

Please stand by for real-time captions.

Good afternoon and welcome to the 2021 Distance Learning and Telemedicine grant program briefing hosted by the United States Department of Agriculture. My name is Ken Wiseman, I am with the Policy and Outreach Division for the Rural Utilities Service which oversees the DLT grant program. We are very happy to have all of you with us today. Our audience continues to grow. We currently have 175 people who are with us, and we hope to see that number grow even more. We are going to have a presentation today that will last for approximately one hour, and we will use the last 30 minutes for Q&A. You can type your questions into the question box that you see on your screen, and we will verbally answer as many of the questions as we can in the last 30 minutes. If you have any technical issues while you are attending this presentation, feel free to type those into the same question box, and our support staff will be here to help you try to navigate those issues. At this time, I would like to recognize our presenter for today, and I will turn it over to him, Mr. Richard Anderson.

Thank you very much, Ken, and good morning, everybody and welcome to this, the first of our two national DLT webinars for Fiscal Year 2021. I know not everyone can attend both webinars, but let me reassure you that the content that we will be covering in today's session is really the same as the content we will be covering in the session next Tuesday. However, the questions that we field and, therefore, the additional information that will come from the Q&A is going to be driven by the participants. So, that will be a little bit different each time out. As far as the presentation, the slide deck itself will be posted on our website shortly after the session is complete. We also, in the near future, will be posting a copy of the webinar that can be run as a video presentation for those who did not get a chance to register and participate today. So, that will be another option in the near future, but it takes a little while to get up and probably will not be available until after the time of the second session next week on the 20th.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you this morning about the DLT grant program. Those of you who have participated in the webinars in the last year may notice that the slide deck is quite similar, but it is not identical to the one you have seen in the past. There are a few program changes we will be going through and changes to emphasis in the presentation and I will point those out as we go along.

First of all, a little bit of a roadmap for the webinar so you will know where we are going and how we will get there. We will go through the different steps regarding the Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant Program, first covering some of the basics, including information about the funding levels and the amount of awards we have made in the last fiscal year and what we anticipate for the coming year. That will also delve into some of the issues of the changes to the program that are important to pay attention to, even for people who are familiar with the program as there are some changes and I want to make sure you are aware of them before you apply. We will talk about the eligibility requirements, the important issues of matching because this program has a required match for virtually all applicants. The scoring protocol, there are changes and you want to pay attention to that, and details about applying and information on sources of assistance you can tap into as need be.

First, to remind you, there is a hierarchy of authority for the DLT program. If there is any question about language that is used in one source versus another, you need to understand what is the most definitive source of information. The big dog, the underlying thing, is the statute. I have given you the reference of where you can find it in the U.S. Code, 7 U.S.C. 950aaa *et seq.* That is the basis for the DLT program. There is not a tremendous amount of detail in the legislation, in the statute. But, where the statute speaks, that is the definitive word. The details of the program are fleshed out in our regulation, which is extremely important but slightly less important than the statute since it's based on the statute. In the case of DLT, that's 7 CFR 1734, Subparts A and B. We emphasize that at the beginning of the application guide because anybody who is interested in the program definitely wants to familiarize themselves with the regulation. It is not that long and reading these sections will not take you a tremendous amount of time, but you do want to be familiar with them because the regulation lays out a lot of the details on how the program is implemented.

Underneath that we have the Funding Opportunity Announcement and the Funding Opportunity Announcement you are looking at now, to which you can respond and apply sometime between now and

June 4th, is the Funding Opportunity Announcement published April 5th, 2021. We talk about publishing it, that is in two places, we put it on our website and the self-same day we published it in grants.gov. It is through grants.gov that any application will be submitted. So, the Funding Opportunity Announcement is also not a long document, but it does have the parameters that apply to this particular opportunity to apply. Underneath the statute and regulations, the things that the FOA, as we will refer to it, the Funding Opportunity Announcement says are very important to understand.

Then comes the DLT Application Guide. A much longer document than the other things we have pointed to, it is intended to help give you the details so that when you are trying to put together an application you understand all the steps, all the pieces. It gets into back and forth information about how to apply the regulation and the Funding Opportunity Announcement's information.

Lastly, we have this webinar or other outreach opportunities we may have. If for some reason we were to miss type something in the webinar slide or I misspeak (because we are all human and all make mistakes), if anything in this webinar conflicts with the Application Guide or the FOA, then those things control because the hierarchy you see on the slide is the hierarchy of authority with respect to the DLT program.

We have this Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant Program and I would be remiss if I don't start out by reminding people about what we mean by distance learning and telemedicine in the context of this program. By distance learning we mean a real-time interactive telecommunications link to an end-user through the use of eligible equipment. I don't tend to read slides, but I wanted to read these words and the reason those certain words are bolded and underlined is because they are so important. We need the key elements that that definition provides, they have to be in evidence for any particular application. There are ways to get curriculum information to people that would not necessarily meet these requirements. The most common is if somebody has the opportunity to view a recorded class online, and major universities provide those worldwide now. Those are wonderful tools. But just having the ability to watch a pre-recorded session for educational purposes would not meet our definition of distance learning, it is the real-time interactive link.

It can have a couple different elements as we list here. It may be about connecting the instructors, the information from one area, which can be urban. The source of the information does not necessarily have to be rural but providing that connection to students and teachers who are located in rural areas. It can be rural to rural. Sometimes we have students and teachers in one rural area interconnecting with students and teachers in another. The most common example is when school districts share resources so that a teacher from one district might be teaching a class for students located in another district and vice versa. In those cases, everybody involved may be in rural areas, but the recipients, the beneficiaries have to primarily be in rural areas in order for it to be a program that, a proposal that we can fund.

On the telemedicine side, some of the same elements are repeated in that it is a real-time interactive telecommunications link to an end-user through the use of eligible equipment. It is a way to link medical professionals in one place to other medical professionals or directly to patients in another, again with the beneficiaries needing to primarily be residents of rural areas. That interactive element is once again a key. What is not telemedicine from our perspective is if there is an x-ray scan that is performed and is transmitted electronically so that at some time in the future, when a radiologist in a large center is available, that person can read the image. That sort of time-shifting is certainly a useful function, but telemedicine is about a real-time interaction between the medical professional and another medical professional, or directly to the patient to provide that care.

Clearly, this benefits the rural residents in a couple of different ways. It gives them access to care that they might not have otherwise been able to receive at all. And it also reduces the demand of travel. Particularly during this coronavirus situation over the last year or so, everyone has understood the value of telemedicine. I don't think we have to explain to anybody anymore how valuable having this kind of electronic interaction where face-to-face is not required to receive care, how valuable that can be.

Here is a little information - the numbers for the program. My slide is a little blurry. I will go back and forth to make sure there is not some hiccup online. Hopefully it is not blurry on your version as well, but I will talk through the important information anyhow. For Fiscal 2020, last year, we had an unusual situation. Normally this program runs once per fiscal year. We have an application cycle, we get a number of

applicants, and we fund all those as we are able. Last year was unusual because there were two application windows, and that happened for a couple of reasons.

