



217 Elm St., Oil City, PA 16301-1412 / 814.677.3152 / OilRegion.org

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## A. Application Information Sheet

R03-26-A-012

### Oil Regional Alliance (ORA) Community-Wide Assessment – Application Information Sheet

1. Applicant Identification

Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism (ORA)  
217 Elm Street  
Oil City, PA 16301

2. Website URL: <https://oilregion.org/>

3. Funding Requested

- a. Assessment Grant Type: Community-wide
- b. Federal Funds Requested: \$500,000

4. Location: The Oil Region, including:

- a. Franklin, Venango County, Pennsylvania
- b. Borough of Sugarcreek, Pennsylvania

5. Target Area and Priority Site Information

- City of Franklin and Borough of Sugarcreek
- Amalie Refinery Site at State Route 322, Franklin (Priority Brownfield #1)
- Kraft Eclipse Refinery Site, Allegheny BLVD, Sugarcreek Borough (Priority Brownfield #2)
- Former Gulf station at 206 8<sup>th</sup> Street, City of Franklin (Priority Brownfield #3)
- See Attached Map

6. Contacts

a. Project Director

Debra Sobina, Executive Vice President  
(814) 677-3152, Ext. 109  
[dsobina@oilregion.org](mailto:dsobina@oilregion.org)  
217 Elm Street  
Oil City, PA 16301-1412

b. Chief Executive/Highest Ranking Elected Official

John R. Phillips II, President/COO  
Phone (814) 677-3152 ext. 108  
[jphillips@oilregion.org](mailto:jphillips@oilregion.org)

217 Elm Street  
Oil City, PA 16301

7. Population

City of Franklin: 5,750

Borough of Sugarcreek: 4,712

8. Other Factors Applicants claiming one or more of the other factors below must provide a summary in the Narrative on the applicable other factor(s). Please identify which of the below items apply to your community/proposed project by noting the corresponding Narrative page number. **If none of the Other Factors apply to your community/proposed project, please provide a statement to that effect.**

Information on the Other Factors	Page #
Community population is 15,000 or less.	1
The applicant is, or will assist, a federally recognized Indian Tribe or United States Territory.	
The priority site(s) is impacted by mine-scarred land.	
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).	1,2,3,4,5
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain.	4
The reuse of the priority site(s) will facilitate renewable energy from wind, solar, or geothermal energy.	2,4
The reuse of the priority site(s) will incorporate energy efficiency measures.	
The proposed project will improve local resilience to the impacts of extreme weather events and natural disasters.	2,4
At least 30% of the overall project budget will be spent on eligible reuse/area-wide planning activities, as described in <a href="#">Section 3.A.(2)</a> , for priority site(s) within the target area(s).	9
The target area(s) is impacted by a coal-fired power plant that has recently closed (2015 or later) or is closing.	

9. Letter from the State or Tribal Environmental Authority (not included in the three-page limit).  
See attached letter

10. Releasing Copies of Applications

NA

# Map of Priority Brownfields





December 24, 2026

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

**RE: US EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant/State Letter of Acknowledgement  
Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism (ORA)**

Dear Mr. Phillips:

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) is pleased to support your efforts to continue to redevelop brownfield properties in the Oil Region of Pennsylvania. The Department has been proud to be a partner in the highly successful brownfield redevelopment projects in Emlenton, Oil City, and other sites that ORA has addressed under their previous EPA Brownfield grants. The Department looks forward to working with you on future brownfield redevelopment projects.

The PADEP acknowledges and supports ORA's application for a \$500,000 US EPA Brownfields Assessment grant. ORA's leadership will continue to provide the capacity to revitalize identified brownfields across ORA's service territory especially the small and rural communities that ORA serves across the region.

Should USEPA award the Assessment grant, PADEP will partner with ORA to help improve the environment and to build a better future for residents in the region. If you have any questions, please contact John Gross, PADEP Environmental Group Manager, by email at [johngross@pa.gov](mailto:johngross@pa.gov) or by telephone at 717-783-7502.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael S. Maddigan".

Michael Maddigan  
Land Recycling Program Manager  
Bureau Environmental Cleanup and Brownfields

## **(1) PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION & PLANS FOR REVITALIZATION**

### **Target Area & Brownfields**

a. **Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Area** - The Oil Region Alliance (ORA) is a Rural Development Hub Organization and National Heritage Area whose pillars are heritage interpretation and preservation, outdoor recreation development, tourism promotion, and economic revitalization, including brownfield redevelopment. ORA serves all of Venango County in addition to the Borough of Hydetown, Oil Creek Township, and the City of Titusville in eastern Crawford County in Northwest Pennsylvania, including the brownfield program. The target area for ORA's EPA Brownfields Community Wide Assessment (CWA) Grant is 2 square miles of the Borough of Sugarcreek and the City of Franklin along the Allegheny River and a tributary, French Creek, though ORA will use grant funding throughout the ORA service area if awarded. Nestled in the "Valley that Changed the World," the neighboring communities are linked together by the history of the oil industry. Following Colonel Edwin Drake's drilling of the country's first commercially successful oil well in 1859 in nearby Titusville, the oil and manufacturing industries refined oil and built manufacturing plants that spurred wealth and historic buildings in Franklin and massive refineries in Sugarcreek. With the decline of the oil and manufacturing industries in Pennsylvania, both communities were left to struggle with poor health outcomes, population loss, and unemployment and poverty, the legacy of brownfields.

