Oil Region Alliance Community Wide Assessment – Narrative Information Sheet

D.1. Applicant Identification

Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism (ORA)
217 Elm Street
Oil City, PA 16301
Applicant DUNS Number: 013176826

D.2. Funding Requested

D.2.a. Assessment Grant Type - Community Wide Assessment Grant

D.2.b. Federal Funds Requested

D.2.b.i. Requested Amount - $500,000

D.2.b.ii. Federal Funds Requested Waiver - Not Applicable

D.3. Location

The location of the Community-wide Assessment Grant project encapsulates two communities:
1) the Borough of Sugarcreek in Venango County, Pennsylvania; and
2) outlying portions of the City of Franklin in Venango County, Pennsylvania.

D.4. Target Area and Priority Site/Property Information

The target area for the Community-wide Assessment Grant project follows a twenty-mile stretch of the Allegheny River in Northwestern PA near the confluence of French Creek. This area includes the Borough of Sugarcreek as well as three census block groups at the edge of the City of Franklin. These are Block Groups 1 and 2 in Census Tract 42121200500 and part of Block Group 5 in Census Tract 42121200600.

The identified priority sites for this project are:
1) Eclipse Point, an un-numbered vacant property consisting of six parcels between Allegheny Boulevard, the Allegheny River, and French Creek in Franklin, PA, which marks the junction of French Creek and the Allegheny River;
2) the former Kraft concrete facility, an un-numbered vacant single parcel at the intersection of Allegheny Boulevard and Gibb Road along the Allegheny River in Sugarcreek Borough; and
3) the Reno Holding site at 1884 Allegheny Boulevard, Reno, Sugarcreek Borough, PA, 16343.
D.5. Contacts

D.5.a. Project Director
Selina Pedi, Redevelopment Manager
Oil Region Alliance
217 Elm Street
Oil City, PA 16301
(724) 264-5772
spedi@oilregion.org

D.5.b. Chief Executive/Highest Ranking Elected Official
John R. Phillips II, President & CEO
Oil Region Alliance
217 Elm Street
Oil City, PA 16301
(814) 677-3152 ext. 108
jphillips@oilregion.org

IV.D.6. Population
The projects will be located within communities in Venango County (2020 population 50,135). Two of the priority sites are located on the riverfront in the Borough of Sugarcreek (population 4,387) and the third priority site is located in the City of Franklin (population 6,089).

IV.D.7. Other Factors

Other Factors ......................................................... Page #
Community population is 10,000 or less. ......................................................... 1
The applicant is a federally recognized Indian tribe or United States territory. ......................................................... 1
The priority brownfield site(s) is impacted by mine-scarred land. ......................................................... 1
The priority site(s) is adjacent to a body of water (i.e., the border of the priority site(s) is contiguous or partially contiguous to the body of water or would be contiguous or partially contiguous with a body of water but for a street, road, or other public thoroughfare separating them). ......................................................... 1, 2
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain. ......................................................... 1, 2
The reuse of the priority site(s) will facilitate renewable energy from wind, solar, or geothermal energy; or will incorporate energy efficiency measures. ......................................................... 3, 4
30% or more of the overall project budget will be spent on eligible reuse planning activities for priority brownfield site(s) within the target area. ......................................................... 7, 8, 9
A county experiencing “persistent poverty” where 20% or more of its population has lived in poverty over the past 30 years, as measured by the 1990 and 2000 decennial censuses and the most recent Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates

IV.D.8. Letter from the State or Tribal Environmental Authority - Attached

IV.D.9. Releasing Copies of Applications - Not Applicable
November 30, 2021

John R Phillips, President/CEO
Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism
217 Elm Street
Oil City, PA 16301-1412

Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism
Various Counties in Northwestern, Pennsylvania

Mr. Phillips:

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection is pleased to support your efforts to redevelop brownfield properties in your community. Returning environmentally challenged and underutilized land and buildings to productive use improves our environment, safeguards our residents, and helps boost Pennsylvania’s economy.

The DEP supports Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism's application for US EPA Brownfields Community Wide Assessment Grant in the amount of $500,000 to conduct environmental assessments, public outreach, and reuse planning on brownfields sites to facilitate revitalization and redevelopment. The Authority’s efforts to examine the redevelopment potential of aggregated, underutilized sites to create renewed neighborhoods and business districts in Pennsylvania is a worthwhile endeavor.

Both Central Office and Regional Office Staff in the Land Recycling Program look forward to supporting the Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism and EPA Region 3 on this project.

If you have any questions, please contact John Gross by email at johngross@pa.gov or by telephone at 717-783-7502.

Sincerely,

Michael Maddigan
Land Recycling Program Manager
Bureau Environmental Cleanup and Brownfields
Oil Region Alliance FY22 Community Wide Assessment - Narrative

1. PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION AND PLANS FOR REVITALIZATION
1.a Target Area and Brownfields
1.a.i. Background and Description of Target Area
The target area for the FY22 Oil Region Alliance (ORA) EPA Brownfields Community Wide Assessment (CWA) Grant follows a twenty-mile stretch of the Allegheny River in Northwestern PA near the confluence of French Creek. This area - now populated by the small community of Sugarcreek as well as the outskirts of the City of Franklin - was once the site of the 243-acre oil refinery known as the Eclipse Lubricating Oil Company and Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO). In the early 1900s the refinery was the world’s largest, utilizing up to 660 metal and wooden storage tanks and filling a huge swath of the Sugarcreek basin, including sludge fields deep into the river. Complementary industrial complexes sprouted up along the neighboring riverbank, covering the entire stretch of riverbank in railroads, factories, and storage yards. When the refinery closed in 1937 it left a scarred landscape, a toxic river, and a legacy of social and environmental contamination that persists to this day.

