

Higher Blends Infrastructure Incentive Program (HBIIP) Webinar
Questions and Answers
December 22, 2020

Questions	Answer
<p>Can you please explain how the project reimbursement will work? What types of documentation will be required? What is the approximate timeline to be reimbursed? Is there retention? Thank you.</p>	<p>The grantee should submit copies of final itemized invoices, proof of payment (e.g. cleared check or bank statement showing payment of invoice), evidence of insurance showing coverage of the improvements, and photographs of the equipment with serial numbers if possible. We will then review the items to determine that all costs are eligible and will prepare the required procurement documents and send to the grantee. There will be some documents that will need to be completed by the grantee and some by that the contractor/vendor. Once returned, we will be able to process the reimbursement. The timeline will depend on many factors but will be a priority on end.</p>
<p>Sorry I'm late to the webinar. If we applied the first time, do we need to sign up for a NEW eAuthentication code to get into the application?</p>	<p>Please check if your eAuth is still active. If it is not you will need to resubmit.</p>
<p>Can applicant dollars that are used to change signage and other promotion for the higher blends be used as part of the match?</p>	<p>Up to 10 percent of an applicant's Matching Funds requirement (up to five percent of total project costs) may be used to pay consumer education and/or marketing and/or signage related expenses. HBIIP grant funds awarded to transportation fueling stations are intended to assist with converting those facilities to ensure full compatibility with HB fuel through upgrade or installation of fuel dispensers, related equipment, and infrastructure. And while the contributions of consumer education and/or marketing and/or signage toward a fuel station's fuel sales are well recognized, a very tall sign to display fuel prices does not in any way assist a facility with higher blends compatibility. Therefore, the Agency determined that while HBIIP grant funds may not be used for consumer education and/or marketing and/or signage, Matching Funds may.</p>
<p>Can you address how ABOVE ground tanks impact the classification of the env. review?</p>	<p>Above ground tanks are eligible. If all piping, etc. associated with the AST is also above ground, then this will most likely be a Categorical Exclusion without Report.</p>

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<p>Please repeat amount allocated for 10 or fewer stations</p>	<p>Approximately \$22 million remains available under the original solicitation, the Agency determined it is in the public interest to announce a second round of funding and to make available approximately \$15 million to fueling stations and fleet facilities and approximately \$7 million to fuel/biodiesel distribution facilities, for purposes as originally specified.</p> <p>Additionally, the Agency reserves discretion to reallocate available funds (among applicant types, as established in the original solicitation) based on the number of applications received, the amount of requested funds and any funds returned by program recipients or made otherwise available to the program.</p>
<p>Does the timing of application affect the applicant's ability to be selected as long as it is within the application period?</p>	<p>No, the application deadline is the same for all, January 19, 2021 at 5:59 PM EST. If two or more applications have the same priority score and the same submittal date, both applicants will be notified and given the option to lower the grant requests and accept the remaining funds. If an applicant agrees to lower its grant request, the applicant must certify that the purposes of the project will be met and provide the remaining total funds needed to complete the project. Due to the competitive nature of this program, applications receiving the same priority score will be competed/ranked based on submittal date. The submittal date is the date the RBCS receives a complete application.</p>
<p>Will these slides be sent out after the webinar?</p>	<p>The PowerPoint will be posted on the HBIIP website at https://www.rd.usda.gov/hbiip</p>
<p>Are sites required to install blender dispenser/pumps or does the expansion of ethanol products offered count?</p>	<p>The program is intended to support the installation of infrastructure that will expand the higher blends of ethanol and biodiesel to the consumer. Retrofitting is not an installation that is supposed by HBIIP. Installation costs for blender pumps are eligible infrastructure under HBIIP, provided the installation is conducted according to the eligibility and program guidelines.</p>

