

# ALGER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Dean Seaberg, Chairman  
101 COURT STREET, MUNISING, MI 49862

## NARRATIVE INFORMATION SHEET

1. **Applicant Identification:** Alger County, Michigan  
101 Court Street  
Munising, Michigan 49862
  
2. **Funding Requested**
  - a. Assessment Grant Type: Community-wide
  - b. Federal Funds Requested: \$300,000
  
3. **Location:** Alger County, Michigan
  
4. **Target Area and Priority Site Information:**

**Target Areas:** City of Munising, Munising Township, Au Train Township, and Onota Township (Census Tracts 26003000100 and 26003000200)

  - City of Munising
    - Priority Site 1: Former Fire Hall and Adjacent Property, 109 and 127 W. Munising Avenue, Munising, Michigan
    - Priority Site 2: Cherry Street Vacant Lots (northeast/northwest corners of intersection of Cherry Street and M-28), Munising, Michigan
    - Priority Site 3: 200 Block of East Superior Street, Munising, Michigan
  - Munising Township
    - Priority Site 4: Indiantown Road Property, Munising Township, Michigan
  - Au Train Township:
    - Priority Site 5: 5426 Park Avenue, Au Train Township, Michigan
    - Priority Site 6: 5409 Oak Street/7511 Spruce Street, Au Train Township, Michigan
    - Priority Site 7: 7330 State Hwy. M-28, Au Train Township, Michigan
    - Priority Site 8: E7336 State Hwy. M-28, Au Train Township, Michigan
  - Onota Township:
    - Priority Site 9: 866 State Hwy. M-28, Onota Township, Michigan
  
5. **Contacts**
  - a. Project Director: Pam Johnson, Treasurer  
906.387.7013  
pjohnson@algercounty.gov  
101 Court Street  
Munising, Michigan 49862
  
  - b. Chief Executive/Highest Ranking Elected Official: Dean Seaberg, Chair  
906.387.7073  
dseaberg@algercounty.gov  
101 Court Street  
Munising, Michigan 49862

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- 6. **Population:** City of Munising, 1,986  
Munising Township, 2,865  
Au Train Township, 1,019  
Onota Township, 371

7. **Other Factors:**

<b>Other Factors</b>	<b>Page #</b>
Community population is 10,000 or less.	1, 2, 5
The applicant is, or will assist, a federally recognized Indian tribe or United States territory.	N/A
The priority site(s) is impacted by mine-scarred land.	N/A
The priority site(s) is adjacent to a body of water.	1, 3, 4
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain.	N/A
The reuse of the priority site(s) will facilitate renewable energy from wind, solar, or geothermal energy.	N/A
The reuse of the priority site(s) will incorporate energy efficiency measures.	4, 6, 7
The proposed project will improve local climate adaptation/mitigation capacity and resilience to protect residents and community investments.	4
At least 30% of the overall project budget will be spent on eligible reuse/area-wide planning activities for priority site(s) within the target area(s).	N/A
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.	N/A

- 8. **Letter from the State or Tribal Environmental Authority** (Attached)

- 9. **Releasing Copies of Applications:** N/A



GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF  
ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES, AND ENERGY  
LANSING



PHILLIP D. ROOS  
DIRECTOR

October 30, 2023

VIA EMAIL

Dean Seaberg, Chair  
Alger County  
101 Court Street  
Munising, Michigan 49862

Dear Dean Seaberg:

**SUBJECT:** Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE)  
Acknowledgment of a United States Environmental Protection Agency  
(U.S. EPA) Brownfield Grant Proposal for 2024

Thank you for your notice and request for a letter of acknowledgment for Alger County's proposal for a U.S. EPA Brownfield Grant. EGLE's Remediation and Redevelopment Division encourages and supports community-led environmental assessment and redevelopment efforts and recognizes Alger County's need for funding.

Alger County is applying for a \$300,000 Community-wide Brownfield Assessment Grant. As a general-purpose unit of local government, Alger County is an eligible grant applicant.

Should the U.S. EPA award a brownfield grant to Alger County, it would allow them to conduct environmental investigations and promote economic development at brownfield sites. If you need further information about potential eligible sites in Alger County or assistance regarding EGLE's brownfield programs, please feel free to contact me at the number below or by email at [SmedleyR@Michigan.gov](mailto:SmedleyR@Michigan.gov).

