

Helpful Hints for EPA Brownfields Assessment Coalition Grants

Criteria CWA	Helpful Hint (HH)
1. PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION AND PLANS FOR REVITALIZATION (45 POINTS) A common pitfall of this section is to write too much upfront and lose points in other sections: Be Concise: Start with a brief introduction for the overview that sets the context. Avoid lengthy explanations and plan to expand on the details throughout the grant narrative. This keeps the reader engaged and assist you with a “cohesive” grant narrative. Use Minimal Statistics in this section and compare and contrast data. For example, “City unemployment is 10% compared to county unemployment at 4%.” Always provide sources for your statistics.	
Coalition Members, Target Areas, and Brownfields (25 points)	
a. Coalition Members (5 points)	Please see FAQs J.6. through J.18. of the FY2026 FAQs for information about Coalition Members. - Justify the creation of a coalition to share capacity among coalition members. - The coalition must include at least one member that has never been awarded a Brownfields MARC Grant - Avoid using acronyms and technical/organizational jargon. - Coalition members may have existing Community-Wide Assessment grants, but they must meet the 70% draw-down requirement by October 1, 2025 in order to be eligible to participate in a Coalition Assessment grant. - Coalition members may not be an agency or instrumentality of themselves (i.e., a county and that county’s redevelopment agency, or multiple departments within the same city) Write as though the reader knows NOTHING about your community – which is likely very true!
b. Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Areas (5 points)	- Clearly identify the geographic boundary for this grant (i.e., county boundary, city limit, regional development district boundary, state borders, etc.). Your geographic boundary will be larger than your target areas. - Use known facts about the area to create a general “picture” such as: “a former mining community”, a “rural and predominantly farming town”; “a city known for its mostly industrial economy”, etc. - Include the area and population size so the reviewer gets an idea if this is an urban area or small rural community. If community has less than 15,000 residents, refer to the page number in your Other Factors Checklist. - When discussing brownfields challenges and their impacts within the geographic boundary (why do you have these brownfields, why are they a problem, who is affected and how): - Include background information on any brownfield challenges (e.g., loss of jobs, high

unemployment, loss of tax base, etc....)

- Reference the number (even estimated number) of brownfields in the area so the reviewer can see the magnitude of your brownfield problem
- Demonstrate cumulative impact of brownfields on surrounding community and how residents are overburdened when compared to the county, region, or other large areas - see [Cumulative Impacts Explained | US EPA](#)
- Discuss relevant facts but tell your story to help the reviewer understand why you really need this grant to make things better for the impacted community. Include a discussion on how you plan to address these sites with the funding requested.
- Support your statements by highlighting only key statistics (e.g. population loss over time, poverty, unemployment, job loss, etc.) that you will present in more detail in subsection 4.C.(2) Community Need. The information you provide here should support the statements you make about revitalization goals and community need in the following sections of your application.

This will lead into the description of your target areas.

Target Areas:

- Remember to identify at least one target area for each coalition member (i.e., the lead and non-lead members). Target areas **cannot** overlap.
- Target areas must be in at least three distinct municipalities or jurisdictions
- Clearly identify and describe your target area(s). These areas can be described using census tract numbers, neighborhood, or corridor name, etc.; however, to make sure that the reviewers have a clear idea where your target area(s) is/are located within your community. Examples include proximity to residential neighborhoods, downtown districts, a known body of water, major ports, interstate(s), direction from downtown, or major industry.
- Within each Target Area, describe the location of your brownfields, i.e., in the center of town, outskirts, close to or in neighborhoods/schools, in a historic section, along a reinvestment corridor, or near other sensitive populations, etc.
- Brownfield challenges can include blight, higher crime rate, job loss, population outmigration, perceived environmental issues, health issues, etc. Support your statements by highlighting key statistics (population loss over time, poverty, unemployment, job loss, environmental justice issues) that you present in more detail in the 4.C.(2).a. Community Need subsections.
- Describe how this grant will help alleviate or address those challenges.

Search your State or Tribal environmental databases for evidence of known releases. Additional resources are also available in the [Grant Data Research](#) document. You want to show that the brownfield sites are significantly impacting your communities or target areas and the specific types of challenges/impacts for/on the community. Please see FAQ C.13 from [FY2026 FAQs](#) for additional links.

