

Engagement Incentive Grant
Division of Communication and Marketing
Kansas State University

Collaboration: North Salina Community Development, Inc. and Kansas State University Salina

This application is a formal request to the Center for Community Engagement and Development, Kansas State University, for a grant of \$10,000 in support of an interdisciplinary collaborative project with the North Salina Community Development, Inc (NSCD), Salina, Kansas and other collaborators.

The city of Salina, Kansas has a population of just fewer than 48,000 and is placed in an ideal location, situated against two major Interstates, I-70 and I-135. Our community of concern is located in the north section of the City. It is an older part of town encompassing approximately two square miles of land and nearly 3,000 people. The income in this area is less than Salina's median income of \$42,027. Of the students attending the two grade schools that serve this north Salina area, 82.60% and 73.55% qualify for free or reduced lunches. Of the population in north Salina, 26.9% is Asian, Latino, African American or other minority designation. About half of the homes are owner occupied.

Introduction to North Salina and the North Salina Community Development, Inc.

NSCD was established October 21, 2010 and is incorporated as a not-for-profit in the state of Kansas and is currently in the process of applying for 501(c)(3) status. The group adopted by-laws on January 2013, and an official board of directors was established and officers elected. NSCD meetings are held at the Salvation Army Community Center the third Thursday of each month, with approximately 20-40 people attending. Their website is at <http://northsalina.org>.

NSCD is an organization of community leaders, business owners, property owners, and residents that are working towards reversing an "area of change" and decline identified in the Salina Comprehensive Plan. NSCD shares common goals of enhancing the community and providing an attractive location for economic development. The mission is to support residents and businesses, by expanding opportunities and to attract new economic development by promoting local assets.

NSCD meeting programs have included educational topics including the following: "The Circles - Bridges Out of Poverty" program, Salina city services, fire safety, public health, property maintenance codes, and a representative of the Kansas PRIDE Program spoke about participating in the program, which is under consideration.

In October, 2011, NSCD was awarded a technical assistance grant from the EPA Sustainable Communities Building Blocks program for the tool, *Sustainable Design and Development*. In 2012, NSCD with support from the EPA, City of Salina, and Salina Chamber of Commerce, conducted two well-attended workshops that focused on visioning and identifying smart growth approaches to incorporating mixed income housing, redevelopment, and revitalization for the distressed area of north Salina. Those in attendance included city staff, community organizations, north Salina business owners, realtors, landlords, developers, and residents. Presentation materials and workshop activities were developed by EPA staff and Jon Blanchard, a local landscape architect and NSCD board member who provided these services pro bono.

One area identified as a direct need was summarized in the EPA Next Steps Memorandum report (June 2012) (available at <http://northsalina.org>) which suggested these "Key Action/Timeframes/Responsibilities":

- Continue to engage and inform residents, businesses, property owners and citywide stakeholders regarding issues, opportunities and accomplishments.
 - Personal door to door contact is important in this community.
 - Events that build community and strengthen social connections should continue.
 - Consider the creation of a blog and the use of social media to communicate events, ideas and initiatives.
 - Provide separate venues for discussion/forums for residents versus business and property owners.

Purpose

The purpose of this proposal is to assist NSCD in their pursuit of "Next Steps" through development of a collaborative project among NSCD, Kansas State University, and other partners. This collaboration encompasses a varied set of activities designed to enhance the initiatives of NSCD. K-State Salina students, the principle investigators from the Art, Science and Business Department, and other Salina collaborators will work to enhance and extend the work of NSCD in the redevelopment of north Salina.

Objectives

1. To increase north Salina residents' participation in redevelopment planning and initiatives for the north Salina neighborhood. This community-organizing project will include the following activities:
 - a) Survey residents door to door
 - b) Identify issues of interest to the residents
 - c) Organize community meetings and events for residents to participate in needs assessment and planning initiatives
 - d) Identify neighborhood leadership
 - e) Develop a communication network including work on organizing the "NextDoor.com" campaign in collaboration with the City of Salina
 - f) Conduct leadership training for residents to develop knowledge and skills for participation in planning and initiatives
2. To increase north Salina businesses' participation in redevelopment planning and initiatives.
 - a) Survey businesses door to door to assess support for redevelopment
 - b) Identify issues of interest to the businesses
 - c) Organize community meetings and events for businesses to participate in needs assessment and planning initiatives
 - d) Identify business leadership
 - e) Develop a communication network for businesses
3. To expand the marketing and public information capacity of NSCD through documentation and development of a "North Salina Redevelopment" media and branding project.
 - a) Collaborate with Kansas Wesleyan University, Paul Greene, Video Production Manager, and Communication Studies students to collect and document archival material, and create and coordinate an individually targeted media package utilizing a social media strategy
 - b) Collaborate with Salina Area Technical College, Cathy Strowig, Department Chair, and Commercial and Advertising Art students to develop a branding and logo plan for NSCD
 - c) Collaborate with north Salina associations, organizations, and enterprises for enhancement of NSCD "Summer Barbecue" event and the possible development of a fall "Diversity Food Festival"
4. Other Collaborators offering support in the form of meeting space, training, or volunteers: City of Salina, Serving Salina Together, The Volunteer Connection, Salina Chamber of Commerce, Leadership Salina, Salvation Army, and St. John's Military Academy.

