EPA Brownfields Assessment Grants—Assessment Coalitions

EPA's Brownfields Program is designed to empower states, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is a property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. EPA's Brownfields Program provides financial and technical assistance for brownfield revitalization, including grants for environmental assessment, cleanup, and job training.

What are EPA Brownfields Assessment Grants?

Assessment grants provide funding for a grant recipient to:

- Inventory Sites: *Compile a listing*
- Characterize Sites: *Identify past uses*
- Assess Sites: *Determine existing contamination*
- Conduct Planning for Cleanup and Redevelopment: *Scope and plan process*
- Conduct Community Involvement: *Inform and engage community*

Revitalized Kassenberg House, Moorehead, MN

What are Assessment Coalitions?

An Assessment Coalition is comprised of three or more eligible entities. The lead coalition member submits a Community-wide Assessment grant proposal on behalf of itself and the other members. The coalition may request up to **$1 million** to work on a **minimum** of **five** hazardous substance and/or petroleum sites.

Who is Eligible to Apply as a Coalition for an Assessment Grant?

Eligible entities, including those with existing brownfields assessment grants, are: state, local and tribal governments, with the exception of certain Indian tribes in Alaska; general purpose units of local government, land clearance authorities, or other quasi-governmental entities; regional councils; redevelopment agencies; and government entities created by state legislatures.

- **Coalition** members are **not** eligible to apply for individual Community-wide or Site- specific Assessment grants **in the year they apply as part of a coalition.**
- **Nonprofit** organizations are **not** eligible to apply.
- Some **properties** are **ineligible** for funding unless EPA makes a site-specific funding determination.

Why Coalition Assessments?

- Increases access to assessment resources for communities that might have limited resources to administer a brownfield grant.
- Helps a state or county to focus assessment dollars on geographical areas with the greatest need over a given time. The larger pool of funding allows the coalition to shift geographic focus to new areas as revitalization needs are identified.

Assessment Coalitions – The Basics

- The grant recipient (lead coalition member) **must** administer the grant, be accountable to EPA for proper expenditure of the funds, and be the point of contact for the other coalition members.
- Assessment Coalition grants are **Community-wide**.
- Assessment Coalitions **must** assess a minimum of five sites regardless of funding request (e.g., less than or up to $1 million).
- Assessment Coalitions may request petroleum *and/or* hazardous substance funding as long as the request is not over $1 million.
- A **Memorandum of Agreement** (MOA) documenting the coalition's site selection process must be in place prior to the expenditure of any funds that have been awarded to the lead coalition. It is up to the coalition to agree internally about the distribution of funds and the mechanisms for implementing the assessment work.
- A tribal community can be the lead coalition member or part of any coalition where the other coalition members are eligible entities.

- Assessment Coalitions can cross regional boundaries, but will be managed out of the EPA Region where the grant recipient is located.
- An eligible city entity and a redevelopment authority from the same locality can be coalition members provided the entities are separate legal entities under state and local law.
- No more than $200,000 can be expended on a site.
- For Assessment Coalitions involving state entities:
  - *Only **one** eligible state entity can apply as the lead coalition member (e.g., state environmental agency, state economic development agency) or be part of a coalition. An eligible state entity **cannot** be a member of two or more Assessment Coalitions.*
  - *If an eligible state entity is part of a coalition that receives an Assessment grant, no additional Assessment grants can be awarded to state entities from the grant recipient's state.*

What are Some Examples of How Assessment Coalitions Work?

Example #1

A state agency applies for EPA Brownfields funding together with several smaller communities as members of a coalition. The state assumes the role of "recipient" (i.e., the entity that would administer the grant, is accountable to EPA for proper expenditure of the funds, and acts as point of contact for other coalition members). These entities have formed a coalition to target numerous sites that have become blighted and/or under-utilized along an historic highway running through the communities.

Example #2

A coalition of metro municipalities, such as one large city and several surrounding cities/towns, could apply for $1 million. In a given year, one coalition member's site assessment needs may be relatively minimal compared to another member's, or the ability to assess a targeted site may be complicated by legal access issues. Priorities can be set each year to conduct assessments on the properties that have the most immediate need.

Brownfields Assessment grants do not provide resources to conduct cleanup or building demolition activities. Cleanup assistance is available under EPA's Cleanup or Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) grants. Information on EPA's Brownfields Cleanup and RLF grants can be found on the EPA Brownfields Web site at: www.epa.gov/brownfields.

How Do I Apply as a Coalition for an Assessment Grant?

A single, eligible entity applies as a coalition for a Community-wide Assessment grant on behalf of itself and other eligible entities. A Community-wide proposal submitted by a coalition **must** include:

- Applicant information (e.g., describe all jurisdictions covered under the proposal, and provide their general populations).
- Applicable mandatory attachments (e.g., coalition applicants for Assessment grants must document how all coalition members are eligible entities; and all coalition members must submit a letter to the potential grant recipient in which they agree to be part of the coalition).
- Responses to evaluation criteria.

How Long is the Performance Period for an Assessment Grant?

The period of performance for an Assessment grant is three years.

The Consumer Energy Headquarters Property in Jackson County, Michigan, before revitalization (above) and after (below).