

Source: Biomass Research and Development Technical Advisory Committee
Advisory To: Biomass Research and Development Board
Report Date: November 2017
Issue: *Implementation and Conduct of the Biomass Research and Development Initiative*



Context

The Technical Advisory Committee (the Committee) for the Biomass Research and Development Initiative (BRDI) was authorized through section 9008(d) of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 and reauthorized through the Agricultural Act of 2014. In section 9008 of the reauthorized act (d)(3)(B), the Committee is obligated to evaluate and make recommendations to the Biomass Research and Development Board.

The Committee’s 2017 reporting obligations and recommendations for BRDI are as follows:

Obligation
1 Funds authorized are distributed and used in a manner that is consistent with BRDI’s objectives, purposes, and considerations [§(e)(2)].
 ⇒ ***To date, the Committee has distributed and used funds appropriately. The combined fiscal year (FY) 2016 and FY 2017 solicitation awards have not yet been announced but are expected in early 2018.***

Solicitations are open and competitive with awards made annually.
 Obligation
2 ⇒ ***The Committee found that the combined FY 2016 and FY 2017 solicitation was open and competitive. Because the funds from the 2 years were combined, awards have not been made annually. The Committee concurs with the decision to combine 2 years of funding into a single solicitation because of the relatively small level of annual funds available. Combining two fiscal years is necessary at the current funding levels. Higher funding levels would allow BRDI to again make awards annually.***

Objectives and evaluation criteria of the solicitations are clearly stated and minimally prescriptive, with no areas of special interest.
 Obligation
3 ⇒ ***The Committee is satisfied that the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA’s) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE’s) Bioenergy Technologies Office (BETO) are fulfilling this requirement.***
 ⇒ ***The Committee recommends that proposers’ ability to submit to any or all technical areas of interest for the solicitation be continued in future solicitations.***
 ⇒ ***The Committee recommends making more education, materials, and feedback available to potential proposers to facilitate a better understanding of what DOE and USDA require in a proposal and to improve the quality of proposals submitted.***

Obligation
4 The points of contact [§(c)(2)(A)] 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 USDA and DOE.
 ⇒ ***The Committee commends USDA-NIFA and DOE-BETO for the selection process they have implemented for BRDI.***

Obligation

Activities under this title are carried out in accordance with the title.

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⇒ ***The Committee found that the activities are being carried out in accordance with the title.***
