

# FY 19 20 Awards

## Grant Archives

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## An Extension Guidebook to Help Communities Plan for Drought Using Scenario Based Exercises

November 5, 2019

**Principal Investigator:** Deborah Bathke, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

**Co-Principal Investigators:** Peter Tomlinson, Kansas State University; Hans Schmitz, Purdue University; Tonya Bernadt, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

**Proposal Abstract:**

Droughts, with their prolonged absence of rain, can creep up on communities causing disastrous consequences to the economy, environment, and human health. Scenario-based exercises (e.g., workshops, tabletop exercises, and games) focused on drought offer an innovative way to bring people together to discuss drought planning and policy issues. Participants can collaborate with and learn from other community members, decision-makers, planners, and scientists. Rural communities, which often have limited fiscal resources and a lack of local government capacity may find these exercises especially beneficial as they create a framework for helping the community to draw up their unique resources, such as their self-reliant nature, strong sense of community, tightly connected family networks, and knowledge of and ties to natural resources, to build resilience to drought and increase sustainability. This project translates existing research on how drought scenario exercises have been used to help communities better prepare for drought into an interactive Extension Guide designed to help Extension specialists and others working in community development educate communities about drought and the importance of planning; illustrate the use of scenario exercises as an innovative way to engage community members in the planning process; provide guidance for selecting appropriate scenario exercises to help start the planning process; and explore case studies based on the experiences of other communities and organizations.

**Award:** \$24,671.00

## Homegrown: Entrepreneurship in your Community—An Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Curriculum

November 5, 2019

**Principal Investigator:** Tessa Conroy, University of Wisconsin-Madison

**Co-Principal Investigator:** Sarah A. Low, University of Missouri

**Proposal Abstract:**

Research and outreach on entrepreneurship in regional economic development indicates weak entrepreneurial networks in much of rural America. This problem is especially acute in regions that have traditionally relied on business attraction and retention as a rural economic development strategy, as have Wisconsin and Missouri. The proposed program aims to create a supportive network in rural areas, so that when entrepreneurs are considering starting a business they get supportive signals from key community leaders. The principal output from this grant will be the development and piloting of an Extension curriculum, “Homegrown: Entrepreneurship in your Community.” The proposed Extension program taps the new and rapidly growing body of research on entrepreneurial ecosystems and uses it to create a customizable curriculum that aims to grow entrepreneurial networks in rural areas, and consequently, foster rural economic development. A secondary output from this grant will be the development of a USDA NIFA AFRI integrated grant proposal to the “Innovation for Rural Entrepreneurs and Communities” program area, summer 2020. Our AFRI project will propose measuring entrepreneurial networks in rural communities and their impact on business ownership and performance. The policy question is whether there is a role for smaller communities to facilitate institutions that foster networking and social capital that enhance local entrepreneurship?

**Award:** \$16,570.00

## Retaining Rural Businesses by Transitioning to Cooperative Ownership

November 5, 2019

**Principal Investigator:** Michael Darger, University of Minnesota

**Co-Principal Investigators:** Courtney Berner, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Kevin Edberg

**Proposal Abstract:**

The UofM Extension and the UofWI Center for Cooperatives, along with Cooperative Development Services in St. Paul will design, deliver and evaluate a “road show” about converting businesses to employee ownership with audiences in rural areas. Converting businesses to employee ownership through worker-owned cooperatives is a new approach to retaining businesses when owners retire. At least it’s new in terms of acceptance and application in the economic development field. It has gained traction on the East and West coasts, however adoption has been slower in the North Central region. For businesses with <100 employees, converting to a worker owned cooperative is potentially a pathway for business succession. However, outside of co-op circles few are aware of this method nor have considered it as a viable option for retaining businesses. In Minnesota and Wisconsin there are ~27,000 retiring business owners potentially interested in this research. Additionally, this project builds on new federal legislation and rules, including the availability of USDA Business and Industry Loan Guarantees for cooperatives, and the Main Street Employee Ownership Act.