Sugarcreek is the home of the 243-acre oil refinery known as the Eclipse Lubricating Oil Company and Atlantic Richfield Company. In the early 1900s, the refinery was the world's largest, utilizing up to 660 metal and wooden storage tanks. Just under three miles west, adjacent to French Creek, sits the former Amalie Refinery Site, which produced lubricating oils for the growing automobile market. The refinery shut down in 1970 after a fire. These refineries left massive brownfields, which are still polluting the impaired waterways. Just south of Sugarcreek is the City of Franklin. During the oil boom, Franklin was a rail terminal that shipped crude oil to New York, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia. In the late nineteenth century, Franklin became a center for refining crude, selling "Franklin's Heavy Crude" at a premium price, with its largest facilities being owned by Rockefeller's Standard Oil. Most of Franklin's fine Victorian homes represent the prosperity of these times, which did not last.

Both target communities have struggled to maintain their populations as jobs declined. The population peaked in Franklin in the 1930s at just over 10,000 residents. Since that time, the population has decreased by almost 50%, with an estimated 5,750 residents today. The City continues to lose residents, with an estimated 2.4% loss of population from 2020 to 2024, while poverty is persistent with an overall rate of 17.2% and a youth rate (5- to 17-year-olds) of 28.3%. Sugarcreek was not a separate municipality during the oil boom, but according to newspaper reports, the community housed 9,400 people in 1970. Since 1990, the Borough has lost 11% of residents (5,542 to 4,712). Franklin has initiated economic revitalization but requires federal investment to recover from the legacy of the Oil Region's industrial boom. While the sections of the Allegheny River to the north and south of Sugarcreek and Franklin enjoy federal Wild and Scenic designations, historical contamination still leaks into the river in both of these communities. Much of the land in Sugarcreek has either been kept in light or medium industrial use or simply abandoned, with massive early-twentieth-century industrial complexes left to decay slowly.

Fortunately, ORA is partnering with Franklin to undertake a strategic planning process in partnership with the US EPA, the Outdoor Recreational Economy for Rural Communities (RERC) Program. ORA's RERC Strategic Plan will focus on revitalizing Mainstreets by integrating and improving the outdoor economy. Central to this effort are assessing, mitigating, and reusing the brownfields in proximity to the Allegheny River and French Creek, the lifeblood of the burgeoning outdoor recreation economy. ORA started environmental assessment of the area with a 2022 USEPA CWA grant, but further investment by EPA is necessary due to the large and contaminated stretches of brownfields. With the support of an EPA CWA Grant and the RERC Program, ORA will continue to improve the long-term health, prosperity, and outdoor recreational opportunities for the residents of Sugarcreek, Franklin, and the Oil Region.

**b. Description of the Priority Brownfield Site(s)** - ORA has identified three new priority brownfield sites along French Creek and the Allegheny River, which require environmental assessment and reuse planning. Due to the industrial history in Sugarcreek, large, abandoned refineries require redevelopment, incorporating stormwater management, increased recreational amenities, and workforce opportunities for residents. In addition, a site in Franklin sits along the river, next to the community's water wells and a park. The past and future of Sugarcreek and Franklin are intertwined, requiring a coordinated, strategic redevelopment of these riverfront brownfield sites to ensure the economic resilience of the Oil Region. Some of the sites have undergone previous environmental assessment, but all require current testing, assessment, and evaluation to inform reuse plans and redevelopment.

**Amalie Refinery Site at State Route 322, Franklin (Priority Brownfield #1)**: The Amalie company was created in 1903 and was the first refiner of mineral oils in the United States. Amalie went on to be the first company to sell multi-grade motor oil in 1953. On June 19, 1970, the 3.6-acre refinery caught fire. The 30-hour fire necessitated the evacuation of several hundred people within a quarter-mile radius of the plant, leaving four employees dead and one firefighter. The large-scale fire caught the attention of the national news and was featured in the New York Times. At the time, the Amalie refinery employed about 80 people and processed about 2,000 barrels of crude oil a day. The refinery was shuttered permanently and is now a declared US EPA Superfund Site (PAD987380649), not on the National Priorities List. Currently owned by Donald Rice, no public assessment or cleanup of the now empty site has been undertaken, but ORA suspects there is widespread contamination along French Creek. Potential reuse of the site includes an eventual link to outdoor recreation, such as a park and a memorial to the men who lost their lives in the fire.

**Kraft Eclipse Refinery Site, Allegheny BLVD, Sugarcreek Borough (Priority Brownfield #2)**: The second priority brownfield is currently owned by Louis W. Kraft and was a priority site in the 2022 CWA Grant awarded to the ORA. With this funding, ORA was able to move forward with a Phase I ESA but was unable to perform an in-depth Phase II. The 12.4-acre Kraft Eclipse brownfield was once part of the 243-acre Eclipse Lubricating Oil Company and Atlantic Refining Company complex, now commonly called the former Eclipse refinery, and is located on the Allegheny River. 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. 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. In 1936, a new pipeline from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia rendered the Sugarcreek facility obsolete, and operations ceased entirely in 1937. The property was parceled off into dozens of individual plots, one of which is the Kraft site, which has since been used for fill activities. USEPA entered the property into the Superfund Program in 1986, but it is not on the National Priorities List. A 2023 Phase I ESA noted the potential for the site to contain PCBs, hazardous waste, paint, petroleum, a chunky tarlike substance, and construction and demolition debris, and recommended that a Phase II be completed to determine potential impacts to soil, groundwater, and to evaluate vapor intrusion. ORA is interested in moving forward with the Phase II since the current owner is amenable to working with ORA and a private solar developer to set up a demonstration solar microgrid, which could be linked to an adjacent Penelec power substation, providing additional energy resilience to the area, which is struggling with rising energy costs.

