EPA Region 5 Air and Radiation Division Clean School Bus Grant Request

Work Plan: Each narrative work plan must explicitly describe how the proposed project/program will provide environmental results and should consist of these elements:

Project Description: Illustrate the need for the project.
Include the following elements in the Project Description:

1. Problem Statement: Provide a well-supported statement or needs assessment of the problem to be addressed, which demonstrates the reason your organization should receive funding support.

The transition to clean transportation, particularly in school bus fleets, presents significant challenges to school districts in Wisconsin. Despite the operational and maintenance savings offered by electric school buses (ESBs) compared to diesel buses, many districts struggle to realize these benefits due to high upfront costs and limited financial resources. These problems are particularly exacerbated among students who live in low-income communities and are more dependent on school transportation. These groups are disproportionately impacted by the harmful effects of diesel emissions, including increased health risks and exposure to pollutants.

With the introduction of the EPA Clean School Bus (CSB) Program, there is a significant opportunity to fund electric school buses in Wisconsin. While the Clean School Bus program removes a large hurdle in electrifying a school's fleet, school districts have limited financial and human resources to focus on the deployment of new transportation technology. Adoption of electric school buses requires planning for new electrical load at facilities, procurement and installation of charging infrastructure, new fueling practices, and training for maintenance staff to maintain ESBs. These challenges cannot be met without the support of Wisconsin communities and the leaders that serve them.

RENEW has an established network of nonprofit organizations, industry partners, and community members that focus on sustainability and building a clean economy. The City of Madison will partner with RENEW to leverage this network to create local advocates for clean school buses in Wisconsin's school districts. By doing so, these districts can take advantage of current and future funding opportunities through the Clean School Bus Program. Our message will emphasize the financial and health benefits of switching to clean school buses and provide RENEW as a valuable resource to guide interested parties through the program.

2. **Objectives:** Identify the project/program objectives. Objectives should be specific, measurable, and clearly describe how they are related to and lead to the project/program goals and expected environmental results. These objectives must link to the EPA Strategic Plan. Information regarding the EPA's Strategic Plan's goals and objectives can be found at: https://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan

Objective 1: Increase awareness and advocate for the adoption of clean school buses in Wisconsin's school districts.

One of the major obstacles in clean school bus adoption is the lack of awareness and education surrounding ESBs in Wisconsin school districts. In addressing this, RENEW will develop and distribute educational materials and participate in Wisconsin events to raise awareness among key stakeholders about the environmental and health benefits of transitioning to clean school buses. Tracking attendance at events and monitoring media coverage will measure the effectiveness of our advocacy efforts.

This objective directly aligns with Strategic Plan Goal 1 (Objective 1.1) by transitioning our school districts' bus fleet to electric buses, significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions. By replacing gas and diesel buses with zero-emission electric buses, we can directly reduce local carbon emissions, which are major contributors to climate change.

Additionally, our proposal aligns with Strategic Plan Goal 4 (Objective 4.1) by improving air quality in Wisconsin communities; particularly near schools and residential neighborhoods, where children are most vulnerable. This proposal will reduce localized air pollution and protect the health of students by eliminating diesel exhaust and other pollutants which have been linked to respiratory illnesses and other health problems.

Objective 2: Educate stakeholders about the financial and health benefits of transitioning to clean school buses.

RENEW will develop and distribute comprehensive educational materials that will focus on highlighting the financial savings, reduced health risks, and environmental benefits of clean school buses. Assessments of stakeholder knowledge before and after educational sessions will measure the effectiveness of our educational efforts. By promoting cleaner transportation options and improving public health outcomes, this objective supports Strategy 2 of the EPA Strategic Plan and contributes to Goal 1 by reducing emissions that cause climate change and enhancing resilience.

Objective 3: Provide support to interested parties in navigating the Clean School Bus Rebate (CSB) Program.

RENEW will establish a digital platform as an online resource to assist school districts in navigating the CSB Rebate Program, providing resources to school districts throughout the application process. Tracking inquiries received and evaluating the success rate of applicants who receive assistance will measure the effectiveness of our support efforts. By advancing environmental justice and civil rights through equitable access to clean transportation options, particularly for underserved communities, this objective aligns with Goal 2 of the EPA Strategic Plan.

Objective 4: Facilitate partnerships between applicants and electric providers to ensure access to resources and support.

