

# Grant Archives

## **Multi-State Rural Development Research or Extension Projects**

*The North Central Regional Center for Rural Development (NCRCRD) at Michigan State University announces a competition for seed grants aimed at enhancing the ability of Land Grant institutions to positively influence the quality of life in rural areas of the North Central region of the United States. Click on the FY titles at the below to navigate to project details awarded in prior years.*

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# FY 18 19 Awards

# 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 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.

# **FY 17 18 Awards**

# North Central Region Aging Network Toolkit Development

December 7, 2017

The Family and Consumer Science program leaders within the North Central Region have challenged specialists and educators to begin working together to add breadth and consistency to our programming and evaluation efforts.

**PI:** Erin Yelland, Kansas State University

**Co-PIs:** Suzanne Bartholomae (Iowa State University), James Bates (The Ohio State University), Barbara Beaulieu (Purdue University), Jacquelyn Benson (University of Missouri), Leacey Brown (South Dakota State University), Chelsey Byers Gerstenecker (University of Illinois), Linda Cronk (Michigan State University), Kristin Litzelman (University of Wisconsin), Jane Strommen (North Dakota State University), and Marlene Stum (University of Minnesota)

**Award:** \$24,655

**Project Abstract:** The Family and Consumer Science program leaders within the North Central Region have challenged specialists and educators to begin working together to add breadth and consistency to our programming and evaluation efforts. The North Central Region Aging Network (NCRAN) has responded to that call by bringing together a cohort of gerontologists and aging-related Extension professionals that are interested in enhancing and increasing knowledge on various aging-related topics across the NCR. NCRAN's forefront mission is to prepare our Extension systems to adequately address an aging population. As a means to begin building this capacity, we have identified the need for a website and a toolkit of high quality, aging-related Extension programs to which all twelve states within the region will have access.

## Diversifying with Lavender: Resources, Training, Networks for Commercial Lavender Producers

December 7, 2017

The process of agricultural restructuring in the United States has been strongly influenced both by demographic trends (U.S. Census of Agriculture, 2014) and market liberalization (Bowler et al, 1996).

**PI:** Wynne Wright (Michigan State University)

**Co-PIs:** Megan Kennelly (Kansas State University); Dennis Hamilton (US Lavender Growers Assoc); Joy Landis and Erin Lizotte (Michigan State University)

**Award:** \$21,686

**Project Abstract:** The process of agricultural restructuring in the United States has been strongly influenced both by demographic trends (U.S. Census of Agriculture, 2014) and market liberalization (Bowler et al, 1996). A host of beginning farmers are searching for new farming practices, while existing farmers are searching for innovative entrepreneurial pathways to increase farm profitability (Anosike and Coughenour, 1990; Barbieri and Mahoney, 2009; Evans and Ilbery, 1993; Gasson, 1998; Marsden et al., 1992; McElwee, 2006; Vogel, 2012). Currently, over 20% of all U.S. farms are operated by beginning farmers (under 10 years in farming) (Ahearn, 2016) – a population who are likely to come from non-farm backgrounds (Shute, 2011). Both experienced producers and beginning farmers encounter high transaction costs in their pursuit of diversification (Delgado and Siamwalla, 1997). The consequences emerging from this change present opportunities for farm diversification that lends itself to broader structural shifts in agriculture while at the same time serving new consumers looking for new markets and innovative forms of recreation/leisure (Atkins and Bowler, 2016; Wright and Annes, 2014). The primary goal of this project is to facilitate farm diversification and build opportunities for beginning and entrepreneurial farmers by establishing an instructional curriculum in commercial lavender production.

## Quality, affordable child care as economic development in rural communities

December 7, 2017

This collaborative effort between KSU and UNL reflects the commitment to explore the availability of quality, affordable child care as a rural community economic and human development strategy.

**PI:** Bradford Wiles (Kansas State University)

**Co-PIs:** Holly Hatton-Bowers (University of Nebraska-Lincoln); Erin Tynon (Kansas State University)

**Award:** \$25,000

**Project Abstract:** This collaborative effort between Kansas State University (KSU) and the University of Nebraska, Lincoln (UNL) reflects the commitment to explore the availability of quality, affordable child care as a rural community economic and human development strategy.

## Examining HSI and EHSI Potential for Latino Community Development

December 7, 2017

**PI:** Rene Rosenbaum (Michigan State University)

**Co-PI:** Stephen Jeanetta (University of Missouri)

**Award:** \$24,995

**Project Abstract:** Hispanic demographic change has resulted in large numbers of Latinos in higher education, with the majority (60%) enrolled at Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), where student enrollment is 25 percent or more Hispanic. Federal funding of HSIs the last 20 years has helped their number to nearly double. This project examines the North Central Region's 18 HSIs and 25 Emerging Hispanic Service Institutions (EHSIs), where Latinos make up between 12 and 24 percent of enrollment, to map their strengths and explore the possibility of working jointly with LGU personnel on Latino community development projects.

# Starting and Managing Community Supported Enterprises

December 7, 2017

**PI:** David Ivan (Michigan State University)

**Co-PI:** Norman Walzer (Northern Illinois University)

**Award:** \$25,000

**Project Abstract:** Community Supported Enterprises (CSE) are used increasingly in communities interested in retaining or expanding local businesses. With the increased use of Crowdfunding, the CSE approach is an important tool but economic development groups often do not have the insights or expertise to effectively start or sustain a CSE. This project builds on previous research describing and documenting CSEs and will research other CSEs in different scenarios to identify key elements in successes.

# Current Thinking in Rural Economic Growth and Development

December 7, 2017

**PI:** Steven C. Deller (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

**Co-PIs:** Rebekka Martin Dudensing (Texas A&M University), Becca B.R. Jablonski (Colorado State University), Mike Woods (Oklahoma State University-Stillwater), David Chicoine, (South Dakota State University)

**Award:** \$20,000

**Project Abstract:** The Great Recession hit rural America particularly hard and many rural communities have yet to fully recover. The policy options at the federal, state and local are complex and require serious reconsideration. This project aims to bring together a team of rural development scholars to identify and summarize the current state of the rural economy, and provide a range of potential strategies. Rural America continues to lag behind urban America across several key economic metrics.

Too often our public policy discussions present overly broad and simplistic ideas, such as reducing taxes to attract better jobs. Given the perceived 'failure' of rural development policy across the U.S., the time is ripe for a fresh look and new ideas to support rural America. This effort, tracking a wide range of rural development issues, is an attempt to uncover strategies across a range of topic areas that will improve rural communities and economies.

# Rural Mental Health: Understanding Stress and Depression in Farmers and Ranchers

December 7, 2017

**PI:** Andrea Bjornestad (South Dakota State University)

**Co-PIs:** Courtney Cuthbertson and Suzanne Pish (Michigan State University), Karen Funkenbusch (University of Missouri), Charlotte Shoup Olson (Kansas State University), Leacey Brown (South Dakota State University)

**Award:** \$25,000

**Project Abstract:** Farming is a stressful career where finances can be impacted by external factors such as government regulations, weather, natural disasters, and market prices. With the risk of injury and exposure to chemicals combined with family pressures and long hours, farmers and ranchers may have a higher risk of developing mental health illnesses such as depression. The purpose of the proposed project is to develop and distribute a survey to farmers to determine the impact of stress on depression and suicide risk in farmers and ranchers. The results of the study will increase knowledge of mental health risks and behaviors of farmers and ranchers in the North Central region and will help inform future research and program development in the Land Grant University Cooperative Extension System.

## Leading Change in a Global World

December 7, 2017

**PI:** Holli Arp (University of Minnesota)

**Co-PI:** Kari O'Neill (South Dakota State University)

**Award:** \$25,000

**Project Abstract:** Community Development staffs from University of Minnesota Extension and South Dakota State University Extension will come together over the period of a year to identify and share resources that will generate high quality and research informed programming that supports equity and diversity. Each state will invite and engage at least two partnering organizations from each state that represent rural minority communities. Their involvement will inform, support, critique and co-create elements of the resulting programs.

# FY 16 17 Awards

# Addressing Mine-Scarred land in the Upper Mississippi River Mining District

April 27, 2017

**PI:** Geoffrey Siemering (University of Wisconsin)

**Co-PIs:** Kevin McSweeney (University of Illinois) and Troy Maggied (SW Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission)

**Awarded:** \$15,591

**Project Abstract:** The Upper Mississippi River Valley zinc-lead mining district comprises an area of approximately 4000 square miles covering southwestern Wisconsin, the northwest corner of Illinois and a small sliver of Iowa along the west bank of the Mississippi River. Over the past almost 200 years it is estimated that there have been over 1500 lead and zinc mining operations in the region. While most mining operations ceased by the early 1950s, their environmental legacies remain. These mines impacted the environment through disturbance at the site, ore smelting operations, and ore tailings disposal. Mine operation and decommissioning regulations during this time period were negligible to non-existent. These mines and mining materials continue to impact both the small towns and agricultural lands in this area. State and county agricultural extension specialists are frequently called upon to help area farmers deal with fields (clearly mine-impacted) where corn and soybean crops, "just don't grow well." In towns, it is not uncommon for mine shafts to extend underneath housing and for sinkholes to open up as the shaft supports collapse. Mine wastes may also compromise the safety of food for human consumption and animal feed due to elevated contaminant levels in plant tissue.

