

**South Carolina Renewable Energy Grant
Program**

**SOLICITATION
For
PRELIMINARY PROPOSALS**

Issued By
**THE SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE**

In Cooperation With
THE SOUTH CAROLINA ENERGY OFFICE

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South Carolina Renewable Energy Grant Program

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Summary

The South Carolina Department of Agriculture and the South Carolina Energy Office hereby solicit Preliminary Proposals from interested persons or organizations for qualifying activities that would advance production of renewable energy within the state of South Carolina. This call is issued based on a mandate from the South Carolina General Assembly that establishes the “South Carolina Renewable Energy Infrastructure Development Fund.”

To view the full text of the legislation, visit www.energy.sc.gov and search under the “Funding Opportunities” section in order to locate the full law as well as other relevant documents.

This solicitation for Preliminary Proposals pertains to funding available from the South Carolina Renewable Energy Grant Program activity of the South Carolina Renewable Energy Infrastructure Development Fund, hereafter known as the Fund. Information about the South Carolina Renewable Energy Revolving Loan Program activity of the Fund is provided in a separate document available from the South Carolina Department of Agriculture or the South Carolina Energy Office.

Based on the results of merit reviews of Preliminary Proposals submitted in response to this solicitation, individuals, project teams, and/or organizations will be invited to submit formal technical and cost proposals to receive funding from the South Carolina Renewable Energy Grant Program.

The South Carolina Department of Agriculture (SCDA) is a state agency designed to promote and nurture the growth and development of South Carolina's agriculture industry and its related businesses, including energy. The Department of Agriculture's shared vision is for the state economy to grow and prosper providing everyone, producers and consumers, opportunities to enjoy the fruits of agriculture.

The South Carolina Energy Office (SCEO), a unit of the State Budget and Control Board, is designed to increase energy efficiency and diversity, enhance environmental quality and save energy dollars for South Carolina. Services and programs of the SCEO include: technical assistance and audits, workshops, financial assistance, free public awareness and informational materials, and project grants, loans and rebates.

Goals and Objectives of the Renewable Energy Grant Program

In providing the Fund, the South Carolina General Assembly intends to create a sustainable foundation to develop a renewable energy industry across the state, to redirect a significant portion of energy expenditures now leaving the state into South Carolina's economy, and to foster a cleaner, healthier, more productive environment by reducing the adverse impacts of use of fossil fuels. Success in meeting these overarching goals will be assessed by the degree to which investments made from the Fund foster applied research activities leading to early commercialization efforts, demonstration projects, capital investments and/or permanent job creation in the state of South Carolina as measured by one or more of the following metrics:

- a. The number of jobs produced, directly or indirectly, through production and use of renewable energy;
- b. The amount of renewable energy produced in the state, as measured in British thermal units (BTUs);
- c. The amount of fossil fuels displaced by renewable energy use in the state, as measured in BTUs;
- d. The number of renewable energy companies that either develop in South Carolina or relocate in whole or in part to South Carolina from another state;
- e. The capability to demonstrate the viability of renewable energy technologies to compete commercially within the state;
- f. Successful recruitment of projects with federal government department or agency partners who execute programs or conduct major projects in South Carolina that focus on renewable energy development;
- g. Successful recruitment of government, academic or industry partners who execute programs or conduct major projects in South Carolina that focus on renewable energy development;
- h. Selective deployment of market-ready or near-market-ready renewable energy technology applications within South Carolina in sufficient numbers to provide the general public with visible evidence that these technologies are affordable and reliable; and
- i. The ability to achieve significant “firsts” in one or more niche markets that can be attributed to policies, practices or technologies developed in South Carolina.

Application Submission, Review and Selection Process

In establishing the process for reviewing and selecting projects and activities to receive proceeds from the Fund, SCDA and SCEO will balance the desire to capitalize on near term opportunities as quickly as possible, while protecting access to additional opportunities that may require more time to organize and develop. Therefore, in recognition of the wide range and complexity of activities that could qualify for funding under this solicitation, and the corresponding time and effort required to submit proposals to secure proceeds from the Fund, the submission, review and selection process will be tailored to support more than one set of awards, beginning in the fall of 2007 and continuing through 2008. Though one category of awards known as Planning Grants will be considered on a rolling basis, there will be at least three opportunities to apply for Research and Development Matching Grants and Demonstration Project Matching Grants.

