
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 787 Session of
2021

INTRODUCED BY AUMENT, STEFANO, PITTMAN, MENSCH, MUTH,
BARTOLOTTA, REGAN, ARGALL, ROBINSON AND YUDICHAK,
JUNE 21, 2021

REFERRED TO TRANSPORTATION, JUNE 21, 2021

AN ACT

1 Amending Title 74 (Transportation) of the Pennsylvania
2 Consolidated Statutes, in aviation development, establishing
3 the Unmanned Aircraft Innovation Program and the Unmanned
4 Aircraft Innovation Fund.

5 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
6 hereby enacts as follows:

7 Section 1. Chapter 61 of Title 74 of the Pennsylvania
8 Consolidated Statutes is amended by adding a subchapter to read:

9 SUBCHAPTER F

10 UNMANNED AIRCRAFT INNOVATION PROGRAM

11 Sec.

12 6171. Scope of subchapter.

13 6172. Definitions.

14 6173. Unmanned Aircraft Innovation Program.

15 6174. Unmanned Aircraft Innovation Fund.

16 6175. Program standards.

17 6176. Grants.

18 6177. Regulations.

1 § 6171. Scope of subchapter.

2 This subchapter relates to the Unmanned Aircraft Innovation
3 Program.

4 § 6172. Definitions.

5 The following words and phrases when used in this subchapter
6 shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
7 context clearly indicates otherwise:

8 "Department." The Department of Transportation of the
9 Commonwealth.

10 "Educational institution." A university, college, technical
11 training school, local educational agency and similar entities,
12 located in this Commonwealth.

13 "Fund." The Unmanned Aircraft Innovation Fund established
14 under section 6174 (relating to Unmanned Aircraft Innovation
15 Fund).

16 "Program." The Unmanned Aircraft Innovation Program
17 established under section 6173(a) (relating to Unmanned Aircraft
18 Innovation Program).

19 "Project." A proposed unmanned aircraft project, in a
20 category under section 6176(a) (relating to grants), for which
21 an applicant is seeking a grant.

22 "Unmanned aircraft." As defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 3505
23 (relating to unlawful use of unmanned aircraft).

24 § 6173. Unmanned Aircraft Innovation Program.

25 (a) Establishment.--The Unmanned Aircraft Innovation Program
26 is established as a grant program in the department. The
27 department shall administer the program in accordance with this
28 subchapter.

29 (b) Purpose.--The department shall operate the program for
30 the following purposes:

1 (1) Ensure the Commonwealth's continued leadership in
2 the unmanned aircraft industry.

3 (2) Encourage development of the unmanned aircraft
4 industry in this Commonwealth, including the manufacturing of
5 unmanned aircraft and associated technology, and the conduct
6 of unmanned aircraft operations.

7 (3) Educate the Commonwealth's workforce in the field of
8 unmanned aircraft.

9 (4) Enable the Commonwealth's industries to fully
10 utilize the potential benefits of unmanned aircraft in their
11 business.

12 (5) Encourage public safety through public education and
13 outreach.

14 § 6174. Unmanned Aircraft Innovation Fund.

15 (a) Establishment.--The Unmanned Aircraft Innovation Fund is
16 established in the State Treasury as a nonlapsing restricted
17 interest-bearing account. Money in the fund shall be used to
18 provide grants through the program.

19 (b) Sources of funding.--Funding for the program may be
20 provided through any of the following:

21 (1) Money appropriated for purposes of the program.

22 (2) Federal money appropriated or authorized for
23 purposes of the program.

24 (3) Money received from another governmental agency.

25 (4) A gift or other contribution from a public or
26 private source.

27 (5) Return on money dedicated for the program.

28 (c) Management.--The department shall administer the fund in
29 accordance with this subchapter.

30 (d) Issuance.--The department, following its review of each

1 application for a grant, shall notify the State Treasurer of
2 each applicant who qualifies for a grant and the amount of the
3 grant. Within 30 days of receiving the notification, the State
4 Treasurer shall issue the grant to the qualifying applicant.

5 § 6175. Program standards.

6 (a) Establishment.--The department shall establish program
7 standards and shall transmit notice of the standards to the
8 Legislative Reference Bureau for publication in the Pennsylvania
9 Bulletin.