One reason was that the CARES Act, which was passed during Fiscal Year 2020, provided additional money to the DLT grant program, and we wanted to make sure those funds were available to support deserving projects. The other reason was that during the initial application window, which ran from February 10<sup>th</sup> to April 10<sup>th</sup> of 2020, during that window is when the major disruptions began to occur as a result of COVID-19. A lot of medical and educational folks who were working on applications began to reach out to the agency and indicate that they had challenges that were making it difficult for them to complete an application within the required timeframe. We chose not to extend the deadline for that particular application window. Instead, we opened an additional application window almost immediately after the first one closed. There was a 90-day application window that ran from April 14<sup>th</sup> to July 13<sup>th</sup> of 2020, a second application window, and it got an overwhelming response in the number of applications received. I'm going to talk more about that in a moment.

Looking into the current fiscal year, we have, through the Funding Opportunity Announcement, announced that we have \$44.5 million available: \$10.2 million of that is specifically for projects that address substance use disorder with the bulk of the funds, \$34.3 million, available for all eligible DLT projects. I should interject that whenever we advertise a particular amount of funds available for the DLT grant program we are committing to those who might apply that we will not have less than those funds because we already have those funds available and we will definitely have at least that amount of money. It is pretty common that we end up with a few additional dollars available. Part of the reason is the DLT program, in the way it is funded through the budget process. It receives "no year" money and those funds are available for use until they are expended. It is fairly common when we make a grant that the grantee, by the time the project is closed out, has not used every single dollar we appropriated. We make a \$500,000 grant and by the time the last amount is advanced, only \$450,000 was used by the grantee. After the grant has closed out, that \$50,000 that was not used comes back into the pot and can be awarded again. That is why you often see the amount that we award is a little more than we originally advertised as being available and sometimes a lot more.

Looking back to Fiscal 2020, the first window we said we had \$71.7 million available, and when all was said and done, we funded 117 application for \$72.4 million a little more than we had originally advertised as available. For Window 2, we talked about having just under \$25 million available, but again we said at the time that there may be additional funds, and, sure enough, when we awarded the projects, we funded 86 projects totaling \$42.3 million, obviously, a good deal more than 25. We will not have less than \$44.5 million available for this set of applications; we may have a few dollars more, depending on what happens with close outs of previous awards and if additional funds would get appropriated to the program. Applications for this FOA, which was published, as I said a few slides back, on April 5<sup>th</sup>, are due by June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021 through grants.gov. I will be emphasizing that point a couple of times because I want to make sure nobody gets shut out just because you lose sight of the deadline.

I have highlighted a couple of bits of information on this slide. In Fiscal 2020, we had those two application windows. In the first window we got 276 applications submitted and of those 180 applications were eligible. We did not have enough money to fund all of them because those 180 applications totaled over \$100 million so we only funded 117, but 180 out of 276 were eligible. They passed through the whole process and we scored them, and the scoring process which we used for allocation helped us sort them out because, unfortunately, we cannot always fund every eligible project. The second application window we got far more applications, 534. We were excited and said this is good, the program is attracting more interest from more people who need the support that the program can give. But I am very disappointed to say that the number of applications eligible was actually smaller than the previous window. It was 149 applications ultimately that were eligible. That is obviously a far smaller percentage than was eligible the previous time. So, one of our goals for Fiscal 2021, we want to increase the number of eligible applications.

This little table shows you two bars on the left that show you, in terms of numbers of applications, how much they grew from the first window to the second window last year. But you can see on the right-hand side, the blue bar, is a measure of how many applications were eligible. Fewer applications eligible, with far more applications at the front of the pipeline. 65% of those submitted the first time were eligible and only 28% the second time. We want to make sure that number goes up. Those of you participating in this webinar are right away in a group that is positioning yourself to be in the group that is eligible because you are trying to get all

possible information to understand the program, and I am very glad you are here and glad you're participating in this. Throughout the presentation I will highlight various points that have been all too frequently the reasons why applications were not deemed eligible. I want to make sure that, to the greatest extent possible, that does not happen to anybody again.

We cannot fund everybody. We only have so much money, and we have said \$44.5 million, maybe a little bit more. With our awards tending to average around \$500,000 per award, that is roughly 90 grants we expect to make with that amount of money available. Remember, the range of projects that we can entertain are from \$50,000 up to a maximum of \$1 million. Even though we cannot fund every project, there is no reason why anybody cannot submit an eligible application. We want people to put together the best possible application, and we will do the scoring and review the scoring because for three of the four elements the applicant already knows in advance what the score should be. We will review the scoring and use it as an allocation tool. But I want to see the percentage be much higher. We want everybody to be eligible. We cannot fund everybody, but everybody can put together an application that has a chance of being funded.

There are some changes for Fiscal 2021 that I want to make sure you are aware of. First of all, in an effort to make sure that as many applicants receive funding as possible, we will not award more than one application per applicant in this cycle. That does not mean that as an applicant you are prevented from putting in more than one application. But if you put in more than one application, and hopefully more than one eligible application, when we do the scoring, only the highest-scoring application will be considered for funding this cycle. Please take note of that. We are not saying you cannot put in more than one application. But remember, this is a national competition and if you put in two applications or three applications, you are not just competing against the rest of the applicants in the country, you are also competing against yourself.

Another point we have emphasized in this year's Funding Opportunity Announcement as well as in the application guide, we will not transfer awards to another entity because the applicant cannot close the award, execute the agreement, or own the grant assets. This has come up a couple times where an applicant has applied, gone through the whole process, received a grant award, and then says, "I have an issue, the grant assets can't actually be owned by this particular entity." The examples I know of where this has occurred have typically been foundations that are set up in support of hospitals, universities, or other institutions, and those foundations are established for the purpose of applying for grants. We have no objection to a properly-created foundation applying for and even receiving a DLT grant. However, the foundation or any entity should not apply unless that entity is able to execute the agreement (and we have a copy of the form of agreement on our website, so everybody should know what that looks like in advance), and own the grant assets, and be able to perform the project as put forth in the application. Just to make sure there is no confusion on this point, we have emphasized that it is not going to be something where we are able to move the award from the hospital foundation to the hospital after the fact just because suddenly it is realized that the foundation cannot perform as required, cannot, for example, own the grant assets. It is important that whoever is putting together the application makes sure that the entity that is chosen as the one to apply for the award is able to fully execute and perform on that award.

A couple other changes for Fiscal 2021 that you definitely want to be aware about. One is the Economic Need scoring has been changed a little bit. It is generally still the same as it was in the past, and we will get into that in a little more detail when we get into the scoring section. But in the past, one difference was we would look at the poverty percentage per site and average those poverty percentages and then go to the table of values to figure out what score was assigned to an application. Now the Economic Need score is going to be calculated more like it's done for the Rurality score. We are going to calculate an Economic Need score for each individual site and then average the scores for all of those sites. This has the advantage of more clearly differentiating between applications, because the old method would stairstep and really only had four possible scores. Now there will be an infinite variety of scores that are possible, which allows for greater differentiation, and that is really the purpose of scoring. There have also been important changes to the Special Consideration points which I will also get into in a little greater detail later. The most important things to remember at the start is that we have a new Special Consideration opportunity where 20 points can be awarded for service to Tribal Lands, and just as important, you need to be aware that there will be no Special Consideration points available for this Fiscal 2021 for STEM projects or projects in Opportunity Zones. I will talk about that a little more when we get into scoring.

