“Developing and promoting outdoor recreational assets to positively improve Morehead-Rowan County’s economy, health and environment”

Sub-Contract Grantee
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ATP Project Outline

Background:
For the past seven years Morehead State University’s ATP student projects have focused on understanding the complexity of factors that impact quality of life. Students enrolled in RAPP 300: Seminar in Regional Issues I have worked with community leaders to develop projects that address a community need. Examining economic and community development as they impact quality of life, students have explored various causal factors through course readings and discussions, interviewing local leaders and working with local organizations, and conducting applied research. The students share their findings with all of the community partners involved. The projects help students gain an understanding of the needs of their community, the importance of long-term planning, and the importance of building on past successes by utilizing previous RAPP 300 projects.

Working with NewCity Morehead, the fall 2011 ATP class at Morehead State University developed a ‘community indicators project.’ After further consultation with NewCity Morehead, the 2012 ATP class built on the community indicators by compiling data on 16 of the indicators. The reports generated by these classes included indicators related to human health, economics, and environment. The 2013 class used these results to engage a range of community organizations in discussions about quality of life and the specific needs of Morehead and Rowan County, resulting in a project that focused on helping to improve our community’s human health, environment, and economy through outdoor recreation.

The 2013 class met with community partners to gain a better knowledge of the causal factors that account for the persistent distress of our community and service region. After listening to guest speakers from the community and visiting a range of organizations, the students discussed areas for more research. Each student conducted a detailed literature review on a specific area related to human health, environment, and economy. The literature reviews were used to select an emphasis for the class project that best fit the current needs of the community. The students selected parks and recreational assets as the focus with the support of our primary partner, NewCity Morehead.

Based on their research, there is a strong connection between parks and outdoor recreational assets on the one hand and the economy, human health, and the environment on the other. Most importantly there are several community organizations that have expressed a need for better promotion and improvements of our outdoor recreation resources. The City of Morehead’s long-term planning process for Rowan County has identified improvements in outdoor recreation opportunities as a top issue. Other activities within our community that make this issue relevant are 1) NewCity Morehead recently established outdoor recreation as a
funding priority, 2) Morehead Tourism is working towards becoming designated as a Trail Town, and 3) community organizations such as Daniel Boone Rails to Trails, Triplett Creek Watershed Group, and Sustainable Morehead, Inc. are working together to recommend and develop outdoor recreation resources.

As a result, the students’ project for 2014-15 will be to actively engage with these community partners, primarily Morehead Tourism, to examine how the community’s outdoor recreational assets can be better tied together and promoted in order to positively impact the economy, health, and environment in Morehead-Rowan County.

Project Details:

Community partners and central focus of the research project:
The particular focus for the 2014-15 course project has resulted in a new primary community partner – Morehead Tourism. Morehead Tourism is excited to have the opportunity to work with the RAPP 300 students in a hands-on project that will benefit the community. The central focus of the students’ community project this coming year will be on helping Morehead Tourism to develop and promote outdoor recreational assets that are expected to enhance not only the community’s economy, but also its health and environment in a sustainable way. Other key organizations that the students will engage during the course of this project include Sustainable Morehead, City of Morehead, Rowan County Fiscal Court, NewCity Morehead, Morehead-Rowan County Chamber of Commerce, Rowan County Health Coalition, and Daniel Boone Rails to Trails.

April Haight, course instructor, will meet with Joy Brown, Director of Morehead Tourism, over the summer to discuss the project goals and objectives and develop potential applied projects that meet the needs of the community as well as ATP’s expectations.

Number and description of planned meetings with the community partners:
This year’s community partners have a flexible schedule that will make it easier for the students to engage with community leaders to conduct an applied project. The students will meet with Morehead Tourism and other community organizations to learn about their recent and ongoing efforts to develop and promote outdoor recreation assets in the community. These meetings will take place over 3 to 4 class periods, as well as in partner offices and in the field. This baseline information will be used by the students and Morehead Tourism to identify particular outdoor recreational assets for further development and promotion and then to work with Morehead Tourism to conduct an applied asset-based project aimed at enhancing the community’s economy, health, and environment in a sustainable way. Such a project may include working with local businesses to make them and their employees more aware of community recreational opportunities, identifying and developing ‘points of interest’ along
community trails, creating markers/displays for points of interest and providing GPS coordinates for them, and developing marketing materials, maps, short videos, and/or testimonials for the website and/or Facebook site. The results of the students’ project will be presented to the community partners.

Course Number, Name, and Instructor:

Course Number: RAPP 300
Course Name: Seminar in Regional Issues I
Instructor: April Haight
Director, Center for Environmental Education
Institute for Regional Analysis and Public Policy
School of Public Affairs, Morehead State University

Project Goals/Objectives:
The goals of this project are to: 1) learn about the needs of Morehead and Rowan County in the area of health, the environment, and recreation; 2) learn about recent and ongoing efforts by Morehead Tourism and other key community organizations to develop and promote outdoor recreational assets located in Morehead-Rowan County; 3) work with Morehead Tourism to conduct an applied asset-based project aimed at enhancing the community’s economy, health, and environment in a sustainable way; and 4) provide project results and useful recommendations to our community partners in the form of a final report to aid their ongoing efforts aimed at helping our community to become more healthy, sustainable, and economically competitive.

Activities that meet the goals/objectives:
This project will:

- Enhance the students’ knowledge of the ARC, Appalachian Kentucky, Rowan County, and the City of Morehead;
- Increase students’ knowledge of their community by meeting with leaders from various local organizations and examining their community’s outdoor recreational assets;
- Provide students with a significant opportunity to engage with partner organizations in completing a meaningful hands-on project that will benefit their community;
- Develop the students’ leadership skills through interactions with issues and resources within the Rowan County community;
- Engage students in an active role while learning more about their community;
- Engage students in place-based community research to assist Rowan County in developing and promoting its outdoor recreational assets to promote a healthy community and economic opportunities, while protecting environmental resources;
• Develop presentation skills by presenting research at the ATP conference in Washington, D.C. and to community organizations;
• Develop presentation skills by developing a poster presentation for the ATP conference, community partners, the School of Public Affairs, and Morehead State University;
• Improve critical thinking, communication and analytic skills, writing, and document development skills.

Project Outcomes:
• 2014 Applied Project—to be conducted in partnership with Morehead Tourism
• 2014 Project Report – documenting all project activities, including partner meetings and collaborations, the applied community project, and other tangible outcomes– all in the context of enhancing the community’s economy, health and environment.
• Poster Presentations
  o School of Public Affairs, Morehead State University
  o ARC Appalachian Teaching Project meeting in Washington, D.C.
  o Posters at the Capitol, Frankfort, KY (pending an accepted abstract)
  o Celebration of Student Scholarship, Morehead State University (pending an accepted abstract)
• PowerPoint/Verbal Presentations
  o School of Public Affairs, Morehead State University
  o ARC Appalachian Teaching Project meeting in Washington, D.C.
  o Morehead Tourism, Sustainable Morehead, City of Morehead, Rowan County Fiscal Court, Morehead-Rowan County Chamber, Rowan County Health Coalition, and/or Daniel Boone Rails to Trails, Inc.

Budget:
All ATP funds will be used to cover travel expenses for students and faculty to attend the December 5-6, 2014 ATP meeting in Washington, D.C. Total = $4,000