

SCHUYLKILL COUNTY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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R03-24-A-004

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Narrative Information Sheet

November 10, 2023

1. Applicant Identification

Schuykill County Industrial Development Authority
Union Station
One Progress Circle, Suite 200
Pottsville, PA 17901

2. Funding Requested

- a) Assessment Grant Type: Community-Wide Assessment Grant
- b) Federal Funds Requested:
 - i. \$500,000
 - ii. Not Applicable

3. Location:

- a) All of Schuykill County
- b) Schuykill County
- c) Pennsylvania

4. Target Area and Priority Site/Property Information:

Community-Wide Assessment Grant Applicants, other than tribes:

- Target Areas: Communities throughout Schuykill County, Pennsylvania
- Priority Site Addresses and Census Tract Numbers:
 - Mine Scarred Land – County Owned Airport Area – 240 Airport Road, South of Airport, Pottsville, PA (Tract No. 42107001300)
 - Former Pennsylvania Power & Light Site – 0 Greenwood Street, Tamaqua, PA (Tract No. 42107002600)
 - Old Frackville Dump – 100 Fireman’s Road, Frackville, PA (Tract No. 42107000700)

- Former Northeastern Power Plant – 86 Plant Road, McAdoo, PA
(Tract No.42107000300)
- Former Kozura Motor Company – 610 Sunbury Street, Minersville, PA
(Tract No. 42107001500)
- Former Wiping Cloth Company – 125 E Lloyd Street, Shenandoah, PA
(Tract No. 42107000602)

5. Contacts:

- a) **Project Director:** Mark Minnig, Economic Development Manager
Schuykill County Industrial Development Authority
Union Station
One Progress Circle, Suite 200
Pottsville, PA 17901
Phone: 570-622-1943 (Office)
Email: mminnig@sed-co.com
- b) **Chief Executive:** Frank Zukas, Chief Executive Officer
Schuykill County Industrial Development Authority
Union Station
One Progress Circle, Suite 200
Pottsville, PA 17901
Phone: 570-622-1943 (Office)
Email: fzukas@sed-co.com

6. Population:

The Schuykill County Industrial Development Authority covers the entirety of Schuykill County, Pennsylvania. The County’s population according to the 2022 US Census was 143,104.

The populations of the 6 selected priority sites are summarized below.

- a) Priority Site #1 – Mine Scarred Land South of Schuykill Regional Airport –Foster Township, PA: *3,017
- b) Priority Site #2 – Former PP&L Site – Tamaqua, PA: 6,911**
- c) Priority Site #3 – Old Frackville Dump - Frackville, PA: 3,870***
- d) Priority Site #4 – Former Northeastern Power Plant – Kline Township, PA: 5,040*
- e) Priority Site #5 – Former Kozura Motor Company– Minersville, PA: 4,205*
- f) Priority Site# 6 – Former Wiping Cloth Company – Shenandoah, PA: 4,238***

* Census Tract Population Per Data Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool

**2022 US Census population data.

***2022 US Census Annual Estimates Resident Population for Incorporated Places

7. Other Factors

Other Factors	Page #
Community population is 10,000 or less.	1
The applicant is, or will assist, a federally recognized Indian tribe or United States territory.	
The priority brownfield site(s) is impacted by mine-scarred land.	2
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).	2
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain.	2
The reuse of the priority site(s) will facilitate renewable energy from wind, solar, or geothermal energy.	2
The reuse of the priority site(s) will incorporate energy efficient measures.	
The proposed project will improve local climate adaptation/mitigation capacity and resilience to protect residents and community investments	
At least 30% of the overall project budget will be spent on eligible reuse/area-wide planning activities, as described in <u>Section I.B.</u> , for priority site(s) within the target area.	6
The target area(s) is located within a community in which a coal-fired power plant has recently closed (2013 or later) or is closing.	2

8. Letter Form State or Tribal Authority

Letter from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection supporting the project is attached.

9. Releasing Copies of Applications

Not applicable. No portions of this application are being claimed as confidential, privileged, or sensitive information.



October 4, 2023

Mr. Frank J. Zukas, Executive Director
Schuylkill County Industrial Development Authority
One Progress Circle, Suite 200
Pottsville, PA 17901

RE: U.S. EPA Brownfields Grant Proposal | State Letter of Acknowledgement
Schuylkill County Industrial Development Authority
Various Sites in Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania

Dear Mr. Zukas:

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection is pleased to support your efforts to redevelop brownfield properties in your regional area. Returning environmentally challenged and underutilized land and buildings to productive use improves our environment, safeguards our residents, and helps boost Pennsylvania's economy.

The DEP supports the Schuylkill County Industrial Development Authority's application for a US EPA Brownfields Community-Wide Assessment Grant in the amount of \$500,000 to conduct community outreach, develop a brownfields site inventory and complete environmental assessments on numerous brownfield sites throughout Schuylkill County.

The Authority's efforts to examine the redevelopment potential of aggregated, underutilized sites to create renewed neighborhoods and business districts in Pennsylvania is a worthwhile endeavor.

Both Central Office and Regional Office Staff in the Land Recycling Program look forward to supporting Schuylkill County Industrial Development Authority and U.S. EPA Region 3 on this project.

If you have any questions, please contact John Gross by email at johngross@pa.gov or by telephone at 717-783-7502.

Sincerely,

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

Michael Maddigan
Land Recycling Program Manager
Bureau Environmental Cleanup and Brownfields

1. PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION AND PLANS FOR REVITALIZATION

a. Target Area and Brownfields

i. Overview of Brownfields Challenges and Description of Target Areas

The Schuylkill County Industrial Development Authority (SCIDA) recognizes the need to identify and actively pursue resources to support brownfield redevelopment and facilitate equitable growth throughout Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania (the County). The financial support made possible through this US EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant will facilitate SCIDA’s goals to improve the quality of life for Schuylkill County communities. The SCIDA assists existing companies, start-up companies, or a company looking to locate to Schuylkill County with financing options, finding the right site locations and workforce recruiting and hiring. Schuylkill County is primarily rural and located in the middle of the eastern half of Pennsylvania. The County has a long proud history of mining and industry. One of the largest anthracite coal deposits in the world is in Northeast Pennsylvania. The County is underlain by the Southern Anthracite Field deposit and has been mined since the 1790’s.

