Narrative Information Sheet

**Applicant Information**
Grounded Strategies

% Ascender, 6401 Penn Ave
3rd Floor | Pittsburgh, PA 15206

**Funding Requested**
Community Wide Assessment Grant - $341,250

**Location**
Neighborhood of Homewood
Pittsburgh, PA, Allegheny County

**Target Area and Priority Site Information**
The brownfield sites within Homewood that we will be assessing include all vacant parcels that; (1) have with no structures, (2) are designated for continued use as some form of open space by the Homewood Comprehensive Community Plan and the Homewood Cluster Plan, (3) are not designated for use as wooded hillside preservation, (4) are within 400 feet of past demolitions, (5) are publicly owned or owned by local community organizations. There will be between 60 and 100 parcels surveyed altogether. Parcels will average around approximately 8,000 square feet in size.
**Project Director**
Tom Mulholland, Director of Programming

tom@groundedpgh.org

% Ascender, 6401 Penn Ave

3rd Floor | Pittsburgh, PA 15206

**Chief Executive**
Ariam Ford, Executive Director

ariam@groundedpgh.org

% Ascender, 6401 Penn Ave

3rd Floor | Pittsburgh, PA 15206

**Population**
Homewood is a low-income community, with a median household income of approximately $18,491. Homewood has a total population of 10,406 people.
Project Narrative

Project Area Description And Plans For Revitalization

Background and Description of Target Area

Elevated lead presence in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County stems from the historic use of lead in gas, paint, pipes, and other industrial applications. During the late 1970s laws and regulations to stop lead-use allowed for the dramatic decrease and halt of the output of lead based housing and industrial application, but Allegheny County is documented to have 80 percent of houses built prior to 1978.

In addition to lead exposure in homes, high levels of lead contamination is prevalent in soil in Allegheny County. Elevated concentrations of lead stem from the increased demolitions of homes built prior to lead regulations, allowing for lead to concentrate in soil of vacant lots where these homes once stood. When these homes were demolished, proper lead-safe wetting methods to decrease lead concentrations were not used, allowing for lead dust plumes that spread hazards as far as 400 feet away from the worksite.

Higher levels of lead concentrations, due to an increased occurrence of vacant building demolitions, are disproportionately higher in African-American majority neighborhoods.

We plan to perform assessment activities in Homewood. This target area lies within the city of Pittsburgh and officially consists of three neighborhoods; Homewood North, Homewood South, and Homewood West. The area has a combined population of 10,406, which is 94% African-American, as of the 2010 census. Homewood is predominantly residential with commercial properties concentrated on Frankstown Road and Homewood Avenue corridors. Of the 5,194 parcels that make up Homewood, 49.6% are vacant, according to a 2014 Operation Better Block survey.

Description of the Priority Brownfield Site(s)

The brownfield sites within Homewood that we will be assessing include all vacant parcels that; (1) have with no structures, (2) are designated for continued use as some form of open space by the Homewood Comprehensive Community Plan and the Homewood Cluster Plan, (3) are not designated for use as wooded hillside preservation, (4) are within 400 feet of past demolitions, (5) are publicly owned or owned by local community organizations.

Priority will be given to sites that are actively being requested for lease as community garden space through the City Adopt-a-Lot program, but are prohibited from use due to high lead contamination levels. Second priority will be given to sites that were identified by community members as ideal for use as parks and gardens, or for use in stormwater management.
This prioritization will be re-evaluated by community stakeholders in the event that we receive this grant funding. It is not expected that this will drastically alter activities given our understanding of the existing community plans.

There will be between 60 and 100 parcels surveyed altogether. Parcels will average around approximately 8,000 square feet in size.

**Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans**

The sites being assessed are all projected to be reused as open green space (community garden, parklet, or ecological services) based on revitalization plans conducted with local community organizations such as Operation Better Block and approved by the City of Pittsburgh through their Registered Community Organization planning process within the Department of City Planning.

**Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy**

The grant will facilitate the creation of park and recreationally properties used for nonprofit purposes related to social and environmental health in the target area. Through the assessment, clean-up, and stewardship of priority parcels we can expand access to quality green spaces for Homewood residents, create opportunities for community education through recruitment of Homewood-resident surveyors, address other local environmental initiatives such as improved stormwater capture or expanded tree canopy.

