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USDA Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant: Education Focus

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Presented by Ashley Schultz and Dr. Liz Shay • Grants Office, LLC

Welcome and Introductions

Ashley Schultz:

Hello, everyone, and welcome to our event. My name is Ashley Schultz. I am the Manager of Community Engagement here at Grants Office, and today we are going to be discussing the Distance Learning and Telemedicine, or DLT, grant program. This grant offers between $40 million and $60 million each year to improve education and healthcare in rural areas of the United States.

Today's event is going to focus specifically on education projects, so grants for K-12 institutions, higher education institutions, or nonprofit education providers. But if you are interested in using DLT for telemedicine initiatives, we actually have a secondary session that is dedicated to healthcare that is going to be airing tomorrow.

For today, the folks here at Grants Office are really excited about the session. This is our second in a series of events that we are hosting in 2026 that focuses specifically on one grant program. As you know, we do dozens of webinars throughout the year on grant-seeking advice in general — how to position your organization broadly for transportation funding or cybersecurity funding or school safety funding. But the purpose of this new event type is to get more granular on our information and more granular on our grants advice to you by focusing that full 30 minutes on just one grant that is relevant for this time of year. So I very much hope that you enjoy today's event, and if you have any feedback on this new event type, please reach out to us at education@grantsoffice.com. We would very much like to hear from you.

I also encourage those of you in the audience who are representing an educational entity — again, higher education, K-12, or nonprofit education provider — to consider who else among your peers may benefit from today's session, and then pass that recording along to them. As Liz is going to discuss here in a few minutes, this is a competitive grant program, so the more folks who can learn about DLT, learn how to submit a competitive proposal, and then ultimately secure themselves grant funding for rural distance learning projects, the better.

Housekeeping

Ashley Schultz:
Really quickly, before we get started, I have just two quick housekeeping items for you. First and foremost, you can ask questions at any time during today's session. Look at the bottom right-hand corner for the question-and-answer interface. Feel free to submit as many questions as you would like, and we will get to as many as possible toward the end of today's session.

Also, know that this session is being recorded. The recording is going to be available for download at the Grants Office website starting tomorrow. The PowerPoint presentation that we are using here today will also be available in that same location. And for the very first time, we are also going to offer all attendees a step-by-step application workbook for the DLT program. We will talk about that workbook here shortly, but I am just letting you know that it is going to be available for download at the exact same spot as the slides and the session's recording starting tomorrow.

Today's Speaker and Agenda

Ashley Schultz:
Again, today we are talking about the Distance Learning and Telemedicine grant offered by the USDA. I am joined today by Dr. Liz Shay, Senior Consultant overseeing our education vertical and our in-house expert on this funding program. Liz has helped dozens upon dozens of organizations just like yours to navigate the ins and outs of DLT. She herself has nearly two decades of experience in the grants space, having held roles as both an applicant and on the funding side of the process. So in short, she has a wealth of grants expertise on not only DLT but also grants in general, and I think you are going to learn a lot from her today.

Here is a quick run-through of our agenda over the next 30 minutes. Once I pass things over to Liz, she is going to run you through a high-level introduction of the Distance Learning and Telemedicine program — what is it, what does it help you pay for, and who can go after it. We want to make sure that before we dive into the nitty-gritty details of the grant, this program is right for you. After we have cleared those hurdles, Liz is going to tackle how to prepare a competitive DLT proposal. She will talk about the objective and subjective scoring components and the scoring range that will be required for you to really realize funding through this program. We will end with a quick overview of some additional services that Grants Office can provide you on this grant program, whether you need us to come in and score your sites, review a draft of your proposal, or maybe you want someone to actually put pen to paper on your behalf and write the narrative for you. So with that, I am going to pass things over to the very capable hands of Liz to get us started. Liz, take it away.

Program Overview

Dr. Liz Shay:
Awesome. Hello, everyone. As Ashley already said, today we are talking about the Distance Learning and Telemedicine grant program, specifically the distance learning half — the education focus of this program. To start out at the beginning, I want to cover some basics of the DLT grant program.

