

FINAL REPORT

1999 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2001

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TITLE: Sustainability Forums

Project Manager: Barbara Toren

Organization: Izaak Walton League of America, Minnesota Division

Address: 805 Park Ave., Mahtomedi, MN 55115

Fund: Minnesota Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund

Legal Citation: ML 1999, Chap. [231], Sec. [16], Subd. [11(I)].

Appropriation Amount: \$200,000

Overall Project Outcome and Results

Sustainability Forums were held in four locations in Minnesota (Red Wing, Willmar, Duluth, and Winona). Each forum consisted of three one-day workshops featuring community sustainability principles, practices, and processes. Objectives were to increase citizen knowledge and awareness of community sustainability principles, improve communication between citizens and local government leaders, and enhance opportunities for citizen leadership in the development and implementation of community sustainability action plans.

331 individuals were involved as planners, sponsors, and/or attendees. They included a broad spectrum of community interests and expertise including elected officials, residents of all ages, and representatives of government agencies, educational institutions, businesses, and organizations.

The workshops combined 60% instructor-directed and 40% participant-directed exercises. Less than 20% of the total Forum meeting time was devoted to formal lecture presentations. Workshop exercises encouraged participants to consider innovative approaches to community development issues and to apply sustainability principles and processes to all aspects of their professional and civic lives.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

The forums brought together individuals with differing, and often opposing, viewpoints and introduced a common concept and process through which they could better identify and work toward the communities' best long-term interests. Decision-makers and residents worked in cooperation to advance their mutual understanding of community development.

Because this was an educational project, all results and outcomes are not immediately measurable. However a number of Duluth forum participants have formed a citizens' group: "Smart Neighborhood Revitalization and Growth Education" (SnrGe). In Winona, participants' interest in waste management issues created a group named "0 Waste Advocates." An increased amount of citizen participation occurred in the Kandiyohi County comprehensive planning process. Project staff members have received a number of information requests and speaking invitations.

A detailed narrative report of the Sustainability Forums Project was written and is available upon request.

July 1, 2001

LCMR Final Work Program Report

I. PROJECT TITLE: Sustainability Forums

Project Manager: Barbara Toren

Affiliation: Izaak Walton League of America, Minnesota Division

Mailing Address: 805 Park Av., Mahtomedi, MN 55115

Telephone: 651-426-2531; **e-mail:** toren@visi.com; **Fax:** 651-407-0882

Total Biennial Budget:

\$LCMR	200,000	\$ Match	0
- LCMR Amount Spent	173,780	- Match Amount Spent	0
<hr/>		<hr/>	
= LCMR Balance 6/30/01	26,220	= Match Balance	0

Legal Citation: ML 1999, Chap. [231], Sec. [16], Subd. [11(I)].

Appropriation Language: (I) Sustainability Forums

\$100,000 the first year and \$100,000 the second year are from the trust fund to the office of environmental assistance for an agreement with the Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America to conduct forums for the public and local units of government on sustainability and community-based planning objectives.

Status of Match Requirement: not applicable

II & III FINAL PROJECT SUMMARY

Overall Project Outcome and Results

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IV OUTLINE OF PROJECT RESULTS

Although each of the four Forums was an independent activity, they all followed similar patterns of planning and implementation. This outline describes activities and processes common to all of the four Forums, and also our notes and comments on significant points of difference. Individual reports describing the results of each of the Forums in more detail are included as attachments to this Final Work Program.

Plan

Planning for each Forum began from four to twelve months prior to the meeting dates. (A planning period of at least nine months is recommended for future workshops of this type. The four month planning period (Red Wing) was probably not long enough.)

In each community, a grass-roots planning group was of fundamental importance to the successful conduct of the forum, and significantly influenced its individual characteristics.

This group was initially composed of local IWLA chapter members who served as its nucleus. Their first task was to augment and diversify the group by

identifying and recruiting other persons representing different community interests. The expanded committee met regularly (5 to 10 times) to provide background about the community and its planning process, and to assist project staff in the development of forum agendas.

An important function of the planning group was the development of a list of forum co-sponsors. These were local organizations, who agreed to show their support of the Forum by including their names as co-sponsors on the meeting programs and brochures. (It was important to demonstrate broad community support to avoid the impression that these were merely "environmental meetings".) Sponsors included city councils, schools and universities, newspapers and other media, non-profit organizations, local businesses and governmental agencies. The numbers of co-sponsors for each Forum were: Red Wing – 8; Willmar – 6; Duluth – 29; Winona – 30.

