



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development

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Agriculture Under Secretary Tonsager Announces Availability of Funds To Improve Public Digital Television Transmission Quality in Rural Areas

WASHINGTON, April 28, 2010 – Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Dallas Tonsager today announced that applications are being accepted for grants to help rural public television stations purchase digital broadcasting equipment.

Some rural public television licensees have yet to complete a full digital transition of their stations. For example, Northern Michigan University, licensee of WNMU in Marquette, received USDA funding recently to convert studio production control facilities from analog to digital and to purchase remote production equipment to better serve its audience in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and in Northeast Wisconsin.

Pioneer Public Television in Minnesota received funding to upgrade a translator in Fergus Falls to enable viewers in a wide rural area to receive multiple program streams.

Funding under the grant program can be used to acquire, lease, and/or install facilities and software necessary to the digital transition. The amount of funding available is \$4.5 million.

Applications are due June 24, 2010. More information on how to apply for a USDA Public Television Digital Transition Grant is available at www.usda.gov/rus/telecom/index.htm or from the Federal Register notice at <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-9452.pdf>.

Public television stations which serve rural areas are eligible for Public Television Station Digital Transition Grants. A public television station is a noncommercial educational television broadcast station that is qualified for Community Service Grants by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting under section 396(k) of the Communications Act of 1934. Individuals are not eligible for Public Television Station Digital Transition Grant Program financial assistance directly.

USDA Rural Development administers and manages more than 40 housing, business, and community infrastructure and facility programs through a network of 6,100 employees located in 500 national, 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 more than \$132 billion in loans and loan guarantees.

Committed to the future of rural communities.

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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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