



Brownfield Site Assessment Grant Program

Program Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2025	
Lead Division: Business and Community Development	
<input type="checkbox"/> New	<input type="checkbox"/> Revised
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grant	<input type="checkbox"/> Loan <input type="checkbox"/> Tax Credit <input type="checkbox"/> Technical Assistance

Introduction

Background Information: The Site Assessment Grant (SAG) program under § 238.133 Wis. Stats. provides grants of up to \$150,000 to local governmental units seeking to redevelop sites with economic or community development potential that are or may be adversely impacted by environmental contamination.

Program’s Purpose: The program helps local governments with commercial and industrial sites in need of environmental evaluation to continue the redevelopment process.

Eligibility Requirements

Eligible Applicants: Site Assessment Grant applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be a Local Governmental Unit, which did not cause the environmental contamination that is the basis for the grant.¹
- Demonstrate that the person that caused the contamination is unknown, cannot be located or is financially unable to pay the cost of the eligible activities.²
- Demonstrate that the property or properties being redeveloped must be one or more contiguous industrial or commercial facilities or sites that are abandoned, idle or underused.
- Demonstrate that the potential expansion or redevelopment of the property is adversely impacted by actual or perceived contamination.
- Provide documentation it has access to the project site to conduct SAG activities.
- Provide a financial commitment to cover the eligible matching project investment.

Eligible Use of Funds: Site Assessment Grants can fund the following activities. Costs are only eligible to be applied to grant and matching fund expenses after WEDC approval.

- The investigation of environmental contamination on an eligible site or facility for the purposes of reducing or eliminating environmental contamination,³ such as Phase I and II Environmental Assessments.
- The demolition of any structures, buildings or other improvements located on an eligible site or facility.⁴ Projects seeking funding for demolition activities should demonstrate that clearing the site will facilitate and provide greater access for

¹ Wis. Stat. § 238.133(2)(b).

² Wis. Stat. § 238.133(2)(c).

³ Wis. Stat. § 238.133(3)(a).

⁴ Wis. Stat. § 238.133(3)(b).

- environmental site investigation.
- The removal of abandoned containers, as defined in § 292.41(1), from an eligible site or facility.⁵
- Asbestos abatement activities, as defined in § 254.11(2), conducted as part of eligible activities listed above on an eligible site or facility.⁶ If an asbestos removal project is in a rural community, site investigation is not required for the project.
- Removal of underground hazardous substance storage tank systems.⁷
- Removal of underground petroleum product storage tank systems.⁸

Ineligible Use of Funds: Activities ineligible for grant assistance or matching funds include but are not limited to:

- Costs of new construction.
- Indirect construction costs (a.k.a. "soft" costs).
- Acquisition costs (except that acquisition costs may be allowable for matching funds expenses at WEDC's discretion).

Matching: The applicant must provide matching funds equal to at least 20 percent of the grant award⁹. Matching funds investment may include tax incremental financing funds, private party contributions, or other grant sources.

Available Incentives

FY25: \$1,000,000

Award Sizes: The maximum Site Assessment Grant may not exceed \$150,000.

Awards per Applicant: The incentives in this program are grants up to \$150,000 per recipient per fiscal year (may be more than one grant but not exceeding the \$150,000 threshold), or 15% of the available funds appropriated for the fiscal year¹⁰, whichever is less.

Activities and Expected Outcomes

Assist seven communities and achieve a 6:1 leverage of other investment.

Impact: Move properties with no known viable owner / payor from a state of unknown contamination to one where environmental condition is known. Allowing communities to redevelop sites with economic or community development potential that are or may be adversely impacted by environmental contamination.

Metrics: Potential program metrics include, but are not limited to:

- Leverage – Total.
- Plans Completed.

⁵ Wis. Stat. § 238.133(3)(c).

⁶ Wis. Stat. § 238.133(3)(d).

⁷ Wis. Stat. § 238.133(3)(e).

⁸ Wis. Stat. § 238.133(3)(f).

⁹ Wis. Stat. § 238.133(7).

¹⁰ Wis. Stat. § 238.133(6).

- Site Work – Investigation, if applicable.
- Site Work – Demolition, if applicable.

Application Guideline

Timeline: The Site Assessment Grant program has a continuous application process.