Applicant eligibility, this is really the same as it has been in prior years, and I can rattle through them if you want. It is incorporated organizations (for-profit and not-for-profit), it is tribes and tribal organizations, state and local units of government that includes things like state universities, public school districts, they are all in that category of state and local units of government. A consortium is eligible, we define that in our regulations, and I will talk a little bit more about that in a moment. Limited liability companies are a very common type of organization, and other legal entities also eligible. The most important thing to remember about eligibility is almost every entity type is eligible, except for individuals and partnerships. The only time I have really seen this confuse people is occasionally an individual has set up a sole proprietorship and thinks of it as a business, which it certainly is, but if that business is not set up either as an LLC or a corporation, but rather is just essentially legally just an arm of that same person, then that business is considered an individual and would not be eligible to apply.

**Consortium:** Consortium has been part of the DLT program since its origin, and it just refers to a group of entities who come together to undertake the purposes for which the grant is sought. Some consortia are formal; the majority that we see are informal. If there is a formal consortium, it has a legal existence of its own and it can apply under its own name and be a grantee just like any other entity. That is perfectly fine, but those are rare. Most of the time when we see a consortium come together and apply for a grant it is an informal consortium where the members have come together and said we want to entertain this project and we are seeking funding for it.

There are two ways to apply to the DLT grant program if you have an informal consortium that you identify in the application. The one choice is to select a host organization. In this case, that host organization becomes the first among equals of those entities that are participating in the consortium. The host comes in as the applicant, provides all of the certifications and documentation required, and, if the project is successful and receives a grant award, that organization will be the one that signs the grant agreement, submits the requisitions, files the required reports, and for all intents and purposes, it runs as if that project were the sole project of that entity. The other members of the consortium still benefit because the scope of work and the site plan are going to lay out that grant-funded assets are being deployed in all those other members' locations.

In example of four school districts that come together and form an informal consortium in order to have some sort of a shared distance learning arrangement, and then school X becomes the host. School X applies and clarifies that there is also a consortium that has been set up and there are three other school districts that are going to benefit, and the project funded assets are deployed exactly as laid out in those other schools. But, as the host organization, that entity is the owner of the equipment and is accountable to the government for the grant funds being deployed and the ownership being properly managed.

If there is no entity that wants to be the host organization, then the consortium can come and say, "Each member of the consortium needs to contract with the agency on its own behalf." If that approach is followed, then as it is laid out in greater detail in the application guide, all of the certification, all the registrations and so forth need to be submitted for each and every member of the consortium because we have to have all the legal information we would normally require from an applicant from each entity because essentially it is like multiple applicants for the same proposal. If you want to make the documentation much simpler, the approach is to go with the host organization.

**Eligible grant purposes.** I cannot cover everything in this presentation, and I want to refer you back to the application guide and the regulation for greater detail. But the big deal is that you can acquire, by lease or purchase eligible equipment. If you go the route of leasing equipment, the cost of the lease during the three-year life of the grant is eligible. Our grants have a three-year life; that means there are three years from the date of the grant agreement, which is prepared and dated after awards are made. There are three years to complete the project and draw down the funds. If you are using a lease rather than buying equipment outright, it is only the lease cost during that three year period that can be funded by the grant.

There is the opportunity to provide some funding for broadband facilities by the DLT grant program, but it is limited to no more than 20% of the grant and it is essential that the broadband facilities must be applicant-owned. What you cannot get is funds necessary to pay a connection charge that a communications provider might have said is required in order to bring a broadband connection to a particular facility. If you are looking at a proposal and you say, "This one clinic does not have good broadband. We need it to have good

broadband for the proposal. We contacted the provider, and they say it is going to cost \$25,000 to bring the connection out to them.” That is not going to work because, unless the provider is the applicant, which it could be, unless the provider is the applicant, then those facilities, once funded, will be owned by the provider and not the applicant. If the provider is not the applicant but instead a medical group is, then we are not going to be able to fund those particular broadband facilities with the grant. It has to be owned by the applicant once they are funded.

Other common grant purposes, acquiring instructional programming. Now, notice that it says acquiring instructional programming. Remember, when we talk about acquiring, just like any eligible equipment, it can be by lease or purchase, but it is acquiring instructional programming that is the capital asset so in this case it has to be something that will be owned by the applicant. What cannot be covered is some sort of subscription arrangement where there is just a particular fee paid and during the time the fee is paid, there is certain instructional programming that is available to you. In that case, the grantee has not purchased anything, does not have a capital asset. All the grantee has done is get into a subscription arrangement, which is essentially a recurring charge, an operating cost, and is not something we can fund through the grant.

We can also fund some provision of technical assistance and instruction for using eligible equipment. It's not uncommon if a new setup is being installed that the business that is coming in and setting that up for the grantee is going to offer some training so that the equipment can be used effectively. To an extent, those costs can be covered by the grant but as we note in the regulation and as I noted here, that category is limited to no more than 10% of the grant.

Additional examples of eligible equipment, because the previous slide said the word eligible equipment, the most common we see are computer hardware and software. We also see telemedical devices, which are often very specialized. I do not want to try to name all of the different options that we see but those are the things that have to be fully integrated into the communications link in order to be eligible. We also have the very standard microphones, cameras, speakers, monitors, other display devices. Inside wiring is something that can be funded. And, as I mentioned, broadband facilities to a limited extent can be funded as long as they will be applicant-owned.

One of the key elements for any eligible equipment is that the application must demonstrate that the predominant purpose, more than 50% of the usage of the equipment, for every line item in the grant, meets the definition of distance learning or telemedicine. Computer hardware is ubiquitous in our applications. Even though computer hardware is ubiquitous, that does not mean every time computer hardware shows up on a budget it is going to be eligible equipment. Because the computer hardware and software that is on the budget and is eligible for funding has to have as its predominant use whatever distance learning or telemedicine service is part of this proposal. If you get a school system that is trying to set up distance learning classroom to interact with other school systems, then there are likely going to be some computers that are put into the distance learning classroom. That does not mean that every computer purchased by the school during the next three years is going to be eligible for DLT grant funding if the majority of those computers are used for other general pedagogical purposes. It is perfectly fine that other computers are being bought, but those computers that are going to be distributed throughout the school are not necessarily tied into the distance learning project. It is only those that can really be tied back to the project, whether it is distance learning or telemedicine, and have as their predominant use that purpose that are going to be able to be funded. This often comes up because people see that the budget, when it gets reviewed, certain pieces of equipment are set aside as ineligible, and they are puzzled because they say "These are things that are regularly funded." And they are regularly funded, but it is the purpose to which they are going to be placed that is essential in determining their eligibility.

