

Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources

Training Needs Assessment

Spring 2010





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Acknowledgements:

Special thanks to all the local government partners who participated in the focus groups and the survey process. Thanks also to BWSR staff and agency partners for consultation and participation in the assessment.

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Cover photo credit:
Hawk Creek Watershed Project

April 2010

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I. Purpose & Background

Introduction

When workers lack the right skills to successfully perform their jobs, communities pay the price. According to 2009 ASTD¹ research of over 1,150 organizations, 79% of respondents said **there is a skills gap** in their organizations.

The number one reason for a gap was that skills of the workforce did not match changes in the organization's strategy, goals, or operations. Other reasons included a lack of strong leaders; the effects of a merger; and cuts in training investments.

With economic challenges, workloads, and competing interests, organizations need to strategically decrease these gaps – often with fewer resources.

How do we increase organizational effectiveness and improve the skills gap? According to the National Center for Education and the Economy, studies from the last decade showed that increases in learning and educational attainment were responsible for 11 to 20 percent of growth in U.S. worker productivity. Our learning experiences shape us - how we perform; how we apply knowledge; how we can affect the changes we seek.

The **Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)** recognizes the value in connecting learning to performance. In the community of soil and water conservation, both the quality and applicability of these learning

¹ Research conducted by the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD). ASTD is a research and policy association with members from more than 100 countries and more than 130 U.S. chapters.

experiences can be a potent determinant to how we implement programs - ultimately connecting us to the outcomes of our conservation programs.

With Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment funding for conservation and water quality practices currently estimated at \$150 million/year for 25 years, well-trained assistance for local delivery of conservation programs and practices is crucial to ensure that dollars spent have the intended impacts on water and soil resources:

- Programs and practices can effectively protect and improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, and enhance fish and wildlife habitat only when they are properly targeted, selected and correctly designed and implemented.
- Results and measurements are best understood when pollution reduction estimates are accurately calculated, and outcomes recorded and reported.
- Wise use of state financial resources can only be known when budgets and programs are tracked and organizations are accountable for dollars spent.

Clean water implementation is based on the premise of using the existing delivery system, primarily through local government units.

BWSR recognizes the increased opportunity for program delivery and the need to ensure programs are implemented with high quality efficiencies that are connected to on-the-ground results. This assessment seeks to understand common gaps and the BWSR niche in the training process.

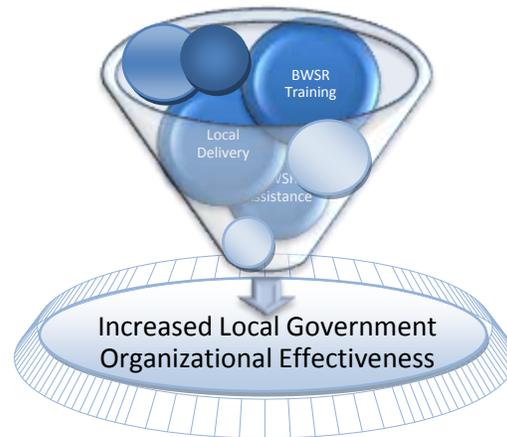
Purpose

The purpose of this report is to examine conservation-based local government unit (LGU) training needs and priorities, BWSR's training niche, BWSR professional development needs, and to propose recommendations for implementation of training.

The report is based on training assessment data gathered between January and March 2010.

Key objectives of this assessment:

- To **analyze** and **evaluate** LGU and BWSR organizational effectiveness needs.
- To provide **intentional recommendations** to deliver effective training services based on achieving outcomes.



With limited resources, both local governments and BWSR must target training and partner with local and state organizations where possible. This assessment must be **realistic, attainable,** and **in recognition of other partner niches.**

Guiding Principles for Assessment

The foundation of this assessment process is driven by BWSR key beliefs as identified in its strategic plan; by adaption principles, and by a purposeful methodology to working with data.

Key Beliefs: Identified in BWSR's 2007 Strategic Plan, our key beliefs are:

- Real-world effectiveness,
- Local planning and implementation,
- Resource leadership,
- Partnerships to deliver programs,
- Wise use,
- Cooperative approach, and
- Innovation.

Adaptation: Outcomes-based effectiveness requires that we adapt to our changing landscape. Adaption involves 3 processes:

1. Identifying needs (what needs change),

2. Planning and implementing the actions necessary to make a change,
3. Evaluating the effectiveness of the changes.

Methodology: Given the different types of LGU work and sheer number of BWSR/LGU staff throughout Minnesota, multiple sources of data will be collected to meet our needs assessment objective. Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were employed. (*See the appendix for the detailed methodological approach.*) The needs assessment process collected data using the following tools:

1. Content analysis,
2. Key partner consultation,
3. Focus groups,
4. Survey.

Background & History

The **Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)** is the state's administrative agency for soil and water conservation. BWSR administers programs for:

- Soil and Water Conservation Districts,
- Watershed Districts,
- Metropolitan Watershed Management Organizations, and
- Counties, cities, and townships.

BWSR's **mission** is to improve and protect Minnesota's water and soil resources by working in partnership with local organizations and private landowners.

BWSR has a long history with training. A tenet of regional BWSR board conservationists' work has been to provide locally-based coaching, training, and support. Additionally, BWSR has provided training support to local government organizations at area-wide meetings and at annual state conventions. BWSR has partnered with NRCS and other organizations to deliver

conservation training and participates in an interagency conservation training workgroup for Minnesota and a regional conservation professional training partnership.

In 2008, northern region staff organized the "BWSR Academy," a 3-day training event for local government staff. The success of this event led to its expansion in 2009 with a state-wide BWSR Academy and continued planning for a 2010 event. To strategically advance BWSR's role in training, the agency hired a training program coordinator in the fall 2009.

Attention to training issues also has changed over time. Partnerships change and evolve. For example, many LGU and BWSR staff perceive decreasing NRCS capacity to provide training and recommendations for Technical Approval Authority (TAA). In these economic times, the federal, state, and local budget challenges are likely to remain.

What's Changing in Our Work

- ✓ **Increasing accountability:** LGUs face increasing accountability for how they operate, which is shifting fundamental interactions with both landowners and state agencies. Their abilities to negotiate this changing culture will impact their success.

Reality: It's no longer good enough to tell the public that the LGU is a worthwhile organization and will find plenty of good projects with the monies they receive. Now "proof" is required that isn't always easy to develop, explain, or document. Additionally, reduced resources have resulted in questions regarding continuing financial support for LGUs that are not able to adequately demonstrate their value.

- ✓ **More programs/more administrative components:** LGUs often hire staff with an interest in the resource or in conservation. However the administrative tasks required and skill sets needed to be successful at those tasks often expand outside the scope of natural resource degrees.

Reality: Increasing numbers of programs require LGU staff to keep abreast of administration requirements for each program, even if they are minimally involved. New skill sets are needed from the few people in the organization. Additionally, the processes required of state agencies and local governments are not always clear and efficient.

