



Request for Proposals

The National Rural Grocery Summit Planning Committee is seeking proposals for presentations at the National Rural Grocery Summit on May 5-7, 2026, in Fargo, North Dakota.

The National Rural Grocery Summit, hosted every other year, is the premier networking and resource-sharing venue for independent grocers and rural food access stakeholders. It brings together grocery store owners and managers, community leaders, food suppliers, academic researchers, healthy food access stakeholders, policy makers, and funders to connect and share lessons learned. The event is focused on sustaining locally-owned rural grocery stores and improving access to healthy food in rural communities.

We invite you to submit a proposal to share your work at this important conference. We are seeking presentations, panel discussions, and posters that relate to summit objectives and suggested topic areas. Proposals should be submitted online by the extended deadline of **11:59 PM Central on Wednesday, October 15, 2025**.

Below find details on:

Summit Objectives	1
Key Dates.....	1
Potential Topic Areas.....	2
Presentation Formats	3
Who should submit a proposal?	3
Submission Requirements.....	3
Submit your proposal via Oxford Abstracts	5
What support is available to defray the cost of attending the summit?	5
Questions?	5

Summit Objectives

- Explore the connections between rural grocery operations and community prosperity
- Provide rural grocery store owners and rural grocery stakeholders the opportunity to network and learn from each other
- Highlight innovative models and strategies for strengthening healthy food retail in rural communities
- Chart a path for robust rural food systems that improve the health and well-being of rural communities

Key Dates

- **Request for Presentation Proposals Opens:** August 18, 2025
- **Presentation Proposal Submission Extended Deadline:** October 15, 2025, at 11:59 PM Central
- **Selected Presenter Notification:** December 2025
- **Conference:** May 5-7, 2026

Potential Topic Areas

Topics to be covered at the summit include, but are not limited to:

- **Rural grocery best practices:** This could include ways to increase sales, attract new customers, handle produce, recruit and retain employees, overcome challenges, build customer loyalty, increase business value, plan for transition, and more.
- **Rural grocery stores as community builders:** This could include examples of community-led rural food access efforts, partnerships among grocers, rural grocery as part of broader community planning and development efforts, and connection to broader community health and Food as/is Medicine programs.
- **Equity in rural food systems:** This could include experiences supporting rural food access in historically marginalized or underserved communities, as well as innovative examples of programs that encourage rural grocery led by Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) entrepreneurs.
- **Rural grocery policy and legislation:** This could include discussion of relevant state or federal grocery or rural food access policies and/or legislation, overview of fair pricing efforts related to grocery, and tools for rural grocers to engage with policymakers.
- **Industry trends and competitive landscape:** This could include an overview of the grocery industry, basics of operating a rural grocery store, and strategies for operating in a competitive landscape.
- **Innovation in rural food access:** This could include emerging grocery models, rural food distribution solutions, creative partnerships, alternative ownership models, and strategies to address rural grocery challenges.
- **Local food system connections:** This could include strategies for sourcing local products in local grocery stores, partnerships with local producers or other food systems stakeholders to build capacity for the local food system, etc.
- **Resources (financial and informational):** This could include startup grocery resources, information on funding programs, getting the most out of wholesalers and supplying your store without a mainline wholesaler, and resources for rural grocery advocates.



Presentation Formats

Presentations at the National Rural Grocery Summit may take the form of:

1. Breakout Session (1 hour total):

- a) **45-minute Presentation:** Provide an in-depth review of research findings, emerging strategies, lived experiences, or resources in this presentation session. Each hourlong breakout session will feature one 45-minute presentation followed by audience Q&A. Up to two individuals may co-present on a selected presentation.
- b) **Panel Discussion:** Engage in a conversation about rural food systems during a panel discussion. Each panel discussion will be one hour and will consist of three to four speakers sharing their unique perspectives on a common theme. Panelists may discuss research, resources, case studies, firsthand experiences, and so on. Panelists will have 5 minutes to introduce themselves, followed by moderated Q&A and dialogue with co-panelists. In your panel session proposal, please also submit initial ideas for potential panelists. If your proposal is selected, the conference planning team will work with you to confirm their participation.
- c) **Workshop Session (1.5 hour total):** Lead a 90-minute session that includes a combination of a traditional presentation and audience participation. Participants should leave workshop sessions with tangible skills acquired and explicit strategies to enact. Each 90-minute workshop session should feature presentation combined with activity and/or discussion and opportunity for audience Q&A. Up to three individuals may co-present on a selected workshop session.

2. **Poster Session:** Share and solicit feedback on an existing or emerging project during a poster session. Posters typically mix a brief narrative description with photographs, organizational or historical charts, maps, etc. Posters may share empirical research, community action research, participatory research, and more. They may also share innovative ideas and practices, programmatic successes, and/or reflections from food access practitioners. Poster presenters are expected to discuss their poster during a dedicated session. If you have questions about poster formatting, please contact us.

Who should submit a proposal?

You! We are looking for proposals from a broad range of rural grocery, healthy food access, and rural community development stakeholders. This may include, but is not limited to, grocers, practitioners, resource providers, academic researchers, policy makers, funders, and students from across North America.

Submission Requirements

Submit the following information using the online form no later than **October 15, 2025, at 11:59 PM** Central. The online form is located at: <https://app.oxfordabstracts.com/stages/79392/submitter>

1. Presentation format (select one)

- 45-minute Presentation
- Panel Discussion
- Workshop Session
- Poster Session



2. Title of presentation, panel, workshop, or poster

3. Topic (select one)

- Rural grocery best practices
- Rural grocery stores as community builders
- Equity in rural food systems
- Rural grocery policy and legislation
- Industry trends and competitive landscape
- Innovation in rural food access
- Local food system connections
- Resources (financial and informational)
- Other, please explain:

4. Brief description of presentation, panel, workshop, or poster (2-3 sentences that will be included in the summit program, if selected)

5. Summary of presentation, panel, workshop, or poster (500 word limit) that addresses the following:

- What information will be covered?
- How will this session connect with summit objectives?
- What knowledge, skills, or new understanding will attendees gain?

6. Contact information of primary presenter and co-presenter (if applicable)

- Name
- Email
- Institutional affiliation (business, organization, academic institution, etc.)
- Position title
- Biography (2-3 sentences)
- City
- State
- Country

7. Panel presenters

If you are submitting a panel presentation proposal, share 2-3 potential panelists (name and organization) that you have in mind to participate in your proposed session.

8. Do you have any other special requests or requirements for your session? Laptops, projectors, and screens will be available for presenters.

9. Presenter will register to attend the 2026 National Rural Grocery Summit

Check this box to confirm that at least one presenter will register to attend and present, if selected, at the 2026 National Rural Grocery Summit in Fargo, ND.

10. Permission to share

Check this box to give the summit planning team permission to share your breakout session description and slides electronically if accepted for presentation.



Submit your proposal via Oxford Abstracts

Presentation proposals will be accepted through an online submission form through Oxford Abstracts. To submit a proposal, you must create an account with Oxford Abstracts ([see instructions](#)). All communications regarding the status of a proposal will occur through the Oxford Abstracts platform.

NRGS Oxford Abstracts submission form: <https://app.oxfordabstracts.com/stages/79392/submitter>

What support is available to defray the cost of attending the summit?

Complimentary registration is available for up to two representatives from an individual grocery store. Presenters will receive a reduced registration rate. Travel costs to attend the conference are the responsibility of the speaker.

Questions?

To learn more about the Rural Grocery Initiative, please visit www.ruralgrocery.org. For additional questions about the initiative or the summit, please contact us at rgi@ksu.edu.