

PUBLICATION

USDA Grants Available to Purchase Equipment for Telemedicine and Distance Learning Programs

Authors: Jennifer M. Summa, Keith Fagerquist

February 21, 2020

A great opportunity has opened providing funds for telemedicine and distance learning investment in rural areas. \$71 million is available with grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$1 million.

On February 10, 2020, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the window for the distance learning and telemedicine grants (DLT) has opened with an application due date of April 10, 2020. Over \$71 million is available with grant awards ranging from \$50,000 to \$1,000,000 for the FY 2020 program. Applicants are required to provide a minimum 15 percent match and spend down the award over three years.

Grant funds may be used for: the acquisition (through lease or purchase) of eligible capital assets, such as broadband transmission facilities; audio, video and interactive video equipment; terminal and data terminal equipment; computer hardware, network components and software; inside wiring and similar infrastructure that further DLT services, as well as acquisition of instructional programming that is a capital asset and acquisition of technical assistance and instruction for using eligible equipment. The application must demonstrate that the predominant purpose (50 percent or more of use) of every line-item in the grant and match budget meets the DLT Grant definition of distance learning or telemedicine.

The intent of the DLT program is to benefit rural areas (populations of 20,000 or less). While some projects could include end-users in more urbanized areas, the USDA will evaluate projects based on their benefit to rural areas. Thus, to be eligible to receive a grant, an application must meet certain rurality scoring thresholds for all hub and end-user sites included in the proposed project. USDA will offer special consideration to applications that have the primary purpose of STEM education, opioid or other substance use disorder treatment, or are in an Opportunity Zone.

If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity, please contact [Jen Summa](#) or [Keith Fagerquist](#). We have been successful in the past at obtaining an almost \$500,000 award for a rural hospital network to purchase telemedicine equipment. For a summary of the grant application, please see: https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/FY2020_DLT_App_Guide_Final.pdf