- ✓ **New funding:** With passage of the Constitutional Amendment in 2008, a new type of dedicated funding is available that targets conservation practices. Consequently, new skills are needed to adapt to the competitive process to obtain these funds.

Reality: 15 years ago, an LGU likely did not participate in as much active competition for their organization's funding. Clean Water Funds will drive an important piece of water and soil conservation funding for the next 25 years and with recent decreased base funding, some LGUs are needing to develop new skills (such as fund-seeking and grant-writing) to be successful in a more competitive environment.

- ✓ **Widening gaps between LGUs' performance:** LGUs that have adapted quickly to this changing environment are finding more success. This has started a cycle of high performers more likely to receive competitive grants for their good proposals. LGUs that are at a different stage of adaptation do not fare as well in these competitive processes. Some LGUs contract for certain skills (such as grant-writing and engineering) which may provide competitive advantage in some programs.

- ✓ **Non-traditional clients:** More absentee landowners, non-traditional row-crop farmers (hobby farming, diversified crop farmers, organic farming) offer new client opportunities. These non-traditional landowners may require LGUs to adopt different marketing and new conservation program techniques.

- ✓ **Non-traditional BWSR-LGU relationships:** BWSR has traditionally worked with SWCDs, WDs, WMOs, and Counties with specific funds and programs. With WCA and Clean Water Fund, cities and townships may expect more consideration and involvement.

- ✓ **Relationships with other agencies:** Partner relationships evolve and change; for example, with increased workload and decreased budgets, LGUs have noticed decreased NRCS resources towards developing LGUs design skills, etc.

Despite, and sometimes because of, these challenges, many agency staff and LGU staff report they want to increase skills, strive to make a difference, and understand the value of their work. This highlights the commitment and dedication of conservation-focused staff.

II. Defining Training at BWSR

Choosing our Words

The intention of any training program must be to deliver results. For trainers and trainees alike, it is important to set expectations of what training is, by starting with a definition. Focus group participants identified phrases and words they associate with ***training***:

- Focused
- Specific
- Interactive
- Real World Examples
- Expectations of use
- Targeted Audience
- Increase knowledge
- Outcome-based
- Skill-Building
- Hands-on
- Use it
- In-depth

Participants distinguished training from ***outreach***, which they labeled as:

- Information-out
- Passive

- Broad
- Listening
- Not-sharing
- General

When we *operationalize* a definition it means we commit to using it throughout the organization as we plan and implement our work. It helps us provide our work with intention. Therefore, it is important that we state what training means to BWSR's work. Our ***operational definition of training*** is:

Systematic acquisition of skills, rules, knowledge, or attitudes that results in improved performance (outside the training environment).

BWSR's Training Program Theory:

If we provide high quality and intentional training to LGU staff and boards and to BWSR staff, then trainee participants will demonstrate increased effectiveness at implementing their work to improve and protect Minnesota's soil and water resources.

Perhaps most importantly, we must look at training as a process, not an event. In order to achieve outcomes, training preparation and commitment begins before the event and it not realized until it is applied in the job setting.

Training isn't always the Solution

Talking about training only for training's sake will almost certainly lead to failure. Training needs to be approached as part of a larger

picture – building organizational effectiveness. Training is not always the best approach to get to the root cause of the issue. Training may

not be useful if the problem or issue is with a specific environment such as a physical setting, with motivation, or with some existing required abilities. Someone who is unable or unwilling to do the job must be involved with other performance management strategies before training should be applied.

Additionally, if the point is to inform only, but there is not an expectation of application back in the workplace, training may not be necessary. Confusion or unawareness about a program may require only additional

information and not a whole training program to receive that information.

If a program or process is not designed well, training is of limited value. As we look to implementation of a training action plan, we need to stay cognizant of the role and limitations of training programs.

So when IS training the answer? Bob Pike suggests the following benchmarks:

For training to be effective, these conditions must be met:

- *Staff must lack skill in the area in which training will be provided.* If people don't know how to properly perform a task, then training can teach them how to do that. But if there's some other reason that staff aren't behaving in a certain way, training won't help.
- *Performance expectations have been clearly set and the training that's provided clearly leads to staff being able to meet these expectations.*
- *Managers have a clear understanding of what is being taught in the training.*
- *There's a plan for ensuring that staff have the tools, resources and supports to use the new skills when they return to the job.* How many times have you participated in computer training three months before the computer arrived on your desk? How much did you actually remember?
- *Work processes have been adjusted to incorporate the use of the new skills.* If staff are being taught how to use new tools, then the use of those tools should be embedded in their daily work. If they are being taught specific ways to engage with clients, then work processes should support staff in being able to engage in those behaviors.

Bob Pike, National Training Consultant

BWSR's Training Process to Build Organizational Effectiveness:



III. LGU Training Priorities

Establishing priorities

Trainings are conducted to meet perceived needs. This assessment set out to examine LGU needs as identified by local government partners, BWSR staff and other key partners in the conservation field. Simply asking, “What are the trainings you need?” does not adequately establish the link between tasks the skills that are required to successfully perform in one’s job and the gaps in those skills that may benefit from training.

Therefore, in the eight local government focus groups conducted in January and February 2010, participants first worked to highlight important tasks required in LGU positions. Then group members used a competency sorting process to identify the key skills sets that are most important to succeed with those tasks. Finally, groups highlighted gaps where trainings were needed and ranked the priorities for training.

Themes between the eight groups emerged. They were used to generate a list of common training priorities and categorized into four areas:

1. **People-based** skill building priorities (interactions between people)
2. **Business-based** skill building priorities (how we operate/function as a public-sector org.)
3. **Technology-based** skills (computer-type competencies)
4. **Conservation and Technical-based** skills (those skills specific to the conservation field)

Then, this list was disseminated to all LGU staff and boards to prioritize in a survey (see methodology). Over 450 survey responses and over 100 participants from focus groups and BWSR staff are represented in the table below.

Symbols (overall ranks):

 = ranked as **high** training priority

 = ranked as **medium** training priority

 = ranked as **low** training priority

X = (**High**)training priority was a common theme among focus groups and BWSR staff.

While this represents common themes, it is important to note that specific organizations may have individual needs and priorities. Also, to keep this survey short and manageable (to promote a higher percentage rate of completion), this survey asked for responses on the organizational level and didn’t ask what a specific staff person or board member needs most. Beyond the scope of this assessment, a future step would be to provide tools so that individual organizations could follow-up with this step themselves to define their specific training needs and priorities.

BWSR’s niche to address these overall priorities will need to be focused. Given the realities of limited resources (both financial and staff), we must choose carefully how we can affect the most impact. Partnerships at local, regional, and state levels will be crucial for supporting the implementation of this work.