Submission instructions are provided in this Solicitation. Please read these requirements carefully to assure that your submission is complete and correct. Data included in Preliminary Proposals should remain valid for ninety (90) days from the date of submission.

South Carolina Renewable Energy Oversight Committee

The South Carolina Renewable Energy Oversight Committee will issue final decisions about grant awards. The committee consists of seven members, one appointed by each of the following persons: the Governor, the Commissioner of Agriculture, the Secretary of Commerce, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee.

The South Carolina Renewable Energy Oversight Committee will rely on the Staff Review Grants Committee to prepare a technical review of all applications and make recommendations.

Staff Review Grants Committee

The Staff Review Grants Committee will initially assess all Preliminary Proposals that meet the required submission deadline. The Staff Review Grants Committee will be composed of: two Department of Agriculture staff members, appointed by the Commissioner of Agriculture, two South Carolina Energy Office staff members, appointed by the Director of the South Carolina Energy Office, and two staff members of the South Carolina Research Authority, appointed by the President of the South Carolina Research Authority. Each Preliminary Proposal will be categorized in one of two ways:

- a) Following a favorable review by the Staff Review Grants Committee, the committee will refer the proposed project to the South Carolina Renewable Energy Oversight Committee.
- b) Following an unfavorable review, the Staff Review Grants Committee will prepare a written recommendation of denial. This recommendation will be submitted to the Commissioner of Agriculture for his review. Upon consent of the Commissioner of Agriculture, a notification will be sent to the applicant. An applicant may submit additional materials and apply for reconsideration of the application.

Merit Criteria for Preliminary Proposal Review

This Staff Review Grants Committee will conduct a merit review using the following criteria:

- a. The composition, qualifications and experience of the project team, including demonstrated capability to execute similar projects in the past;
- b. The degree to which the project concept demonstrates a sound methodology and approach and includes definitive goals, specific tasks to achieve them, a schedule and realistic cost for the work proposed;
- c. The degree to which the proposed project leverages assets inside the state of South Carolina (e.g., facilities, personnel and other assets of colleges, universities, agri-businesses, or private industry);

- d. The degree to which the proposed project would attract additional federal dollars, industry partners and/or other sources of direct and in-kind funding (beyond the required match for the specific project);
- e. The degree to which the project, if successful, would contribute to creation of a market demand for renewable energy technologies;
- f. The degree to which the project would provide economic benefits for the people of the state of South Carolina; and
- g. The degree to which the project would contribute to one or more of the metrics of success outlined on pages 3-4.
- h. The proposed cost share approach, specifically if the matching funds meet or exceed the required cost share, the quality of matching funds (particularly for in-kind cost share), and the matching funds relationship to the project.

The Staff Review Grants Committee may suggest other factors to be considered in its recommendations to the Oversight Committee.

Eligible Projects

In soliciting Preliminary Proposals that outline candidate projects and activities for which funding would be available, SCDA and SCEO will consider projects and activities drawn from one or more of the following categories:

- a. Planning grants to develop proposals to obtain federal grants and other funding sources for biomass, solar, and wind energy projects in South Carolina (pg.12);
- b. Matching grants for research and development projects that relate to the development of South Carolina biomass, solar, and wind energy resources (pg.14); and
- c. Matching grants for demonstration projects that validate the effectiveness of new and future biomass energy technologies and products (pg.16).

More specific details about each category are available in subsequent pages of the solicitation. The Staff Review Grants Committee will apply the same merit criteria to evaluate the Preliminary Proposals for each of the grant categories.

Eligible Applicants

Applications must be submitted by eligible candidates who are different for each grant category.

- a. Planning grants can be submitted by research institutions, including colleges, universities, and research authorities, and private organizations such as agri-businesses, other businesses, industry, and non-profit organizations.

- b. Matching grants for research and development projects can be submitted by private businesses, private individuals, units of state and local government, school districts, non-profit organizations, and public and private colleges and universities.
- c. Matching grants for demonstration projects can be submitted by private businesses, private individuals, units of state and local government, school districts, non-profit organizations, and public and private colleges and universities.

