

Guidance for writing a successful Community Outreach / Education proposal

How to use this document

The purpose of this document is to assist individuals with the planning and writing their Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health (GPCAH) community outreach pilot grant proposals. This document is organized into three major sections, described below. Please read the initial “Proposal Planning” section to ensure that the project qualifies for GPCAH funding before taking the time to write a proposal.

I. Proposal Planning

This section provides information regarding applicant and project eligibility.

II. Section-by-Section Guidance

This section provides a description of the purpose and recommended content of each pilot grant required section. Guidance is presented in the order of the ‘Pilot Grant Required Sections’ listed below.

III. Additional information

This section contains web links and contact information for applicants who have further questions.

I. Proposal Planning

Prior to submitting an application to GPCAH, it is important for the applicant to consider if the proposed topic is appropriate for Center funding. The overall goal of the proposal should be in line with the mission of GPCAH, which is to prevent agricultural injury and illnesses and to improve safety and health among agricultural communities. Our Center addresses the health and safety concerns of agricultural workers in Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, Minnesota, North Dakota, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Because of similarity in agricultural practice, we will also review and fund pilot projects submitted by organization and individuals in Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio.

In the past, we have supported a wide range of projects, including those that: a) generated awareness to reduce the rate of unintentional fatalities and injuries associated with agriculture, b) promoted the adoption of effective occupational safety and health interventions, c) generated a stronger safety culture among farm families.

A full list of previously-funded community-based projects can be viewed here:

<https://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/gpcah/funded-community-grants/>

Note that the Center will only fund projects related directly to illness and injury resulting from agricultural work. Projects addressing health problems not specifically resulting from agricultural work (e.g., vision impairment, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, smoking cessation programs), are not eligible for Center funding. In addition, projects that address issues relevant to agricultural practices (e.g., projects that examine nutrient management, water use, waste

management, urban farms) but not the safety and health of the workforce are not eligible for funding.

Before submitting a proposal, it is helpful to ask yourself the following:

- Does your project address *injury or illness* among *agricultural workers* or their families?
- Will your project serve as an “incubator” for new safety research, prevention, intervention, community outreach, and/or translation projects? Is it likely to lead to more comprehensive projects or activities?
- Is the funding amount adequate to complete your project goals?
- Do you have adequate support from your organization to conduct the project?
- Is your project idea innovative? Think outside of the box and get creative! Projects that repeat past activities and projects that are used to fund ongoing everyday organizational activities will not be considered innovative.

II. Section-by-Section Guidance

Pilot Grant Proposal Required Sections

The required sections for pilot grant applications are provided below.

1. Cover Letter
2. Front Page (1 page limit)
3. Project Plan (5 page limit)
 - a. *Specific Aims*
 - b. *Background and Significance*
 - c. *Methods and Approach*
 - d. *Data Analysis and Evaluation*
4. Potential for future funding and plans for dissemination of results (1 page limit)
5. References (No page limit)
6. Budget and Budget Justification (2 page limit)
7. Timeline and Milestones (1 page limit)
8. Biographical Sketch, Curriculum Vitae, or Resume (2 page limit per individual)
9. Letters of Support (No page limit)
10. Appendices (No page limit)
11. Assurance Form

Although listed above, the *Letters of Support* and *Appendices* sections are not technically required and should be included only to the extent that they support the application. Note, however, that most successful applications will have one or more letters of support signed by key stakeholders and many also include appendices with information too detailed or lengthy to be included in the page-limited sections. Applicants should be aware that reviewers are not obligated to read appendices and information critical to understanding the proposal should not be included solely in an appendix.

1) Cover Letter

At the beginning of the proposal, include a one page cover letter, signed by an appropriate official and written on your organization's letterhead. Address the letter to Dr. Nathan Fethke, PhD, Pilot Program Director. In your cover letter, include the date of submission, title of the pilot grant proposal, investigator name, and dollar amount requested. It is helpful to describe in 1-2 sentences how the successful completion of the project will further advance GPCAH's mission. Finally, if you have discussed this application with a GPCAH official or the proposal is a revised version of a previous proposal, please state this in the letter. Typically, cover letters are 1-2 paragraphs in length.

