

Eastern District Funding for Innovative Programs

Application Form

Project Title: Grape Production Systems That Are Working

Project Timeline: May 2005 thru October 2005

Funding Requested: \$ 2,600

Project Lead/Grant Applicant: Mark Feuerstein

Project Collaborator(s) (if applicable):

Richard Weidman - Peninsular Research Station Superintendent

Rob Burke - Door County Extension CRED

Tim Lawrie - Owner of Simon Creek Winery

Bill Schmeiling- Owner of Von Stiehl Winery

GRAPE PRODUCTION SYSTEMS THAT ARE WORKING

Project Description:

Grape growing for wine making in Northeast Wisconsin is a fairly new, but growing enterprise. Now with five wineries in operation year round in Door and Kewaunee counties, winery owners and interested parties in grape production are asking the questions of how to produce desired grape varieties locally that will give wine makers the quality they are looking for.

Most of the current information regarding local grape growing and production is coming from the Peninsular Research Station located in Sturgeon Bay, WI. The superintendent of the research station does not specialize in grapes, but is willing to allow an expansion of the grape trial area to help assist the grape growing industry of northeast Wisconsin. At the same time, UW-Madison does not at this time have a grape program, and there are no plans to add one in the near future.

Therefore, to gain more knowledge of the industry in terms of cultural, varietal and other production practices to explore and implement in this region we plan to conduct an assessment of the grape production system in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York. This region of the country is very similar to the northeast part of Wisconsin in terms of climate, overall precipitation and frost-free days. Plans are in motion to spend 5 days in the Finger Lakes region, learning from the staff and Grape specialists from Cornell University who will be at the Finger Lakes Research Center. We will also visit several grape vineyards and growers who are using the technology discovered at the research center and are now into production phase of their operation.

Goals:

1. Identify a set of production practices from the Finger Lakes region that producers in northeast Wisconsin could apply to improve our grape growing industry.
2. Assess supporting resources (University specialists, extensionists, experiment stations, private consultants, related businesses, etc.) that support grape production in the Finger Lakes region. Upon return, conduct a "Gap Analysis" to identify weaknesses and needs of our current array of supporting resources in northeast Wisconsin. Involve extensionists from the CNRED program area in this analysis.
3. Using Digital Photography, a Digital Palm Recorder and materials collected from our assessment of the Finger Lakes region in New York we shall put together an updated version of the "**Wisconsin Wine Grape Production Guide**" that will be available in hard copy as well as a CD ROM.
4. Present the results of our assessment and the updated Wisconsin Wine Grape Production Guide at meetings with producers, vintners, extensionists, and economic development professionals in Northeast Wisconsin.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Using the guide, producers will apply technologies and practices that increase production and produce a higher quality product.
2. Individual producers will gain a better understanding of production costs associated with this crop, and will make a determination if this is an enterprise they will invest in.
3. Through the Gap Analysis, UW-Extension and economic development professionals who are evaluating and promoting wine grape production in northeast Wisconsin will better understand what is needed to build a strong business climate for our local grape and wine industry.

Evaluation Plan:

People interested in learning about wine grape production in northeast Wisconsin will be charged for the hard copy or CD. After they have reviewed the materials for a month, an evaluation will be sent out to determine if their needs are being met. Another evaluation will be created when the **Wisconsin Wine Grape Production Guide** is used as a teaching tool for those wanting more formal training as time goes on.

Through interviews with producers assess how they improved production. We will evaluate if and to what extent the improved practices lead to impacts such as: higher production, higher quality product, quicker maturity, and increased profitability.

Budget: *The following is what will be required:*

Travel by plane to Finger Lakes Region for (2).....	\$ 960.00
Vehicle Rental.....	165.00
Meals and Hotels	460.00
Rootstock Purchase of Elite Varieties	750.00
Educational Resources (CD's and Published Materials).....	<u>265.00</u>
Total Requested from Resource Management Funds	\$2,600.00

Other Funding:

Funding for production of the CD and hardcopy of the Wisconsin Wine Grape Production Guide in the amount of **\$1,400.00** by the Peninsular Research Station for production costs.

Past Resource Management Funding

In the fall of 2002, I was awarded funds for a project "**Stimulating Local Grape Juice Market: Experimental Vintner Proposal**" from the Resource Management funds.

The outcomes were to evaluate the grape varieties currently grown at the Peninsular Research Station to determine if they had the quality characteristics needed for local wineries to use to produce their wine products. In 2003, due to the long, warm growing season, all the varieties grown at the Peninsular Research Station reached maturity and were evaluated on sugar content and yield. From there, the grapes were juiced, tested for pH, and fermented in oak barrels. Samples of the juice were made available to winery owners for their evaluation. In 2004, due to the cool, wet growing season, only 3 early maturity varieties made it to maturity, and these 3 were also evaluated.

This project proposal is different in that we will now be focusing on areas of production, and how that relates to yield and quality. New varieties that are not being grown at the Peninsular Research Station will be observed and explained.

A main thrust of this new project will be to see and learn how Cornell Research Center is working with grape production, and how growers have used this information to improve production, with a focus on quality for their local wine making industry.

Signature:

Grant Applicant/Lead

