

National Innovation and Modern Skills Training Act (NIMSTA)
Senator John Hickenlooper and Senator Deb Fischer

Topline Summary: This legislation would create a competitive grant program available to any land-grant institution to establish a community program, in conjunction with the Cooperative Extension Program, to facilitate research, workforce development, and entrepreneurship efforts that lift up the surrounding community and address areas of national need or importance.

Grant funding will be awarded to ten land-grant institutions to conduct a pilot program to offer workforce development, research, and/or entrepreneurship programs in conjunction with the Cooperative Extension Program. Any land-grant university designated by the Morrill Acts of 1862, 1890, and 1994 would be eligible.

Land-Grant Universities:

- There is at least one land-grant institution in every state and territory of the United States, as well as the District of Columbia.
- The national system of land-grant colleges and universities that has developed since 1862 is recognized for its breadth, reach, and excellence in teaching, research, and extension.

Outline of the Legislation: Land-grant institutions can tailor workforce development, research, and/or entrepreneurship programs to their institutions' areas of interest or expertise and the needs of the community.

Entrepreneurship, Research, and Workforce Development

- Entrepreneurship programs should focus on the needs of the community and the variety of industries in the region. Programs can focus on creating an entrepreneurial environment, professional network, mentoring, and resources to develop Main Street small businesses to spur economic development in underrepresented communities and grow the nation's next generation of entrepreneurs across the country.
- Workforce development programs should focus on the middle and high-skilled jobs needed in our existing and evolving economy, with an emphasis on the unemployed and underemployed through rapid up-skilling, registered apprenticeships, and mentorship opportunities.
 - Land-grant universities should offer flexible and alternative educational pathways to further workforce development including stackable credits, micro degrees, boot camps, or credit-by-examination programs
- Research programs can be tailored to support the needs of the community's regional attributes, workforce needs, and economic development goals. Research should immerse participants in emerging STEM fields and technologies such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, quantum computer, advanced telecommunications, and more
- Participants in workforce development programs will receive a measurable benefit or credential upon completion.
- Programs are encouraged to work with private-sector partners, workforce development boards, and local leaders to craft programs that meet the professional and social needs of the community

Eligibility Requirements

- The legislation would require award selection to account for regional and geographic diversity including the economic conditions of a region, and the capacity to engage industry, workforce, institutes of higher education, and other organizations
- Programs will be subject to performance metrics and evaluation, including an economic impact study
- Land-grant institutions will be required to demonstrate matching funds from the private sector for the program
- The Department of Agriculture will be required to coordinate with the Departments of Commerce, Labor, and Education, the National Science Foundation, and the Small Business Administration on oversight and management of the program
- No more than one land-grant institution or consortium per state can be awarded grant funding in the initial pilot