2) Front Page (1 page limit)

The front page of your pilot grant application should include the title of the pilot grant proposal, investigator(s) and organization name(s), project duration (e.g., 12 months), date of the submission, and a Project Summary.

The Project Summary is a narrative description of the project (150 words maximum length). In the summary, provide a description of (a) the problem to be addressed and why it is relevant to agricultural safety and health, (b) your aims for the accomplishing the project, and (c) the approach or method.

Below is an example of a project summary from a rural health clinic:

Our project aims to host and evaluate two Farm Safety Fairs in Gove County, KS, prior to Fall harvest. The purpose of these fairs is to increase safety awareness among farm youth about ATV use, chemical safety, grain handling safety, machinery operation, and basic first aid/emergency response. These Safety Fairs will benefit from a unique partnership with the Kansas Farm Bureau, K-State Extension, and local 4-H groups. Our goal is to lower the number of Emergency Room visits and fatalities associated with agricultural-related injuries during the four-month harvest season. If injuries do occur, an additional goal is to increase youth preparedness so that they are confident in basic first aid/emergency response to reduce the likelihood of ag-related fatalities.

Below is an example of a project summary from a non-profit organization:

We propose to pilot a social marketing radio campaign aimed at increasing the use of personal protective equipment among Western Iowa farm youth (ages 12-18) while performing agricultural tasks. Our radio campaign will focus on changing farmer-parents' perceptions of agricultural health and safety risks while their adolescent is performing agricultural tasks and the need for the child to wear personal protective equipment. Our proposed PSA topics will be: respiratory protection, hearing protection, and sun safety. To maximize the impact of the radio campaign, we will use data collected from farmer-parent focus groups in the development of the public service messages. We will evaluate the use of PPE among farm youth in region through an anonymous survey, and the project will be considered successful if we report at least a 15% or higher rate of PPE use among the farm youth.

3) Project Plan (5 page limit)

Specific Aims

The Specific Aims are the objectives or achievements to be accomplished during completion of the proposed project. The Specific Aims should have clear and measurable endpoints. The Specific Aims should be statements of activities rather than of intentions. For example, “Improving safety and health of farmers in Iowa” would not be considered an appropriate aim. Examples of Specific Aims from funded projects are provided in the box, below. It is common for applicants to identify *who* you will target for agricultural safety and health activities what activity/service/intervention will be implemented.

Typically, pilot grant applications accepted for funding included 1-3 Specific Aims, each written in 1-2 sentences.

Below are some examples of Specific Aims from previous projects:

Specific Aims Example 1:

1. Reduce the number of agricultural-related fatalities among the Hutterian Brethren population in a geographically isolated region of rural South Dakota.
2. Teach Certification level CPR/AED/First Aid training and Basic First Aid classes to more than 100 agricultural workers at 8 local Hutterite colonies.
3. Conduct participant surveys and track emergency room visits before and after the training.

Specific Aims Example 2:

1. Prevent injuries, illnesses, and fatalities in Midwestern farmers resulting from direct exposure or inhalation hazards of anhydrous ammonia fertilizer.
2. Provide 10 trainings in Iowa, Nebraska, and Missouri for more than 60 coop employees and farmers.
3. Analyze follow-up surveys to examine current practices on the farms and determine if the training was effective in changing work habits.

Specific Aims Example 3:

Develop and evaluate the usefulness and usability of a smartphone app to track daily hearing protection device use among young adult swine confinement workers in Eastern Iowa.

