

**2007 SBO/SBEAP NATIONAL CONFERENCE**  
**June 18-21, 2007 • St. Paul, Minnesota**  
**Co-sponsors: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**  
**Minnesota Pollution Control Agency**



**CONFERENCE REPORT**  
**EPA Small Business Ombudsman**

**I. The Conference**

This is the draft report on the 2007 Small Business Ombudsman/Small Business Environmental Assistance Providers National Conference (Conference). This report details the Conference and provides information on lessons learned that will be helpful for future conferences. The Conference was co-sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Small Business Ombudsman (SBO) within the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) and the Minnesota SBO and Small Business Environmental Assistance Program (SBEAP) within the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The EPA Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards (OAQPS) also supported the Conference. PRIZIM Inc. (PRIZIM) provided logistics support and conducted training at the Conference under a contract to EPA.

The Clean Air Act (CAA), as amended in 1990, directed each state to create programs to assist small businesses in understanding and complying with their CAA obligations. These programs, known as the 507 programs, consist of three components: SBO, SBEAP, and a Compliance Advisory Panel (CAP). Every year for the past 14 years members of the 507 community have come together at a national conference. The broad purpose of the Conference is to build and maintain a national network of assistance providers and to improve the technical capability of SBO/SBEAPs. This is achieved by providing training about the structure and requirements of the 507 Programs, and a venue for assistance providers, EPA staff, and small businesses to learn about assistance initiatives and regulations. The Conference is also an opportunity for rule writers from the EPA to meet with SBO, SBEAPs, CAP representatives, and small businesses.

In 1995, the 507 Programs created the SBO/SBEAP National Steering Committee (NSC) to represent the interests of the 507 Programs and to provide networking and communications between the programs, and EPA's SBO and the EPA Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards. One representative and an alternate from an SBO/SBEAP in each EPA region serves on the NSC. The NSC also functions through the following subcommittees: awards, guidelines, measurement, multimedia, promotional, technical, and planning. The annual Conference is an opportunity for the NSC to report to the SBO/SBEAP community, hold their annual meeting, and to gain new ideas and members from the SBO/SBEAP community. The subcommittees also report to the conference attendees and meet during the conference.

The state CAPs, which consist of small business owners and operators, are important components of the 507 Programs. The state CAPS are represented by a National CAP, which is similar to the NSC, and the National CAP also meets at the annual Conference. The participation of small business owners from the CAPs at the Conference is an opportunity for them to learn more about the regulatory process and for EPA and assistance providers to learn more about the needs and attitudes of small businesses.

As noted, the broad purpose of the Conference is to foster a national network and to improve technical expertise. The matrix below illustrates more specific Conference objectives.

<b>Function/Objective</b>	<b>Conference Element</b>
Foster a national network of assistance providers	NSC meeting NSC subcommittee meetings Networking at Conference
Improve staff and program expertise	Technical breakout sessions and site visits Program development breakout sessions Personal development breakout sessions
Improve/Support 507 Programs	NSC meeting National CAP Meeting New member orientation Training Day
Increase EPA awareness of small business needs and concerns	Technical breakout sessions with EPA rule writers Presentations by EPA staff Networking with EPA staff

## **II. Conference Details**

This Conference was a joint effort of Minnesota and EPA with input from the state programs. Details about the Conference planning and logistics are presented below.

### **Conference Planning and Management**

The EPA SBO and OAQPS provided financial support for the Conference. Minnesota provided staff time and financial support. PRIZIM, under an EPA Contract, provided Conference planning, training, and logistics support. EPA, the Minnesota SBO and SBEAP, PRIZIM and the NSC Planning Subcommittee worked jointly to plan and conduct the Conference. The primary individuals from EPA, Minnesota and the contractor involved in the Conference planning and logistics include:

- Angela Suber, Acting SBO, EPA OSDDBU
- Mike Nelson, MN SBO
- Troy Johnson, MN SBEAP
- Robert France, PRIZIM
- Tiffin Shewmake, PRIZIM

The Planning Subcommittee of the NSC, composed of regional representatives of state programs, provided invaluable support in the Conference planning, content development, and the identification of speakers. The Subcommittee held monthly conference calls regarding the Conference, identified and contacted potential speakers, and helped develop the agenda and promotional material for the Conference. The Planning Subcommittee was fundamental in ensuring that the Conference content met the needs of the SBO/SBEAP community and included the most relevant topics. A list of the Planning Subcommittee members is in Attachment 1.

