



*R05-25-A-057*

## **SOUTH SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY COALITION**

### **Narrative Information Sheet**

#### **1. Applicant Identification**

Applicant Name: Cook County Department of Environment and Sustainability

Applicant Address: 69 West Washington Street, Suite 1900, Chicago, Illinois 60602

#### **2. Website URLs**

Lead applicant, Cook County Department of Environment and Sustainability website:

<https://www.cookcountyil.gov/agency/environment-and-sustainability>

Non-lead, South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association website: <https://www.ssmma.org/>

Non-lead, City of Harvey website: <https://www.cityofharveyil.gov/>

#### **3. Funding Requested**

- a. Assessment Grant Type: Assessment Coalition
- b. Federal Funds Requested: \$1,200,000

#### **4. Location**

- **Lead Applicant:** Cook County Department of Environment and Sustainability (CCDES) has jurisdiction within all of Cook County, Illinois. Cook County is located at the northeast corner of the State of Illinois, touching both Lake Michigan and the State of Indiana.
- **Non-lead Member:** South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA) is an intergovernmental agency providing technical assistance and joint services to 45 suburban municipalities located south of the City of Chicago, within Cook and Will Counties within the State of Illinois. This area is locally referred to as the "Southland."
- **Non-lead Member:** The City of Harvey is a municipality located in southern Cook County, Illinois. Its geographic area consists of the 6.21 square mile area within its municipal boundaries.

#### **5. Coalition Members' Target Areas and Priority Site Information**

- **Lead Member:** Cook County Department of Environment and Sustainability  
**Lead Member Target Area:** Portions of adjoining municipalities Village of Ford Heights/City of Chicago Heights Census Tracts: 17031829200, 17031828900, 17031829000, 17031829700, and 17031829100  
**Priority Site:** Future hydroponic agriculture and job training facility (907 to 925 East Lincoln Highway Ford Heights, Illinois)
- **Non-Lead Member:** South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association:  
**SSMMA Target Area:** Village of South Chicago Heights and Village of Park Forest  
Census Tracts: 17031829500, 17031830300, 17031829402, 17031830400, and 17031830202  
**SSMMA Priority Site:** Former Norwood Square Mall site 400-800 Norwood Square Drive Park Forest, Illinois

- **Non-Lead Member:** City of Harvey  
**City of Harvey Target Area:** City of Harvey  
**City of Harvey Priority Site:** 14900 Lexington Street Harvey, Illinois

## **6. Contacts**

### **a. Project Director**

Name: Cristin Williams, CHMM - Cook County Brownfield Program Manager

Phone Number: (312) 603-4944

Email: [Cristin.Williams@cookcountyil.gov](mailto:Cristin.Williams@cookcountyil.gov)

Mailing Address: Cook County Department of Environment and Sustainability 69 West Washington Street, Suite 1900, Chicago, Illinois 60602

### **b. Chief Executive/Highest Ranking Elected Official**

Name: Ms. Toni Preckwinkle, Cook County Board President

Phone Number: (312) 603-6400

Email: [Pamela.Cummings@cookcountyil.gov](mailto:Pamela.Cummings@cookcountyil.gov)

Mailing Address: 118 North Clark Street, Room 537 Chicago, Illinois 60602

## **7. Population**

Cook County: 5,087,072 total population

Population of CCDES Target Area communities:

Village of Ford Heights: 1,813

City of Chicago Heights: 26,184

Population of SSMMA Target Area communities:

Village of Park Forest: 21,687

Village of South Chicago Heights: 4,026

City of Harvey Population: 19,397

(continued on following page)

## **8. Other Factors**

<b>Other Factors</b>	<b>Page #</b>
Community population is 15,000 or less.	2
The applicant is, or will assist, a federally recognized Indian Tribe or United States Territory.	
The priority site(s) is impacted by mine-scarred land.	
The priority site(s) is adjacent to a body of water (i.e., the border of the priority site(s) is contiguous or partially contiguous to the body of water, or would be contiguous or partially contiguous with a body of water but for a street, road, or other public thoroughfare separating them).	
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain.	3
The reuse of the priority site(s) will facilitate renewable energy from wind, solar, or geothermal energy.	8
The reuse of the priority site(s) will incorporate energy efficiency measures.	4
The proposed project will improve local climate adaptation/mitigation capacity and resilience to protect residents and community investments.	4, 7
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).	
The target area(s) is impacted by a coal-fired power plant that has recently closed (2014 or later) or is closing.	

## **9. Letter from the State or Tribal Environmental Authority**

Please find attached a letter dated October 22, 2024 from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) acknowledging our intent to apply for FY24 grant funds and conduct assessment activities.

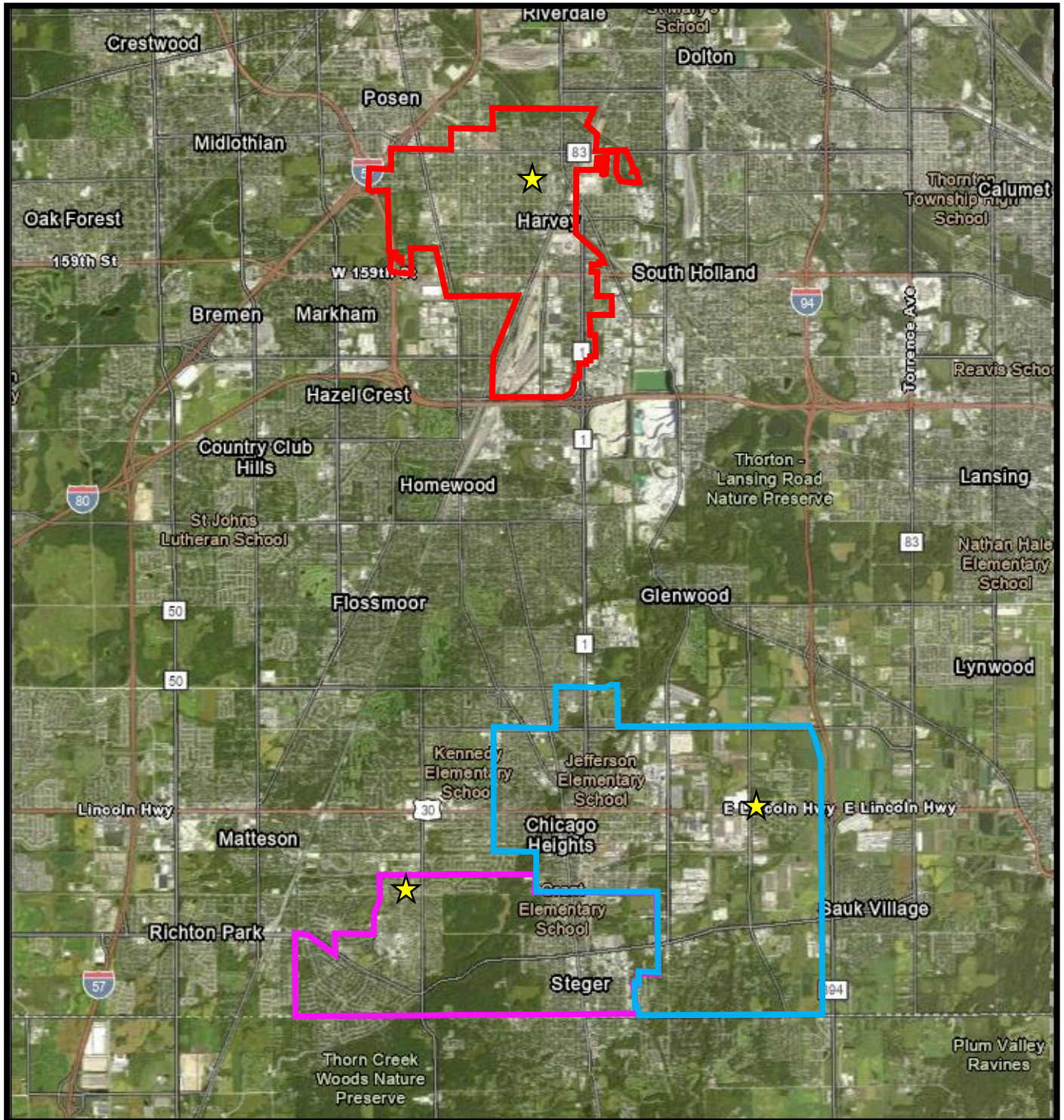
## **10. Releasing Copies of Applications**

Not applicable.