c. Description of Priority Brownfield Sites (10 points)	Provide a clear overview of the brownfield sites in the target areas. (Include properties like longtime-vacant lots, blighted or aging buildings, historic dry cleaners, historic gas stations, former manufacturing site etc.). Use address, assessor's parcel number or tax lot number to identify the site. Some examples as to why sites are a priority for assessment and subsequent reuse: • Good redevelopment potential • Significant health impacts or potential exposure impacts to residents • Community concern – Sites are in the midst of a neighborhood, proximal to schools, parks and are unsafe, unsecured, attracts vagrants Take a look at the Other Factors check list (Section B.(8)) and see if any of those factors apply (i.e. is the site adjacent to or near a body of water or federally designated floodplain, is the site impacted by mine-scarred lands, etc.). Bodies of water can be large or small and might include lakes, rivers, creeks, marshes, wetlands, or floodplains. Indicate if any of the priority site(s) are impacted by mine-scarred lands or a coal-fired power plant recently closed - refer to the page number in your Other Factors Checklist. Describe the extent of the brownfields problem including impacts to the health and well-being of people in the target area. However, detailed demographic and health data should be referenced in the Section 2.a-d. where this information is requested. Please refer to the “Environmental Information for Targeted Area and Priority Sites” Section in the Grant Data Research guidance document for additional resources.
d. Identifying Additional Sites (5 points)	Describe the selection process and prioritization criteria (immediate job creation, removal of contaminants to prevent exposure, motivated developer, data sources). • If you have not done so already, consider using some of your grant funds to establish a brownfields inventory. You can talk about an existing or planned inventory as a way to identify additional sites • Consider talking about stakeholder outreach – will you have an online form where community members can nominate a site they're aware of? Will you conduct outreach to commercial realtors and brokers? Etc.
Revitalization of the Target Areas (10 points)	
e. Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans (5 points)	Describe the reuse strategy for the site(s) or the general target area(s). For example: the area will be developed as a greenbelt with a community garden; or a property will be part of a multi-building affordable housing development, etc. • Explain how the assessment will pave the way for reuse/redevelopment. Reference a Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDs), community comprehensive plans, master plans, or similar public documents that indicates reuse and redevelopment in each target area(s) is consistent

	with a plan. If there is no such formal plan, describe how the project aligns with community priorities and how and when these priorities were established. Mention if updates to these plans are in process • Describe how the community has been involved with the development of comprehensive or master plans, reuse strategy, vision, or other reuse/revitalization decision-making efforts. • Indicate whether or not sites are in a federally designated floodplain and justify the reuse strategy/project reuse as an appropriate reuse option. Refer to Section V. “Alignment with Sustainability and Resiliency” in the Grant Data Research guidance document. Refer to the page number where you discuss this in your Other Factors Checklist found in Section B.(8) of the Guidelines. • Discuss what activities you plan to do to create a site-specific or area-wide plan(s) for revitalization as part of the grant. Examples of eligible planning activities for Coalition Assessment Grants can be found in G.3 and G.4 in the FY26 FAQs. Examples of general planning activities are outlined in the Planning Information Sheets. Remember that if you allocate 30+% of your budget to planning activities, you may include it in your “Other Factors” checklist, which may help break a tie between two identically scored applications. If possible, try to give the reviewer a strong sense that reuse/redevelopment is likely to happen after the assessment and subsequent cleanup, if necessary, are completed. The proposed reuse of the site(s) should align with solutions to the challenges presented in Section 1.b., Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Areas: • If you have considered any measures that will improve local resilience to extreme weather events and natural disasters, facilitate the use of renewable energy, or improve energy efficiency as part of the reuse strategy, mention it in this section and include the page number in your Other Factors Checklist. <i>See FAQs S.5., S.6., and T.3. in the FY 2026 FAQs for more information.</i>
1.e. Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy (5 points)	Describe how your reuse strategy will stimulate economic development in the target areas and the community at large (for example: provide affordable housing and jobs, access to food, health care, recreation, etc.). For anticipated reuses that don’t center around economic activity (i.e., park space, recreational amenities, municipal facilities, schools, other non-profit purposes, etc.), describe the desired outcomes and benefits from reuse, particularly how the proposed projects or revitalization plans will benefit the local population. Make sure to link the outcomes and benefits of the project(s) with the issues described in Section 1.b (Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Areas) and Section 2.a.(Community Need), to your target communities. • If applicable, provide specific anticipated outcomes and economic improvements, such as X% increase in tax base, number of jobs this project may create, etc. Specify how many acres of reusable land will be available if all sites get assessed and/or cleaned up. If you cannot be specific, provide a realistic estimate based on reliable resources.

	• If applicable, describe how the project preserves greenfields, creates or adds to a park, greenway, recreational property or other property used for non-profit purposes. Provide metrics such as X acres of new greenspace in a neighborhood, X number of pocket parks in developed areas, X square miles protected from sprawl, etc. • If applicable, identify specific regulations, programs, or policies that will provide long-term management and preservation of green space. This may include land use restrictions, zoning, easements, land trusts, and maintenance. If regulations, programs, and/or policies do not yet exist, discuss any efforts or plans to develop these. • If applicable, describe space for not-for-profit, governmental, or charitable organizations, including amount and type of space provided, and how these improve the livability of the community. • When applicable, describe how sensitive populations will benefit. Discuss how your proposed projects will improve local resilience to the impacts of extreme weather events and natural disasters? Consider things like upgrading stormwater controls to reduce local flooding in the target area, increasing local food production, providing landscaping with trees and maximizing green space to minimize urban heat index, etc. • How will the project potentially incorporate renewable energy or energy efficiency measures? Will renewable energy be used as part of the site reuse? Will building codes require certain energy efficiency measures or standards? Visit EPA's Renewable Energy or Energy-Efficient Approaches in Brownfield Redevelopment Fact Sheet for more information. Check out FY2026 FAQs for “Brownfields, Public Health, Extreme Weather” (Section S) and “Benefits of Brownfields Projects” in Section T for helpful information. Additional Resources can be found in Section IV. and Section V. in: Grant Data Research KSU TAB - Technical Assistance to Brownfields
Strategy for Leveraging Resources (10 points)	
g. Resources Needed for Site Reuse (5 points)	All leveraged funding should be easily identifiable including the source of the funding, activity being funded, and amount. Do not just list random funding received/sought, but make sure the reviewer can clearly see how it links to your assessment, cleanup and redevelopment project. It is important to note leveraging resources that have been secured and those that are pending or being sought (e.g., applied for a grant.) Applications which demonstrate some level of secured funding will be viewed more favorably. • Discuss <i>eligibility and plans</i> for leveraging funds from other sources in order to show commitment to complete assessment, cleanup and reuse the property. • If you have not already secured leveraged funding, demonstrate that you have the ability to leverage funds and describe the ones you are pursuing. Describe possible local, state, federal or regional resources. The

