



The RIDGE Center For Targeted Studies



**Doctoral Dissertation
Research Grant Program**

2014

Introduction

The RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies, a partnership of the Purdue Center for Regional Development (PCRD) and the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC), is pleased to announce a new round of funding for its *Doctoral Dissertation Research Grant Program*. The program is intended to invest in graduate students attending universities in the U.S. who are pursuing doctoral research in areas that closely align with the research priorities of the RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies. This document provides guidelines and procedures for students and their supervising professor who may wish to apply for this exciting new RIDGE initiative.

About the ERS Supported RIDGE Center

USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) named the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) at Mississippi State University as one of two RIDGE Centers in 2010. The Purdue Center for Regional Development Center (PCRD) joined as a partner with the SRDC in 2013. The RIDGE (Research Innovation and Development Grants in Economics) Center for Targeted Studies invests in innovative social sciences-based research that explores the food and nutrition assistance challenges facing residents and communities in rural America, including Native Americans, immigrants, other racial/ethnic minorities, youth, single parents, the persistently poor and other key populations.

Who's Eligible to Apply?

Students currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program from an accredited U.S. institution of higher education are eligible to apply for the RIDGE Center Doctoral Dissertation Research Grant Program. Applicants must have completed all formal work related to their area of study and be at the "All But Dissertation" (ABD) stage of the doctoral program. As such, applicants should have dissertation proposals that have been approved by their doctoral committees. Recipients of the RIDGE Center grant are expected to complete their dissertation within a 24-month period (by July 1, 2016, or sooner).

In order to comply with the regulations of most universities, the proposal must be formally submitted by the student's supervising professor or the department/center chair. It is the faculty member who will be designated as the Project's Principal Investigator. However, the funds awarded must be dedicated to support the dissertation work of the doctoral student listed in this RIDGE application.

Application Deadline: Proposals must be postmarked no later than May 15, 2014.

Priority Research Areas

The RIDGE Center is interested in basic, applied, policy and evaluation-related research proposals that align with one or more of the following priority themes. Topics presented under each theme are offered as examples of the type of research the student may opt to pursue.

1. CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

- Examine challenges associated with the availability and use of child nutrition programs or the advancement of child nutrition in rural areas.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of federal and/or state child nutrition programs in advancing the nutritional health of children.

2. **FOOD SECURITY**

- Explore the current and/or changing characteristics of food insecure populations in rural areas and the strategies used to cope with food insecurity.
- Assess implications and/or consequences of increases in SNAP funding in 2008 and/or decreases in SNAP funding in 2013 on low-income families/households.

3. **HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIC/MENTAL/PHYSICAL INSTABILITY & FOOD ASSISTANCE PARTICIPATION**

- Assess the impact of health care costs on adult and child food assistance participation rates.
- Examine if food assistance programs serve as an economic safety net for low-income families/households, protecting them from hardships resulting from income losses and major unexpected expenses.
- Explore the nature of the relationship (if any) between the mental/physical health of individuals or families and participation in food assistance programs.

4. **FOOD CHOICES: SOCIO-ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS AND CONSEQUENCES**

- Examine the away-from-home food consumption patterns of adults and/or children and the consequences on their nutrition and health status.
- Assess the role of behavioral economics and incentives in helping adults or children make better health/nutrition-related choices.

5. **BUILT ENVIRONMENT & FOOD/NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM USE**

- Examine whether features of the “built environment” (i.e., availability of local offices, access to transportation services, web-based or face-to-face enrollment process) have effects on food assistance program participation rates.
- Determine whether federal or state policy decisions regarding the “built environment” have positive or negative impacts on food assistance program participation.

6. **PLACE-BASED FACTORS AFFECTING FOOD ACCESS OR CHOICES**

- Explore how place-based factors may affect the nutritional health of local residents such as the availability of a variety of healthy food products by type of stores, the cost of healthy diets, diet quality and access to healthy foods.
- Assess the impacts of community-led efforts to promote weight reduction on the health status of local residents.
- Determine whether the introduction and expansion of local or regional food systems alters the food assistance and nutritional status of local residents, in general, and/or key sub-populations, in particular.

7. **OTHER RELEVANT TOPICS**

- Timely topics (not outlined above) that the applicant believe would be interest to the RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies are welcomed. The key is to ensure that the research explores the social sciences-based aspects of your food assistance and/or nutrition-related topic.

Funding and Grant Requirements

Grants of up to \$17,500 will be provided to support the dissertation research of the successful applicant. It is expected that TWO and a maximum of FOUR grants will be awarded as part of this year’s RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies grant program. Awardees will be contacted by early June 2014.

