

EXPLORE BOWHUNTING: NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION



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BACKGROUND:

In 2011 The National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation (FHWAR) has shown an increase in the number of people participating in hunting; the data showed a decrease from 14 million in 1996 and 13 million in 2001 to an estimated 12.5 million in 2006 but in 2011 hunters rebounded to 13.7 million, a 9 percent increase from 2006. The 2011 survey has seen across-the-board increases in hunting participation, day, and expenditure estimates. This runs counter to the downward trends documented in the preceding three FHWAR National Surveys. From 1991 to 2006, hunting participation had dropped 11 percent and the number of hunting days had not significantly changed. The 9 percent participant and 28 percent day increases puts the 2011 hunting status on par with that of 1991 hunting, the high point of hunting in the last twenty years. The ATA wants to continue this upward trend by engaging youth through progressive programming.

A survey conducted by Responsive Management (RM) in 2005 on behalf of the Archery Trade Association (ATA), found that 63% of students who completed the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) were interested in learning more about bowhunting. These students were interested in learning more only after taking an introduction to archery. Imagine the response if those students had progressive next-step programs and a support network available.

In response, the ATA developed Explore Bowhunting (EB), an exciting and challenging next-step program. It is a written curriculum that contains activities covering all aspects associated with bowhunting. Along with the written curriculum book, the ATA has compiled an activity trunk filled with materials and equipment needed to successfully teach the program. EB offers educators an innovative tool that engages students from upper elementary, middle school and high school age groups which is a time when kids are choosing from many recreational opportunities.

Explore Bowhunting is an elective curriculum-based educational program that bridges the gap between archery and the outdoors. *Explore Bowhunting* is a proven, next-step program to any introductory shooting experience that teaches the basics of bowhunting. This MSCGP addressed NCN 2 by expanding the reach of Explore Bowhunting Program to more states and providing kids who have already been introduced to archery with the knowledge and skills necessary to become bowhunters.

The ATA believes hunter and shooter recruitment is a “pathway” of related and supporting events, rather than simply independent recruitment actions. An initial step along the pathway is an introductory program that’s fun and teaches the basics of archery, such as NASP. The second step would lead participants to more exciting and challenging experiences, such as Explore Bowhunting, Hunter Education and intermediate archery programs. Finally, a support network

of mentors, retailers or peers give new participants the confidence needed to purchase equipment, buy a hunting license, and go hunting for the first time.

The ATA continues to work with state wildlife agencies to implement EB nationwide in an effort to increase bowhunting participation rates and license sales. During early implementation of EB we saw the most success in states such as Oklahoma and Michigan, where Explore Bowhunting is offered in schools in conjunction with NASP and hunter education, the first steps on a recruitment pathway.

EB contains 23 activities designed to help instructors, program leaders and educators teach students ages 11-17 the basic skills of bowhunting. It begins with track identification, animal communication, and camouflage. Then, students are taught skills such as shot placement, distance judging, how to create a hunt plan, and an archery shooting course designed to offer challenges that a bowhunter may encounter. The last section of the curriculum deals with skills such as blood trailing and field dressing. Along with the curriculum book, the ATA has compiled an activity kit filled with materials and equipment needed to successfully teach the program. Finally we have designed a student handbook that will help students as they complete each activity. The handbook will provide students with a take-home reference to share with their family and friends.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

1. To expand the Explore Bowhunting program nationwide by offering assistance to state wildlife agencies to implement the program in conjunction with introductory archery and hunter education programs.
2. To build partnerships with non-governmental organizations and the archery and bowhunting industry to help financially support agency implementation efforts.
3. To build on Explore Bowhunting's capabilities as a recruitment tool and next step from introductory archery programs such as NASP.
4. Gather information through instructor and student surveys on the impact of Explore Bowhunting.

APPROACH:

At the beginning of this grant cycle, we were already implementing the program in 10 states. From those ten states we learned that EB was most successful when offered in schools in conjunction with NASP and hunter education, we focused our efforts and funds on states that would implement in a similar way.