# South Suburban Cook County Coalition

FY25 EPA Brownfield Assessment Coalition Grant



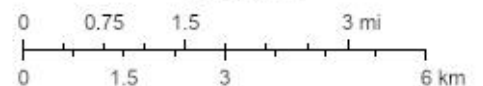
November 8, 2024



## MAP KEY

- = City of Harvey Target Area
- = CCDES Target Area
- = SSMMA Target Area
- ★ = Priority Site Location

1:144,448



Source: Esri, USDA FSA, Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



# ILLINOIS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

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JB PRITZKER, GOVERNOR

JAMES JENNINGS, ACTING DIRECTOR

217/785-8726

10/22/2024

Cook County (South Suburban Cook County Coalition)  
ATTN: Mr. Kevin Schnoes  
Director  
Cook County Department of Environment and Sustainability  
69 West Washington Avenue, Suite 1900  
Chicago, IL 60602

**Subject: State Acknowledgement Letter for Cook County  
FY2025 US EPA Brownfield Assessment Coalition Grant Application**

Dear Mr. Kevin Schnoes,

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA) has received your request for a letter of acknowledgement for an upcoming Assessment Coalition Grant application to U.S. EPA. Cook County is applying for a \$1,200,000 Assessment Coalition Grant.

The grant will be an Assessment Coalition Grant for Hazardous Substances and Petroleum.

Illinois EPA acknowledges the lead applicant Cook County and the non-lead coalition members the City of Harvey and South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association efforts to obtain federal Brownfields funds for this project. If you have any questions, I may be contacted at the above address or telephone numbers below, or at [Jacob.fink@illinois.gov](mailto:Jacob.fink@illinois.gov).

Sincerely,

Jacob Fink  
Brownfield Program Administrator  
Bureau of Land/Office of Site Evaluation  
Office# (217) 785-8726  
Cell# (217) 986-0818  
[Jacob.fink@illinois.gov](mailto:Jacob.fink@illinois.gov)



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## **1. PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION AND PLANS FOR REVITALIZATION**

### **1.a. Coalition Members, Target Areas and Brownfields**

#### **1.a.i. Coalition Members**

The non-lead members of the South Suburban Cook County Coalition (Coalition) include the City of Harvey and the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA). Harvey is a General Purpose Unit of Local Government founded in 1891. Harvey has never been awarded a United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfield Grant. The municipality has experienced severe financial challenges over the past 15 years, exacerbated by population loss, lawsuits, administration changes, and staff turnover. In 2018, Harvey was the first city in Illinois to have its revenue garnished by the state. According to Harvey Mayor Christopher Clark, the City has a budget deficit of over \$149,000,000 as of 2024. Harvey lacks staff capacity and relevant experience to apply for and manage a brownfield grant and does not possess the financial resources to address brownfield sites.

Established in 1978, the SSMMA is a tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) nonprofit Council of Governments providing technical assistance and joint services to 45 suburban member municipalities located south of Chicago, Illinois. SSMMA coordinates resources for transportation, legislation, land use, economic development, and other issues. SSMMA has a small staff of nine employees. The organization is funded primarily by municipal membership dues and various state and federal government grants. SSMMA is interested in providing brownfield assessment resources to its disadvantaged member municipalities; however, SSMMA staff lack brownfield-specific technical knowledge and are already assigned to active economic development, housing, and transportation initiatives. Due to staffing and budget constraints, SSMMA does not have the capacity to apply for or manage a multi-year brownfield grant.

#### **1.a.ii. Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Areas**

Cook County, founded in 1831, is a majority urban area in northeastern Illinois. Cook County borders Lake Michigan to the northeast and shares a border with Indiana directly to the east. Per the 2020 Census, Cook County has a population of 5,275,541 residents, making it the second most populated county in the United States. Cook County wholly contains the City of Chicago, along with 133 other municipalities and unincorporated areas. The entire geographic jurisdiction of suburban Cook County (excluding the City of Chicago, which pursues grant funding separately) will be eligible to access to EPA brownfield grant funds.

Cook County's south suburbs, inclusive of the target areas, are known locally as “The Southland.” The Southland has numerous environmental issues and brownfield sites resulting from former industrial facilities in the area. In the early 1900s, the Southland experienced economic growth, attracting large industrial employers including Inland Steel, Thrall Car Manufacturing Company, Stauffer Chemical Company, and Ford Motors. Cook County was an ideal location for early heavy industrial development, due to its geographic position near the center of the country and increasingly advanced and connected transportation infrastructure. During World War II, industrial business boomed as the area's factories produced steel, chemicals, and other critical war materials. Jobs attracted diverse blue-collar workers, including sizable African American, Polish, Irish, and Italian populations, to the Southland.

Businesses and the surrounding residential communities thrived until the late 1970s, when economic depression, competition from overseas industry, and sweeping advancements in manufacturing technology occurred. The downward spiral continued through the 2000s with Southland factories closing, forcing families to relocate in search of job opportunities. South suburban towns experienced drastic population losses of 20% to nearly 70% from 1980 to 2020, resulting in vacant and deteriorating homes. Large retail centers also closed from reduced demand, such as Dixie Square Mall in Harvey. Since the inception of the Cook County Brownfield Program in 2014, the Southland has seen an inspiring revitalization of salvageable industrial buildings and the construction of new commercial and industrial facilities. However, the Southland has a long road ahead. According to data presented by the University of Illinois, there are more than 600 brownfields on Chicago's Southeast Side and in the south suburbs, with over 1,370 leaking underground storage tank (LUST) cases, and nine closed landfills. CCDES is apply for a \$1,200,000 FY2025 Brownfield Coalition Assessment grant to evaluate brownfield sites in the Southland to help ensure the health and safety of residents, eliminate costly barriers to land redevelopment, and attract new jobs and services to disadvantaged communities.

As the lead applicant, CCDES's target area consists of portions of the **City of Chicago Heights and Village of Ford Heights**. The area is located approximately 25 miles south of downtown Chicago, Illinois. These communities are adjacent and connected via Lincoln Highway (US Rt. 30). This target area includes the following five census tracts: 17031829200, 17031828900, 17031829000, 17031829700, and 17031829100. All five census tracts within this target

area are considered disadvantaged per the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST). Over 200 brownfields exist in this target area, according to Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) data. Commercial corridors along Lincoln Highway and within downtown Chicago Heights contain vacant and/or abandoned gasoline stations, automotive repair shops, and dry cleaners. Once thriving residential areas and central business districts have seen high vacancy rates and lack of investment. Increasingly severe rain events have led to frequent flooding along Deer Creek in Ford Heights, resulting in residential evacuation orders, school closures, and resident relocation. Between 1980 and 2020, the population of Chicago Heights decreased from 37,026 to 27,480 (an over 25% reduction) and the population of Ford Heights decreased from 5,347 to 1,813 (66% reduction). Population loss resulted in numerous residential, commercial, and industrial vacancies throughout this area. Due to public safety concerns, many vacant and deteriorated structures have been demolished over the past 20 years, leaving large plats of vacant, potentially developable land. Open dumping of trash, building materials, furniture, and electronics is also a known issue impacting vacant, unsecured lots in this area.