Available Funding

The maximum amount available for a planning grant is \$10,000. No cost share is required, but matching funds and in-kind contributions will be considered favorably in ranking of applications. No more than three planning grants may ordinarily be awarded in any month. Exceptions may be made for extraordinary circumstances, such as timing of federal grant opportunities. Targeted outlay for all planning grants shall not exceed \$300,000.

The maximum amount available for a research and development grant is \$200,000. Matching funds of at least fifty percent of total project costs are required and must come from a source other than government funds from the State of South Carolina. Project specific in-kind match will be considered. Merit criteria will include rating the amount and quality of match.

The maximum amount available for a demonstration grant is \$200,000. Matching funds of at least fifty percent of total project costs are required and must come from a source other than government funds from the State of South Carolina. Project specific in-kind match will be considered. Merit criteria will include rating the amount and quality of match.

The targeted amount of funds available in Round One of matching grant funding is \$1 million. The targeted amount of funds available in Round Two matching grant funding is \$1 million, and targeted amount of funds available in Round Three matching grant funds is \$1 million plus any additional funds available.

The intent in disbursing funds is to award multiple projects across multiple categories as outlined above. Not all monies actually available may be awarded.

Application Requirements

The following general requirements apply to all Preliminary Proposals submitted in response to this solicitation:

- a. Preliminary Proposals should be straightforward and concise. They should be no longer than four pages (Times New Roman font, 12 pitch or greater). They must be complete and accurate. Omissions, inaccuracies or misstatements may be cause for not receiving an invitation to submit a formal proposal. The Preliminary Proposal should be prepared in the least expensive method (i.e., cover page with staple in upper left-hand corner, no fancy bindings). A sample format for Preliminary Proposals is provided on page 10 of this notice.

- b. Costs incurred for developing Preliminary Proposals (for formal and technical proposals, if invited) are entirely the responsibility of the applicant, and will not be recoverable should an award result. The awarding agency reserves the right to invite no formal proposals as a result of this solicitation.
- c. An individual who is authorized to bind the proposing firm contractually shall sign the Preliminary Proposal. The signature must indicate the title or position that the individual holds in the firm. An unsigned Preliminary Proposal will be rejected. No oral understanding or agreement will be binding on either party. No work chargeable to the proceeds of the fund will begin before the grant start date.

In addition to the preceding general requirements, the following specific criteria must be satisfied for an invitation to submit a full application to be extended:

- a. For projects other than planning grants, the applicant must certify that the project team can provide at least 50 percent of the matching requirement if selected for funding.
- b. Preliminary Proposals submitted by collaborative teams must include one or more South Carolina based partners. For projects eventually selected for funding, project execution must occur in South Carolina.
- c. Preliminary Proposals must address how the proposed activities would support developing and commercializing renewable energy products, renewable energy use, or other metrics as outlined on pages 3-4.
- d. Research & Development Matching Grants and Demonstration Project Matching Grants must be started within 8 months after notification of award and completed within a period of 24 months upon notification of award. Planning grant projects must be completed within a period of 12 months upon notification of award.

Application Deadline

Proposals for planning grants will be considered if received by **5:00PM on the first Monday of each month, beginning October 1, 2007**. Review, evaluation and response to applicants will be completed on the fourth Monday of each month.

Preliminary Proposals for matching grants may be submitted at any time, but must be received by one of three deadlines in order to be considered for Round One, Round Two, or Round Three. Timelines for the three rounds of review and selection will be as follows:

- a. Preliminary Proposals for matching grants will be considered for Round One if received by October 12, 2007. The Preliminary Proposals will be reviewed and evaluated, with invitations to submit Full Proposals issued on or about October 26, 2007.

- b. Preliminary Proposals for matching grants will be considered for Round Two if received by January 15, 2008. The Preliminary Proposals will be reviewed and evaluated, with invitations to submit Full Proposals issued on or about February 15, 2008.

Preliminary Proposals for matching grants, must be received by SCEO no later than **5:00 PM on Friday, October 12, 2007**, no later than **5:00 PM on Tuesday, January 15, 2008** or no later than **5:00 PM on Friday, April 18, 2008** to be considered for review and evaluation in the three rounds. An email copy and a hard copy must be received by the deadline in order to be considered.