In order to implement EB, a state agency must agree to implement and manage the program through an informal plan that briefly outlines purpose, audience, goals, implementation strategy, and measuring effectiveness. Based on that plan and meetings with the state agency, ATA then grants each state a dollar amount that is used to purchase EB teaching kits and associated materials. The grant amounts were dependent on the needs expressed by each state. Funding preference was given to state agencies that implemented the program in juxtaposition of NASP (schools) or other introductory archery programs (park and recreation) and hunter education, ultimately putting kids on a recruitment pathway.

It is important to note that EB is a state agency program. Residents and students must associate the state agency with bowhunting and the EB program simply because of hunter education and licensing requirements. In order to do that, the ATA works with a printer to customize printed materials with agency logos, state specific “Hunter Education,” “Where to Hunt” and informational pages inside each instructor’s curriculum guide and student handbooks and market it as their own program. ATA wants all state agencies to have full ownership and this ensures each state is invested in the quality of the program.

Each state agency chooses how to implement the program with schools, local agencies, and nonprofit organizations. The program is implemented by either loaning out the equipment kits or placing them on permanent loan. States made this decision depending on interest, staffing and agency preference. All states had some kind of Materials Request form or Application, Program Agreement document, Equipment Sign-Out form, and/or checklist.

ATA then launches the program in each state by leading a 4-hour teacher workshop. The first workshop has multiple purposes: 1. To train state agency staff on how-to conduct an EB teacher workshop; 2. To train educators on how-to use the program to fit their educational needs and teaching environment, and; 3. To facilitate a meeting of ATA members, within that state, interested in learning about the program and/or supporting the state’s efforts. The workshop introduces teaching materials, equipment and educational kits, demonstrates at least half of the activities, offers options for using the curriculum to meet educator goals and student needs, and addresses any questions or concerns that arise.

All states continue to offer workshops in order to grow the program. Many states are able to offer Continuing Education Credits for teachers attending the workshop.

Evaluation of the program within each state was conducted using online surveys, follow-up phone calls and meetings with state coordinators. Our focus is primarily on statewide implementation and the success within each state. State coordinators were issued annual surveys using Survey Monkey and requested to submit annual participation reports as well. In addition, we requested archery hunting license information from 2005 to 2014 to determine if license data has shown an increase or decrease in state utilizing recruitment tools.

Instructor evaluation data was collected using an online survey from active instructors, past instructors, or workshop participants who have not yet started the program. Instructor's surveys were used to determine where the program was implemented, if classroom goals were reached, quality of materials, access to materials, level of bowhunting experience prior to the workshop, and if they would recommend the program to another instructor.

In an attempt to ensure the longevity of this program, the ATA also set out to develop partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGO) and the archery and bowhunting industry to help financially support agency implementation efforts. We identified national NGO's and worked with the national office in order to determine the best path to engage local chapters within active EB states to assist with future program costs and general support.

All funding provided by the ATA, as well as the funding provided through this Multistate Grant was made available to state wildlife agencies to support equipment, materials and other costs associated with expanding the implementation of the EB program.

RESULTS:

At the start of this grant cycle in 2013 Explore Bowhunting was already in 10 states (AL, AZ, GA, IN, KY, MI, MO, NE, OK, and VA). Today, the program is in 22 states (added AK, FL, IA, LA, MA, MN, MT, NH, NY, PA, TX, and WI) with over 1,860 programs, 1,289 trained instructors and 188,162 students exposed to the program.

An EB program is defined as any instructor using the EB curriculum materials for any class and any length of time. For example, a school-based 8-week course that met twice a week for 45 minutes to teach the basics of bowhunting and a park and recreation program that taught a general outdoors class each Saturday for 4 weeks would both be considered a "program."