The sections of the Allegheny River to the north and south of the Sugarcreek basin now enjoy federal Wild and Scenic designations, but the basin itself is a notable exception. The sections of the Allegheny River to the north and south of the Sugarcreek basin are particularly beautiful to drive, ride, hike, or kayak, but the basin itself, again, is a notable exception. Persistent historical contamination still leeches into the river, which is a regulatory floodway. Much of the land has either been kept in light or medium industrial use, further polluting the local area, or simply abandoned, with massive early-twentieth-century industrial complexes left to slowly decay. There has been little local capacity for environmental assessment, remediation, or strategic reuse of such a massive area, and so it has been left as a no-man’s land, strikingly and noticeably separated from revitalization efforts in the downtown areas of Franklin and Oil City.

The median household income for the target area is roughly half that of most Americans, with an overall poverty level of 19.7% - 25.4% for those under the age of 18. Sugarcreek is an area where life is anything but sweet.

In 2020, the Oil Region Alliance, steward of the Oil Heritage Region, took the first step toward healing the scars of the past by focusing a Community Wide Assessment on several brownfield sites in the Allegheny-Clarion (AC) Valley, some thirty miles downriver from the Sugarcreek basin, and one priority site in Oil City, only a few miles upriver from the Sugarcreek basin. Now it is time to build on the success of the ORA’s first CWA project and fill in the gap in assessment information and reuse planning for this critical stretch of river and give these communities some hope of improvement to their economic opportunities and quality of life.

The target area is characterized by mostly undisturbed vegetation along the southeastern bank of the river, along which runs a section of the Erie-to-Pittsburgh Trail. The experience of the trail, however, is marred by the remnant industry and abandoned complexes within easy view and earshot along most of the northwestern bank. The community of Sugarcreek (Venango County, 38.6 square miles, population 4,837) lies along the northwestern bank, with a residential and light industrial section upriver near Oil City, and a mostly commercial and medium industrial section downriver near Franklin. An outlying, largely industrial section of the City of Franklin (Venango County, 4.8 square miles, total population 6,089, target area population approximately 2,200) also lies along the lower few miles of the target area. Even though the target area is dotted with active commercial and industrial sites, they do not provide adequate quality employment for residents, and underemployment and the effects of poverty are still endemic to the area.

The prosperity of this region once depended on the fickle luck of the oil drill. Today, true prosperity and long-term resilience for the Oil Heritage Region depends on the balanced development and utilization of the Allegheny River. With the support of an EPA Community Wide Assessment Grant, the ORA can continue its mission to equitably and strategically nurture the resources and opportunities along the river for the benefit of all who call this area home.

1.a.ii. Description of the Priority Brownfield Site(s)
In addition to continuing work on two priority brownfield sites identified through the FY20 CWA project, the ORA has identified three new priority brownfield sites along the Sugarcreek basin corridor which require environmental assessment and reuse planning. Due to its unique industrial history, the Sugarcreek basin is one huge brownfield with many privately held parcels, and almost every single parcel would benefit from proper environmental assessment and remediation. The entire basin is in dire need of a holistic, mixed-use strategy for redevelopment, incorporating stormwater management and environmental conservation, increased recreational amenity, and a renaissance of next-
Two of the identified priority brownfield sites were once part of the 243-acre Eclipse Lubricating Oil Company and Atlantic Refining Company complex, now commonly called the former Eclipse refinery. The refinery was founded in 1872 by private developers who organized the Eclipse Lubricating Oil Company. In 1876, the company and property were purchased by Standard Oil, who grew it from a small holding into a regional brand, vastly increasing the scale and level of operations on the site. In the realignment of Standard Oil Trust activity in 1892, all of Standard’s Pennsylvania refining and marketing operations were consolidated under the Atlantic Refining Company name, and the Sugarcreek site assumed the Atlantic name in the early 1900s. The complex bustled with activity through the first few decades of the twentieth century, with “Atlantic” branded gasoline and motor oil being sold throughout Pennsylvania and the surrounding region. In 1936, however, a new pipeline from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia rendered the Sugarcreek facility obsolete, and operations ceased completely in 1937. The property was parceled off into dozens of individual plots, two of which are now of prime interest to the balanced redevelopment of the entire Sugarcreek basin.

The first priority brownfield is a cluster of six parcels directly at the junction of French Creek and the Allegheny River. Owned by Venango County since 1970, the 47.6-acre property is known as Eclipse Point and includes a small island in the Allegheny. The property is in the floodplain. Once a main railyard and storage area for the Eclipse refinery, the site sat vacant for decades and is now covered in vegetation. Previous environmental assessments along the river near the property indicated a significant amount of contamination still leaching into the river from the site, which is in a prime position to be utilized as public green space and river access when remediated, especially considering the island and the property’s proximity to the Erie-to-Pittsburgh trail. A current, thorough environmental analysis and remediation plan for the site is needed to stop the contamination flowing downstream and to prepare the property for outdoor recreation use.

