

D.4 Need and Benefits

Introduction

The XX XXXX Education Services (XXX-XXX-Erie-Wyoming XX XXXX Educational Services (CA-BOCES)) proposes the **Distance Learning program**. The goal of the program will be to increase the distance learning at partner school districts so that students achieve educational success, stay in school, graduate, and pursue postsecondary education that allows them to successfully transition to adulthood. This fixed site distance learning program will connect 6,567 students and their teachers at 16 different rural school sites from 14 different districts and two Career and Technical Education Centers. (The populations of the Career and Technical Education Centers have been subtracted out of the total students served on the site sheet, as those students have already been counted in their home school.)

The Distance Learning program will provide students with additional English Language Arts learning opportunities through distance learning and create a new dual enrollment program for rural students who would otherwise not have an opportunity for accelerated educational opportunities. The program outcomes will be student mastery of English Language Arts using the XX XXXX State (XXX) standards from qualified teachers and enhancement to instruction through distance learning, as well as an increase in the number of students participating in dual enrollment programs.

XX XXXX school districts score poorly on XXX English Language Arts standards. Strong English Language Arts skills are crucial for future success, providing a foundation for effective communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving, which are essential in all aspects of life, from academics to careers and personal relationships. A strong foundation in English Language Arts is transferable into success in other school subjects such as math, science and social studies. In order to address this need, the partner schools will replace end of life equipment with new high-definition distance learning equipment to expand English Language Arts distance learning at those schools.

XX XXXX will also start a dual enrollment for rural students who would otherwise not have an opportunity for accelerated educational opportunities. XX XXXX will offer partner school districts options for enrolling students in early college access courses taught by XXX-certified teachers who are approved and/or considered an adjunct by local partner institutions of higher education (IHE). Each dual enrollment class offered will have an articulation agreement with colleges and universities, and students may receive college credit for course work taken through video conference courses offered by XX XXXX and/or districts in the region.

Overall, the Distance Learning program outcomes will be student mastery of English Language Arts using the XXX standards from qualified teachers and enhancement to instruction through distance learning and to start a dual enrollment program that allows students the ability to earn college credits while enrolled in high school.

XX XXXX is eligible for Special Consideration Points in three categories. [REDACTED] High School is located on Federally designated **Tribal Lands** of the Seneca Nation of Indians (Seneca) reservation, a member of the Iroquois Confederacy. [REDACTED]

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are all serving **Distressed Communities**.
 are serving **Socially Vulnerable Communities**.

Site Name	Hub/End-User	County	Town	School District	Enrollment (AY 2023-24)	SAIPE
XX XXXX Education Services (Xxx-Xxx-Erie-Wyoming XX XXXX Educational Services (CA: BOCES))	Hub					
	Hub/End-User				n/a	15.0%
	Hub/End-User				n/a	18.6%
	End-User				553	18.6%
	End-User				240	15.0%
	End-User				302	15.0%
	End-User				287	15.0%
	End-User				350	15.0%
	End-User				778	18.6%
	End-User				326	15.0%
	End-User				366	15.0%
	End-User				559	15.0%
	End-User				248	15.0%
	End-User				477	15.0%

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[REDACTED]	End-User	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	351	18.6%
[REDACTED]	End-User	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	508	18.6%
[REDACTED]	End-User	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	261	15.0%
[REDACTED]	End-User	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	308	18.6%
[REDACTED]	End-User	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	653	15.0%
Central School District (CSD)					Total Students	
					6,567	

D-4 Need for Service and Project Benefits – Up to 30 Points

Needs for Services

The Boards of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) were started as a state institution in 1948. XX XXXX, our organization, was formed in 1983 when Xxx and Xxx BOCES merged. Today, XX XXXX partners with its 22 component school districts to meet the educational needs of all students ages birth to adult in the region. Located in [REDACTED] counties in southwestern XX XXXX State, XX XXXX encompasses 2,159 square miles. School districts vary in size from rural, single campus K-12 settings to small city school districts. The combined public school enrollment in the 2023-24 academic year was roughly 17,000 students for the entire XX XXXX, with the enrollment for the sixteen schools specifically included in this funding opportunity being approximately 6,567. XX XXXX exists to provide cost effective sharing of educational services among local school districts.

Geography and Community

Our program provides service to two southern XX XXXX State counties, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] has 1,029.4 square miles of land area and 5.08 square miles of water area, with 45.1 people per square mile. Xxx County has 1,308.2 square miles of land area and 14.14 square miles of water area with 58.1 people per square mile (US Census 2020). Both counties have significantly less people per square mile than the 428.7 for the State of XX XXXX and the 93.8 for the nation as a whole.

Xxx County is a rural county in the Southern Tier of Western XX XXXX State, along the Pennsylvania border. Xxx is the only county in the State that is home to three primary watershed headwaters: The Xxx, Susquehanna and Genesee Rivers. Xxx County boasts four Higher Education facilities including Alfred University, which is the nation’s second oldest four-year co-ed liberal arts university. Part of the Oil Springs Reservation, controlled by the Seneca Nation, is located in the county. (ny.gov/counties/Xxx, accessed 1/29/25)

Xxx County is located in the southwestern portion of XX XXXX State just north of the Pennsylvania border. The main industries of the county are farming and small businesses. The Seneca Nation of Indians Reservation is located in Xxx County. It is home to three higher education institutions. (ny.gov/counties/Xxx, accessed 1/29/25)

The Seneca Nation

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Xxxx City School District is located on the Seneca Nation of Indians (Seneca) reservation, a member of the Iroquois Confederacy. Due to its location, 38% of all students identify as American Indian. In a region not known for cultural diversity, bridging cultural divides and creating equitable opportunities for all students is critical.

“We have a proud & rich history – the Seneca were the largest of six Native American nations that comprised the Iroquois Confederacy or Six Nations, a democratic government that pre-dates the United States Constitution.

Today the Seneca Nation currently has a total enrolled population of over 8,000 citizens. The Seneca Nation supports its own people and benefits surrounding communities with a variety of cultural, educational and economic efforts. The territories are generally rural, with several residential areas. ...