As a nonlead coalition member, SSMMA's target area consists of portions of the **Village of South Chicago Heights and Village of Park Forest**. These municipalities are adjacent, partially separated by Sauk Trail Woods, a 630-acre natural area managed by Cook County Forest Preserve District. This target area is located approximately 27 miles south of downtown Chicago. Major thoroughfares connecting the two communities include Lincoln Highway to the north and Sauk Trail to the south. The South Chicago Heights-Park Forest target area includes the following five census tracts: 17031829500, 17031829600, 17031830300, 17031829402, and 17031830400. Two of the five census tracts are considered disadvantaged per CEJST. Park Forest was developed in the mid-1940s as a planned residential community for returning World War II veterans. Between 1980 and 2020, the population of Park Forest decreased from 26,222 to 21,687 (an over 26% reduction), resulting in the closure of commercial retail centers and the consolidation and closure of major schools. The housing stock of Park Forest is aging, with most homes over 50 years old. Potential new residents are attracted by updated, accessible, and affordable housing options. The Village of South Chicago Heights has faced similar challenges with abandoned properties and is working to address blighted areas by acquiring deeds to tax foreclosed properties. In the short term, South Chicago Heights aims to secure vacant buildings and implement regular police monitoring. Long term, South Chicago Heights goals is to attract businesses and services to commercial corridors and enhance resident quality of life.

As a nonlead coalition member, the **City of Harvey's** target area consists of the entire geographic boundaries of the city. All census tracts located within Harvey municipal boundaries are considered to be disadvantaged per CEJST. Harvey is located approximately 18 miles south of downtown Chicago. Similar to other south suburban municipalities, Harvey was impacted by the decline of the region's heavy industrial employers, as its residents began to relocate in the 1980s. Between 1980 and 2020, the Harvey's population dropped from 35,810 residents to 20,324 residents - an over 43% decrease. A 2017 report by National Public Radio estimated Harvey had over 1,000 vacant and abandoned properties and has since increased. Harvey's plan is to attract new commercial and light industrial development by leveraging the City's ample transportation assets and availability of large, vacant, developable lots.

By resolving environmental "unknowns" to help reduce investment risk, environmental assessment services offered through EPA Brownfield Grant funding will incentivize the revitalization of commercial and industrial corridors within the target areas.

#### **1.a.iii. Description of the Priority Brownfield Sites**

According to the EPA Cleanups in My Community Mapper, over 80 brownfield sites are in the target areas. IEPA also indicates the presence of 308 cleanup sites, including Site Remediation Program (SRP) and/or LUST sites, within the target areas. Coalition partners have identified the following sites as priorities.

The priority site within lead applicant CCDES's target area of **City of Chicago Heights and Village of Ford Heights** is the **Standard/Sinclair/Monty** site, an abandoned gas station located at 907-925 East Lincoln Highway in Ford Heights. This priority site consists of nine parcels, totaling 0.70 acres. The property is within a disadvantaged area, per CEJST. The property operated as a gas station from the mid-1960s to the 1990s. According to IEPA, the property is a LUST and SRP site. Seven petroleum underground storage tanks (USTs) were removed from the property in 2007, with funding from an IEPA Brownfield Redevelopment Grant. Petroleum contaminants were identified in soil and groundwater. Additional environmental assessment activities, including an asbestos survey, must be completed to further evaluate on-site contaminants and potential exposure routes prior to reuse by Cornerstone Community Development Corporation (CCDC) as a hydroponic farming and urban agriculture hub. The Standard/Sinclair/Monty

Site is adjacent to the north, and 60 feet from CCDC to the east. Further evaluation of on-site releases will also help ensure health and safety of low-income vicinity residents and community members. The site is a priority due to unknown environmental impacts to residents and a committed developer.

The priority site within non-lead coalition member SSMMA's target area of the **Village of South Chicago Heights and Village of Park Forest** is the **Former Norwood Square Shopping Center site** (Norwood Site), located at 400-800 Norwood Square Drive in Park Forest, Illinois. The property is approximately 12.75 acres and consists of a mostly vacant lot with one 13,000 square foot (sf) public works storage building. The property is owned by Park Forest and located within a disadvantaged area, per CEJST. Environmental reports funded by the IEPA Brownfield Program circa 2007 noted the property was developed with at least four commercial buildings in the 1950s. These structures underwent renovations and expansions throughout the 1980s. Phase II subsurface investigation activities (2005) identified subsurface impacts including tetrachloroethylene (TCE), perchloroethylene (PCE), and petroleum at the site from prior dry cleaning and automotive repair tenants. IEPA Brownfield grants funded the excavation and disposal of 101 tons of impacted soil. The property received an IEPA No Further Remediation (NFR) letter restricting the property to future commercial or industrial use. Multiple developers have approached the municipality with interest in redeveloping the site for multi-family residential purposes. However, developers have been unwilling to fund additional environmental assessment or remediation at the site. The site is a priority for Park Forest, as the Village supports redevelopment of the site for multi-family residential purposes to meet the extremely high demand for affordable, modern housing. EPA Brownfield funds would be used to complete additional environmental assessment activities and remedial planning to allow future residential redevelopment.

The priority site within non-lead coalition member City of Harvey's target area of the **City of Harvey** municipal limits consists of a four-acre vacant former industrial site located at **14900 Lexington Street** in Harvey, Illinois. The property is owned by Harvey and is in a disadvantaged area, per CEJST. A residential neighborhood borders the site immediately to the north and east with a high school two blocks southeast. The site is also located adjacent to a 100-year flood zone, as designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) funded in 2024 by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) by CCDES notes the property was developed for industrial use and occupied circa 1911 by Koch Machine Shop, and later by Fahrloy Company Steel Foundry for alloy steel casting use. By 1950, the facility was improved with a coke oven, a material transfer yard, various storage and processing buildings, and a railroad spur. Factory buildings were demolished in the late 1990s, and the site has remained vacant. Past industrial operations occurred prior to modern environmental regulations, and it is probable the property has soil and groundwater contamination consisting of heavy metals, petroleum products, and semi-volatile organic compounds. In recent years, the property has become a public nuisance as a location of frequent, illegal fly dumping. Harvey's plan is to redevelop the site as an environmentally-sensitive light industrial facility or as a community solar array. The site is a priority, as completion of environmental assessments would quantify environmental risk, attract developers, and protect health and safety of vicinity residents.

#### **1.a.iv. Identifying Additional Sites**

Ford Heights, Harvey, and Park Forest have developed strategic and/or comprehensive housing plans for their respective villages. These plans will assist the Coalition members as they identify additional sites for assessment in target areas. Site prioritization considerations include: 1) estimated cost and timeline to complete necessary environmental assessment activities, 2) estimated human health risk presented by known or suspected environmental contaminants, 3) location of a prospective brownfield site within a disadvantaged census tract per CEJST, 4) type of anticipated reuse or redevelopment plans for the site and progress on such plans, 5) demonstrated support of the municipality and community members, and 6) ability to leverage other funding to complete additional aspects of the project. Grant funds remaining after priority sites/target areas have been addressed will be used to identify additional sites.

#### **1.b. Revitalization of the Target Areas**

##### **1.b.i. Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans**

According to the 2020 Village of Ford Heights Strategic Plan, the **Standard/Sinclair/Monty Site** area is planned for future commercial use as part of the Lincoln Highway Commercial Corridor. The 2020 Strategic Plan empowers residents and local organizations to lead community-driven initiatives and improve residents' access to healthy foods. The planned redevelopment of the Standard/Sinclair/Monty Site for sustainable production of healthy foods will directly benefit the surrounding community and provide critical job-training opportunities.



According to the 2024 Harvey Comprehensive Plan, Harvey has over 930 acres of vacant land available for development, noting that the vacancies are both an ongoing issue for the community as well as an opportunity for reinvestment. Within the Plan, the **14900 Lexington Street** priority site is highlighted for environmentally sensitive light industrial, commercial, or solar development, based on the proximity of nearby residential development.

The Village of Park Forest strongly supports the future redevelopment of the **Norwood Site** for multi-family residential purposes, as the Village is experiencing high demand for affordable, modern housing which aligns with the Comprehensive Housing Plan (2018).

