2018 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
2018 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 2018 grant cycle, the maximum allowable grant award is $50,000 per project.

Targeted Topics
This year the Board of Directors has approved 11 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 seven Mini Grant targeted topics. The list of
topics begins on Page 10.

Open Topics
Open topics will also be accepted for Mini Grants.

Grant Application Process
The Center’s 2018 Research Grant Program application process is as follows:

1. Request for Proposals is released. April 2017
2. Deadline for submission of Letters of Intent. May 22, 2017
3. Letters of Intent are reviewed and selected applicants are invited to submit a full proposal. June 2017
4. Proposal planning discussions are conducted with applicants. July-August 2017
5. Deadline for full proposal submission. August 28, 2017
6. Center’s Board of Directors selects projects for funding. December 2017
7. Final work plans are negotiated and accepted. December 2017
8. Cooperative Agreements are issued and work begins. January 2018

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 15) 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 22, 2017.
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 22, 2017.
TARGETED RESEARCH GRANT TOPICS FOR THE 2018 GRANT PROGRAM

Assessment of Computer Security for Pennsylvania Municipalities – An Update
In 2009, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania published research that examined the information systems security readiness of municipal governments in Pennsylvania. The results of the 2009 study pointed to areas of weakness in infrastructure, computer literacy, and daily practices of Pennsylvania’s municipalities and municipal staff. This research will update the 2009 research by again examining information systems infrastructure, computer literacy, and daily practices of 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.

Analysis of K-12 Teacher Demand and Supply in Pennsylvania
From 2010 to 2015, the number of public school classroom teachers in Pennsylvania declined by 10 percent, a higher rate than the 7 percent decline in school enrollment over the same period. During the same period, the number of college students in Pennsylvania graduating with a bachelor’s degree in education declined by 21 percent and many school districts are experiencing substitute teacher shortages. This research will examine the teacher pipeline in Pennsylvania from college degree to practice and determine any regional or subject matter (special education, mathematics, etc.) gaps that exist between the supply and demand for public school teachers in Pennsylvania.

Key Expected Outcomes:
- Determination of the demand for public school teachers in rural and urban Pennsylvania by school district, over the 10 next years, including instruction type, certification level and other relevant factors.
- Determination of whether the current and future supply of public school elementary and secondary teachers will be adequate to meet demand in Pennsylvania’s school districts over the next 10 years.
- Analysis of potential gaps between projected supply and demand for public school teachers by instruction type, level and other relevant factors, over the next 10 years.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.
The Role of Foreign-Born Residents in Pennsylvania’s Economy

Foreign-born residents make up 8 percent of the workforce in Pennsylvania and work in industries such as health care, manufacturing, and agriculture; other foreign-born residents are business owners. This research will examine the economic contribution (employment, income, business ownership, etc.) of foreign-born residents in rural and urban Pennsylvania.

Key Expected Outcomes:
- Determination of the composition of the foreign-born workforce in rural and urban Pennsylvania, including the predominant industries in which they work, and the percentage of specific industry workforce, business ownership and demographics.
- Determination of any trends among the foreign-born workforce in rural and urban Pennsylvania over the past 5 years.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.

Options for Ride-Hailing Models to Serve Rural Communities

Many rural residents do not have access to public transportation, making other transportation options a necessity for trips to work, health care services, shopping and other activities. Ride-hailing services, such as Uber and Lyft, have filled this gap in urban communities, but have not penetrated the rural market in most communities. This research will explore public, private and nonprofit models of ride-hailing services and determine their feasibility for implementation in rural Pennsylvania.

Key Expected Outcomes:
- Identification and analysis of ride-hailing service models that are currently being used in rural communities, including 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.

Evaluation of Senior Community Centers in Rural and Urban Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania has over 500 senior community centers funded by the Area Agencies on Aging and charged with providing meals, social activities, and other services to Pennsylvania’s older residents. This research will examine the locations, programs, and activities of senior centers in Pennsylvania to determine how they are meeting current needs of older Pennsylvanians and preparing for the future.

