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USDA Rural Development
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program

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Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant Program

The program provides or improves Distance Learning and/or Telemedicine Services in Rural America by funding equipment that allows rural residents to access distance learning or telemedicine services from hub sites located in larger urban or suburban areas

Overcoming the effects of remoteness and low population density.

Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Program Changes for 2018

Changes to the Program Application Guide - Scoring Categories

There are now 4 recommended scoring categories, 3 objective and one subjective, with a maximum of 110 points.

- Rurality (40 points)

- Economic Need (30 points)

- Special Considerations (10 points)

- Service Need and Benefits (30 points)

Economic Need is recommended to be scored using the US Census Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) county data.

Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Program

Broadband Facilities

Purchasing and installing broadband facilities has been added to the approved grant purposes.

This purpose is limited to a **maximum of 20 percent** of the requested grant amount and must be used for providing distance learning or telemedicine services. The awardee must own the final broadband asset in order for funding to be approved.

Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Program

Applicant Assistance

Prior to official submission of applications, applicants may request technical assistance or other application guidance from RUS, as long as such requests are made 15 days prior to the final application due date.

Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Program

Applicant Eligibility

The following entity types are eligible to apply:

Incorporated organization

Indian tribe or tribal organization, as defined in 25 U.S.C. 450b (e);

State or local unit of government;

Consortium as defined in 1734.3; or

Other legal entity, including a private corporation organized on a for-profit or not-for-profit basis.

Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Program

Consortium

A consortium is a combination or group of entities formed to undertake the purposes for which the distance learning and telemedicine financial assistance is provided.

If the applicant is an existing established consortium with the legal ability to contract with the Federal Government, that organization can apply in the name of the formal consortium.

If the applicant is an informal consortium which by itself lacks the legal capacity to contract, the consortium must have a legally organized host organization that will apply on its behalf or each individual entity must contract with RUS on its own behalf. Each member of the informal consortium must provide signed copies of certifications.

An informal consortium may have a legally organized host organization which will apply on behalf of the consortium and be designated as the project owner with all awardee responsibilities.

See page 6 *of the DLT Application Guide for more detail.*

Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Program Eligible Purposes

Categories of eligible grant purposes

Acquiring, by lease or purchase eligible equipment.

   If leased, the cost of the lease during the three year life of the grant is eligible.

Constructing Broadband Facilities to serve DLT purposes.

   Costs may not exceed 20% of the grant amount

Acquiring instructional programming that is a capital asset.

   Including the purchase or lease of instructional programming already on the market

Providing technical assistance and instruction for using eligible equipment.

   The costs for this category cannot exceed 10% of the grant amount requested

   See page 7 of the DLT Application Guide for more detail

Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Program Ineligible Grant Purposes

Select Ineligible Purposes

To pay for medical or educational equipment not having telemedicine or distance learning as its essential function

To pay for Electronic Medical Records

Medical equipment not used primarily for telemedicine (50%+)

Salaries or administrative expenses

Application preparation costs

Purchase of land, buildings, building construction, site development, or destruction or alteration of buildings.

See page 8 *of the DLT Application Guide for more detail*

Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Program Eligible Equipment

The following are examples of eligible equipment

- Computer hardware and software

- Computer network components

- Data terminal equipment

- Inside wiring

- Audio and video equipment

- Telecommunications terminal equipment

- Interactive audio/video equipment

- Broadband facilities, if owned by the applicant

- The application must demonstrate both 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 and/or telemedicine.

- All equipment must be new and non-depreciated

Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Program Additional Eligibility Criteria

Matching Contribution:

The grant applicant's minimum matching contribution must equal 15 percent of the grant amount requested and be used for eligible grant purposes.

There are special matching provisions for American Samoa, Guam, Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands for eligibility purposes.

See page 20 *of the DLT Application Guide for more detail*

Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Program Matching Funds

Matching Contribution (15% required)

Matching funds can either be cash or equipment

Matching funds must be for a purpose that would be otherwise eligible for grant funding (i.e., No salaries, administrative expenses, or other items prohibited from grant funding) and must be integral to the overall DLT project and have a predominant DLT purpose.

Vendor discounts or supplied equipment is not an eligible in-kind contribution.

Only new equipment may be used in a DLT project; donations or use of partially or fully depreciated equipment are not allowable as match.