Its varied enterprises include: world-class casino gaming, hospitality and entertainment, which employ over 3,500 people, sustainable energy company focused on wind and solar, as well as a convenience store chain (6 stores), construction management, and diverse holdings in business ventures. ...

The Seneca Nation of Indians holds title to five reservations in XX XXXX - Xxx, Xxx, Oil Spring, Niagara and Buffalo. Included on the Xxx Reservation is the City of xxx, known as the "only city in the world entirely on an Indian reservation." Xxxx High School is located on tribal land.

Xxx Indian Territory...is located along the Xxx River from the Pennsylvania border upriver to Vandalia, XX XXXX, and is located entirely within Xxx County...This reservation also includes the City of xxx.

Xxx Indian Territory (CIR)...is located along the Xxx Creek, from Gowanda, XX XXXX, downstream to the shore of Lake Erie. The CIR is comprised of some 21,618 acres in Xxx, xxx counties.

Oil Spring Indian Territory (OSIR)...is located on the border of Xxx and Xxx Counties near Cuba, XX XXXX. The OSIR is made up of one square mile of land that includes access to Cuba Lake. Although the OSIR has no permanent Seneca residents, there are SNI and privately owned enterprises operating on the reservation.” ([REDACTED])

Appalachia

Both program counties are part of the Appalachian region. Appalachia is a vast region that is historically a rural and impoverished area. The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) is a regional economic development council founded by an act of Congress in 1965. ARC works with all levels of government and the local community to enhance economic development and help build pathways out of poverty for residents.

The Appalachian Region, as defined in ARC's authorizing legislation, is a 205,000-square-mile region that follows the spine of the Appalachian Mountains from southern XX XXXX to

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northern Mississippi. It includes all of West Virginia and parts of 12 other states: Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, XX XXXX, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. Forty-two percent of the Region's population is rural, compared with 20 percent of the national population.

The Appalachian Region's economy, once highly dependent on mining, forestry, agriculture, chemical industries, and heavy industry, has become more diversified in recent times, and now includes manufacturing and professional service industries. ARC classifies counties in one of five categories based upon its economic status: Distressed, At-risk, Transitional, Competitive, and Attainment. For fiscal year 2025, Xxx is listed by ARC as At-risk with two distressed areas and Xxx is listed as At-risk with four distressed areas. Distressed areas are those census tracts in at-risk and transitional counties that have a median family income no greater than 67 percent of the U.S. average and a poverty rate 150 percent of the U.S. average or greater. It should be noted that in the past two years, Xxx has gone from Transitional to At-risk and Xxx has increased its distressed areas from one to two showing an economic drop in the project service area.

(www.arc.gov, accessed 1/29/25)

Because of the terrain of these counties, they face many weather hazards. The Xxx Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan found the hazards to be Severe Winter Storm (including heavy snow), Flood (including flash flooding), Hurricane, Severe Storm, Ice Storm, Tornado, Wildfire, Landslide (including severe erosion) and Dam Failure (earthen dams). While dam failure is not a natural hazard, it was added to this list because Xxx County has several earthen dams that are nearing the end of their designed life span with 12 dams listed as high hazard: flooding, severe storms, and tornadoes could all play a role in compromising the structural integrity of these dams. On average, there have been 5.13 Severe Winter Weather events annually over the past 25 years. (Xxx Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan 2020)

Demographics

These counties are rural and have little diversity in their populations. Whites are the majority in both counties with significantly higher percentages than both the state and national rates. Xxx does have an extremely high percentage of Native Americans compared to both the nation and the state due to the Seneca Reservation.

Location	Population	White	Black	American Indian / Alaskan Native	Asian	Hispanic
US		73.4%	14.4%	1.4%	7.2%	19.0%
xx		64.3%	17.7%	1.4%	10.1%	19.0%
Xxx	47,027	95.8%	2.3%	0.6%	1.7%	2.1%
Xxx	76,479	94.0%	2.7%	4.0%	1.2%	2.3%

US Census Bureau, ACS, 2023

Education

According to the XX XXXX State Education Department (XXXED), Performance Level Descriptions describe the range of knowledge and skills students should demonstrate at a given performance level. XX XXXX State assessments are designed to classify students into one of four proficiency categories; these proficiency categories are defined as:

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XXX Level 4 - Students performing at this level excel in standards for their grade. They demonstrate knowledge, skills, and practices embodied by the XX XXXX State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards...that are considered more than sufficient for the expectations at this grade.

XXX Level 3 - Students performing at this level are proficient in standards for their grade. They demonstrate knowledge, skills, and practices embodied by the XX XXXX State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards...that are considered sufficient for the expectations at this grade.

XXX Level 2 - Students performing at this level are partially proficient in standards for their grade. They demonstrate knowledge, skills, and practices embodied by the XX XXXX State P – 12 Common Core Learning Standards...that are considered partial but insufficient for the expectations at this grade. Students performing at Level 2 are considered on track to meet current XX XXXX high school graduation requirements but are not yet proficient on Common Core Learning Standards at this grade.

XXX Level 1 - Students performing at this level are well below proficient in standards for their grade. They demonstrate limited knowledge, skills, and practices embodied by the XX XXXX State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards...that are considered insufficient for the expectations at this grade.

A review of the XXXED’s school report cards demonstrates significant achievement gaps for students in most of our partner schools. Data in the charts below demonstrate the percentage of students who **did meet minimum proficiency levels** (i.e., scored a level 3 or 4). Districts with scores that perform poorly in 3rd and 4th grade but improve along the grade continuum generally have larger percentages of students who are not school ready. Districts whose scores worsen over the grade continuum generally do not have enough rigor in their curriculum and/or their curriculum is not well articulated across the grade spectrum. It is important to note that even the schools that met the state average still have a significant percentage of students that are not proficient in the subject area.

