



Leveraging Resources for Brownfield Revitalization:

Strategies & Support for Local Communities

As part of its *Next Generation Brownfields* initiative, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is launching an effort in 2015-2016 to provide guidance and technical assistance to localities and brownfield practitioners on strategies for leveraging resources for brownfield revitalization.

Brownfield sites continue to present major challenges to communities across America, as well as opportunities for revitalization and renewal. EPA's Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization (OBLR) provides grants to states, communities, and nonprofits for area-wide planning activities and for the assessment and cleanup of brownfield properties. EPA's Brownfields Program also provides funding to state and local governments for the capitalization of revolving loan fund (RLF) grants. Loans from RLF grants can be made to private parties to cover the costs of brownfield cleanups.

Despite the availability of federal brownfield grants, it still can be difficult for local communities to secure adequate resources to complete brownfield revitalization projects. Cleanup, design, and engineering costs can be substantial, and expensive infrastructure upgrades may be needed to support brownfield redevelopments. Redevelopment costs may be prohibitive, especially in distressed or small communities with weak markets and at sites with limited reuse potential.

Many local communities have collaborated with OBLR and other partners to overcome these challenges and leverage resources for successful brownfields revitalization. Successful localities often conduct the following **key steps** to enhance their chances of securing the resources they need to reach their brownfield revitalization milestones:

- 1.) **Organize a Project Team with Identified Leaders and Designated Managers** – Maintain an organized task force or working group of key project leaders and participants to ensure coordination, leveraging, project management, resource allocation, and momentum. Make sure your local elected officials are on board!
- 2.) **Identify Priority Brownfield Projects** – Brownfield revitalization and private sector investment can be sparked by public sector-led projects to prepare and clean land for redevelopment, upgrade infrastructure, create new public facilities, or incentivize economic development. It is important to identify specific, discreet projects rather than generalized ideas, and to prioritize your top brownfield projects for implementation.
- 3.) **Delineate Project Phasing** – Each brownfield revitalization project should be considered as a multi-stage effort, with each stage potentially fundable (often from a variety of sources). A typical public works project consists of phases including planning, design, and engineering; right-of-way acquisition; permitting; construction; and operation. Most importantly, determine costs for the immediate next stages of each project, and seek funding and support for that stage. Often, funders who support an early stage can become continuing funders in a later stage. When seeking project funding, it often is best to consider tackling the project one step at a time.

In 2015, EPA convened a group of brownfield stakeholders from state and local governments, community groups, nonprofits, academia, the private sector, and philanthropy to identify issues and challenges affecting communities impacted by brownfields. This effort culminated in the April 16, 2015, **Forum for Action**, which brought together leading organizations and stakeholders to help OBLR develop an agenda for action that will foster the next generation of brownfields and community revitalization.

Participants in the process agreed that communities and brownfield practitioners need more guidance and support on strategies for leveraging resources beyond the initial brownfields grant. In response, EPA OBLR will provide the following assistance in 2015-2016:

- ✓ Issue the 2015 **Brownfields Federal Programs Guide**.
- ✓ Develop a new Resource Guide that provides **technical assistance on leveraging strategies** and describes how to create an effective **Resource Strategy** for brownfields revitalization.
- ✓ Conduct a series of **Meet the Funders** webinars to introduce brownfields grantees to federal agency and philanthropic funders and explore ways to enhance leveraging of resources for local brownfields revitalization efforts.

- 4.) **Create Estimates of Project Costs** – Once priority projects have been identified and their key phases have been delineated, conduct an analysis to estimate project costs for each key project and its core components. With well-estimated project costs, a community can better identify the best potential funding sources, understand the levels of matching funds that will be needed, and tailor efforts to gain support for funding requests.
- 5.) **Match Funding Sources to Project Components and Phases** – A brownfield community can match priority projects and their key components with the best federal, state, philanthropic, and private sector resources for those tasks. Create a “Resource Roadmap” document that can guide funding efforts over the key stages of the revitalization process.
- 6.) **Establish Matching and Leveraging Strategies, and Assess the Feasibility of Debt Financing** – The communities that focus on finding grant matches and leveraging resources are the most competitive for funding. This takes municipal financial planning, budgeting, and requests to key funding stakeholders (i.e., municipal department heads, city council, or state officials) well before grant applications are due. Create a match/leverage strategy for each project and funding request, and secure match commitments from key funding partners. This should include an assessment of whether the locality could service debt, bonding, tax increment financing, low-cost/publicly backed loans, or other useful financing approaches.
- 7.) **Create a Briefing Sheet for Each Priority Project** – When you are ready to proceed on a specific project or component, it is valuable to create a well-crafted briefing sheet for that project or project component. (For example, one briefing sheet could focus on transportation infrastructure elements of a project, while another focuses on parks and recreational plans for a brownfield area.) A one-page briefing document can be used to succinctly explain to the public, key stakeholders, and funders the scope and objectives of the project, its benefits, status and progress, supporters, challenges, and specific funding needs and requests.
- 8.) **Seek State Backing** – Often, the best sources of funding and other support are state agencies, including economic development, environmental, and infrastructure agencies, as well as state elected officials. It is important to coordinate closely with these agencies or officials, whether or not you are seeking funding from them. Federal, philanthropic, and private-sector funders usually are more supportive if they understand that the governor, state agency leadership, and other key state officials support a project.
- 9.) **Collaborate with Federal Agency Officials** – It is critical to be engaged on your project early with relevant federal agency and program officials. Officials at EPA, the Departments of Commerce, Transportation, Agriculture, and Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and many other agencies – as well as your federal congressional delegation – can be supportive guides and boosters for your efforts. Visits to federal agency headquarters in Washington D.C., visits with regional officials, invitations for site and project tours, and collaborative roundtable events and workshops can build their understanding and ongoing support.
- 10.) **Prepare for Grant-Writing** – Prepare ahead to write effective grant applications, and do not wait until just before the funding or submission deadline. Determine the best municipal agency or other entity to be the lead applicant. Confirm key partners. Identify the internal or external grant writer for each application, and have that lead grant writer review past application materials to consider how you can position your future applications to be most effective. Shape your project as necessary to meet the goals of the funding program. Confirm project costs and solidify matching and leveraged commitments. Consider using graphic designers to create renderings, charts, and other visual designs to make the application look its best.

OBLR will provide enhanced support to EPA brownfield grantees to help them create effective strategies for leveraging resources beyond their brownfields grant. As part of EPA’s *Next Generation Brownfields* initiative, OBLR will provide the following resources and assistance in 2015-2016:

- **Brownfield Federal Programs Guide:** Issue the updated 2015 *Brownfields Federal Programs Guide*, which provides in-depth information on resources available from more than 20 federal agencies and offices and highlights federal tax incentives that can support brownfield revitalization.
- **Guide to Leveraging Resources for Brownfields Revitalization:** Develop a new resource guide with information on how to develop effective resource strategies for leveraging funding for brownfields revitalization.
- **Meet the Funders:** EPA will host a webinar series to introduce brownfields grantees to representatives of key federal agencies, philanthropic foundations, and nonprofit organizations, and engage in conversations to explore ways to enhance leveraging of resources for local brownfield revitalization efforts. Through these webinars, funders will have an opportunity to learn more about the needs and challenges of local communities on brownfield and revitalization issues, and brownfields grantees will gain in-depth information and valuable tips on how to successfully identify and compete for resources.

*For information on EPA’s Climate Smart Brownfields initiative,
contact Patricia Overmeyer at overmeyer.patricia@epa.gov*