan in accordance with
5 this section.

6 “(b) COORDINATION WITH OTHER PLANS.—

7 “(1) IN GENERAL.—In developing a Plan under
8 this section, a Council is encouraged to utilize exist-
9 ing Federal plans, and existing State, regional, or
10 Tribal plans, so as to reduce duplicative efforts and
11 align Federal investment.

12 “(2) FEDERAL PLANS.—Existing Federal plans
13 referred to in paragraph (1) include—

14 “(A) the Comprehensive Economic Devel-
15 opment Strategy of the Economic Development
16 Administration;

17 “(B) a local plan, as defined in section 3
18 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity
19 Act (29 U.S.C. 3102);

20 “(C) the Consolidated Plan of the Depart-
21 ment of Housing and Urban Development;

22 “(D) plans developed by metropolitan plan-
23 ning organizations under section 134 of title
24 23, United States Code;

25 “(E) plans developed by regional transpor-
26 tation planning organizations designated under

1 section 135(m) of title 23, United States Code,
2 or section 5304(l) of title 49, United States
3 Code (commonly known as a ‘rural transpor-
4 tation planning organization’);

5 “(F) emergency preparedness and hazard
6 mitigation plans required by the Federal Emer-
7 gency Management Agency;

8 “(G) the Drinking Water Action Plan of
9 the Environmental Protection Agency;

10 “(H) a good neighbor agreement (as de-
11 fined in section 8206(a) of the Agricultural Act
12 of 2014 (16 U.S.C. 2113a(a))); and

13 “(I) strategic plans developed by Federal
14 regional commissions, including—

15 “(i) the Appalachian Regional Com-
16 mission established by section 14301(a) of
17 title 40, United States Code;

18 “(ii) the Delta Regional Authority es-
19 tablished under subtitle F of the Consoli-
20 dated Farm and Rural Development Act (7
21 U.S.C. 2009aa et seq.);

22 “(iii) the Denali Commission estab-
23 lished under the Denali Commission Act of
24 1998 (42 U.S.C. 3121 note; title III of di-
25 vision C of Public Law 105–277);

1 “(iv) the Northern Border Regional
2 Commission established by section
3 15301(a)(3) of title 40, United States
4 Code;

5 “(v) the Northern Great Plains Re-
6 gional Authority established under subtitle
7 G of the Consolidated Farm and Rural De-
8 velopment Act (7 U.S.C. 2009bb et seq.);

9 “(vi) the Southeast Crescent Regional
10 Commission established by section
11 15301(a)(1) of title 40, United States
12 Code; and

13 “(vii) the Southwest Border Regional
14 Commission established by section
15 15301(a)(2) of title 40, United States
16 Code.

17 “(c) CONTENTS.—To the maximum extent prac-
18 ticable, a Plan shall include—

19 “(1) a plan to coordinate and build capacity
20 across jurisdictions in the applicable area to develop
21 and implement the Plan, including by targeting as-
22 sistance to high-poverty and other struggling areas
23 within that region;

24 “(2) a plan that outlines feasible steps and
25 achievable goals, timelines, and strategies for imple-

1 menting the Plan, including making interjurisdic-
2 tional agreements that provide for cooperative and
3 coordinated approaches to achieving the goals of the
4 Plan;

5 “(3) a prioritization of projects for funding and
6 implementation, when practicable, including by pro-
7 viding—

8 “(A) a description of each prioritized
9 project proposed to be carried out; and

10 “(B) a budget for each project described in
11 subparagraph (A) that includes—

12 “(i) preliminary actions that have
13 been or must be taken at the local or re-
14 gional level to implement the project;

15 “(ii) the anticipated Federal share of
16 the cost of the project; and

17 “(iii) a description of the source of
18 the non-Federal share of funds or in-kind
19 contributions for the project;

20 “(4) an assessment of current and future
21 trends in the applicable area, which may include—

22 “(A) population growth or loss, and demo-
23 graphic changes, in the region;

1 “(B) accessibility of job centers within the
2 region to public transportation facilities and
3 housing;

4 “(C) infrastructure needs in the region, in-
5 cluding—

6 “(i) projected water needs and
7 sources;

8 “(ii) any need for sewer infrastruc-
9 ture;

10 “(iii) the existence of flood plains;

11 “(iv) the needs of local and regional
12 food systems, agricultural producers, and
13 value-added agricultural industries; and

14 “(v) any need for affordable, high-
15 speed internet, including new technologies
16 for mobile internet services and for afford-
17 able, reliable cellular phone coverage;

