

SAMPLE NOMINATION

(A successful nomination from the 2010 Emerald Awards)

Nominee: BP Canada Energy Company
Project: A+ for Energy Education Grant Program
Category: Education: Non-Formal

1. Summary of Activity:

BP Canada believes tomorrow's energy problems just might be solved by the thinking of teachers and students today. That's why BP developed and delivers A+ for Energy, a program that provides \$5,000 and \$10,000 grants to Alberta K-12 teachers with creative proposals for energy and energy conservation education projects.

Successful applicants also receive a scholarship to attend an energy education conference, hosted in partnership with Inside Education, and energy education kits for their classroom. BP Canada has invested \$1.5 million in A+ for Energy grants, scholarships and educational materials since the program's inception in 2007. To date, A+ for Energy has awarded grants to 123 projects impacting close to 30,000 Alberta students.

From conducting experiments with solar and wind power and alternative fuels, to designing electricity conservation and anti-idling campaigns, teachers and students involved in A+ for Energy are making a difference in their schools and communities.

2. Timing:

A+ for Energy is an ongoing program, launched by BP Canada in Alberta in 2007. The next grant winners will be announced in May 2010.

Our most significant partners are the K-12 teachers across Alberta who use A+ for Energy support to bring the energy and environment curriculum to life in their classrooms. This program respects and supports teachers in their role as educators and has inspired thousands of young minds to think differently about energy, energy conservation and their relationship to the world around them.

A key partner in delivering A+ for Energy since its inception is Inside Education, a highly respected non-profit organization that supports natural resource education in Alberta. Its primary role with A+ for Energy is to facilitate the annual energy education conference but it also acts as a valued advisor for the program year-round.

BP has also fostered relationships with a number of Alberta educators who contribute immensely

to the success of A+ for Energy by:

- Working with BP to ensure our process is aligned with the Alberta education system and the best interests of students.
- Helping to refine the scoring rubric used to evaluate applications.
- Delivering grant writing workshops to assist teachers with the application process.
- Acting as grant readers to assess applications and provide feedback to applicants.

The program is also supported by various government and community organizations who lend their talents to the final judging process.

3. Location:

A+ for Energy is a provincial initiative open to K-12 teachers at accredited schools across Alberta. Winning schools have spanned the province, rural and urban, from Niton Junction, to Whitecourt, to Fort McMurray, to Lethbridge, to Medicine Hat, to Calgary and Edmonton and more.

4. Detailed Project Description:

Application process

Alberta teachers are encouraged to apply online (www.aplusforenergy.ca) for an A+ for Energy grant, with applications due in March for projects to be implemented the following academic year.

The application process is transparent and supportive. Through the A+ website, teachers have access to the scoring rubric so they know what their proposal will be evaluated on, as well as access to information on grant writing workshops, tips, sample proposals, project summaries, and how to get advice from a mentor.

Judging process

All submissions undergo a rigorous review process that begins with a grant reading team made up of an exceptional group of teachers from across Alberta. Working in teams of two using an innovative online marking system, grant readers review applications and submit their scores. The team approach helps to ensure each application receives an objective evaluation.

Once an application has been scored by grant readers, it receives a further level of scrutiny by a panel of final judges made up of BP safety experts along with Alberta government

representatives and members of the educational and scientific community. Applicants learn the results in May. While not every application is successful, all candidates receive constructive comments and suggestions for improvements in their application.

Conference

The successful A+ for Energy applicants attend an energy education conference in late August to help motivate and prepare them for the launch of their projects in the upcoming school year. The conference is designed by BP and Inside Education to provide participants with a broad foundation in energy and energy conservation topics.

At the 2009 conference, speakers included representatives from the Canadian Wind Energy Association; Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists, and Geophysicists of Alberta; Solar Energy Society of Canada; University of Calgary Biogeoscience Institute; GreenLearning (Pembina Institute); Canadian Petroleum Human Resources Council; Alberta Energy; Alberta Biodiesel Association; Ener-West/Canadian Geoexchange Coalition; Canadian Nuclear Society; and Climate Change Central.

Included in the conference is a gala celebration which honours the successful teachers and the important role they play in inspiring students and promoting energy and energy conservation literacy.

“The past few days have been an incredible experience. I feel so much more informed and confident as a result of the range of topics and expertise of the speakers.”

- Sue Crocker, Our Lady of Peace School

Project implementation

Teachers leave the conference excited and ready to implement their A+ projects – which are as diverse as the teachers who create them and the students who participate in them. Energy is all around us and it can be taught in many ways, whether through art, music, social studies or science.

