

SECTION V. – NARRATIVE REVIEW INFORMATION

Note: Additional provisions that apply to this section can be found at [EPA Solicitation Clauses](#).

V.A. Evaluation Criteria

If your application passes the threshold eligibility review (see [Section III.B.](#)), the information you provide in response to [Section IV.E.](#) (Narrative/Ranking Criteria) will be evaluated per the criteria below and scored by a national evaluation panel. Your application may be assigned up to 165 points.

Criteria (Maximum Points per Criterion)
<p><u>1. PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION AND PLANS FOR REVITALIZATION</u> 40 Points</p>
<p>Each application will be evaluated on the quality and extent to which it addresses the following:</p>
<p>1.a. Target Area and Brownfields (15 points)</p>
<p><u>1.a.i. Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Area (5 points)</u> The extent to which the geographic boundary(ies) where the applicant is proposing to conduct eligible activities under this grant is clearly identified. The extent to which the brownfield challenges are clearly discussed and the degree to which the brownfield challenges impact the area(s) in the geographic boundary(ies). The extent to which this grant will potentially help address those challenges and impacts.</p> <p>The extent to which the applicant clearly identifies and describes the specific target area(s) within the geographic boundary(ies) where it plans to focus grant activities.</p>
<p><u>1.a.ii. Description of the Priority Brownfield Site(s) (10 points)</u> The extent to which the response provides a clear overview of the brownfield sites in the target area(s). The degree to which one or more sites are highlighted as a priority and the degree to which the priority site(s) is clearly described. The degree to which it is clear why the site(s) identified as a priority (for assessment and reuse) has been selected.</p>
<p>1.b. Revitalization of the Target Area (10 points)</p>
<p><u>1.b.i. Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans (5 points)</u> The extent to which a reuse strategy or projected reuse is clearly described for the priority site(s) to be assessed in the target area(s), and the extent to which the reuse strategy/projected reuse clearly aligns with and advances the local government’s land use and revitalization plans or related community priorities.</p>
<p><u>1.b.ii. Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy (5 points)</u> Given the type of community being served (e.g., urban, rural, tribal, etc.), the degree to which the proposed project or revitalization plans will potentially stimulate economic development in the target area(s) upon completion of the cleanup of the priority site(s) <u>and/or</u> the degree to</p>

which the grant will facilitate the creation of, preservation of, or addition to a park, a greenway, undeveloped property, recreational property, or other property used for nonprofit purposes in the target area(s). The degree to which these outcomes clearly correlate with the applicant's reuse strategy/projected site reuse(s).

When applicable, the extent to which the reuse of the priority site(s) will facilitate renewable energy from wind, solar, or geothermal energy, or will incorporate energy efficiency measures.

When the proposed project or revitalization plans may potentially cause the displacement of residents and/or businesses, the extent to which strategies and/or policies will be implemented to minimize the displacement of residents and/or businesses.

1.c. Strategy for Leveraging Resources (15 points)

1.c.i. Resources Needed for Site Reuse (10 points)

- The extent to which the applicant has access to monetary funding from other resources, and the extent to which the grant will stimulate the availability of additional funds for environmental site assessment or remediation, and subsequent reuse. (5 points)
- The extent to which the potential key funding resources can be used to support the completion of the assessment, remediation, and/or reuse strategy at the priority site(s). *(Note, a response may not earn full points if the applicant duplicates sources that are listed in 3.a. Description of Tasks/Activities and Outputs.)* (5 points)

1.c.ii. Use of Existing Infrastructure (5 points)

The extent to which work performed under this grant will facilitate the use of existing infrastructure at the priority site(s) and/or within the target area(s).

When additional infrastructure needs or upgrades are key to the revitalization plans for the priority site(s), the extent to which the applicant provides a clear description of the infrastructure needs/upgrades and the extent to which the identified funding resources that will be sought to implement the work are relevant to the project.

2. COMMUNITY NEED AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

40 Points

Each application will be evaluated on the quality and extent to which it addresses the following:

2.a. Community Need (25 points)

2.a.i. The Community's Need for Funding (5 points)

The extent to which this grant will meet the needs of the community(ies) (i.e., the communities located within the geographic boundary(ies)) that has an inability to draw on other initial sources of funding to carry out environmental assessment or remediation, and subsequent reuse in the target area(s) **because the community has a small population and/or is low-income.**

(Note, if the inability to draw on other initial sources of funding is not because the community has a small population or is low-income, then the response may only earn up to 2 points.)

2.a.ii. Threats to Sensitive Populations (20 points)

(1) Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations (5 points)

The degree to which the sensitive populations within the target area(s) are clearly identified, the severity of the health or welfare issues experienced by the sensitive populations in the target area(s), and the extent to which this grant and reuse strategy/projected site reuse(s) will address those issues and/or will facilitate the identification and reduction of threats to the health or welfare of such groups.

