



NEWS RELEASE

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

TEMPLE, TEXAS, April 14, 2006 - Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development, Thomas C. Dorr, today announced the availability of \$20 million in grants to rural communities to strengthen distance learning and telemedicine 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.”

“Distance learning and telemedicine systems are powerful tools for rural Texas,” said Bryan Daniel, USDA Rural Development Texas State Director. “Through technology, students and families can participate in classes not previously available to them, and people who live in rural areas can access expanded health care options.”

In Fiscal Year 2005, Texas was awarded nearly \$2.5 million to be distributed through the Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant Program. The education projects helped schools provide students with advanced educational tools. Distance learning projects provide funding for computers and internet connections in schools and libraries. The vast array of study options available to rural students through distance learning technologies literally brings the world to their doorstep. Telemedicine projects are providing new and improved healthcare services beginning with patient diagnosis, through surgical procedures, and post-operative treatment.

Applications for the \$20 million in grants must be received by June 12, 2006 and will compete nationally for funding. The application guide and materials can be obtained online at <http://www.usda.gov/rus/telecom/dlt/dlt.htm> or by contacting the Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program at (202) 720-0413.

USDA Rural Development strives to see that rural citizens can participate fully in the global economy by providing technical assistance, funding, and other programs that help rural Americans build strong economies to improve their quality of life. For further information regarding USDA Rural Development Programs, contact the State Office at (254) 742-9700 or visit our website at <http://rurdev.usda.gov/tx/>.

Committed to the future of rural communities.

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