Planning for the Conference started almost a year before the Conference. In the fall of 2006, the Planning Subcommittee conducted a survey of past Conference attendees and state SBO/SBEAP

programs to ask about topics for the 2007 Conference (see Attachment 2 for the survey results). The survey results helped the Subcommittee identify topics for the Conference and to design the sessions.

### **Location**

The NSC selected Minnesota as the host state for the 2007 Conference. Bids were solicited from hotels in Minneapolis and St. Paul. The Minnesota SBO and SBEAP selected the Crowne Plaza Riverfront Hotel in St. Paul, MN based on the size, location, and value. The Crowne Plaza was the only large hotel in the area with rates close to the government per diem rate for the area. The hotel also provided the Conference meeting rooms at no additional cost. The Crowne Plaza is situated along the Mississippi River and located within walking distance of the St. Paul downtown and numerous restaurants. Another advantage of the hotel was that the meeting rooms were relatively close together, and the registration area and display booths could be set up near the two main meeting rooms.

### **Logistics**

Conducting a successful conference included a host of tasks. As noted above, the Planning Subcommittee helped in the content development and identification of session speakers. Other tasks conducted prior to Conference included:

- Negotiate a hotel contract for the guest room rates, audio visual (AV) equipment, meeting rooms, and amenities such as free parking.
- Negotiate a contract with the hotel for meals and breaks.
- Coordinate planning committee meetings (plan, schedule and lead meetings, take notes and post on web).
- Coordinate Conference agenda development (number and length of days, number of tracks, number and length of general and breakout sessions, breaks, and site visits).
- Document agenda development; a one page “at a glance” and a more detailed agenda were maintained during the planning process.
- Schedule site visits and plan transportation.
- Plan after-hours activities and schedule transportation.
- Identify and coordinate speakers for the general sessions and a keynote lunch speaker.
- Send out confirmation letters for the session speakers and moderators with instructions.
- Collect Conference presentations from presenters.
- Produce the Conference program (this included the agendas, plus information on the Conference, a hotel map, and after-hours activities).
- Create registration packages for the attendees (this included a list of Conference attendees, biographies of general session speakers, a list of Planning Committee Members, descriptions of the subcommittees, and information about the local area).
- Create evaluation forms for the training, general sessions, and individual technical sessions.
- Produce name tags and fill badge holders prior to the Conference.
- Assign sessions to meeting rooms and create signs for the rooms.
- Coordinate with Audrey Zelanko to create a Conference web site at [www.sbeapconference.com](http://www.sbeapconference.com) (registration, agenda, hotel, travel, after-hours, planning committee).
- Collect registration fee (determine fee and payment options, develop invoicing system, collect fee).

For the first time, a small registration fee was collected to cover the cost of food at the Conference. The fee of \$125 for the full Conference (\$60 for a single day) covered the cost of the reception, breakfasts, awards lunch, and refreshments between sessions. Attendees paid separately for the after-hours events. Minnesota collected and managed the registration fee and after hours events fees.

At the Conference, staff from PRIZIM and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency helped with Conference logistics, the registration table, answered participant questions, checked session rooms to make sure that the AV equipment was working, and in general, ensured that the Conference went smoothly.

**Participants**

Over 120 participants from 35 states attended the Conference. A list of the conference participants is in Attachment 3. Participants included state SBOs, SBEAP staff, EPA regional and Headquarters staff, small business owners, and related non-profit organizations. As expected, the majority of attendees were from state programs (over 70 %). About 15% percent of attendees were from EPA, evenly split between Headquarters and the regions.

