



P.O. BOX 499 – NEWTON, MISSISSIPPI 39345 – PHONE 601.683.2007  
FY2026 EPA Brownfield Assessment Coalition Grant

1. Applicant Identification

East Central Planning and Development District (ECPDD)  
280 Commercial Drive  
P.O. Box 499  
Newton, MS 39345

2. Website URL

ECPDD (lead) – [www.ecpdd.org](http://www.ecpdd.org)  
Lauderdale County (non-lead) – [www.lauderdalecounty.org](http://www.lauderdalecounty.org)  
City of Philadelphia (non-lead) – [www.philidelphiathecity.com](http://www.philidelphiathecity.com)

3. Funding Requested

- a. Assessment Grant Type – Assessment Coalition
- b. Federal Funds Requested - \$1,500,000

4. Location

Non-lead coalition member: Lauderdale County

- a) **City:** Meridian
- b) **County:** Lauderdale County
- c) **State:** Mississippi

Non-lead coalition member: City of Philadelphia

- a) **City:** Philadelphia
- b) **County:** Neshoba County
- c) **State:** Mississippi
- d)

All geographic boundaries: ECPDD

- a) **Cities:** Quitman, Enterprise, Pachuta, Stonewall, Bay Springs, Heidelberg, Louin, Montrose, Paulding, De Kalb, Scooba, Wahalak, Meridian, Lauderdale, Marion, Carthage, Lena, Walnut Grove, Philadelphia, Union, Neshoba, Decatur, Newton, Hickory, Lake, Chunky, Forest, Morton, Hillsboro, Sebastopol, Raleigh, Taylorsville, Mize, Polkville, Mount Olive
- b) **Counties:** Clarke, Jasper, Kemper, Lauderdale, Leake, Neshoba, Newton, Scott, and Smith
- c) **State:** Mississippi

5. Coalition Members' Target Areas and Priority Site Information

- ECPDD (lead) – City of Scooba Target Area
  - **Old Vocational Center**  
1512 Kemper Street  
Scooba, MS 39358
  
- Lauderdale County (non-lead) – 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Corridor Target Area (Meridian, MS)
  - **Sowashee Creek Dumpsite Priority Site**  
18<sup>th</sup> Avenue & Grand Avenue  
Meridian, MS 39301
  
- City of Philadelphia (non-lead) – Downtown Philadelphia Target Area
  - **Benwalt Hotel Priority Site**  
238 Byrd Avenue  
Philadelphia, MS 39350

6. Contacts

- a. Project Director  
Jennifer Buford  
Community Development Director  
(601) 683-2007  
jbuford@ecpdd.org  
P.O. Box 499  
280 Commercial Drive  
Newton, Mississippi 39345
  
- b. Chief Executive/Highest Ranking Official  
Kawana McCary  
Executive Director  
(601) 683-2007  
kmccary@ecpdd.org  
P.O. Box 499  
280 Commercial Drive  
Newton, Mississippi 39345

7. Population

City of Scooba (Scooba Target Area): 584  
The City of Meridian: (22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Target Area): 33,551  
City of Philadelphia (Downtown Philadelphia Target Area): 7,065

8. Other Factors Checklist

Other Factors	Page #
Community population is 15,000 or less.	5,6
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).	3
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain.	3
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.	4
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 sites within the target areas.	

9. Letter from the State or Tribal Environmental Authority

See Attached.

10. Releasing Copies of Applications

Not applicable.



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI  
TATE REEVES  
GOVERNOR

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY  
CHRIS WELLS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

January 5, 2026

Ms. Kawana McCary  
Executive Director  
East Central Planning & Development District (ECPDD)  
280 Commercial Drive  
Newton, MS 39345

**RE: FY26 EPA Brownfield 104(k) Coalition Assessment Grant  
Letter of Acknowledgement  
East Central Planning & Development District (ECPDD)**

Dear Ms. McCary:

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) hereby acknowledges ECPDD's plans to assist communities in the East Central regional area of Mississippi by conducting brownfield activities and plans to apply for federal grant funds through the United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Brownfields initiative. Since many brownfields are abandoned, underutilized, and contaminated, MDEQ is expressly interested in seeing entities like the ECPDD take the initiative to assess, remediate, and return these sites to productive uses. 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 ECPDD'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) 961-5093.

Sincerely,

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

Thomas L. Wallace, P.E.  
Division Chief - GARD

## 1. PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION AND PLANS FOR REVITALIZATION

**Coalition Members, Target Areas, and Brownfields 1.a. Coalition Members:** The East Central Planning & Development District (ECPDD) is the lead coalition member for this Assessment Coalition application. ECPDD is a regional planning and economic development organization serving nine contiguous counties in east-central Mississippi. ECPDD provides technical planning, project development, and grant administration support to local governments across the region, particularly where limited local staffing constrains implementation capacity. **The non-lead members are the City of Philadelphia, Mississippi and Lauderdale County, Mississippi** —both general-purpose units of local government. Philadelphia and Lauderdale County are both general-purpose units of local government but **lack the staffing and brownfields/program-management experience to prepare a compliant EPA Community Wide Assessment application and administer an award** (e.g., 2 CFR 200—compliant procurement and contract oversight, ACRES reporting, required performance/financial reporting, and grant drawdowns). While both coalition members are committed to addressing brownfield barriers in their jurisdictions, **they do not have access to the internal capacity or dedicated resources needed to run a brownfields grant program without a lead partner.** ECPDD fills this gap and has successfully managed a prior Brownfields Community Wide Assessment Grant.

**1.b. Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Areas (TAs):** Located in east-central Mississippi and bordered by Alabama to the east, ECPDD's nine-county rural service area—Clarke, Jasper, Kemper, Lauderdale, Leake, Neshoba, Newton, Scott, and Smith—covers approximately 5,900 square miles, includes 31 municipalities and serves as the **geographic boundary** for eligible activities. Industry declines and facility closures in textiles, manufacturing, and agriculture have left vacant and underutilized industrial and commercial properties where real or perceived contamination limits reinvestment by increasing redevelopment uncertainty and delaying financing. These brownfield conditions contribute to blight, reduced property values, and weaker local tax bases. Economic distress is reflected in the District's per capita income of \$26,591, compared to \$30,529 statewide and \$43,288 nationally,<sup>1</sup> alongside population loss, workforce constraints, and persistent poverty — seven of ECPDD's nine counties are designated Persistent Poverty Counties, including the counties encompassing all three TAs.<sup>2</sup> This grant will reduce redevelopment barriers by funding site identification, prioritization, and environmental assessments that inform cleanup decisions and support productive reuse.

**The City of Philadelphia's (Non-Lead Member) TA is Downtown Philadelphia** (approximately 0.14 square miles), bounded by Oak Street (north), Highway 19 (east), Beech Street (south), and Front Street/Line Avenue (west). Downtown Philadelphia has experienced sustained disinvestment, with vacancies and underutilized buildings concentrated in the downtown core. Citywide, **Philadelphia's population declined by more than 5% from 2010-2020, (compared to a 7% increase nationally)**<sup>3</sup>, and business closures have left this compact downtown area with a visible concentration of vacant, abandoned, and underutilized buildings—many of them prime, street-front properties. These prominent structures blight key blocks, break the continuity of walkable commercial corridors, and reduce downtown vitality, which in turn constrains business retention, suppresses property values, and limits the City's ability to strengthen its tax base. Real or perceived contamination tied to legacy commercial and light industrial uses further delays reinvestment by increasing uncertainty and complicating financing and redevelopment decisions.

As the community's primary commercial and entertainment hub, Downtown Philadelphia offers the highest return on assessment investment because it contains market-relevant properties where brownfield uncertainty is a primary barrier to reuse. Focused assessment activity will support site selection, due diligence, and redevelopment readiness; reduce uncertainty for developers and lenders; and move priority sites toward cleanup and productive reuse—restoring storefront continuity, increasing foot traffic, and strengthening the City's tax base. Philadelphia and local partners have demonstrated clear readiness to reinvest downtown. **Marty Stuart's Congress of Country Music renovated the Ellis Theater into a live music venue, creating a visible anchor for downtown activity.** The next phase will add a new community center and meeting space on the lot immediately north of the theater, designed to reflect the architectural character of the historic Ryman Auditorium. These investments signal momentum; however, nearby underutilized properties with unresolved environmental questions continue to limit complementary private redevelopment. **EPA-funded assessments will remove this constraint by clarifying site conditions and providing the documentation needed to convert prime but blighted properties into investable projects that build on current downtown revitalization efforts.**

**Lauderdale County's (Non-Lead Member) TA is the 22nd Avenue Corridor** (Meridian's Downtown Gateway), approximately 0.66 square miles, bounded by Front Street (northwest), 10th Avenue (northeast), Interstate 20 (southeast), and 28th Avenue (southwest). The 22nd Avenue Corridor includes the former Village Fair Mall site (now Lauderdale County's Government Complex) and surrounding retail, light industrial, and commercial development in a key gateway area leading into downtown Meridian. In 2020, Lauderdale County completed a preliminary brownfield inventory and identified multiple candidate properties within the TA, including three former gas stations, five vacant lots with visible signs of prior industrial/commercial use, and two industrial buildings currently listed for sale.

<sup>1</sup> US Department of Commerce, *US Bureau of Economic Analysis*. 2019

<sup>2</sup> *Eda.gov*

<sup>3</sup> US Census Bureau, Decennial Census. 2020

Socioeconomic conditions reinforce the importance of redevelopment in the TA: **47.60%** of households are **cost-burdened** (housing costs  $\geq$ 30% of income), vs. 24.96% statewide and 29.28% nationally; and **9.91% of occupied households in Lauderdale County have no motor vehicle**, vs. 6.17% statewide and 8.32% nationally.<sup>4</sup> The 22nd Avenue Corridor's brownfield challenges reflect Meridian's broader industrial and rail legacy. Meridian is the eighth largest city in Mississippi and historically served as a leading center for manufacturing and rail distribution. As with many rail towns, legacy rail-related fueling activities and other industrial uses have left a pattern of underutilized properties where real or perceived contamination can delay reinvestment. Within the 22nd Avenue Corridor, shuttered warehouses, vacant service stations, and deteriorated commercial properties continue to suppress market interest and slow redevelopment in an area critical to downtown access and economic activity.

