



Wisconsin Ag in the Classroom County AITC Organization Handbook

County Organization	Page 2
Keys to a Successful AITC Program	Page 3
Starting an AITC Program	Page 4
Moving Forward	Page 5
Developing a Budget	Page 6
Establishing Goals	Page 7
How can you be involved?	Page 8
Where to find volunteers	Page 9
Working with volunteers	Pages 10-11
Organizing AITC Resources	Page 12
Organizing AITC Resource Tubs	Pages 13-14
County Planning Meeting Draft Agenda	Page 15
Writing Effective Press Releases	Page 16
Tracking Sheet	Page 17
Funding Sources	Page 18
Funding a project or activity- sample	Page 19
Funding a project or activity- template	Page 20

www.wisagclassroom.org

County Organization

County AITC Coordinator's Responsibilities:

1. Submit the County AITC Report by July1
2. Work directly with county Farm Bureau in regard to budget, reports to Board of Directors, and conveying information to other committee members, Farm Bureau members and teachers.
3. Organize 2-4 (will vary from county to county) AITC committee planning meetings each year
4. Communicate with the county essay contest coordinator to coordinate promotion of the contest.

Committee's responsibilities:

1. Attend AITC committee planning meetings
2. Assist with various AITC activities
3. Help develop teacher database and communications

How does your county appoint/ask/select committees?

- Asking people to serve
- Appointing people
- Board of Directors nominates or asks
- How are they asked? Are they re-affirmed each year? How is the chairperson selected?
- How do you promote committee involvement?

Coordinating Information, Budgets & Activities with the County FB

- Communicate with county AITC coordinator and committee about budget, reporting on activities, support of activities and communications schedule
 - i. How to get items into newsletter and what to do with AITC mailings/emails that come from Wisconsin AITC
 - ii. What is the budget for AITC? How can the committee utilize the funds? Are there forms that need to be filled out for reimbursement or how are funds distributed?
- Are monthly, quarterly or annual reports needed by the Board of Directors? Or attendance at Board or annual meetings?
- Can AITC be featured at annual meeting by a display, items in program book, activity or other ways?
- If there is a county Soybean Science Kit, does the county support stocking and refilling the kit as teachers use it? Communicate with the county essay coordinator to promote the contest and their activities.
- Coordinate inventory and distribution of county supported AITC materials with the AITC coordinator and committee. Is there storage available at the county office? If teachers request items, how is that handled? If there are items that can be checked out, how is that handled?

Keys to a Successful AITC Program

1. Form a committee for your county. Develop an invitation list with names that Farm Bureau, other commodity groups, agriculture education instructors, extension has on their lists can offer. Send out a letter for a committee meeting, do some follow-up phone calls to encourage attendance, and have a program that helps them understand the Ag in the Classroom program.
2. Set SMART goals – (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely) Evaluate how many schools you can work with based on available time and funds. Evaluate your volunteers and their availability, skills and background.
3. Utilize resources available to you through the Wisconsin AITC Program, American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture and the National Ag in the Classroom Program. Contact them via telephone, website or mail to get more information. Help in training volunteers, assisting with teacher in-services, or other help is available.
 - www.agclassroom.org
 - www.wisagclassroom.org
 - www.agfoundation.org
4. Report to your county Farm Bureau or interested partners. Let them know the success that you are having. Good communications will help you develop your program, helps with obtaining additional funding and build your volunteer network.
5. Network with other county coordinators at AITC events or on a one-to-one basis. Share ideas, success stories and resources. Ask questions of each other. Most people involved in AITC are more than willing to give help and ideas to new programs.

