



B. APPLICANT INFORMATION SHEET

1. Applicant Identification:

Name: City of Hernando, Mississippi

Full Address: 475 West Commerce Street
Hernando, Mississippi 38632

2. Website URL: <https://www.cityofhernando.org/>

3. Funding Requested

a. Assessment Grant Type: Community-wide Assessment Grant

b. Federal Funds Requested: \$500,000

4. Location:

a. City: Hernando

b. County: DeSoto County

c. State: Mississippi

5. Target Area and Priority Site Information

a. Target Area: Hernando has selected the **Commerce Street Corridor** as the target area which includes the Historic Town Square. The Commerce Street Corridor is Hernando's primary gateway into our city and extends westward from I-55 to Highway 51 where they intersect at the heart of downtown Hernando.

b. Priority Sites:

Priority Site #1: Hole in the Wall, 2348 and 2380 Highway 51 S, Hernando, MS 38632

Priority Site #2: J & J Repair, 183 Loshier Street, Hernando, MS 38632

Priority Site #3: Emerson Brothers Property, 345 and 381 E Commerce Street,
Hernando, MS 38632

6. Contacts

a. Project Director:

Gia Matheny, Community Development Director

662.429.9092

gmatheny@cityofhernando.org

475 West Commerce Street

Hernando, Mississippi 38632

b. Chief Executive/ Highest Ranking Elected Official

Mayor Chip Johnson

662.429.9092

mayor@cityofhernando.org

475 West Commerce Street

Hernando, Mississippi 38632

7. Population: Hernando, Mississippi – 17,138 (Data source: Census.gov)



City of Hernando MISSISSIPPI

8. Other Factors

Sample Format for Providing 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).	
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain.	
The reuse of the priority site(s) will facilitate renewable energy from wind, solar, or geothermal energy.	(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.	(4)
At least 30% of the overall project budget will be spent on eligible reuse/area-wide planning activities, as described in Section 3.A.(2), for priority site(s) within the target area(s).	
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: See attached letter from MDEQ

10. Releasing Copies of Applications: Not Applicable



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
TATE REEVES
GOVERNOR

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
CHRIS WELLS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

January 22, 2026

Mayor Chip Johnson
City of Hernando
475 West Commerce Street
Hernando, MS 38632

**RE: FY26 EPA Brownfield 104(k) Community-Wide Assessment Grant
Letter of Acknowledgement
City of Hernando**

Dear Mayor Johnson:

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) hereby acknowledges the City of Hernando's plans to conduct brownfield assessments and apply for federal grant funds through the United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Brownfields initiative. The City of Hernando has been a leader in Mississippi at leveraging brownfield grant funding and putting multiple brownfield sites in their community back into reuse. Since many brownfields are abandoned, underutilized, and contaminated, MDEQ is expressly interested in seeing entities like the City of Hernando continue to take the initiative to assess, remediate, and return these sites to productive use. These efforts are consistent with our mission to safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of present and future generations of Mississippians.

MDEQ looks forward to our continued role in the City's Brownfield Initiative and are available to assist you at any time. Should you have any questions or comments concerning this matter, please contact me at (601) 961-5240.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Thomas L. Wallace".

Thomas L. Wallace, P.E.
Division Chief – GARD
Mississippi Brownfield Program

1. PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION AND PLANS FOR REVITALIZATION Target Area and Brownfields

a. **Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Area**

The City of Hernando, Mississippi, incorporated in 1836 and serving as the county seat of DeSoto County, is a small but growing suburban community with a population of 18,542 and a compact, walkable historic core defined by a traditional courthouse square, locally owned businesses, and long-established residential neighborhoods. The city's small-town "front porch" identity is reinforced through its designation as a **Mississippi Main Street Community** and its continued investments in downtown revitalization and community-centered economic development. Due to its proximity to the expanding Metro Memphis area, Hernando has experienced increasing development pressure while maintaining a strong emphasis on historic preservation and downtown revitalization. **The geographic boundary for the proposed grant activities is the jurisdictional limits of the City of Hernando, Mississippi**, allowing the city to comprehensively address brownfield conditions in areas already served by public infrastructure, particularly within downtown corridors, gateway roadways, and adjacent neighborhoods that are central to the community's identity and daily life.

The brownfield challenges within the geographic boundary are clearly demonstrated by the presence of multiple underutilized and vacant properties that **suppress private investment, limit job creation, and constrain the city's ability to strengthen its tax base** in areas already served by public infrastructure. These include former gas stations, automotive repair facilities, and related businesses that once supported the local economy but are now dormant. Many of these properties also occupy **highly visible locations near the historic downtown**, interrupting walkable streetscapes and diminishing the continuity of redevelopment efforts. These challenges are particularly acute in Mississippi, which consistently ranks near the bottom nationally in economic, health, and quality-of-life indicators, amplifying the community-level impacts of persistent brownfield conditions. The U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey reports 18.8% of Mississippi residents live below the federal poverty level, one of the **highest poverty rates among all states**. Health disparities further compound these impacts, with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention documenting higher-than-average rates of chronic disease and premature mortality in Mississippi. Mississippi also ranks **last among all states in the Commonwealth Fund's 2025 State Health System Performance Scorecard**, reflecting significant deficits in access to care, insurance coverage, and health outcomes. Long-term vacancy and disinvestment associated with brownfield properties also **undermine prior public investments of over \$1 million in the city's Complete Streets program** established to support roadway improvements, bicycle-supportive infrastructure, and downtown revitalization efforts within Hernando's core corridors. Many of these underutilized properties are affected by suspected environmental contamination associated with historic commercial and service-oriented uses, creating uncertainty regarding site conditions that discourage private investment and delays redevelopment. Many of these sites are associated with historic commercial uses such as former service stations and automotive activities, raising concerns related to petroleum-impacted soil and groundwater that require further assessment. **These brownfield challenges have a direct and ongoing impact on the community**, limiting redevelopment potential in Hernando's most walkable and population-dense neighborhoods and preventing the city from maximizing the use of existing infrastructure. **This grant will help address these challenges and their impacts** by building upon the City's successful implementation of prior FY2012, FY2016, and FY2022 EPA Brownfields Assessment and Cleanup grants, which advanced site assessments, planning activities, and redevelopment readiness across multiple remaining brownfield properties. Through these grants Hernando took deliberate steps to assess and understand environmental conditions, laying the groundwork for reuse that respects local history. One of the most telling success stories is a former tractor dealership and repair shop near downtown, a site long considered an eyesore. Once environmental assessments clarified contamination concerns and cleanup pathways, the property was reborn as **locally owned businesses that now draw residents and visitors alike**. The success of these brownfield projects established **Uncle Bubba's Barbeque** and local boutique shop **Social x Saint**, bringing new life to a location that once symbolized stagnation. Despite these successes, **environmental uncertainty continues to delay reuse at many remaining sites** by suppressing property values and limiting job creation. By addressing environmental uncertainty, this grant will position priority sites for cleanup and reuse, supporting tax base growth, job creation, and commercial revitalization to continue the success of past brownfield projects such as these. **The target area within the geographic boundary for the focused grant activities is clearly identified and described** as the **Commerce Street Corridor** encompassing **Census Tracts 07711.22 and 07711.24**. This target area spans **22.01 square miles** and, according to the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (2019–2023 five-year estimates), contain an estimated **6,709 residents**, resulting in a population density of approximately **305 people per square mile**, substantially higher than the national average of 94 people per square mile. This concentration of residents within infrastructure-served areas reflects strong redevelopment potential and supports infill development that promotes economic growth while limiting urban sprawl, aligning the city's brownfields strategy with efficient use of existing infrastructure and long-term community revitalization goals.