Again, going back through the ineligible grant purposes, the flipside of the previous slide, it is first and foremost on the slide as well, medical or educational equipment that does not have telemedicine or distance learning as its essential function is not eligible. The same equipment can be eligible or not eligible depending on the purpose for which it is being acquired. Other things we can't fund: electronic medical record systems, and here is a key point, salaries, administrative, operating or recurring expenses are not eligible grant purposes. This includes broadband connection fees. This is a very important point because it comes up a lot in our review of applications.

If you remember a couple slides ago, when we were talking about things that can be funded by the grant, among them was technical assistance and instruction in use of eligible equipment. But if that technical assistance and instruction in the use of eligible equipment is done by your own forces, let's say a major university applies for a DLT grant and this major university has an excellent IT department. That IT department is going to actually install the equipment and teach the people who are in the academic department how to use it. That is fine, but that cannot be funded by the grant because those are salaries and operating expenses of the applicant and therefore not eligible. If a third party were being paid to provide those same services, they would be eligible. I think that is often the point of confusion; it matters who is doing it whether or not something is going to be eligible for funding. If it is salaries, administrative, operating, or recurring expenses of the applicant or the project, it is not going to be something that can be funded by the grant. I will come back to this, but if it cannot be funded by the grant it also cannot be matching funds.

Application preparation cost, we really have not seen that to be a problem. We cannot buy buildings or construct buildings or develop a site or alter buildings with the DLT grant. As far as the catchall, if we did not specifically say in 7 CFR 1734.21 that it can be funded, then it cannot be funded.

Matching funds. Almost all applicants (except as I mention here at the bottom of the slide - special provisions for American Samoa, Guam, Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands), for everybody else, which is the vast majority of applicants, there is a required matching contribution of 15% of the grant amount. That means that you are going to have to explain to us, as part of the application, how much you are contributing in terms of matching; you can contribute more than 15% but you cannot contribute less than 15%. Your match can either be cash, which is what we recommend, or it can be in-kind.

Why do I say cash is recommended? It is because, if the proposal puts forward in-kind matching, and then on the budget we review, the reviewer identifies that the things that are identified as in-kind are not in fact eligible, then the application may well drop below the 15% minimum match. Once you drop below the 15% minimum match, regardless of how good the application is, it is no longer eligible. The application has to demonstrate at least 15% match. If you come in with a grant proposal and you say "my match is going to be a cash contribution that I am making it an amount equal to 15% of the amount I have asked to be funded through a grant", and then we review it and we say there is one small line item that is in the budget that cannot be funded and it is removed from the budget, we are going to proportionally reduce in the approved budget both the proposed grant and the proposed match. So, the 15% relationship still holds; it is just the grant is going to be a little less than we are considering, the match is going to be a little less than we are expecting. They move together.

On the other hand, if the application came with the in-kind match, and there is a problem specifically with the in-kind match, you cannot do any kind of pro-rata adjustment in that instance because the in-kind match is only in there as match. You put yourself in a situation where, if a line item of the budget is reviewed and determined not to be eligible, that may blow the whole application because you drop below the required match.

In-kind match is acceptable, but it has to be new and non-depreciated equipment. In-kind match has to be stuff. That is the clearest way I can say it. In-kind match cannot be expected charges for services, even eligible services. Sometimes folks will say, "I am going pay for that installation and instructional programming, or excuse me, instruction in the use of equipment, and I am going to call that in-kind." No, that is not in-kind. In-kind is stuff that you have that you are going to contribute to the project. If you're talking about an external party is going to come in and install and teach us to use the equipment, that is perfectly legitimate as far as something we can consider in the budget. But to the extent you're funding that yourself, you are just kicking in a cash match, so either cash or grant could pay for that particular line item. That is not going to be something you want to label as in-kind because it is not. Think of in-kind as you can pick this thing up off the shelf and move into the project. It's brand-new, never been used, that is in-kind. Paying somebody for services rendered, even eligible services rendered, that is not considered in-kind match.

One of the things that we looked at, the various pieces that we are providing for the preparation of your application, we have a number of worksheets that we provide in an Excel format for your use. One of those is a budget worksheet. The budget worksheet we have taken pains to amend somewhat this time out, and it was because it looked like the budget worksheet was confusing some people because we had these parallel

columns running down the budget worksheet that used to show grant and cash match funded equipment versus in-kind match. Some folks would look at that and feel like, I need to put something in the in-kind because it looks like my part of the proposal. What we have done now is we have changed the budget so that if you go into the budget worksheet that we have provided as part of our DLT worksheets on our website, the budget worksheet now has an upper section and a lower section. The upper section deals exclusively with things that are being funded by the grant or cash match; the lower section deals exclusively with things that are being contributed as in-kind. In this way we are hoping not to confuse you with the presentation of the budget so that people think I have to have something in the in-kind column. You do not need to have something in the in-kind column. You do have to have at least 15% match; cash is the simple way to do it.

A couple other items about that, it cannot be federal funds unless there is a federal statutory exemption which you have to document. Vendor discounts are not an eligible match. Anything that is considered to be a match, most particularly this focuses on in-kind, it has to be something that would otherwise be eligible for funding, has to be needed for the project.

Scoring, the scoring, like before, still has three objective criteria and one subjective category, but the maximum total has risen. The maximum total used to be 110 points, and now it is 120 points. The difference is when we get into Special Consideration; it used to be everything we could fund, or designate as Special Consideration, received 10 points. It was just a matter of which 10 points you might qualify for if you qualified for any. Now, there is an opportunity on the Tribal Lands to get 20 points, that makes the maximum total score shift because, as you can see, the objective criteria have a maximum value of 90 points. The subjective is 30 points. Add those together; 120 is the maximum score any particular application could receive. Rurality, Economic Need, those are both still for 40 and 30 points maximum as before; Special Consideration is the one that has changed.

Speaking to Rurality, there are a couple different pieces to it. It used to be pretty simple, but last year implementing some changes that had been mandated by the 2018 Farm Bill, again statute always controls everything else, the definition of rural area shifted a little bit, so when Rurality scores for individual sites are being calculated, there are two things that have to be checked. One is the 2010 (because 2010 is the latest decennial census, likely by Fiscal 2022 or no later than Fiscal 2023, the latest census will be the 2020, but right now it is still 2010) so the 2010 census population for the town in which the site is located is one element that needs to be checked. But the other thing that needs to be checked is a determination of whether or not there is an adjacent urban area. This can be a little difficult to sort through, so we have a map. There is a link to the map here in the slide but there is also not only a link to the map, but also a couple of pages of examples of how to use the DLT map to check whether or not there is an adjacent urban area that is going to affect the Rurality score for a particular site. Please use the application guide. We have updated it so that we remind you not only how to get the information for the census population, since the census site changed a little bit since last year, but also how to use our map because you need to check both pieces in order to determine the Rurality score for any particular site. We check the Rurality score for every end-user site, and in the case of a non-fixed end-user site project, where, for example, computers are being deployed to students or other learners in their homes, where the hub site is a fixed location but the end-user sites are not, in that case the hub location itself is used as a proxy and is the thing that is used for the determination of Rurality. The Rurality scores per site, 40, 30, 20, or 0, are averaged to determine the overall score for the application, and the minimum Rurality score to be considered for a grant is 20.

