

# 2010 RESEARCH GRANT PROGRAM



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## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

*The Center for*  
*Rural Pennsylvania*  
*A Legislative Agency of the Pennsylvania General Assembly*



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Phone (717) 787-9555 Fax (717) 772-3587 [www.ruralpa.org](http://www.ruralpa.org)

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The Center for Rural Pennsylvania is a bipartisan, bicameral legislative agency that serves as a resource for rural policy research within the Pennsylvania General Assembly. It was created in 1987 under Act 16, the Rural Revitalization Act, to promote and sustain the vitality of Pennsylvania's rural and small communities.

## 2010 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The Center for Rural Pennsylvania is a bipartisan, bicameral legislative agency that serves as a resource for rural policy research within the Pennsylvania General Assembly. The Center's mission is to promote and sustain the vitality of the state's rural and small communities by:

- administering grants to conduct research on matters relating to rural conditions;
- maintaining and disseminating a broad base of information on rural trends and conditions;
- publishing research and project results; and
- sponsoring regional and statewide forums on rural issues.

As part of the Center's yearly Research Grant Program, the Board of Directors approves topics for research and demonstration projects. All projects must show a clear relationship to one or more of the Center's mandated research areas, which are:

- rural people and communities;
- economic development;
- local government finance and administration;
- community services;
- natural resources and the environment;
- rural values and social change; and
- educational outreach.

### **Focus**

The Research Grant Program is focused on policy research. Proposals submitted under the program must include a discussion of state and local policy considerations and implications that may be affected by the project research findings, and describe any audiences that might have an interest in the project's results.

### **Eligibility**

The Center's enabling legislation requires that Center grants be awarded to qualified faculty members of the Pennsylvania State University or the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) universities. A qualified faculty member must serve as the project director. Partnerships with other academic institutions, community organizations, and public and private agencies are encouraged.

### **Research Grant Program**

One-year grants are awarded to conduct applied policy research or identify local strategies that can result in legislative or program policy considerations or recommendations. Multiple-year projects may be financially supported for up to three years. However, grantees must submit annual proposals and must fulfill current year grant requirements. The maximum allowable grant award is \$50,000 per year, per project.

#### **Targeted Topics**

This year the Board of Directors has approved 10 targeted topics. The list of topics starts on Page 6.

#### **Open Topics**

Other reasonable and beneficial projects that address one or more of the Center's mandated research areas will be considered by the Center under the Open Topics category.

### **Mini Grant Program**

Mini Grants are awarded to projects that focus on basic data collection and analysis, time-sensitive issues, and/or the preparation of reference materials. Projects supported as Mini Grants are a maximum

of nine months in duration and are eligible for a maximum of \$10,000 in Center support. The Board has approved two targeted Mini Grant topics that are listed on Page 10. Open topics will also be accepted for Mini Grants.

### **Grant Application Process**

The Center's 2010 Research Grant Program application process is as follows:

1. Request for Proposals released. March 2009
2. Deadline for submission of Letters of Intent. April 20, 2009
3. Letters of Intent are reviewed and acted upon by the Board of Directors.  
Selected applicants are invited to submit a full proposal for formal review. June 2009
4. Proposal planning discussions are conducted with applicants. June – July 2009
5. Deadline for full proposal submission. August 24, 2009
6. Center's Board of Directors selects projects for funding. November 2009
7. Final work plans are negotiated and accepted. November – December 2009
8. Cooperative Agreements are issued and work begins. January 2010

### **Letters of Intent**

As the first step in the grant application process, researchers must submit a Letter of Intent. No full proposal will be accepted without the submission and Board approval of a Letter of Intent. Each Letter is reviewed to determine its potential for supporting the Center's research mandate. Applicants meeting that benchmark will be invited to prepare and submit a full grant proposal. The Letter of Intent process is the same for both the traditional Research Grant Program and the Mini Grant Program.

A Letter of Intent must include the cover sheet (included on the back inside cover and available on the Center's website at [www.ruralpa.org](http://www.ruralpa.org)) and is limited to three additional typewritten pages.

The Letter of Intent narrative must include the following:

- project description;
- scope of work to be undertaken;
- anticipated policy implications; and
- identification of partners and/or subcontractors.

Letters of Intent must be received in the Center for Rural Pennsylvania office, either in hard copy, via email or fax, by the close of business (4:30 p.m.) on Monday, April 20, 2009.