### **1.b.ii. Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy**

Following environmental assessment and remediation, the **Standard/Sinclair/Monty** priority site in the Ford Heights is planned for redevelopment as a hydroponic farming and urban agriculture hub. These efforts will be led by CCDC, a non-profit organization assisting vulnerable populations in times of crisis. Food grown at the hub will support CCDC's food pantry and community cafeteria operations and provide job training opportunities for individuals interested in the hydroponic farming industry. This project will help support local climate resilience, as the small and disadvantaged community (in the 85th percentile in the US for low-income individuals) will have reliable access to local, healthy food. The nearest grocery store is not accessible to many residents, as it is located nearly three miles away. Additionally, the self-contained hydroponic system is capable of operating in temperatures ranging from -40°F to 130°F, while utilizing 90% less irrigation water than traditional agriculture, allowing plants to flourish regardless of exterior climate conditions. Significant portions of the site will be left unpaved, providing a permeable surface to allow for rainwater infiltration and an updated stormwater plan will be required for development. This is important as storms increase in severity due to climate change and because the priority site census tract is within the 90th percentile for projected flood risk.

The **14900 Lexington Street** priority site in Harvey presents a prime industrial redevelopment opportunity following environmental assessment and cleanup to commercial/industrial remediation objectives. The site is approximately four acres in size, providing space for an industrial building (up to 80,000 SF) and associated parking, and is located in an optimal location near freight rail and major highways. The site is located within an EJ and disadvantaged community and the local unemployment rate is 10.10%, compared to the national unemployment rate of 4.1%. Redevelopment of this priority site with a new light industrial development will create employment opportunities through environmental remediation activities, new construction, and new facility operations. It is estimated redevelopment as a commercial/industrial facility will generate up to 600 jobs.

The **Norwood** priority site, located at 400-800 Norwood Square Drive in Park Forest is a mostly vacant grassy lot improved with one 13,000 sf public works storage building. The site is located in an EJ community (low income and 84% people of color) as well as a CEJST disadvantaged community, with housing costs in the 96<sup>th</sup> percentile. Developers have approached the municipality to redevelop the site as a multi-family residential complex, incorporating mixed use elements like ground floor commercial units. Much of the Village's housing stock consists of structures exceeding 50 years of age. The layout of older homes can present a challenge for seniors and mobility-challenged residents. A new multi-family residential development would be ADA-compliant, and incorporate energy efficiency measures such as LED lighting, efficient appliances, and automated climate controls – reducing energy bill costs for residents. New construction would also require updated stormwater planning. A new, modern, accessible, multi-family residential development providing an estimated 250 dwelling units at the Norwood Site would attract new residents to the Village, stimulating the much-needed revitalization of the Western Avenue Commercial Corridor in Park Forest.

### **1.c. Strategy for Leveraging Resources**

#### **1.c.i Resources Needed for Site Reuse**

The CCDES Brownfield Program has an EPA Brownfield Remediation Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) with \$1,200,000 available for disbursement. CCDES Brownfield Program received \$10,000,000 from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to support brownfield assessment and remediation projects within disadvantaged suburban communities. Since October 2022, the ARPA funding for brownfield projects has allowed CCDES to identify/screen 100 suburban brownfield sites, assess 53 sites, and remediate three sites. The ARPA funding has been fully obligated, therefore, FY25 EPA Brownfield Assessment funds will leverage the ARPA-funded activities and expand assessment efforts within the target areas and facilitate disbursement of RLF funds for remediation.

Of the three priority sites identified in this application, two sites (Standard/Sinclair/Monty Site and Norwood Site) have previously utilized IEPA Brownfield Grants to complete earlier phases of environmental assessment and

remediation. These prior grant funds have funded critical work and generated valuable site data. This existing information will enable CCDES to expand assessment efforts with precision, and not duplicate prior efforts.

The reuse/redevelopment of priority brownfield sites will demonstrate the effectiveness of leveraging brownfield funds from Federal, State, and County sources.

### **1.c.ii. Use of Existing Infrastructure**

The **Norwood** priority site in Park Forest is grass-covered, vacant land, with the exception of one 13,000 sf storage building used by public works to the west. The area is currently served by village sewer, water and electric; however, new roads, sidewalks, and trees will need to be installed to support a future multi-family development.

The **Standard/Sinclair/Monty** priority site in Ford Heights has existing infrastructure (water, sewer, streets) sufficient for site reuse as an agriculture hub and therefore requires no additional existing infrastructure.

The **14900 Lexington Street** priority site in Harvey is currently served by village sewer, water and electric that can be access for future onsite development.

## **2. COMMUNITY NEED AND ENGAGEMENT**

### **2.a. Community Need**

#### **2.a.i. Community's Need for Funding**

According to the University of Illinois, there were 612,828 workers in Cook County in the manufacturing sector in 1980. By 2014, just 255,642 workers in Cook County worked in manufacturing, forcing families to relocate away from the Southland in search of job opportunities. This drastic, regional population loss resulted in many vacant homes, of which many remain abandoned and deteriorated to this day. Between 1980 and 2020, many target area communities reported significant rates of population loss, including Chicago Heights (25% decrease), Ford Heights (66% decrease), Harvey (43% decrease), and Park Forest (26% decrease). As of 2024, Southland municipalities, including those containing target areas and priority sites, continue to struggle in attracting new residents and businesses. Residential and industrial vacancies have resulted in issues with widespread blight, illegal fly dumping, and crime. Property owners in Park Forest have also faced a debilitating tax burden, with the Village reporting a 43.3% property tax rate in 2024.

Target area communities also face high rates of unemployment compared to the national rate of 4.1%. Specifically, the unemployment rate in Chicago Heights is 6.4%, Ford Heights is 11.2%, South Chicago Heights is 4.2%, Park Forest is 8.4% and Harvey is 10.10%. Residents in target area communities also have lower median household income than the median household income rate for Cook County as a whole (\$78,304). Median household income rates of target area communities include Chicago Heights (\$56,755), Ford Heights (\$43,086), South Chicago Heights (\$52,115), Park Forest (\$58,907), and Harvey (\$40,898). Unemployment and income data was obtained from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP).

The three priority sites identified in this application are located within disadvantaged and low-income census tracts, according to CEJST. As a result of population decrease and income, combined with a history of disinvestment, all target area communities are severely deficient in property and sales tax to fund local government. In addition, target area municipalities do not possess the staff expertise or capacity to manage brownfield grants.

#### **2.a.ii. Threats to Sensitive Populations**

##### **2.a.ii.(1) Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations**

Compared to the Cook County average, selected target areas face disproportionate challenges when it comes to health and economic issues. Many residents of target areas also belong to sensitive populations, making them more susceptible to the harmful effects of toxic chemical exposures.

The entire geographic boundaries of **Chicago Heights and Ford Heights** Target Areas and the **Harvey** Target Area are identified as disadvantaged, per CEJST. **South Chicago Heights and Park Forest** Target Areas include the following five census tracts 17031829500, 17031829600, 17031830300, 17031829402, and 17031830400, of which two are disadvantaged per CEJST. EPA EJScreen notes all three target areas have critical service gaps including housing burden, transportation access burden, and food deserts (i.e. limited access to affordable and nutritious food).

According to the Illinois Department of Public Health, Black women are three times as likely to die from pregnancy-related medical conditions as white women. The percentage of Black residents in target areas is higher than the national average (13.7%) compared to Chicago Heights/Ford Heights (41% Black residents), Harvey (60%), and Park Forest/South Chicago Heights (54%), according to US Census 2023 population estimates.

The following data from EJScreen highlights the percentage of low-income individuals, people of color, unemployment, and disabled residents within the target areas, as compared to the national average:

Target Area	% Low Income	% People of Color	Unemployment Rate	% Disabled Residents
<i>US Average</i>	30%	40%	4.1%	13.7%
<b>Chicago Heights &amp; Ford Heights</b>	53%	82%	11%	20%
<b>Harvey</b>	52%	97%	15%	22%
<b>Park Forest &amp; South Chicago Heights</b>	41%	75%	9%	11%

Following environmental assessment and remediation of identified impacts, brownfield properties will become opportunities for reuse. Revitalization of underutilized brownfield sites will bring new job opportunities and resources to target areas facing elevated unemployment rates. Delineation, treatment and/or removal of subsurface contaminants will reduce exposure to hazardous environmental pollutants, which is critical for communities already facing an inequitable rate of health disparities. Due to decades of disinvestment and population loss, target area municipalities are not well equipped to fund or manage brownfield projects. EPA Brownfield funding for environmental assessment will assist in assessing site hazards, developing remedial strategies, and designing site reuse or redevelopment plans.

