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7 CFR Ch. XVII (1–1–03 Edition)

made available to an individual recipient for each fiscal year under this subpart by publishing notice of the maximum amount in the FEDERAL REGISTER not sooner than 45 days before the period for accepting applications begins. The minimum amount of a grant is \$50,000.

§ 1703.125 **Completed application.**

The following items are required to be submitted to RUS in support of an application for grant funds:

(a) *An application for Federal Assistance.* A completed Standard Form 424.

(b) *An executive summary of the project.* The applicant must provide RUS with a general project overview that addresses the following 8 categories:

(1) A description of why the project is needed;

(2) An explanation of how the applicant will address the need cited in paragraph (b)(1) of this section, why the applicant requires financial assistance, the types of educational or medical services to be offered by the project, and the benefits to rural residents;

(3) A description of the applicant, documenting eligibility in accordance with §1703.103;

(4) An explanation of the total project cost including a breakdown of the grant required and the source of matching contribution and other financial assistance for the remainder of the project;

(5) A statement specifying whether the project is either a distance learning or telemedicine facility as defined in §1703.102. If the project provides both distance learning and telemedicine services, the applicant must identify the predominant use of the system;

(6) A general overview of the telecommunications system to be developed, including the types of equipment, technologies, and facilities used;

(7) A description of the participating hubs and end user sites and the number of rural residents that will be served by the project at each end user site; and

(8) A certification by the applicant that facilities constructed with grants do not duplicate adequate established telemedicine or distance learning services.

(9) A listing of the location of each end user site (city, town, village, borough, or rural areas) plus the State.

(c) *Scoring criteria documentation.* Each grant applicant must address and provide documentation on how it meets each of the scoring criteria contained in §1703.126.

(d) *A scope of work.* The scope of work must include, at a minimum:

(1) The specific activities to be performed under the project;

(2) Who will carry out the activities;

(3) The time-frames for accomplishing the project objectives and activities; and

(4) A budget for all capital expenditures reflecting the line item costs for approved purposes for both the grant funds and other sources of funds for the project. Separately, the budget must specify any line item costs that are nonapproved purposes for grants as contained in §1703.123.

(e) *Financial information and sustainability.* The applicant must provide a narrative description demonstrating: feasibility of the project, including having sufficient resources and expertise necessary to undertake and complete the project; and, how the project will be sustained following completion of the project.

(f) *A statement of experience.* The applicant must provide a written narrative (not exceeding three single spaced pages) describing its demonstrated capability and experience, if any, in operating an educational or health care endeavor and any project similar to the project. Experience in a similar project is desirable but not required.

(g) *Funding commitment from other sources.* The applicant must provide evidence, in form and substance satisfactory to RUS, that funding agreements have been obtained to ensure completion of the project. These agreements shall be sufficient to ensure:

(1) Payment of all proposed expenditures for the project;

(2) All required matching contribution in 1703.120;

(3) any additional matching funding provided in accordance with §1703.126(b)(4); and

(4) Any other funds necessary to complete the project.

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(h) *A telecommunications system plan.* A telecommunications system plan consisting of the following:

(1) The capabilities of the telecommunications terminal equipment, including a description of the specific equipment which will be used to deliver the proposed service. The applicant must document discussions with various technical sources which could include consultants, engineers, product vendors, or internal technical experts, provide detailed cost estimates for operating and maintaining the end user equipment and provide evidence that alternative equipment and technologies were evaluated.

(2) A listing of the proposed telecommunications terminal equipment, telecommunications transmission facilities, data terminal equipment, interactive video equipment, computer hardware and software systems, and components that process data for transmission via telecommunications, computer network components, communication satellite ground station equipment, or any other elements of the telecommunications system designed to further the purposes of this subpart, that the applicant intends to build or fund using RUS financial assistance.

(3) A description of the consultations with the appropriate telecommunications carriers (including other inter-exchange carriers, cable television operators, enhanced service providers, providers of satellite services and telecommunications equipment manufacturers and distributors) and the anticipated role of such providers in the proposed telecommunications system.

(i) *Compliance with other Federal statutes.* The applicant must provide evidence of compliance with other Federal statutes and regulations including, but not limited to the following:

(1) E.O. 11246, Equal Employment Opportunity, as amended by E.O. 11375 and as supplemented by regulations contained in 41 CFR part 60;

(2) Architectural barriers;

(3) Flood hazard area precautions;

(4) Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970;

(5) Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1998 (41 U.S.C. 701);

(6) E.O.s 12549 and 12689, Debarment and Suspension;

(7) Byrd Anti-Lobbying Amendment (31 U.S.C. 1352).

