

Alabama ~ Florida ~ Georgia ~ Kentucky ~ Mississippi ~ North Carolina ~ South Carolina ~ Tennessee

## So You Want To Apply For A Brownfields Grant?

before investing time in preparing a Brownfields grant proposal.

**Take a long view.** Brownfields assessment grants typically provide \$400,000 in funding over three years. That's often not enough time or money to address a single target area, much less other needy communities or neighborhoods in your jurisdiction. Brownfields cleanup grants provide a maximum of \$200,000 in federal funding. Additional public or private sources of funding may be needed. EPA wants to work with successful grantees who want to continue to grow their Brownfields programs through additional assessment grants, moving sites from assessment to remediation through Brownfields cleanup grants, and on to redevelopment.

**After you get a grant. Keep your community involved and enthusiasm high.** Hold routine community meetings to seek input and provide updates. Use a variety of methods for notification, including web sites, newsletters, or social networking sites. Get community members to actively participate with volunteer events, weekend markets, or festivals.

**Don't limit your efforts to Brownfields assessment and remediation.** The target area may have other challenges and needs beyond those that can be addressed through EPA Brownfields grants. High crime rates, substandard housing, poor transportation options, limited access to healthy food may all need to be addressed before investors are willing to participate in the renaissance of a community. A variety of partners including federal government agencies, charitable foundations, and nearby colleges and universities may be drafted as participants in your project.

**Consider incentives to spur redevelopment.** Some local governments take on the role of a pre-developer, acquiring and assembling properties, and taking actions to improve the appeal of Brownfields,

including demolition of deteriorated structures, site cleanup and infrastructure improvements. Development of master plans, establishment of overlay districts, zoning changes, and tax abatements may also help attract investment.

**Special consideration before purchasing Brownfields properties.** Often communities have a priority property that the local government or other entity will want to acquire for cleanup and redevelopment purposes. In this case careful attention should be given to pre-purchase inquiries which are necessary to avoid assuming liability for cleanup under federal laws. Appropriate inquiry prior to acquisition is also required to be eligible for EPA Brownfields assessment and cleanup funding.

**Don't have an end use? Consider an interim use.** Properties that aren't attracting investment may be able to benefit the community in other ways. For example, many communities offer vacant properties to area residents for community gardens. Community gardens not only provide a neighborhood with delicious and healthy food choices, but they also create recreational opportunities and attractive greenspace. And perhaps the community garden itself will become the missing catalyst to attract investment to a neighborhood.

**Go Green!** Whether you're preparing a property for reuse, developing plans and designs, or constructing a project, consider employing sustainable practices. For example, when removing structures, many parts of buildings can be recycled. If you're installing pavement, consider sustainable stormwater management practices such as pervious pavement, bioswales and rain gardens. And if you're constructing buildings, consider energy efficient design and the use of renewable energy.

Have questions? Visit our website at <https://www.epa.gov/brownfields>

### SEE ALSO:

<https://www3.epa.gov/>

<https://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/forms/contacting-epa-region-4-southeast>



Before: Union Mill - Union, South Carolina



After: Union Mill - Union, South Carolina

### U. S. Environmental Protection Agency



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**BACKGROUND**

**Who can apply?** State, tribal, local, and other governmental organizations, and, in some cases, non-profit organizations.

**What can I apply for?** Funding to conduct planning, environmental assessment and site cleanup, including establishing a revolving loan fund program for clean-up.

**When can I apply?** EPA conducts an annual competition with requests for proposals usually in late summer.

**What are my chances of success?** Only about one in four applications will be successful. To increase your chances of success, the steps you take long before you submit your application are extremely important. Applicants who have taken the following steps are not only able to write stronger proposals, but they are also more likely to be successful Brownfields grantees. (This brochure will focus on those applicants who are applying for assessment grants, but many of these recommendations are important for revolving loan fund and cleanup grant applicants as well.)

**What are Brownfields?** Property that is, or may be, contaminated with hazardous substances or other pollutants. Often, the perception of contamination is the only impediment. Historically, nearly 30% of the sites assessed under EPA Brownfields grants do not have contamination that requires cleanup. For contaminated sites, cleanup costs may be significant or not. Uncertainty on needed cleanup and cleanup costs is a big hindrance to redevelopment of Brownfields. Brownfields assessment grants offer communities an opportunity to eliminate that uncertainty. Brownfields can be found just about everywhere. An everyday example could be the vacant corner gas station or abandoned warehouse that has attracted vandals, vagrants, and graffiti artists. Some in your community will see Brownfields as blight on their neighborhood, a symbol of America's

industrial decline, or the reason for chronic health problems. Others will look beyond the blight and see Brownfields as an opportunity to create an economic engine, a new community gateway, or a jobs magnet.

