

Higher Blends Infrastructure Incentive Program (HBIIIP) Environmental Review Process for Applicants

Questions and Answers

General Information

1. When will the PowerPoints and recordings be available?

ANSWER: All webinar recordings PowerPoints, and other information will be posted to the program website under the Events tab as soon as they are made available to program staff.

Project Eligibility

1. Would an existing Convenience store with 2 manifolded tanks underground, qualify for the grant, if there is no digging involved? We would only convert one of these 2 existing tanks into a renewable fuel tank and add a bio blender to introduce up to B20 to blend in-line to the dispensers.

ANSWER: Yes, this would be an eligible project.

2. If 3 dispensers are replaced today, we want 8, can I apply for the additional 5 and new tanks in my application, providing the 3 meet the intend of this award?

ANSWER: Yes, the additional dispensers and tanks would be eligible if they are associated with higher blends of ethanol (greater than 10 percent) and/or biodiesel (greater than 5 percent).

Applicant Eligibility

1. Are there specific exclusions or additional requirements for Tribes who want to participate in HBIIIP?

ANSWER: No.

Environmental Review

1. Are there examples of the Environmental Assessment and Categorical Exclusion Environmental Reports available?

ANSWER: 1970-B, Exhibit C is a Guide to Applicants for Preparing Environmental Reports for Categorical Exclusions Under 1970.54. 1970-C, Exhibit B is a Guide to Applicants for Preparing Environmental Assessments.

2. Do you recommend we use an environmental consultant to prepare the environmental survey?

ANSWER: The use of a consultant to prepare the Preliminary Environmental Information Survey is entirely up to the applicant. The information asked for includes resources to be able to provide the information necessary to support the response to the questions.

3. Can you just explain the steps for submitting the Preliminary Environmental Information Survey again? Like you fill out the checklist, e-mail it to the HBIIIP access address, wait for the response, and then attach the checklist as an attachment when you submit your grant. Is that correct?

ANSWER: Applicants will provide the Preliminary Environmental Information Survey via email to HigherBlendsGrants-access@usda.gov. We will then respond acknowledging receipt. The email response will need to be uploaded to the online application system under the Environmental Review Documents. It is recommended that the survey and project map also be uploaded, but it is not required if the acknowledgement email is provided.

4. What about removing AST's within an existing dike, then demolishing the dike, reconstructing it in the same location, and putting in new AST's? Our site is on a hill.

ANSWER: If the facility is implementing activities related to higher blends of ethanol (greater than 10%) and/or biodiesel (greater than 5%), then this would be an eligible project.

5. Would the Energy Coordinator make the determination for level of NEPA for Tribes?

ANSWER: The Energy Coordinator for the state the project is located in will work with their State Environmental Coordinator to determine the likely level of environmental review for all applicants.

6. Are Tribes subject to SPOC (Executive Order 12372 requirements)?

ANSWER: Tribes are not subject to SPOC requirements if the project occurs on Tribal or Trust land, unless they have affirmatively decided to participate in the SPOC process.

7. What is the typical timeframe for each of the environmental review classifications? When will this begin?

ANSWER: This will vary based on the state and their respective workload. The determination should not take long if the applicant provides all of the necessary information with sufficient detail.

8. You asked that we send the completed preliminary survey to your office. Should we also send to the state environmental coordinator at the same time?

ANSWER: The HBIIP program staff will provide information to the Energy Coordinator in which the project is located.

9. Can we start contacting Tribes/SHPO/CHRIS before submitting the application?

ANSWER: You should contact the Energy Coordinator in the state the project is located in for guidance.

10. Are completed tribal contacts required to complete the preliminary survey for all projects? Or is it possible that some projects will have such minimal disturbance or change to an existing location's operation, that the state environmental coordinator may deem tribal contact not required?

ANSWER: You should contact the Energy Coordinator in the state the project is located in for guidance.

11. If USDA determines an Environmental Assessment is necessary, is that looked upon unfavorably during the application review process?

ANSWER: This would have no impact on the application review process.

12. Can you please explain the Intergovernmental Review process again? What paperwork are we to send a state Environment or Energy coordinator? And what if the state representative does not know how to do this process?

ANSWER: The intergovernmental review process is required by Executive Order 12372. For states that participate in the SPOC process, this is usually accomplished by one submittal to the State's portal. The SEC in those states can provide advice on this. For non-SPOC states, the project must be disclosed individually to certain state and local entities; the SEC will advise on which entities must review the project.