The County is inextricably bound to the anthracite fueling the American industrial revolution in the early 19th century. Like much of region, the County also became an important center for iron manufacturing which relied heavily on the local coal industry. Steel and heavy manufacturing, along with the associated rail and coal industries, fueled economic and population growth throughout the County for most of the 20th Century. Shifting trends away from the historical reliance on the coal, steel, and manufacturing industries in the late 20th Century are having acutely deleterious impacts on the County’s economy and quality of life. Numerous abandoned mines are scattered across the County, industrial manufacturing operations have closed or relocated, rail commerce has declined, and the reliance on coal has diminished significantly. Schuylkill County’s abandoned mine lands (AMLs) memorialize a period of great economic and industrial growth in the state and country. These abandoned areas now scar Schuylkill County’s landscape with environmental and safety hazards. The County’s waterways are polluted from acid mine drainage and many coal refuse piles are unsafe and unstable. Coal ash piles, culm, blighted and abandoned manufacturing space, and the deteriorating rail infrastructure are ubiquitous throughout the County.

The targeted areas for the assessment grants span the extent of the County and include the 12 census tracts identified as disadvantaged including land within the core communities of Pottsville (2022 Population-13,338), Tamaqua (6,911), Shenandoah (4,238), Mahanoy City (3,509), St. Clair (2,753), McAdoo (2,470) and Minersville (4,386). Township and Borough brownfields sites are centrally located in underserved neighborhoods near churches, community centers, and schools. Beyond the larger towns, the communities near brownfields are primarily small and rural and lack the resources to confront the complex challenges of meaningful brownfield redevelopment and equitable growth. The SCIDA’s goal overall goal is to provide a redevelopment plan that is responsive to the economic, social, and cultural needs of the county residents, achieving these goals starts with assessing and cleaning up brownfield sites.

1.a. ii. Description of the Priority Brownfield Site(s): The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) Environment Facility Application Compliance Tracking System (eFACTS) database of regulated environmental sites lists over 4,000 regulated or potentially impacted sites throughout Schuylkill County. Many of these sites are negatively impacting sensitive and disadvantaged populations by exposing them to myriad contaminants including, heavy metals, waste oils, volatile organic compounds, and asbestos through multiple pathways. Moreover, the vacant and crumbling buildings on these sites represent physical hazards and attract crime, vandalism, and substance abuse. The table below provides brief descriptions of select priority brownfield sites that will be targeted for assessment by the SCIDA because of their size, potential for contamination to impact underserved communities, environmental liabilities, and potential to become a community and economic asset.

	Community	Adjacent Body of Water?	EJ Area?	Potential Impacts	Reuse Potential
Former PP&L Site	Tamaqua	Yes	Yes	VOCs, SVOs Metals	Greenway Trail, Non-Profit Educational Center

Mine Scarred Land – County Owned Airport Area	Foster Township	No	Yes	Metals, SVOCs, Wind Blown Deposition	Commercial, Retail, Industrial, Renewable Energy Solar/Wind Farms, Brightfields
Old Frackville Dump – SCIDA Owned Land	Frackville	Yes	Adjacent	VOCs, SVOCs,	Solar/Wind Farms, Community Center Flex Space
Former Northeastern Power Plant	Kline Township	No	Adjacent	VOCs, SVOCs, Metals	Solar and Wind Farms, Recreational, Coal Liquefaction
Former Kozura Motor Co.	Minersville	Yes	Yes	VOCs, SVOCs and Metals	Community Center/ Commercial, Industrial
Former United Wiping Cloth Company	Shenandoah	No	Yes	VOCs, SVOCs, Metals	Community Building, Affordable Housing, Healthy Food Outlet

The former Pennsylvania Power and Light (PP&L) Site in Tamaqua consists of two parcels totaling approximately 2-acres. This priority site is located along the Little Schuylkill River portion of the 147-mile Schuylkill River Water Trail. SCIDA has made this Site a priority due to its location along the Schuylkill River Trail and within an underserved and disadvantaged community, its presence on a federal floodplain, its high potential recreational value, readily available existing utility connections, and its current blighted state with automobile debris and dilapidated buildings.

The Old Frackville Dump site is located adjacent to the 1-81 corridor in Frackville. This site is a priority because it is owned by SCIDA, its location along the major interchange of route 61 and Interstate 81, the presence of a nearby growing industrial complex, restaurants, and shopping nearby, its past use as a dump, and its location next to public utility connections. The former United Wiping Cloth Company building burned down in January 2020. The multi-story former garment factory and has remained in a vacant, unsafe, and blighted state ever since. The property is located within the heart of a residential area and within the Shenandoah Planning Commission Bower Street Redevelopment Area, an area deemed critical for redevelopment. Environmental assessment of this former factory would facilitate a more expeditious pathway to redevelopment and rid the Shenandoah community of a blighted eyesore.

The borough of Minersville purchased the 1.3 acre parcel the former Kozura Motor Company in August 2022 with intent to revitalize the highly visible, blighted area at the entrance to the town. The existing garage was left in a dilapidated state and much of the parcel is littered with automobile debris and tires. The condition of the old unused underground storage tanks is unknown. Subsurface assessment of soil and groundwater conditions proximal to underground storage tanks and other site features will be critical to attract buyers and redevelop the property.

The cessation of mining operations has left 338 abandoned underutilized mine land sites and mine scarred lands scattered across the County. The prevalence of abandoned mines throughout the County has left vacancies and stifled development. Prior to redevelopment key abandoned mine sites and former coal fired power plants like the Northeastern Power Plant will need to be assessed for environmental hazards. The County owns of mine scarred land along the I-81 corridor and surrounding the Schuylkill Regional Airport with intention to expand operations in disadvantaged areas. Environmental assessment of the mine scarred land will be a key step to facilitate investment and subsequent redevelopment.