Examples of past projects include:

Alexander Fergusson Elementary – Transformations

K-6 students participated in energy-related exploration field trips and then worked with a songwriter to transform the information they learned into 10 original energy-related songs which were then performed by the entire school and compiled on a CD entitled “Pitch for the Planet.”

“Students have developed a deep appreciation for their natural world and the life forms that rely on our responsible choices.”

- Monika Wenzel Kurtis, Teacher

Bishop Grandin High School – McEnergy for the Future

Chemistry students learned how to convert recycled oil from the school cafeteria into biodiesel.

“This project impacted my life and the lives of all those involved more than I ever imagined... BP gave our school an amazing opportunity to purchase items that we never would have had the money to afford, but the growth intellectually was priceless.”

- Alicia Motuz, Teacher

Sundre High School – Environmental Energy

The school developed an Environmental Energy Course through which students examine key sources of their personal impact on the environment, along with associated social and economic considerations related to energy use.

“I am confident that my students are gaining a unique learning experience that they will remember for a lifetime thanks to the A+ for Energy grant program.”

- Kevin Challoner, Teacher

Final reports

A+ for Energy teachers submit a final report to BP at the conclusion of their projects outlining how the project progressed and what their students learned and achieved. This information helps demonstrate to BP that the program is meeting its goal.

5. Barriers/Challenges to Success

The rigour of the A+ for Energy application and scoring process is critical to the program’s success. However, the detailed application can seem daunting to some teachers.

BP has taken steps to de-mystify the application process by:

- Creating a clear online application.
- Providing grant-writing workshops led by teachers with intimate knowledge of the scoring rubric.
- Introducing a mentor program.
- Providing help on the A+ website, including grant writing tips, project summaries and sample proposals.
- Encouraging teachers to contact program administrators with questions.
- Conducting annual reviews of the rubric to ensure it still reflects the curriculum.

6. Tangible environmental benefits or results:

Environmental benefits

The A+ for Energy vision is to provide teachers with resources that will help them to inspire their students to learn about energy and energy conservation in creative ways.

In the short term, these projects aim to raise student understanding of energy sources and issues and how conservation can help address energy challenges. In the long term, we hope these students will become inspired by their A+ for Energy experiences to become the future scientists, leaders, energy workers and teachers who will help chart a more sustainable energy future for our communities.

Along with student research on energy and conservation, many projects include a component of hands-on environmental action by students as well as outreach beyond the school. For example, A+ for Energy students have demonstrated how reduce-reuse-recycle projects can save energy, become hands-on practitioners of vermi-composting, converted waste cooking oil into biodiesel, monitored electricity use at their schools and shared energy conservation tips with classmates and community members.

Here's how one school tackled an environmental issue in its community as part of its A+ grant:

J.J. Nearing Catholic Elementary School – St. Albert Idle

Grade 4 students focusing on energy conservation researched the City of St. Albert's idle-free bylaw, monitored vehicle idling in their school zone, and used an "Idle-Free Day" at the school to present idling information to members of city council, parents, the school district and local environmental advisory committee. They presented drivers with hand-made "thank you for not idling" cards and other information. Local media and the city's website showcased the students' efforts.

"This project has been a wonderful opportunity for the Grade 4 students at J.J. Nearing. They have embraced the ideas of energy reduction and encourage an idle free lifestyle for their families."

- Monique Bélanger-Aultman, Teacher

Communicating the impacts

The A+ for Energy scoring rubric encourages teachers to incorporate community involvement in their projects. One school partnered with a local radio station to enable students to share their conservation knowledge with the community. Another had students create conservation-themed door hangers for neighbours. Others have shared student learning at public energy fairs or through articles in school newsletters.

"I would like to thank you so much for working on such a great project and for the reminder that we can all take part in saving our environment. I will keep your notice hanging on my door and will remember that I need to Recycle, Reuse, Reduce every day. Way to go class!"

- from a neighbour to Grade 4 class, Crestwood School

In addition, some winning teachers have shared their A+ for Energy experiences at teacher conventions.

BP has also communicated the achievements of A+ for Energy teachers and students through:

- Television advertising showcasing various A+ for Energy projects.
- Website recognition of all winning projects.
- Participation in an Energy Literacy Conference hosted by the Centre for Economy and Environmental learning in 2009, presenting A+ for Energy to 125 representatives from industry, government and educational community.

