

USU Extension Grant – Final Report

Project Leader: Mark Larese-Casanova

Project Title: Developing Online Resources for the Utah Nature Explorers Program

Beginning Date and End Date: 6/1/16-12/31/16

Total Requested: \$10,000

Project Summary:

This project is the final step in developing and releasing the Utah Nature Explorers Program to the public. The website, lesson plans, and initial equipment are in place, and we needed to develop an online inventory management system to manage the inventory of equipment and make the resources available to educators across the state.

Project Results:

Development of the Utah Nature Explorers program was initiated in response to the need for additional educational resources shared by the teachers. The resources at the core of Utah Nature Explorers are the curriculum aligned lesson plans developed by the participating K-12 teachers as the Utah Master Naturalist capstone project. We have revised 20 lesson plans, and a suite of field equipment and books is available for teachers to borrow at no cost to supplement their instructional needs.

An interactive website was created to serve as the hub of Utah Nature Explorers, connecting educators to the Utah Master Naturalist Program, where they can receive professional development, as well as to the lesson plans, equipment, and resources available for their use. We hired Jennifer Perkins, an undergraduate marketing/scientific writing student with a natural resources background to take the lead in developing the new website. Jennifer did an exemplary job learning how to use OU Campus to build the Utah Nature Explorers website, which can be viewed at: <https://nature-explorers-usu.ou.usu.edu/>

The final component of the Utah Nature Explorers website was an online inventory management system for reserving equipment and materials. USU IT has created the system using Service Now, and is making the final edits before seamlessly integrating it into the Utah Nature Explorers website. We plan to launch the site and program January 2017.

The Utah Nature Explorers website will give me the opportunity to reach and support educators, including K-12 teachers, 4-H leaders, and non-profit educators, across Utah. We have integrated evaluation surveys into the inventory management system and website so that we can measure the impacts of the lesson plans, resources, and equipment on teachers' abilities to effectively deliver nature-based instruction to their students. I plan to present on the Utah Nature Explorers program and impacts at state and national education and Master Naturalist conferences in 2017. Once the Utah Nature Explorers program has been running for at least six months, I will assess the use rates for each school district and solicit additional funding from high-use districts for supplemental equipment.

The cost of the online inventory management system was lower than expected, and I was approved by Brian Higginbotham to use the surplus funding on other items that

are essential to my Extension work, and to Utah Nature Explorers. The table below lists the additional items in detail:

Jennifer Perkins	Website development hours	\$492.00
Hilary Lambert	Lesson plan development hours	\$258.00
Vernier	Temperature and pH sensors	\$443.00
Amazon	Mouse, keyboard	\$220.00
Amazon	Computer monitor	\$599.00
Ben Meadows	Dipnets for collecting insects	\$746.28
Brock	Magiscope field microscopes	\$648.72

I plan to share the results of this project at the upcoming Extension Annual Conference, where other Extension personnel will have the opportunity to learn about Utah Nature Explorers and the resources that it offers. I am also happy to present the program to Extension county faculty via an IVC webinar.