## Workforce Issues: Collaborating to Build Extension's Capacity

April 27, 2017

**PI:** Kenneth Sherin (South Dakota State University)

**Co-PI:** Cheryl Burkhart-Kriesel (University of Nebraska)

**Awarded:** \$8,571

**Project Abstract:** Globalization has laid the foundation for an increasing skills gap in the US labor market. Communities, regardless of their size and location, have to compete for skilled workers. Attracting and retaining talent, both in the foundational STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) areas as well as in vocational skills, is a subject of increasing concern. This has not gone unnoticed by Extension. Several states in the North Central region have been working on specific workforce issues within their state but there has been limited conversation about how these resources could be pooled or what gaps exist. Multi-state collaborations in this area offer obvious efficiencies and yet untapped opportunities for effectiveness. This project proposes to: 1) initiate a regional Extension dialogue on possible methods to support the development of local workforce skills at the community level; 2) start to identify and inventory key current workforce development resources, primarily within Extension and this region and possibly within other regions; 3) identify gaps, primarily programmatic but possibly in research, that would help communities better address workforce skill issues; 4) modify, if needed, possible resources for multi-state use and consider ways to make resources available in a “one-stop shop”; and 5) disseminate what the project learns and compiles through a 2017 pre-conference workshop at NACDEP.

# Using Agent Based Modelling to Understand and Enhance Rural Tourism Industry Collaboration

April 27, 2017

**PI:** Sarah Nicholls (Michigan State University)

**Co-PIs:** Jonathan Day (Purdue University), Bonnie Zoia (Michigan State University)

**Awarded:** \$12,276

**Project Abstract:** Unlike traditional primary and secondary sectors such as forestry, fishing and manufacturing, tourism is diverse and fragmented, made up of a diverse assortment of public, private and non-profit agencies and entities that operate under a range of missions and mandates, and at a variety of geographic scales. As such, tourism is a classic though often not recognized example of a complex system. The tourism industry is also plagued by a general lack of collaboration, cooperation and partnerships, especially in rural areas. The funds requested would be used as seed monies to assist in the development of a proposal to be submitted to the National Science Foundation that would explore and demonstrate the use of agent based modelling in the understanding and enhancement of tourism industry collaboration in a rural context. The use of ABM will allow industry actors' behaviors, and the interactions between them, to be visualized and assessed. Resulting outcomes will enable researchers and practitioners to identify, understand and replicate the drivers of collaboration, as well as the settings in which collaboration is most likely to flourish.

# Farmer to Non-Farmer: The Role of Farmer Identity on Conservation

April 27, 2017

**PI:** Eric Toman (Ohio State University)

**CO-PI:** J. Arbuckle (Iowa State University)

**Awarded:** \$20,309

**Project Abstract:** The need exists to better understand the full population of landowners, and the factors that influence their behaviors, to balance agriculture production and maintenance of ecosystem quality and services. To date, limited research has examined how a farmer occupational identity influences land management decisions in the U.S. Occupational identity has the potential to provide a filter to help determine the factors that influence best management practice (BMP) adoption among different segments of the rural population. Utilizing postal surveys to rural landowners, we expect findings from the proposed research to help inform how to tailor programs that seek to advance adoption of BMPs. In addition, findings will advance theoretical understanding by providing further testing of a measure of occupational identity among rural landowners and its first quantitative assessment among U.S. landowners. As calls for increased efficiency and effectiveness from federal and state agencies to address environmental concerns escalates, there is a critical need for a closer examination of the relationship between non-operator landowners, with varying farmer occupational identities, and the tenant farmers in relation to barriers and incentives that exist to adopt BMPs.

# Community Entrepreneurial Development Project

March 17, 2017

**PI:** Francis Gublo (Michigan State University)

**Co-PIs:** Narjes, C. and Hancock, C. (University of Nebraska), and Hayes, A. (Michigan State University)

**Awarded:** \$12,000

**Project Abstract:** Creating entrepreneurial communities encompasses many elements from community knowledge and mindset to tools and resources to help entrepreneurs grow their endeavor. It has been well documented that helping entrepreneurs is a cost effective way for rural communities to grow and sustain their economy. Although there is no “template” to implement a successful program we feel that Extension faculty can learn and improve educational offerings by sharing best practices.

Michigan State University Extension “Creating Entrepreneurial Communities” (CEC) Team, will partner with the Nebraska “Extension Entrepreneurial Community Activation Process” Team to learn from each other and share best practices which will improve both program offerings and provide educational webinars to others in the North Central Region.

# Refining Rural Food Deserts by Transportation Networks

February 23, 2017

**PI:** Kim, H.J. and Newmark, G. (Kansas State University)

**Collaborators:** Procter, D. and Knopp Daniels, N. (Kansas State University), Muske, G. (North Dakota State University), Capouch, L. (North Dakota Assoc. of Rural Electric Cooperatives)

**Award:** \$24,803

**Project Abstract:** A critical concern for the sustainability of rural communities is access to food. Food access promotes the health of rural residents as well as the stability of rural areas. These concerns are particularly pressing for weaker social groups with limited means to travel, such as older adults, disabled persons, and low-income households. Effective public policy to enhance rural food access needs to be based on a rigorous understanding of the actual travel and activity behaviors of rural residents. To date, these patterns have been unexplored with the result that policymaking continues to rely on simple, distance-based models of food deserts imported from urban environments – models which may not translate fully to the very different rural context where longer, chained-trips are common. This research seeks to explore the food access patterns of rural residents to better inform public policy. Specifically, this study aims (a) to reframe rural food access within the context of rural travel behavior that considers the distribution of food outlets using a GIS-based spatial network model; and (b) to understand rural food access barriers and disparities. This study will examine the grocery-related travel of rural residents in the twelve-state NCRCD region, with additional focus on communities in Kansas and North Dakota, by combining the highly-detailed, geocoded information on trip and activity behavior from the National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) with a full GIS mapping of food outlet location data. This quantitative work will be complemented by focus groups conducted through community extension programs in Kansas and North Dakota.

# Food Council Development in Rural Communities: A Toolkit for Extension Educators

January 19, 2017

**PI:** Kendra Wills (Michigan State University)

**Co-PI:** Jodee Ellett (Purdue University)

**Award:** \$11,000

**Project Abstract:** The rural Midwest is scattered with small towns affected by poverty, hunger and a lack of community services and events. Local food efforts have begun to address some of these issues in rural communities. New farmers markets create greater access to healthier foods. Young food and farming entrepreneurs build the economic base and enhance quality of life. Extension often takes a leadership role in small/rural communities and the diversity of demands on an Educator can be broad. Agricultural and food issues can be complex and controversial in some communities and the need for Extension to have a facilitative leadership role is increasing. We seek to enhance this new role for Extension by creating and piloting a food council development curriculum that will guide our new and seasoned Educators in a six-month process with an engaged group of community members and leaders. This peer-reviewed guidebook will have information relevant to local food and food council development, areas of further study for the convening group and meeting outlines for the six-month development process. We will pilot this guidebook in two rural communities (Michigan and Indiana) and revise accordingly. Evaluation of this guidebook will come from the pilot community groups in the project. We will survey the group at the onset and after completion of the pilot to determine efficacy and impact.

# **FY 15 16 Awards**

## Building Leadership to Address Latino Educational Underachievement in the Midwest

November 23, 2015

**PI:** Martinez, R. (Michigan State University)

**Co-PI:** Greder, K. (Iowa State University)

**Award:** \$5,000

**Project Abstract:** Education is a long-time major concern among Latinos. This interstate project will involve partners from Michigan, Iowa and North Carolina in building leadership in Lansing and Southeast Michigan to address the problem of educational underachievement among Latinos. The project will train 20 educational leaders in the components and delivery of *Juntos para una Mejor Educación* (Juntos), a program with success in promoting educational achievement among Latino participants in North Carolina, Oregon, Iowa and other states. Leadership development through use of the Juntos program will promote the establishment of local community, university and school district partnerships. It will also strengthen the capacity of MSU Extension to engage community organizations and school districts in addressing the problem of Latino educational underachievement. The Juntos program will serve as the mechanism by which participants learn about the educational challenges within local Latino communities and about opportunities for partnerships in implementing the program. Program participants will design and pilot a Juntos program tailored to the local Latino community and context. It will build a community of practice in mid- and southeast Michigan that promotes Juntos in addressing Latino educational underachievement. Lessons learned from this project will inform the development of educational leadership in Missouri and Kansas the following year. The aim is develop locally designed Juntos programs in states across the North Central Region.

