

PART 1751—TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM PLANNING AND DESIGN CRITERIA, AND PROCEDURES

Subpart A [Reserved]

1751.1–1751.99 [Reserved]

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Subpart A [Reserved]

§§ 1751.1–1751.99 [Reserved]

Subpart B—State Telecommunications Modernization Plan

§ 1751.100 Definitions.

As used in this subpart:

Bit rate. The rate of transmission of telecommunications signals or intelligence in binary (two state) form in bits per unit time, e.g., Mb/s (megabits per second), kb/s (kilobits per second), etc.

Borrower. Any organization that has received an RUS loan designation number and which has an outstanding telephone loan made by RUS or the Rural Telephone Bank, or guaranteed by RUS, or which has a completed loan application with RUS.

Emerging technologies. New or not fully developed methods of telecommunications.

Modernization Plan (State Telecommunications Modernization Plan). A State plan, which has been approved by RUS, for improving the telecommunications network of those Telecommunications Providers covered by the plan. A Modernization Plan must

conform to the provisions of this subpart.

New facilities. Facilities which are wholly or partially constructed or reconstructed after a short- or medium-term requirements start date, as appropriate. This does not include connections or capacity extensions within the wired capacity of existing plant such as adding line cards to existing equipment.

Plan Developer. The entity creating the Modernization Plan for the State, which may be the State PUC, the State legislature, or a numeric majority of the RUS Borrowers within the State. When this part refers to the PUC as the Plan Developer, this includes the State legislature.

PUC (Public Utilities Commission). The public utilities commission, public service commission or other State body with such jurisdiction over rates, service areas or other aspects of the services and operation of providers of telecommunications services as vested in the commission or other body authority, to the extent provided by the State, to guide development of telecommunications services in the State. When this part refers to the PUC as the Plan Developer, this includes the State legislature.

RE Act. The Rural Electrification Act of 1936, as amended (7 U.S.C. 901 *et seq.*).

REA. The Rural Electrification Administration, formerly an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture and predecessor agency to RUS with respect to administering certain electric and telephone loan programs.

RELRA. The Rural Electrification Loan Restructuring Act of 1993 (107 Stat. 1356).

RUS. The Rural Utilities Service, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture established pursuant to Section 232 of the Federal Crop Insurance Reform and Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (Pub. L. 103-354, 108 Stat. 3178 (7 U.S.C. 6941 *et seq.*)), successor to REA with respect to administering certain electric and telephone programs. See 7 CFR 1700.1.

RUS cost-of-money loan. A loan made under section 305(d)(2) of the RE Act bearing interest as determined under 7 CFR 1735.31(c). RUS cost-of-money

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loans are made concurrently with RTB loans.

RUS hardship loan. A loan made by RUS under section 305(d)(1) of the RE Act bearing interest at a rate of 5 percent per year.

RTB loan. A loan made by the Rural Telephone Bank (RTB) under section 408 of the RE Act bearing interest as determined under 7 CFR 1610.10. RTB loans are made concurrently with RUS cost-of-money loans.

State. Each of the 50 states of the United States, the District of Columbia, and the territories and insular possessions of the United States. This does not include countries in the Compact of Free Association.

Telecommunications. The transmission or reception of voice, data, sounds, signals, pictures, writings, or signs of all kinds, by wire, fiber, radio, light, or other visual or electromagnetic means.

Telecommunications providers. RUS Borrowers and if the Plan Developer is a PUC, such other entities providing telecommunications services as the developer of the Modernization Plan (See § 1751.101) may determine.

Wireline Service. Telecommunications service provided over telephone lines. It is characterized by a wire or wirelike connection carrying electricity or light between the subscriber and the rest of the telecommunications network. Wireline Service implies a physical connection. Although radio may form part of the circuit, it is not the major method of transmission as in radiotelephone.

§ 1751.101 General.

(a) It is the policy of RUS that every State have a Modernization Plan which provides for the improvement of the State's telecommunications network.

(b) A proposed Modernization Plan must be submitted to RUS for approval. RUS will approve the proposed Modernization Plan if it conforms to the provisions of this subpart. Once obtained, RUS's approval of a Modernization Plan cannot be rescinded.

(c) The Modernization Plan shall not interfere with RUS's authority to issue such other telecommunications standards, specifications, requirements, and procurement rules as may be promulgated from time to time by RUS in-

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cluding, without limitation, those set forth in 7 CFR part 1755.

(d) The Modernization Plan must, at a minimum, apply to RUS Borrowers' wireline service areas. If a Modernization Plan is developed by the PUC, RUS encourages, but does not require, that the Modernization Plan's requirements apply to the rural service areas of all providers of telecommunications services in the State. A PUC's decision not to include non-RUS Borrowers will not prejudice RUS approval of that PUC's Modernization Plan. The PUC may also, at its option, extend coverage of the Modernization Plan to all service areas of all providers of telecommunications services in the State. In addition, while the requirements and goals contained in § 1751.106 apply only to wireline services, the PUC, at its discretion, may extend coverage of Modernization Plans to wireless or other communications services in the State as it deems appropriate. Borrower-developed Modernization Plans apply only to Borrowers.