### **2.a.ii.(2) Greater Than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions**

With its history of industrial activity, southern Cook County has well-documented environmental issues relating to air, land, and water. Vacant industrial sites continue to harm residents through soil and groundwater contamination. Active industrial facilities cause environmental pollution through incremental and emergency releases of toxic chemicals. Cook County residents may be impacted through the consumption of contaminated groundwater, ingestion of soil and dust, migration of vapor into homes, and consuming food grown on contaminated land.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicates exposure to many environmental factors can exacerbate asthma. Air pollution contributes to the increase in asthma incidence in most industrialized counties, such as Cook County. Cook County is a Clean Air Act (CAA) non-attainment area for ozone. Historically, Cook County was a non-attainment area for lead, particulate matter of 10 microns in diameter or less (PM-10), PM 2.5, and sulfur dioxide. These airborne pollutants have serious health consequences for residents, contributing to asthma and other debilitating respiratory illnesses. The selected target areas rank above the 75th percentile for asthma in Illinois, demonstrating a higher-than-normal rate of disease occurrence.

Exposure to high levels of toxic chemicals can harm health and increase cancer risk, according to the CDC. Specifically, exposure to chemicals (such as TCE, PCE, benzene, and vinyl chloride) has been linked to the formation of cancer. These chemicals have been detected at brownfield sites in the target areas.

According to a 2017 article titled *Environmental Determinants of Cardiovascular Disease*, authored by Aruni Bhatnagar, PhD and published in *Circulation Research*, many natural, personal, and social environmental factors can contribute to a person's risk of developing cardiovascular disease. According to the same article, “although exposure to PM 2.5 has been linked to premature mortality due to respiratory diseases and cancer, between 70% and 80% of premature deaths because of exposure to PM 2.5 are due to cardiovascular causes.” Extensive evidence demonstrates individuals exposed recurrently to air pollution are more likely to experience cardiovascular events and disease. All target areas are noted to be above the 64th percentile for heart disease in Illinois, per data from EJScreen.

Residents of the target areas have a lower life expectancy than the average Illinois resident, per data from EJScreen. Many social, economic, and environmental factors contribute to this lower life expectancy; however, residents of target areas do experience a higher-than-normal rate of exposure to dangerous environmental pollutants.

Health Indicator	Chicago Heights & Ford Heights Target Area	Harvey Target Area	Park Forest & South Chicago Heights Target Area
<b>Asthma</b>	82nd percentile	92nd percentile	77th percentile
<b>Heart Disease</b>	59th percentile	80th percentile	65th percentile
<b>Low Life Expectancy</b>	78th percentile	87th percentile	80th percentile

EPA Brownfield Assessment funds will contribute to the mitigation of the environmental hazards which disproportionately affect the health of residents in southern Cook County.

### **2.a.ii.(3) Environmental Justice**

#### **2.a.ii.(3)(a) Identification of Environmental Justice Issues:**

The selected coalition target areas face disproportionate challenges for health and economic issues. All three coalition priority sites are located within disadvantaged census tracts according to CEJST. The table below indicates the percentage of individuals of color in the priority site census blockgroup and the specific burden thresholds exceeded in each priority site census tract, per CEJST and EJScreen.

Priority Site Name	% People of Color*	Burden Thresholds Exceeded
<b>Standard Sinclair Monty</b>	99%	Low Income, Expected Agriculture Loss Rate, Flood Risk, Proximity to Risk Management Plan Facilities, Wastewater Discharge, High Unemployment
<b>14900 Lexington St</b>	100%	Low Income, Energy Cost, PM-2.5, Asthma, Diabetes, Proximity to Risk Management Plan Facilities, Underground Storage Tanks and Releases, Low Median Income, Poverty, Unemployment, Less Than High School Education
<b>Norwood Site</b>	90%	Low Income, Low Median Income, High Unemployment, Housing Cost, Lack of Indoor Plumbing

### 2.a.ii.3(b) Advancing Environmental Justice

Environmental justice is a key objective of *Cook County's 2024 to 2027 Policy Roadmap*. Specifically, Cook County seeks to advance environmental justice by investing equitably across the County to address historic disinvestment and inequitable pollutant overburden. Cook County offers programs to reduce exposure to pollution, with priority given to environmental justice areas. The goals of the CCDES's Brownfield Program are to protect human health and return underutilized properties to productive use. EPA Brownfield Assessment funds will be used to assist the disadvantaged and low-income communities identified in the coalition target areas.

The prioritization of environmental assessment and remediation within overburdened and underserved communities advances equity and environmental justice. Additionally, redevelopment projects planned for priority sites will promote environmental justice by helping to alleviate specific burdens experienced by target area communities, as discussed below:

The reuse of the **Standard/Sinclair/Monty** priority site will help a non-profit organization improve the quality of life for underprivileged individuals through a job-training program for plant care and hydroponic system maintenance. Healthy fruits and vegetables produced through various farming methods will be provided to local residents through CCDC's adjacent food pantry and community cafeteria. On-site food production helps promote community resiliency by providing local access to healthy food. Additionally, August 2024 data from CMAP indicates 11.2% of Ford Heights residents are unemployed. Job training efforts focused on hydroponic system operation and maintenance, as well as plant care, will provide job seekers skills to help acquire full-time employment.

The **Norwood** priority site in Park Forest has existed as a mostly vacant lot improved with one 13,000 sf building for at least 10 years. Multiple developers have approached the municipality with interest in redeveloping the site with a multi-building, multi-family residential complex, also featuring ground floor commercial units. Unfortunately, subsurface conditions at the site do not support residential remediation objectives, due to the presence of elevated levels of VOCs and other constituents of concern in soil. Therefore, residential use is not allowable under the current NFR letter. According to CEJST, the Norwood Site is in the 96th percentile for housing cost burden. The future redevelopment of the site for affordable, multi-family residential purposes, will provide additional affordable housing units for low-income families.

Following environmental assessment and remediation (if necessary), the **14900 Lexington Street** site would be marketed by the City of Harvey for future light industrial or community solar array use. Redevelopment of the priority site with a light industrial development would create new jobs and benefit the Harvey community, which currently experiences 14.6% unemployment (according to August 2024 data from CMAP).

## 2.b. Community Engagement

### 2.b.i. Project Involvement/2.b.ii Project Roles

The following table includes partners who will assist CCDES with activities under the EPA Brownfield Assessment grant:

Project Involvement/Project Roles
<p><b>Name of Organization:</b> Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County (CEDA)</p> <p><b>Organization Mission:</b> Empowering individuals facing poverty to secure a better quality of life. Offers a variety of programs and services in the areas of community and economic development, education, emergency assistance, employment and training, energy conservation and services, health and nutrition, and housing.</p> <p><b>Point of Contact:</b> John Pady, Chief Program Officer, <a href="mailto:jpady@cedaorg.net">jpady@cedaorg.net</a></p> <p><b>Specific Involvement in the Project:</b> Community engagement and brownfield site identification throughout Southland, but especially in Harvey.</p>
<p><b>Name of Organization:</b> Cornerstone Community Development Corporation (CCDC)</p> <p><b>Organization Mission:</b> CCDC is a minority, community based nonprofit organization, located in Ford Heights. Its core mission is to improve the quality of life for the underprivileged and assist vulnerable populations.</p> <p><b>Point of Contact:</b> Kamil Walton, Deputy Director, <a href="mailto:kamil.walton@cornerstone-cdc.org">kamil.walton@cornerstone-cdc.org</a></p> <p><b>Specific Involvement in the Project:</b> Redevelopment efforts associated with Standard/Sinclair/Monty priority site as agricultural hub site. Organization is well-connected with the small community of Ford Heights and can facilitate public meetings, as needed.</p>
<p><b>Name of Organization:</b> South Suburban Land Bank &amp; Development Authority (SSLBDA)</p> <p><b>Organization Mission:</b> Through collaborative efforts, breathe new life into communities, create vibrant spaces for residents and businesses, and boost economic vitality of the Chicago Southland.</p> <p><b>Point of Contact:</b> Joseph van Dyk, Executive Director, <a href="mailto:joseph.vandyk@southlanddevelopment.org">joseph.vandyk@southlanddevelopment.org</a></p> <p><b>Specific Involvement in the Project:</b> Identification of brownfield sites</p>
<p><b>Name of Organization:</b> City of Harvey</p> <p><b>Organization Mission:</b> Build a better future and higher quality of life for Harvey residents.</p> <p><b>Point of Contact:</b> Cesar Suarez, Economic Development Director, <a href="mailto:csuarez@cityofharveyil.gov">csuarez@cityofharveyil.gov</a></p> <p><b>Specific Involvement in the Project:</b> Non-lead coalition member. Nominated 14900 Lexington Street (priority site) to receive brownfield assistance. Assisting in the identification of additional municipal-owned brownfield sites in Harvey. Can facilitate community meetings for reuse visioning.</p>
<p><b>Name of Organization:</b> South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA)</p> <p><b>Organization Mission:</b> SSMMA is an intergovernmental agency providing technical assistance and joint services to 45 municipalities in Cook and Will Counties.</p> <p><b>Point of Contact:</b> Kristi DeLaurentiis, Executive Director, <a href="mailto:kdelaurentiis@ssmma.org">kdelaurentiis@ssmma.org</a></p> <p><b>Specific Involvement in the Project:</b> Non-lead coalition member. Through regular meetings with south suburban municipal leaders, can publicize the availability of EPA Brownfield Grant funding for assessment and assist in the identification of additional brownfield sites.</p>
<p><b>Name of Organization:</b> Village of Park Forest</p> <p><b>Organization Mission:</b> Serve the residents of Park Forest.</p> <p><b>Point of Contact:</b> Andrew Brown, Assistant Director of Economic Development and Planning, <a href="mailto:ajbrown@vopf.com">ajbrown@vopf.com</a></p> <p><b>Specific Involvement in the Project:</b> Municipality is part of SSMMA's target area. Recommended Norwood priority site. Shared information about potential for affordable multi-family housing redevelopment and will be involved with site selection and reuse of brownfield sites within the target area.</p>
<p><b>Name of Organization:</b> Village of South Chicago Heights</p> <p><b>Organization Mission:</b> Provide excellent services to residents and keep tax rates low.</p> <p><b>Point of Contact:</b> Nora Gomez, Village Administrator, <a href="mailto:ngomez@southchicagoheights.com">ngomez@southchicagoheights.com</a></p> <p><b>Specific Involvement in the Project:</b> Community engagement and brownfield site identification.</p>
<p><b>Name of Organization:</b> Village of Ford Heights</p> <p><b>Organization Mission:</b> Serve residents of Ford Heights.</p> <p><b>Point of Contact:</b> Charles Griffin, Mayor, <a href="mailto:charles.griffin@fordheights.org">charles.griffin@fordheights.org</a></p> <p><b>Specific Involvement in the Project:</b> Community engagement/visioning for the Standard/Sinclair/Monty site.</p>
<p><b>Name of Organization:</b> City of Chicago Heights</p> <p><b>Organization Mission:</b> Serve residents of Chicago Heights.</p>



**Project Involvement/Project Roles**

**Point of Contact:** Thomas “TJ” Somer, Counsel,  
[TJSomer@chicagoheights.net](mailto:TJSomer@chicagoheights.net)

**Specific Involvement in the Project:** Community engagement and brownfield site identification.

**2.b.iii. Incorporating Community Input**

According to the 2024 to 2027 Cook County Policy Roadmap, “Open Communities” are a top priority for Cook County government. Cook County seeks to improve communications with residents, including those with unique needs related to disability, language and other barriers, and also improve community engagement by involving community members and stakeholders that centers them in processes and informs planning. CCDES and the non-lead coalition members will communicate progress and seek public involvement regarding grant activities through the following methods:

CCDES: Public meetings-within target areas, virtual public meetings, press releases, CCDES website for information sharing, CCDES social media and quarterly e-newsletter, in-person outreach at community events and festivals, translation of outreach materials into Spanish

Non-lead Coalition Members: Individual websites and social media, community feedback/visioning surveys distributed on websites and social media, update respective board members

Target Area Municipalities: Update city officials and residents at city council meetings

All: Community specific outreach, ADA accommodations for disabled individuals and seniors

**3. TASK DESCRIPTIONS, COST ESTIMATES, AND MEASURING PROGRESS****3.a. Description of Tasks/Activities and Outputs**

The Coalition will utilize grant funds to conduct four tasks: (1) programmatic activities and community outreach, (2) brownfield site inventory and site prioritization, (3) Phase I and II ESA, and (4) preparation of Remedial Action Plans (RAP). Each task will be conducted throughout the 4-year period of the grant. The Coalition will collaborate on community outreach and brownfield site inventory at the start of the grant. These tasks will continue, as needed, throughout the grant period. Following an internal site evaluation process, qualified prospective brownfield sites will be prioritized for assessment. Applicable documents, such as a site eligibility form, will be submitted for EPA approval. Phase I ESA and/or Phase II ESA, may proceed following execution of the access agreement by all parties. RAPs may also be prepared by the consultant following assessment activities and with approval of the Coalition.

**3.a.i. to 3.a.iv. Project Implementation/Anticipated Schedule/Task Activity Lead/Outputs****Task 1: Programmatic Activities and Community Outreach**

**i. Project Implementation:** Led by CCDES staff, the programmatic activities will include overall grant management and reporting, procurement, ACRES data entry and contract oversight, financial management, monitoring compliance with Work Plan. CCDES will also lead community engagement activities, described in Section IV.E.2.b.. A kickoff meeting will be organized by CCDES for the Coalition. QAPP will be updated. CCDES will send at least one staff member to the EPA brownfield conference, which will be held locally in Chicago in 2025

**ii. Anticipated Project Schedule:** Procurement/Selection of Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP) and setting up financial systems - 1<sup>st</sup> quarter, Development of Community Engagement Plan-1<sup>st</sup> quarter

**iii. Task/Activity Lead:** CCDES staff, with in-kind guidance from non-lead coalition members. Environmental consultant will update QAPP.

**iv. Outputs:** Community outreach and education, Brownfield Conference attendance, ACRES data entry, quarterly and annual MBE/WBE reports and final reporting.

**Task 2: Brownfield Site Inventory and Prioritization**

**i. Project Implementation:** CCDES staff will collect and review available brownfield site data to select and prioritize properties for further environmental investigation. Non-lead coalition partners will also recommend potential brownfield sites. CCDES will maintain a site inventory database and manage site information in EPA’s ACRES database. The CCDES Brownfield Program website will also provide an online, interactive map depicting brownfield site inventory data, which will be updated quarterly.

**ii. Anticipated Project Schedule:** Throughout grant period. CCDES will work to expand the brownfield inventory within the first two years of the grant.

**iii. Task/Activity Lead:** CCDES staff. County GIS Department staff will also provide in-kind support to manage development of the interactive map.

**iv. Outputs:** Expanded brownfield database, selection of vetted, prioritized sites, public interactive map of inventory.

### **Task 3: Environmental Site Assessments**

**i. Project Implementation:** Brownfield sites which have been reviewed by the Coalition, prioritized, and approved for funding by EPA will receive necessary environmental site assessment services from the QEP. An ASTM E1527-21-compliant Phase I ESA will determine if a site is likely to be contaminated with hazardous substances or petroleum products. As funding allows, ASTM E1903-11 Phase II ESA Subsurface Investigation will be performed to characterize the nature and extent of the impacts.

