

Source: Biomass R&D Technical Advisory Committee
Advisory To: Biomass R&D Board
Report Date: November 16, 2018
Issue: *Annual BRDI-Specific Recommendations*



The Technical Advisory Committee (the Committee) for the Biomass Research and Development Initiative (BRDI) was authorized through Section 9008(d) of the Food, Conservation, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 and re-authorized in the Agricultural Act of 2014. Section 9008(d)(3)(B) requires the Committee to evaluate the BRDI program against specific criteria and make written annual recommendations to the Biomass Research and Development Board.

Criteria	Committee Evaluation & Recommendations
i <i>Funds authorized for the Initiative are distributed and used in a manner that is consistent with the objectives, purposes, and considerations of the Initiative.</i>	Funds are distributed and used appropriately. A total of 6 awards were made in 2018 from the combined FY2016 and FY2017 solicitation, totaling \$8 million (versus previously communicated plan to award \$9 million).
ii <i>Solicitations are open and competitive with awards made annually.</i>	The combined FY2016 and FY2017 solicitation (the last program funded in the Farm Bill) has been open and competitive, although awards have not been made annually due to relatively small annual funding levels.
iii <i>Objectives and evaluation criteria of the solicitations are clearly stated and minimally prescriptive, with no areas of special interest.</i>	Committee consensus is that USDA's NIFA and DOE's BETO are fulfilling this requirement.
iv <i>The points of contact are funding proposals under this title that are selected on the basis of merit, as determined by an independent panel of scientific and technical peers predominantly from outside the Departments of Agriculture and Energy.</i>	The USDA-NIFA and DOE-BETO selection process reflects consistent merit review from a diverse and highly qualified group of reviewers and managers.
v <i>Activities under this title are carried out in accordance with this title.</i>	The Committee finds that the activities are being carried out in accordance with the title.

The Committee makes the following additional recommendations for further improving BRDI:

- The consensus of the Committee is that the BRDI program has been a well-implemented and successful program, funding highly relevant work and yielding positive impacts. New funding for the BRDI program has not been authorized beyond FY2017. The Committee recommends reauthorization of the BRDI program at meaningful funding levels in a new Farm Bill or other reauthorization vehicle or through discretionary funding support.
- The Committee commends DOE and USDA for incorporating the research priorities identified and highlighted by the Committee in the recent BRDI solicitation and award process.
- The Committee recommends enhanced agency efforts to communicate the successes and impacts resulting from funded BRDI projects, targeted to a general audience.