Through annual state coordinator program evaluations we discovered that of the 1,860 programs 67% were operated in-schools, meaning the programs were offered during a normal school day in a variety of class settings while 6% were offered after-school, meaning these programs typically fell into a club format, outside of the normal school day. Nine percent of programs were offered in Park and Recreation settings and 8% were offered in summer camps, including private and state operated camps. The remaining programs were offered in residential camps, Girl Scouts, conservation organizations, YMCA's, and in retail archery stores.

This program has found a foothold in schools. Based on the instructor survey, school teachers are seeking new materials to create new classes such as hunting and/or outdoor skills. They also incorporate the materials into existing programs and to complement or be a next-step to an existing shooting sports program such as NASP. To date, the most growth we see is in states that implement the program in schools.

In addition to spreading into schools, EB is spreading into urban and suburban areas. At the end of 2011, EB was found predominately in rural areas (57% of programs), while 22% was in urban centers and 21% in suburban areas. Today, EB is evenly distributed with 36% found in suburban areas, 34% in rural communities and 30% in urban centers.

In 2012, the ATA implemented a policy that required all state agencies wanting to implement EB to submit a proposal outlining their implementation strategy, program goals, evaluation processes, and budget requirements. We found that this greatly increased the success of the program in the initial years compared to states that did not submit a proposal. The proposal forced state agencies to create a plan and be accountable for it, leading to a well-organized execution of the program.

Hunting and archery license data from 2005 to 2014 (where available) was collected from states and evaluated. We found hunting license data is an unreliable way to measure success of recruitment programs. First, each state has a different licensing system, which makes it impossible to compare states. Second, many states have incentive programs such as an Apprentice Program, Land Owner Exemption, Hunter Education Exemption Permits, and minimum age requirements that allows youth, new and returning hunters to either hunt without purchasing a license and/or postpone attending a Hunter Education class. While these incentive programs are effective they make it impossible to track success of any one program and other efforts that are being made throughout a state. Finally, licensing requirements change from year-to-year resulting in data that is not consistent nor comparable.

However, when we look at an individual state such as Oklahoma, we see positive results. Oklahoma has implemented NASP since 2004, added hunter education in-schools in 2007, and implemented EB in 2010. Oklahoma's Youth Archery License sales from 2009 to 2013 (years data was available) increased 43%, from 3,643 to 6,313. Oklahoma also legalized crossbows in 2012 which could have contributed to this increase. While we see an increase in license sales, we can never attribute one program over another to this increase.

Based on the instructor survey, EB is easy to use and meets instructor's educational goals and expectations. Out of 1,844 instructors, 102 completed the survey, with 100% indicating they will use EB in the future and 99% indicating they would recommend the program to another instructor.

Another goal of this grant was to develop partnerships with NGO's and the industry to help financially support agency implementation efforts. ATA has partnered with many organizations for content collaboration such as National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), Mule Deer Foundation (MDF), and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF). However, our main goal was to secure future funding for state programs. To this end, we worked with the national offices at NWTf, Isaac Walton League of America (IWLA) and the Pope and Young Club. What we found

was that the national office for NWTF and IWLA has no funding to support programs directly. Therefore, the best route to obtain support and funding is for state agencies to work directly with local chapters in areas in need of program support. The national offices are supportive of the program but they have little to no impact on how or why chapters may choose to support a program or not. We were able to obtain lists of states that have very active chapters, helping to focus our efforts.

Work with the Pope and Young Club resulted in EB receiving the Pope and Young Conservation Award in 2015. The Pope and Young Club does not operate through state chapters and therefore limits their contribution to the program.

Other organizations are better situated to actually implement the program and do programs on the ground. The Mule Deer Foundation is currently using EB in their M.U.L.E.Y. program in four states (AZ, CO, MT, and UT).

The Salvation Army (TSA) launched the program in their summer camps and TSA Outdoors program in 2015. The partnership with TSA also brings Safari Club International who supports many of TSA Outdoors programming, including EB.

