



**Rural Reimagined Faculty Grant Program**

**Handbook**

**Spring 2023**

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The TN Tech Rural Reimagined Grand Challenge Faculty Grant Program aims to continue the grand challenge of enriching rural communities across the state through partnership and collaboration with TN Tech faculty and students. Involving faculty and students not only influences future generations, but it largely expands the scope of rural impact. Being a campus composed of diverse faculty with varying backgrounds, skill sets, and interests, there is unlimited potential to transform our rural communities. Therefore, the Rural Reimagined Grand Challenge, through the Tennessee Tech Center for Rural Innovation, is providing a total of \$150,000 to support faculty led, rural related research projects.

Please read further to develop a deeper understanding of the program's purpose, goals, and qualifications. **Apply by Friday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022** to meet the following criterion to be considered eligible for the grant.

## Program Overview and Core Goals

The TN Tech Rural Reimagined Grand Challenge Faculty Grant Program (the Program) was established at Tennessee Tech University in the fall semester of 2022 to partner with faculty and students in effort to collaboratively examine and address rural facing issues. We believe that a primary benefit of faculty research lies in its potential to transform rural living. It is anticipated that faculty engagement in research and creative activities will enable them to remain at the leading edges of their fields. This knowledge will filter downward into the classroom and community as well as provide opportunities for students to become directly involved in scholarly exploration.

## Funding Levels

The Program is funded by the State of Tennessee Governor's Budget state appropriations received July 1, 2022, for the Rural Reimagined Grand Challenge. The Program is managed by the TN Tech Center for Rural Innovation.

There are three funding levels to which you can apply. Only one proposal per applicant will be accepted across all funding levels.

### Level 1 - up to \$2,500

Funding Level 1 requires a two-page maximum narrative. See the Application Package for details.

### Level 2 - \$2,500-\$10,000

Funding Level 2 requires a four-page maximum narrative. See the Application Package for details.

### Level 3 - \$10,000-\$25,000

Funding Level 3 requires a six-page maximum narrative. See the Application Package for details.

## Timeline

The period of performance for the Program is January 1, 2023 – June 1, 2023. All funds must be expensed by June 1, 2023. This is the period during which the PI is expected to complete the project and to incur



and expend all approved funds. A proposal that requests to extend a project's budget beyond June 1, 2023, will not be accepted. Please note that funds will not carry over beyond the project period approved. Any unused funds after June 1 of the project year will be forfeited. However, it is our hope that the Program will catalyze continued scholarly activity beyond the period of performance.

1. Projects can be funded once for a period of January – June 2023.
2. No indirect costs (IDC) should be budgeted.

### Allowable Costs

The following categories of expenses fall within the definitions of basic and applied research and other creative scholarly work, including the necessary dissemination of information, and thus are eligible for funding.

A. Release time. Assistance in the form of release time/reduced teaching load will apply only to the regular academic year and will not exceed one course. Requests for release time will be at the same rate as departmental adjunct faculty.

B. Student Salaries. It is highly advised that proposals include requests to fund (undergraduate or graduate) student(s) to assist faculty in the design and implementation of the work.

C. Travel. Travel should be primarily within Tennessee. The committee will not consider travel outside the United States. The committee will consider travel to bordering state counties if it proves to be substantially beneficial for the project.

- Travel is ONLY permitted when it is necessary for the overall support and success of the project.
- Travel is limited to faculty members ONLY.
- Allowable travel costs include employee mileage, lodging, per diem, etc. and will be considered in relation to the overall scope of the project budget.

D. Supplies and Operating Expenses. Funds for special supplies, dissemination/publishing costs, laboratory assistance, data processing, etc. are allowable. This includes costs to conduct descriptive or normative surveys, i.e., the compilation of data through questionnaires or similar methods and the analysis of the data.

E. Allowable publication and dissemination costs include:

- Payment of the minimum amount for publication in peer reviewed, quality scholarly journals, short articles, or abstracts of articles related to research supported by the faculty research grant program.
- Cost of the minimum number of reprints of articles related to research supported by the faculty research grant program, if required as a part of the publication agreement.
- Costs of University Printing Services to publish handbooks and similar works related to research supported by the faculty research grant program when the document is of broad interest and when support of such publication cannot be arranged through an outside agency.
- The making of recordings when such is an essential part of the proposed research.



F. Equipment. Special purpose equipment with a total acquisition cost of \$5,000 or greater, used for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities are **not allowable**.

**Application Process:** Competitive.

### Investigator Requirements

Applicants must meet the following requirements to be eligible for an award under this program:

The PI and Co-PIs must be eligible to be an investigator at Tennessee Tech University.

- All full-time faculty are eligible to apply.
- Non-tenure-track faculty are eligible to apply if (a) their Agreement on Responsibilities (AOR) includes a research component, AND (b) the project includes a tenured or tenure-track faculty member as PI or Co-PI.
- Staff and administrative employee who conduct research or routinely engage rural communities as part of their responsibilities.