Background and Significance

The purpose of the Background and Significance section of the Project Plan is to provide information about the agricultural safety and health problem that the proposal will address. The successful applicant will explain why the problem is important to agricultural safety and health. Typically, this section will include information about the magnitude of the problem among members of the target community group (i.e., the agricultural safety and health **burden**). When describing the agricultural safety and health burden, it may be appropriate to provide information about the number of people in the target community who have been affected by the hazard or situation that your proposal will address. Consider using information like medical admission records, examples of cases identified in the media, or information on regional injury or illness trends. Sometimes, a search of recent academic literature can provide information about the overall burden of injury or illness. Recent scholarly papers can be found in the PubMedCentral database and should be accessible to the public. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/>

In addition to describing the agricultural safety and health burden, the Background and Significance section will also include an explanation of how the proposed project fills an unmet **need** for agricultural safety and health knowledge, skills, technology, or other approaches necessary to address the burden. Finally, the Background and Significance Section will explain how the proposed project will **impact** the agricultural safety and health problem favorably. Examples of these components from previous applicants are provided on the next page.

Examples of how applicants have described agricultural safety and health burden:

- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has 59 anhydrous ammonia incidents recorded since 1985. This includes more than 195 people hurt by or exposed to ammonia and 15 deaths. More than half of these were in our Midwest region.
- Farmers continue to have a high prevalence of noise induced hearing loss, despite prevention efforts (Beckett et al, 2000; McCullagh et al 2002). Farmers are exposed to excessive noises at work, such as tractors (open and closed cabs), dryers, silage blowers, mowers, animals, chain saws.

Examples of how applicants have described community need:

- Many farm family members have communicated that they would like to know more about the safe handling practices of ammonia and other chemicals. Over the past 5 years, we have received 30 requests for more information on anhydrous ammonia safety.
- We surveyed 199 farmers in the Midwest region, and found that protecting their hearing was the second highest health and safety concern after farm equipment safety. However, less than one third of the farmers reporting wearing hearing protection devices when around loud noises.

Examples of how an applicant has described community impact:

- In rural Kansas, it is important to include farm youth in safety education since any family member could be responsible for saving a life during a farm incident. Many farmers live >40 miles from a Critical Access Hospital, and it can take more than 45 minutes for emergency personnel to arrive on the scene. We are a well-respected medical center that has served farmers in the region for more than 80 years. Previously, we have held multiple emergency response trainings accredited by the American Heart Association (basic first aid/CPR) in our community, although we did not target them specifically at farmers. Since we have experience and are one of the most trusted sources for medical information, we are qualified to pilot a basic first aid/emergency response training for farm youth.

Methods and Approach

The purpose of the Methods and Approach section of the Project Plan is to describe the procedures, equipment, settings, and strategies that will be implemented to successfully complete the project. Of relevance to the Methods and Approach section is information about (a) the specific members of the community who will be engaged or targeted by the project (e.g., farmers, farm youth, farm women, grain elevator workers) and how you plan to recruit or otherwise engage them in the project, (b) the specific activities proposed to operationally achieve the stated Specific Aims, (c) the distribution of tasks and responsibilities to members of the project team, and (d) the information to be collected by your team so that you can assess the extent to which the project met the stated Specific Aims.

The following section describes some common issues that should be addressed when preparing a pilot project application.

Participant Recruitment

Describe how the study team has unique access to members of the target community or group. Highlight the personnel on your team who may be best suited to assist with recruitment procedures. In addition, it is helpful to provide a letter of support from a community leader or other relevant official to demonstrate your relationship with them. If you have an existing relationship with the community or group, details of the relationship should be described in the Background and Significance section. In the *Methods and Approach* section, include the number of persons who will be engaged by or participate in the project. Describe your plan for an unanticipated failure to enroll the stated number of participants. Specifically, a description of an alternate strategy is recommended.

Surveys and Questionnaires

If the proposed project requires completion of surveys or questionnaires, applicants should describe the content of the survey and how survey information will be used to achieve the project Specific Aims. Questions of relevance may include, are the surveys being used to evaluate the project's impact? Are surveys being used to test knowledge? Describe how the survey will be administered (e.g., in person, on paper, or electronically). It is recommended that applicants provide a sample or draft survey in an Appendix.

For additional information on how to develop effective surveys, Rutgers University Extension has put together a useful fact sheet: <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs995/>

Education and Training

If the proposed project has an education and training component, then the applicant should include relevant information, including descriptions of the (a) training content or curriculum, (b) details and background of the individuals conducting the training (c) training format (video, webinar, in-person) (d) materials to be distributed to trainees, (e) plans to advertise and promote the training. Identify what resources you will be relying on to develop your training materials and highlight how the training is was designed to have impact on the target agricultural safety and health problem.