As Ashley alluded to already, it expands educational opportunities and health services out to rural Americans. This is a grant out of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, so they are very interested in rural communities. It supports projects that expand this programming through the use of telecommunications, computer networks, and related advanced technologies. It is a very technology-focused grant, atypical to the majority of the grant funding landscape. It is really about supporting those communities that have populations of fewer than 20,000 people, so definitely looking for those really remote communities. I will talk in more detail as we go on about identifying those communities and which ones are actually maximally competitive.

I also want to give a caveat of what this program is not for. This particular opportunity is not for remote education that goes into individual student homes. It is about supporting remote education out to other organizations, and we will talk about that again in more detail coming up.

Funding Availability

Dr. Liz Shay:
The USDA budget has been passed for fiscal year 2026, and we have analyzed that in detail. We can see that this year there is going to be $40.76 million under this particular program. $10.76 million of this is for congressionally directed spending, or earmarks, and the remaining $30 million will be used for competitive granting. That competitive component is the part that we are talking about today.

Individual awards typically range from $50,000 to $1 million for an organization. There is a 15% cost match requirement. We will talk about this also in more detail moving on, but cost match does mean that it is on top of the amount that you are receiving from the award. We do expect this program to open any day now. The USDA has started making movements in that direction, and so this is really the time to be preparing for it so that once the program opens, you will be ready to apply and hit that deadline. Typically they give somewhere around 30 to 45 days to apply, so it is a pretty quick turnaround if you are not already prepared.

Eligibility

Dr. Liz Shay:
This program is quite flexible in terms of eligibility. It is really any entity that is capable of providing the services that they are interested in providing. In terms of the education side of things, most often we see institutes of higher education, K-12 schools or school districts, and nonprofit education providers being the main applicants under this program. Certainly we also see other entities like governments, corrections facilities, and folks like that as well.

Hub Sites and End User Sites

Dr. Liz Shay:
When we look at this particular program, it has a unique structure in terms of what they are looking for. Every application will have one or more hub sites. These are locations that will be sending out real-time education experiences. Often these are in urban locations, although not exclusively, but they are the ones that are prepared to provide the educational experience. There can be more than one or there can just be a single hub site.

The other part of the equation, and super importantly, are the end user sites. These must be in rural places, and these are the ones who are receiving the real-time educational experiences and taking advantage of them — participating in the classroom without having to be at the hub site.

What we see that look like in practice in the education space most often is a dual enrollment kind of structure. This is by no means the only kind of project that we see funded under the Distance Learning and Telemedicine grant for education initiatives, but it is an extremely popular format. What we see most often is an urban college or university providing real-time educational experiences out to rural end users. Those rural end users are most often entities like high schools or school districts more broadly, community or technical colleges, or perhaps liberal arts colleges — basically any place in rural communities where they cannot offer all of the programming that they might be interested in because they do not have enough students involved in it, or the travel to be able to get to the urban center to take the course would be much too far.

We see lots of these kinds of entities working on these kinds of projects, where we have this university in an urban place leading the coursework, sending out to these rural locations. There can be any number of them. It could be as few as a few rural locations or as many as ten to twelve or something like that. It is really dependent on the specific project you are working on, what makes sense for your project, and what you can accomplish within the budget that you are looking for.

Eligible Technology Expenses

Dr. Liz Shay:
I mentioned that this is a really technology-focused grant, which is a little bit different from a lot of the grant programs that you often see us talking about. For this particular program, the vast majority of the budget will be used for technology expenses. These include telecommunications equipment, which is probably the most common expense — so audio, video, and interactive video equipment to go into the classrooms or other rooms where real-time educational experiences are happening, either at the hub site or the end user sites.

There is also an opportunity for some broadband facilities — basically the broadband that is needed to enable the project to exist. This is a limited kind of functionality within the project, but it certainly does play a factor in making sure that there is that required connectivity to enable this real-time educational experience.

Hardware and software also can be included. Things like computer hardware and networking components, cybersecurity components, and software can all be included. Oftentimes these are necessary to enable the AV and teleconferencing to work properly, so they can also be included, again, often also in the classroom.

