The Nebraska Corn Board recently allocated funds in its 2012-13 fiscal year budget to further develop the renewable fuel infrastructure in Nebraska.

Through a grant program, Nebraska Corn Board will award qualifying retailers $30,000 for the first blender pump and installation and $10,000 for a second pump. The maximum grant allowed per retail site is $40,000.

Blender pumps allow retailers to more easily offer additional ethanol blended fuels, expand their fuel offerings and provide a point of distinction in the marketplace while serving the growing number of motorists driving flex fuel vehicles.

Such pumps also provide opportunities for stations to more easily offer E15, which is approved for use in all model year 2001 and newer cars, light-duty trucks and SUVs.

Grants are available on a first come, first served basis. Once funding is exhausted, retailers will be placed on a waiting list and awarded grant money in the order applications were received, if additional funding becomes available.

“We recognize the cost to install blender pumps can be a hurdle, and this grant program is designed to help station owners move forward and upgrade their system,” said Curt Friesen, a farmer from Henderson and secretary-treasurer of the Nebraska Corn Board. “We especially would like to see new pumps installed in larger cities where there are more drivers, which means more flex fuel vehicles capable of using ethanol blends beyond E10 and E15.”

There are more than 120,000 flex fuel vehicles in Nebraska and that number is increasing everyday, said Kim Clark, director of biofuels development with the Nebraska Corn Board.

However, there are only about 20 blender pumps and an additional 40 pumps offering E85 across the state. “Nebraska is the second largest producer of ethanol in the country yet the state is lagging behind in ethanol infrastructure,” Clark said.

Station owners who install blender pumps may benefit from the blending economics and a higher volume of ethanol sales, while their customers enjoy a new array of fuel choices at the pump.

“Flex fuel vehicle owners of today and tomorrow will appreciate the ability to pull up to a pump and find higher blends of ethanol fuel such as E30 or E85,” Friesen said.

Clark said E15 should be available for sale in the state by the end of the year.

“Blender pumps are the perfect opportunity to offer E15 along with E10 and other ethanol blended fuels,” she said. “Station owners who lay the foundation for the future of renewable fuels now will really be in a good position in the years to come.”

For more information about the grant program or to request an application for a grant, contact Clark at kim.clark@nebraska.gov or telephone 402-471-2676.