English Language Arts	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
XX XXXX State	43%	47%	44%	44%	50%	52%
	55%	41%	52%	52%	55%	51%
	16%	7%	33%	22%	39%	33%
	40%	53%	54%	42%	30%	33%
	37%	35%	37%	28%	39%	55%
	55%	39%	29%	21%	16%	48%
	43%	58%	54%	52%	33%	41%
	45%	38%	53%	71%	30%	61%
	30%	38%	46%	28%	48%	43%
	43%	45%	36%	38%	19%	54%
	43%	53%	54%	48%	25%	49%
	50%	32%	36%	48%	36%	34%
	28%	28%	20%	23%	36%	20%

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	58%	31%	50%	53%	38%	42%
	31%	29%	35%	41%	45%	30%

2023-24 XX XXXX State Report Cards

Central School District (CSD)

Math	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
XX XXXX State	54%	58%	49%	51%	57%	41%
	79%	62%	68%	56%	60%	45%
	50%	50%	39%	28%	50%	50%
	53%	82%	76%	90%	43%	50%
	71%	48%	52%	33%	53%	37%
	61%	64%	45%	36%	49%	47%
	51%	68%	57%	36%	51%	30%
	47%	74%	79%	74%	64%	46%
	41%	53%	44%	68%	67%	50%
	57%	65%	52%	62%	29%	64%
	61%	78%	81%	57%	61%	17%
	58%	21%	52%	35%	48%	45%
	36%	48%	31%	45%	20%	18%
	42%	56%	54%	54%	67%	65%
	50%	45%	49%	36%	62%	28%

2023-24 XX XXXX State Report Cards

As can be seen in the above charts, none of our districts performed better than the state rates across the board in English Language Arts and only one performed better in Math. In all the other districts, the percentage of students performing below proficiency is often significantly higher than the state rates. Specifically, more than two-thirds of our school districts scored below the state's proficiency level for English Language Arts in grades 4-8, with three school districts underperforming in all grades. This is particularly distressing since the state's average proficiency level in English Language Arts is only 50% or less in grades 3-7 and our school districts performed below that. Proficiency in Math is better throughout our school districts but only slightly. Fifty percent of our school districts performed at a lower proficiency level in Math in grades 3, 4, 6, and 7 than the state. Further, one school district underperformed across the board in all grade levels for Math compared to the state.

Due to low proficiencies, XX XXXX will primarily focus distance learning on English Language Arts which are the lowest scores demonstrated above and will also address Math. Students who are lacking in English Language Arts skills will only struggle more and more as they advance grades. Students must master basic language skills in early grades or risk falling behind as they progress through school. XXXED uses the "Science of Reading" evidence-based components to advance literacy from pre-kindergarten through high school. The importance of competency in English Language Arts is more critical than ever in today's text-mediated, information-rich, digital and fast changing world. The "Science of Reading" focuses on six primary skills and competencies to support effective reading and writing – oral language, phonics, phonological awareness, comprehension, fluency and vocabulary. (Leseaux and Carr 2017)

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Targeting improvements in English Language Arts will also carry over to improvements in Math. A recent study addressing the developmental dynamics between reading and math in elementary school showed average and high levels of reading performance were associated with subsequent gains in math growth, in particular for below average performing children in math. (Erbeli et al. 2020 <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7725923/>) Students not mastering math will more likely experience severe challenges as adults as math is used in everyday life, including shopping, banking, and cooking. Furthermore, much of the technology used in our society and needed for many jobs require certain levels of mathematical ability. “Students who lack sufficient mathematical knowledge and skills are more likely to experience negative outcomes as adults, including fewer opportunities for meaningful employment and a reduced likelihood of economic independence. Because of these factors, it is critical that students begin to develop essential math concepts and skills at an early age.” (The IRIS Center. (2017) *High-quality mathematics instruction: What teachers should know*. Retrieved from <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/math/>)

Secondary schools fared bit better, but the testing scores are still in need of improvement. Only five of the fourteen school districts out-perform the state average in Math, English Language Arts, Science, Global History & Geography and U.S. History and Government across the board.

2020 High School Cohort*	English Language Arts	Math	Science	Global History & Geography	U.S. History & Government
XX XXXX State	78%	48%	51%	71%	65%
	86%	76%	81%	78%	79%
	67%	33%	67%	57%	48%
	89%	84%	89%	84%	84%
	72%	35%	78%	63%	54%
	73%	59%	63%	66%	67%
	85%	79%	72%	66%	79%
	82%	79%	74%	70%	82%
	88%	86%	84%	84%	84%
	88%	58%	88%	71%	63%
	77%	43%	47%	77%	80%
	80%	76%	76%	73%	85%
	74%	46%	40%	71%	70%
	90%	62%	71%	76%	76%
	77%	53%	59%	71%	75%

2023-24 XX XXXX State Report Cards

*A High School Cohort consists of all students who first enter grade 9 anywhere or, in the case of ungraded students with disabilities, reach their seventeenth birthday in a particular school year (July 1 - June 30). The "year" used to identify the cohort is the year in which the July 1 - December 31 dates fall. Results are reported four years after these students first enter grade 9.

At this time, a few of the individual school districts offer some dual enrollment opportunities to their rural students but it is not easily accessible to all schools. XX XXXX currently does not have an dual enrollment program. Dual enrollment is vital to expanding continuing education as

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well as high paying careers to students. Dual enrollment programs offer high school students a valuable opportunity to earn college credits while still in high school, potentially saving time and money on a college degree, while also providing a head start on college-level coursework and a more affordable pathway to higher education. (<https://www.act.org/content/act/en/students-and-parents/high-school-success/high-school-resources/dual-enrollment-faqs.html#:~:text=Benefits%20of%20Dual%20Enrollment%20Programs&text=Dual%20enrollment%20courses%20offer%20a,offers%20a%20more%20affordable%20pathway>)

Economics

The service counties are more economically depressed when compared to the state and the nation. Xxx County and Xxx County have lower median household incomes than the U.S. and XX XXXX as well as higher percentages of poverty for individuals and children as well. Nearly one in four children in each county live in poverty.

	Median Household Income	Individuals in Poverty	Children in Poverty
U.S.	\$78,538	12.4%	16.3%
XX XXXX	\$84,578	13.7%	18.2%
Xxx County	\$61,233	16.8%	22.7%
Xxx County	\$58,248	17.6%	24.2

US Census Bureau, ACS, 2023

Additionally, the application should address why the applicant cannot afford the project without a grant.