The second priority brownfield is one mile upriver from Eclipse Point. Currently owned by Louis W. Kraft, this 9.21-acre brownfield was most recently a cement and concrete processing facility, in addition to the historical railroad and oil refinery operations. The property has been vacant for several years and is not in the floodplain, sitting on a slightly elevated plateau. The industrial history of the site necessitates a proper environmental assessment, especially as it presents a unique, valuable opportunity for a demonstration solar farm site. The current owner is amenable to working with the ORA and a private solar developer to set up a demonstration solar microgrid, which could be linked in to an adjacent Penelec power substation, providing additional energy resilience to the area as well as an opportunity to familiarize residents with the benefits of solar energy development.

The third priority brownfield is roughly 9.5 miles upstream from the Kraft site, at the northern, residential end of the Sugarcreek basin. The site is currently owned by Reno Holdings, LLC, and sits on 6.16 acres of riverfront property. This parcel has been an oil refining site for most of its developed life, producing lubricant product for Pennzoil up into the early 2000s. Purchased by the current owner in 2009, much of the complex was shut down. The remaining active portions are now utilized for light industry workshops, including a machine shop and a woodworking shop, while the rest has fallen into disrepair. The property is a highly visible eyesore situated between the river and the main thoroughfare, Allegheny Boulevard, giving it priority for remediation and redevelopment from an aesthetic and community pride standpoint. An active rail line and siding runs through the rear of property, too, which further enhances the site’s potential for environmentally sensitive industrial redevelopment. Altogether, the property presents tremendous opportunity as a maker space and industrial incubator, right at the visual entrance to the Sugarcreek basin.

Two previously identified priority sites still require additional assessment and remediation planning, as well, that will be above and beyond the funding limits of the ORA’s FY20 CWA grant: the former Quaker State Refinery in Emlenton, a 50-acre brownfield which runs along the entire western edge of Emlenton, and the Parkers Landing Outfitter property, a 0.64-acre riverfront property with 165 feet of Allegheny River frontage. Much progress has been
made on several of the priority sites from the FY20 CWA, and it is crucial to continue this work and tie it into this new target area to fully develop the Oil Heritage Region’s revitalization strategy.

1.b. Revitalization of the Target Area

1.b.i. Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans
When the ORA undertook the FY20 EPA Community Wide Assessment project, it was with the goal of reawakening hope in several communities along the Allegheny River, communities that had been neglected and disenfranchised. The goal initially focused on just a few communities, and a few priority sites, in the AC Valley and Oil City so as to best utilize the available funding and manpower. Now the ORA is ready to expand that goal to include more of the Oil Heritage Region, this time by focusing on the area between the AC Valley and Oil City. The vision that first drove the ORA’s brownfield redevelopment strategy, of vibrant waterfront communities linked by history, water, and trail, has been validated and strengthened as new partners are added and new sites are selected for redevelopment. Community by community, the vision of revitalized, walkable and rideable town centers, accessible green spaces, and educational opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities, investment in sustainable and regenerative infrastructure and industry, and protection of natural resources now extends to new corners of the Oil Heritage Region.

The ORA has spent several years working with partners across the region to identify the needs and objectives of residents, property owners, local and county-level government. Existing organizational, municipal, and county level strategic plans have been reinforced by new planning documents completed by the ORA and partners such as the Northwest Commission and the Franklin Industrial and Commercial Development Authority.

Each of the identified priority brownfield sites plays an important role in realizing the desired outcomes of these strategic plans, kickstarting new business opportunities, building new connections between communities, and creating lasting resilience across the region. Eclipse Point presents an opportunity to expand equitable river access and green space with nature trails, cultural event space, and community gardens, as well as providing a resting spot for those coming upriver from Emlenton or down from Oil City. The property also provides an opportunity for further entrepreneurial linkages to the Erie-to-Pittsburgh Trail. The Kraft site is ideal for a pilot program in renewable energy development and education, and the Reno Holdings facility is envisioned as a new entrepreneurial asset, redeveloped to be energy efficient and welcoming to those seeking incubator space for their innovative light-industrial ventures.

1.b.ii. Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy
This EPA Community-Wide Assessment Grant will provide crucial continued momentum to realize the long-term goals of the Oil Heritage Region. Two years ago, the ORA was confident that the FY20 CWA project would transform not just the towns of the AC Valley but would advance the resilience and potential of the entire region. That expectation has been realized, with a burgeoning revitalization ongoing in the Valley and an air of newfound hope and potential throughout the Oil Region. The attention given to each priority site, even at the initial assessment stage, has given residents, business owners, and local government the confidence that now, finally, fortunes are changing. There is now a tangible sense of excitement as the ORA sets its sights on the Sugarcreek basin, which is ripe for balanced, strategic redevelopment, bringing new economic opportunity, new green spaces, and a significantly improved quality of life to these historically disadvantaged communities.

Entrepreneurship: With newly available spaces, engaged support resources, and a clear outline of feasible business opportunities, this Community-Wide Assessment process will provide the ORA to alleviate some of the risk and uncertainty of starting a new business, encouraging investment in the next generation of commerce and industry and new job-training and entrepreneurship pathways, and turning the tide on the persistent poverty experienced by the Oil Heritage Region. The redevelopment of Eclipse Point has the potential to create more than a dozen new jobs in conservation, hospitality, and outdoor recreation; the redevelopment of the Kraft site has the potential to create another dozen new jobs in renewable energy installation and maintenance, not to mention critical public-private partnerships for energy resilience; the redevelopment of the Reno Holdings site has the potential to create dozens of new businesses and jobs in programming, robotics, next-generation manufacturing, and the arts.