1. People-based Skill Building Priorities

Local Government Training Need	Survey Group Priority	Focus Grps (High)	BWSR Staff (High)
1. Communication - Internal board &/or staff relations		X	X
2. Communication - Public public relations		X	
3. Conflict Management & working with difficult people		X	
4. Conservation Sales - Marketing		X	X
5. Crisis Management			
6. Engaging Public meaningful civic engagement			
7. Ethics and Integrity conflict of interest, roles		X	
8. Facilitation			
9. Farming Knowledge mentoring for non-farmer staff			
10. Interviewing and Hiring		X	
11. Leadership Training		X	
12. Personnel Management supervision, performance mgt.		X	X
13. Team Building			
14. Time Management			
15. Working with landowners		X	X
16. Writing skills letter, email etiquette, etc.			

2. Business-based Skill Building Priorities

Local Government Training Need	Survey Group Priority	Focus Grp	BWSR Staff
1. Accounting for conservation local governments		X	
2. Budgeting - financial knowledge			
3. Capacity building develop a better board; org.			

Local Government Training Need	Survey Group Priority	Focus Grp	BWSR Staff
4. Database developments contact tracking			
5. Legal Knowledge personnel and org laws			
6. Fund-seeking getting resources		X	X
7. Governance - Board roles and Responsibilities		X	X
8. Grant-writing; grant mgt		X	X
9. Outcomes – Accountability; Evaluation			X
10. Permitting Issues			
11. Planning practical tips, visioning, strategic, annual		X	X
12. Reporting requirements			X
13. Sharing Resources; Partnerships		X	
14. Strategic thinking - future orientated change		X	X

3. Technology-based Skill Building Priorities

Local Government Training Need	Survey Group Priority	Focus Grp	BWSR Staff
1. LIDAR/GIS/ARC-VIEW		X	X
2. Microsoft Office Software powerpoint, excel, word			
3. Accounting software such as Quickbooks		X	
4. Website development, requirements, maintenance			

4. Conservation-based Skill Building Priorities

Local Government Training Need	Survey Group Priority	Focus Grp	BWSR Staff
1. Basic program knowledge for Boards		X	
2. Basic water and watershed Knowledge		X	
3. BWSR Programs in-depth program knowledge			X
4. Project Management start to finish		X	
5. Conservation Inspection/ Testing			X
6. eLink Reporting			X
7. Data Interpretation		X	
8. Survey & Design Skills		X	
9. Design Standards (TAA) Technical approval authority		X	X
10. Field Work new field equipment, construction projects		X	
11. Wetland Conservation Act Administration		X	X
12. Soils			X
13. Vegetation / Plant ID			X
14. Hydrology			X
15. Pollution Estimators, models		X	X
16. Water Quality Monitoring		X	

IV. Training Delivery

Key Findings

One sorting approach BWSR uses to discuss training events is to segment by audience delivery locations. We classify 3 main in-person delivery locations:



LGU and BWSR Focus group participants report a continuum of information generally presented in these three areas. State forums often provide general “awareness training” information that is lecture or presentation-based. Regional forums tend to get more specific and offer more opportunities for participants to ask applied questions. Local training forums generally provide learning opportunities that most directly integrate into one’s work. What types and styles of training work best at state, regional, and local levels?

Assumed Benefits:

- State-wide delivery locations offer an economy of scale of BWSR staff time and resources. This delivery system also allows for consistent message.
- Regional delivery systems allow for concentration on geographic uniqueness

and connection to peers working on similar issues.

- Local delivery systems allow for individualized learning and application

Challenges and Consequences:

- State-wide delivery system currently may not provide the best learning experiences. Many trainings are delivered in a presentation-only format; meaning that the *resource economies of scale often do not translate into learning economies of scale*
- Regional training may have varying levels of consistency in content and delivery.
- Local forums often miss opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and require more resources (staff; time) to realize a benefit.

Delivery Assumptions:



Opportunities:

- BWSR can incorporate training strategies that challenge and change these assumptions about the value of state level trainings.
- BWSR has many staff with some component of being a trainer in their position. Many have been successful at lecture-style presentations; many are experts in the subject area and have built good rapport and trust with LGUs. As a next step for statewide forums, BWSR should incorporate training delivery models that help us get our best “bang for the buck” – including small group learning within or in place of presentation-only training formats.

One example of success: BWSR Academy’s eLink office hours provided local delivery model within a state-wide forum. This offered participants the chance to apply specific questions to their work.

Guidelines for when to take a program “on the road” regionally:

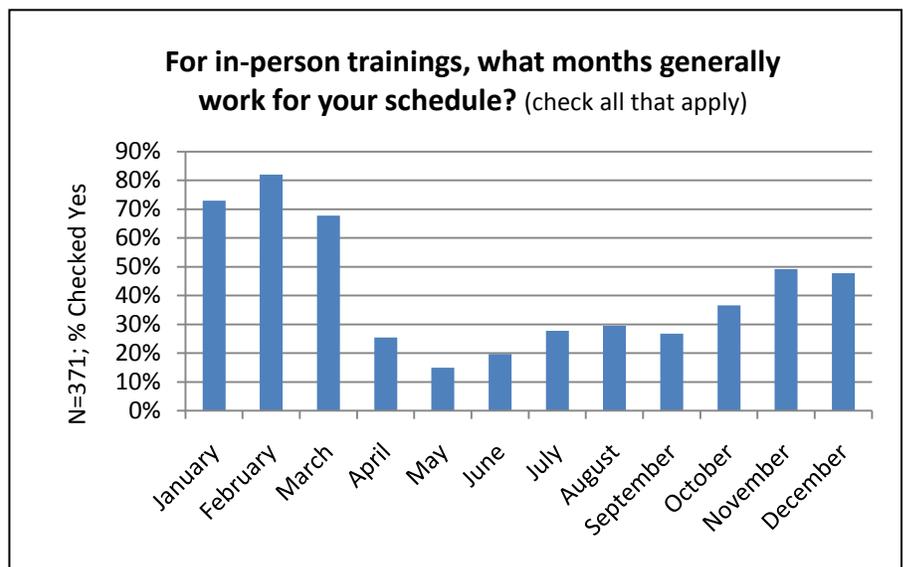
- When it is a new program
- When the application of the skill needs to be implemented immediately (within a few weeks of training)
- When a critical mass of “new” people need to learn the program

Timing – Lag time between training and use:

When lag time exists between skills learned in a training session and when those skills are applied on the job, studies show the retention and usefulness drop dramatically. Trainings need to consider application timing. If there is clearly a lag time of over 1 month until use, consider other training modes or timing. For example, if people don’t generally use eLink until reporting time, it may make more sense to train in the later fall and/or early winter reporting time versus spring.

This might help support what other vehicles we tap into (e.g. eLink @ MAWD or MASWCD annual meeting because they take place in December). Another option if there doesn’t seem to be good timing – we may want to consider how web training fits into the mix.

Preferred in-person training months:



Distance Learning Technologies:

Distance learning technologies may provide a supplement or replacement to address some training barriers: such as travel distance; cost; and shortening or eliminating the lag time between training and use.

