

The broad goals of the proposed project, “Engaging Public Health Practice and Academia: a Model for Public Health Partnership at Kansas State University” are: 1) to foster collaboration between local health departments, and Extension agents, and public health students and faculty; and 2) establish public health practice and academic relationships that will be sustained past the funding period in order to explore an academic health department model at Kansas State University (K-State). These goals will be supported by 1) analyzing data collected by surveys from students, field experience preceptors and employers for themes related to field experiences and career preparation; 2) incorporating stakeholder participation and feedback into program practice to target excellent field experience planning and graduate employment strategies; and 3) meeting face-to-face with public health department directors and staff, and Extension agents to establish and nurture practice-academic relationships.

The MPH program at K-State is an interdepartmental, interdisciplinary program that connects 67 faculty and 104 students from four colleges and 13 academic departments. This accredited program has trained and graduated 154 students for careers in public health since 2004. During their field experience with a public health agency or Extension agent, students apply their academic based knowledge in a practical public health setting. The field experience is the culminating experience that enables students to utilize their critical thinking and problem-solving skills to address challenges in practice and public policy for local, state, national and international agencies. Students also gain leadership and organizational skills during the field experiences, as they are responsible for a project that will inform the field agency on a critical issue. Mentorship during this part of their degree program from their field agency preceptor and from their faculty committee members prepares students for workplace dynamics, project structure and assists with career placement. Field experiences also integrate social and community experiential learning for students. Synergy during these field experience partnerships and leadership opportunities, all serve to purposefully guide students to careers in public health, and provides a training mechanism to prepare for careers in areas of critical workforce shortages including rural and agricultural public health, epidemiology, food safety and other areas in public health and veterinary medicine. The MPH program at K-State has collaborated with public health departments on a total of 34 student field experience projects since 2004. Many of these have been in co-operation with Extension agents in that county. Twenty-six of these student projects were located in local health departments in the State of Kansas as outlined below in Table 1. These field experience sites have not been assessed specifically for K-State MPH student field experience readiness, public health and academic collaboration opportunities, or potential partners for academic public health department models.

To achieve these goals, the readiness and preparation of public health students for field experiences and public health careers by identifying best practices will be explored. The specific objective to foster and establish a relationship of collaboration is as follows:

Table 1. MPH Field Experiences in County Public Health Departments in Kansas

Kansas County Public Health Department	Location	Number of Field Experiences
Douglas	Lawrence	3
Geary	Junction City	2
Hodgeman	Jetmore	1
Johnson	Olathe (two locations)	8
Riley	Manhattan	6
Saline	Salina	2
Sedgewick	Wichita	1
Shawnee	Topeka	1
Wyandotte	Kansas City	2

Objective 1: Develop a collaborative plan for the process of field experiences in public health departments and Extension offices. The outcome of the first objective of this project is adequately prepared students for careers in public health settings (see Table 2). Examination of skills that students are expected to have mastered prior to the field experience, and public health practice skills they are expected to acquire during their field experiences will be performed. Students, field experience preceptors and employers will be surveyed to determine which skills were critical to field experience preparation success and career readiness. These surveys will be initially validated with two public health departments (Riley and Saline counties), Extension agents that have served as field experience mentors for public health students, and a small subset of MPH students that were hired by health departments in Kansas. These skills, as informed by public health agencies and MPH students that have completed field experiences, will be coded for themes, and mapped to the public health core competencies utilized by the MPH program to assess student competence in public health skills. This mapping will serve as a tool to enhance program planning practices for field experiences to ensure student readiness for public health practice. This process of aligning coursework with competencies for both academic and practice will introduce into the MPH program a deliberate and systematic plan for preparing students for the public health workforce. Furthermore, the process of field experience improvement will facilitate the identification of models, practices, and other activities to inform the process of academic public health relationship building. Engagement activities and the project timeline for objective one are represented in table 3.

To achieve goal two, to establish connections with Kansas public health partners, with the purpose of long-term sustainable collaborations, the specific objective is as follows:

Objective 2: To establish mutually beneficial partnerships with Kansas public health practitioners. The outcome of the second objective of this project is a sustainable relationship with health departments and Extension agents in order to promote and advance academic public health in Kansas (see Table 2). The process for developing this academic-practical relationship will be articulated, and best practices will be described. Recommendations

for program development will be provided based on feedback received from stakeholders. Strategies utilized to engage health department staff, university staff and Extension agents to participate in academic public health - practical programming will also be explored. The outcomes of these goals and objectives are reported in Table 2 using the Education Reporting Logic Model. Engagement activities and the project timeline for objective two are represented in table 3.

Table 2. Project Outcomes

Short-term (changes in knowledge, skills)	Medium-term (changes in behavior)	Long-term (changes in condition)
MPH Students gain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core competencies • Leadership skills • Problem-solving skills • Critical thinking skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced program practices for field experiences • Improved career preparation for MPH students • Increased MPH program collaboration with public health departments and Extension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MPH students enter careers in public health leadership roles • MPH faculty, public health department staff and Extension agents develop an academic health department model • Public health professionals enhance their career through leadership roles

Table 3. Project Timeline

Semester	Inputs	Activities	Outputs
Fall 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CECD funding • MPH student(s) • Project Director 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Survey Validation 2. Engagement of Partner Health Departments and Extension Agents 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Successful survey to examine field experience process 2. Successful survey to inform academic public health model
Spring 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MPH student(s) • Project Director • Partner Health Departments • Partner Extension Agents 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Survey Implementation 2. Interview Partner Health Department Director and Staff, and Partner Extension Agents 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Successful Strategy to engage Health Department and Extension Partners
Fall 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MPH student(s) • Project Director • MPH Program and Faculty • Partner and Non-partner Health Departments and Extension Agents 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyze Survey Results 2. Inform MPH Program and Faculty 3. Inform Partner and Non-partner Health Departments and Extension Agents 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community Public Health Network Development 2. Informed Community Public Health Partners 3. MPH faculty capacity building for public health practice

This project will be carried out and informed by a multidisciplinary team of public health faculty and students, local health department personnel, and extension agents in the counties represented by public health student field experiences (see Table 1). The results of this project will be used to inform and sustain the relationship between academic and local public health practitioners. \$10,000 is requested for this project.