# Family Business Contributions to Sustainable and Entrepreneurial Rural Communities over Time

November 23, 2015

**PI:** Niehm, L. (Iowa State University)

**Co-PIs:** Muske, G. and Fitzgerald, M. (North Dakota State University)

**Award:** \$25,000

**Project Abstract:** The specific purpose of this project is to enhance understanding of the entrepreneurial efforts of rural family businesses and the factors that contribute to the sustainability of their businesses and communities over time. Adding a fourth wave of data collection to the National Family Business Panel (NFBP) will allow us to assess change over a nearly 20 year period to better understand how family businesses survive, thrive, or fail during recessionary periods. The requested funding would allow us to garner a unique understanding of family businesses by also adding a qualitative dimension to our previously collected quantitative waves of data (1997, 2000 & 2007). We will glean an in-depth understanding of entrepreneurial strategies used by family businesses and how they foster sustainability in rural communities, particularly during recessionary periods. This will be achieved through a mixed-method design and will position us to pursue a larger federal grant to continue our work and inform Extension efforts in both Iowa and North Dakota. These findings will also benefit other states in the north central region, particularly those participating in the NC 1030 Family Business Research Group (FBRG), for which we are members. The proposed project will position the research team of Niehm, Muske and Fitzgerald, as well as the NC 1030 FBRG, to forge new relationships and partnerships and extend our work, for example, with the Nebraska Rural Futures Institute. Such partnerships could extend the application and impact of our research findings and create synergies for new grant proposals and research collaborations.

# Successful Disaster Recovery Using the Community Capitals Framework

November 23, 2015

**PI:** Goreham, G. (North Dakota State University)

**Co-PIs:** Klenow, D., and Koch, B. (North Dakota State University), Redlin, M. (South Dakota State University), Bathke, D., Mueller, A., and Wall, N. (University of Nebraska), Mantonya, K. (Heartland Center), Paul, B.K. (Kansas State University), Naile, T. and Gill, D. (Oklahoma State University)

**Award:** \$24,976

**Project Abstract:** The community capitals framework (CCF) can be a powerful tool to help communities successfully recover from natural disasters. This project develops useable CCF methods/materials for community leaders and officials to inventory their communities' assets that can be leveraged for disaster recovery. A team of research and Extension faculty from landgrant universities in five Midwestern states will meet to develop these methods/materials. The multidisciplinary team includes backgrounds in climatology, community development, education, emergency management, geography, journalism, and sociology. The methods/materials will be tested in case studies of three communities that have experienced a tornado (Nebraska), flood (North Dakota/Minnesota), or drought (Kansas). Although the research literature includes disaster recovery cases studies, very few case studies have been conducted using the CCF. The three case studies will use a mixed methods approach involving data from secondary, documentary, interview, observational, and photographic sources. A metaanalysis will be conducted on the three case studies to determine best disaster recovery practices based on the CCF. The case studies and meta-analysis will serve three functions. First, a report applicable to emergency management Extension educators will be written to describe how community leaders and officials can build an inventory of their communities' assets to be leveraged if and when they need to recover from a natural disaster. Second, the case studies and meta-analysis will serve as a pilot as the team applies for subsequent research grant funding from federal sources. And third, the findings will serve as the basis for subsequent implementation grant funding from regional sources.

# Cultivating Successful Wine and Cider-Making Enterprises in the NC Region

November 23, 2015

**PI:** Miller, M. (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

**Co-PIs:** Cochran, D. (Iowa State University) and Steele, J. (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

**Award:** \$10,000

**Project Abstract:** Burgeoning wine and cider industries in the North Central Region offer significant opportunities for farmers, entrepreneurs and rural communities. They can capture market share, draw in recreational traffic to other local businesses, and incentivize sustainable farming practices by connecting consumers to the land. For these industries to continue to grow and thrive, producers will need ample educational support that is reinforced with evidence-based research. For states where the concentration of producers is significant but not yet sufficient to justify a large and comprehensive program, it makes sense for land grant universities to collaborate. The goal of this project is to identify a framework for educational support that meets the needs of growers and producers of wine and cider through a collaborative process involving the University of Wisconsin Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, the Iowa State University Department of Horticulture and the University of Wisconsin Department of Food Science. Specifically, we intend to develop a strong proposal for a National Institute of Food and Agriculture Beginning Farmer and Rancher Grant that will enable us to implement the framework that we identify. In addition to drafting the grant, the primary activities funded through the project will include a preliminary brainstorming session, a producer survey and needs assessment, and a grant-planning workshop so that we garner input and invite relevant stakeholders to take part in the grant-planning process.

# Identifying Economically Resilient Small City Downtowns

November 23, 2015

**PI:** Kennedy, Z. (University of Illinois)

**Co-PIs:** Haines, A. (University of Wisconsin) and Schwartau, B. (University of Minnesota)

**Award:** \$6,000

**Project Abstract:** This project will help community economic development educators in the North Central Region provide local economic development and business leaders with information to support their improvement of the health, vitality and resiliency of their downtown districts. Building upon previous work, including a literature review of successful downtown indicators, this project will create a website featuring a searchable database (with perhaps 250 community entries) of successful downtowns enabling users to identify “peer comparison” communities. The idea being that a community can gain insight and learn from the successes of other similar communities. The website will feature best practices related to: creating entrepreneurial communities, planning & zoning, business development and redevelopment, data driven decision-making, and developing partnerships with the private sector.

# Local Government Fiscal Stress and Innovative Response Strategies

November 23, 2015

**PI:** Das, B. (Iowa State University)

**Co-PIs:** Leatherman, J. (Kansas State University), Stallman, J. (University of Missouri), Maher, C. (University of Nebraska), Skidmore, M. and Scorsone, E. (Michigan State University) and Bressers, B. (Miller School of Journalism)

**Award:** \$20,353

**Project Abstract:** Local governments provide vital public services affecting individual quality of life and creating economic opportunity. But, the task of maintaining local public services is becoming more challenging. With reduced levels of support from higher levels of government, local governments will have to find solutions to tackle budgetary challenges at the local level. Although we are slowly recovering from the recent “Great Recession,” the rise of public sentiment antithetical to taxation and government expenditure is overwhelming many states. Further, many state policies exacerbate local fiscal conditions. As local governments adjust to the ‘new normal,’ innovative response strategies are being employed to maintain local government services. These ‘innovations’ offer a glimpse into what the future potentially holds for local governments.

The goal of this study is to enhance county government fiscal management capacity within a context of general fiscal austerity. We propose an integrated research/Extension initiative to gain a better understanding of state-local intergovernmental fiscal relations and innovative county government response strategies. Conducting semi-structured interviews of state counties’ association Executive Directors. We will pay particular attention to implications for smaller rural counties and seek examples of innovative response strategies. We will develop two white papers. The first will report the current state of county government fiscal condition and include case studies of innovative response strategies for use by local elected and appointed officials, extension educators and other stakeholder groups. The second paper will offer a nuanced review of state policies that both exacerbate or alleviate local government fiscal stress.

# Exploring Programming Opportunities That Help Create Resilient Small City Downtowns

November 23, 2015

**PI:** Martin, K. (University of Wisconsin)

**Co-PIs:** Wise, G. & Ryan, B. (University of Wisconsin), Borich, T. (Iowa State University) and Pesch, R. (University of Minnesota)

**Award:** \$17,736

**Project Abstract:** Downtowns in many small cities and rural communities have struggled for decades with declining commercial activity. Retail choices have changed and there are fewer businesses and reasons to shop downtown. Downtowns have been bypassed and replaced by commercial development on the periphery of town. Businesses down the market is changing and the business acumen of owners and operators is too, the building and streetscapes are deteriorating, and fewer people are discovering our downtowns.

In *Downtown Success Indicators*, Edwards, et al identified ten scales that measure healthy downtowns, including housing, traffic generators, multi-functionality, and other attributes. This proposal offers a multi-attribute approach to building up these success indicators. This proposal will encourage multi-state collaboration to examine collaborative downtown revitalization programming opportunities. It addresses our community vitality challenge and specifically supports the entrepreneurial communities priority area.

We plan to bring together extension leaders and educators to understand current downtown revitalization programming, leading to discussions on how our states can leverage each other's strengths, and may lead to the development of a multi-state educational program. In the long term, this project's impact will be to positively influence economic conditions of downtowns and quality of life in rural areas of the North Central region.