As demonstrated above, partner districts serve low-income areas with limited fiscal resources. With shrinking populations and economies (see section on out-migration below), school budgets will only continue to decrease at a time when districts are being asked to take on increasing duties. Successful funding of this project will provide partners with significant, long-term capital resources that are outside of the scope of local budgets. The total program budget is \$648,624.65 and the partners are providing a combined match of \$97,207.88. The Federal funding request is \$551,416.77. The program will provide services to 6,567 students and their teachers.

Applicants must also substantiate the underserved educational nature of the project's proposed service area, as well as demonstrate demand by rural residents and other beneficiaries for the educational services that the project would provide.

The demand by rural residents is demonstrated in the letters of support written. All know the value and importance of distance learning, as it creates additional learning resources, more qualified teachers and the ability to access additional learning opportunities and the world.

The participating school districts have pooled their resources to provide matching dollars to participate in the 2025 RUS grant. Providing matching funds clearly demonstrates the importance of the project to the community and the need to implement and expand English Language Arts learning opportunities for our rural students as well as a dual enrollment program.

Technology

The chart below illustrates the current distance learning technology in place at each location and

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the proposed equipment. The 2025 proposed equipment will either: 1) create distance learning capacity and/or 2) replace end of life distance equipment.

Site Name	Current Equipment/Limitation	2025 RUS DLT Request Proposed Equipment and/or Enhancement
[REDACTED]	No budget requested	No budget requested
[REDACTED]	End of life equipment. Current Distance Learning (DL) Room equipment including current Displays and Video/Sound systems are outdated and unreliable.	Requesting Logitech Rally Bar, Extension Cord, Surge Protector, Pan-Way Latching Surface Raceway, Logitech Wall Mounting kit for Rally Bar, 86” Interactive Panel, i5 PC Module, Windows 11 licensing, Logitech TAP Touch Meeting Room Controller, and Logitech Reach Adjustable Content Camera to substantially improve the usability of the DL Room.
[REDACTED]	End of life equipment. Current DL Room equipment including current Displays and Video/Sound systems are outdated and unreliable.	Requesting Logitech Rally Bar, Extension Cord, Surge Protector, Pan-Way Latching Surface Raceway, Logitech Wall Mounting kit for Rally Bar, 86” Interactive Panel, i5 PC Module, Windows 11 licensing, Logitech TAP Touch Meeting Room Controller, and Logitech Reach Adjustable Content Camera to substantially improve the usability of the DL Room.
[REDACTED]	End of life equipment. Current DL Room equipment including current Displays and Video/Sound systems are outdated and unreliable.	Requesting the Video Conference Room Package with Logitech Rally Bar, Logitech TAP Touch Meeting Room Controller, Logitech Sight, Boundary Microphones, 86” Interactive Panel, i5 PC Module, Windows 11 licensing, Logitech Scribe Whiteboard Camera, Logitech BYOD Meeting Room System, and Logitech Reach Adjustable Content Camera to substantially improve, update, and increase the capabilities of the current DL Room.
[REDACTED]	End of life equipment. Current Video/Sound	Requesting the Mobile Package with Logitech TAP Touch Meeting Room

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	equipment utilized for DL is unreliable. District has sufficient Displays but insufficient Video/Sound systems.	Controller and Gabor TV Cart which will provide flexibility to enhance the video/audio capacity of current rooms for the purpose of videoconferencing.
	End of life equipment. Current DL Room equipment including current Displays and Video/Sound systems are outdated and unreliable.	Requesting 86” TouchView Interactive Panels and OWL Camera Package to replace current Displays and improve the videoconferencing capacity of the current rooms.
	End of life equipment. Current Video/Sound equipment utilized for DL is unreliable. District has sufficient Displays but insufficient Video/Sound systems.	Requesting Logitech Rally Bar, Extension Cord, Surge Protector, Pan-Way Latching Surface Raceway, Logitech TV Mount for Rally Bars, Logitech Scribe Whiteboard Camera, Pearstone Cat 6 Network Patch Cable and OWL Camera Packages to enhance the Video/Sound capacity of their DL rooms.
	End of life equipment. Current Video/Sound equipment utilized for DL is unreliable. District has sufficient Displays but insufficient Video/Sound systems.	Requesting Logitech Rally Bar, Extension Cord, Surge Protector, Pan-Way Latching Surface Raceway, Logitech TV Mount for Rally Bars, Logitech Scribe Whiteboard Camera, and Pearstone Cat 6 Network Patch Cable to enhance the Video/Sound capacity of their DL room.
	End of life equipment. Current Video/Sound equipment utilized for DL is unreliable. District has sufficient Displays but insufficient Video/Sound systems.	Requesting Logitech Rally Bar, Extension Cord, Surge Protector, Pan-Way Latching Surface Raceway, and Logitech Wall Mounting Kit for Rally Bar to enhance the Video/Sound capacity of their DL room.
	End of life equipment. Current DL Room equipment including current Display and Video/Sound system are outdated and unreliable.	Requesting Logitech Rally Bar, Extension Cord, Surge Protector, Pan-Way Latching Surface Raceway, Logitech Wall Mounting Kit for Rally Bar, 86” Interactive Panel, i5 PC Module, Windows 11 licensing, and Logitech TAP Touch Meeting Room Controller to substantially improve the usability of the DL Room.
	End of life equipment. Current DL Room equipment including current Display and	Requesting Logitech Rally Bar, Extension Cord, Surge Protector, Pan-Way Latching Surface Raceway, Logitech Wall Mounting Kit for Rally Bar, 86”

