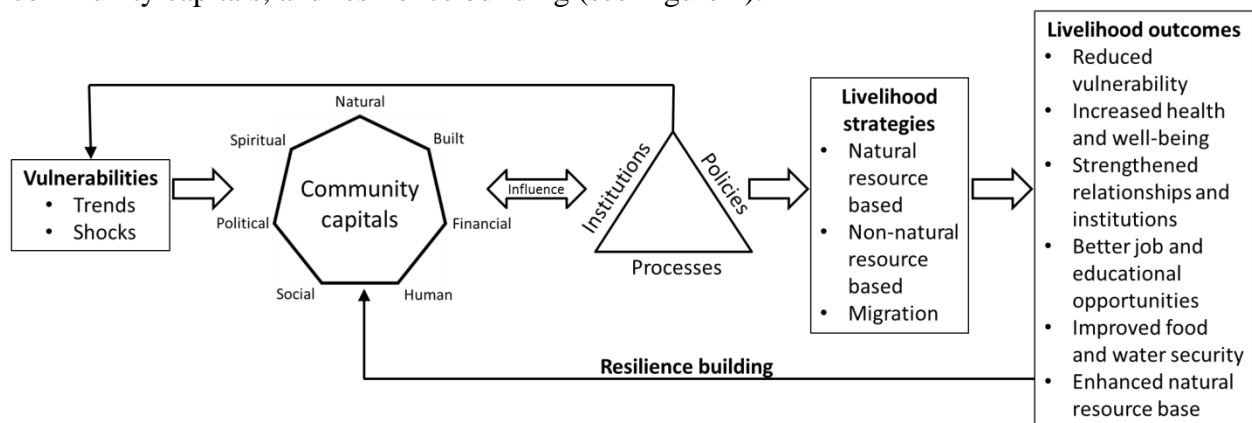**Tier 1 Rural Renewal Initiative**

Oklahoma State University

Request for Seed Grant Proposals

Synopsis: OSU faculty members are invited to apply for a research seed grant through the Tier 1 Rural Renewal Initiative. The proposed research project may include up to $100,000 in total direct costs and should have a duration of 2 years. One-page *pre-proposals* and supporting documents should be sent to ruralrenewal@okstate.edu by 5:00 p.m. CDT, ***February 1, 2022***.

Background and purpose: The mission of the Rural Renewal Initiative is to catalyze the renewal of rural communities and places in Oklahoma and beyond through interdisciplinary research, student mobilization, and community engagement. We aim to work with faculty, students, and rural communities to discover effective ways to enhance natural, human, and technological capitals, which reduce vulnerabilities and build resilience. This seed grant program is designed to generate a highly interdisciplinary research portfolio designed for exponential growth through external funding. A key feature of these efforts will be participatory research, driven by priorities and questions generated jointly by the community and the researchers. Past seed grants have supported: exploration of new ways to provide internet service to remote rural areas; piloting of innovative telemedicine approaches in rural communities that lack hospital access; development and evaluation of training programs to help rural youth develop leadership and critical thinking skills; and investigation of ways to develop political capital and policy response capacity in rural communities. This seed grant program aims to catalyze a broad spectrum of research recognizing the complex and "wicked" nature of rural problems that must be organized, interpreted, and communicated using a robust conceptual framework for rural communities as coupled human and natural systems, uniting existing models for vulnerability, community capitals, and resilience building (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Rural communities experience vulnerabilities from both gradual trends and sudden shocks, the impacts of which are mediated through diverse, interacting forms of community capital. These capitals influence and are influenced by institutions, policies, and processes at local, state, national, and global levels. In this context, rural citizens choose livelihood strategies in hopes of achieving desirable livelihood outcomes, which create the possibility of resilience building through reinvestment in community capitals. Such reinvestment stimulates renewal and spiraling up.

Details: This competitive seed grant program is open to all OSU faculty members and their collaborators. It will provide funds to initiate research in, with, or for rural communities in the initial focus counties for the Rural Renewal Initiative – Harmon and Tillman County, Oklahoma, or another rural community in which the proposing researcher(s) has strong working relationships. Priority will be given to research involving one or more non-metro Oklahoma counties facing multiple stressors including low education, low employment, persistent poverty, persistent child poverty, or population loss as classified by the 2015 USDA Economic Research Service County Typology Codes (link). We expect to award one or two seed grants for research projects of 2-years duration and up to $100,000 total direct costs. Projects should start August 1, 2022, and end on July 30, 2024. This seed grant program is intended to stimulate community-engaged and place-based research by creating opportunities to engage communities in refining research questions and opportunities to build new community-academic partnerships. These seed grants are also designed to attract new researchers from all career stages into rural renewal research and to provide training opportunities for students and postdocs. Researchers awarded a seed grant are eligible to apply for a subsequent seed grant only if they provide proof of one or more external funding proposals submitted that leveraged the prior seed grant funds.

Pre-proposal guidelines:

1. The one-page pre-proposal narrative should be written for the general public, not for researchers. It must be in 12-pt Times New Roman font with one-inch margins and should include the following:
   a. Project title
   b. List of team members and affiliations
   c. Problem statement, research question(s), objectives, methods, and expected contribution to rural renewal
   d. The pre-proposal must specify and justify the anticipated focus community or communities for the research. *Community here means a particular area or place and all its inhabitants.*
   e. A list of references is not required and not allowed for the pre-proposal.
2. Include a two-page NSF-style biosketch for each team member. The pre-proposal narrative and biosketches should all be compiled into one pdf file.

Pre-proposal review process: Pre-proposals will be reviewed by rural community members and other stakeholders, who will also have the opportunity to provide suggestions to improve the relevance of the research to rural communities and suggestions of potential partners. A subset of the top ranked proposals will be invited to develop full proposals, which will be due *May 3, 2022*.

Full proposal guidelines:

1. Include the project's title and list of team members and their affiliations.
2. Include a one paragraph project summary written for the general public.
3. Include a problem statement, research question(s), objectives, expected contribution to rural renewal, methods, and role of each team member.
4. Specify and justify the focus (place-based) community or communities for the research.
5. Describe partnerships (or plans for developing such partnerships) with individuals and/or organizations in the communities that will be the focus of the research.
6. Provide a clear project evaluation and communication plan with appropriate resources allocated to these efforts.
7. Provide a plan for leveraging the seed grant to pursue external funding.
8. Proposal narrative including items 1-7 above must be five pages or less and written in 12-pt Times New Roman font with one-inch margins. Proposal narrative must be submitted as a Word document. A list of references is required and is not included in the page count.
9. Include a budget spreadsheet based on the standard template for the PI's academic unit. Include a detailed budget justification. Do not include indirect costs.
10. Include a two-page NSF-style biosketch for each team member and relevant letters of commitment from partners in the focus communities. The budget justification, biosketches, and letters should all be compiled into one pdf file.

Full proposal review process: The Rural Renewal Initiative leadership team will coordinate peer reviews and ratings of the full proposals by external researchers. Projects supported by these seed grants must meaningfully engage rural partners in the design, execution, and communication of the proposed research. Proposals that include training opportunities for graduate students, postdocs, and early career researchers will be prioritized. Members of the leadership team will not contribute to the final proposal rankings and will be eligible to submit proposals or serve as team members on proposals. Questions may be directed to any member of the Rural Renewal Initiative leadership team or submitted to ruralrenewal@okstate.edu. To learn more about the Rural Renewal Initiative and past seed grants visit https://ruralrenewal.okstate.edu/.