Participants came from across country. The breakdown of participants by EPA region is in the table below. This table is not complete because not every participant filled out the appropriate section in the registration form. However, it does give a good idea of the geographic representation.

<b>EPA Region</b>	<b>Number of Attendees</b>
5*	33
4	21
3	16
7	11
8	8
6	7
2	7
10	4
1	2
9	1

\*Minnesota is in EPA Region 5

**Conference Agenda and Sessions**

The Conference included a half-day of training on Monday June 18, two days of sessions, and a closing session on the morning of Thursday, June 21. The detailed Conference agenda is in Attachment 4 and the Conference program in Attachment 5. Section IV includes a discussion of the participant feedback for the individual sessions. A description on the types of Conference events is presented below.

## **Training**

The training session was divided into two parts: an introductory orientation, *Plug In and Power Up*, followed by a second session on performance measurement. *Plug In and Power Up* was designed primarily for new members. The first part consisted of an orientation about the 507 program components and legal requirements, which was followed by a panel discussion that highlighted the NSC and the work of the subcommittees. Each subcommittee chair introduced the mission and activities of their respective committee. The session wrapped up with information on resources for SBO/SBEAPs presented by the NSC Vice-chair.

The performance measurement session was selected based on the desire of the NSC, Planning Subcommittee, and Measurement Subcommittee to provide participants with the tools to improve the use of outcome measures in their programs. In addition, it was designed to help programs with the new Annual Reporting Form, which includes outcome measures for the first time. The first part of the training consisted of an introduction to measures, logic model for SBEAPs, a guide to using measures, and a case study. The second part consisted of an interactive exercise that encouraged participants to apply their knowledge in a hypothetical situation. Participants divided into breakout groups and each group was assigned a scenario. They then worked together to identify measures for their scenario, and plan how to use and report the measures. The training agenda and material is in Attachment 6.

## **Regional Meetings**

Each morning on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, time was set aside during breakfast for SBO, SBEAP, EPA, and small business staff in the same EPA region to meet. These informal meetings provided regional SBO/SBEAPs, EPA staff, and small businesses an opportunity to network and discuss common issues and initiatives. Subcommittees could also use this time for additional meetings; the Technical Subcommittee used the time for a strategic planning session.

## **General Session**

Each day started with a general plenary session. These sessions included topics such as:

- Speed Dating for Compliance Assistance Tools – a popular session with a quick review of tools from different states.
- Small Business Panel – an opportunity for states to hear from small business owners about their compliance assistance needs as well as well-received tools and resources.
- Area National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) update – an EPA presentation about the new rules.
- Future of the Program – updates from EPA OSDDBU, NCAP Chair, and the NSC Chair on the upcoming year and new initiatives.

All participants gathered for an awards lunch on Tuesday. The Awards Committee presented three awards for exemplary environmental performance to:

- *Small Business Environmental Assistance Program Award* to the Kentucky Business Environmental Assistance Program (Greg Copley accepted the award).
- *Trade Association Environmental Leadership Award* to the North Carolina Association of Launderers & Cleaners (Chris Edwards, Vice President for Governmental Affairs accepted the award).
- *Small Business Environmental Stewardship Award* to BTI Railcar Repair Incorporated (Clifford Root, owner of BTI Railcar Repair accepted the award).

The award presentations were followed by a keynote speaker, Robin Getman, who spoke on *Leading from Your Soul (instead of a position of authority)*.

**Breakout Sessions**

The Conference included over 20 sessions that covered a broad range of information and topics. The sessions included technical sessions and regulatory updates, NSC subcommittee meetings, and sessions on professional development. Titles for the technical sessions are shown below; descriptions are in the detailed agenda in Attachment 4.