Maintaining consistent communication between school districts and their electric providers is a crucial and often overlooked aspect of ESB adoption. School districts and their electric providers must partner in order to successfully implement and install charging infrastructure, manage the increased load brought on by ESBs, and address any potential challenges. In this project, RENEW will focus on establishing partnerships between school districts and electric providers, facilitating introductions, and assisting in meeting coordination to foster collaboration and knowledge exchange. Monitoring the establishment of partnerships and evaluating their effectiveness in supporting project implementation will measure the success of our partnership facilitation efforts. By promoting equitable access to clean transportation solutions and reducing emissions that cause climate change, this objective aligns with both Goals 1 and 2 of the EPA Strategic Plan.

3. Project Methods: Outline in detail the necessary tasks and activities that will be conducted to accomplish the objectives. Describe why you have chosen these activities to obtain the desired environmental results. The tasks and activities should be realistic and achievable within the budget and project period of the grant. Include whether or not the activities will require a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP).

1. Participate in Wisconsin events to build awareness about the program and educate potential participants about clean school buses (these might be stand-alone clean school bus events or components of clean energy events).
2. Develop and support the Clean School Bus Coalition in Wisconsin
3. Host regular meetings (virtual or in person) with relevant agenda items to update members and schools on the Clean School Bus Program.

4. Educate prospective program applicants on the specific benefits of deploying clean school buses while highlighting alignment between the program and the interests of school officials.
5. Facilitate partnerships between applicants and their electric providers to ensure that applications are not withdrawn or unfulfilled due to a lack of resources.
6. Build a network of trusted stakeholders to serve as local ambassadors for the program, providing accurate information about EPA's program and how schools can procure and operate clean school buses.
7. Educate key stakeholders on specific EPA program requirements and the application process for the Clean School Bus program during the current and subsequent funding rounds through social media and other digital channels.
8. Build a digital platform for program participants that will help ensure the school's participation will be a positive experience for teachers, students, and parents by troubleshooting and sharing experiences and success stories.

The above methods and activities will not require a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP).

4. Specific Environmental Outputs: Identify the specific outputs. Deliverables of environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work products related to an environmental goal or objectives, which will be developed over a period of time or by a specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable during an assistance agreement funding period. For example, developing an air quality management plan, an emissions inventory, producing raw and summarized air monitoring data, or progress reports to be submitted on a quarterly or semi-annual basis.

Develop one qualitative report including estimated reduced greenhouse gas emissions and improved air quality based on the number of electric school buses integrated during the project period.

RENEW will use the Department of Energy's Alternative Fuel Life-Cycle Environmental and Economic Transportation (AFLEET) Tool to estimate the reductions in greenhouse gas and air pollutant emissions. The AFLEET tool allows stakeholders to compare new alternative fuel vehicles to diesel heavy-duty vehicles.

RENEW will collect all of the necessary data (vehicle type, mileage, fuel economy, purchase price, maintenance, fuel price, etc.) from partner school districts, and will input that data to the AFLEET Payback On-Road Calculator to determine annual greenhouse

gas and air pollutant emissions. Upon receiving the annual data, RENEW will calculate the full life cycle emissions reductions, based on the assumption that school buses spend on average 12 years in operation.

5. Desired Environmental Outcomes: Articulate the desired environmental outcomes. The result, effect, or consequence that will occur from carrying out an environmental program or activity that is related to an environmental or programmatic goal or objective. Outcomes may be environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature, must be quantitative, and may not necessarily be achievable within an assistance agreement funding period. For example, “significant number of community members with increased awareness of air quality issues” or “increased number of residents breathing cleaner air.”

- Our proposal directly aligns with EPA Strategic Plan Goal 4, Objective 4.1, by significantly improving air quality in Wisconsin's communities, with a special focus on areas surrounding schools and residential neighborhoods where children are most vulnerable. By targeting and reducing localized air pollution, this initiative will be crucial in protecting student health. The elimination of diesel exhaust and other harmful pollutants—known contributors to respiratory illnesses and a range of other health issues—will have a profound and lasting impact on the well-being of students, families, and the broader community.

