

Center for Rural Policy and Development

Request for Proposals for Education Research Grant

April 2008

The Center for Rural Policy and Development in St. Peter, Minn., invites applications for a grant investigating K-12 education in rural Minnesota and potential public policy implications.

The Center was established by the Minnesota Legislature in 1997 to serve as a non-partisan statewide resource for policy research on topics currently on the public agenda. The Center's mission includes identifying salient rural issues and coordinating with expert researchers both inside and outside of Minnesota universities and colleges to conduct appropriate, timely and useful studies for policymakers, including state legislators, regional and local officials, professional associations, opinion leaders and other interested citizens.

This project addresses the topics of the changing demographics in rural Minnesota schools and the related funding issues. Many rural Minnesota school districts are in statutory operating debt due to declining enrollment, fewer students in the lower grades, and aging facilities. Many districts are experiencing significant and continued decline in enrollment, with losses exceeding 20%. An overall decline statewide from 800,000 to 700,000 students is predicted over the next few years. Since school revenue is tied to enrollment and weighted according to the grade level of students, a decline in student numbers, particularly in the upper grades, means a corresponding drop in school revenue.

To help policy and decision makers educate our children, the Center for Rural Policy and Development requests proposals for the following two separate studies:

1. A composite of best practices from Minnesota or other states that can be applied in Minnesota schools to mitigate the loss of revenue while at the same time maintaining and improving the educational performance of our children. An outline of policy implications tied specifically to implementing the best practices should be included. Applicants may request up to \$15,000.
2. Using trend analysis and future forecasting, project a multi-variant demographic and economic profile of Minnesota rural school districts in five-year increments to 2025. Develop a set of policy suggestions for each five-year period that if implemented can help prepare school districts to successfully meet the challenges of the future. Applicants may request up to \$30,000.

Applicants may apply for one or both studies. The deliverable on each study will be a final report to be reviewed by staff and the research committee. The final report will be due by Dec. 31, 2008. We also ask that the researchers be able to present the findings to the Center's board of directors and on an agreed upon number of occasions when requests come up.

Applicants for the grant must complete a research proposal as outlined below. Only complete proposals will be considered.

Twelve copies of the proposal and the accompanying documents should be sent by 11:59 pm CST, May 9, 2008 to the address below. No submissions will be accepted after the deadline. Early submissions are encouraged. Review of proposals begins after May 12, 2008.

Center for Rural Policy and Development
Attn: Marnie Werner
600 South 5th Street, Suite 211
Saint Peter, MN 56082

Please call Marnie Werner, Research Manager, at (507) 934-7700 with any questions you have.

Please use the following outline to format your application.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Principal Investigator:
Title & Department:
Institution/Organization:
Address:

Phone:
Fax:
Email:

Please attach a current curriculum vita for the principal investigator.

Brief (100-word maximum) description of how principal investigator's experiences have prepared him/her to conduct the proposed research.

Additional Researchers (attach additional pages if necessary)

Name:
Title & Department:
Institution:
Address:

Phone:
Fax:
Email:
Role in the proposed research process:

Research Study Title:

Please include the proposal's title in the header on every page in your proposal.

Abstract (100 word maximum)

The abstract should be a brief summary of the proposal's key points and should include the research question that guides the investigation.

Introduction (400 word maximum)

Introduce the issues to be addressed by your research. Be sure to include the rationale for the study and a discussion of relevant literature. Explain in full the significance of this project to rural residents and communities. Feel free to cite existing or proposed policies, past studies and existing literature.

Methodology and Procedures (800 word maximum)

Describe the research methodology. Be sure to address the research question, data collection, instruments/protocols, and data analysis.

Potential Implications (200 word maximum)

Be sure to discuss the potential impact of your findings on student success, as well as the policy recommendations that may follow from your findings.

Timeline and deliverables (100 word maximum or a small table)

Provide a timeline of activities related to this research. Please include anticipated start and completion dates for all relevant activities (i.e., data collection, analysis, dissemination). Please note that research must be completed and a final report submitted for review by December 31, 2008.

Project budget

Please include following information:

I) Personnel expenses

II) Operational expenses:

- a) Project supply expenses
- b) Communications expenses
- c) Travel expenses
- d) Other expenses
- e) Indirect expenses (not to exceed 10% of operational expenses)

Total request (Personnel expenses + Operational expense) =

Please also include:

A list of 2007 funding sources

A 2007 audit (public institutions are exempt)

References (as needed, no word limit)

Fully cite all sources referenced in your proposal.

Questions about this request should be directed to Marnie Werner, Research Manager, at mwerner@ruralmn.org or (507) 934-7700.