



News Release

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USDA Invests in the Expansion of Rural Education and Health Care Access

Distance Learning and Telemedicine Investments will benefit more than 200,000 rural Tennessee residents

NASHVILLE, Tenn., Nov. 20, 2019 – U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development Donald “DJ” LaVoy today announced that USDA [is investing \\$42.5 million in 133 distance learning and telemedicine projects in 37 states and two U.S. territories](#). USDA is providing the funding through the [Distance Learning and Telemedicine \(DLT\) grant program](#). These investments will benefit 5.4 million rural residents. Tennessee Rural Development State Director Jim Tracy is excited to announce that three projects will receive funding to expand its distance learning and telemedicine opportunities.

“The expansion of rural education and health care access significantly advances the quality of life for students and residents,” Tracy said. “Today’s investments will allow citizen’s in rural areas to take advantage of telemedicine and distance learning opportunities that would otherwise not be available.”

USDA is announcing investments today in Alaska, Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Below are examples of projects announced today in Tennessee:

- Dyer County Board of Education is receiving a \$497,252 grant to implement a Distance Learning program that will expand educational offerings in 3 rural school districts in Dyer, Lake and Weakley counties. This project involves sixteen schools in 10 communities and will serve 6,519 students and 422 teachers.
- Rural Health Service Consortium, Inc. is receiving a \$500,000 grant to improve primary care, behavioral health, speech therapy, physical therapy and opioid counseling via

a telemedicine system. Interactive video equipment will be placed in seventeen communities in 8 counties. Approximately 3,300 patients will be served.

- Maury Regional Hospital is receiving a \$362,087 grant to enable the deployment of interactive video conferencing equipment at its hub, the Mercy Virtual Care Center in St. Louis. Links will be established with nine hospitals: three in Missouri, three in Arkansas, two in Oklahoma and one in Kansas. This project will impact over 210,000 residents living in the primary service area of the participating hospitals.

Applicants eligible for Distance Learning and Telemedicine grants include most State and local governmental entities, federally-recognized tribes, nonprofits, for-profit businesses and consortia of eligible entities.

In April 2017, President Donald J. Trump established the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity to identify legislative, regulatory and policy changes that could promote agriculture and prosperity in rural communities. In January 2018, Secretary Perdue presented the Task Force's findings to President Trump. These findings included 31 recommendations to align the federal government with state, local and tribal governments to take advantage of opportunities that exist in rural America. Supporting the rural workforce was a cornerstone recommendation of the task force.

To view the report in its entirety, please view the [Report to the President of the United States from the Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity](#) (PDF, 5.4 MB). In addition, to view the categories of the recommendations, please view the [Rural Prosperity infographic](#) (PDF, 190 KB).

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community facilities such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov/tn.

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