Starting an Ag in the Classroom Program

1. Contact your county Farm Bureau to find out if there are any members on an Ag in the Classroom committee or any past history of a program. Is there a person designated as the County AITC Coordinator with the Wisconsin AITC Program? You can find out by contact Darlene Arneson at 608-828-5644 or darneson@wfbf.com
2. See to it that your county establishes a budget to work with – you don't need to spend a fortune. There are many things you can do that won't cost a lot. A budget of \$250 or less can go a long way. Some things to budget for:
 - a. Materials donated to schools
 - b. Scholarships for teachers to attend Teachers in-services, training, or other Ag in the Classroom related conferences.
 - c. Postage, mailings and office-related expenses
 - d. Amount to reimburse volunteers visiting classrooms or hosting farm tours
3. Form a committee for your county. Develop an invitation list with names that Farm Bureau, other commodity groups, agriculture education instructors, extension has on their lists can offer. Send out a letter for a committee meeting, do some follow-up phone calls to encourage attendance, and have a program that helps them understand the Ag in the Classroom program.
4. Set SMART goals – (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely) Evaluate how many schools you can work with based on available time and funds. Evaluate your volunteers and their availability, skills and background.
5. Utilize resources available to you through the Wisconsin AITC Program and the USDA Program. Contact them via telephone, website or mail to get more information. Help in training volunteers, assisting with teacher in-services, or other help is available.
 - a. www.agclassroom.org
 - b. www.wisagclassroom.org
 - c. www.agfoundation.org
6. Report to your county Farm Bureau or interested partners. Let them know the success that you are having. Good communications will help you develop your program, helps with obtaining additional funding and build your volunteer network.
7. Network with other county coordinators at AITC events or on a one-to-one basis. Share ideas, success stories and resources. Ask questions of each other. Most people involved in AITC are more than willing to give help and ideas to new programs.

Moving forward.... _____ County

Focusing on Dairy promotion, Ag in the Classroom, Promotion and Education Activities in our county:

What works well:

What activities need review or improvement:

Areas we currently have no programs or activities:

What should be done before our next county board meeting?

Looking at our county committee structure, what committees?

- Need to meet to plan 2019 activities?
- Need to look at committee members (add, remove)?
- Do they know their budget? Do they need more money?

What are our goals for this year?

- Dairy Promotion
- Ag in the Classroom
- Promotion & Education

Developing a Budget

It's not any different than farming, we need to know our "cost of production" before we begin a project!

Make a list of all items needed for the project

- Supplies
- Items you need to order- don't forget sales tax and shipping costs!
- Printing needs
- Postage and packaging
- Mileage and volunteer expenses
- Equipment
- Hourly wages or honorariums or stipends
- Storage needs
- Historical documentation
- Promotion of the project or activity
- Anything else?

Get competitive bids on the large items or things you can compare on-line or locally

Are there in-kind donations or the possibility for them?

Make sure all involved are aware of the budget. Who has the authority to approve expenses?

How is the money handled?

Establishing Goals for County Ag in the Classroom Programs

It is always important to establish goals for your county Ag in the Classroom (AITC) programs. Goal setting provides an opportunity to review past activities, brainstorm possible activities and programs, and play an important part of the planning process. Goals that are SMART will also provide you with many of the planning details needed for program success! This guide will give you examples and ideas of the types of goals your committee could establish. They are simply guidelines as you will find your program is unique and will want to add, subtract or edit some of the examples to fit your plans!

SMART goals are:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Realistic
- Timely

When should goals be completed? Late summer or early fall are recommended planning times for AITC so that you are able to begin the school year with goals, plans and a framework for a successful school year.

Short and long term goals- You will probably have a mix of both types of goals as you plan out your year, long-range plans for the program, and different size projects and programs.

Area	Sample Goals
Committees	Our committee will have representatives from each school district, an elementary teacher, middle school teacher, and a high school agriculture teacher.
	Our committee will meet a minimum of four times.
Essay Contest	Our county will have 50 entries this year from at least three schools.
Teacher Training	Our county will have one teacher attend a training session.
Soybean Science Kit	We will have at least five schools use the kit this year
County AITC Report	We will submit the report by the July 1 deadline
Newsletter articles	We will have ___ articles in the District FB newsletter and submit at least three articles to local newspapers
County FB Reports	We will submit at least four reports to the county FB Board of Directors
Grants	We will have 3 teachers apply for Teacher Mini-Grants and our county AITC will apply for a Matching Grant

How can you be involved?