Key Expected Outcomes:
- Inventory of Pennsylvania’s rural and urban senior community center locations, including types of services provided and activities available.
- Analysis of senior community center attendance and program participation, accessibility/access issues, means of transportation to and from the center, and relevant demographic characteristics.
- Analysis of challenges and opportunities that senior community centers face in providing services in rural and urban Pennsylvania for a growing senior population.
- Identification of innovative and successful models that senior community centers are using to provide services to older adults in rural and urban Pennsylvania, including those focusing on transportation, nutrition, social activities and other issues.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.
**Status of Dental Care for Pennsylvania’s Low-Income Children**

School children in Pennsylvania are required to have dental screenings either in school or through a private dentist. After screening, many children are referred for follow-up examinations or treatment. With a limited supply of dentists in rural areas and an even more limited number who access public dental insurance, some children may go without treatment. This research will examine dental care status and trends for Pennsylvania’s rural and urban school children and determine any gaps in access and availability.

Key Expected Outcomes:
- Analysis of school dental program participation data over the past 5 years in rural and urban Pennsylvania.
- Analysis of the number of rural and urban school children eligible and/or receiving dental services funded by Medical Assistance dental insurance over the past 3 years.
- Analysis of the availability and accessibility of dental providers who accept public dental insurance in rural and urban Pennsylvania.
- Determination of any gaps between available providers and eligible children who receive public dental insurance.
- Determination of the use of dental sealants by school dental programs in Pennsylvania.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.

**Development of a Rapid Response Policy and Protocol for Invasive Species in Pennsylvania**

A non-native invasive species is that which is not indigenous to the ecosystem under consideration and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause harm to the economy, the environment, and human health. This research will develop an invasive species rapid response policy for Pennsylvania that will include a protocol for immediately addressing potential threats, identifying possible funding mechanisms, and developing a communications plan to alert stakeholders, with the goal of promoting timely decision making and communication in the event of new invasive species infestations.

Key Expected Outcomes:
- Development of a protocol that will consist of steps in the process of rapid response including the following activities: early detection and reporting, verification, notification to resource managers, rapid assessment, planning, rapid response, monitoring and evaluation, and restoration.
- Identification of public, private and nonprofit resource managers who will be stakeholders in implementing each of the steps in the rapid response policy and protocol when necessary.
- Identification of sources of permanent funding for invasive species programs in Pennsylvania including state, federal, and private sources.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.
Assessment of Rural Arts Councils and Organizations

Rural communities are looking for ways to attract new residents and keep their population base. Arts organizations can play an important role in helping a community to sustain a high quality of life that is attractive to residents and newcomers, as well as providing a boost to economic development and tourism. In rural Pennsylvania, there are more than 375 arts councils and organizations providing services to rural communities. This research will provide a baseline assessment of the capacity, sustainability and programming of arts councils and organizations in rural Pennsylvania.

Key Expected Outcomes:
- Inventory of arts councils and organizations in rural Pennsylvania and a profile of their service areas, specific arts focus (if any), financial resources, activities, programs and personnel.
- Analysis of challenges and opportunities to provide sustainable arts programming and activities to rural Pennsylvania.
- Identification of case studies of arts councils/organizations in rural Pennsylvania that have been especially successful in achieving goals that benefit their 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 may have an economic impact in 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 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 community college campuses have on the municipality in which they are located.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.

Analysis of Availability and Access to High-Speed Broadband in Rural Pennsylvania

Fixed, high-speed broadband services (25Mbps/3Mbps) are readily available and reasonably priced in many parts of Pennsylvania, enabling opportunities for business development, education and entertainment to be close at hand. This, however, is not the case in parts of rural Pennsylvania. This research will document the gaps in high-speed broadband access in Pennsylvania and identify barriers and opportunities to providing their services statewide.