Criteria for scoring grant applications

Rurality; economic need; service need and benefit; and special considerations

§1734.26

The criteria by which applications will be scored will be published in the RUS DLT Program application guide and/or the RUS DLT Program Web site and in the funding opportunity posted on www.Grants.gov Web site on an annual basis. The criteria will be used to determine and evaluate: Rurality; economic need; service need and benefit; and special considerations as determined by the Administrator

Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Program

Additional Links

DLT Program Website

http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/distance-learning-telemedicine-grants

Background

Community Connect Grant Program

- Created in 2002

- Competitive Grant Program with nationwide applications scored via a point system

Program Regulation and NOFA:

- Community Connect Grant Program Regulation, 7 CFR 1739 Subpart A, published in the Federal Register on May 3, 2013

- Notice of Solicitation of Applications (NOSA), published in the Federal Register on March 15, 2018. The NOSA sets for the minimum and maximum grant amounts for the 2018 program as well as the Minimum Broadband Service and Minimum Broadband Grant speed.

- For 2019:
  - Broadband Service is defined as 10 Mbps (download) and 1 Mbps (upload).

  - Broadband Grant Speed is defined as 25 Mbps (download) and 3 Mbps (upload)

Key Definitions and Limits

Broadband Service means any terrestrial technology having the capacity to provide transmission facilities that enable subscribes of the service to originate and receive high-quality voice, data, graphics, and video at the minimum rate of 10 megabits per second download and 1 megabits per second upload for both fixed and mobile service. (10 X 1)

Broadband Grant Speed means the minimum bandwidth of 25 megabits per second download and 3 megabits per second upload that an applicant must propose to deliver to every customer in the PFSA. (25 X 3)

Minimum and Maximum Grant Amounts:

- $100,000 minimum

- $3,000,000 maximum

Eligible Applicants

- An Indian Tribe or tribal organization, as defined in 25 U.S.C. 450b(e).

- A state or local unit of government, or

- An incorporated organization,

- A cooperative, private corporation or limited liability company organized on a for-profit or not-for-profit basis.

Individuals and Partnerships are not Eligible.

Applicants must have the legal capacity and authority to apply for funding and enter into a contract with RUS.

Applicants must have the legal capacity to own and operate a broadband delivery system.

Eligible Projects

To be eligible for a Community Connect grant, the Project must:

- Serve a Proposed Funded Service Area (PFSA) in which Broadband Service (10 X 1) does not exist;

- Offer service at the Broadband Grant Speed (25 X 3) to all residents and business customers within the PFSA;

- Offer free service at the Broadband Grant Speed to all Critical Community Facilities (CCF) located within the PFSA for at least 2 years starting from the time service becomes available to each CCF. Critical Community Facilities means the Community Center; any public school, public education center, public library, public medical clinic, public hospital, community college, public university; or law enforcement, fire or ambulance station in the Proposed Funded Service Area.

- Provide a Community Center with at least two Computer Access Points and wireless access at the Broadband Grant Speed, free of all charges to users for at least 2 years and is open and accessible to area residents before, during and after normal working hours and on Saturday and/or Sunday.

Eligible PFSA

Proposed Funded Service Area (PFSA) means the contiguous geographic area within an eligible Rural Area in which the applicant proposes to provide service at the Broadband Grant Speed

Rural Area means any area, as confirmed by the latest decennial census of the Bureau of the Census, which is not located within:

- a city, town, or incorporated area that has a population greater than 20,000 inhabitants; or

- An urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to a city or town that has a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants. For purposes of the definition of rural area, an urbanized area means a densely populated territory as defined by the US Census Bureau.

Eligible PFSA (Continued)

Broadband Service (10 X 1) cannot exist in any portion of an eligible PFSA.

Applicants should use all available resources to determine if Broadband Service exists, including:

- FCC data (https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov or https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/maps),

- A listing of communities served by existing RUS borrowers and grantees https://broadbandsearch.sc.egov.usda.gov/searchtabs.aspx

- View service provider websites and contact local service providers

A PFSA must not overlap with the Service Areas of current RUS borrowers and grantees.

*** All Information Will Be Independently Verified By RUS ***

Eligible Grant Purposes

1) The construction, acquisition, or leasing of facilities used to deploy service at the Broadband Grant Speed to all residents and businesses in the PFSA

- Buildings constructed with grant funds must reside on property owned by the awardee.

- Leasing costs will only be covered through the advance of funds period included in the award documents.

Eligible Grant Purposes (Continued)

2) The improvement, expansion, construction, or acquisition of a Community   Center and provision of Computer Access Points.

- Grant funds for the Community Center are limited to the lesser of ten percent of the requested grant amount or $150,000.

- If the community center is constructed with grant funds, the center must reside on property owned by the awardee.