Presentation Skills: How to Capture an Audience (without taking prisoners!)	Update on Major Changes to Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure (SPCC) Rule
Consumer Products/AIM	New Annual Reporting Form and Data Collection Experiences
What is Energy Efficiency?	Integrating Pollution Prevention (P2) into Compliance Assistance
Environmental Results Programs: Innovative Approaches to Helping Small Businesses	Surveys and Data Collection
Changes to the Perc Dry Cleaning Rule	Mobile Outreach for Pollution Prevention VirtualPaint™ Training (Iowa MOPP Virtual Painting)
Adult Learning Styles/Personality Types	Introduction to EPA Grants and OSDBU’s role
Idle Reduction and other Emission Reduction Efforts	Roadmap to a Successful Site Visit
Ethanol/Biodiesel	

Site visits to several small businesses were also offered and participants had the opportunity to test out the virtual painting spray booth in the Iowa Mobile Outreach for Pollution Prevention (MOPP) vehicle.

**Social and After Hours Events**

These events facilitated networking and building relationships between providers from across the country. The Conference held an official opening reception and an evening cruise on the Mississippi River. The reception was designed as an icebreaker to encourage people to get to know each other. This was accomplished by conducting a raffle of items from states that the participants had brought to the Conference.

**Conference Buddies**

The Conference also included a Conference buddy program which matched new assistance providers and experienced Conference attendees. The purpose was to help connect newcomers to the SBO/SBEAP community by orienting them to current issues and available resources, and helping them meet other SBO/SBEAPs. Buddies were matched prior to the Conference and given each other’s contact information. Buddies were responsible for setting up meetings at the Conference.

**III. Greening the Conference**

PRIZIM and Minnesota worked to reduce the environmental impact of the Conference using a three-part approach: 1) reviewing the hotel operations, 2) reviewing the Conference process for opportunities, and 3) asking participants to reduce their personal impact. One area of focus was the amount of paper used at the Conference. To reduce paper, the program was printed on a one-page

folding program, Conference material and presentations were supplied on a CD-ROM, and the presenters were asked not to hand out their presentation or other material in hardcopy.

Minnesota provided reusable water bottles at registration to reduce the use of bottled water.

PRIZIM also worked with the hotel to identify opportunities to further green the Conference. As a first step, the hotel was asked to fill out a green hotel questionnaire. Based on the information provided, the hotel was then asked to provide recycling containers during breaks, adjust the temperature of the meeting rooms to comfortable and energy efficient levels, and to provide reusable rather than disposable items for food and beverage services.

In addition, the Conference participants were asked to do their part to reduce their footprint. This was noted in the program and again in several of the general sessions. A more detailed list of the specific greening areas is in Attachment 7.

#### **IV. Conference Evaluations**

Participants were requested to fill out several evaluation forms during the Conference. They were asked to evaluate the training on the first day, to fill out an evaluation for the entire Conference and to rate each of the individual sessions that they attended. A summary of the results is provided below and the raw data is in Attachment 8.