Summary

The primary outcome of this project was to expand EB nationwide in states that implement the program in conjunction with introductory archery and hunter education programs. The 12 new state agencies (AK, FL, IA, LA, MA, MN, MT, NH, NY, PA, TX, and WI) implementing EB during this grant cycle are invested in growing an all-encompassing recruitment pathway that offers students an opportunity to get everything they need in order to become a hunter in one place, predominantly through in-school programming. The most growth is seen in Oklahoma, Texas, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Kentucky.

When we began to implement EB in 2010 no states were willing to invest their own money in the program. Today, we have 12 states that invest money in the program to purchase kits and/or printed materials. Our goal was to wean state agencies off industry funding after the first few years of implementation and we are succeeding.

One challenge we had to face immediately was state agency staff turnover. When a coordinator vacates the position, it leaves the program in limbo until positions are filled. Once the position is filled ATA goes back and trains all new staff not only on how to do a workshop but also on what the program is, the value it brings to a recruitment plan and how to implement the program within that state in order to achieve their goals. However, this could take 1-3 years depending on state agency funding, recruitment and retention priorities and personnel. Currently, Michigan, Missouri, and Indiana have seen turnover that has resulted in a lengthy lag

time to get the program back up and functioning. We are working with these states to get new personnel trained and materials in-hand so they can revive the program.

A fact of educational program implementation is that it is slow. Once the first workshop is conducted and that initial set of instructors receive materials, at that time instructors begin to plan to utilize the program. Schools will use the program at the beginning of semesters or at the beginning of a new school year, regardless of when they attend a workshop. Many park and recreation centers plan six months out to use the program in later “seasons” or during summer camps. Because of this, it makes it difficult to capture survey data about the actual program in use from states that began the program within this grant cycle.

The long term outcome of EB is to become a bowhunting recruitment tool that is part of a larger recruitment toolbox for each state. While EB is not a silver bullet for state agency recruitment problems we have seen that when programs are offered together in one location (i.e. a school) we are able to reach more kids and accomplish more.

Overall, EB fits into state agency recruitment goals and strategies, satisfies instructor expectations, and students find the program challenging, fun and interesting. When expanding EB in the future ATA will continue to require a program proposal and offer guidance in order to make implementation more successful. A standard annual survey of the EB program and implementation will be created, making it easier for state coordinators to report.

All states that implemented EB will continue the program and expand it in the future. Popularity of the program continues to grow, resulting in most of the states including EB in future annual budgets (materials, kits, and workshops). We look forward to expanding this program in the future.