**Former Gulf station at 206 8<sup>th</sup> Street, City of Franklin (Priority Brownfield #3)**: The property has been used as a gas filling station since the 1930s. The current empty gas station was built in 1970, before EPA required that all single-wall underground storage tanks be replaced with double-wall fiberglass tanks. The .15 acre former Gulf Station was shut down in the 1990s. A previous private Phase I ESA of the property noted Recognized Environmental Conditions (REC). This is particularly troubling since the City's municipal drinking water wells are directly east of the property along the Allegheny River, as is Riverfront Park. Riverfront Park currently boasts children's playground equipment, adult exercise equipment, community gatherings, including a 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks show, walking/biking trails, river access, and areas for families to picnic. The park is also an access point to the Samuel Justus Recreational Trail, a 5.8-mile paved trail that connects Oil City to Franklin to the north and the 28-mile paved Allegheny River Trail to

the south. The Gulf Station Site is ideal for kickstarting ORA's RERC Strategic Plan. The property lies right outside the core of Mainstreet, is adjacent to bike paths and a park, and there is potential interest in the community for a coffee shop/bakery that would expand the local tax base, create a small business, and serve the community and recreating visitors.

c. **Identifying Additional Sites** - ORA will develop a process with the existing Brownfield Steering Committee to identify secondary sites, if needed. Appropriate properties will be identified with the following criteria: redevelopment potential; percentage of LMI populations; protection of public health; proximity to a body of water; possible interested buyer; community support; capacity to unleash further revitalization; ability to create jobs; likeliness to negotiate site access with owners; and potential to leverage state and federal resources.

#### **Revitalization of the Target Area**

d. **Reuse Strategy & Alignment with Revitalization Plans** – Mitigating, cleaning up, and reusing brownfields along waterways in Franklin and Sugarcreek aligns with the 2024 Venango County Comprehensive Plan, the 2021 Oil Heritage Region National Heritage Area Strategy (OHRNHA), and the ongoing RERC Strategic Plan. Venango County is a small and rural, just under 50,000 residents. The County's comprehensive plan is completed in close partnership with its municipalities, including Sugarcreek and Franklin. The Comp Plan highlights that the County's population has declined by 12% from 2000 to 2020, and that it is projected to lose another 5,000 residents by 2050, leaving an aging population with limited resources to fund community needs. To ensure that young people can work and raise families in Venango County, the County's main strategies are: 1.) Business and Jobs; 2.) Community Empowerment and Revitalization, and 3.) Outdoor Recreation. A major priority under business and jobs is to "Return Vacant and Underutilized Space to Productive Use" by rehabilitating brownfield properties. All three priority brownfield sites now sit vacant and will be reused once assessed and mitigated, returning them to productive use. The second strategy, Community Empowerment and Revitalization, has a goal of "Increased Quality of Life Benefits and Stability for Families and Individuals" by addressing contamination sources. All three sites are contaminated and are likely leaching into French Creek and the Allegheny River, which are impaired. In addition, the Gulf Site could be directly impacting the well water for the City of Franklin. Finally, the Gulf Site and Amalie Refinery Site can improve the region's ability to "Increase Capacity to Attract Tourists and Visitors" by increasing connections between consumers and attractions. The Amalie Refinery Site could host a park with a boat launch and memorial, and the Gulf Site already has the interest of a private developer who would like to start up a coffee/bakery shop near Riverfront Park and bike trails.

The three priority sites will also further the vision of ORA's 2021 Strategic Plan for the ORNHA, which focuses on heritage, tourism, and economic development. The plan recommends connecting and expanding trail systems, including water trails, and improving the tourist experience through historical interpretation and vibrant downtowns. This plan was the start of ORA's focus on outdoor recreation. However, the plan was underway at the height of COVID-19, before demand for outdoor recreation exploded, and the extent of the potential to leverage outdoor amenities in Northwestern PA was clear. ORA intends for the ORNHA to be the starting point of the RERC Strategic Plan, which will further delve into strategies that connect Mainstreets to outdoor recreation, expand main street programs, and provide access to outdoor recreation, and rebrand the region to increase its appeal to visitors. The RERC planning process will take place throughout 2026. ORA will include the Gulf Station Site since it is adjacent to the river and park amenities, and the Amalie Refinery Site since it has been identified as a possible future park.

e. **Outcomes & Benefits of Reuse Strategy** - ORA's brownfield redevelopment program is in its 5<sup>th</sup> year, and properties assessed with funding from EPA in 2020 and 2022 are now being cleaned up, pulling in private investment, and considered for sustainable reuse. Further support from EPA is crucial to continue this momentum and implement the ongoing RERC Strategic Plan.

**Economic Development:** The Gulf Site is in a prime location to serve the growing small business outdoor recreational economy. Situated next to Riverfront Park, the trail head for the Samuel Justus Recreational

Trail and the Allegheny River Trail, the site will create jobs and grow the amenities necessary for a robust outdoor economy. The Kraft Eclipse Site has long been considered for a demonstration solar farm site, providing an opportunity for local workforce training in solar installation and family supportive wages. The redevelopment of the Amalie Refinery Site has the potential to create more than a dozen new jobs in conservation, hospitality, and outdoor recreation, plus provide a memorial to community members lost in the fire. Both the Kraft Eclipse and the Amalie Refinery sites now sit empty, and the Gulf site is boarded up, so all can be returned to use.