Sincerely,

Ronald L. Smedley  
Brownfield Coordinator  
Brownfield Assessment and Redevelopment  
Section  
517-242-9048

cc: Julie Lowe, EGLE

## 1. PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION AND PLANS FOR REVITALIZATION

### 1.a. Target Area and Brownfields

#### 1.a.i. Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Area

Alger County (**geographic boundary for grant**) (pop. 8,842) is located in the heart of Michigan's Upper Peninsula (U.P.) along the southern shore of Lake Superior, the largest of the five Great Lakes. The City of Munising (pop. 1,986) is the sole city in the county and is home to the largest population and the greatest number of contaminated sites. Outside Munising lies one village, eight townships, and 41 unincorporated communities—all qualifying as “micro-communities” with populations well under 10,000. The entire county is designated “rural” and is made up of three census tracts (CT1, CT2, and CT3). CT1 is a Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) disadvantaged community, which includes the City of Munising.

The mining, iron smelting, and logging industries formed the economic and community heart of the U.P. during its settlement. Alger County has a proud heritage of these industries, as well as the shipping industry and leather tanning. But these once thriving industries are long gone and have left behind numerous properties contaminated by historical industrial and commercial uses. Logging roads have given way to skiing and snowmobile trails; ships that once left our harbors with copper and iron ore now leave with tourists to see shipwrecks and the spectacular Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. The main drivers of our present-day economy include primarily small manufacturing operations, small businesses, service sector jobs, agriculture, fishing, and seasonal tourism. Limitations on development, including limited available land (70% of the land in the county is state or federally-owned or is locked in forestry reserve) and electricity rates 25% higher than elsewhere in the state (92nd percentile, CEJST), make it expensive to locate new businesses anywhere in Alger County.

Despite the county's natural beauty and access to Lake Superior, the small-town, rural communities within the county experience many challenges including poverty, low-wage jobs, disinvestment, lack of affordable housing, and numerous sites of contamination. Blight and disinvestment have become major issues because of the rural and remote nature of the county, an aging population (23.6% at 65 and older, data.census.gov) with limited resources, and over 11% of county residents living in poverty (data.census.gov) with 49% below the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed (ALICE) threshold. Due to the influx of tourists and recreational visitors, properties for short-term rentals have added a strain to the county's existing housing crisis—there is a lack of affordable housing, which is desperately needed for the low-income workforce and seasonal workers that support the local tourism and recreational economy. These residents do not qualify for assistance with housing and cannot afford a house in the area. The Alger County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (Authority) has developed an inventory prioritizing over 70 possible brownfield sites throughout the county. The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) has confirmed 52 known sites of contamination (egle.state.mi.us/RIDE). It is critical that Alger County not only cleans up known contaminated sites throughout the county, but also that it ensures steps are taken to prevent the creation of new sites or sources of contamination, i.e., blighted properties. Alger County relies almost solely on groundwater to provide drinking water to all county residents, and only a few communities have a public water system, as most of the county is served by individual wells. It is imperative that contaminants from brownfield sites do not affect the water bodies (either surface water or groundwater) that sustain our economy, livelihood, and health.

Many of the sites of known contamination in the county (nearly 40%) are located in the City of Munising; however, other sites of contamination and blight are scattered throughout the county. Target areas for this EPA Assessment Grant include the City of Munising and other smaller communities that characterize the county as a whole including Munising Township, Au Train Township, and Onota Township, which have populations of 2,865, 1,019, and 371, respectively (U.S. Census 2020). The Authority, on behalf of the county, is taking the lead on this grant because the rural communities do not have the resources to address these brownfield sites. This EPA Grant will act as a catalyst for the reuse and redevelopment of brownfield sites throughout the county by providing funds for Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments, hazardous materials building surveys, and cleanup planning. The knowledge gained from these assessments will help to break the cycle of neglect, blight, and unaddressed contamination and create opportunities for affordable housing, new development, and pursuing environmental cleanup.

### 1.a.ii. Description of the Priority Brownfield Site(s)

This application is for a Community-wide Assessment Grant and will address sites throughout Alger County. With 52 known sites of contamination in the county, and many other blighted and/or perceived to be contaminated (70 sites in inventory), the following priority sites have been identified.