1.a.iii. Identifying Additional Sites: SCIDA is dedicated to serving the needs of the entire County. Measures used to identify additional sites include: ability to create a positive community impact, feasibility of redevelopment, presence, or absence existing utility infrastructure, and targeting underserved and disadvantaged areas including Pottsville, Shenandoah, Tamaqua, Tremont, Mahanoy City, Minersville, and McAdoo. The SCIDA is targeting for a minimum of 40% of assessment sites to be within underserved or disadvantaged communities as identified in US EPA’s *Climate and Environmental Justice Screening Tool* (CEJST). The *Schuylkill County Comprehensive Plan* (2006) identifies future economic development will likely

happen near transportation corridors, including I-81 and PA 61. Retail clusters would be welcomed, but the cluster must include the right types of stores to serve as a destination.

1.b.i. Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans: Expanding the County's ability to assess brownfields and restore their potential as both economic and community resources will allow the SCIDA to support the goals and objectives outlined in various revitalization plans such as the *Schuykill County Comprehensive Plan* (2006), the *Eastern Schuylkill Planning Joint Comprehensive Plan* (2007). The overall goal of the County's Revitalization Plans are to achieve development that is responsive to the economic, social and cultural needs of county residents.

The comprehensive plans stress redevelopment along key interstates and roadways. With nine convenient exits, Interstate 81 runs northeast to southwest across the County enroute from Harrisburg and points south to the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton area and New York State. Interstate 81 is the primary transportation route for Schuylkill County's manufacturers and other businesses. A priority recommendation of those plans is to target the removal or rehab of distressed properties to encourage reinvestment in core communities and along the I-81 corridor such as the mine scarred land priority site south of the airport and rural mountain communities across the County. The SCIDA has developed a comprehensive plan for redevelopment at existing sites with numerous vacant lots including commercial and industrial development in Cass, Foster, and Butler Townships as part of development in and near the Highridge Industrial Park. Other smaller scale commercial development will take place in a scattered fashion throughout the county in areas like Tamaqua long the Route 209 corridor and Minersville along the Route 901 corridor. As for residential development, affordability in Schuylkill County has been assisted by relatively low land costs in both rural areas and in existing communities. Increased economic opportunities through brownfield assessment and redevelopment in Schuylkill County will assist residents to afford suitable housing.

Assessment funding for brownfield sites will be used to conduct Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs) as part of a dynamic approach to assess brownfields sites that have been identified by municipalities and private industry. Brownfield assessment and redevelopment work and in the rural disadvantaged towns of Tamaqua, Minersville, Shenandoah, and others will facilitate the goals of Comprehensive Plans. This approach will allow the brownfields assessment program to be responsive to new interest and capitalize on redevelopment interest. The SCIDA will work with their community partners to identify and assess those priority brownfields sites, specifically in CEJST identified disadvantaged communities, which have the greatest potential for redevelopment and align with the goals and vision of the various municipal and county comprehensive plans. The SCIDA needs additional funding resources to assess these brownfields sites and assist communities across the County to meet these goals.

1.b. ii. Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy: The SCIDA will use a systematic approach to brownfields redevelopment by identifying and assessing those brownfields that are consistent with the principles and goals of SCIDA and preferentially benefit underserved communities in both economic and non-economic ways. By revitalizing blighted, abandoned, and potentially contaminated brownfields sites throughout the County, the SCIDA's revitalization approach promotes economic stability and equitable growth while strengthening the social fabric of the County. This approach will also mitigate existing hazardous conditions, create good paying jobs and opportunities for the underserved communities throughout the County.

By identifying, assessing, and prioritizing development of existing brownfields sites, the SCIDA's redevelopment strategy will support the County in achieving their goal to promote the revitalization of existing urban and rural places to create a modern economy for the community. Additionally, the availability of open space and over 300 abandoned mine land areas makes the County an attractive location for potential renewable energy projects such as solar power, wind power (cogeneration facilities using existing culm piles to aid in clearing abandoned mine land for redevelopment purposes) use of methane gas from landfills such as the Frackville Dump site. These alternative fuels promote County goals to support development of locally generated alternative energy in addition to mitigating the promoting land and water restoration. Redeveloped sites will plan to incorporate stormwater management systems to limit excessive surface flow into stormwater infrastructure.

As outlined in the Greenways Plan, the County is currently prioritizing the extension of the Schuylkill River Trail. The Schuylkill County segment of Little Schuylkill River Trail is approximately 17 miles long. Redevelopment of the former PP&L site will facilitate Schuylkill River greenway expansion by removing blighted lands and beautifying the area to attract more recreational activity in Tamaqua and throughout County. Phase I and Phase II ESAs will be conducted as necessary to support county-wide greenspace expansion and sustainable transportation goals.

1.c.i. Resources Needed for Site Reuse: The SCIDA operates in conjunction with the Schuylkill County Economic Development Corporation (SEDCO). SEDCO and SCIDA have a demonstrated record of leveraging public funding to support community revitalization projects and initiatives at priority sites. The SCIDA will leverage their eligibility as a development authority to access additional public funding from numerous sources and use their influence beyond the assessment grant to include remediation and redevelopment. The unknown environmental impacts and liabilities are the only obstacle preventing redevelopment of these sites. The SCIDA and its partner/affiliates have a strong history of leveraging funding for community revitalization projects and initiatives. If the assessments determine that additional work is required, the County has previously obtained and will continue to leverage funding via the following State entities:

- **Pennsylvania Industrial Development Authority (PIDA)** – SCIDA and its partners/affiliates have successfully leveraged over \$1.7 million in low interest PIDA loans to facilitate development and infrastructure. Projects included building renovations and infrastructure work for Columbia Street, LLC, the Ashland Foundry and Machine Works, and Solar Innovations, LLC. Ashland Foundry and Machine Works is a generational employer located with over 130 employees in the disadvantaged community of Ashland.
- **Pennsylvania Redevelopment Assistance Capital Programs (RACP) Grants**– The SCIDA and its partners have been awarded over \$3.2 million in RACP grants since 2000. The grants have assisted disadvantaged and underserved areas including Tamaqua, Pottsville, and Coaldale. RACP projects are authorized in the Redevelopment Assistance section of a Capital Budget Itemization Act, have a regional or multi-jurisdictional impact, and generate substantial increases or maintain current levels of employment, tax revenues, or other measures of economic activity. RACP grants were utilized to develop the 2,000-acre Highridge Business Park located in Butler, Cass, and Foster Townships. Portions of the Business Park are in the disadvantaged tracks of Butler Township west of I-81 at Exit 119.