	more variety, the better. Local commitments are especially important. Think about what your coalition members and partners can contribute and discuss it here. EPA and State targeted brownfields assessments (TBAs), completed or proposed, are examples of leveraging, as is KSU TAB (or your local TAB) and/or Land Revitalization Technical Assistance support. Examples of funding resources include other federal funding (e.g. HUD, EDA, USDA, etc.), Opportunity Zone developer credits, State program (e.g. State Tax Credits), local funds (tax increment financing zones), philanthropic foundations, and traditional private financing. <i>See C.9. in the FY2026 FAQs for more leveraging information.</i>
h. Use of Existing Infrastructure (5points)	Infrastructure refers to roads and utilities (sewer, water, electricity, broadband, etc.); transportation (bus, train or air); other energy and telecommunications and even housing and business services needed to support redevelopment. Be as inclusive as possible. Include information about the reuse of existing infrastructure at the priority site(s) or target area. Indicate if the infrastructure in place (water, sewer, electricity) was built for large capacity industrial or commercial activities and whether you believe it can be used for your proposed reuse. Describe the benefit of using existing infrastructure: • money and energy savings, reuse/recycling of materials, etc. • avoiding construction noise, dust and traffic associated with building new infrastructure. • Preservation of history and culture of an area (applicable to preservation of historic buildings) • If applicable, explain how your project can/will lead to any sustainable reuse of buildings or structures. If additional infrastructure is needed, discuss what is needed and the plan for how funding for it will be sought or provided. Please see the Infrastructure Evaluation (epa.gov) for definition of infrastructure needed during redevelopment. The benefits of infrastructure upgrades may include: • energy efficient building construction (energy efficient lighting, heating, cooling, building materials) • replacement of lead pipes or updated septic or sewer systems • connections to public drinking water sources for residential developments • traffic and pedestrian safety features • mitigation of vehicle congestion and air pollution • updated lighting, walkways, and trails to promote safety and connectivity throughout the community
2. COMMUNITY NEED AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (35 POINTS)	

This section focuses on community needs, especially for communities within your geographic boundaries and in your target area(s) that cannot secure funding because of small populations and/or low-income needs. **The populations and challenges that you discuss in this section need to tie back to Section 1.b, Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Areas**

Community Need (20 Points)

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

*Note: if the inability to draw on initial sources of funding is not due to the small population and/or low income of the community then your **response may only earn up to two points out of five points.***

This section should be consistent with the descriptions written Section 1.b. (Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Areas). Community is described as the city(ies), town(s), or geographic boundary(ies) targeted in the application.

Explain the need for funds:

- Support your statements by highlighting key statistics (population loss over time, poverty, unemployment, job loss, health conditions, etc.) that you have previewed in the **Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Area in Section 1.**
- What economic conditions, limited taxes, or other situations limit the funding available for addressing your brownfields sites? *Please see C.13 and C.14 in the FY26 FAQs for additional examples and links to resources for demographic information.* Also, please see Sections I. and IV.: "Demographic Information" and "Community Need and Economic Information" in the [Grant Data Research](#) guidance document.
- If applicable, because a community either has a small population (15,000) or low income.
 - Refer to this page number in your Other Factors Checklist if your population is below 15,000.
- Why the community has no other source of funding for the proposed assessment, remediation or redevelopment activities.
- Describe the economic impacts of your brownfields. For example: did prospective employers back out because of environmental unknowns of the property they were looking at? Does the community have to pay for maintenance of the brownfield site(s), is there an increase in policing required because of the brownfields? How will this grant address these issues?

Use statistics (with citations) to support your statements about small population, low income or other relevant demographics that show need. Include the target area population(s) as well as the community as a whole, to describe the economic impacts of your brownfields:

- Review sales tax data or assessed valuations of property to identify downward trends that demonstrate that brownfields have been a partial cause of financial impact to the target area and made other funding from taxes unavailable
- Focus your census data and describe the adverse impact of brownfields on a subset of the population (consider using census blocks rather than census tracts).

