

# **Minnesota Agricultural Education Leadership Council (MAELC) Farm Business Management Grant Evaluation Project Briefing**

by Doris Mold, Outside Evaluator

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The purpose of this project is to assess the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities' (Minnesota State) Farm Business Management (FBM) Challenge Grants program, by assessing its ability to maintain and increase the number of instructors and students in local FBM programs. This assessment will provide the basis for the evaluation of the grant program and will provide information that will communicate the impacts of the program.

The responder (Outside Evaluator) developed questions for the evaluation process; conducted focus group discussions with instructors; has reviewed progress reports and instructor responses to questionnaires; developed an interim report and will work on further assessments; will review final report data and in turn develop that data and previous data collected into information that will provide answers to the following questions: 1) Is the grant program effective at maintaining and increasing instructors and students? Why or why not? 2) What are the most meaningful outcomes and impacts?

The Outside Evaluator recommended that progress towards grant parameters and indicators be evaluated in an interim report made during the program rather than waiting until program completion so that corrections could possibly be addressed during the process. This interim report was outside the scope of the RFP but it was agreed that it is an important step in the process.

## **Farm Business Management Challenge Grant Program**

The Minnesota Agricultural Education Leadership Council (MAELC) awarded Farm Business Management (FBM) Challenge Grants to eight applicant colleges that planned to maintain and increase the number of instructors and students in their local FBM program. In order to be eligible for this program, all parameters outlined in the application were to be met. Only recognized Minnesota State Colleges and Universities' (Minnesota State) FBM programs were eligible to apply. Grant recipients received 50% of their grant monies up front. Another 25% was dispersed following the submission of their progress report. Partial results from that progress and final reports are included in this report.

## Challenge Grant Parameters

In order to receive the full funding, FBM programs MUST meet the following parameters:

- Maintain current number of credentialed FBM instructors under a MSCF contract
- Grow current FBM student credit numbers by 2% (collegewide, not per instructor)
- 80% of eligible students are enrolled as full time FBM students (10 credits per year)
- 80% of full-time students in the FBM program complete a FINAN analysis (whole farm at a minimum) and submit to the Minnesota statewide database
- Local college encourages professional development for new FBM instructors (less than 4 years of FBM experience) by supporting them in the Professional Excellence Program (PEP) for early career mentoring

## Recommended Quality Program Indicators

- 95% of students have completed an assessment within their respective business model. FINAN and enterprise submissions follow state parameters for submission (pricing, methodology, etc.)
- Instructor possesses and follows a professional development plan supported by the college
- Local college offers public meeting setting to present data related to FBM
- Local college is aware of statewide initiatives within FBM and supports instructor involvement

### College Challenge Grant Recipients Progress and Final Reports Overview

All successful Farm Business Management Challenge grant award recipients received an e-mail notification reminding them that they were required to complete a progress report at the end of the 2016 Fiscal Year and a final report at the end of the 2017 Fiscal Year. Reports were gathered utilizing the Qualtrics system available through the University of Minnesota. Eight out of eight recipients responded.

At the time of their reporting overall the Colleges reported the following:

- In 2015 - 55 total instructors, 48 full-time, 7 part-time; 2016 - 57 total instructors, 52 full-time and 5 part-time; 2017 - 64 total instructors, 56 full-time and 8 part-time.
- In 2017 – 2,602 students (1,833 full-time, 769 part-time) - 70% of all students were full-time; 2015 – 3,047 total students (1,778 full-time, 1,269 part-time) - 58.35% of all students were full-time.
- In FY17, a total of non-amended 23,498.7 credits sold (22,626.2 amended) at an average cost of \$178.01 per credit. In FY15 non-amended credits sold 23,880.9 (21,205.9 amended) at an average cost of \$182.54.
- 1,967 Full time students completed a FINAN in FY17, 2,071 in FY15