• **Online learning:**

As an example of current online learning, BWSR staff Michelle Schaefers and Tabor Hoek developed a step-by-step guide to completing the rural preserves form. This allows LGUs to access the process when it is needed.

NRCS provides some online training modules open to LGUs. Additionally, the regional training partnership has a curriculum committee reviewing software platforms and existing curriculums that can be shared.

Pollution reduction estimators may be an important place to develop online learning.

• **Webinars:**

These technologies occur in “real time” – with participants connected to an interactive

website and via phone (computer phone or land line).

Some BCs and other BWSR staff report that they receive a common set of questions about particular topics and these questions come on a cyclical basis (such as when reports are due.) While a strength of BWSR staff interaction is with this 1 to 1 connection, some additional efficiency could be realized using web technologies. Rule distance learning training: If you could test it on the web, you can teach it on the web.

As part of a training budget, BWSR may want to purchase administrative rights with a specific webinar company to organize and hold webinars. We also have purchased WebTrain pre-paid hours for use in webinars.

• **Other distance learning:**

Other forms of learning may include components of podcasts, video conferencing, and blended learning – which combines in-person and distance learning strategies.

Recommendations for training delivery

- Support/Coach BWSR trainers with tips to incorporate local-level learning strategies in regional or state training delivery.
- Continue BWSR Academy as an important state training event for the agency, incorporating learning strategies.
- Start a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for each major BWSR program and post on web.
- Develop and prioritize a list of program topics that would benefit from a web-based, step-by-step module. Begin development of highest priority program modules.

V. BWSR Role as Trainers/Organizers

Trainer commitments

✓ Many staff conduct or support training at BWSR! We are an organization where many staff have some part of their position devoted to training.

- **22 BWSR staff trainers** at the '09 Academy.
- **1,900 trainer/education hours** reported in 2009 BWSR field staff activity reports.

As an organization, we have different measures for how we define and record training and outreach. The estimates above provide a good start to highlight field staff work in this area. Currently, we don't have a systematic way of sharing or recording specific training events that BWSR leads or supports in a given year. We also don't have a central way to record who is served and to what extent a given area, region, or individual has participated in BWSR-led trainings.

Some BWSR staff reported that they aren't clear about their role and priorities as trainers and what emphasis they should place on conducting outreach presentations.

- ✓ BWSR Academy was well-received by LGU participants.
 - Evaluations measured highly positive experiences by participants. The Academy has completed two pilot years (one for the Northern region and one statewide pilot) and highlights how many training topics can be achieved.
 - MAWD and MASWCD representatives noted a perceived lack of partnership in the planning of the event – saying they weren't consulted on timing or topics. We can make sure that we include

these partner organizations in a consultant capacity.

- ✓ Our first priority as trainers is to support delivery of BWSR programs.
 - BWSR programs include: Program Administration for different areas of BWSR work; WCA and WDCP; and orientations to how BWSR fits into the conservation system.
 - Training gap consideration: no other partner would be in a better position to provide this type of training on our programs and that we want to ensure content delivery.
 - For some programs, in-person training may not be needed to deliver program information. Depending on knowledge and skills we need to increase, BWSR may want to share information via web, email, and in-person.
 - Secondly, BWSR may also be well suited to support or lead basic board orientations, other conservation-related trainings, and building the skills of lead staff. For example, BWSR has played a key role at MAWD and MASWCD manager/supervisor orientation functions.
 - WCA/Wetland training is BWSR's most developed training program to date. Staff currently develops training timeline and courses, send out surveys, and work with partner organizations on WDCP.
 - LGU focus groups and BWSR staff report that after we roll out new

programs, we haven't prioritized help to LGUs with strategies on how to sell these programs. This additional

training support may help with overall program success.

Recommendations for trainer commitments:

- Create a "BWSR training database" to capture all BWSR's training events and efforts as trainers.
- Determine need and value of a database that captures training participants (who we are reaching and to what extent). If determined as a need, database to be developed in future year.
- Continue BWSR Academy, building off previous success. Solicit additional input from partners on training priorities.
- Develop a mini needs-assessment worksheet to be used by staff before training starts to help determine the need and value of their time as a trainer.
- Consider BWSR's role in conservation marketing training for LGUs.

Trainer effectiveness

Long before training occurs, training leaders must determine the need for the training including the problem or issue, the root cause of the need, and the desired outcome.

✓ BWSR Trainers' self-assessment survey indicated that staff generally are most comfortable with their skills regarding knowledge of content material, defining the training audience, training logistics, advertising, and working with partners. The assessment identified these areas as the **highest priority for improving our own staff skills as trainers:**

- Writing clear learning objectives
- Creating effective powerpoint presentations
- Using other visual aids
- Using "new" media (podcasts, webinars, etc.)
- Using effective presentation openers and closers
- Telling stories
- Checking for understanding
- Measuring change/impact
- Assessing the format/content/delivery

Recommendation for increased trainer effectiveness

- Support/coach presenters with tweaking presentation to become more centered on the learner; to develop learning objectives; and to create facilitator scripts instead of just sharing powerpoints
 - Provide specific support during the development of training
 - Support re-design powerpoints, incorporate more hands-on experiences, etc.
 - Help assess content and delivery

Outcomes and evaluation

✓ Our training evaluations tend to record numbers, experiences, and perceived value of events. The BWSR Academy evaluation received high marks for how participants valued this event.

➤ Our evaluations are less successful in measuring if learning occurred. The next step in honing evaluation forms will be to incorporate

learning measurements and improved performance. This can be very challenging, especially with programs where outcomes are not directly connected to training. Therefore, it is important to start articulating specific training and learning objectives, how those objectives will translate into improved performance, and ways we can measure the transfer of knowledge.

Recommendation for outcomes and evaluation

- Incorporate learning measures into evaluations and application of work
 - Support existing training to tweak evaluation measures
 - Add 2-tiered evaluation process to BWSR Academy

VI. LGU Considerations

Components of Successful LGUs

As LGU and BWSR staff shared why some LGUs are more successful than others and what makes those LGUs successful, 5 common themes emerged:

- ✓ Strong leader (lead staff steers the ship; sets direction; takes responsibility)
- ✓ Positive leaders (staff leadership and board leadership)
- ✓ Organization seeks out partnerships (and publicizes the org to develop these partnerships)
- ✓ Board supports and encourages staff
- ✓ Staff and board exhibit a willingness to fail (pilots new ideas; develop proposals even for tough grants)

At the winter 2010 Northern region staff meeting, Ron Shelito led an exercise where staff highlighted two high performing LGUs from their work area, explaining to the group why they selected them as successful. This discussion led to 5 key traits of successful LGUs:

1. Staff resources

- a. Strong, motivated lead staff
- b. Qualified technical staff
- c. Staff turnover can provide opportunities for change
- d. Staff go to training regularly (esp. WCA)

2. Play well with others

- a. Partner effectively with other state and local agencies.
- b. Communicate regularly with all agencies.
- c. SWCDs have good relationship with county.
- d. They know the landowners and have their respect

3. Attitude

- a. Opportunistic
- b. Look ahead ; get in front of issues.
- c. Take risks
- d. Step up to the plate
- e. Don't back down from tough decisions

4. Be a conservationist

- a. Boards and staff know their responsibility and carry it out
- b. Know the resources needs and opportunities

5. Get stuff done

- a. Use all the traits above to get projects implemented.