### **Submission Guidelines - Letter of Intent**

#### **Hard Copy**

Submit the original Letter of Intent and **four** copies to:

Mary Kandray Gelenser  
Program Manager for Grants  
The Center for Rural Pennsylvania  
200 North Third St., Suite 600  
Harrisburg, PA 17101

**Receipt of a Letter of Intent will be acknowledged via email. If acknowledgement is not received in three business days from the date of mailing, please call (717) 787-9555 to follow up.**

### **Email**

1. Download the cover sheet from the Center for Rural Pennsylvania website at [www.ruralpa.org](http://www.ruralpa.org) and email the completed cover sheet and the text of the Letter of Intent to Mary Kandray Gelenser at: [gelensermk@ruralpa.org](mailto:gelensermk@ruralpa.org).
2. An emailed Letter of Intent must be submitted in Microsoft Word. A Letter of Intent submitted in another format will not be accepted.
3. The acceptance of an emailed Letter of Intent will be acknowledged via return email. If the receipt of an emailed Letter of Intent has not been acknowledged within three business days of its submission, please call to check its status.

### **Fax**

A Letter of Intent may also be faxed to Mary Kandray Gelenser at (717) 772-3587. Please follow up fax submissions with a telephone call to confirm that the fax has been received and is readable.

**All Letters of Intent must arrive at the office of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania by the close of business (4:30 p.m.) on Monday, April 20, 2009.**

### **Proposals**

An applicant whose Letter of Intent is approved by the Board will be asked to submit a detailed proposal for his/her project. Proposals are due at the Center by close of business on Monday, August 24, 2009.

Proposals are evaluated on concept clarity, project methodology, impact on rural communities, financial viability, and policy implications. Grant awards are made by the Center's Board of Directors and are contingent upon appropriation by the General Assembly in the Commonwealth's 2009-2010 Budget. Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss concepts and project viability with Center personnel during the development of the Letter of Intent and full grant proposal.

Detailed proposal guidelines will be sent to each researcher whose Letter of Intent has been accepted. Proposals should be developed with a January 2010 start-up date and reflect a maximum 12-month work cycle for the Research Grant Program and up to a nine-month work cycle for Mini Grants. Proposals must be received in the office of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania by the close of business on Monday, August 24, 2009. All proposals submitted become the property of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania.

### **Content**

Applicants whose Letter of Intent is approved by the Board of Directors will receive complete guidelines on the requirements of the project proposal. Proposals must include the following information: needs statement and related research; goals and objectives; methodology; expected results and policy implications; budget (see following note); budget justification; and subcontractors.

### **Budget**

For projects submitted for the 2010 Research Grant Program, the Center will provide payment for up to one-quarter faculty release time per semester (traditionally Fall and Spring) for faculty to work on Center-sponsored research. Payment will be authorized if the faculty researcher is being relieved from teaching or other professionally related duties requiring a replacement staff person to be hired. The Center will provide payment for replacement costs (salaries or wages of replacement staff including

benefits). The Center will also provide for payment of summer stipends for faculty, based on the project schedule.

The Center will cover either a stipend or tuition costs for students working on the project, but not both. The maximum Center for Rural Pennsylvania grant award is \$50,000 per project. The maximum for Mini Grants is \$10,000 per project.

The Center does not require a cash match from applicants for research grants. However, investment by other partners clearly represents support and belief in a proposed project; the commitment of matching cash or in-kind funding can offer a competitive advantage to an applicant. Applicants are reminded that host universities must contribute indirect overhead costs.

For more information about proposals or guidelines, contact Mary Kandray Gelenser, Program Manager for Grants, at (717) 787-9555 or gelensermk@ruralpa.org.

**All Letters of Intent must be received in the Center for Rural Pennsylvania office by the close of business (4:30 p.m.) on Monday, April 20, 2009.**

**All proposals for the 2009 Research Grant Program must be received in the Center for Rural Pennsylvania office by the close of business (4:30 p.m.) on Monday, August 24, 2009.**

## **TARGETED TOPICS FOR THE 2010 GRANT PROGRAM**

### **1. Needs Assessment of Emergency Medical Service Providers in Rural Pennsylvania**

Pennsylvania's nearly 1,000 emergency medical service (EMS) providers are volunteers, paid staff or a combination of the two. In rural areas, these providers have an average service area of 76 square miles compared to the typical urban service area of 21 miles. Increasing operating and personnel costs are creating financial concerns for some ambulance services as current funding sources may not be keeping pace with expenses. This research will analyze rural EMS providers' budgets and personnel complements.

#### **Key Expected Outcomes**

- Identification and cataloging of financial revenue sources and expenditures for rural Pennsylvania EMS providers.
- Analysis of financial information to estimate the number of rural EMS providers who are currently financially at risk and those who will likely be at risk over the next 10 years.
- Determination of the current staffing complement of rural EMS providers and estimation of staffing needs over the next 10 years to identify any potential gaps.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.