- Four colleges have instructors under four years of experience. Across these four colleges there were 17 instructors that had under four years of experience.
- Seven of the colleges had 100% of their instructors participate in the Professional Experience Program. One college had 60%+ of their instructors participate.
- All colleges reported that receiving the FBM Challenge Grant had impacted their local college "A lot", the highest level option available.
- All colleges held public meetings in both 2017 and 2016. In 2017, colleges held 114 meetings that reached over 6,521 people. In 2016 the colleges hosted 82+ public meetings with an attendance of 4,131 people.
- Colleges reported the following attendees at their public meetings: administrators, ag finance/lenders, agri-business professionals, community members; farmers (non FBM students), FBM instructors, and FBM students attended. Colleges also reported that others participated including legislators; Minnesota Department of Agriculture and college faculty and students.
- In the final report, seven colleges reported that as a staff they were involved in statewide Farm Business Management initiatives "A lot", the highest level of activity offered. This is an increase from four colleges from the interim report; one college reported at the next highest level "some", while it was four colleges in the interim report.

The reports completed by the colleges show that the Challenge Grant had meaningful impact on their Farm Business Management programs and that they were all progressing in the eyes of the parameters, especially after amendment on credits were allowed. The Challenge Grant brought "new life" and a forward thinking attitude to many programs. It allowed for some new and innovative programming and helped the colleges reach some new audiences with the program.

## Challenge Grant Parameters

- Maintain current number of credentialed FBM instructors under a MSCF contract

College	# FBM Instructors under MSCF Contract - Full-Time		# FBM Instructors under MSCF Contract - Part-Time		TOTAL	
	FY15	FY17	FY15	FY17	FY15	FY17
	Alexandria	1	1	0	0	1
Central Lakes	4	7	1	0	5	7
MN West	7	9	4	6	11	15
Northland	6	7	1	2	7	9
Ridgewater	8	8	0	0	8	8
Riverland	8	9	1	0	9	9
South Central	12	13	0	0	12	13
St. Cloud	2	2	0	0	2	2
Totals					55	64

All maintained or increased.

- Grow current FBM student credit numbers by 2% (collegewide, not per instructor)

College	# of Credits Sold		% Growth (looking for 2%)	AMENDED # of Credits Sold		% Growth (looking for 2%)
	FY15	FY17		FY15	FY17	
Alexandria	457.0	525.0	14.88%			
Central Lakes	1,959.0	2,205.0	12.56%			
MN West	3,839.4	4,064.2	5.86%			
Northland	3,394.0	3,067.0	-9.63%	2,593.00	3,067.00	18%
Ridgewater	3,590.5	3,052.5	-14.98%	2,806.50	2,900.00	3%
Riverland	4,375.0	4,205.0	-3.89%	3,842.00	3,927.00	2%
South Central	5,338.0	5,433.0	1.78%	4,781.00	4,991.00	4%
St. Cloud	928.0	947.0	2.05%			

Four of the eight programs had grown their credit numbers within the parameters set. MAELC allowed amended numbers to exclude retired, injured, or separated instructors' credit totals if not meeting credit-related parameters. When allowed to do this all colleges met the parameter.

- 80% of eligible students are enrolled as full time FBM students (10 credits per year) \*\* If college is below this number based on FY15 student credit numbers they must show 2% growth towards meeting this criterion.

College	# Students Enrolled - Full-Time (10 credits or more/yr)		# Students Enrolled - Part-Time (less than 10 credits/year)		# Students Enrolled Total		% Full-Time	
	FY15	FY17	FY15	FY17	FY15	FY17	FY15	FY17
Alexandria	32	45	23	11	55	56	58%	80%
Central Lakes	90	172	219	127	309	299	29%	58%
MN West	231	249	330	138	561	387	41%	64%
Northland	234	213	184	146	418	359	56%	59%
Ridgewater	277	224	229	117	506	341	55%	66%
Riverland	357	354	135	117	492	471	73%	75%
South Central	462	489	120	96	582	585	79%	84%
St. Cloud	95	87	29	17	124	104	77%	84%

All show colleges are showing 80% full time or a 2% growth towards the parameter if they were below 80% in FY17.

