

Call for Proposals



Multi-State Rural Development Research or Extension Projects North Central Region

Fall 2020/Spring 2021

The North Central Regional Center for Rural Development (NCRCRD) at Michigan State University announces a competition for seed grants aimed at *enhancing the ability of Land Grant institutions* to positively influence the quality of life in rural areas of the twelve-state North Central region of the United States. Priority areas for the Center's work include:

- Building a 21st century economy
- Sustainable communities
- Leadership development and civic engagement
- Community health and wellness

More complete descriptions of these themes are available on the Center's web site at: http://www.canr.msu.edu/ncrcrd/who_we_are/.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants include current faculty and staff of Land Grant institutions in the North Central region and their partners. Each proposal must have a PI and at least one co-PI. The PI and Co-PI must be appointed at Land Grant institutions in different North Central states. Additional Co-PIs drawn from other institutions of higher learning or non-profits with expertise serving the project's rural development mission are encouraged but not required. Non-profits are encouraged to be in contact with Land Grant(s) in their service region as they engage in proposal development. The PI's employer will serve as the fiduciary institution for the grant, but the PI and all Co-PIs are expected to operate on a consensus basis in grant management decisions. A list of North Central Land Grant institutions is found at http://www.canr.msu.edu/ncrcrd/who_we_are/nc_land_grants.

The proposal must be applicable to more than one state in the North Central region (in terms of outputs, activities, or both). For example, it is not sufficient for the Co-PI to serve as a consultant to the PI for work relating only to the PI's state.

Proposals that bridge social and biophysical sciences to foster rural development are strongly encouraged. Proposals that engage both Extension and Agricultural Experiment Station (AES) personnel are also encouraged.

ACTIVITIES TO BE FUNDED

Types of grant products may include, but are not limited to:

1. Development of proposals for major funding from a federal agency or foundation. Funds can be used for activities such as proposal team meetings, literature review, preliminary data collection, or other types of piloting to increase the team's probability of success. In this case the deliverable associated with the NCRCRD grant will be a fully completed proposal to another funding source. This type of deliverable is the Center's highest priority. Proposals listing grant proposals as their principal deliverable should specify the source of funds (agency, or foundation, program), and application deadline(s), if any.
2. Presentations of results on emerging issues of importance to rural areas of North Central states through white papers, blogs, webinars or new communications technologies. The content is expected to influence action on the part of North Central Land Grant employees.
3. Organized conferences and proceedings relevant to topical rural development issues in North Central states (conference location in North Central region is preferred, but other locations may be considered if sufficient justification for an alternative site is provided.).
4. Development or piloting of Extension curricula aimed at enhancing the system's ability to deliver. Proposals in this arena should specify how the activity will be sustained through participant fees or other sources of revenue that benefit all participating states (and possibly beyond).

The PI of each funded project will work with the NCRCRD staff to schedule a NCRCRD-hosted webinar to share project results/findings with the broader North Central region and beyond.

FIDUCIARY & REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

Two grants will be awarded for up to \$60,000 each. Up to \$120,000 will be awarded. **The Center does not pay overhead or other administrative costs.**

Proposal authors must choose between two fiduciary arrangements, depending on the nature of the proposal (contact the Center Director for details, if necessary):

- **FIDUCIARY ARRANGEMENT 1:** Proposals that involve subcontracting with Land Grant institutions; subcontracts are typically necessary when the proposal covers compensation of Land Grant employees or consultants. In these cases, the fiduciary institution will invoice the Center for reimbursement of actual costs. Up to two invoices will be processed per award (one intermediate and one final). Each intermediate invoice should include documentation of actual expenses consistent with Michigan State University and federal guidelines, and a one page statement from the PI detailing progress on the project deliverables. The final

invoice should include the PI's final report. The final report should be three to five pages long, and provide details about accomplishments and barriers.)

- **FIDUCIARY ARRANGEMENT 2:** Authors of proposals that involve only expenses for reimbursement, such as travel, materials and supplies, and other non-compensation items may wish to choose this arrangement to reduce paperwork. The Center will reimburse directly according to Michigan State University policies on reimbursement (consistent with federal guidelines). Intermediate reimbursement requests should be accompanied by progress reports. The project PI is expected to produce a final report of three to five pages to be submitted with the final reimbursement request.

Additional reporting (under either fiduciary arrangement) is required for teams pursuing major grants as their principal NCRCRD small grant project output. For teams pursuing science grants, the team should plan on submitting their draft problem statement and literature review for the first progress report, and a draft activities narrative for the second progress report. The Center Director, who has science competitive grants panel experience, will provide editorial feedback on the team's drafts to help improve the team's chances of success in obtaining a large grant from their target agency. Teams pursuing non-science grants should also plan on submitting intermediate drafts as part of their progress reports.