Connection: With the Erie-to-Pittsburgh Trail and river between Oil City and the AC Valley clean, well-appointed and supported by robust facilities and activities for all seasons and ability levels, residents and visitors will be afforded reliable access to the Oil Heritage Region’s greatest asset - the great outdoors! French Creek near Eclipse Point is a
favored local spot for freshwater fishing, and both French Creek and the Sugarcreek section of the Allegheny are perfect for boating and kayaking. While some locals make use of this section of the river, access is limited, and the industrial nature of the surrounding area scares off some would-be visitors. A cleaner, safer, and more inviting public green space with easy river access and increased overall amenity will give residents and visitors alike more reason and opportunity to connect to their natural surroundings and enjoy the benefits of being outdoors on and near the water, and will provide even greater connection between the region’s river towns.

Resilience: With the redevelopment of the priority brownfield sites into cohesive, cooperative, connected community assets, and the continued cultivation of local and regional partnerships, the social, environmental, and economic resilience of the Sugarcreek basin and the entire Oil Heritage Region will be improved and strengthened. Youth will stay in the local area for the purposeful and fulfilling life and opportunities to create meaningful memories with their children. Seniors will stay in the local area for the strong social connectivity and support systems and the ability to continue learning and growing and enjoying life.

1.c. Strategy for Leveraging Resources

1.c.i. Resources Needed for Site Reuse
The pace of utilization of the ORA’s FY20 CWA grant has been such that the ORA is now able to pursue additional EPA assessment funding and plans to apply for assessment and remediation funding in future grant rounds, until such time as every possible brownfield has been evaluated and brought back to full, purposeful life. It is recognized that continued reuse planning and redevelopment needs will likely exceed the funding and limitations of the EPA’s brownfield programs, so the ORA has also been working hard to strengthen relationships with other state and federal agencies and charitable foundations, as well as private development partners, to leverage additional resources. For example, funds that are used for site reuse planning will be leveraged to secure Community Conservation and Partnership Program (C2P2) grants from DCNR to complete recreational amenities at riverfront sites. FY20 CWA funds are currently earmarked as a match to leverage an additional $1M in assessment and remediation planning funds from PA DCED’s Industrial Site Reuse Program (ISRP), and once assessments are complete, ISRP Funds for remediation will be pursued for sites owned by the ORA. Market research funded by the FY20 CWA grant was also crucial to the recent ORA-led coalition application for a $500k EDA Build Back Better Regional Challenge planning grant, which has the potential to bring millions more in redevelopment funding for remediated brownfields.

1.c.ii. Use of Existing Infrastructure
Of the three identified priority brownfields in the Sugar Creek basin target area, the most infrastructure-intensive redevelopment projects are expected to be the Kraft site and the Reno Holdings site. The Reno Holdings site has extensive infrastructure in place, but a key goal of the ORA’s brownfield redevelopment strategy is to develop and encourage on-site renewable energy generation, including solar and wind, as well as on-site green stormwater management strategies. Similarly, the Kraft site has basic infrastructure in place, but is envisioned as a demonstration solar microgrid which will require upgrades to energy infrastructure. The Eclipse Point site will not require much in the way of infrastructure, but any necessary facilities for the outdoor recreation amenities are planned to be powered by off-grid or grid-connected renewable sources such as wind and solar. Funding for such improvements will be sought through DCED’s Alternative and Clean Energy program as well as through private investment.

2. COMMUNITY NEED AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

2.a. Community Need
2.a.i. The Community’s Need for Funding
The Sugarcreek basin is far from a community of means and opportunity. The Borough of Sugarcreek is home to less than five thousand residents spread out over nearly 40 square miles, where the median household income is only $31,952, roughly half that enjoyed by the average American. Even the City of Franklin, which boasts one of the more successful downtown business districts in the region, suffers from a median household income of $43,828 and a poverty level of 19.6%. Population in the target area continues to decline as young people leave searching for purposeful, family-sustaining work, and the tax base suffers, leaving few hands and little municipal funding available for the expertise needed to assess, remediate, or redevelop brownfield sites. Because of the relative obscurity, low
population, and depressed socio-economic status of the entire region, private developers have historically been averse to investing in these communities, and the environmental cleanup necessary of the identified priority brownfield sites makes the situation even worse. Regional organizations are able to pledge in-kind assistance, but not direct financial support. The Sugarcreek basin has long been a mostly forgotten community, the sort of place people drive through on their way to somewhere better, and funding from the EPA Community-Wide Assessment Grant program is the critical lifeline needed to bring lasting, equitable, beneficial change. With this funding, a clear, logical, feasible path to the strategic redevelopment of the basin will be laid out, with the groundwork completed, and the ORA will be able to lower redevelopment risk, gain buy-in from partner organizations and institutions, and attract private investment.