Another component is instructional programming. If you want to be able to provide a particular curriculum through a distance learning medium that you do not have the stuff that you need for, you can include the instructional programming to enable that to work successfully. And then finally, technical instruction — there can be a limited component within your broader budget to be able to teach people how to use the equipment. So that is the instructors and the people who will be operating at the end user end to ensure that those participants are able to access the course. All of those folks can receive some technical assistance as part of this grant program.

Preparing a Competitive Proposal

Dr. Liz Shay:
Ultimately, any application that you are proposing is going to have three major components. I am going to be talking about all three of these during the course of today's conversation, but starting out predominantly with the objective scoring. This is the really crucial part that determines if the rest of your application is even reviewed, so understanding the objective scoring is key to being able to decide if you want to apply to this grant and if your organization and your project are a good fit.

I will also touch on subjective scoring, which is that project narrative component that we often see in many of the grant programs that we apply for. And then finally, I will touch on budgets and vendor

quotes, because that is also handled a little bit differently under this grant program compared to the majority of typical programs.

Objective Scoring: Rurality and Economic Need

Dr. Liz Shay:
Objective scoring is the super important first aspect that goes under this particular grant program, where every end user site will be scored on an objective scale. End user sites are those rural locations that are receiving real-time educational experiences. You can have hybrid hub and end user sites where they send out some real-time educational experiences and they receive others. That is absolutely allowed; however, they are also included in this scoring, so you need to make sure that they meet the objective scoring requirements as well. Pure hub sites will not be counted in the same way, and so those can be located in those urban centers.

There are two main components of the objective scoring that are crucial and they stay consistent from year to year. The first of these is rurality. You can receive up to 40 points for rurality. Every end user site is scored based on its population, and it cannot be part of an urbanized area that is contiguous and adjacent to a city or town having a population over 50,000. So it may be a small town, but if it is essentially a suburb of a bigger community, it will not be eligible under this program. The 40 points come from locations that have populations under 5,000 people, so those are definitely the most competitive, and then it is done on a sliding scale from there up to that 20,000 limit. Anything that is over 20,000, you are not going to receive any points for, and if a site is in an urbanized area, you are not going to receive any points for that. Your rurality score will ultimately be averaged, and we will talk through a little bit about what a competitive score looks like there.

The other consistent component is economic need. You can receive up to 30 points for this. This uses the U.S. Census Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates calculations, and you receive top scores for county poverty percentages of at least 30%. Again, there is a range that you can do your analysis under, and you can have communities that have a higher percentage of poverty and communities that have a lower percentage of poverty, but ultimately you are scoring on that scale throughout. This is looked at at the county level, so that is something that is important to keep in mind when you are looking across the community.

Objective Scoring: Special Consideration

Dr. Liz Shay:
The last component that goes into objective scoring is special consideration. This is up to 10 points that you can receive each year, and these areas change from year to year. For fiscal year 2025, they focused on the most distressed tier of the Distressed Communities Index, meaning you had at least one

community or end user site within that area, and also communities with a high Social Vulnerability Index, tribal lands, or where you are including tribes as part of your project.

The fiscal year 2026 areas of special consideration are likely to change, but we have seen several areas related to these kinds of topics. Sometimes priority is also given to particular types of education — for example, STEM education or something along those lines as well. So lots of different possibilities there, but this is the smaller portion of the objective scoring. The other two portions you can start planning for now.

What Counts as a Competitive Score

Dr. Liz Shay:
When you look at your objective score and you are trying to decide if it will be competitive, it is important to look at that total score. Most competitive applications score at least a 50; the maximum objective score is 80. The application requires that you receive at least an average of 20 on your rurality component to be reviewed. However, in most instances, competitive applications typically score at least a 30 on this component, so you are looking at quite small communities to be maximally competitive under this particular program. If you score less than a 20 on rurality, your application will just automatically be rejected and the USDA will not read anything else, so that is definitely an important consideration.

