

Episode Title: Get Inspired! Pilot Grants/Get Inspired: FarmSafe Bonus Episode Highlights Academic and Community Track Pilot Awards

Summary: Interested in applying for a GPCAH pilot award of up to \$30,000? Listen to this short episode highlighting past recipients, their impact, and what they thought of the GPCAH pilot grant program. Application deadline: June 6, 2025.

Transcript

00:12 J. Patterson

Welcome to the FarmSafe Podcast brought to you by the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health.

The mission of the Great Plains Center is to improve safety and health among agricultural communities. One of the ways the Center accomplishes this mission is by funding pilot projects that promote innovative outreach and research efforts to prevent agricultural injury and illness. Projects can be funded up to \$30,000 which can be used to cover staff salary, supplies, equipment, materials, and other expenses necessary to complete the project.

In this bonus episode, we are highlighting previous episodes of FarmSafe where we shared stories from pilot grant recipients. In Season 1, we brought you stories from four pilot grant recipients. We are highlighting these great studies and community projects in hopes that they will help inspire you to come up with your own pilot grant ideas.

00:58 J. Patterson

At the Great Plains, we offer two different types of funding through our community and academic-track pilot grants. We'll highlight community pilot grants first. These typically focus on outreach or education. Proposals are typically submitted by staff members of community-based organizations who want to develop and deliver evidence-based agricultural health outreach programs.

01:17 J. Patterson

We have funded a project out of the Avera Health Center in South Dakota to reduce emergency room visits for local Hutterite communities by bringing farm safety education to their community. More recently, pilots awarded to Meg Moynihan from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and Don Wick, a farm broadcaster with the Red River Farm network, developed the beginning of the Transformation Podcast.

In 2018, Meg and Don received a Great Plains pilot grant, called "Airing out Farm Stress," aimed at tackling the silence around how the stresses inherent in agricultural production can affect the mental, physical, and emotional well-being of agricultural workers. They partnered with a local radio network to create 60-second segments to air to a listening audience of more than 100,000 North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota agricultural workers and family members. The project also led to the creation of more in-depth podcasts on mental health topics.

Here they discuss how they came up with the idea and how the pilot grant spurred creativity and freedom to explore:

02:15 M. Moynihan

"This goes back to a conversation that Don and I had after an interview one day, I think. Don had called in response to a press release—probably something about our Minnesota Farm and Rural Helpline. And after the recording, you know, we just sort of chatted, and I think you said Don, "Gee, I'm getting a lot of calls and talking to a lot of people who just really seem up against the wall." And this was, I'm trying to think of what date this was. This would have been 2017 or 2018, you know, and we had been through so many consistent years of low prices and weather challenges, and things. And Don was just talking about how down farmers were, and I think that you and I just started talking about that, and that was the kernel of, what could we do through radio? Which I've used a lot, I mean I'm a big fan of radio, because I know from personal experience that farmers always have the radio on. And I think it's easier to get a message to farmers when they're already paying attention and not ask them to pay attention to something new.

03:15 D. Wick

"I think we wanted to try to create some awareness, we wanted to reduce some of the stigma associated with farm stress and mental wellness, and that's really what we've been able to share during this whole series. The series ran from April of '19 through June of

2021. And now we're back actually just starting again with the second round of Transformation. So, to me, it's those stories. I don't know what your thoughts are Meg, but that's really what this is all about."

03:42 M. Moynihan

Well, you know, it really resonated, because the funding from Great Plains, the pilot funding was just that. It was pilot funding, and it supported the creation and broadcast of 5 episodes, and very rapidly Don was able to make connections with other businesses and community foundations that wanted to support these stories. And so, it blew past those first 5 episodes and turned into its own thing, and I don't know how many episodes we ended up with Don, and if you have an idea of how many organizations or companies helped underwrite a portion of that, but it was a lot.

04:20 M. Moynihan

I guess you could look at this as really successful seed money. Sometimes you plant a seed, and you don't know if it's old or moldy, and it's not going to grow, and sometimes you plant a seed and it rockets out of the ground and in our case, it really rocketed out of the ground, and it exceeded my expectations. I think it exceeded a lot of expectations, and I can remember going to a legislative hearing in St. Paul, sort of an informational hearing. We like to keep legislators updated on emerging issues and continuing issues. And so, this was one about mental health and farm stress, and I was describing the Transformation program, and several legislators said, "Why is this only in the Red River Valley?" "Why is this only at Northern Minnesota? We need this in my part of the state."

I will say that I think that framing this as a pilot is really wonderful because it challenges people's creativity, and I think that too often we feel like we are writing proposals or securing funds for something that we have to be sure it's going to work. And I think there's really room for creativity and you need a little bit of leeway to throw the spaghetti at the wall and say we're gonna do our best and we'll learn along the way, but it may not turn out the way we thought it would. Now in our case it did – plus. But it gave us the liberty to try things and to do things a little bit differently. Somehow, we need to spur more creativity and think about new ways of doing things, new topics to explore, new kinds of partnerships, and that can be generated with a pilot grant.