REVIEW PROCESS

Proposals will receive two levels of programmatic review. A technical review will be completed by an independent panel. The Center's Board of Directors will provide input into the final selection and recommended funding levels. Selection criteria include:

- The relevance of the proposal to the Center's goal of enhancing the capacity of Land Grants to execute their rural development mission.
- Relevance of the project to rural development.
- The degree to which the project is aligned with the NCRCRD priority areas outlined in the call for proposals.
- The innovativeness of the proposed work.
- The degree to which the work will impact rural development.
- The degree to which the plan of work is realistic (can the proposed activities be accomplished in the given time line?).
- The appropriateness of the budget for the proposed work.
- The likelihood that the project will continue after the funding is exhausted.
- The likelihood that the project will leverage other funding for the activity in the future.
- The demonstrated ability of the project team.

The USDA will review budgets and plans of work for consistency with federal guidelines. The MSU Office of Grant and Contract Administration will review budgets for consistency with its guidelines.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Proposals should use one inch margins and 12 point font, and should include the following items in the order listed below:

1. **NCRCRD proposal cover page** (includes Abstract and Summary of Deliverables). Access the NCRCRD Small Grants call for proposals page at <http://ncrcrd.msu.edu/ncrcrd/grants> for a template.)
2. **Project narrative** (5 pages maximum).
3. Description of how the project and the cross-state composition of the team will enhance capacity of land grant institutions in the North Central region to execute their rural development missions (½ page maximum).
4. Description of roles of the PI and Co-PIs in executing the project (½ page maximum per investigator).
5. One page time table including specific deliverables. Investigators should plan on an award period starting in October 2020 and running no more than twelve months.
6. Curriculum vita of the PI and all Co-PIs (2 pages maximum per investigator.)
7. NCRCRD proposal approval page. The PI and all co-PIs should document approval from their immediate supervisor (in cases where a non-profit Director is a Co-PI, the governing board chair can approve). In addition, approval from the Agricultural Experiment Station (AES) Director is required for AES appointed PI or Co-PIs, and from the Extension Director for Cooperative Extension Service appointed PI or Co-PIs. Use the template on the Center's small grants call for proposals page.
8. For proposals that fall under Fiduciary Arrangement 1 as described on pages 2-3 of this document, fiduciary institution AD 1048 form, DUNS number, and FEIN number.
9. Budget in the format specified by NCRCRD in its budget instructions page (access the NCRCRD.org small grants page to see the Small Grants Budget Instructions).
10. Budget justification – brief description of why each expense is needed.
11. Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) approval of the proposal. This is normally an individual appointed in the university's grants office. This item is not required if the proposal uses Fiduciary Arrangement 2 (see page 3).
12. Completed Michigan State University subrecipient form. This item is not required if the proposal uses Fiduciary Arrangement 2.

The entire proposal package should be saved as four separate pdfs.

- A. Items 1 through 8 from the above list. Save as {PI Last Name University Name Nar} e.g., smithMSUnar.pdf.
- B. Items 9 & 10. Save as {PI Last Name University Name Bud.pdf} e.g. smithMSUbud.pdf. (Note that your budget justification should be included as an attachment on line K of the budget form.)
- C. Item 11. Save as {PI Last Name University Name AOR.pdf} e.g., smithMSUAOR.pdf.
- D. Item 12. Save as {PI Last Name University Name SubRep.pdf}

All files must be emailed to MSUE.NCGrants@msu.edu as attachments to a single email with the following subject line: NCRCD Small Grant Proposal {Name of PI}.

Proposals are due at 5:00 p.m. Eastern time, February 10, 2020. Proposals received after the application window closes will be reviewed by the NCRCD director only (not referees) and not considered for funding in this cycle.

Pre-proposals are not required. Persons wishing initial feedback on a project idea are welcome to submit an *initial concept paper* any time prior to the proposal deadline. An *initial concept paper* can take the form of a brief (half-page) project abstract and list of collaborators. Initial concept papers will be reviewed in the order received, so initial concepts received very close to the final deadline for full proposals may not receive timely feedback. For a list of previously funded projects, see the NCRCD small grants page.

TIME LINE FOR AWARDS

Award recommendations will be made at the NCRCD Board meeting planned for late spring, 2020. Project PIs will be notified of the board recommendations shortly after the meeting. Board award recommendations will be forwarded to USDA for consent and approval, subject to budget availability, and finally processed by the Michigan State University grants office. Projects funded under the NCRCD small grants process are expected to begin in early- to mid-fall 2020 (exact start date to be determined by MSU grants office), and will be completed within 12 months of the start date.