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News Release

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USDA Provides Funding to Increase Access to Educational and Health Care Services in Rural Areas

Grants Will Also Support Opioid Treatment

Gainesville, Florida., January 23, 2018 – In Colorado Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development Anne Hazlett announced that USDA is awarding grants for broadband projects to increase access to job training, educational and health care services in rural areas in 35 states.

“Broadband technology helps provide career opportunities and deliver critical medical services to rural residents,” Hazlett said. “It allows rural hospitals to better diagnose and treat patients. It helps treat people who are struggling with opioid and other substance use disorders. It also helps bring jobs to rural areas.”

USDA is awarding [72 grants totaling \\$23.6 million](#) through the [Distance Learning and Telemedicine \(DLT\) Grant Program](#). This program funds equipment that uses broadband to help rural communities connect to advanced learning and specialized medical services. Several recipients will use the grants to help address two of the nation’s most urgent needs: opioid abuse treatment and mental health counseling.

Assisting Florida, funds will help the United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. (USET) purchase telemedicine equipment to provide enhanced telemedicine services. This DLT project will benefit one hub and 10 end-user sites in 10 communities throughout Tennessee, Maine and Florida and provide computer servers, video conferencing equipment, laptops and tablets, electronic stethoscopes, software and networking equipment. USET plans to expand to Tribal Nation health departments to include direct service provision and support through professional development and telemedicine, initially in psychiatry and behavioral health.

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 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.

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