The agenda of each Forum included several short presentations describing existing local projects exemplifying sustainability principals. These projects were selected by the local planning group.

Workshop meeting days were set on Friday/Saturday/–2 week break–/Saturday, except in Duluth where a Tuesday/Wednesday/–2 week break–/Friday sequence was chosen by the local planning group.

The planning committees also identified local media contacts, meeting sites, and catering services; and helped generate inclusive mailing lists.

Invite

An invitation brochure for each Forum was prepared by project staff in cooperation with the local planning group. These brochures were tailored to each area, with logos and titles appropriate to the special concerns of the community. (Copies of these brochures are included in the attachments to this report).

The goal of these Forums was to include participation from all parts of each community – economic, educational, governmental, and the citizenry in general. To this end, project staff prepared extensive invitation mailing lists, using organizational, business, educational, and governmental name lists provided by planning group members.

Invitation letters, including copies of the brochure, were sent by first class mail to all persons on the mailing lists. (Red Wing – 446, Willmar – 484, Duluth – 951, Winona – 949).

Invitations to the general public were also made by radio interviews, newspaper articles, presentations to civic groups, and cable TV.

Advance registrations were: Red Wing – 30, Willmar – 37, Duluth – 113, Winona – 63. (It's interesting to speculate whether the higher registration in Duluth was related to the mid-week scheduling.)

Conduct

Four Forums, each consisting of three one-day workshops were conducted. With the help of the local planning committees, project staff managed and conducted each meeting. Staff and volunteers handled registration and information distribution, refreshments, and room set-up. Project staff ran the

forums, making presentations, facilitating exercises, managing participant presentations, and summarizing participant responses to workshop exercises.

At registration, each participant received a binder of resource materials and background information about sustainability practices

The first two workshops were held on consecutive days. The first workshop of the forum introduced community sustainability principles and practices. IWLA project staff and local sustainability practitioners helped participants build an understanding of what sustainability is and how it is being practiced. The second workshop involved participants in activities that promoted inclusive, consensus-based decision-making.

After completion of the first two workshops, project staff prepared and distributed written reports documenting forum discussions and presentations. In Forums II, III, and IV, project staff also prepared maps showing socially significant community features, based on compilation of participant responses from small group exercises. These maps offered a springboard for discussion at the third workshop.

The third workshop occurred about two weeks later. It was participant driven and offered opportunities to critically examine issues of local concern within the context of sustainability. Workshop exercises encouraged participants to consider innovative approaches to community development issues and to apply sustainability principles and processes to all aspects of their professional and civic lives. A modified "Open Space" group process technology was used to identify and explore topics of interest. Although many of the topics discussed had the potential to become divisive, participants were charged with applying community sustainability principles to the topics and considering ways the entire community could work together to address the issue. The results were respectful discussions that sometimes sparked creative ideas and other times simply enhanced understanding and communication among residents with different viewpoints.

The total participation in the Forums (planners, presenters, and participants) was: Red Wing – 42, Willmar – 69, Duluth – 126, Winona – 75.

Evaluate

At the close of each day's session, participants filled out comment sheets on their reactions to the operation and content of the meeting. In addition, about four weeks after each forum, a questionnaire was mailed to each participant with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. The questionnaire asked participants briefly to explain how they had used or planned to use the information presented at the Sustainability Forum. They also were asked what additional information, training, or assistance they could use to act on what they had learned. Responses from these questionnaires provided a basis for fine-tuning workshop procedures and planning follow-up activities.

Post-Forum Activities

- For several months following each forum, project staff continued to work with participants as they implemented recommendations and continued to identify opportunities to advance community sustainability. This follow-up support

took many forms — resource identification, educational outreach materials development, and additional workshops.