**Resilience:** The reuse of the properties will allow Franklin and Sugarcreek to decrease flooding risk, increasing resiliency. All three properties abut a waterway, with the Amalie Refinery Site within the floodway and the Kraft Eclipse and Gulf Sites adjacent to the 100-year flood zone. To decrease the risk of contamination in the river, eventual redevelopment will require stormwater controls that will also contain runoff, reducing flooding risk for neighbors and decreasing contaminated water that enters the waterways during a large rain event. The proposed solar farm site will also act as a microgrid for the area, providing power to nearby residents and businesses when the power grid goes down. This could allow for heating and cooling stations, increasing resiliency to extreme heat and cold for low-income residents.

**Strategy for Leveraging Resources**

**f. Resources Needed for Site Reuse** – ORA has extensive experience leveraging federal and state dollars with public and private resources in all areas of its mission, including heritage interpretation and preservation, outdoor recreation development, tourism promotion, economic revitalization, and workforce education. ORA anticipates that both the Kraft Eclipse and Amalie Refinery Site will require extensive remediation and will use assessment funding to detail the best cleanup and reuse plan in partnership with the impacted communities. In addition, ORA’s RERC strategic planning process will help determine how to best integrate Mainstreet with outdoor recreation, pushing forward the Gulf Site with private funding after cleanup that can be supported through state assistance. The assessment funding will create the opportunity and momentum to turn these undevelopable properties into places where people can work and recreate, while stimulating the local economy through the following key funding sources:

Source	Purpose	Status	Amount
EPA Brownfield Clean Up Funding	To remediate the Kraft Eclipse Site	Anticipated	\$1 million
PA Industrial Sites Reuse Program (ISRP)	To remediate the Amalie Refinery Site	Anticipated	\$1 million
PA Community Conservation Partnership Program (C2P2)	For potential recreational amenities at the Amalie Refinery Site	Anticipated	\$500,000
PA Industrial Sites Reuse Program (ISRP)	To remediate the Gulf Site	Anticipated	\$300,000
New Private Investment	Redevelopment of the Gulf Site	Expected	\$300,000
New Private Investment	Redevelopment of the Kraft Eclipse Site	Anticipated	\$1,000,000

**g. Use of Existing Infrastructure** - Of the three identified priority brownfields in the target area, the most infrastructure-intensive redevelopment project is expected to be the Kraft Eclipse site since it lacks access to water and sewer utilities and is envisioned as a demonstration solar microgrid, which will require upgrades to energy infrastructure. The Amalie Refinery Site is off a major road (State Highway 322) but lacks access to municipal water and sewer. The end use of the property is unknown at this time, but outdoor recreation infrastructure could take advantage of PA DCED’s Growing Greener funding, or light manufacturing infrastructure could be funded by PA SITES and private investment. The former Gulf Station site is located within Franklin along a major roadway and will take advantage of existing roads, sewers, and utilities. ORA anticipates that the eventual redevelopment of the site will be funded through private investment.

**(2) COMMUNITY NEED AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**Community Need**

**a. The Community’s Need for Funding** – The rural target area struggles with poverty, isolation, and a declining, aging population. Sugarcreek is home to fewer than five thousand residents spread out over

nearly 40 square miles, where the median household income is \$59,594, much less than the average American household income of \$83,730. Franklin has a median household income of \$54,955 and a poverty level of 17.2%. The population in the target area continues to decline as young people leave searching for purposeful, family-sustaining work, leaving behind a dwindling tax base 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 for the identified priority brownfield sites makes the situation worse. Regional organizations are able to pledge in-kind assistance, but not direct financial support. Sugarcreek, Franklin, and the Oil Region were forgotten by the oil industry, but these communities still struggle to overcome the brownfields left behind. With this funding, ORA will work with community partners and the public to continue successful redevelopment of these abandoned sites by lowering redevelopment risk, gaining buy-in from the public, partner organizations, and institutions, and attracting private investment.

**b. Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations** – Like most of the Oil Heritage Region, the target area faces significant health and welfare challenges relating to underemployment, persistent poverty, and chronic diseases. Franklin is continuing to lose an estimated .6% of its population a year, and Sugarcreek around .8%. This loss in population equates to a growing elderly population with 29.9% of Sugarcreek residents over 65 and 20.4% in Franklin. This trend is expected to accelerate without increased economic opportunity, which is exacerbated by the fact that few residents in Sugarcreek (7.7%) and Franklin (8.4%) have an associate’s degree, and only 14.3% and 13.6% have a bachelor’s degree, respectively. In addition, the employment rate is 52.9% in Franklin and 45.8% in Sugarcreek. The aging population, lack of education, and employment opportunities lead to persistent poverty, as highlighted by Franklin’s 17.2% poverty rate. Substance abuse is also endemic throughout the region, with 23 reported drug overdose deaths per 10,000 people in 2023. These social challenges, when combined with legacy pollution, lead to an aging and sensitive population. According to the PA Department of Health, the rate of heart disease, cancer, chronic lower respiratory diseases, and diabetes mellitus is higher in Venango County than in Pennsylvania at large, and more residents are being hospitalized for cerebrovascular diseases, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), heart attacks, and influenza and pneumonia. EPA funding will initiate the cleanup of suspected contaminants, including hazardous waste, petroleum, and PCBs that are worsening chronic diseases, especially since residents are known to fish in waterways contaminated with mercury. Existing research has linked mercury to numerous disorders in the body, including the nervous system, the respiratory system, and the cardiovascular system. Reducing the threat of mercury and the pollutants flowing into French Creek and the Allegheny River will reduce threats to the health and welfare of sensitive populations. Brownfield assessments of critical sites represent a first step in removing pollution and eliminating exposure pathways for the most vulnerable residents.

