



NEWS RELEASE

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USDA ANNOUNCES \$20 MILLION AVAILABLE FOR DISTANCE LEARNING AND TELEMEDICINE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

COLUMBUS, OHIO, April 14, 2006 — Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Thomas C. Dorr announced the availability of \$20 million in grants to rural communities to strengthen distance learning and telemedicine (DLT) programs in rural America.

“The specialized health care and enhanced educational opportunities brought by modern technologies saves lives and promotes opportunities essential to the advancement of rural areas,” said Dorr. “USDA Rural Development’s funding for distance learning and telemedicine will help to bring technology into rural America to build strong and vibrant communities.”

Telemedicine technology makes it possible for doctors to examine and direct the treatment of patients without being physically present. The distance learning program finances equipment to expand educational resources to students and educational institutions in isolated rural areas. Since the beginning of the Bush Administration, over \$177 million has been invested in local distance learning and telemedicine programs, allowing 3,635 rural educational facilities to expand their access to modern telecommunications technology, and 1,650 health care institutions to develop technologies needed to enhance local medical care.

“Ohio has maintained a steady success rate in accessing this program,” said Ohio Rural Development State Director Randy Hunt. “Last year we received more than \$480,000 in two DLT grant awards. Combined with our grants received since the beginning of the Bush administration Ohio has tapped the DLT program for more than \$2 million.”

Applications for the \$20 million in grants must be received by June 12, 2006 and will compete nationally for funding. View <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov> for additional information on the distance learning and telemedicine program.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

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