Economic Need, I mentioned this is a change from last year; we are now calculating Economic Need scores per site and then averaging them. In past years, even in FOA-2 of last year, we told you to find the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates or the SAIPE poverty percentage for each county, that is the county where each site is located. You are still doing that, but now you do that for each site and then, based on that poverty percentage, that site gets an Economic Need score of 0, 10, 20, or 30, and you do this for every site, every end-user site (and in the case of a non-fixed end-user site project, you would also use the hub locations, just as in Rurality). Then we have all those end-user sites with their individual Economic Need scores, and you average them. Whereas before you would only get 0, 10, 20, or 30 as your possible Economic Need score for the overall application, now, since you are doing the score at the individual sites and then averaging them, one application might be 12.9 and another could be 13.2, because you are averaging the score for each individual site rather than coming up with just a single score based on averaging the poverty percentages. The poverty percentage is still used to determine the score per site, but we average them out. Just as before, if there is an end-user site located in a geographic area for which there is no SAIPE



data, and really this is just certain of the insular territories, not in any of the 50 states or the District of Columbia, then you would be assigned a poverty percentage of 30% which basically means a score of 30 for that particular site.

Special Consideration. This is the change you want to make sure you pay attention to because there are big changes from last year. STEM and Opportunity Zones do not get any Special Consideration points in Fiscal 2021. Zero points and if you use our Special Consideration worksheet, as you should, to complete it, you will find that STEM and Opportunity Zones are not on that worksheet anymore because they no longer apply. The Opioid or other Substance Use Disorder treatment is still something that can get Special Consideration points, as long it is the primary purpose of the application, 10 points may be awarded for that purpose. The new one at the top is the 20 points that may be awarded for projects that have at least one end-user site providing service on Tribal Lands. If you are claiming that any Special Consideration points apply to you, you need to complete the Special Consideration worksheet. There are two possible categories to receive points, 20 points are possible for service on Tribal Lands (I'll say more about that in just a second), 10 points is available for if the primary purpose of your project is Opioid or other Substance Use Disorder treatment. But you get one or the other, you do not get both. Nobody will get 30 points Special Consideration; the maximum is 20. Even if both categories apply, if both apply, you will get the 20. That's the best possible result.

Tribal Lands, what are we referring to? We are referring to federally recognized Indian tribes. Most years there is a new publication of that list; the new one was published right at the end of January. I do have a link to it. You can go to the Federal Register and see the current list of federally recognized Indian tribes. We are only looking at Tribal Lands that are on lands that are controlled by the tribes on that list.

Non-tribal applicants who submit an application where at least one end-user site is on Tribal Lands must submit a tribal resolution authorizing the service on the Tribal Lands if they want the Special Consideration points. I had somebody call me the other day and say we have a public school and the public school is on Tribal Lands. The public school has been running for years. It is not a tribal school; it is a public school that happens to sit on Tribal Lands. They said, "if we submit an application and we have the service location on Tribal Lands, would we get the 20 points?" Well, they are not the tribe that is applying. They are a public-school system. If they want 20 Special Consideration points, they need to reach out to the tribe and get a tribal resolution that is included with the application that authorizes that service in that location. They are not required to have that resolution in order to submit an application. But if they don't submit an application with that resolution, they will not get the points. This is the requirement for non-tribal applicants who want to get the 20 Special Consideration points for serving on Tribal Lands; it is required that you have a resolution from the appropriate tribe.

If the tribe itself is applying for the grant, that is not required. Obviously if the tribe is applying for the grant, we know that the tribe endorses the provision of service on the tribe's own land. The site worksheet has to back up this claim, by the way. If there is a claim that there are one or more sites that are on Tribal Lands, we are going to go to the site worksheet and see where are the sites because we have to identify that there is one, or more than one, end-user site in the appropriate location.

Opioid or other Substance Use Disorder treatment: just to remind people of what we are talking about, the treatment purposes that may be included include counseling of people with SUD, treatment of people with SUD, and training people to provide that sort of counseling and education programs addressing it.

One thing I did want to emphasize is if an application serves Tribal Lands, please request both types of Special Consideration. Why do I say that? First of all, when we review the situation, it is possible that the Special Consideration points for Tribal Lands might not be awarded because maybe there is some sort of a problem. Maybe the site was misidentified, and it is not actually on Tribal Lands, or maybe the resolution was overlooked and without the resolution the non-tribal applicant cannot get the points. We want to make sure the application gets all the points to which it is entitled. Even if the documentation is sound and the 20 points are going to be awarded, please make sure you identify this, because this is an easy way for us to identify that this project is one that is eligible for the funds that are allocated for substance use disorder treatment. If you remember all the way back to the slide where we talked about the amount of funds available, we said there are certain funds that are specifically for SUD projects (Substance Use Disorder

treatment projects) that are available for awarding, and this is one of the ways we can readily identify if an application is eligible for those.

The subjective criteria, Needs and Benefits, really three subcategories within these 30 points. There is a discussion of the need for the services, why the communities that are going to be affected by this need the project to be deployed. There needs to be a discussion of the benefits. The benefits really should be quantified to the greatest extent possible and documented for whatever quantification is provided. And also local community involvement, community meetings (and in the time of COVID-19, we understand right now those may not be face-to-face meetings) but virtual meetings are also a way to document community involvement. Community involvement is sometimes documented also whenever a community decides to support it by putting some funds forward or by providing letters of support, those are other ways to document local community involvement.

Completing the grant application, please pay attention to this slide because for the last few years we have had sections A through M (as in Mary), but now we have A through N (as in Nancy). Why do we have one more section? We have one more because at the very top we used to say Standard Form 424 with site worksheet. Well, because the Standard Form 424 is something you complete within grants.gov, but the site worksheet is actually something that you attach to the application distinctly - It is not a form you complete on grants.gov; it is something you provide by attaching to that SF-424 form - we wanted to make sure we highlighted the fact that there is a distinct thing called the site worksheet because, unfortunately, some people have neglected to provide them and that is one of the reasons applications get ruled ineligible. Another thing about this is remember that the Standard Form 424 is the only form that is provided on grants.gov, but look at all the other elements that are required for an application. Everything besides the Standard Form 424 is attached to the Standard Form 424 when you're on grants.gov. You complete all of these other things, some are then going to be Word documents and some may be PDF, we provide a number of Excel templates that you can use for the scoring criteria documentation, and the matching requirements, and the scope of work. All those things need to be attached to the 424 form when you go to submit your application.