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What if they were selected in the first round, however the environmental review is not completed. How much time do we give them to complete the environmental review?	There is not a deadline for them to complete this. We would want to make sure that it is moving forward, especially as time goes on, but no deadline has been established. It might be something for the team to discuss if we start running into issues with it.
if you previously applied to you resubmit an environmental checklist?	Please review and update your environmental checklist and resubmit it.
Do you need to request to participate/create an account for HBIIP if you already applied but did not receive funding?	Provided your eAuthentication is still active, you will not need to re-establish a new account. However, you may need to have your previous account re-activated. Please contact the USDA eAuthentication Help Desk at https://www.eauth.usda.gov/
what about above ground storage tanks?	Above ground tanks are eligible. If all piping, etc. associated with the AST is also above ground, then this will most likely be a Categorical Exclusion without Report.
Does the USDA expect to provide additional opportunities for funding later in 2021 or in 2022?	Any future opportunities are subject to funds availability.
how do you receive a cage code? We have a DUNS number and created a SAM account but are unsure how the cage code is issued?	Please visit the Defense Logistics Agency website at https://cage.dla.mil/Home/UsageAgree to obtain a Commercial and Government Entity (CAGE) number. Once your CAGE Code has been acquired and your SAM is registered, you will be complete and ready to apply to HBIIP.
If deposits for equipment have already been made for project will that portion be disallowed since paid prior to grant being awarded?	Yes, that portion would be ineligible.
As a second-round applicant is it necessary to reach out again to the REC? Or are we able to use confirmation from our summer application?	Please review and update your environmental checklist and resubmit it.

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How does my client know if they have received level II access, as opposed to level I access?	Please contact the USDA eAuthentication Help Desk at https://www.eauth.usda.gov/ to confirm your access level status.
How do you apply for level 2 access for USDA e authentication. Was that part of the last grant process	Please contact the USDA eAuthentication Help Desk at https://www.eauth.usda.gov/
Can we reuse documents from the last round if there have not been changes - for example, the signed SF-424D and Environmental documents?	Yes.
Is there a minimum dollar construction value to Qualify for the grant?	No.
Hello I'm from Milwaukee, with one gas station do we qualify for this program?	Yes.
If we were approved in the first round, but one of the stations will no longer get e15. Can we replace that station with another one?	No. There is no ability to replace station locations once the application is submitted and the environmental review has been completed.
please send a copy of the slides to dawnj.dcjsolution@att.net, thank you.	The PowerPoint will be posted on the HBIIP website at https://www.rd.usda.gov/hbiip
Do you have to own 100% of the Station!	You must own 51% or more of the station.
Is this meeting recorded? So, we can have slides if we joined late?	Yes, the training session is being recorded. The PowerPoint and recording will be posted on the HBIIP website at https://www.rd.usda.gov/hbiip

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<p>If it takes 2 weeks to get a SAM# then is this a 1st come 1st serve basis?</p>	<p>The application deadline is the same for all, January 19, 2021 at 5:59 PM EST. If two or more applications have the same priority score and the same submittal date, both applicants will be notified and given the option to lower the grant requests and accept the remaining funds. If an applicant agrees to lower its grant request, the applicant must certify that the purposes of the project will be met and provide the remaining total funds needed to complete the project. Due to the competitive nature of this program, applications receiving the same priority score will be competed/ranked based on submittal date. The submittal date is the date the RBCS receives a complete application.</p>
<p>What happens in the case that we were selected for funding in the first round, but USDA has not wrapped up their assessment yet? Can we reapply or do we just wait until USDA is finished with all environmental components? We have not signed the agreement yet</p>	<p>They would need to wait for the environmental review to be completed. Please encourage them to communicate with the Energy Coordinator to get updates and resolve it.</p> <p>If additional discussion would be helpful please contact jeff.carpenter@usda.gov or 402-437-5554.</p>
<p>Will there be a need of Phase I ESA? Thank you</p>	<p>There may be depending on the level of environmental review required. Please work with the Energy Coordinator and State Environmental Coordinator in the state where the project is located to determine your specific needs.</p>
<p>If doing a project to upgrade with added Biofuels and also non-Biofuels is project eligible?</p>	<p>The program is intended to support the installation of infrastructure that will expand the higher blends of ethanol and biodiesel to the consumer. Installation costs for higher blend equipment, such as blender pumps are eligible infrastructure under HBIIP, provided the installation is conducted according to the eligibility and program guidelines. If the equipment is not for higher biofuel blends, then those equipment items will not be eligible and must not interfere with the HBIIP environmental review & compliance process.</p>
<p>if WE HAVE ALREADY STARTED OUR PROJECT, DOES THIS MEAN THAT WE ARE NOT ELLIGIBLE?</p>	<p>From an environmental review perspective, you would need to halt construction until an environmental review can be</p>