The **City of Munising** (pop. 1,986, Census Tract 1) is the County Seat and has been aggressively preparing for redevelopment in its downtown by pursuing its Michigan Certified Redevelopment Ready Community status. The city has streamlined and documented its processes and procedures, making it more business-friendly and encouraging private investment. By embracing a Placemaking Strategy, the downtown will be the catalyst for creating a quality place where people want to live, work, play, and learn. This strategy includes its natural areas, neighborhoods, and the downtown. To realize this future, the following brownfield sites are priorities and require immediate assessment.

- **Former Fire Hall and Adjacent Property (109 and 127 W. Munising Ave.):** Located on the main street in town, the site contains an old fire hall that is blighted with a failing roof. The adjacent vacant property to the east was the site of a former auto dealership. Both sites are contaminated with metals, polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons, and petroleum compounds (benzene, toluene, and xylene) and require additional assessment and a potential vapor mitigation system. The fire hall also has asbestos and lead-based paint.
- **Cherry Street Vacant Lots (northeast/northwest corners of intersection of Cherry St. and M-28):** These parcels are also located along the main street through downtown. The former County Road Commission and previous sawmill activities resulted in petroleum contamination in soil and groundwater. The buildings were removed from the property, but some contamination remains that potentially impacts adjacent housing and a senior living facility downgradient of the site.
- **200 Block of East Superior Street:** This site is nearly a block of vacant land in the downtown zoning district. The site was a former auto service facility with perceived concerns related to potential contamination from petroleum products, fuel storage, oils, gasoline, and other chemicals.

**Munising Township** (pop. 2,865, Census Tract 1 and 3) is home to much of Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore and numerous famous waterfalls, Neenah Paper Company (Alger County's largest employer), a casino, a timber products company, and an active landfill. One of their major concerns is an old township dump that remains vacant with unknown or perceived contamination. Reuse of the land has been stalled due to these concerns, which could include per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)/perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) contamination.

- **Indiantown Road Property:** This 40-acre property is suspected of being contaminated based on its historical use as a township dump. Concerns for various contaminants such as solvents, metals, and PFAS/PFOS have prevented the township from considering reuse of the property.

**Au Train Township** (pop. 1,019, Census Tract 2) lies along the main state highway M-28 overlooking beautiful Lake Superior. However, the township is plagued by blight and properties that have junk cars with potential leaking fuel tanks and motor oil; uninhabitable houses with potential heating oil tanks, asbestos, and lead-based paint; junk and debris; and burned-out mobile homes. These properties are interspersed with adjacent residents whose property values have been depressed and are potentially exposed to various chemicals and these eyesores. The township is working to find resources to clean these sites up for possible affordable housing; however, due to the years of neglect, environmental assessments are necessary to conduct hazardous materials surveys prior to demolition and to determine if the properties are safe for reuse.

- **5426 Park Avenue:** The property has an uninhabitable mobile home with junk and debris on site.
- **5409 Oak Street/7511 Spruce Street:** The site has a burned-out mobile home that the township does not have the resources to clean up. The junk and debris have spread onto the adjacent parcel.
- **7330 State Hwy. M-28:** The property has an uninhabitable house that has been vacant for 15 years, likely with asbestos and lead-based paint, a heating oil tank, miscellaneous junk, and an old unlicensed recreational vehicle. This site is on the main corridor into the U.P. and has received written citizen complaints.
- **E7336 State Hwy. M-28:** This property has over 20 unlicensed junk boats that have been present for years, likely with old fuel tanks and various oils from boat engines. The house is uninhabitable with a collapsed shed. This site has also received citizen complaints.

**Onota Township** (pop. 371, Census Tract 2) lies along the southern shore of Lake Superior, and 30% of the township is within the Hiawatha National Forest. Blight and neglect are also present in this township, causing various parcels to deter from the area's beauty.

- **866 Hwy. M-28:** Home to the Tyoga Bar, named after the now ghost town of Tyoga, this site sits in ruins with junk cars and a collapsed burned structure after a fire destroyed its previously vacant status. Beyond the eyesore it presents to visitors along M-28, the township is concerned that the remaining junk cars and a potential heating oil tank could be leaking fuel, oils, and other chemicals leaching into soil, surface water (Lake Superior), and groundwater.

Alger County has access to recent funding through the State Land Bank (up to \$3,000,000) that can be used for demolition activities to assist with blight elimination at some of the above sites. The EPA Grant would be used to conduct assessments to support the demolition activities.