If your objective score is currently under a 50, a few things to consider. Look at your end user sites. Is there something that you could easily remove and still have a viable and good project? If you have other potential partners that you are looking at, are there also end user sites that you could potentially add to make your project more competitive? Also consider any hybrid hub/end user sites that you have and decide if they should just only send out real-time educational experiences rather than receiving them, because that removes them from that rurality calculation. If you still do not have an objective score over 50, it may be time to consider a different grant program for your particular project, as it is unlikely that you would end up winning these funds.

Other Factors to Consider

Dr. Liz Shay:
Overall, there are a few factors to consider beyond this objective scoring to decide if your education project is a good fit. First off, you need to be focused on providing real-time educational experiences to rural Americans. That is the purpose of this grant, so that is what you need to be focusing on. You need to have collaborators or an organizational structure that allows you to implement the project into rural eligible locations. So if you already have rural locations that you can work within, great. If you have partners — for example, in that dual enrollment structure that I mentioned — that also works very well under this grant program. Then you want to do your objective scoring and ensure that you are scoring at

least a 50. And finally, the other thing to consider is, are you capable of providing the 15% match in non-federal cash from non-federal sources? This particular program does require that match, so you need to make sure that you can contribute some financially to your overall project.

In terms of that educational focus, I do want to mention now: while sometimes special consideration points are given to particular types of education, the USDA is quite interested in a broad range of educational experiences. So it is really about what makes sense for the students that you are looking to serve — be that K-12 students, higher education students, or adults within the community. Lots of flexibility in terms of what you might want to provide. Ultimately, DLT is mostly about expanding opportunities for rural Americans, so if you can do that, then it might be a good fit for you.

Free Application Workbook

Dr. Liz Shay:
Now that you have decided, hopefully, that this is a good fit, or you are thinking about it at least, check out our free eligibility and proposal workbook that is going to be on the page where you can see the recording tomorrow. It will talk through some of these components and the scoring process and those kinds of things so that you can be prepared to decide if this is a good fit, and you can be prepared to start developing your application now.

The Three Application Components in Detail

Dr. Liz Shay:
As we transition into this process, I do want to talk a little bit about preparing a competitive DLT application. If you have experience with grant funding, then you might have some familiarity with some aspects, but there are some things that are unique to DLT. If you do not have a lot of grants experience, I highly recommend checking out some of our other webinars, because we talk a lot about preparing competitive applications, so there can be some great opportunities there to learn some other things.

In terms of the DLT application, I have referenced this already, but there are three major components. The first is the objective scoring. This is the site list of physical addresses where equipment will be installed. The exact locations are super important, and you need to do that objective scoring process. You must have a rurality score of at least 20 for review, 30 to be really competitive, and an overall objective score of about 50 to be competitive.

The next section that we are going to talk about is subjective scoring. This is your narrative component, and it describes the planned services and the needs that you have. As part of this process, you are going to need to reach out to your USDA state director to discuss your project, and you are going to need to talk about how you have done that in your narrative. So start doing that process now so that they can

better understand your project and you will be well positioned to be able to complete this component as you are developing your application.

Finally, the third major component is the budget. This is a detailed line-item budget of every anticipated expense and the associated justifications. You will also discuss your cash match from non-federal sources in this particular section as well. You are required to have vendor quotes for the exact planned equipment, so that is also another component. We are going to talk about it in a little bit more detail coming up, but that is another aspect that is super important to start preparing early.

Subjective Scoring: The Project Narrative

Dr. Liz Shay:
Since we already talked about objective scoring quite a bit, we are going to move on to subjective scoring. There are four major components that go into this narrative. The first is your scope of work, where you describe the activities, the goals, the timeframes, the processes — all the stuff that goes into really any grant application narrative where you describe exactly what you are going to do.

You are also going to discuss your financial information and sustainability. This is basically the information that says your organization would be a good steward of the funds and you are capable of completing the project. You also want to be able to talk about how you are going to be able to continue this project beyond the end of the grant period and continue to provide these real-time educational experiences out to rural Americans.