2.b. Health or Welfare of Sensitive Population (5 points)	Sensitive populations include “those populations that are likely to experience elevated health risks from pollution, including populations based on age (young children and the elderly), pregnant women, and serious disease burden (such as, high rates of cancer, asthma, chronic respiratory disease, coronary heart disease, low birth weights, etc.), as well as low-income populations.” However, there is no one definition of a sensitive population. <i>See S.4. in the FY2026 FAQs for more information about sensitive populations.</i> Include demographics on sensitive populations (children, elderly, or people with chronic conditions) within your target areas. If the sensitive populations statistics do not support your application favorably, focus on other statistics that reflect the sensitive nature of the community (lack of medical services, food desert, veteran population, etc.). Discuss the proximity of residential areas, hospitals, schools, daycare facilities or elder care and assisted living facilities to brownfield sites. You may compare data from your target areas to community-wide, state-wise, or nation-wide level data to further emphasize your case. For smaller communities use any and all available information to provide a picture of the impact brownfields have on communities in target areas. Note that the information provided needs to tie back to Sections 1.b. and 2.a. Severity of health <u>or</u> welfare: • Include health effects in the community that are possibly directly or indirectly caused by contaminants present at the brownfield sites in the target area. This can include infant mortality rate, incidence of asthma and cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, low life expectancy, etc. • Do not forget mental health (depression may be linked to the presence of brownfields). • Is the brownfield site or target area an attraction to crime or unsafe activities or located in an area of high crime – will the project reduce these threats? • If you are unsure of the contaminants found at your site(s), you can find more information at Environmental Contaminants Often Found at Brownfield Sites (epa.gov) Contact your local health department for any statistics that support your discussion. If data is not available at the target area level, explain how the data used (i.e. city or county level data) is representative of the target area. If your community has a Community Action Program (CAP) that serves sensitive and disadvantaged populations, review their Community Needs Assessment. Local and Regional Hospitals may also be able to provide a Community Health Needs Assessment for communities. <i>See C.13. and C.14 in the FY2026 FAQs for more examples of health, welfare, environmental, and other demographic information that may help you provide information about your community, and Section II. “Health and Welfare” in the Grant Data Research guidance document.</i>
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	Describe how the grant funds will address these threats. i.e. if greenspace is created, correlate how it will promote outdoor recreation, exercise, etc. that will improve the health and welfare of these sensitive populations. Discuss how your project and associated reuse strategy will identify and mitigate human health risks (i.e. via removal of contaminants, prevention of pollution (via zoning, codes, etc.) and prevention of future brownfields through sustainable redevelopment). Can also include the addition of sidewalks or bike lanes that will provide pedestrian safety, better walkability, and transportation alternatives.
2.c. Greater Than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions (5 points)	Address cancer, asthma and birth defects rates within your target areas that may be associated with exposure to hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or petroleum. If one or all of these are not elevated compared to the region, State, U.S., mention this. If other statistics are elevated, such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, lower life expectancy, etc.; mention it and make a potential connection with your brownfields. Work with the local or state health department to gather data on incidence of disease and adverse health conditions for your target area(s). Use negative trends or disproportionate percentages to demonstrate negative health impacts in your target area(s). Compare local data to regional, state and federal statistics. <i>See FAQ C.13 for more Community Need criterion as well as Section S “Brownfields, Public Health, Extreme Weather, and Natural Disasters” in the FY2026 FAQs for more information. Please refer to Section II. “Health and Welfare of the Community” in the Grant Data Research guidance document.</i> Describe how you have and/or will prioritize brownfields that contribute to impacts on residents who are already experiencing greater cumulative public health threats or greater than normal incidence of disease or adverse health conditions. i.e., if a community is potentially impacted by proximity to a power plant or heavily used highway, as well as proximity to brownfields, explain this situation and the urgency for alleviating impacts to their health, such as asthma or heart conditions. Indicate that this grant will allow you to identify and address those issues for those residents impacted. Describe how the project and reuse strategy may help reduce or mitigate impacts to the health of the target population by assessing contaminants at the site which can lead to cleanup and redevelopment of the site. Include elimination of exposure to contaminants through cleanup and any site improvements that will benefit the community, like parks for recreation, trees for air quality, healthy food, or other social determinants of health incorporated into reuse plan. Another example, if asbestos and mold are addressed, asthma rates may decline in populations surrounding a site.
2.d. Economically Impoverished/ Disproportionately	Cumulative impacts characterize the potential state of vulnerability or resilience of a community. How does the target area population bear greater pollution burdens or consequences? How will the grant and revitalization plans/reuse address these issues?

