

North Woods Education Project

Hardwood Manufacturers in Northern Minnesota Gain Marketing Expertise

The Challenge

Local manufacturers produce a rich array of products from northern Minnesota's forests, ranging from fine furniture, flooring, and cabinetry to hand-crafted items and wooden toys. These forest-based jobs and products make a vital contribution to the region's economy. However, growing competition from global supply and demand is threatening the region's economic stability.

The Solution

The Minnesota Wood Campaign developed the *North Woods Education Project* with support from Iron Range Resources; the McKnight Foundation; the Blandin Foundation; the Carolyn Foundation; and a grant from the Wood Education and Resource Center, operated by the U.S. Forest Service, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry. The program is designed for participants with varying levels of experience and expertise, and is intended to boost markets for local wood products.

A series of interactive workshops were delivered to producers of northern Minnesota hardwood products. Topics included creative marketing, product branding and promotion, and selling the connection between sustainable forests and locally produced items, among others. Participants received one-on-one technical assistance to help them implement their new marketing and sales programs more quickly. A Business Services Resource Directory was also developed and distributed to program participants.

Resulting Benefits

- Empowered producers and manufacturers of Minnesota's hardwood forest products to develop effective marketing skills.

The North Woods Education Project accelerates branding and marketing of high-quality wood products made by existing and emerging hardwood manufacturers.



Workshop attendees develop effective marketing skills.

- Improved the market for and promotion of value-added hardwood products through targeted advertising and development of niche markets.
- Created competitive advantages among producers and manufacturers through product differentiation.
- Increased wood utilization through networking among suppliers and users.
- Increased awareness of the value of sustainable management of forests and their role in improving the economy of communities.

Sharing Success

- Conducted 67 group training workshops.
- Published a series of Webinars on CDs that are also located on the Web at: www.truenorthwoods.com/links.php.
- Provided one-on-one technical assistance to more than 440 manufacturers.
- Developed a Business Services Resource Directory that provided sources of assistance to forest-based producers. The Directory is available at: www.truenorthwoods.com/files/MWC-ResourceDirectory-2007-email-080111.pdf.



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