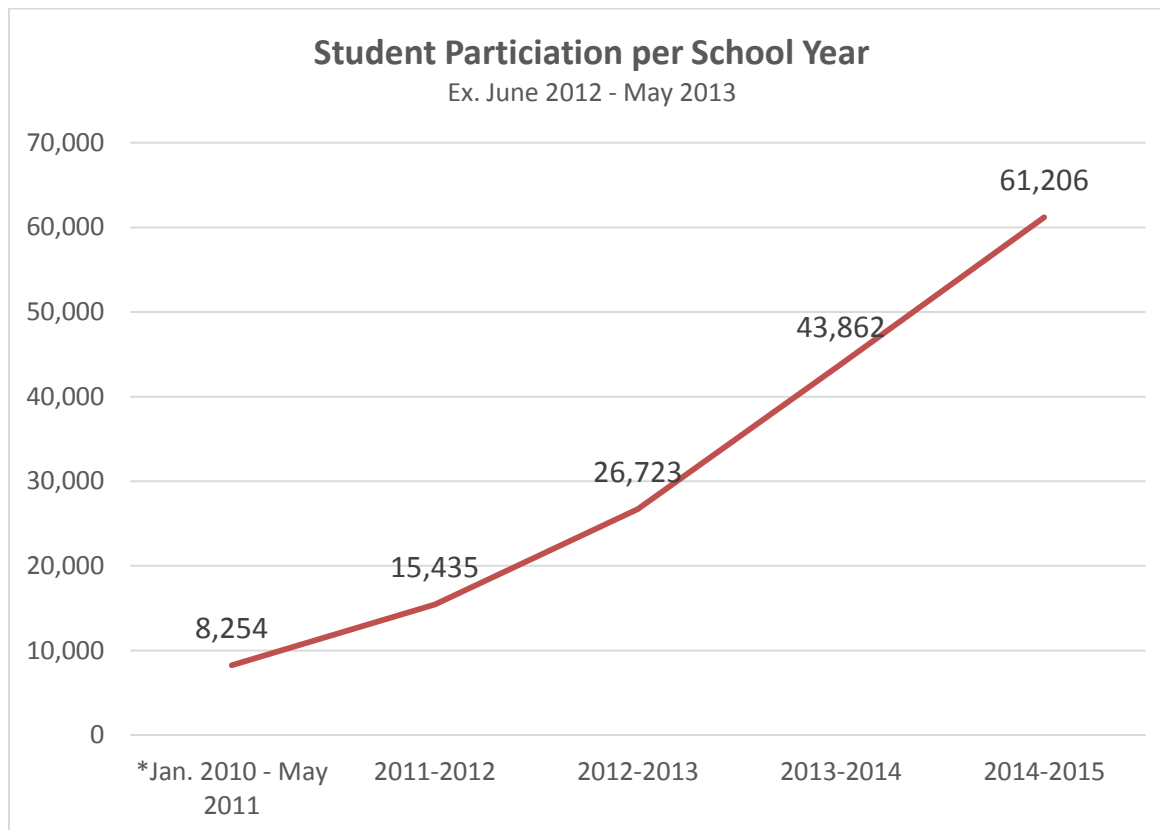
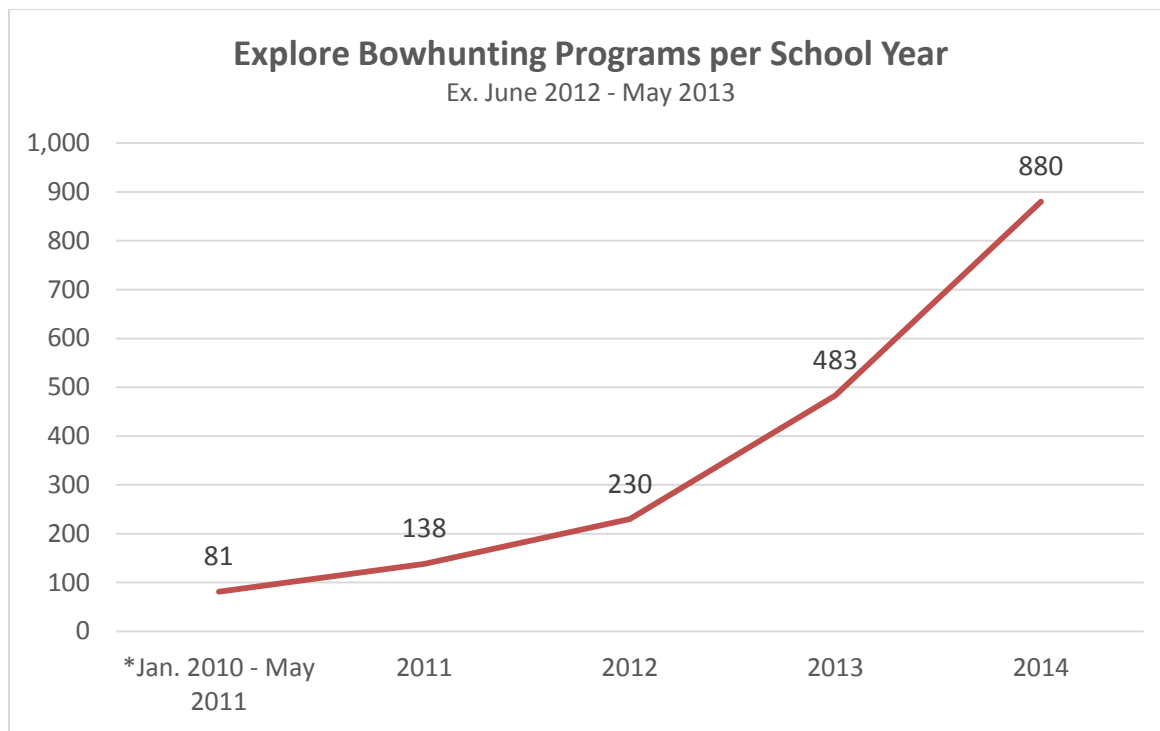
2015 Explore Bowhunting Program

