

2019 RESEARCH GRANT PROGRAM

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS



THE CENTER FOR RURAL PENNSYLVANIA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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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.

THE CENTER FOR RURAL PENNSYLVANIA 2019 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 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;
- educational outreach;
- agriculture; and
- health and welfare concerns.

Eligibility

The Center's enabling legislation allows the Center to award grants to qualified faculty members of Pennsylvania State University, the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) universities, and the regional campuses of the University of Pittsburgh. 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 to identify local strategies that can result in legislative or program policy considerations or recommendations. For the 2019 grant cycle, the maximum allowable grant award is \$50,000 per project.

Targeted Topics

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

Open Topics

Other reasonable and beneficial projects that address one or more of the Center's mandated research areas (see above) 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 \$15,000 in Center support.

Targeted Topics

This year the Board of Directors has approved six Mini Grant targeted topics. The list of topics begins on Page 9.

Open Topics

Open topics will also be accepted for Mini Grants.

Grant Application Process

The Center's 2019 Research Grant Program application process is as follows:

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| 1. Request for Proposals is released. | April 2018 |
| 2. Deadline for submission of Letters of Intent. | May 21, 2018 |
| 3. Letters of Intent are reviewed and selected applicants are invited to submit a full proposal. | June 2018 |
| 4. Proposal planning discussions are conducted with applicants. | July-August 2018 |
| 5. Deadline for full proposal submissions. | August 27, 2018 |
| 6. Center's Board of Directors selects projects for funding. | December 2018 |
| 7. Final work plans are negotiated and accepted. | December 2018 |
| 8. Cooperative Agreements are issued and work begins. | January 2019 |

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 to support 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. Those applicants whose Letters of Intent are approved for full proposal submission will receive additional information and instructions on full proposal preparation, submission and review procedures.

A Letter of Intent must include the cover sheet (page 13) 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 (for full research projects only); and
- identification of partners and/or subcontractors.

Letters of Intent must be received in the Center for Rural Pennsylvania office, either in hard copy, by mail, or via email or fax, by the close of business (4:30 p.m.) on Monday, May 21, 2018.

Letter of Intent Submission Guidelines

Letters of intent may be mailed, emailed or faxed to the Center for Rural Pennsylvania.

1. *Hard Copy*

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

Mary Kandray Gelenser
Program Manager for Grants
The Center for Rural Pennsylvania
625 Forster St., Room 902
Harrisburg, PA 17120

2. *Email*

Download the cover sheet from the Center for Rural Pennsylvania website at www.rural.palegislature.us and email the completed cover sheet and the narrative of the Letter of Intent to Mary Kandray Gelenser at gelensermk@rural.palegislature.us.

3. *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.

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

All Letters of Intent must be received in the office of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania no later than the close of business (4:30 p.m.) on Monday, May 21, 2018.

TARGETED RESEARCH GRANT TOPICS FOR THE 2019 GRANT PROGRAM

Examination of Employment and Housing Barriers and Opportunities for Rural Pennsylvanians with Felony Convictions

A Kaiser Foundation study reported that 34 percent of those convicted of felonies, some due to crimes related to a substance abuse disorder, have difficulty finding employment and housing upon release from incarceration. This research will examine this issue to quantify the number of rural Pennsylvanians in this situation and identify barriers and opportunities for housing and employment for rural residents with felony convictions.

Key Expected Outcomes:

- Estimation of the number of rural Pennsylvanians with felony convictions who have been released from incarceration in the past 5 years and projections of the number forward in the next 5 years.
- Inventory of prison-based pre-release services for incarcerated individuals that assist with finding employment and affordable housing upon release.
- Identification of legal and financial barriers to obtaining employment and housing for those convicted of felonies in Pennsylvania.
- Identification of post-release innovative community-based programs and services to address employment and housing for those with felony convictions in rural Pennsylvania.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.

The Role of Rural Public Libraries in Providing Access to Online Government Services

As local, state and federal governments provide an increasing number of information services to residents online, those without access to a home computer and/or high-speed internet may find the local public library as their online access point for government services. This research will assess the capabilities and limitations of rural public libraries and library staff in assisting residents in accessing government services in the digital age.

Key Expected Outcomes:

- Estimation of the number of rural libraries that are providing assistance to residents for online services and description of the types of services requested and provided.
- Identification of barriers and opportunities to providing assistance with government services including equipment, training, funding and staffing.
- Identification of any innovative practices used in rural communities in other states that address this issue.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.

Economic Impact of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Pennsylvania's Deer Population

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), which affects the brain and nervous system of infected deer and eventually results in death, was first detected in Pennsylvania in 2012. There is growing concern about the impact of this disease on Pennsylvania's deer hunting and deer farming industries. This research will ascertain the economic impact of the current and projected presence of CWD on Pennsylvania's deer population and the businesses that rely upon it.