**Strategy for Leveraging Resources**

Our organization is a Nonprofit organization, as described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Our work is primarily sustained through the grantmaking of primarily local/regional foundations and endowments.

Since 2007, Grounded has reclaimed over 3.5M square feet of vacant land to support community driven improvements generating green space and other community amenities and directly raised over $11M for community development initiatives in over 70 communities throughout Allegheny County.

**Use of Existing Infrastructure**

Work performed under this grant will facilitate the planning of green stormwater management infrastructure upgrades within the target area. The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority will be completing their city-wide comprehensive stormwater management plan during the term of this grant. Data that we collect can serve their efforts without the need of seeking additional funding resources.

**COMMUNITY NEED AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**The Community’s Need for Funding**
Homewood is a low-income community, with a median household income of approximately $18,491. Homewood has a total population of 10,406 people.

**Threats to Sensitive Populations**

In neighborhoods like Homewood, where 45 percent of the population lives in poverty, older and disinvested in homes, parks, and schools make residents more vulnerable to lead contamination, as well as other environmental problems. Exposure to lead, even at low levels can cause intellectual, behavioral, and academic problems.

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reported in 2016 that researchers at the University of Pittsburgh have conducted preliminary tests of the soil in Homewood. Measurements were collected at three sites — the Westinghouse High School, Homewood-Brushton YMCA and Homewood Senior Center — using soil test reports made by Pennsylvania State University’s Agricultural Analytical Services Laboratory.

These tests revealed that Westinghouse High School has approximately 100 times the acceptable concentration of lead in its surrounding soil, while the YMCA and Homewood Senior Center have roughly 10 times the acceptable concentration.

This grant will help address this inequity through the support of planning for future actions to address lead exposure through the vector of soil on vacant land.

**Greater Than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions**

According to the Allegheny County Health Department, In 2020, the elevated blood lead level (EBLL) rate was 2.5 times higher for the City of Pittsburgh compared to all other municipalities in Allegheny County combined.

According to the “Childhood Lead Testing and Poisoning Report” (2020) produced by the Pennsylvania Department of Health, among Pennsylvania children screened for blood lead levels, 4.3% of Black children had confirmed EBLLs, much higher than Asian (3.5%) and White (2.1%) children. Homewood is a predominately (98%) African American neighborhood.

This grant will help address this inequity through community education around lead exposure risks and the support of planning for future actions to address lead exposure through the vector of soil on vacant land.

**Promoting Environmental Justice**

Whereas only 25 percent of the neighborhood’s population was African-American in 1950, by 1960 the figure had increased to 70 percent, rising to 98 percent by 1990. This demographic shift was due in part to the Urban Renewal activities of the City of Pittsburgh and URA that displaced Black communities in other parts of the City (particularly the Hill District), as well as commercial operations related to red-lining by the Home Owners Loan Corporation and ensuing white flight.
The soil in Homewood is particularly likely to contain elevated lead levels, as compared with other Pittsburgh neighborhoods.

**Project Involvement and Roles**

Site selection will be based on the existing Homewood Cluster Plan and the Homewood Community Comprehensive Plan, specifically as they relate to vacant land designated for continued use as open space (not developed for housing, in example).

Site selection will be further informed by early planning meetings with local partners likely to be involved in future remediation activities (Operation Better Block, Black Urban Gardeners Cooperative, Oasis Farm and Fishery, Rosedale Block Cluster, and the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy. Once site selection is completed, partners will continue to be engaged based on their specific abilities to provide assistance or crucial feedback.

**List of Organizations/Entities/Groups & Roles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of organization/entity/group</th>
<th>Point of contact</th>
<th>Specific involvement in the project or assistance provided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grounded Strategies</td>
<td>Tom Mulholland</td>
<td>Project Management, Mapping and Data Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation Better Block [OBB]</td>
<td>Hayly Hoch</td>
<td>Project Planning, Site Prioritization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Green Corps (Operation Better Block)</td>
<td>Hayly Hoch</td>
<td>Project Planning, Site Prioritization, Youth Engagement, Future Reuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CommunityCare Stewards (Grounded Strategies)</td>
<td>NA (Multiple)</td>
<td>Community Education, Potential Participation in Soil Sample Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homewood Community Development Collaborative</td>
<td>Jerome Jackson (OBB)</td>
<td>Community Education, Community Feedback, Site Prioritization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oasis Farm and Fishery</td>
<td>Tacumba Turner</td>
<td>Community Feedback, Site Prioritization, Future Reuse Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Urban Farmers and Gardeners Cooperative</td>
<td>Raqueeb Bey</td>
<td>Community Feedback, Site Prioritization, Future Reuse Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Pittsburgh - Department of City Planning</td>
<td>Shelly Danko+Day</td>
<td>Site access agreements for any early action activities that may occur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homewood Concerned Citizens Council</td>
<td></td>
<td>To be engaged for Community Education,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Incorporating Community Input