The map displays the following states categorized by program status:

- Explore Bowhunting (Orange):** AK, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DE, FL, GA, HI, IL, IN, IA, KY, LA, MD, MI, MN, MO, NE, NM, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, SC, SD, TN, TX, VA, VT, WA, WI, WV, and ZS.
- No program (Grey):** ME, NH, MA, NJ, NC, SC, TN, MS, AR, MS, NM, UT, WY, ND, SD, MT, ID, WA, OR, NV, CA, and HI.
- USFWS Region (Green outline):** The contiguous United States and Alaska.

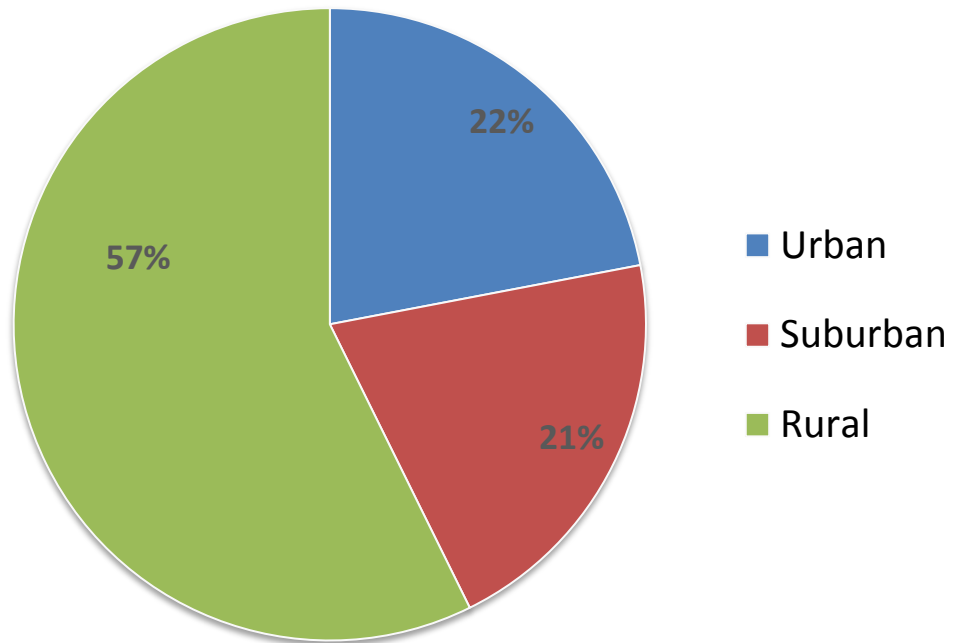
Table 1. Explore Bowhunting program specifics by state.

