

FY 18 19 Awards

Grant Archives

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Food Access and Independent Grocers: Strengthening Food Security in Underserved Communities

November 15, 2018

PI: Gary Taylor, Iowa State University

Co-PIs: Lisa Bates and Jon Wolseth, Iowa State University; David Procter, Kansas State University; and Greg Schweser, University of Minnesota

Award: \$22,012

Project Abstract:

Compile existing land grant university resources that support independently-owned groceries as sites of food security, social centers, and economic opportunity in the rural Heartland by bringing together three partners (Iowa State University, Kansas State University, and University of Minnesota) to review our existing resources and efforts, identify gaps where development of additional resources are needed, and begin the discussion on creating a joint curriculum for working with independently-owned groceries that could be shared throughout the North Central region.

STEPping UP: Social-Emotional Learning for Rural Middle School Youth

November 15, 2018

PI: Amber Letcher, South Dakota State University

Co-PIs: Kristine Ramsay-Seaner, South Dakota State University and Meagan Scott, North Dakota State University

Award: \$21,765

Project Abstract:

Youth suicide rates continue to rise throughout the United States, particularly in rural areas such as South Dakota and North Dakota. South Dakota has the 14th highest suicide rate in the country, with two counties ranking in the top 1% for suicide rates nationally (South Dakota Department of Health, 2017). North Dakota presents similar statistics with an upward trend in high school students who have considered, planned, or attempted suicide over the past decade (North Dakota Department of Human Services, 2016). Research indicates that the majority of diagnosable mental illnesses start before age 14 (Kessler et al., 2005) suggesting an increased urgency in providing prevention programs that help youth, specifically, learn the skills needed to combat these suicidal thoughts.

Successful programming related to suicide awareness often targets social and emotional learning (SEL) which involves enhancing skills in emotion regulation, perspective-taking, decision-making, empathy, and self-awareness (CASEL, 2013). The current study aims to enhance SEL among middle school youth in rural North and South Dakota. Extension educators in both states will be trained in the Step Up curriculum, an evidence-based program targeting the development of SEL. Extension educators will implement the program with youth from their state (n = 100 per state) in a treatment versus waitlist control design. Results from treatment versus control youth will be compared to identify any significant differences in SEL and mood among the youth.

The Impact of Volunteers on Sustainable Rural Community Development

November 15, 2018

PI: SoJung Lee, Iowa State University

Co-PIs: Linda Niehm, Iowa State University; Jichul Jang, Kansas State University; and MiRan Kim, Michigan State University

Award: \$25,000

Project Abstract:

A rural festival can be an important contributor to a community's resource base and a means of sustainable community development. Effective festival operation and management are also essential to a successful event. Many rural festivals rely heavily on volunteers to remain viable. However, there is limited understanding regarding the role of volunteers in rural community events and their impact on civic life and local leadership development. The primary purpose of this research is to identify the role and impact of festival volunteers on sustainable rural community development using a community capitals perspective. For this study, a research model will be developed and tested to 1) identify how volunteers influence community sustainability through a set of input variables, including: motivation, attachment, ownership, loyalty, leadership, engagement, and community support, 2) examine if volunteers' demographics and festivals' profiles moderate the impact of volunteers on a rural community, and 3) create a foundational assessment tool to be used for a festival volunteer training toolkit. Twelve rural festivals in Iowa, Michigan, and Kansas will be selected for the proposed study. Surveys will be distributed to festival volunteers between fall 2018 and summer 2019. Findings will portray the current opportunities and challenges of managing volunteers in rural festivals and provide a feasible and practicable perspective for developing a volunteer training program and related toolkit. Results will offer preliminary data for a larger external grant (e.g., USDA Rural Community Development Initiative Grants) to develop a sustainable volunteer training program to for rural festival organizers and community stakeholders.