**c. Greater than Normal Incidence of Disease & Adverse Health Conditions** – UPMC Northwest is the only hospital in Venango County. According to the 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment from UPMC Northwest, significant health needs in Venango County included obesity, respiratory diseases, diabetes, opioid addiction and substance abuse, and access to behavioral health services. The leading cause of death is heart disease, with malignant neoplasm (cancer) being the second. Of note is that 67% of all deaths are attributed to chronic disease. The lack of job opportunities and the declining population have led to a large and increasing percentage of elderly residents (65 years and older) at 21%. While the total population in Venango County decreased by 7% from 2010 to 2018, the elderly population in Venango County (65+) saw a 16 percent increase from 2010 to 2018. Brownfields also yield negative psychological impacts as vacant sites and dilapidated areas result in blight and disinvestment, reduced property values, and tax revenue. The revitalization of these brownfields provides an opportunity to provide economic opportunity and increased access to outdoor recreation. This in turn can reverse the loss of a youthful population and reduce the high prevalence of diabetes and opioid addiction and substance abuse, leading to

healthier long-term outcomes. In addition, since exposure to hazardous materials/petroleum is likely a contributor to poor health outcomes, cleanup will help mitigate chronic diseases.

**d. Economically Impoverished/Disproportionately Impacted Populations** -The two square mile target area is comprised of Census Tract 2003, Block Group 1 and 2; Census Tract 2004, Block Group 1 and 2; Census Tract 2005, Block Group 1; and Census Tract 2006, Block Group 1. Residents in this area all live with the historic pollutants from the oil and manufacturing boom and the remaining industry. While only 17.1% of all of Venango County’s waterways are impaired, both French Creek and the Allegheny River in this area are considered impaired and contain mercury, making the fish in these waterways not safe to eat. In addition, the target area is deeply impacted by poverty. According to the 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) in the last 12 months, 42.55% of residents in Census Tract 2003 Block Group 1; 23.5% in Census Tract 2003 Block Group 2; and 30.56% in Census Tract 2004 Block Group 1 all had incomes below the poverty level as compared to the US poverty rate of 12.4% or the PA rate of 11.8%. These residents are the most vulnerable in the target area, and all of their waterways are considered impaired. Assessment dollars will determine the level of hazardous waste currently impacting residents. Reuse planning will attract private development, incentivize the cleanup of hazardous materials, improve quality of life, the environment, and job opportunities.

**Community Engagement**

**e. Project Involvement & **f. Project Roles** – Local organizations and entities have been chosen because their clients/constituents include ORA’s target areas and sensitive populations. Their missions align with redeveloping brownfields, community health/wellness, and community prosperity. The primary avenue for their meaningful involvement is participation on the Steering Committee, which will guide site selection and community engagement.**

<b>Name of Group</b>	<b>Point of Contact (name &amp; email)</b>	<b>Specific involvement/ Assistance Provided</b>
City of Franklin	Ashley Zaccari, Councilperson, <a href="mailto:azaccari@venangochamber.org">azaccari@venangochamber.org</a>	Steering Committee (SC)/Site prioritization & outreach to LMI/impacted community
Sugarcreek Borough	Craig Westover, Mayor <a href="mailto:mayor@sugarcreekboroughpa.us">mayor@sugarcreekboroughpa.us</a>	SC/Site prioritization, engagement, and integrate reuse plans with revitalization goals
Franklin Industrial & Commercial Development	Jessica Carroll, Business Outreach Coordinator, <a href="mailto:jcarroll@franklinpa.gov">jcarroll@franklinpa.gov</a>	Site prioritization, business engagement, and outreach to developers for reuse
Venango Area Chamber of Commerce	Kat Thompson, Vice President <a href="mailto:kthompson@venangochamber.org">kthompson@venangochamber.org</a>	Support community engagement and outreach to the region’s businesses
Northwest Commission	Jen Feehan, Economic Development Manager, <a href="mailto:jenniferf@northwestpa.org">jenniferf@northwestpa.org</a>	SC/Site prioritization, outdoor economy reuse, outreach to developers to encourage reuse.
Penn State Extension	Dan Brockett, Educator <a href="mailto:Dlb14@plu.edu">Dlb14@plu.edu</a>	Support site selection with focus on adaptive reuse
Venango County (Planning Commission)	Josh Sterling, Executive Director <a href="mailto:Joshua.Sterling@venangocountypa.gov">Joshua.Sterling@venangocountypa.gov</a>	SC/Site prioritization & community engagement. Integrating reuse plans with revitalization goals
Venango County Economic Development Authority	Emily Lewis, Executive Director <a href="mailto:Emily.lewis@venangocountypa.gov">Emily.lewis@venangocountypa.gov</a>	Support site prioritization and strategize redevelopment funding
St. Elizabeth Center	Jessica Struthers, ED, <a href="mailto:jessica@stecenter.org">jessica@stecenter.org</a>	Advise residents on the use and safety of remediated brownfields and LMI outreach
Venango County Community Services	Meghan Dunham, Executive Director <a href="mailto:msnyder@cvsvenango.com">msnyder@cvsvenango.com</a>	SC/Advise residents on the use and safety of remediated brownfields and LMI outreach
Amy’s Closet Borough of Emlenton	Amy Whitehill, Business Owner [REDACTED]	SC/Advise ORA on retail gaps in the priority areas and reuse plans with revitalization goals

