



The RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies

Advancing Social Sciences-Based Research on
Food Assistance and Nutrition Challenges in Rural America

! **2014 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS DEADLINE DATE**
must be e-mailed or postmarked by May 8, 2014

Background Information

The purpose of the RIDGE (Research Innovation and Development Grants in Economics) Center for Targeted Studies is to invest in innovative social sciences-based research that explores the food and nutrition assistance challenges of **rural people and places**. The program is especially interested in a wide array of topics and issues. Proposals that focus on Native Americans, Hispanics, African Americans, and other racial/ethnic populations, as well as children and low-wealth individuals/households, are strongly encouraged. This document outlines the key information for applicants planning to submit grant proposals.



Maximum Grant Award Amount

The maximum amount allowed for a RIDGE grant proposal is \$35,000. Applicants will be allowed to include a 10 percent indirect cost rate in their budget request. However, the total amount of the budget cannot exceed the \$35,000 level.



Geographic Areas Targeted

RIDGE grant applicants are required to focus their research on people, organizations, institutions, or communities/counties located in nonmetro counties or rural places of the United States. Applicants are free to propose:

- Case studies
- Cross-sectional or longitudinal studies of select people and/or counties/communities
- Comparative studies within a given region (such as exploring differences across metro and nonmetro areas of the South or West) or across U.S. regions (such as differences across the South, North Central, Northeast and/or Western regions)



Eligible Applicants

Social scientists employed by U.S. land-grant or non-land-grant universities, colleges, research centers/institutes or other appropriate research settings, are eligible to apply.

Project Duration

Grantees will have 17 months (August 1, 2014 to December 31, 2015) to complete their research projects. However, projects should be close to completion by September 2015 to allow the Principal Investigators (P.I.) to present their findings at the 2015 ERS National RIDGE Conference typically planned for early fall 2015 in Washington, D.C. Participation in the conference is required for the P.I. of each RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies funded grant.

Award Notification

All successful grantees will receive preliminary notification of the award around June 2, 2014.



2014 PRIORITY RESEARCH THEMES/TOPICS

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 and possible research topics (NOTE: Other possible topics relevant to each priority theme are welcomed from grant applicants.)

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

OTHER RELEVANT TOPICS

- Timely topics (not outlined above) that the applicant believe would be of 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.

Important Note Regarding the Grantee's Research Methodology

In light of the modest level of grant funding available, coupled with the short time period available to complete the research, grant applicants are strongly encouraged to tap existing secondary data resources to pursue their research investigations. A list of quality data resources available to support food assistance and nutrition-related research studies are listed on the following ERS sites:

- <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-security-in-the-united-states.aspx>
- <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance.aspx>

For an applicant who believes that primary data collection is essential to conduct his/her RIDGE study, the person is urged to pursue a smaller scale qualitative research study in order to ensure that the project can be completed in the time period provided as part of this grant.

The Need to Include a Rural or Nonmetro Focus

Applicants are reminded that their proposed research should include areas that meet the "rural" or "nonmetro" designation. Studies that pursue comparative studies of rural/urban, or metro/nometro areas, are acceptable. Check out the following ERS website to review the variety of metro/nonmetro or rural/urban typologies:

- <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-classifications.aspx>



All proposals must be organized in the following manner.

■ **Title of the proposal**

■ **The specific research topic(s) being addressed**

Indicate with which of the seven broad themes/topics listed under the heading “2014 PRIORITY RESEARCH TOPICS” your proposal most closely aligns.

■ **Principal Investigator(s) and Collaborators**

List the name and institutional affiliation of each research team member. Provide the telephone number, fax number, mailing address and email address of the Principal Investigator(s).

■ **Project Summary**

Provide a 250-words summary of your proposal.