1. Get involved on your county AITC Committee – all it takes is a small group with some good ideas and a willingness to make a difference. If your county doesn't have an established committee, start one!
2. See to it that your county establishes a budget to work with – you don't need to spend a fortune. There are many things you can do that won't cost a lot. A budget of \$250 or less can go a long way. Some things to budget for:
 - Materials donated to schools
 - Scholarships for teachers to attend Teachers in-services, training, or other Ag in the Classroom related conferences.
 - Postage, mailings and office-related expenses
 - Amount to reimburse volunteers visiting classrooms or hosting farm tours
3. Promote this program in your local schools – find out who makes the decisions regarding curriculum and make an appointment to visit with that individual – it may be the principal or the curriculum director. Take samples of all the materials that the Wisconsin Ag in the Classroom program has to offer.
4. Start small – evaluate how many schools you can work with based on available time and funds. Set some goals for your program, but keep them realistic and attainable.
5. Assemble a list of farmers from your county who would host a farm tour for local classrooms or go into classrooms to give presentations. If possible, categorize the list by the type of farm. **DISTRIBUTE THIS LIST TO EVERY SCHOOL IN THE COUNTY.** This is a great way to involve Farm Bureau members in a worthwhile project.
6. Distributing free resource materials from Farm Bureau and/or other ag groups is a great way to get your foot in the door. We also have quality items such as books, videos & brochures that are available for purchase. Consider donating books, videos, etc. to schools and/or libraries. A great resource is the website: www.wisagclassroom.org
7. Adopt a classroom – send the class letters occasionally to explain what is happening on your farm during the year. Schedule a day to go into the classroom and make a presentation – the students will love it, especially if you bring some items from the farm for “show & tell.”
8. Encourage teachers to attend the Teacher Training opportunities.
9. Look for opportunities to apply for funding to assist in your local efforts. Some possible sources include.

Where to find volunteers for a County AITC Committee

1. Review your county Farm Bureau membership lists
 - a. Sort by township and highlight names from each school district
 - b. Do you recognize members that are teachers? Have youth in school? Are active in other groups that promote agricultural education activities?
 - c. Ask your county Farm Bureau board members to provide 1-2 names from areas they represent or that they have signed up for membership

2. Submit articles in your county newsletter
 - a. Explain what AITC is and what your county is doing (or plans to do)
 - b. Ask for volunteers and provide a contact person for them (your county AITC coordinator)
 - c. Find out if members already are working with schools or hosting farm tours
 - d. Ask if any of the members are teachers, retired teachers, 4-H leaders...

3. Contact agriculture education instructors from your county
 - a. Find the listing at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/ag/pdf/ageddirectory.pdf>
 - b. Agriculture education and FFA chapters may have active Food for America programs, students that would like to use agricultural literacy activities as their Education SAE (Supervised Agricultural Experience Project), or with the PALS (Partners in Active Learning Support) projects.
 - c. Contact local FFA Alumni affiliates- many members have an interest in ag literacy!

4. Involve teachers on your committee- they can provide information on their needs, how to contact schools, and other information on distributing materials
 - a. You can find school directories on the DPI website at **<http://dpi.wi.gov/directories.html>**
 - b. Public schools- Elementary, middle and high school (any subject)
 - c. 4th grade (because we study Wisconsin in that grade)
 - d. Private schools
 - e. Agriculture education instructors
 - f. Home school parents or home school groups that meet in your area

5. Contact county extension and 4-H programs
 - a. Is there an after-school program in your county?
 - b. Do any 4-H clubs want to work with agricultural literacy programs?
 - c. Is there a county 4-H leaders group that might be interested in joint projects?

6. What other groups are in your county that might be good partners?
 - a. Dairy promotion and commodity groups
 - b. Chamber of Commerce programs
 - c. Other farm organizations and groups
 - d. Check your phone books, do Internet searches, and other sources!
 - e. Submit articles to local papers, commodity newsletters and email groups to contacts in various groups and organizations.