### **2. Examination of Criminal Offenders**

According to the National Center on Rural Justice and Crime Prevention, the specific causes and consequences of rural crime can be uniquely different from urban crime. This research will analyze Pennsylvania Department of Corrections inmate data and Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing data to identify demographics, criminal histories and backgrounds of Pennsylvania offenders for a 10-year period. This examination will include an analysis of educational attainment, history of any substance abuse, mental health issues, family backgrounds, any prior convictions and other relevant data.

The research will include a special analysis of inmates who are serving or have served time for offenses committed in domestic violence situations.

#### **Key Expected Outcomes**

- Profile of offenders who committed crimes in Pennsylvania in the last 10 years. Profile to include county of residence, criminal history, demographics, and history of health and human service interventions.
- Determination of the number and types of crimes committed by offenders that are domestic violence related.
- Analysis, by rural and urban county of residence, of domestic violence offender demographics, human service intervention histories, sentencing histories, and other relevant data to identify patterns and trends.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.

### **3. Rural School Building Closings**

Since 1990, the number of rural school buildings and enrollment in rural schools have both declined and are expected to continue to decline. These historical data and future projections suggest that rural school districts will increasingly need to consider the issue of closing school buildings. Such decisions will be influenced by construction and renovation costs, transportation costs, location choices and community sentiment. This research will identify and examine rural school districts that may be facing this issue within the next 15 years. A review of school districts that have already addressed this issue will be completed to identify strategies and lessons affecting the outcome.

#### **Key Expected Outcomes**

- Projection of the rural school districts facing building closure decisions within the next 5, 10, and 15 years.
- Examination of school districts that have addressed the issue of school closing to identify strategies and lessons that may be applicable to Pennsylvania rural schools.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.

### **4. Pennsylvanians' Attitudes Toward Renewable Energy**

Across Pennsylvania, renewable energy resources, such as wind energy, solar, geothermal and biomass, are being explored and developed. Optimal alternative energy development and implementation will be affected by residents' attitudes toward and acceptance of renewable energy. This project will examine Pennsylvanians' attitudes toward all types of renewable energy, in terms of use and willingness to pay, as consumers, as well as their acceptance of energy facilities in their communities.

#### **Key Expected Outcomes**

- Identification of rural and urban attitudes toward the use of renewable energy including examination of demand, access and willingness to pay.
- Identification of rural and urban attitudes toward renewable energy generation facilities on their property or in their communities.
- Comparison of attitudes toward the use of alternative energy and the acceptance of generation facilities nearby.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.

## **5. Examination of Transportation Services Available to Rural Military Veterans for Medical Services**

Medical services for veterans are provided at Veterans Administration (VA) regional medical centers and outpatient clinics throughout Pennsylvania. The often limited transportation services in rural Pennsylvania can make access to these VA centers challenging for some veterans. This research will assess the healthcare transportation needs of rural military veterans in Pennsylvania and the transportation systems specifically available to them.

### **Key Expected Outcomes**

- Estimation of the number of veterans needing transportation services for VA medical care in rural Pennsylvania.
- Identification of the transportation services currently available to veterans and the resources that support these services.
- Gap analysis for veterans' health care transportation networks.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.

## **6. Examination of Rural County Veterans Affairs Offices**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are approximately 336,000 veterans living in rural Pennsylvania, including veterans from pre-WWII to those returning from recent military deployment. County Veterans Affairs Offices can assist with compensation and pension claims, healthcare coverage applications (VA hospitals and CHAMP VA), funeral and burial benefit claims, and the recording of county veterans' burial places. However, the need for and range of services provided vary greatly from county to county. This research will inventory and compare the services provided by County Veterans Affairs Offices in rural Pennsylvania.

### **Key Expected Outcomes**

- Analysis of the operating budgets and staffing patterns of County Veterans Affairs Offices.
- Identification and analysis, by rural and urban, of the universe of services currently provided by County Veterans Affairs Offices.
- Examination of the actual use of County Veterans Affairs services compared to potential demand.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.

## **7. Financing Part-time Post-Secondary Education**

Costs, coupled with family, work and other obligations, often limit an adult's pursuit of post-secondary education to part-time. For adults living in rural areas, geographic isolation along with limited institutional and course availability can add to the cost of pursuing a post-secondary education. This research will examine how adult part-time students at various post-secondary institutions in the commonwealth including technical schools, community colleges, colleges and universities, are financing their education, both at undergraduate and graduate levels. It will also propose viable funding options to improve affordability of higher education for part-time students.

### **Key Expected Outcomes**

- Estimation of the number of rural students pursuing part-time education, by institution type and educational program.
- Determination of how rural part-time students are financing post-secondary education in Pennsylvania.
- Identification of factors influencing students' decisions to pursue post-secondary education on a part-time basis.
- Identification of viable funding options that improve the affordability of post-secondary education for part-time students.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.