Impacted Populations (5 points)	<i>In the FY2026 FAQs, see C.13, S.1-S.3 and T.1 for additional resources.</i> Other resources can be found in Section II. Health and Welfare of the Community and Section V. Alignment with Sustainability and Resiliency in: Grant Data Research KSU TAB - Technical Assistance to Brownfields
Community Engagement (15 points)	
2.e. Project Involvement (5 points)	Use the sample format for prompts 2.e.-2.f. provided in the guidelines, or use a format that is legible and includes the information on the table provided in the guidelines. This clearly and concisely provides the information requested by EPA and will facilitate the review for those reviewing your application. Listed partners should be local organizations and <u>have a commitment or special interest in the proposed project</u>. Quality is better than quantity. For example, if your projected reuse is on housing then you should have a partner with relevant expertise in housing. Note that you do not have to include information on the non-lead coalition members in this table – project partners should include other organizations that will play a supporting role in your project, like your local housing authority, economic development organizations, schools and churches, etc. <i>See E.4, E.5, and E.6 in the 2026 FAQs for more information.</i> Additional resources include “See KSU TAB “Community Engagement Process”.pdf, and, U.S. EPA: Capacity Building Through Effective Meaningful Engagement
2.f. Project Roles (5 points)	Letters of Commitment from your partners are no longer required. • Discuss how each project partner will be engaged and informed. • Discuss how you have intentionally involved the community with regards to the brownfield sites in the target area. Mention all the ways you have engaged them in any of the steps of the redevelopment process. • <i>See FAQs E.4, E.5, E.6 in FY26 FAQs for more information on “local organizations/entities/groups”, partner roles, and meaningful involvement.</i> • Diversify your partnerships by covering multiple aspects of your project to include at least one community-based and/or community liaison representing residents directly affected by the work in the target area(s). Try to include organizations such as: local citizen groups, environmental groups, developer groups, chamber(s) of commerce, property owners as well as governmental/public entities supporting brownfield redevelopment such as the local health department, local community college or university, local and regional economic development agencies and local brownfield and environmental departments. • If your community(ies) is small or remote and no local community organizations exist, address this in this section and show how your community is engaged with someone such as your local Chamber of Commerce, citizen groups, environmental organizations, schools, etc. who may be considered as an acceptable substitute for community organizations in this unusual situation. • Have your partners review and provide input on your application! EPA may randomly check up on partners to ensure they are fully aware and knowledgeable of their role in the project. • Meet with and discuss your application with your potential partners early. Include names, if possible, to demonstrate the partners are indeed committed.

2.g. Incorporating Community Input (5 points)	Develop a clear, complete and robust community engagement program. <i>See Section 6 “Community Engagement” in the Grant Data Research guidance document for more information.</i> Some examples of involving the affected/target community include: • In-person meetings may be more successful if held in or proximal to each target area or priority brownfield site. • Holding public meetings where the progress/result of the assessment project is explained, engage the community up front in site selection/prioritization and with re-use planning for the sites and target area. • Public meetings, web sites, social media, newspaper and newsletters are mechanisms you can use to provide updates to the community and ask for feedback/comments. • Indicate if you already have a process or community engagement plan that you've successfully used in your community. Explain how your methods are appropriate for your community; i.e., most of your community members work during the day so you schedule your meeting in the evening when more are available to attend; you offer childcare to encourage parents to attend, etc. • Address any language barriers within your targeted community, i.e. provide translation services (meeting invitations, meetings, documents) as needed. If all of your community speaks English, then be sure to mention this so the reviewer doesn't think you've missed this aspect. • Address the needs of sensitive populations - for example, provide ADA accessible meeting space if your targeted community consists of a high percentage of seniors. • Consider various methods of reaching and receiving feedback from sensitive populations, such as remote videoconferences, radio, street fairs, surveys, etc. • Make sure your community engagement includes soliciting input from the community and not just updating them on site progress. Include: • Frequency of communication and how input will be solicited, considered, and responded to using the various methods described above. See KSU TAB “Community Engagement Process”.pdf and U.S. EPA: Capacity Building Through Effective Meaningful Engagement. Also, see socially_distant_engagement_ideas.pdf (epa.gov) if needed for your communities. <i>Just collecting community input is not enough</i> – you need to respond to it and use it in a meaningful way. Discuss how you will seek feedback from your coalition members, their communities and how those comments will be addressed. EPA places emphasis on community engagement as well as seeking and responding to community input so make sure you address how comments from community members will be addressed to receive maximum points for this section. Do not forget to describe how you incorporated coalition members, communities and their partner input into your project.
3. TASK DESCRIPTIONS, COST ESTIMATES, AND MEASURING PROGRESS (45 points)	
Description of Tasks/Activities and Outputs (25 points) Use the EPA sample format contained in the Guidelines to provide the requested information for prompts 3.a.- 3.d. . Doing so will help ensure you include all the requested information and make it easier for the reviewer to evaluate the information.	

- If you anticipate hiring a contractor, explain what project activities the contractor will perform. You will need to comply with procurement procedures in 2 CFR §200.318 for any contractors paid for using the grant.
- Make sure each of the activities listed are necessary, relevant and appropriate for completing the project in the 4-year period of the grant.
- Do not include activities that are ineligible uses of funds under EPA’s Assessment Coalition Grant (i.e., land acquisition; remediation, building demolition).
- A response that includes ineligible tasks/activities will be evaluated less favorably.