Approach

The general approach to this organizing project is what Rothman calls "Locality Development" or "Community Capacity Development." This approach emphasizes the development of individual and collective capacity to engage community challenges and plan and take action with regard to these challenges. Rothman's words explain: "...the empowerment of people and communities—energizing them to act competently on their own behalf in determining goals and taking civic action." (Rothman, Jack, *Strategies of Community Intervention*, page 141) One key skill for this project is collaboration--where local residents and area businesses learn to work with NSCD and other community collaborators to redevelop the north Salina area. While there are particular initiatives and activities identified for this project, the exact projects depend on the assessments and the setting of priorities with NSCD, residents, and businesses. Business students in the Department of Art, Sciences, and Business involved in the ENACTUS organization (formally Students in Free Enterprise which have conducted numerous community projects using business and entrepreneurship principles), students in the social work program, and community volunteers will work to accomplish the objectives and activities.

The social work students enrolled in socwk325 Human Behavior and the Social Environment II for the spring 2013 semester will conduct an asset based assessment of the north Salina area. This assessment is modeled on the work of Kretzman and McKnight in their workbook entitled: "Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets." The involvement of local residents and businesses will enrich the results of this assessment and can be integrated with the significant assessment and planning already completed by NSCD

The City of Salina's initiative called "NextDoor.com" is the development of a private electronic social neighborhood network of citizens. This network could be used for exchange of services, mutual support, organizing events, crime prevention, sharing of recommendations (babysitters, plumbers, health, etc.), and public participation for the citizens of Salina including north Salina. Communication has been identified as an issue for the area, so this initiative will serve as one concrete building block for the organization of north Salina residents and businesses. The students in their organizing activities will encourage resident participation and help identify social and technical challenges to the implementation of the NextDoor.com network. The City also plans to support the project through GIS mapping.

Finally, the faculty investigators and the students will develop a mixed method evaluation for the project. The primary outcome variables for this evaluation may include: level of participation, quality of participation, leadership development results, level and quality of participation in NextDoor.com, and student knowledge and skill acquisition. The project presents an opportunity to conceptualize and test a kind of "digital community organization." The "Community Tool Box," University of Kansas, resource will be used to discover and assess models for the evaluation of the project. The final research report will consider the successes and challenges discovered while completing the project and will be prepared for possible publication. Students in the socwk525 course will work on project completion during the spring semester 2014.

The Social Work Program, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, 2025 Strategic Plan calls for the program to emphasize "High Impact Teaching Methods" that integrate classroom experiences with hands on action projects and student research. The social work faculty is experienced at the use of role playing and simulation methods to teach social work practice skills. Working in the community with NSCD will provide a high impact teaching method in a community laboratory for learning community organization skills. (Social Work Program, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, KSU 2025 Strategic Plan, in preparation) Academic assessment procedures will be implemented to assess student learning through participation in the north Salina project.

The project would begin July 1, 2013 with community organization and data collection concentrated during the fall semester 2013. Preparation of the data and writing of the research report will be addressed during the spring of 2014 culminating with submission of the mid-project progress report before July 1, 2014. Students will continue to work on project community organization activities during academic year 2014-15. Final report will be submitted by July 1, 2015. This project represents a good opportunity for undergraduate student research. Results will be presented to the City Commission during a public study session by students and faculty.

Principle Investigators

- David Norlin, Associate Professor of Social Work, Social Work Program, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work and the Department of Arts, Sciences and Business
- Greg Stephens, Associate Professor, Business Unit, Department of Arts, Sciences and Business
- Kathy Brockway, Associate Professor, Business Unit, Department of Arts, Sciences and Business

Collaborators

- Barb Young, President, Board of Directors, North Salina Community Development, Inc.
- Gary Hobbie, Director, Community and Development Services, City of Salina
- Jason Gage, City Manager, City of Salina
- Dennis Lauver, President and Chief Executive Officer, Salina Area Chamber of Commerce
- Paul Greene, Kansas Wesleyan, Video Production and Communication Studies Instructor
- Cathy Strowig, Salina Area Technical College, Commercial and Advertising Art Department Chair
- Jon Blanchard, Board of Directors, North Salina Community Development, Inc.