Both exercises highlight similar traits. It offers insights on what are important skills to develop and reminds us there are many successful LGUs already at work.

LGU's Training Barriers

✓ Local government staff, especially lead staff, report **over-extended workloads**.

Many state agencies (BWSR, MPCA, DNR, MDA) use Minnesota's local conservation delivery system as a way to introduce and implement new programs, meet public involvement obligations, & regulate specific activities. LGU staff are involved with increasing numbers of government programs while staff size often does not change.

Additionally, state agencies don't always communicate with each other about their work, their expectations of LGU work, and the totality of these expectations.

✓ Tasks are not easily tied to positions, **making it challenging to establish or require "position-type trainings."** Using position descriptions, the focus groups set out to identify common and required tasks for these four staff position types:

- Office and Administrative Support
- Technical Staff
- Program Staff
- Lead Staff

Tasks do not easily fit in position types in the LGU delivery system where vast differences exist geographically, with the size of the organization, and with the existing skills of staff.

For example, an SWCD lead staff person who was promoted from a technical or clerk position may include duties not expected from an administrator hired from outside of the organization. As a result, some LGUs have tailored the position duties to the person, not vice versa. Additionally, LGUs with more staff often become more specialized in tasks and duties.

Board member positions and support staff positions each had strong focus group

consensus on which competencies were most important for members to be successful in their work.

Conversely, the focus groups did not establish clear consensus on the competencies needed for lead staff – noting that lead staff are required to have skill sets in all the areas of their organization. The identified competencies for lead staff was, on average, 30% longer than other groups, suggesting the varied nature and many expectations of persons in those positions.

✓ Local water plan funding has declined. Today many water planners/local water managers operate at less than full-time employment in that role. Some report experiencing a sense of isolation, as they don't have an organized employee group like MACDE or ADA and receive less structured support from BWSR.

✓ LGU focus groups identified other **training barriers**, including:

- Cost (not only registration, but travel, meals, lodging)
- Time/workload
- Don't know what skills to prioritize
- Attendance isn't mandatory; training isn't prioritized
- Geographic distance
- Board doesn't support the expense/time investment
- Don't know if training is valuable
- Don't know what training opportunities exist.

✓ To overcome these barriers, LGU focus groups and BWSR staff identified strategies:

Barrier	Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cost (not only registration, but travel, meals, lodging) ○ Board doesn't support the expense/time investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Engage managers before and after training; ✓ Notify LGUs of trainings early enough to get necessary approval; ✓ Provide scholarships where possible ✓ Use online/distance learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Time/workload 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Incorporate trainings into existing gatherings where possible; ✓ Be systematic – plan for training ahead of time – get it on the calendar early
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Don't know what skills we should prioritize 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Share performance mgt tool, such as competency skill deck, for individual-level prioritization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attendance isn't mandatory; training isn't prioritized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Create mechanisms that build buy-in for training: Consider incorporating professional development into work plans ✓ Consider creating area on timesheets that note time spent on training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Geographic distance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use distance learning (webinars, online) as appropriate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We don't know if it is valuable; trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use peer testimonials in marketing; link peer to peer learning connections
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We don't know what training opportunities are out there. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Notify LGUs not only of BWSR training opportunities but of other partners' training opportunities as well.

Recommendations for workload and barriers

- With the exception of orientations, develop training sessions based on the skill to be learned and not on the specific position that may implement the skill.
- Incorporate distance learning trainings where possible.
- Consider using the BWSR Academy to supply an opportunity for water planners to gather and discuss pressing issues, share strategies, etc.
- Promote peer to peer learning and local tools for overcoming training barriers.
- Regularly communicate BWSR and partner trainings (through web and email). Continue to provide BWSR's training information on website. Increase website use to note ALL upcoming BWSR trainings.
- Share training and timing preferences for training events, such as BWSR Academy team and incorporate hard to find trainings or top picks into BWSR Academy offerings

Improving LGU Skill Sets

✓ **68%** of focus group participants do not have any written professional development goals (in a work plan or other document). Of the 32% who have some aspect of professional development planned, many said it is informal at best and most often discussed during a performance review.

A formalized approach to professional development can serve multiple objectives. It can: offer a self-assessment of strengths and blind spots; map a plan for how to achieve the “systematic” definition of training; allow for positive performance discussion; motivate the employee; and improve efficiencies by bringing trainers to groups at lower cost.

✓ Orientation trainings can serve to build skills and develop an important knowledge base for board and staff.

Board member orientations are more consistently delivered than staff orientations. They are implemented at the MAWD Annual Meeting, MASWCD Supervisor Boot Camp, and with BWSR Board Conservationists regional sessions. Staff orientations are often done in-house and are less consistent. The nomenclature, roles, and acronyms specific to local and state conservation agencies are confusing to staff who are new to the system.

✓ As our professional population ages, retirements will increase with potential loss of large amounts of institutional history. Consider future steps for making this a smooth transition. Programs may include: Succession planning, cooperative work agreements, and mentoring programs. BWSR has a current LCCMR project to begin a mentoring program with the Minnesota Conservation Corps.

Recommendations for improving LGU skill sets

- Continue to promote, encourage, and participate in LGU board orientations
- Develop a online training orientation model for new LGU staff
- Develop and implement simple Performance Management Training to focus individual skill sets

- Provide example Performance Review and Individual Development Plan forms
- Incorporate skill building objectives into all training design.
- Consider BWSR's role in LGU staff transactions with programs such as succession planning, cooperative work agreements, and mentoring programs.

Technical Quality Assurance and Credentialing

In February 2010, the BWSR Technical Quality Assurance (TQA) workgroup drafted a report outlining recommendations for TQA requirements for competitive and noncompetitive grants. Technical Approval Authority is incorporated in these recommendations, but not the only way to document expertise. Long-term recommendations include a potential credentialing system for LGU staff.

Some states have implemented incentive-based credentialing for conservation professionals. For example, in Michigan if a technician attends a certain number of core training classes, she will receive increased salary. Other credentialing programs might be formed as an eligibility requirement for funds. For example, if the LGU doesn't have staff or consultants certified for a specific skill and credential, that LGU would not be eligible to apply for related funds.

