

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 11417



Introduced by Rep. **MARIA VANESSA C. AUMENTADO**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) has long been at the forefront of fostering technological innovation and scientific advancement in the Philippines. A crucial part of DOST's strategy in fulfilling its mandate is through the implementation of various programs aimed at empowering local industries, improving the lives of Filipino communities, and contributing to national progress. These programs, such as the Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program (SET-UP), Community Empowerment through Science and Technology (CEST), OneLab, and Grants-in-Aid for Research and Innovation on Development (GRIND), play a pivotal role in addressing the needs of local businesses, communities, and scientific institutions.

To ensure the effective and seamless implementation of these programs and meet the increasing demands for science and technology interventions, it is crucial to strengthen the capacities of the DOST Regional Offices that would enhance collaboration with local government units (LGUs), stakeholders, and regional industries, contributing to the overall advancement of science and technology initiatives across the country. This will allow DOST to expand its reach, improve program delivery, and provide more responsive, localized services to various sectors across the country.

Strengthening the DOST Regional Offices to better implement and manage these key programs is essential in addressing the evolving needs of the local communities, industries, and research sectors. With enhanced capabilities at the regional level, DOST will be able to ensure more efficient program delivery, facilitate the adoption of science and technology innovations, and contribute to the overall progress of the country.

Finally, the proposed strengthening of the regional offices will empower DOST to more effectively carry out its mandate of fostering inclusive and sustainable growth through science, technology, and innovation across the Philippines.


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AN ACT
FURTHER STRENGTHENING THE REGIONAL OFFICES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. Title. - This Act shall be known as the "DOST Regional Office Act."

SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is hereby declared that the policy of the State to take account regional and sectoral needs and conditions to strengthen Local Government Units (LGUs) therein and to accelerate the economic and social growth and development in every part of the country. The State also recognizes the role of science, technology and innovation (STI) for national benefit as such there is a need to modernize the existing Regional Offices of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) in the generation, transfer, promotion and regulation of STI-based knowledge and application; and to encourage the widest participation of all Filipinos in these endeavors.

SEC. 3. Objectives. The following are the objectives of this Act:

- (a) To strengthen the operational capacity of the DOST Regional Offices.
- (b) To enhance the implementation of science and technology programs at the regional level.
- (c) To integrate the OneLab Program into regional operations to enhance local access to laboratory services.

- (d) To improve the delivery of the Community Empowerment Through Science and Technology (CEST) Program to empower local communities through scientific innovation.
- (e) To establish a unified network that fosters collaboration between local governments, businesses, academic institutions, and DOST.

SEC. 4. Functions of the Regional Office. – The Regional Offices shall have the following primary functions being the focal points for the planning and implementation of Science, Technology and Innovations (STI) programs and projects in the regions. Specifically, each regional office shall assume the following functions:

- a) Identify the needs and opportunities in STI in the region;
- b) Formulate and implement a regional STI plan consistent with and supportive of regional development thrusts;
- c) Provide STI interventions to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME's) in the regions to improve their productivity and competitiveness in both local and international markets through the Small Enterprises Technology Upgrading Program (SET-UP), the banner program of DOST for technology transfer and commercialization, CEST, GRIND, iHub and OneLab.
- d) Plan and implement STI human resource development programs in coordination with relevant DOST institutes, such as STI scholarships, trainings and similar activities aimed at creating a critical pool of S&T manpower.
- e) Develop institutional linkages and other mechanisms with ROs and other agencies, local governments, and private organizations or entities for the effective planning and implementation of STI programs in the region.
- f) Monitor and coordinate the various programs, projects, and activities of DOST Councils, Institutes and other attached agencies in the region.

SEC. 5. Organizational Restructure. - The Department of Science and Technology Regional Offices shall be restructured to enhance operational effectiveness and improve coordination with local government units (LGUs), academic institutions, and businesses.

The Regional Office shall be headed by a Regional Director, who shall be assisted by at least two (2) Assistant Regional Directors. The designated Chief Science Research Specialist shall be reclassified as Director III to serve as ARD of the RO.

The DOST shall likewise determine the organization structure and staffing pattern of the Regional Offices including its Provincial Science and Technology Offices under RA 11914, in accordance with civil service laws, rules and regulations, subject to the review and approval of the DBM. In line with this, the existing position of Chief Science Research

Specialist which is currently held by the head of the PSTOs shall be reclassified as Director III.

SEC. 6. Functions and Responsibilities of the Assistant Regional Directors. – The Assistant Regional Director/s shall have the following functions and responsibilities:

1. Program Management and Implementation

- a) Assist the Regional Director in overseeing the implementation of science and technology programs in the region.
- b) Ensure the timely and efficient delivery of DOST services, including research and development (R&D), technology transfer, innovation support, and training programs.

2. Coordination with Local Government

- a) Facilitate close coordination with LGUs to ensure that DOST programs and projects are aligned with local development priorities.
- b) Provide technical assistance to LGUs in implementing regional S&T policies and programs.

