



May 24, 2013

Minnesota Renewable Energy Planning Grant Funds Extended

The Minnesota renewable energy research-to-commercialization effort received a boost this month when federal authorities extended the grant and provided greater flexibility to achieve goals. The \$300,000 planning initiative focuses on creating a statewide proof of concept center by bringing together expanding renewable energy businesses, higher education research institutions, and state and regional economic development agencies.

The federal Economic Development Authority (EDA) granted a six-month extension to the Minnesota Renewable Energy Proof of Concept Center (REPoCC) for carrying out its mission by April 2014.

Region Five Development Commission (R5DC) and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) are lead agencies for the initiative. The University of Minnesota-Duluth Natural Resources Research Institute (UMD-NRRI) heads up the research institution component. Business associations representing Minnesota's solar industry and biomass companies, labor and the environment, and private renewable energy specialists are participating in the planning effort.

The initiative focuses on eight broad goals, including: research and commercialization, business support services, capital access, private sector engagement, policy reform, market development, branding and measurement, and model expansion. Despite funding uncertainties, the planning grant has moved forward at a brisk pace with numerous in-depth meetings and consideration of preliminary recommendations. At the same time, EDA recognized the challenge involved in achieving these goals, and approved the extended deadline.

Early planning grant successes include active University of Minnesota engagement, new capital finance opportunities, extensive private sector involvement, and policy reform coordination as the Legislature considers major renewable energy reforms under formal study over the latter half of 2013. A website recently has been established at www.resilientregion.org/repocc/ which provides background information on the REPoCC planning grant and current activities.

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The mission of Region Five Development Commission is to enhance the vitality and quality of life in Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd and Wadena counties. Region Five counties are recognized as a distressed region by EDA, eligible for priority economic development funding.

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development is the state's principal economic development agency. DEED programs promote business recruitment, expansion, and retention; international trade; workforce development; and community development.

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