Please submit one hard copy of your Preliminary Proposal to:
South Carolina Energy Office
Attn: Michael Hughes
1201 Main Street, Suite 430
Columbia, SC 29201

Please send one copy of your Preliminary Proposal by e-mail to:
mhughes@energy.sc.gov

Notification and Next Steps

Following consultation with the Staff Review Grants Committee, SCDA will notify all respondents to this solicitation that their Preliminary Proposals have been reviewed, evaluated, and placed in one of two possible categories: (1) those Preliminary Proposals for which formal technical and cost proposal submission will be invited and (2) those Preliminary Proposals for which formal technical and cost proposals will not be invited. Applicants are advised that an invitation to submit formal technical and cost proposals does not guarantee such proposals will be selected for funding. Additional information regarding application requirements and selection criteria will be provided coincident with the invitation to propose.

Formal technical and cost proposals submitted in this process will be evaluated by the Staff Review Grants Committee. Following this review, the committee will make funding award recommendations to the South Carolina Renewable Energy Oversight Committee, which has ultimate responsibility and authority for administering the proceeds from the South Carolina Renewable Energy Infrastructure Development Fund.

Questions regarding this Solicitation: Questions regarding this solicitation should be directed to Michael Hughes at the SCEO by one of the following methods:

Fax : (803) 737-9846
E-mail : mhughes@energy.sc.gov

Responses to all questions will be posted on the SCEO website (www.energy.sc.gov) so the information will be available to all potential applicants.

Preliminary Proposal Format Example

Project Title:

Submitting Organization or Authority:

Partners and Team Members (as applicable) and primary contact for the application with contact information (including phone number, fax number, mailing address, and email).

Type of Eligible Project:

Select the grant project category as summarized on page 6 of the solicitation.

Scope of Work:

Describe the physical work that will be accomplished and the results/benefits anticipated.

Location for Performance:

Where will the work, if funded, be accomplished? (Must be in South Carolina)

Estimated Project Costs:

Estimated total cost of project (all sources)
Funding requested from the SC Renewable Energy Infrastructure Development Fund
Available matching funding (all sources)
Matching funding source (organization and/or individuals)
Ratio of matching funding to total project cost (percent)

Estimated Schedule:

Include major project milestones as appropriate.
(period of performance must be no more than 24 months)

Rationale for Project:

How will project advance the overall goal of creating a sustainable foundation upon which a renewable energy industry may develop across the State of South Carolina?
Which metrics of success (summarized on pages 3-4 of the solicitation) will be supported?

Economic Development Impact:

Describe potential economic development benefits for South Carolina.

Merit Criteria:

Describe the extent to which your project meets merit criteria as outlined on pages 5-6

Major Assumptions or Risks:

What issues (technical or policy) might have a negative impact on the project's success?

Additional information:

Please provide any additional information you deem appropriate to assist the reviewing body in making its evaluation.

Signatory Authority

An individual who is authorized to bind the proposing firm contractually must sign the Preliminary Proposal and indicate the title that the individual holds in the organization.

Planning grant applicants will not be required to submit a Full Proposal. However, planning grant applicants are required to submit additional information in the Preliminary Proposal. The Staff Review Grants Committee reserves the right to request information from planning grant applicants at any time. Additional information includes:

Solicitation Number and/or Name of the Grant

Please include grant identification information including but not limited to the name of the grant, the solicitation number, the organization awarding the grant, and other relevant information.

Due Date of the Grant

Please include the date the grant application is due as well as a timeline of when the applicant expects the grant application to be finalized and submitted.

Relevance of the Grant

Describe why the grant the applicant is applying for is important and relevant to South Carolina.

Planning Grant Overview and Guidelines

Law:

As written in S.C. Code Section 46-3-260, "...(a) planning grants up to ten thousand dollars are available to a research institution or private organization to develop proposals to obtain federal grants and other funding sources for biomass, solar, and wind energy projects in South Carolina;..."

Purpose:

The Planning Grant was established by the South Carolina General Assembly to provide necessary funds to prepare grant applications to obtain funding for renewable energy development in South Carolina.

Definitions:

Biomass energy is defined as creating energy from organic renewable materials, otherwise known as biomass, to generate reliable and consistent power in the form of a gas, liquid, or solid or other forms of biomass energy that replace energy produced from fossil fuels.