3. Resource Mobilization and Partnership Building

- a) Collaborate with stakeholders, including the private sector, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations, to secure additional resources for regional S&T projects.
- b) Forge partnerships to promote science and technology initiatives and create opportunities for innovation-driven regional development.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

- a) Assist in the monitoring, evaluation, and assessment of the effectiveness and impact of DOST programs and projects in the region.
- b) Provide recommendations for improving program performance and ensuring that targets are met.

5. Capacity Building and Technical Assistance

- a) Oversee the training and capacity-building activities for local stakeholders, including government officials, community leaders, and entrepreneurs, to strengthen regional innovation ecosystems.
- b) Provide technical assistance to local industries and communities to ensure effective adoption of technologies and innovation.

SEC. 7. Qualifications of Assistant Regional Directors. – The Assistant Regional Director/s shall be appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology, based on the following minimum qualifications:

- a) A bachelor's degree in science, engineering, technology management, or a related field; a master's degree in a relevant area is preferred;
- b) At least five (5) years of experience in program management, preferably in the science and technology sector, with significant exposure to regional development initiatives;
- c) Strong leadership, management, communication, and coordination skills; demonstrated ability to work with diverse stakeholders at the local and national levels.

SEC. 8. Establishment of OneLab Services in Regional Offices. - The DOST Regional Offices (ROs) shall establish or upgrade the existing regional OneLab centers to provide Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), local government units, and the general public with easier access to laboratory services, including testing, calibration, and product certification.

The DOST ROs shall likewise partner with local laboratories, universities, and other entities to extend laboratory services and testing capabilities to underserved areas. Services provided through OneLab shall be priced reasonably to ensure accessibility to all sectors, especially MSMEs, start-ups, and local entrepreneurs.

SEC. 9. Strengthening the Community Empowerment Through Science and Technology (CEST) Program. - The CEST Program shall be expanded to include additional communities across all regions, focusing on areas in need of scientific assistance to address local challenges.

The CEST Program shall focus on providing scientific solutions but not limited to the following sectors: a) Agriculture; b) Health and nutrition; c) Education; d) Livelihood and entrepreneurship; and e) Environmental sustainability

The program shall likewise facilitate the transfer of appropriate technologies to communities, enhancing productivity and livelihoods.

Each DOST Regional Office shall engage local communities to assess needs, provide training, and deliver science-based solutions.

In line with this, an efficient monitoring and evaluation system will be developed to measure the effectiveness of the CEST Program and ensure its sustainability.

SEC. 10. Establishment of the Grassroots Innovation for Inclusive Development Program (GRIND). - The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) shall establish and implement, through the Regional Offices, the Grassroots Innovation for Inclusive Development (GRIND) Program to support, promote, and scale grassroots innovations. The program shall be inclusive and accessible to all Filipino citizens, with particular focus on individuals and communities in marginalized, rural, or underserved areas. It shall address the following key areas:

- a) **Technology and Product Development.** – Providing support for the development of locally relevant and culturally appropriate innovations.
- b) **Market Access.** – Helping grassroots innovators access markets, networks, and commercial opportunities.
- c) **Capacity Building.** – Providing training, mentorship, and resources to enable innovators to refine their products, services, and business models.
- d) **Sustainability and Scalability.** – Supporting efforts to scale successful innovations and integrate them into local economies in a sustainable manner.

SEC. 11. Creation of the Regional Science and Technology Innovation Hub.

Each DOST Regional Office shall create a Regional Science and Technology Innovation Hub, which will serve as the focal point for the following activities:

- a) **Research and Development** – Support research and development initiatives to address regional issues, such as agricultural productivity, public health, environmental protection, and sustainable energy.
- b) **Capacity Building** – Offer programs that equip local communities, students, and professionals with the necessary skills to innovate and adopt new technologies.
- c) **Partnerships** – Foster partnerships between local government units, businesses, and academic institutions to facilitate the application of science and technology for regional development.

SEC. 12. Role of Local Government Units. – Local government units (LGUs) shall play an active role in the implementation of the CEST Program within their respective areas.

In cooperation with the DOST, the LGUs shall develop and implement a Community Science and Technology Development Plan (CSTDP), which shall be integrated into their local development plans.

Further, this Act empowers LGUs to:

- (a) Establish a City/Municipality Science and Technology Office (CMSTO) responsible for coordinating and implementing science and technology-related programs, projects, and activities within their respective jurisdictions to enhance the local implementation of science and technology initiatives.
- (b) Collaborate with the DOST to identify the needs of their communities and prioritize technology interventions.
- (c) Provide logistical support, facilitate the integration of S&T solutions into local policies, and allocate funds to complement the national government's efforts.
- (d) Support local S&T innovations by facilitating market access, distribution, and sustainability.

SEC. 13. Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). The DOST through the Office of the Undersecretary for Regional Operations in consultation with relevant stakeholders shall promulgate the implementing rules and regulations of this Act within ninety (90) days after the effectivity thereof.

SEC. 14. Separability Clause. – If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining parts or provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 15. Repealing Clause. - All laws, decrees, executive orders, proclamations, rules and regulations, and issuances, or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 16. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in one (1) newspaper of general circulation.