# Innovative Practices for Community Supported Ventures

November 23, 2015

**PI:** Ivan, D. (Michigan State University)

**Co-PIs:** Wise, G. (University of Wisconsin) and Walzer, N. (Northern Illinois University)

**Award:** \$24,172

**Project Abstract:** Methods of financing local businesses have changed in recent years with an increased willingness of residents in small communities to invest in local business ventures with the expectation that some of their returns will be in the form of services from that business. These alternative financing methods are not well understood by local practitioners yet. This project will identify best practices, isolate key factors associated with success, and then seek additional support to prepare materials that Extension personnel and other outreach organizations can work to help practitioners implement successful practices in their communities.

# FY 14 15 Awards

# Tribal Community Development Projects in the Great Lakes Regions

October 14, 2014

**PI:** Proctor, E. (Michigan State University)

**Co-PIs:** Newman, D. (University of Minnesota) & Gauthier, B. (Lac Flambeau Tribal UW)

**Award:** \$20,000

**Project Abstract:** There are 35 federally recognize tribes in the states of Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The native population of these states is over 177,000. Based on federal trust responsibilities the Cooperative Extension services of all three states have a responsibility to build relationships and partnerships with the tribal communities that we serve. Community development has been the responsibility of planners and politicians. But in many communities there is a deep desire for more grass roots involvement in the community development process. How can Extension, do a better job in working with their Native communities and as concerned citizen's involve the population in a more meaningful and creative way? This initiative will provide three levels of training on community development; analysis, planning, and implementation. Along with an in-depth study on what Community Development is and isn't about.

# Facilitating Rural Development in the greater Great Lakes Region

October 14, 2014

**PI:** J. Robert Surrine (Michigan State University)

**Co-PIs:** Erin Lizotte & Diane Brown-Rytlewski (Michigan State University); Charlie Rohwer (University of Minnesota), Brad Bergefurd (Ohio State University); Carl Duley, Timothy Rehbein (University of Wisconsin); Grant McCarty (University of Illinois); Lori Hoagland (Purdue University); Steve Miller (Cornell University); Heather Darby (University of Vermont); Jeanine Davis (North Carolina State University); Evan Elford & Melanie Filotas (Ontario) and Julien Venne (Quebec)

**Awarded:** \$15,000

**Project Abstract:** The goal of this proposal is to bring together hop educators and researchers working in the Midwest and Canada under similar climatic conditions to convene a formal greater Great Lakes Region Hops Working Group (GLHWG). The GLHWG and key stakeholders will convene and participate in a facilitated needs assessment to identify areas where hop grower resources are needed and form expertise teams to address identified needs. Expertise teams will develop identified resources and make them available online to serve growers through a collaborative information repository to be determined during the needs assessment. Those needs that cannot be addressed with existing resources or expertise will be prioritized for collaborative research and grant efforts through the newly formed working group.

# A Gathering: Towards Tribal Rural Land and Resource Use Sustainability

October 14, 2014

**PI:** Jubin Cheruvelil (Michigan State University)

**Co-PIs:** Gordon Henry (Michigan State University) & Chris Caldwell (College of Menominee Nation)

**Awarded:** \$14,000

**Project Abstract:** Effective Ojibwe tribal land and resource use and management are crucial to the sustainable growth and development of Upper Great Lakes rural communities, especially given the rapid environmental and economic changes that are taking place. Tribal communities working together with land-grant institutions can make important contributions to both science and traditional practices of resource management and ecosystem services on treated and ceded lands. Therefore, we propose to plan and host a gathering of tribal peoples to assess and prioritize concerns regarding land and resources use across the region. Further, this grant will develop a research and outreach plan for sustainable land and resource use. The gathering will provide a basis for combined land and resource use research, management, education and outreach.

# Place-Based Leadership: Development of a Research Based Curriculum

October 14, 2014

**PI:** Deborah Tootle (Iowa State University)

**Co-PI:** Todd Johnson (University of Wisconsin)

Award: \$19,260

**Project Abstract:** The project will focus on the development of a research based curriculum on place-based leadership appropriate for extension educators to use in Iowa and Wisconsin communities. The project will encompass a literature review of place-based leadership, a review of existing leadership programs used by community development extension practitioners, identification of the core competencies for place-based leadership, critical assessment of the existing community leadership programs in both states and their impacts, identification of appropriate adult learning practices for program delivery, and development of a curriculum for place-based leadership. The curriculum will be modular in design so that it can be tailored specifically for the needs of the communities in which it will be used. The curriculum will incorporate principles of adult learning as well as both synchronous and asynchronous learning methods and multimedia content.

# FY 13 14 Awards

# Measuring the Impact of Extension's Web-Based Entrepreneurship Outreach

May 2, 2014

**PI:** Reimers-Hild, C. (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)

**Co-PIs:** Muske, G. (North Dakota State University) and Hancock, C. (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)

**Award:** \$19,957

**Project Abstract:** The world continues to evolve at an increasingly rapid pace, and Extension must continue to innovate in order to serve clientele in ways that best support them. This project aims to strengthen Extension's support of entrepreneurs while also determining "best practices" designed to reach business owners with information focused on helping them grow various aspects of their enterprises.

# Tribal Community Development Projects in the Great Lakes Regions

April 29, 2014

**PI:** Proctor, E. (Michigan State University)

**Co-PIs:** Newman (University of Minnesota), Gauthier, B. (University of Wisconsin)

Awarded: \$3,000

**Project Abstract:** There are 33 federally recognize tribes in the states of Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The native population of these states is over 177,000. Based on federal trust responsibilities the Cooperative Extension services of all three states have a responsibility to build relationships and partnerships with the tribal communities that we serve. Community development has been the responsibility of planners and politicians. But in many communities there is a deep desire for more grass roots involvement in the community development process. How can Extension, do a better job in working with their Native communities and as concerned citizen's involve the population in a more meaningful and creative way? This initiative will provide three levels of training on community development; analysis, planning, and implementation. Along with an in-depth study on what Community Development is and isn't about.

# Preparing Communities for Shale Development through Sustainable Planning

April 29, 2014

**PI:** Moss, M. (Ohio State University)

**Co-PIs:** Olson, D. (South Dakota State University), Bond, C., Romich, E. & Bowen-Ellzey (Ohio State University)

**Collaborator:** Tweeten, K. (North Dakota State University)

**Award:** \$19,522

**Project Abstract:** Rural communities throughout the North Central region are experiencing sudden negative and positive impacts as a result of the shale gas boom. The communities most affected by this wave of energy development are those who are resource rich and prone to the long-term economic fluctuations experienced by natural resource dependent economies. Shale development impacts upon these community's social structure through the influx of new, often temporary workers, challenging existing community dynamics and the ability of existing institutions such as schools and social services to meet increased needs. Economically the impacts include the growing demand for public and private goods and services as well as increasing tax revenues and large sums of money for individual landowners. Environmentally shale development impacts upon land use, agriculture, water, and air quality. Many of the long-range impacts are still being studied. Because shale development influences the social, economic and environmental aspects of each community, the approach to addressing these impacts should be from a perspective of sustainability.

We propose to create educational materials that can be used by local leaders to prepare for and mitigate the immediate impacts of shale development while taking advantage of revenue generation to build long-term community sustainability. Our team will analyze case studies, field research and best practices to develop a comprehensive classroom and web-based curriculum that will then be piloted and evaluated. This curriculum can be used by Extension Educators throughout the North Central Region to help their communities prepare for the impacts of shale development.

# Evaluating Impacts of Natural Resource Development

April 29, 2014

**PI:** Redlin, M. (South Dakota State University)

**Co-PIs:** Emery, M., Jacquet, J. & Kang, S. (South Dakota State University), Goreham, G. & Tweeten, K. (North Dakota State University)

**Award:** \$12,500

**Project Abstract:** New technologies in natural resource industries, most notably hydraulic fracturing (i.e.,fracking) but also turbine technologies, have rapidly expanded development of these resources in the North Central region. The impacts emerging from this development have social, economic, and environmental ramifications for both communities and states, and for adjoining states and communities. In response, multiple efforts through universities and extension, industry, non-government organizations and governments seek to address and define both benefits and detriments in these impacts. However, many of these efforts are fragmented, and knowledge gained within and across engaged entities (and within and across regions) is inadequately shared. To address this fragmentation, this proposal seeks to build on current research and extension/outreach partnerships by formalizing an interdisciplinary think tank group dedicated to research of social, economic and environmental sustainability issues and outcomes arising from rapid energy development. Current and proposed members include faculty and extension personnel from SDSU, NDSU, UND, U of WY, Cornell University, and Pennsylvania State University.

# Missouri-Illinois Step Up to Leadership Program Impact Evaluation

April 29, 2014

**PI:** Adams, J. (University of Missouri)

**Co-PIs:** Majee, W. (University of Missouri), Silvis, A. (University of Illinois) & Donahue, G. (Missouri Association for Community Action)

**Awarded:** \$19,150

**Project Abstract:** In the face of growing challenges in rural and inner city areas of America, policymakers, academics, and practitioners are increasingly advocating for a more homegrown approach that seeks to identify and build upon internal community assets, such as community leadership and entrepreneurship capacity. Through a mixed-method analysis of a community leadership program, this project will assess the impact of the Step Up to Leadership program on participants' leadership skills and how the skills strengthen community economic development. Step Up to Leadership is a University of Missouri Extension developed curriculum used in Missouri and Illinois. Data will be obtained from participant surveys, document review, and in-depth interviews with graduates of the program, facilitators and community members knowledgeable of the leadership program.

