



2027 Faculty Research Grant Program RFP FAQ

What are the most important factors in creating a competitive Letter of Intent (LOI)?

- Clear relevance to rural Pennsylvania policy
- Goals that outline 3-5 key questions to be answered by the research and their relevance to state or local decision-making
- Multi-county or statewide applicability
- Feasible, well-defined methods
- Strong likelihood of successful execution (data access, project partners, existing relationships with stakeholders)
- New primary data or information, or novel approaches

The 2027 RFP has three research themes; how does this affect funding decisions?

The Center is piloting a new approach for 2027. Our plan is to focus primarily on funded projects that align with those themes.

Is there any advantage to submitting a Letter of Intent (LOI) for one of the six targeted topics as opposed to an open topic?

In a competitive year with many high-quality submissions, the Center will give preference to inviting proposals on targeted topics or open topics related to one of the three themes.

Does a letter of intent have to focus on one of the themes or a targeted topic?

No, the Center is glad to consider an excellent research design that is related to any one of our mandated research areas (as noted in the RFP). Still, a high-quality design addressing an open topic related to one of the themes for 2027 could be given preference over other open topics.

For 2027, the Cover Letter for the LOI asks for a maximum and minimum level of funding requested. Why is that?

With limited resources, the Center is looking for flexibility to fund projects of varying scope. For example, if your full research design includes case studies, a

policy review, and an analysis of secondary quantitative data, consider whether you could accept a lower level of funding for case studies only.

If my LOI requests \$60,000 and the design is not something that can be reduced in scope, will my LOI still be considered?

Yes, your LOI will still receive consideration.

The maximum level of funding is set at \$60,000. Can I request and possibly receive higher funding for a major and important project?

Unfortunately, a higher level of funding is not possible. The maximum award level is determined by the Pennsylvania General Assembly and would have to be authorized via legislation.

Are there any methodologies that are particularly preferred by the Center?

The Center funds both quantitative and qualitative research. In general, we prefer research designs that include some newly gathered primary information, the analysis of a newly available dataset, or a new approach to integrating the analyses of various sources that have not been done before. Single-county studies are generally less competitive for full funding, as are descriptive analyses of publicly available secondary data.

Is qualitative research comparing two rural communities something that interests the Center?

A qualitative design that includes two communities will be considered, particularly if it will provide a model for a solution to address a broadly relevant challenge. Projects that include multiple rural areas from various regions across the state may be preferred for full funding, all other things being equal.

My research design includes a survey, focus groups, or a set of interviews. What information should I include in the LOI?

Key pieces of information to include are the expected response rate(s), the geographic breadth, and how you will obtain the needed participation or responses. If you have partners who will promote participation, a letter from one or more that confirms their support is helpful. If you have previous experience in successfully obtaining high response rates, particularly from similar stakeholders, include a brief outline of that experience.

I am not sure that the topic I'm interested in is a good fit for the Center. Can I talk with someone?

Yes! We encourage researchers to contact us directly for a phone call or virtual meeting to discuss potential ideas. You can email the Center's assistant director, Dr. Laura Dimino, to set it up: LDimino@rural.pa.gov.