## **8. Sustainability of Main Street Programs in Rural Pennsylvania**

Pennsylvania's Main Street Program (MSP) follows a community-based downtown revitalization approach, focused on design, promotion, organization and economic restructuring, and developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1980. Currently in Pennsylvania, more than 125 communities are participating in the Main Street Program. This research will examine past and present participants of the Main Street program to determine their long-term viability and sustainability.

### **Key Expected Outcomes**

- Identification of Pennsylvania MSP graduates and current status of any efforts that conform to the four-part MSP revitalization approach.
- Identification of elements/factors that contribute to long term sustainability of MSP programs.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.

## **OPEN CALL TARGETED TOPICS**

### **9. Open Call for Marcellus Shale Studies**

New drilling technologies and the cost of fossil fuels have made gas exploration and development of the Marcellus Shale a viable option for the oil and gas industry. As this development has environmental, natural resource, economic, social, legal, and financial impacts, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania issues an open call for applied policy research that explores issues surrounding Marcellus Shale development.

### **10. Open Call on Meeting the Challenges of Recession**

The current recession is creating economic and social hardships for many Pennsylvanians. Historically, the impact of recessions on rural Pennsylvania has resulted in lower incomes, higher unemployment rates, increased need for social services and declining revenues for local governments and school districts. To identify and analyze the probable prolonged effects of the current recession on rural Pennsylvania and their impact on the state's overall economy and prospects for recovery, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania issues an open call for applied policy research. Researchers are encouraged to consult the Center's mandated research areas (Page 3) for general topic guidance in answering this open call.

## **OPEN TOPICS FOR THE 2010 RESEARCH GRANT PROGRAM**

In addition to the targeted topics listed above, other reasonable and potentially beneficial projects will be considered by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania under the Open Topics category.

Proposed projects for this category must show a clear relationship to one or more of the Center's mandated research areas listed on Page 3. Application procedures for proposed open topic projects must follow the Letter of Intent guidelines listed on Page 4. Open topic projects must define specific key outcomes and specific policy implications that will benefit communities in rural Pennsylvania.

## MINI-GRANT RESEARCH TOPICS

### 11. Mini Grant: Analysis of Pennsylvania Mental Health/Mental Retardation Funding

In FY 2006-2007, the commonwealth spent more than \$3 billion to support mental health and mental retardation (MH/MR) services. This research will examine total funding for MH/MR services and analyze county MH/MR expenditures to determine differences between rural and urban areas.

#### **Key Expected Outcomes**

- Analysis of the various funding sources for MH/MR services at the county level.
- Analysis of rural and urban MH/MR expenditure patterns over the last 10 years.
- Examination of the client base over the past 10 years in terms of caseload, services provided, expenditures per client, etc.
- Rural and urban analysis of the funding and client base data.

### 12. Mini Grant: Analysis of Small Business Development Center Use in Pennsylvania

Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) provide management assistance to current and prospective small business owners. This research will identify the characteristics of rural and urban Pennsylvanians who have used SBDC services over the last 10 years.

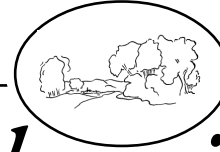
#### **Key Expected Outcomes**

- Profile of users of SBDC services in Pennsylvania over the last 10 years.
- Identification of rural and urban use patterns and trends for SBDC services.

## OPEN TOPICS FOR THE 2010 MINI GRANT PROGRAM

Open topic projects will also be accepted for the Mini Grant Program. Proposed Mini Grant topics should focus on basic data collection and analysis, time-sensitive issues and/or the preparation of reference materials. Mini Grant projects are to be a maximum of nine months in duration.

Proposed projects for open Mini Grants must show a clear relationship to one or more of the Center's mandated research areas listed on Page 3. Application procedures for proposed open Mini Grant projects must follow the Letter of Intent guidelines listed on Page 4.



# Rural Pennsylvania

A Legislative Agency of the Pennsylvania General Assembly

## 2010 Letter of Intent Cover Sheet

Project Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Director Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Host University: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Targeted Topic – List RFP Topic Addressed: \_\_\_\_\_

Open Topic – Indicate Subject Area Addressed By Selecting One Of The Areas Listed Below:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rural People and Communities      | <input type="checkbox"/> Local Government Finance and Administration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Natural Resources and Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Outreach                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Development              | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Services                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rural Values and Social Change    |  |

Synopsis of Project: \_\_\_\_\_

(50 word maximum) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2010 Estimated Budget:

_____	Center for Rural Pennsylvania Funding
_____	Other (Cash/In-kind)
_____	2010 Budget Total

Project Duration:     Nine Months (Mini-Grant)     One Year     Two Years     Three Years

Identified Partners or Subcontractors: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Project Director Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



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