

## EDGE Pilot Program

September 29, 2020 | 11:00 a.m.– 12:30 p.m.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Conference Call: Skype

Notes

**Members:** Dave Misky - City of Milwaukee, Douglas Johnson - Environmental Intelligence Inc., Jeff Jaeckels – MG&E, Jennifer Buzacky - Citizen, Ken Yass - Geosyntec, Mark Thimke - Foley and Lardner, Jason Scott - WEDC, Art Harrington – Godfrey and Kahn

**DNR:** Renee Bashel, Kristin Hart, Katie Grant, Jodie Peotter, Michael Prager, Bart Sponseller, Weston Wegner, Bill Nelson.

- I. Welcome (Bart Sponseller) – 5 minutes
- II. Standing Items (All) – Review and Recording— 5 minutes
  - Agenda Review
    - o No agenda repair
  - Communication and Metrics Recording
    - o No activities reported
- III. Communication Implementation (Michael Prager) – Discussion—10 minutes
  - [Communications Toolkit](#) Feedback, Survey Concept, Implementation
    - o Michael showed the toolkit webpage. Toolkit is for EDGE advisors to use. DNR would like to get feedback on usefulness and ways to improve. A questionnaire will be included in the toolkit to get feedback on what is effective and what needs improvement.
    - o DNR is working to improve our toolkit, please keep using the toolkit and thinking of new ways to improve our communications
      - Send ideas for additional outreach or tools to Michael Prager and Weston Wegener
  - Drafting Additional Content and Tools
    - o Mark Thimke noted that the focus on trade groups and organizations is fine but not where we'll get the most from our program.
    - o More effective is to identify potential opportunities. Some opportunities come from misfortune, so we need to push the connection with WEDC. Promote this program to help hurting communities. EDGE was designed to be a tool to help rebuilding so how it can fit into other work done by the State is important to showcase.
      - DNR to investigate options for targeting EDGE marketing to municipalities and developers affected by plant closure situations.
      - DNR to clarify the roles of municipalities in the program
    - o Mark Thimke suggested to pre-program an EMS into a Green Tier Charter for the vacant sites so they are ready for 2021/2022 developments

- Implementation Assistance and Direction
  - Jason Scott mentioned that WEDC will try to do the outreach from their perspective. WEDC is becoming familiar with EDGE, and the intent is to start promoting EDGE and more actively partner with DNR
  - DNR is looking for suggestions for next steps including groups to provide outreach to specific economic development groups
    - Advisors to provide suggestions and outreach opportunities to Michael Prager or Weston Wegener
  
- IV. EDGE Implementation Under COVID-19 (Jennifer Buzacky) – Discussion— 15 minutes
  - Factors and Impacts on the Pilot
    - We've done a lot of work over the past couple of years, but now, COVID has given us a whole new set of assumptions and issues to drive EDGE. This economy creates pressure on facilities, pressure to relocate, closures, and new opportunities.
  
  - Potential Adjustments for Implementation of the Pilot
    - Think more about technology for remote sensing or video
    - Auditors have been doing remote audits. Audits done in real time if possible, not downloaded or reviewed later.
    - Must consider security, i.e., phones are not secure. Concerns about confidential business info must also be considered
      - Google glass
      - Virtual audits using specialized software
      - Zoom, teams, etc. work well.
      - Clients can provide additional evidence such as video.
  
  - Creative Marketing Strategies
    - Federal government has a focus on manufacturing, how can we align with this?
      - Targeting a particular type of industry
    - Adjusting to remote meetings over zoom or other advancements
    - Host and record webinars for future use and information to minimize need for interpersonal outreach and presentations
      - Weston to connect with WEDC on hosting a joint webinar
  
- V. Expanding the Scope of EDGE (Mark Thimke) – Discussion—15 minutes
  - Opportunities for New Approaches (Federal, State, Economic Development)
    - It is essential that EDGE is not pigeon-holed as an environmental program. It should be a priority within the Governor's office. Big events such as losing Verso and 800 jobs needs to be a more intentional focus of state agencies. EDGE needs to be one of the things that is presented to communities.
    - We have the elements of a very innovative program, but we should take it to the next step. Can we integrate as a federal pilot for sustainable development?

(lots of federal programs are expected to be developed coming out of COVID and Wisconsin needs to be a part of any federal programs developed)

- Conceptualizing Future Candidates
    - o Economic rebound looks like we will be promoting manufacturing during the 2021/22 timeframe, if the economy gets back on track
    - o There are organizations that help score facilities on ESG (environment, social, governance). Scoring can be marketed. They hit social as well as environmental benchmarks and provide a score.
    - o WEDC advertise sites and have individuals who work specifically with site selectors and work with regional economic development organizations. They can help target EDGE developments
    - o It will be essential to get a program like this integrated into WEDC with an ESG/Sustainability component
  
