

## USDA Prioritizes Investments to Address Opioid Crisis in Rural America

USDA is reserving \$5 million in the [Community Facilities Grant Program](#) and is giving priority to [Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant \(DLT\) Program](#) applications proposing innovative projects to address the opioid epidemic in rural communities.

In the Community Facilities grant program, rural communities, non-profit organizations and federally recognized tribes can apply through the usual Community Facilities grant application process for grants up to \$150,000 for innovative projects such as mobile treatment clinics. Community Facilities grants may fund up to 75 percent of an eligible project.

Applications for Community Facilities grants funded with this National Office reserve should be submitted on or before **June 4, 2018**. Applications will be accepted at your local [Area Office](#). Applications submitted after this date will be considered for regular, state-allocated funding.

Distance Learning and Telemedicine grant program applicants will receive priority for telemedicine projects with the primary purpose of providing opioid prevention, treatment or recovery services. Eligible proposals can receive 10 priority points on their applications.

Funding for both programs was made available through the FY 2018 Omnibus spending bill. The funding comes at a time when the Trump administration is pursuing an ambitious agenda to combat the nation's opioid crisis.

The \$20 million supplement being provided in USDA's Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Grant Program will go towards advanced technologies to give rural communities all the modern tools possible to fight the opioid epidemic, including:

- Prevention: making sure doctors' offices and pharmacies are connected to real-time controlled substances (opioid) patient registries
- Treatment: training health care providers on how to identify and treat addiction
- Recovery: providing remote access for addiction treatment counseling



DLT grants are available to most state and local governmental entities, federally-recognized tribes, non-profit groups, for-profit businesses or a consortium of these.

The \$20 million supplement is in addition to \$29 million that Congress provided for the DLT program's annual budget this year. The \$29 million also may be used for opioid-related projects, but, unlike the \$20 million, it is not specifically targeted to those purposes.

The DLT program has been particularly effective in addressing generational poverty, which is often is linked to rural isolation and a lack of access to education. These factors can lead to a sense of isolation and desperation that sometimes results in drug abuse.

The application deadline for Distance Learning and Telemedicine grants is **June 4, 2018**. Applications can be submitted electronically at [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) or in hardcopy to: USDA Rural Development Telecommunications Programs, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Room 2844, STOP 1597, Washington, DC 20250-1597.

The National Center for Health Statistics estimates that nearly 64,000 Americans died from drug overdoses in 2016. More than half of those deaths involved opioids, including prescription drugs and heroin.

USDA is an important partner to rural communities addressing this national emergency. The Department is investing in treatment facilities and services, e-Connectivity and telemedicine, and public education efforts. In addition to program investment, USDA is helping communities share information about best practices to address the crisis. Visit [USDA's Rural Opioid Misuse webpage](#) for more information.

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. In the area of quality of life, the Task Force included a recommendation to modernize health care access through innovative approaches like telemedicine. 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).

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure



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## Rural Development



# Minnesota

improvements; business development; housing; community services such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit [www.rd.usda.gov/mn](http://www.rd.usda.gov/mn).