You will also provide your statement of experience. This demonstrates the capability and expertise of providing these types of services out to these types of communities. So this will be where you talk about your organization as well as any partners that you have and things like that to make you well qualified to be able to implement this project.

And then finally, you have to give a telecommunication system plan. This is a network description and a system plan diagram that is going to describe exactly what is being installed and where it is being installed at every site that you are working on — both the hub sites and the end user sites — so that the reviewers have a very clear picture of what your project will look like.

Narrative Tips

Dr. Liz Shay:
There are a few things to keep in mind as you develop this narrative component. Charts are super useful given the page limit requirements and things like that, and you can show key project components — for example, what is happening at each of your partner sites, as well as things like the timeline — using charts to effectively use your space.

You also want to make sure that you define your cost-sharing arrangements among your project partners. Make it very clear who is covering what costs, how your cost match is being created, and how your relationship looks so that the USDA knows that you will be able to implement this project.

Reviewers are going to be looking for specifics on the services being provided, so just saying that you are providing real-time education is not going to be enough. You are going to want to talk through the particular courses that you are looking to provide or the particular training that you are going to be doing as part of your project. Giving as many details as possible is going to be key for them to understand this is a well-thought-out project.

And then finally, involve your vendors and consultants early. That system plan diagram and the budget components are definitely going to require their involvement, and getting them involved as early as possible will be key for maximizing success.

Budget and Vendor Quotes

Dr. Liz Shay:
When we look at the budget, there are a few things to keep in mind as well. There is a 15% cost match required. What this means is that if you have a $1 million request from the USDA, you need to contribute another $150,000, making a $1.15 million project. To be competitive, you need to be providing a cash match from non-federal sources. So make sure that you consider your project size in total when you are thinking about this project so that you are including not only your request from the grant, but also that match to build that comprehensive project.

This particular grant program requires vendor quotes. Unlike most grant programs where you do procurement after you have received the funds, you actually have to give the exact equipment that you will install and have it be quoted and put into the budget. Changes can be made after submission and after you win an award, but it gets much more complicated, so it is really important that you follow a lot of those procurement procedures now to be able to put together exactly what you want to implement.

That system plan map or diagram is going to have to have a separate map for each site and include geographic information and equipment details. So getting those vendors and consultants involved early will be really key to making sure that those are built out very accurately.

In terms of the budget itself, you need detailed line items. This needs to include brands and model numbers. As I said, unlike most grant programs, you need to give all the specifics now — not just say that you are planning to buy, you know, a hundred cameras or whatever it is that you are looking to buy. You need to give exactly what you will be including, and make sure that each line item can be easily evaluated by the USDA. If they are unsure if it is eligible under this grant program, they will just line-item veto individual lines, even if they accept your program as a whole. And then finally, you have to give a

very clear justification of every item and show how more than 50% of the usage of that item will be for eligible distance learning purposes. So covering all of that is super important as you do your budget.

With that, we have covered all the major components of a DLT application, and I am now going to pass things over to Ashley to talk a little bit about how we are here to help.

Grants Office Services

Ashley Schultz:
Amazing. Thank you so much, Liz, for that excellent information. I am going to just give you a few seconds to grab a glass of water before we start our Q&A session. I have more than six questions in our Q&A right now. If you have more questions, please do look at the bottom right-hand corner of your screen and drop them into the chat.

On the Federal Funding Landscape

Ashley Schultz:
First off, I just want to quickly call attention to Liz's comment earlier about the USDA budget, and also to the number of folks who have reached out to us in the last two to three months trying to understand what is happening with the U.S. federal budget. While state budgets and foundation budgets have remained quite stable and reliable forms of funding, we are seeing quite a bit of discourse surrounding how and when the U.S. federal budget provides grants. Lots of conflicting information coming from the White House, from Congress, cabinet members, federal agency heads, and other representatives — and it can be really challenging to keep track of.

If you have not already done so, I encourage you to check out our website under the Guidance for Grant Seekers tab. We have a series of 5-minute videos there on the U.S. federal budget — what has passed, what has not passed, how much funding is available, what changes are we seeing in the grant funding landscape, etc. All of those videos are available for you on demand and are completely free right now on our website.

