



Risk Management Education for the Green Industry

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Project Introduction

Expended Amount: \$49,694

Educational programs were developed for green industry personnel to improve their understanding of environmental risks specific to the green industry (e.g., water conservation and quality, ecosystem services, etc.) and apply proactive strategies to minimize these risks and maximize profits. Green industry personnel have improved their understanding of marketing-related risks and apply social media and other innovative marketing strategies for differentiating their respective firms to minimize these risks, obtain higher prices and increase profits. They also learned about consumer perceptions of sustainable products and services (e.g., those produced in water-conserving and energy-conserving systems, locally grown biases and purchasing intentions and how environmentally conscious behaviors influence buying habits) and make more informed marketing decisions. Through ongoing benchmarking efforts, green industry personnel had a better understanding of the financial risks associated with economic downturn and recovery and develop strategic business plans to minimize risks and take advantage of opportunities during economic downturn.

Project Participants

The main target audience was producers from the green industry who have suffered greatly due to the economic downturn, the housing market crash and ever-increasing production cost due to gas price. They are involved in the business of producing, selling and providing service related to landscape plants. The abnormal climate conditions that we are

facing more and more often, such as the unusual heat and drought conditions, are like adding salt to the wound. Many green industry firms have filed bankruptcy despite long-time success. Producers in the green industry are in great need of risk education to deal with various risks that they are facing during the current different time. Comments from extension educational programming, including those previously funded by SRMEC, and producer participation over the previous years have validated the need for risk management education in the green industry. Last year, risk management education developed by the program leaders reached 1,944 producers and over 2,000 web viewings. If the green industry firms want to survive, or be successful, during the economic downturn, they must be aggressive in managing the risks facing them right now and in the future. The proposed project will, at least partially, meet their needs in risk management education. Another target audience is extension personnel who serve the green industry.

Project Area

The project area was mainly focused on Texas and areas with similar environmental conditions in the Southern region. Some topics covered in the project are applicable to audiences nationwide.

Project Outcomes

- 1,589 participants had a better understanding of production, marketing, financial and human risks specific to green industry firms.
- 254 participants had an opportunity to continue their contributions to an ongoing benchmarking project that was developed as part of a SRMEC grant three years ago.

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- 1,459 participants, who attended webinars or viewed online videos, could use the information to evaluate and adjust strategic plans for their firms.
- 703 participants implemented and used the risk management tools and educational materials developed for the project and either reduced losses or increased profits as a result of their participation in the project.

■ Quotes

“I attended the risk management workshop and found it to be a good mix of theory and practical insights. I particularly enjoyed the case studies and interaction with the other workshop participants. The style of the presentations led to some interesting discussion and I would recommend the workshop to my colleagues. Overall, the workshop was excellent.”

Steve Bennett, Owner, Riverbend Nurseries, TN

“We have learned that the big question facing the industry currently is ‘how do you transition from a growth industry to a mature one and stay profitable?’ Working with industry experts in a collaborative group environment like this program has provided us the tools needed to start this paradigm shift. Within the first six months of the program, we have moved from concepts to implementation of a strategy allowing us to start the journey into the future: this program is providing the roadmap and tools to help get us there.”

Tom Demaline, President, Willoway Nursery, OH

■ Project Success Story

Jim Prewitt founded Landmark Nurseries, Inc., over 20 years ago. Jim began his landscape career doing jobs for friends and neighbors and soon after opened his first wholesale nursery in Garland, Texas. In 1992, Landmark moved from Garland to Coppell, Texas, to set up new corporate headquarters and begin a long-term goal of expanding facilities to service landscapers across the state. Since then, four other wholesale distribution locations have been added to major markets in Texas: Round Rock–1996, Fort Worth–1999, Houston–2001 and San Antonio–2006. In addition to its wholesale locations, Landmark operates four growing facilities located throughout Texas in Edgewood, Grand Saline, Kirbyville and Round Rock. From annuals, perennials, shrubs, ground cover, to trees, each operation specializes in different aspects of Landmark’s goal to service the green industry as a whole. The farms encompass over 900 acres allowing Landmark to grow quality products while being able to maintain fair pricing. Kevin Norris, president of Landmark Nurseries, participated in the project and commented, “This course was very beneficial. It is a tall order to break down the current demographic and economic changes occurring in our industry. This course will help me provide a roadmap to responding to these changing trends. The industry is changing rapidly and my company recognizes the need to change. This workshop will not only provide a roadmap for assisting my team, but it also gave me a great list of walk-always to enhance the things we’re already doing well.”

***Sandra Martini, H. L. Goodwin and Ronald L. Rainey**, Grant Coordinator and Co-Directors, respectively, of the Southern Risk Management Education Center, serve as editors of this report series. To learn more about risk management education programs and resources, visit the Southern Center web site (<http://srmec.uark.edu>) or the Extension Risk Management Education Program link (www.extensionrme.org).

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