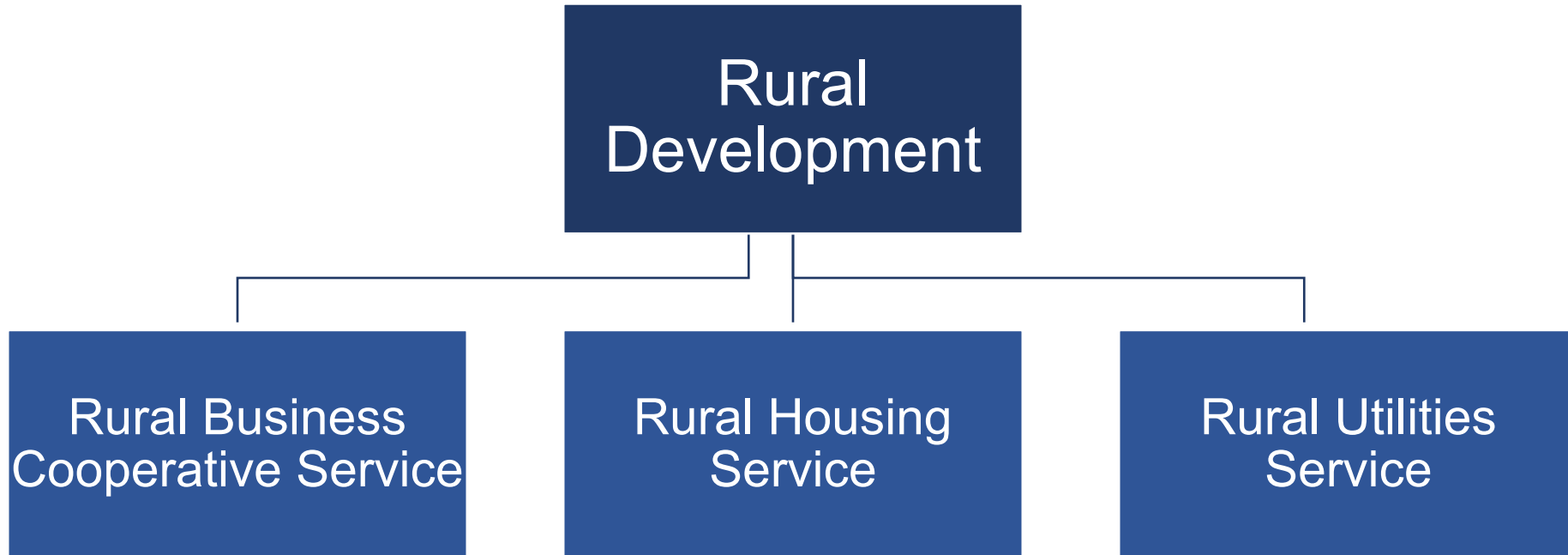




# Rural Utilities Service – Telecommunications Programs

# USDA Rural Development Agencies



# Rural Utilities Service

RUS provides funding for much-needed infrastructure or infrastructure improvements to rural and Tribal communities. These include **water and waste treatment, electric power, and telecommunications** services. All of these services help to expand economic opportunities and improve the quality of life for rural areas and Tribal Lands.

# Telecommunications Programs - General Info

- Funding to construct, expand, and upgrade broadband infrastructure, and increase access to distance learning and telemedicine.
- In rural areas with a population of 20,000 or less.
- Loans, Grants, and Loan/Grant combos.
- For-profit and non-profit entities, federally recognized Tribes, municipalities, cooperatives, institutions of higher education.
- Exclusively focused on rural and Tribal broadband.

# Telecommunications Programs

1. **Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant Program**
  2. **ReConnect Program**
  3. Community Connect Grant Program
  4. Broadband Technical Assistance
  5. Telecommunications Infrastructure Loan Program
  6. Rural Broadband Program
- \*Special Authority: Substantially Underserved Trust Areas (SUTA)**



# SUTA – Substantially Underserved Trust Areas

- Programs covered: Electric Loans, Telecom and Broadband Loans, Community Connect Grants, WEP Loans and Grants and High Energy Cost Grants:  
<https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/initiatives/substantially-underserved-trust-area-suta>
- **At the discretion of Administrator, RUS can modify certain loan terms or application requirements:**
  - Interest rates as low as 2%, extended amortization period, and/or priority processing
  - Waiver of certain documentation requirements regarding non-duplication of service
  - Waiver of matching funds or credit support requirements for loans
  - Providing the highest priority for funding to eligible projects that will serve trust areas

# Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant Program

# Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant Program

- **Purpose:** Equipment to deliver telemedicine service and distance learning curriculums in rural communities with a population of 20,000 people or less.
- **Funding Type:** Grants with 15% Matching Fund Requirement.
- **Eligible entities:** Federally recognized Tribes, nonprofits, for-profit businesses, consortia, institutions of higher education
- **Broadband Facilities:** Up to 20% of a grant can be used for broadband facilities that support distance learning or telemedicine



# Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant Program - Eligibility

## Applicant Eligibility

- The following entity types are eligible to apply:
  - Incorporated organization (for-profit or not-for-profit)
  - Indian tribe or tribal organization, as defined in 25 U.S.C. 5304
  - State or local unit of government
  - Consortium as defined in 1734.3
  - Limited liability company or other legal entity
  - **Almost every entity except individuals & partnerships**

# Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant Program

## Distance Learning

- Distance Learning means a telecommunications link to an end-user through the use of eligible equipment for the following purposes:
  - Provide educational programs, instruction, or information originating in one area, whether rural or not, to students and teachers who are located in rural areas; or
  - Connect teachers and students, located in one rural area with teachers and students who are located in a different rural area.

# Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant Program

## Telemedicine

- Telemedicine is a telecommunications connection to an end-user through the use of eligible equipment which electronically links medical professionals at separate sites in order to exchange health care information in audio, video, graphic, or other format for the purpose of providing improved health care services primarily to residents of rural areas.
  - Benefits rural residents both in reduced travel and improved access to service.

# Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant Program - Eligibility

## **Eligible Grant Purposes** *(See DLT Application Guide for details)*

- Acquiring, by lease or purchase eligible equipment.
  - If leased, the cost of the lease during the 3-year life of the grant is eligible.
  - Broadband facilities must be applicant owned & are limited to 20% of grant
- Acquiring instructional programming that is a capital asset (including the purchase or lease of instructional programming already on the market)
- Providing technical assistance and instruction for using eligible equipment. (category limited to 10% of grant)

# Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant Program - Eligibility

## Examples of eligible equipment

- Computer hardware & software
  - Telemedical devices
  - Microphones
  - Cameras
  - Speakers
  - Monitors & other display devices
  - Inside wiring
  - Broadband facilities, **if applicant-owned**
- ✓ The application must demonstrate that the predominant purpose (50% or more of use) of every line-item in the grant and match budget meets the DLT Grant definition of distance learning or telemedicine .

# Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant Program - Eligibility

## **Ineligible Grant Purposes** *(See DLT Application Guide for details)*

- Medical or educational equipment not having telemedicine or distance learning as its official function
- Electronic Medical Record Systems
- Salaries, administrative, operating, or recurring expenses (including recurring broadband connection fees)
- Application preparation costs
- Purchase of land, buildings, building construction, site development, destruction or alteration of buildings
- Any purpose not specifically contained in 7 CFR 1734.21



# Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant Program - Eligibility

## **Matching Contribution** *(15% of the grant amount required)*

- Can either be cash (recommended) or in-kind
- Must be for a purpose that would be otherwise eligible
- Cannot include federal funds unless there is a federal statutory exception
- Only new, non-depreciated equipment with an established value may be considered an in-kind match
- Vendor discounts or supplied equipment are not an eligible match
- Special matching provisions exist for American Samoa, Guam, Virgin Islands, and Marianas Islands

# Distance Learning & Telemedicine Grant Program

## Sources of Assistance

- Website: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/telecommunications-programs/distance-learning-telemedicine-grants>
- Application Guide: Updated for each round of funding and posted to the website
- Contact Us: <https://www.usda.gov/reconnect/contact-us>

# ReConnect Program

# ReConnect Program

- **Purpose:** Construction and expansion of broadband service in rural communities with a population of 20,000 people or less, where sufficient broadband access is not available to at least 90% of the households.
- **Funding Type:** Direct loans, grants, and loan/grant combinations. Grants have a 25% matching requirement\*.
- **Eligible entities:** Federally recognized Tribes, nonprofits, businesses, coops, etc.