State	Implemented Statewide	Program Type	Trained Instructors	Number of kits	NASP	Hunter Ed	Programs 2010-2011	Programs 2011-2012	Programs 2012-2013	Programs 2013-2014	Programs 2014-2015	NEW Programs** First half 2015-2016 school year	TOTAL Programs	Agency Investment
Alabama	July 2012	In-school	66	63	✓	✓			57	87	61		205	\$0
Alaska	Feb. 2013	School, P&R, state	45	9	✓	✓			0	5	4		9	\$8,000
Arizona	April 2010	School, P&R, state	51	10	✓		14	11	11	33			80	\$3,400
Florida	Sept. 2013	P&R, Camps, School, partners	51	15		✓				10	24		34	\$10,000
Georgia	March 2012	State programs	20	15		✓				9	10		19	\$20,000
Indiana	July 2012	School, 4-H, state	72	14	✓					6	24		30	\$0
Iowa	August 2014	Schools, P&R, state	25	20	✓						1		1	\$5,000
Kentucky	March 2011	School, P&R, state, other	224	45	✓	✓		34	14	46	162		256	\$3,500
Louisiana	July 2015		24	10	✓							20	20	\$4,200
Massachusetts	July 2015		13	10	✓							10	10	\$2,100
Michigan	August 2008	Schools, P&R and state	87	21	✓		37	37	37	37	39		187	\$0
Minnesota	Sept. 2015*	Schools, P&R and businesses	20	20	✓									\$0
Missouri	Sept. 2011	School, state, camps	31	10	✓					5	5		10	\$0
Montana	October 2014	Schools	25	20	✓						12		12	\$0
Mule Deer Foundati	November 2014	Conservation Org	4	4							4		4	\$0
Nebraska	April 2009	Schools	15	10	✓		6	6	6	6	10		34	\$0
New Hampshire	Feb. 2013	State	3	1	✓	✓				1	1		2	\$0
New York	May 2015	Schools	39	40	✓							18	18	\$0
Oklahoma	July 2010	Schools	240	222	✓	✓	15	40	90	172	240		557	\$220,000
Pennsylvania	October 2013	Schools	78	41	✓	✓				22	56		78	\$60,000
Texas	Feb. 2013	Schools, P&R	80	80	✓	✓				43	80		123	\$35,000
The Salvation Army	May 2015	Camps	14	4	✓						4		4	\$0
Virginia	March 2010	Schools, P&R, state	52	16	✓	✓	9	10	15	21	28		83	\$0
Wisconsin	Nov. 2013	Schools and state	20	12	✓	✓					54		54	\$21,800
USFWS	August 2011	NWR	28	2	✓					2	28		30	\$5,000
TOTAL			1,307	714			81	138	230	483	880	48**	1,860	\$398,000
States implemented during January 2013 through December 2015														
* Limited program launch														
** This column shows only 3 new states added mid-2015. States report based on school year however, we were able to identify 48 programs with an estimated 3,096 new students exposed to EB in the first half of the 2015-2016 school year (June-December 2015).														

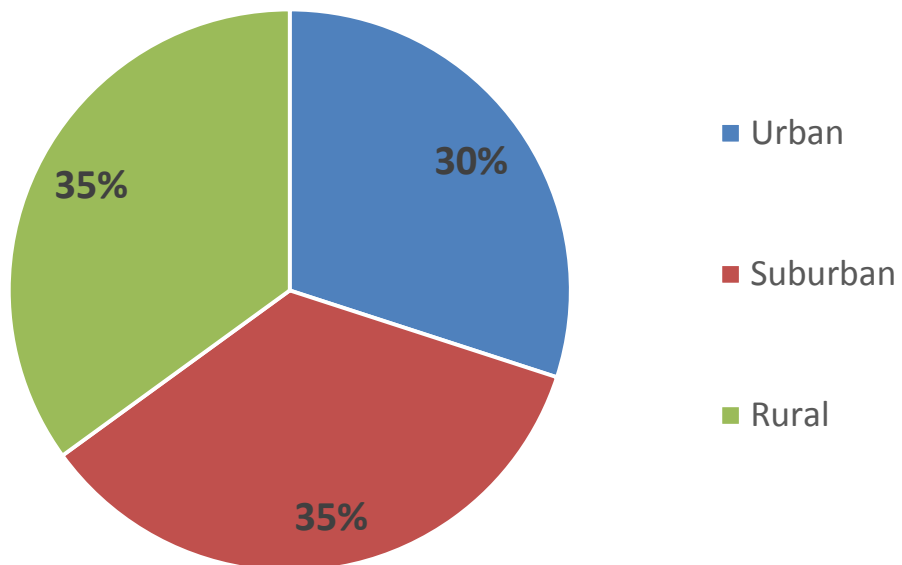


* Indicates change in reporting for January 1, 2010 to May 31, 2011.

2012 Program Areas



2015 Program Areas



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