Key Expected Outcomes:

- An estimate and analysis of the potential impact of CWD on Pennsylvania's deer population over the next 5 years. An estimate and analysis of the economic impact of CWS on deer hunting and deer farming industries in Pennsylvania over the next 5 years.
- An estimate and analysis of the economic impact of CWS on Pennsylvania's economy over the next 5 years.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.

Attitudinal Survey of Rural Pennsylvanians

In 2008, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania funded an attitudinal survey of rural Pennsylvanians to identify views on issues such as current conditions in their community, the future of their community, and any role state government should have in improving their lives and communities. This research will again survey rural Pennsylvanians' attitudes on rural issues, making comparisons to the previous survey where appropriate, but also adding questions about current issues.

Key Expected Outcomes:

- Examination of rural Pennsylvanians' attitudes on current conditions in their community, the future of their community, and the role state government plays in their communities.
- Comparison of the results of the survey with those of the 2008 survey.
- Analysis of current findings and identification of trends.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.

Examination of Free Community College Tuition

The subject of free tuition in American higher education continues to gain attention across the nation. In Pennsylvania, in 2002, Lehigh Carbon Community College was a leader in providing free tuition to recent graduates of Tamaqua Area High School. Free tuition programs vary by funding sources (public or private) and eligibility (statewide or limited to education for high-demand fields, etc.). This research will examine the economic and educational impact of both limited and statewide free tuition programs.

Key Expected Outcomes:

- Inventory programs that provide free tuition for community college both in Pennsylvania and in other states to include: funding sources, geographic limitations, eligibility, and other relevant factors.
- Analysis of the impacts of free community college tuition programs within Pennsylvania over the last 5 years.
- Comparison of community colleges with and without free tuition programs in terms of enrollment in degree and certificate programs, and graduation rates.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.

Assessment of Computer Security for Pennsylvania Municipalities – An Update

Ten years ago, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania published research examining the information systems security readiness of municipal governments in Pennsylvania. Since that time, technology, and the ways in which municipal governments use it, has changed considerably. The possibility of vulnerability to cybercrime also has increased. This research will examine municipal information systems infrastructure, security measures, and daily information technology practices of Pennsylvania municipal governments.

Key Expected Outcomes:

- Inventory and assessment of the types of technology, programs, and platforms rural and urban municipalities use to provide services to their residents.
- Assessment of the information systems security readiness of rural and urban municipal governments in Pennsylvania including infrastructure assessment, computer and security literacy, and daily practices.
- Identification of changes in security readiness in rural and urban Pennsylvania municipalities since 2009.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.

Options for Transportation Models to Serve Rural Communities

Many rural residents do not have access to public transportation, making other transportation options a necessity for employment, health care services, shopping, and other activities. In some communities, ride-hailing services have helped to fill this need, while in other communities, private or non-profit organizations have developed models for transportation. This research will explore public, private and nonprofit transportation models in rural communities and determine their feasibility for implementation in rural Pennsylvania.

Key Expected Outcomes:

- Identification and analysis of transportation service models that are currently being used in rural communities, including host organization type, funding, population served, and indicators of success.
- Analysis of the feasibility of potential models for use in rural Pennsylvania communities.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.

Analysis of Pennsylvania's Rural Community College Campuses

Many of Pennsylvania's 14 community colleges have campuses located in rural communities. The physical location of these campuses can economically benefit the communities in which they are located. This research will examine those community college campuses located in rural Pennsylvania to determine their economic and investment impact.

Key Expected Outcomes:

- Identification and analysis of the characteristics of rural community college campuses including the number of students and their demographic characteristics, size of physical plant and amenities (i.e. child care centers, food service, etc.), number of employees, and other relevant factors.
- Measurement of the direct and indirect economic impact rural community college campuses have on the municipality in which they are located.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.

Analysis of the Demand for Fixed High-Speed (25Mbps/3Mbps) Broadband Services in Rural Pennsylvania

Not all areas in rural Pennsylvania have access to high-speed broadband services. Where service is available, affordability can be an issue. Without access or affordable rates, rural communities have limited opportunities for new and expanded business development, education and entertainment. This research will identify the demand and the willingness-to-pay for high-speed broadband for businesses and residents in areas where it is limited or not available, and identify barriers and opportunities to accessing affordable services statewide.

Key Expected Outcomes:

- Estimation of the demand for fixed, high-speed broadband services in rural Pennsylvania communities where service is limited or not available.
- Estimation of the price that residents and businesses are willing to pay for access to high-speed broadband internet services in areas with limited or no services.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.

OPEN TOPICS FOR THE 2019 RESEARCH GRANT PROGRAM

In addition to the targeted topics, 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.

TARGETED MINI GRANT TOPICS FOR THE 2019 GRANT PROGRAM

Analysis of the Change in the Number and Type of Small Businesses in Pennsylvania Over the Past 15 Years

According to the U.S Census Bureau, the number of businesses with fewer than five employees has declined 8 percent in rural Pennsylvania over a 10-year period. During the same 10-year period, the number of urban small businesses declined only 2 percent. Using multiple data sources, this research will profile small businesses in rural and urban Pennsylvania and identify trends and patterns in changes in business types and numbers.