- Includes funding for at least 2 and up to 10 computer access points to be used in the Community Center.
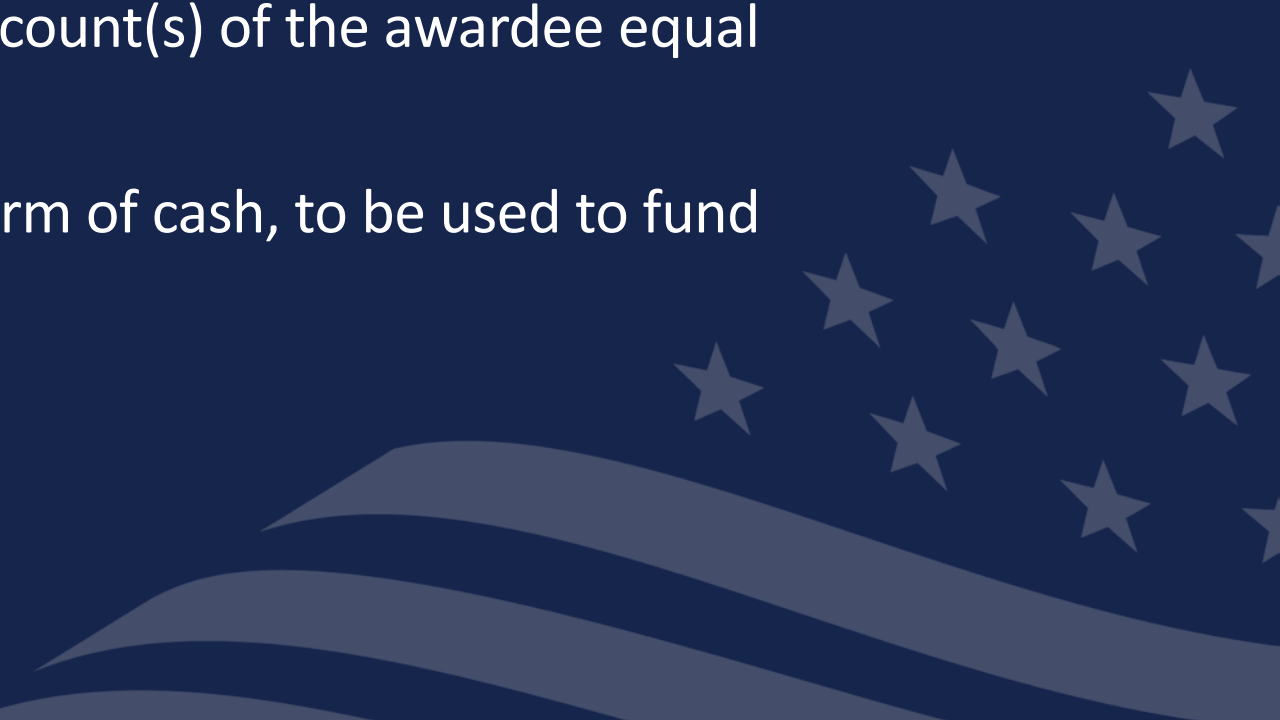
3) The costs of providing the necessary bandwidth for service free of charge to   the CCFs for 2 years.

Ineligible Grant Purposes

1) Funds may not be used to finance the duplication of any existing Broadband Service provided by other entities.

2) Operating expenses are ineligible with the exception of lease costs for facilities used to deploy broadband service and bandwidth expenses.

Matching Contribution

- Applicants must provide a Matching Contribution which is at least 15% of the total amount of financial assistance being requested.

- Matching Contributions cannot include any financial assistance from federal sources unless there is a federal statutory exception.

- At the time of closing of the award, the awardee must contribute or demonstrate available cash reserves in an account(s) of the awardee equal to at least 15% of the grant.

- The Matching Contribution must be in the form of cash, to be used to fund operations of the project.

Scoring

Up to 100 points are available. These points are broken into 3 Scoring Components:

- PFSA Challenges (up to 50 points are available)

- Local Participation (up to 40 points are available)

- Management Experience (up to 10 points are available)

Scoring (Continued)

In making the final selection among and between applications with comparable rankings and geographic distribution, the Administrator may take into consideration the characteristics of the PFSA.

- Persistent poverty counties that will be served within the PFSA;

- Out-migration communities that will be served within the PFSA;

- The rurality of the PFSA;

- The speed of broadband service that is offered to subscribers in the PFSA;

- Substantially Underserved Trust Areas (SUTA) that will be served within the PFSA; and

- Community members with disabilities that will be served within the PFSA.

