

Remarks by Rural Development Under Secretary Dallas Tonsager; Announce 2012

Distance Learning and Telemedicine Awards

June 6, 2012 • Maine

Again, I'm really pleased to be with you today, and to have the opportunity to announce two exciting projects through our DLT program.

First, a \$309,619 telemedicine grant will go to Central Maine Healthcare in Lewiston. These funds will be used to purchase video conferencing equipment for a telemedicine project that covers 5 counties in Western, Central and coastal Maine.

Because the service area has **high rates of chronic disease** among its residents, and because of some of Maine's **geographical barriers and severe weather conditions**, this project will help meet some very real needs in the communities it touches.

This project, like the next one I'm going to talk about, will also bring educational benefits along with it: the same telemedicine system will be used to offer courses that lead to degree programs in Nursing and Radiologic Technology, and to support a Family Medicine Residency program

Our second award is a DLT grant of \$499,967 that will provide **distance learning capabilities to Regional School Unit 24**. Once operational, the network will provide access to students in five counties in Maine as well as two others in Vermont.

Both adult learners and school age children will be able to participate in the comprehensive educational network, including medical courses for healthcare and non-health care students.



All told, 11,000 rural residents of Maine’s Piscataquis, Aroostook, Washington and Hancock counties, and Vermont’s Winsor and Windham counties will stand to benefit from the educational and professional training opportunities that this enormous array of courses will offer.

These projects represent some very important technological opportunities for rural America. If we want rural areas to succeed in the 21st century, we've got to make sure we harness the potential of every young person.

We need to give them the **world class educational opportunities** they deserve, and we need to ensure that they have **access to quality healthcare** so they can grow up to be strong future leaders.

What this Administration and Secretary Vilsack have recognized, is that for rural communities to thrive, they must be able to offer competitive opportunities so that its best and brightest remain—and so that others will want to become part of them. I think it’s clear that projects like these are precisely the types of initiatives that will make this possible. I want to thank you again for the opportunity to be here.