

April, 2008

SUPPORTING STATEMENT
(0572-0134)
Public Television Digital Transition Grant Program

This is a revision of a currently approved collection.

A. Justification

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary.

The Rural Utilities Service (RUS), an agency delivering the United States Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Utilities Programs, hereinafter referred to as Rural Development and/or Agency, is assisting with the nation's transition to digital television, which is required by the Federal Communications Commission that all television broadcasters are to initiate the broadcast of a digital television signal, and to cease analog television broadcasts on February 18, 2009

Congress recognized the need to facilitate the digital transition in public television stations that serve rural areas. The Omnibus Appropriations Act (Public Law 108-7) provided for \$15,000,000 in grant funds in the Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant Program budget for public broadcasting systems to meet the digital transition. On February 20, 2004, USDA announced the selection of 16 recipients in 13 states to receive \$15 million in grant funds to finance the conversion of television services to digital broadcasting for small rural public television stations. The Consolidated Appropriations Act (Public Law 108-199) provided for an additional \$14,000,000 in grant funds for this purpose, and on March 11, 2004, USDA issued a Notice stating that this funding would be used to provide grants to unfunded applications on hand from the FY 2003 application cycle. On April 20, 2004, an additional 18 grants were awarded to recipients in 16 states.

In FY 2003 and 2004, Rural Development issued requirements for the grant program by way of Notices of Funds Availability (NOFA) (attached). To continue this program in FY 2005, Congress provided \$10,000,000 for grant funds in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2005 (P.L. 108-447). Congress also authorized additional grant purposes which were specifically excluded in the previous fiscal years' NOFAs. Rural Development wrote a new regulation to incorporate the new statutory requirements and update this competitive grant program in FY 2006. The regulation codified the grant program and simplified the information collection burden for grant applicants. Rural Development will use similar information collection requirements as submitted in the previous approved collection to reflect the burden imposed by the new regulation.

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the Agency has made of the information received from the current collection.

Applications may be submitted by entities to Rural Development via electronic and hard copy. The applicant will submit a grant application that contains those items set forth in the new regulation and will enter into a Grant Agreement with the Agency. The Agency will use the submitted information to score and rank applications for funding. The information collected will enable scoring in three categories: rurality; economic need as measured by eligibility for National School Lunch Program participation; and special disadvantaging factors facing the station's transition plans. The specific information required under this collection will consist of the following:

Standard Form (SF) 424 - Application for Federal Assistance

The Executive Summary, not to exceed two pages that will describe the public television station, its service area and offerings, its current digital transition status, and the proposed project.

Evidence of eligibility such as:

- A spreadsheet showing the total project cost, with a breakdown of items sufficient to enable Rural Development to determine item eligibility and compliance with required level of matching funding.
- A map or maps, showing the digital television core coverage area for the proposed grant project.

The applicant's estimated rurality score, supported by a worksheet showing the population of its digital television coverage area, the derivation of the urban and rural components of that population, and a map showing the digital television coverage area and all urban areas within its boundaries. Supporting information shall list the sources of all population and coverage area information, and if the application includes computations made by a consultant or other organization outside the public television station, shall state the details of that collaboration.

For the applicant's core coverage area, the percentage of students who are eligible for benefits from the National School Lunch Program.

If applicable, a presentation not to exceed two pages demonstrating station hardship.

Evidence that the Federal Communications Commission has authorized the initiation of digital broadcasting at each of the applicant's transmitter and translator sites. In the event that a Federal Communications Commission construction permit has not been issued for one or more sites, the Agency may include those sites in the grant, and make advance of funds for that site conditional upon the submission of a construction permit.

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:

- Executive Order (E.O.) 11246, Equal Employment Opportunity, as amended by E.O. 11375 and as supplemented by regulations contained in 41 CFR Part 60;
- Architectural barriers;
- Flood hazard area precautions;
- Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970;
- Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1998 (41 U.S.C. 701);
- E.O.s 12549 and 12689, Debarment and Suspension; and
- Byrd Anti-Lobbying Amendment (31 U.S.C. 1352).
- Economic impact and historic preservation. The applicant must provide details of the digital transition's impact on the environment and historic preservation, and comply with 7 CFR 1794, which contains the Agency's 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. The application shall contain a separate section entitled "Environmental Impact of the Digital Transition." This shall include the Environmental Questionnaire/Certification, which is available from the Agency, on which the applicant describes the impact of its digital transition. Submission of the Environmental Questionnaire/Certification does not constitute compliance with 7 CFR 1794.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g. permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection.

Rural Development is committed to complying with the requirements of the Government Paperwork Elimination Act and offers this program through Grants.gov and accepts electronically submitted applications.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Item 2 above.