1.c. ii. Use of Existing Infrastructure: Many priority brownfields sites in Schuylkill County are former industrial/commercial facilities which are already tied into existing infrastructure. These sites have existing water, electric, sewer utilities. All existing utilities will be utilized to support development. The SCIDA brownfields inventory identification and ranking system will include a metric which evaluates sites based on connectivity to existing infrastructure, these sites will be given higher priority. Schuylkill County is fortunate to have nine exits along Interstate 81 and the ability to enhance its physical infrastructure (water, sewer, stormwater, natural gas, etc.) and unlock the full potential of its highway exits. Likewise, Interstate 81's connectivity to Schuylkill County's other major transportation routes, such as U.S. Route 209 and PA Route 61, has strengthened the development opportunities of areas that are not adjacent to the interstate (such as Route 209 along the Schuylkill Valley Heritage Trail. Absent major rail service, Schuylkill County must strategically plan for infrastructure that takes advantage of Interstate 81's connectivity to major East Coast markets. The SCIDA has leveraged and will continue to leverage RACP funding as needed to build infrastructure in rural areas to facilitate planned redevelopment.

2.a.i. The Communities Need for Funding

Beyond the City Pottsville and a few other boroughs, Schuylkill County is primarily a collection of small, rural communities with limited opportunities for employment and economic growth. This is due in part to their small populations, limited financial resources, and the decades-long decline in the steel, coal, and manufacturing industries. Nearly 37% of the County population lives in rural areas. US Census Bureau, estimates indicate that the population in Schuylkill County decreased 3.5% from 2010 to 2022. Less than 10% of the population is less than age 5 (5%) or between 18 and 24 (7%). 20% of the total population is age 65 or older, which is the largest age group in the county. The aging population trend is indicative of the need for increased job and housing opportunities for younger generations. 12.6% of the population has a disability, which is higher than the state percentage of 9.9% (<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts>). Moreover, 37% of those age 65 and older have a disability, followed by 15% of those age 18-64. According to the 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment Health Profile - Schuylkill County, 16% of the population receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (i.e., food stamps), which is higher than the state percentage (14%). This percentage has increased over time from 8.4% in 2007 to 16.3% in 2017. The aging and shrinking population in the County has resulted in an eroding tax base and an increased use of social services.

Because the SCIDA serves the entirety of Schuylkill County, they also represent the small, rural communities that do not have the resources to revitalize the brownfields that are negatively impacting their residents. The SCIDA's goal is to continue to support the growth and economic development of communities throughout

the County by removing the barriers to brownfields revitalization and supporting social equity principles in disadvantaged communities consistent with The Justice40 Initiative. Comparative measures of income and wages indicate greater inequality and disproportionately higher impacts to disadvantaged communities in Schuylkill County limit their capacity to acquire the resources needed to remove community blight and mitigate environmental hazards to improve public health conditions. US Census Bureau data indicates the median household income in Schuylkill County (\$57,785) is 14.5% less than Pennsylvania (\$67,587) and 16.2% less than national (\$69,021) averages. These income disparities are contributing to disproportionately elevated rates of poverty in Schuylkill County. The overall poverty rate in Schuylkill County (12.8%) is greater than that in Pennsylvania (11.8%) and the U.S. (11.5%) (<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts>). It will take investment and meaningful involvement to fight for environmental justice in disadvantaged communities. Funding made available through this grant will help to provide a much-needed resource to assess and ultimately revitalize brownfields throughout the County.

2.a. ii. Threats to Sensitive Populations

(1) Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations: Revitalization of blighted properties and persistent environmental conditions to improve the welfare of sensitive populations is fundamental to the SCIDA's approach to brownfields. The US EPA identifies climate and environmental justice (CEJ) disadvantaged areas as areas where at least one or more climate and health burden (e.g., flood risk, health conditions) combine with one or more socioeconomic burden (e.g., high poverty, low income, low education attainment). There are 12 census tracts with a total population of over 42,000 in Schuylkill county identified as disadvantaged. The overall socioeconomic burden for all disadvantaged tracts is low income. Pottsville and Tamaqua (Tracts 42107001900 and 42107002600) are identified as disadvantaged communities due elevated projected flood risk, high energy costs, asthma (Pottsville) elevated instances of heart disease, lack of indoor plumbing (Tamaqua), lead paint in old houses (Tamaqua), low life expectancy, high unemployment, and higher education non-enrollment. The rural disadvantaged towns of Shenandoah, Ashland, Minersville, McAdoo, Mahanoy City, Coaldale St. Clair, and Tremont all suffer similar environmental and socioeconomic burdens. Low-income sensitive population groups are especially vulnerable to environmental conditions because of limited financial resources to restrict their access to healthcare, social services, and nutritious food. Redevelopment of the vacant and dilapidated former Wiping Cloth Company in Shenandoah into affordable housing, community space, healthy food outlet or even green space would be an uplifting and positive change for the Shenandoah community. Overall, mitigating the human health and environmental conditions at brownfield sites in disadvantaged communities will support direct investment, revitalization, social equity, and help to improve the welfare of sensitive populations across Schuylkill County.