Working with Volunteers

Recruiting volunteers- You may use a variety of methods for recruiting members but one of the most effective ways is to “ASK THEM”. We can advertise, promote, and send emails until we are exhausted, but simply asking someone can be the most effective. For recruiting AITC people, look for those with an interest in education, teachers, promotional groups, FB members with children in school, agriculture education instructors and others that show an interest in agricultural literacy. As you form your county group, a more diverse group of people will lead to reaching out in more diverse ways.

Position descriptions- Trends show that volunteers gain increased satisfaction, do a more effective job, and stay with a project longer when they have clear expectations and guidelines of what their role is. Position descriptions, or job descriptions, will define the work that needs to be done, provide ideas, clarify who should be doing what, and offer ways for the volunteer to change or grow. Reviewing the position descriptions with the volunteers through an interview process will also help match volunteer skill levels to the tasks needing to be done. Periodic feedback and evaluation with the volunteer will help them assess the job they are doing as well.

Time commitment- It is important that the group outlines the time needed to complete a task and that the volunteers communicate the time they have available or are willing to commit to the project. Differences in the “time offered” vs. “time required for the job” may result in needing to recruit more volunteers, evaluating the task to be done, or determining that the volunteer may not be the right person for the job. Be realistic and up-front about the amount of time needed to help with your program.

Finances and costs- It is important that policy is set up for handling costs, ordering supplies, and other expenses related to activities. If there isn't funding available and costs are picked up by the volunteers, it is important to let the volunteers know that before you begin. If there is funding, outline what the limits, procedures, and guidelines are so that one person doesn't use up the entire budget! Have the guidelines and procedures in writing so that there isn't any miscommunication.

Effective use of volunteer's time- Volunteers are offering a very precious resource – their time – and it is important that organizations value that resource. Having productive meetings, not canceling or postponing meetings at the last minute, and following through on commitments is important to volunteers. Acknowledging the volunteer's efforts, thanking them, and recognizing them for taking their time to help is appreciated by volunteers. Most volunteers do their jobs because they believe in the effort – but it's nice to recognize those efforts and the payoff is usually a guarantee that they will help again.

Communications- Good communications with volunteers keeps them informed about any changes and strengthens their bond with the activity. Communication also conveys to the volunteer that they are important and need to be aware of important information. Find the best way to communicate with your group- newsletter, email, letters or via the telephone.

When volunteers need redirection- Sometimes volunteers aren't working out as we had anticipated. There are ways to address situations and still have a positive outcome. If a volunteer needs some assistance in classroom presentations or the content of the subject they are covering, perhaps one-on-one time to go over the presentation would be best. If they are overstepping their authority, a time to review the program and who is responsible for what tasks may be helpful. Being diplomatic in your conversation is essential- it is important not to embarrass, talk down to, or be harsh with the volunteer.

Delegating responsibility- Delegation is essential if an organization wants to succeed. Delegation may fail if the leader doesn't understand what his/her responsibilities are, they don't know how to delegate, they feel ownership and don't want to give it up, and they want the task to go perfectly. In order for the delegation of tasks to be successful, the group should make sure the tasks are manageable, define the responsibilities clearly, match the right people for the appropriate task, agree on time limits for completion, and provide support through sharing knowledge and information.

Instituting change on a committee or program- People view change in different ways- some are threatened by change and others embrace it. Making changes in your AITC program should be a group effort. Change is more likely to be accepted if people are involved in making decisions, the changes seem logical, the effects of the change are clear and specific, those being affected by the change understand the circumstances and the risks are minimized. Committee meetings should provide members an opportunity to voice their opinions, concerns and ideas. By involving everyone in the process, the more effective the changes will be and the easier they will be accepted.

Reporting on activities- Set up a procedure for volunteers to report on their activities. It will make tracking activities and projects easier and provide volunteers the opportunity to tell what they have been doing. If monthly reports are needed or just a year-end report, collection of information throughout the year will make the process so much easier. You may need a system that also allows you to inventory supplies- especially if you have items you give away to students during classroom presentations or farm tours. Develop a system with your volunteers input so that it is easy to use and understand for them.