Key Expected Outcomes:
- Identification of areas in Pennsylvania without high-speed (25Mbps/3Mbps) broadband.
- Documentation of characteristics of the population living in areas without high-speed broadband.
- Documentation of the number and types of businesses, nonprofit organizations and government entities in areas without high-speed broadband.
- Analyze and discuss the number and types of public and private efforts currently underway to increase high-speed broadband service within rural Pennsylvania.
- 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 (25Mbps/3Mbps). Where service is available, affordability can be an issue. Without access to affordable broadband, opportunities for new business development, education and entertainment can be limited. 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 providing affordable service 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 of limited or no services.
- Analysis of the barriers and opportunities to providing affordable, fixed, high-speed broadband services to all of rural Pennsylvania.
- Public policy implications and relevant recommendations.

OPEN TOPICS FOR THE 2018 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 2018 GRANT PROGRAM

Analysis of Medical Assistance Mental Health Services in Pennsylvania

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, nearly 500,000 Pennsylvanians are living with serious mental illness. This research will analyze Medical Assistance county mental health (MH) services data, collected by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, to determine the number and characteristics of consumers of mental health services, the types of services provided, expenditure patterns over time, and differences between rural and urban areas.

Key Expected Outcomes:
- Analysis of mental health Medical Assistance (MA) data, by diagnosis and demographics of MA consumers of mental health services, types of services provided, expenditure patterns, and other relevant data for rural and urban Pennsylvania over the past 5 years.
- Rural and urban comparison of MA mental health data to determine differences, if any, between diagnoses, service delivery and consumer demographics.
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 socio-economic 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 (DGS) 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:
- Inventory and analysis of state offices and the number located within a downtown.
- Assessment of a representative sample of state offices within and outside a downtown (square feet, rent, number of employees, parking availability, etc.).
- Analysis of the past 10 years of annual reports compiled by DGS on the implementation and effectiveness of this legislation.

Analysis of Obesity Rates for School Children in Pennsylvania
Tracking rates of childhood obesity is important as obese children can have higher rates of high blood pressure, diabetes and other health problems that impact their quality of life, even into adulthood. The Pennsylvania Department of Health measures obesity rates of children at the elementary and secondary levels for all public school districts. This research will analyze school district data to identify rates of and trends in childhood obesity as well as any relationships to socio-economic 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 child obesity rates and identification of any changes over the past 10 years.
- Identification of factors that may explain any changes in a school district’s rate of child obesity for the past 10 years.
- Identification and analysis of any socio-economic and school district level factors that are related to obesity rates.
Availability of Hospice and Palliative Care in Rural Pennsylvania

Hospice and palliative care are generally 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. In 2013, an estimated 1.5 million patients received hospice care nationwide. This research will determine the distribution and types of hospice care services provided to rural Pennsylvanians and identify any unmet needs or service gaps for this type of health care.

Key Expected Outcomes:
- Identification of the type (private, hospital based, etc.), patient numbers and characteristics (age, income, health insurance status), and coverage area of hospice providers in rural Pennsylvania.
- Determination of future demand for hospice services in rural Pennsylvania based on population projections.
- Determination of the distribution of hospice providers in rural Pennsylvania to identify any geographic areas that do not have access to a hospice provider.
- 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 to 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 identify rural success stories in sustaining a viable 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, help revitalize downtowns and create 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 2018 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.
## 2018 Letter of Intent Cover Sheet

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<th>Project Title:</th>
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<td>Project Director Name:</td>
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Open Topic – Indicate Subject Area Addressed By Selecting One Of The Areas Listed Below:

- Rural People and Communities
- Local Government Finance and Administration
- Natural Resources and Environment
- Educational Outreach
- Economic Development
- Community Services
- Rural Values and Social Change
- Agriculture
- Health and Welfare Concerns

Synopsis of Project:  
(50 word maximum)  
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

2018 Estimated Budget:  
___________________ Center for Rural Pennsylvania Funding  
___________________ Other (Cash/In-kind)  
___________________ 2018 Budget Total

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

Identified Partners or Subcontractors:  
___________________________________________________________________

Project Director Signature:  
___________________________________________________________________

Date:  
___________________________________________________________________