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	Video/Sound system are outdated and unreliable.	Interactive Panel, i5 PC Module, Windows 11 licensing, and Logitech TAP Touch Meeting Room Controller to substantially improve the usability of the DL Room.
	End of life equipment. Current Video/Sound equipment utilized for DL is unreliable. District has sufficient Displays but insufficient Video/Sound systems.	Requesting Logitech Rally Bar, Extension Cord, Surge Protector, Pan-Way Latching Surface Raceway, Logitech Wall Mounting Kit for Rally Bar, and Logitech TV Mount to enhance the Video/Sound capacity of their DL rooms.
	End of life equipment. Current Video/Sound equipment utilized for DL is unreliable. District has sufficient Displays but insufficient Video/Sound systems.	Requesting Logitech Rally Bar, Extension Cord, Surge Protector, Pan-Way Latching Surface Raceway, and Logitech TV Mount to enhance the Video/Sound capacity of all their classrooms so they can be used for videoconferencing.
	End of life equipment. Current DL Room equipment including current Displays and Video/Sound systems are outdated and unreliable.	Requesting Logitech Rally Bar, Extension Cord, Surge Protector, Pan-Way Latching Surface Raceway, Logitech Wall Mounting Kit for Rally Bar, 86" Interactive Panel, i5 PC Module, Windows 11 licensing, and Logitech TAP Touch Meeting Room Controller to substantially improve the usability of their DL Rooms.
	End of life equipment. Current DL Room equipment including current Display and Video/Sound system are outdated and unreliable.	Requesting Logitech Rally Bar, Extension Cord, Surge Protector, Pan-Way Latching Surface Raceway, Logitech TV Mount for Rally Bars and 75" Interactive Panels to equip all classrooms to be videoconference-ready rooms. Requesting Video Conference Room Package with Logitech Rally Bar, Logitech TAP Touch Meeting Room Controller, Logitech Sight, Boundary Microphones, 75"/86" Interactive Panels, Logitech BYOD Meeting Room System, and Logitech Reach Adjustable Content Camera to substantially improve, update, and increase the capabilities of the current DL Rooms.
	End of life equipment.	Requesting Logitech Rally Bar, Extension

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[REDACTED]	Current Video/Sound equipment utilized for DL is unreliable. District has sufficient Displays but insufficient Video/Sound systems.	Cord, Surge Protector, Pan-Way Latching Surface Raceway, Logitech Wall Mounting Kit for Rally Bars, Logitech TV Mount for Rally Bars, and Logitech BYOD Meeting Room System to enhance the Video/Sound capacity of their DL rooms.
[REDACTED]	End of life equipment. Current Video/Sound equipment utilized for DL is unreliable. District has sufficient Displays but insufficient Video/Sound systems.	Requesting the Mobile Package with Logitech TAP Touch Meeting Room Controller and Gabor TV Cart which will provide flexibility to enhance the video/audio capacity of current rooms for the purpose of videoconferencing.
[REDACTED]	End of life equipment. Current DL Room equipment including current Displays and Video/Sound systems are outdated and unreliable.	Requesting the Video Conference Room Package with Logitech Rally Bar, Logitech TAP Touch Meeting Room Controller, Logitech Sight, Boundary Microphones, 75" Interactive Panel, i5 PC Module, Windows 11 licensing, Logitech Scribe Whiteboard Camera, Logitech BYOD Meeting Room System, and Logitech Reach Adjustable Content Camera to substantially improve, update, and increase the capabilities of the current DL Room.
[REDACTED]	End of life equipment. Current Video/Sound equipment utilized for DL is unreliable. District has sufficient Displays but insufficient Video/Sound systems.	Requesting the Mobile Package with Logitech TAP Touch Meeting Room Controller and Gabor TV Cart which will provide flexibility to enhance the video/audio capacity of current rooms for the purpose of videoconferencing. Requesting the OWL Camera Packages to enhance the Video/Sound capacity of their DL rooms.

The applicant's proposed plan to address these challenges and how the proposed project will help resolve these challenges

In creating the Distance Learning program, the project team performed a needs assessment. While some needs are beyond the ability of XX XXXX and the partners to improve directly, as K-12 education institutions, better preparing students for high growth and high wage postsecondary opportunities is a need we can meet. To accomplish this, the program will implement and expand distance learning opportunities to meet two overall objectives:

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- 1) expand distance learning opportunities to improve student's English Language Arts XXX Standardized Testing scores.
- 2) Create a dual enrollment program for XX XXXX school districts and students.

Doing so will accomplish the overall goals of better preparing students with skills necessary for the top careers in our area, as well as preparing those who choose to leave the area for careers that are high growth and high wage nationally.

The Distance Learning program development team noted major challenges that the applicant and partner school districts face in accomplishing the goal and objectives noted above. These challenges include: end of life equipment at schools which creates an inequality in content delivery for very high needs students; limited English Language Arts instruction resources at rural schools which inhibits experiential learning; and, the need for expanded dual enrollment opportunities for students. This program was designed to directly overcome these challenges using distance learning and move the program to successful implementation.

Benefits Derived from Services

The XX XXXX Education Services (xxx XX XXXX Educational Services (CA-BOCES)) proposes the Distance Learning **program**. The goal of the program will be to increase the distance learning at XX XXXX partner school districts so that students achieve educational success, stay in school, graduate, and pursue postsecondary education that allows them to successfully transition to adulthood. XX XXXX is requesting a fixed site distance learning program will connect 6,567 students and their teachers at 16 different rural school sites from 14 different districts and two Career and Technical Education Centers. (The populations of the Career and Technical Education Centers have been subtracted out of the total students served on the site sheet, as those students have already been counted in their home school.)

The Distance Learning program will provide students with additional English Language Arts learning opportunities through distance learning and create a new dual enrollment program for rural students who would otherwise not have an opportunity for accelerated educational opportunities. The program outcomes will be student mastery of English Language Arts using the XXX standards from qualified teachers and enhancement to instruction through distance learning, as well as an increase in the number of students participating in dual enrollment programs.

XX XXXX school districts score poorly on XXX English Language Arts Standards. Strong English Language Arts skills are crucial for future success, providing a foundation for effective communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving, which are essential in all aspects of life, from academics to careers and personal relationships. A strong foundation in English Language Arts is transferable into success in other school subjects such as math, science and social studies. In order to address this need, the partner schools will replace end of life equipment with new high-definition distance learning equipment to expand English Language Arts distance learning at those schools.