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	completed. If you were to continue construction without having an environmental review completed, you would not be eligible.
Is the funding available for projects in States where the higher blended products are not available?	This program is available in all States and Territories.
will small gas stations/convenience store qualify for this grant? How much will they qualify for... What is the SAM CODE code?	<p>Approximately \$22 million remains available under the original solicitation, the Agency determined it is in the public interest to announce a second round of funding and to make available approximately \$15 million to fueling stations and fleet facilities. Approximately 40 percent (\$6 million) of the \$15 million is targeted to support owner of 10 or fewer stations.</p> <p>A System for Award Management (SAM) number can be obtained at the www.sam.gov website after you have a DUNS. An active registration in SAM allows you to do business (apply for and received grant awards) with the Federal Government.</p>
Will we receive a copy of this slide show?	Yes, the training session is being recorded. The PowerPoint and recording will be posted on the HBIIP website at https://www.rd.usda.gov/hbiip
For brand new ground up sites, are soil samples and environmental testing required	This will depend on the specific environmental review requirements for your project. Please work with the Energy Coordinator and State Environmental Coordinator in the state where the project is located.
Are the slide decks going to be available later?	Yes, the training session is being recorded. The PowerPoint and recording will be posted on the HBIIP website at https://www.rd.usda.gov/hbiip
Would a site plan drawing be helpful for the project?	Yes, please submit a site plan drawing with your environmental checklist.
is it possible to receive a copy of the presentation slides?	Yes, the training session is being recorded. The PowerPoint and recording will be posted on the HBIIP website at https://www.rd.usda.gov/hbiip

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how much fund available for truck stop	Approximately \$22 million remains available under the original solicitation, the Agency determined it is in the public interest to announce a second round of funding and to make available approximately \$15 million to fueling stations and fleet facilities. Approximately 40 percent (\$6 million) of the \$15 million is targeted to support owner of 10 or fewer stations.
Do we have to request an E- Authorization account again even if we already have one from the first HBIIP submission.	Provided your eAuthentication is still active, you will not need to re-establish a new account. However, you may need to have your previous account re-activated. Please contact the USDA eAuthentication Help Desk at https://www.eauth.usda.gov/
If a station and/or fueling distribution center has already begun a project (started June/July) would any costs be reimbursable at all if they have a few outstanding pieces of the project yet?	No, the application deadline is January 19, 2021 at 5:59 PM EST and a selected awardee must complete their environmental review before any eligible cost reimbursements
We own more than one retail location, but we are applying for 1 location only, a truck stop. Mark the applicant type as owner of 10 or more fueling stations still?	The fleet fueling facilities are an application type that may be selected for submission. Please keep in mind that only one application is allowable per applicant. Thus, a truck stop would be a fleet fueling facility and the applicant would not be able to also submit a 10 or fewer or 10 or less fueling station application type.
Regarding eligibility, can a CNG station project that will use renewable natural gas (RNG) qualify for HBIIP funding?	No, this program is designed to assist with infrastructure related to ethanol and biodiesel distribution.
Was level 2 access required last time? If not, what is the difference?	No, level 2 access was recommended but not available for HBIIP applications processed in FY 2020, due to the Covid19 related circumstances. Level 2 access is required to allow for application in FY 2021.
If the convenience store located at the construction site is currently being renovated but the fuel pumps are a separate project, not to being until AFTER the convenience store is	From an environmental review perspective, you would need to halt construction until an environmental review can be completed. If you were to continue construction without having an environmental review completed, you would not be eligible.