b. **Description of the Priority Brownfield Site(s)**

The City of Hernando maintains a publicly accessible GIS database of identified and addressed brownfield properties and the development, with assistance from the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), of an internal inventory of at

least 30-40 additional brownfield sites within the target areas requiring assessment. These sites include former gas stations, automotive and printing shops, an old lumberyard, vacant lots, and abandoned commercial properties. This combined inventory establishes a clear and credible universe of brownfield sites within the target areas from which priority sites have been selected. Of this broader inventory, the city has selected three priority sites along the Commerce Street Corridor (TA).

Priority Site 1 is the **Hole in the Wall property**, located at **2348 and 2380 Highway 51 South**, consisting of two parcels—Parcel ID 3086130010006200 (0.43 acres) and Parcel ID 3086130010006300 (0.32 acres)—for a total area of **0.75 acres**. Located along Highway 51 South, a primary entrance into Hernando’s historic downtown, the property plays a prominent role in shaping first impressions of the community. The site is bordered by Hernando’s Historic Homes District to the east and the Velvet Cream ice cream shop to the north, a long-standing local landmark and tourist destination. The property is also adjacent to the former brownfield site redeveloped into **Fratello’s Prime Steak House**, located immediately west of the site, which represents Hernando’s first successful EPA-funded brownfield revitalization project. Building on this demonstrated success, additional EPA-supported assessment is essential to reduce environmental uncertainty, enable redevelopment for retail or restaurant use, and support continued corridor revitalization and improved downtown connectivity. The property historically operated as a gasoline service station utilizing underground storage tanks (USTs) for gasoline and diesel fuel dispensing. A primary building of approximately 2,400 square feet, formerly used as a convenience store, includes a canopy extension covering fuel dispenser islands, and a bay door indicates potential historic automobile maintenance activities. A second building of approximately 700 square feet, located on the southern portion of the property, appears to have served as a petroleum bulk distribution facility and includes a bay door suggesting maintenance use. A smaller structure northeast of the former bulk distribution building appears to have functioned as a pump house. The site is currently vacant. Both USTs and aboveground storage tanks (ASTs) have existed on the property, and documented leaks have occurred, resulting in environmental uncertainty. A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment conducted in 2022 identified Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs) related to historical fuel storage and dispensing activities, including petroleum-impacted soil and groundwater and potential vapor intrusion pathways. Contaminants of concern (COCs) include petroleum hydrocarbons; VOCs, including BTEX and chlorinated solvents; SVOCs such as PAHs; and metals, including lead, chromium, cadmium, and zinc associated with fuels, oils, and solvents. Historical records indicate that prior to 1963 the property was owned and developed by Monsanto Chemical Company. Given the pre-RCRA timeframe, this historical use suggests potential management, storage, or disposal of hazardous substances and constitutes an additional REC. Further assessment is required to delineate subsurface conditions and support cleanup and redevelopment planning. This site is a priority due to its **environmental uncertainty, gateway location, and redevelopment leverage**.

Priority Site 2 is **J & J Repair**, located at **183 Loshier Street**, Parcel ID 3086130040004202, encompassing **0.462277 acres**. The property contains a **3,200-square-foot building** constructed in 1975, historically used as an **automobile repair shop**. Numerous vehicles are stored on-site, and a canopy with a former fuel dispenser island is located on the northern portion of the property. The central and northern portions of the site are surfaced with asphalt and gravel for parking. The business is no longer in operation. Historical uses include a fueling station, coffee shop, and hair salon. The property is located within a well-developed commercial and residential area. Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments conducted using prior EPA Brownfields funding confirmed COCs including VOCs, TPH-GRO, TPH-DRO, EPH, VPH, and RCRA metals, **establishing the site as a priority** for continued assessment and remediation planning. **This site is a priority because of its location** within Hernando’s Commerce Street Corridor and **redevelopment leverage**.