(2) Greater Incidences of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions: The environmental conditions associated with brownfields sites in Schuylkill County represent persistent sources of contamination that are adversely impacting the health of county residents. *Schuylkill Hospital Community Needs Assessment (2022)* (<https://scholarlyworks.lvhn.org/reports/91/>) summarizes a comprehensive review and analysis of health status indicators, public health, socioeconomic, demographic, and other qualitative and quantitative data. As reported in the Assessment, the heart disease mortality rate is 178 per 100,000 people, which is significantly higher than the Pennsylvania rate of 96.2. The cancer incidence rate is 504.7 per 100,000 people, which again is higher than the Pennsylvania and US median of 484.7 and 448.7, respectively. Schuylkill County also has disproportionately higher incidences of lung disease and diabetes when compared to the Pennsylvania and the US. According to the Assessment, the low life expectancy rate and premature death rates are higher in Schuylkill County (9,758 years of potential life lost per 100,000) between 2017 and 2019 than the State of Pennsylvania (7,467 years lost per 100,000) or the United States (6,943 years lost per 100,000). Unfortunately, suicide rates are also disproportionately higher in Schuylkill County (24.1 per 100,000) are higher than Pennsylvania (14.5 per 100,000) and the United States (13.8 per 100,000). Suicide is an indicator of poor mental health and can be attributed to poverty and depression.

Over 300 identified areas of abandoned mine lands, other brownfields, and decline in industry in Schuylkill County have negatively contributed to the overall health of the population. Given that sensitive populations often reside in disadvantaged communities disproportionately impacted by brownfields, public-health data suggest hazards at these sites are having measurable and negative impacts on the mental and physical health of those communities.

(3)(a) Identification of Environmental Justice Issues: Consistent with the US EPA's EJ 2020 Action Agenda goal to improve the health and environment of disadvantaged communities, the SCIDA is focused on those neighborhoods and communities where promoting the principles of environmental justice (EJ) will be most impactful. Compared to the rest of Pennsylvania, the prevalence of brownfields in Schuylkill County has

contributed to disproportionately higher unemployment, increased poverty rates, a lower median household income, and disproportionate health issues of which have directly impacted disadvantaged communities. These sites are also sources of vagrancy and blight and represent both acute and long-term, human-health liabilities to the surrounding communities, though they lack the resources to mitigate these hazards.

The Shenandoah Tracts (42107000601 and 42107000602) have been hit especially hard with the decline of the coal industry. Shenandoah is identified as a disadvantaged community for several health and socioeconomic issues including: low-income (90th Percentile), high energy costs (99th Percentile), asthma (91st Percentile), heart disease (95th Percentile), homes with lead paint (97th Percentile), low median income (94th percentile), high poverty (94th percentile), high unemployment, and lower high school graduation rates (16% of citizens do not have a high school diploma). The Shenandoah tracts are also home to the highest minority percentage (25%) of Hispanic/Latino population in the County.

The Tremont Tract (Tract 42107001300), including the Abandoned Mine Lands surrounding the Airport in Foster Township are home to rural townships identified as disadvantaged due to climate, health and socioeconomic concerns including: elevated project flood risks in the next 30 years (92st percentile), low-income (67th percentile), high energy costs (94th percentile), homes with lead paint (92nd percentile), and over 13% of citizens within the Tract do not have high school diplomas.

Within Schuylkill County, the synergy between community input and environmental justice (EJ) commitments is not only mitigating existing hazards but will also provide opportunities for a more equitable future in these disadvantaged communities. Due to the rural nature of the county, population centers are concentrated in the areas of the former industries and coal mines. The rural nature of the county depresses population counts; however, the high levels of poverty and unemployment are no less impactful. The cost to redevelop these areas is significantly higher than more urban areas due to the scar of coal mining and lack of population, so these communities have become overlooked and disenfranchised. Environmental Justice is not limited to more populous areas nor is the impact and stress of poverty or unemployment.

(3)(b) Advancing Environmental Justice: SCIDA is committed to supporting EJ initiatives like Justice40, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, and the US EPA 2022-2026 Strategic Plan to safeguard and revitalize communities by cleaning up and restoring brownfields to productive, healthy use. Accordingly, the SCIDA has set a goal to allocate a minimum of 40% of the grant budget to direct assessment tasks and activities to sites within disadvantaged communities. This focus is also consistent with Pennsylvania’s long-standing commitment to EJ principles which affirm that all Pennsylvania’s are entitled to fair and equitable treatment and should be able to live in and enjoy a clean and healthy environment, as reiterated, and expanded in Governor Shapiro’s 2023 Environmental Justice Policy (Doc # 015-0501-002). To further incorporate EJ principles into their brownfields program, the SCIDA site-ranking criteria will be weighted to prioritize those sites within PADEP’s Environmental Justice Mapping and Screening Tool ([PennEnviroScreen](#)) and will incorporate data from the US EPA’s Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool. SCIDA also recognizes the need for community integrity, to minimize displacement of existing residences, and to provide low-income housing opportunities. Because the targeted areas for assessment and redevelopment are in predominately rural areas or abandoned mine scarred land the impact to the community will be positive with minimal to no displacement.

2.b.i. and ii. Project Involvement and Project Roles: Only by engaging the civic groups, residents, and local organizations representing communities adversely affected by brownfields can a revitalization program be successful and impactful. Below are some of the community partners the SCIDA has been working with to identify and prioritize sites throughout the County. SCIDA will continue to actively engage additional partners to broaden their community connections and outreach.

<u>Organization Name</u>	<u>Point of Contact</u>	<u>Specific involvement in the project or assistance provided</u>
Schuylkill County Economic Development Corporation	Frank J. Zukas fzukas@sed-co.com 570-622-1943	Engage membership to identify priority sites distribute assessment program announcements, and educate prospective buyers of incentives and loans.
Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance	Jeffrey Box jbox@nepa-alliance.org 570-891-4647 ext. 222	Provide space for public meetings and will coordinate outreach to their members, provide marketing materials and public announcements
Schuylkill Conservation District	Jenna St. Clair schuylcd@schuylkill.pa.us	Coordinate to identify priority sites, use member network to engage residents, gather community reuse ideas and input,

	570-622-3742 ext. 5	provide public notification, education and updates leverage reuse and remediation funding
Schuykill County Housing Authority	Thomas Hale thale@schcoha.org 570-385-3400	Coordinate to identify priority sites in Schuykill County, provide input on low-income housing needs and potential revitalization areas, engage residents, identify potential brownfield sites through tax liens
Schuykill Community Action	Barron Hetherington info@schuykillcommunityaction.com 570-622-1995	Identification of priority sites for low-income housing opportunities, advocate for low-income citizens and senior citizens, provide announcements and aid to Spanish speaking citizens.