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complete, does that disqualify an applicant or can is it considered 2 separate projects?	
can you apply for permitting prior to receiving funding? how does the permitting timeline work with the grant period?	Yes, you can apply for permitting prior to receiving funding. You would need to ensure that the permitting period is built into your construction timeline and falls within the 18 months allowable by the grant.
Will applicants who applied in the first round be given priority since they have gone through the environmental reviews that others haven't?	No.
Is there a limitation to number of stations you own for eligibility? I thought you mentioned only those that own 10 or less stations would be eligible?	There are three categories for station owner application: 1.) 10 or more; 2.) Fewer than 10 stations; and 3.) Fleet. All three categories are open for application in FY 2021.
If an environmental review was performed and accepted on round #1, does a new environmental review need to be done or will the 1st one be acceptable?	No, the environmental review that was previously completed would be acceptable as long as the scope of the project has not changed.
Are first round awards public record and where can that be accessed?	Please refer to the award announcements from October 8, 2020 and any pursuant awards as they occur. The October announcement can be viewed at https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/NR_HBIIP_CHART10082020.pdf

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<p>Please restate what considerations will be taken into account in the remote event of a tie? I understood you to say the earlier project completion date and/or the date the application is submitted to DOE would be considered.</p>	<p>The application deadline is the same for all, January 19, 2021 at 5:59 PM EST. If two or more applications have the same priority score and the same submittal date, both applicants will be notified and given the option to lower the grant requests and accept the remaining funds. If an applicant agrees to lower its grant request, the applicant must certify that the purposes of the project will be met and provide the remaining total funds needed to complete the project. Due to the competitive nature of this program, applications receiving the same priority score will be competed/ranked based on submittal date. The submittal date is the date the RBCS receives a complete application.</p>
<p>Last time our project was described in 2 phases. We did not receive funding last time and phase I of the project is proceeding anyhow. This time we'll only be applying for phase II - should we still describe phase I in the application even though we're not asking for that to be funded? Just to emphasize that things are already in progress?</p>	<p>Please note the Phase I installations will not be eligible and must not interfere with the HBIIP environmental review & compliance process. Typically, a project already in progress will not be eligible. Please check with your applicable State Energy Coordinator to confirm the impacts on eligibility at this time.</p>
<p>We now have a biodiesel blending system at our bulk plant. We are planning to increase our blending rate from B-20 To B-80. Is the cost of upgrading the system Applicable</p>	<p>The program is intended to support the installation of infrastructure that will expand the higher blends of ethanol and biodiesel to the consumer. Retrofitting is not an installation that is supposed by HBIIP. Installation costs for blender pumps are eligible infrastructure under HBIIP, provided the installation is conducted according to the eligibility and program guidelines.</p>
<p>How do we get an environmental review from state to get qualified for this program?</p>	<p>You will need to complete an environmental checklist and submit it, with supporting documentation, to the Energy Coordinator in the state in which your project is located.</p>

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<p>I am sorry I joined late, but let's say we add tanks and pumps for e15 and e20 but if we also put in tanks and pumps for other grades will they be also covered in this grant?</p>	<p>The program is intended to support the installation of infrastructure that will expand the higher blends of ethanol and biodiesel to the consumer. Installation costs for higher blend equipment, such as blender pumps are eligible infrastructure under HBIIP, provided the installation is conducted according to the eligibility and program guidelines. If the equipment is not for higher biofuel blends, then those equipment items will not be eligible and must not interfere with the HBIIP environmental review & compliance process.</p>
<p>There may be a few sites which are under Phase II ESA. Are those sites eligible for the grant?</p> <p>Thank you</p>	<p>As long as the environmental review can be completed, the site would be eligible.</p>
<p>What is the minimum amount of grant money can an applicant receive?</p>	<p>There is no minimum dollar amount for a HBIIP grant application. However, the cap per application is 50 percent of eligible costs not to exceed \$3 million per applicant.</p>
<p>Where do we find out who our energy contact person</p>	<p>The state Energy Coordinator list can be found here: https://rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/RBS_StateEnergyCoordinators.pdf.</p>
<p>The link did not work</p>	<p>The state Energy Coordinator list can be found here: https://rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/RBS_StateEnergyCoordinators.pdf. The environmental checklist can be found here: https://rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/HBIIP_Environmental_Checklist.pdf. Both are linked on the HBIIP website.</p>