Grant Writing and Editing Services

Ashley Schultz:
I also want to call out Grants Office's grant writing and editing services that I referred to at the beginning of today's session. The team here is filled with folks who are just like Liz. We have a 25-year reputation across both the U.S. and Canada in proposal development work. So we help organizations just like yours to plan out and then articulate their projects in a way that is going to speak to the funder's goals and objectives.

If you followed along with today's session and you plan to apply to DLT, but you feel like you are going to need some assistance to help you get across the finish line, please do reach out. We offer full proposal development and writing, which for DLT means that you come to us with a general idea of your project, your budget, and that list of competitive sites — again, as Liz said, the more rural and remote and the more economically distressed, the better. We will get you a grant writer who can then translate all of those ideas into a competitive narrative — that subjective piece that Liz mentioned — that you can submit to the USDA.

If you are writing the proposal on your own, but you want an extra set of eyes on your draft to make sure you have dotted all your i's, crossed all your t's, and scored all your sites correctly, we also offer proposal editing services at 25% of that full cost of writing.

How Working with Grants Office Looks

Ashley Schultz:
So what this looks like, if you are interested in exploring our support, the first step is to contact us at grantwriting@grantsoffice.com. You will want to come to that email having already read and looked through most of the questions in that workbook that Liz mentioned earlier. You do not need to have full sentences or beautiful prose for all the prompts inside it, but we do ask that you have given each component of your project a fair deal of thought. What sites are you going to include? What do you need to purchase for those sites? What is this all going to cost? What evidence do you have to illustrate that your rural communities that are going to receive those educational services are going to be positioned for the grant — those types of things.

From there, you will meet with Liz or a member of our education team to discuss your project and your development needs. If you contract with us for writing, we are going to get you connected to a writer who is going to put pen to paper on your behalf. We try to give you at least two opportunities to review those drafts and provide feedback to make sure we have really captured your organization's goals and mission correctly. As you work through that deadline, we give you the application materials so that you can go upload them into the portal and click submit. So again, if this is something that you are interested in, please feel free to reach out to us at grantwriting@grantsoffice.com and we will get you started.

Other Grants Office Services

Ashley Schultz:
Lastly, if you followed along with today's event and you think DLT is not right for you, I also want to call your attention to other Grants Office services that are available. We have a research and consultation service that allows you to sit down with a consultant — folks just like Liz — who can discuss your upcoming projects and then point you in the direction of state, federal, and foundation grants that could best support those initiatives. We also have project building services that again allow you to sit down

with a consultant and build out a competitive application for an entirely different grant program. And we also have our subscription service, Grants Office Communities, which gives you access to our database that, as of this morning, has about 26,000 state, federal, and foundation grants that you can do the research and project building all on your own with. You can do that inside this platform that we designed for grants people — Grants Office Communities. We always have a free two-week trial, so if you have not gone over to check it out yet, I very much encourage you to do so.

Q&A Session

Ashley Schultz:
We got a few extra questions in while I was chatting, so I am going to start right here at the top of this list.

Q1: Will this grant provide funding for equipment needed at the end site for hands-on practice of lessons — for example, simulators or mannequins for nursing instruction?

Dr. Liz Shay:
Good question. They have started adding that kind of thing in in the last couple of years, and so we have seen those being funded — typically with the perspective of their being used during the class time rather than things like homework practice or things like that, although certainly people could potentially also be doing that. But for purposes of the grant program, it is typically being used as basically classroom equipment for during the instructional time period. We have seen those start to get funded.

Q2: What types of education count? Do the courses need to be credit-bearing or have the student working toward a certain credential to qualify?

Dr. Liz Shay:
Another great question. The short answer is no. They do not have to be credit-bearing and they do not have to be credentialing courses, but they do have to be focused on things that your end user sites are interested in. We often see them being used for credit-bearing or credentialing-type work, but that is not mandatory. Ultimately the goal is about increasing opportunities for rural Americans, so frequently that does relate to advancement of education as a component. But we do also see this program being used for other types of things. For example, a fish and wildlife department might use it for hunter safety training, or something along those lines, out to variable locations. So certainly we also see those kinds of broader education and training initiative-type things being used under this particular grant program.