2.b.iii Incorporating Community Input: Once the award has been secured, the SCIDA will be focused on engaging the community with a program of active outreach to identify potential brownfields sites. In a series of quarterly public meetings to be held at various municipal meeting halls throughout the County, the SCIDA in conjunction with its partners will solicit members of the communities they serve to identify sites they consider to be brownfields and sites that they feel are negatively impacting health and welfare in the County. The meeting presentation materials and minutes will be posted on Facebook, LinkedIn, and the Schuykill County Economic Development and County websites. SCIDA meetings are held in the county Schuykill County Economic Development Corporation in Pottsville. The County also hosts monthly meetings and has established a free call-in number for members of the county to attend the monthly meetings virtually and have their voices heard. The free call-in line information is provided on the Schuykill County Webpage.

3.a. i.-iv. Description of Tasks/Activities and Outputs:

Task 1: Programmatic	
i. <u>Project Implementation:</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overall programmatic and administrative oversight along with cooperative agreement (CA) compliance ▪ Solicitation, selection, and contracting an experienced, qualified environmental professional (QEP)* ▪ Annual and quarterly progress reporting (US ACRES), ASAP accounting updates, and grant closeout ▪ Cross checking expenditures associated with this grant do not duplicate those of other programs ▪ Travel for applicant attendance at conferences to present program success stories ▪ Development and submission of the Quality Management Plan (QMP)
ii. <u>Identifying Additional Sites:</u>	Additional Sites will be selected based on community need and those with the potential for the greatest positive impact for the community. Preferential site selection will be biased toward underserved communities, specifically the 12 tracts identified as disadvantaged.
iii. <u>Anticipated Project Schedule:</u>	The solicitation for and selection of the QEP will be completed within 3 months following execution of the CA. The QMP will be developed and submitted within 90 days of the beginning of the grant-performance period. All other administrative tasks will be completed, as required in the CA, over the grant-performance period. Conference attendance, annually, as available.
iv. <u>Task/Activity Lead:</u>	Schuykill County Industrial Development Authority (Applicant)
v. <u>Outputs:</u>	CA execution, QEP solicitation and contracting, US EPA approved QMP, 16 quarterly progress reports (US ACRES), monthly ASAP accounting updates, annual FFR and MBE/WBE reporting, 1 kickoff meeting with US EPA, travel for SCIDA staff for to up to 4 conferences, and requisite grant closeout reporting.
Task 2: Community Outreach	
i. <u>Project Implementation:</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public announcements of grant progress, updates, and meetings via print, electronic, and TV media ▪ Solicitation of community input through SCIDA partner social media accounts and email newsletters ▪ Secondary information distribution via SCIDA community engagement partners ▪ Host a kick-off meeting in Schuykill (and livestream) to inform the community and solicit input ▪ Outreach to community engagement partners, local governments, and private stakeholders
ii. <u>Anticipated Project Schedule:</u>	Initial public meeting will be scheduled during the first quarter following grant award. Program updates, announcements, and solicitations for input will be posted regularly via SCIDA/SEDCO social media accounts and websites and public update meetings will be held annually, or as needed, based on community input, site selection, and program progress.
iii. <u>Task/Activity Lead:</u>	Schuykill County Industrial Development Authority (Applicant)

iv. Outputs: Host up to 3 public meetings, regular social media and website updates, creation of marketing materials, press releases/conferences, and regular outreach to community partners.

Task 3: Site Inventory and Selection

i. Project Implementation:

- Maintain, update, rank, and prioritize brownfields inventory sites
- Coordinate with community engagement partners and coordinate with the selected QEP to expand the list of brownfields sites and revise ranking criteria to incorporate EJ criteria
- Site owner outreach*, site access coordination, and completion of site access agreements
- Preparation of Property Approval Questionnaires (PAQs) and coordination of requisite eligibility determination for petroleum sites with the Pa Dept. of Environmental Protection

ii. Anticipated Project Schedule: The existing site inventory will be actively expanded during the first 6-9 months following grant award and updated for the duration of the performance period. Site selection will be completed and access agreements, PAQs, and petroleum eligibility determination coordination, as necessary, will be completed continuously during the 4-year grant-performance period.

iii. Task/Activity Lead: Schuylkill County Industrial Development Authority (Applicant)

iv. Outputs: Update and expand site inventory list, rank and identify priority sites, complete up to 20 PAQs and 20 site access agreements (14 hazardous sites), including eligibility determination coordination for up to 6 petroleum products sites, and complete up to 5 site inventory evaluation visits.

Task 4: Site Assessments

i. Project Implementation:

- Prepare and submit a quality assurance program plan (QAPrP) for both hazardous substances and petroleum products to be used for the duration of the performance period for all sites
- Coordinate site access at eligible sites to complete Phase I/II activities*
- Complete up to 20 Phase I ESAs (and accompanying US EPA All Appropriate Inquiry Checklists) in accordance with ASTM E1527-21 and All Appropriate Inquiry requirements
- Complete up to 9 Phase II ESAs, which include the completion of site-specific health and safety plans (HASP) and submission of Field Sampling Plans (FSPs) to evaluate environmental conditions, consistent with Pa’s Voluntary Cleanup Program (Land Recycling Program) requirements
- A minimum of 10 assessments will be completed in underserved areas

ii. Anticipated Project Schedule: Phase I ESAs will be initiated within 6 months of the start of the program and will be ongoing throughout the duration of the performance period. A FSP, HASP, and a Phase II ESA report will be initiated for each site, as appropriate, based on the findings of the Phase I ESA on a rolling basis. The QAPrP will be completed and submitted to the US EPA within the first 6 months of the program and prior to initiation of any Phase II ESA activities.

iii. Task/Activity Lead: The selected Qualified Environmental Professional. At the direction of the SCIDA (Applicant), the QEP will be the Task 4 lead because of the specialized expertise and familiarity with programmatic requirements of the US EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant program and Pa’s Voluntary Cleanup Program (Land Recycling Program) regulations, along with specialized training necessary to complete the activities for Task 4 (e.g., HAZWOPER, 29 CFR Part 1910.120).

iv. Outputs: Up to 20 Phase I ESA reports (14 hazardous & 6 petroleum), 1 QAPrP, 9 FSPs, 9 HASPs, 9 Phase II ESA reports, and US ACRES updates.

