

DLT Grant Program Performance

Program Purpose and Mission:

Advanced telecommunications services play a vital role in the economic development, education and health care of rural Americans. The Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Program is specifically designed to meet the educational and health care needs of rural America through the use of advanced telecommunications technologies. With DLT grants, loans, and loan-grant combinations, we help rural communities enjoy enhanced educational opportunities, improved health care services and greater economic development.

Our partnership with rural America is long-standing. For over 55 years, the Telecommunications Program has been at the forefront of providing the infrastructure financing that brought advanced telecommunications services to the most rural areas of our country. Today, Rural Development's Telecommunications Program continues as an essential source of financing and technical assistance for rural telecommunication systems. The DLT Grant Program strengthens that partnership and commitment by continuing to improve the quality of life for rural citizens.

Telemedicine technology makes it possible for doctors to examine and direct the treatment of patients from remote treatment centers. The technology gives rural residents access to medical specialists not often available in remote areas. The distance learning program finances equipment to expand educational resources to students and educational institutions in isolated rural areas.

Program Investment:

Since 2002, USDA has invested more than \$166 million in its Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Program, allowing 3,796 rural educational facilities to expand their access to modern telecommunications technology, and 2,226 health care institutions to develop technologies needed to enhance local medical care. The competitive grant program experiences heavy demand, as the following chart

illustrates:

Yr.	No. of Grant Applications Recv'd	Total Grant \$ Requested	Eligible Grant \$	No. of Grant Applications Determined Eligible	Number of Grants Awarded	Total Grant \$ Awarded
2004	332	\$118,279,259	\$70,822,913	274	63	\$24,604,673
2005	223	\$79,678,209	\$55,402,078	162	79	\$29,410,012
2006	225	\$64,520,436	\$36,355,914	146	102	\$25,853,991

Background of the Study:

A review of the performance of the DLT Grant Program was undertaken as part of the Performance Analysis and Rating Tool (available at www.expectmore.gov). A statistically valid, randomly selected sample of DLT grants was selected and grantees were contacted. The total number of grants reviewed for status was 84. The current status of the project funded under the grant was recorded and the status was rated according to a 1 to 6 scale. The rating system used distinguishes between grant projects that are not yet completed but meeting their deployment schedules vs. those grant projects that are not yet completed and not meeting their deployment schedules. Telecommunications Program field staff are currently contacting those grantees which are behind schedule.

Report Summary [[.pdf](#)]