Tribal Nations Lead! Leadership Development in the Great Lakes Region (TNLL)

November 15, 2018

PI: Emily Proctor, Michigan State University

Co-PIs: Brian Gauthier, Lac du Flambeau Tribal UWEX; Ellen J. Geisler, Annie Jones, and Cathy Techtmann (University of Wisconsin); Bethany Prykucki and Eric Walcott (Michigan State University); and John C. Young, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

Award: \$23,158

Project Abstract:

The North Central Region is home to 56 federally recognized Tribes, 23 of those reside in Michigan and Wisconsin, each with a unique system of governance. Based on federal trust responsibilities the Cooperative Extension services in Michigan and Wisconsin have a responsibility to build relationships and partnerships with the tribal communities that we serve. Community development has been the responsibility of local governments, planners and politicians. But in many communities, there is a deep desire for more grass roots involvement in the development of current and future leaders. It is essential for Tribes to develop successional leadership plans within their communities in order to address emerging cultural, economic, and social issues. While there are Cooperative Extension leadership development programs, there is a lack of training that integrates indigenous teachings with western leadership concepts to promote culturally relevant leadership in tribal communities. Likewise, there are important leadership lessons to be learned from Tribal cultures that can be shared to strengthen non-tribal leadership development programs across the region.

Expanding the Intelligent Community Extension Program

November 15, 2018

PI: Roberto Gallardo, Purdue University

Co-PIs: Charlotte Narjes and Connie Hancock, University of Nebraska

Award: \$24,988

Proposal Abstract:

With the socioeconomic landscape changing due to the disruptions brought forth by the digital age, rural communities need to transition to a digital mindset in order to adapt and prosper and avoid being on the wrong side of the digital divide. Extension can play a more active role in helping rural communities achieving this mindset transition and reducing the rural digital divide by facilitating and implementing the Intelligent Community Extension Program (ICEP). ICEP is a pilot program first developed in Mississippi but currently being piloted in Indiana and Nebraska rural communities. ICEP is community driven and utilizes the community development self-help approach and the Intelligent Community framework to help rural communities transition to, plan for, and prosper in the digital age. The ICEP is a process that consists of awareness, asset mapping, implementing & documenting, and recognition. Extension personnel and resources play a critical role in this process.

This project will help fine-tune the pilot ICEP by providing seed funding for communities to implement some Intelligent Community recommendations. Next, the ICEP will be fine-tuned by documenting and identifying funding patterns aside from interacting with four communities across two states. Once the pilot ICEP is fine-tuned, up to 10 Extension personnel will be trained throughout the NCRCRD region to expand this program. In the end, more communities that are rural will adapt and prosper in the digital age and Extension will demonstrate its relevance in addressing 21st century issues.

Integrating and Sustaining Financial Capability Services in Rural Healthcare Delivery

November 15, 2018

PI: J. Michael Collins, University of Wisconsin

Co-PIs: D. Elizabeth Kiss, Kansas State University; Suzanne Bartholomae, Iowa State University; and Carrie Johnson, North Dakota State University

Award: \$24,897

Proposal Abstract:

Extension educators in several states in the North Central region have been delving into the links between health and household finances. Although financial capability support services are available in many rural communities, financial education, coaching, and related programs are not well integrated into health systems. At the same time, a growing body of research shows that financial strain undermines people's ability to follow-through on medical treatments, ultimately harming their health. This project bridges the domains of household finance and health through 1) a needs assessment documenting rural healthcare providers' perspectives on screening patients for financial difficulties and integrating financial capability supports into health services and 2) exploring the potential of sustaining these services through insurance reimbursement. Healthcare's fee-for-service payment model has restricted the integration of social services, such as financial education, into the delivery system; however, financial hardship recently gained a medical diagnosis code (ICD-10-Z59.9), creating interest in reimbursement for financial education. Challenges to service integration loom especially large in rural areas, where the average patient-to-primary care physician ratio of only 40 physicians per 100,000 people, compared to 53 physicians per 100,000 in urban areas. Thus, rural healthcare providers have even less capacity to conduct financial screenings or make referrals. This project will draw on healthcare professionals' perspectives to develop recommendations for tools, resources, partnership strategies, and programs that support financial capability service integration into rural health systems.