FFA Year-Long Living to Serve Grant

FFA Links: <https://www.ffa.org/livingtoserve/types-of-service/>

<https://www.ffa.org/livingtoserve/grants/>

Provide a short overview of your project. It should include the community need identified and how it will be addressed through service and educational outreach. Please write the overview in third person, present tense as shown in the example.  (2-4 sentences)

Example: Sample FFA is addressing hunger by raising laying hens to provide fresh eggs to the local food pantry. In addition, the chapter is hosting 3 workshops for community members on how to raise laying hens and serving as mentors for interested individuals.

The Todd Central FFA chapter is enabling a service-learning project by expanding a cut flower garden and floral design program to be donated to our local senior centers, nursing homes, and local businesses. In addition, students are wishing to develop a curriculum that can be utilized in floral workshops.

How was the community need identified? For example: surveying the community, speaking with city officials or community organizations, etc.

Students were the driving force that sparked this idea within our chapter. With an increasing horticulture pathway in our school and an interest in giving back to our school and community, students have created the idea of raising, harvesting, and providing flowers and education to those in our community. Students have established multiple goals for this projects. They wish to provide enriching activities to an underserved group, educate youth about the horticulture industry, and provide the gift of flowers at free or reduced costs within our community.

As an advisor, I have spoken with individuals in our community about building healthy lifestyles with our elderly community. Resources and recreational activities for our senior residents are limited. To meet this need, students are striving to instruct floral workshops with our local senior citizens center.

Students enrolled in agricultural education, also have strong roots in our local 4-H Youth Development program. Collaboration between the two organizations is essential in our community. Students have spoken with our 4-H agent about opening opportunities to educate others about this industry.

Students have sparked ideas within their class to give back to their peers. An idea that was sparked in class, has led to goals for this project. Students are setting goals to meet the needs of providing affordable flowers to their peers during seasons such as prom and holidays.

This service-learning project positively impacts our students and community in several ways. Students are exposed to hands-on curriculum within the horticulture pathway as they plant, manage, harvest, and arrange locally grown flowers. This project will develop a sense of pride in our students as they may see the fruits of their labor in action. We are channeling resources that can be given to those who support us and to those in need.

How is the issue affecting the community? Include 1-3 statistics on the need.

Our project focuses on serving three main groups: (1) senior citizens, (2) youth of Todd County, and (3) students' peers (high school students).

As stated, resources and recreational activities for our elderly community are limited. Our senior center is welcoming of new activities and nursing homes have limited connections to nature. By working with these groups, we are bringing joy and building confidence in our community. We have one senior center of a county of 12,000+. Therefore, activities are constantly needed. As multiple individuals pass through this center. We have the opportunity to serve anywhere from 10-50 people per session with our senior center.

The Todd County 4-H serves youth ages 9-19. Of those students, approximately 200 of those students are in elementary school. Students designing this project have identified a need to increase agricultural literacy in our community by targeting our youth not enrolled in agricultural education. Students will collaborate with our 4-H agent to construct lessons about the horticulture industry.

Lastly, with a county that has approximately 21% poverty, and a school with 100% free lunch, our students have noticed a need in our school. With bouquets or florals costing large amounts of money, students are wishing to provide more affordable options for their peers during important events such as prom, Valentine's Day, etc.

What role did FFA members play in choosing the need?

Students played an integral role in the creation of this project. A group of 7 students out of our horticulture classes drafted up the idea to produce our own flowers. This idea has been in the works for approximately a year, however, the service idea was drafted up to reach goals of giving back to our community. In the 2022-2023 school year, our school has initiated several school-based, horticulture SAE projects. As these students have focused on establishing methods to expand their SAE projects, this idea was born as the result of student collaboration. Students are striving to fulfill the "Living to Serve" part of the FFA Motto. This project focuses on the Community Engagement sector, however, it is a multi-tier project. Students become involved in environmental and agricultural processes as they sow, raise, and harvest flowers native to our areas. Students are gaining life skills in the budgeting of supplies, program advertising, and essential communication skills. Students gain a sense of community by giving back to our community while the fruits of their labor are given to our local sponsors, nursing homes, peers, etc.

As a project in conjunction with our Greenhouse Technology and Floriculture & Floral Design, we are striving to create worthwhile learning experiences for our students.

Describe potential community partners and their roles in the project.

Community networking will be an essential component of this service learning project. The fruits of our labor will be directly implemented into our local community. Community partners play a large role in our success as an FFA chapter and agriculture department. As stated, our goal is to plant, raise, harvest, and construct cut flower arrangements. Through this project will develop partnerships with our local Senior Citizens Center, 4-H Youth Development program, Todd County Chamber of Commerce, and Todd County School District. These are just the beginning partnerships that we are certain of, the opportunities to expand our partnerships are endless. The senior center and 4-H program will grant our students the opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of floral design and the horticulture industry as they deliver workshops and lessons to these groups. The Chamber of Commerce will provide an opportunity for students to exhibit mastery of floral design as they construct arrangements for the local Agriculture Appreciation Breakfast. The Chamber will also provide us with the support to continue to network and meet with other groups who could become potential partners. Lastly, our school system will be one of our biggest supporters as they have granted us ground to utilize for our cut flower garden. Students wish to provide flowers to our school system for dances and events.