Use of RIDGE Grant Funds

Funds can be used for a variety of expenses, such as:

- Travel to research sites to collect qualitative/quantitative data;
- Data collection and analysis;
- Purchase of data and appropriate supplies;
- Specialized software;
- Long distance telephone expenses (note that regular monthly telephone fees are typically considered regular F&A expenses and, as such, cannot be paid from grant funds); and
- Research assistantship (if the assistantship is designed to allow the student to pursue his/her dissertation research).

NOTE that the doctoral dissertation research grant will be awarded to the supervising professor overseeing the student's dissertation research or to the appropriate department chair/center director (since students usually are not allowed to serve as P.I.s on grants awarded to a university or research center). Eighty percent of the award will be provided to the Principal Investigator (i.e., supervising professor or appropriate administrator) at the beginning of the grant period (around August 2014). The remaining 20 percent will be dispensed upon completion and formal acceptance of the dissertation by the student's doctoral committee and the submission of the required products outlined in the next section of this document. Please note that funds cannot be used to pay for the student's tuition. In addition, no indirect costs (F&A) are allowed to be assessed by the recipient institution for this grant program.

Required Products to be Submitted to the RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies

Doctoral students receiving grant support from the RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies will be required to submit the following products before the final allocation of funds is provided to the student's university department/center:

- Electronic copy of the completed dissertation or publication ready manuscript(s).
- A 250-word abstract and a 10-12 page (double spaced, 12-point font) research brief that highlights key aspects of the research, including findings and implications. The document should be written for non-academic audiences, such as agency or policy-related personnel, practitioners, media, and other appropriate individuals and organizations. The RIDGE Center staff at the PCRD will work with the grantee on the guidelines for preparing this important report.

Participation in the National ERS Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Conference

If feasible, grantees may be invited to present their research at one of the annual Food Assistance and Nutrition Research conferences sponsored by the USDA Economic Research Service. The workshop is typically held each fall in Washington, D.C. The RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies will pay the travel expenses for grantees that are able to take part in this valuable conference.

Proprietary Rights

The dissertation and all documents developed in support of the doctoral research are the property of the grantee. The RIDGE Center has the right to: (1) include an abstract of the funded research on the RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies website or other Center related products; (2) publish the research brief prepared and submitted by the doctoral student in fulfillment of the RIDGE Center grant requirements; and (3) secure an electronic copy of the doctoral dissertation or publication ready manuscript(s) that the grantee has prepared as part of his/her doctoral dissertation work (these will not be released by the RIDGE Center, but will serve as documentation of the completion of the grantee's Ph.D. research). In addition, the Center will be permitted to use a photo of the grantee for use on its website or other appropriate products.

Any research reports, journal articles or contributed papers developed as part of this research shall include the following language:

This research was funded in part by a grant from the RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies, a partnership of the Southern Rural Development Center and the Purdue Center for Regional Development, in collaboration with the USDA Economic Research Service.

Grant Application Procedures

All proposals must be organized in the following manner. Please use a 12-point font to ensure easy readability and use a single-spaced format for the text, with double spaces between paragraphs. The total length of this proposal should not exceed EIGHT (8) single-spaced pages, including references. However, the length limitation does not include the cover sheet, budget and budget justification, abbreviated resume/CV of the applicant or the recommendation letter from the supervising professor, all of which are required to be included with the grant proposal.

1. **Cover Sheet:** The cover sheet seeks basic information about the doctoral student who is applying for RIDGE Center funding. This includes a request for the applicant to describe the current status of her/his doctoral research work.
2. **Statement from the Supervising Professor:** The applicant must have a signed statement from her/his supervising professor stating that the dissertation proposal has been formally approved by the student's dissertation committee and that the dissertation is expected to be completed by July 1, 2016 (or sooner).
3. **Supervising Professor's Recommendation Letter:** The applicant's supervising professor must provide a letter of recommendation on university letterhead. In addition, the supervising professor must state in the letter his/her willingness to serve as the Principal Investigator and manage the RIDGE grant funds being dedicated in support of the dissertation research of the student applicant. This letter should be attached to the grant application. If the P.I. is someone other than the supervising professor (such as the department chair or center director), then a signed statement from this individual must be attached to the grantee's proposal as well.