  - Increasing Outreach
    - o Rebranding can help show EDGE as a sustainable economic development program (not just a brownfield development program).
    - o Current branding efforts already show sustainable economic development connection. Future efforts should make that more explicit and we should look to build on these concepts by making partnerships, rather than branding.
    - o Tools to help build upon current branding include: description of the municipality's role, description of a charter, description of TIFs and how communities can leverage TIFs
- VI. Potential Legislative Considerations (Art Harrington) – Discussion— 15 minutes
- Simplifying Complexities
    - o Art wanted to note that he has received feedback that some are frustrated by the complexities of the program, but overall impressed by DNR's ability to put resources behind EDGE projects
    - o We should find ways to make EDGE simpler so that we can attract more businesses
    - o There are lots of requirements and the benefit is very limited. Can we make some recommendations for improvements?
      - Still need VPLE
      - Green Tier still important
        - the EMS part can be a big hurdle
        - recommendation to change prerequisites to include Charters
      - ROP criteria only applies to some manufacturers
        - 10-year benefit from statute is even more limited
        - Can we get more regulatory flexibility besides the air permit?

- Additional Benefits and Flexibilities
  - o Art supports Mark's thoughts and recommendations on the federal pilot idea
  - o Art wondered if there is a way to eliminate the requirement to have an EMS and give regulatory benefits beyond the air program?
    - Lots of innovations can involve wetlands, runoff, and other water issues.
    - Additions beyond the air benefits would require statutory changes
  - o Doug doesn't want to eliminate the EMS. Maybe it is more of a matter of explaining the value of an EMS and help facilities understand how they can leverage the EMS to their benefit
  - o Bill asked whether the group should discuss changes to prerequisites or to the benefits?
    - Changing prerequisites requires changing the law
    - Menu of benefits might be easier to create
  - o Weston will coordinate a smaller group to discuss recommendations for improving the program. This group will eventually transition to writing the legislative report.
    - **Email Weston if you want to participate in these discussions**

VII. Recruiting and Applicant Updates (All) – Informational – 10 minutes

- Art mentioned that Ariens sees the EMS as a big workload. They are entering VPLE and are excited about the fact that these could be split up for individual certificates. Ariens is still pursuing the Green Tier Charter for the Brillion Works Site
- Mark mentioned that C.A. Lawton is willing to participate with the Department in discussing the advantages of the program and their EMS. They will also be happy to discuss with other facilities. They are finalizing their Green Tier 2 contract.
- The DNR spoke to the city of Sheboygan and Alliant Energy to discuss EDGE for the Edgewater Powerplant. Alliant is still early in the planning process and is interested in hearing about the opportunities. DNR will continue to keep in touch with them.
- Bart mentioned that Dan Baumann was provided information on EDGE and will keep in touch with city and county regarding the Verso closure.
- Doug Johnson noted that he would be willing to provide support on EMS to anyone who is interested, including selling the benefits of EMS to a facility

VIII. Program Updates (DNR) – Informational – 10 minutes

- WEDC Partnership Efforts – (Bart Sponseller)
  - DNR’s secretary’s office was briefed and made a connection with senior level staff as a point of contact for EDGE
  - Mark mentioned that we might want to bring in other agencies from the enterprise to create additional benefits in tandem with WEDC
  - EDGE is likely not on the Governor’s office radar right now due to COVID, but could be an opportunity when redevelopment discussions take place.
  
- WEDC REDD Presentation – (Weston Wegener)
  - Weston, Kristin, and Michael presented to WEDC economic and community development director’s group
  - Weston would like to set up another group to meet once or twice to formalize a proposal with WEDC for roles and responsibilities and lay out some specifics on how to interface with the two agencies.
    - Email Weston if you are interested in this conversation for 1 or 2 meetings to formalize a proposal
  
- FET Topic Concept and Strategy – (Weston Wegener)
  - DNR will present at FET and will focus on the ROPG
  - Kristin will present on the ROPG, CA Lawton will provide a testimonial
  - Weston will present on EDGE, Brillion Works will provide a testimonial
  - DNR will report back in Dec.

IV. Next Steps (All)—Review—5 minutes

- Implementing and Improving the Communications Toolkit
  - Developing new materials
  - Targeting outreach and using new technologies
  - Partnerships and branding for a holistic view of sustainable redevelopment to bring on the next level of manufacturing post-COVID-19
  
- Defining Roles for the Legislative Report in 2023
  - Additional benefits & flexibilities to increase interest
  - Recommendations to simplify the program
  - Legislative report preparations

Action Items:

- Send metrics on presentations to Weston for recording
- Let Michael and Weston know what feedback you have on the toolkit
- DNR to continue to build the brand and partnerships by working on new and well-defined communications materials and recorded outreach materials
- Let Weston know if you'd like to participate in discussions about formalizing a proposal for WEDC's consideration
- Let Weston know if you'd like to be part of a conversation on improving the EDGE program based on lessons learned so far and from lessons learned from COVID
  - o Offer specific ideas to help define roles for legislative report and for improving the program and simplifying the program including any help we need from the legislature to improve the program

Next Advisory Group Meeting: **December 15, 2:00 PM**