Addressing brownfield challenges in this TA will build directly on Lauderdale County's demonstrated redevelopment success at the former Village Fair Mall site. The Village Fair Mall project served as a catalyst for reinvestment, but adjoining and nearby properties remain underutilized and continue to constrain corridor-wide revitalization. Funding from this EPA grant will support Phase I and Phase II environmental site assessments and related planning to document site conditions, resolve environmental uncertainties, and produce redevelopment-ready information needed to continue reinvestment and advance reuse in the 22nd Avenue Corridor.

ECPDD's (Lead Member) TA is the Town of **Scooba** in Kemper County. **Scooba is a priority focus within ECPDD's footprint because it is home to the main campus of East Mississippi Community College (EMCC)**. EMCC is the region's primary higher-education pathway for graduating high school students and a cornerstone of local workforce development. Educational attainment challenges across the service area reinforce the need for targeted revitalization and workforce-aligned reuse in this TA. Historically a farming and timber community, Scooba has experienced long-term disinvestment and limited commercial reinvestment, leaving vacant and deteriorated properties in the downtown area and along the main gateway to EMCC. Multiple street-front commercial structures are vacant or underutilized, including severely deteriorated buildings with significant structural failure. These conditions weaken the downtown environment and limit the availability of usable space for community-serving and EMCC-supportive activity. High poverty levels in the community increase the importance of returning underutilized properties to productive use that supports small business activity and EMCC-related traffic.

Scooba is positioned for revitalization, with active planning and committed investments that make EPA Brownfields assessment funding a high-leverage tool for accelerating reuse. Kemper County has **secured \$100,000 in Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) funding to complete an in-depth market study supporting revitalization in Scooba**; the 18-month study begins February 2026. In addition, **EMCC has secured approximately \$4 million in recent funding to advance local workforce and facility investments, increasing the near-term readiness of community assets for redevelopment once environmental due diligence is completed. Funding from this EPA grant will support Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs) and related planning to document site conditions, resolve environmental uncertainties, and produce redevelopment-ready information for decision-makers.** This work will advance multiple candidate properties in Scooba toward cleanup and reuse and help support reinvestment consistent with EMCC's education priorities.

**1.c. Description of the Priority Brownfield Site(s):** In preparation for this application, we inventoried brownfield sites across our three TAs, identifying 35 sites – 15 in Downtown Philadelphia, 5 in Scooba, and 15 in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Corridor. Past uses include gas stations, auto repair shops, dry cleaners, and industrial facilities. This diverse history has left a legacy of contaminants, including heavy metals, Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), petroleum hydrocarbons, asbestos, and polychlorinated biphenyl (PCBs). We have identified the following priority sites:

***Downtown Philadelphia (City of Philadelphia TA):*** The former **Benwalt Hotel** (238 Byrd Avenue) is a priority brownfield site located within the Downtown Philadelphia, approximately one block from the newly renovated Ellis Theater. The property occupies 0.5 acres and includes a three-story brick and cement structure on the eastern portion of the site and vacant land on the western portion. Constructed in 1927, the Benwalt Hotel is **listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a prominent downtown asset with strong reuse and catalytic redevelopment potential.** Current site conditions include severe deterioration, including a partial roof collapse, which increases public safety concerns and the likelihood of uncontrolled disturbance of hazardous building materials.

A Phase I ESA, Phase II ESA, and asbestos survey have been completed; however, **site conditions have changed since the most recent assessments, including additional roof failure and collapse**, which may have altered interior conditions, increased water intrusion, and accelerated deterioration of building materials. The oldest historical record for the property indicates the site was developed with a dry cleaner in 1926, prior to construction of the Benwalt Hotel. Phase II ESA revealed that there were no apparent impacts from the former dry-cleaning operation that would pose a threat to public health or the environment. However, the **asbestos survey indicated that 42 of the 74 collected samples contained asbestos, with percentages ranging from 2 to 65 percent.** The additional roof collapse increases the likelihood that asbestos-containing materials (ACM) could be damaged, become friable, and be inadvertently disturbed during stabilization or rehabilitation activities, elevating both worker-safety and public-safety concerns. Accordingly, asbestos-containing materials are the primary contaminant of concern and the principal environmental

<sup>4</sup> US Census Bureau, *American Community Survey*, 2019-23.

barrier to rehabilitation and reuse. Proposed EPA-funded activities for this site include an updated Phase I ESA, a Phase II ESA (as warranted by Phase I findings), an updated asbestos survey, an Analysis of Brownfield Cleanup Alternatives (ABCA), and an Evaluation of Market Viability. These deliverables will confirm current conditions, refine cleanup/abatement decision-making, and produce redevelopment-ready information needed to advance rehabilitation and reuse. The Benwalt Hotel was selected as a priority site because it is a prominent, long-vacant downtown anchor with documented friable asbestos that may pose potential exposure risks if disturbed, and because its reuse is pre-identified and supported in *The Vision Neshoba: Generational Master Plan*—including conceptual redevelopment direction for mixed-use.

**22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Corridor (Lauderdale County TA):** The **Sowashee Creek Dump Site** is an approximately 80-acre priority brownfield within the 22nd Avenue Corridor TA, located between 18th Avenue and Grand Avenue and adjacent to the former Village Fair Mall site (now the Lauderdale County Government Complex). The site is contiguous to Sowashee Creek, a primary drainage corridor through the City of Meridian and lies within a FEMA-designated Special Flood Hazard Area. The property is largely open and grass-covered with scattered trees and contains no buildings.

The site has a history of refuse impacts to Sowashee Creek, and records reviewed at the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) indicate chlorobenzene, xylenes, cyanide, lead, and 1,1-dichloroethene were detected in monitoring wells associated with the dump site. These conditions create uncertainty that constrains safe reuse planning and **can delay implementation of** adjacent investment in a highly visible gateway area.

This site is a priority because Lauderdale County has an implementable greenspace and trail reuse planned that requires removal of the environmental barrier before construction and long-term public use can proceed. The County's planned Sowashee Creek Bike Trail, extending from 29th Avenue to 22nd Avenue, is intended to run through the dump site, making assessment and cleanup planning a prerequisite to acquisition and construction. The trail project is funded through a **\$508,000 Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) award, elevating the urgency of completing environmental due diligence to keep the project on schedule and ensure safe public access.** Directly adjacent to a redeveloped brownfield site—the County's \$50 million Government Complex—the project further amplifies public benefit by improving environmental conditions and connectivity within a high-visibility civic corridor.

EPA funding will support an updated Phase I ESA, Phase II ESA, and an ABCA for this site. A Supplemental Delineation Assessment may be conducted if warranted by Phase II results. These deliverables will reduce uncertainty and define the actions needed to protect public health and Sowashee Creek, enabling safe conversion of the Sowashee Creek Dump Site—one of the corridor's largest blighted properties and a key drainage-adjacent location—into the County's planned lighted trail/greenspace, making it a high-priority site for assessment and cleanup planning.

**Scooba (ECPDD TA):** The **Old Vocational Center** (1512 Kemper Street, Scooba, Mississippi), located on the **EMCC Scooba campus**, is a priority brownfield site within ECPDD's Scooba TA. Constructed in 1974 and approximately 43,000 square feet, the antiquated facility historically housed **welding and mechanics training**. Based on the building's age and historical vocational uses, environmental due diligence is necessary to address potential COC including **asbestos-containing materials (ACM), lead-based paint (LBP), petroleum hydrocarbons** (e.g., gasoline- and diesel-range organics, lubricating oils), and **VOCs** commonly associated with shop products (e.g., degreasers/solvents).

This site is a priority because it is tied to committed reuse and leveraged investment. **EMCC has secured \$1,000,000 in Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) funding to renovate the Old Vocational Center into the Hawkins Health Sciences Center**, which will house EMCC's nursing and health sciences programs. Separately, EMCC has been awarded **\$3,000,000 in U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding to construct a workforce training facility adjacent to the site—demonstrating coordinated campus investment that strengthens regional higher-education and workforce capacity and supports redevelopment momentum in Scooba.** Completing environmental assessments is a prerequisite to proceed with renovation. EPA funding will support a Phase I ESA, a Phase II ESA (as warranted), and, as appropriate for building reuse and renovation planning, asbestos and lead-based paint surveys. If assessment findings indicate the need for cleanup planning, EPA funds will also support preparation of an ABCA to evaluate response options, costs, and implementation considerations and to produce redevelopment-ready information needed to advance the Hawkins Health Sciences Center project.

**1.d. Identifying Additional Sites:** Building on the initial inventory developed for this application, the Coalition will identify additional brownfield sites within the TAs through (1) engagement with local governments and community leaders, (2) review of EPA and Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) databases and files, (3) examination of property and tax records, and (4) analysis of historical documentation. The Coalition will also convene a Brownfields Advisory Committee (BAC) that includes local developers, realtors, property owners, and other stakeholders to surface candidate sites and align assessments with active or planned redevelopment opportunities.

Consistent with EPA coalition requirements, the Coalition will assess at least two sites within each coalition member's geographic boundary over the period of performance, prioritizing the identified priority sites first. After initial priority-site assessments, the Coalition will apply a transparent, quantifiable prioritization system to select additional sites. Criteria will include: (a) known or suspected contamination and potential exposure concerns; (b) redevelopment feasibility and market readiness; (c) consistency with local plans and targeted revitalization areas; (d) community-identified priorities; (e) site ownership/ability to obtain access; (f) proximity to existing infrastructure and services; and (g) ability to leverage committed or prospective redevelopment funding. The scoring system will be updated as

new information becomes available to ensure decisions remain data-driven and defensible.