18 “(D) challenges in basic services within the
19 region, including pressing health challenges;

20 “(E) skills and education for in-demand,
21 quality jobs and for regional economic develop-
22 ment, which may include retraining and edu-
23 cation of incumbent or displaced workers; and

24 “(F) access to private debt and investment
25 capital;

1 “(5) a plan to develop opportunities for eco-
2 nomic diversification and innovation within the ap-
3 plicable area, with particular attention to—

4 “(A) agricultural diversification and supply
5 chain development;

6 “(B) the conversion of existing businesses
7 to employee or local ownership, such as a coop-
8 erative;

9 “(C) entrepreneurial support;

10 “(D) clean energy;

11 “(E) manufacturing; and

12 “(F) technological innovation;

13 “(6) a plan for improving environmental resil-
14 iency, efficient land use, remediation of brownfields
15 and other contaminated properties for re-use, mixed-
16 use development, and the preservation of agricul-
17 tural, green, and open space, including—

18 “(A) an assessment of projected loss of ag-
19 ricultural and rural land and other green space
20 to development; and

21 “(B) a description of methods to minimize
22 loss described in subparagraph (A);

23 “(7) a plan for ensuring that no community or
24 county in the applicable area is excluded from re-
25 ceiving assistance through the rural partnership

1 block grant, including timelines and goals for tar-
2 geting assistance to high-poverty census tracts in-
3 cluded in the area;

4 “(8) a plan for building greater collaboration
5 between—

6 “(A) rural population centers and neigh-
7 boring rural areas of the applicable area; and

8 “(B) the applicable area and neighboring
9 urban areas;

10 “(9) a plan for the creation and preservation of
11 workforce housing and affordable, energy-efficient
12 housing for all ages, incomes, races, and ethnicities,
13 including—

14 “(A) cooperative housing; and

15 “(B) limited equity cooperative housing;

16 “(10) a plan to develop opportunities to revi-
17 talize existing communities, including infill develop-
18 ment and utilizing existing assets, such as natural
19 assets and public infrastructure; and

20 “(11) such other information or plans as a
21 Council or the Secretary determines to be appro-
22 priate.

23 “(d) APPROVAL.—

24 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Not less frequently than
25 annually, each Council shall approve a Plan by a

1 majority vote of the members of the Council for sub-
2 mission to the Secretary for final approval under
3 paragraph (2).

4 “(2) APPROVAL BY SECRETARY.—On receipt of
5 a Plan under paragraph (1), the Secretary may ap-
6 prove or disapprove the Plan.

7 **“SEC. 385F. USE OF GRANT FUNDS.**

8 “(a) PLANNING.—During the first 2 years of the
9 term of a rural partnership block grant, a Council may
10 use the funds for comprehensive planning and capacity
11 building to implement a Plan.

12 “(b) IMPLEMENTATION.—

13 “(1) IN GENERAL.—A Council shall use funds
14 under a rural partnership block grant to implement
15 a Plan.

16 “(2) PERMISSIBLE USES.—In using funds to
17 implement a Plan under paragraph (1), a Council
18 may use the funds—

19 “(A) to support the development of critical
20 infrastructure necessary to facilitate economic
21 development in the applicable area, including
22 high-speed internet, including new technologies
23 for mobile internet services and for affordable,
24 reliable cellular phone coverage;

1 “(B) to support activities to achieve great-
2 er economic and environmental resiliency, in-
3 cluding for emergency preparedness, disaster
4 recovery, and hazard mitigation;

5 “(C) to provide assistance to entities with-
6 in the applicable area that provide basic public
7 services, such as—

8 “(i) child care centers;

9 “(ii) nonprofit health care, including
10 community health centers, primary and
11 emergency medical care, mental health,
12 and substance abuse treatment providers;

13 “(iii) public libraries;

14 “(iv) community centers;

15 “(v) public schools; and

16 “(vi) nonprofit technology centers, in-
17 cluding business incubators and business
18 accelerators;

19 “(D) to provide assistance with education,
20 job training, workforce development, or other
21 needs relating to the development and mainte-
22 nance of a strong workforce and support of
23 youth, unemployed, underemployed, dislocated,
24 disabled, adult, and incumbent workers and in-
25 dividuals with a barrier to employment;

1 “(E) to provide assistance in the develop-
2 ment of innovative collaborations that link pub-
3 lic, private, and philanthropic resources to
4 achieve collaboratively designed regional ad-
5 vancement;

6 “(F) to promote and use employee owner-
7 ship, cooperatives, and local ownership in the
8 development of infrastructure, businesses, and
9 community services;