Following the initial planning phase, updates will be taken to regular monthly community meetings for broader feedback. Meetings include the Homewood Concerned Citizens Council monthly meeting and the Operation Better Block monthly meeting. If alternatives to in-person meetings are necessitated, then we will participate in virtual meetings or create outreach materials that can be shared digitally or by mail with these networks of engaged residents.

Community stakeholder updates will occur on a quarterly basis. Community stakeholders include all of the partners listed in the “List of Organizations/Entities/Groups & Roles” above, as well as the offices of the District 7, 8, and 9 Councilpersons.

We will also engage and train residents as paid soil sample collectors, and prepare them to share information about the initiative with neighbors as they perform program activities.

**TASK DESCRIPTIONS, COST ESTIMATES, AND MEASURING PROGRESS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task 1: Community Feedback</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project Implementation:</strong> (Phase 1) Community stakeholder feedback and planning. Announcement at community meetings. Gather feedback from community members on our planning process. Recruit a qualified soil scientist utilizing the organization's partnership with Allegheny County Conservation District and the University of Pittsburgh Department of Geology and Environmental Science. (Phase 2) Share developments with community members at community meetings. Share developments with partners and community stakeholders with quarterly updates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anticipated Schedule:</strong> (Phase 1) 2022 Q2-4. (Phase 2) 2023 Q1 - 2024 Q4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task Lead:</strong> Grounded Strategies</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Outputs:** Community stakeholder feedback report. Letters of support from partners and community stakeholders. 8 stakeholder progress update reports.

### Task 2: Finalized Site Selection

**Project Implementation:** (Phase 1) Collect input from partners and community stakeholders. Create GIS map incorporating that feedback and building off of the existing Homewood Cluster Plan maps, and Allegheny County Community Environment Inspections, datasets from City of Pittsburgh Department of City Planning, datasets from the Allegheny County Real Estate department and datasets from the Allegheny County Conservation District. Use this map to create a final inventory of sites, categorized by priority. (Phase 2) Perform Phase I Environmental Site Assessment to visually assess sites for likelihood of lead contamination. Complete a broader visual assessment of physical conditions on each site and complete a survey for each site. This will result in the production of the ‘Homewood Vacant Lot Physical Assessment Data Set’. Engage with youth program participants through subaward with Operation Better Block. Supplement activities with education related to habitat, physical geography, local history, and other topics.

**Anticipated Schedule:** (Phase 1) 2022 Q2-Q4. (Phase 2) 2023 Q1-Q2.

**Task Lead:** Grounded Strategies

**Outputs:** GIS Map - Inventory of Sites for Soil Testing and Physical Assessment

### Task/Activity 3: Data Collector Recruitment/Training

**Project Implementation:** (Phase 1) Planning. Coordination with a local health agency (Allegheny County Health Department) so they can monitor individuals for lead exposure. Coordination with local institutions with networks of active residents to engage for data collection recruitment. (Phase 2) Recruitment. Prepare job description for Resident Brownfield Data Collectors. Recruit 6-12 resident data collectors from active resident networks to participate as data collectors. (Phase 3) Training. Train soil sample collectors and neighborhood ‘Ambassadors’ on safe and accurate soil sampling techniques and on general information regarding risks of lead exposure and other information relevant for educating inquiring neighbors. Leverage relationships with subject matter experts and relevant community organizing/advocacy groups, such as the ‘Get the Lead Out Coalition’ to support with workshop content.

**Anticipated Schedule:** (Phase 1) 2022 Q2-Q4. (Phase 2) 2022 Q4 - 2023 Q1. (Phase 3) 2023 Q1-Q2.

**Task Lead:** Grounded Strategies

**Outputs:** Job Description for Resident Brownfield Data Collector. Brownfield Soil Sample Collection Process and Safety Guidelines. 6-12 Resident Brownfield Data Collector participant agreements.

