

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2977

To allow State manufacturing extension partnerships to award grants to small- and medium-sized manufacturers for the purpose of training new workers to replace departing experienced workers.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER 7, 2021

Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself and Mr. INHOFE) introduced the following bill;
which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce,
Science, and Transportation

A BILL

To allow State manufacturing extension partnerships to award grants to small- and medium-sized manufacturers for the purpose of training new workers to replace departing experienced workers.

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 “Retain Innovation and
5 Manufacturing Excellence (RIME) Act of 2021”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

1 (1) CENTER.—The term “Center” has the
2 meaning given the term in section 25(a) of the Na-
3 tional Institute of Standards and Technology Act
4 (15 U.S.C. 278k(a)).

5 (2) ELIGIBLE MANUFACTURERS.—The term
6 “eligible manufacturer” means a manufacturer
7 that—

8 (A) is a small business concern, as that
9 term is defined under section 3 of the Small
10 Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632); and

11 (B) has an existing relationship with a
12 Center.

13 **SEC. 3. PILOT PROGRAM.**

14 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Commerce shall
15 establish a pilot program to award National Institute of
16 Standards and Technology Manufacturing Extension
17 Partnership (MEP) grants to help ensure an adequately
18 trained manufacturing workforce. Under the program, eli-
19 gible Centers may award MEP grants to eligible manufac-
20 turers to retain retiring employees for up to 90 days for
21 the purpose of transferring job-specific skills and training
22 to existing or new employees. The length of each grant
23 shall be determined through negotiations between the Cen-
24 ter and the eligible manufacturer.

1 (b) ELIGIBILITY.—In order to be eligible to receive
2 funding and award grants under the program, a Center
3 must meet the following criteria:

4 (1) A Center must be able to document evi-
5 dence of an aging workforce within manufacturing
6 firms that are seeking assistance with retaining
7 skills and knowledge of their operations.

8 (2) A Center shall establish a transparent appli-
9 cation process for eligible manufacturing firms that
10 may include one or more of the following pref-
11 erences:

12 (A) A preference for manufacturers that
13 employ veterans discharged or released under
14 honorable conditions.

15 (B) A preference for manufacturing firms
16 from industry sectors that are most in need of
17 assistance as determined by the local MEP.

18 (C) A preference for manufacturing firms
19 with a facility in the State or region for an ex-
20 tended period of time before the application is
21 submitted (as determined by the Center).

22 (D) A preference for manufacturing firms
23 that have an existing relationship with the local
24 MEP.

1 (3) A Center must be able to demonstrate their
2 ability to assess, advise, and train manufacturers on
3 how to transfer the job-specific skills and training
4 through the implementation of a training structure
5 and train-the-trainer program focused on knowledge
6 capture and transfer.

7 (c) TRAINING.—In awarding grants pursuant to this
8 section, consideration shall be given to the use of funds
9 by Centers to assist manufacturers that are experiencing
10 high employee turnover due to their inability to transfer
11 required job-specific skills and training to new employees
12 with the implementation of training structures and train-
13 the-trainer programs.

14 (d) COST SHARING.—To be eligible for a grant under
15 the pilot program under this section, a Center shall dem-
16 onstrate that 50 percent of the amount of the funds
17 awarded are matched from non-Federal sources. Those
18 sources may include State and local agencies engaged in
19 workforce development, foundations engaged in workforce
20 development, or an in-kind contribution from an employer
21 that would stand to directly benefit from the grant re-
22 ceived by the Center.

23 (e) NUMBER AND SIZE OF AWARDS.—

24 (1) NUMBER.—The Secretary may award up to
25 25 grants to Centers under the pilot program.

1 (2) SIZE.—Each award under the program
2 shall be for not less than \$50,000 and not more
3 than \$500,000.

4 (f) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—A Center receiving
5 a grant under the pilot program may use up to 5 percent
6 of the amount of the grant for the administration of ex-
7 penses incurred by the Center in distributing grants to
8 eligible manufacturers under the pilot program.

9 (g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
10 authorized to be appropriated to the National Institute of
11 Standards and Technology \$10,000,000 to carry out the
12 pilot program.

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