In the past, the Center Coordinator has helped organizations advertise and promote participant recruitment and training programs online, via social media, and with press releases. Please inquire if you would like assistance with promotional activities.

Data Analysis and Evaluation

Community-based pilot projects are expected to collect information (from questionnaires, surveys, focus groups, direct observation, or other methods) that will allow the investigators to evaluate the extent to which the project (i) was successful in achieving the Specific Aims and (ii) had (or is expected to have) impact on the agricultural safety and health problem described in the Background and Significance section. The Data Analysis and Evaluation section of the pilot grant application should typically include a description of what information will be collected, how it will be collected, and how it will be processed or analyzed in order to permit an overall evaluation of project success.

It is important to understand that, for this pilot grant program, it is not sufficient to deliver some product or service to a community. The investigators must propose a meaningful assessment (i.e., evaluation) of their project's success in promoting agricultural safety and health or impacting directly and beneficially the risk of agricultural injury or illness.

Finally, in addition to an assessment of project impact, it is also important to collect descriptive information about participants, such as the number of community members who were engaged by the project, their age, gender distribution, work settings, etc.

4) Potential for future funding and plans for dissemination of results (1 page limit)

Pilot project grant recipients are expected to propose projects that have the potential for future development. In the "Potential for future funding and plans for dissemination of results" Section, applicants should briefly explain how their experience will be communicated to others in order to maximize the benefit of the project. Such information can include the identification of other funding sources for continuation of the project, efforts by the investigators to disseminate their experience or observations to other organizations, or direct media campaigns.

Below are some examples of potential for future funding and plans for dissemination of results:

- The findings from this educational project will be presented at appropriate professional meetings, like the 2017 MRASH conference, AIHA Annual Conference, and at the American Academy of Audiology (AAA) and National Hearing Conservation Association (NHCA) annual meetings. In addition, a short article about the NIHL simulator app will be published in the GPCAH Alive and Well Newsletter and in the Council for Accreditation in Occupational Hearing Conservation (CAOHC) Newsletter. Other funded outreach and educational projects may result, and they include: a) partnering with the University of Iowa Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at farm progress shows; b) using the simulator app for educational purposes, such as the GPCAH Core Course, undergraduate and graduate courses, and during outreach events or trainings at high schools; c) using the simulator app in a YouTube video about "Feeling the Effects of NIHL on the Farm"; and d) working with producers in the nine state region to identify 'best locations' around their farm to store hearing protection devices in places that are convenient and visible.
- If this grain handling training is successful, we anticipate that many industry partners will begin to and use this curriculum and training. There is a greater movement among some of the corporations to promote safe practices with their farm customers, so it is likely a corporation would entertain the possibility of absorbing part of the costs for future train the trainer programs. We have many distribution networks to help promote and disseminate the training materials. Additionally, members of both organizations are actively involved in many industry related events such as symposiums, safety groups (e.g. Grain Handling Safety Coalition), trade shows (e.g. Farm Progress Show), and professional associations. Additionally, we will present this work at the 2014 MRASH conference and 2014 ISASH conference.

5) References (No page limit)

Provide a list in alphabetical order of all references cited in the pilot grant application. A citation will include author, title, publication, and date. The following web link at the University of Iowa has some useful information about citations. <http://guides.lib.uiowa.edu/citationhelp>

The single most important aspect of a citation is that the reader can find the cited document (or internet address) by using only the information provided in the citation.

6) Budget and Budget Justification (2 page limit)

The Budget requested for completion of the project must be provided on a standard spreadsheet. Legitimate budget items include staff salary, supplies, necessary equipment, materials, travel and other expenses. The Budget Justification is a written narrative that explains the purpose of **every** item in the budget. If the budget item is for salary support, then

an explanation of the role of that person should be provided. If the budget item is for materials, then the applicant should explain why they are necessary for completion of the project. Similarly, travel, rent, and other expenses must be justified. Please see the Budget Form and Budget Justification Instructions PDFs for more information. These forms are available at <https://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/gpcah/community-grants/>.