Recognizing volunteers- It is always nice to recognize and thank the volunteers that make a program successful. Consider ways to recognize them through newsletters, at events such as annual meetings, on programs or flyers, as a part of teacher in-services, or during other activities.

Organizing AITC Resources

What Resources do you have and how do you collect resources?

- Inventory your items and have a master list
- Collect resources at various events and conferences
- Internet and search options
- Use the AITC Resource Guide
 - Order resources from the listings
 - Use the website references to find educational sites and downloadable resources

How do you organize and store the resources you have?

- Farm Bureau offices, extension, your home or where?
- Tubs and bins
- Filing cabinets and storage units
- Computer files
- What resources are used by volunteers and what is used by teachers
- 3 ring notebooks, binders, expandable files and other office organization options
- Equipment- Soybean Science Kit, TV/VCR's, screens, poster displays, projectors ...

How do you keep track of where resources go and when they come back?

- Inventory systems
- Check out lists and systems
- Who does the scheduling?
- Who transports or sends items out to teachers or volunteers?
- Who re-orders supplies?
- Who pays for the supplies? What is your budget?
- Who makes sure that resources are all returned?

Organizing AITC Resource Tubs

There isn't a right or wrong way to organize resource tubs. So much depends on who the users are, what resources and finances are available, and how the tubs will be managed.

The following is a series of questions to consider as you organize your resource tubs and some answers or things to consider.

What kind of tub system do you want to develop?

- Ask potential users of the tubs- teachers, volunteers, librarians, students
- What is workable in your situation? – who, where, how often, costs

The logistics of the tubs

- Where will they be stored? FB office, school, library, CESA, your home
- Who will keep track of the tubs, inventory and tracking information?- AITC chairman, librarian, FB District Coordinators, teachers...
- How will they be transported? Volunteers, teachers must pick them up, CESA vans, library transport system
- Who re-orders consumable items if they are included in the tub? AITC chairman, FB secretary, volunteers
- Size of tub? Get your items first and then find a tub they'll fit in! Leave extra room as not everyone will pack them efficiently. Keep in mind how easy the tubs are to carry, transport and how the lid system works.

Funding tubs

- Grants and donations- what is available in your area, businesses, AITC grants, FFA Alumni, donations by FB members (put an article in your newsletter)
- AITC budgets- does your county FB allocate funds for AITC?
- Initial funding vs. maintaining the tubs- Initial costs to purchase the tubs, resources, and misc. items. How do you add new resources to the tubs?
- Replacement of items- Are there consumables in the tubs? Lost items?

What do you put in the tubs?

- Specialty tubs- Topics such as: cheese, pizza, history, biotechnology, goats, beef, dairy, cranberries, nutrition...
- General resources- A sampling of various resources that teachers can use
- Targeted to grades- Grade specific so all resources can be used. Can they be correlated to state standards? For example, a 4th grade tub.
- Targeted to units- The tub could focus on math, history, nutrition, art, social studies, science. Probably best to also target it to a grade level for those units.
- Targeted to books- Select a book and all items in the tub are related to the book, or the subject. For example: ***A Young Shepherd***: You could include the book, wool dyeing information, wool samples, carding equipment, samples of feed for sheep, pictures of breeds of sheep, a sheep puppet, craft ideas related to sheep...

Promotion of your tubs and getting them used

- Teacher in-service days- take the tub in after school and do a 15 minute presentation on what's inside! Ask if you can meet with a group of teachers. Does your school have in-service times that you could submit a proposal to conduct an in-service on your tub and AITC program?
- Press releases and articles- Get some publicity in the local community newspapers of districts you want using your tubs.
- 4-H, FFA, home schools, libraries and other groups in the community- County FB newsletter. County 4-H newsletter. Library newsletters. FFA Alumni newsletters. Home school associations. After school programs. Daycare and pre-schools.

After they're set up

- Evaluations and feedback- have some type of form right in the tub.
- Checking inventory- who makes sure that everything is in the tub when it's returned.
- Keeping the resources current- periodically check through the tubs to take inventory, how current the resources are, and put in new resources that you have found.