**ii. Anticipated Project Schedule:** Following approval of the Cooperative Agreement, environmental assessment work will be initiated at priority sites. Phase I ESAs will be completed for the Standard/Sinclair/Monty site and the Former Norwood Shopping Center site within the first two months of the grant period. Phase II ESA work will likely be initiated following completion of Phase I ESA work for both sites, with the first round of subsurface assessment results expected by the 6th month of the grant period.

Given the 2024-completion of a Phase I ESA for the 14900 Lexington Street site, Phase II work at this site may begin within the first 2 months of the grant period. Supplemental sites will begin receiving environmental assessment services by the 4th month of the grant period. CCDES intends to use grant funds to expand on previous environmental work already performed at brownfield sites, of which a significant portion was funded by Cook County.

**iii. Task/Activity Lead:** CCDES will lead and oversee the QEP

**iv. Outputs:** QAPP, Site Eligibility Forms, Phase I ESAs, Phase II ESAs, Supplemental Site Investigations. The Coalition anticipates approximately 56 Phase I ESAs and 18 Phase II ESAs will be completed during the grant period.

### **Task 4: Remediation and Redevelopment Planning**

**i. Project Implementation:** Sites selected for RAPs will also be enrolled by CCDES in the IEPA SRP or LUST program.

**ii. Anticipated Project Schedule:** CCDES anticipates that one RAP will begin by the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year and continue throughout the term of the project.

**iii. Task/Activity Lead:** CCDES will oversee the QEP

**iv. Outputs:** RAPs and redevelopment planning meetings. The Coalition anticipates approximately 9 RAPs will be completed during the grant period.

### **3.b. Cost Estimates**

Average costs of brownfield services, based on CCDES's experience with QEP consulting firms, are provided below. Personnel cost is based on an hourly rate of \$50 and a fringe rate of 43%. Additional in-kind labor will be performed by CCDES for grant activities. An allowable 4.86% Administrative Costs have been added to support the coalition in the form of Indirect Costs for grant management.

#### **Task 1: Programmatic Activities and Community Outreach**

**Personnel:** Brownfield website edits, development of handouts, social media posts, emails and phone calls to municipalities: **\$15,000** (300 hrs at \$50/hr); Community meeting presentations for marketing/awareness: **\$7,500** (150 hrs at \$50/hr). Quarterly (and as-needed) meetings with coalition partners (20 meetings at 2 hrs each) **\$2,000** biweekly meetings with QEP (approx. 96 meetings, 1 hr each) **\$4,800**. Grant management/admin tasks in ACRES, yearly financial reporting, QEP procurement, programmatic support for the four-year period (600 hrs) **\$30,000**.

**Contractual:** Updating of QAPP **\$5,000**. Biweekly meetings with CCDES (\$150/hr for QEP, approx. 80 meetings) **\$12,000**.

#### **Task 2: Brownfield Site Inventory and Prioritization**

**Personnel:** Support with Site Inventory and GIS map creation **\$7,500** (150 hrs). **Contractual:** N/A

#### **Task 3: Environmental Site Assessments**

**Personnel:** Oversight of QEP (assume 100 site visits at 2 hrs each) **\$10,000**, and review of reports (assume 100 reports or other documents, 3 hrs review/discuss each) **\$15,000**.

**Contractual:** Phase I ESA - Average cost of \$5,000 per ESA, CCDES 55 Phase I ESAs will be completed by a QEP under the grant for a total of **\$275,000**. The average cost of a Phase II ESA is \$30,000, and CCDES estimates 17 Phase II ESAs will be completed by a QEP under the grant for a total cost of **\$510,000**.

#### **Task 4: - Remediation and Redevelopment Planning**

**Personnel:** Facilitation of community visioning meetings (2 hrs prep, 2 hrs attendance at \$50/hr, assume 30 meetings) **\$6,000**.

**Contractual:** RAPs cost an average of \$20,000 for a complex brownfield site. CCDES estimates 10 RAPs will be completed under the grant by a QEP for a total cost of **\$200,000**.

Budget Categories	Project Tasks (\$)				
Direct Costs	Task 1: Programmatic Activities & Community Engagement	Task 2: Inventory & Prioritization	Task 3: Environmental Assessment	Task 4: Remediation Planning	Total
Personnel	\$59,300	\$7,500	\$25,000	\$6,000	\$97,800
Fringe Benefits	\$25,614	\$3,240	\$10,799	\$2,592	\$42,244
Travel/Equipment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Supplies	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Contractual	\$17,000	\$0	\$785,000	\$200,000	\$1,002,000
Construction	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Direct Costs	\$101,914	\$10,740	\$820,799	\$208,592	\$1,142,044
Indirect Costs	\$35,141	\$4,445	\$14,815	\$3,556	\$57,956
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$137,055</b>	<b>\$15,184</b>	<b>\$835,614</b>	<b>\$212,147</b>	<b>\$1,200,000</b>

### **3.c. Plan to Measure and Evaluate Environmental Progress and Results**

CCDES will track progress under the established Work Plan and will report to the Coalition partners on a quarterly basis. CCDES will update the ACRES database with site information and submit quarterly/final reports to EPA.

Tracking and reporting will include the following metrics, which will be tracked both during and after the grant period:

- # of public meetings held
- # of brownfield consultant meetings held
- # of Phase I ESAs completed
- # of RAPs completed
- Amount of funds expended per project
- # of Coalition meetings held
- # of brownfield sites within inventory
- # of Phase II ESAs completed
- # of brownfield sites entered in IEPA LUST or SRP
- Anticipated # of jobs created

## **4. PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITY AND PAST PERFORMANCE**

### **4.a. Programmatic Capability**

#### **4.a.i. Organizational Capacity**

CCDES's previous two Coalition Assessment grants were completed within the period of performance for the respective grants. CCDES completed all the technical requirements of the grant; accomplishments are outlined under section "IV.E.4.b." CCDES is a 50-person department with a \$3M operating budget and multiple federal grants. CCDES accesses multiple County resources to meet goals of the grant, including experienced planning and economic development staff within the Department of Planning and Development, contract/grant specialists in the Department of Budget and Procurement, and location-specific board members to facilitate meetings in applicable County Districts.

#### **4.a.ii. Organizational Structure**

The CCDES Brownfield Program Manager will maintain frequent contact with the Coalition partners. The Program Manager will conduct quarterly meetings with the Coalition partners to provide updates and coordinate grant activities, including sites under assessment and remediation planning, funding expenditures and balances, and outputs/outcomes. SSMMA is governed by an executive director and board of directors. Harvey is led by a mayor and six-member city council.

The Qualified Environmental Professional will report to the Brownfield Program Manager on a bi-weekly basis to update the status on brownfield projects. The Brownfield Program Manager will coordinate with CCDES Financial Manager to track the grant's financial status. The CCDES Financial Manager coordinates with the Cook County Bureau of Finance to set budgets, obtain board-approved appropriations, execute contracts, and invoice payment.

#### **4.a.iii. Description of Key Staff**

Cristin Williams has served as CCDES's Brownfield Program Manager since 2022 and will be the program manager of the FY25 Brownfield Coalition Assessment Grant. She performs outreach to municipalities and organizations, evaluates proposed brownfield sites, collaborates with environmental consultants and professional engineers to advance remediation projects, and contributes to several department sustainability programs. Prior to joining CCDES, Ms. Williams spent 10 years as an environmental consultant and project manager. She graduated from Indiana University in 2012 with a B.S. in Environmental Management. Ms. Williams is an Environmental Professional, Certified Hazardous Materials Manager (CHMM), and has a 40-hour Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) certification.

Kevin Schnoes, Interim Director, will assist with grant management. Mr. Schnoes managed CCDES's previous brownfield Coalition Assessment and Revolving Loan Fund grants and has over 33 years of experience in the investigation and cleanup of contaminated sites. He has worked extensively guiding sites through IEPA's SRP and LUST programs. Prior to CCDES, he managed the program at the City of Chicago responsible for the cleanup of numerous sites. He has a B.S. in Geology, an M.S. in Environmental Management and is a Licensed Professional Geologist in Illinois.