Task 5: Remedial Planning and Design

i. Project Implementation:

- Complete up to a total of 4 Remedial Action Plans (RAPs) for hazardous substances and petroleum products sites, based on the results of the Phase I and Phase II ESAs and reuse needs/requirements
- The RAPs will outline the remediation plans and will be used to leverage additional assessment and cleanup funds and satisfy Pa Land Recycling Program requirements.

ii. Anticipated Project Schedule: RAPs will be developed and submitted to the US EPA within 3 months following the completion of Phase II ESA activities for a given site, as appropriate.

iii. Task/Activity Lead: The selected Qualified Environmental Professional. At the direction of the SCIDA (Applicant), the QEP will be the Task 5 lead because of the specialized expertise and familiarity with programmatic requirements of the US EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant program and Pa’s Voluntary Cleanup Program (Land Recycling Program) regulations.

iv. Outputs: Complete up to 4 RAPs, identify secondary funding programs to leverage with the completed RAPs.

3.b.i. and ii. Cost Estimates: The table below summarizes the funding allocation for each proposed task.

Budget Categories		Project Tasks (\$)					Total
		Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5	
Direct Costs	Personnel	\$11,000	\$2,750	\$4,125	\$4,400	\$1,925	\$24,200
	Fringe Benefits	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Travel	\$3,200	\$0	\$2,200	\$0	\$0	\$5,400
	Equipment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Supplies	\$1,200	\$1,400	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,600
	Contractual	\$5,000	\$8,400	\$32,400	\$390,000	\$32,000	\$467,800
	Other	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Direct Costs		\$20,400	\$12,550	\$32,400	\$390,000	\$32,000	\$500,000
Total Indirect Costs		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Budget		\$20,400	\$12,550	\$32,400	\$394,400	\$33,925	\$500,000

Cost Estimate Development

Task 1 Programmatic: *Personnel* – 200 hours at an average rate of \$55/hour = \$11,000; *Travel* - \$800 for SCIDA staff attendance at 4 conferences = \$3,200; *Supplies* - \$1,200 for printing and distribution of program information materials, website maintenance and remote-hosting service (e.g., Zoom) fees; *Contractual* – The QEP will assist the CAR in development and submission of the QMP = \$2,500.

Task 2 Community Outreach: *Personnel* – 50 hours at an average rate of \$55/hour = \$2,750; *Supplies* – \$1,400 for newspaper fees, website/social media fees, printing information materials; *Contractual* – 7 days for the QEP to attend and support outreach meetings at an average rate of \$1,200/day = \$8,400.

Task 3 Site Inventory and Selection: *Personnel* – 75 hours at an average rate of \$55/hour = \$4,125; *Travel* – 40 hours at an average rate of \$55/hour = \$2,200 for SCIDA staff to visit potential sites; *Contractual* – 27 days for the QEP to assist in contacting site owners, completing Property Approval Questionnaires, canvassing, inventory database updates, and maintenance at an average rate of \$1,200/day = \$32,400.

Task 4 Site Assessments: *Personnel* – 80 hours at an average rate of \$55/hour = \$4,400; *Contractual* – The QEP will complete up to 20 Phase I ESAs at an average cost of \$6,000 each = \$120,000, a QAPrP at a cost of \$5,000, and up to 9 Phase II ESAs (including Site Access Agreements, FSPs, HASP, and Phase II ESA report) at an average cost of \$30,000 each = \$270,000 (Total Contractual: \$390,000).

Task 5 Remedial Planning and Design: *Personnel* – 35 hours at an average rate of \$55/hour = \$1,925; *Contractual* – The QEP will complete up to 4 RAPs at an average cost of \$8,000 each = \$32,000.

3.c. Plan to Measure and Evaluate Environmental Progress and Results: SCIDA intends to assess up to 6-7 sites per year and will evaluate overall progress toward that goal by performing an annual review of the requisite quarterly progress reports. Additionally, the solicitation for the QEP will require the submission of a project timeline based on the expected outputs identified in Section 3.b to ensure the program schedule is being met and deliverables are being completed in a timely and efficient manner. Moreover, the SCIDA will update ACRES when additional resources beyond the Assessment Grant are leveraged. Consistent with the summary of tasks and activities above, the following table summarizes the expected outputs and outcomes of the assessment grant program.

Outputs		Outcomes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of community-involvement meetings • Number of assessment sites identified • Number of Phase I ESAs completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Phase II ESAs completed • Number of sites where remediation planning was conducted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acres of land assessed • Number of sites assessed • Acres of greenspace preserved/created • Additional funding leveraged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of sites redeveloped • Jobs created/retained • Tax-base increase • Redevelopment value added

4.a.i., ii, and iii. Organizational Capacity, Description of Key Staff and Organization Structure: The SCIDA has previous PIDA and RACP grant experience, and community connections provide it with the capacity to carry out the programmatic, administrative, and financial requirements to successfully manage and implement this grant program. Under the guidance of Executive Director, Mr. Frank Zukas as the designated lead for the US EPA Brownfields Community Wide Assessment Grant, the SCIDA and SEDCO have successfully managed and implemented PIDA and RACP grants throughout Schuykill County. Mr. Zukas is also the

president of the Schuylkill Economic Development Corporation (SEDCO) and has been in the economic development field since 1979. Mr. Zukas is also affiliated with the Schuylkill County Municipal Authority, the PA Economic Development Association (PEDA) and the Northeast Economic Development Association among others. Mr. Mark Minnig will provide direct support to Mr. Zukas as the SCIDA economic development manager, to oversee the day-to-day management of this program and direct the selected QEP throughout the grant performance period. Ms. Letitia Reiser serves as the Executive Secretary and will provide accounting, sales, marketing, and public relations support. The SCIDA and its partner SEDCO board of directors consists of corporate leaders in real estate, banking, healthcare, development, law, and business as well as county commissioners.