Review Considerations: WEDC may take the following into account when considering a Site Assessment Grant award:

- The Local Governmental Unit’s demonstrated commitment to performing and completing necessary environmental activities on the eligible site including the Local Governmental Unit’s financial commitment.¹¹
- The degree to which the project will have a positive impact on public health and the environment.¹²
- The relative size of a property and its relationship to the downtown or other economic centers of the community (e.g., industrial parks).
- The economic distress of the community (e.g., recent layoffs) and the degree to which the property has contributed to the economic distress.
- The extent to which the site demonstrates potential for redevelopment and includes considerations such as the interest demonstrated by private investors, location of the property, and access to existing utility and transportation infrastructure.
- Project readiness and viability demonstrated through financing commitments, established access to the property and documentation of property acquisition, if applicable.
- The degree to which the applicant can delineate the anticipated costs of the proposed project as demonstrated by third party cost estimates.
- The degree to which the project demonstrates involvement of diverse businesses, including women and veteran-owned contractors, in eligible project costs.
- Whether the project is in an Economically Distressed community.
- Alignment with Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) / Economic Development District (EDD) plan for the region.
- Other criteria that WEDC finds necessary to calculate the amount of a grant.¹³

How to Apply: An interested applicant should contact a WEDC Account Manager to determine if their project is right for the program. Upon review of the project, and alignment with eligibility criteria, an applicant will be invited to submit their application through Network Wisconsin.

Award Process: The completed application will be assigned to a WEDC underwriter and go through the award review process. For more information on application review, internal process, and award distribution, please refer to WEDC’s award administration policies and procedures.

Performance Reporting: Recipients must annually submit a performance report documenting sitework and any other contract deliverable.

¹¹ Wis. Stat. § 238.133(5)(a).

¹² Wis. Stat. § 238.133(5)(b).

¹³ Wis. Stat. § 238.133(5)(c).

WEDC annually selects awards on a sample basis for an audit. All backup to the performance report and financial records are required to be maintained by the Recipient for a period of at least three (3) years after the last performance report is due.

WEDC may impose additional reporting requirements to evaluate project performance and to ensure compliance with contract deliverables.

Helpful Information

Definitions:

“Economically Distressed” - a county or municipality so designated by WEDC by considering the most current area and state data available for the following indicators:

- Unemployment rate
- Percentage of families with incomes below the poverty line
- Median family income
- Median per capita income
- Average annual wage
- Manufacturing assessment values by county
- Other significant or irregular indicators of economic distress – such as a natural disaster, or plant closings and layoffs

“Eligible Site or Facility” - one or more contiguous industrial or commercial facilities or sites with common or multiple ownership that are abandoned, idle, or underused, the expansion or redevelopment of which is adversely affected by actual or perceived environmental contamination.¹⁴

“Local Governmental Unit” - a city, village, town, county, redevelopment authority created under § 66.1333, community development authority created under § 66.1333, or housing authority.¹⁵

“Opportunity Zone” - a designated qualified opportunity zone in the State of Wisconsin under Internal Revenue Code § 1400Z-1.

“Petroleum product” - has the meaning given in § 292.63(1).¹⁶

“Underground Hazardous Substance Storage Tank System” - an underground storage tank used for storing a hazardous substance other than a petroleum product together with any on-site integral piping or dispensing system with at least 10% of its total volume below the surface of the ground.¹⁷

“Underground Petroleum Product Storage Tank” - has the meaning given in § 292.63(1)(i).¹⁸

Revision History

¹⁴ Wis. Stat. § 238.133 (1)(a).

¹⁵ Wis. Stat. § 238.133 (1)(b).

¹⁶ Wis. Stat. § 238.133 (1)(c).

¹⁷ Wis. Stat. § 238.133 (1)(d).

¹⁸ Wis. Stat. § 238.133 (1)(e).

Program Inception – 1999 Wisconsin Act 9 – Fiscal Year 1999

- 7/1/2017: Corrected inaccurate statutory reference for abandoned containers.
- 7/1/2018: Reduced match requirement for projects in a Designated Rural County
- 7/1/2019: Added statutory citations; reduced match requirement for projects in an Opportunity Zone; clarified performance reporting requirements
- 7/1/2021: Clarified program description; replaced Designated Rural County with Economically Distressed; added consideration for diverse businesses; simplified requirements for matching funds
- 7/1/2023: Defines Rural Community; allows for asbestos removal projects in rural communities