### Task/Activity 4: Soil Sample Collection and Processing
Project Implementation: (Phase 1) Perform Phase II Environmental Site Assessment, incorporating site-wide soil probing to generate samples for analysis by Penn State University’s Agricultural Analytical Services Laboratory (AASL). This will be performed by a cohort of Resident Brownfield Data Collectors and will result in a ‘Homewood Vacant Lot Soil Information Data Set’. Prepare samples for the laboratory, send samples, and compile test results.

Anticipated Schedule: (Phase 1) 2023 Q3 - 2024 Q3.

Task Lead: Grounded Strategies

Outputs: Homewood Vacant Lot Physical Assessment Data Set. Homewood Vacant Lot Soil Information Data Set.

Task/Activity 5: Finalizing Assessments and Staging Clean-up and Redevelopment

Project Implementation: (Phase 1) Identify priority sites for clean-up based on results of soil tests and feedback from community residents and stakeholders. Produce speculative designs for green space redevelopment of viable parcels incorporating judgment of local land stewardship organizations like Oasis Farm and Fishery, Rosedale Block Cluster, and the Black Urban Gardeners and Farmers Cooperative.

Anticipated Schedule: (Phase 1) 2024 Q2 - 2025 Q1

Task Lead: Grounded Strategies


Measuring Environmental Results

Grounded conducts weekly program activity meetings to track, record measures of, and evaluate progress towards planned outputs, results and outcomes. Quarterly reports are completed that are shared with the Board of Directors.

PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITY AND PAST PERFORMANCE

Organizational Capacity

Since its founding in 2007, Grounded has initiated and supported 175 vacant land projects in communities and municipalities throughout Allegheny County. Grounded Strategies is building a sense of urgency around how inequitable vacant land maintenance negatively affects the quality of life for historically disadvantaged communities of color in our region. Pittsburgh is home to a staggering 30,000 vacant lots covering more than 1/4th of the entire city. In total, there are over 60,000 vacant lots across Allegheny county. Unstewarded vacant lots become dumping grounds, eyesores, and public health concerns. At Grounded, we are using distressed vacant land as a medium for community
change. The proactive greening of vacant lots has been linked to positive economic, environmental, and social benefits for communities.

Description of Key Staff

Executive Director, Ariam Ford - Ariam is a City Planner by trade and self-driven by choice. She is deeply passionate about equitable development, community planning, and land-use policy. Her professional work has focused on community-led land use interventions, resident empowerment, civic education programs, geospatial statistics, and GIS mapping.

Ariam holds a Master of City Planning from Boston University and a Bachelor of Arts in History from the University of Virginia. An active resident of the Overbrook neighborhood of Pittsburgh, Ariam serves on the board of the Watersheds of South Pittsburgh and is President of the Overbrook Community Council. Most recently, Ariam was honored to join the board of Propel Schools. Ariam has been with Grounded since 2017.

Director of Operations, Shequaya Bailey - Shequaya is the Director of Operations for Grounded Strategies. She is a native of Pittsburgh who graduated from Peabody High School; attended Pennsylvania State University to study Health Policy and Administration and earned her Bachelor of Science degree; she has her Master in Business Administration from the University of Phoenix.

Director of Programming, Tom Mulholland - Tom has been with Grounded since 2016 and in that time has managed elements of multiple projects related to community education about stormwater management issues, including all of those referenced in this work plan.

Past Performance and Accomplishments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assistance Agreement</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Agreement Management</th>
<th>Reporting Requirements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richard King Mellon Foundation</td>
<td>2016-2018</td>
<td>$250K over 2 years for stormwater education and demonstration projects in 2 sewersheds in the city. Project included data collection, resident education, networking, design of systems with over 1M gallons capacity, and implementation of projects which remove 840K gallons per year from the system.</td>
<td>Interim and final financial and narrative reports were submitted on time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA Dept. of Environmental Protection</td>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>$50,000 for ongoing environmental education with youth group partners throughout the county. Involved 170 hours of education, with over 100 youth, outreach kits given to communities, participation in volunteer days and community activities.</td>
<td>Our final report was on-time and funds were fully expended on budgeted line items. Data was provided to show that we met targeted objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allegheny County Health Dept.</td>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>$75,900 over 2 years to implement public art with air quality messaging to enhance existing vacant land projects in McKeesport, Braddock, Wilkinsburg, and Clairton. Environmental justice outreach/education was</td>
<td>Interim and final financial and narrative reports were submitted on time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Environmental Protection Agency Environmental Justice Grant 2019-2021 $30,000 over 1 year (with 2nd year extension due to COVID-19) to educate the residents of the City of Allentown neighborhood about potential sources of lead, issues related to lead toxicity, and strategies for abatement and remediation.