How will the project be infused into classroom learning?

This garden will be directly infused in our classroom environment. With approximately 110+ annually enrolled in the horticulture pathway, students will have the opportunity to develop skills, confidence, and pride in creating their own learning environment to meet the skills and learning necessary to master the Horticulture curriculum. The impact of creating this type of direct, hands-on learning environment will impact our students’ knowledge of growing and harvesting products, budgeting and marketing products, enhancing writing and mathematical skills, and promoting servant leaders in our community. Each student will have a role in the garden as they will be accountable for their contribution to the success. From seed to harvest, each student plays an integral part in each step. Participation, self-reflection, record keeping, and data analysis will be used to evaluate success.

Detail how your FFA chapter plans to take action, throughout the school year (and if you answered “Yes” above – summer months), to impact the community need chosen. The following information should be included throughout your timeline: project planning, any activities occurring in the classroom, service activities, educational outreach and project evaluation.

Fall (August – December 2023)

The fall will play a key role in the establishment of our project. As of May, 2023, our students have established a small garden. However, this is not enough to suffice the needs of our project. The fall will be dedicated to two main tasks: (1) Land Preparation and (2) Community Networking.

We have targeted spring bulbs to be our first major crop to be harvested. Tulips, Daffodils, Anemones, and Ranunculus will be our targeted florals. Bulbs and corms will be acquired utilizing grant funds. Students enrolled in the Floriculture & Floral Design course will complete the task of planting the bulbs and corms in the months of September - October of 2023.

This task requires students to take a deep dive into the critical skills of understanding environmental conditions, the overwintering process of flowers, and land preparation. Our agriculture department currently owns a small garden cultivator. This will be used for basic ground tillage. The garden bed will be prepped with this cultivator by the students. Furthermore, bed preparation will include completing soil testing, amending soil as needed, the setup of grow tunnels, etc. Students will also be tasked with observing, analyzing, and problem-solving any situations related to weather. As needed, students will cover garden areas, mulch, etc.

Furthermore, community networking will be an integral step to be implemented in the fall season. As mentioned in our touchpoints, students are striving to establish a strong community base with this project. During the fall months, students will be tasked with networking with our local senior center. Our first goal is to provide a free workshop to our senior citizens center starting in March 2024. Students will coordinate times to meet with the director of the center to establish meeting times, lesson length, objectives, gather supplies, and construct lesson plans. Along with our senior center, students will be coordinating with our local 4-H Youth Development program. Similar tasks will be delegated with this goal. However, students will analyze and collaborate to discover how to teach similar content to different audiences. The 4-H lessons are predicted to begin in December of 2023.

Spring (January – May 2024)

Spring will begin a very busy season within this project. Building off of the fall months, we will be focusing on three main components within the spring of 2024: (1) Delivery of lessons/workshops, (2) Harvesting of fall bulbs, and (3) Planting summer crops.

As mentioned, students will be delivering content to two distinct groups: senior citizens and local youth. At the conclusion of the fall, students will have all content and lessons finalized. One 4-H lesson will be completed, while the senior center lesson will be begin in March. By this point, all students will need to do is secure specific materials such as live florals that cannot be gathered early. Students will have coordinated dates and times to deliver lessons to both groups. Upon conclusion of the workshops, students will reflect with the coordinators of both groups to establish further workshops and discuss improvements for upcoming lessons.

Our second focus for the spring season is to harvest the fall planted florals. Being in USDA garden zone 6b, we will begin seeing blooms in March. Students enrolled in the Floriculture and Floral Design course will be responsible for harvesting the florals. Students will develop an understanding of when to harvest florals, how to extend vase life, and maximizing stem length. The flowers harvested during these months will be utilized for three purposes. The first will be for our senior center workshop. Majority of the flowers will be allocated for this tasks. Second, we will utilize flowers to decorate the "Ham Basket" for our local Chamber of Commerce Agricultural Breakfast in early March. Each year, a local family donates a country ham produced on their farm to be auctioned off during the breakfast. Proceeds from the ham will be split between Todd County 4-H and Todd Central FFA. The Todd Central Agriculture Department is tasked each year with decorating the basket that the ham is displayed in each year. The third use of these flowers will be utilized for student learning in the Floriculture & Floral Design course. Students will learn and demonstrate how to create new designs utilizing the flowers produced in their garden.