The information that applicants will submit under this request has not been collected by this or any other Federal Agency. Each application will be for a new project and for new purposes.

5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities (item 5 of OMB Form 83-1), describe any methods used to minimize burden.

The grant application process has been designed to have minimal impact. The scoring has been kept to only three elements, requested narratives have length limits placed upon them, and the Agency has researched the information requested to ensure that it is information that is reasonably available to potential applicants.

6. Describe the consequences to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.

If this information is not collected, there would be no basis for awarding grant funding. Since this is a one time collection from each applicant, it cannot be collected less often. The digital television transition is a one-time changeover in technology, so the projects will not be repeated in any geographical area.

7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner:

- a. Requiring respondents to report information more than quarterly.

Information would be collected only once per applicant for this grant authorization.

- b. Requiring written responses in less than 30 days.

If an application contains information that appears to be incorrect or incomplete, the Agency could give the applicant an opportunity to provide the correct or complete information. The Agency could place a time limit of less than 30 days for submission of this type of information.

- c. Requiring more than an original and two copies.

The Agency would not request more than an original and two copies of any document.

- d. Requiring respondents to retain records for more than 3 years.

The Agency would not require applicants to retain records for more than 3 years.

- e. That is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study.

The statistical information in the requested grant application will rely on currently-available statistical information about the areas covered by public television stations. All of this information is available from Federal agencies. The application does not involve the generation of new statistical information.

- f. Requiring use of statistical sampling which has not been reviewed and approved by OMB.

The application relies on statistical information that is publicly available, in particular: population data from the Bureau of the Census; and National School Lunch Program eligibility data which are available from state departments of education and local school districts, and often from schools in the applicant's coverage area.

g. Requiring a pledge of confidentiality.

This application does not involve a pledge of confidentiality.

h. Requiring submission of proprietary trade secrets.

This application does not involve any submission of proprietary trade secrets.

8. If applicable, identify the date and page number of publication in the Federal Register of the agency's notice soliciting comments on the information collection. Summarize public comments received and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments. Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the Agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, reporting format (if any), and on data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

As required by 5 CFR 1320.8(d), a *Federal Register* 60-day Notice to request comments was published on December 26, 2007 in 72 FR 72985. No comments were received.

We are in frequent individual contact with the applicants, awardees, and other interested parties and we solicit input on the Program. While we receive numerous comments, none have concerned details of the information collection.

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than reenumeration of contractors or grantees.

No such decision has been made.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or Agency policy.

There has been no assurance of confidentiality offered. Information submitted to the Agency by applicants and borrowers is covered by provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552).

11. Provide additional justification for any question of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior or attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private.

There is no request for sensitive information.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information.

The Agency estimates the hour burden on respondents to be 920 hours with a cost of \$600 per application to complete the application package determined as follows:

- 4 hours engineering/computer technician to determine the core coverage area of the proposed grant project.: 4 hours @ \$30/hr = \$120.00
- 4 hours authoring application, which includes writing the executive summary and the argument for points for “Station Hardship”: 4 analyst hours at \$25/hr = \$100.00
- 15 hours completing forms, attaching documents, complying with other Federal statutes, finding information at referenced websites: 15 clerical hours at \$20/hr = \$300.00
- \$80 is included for duplication, shipping costs, etc. per application

Totals 23 hours X 40 applications = 920 hours
 \$600 X 40 applications = \$24,000

The Agency estimates that it will be able to fund 10 grants from the 40 estimated applications, therefore the hours and costs to complete the grant agreement are as follows:

- 10 grant agreements X 3 hours = 30 hours X \$30 = \$900.00

Total hours this collection: 950 hours

Total costs this collection: \$24,900

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to respondents or recordkeepers resulting from the collection of information.

(a) Total capital and start-up cost component (annualized over its expected useful life); and

There are no capital and start-up cost components associated with this collection.

(b) Total operation and maintenance and purchase of services component.

No operations and maintenance or purchase of services are required.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal Government.

Reviewing and scoring each application should take approximately 10 hours. The estimated cost to the Government would be:

1 GS-13/5 @ \$45.05/hour X 10 hours X 40 responses = \$18,020

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in items 13 or 14 of the OMB Form 83-1.

This is a revision of a currently approved information collection. There is a decrease in the number of applications resulting in an adjustment decrease of -218 burden hours.

16. For collection of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication.

There are no plans to publish this information.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

The Agency is not seeking such approval.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in item 19 on OMB 83-1.

There are no exceptions.

B. Collection of Information Employing Statistical Methods.

This collection does not involve statistical methods.