

Rural Utilities Service, USDA

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[54 FR 13351, Apr. 3, 1989; 54 FR 16194, Apr. 21, 1989. Redesignated at 55 FR 39395, Sept. 27, 1990, as amended at 56 FR 26596, June 10, 1991; 58 FR 66253, Dec. 20, 1993; 62 FR 46869, Sept. 5, 1997; 65 FR 42619, July 11, 2000; 65 FR 54402, Sept. 8, 2000]

§ 1735.3 Availability of forms.

Single copies of RUS forms and publications cited in this part are available from Program Support Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, STOP 1522, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250-1522. These RUS forms and publications may be reproduced. The terms “RUS form”, “RUS standard form”, and “RUS specification” have the same meanings as the terms “REA form”, “REA standard form”, and “REA specification”, respectively, unless otherwise indicated.

[54 FR 13351, Apr. 3, 1989. Redesignated at 55 FR 39395, Sept. 27, 1990, and amended at 59 FR 66441, Dec. 27, 1994; 62 FR 46870, Sept. 5, 1997]

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Subpart B—Loan Purposes and Basic Policies

SOURCE: 54 FR 13351, Apr. 3, 1989, unless otherwise noted. Redesignated at 55 FR 39395, Sept. 27, 1990.

§ 1735.10 General.

(a) The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) makes loans to furnish and improve telephone service in rural areas. Loans made or guaranteed by the Administrator of RUS will be made in conformance with the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (RE Act), as amended (7 U.S.C. 901 *et seq.*), and 7 CFR chapter XVII. RUS provides borrowers specialized and technical accounting, engineering, and other managerial assistance in the construction and operation of their facilities when necessary to aid the development of rural telephone service and to protect loan security.

(b) RUS will not make hardship loans, RUS cost-of-money loans, or RTB loans for any wireline local exchange service or similar fixed-station voice service that, in RUS’ opinion, is inconsistent with the borrower achieving the requirements stated in the State’s telecommunication moderniza-

tion plan within the time frame stated in the plan (see 7 CFR part 1751, subpart B), unless RUS has determined that achieving the requirements as stated in such plan is not technically or economically feasible.

(c) A borrower receiving a loan to provide mobile telecommunications services or special telecommunications services shall be considered to be participating in the state telecommunications plan (TMP) with respect to the particular loan so long as the loan funds are not used in a manner that, in RUS’ opinion, is inconsistent with the borrower achieving the goals set forth in the plan, except that a borrower must comply with any portion of a TMP made applicable to the borrower by a state commission with jurisdiction.

(d) RUS will not deny or reduce a loan or an advance of loan funds based on a borrower’s level of general funds.

(e) No fees or charges are assessed for any type of loan or guarantee provided by RUS or the Rural Telephone Bank (RTB).

(f) The Administrator may use consultants funded by the borrower for financial, legal, engineering, and other technical advice in connection with the review of a borrower’s loan application.

[58 FR 66253, Dec. 20, 1993, as amended at 59 FR 17464, Apr. 13, 1994; 65 FR 42619, July 11, 2000; 65 FR 54403, Sept. 8, 2000]

§ 1735.11 Area coverage.

Borrowers must make adequate telephone service available to the widest practical number of rural subscribers during the life of the loan. Both the nature of the service area and the cost per subscriber must be fully considered. The borrower must seek to provide service to all interested potential subscribers in the service area. Borrowers are not required to extend service in situations where the costs would be exorbitant. The loan contract shall contain appropriate provisions to effect this requirement. See 7 CFR 1737.11(a), Preapplication Determinations: Area to be Served.

§ 1735.12 Nonduplication.

(a) In states having a state regulatory body with authority to regulate

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telephone service and to require certificates of convenience and necessity, the borrower must obtain such a certificate before RUS will make a loan. Facilities or services not specifically covered by such certificate will be subject to the provisions of §1735.12(b).

(b) In states where there is no such regulatory body, a loan will not be made unless the Administrator determines that no duplication of lines, facilities, or systems already providing reasonably adequate services shall result from such a loan.

(c) RUS shall consider the following criteria for any wireline local exchange service or similar fixed-station voice service provided by a local exchange carrier (LEC) in determining whether such service is reasonably adequate:

(1) The LEC is providing area coverage as described in §1735.11.

(2) The LEC is providing all one-party service or, if the State commission has mandated a lower grade of service, the LEC is eliminating that service in accordance with the requirements of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, 47 U.S.C. 151 *et seq.*

(3) The LEC's network is capable of providing transmission and reception of data at a rate of at least 1,000,000 bits per second (1 Mbps) with reasonable modification to any subscriber who requests it.

(4) The LEC makes available custom calling features (at a minimum, call waiting, call forwarding, abbreviated dialing, and three-way calling).

(5) The LEC is able to provide E911 service to all subscribers, when requested by the government entity responsible for this service.

(6) The LEC is able to offer local service with blocked toll access to those subscribers who request it.

(7) The LEC's network is capable of accommodating Internet access at speeds of at least 28,800 bits per second (28.8 Kbps) via modem dial-up from any subscriber location.