Proposals will not be considered if any of the following conditions are satisfied:

1. Proposals that do not show deliverables (demonstrable outcomes appropriate to the discipline).
2. Proposals requesting extra or summer compensation.
3. Proposals requesting equipment purchases.

#### Notes:

A. If a faculty member is awarded an Program grant for a given year but is not able to accept it that year, the award is forfeited. The faculty member may resubmit the proposal for consideration in a subsequent year's award competition.

B. The Grand Challenge Committee members may submit a proposal but will not review their own proposals. They must excuse themselves from a portion of the meeting if their own proposals are under discussion. Although their proposals may or may not be funded, they may continue to serve their term on the committee.

### Proposal Submission and Evaluation

When writing a proposal, it is important to remember to “target the audience.” The members of the Grand Challenge Committee are the audience, as they will evaluate the proposals and decide which are eligible and which will receive funding. Although the committee members are knowledgeable about research, they are not usually experts in the specialized area of research in the proposal. They are an educated, intelligent, “lay” audience.

The application package will be routed electronically for signatures via DocuSign. Prior to starting the DocuSign routing process, the PI should complete the **Application Package - Rural Reimagined Faculty Grant 10-20-22** document.



## Application Procedures

The committee will issue a call for proposals each year and announce a deadline for the submission of proposals. **PROPOSALS RECEIVED AFTER THE DEADLINE WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.**

- A. Completed proposals must be endorsed by the PI's, all key personnel's department chair, and the dean of their respective college/school (or designated representative). By endorsing the proposal, chairs and deans specifically agree to adhere to the budget requirements including faculty release time and to cover the cost of overages if the PI overspends.
- B. Fully endorsed proposals and supporting documentation are due no later than 4:30 p.m. on the deadline date.
- C. The Center for Rural Innovation Director will distribute proposals to the Internal Grant Program Committee for evaluation after the deadline date.
- D. The Internal Rural Reimagined Grant Program Committee will evaluate the proposed projects utilizing an approach similar to federal funding agencies.
- E. The committee chairperson will forward the committee's recommendations to the Director of the Center for Rural Innovation. Once approved, the Center for Rural Innovation will notify the applicant, departmental chairperson, and dean.

## Criteria Used to Evaluate Research Proposals

Proposals will be evaluated based on the project description and justification of need, intellectual merit, plan of action, PI qualifications, dissemination plan, and reasonableness of the budget.

- A. Applicants must be knowledgeable and experienced in the proposed research area.
- B. The research project must promise transformative contributions to knowledge in the field of work in rural communities of Tennessee.
- C. The project must not duplicate research already accomplished by others but may represent extensions of such earlier research.
- D. Funds cannot be used to assist faculty in completing the requirements for any degree.
- E. Funds cannot be used to assist faculty in equipment purchases.
- F. In reviewing proposals, the Committee will carefully look for the following:
  - Evidence of plans that have been thoughtfully and carefully worked out;
  - Involvement of students (undergraduate or graduate)
  - Clear definition of the objective(s) and an outline of steps, methods, and procedures leading to the accomplishment of the objective(s)
  - Thoughtful estimates of required time frames and anticipated needs;
  - If public schools or other outside agencies/entities are involved, letters of agreement from appropriate persons will need to be included in the form of an appendix. Appendices will not count against narrative page limits;
  - Statements relative to the possibility of publication of the results; and
  - Adherence to the guidelines.



## Rating System and Priority Requirements for Internal Grant Program Proposals (Rubric)

When evaluating proposals, Committee members rate each eligible proposal in the following five areas. The maximum number of points that can be awarded in each area is indicated in parentheses. To rank eligible proposals, the totals of all evaluators' ratings are averaged. Any evaluator perceiving a conflict of interest relative to any proposal will not submit a rating of that proposal.

### 1. Description of Project (15%)

- A clear statement of the problem or activity is contained in the proposal.
- There is adequate justification for the project.
- There is an adequate review of the literature or other evidence to support the need for the project.
- There are adequate and appropriate references.

### 2. Significance/Merit/Impact to Rural (40%)

- The project is of significance and clearly demonstrates intellectual merit and broader impact in its respective field and rural Tennessee.
- The ways in which project will further extend the mission and vision of Rural Reimagined.

### 3. Plan of Action (25%)

- An effective plan of management is in place that ensures proper and efficient administration of the project.
- The step-by-step plan will ensure that the objectives are met.
- There are adequate measures to ensure compliance with human subjects.
- The plan of action is adequate as applied to such factors as data gathering and analysis.
- An established budget for the project is adequate to support the activities.
- Costs included within the budget are reasonable and appropriate in relation to the objectives.
- An explanation of how your project plans to involve TN Tech students.

### 4. Personnel Qualifications of Investigator (10%):

- The PI is qualified to conduct the project.
- Co-PIs and other personnel (if applicable) are appropriate and adequate.

