



Small Grants for Rural Development Research and/or Extension Projects in the North Central Region

2026 RFP

- **Proposal Deadline: Monday, March 16, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. Eastern time**
- **Funding limit: \$20,000**
- **Time limit: Complete within 12 months of the start date**

The North Central Regional Center for Rural Development (NCRCRD) at Purdue 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-states in the North Central Region of the United States. Priority areas for the Center's work include:

- [Creating Resilient Communities and Economies](#)
- [Developing Leadership and Civic Engagement](#)
- [Promoting Community Health and Wellness](#)

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants include current faculty and staff of land-grant institutions (LGIs) in the North Central Region (NCR) and their partners. The PI must be employed by [a land-grant institution in the NCR](#). Additional Co-PIs drawn from other institutions 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 institutions in their service region as LGIs 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.

Proposals that engage both Extension and Agricultural Experiment Station (AES) personnel are strongly encouraged. Proposals that bridge social and biophysical sciences to foster rural development 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 a team's probability of grant writing 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 in the North Central Region through academic and popular venues, including: journal articles, white papers, blogs, webinars and/or new communications technologies. The content is expected to influence action on the part of NCR land-grant employees.
 3. Organized conferences and proceedings relevant to topical rural development issues in the North Central Region (conference location in North Central Region is required).
 4. Development or piloting of Extension curricula aimed at enhancing the system's ability to develop, deliver and evaluate programming throughout the NCR. Proposals in this arena should specify how the activity can be maintained through participant fees or other sources of revenue. Proposals should also specify how curricula will be disseminated to increase duplication across the NCR. For example, using the [CD Extension Library](#), is one option.

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

FIDUCIARY & REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

Proposal budgets may not exceed \$20,000. All projects must be completed within one year of start date. The Center does not pay overhead or other administrative costs. Cost sharing is not required.

The NCRCRD is hosted by Purdue University which means that all proposals will involve subcontracting with a land-grant institution; 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. Each intermediate invoice should include documentation of actual expenses consistent with Purdue University and federal guidelines. The final invoice should include the PI's final report. The PI will be required to answer a survey detailing accomplishments and impacts.

REVIEW PROCESS

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

1. The relevance of the proposal to the Center's goal of enhancing the capacity of land-grant institutions to execute their rural development mission.
2. Relevance of the project to rural development and potential for impact.
3. The degree to which the project is aligned with the NCRCRD priority areas outlined in the call for proposals.
4. The innovativeness of the proposed work.

5. The feasibility of successfully expanding the scale and scope of the work throughout the NCR.
6. The degree to which the plan of work is realistic (can the proposed activities be accomplished in the given timeline?).
7. The appropriateness of the budget for the proposed work.
8. The likelihood that the project will continue after the funding is exhausted.
9. The likelihood that the project will leverage other funding for the activity in the future.
10. The demonstrated ability of the project team.

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

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Proposals should use one-inch margins, 12-point font, and 1.5 spaced and should include the following items in the order listed below:

1. Proposal cover page:
 - a. Name,
 - b. Abstract 150 words
 - c. Summary of Deliverables.
2. Project narrative (5 pages maximum).
3. Description of how the project and the PI or team will enhance the capacity of land-grant institutions in the North Central region to execute their rural development missions (half page maximum).
4. Description of roles of the PI and Co-PIs in executing the project (half page maximum per investigator).
5. One-page timetable including specific deliverables. Investigators should plan on an award period of no more than twelve months.
6. A two-page CV for each PI and Co-PI.
7. Complete the [USDA's Current and Pending Support template](#)
8. Fiduciary institution AD 1048 form, DUNS number, and FEIN number.
9. Budget
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.
12. Completed Purdue University subrecipient forms:
 - a. [Entity Profile](#)
 - b. [Letter of Intent](#)



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

- A. Items 1 through 7 from the above list. Save as {PI Last Name_University Name_ Nar}
Example: Smith_MSU_nar.pdf.
- B. Items 8-10. Save as {PI Last Name_University Name_Bud.pdf}
Example: Smith_MSU_bud.pdf.
- C. Item 11. Save as {PI Last Name_University Name_AOR.pdf}
Example: Smith_MSU_AOR.pdf.
- D. Item 12. Save as {PI Last Name_University Name_SubRep.pdf}
Example: Smith_MSU_SubRep.pdf.

All files must be emailed to ncrcrd@purdue.edu as attachments to a single email with the following subject line: NCRCRD Small Grant Proposal {Last Name of PI}.

Proposals are due at 5:00 p.m. Eastern time, March 16, 2026.

Proposals received after the application window closes will not be reviewed.

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, visit the [NCRCRD recently funded grants web page](#).

TIMELINE FOR AWARDS

Award recommendations will be made at the NCRCRD Board of Directors meeting. Project PIs will be notified of the board recommendations by June 2026. Board award recommendations will be forwarded to USDA for consent and approval, subject to budget availability, and finally processed by the Purdue University grants office. Projects funded under the NCRCRD small grants process are expected to begin in August 2026 (exact start date to be determined by Purdue grants office) and will be completed within 12 months of the start date.