

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

Information Collection Activity; Comment Request

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Utilities Service (RUS) invites comments on this information collection for the Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loan and Grant Program, which it intends to request approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thomas P. Dickson, Rural Development Innovation Center – Regulatory Team 2, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, STOP 1522, Room 5164, South Building, Washington, DC 20250-1522. Telephone: (202) 690-4492. Email Thomas.dickson@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) regulation (5 CFR 1320) implementing provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) requires that interested members of the public and affected agencies have an opportunity to comment on information collection and recordkeeping activities (see 5 CFR 1320.8(d)). This notice identifies an information collection that RUS is submitting to OMB for extension.

Comments are invited on: (a) whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the Agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments may be sent by any of the following methods:

- Mail: Thomas P. Dickson, Rural Development Innovation Center, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., STOP 1522, Room 5164, South Building, Washington, DC 20250-1522. Telephone: (202) 690-4492. Email: Thomas.Dickson@wdc.usda.gov.

Federal eRulemaking Portal: Go to <https://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments.

Title: Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loan and Grant Program.

OMB Control Number: 0572-0096.

Type of Request: Extension of a currently approved information collection package.

Abstract: The Rural Utilities Service's (RUS) Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Loan and Grant program provides loans and grants for advanced telecommunications services to improve rural areas' access to educational and medical services. The various forms and narrative statements required are collected from the applicants (rural community facilities, such as schools, libraries, hospitals, and medical facilities, for example). The purpose of collecting the information is to determine such factors as eligibility of the applicant; the specific nature of the proposed project; the purposes for which loan and grant funds will be used; project financial and technical feasibility; and, compliance with applicable laws and regulations. In addition, for grants funded pursuant to the competitive evaluation process, information collected facilitates RUS' selection of those applications most consistent with DLT goals and objectives in accordance with the authorizing legislation and implementing regulation.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 2.45 hours per response.

Respondents: Business or other for-profit; Not-for-profit institutions; and State, Local or Tribal Government.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 200.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 23.3.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 11,031 hours.

Copies of this information collection can be obtained from Robin M. Jones, Innovation Center, at (202)772-1172, Email: robin.m.jones@wdc.usda.gov.

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

BETTE B. BRAND
Acting Administrator
Rural Utilities Service

Date