

## FOA: Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grants

### OVERVIEW

On April 5<sup>th</sup>, the Department of Agriculture Rural Utilities Service (RUS) released a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) for a new round of Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Grants. The DLT Program provides financial assistance to enable and improve DLT services in rural areas. Funding supports the use of telecommunications-enabled information, audio and video equipment, and related advanced technologies by students, teachers, medical professionals, and rural residents. These grants support increasing rural access to education, training, and health care resources that are otherwise unavailable or limited in scope.

Approximately \$44.5 million in total funding is available through this FOA to eligible applicants, including \$5.3 million in funding that was not appropriated during fiscal year 2020. Applicants are encouraged to consider projects that will promote equity and economic opportunity in rural America, specifically those that advance the following priorities:

- Containing the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Ensuring racial equity;
- Rebuilding the rural economy; and
- Addressing the climate crisis.

The full FOA is available [here](#), and RUS's application guidance can be found [here](#). Applications are due on June 4<sup>th</sup>.

### FUNDING

Of the \$44.5 million in total funding, \$10.2 million will be allocated to DLT projects that provide substance use disorder treatment services.

Individual awards will be between \$50,000 and \$1 million. Applicants must demonstrate matching contributions, in cash or in kind, of at least 15 percent of the grant amount requested. Federal funds are not eligible as matching funds, unless specifically authorized. Hub (distant) sites located in non-rural areas are not eligible for grant funding unless they are necessary to provide DLT services to rural residents at end user sites. 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 definition of distance learning or telemedicine.

The grant period will last for three years.

## ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants may be of any type of legal entity able to contract with the Federal Government, including private corporations organized on a for-profit or not-for-profit basis. Applicants must either:

- Operate a rural community facility; or
- Deliver distance learning or telemedicine services to entities that operate a rural community facility or to residents of rural areas at rates calculated to ensure that the benefit of the financial assistance is passed through to such entities or to residents of rural areas.

Only one application per applicant will be eligible for approval. If an applicant submits more than one application, the proposal with the highest score will be considered for funding.

## ELIGIBLE PURPOSES

The following three categories are eligible purposes for funding:

- Acquiring, by lease or purchase, eligible equipment (a list of which is available in the application guide);
- Acquiring instructional programming that is a capital asset (including the purchase or lease of instructional programming already on the market); and
- Providing technical assistance and instruction for using eligible equipment, including any related software (costs for this category cannot exceed 10% of the grant amount proposed).

## APPLICATION

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Rurality (40 points)
- Economic Need (30 points)
- Service Needs and Benefits (30 points)

Applicants may also receive special consideration points for projects in one of the following areas:

- Projects that aim to reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with substance use disorder, including opioid misuse, in high-risk rural communities (10 points); or
- Projects that provide service to federally recognized Indian tribes (20 points).

Awards will be determined based on the above criteria. Applicants must achieve a minimum of 20 on the Rurality Score in order to be considered for funding. RUS may limit the number of awards in any one state or for any particular type of project during a fiscal year.

## Timeline

Applications are due on June 4<sup>th</sup>. Questions and technical assistance requests may be submitted to Randall Millhiser at [dltinfo@usda.gov](mailto:dltinfo@usda.gov) by May 21<sup>st</sup>.