

Participating Agencies' Experience and Interaction With Stakeholders

In designing the Request for Applications for the Program, committee members relied on their past experiences with biodiesel education and outreach. For over a decade, USDA has been involved in biodiesel outreach programs. USDA's Office of Energy Policy and New Uses (OEPNU) coordinates activities related to biodiesel and other renewable fuels for the Department. Since 1993, OEPNU has been involved with producer and consumer stakeholder groups interested in developing a biodiesel industry in the United States. One of the Department's first efforts to bring biodiesel stakeholders together took place in September 1995 when OEPNU and the Department of Energy organized a stakeholder meeting in Washington, DC. The purpose of the meeting was to develop a life cycle inventory of biodiesel. This life cycle inventory furthered knowledge about the benefits of biodiesel. Several groups were represented at the meeting, including biodiesel producers, the oilseed processing industry, the rendering industry, engine manufacturers, state and local governments, and environmental groups.

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) leads the Department's efforts on biodiesel research and demonstration. Since the summer of 1999, the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) has been conducting a biodiesel demonstration project that has become a working model for others interested in using biodiesel. All of the Center's 150 pieces of diesel equipment and trucks were converted to a fuel blend of 20 percent biodiesel and 80 percent petroleum diesel (B20). Vehicles from BARC that run on biodiesel and educational materials have been displayed and distributed throughout the country. In January 2000, ARS conducted a workshop to highlight the BARC biodiesel demonstration project. The workshop's 75 attendees represented a broad range of potential users, including Federal Agencies, such as the Departments of Energy, Defense, and the Interior, and the U.S. Postal Service. Officials from nearby cities, counties, and states were also in attendance, as well as private industry groups, farmers and biodiesel suppliers. The biodiesel demonstration project has been highlighted at the BARC Public Day, an annual event that provides an opportunity for ARS scientists to describe their research projects to the public.

A biodiesel outreach program has also been established to introduce biodiesel to USDA and other Federal agencies that operate motor fleets. Beginning in July of 2000, USDA's Office of Procurement and Property Management (OPPM) has been conducting a series of informational meetings at various locations around the United States to educate Federal fleet managers and other stakeholders on the benefits of biodiesel. Meetings have been held in Orlando, FL, San Antonio, TX, Minneapolis, MN, Washington, DC, Kansas City, MI, and Salt Lake City, UT. These meetings are used as a platform to educate motor fleet personnel, postal workers and the public about the major advantages of biodiesel. OPPM has also teamed with other entities interested in the environmental and health effects of biodiesel, such as the American Lung Association and the National Biodiesel Board, to conduct biodiesel education meetings for Federal fleet managers, postal workers, and other interested stakeholders.

Proposal Review

In collaboration with external reviewers, the Oversight Committee will review proposals and recommend awards. The Committee will monitor the Program's performance and provide guidance to OEPNU to insure that the Program objectives are being achieved. The Committee will review progress reports submitted by the grantees and, on a yearly basis, recommend whether the awards should be renewed. Also, on a yearly basis, the Committee will recommend whether to reissue the RFA and award new grants.

CSREES will compile application reviews and recommend awards to OEPNU. OEPNU will make award decisions.

Awards

The Program will fund Biodiesel Fuel Education Program grants in each of FYs 2003 through 2007. Because of the scope of this Program and the limited funds available to support it, OEPNU plans to award one or two continuation grants in FY 2003. A continuation grant is a grant instrument by which the Department agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined project period with a statement of intention to provide additional support at a future date, provided that performance has been satisfactory, appropriations are available for this purpose, and continued support would be in the best interest of the Federal government and the public. If these three elements are met, OEPNU plans to provide additional support to

the funded projects in each of FYs 2004 through 2007.

OEPNU's plan to award only one or two continuation grants should facilitate a national education program with a consistent message. It should also ease the implementation process and allow OEPNU to monitor the Program more effectively. If the Agency were to make numerous smaller awards, this could result in multiple education programs with different emphases and goals, as well as competition for Program participants and human resources to conduct the Program.

Continuation grants are necessary to ensure that the Program follows an orderly and consistent transition from one year to the next over the five-year funding period. A successful Biodiesel Fuel Education Program will be sequential in nature, *i.e.*, conducted in several dependent work phases. For example, phase one might focus on identifying program participants and designing educational tools. Phase 2 might develop a strategy for putting a system and infrastructure in place to reach the targeted audience. Phase 3 could focus on scheduling and travel logistics. The work phases are interdependent, so selecting new grantees each year would cause disruptions and create the potential for repetitive efforts. Authorizing continuation grants will allow the grantees to develop and conduct long-term plans, preserve program continuity, and benefit from learning experiences over the funding period.

The Final Rule is divided into subparts. Subpart A contains general information about the Program prescribed by the authorizing legislation, including the purpose of the Program and eligibility restrictions established by the legislation. Subpart A limits indirect costs to the rate that an applicant has negotiated with the cognizant Federal negotiating agency, and explains that there are no matching funds requirements for the Program. Subpart B describes the continuation grant instrument that OEPNU plans to use and outlines objectives for projects funded by the Program. Subpart C provides information about the publication of program announcements, instructs applicants regarding the minimum content requirements for applications, and directs them to the program announcement for specific instructions regarding application requirements and the order of application contents. Subpart C also lists the application submission information that will appear in program announcements and describes the process for acknowledging the receipt of