(8) There is an absence of frequent service interruptions.

(9) The LEC is interconnected with the public switched network.

(10) No Federal or State regulatory commission having jurisdiction has determined that the quality, availability,

or reliability of the service provided is inadequate.

(11) Services are provided at reasonably affordable rates.

(12) Any other criteria the Administrator determines to be applicable to the particular case.

(d) RUS shall consider the following criteria for any of mobile telecommunications service in determining whether such service is reasonably adequate:

(1) The extent to which area coverage is being provided as described in 7 CFR 1735.11.

(2) Clear and reliable call transmission is provided with sufficient channel availability.

(3) The mobile telecommunications service signal strength is at least -85dBm (decibels expressed in milliwatts).

(4) The mobile telecommunications service is interconnected with the public switched network.

(5) Mobile 911 service is available to all subscribers, when requested by the local government entity responsible for this service.

(6) No Federal or State regulatory commission having jurisdiction has determined that the quality, availability, or reliability of the service provided is inadequate.

(7) Mobile telecommunications service is not provided at rates which render the service unaffordable to a significant number of rural persons.

(8) Any other criteria the Administrator determines to be applicable to the particular case.

(e) RUS does not consider mobile telecommunications service a duplication of existing wireline local exchange service or similar fixed-station voice service. RUS may finance mobile telecommunications systems designed to provide eligible services in rural areas under the Rural Electrification Act even though the services provided by the system may incidentally overlap services of existing mobile telecommunications providers.

(f) RUS shall consider the following criteria for any provider of a specialized telecommunications service in determining whether such service is reasonably adequate:

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(1) The provider of a specialized telecommunications service is providing area coverage as described in § 1735.11.

(2) An adequate signal strength is provided throughout the largest practical portion of the service area.

(3) There is an absence of frequent service interruptions.

(4) The quality and variety of service provided is comparable to that provided in nonrural areas.

(5) The service provided complies with industry standards.

(6) No Federal, State, or local regulatory commission having jurisdiction has determined that the quality, availability, or reliability of the service provided is inadequate.

(7) Services are provided at reasonably affordable rates.

(8) Any other criteria the Administrator determines to be applicable to the particular case.

[54 FR 13351, Apr. 3, 1989. Redesignated at 55 FR 39395, Sept. 27, 1990, as amended at 65 FR 42619, July 11, 2000; 65 FR 54403, Sept. 8, 2000]

§ 1735.13 Location of facilities and service for nonrural subscribers.

(a) When it is determined by the Administrator to be necessary in order to furnish or improve telephone service in rural areas, loans may be made for the improvement, expansion, construction, acquisition, and operation of telephone lines, facilities, or systems without regard to their geographical location.

(b) To the greatest extent practical, loans are limited to providing telephone facilities that serve subscribers in rural areas. In order to furnish and improve service to rural subscribers it may at times be necessary to provide loan funds to finance telephone facilities which (1) will also serve nonrural subscribers, or (2) are located in nonrural areas. Loans may be approved to finance such facilities if the Administrator determines, on a case-by-case basis, that (i) the primary purpose of the loan is to provide service to rural areas and (ii) the financing of facilities for nonrural subscribers is necessary and incidental to furnishing or improving telephone service in rural areas.

(c) Loan funds may be approved for facilities to serve nonrural subscribers only if (1) the principal purpose of the loan is to furnish and improve rural

service and (2) the use of loan funds to serve nonrural subscribers is necessary and incidental to the principal purpose of the loan. The following are examples of purposes for which such loans may be made (such loans are not limited to these examples):

(1) In the case of construction of a new system, if the loan would not be economically feasible and self-liquidating unless the nonrural as well as the rural portions of the telephone service area are included in the proposed system, the loan may include funds for both portions.

(2) Where the acquisition of an existing system located in and serving a nonrural area is necessary to serve as the nucleus of an expanded system to furnish area coverage service in rural areas, the loan may include funds to finance the acquisition.

(3) When a system is being converted to modern service for rural subscribers, the loan may include funds for the conversion of the nonrural facilities, if the rural service will be improved as a result of such nonrural improvements and it is impractical to finance and serve the nonrural and rural areas separately.

(4) A loan may include funds to serve nonrural subscribers located in community centers frequently called by the rural subscribers if the construction to serve such nonrural subscribers will be incidental to, and contribute substantially to, the provision of adequate service for the rural subscribers.

(d) RUS may also approve financing for facilities to serve nonrural areas if, at the time financing was first approved by RUS:

(1) The nonrural area had a population of 1,500 or less when first financed by RUS and that financing was approved prior to November 1, 1993; or

(2) The nonrural area had a population of 5,000 or less when first financed by RUS and that financing was approved on or after November 1, 1993.

[54 FR 13351, Apr. 3, 1989. Redesignated at 55 FR 39395, Sept. 27, 1990, as amended at 58 FR 66253, Dec. 20, 1993]

§ 1735.14 Borrower eligibility.

(a) RUS makes loans to: