

Request for District Funding for Innovative Programs

Title: Hmong Entrepreneurial Education and Assistance

Project Timeline: One year from award of funds. Monies granted will be transferred to County budget prior to May 1, 2005 and utilized for 26 weeks of the project expenses

Funding Request: \$5000

Project Lead/Grant Applicant: Karen Early, Brown County WNEP Coordinator
Cathy Huntowski, Brown County WNEP Educator
And the Brown County UW Extension Office

Project Collaborators: United Hmong Community Center, Inc.
UWGB Small Business Development Center
Brown County Food & Hunger Network
Brown County Community Garden Program
Brown County Health Department

Situation Statement:

The Brown County UW Extension conducted food security research that provided a basis for many community-based hunger and food security activities, launching the Brown County Food Security Initiative. Due to the high degree of food insecurity and hunger in the Hmong community a partnership was formed with the United Hmong Community Center, UW Extension and the Brown County Food & Hunger Network that was instrumental in securing funds through the USDA Community Food Systems Grant Program. The purpose of the grant was to assist the Hmong community in reducing food insecurity by strengthening elements of their local food system and in expanding opportunities for agriculture and food-related micro-enterprise development.

The USDA Community Food Systems Grant allowed for three years of foundation-building activities; renovation of the kitchen facilities, purchasing of equipment for an inspected and licensed commercial kitchen, a written business plan for the kitchen and cold storage facility. Over 30 Hmong people were trained in Food Service Sanitation and there are at least 10 people that have indicated an interest in starting their own food-related micro-enterprise or business utilizing the commercial kitchen and cold storage facility. Market growers are also interested in using the cold storage facility to improve product quality and sales.

The kitchen was to be self-sustaining at this point, however, building cultural bridges and adjusting project plans to make needed cultural accommodations occupied the bulk of the grant activities. In addition, the Center was also heavily occupied in assisting the new Hmong refugee families in finding housing, employment and to acquire daily living skills.

The USDA grant provided an excellent foundation for future business development activities. These business development activities have the potential to improve the food security status of these families as they increase their income from micro-enterprise development. We are now in the position to begin business development with the shared kitchen as a resource. Education in business development basics, food safety and sanitation and mentoring for new business owners will be essential to coach new entrepreneurs in business practices and to assist in marketing.

This project addresses several goals in the UWEX Plan of Work for the FLP Poverty and Food Insecurity Team. It addresses two of the Team Impact Indicators; 1.6 – Improves food security status of community by assisting individuals in developing income earning potential through food micro-enterprises and reducing reliance on public assistance funds and, 3.0 – Stretches resources and improves family food security by growing food, storing it properly to make a profit through a family micro-enterprise. This will increase family income and allow for increased money for food.

The District Resource Management Funds are requested to accomplish the following goals and outcomes:

Goal 1: To provide food business development assistance, mentoring and coaching

Outcome: Five Hmong individuals interested in using the commercial kitchen to start a food micro-enterprise business will be assisted in their ventures

Evaluation: Assistance Satisfaction interview will be conducted with each participant

Goal 2: To provide specific education in food safety and sanitation, product development, preparation, processing and marketing for food-related business owners

Outcome: 25 Hmong individuals will receive education and assistance

Evaluation: Written evaluations will be obtained at all educational offerings. Pre- and Post knowledge and behavior scales will be used to gauge effectiveness of training and assistance

Goal 3: To provide education and assistance that will improve sales of market gardeners by extending shelf life through proper handling and cold storage and selling produce by weight.

Outcome: Ten Hmong individuals involved in growing and direct marketing of garden produce will receive education and assistance.

Evaluation: Yields and sales will be measured and compared to last year's figures from those willing to share the information.

Budget

Salaries (LTE) 26 weeks 15 hrs per week @\$11/hr	\$ 4290
Fringe 9% of salary	385
Mileage 35 miles/ week @ \$ 32.5/mile	295
Supplies and postage	30
Total Resource Management Team Funds Requested	\$ 5000

Other Funds

USDA Carry Over funds	\$ 5900
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Project Total \$10,900

Other DRM Team Funds Received

These funds were provided to Brown County UWEX and have been instrumental in improving access to community gardens and in educating Hmong individuals in the county on practices that have improved income producing potential of those gardens.

2002 - Community Garden Intern	\$ 5000
2003 - Oriental Vegetable Trial Garden	\$ 5000
2004 - Unheated Hoop House	\$ 5000

The funds used in these projects will greatly enhance the outcomes of the proposed project by providing additional educational resources for project participants.

The project has identified and will be hiring a Hmong individual as staff for this project – he has the work experience and education to be a valuable resource to the Hmong community and other county residents as well.

Signature:

Grant Applicant/Lead