Priority Site 3 is the **Emerson Brothers Property**, consisting of two adjoining parcels located at **345 and 381 East Commerce Street**, Parcel IDs 307418003000601 and 307418003000600, totaling approximately **2.24 acres**. The underutilized site **contains three buildings** occupied by Sports of All Sorts, Pounders Repair, and Delta Muffler. Although the site contains three buildings and surface parking, **only about one-quarter of the 2.24-acre property is currently developed**, leaving **more than 70,000 square feet (over 74% of the site) underutilized and constrained by environmental contamination**. Identified COCs include petroleum hydrocarbons; VOCs, including BTEX and chlorinated solvents; SVOCs such as PAHs; and metals including lead, chromium, cadmium, and zinc associated with fuels, oils, solvents, welding activities, and vehicle exhaust components. Historical data indicate the property operated as a **bulk fueling facility for 25 to 50 years, constituting a REC**. The site is bordered to the west by railroad tracks containing known contaminants such as creosote from treated ties, arsenic from coal ash and cinder, and potential petroleum or chlorinated releases associated with rail transport. **This site is a priority because** it represents a **high-priority redevelopment opportunity** within a revitalized corridor already served by public infrastructure. Redevelopment of the site would leverage existing public and private investment and create a **catalytic, domino effect** that advances the remediation and reuse of the remaining adjacent brownfield properties.

c. Identifying Additional Sites

The City of Hernando maintains a clear and systematic **process for identifying additional brownfield sites** within the geographic boundary **through ongoing site inventory and screening**, stakeholder referrals, and corridor- and area-based knowledge informed

by community conditions. This process is strengthened by regular input from neighborhood-serving organizations, economic development partners, and redevelopment professionals, and is supported by established partnerships with the Mississippi Development Authority, Hernando Main Street Chamber of Commerce, Interfaith Council on Poverty, Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi, Northwest Community College, Hernando Bike Club, and local development professionals, which collectively help identify priority needs and emerging opportunities. The city will also review commercial and industrial real estate listings to flag vacant or long-listed properties where redevelopment interest may be constrained, and will coordinate with realtors, developers, and potential investors to identify sites where environmental uncertainty is a barrier to investment. Potential sites are evaluated and prioritized based on owner willingness to participate, availability of access agreements, alignment with community and reuse goals, and the feasibility of completing AAI, Phase I, Phase II, and Phase III environmental site assessments and cleanup planning within the grant period. Potential sites will then be brought to the city for initial eligibility determination and prioritization, based on factors such as redevelopment potential, community benefit, and alignment with local planning goals, before advancing priority properties for environmental assessment and redevelopment planning.

Revitalization of the Target Area d. Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans

Below is a table of our reuse plans for each priority site and alignment with Hernando’s Comprehensive Plan developed in March of 2021. All reuses align with land use plans.

Priority Site/Reuse	Comprehensive Plan Goal	Alignment with Revitalization Plans
Hole in the Wall, Retail/ Restaurant	Economic vitality; locally owned, pedestrian-oriented retail (Commercial Land Use Goals, p. 67)	Reuse as a locally owned restaurant strengthens commercial activity that generates jobs and sales tax revenue.
J & J Repair, Retail/ Restaurant	Diverse local economy and employment growth (Population & Economy Goals, p. 66–67)	Redevelopment supports local employment and expands non-franchise retail and dining options aligned with community needs.
Emerson Brothers Property, Pharmacy/Neighborhood-Serving Retail	Neighborhood services and complete community amenities (Vision Statement; Neighborhood Commercial Goals, p. 66, 68)	A neighborhood pharmacy improves access to essential health services while supporting local jobs and reinvestment.

e. Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy

The City of Hernando is a small, suburban community with a focus on eliminating the effect of brownfield sites on its historic downtown region. Through the proposed reuse of the designated priority sites the city anticipates that redevelopment will stimulate economic development in the target area post-cleanup by returning underutilized properties within the community’s walkable town center to productive, neighborhood-serving commercial use. Post-cleanup reuse will prioritize retail, dining, pharmacy, and service-oriented uses that align with local market demand and zoning, strengthening the downtown corridor, supporting local businesses, and increasing visitor activity. Anticipated outcomes and benefits of reuse strategies are outlined as follows:

Reuse Objective	Reuse/Strategy	Anticipated Outcomes/Benefit	Correlation to Reuse
Hole in the Wall & J & J Repair Sites	Retail, dining, neighborhood-serving commercial redevelopment; both sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20–60 temporary construction jobs • 85+ permanent jobs • Expanded local tax base • Increased tourism-related and local spending • Stimulated adjacent private investment • Support for a walkable town center 	Proposed commercial uses are job-generating, visitor-oriented, and proven to increase downtown economic activity. Retail/dining reuse directly supports employment, entrepreneurship, and pedestrian activity
Emerson Brothers Property	Pharmacy, neighborhood-serving retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved access to essential goods and services • Benefits seniors, families, and residents with limited transportation • Strengthens commercial corridor 	Neighborhood-serving retail aligns with community healthcare needs
Local Resilience to Extreme Weather & Disasters- All Sites	Infill redevelopment within existing infrastructure-served areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All sites to be updated to current code for increased resilience • Limits urban sprawl and surface expansion • Maximizes existing transportation and utilities • Shorter travel distances and reduced infrastructure strain 	Concentrated redevelopment improves long-term resilience and infrastructure efficiency

Energy Efficiency & Sustainable Land Use- All Sites	Cleanup and reuse of previously developed properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoids new land consumption • Supports energy-efficient land use patterns • Locates jobs and services in walkable areas • Lighting, appliances and fixtures to be upgraded to energy-efficient models 	Reuse inherently improves energy efficiency
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Strategy for Leveraging Resources