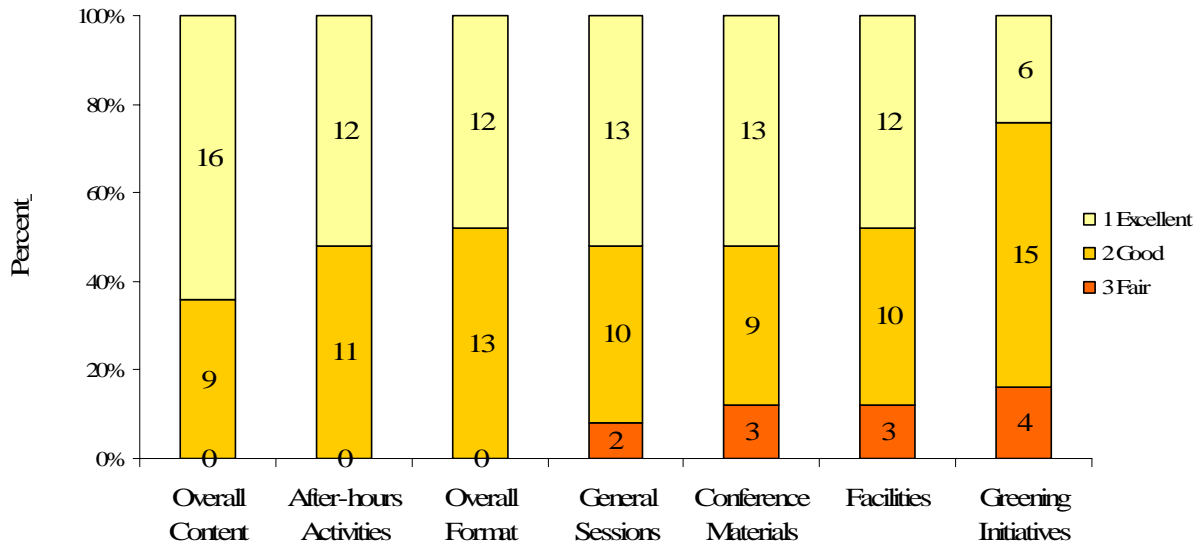
##### Overall Conference Evaluations

Attendees turned in 25 completed evaluations for the overall Conference (about 20 % of attendees). The responses (selections were “excellent, good, fair, and poor”) were overwhelmingly positive:

- Almost 65% of respondents gave the Overall Content of the Conference a rating of “*excellent*,” while about 35% percent gave the Overall Content a “*good*” rating.
- The After-hours Activities and Overall Format both received an “*excellent*” rating from half (50%) of the respondents and a “*good*” rating from the other half (50%) of the respondents.
- The General Sessions, Conference Materials, and Facilities each received an “*excellent*” rating from about half (50%) of the respondents, a “*good*” rating from about 40% of the respondents, and a “*fair*” rating from about 10% of the respondents.
- The Greening Initiatives received an “*excellent*” rating from a quarter (25%) of the respondents, a “*good*” rating from 60% of respondents, and a “*fair*” rating from 15% of respondents.
- None of the categories in the overall Conference evaluation received a rating of “*poor*.”

Figure 1 shows the distribution of “*excellent*,” “*good*,” and “*fair*” ratings by percentage for each category for the Conference overall. The frequency of each rating is shown in the bars:

Figure 1. Overall Conference Ratings



When asked to comment on the *most useful* portions of the Conference overall, multiple respondents mentioned that they greatly appreciated the presence of EPA rule-writers (Keith Barnett with Area Sources in particular) and requested the presence of EPA officials at future conferences to provide information on policy directions. Multiple respondents also commented that they found the training session, breakout sessions, small business panel, speed-dating, site visits, and networking opportunities particularly useful. Additional aspects mentioned as useful included the presence of Jeannette Brown and OSDBU, and the multi-media subcommittee, dry cleaning, professional development and ethanol/biodiesel sessions.

*Most Useful*

- EPA rule-writers, input from Keith Barnett
- Breakout sessions
- Speed-dating
- Networking opportunities
- Multi-media sessions
- Professional development
- Training session
- Small business panel
- Site visits
- Jeannette Brown and OSDBU
- Dry cleaning
- Ethanol/biodiesel session

When asked to comment on the *least useful* portions of the Conference overall and suggest improvements, multiple respondents mentioned that there was not enough time allotted for the breakout sessions or for the break periods between sessions. Respondents would have liked more in-depth information (e.g., on ERP and P2), and less repetition (e.g., site visits were to the same types of businesses as in past years, subcommittee updates were repeated, and measurements presentation is “getting redundant”). Some felt that too much time was spent during the general sessions commending each other on Conference arrangements. Respondents suggested reducing the number of concurrent sessions to allow Conference participants to attend more sessions, site visits, or visit the Iowa MOPP. Multiple respondents commented that the temperature was too cold, the sound and lighting not good,

and that coffee and water should be provided at the morning breaks. One respondent suggested that the agenda and abstracts (or brief “teaser” slides) be provided ahead of the Conference to allow more time to plan.

