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# Brownfields Bulletin


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## How to Hire a Qualified Brownfields Assessment or Cleanup Consultant

You've been awarded your EPA Brownfields grant. EPA has approved your Cooperative Agreement Work Plan. Now it's time to solicit qualifications and retain a Consultant to implement your Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments or your Cleanup. Here are some qualifications to look for when you are ready to retain your Brownfields Consultant.

**Previous Experience**-Ideally, your Brownfields Consultant will have previous EPA Brownfields experience. EPA's program has been in place for enough years that there should be no dearth of experienced Consultants that would be delighted to submit their qualifications for your project. Working with a federal program like EPA's Brownfields Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund, and Cleanup (ARC) Program is different enough from working in state programs, that a Consultant with little or no familiarity with the reporting, quality assurance, site eligibility, approvals, forms, and deadlines could become quickly overwhelmed. In the worst case, this could mean that the Consultant expends funds that are ineligible for reimbursement from EPA leaving you stuck with the bill.

**Voluntary Cleanup Programs**-No matter what type of EPA Brownfields grant you have been awarded your Consultant should be experienced in state voluntary cleanup programs (VCPs), preferably in the state in which you are located. Cleanup planning is an integral part of the Brownfields Assessment grants as well as the Brownfields Cleanup grants. Your Consultant will need to understand your state's screening and cleanup standards as well as how to enroll a site in the VCP and take a contaminated site through the program. You can always call your State Brownfields Program Manager and ask about a Consultant's track record with them. They may not be allowed to give you a definitive answer but you can always read between the lines on the response you get.

**Community Involvement**-Your Brownfields Consultant should be able to demonstrate not only proficiency but creativity in dealing with local communities. Every community is different and has unique needs when it comes to getting its citizens involved in meaningful participation. Ask the Consultant to show you brochures and materials they have developed for other EPA Brownfields clients. What innovative ideas have they used to get the public involved? Have they been able to bring developers to the community?

**Funding Procurement**-The ability to identify and secure "gap" funding is not a requirement to complete your EPA Cooperative Agreement Work Plan. However, if you have a Consultant with a history of securing complementary funding to keep redevelopment projects moving along, your project is much less likely to stall out because you don't know where your next assessment is coming from. Ask your potential Consultants about other funding they have secured for clients. They

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should be knowledgeable about other federal and state funding sources. Additionally, if you use your EPA Brownfields grant to leverage other types of funding, it will gain you additional points on your next EPA Brownfields grant application.

**Consultant Staff Qualifications**-The staff proposed by a potential Brownfields Consultant must meet the EPA All Appropriate Inquiry (AAI) and ASTM E 1527-05 definition and qualifications as an Environmental Professional. Your project team should include at least one Professional Geologist (P.G.) and one Professional Engineer (P.E). This combination of skill sets will cover the technical requirements of your assessment or cleanup project. In addition, these individuals will have the qualifications to meet the requirements mentioned above. If there are requirements in your state for persons who conduct environmental site assessments or environmental sampling, at least one person on the Project Team should have the state certification. Your Consultant should be experienced in conducting Phase II Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs) by ASTM E 1903-07 which requires a more comprehensive investigation than a typical Phase II ESA. If your Brownfields Consultant has an Environmental Planner who is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners (A.I.C.P) on your Project Team, you will receive the added benefit of assistance for your redevelopment vision and an understanding of how future land use, limited by contamination will impact your vision. Often these individuals know where to obtain necessary state and federal funding to make your vision a reality and the experience to guide you through the bureaucratic maze. In addition, a certified Planner can assist you in the redevelopment process, ordinance adoption or design standards and zoning overlays. All of these mechanisms will offer a wider range of return on the limited amount of funding available to your community.

**Economic Viability**-Consultant selection for EPA Brownfields projects should be based on qualifications. But realistically, what good are qualifications if billing rates are so high, by the end of your project only a few sites have been assessed or only 25% of the cleanup is complete? Ask your potential Brownfields Consultant to quantify how many Phase I and Phase II ESAs were completed on their previous EPA Brownfields grant projects and ask for client references. Can this Consultant meet the objectives and milestones set for in your EPA Cooperative Agreement Work Plan? You'll be surprised at the variability of answers you receive. Ultimately you, as the grantee, are responsible for the success of the grant.

**Check References**-Your EPA Brownfields Consultant should be able to supply you with a minimum of three client references for EPA Brownfields projects. References will be able to tell you how many sites were assessed for the grant dollars expended, if project activities were timely, and if EPA required many revisions to the Consultant's submittals. Ask the reference if he or she has additional comments on the Consultant's performance.

Congratulations on your new grant and good luck!

If you would like more information on brownfield redevelopment funding opportunities, or grant writing please contact Cynthia Quast, P.E., Brownfields Redevelopment Department Manager at [quastcindy@stanleygroup.com](mailto:quastcindy@stanleygroup.com) or 319.626.5316.

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