- Our proposal aligns with EPA Strategic Plan Goal 1, Objective 1.1, by facilitating the transition of school districts’ bus fleets to electric vehicles, thereby significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Replacing gas and diesel buses with zero-emission electric alternatives will directly lower local carbon emissions, a key driver of climate change. This accelerated shift to clean and zero-emission school buses not only contributes to global efforts to combat climate change but also promotes sustainable transportation solutions.

6. Target Dates and Milestones: Include an estimated timeline or schedule of expected target dates and milestones (a marker of reaching an identifiable stage in any task) to achieve specific tasks and accomplishments during the budget and project period.

To ensure timely progress and achievement of our objectives, we have established target dates and milestones for key activities. These include the launch of awareness campaigns, regular and recurring meetings of the Clean School Bus Coalition, completion of educational outreach efforts, and submission of progress reports. By adhering to these timelines, we aim to track progress and make necessary adjustments to ensure the successful implementation of the project.

Target date	Milestone
October 2024	Announcement of CSB Program Rebates
Q1, October 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024	
October 1, 2024	**Start of Project Period**
October 2024 - December 2024	Outreach to School Districts
October 16, 2024	Clean School Bus Coalition Meeting
Fall 2024	Clean Energy Event
November 20, 2024	Clean School Bus Coalition Meeting
First Quarterly Report Due	**December 31, 2024**
Q2, January 1, 2025 - March 31, 2025	
January 2025 - March 2025	Continued Communication to Awarded School Districts on EPA updates
Winter 2025	Clean Energy Event
March, 2025	Clean School Bus Coalition Meeting
Second Quarterly Report Due	**March 31, 2025**
Q3, April 1, 2025 - June 30, 2025	
April 2025 - June 2025	Communicate with and Support Awarded School Districts
Spring 2025	Clean Energy Event
Third Quarterly Report Due	**June 30, 2025**
Q4, July 1, 2025 - September 30, 2025	
Summer 2025	Clean Energy Event
Final Technical Report Due	**October 31, 2025**

7. Performance Measures: Provide a detailed explanation of how the project/program shall be evaluated (through quantitative means, if possible). Applicants must develop criteria to evaluate progress and results by tracking and measuring outputs and outcomes. Evaluation must occur during as well as after the project/program activities are conducted to make sure appropriate adjustments can be made along the way, if necessary. For example, if permit review is one of your objectives, provide a number of permits you plan to review.

- Participate in three to six (3-6) in-person events with at least 200 cumulative attendees, discussing the benefits of ESBs with Wisconsin communities.
- Monthly meetings and engagement with the Clean School Bus Coalition.
- Measure the number of prospective program applicants educated and supported.
- Development of one (1) digital platform offering resources for program participants.
- Develop at least three (3) case studies evaluating electric school bus performance. The studies should include emissions reduction, fuel cost savings, maintenance savings, and other benefits such as noise reduction, driver recruitment, retention, etc.

8. Program Manager/Contact(s): Identify all individuals or parties who will be involved in the project/program activities and a description of their respective roles/responsibilities.

- Ben Behlke, Clean Technology Manager

9. Budget Narrative: Provide a detailed itemized budget proposal, including a narrative statement justifying the expenses for each of the categories on the SF424A being performed within the grant/project period.

Contract EPA Grant for Electric School Bus Organizing and Advocacy
Period 10/01/2024 – 09/30/2025

	Description		**Narrative**
Expense			
	RENEW WI Personnel	$29,383	Wages
	RENEW WI Fringe Benefits (20% of Personnel)	$5,877	Social Security, Medicare, federal and state unemployment, workers comp insurance, 401k match, medical insurance reimbursement
	RENEW WI Supplies	$500	Brochures, fact sheets, signage
	RENEW WI Travel	$1,302	Ben Behlke, Visits Across the State to Visit with School Boards and Other Stakeholders
	RENEW WI Indirect Cost (10% of Personnel)	$2,938	Indirect expenses include rent, nondirect staff (including human resources/payroll, accounting, administrative), organizational insurance, legal, audit, I/T, and other miscellaneous expenses.
Total Expenses	**Total Year 1**	**$40,000**	

Position Schedule

Position Title / Staff Name	**Hourly Rate**	**Hours per Week**	**Yearly Cost**
RENEW WI Clean Technology Manager	$31	10	$16,250
RENEW WI Deputy Director	$50	3	$7,725
RENEW WI Communications Manager	$35	3	$5,408
Total Salaries			**$29,383**