Our major goals are to demonstrate that (1) Step Up to Leadership has significant impact on the participants and their communities' socio-economic well-being; and (2) collaborative initiatives between states and organizations hold promise in producing sustainable rural development. Another goal of the project is to use the data to redesign the program to better meet the needs of communities and facilitate collaboration with others states.

# Elevating and Expanding the Traditional Business Retention & Expansion Program

April 29, 2014

**PI:** Bowen-Ellzey, N. (Ohio State University)

**Co-PIs:** Civittolo, D. (Ohio State University), Hutcheson, S. (Purdue University) and Ladjahasan N. (Iowa State University)

**Awarded:** \$18,500

**Project Abstract:** There is widespread recognition that active Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) programs promote business growth, job creation and healthier economies. BR&E was developed by George Morse in the mid-1980s, and the program has been executed in a multitude of communities throughout the nation. Land Grant Universities within the NCRCD region have led efforts to implement BR&E-related programs and an array of process methods and tools in multiple communities with varying levels of success.

BR&E has been a staple program since its development and a “Signature Program” since 2009 at The Ohio State University. The program contains a packaged curriculum, which includes three workshops, programmatic tools and templates and turn-key software to support a comprehensive BR&E program on a local or regional level. Website and marketing materials have been professionally developed to promote the program. To date, the program has served over 140 communities in 80 of Ohio’s 88 counties. The Ohio team is collaborating with Land Grant Universities in Iowa, Indiana, Minnesota and North Dakota, in addition to the Manufacturing Extension Partnerships, to remodel an older BR&E program by infusing components of complementary business development initiatives, impact analysis, and innovative technology. The revitalized, hybrid BR&E program will include an expanded bank of surveys and questions, updated process and evaluation tools, and development of a new web and mobile application for interactive use by local economic development practitioners. The program will be elevated and expanded for replication throughout the NC region to grow businesses that help grow local economies.

## Building community capacity through strategic planning

April 29, 2014

**PI:** Silvis, A. (University of Illinois)

**Co-PIs:** Nesbitt, B. (Ohio State University)

**Project Collaborators:** Brown, K. (University of Illinois), Davis, G. & Merkowitz, R. (Ohio State University)

**Award:** \$18,000

**Project Abstract:** As often happens with widespread implementation, strategic planning practices have become varied and diverse. In addition, little information exists related to evaluation procedures and data collection of the outcomes and impacts of strategic planning. Through a literature review and a survey of practices, this proposed project will examine a variety of questions.

Gaining insight into these questions can help inform an effort to build an assortment of educational materials and evaluation processes related to strategic planning. Once the educational programs and evaluation methods are shared and replicated, impacts throughout the North Central Region can be collected. The data gathered from across the region can be shared with partners, leaders and funders to create a more significant, powerful story about the potential of strategic planning, and perhaps further strengthen Extension's role in empowering communities and organizations.

# FY 12 13 Awards

# Shifting Intermediaries: Tracing the Land Grant Role in Water Management in Nebraska

August 8, 2012

**PI:** Gasteyer, S. (Michigan State University)

**Co-PIs:** Knutson, C., Schutz, A., and Wall, N. (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)

**Award:** 20,000

**Project Abstract:** This project will document how land grant agricultural research, extension system, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and other key actors influenced water supply and management from the 1920s to present in the arid Great Plains. We will use this knowledge to create a conceptual map of how local people access knowledge of technologies, practices, management systems, ideas and alternatives to current practice. We will use this conceptual model to clarify the role of land grant universities in fostering rural community resilience and sustainability in the context of increasing water scarcity. We will focus on the Republican River Basin in Nebraska, where irrigated and dry land farms produce corn, beans, and cattle, among other crops. Increasing recognition of water scarcity and water conflict has created restrictions on water withdrawals. Key stakeholders have identified new technologies, practices, and social systems as key to long term sustainable management of underground and surface water resources. Building on previous and ongoing research and outreach in the Basin, our project will use a multi-method approach to document where residents and decision makers in the Basin go for information, technologies, and practices. This knowledge will be used to identify new roles for land grant institutions in helping rural places in the arid Great Plains to address and respond to water scarcity.

## Assist Farmers in Rural MI & WI in Making Informed Decisions About On-farm Scale Anaerobic Digesters

August 8, 2012

**PI:** Gould, C. (Michigan State University)

**Co-PIs:** Haugen, V., Larson, B. and Rivin, J. (University of Wisconsin), Kirk, D. (Michigan State University)

**Award:** \$9,538

**Project Abstract:** The long term outcome of this project is to increase the economic prosperity of rural communities through renewable energy development. Achieving this goal requires some intermediate knowledge transfer steps. We propose to support knowledge transfer steps by pulling together all that is known about the economics of installing, operating and maintaining a small digester and assembling.

We will address the economic issues that were brought up at the 2011 small digester conference, while the USDA NCR SARE grant will focus on designing an anaerobic digester system that a 100-head dairy can afford. Case studies and article will summarize the results of the literature.

## Rural Social Media Champions: Development of Models of Diffusion & Best Business Practices

August 8, 2012

**PI:** Niehm, L. (Iowa State University)

**Co-PIs:** Frazier, B. (Western Michigan University) and Stoel, L. (The Ohio State University)

**Award:** \$18,427

**Project Abstract:** Social Media Champions are business owners who are actively and successfully using innovative social media techniques in their marketing and promotional efforts. It is posited that these champions may serve as exemplars for other rural community businesses and facilitate the diffusion of social media technologies for small rural businesses. Researchers will use qualitative research methods to collect data that will enable identification of innovative best practices in social media used by small, rural businesses, and profile characteristics of social media champions to better understand their role in diffusing social media use in rural communities. Researchers will conduct interviews with rural business owners in three mid-western states who are seen as leaders in social media use to promote their businesses. For this study, rural social media champions will be defined as: being among the first in their communities to use social media; using at least one form of social media (e.g. blogs, Facebook, Twitter) to promote their business; using social media for at least one year; and considered a leader related to business social media use in their community. Community climate and infrastructure that may facilitate or impede social media adoption for small community businesses will also be assessed. Following analysis of the data, researchers will develop a model of diffusion/adoption processes to identify factors that favor social media adoption by rural businesses. Case studies concerning best practices in social media by rural entrepreneurs will also be developed and disseminated through the national Extension website.

# Utility Scale Renewable Energy Development - Project Siting & Conflict Resolution

August 8, 2012

**PI:** Romich, E. (Ohio State University)

**Co PIs:** Beya, W. (Michigan State University) and Hall, P. (The Ohio State University)

**Award:** \$10,732

**Project Abstract:** Rural communities throughout the Midwest are struggling to determine if large-scale wind and solar projects are acceptable to local residents and to assess the potential community development impacts. Residents in communities targeted by renewable energy projects have many questions about related to the construction process, the environmental impacts, land use impacts, social impacts, and the economic impacts. Uncertainty and lack of information often leads to community conflict and various concerns raised at public hearings. Ongoing community conflict and resistance may prevent the expansion of utility scale renewable energy projects throughout the Midwest.

Engaging citizens in outreach and community education on utility scale renewable energy projects can diminish potential community conflicts, while providing community leaders with best practices to facilitate the project siting process.

## Are we Ready? Community Leadership in the Disaster Cycle

August 8, 2012

**PI:** Silvis, A (University of Illinois)

**Co PI:** Cain, S. (Purdue University)

**Collaborator:** Maltsberger, B. (University of Missouri)

**Award:** \$12,000

**Project Abstract:** This project will build on a curriculum currently under development at the University of Illinois, with input from University of Missouri and Purdue University Extension. Workshop participants will include the Community or County Emergency Management Director, local elected officials, emergency responders, faith community leaders, not-for-profit leaders, civic club leaders, health and education leaders, business leaders, etc. The objectives are to help community leaders:

- Identify and understand the four phases of the disaster cycle (preparedness, response, recovery, mitigation).
- Understand the role of leadership in each phase of the disaster cycle.
- Learn a process for identifying key local leaders, both formal and informal, who should be involved in each phase of the disaster cycle.
- Develop a foundation for community partnerships and processes to plan for and manage a disaster.