Here is a quick tip for you, when you submit your application in grants.gov, after you have submitted it, you can turn right around and download back to your own system a copy of what you just submitted. Please do that. And then open it up, and look at what you have provided. Because we provide a checklist that everybody seems to supply with their application, and that is good, but the checklist is designed to be a tool to help make sure that nothing is overlooked - that no pieces are forgotten. That is unfortunately one of the reasons why a number of applications are declared ineligible is one or more critical pieces are not provided. So please don't just rattle through the checklist, checking merrily along and say, "Good, it's all marked up and I'm going to send it to them." If you have not used that as a tool, use it as a tool. Make sure that all those pieces are there. After you submit it into grants.gov, pull back down a copy, look back through it, make sure everything is there, because if you forgot something, then add it in and put it back into grants.gov again. We will only use the latest version that you submit if you submit your application more than one type into grants.gov. We do not want you to miss out because you forgot to attach a piece. Please check for these things.

By the way, when you download that from grants.gov it is going to come back down from grants.gov as a little zip file all packed together. Look at the size of it. If it is under 500K (KB), I guarantee it is not a complete application. One of the first things I do when I download them all off of grants.gov, because I get them as those individual zip files, is I look at the sizes. The ones that have 15K, 25K, those are 424 forms only or maybe with one very small attachment. The complete applications typically range from one Meg (MB) and sometimes they get extremely big when people scan a lot of high definition PDFs in and they can end up with 40 or 50 Meg, it does need to be that big. There is a wide range of acceptability; I reviewed this before this session, and there were no eligible and complete applications that were under 500K. If your submission file is that small, look carefully; something is missing, probably many things are missing.

Just a couple of things, rattling through, the compliance with other federal statutes, was section I before, now it's section J, and also the certification statement has changed a little bit. Each year we try to get fewer and fewer things that you have to blanket certify to with this signed document. One of the things we have changed this time, when you're on our checklist form, which is loaded up on the DLT website, on the checklist form, it now provides, within the Excel document, a place for the attachments. There are two

different opportunities, one dealing with federal debt and the other dealing with flood insurance where, depending on your answer, you might need to provide something as a supplement. Sometimes people were forgetting that supplement so we now put three worksheets into the Excel file to help make sure you do not forget to do that supplemental statement, if necessary. So please take advantage of it. Use the worksheets that we provide you, that is kind of what this text is saying now.

System for Award Management - the last big thing I need to emphasize. Far too many people drop out of the process because they do not do their SAM registrations in a timely manner and they don't do them completely. In order to apply you must have an active SAM registration prior to submitting an application. You cannot just have submitted to re-up your SAM registration, which you unfortunately allowed to expire, and you submit to do that a week before the deadline. And lo and behold, SAM did not get your recertification done in time, and it became active two weeks after you submitted your application in grants.gov. We are going to check that. If your SAM registration was not active at the time you applied, you are ineligible. You cannot get a grant. You may have done the best application submitted this cycle, but you will not get funded if you did not have an active SAM registration.

Not only does it have to be an active SAM registration; it has to be for the entity that is applying. There are often these complicated, interlocking layers of hierarchy and you applied, and whoops, that is actually the SAM registration and I gave you the DUNS number from my sister company. It has to be for you, the applicant, the entity that is applying has to be the one associated with the DUNS number, with the tax I.D. number and with the SAM registration. The SAM registration needs to be current and in the correct name. In addition to being registered actively in SAM, you must have the Financial Assistance Certifications and Representations. Those must have been made and must be active with the active registration at the time of application. These are not the same as the registrations that you might have for FAR purposes or DFAR purposes, which a lot of entities are set up for so they can do certain contracting things. This is the Financial Assistance Certifications and Representations. Depending on how you look at it within SAM, sometimes it shows up as Grant Certifications. It will use that name Grant Certifications. It will use the name Financial Assistance Certifications and Representations. Make sure those are in there. Make sure you have made those certifications. Because many of the things that we used to have our standalone certification documents for are captured through these certs and reps in SAM, and we are required to use the certs and reps in SAM and only those. So, if you have neglected to do those, your application is ineligible .

The DLT Worksheets: within the DLT worksheets sitting on the website are all these pieces: a version of the Site worksheet, the Rurality worksheet, the Economic Need worksheet (which now averages the scores for each site, as I described), a new Special Consideration worksheet that shows the Tribal Lands and the Opioid/SUD as the only two possibilities, a Matching worksheet, and a Budget worksheet. And I mentioned that we have updated the view of the budget worksheet to more clearly differentiate between grant/cash match and in-kind in the hope that confusion that sometimes resulted will be gone.

Please take note of the deadline; the application submission has to occur through grants.gov by June 4th. It has to happen before midnight. The system has a hard shut off at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time. If you have not submitted it by then, you may be on the West Coast, you may be in the Pacific and the time is different where you are, but it's the time Eastern that controls the shut off in grants.gov. Please don't do it at the last second. Please give yourself time to get it in there. And remember, your SAM registration with the grant certifications must be completed first, and give yourself adequate time. It can take, I have seen it take three weeks, that is 15 business days, in order to get a certification redone so do not do it at the last second. Remember also the SF-424, is the only thing within grants.gov, everything else is attached. And remember what I said: after you submitted it, download a copy, if it is really tiny, less than 500K, you missed something.

Here are some sources of assistance, of course we have our website, we have a link here to our app guide, our General Field Representatives are a great help at understanding what is eligible and what is not. As long as you contact them not fewer than 14 days prior to the closing date, they can still help you. We have to cut it off at that point because they are only so many people and they cannot talk to everybody at the last second, so please do not reach out to them at the last second. Other sources of information, you can send email to the [DLTInfo@usda.gov](mailto:DLTInfo@usda.gov) or you can also call us on the phone at 202-720-0800. That will get passed through to those of us who can assist you on DLT.

That is all we have. I think it's time to turn it over to hear some of your questions and provide a few answers.

Thank you, Richard. We have a lot of questions that have come in and several along the same topic. I will try to group a few of these together. We will start with the one about remote patient monitoring. Is it an eligible activity, and, if so, how would DLT or RUS define remote patient monitoring?

We have made grants that include equipment for remote patient monitoring. It is an eligible purpose, however, it cannot be the totality of an application because remote patient monitoring in and of itself is typically a passive, one-sided activity where patients are connecting at certain times of day to certain equipment, whether to register their blood pressure, temperature, weight, on integrated devices so that, in some cases blood sugar can be monitored. These interconnected devices provide information to their provider, but they need to be part of a telemedicine connection and set up where there is interaction between the patient and provider. They can be part of a telemedicine set up whereby patients are interconnecting real-time with their providers and monitoring devices are used as part of the session and in between sessions. But, if the only thing is monitoring and all direct patient and provider interactions are going to be in person, then it would not be eligible because we would not find that there was telemedicine involved.

Thank you for that. I will expand on that a little as we have another question that says, “we use dual use home telemonitoring that both monitors the patient's vitals and they have the capacity to initiate and/or receive live cellular and video feeds. Am I to take it that these devices would be eligible?”