*Least Useful / Needs Improvement*

- Breakout sessions not long enough and breaks between sessions not long enough
- Some information not in-depth enough (e.g. ERP, P2)
- Some topics repetitive (e.g. site visits, subcommittee updates, measurements)
- Too much time spent commending each other
- Too many concurrent sessions
- Temperature too cold
- Sound and lighting not good
- No coffee and water at the morning breaks
- Agenda and abstracts not provided early enough

Regarding the General Sessions, multiple respondents thought they were very informative, addressed topics of interest, and should remain as they are now. Respondents liked the small business panel in particular and suggested putting it first to “invigorate” Conference participants. One respondent suggested including small businesses that are not quite so far along in compliance as those who participated in the panel this year. The speed-dating session was also very popular.

The Performance Measurement Training sessions’ evaluations were also very positive overall. The Guide to Measures, Logic Model, and Minnesota Technical Assistance Program (MnTAP) sessions were awarded a majority of “*excellent*” ratings, while the Introduction to Measures session received a majority of “*good*” ratings.

The greening initiatives were well-received, although some respondents recognized that the hotel could do more (e.g., no recycling bins for plastic water bottles available). Suggestions for improving the greening initiatives included encouraging carbon offsets for travel or making the Conference carbon-neutral.

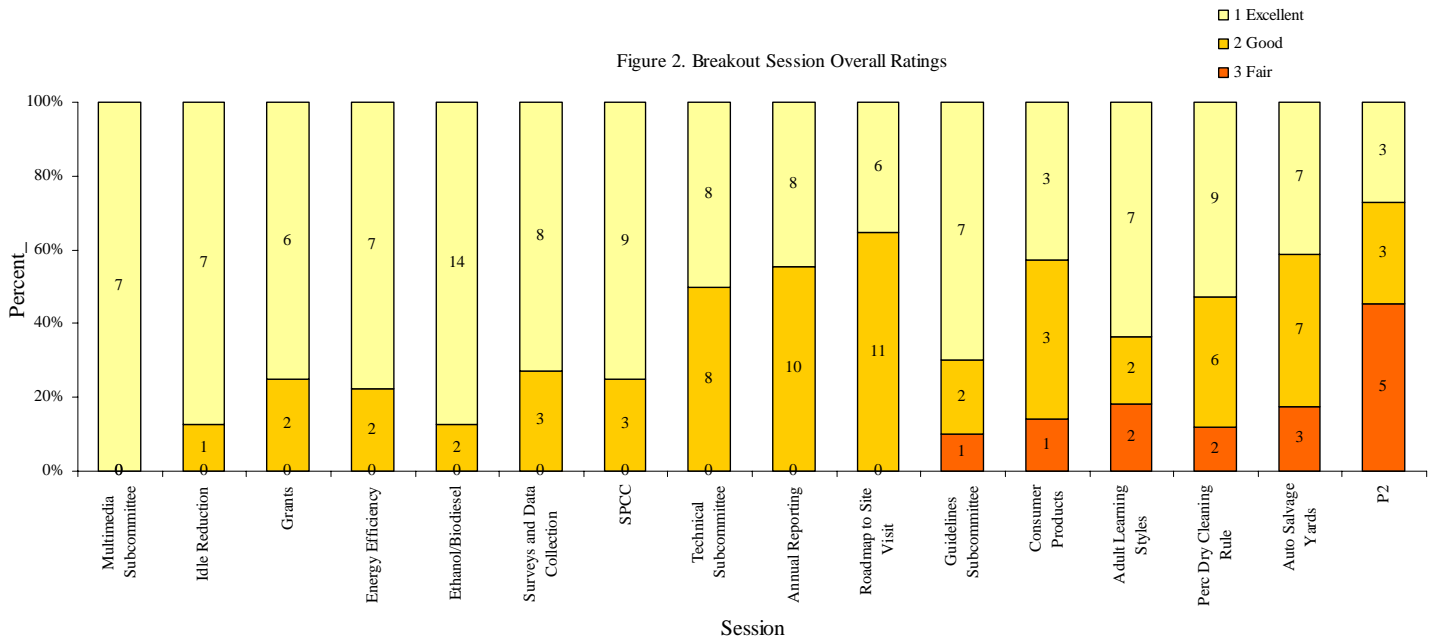
In general, respondents commented positively on the agenda, after-hours activities, and the efforts of the host state.

