



NEWS RELEASE

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USDA AWARDS \$28 MILLION FOR DISTANCE LEARNING AND TELEMEDICINE GRANTS—*Nebraska to Benefit from \$2.3 Million*

WASHINGTON, September 19, 2008 – Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Thomas C. Dorr announced the selection of 105 recipients in 41 states for Distance Learning and Telemedicine grants totaling \$28.2 million.

“These funds will increase the range of educational opportunities available to students in rural communities and improve access to health care for countless numbers of rural Americans,” said Dorr. “The projects will also open the door to the expansion of technology, increasing rural economic opportunities, promoting strong and vibrant communities.”

Of the grants announced today, 47 will provide access to medical services; 58 will be used to improve educational opportunities. The eight Nebraska recipients are:

- **Alegent Health-Omaha**-\$383,996 that will enable the Alegent Health eHospital to deliver expert service to patients and medical professionals at six critical access hospitals in rural Nebraska. Residents served are those in the Nebraska counties of Colfax, Cuming, Holt and Washington; and Iowa counties of Adams and Harrison.
- **Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society-Auburn**-\$249,998 will expand a current home healthcare system and incorporate telehealth delivery of skilled and non-skilled services to additional rural patients. Counties served are Antelope, Boyd, Brown, Franklin, Furnas, Garfield, Gosper, Harlan, Holt, Kearney and Keya Paha.

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- **Educational Service Unit #1-Wakefield**-\$142,546 will enable connectivity between ESU #1 and Northeast Community College to provide educational opportunities associated with agriculture courses and leadership programs including Future Farmers of America (FFA) through interactive distance learning. Current communications equipment will be upgraded and the proposed network will provide greater flexibility and interoperability. Counties served are Cedar, Dakota, Dixon, Knox, Thurston, and Wayne.
- **Educational Service Unit #2- Fremont**-\$304,096 will enable connectivity between ESU #2 and #7 and Northeast Community College to provide educational opportunities associated with agriculture courses and preparatory courses designed to prepare students to enter the bio-fuels program at NECC through interactive distance learning. Current communications equipment will be upgraded and the proposed network will provide greater flexibility and interoperability. Counties served are Boone, Burt, Cuming, Merrick, Nance and Saunders.
- **Educational Service Unit No. 5-Beatrice**-\$315,031 will provide for upgraded equipment and allow member schools to upgrade local area networks for distance learning sessions to be accessed as a plug-and-play application in classrooms. Participating schools will have broadened access to distance learning opportunities through installation of a new Multipoint Control Unit that allows schools to connect to dissimilar systems outside their network. Counties served are Gage, Fillmore, Johnson, Otoe, Pawnee, Richardson, Saline, Sarpy, Seward, Thayer, and Washington.
- **Educational Service Unit No. 16-Ogallala**-\$391,840 will be used to implement the 21st Century Distance Learning Classroom Project. Interactive distance learning will serve 32 end-user sites providing for simultaneous distance learning classrooms for students, opportunities for community members to take college courses, and offer professional development opportunities to teachers in remote rural districts of Nebraska. Counties served are Chase, Dundy, Furnas, Hayes, Hooker, Keith, Lincoln, Logan, Perkins, Red Willow, and Thomas.

- **Crawford Public Schools-Crawford**-\$216,825 will be used for synchronous distance learning technology. Twenty-eight hub/end-user sites will participate. Distance learning will include advanced placement courses for high-achieving students, remedial courses for students with deficits, and elective courses. Counties served are Dawes, Scotts Bluff and Sheridan in Nebraska and Todd County in South Dakota.
- **Distance Education Council-Kearney**-\$307,637 will be utilized to place mobile cart videoconferencing systems in participant schools. Eight Educational Service Units and 32 rural high schools will participate. Students will be provided access to dual-credit courses for both high school and college credit, advanced courses in math, agriculture, and foreign language. Teachers will be provided with professional enrichment and development activities. Counties served are Antelope, Buffalo, Cherry, Frontier, Furnas, Hooker, Keith, Lincoln, Phelps, Rock and Wayne.

Funding of each recipient is contingent upon their meeting the conditions of the grant agreement. A complete list of the selected recipients is posted on the USDA Rural Development web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rd/newsroom/2008/09-18-2008-DLTrl.pdf>.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for rural residents. Rural Development has invested more than \$90 billion since 2001 for equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. More than 1.7 million jobs have been created or saved through these investments. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA Rural Development's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.