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News Release

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USDA Announces Funding to Increase Access to Education, Workforce Training and Health Care Opportunities in Rural Communities *Investments will help more than 4.5 million rural Americans*

GAINESVILLE, Oct. 31, 2018 – Florida/USVI Rural Development State Director Sydney Gruters today announced that USDA is investing \$967,920 in Distance Learning and Telemedicine in Florida and \$372,008 in the U.S. Virgin Islands. USDA is awarding grants for [128 projects](#) to increase access to job training, educational and health care services in rural areas.

“Providing rural Americans with access to services for quality of life and economic development is essential to the success and longevity of our rural communities,” State Director Gruters said. “Distance learning and telemedicine technology provides a much needed tool to strengthen the relationship between our rural communities and essential education, workforce training, and health care resources.”

USDA is awarding \$39.6 million through the [Distance Learning and Telemedicine \(DLT\) Grant Program](#). More than 4.5 million residents in 40 states and three territories will benefit from the funding.

In April 2017, President Donald J. Trump established the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity to identify legislative, regulatory and policy changes that could promote agriculture and prosperity in rural communities. In January 2018, Secretary Perdue presented the Task Force’s findings to President Trump. These findings included 31 recommendations to align the federal government with state, local and tribal governments to take advantage of opportunities that exist in rural America. Increasing investments in rural infrastructure is a key recommendation of the task force.

To view the report in its entirety, please view the [Report to the President of the United States from the Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity](#) (PDF, 5.4 MB). In addition, to view the categories of the recommendations, please view the [Rural Prosperity infographic](#) (PDF, 190 KB).

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community facilities such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov.

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