1. **Host Name:** STEPS, Seneca Towns Engaging People for Solutions (with assistance from Seneca County Cornell Cooperative Extension)

2. **Host and Background Information:** STEPS is a Neighborhood Health Improvement Initiative funded by the Greater Rochester Health Foundation with money flowing through the S2AY Rural Health Network, utilizing an Asset Based Community Development approach to improve the social determinants of health (health is affected by the economy, education levels, employment/income, transportation, and environment/housing conditions of the individual) in the Towns of Covert, Lodi, Ovid, and Romulus. The STEPS Mission: To strengthen families, address challenges that are a part of rural life, grow a sustainable regional economy, cultivate leadership, encourage initiative, and foster respect for all. While S2AY is the funded organization, the intern will be working with local STEPS program staff and volunteers to improve the overall health of the community.

3. **Internship Position Name/Title:** Assistant for Community Engagement and Outreach

4. **Internship Position / Project Context:** With a small staff, the intern will be a key player in the office assisting with the fine tuning and implementation of the long term neighborhood health improvement plan and the community engagement activities of STEPS (see project overview below). S/he will be an active member of the team. The intern will play an important role as we carrying out our plan for improvement based on our year one assessment, data and year two planning. The intern will interact with residents engaged in workgroups (focus groups) based on their areas of interest and passion as follow:

   - Improving the Physical Environment
   - Increasing Economic and Educational Opportunities
   - Improving Personal Health and Wellness

   Our work will yield a vision that is reflective of the neighborhoods assets, and also a picture of how the assets can be further enhanced to develop the infrastructure and partnerships around the main ideas and priorities ultimately leading to a healthier, more vibrant neighborhood.

5. **Internship Position Description:** Identify, educate, and engage community residents to be local leaders and participants in improving the health of their neighborhood through the STEPS project. Responsible for the coordination, planning, and implementation of project deliverables in partnership with STEPS staff. The 10 week internship will include assisting staff and residents to achieve STEPS objectives in a manner consistent with the projects mission and objectives. It will also include interaction with residents carrying out Resident Health Promotion Projects, where residents design and carry out creative small
scale projects to make the community a better place to live. Intern duties will include developing and implementing outreach and community engagement activities about the project at various community events, festivals, meetings, and to individual residents. In addition to these general responsibilities, the intern will work with the “Increasing the Economic and Educational Opportunities” workgroup to increase high school student involvement in the agricultural industry and promote the breath of related opportunities available in the STEPS neighborhood, a concept proposed by the 2015 CALS NYS STEPS intern. Exact roles and responsibilities will be based on the intern’s skill sets and STEPS’ timeline. A plan of work will be jointly developed and finalized by the student intern, the Increasing the Economic and Educational Opportunities workgroup, and STEPS staff. Satisfactory transportation and housing arrangements that enable the intern to meet obligations of the STEPS internship position are required.

6. Basic Qualifications and Preferred Experience: The intern should be comfortable working and speaking with the public. Experience with planning will be a plus. S/he should have an interest in rural areas, health, community development, and physical and social well-being. An ability to look at an issue in an interdisciplinary way will be most helpful. We are looking for someone who wants to be an integral member of the team and who is willing to embrace duties assigned them. A background or coursework in community development or community health will be helpful. A high degree of flexibility, curiosity, and tact to engage all types of people is necessary.

7. Internship Schedule: We are flexible with scheduling, the intern will need to work some evenings and weekends. The 8 hour community engagement component of the internship position will be included in the total 40 hour work week.

8. Expected Outcomes (for intern): Some of this is outlined above. Depending on where the STEPS project is on its timeline, and therefore the specific responsibilities assigned to the intern, it is expected that the intern will have an opportunity to increase their skills in the following areas: planning, public speaking through presentations to various community groups, interacting with local media, and contributing to the development of a major community development project focused on health and well-being. The intern will have the opportunity to be on the ground floor of a community health initiative that has the potential to be transformational for this area of southern Seneca County. Keeping the intern’s goals in mind, we will strive to shape their role in the project as one that provides valuable experiences and educational benefits.

9. Location of Assignment: The main base will be the STEPS office on Main Street in Ovid, but the intern will likely be at locations and events throughout the “neighborhood” of the four towns. Our rural “neighborhood “is spread out so again, reliable transportation is a must.

