

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

An Update on **Federal Funding Concerns for the Pesticide Safety Education Program**
 Submitted to the PPDC by Wayne Buhler, Ph.D., North Carolina State University
 October 12, 2012

*Excerpted from: **The Precarious State of the Pesticide Safety Education Program**, Weed Science Society of America (WSSA) --Press Release, 9/8/11, and **The Pesticide Safety Education Program: Assessment of Funding Reductions**, Andrew Thostenson, President of the American Association of Pesticide Safety Educators (AAPSE), 9/28/11.*

The Pesticide Safety Education Program (PSEP), formerly known as the Pesticide Applicator Training (PAT) Program, was federally “commissioned” in the 1970’s when Congress directed EPA to “use the services of the State Cooperative Extension Service to inform and educate pesticide users about accepted uses and other regulations.” As part of each state’s and 5 trusts’ and territories’ land-grant university Extension service, PSEPs educate the majority of pesticide applicators in the US for initial certification and recertification.

In 2010, there were 488,000 certified private applicators and 405,000 certified commercial applicators holding credentials, including 105,000 newly certified applicators and 227,000 applicators participating in recertification programs in the states. Additionally, PSEP, using non-EPA funds, educates nearly 1.1 million non-occupational pesticide users (Master Gardeners, IPM in Schools, etc.) annually.

Federal Funding Decline

Federal Funding for the Pesticide Safety Education Program (PSEP)			
Year	EPA Discretionary	PRIA II	Total
	----- Funding -----		
FY 2000	\$1,900,000	n/a	\$1,900,000
FY 2004	\$1,200,000	n/a	\$1,200,000
FY 2005	\$1,200,000	n/a	\$1,200,000
FY 2006	\$1,200,000	n/a	\$1,200,000
FY 2007	\$1,200,000	n/a	\$1,200,000
FY 2008	\$1,200,000	\$500,000	\$1,700,000
FY 2009	\$1,100,000	\$500,000	\$1,600,000
FY 2010	\$800,000	\$500,000	\$1,300,000
FY 2011	\$0	\$500,000	\$500,000

In recent years, federal funding to support PSEP typically hovered around \$1.2 to \$1.8 million on an annual basis. Until 2007, all EPA PSEP funds were discretionary. Beginning in FY 2008 and going through FY 2012, the Pesticide Registration Improvement Renewal Act (PRIA II) specifically earmarks \$500,000 annually from company pesticide registration fees to be dedicated for PSEPs.

These funds were added to EPA's existing discretionary funds. Due to budget constraints and a variety of other challenges over the years, EPA recently eliminated its discretionary funding and provided support for the PSEP only at the PRIA II funding level for FY 2011. All except a few states and territories will receive \$10,000 (distributed in the fall of 2011). This amounts to a one-year reduction of 20 to 75% to each state, and up to an 83% reduction compared with FY 2008 funding levels.

If PRIA funding is not renewed by Congress and authorized by EPA, federal PSEP funding will go to zero starting in FY 2013.

In response to the latest reductions, the American Association of Pesticide Safety Educators (AAPSE) Board of Directors conducted an online survey of PSEP Coordinators nationwide in Sept. 2011. The survey asked PSEP Coordinators about the financial condition of their program. Forty-seven states and territories responded. Results confirm the difficult condition many PSEPs are facing across the country. Nearly 50% of state programs suffered serious setbacks in recent years and the federal funding reduction this year and next will be hard on many programs. Many states generate additional funds through education fees, the sale of training materials, securing outside grants and contracts, and partnering with other organizations. But some lack the infrastructure, administrative support, and/or legal capability to pursue these funding avenues. Lack of sustainability has directly resulted in decreased staff, reduced pesticide manual production, reduced educational offerings, realignment to other non-PSEP educational work and more time spent writing grants and contracts to maintain PSEP programs. More than 2/3 of the Coordinators felt that they would have to seek funding in areas NOT related to pesticide safety education in order to make up for the federal funding shortfall.

The survey results are clear: national funding is an essential part of the PSEP program in many states. Without it, some state programs would cease to exist. As pesticide users become more and more diverse, including those involved with organic production methods, and with the growing complexity of pesticide labels, the public need for and demands on PSEP are also growing.

On behalf of AAPSE and PSEP, I seek the assistance of the PPDC to help ensure that adequate federal funding is available to PSEP for the foreseeable future. It is our hope that PRIA funding will be renewed to provide a stable source of support for pesticide safety education.