Solar energy is defined as energy from the sun that is directly or indirectly converted into thermal or electrical energy or other forms of solar energy that replace energy produced from fossil fuels.

Wind energy is defined as energy which harnesses the power from wind either directly or indirectly or utilizes other forms of wind energy that replace energy produced from fossil fuels.

Program Guidelines:

1. Eligibility

- Eligible applicants include research institutions, including colleges, universities, governmental entities, and research authorities, and private organizations such as agri-businesses, other businesses, industry, and non-profit organizations.
- Planning grants must be used to develop proposals to obtain federal grants and other sources of funding (not to include funds from the state of South Carolina) for renewable energy projects related to the development of biomass, solar, and wind energy resources. Funding sources need to be clearly identified.
- Eligible applicants must include one or more South Carolina based partners. If eventually selected for funding, project execution must occur in South Carolina.

2. Funding

- No grant from this program may exceed \$10,000.
- The accounting basis for the amount reported must be clearly delineated.
- Costs incurred before grant approval are not eligible for reimbursement.

- No match is required, but matching funds and in-kind contributions will be considered favorably in ranking of applications.
- All funds allotted to a planning grant must be spent within twelve months and the grant application process must be completed within twelve months from the date of award notification.

3. Award Information

- Approximately 3 planning grants will be selected per month.
- Targeted outlay for all planning grants shall not exceed \$300,000.
- If the Staff Review Grants Committee concludes that the applicant does not meet the requirements for the external funding grant, the Committee may deny the Preliminary Proposal.
- An applicant may be the recipient of one Planning Grant per fiscal year.

4. Exceptions to receiving the award

- The planning grant may not be used to fund grant applications for in-state grants, including the Renewable Energy Infrastructure Development Fund. The purpose of the planning grant is to assist applicants with federal and/or private foundation funding.

5. Decision Information

- Applications will be approved on a rolling basis, meaning that the applicant will be notified within one month of submission. Projects will be evaluated and ranked on merit criteria by the Staff Review Grants Committee. The Oversight Committee will make the final decision on grant awards each month.

6. Requirements for award grantees

- It is required that the planning grant project must be completed within one year of award notification, as evidenced by submission of a complete proposal to the targeted funding source.
- All grantees are subject to inquiries about project status for up to five years from the date of award notification.
- To apply for reimbursement, submit all relevant invoices and receipts and final federal or out-of-state grant application to the SCDA.

7. Advance of grant funds

- If special circumstances warrant immediate funding upon approval of the planning grant, a waiver must be attached to the planning grant application. Special exceptions would include individuals or organizations with limited available funds. The waiver may or may not be approved.

8. Non-disclosure

- All information will be subject to a non-disclosure agreement to be signed by all members of the Staff Review Grants Committee, the Renewable Energy Oversight Committee, and all other relevant parties.

Research & Development Matching Grant Overview and Guidelines

Law:

As written in S.C. Code Section 46-3-260, "...(a) matching grants up to two hundred thousand dollars are available for research and development projects that relate to development of South Carolina biomass, solar, and wind energy resources, provided that the grant does not exceed fifty percent of the total cost of the project;..."

Purpose:

The Research and Development Matching Grant was established by the South Carolina General Assembly to provide necessary funds to assist renewable energy development in South Carolina.

Definitions:

Research and development is defined as the systematic study and application of knowledge or understanding to determine the means by which a recognized and specific need may be met. The end result is the development toward the production of useful materials, devices, and systems or methods, including economic feasibility, design, development, and improvement of prototypes and new processes to meet these specific requirements. This definition will be used when considering applications.

Biomass energy is defined as creating energy from organic renewable materials, otherwise known as biomass, to generate reliable and consistent power in the form of a gas, liquid, or solid or other forms of biomass energy that replace energy produced from fossil fuels.

Solar energy is defined as energy from the sun that is directly or indirectly converted into thermal or electrical energy or other forms of solar energy that replace energy produced from fossil fuels.

Wind energy is defined as energy which harnesses the power from wind either directly or indirectly or utilizes other forms of wind energy that replace energy produced from fossil fuels.

