

§ 950aa. Additional powers and duties

The Secretary shall—

(1) provide advice and guidance to electric borrowers under this chapter concerning the effective and prudent use by such borrowers of the investment authority under section 940b of this title to promote rural development;

(2) provide technical advice, troubleshooting, and guidance concerning the operation of programs or systems that receive assistance under this chapter;

(3) establish and administer various pilot projects through electric and telephone borrowers that the Secretary determines are useful or necessary, and recommend specific rural development projects for rural areas;

(4) act as an information clearinghouse and conduit to provide information to electric and telephone borrowers under this chapter concerning useful and effective rural development efforts that such borrowers may wish to apply in their areas of operation and concerning State, regional, or local plans for long-term rural economic development;

(5) provide information to electric and telephone borrowers under this chapter concerning the eligibility of such borrowers to apply for financial assistance, loans, or grants from other Federal agencies and non-Federal sources to enable such borrowers to expand their rural development efforts; and

(6) promote local partnerships and other coordination between borrowers under this chapter and community organizations, States, counties, or other entities, to improve rural development.

(May 20, 1936, ch. 432, title V, § 501, as added Pub. L. 101-624, title XXIII, § 2345, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 4029; amended Pub. L. 102-237, title VII, § 703(c), Dec. 13, 1991, 105 Stat. 1881; Pub. L. 103-354, title II, § 235(a)(12), (13), Oct. 13, 1994, 108 Stat. 3221; Pub. L. 104-127, title VII, § 781(b), Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 1151.)

AMENDMENTS

1996—Par. (7). Pub. L. 104-127 struck out par. (7) which read as follows: “administer a Rural Business Incubator Fund (as established under section 950aa-1 of this title) that shall provide technical assistance, advice, loans, or capital to business incubator programs or for the creation or operation of small business incubators in rural areas.”

1994—Pub. L. 103-354 struck out “of REA Administrator” at end of section catchline and substituted “Secretary” for “Administrator” in introductory provisions and par. (3).

1991—Pars. (6) to (8). Pub. L. 102-237 inserted “and” at end of par. (6), redesignated par. (8) as (7), and struck out former par. (7) which read as follows: “review the advice and recommendations of the Rural Educational Opportunities Board as established under section 601(f); and”.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1991 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 102-237 effective as if included in the provision of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, Pub. L. 101-624, to which the amendment relates, see section 1101(b)(8) of Pub. L. 102-237, set out as a note under section 1421 of this title.

§ 950aa-1. Repealed. Pub. L. 104-127, title VII, § 781(a), Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 1151

Section, act May 20, 1936, ch. 432, title V, § 502, as added Nov. 28, 1990, Pub. L. 101-624, title XXIII, § 2345,

104 Stat. 4030; amended Dec. 13, 1991, Pub. L. 102-237, title VII, § 703(d), 105 Stat. 1881; Oct. 13, 1994, Pub. L. 103-354, title II, § 235(a)(13), 108 Stat. 3221, provided for establishment of Rural Business Incubator Fund.

CHAPTER 31A—TELEMEDICINE AND DISTANCE LEARNING SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS

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TERMINATION OF CHAPTER

For termination of chapter by section 1(b) of Pub. L. 102-551, see note set out under section 950aaa of this title.

§ 950aaa. Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to encourage and improve telemedicine services and distance learning services in rural areas through the use of telecommunications, computer networks, and related advanced technologies by students, teachers, medical professionals, and rural residents.

(Pub. L. 101-624, title XXIII, § 2331, as added Pub. L. 104-127, title VII, § 704, Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 1108.)

TERMINATION OF SECTION

For termination of section by section 1(b) of Pub. L. 102-551, see Termination of Chapter note set out below.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 950aaa, Pub. L. 101-624, title XXIII, § 2331, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 4017, provided purposes of chapter, prior to the general amendment of this chapter by Pub. L. 104-127.

TERMINATION OF CHAPTER

Pub. L. 102-551, § 1(b), Oct. 28, 1992, 106 Stat. 4100, provided that: “Notwithstanding any other provision of law, chapter 1 of subtitle D of title XXIII of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 950aaa et seq.), including the amendments made by this section [enacting section 950aaa-5 of this title and amending section 950aaa-4 of this title], shall be effective until September 30, 1997.”

