

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

## **Project Summary Information Page**

**Project Title:** A Community-Based Strategy for Promoting Environmental Leadership in South Carolina

**Applicant:** South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, Environmental Quality Control Administration

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**Other Federal Programs:** The project is not being executed in cooperation with or funded by another Federal Program.

**Regulatory Flexibility:** No regulatory flexibility from the Federal government is anticipated for this project.

**Statement of Endorsement:** The Deputy Commissioner for Environmental Quality Control strongly supports and endorses this project.

## Pre-Proposal Project Narrative

### **Background and Problem Statement:**

This project seeks to address two issues related to promoting environmental leadership in South Carolina. The first issue is program alignment between the South Carolina Environmental Excellence Program (SCEEP) and the U.S. EPA National Environmental Performance Track Program (PT program). The SCEEP was created in 1996, preceding by approximately four years the creation of the PT program. The SCEEP is housed within the Department of Health and Environmental Control's Center for Waste Minimization (DHEC). Currently, SCEEP has twenty-nine companies in the program. There are ten South Carolina companies that are members of the PT Program. Six of the ten PT members are also members of the SCEEP. There has been an increase in the number of facilities that are members of both the state and federal programs, and questions have been raised concerning such issues as shared applications, reporting and measurement requirements, compliance screens, and regulatory incentives. This project will allow the SCEEP to consider more closely aligning its program to the PT program. The three specific program elements that will be addressed are performance measurement, reporting, and community involvement.

The second issue involves proactively working with communities to foster a better understanding of DHEC's role in protecting the environment and the environmental regulations that regulated facilities are required to meet. Despite areas of heavy growth in areas along the Interstate 85 corridor in the upstate and along the coast of South Carolina, the state is still predominantly small and rural. In areas where growth is occurring, tension exists between the small communities historically located there and encroachment from industrial and commercial growth. Much of this tension is focused on how well or how poorly the public perceives that DHEC is protecting the environment and how diligently local industry is complying with DHEC's environmental regulations. PT and SCEEP companies are located throughout South Carolina. With this project, DHEC, and PT and SCEEP members can work together to develop and implement a community-based strategy to promote environmental leadership and environmental stewardship in a positive, proactive manner. Through a series of community forums, support for environmental leadership programs can be promoted. Likewise, working with the communities will serve to strengthen members' community involvement and provide them with a forum to showcase and report environmental performance through their respective leadership programs.

### **Project Goals:**

This project meets the strategic area of the State Innovations Grant program by "building State support for EPA's National Environmental Performance Track Program or similar State performance-based environmental leadership program." The project demonstrates strategic innovation by partnering with the membership of both the PT and SCEEP programs to accomplish the following two project goals: (1) promote environmental leadership within South Carolina through the development of a community-based

education and outreach strategy; and (2) address opportunities to more closely align the SCEEP with the PT program. Expected environmental outcomes and performance goals include the following: (1) increased public awareness and support for environmental leadership programs within South Carolina; and (2) through alignment of the programs, increased participation in both the state and federal programs leading to more companies committing to waste reduction, pollution prevention, and improvements in environmental performance.

The project's goals are linked to EPA's Strategic Goals, specifically, Goal 5, Compliance and Environmental Stewardship, and Objective 5.2: Improve Environmental Performance through Pollution Prevention and Innovation. The project will work to engage communities in a dialogue about environmental protection and improvement, and will accomplish this by promoting environmental stewardship specific to each business. By aligning measurement and reporting elements, SCEEP members will more effectively contribute to measuring environmental results through program participation. Additionally, these results can be shared with communities to meet and advance the community involvement elements currently required by both the SCEEP and PT programs. Ultimately, the project should increase awareness of the programs and strengthen communication amongst stakeholders, thereby increasing programs membership that would result in greater pollutant reductions, energy conservation and natural resource protection.

The project also advances one of EPA's Innovation Strategy elements to strengthen partnerships with states by "emphasizing partnership and stakeholder collaboration" to foster a cooperative approach among business, the State, and local communities to promote environmental leadership and to more proactively address environmental issues.

**Activities, Key Milestones, Outcomes, Measures and Timeline:**

The proposed project is for two years, beginning in October 2006 and ending September 2008. The following is a description of project activities, time frames for accomplishing them, key milestones to indicate progress, and outcomes and measures of performance.

**Activity 1: Project Organization and Personnel.** The project will be co-managed by the Office of Environmental Community Health and the Center for Waste Minimization within Environmental Quality Control (EQC). Both offices are located within EQC Administration. The Office of Environmental Community Health works with stakeholders throughout the state to educate communities on environmental issues and address their concerns. Staff has extensive experience working with communities to build collaboration and partnerships. Karen Sprayberry, Community Program Coordinator, will serve as project staff for the community involvement elements of the project. The Center for Waste Minimization houses the SCEEP, and Christine Steagall, SCEEP Program Coordinator, has extensive experience working with the program, having also served in that capacity when it was housed at the University of South Carolina prior to coming to DHEC. Ms. Steagall is directly involved with PT as the DHEC representative for regional and national PT activities. The SCEEP program coordinator will convene a project organizational meeting with the SCEEP Advisory

Committee to discuss project goals and activities. The Advisory Committee is comprised of government, academic, environmental, business and public interests, and will serve as an advisor to the project.

**Key Milestone:** Complete initial start-up of project and hold organizational meeting with the SCEEP Advisory Committee.

