



## Brownfields Basics

### WHAT IS A BROWNFIELD?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines a brownfield as "...real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant" (Public Law 107-118 (H.R. 2869) - "Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act," signed into law January 11, 2002). In 2018, the Brownfields Utilization, Investment and Local Development (BUILD) Act (Omnibus H.R. 1625) reauthorized EPA's Brownfields Program, and authorized changes that affect brownfield grants, ownership and liability provisions, and State and Tribal Response Programs. A brownfield typically is underutilized, idled and/or abandoned property.

### EXAMPLES OF BROWNFIELDS SITES

A brownfield is a redevelopment project that is often impeded by environmental concerns. Brownfields sites include abandoned factories and other industrial facilities, service stations, oil storage facilities, dry cleaning businesses, hospitals, schools or any other business or facility that dealt with hazardous substances, pollutants or contaminants. Mine-scarred lands, properties impacted by asbestos and/or lead-based paint, and controlled substances can be brownfields as well. It's important to realize that brownfield sites may or may not be contaminated; however, the perception of environmental contamination is often enough to keep these sites from being reused. The fear of contamination and potential liability prevents many prospective purchasers from acquiring and developing brownfield sites. The Brownfields Law was created in large part to provide liability relief for prospective purchasers of potentially contaminated, underutilized, idled and/or abandoned properties and help move these sites into redevelopment.

**See the Citizen Brief on Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessments for more information about the liability provisions of the Brownfields Law.**

**The U.S. Government Accounting Office estimates that there are 400,000 to 600,000 brownfields in the U.S.**

### WHAT IS THE EPA BROWNFIELDS PROGRAM?

EPA's Brownfields Program started in 1995 with the provision of a small amount of seed money to local governments that launched hundreds of two-year brownfield pilot projects. Today, the program has grown to include numerous competitive grant programs and other sources of technical assistance.

**The Brownfields Program encourages collaboration among other federal program resources to support community efforts to prevent, assess, safely clean up and sustainably reuse brownfields. Communities often find funding and technical assistance for brownfields projects from other agencies such as HUD, DOT, EDA and USDA.**

### TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Local communities can obtain technical assistance through the following programs, many of which are provided at no cost.

**State and Tribal Response Program Grants** (also referred to as 128(a)) provide non-competitive funding on an allocation basis to eligible states and tribes to establish or enhance their State and Tribal Brownfields response programs. These programs use the funding to operate voluntary cleanup programs and provide technical assistance. This funding can also be used to conduct Targeted Brownfield Assessments for local communities at no cost.

**Targeted Brownfield Assessments (TBAs)** are Phase 1 and Phase 2 environmental assessments conducted by EPA and/or the State at brownfield properties at no cost to local governments, quasi-governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations and tribes. Information gathered from a TBA provides eligible entities such as local governments and prospective purchasers a better understanding of potential contamination at a brownfield site and may be required to transfer ownership or secure a loan for acquisition of a site. TBA results can also assist a community in the site prioritization and redevelopment planning process.

**Technical Assistance to Brownfields (TAB) Program** is one of several different research, training and technical assistance grants funded by the Brownfields Program. The TAB Program provides a wide array of technical assistance to communities at no cost. TAB can help do the following.

- Identify, inventory and prioritize brownfields for redevelopment.
- Determine the potential public health impact of brownfields.
- Get the public and other stakeholders involved.
- Facilitate site reuse goal-setting and planning charrettes.
- Evaluate economic feasibility of reuse plans.
- Conduct educational workshops, seminars and webinars.
- Use web-based tools to facilitate brownfields site inventories and grant writing.
- Interpret/comment on technical brownfield reports, assessments and plans.
- Integrate approaches to brownfield cleanup and redevelopment.
- Review draft EPA brownfield grant applications.

**The Kansas State University TAB Program is funded by the EPA Brownfields Program and provides technical assistance to communities. To find the TAB program to assist your specific community, visit the [U.S. EPA Brownfields Technical Assistance Website](#).**

## COMPETITIVE BROWNFIELD GRANTS

The Brownfields Program provides funding to eligible applicants through a variety of competitive grant opportunities. Several of the grant opportunities are offered in alternating years or as needed.

**Assessment Grants** provide monies to inventory brownfields, for planning, to conduct environmental assessments and to foster community engagement.

**Cleanup Grants** provide funding for cleanup of environmentally impacted brownfields properties owned by the applicant.

**Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Grants** provide monies to capitalize a loan fund from which loans and subgrants are made to clean up brownfields properties.

**Multipurpose (MP) Grants** provide monies to carry out a range of eligible planning, assessment, cleanup and community engagement activities within a specified target area, such as a neighborhood, a number of neighboring towns, a district, a corridor, a shared planning area or a census tract.

**Job Training Grants** provide environmental training for residents of brownfield communities.

Check out more Fact Sheets on our website.

