

Ethanol Study Proposal 08.02

1. Describe your project idea, including clearly defining the problems and specific policy questions to be addressed.

Promotion of ethanol as a renewable resource. Minnesota has a number of ethanol plants, has plans to build many more, all of which will be state subsidized, has goals for state ethanol use, and is a large corn producer. Research indicates that ethanol may not be the resource that it was originally portrayed to be and may actually cause more harm than good. Examples of issues include: water and oil use, impact on domestic and international corn markets, etc. Therefore, should Minnesota be promoting ethanol let alone investing in it?

2. Why is this problem important?

Ethanol production is impacting the environment and food prices and we may be investing state resources in a renewable resources that is unsound. Also, rural communities are making huge investments in this. Some are draining their wells to support plants and are now having water access issues, others are building plants that may eventually sit vacant like so many other rural development projects.

3. How could the Citizens League make a unique contribution?

This is a highly political issue for many reasons (e.g., stakeholders large and small) but it is an important discussion that needs to take place in an unbiased atmosphere.

4. What are prospects that project would yield recommendations that could be implemented and have a major impact on the problem?

If the right people are at the table, ver likely. If nothing else, get the discussion started, understand the stakeholders, and to provide some guidance on where to go from here before we waste time and more money.

5. Explain how this problem can be addressed by data, research, and reason? Identify probable sources for data and research.

Data and research will be key to this project and reason will need to follow. Research, not sure who and where but it is being talked about so it is there.

6. Explain how this proposal can be framed without partisan bias.

I could be wrong but I don't know this is political. Ethanol doesn't seem to be a partisan issue.

7. Why would this project be attractive to members?

It affects all Minnesotans in so many ways from taxes, to fuel, to food

8. How would this project reach out to under-represented segments of the community?

Huge rural community focus

9. What is the potential for making this issue visible to a broader public? Why?

Energy is a major topic of the day

10. What resources—funding, experts, etc. might be available to support this project?

Unsure but I would think orgs like Flint Hills, energy groups, ag at the UofM, would be interested