



**SOUTHERN
EXTENSION
RISK MANAGEMENT
EDUCATION**

Final Report

2010 Competitive Grant Program

Managing Risk in the Green Industry

Project Number: 10881

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Project Overview

This strategic multi-faceted risk-management project involved innovative producer-oriented projects targeting nursery, greenhouse, and landscape operators. This first phase of this project used concepts from the "Green Industry Risk Management Guide" and the "2009 National Nursery Industry Survey" to formulate a series of educational materials that addressed timely green industry-related risk management issues. The second phase of the project involved integrating these materials into targeted face-to-face educational programs at several key industry events where attendance had been strong historically. The third phase of the project involved developing online webinars which have been shown to be an effective means of regional educational delivery in previous SRMEC projects. Lastly, the leading green industry blog entitled "Making Cents of Green Industry Economics" was used as an important outreach corollary to the online educational programs, as well as e-newsletters distributed by green industry trade organizations that served as project collaborators.

Number of Participants

Number of Participants:

0

Results

	Proposed Result	Topic	Producer action	When measured	Estimated number	Actual number	How verified
1	Nursery and greenhouse growers will improve their understanding of marketing-related risks that are specific to the Green Industry and strategies for differentiating their respective firms in order to minimize these risks. We expect to provide a minimum of 3 sessions with 150 growers reached per session.	Marketing plans and strategies	Understand	May 2011	450	945	Audience Response System
2	Nursery and greenhouse operators will learn about ways to minimize legal and environmental risks associated with potential cap & trade carbon emissions legislation. They will also learn about the potential role (and associated opportunities) of green industry firms. We expect to provide a minimum of 3 sessions with 150 growers reached per session.	Environmental regulations	Understand	May 2011	450	432	Audience Response System
3	Nursery and greenhouse growers will better understand the nature of financial risks associated with periods of economic recovery and develop strategic marketing plans to minimize risk and take advantage of opportunities. We expect to provide a minimum of 3 sessions with 150 growers reached per session.	Business and strategic planning	Understand	May 2011	450	396	Audience Response System
4	Nursery and greenhouse growers	Personal and business liability	Analyze	May 2011	450	0	Online Evaluation

	Proposed Result	Topic	Producer action	When measured	Estimated number	Actual number	How verified
	will learn about the pending health care legislation and how they need to evaluate alternative health care options for their business. We expect to provide a minimum of 3 sessions with 150 growers reached per session.						
5	Webinar participants will learn about marketing, financial and human risks specific to green industry growers. The steering committee of the Southwest Growers Conference will provide input on the webinar topics. In previous webinars, we have averaged 475 registrants per 3-part series.	Marketing plans and strategies	Understand	May 2011	475	396	Online Evaluation
6	Webinar participants will learn about alternative sustainable energy sources applicable to nursery and greenhouse operations and how these minimize production risks and enhance profitability. In previous webinars, we have averaged 475 registrants per 3-part series, thus we assume the same number for this 3-part series.	Returns to alternative energy investments	Analyze	May 2011	475	0	Online Evaluation
7	Webinar participants will better understand the role of benchmarking in managing their nursery and greenhouse businesses. They will also choose a subset of financial and operational benchmarks to implement in their respective business	Cost of production and benchmarking	Decide	May 2011	475	498	Online Evaluation

	Proposed Result	Topic	Producer action	When measured	Estimated number	Actual number	How verified
	during the coming year. In previous webinars, we have averaged 475 registrants per 3-part series, thus we assume the same number for this 3-part series.						
8	Green industry firms will have access to a series of previously recorded webcasts on risk management topics and will use the information to evaluate and adjust the strategic business plans for their operation. Previously recorded risk management webinar series have generated 750 post-webinar viewings each, thus we assume the same number for each of the 3 webinar series above.	Marketing plans and strategies	Analyze	May 2011	2250	1265	Online Evaluation
9	The project will increase the professional expertise of Extension agents and area farm management specialists working in these specialty crop areas and enable them to develop educational programs tailored specifically for their local clientele.	Marketing plans and strategies	Implement	May 2011	25	24	Written Action Plan
10	Materials developed for these risk management projects will be available to Extension agents, area specialists, and clientele in the form of online publications and/or proceedings following these educational activities. Specifically, leaflets and handouts will be generated and made available, along with	Marketing plans and strategies	Implement	May 2011	25	29	Written Action Plan