Q3: How do I find my USDA state director?

Ashley Schultz:
Fantastic, thanks very much. I also want to call everyone's attention to the chat. We had an individual ask about contacting their USDA state director and looking for that list. If you were also curious about

who your USDA state director is and you need to look them up in the directory, there is a link in the chat. You can view the URL — it is all laid out very nicely by state, and you can find that individual.

Q4: What options do we have for cash match? Would in-kind match or a waiver hurt our chances if we are trying to not use cash?

Dr. Liz Shay:
Cash match oftentimes comes from the organization who is applying and/or from their partner organizations. So, for example, in a dual enrollment situation, each high school who is participating might chip in a little bit toward the match. We do see some instances where in-kind is used or potentially a submission of a waiver. Waivers can sometimes be successful if you have a project that is very centered on very economically distressed communities. But the in-kind is a little bit trickier. There are a lot of rules around what is allowed to be in-kind match under this particular grant program and what is not. It is actually quite strict in that regard relative to some other grant programs, and so often it is quite difficult to actually meet an in-kind match successfully and have the USDA take that seriously.

Most competitive projects would provide a cash match. Sometimes that even comes from perhaps a local foundation being willing to chip in on their part of it as well — that is another potential avenue if doing it all within your own organization or your partner organizations is not viable.

Q5: Can we add an escalation to our budget considering inflation pricing changing from the day we submit the application to the day we actually realize the funds?

Dr. Liz Shay:
That is one of the trickiest components here. Often it can be included in the quote itself from the vendors. That is absolutely required if you are going to try to fit something like this in. It has to be in the vendor quotes, and they have to do it as a projected pricing from when the project is anticipated to start. The USDA typically puts somewhere in the six- to nine-month timeline for when they anticipate projects to start after applications are submitted. We know sometimes it is even slower than that in practice, but that is typically what they are looking at for implementation. So you would need vendors to be able to make the projected pricing out to that particular timeline in your vendor quote.

Q6: What scoring threshold does the Grants Office team look for to consider a project competitive?

Dr. Liz Shay:
That 50 is actually something that we look at as a starting point. Technically the USDA only requires a 20 as the minimum to review things, and that is on the rurality score specifically — that is only half of the total objective scoring. So that 50 that we are looking at is typically a sweet spot for where we would feel that a project is competitive enough to start considering subjective components to determine if the

subjective components and the budget are well aligned with this particular grant program to ultimately have a good chance of being successful.

Q7: You mentioned that DLT is about to release any day. How will we find out when this grant has been released?

Ashley Schultz:
I will just put out a note here that if you contact us at grantwriting@grantsoffice.com and we are actively working with you on your proposal in advance, you will find out within about 5 minutes that DLT has opened and that we finally have a deadline. But if you do not happen to be working with us on it, Liz, do you want to drop a few other ways that you can find out if DLT opens?

Dr. Liz Shay:
Absolutely. First off, you can expect another email from us in follow-up to this event, letting you know that information. But also, the DLT website does post this detail. Usually that is the fastest place to find it for this particular one, and I will pop that into the chat so that everyone has it handy.

Ashley Schultz:
Thank you. And those of you who are regularly using federal grants, Grants.gov is also a really great place to just watch for notices of funding being announced.

Closing

Ashley Schultz:
Fantastic. Well, again, thank you very much to all of you for joining us today, and a huge thank you to Liz Shay for sharing all of her wisdom on DLT. The recording of today's event, along with the PowerPoint presentation and that workbook that we mentioned, are going to be available at grantsoffice.com tomorrow. Also, to those of you who are interested in telemedicine or healthcare-specific projects, I highly encourage you to find tomorrow's event and/or the recording of tomorrow's event so that you can kind of see what this program looks like through a healthcare lens.

Thank you again for coming to today's session. We hope you found it to be a valuable use of your time, and we hope to see you at another webinar. Have a great day.

— End of Transcript —

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