**Revitalization of the Target Areas 1.e. Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans:** Redevelopment of each priority site advances *ECPDD’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)* by improving quality of life and expanding economic opportunity across the region. Priority Site 1: The Vision Neshoba: Generational Master Plan identifies the **Benwalt Hotel** as a signature catalyst project and outlines a mixed-use reuse concept (ground-floor retail with upper-floor housing) to reactivate the historic downtown core; it also documents a market gap for distinctive downtown lodging and highlights feasible implementation tools, including Historic Tax Credits and local financing mechanisms.<sup>5</sup> Priority Site 2: The reuse strategy for the **Sowashee Creek Dump Site** is to redevelop the property as part of a walking trail and greenspace along Sowashee Creek, consistent with adopted plans and committed investments: *Lauderdale County’s 2016 Facilities Study* identifies the site as a key redevelopment opportunity; the *2019 Lauderdale County Conceptual Site Plan* calls for assessment and cleanup of site to improve conditions around the adjacent County Government Complex; and the *2018 City of Meridian Downtown Master Plan* identifies the site as future greenspace due to its floodplain location. Priority Site 3: In Scooba, repurposing the **Old Vocational Center into the Hawkins Health Sciences Center** aligns with the Kemper County Strategic Investment Plan by expanding EMCC’s nursing and health sciences programs, increasing the local healthcare workforce and supporting more affordable access to care.

**1.f. Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy: Priority Site 1: Vision Neshoba: Generational Master Plan** identifies the **Benwalt Hotel as a catalyst property and presents a conceptual mixed-use redevelopment plan** of approximately 21,000 SF with ~7,000 SF of ground-floor retail and 10–14 upper-floor residential units. The plan also documents a clear market gap—little inventory of for-rent apartment product or condominium development in Neshoba County and no units available in downtown—that this mixed-use concept would fill. The plan’s simplified pro forma projects \$872,640 in total annual income and 10 jobs, indicating potential to strengthen downtown activity and increase the local tax base through returned occupancy, new retail space, and higher assessed value. **Redeveloping Benwalt Hotel as a mixed-use downtown project** will stimulate economic activity by bringing underutilized space back into service, increasing downtown foot traffic, and strengthening the local tax base. Rehabilitation can incorporate energy efficiency measures—HVAC and lighting upgrades, improved building envelope performance, and modern controls—and, where feasible, evaluation of on-site solar to reduce operating costs and improve long-term building performance while increasing resilience to severe storms through roof/envelope improvements that reduce water intrusion and associated damage and support safer re-occupancy after extreme weather events.

Priority Site 2: Converting the **Sowashee Creek Dump Site into the County’s planned Sowashee Creek Bike Trail**—a lighted, creek-adjacent multi-use walking and biking trail— will **add a public recreational amenity/greenspace** in the 22nd Avenue Corridor and **reinforce ongoing reinvestment** anchored by the County Government Complex and the Mississippi Children’s Museum Annex (a former Sears building advanced through ECPDD’s FY2017 EPA Brownfields assessment and asbestos planning). EPA-funded assessment and cleanup planning will address environmental conditions and enable implementation of the MDOT \$508,000-funded Sowashee Creek Bike Trail project, improving corridor aesthetics and providing nearby low-income neighborhoods with a safe, accessible place for routine outdoor activity. Because the site lies within the Sowashee Creek floodplain, an EPA-funded Resilient Brownfields Planning will integrate current and future flood risk into remedy and reuse decisions—informing any needed response actions to ensure the site is protective before public use and reducing risk to Sowashee Creek, a primary drainage corridor through Meridian. The greenspace can **incorporate nature-based stormwater features (e.g., vegetated buffers, bioswales, permeable trail sections) that improve performance during heavy rainfall and localized flooding; trail lighting can incorporate energy-efficient fixtures and, where feasible, solar-powered elements to reduce operating costs.**

Priority Site 3: Converting EMCC’s **Old Vocational Center into the Hawkins Health Sciences Center** will expand EMCC’s nursing and health sciences training capacity to prepare residents for in-demand healthcare careers—supporting higher employment, increased earnings, and a stronger local tax base. This expanded facility will increase access to job-aligned credentials and training pathways that strengthen the regional healthcare workforce pipeline and improve long-term economic mobility. This need is reinforced by the **Mississippi Partnership Workforce Development Area (MDES) long-term projections, which show total employment increasing by 5.0% from 2016–2026, with higher growth in healthcare fields—7.9% for Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations and 10.7% for Healthcare Support Occupations.**<sup>6</sup> Renovation activities also provide an opportunity to **incorporate energy-efficiency measures—modern HVAC, lighting, and building controls—and evaluate feasible on-site renewable energy options to reduce long-term operating costs and improve facility performance.**

**Strategy for Leveraging Resources 1.g. Resources Needed for Site Reuse:** ECPDD is eligible for and likely to secure additional public- and private-sector resources for priority-site reuse. EPA-funded assessments and cleanup planning will **strengthen committed investments and unlock incentive and private financing packages** by reducing environmental uncertainty that can delay underwriting, incentive approvals, and project implementation.

Leveraged Resources	Committed/Active Investments (already awarded/underway) — strengthened by EPA-funded assessment/cleanup planning
County Government Complex	This \$50M public anchor increases the likelihood of additional corridor reinvestment and underscores that EPA-funded assessment/cleanup planning at the adjoining Sowashee Creek Dump Site will stimulate and

<sup>5</sup> Vision Neshoba, *Vision Neshoba – A Generational Plan for Neshoba County, Choctaw, and Philadelphia (Implementation Release 10.22.24)*, pp. 50–53.

<sup>6</sup> Mississippi Department of Employment Security. (n.d.). *Occupational employment projections, year 2016 projected to year 2026: Mississippi Partnership Workforce Development Area [PDF]*.

**EAST CENTRAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT (ECPDD)  
FY2026 ASSESSMENT COALITION GRANT**

<b>Leveraged Resources</b>	<b>Committed/Active Investments (already awarded/underway) — strengthened by EPA-funded assessment/cleanup planning</b>
	help unlock implementation of committed trail/greenspace improvements by removing environmental uncertainty that could otherwise delay or complicate construction adjacent to the Complex.
<b>MDOT Walking Trails Funding</b>	The MDOT awarded \$508,000 to construct walking trails along Sowashee Creek, and EPA-funded assessment/cleanup planning will remove environmental barriers to implement this committed investment, including the trail segment on the <b>Sowashee Creek Dump Site</b> within the 22nd Avenue Corridor.
<b>2017 EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant</b>	EPA awarded ECPDD \$299,700 for a Community-Wide Assessment grant in 2017; ECPDD completed assessments at the former Sears building in Lauderdale County—now the Mississippi Children’s Museum Annex—located within the <b>22nd Avenue Corridor TA</b> . This demonstrated performance, coupled with visible corridor reinvestment and positive local experience with EPA Brownfields support, will be leveraged to accelerate assessments, cleanup planning, and reuse outcomes in the <b>22nd Avenue Corridor (Sowashee Creek Dump Site)</b> and other coalition target areas under this coalition grant.
<b>Marty Stuart’s Congress of Country Music</b>	Renovated the Ellis Theater into an operating live-music venue in the <b>Downtown Philadelphia TA</b> , creating a major anchor investment on the same street as the <b>Benwalt Hotel</b> and strengthening downtown demand and redevelopment readiness; Phase 2 includes construction of a new community center/meeting space on the lot immediately north of the theater, further reinforcing momentum for complementary private reinvestment near the Benwalt Hotel. Marty Stuart’s Congress of Country Music’s renovation of the Ellis Theater is increasing downtown visitation and foot traffic on the same corridor as the Benwalt Hotel, strengthening near-term demand for ground-floor retail and making upper-floor downtown living more market-feasible—thereby improving the Benwalt Hotel’s redevelopment readiness.
<b>ARC Grant Hawkins Health &amp; Science Center – \$1M; 2024</b>	EMCC received an ARC award to renovate the <b>Old Vocational Center</b> on the <b>Scooba</b> campus into the Hawkins Health Sciences Center, expanding Nursing and Health Sciences programming.
<b>EDA Grant Workforce Training Facility – \$3M; 2023</b>	EMCC has been awarded \$3,000,000 in U.S. Economic Development Administration funding to construct a new workforce training facility adjacent to the Hawkins Health Sciences Center, reinforcing the campus’s role as a regional healthcare and workforce hub.
<b>Tax Incentives</b>	<b>Incentives/Capital Likely to be Unlocked by EPA-funded assessment and cleanup planning (contingent on eligibility/approvals)</b>
<b>Mississippi Economic Redevelopment Act (MERA)</b>	Private developers are eligible to utilize the MERA program and <b>all priority sites</b> can use the program to assist with clean-up costs. All sales, income and franchise taxes collected from businesses located in a designated redevelopment project area would be deposited into a special fund that would be used to reimburse developers for approved cleanup costs. Reimbursement to developers would be made semi-annually for a period of up to 15 years, <b>with a maximum distribution to the developer of 2.5x the allowable remediation cost.</b>
<b>Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Program</b>	The program offers a 20% state tax credit and 25% federal 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. <b>(Benwalt Hotel)</b>
<b>Advantage Jobs Incentive Program</b>	Provides for a 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. <b>(Benwalt Hotel)</b>
<b>Brownfield Voluntary Cleanup &amp; Redevelopment Incentives</b>	Provides an income tax credit for a property owner equal to 25% of the costs of remediating a brownfields property. In lieu of the state income tax credit, a job tax credit for each new job created can be claimed. Provisions for liability protection through the State Brownfield Program exist for public and private entities. All priority sites can use the program to assist with assessment, remediation, and monitoring costs. <b>(Ben Walt Hotel)</b>

Additionally, grant funds will stimulate additional investment at the **Benwalt Hotel**: EPA-funded Phase I/II assessment and cleanup planning will reduce environmental uncertainty and generate due diligence required for underwriting and incentive approvals—stimulating additional funds to complete assessment/remediation and implement the Benwalt Hotel’s mixed-use reuse strategy. The Vision Neshoba: Generational Master Plan pro forma identifies a potential incentive stack including TIF (up to \$2,000,000) and a tourism rebate (est. \$65,408 annually), with total incentives shown at **approximately \$7,065,408** (planning-level estimates contingent on eligibility and approvals).<sup>7</sup>

**1.h. Use of Existing Infrastructure:** The Benwalt Hotel and the Old Vocational Center will reuse existing buildings and municipal utilities. The Sowashee Creek Dump Site has no structure and is planned for trail/greenspace reuse, so no building infrastructure or utility extensions are anticipated. All sites are accessible by existing roadways.

