

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1749

To authorize the Minority Business Development Agency of the Department of Commerce to establish business centers at historically Black colleges and universities, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 20, 2021

Mr. WICKER (for himself, Mr. KAINE, Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, Mr. COONS, and Mr. TILLIS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

A BILL

To authorize the Minority Business Development Agency of the Department of Commerce to establish business centers at historically Black colleges and universities, 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 “Reaching America’s
5 Rural Minority Businesses Act of 2021”.

1 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

2 (1) **AGENCY.**—The term “Agency” means the
3 Minority Business Development Agency of the De-
4 partment of Commerce.

5 (2) **APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMIT-**
6 **TEES.**—The term “appropriate congressional com-
7 mittees” means—

8 (A) the Committee on Commerce, Science,
9 and Transportation of the Senate;

10 (B) the Committee on Small Business and
11 Entrepreneurship of the Senate;

12 (C) the Committee on Energy and Com-
13 merce of the House of Representatives; and

14 (D) the Committee on Small Business of
15 the House of Representatives.

16 (3) **ELIGIBLE ENTITY.**—The term “eligible enti-
17 ty” means—

18 (A) a historically Black college or univer-
19 sity; or

20 (B) a consortium of institutions of higher
21 education that is led by a historically Black col-
22 lege or university.

23 (4) **HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE OR UNI-**
24 **VERSITY.**—The term “historically Black college or
25 university” has the meaning given the term “part B

1 institution” in section 322 of the Higher Education
2 Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1061).

3 (5) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The
4 term “institution of higher education” has the
5 meaning given the term in section 101 of the Higher
6 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

7 (6) MBDA CENTER.—The term “MBDA cen-
8 ter” means any business center established by the
9 Agency.

10 (7) MBDC AGREEMENT.—The term “MBDC
11 agreement” means a collaborative agreement entered
12 into between the Agency and an eligible entity under
13 section 3(b)(2).

14 (8) MINORITY BUSINESS ENTERPRISE.—The
15 term “minority business enterprise” has the mean-
16 ing given the term in section 1108(a) of the CARES
17 Act (15 U.S.C. 9007(a)).

18 (9) RURAL AREA.—The term “rural area”
19 means an area located outside a metropolitan statis-
20 tical area (as designated by the Office of Manage-
21 ment and Budget).

22 (10) RURAL BUSINESS CENTER.—The term
23 “rural business center” means an MBDA center
24 with the functions described in section 3(c).

1 (11) RURAL MINORITY BUSINESS ENTER-
2 PRISE.—The term “rural minority business enter-
3 prise” means a minority business enterprise located
4 in a rural area.

5 **SEC. 3. BUSINESS CENTERS.**

6 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Agency may establish not
7 more than 10 rural business centers.

8 (b) PARTNERSHIP.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—The agency shall establish
10 each rural business center in partnership with an eli-
11 gible entity in accordance with paragraph (2).

12 (2) MBDC AGREEMENT.—

13 (A) IN GENERAL.—With respect to each
14 rural business center established by the Agency,
15 the Agency shall enter into a collaborative
16 agreement with an eligible entity that provides
17 that—

18 (i) the eligible entity shall provide
19 space, facilities, and staffing for the rural
20 business center;

21 (ii) the Agency shall provide funding
22 for, and oversight with respect to, the rural
23 business center; and

24 (iii) subject to subparagraph (B), the
25 eligible entity shall match 20 percent of

the amount of the funding provided by the Agency under clause (ii), which may be calculated to include the costs of providing the space, facilities, and staffing under clause (i).

(B) LOWER MATCH REQUIREMENT.—

Based on the available resources of an eligible entity, the Agency may enter into a collaborative agreement with the eligible entity that provides that the eligible entity shall match less than 20 percent of the amount of the funding provided by the Agency under subparagraph (A)(ii).

(3) TERM.—The term of an MBDC agreement shall be 5 years.

