Preface

This book was produced through a very unusual research process. Following the field network research strategy used elsewhere to track intergovernmental policy development, most of the authors were selected because their geographical location represented the states included in the original pilot effort. Only a few of the seven authors had worked together before the four-year research effort culminating in New Governance for Rural America.

It is not often that a group of seven senior researchers can put egos aside and write a book together! We were committed to practicing, not simply writing about, the art of collaborative work—the subject of our research. What started out as a group of individuals selected for the sake of convenience evolved into a cohesive collaborative team.

This transformation was achieved by means of two- to three-day meetings held twice a year, which provided us with the opportunity to work in a highly interactive fashion to develop detailed research designs, instruments, and formats for presenting data, and to share our findings and build comparisons. We worked hard, but also found time to socialize and explore restaurants (usually in Washington, D.C.). A set of warm personal relationships has resulted that we hope will lead to future collaborative work.