f. Resources Needed for Site Reuse

Leveraging Incentives	Tax Description
Mississippi Economic Redevelopment Act (MERA)	Assessments and Corrective Action Plans for sites like Hole in the Wall funded through this grant will provide a private developer with the environmental information needed to reach a Brownfield Agreement with MDEQ, which then allows the developer to receive a brownfield tax rebate on the clean-up costs that will be expended. Through the MERA tax incentive, all sales, income, and franchise taxes collected from businesses located in a designated redevelopment project area will be used to reimburse developers for cleanup costs. Reimbursement to developers is made semi-annually for a period of up to 15 years, with a maximum distribution to the developer of up to 2.5 times the site’s remediation cost. Similar sites in the Commerce Street Corridor have already received.
Historic Preservation Incentives	Private developers are eligible for the Historic Tax Credit program, and eligible priority sites particularly in the historic downtown area. This includes the Commerce Street Corridor. to support reuse of buildings and existing infrastructure. The program offers a 25% tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic structures used for residential or business purposes. A project must exceed \$5,000 or 50% of the total basis of the building. All sites are located within Hernando’s historic downtown corridor.
Advantage Incentive Program	Provides for the rebate of a percentage of Mississippi payrolls to qualified employers for a period of up to 10 years. Available to businesses that promise significant expansion of the economy through the creation of jobs. All priority sites are eligible and likely to receive based on estimated outcomes from reuse.
Brownfield Voluntary Cleanup & Redevelopment Incentives	Provides an income tax credit for a property owner equal to 25% of the costs of assessing and remediating a brownfields property, with the annual credit capped at \$40,000, and the total credit not to exceed \$150,000. Any unused portion of the tax credit may be carried over into succeeding tax years. In lieu of the state income tax credit, the property owner may claim a job tax credit for each new employee created as a result of the cleanup and redevelopment of a brownfield site. This incentive supports both assessment and remediation for all sites. All priority sites are eligible and likely to receive based on estimated employment outcomes from reuse.

Since 2023, the City of Hernando has demonstrated its capacity to successfully secure and manage state and federal funding for community and economic development projects. In 2023, the city was awarded \$176,000 through the Federal Transportation Alternatives Program, administered by the Mississippi Department of Transportation, to construct bicycle and pedestrian improvements along Mt. Pleasant Road. That same year, Hernando received \$25,000 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Partners Network Placemaking Grant to support downtown planning and design activities focused on strengthening Main Street vitality. Also in 2023, the City was awarded \$1,737,060 from the Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund to fund major enhancements at Renasant Park, including trails, environmental education features, and recreation amenities supporting eco-tourism. In 2024, the city leveraged approximately \$161,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Main Street funding for downtown beautification, wayfinding, lighting, and public-space improvements. In 2023, the city was awarded \$10,000 and \$9113 in 2025 from the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area Alliance to further enhance cultural programming and development of a mobile tourism application. Additional private expenditures from McIngvale Square LLC of \$13,190 for assessment and consulting services and \$15,500 for cleanup activities occurred because EPA assessment funding reduced uncertainty and established a clear cleanup pathway, illustrating the multiplier effect of EPA Brownfields investments. This demonstrated ability to secure, manage, and leverage diverse funding sources supports the City of Hernando’s capacity to effectively administer the proposed EPA Brownfields grant and achieve the intended environmental and redevelopment outcomes. EPA Brownfields assessment funding will directly enable property owners and developers to access these complementary resources-particularly MERA incentives, Historic Preservation Tax

Credits, and Mississippi brownfield tax credits-by establishing site eligibility, clarifying cleanup costs, and reducing financial risk, thereby accelerating remediation and reuse of the priority sites.

g. Use of Existing Infrastructure

The city’s reuse strategy prioritizes infill and redevelopment within the target areas to **leverage existing utility and roadway infrastructure**. Prior city planning documents note that these areas are **already fully served by infrastructure**, allowing redevelopment to reduce the need for new construction while advancing sustainability goals, including reduced resource use and a **lower overall carbon footprint**.

2. COMMUNITY NEED AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

a. The Community’s Need for Funding

Hernando has a documented need for EPA assessment funding, as environmental uncertainty at underutilized properties often delays redevelopment and the City has limited flexible resources for environmental due diligence, particularly in low-income areas. Prior city documentation notes that DeSoto County has localized disparities in income that constrain redevelopment without external assistance. The per capita income for the target areas¹ is \$35,693, which is 17.5% lower than the US, which is \$43,288. Roughly **9.3% of Hernando residents live below the poverty line**, highlighting a segment that struggle with housing affordability, access to health care, transportation, and basic needs.

b. Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations

The target area has a high concentration of sensitive populations compared to DeSoto County, Mississippi, and national benchmarks. Among residents age 65 and older in the target area, **61.21% report having at least one disability**, compared to 33.54% in DeSoto County and 41.08% statewide. **Children with disabilities under age 18** are also more prevalent at **7.17%**, exceeding county (**4.52%**) and state (**5.95%**) levels. Overall, 15.6% of the target area population has a disability, higher than DeSoto County (12.29%) and the U.S. average (13.04%). The area also has a higher share of young children under age 4 (6.6%) compared to the county (5.79%), state (6.0%), and U.S. (5.70%), as well as a **greater proportion of households without a vehicle (7.09%)**, nearly double DeSoto County (3.62%) and higher than Mississippi (6.17%), indicating elevated vulnerability and access challenges within the target area. Hernando also has 14.97% of **adults without a high school diploma**, nearly **twice** the county average of 8.6%. Households experiencing **low income with low food access** are 27.4% in the target area while 26.2% in the state and 19.4% in the US.¹ **This grant addresses these issues** by environmentally clearing sites for reuse that improves economic and health outlooks for the community’s sensitive populations. Redevelopment of Hole in the Wall, J&J Repair, and the Emerson Brothers Property as restaurants, retail space, and a drugstore will provide **entry-level employment opportunities** for less educated and lower income residents. For elderly and disabled populations, the presence of a nearby drugstore **reduces the need for long or vehicle-dependent trips to obtain healthcare-related goods**. ¹US Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, 2019-2023*.

c. Greater Than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions

	DESOTO COUNTY	US
Cancer (all types per 100k pop) ¹	455.5	444.4
Colon Cancer (per 100k pop.) ¹	44.7	36.4
Lung Cancer (per 100k pop.) ¹	70.7	53.1
Cancer Mortality (per 100 pop.) (2018-2022) ¹	178.1	146.0
Diabetes ²	13.1%	8.9%
Obesity ²	39.5%	30.1%
Low Birth Weight ³	10%	8.4%
Deaths Per Live Births ⁴	8.6	5.5

¹ *State Cancer Profiles. 2018-2022*

² *National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. 2021*

³ *County Health Rankings. 2017-2023*

⁴ *Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Maternal and Infant Health Mapping Tool*