10 “(G) to acquire, or demolish improvements
11 on, real property;

12 “(H) to construct or rehabilitate residen-
13 tial or nonresidential structures;

14 “(I) to develop new affordable low-income
15 and workforce housing options that ensure
16 mixed-income development;

17 “(J) to construct public facilities and im-
18 provements, such as water and sewer facilities,
19 streets, community centers, and the conversion
20 of school buildings for other purposes that are
21 eligible for funding under this subsection;

22 “(K) to establish new connections between
23 rural population centers and neighboring rural
24 areas within the applicable area, and between
25 the applicable area and urban areas, relating to

1 systems such as the supply of clean energy,
2 workforce sheds, food systems, supply chains,
3 commuting patterns, and outdoor recreation;

4 “(L) to carry out activities relating to—

5 “(i) energy conservation;

6 “(ii) the development, storage, and
7 use of clean energy resources; and

8 “(iii) bio-based manufacturing;

9 “(M) to rebuild and modernize infrastruc-
10 ture and expand investment to support agricul-
11 tural diversification and supply chain develop-
12 ment;

13 “(N) to promote integrated transportation,
14 housing, energy, and economic development ac-
15 tivities carried out across policy areas and gov-
16 ernmental jurisdictions;

17 “(O) to coordinate business development,
18 land use, housing, transportation, and infra-
19 structure planning processes across jurisdictions
20 and agencies;

21 “(P) to address public health needs, in-
22 cluding—

23 “(i) access to mental health and sub-
24 stance abuse services; and

1 “(ii) access to healthy, locally, and re-
2 gionally grown foods;

3 “(Q) to encourage entrepreneurship and
4 the scale-up of existing business operations
5 by—

6 “(i) improving access to capital, in-
7 cluding market-based financing, such as
8 angel, venture, equity, and equity-like cap-
9 ital;

10 “(ii) facilitating collaboration between
11 entrepreneurs and institutions of higher
12 education and applied research institutions
13 for the purposes of commercialization of
14 research or adoption of technology or proc-
15 esses;

16 “(iii) assisting with integration into a
17 supply chain; and

18 “(iv) providing mentor, networking,
19 and support services for entrepreneurs, in-
20 cluding establishing business incubators or
21 accelerators;

22 “(R) to develop innovative public and pri-
23 vate collaborations for investments in the appli-
24 cable area;

1 “(S) to use arts and culture for improve-
2 ments in economic development, education,
3 training, and quality of life;

4 “(T) to revitalize downtown corridors and
5 other community centers to create vibrant,
6 mixed-use neighborhoods;

7 “(U) to expand access to domestic and
8 international markets for businesses and agri-
9 cultural producers;

10 “(V) to lead development programming for
11 organizations or cohorts of organizations in-
12 cluded in the Plan;

13 “(W) to provide matching funds for other
14 Federal funding if that other Federal funding is
15 for a project that is in accordance with the
16 goals of the Plan;

17 “(X) to promote the use of energy effi-
18 ciency in applicable projects; and

19 “(Y) to provide technical assistance for co-
20 operative conversions, startups, and expansions,
21 including education on cooperative governance.

22 **“SEC. 385G. ACCESS TO FEDERAL PROGRAMS.**

23 “(a) DEFINITION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PRO-
24 GRAM.—In this section, the term ‘rural development pro-
25 gram’ means—

1 “(1) community facility direct and guaranteed
2 loans under section 306(a);

3 “(2) water or waste disposal grants or direct or
4 guaranteed loans under paragraph (1) or (2) of sec-
5 tion 306(a);

6 “(3) community facility grants under paragraph
7 (19), (20), or (21) of section 306(a);

8 “(4) the rural cooperative development grant
9 program established under section 310B(e);

10 “(5) business and industry guaranteed loans
11 under section 310B(g);

12 “(6) the rural microentrepreneur assistance
13 program established under section 379E;

14 “(7) the rural broadband access program estab-
15 lished under title VI of the Rural Electrification Act
16 of 1936 (7 U.S.C. 950bb et seq.);

17 “(8) value-added producer grants under section
18 210A(d)(5) of the Agricultural Marketing Act of
19 1946 (7 U.S.C. 1627c(d)(5));

20 “(9) the Healthy Food Financing Initiative es-
21 tablished under section 243 of the Department of
22 Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C.
23 6953);

1 “(10) the Rural Energy for America Program
2 established under section 9007 of the Farm Security
3 and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (7 U.S.C. 8107);