7. Intangible environmental benefits or results:

Building teacher capacity

A+ for Energy helps build capacity within Alberta teachers to deliver outstanding energy and energy conservation education programs in the classroom. At the application stage, BP builds teacher capacity through grant writing workshops, peer review of applications, and constructive feedback for all applicants. The program also has a provision for teachers to apply for a second consecutive year of funding to sustain their project and ensure the principles of energy and energy conservation education are deeply rooted in the culture of their school.

The energy education conference in August provides teachers with tools as well as accurate, independent and current information about energy sources and environmental education. This conference counts towards teachers' professional development requirements.

"The opportunities afforded me through this grant will forever change the way I teach."

- Lianne Jones, Westmount School

8. Demonstration of effort or commitment:

Since the program's inception in 2007, BP has invested \$1.5 million in A+ for Energy grants, classroom materials, and scholarships, impacting close to 30,000 students across Alberta.

For BP, A+ for Energy goes beyond traditional corporate giving. We administer the program directly with support from our partners in education. We worked closely with Alberta educators to ensure we could develop a program that helps teachers meet the requirements of the Alberta curriculum in ways that make the subject matter tangible, exciting and memorable for students.

Employee engagement

BP employees are incredibly proud of A+ for Energy and it receives great support at all levels of the company. We often hear of BP employees communicating with teachers in their children's schools about A+ for Energy and BP's senior leaders encourage employee involvement. Our employees take an active interest in the program, visiting schools upon request to observe events such as solar car races or talk to students about energy issues.

To help raise teacher awareness of the 2010 application cycle, BP received enthusiastic help from more than 150 employee, teacher and community volunteers who spread the word about A+ for Energy to Alberta educators through an e-newsletter-based social media campaign.

9. Innovation/"Going the extra mile":

BP has integrated technology into A+ for Energy in an innovative way to create an easier to manage and more effective program, while maintaining the focus on Alberta classrooms.

To ensure the program is sustainable into the future, BP has invested time and resources to create an online application and judging process. This decreases administration and automates much of the grant management process, which allows more time for working directly with teachers, students and employees. Further, the online tool helps save paper and aligns with BP's environmental values.

The system is easy to use and provides a powerful platform for BP to coordinate the judging process with our volunteer grant readers, and conduct grant management and teacher communications more efficiently.

10. Third party testimonials/References/Other meritorious considerations:

Third-party testimonials

"BP Canada's A+ for Energy is truly an innovative, exciting energy and environmental education program for Alberta teachers. By providing direct support to energy education classroom projects, A+ for Energy has afforded thousands of Alberta students the opportunity to investigate energy in unbelievably creative ways. Many of the projects selected over the past three years of the program have allowed and encouraged young people to study energy efficiency, renewable energy and climate change. As proud partners in the A+ for Energy program, Inside Education believes BP Canada is truly helping create a stewardship and sustainability ethic in Alberta teachers and students. BP Canada is to be commended for A+ for Energy, truly a good news story in Alberta's education system."

- Steve McIsaac, Executive Director, Inside Education, smcisaac@insideeducation.ca

"Thanks to the A+ for Energy grant our students are on their way to becoming environmentally aware Canadians with the capacity to change their own attitudes and approaches towards the environment while encouraging others to change as well. It has been an exciting event filled year of learning that could never have unfolded as it did without the support of the A+ for Energy grant."

- Jim Burchell, Principal, Tilley School, James.Burchell@grasslands.ab.ca

"A+ brings out the creative potential in our youth and engages all involved in a discussion about

the importance of energy in our lives. From conventional to emerging green technologies, students across all subjects and grade levels can experience relevant energy projects that enhance student learning and achievement... Teacher professional development is a significant part of this program and the long term effects of this initiative will be carried forward into future generations... As a teacher, grant reader, and science educator, I believe that the A+ for Energy program is an outstanding initiative worthy of recognition across Canada and the world."

- Art Bauer, Grant Reader and Teacher, St. Joseph School, art.bauer@livingwaters.ab.ca

Meritorious considerations

A+ for Energy received a Lighthouse Award from the Calgary Board of Education, February 2010: www.cbe.ab.ca/new/lighthouse_Feb10.asp

A+ for Energy received a 2009 Steward of Excellence Award from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers:

www.capp.ca/energySupply/innovationStories/RelationshipsPartners/Pages/AforEnergy.aspx#KDAUtVhOqrWi