	Proposed Result	Topic	Producer action	When measured	Estimated number	Actual number	How verified
	PowerPoint® presentations for Extension agents and area farm management specialists to use in local educational programming in the risk management area.						
11	A website will be developed for green industry firms to have continued access to the series of previously recorded webinars (and associated materials) on risk management topics and will use the information to evaluate and adjust the strategic business plans for their operation.	Marketing plans and strategies	Analyze	May 2011	2500	6871	Online Evaluation

Project Steps

	What project team does	What participants do	Done?	Actual number of participants	When Completed
1	Finalize Plans. Among the first tasks in the execution of this project will be to confirm the overall project timeline and finalize the dates and locations for the workshop events. A web conference will be scheduled with the project team to review the project activities and timeline, and to clarify any outstanding issues.	NA	√	1	August 2010
2	Assemble Instructional Materials. The project team will gather existing instructional materials pertaining to the workshop curriculum from a wide range of sources, including land grant university extension publications, presentations by university colleagues, Internet searches, and electronic libraries, such as the Ag Risk Education Library (www.agrisk.umn.edu). The main sources of curriculum materials include the “Green Industry Risk Management Guide” and the “2009 National Nursery Industry Survey.”	NA	√	1	September 2010
3	Develop Curriculum. The team will identify any gaps or omissions in existing instructional materials relative to the nursery and greenhouse industry in the southern U.S. and green industry professionals will be consulted to identify critical risk issues that impact the industry. The team will develop new presentations synthesizing the educational materials. The draft curriculum will be distributed to the project	Industry advisers will provide input regarding the curriculum content.	√	24	October - November 2010

	What project team does	What participants do	Done?	Actual number of participants	When Completed
	team for review, with modifications will be made as appropriate, then uploaded to the Ag Risk Education Library.				
4	Develop and Conduct a Promotional Program. A marketing and promotional campaign will be implemented prior to the educational workshops, using promotional materials developed. The project collaborators will assist in distributing the promotional materials and make arrangements with industry associations in each state. Avenues of dissemination will include industry trade magazines and websites, state and local Farm Bureaus, media channels of public institutions including the University Extension Service, Farm Credit and Farm Service Agencies, as well as direct personal contacts and mailings.	Receive the promotional materials.	√	2343	December 2010
5	Deliver Training Workshops and Educational Materials. The delivery of this program consists of three primary pedagogies: (1) on-site presentations at conferences and workshops for green industry growers, nursery and landscape trade organization personnel, and agribusiness professionals covering risk management strategies; (2) stand-alone online webinars (web-based seminars) covering risk management strategies and tactics for nursery and greenhouse growers, landscape service providers, and retail firms with emphasis on differentiation strategies and their impact on firm-level price elasticity; and (3) timely	Participate in the on-site sessions at key industry conferences and workshops.	√	23	January - June 2011

	What project team does	What participants do	Done?	Actual number of participants	When Completed
	posts on the leading green industry blog entitled "Making Cents of Green Industry Economics" as well as in e-newsletters distributed by green industry trade organizations who have agreed to serve as project collaborators.				
6	<p>Online Access. The curriculum developed for this project will be a valuable educational tool for educators and agribusiness professionals to use at association meetings and producer workshops in helping their clientele learn about risk management and crop insurance. The materials prepared for the conferences, workshops, and webinars will be made available on the Internet. This varied approach for educational instruction is consistent with recent research showing that agricultural producers prefer to receive risk management information through a variety of formats, including publications, workshops, and the Internet. Moreover this approach is very cost effective at providing accurate information on risk management in a timely, unified manner, rather than through a more limited one-on-one communication.</p>	Engage in online learning opportunities.	√	29	August 2011
7	<p>Document All Educational Activities. Documentation of the program will be conducted at every stage in the project. Finalization of the delivery plan will be the benchmark for the project. Once instructional materials have been assembled and finalized, these materials will be cataloged, inventoried and provided to</p>	Complete registration lists.	√	1	January - June 2011

	What project team does	What participants do	Done?	Actual number of participants	When Completed
	<p>the Ag Risk Library. Documentation of the promotional activities will include an inventory of all promotional materials along with the development and maintenance of a contact control chart. The control chart will provides an inventory of participants and other interested parties associated with the project. The SRMEC will also receive this document as part of the final report.</p>				
8	<p>Final Project Evaluations. To complete the documentation process, a three-step evaluation process will be implemented. The first evaluation will occur immediately following each on-site conference and/or workshop session. Participants will be given evaluations to gage their level of understanding of the material covered. Results of these exercises will be tabulated, summarized, and submitted to as part of the final project report. The second evaluation will transpire at the end of each webinar program. Participants will be given an evaluation form to assess the program's strengths and weaknesses, to quantify program performance based on ranked scale, and to provide feedback regarding ways to improve future programs. Finally, a report summarizing findings of both program evaluations will be submitted to the SRMEC.</p>	<p>Complete the online and on-site evaluations.</p>	√	24	January - June 2011