(4) RENEWAL.—The Agency and an eligible entity may agree to extend the term of an MBDC agreement with respect to a rural business center for an additional 5 years.

(c) FUNCTIONS.—A rural business center shall—

(1) primarily serve clients that are—

(A) rural minority business enterprises; or

(B) minority business enterprises that are

located more than 50 miles from an MBDA center (other than that rural business center);

1 (2) focus on issues relating to—

2 (A) the adoption of broadband internet ac-
3 cess service (as defined in section 8.1(b) of title
4 47, Code of Federal Regulations, or any suc-
5 cessor regulation), digital literacy skills, and e-
6 commerce by rural minority business enter-
7 prises;

8 (B) advanced manufacturing;

9 (C) the promotion of manufacturing in the
10 United States;

11 (D) ways in which rural minority business
12 enterprises can meet gaps in the supply chain
13 of critical supplies and essential goods and serv-
14 ices for the United States;

15 (E) improving the connectivity of rural mi-
16 nority business enterprises through transpor-
17 tation and logistics;

18 (F) promoting trade and export opportuni-
19 ties by rural minority business enterprises;

20 (G) securing financial capital; and

21 (H) facilitating entrepreneurship in rural
22 areas; and

23 (3) provide education, training, and technical
24 assistance to minority business enterprises.

25 (d) APPLICATIONS.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after
2 the date of enactment of this Act, the Agency shall
3 issue a request for applications from eligible entities
4 that desire to enter into MBDC agreements with the
5 Agency.

6 (2) CRITERIA AND PRIORITY.—In selecting an
7 eligible entity with which to enter into an MBDC
8 agreement, the Agency shall—

9 (A) select an eligible entity that dem-
10 onstrates—

11 (i) the ability to collaborate with gov-
12 ernmental and private sector entities to le-
13 verage capabilities of minority business en-
14 terprises through public-private partner-
15 ships;

16 (ii) the research and extension capac-
17 ity to support minority business enter-
18 prises;

19 (iii) knowledge of the community that
20 the eligible entity serves and the ability to
21 conduct effective outreach to that commu-
22 nity to advance the goals of a rural busi-
23 ness center;

24 (iv) the ability to provide innovative
25 business solutions, including access to con-

tracting opportunities, markets, and capital;

(v) the ability to provide services that advance the development of science, technology, engineering, and math jobs within minority business enterprises;

(vi) the ability to leverage resources from within the eligible entity to advance a rural business center;

(vii) that the mission of the eligible entity aligns with the mission of the Agency; and

(viii) the ability to leverage relationships with rural minority business enterprises; and

(B) give priority to an eligible entity located in a State or region that lacks an MBDA center, as of the date of enactment of this Act.

(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Agency to establish rural business centers under this section \$10,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2022 through 2026.

1 **SEC. 4. REPORT TO CONGRESS.**

2 Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment
3 of this Act, the Agency shall submit to the appropriate
4 congressional committees a report that includes—

5 (1) a summary of the efforts of the Agency to
6 provide services to minority business enterprises lo-
7 cated in States that lack an MBDA center, as of the
8 date of enactment of this Act, and especially in those
9 States that have significant minority populations;
10 and

11 (2) recommendations for extending the outreach
12 of the Agency to underserved areas.

13 **SEC. 5. STUDY AND REPORT.**

14 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Agency, in coordination with
15 the Administrator of the Small Business Administration,
16 shall conduct a study on the ways in which minority busi-
17 ness enterprises can meet gaps in the supply chain of the
18 United States, with a particular focus on the supply chain
19 of advanced manufacturing and essential goods and serv-
20 ices.

21 (b) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date
22 of enactment of this Act, the Agency shall submit to Con-
23 gress a report that includes—

24 (1) the results of the study conducted under
25 subsection (a); and

- 1 (2) recommendations on the ways in which mi-
- 2 nority business enterprises can meet gaps in the
- 3 supply chain of the United States.