4 “(11) the rural energy savings program under
5 section 6407 of the Farm Security and Rural Invest-
6 ment Act of 2002 (7 U.S.C. 8107a);

7 “(12) rural rental housing direct loans under
8 section 515 of the Housing Act of 1949 (42 U.S.C.
9 1485);

10 “(13) the housing preservation grant program
11 under section 533 of the Housing Act of 1949 (42
12 U.S.C. 1490m);

13 “(14) loan guarantees for multifamily rental
14 housing in rural areas under section 538 of the
15 Housing Act of 1949 (42 U.S.C. 1490p–2);

16 “(15) housing preservation and revitalization
17 demonstration loans and grants provided by the
18 Rural Housing Service; and

19 “(16) multifamily housing transfer and prepay-
20 ment technical assistance grants provided by the
21 Rural Housing Service.

22 “(b) WAIVER OF MATCHING FUNDS REQUIRE-
23 MENTS.—The Secretary shall waive any matching funds
24 requirement under a rural development program for a
25 project that is carried out in an applicable area that is

1 within or comprises a census tract, or a group of contig-
2 uous census tracts, that has a poverty rate of 20 percent
3 or greater.

4 “(c) PRIORITY CONSIDERATION FOR OTHER RURAL
5 DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS.—The Secretary shall give pri-
6 ority under a rural development program for an applica-
7 tion for a project that—

8 “(1) is included in and supports a Plan;

9 “(2) is eligible for the applicable program from
10 which the funds were set aside; and

11 “(3) is carried out in the applicable area cov-
12 ered by the Plan.

13 “(d) OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES.—The Secretary of
14 Agriculture, acting as the Chair of the Council on Rural
15 Community Innovation and Economic Development estab-
16 lished by section 6306 of the Agriculture Improvement Act
17 of 2018 (7 U.S.C. 2204b–3), may invite a member of that
18 Council to give priority under the programs carried out
19 by the member for a project that satisfies the criteria de-
20 scribed in paragraphs (1) through (3) of subsection (c).

21 **“SEC. 385H. CAPACITY BUILDING AND TECHNICAL ASSIST-**
22 **ANCE PARTNERS.**

23 “(a) CAPACITY BUILDING.—

24 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall provide
25 to a Council training, education, support, and advice

1 to enhance the technical assistance, research, organi-
2 zational, and other capacities of the Council in car-
3 rying out activities under the Fund.

4 “(2) ACTIVITIES.—In carrying out paragraph
5 (1), the Secretary, in coordination with the Rural
6 Development Innovation Center established by the
7 Secretary of Agriculture or through a contract for
8 services entered into with an eligible technical assist-
9 ance provider, may provide training, education, sup-
10 port, and advice that addresses—

11 “(A) emergent innovative opportunities
12 that are not covered by an existing Plan;

13 “(B) entrepreneurial opportunities to ad-
14 vance the goals of the Fund;

15 “(C) opportunities to advance a more inte-
16 grative rural policy framework for the United
17 States, including building regional connections
18 between urban areas and rural areas;

19 “(D) with support from the Chief Informa-
20 tion Officer of the Department of Agriculture,
21 the tracking, collection, and analysis of data
22 and measurements for assessing the progress of
23 Plans; and

24 “(E) best practices based on—

25 “(i) the experiences of Councils; and

1 “(ii) domestic and international rural
2 development practices.

3 “(b) RURAL FUTURE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE.—

4 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall estab-
5 lish a Rural Future Leadership Institute (referred to
6 in this subsection as the ‘Institute’).

7 “(2) SELECTION OF ENTITIES.—

8 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Under the Institute,
9 each year the Secretary shall select individuals
10 to participate in the Institute.

11 “(B) PREFERENCE.—In selecting individ-
12 uals to participate in the Institute under sub-
13 paragraph (A), the Secretary shall give pref-
14 erence to an individual residing in, or directly
15 assisting, an area represented by a Council.

16 “(3) ACTIVITIES.—The Secretary shall provide
17 to each individual that is selected to participate in
18 the Institute under paragraph (2) year-long pro-
19 gramming such as—

20 “(A) skill-building seminars;

21 “(B) best practice reviews;

22 “(C) site visits;

23 “(D) performance measurement and data
24 analytics; and

1 “(E) other training and capacity building
2 activities.

