



NEWS RELEASE

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USDA Invites Applications for Grants to Bring Improved Educational and Health Care Services to Rural Communities

WASHINGTON, Feb. 24, 2011 - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that USDA is accepting applications for telecommunications grants to provide access to education, training and healthcare resources in rural areas. Funding is authorized through the Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Grant Program.

“Modern technology is critical to the expansion of business, education and health care opportunities in rural areas and the competitiveness of the nation’s small towns and rural communities. These grants will increase the range of educational opportunities available to students and improve access to healthcare for many rural Americans,” Vilsack said. “The DLT program provides services to schools, libraries, clinics and hospitals. It makes remote learning and medical record keeping a reality, part of the Obama Administration’s effort to ‘win the future.’”

DLT grants can be used for the purchase of eligible equipment and to provide technical assistance. To be eligible, applicants must serve a rural area, demonstrate economic need, and provide at least 15 percent in matching funds. Awards range up to \$500,000.

The DLT program provides funds to improve rural access to education and health care. For example, an award to the Bledsoe County Schools will bring distance learning to 14 schools in a four-county area of eastern central Tennessee. The grant will allow the consortium of schools in these mountainous communities access to higher education coursework, continuing education programs, and vocational programs.

In Oklahoma, INTEGRIS Health, Inc. will replace outdated systems with modern video teleconferencing equipment throughout this network of 20 rural schools, hospitals and health centers. Links to 11 resource hospitals and physicians offices will provide a variety of health and educational services.

Completed applications must be received by April 25, 2011. For further details about eligibility rules and application procedures, see the Notice of Solicitation of Applications (NOSA) published on page 10321 of the February 24, 2011 Federal Register. Materials including an application guide and full details about the program can also be obtained at http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/UTP_DLT.html.

Committed to the future of rural communities.

“USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.”

To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).

The program is competitive. In 2010, USDA Rural Development provided grants for 106 projects in 38 states and one territory. Since inception of the DLT program, 1,269 projects in 49 states, four territories and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico have been funded.

Funding is contingent upon the recipient meeting the conditions of the grant agreement. For a complete list of the DLT projects recently announced, please [click here](#) .

USDA, through its Rural Development mission area, administers and manages more than 40 housing, business and community infrastructure and facility programs through a national network of employees located in the nation's capital and state and local offices. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America. Rural Development has an existing portfolio of nearly \$146 billion in loans and loan guarantees.

Rural Development serves as the lead Federal entity for rural development needs and administers program assistance through its housing, business, community and infrastructure programs. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

Further information on USDA Rural Development may be obtained by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>. In West Virginia, call 1-800-295-8228 to be put in touch with the appropriate personnel serving your county. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202.720.2600 (voice and TDD).

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