05:44 J. Patterson

Next up is Dr. David Brown, a behavioral health state specialist with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, who works with programs on farm stress management, mental health literacy, and suicide prevention. He received a Great Plains community-track pilot grant in 2019 for his project titled, "Stress on the Farm: Strategies to Help Each Other." He worked collaboratively with ag and natural resources specialists across the state through Iowa State University Extension to develop and implement a short, culturally specific suicide prevention program for agriculture producers and landowners in Iowa.

06:18 D. Brown

We wanted, our own model that was more specific to the agricultural community that we knew that the farmers could remember, and that was "corn".

And so that was to Choose to engage, Offer assistance to support, provide Resources locally and hotlines, and then the "n" was for Never leave a person alone without a plan and without hope. And so that was the model that we used to provide the training. We provided 3 different scenarios for them to practice using the model. We also provided a list of warning signs of suicide, so that they kinda could observe those in the scenarios, so they knew what to look for, and then how to implement the CORN model related to those scenarios, and then at the end we provided a lot of different resources that they could access as well.

We knew that farmers, producers had a lot higher rate of suicide than the general population. We also knew that they had a lot higher rate of depression, anxiety than the general population, and so we felt it was important to get out and to start the conversation about suicide prevention in the agricultural community. Now, what was really interesting is, the timing could not have been better because right after we finished one of our last presentations, the COVID pandemic struck and so we did all of these programs in person, so we had the resources, information out to the farmers and the landowners in Iowa ahead of the pandemic. And so really it was just fortunate timing.

07:56 D. Brown

"If you have an idea of what you'd like to do, or you know, gosh, "if I just had a little bit more money, I'd have this great project I'd like to implement and offer," this is a great source of funding to be able to do that. It's enough funding to get a project off the ground, and if it's, smaller projects, certainly, you're able to implement it as well get as much data as you can to provide that. If you have an idea that you want to try to test out, it's a great opportunity."

08:22 J. Patterson

In addition to community grants, the GPCAH Pilot Grant program has an academic track. This academic track is for students, staff, and faculty of academic institutions who are creating new agricultural safety and health knowledge or assessing best safety and health practices to prevent illness and injury resulting from agricultural work exposures.

As a PhD student in 2020, Yanni Liang received a pilot grant for her project called, "Examining the role of agricultural cooperatives in protecting farmers' mental health." Cooperatives provide farmer-members market stability, technical support, and support networks, and Yanni wanted to know if and how these supports affected farmers' mental health.

09:01 Y. Lang

The goal of that project was really [to] try to understand from a community level, but also from an organizational level, what are some of the resources that are available [that] already exist [in] the communities that can potentially help farmers mitigate the mental health risk. Because, for context, that project really started at a time where we had heard a lot of, at least from the news and media, about farmers' depression and suicide in the Midwest.

But going through that whole process of trying to develop a grant proposal, figure out what to put in the grant proposal, try to convince the grant reviewers that your ideas are worth pursuing and try to convince them that it would be really helpful to get the funding so that's really a great skill set to develop. So that's for the grant writing piece of it. But then, once I got the money, then there's another great experience attached to it, which is, trying figure out how to manage the grant money. How do you figure out who to work with to help recruit your participants? Because participants don't just come to your doors and say, "I'm interested in your study," even though you compensate them. People are busy, and people have priorities so that's a great way to again to experience that. How do you navigate all these little hurdles that are out there for you to figure out as a PhD student?

10:24 J. Patterson

Maya Ramaswamy is a health scientist with the CDC. She graduated with a PhD in Occupational & Environmental Health from the University of Iowa in 2018. In 2015, Maya received a pilot grant for a project titled, "Identifying job demands and health outcomes among Iowa beginning farmers."

10:42 M. Ramaswamy

This pilot grant helped me learn how to write a grant application and helped lead me towards writing other successful applications. After this grant application, I wrote three other successful pilot grant applications and was funded to do all of my PhD dissertation research. This was a really amazing opportunity to do primary research, and it's really helped my career since I graduated from the University of Iowa.

11:10 J. Patterson

Listen to the full episodes to learn about these studies. If we've inspired you to think of a new community or academic pilot grant idea, let us know. We will begin accepting applications for both academic and community track pilot grant awards on April 3rd, 2023. The application deadline is July 3rd.

Please visit gpcah.org to learn more about the application process.

11:41 M. Bentley

We want to hear from you. Share your stories about health and safety issues on the farm, about injuries that made you change the way you work, or about the ways you keep yourself and others safe on your farm. Also let us know if there's questions you have or topics that you want to hear about on the air. You can visit our website, gpcah.org or email us.

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Episode Resources

- [GPCAH Pilot Grant Program Info and RFA](#)

Photo