Key Expected Outcomes:

- Profile of small businesses (fewer than five employees) in rural and urban Pennsylvania over the past 15 years to include types of businesses and location.
- Comparison of the numbers and types of small businesses in counties with higher economic and population growth to those with lower or negative economic and population growth.
- Analysis of demographic changes in rural and urban Pennsylvania and identification of any relationship between demographic change and the numbers and types of small businesses in rural and urban Pennsylvania over the past 15 years.

Analysis of Expenditures and Participation in Public School Sports

Public school districts in Pennsylvania are required to annually submit information regarding interscholastic athletic opportunities for both male and female students. Using data collected by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, this research will analyze interscholastic athletic participation and expenditure data for Pennsylvania school districts and their relationship to socioeconomic (income, race, crime, etc.) and school district level indicators (PSSA scores, free and reduced school lunch, etc.).

Key Expected Outcomes:

- Analysis of trends in rural and urban public school district athletic participation by type of sport and gender over the past 3 years.
- Analysis of trends in rural and urban public school district expenditures for athletics, including non-school purchases and contributions, over the past 3 years.
- Analysis of the relationship between rural and urban public school district athletic participation and expenditures and relevant socio-demographic and school district indicators.

Assessment of the State Office Downtown Location Law

The Pennsylvania Downtown Location Law (Act 32, amended) encourages the Department of General Services to locate state offices in a downtown area as a means of providing support for business districts and community revitalization. This research will assess the implementation of this law to determine the level of compliance with this act.

Key Expected Outcomes:

- Identification of the number and type of state offices located within a downtown (as defined by Act 32, amended) and those outside a downtown.
- Analysis of the past 10 years of annual reports compiled by DGS on the implementation and effectiveness of this legislation.

Availability of Hospice and Palliative Care in Rural Pennsylvania

Hospice and palliative care are provided for patients with a life expectancy of six months or less and may include pain relief and nursing care, emotional support, and help with everyday tasks. This research will determine the types of hospice care available in rural Pennsylvania and identify any unmet needs or service gaps for hospice and palliative care.

Key Expected Outcomes:

- Identification of the type (for profit/non-profit) and coverage area of hospice providers in rural Pennsylvania.
- Estimations of future demand for hospice services in rural Pennsylvania based on population projections and current usage trends.
- Identification of any geographic areas in Pennsylvania that have limited or no hospice providers.
- Identification of challenges and opportunities to providing hospice care in rural Pennsylvania.

Examination of the Impact of Population Change on Workforce Sustainability: What's Working?

Pennsylvania population projections show that, from 2010 to 2040, the number of working age rural residents (20-64 years old) will decline 7 percent. This decline may prove to be challenging for businesses in rural areas. This research will examine the effect of population change on workforce availability and specific rural industries, and identify programs or efforts that have been successful in sustaining a viable rural workforce.

Key Expected Outcomes:

- Analysis of rural Pennsylvania population trends and their potential impact on future workforce characteristics and participation, and on wages and other income.
- Identification of industries in rural Pennsylvania that may be most affected by changes in population.
- Case studies of rural industries and/or communities that are successfully addressing labor shortages and their applicability to rural Pennsylvania.

Examination of the City Revitalization and Impact Zone (CRIZ) Implementation

Enacted in 2013, the City Revitalization and Impact Zone (CRIZ) provides opportunity to spur new economic growth, helps revitalize downtowns, and creates jobs for residents through the development of vacant, desolate, underused or abandoned properties. This research will provide a baseline study of municipalities that have established a CRIZ to determine community and economic impact as provided through the enabling legislation.

Key Expected Outcomes:

- Description of each of Pennsylvania's CRIZs to include the number of property parcels, business establishments, employment, and wages of employees.
- Comparison of economic changes (employment, wages, number of business establishments, etc.) within each CRIZ to economic changes in the non-CRIZ areas of the county or region.
- Assessment of resources used to support each CRIZ and what, if any, return on investment has been realized.
- Determination of state and local taxes collected within each CRIZ that have been used to repay debt service.

OPEN TOPICS FOR THE 2019 MINI GRANT PROGRAM

Open topics will also be accepted for the Mini Grant Program. Proposed Mini Grant topics for this category 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 Mini Grant projects 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.

2019 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 | <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Health and Welfare Concerns |

Synopsis of Project: _____

(50 word maximum) _____

2019 Estimated Budget:

_____	Center for Rural Pennsylvania Funding
_____	Other (Cash/In-kind)
_____	2019 Budget Total

Project Duration: Nine Months (Mini Grant) One Year

Identified Partners or Subcontractors: _____

Project Director Signature: _____

Date: _____



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