DeSoto County experiences a greater-than-normal incidence of adverse health outcomes, including elevated cancer incidence and mortality, lung and colon cancer, and low birth weight compared to national averages. Exposure to PAHs, petroleum hydrocarbons (including benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, and xylene), VOCs, and heavy metals such as lead, chromium, and cadmium commonly present in soils at former gas stations and auto repair shops are linked to increased rates of lung, skin, and gastrointestinal cancers. **This grant-funded assessment and reuse strategy will help identify and reduce exposure risks** by evaluating petroleum hydrocarbons, volatile organic compounds, and metals, and by addressing exposure pathways such as direct contact, vapor

intrusion, and groundwater contamination. Assessment and reuse will support cleanup planning, reduce blight, and return sites to productive use, reducing environmental health risks.

d. Economically Impoverished/Disproportionately Impacted Populations

The target area **experiences significantly higher economic hardship** than DeSoto County and national averages, leaving residents more vulnerable to the impacts of past industrial and commercial activity. Elderly individuals with disabilities comprise 61.21% of the population, nearly double the county rate, while children with disabilities account for 7.17%, both of which **limit workforce participation and increase reliance on fixed or low incomes**. Overall, 15.6% of residents have a disability, contributing to **higher unemployment and long-term economic instability**. These challenges are reinforced by low educational attainment, with 14.97% of adults lacking a high school diploma, and by limited household resources, as 27.4% of households experience low income and low food access. The area also has a higher share of young children (6.6% under age four) and households without a vehicle (7.09%), **restricting access to jobs, services, and economic opportunities**.

These economic conditions are closely linked to underutilized and potentially contaminated properties within the Commerce Street Corridor that **suppress property values, deter private investment**, and contribute to **business losses and neighborhood disinvestment**. **The proposed grant and reuse strategy will identify, assess, and support the cleanup** of brownfield sites that hinder redevelopment and economic recovery. By prioritizing sites near low-income households, individuals with disabilities, and residents with limited transportation options, **the project will help remove barriers to productive land use and attract reinvestment**. Cleanup and reuse efforts will **support neighborhood-serving development, job creation, and improved access to services**, strengthening the **local economy** and creating more stable conditions for residents facing persistent economic hardship.

Community Engagement e. Project Involvement and f. Project Roles

The City of Hernando has **engaged the community** on brownfield issues for more than a decade, beginning prior to receiving its first grant in 2012. Public input was also incorporated into redevelopment planning for potential brownfield sites during the preparation of Hernando’s Draft Comprehensive Plan. Through these grants and planning efforts, the City has established strong partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders, including business and community organizations, property owners, lenders, developers, and real estate professionals—to support collaborative and successful implementation. The table below summarizes the partnerships that will be leveraged to advance a coordinated strategy for this grant.

Partner Name	Entity’s Mission	Point of contact	Specific role in the project
Mississippi Development Authority	Recruit new industries, expand existing businesses, promote tourism, create quality jobs, improve quality of life	Bill Cork locateinms@mississippi.org	Provides economic development support and will work with Hernando and Mississippi Main Street to identify new investment opportunities through the location of new industry on assessed brownfield properties, advertisement of properties available for development, and identification of potential leveraging resources
Hernando Main Street Chamber of Commerce	Promote and support needs of business and industry, foster economic growth, build a strong community	Sibonie Swatzyna sibonie@hernandoms.org	The Chamber will serve by helping to select brownfields for redevelopment and attract new businesses to locate at redeveloped brownfield sites.
Interfaith Council on Poverty	Unite the community to serve families in poverty. A community-based group serving local people.	Roxanne McIngvale [REDACTED]	They will assist Hernando by helping provide the community with updates on the grant.
The Hill Hernando Church Family	Support community harmony and goodwill. Support the community’s people. A community-based organization serving local residents.	Pastor Michael Minor info@thehillhernando.com	Convey community priorities; inform site selection and reuse; share project feedback with residents.
Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi	Connect people who care with causes that matter.	Tom Pittman tompittman@cfnm.org	The Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi will assist

	Research charitable causes, evaluate non-profits.		in community outreach and securing additional grant funding for addressing food insecurity within the target areas.
Northwest Community College	Provide open access, student-centered education that strengthens communities through quality and innovation while partnering with local businesses to support economic development.	Daniel Hollowell dhollowell@northwestms.edu	The Northwest Community College will provide career workforce training for many of the type businesses that may locate to many of the brownfield properties.
Hernando Bike Club	Build relationships through biking, promote fitness and local exploration.	Bo McAninch hernandobike@aol.com	Provide project updates to members and provide guidance on connectivity and safety pertaining to the expansion of greenspace and biking trails.
Grant & Company Builders/Realtors	Build quality homes that exceed customer expectations, prioritizing homeowner happiness and security through diligent excellence, passionate service, and gratitude, guided by a vision to honor Christ in serving community housing needs.	Martha Fondren mfondren@grantnewhomes.com	Will confer with the City regarding available properties for construction of affordable housing.

g. Incorporating Community Input

The City of Hernando has **already cultivated** a culture within the community that **encourages discussion and input pertaining to the redevelopment of brownfield sites**. This has been achieved through community outreach events that have taken place during the years of previous grants awarded in 2012, 2016 and 2022 and development of the recent draft Hernando Comprehensive Plan. These efforts have involved over 150 participants from the community and has helped to shape Hernando’s entire brownfields program. Therefore, Hernando will continue along the same track that has been successful in obtaining and incorporating community input to date. This includes holding an **initial kickoff meeting and at least two community outreach events per year**. Hernando will also reach out to the community through the distribution of flyers, newspaper advertisements, the City’s website, social media, and local news media. **Community input will be encouraged through visioning sessions to gain input** on which redevelopments are most important to the community. **Adjacent property owners/occupants to priority Brownfield sites will be personally invited to community meetings**. To ensure broad participation, Hernando will provide both in-person and non-in-person engagement opportunities. Virtual meeting options will be offered when feasible, and meeting recordings, summaries, and comment opportunities will be posted on the City’s website. Residents will also be able to submit comments via an online form or dedicated email address. All community input will be documented in a community input log identifying comments received, how they were considered, and resulting actions or decisions. This feedback will be reviewed by the Brownfield Advisory Committee (BAC) and used to inform site prioritization, cleanup planning, and reuse decisions. Summaries of community input and responses will be made publicly available to ensure transparency. **All documents associated with the project will be made available through document repository** located with Ms. Matheny at City Hall. In addition to the Community Outreach meetings and virtual meetings that will be recorded and posted online, Hernando will hold brownfield advisory committee (BAC) meetings that will **include the key stakeholders and partners listed in the above table**. These meetings will be held at a **minimum of an annual basis and up to a quarterly frequency** if needed. The BAC will assist in site selection, cleanup and future reuse planning.

