
Name of Organization: The Right Place Program

Type of Organization: Other

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The Right Place Program

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Project Title: Fostering Sustainable Business Practices in West Michigan

Project Category: Pollution Prevention and Reduction - BNS

Rank by Organization (if applicable): 0

Total Funding Requested (\$): 65,000 **Project Duration:** 1 Years

Abstract:

The Right Place Program seeks support from the Environmental Protection Agency's Great Lakes National Program Office to design sustainable business training modules in eight key business areas, and to facilitate a sustainable business learning network for ten manufacturing firms in the Grand River watershed. Firms will be selected for inclusion in the network based on their use and emissions of Level I and Level II persistent bio-accumulative toxic substances, as defined by the Binational Toxics Strategy. The purpose of the learning network will be to foster understanding and application of cost effective alternatives to the use of these substances in the operations of the ten participating firms. The Right Place program will work closely with the West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum (WMSBF), the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center, BLDI Environmental and Safety Management, and other technical contractors to accomplish our objectives.

Geographic Areas Affected by the Project

- States:**
- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illinois | <input type="checkbox"/> New York |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indiana | <input type="checkbox"/> Pennsylvania |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Michigan | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wisconsin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Minnesota | <input type="checkbox"/> Ohio |
- Lakes:**
- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Superior | <input type="checkbox"/> Erie |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Huron | <input type="checkbox"/> Ontario |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Michigan | <input type="checkbox"/> All Lakes |

- Geographic Initiatives:**
- | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greater Chicago | <input type="checkbox"/> NE Ohio | <input type="checkbox"/> NW Indiana | <input type="checkbox"/> SE Michigan | <input type="checkbox"/> Lake St. Clair |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|

Primary Affected Area of Concern: White Lake, MI

Other Affected Areas of Concern: The AOC includes White Lake and a one-quarter mile wide zone around the lake, Muskegon Lake, Kalamazoo River from Morrow Dam to Lake Michigan

Muskegon Lake is a 4,149 acre inland coastal lake located in Muskegon County, Michigan along the east shoreline of Lake Michigan. The AOC includes the entire lake with the lake being separated from Lake Michigan by sand dunes. The Muskegon River flows through the lake before emptying into Lake Michigan. Additional tributaries include Mosquito Creek, Ryerson Creek, Ruddiman Creek, Green Creek, and Four Mile Creek. The immediate inland area is primarily residential and industrial, with chemical and petrochemi

For Habitat Projects Only:

Primary Affected Biodiversity Investment Area:

Other Affected Biodiversity Investment Areas:

Problem Statement:

While there are promising national and international trends relative to sustainable business development, there is still insufficient information easily accessible to the average manufacturing firm about proven, cost-effective alternatives to the use and generation of persistent bioaccumulative toxic substances. Therefore, many manufacturing facilities have been slow to acquire the necessary training and skills and adopt processes that can contribute to the implementation of these alternative processes.

One of Michigan's economic strengths is its manufacturing base, including automotive suppliers, furniture makers, metal casters, steel processors, and plastics manufacturers. These manufacturers generate significant wastes, are energy intensive, and process large quantities of natural resources as raw materials. All of these factors contribute to Michigan's rank of 9th in the nation for toxic releases (1996 TRI data). The barriers to improving environmental performance are significant. Many firms feel threatened by environmental regulations and are unlikely to embrace concepts that they perceive may take away from their bottom line. In some cases, this concern is warranted, as environmental approaches have historically tended to be difficult and costly to implement and have not integrated well with business practices.

However, entrepreneurial business leaders have recently begun combining lean manufacturing techniques with sustainable business principles to foster product innovation, cost savings, and competitive advantage. This proposal will build on this positive trend by making best practices and current best knowledge on alternatives to the use of bioaccumulative toxic substances easily accessible to participating manufacturers, and eventually to any interested manufacturing in the Great Lakes region. The geographic focus of the project will be Muskegon county, because that is the site of an Area of Concern as defined by the Environmental Protection Agency. Secondary areas of focus will include Kent, Ottawa, Allegan, and Kalamazoo counties of West Michigan.

Proposed Work Outcome:

1. Develop Sustainable Commerce Training Modules

The West Michigan Business Forum has developed a "Self-Assessment Guide for Environmentally Sustainable Commerce" that guides companies through a self-assessment of the following eight key business areas:

- * Environmental Management Systems
- * Product Design
- * Facilities
- * Purchasing
- * Operations
- * Packaging
- * Transportation
- * Sales and Marketing

With support from the Great Lakes National Program Office, we propose to develop training modules in each of these eight areas, with an emphasis on the elimination of Level I and Level II bioaccumulative persistent toxic substances identified by the Binational Toxics Strategy.