**g. Incorporating Community Input** – ORA established a brownfield redevelopment Steering Committee in 2020 that consists of residents, business owners, organizational representatives, and elected officials from across the Oil Region and advisors in economic/community development. To ensure

representation in the Franklin and Sugarcreek communities, with a focus on LMI representation, ORA will invite a representative from both municipalities. The Venango Chamber of Commerce and Franklin Redevelopment Authority will help ORA engage with the business community. For reuse planning assistance, ORA will lean on Penn State Extension, Venango County, Venango County Economic Development Authority, and Northwest Commission. St. Elizabeth Center and Venango County Community Services will advise residents on brownfield safety measures and outreach with LMI residents, and Amy’s Closet will help with retail gaps. ORA will meet quarterly with the Steering Committee members, who will help decide where to deploy EPA funds and serve as a sounding board for potential reuse options. ORA will also connect with residents and businesses through a weekly newspaper column, weekly coffee chats, newsletters, dedicated websites, social media, and the production of print materials. ORA will also hold a community charette in each priority brownfield site neighborhood and one for a non-selected site based on Steering Committee feedback. The purpose of this engagement is to share information, describe next steps, and gather feedback to shape the reuse of assessed properties. While English is currently the only language necessary in the target area, ORA will accommodate other languages through a translation service when needed.

**(3) TASK DESCRIPTIONS, COST ESTIMATES & MEASURING PROGRESS**

**Description of Tasks/Activities & Outputs**

**a. Project Implementation** – EPA resources will enable ORA to conduct 5 Phase I and 4 Phase II ESAs and undertake robust reuse planning activities that include extensive public outreach to LMI residents and impacted neighborhoods, working with an expanded Steering Committee. ORA will set up a Project Team consisting of the Project Manager, Executive Vice President, and environmental remediation and planning consultants that will keep the project moving forward, advise the Steering Committee on selecting additional assessment sites, and carry out strategies to enhance resident involvement. ORA will ensure the timely implementation of key activities by:

Procuring Contractors: Environmental/planning contractors will be hired to conduct assessments, develop cleanup/reuse plans, and assist with public outreach. ORA will solicit these services through a competitive RFP process to ensure a qualifications-based selection in compliance with state and federal (2 CFR 200.317-326) regulations.

Site Access: The Project Manager will finalize negotiations with landowners for access. This permission will enable ORA and consultants to access all property areas; conduct interviews, photographs, site sketches, air monitoring; collect waste, soil, surface water, sediment, groundwater samples; install groundwater monitoring wells; and use equipment, including vehicles and drill rigs, to perform activities.

**b. Anticipated Project Schedule**

Activity	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Grant Management	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Qualified Contractors RFP	X															
Hire Program Manager	X															
Hire Qualified Contractors		X														
Steering Committee Meetings	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Community Meetings		X		X		X		X		X		X		X		X
Negotiate Access		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X						
Secondary Site Selection				X	X	X	X	X	X	X						
Phase I & Phase II Activities			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Cleanup & Reuse Planning			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

**c. Task/Activity Lead**

Cooperative Agreement Oversight: ORA will hire a Project Manager who will be responsible for assuring compliance with grant requirements and oversee the Qualified Environmental Professionals (QEPs), and

planning consultants, and grant management consultants. The Project Manager will also manage consultant work. They will oversee the project at \$38.46/hour for 520 hours. Fringe for the position is budgeted at 30% or \$6,000. Tasks include oversight and performance reporting. Travel expenses (\$1,132.43 per person for airfare, hotel, per diem, and mileage) have been set aside for two people to attend two EPA national brownfields conferences and for two people to attend two PA brownfield conferences (\$941.38 for hotel, mileage, and per diem) to learn best practices and identify ways to leverage EPA resources. Conference registration at \$350 per conference is in the Other line item. There is \$12,800 budgeted for an outside consultant to assist with grant management. *Cost estimate* – \$54,425. *Lead* – Project Manager.

Community Engagement: The Project Manager and ORA staff will lead community engagement efforts. ORA will expand the existing Steering Committee by inviting additional municipal partners, community members, and business leaders, who will help in determining secondary sites and reuse options. ORA will connect with the community through quarterly meetings, newsletters, websites, social media, and pop-up community events in LMI neighborhoods and in proximity to brownfield sites. Under this task, the Project Manager will present at public events and provide project updates and information for public distribution. ORA will also partner with St. Elizabeth Center and Venango County Community Services to assess the impact of brownfields on public health, perform LMI outreach, and advise residents on brownfield safety and use. The Project Manager (\$38.46/hour for approximately 525 hours with a 30% fringe rate [\$6,000]) and the contractors (\$20,000) will manage the engagement process. *Cost estimate* – \$46,000. *Lead* – Project Manager, who will head engagement activities with help from environmental and planning contractors.

Site Assessments: ORA will initiate and complete up to 5 Phase I ESAs, estimated at \$6,000 each.