XX XXXX will also start a dual enrollment for rural students who would otherwise not have an opportunity for accelerated educational opportunities. XX XXXX will offer partner school

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districts options for enrolling students in early college access courses taught by XXX-certified teachers who are approved and/or considered an adjunct by local partner institutions of higher education. Each dual enrollment class offered will have an articulation agreement with colleges and universities, and students may receive college credit for course work taken through video conference courses offered by the districts in the region.

Overall, the Distance Learning program outcomes will be student mastery of English Language Arts using the XXX standards from qualified teachers and enhancement to instruction through distance learning and to start a dual enrollment program that allows students the ability to earn college credits while enrolled in high school.

Site Name	Hub/End-User	County	Town	School District	Enrollment (AY 2023-24)	SAIPE
XX XXXX Education Services (xxxx XX XXXX Educational Services (CA BOCES)	Hub	█	█			
█	Hub/End-User	█	█	█	n/a	15.0%
█	Hub/End-User	█	█	█	n/a	18.6%
█	End-User	█	█	█	553	18.6%
█	End-User	█	█	█	240	15.0%
█	End-User	█	█	█	302	15.0%
█	End-User	█	█	█	287	15.0%
█	End-User	█	█	█	350	15.0%
█	End-User	█	█	█	778	18.6%
█	End-User	█	█	█	326	15.0%

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[REDACTED]	End-User	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	366	15.0%
[REDACTED]	End-User	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	559	15.0%
[REDACTED]	End-User	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	248	15.0%
[REDACTED]	End-User	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	477	15.0%
[REDACTED]	End-User	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	351	18.6%
[REDACTED]	End-User	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	508	18.6%
[REDACTED]	End-User	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	261	15.0%
[REDACTED]	End-User	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	308	18.6%
[REDACTED]	End-User	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	653	15.0%
Central School District (CSD) (http://data.Xxxed.gov/)					Total Students	
					6,567	

Technology: Improve the distance learning technology available at sites to increase the quality of content delivery and provide more students access to distance learning content and courses.

Challenge(s) met: lack of high-definition equipment at some schools which creates an inequality in content delivery for very high needs students; lack of interactive distance learning technology at some sites; limited English Language Arts resources at rural schools; and, need to expand dual enrollment programming.

Each school determined the best equipment to improve its distance learning capabilities. Some schools did not need an entire package of equipment, while others needed a complete package of equipment and accessories. Packages offered to enhance distance learning instruction and equipment include:

- Video Conference Room Package** with the **capability** to enhance teacher instruction and student involvement from one classroom to another classroom. With this equipment, all students can be heard and seen. It allows the teacher to freely move around the room and use white board. Teacher can switch back and forth between whiteboard and the classroom camera. This distance learning package makes it easier for video instruction and active participation in the class. The Video Conference Room Package components include: C2G USB 3.0/3.1 Gen 1 Type-C Male to Type-A Male Cable; C2G USB 2.0 Type-C Male to Type-C Male Cable; Pearstone USB-C Male to HDMI Male 8K Cable; Pearstone High-Speed HDMI Cable with Ethernet; Pearstone Cat 6 Snagless Network Patch Cable; GoGreen Extension Cord; Logitech Rally Mic Pod Hub; Logitech Rally Mic Pod Extension Cable; Logitech PoE Injector with Plug Set; Belkin Surge Protector; Logitech Rally Mic Pod Cat Coupler; Simply45 Hook and Loop Roll; Logitech Rally Mic Pod Mount; Logitech K400 Plus Wireless Touch Keyboard; Pan-Way Latching Surface Raceway; and Logitech TV Mount for Rally Bars.

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- **Mobile Package** with the **capability** to have one microphone, camera and speaker all in one place (Rally Bar). The Rally Bar is easy to use by plugging into a TV screen or computer, which instantly transforms the room into a distance learning room. The Mobile Package is mobile and shared among the school and all its classrooms creating instant distance learning capabilities and rooms. The Mobile Package components include: Logitech Rally Bar; Pearstone Cat 6 Snagless Network Patch Cable; Kopul Braided High-Speed HDMI Cable with Ethernet; Comprehensive USB 2.0 Type-A Male to USB Type-A Male Cable; Comprehensive USB 2.0 Type-A Extension Cable; Pearstone USB 3.2 Type-C to USB Type-A Adapter; GoGreen Extension Cord; Pelican 1740 Transport Case; Logitech Wall Mounting Kit for Rally Bar; and Belkin Surge Protector.
- **OWL Camera Package capability** is an all-in-one microphone, camera, and speaker that plugs into a TV screen or Computer and allows the room to become a distance learning room. It is shared among the school and all its classrooms. OWL equipment was chosen to be compatible with the schools existing equipment. The OWL Camera Package components include: Owl Labs Meeting Owl 4+ Premium Pack; and Owl Labs Hard Case for Meeting Owl.

The XXXED supports using digital technologies to expand access to high-quality, virtual and blended learning opportunities for students in grades K-12. In 2024, XXXED updated its regulations to establish clear definitions and guidelines for virtual and blended instruction, ensuring these programs align with state learning standards and meet specific criteria for instructional delivery. While distance learning is not mandated, schools that offer such programs must adhere to rigorous standards, including providing access to necessary technology and internet connectivity. Instruction must be delivered by appropriately certified teachers who maintain regular, substantive interactions with students. Additionally, virtual and blended programs must document student mastery of learning outcomes, satisfy unit of study and credit requirements, and align with students' individualized education plans to ensure the continued provision of a free appropriate public education. The proposed program will allow us to meet XXXED guidelines and standards.

English Language Arts enhancements: Provide access to students in all rural sites with English Language Arts enhancement to instruction through distance learning.

Challenge(s) met: limited English Language Arts resources at rural schools inhibits experiential learning; K-5 English Language Arts teachers at local districts need learning enhancements tools for English Language Arts to teach in conjunction with the English Language Arts curriculum and XXX English Language Arts standards while recognizing the resource limitations and challenges present in rural and high needs schools.