3. TASK DESCRIPTIONS, COST ESTIMATES, AND MEASURING PROGRESS

Description of Tasks/Activities and Outputs (3a.-3d.)

Task/Activity 1: PROJECT MANAGEMENT

a. Project Implementation

- EPA-funded tasks/activities: Develop and implement the EPA-approved Cooperative Agreement Workplan. Prepare required quarterly, semi-annual, annual, and final reports, and financial reports, and coordinate with EPA and MDEQ. Hernando will procure a Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP) in compliance with 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR Part 1500 to conduct

environmental assessments and remediation planning, reporting to the Hernando Project Director (Gia Matheny). Hernando will oversee contractor activities, participate in national and regional brownfields conferences, and Project Coordinator will document and report project outcomes and benefits in ACRES, including progress toward cleanup, redevelopment, and reuse.

- Non-EPA grant resources needed to carry out tasks/activities, if applicable: Not applicable

b. Anticipated Project Schedule:

- Cooperative Agreement & workplan – Q1
- Kickoff meeting – Q1
- Quarterly reports – end of each quarter
- Annual reports – Q4, annually
- DBE Reports – October annually
- Federal Financial Reports (FFRs) – Q4 annually
- ACRES Updates – monthly
- Attend 3 conferences – Q1, Q5, Q9
- Final Performance Report – Y4 Q4

c. Task/Activity Lead: Project Director supported by QEP.

d. Outputs: Workplan, 16 quarterly reports, 4 annual reports, 4 DBE reports, 4 FFRs, 1 final report, ACRES updates, conference attendance over 4 years.

Task/Activity 2: SITE INVENTORY AND SELECTION, COMMUNITY OUTREACH

a. Project Implementation

- EPA-funded tasks/activities: **Site Prioritization:** During Q1, potential sites will be screened and prioritized in collaboration with BAC. Evaluation factors will include environmental justice impacts, anticipated reuse or redevelopment, demonstrated community need, funding readiness, site scale and complexity, existing infrastructure, public health considerations, and overall project viability. **Site Review and Documentation:** The QEP will conduct eligibility reviews in Q1 for selected properties using the established site inventory. Tasks will include analysis of environmental and property records, historical land-use research, and outreach to owners, brokers, employees, and others with relevant site knowledge. All sites will be documented and maintained in a GIS-based tracking system. **Public Involvement:** Active and ongoing public engagement will support project implementation. In Q1, Hernando, the BAC, and the QEP will jointly develop a Community Involvement Plan (CIP) to guide outreach efforts, with updates made as project activities evolve. Engagement activities will be carried out continuously in partnership with local organizations and stakeholders. **Property Access:** Hernando, with support from the QEP, will work with property owners in Q1 to secure site access and execute necessary access agreements.
- Non-EPA grant resources needed to carry out tasks/activities, if applicable:

b. Anticipated Project Schedule:

- GIS-based site inventory- established Q1 with quarterly updates
- Site eligibility determinations- monthly
- Community involvement plan- Q1
- BAC meetings- Q2 and Q4 annually
- Site access agreements- secured quarterly Q1-Q4

c. Task/Activity Lead: Project Director with QEP assistance.

d. Outputs: 16 site inventory updates, 12 annual site eligibility determinations, 1 CIP, 8 BAC meetings, site access agreements

Task/Activity 3: ASSESSMENTS

a. Project Implementation

- EPA-funded tasks/activities: The QEP will prepare a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) to establish QA/QC procedures for all assessment activities. Assessments will prioritize designated sites, with additional sites evaluated only after priority work is on schedule and fully funded. Phase I ESAs will be conducted in accordance with AAI and ASTM E1527-21 standards and will include site inspections, records review, GPR surveys as needed, and reporting. Phase II ESAs will be completed where warranted based on Phase I findings, following approval of site-specific sampling and analysis plans, and may include soil, groundwater, surface water, or soil vapor sampling, as well as ACM and LBP surveys.

b. Anticipated Project Schedule:

- QAPP- Q1
- Phase I ESAs- Q2-Q8
- Phase II ESAs- Q4-Q10
- ACM/LBP Surveys- As needed
- SAPs- Q7-Q12

c. Task/Activity Lead: QEP under supervision of the Project Director.

d. Outputs: 1 QAPP, 9 Phase I ESAs, 6 Phase II ESAs with SAPs, 2 ACM/LBP Surveys

Task/Activity 4: PLANNING

a. Project Implementation: Following up after feedback from community engagement sessions and BAC feedback, the preparation of 1 comprehensive brownfield revitalization plan integrating community input, feasibility findings, and conceptual design to guide remediation and attract public and private investment will take place. 2 Site Reuse Visions coupled with work on a Market Viability Analysis will identify constraints, opportunities, and viable redevelopment scenarios; 3 ABCAs will then be developed to estimating will be completed to evaluate and compare cleanup options.

