

## Rural Development Utilities Programs

# Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program

### *Bringing the World to Rural America*

The Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Program provides both educational and healthcare opportunities in rural communities through grants that finance advanced telecommunications technologies. The focus is on using the unique capabilities of telecommunications to connect rural areas to each other and to the world, thus overcoming the effects of remoteness and low population density. DLT, which began in 1993, has funded more than 1,400 projects totaling \$512 million.

Projects funded by these grants have allowed rural residents to benefit from healthcare services provided to rural clinics and hospitals through broadband infrastructure. Students are now able to take advanced and specialized courses without having to travel long distances to attend classes.

### *DLT Grant Program Features*

DLT grant applications are accepted annually through a competitive process. The open season for applications is announced through a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) in the *Federal Register*. Applicants are required to provide a minimum of 15 percent in matching funds. Grant minimum and maximum award amounts are specified in the NOFA. Once announced, the NOFA and an application guide are posted on the program Web site at: [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/UTP\\_DLT.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/UTP_DLT.html).

**Distance learning** means a curriculum delivered via telecommunications and stresses the connection of students and teachers at remote sites. **Telemedicine** means the delivery of health care from medical professionals at one site to patients at other sites via telecommunications. Telemedicine shows benefit to rural residents either in reduced travel or access to services.

#### *Eligible Applicants:*

- Corporations or partnerships; tribal nations or organizations; State or local units of government; consortiums or other legal entities; and for-profit or not-for-profit entities able to contract with the U.S. Government. No individuals or sole-proprietorships are eligible;

- Operate a rural community facility, or deliver DLT services to entities that operate a rural community facility or to residents of rural areas at rates calculated to ensure that the benefit of the financial assistance passes through to such entities or to residents of rural areas.

#### *Eligible Equipment:*

This list is not exhaustive and does not convey automatic eligibility. To be eligible in full, items must be primarily for DLT eligible purposes. Eligible equipment includes:

- Audio and video equipment;
- Computer hardware and software;
- Computer network components;
- Terminal equipment;
- Data terminal equipment;
- Interactive audio/video equipment;
- Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) or OEM-authorized warranties on eligible equipment up to the 3-year life of the grant; and
- Inside wiring.

#### *Competitive Scoring Criteria:*

A total score of 220 points is possible through the following 8 scoring categories:

1. Rurality (population density) – 45 points
2. National School Lunch Program (economic need) – 35 points
3. Leveraging (matching funds) – 35 points
4. USDA-Designated Empowerment Zones – 10 points
5. Additional National School Lunch Program – 10 points
6. Need for Services and Project Benefits – 45 points
7. Innovativeness – 15 points
8. Cost Effectiveness – 35 points

### *For More Information*

For more information or to obtain an application packet, visit the DLT Web site at [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/UTP\\_DLT.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/UTP_DLT.html).

Or write to your local or State USDA Rural Development office (see the U.S. Government listing in your phone directory under U.S. Department of Agriculture) or the National Office at:

USDA Rural Development  
Utilities Programs  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Room 2845  
Mail STOP 1550  
Washington, DC 20250-1550

Toll-Free Phone: 1 (800) 670-6553  
Phone: (202) 720-0413  
Fax: (202) 720-1051

program complaint please contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339 or (800) 845-6136 (in Spanish).

Persons with disabilities who wish to file a program complaint, please see information above on how to contact us by mail directly or by email. If you require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) please contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

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If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities and wish to file either an EEO or