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<p>Can you review again the matching funds elements of the grant. Thank you.</p>	<p>Matching funds may be in the form of cash or eligible in-kind contributions. Matching funds/contributions and grant funds may be used only for eligible project purposes, including any contributions exceeding the minimum amount required. Eligible costs for HBIIP are to be incurred during the grant period. Any work performed before the grant period occurs will be ineligible costs. Loan proceeds for the purpose of HBIIP implementation activities are eligible matching funds. A promissory note or bank statement attesting to the amount of the loan is sufficient validation/certification. Up to 10 percent of an applicant’s Matching Funds requirement (up to five percent of total project costs) may be used to pay consumer education and/or marketing and/or signage related expenses. HBIIP grant funds awarded to transportation fueling stations are intended to assist with converting those facilities to ensure full compatibility with HB fuel through upgrade or installation of fuel dispensers, related equipment, and infrastructure. And while the contributions of consumer education and/or marketing and/or signage toward a fuel station’s fuel sales are well recognized, a very tall sign to display fuel prices does not in any way assist a facility with higher blends compatibility. Therefore, the Agency determined that while HBIIP grant funds may not be used for consumer education and/or marketing and/or signage, Matching Funds may.</p>
<p>if me and my partner both own more than 10 station but each of us own less than 10 what we should mark on the application</p>	<p>The owner of the stations would be the applicant and would have a 51 percent ownership level. The applicant's ownership level will inform the classification under which the application is submitted. If ownership is an equal ownership (50/50) both parties will be the applicant and the application will in the appropriate classification and proof of joint ownership must be submitted.</p>
<p>FYI --I just checked, and my E-authorization from Round 1 is still active.</p>	<p>That is good news. You are ready to continue through to the application process.</p>

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<p>There is a station that has had difficulty getting a quote from a vendor in a timely fashion. We are concerned with the short timeline that we will not get a complete bid before the January 19th date. In this situation, could estimates be used?</p>	<p>Cost share estimates maybe used and should comply with the 50 percent cap and \$3 million cap per applicant. RBCS retains the right to adjust. Transportation fueling stations/facilities applications should take special care to provide evidentiary documentation in support of their proposed activities in the HBIIP Project Technical Report. In the event of suspect, overstated, or otherwise unsubstantiated claims, the Agency reserves the right to adjust an application’s priority score accordingly.</p>
<p>How many was awarded grants the first round and how many was denied?</p>	<p>Please refer to the award announcements from October 8, 2020 and any pursuant awards as they occur. The October announcement can be viewed at https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/NR_HBIIP_CHART10082020.pdf</p>
<p>I think there is some confusion about eligible funds - last time we were under the assumption that only equipment was eligible. For example, Dispensers and likewise equipment such as nozzles, hoses, concrete, etc. / Are other items eligible?</p>	<p>In terms of tanks, eligible costs in relation to tanks may include any required equipment including, but not limited to, the tank, piping, piping containment sumps, underground pumping equipment, including the submersible pump or suction pump, release detection equipment, spill equipment (spill buckets), overfill equipment, fuel dispensers/pumps, or other equipment. It is also important to note that expenses associated with reporting results and/or outcomes during the disbursement, performance, and servicing portions of this program” are considered ineligible project costs. If labor costs are to be a part of the matching fund, please remember that matching funds plus grant funds must equal total eligible project cost. Matching funds may be in the form of cash or eligible in-kind contributions. Matching funds/contributions and grant funds may be used only for eligible project purposes, including any contributions exceeding the minimum amount required. Eligible costs for HBIIP are to be incurred during the grant period. Any work performed before the grant period occurs will be ineligible costs. For full listing of eligible equipment please see the tooltip provided in the fueling station proposed activities worksheet.</p>

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<p>When will those who received round 1 funding be public? Will there be a press release?</p>	<p>Please refer to the award announcements from October 8, 2020 and any pursuant awards as they occur. The October announcement can be viewed at https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/NR_HBIIP_CHART10082020.pdf</p>
<p>Are in line blending systems eligible?</p>	<p>In terms of tanks, eligible costs in relation to tanks may include any required equipment including, but not limited to, the tank, piping, piping containment sumps, underground pumping equipment, including the submersible pump or suction pump, release detection equipment, spill equipment (spill buckets), overfill equipment, fuel dispensers/pumps, or other equipment. It is also important to note that expenses associated with reporting results and/or outcomes during the disbursement, performance, and servicing portions of this program” are considered ineligible project costs. If labor costs are to be a part of the matching fund, please remember that matching funds plus grant funds must equal total eligible project cost. Matching funds may be in the form of cash or eligible in-kind contributions. Matching funds/contributions and grant funds may be used only for eligible project purposes, including any contributions exceeding the minimum amount required. Eligible costs for HBIIP are to be incurred during the grant period. Any work performed before the grant period occurs will be ineligible costs. For full listing of eligible equipment please see the tooltip provided in the fueling station proposed activities worksheet.</p>
<p>We are resubmitting our application from last August with some minimal changes. Would it be helpful to highlight where those changes are in the resubmitted project?</p>	<p>Yes, but in addition please be mindful that the overall applicant cap has been adjusted downward to 50 percent of eligible costs not to exceed \$3 million. In addition, the scoring system set forth will still be applicable and it is prudent to carefully consider the elements to applications using the tooltip provided in the fueling station proposed activities worksheet.</p>