10 (b) Contents.--Program standards established under
11 subsection (a) shall be consistent with this subchapter and
12 shall do the following:

13 (1) Establish eligibility standards for applicants.

14 (2) Describe the objectives of the program.

15 (3) Establish caps, limits and restrictions with respect
16 to grant amounts.

17 (4) Establish an application process and timetable for
18 the application process which shall include provisions
19 consistent with the following:

20 (i) An applicant shall be provided reasonable notice
21 and an opportunity to supplement the applicant's
22 application if the application is determined to be
23 incomplete.

24 (ii) The application process timetable may not
25 exceed six months.

26 (5) Establish a timetable within which the department
27 shall review and award or disapprove a complete grant
28 application, which may not be longer than six months from the
29 close of the application period.

30 (6) Establish procedures by which the department shall

1 verify expenditures of grant money by a grant recipient.

2 (7) Establish the criteria by which a grant application
3 shall be evaluated by the department, including the
4 following:

5 (i) The anticipated benefits of the project
6 considering potential to encourage significant or ongoing
7 economic activity in this Commonwealth.

8 (ii) The estimated cost of the project.

9 (iii) The local, regional and Statewide impact of
10 the project.

11 (iv) The results of similar types of projects that
12 have already been completed.

13 (v) Cost sharing by the grant applicant or other
14 entities.

15 (c) Special factors.--In considering the criteria applicable
16 to the review of an application, the department may take into
17 account unique or special factors that may arise in the
18 administration of the program.

19 § 6176. Grants.

20 (a) Purpose.--A grant awarded under this subchapter may be
21 used for any of the following:

22 (1) Reimbursement of up to 75% of expenses for training
23 or licensing an employee to operate an unmanned aircraft if:

24 (i) the employee's primary place of employment is
25 located in this Commonwealth; or

26 (ii) the entity providing the training maintains its
27 principal place of business in this Commonwealth.

28 (2) Reimbursement of up to 75% of expenses directly
29 related to the purchase of unmanned aircraft if:

30 (i) the unmanned aircraft will be primarily operated

1 in this Commonwealth; or

2 (ii) the entity purchasing the unmanned aircraft
3 maintains its principal place of business in this
4 Commonwealth.

5 (3) Reimbursement of up to 75% of expenses directly
6 related to the development or testing of the use of unmanned
7 aircraft, unmanned aircraft sensors or technology or unmanned
8 aircraft data analysis, if:

9 (i) the development or testing will occur in this
10 Commonwealth; or

11 (ii) the entity developing or testing the unmanned
12 aircraft maintains its principal place of business in
13 this Commonwealth.

14 (4) Reimbursement of up to 25% of expenses incurred to
15 hire a third-party unmanned aircraft operator for operations
16 located in this Commonwealth.

17 (5) Establishment of an unmanned aircraft training
18 program at an educational institution. A grant under this
19 paragraph may be provided in advance of the establishment of
20 the program.

21 (6) Reimbursement of up to 75% of expenses incurred for
22 actions designed to benefit and advance the unmanned aircraft
23 industry operating or located in this Commonwealth.

24 (7) Matching funds for Federal programs offering grant
25 funding for programs related to the purposes under section
26 6173(b) (relating to Unmanned Aircraft Innovation Program).

27 (b) Limitations.--

28 (1) A grant shall be awarded to the extent funding is
29 available under section 6174(b) (relating to Unmanned
30 Aircraft Innovation Fund).

1 (2) A grant may not exceed \$30,000.

2 (3) A grant amount may not exceed 75% of project costs.
3 In-kind support may not be counted toward an applicant's
4 matching contribution. This paragraph shall not apply to a
5 grant awarded to an educational institution.

6 (4) The department may approve a grant in less than the
7 requested amount and may impose restrictions or special
8 conditions on the issuance of the grant.

9 (5) Not more than 50% of grant funding available in a
10 single year may be awarded to applicants in a city of the
11 first class or second class.

12 (c) Disposition.--

13 (1) The department may require a written agreement
14 describing the terms and conditions of the grant.

15 (2) The department may establish criteria under which
16 the secretary may demand the return of all or a portion of
17 the grant money.

18 § 6177. Regulations.

19 The department may promulgate rules and regulations to
20 administer and enforce this subchapter.

21 Section 2. This act shall take effect in 60 days.