# FY 11 12 Awards

# Keeping Your Equine Business a Vibrant Part of Rural Communities

October 11, 2011

**PI:** Anderson, K. (University of Nebraska)

**Co-PIs:** Auwerda, P. (Iowa State University), Heyboer, G., Skelly, C., and Waite, K. (Michigan State University), and Martinson, K. (University of Minnesota)

**Award:** \$11,436

**Project Abstract:** The equine industry is a vital part of agriculture at a national, state and rural community level. There are over 1 million horses and 162,000 horse farms in the North Central region (NCR) (USDA 2007 Census of Agriculture). Over 70% of horse owners live in rural communities of 50,000 or less. Most equine related businesses (training, breeding, boarding, etc.) are rurally located and support larger located spectator aspects of the industry. Michigan State University, University of Minnesota, University of Nebraska, and Iowa State University will develop a equine business education program targeted for the NCR, but applicable nationwide. Each state will host a simultaneous Extension conference focusing on liability, business finance, marketing, and insurance for equine business owners.

# Heritage Tourism for the North Central Region

October 11, 2011

**PI:** Avery, J. (Michigan State University)

**Co-PIs:** Dickerson, L. and Mefford, C.(University of Missouri)

**Award:** \$15,685

**Project Abstract:** Heritage tourism encompasses elements of living culture, history, and natural history of place that communities value and steward for the future. These elements are specific to a community or region and can contribute to stability, growth and economic development. The role of heritage and culture is especially critical in rural settings. This proposal describes a process for developing a peer-reviewed, comprehensive Heritage Tourism Process Curriculum and practice for the North Central Region to assist in developing and implementing heritage tourism community and economic development strategies. Opportunities for networking across the region will be enhanced with the development of an eXtension Community of Practice. Outreach and presentations will be conducted to reach and inform strategic partners for their own work. Once curriculum is completed, training will be offered through self-sustaining webinars to Extension faculty and key partners throughout the North Central Region.

[Heritage Tourism for the NC Region Webinar Series](#)

## Helping nonmetro communities and underserved entrepreneurs grow together

October 11, 2011

**PI:** Borich, T. (Iowa State University)

**Co-PI:** Mykerezi, E. (University of Minnesota)

**Award:** \$16,500

**Project Abstract:** The immigrant population of nonmetro communities in the North Central region has grown rapidly in the past 25 years. Entrepreneurs within these communities appear to lack strong social and business ties to their new communities' traditional sources of business finance and business technical assistance and are thus termed underserved. Similarly, banks, nonprofit technical assistance providers, and other intermediaries may be unaware of the economic potential of these entrepreneurs or not understand how to reach them and serve them effectively. To address these barriers, we will prepare a white paper assessing, in at least four North Central states, the financing and technical assistance needs of underserved entrepreneurs and the barriers separating them from providers of these services. The assessment will use existing data and new information from surveys and roundtable discussions, and we will present its findings via webinar. Based on the assessment, we will prepare a proposal for major funding to develop, pilot, assess and revise, and ultimately implement new curricula for Extension agents to use in working with underserved entrepreneurs, financial institutions, and technical assistance providers in nonmetro communities. We will focus our initial assessment on Latino entrepreneurs. However, the additional funding will also support new curriculum development for other North Central communities of underserved entrepreneurs.

# Evaluating Impacts of Community Leadership Programs

October 11, 2011

**PI:** Emery, M. (South Dakota State University)

**Co-PIs:** Chazdon, S. (University of Minnesota) and Otto, D. (Iowa State University)

**Award:** \$19,473

**Project Abstract:** Investigate the link between community leadership programming and individual benefits to subsequent increases in community capacity, including economic development. Common definitions of community capacity include indicators related to: decision making, inclusion, communications, expanded economies, reduced distress in livelihoods, etc. We propose to take one step closer to identifying measures of impact on the community and to identify and develop appropriate program design that can contribute to increasing the impact of leadership development on community capacity.

We will primarily focus on assessing completed evaluations of leadership programs for communities and other institutions in the region along with bringing in cutting edge research on leadership development evaluation approaches including approaches used outside of the land-grant system. Our work will make an important contribution to the study of leadership and community. We will begin by: 1) Providing practitioners and program leaders with information on current evaluation strategies and suggesting strategies for measuring impact indicators, 2) Improving current leadership development programs with the addition of curriculum modules or strategies that intend to increase the impact of the program on the community, and 3) Taking the next step in designing research that increases our understanding of how these programs build community capacity.

# Poverty & Other Socioeconomic Distress in the North Central Region: Assessing Trends & Determinants

October 11, 2011

**PI:** Lobao, L. (The Ohio State University)

**Co-PIs:** Goe, R. (Kansas State University) and Partridge, M. (The Ohio State University)

**Award:** \$19,688

**Project Abstract:** The North Central Region has experienced a dramatic shift in the well-being of its communities and people over the last decade and particularly with the 2007-2009 recession. Poverty has been rising from the post-September 11th period. This trend diverges from the 1990s decade when poverty rates fell overall and especially in rural areas. While poverty across the North Central Region was studied in a previous NCRCRD-sponsored project for the 1990s decade, little is known about distress in the 2000-2010 period. The project addresses the gap in research. Our research goals are to: (1) document the new patterns of poverty and related distress emerging in the 12-North Central state region over time and geographically; and (2) identify key determinants of these trends.

# Recreational Homes, Gateway Communities, and Rural Development

October 11, 2011

**PI:** Marcouiller, D. (University of Wisconsin)

**Co-PIs:** Deller, S., Green, G. Haverkamp, K., and Winkler, R. (University of Wisconsin), Erkkila, D. (NC Research and Outreach Center), Gartner, B., and Ziebarth, A. (University of Minnesota), Skidmore, M., and Vogt, C. (Michigan State University)

**Award:** \$10,518

**Project Abstract:** The use of recreational homes by absentee (non-local) owners creates both opportunities and pitfalls for rural community leaders, their citizenry, local business owners, and those concerned about land use and development planning. A multi-state team from Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan will develop: 1) an applied research agenda focusing on the challenges and opportunities associated with recreational home ownership and supporting preliminary pilot research, 2) longer-term, large-scale applied research proposals for funding by federal agencies and/or foundations, and 3) a set of outreach materials to address rural development issues pertinent to the recreational home - gateway community phenomenon. While our work will focus on the Lake States of Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin, our intent is to develop materials that can be transferable to other regions throughout the North Central United States and elsewhere experiencing analogous recreational home pressures.

# Asset Building in Rural Communities: Exploring Barriers and Identifying Opportunities

October 11, 2011

**PI:** Needles Fletcher, C., (Iowa State University)

**Co-PI:** Flage, L. (North Dakota State University), Olson, P. (University of Minnesota), Warning, J. (Iowa State University)

**Award:** \$18,708

**Project Abstract:** Community-based poverty reduction strategies are shifting focus from income and consumption to building assets among low-income households. Expanding opportunities for low-income families to save and invest for short- and long-term goals can lead to greater financial stability and can benefit local economies. However, much of the research and most demonstration projects on asset building have been conducted in metropolitan areas that have a much more extensive infrastructure of financial services and nonprofit organizations compared to the typical rural community. Iowa State University, the University of Minnesota and North Dakota State University have collaborated with the Northwest Area Foundation (NWAFF) to build the capacity of rural communities to reduce poverty through participation in the Horizons program. It has become clear that community-based approaches to asset building hold promise, but little is known about what strategies may be most useful to rural low-income households and also would be supported by the community. This proposal outlines a research program that will identify (1) assets that are perceived to be of greatest benefit to rural, low income households in building financial stability, (2) barriers faced by rural, low-income households in their attempts to build wealth, and (3) opportunities that could be shaped by collaborative efforts among low-income households, service providers, businesses, local government, rural philanthropists, and other community leaders to enhance asset building in rural communities.

# Incorporating Community Issues Management with Public Engagement and Community Decision Making

October 11, 2011

**PI:** Otto, D. (Iowa State University)

**Co-PIs:** Fulcher, C., and Leuci, M. (University of Missouri), Seeger, C. (Extension Specialist in Landscape Architecture), and VanWyngarden, D. (Iowa State University)

**Award:** \$20,000

**Project Abstract:** This project will investigate the effectiveness of using a web-based interactive GIS and community collaboration system to improve the engagement and decision-making process of several Iowa and Missouri community development projects. The proposed demonstration projects include developing local food systems, regional tourism development, and local government services sharing. Missouri's Community Information Management (CIM) system will be used to provide the interactive GIS framework. CIM is a web-based system designed for local and regional organizations to frame, manage and take action on complex issues. The foundation of this system is a process for framing issues through a wealth of GIS data, and mapping and reporting tools custom built for organizations to better understand how issues impact people and places. CIM can be employed as a tool within organizations and for community engagement in open, data-informed and collaborative decision making. Our major goal with this initiative is to demonstrate and document the effectiveness of this technology in a range of community development applications and the transferability of the technology to other states.