Some interest has been expressed in what a credentialing program might be like in

Minnesota. While this goes beyond the scope of this needs assessment, a few key questions to consider include:

What would be the reason/purpose of a credentialing program? Would our MN system integrate with the NRCS/conservation partnership TAA system? Would it be related to a specific statute (like knowledgeable and trained in the Wetland Conservation Act)? Is it tied to specific funding? Is there a demonstrated need? There are also plenty of considerations for the vast staff resource differences in rural and urban counties. Would a LGU with 2 staff be able to find success in the program the same way an LGU with 6 staff could?

Based on the research and recommendations of the TQA workgroup and approval by SMT, a credentialing workgroup/team would need to explore curriculum topics, threshold requirements, structure & levels of training.

VII. BWSR Staff Development

Key Findings

- ✓ BWSR staff report that the organizational culture towards staff development is generally passive. Not discouraged; not encouraged. In general, field staff report higher degrees of active training discussion with their supervisor. Budget and workload considerations often de-prioritize professional development.
- ✓ Some general confusion reported about whether the MAWD and MASWCD annual conference are considered “training” for BWSR staff that attend. Many staff view these events as important networking opportunities to represent BWSR and meet with LGU partners; few consider it important personal professional training. These same staff were unsure if their supervisors considered it training for them.
- ✓ Discrepancies exist in frequency staff performance reviews and professional development discussion. Some staff report infrequent performance reviews. Some expressed being uncomfortable suggesting professional development opportunities.
- Some staff report regular reviews where supervisors connect performance reviews and professional development using the annual work plan as a basis – others don’t.
- ✓ Some staff report little in the way of BWSR orientation and procedures for how one accomplishes their job (e.g., “ There is no standardized “closeout procedures” for how we work with LGUs; how do we know if we are doing it right?; we don’t have a good system for explaining to staff what BWSR does”). This can lead to inconsistent delivery.
- ✓ Culture: staff reported that shared experiences can improve staff partnerships and knowledge outside of one’s own area of expertise (e.g. participating in Megan Lennon’s food for thought reading group).
- ✓ In February 2010, the Communications workgroup prepared an action plan for internal BWSR communications. These actions may serve a related purpose to some the issues outlined in this section.

Recommendations

- Consider using intranet for task-related training, such as a series of “How to’s” with examples, such as “How to prepare a resolution for a board meeting,” a template for “How to conduct a closeout,” or cheat sheets on what is most important to know about each BWSR program, etc.
- “Advertise” BWSR staff strengths on the intranet that can support colleagues work (such as Excel expert, etc.)
- Incorporate a more consistent formalized approach to professional development, promoting it in annual work plans and discussed at performance reviews (i.e. Individual Development Plans).
- Use the individually identified training needs to highlight common themes of need/interest where an external trainer coming into BWSR to train a group might cost less than individual staff training. Incorporate group training at existing meetings.

VIII. 2010 Training Strategy

Purpose:

Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) 2010 training strategy seeks to provide an intentional plan for our role in supporting and building conservation local government organizational effectiveness.

The plan builds on the BWSR's past approaches to training and rich history of training events and programs. The plan uses the 2010 needs assessment process which included: local government staff and board engagement in focus groups and/or survey, BWSR staff interviews, and partnerships with key partners² working in the conservation training field.

Need:

With Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment funding for conservation and water quality practices currently estimated at \$150 million/year for 25 years, BWSR recognizes the increased opportunity for program delivery and the need to ensure programs are implemented with quality efficiencies that are connected to on-the-ground results.

Links between learning and performance are well-established. Programs and practices do

² See needs assessment for more information. Key partners include Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), MN Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, MN Association of Watershed Districts, MN Association of Conservation District Employees, MN Association of District Administrators, MN Interagency Conservation Training Workgroup (MN Department of Agriculture, University of MN, MN Pollution Control Agency, MN Department of Natural Resources, NRCS, and others).

not effectively protect and improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, and enhance fish and wildlife habitat – unless they are properly selected, marketed effectively and correctly designed and implemented.

Measures and outcomes are not realized - unless pollution reduction estimates are accurately calculated, and outcomes recorded and reported. Wise use of state financial resources are not assured - unless budgets and programs are tracked and organizations accountable for dollars spent.

BWSR recognizes the value in connecting learning to performance. In the community of soil and water conservation, well-trained assistance for local delivery of conservation programs and practices is crucial to ensure that dollars spent have impacts on water and soil resources - ultimately connecting us to the outcomes within watersheds.

Audience:

The primary audience is the local government units for which BWSR is the administrative agency. This includes: Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Watershed Districts, Watershed Management Organizations, and County water management.

Approach:

The strategy addresses three areas of BWSR work:

- Defining BWSR's niche with local government training priorities
- Improving BWSR's function as trainers

- Increasing BWSR's internal professional development and performance

With limited resources, both local governments and BWSR must target training and partner with local, state and federal organizations where possible.

BWSR's training focus should be only one component of increasing organization effectiveness; other public, private, and non-profit organizations also have niches and areas of influence.

Key Recommendations:

The intention of any training program must be to deliver results. This strategy must be realistic, attainable, and in recognition of other partner niches.

Over the next year, BWSR will implement recommendations to:

- ✓ Deliver increased training communications to LGU partners using new online methods and existing BWSR channels (such as PRAP process or board conservationists meetings with LGUs).

- ✓ Support intentional individual development plans (IDPs), for BWSR staff and LGU partners, to improve professional performance and organizational effectiveness.
- ✓ Continue BWSR's role in implementing specific training events such as the BWSR Academy and WCA/WDCP programs.
- ✓ Determine BWSR's niche in these priority training areas: conservation marketing; personnel management, fund-seeking, grant writing, outcomes and measures, planning, and pollution estimators.
- ✓ Increase effectiveness of learning strategies and trainer roles into all BWSR delivered trainings through program design support and coaching.
- ✓ Incorporate learning measures into training and program evaluations.

Specific recommendations and intended results are outline in the table that follows. A BWSR Training team has been established to determine priorities and to develop specific action steps, roles, and timelines for the strategy.

BWSR 2010 Training Strategy:

Recommendation	Intended Result
A. COMMUNICATIONS	
A1. Develop system to regularly communicate BWSR & partner trainings	LGUs will have increased access to training opportunities – allowing better decisions and prioritizations for their time.
A2. Continue providing BWSR’s training information on website. Increase website/email use to note ALL upcoming BWSR trainings.	LGUs will have increased access to training opportunities – allowing better decisions and prioritizations for their time.
B. TRAININGS / EVENTS TO CONTINUE IN 2010	
B1. Continue BWSR’s role in WCA and WDCP training, including partnership with U of MN.	More effective TEPs will better deliver/implement statute.
B2. Continue BWSR Academy as an important training event for the agency.	Attending LGU staff will exhibit improved performance in implementing their work (both technical and org development).
B3. Continue promoting BWSR’s work by participating in Associations’ key mtgs (such as MAWD, MASWCD, AMC annual conventions; boot camps; etc)	Boards will demonstrate program competence when making decision governing the organization. Knowledgeable boards make better governance decisions using BWSR program funds. Boards stay engaged through peer-to-peer learning (& reporting back from events).
B4. Continue training delivery of BWSR program priorities and partnerships	LGU staff will demonstrate new or increased skills delivering BWSR-related program work.
C. POSSIBLE NEW TRAINING DEVELOPMENT IN 2010	
C1. Incorporate distance learning trainings where possible as it meets BWSR’s needs assessment.	Economic and timing efficiencies realized in self-directed learning.
C2. Develop 2010-2011 training priorities and that focus BWSR’s niche	Increase in systematic training attention at LGU level leads to better trainings improved performance.
C3. Maintain flexibility to capitalize on new training opportunities.	Incorporating appropriate existing curriculums or partnering on opportunities will provide additional advantages to our LGU partners.