7) Timeline and Milestones (1 page limit)

List each activity and the months of the year during which they will be conducted. It helps to organize activities by Specific Aim. A sample timeline from a previously funded project is provided, below:

Activity	Fall 2015			Winter 2016			Spring 2016			Summer 2016		
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept
Aim A: NIHL Simulator for Farmers												
Order equipment												
Noise collection on the farm												
Hearing loss software simulations												
Simulator/tablet interface design												
Simulator testing in the field at outreach events												
Simulation data analysis												
Aim B: Self Selection of hearing protection												
Order ear plugs												
Self-selection of hearing protection at outreach events												
Self-selection data analysis												
Aim C: Fit testing												
Ordering equipment												
Training of fit testing personal on equipment use												
Identifying locations and partners for fit testing in field												
Fit testing in the field												
Fit testing data analysis												

8) Biographical Sketch (2 page limit per individual)

The qualifications of each member of the study team is described in the Biographical Sketch section. Standard information includes academic degrees, clinical credentials, current employment status and prior relevant employment. If personnel have relevant past experience, it should be highlighted here. Publications, relevant experience as an educator or trainer, and other credential can be provided. If you need assistance identifying a person with a technical background relevant to an agricultural safety or health issue, please contact the Center Coordinator, and we can provide suggestions.

Prior to submitting a community pilot grant proposal, consider whether you or your staff needs additional training. The GPCAH has a week-long summer course designed to educate community members (and safety and health professionals) about agricultural safety and health. You might want to consider attending this course (see <https://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/gpcah/education/training-opportunities/> for details) to improve your understanding of agricultural health and to meet partners who might be willing to help you propose and complete your project.

Below are some considerations for personnel on your project:

- **Ability to recruiting community members:** Given how you plan to interact with your community, who has skills to motivate community members to participate?
- **Training:** If you are developing training materials, who has skills with education? If you are working with a vulnerable population of agricultural workers, have you trained or worked with people in this community before? Provide evidence of how you have been successful in training your community previously.
- **Cultural and linguistic relevance:** Do you need an interpreter? Do you need to provide materials in a language other than English?
- **Educational materials development:** If you are planning to develop training or educational materials, you will need to identify who on your team has the technical skills to ensure the training materials include *best practices* for that hazard. If you don't have that expertise, how will you find it?
- **External expertise:** If your team is lacking in *technical* expertise in safety or health or other skill essential to the success of your project, identify a person who has this expertise and secure their participation in the project.

9) Letters of Support (No page limit)

In this section, you will insert letters of support. Letters of support document the availability of persons or institutions necessary for completion of the project who are not members of the applicant program or organization.

- A) If you have contacted people *external to your organization* to work on the project, it is important request a letter of support from them. Make sure their letter specifically states how their expertise is relevant to the project, and that they have time and approval to commit to the project.
- B) Sometimes in order to demonstrate that a project is significant, it helps to provide a letter of support from a local farmer, health clinic, producer organization, or other advocates of agriculture in support of your project, explaining why it is important to the local community and to the improvement of agricultural health and safety, overall.

10) Appendices (No page limit)

Provide in the Appendices materials that are important to understanding the application and that were not included in other sections of the grant proposal. Some useful items to include as appendices are surveys/questionnaires (especially those planned for inclusion in the proposed project), background information on web tools or smartphone apps proposed for use, previously developed training materials, public service announcement scripts, and press-releases.

11) Assurance Form (1 page)

Complete and provide the assurance form with signatures.

III. Additional Information

For more information on the pilot grant program, go to <https://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/gpcah/current-projects/pilot-grant-program/>

A full list of previous community-based projects can be viewed here: <https://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/gpcah/funded-community-grants/>

If you have additional questions regarding your pilot grant proposal submission, please contact the GPCAH Center Coordinator, H. Russ Foushee, at herman-foushee@uiowa.edu