3 “(4) PEER EXCHANGE PROGRAM.—In carrying
4 out the Institute, the Secretary shall establish a peer
5 exchange program within and across areas rep-
6 resented by Councils to promote industry-leading
7 practices, innovations relating to the organizational
8 development, program delivery, and regional initia-
9 tives of the Councils, and opportunities to build col-
10 laborative relationships between urban leaders and
11 rural leaders.

12 “(c) RURAL FUTURE CORPS.—

13 “(1) DEFINITION OF AMERICORPS PARTICI-
14 PANT.—In this subsection, the term ‘AmeriCorps
15 participant’ means a participant under subtitle C of
16 title I of the National and Community Service Act
17 of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12571 et seq.) who received an
18 approved national service position provided under
19 section 121(b) of that Act (42 U.S.C. 12571(b)).

20 “(2) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall
21 enter into an agreement with the Corporation for
22 National and Community Service under section
23 121(b) of the National and Community Service Act
24 of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12571(b)) to establish a Rural
25 Future Corps in which AmeriCorps participants

1 shall serve in areas represented by Councils, to im-
2 plement the Plans of the Councils, including serving
3 through—

4 “(A) expansion of critical services such as
5 child care, health, nutrition assistance, edu-
6 cation, and job training; and

7 “(B) strengthening the capacity of units of
8 local government and economic, community,
9 and cooperative development organizations to
10 implement community and economic develop-
11 ment activities.

12 “(3) RETENTION.—On completion of service of
13 an AmeriCorps participant in the Rural Future
14 Corps, the Secretary shall encourage the retention of
15 the participant in the applicable area in which the
16 participant served.

17 “(4) RELATIONSHIP TO NATIONAL SERVICE
18 PROGRAMS.—Notwithstanding section 122(a) of the
19 National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42
20 U.S.C. 12752(a)), for purposes of that Act, the ap-
21 proved national service positions provided under the
22 agreement for the Rural Future Corps program will
23 be considered to be used to support a national serv-
24 ice program under section 122(b) of that Act (42
25 U.S.C. 12572(b)).

1 “(d) MAP.—The Secretary, in coordination with the
2 Chief Information Officer of the Department of Agri-
3 culture, shall make publicly available on a website a map
4 of areas represented by Councils, including, with respect
5 to each area, the members of the Council.

6 “(e) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PARTNERS.—The Sec-
7 retary may enter into a cooperative agreement under sec-
8 tion 607(b)(4) of the Rural Development Act of 1972 (7
9 U.S.C. 2204b(b)(4)) with an eligible technical assistance
10 provider to provide technical assistance to the Secretary
11 and Councils in carrying out the Fund.

12 **“SEC. 385I. EVALUATION AND REPORTING.**

13 “(a) EVALUATIONS.—Not later than the last day of
14 the fourth year of the first rural partnership block grant
15 awarded to a Council, and annually thereafter—

16 “(1) the Secretary shall evaluate the perform-
17 ance of the Council in carrying out the Plan of the
18 Council in relation to the benchmarks established
19 under subsection (b); and

20 “(2) the Council shall use the evaluation under
21 paragraph (1) in updating the Plan under section
22 385E(d)(1).

23 “(b) REPORTING BENCHMARKS.—

24 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in coordina-
25 tion with Councils and national providers of tech-

1 nical assistance under section 385H(e), shall estab-
2 lish annual reporting benchmarks relating to the
3 purposes of the Fund.

4 “(2) EXISTING MEASURES.—In establishing re-
5 porting benchmarks under paragraph (1), the Sec-
6 retary shall consider relevant existing performance
7 measures used in programs of the rural development
8 mission area—

9 “(A) to achieve alignment with those pro-
10 grams; and

11 “(B) to allow for opportunities for a part-
12 nership block grant to leverage other funding
13 provided under those programs.

14 “(c) REPORTS.—The Secretary shall—

15 “(1) not less frequently than annually, prepare
16 and submit to Congress a report describing—

17 “(A) the implementation of the Fund; and

18 “(B) an assessment of future goals for the
19 Fund; and

20 “(2) include the assessment described in para-
21 graph (1)(B) in the comprehensive rural develop-
22 ment strategy under section 607(c) of the Rural De-
23 velopment Act of 1972 (7 U.S.C. 2204b(c)).

1 **“SEC. 385J. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

2 “There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out
3 the Fund \$10,000,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2022
4 through 2026, of which—

5 “(1) \$100,000,000 for each fiscal year shall be
6 used for administrative functions, including staff
7 and information technology infrastructure, of the
8 Rural Innovation and Partnership Administration;
9 and

10 “(2) \$40,000,000 for each fiscal year shall be
11 used to carry out section 385H.”.

○