



NEWS

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FCC AND USDA TO HELP CREATE WIRELESS BROADBAND MODEL COMMUNITIES IN RURAL AMERICA

Rural Wireless Community VISION Program Will Provide Expert Assistance Directly to Rural America

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the FCC’s Wireless Telecommunications Bureau (WTB) launched the Rural Wireless Community VISION Program to advance the deployment of broadband wireless telecommunications across rural America. The VISION Program will harness synergies between WTB and USDA’s Rural Utilities Service (RUS) to develop model rural communities using the two agencies’ experts in engineering, technical, project finance, and other practical aspects of launching wireless broadband services.

Rural communities will be selected as participants in the VISION Program based on an essay describing their community’s vision for wireless connectivity and services and how the community will benefit from the implementation of this vision. WTB staff working in cooperation with RUS financial loan-grant officers and regional field representatives will work on-site with community and business leaders to assist the deployment of wireless broadband in the community. Applications for the assistance available through the VISION program for the first quarter of 2005 are due on December 1, 2004. More information on the Rural Wireless Community VISION Program, including program information, essay guidelines, and applications are available on-line at <http://wireless.fcc.gov/outreach/ruralvision/index.html>. The program is open to any rural community in the United States and its territories.

The VISION Program is the latest innovation developed under the Joint Federal Rural Wireless Outreach Initiative, <http://www.usda.gov/rus/jointoutreach>, a partnership between WTB and RUS. The VISION Program is designed to encourage rural government and business leaders to develop their own vision of how broadband access would benefit their community. Access to e-commerce, e-government, telemedicine, and distance learning can translate into better jobs, more responsive government, improved health care, greater educational opportunities, and a brighter future for a rural community.

WTB Chief John B. Muleta described the VISION program as “a way to bring our experts directly to rural communities in order to help them determine the best wireless broadband solution

for their particular community. We hope, in turn, that these communities will serve as role models for other communities looking to enjoy the benefits of wireless services.” Since the launch of the Joint Federal Rural Wireless Outreach Initiative, the FCC has addressed several issues facing telecommunications services in rural America. Most recently, in September 2004, the Commission issued new rules that, among other things, permit increased power levels for wireless services in rural areas. Also, for the first time in Commission history, the FCC is permitting licenseholders for wireless services to grant a security interest in their licenses to the RUS, a development aimed at assisting rural wireless providers in obtaining low-cost capital.

For more information on the Rural Wireless Community VISION Program, visit <http://wireless.fcc.gov/outreach/ruralvision/index.html> or send an e-mail to WTBCommunityVision@fcc.gov. Information is also available through Nancy Plon, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau Community Vision Program Coordinator at (202) 418-2899.

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