(2) Greater Than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions (5 points)

The extent to which this grant and reuse strategy/projected site reuse(s) will address, or facilitate the identification and reduction of, threats to populations in the target area(s) that suffer from a greater-than-normal incidence of diseases or conditions (including cancer, asthma, or birth defects) that may be associated with exposure to hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or petroleum. *(Note, if populations in the target area(s) do not suffer from a greater-than-normal incidence of cancer, asthma, or birth defects, then the response may only earn up to 2 points.)*

(3) Promoting Environmental Justice (10 points)

The extent to which the environmental justice issues affecting the underserved populations in the target area(s) are clearly described, and the severity of the environmental justice issues experienced by the underserved populations in the target area(s). The extent to which this grant and reuse strategy/projected site reuse(s) will promote environmental justice among the underserved populations in the target area(s).

2.b. Community Engagement (15 points)

Per the ranking criterion in [Section IV.E.2.b.](#), applicants may consolidate information for 2.b.i. – 2.b.ii. into one response. Reviewers must evaluate the response against the sub-criteria outlined below.

2.b.i. Project Involvement (5 points)

The degree to which the applicant involves a diverse group of local organizations/entities/groups that are relevant to the proposed project, including community-based organizations and/or community liaisons representing residents directly affected by the project work in the target area(s). *(Note, a plan that does not involve at least one relevant community-based organization or community liaison representing residents directly affected by the project work in the target area(s) will be evaluated less favorably.)*

2.b.ii. Project Roles (5 points)

The degree to which each identified local organization/entity/group will have meaningful involvement in the project and the extent to which partners will be involved in making decisions with respect to site selection, cleanup, and future reuse of the brownfield sites, including the priority site(s).

2.b.iii. Incorporating Community Input (5 points)

The extent to which the plan to communicate project progress to the local community, local organizations/entities/groups that will be involved in the project, and residents/groups in (or in closest proximity to) the target area(s) will be effective and appropriate, and the extent to which their input will be solicited, considered, and responded to in an intentional way. The extent to which the proposed methods offer an alternative to in-person community engagement in the event of social distancing or other restrictions as a result of COVID-19.

3. TASK DESCRIPTIONS, COST ESTIMATES, AND MEASURING PROGRESS

50 Points

Each application will be evaluated on the quality and extent to which it addresses the following:

3.a. Description of Tasks/Activities and Outputs (30 points)

3.a.i. Project Implementation (10 points)

The degree to which the EPA-funded tasks/activities that will take place under this grant are eligible, specific, and appropriate to the goals of the proposed project, and the degree to which the response demonstrates a sound plan to address the priority site(s) in the target area(s).

When the project includes a subaward(s), the extent to which the tasks/activities or services to be provided by the subawardees(s) are clearly identified.

When the project includes participant support costs to pay for activities associated with a community liaison(s), the extent to which the applicant describes a sound process and procedures for determining the amounts of the allowable stipend(s), accounting for participant support cost payments (including receipts), and documenting that the costs do not duplicate support provided through other Federal, state, tribal, or local programs.

(Notes:

- *A response that includes ineligible tasks/activities will be evaluated less favorably.*
- *Applicants that plan to use grant funds to support more than one community liaison per target area will be evaluated less favorably.)*

When applicable, the extent to which the tasks/activities that are necessary to carry out the grant that will be contributed by sources other than the EPA grant (e.g., in-kind resources) will bring the grant to successful completion. *(Note, a response may not earn full points if the applicant duplicates sources that are listed in 1.c.i. Resources Needed for Site Reuse.)*

3.a.ii. Identifying Additional Sites (5 points)

The extent to which there is a clear plan to identify additional sites for eligible activities and the degree to which the prioritization criteria that will be used to select additional sites consider underserved communities.

3.a.iii. Anticipated Project Schedule (5 points)

The extent to which the anticipated project schedule milestones are achievable and the likelihood that the activities will be completed within the 4-year period of performance.

3.a.iv. Task/Activity Lead (5 points)

The extent to which the lead entity(ies) for each task/activity is clearly identified and the extent to which the lead entity(ies) overseeing each task/activity is appropriate.

When applicable, the degree to which the local health agency is involved in health monitoring activities.

3.a.v. Outputs (5 points)

The extent to which the anticipated outputs/deliverables for each task/activity are identified and quantified as appropriate, and the degree to which the outputs/deliverables clearly correlate with the proposed project.