Promotional Materials

[Economic Recovery Brings Immigration Debate Back to Forefront](#)

[Current Practices and Economic Impacts of Growers in the U.S. Green Industry](#)

Educational Materials

[Benchmarking: You Manage What You Measure!](#)

[Peering Into The Mind of the Post-recession Consumer](#)

[Managing Inputs and Costs to Maintain Profitability](#)

[Making Cents of Green Industry Economics](#)

[The Original Green industry: Serving an Environmentally Conscious Consumer](#)

[Green industry Risk Management Guide](#)

[National Nursery Survey](#)

[So You Want Proof, Do You?](#)

[Economic Contributions of the Green Industry in the United States](#)

[Benchmarking: The One Number You Need to Know!](#)

[Making Cents of Green Industry Economics](#)

[ANLA Knowledge Center -- Charlie's Angle segments](#)

Evaluations and Reports

Current Practices and Economic Impacts of Growers in the U.S. Green Industry

<http://rvs.umn.edu/Uploads/EvaluationsReports/1952ffb2-003b-4786-984b-a4117dd1f456.pdf>

Comment: This evaluation is for a webinar conducted on July 19, 2011.

Date of Evaluation/Report:

This Evaluation/Report is available to the public.

Economic Recovery Brings Immigration Debate Back to the Forefront

<http://rvs.umn.edu/Uploads/EvaluationsReports/b45536c8-a01d-4ee3-9307-41eea68ede1a.pdf>

Comment: This evaluation is for a webinar conducted on May 24, 2011

Date of Evaluation/Report:

This Evaluation/Report is available to the public.

Soul Searching & Marketing in Today's Challenging Marketplace

<http://rvs.umn.edu/Uploads/EvaluationsReports/87373ae4-8abe-4a80-8864-c671516b1fba.pdf>

Comment: This evaluation is for a 4-hour workshop conducted at the 2011 OFA Short Course.

Date of Evaluation/Report:

This Evaluation/Report is available to the public.

On-site presentations at conferences and workshops for green industry growers, nursery and landscape trade organization personnel, and agribusiness professionals.

<http://rvs.umn.edu/Uploads/EvaluationsReports/b42192ec-94eb-4a44-838b-7f23f6394518.pdf>

Comment: The delivery of this program consists of three primary pedagogies: (1) on-site presentations at conferences and workshops for green industry growers, nursery and landscape trade organization personnel, and agribusiness professionals covering risk management strategies. This table summarizes the types of risk covered at these meetings and the respective audience sizes.

Date of Evaluation/Report:

This Evaluation/Report is available to the public.

Making Cents of Green Industry Economics

<http://rvs.umn.edu/Uploads/EvaluationsReports/b748f3cc-8346-42fe-ad3f-c0de6556b08b.pdf>

Comment: This report summarizes the Google Analytics analysis of the blog utilized for disseminating risk-related information to clientele in the green industry. The blog is located at <http://ellisonchair.tamu.edu/making-cents-blog/>.

Date of Evaluation/Report:

This Evaluation/Report is available to the public.

Project Comments

Describe any unexpected results of the project:

One of the biggest problems we faced was the continued effects of the economic downturn in the green industry. People are still very strapped for money and could not afford to travel to participate in the presentations and/or workshops at the green industry conferences we spoke at or conducted workshops at. Of course, this worked to our advantage with the online webinars. Attendance is still strong at our online educational events.

We ended up changing one of the topics for the webinar series due to clientele in the green industry specifying in previous webinar evaluations the topics they would like to have addressed. This feedback was invaluable and we recommend that SRMEC grants in the future be allowed this kind of flexibility to address timely issues that arise during the duration of the project.

How would you improve this project if you were to do it again?

Given the significant focus on online pedagogies (e.g. webinars) in this educational project, we anticipate making the following adjustments in the future given our collective experiences:

1. Give webinar attendees access to the speaker

One of the biggest differences between a live webinar and a recorded one, or other media like white papers, is the ability to actually interact with the expert. Nearly all webinars we conduct have some sort of chat feature which can be used for live Q & A. In our promotions, we need to stress the fact that our audience member can have their question answered. Additionally, we need to consider allowing registrants to send questions to the speaker in advance, e.g. on Twitter or via a central email address. This makes the registrant a stakeholder in the event, and much more likely to attend.