- EPA-funded tasks/activities:

b. Anticipated Project Schedule:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revitalization Plan- Q5-Q10 • Market Viability Analysis- Q9-Q12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABCAs- Q9-Q12 • Site Reuse Visions – Q5-Q7
c. Task/Activity Lead: Project Director to complete Resource Roadmap. QEP to be responsible for other tasks with Project Director supervision.	
d. Outputs: 2 Site Reuse Visions, 1 Market Viability Analysis, 1 Brownfield Revitalization Plan, and 3 ABCAs	

Cost Estimates

Budget Categories		Project Tasks				
		Task 1: Project Management	Task 2: Site Inventory and Selection, Community Outreach	Task 3: Assessments	Task 4: Planning	Total
Dire	Personnel	\$19,500	\$13,000			\$32,500
	Fringe Benefits					
	Travel	\$17,400				\$17,400
	Supplies		\$2,100			\$2,100
	Contractual	\$36,000	\$31,500	\$280,500	\$98,000	\$446,000
	Other: VCP Fee	\$2,000				\$2,000
Total Direct Costs		\$74,900	\$46,600	\$280,500	\$98,000	500,000
Indirect Costs						
Total Budget (Total Direct Costs + Indirect Costs)		\$74,900	\$46,600	\$280,500	\$98,000	\$500,000

Task 1: Project Management- Total \$40,725. Personnel: 300 hours @ \$65/hr = \$19,500. Travel (\$17,400): Three Brownfield conferences for two people @ \$250/conference=\$1,500, flights (\$1,000/person), hotel (4 nights x \$250/night=\$1,000/person), expenses (4 days x \$100=\$400/person). Contractual: 200 hours x \$180/hour=\$36,000.

Task 2: Site Inventory and Selection, Community Outreach- Total \$46,600. Personnel: 200 hours @ \$65/hr = \$13,000. Contractual: 200 hours x \$180/hr=\$31,500. Supplies (\$2,100): Materials for printing- \$600. 2 computers @ \$500=\$1,000. Software and misc- \$425.

Task 3: Assessments- Total \$280,500. Contractual: 1 QAPP = \$6,500; 9 Phase I ESAs @ \$6,000 each = \$54,000; 6 Phase II ESAs @ \$35,000 each = \$210,000. 2 ACM/LBP Surveys @ \$5,000 each=\$10,000.

Task 4: Planning- Total \$98,000. Contractual: 3 ABCAs @ \$6,000 each=\$18,000; 1 Brownfield Revitalization Plan @ \$54,000; 2 Site Reuse Visions @ \$8,000 each=\$16,000. 1 Market Viability Analysis @ \$10,000.

Required performance and financial reporting costs will be treated as allowable programmatic costs and the City will not require administrative costs.

Cost estimates were developed through an internal assessment of prior successful EPA Assessment grant applications and established grant management expertise.

f. Plan to Measure and Evaluate Environmental Progress and Results

The City will measure progress using **clear, EPA-recognized metrics** and will report results through required progress reporting and the ACRES database. The City’s established approach includes tracking grant deliverables and uploading progress to **EPA’s ACRES database on a quarterly basis**, including key metrics and accomplishments for each assessed property. The City will enter or **update information in ACRES** at key milestones, at a minimum when a **property is identified and confirmed** as eligible and a basic property profile is established; when a **Phase I ESA is completed**, including the date, AAI status, planned reuse, and a summary of findings; when a **Phase II ESA is completed**, including media sampled, contaminants of concern, and a summary of results; when a **cleanup plan is completed**, such as a CAP/ABCA or other applicable plan type; when **cleanup actions are initiated or completed**, if applicable and known; and when **redevelopment status changes** occur as a result of public or private actions, such as the execution of agreements or the start of construction. **Outcome measures will include** acres assessed and made ready for reuse, reduction of environmental uncertainty, advancement of reuse plans, leveraged funding, and redevelopment readiness indicators such as developer interest and site disposition progress.

4. PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITY AND PAST PERFORMANCE

Programmatic Capability a. Organizational Capacity b. Organizational Structure c. Description of Key Staff

The City of Hernando has an outstanding record of exhibiting **programmatic ,administrative and financial capability**, as the city has already successfully managed three EPA Brownfield Assessment Grants in the past. The same staff who successfully

managed the previous grants will continue to oversee this effort and ensure compliance with all programmatic, administrative, technical, and financial requirements of this grant. In addition, Hernando's selected QEP has successfully supported the management of more than 30 EPA grants and brings a deep bench of experienced staff to support this effort. The Brownfield grant will be managed by the City's Community Development Department, which reports directly to the Mayor. This office is responsible for writing and administering private, state, and federal grants and has extensive experience working with EPA and MDEQ on brownfield projects. The department is led by Gia Matheny, Director, who has served the city for twelve years and is responsible for grant oversight. She is supported by additional city staff, including Eva Ward and Nicole Hilario. Eva Ward provides financial management support and processes payment requests for approval by the Board of Alderman. Nicole Hilario, City Clerk, oversees financial compliance and submits reimbursement requests through the EPA grants management system.

d. Acquiring Additional Resources

The City's programmatic capacity is strengthened by a robust leveraging strategy that includes coordination with state incentives such as MERA and voluntary brownfields cleanup programs, investments in transportation and trail connectivity, tourism-related improvements, and partnerships that advance economic development and workforce alignment.

Past Performance and Accomplishments

e. Currently Has or Previously Received an EPA Brownfields Grant Hernando has been the recipient of three EPA Brownfield Grants. The city has successfully implemented and completed the 2012 and 2016 grants of \$400,000 each with substantial outputs. A 2022 grant of \$409,000 was awarded for the Commerce Street Corridor and the Westside Community and remains active.

1. Accomplishment

Under the FY2012 grant, the city completed **26 Phase I Environmental Site Assessments, six site-specific QAPPs, six Phase II assessments, and four All Appropriate Inquiries–Based Cleanup Analyses (ABCAs)**. The FY2016 grant resulted in **26 Phase I assessments, seven Phase II assessments, and five ABCAs**. Accomplishments of the FY2022 grant are as follows: The city completed **Phase I ESAs at eight (8) properties**, each performed in accordance with ASTM E1527 and AAI requirements. The City completed **five Phase II-level investigations**, including traditional Phase II ESAs and EPA-eligible targeted investigations at five properties, **One Phase III ESA** was completed. **Two (2) ACM inspections** were completed as well as **One Corrective Action Plan (CAP)** at McIngvale Square. The McIngvale Square Property represents the City's most significant brownfield success under the FY2022 grant. Environmental outcomes include completion of Phase I, Phase II, and Phase III ESAs; preparation and approval of a Corrective Action Plan; completion of corrective actions with confirmation results supporting a No Further Action recommendation for the addressed exposure pathway; and advancement toward execution of a State Brownfield Agreement. Expected economic outcomes include redevelopment of the site into a publicly documented \$30-million mixed-use project featuring restaurants, retail, office, and residential uses. Anticipated benefits include construction-phase employment and local spending, creation of permanent jobs in retail, dining, office, and property management, increased property values and long-term growth in the City's tax base and continued strengthening of Hernando's town center as a walkable, community-oriented destination. All of these accomplishments were reported to ACRES in a timely manner.