The SCIDA has the organizational structure necessary to ensure the timely and successful expenditure of funds to complete all technical, administrative, and financial requirements of the grant. The SCIDA is led by an Executive Director, Mr. Zukas, with over 40 years' experience in redeveloping blighted and distressed properties. Upon authorization of the Cooperative Agreement by the US EPA, the SCIDA will issue a request for proposal to select an experienced, qualified environmental professional (QEP) to assist in completing select technical project tasks and activities as identified in Task 4 and 5 of Section 3a. Mr. Minnig will also coordinate with the QEP throughout the grant performance period to secure additional funding resources, such as those programs described in Section 1.c.i., to extend the impact and reach of the assessment grant program. The SCIDA does not anticipate any subrecipients as part of this grant program.

4.a. iv. Acquiring Additional Resources: The SCIDA and its affiliates are well versed in soliciting and managing contractors and consultants for significant industrial development projects. Additionally, SCIDA has worked directly with their affiliate economic and industrial development organizations in Schuylkill County and leveraged federal and state assistance to effectuate local job creation and remove environmental hazards similar in scope and purpose to the proposed county-wide brownfields assessment grant program currently being applied for by the SCIDA.

4b. Past Performance and Accomplishments

4b ii. Has Not Received an EPA Brownfields Grant but has Received Other Federal or Non-Federal Assistance Agreements - The SCIDA has not received a US EPA Brownfields Grant. The SCIDA and its partners have been awarded numerous federal and state assistance agreements to facilitate job creation and remove environmental hazards in the County that are similar in scope and purpose to the proposed community-wide brownfields assessment grant program.

(1). Purpose and Accomplishments

- **Pennsylvania Industrial Development Authority (PIDA)** – SCIDA and its partners/affiliates have successfully leveraged over \$1.7 million in low interest PIDA loans to facilitate development and infrastructure. Projects included building renovations and infrastructure work for Columbia Street, LLC, the Ashland Foundry and Machine Works, and Solar Innovations, LLC. Ashland Foundry and Machine Works is a generational employer located with over 130 employees in the disadvantaged community of Ashland.
- **Pennsylvania Redevelopment Assistance Capital Programs (RACP) Grants**– The SCIDA and its partners have been awarded over \$3.2 million in RACP grants since 2000. The grants have assisted disadvantaged and underserved areas including Tamaqua, Pottsville, and Coaldale. RACP grants were utilized to develop the 2,000-acre Highridge Business Park located in Butler, Cass, and Foster Townships. Portions of the Business Park are in the disadvantaged tracks of Butler Township west of I-81 at Exit 119.

(2). Compliance with Grant Requirements:

The SCIDA has complied with all requirements of the above-mentioned assistance agreements, including reporting requirements, procurement requirements, funds disbursement requirements, financial tracking requirements, submission of technical documents, documentation of project progress, and auditing requirements. The SCIDA complied with all specific grant requirements including the timely development of the workplan, schedule, terms and conditions, and timely reporting of quarterly reports and financial status reports. Accordingly, the SCIDA has the procedural knowledge to successfully disburse Assessment Grant funds and track Assessment Grant expenditures. The projects funded through the identified grants completed the project tasks.

FY 2024 UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY BROWNFIELDS
COMMUNITY-WIDE ASSESSMENT GRANT APPLICATION

Schuykill County Industrial Development Authority

Attachment 1 – Threshold Documentation

III.B. Threshold Criteria for Assessment Grants

1. Applicant Eligibility: The Schuykill County Industrial Development Authority is an eligible applicant to apply to the US EPA Brownfields Community Wide Assessment Grant as a general purpose of local government. The Schuykill County Industrial Development Authority was established on October 21, 1969 and duly formed under the provisions of the Pennsylvania Economic Development Financing Law (formerly known as the Industrial and Commercial Development Authority Law), as amended and supplemented, 73 P.S. Section 371 et seq. The Schuykill County Industrial Development Authority's concentration is on Economic Development. The Authority's focus is on the creation, attraction, and retention of business.

2. Community Involvement

Schuykill County's residents, businesses, and elected officials are open to bold proposals and development opportunities that help Schuykill County differentiate itself among neighboring counties and grow its economy. The SCIDA and the County municipalities have been engaging the public to assist in determining a list of priority brownfield sites. This engagement has been developed with Schuykill County's 2006 *Comprehensive Plan*, the *Eastern Schuykill Planning (ESP) Comprehensive Plan (2007)*, the *Open Space and Greenway Plan (2006)*, and *Tamaqua Choose Happiness Community Plan (2022)*. The Plans includes public meetings, surveys, and interviews. This community input will help identify priority brownfields sites for redevelopment and reinvestment. Once the award has been secured, the primary community outreach will include an advertised public "kick-off meeting" with an educational presentation with an overview of the planned grant assessment work and solicit public recommendations for additional priority sites. Advertisements for the award and kick-off meeting will be published in the local newspaper, The Skook News, and on the SCIDA website. Upon selection of a qualified environmental professional (QEP), the SCIDA will advertise and host a public outreach meeting and task the QEP to provide the public an overview of the program and solicit public input from community partners and stakeholders. The SCIDA and its partners will continue to solicit members of the community to identify sites they feel are impacting the health and welfare in the County. The public meeting presentation materials and meeting minutes will be posted on County social media accounts, including; Facebook, LinkedIn, and the SCIDA websites. Meetings are advertised in the SCIDA website, sed-co.com.

3. Named Contractors and Subrecipients

The SCIDA affirms it has not named nor procured a contractor or subrecipients prior to the award of Brownfields grant funding. If awarded the SCIDA will utilize their standard competitive procurement practices, which follow 2 CFR § 200.317 through 200.326, to secure a qualified environmental contractor.

4. Expenditure of Existing Grant Funds

The SCIDA affirms it does not have an open EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant or Multipurpose Grant.