

C. Executive Summary

USDA Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant 2026



APPLICANT NAME: Joseph City Unified School District 02

1. Description of Project Need

Joseph City Unified School District (JCUSD) faces acute challenges exacerbated by geographic isolation and the decommissioning of the Cholla Power Plant, which has led to declining enrollment, causing economic and educational strain. The district's needs are categorized as follows:

1. Limited Educational and Career Access: Students suffer from a lack of educational opportunities, particularly in specialized STEM, advanced mathematics, and Dual Enrollment coursework. With only 9% of residents attaining a bachelor's degree (roughly 4x worse than state/national levels) the district must provide access to college-ready curricula and virtual career pathways to bridge this achievement gap.
2. Inconsistent or Unavailable Mental Health Resources: The community faces a severe shortage of localized mental health support. Navajo County has a ratio of 940:1 mental health providers, over 3x the national average. Without local infrastructure, families must travel up to 90 miles (3 hours round-trip) for basic care, causing lost instructional time and financial strain for our population, 30% of whom live below the poverty line.
3. Limited Opportunities for Staff Specialized Training: Geographic isolation prevents educators from attending external training without significant time and cost. The lack of robust remote professional development infrastructure leaves staff feeling isolated and hinders the implementation of modern curriculum, which is vital given the difficulty of recruiting specialized teachers locally.

2. Addressing Needs and Financial Assistance

JCUSD will address these critical gaps by deploying a fixed robust distance learning and telehealth infrastructure. This project enables students to access specialized coursework and private mental health counseling on-site. The project addresses the identified needs as follows:

Please note, all requested equipment is to be installed across Sites 1 and 2

- Addressing Need 1 (Educational Access): By installing multiple large-room conferencing systems and interactive displays, the district will provide consistent, live access to STEM labs, Dual Enrollment partners (e.g., ASU Digital Prep), and virtual career exploration, directly overcoming local staffing shortages.

- Addressing Need 2 (Mental Health): The implementation of private, dedicated Telehealth rooms with secure AV equipment enables reliable, confidential access to the Cartwheel program, directly reducing student absenteeism and providing life-saving support without the burden of long-distance travel.
- Addressing Need 3 (Staff Development): The upgraded audiovisual hardware allows staff to participate in virtual conferences and expert-led Professional Development sessions, eliminating the need for costly travel and substitute coverage, thereby improving teacher retention and instructional quality.

Financial assistance is required because the district's capital and operating reserve funds have experienced downward pressure from the closing of the Cholla Power Plant. The district has experienced declining enrollment and associated reductions in state funding as families increasingly utilize Arizona's expanded educational choice options, including homeschooling and other alternative educational settings. We also have had emergency HVAC and other deferred maintenance repairs north of \$100,000 over the last couple of years. This, along with a lack of state funding sources, leaves us with no local capital to fund this necessary equipment.

3. Applicant Description and Eligibility

The applicant is the Joseph City Unified School District (JCUSD), a public educational institution serving the rural community of Joseph City, Arizona. We are legally established by Arizona State Statute and are fully eligible for the Distance Learning and Telemedicine grant.

4. Total Project Cost and Financial Assistance

The total project budget for the DLT program is \$453,605. To support this, the district is providing a cash match of \$59,240 from its unrestricted cash reserves, leaving a total federal grant request of \$394,365.

5. Project Classification

This project is a fixed-site Distance Learning and Telemedicine project. The predominant use of the system and the primary equipment request is for distance learning, as the core objective is to expand student access to specialized curricula (STEM, Dual Enrollment) and staff professional development. Telemedicine services will still be a critical focus to ensure student well-being and consistent school attendance. Equipment will be used for approved DLT purposes 100% of the time.

6. General Overview of the Telecommunications System

JCUSD's project is a fixed site project where all equipment will be installed at the end-user sites (Site 1 and Site 2) The system comprises integrated audiovisual hardware designed to bridge physical isolation, including:

Site 1 - Joseph City Elementary School

- Elementary School Mental Health Telehealth Room
 - Use Cases: Telehealth, small group distance learning, IEP skills coaching.
 - Equipment: Small room video conferencing setup: cameras, microphones, speakers, displays, video bars.
- Districtwide Distance Learning Room (Extra Large Groups)
 - Use Cases: Large group events, classroom-size distance learning, digital field trips, career pathway events (all grades), staff professional development.
 - Equipment: Large room conferencing setup: cameras, microphones, ceiling speakers, displays, video bars, switches, networking equipment.