§ 1751.102 Modernization Plan Developer; eligibility.

(a) Each PUC is eligible until February 13, 1996 to develop a proposed Modernization Plan and deliver it to RUS. RUS will review and consider for approval all PUC-developed Modernization Plans received by RUS within this one year period. The review and approval, if any, may occur after the one year period ends even though the PUC is no longer eligible to submit a proposed Modernization Plan.

(b) The PUC must notify all Telecommunications Providers in the State and other interested parties of its intent to develop a proposed Modernization Plan. The PUC is encouraged to consider all Telecommunications Providers' and interested parties' views and incorporate these views into the Modernization Plan. In the event that the PUC does not intend to develop a proposed Modernization Plan, RUS requests that the PUC inform RUS of this decision as soon as possible.

(c)(1) If the PUC is no longer eligible to develop a Modernization Plan or has informed RUS that it will not develop a Modernization Plan, as described in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section, a

majority of the Borrowers within the State may develop the Modernization Plan. If a majority of Borrowers develops the Modernization Plan, the following apply:

(i) All Borrowers shall be given reasonable notice of and shall be encouraged to attend and contribute to all meetings and other proceedings relating to the development of the Modernization Plan; and

(ii) Borrowers developing a Modernization Plan are encouraged to solicit the views of other providers of telecommunications services and interested parties in the State.

(2) There is no time limit placed on Borrowers to develop a Modernization Plan. Borrowers should be aware that certain types of loans may be restricted until a Modernization Plan is approved. See § 1751.103.

§ 1751.103 Loan and loan advance requirements.

(a) For information about loan eligibility requirements in relation to the Modernization Plan, see 7 CFR part 1735. In particular, beginning February 13, 1996, RUS will make RUS hardship loans, RUS cost-of-money loans, and RTB loans for facilities and other RE Act purposes in a State only if:

(1) The State has an RUS approved Modernization Plan; and

(2) The Borrower to whom the loan is to be made is participating in the Modernization Plan for the State. A Borrower is considered to be participating if, in RUS's opinion, the purposes of the loan requested by the Borrower are consistent with the Borrower achieving the requirements stated in the Modernization Plan within the timeframe stated in the Modernization Plan unless RUS has determined that achieving the requirements is not technically or economically feasible.

(b) With regard to the three types of loans discussed in paragraph (a), only loans approved after the date the State has an RUS approved Modernization Plan are subject to complying with the Modernization Plan.

(c) For loans subject to complying with the Modernization Plan, advances will not be made if, in RUS's opinion, the advances are not consistent with

achieving the requirements of the Modernization Plan.

§ 1751.104 Obtaining RUS approval of a proposed Modernization Plan.

(a) To obtain RUS approval of a proposed Modernization Plan, the Plan Developer must submit the following to RUS:

(1) A certified copy of the statute or PUC order, if the PUC is the Plan Developer, or a written request for RUS approval of the proposed Modernization Plan signed by an authorized representative of the Plan Developer, if a majority of Borrowers is the Plan Developer; and

(2) Three copies of the proposed Modernization Plan.

(b) Generally, RUS will review the proposed Modernization Plan within (30) days and either:

(1) Approve the Modernization Plan if it conforms to the provisions of this subpart in which case RUS will return a copy of the Modernization Plan with notice of approval to the Plan Developer; or

(2) Not approve the proposed Modernization Plan if it does not conform to the provisions of this subpart. In this event, RUS will return the proposed Modernization Plan to the Plan Developer with specific written comments and suggestions for modifying the proposed Modernization Plan so that it will conform to the provisions of this subpart. If the Plan Developer remains eligible, RUS will invite the Plan Developer to submit a modified proposed Modernization Plan for RUS consideration. This process can continue until the Plan Developer gains approval of a proposed Modernization Plan unless the Plan Developer is a PUC whose eligibility has expired. If a PUC's eligibility has expired, RUS will return the proposed Modernization Plan unapproved. Because RUS does not have authority to extend the term of a PUC's eligibility, RUS recommends that the PUC submit a proposed Modernization Plan at least 90 days in advance of February 13, 1996 to allow time for this process.

§ 1751.105 Amending a Modernization Plan.

(a) RUS understands that changes in standards, technology, regulation, and the economy could indicate that an RUS-approved Modernization Plan should be amended.

(b) The Plan Developer of the Modernization Plan may amend the Modernization Plan if RUS finds the proposed changes continue to conform to the provisions of this subpart.

(c) The procedure for requesting approval of an amended Modernization Plan is identical to the procedure for a proposed Modernization Plan except that there are no time limits on the eligibility of the Plan Developer.

(d) The existing Modernization Plan remains in force until RUS has approved the proposed amended Modernization Plan.

(e) RUS may from time to time revise these regulations to incorporate newer technological and economic standards that RUS believes represent more desirable goals for the future course of telecommunications services. Such revisions will be made in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act. These revisions shall not invalidate Modernization Plans approved by RUS but shall be used by RUS to determine whether to approve amendments to Modernization Plans presented for RUS approval after March 15, 1995.

