



Title: A Multi-Agency Grant Program to Help Conservation Professionals Educate Producers

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Organization: University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension

State: WI **Region:** Great Lakes

Year of Funding:

Theme: Watershed Management

Situation: Tight budgets in 1997 inspired Wisconsin's major natural resource management agencies, including NRCS and UW-Cooperative Extension (UWEX) to integrate the financial, technical, regulatory and educational services they provide to farmers. Agreeing that education is a key step on the pathway producers travel before adopting a conservation practice, the leaders created a new competitive funding source that provided additional institutional resources to conservation professionals at the local watershed, district and county levels, who in turn reached out to producers.

Objectives: The program was called the Multi-Agency Land and Water Conservation Grant Program. It has three main objectives - 1. Create a joint-agency program where participating agencies could support (via funding, staff assistance, or both) the distribution of funds for producer-focused education about natural resource issues and conservation practices. 2. Encourage new and innovative approaches to educating producers. 3. Train local conservation professionals in effective approaches to providing and supporting education/outreach efforts.

Methods: The MALWEG program distributes an annual request for educational proposals to nearly 1500 conservation professionals in Wisconsin. From 1997 to 2000, the program conducted an annual grant writing and evaluation workshops for applicants and grant winners. A web site and a growing series of "success-stories" on completed grant projects helps to inform others resource management professional about successful initiatives. Success story authors are: C. Javid and C. Corrigan. L.Wohlwend, J. Strobel and A. Yencha built the web site: <http://clean-water.uwex.edu/malweg/index.htm>.

Partnerships: The program works with UWEX program leaders and NRCS administrators to develop its RFP. Wisconsin's Depts. of Agriculture and Natural Resources provide technical expertise during grant selection. Our NRCS State Technical Committee provides guidance and a final review of selected projects?

Research: The program requires applicants to develop educational initiatives that: 1) demonstrate a compelling need (preferably based on research), 2) include measurable objectives, and 3) contain a detailed evaluation component. About 20% of our funding goes to research focused initiatives with outreach components. This creative use of educational funds integrates NRCS's technical assistance mission with UWEX's outreach mission. It also has fostered greater integration of the Land Grant University response by linking outreach programming with applied research.

Resources: The program has leveraged funds on two levels: 1) The program level where partner agencies have provided over \$250,000 in matched funds and staff time, and 2) the project level where funded projects have leveraged over \$1 million.

Results: The program has distributed over \$1 million dollars to 124 projects that educate farmers about conservation practices. Many projects are ongoing, but short term, over 5000 producers have directly participated in the program and more than 37,000 producers and rural landowners have been contacted via educational events, project newsletters, and displays; medium term, over 400 structural and management BMPs installed or adopted; and long term, the program protects the state's water resources as nutrient management, grazing, and tillage plans are implemented.



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