# ReConnect Program

## Sources of Assistance

- Website: <https://www.usda.gov/reconnect>
- Application Guide: Updated for each round of funding and posted to the website
- Contact Us: <https://www.usda.gov/reconnect/contact-us>
- Webinars and workshops: <https://www.usda.gov/reconnect/events>

# Contact Rural Utilities Service

**47 State Offices**

**400+ Area Offices**

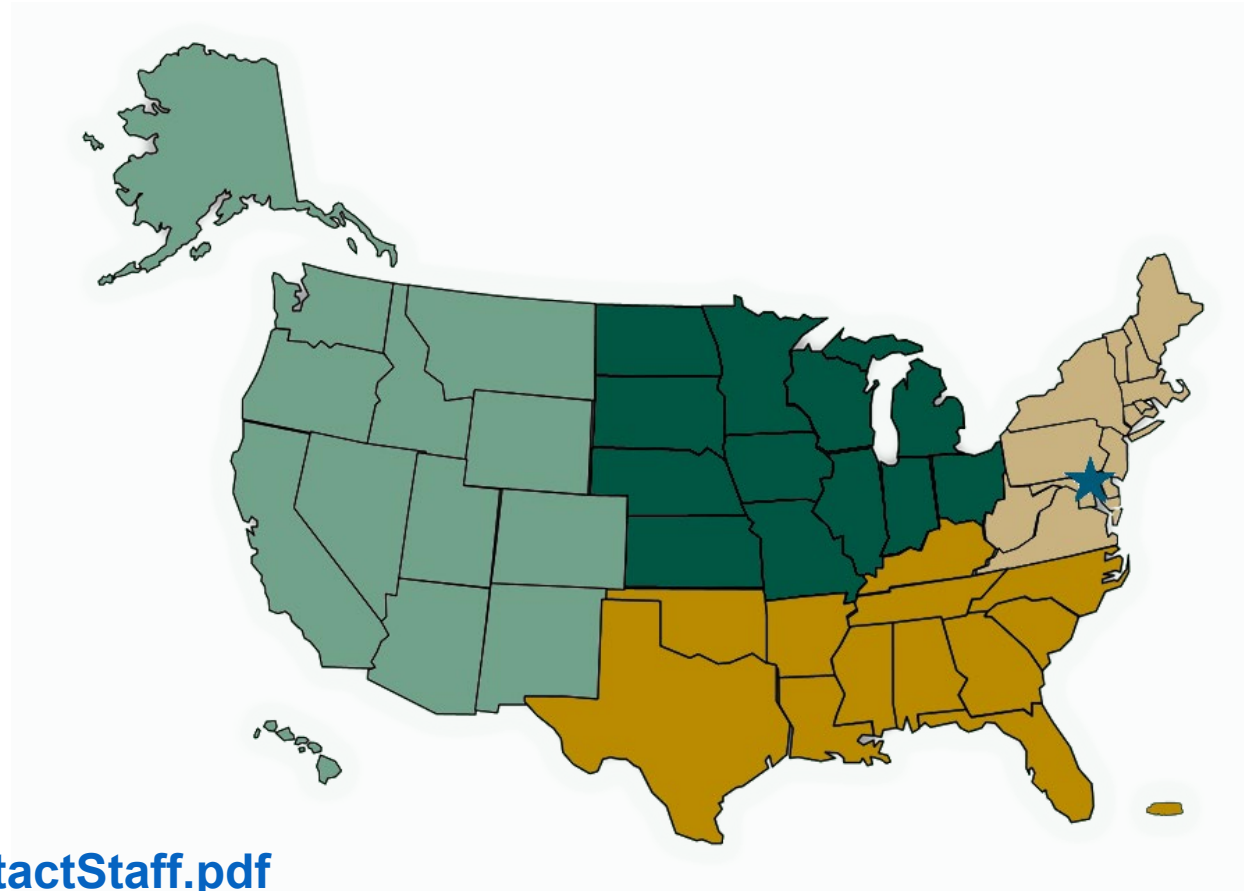
**1 National Office in DC**

Contact your General Field Representative (GFR)

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/telecom-gfr>

National Office Telecom Staff

[https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/UTP\\_ContactStaff.pdf](https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/UTP_ContactStaff.pdf)





Q & A

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