County Planning Meeting Draft Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Who is currently listed?
 - a. County AITC Coordinator
 - b. County AITC Committee members
 - c. County Essay Contest Coordinator
 - d. County Soybean Science Kit Coordinator
3. What currently is happening with agricultural literacy in our County?
4. Current AITC resources
 - a. Budget
 - b. Do you have any supplies? Resources? Equipment?
5. What school districts are in our county? Do we have any Farm Bureau/AITC contacts or relationships with any of them?
6. Does the county have a connection with their county agriculture educators/FFA advisors? County extension office? 4-H leaders? Fair boards?
7. Discussion of a plan for Dane County

Some items to discuss:

- Committee- securing members who are interested in helping
 - Finances- is the budget adequate? Matching grants? Partnerships or sponsorships?
 - Promotion of the Essay contest
 - Ag Day- Reading event and Student contest
 - Children's book program
 - Coordinating the County Report and Soybean Science Kit report
 - Breakfast on the Farm
 - County fair
8. Develop an action plan and priorities that are realistic, manageable, and meet the needs of your county's teachers, students AND volunteers!

Writing Effective Press Releases

A press release is a standard way of issuing a notice or a statement about some event or issue. Most media campaigns will use a press release as one of the main tools for getting information to the media.

Writing the press release

Press release is written in simple, short detailed sentences to quickly and clearly convey a message or information. The release should contain the 4 W's (what, where, when, why) of information that describe an event or statement.

Writing style

The release should be one page and include all pertinent information, including the contact of the event.

- The format of release should include the name and phone number of the contact of the person issuing the news release.
- Keep sentences and paragraphs short.
- Use everyday words instead of technical jargon.

Getting it printed or used

Email releases to all local media well in advance of your event or use their online submissions.

Do a follow-up phone call within a week after issuing it to see if it was received, if additional information is needed, or if the media have questions.

After an event

Write a short article on the event and send to local newspapers. Include photos with captions identifying the people or the activity in the photo. Check with the newspaper as to the format they'd like the photo in- print, sent via email, or on a disk. If your participants are from different towns, send copies to each local newspaper.

You may want to send articles and photos to some of the statewide farm publications as well.

Tracking Sheet

_____ YEAR

Volunteer _____

DATE	SCHOOL	TEACHER	#STUDENTS	#CLASSES	COMMENTS

This form can be used to track teacher contacts, farm tours, classroom presentations, resource distribution and usage and other activities of your program.

If you are not the county AITC coordinator, please send this information to your county AITC Coordinator so they can use it in their report which is due July 1.

Funding Sources

Potential sources of grants:

- Wisconsin Ag in the Classroom Matching Grants- \$500 in matching grants. Due date is March 1- postmarked.
- White-Reinhardt Fund for Education Mini Grants- established by the American Farm Bureau (AFB) Women's Committee. The funds are distributed in mini-grants for educational projects for state and county Farm Bureaus. Can apply for up to \$1,000 in two grant cycles- April and October. www.agfoundation.org
- Local community foundations- check in your area to see what might be established and if any qualify for educational projects. Many have restrictions or are only available to 501c3 organizations.
- Local companies and businesses- some companies have funds available for projects and community related activities.