The third, and perhaps most important, sector of the spring season will be dedicated to starting our summer florals. Starting in January, students will begin starting seeds indoors for flowers such as Snapdragons, Statice, and Strawflower that require a long grow period. Students will develop an understanding of germination requirements as they utilize heat mats, humidity domes, and grow lights to produce the hardiest seedlings. Students will also be tasked with understanding the importance of USDA garden zones and frost dates within our area as they time out seed starting dates. Planting dates will range from January-May and include indoor seed starting, along with direct seeding. Along with seeds, students will be starting plants from tubers and roots, as well. Popular cut flowers, including Dahlias and Lilies will be purchased in tuber or root form. These tubers will be directly planted into the ground after the last frost date, which is typically mid-April in our garden zone. Plants started in the spring will bloom from early summer up until our first frost date in late fall.

Summer (June – August 2024)

The summer season is predicted to be an exciting season for this project. The summer will be dedicated to two main purposes: (1) garden maintenance, and (2) harvesting.

With school being out of session, much of our student help will disappear. However, this provides an amazing opportunity for the students coordinating this project. A group of approximately 4-6 students have dedicated to pursuing, school-based SAE projects within the horticulture area. Students responsible for caring for the garden will be conducting an unpaid placement SAE. Students will collaborate to create working schedules, scout fields, pull weeds, and monitor plant health.

The students caring for the garden will be tasked with a large responsibility. That responsibility being the harvesting of flowers during the summer months. As students in the spring developed an understanding of peak times to harvest, students will continue demonstrating these skills as they harvest flowers from our garden during the summer. Flowers harvested during the summer months can be utilized for any further workshops scheduled during the summer. During times where there are no workshops, students will donate flowers to local businesses, FFA sponsors, and our local nursing homes. Furthermore, in the future, we would like to find an outlet to market our flowers either through a local produce stand or attending farmers markets in surrounding communities.

Yearlong service-learning projects require at least four (4) touch-points with the community. These touch-points should educate and engage the community in addressing the need and not just promote the project or chapter. Example touch-points include, but are not limited too; workshops, hosting a booth at a local event, handing out informational flyers or writing an article for the local paper.

Describe how your FFA chapter plans to provide educational outreach to impact the community need chosen. The following topics should be included in your description.

Type(s) of touch-points

Topic(s) of the touch-points

When the touch-points will occur

Potential audience for the touch-points

Role of FFA members in educational outreach activities

Note: An activity that only promotes the project or chapter does not qualify as one of the four required touch-points.

Our chapter has identified four touch-points to be implemented within our community. The touch-points are as followed:

1. Senior Citizen Center Workshop: One of the primary goals of our project is to develop a service project that will give back to members of our community. The senior center is our target audience. This group was selected as we feel it is an underserved group within our community. Through this project, we are establishing a new community partnership; something that we feel is essential in any agriculture department. Students will take on great leadership as they will be responsible for planning and executing a step-by-step floral design workshop. This activity will offer an enriching and unique opportunity for the senior citizens of Todd County. Participants will be able to take the arrangement they created back to their homes. It is our hope that this workshop can continue to grow after our initial set-up and eventually lead to opportunities to provide workshops at other venues within our community. We anticipate hosting the first workshop by March 2024.

2. Youth Education: Our FFA chapter has a valued partnership with our local 4-H extension office. In our community, 4-H is the first introduction to agriculture for our local youth. It is common for many FFA members to also be an active 4-H member. Through our partnership with Todd County 4-H, our chapter has collaborated in many events such as networking opportunities, serving farmers, and more. A driving factor in this project is education, not just for high school students, but for all youth in our community. FFA members will coordinate with the local 4-H Agent to construct, critique, and deliver lessons related to horticulture and floriculture content to our young 4-H members (primarily ages 9-14). This touch-point is projected to deliver, at minimum, 3 lessons. We anticipate starting these lessons by December of 2023.

3. Media Development: Media Development and Marketing are becoming essential career skills in today's society. With digital access at our fingertips, many employers find it dire that employees are skilled in this area. This is a skill that we are focusing on in our project. While this project is a service project, advocating for our program is vital to opening new community partnerships. Students will utilize multiple media outlets including, but not limited to: Canva, social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, etc.), and photo/video editing programs. Students will develop proficiency in digital literacy as they utilize these outlets for educational and marketing purposes.

4. School Bouquets: The fourth and final touchpoint focuses on serving our school community. Students have identified a need within their school, particularly around the time of school dances or holidays. For example, being in a low socio-economic community, many students are unable to purchase flowers for events such as prom. The students coordinating this project have identified the solution to this issue by offering bouquets grown and designed by the Floriculture and Floral Design course. These bouquets will be offered at price significantly cheaper in comparison to those from florists. Students wish to offer this service for school dances and holidays such as Valentine's or Christmas. This touchpoint will allow students to exhibit pride in their work while serving their peers.