

TO: House Commerce and Economic Development  
FROM: Catherine Dimitruk, Executive Director, Northwest Regional Planning Commission  
DATE: April 18, 2017  
RE: S.34, as passed the Senate, Section 1, Rural Economic Development Team

**Suggested Changes:**

*Add regional planning commissions to the rural economic development team collaborators.*

§ 325m. RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM

(b)The Rural Economic Development Team shall collaborate with municipalities, businesses, industrial parks, regional development corporations, regional planning commissions and other appropriate entities to access funding and other assistance available...

*Give priority for projects identified as a priority in a planning process.*

(c)(2) In providing services under this subsection, the Rural Economic Development Team shall give first priority to projects that have received necessary State or municipal approval and that are ready for construction or implementation, or projects that have been identified in a local, regional or multi-jurisdictional plan.

*Broaden the language on public buildings.*

(d)(3) Coordinating with small towns or rural areas on ways to establish or attract coworker spaces or generator spaces that facilitate the incubation and development of businesses. The Rural Economic Development Team shall explore with a small town or rural area whether underused or closed ~~school~~ public buildings are appropriate sites for coworker or generator spaces.

**Other comments:**

Much of the language focuses on new businesses. And equal or greater need in some rural areas is to bolster or expand existing businesses.

It is highly unlikely that funds received for grant administration will offset costs. Grant administration funds pay for a specific job- grant administration, and cannot be used to offset other costs.

VHCB has indicated that they will likely use some of the funds to hire RDCs, RPCs or others to assist with grant writing or other portions of this work. That will help to minimize duplication of efforts.