Julia Theis, Director of Financial Control, will manage purchasing, financial tracking, invoicing and expenditure reporting. She has 16 years of experience in government and private business administration and an MBA in Finance.

#### **4.a.iv. Acquiring Additional Resources**

CCDES will retain a QEP to assist with assessment grant activities, including performance of environmental site assessments. CCDES's procurement process will select a consultant using Cook County Department of Procurement Services fair and open competitive selection procedures that meet federal procurement requirements, such as 2 CFR Part 200, 2 CFR Part 1500, and 40 CFR Part 33. Additionally, Cook County's procurement policy includes a commitment to using local labor, utilizing responsible contractors with a history of safe and strong labor practices, using minority- and women-owned businesses. The selected consultant will have prior experience working on EPA brownfield projects and will be familiar with IEPA SRP and LUST programs.

#### **4.b. Past Performance and Accomplishments**

##### **4.b.i. Currently Has or Previously Received an EPA Brownfields Grant**

##### **4.b.i.1 Accomplishments**

CCDES was the recipient of a FY2014 Brownfield Coalition Assessment grant for \$600,000. CCDES led a coalition of seven municipal partners from Cook County's Western Suburbs – Bellwood, Forest Park, Franklin Park, Melrose Park, Maywood, Northlake, and Schiller Park. CCDES was the recipient of a FY2018 Brownfield Coalition Assessment grant for \$600,000 for a coalition of three municipal partners in Cook County's southern suburbs – Chicago Heights, Ford Heights, and Sauk Village. CCDES is also the recipient of an FY2018 Revolving Loan Fund grant for \$751,000. CCDES also received a supplemental \$950,000 to expand its existing RLF in 2024.

Under the FY2014 Coalition Assessment grant, 54 brownfield sites identified and screened; Phase I/II activities were conducted at 24 sites; and seven RAPs were prepared to navigate sites through IEPA's SRP program. CCDES entered site information in ACRES. Approximately 130 acres were assessed with 120 acres undergoing remediation and development resulting in approximately 400 jobs created/retained. Under the FY2018 Coalition Assessment grant, 34 brownfield sites were identified and prioritized; Phase I/II activities were conducted at 27 sites; and seven RAPs were prepared to navigate sites through the IEPA SRP Program. CCDES entered site information in ACRES. Approximately 273 acres were assessed, 200 acres remediated, and development resulted in approximately 100 jobs created/retained. All prior EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant funds have been fully expended.

##### **4.b.i.2. Compliance with Grant Requirements**

For both prior EPA Coalition Assessment Grants, CCDES was in full compliance with grant requirements. All grant funds were utilized within the approved period of the grant. The activities under the previous Coalition Assessment grant were conducted in accordance with the grant Workplan and approved QAPP. Quarterly grant reports were submitted in a timely manner and relevant data was entered in ACRES. Progress was achieved towards the grant outputs such as # of Coalition meetings, # of brownfield sites identified, # of Phase I/II ESAs completed, # of acres assessed, acreage made ready for reuse, and # of green remediation options identified. Progress was also made toward the grant outcomes including # of cleanups completed, and # of acres available for redevelopment.

## **THRESHOLD CRITERIA FOR COALITION ASSESSMENT GRANTS**

### **1. Applicant Eligibility**

- a) I affirm that my organization is a County, and therefore, eligible to apply for this assessment grant.  
Applicant Type: Cook County, Illinois is a county government, also known as a “general purpose unit of local government” as defined in 2 CRF 200.64. Cook County is eligible to receive a USEPA Brownfield Assessment Grant and serve as the lead member of a brownfield assessment coalition.
- b) Cook County is not exempt from Federal taxation under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code.

### **2. Number and Eligibility of Non-lead Coalition Members**

Two (2) non-lead coalition members are partnering with Cook County for the FY25 Assessment Coalition Grant. All non-lead coalition members are eligible for an FY25 Assessment Coalition Grant, and are discussed as follows:

- The City of Harvey is a General Purpose Unit of Local Government as defined under 40 CFR Part 31
- South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

Documentation is included as an attachment.

### **3. Target Areas**

As the lead applicant, **CCDES's** target area consists of portions of the City of Chicago Heights and Village of Ford Heights. This target area includes the following five census tracts: 17031829200, 17031828900, 17031829000, 17031829700, and 17031829100.

Non-lead Coalition Member **South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA)**'s target area consists of portions of the Village of South Chicago Heights and Village of Park Forest. This target area includes the following five census tracts: 17031829500, 17031829600, 17031830300, 17031829402, and 17031830400.

Non-lead Coalition Member **City of Harvey's** target area consists of the entire municipality of Harvey, within its established municipal geographic limits.

### **4. Existing Brownfields Grants to Non-lead Members**

- a) The City of Harvey has never been awarded an EPA Brownfields MARC Grant.
- b) This section is not applicable, as neither of the Non-Lead Members have existing brownfield grants.

### **5. Coalition Agreement**

Letters of commitment from both Non-lead Coalition Members, the City of Harvey and SSMMA, are attached.

### **6. Community Involvement**

According to the 2024 to 2027 Cook County Policy Roadmap, “Open Communities” is listed as a top priority for Cook County government. Cook County seeks to improve communications with residents, paying special attention to those with unique needs related to disability, language and other barriers, and also improve community engagement by involving community members and stakeholders in an authentic way that centers them in processes and informs planning. To that end, CCDES is committed to meaningful and sustained community involvement to ensure each brownfield project is successful in maximizing positive outcomes for



target area residents. Engagement and collaboration are especially critical in the Coalition communities, where the opinions of minority and low-income voices were historically excluded from local and regional planning efforts.

CCDES previously collaborated with SSMMA and the Technical Assistance for Brownfields (TAB) program to host a local Brownfields Workshop in 2017. This educational workshop included representatives from USEPA, IEPA, and local government agencies presenting a discussion of the history of industrialization and how it led to brownfields, a brief overview of the assessment, remediation, and cleanup processes, and examples of brownfields that have been successfully redeveloped. The workshop was designed to build community capacity to identify possible brownfield opportunities and resources. During the course of the FY25 USEPA Assessment Grant, CCDES would like to host similar educational, capacity-building workshops in the south suburbs.

With the full support of the County, CCDES and the non-lead coalition members will communicate progress and seek public involvement regarding brownfield grant activities through the following methods:

CCDES: Public meetings-within target areas, virtual public meetings, press releases, CCDES website for information sharing, CCDES social media and quarterly e-newsletter, in-person outreach at community events and festivals, translation of outreach materials into Spanish

Non-lead Coalition Members: Individual websites and social media, community feedback/visioning surveys distributed on websites and social media, update respective board members

Target Area Municipalities: Update city officials and residents at city council meetings

All: Community specific outreach, ADA accommodations for disabled individuals and seniors

## **7. Expenditure of Existing Grant Funds**

I affirm that my organization (CCDES) **does not** have an active EPA Brownfields Assessment or Multipurpose Grant. CCDES's previously awarded Brownfield Assessment Grants are now closed. CCDES established a Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) in 2018, and continues to issue loans from the RLF to qualified applicants for environmental remediation purposes. CCDES's RLF was awarded \$950,000 in supplemental funding in 2024.

## **8. Contractors and Named Subrecipients**

CCDES will retain qualified environmental professionals (QEPs) to assist with assessment grant activities, including performance of environmental site assessments. CCDES's procurement process will select a consultant using Cook County Department of Procurement Services fair and open competitive selection procedures that meet federal procurement requirements, such as 2 CFR Part 200, 2 CFR Part 1500, and 40 CFR Part 33. Additionally, Cook County's procurement policy includes a commitment to using local labor, utilizing responsible contractors with a history of safe and strong labor practices, using minority- and women-owned businesses. The selected consultant will have prior experience working on USEPA brownfield projects, and will be familiar with IEPA SRP and LUST programs. CCDES has not named a subrecipient and does not intend to use a subrecipient to facilitate grant activities.