STEPS PROJECT OVERVIEW:
The Greater Rochester Health Foundation Health Foundation (GRHF) through the S²AY Rural Health Network (a network of 8 county public health departments, including Seneca) has awarded STEPS, a Neighborhood Health Improvement Grant. The premise of the initiative is that health is affected by the economy, education levels, employment/income, transportation, and environment/housing.
These factors are called the “social determinants” of health. According to the County Health Rankings model, only about 20% of health status is determined by the availability and quality of clinical health care. In other words, when it comes to health, where you live makes a difference. Lower income communities usually have low levels of education, high levels of poverty, and limited access to services. STEPS believes that healthy communities lead to healthier residents. If the community is strong and vital the residents are more apt to be healthy. The elements that make people healthy are: personal behavior (not smoking, eating healthy foods, physical activity); social relationships (connections with friends, family, groups); physical environment (quality of housing, air, water, streets, sidewalks, etc.); economics (employment status, level of income, education level); and access and quality of medical care. Researchers have found repeatedly that the social determinants of health are essential drivers of health status.

The project focuses on the southern area of Seneca County, an economically depressed region which includes the 4 townships of Covert, Lodi, Ovid and Romulus (total population approximately 10,000). The communities are served by the South Seneca and Romulus school districts (with about 775 and 400 students, respectively) and much of the community’s identity and activities revolve around the schools. Its “commercial center” is the village of Ovid, with other “downtowns” found in the villages of Interlaken and Lodi, as well as the hamlets of Romulus and Willard. Agriculture and tourism are the major industries in the area, including a large number of Amish and “English” farms. Award winning wineries also contribute to the local economy. Area residents show a surprising resilience and “can do” attitude, making a concerted effort to look out for and help each other.

The STEPS project began on December 1, 2013. The GRHF funded this project (and the S^2 AY Rural Health Network sponsored STEPS) because they want to show that the health status of residents will, in fact, improve if the social determinants of health in their neighborhoods improve. In short this is not a traditional health improvement grant meant to provide health screenings and nutrition information. Rather it is an untraditional community health improvement initiative. It looks to improve the economic, social, and physical environment of the area’s residents with the ultimate goal of improved physical health. The project involves continued use of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) to identify the assets of the residents and the area, building partnerships and long-term neighborhood health improvement planning and implementation. Assets and data gathered in the first year will be used to develop the strategies and activities leading to changes that will result in improved health outcomes in the community.

The assets examined in Phase 1 of the STEPS project (December 2013 – November 2014) were: Individuals (skills, knowledge, and experience of the people in our community); Associations (groups of volunteers, neighbors, and friends); Institutions (local public, private, and non-profit organizations); Physical (land, property, buildings, and transportation); Economic (businesses, jobs, and income); and Cultural (history, community identity, and traditions). These assessments were completed by conducting focus groups and individual resident surveys, along with other techniques and methodologies. Technical assistance is provided by a professor from Northwestern University, developers of the ABCD
approach, through the GRHF. The richness of the assets collected in Phase 1 is truly impressive. As this information is shared, enthusiasm is created or renewed regarding the many possibilities for strengthening the community this project represents. (To see a copy of our assessment and asset map paste [http://www.senecasteps.org/uploads/4/6/0/1/46014307/092414_stepsphaseiassessment.pdf](http://www.senecasteps.org/uploads/4/6/0/1/46014307/092414_stepsphaseiassessment.pdf) into your browser.

**Emerging ideas and priorities based on assessment:** Based on the review of assets collected in the first year, themes that arise relate to public infrastructure/services, especially the desire for a community space and the interactive activities that would accompany it, business amenities and economic development (jobs and retail opportunities), community spirit and people, and the natural landscape/environment. A set of health improvement priorities surfacing for possible areas of focus, deemed as a reasonable place to begin Phase II planning were:

- **Changing Personal Health Behaviors:** related to chronic disease prevention and management, physical activity, nutrition (including environmental change: i.e. healthy food offerings at community events), emotional health/stress management, and substance abuse (including tobacco) prevention.
- **Increasing Social Opportunities/activities:** for youth, seniors, and families. Create an intergenerational gathering space for such. Initiate a ‘Welcome Wagon’ type program.
- **Increasing Economic Opportunities:** small business, jobs, stores, restaurants, housing, youth retention, senior housing, and increasing [educational opportunities](#).
- **Beautifying the Project Area:** improve Main Streets and general clean-up. The environmental issues and creating sustainable communities.

These focus areas have been folded into the workgroups noted above and will be where STEPS is concentrating in the implementation phase.