



NEWS RELEASE

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USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCES AVAILABILITY OF \$8.9 MILLION IN BROADBAND GRANT FUNDS

TEMPLE, TEXAS, MARCH 21, 2006 — Bryan Daniel, USDA Rural Development State Director, announced today \$8.9 million in broadband grant funds are available for connecting essential community facilities to high-speed telecommunications in rural towns and communities where broadband service does not exist.

“The expansion of these technologies will better equip our rural communities to enhance opportunities for overall economic development,” said Daniel. “The funds from this program will provide community-oriented broadband transmission service that delivers enhanced educational, health care and public safety services for rural Texas communities.”

More than \$39 million in four years have been invested by USDA Rural Development through the Community Connect Broadband Grant Program. To date, 109 communities have participated in the program to connect essential services of police and fire protection, local government, hospitals, libraries and schools to broadband service. For their part of the project, the communities will make at least 10 computers available to the public with set hours and instructions available for use on the internet.

Broadband transmission service is vital to the economic development, education, health and safety of rural Americans. The purpose of the Community Broadband Connect Grant Program is to provide grant funds to eligible applicants that will provide currently unserved areas with broadband transmission services. Incorporated organizations, federally recognized Indian tribes, state, or local governments, profit and non-profit corporations are eligible to apply. Grant funds may be used for the construction, improvement, or the expansion of a community center that furnishes free access to broadband Internet service.

The minimum award per grant is \$50,000, and there is no maximum. Applications must be completed and submitted no later than May 15, 2006, to U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 2844, Stop 1559, Washington, DC, 20250-1599. For more information on the Community Connect Broadband Grant Program, please contact Paco Valentin, Community Programs Director, (254) 742-9789, or visit the website at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rus/telecom/commconnect.htm>.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs that will increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, USDA Rural Development has invested over \$50 billion since the beginning of the Bush Administration to provide equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and community and technology infrastructure. As a result, over 800,000 jobs have been created or saved through these investments. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting the website at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

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