**GETTING STARTED**

**Assess your capacity to manage a Brownfields grant.** Brownfields grants require a great deal of effort to manage. You must have the ability to contract with and manage an environmental consultant. You must have a financial and accounting system to manage a budget, draw down funds, make payments, and report accomplishments quarterly to EPA. Even if you delegate some of these tasks to your consultant, you are ultimately responsible for meeting the Terms and Conditions of your grant. (If you decide that management of a grant is too much to take on, EPA can assist you in other ways. For example, EPA offers Targeted Brownfields Assessments, a non-grant option, where an EPA project manager can conduct Phase I and II environmental site assessments and cleanup planning using EPA contract resources.)

**Identify your project manager.** A dedicated, energetic project manager is often the difference between a successful community Brownfields program and an unsuccessful one. Make sure he/she has plenty of time and energy to devote to the project and empower your project manager with clear decision-making authority. You should also ask yourself some important questions. Can you retain this person for the three year life of the grant or beyond, when your Brownfields program begins to flourish? Or, how will you replace your Project Manager if he/she leaves your organization?

**Put together a Brownfields Team.** Whether you call it a Brownfields Team, a Brownfields Advisory Committee or something else, your program will benefit from the collective thinking of many diverse minds. Team membership could consist of political leaders, local government planners, community leaders, local environmental consultants, and

developers. Your Team will likely evolve to include new membership after you get the grant.

**Look at political support for a Brownfields program.**

Even if your current political leaders support a Brownfields program, will the administration potentially change over the life of the grant? Would potential new leaders support such a program? Some leaders do not want a Brownfields grant because it places a perceived stigma of blighted, abandoned, and contaminated properties on a community.

**Find a mentor.** The Southeast has many communities, big and small, that have successfully redeveloped Brownfields. Most are more than happy to give you advice and assistance in developing your Brownfields program. EPA can help you identify present and past successful Brownfields grantees.

**Identify your project area.** Most assessment grant applications are for community-wide assessment grants. This can cover the entire geographic jurisdiction of an applicant, such as a sprawling city or an entire county. Realistically, the limited funding will not allow you to spread dollars equally over a large area and you should consider concentrating the funding into a few areas with the greatest need. The Community Need information requested in our grant proposals examines human health, environmental, and financial indicators. Targeting areas with demographic data that compare unfavorably with city, county, state, or national averages will not only score your proposal more points, but it will help those with the greatest need.

**Get your targeted community(ies) involved.** As a first step, consider education for your targeted community on Brownfields. EPA and your state environmental agency can assist with this. A community's challenges often go well beyond the Brownfields properties themselves, to include health concerns, housing issues, and transportation limitations. In such cases, EPA can connect you with other federal partners for assistance. Keep the community informed through

flyers, newsletters, web sites or other appropriate means. If you have any language barriers, provide translations of information to maximize participation.

**Discuss your vision for your project area. If you don't have a vision, develop one.** Hold a charrette to get your community talking about its future. A shared vision can motivate a community and attract outside interest, and lead to a winning Brownfields grant proposal.

**Start identifying Brownfields in your target area.**

Development of an inventory of Brownfields properties is a critical step in creating a community Brownfields program. Initial development of an inventory doesn't have to be an expensive undertaking. Community members are often the best source of information about blighted or abandoned properties in their neighborhood. EPA Cleanups in My Community (<https://www.epa.gov/cleanups/cleanups-my-community>) is a web-based mapping tool that can be searched to identify additional sites that may be of concern. Your state environmental agency may also have on-line resources with information on sites in your target area. If applicable, your tax assessor's office may be able to identify tax-delinquent properties in your target area that may meet the definition of a Brownfields site. Business directories with information on plant closings are another possible source of information.

**Develop an approach to prioritize sites.** Which sites should you address first? Develop a priority scheme based on your objectives and vision for your target area. Some factors that might help prioritize sites include community concerns, health hazards, and potential for redevelopment.

**Involve private property owners.** In many cases Brownfields properties are under private ownership. If you intend to target these properties with your grant, be sure to have conversations with the landowner to ensure their willingness to participate. If you are applying for a site-specific assessment grant that addresses private property, it is wise to get a signed access agreement

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