

DISTANCE LEARNING AND TELEMEDICINE GRANT PROGRAM – SYNOPSIS

Available Funding - \$25 million

Eligible Entities –

- i. An incorporated organization;
- ii. An Indian tribe or tribal organization, as defined in 25 U.S.C. 5304;
- iii. A state or local unit of government;
- iv. A consortium, as defined in 7 CFR part 1734.3; or
- v. Other legal entity, including a private corporation organized on a for-profit or not-for-profit basis.

Cost Sharing: 15%

Award Range: \$50,000 - \$1,000,000

Due Date: July 13, 2020

Required Application Components

1. SF 424
2. Executive Summary
3. Scoring Criteria/Special Consideration Documentation
4. Scope of Work
5. Financial Information and Sustainability
6. Statement of Experience
7. Evidence of Leverage
8. Telecommunications System Plan
9. Compliance with Federal Statutes
10. Non-Duplication of Services
11. Assurance Regarding Felony Convictions
12. Environmental Review Requirements
13. Evidence of Legal Authority
14. Federal Debt Certification
15. Consultation with USDA State Director
16. Supplemental Information

Eligible Grant Purposes

There are three categories of eligible purposes:

1. Acquiring, by lease or purchase, eligible equipment. If leased, the cost of the lease during the three-year life of the grant is eligible.

The following are examples of eligible equipment. This list is not exhaustive. Neither does it convey blanket eligibility. A computer is not automatically eligible. It must be used for an eligible purpose. Remember also that the purpose of the DLT Grant program is to deliver education or medical care between remote sites via telecommunications, not simply to furnish educational or medical technology.

- Computer hardware and software
- Site licenses and maintenance contracts
- Extended warranties (up to 3 years)
- Audio and video equipment
- Computer network components
- Telecommunications terminal equipment
- Data terminal equipment
- Interactive audio/video equipment
- Inside wiring
- Broadband facilities, if owned by the applicant **(limited to 20% of grant)**

In general, equipment not electronically interconnected to the grant and match funded equipment is not eligible. The application must demonstrate that the predominant purpose (50% or more of use) of every line-item in the grant and match budget meets the DLT Grant definition of distance learning or telemedicine,

NOTE: All equipment purchased for this Project must be new or non-depreciated.

2. **Acquiring instructional programming** that is a capital asset (including the purchase or lease of instructional programming already on the market). Renewals of instructional programming are not eligible nor is classroom equipment (such as laboratory equipment). Also, expenses (such as those for tuition, fees for coursework on a per course basis, or fees for cultural events or virtual field trips) are not capital assets and therefore, are not eligible.

3. **Providing technical assistance and instruction for using eligible equipment**, including any related software; developing instructional programming that is a capital asset and providing engineering or environmental studies relating to the establishment or expansion of the phase of the project to be financed with the grant. The costs for this category cannot exceed 10% of the grant amount requested.

Scoring Criteria

a. Rurality Category (up to 40 points). The rurality score is based on the population size of each community where an end user site is located. For non-fixed site projects and projects which contain non-fixed components, the rurality score will be based on the population of the Hub site. Applicants can use Census population data either from the Census Website (<http://data.census.gov>) or from Rand McNally Atlas (Atlas) that cites the 2010 Census as its source for population statistics. Population figures used in the DLT grant competition under this announcement must use the 2010 Census as the source, whether it is from the Atlas, or from the Census Website (<http://data.census.gov>). The Application Guide provides additional guidance for this category, including a Rurality Worksheet to assist applicants in the calculation of points.

b. Economic Need Category (up to 30 points). Economic need is based on the county poverty percentage of the end user sites proposed in the application. The percentages must be determined by utilizing the United States Census Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Program. End-user sites located in geographic areas for which no SAIPE data exist will be determined to have an average SAIPE poverty percentage of 30 percent. Such geographic areas may include territories of the United States or other locations eligible for funding through the DLT Grant Program.

c. Service Needs and Benefits Category (up to 30 points). This category measures the extent to which the proposed project meets the need for distance learning or telemedicine services in rural areas, the benefits derived from the proposed services, and the local community involvement in the planning, implementation, and financial assistance of the project. RUS will also consider the extent to which the applicant's documentation identifies the local economic, education, or health care challenges. The applicant must explain how the project proposes to address these issues and why the applicant cannot complete the project without a grant.

d. Special Consideration. Special consideration points will be awarded for projects in the following areas. Applicants may only receive special consideration points in one area (up to 10 points):

- Telemedicine projects having the primary purpose of providing treatment and counseling services for opioid or other substance use disorder. Opioid or other substance use disorder treatment is defined as the interactive communication between medical or educational professionals and opioid users or their families, other treatment professionals or those who interact with opioid or other substance users. Opioid or other substance use disorder treatment eligible purposes include:
 - o Counseling of opioid or other substance users
 - o Treatment of opioid or other substance dependent persons
 - o Training of medical professionals, counselors or first responders in the interaction with opioid or other substance users
 - o Education programs addressing opioid or other substance abuse, or;
- Distance learning projects having the primary purpose of providing access to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) courses; or
- Telemedicine or distance learning projects having at least one end-user site physically located in an Opportunity Zone. An Opportunity Zone is an economically distressed community where new investments, under certain conditions, may be eligible for preferential tax treatment. Localities qualify as Opportunity Zones if they have been nominated for that designation by the State and that nomination has been certified by the Secretary of the U.S. Treasury via delegation of authority to the Internal Revenue Service. See <https://www.cdfifund.gov/Pages/Opportunity-Zones.aspx> for the list of current Opportunity

Zones. See <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/opportunity-zones-frequently-asked-questions> for additional information.

Selection Process

a. Grant applications are ranked by the final score. RUS selects applications based on those rankings, subject to the availability of funds. In addition, the Agency has the authority to limit the number of applications selected in any one state or for any one project during a fiscal year. See 7 CFR 1734.27 for a description of the grant application selection process. An application receiving fewer points can be selected over a higher scoring application in the event that there are insufficient funds available to cover the costs of the higher scoring application, as stated in 7 CFR 1734.27(b)(3).

b. The Agency evaluates grant applications on the following items, in accordance with 7 CFR part 1734.27(c):

- i. Financial feasibility. A proposal that does not indicate financial feasibility or that is not sustainable will not be approved for an award.
- ii. Technical considerations. An application that contains flaws that would prevent the successful implementation, operation, or sustainability of the project will not be approved for an award.
- iii. Other aspects of proposals that contain inadequacies that would undermine the ability of the project to comply with the policies of the DLT Program.