# FY 10 11 Awards

# Contribution of Youth Engagement to the Development of Community Social Capital

April 26, 2011

**PI:** Calvert, M. (University of Wisconsin)

**Co-PIs:** Blyth, D. (University of Minnesota), Allen, R. (Hubert H. Humphrey Center Minneapolis), Wise, G. (University of Wisconsin)

**Award:** \$18,000

**Project Abstract:** Interest in community youth development and civic engagement is growing. From the community economic development (CED) perspective, we see more and more community change strategies that encourage youth engagement. At the same time, many 4-H and other Extension youth development programs include service learning components and create opportunities for young people to play an important role in community improvement strategies. Yet, CED educators and 4-H educators rarely interact about how youth engagement can support successful community change. We propose to create a bridge between these communities of interest and strengthen the evaluation of youth engagement strategies. We will build on the existing work of the NCERA215 integrated project which emerged from conversations about how 4-H builds individual and community social capital. Prior to our convening, five or more states will collect data on the impact of 4-H community involvement by engaging young people in mapping the impact at the community level using the Community Capitals Framework. Selected states will also pilot triangulation strategies, including interviews and social capital surveys. We will analyze data and the methodology, identify indicators and formulate follow up research designs; explore how strategies from CED might be incorporated in 4-H programming and vice-versa; and expand our understanding of how youth engagement contributes to the community capitals, particularly social capital.

# Collaborative Proposal Development for Connecting Farm and Community

April 26, 2011

**PI:** Conley, D. (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)

**Co-PI:** Francis, C. (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), Wells, B. (Iowa State University)

**Award:** \$19,000

**Project Abstract:** Teams from the neighboring states of Nebraska and Iowa propose to come together in face-to-face meetings and by conference calls for the purpose of developing a funding proposal which builds on our complementary strengths in applied research and Extension programming connecting small and medium sized farms to community. The proposal we develop, will be submitted to the Agricultural Prosperity for Small and Medium-sized Farms competition of the USDA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative will fund work that bridges the social and biophysical sciences and engages staff with Extension, research and teaching appointments. A two-day meeting will include field trips to sites in the geographic area of focus for our proposal: the Omaha-Council Bluffs urban area and surrounding rural counties. Provide time to become better acquainted and to generate a detailed plan of work for proposal development. Our work and subsequent proposal will support rural development in the North Central Region by strengthening the economic, ecological and social foundations for rural development in the food and agricultural sector.

## Preparing Youth for an Increasingly Diverse World

April 26, 2011

**PI:** de Guzman, M. (Univ. of Nebraska-Lincoln)

**Co-PIs:** Fairchild, P., Potthoff, K., and Cervantes-Guzman (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), Randall, B. and Vetter, R. (North Dakota State University), Becker, J. and Witkoske, T. (Purdue University), and Taylor, J. (University of Missouri)

**Award:** \$2,000

**Project Abstract:** With the increasingly globalized workplace, as well as the rapidly shifting ethnic demography of the country, youth today need to develop cultural competency skills that will allow them to think in more global ways and be comfortable with people of different backgrounds. For youth in rural communities, there is an additional challenge of diminishing economic opportunities – prompting many to move outside of their communities as soon as they are able. This planning grant will be used so that project team members can plan a long term collaborative partnership that will focus on helping youth think globally (e.g., cultural competency) but also to explore and develop opportunities in their own communities (e.g. entrepreneurship). The team will meet; explore potential programs to pursue, and plan and develop funding proposals for future activities.

# Great Lakes Land Grant Institutions Tribal Water Resources Summit

April 26, 2011

**PI:** Robinson, P. (University of Wisconsin)

**Co-PIs:** Cook, M. (College of Menominee Nation), Zak, D. (University of Minnesota), and Power, R. (University of Wisconsin)

**Award:** \$15,000

**Project Abstract:** Water resources are central to the sustainable growth and development of rural communities across the Upper Midwest. Tribal communities and 1994 land-grant institutions have unique needs and contributions to make to the science and art of water resource management. Given the diversity of needs across the Upper Midwest, we propose planning and hosting a Great Lakes Land-grant Institutions Tribal Water Resources Summit to assess and prioritize tribal water resource issues across the upper Great Lakes Region. The assessment would focus on Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin and would provide a valuable context for enhancing and encouraging integrated water resource research, education, and extension collaborations among 1862 and 1994 land-grant institutions and other partners in the Great Lakes Region. Enhanced collaboration among the 1862 and 1994 institutions on water issues will contribute to both the Sustainable Communities and Leadership Development priorities of NCRCRD. Priorities that emerge from this summit will be woven into larger coordination proposals, such as USDA NIFA Tribal Colleges Research or Extension Special Emphasis grants.

# Challenges Facing Small and Medium Sized Entrepreneurs in Emerging Cool Climate Wine Regions

April 26, 2011

**PI:** Ross, B. (Michigan State University)

**Co-PIs:** Chaddad, F. (University of Missouri), and Gómez, M. (Cornell University)

**Award:** \$20,000

**Project Abstract:** In the last decade we have observed the rapid establishment of new small- and medium-sized wineries in non-traditional, cold-climate wine regions. These rural entrepreneurs include grape growers that have decided to vertically integrate into winemaking and also non-farmer investor-entrepreneurs who have opted for a rural lifestyle. As a result of this entrepreneurial activity, wine clusters are emerging in nontraditional regions such as Michigan, Missouri and northwest New York. These wine clusters might become economic vectors of rural development as they have the potential to foster the development of related industries (e.g., tourism) as is the case of established wine regions such as Napa Valley.

We seek to identify the challenges faced by rural entrepreneurs in these regions with particular focus on economic, business and marketing challenges at two interrelated levels – the firm (i.e., the winery) and the cluster (or region). We are also specifically interested in exploring how collective action by small and medium- sized wineries might assist them in overcoming common challenges and establishing successful wine clusters. Our approach is to conduct an exploratory comparative analysis of the three emerging cold climate wine regions. This analysis will follow a multi-method research design that will include an extensive literature review, a multi-state survey, and mini case studies of small- and medium-sized wineries.

# Establishing a Knowledge and Organizational Infrastructure for Rural Design

April 26, 2011

**PI:** Kinney, T. (University of Minnesota)

**Co-PIs:** Thorbeck, D. (University of Minnesota), and Borich, T. (Iowa State University)

**Award:** \$10,000

**Project Abstract:** Design is a potent tool to help rural communities address existing problems and a powerful aid to help communities prepare for the new economic and social challenges presented by climate change. However, the design and planning fields have historically ignored rural communities. In January 2010, researchers, practitioners, and extension professionals from the Midwest attended the First International Symposium on Rural Design to create a new field to address the challenges above: rural design.

Attendees identified that an organizational infrastructure is needed to nurture this new field and its potential to improve rural quality of life. The PIs propose creating a web-based social networking site to continue the symposium's success in constructing rural design's foundation. The proposed web site will facilitate continuing discussion among attendees, the sharing of resources and research, and collaboration on major grant proposals.

## Public Talk, Public Action: Professional Development Community of Practice

April 26, 2011

**PI:** Wright, W. (Michigan State University)

**Co-PI:** Hodge, S. (University of Missouri)

**Award:** \$10,000

**Project Abstract:** The goal of this initiative is to strengthen the capacity of Extension professionals to work in partnership with the public to design, implement, and learn from citizen-centered approaches that focus on current and emerging contested public issues. We propose to organize a professional development community of practice (PDCoP) to broaden Extension educators' partnership work with local governments, public agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and citizens. This will help to ensure that the collective resources of the community are tapped to address and manage tough public issues. The practical outcome is to make "dialogue and deliberation" (D&D) a common offering—and prominent feature—in Extension educational offerings. We will do this by developing a community of practice among Extension educators across the nation with the use of the web-based *eXtension* educational platform. This effort can help ExtensionEducators develop the skills to assist communities as they struggle with difficult and controversial public issues such as land use, zoning, health care, bioenergy or economic development. Addressing contentious issues where the public may be divided will require that future Educators have knowledge of and skills in community-based deliberation strategies – ones that are intended to empower citizens to share their voices and to pursue action on the difficult issues having important impacts on individuals, families/households, and communities. The intent of this PDCoP is to help Extension educators gain the set of skills, competencies, and experiences needed to effectively employ citizen-centered approaches as a core part of their Extension engagement activities.

# The Impact of Invasive Plant Species on Ecosystem Goods and Services

April 26, 2011

**PI:** Young, S. (University of Nebraska)

**Award:** \$5,000

**Project Abstract:** Invasive plant species can establish in diverse environments and with the increase in human mobility, they are no longer restricted to isolated pockets in remote parts of the world. Cheat grass in rangelands, purple loosestrife in wetlands and common reed in riparian areas are invasive plant species examples common to the U.S. and can be found in monocultures and patches covering many thousands of hectares. Across the world, invasive plant species like water hyacinth, cogon grass, and mile-a-minute weed have choked waterways, altered fire regimes or caused the abandonment of farmland due to their dominating and persistent presence.