According to the XXXED, literacy is a foundational skill for 21st-century learners. In fact, being a proficient reader, writer, and communicator has an impact on a student's entire education and their life beyond. XXXED is working to ensure all students have the resources they need to be

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successful in literacy and life, no matter their learning differences. All students deserve the opportunity of a high-quality education that allows them to thrive.

The program will connect students at end-user sites to high quality English Language Arts teaching enhancements at the hub sites. According to the XX XXXX State Next Generation English Language Arts Learning Standards P-12, the main design principles in the XX XXXX State Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) for English Language Arts standards are a set of standards that define what students should know and be able to do in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language, organized by grade level (PreK-8) and grade band (9-10 and 11-12). The outcome of the standards are to produce students with lifelong practices of reading and writing.

Lifelong Practices of Readers and Writers

Lifelong Practices of Readers	Lifelong Practices of Writers
<p>Readers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● think, write, speak, and listen to understand ● read often and widely from a range of global and diverse texts ● read for multiple purposes, including for learning and for pleasure ● self-select texts based on interest ● persevere through challenging, complex texts ● enrich personal language, background knowledge, and vocabulary through reading and communicating with others ● monitor comprehension and apply reading strategies flexibly ● make connections (to self, other texts, ideas, cultures, eras, etc.) 	<p>Writers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● think, read, speak, and listen to support writing ● write often and widely in a variety of formats, using print and digital resources and tools ● write for multiple purposes, including for learning and for pleasure ● persevere through challenging writing tasks ● enrich personal language, background knowledge, and vocabulary through writing and communicating with others ● experiment and play with language ● analyze mentor texts to enhance writing ● strengthen writing by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach

When it comes to the development of young people, many different elements go into the creation of a well-rounded individual. Certain skills, such as English Language Arts, are more fundamental to the process than others. After all, the ability to communicate is the foundation on which all other teachings rest. Without the ability to effectively convey ideas, there would be no way to teach or learn anything else. No matter the method, everyone must be able to effectively exchange information.

The focus of the curriculum is meant to give students an opportunity to understand concepts and practice with them in order to reach a deep and fluent understanding. Coherence in the curriculum means progressions that span grade levels to build students' understanding of ever more sophisticated language concepts and applications. Rigor means a combination of fluency exercises, chains of reasoning, abstract activities, and contextual activities throughout the module.

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In order to improve the English Language Arts scores, each school adopting English Language Arts instruction and enhancement via distance learning will provide access to high quality resources needed for improving English Language Arts achievement. These resources will be available to all partner sites through the distance learning network.

For example, English Language Arts may be enhanced by the following programs using distance learning:

- The Science of Reading Fundamentals microcredential (SoRF MC). This is a fully asynchronous online, non-credit microcredential delivered in the learn.newpaltz.edu online platform. It is designed for practicing P-12 teachers and others interested in learning about the research-based building blocks of reading instruction. The SoRF MC covers the five pillars of the Science of Reading -- phonemic awareness, phonics (including alphabetic principle and orthography), fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The microcredential can be completed in as little as seven weeks or as long as six months. XXX teachers can receive 35 Continuing Teacher and Leader Education (CTLE) hours upon completion.
- Quill has adapted research-based writing instruction into a free, open source digital platform. Activities help students develop their sentence construction and grammar skills and are designed as supplemental writing exercises that students complete over short, 10-to-15-minute sessions at the beginning or end of a class period. Quill offers prompts and exercises and delivers instant feedback to help students write, revise, and revise again until they are able to produce succinct, powerful sentences.

A teacher will be at the hub/end-user site to guide students in teaching English Language Arts skills and to perform required hands-on tasks. Classrooms are taught by teachers using computers accessible via web conferencing, through the proposed distance learning equipment. Eight schools are requesting equipment to replace outdated equipment and to substantially improve, update, and increase the capabilities of the current Distance Learning Room. Three schools are requesting mobile distance learning carts. Three schools are requesting TouchView Interactive Panels and OWL Camera Packages to replace current Displays and improve the videoconferencing capacity of the current rooms.

Students at the end-user sites will participate through distance learning with the images displayed on the classroom monitors. Hands on English Language Arts enhancements provide for an important experiential learning opportunity that, for some students entering dual enrollment programs and professional careers after high school, will also translate as a valuable job skill. English Language Arts skills, encompassing reading, writing, speaking, and listening, are crucial for effective communication, academic success, and overall development, as they are fundamental to understanding and participating in society. (<https://www.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/LA.pdf>)

Video conferencing through distance learning will also be used for professional development for teachers and administrators using the Lexia LETRS® (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) Suite. LETRS is comprehensive professional learning designed to provide early childhood and elementary educators and administrators with deep knowledge to be literacy and language experts in the Science of Reading. Developed by Dr. Louisa Moats and leaders in

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the field of literacy, Lexia LETRS teaches the skills needed to master the foundational and fundamentals of reading and writing instruction—phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and written language.

Dual Enrollment: To begin and offer The XX XXXX Early College Access program that will enhance proficiency in secondary schools and increase graduation rates, through distance learning and increase access to post-secondary education.

Challenge(s) met: Create a dual enrollment program; provide all partner school districts with equal dual enrollment opportunities; obtain equipment for distance learning in dual enrollment program; and provide college opportunities for rural students.

Through this program, XX XXXX and the Career and Technical Education Centers will start a new dual enrollment program to offer to all the partnering school districts. The XX XXXX Early College Access program will enhance proficiency in secondary schools and increase graduation rates, through distance learning and increase access to post-secondary education. The program will also provide students the opportunity to experience college level courses and earn credits, while in high school, and build college and/or career readiness. Some students are apprehensive about attending college. The XX XXXX Early College Access Program provides these students with the opportunity to try out college classes, be successful and realize they are capable of attending and graduating college.

The XX XXXX Early College Access program will offer partner school districts options for enrolling students in early college access courses by XXX-certified teachers who are approved and/or considered an adjunct by partner institutions of higher education (IHE). XX XXXX will coordinate real-time video conference courses within and among component school districts. As the program is established, the program will begin with school-based early college courses taught by a XXX-certified teacher who has been recognized by the IHE to teach a college course. Two or more component districts will be connected through live (synchronous) videoconference as demand and schedules allow.