- In response to a request for a follow-up educational outreach product, "*Connections: People, Communities, and Sustainability*" was developed. This is a short presentation individuals can use for organization meetings or work groups. It contains step-by-step directions, including overhead projection masters and a script, for conducting a 90-minute introductory discussion about community sustainability.
- A number of Duluth forum participants joined together to form a new citizens' group: "Smart Neighborhood Revitalization and Growth Education" (SnrGe — pronounced "synergy") SnrGe organizers meet weekly at a local coffee shop, and have affiliated with the University of Minnesota Extension Service. They are a community-based citizen group that sends representatives to neighborhood meetings, and has organized a speakers bureau. They also host open forums that address community building, economic development, green space, parks, environmental health, housing, and the ways these topics are addressed in Duluth's comprehensive plan.
- In Winona, forum participants' interest in waste management issues led to the creation of a group named "0 Waste Advocates." They developed a questionnaire to identify the community's interest in a facility where they could drop off usable but unwanted items and pick-up such items that other people had deposited. By the end of the forum they had set a date to meet and had articulated a strategy to approach the county for help identifying and operating such a site. In the weeks that followed the forum, the group solidified its ideas, obtained the county's support, and launched their re-use exchange center.
- Also significant was increased citizen participation in the Kandiyohi County comprehensive planning process
- One full day of the Winona forum was videotaped for use in a program describing projects funded by the Minnesota Environmental Trust Fund. That program, *The Minnesota State Lottery's Environmental Journal, Program Number 284* was aired on cable television stations throughout the state. This videotape segment of the forum provided an excellent overview of the Sustainability Forum process, and is available, on request, for use in future presentations.
- In addition to the formal Work Program Report, a ten page narrative final report was written and distributed to all participants in the project and to a number of persons in academia and government. This report includes a description of the entire project, as well as additional information and commentary by project staff on the operations and outcomes of the project. Copies of this report are available on request, and are included as attachments to the formal report.

Project Budget

The proposed project budget was based on previous experience with pilot projects carried out in 1997-98. We recognized that expenses of this project would vary from one Forum to another, mainly because of differing costs of meeting room rentals and participants meals. The actual expenses of each of the four Forums is tabulated below.

	Forum I	Forum II	Forum III	Forum IV	Total
	Red Wing	Willmar	Duluth	Winona	
Budget	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$200,000
Spent	\$41,873	\$41,399	\$44,500	\$46,008	\$173,780
Not Spent	\$8,127	\$8,601	\$5,500	\$3,992	\$26,220

V DISSEMINATION

Workshop notices, information and outcomes were disseminated through the communication tools and networks of the participating organizations. Volunteer planning committees in the forum host communities also assisted project staff with the development of local and regional media lists.

Both the Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America and the Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance have print and non-print media tools for efficient information dissemination. The Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League produces a quarterly publication called the *Waltonian* and maintains a home page on the World Wide Web (www.mn-ikes@mtn.org). These are effective tools for communicating with the organization's 1,500 state members and the public. The Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance produces a quarterly magazine, *The Resource*, and maintains a Minnesota Sustainable Community Network list serve on the Internet.

Local media outreach included reporting about workshops through local radio, television and print media. Press releases also were sent to local organizations, churches, educational institutions and businesses for inclusion in their newsletters. Project staff promoted the workshops through presentations to local business, church, and other citizen groups, and by interviews with local newspapers, and radio and television stations.

VI CONTEXT

A Significance:

Over the past three years the League has developed and piloted a series of group learning and analysis exercises to build knowledge among community members and leaders who represent the full range of community sectors and

interests — agriculture, business, industry, local government, real estate, economic development, health and human services, communities of faith, education, the arts youth, civic organizations and others. The goals of this process are to:

- Develop leadership capacity to address sustainability issues and community-based planning among people representing all community sectors and interests.
- Create a citizenry informed about and engaged in sustainability issues and community-based planning processes.
- Encourage citizen-led, community-wide processes to address sustainability issues and community-based planning processes.
- Demonstrate that community sustainability requires collaborative corporate, governmental, community and individual action.

The "Sustainability Forums" project complements the work of Minnesota-based non-governmental organizations, as well as the work of a number of Minnesota state agencies. These agencies include the Office of Strategic and Long Range Planning, the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board, Office of Environmental Assistance, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota Department of Public Service (now Department of Commerce), and Minnesota Department of Transportation.

B. Time

The project was completed within the two year project period.

C Budget Context:

The budget for this project was based on similar projects successfully implemented by the Izaak Walton League of America's Sustainability Education Project and funded by the San Francisco based S.H. Cowell Foundation in 1997-98.