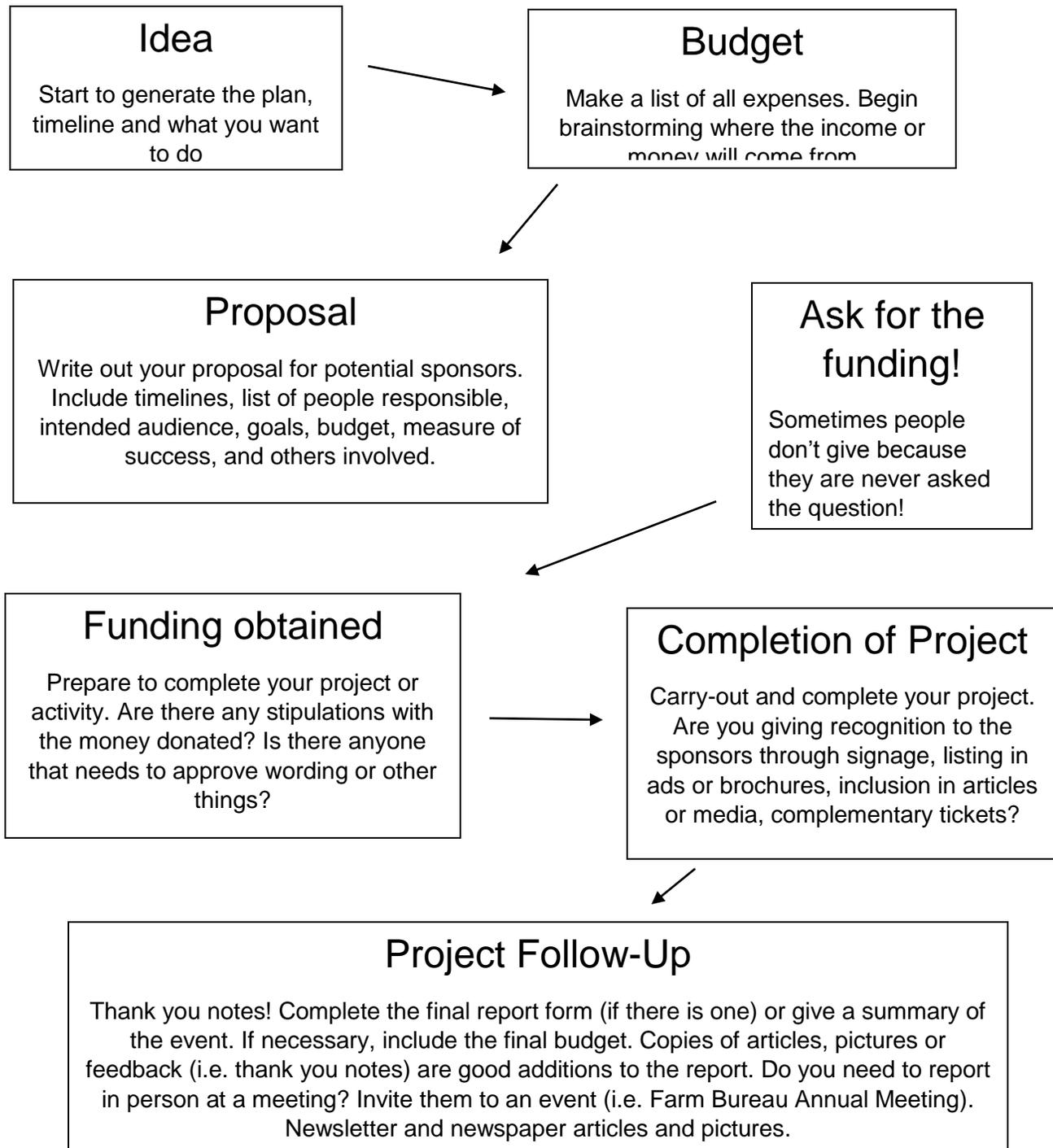
Other sources of funds:

- County Farm Bureau Board budget
- Local FFA Alumni affiliates and FFA Chapters
- Commodity groups i.e. dairy, pork, cranberry
- Promotional groups in your county or area
- Fair stand proceeds
- Special fundraising efforts – cookbooks, dances, cook-outs, calendars
- Silent Auctions
- Memorial contributions
- County Extension
- Commodity groups- local or state funding
- Donations at various Farm Bureau events

Making your funds go farther:

- Co-sponsor events and projects with other groups
- Ask for donations in your county newsletters and publications
- Some businesses will donate product for farm tours and classroom presentations i.e. pizza, dairy products, soy products
- Some schools budget for activities and trips. Don't be shy to ask if they have funding to help cover some of the costs.
- Use media and publicity to promote your activities. Sometimes sponsors will come to you when they see positive activities happening!
- Give follow-up reports to groups that currently give you funds so that they are willing to renew funding for future years.
- Apply for grants with another group.

Funding a Project or Activity



Funding Template

Activity _____