§ 950aaa-1. Definitions

In this chapter:

(1) Construct

The term “construct” means to construct, acquire, install, improve, or extend a facility or system.

(2) Cost of money loan

The term “cost of money loan” means a loan made under this chapter bearing interest at a rate equal to the then current cost to the Federal Government of loans of similar maturity.

(3) Secretary

The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Agriculture.

(Pub. L. 101-624, title XXIII, § 2332, as added Pub. L. 104-127, title VII, § 704, Apr. 4, 1996, 110 Stat. 1108.)

TERMINATION OF SECTION

For termination of section by section 1(b) of Pub. L. 102-551, see Termination of Chapter note set out under section 950aaa of this title.

PRIOR PROVISIONS

A prior section 950aaa-1, Pub. L. 101-624, title XXIII, § 2332, Nov. 28, 1990, 104 Stat. 4017; Pub. L. 102-237, title VII, § 702(g), Dec. 13, 1991, 105 Stat. 1880, provided goal of Federal Government to make affordable advanced telecommunications available to rural residents, prior to the general amendment of this chapter by Pub. L. 104-127.

§ 950aaa-2. Telemedicine and distance learning services in rural areas**(a) Services to rural areas**

The Secretary may provide financial assistance for the purpose of financing the construction of facilities and systems to provide telemedicine services and distance learning services in rural areas.

(b) Financial assistance**(1) In general**

Financial assistance shall consist of grants or cost of money loans, or both.

(2) Form

The Secretary shall determine the portion of the financial assistance provided to a recipient that consists of grants and the portion that consists of cost of money loans so as to result in the maximum feasible repayment to the Federal Government of the financial assistance, based on the ability to repay of the recipient and full utilization of funds made available to carry out this chapter.

(c) Recipients**(1) In general**

The Secretary may provide financial assistance under this chapter to—

(A) entities using telemedicine services or distance learning services; and

(B) entities providing or proposing to provide telemedicine service or distance learning service to other persons at rates calculated to ensure that the benefit of the financial assistance is passed through to the other persons.

(2) Electric or telecommunications borrowers**(A) Loans to borrowers**

Subject to subparagraph (B), the Secretary may provide a cost of money loan under this chapter to a borrower of an electric or telecommunications loan under the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 (7 U.S.C. 901 et seq.). A borrower receiving a cost of money loan under this paragraph shall—

(i) make the funds provided available to entities that qualify under paragraph (1) for projects satisfying the requirements of this chapter;

(ii) use the funds provided to acquire, install, improve, or extend a system referred to in subsection (a) of this section; or

(iii) use the funds provided to install, improve, or extend a facility referred to in subsection (a) of this section.

(B) Limitations

A borrower of an electric or telecommunications loan under the Rural Electrification Act of 1936 [7 U.S.C. 901 et seq.] shall—

(i) make a system or facility funded under subparagraph (A) available to entities that qualify under paragraph (1); and

(ii) neither retain from the proceeds of a loan provided under subparagraph (A), nor assess a qualifying entity under paragraph (1), any amount except as may be required to pay the actual costs incurred in administering the loan or making the system or facility available.

(3) Appeal

If the Secretary rejects the application of a borrower who applies for a cost of money loan or grant under this section, the borrower may appeal the decision to the Secretary not later than 10 days after the borrower is notified of the rejection.

(4) Assistance to provide or improve services

Financial assistance may be provided under this chapter for a facility regardless of the location of the facility if the Secretary determines that the assistance is necessary to provide or improve telemedicine services or distance learning services in a rural area.

(d) Priority

The Secretary shall establish procedures to prioritize financial assistance under this chapter considering—

(1) the need for the assistance in the affected rural area;

(2) the financial need of the applicant;

(3) the population sparsity of the affected rural area;

(4) the local involvement in the project serving the affected rural area;

(5) geographic diversity among the recipients of financial assistance;

(6) the utilization of the telecommunications facilities of any telecommunications provider serving the affected rural area;

(7) the portion of total project financing provided by the applicant from the funds of the applicant;

(8) the portion of project financing provided by the applicant with funds obtained from non-Federal sources;