**Timeline:** Within the two months of the grant award (by December 2006).

**Output:** Meeting held and buy-in obtained.

**Outcome:** Increased awareness of, and support for the project goals and activities.

**Activity 2. Program Alignment.** The SCEEP program coordinator will take the lead in reviewing and analyzing program alignment issues, and conducting a joint meeting of PT and SCEEP members to discuss potential alignment of program elements. The review and analysis will focus on three elements required by both programs: performance measurement; reporting; and community involvement. The SCEEP requires members to report continuous improvements as part of their two-year renewal applications. However, reporting and measurement are open-ended in that the member sets its own environmental targets and reports on them as well as other environmental activities. Unlike in the PT program, there is little consistency or structure in how members measure and report environmental progress. Consequently, it is difficult to publicly report on and promote the successes of the program and its members. A five-year program report was published, but a similar report has not been done and the program is now in its tenth year. Community involvement is also open-ended, and this is the case for both the PT and SCEEP programs. How involved members are with the community and the type of activities they “count” towards the program requirement is largely left up to the facilities to decide. Once the review and analysis is completed, a meeting of both the SCEEP and PT members will be held to discuss findings and solicit input on program alignment for these elements (and potentially others, e.g. application reciprocity and regulatory incentives, depending on the feedback received from members). To date, PT and SCEEP members have not met together or had an opportunity to network. With the concurrence of the members and the SCEEP Advisory Committee, changes to the SCEEP will be made to more closely align the program elements to the PT program.

**Key Milestones:** Completion of the program review and analysis; joint meeting of PT and SCEEP members.

**Timeline:** For program review, within 4 months of grant award (by January 2007); for members’ meeting, one month after completion of review (by February 2007); programmatic changes to the SCEEP as a result of program alignment discussions (by September 2007).

**Outputs:** Development of comparison chart of SCEEP and PT program elements; development of recommendations on SCEEP program alignment issues (specifically, measurement, reporting, and community involvement); number of attendees at PT and SCEEP joint meeting; programmatic changes to SCEEP.

**Outcomes:** Increased understanding and acceptance of PT program and program alignment issues by SCEEP (short term); changes in measurement, reporting and community involvement through program alignment (intermediate); increased pollutant reduction, energy conservation and natural resource protection by program members (long term).

**Activity 3. Community-based Strategy for Promoting Environmental Leadership.**

Promoting environmental leadership at the community level will serve several purposes: provide a means for members to meet their community involvement program element; provide a forum for the members to report their environmental results, promote their status as SCEEP and/of PT members, and proactively work with communities to address their environmental concerns; encourage other companies to consider joining the SCEEP and PT programs; and allow DHEC the opportunity to proactively engage in open dialogue with the stakeholders to hear their concerns, educate them on the role of DHEC in protecting the environment, and be responsive to community needs. This proactive public participation effort could foster future environmental innovations such as regulatory flexibility, regulatory development and improved permitting application process. The Office of Community Environmental Health will work with the SCEEP program coordinator to develop a series of community-based forums in which SCEEP and PT members will be strongly encouraged to participate. This will involve identifying areas of the state where communities have environmental concerns, particularly in environmental justice communities, and comparing these areas to areas where either SCEEP or PT facilities are located. Staff will then work with the community representatives and the member facilities to schedule a series of community events that will bring together DHEC, industry and the community. Up to eight forums (possibly coinciding with the geographic boundaries of the eight EQC regional offices, but not a determining factor) will be held. Prior to beginning these forums, the Office of Environmental Community Health will conduct a "Community Involvement" training for SCEEP and PT members as well as selected DHEC staff. The training will focus on effective community interaction, the tools and techniques needed, and the message to be communicated during the forums. This training will be essential to ensure the format and content of the forums are well designed and appropriate for the target audiences.

**Key Milestones:** Development and implementation of community-based strategy; completion of community involvement training; conduct of community forums; development of plan to follow-up on issues identified during the forums.

**Timeline:** Development work to be completed by the second half of year one (by September 2007) with training held within the first two months of the second year (by December 2007) and forums to be completed with follow-up plan developed by the end of year two (by September 2008).

**Outputs:** Number of facilities agreeing to participate in community forums; number of attendees at the community involvement training; number of forums held and number of participants at each; identification of community issues for follow-up plans.

**Outcomes:** Increased awareness and understanding of community interaction and community issues (short term); changes in community involvement program elements by member facilities to incorporate more proactive community activities (intermediate); greater environmental protection by DHEC, industry and the community as a result of community education and networking (long term).

**Activity 4. Project Reporting, Evaluation and Sharing Results.** Quarterly reports will be provided to EPA concerning project progress in meeting key milestones. The project will also produce other documentation of activities, including: (1) comparison

matrix of SCEEP and PT program elements; (2) revisions to SCEEP program requirements based on results of alignment discussions; (3) a community involvement training manual for member participants; (4) information packets for the community forums; (5) transcripts of the forums; and (6) a follow-up plan for future community interaction. The SCEEP Advisory Committee will assist in overseeing and evaluating the project progress. This Committee is currently in place and responsible for setting the goals, program requirements, membership criteria, as well as making decisions on membership application. Project results will be shared with EPA Region 4 through DHEC's ongoing participation in Region 4's PT members' meetings, and with EPA Headquarters through DHEC's ongoing participation in PT monthly conference calls with states, the EPA-State Innovations and Performance Track meetings, and other forums that may be an opportunity to disseminate results such as the annual Environmental Summit and EPA's Community Involvement Conference. Project information will also be posted on the SCEEP web site that is linked through the DHEC web page.

Budget Summary Page

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