This project will create insights and greater understanding of needs/barriers relative to supporting rural business-to-cooperative transitions in the North Central region. Leveraging the knowledge and experience developed by project partners and practitioners in other regions, the project team will create, pilot test, and evaluate methods. The goals include 1. creating basic awareness about converting businesses to employee ownership, 2. gaining its acceptance as a viable option and 3. spurring adoption of cooperative conversions as a succession strategy.

**Award:** \$25,000

## Support Our Stores (SOS): Initiating Multi-State Response to Rural Grocery Store Crisis

November 5, 2019

**Principal Investigator:** Kathy Draeger, University of Minnesota

**Co-Principal Investigators:** Jody Bruns, North Dakota State University; Ren Olive, University of Minnesota

**Proposal Abstract:**

Rural grocery stores, those located in communities with a population of 2,500 or less, are closing at unprecedented rates, the impact of which is being felt throughout rural communities nationwide. These closures are often permanent and new owners and stores are not replacing those that are shuttered.

The impact of these closures results in limited access to a full range of healthy grocery items, decreased Main Street businesses, reduced community assets and vitality. This project seeks to identify, recruit, and orient Extension research and outreach to supporting the remaining grocery stores, piloting this in MN and ND. The goal of this project, Support Our Stores (SOS): Initiating Multi-State Response to Rural Grocery Store Crisis, is to develop a grant proposal to increase land-grant university capacity to help stem the epidemic of rural grocery store closings in Minnesota and North Dakota, and to provide a framework for other regions to address a similar problem.

This planning project will harness multi-state insight, experience, and expertise through the collaboration of the University of Minnesota (UMN) Extension and the North Dakota State University (NDSU) Extension services. The "SOS" planning team will: 1) conduct a Situation Assessment and identify available resources, 2) use project planning meetings with ND and MN to define goals and objectives, and, 3) complete a full grant proposal and budget.

**Award:** \$25,000

## Updating Marketing Hometown America Curriculum and Expanding to Additional States

November 5, 2019

**Principal Investigator:** Cheryl Burkhart-Kriesel, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

**Co-Principal Investigator:** Neil Linscheid, University of Minnesota; Peggy Schlechter, South Dakota State University; Jodi Burns, North Dakota State University; Abbie Gaffey, Iowa State University

**Proposal Abstract:**

This proposal seeks \$13,500 to update the award-winning “Marketing Hometown America” curriculum which is a community engagement process using study circles and action planning to help communities market themselves to new residents and businesses. This project will create a suite of resources to help local Extension staff initiate the program, recruit participants, and successfully conduct the program in their communities. The funds will be used for travel expenses to bring two Extension staff people from each of the five participating states to South Dakota State University for a two-day, facilitated innovation process in April of 2020. The refreshed curriculum will better address issues such as diversity and inclusion and better guidance on how to implement community priorities and projects to achieve their economic development and leadership goals. The revised curriculum will also incorporate the field research gained from the first 52 communities to have completed this program with the scholarly research the program has thus far generated. This proposal also seeks the seed funding needed for an initial large print run of the new materials. The costs for the printing will be recovered through a nominal charge per booklet which will then pay for the on-going costs of reprinting materials. This keeps the cost of providing the program affordable for the small communities targeted by this program.

**Award:** \$13,500.00

## Combating a Crisis: Exploring Community Responses to Opioids

November 5, 2019

**Principal Investigator:** John Leatherman, Kansas State University

**Co-Principal Investigators:** Bonnie Bressers, Kansas State University; Jami Dellifield, Ohio State University

**Proposal Abstract:**

In 2017, more than 70,000 drug overdose deaths occurred in the United States. Opioids are the main driver of drug overdose deaths, leading the federal government to declare a nationwide Public Health Emergency. Most federal assistance is targeted to states, while at the community level – where consequences of the epidemic are acute – local leaders, healthcare providers, and law enforcement are left to formulate a response. A tenet of this project is that the epidemic is too great a problem for any single local entity to handle. Rather, it requires collaboration of a coalition of local entities to reduce the incidence of opioid abuse. There is evidence such coalitions are forming and initiating remedial local efforts, but little is known about the extent to which this is occurring, the scope of coalition activities, or the progress of their efforts.