See Section G “Use of Grant Funds” in the 2026 FAQs where you will find a plethora of budget-related topics. Refer specifically to G.11 and G.12 in this section for additional examples of ineligible uses of funds (including administrative costs). See J.1.-J.3 for examples of eligible tasks and activities under Assessment Grants in the 2026 FAQs. Also, see G.3 and G.4. in the 2026 FAQs for eligible planning activities for Assessment Grants (includes Coalitions).

For questions not covered by the FAQs, contact your Regional Brownfields Contact listed in Section 1.E.

3.a. Project implementation
(10 points)

List and describe the tasks necessary to complete for your project to be successful. Multiple activities may be grouped under one task. For example, the task “Project Management” may include contractor procurement, reporting, etc. Your task/activities should represent a sound and efficient plan for performing the overall project. Ensure that each task includes information on the task lead, anticipated outputs, estimated cost, and start and end dates.

Be realistic with your tasks and number of outputs. If you know that a priority site requires a complex site investigation to be able to develop an ABCA, then consider that in your budget.

Avoid listing outputs that will ultimately be unattainable based on the budget (i.e. high number of Phase I and Phase II ESAs). Keep in mind that if you are awarded a grant, the Cooperative Agreement and Workplan that follows will be based on your application.

If a key activity associated with your project is not going to be included in your budget, explain why. For example, if another part of your organization or project partners will be taking care of community involvement activities as an in-kind contribution and is not charging this to the grant, note that. Otherwise, reviewers may wonder how key activities will get accomplished and think you’ve failed to include key information.

Subawards may be conveyed to eligible entities, such as nonprofits, local government, etc. *Note: Coalition projects that propose to subaward aspects of the programmatic, administrative, and financial requirements will be evaluated less favorably.*

Indicate the process you will use to determine which entities will receive participant support costs, the reason, and the method of providing the assistance.

For more information about Subawards, see [Grants Policy Issuance \(GPI\) 16-01: EPA Subaward Policy for EPA Assistance Agreement Recipients | US EPA](#)

3.b. Anticipated Project Schedule (5 points)	Describe the anticipated project schedule by months or quarters - not years. For example: "Community engagement activities will begin in the 2nd Quarter of the First Year". Public meetings providing updates on the cleanup will occur bi-annually in Years 2, 3 and 4." Include a timeline/schedule of milestones demonstrating how you will complete the proposed activities within 4 years. Have aggressive yet realistic milestones. • Include all key activities in your schedule, i.e. procuring a Qualified Environmental Professional, inventory work, site access, community engagement, site selection, Phase Is, Phase IIs, cleanup planning, etc. Include anticipated dates for key events such as procurement of contractors, etc.... rather than saying "ongoing: for all tasks. • Applicants may include pre-award costs incurred up to 90 days before award. Travel expenses for brownfields-related training, such as the National Brownfields Training Conference, are an eligible expense. <i>See FAQ G.8. in FY2026 FAQs for more on pre-award costs.</i> Explain any activities that will occur beyond the priority sites, the timing for these, and why they need to occur in order to have a successful project.
3.c. Task/Activity Lead (5 points)	Identify activity leads that are qualified for the roles they will be performing: • Task lead should be within the applicants' organization, providing oversight to contractors or sub-awardees as appropriate. If a lead is not with the applicant's organization, include a justification.
3.d. Outputs (5 points)	List and briefly describe outputs. Be realistic on the outputs and the budget. If possible, consult with someone knowledgeable about costs for environmental tasks. Outputs are work products that are measurable and will be done on a set schedule or by a set date. For example, an output could be "conduct 3 community meetings" or "complete 10 Phase I assessments". Correlate outputs with project objectives. If you proposed completing 5 Phase IIs, then you should have 5 Phase II reports at the end of the grant. • Identify the deliverables that will be required. Examples of deliverables could include: ○ Generic and site-specific quality assurance plans, as required by the EPA Region ○ Quarterly progress reports ○ Annual Financial reports ○ Phase I and II ESA reports ○ Cleanup Plans ○ Area-Wide Redevelopment Plans
3.e. Cost Estimates (15 points)	Use the budget sample table provided. It will clearly and concisely present your budget in a way that will facilitate review by the EPA reviewer. Do not change the "Budget Categories" in the table, as these are the standard federal budget categories. If a budget category is not relevant, then leave it blank, but do not delete.

Tasks:

- Feel free to add additional Tasks in the budget table if more than four Tasks are needed. However, too many Tasks may be difficult for reviewers to follow. Typical task categories may include: Program/Project Management; Community Engagement; Assessment; Cleanup Planning.
- Link the budget amounts to specific tasks/activities that you described in Section 3.a. If you said you were going to procure a contractor to perform the Phase I and II assessments, then make sure the budget table includes those costs (typically under Program Management).