Semi-annual progress reports have been submitted with an upcoming report due June 2021. Final report will be submitted in December 2021.
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<td>Personnel</td>
<td>Project Management and Coordination</td>
<td>35800</td>
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<td>24000</td>
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<td>Fringe Benefits</td>
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<td>Travel</td>
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<td>Travel to Brownfield Sites</td>
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<td>Equipment</td>
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<td>XRF Handheld Device</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supplies</td>
<td>Outreach materials. Office equipment for soil scientist. ArcGIS license renewal.</td>
<td>5500</td>
<td>Tablets for field data collection</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>Education Session Supplies</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>Soil Probes, Ovens, Lab and Safety Equipment</td>
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<td>Software license renewals</td>
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<td>Contractual</td>
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<td>Penn State Univers</td>
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<td>Penn State University's AASL</td>
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<td>Consultant</td>
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<td>Other (include subawards)</td>
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<td>Operation Better Block</td>
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<td>Total Direct Costs</td>
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<td>51675</td>
<td>60425</td>
<td>165600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Budget (Total Direct + Indirect)</td>
<td>47300</td>
<td>51675</td>
<td>60425</td>
<td>165600</td>
<td>31100</td>
<td>325000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Subtotal $325,000 EPA
5% Admin $16,250 EPA
10% Admin $32,500 Grounded
Grand Total $373,750
Community Involvement

Following the initial planning phase, updates will be taken to regular monthly community meetings for broader feedback. Meetings include the Homewood Concerned Citizens Council monthly meeting and the Operation Better Block monthly meeting. If alternatives to in-person meetings are necessitated, then we will participate in virtual meetings or create outreach materials that can be shared digitally or by mail with these networks of engaged residents.

Community stakeholder updates will occur on a quarterly basis. Community stakeholders include all of the partners listed in the “List of Organizations/Entities/Groups & Roles” above, as well as the offices of the District 7, 8, and 9 Councilpersons.

We will also engage and train residents as paid soil sample collectors, and prepare them to share information about the initiative with neighbors as they perform program activities.

Samples of Grounded Community Outreach Projects

Pb+G Biochar Report

Grounded in Green Stormwater Infrastructure

Talking Lots Podcast

Lot-by-Lot Illustrated Storybook
Dear Taxpayer:

We're responding to your request dated May 07, 2018, about your tax-exempt status.

We issued you a determination letter in May 2009, recognizing you as tax-exempt under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 501(c)(3).

We also show you're not a private foundation as defined under IRC Section 509(a) because you're described in IRC Sections 509(a)(1) and 170(b)(1)(A)(vi).

Donors can deduct contributions they make to you as provided in IRC Section 170. You're also qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, legacies, devises, transfers, or gifts under IRC Sections 2055, 2106, and 2522.

In the heading of this letter, we indicated whether you must file an annual information return. If you're required to file a return, you must file one of the following by the 15th day of the 5th month after the end of your annual accounting period:

- Form 990, Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax
- Form 990EZ, Short Form Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax
- Form 990-N, Electronic Notice (e-Postcard) for Tax-Exempt Organizations Not Required to File Form 990 or Form 990-EZ
- Form 990-PF, Return of Private Foundation or Section 4947(a)(1) Trust Treated as Private Foundation

According to IRC Section 6033(j), if you don't file a required annual information return or notice for 3 consecutive years, we'll revoke your tax-exempt status on the due date of the 3rd required return or notice.

You can get IRS forms or publications you need from our website at www.irs.gov/forms-pubs or by calling 800-TAX-FORM (800-829-3676).

If you have questions, call 877-829-5500 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.,
local time, Monday through Friday (Alaska and Hawaii follow Pacific time).

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

Kim A. Billups, Operations Manager
Accounts Management Operations