2. Compliance with Grant Requirements

The City prepared and submitted all EPA-required reports including quarterly, semi-annual, and final reports within the timeframe required by the EPA. In addition, the city updated the ACRES online database to accurately and consistently track project outputs and outcomes. All compliance requirements were successfully met for the Cooperative Agreement, including the submittal of the Work Plan, Generic QAPP, eligibility determinations, Site Specific QAPPs, Quarterly Reports, Annual Reports, Financial Reports, and ACRES Database reporting.



THRESHOLD CRITERIA FOR COMMUNITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT FY26

1. Applicant Eligibility

a. The City of Hernando, Mississippi, is a “General Purpose Unit of Local Government” as defined under 2 CFR § 200.1 and therefore is eligible to apply for an EPA Assessment Grant.

b. The City of Hernando is not exempt from federal taxation under section 501(c)(3) of the IRC.

2. Community Involvement

The City of Hernando has demonstrated a sustained and proactive approach to public involvement and collaborative redevelopment planning. The City has engaged residents and stakeholders on brownfield issues for more than a decade, beginning prior to receipt of its first EPA Brownfields grant in 2012. Public participation has also played a key role in identifying redevelopment priorities for potential brownfield sites during the development of Hernando’s Draft Comprehensive Plan, ensuring that assessment activities are responsive to community needs and local planning goals.

Through prior grant-funded efforts and comprehensive planning processes, the City has established strong partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders, including business and community organizations, property owners, lenders, developers, and real estate professionals. These partnerships will support site identification, prioritization, and reuse planning efforts under this Community-wide Assessment grant and ensure a coordinated, community-driven approach to environmental assessment and revitalization. A table summarizing these partnerships, which collectively advance a cohesive and strategic assessment framework, is provided below.

Partner Name	Point of contact	Specific role in the project
Mississippi Development Authority	Bill Cork (601) 0359-5769	Provides economic development support and will work with Hernando and Mississippi Main Street to identify new investment opportunities through the location of new industry on assessed brownfield properties, advertisement of properties available for development, and identification of potential leveraging resources
Hernando Main Street Chamber of Commerce	Sibonie Swatzyna (662) 429-9055 sibonie@hernandoms.org	The Chamber will serve by helping to select brownfields for redevelopment and attract new businesses to locate at redeveloped brownfield sites.
Interfaith Council on Poverty	Roxanne McIngvale [REDACTED]	The Interfaith Council on Poverty is an ecumenical collaboration of more than fifteen Christian churches in Hernando. They will assist Hernando by helping provide the community with updates on the grant.
The Hill Hernando Church Family	Pastor Michael Minor (901) 490-2041 info@thehillhernando.com	Pastor Minor of the Hill Hernando Church Family will serve in an advisory capacity. He is very active in the community and in touch with low income families within the target area and will help identify redevelopment opportunities that will better serve his community as well as acceptable cleanup methods for the community.

Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi	Tom Pittman (662) 469-5002 tompittman@cfnm.org	The Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi will assist in community outreach and securing additional grant funding for addressing food insecurity within the target areas.
Northwest Community College	Daniel Hollowell (662) 560-5272 dhollowell@northwestms.edu	The Northwest Community College will provide career workforce training for many of the type businesses that may locate to many of the brownfield properties.
Hernando Bike Club	Bo McAninch (901) 299-7940 hernandobike@aol.com	Provide project updates to members and provide guidance on connectivity and safety pertaining to the expansion of greenspace and biking trails.
Grant & Company Builders/Realtors	Martha Fondren (901) 316-1048 mfondren@grantnewhomes.com	Will confer with the City regarding available properties for construction of affordable housing.

The City of Hernando will inform and involve the community and key stakeholders throughout the planning, implementation, and oversight of brownfields assessment activities. This approach builds upon successful outreach conducted under EPA Brownfields grant awards in **2012, 2016, and 2022**, as well as community input incorporated through the Hernando Comprehensive Plan. These efforts established a strong framework for meaningful public participation. Hernando will conduct an initial project meeting and a minimum of two community outreach events annually to ensure ongoing public involvement. Information will be disseminated through flyers, newspaper advertisements, the City’s website, social media platforms, and local news media. Community members will be engaged through visioning sessions to identify priority sites and desired reuse outcomes that support community needs and local planning goals. Adjacent property owners and occupants of priority brownfield sites will be directly notified and encouraged to participate. All project-related documents and public information will be made available through a document repository maintained at City Hall with Gia Matheny to promote transparency and accessibility.

In addition to community-wide outreach, the city will convene a Brownfields Advisory Committee (BAC) composed of key stakeholders and partners listed in the above table. The BAC will meet at least annually, and more frequently as needed, to support site selection, **assessment prioritization**, and reuse planning consistent with local land use and economic development objectives. Input received from the community and the BAC will guide assessment decisions and ensure alignment with community priorities. **Performance metrics** will include documentation of **all outreach and BAC meetings**, participation levels, and community input received; completion of **one kickoff meeting, at least two community outreach events per year, and a minimum of one BAC meeting annually**; and the identification and evaluation of **multiple brownfield sites for Phase I and Phase II environmental assessments** during the grant period. These outputs will be tracked and reported to EPA to demonstrate timely progress and effective community engagement.

3. Expenditure of Existing Grant Funds

The City of Hernando has an existing community-wide assessment grant. Please see the attached proof of drawdown funds.

4. Contractors and Named Subrecipients

Not Applicable