4. **Research Proposal:** The applicant is urged to provide well-thought out responses to the following items:
- a. Dissertation Title: Provide a working title of your dissertation.
 - b. RIDGE Center Priority Research Topic: Identify the topic(s) listed under the “Priority Research Areas” section of this document that most closely matches your research focus.
 - c. Abstract: Prepare a 250-word abstract of your proposed dissertation research.
 - d. Problem Statement and Unique Aspect of Your Research: Provide a brief overview of the current state of knowledge (including key theories) regarding the topic of your research. Then, state how your research will contribute to our understanding of the topic you are addressing (that is, the unique theoretical, methodological, policy and/or practical aspects of your research).
 - e. Research Questions/Hypotheses to be Addressed: Delineate the research questions or hypotheses being examined in your dissertation research.
 - f. Methodology: Describe the research methodology you plan to undertake to address each of your research questions/hypotheses. Do you plan to collect primary data, and if so, how? If you intend to tap existing secondary data, indicate what sources you plan to use and describe the relevance of these data sources in addressing your research questions/hypotheses. The key is to show how the methods you are using will allow you to successfully examine your research questions/hypotheses.
 - g. Application of Results: Briefly describe the importance of your research to policy and/or practice (that is, what does it imply with regard to policy or program shifts that may be needed to further strengthen food assistance or nutrition efforts in rural areas?).
 - h. Timeline of Activities: Provide a detailed timeline of activities to be completed over the August 2014 – July 1, 2016 time period. Use a shorter end date if you anticipate having your dissertation completed before the July 1, 2016, deadline. The timeline should include specific activities to be completed on a month-to-month basis.
 - i. Proposed Budget and Justification: Provide a budget for your proposed research. Proposed expenditures should be presented by the following categories:
 - Doctoral student salary/Research assistantship stipend
 - Fringes (indicate the fringe rate for your institution)
 - Travel
 - Data and software expenses
 - Supplies (printing, duplication expenses, office materials, postage, etc.)
 - Long distance telephone expenses (directly related to the research project)
 - Meeting expenses (for focus groups, roundtable sessions, etc.)

Next, prepare a sound justification for the items included in your research budget.

5. **Brief Resume or Curriculum Vitae.** Please submit a resume/CV of not more than five pages.

Where to Send the Completed Proposal: Applicants should submit all materials using one of the following options:

E-Mail (must be sent before 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time on May 15, 2014):

Please email your completed proposal to Dr. Bo Beaulieu, RIDGE Center director, at ljb@purdue.edu AND Vicki Vaughn, Program Manager, at vickiv@srcd.msstate.edu.

Overnight/Express Mail (dated May 15, 2014, or earlier):

RIDGE Doctoral Dissertation Research Grant Program
c/o Purdue Center for Regional Development
Gerald D. and Edna E. Mann Hall, Suite 266
203 Martin Jischke Drive
West Lafayette, IN 47907
Telephone: 765-494-7273

The Grant Review Process:

All applications received will be evaluated by the RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies National Advisory Committee. The following are the key criteria that will be used to score the applications:

1. The importance of the proposal in terms of addressing one or more of the RIDGE Center food assistance/nutrition priorities and target population(s). **(20 percent)**
2. The quality of the research plan submitted, including the questions/hypotheses, methodology, project timeline and budget/budget justification associated with the dissertation research. **(30 percent)**
3. The potential contribution of the project to the basic, applied, policy and/or evaluation research literature. **(20 percent)**
4. The ability of the applicant to carry out the proposed doctoral dissertation work within the two-year time frame (based upon the applicant's training, background and experiences, as well as the recommendation letter provided by the applicant's supervising professor). **(30 percent)**

Questions?

If you have any questions about the RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies Doctoral Dissertation Research Grant Program, please contact Dr. Bo Beaulieu at ljb@purdue.edu (765-494-7273) or Vicki Vaughn at vickiv@srcd.msstate.edu (662-325-1775).



COVER SHEET: Background Information

Name of Applicant:

Mailing Address:

Email Address:

Telephone Number:

College/University Affiliation:

Student's Academic Department:

Current Education (Year, Institution, Field of Study):

Information about the Student's Doctoral Research

Dissertation Title:

Current Status of Your Dissertation Research:

Anticipated Date of Completion of the Dissertation (month/year):

Name and Contact Information (including telephone number) of the Supervising Professor:

Name and Contact Information (including telephone number) of the Faculty Member or Administrator serving as the P.I. for this Grant (if different from the Supervising Professor):

Supervising Professor Email Address:

Applicant Signature: I certify that the information provided in this application (including the accompanying materials) is accurate and complete. I understand and agree that any false or misleading information will result in my being disqualified for consideration for the RIDGE Center Doctoral Dissertation Research Grant.

Signature: _____ *Date:* _____

Statement from the Supervising Professor

As Supervising Professor for the student applying for the RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies Doctoral Dissertation Research Grant Program, you are asked to complete this form.

A. Your Recommendation is in Support of the Following Individual:

Student's Name: _____

Dissertation Title: _____

B. Your Contact Information:

Name: _____

Academic Institution: _____

Department/Center: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

C. Status of Your Student's Dissertation: The above student's dissertation proposal . . .

Has been approved by the student's dissertation committee on
(month/year) _____

Has not been approved by the student's dissertation committee (If this is the case, the student is not eligible to apply for the RIDGE Center Doctoral Dissertation Research Grant Program)

D. Projected Completion of the Dissertation:

I expect the student's dissertation to be completed by (month/year): _____

E. Signature of Supervising Professor:

Date: _____

NOTE: Please attach your recommendation letter to this form and include both of these documents with the student's grant proposal packet