§ 1751.106 Modernization Plan; requirements.

(a) The requirements for a Modernization Plan as stated in RELRA are:

(1) The plan must provide for the elimination of party line service.

(2) The plan must provide for the availability of telecommunications services for improved business, educational, and medical services.

(3) The plan must encourage and improve computer networks and information highways for subscribers in rural areas.

(4) The plan must provide for—

(i) Subscribers in rural areas to be able to receive through telephone lines—

- (A) Conference calling;
- (B) Video images; and

(C) Data at a rate of at least 1,000,000 bits of information per second; and

(ii) The proper routing of information to subscribers.

(5) The plan must provide for uniform deployment schedules to ensure that advanced services are deployed at the same time in rural and nonrural areas.

(6) The plan must provide for such additional requirements for service standards as may be required by the Administrator.

(b) To implement the requirements of the law described in paragraph (a) of this section, RUS has set minimum requirements as described in paragraphs (i) and (j) of this section. They are grouped into short-term and medium-term requirements. RUS has also included long-term goals which are not requirements. The Modernization Plan must meet all of the statutory requirements of RELRA and shall provide that short- and medium-term requirements be implemented as set forth in this section of the regulation except that the PUC, if it is the Plan Developer, or RUS, if a majority of Borrowers is the Plan Developer, may approve extensions of time if the required investment is not economically feasible or if the best available telecommunications technology lacks the capability to enable the Telecommunications Provider receiving the extension to comply with the Modernization Plan. Extensions shall be granted only on a case-by-case basis and generally shall not exceed a total of five years from the first such extension granted to the Telecommunications Provider.

(c) Each State's Modernization Plan shall be a strategic development proposal for modernizing the telecommunications network of the Telecommunications Providers covered by the Modernization Plan. In addition to implementing the requirements described in paragraphs (a), (i), and (j) of this section, the Modernization Plan shall include a short engineering description of the characteristics of a future telecommunications structure that would enable all Telecommunications Providers to achieve the requirements and goals of the Modernization Plan.

(d) Within the scope of § 1751.101(d), if the Plan Developer is the PUC, the

Modernization Plan shall name the Telecommunications Providers in the State, in addition to Borrowers, that are covered by the Modernization Plan.

(e) The Modernization Plan must require that the design of the network provided by Telecommunications Providers allow for the expeditious deployment and integration of such emerging technologies as may from time to time become commercially feasible.

(f) The Modernization Plan must provide guidelines to Telecommunications Providers for the development of affordable tariffs for medical links and distance learning services.

(g) With regard to the uniform deployment requirement of the law restated in paragraph (a)(5) of this section, if services cannot be deployed at the same time, only the minimum feasible interval of time shall separate availability of the services in rural and nonrural areas.

(h) The Modernization Plan must make provision for reliable powering of ordinary voice telephone service operating over those portions of the telecommunications network which are not network powered. In the event of electric utility power outages, an alternative source of power must be available to ensure reliable voice service.

(i) *Short-term requirements.* (1) The "short-term requirements start date" is the date one year after the date RUS approves the Modernization Plan for the State.

(2) All New Facilities providing Wireline Service after the short-term requirements start date, even if the construction began before such date, shall be constructed so that:

(i) Every subscriber can be provided 1-party service.

(ii) The New Facilities are suitable, as built or with additional equipment, to provide transmission and reception of data at a rate no lower than 1 Mb/sec.

(3) All switching equipment installed by a Telecommunications Provider after the short-term requirements start date shall be capable of:

(i) Providing custom calling features. At a minimum, custom calling features must include call waiting, call for-

warding, abbreviated dialing, and three-way calling; and

(ii) Providing E911 service for areas served by the Telecommunication Provider when requested by the government responsible for this service.

(j) *Medium-term requirements.* (1) The "medium-term requirements start date" is the date six years after the date RUS approves the Modernization Plan for the State, or such earlier date as the Modernization Plan shall provide.

(2) All New Facilities providing Wireline Service after the medium-term requirements start date, even if the construction began before such date, shall be capable, as built or with additional equipment, of transmitting video to a subscriber. The video must be capable of depicting a reasonable representation of motion. The frame rate, resolution, and other measures of audio and video quality shall be determined by the Plan Developer.

(3) No later than the medium-term requirements start date, all switching equipment of Telecommunications Providers covered by the Modernization Plan must be capable of providing E911 service when requested by the government responsible for this service.

(4) No later than five years after the medium-term requirements start date, one-party service must be provided upon demand to any subscriber of a Telecommunications Provider covered by the Modernization Plan.

(k) *Long-term goals.* RUS suggests, but does not require, that the provisions of each Modernization Plan be consistent with the accomplishment of the following:

(1) The elimination of party line service.

(2) For subscribers that desire the service, universal availability of:

(i) Digital voice and data service (56-164 kb/sec).

(ii) Service that provides transmission and reception of high bit rate (no less than 1 Mb/sec) data.

(iii) Service that provides reception of video as described in paragraph (j)(2) of this section.