2. Have a prize draw during the webinar

Prizes can sometimes be all the extra incentive that's needed to turn to that tentative webinar calendar appointment to a confirmed one. We are considering prizes that match our audience's interest. The prize of choice in 2011 is the iPad2. In 2009, it was the Kindle. But in order to stand out, we might try something different like a book related to the webinar topic. Even a whole set of books doesn't cost as much as an iPad, and winning them looks better in front of the attendee's boss.

3. Give attendees access to other attendees

Webinars are traditionally a one-to-many communication medium, instead of many-to-many which is characteristic of social networks. We think we should have a live Twitter chat during the event, or a Twitter debriefing after. This allows audience members to see who else is attending and make meaningful connections with peers. We could also invite webinar attendees to join our LinkedIn group where they can get access to webinar slides, plus interact with speakers and each other. This strategy will obviously lead to a significant increase in our LinkedIn group membership and user engagement.

4. Have an exclusive offer for attendees

Scarcity drives demand. We think we should let our registrants know that by attending, they are getting access to important information before others. We are considering having an exclusive offer such as an e-book or special report which only they can access after the webinar.

5. Have an option for ex ante no-shows

Obviously, not everyone will attend our webinar even if they register. And amongst those that don't attend, some will be future attendees. Sometimes it's just a matter of personal preference, and that is why we are considering giving registrants a 'slides only' option when registering. By choosing 'slides only', they are excusing themselves in advance for not being able to attend the webinar, while still showing interest in our content.

What were the keys to success for your participants?

We had a combination of live face to face workshops, but also webinars provided the opportunity for growers to participate without having to spend a lot of money in traveling. They also had the opportunity to view the recordings of the webinars. This was crucial, as the state of the economy reduced conference participation due to tighter budgets.

Partnerships with key industry leaders to facilitate communication and entail participation from growers.

Relevant educational materials and presentations to the risks faced by Green Industry firms today.

Quality of materials and experience of team members in conducting SRMEC educational programs.

The collaboration with academia, educators, growers, grower associations, several government agencies, and many others that made this project possible.

Individual stories / Examples of success / Quotes

In the webinar entitled "Economic Recovery Brings Immigration Debate Back to the Forefront," 89 evaluations were received out of the 323 participants (who attended live and viewed the recorded webinar). The dollar value they placed on the webinar information averaged \$1,250 which totals to \$157,500 for those returning the evaluation. They rated the webinar 4.65 on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being "fully met expectations" and 97.5% indicated they would handle immigration-related issues differently after attending the webinar. Their self-rated knowledge before the webinar was 3.0 on a 1 to 5 scale and increased to 4.25 after participating in the webinar (an increase in knowledge of 41%).

In the webinar entitled "Current Practices and Economic Impacts of Growers in the U.S. Green Industry," 126 evaluations were received out of the 216 participants (who attended live and viewed the recorded webinar). The dollar value they placed on the webinar information averaged \$2,500 which totals to \$222,500 for those returning the evaluation. They rated the webinar 4.85 on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being "fully met expectations" and 97.5% indicated they would use the information presented in some form attending the webinar. Their self-rated knowledge before the webinar was 2.5 on a 1 to 5 scale and increased to 4.50 after participating in the webinar (an increase in knowledge of 80%).

Most participants reported that each of these risk management programs were very well organized and some of the best information that they have ever gained in an Extension Program. Participants pointed out that they enjoyed the diversity that was used to present each program. Many participants reported and stated that they were very motivated to plan and/or adopt practices that they learned while in these risk management and small business management programs.

Comments from clientele are included in the evaluation materials uploaded, but below is a random selection of other commentary obtained on-site from the risk-related presentations about what the participants liked best:

- * Eye Opening, Much Needed.
- * We will re-think present procedures.
- * Great Speakers. Good Program.
- * Good Overview of present issues.
- * Very good updates concerning the industry
- * The enthusiasm of the speakers and their information was impressive.
- * Informative, nice facilities, different speakers than usual
- * The education gained and being with peers/fellow landscape professionals was invaluable.
- * The stimulating personalities of the speaker
- * Learning about new technologies
- * Importance of sustainability in the green industry

Leveraged Resources

ERME grant funds allocated:	47,509
ERME grant funds expended:	47,509
Other funds used for the project:	20,000
Non cash resources:	0

Delivery Area

This project was delivered through the internet.