**2. COMMUNITY NEED AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT 2.a. The Community’s Need for Funding:**

*Indicators are reported at the smallest available geography; where target-area-level data were unavailable, county-level data were used as the closest available proxy. The Coalitions’ TAs have an inability to draw on other sources of funding to carry out environmental assessment, remediation, and subsequent*

Community Need Matrix <sup>8</sup>	Scooba	Downtown Philadelphia	22 <sup>nd</sup> Ave. Corridor	MS	U.S.
Total Population	584	182	1,049	2,943,045	340,110,988
Per Capita Income	\$23,195	\$21,965	\$16,520	\$30,529	\$43,288
Poverty 200% below FPL	67%	60%	85%	40%	28%

<sup>7</sup> Vision Neshoba, *Vision Neshoba – A Generational Plan for Neshoba County, Choctaw, and Philadelphia (Implementation Release 10.22.24)*, pp. 50–53.  
<sup>8</sup> US Census Bureau, *American Community Survey*, 2019–23.

reuse because they are small-population and/or low-income communities with a limited tax base and limited fiscal capacity. In the three TAs—Scooba (population 584), Downtown Philadelphia (population 182), and the 22nd Avenue Corridor (population 1,049)—per capita incomes (\$23,195; \$21,965; and \$16,520) are substantially below Mississippi (\$30,529) and the United States (\$43,288).<sup>9</sup> Poverty levels are also acute: **60%–85% of the total population** in the Target Areas lives at or below 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL), compared to 40% statewide and 28% nationally.<sup>9</sup> These conditions directly constrain local governments’ ability to fund the upfront due diligence required for reuse—such as Phase I/Phase II environmental site assessments and cleanup planning—because those costs must often be paid before a site can compete for or attract other redevelopment capital.

ECPDD’s broader service area reflects the same structural limitations on local capacity. Of ECPDD’s 31 rural municipalities, 20 have a population of 1,000 or less, and only three exceed 5,000: Forest (5,279), Philadelphia (7,065), and Meridian (33,551). The District has also experienced long-term population loss; from 2010 to 2022, the geographic boundary declined by 8.6%, compared to a 0.2% decline statewide and a 7% increase nationally.<sup>9</sup> With fewer residents, lower incomes, and a constrained tax base, communities have limited discretionary general funds and limited borrowing capacity, and major public investments can quickly consume the limited resources available. As a result, local governments cannot reliably front-load the assessment and cleanup-planning costs that are typically required to reduce risk and move redevelopment projects forward.

This EPA Brownfields grant will directly meet these needs by providing the environmental assessment and planning resources that small and/or low-income communities within the Coalition cannot afford to undertake on their own. By funding due diligence that reduces uncertainty and supports reuse planning, the grant will move priority sites toward redevelopment readiness and improve the Coalition’s ability to leverage subsequent investment for cleanup and reuse in the TAs.

**2.b. Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations:** Many

sensitive populations are concentrated within the Coalition’s TAs, including children in poverty, persons with disabilities, uninsured residents, and young families (including teenage mothers). The severity of need is demonstrated by the share of children living at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL): 67% in Scooba, 60% in Downtown Philadelphia, and 100% in the 22nd Avenue Corridor, compared to 40% statewide and 28% nationally.<sup>9</sup> Persons with disabilities are elevated (9%, 18%, and 23%, respectively) compared to 12.86% nationally, and the uninsured rate is 15%–17% across the TAs versus 11.24% nationally.<sup>9</sup> Teen parenting vulnerability is also elevated: teenage mothers per 1,000 females ages 15–19 are 42 in Downtown Philadelphia and 32 in the 22nd Avenue Corridor—approximately 2.6 times and 1.9 times the national rate (16), respectively.<sup>11</sup> These populations are disproportionately affected by environmental threats and neighborhood disinvestment because they have fewer resources to avoid risk, fewer transportation and healthcare options, and greater dependence on safe, nearby community amenities.

Sensitive Populations	Scooba	Downtown Philadelphia	22 <sup>nd</sup> Ave. Corridor	State	U.S.
Children Living 200% below FPL Poverty <sup>9</sup>	67%	60%	100%	40%	28%
Persons with Disabilities <sup>9</sup>	9%	18%	23%	17.15%	12.86%
Uninsured <sup>10</sup>	15%	17%	15%	16.13%	11.24%
Teenage Mothers <sup>11</sup> (per 1,000 female population age 15-19)	21	42	32	28	16

EPA Brownfields funding will **identify environmental conditions and reduce uncertainty** at priority sites and **advance** reuses that directly improve health and welfare outcomes for sensitive populations. Uncharacterized conditions at vacant or underutilized properties can function as welfare hazards—limiting safe public use and discouraging reinvestment—until site conditions are assessed and response actions are defined. In the 22nd Avenue Corridor, these vulnerabilities are compounded by limited access to safe outdoor recreation. Only **17%** of Lauderdale County residents live within one-half mile of a park, compared to **22%** statewide and **61%** nationally.<sup>12</sup> Obesity is also substantially higher: an estimated **53%** of adults in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Corridor have obesity, compared to **35%** in Mississippi and **30%** nationally.<sup>13</sup> EPA-funded assessment and cleanup planning for the **Sowashee Creek Dump Site** will characterize environmental conditions, inform any needed response actions, and **position implementation** of the County’s planned, lighted trail/greenspace reuse—expanding access to safe, routine physical activity within walking distance and improving quality of life. Public safety is also a critical welfare issue for sensitive populations, particularly women, children, and households without reliable transportation who depend on safe routes to schools, services, and daily destinations. Property crime is 672 per 100,000 in Scooba, 4,197 for Downtown Philadelphia, and 3,086 per 100,000 in the 22nd Avenue Corridor, compared to 1,875.8 statewide and 2,466.1 nationally.<sup>14</sup> EPA-funded assessment and cleanup/reuse planning will move priority sites from vacancy to productive use, reducing conditions that can attract illegal activity. Educational attainment further constrains economic stability for low-income residents and young

<sup>9</sup> US Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, 2019-23*.  
<sup>10</sup> US Census Bureau, *Small Area Health Insurance Estimates, 2023*.  
<sup>11</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *CDC - National Vital Statistics System*. Accessed via *County Health Rankings, 2017-2023*  
<sup>12</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *CDC - National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network, 2020*.  
<sup>13</sup> *cdc.gov/places*  
<sup>14</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *FBI Uniform Crime Reports*. Additional analysis by the *National Archive of Criminal Justice Data*.

families. The share of residents lacking a high school education is 33% in Scooba, 17% in Downtown Philadelphia, and 35% in the 22nd Avenue Corridor, compared to 13% statewide and 11% nationally.<sup>15</sup> EPA-funded assessment and planning will support projects such as conversion of the **Old Vocational Center into the Hawkins Health Sciences Center** and mixed-use redevelopment of the Benwalt Hotel, expanding access to training, jobs, and services that improve long-term household stability.

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

Populations within the TAs experience a greater-than-normal incidence of adverse health conditions compared to state and national benchmarks, and the concentration of legacy brownfield properties increases the likelihood of exposure to hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or petroleum when site conditions are not characterized and addressed. Current adult asthma prevalence in the 22nd Avenue Corridor is estimated at 12%, exceeding the national prevalence (10%).<sup>18</sup> In Downtown Philadelphia, COPD prevalence is 10%, compared to 8% statewide and 5% nationally.<sup>16</sup> Cancer mortality indicators are also above national benchmarks (244 in the Downtown Philadelphia context vs. 183 nationally).<sup>16</sup> Heart disease mortality is also elevated in the counties containing our target areas: **236 per 100,000 in Neshoba County (Downtown Philadelphia TA) and 276 per 100,000 in Lauderdale County (22nd Avenue Corridor TA)**, compared to **142** statewide and **111** nationally.<sup>16</sup>

Adverse Health Conditions	Kemper County (Scooba)	Neshoba County (Downtown Philadelphia)	Lauderdale County (22nd Ave. Corridor)	Mississippi	United States
Cancer Mortality <sup>16</sup>	212	244	201	223	183
Colon & Rectum Cancer (per 100,000) <sup>17</sup>	57	62	49	46	36
Asthma <sup>18</sup>	11%	11%	12%	11%	10%
COPD <sup>16</sup>	8%	10%	8%	9%	6%
Heart Disease Mortality (per 100,000) <sup>16</sup>	174	236	276	142	111

Adverse birth outcomes further indicate heightened vulnerability. Although low birth weight (LBW) data are not available at the TA level, county-level indicators show elevated LBW in both Lauderdale County (14%) and Kemper County (14%), compared to Mississippi (12%) and the United States (8%).<sup>19</sup> Statewide vital statistics show elevated maternal and infant risk: **Mississippi recorded the highest state infant mortality rate in 2021 (9.39 deaths per 1,000 live births), compared with 5.44 nationally,**<sup>20</sup> and **congenital/chromosomal abnormalities and major structural birth defects are a leading cause category of infant deaths in Mississippi.**<sup>21</sup> Environmental health research indicates that prenatal exposure to certain environmental contaminants—including **metals and VOCs**—is associated with adverse pregnancy and infant outcomes, including low birth weight,<sup>22</sup> making characterization of potential exposures particularly important for pregnant women and children.

At the **Sowashee Creek Dump Site**, MDEQ records document detections in monitoring wells of chlorobenzene, xylenes, cyanide, lead, and 1,1-dichloroethene, which could present exposure concerns if site conditions are not fully characterized and addressed prior to long-term public reuse. EPA-funded assessment and cleanup planning will further characterize site conditions, evaluate potential exposure pathways—including impacts to adjacent surface water—and identify protective measures needed to support safe greenspace/trail reuse and inform project design, with particular attention to risks for pregnant women and children.