- 80% of full-time students in the FBM program complete a FINAN analysis (whole farm at a minimum) and submit to the Minnesota statewide database.

College	Whole Farm Enterprise Analysis		% of FT Students Completing Analysis
	FY15	FY17	FY17
Alexandria	49	51	113.33%
Central Lakes	204	191	111.05%
MN West	315	338	135.74%
Northland	316	240	112.68%
Ridgewater	258	246	109.82%
Riverland	321	338	95.48%
South Central	525	481	98.36%
St. Cloud	83	82	94.25%

Based on the fact that the majority of colleges reported higher numbers of FINAN completions than they have full time students indicates that they misread the question which asked for full time students. It also raises a question. Should those who are receiving instructor attention to prepare records that can complete a FINAN, especially the more detailed enterprise analysis be registered as full time students? What are the obstacles to moving these students to full time status?

FINAN analysis has considerable value to the participating farm business. The contributions of FINAN data to the Minnesota Statewide database also has tremendous value to the greater agricultural community - other farmers, lenders, educators, students, ag businesses and researchers all have a reliable place to go to get quality data.

- Local college encourages professional development for new FBM instructors (less than 4 years of FBM experience) by supporting them in the Professional Excellence Program (PEP) for early career mentoring.

College	# FBM Instructors w/less than 4 yrs. Experience	
	FY15	FY17
Alexandria	0	0
Central Lakes	2	4
MN West	2	4
Northland	2	3
Ridgewater	0	2
Riverland	0	1
South Central	2	3
St. Cloud	0	0
Totals	8	17

Four of the eight colleges had instructors with less than four years of experience with a total of 17 new instructors as of the final report. Each of the colleges appears to be taking the professional development of their instructors seriously with the instructors participating in some PEP. They are working with them to ensure that they are mentored and are getting guidance in their new role.

### Recommended Quality Program Indicators

- 95% of students have completed an assessment within their respective business model. FINAN and enterprise submissions follow state parameters for submission (pricing, methodology, etc.) All colleges are on track with this indicator.
- Instructor possesses and follows a professional development plan supported by the college. Seven of the colleges had 100% of their instructors participate in the Professional Experience Program. One college had 60%+ of their instructors participate.
- Local college offers public meeting setting to present data related to FBM

All colleges held public meetings in both 2017 and 2016. In 2017, colleges held 114 meetings that reached over 6,521 people. In 2016, the colleges hosted 82+ public meetings with an attendance of 4,131 people. Colleges reported the following attendees at their public meetings: administrators, ag finance/lenders, agri-business professionals, community members; farmers (non FBM students), FBM instructors, and FBM students attended. Colleges also reported that others participated including legislators; Minnesota Department of Agriculture and college faculty and students.

- Local college is aware of statewide initiatives within FBM and supports instructor involvement. All colleges are aware of and appear to support statewide initiatives within FBM and support instructor involvement. In the final report seven colleges reported that as a staff they were involved in statewide Farm Business Management initiatives "A lot" the highest level of activity offered this is up from four colleges from the interim report; one college reported at the next highest level "some", while it was four colleges in the interim report.



With the grant do you expect the	Increase		Decrease		Stay the Same		Total
...number of students that you work with annually to	54.35%	25	6.52%	3	39.13%	18	46
...amount of time you spend with each student annually to	17.39%	8	6.52%	3	76.09%	35	46

### Instructor View of Their Farms

To what level do your farmers	Not at all		Some		Quite a bit		A lot		Don't know		Total
...feel financially stressed?	0.00%	0	17.78%	8	37.78%	17	44.44%	20	0.00%	0	45
...use information gained from participating in the farm business analysis program?	0.00%	0	6.67%	3	37.78%	17	55.56%	25	0.00%	0	45
...make more informed management decisions after participating in the farm business analysis program?	0.00%	0	4.44%	2	22.22%	10	73.33%	33	0.00%	0	45

*n=45*

Additional analysis and full report information will be available soon.