2. Learning Network

As a means of using these modules to guide manufacturers to understand and implement processes that reduce or eliminate the use and generation of these substances, we will create a learning network with the following features:

- * Ten companies. Ten manufacturing firms will be selected from the Grand River watershed region with a focus on those firms that are most likely to use and emit Level I and Level II substances.
- * Proven learning technology. The Learning Network will be based on the Right Place Program structure for Users Groups - a structure and process that RPP has used with hundreds of companies over the last ten years.
- * On-Site Facilitated Self-assessment. Once firms have been selected, they will participate in a BLDI-facilitated self-assessment, based on the West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum's "Self Assessment Guide to Environmentally Sustainable Commerce" (attached). This guide will be customized for each firm, and will focus on persistent bio-accumulative compounds. The purpose of this assessment exercise will be to begin to focus on low cost, high leverage areas of improvement that are most likely to reduce production and use of bio-accumulative compounds. This exercise will precede the initial convening of the learning network.
- * Focus on "up-stream" root cause elimination. The Forum's framework is heavily focused on reduction of resource consumption and elimination of pollution through changes in product design, material use, and innovative process technologies. The focus is on eliminating the need for substances of concern, rather than simply preventing their release into the watershed.
- * Six meetings. The learning network will hold six one-day meetings throughout the term of the grant period, and the meetings will rotate from firm to firm. The focus of each meeting will be on the assessment and implementation strategies of the host firm.
- * Company projects. Each participating company will select at least one project to implement during the Learning Network, based on its assessment. Project documentation will be in the form of a traditional Continuous Improvement project: 1) Define the Problem; 2) Assess Current Situation; 3) Analyze Causes; 4) Implement Improvements; 5) Study Results; 6) Standardize Improvements; 7) Plan Next Improvement. Each company will provide a project update at each meeting.
- * Outside experts. The budget provides for bringing in outside experts on an as-needed basis. The content areas will be determined based on the firm assessments and the issues that are most common to the group of firms. For example, if a common issue is the use of solvents, paints or coatings that result in the release of Level I or Level II substances, experts who have developed or understand alternative, environmentally benign processes and materials will be brought in to offer

guidance.

3. Dissemination

The ten participating firms will be treated as a pilot project for spreading practices that eliminate Level I and Level II substances throughout the watershed region. In the tenth month of the project period, we will disseminate the results of their projects and the lessons learned through numerous venues including the 50-member West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum and the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center. Dissemination methods will include hosting workshops at the annual meetings of these organizations, and development and dissemination of case studies based on the lessons learned through the learning network.

Project Milestones:	Dates:
Project Organization and kick-off	09/2000
Complete selection of participating cos.	12/2000
Finish self-assessments of participants	03/2001
Complete development of training modules	03/2001
Completion of six user group meetings	07/2001
Complete case studies	08/2001
Complete dissemination	09/2001
Final Project Report	09/2001

Project Addresses Environmental Justice

If So, Description of How:

Project Addresses Education/Outreach

If So, Description of How:

Project will target manufacturers in economically depressed areas. Please refer to proposed work/outcomes statement for further details.

Project Budget:

	Federal Share Requested (\$)	Applicant's Share (\$)
Personnel:	23,800	10,200
Fringe:	11,200	4,800
Travel:	0	0
Equipment:	0	0
Supplies:	0	0
Contracts:	30,000	20,000
Construction:	0	0
Other:	0	0
Total Direct Costs:	65,000	35,000
Indirect Costs:	0	0
Total:	65,000	35,000
Projected Income:	0	0

Funding by Other Organizations (Names, Amounts, Description of Commitments):

All partners listed will support the fulfillment of the goals of this project.

Description of Collaboration/Community Based Support:

Project partners represent a majority of the key sectors in the community, and are committed to collaboration on this project.

The Right Place Program (RPP) (www.rightplace.org) is a 15 year old non-profit, private-public partnership that is a widely recognized economic development organization in West Michigan. RPP convenes industry councils and inter-firm learning networks that advance the competitiveness area manufacturers. RPP has organized and operated over 50 different learning networks addressing manufacturing issues such as: *ISO/ QS 9000, and 14000, Y2K * Sensors * Project Management * TQM/Continuous Improvement * Lean Manufacturing * Product Development * Sales and Marketing RPP has the track record and resources to develop and continue to offer such training for as long as there are companies interested in its benefits.

West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum: (See www.sustainable-busforum.org). This organization is committed to the implementation of sustainable business practices. Its 50 members include leading area manufacturers (Amway, Donnelly, GM, Herman Miller, Crystal Flash, Irwin Seating, Steelcase) as well as environmental organizations and service providers. It has developed specific tools to foster implementation such as a self-assessment guide to sustainability, and a guidebook on "green" design. The WMSBF has a five-year track record and will be a strong partner in helping solicit and maintain interest in this program. The Forum is a business outreach program of West Michigan Environmental Action Council, a citizens environmental advocacy organization, so the general public is also represented in this project.

Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center/ WM Affiliates and BLDI Environmental and Safety Management: These organizations represent the business, private/public partnerships, and the scientific and engineering sectors of the community. One of the MMTC-West affiliates is the Muskegon Area Chamber of Commerce.