Due to a previous Phase I at the Kraft Eclipse Site, which identified significant contamination, ORA is budgeting \$75,000 for a Phase II. ORA budgeted \$120,000 for up to three additional Phase II ESAs (\$40,000 a piece) in the targeted area. These activities will be conducted by the QEPs and preceded by an approved Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPP). Staff time (\$12,000 [312 hours at \$38.46 an hour with \$3,600 in fringe benefits]) is also dedicated to overseeing the task. *Cost estimate* – \$240,600,000. *Lead* – Procured environmental contractors will ensure that all Phase I and Phase II activities meet ATSM standards and comply with the All Appropriate Inquiries Final Rule.

Cleanup/Reuse Planning: Cleanup/reuse plans, at an estimated cost of \$132,975, will be developed by the QEPs and planning consultants, with significant input from the community. The Project Manager (\$38.46/hour for approximately 520 hours with 30% in fringe) will oversee the planning process. Proposed activities include: a charrette to gather community input at each priority site and one additional site for a total of 4; development of an ABCA for sites to be remediated, including the Kraft Eclipse Site; an infrastructure needs assessment to identify upgrades required to support growth; a land use plan that considers cleanup strategies for high priority brownfield sites, infrastructure, and clean water; an implementation strategy with business recruitment approaches, and identification of public and private revitalization resources. *Cost estimate* – \$158,975. *Lead* – A planning team familiar with market analysis, infrastructure needs, land use planning, and funding/financing options will be contracted.

**d. Outputs**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Outputs</b>
Cooperative Agreement Oversight	Staff support of Steering Committee; attendance at national & state brownfields conferences; QEPs; quarterly reports; closeout report; grant management oversight, & ACRES updates.
Community Engagement	16 Steering Committee and 8 community meetings; webpage and media content; site access agreements; info on safe brownfield use; & environmental and planning contractor support.
Site Assessments	5 Phase I ESAs and 4 Phase II ESAs conducted by environmental consultants.
Cleanup/Reuse Planning	4 community charrettes; pop-up community events; surveys; ABCAs for sites to be remediated; assessment of existing infrastructure assets and upgrades for reuse; redevelopment land use plan; and detailed implementation strategy that includes brownfields cleanup priorities, business recruitment approach, and public and private resources to support revitalization.

e. **Cost Estimates**– ORA seeks \$500,000 in EPA Assessment resources. The budget, developed with input from qualified environmental experts, dedicates 48.1% of funds for assessments, 31.7% to planning, and 14.4.% to hire an employee to expand capacity for the expanding brownfield program.

Budget Categories		Project Tasks				Total
		Cooperative Agreement Oversight	Community Engagement	Site Assessment	Cleanup/Reuse Planning	
Direct Costs	Personnel	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$12,000	\$20,000	\$72,000
	Fringe Benefits	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$3,600	\$6,000	\$21,600
	Travel	\$12,825	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$12,825
	Equipment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Supplies	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Contractual	\$12,800	\$20,000	\$225,000	\$132,975	\$390,775
	Construction	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Other	\$2,800	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,800
Total Direct Costs		\$54,425	\$46,000	\$240,600	\$158,975	\$500,000
Indirect Costs		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Total Budget</b>		\$54,425	\$46,000	\$240,600	\$158,975	\$500,000

f. **Plan to Measure and Evaluate Environmental Progress and Results** – The Project Manager, with the assistance of the procured environmental consultants, will track, measure, and evaluate ORA’s progress. An established work plan, approved by EPA, will guide outputs and outcomes. The Project Manager will evaluate progress based upon milestones identified in the work plan and guarantee that clearly defined responsibilities are implemented. Internal project management software will ensure that assessment and reuse planning activities are progressing, and that project outputs and outcomes are achieved. Monthly meetings with the Project Team (consisting of the Project Manager and environmental and grant consultants) will flag issues with achieving project outcomes and ensure grant funds are expended in a timely and efficient manner. The Project Manager will regularly enter data into ACRES.

**(4) PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITY AND PAST PERFORMANCE**

**Programmatic Capability**

**a, b, and c. Organizational Capacity/Organizational Structure/Description of Key Staff** - ORA has a successful, over twenty-year history of managing federal grants from NPS, the DOL, DOT, HUD, USDA, and the SBA, as well as state level and local grants. As the administrator of the Oil Region National Heritage Area (ORHA), ORA regularly manages federal funding. In the past three years, ORA has successfully managed over 50 grants, many concurrently. 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. 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. ORA has two closeout specialists who close out grants on time, within budget, and with satisfied grant requirements, including timely filing of reports.

ORA has a 16-member governing Board, which includes representation from Sugarcreek and Franklin. John R. Phillips, II, has been the President and CEO of ORA for 21 years and has overseen the expansion of ORA’s mission to include brownfield redevelopment. He works closely with Debra Sobina, the Executive Vice President. Ms. Sobina has served on numerous ORA board terms and offices, including that of Treasurer, where she oversaw ORA’s financial reporting, including grant awards. Ms. Sobina has been responsible for the brownfield program for 3 years and undertakes all bidding, awarding, and managing of federal contracts, with 20-plus years of financial reporting and grant management experience.

As the brownfield program continues to grow, ORA has determined that a Program Manager focused on brownfields will spur further economic prosperity, cleaner air and water for residents, and improved health outcomes. Ms. Sobina will initiate the project, competitively procure the QEPs, and hire the Program Manager. She will directly oversee and mentor the Program Manager, who will have a combined 5 years of experience in grant management, brownfield redevelopment, or public outreach. The Project Manager will lead the Project Team.