Recommendation	Intended Result
D. BWSR ROLES AS TRAINER	
D1. Support/coach BWSR staff trainers to incorporate local-level learning strategies in regional or state training delivery.	Improved BWSR training delivery will lead to better participant recall of material, increased use/application in the LGU work, and better connections with training and outcomes.
D2. Develop and incorporate a mini-needs assessment worksheet to be used by staff prior to new training development.	Accountability and best use of training time/resources will be confirmed. LGUs will not be expected to attend new trainings unless it has been established why it's needed and what are expected learning objectives.
D3. Incorporate measures of learning & application into evaluations.	BWSR will document what learning outcomes are realized for internal and external reporting (legislature and others).
D4. Create a "BWSR trainer database" to capture all BWSR's training events and efforts as trainers.	BWSR will record, tally, and promote the important training work we do towards improving performance.
E. BWSR STAFF DEVELOPMENT	
E1. Use web-format to share internal program controls and staff expertise as appropriate.	Increased consistency among staff for delivery of BWSR programs. Creating forums to coach/troubleshoot without the need for formal training can be more efficient at getting the job done.
E2. Incorporate a more consistent approach to staff professional development, promoting it in annual work plans and discussed at performance reviews.	Increased connections between skills and tasks improve work performance.
E3. Create economies of scale by incorporating similar individual staff development needs to provide group training.	Increased connections between skills and tasks improve work performance.
F. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION IN FUTURE YEARS (2011 AND BEYOND)	
F1. Consider BWSR's niche for future training opportunities.	
F2. Determine value in creating a database that captures LGUs served.	

A. Methodology

Approach, Scope, and Limitations

In December 2009, the Board of Water and Soil Resources began the assessment process to determine training priorities that will increase organizational effectiveness. With the new training program coordinator position hired, BWSR decided to strategically assess current LGU training priorities, BWSR priorities, and our niche in meeting identified needs. The training coordinator facilitated the assessment process, gathering and analyzing data, and writing the report. BWSR's Senior Management Team fostered the project, providing resources, data, and staff insights to the assessment process.

This report is the synthesis of gathered data and analysis. It is written for an audience who has knowledge of BWSR and is familiar with local government conservation work. In addition to the senior management team, other audiences of this report include: BWSR staff, Board members and training partners.

To achieve the objectives of this assessment, multiple sources of data would be gathered for analysis. Mindful of the limited timeline and resources to implement the assessment, we understood from the beginning of this project that it would not be possible to gather all types of data from LGU partners, agency partners, and BWSR staff. Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were employed. The needs assessment process will collect data using the following tools:

1. Content Analysis
2. Key Partner Consultation
3. Focus Groups
4. Survey

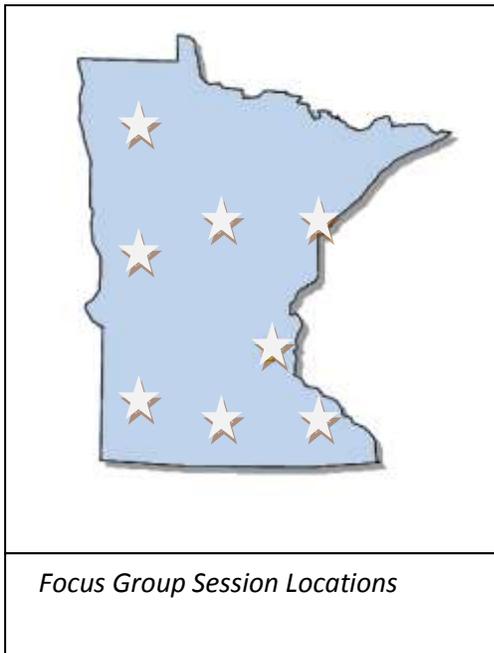
In determining the best gathering tools to meet the assessment objectives, we weighed the benefits of different tools. For example, while surveys can gather large amounts of data from many respondents, survey methods are primarily quantitative and non explanatory. Additionally, surveys alone cannot offer insights into the larger context, cause-and-effect relationships, or supplementary information a "real-time" discussion may generate. Therefore, we chose to complement content and report analysis with in-person data gathering discussions and a large-group simple survey.

1. **Content Analysis:** Current and historical work helped to frame the state of conservation training and BWSR's role. Evaluations, assessments, and reports can tell us about past effectiveness and conservation training needs. External documents reviewed include the Minnesota Interagency Conservation Training Workgroup reports, Regional Partnership (multi-state) guiding principles, needs assessments, and workgroup reports, and many program materials.

Internal documents reviewed included BWSR strategic plan, current training presentations and Powerpoints, BWSR Academy planning and evaluation documents, PRAP annual reports, general position descriptions, press releases, website materials, and program specific documents. Staff also provided detailed background on BWSR's role in current training and partnerships. This was particularly helpful to set the context for analysis.

2. **Key Partner Consultation:** Interviews with a small number of key external partners, helped to frame current partnerships, successes, barriers, and/or opportunities. These included meetings with NRCS, MAWD, MASWCD, UMN, MDA. Additionally, participation in Conservation Training workgroups including MPCA, DNR, and many of the previously listed groups.

3. **Focus Groups:** In January and February 2010, the training coordinator facilitated eight local government-centered focus groups around the state. BWSR Board Conservationists chose small groups of 6-9 LGU affiliates to participate in the focus groups. BCs based their selection on representing different LGU types (SWCD, WD, WMO, and County) and geography. Focus groups participants were also chosen for their past performance as a key strategic thinker – who could reflect on trends and needs outside of their own organization.



A total of 61 people participated in the focus group sessions including 23 people from SWCDS, 13 people from BWSR, 12 people from WDs, 9 people from counties, 2 people from SWCD TSAs, and 1 person from a WMO. Focus groups often work best for discussion in small

groups, necessitating an invite-only approach. One limitation of this approach was that many qualified LGUs representatives were not asked to participate. Therefore, we wanted to ensure that all LGU staff and board members interested in contributing to this process had a meaningful way to do so as a follow-up up to the focus groups meetings via a large survey (see survey details below.)