Site 2 - Joseph City Jr./Sr. High School\

- Highschool Mental Health Telehealth Room
 - Use Cases: Dedicated mental health/telehealth, private consultation room.
 - Equipment: Private room video setup: display connected to A/V device.
- Highschool Flex Distance Learning Room (Large Groups)
 - Use Cases: Large group distance learning, dual enrollment programs, ASU and partner programs, career exploration (junior/senior high).
 - Equipment: Large classroom conferencing setup: cameras, microphones, ceiling speakers, displays, video bars, switches, networking equipment.
- Highschool Distance Learning A/V Cart (Small Groups)
 - Use Cases: Flexible small group setup, small group learning.
 - Equipment: Small room video conferencing setup: camera, microphone, speakers, display, mobile cart.

7. Hub and End-User Sites

Site Number	Site Name	Site Designation	Street Address	Town	County	State	5 Digit ZIP	Congressional District	# Rural Residents Served at each Site
1	Joseph City Elementary School	End-User	8176 Westover Avenue	Joseph City	Navajo	AZ	86032	AZ-002	204
2	Joseph City Jr./Sr. High School	End-User	4629 East 2nd North Avenue	Joseph City	Navajo	AZ	86032	AZ-002	253
3	Northland Pioneer College	Hub	2251 E. Navajo Blvd	Holbrook	Navajo	AZ	86025	AZ-002	N/A - This is a hub site
4	Arizona State University	Hub	1151 S. Forest Ave.	Tempe	Maricopa	AZ	85281	AZ-004	N/A - This is a hub site

The project utilizes the JCUSD schools (Site 1 and Site 2) as the end-user sites for educational and health service delivery. **415 students and 42 teachers will receive benefits from this project and that will result in a total of 457 rural residents benefiting if our project is funded. These numbers are from enrollment numbers and teacher count.** Please see below for a breakdown of which partners will deliver which services to make these benefits a reality:

Site 1 - Joseph City Elementary School: End-User

At Joseph City Elementary School, content and services received through the proposed project focus on both student well-being and foundational learning. The Cartwheel program provides dedicated telehealth counseling and family support services directly to our campus. Additionally, the districtwide distance learning infrastructure facilitates broader educational opportunities, including small-group distance learning, digital field trips, and career pathway events accessible to elementary students.

Site 2 - Joseph City Jr./Sr. High School: End-User

At Joseph City Jr./Sr. High School, we will specialize our services received to meet secondary education and college-readiness needs. We will receive mental health services through private, dedicated consultations with Cartwheel mental health providers. We will also receive academic and career-focused content from several partners: Arizona State University (ASU Digital Prep) will provide rigorous STEM coursework, advanced mathematics, and Dual Enrollment

programs, while Northland Pioneer College (NPC) will offer foreign language instruction, such as Spanish. We will collaborate with various industry and career partners to receive virtual career exploration pathways, guest speaker events, and digital field trips to support our students' post-secondary readiness.

Site 3 - Northland Pioneer College: Hub

This site is not receiving project equipment. As a hub, it will contribute foreign language instruction, such as Spanish, to the high school curriculum. This will be done via live instruction.

Site 4 - Arizona State University: Hub

This site is not receiving project equipment. As a hub, it will contribute rigorous STEM coursework, advanced mathematics programs to the high school curriculum. This will be done via live instruction.

8. Certification of Non-Duplication

Joseph City Unified School District certifies that the requested equipment does not duplicate any existing, adequate, established telemedicine or distance learning services. Were not a part of any other 2026 DLT applications. There is no other federal or non-federal funding currently supporting these specific activities, and the district currently lacks any functional infrastructure to support these programs.

9. Location of Sites

Site Number	Site Name	Site Designation	Street Address	Town	County	State	5 Digit ZIP	Congressional District	# Rural Residents Served at each Site
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Upon installation at Site 1 (Joseph City Elementary School) and Site 2 (Joseph City Jr./Sr. High School), the requested technology will enable 415 students to engage in live educational programs from our two hub sites and receive virtual mental health support through Cartwheel. The project will also facilitate the delivery of professional development to 42 staff members at these end-user locations via the new infrastructure. This equals a total of 457 rural residents served. These numbers are based on student enrollment numbers and staff count.

Publicly Releasable Project Description

Through our Joseph City Unified School District Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Initiative, we will transform our Joseph City Elementary and High School campuses into end-user sites for service delivery. This fixed site project will leverage advanced audiovisual telecommunications hardware, which will enable us to provide students with consistent, live access to specialized core curricula, including STEM, advanced mathematics, and dual-enrollment coursework, alongside secure, private remote mental health counseling and robust professional development for our staff. By deploying this infrastructure to bridge critical gaps in academic access and student support, we will directly benefit approximately 415 students and 42 staff, for a total of 457 rural residents.