Breakout Sessions

Participants turned in evaluations for 21 breakout sessions with the number of completed evaluations per session ranging from 2 to 18. For the *Overall* category, 13 sessions were awarded a majority of “*excellent*” ratings, 4 received a majority of “*good*” ratings, 4 received an equal number of “*excellent*” and “*good*” ratings, and 1 received a majority of “*fair*” ratings. None of the breakout sessions received a rating of “*poor*” in the *Overall* category.

Of the sessions for which 7 or more evaluations were returned, the Multi-media Subcommittee, Ethanol/Biodiesel, Idle Reduction, Energy Efficiency, and Guidelines Subcommittee sessions received the highest percentages of “*excellent*” ratings. Figure 2 shows the percentage of “*excellent*,” “*good*”

and “fair” overall ratings awarded to sessions for which we received more than 7 evaluations (the frequency of each rating is shown in the bars):



Suggested Topics for 2008 SBO/SBEAP National Conference

The following table highlights the topics that attendees suggested for the 2008 Conference:

Topic	Details
Area Source	Continued updates, science behind EPA proposal, compliance assistance
Energy Efficiency	Climate change, greenhouse gases and small business, energy efficiency tools and policy
Tools	Data collection and energy efficiency tools, speed-dating session, more spreadsheets, database examples
Newcomers	Regulations 101, site visits, networking session
Professional Development	Project management skills, presentation skills, self-improvement, client report writing (“what works best”), best practices, plain language writing
Multi-media	Site inspection with specific examples, entities addressed together rather than stand-alone, more updates
<i>Other suggestions:</i>	More P2 topics, small business regulatory reform, finding funding, what to look for in a site visit, host a scheduled open discussion

**V. 2008 Conference Planning Meeting**

To begin planning for next year’s conference, the new 2008 Conference Planning Subcommittee met during the 2007 Conference. The State of Pennsylvania will be the host of the next conference. The

discussion centered on potential locations for the conference. The initial logistics to set the dates, select and secure a hotel are underway.

## **VI. Lessons Learned**

Overall, the Conference evaluations and informal comments heard at the Conference were quite positive. However, there are several elements that should be kept in mind for the 2008 Conference. A list of these areas based on the evaluations, experience of the Conference organizers, and comments from attendees are presented below.

- Maintain or expand the number of EPA rule writers that attend the Conference and give presentations.
- Expand the greening elements, ask the participants to do more up-front, and publicize the effort more before and during the Conference. Specify organic and locally grown foods when soliciting bids from hotel.
- Continue to hold the training day in the afternoon to allow for morning travel.
- Continue to have a session dedicated to small business owner perspectives.
- Try to have an on-site planning meeting early in the planning process. It will help to finalize the majority of the agenda sooner so that it can be provided to attendees earlier.
- Make sure that the 2008 Conference builds on and does not repeat the 2007 Conference agenda topics.
- Think about how to add longer breaks or reduce the number of concurrent session (consider the trade off between the amount of information to present and the desire for networking time).
- Coordinate “Thank Yous” from speakers at the general sessions so that each speaker is not thanking the same set of people.
- Be clear about the purpose of any site visits and think about how to make them more innovative.
- Continue to provide travel funding for state programs and CAP members.

## **List of Attachments**

1. Planning Subcommittee Members
2. 2007 Pre-Conference Survey Results
3. List of Conference Participants
4. Detailed Conference Agenda
5. Conference Program
6. Training agenda and material
7. Green the Conference
8. Evaluation Data