Costs:

- Make sure it is clear to the reviewer how you calculated and arrived at the costs for each budget item.
- Explain and justify equipment and/or supply budget items. If you have "supplies", do not exceed \$10,000. Anything over \$10,000 is considered "equipment", which will require EPA Project Officer approval. Be specific about supplies, not just "miscellaneous supplies." Examples include: markers, pens, post-it notes, ink for printing, and name tags for public meetings.
- Double check that your proposed budget only includes eligible costs. *See G.11, G.12 in the [FY2026 FAQs](#) for more information on ineligible activities and uses of brownfield grant funds.*
- At least 50% of the budget must be directly associated with Phase I and II environmental site assessments and site-specific cleanup planning.
- Cost estimates that are included that are not reasonable or realistic to implement the grant will be evaluated less favorably. 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.

DO NOT include leveraged funding in the budget table.

Check/re-check your MATH! Your budget needs to add up correctly. Cross reference costs outlined in the Budget Table with costs described for each Task for accuracy.

Be realistic! Do not request unrealistic amounts of money for a task. The reviewer wants to see that you plan to use the funding prudently and efficiently. At the same time, include what you actually think it will cost based on past assessment work in your area. For example, if you live in an area where costs generally run high, explain this and the reason why in your basis of cost statement.

Detailed Cost Narrative:

- Make sure your basis for each cost is straightforward and easy to follow.
- Make sure it is clear to the reviewer how you calculated and arrived at the costs for each budget item.
- *Cross reference costs outlined in the Budget Table with costs described for each Task for accuracy.*

	<i>Avoid easy ways to lose points:</i> • <i>What's the source of the costs? Provide rationale for the values.</i> • <i>Unit costs in the wrong area, not in Cost Estimates</i> • <i>Indirect costs were not fully explained.</i> • <i>Break down costs per unit. For example- hours x rate = \$\$</i> • <i>Include details on how costs are developed, with rates for personnel</i> • <i>If you include any supply costs, specifically identify the supplies.</i> <i>More information on how to develop cost estimates is included in the Grant Data Research KSU TAB - Technical Assistance to Brownfields</i>
3.f. Plan to Measure and Evaluate Environmental Progress and Results(5 points)	Outputs are work products that are measurable and will be done on a set schedule or by a set date. Make sure outputs correlate with the proposed project and are likely to be achieved in the 4-year grant period. For example, an output could be "conduct 3 community meetings" or "complete 5 Phase I" or "complete 1 site cleanup plan". • Outcomes are results from carrying out the grant; i.e. jobs created and funding leveraged through the economic reuse of sites; acres made ready for reuse; acres of greenspace created for communities; infrastructure investments leveraged, and the minimized exposure to hazardous substances and petroleum contamination. Systems to Track: • Describe a plan and mechanism for tracking and evaluating progress. Specify personnel and mechanisms, such as project management software or spreadsheets, to track your anticipated project schedule. • Examples of tracking, measuring and evaluating are the use of quarterly and annual reports, progress tracking software, team meetings to evaluate progress and make corrections where necessary, ACRES, etc. • Most outcomes are realized after the grant closes out. If applicable, describe how you will report outcomes after closeout, i.e. send photos of groundbreaking, press releases, send progress, and before/after photos and updates. Don't forget to mention how you plan to report progress to ACRES.
4. PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITY AND PAST PERFORMANCE (35 points)	
Programmatic Capability (20 points) Per the ranking criterion in Section 4., applicants may consolidate information for 4.a. – 4.d. into one response.	
4.a. Organizational Capacity (5 points)	Describe your organization's experience with grants, programs, and tasks of similar scale and function. Provide information that will give the reviewer confidence that your organization has the experience and capacity to manage this grant and oversee grant tasks/activities. Describe the tools and procedures, i.e. internal audits, management software, etc., that ensure operational and programmatic success.

	Describe stability of the organization, city/town, or department. Give the reviewer confidence that the organization or coalition can manage this grant by describing other federally funded programs, experience with similar programs, number of employees, etc. <i>Discuss the lead coalition member's capacity to do this on the coalition's behalf.</i>
4.b. Organizational Structure (5 points)	Describe your organization's structure and departments' roles that will support management of this grant. For example, highlight existing capacity in key functions (technical, administrative, project management, financial, etc.). Outline past grants/projects of similar scale and purpose that your organization has successfully completed. <i>Describe the proposed governance/decision-making structure among your coalition members.</i> <i>Describe how coalition members will be involved in grant decisions. Include how communications will take place and who will lead/initiate them.</i>
4.c. Description of Key Staff (5 points)	Include information highlighting staff availability, roles, expertise, qualifications and experience. Include assignments to key roles and the expertise / qualifications / experience of assigned staff. Include their education, years of experience, or other similar projects they have worked on and managed. • At a minimum include the project manager role, technical contact, decision maker(s), procurement expert, etc. • Communicate how the level of expertise/qualifications/experience of your key staff will result in timely and successful expenditure of funds as you complete all technical, administrative and financial requirements of the grant. • Describe the key aspects of the organizational structure that will help support this grant. For example, if there is a dedicated outreach group that will lead outreach , indicate so. If there is a financial group with procurement expertise that will support fiscal and procurement activities, mention it. • If any, describe any administrative or board approval process pertaining to the grant or scope of work Communicate how the level of expertise/qualifications/experience of your key staff will result in timely and successful expenditure of funds as you complete all technical, administrative and financial requirements of the grant. Discuss contingency plans in case key staff quits or gets sick. Do you have an immediate replacement? If so, who?
4.d. Acquiring Additional Resources (5 points)	Include information about your organization's experience in putting in place subrecipient agreements and/or contracts that you may need to implement the grant • Present a plan for acquiring any additional resources (subrecipients and contractors) that you know you will need for successful completion of the proposed project. • Describe your organization's system(s) to appropriately acquire any additional expertise and resources (i.e., contractors or subrecipients) required to successfully complete the project. <i>(Note, if an applicant has</i>