The proposal will be key here because, if there is not, if the majority of patients who are receiving this equipment are not going to be having a direct interaction, then it would be problematic because then we would say, the predominant use of this is not for telemedicine. If it is a supplement and the predominant use is to use in telemedicine direct interaction, and there is some monitoring that takes place in between times, which is one-sided and the patient can always reach out and connect with the provider instantly if necessary, then that may be eligible. It gets a little bit tricky. It is like, shifting to the distance learning side, we will have people say, “can I have time shifted recorded sessions available as a supplement to education?” The answer is yes, it could supplement the education, but the primary education needs to be real-time interaction and there may be some additional content that people are able to see at a shifted time, using the same tool they are using for the direct interaction. For the telemedicine, it would have to be the direct interaction, the fundamental reason for deploying the equipment, but it is certainly acceptable if the patients are connecting to it, providing certain information in between times, and can at any moment initiate a new session if need be.

Thank you for that. Several related questions, if the patients are in the rural areas, is there a problem with the healthcare providers and the monitoring being done in an urban area? I will answer that, the answer is, no, that is exactly what this is designed for. It is designed to link people in rural areas with care that is provided in urban areas.

I think we have covered that fairly well. Let's go on to a couple of questions about connectivity. Can this grant be used to establish last mile connections to people's homes?

It is difficult to see how we would have an acceptable proposal to connect individual homes. The end-user sites are typically going to be facilities that are going to be benefiting multiple users, whether it is a school, clinic, a community center where people can use the facilities for educational or medical needs. To directly connect to an individual home seems challenging because it is difficult to see that as a permanent fixed site. It seems like the most likely time it may come up is, especially right now when people are off and trying to do distributive learning and have students who have equipment at home and the student does not have the ability to connect to the internet, they wonder if they can find that through this program. But the problem is it becomes recurring charges, including recurring broadband connection fees, which we have already clarified are not eligible. There are some other programs that work to provide some of those funding opportunities, particularly on the telemedicine site, the FCC has some grants that can do that, but we have much more limited ability. The use of broadband funds through the DLT program has been very small. There is an opportunity to do it, but it is pretty limited in scope and application.

We have another broadband related question. That would be, will the broadband internet connection between the healthcare provider and the patient or teacher to student be funded? I believe that is what we just covered but is there a limitation on the money requested for Internet connectivity compared to the DLT equipment?

Internet connectivity, as we just said, there can be some facilities that are funded, but not the ongoing connection charge. The ongoing connection charges are prohibited expenditure as a recurring or operating expense of any project through telemedicine or distance learning. The hard connection itself, whether wired or wireless, can possibly be funded as long as it will be applicant owned and limited to 20% of the total grant funds in any particular award.

That plays right into the next question, can broadband facilities include dark fiber? And elaborate on the limit of the 20% grant.

The problem with funding dark fiber is, if you recall, any particular item that will be funded by a grant has to have as its predominant use the distance learning or telemedicine project. Dark fiber by definition is unused fiber. If you are asking to fund resources that are not being used, then clearly, they do not have majority used for distance learning or telemedicine because they are not even being used. As far as, I am not sure how much more I can say about the 20% limitation on a grant, certainly if someone were applying for the maximum grant, \$1 million, no more than \$200,000 of that grant can be used for broadband facilities, and let's assume that, in this particular instance, there is a desire to run a couple of miles of fiber to connect a particular location that will serve as the hub and the cost of running that fiber exceeds the \$200,000. Let's say it costs \$400,000. In such an instance, it would have to be demonstrated that the entire facility could be funded, but no more than \$200,000 if it will be funded through the grant. The remaining funds would have to already have been obtained, committed, or available from some source in order for it to be requested. We are not saying that the total expenditure has to be within the 20% amount, but the maximum amount of grant funds that can be provided for that purpose is clearly limited to no more than 20% of the award.

Okay. We have a few others but for the sake of time I will jump to a couple of other topics. If we have time we will revisit the broadband topic. Please clarify the Economic Need calculation.

Okay. The Economic Need calculation is used to determine, first of all, an Economic Need score for each individual end-user site. Just as we determine a Rurality score for each individual end-user site, we also determine an Economic Need score. The individual sites are identified first and foremost from the site worksheet and the references on the site worksheet, which lists the address and specific location of every site. Then those references are consistently used when you are determining Rurality and Economic Need. If we have 10 sites numbered one through 10, we will look at the same 10 sites numbered one through 10 when we look at the Economic Need calculation. Let's assume we have two hub sites, and those are just sources of information, and eight end-user sites. My end-user sites in my example are numbers three through 10. I go to the address of the first of the end-user sites, and I look to see in which county (or if you are from Louisiana in which parish) it is located and then I go to the SAIPE data table. We have provided a copy of the SAIPE data that we got for your convenient use. It is on the DLT website, or you can also go through the link and get it from the Census Bureau itself. We have made it easy because we filtered it out so all that you have left is the name of the county, which includes parishes or in some locations, cities, like Virginia where independent cities do not have a county, it lists that geography in a county listing. Next to it has the poverty percentage. You look at the poverty percentage and based on that poverty percentage, you then can go to the Economic Need table and say, depending on what that poverty percentage is, that determines what Economic Need score this location gets.

For example, if the poverty percentage for a particular county is 21.2%, then the Economic Need table will say, okay, that is an Economic Need score of 20 for that location. You do this for each individual location, this one gets 20 and this one gets 10 and this one gets zero and this one gets 20. When you are all done, you average all of the end-user sites to get an overall score. So those 20s, 10s, and zeros, whatever it averages out to, 12.75, that is your Economic Need score, if 17.20, that is your Economic Need score. Individual scores are based on the poverty percentage for each individual site as determined by the address, and then you are going to average the scores for each individual site to get the overall Economic Need score for the application.

Thank you, very much. We have a couple of questions related to what types of entities can apply. Can new entities apply, and can a private university apply?

A new entity can apply. There is not a requirement for a particular longevity of the entity that is applying. In some cases, we have had maybe someone who was a long-standing medical practice that had not formally incorporated, and they do so, so that they are now an eligible form of organization. One thing to bear in mind, if you have a brand-new entity that is applying, among the information a complete application requires is information on sustainability. So, when you get something, an entity that does not have a track record, you do need to make sure you address seriously the information about how the entity is viable and the entity as well as the project will remain viable after the deployment period.

What was the other part of the question, Teresa?

It was about a private university, are they eligible?

A private university would be eligible as long as it has one of those forms of organization. I find it difficult to believe a private university would be an individual or a partnership, so as long as it is incorporated or an LLC and it's a domestic entity, it would be eligible.

Thank you for that. We have a couple of other questions that are pertaining to the IT equipment and it says, "Our distance learning project will train para-professionals to deliver telemedicine in addition to purchasing the core IT equipment for delivery. We also need to purchase specific medical equipment for the students to use for training at end-user sites. Would this medical equipment be eligible if it is used in this environment?"

