# Brian Gardner

## Lecturer of Information Sciences and Technology
## Information Sciences and Technology (IST)

**Title of your research project.**

Addressing the Cybersecurity Issues and Needs of Rural Pennsylvania Nonprofit Organizations

**Description of research. Please provide a few sentences that explain the question and the methods employed in this research project.**

Our research team developed a cybersecurity assessment process to ascertain key needs and weaknesses with respect to cybersecurity for nonprofits in rural communities in Pennsylvania. Additionally, this grant-sponsored work-in-progress research aims to provide guidance to rural nonprofits with "best practices" and related content that can be easily implemented despite their limitations.

We developed a survey in Qualtrics that will be distributed to individuals working for rural non-profit organizations across Pennsylvania. We are building our list of non-profits from several sources including the Center for Rural PA, the taxexemptworld.com website, and the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) website. The survey questions cover eight key areas:

1) Internal vs. External IT services and resources
2) Website security
3) IT and Security budgeting
4) Current risk environment
5) Business continuity/disaster recovery plan
6) Physical security
7) Logical access control
8) Inventory.

**Did this project include Penn State students as researchers?**

Yes

**If yes to the above question, please state where it was published.**

Journal of the 26th Colloquium for Information Systems Security Education (CISSE), March 2023

**What problem do you address with your research?**

This project seeks to determine the current cybersecurity readiness of rural Pennsylvania non-profit organization. Previous work conducted in 2009 and 2020 focused on rural PA local governments and NPOs respectively identifying common needs and vulnerabilities that can be addressed through specific policy recommendations relayed to the PA legislature and PA government agencies. The findings indicated the unfulfilled cybersecurity needs of such agencies are substantial. Even larger non-profit organizations such as the United Way do not have the overall budgets to devote to proper cybersecurity software, hardware, policies, and employee training. Nonprofits do not have the funds to hire consultants or add employees to address cybersecurity issues.