At the **Benwalt Hotel** and the **Old Vocational Center**, EPA-funded assessment and building-material surveys will address **asbestos and lead hazards**—including documented **friable asbestos** at Benwalt Hotel that can become airborne and be inhaled if disturbed—so materials can be properly managed prior to renovation and occupancy. This EPA Brownfields grant and the Coalition’s reuse strategy will address and reduce these threats by funding **Phase I/Phase II environmental site assessments and cleanup/redevelopment planning** to identify contaminants of concern, define the nature and extent of contamination, evaluate exposure pathways (e.g., soil, groundwater, indoor air/vapor intrusion as applicable), and develop cleanup alternatives and protective measures needed for safe reuse.

**2.d. Economically Impoverished/Disproportionately Impacted Populations:** Across the Coalition’s TAs, economically strained households and other sensitive populations bear the compounding impacts of long-term vacancy, legacy commercial/industrial activity, and prolonged uncertainty about environmental conditions. These conditions suppress private investment, reduce access to safe and maintained community spaces, and prolong exposure to blight-related hazards in neighborhoods least able to absorb added economic and health risks. Economic hardship is elevated across the TAs. Households experience above-average reliance on food assistance—**17% in Lauderdale County (22nd Avenue**

<sup>15</sup> US Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, 2019-23*  
<sup>16</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *CDC - National Vital Statistics System. Accessed via CDC WONDER, 2019-2023.*  
<sup>17</sup> *State Cancer Profiles, 2017 - 21*  
<sup>18</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.*  
<sup>19</sup> University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, *County Health Rankings, 2017-2023.*  
<sup>20</sup> *cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr72/nvsr72-11.pdf*  
<sup>21</sup> (Ely & Driscoll, 2023)  
<sup>22</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (2024). *Adverse Birth Outcomes.* Washington, DC: U.S. EPA.

Corridor), 17% in Kemper County (Scooba), and 24% in Neshoba County (Downtown Philadelphia)—compared to 14% statewide and 12% nationally.<sup>23</sup> These indicators reflect limited local capacity to resolve brownfield barriers without outside assistance. **Negative environmental consequences associated with brownfields in the TAs include:** (1) potential exposure to hazardous substances and building-related contaminants (e.g., asbestos-containing materials and lead-based paint) from deteriorated structures or unplanned disturbance (ACM has been documented at the **Benwalt Hotel**; ACM/LBP are suspected at the **Old Vocational Center** pending surveys); (2) unknown soil/groundwater conditions that prevent safe use and deter reinvestment (soil/groundwater concerns have been identified at the **Sowashee Creek Dump Site**, and conditions will be further characterized through assessment); (3) persistent blight that creates safety hazards (structural instability, trespass, illegal dumping, pests) and depresses surrounding property values; and (4) delayed reuse that prolongs disinvestment and limits access to community-serving services and amenities. The Coalition's priority sites reflect and concentrate these burdens—each prolonging exposure to blight and potential hazards until assessment clarifies conditions and cleanup planning can proceed:

**Downtown Philadelphia** exhibits substantial income constraints: only 26% of families earn over \$75,000 (vs. 47% statewide; 62% U.S.), and median household income is \$36,781, less than half the U.S. median (\$78,538).<sup>24</sup> Housing vulnerability reinforces disproportionate impact: 30% of housing is substandard (vs. 27% statewide), housing insecurity is 20% (vs. 18% statewide; 13% U.S.), and the housing stock is older (median year built 1972 vs. 1986 statewide).<sup>24</sup> These conditions increase sensitivity to the negative consequences of vacancy and blight in the downtown core, where residents, nearby businesses, and routine pedestrian traffic are the likely receptors. The **Benwalt Hotel** is a prominent, long-idled structure; its continued vacancy and documented building-related hazards—including potential asbestos-containing materials and lead-based paint—create a credible threat of exposure during deterioration, trespass, or uncontrolled disturbance and continue to deter productive reuse. Coalition assessment funding will define building-material and environmental conditions and produce cleanup planning and management measures needed for safe redevelopment (e.g., appropriate abatement specifications, safe renovation protocols, and reuse-compatible controls). This reduces exposure risk and unlocks rehabilitation of the **Benwalt Hotel** as **mixed-use redevelopment (retail/residential living)**—returning an anchor property to productive use, expanding attainable employment, increasing taxable value, and supporting housing stability.

**Scooba (Kemper County) – Old Vocational Center (Priority Site).** Kemper County faces elevated economic stress, including unemployment of 5.5% compared to 3.8% statewide and 4.3% nationally<sup>25</sup>, reducing household resilience and limiting the community's capacity to address legacy hazards without assistance. Socioeconomic hardship is compounded by limited healthcare capacity, including low provider availability (22.25 nurse practitioners per 100,000 residents vs. 84.76 statewide and 103.7 nationally).<sup>26</sup> Disproportionately impacted populations include low-income households and students/workforce participants who would benefit from expanded local training opportunities but are constrained by delayed facility reinvestment. The Old Vocational Center is a legacy structure that cannot proceed to renovation until potential environmental conditions and building-material hazards are evaluated and appropriately managed—delaying a committed workforce investment and prolonging the negative consequences of an underutilized, potentially hazardous building. Assessment and cleanup planning will define the presence and extent of hazards and establish safe management/abatement measures aligned to renovation, reducing the risk of uncontrolled exposure during future construction and enabling reuse as the **Hawkins Health Sciences Center** that strengthens the regional healthcare workforce pipeline.

**22nd Avenue Corridor – Sowashee Creek Dump Site (Priority Site).** The 22nd Avenue Corridor reflects health vulnerability, with 26% reporting poor health compared to 24% statewide and 19% nationally,<sup>27</sup> and 56% physically inactive compared to approximately 50% statewide<sup>28</sup>—reinforcing the need for safe, accessible greenspace. Disproportionately impacted populations include lower-income residents with limited access to safe outdoor recreation who are more likely to be affected by long-term blight near a primary drainage corridor. The Sowashee Creek Dump Site is a large underutilized property adjacent to a key drainage pathway; historic dumping and uncertainty about soil/groundwater conditions constrain safe public use and delay conversion of blight into a community asset. Assessment and cleanup planning will determine whether contaminants are present, define their nature and extent, and produce a cleanup plan and reuse-specific controls appropriate for public access. This will reduce potential exposure and enable safe conversion to **maintained trail/greenspace**, improving environmental conditions, supporting healthier activity, and delivering a tangible quality-of-life benefit in an area that has disproportionately carried environmental disamenities. Collectively, the grant reduces disproportionate impacts by replacing uncertainty with actionable environmental data and cleanup planning, reducing exposure pathways, and enabling community-serving reuses—mixed-use housing/jobs in Downtown Philadelphia, healthcare workforce training in Scooba, and safe trail/greenspace access in the 22nd Avenue Corridor.

**Community Engagement 2.e. Project Involvement & 2.f. Project Roles:** ECPDD will establish and convene a Brownfields

<sup>23</sup> US Census Bureau, *Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates*. 2022.

<sup>24</sup> US Census Bureau, *American Community Survey*. 2019-23

<sup>25</sup> US Department of Labor, *Bureau of Labor Statistics*. 2025

<sup>26</sup> US Department of Health & Human Services, *Health Resources and Services Administration, HSRA – Health Professional Shortage Areas Database*. 2025.

<sup>27</sup> *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System*. Accessed via the *PLACES Data Portal*. 2023.

<sup>28</sup> [cdc.gov/places](https://cdc.gov/places)

**EAST CENTRAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT (ECPDD)  
FY2026 ASSESSMENT COALITION GRANT**

Advisory Committee (BAC) comprised of coalition-member representatives and community-rooted partners from each TA. The BAC will meet semi-annually (and more often as needed during priority-site assessment and planning) to review outreach results and provide documented recommendations on site nomination and prioritization, addressing community concerns and sensitive receptors when reviewing Phase I/II findings, and shaping cleanup planning and reuse concepts for priority sites. **BAC recommendations will be documented in meeting minutes and used to inform final site selection, sequencing, and planning priorities in coordination with EPA eligibility determinations and site access readiness.** Each non-lead coalition member will serve as the functional lead for outreach and engagement within its TA and will coordinate meeting logistics, notifications, and local stakeholder participation, keeping partners informed throughout the project. **ECPDD will provide quarterly email/briefing updates to coalition members and BAC partners and will circulate draft site lists/prioritization criteria and key deliverables for review and comment prior to finalization.** Community engagement activities are directly linked to site inventory, prioritization, site access, and cleanup/reuse planning. ECPDD will build on the BAC approach used under its FY2017 Brownfields grant, in which the BAC supported effective, collaborative decision-making and strengthened community trust. Several members of the FY2017 BAC will continue to serve on the BAC for this project, providing continuity, established working relationships, and a strong foundation for coordinated implementation across the TAs. Key partners for this project and their roles are summarized below.