This is one of those "it depends" answers, because it depends on the type of equipment you're talking about. If you're talking about something that is going to be integrated into the electronic provision of the training, so that, for example, we have had a few projects that came forward and they are using VR technology so that people can learn how to perform certain tasks in the medical field before they actually put hands on patients. So that VR technology is being used to train people and it may include certain elements of tools and so forth that they would use in performing the medical tasks. Those things could potentially be funded.

On the other hand, if students were getting some traditional tools that they would use, like a traditional stethoscope or other devices that would be used in a common office situation, just so they can get the opportunity to put hands on, we understand why they need that sort of thing, but that is not really, at that point, distance education equipment, it is just traditional tools that they would have to learn how to handle. Those tools that are, if you will, old-school, standalone things that are not integrated into the telecommunications link in any form or fashion, those things would not be eligible.

We have about six minutes left. If we want to do one more question or if we have two short ones.

Let me do one quick follow-up to what Richard just covered, if equipment is included in the budget but it turns out not to be eligible, will the whole application be ineligible, or will USDA grant a smaller amount?

I am glad you asked the question. It's an excellent question because this comes up a lot. If we are reviewing the budget, because we review the budget carefully line by line to make sure every item of equipment or other expenditure that is listed is eligible for funding. If we find something that is not eligible, we will strike it from the budget, or in some cases we have to scale something back. For example, somebody might put in, and this has happened, five years' worth of lease charges for leased equipment and we can only fund three years. So, we scale it back to the first three years, which we can do. As long as the amount of change is small, we will continue to consider the proposal. Typically, by small we look at a ratio of around 20%. If it is within 20% of the original amount, that we have to set aside as ineligible, we will still say that we are willing to consider the project. When it exceeds that amount, we run into a viability concern. If we look at a proposal and we have to strike 40% of the items, at that point we are not going to consider the proposal because we cannot, in accordance with our regulation, make an award that is dependent for success on the receipt of funds that we have not already seen are there. In that case, a very large chunk of what was proposed is not going to get funded in the way the applicant had asked and we do not know that the project would deploy. Without having all of the equipment that the applicant said that they need we cannot be sure that the needs will be met, the benefits will be honored, the project can even be viable. We run into a viability problem if

we knock out more than 20% of the request. If it is less than that, we will set aside the line item and say that we are willing to consider the proposal on its own merits just with a smaller grant under consideration.

Thank you. I will toss you the very last question, what is the main reason for ineligibility when you get applications?

Probably the overarching reason that pops up in various quarters is the failure to provide one or more components of the required application in an acceptable format. Sometimes there is something that is labeled as being X, but when we look at it, it does not actually provide the information required. That's why I was emphasizing the point of please review the checklist that we provide and that we also repeated in the application guide and make sure each individual component is there. Not only there but complete and consistent with the guidance that we have provided.

There are some other issues that come up, but I have already mentioned a couple of those things. Make sure that your filed application is not under 500K or you missed something. Make sure that you have all the pieces there and that they are as we have dictated. And as just came up on the budget, please make sure that you did not put a number of things in the budget that cannot be funded because if we have to reduce the budget by more than 1/5, we have a viability concern and the application is not going to get funded.

Richard, I have been told been told that we can take a few more questions, so we are going to stretch it out just a little bit. We got several questions on an informal or formal consortium. The first one is, "For an informal consortium, is the host organization the only entity to file an SF-424?"

In any consortium application, informal consortium application, there is only going to be one SF-424. If there is a host organization, not only is there just one 424, which of necessity is always going to be the case, but there is also only one entity that has to have an active SAM registration with the Financial Assistance Certifications and Representations. There is only one entity, the host entity, that has to provide the checklist that makes those other certifications. It is only the host entity that needs to provide the proof of legal existence. So, all of those components are only required of the host entity.

If there is an informal consortium where, although there is one who is putting forward the application, every participant in the consortium needs to be on the grant agreement and individually sign on the grant agreement. Then each and every one of those entities needs to provide a separate SAM registration, needs to provide the Financial Assistance Certifications and Representations associated with that, and needs to make sure they are providing the other certifications that are covered now under that checklist in part J, as well as proof of legal existence.

You covered two questions in one, thank you. We have several questions about licenses. Would a Zoom license be allowable under DLT for use of tele activity?

Normally, a Zoom license is something that is going to be paid for year-over-year, which turns it into an operating expense. As such, it is something that cannot be funded.

Another license-related question, video software required for use on telemedicine carts is under a yearly license, can any of those costs of the video software subscription be included in the grant as eligible cost?

Again, we run into the problem that this is a recurring expense of using the equipment. If there was a one-time charge in order to get access, that could conceivably be funded because basically you own the rights going forward. When you are required to subscribe year-over-year, that is an operating cost of using the equipment, and although we can fund the equipment itself, the operating expenses for the project are not something we can fund.

I will give you one more question and we will wrap this up, do matching funds need to be provided? I think they are asking; at what point do they need to support matching funds.

The matching funds, the way it is implemented is that when a grant is awarded and then it comes time to request reimbursement of various expenditures and you are submitting those requests in to the agency, the

grantee is going to have to document that at least a pro-rata portion of expenditures have been covered by matching funds.

As far as the commitment of matching funds, if the grantee itself is committing to the required matching funds, the grantee just provides a commitment, typically in the form of a letter, that it uses to support the fact that it is willing to put forward the requisite funds. If the grantee is representing that the matching funds are coming from some other party or parties, then there needs to be a letter from each entity that is supporting the project with some sort of contribution, documenting that commitment. It needs to be signed by somebody who is going to be in a position to make that sort of commitment. If there is a local business that is going to the school district that is trying to get some equipment, it should be signed by the CEO of the business, the owner, president, manager of that business, saying I am willing to commit \$10,000 to the project. It should not be signed by somebody who has a much lower role in the organization.

As far as the commitment, that would be the commitment letter, the document, the appropriate portion of the match. As far as when the funds are going to actually be provided and used, they are going to be used over the time of the deployment of the project and that's going to take place, for those that are successful, after all legal documents have been signed and as the project is being deployed. In order to support the requisition requests submitted to the agency that their pro-rata portion has been expended, they will have to get the money from those donors at that point in order to acquire the equipment and demonstrate it has already been paid for .

Okay, thank you very much, Rich. It was outstanding to hear the presentation you put forward. I was watching the count, we had nearly 250 people watching at some point or another through the presentation, and we had 115 questions. Clearly, the DLT program is one that does a lot of great things and has so much interest from all across the country.

In the presentation, Rich included the phone number and email address that you can reach out to us at, as well as our GFRs who are a great resource in the local area. I want to remind everyone that we will be posting the slide deck and once the video is made, we will post that as well.

One of the questions that came through was, "Will the recording include the Q&A session?" Yes, it will. We will be having our next presentation on the 20th at 2:00 p.m. You are all encouraged to register because as you heard, part of what makes these presentations so great is the input from folks, like all of you who are joining us. We will be looking forward to the one on the 20th as well. On behalf of the Rural Utilities Service and the United States Department of Agriculture, I again want to thank you for coming. Thank you for coming and have a great day. This concludes our presentation. [ Event Concluded]