■ **Project Description**

This represents the most critical part of your proposal. This portion of your application cannot exceed 10 pages in length and should be single-spaced (double-spaced between paragraphs). Please use a 12-point font to ensure easy readability. The Project Description should include the following:

1. *Introduction and Problem Statement:* Provide an overview of the current state of knowledge regarding the research problem of interest in your study. In addition, specify what your research proposal will do to further advance our understanding of this specific food assistance or nutrition related issue being addressed.
2. *Research Objectives/Questions:* Specify the research objectives or research questions on which you plan to focus.
3. *Research Methods:* Describe the research methodology to be undertaken for each objective or research question. If sampling is being proposed, provide a strong rationale as to the relevance of the site(s) selected for your research investigation. If an existing data set is being utilized, discuss the quality and relevance of the data in terms of being able to address your research objectives or research questions.
4. *Data Analysis:* Indicate the statistical procedures that you anticipate using for your data analysis.
5. *Application of the Research Results:* Provide an assessment of the relevance of your research in terms of its contribution to the scientific literature, policy and/or practice.
6. *Project Timeline:* Provide a project timeline that specifies the activities to be completed over the period of the grant.

NOTE: Grantees will have approximately 17 months (August 1, 2014 to December 31, 2015) to complete their projects. A “no cost” extension beyond the 17-month period will not be allowed since all projects MUST BE completed by December 2015.

7. *Proposed Budget:* Specify the anticipated budget expenditures for your project and include a brief justification for these budget expenditures. As noted earlier, the indirect cost rate is limited to 10 percent. Moreover, no computer-related equipment can be purchased with RIDGE grant funds.

NOTE: The budget must include funds for ONE person (typically the project P.I.) to participate in a one day research conference organized by the Economic Research Service. Held in Washington, D.C. in the fall of 2015, this conference will provide a forum for awardees to share the findings of their food assistance and nutrition research projects.

8. *References:* Complete citation of articles referenced in your project description.

■ **Relevant Experiences of Researcher(s) and Curriculum Vita**

Briefly highlight the past activities that the applicant(s) has been engaged in that are relevant to the proposed research project. This could include a listing of relevant publications, reports and contributed papers. The Principal Investigator(s) abbreviated curriculum vita of approximately 3-5 pages must be included with the grant proposal packet.

The RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies takes seriously the need for a sound and unbiased peer review process of all research proposals that it receives. As such, all reviews and decisions regarding projects to be funded will be made by the members of the RIDGE Center's National Research Advisory Committee. Proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria:

1. The scientific merit of the research being proposed (**20 percent**)
2. The relevance of the proposed research in terms of addressing one or more of the food assistance/nutrition priorities of the RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies, including a focus on key populations and/or places in rural America (**20 percent**)
3. The soundness of the methodology being proposed (**20 percent**)
4. The project's potential contribution to the research literature; to informing policy discussions at federal, regional, state, and/or local levels; and/or to improving food assistance/nutrition-related program outreach/delivery activities (**25 percent**)
5. The qualifications of the individual or team that will provide leadership to the research effort (**15 percent**)

? Questions

If you have questions about any aspect of the RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies grant program, please contact Dr. Bo Beaulieu, RIDGE Center director, at ljb@purdue.edu or 765-494-7273. You may also contact Vicki Vaughn, Program Manager, at vickiv@srdc.msstate.edu or 662-325-1775.

PROCESS FOR SUBMITTING COMPLETED PROPOSALS

Please Remember

Your completed application must be emailed by 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time, May 8, 2014, or postmarked no later than May 8, 2014.

Please **email** ONE copy of your proposal to the Purdue Center for Regional Development and the Southern Rural Development Center by the deadline date of 11:59 pm Pacific Time on May 8, 2014. The document should be sent to the following TWO email addresses:

Bo Beaulieu ljb@purdue.edu
Vicki Vaughn vickiv@srdc.msstate.edu

If you prefer to send your proposal by overnight, two-day delivery or regular mail, it must be postmarked no later than May 8, 2014. Please send the document to the following address:

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

The RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies is coordinated by the Purdue Center for Regional Development in partnership with the Southern Rural Development Center. Funds to support the work of the RIDGE Center are provided by the Economic Research Service, USDA.



About PCRDC and SRDC

The mission of the Purdue Center for Regional Development (PCRDC) is to pioneer new ideas and strategies that contribute to regional collaboration, innovation and prosperity. The Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) strengthens the capacity of the region's 29 land-grant institutions to address critical contemporary rural development issues impacting the well-being of people and communities in the rural South.



About the Economic Research Service (ERS)

ERS is a primary source of economic information and research in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Its research is designed to inform public and private decision-making on a variety of economic and policy issues involving food, farming, natural resources, and rural development. ERS is the major sponsor of the RIDGE Center for Targeted Studies.