

Finding grants to stretch budgets

GETTING GRANTS for local projects means more money without more taxes. It takes time to find the sources, more time to write the proposal, and still more time to report afterwards. Is it worth the effort?

"That depends on the project," says John Edlebeck, Public Works Director for the City of Waupaca. "I've been very aggressive with trying to get grant monies for various projects. I feel we owe that to the community."

Recent grants from sources other than WisDOT have helped pay for:

- chain saw safety training (part of a DNR Urban Forestry Grant)
- relamping traffic signals with LEDs (Focus on Energy), and
- buying energy efficient well motors and air conditioners, and even a device to cut energy use in vending machines (Focus on Energy)

They also save money on electric bills by being in an air conditioner power shed program. The city pays a lower rate and in return the local utility can turn off their air conditioners when power use peaks.

"You're talking tens of thousands of dollars for projects that you may need to do ultimately anyway," says Edlebeck. "For some, like Focus on Energy, the paperwork is pretty minimal."

How do you find grant programs? Start with the WisDOT Web page Programs for Local Governments. Also, watch your mail. WisDOT and DNR routinely send letters announcing funding programs and time-tables. These are also posted on agency Web sites and promoted through association newsletters.

Word of mouth is a common method: talking to other public works and streets department people, asking locally-based agency staff, listening at seminars and conferences. "For a lot of them, you have to seek them out: call someone or work through a Web page," says Edlebeck. "I think it's a mindset."

A new Web site—**WIGrants**—offers "one-stop shopping." It is operated by the state Department of Administration and replaces the print booklet: *Wisconsin Catalog of Community Assistance*.

The site has direct links to program descriptions on other state and federal agency Web sites. These give information on the most recent grant cycle, which may be completed. If a program seems to fit your needs, call the listed contact person to get details and dates for the next cycle.

Not finding what you need? Call or e-mail Dawn Vick, DOA Intergovernmental Liaison.

"We can help local officials look for grants, both state and federal," she says, "though I have to say that roads is one area where we have not found alternative sources [to DOT]."

"It's a lot easier not to apply for grants," says Edlebeck. "To take a half a day off from your normal work a couple times to get a grant written is very difficult. But, getting a grant, like the Urban Forestry grant which was a 50:50 match, allowed us to double the budget for needed services and improvements."

For ideas on grants and sources, contact the TIC for a list of grants secured by John Edlebeck for Waupaca.



A DNR grant provided thousands of dollars toward dam removal and streambank renovation.

Where to start looking for grants

Programs for Local Governments, on the WisDOT home page: <http://www.dot.state.wi.us>

WI-Grants, at: <http://wigrants.wi.gov> or from a link on <http://wisconsinpartnership.wi.gov>

You can contact Dawn Vick through this page. The best approach is to browse the listing. The keyword search doesn't work particularly well.

Wisconsin's Focus on Energy Government Program serves village, town, city, and county government facilities with "information, training, and resources to make informed decisions about energy use and management options to decrease your energy costs." Call 1-800-762-7077

On the Web: <http://www.focusonenergy.com>

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