Entity/Group	Entity's Mission	Point of contact	Involvement/ assistance in the project
City of Meridian	Provide excellent service to the community while also being a vibrant, connected, and livable community.	David Hodge, 601.616.2251 davidhodge@meridianms.org	<b>22nd Avenue Corridor TA / Sowashee Creek Dump Site:</b> Assist with site selection and access coordination; support code-aligned reuse concepts (greenspace/trail); coordinate City participation on the BAC; support local incentives.
East MS Business Development Corp.	Support growth, connect people, build leaders.	Bill Hannah, Pres./CEO 717-877-4416 bhannah@embdc.org	<b>All TAs / All Priority Sites:</b> Support site prioritization and redevelopment feasibility; identify public/private financing and incentives; assist with business recruitment; serve on the BAC to align reuse concepts with market conditions.
MDEQ – Brownfields Program	Protect the health, safety, and welfare of current and future generations of Mississippians.	Thomas Wallace 601.961.5240 twallace@mdeq.ms.gov	<b>All TAs / All Priority Sites:</b> Provide program coordination and technical input; share relevant cleanup standards and state processes during outreach; support alignment of cleanup planning with applicable state requirements.
Philadelphia Community Development Partnership	Lead Philadelphia–Neshoba County toward a community where industry thrives, tourism grows, and residents are proud to call home.	David Vowell 601.656.1000 [REDACTED]	<b>Downtown Philadelphia TA / Benwalt Hotel:</b> Local outreach lead support; coordinate local stakeholders and partners; support business planning and redevelopment coordination; assist with reuse discussions and developer interest as the market viability work proceeds; serve on the BAC.
Philadelphia-Neshoba Co. Chamber of Commerce	Represent local businesses and professionals to improve the community.	Tim Moore 601.693.2732 tmorre@neshoba.org	<b>Philadelphia TA / Benwalt Hotel:</b> Provide centrally located meeting space; assist with outreach promotion to business stakeholders; support dissemination of project updates and redevelopment opportunities; serve on the BAC as appropriate.
EMCC	Improve quality of life through instructional opportunities focusing on a healthy mind, body, and spirit.	Scott Alsobrooks 662.476.5050 alsobrooks@eastms.edu	<b>Scooba TA / Old Vocational Center:</b> Provide meeting space and outreach support; assist with partner coordination; support workforce-aligned reuse discussions (Hawkins Health Sciences Center) and local stakeholder engagement; serve on the BAC.
Town of Scooba	Serve our residents well and foster a sense of “small town pride”	Mayor Craig Nave 662.476.8451 [REDACTED]	<b>Scooba TA / Old Vocational Center:</b> Assist with site selection and access coordination; support reuse alignment with local codes and community priorities; coordinate local outreach and meeting participation; serve on the BAC.
Kemper County Economic Development Authority (KCEDA)	Promote economic growth and community revitalization in Kemper County by supporting business development and investment attraction.	Steven Lockley, 601-743-2754; lockleys@kempercounty.ms	<b>Scooba TA:</b> Engaged in brownfields site inventory for this application; connected to local property owners and investors; will serve on the BAC; support site nomination/prioritization and selection; facilitate site access and coordination for assessments in the Scooba.

**2.g. Incorporating Community Input:** Our coalition team will expand on the successful Community Involvement Plan (CIP) developed under ECPDD’s FY2017 Brownfields Community-Wide Assessment grant, which outlined our approach to engaging communities within the ECPDD footprint. We will employ a range of strategies to keep local communities, sensitive populations, and residents/groups directly impacted by the project informed. Public meetings will be held in each TA before initiating work on Priority Sites and will continue annually, with additional meetings as needed. Virtual meetings will also be offered to reach communities across our service area, including sensitive populations such as single-parent families who may find in-person attendance challenging. Meetings will provide sign language interpreters as needed and translation services as required. Project information will be posted on the ECPDD website and shared during public meetings. Meeting announcements will be made through local newspapers, the ECPDD website, and project partners’ social media and other channels. During meetings, attendees will receive informational handouts with a project summary, Brownfields Program information, project timeline, contact information, and relevant health and safety information in an easy-to-understand format. To supplement web-based updates and

public meetings, local media outlets will be used as needed. Community feedback will be encouraged with every project update and may be submitted through in-person and virtual meetings, phone calls, emails, and web forms. The Grant Manager will collect and address all community feedback or coordinate with the appropriate Coalition partner for response, with follow-up within one week of receipt when feasible. ECPDD will maintain a comment-and-response log and will post meeting summaries and responses on the project webpage to document how community input informed site selection, assessment sequencing, and reuse planning. Project progress updates will be posted at least quarterly and after major milestones (e.g., completion of Phase I/II, initiation of fieldwork, and completion of ABCAs and planning deliverables). For residents and property owners directly adjacent to active field work, ECPDD and the local TA lead will provide direct notifications prior to mobilization.

**3. TASK DESCRIPTIONS, COST ESTIMATES, AND MEASURING PROGRESS 3.a. Project Implementation:** The table below summarizes eligible, site-specific tasks prioritized for the coalition’s priority sites. **No subawards or participant support costs (including stipends) are proposed.** Non-EPA resources (in-kind): ECPDD, coalition members, and BAC participants will contribute in-kind staff time for site identification and prioritization, property access coordination, community engagement logistics, and review of assessment and planning results.

Task 1: Project Management
<p><b>a. Project Implementation:</b> <i>EPA-funded tasks/activities:</i> Develop the Cooperative Agreement (CA) and workplan; manage and track project progress, budgets, fiscal expenditures, and drawdowns; coordinate with EPA, MDEQ, and the BAC; prepare and submit quarterly, annual, DBE, and final reports; upload required reports and updates in ACRES; manage and oversee contractor performance; attend national and regional brownfields conferences and trainings as appropriate; and capture and report in ACRES project outcomes beyond assessment, including advancement to cleanup and redevelopment/reuse as they occur. Technical assessment and planning work will be performed by the Consultant under a competitively procured contract.</p>
<p><b>b. Anticipated Project Schedule:</b> CA &amp; workplan: Quarter 1 (Q1); kickoff meeting: Q1; quarterly reports: end of each quarter; annual reports: end of year, annually; DBE reports: October annually; Federal Financial Reports (FFRs): December annually; Final Performance Report: Q16; ACRES updates: monthly; attend 4 conferences: throughout the period of performance.</p>
<p><b>c. Task/Activity Lead(s):</b> Grant Manager, supported by the Consultant.</p>
<p><b>d. Output(s):</b> 1 CA, workplan, 16 quarterly reports, 4 annual reports, 4 DBE reports, 4 FFRs, 1 final report, monthly ACRES updates</p>
Task 2: Community Outreach
<p><b>a. Project Implementation:</b> <i>EPA-funded tasks/activities:</i> Update the Community Involvement Plan (building on the FY2017 CIP); coordinate with key community partners to support outreach and participation; hold public meetings at the start of work at the priority sites and provide annual updates thereafter (with additional meetings as needed); use ECPDD and coalition web/social media channels and the ECPDD website to share project information and collect input; document and respond to community input; use input to maintain a brownfields site inventory, establish a site prioritization process, and identify additional sites for assessment and/or cleanup planning. <i>Non-EPA grant resources:</i> Meeting spaces; in-kind staff time for outreach coordination, meeting logistics, and review of community input and draft materials.</p>
<p><b>b. Anticipated Project Schedule:</b> CIP: Q1; meeting announcements: two weeks prior to meetings; community meetings: at the start of work at priority sites and annually thereafter (with additional meetings as needed); community input responses: within one week of receipt; BAC meetings: semi-annually; website updates: continuous; meetings with key partners: as needed; site inventory and site identification: ongoing; site prioritization process/criteria: developed in Q1 and applied ongoing.</p>
<p><b>c. Task/Activity Lead(s):</b> Grant Manager, supported by Consultant.</p>
<p><b>d. Output(s):</b> 1 updated CIP; at least 3 priority-site kickoff public meetings; at least 4 annual public update meetings (additional as needed); 8 BAC meetings; ongoing website and social media updates; documented input and response log; 1 site inventory (maintained/updated); 1 site prioritization process/criteria.</p>
Task 3: Environmental Assessments
<p><b>a. Project Implementation:</b> <i>EPA-funded tasks/activities:</i> Prepare a Comprehensive Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) defining field, sampling, laboratory, and QA/QC procedures. Assessments will be initiated at priority sites before additional sites selected through the process described in Section 1.d. Conduct ASTM E1527-compliant Phase I ESAs. Perform ground-penetrating radar (GPR) surveys as needed to identify subsurface features, including potential underground lines or tanks. Based on Phase I findings, determine the need for Phase II ESAs; prepare Sampling and Analysis Plans (SAPs) prior to Phase II work. Conduct Phase II ESAs, including ACM and LBP surveys as appropriate; conduct Supplemental Assessments with SAPs as necessary to delineate plume/source areas for developing Corrective Action Plans (CAPs). All assessment work will support cleanup decision-making and No Further Action determinations, as applicable. QA/QC and data management will include deliverable review, documentation, and ACRES-ready reporting support.</p>
<p><b>b. Anticipated Project Schedule:</b> Comprehensive QAPP: Q1; 24 Phase I ESAs: Q1–Q8 (priority sites assessed in Q1–Q2, with remaining sites assessed on a rolling basis through Q8); 16 Phase II ESAs with SAPs: Q2–Q9; 4 Supplemental Assessments (delineation) with SAPs: Q8–Q10; 7 GPR surveys (as needed): Q2–Q10; 5 ACM/LBP surveys (as appropriate): Q2–Q10. At least two sites within each coalition member’s geographic boundary will be assessed, with priority sites initiated first (beginning in Q2) and remaining sites assessed on a rolling basis through the period of performance.</p>
<p><b>c. Task/Activity Lead(s):</b> This task will primarily be conducted by the Consultant.</p>
<p><b>d. Output(s):</b> Comprehensive QAPP; 24 Phase I ESAs; 16 Phase II ESAs with SAPs (as required) and reports; 7 GPR surveys (as needed); 5 ACM/LBP survey reports (as appropriate); 4 Supplemental Assessments with SAPs (as required) and reports.</p>
Task 4: Eligible Planning
<p><b>a. Project Implementation:</b> <i>EPA-funded tasks/activities:</i> Develop 6 ABCAs and 5 Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) to support cleanup decision-making and implementation. A Resource Roadmap will be developed to organize projects into fundable components, identify responsible parties, and outline a funding and implementation timeline for cleanup and reuse. The Roadmap will include an implementation sequence and funding strategy to advance sites from assessment through cleanup</p>

and reuse. An **Evaluation of Market Viability** will be conducted for the **Benwalt Hotel** site to identify parties interested in acquiring, redeveloping, leasing, or using the property and to compile the information needed for informed site acquisition and disposition decisions. A **Site Reuse Vision** will be developed for the **Old Vocational Center (Hawkins Health Sciences Center)** to provide site-specific concept graphics to support implementation. A **Resilient Brownfields Plan** will be prepared for the **Sowashee Creek Dump Site** to guide cleanup and implementation of the planned greenspace/trail reuse. A **Brownfield Revitalization Plan** will be prepared for the **Scooba TA** to guide assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment priorities.

