

To: Superintendents, Principals, and School Leaders

From: Indiana Department of Education

Date: July 3, 2020

Subject: USDOE Rural Tech Project Competition

U.S. Department of Education has announced a competition to advance student-centered technology education. The Rural Tech Project, with a total cash prize pool of \$600,000, invites high schools and local educational agencies to develop competency-based, distance learning programs that enable students to master skills at their own pace with the goal of preparing them for the well-paying, in-demand jobs of today and tomorrow.

Interested entities can find additional resources online at [ruraltechproject.com](http://ruraltechproject.com) and can [join a virtual information session](#) on July 21. Those interested in entering the challenge should [submit a proposal](#) for a competency-based program by 5:59 p.m. ET on October 8, 2020. The online submission form asks for a program overview, including the delivery model, curriculum topics, and intended collaboration with local employers and other partners.

Up to five finalists will each receive an equal share of the initial \$500,000 prize pool and progress to Phase 2. From January to June 2021, finalists will develop detailed program plans and build partnerships before programs launch. They will have on-the-ground assistance, expert mentorship, and access to virtual resources as they plan, run, and refine their programs for two academic years. Finalists will also be supported by a Community Engagement Manager, who will assist with on-the-ground setup, implementation, and evaluation of each program. During Summer 2023, finalists will document their outcomes and learnings in a final submission; the judging panel will then recommend one grand-prize winner to receive an additional \$100,000. The Rural Tech Project will compile insights from all finalists and share lessons learned as a resource for other communities.

“Our rural tech challenge is a tremendous opportunity for educators in rural communities to rethink how students access education,” said Secretary DeVos. “As I’ve said many times, a student’s education shouldn’t be arbitrarily limited by what’s available inside their brick-and-mortar classroom, and that’s never been more apparent than now as the coronavirus pandemic has made clear the need for more innovation to ensure all students have access to robust educational options. I look forward to seeing the student-centered approaches to tech education our challenge participants develop and hope they serve as examples for other schools as they create their own technology education programs that will prepare students for well-paying, in-demand careers.”