2.a.ii. Threats to Sensitive Populations
(1) Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations
Like most of the Oil Heritage Region, the Sugarcreek basin target area faces significant health and welfare challenges relating to un- and underemployment and persistent poverty. Only 18.7% of residents enjoy higher levels of education and better employment in health care, academics, or local or state government. Roughly 5% of residents, depending on the specific community or neighborhood, enjoy significantly higher paying positions than most, skewing the median values shown by aggregated data, which are already 25-50% lower than state and federal averages. It is also important to note that decent, family-sustaining jobs are generally clustered in larger towns and cities. The average commute is 22.7 minutes, well outside the geographic boundaries of these small, geographically isolated towns. There is no public transportation linking these smaller communities to the larger employment centers, which means that residents must travel to work in private vehicles. For many residents, including the 19.7% who are locked into a cycle of generational poverty, something as seemingly simple as reliable transportation is an insurmountable obstacle to a better life. A heartbreaking 25.4% of local children live in persistent poverty. For many, convenience and dollar stores are the main source of nutrition, leading to a food insecurity level of 12.8% for adults and 17.6% for children, obesity levels of 35%, and a diabetes risk of 13.2%. Substance abuse is also endemic throughout the region, with an average of 35 reported drug overdose deaths per 100,000 people and a 36% increase in drug overdose deaths over the last three reported years.

The ORA’s brownfield redevelopment strategy is centered on strengthening social support systems and community connectivity and providing accessible and equitable educational and employment opportunities, empowering locals to find their passion and their purpose and create the future they want to see for themselves and their children. In the Sugarcreek basin target area, this starts with highly visible and accessible projects dedicated to entrepreneurship and training, where local youth and displaced workers can begin to see themselves in fulfilling roles in technology, green energy, and next-generation manufacturing, giving them the hope and resources needed to change their reality.

(2) Greater Than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions
The Oil Heritage Region is lucky in that local brownfields present only minimal active health hazards. The incidence of cancer or other exposure-related diseases is on par with national averages. Hospitalizations and deaths from heart disease, respiratory disease, and diabetes are higher than state and national averages, but these are related to lifestyle, rather than exposure to hazardous substances. Smoking, for example, is 44% more common in the target area than in the rest of the state. Local brownfields, however, represent the opportunity to change the income and poverty factors that heavily impact those lifestyle-related diseases and deaths. Improving options for and access to meaningful, family-sustaining employment, healthy food, green space, and social support can ensure that hope and opportunity are reawakened throughout the Sugarcreek basin and the entire Oil Heritage Region, purging the shadow of poverty, malnutrition, addiction, and despair.

(3) Promoting Environmental Justice
Environmental Justice in the Sugarcreek basin looks a little different than it might in other communities, in that roughly 80% of the local population bears the weight of the general lack of opportunity and resources due to the unique industrial history of the region. This is a systemic issue that is based on geography, history, and corporate greed and indifference rather than any aspect of culture; the past prosperity of the Oil Heritage Region has been decidedly inequitable. The natural environment was ravaged time and again, and a few fortunate individuals were made fabulously wealthy on the backs of the unfortunate many. This painful history has resulted in significant modern
challenges, including those relating to employment, poverty, drug abuse, and physical and mental health, which can be alleviated dramatically if economic and social opportunity are improved. Equitable access to resources and opportunity is therefore built into every aspect of the ORA’s regional redevelopment strategy. This is not a matter of sharing benefits from the top down; this is a matter of including and empowering every segment of the population from the bottom up, ensuring that all residents are heard, respected, and given the chance to take an active role in the creation of their future. Equity and Justice are not simply about sharing; they are about empowering. The ORA’s strategy is to empower residents by providing the tools and resources necessary for them to realize their full potential. Whether it is giving a single mother an entrepreneurial option that allows her more time with her child, or helping an out-of-work coal miner find a new passion in an entirely unexpected industry, the ORA and its redevelopment partners engage directly with those who need the most support, find connections to available resources, and provide sound, data-drive reuse plans that fulfill local and regional needs for equitable economic prosperity and social wellbeing.

2.b. Community Engagement
2.b.i. and ii. Project Involvement & Roles
In addition to the partnerships the ORA cultivated for the FY20 CWA project, several new partners are now involved in the push to expand the Oil Region’s brownfield redevelopment program, providing high quality regional insight as well as organization-specific technical support. Ben Franklin Technology Partners, represented by Brian Slawin (Northwest Director, brianslawin@cnp.benfranklin.org), provides economic and technology expertise; Central Electric Cooperative, represented by Matt Boshaw (CEO, mboshaw@central.coop), provides energy infrastructure expertise and project support; the Venango campus of Clarion University, represented by Hope Lineman (Dean of Career and Workforce Development, hlineman@clarion.edu), provides workforce development expertise; DBS Consulting & Development, represented by Donald Smith (CEO, drsmithosm@icloud.com), provides technology and workforce development expertise and project support; the Franklin Industrial and Commercial Development Authority, represented by Deb Eckelberger (Economic Development Director, deckelberger@franklinpa.gov), provides economic development expertise; the Northwest Commission, represented by Tammy Dulaney (Program Manager, tammyd@northwestpa.org), provides economic development expertise; and, last but certainly not least, the PA Department of Environmental Protection, represented by Anita Stainbrook (Environmental Program Manager, astainbrook@pa.gov), provides environmental assessment and remediation expertise.