### 5. Dissemination of Results (10%)

- The dissemination plan is adequate and appropriate. There are possibilities for publication – including identification of target outlets and how work will contribute to the respective field.

## Priority Requirements

Priority/ Eligibility will be given to proposals that have one or more of the following elements in all tracks.

- Demonstrates potentiality for significant contributions to knowledge in the field of work in rural communities of Tennessee.
- Extensively involves graduate or undergraduate students in ways that enhance their education and post-graduate or professional opportunities.



- Projects that promote collaborative and research-based experiential teaching and learning for undergraduate, graduate, and professional students, particularly those that can develop into initiatives that can attract external support, are also of interest.
- Cost sharing is not required.
- A faculty member may only be the PI on one project per funding round.
- Provide support to interdisciplinary or other multi-faculty collaborations where at least one faculty member is from another department/unit.
- Involve collaborative partnerships with business, industry, and non-profit entities that have strong probabilities of leading to future federal, state, or other external funding sources and further rural impact outcomes.

## Funding of Approved Projects

Funds should be expended in a timely manner. No extensions beyond June 1<sup>st</sup> are allowable. In addition, delays in making expenditures may lead to the loss of funds with the expiration of the grant program on June 1st.

### Procedures

A. Human Subjects and Animal Care: If human subjects or laboratory animals are involved, the Committee's approval of the award is contingent upon the applicant's obtaining appropriate clearance from the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) or the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).

B. When a research proposal has received final approval, the Center for Rural Innovation Director will notify Grant Accounting of the recipient's name, department, and a copy of the itemized budget.

C. Release Time: In cases involving release time, Grant Accounting will transfer the portion of the recipient's salary from the faculty research account into the appropriate departmental account. The department must submit a properly completed "Request for Revision in Budget" form transferring funds from the faculty member's position line to the appropriate account code from which the funds will be expended.

D. Other Expenses: If funds for student salaries, supplies, travel, and/or supplies are involved, Grant Accounting will assign an account number to the project and establish the account. **The department secretary in the PI's department will be assigned as the bookkeeper on the account.** Grant Accounting will email the FOAPAL information to the PI and Bookkeeper once the account is activated in January. Expenditures shall be made in accordance with University policies and procedures. Standard requisition forms shall be used and forwarded through the regular department and college/school offices for approval.

E. Budget Revisions: Re-budgeting within 10 percent of the total project budget is permitted so long as the amount of funds budgeted for student salaries is not reduced. Any requests for budget revisions where the total cumulative amount of changes exceed 10 percent of the total budget, and/or the amount of funds budgeted for student salaries would be reduced, will require prior written approval by the Center for Rural Innovation Director.





F. Overages: Project budgets are only approved for the amount funded in the award letter. Overspending is not permitted for any reason. **If expenditures are in excess of the approved amount, the PI's department or college will be required to fully fund the cost of those overages.**

### Project

Recipients of research assistance are required to provide the committee with final reports relative to their projects as well as special reports if requested. These reports are necessary so that the committee may constantly assess the progress of both individual projects and the overall research program. The Final Report Form should be submitted to the Center for Rural Innovation no later than June 1<sup>st</sup>, **WHETHER OR NOT THE RESEARCH HAS BEEN COMPLETED**. The report should summarize the results of the entire project, and in cases where a project was not completed on time, a revised report should be submitted when the project has been completed. Recipients are encouraged to make special progress reports at any time if they encounter unanticipated difficulties and delays in their projects. They are also encouraged to consult the committee in such cases.

### Publications

Many faculty research projects result in publications of one type or another, or in papers presented at scholarly meetings. Such publications and papers provide one of the most significant measures of the overall success of the research program. The Final Report Form has spaces for listing these points of evidence of the successful conclusions of the project. It is understood that some articles and papers will not have been published and/or presented by the time the final report is prepared. Once available, the committee should be furnished a copy of the reprint of each article resulting from internal research projects. In submitting articles for publications, recipients of the Internal Grant Program assistance should identify themselves with Tennessee Technological University.

### Patents and Copyrights

The provisions of Tennessee Tech Policy 732 – Intellectual Property – shall govern the interests of the researcher and the University in all inventions, discoveries, or copyrightable materials resulting from a faculty research award. Information and assistance are available in the Office of Research.

### Review Committee

The Director of the Center for Rural Innovation serves as the Executive Officer of the committee. Committee members will not review applications to which they are connected by any academic, professional, or personal means. They must excuse themselves from a portion of the meeting if their own proposals or any associated proposals are under discussion. The committee meets at least twice each semester of the academic year to oversee the evaluation of research proposals as well as consider progress reports and the general status of faculty research supported by the grant program.

**Submission Information:** Once the budget summary and proposal narrative are completed, [submit the document via DocuSign here](#).

For questions or more information, contact Michael Aikens, Director - Center for Rural Innovation, at [maikens@tntech.edu](mailto:maikens@tntech.edu).