**d. Acquiring Additional Resources** – ORA will hire a QEP consulting team to support engagement activities, conduct assessments, and develop cleanup and reuse plans. These services will be solicited in compliance with local, state, and federal competitive procurement standards. ORA’s procurement procedures include seeking statements of qualifications and cost proposals and are independently verified for reasonableness and reviewed by the Executive Vice President. 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. ORA will consult with Pennsylvania DEQ for technical assistance and to review cleanup plans and will work with Venango County Community Services to communicate the health risks associated with brownfields and identify sensitive populations so that cleanup reduces health risks.

#### **Past Performance & Accomplishments**

**e. Currently Has or Previously Received an EPA Brownfields Grant**

(1) Accomplishments - ORA has built a successful brownfield redevelopment program that is improving the Oil Region. Starting with a 2020 CWA Grant (closed 4/21/2023), ORA was able to create a vision and implement strategies for brownfield redevelopment. With this funding, ORA undertook a Phase II ESA at the Fuchs site and is leveraging \$1 million in remediation funding from the PA ISRP grant to remediate the site. Building off this success, ORA undertook a Phase I ESA at the Former Days Inn Hotel in Oil City and used a \$500,000 PA Keystone Community Grant to demolish the abandoned, asbestoses filled hotel. ORA is currently negotiating with a developer to build an event center and 63-room hotel at this site. Finally, ORA was also able to perform a Phase I ESA at the Kraft Dahlstrom site. In total, 3 properties underwent a Phase I ESA, and 2 properties underwent a Phase II ESA. A 2022 CWA Grant (closed 12/1/2025) allowed a Phase II ESA at the Kraft Dahlstrom site, leading to a \$999,730 2024 US EPA Cleanup grant. ORA is underway with cleanup and is closely working with WEBCO, the adjacent manufacturer, to acquire the mitigated property to enhance rail siding and install solar energy. ORA was also able to perform a Phase I ESA at the Kraft Eclipse Site. In total, 5 properties underwent a Phase I ESA, and 3 properties underwent a Phase II ESA. All achievements have been accurately reported in ACRES.

(2). Compliance with Grant Requirements - ORA has a successful, nearly 20-year history of managing federal and state grants. ORA has added the successful management of USEPA grants with timely reporting and effective management of its 2020 (BF96377801) and 2022 (4B95301801) EPA CWA Grants and its current management of a 2024 Cleanup Grant (4B95301801). ORA’s first assessment grant closed out with no funds remaining in March 2023, six months ahead of its period of performance, and the 2022 grant closed out on September 30, 2025, on time. ORA did return \$3,695 since a second employee was unable to attend the National Brownfield Conference. For the CWA grants, the funds were all expended in accordance with the work plan, all quarterly and annual reports were submitted on time, site information was updated in ACRES throughout the grant period, and all closeout reporting was completed as required. ORA's current Cleanup grant started 10/1/2024 and ends 9/30/2026, and there is \$999,730 remaining in EPA funding. ORA has awarded a remediation contract and expects funding to be fully expended by 9/30/2026. The Project Team will meet monthly to ensure the project remains on track and deals with issues that emerge promptly, providing regular and accurate drawdowns and reporting.

## Oil Regional Alliance (ORA) THRESHOLD CRITERIA

**Name of Applicant:** Oil Regional Alliance (ORA)

(a) Incorporated in 2005, the Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism (ORA) is a private Pennsylvania non-profit corporation under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and a 501 (c) (3) under the United States Internal Revenue Service. ORA is eligible to be a recipient of U.S. EPA Brownfield Cleanup funding. Please see attachments.

(b) ORA is a 501 (c) (3) under the United States Internal Revenue Service, not a 501 (c) (4).

1. **Community Involvement:** ORA believes strongly in the role of community engagement in project success. ORA established a brownfield redevelopment Steering Committee in 2020 that consists of residents, business owners, organizational representatives and elected officials from across the Oil Region and advisors in economic/community development. To ensure representation in the Franklin and Sugarcreek communities, with a focus on LMI representation, ORA will invite a representative from both municipalities. The Venango Chamber of Commerce and Franklin Redevelopment Authority will help ORA engage with the business community. For reuse planning assistance, ORA will lean on Penn State Extension, Venango County, Venango County Economic Development Authority, and Northwest Commission. St. Elizabeth Center and Venango County Community Services will advise residents on brownfield safety measures, and Amy's closet will help with retail gaps.

ORA will meet quarterly with the Steering Committee members, who will help decide where to deploy EPA funds and serve as a sounding board for potential reuse options. ORA will also connect with project communities through a weekly newspaper column, weekly coffee chats, newsletters, dedicated web sites, social media, and the production of print materials. ORA will also hold a community charette in each priority brownfield site neighborhood and one for a non-selected site based on Steering Committee feedback. The purpose of this engagement is to share information, describe next steps, and gather feedback to shape the reuse of assessed properties. While English is currently the only language necessary in the target area, ORA will accommodate other languages through a translation service if needed.

2. **Expenditure of Existing Grant Funds** – ORA has successfully closed out the 2020 and 2022 Assessment Grants from the US EPA.
3. **Contractors and Named Subrecipients:**

Contractor: N/A

Subrecipient: N/A