**b. Anticipated Project Schedule:** ABCAs/CAPs: Q6–Q10; 1 **Evaluation of Market Viability (Benwalt Hotel):** Q8–Q10; 1 **Site Reuse Vision (Old Vocational Center):** Q8–Q10; 1 **Resilient Brownfields Plan (Sowashee Creek Dump Site):** Q10–Q12; 1 **Resource Roadmap (All TAs):** populated throughout the grant and finalized upon grant completion. 1 **Brownfield Revitalization Plan (Scooba TA):** (Q8–Q12).

**c. Task/Activity Lead(s):** This task will primarily be conducted by the Consultant.

**d. Output(s):** 6 ABCAs, 5 CAPs, 1 Market Viability Evaluation, 1 Site Reuse Vision, 1 Resilient Brownfields Plan, 1 Resource Roadmap; 1 Brownfield Revitalization Plan.

**3.e. Cost Estimates**

Budget Categories		Project Tasks (\$)					Total
		Project Management	Community Outreach	Environmental Assessments	Cleanup Planning	Admin. Costs	
Direct Costs	Personnel	\$37,500	\$37,500			-0-	\$75,000
	Fringe Benefits					-0-	-0-
	Travel	\$16,000				-0-	\$16,000
	Equipment					-0-	-0-
	Supplies		\$2,600			-0-	\$2,600
	Contractual	\$35,000	\$35,000	\$977,000	\$357,000	-0-	\$1,404,000
	Construction					-0-	-0-
	Other	\$2,400				-0-	\$2,400
<b>Total Direct Costs</b>		<b>\$90,900</b>	<b>\$75,100</b>	<b>\$977,000</b>	<b>\$357,000</b>	<b>-0-</b>	<b>\$1,500,000</b>
Indirect Costs						-0-	-0-
<b>Total Budget</b>		<b>\$90,900</b>	<b>\$75,100</b>	<b>\$977,000</b>	<b>\$357,000</b>	<b>-0-</b>	<b>\$1,500,000</b>

Overall, ~89% of funds are allocated to site-specific environmental assessments, site-specific cleanup plans (ABCAs/CAPs), and eligible reuse/area-wide planning activities. No Adm. Costs are proposed (i.e., < 5%)

**Task 1 Project Management (\$90,900):** Personnel - 500 hours x \$75/hr = \$37,500; Travel (lodging/airfare/per diem for conferences) = \$2,000/person/conference x 2 people x 4 conferences = \$16,000; Other (conference registration fees) = \$300/person/conference x 2 people x 4 conferences = \$2,400; Contractual (consultant support for grant admin/reporting/ACRES/subcontractor oversight) - 200 hours x \$175/hr = \$35,000.

**Task 2 Community Outreach (\$75,100):** Personnel - 500 hours x \$75/hr. = \$37,500; Supplies (meeting notices, sign-in sheets, printed materials, outreach supplies, laptop, A/V equipment) = \$2,600; Contractual (community engagement support, facilitation support, inventory/prioritization support) 200 hours x \$175/hour = \$35,000.

**Task 3 Environmental Assessments (\$977,000):** Contractual: Comprehensive QAPP: 40 hr. x \$175/hr. = \$7,000; 24 Phase I ESAs: 24 sites x \$6,000 = \$144,000; 7 GPR Surveys (as needed): 7 sites x \$3,000 = \$21,000; 16 Phase II ESAs & SAPs: 16 sites x \$35,000 = \$560,000; 5 ACM/LBP Surveys (as appropriate): 5 sites x \$5,000 = \$25,000; 4 Supplemental Assessments (delineation) with SAPs: 4 sites x \$55,000 = \$220,000.

**Task 4 Cleanup Planning (\$357,000):** Contractual: 6 ABCAs: 6 sites x \$12,000 = \$72,000; 5 CAPs: 5 sites x \$18,000 = \$90,000. 1 Evaluation of Market Viability = 1 site x \$50,000 = \$50,000; 1 Site Reuse Vision = 1 site x \$25,000 = \$25,000; 1 Resilient Brownfield Planning = 1 Target Site x \$25,000 = \$25,000; 1 Brownfield Revitalization Plan = 1 Target Area (Scooba) x \$65,000 = \$65,000; 1 Resource Roadmap = 1 x \$30,000 = \$30,000.

**3.f. Plan to Measure and Evaluate Environmental Progress and Results:** ECPDD will measure progress against the EPA-approved workplan using a task-based performance tracking system supported by monthly internal reviews and quarterly coordination with Coalition members, MDEQ, EPA, and the BAC, as appropriate. ECPDD will maintain a centralized Coalition SharePoint workspace (tracking lists, dashboards, and document repository) that logs, by task and site, pipeline status, deliverable status, milestones, and expenditures to ensure spending aligns with completed work products. ACRES will be updated at least quarterly and upon completion of major milestones; entries will be verified against final deliverables and site files and will document EPA-funded outputs and leveraged resources. Performance will be evaluated using task-level metrics aligned to Tasks 1–4, including reporting timeliness; outreach meetings and participation; Phase I/II (and related) assessments completed; cleanup planning and reuse deliverables completed (e.g., ABCAs); sites advanced toward reuse (including where access/title barriers are addressed); acres assessed/positioned for redevelopment or greenspace; and leveraged dollars and redevelopment outcomes as they occur. If a problem is identified or milestones slip, ECPDD will promptly notify and coordinate with EPA and MDEQ to adjust schedules and maintain progress.

**4. PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITY AND PAST PERFORMANCE 4.a Organizational Capacity 4.b. Organizational Structure**

**4.c. Description of Key Staff:** ECPDD has the institutional capacity to oversee grant tasks/activities and successfully carry out the programmatic, administrative, and financial requirements of this EPA Brownfields Coalition Assessment grant on behalf of the Coalition. ECPDD’s Economic and Community Development Department has a proven track record in the preparation, coordination, oversight, and monitoring of federal and state grants, including compliance management, procurement and contract oversight, performance tracking and reporting, and

documentation/recordkeeping. ECPDD has successfully written and managed numerous grant programs through agencies including the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA), ARC, U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), USDA Rural Development (RD), Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), and the MDOT. Building on this experience, ECPDD will ensure timely completion of the workplan and required deliverables, proper contractor oversight, accurate fiscal management, and on-time reporting and ACRES updates consistent with EPA requirements. ECPDD's organizational structure is designed to support the timely and successful expenditure of funds and completion of all technical, administrative, and financial requirements through clear roles and separation of duties. The Economic and Community Development Department will manage day-to-day program implementation, including coalition coordination, consultant oversight, deliverable tracking, and required reporting. Financial management, drawdowns, documentation, and compliance will be handled independently by ECPDD's Fiscal Office to maintain internal controls and ensure accurate, compliant use of funds. Meaningful coalition-member involvement in determining how grant funds benefit each member community will be ensured through a shared decision-making process supported by the Brownfields Advisory Committee (BAC), which includes coalition-member representatives and community-rooted partners from each Target Area. The BAC will provide documented recommendations on site nomination, prioritization, and sequencing, including consideration of community concerns and sensitive receptors as site work proceeds. ECPDD will circulate draft site lists/prioritization criteria and key deliverables for coalition/BAC review and comment prior to finalization, consistent with EPA eligibility determinations and site access readiness.

**Kawana McCary, Executive Director, will serve as Program Manager for this project.** Kawana will provide strategic oversight throughout the project and ensure ECPDD meets all programmatic, administrative, and financial requirements. Kawana holds a master's in business administration and has been with ECPDD for over 30 years, successfully managing numerous federal and state grant programs, ensuring compliance, reporting, and contractor oversight for high-accountability awards. **Jennifer Buford, Director of Economic and Community Development, will serve as Project Director and will be** responsible for day-to-day grant implementation, coordination with coalition members and the Consultant, tracking of outputs and deliverables, and completion of required reports and ACRES-ready documentation. She will also serve as **backup to the Program Manager** to ensure continuity of oversight and timely decision-making throughout the period of performance. Jennifer holds a master's degree in urban systems engineering and planning and has extensive experience administering grant programs from EDA, MRA, HUD, and other agencies. She also played a key role in managing the highly successful FY2017 EPA Brownfields Community-Wide Assessment Grant for ECPDD. **Cady Skelton (CPA), Senior Accountant, will manage financial oversight for the grant,** including budget tracking, drawdowns, documentation, and compliance with federal financial requirements. She has eight years of accounting experience and holds a B.B.A. in Accounting from Mississippi State University. In this role, she will provide independent fiscal controls separate from the assessment and planning teams. Together, this team brings decades of combined experience administering complex grants and delivering regional development initiatives, positioning ECPDD to successfully manage coalition coordination, consultant oversight, compliance, reporting, and performance tracking required to complete this Brownfields Coalition Assessment project.

**4.d. Acquiring Additional Resources:** To expedite implementation, ECPDD has already competitively procured and executed a contract with a qualified multi-disciplinary Consultant to perform the technical assessment and planning work under this grant, consistent with applicable procurement requirements in 2 CFR Part 200 and 40 CFR Part 33. The RFQ was publicly posted for 30 days on ECPDD's website; two proposals were received; and a three-member evaluation committee reviewed, scored, and ranked proposals using documented criteria, including qualifications/experience, capacity, past performance, and cost reasonableness. No subawards or participant support costs (including stipends) are proposed. If additional specialized expertise is needed during the period of performance, ECPDD will obtain those services only through competitively procured contractor agreements (not subawards), supported by a written scope of work and independent cost estimate. ECPDD will manage contractors through written agreements with defined deliverables, schedules, and invoicing requirements and will monitor performance through deliverable review, routine coordination, and compliance checks prior to payment. ECPDD will prioritize local procurement and participation of DBEs and local subconsultants/subcontractors where feasible and allowable.

