Call for Proposals

**North Central Regional Center for Rural Development Policy Projects**

2013

The North Central Regional Center for Rural Development is pleased to announce a call for FY 13-14 policy projects. These are single- or multiple-investigator projects, and must be led by personnel from a land grant institution within the 12 North Central States. Land grant graduate students and others not employed by land-grants may join a project led by an eligible land grant employee. A list of eligible institutions is available on the Center’s web site.

* Budget line items are limited to personnel and reimbursable travel
* Personnel are NOT required to relocate to Center offices during their appointment
* Payment will be made on receipt of acceptable products.

All FY 13-14 projects should plan on starting in November 2013 and submitting a first draft by March 1. Webinars will be scheduled upon final approval of the other outputs.

Suggested Topics (one per proposal, multiple proposals from the same individual are permitted), maximum of $15K budget per proposal:

1. **Land Tenure in the Upper Midwest (12 North Central states).** Land is the new “black gold” and the 12-state region is home to some of the most productive land in the world. How are cropland ownership patterns shifting in response to increased land prices, interest by institutional investors, new natural gas extraction technologies, and foreign desire to lock in food supplies? How will these shifts affect outcomes in rural communities where the land is located? What are potential state and local policy responses? Outputs: 20 page document with original maps of land tenure hot spots; 2 page policy brief; webinar.
2. **Land Tenure in Tribal Areas (12 North Central States).** In 2012, the Helping Expedite and Advance Responsible Tribal Homeownership (HEARTH) Act became law. This legislation allows tribes to lease restricted lands for residential, business, public, religious, educational, or recreational purposes without the approval of the Secretary of the Interior. How are tribes responding to this new legislation? What best practices have emerged? Does uptake of the new flexibility vary across tribal areas in the 12-state region, and if so, why? Outputs: 10 page overview of any issues surrounding implementation of the legislation, case studies; 2 page policy brief aimed at tribal leaders; webinar.
3. **Community Impacts of Non-Fuel Mining in the Upper Midwest (12 North Central States).** Isolated pockets of the region are seeing uptake of lands into mining for deposits of copper, precious metals, and sand. How will these shifts affect outcomes in rural communities where the land is located? What are potential state and local policy responses? Outputs: 20 page document with maps of hot spots; 2 page policy brief; webinar.
4. **Alternative Funding for Food Systems Development.** Community interest in local food systems has never been higher. The authors of this proposal will develop eight primary interview-based cases studies of how rural communities have attempted to fund and sustain improvements in their local food systems. Case study examples can be drawn from anywhere, and descriptions of both successes and failures are encouraged. Outputs: case studies; two page “best practices” for the upper Midwest document; webinar.
5. **Rural Skills Gap in the Upper Midwest (12 North Central States).** While the lower proportion of college graduates in rural communities is well-known, less well understood is where rural skill shortages exist. Some high paying rural jobs don’t require college education (e.g. natural gas), while others require some (biofuel tech) and still others an advanced degree (large animal vet). Some areas report a missing rural “skill” is ability to clear a drug test. Authors of this proposal will develop a method for assessing local skill gaps, with a case study example drawn from a North Central state, and a list of best practices for training and recruiting key members of the local workforce given market conditions in the 12-state region. The authors will deliver a webinar to explain their methods to individuals interested in potentially replicating the work.
6. **Opportunities and Threats of Low River Levels in the Upper Midwest.** Much of the grain produced in the 12-state region flows to export markets via river transport. When river levels are low, movement of product is threatened. Proposal authors will write two five page papers. One will discuss potential impacts on the region, federal policy options for reducing the probability of navigational blockages due to low river levels. The second will outline new rural economic opportunities that may arise due to increased export transport costs (e.g., value-added processes in lieu of bulk commodity exports). Authors will present two webinars based on the papers.
7. **Rural Schools-Best Practices in a Changing Environment.** Rural schools in the 12-state region face an array of opportunities and challenges. Internet availability is increasing, opening the possibility of broader offerings through distance education. Parts of the region are depopulating, leading to school closings that result in longer student commutes. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (2012), rural people under 18 are more likely to begin substance abuse than minors from other areas. Some districts are implementing four-day weeks. Many families choose to home-school their children, accelerating public school enrollment decline. Authors of this proposal will produce a 20 page policy document (aimed at rural public school authorities) detailing options for sustainable rural schools in the 12-state region; 2-page summary; webinar.

To Apply:

The Center’s preferred administrative mode is direct contracting with individuals and direct reimbursement of travel. The proposals under this mode require only immediate supervisor sign-off. The Center is open to alternative contracting arrangements (e.g. award to institution). Alternative contracting arrangements will entail more involved approval processes, to be determined in dialog with proposal authors. Proposal authors should use the cover page found below.

In addition, the authors should provide a two page narrative outlining their approach and curriculum vitae (up to 5 pages per person) for each individual involved with the project.

Applications will be reviewed by the NCRCRD Board of Directors. Proposals should be received no later than **September 12, 2013**. Email to loveridge2@msu.edu. Use “NCRCRD Special Project Proposal” in the subject line.

**Cover Page**

**Proposal Title** (Suggested length is no more than ten words.)

Project type number:

Proposal Fiduciary Arrangement (mark one):

\_\_ 1. Subcontract (contract with one or more NC land grant institutions; more involved approval process)

\_\_ 2. Reimbursement (direct payment of personnel up to $75/hour; travel)

**Principal Investigator Contact Information** (should include Last and First Names

Title, Mailing Address, Email Address, Work Telephone, Cell Phone)

**Co-Principal Investigator Name, Title and Contact Information** (for multiple Co-PIs, repeat as needed)

**Proposal Abstract** (250 words maximum)**:**

**Summary of Deliverables** (List major project outputs and completion dates. Do not use paragraph format.)

Output Month