2.b.iii. Incorporating Community Input
The ORA understands that the residents, neighbors, and businesses in a proposed project area are those that will most likely be affected and impacted by the activities undertaken under this grant and remains committed to equitable community involvement, making authentic, effective, and meaningful public participation a key component of the project process. For this grant project, the ORA will conduct engagement activities with residents, businesses, organizations, and other stakeholders, building on the successful model utilized to date. A Steering Committee of dedicated residents, business owners, organizational representatives and elected officials from across the Oil Heritage Region, plus county-level and specialty advisors in economic and community development, sustainability, education, culture, and community resilience meets regularly to discuss project goals. This system is well-established and already includes representatives from the Sugarcreek basin. Steering committee members and other community stakeholders help to decide where to deploy EPA funds and serve as the initial sounding board for potential reuse options. Beyond this effective representative system, the ORA also connects with project communities through a weekly newspaper column, weekly coffee chats and other periodic public engagement events, newsletters, dedicated web sites, social media, the production of print materials, and other outreach vehicles. Meetings and events are now regularly held in remote or hybrid form as well as in-person when appropriate and safe. English is currently the only language needed to communicate within the target area, though several members of the ORA and partner organizations do speak and write in other languages should the need arise to communicate with anyone not proficient in English.

3. TASK DESCRIPTIONS, COST ESTIMATES, AND MEASURING PROGRESS
3.a. Description of Tasks/Activities and Outputs
The following grant tasks and budget were developed based on the experience to date of the ORA’s FY20 CWA project, input obtained from other EPA award grantees, planning activities conducted by the ORA and partners, and feedback from the Brownfield Steering Committee. Each task is expected to result in progress towards redevelopment of the priority sites and achievement of the desired project outcomes.
3.a.i. Project Implementation

Each Task Description identifies the Task Lead, Roles and Responsibilities for each entity assigned activities under that task. The identified assignments assure efficient implementation of the grant tasks and achievement of the desired project goals.

**Task 1 Cooperative Agreement Oversight:** Under this task, the ORA Project Manager will: be a liaison with EPA Region 3 throughout the 3-year project period; assure compliance with grant requirements; procure a Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP) and planning consultants in adherence with competitive procurement standards; oversee consultant work; attend 2 regional brownfield conferences and 1 EPA Brownfields Conferences (if and when available) during the project period to learn best practices and identify ways to leverage further resources and opportunities. Under this task, the QEP, with assistance from the Project Manager and ORA staff, will complete and submit quarterly progress reports, disadvantaged business enterprise reports, federal financial reports, ACRES reports, and a final performance report.

**Task 2 Community Outreach & Involvement:** Under this task, the Project Manager and ORA staff will conduct engagement activities with residents, businesses, organizations, and other stakeholders. The ORA will maintain and augment the existing Brownfield Steering Committee by inviting additional municipal partners, community members, business leaders and other stakeholders. Participants will help to decide where to deploy EPA funds and serve as the initial sounding board for potential reuse options. The ORA will also connect with the project communities through newspaper columns, regular public engagement events, newsletters, dedicated web sites, social media, the production of print materials, and other outreach vehicles, both in-person (when appropriate and safe) and virtually. The Project Manager will arrange for meeting space and provide supplies and audio-visual for meetings as needed. Under this task, the QEP will be available to present at public events and provide project updates and information for public distribution.

**Task 3 Brownfields Assessment Activities:** The QEP, ORA Project Manager, and ORA staff, with the support of the Brownfield Steering Committee, will undertake site assessment activities; procurement of subcontractors if necessary; refinement and finalization of rating/ranking criteria; rating and ranking of sites; follow-up planning/technical assistance on sites (tax records, mapping, past studies); preparation for a comprehensive Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPP) for all sites; and preparation of Sampling and Analysis Plans and Health and Safety Plans as needed for Phase II Assessments. Sites will be evaluated through performance of Phase I and/or Phase II Environmental Sites Assessments (ESAs). The Phase I ESAs will be performed by the QEP in accordance with the American Society for Testing Materials Standard (ASTM) 1527-13 and the guidelines set forth in the US EPAs All Appropriate Inquiry Rule (AAI). Sites recommended for further study will be subject to a Phase II ESA, inclusive of analytical studies to determine the impact by the site to public health and/or the environment. Prior to undertaking activities involving the collection of environmental samples, the QEP will prepare and submit a QAPP which meets the approval of the U.S. EPA Region 3 Brownfields Program. The QAPP will describe the project, the sampling and analytical strategies, and the methods and procedures that will be used in all Phase II assessments. The QAPP will be utilized to facilitate the compilation of Site-Specific Sampling & Analysis Plans (SSAP) to determine the degree of contamination at these sites. The QEP will also undertake environmental risk assessments to advance key sites toward development and additional reuse development planning based upon new information from the assessments. Brownfield sites will vary in size, complexity, and condition.

**Task 4 Site Reuse & Cleanup Planning:** Under this task the QEP will work with the Project Manager, Steering Committee, and other consultants to produce Remedial Action Program Plans (RAPPs) to advance the priority sites toward redevelopment. The Project Manager and ORA staff, with the support of the QEP, will develop a comprehensive reuse plan for the three Sugarcreek basin priority sites, linked to the ongoing regional comprehensive redevelopment strategy. Similar to an EPA Areawide plan, this effort will include additional site reuse assessment, infrastructure assessments, sites disposition strategies (as necessary), evaluations of market viability and solicitation and incorporation of community input regarding desired end uses that align with current planning and regional efforts. If budget allows, similar, but smaller scale reuse plans will be developed for other identified sites. Under this task, the Project Manager will manage planning activities and meeting and facility expenses, materials, and equipment.

3.a.ii. Anticipated Project Schedule
Given the advanced work completed under the ORA’s FY20 CWA project and site control potential of the identified priority sites, immediate initiation of the project tasks is anticipated. The ORA is prepared to procure professional services as soon as possible after the Cooperative Agreement and Workplan are approved and in place. The graphic below depicts the intended schedule for implementation of grant activities. As required by the Cooperative Agreement, grant closeout activities will be completed within 90 days of the end of the grant period.