Program Guidelines:

1. Eligibility

- Eligible applicants include private businesses, private individuals, units of state and local government, school districts, non-profit organizations, and public and private colleges and universities.
- Eligible renewable energy projects must relate to the development of biomass, solar, and wind energy resources.
- Eligible applicants must include one or more South Carolina based partners. If eventually selected for funding, project execution must occur in South Carolina.

2. Funding

- No grant from this program may exceed \$200,000.
- No grant from this program may exceed fifty percent of the total cost of the project.
- The grant project must begin within 8 months of award notification and all funds must be expended within 24 months from the date of award notification.

3. Award Information

- Approximately 2-3 research and development grants will be selected per round.
- An applicant may be the recipient of one Research and Development Matching Grant per fiscal year.
- There is no guarantee that an applicant will receive an award, but applicants are not excluded from submitting the same or different projects in subsequent award periods if the application was not awarded in a prior award period.

4. Decision Information

- Projects will be evaluated and ranked on merit criteria by the Staff Review Grants Committee. The Oversight Committee will make the final decision on grant awards for each round.

5. Requirements for award grantees

- All award recipients are subject to inquiries about project status for up to five years from the date of award notification.
- To apply for reimbursement submit all relevant invoices and receipts to the SCDA.

6. Advance of grant funds

- If special circumstances warrant immediate funding upon approval of the research and development grant, a waiver must be attached to the grant application. Special exceptions would include individuals or organizations with limited available funds. The waiver may or may not be approved.

7. Non-disclosure

- All information will be subject to a non-disclosure agreement to be signed by all members of the Staff Review Grants Committee, the Renewable Energy Oversight Committee, and all other relevant parties.

Demonstration Project Matching Grant Overview and Guidelines

Law:

As written in S.C. Code Section 46-3-260, "...(a) matching grants up to two hundred thousand dollars are available for demonstration projects that validate the effectiveness of new and future biomass technologies and products, provided that the grant does not exceed fifty percent of the total cost of the project."

Purpose:

The Demonstration Project Matching Grant was established by the South Carolina General Assembly to provide funds to advance biomass energy and product technologies in South Carolina.

Definitions:

A demonstration project is defined as a demonstration that exhibits a biomass energy or biomass product technology to prove beyond doubt that the technology is viable in South Carolina. This definition will be used when considering applications.

Biomass energy technologies are defined as infrastructure designed to create energy from organic renewable materials, otherwise known as biomass, to generate reliable and consistent power in the form of a gas, liquid, or solid or other forms of biomass energy that replace energy produced from fossil fuels.

Biomass product technologies are defined as any organic renewable material, otherwise known as biomass, which is used to create products which will replace products primarily produced by fossil fuels or other non-renewable resources.

Program Guidelines:

1. Eligibility

- Eligible applicants include private businesses, private individuals, units of state and local government, school districts, non-profit organizations, and public and private colleges and universities.
- Eligible renewable energy projects must relate to the demonstration of biomass technologies and/or products.
- Eligible applicants must include one or more South Carolina based partners. If eventually selected for funding, project execution must occur in South Carolina.

2. Funding

- No grant from this program may exceed \$200,000.
- No grant from this program may exceed fifty percent of the total cost of the project.

- The grant project and all funds expended within 24 months from the date of award notification.

3. Award Information

- Approximately 2-3 demonstration grants will be selected per award period.
- An applicant may be the recipient of one Demonstration Project grant from the Fund per fiscal year.
- There is no guarantee that an applicant will receive an award, but applicants are not excluded from submitting the same or different projects in subsequent award periods if the application was not awarded in a prior award period.

4. Decision Information

- Projects will be evaluated and ranked on merit criteria by the Staff Review Grants Committee. The Oversight Committee will make the final decision on grant awards for each round.

5. Requirements for award grantees

- All award recipients are subject to inquiries about project status for up to five years from the date of award notification.
- To apply for reimbursement, submit all relevant invoices and receipts to the SCDA.

6. Advance of grant funds

- If special circumstances warrant immediate funding upon approval of the demonstration grant, a waiver must be attached to the grant application. Special exceptions would include individuals or organizations with limited available funds. The waiver may or may not be approved.

7. Non-disclosure

- All information will be subject to a non-disclosure agreement to be signed by all members of the Staff Review Grants Committee, the Renewable Energy Oversight Committee, and all other relevant parties.