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**ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5357**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2021 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Honeyford, King, Wagoner, Wellman, and Wilson, L.)

AN ACT Relating to establishing the capital broadband investment acceleration program; and adding a new section to chapter 43.330 RCW.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.330 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The capital broadband investment acceleration program is created in the statewide broadband office as established in RCW 43.330.532. Funding appropriated for the program shall be used for the statewide broadband office to establish a competitive grant program to increase broadband access in unserved areas of the state, as defined in RCW 43.330.530. Funding must be awarded to match funds required to participate in the federal broadband infrastructure programs. Priority for grants must be for projects that serve distressed areas and rural counties as defined in RCW 43.168.020.

(2) Eligible applicants for grants awarded under this section include:

(a) Local governments;

(b) Tribes;

(c) Nonprofit organizations;

(d) Cooperative associations;

(e) Multiparty entities comprised of public entity members;

(f) Limited liability corporations organized for the purpose of expanding broadband access; and

(g) Incorporated businesses or partnerships.

(3) No more than three percent of the funds appropriated for the program may be expended by the statewide broadband office for administration of the program.

(4) No more than three percent of each grant may be expended by the grant recipient for management or administration of the grant.

(5) The statewide broadband office must develop a project evaluation process to assist in coordination among state broadband infrastructure funders to maximize opportunities to leverage federal funding and ensure efficient state investment in achieving the policy objectives of RCW 43.330.536. The project evaluation process must help standardize the assessment of proposed broadband projects so that the state funders, soon after a project is identified, can determine whether the project is a strong candidate for a known federal funding opportunity. The statewide broadband office will use the tool to identify whether a project can be packaged as part of a regional or other coordinated federal grant proposal. The statewide broadband office, public works board, and community economic revitalization board are encouraged to enter into a memorandum of understanding outlining how coordination will take place so that the process can help with a coordinated funding strategy across these entities.

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