This project proposes a pilot study comparing Ohio, where the opioid problem is acute, to Kansas, where opioids are less problematic. We propose surveying mental health professionals to learn about community-based initiatives, the range of activities undertaken, and the extent of success or failure. We hypothesize we will find hopeful indications that local coalitions are forming and making progress in response to the opioid crisis. This information would be compelling toward securing additional resources to scale the effort to the national level with the goal of offering communities a viable strategy to combat opioids and best practices to effectively respond to the ravages of the epidemic.

**Award:** \$20,330.00

## Local Policymaker Perceptions of the Opioid Crisis and the Efficacy of Extension Communications

November 5, 2019

**Principal Investigator:** Daniel Bergan, Michigan State University

**Co-Principal Investigator:** Hillary Shulman, Ohio State University

**Proposal Abstract:**

How accurate are local policymaker perceptions of the opiate epidemic in their communities? What types of evidence are most useful to local policymakers in making judgments about the severity of the opiate epidemic and the effectiveness of local policies meant to address opiate abuse? We plan to measure local policymaker perceptions and attitudes about the opiate epidemic in their communities, comparing policymaker responses to objective data about the local impacts of the opiate epidemic. We also plan to explore the impact of evidence about the opioid crisis on policymaker perceptions of the prevalence of opioid-related problems in their community, perceived importance of the issue, and support for potential policy solutions. To answer these questions, we will use a unique field experimental design and an online survey of local policymakers in Michigan and Ohio. We will randomly assign policymakers to receive policy-relevant evidence, including locally tailored data on how the opiate epidemic affects their community, as well as reviews of the academic literature on opiate policy as well as narrative evidence about the success or failures of a variety of local opiate-related policies in jurisdictions across the Midwest. We will follow-up with an online survey of policymaker perceptions and attitudes about substance abuse policy.

**Award:** \$20,500.00



## Reducing Rural Young Adult Health Disparities through an Adaptive Mobile Relationship Intervention

November 5, 2019

**Principal Investigator:** James Kale Monk, University of Missouri

**Co-Principal Investigators:** Amber Venum, Kansas State University; Elaine Johannes, Kansas State University

**Proposal Abstract:**

Due to the impact of intimate relationship quality and stability on mental and physical health, child outcomes, and the economy, the government instituted policy initiatives promoting healthy marriage through relationship education (RE). Many scholars recommend implementing RE with young adults given that early relationship dynamics while dating strongly predict later marital and health outcomes as individuals begin to focus on long-term committed unions during this key developmental period. Current RE initiatives are impaired by both limited resources to implement face-to-face classes, especially in rural areas, and the need for more adaptable, personalized content dissemination. The rapid development of mobile technologies provides opportunities for gathering information and delivering health interventions in real-time in rural areas. Indeed, 65% of rural Americans own smartphones and many young adults use their smartphones to seek health information and relationship advice online. Unfortunately, the information available online is often anecdotal and maladaptive. Thus, along with the assistance of an interdisciplinary team of scholars, clinicians, educators, and software engineers (i.e., “Relevate”), we seek to respond to these limitations by providing a relationship-specific, individually tailored platform (i.e., “MyRelevate”) to share evidence-based curricula and content with the public. In order to equip Extension professionals with the tools needed to help rural young adults make healthy relationship and well-being decisions, we are requesting \$24,690 in financial support to finalize the development of the platform, create additional content, train Extension professionals in how to use MyRelevate, and support future grant submissions.

**Award:** \$24,690.00