Invasive plant species' contribution to ecosystem services is controversial because of the mostly negative relationship that these species have with the native flora. However, their continued dominance in many regions warrants a more thorough evaluation of their impact, both positive and negative, on the ecosystem (see Hershner and Havens, 2008). The use of technology to identify and quantify ecosystem services across the landscape will help in determining their value and the management strategy policies, particularly in areas that include invasive plant species.

# **FY 09 10 Awards**

# Improving Practice and Collaboration to Aid Distressed Rural Communities

April 26, 2011

**PI:** Cordes, S. (Purdue U.)

**Co-PI:** Emery, M. (Iowa State)

Award: \$15,000

**Project Abstract:** Rural communities in the North Central region are facing extraordinary challenges, more severe and far reaching than those of the mid-1980s. This project proposes a convening to learn from three related, innovative rural development approaches, known as Home Town Competitiveness (HTC), Entrepreneurship Investigation (ESI) and Energizing Entrepreneurship (e2). The project collaborators will convene a two-day meeting in to bring together land-grant university faculty and community partners with experience in these three related rural community development initiatives. The goal of the convening will be two-fold:

- To review best practices in implementation of these three related initiatives; and
- To explore ways to increase collaboration among Land Grant Universities and rural nonprofit development organizations, as well as, to improve the practices related to these and other similar development initiatives

## Studying Food System Approaches in Three Types of Rural Communities

April 26, 2011

**PI:** Hendrickson, M. (University of Missouri)

**Co-PI:** Cantrell, R. (University of Nebraska)

**Award:** \$14,000

**Project Abstract:** Develop a proposal for the USDA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) Rural Development Grant Program. Researchers from the Universities of Missouri and Nebraska will develop a proposal to study food system approaches for rural development in three distinct types of rural communities in Missouri and Nebraska. The communities fall into three of the broad categories laid out by the Carsey Institute's research reported in *Place Matters: Challenges and Opportunities in Four Rural Americas*. The proposed research focuses on food systems approaches to rural development in three of the four community types, including declining resource-dependent, chronically poor, and communities with amenity-driven growth along with resource-based decline. Communities in Missouri and Nebraska were also chosen to represent the spectrum of rural communities located near urban centers and those relatively isolated from large population centers.

## Rural Alliance for Service-Learning

April 26, 2011

**PI:** Proulx-Curry, P. (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

**Co-PIs:** Stoecker, R. (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Goreham, G. (North Dakota State University), Nagy, D. (South Dakota State University), Mark, C. (Michigan State University), and Wood, S. (Kansas State University)

**Award:** \$14,700

**Project Abstract:** Higher Education service learning—the practice of sending students off campus to do community work for course credit—is increasingly popular in colleges and universities. But do rural communities get access to such services? If they do, are the services effective, and how do we make them as effective as possible? Is there anything about rural service learning that distinguishes it from the more well-known urban service learning models? Our project will take the first steps toward building knowledge of rural service learning models and infrastructures to support their implementation.

Our goal is to plan a large-scale action research project to develop and support rural service learning. Our strategy includes growing a regional network of rural service learning practitioners who can document cases of rural service learning, share lessons with each other, and produce a grant proposal to test those lessons more broadly and deeply.

# Immigration Reform: Implications for Farmers, Farm Workers and Communities

April 26, 2011

**PI:** Martinez, R. (Michigan State University)

**Co-PI:** Flora, C. (Iowa State University)

**Award:** \$17,973

**Project Abstract:** Immigration may be the most important people issue in rural and agricultural America today. Most new entrants to the hired farm work force were born abroad, and are unauthorized. Seasonal farm work is a decade-long job rather than a career for most workers. If current trends continue, the farm workers of tomorrow are growing up today somewhere outside the U.S. Rural and agricultural America appears to be planted firmly on an immigration treadmill, seeking new workers from abroad to fill jobs vacated by experienced migrants and shunned by their children educated in the U.S.

This project involves the major stakeholders in a quest for an improved understanding of how newcomers from abroad are affecting agriculture and agricultural communities.

The three core elements of the project:

- Analysis that establishes benchmarks to assess current immigration patterns and proposed policy reforms.
- A national conference that includes a North Central Region panel of scholars and stakeholders, (Hispanic-serving institutions, farm employers, community leaders, and policy makers).
- Assessment and summary of ongoing migration and farm labor developments to be disseminated via the Rural Migration News (<http://migration.ucdavis.edu>), which reaches over 1,200 researchers, journalists, and opinion leaders each quarter, and dissemination among NCERA 216.

# Re-Localizing Our Foodshed: New Models and Methodologies for Planning Our Food Future

April 26, 2011

**PI:** Draeger, K. (University of Minnesota) [Adamek, Margaret]

**Co-PIs:** Cadieux, V., Kurzer, M. Pesch, R., Porter, P., and Robertson C. (University of Minnesota), Gold, A. and Kutka. F. (North Dakota State University), and Stark, S. (University of Minnesota-Duluth)

**Award:** \$17,210

**Project Abstract:** Increasingly, communities and institutions are calling for and initiating a substantial overhaul of the American food system. This rapidly growing movement reflects a commitment a robust food culture and agriculture that is:

- more regionally based
- sustainable in practice
- intimate in scale

The momentum to regionalize our foodsheds has reached the point where major infrastructure changes are needed. Gardeners, chefs, farmers and activists lack the expertise for necessary planning, modeling and other research to inform public decision-making. Meanwhile- the land grant university – the very institution established to meet the needs the American food system – is well-positioned to offer this research support. This symposium will convene faculty, staff and students with visiting experts and community partners to discuss novel models and methodologies to meet public needs associated with redesigning our food system. The approach to and design of this new scholarship does not fit the classic model of agricultural research; rather it calls for a broader, more integrated base of expertise – reflecting interdisciplinary, socially beneficial inquiry. This symposium will convene scholars from multiple social and agricultural sciences and humanities disciplines, involve two land grant universities, their Extension and AES units and result in increased capacity and a research proposal.

# Community Retail Development Toolbox Project

April 26, 2011

**PI:** Davis, G. (The Ohio State University)

**Co-PIs:** Clark, J. and Irwin E. (The Ohio State University), Pesch, R. and Schwartau, B. (University of Minnesota), and Ryan, B. (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

**Award:** \$19,048

**Project Abstract:** Small communities throughout the Midwest are struggling to maintain a vital economic mix in their downtowns and business districts. While retail in small communities struggles, many creative opportunities exist to curb the leakage of retail dollars and foster local economic health. This project aims to combine the research and analytical techniques developed by Extension educators throughout the North Central region into a one-stop resource for community retail analysis for use across the North Central region (and beyond). We will refine, improve and consolidate retail analysis tools already developed in Ohio, Minnesota, and Wisconsin and elsewhere in the North Central region, co-brand this innovative and comprehensive effort and make it available as an online collaborative resource complete with easily accessible, multi-media curricula. The product will be a self-help resource for entrepreneurs, commercial district/"Main Street" directors, and community and economic development leaders to make more informed business decisions. After piloting the programming in three communities in the region, we will refine the outputs and offer training to others in the North Central Region on how to apply these tools. The tools will then be reintroduced to various states, regional and national organizations involved in building vibrant and sustainable downtowns and local economies.

# Building Extension's Capacity for a Sustainable Communities Program

April 26, 2011

**PI:** Haines, A. (University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point)

**Co-PI:** Beyea, W. (Michigan State University)

**Award:** \$17,000

**Project Abstract:** Develop a comprehensive, research-based sustainable communities education program for use throughout the North Central states and transferable to other regions. The North Central Region Task Force for Sustainable Communities will lead the curriculum development. Activities include:

- A suite of outreach tools to assist Extension professionals to access and use materials from existing programs;
- Professional development webinars and supporting curriculum package;
- A multi-tier logic model for implementing sustainable development activities in rural communities; and
- One or more reports/articles that disseminate project results through extension and research channels.

A diverse audience will be served including extension professionals, community and citizen planners, and other community leaders. To assure efficient transferability both within the North central region and beyond, social networking tools of the newly formed eXtension Land Use Planning Community of Practice will be used to provide distance learning opportunities and network with Extension professionals.

## Innovations and Success in Community & Economic Development Extension Programming

April 26, 2011

**PI:** Ivan, D. (Michigan State University)

**Co-PI:** Emery, M. (Iowa State University)

**Award:** \$16,000

**Project Abstract:** Rural communities throughout the North Central Region struggle amidst an economic tsunami. Despite this challenging environment, some communities and regions are proactively positioning themselves for success through extension-led initiatives. It is their approaches, and experiences, that can serve as a roadmap for long term sustainability. We seek to gain knowledge from successful and innovative initiatives in a learning environment populated with leading community and economic development practitioners and scholars, many of which are financed by extension personnel.