**Past Performance and Accomplishments 4.e. Currently Has or Previously Received an EPA Brownfields Grant:**

**1. Accomplishments:** ECPDD was awarded **\$299,700** under an FY2017 EPA Brownfields Community-Wide Assessment Grant (BF00D60717). ACRES documents **13 acres assessed**, and **5 properties reported as Ready for Anticipated Use (RAU)**. Grant deliverables recorded in ACRES include **10 Phase I ESAs, 8 Phase II ESAs, 1 supplemental assessment, and 2 cleanup-planning outputs**, along with **\$16,793** in leveraged assessment funding. ACRES also tracks **\$370,482** in leveraged cleanup funding and **8 cleanup jobs leveraged**, including asbestos cleanup leveraging at the Branton Property and the former Sears building. Grant-funded asbestos/LBP assessment information supported implementation at the former Sears building; abatement and demolition were completed in **January–February 2019**, and the property has since been **redeveloped into the Mississippi Children's Museum Annex**, leveraging **approximately \$25,000,000** in redevelopment investment and **172 redevelopment jobs** as reported in ACRES.

**2. Compliance with Grant Requirements** ECPDD complied with all terms of the Cooperative Agreement. A Work Plan was produced in the early stages of the project and closely followed throughout the grant period. Minor adjustments to the budget were provided to the EPA Project Officer when required. ECPDD prepared and submitted all EPA-required reports including quarterly, semi-annual, and final reports. All work was updated in EPA ACRES to accurately and consistently track project outputs and outcomes, and the expected results presented in the grant application and Work Plan were achieved.

## FY2026 ECPDD Assessment Coalition Grant Threshold Criteria

### 1. Eligibility of Lead and Non-Lead Coalition Members

- a. The lead grant applicant for this coalition is the East Central Mississippi Planning and Development District (ECPDD). As a regional planning and development district, the ECPDD is eligible for funding. Proof of eligibility is attached.
- b. Not Applicable, ECFRPC is not a 501 (c)(4). None of the coalition members are 501 (c)(4)s.

#### Number and Eligibility of Non-lead Coalition Members

- Lauderdale County, Mississippi is a General Purpose Unit of Local Government, and is therefore eligible for funding.
- The City of Philadelphia, Mississippi is a General Purpose Unit of Local Government, and is therefore eligible for funding.

### 2. Target Areas

Target Areas for the lead member and both non-lead members are identified on the Application Information Sheet as a response to Section 4.B.(5).

### 3. Non-Lead Member(s) that Never Received an EPA MARC Grant

- a. Neither the City of Philadelphia, nor Lauderdale County, have ever been awarded an EPA Brownfields MARC Grant.

### 4. Legal Authority to Expend Grant Funds on Behalf of Non-Lead Coalition Members

ECPDD attests that the lead member has legal authority to expend grant funds on behalf of the nonlead members to conduct the proposed grant activities.

### 5. Coalition Agreement

Coalition Letters are attached.

### 6. Community Involvement

ECPDD will establish and convene a Brownfields Advisory Committee (BAC) comprised of coalition-member representatives and community-rooted partners from each TA. The BAC will meet semi-annually (and more often as needed during priority-site assessment and planning) to review outreach results and provide documented recommendations on site nomination and prioritization, addressing community concerns and sensitive receptors when reviewing Phase I/II findings, and shaping cleanup planning and reuse concepts for priority sites. BAC recommendations will be documented in meeting minutes and used to inform final site selection, sequencing, and planning priorities in coordination with EPA eligibility determinations and site access readiness. Each non-lead coalition member will serve as the functional lead for outreach and engagement within its TA and will coordinate meeting logistics, notifications, and local stakeholder participation, keeping partners informed throughout the project. ECPDD will provide quarterly email/briefing updates to coalition members and BAC partners and will circulate draft site lists/prioritization criteria and key deliverables for review and comment prior to finalization. Community engagement activities are directly linked to site inventory, prioritization, site access, and cleanup/reuse planning. ECPDD will build on the BAC approach used under its FY2017 Brownfields grant, in which the BAC supported effective, collaborative decision-making and strengthened community trust. Several members of the FY2017 BAC will continue to serve on the BAC for this project, providing continuity, established working relationships, and a strong foundation for coordinated implementation across the TAs. Key partners for this project

and their roles are summarized below.

Entity/Group	Entity's Mission	Point of contact	Involvement/ assistance in the project
City of Meridian	Provide excellent service to the community while also being a vibrant, connected, and livable community.	David Hodge, 601.616.2251 davidhodge@meridianms.org	22nd Avenue Corridor TA / Sowashee Creek Dump Site: Assist with site selection and access coordination; support code-aligned reuse concepts (greenspace/trail); coordinate City participation on the BAC; support local incentives.
East MS Business Development Corp.	Support growth, connect people, build leaders.	Bill Hannah, Pres./CEO 717-877-4416 bhannah@embdc.org	All TAs / All Priority Sites: Support site prioritization and redevelopment feasibility; identify public/private financing and incentives; assist with business recruitment; serve on the BAC to align reuse concepts with market conditions.
MDEQ – Brownfields Program	Protect the health, safety, and welfare of current and future generations of Mississippians.	Thomas Wallace 601.961.5240 twallace@mdeq.ms.gov	All TAs / All Priority Sites: Provide program coordination and technical input; share relevant cleanup standards and state processes during outreach; support alignment of cleanup planning with applicable state requirements.
Philadelphia Community Development Partnership	Lead Philadelphia–Neshoba County toward a community where industry thrives, tourism grows, and residents are proud to call home.	David Vowell 601.656.1000 [REDACTED]	Downtown Philadelphia TA / Benwalt Hotel: Local outreach lead support; coordinate local stakeholders and partners; support business planning and redevelopment coordination; assist with reuse discussions and developer interest as the market viability work proceeds; serve on the BAC.
Philadelphia-Neshoba Co. Chamber of Commerce	Represent local businesses and professionals to improve the community.	Tim Moore 601.693.2732 tmorre@neshoba.org	Philadelphia TA / Benwalt Hotel: Provide centrally located meeting space; assist with outreach promotion to business stakeholders; support dissemination of project updates and redevelopment opportunities; serve on the BAC as appropriate.
EMCC	Improve quality of life through instructional opportunities focusing on a healthy mind, body, and spirit.	Scott Alsobrooks 662.476.5050 alsobrooks@eastms.edu	Scooba TA / Old Vocational Center: Provide meeting space and outreach support; assist with partner coordination; support workforce-aligned reuse discussions (Hawkins Health Sciences Center) and local stakeholder engagement; serve on the BAC.
Town of Scooba	Serve our residents well and foster a sense of “small town pride”	Mayor Craig Nave 662.476.8451 [REDACTED]	Scooba TA / Old Vocational Center: Assist with site selection and access coordination; support reuse alignment with local codes and community priorities; coordinate local outreach and meeting participation; serve on the BAC.
Kemper County Economic Development Authority (KCEDA)	Promote economic growth and community revitalization in Kemper County by supporting business development and investment attraction.	Steven Lockley, 601-743-2754; lockleys@kempercounty.ms	Scooba TA: Engaged in brownfields site inventory for this application; connected to local property owners and investors; will serve on the BAC; support site nomination/prioritization and selection; facilitate site access and coordination for assessments in the Scooba.

Incorporating Community Input: Our coalition team will expand on the successful Community Involvement Plan (CIP) developed under ECPDD’s FY2017 Brownfields Community-Wide Assessment grant, which outlined our approach to engaging communities within the ECPDD footprint. We will employ a range of strategies to keep local communities, sensitive populations, and residents/groups directly impacted by the project informed. Public meetings will be held in each TA before initiating work on Priority Sites and will continue annually, with additional meetings as needed. Virtual meetings will also be offered to reach communities across our service area, including sensitive populations such as single-parent families who may find in-person attendance challenging. Meetings will

provide sign language interpreters as needed and translation services as required. Project information will be posted on the ECPDD website and shared during public meetings. Meeting announcements will be made through local newspapers, the ECPDD website, and project partners' social media and other channels. During meetings, attendees will receive informational handouts with a project summary, Brownfields Program information, project timeline, contact information, and relevant health and safety information in an easy-to-understand format. To supplement web-based updates and public meetings, local media outlets will be used as needed. Community feedback will be encouraged with every project update and may be submitted through in-person and virtual meetings, phone calls, emails, and web forms. The Grant Manager will collect and address all community feedback or coordinate with the appropriate Coalition partner for response, with follow-up within one week of receipt when feasible. ECPDD will maintain a comment-and-response log and will post meeting summaries and responses on the project webpage to document how community input informed site selection, assessment sequencing, and reuse planning. Project progress updates will be posted at least quarterly and after major milestones (e.g., completion of Phase I/II, initiation of fieldwork, and completion of ABCAs and planning deliverables). For residents and property owners directly adjacent to active field work, ECPDD and the local TA lead will provide direct notifications prior to mobilization.

7. Expenditure of Existing Grant Funds

The ECPDD does not have an open EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant or Multipurpose Grant.

8. Contractors and Named Subrecipients

- Contractors

The ECPDD has already selected a contractor under a “dual procurement process” for both grant proposal writing and the services necessary to help carry out the grant. The ECPDD solicited firms by issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) on July 17, 2024. The RFP was posted publicly in the Clarion Ledger and the Newton Appeal, the primary newspapers for the region. It was posted for 30 days and two submittals were received by the deadline. The solicitation was conducted in accordance with 2 CFR Part 200 and 2 CFR Part 1500 and 40 CFR Part 33, and EPA contractor procurement. The ECPDD created a panel of individuals who met and reviewed and scored/ranked the firms based on the criteria outlined in the RFP. The panel selected the highest-scoring submittal (PPM Consultants, Inc.) and negotiated the services of completing the grant application and providing the scope of services for implementation of the grant if awarded. Documentation on our RFP process is attached.

Subrecipients – not applicable