

**Outreach Scholars Academy – 2007
Project Proposal**

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1. Project Title: Helping Older Adults to Identify and Select Whole Grain Foods

2. Project Description

I am currently working on a five-station (NH, MA, MD, MN, and DC), Hatch grant funded, applied research study to investigate how older adults identify whole grain foods. The research protocol was developed, pre-tested, and revised by collaborating researchers during early 2006. The research protocol was implemented via in-person interviews with 95 older adults in four states and the District of Columbia. Analysis of these data is currently in progress and will be completed later in 2007.

My Outreach Scholarship project will build on and extend the results of this applied research study.

Specifically, I will:

1. Collaborate with current research colleagues to prepare a manuscript as a means of disseminating results from this study to the broader nutrition community.
2. Prior to developing an educational intervention, I will design and complete a professional development plan to learn more about community-based participatory research methods. Cooperative Extension has a strong history of involving target audiences in program development. I would like to explore the use of these methods – especially with older adults. Older adults have much to offer the research community; including, but not limited to, their interest and motivation in maintaining health, their knowledge and experience in buying food and preparing meals, and their time and commitment to helping others in their communities.
3. Lastly, I will identify and work with research collaborators, community agencies, and members of the target audience to prepare a grant proposal to translate these research results into an education program designed to help older adults identify whole grain foods and increase consumption.

This project supports the UNH Academic Plan's (2003-2008) strategic theme of Engagement and Outreach. Using our research study results to develop an education program for older adults to identify and select more whole grain foods is an example of the application and dissemination of knowledge generated at UNH and other northeast land-grant universities while partnering with the target community of interest.

3. Background Information - Issue/Problem Statement

Whole grain foods contain numerous bioactive compounds that are involved in reducing oxidative damage in tissues, improving gastrointestinal function, as well as other physiological processes. Whole grain food consumption is associated with a reduce risk of cardiovascular disease, type II diabetes, certain cancers, and improved weight management. The US Dietary Guidelines for Americans (2005) recommends that Americans eat at least three servings of whole grain foods each day, however, survey data indicates a typical daily intake is slightly less than one serving.

Older adults are the fastest growing population segment in the US. At present, adults 65 years of age or older comprise 12.1% of the US population. By 2030, this proportion will rise to about 20% of the US population. Lifestyle factors such as diet will become increasingly important in maintaining and enhancing health and overall quality of life as the nation's population ages.

My research agenda focuses on utilizing cognitive theories to elucidate nutrition-related knowledge, behaviors and practices from the target audience's perspective and to use that information to develop high-impact education programs. One area of particular interest is food acquisition. Food acquisition is a critical step in the food provisioning process for it determines, in part, which and how much food is available for household members. For example, nutrition educators recommend consumers read the nutrition label at the grocery store to compare and select the most healthful food option; however, few studies have investigated if, and how, consumers understand and practice that recommendation to select whole grain foods.

4. Project Details Goals and Objectives

The goal of this project is to translate the results of this multi-state research study into an education program for older adults to improve their ability to identify whole grain foods and, subsequently, increase their consumption of these foods.

Objectives:

- To prepare and submit for publication a manuscript of our applied research study results.
- To increase my knowledge of community-based participatory research methods.
- To prepare and submit a grant proposal to fund development and implementation of an education program on whole grain foods targeting older adults.

Target Population/Audience

There are several target audiences involved in this project:

- The primary target audience is older adults residing in New Hampshire and the other northeast states participating in the project. Older adults will be involved at two levels – as the primary target audience for the education program and as part of the planning team for the grant proposal and the education program.

- A secondary audience is the agencies/groups servicing older adults we will collaborate with to develop the grant application as well as the education program.
- A tertiary audience is the group of research colleagues from other states collaborating on this project (manuscript) and future projects (i.e. the grant proposal to develop the education program).

Methods

- I will work with my current research colleagues to draft, review, and submit the manuscript once data analysis of our study is completed.
- I will conduct a literature review of community-based participator research methods. I will seek out UNH researchers skilled in participatory methods and interview them about their experiences and potential to collaborate on a future grant application.
- As a requisite to preparing the grant proposal, I will work with selected county-based Cooperative Extension Educators to establish and develop relationships with agencies targeting older adults. These agencies and others will be solicited to participate in the grant development process. They will also be requested to recruit one member of the target audience to assist us in the grant development process as well as the program development process.

Evidence of External Collaboration and Partnership

There are two external partners identified for this project:

1. I am currently working closely with research colleagues in Massachusetts, Maryland, and Minnesota on all aspects of the current research study. I will continue to work closely with this group to prepare and submit a manuscript of the study results.
2. The second external partner will be comprised of agencies/organizations working with older adults (e.g. elderly meal sites) and members of the target audience. The benefits of involving these groups and individuals are numerous. They can provide access to the target audience and a location for recruiting volunteers and participants as well as community-based meeting space for education programs. Most importantly, their input on content and implementation of the education program would help to ensure success. Older adults participating in our study interviews indicated their interest in learning more about nutrition and how important it was to them to maintain their health. The education program would provide them additional tools for selecting a healthful diet.

Expected Impact

The expected impact for the agencies/organizations participating in the project will be to further their goal of maintaining and enhancing the health of the older adults they serve. For older adult meal sites, this connection direct.

Scholarly Connection

While I plan and evaluate many educational programs, this project adds a new dimension – the inclusion of outreach scholarship during the planning phase of the project. One of

my professional goals is to prepare and submit manuscripts to peer-reviewed journals. This project ties together several of my professional interests – older adults, nutrition, and the use of cognitive theory community-based participatory methods to plan and implement educational programs.

5. Evaluation Plan

Evaluation of the scholarship component of this plan will be based on the acceptance of the manuscript in a peer-reviewed journal.

The partnership with agencies/organizations serving older adults and the older adults who volunteer to assist us with planning and implementing the intervention will participate in an evaluation process. The evaluation method selected will depend on the number of agencies and or volunteers participating. For example, interviews with representatives of selected agencies could be utilized to assess if, and how, the project benefited the organization. Interviews or surveys could be used with the older adult volunteers.