A significant difference between the League's pilot projects and this project is that the pilot projects included only one workshop in each of three different communities, Ames, IA; Mahtomedi, MN and San Pedro CA. Based on written participant evaluations, the Minnesota Division, Izaak Walton League of America believed that a forum of three consecutive workshops would be a more effective way to prepare communities to apply sustainability principles and develop a local, community-based planning process. Four such forums — each consisting of three workshops and staff-assisted follow-up — were proposed for this LCMR project. Budget research indicated that costs similar to those required to implement the League's pilot workshops would be incurred in each workshop of the four Minnesota forums.

This budget does not include anticipated in-kind donations and volunteer support.

Personnel

The two-year budget provided funds for a project manager (\$73,400), and assistant project manager (\$61,900) and contractual staff (\$8,000).

The project manager was responsible for overall supervision of the project and for coordinating the work of the project partners. The project manager shared responsibility with the assistant project manager for planning the forums, recruiting participants, implementing the forums, evaluating the forums, providing technical advice and reporting about forum outcomes.

The assistant project manager supported the project manager's efforts to provide project supervision and coordination. The assistant project manager shared responsibility with the project manager for planning the forums, recruiting participants, implementing the forums, evaluating the forums, providing technical advice to participating communities and reporting about forum outcomes.

Contractual staff was hired to provide additional clerical and technical support as needed. Clerical tasks included data entry and mail handling. Technical support included graphic design and computer and technical consulting services.

Forum Expenses

Forum expenses included costs associated with forum planning and implementation. These included, but were not limited to rental fees for meeting rooms and audiovisual equipment, workshop supplies, refreshments and box lunches for participants, and special services for visually or hearing impaired participants (as needed).

Participant Workbooks

Each forum participant received a workbook binder with background information provided by state agencies and non-profit organizations about sustainability and community-based planning. The workbook also held workshop exercises and served as a post-forum reference. Approximately 300 workbooks were produced.

Telephone

Telephone expenses included local and long-distance telephone service.

Postage

Postage, shipping and handling costs included services provided by the U.S. Postal Service, private parcel and delivery services and bulk-mail handling services.

Travel

Travel expenses included costs associated with car train travel within the state and associated lodging and meals for project staff and other professionals who helped with forum planning, implementation and follow-up.

Administrative

These included photocopying, office supplies, subscriptions and other administrative costs. Administrative expenses also included a portion (20%) of the rental of the IWLA office where clerical work and preparation of materials was done.

BUDGET DETAIL

Each of the four Forums was budgeted at \$50,000, one fourth of the total project amount. It was realized that there was overlap between the items, and that the actual expenditures would vary from one Forum to the next. The amounts below were based on our best judgment, and served as guidelines as the project proceeded.

Estimated Single Forum Budget

	Result 1 Plan	Result 2 Invite	Result 3 Conduct	Result 4 Evaluate	Result 5 Follow-up	ROW TOTAL
Project Manager	8,040	3,600	720	2,400	3,590	18,350
Assistant Project Manager	6,270	3,160	630	2,100	3,315	15,475
Contracts	500	0	1,500	0	0	2,000
Forum Expense	0	1,500	4,000	800	2,000	8,300
Participant Workbooks	1,250	0	0	0	0	1,250
Telephone	300	300	0	300	300	1,200
Postage	100	600	100	0	700	1,500
Travel	500	0	500	0	0	1,000
Admin.	200	200	300	100	125	925
Totals	17,160	9,360	7,750	5,700	10,030	50,000

VII COOPERATION

Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance: Sue Wylie, Environmental Education Specialist;

Minnesota Office of Strategic and Long Range Planning — Environmental Quality Board;

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources;

Minnesota Association of Townships is interested in working with this project;

Minnesota State University System;

Izaak Walton League of America, Minnesota Division and Chapters.

VIII LOCATION

Forum I Red Wing MN (Cannon River Communities)

Forum II Willmar, MN (Kandiyohi County)

Forum III Duluth, MN (Duluth Area)

Forum IV Winona, MN (Winona County)

IX REPORTS

Work program progress reports were submitted in January 2000, July 2000 and February 2001. This document is the final work program report due after the June 30, 2001 project completion date. An additional narrative report was also prepared and is included as an attachment to this document.

X. RESEARCH PROJECTS: Not applicable

ATTACHMENTS

A Forum I Red Wing MN (Cannon River Communities)

B Forum II Willmar, MN (Kandiyohi County)

C Forum III Duluth, MN (Duluth Area)

D Forum IV Winona, MN (Winona County)

E Narrative Report on Project

F Winona Forum Videotape

G "Connections: People, Communities, and Sustainability"