Once the program is fully launched, the program partnerships will be expanded with [REDACTED]. Other IHEs will be added as the program grows and expands. Each dual enrollment class offered will have an articulation agreement with colleges and universities, and students may receive college credit for course work taken in their district, through video conference courses, or at the Career and Technical Education Centers.

A sampling of classes that will include dual enrollment credits include, but are not limited to:

- New Vision Health Professions offer up to 30 credit hours.
- New Vision Educational Careers offer approximately 15 credits.
- Criminal Justice offers 3 credits.
- Media Communications Technology offers 9 credits.
- Welding offers 6 credits.
- Product Design and Manufacturing offers 6 credits.

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- Medical Assisting (Olean) offers 4 credits.
- Medical Assisting (Xxx) offers 13 credits.
- Medical Assisting (Ellicottville) offers 13 credits.
- Pre-Engineering and CAD up to 16 credits.

Document the specific benefits of your project and quantify them in terms of expected outcomes.

Benefit	Outcome
Improved distance learning technology	By the end of the three-year grant period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update end of life equipment at 16 schools. • Students will have improved experiential learning opportunities using high-definition video. • 6,567 students will have improved access to distance learning. • A new dual enrollment program will be created offering 6,567 students the opportunity to attend college classes.
Improved English Language Arts scores per XXXLAS	By the end of the three-year grant period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 schools will access English Language Arts instruction through instructional enhancement through distance learning. • Each school adopting English Language Arts instruction and enhancement via distance learning will have access to high quality resources needed for improving English Language Arts achievement. • 90% more students will have the opportunity to explore English Language Arts careers. • Students develop critical thinking and problem solving skills.
Increased access to dual enrollment	By the end of the three-year grant period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new dual enrollment program will be created offering 6,567 students and 16 schools the opportunity to attend college classes. • Offer challenging coursework to 6,567 students. • Create a cost-effective way to attend college. • Accelerate the educational path of students.

Ancillary Benefits

The program's successful implementation will lead to the following ancillary benefits:

- Improved K-12 test scores in all subject areas.
- By offering dual credit courses through IHE video conference instruction, students at the different sites have the opportunity to partake in college courses. This allows students to receive high school and college credits simultaneously, that they would not otherwise be able to take at their current enrolled site because of the teacher shortage, teacher credentials, or teacher work/schedule load.

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- Distance learning skills will be transferable and will improve the local workforce, enticing new local business growth.
- More students will enter dual enrollment while in high school for a fast track to a career, reducing their likelihood of living in poverty.
- Increased access to professional development for teachers and administrators.
- Fewer students will leave the community; thereby reducing out-migration.
- Improved quality of life and health outcomes for students.

Applicants should include documentation of support for the project from professionals in the educational fields. The professional opinion(s) should be as specific as possible regarding the situation and the proposed project.

Document support for the project provided by professionals in the educational fields.

XX XXXX participates in the XXX Distance Learning Consortium. The mission of the XXX Distance Learning Consortium is to provide opportunities, services, and professional development related to distance learning and e-learning. Using 21st century learning technologies and solutions, the consortium enriches student learning by enhancing and expanding the traditional role of education through virtual environments. The consortium meets monthly and serves as a resource on current technology, trends in distance learning and best practices.

Please see attached letters of support.

Demonstrate demand by rural residents and other beneficiaries for the educational or medical services that the project would provide. Show that the project is designed to meet local community needs.

The demand by rural residents is demonstrated in the letters of support written. Everyone who provided a letter of support resides in our rural community. All know the value and importance of distance learning, as it creates additional learning resources, more qualified teachers and the ability to access additional learning opportunities and the world.

The participating school districts have pooled their resources to provide matching dollars to participate in the 2025 RUS grant. Providing matching funds clearly demonstrates the importance of the project to the community and the need to implement and expand English Language Arts enhancement learning opportunities for our rural students.

Local community involvement in planning, implementing, and financial assistance of the project.

The Distance Learning Program is well supported by the community as demonstrated by the attached letters of support. All the partners understand the hardships that our communities face. They see the value in education and realize that education will provide students with a successful future. Demand by rural residents and other beneficiaries for the educational services the project provides is demonstrated through inclusion of community members in each district's strategic planning, including their technology plans and school improvement plans. The importance of this project is also noted in the willingness of small, rural school districts to provide cash matching funds. Please see letters of support from teachers, staff and students.

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In addition to our local community, we have consulted with the XX XXXX State USDA office, the XXX Distance Learning Consortium, our telecom provider and the XXXED. The USDA office has indicated support for our application and indicated that there are no other funds available at this time. Our telecom provider, Western XX XXXX Regional Information Center (WNYRIC), has indicated that we have sufficient bandwidth for the project.

The extent to which the application is consistent with the State strategic plan prepared by the Rural Development State Director of the United States Department of Agriculture. (Section M)

Please see the letter in Section M. from XX XXXX Acting State Director, xxxxx documenting that our project is in alignment with the XX XXXX State strategic plan.

The extent to which the application addresses the problems of population out-migration and how the project seeks to slow, halt, or prevent population loss.

Limited opportunity has led to an outmigration in the service area. While XX XXXX State and the nation underwent positive population changes between 2010 and 2022 (1.4% and 7.7%, respectively), Xxx (-4.7%) and Xxx (-4.7%) Counties had negative growth for the same period. Both counties have had a trend of outmigration every year since 2010, except for 2020 when there was net migration during COVID. (US Census)

The Distance Learning Program is designed to better prepare students for high growth, high wage jobs available in our community. Also, it will create greater career awareness around these jobs, particularly in skilled trades and health care. As more students become aware of, and interested in these careers, it will better position them for local postsecondary education needed for the proper licensure and/or certification. By better preparing students for these jobs, the project will reduce the numbers of students leaving the area to find suitable employment and thereby reduce out migration.

XX XXXX implemented its last RUS DLT award in 2020. The equipment received through this request will **result in no duplication of services.**