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<p>To fill out the application we go to USDA.gov and after that what link we follow?</p>	<p>To better inform your application process, we recommend visiting the application checklist at https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/HBIIP_Checklist_Online_Application_System051120.pdf and reviewing HBIIP online posted PowerPoints to get a preview of the application itself, before proceeding to obtain the eAuthentication that will provide access to the application. We specifically think you will find the following PowerPoint (slides 29 forward) useful: https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/HBIIP_Applicants_Stakeholders_CheckIn060220.pdf</p>
<p>I am located in Wisconsin, but I don't see my contact person for state of Wisconsin?</p>	<p>Judy Clendenning, USDA Rural Development 5417 Clem's Way Stevens Point, WI 54482 Tel: (715) 345-7642 judy.clendenning@usda.gov</p>
<p>Item # 22 of "Environmental Information" requires Phase I ESA for all projects over \$100,000 in which the agency takes security. Is it true?</p>	<p>Yes, that is true. Under this program we are not taking security, so the Phase 1 ESA would only be required if necessary, for us to complete our environmental review.</p>
<p>could you put up the energy coordinator information link again, the previous link did not work.</p>	<p>Here you go - https://rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/RBS_StateEnergyCoordinators.pdf. It is also on the HBIIP website under the Contact tab.</p>
<p>There was a mention of another round of funding? Any ideas on timeline for this? It would be helpful for recruitment of stations.</p>	<p>Any future opportunities are subject to funds availability.</p>
<p>How much is being awarded in grants to "owner of 10 or more fueling stations"?</p>	<p>Approximately \$22 million remains available under the original solicitation, the Agency determined it is in the public interest to announce a second round of funding and to make available approximately \$15 million to fueling stations and fleet facilities. Approximately 40 percent (\$6 million) of the \$15 million is targeted to support owner of 10 or fewer stations. The remainder available could be applied to owners of more than 10 stations.</p>

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	USDA Rural Development also reserves the right to adjust the allocations as needed.
As far as level two access requirements go, will they be prompted by the system to provide additional necessary information?	Yes, the system will prompt you.
is there a chance additional money will be available in this round is the 50 awardees from round 1 are not able to meet their requirements	<p>There is a possibility for this. We are adding to the pot of money as sites are dropped before obligation from the first round and we can reduce grant amounts.</p> <p>I hope that helps. Let me know if you have additional questions about this - jeff.carpenter@usda.gov or 402-437-5554.</p>
could this project be eligible for use for renewable fuel?	Only ethanol and biodiesel are eligible higher blend fuels. Renewable diesel is not an eligible fuel.
is there a minimum station owned required to receive or apply for grant?	You must own at least one station.
Item # 26 talks about Phase II ESA information. If the investigation is going on and there would be a need of remediation, will the government pay for the costs of investigation, remediation, and closure?	No, we would not cover costs associated with investigation, remediation, and closure.
So, the date and time you submit only have precedence when there is a tie? Or do the date and time of submission have significance overall?	It would only matter in the event of a tie. I hope that helps.

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Will the remedial cost for an open WDNR site be covered under the construction cost?	No, these costs would not be covered under the grant.
It is my understanding that the Midwestern Biofuel, LLC owns a closed biofuel plant at 125 Industrial Drive, Clinton, WI 53525 (south of I-43, Rock County) before Beloit. Will this grant, if granted, be used to restore the production? Thank you	If the facility has an owner that voluntarily applies with a complete application to the HBIIP within the application window and establishes eligibility, it is possible that the facility, if eligible and with the completion of environmental review, could be restored under an HBIIP grant award, if selected.