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<th>Project Schedule</th>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Q2</th>
<th>Q3</th>
<th>Q4</th>
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</table>

3.a.iii. Task/Activity Lead
The Tasks and Activity Leads were described in Section 3.a.i. The ORA has assigned Selina Pedi to serve as the Project Manager for this grant, continuing her role from the ongoing FY20 CWA project. Ms. Pedi has extensive experience in public-private and cross-agency partnerships focused on community resilience, sustainable community development, landscape-level rehabilitation, natural resource management, and social enterprise planning, as well as a background in developing innovative outreach methodology for rural and disenfranchised communities, giving her a valuable skillset when overseeing the assessment and evaluation of ecologically sensitive locations for mixed-use, community-benefit redevelopment. Ms. Pedi will continue to serve as a liaison between the EPA, the ORA, and the target area communities of Sugarcreek and Franklin. She will oversee engagement with the local and regional community and will assume responsibility for administrative and reporting compliance for the cooperative agreement. The services of a Qualified Environmental Professional will be competitively procured in accordance with ORA procurement protocols. Responses to the Requests for Qualifications must demonstrate success with EPA Brownfield Assessment grants and provide recent client references for similar work.

3.a.iv. Outputs
As demonstrated through the success of many EPA Brownfield projects, the generation of solid outputs (deliverables) will result in the achievement of the project’s desired outcomes (goals). To demonstrate this correlation, Outputs have been presented with correlating Outcomes in Section 3.c. Measuring Environmental Results.

3.b. Cost Estimates
3.b.i. Development of Cost Estimates
Information used to develop each cost estimate is provided following the Budget Table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.b.ii.</th>
<th>Budget Table</th>
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<td>Category</td>
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Task 1 Cooperative Agreement Oversight ($11,450):
Personnel: $6,000 = Administration (Project Manager @ $60,000/yr * 3 yrs * 0.033FTE)
Travel: $5,250 = 2 staff attending 2 regional conferences and 1 EPA conferences ($1000), flights (4 * $600),
        driving ($200 gas), hotels (6 * $200), and per diem ($450)
Supplies: $250 miscellaneous office supplies (copies, pens, paper clips, ink, etc.)
Contractual: $4,000 QEP allowance for reporting

Task 2 Community Outreach & Involvement ($15,200):
Personnel: $6,000 = Administration (Project Manager @ $60,000/yr * 3 yrs * 0.033FTE)
          $20,000 = Environmental and Planning Staff @ $40,000/yr * 3 yrs * 0.166FTE
Supplies: $5,000 ($500 print materials, $500 miscellaneous office supplies, $4000 allowance for event rentals,
          services, and materials (food, drinks, displays, etc.))
Contractual: $3,000 QEP allowance for participating in and facilitating public meetings & engagement

Task 3 Brownfields Assessment Activities ($147,450):
Personnel: $6,000 = Administration (Project Manager @ $60,000/yr * 3 yrs * 0.033FTE);
          $20,000 = Environmental and Planning Staff @ $40,000/yr * 3 yrs * 0.166FTE
Supplies: $500 miscellaneous office supplies
Contractual: $250,000 QEP allowance for Environmental Assessments (Phase II Assessments @ $50,000 each * 5
           for three new identified priority site and two previously identified priority sites, including SAPs, HASPs, etc.)

Task 4 Site Reuse & Cleanup Planning ($125,900):
Personnel: $6,000 = Administration (Project Manager @ $60,000/yr * 3 yrs * 0.033FTE);
          $40,000 = Environmental and Planning Staff @ $40,000/yr * 3 yrs * 0.33FTE
Supplies: $1000 ($250 miscellaneous office supplies, $750 print materials)
Contractual: $127,000 QEP allowance for remedial action planning and reuse planning at target area sites

3.c. Measuring Environmental Results
The ORA Project Manager, with assistance from the QEP, will track, measure, and evaluate its progress toward
project goals by: documenting outputs and outcomes in Quarterly Reports and in ACRES; holding Steering Committee
and public meetings at key milestones to update project progress and to seek input on next steps; and posting progress
reports on outputs and outcomes via a dedicated webpage and existing community newsletters. Outputs measured will
include sites assessed, resources leveraged, sites positioned for cleanup, acres of property made ready for economic
reuse or community recreational uses, stakeholders involved, and reuse plans established. Outcomes will include
economic revitalization, enhanced recreational amenities, reconnection of the community to the riverfront, jobs created,
infrastructure upgrades, vulnerable populations helped, and resilience measures implemented. Project
outputs/outcomes include:

(1) Cooperative Agreement Oversight: Outputs: Effectively executed cooperative agreement; clearly established roles and
tasks for grant management process; training and capacity-building at conferences; compliance measure in place.
Outcomes: Grants efficiently administered; clear governance structure; timely and complete reporting. Tracking:
Quarterly & ACRES reporting and internal quality assurance evaluation.

(2) Community Outreach & Involvement: Outputs: 12 Steering Committee & community meetings; dedicated web
page; formal site access agreements. Outcomes: Stakeholders have ownership and input in project and are vested in
redevelopment plans. Tracking: Quarterly & ACRES report on engagement; public feedback into and on reuse plans.

