



NORTH CENTRAL REGIONAL CENTER
FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

NCRCRD FY 21-22 Grants Awarded

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Resilient Couples, Resilient Communities: Enhancing family and community well-being through sustainable, evidence-based programming for couples in the North Central Region

Principal Investigator: Allen Barton, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Co-Principal Investigator: Anthony Santiago, Extension Specialist, Iowa State University

Proposal Abstract: Strong and resilient couple relationships are integral to building strong and resilient communities. Unfortunately, maintaining such a relationship is a trying endeavor for many couples, including those living in rural areas. If not addressed, chronic relationship distress negatively affects the health and well-being of individuals, their families, and the rural communities in which they reside. To address this concern, the current proposal will disseminate a leading, evidence-based relationship education program to rural couples in the North Central Region (NCR). Building upon the success of this project in Illinois, the aims of the current proposal are to: (a) disseminate the program to rural couples throughout the NCR, (b) evaluate the effects of program participation, and (c) train Extension professionals in other NCR states in program implementation. The outcomes of this project are expected to advance the mission of NCRCRD and improve the well-being of rural NCR families and their communities.

Awarded: \$39,957 / North Central Region Small Grants / March 15, 2022

Enhancing Cost Estimates of Rural Child Care in Indiana

Principal Investigator: Jennifer Finders, Purdue University

Co-Principal Investigator: Sara Schmitt, Purdue University

Investigators: George Rickus, Advisor and Consultant; Tanya Hall, Purdue University Extension Community Development

Proposal Abstract: Child care subsidies assist families with low incomes in paying for child care. The equal access principal asserts that families using subsidies should have comparable options to families who are not eligible for subsidies. Almost all states face challenges meeting this benchmark because they typically reimburse child care providers based on the prices they charge instead of what it costs to operate their programs. This is particularly problematic in rural communities where there exists a shortage of child care overall. Thus, it is important to ensure the methodology behind reimbursement rates captures actual costs in rural markets to incentivize programs to accept subsidies and increase options for families. The proposed project will support the enhancement of a tool developed to estimate the costs of providing child care in Indiana. Findings will generate knowledge about the costs of high-quality programming in rural communities and may inform future reimbursement rate setting.

Awarded: \$39,953 / North Central Region Small Grants / March 15, 2022

Supporting Rural Resilience Through the Rural Grocery Specialist Certificate

Principal Investigator: Rial Carver, Kansas State University

Co-Principal Investigator: Debra Hagenmaier and Erica Blair, Kansas State University

Proposal Abstract: Independent businesses, particularly grocery stores, are critical for rural communities to flourish. However, many business owners across the country are nearing retirement. Proactively planning for business transition is crucial to keeping businesses operational, even after the owner moves on.

This topic is especially relevant in rural communities, where the closure of a single business can dramatically impact the local economy and quality of life. Without a business transition plan, rural grocery stores abruptly close, and communities lose out.

In 2021, the Rural Grocery Initiative launched programming to support successful rural grocery business transitions. This work revealed a clear and extensive need for more technical assistance from skilled professionals. In response, the Rural Grocery Initiative will develop a Rural Grocery Specialist certificate program to train extension professionals, economic developers and other rural stakeholders in business transition planning fundamentals so that they may promote long-term economic resilience in their communities.

Awarded: \$39,800 / North Central Region Small Grants / March 15, 2022

Translational Research in Rural Economic Development and Health Psychology: Sleep and cardiovascular health in a meatpacking community during COVID-19

Principal Investigator: Dr. Katherine Duggan, North Dakota State University

Co-Principal Investigator: Dr. Thomas Krudel, North Dakota State University

Project Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic and the corresponding economic downturn have worsened labor market constraints and rigidities that existed before the pandemic. These gaps are especially pronounced among under-represented minority workers, who faced high employment-related risks at the onset of the pandemic and also have high barriers to labor force reentry. Through surveys and ambulatory health biomarker data collection in a rural Minnesota community (home to a large meatpacking plant that experienced a significant COVID-19 outbreak), we will bridge the social and biophysical sciences and foster rural development by documenting labor market barriers (as a social determinant of health) in a meatpacking community by exploring associated sleep and cardiovascular health disparities. Our focus is on meatpacking because of the well-documented difficult working conditions at the onset of the pandemic. The industry also relies disproportionately on immigrants and refugee workers, making it an ideal case study for examining these impacts in under-represented individuals.

Awarded: \$40,000 / North Central Region Small Grants / March 15, 2022

Gathering with Extension Professionals from Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Tribal Colleges and Universities in the North Central Region to Seek Understanding and Create Collaborative Partnerships in Aging

Principal Investigator: James S. Bates, Ph.D., Ohio State University

Co-Investigators:

Chelsey Byers, MA, University of Illinois

Jeong Eun Lee, Ph.D., Iowa State University

Kristin Miller, MS, University of Missouri

Proposal Abstract: There are 34 land-grant colleges and universities in the twelve North Central Region states. Twelve are designated “1862” land-grants because they were inaugurated with the Morrill Act of 1862, two are historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), or “1890” land-grants established by the 1890 Morrill Act, and the remaining 20 are tribal colleges and universities (TCUs), also known as “1994” land-grants because of the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994. The North Central Region Aging Network (NCRAN), founded in 2016, is a collaborative of Extension professionals from the 1862 land-grants dedicated to improving the health and well-being of adults in later life through science-based strategies. NCRAN members will use the funds requested to host a conference gathering with Extension/university representatives from the other 22 land-grant colleges and universities to discuss ways we can work together to *promote community health and wellness in aging*.

Award: \$25,000 / North Central Region Small Grants / March 15, 2022