

partners who are applying for the funds can decide what their priority development needs for their area and use the partnership fund to begin to address those needs. There are a lot of people who have asked me if partnerships is intended to be rural or urban, to be a rural or urban program. My answer to them is both. The bill talks about the need for better coordination and collaboration in rural communities and counties and one of the things the working group talked about was that sometimes it's more difficult to develop the type of collaboration and coordination we would like to see in rural areas for a variety of reasons because of distance, because of competition and because a number of other things that are certainly unique to rural areas. Sometimes urban areas have an easier time with these because of the more common interest between them. This does not mean, however, that either area has priority over the other in this bill. After all, the name of the program is partnerships and that is what we hope to build through this concept. So both rural and urban applications are eligible. In fact, some of the strongest application in my mind would be those that would help form rural and urban partnerships.

SPEAKER WITHEM: One minute.

SENATOR VRTISKA: I've been asked what the partnership start...to move on down and talk about here how the partnership would be implemented on a practical level, the bill directs DED to adopt the rules and regulations as I said earlier in order to develop the partnerships. Certainly there is some discussion about whether this is an over...well, duplicates some of the programs that are already out there and I say they will not duplicate but it will only complement those programs. And finally I have been asked about what we've done to put some accountability into partnerships. I said before the bill requires that applicants set goals for their projects as part of the application process. DED is also required in the bill to file a report with the Governor and the Legislature regarding the activities of these partnerships and the performance based on the applicant's goals. The reason I believe in the partnership is because it does exactly what...(interruption)

SPEAKER WITHEM: Time, Senator Vrtiska.

SENATOR VRTISKA: ...are doing, but certainly need to be expanded and provides the funding so that that can be done.