3.b. Cost Estimates (15 points)

The degree of clarity on how each cost estimate was developed (including direct and/or indirect administrative costs, when applicable) and the extent to which costs per unit are presented in detail. The extent to which each proposed cost estimate is reasonable and realistic to implement the project/grant and clearly correlates with the proposed tasks/activities.

(Notes:

- *Projects that allocate at least 40% of the funds to tasks directly associated with site-specific work (i.e., Phase I and Phase II environmental site assessments and site-specific cleanup planning) will be evaluated more favorably.*
- *Administrative costs that exceed 5% of the total EPA-requested funds will be evaluated less favorably.*
- *A response that includes cost estimates that are not reasonable or realistic to implement the project/grant will be evaluated less favorably. For example, applicants that request more funds than is reasonably justified in the Narrative to complete the proposed project/grant.)*

3.c. Measuring Environmental Results (5 points)

The extent to which the plan and mechanism to track, measure, and evaluate progress in achieving expected project outputs, overall project results, and eventual project outcomes are reasonable, appropriate, and clearly correlate with information previously presented in the Narrative.

4. PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITY AND PAST PERFORMANCE

35 Points

Each application will be evaluated on the quality and extent to which it addresses the following:

4.a. Programmatic Capability (20 points)

Per the ranking criterion in [Section IV.E.4.a.](#), applicants may consolidate information for 4.a.i. – 4.a.iii. into one response. Reviewers must evaluate the response against the sub-criteria outlined below.

4.a.i. Organizational Capacity (5 points)

The degree to which the applicant's organization has the capacity to successfully carry out and manage the programmatic, administrative, and financial requirements of the project and grant.

4.a.ii. Organizational Structure (5 points)

The degree to which the organizational structure used will lead to the timely and successful expenditure of funds to complete all technical, administrative, and financial requirements of the project and grant.

4.a.iii. Description of Key Staff (5 points)

The degree to which key staff have expertise, qualifications, and experience that will result in the successful administration of the grant.

4.a.iv. Acquiring Additional Resources (5 points)

The degree to which the applicant's organization has a system(s) in place to appropriately acquire any additional expertise and resources (e.g., contractors or subrecipients) required to successfully complete the project.

4.b. Past Performance and Accomplishments (15 points)

In evaluating an applicant's response to this criterion, in addition to the information provided by the applicant, EPA may consider relevant information from other sources including information from EPA files and/or from other federal or non-federal grantors to verify or supplement information provided by the applicant.

4.b.i. Currently Has or Previously Received an EPA Brownfields Grant (15 points)

The degree to which the applicant demonstrates its ability to successfully manage the grant based on current/past EPA Brownfields Grant(s) (i.e., Multipurpose Grant, Assessment Grant, Revolving Loan Fund Grant, Cleanup Grant, or 128(a) Grant) and the extent to which the applicant successfully performed all phases of work under the grant.

(1) Accomplishments (5 points)

The extent to which meaningful accomplishments (including specific outputs and outcomes) were achieved under the current/most recent grant(s), including at a minimum, the number of sites assessed and/or cleaned up, and the extent to which outputs and outcomes were accurately reflected in ACRES at the time of this application submission.

(2) Compliance with Grant Requirements (10 points)

- The extent of compliance with the workplan, schedule, and terms and conditions under the current/most recent grant(s), and the extent to which there is a demonstrated history of timely and acceptable quarterly performance and grant deliverables, as well as ongoing ACRES reporting.

The degree to which progress was made (and reported on), or is being made, towards achieving the expected results of the grant(s) in a timely manner. If expected results were not being reported on, the extent to which the measures taken to correct the

situation were reasonable and appropriate or the extent to which there is an adequate explanation for lack of reporting. (5 points)

- The extent to which funds from any open EPA Brownfields Grants (i.e., Multipurpose Grants, Assessment Grants, Revolving Loan Fund Grants, Cleanup Grants, and/or 128(a) Grants) are committed to ongoing eligible grant activities or will support the tasks/activities described in the Narrative. The likelihood that all grant funds under the current grant(s) will be expended by the end of the *Period of performance* as defined in 2 CFR § 200.1.

For all closed EPA Brownfield Grants, the extent to which there is a reasonable explanation of why funds remained when the grant closed, and the degree to which the applicant made every effort to spend the remaining funds within the *Period of performance*. (5 points)

– OR –

4.b.ii. Has Not Received an EPA Brownfields Grant but has Received Other Federal or Non-Federal Assistance Agreements (15 points)

The degree to which the applicant demonstrates its ability to successfully manage the grant and perform all phases of work under the grant based on current/most recent federal or non-federal assistance agreements.

(1) Purpose and Accomplishments (5 points)

The extent to which the current/most recent assistance agreement(s) is similar in terms of scope and relevance to the proposed project.