Applicant Information

For program regulation (7 CFR 1739), 2018 Notice of Solicitation of Applications (NOSA), Standard Form 424 and instructions, and the Application Guide, view:

- http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-connect-grants

RUS hosted webinar focused on the Community Connect Grant Program:

- FY2018: Will be held in April 5 and April 10, 2018 & posted shortly thereafter; Environmental webinars will be held April 5 and April 12, 2018.

- Webinar informs participants about the major eligibility and regulatory requirements of the program and provides detailed guidance on how to submit a successful grant application.

Questions?

- More information about the Community Connect Grant Program is available by contacting the RUS at (202) 720-0800 or emailing us at community.connect@wdc.usda.gov.

Rural e-Connectivity Reconnect

Program Introduction & Frequently Asked Questions

Understanding Reconnect

An introduction to eligibility, the application

process and other critical information

Eligibility

Who can apply and what funding opportunities are available to you.

Who can apply?

v   States, local governments, or any agency, subdivision, instrumentality, or political subdivision thereof

v   A territory or possession of the United States

v   An Indian tribe (as defined in section 4 of the Indian

v   Self Determination and Education Assistance Act

v   Non-profit entities

v   For-profit corporations

v   Limited liability companies

v   Cooperative or mutual organizations

Application Eligibility Factors

- Unqualified Audited Financial Statement
- Fully Complete Application
- Timely Buildout Completion
- Financial Feasibility and Sustainability
- Technical Feasibility
- Service Areas
- Fully Funded

Program Design

Key factors, eligible costs and how to maximize your score

Program Funding

Loan
Buildout speed: 25/3 mbps minimum
Terms: Max award: $50 million, 2% interest rate
Application review: Open (non-competitive)
Round 1 Federal Funds: $200 million

Combo
Buildout speed: 25/3 mbps minimum, incentive for higher speeds
Terms: Max award: $50 million, 50/50 Loan/Grant, Fed. Fund
Interest = -3%   Application review: Competitive scoring
Round 1 Federal Funds: $100 million grant + $100 million loan

Grant
Buildout speed: 25/3 mbps minimum, incentive for higher
speeds Terms: Max award: $25 million, 25% match
Application review: Competitive scoring
Round 1 Federal Funds: $200 million

Eligible Proposed Service Areas

- **100% Loan Products**
  - PFSA must be located in an area where 90% of households do not have sufficient access to broadband.
  - July 12, 2019 application deadline.

- **50/50 Loan/Grant Products**
  - PFSA must be located in an area where 90% of households do not have sufficient access to broadband.
  - June 21, 2019 application deadline.

- **100% Grant Products**
  - PFSA must be located in an area where 100% of households do not have sufficient access to broadband
  - May 31, 2019 application deadline.

Eligible Costs

- The construction or improvement of facilities, including buildings and land, required to provide broadband service

- Pre-application expenses (not to exceed 5% of the total award). Costs must be incurred after the publication date of the FOA and be documented.

- Terrestrial-based facilities for satellite broadband service.

- Costs must be reasonable, allocable, and necessary.

- Applications that propose to use any portion of the award or matching funds for any ineligible cost may be rejected.

For 100% loans only
The acquisition of an existing system that does not currently provide sufficient access to broadband (limited to 40% of the total loan amount).

Ways to maximize your score

Rurality of proposed funded service area

Farms served

Performance of the offered service

Business

Healthcare centers

Educational facilities

Critical community facilities

Tribal lands

State broadband activity

https://reconnect.usda.gov

Critical Reminders and Information

Information you need before starting the application process

https://reconnect.usda.gov

Important Reminders

Online Applications

All applications must be submitted through the online system at https://reconnect.usda.gov/

System Registration

A DUNS number and registration at SAM.gov are required to submit application.

Available Resources

What resources are available and how you can get help during the application process.

List of Available Resources

- Workshops
  - Multiple Workshops to be Held Across the Country
  - RD Experts and Detailed Application Information
- Webinars
  - Multiple Webinars to be Held
  - RD Experts and Detailed Application Information
- Resources
  - ReConnect Website http://reconnect.usda.gov/
  - Electronic Application Intake System
  - Program FAQs
- OneRD Coordination
  - Resources Across RD
  - Help Desk
  - Technical Assistance and Support to Applicants

For help or questions contact us at

Reconnect Support Desk

https://reconnect.usda.gov

Contact Information

Assistance under USDA Rural Development programs is available to applicants in areas designated as "rural."
Under law, the definition of "rural area" is different for each program.

Contact USDA Rural Development State Office for more information at 505-761-4950

Or go to: www.rd.usda.gov/nm

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