



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development
800 West Evergreen • Suite 201 • Palmer, AK 99645-6539

Phone: (907) 761-7705 • Fax: (907) 761-7783 • TDD: (907) 761-7786 • Web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ak/>

Contact: Chad Padgett (907) 761-7705

USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT SEEKS APPLICANTS FOR 2009 DISTANCE LEARNING AND TELEMEDICINE GRANTS *Six Grants Awarded in Alaska in 2008-Deadline to Apply is March 24th*

PALMER, January 8, 2009-Acting Alaska State Director for USDA Rural Development Chad Padgett said today that the application period has opened for eligible entities, including school districts, Tribes and health organizations to apply for USDA Rural Development Distance Learning and Telemedicine grants. Last year over \$28 million was allocated nationwide, with six grants awarded in Alaska.

“These grants are designed to provide access to education, training and health care resources in rural communities, including those here in Alaska,” said Padgett. “The object is to provide financial assistance to improve telemedicine and distance learning services in rural areas. Communities across Alaska have benefited from this program in previous years and I encourage any eligible entity to consider filing an application for funding.”

The grants are contingent upon the provision of funding to USDA and the application period is being opened now to give potential applicants time to submit proposals. Applications must be complete and applicants should be aware that the FY 2009 application guide has changed to reflect recent technology and application trends. Grants are awarded on a competitive basis. The maximum amount of an application for a 100 percent grant is \$500,000 and the minimum amount is \$50,000. Applicants must demonstrate the ability to provide matching contributions totaling at least 15 percent of the amount of grant funding requested.

The deadline to apply is March 24th, 2009. Details on the program can be obtained in the December 24th, 2008 edition of the *Federal Register*. Materials including an application guide and full details about the program can be obtained at www.usda.gov/rus/telecom/dlt/dlt.htm or by calling the DLT program at 202-720-0413. Paper applications can be submitted by mail and electronic applications can be submitted through www.grants.gov.

In 2008, almost \$1.9 million in grant funds were provided to Alaska school districts and health organizations through the program. USDA Rural Development’s mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for rural residents. Since 2001 Rural Development has invested an estimated \$1.2 billion in Alaska for equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. In addition to the State Office in Palmer, USDA Rural Development maintains offices in Bethel, Dillingham, Fairbanks, Kenai, Nome and Sitka. Further information on rural programs is available at any USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ak>.

#

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, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice), or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).