(3) Brownfields Assessment Activities: Outputs: QAPP, SAPs, 3 Phase I assessments and 3 Phase II assessments;
additional resources leveraged for assessment and remediation. Outcomes: Quality data for use in remedial and reuse
planning; more certainty and less risk associated with priority sites; ability to move sites forward in redevelopment
process. Tracking: Quarterly &ACRES reports on results and leveraged resources.

(4) Site Reuse & Cleanup Planning: Outputs: well-informed remedial plans; reuse plans for identified priority sites;
implementation strategy and resource roadmap for advancing key sites; community support and approval. Outcomes:
integration of remediation and site planning to save time and money; reconnection of communities to the riverfront;
improved quality of life through new recreational amenities; job creation and economic development through public
and private sector investment. Tracking: Quarterly & ACRES reports on results.
4. PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITY AND PAST PERFORMANCE

4.a. Programmatic Capability

4.a.i., ii., and iii. Organizational Capacity, Structure, & Description of Key Staff

The Oil Region Alliance has a successful history of managing community and economic development projects, as well as projects in outdoor conservation and recreation. This success comes from an efficient and effective strategic planning process for all projects, starting with a detailed work plan with clear milestones and responsibilities, developed in concert with project partners, and based on well-defined and measurable performance indicators. The assigned Project Manager and experienced support staff within the ORA meet regularly with partner organizations and community liaisons and ensure that projects stay on schedule, under budget and meet all reporting requirements. Supervision for the Community-Wide Assessment will be assigned to Selina Pedi, Redevelopment Manager, and supported by an experienced team of ORA staff. Kim Copley-Harris, Project Manager for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism, will provide strategic project support, including engagement with rail-trail partners and river-based asset management. Dan Twombly, Executive Vice President, and Office Manager Chris Clifton will manage the fiscal resources of the grant, drawing down the funds and reporting on the fiscal expenses required. Emily Altomare, Communications and Tourism Manager, will support community engagement and communication with partners.

The ORA has a successful, nearly twenty-year history of managing federal grants from the National Park Service, the Department of Labor, Department of Transportation, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Agriculture, and Small Business Administration, as well as state level and local grants. In the past three years, the ORA has successfully managed over 50 grants, many concurrently. Project Managers provide grant management, including required reporting. All fiscal activity is done in-house and is tied into the organization’s electronic accounting system which is audited annually. The ORA has two close-out specialists to ensure that grants are closed out on time and within the budget with grant funds expended. All requirements are satisfied, including timely filing of quarterly reports and financial status reports.

4.a.iii. Acquiring Additional Resources

The project team will procure the QEP and additional remedial planning consultants in adherence with local, state, and federal competitive procurement standards. The ORA’s procurement procedures include seeking statements of qualifications and cost proposals that are reviewed by the Supervisor and staff. The Brownfield Steering Committee will have an advisory role in QEP procurement. Professionals with previous EPA Brownfields experience will be encouraged to compete. For contracted services, contractors who submit the lowest bona fide bids and are considered fully qualified will be selected. ORA Board approval is required for all RFP awards. Assuming an October 1, 2022, award date, the ORA anticipates the immediate release of the RFP with proposal due November 15, 2022. The ORA will select the QEP and any additional expert consulting firms by December 15, 2022, and, following selection, execution of contracts will be complete by January 15, 2023. When recruiting new staff for the project, the ORA will seek candidates with previous brownfields experience. Open positions will be filled quickly, and new staff members will be assimilated into existing team structures.

4.b. Past Performance and Accomplishments

4.b.i. Currently Has or Previously Received an EPA Brownfields Grant

(1) Accomplishments

While only one year into the FY20 CWA grant project, the ORA has successfully engaged with the target area, formed a Brownfield Steering Committee, and held regular meeting and outreach events. The ORA has also completed three Phase I environmental assessments for identified priority sites, one Phase II assessment, a regional market analysis, and conceptual reuse plans for two priority sites. All achievements have been accurately reported in ACRES.

(2) Compliance with Grant Requirements

The ORA is currently ahead of schedule on the FY20 CWA grant project, which began on October 1st, 2020, and is scheduled to close out by September 30th, 2023, and is in full compliance with the terms and conditions of the original cooperative agreement. All quarterly and annual reports to date have been delivered as required and on time within ACRES and/or to the appropriate EPA staff. As of October 1st, 2021, $210,000, or 70% of the award amount has been drawn down and expended, with 97% of total funds expended going to direct assessment tasks and activities.
Dear Sir or Madam:

By our determination dated January 1, 2005, you were held to be exempt from Federal Income Tax under the provisions of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

You recently furnished us information that the Oil City Economic Development Corporation, Oil Heritage Region Inc, and Oil Heritage Region Tourist Promotion Agency Inc merged with Venango Economic Development Corporation on January 1, 2005. Based on the information submitted, we have determined that the merger does not affect your exempt status. The organization will continue using Employer Identification Number 25-1118284.

Please let us know about any further changes in your character, purposes, method of operation, name or address.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact the person whose name and telephone number appear in the heading of this letter.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Lois G. Lerner
Director, Exempt Organizations
Rulings and Agreements
## Account Settlement Report

**Date:** 11/30/2021  
**Time:** 10:49 AM

### ALC/Region: 68128933  
### Agency Short Name: RTP-Grants  
### Account ID: BF96377801  
### Recipient ID: 4254196  
### Recipient Short Name: ORA  
### Transaction Date From: 02/24/2021  
### Through: 11/30/2021

### Inquiry Results:

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<th>Decreases</th>
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**Totals:**  
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