

March, 2011

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

A. Justification

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

The Rural Utilities Service (RUS), an agency of United States Department of Agriculture, is assisting with the nation's completion of the transition to digital television.

Congress recognized the need to facilitate the digital transition in public television stations that serve rural areas. Beginning in 2003, 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. This amount was awarded to 16 different recipients to finance the conversion of television services to digital broadcasting for small rural public television stations in February 2004.

The Program initially operated under a temporary regulation. In FY 2006, RUS wrote a new regulation to incorporate the new statutory requirements and update this competitive grant program. The regulation codified the grant program and simplified the information collection burden for grant applicants.

In subsequent years the following amounts were awarded:

FY 2004: \$14,000,000 – 18 awards; FY 2006: \$4,970,000 – 10 awards

FY 2007: \$4,950,000 – 7 awards; FY 2008: \$4,965,000 – 19 awards

FY 2009: \$5,086,000 – 10 awards; FY 2010: \$6,180,188 – 14 awards

The Federal Communications Commission required that all television stations have their transmitters converted to digital broadcast signals by June 12, 2009. While stations must broadcast their main transmitter signal in digital, many rural stations even now have yet to complete a full digital transition of their stations across all equipment. Rural stations often have translators serving small or isolated areas and some of these have not completed the transition to digital. Because the FCC deadline did not apply to translators, they are allowed to continue broadcasting in analog. Some rural stations also have not fully converted their production and studio equipment to digital. The digital transition has also created some service gaps where households that received an analog signal are now unable to receive a digital signal. This explains why the grant program has continued past the FCC digital transition deadline of June 2009.

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 eligible entities to RUS via electronic and hard copy. The applicant will submit a grant application that contains those items set forth in the regulation. 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 critical need, which measures 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.

A narrative demonstrating critical need.

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.

RUS is committed to complying with the requirements of the E-Government 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 have received numerous comments, none have concerned details of the information collection. Specifically in response to this paperwork burden information request, several grant program participants were contacted for comments. The responses received were generally favorable. The respondents said that instructions for the application as well as recordkeeping requirements were generally well explained. While one grantee did mention the complexity of data collection required for the grant application, another found that the data was readily available by phone or on a website.

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 \$584.19 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 @ \$39.96/hr = \$159.84
- 4 hours authoring application, which includes writing the executive summary and the argument for points for “Station Hardship”: 4 analyst hours at \$32.05/hr = \$128.20
- 15 hours completing forms, attaching documents, complying with other Federal statutes, finding information at referenced websites: 15 clerical hours at \$14.41/hr = \$216.15
- \$80 is included for duplication, shipping costs, etc. per application

Totals 23 hours X 40 applications = 920 hours
 \$584.19 X 40 applications = \$23,367.60

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 \$39.96 = \$1,198.80

Total hours this collection: 950 hours
Total costs this collection: \$24,566.40

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 @ \$48.35/hour X 10 hours X 40 responses = \$19,340

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.

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.