	<i>selected a contractor or subrecipient without complying with applicable requirements as described in Section III.B.4., the response will be evaluated less favorably.)</i> • If contractors are needed, state that you will follow required competitive Procurement Standards in 2 CFR 200.317-326 when hiring contractors. For more information see Brownfields Grants: Guidance on Competitively Procuring a Contractor (epa.gov) • Describe your organization's existing practices or plans to promote strong labor practices, local hiring/procurement, or efforts to link members of the community to potential employment opportunities in brownfields assessment, cleanup, or redevelopment related to the proposed project in a meaningful and equitable way.
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.e. Currently Has or Previously Received an EPA Brownfields Grant (15 points)	
4.e.(1)Accomplishments (5 points)	For recipients of an EPA Brownfield Assessment, Cleanup, Area-Wide Planning, Revolving Loan Fund, Multipurpose or 128(a) Grant, use the most recent grant(s) (up to 3), and specify the grant number, grant type, year received and period of performance, and amount of grant: • Describe progress toward achieving the expected outputs and outcomes. Make sure these accomplishments are reflected in ACRES. EPA is likely to check. If you are not up to date on ACRES, and/or have not completed ACRES in the past, explain why, and list measures to comply in the future
4.e.(2)Compliance with Grant Requirements (10 points) <i>This criterion is broken into 2 parts</i> EPA is likely to check if your reports were submitted as outlined in the cooperative agreement, and accomplishments were reported and reflected in ACRES.	
Part 1. Compliance with Grant Requirements (5 points)	Explain any deviation(s) from the work plan and schedule, and reporting related to past/current brownfield grants. • Discuss history of submitting all ACRES, quarterly and annual reports, and explanations for untimely reporting. Indicate if expected results were achieved and progress had been adequately documented in ACRES and/or quarterly reports. • Discuss history of completing and submitting deliverables, and explain if targets were not met. If the expected results were not achieved, explain how it was resolved and communicated.
Part 2 Compliance (5 points)	For open grants, indicate any amount unspent and reasons for not spending the entire amount, and issues and how these are being resolved, i.e. those funds are either already committed to ongoing eligible activities or will be expended by the end of the grant. If the grant is closed and there were remaining funds, then provide a reasonable explanation for why that happened. If there were any deviations, describe the measures taken to correct them.

	If you have remaining funds on any of these grants, then explain why and how those funds are either already committed to ongoing eligible activities or will be expended by the end of the grant. For closed EPA Brownfield Grants, if there were funds remaining, provide a reasonable explanation as to why they were not expended within the Period of Performance.
4.f. Has Not Received EPA Brownfields Grant but has received other Federal or Non-Federal Funding (15 points) For applicants that have not received EPA Brownfield Assessment, Cleanup, Area-Wide Planning, Revolving Loan Fund, Multipurpose or 128(a) Grant.	
(1) Purpose and Accomplishment (5 points)	If you haven't received an EPA Brownfield Multipurpose, Assessment, Cleanup, Revolving Loan Fund or 128(a) grant, but you have received a federal or non-federal grant (not contract) of similar size, scope or relevance to this project then complete this sub-section. Do not include federal or non-federal assistance agreements where you were a subawardee or partner. You must have been the recipient of the assistance agreement. • Describe the granting entity, amount, activity funded, years of performance. • Describe the history of managing these grants, i.e. federal, state, local, foundation, etc. and accomplishments of that grant. • Describe the scope, outputs, outcomes, and other measures of success, under those grants. • Describe what was accomplished with the funding including whether the expected results were achieved. • Highlight a grant that has an environmental scope or is similar to an EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant. EPA wants to have confidence your organization knows how to manage grant dollars and meet project outcomes. Try to avoid falling into 4.g. (below) which results in a neutral score.
(2) Compliance (10 points)	• Describe your work plan and schedule, and outputs, and if you complied with the terms and conditions. • Describe progress toward achieving the expected outputs and outcomes within the schedule. • Confirm that accomplishments are reflected in the required reports If the expected results were not achieved explain why and how your organization communicated with the awarding entity.
4.g. Never Received Any Type of Federal or Non-Federal Assistance Agreements (8 points) If you find yourself in this category, it's ok. Include a statement that your organization has never received any type of federal or non-federal assistance agreement. If your community recently received a grant that has not been completed or not enough time has elapsed to conduct reporting or produce outputs or outcomes, explain here, and provide information on the granting agency, amount, purpose, period of performance, and any other relevant information.	

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