(j) *Environmental impact and historic preservation.* (1) The applicant must provide details of the project's impact on the environment and historic preservation. Grants made under this part are subject to part 1794 of this chapter which contains RUS' policies and procedures for implementing a variety of Federal statutes, regulations, and executive orders generally pertaining to the protection of the quality of the human environment that are listed in 7 CFR 1794.1. The application shall contain a separate section entitled "Environmental Impact of the Project."

(2) The applicant may use the "Environmental Questionnaire," available from RUS, to assist in complying with the requirements of this section.

(k) *Evidence of legal authority and existence.* The applicant must provide evidence of its legal existence and authority to enter into a grant agreement with RUS and perform the activities proposed under the grant application.

(l) *Federal debt certification.* The applicant must provide a certification that it is not delinquent on any obligation owed to the government (7 CFR parts 3016 and 3019).

(m) *Consultation with USDA State Director, Rural Development.* The applicant must provide evidence that it has consulted with the USDA State Director, Rural Development, concerning the availability of other sources of funding available at the State or local level.

(n) *State strategic plan conformity.* The applicant must provide evidence from the USDA State Director, Rural Development, that the application conforms with the State strategic plan as prepared under section 381D of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1921 *et seq.*). The applicant should indicate if such a plan does not exist.

(o) *Supplemental information.* The applicant should provide any additional information it considers relevant to the project and likely to be helpful in determining the extent to which the project would further the purposes of the 1996 Act.

(p) *Additional information required by RUS.* The applicant must provide any additional information RUS may consider relevant to the application and necessary to adequately evaluate the application. RUS may request modifications or changes, including changes in the amount of financial assistance requested, in any proposal described in an application submitted under this subpart.

[64 FR 14360, Mar. 25, 1999, as amended at 64 FR 25423, May 12, 1999; 67 FR 3040, Mar. 11, 2002]

§ 1703.126 Criteria for scoring grant applications.

(a) *Criteria.* The criteria in this section will be used by RUS to score applications that have been determined to be in compliance with the requirements of this subpart. Applications for grants must meet the rurality requirements in paragraph (b)(2)(iv) of this section and address each of the following scoring criteria:

- (1) The need for services and benefits derived from services (up to 55 points);
- (2) The comparative rurality of the project service area (up to 45 points);
- (3) The economic need of the applicant's service area as estimated by the NSLP or other supplemental objective criteria (up to 35 points);
- (4) The ability of the applicant to leverage resources (up to 35 points);
- (5) Innovativeness of the project (up to 15 points);
- (6) The cost effectiveness of the system (up to 35 points);
- (7) Project participation in EZ/ECs (Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Communities) and Champion Communities (up to 15 points).

(b) *Scoring criteria:*

(1) *The need for services and benefits derived from services—Up to 55 Points.* (i) This criterion will be used by RUS to score applications based on the documentation in support of the need for services, benefits derived from the services proposed by the project, and local community involvement in planning, implementing, and financial assistance of the project. Applicants may receive up to 45 points for documenting the need for services and benefits derived from service as explained in this section. Applicants with an average

NSLP percentage less than 50 percent as determined in paragraph (b)(3) of this section may receive up to an additional 10 points based on information submitted that evidences the economic need of the project's service area. This determination will be made by RUS based on information submitted by the applicant under paragraph (b)(1) of this section.

(ii) RUS will consider the extent of the applicant's documentation explaining the economic, education, or health care challenges facing the community; the applicant's proposed plan to address these challenges; how the grant can help; and why the applicant cannot complete the project without a grant. RUS will also consider the extent to which the applicant provides evidence that economic, education, or health care challenges could not be addressed without employing advanced technology. The Administrator will also consider any support by recognized experts in the related educational or health care field, any documentation substantiating the educational or health care underserved nature of the applicant's proposed service area, and any justification for specific educational or medical services which are needed and will provide direct benefits to rural residents.

(A) Some examples of benefits to be provided by the project include, but are not limited to:

- (1) Improved educational opportunities for a specified number of students;
- (2) Travel time and money saved by telemedicine diagnoses;
- (3) Number of doctors retained in rural areas;
- (4) Number of additional students electing to attend higher education institutions;
- (5) Lives saved due to prompt medical diagnoses and treatment;
- (6) New education courses offered, including college level courses;
- (7) Expanded use of educational facilities such as night training;
- (8) Number of patients receiving telemedicine diagnoses;
- (9) Provision of training, information resources, library assets, adult education, lifetime learning, community use of technology, jobs, connection to region, nation, and world.