Perceived needs are, by their nature, subjective. So, rather than starting with a long list of training, the focus groups worked through a process which first identified the key tasks performed in LGU job classes; then ranked the most important skill sets needed to achieve these tasks, and only then did we discuss gaps in skill sets and training needs.

BWSR field and central office staff also participated in small group interviews. Using semi-structured interview methodology, questions focused on three areas: LGU training priorities, BWSR’s role and niche as trainers, and BWSR staff professional development. 62 staff participated in these interviews, representing 75% of the agency.

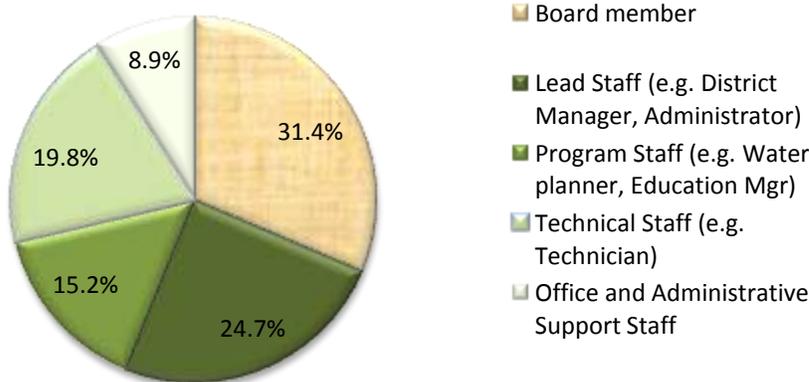
4. **Survey:** Using training priorities developed in focus group work, a voluntary training needs survey (designed in Survey Monkey) was emailed to all LGU staff on March 2, 2010. The purpose of the survey was to offer a voice for all who wanted to participate in this needs assessment process. BWSR used email contact records to send the email out to 677 LGU staff (91 local water managers, 47 WMO staff, 181 Watershed District staff, and 358 Soil and Water Conservation Staff).

BWSR does not keep a contact database sorted by board members, so WD, WMO, and SWCD main contacts received an email request to forward the survey and instructions to their board members. With this secondary contact mechanism, we expected a lower percent of board response. For those main contacts

requesting paper copies of the survey for their board members, BWSR sent a printable copy and offered to input those responses by hand. There are approximately 690 board members (455 SWCD board members and 234 Watershed District board members).

By March 25, 2010, 456 surveys were returned/submitted. LGU staff had a 44% response rate (298/677) and board members had a 23% response rate (158/690).

456 LGU survey respondents, by position



Notes on Scope and Limitations: All research must be approached mindful of the benefits and limitations. Therefore, it is important to use sound research methodologies to ensure that meaningful data is systematically collected and reviewed. While the methodology aims to measure and assess the objectives of this needs assessment, the scope could easily have made this a 6-8 month project. The actual schedule included the following components: December: Tool development, selecting focus groups, organizing logistics and scheduling; January-February: Focus Group meetings, interviewing, partner consultations, content analysis; March: LGU survey and report writing, April: Draft report provided to SMT.

The scope of this assessment project did not allow for detailed interviewing of LGU partners outside SWCDs, WDs, WMO, and Counties as they relate to BWSR programs. Nor did it set out to evaluate the conservation training beyond the scope of BWSR’s work. As a result, additional assessment of other LGUs, such as cities and townships may need to be completed as their involvement with BWSR programs grow.

Next, many assessment projects include recommendations for organization and project improvement. While the information gathered comes from BWSR partners in many different sectors (geographically, LGU type, position within the organization), we must take special care to note that some views and opinions may not have been captured.

Email-based surveys also provide opportunity for further dissemination but did not control for the audience response. If, for example the email was forwarded to another county staff member, we would not have that information. Given the shared internet system with some public computers, we did not limit the survey to one computer use. While the likelihood of duplicate replies is small, we must note that we cannot guarantee single response only.

Finally, we recognize that each methodological approach has flaws inherent in its approach and acknowledge the limitations of each. As expected, this process produced large amounts of data to distill, analyze, and organize into a report. We hope it serves to launch further discussion and action – that record and celebrate success and highlight areas for improved service.

B. Common Acronyms

ORGANIZATIONS/AGENCIES:

State

- BWSR: Board of Water and Soil Resources
- CWC: Clean Water Council
- DNR: Department of Natural Resources
- LCCMR: Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources
- LOHC: Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council
- MDA: Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- MDH: Minnesota Department of Health
- MDOT: Minnesota Department of Transportation
- MGS: Minnesota Geological Service
- MMB: Minnesota Office of Management and Budget
- MPCA: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Federal

- ACOE: Army Corps of Engineers
- CFSA: Consolidated Farm Services Agency
- EPA: Environmental Protection Agency
- FEMA: Federal Emergency Management Agency
- FSA: USDA Farm Service Agency
- NRCS: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- RC&D: Resource Conservation & Development
- RECD: Rural Economic and Community Development
- USDA: United States Department of Agricultural
- USF&WS: United States Fish & Wildlife Service
- USGS: United States Geological Survey

Regional/Local

- CAC: Citizen Advisory Committee
- CHS: Community Health Service
- JPB: Joint Powers Board
- LGU: Local Government Unit
- RDC: Regional Development Commission
- SWCD: Soil and Water Conservation District
- TAC: Technical Advisory Committee
- WD: Watershed District
- WMO: Watershed Management Organization

ASSOCIATIONS:

State

- ADA: Association of (Watershed) District Administrators
- AMC: Association of Minnesota Counties
- AMT: Association of Minnesota Townships
- AMWRAP: Association of Minnesota Water Resources Administrators and Planners
- LMC: League of Minnesota Cities

- MACDE: Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees
- MACPZA: Minnesota Association of County Planning and Zoning Administrators
- MARC&D: Minnesota Association of Resource Conservation and Development
- MASWCD: Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- MAWD: Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts

National

- NACD: National Association of Conservation Districts
- NWF: National Wildlife Federation
- SWCS: Soil and Water Conservation Society

PROGRAMS:

State

- CLWP: Comprehensive Local Water Planning
- CREP: Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
- C-S: Cost-Share Program
- CWF: Clean Water Fund
- CWL: Clean Water Legacy
- CWP: Clean Water Partnership
- LAP: Lake Assessment Program
- LWRPMP: Local Water Resources Protection and Management Program
- NPEA: Nonpoint Engineering Assistance
- NRBG: Natural Resources Block Grant
- PFM: Private Forestry Management
- PWP: Permanent Wetland Preserve
- RIM: Reinvest in Minnesota
- SLR: Streambank, Lakeshore, and Roadside Program
- SRF: State Revolving Fund
- WCA: Wetland Conservation Act

Federal

- ACP: Agricultural Conservation Program
- CRP: Conservation Reserve Program
- EQIP: Environmental Quality Incentive Program
- FDR: Flood Damage Reduction
- FEMA: Federal Emergency Management Act
- WBP: Water Bank Program
- WRP: Wetland Reserve Program



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