The extent to which meaningful project accomplishments (including specific outputs and outcomes and measures of success) were achieved under the current/most recent assistance agreement(s).

(2) Compliance with Grant Requirements (10 points)

The extent of compliance with the workplan, schedule, and terms and conditions under the current/most recent assistance agreement(s), and the extent to which there is a demonstrated history of timely and acceptable reporting, as required by the awarding agency/organization.

The degree to which progress was made (and reported on), or is being made, towards achieving the expected results of the agreement(s) in a timely manner. If expected results were not achieved, the extent to which the measures taken to correct the situation were reasonable and appropriate.

– OR –

4.b.iii. Never Received Any Type of Federal or Non-Federal Assistance Agreements (8 points)

The extent to which it is clearly affirmed that the organization never received any type of federal or non-federal assistance agreement, or has recently received an assistance agreement, but has not had an opportunity to demonstrate compliance with the award requirements. (*These*

applicants will receive a “neutral” score of 8 points. Applicants that fail to indicate anything in response to this sub-criterion may result in zero points.)

V.B. Other Factors and Considerations

In making the final selections from among the most highly ranked applicants on each of the lists discussed in [Section V.C.](#), EPA’s Headquarters Selection Official may consider the factors below as appropriate. Applicants should provide a summary in the Narrative on the applicable other factors and note the corresponding page number in the [Narrative Information Sheet](#). Other factors include:

- whether the community population is 10,000 or less;
- whether the applicant is a federally recognized Indian tribe or United States territory or whether the project is assisting a tribe or territory;
- whether the priority site(s) is impacted by mine-scarred land;
- whether the priority site(s) is adjacent to a body of water;
- whether the priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain;
- whether reuse of the priority site(s) will facilitate renewable energy from wind, solar, or geothermal energy;
- whether reuse of the priority site(s) will incorporate energy efficiency measures;
- whether the applicant has considered climate adaptation and/or mitigation measures as part of the reuse strategy or projected reuse of the priority site(s);
- whether at least 30% of the overall project budget will be spent on eligible reuse/area-wide planning activities, as described in [Section I.B.](#), for priority site(s) within the target area(s); and
- whether a target area(s) is located within a community in which a coal-fired power plant has recently closed (2012 or later) or is closing.

Additionally, EPA’s Headquarters Selection Official may take the following considerations into account when making final selections:

- distribution of funds between urban and non-urban areas;
- whether the applicant’s jurisdiction/geographic boundary(ies) is located within, or includes, a county experiencing “persistent poverty” where 20% or more of its population has lived in poverty over the past 30 years, as measured by the 1990 and 2000 decennial censuses and the most recent Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates;
- the distribution of funds among EPA’s ten Regions;
- whether the applicant has not previously been awarded a Brownfields Assessment Grant; and
- whether a target area(s) is located within, or includes, a census tract in which 20% or more of the population lives below the national poverty level as measured by the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates from the United States Census Bureau.

V.C. Review and Selection Process

Timely submitted applications will initially be reviewed by the EPA Regional Office which covers the location of the project to determine compliance with the applicable threshold

eligibility criteria for Assessment Grants ([Section III.B.](#)). All applications that pass the threshold criteria review will be evaluated by national evaluation panels. The national evaluation panels will be comprised of EPA staff and potentially other federal agency representatives chosen for their expertise in the range of activities associated with the Brownfield Assessment Grants. Eligible applications will be evaluated based on the criteria described in [Section V.A.](#) and ranking lists of applicants will be developed.

For selection purposes, EPA's Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization (OBLR) will prepare two ranked lists of applications.

One list will be comprised of "new applicants" defined as:

- applicants who have never received an EPA Brownfields Multipurpose, Assessment, RLF, or Cleanup Grant, or
- applicants who were awarded a Brownfields Multipurpose, Assessment, RLF, or Cleanup Grant that closed in 2014 or earlier.

A second list will be comprised of "existing and recent recipients" defined as:

- applicants who have an open Brownfields Multipurpose, Assessment, RLF, or Cleanup Grant, or
- applicants who were awarded a Brownfields Multipurpose, Assessment, RLF, or Cleanup Grant that closed in 2015 or later.

EPA expects to select approximately 36 of the highest ranked Community-wide Assessment Grant applications and intends to use approximately 60% of the total amount of funding available under this category for grants to "new applicants." This percentage is an estimate and is subject to change based on funding levels, the quality of applications received, and other applicable considerations.

OBLR will provide the two lists to the Headquarters Selection Official, who is responsible for further consideration of the applications and final selection of grant recipients. Applications will be selected for award based on their evaluated point scores, the availability of funds, and, as appropriate, the other factors and considerations described in [Section V.B.](#)