1.a.iii. Identifying Additional Sites

Moving inland from the City of Munising target area, there is a more rural and agricultural landscape that contains pockets of low-income, distressed neighborhoods with blighted properties, substandard housing, and disproportionate environmental stressors including abandoned properties and closed gas stations/auto repair shops with solvents, petroleum, and metals contamination. The Authority, using its existing application process and in concert with the underserved community (CEJST Disadvantaged), will evaluate and determine if grant support to a particular site is warranted and will address a need or needs that make that portion of a community in which the site is located underserved and disadvantaged. Additionally, the county anticipates inventorying sites of contamination along the coast to avoid movement of contamination into the Great Lakes and incorporating resilient coastal management principles when applicable.

**1.b. Revitalization of the Target Area**

1.b.i. Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans

The City of Munising’s 2020 Master Plan and the other target communities’ plans include investing in and improving their downtowns and townships, attracting and retaining new businesses, and creating a sense of place as priorities. The City of Munising is the rural center that helps provide nearly the entire county’s services, infrastructure, and support. Many of the jobs in the county are tied to tourism, customer service, and a paper mill. Outside of the mill, most of the service-oriented jobs are typically low-wage jobs requiring affordable housing, including multi-family, rental apartments, and senior housing. According to the City of Munising 2020 Master Plan, Munising (along with the rest of the U.P.) has been seeing a slow decline in population since the 1980s. Further, the population that remains is aging significantly with over a quarter of the county population over 65 (93rd percentile, MiEJScreen). Munising, and the county as a whole, recognizes the need to slow this decrease in population and ensure that the area can attract younger people to fill existing and future jobs. Brownfields, blight, junk cars, and contaminated sites do not help create a sense of place attractive to a younger generation that is so desperately needed.

In Munising’s 2020 Master Plan, the **Firehall and Adjacent Property** priority site in Munising was identified for a multi-story, mixed-use building (reusing the existing building) consistent with the traditional downtown with higher-density housing on the upper floors and commercial uses on the first floor. The **Cherry Street Vacant Lots** are slated for residential-type structures including larger single-family homes or townhomes and high-tech type professional offices, creating a walkable live/work environment. The **200 Block of East Superior Street** has a developer that is pursuing a mixed-use development called the Munising Marketplace. In concert with the State and County Land Banks, the site will include street-level commercial space, a workforce development center, and retail and restaurants that will participate in direct placement hiring programs all managed by Michigan Works to help support and retain talent. Additionally, the development will include workforce housing with 36 studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom units on the second and third floors with some units set aside for individuals earning less than 80% of Area Median Income.

In our target community of Munising Township, the **Indiantown Road** 40-acre former dump has been identified by the township for reuse as soccer fields and a disc golf course. To attract and retain residents to their community and the county, it is imperative to have facilities for organized recreation and sports activities.

Au Train Township’s strategy for reuse of the various blighted priority sites is for affordable and attainable workforce housing, which is needed throughout the county. Once the blight has been removed and the properties are determined to be safe for reuse, interest in these properties will develop and adjacent residential properties/neighborhoods will improve.

Onota Township's **866 Hwy. M-28** priority site is an eyesore which must be removed. Due to its remote location, no plans for reuse have been identified other than ensuring it no longer presents a potential hazard to the environment and nearby surface and groundwater.

#### 1.b.ii. Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy

Assessing sites in our **target communities** and countywide will be critical for realizing the ultimate reuse vision of ensuring brownfield redevelopment contributes to the well-being of the communities in concert with our targeted communities' redevelopment and renewal strategies. This is accomplished by (1) understanding the conditions that make a site a brownfield (i.e., contaminated, blighted); (2) arriving at solutions for alleviating the brownfield conditions (i.e., cleanup, due care or continuing obligations, compatible reuse); (3) providing tools, resources, and incentives to implement the solutions (i.e., utilize the Land Bank to secure and stabilize blighted and vacant properties); and (4) educating the community, allowing informed decisions on brownfield properties to eliminate or manage adverse conditions.

The projects in Munising are projected to result in a new construction, which will create 46 new residential units to address the local housing shortage. The investment for these projects is projected to exceed \$20 million and would result in annual increases of local taxes and support for local downtown businesses. Munising Township is seeking to create recreational space for residents by reusing an old dump (**Indiantown Road Property**) for soccer fields. Removing the blight in Au Train and Onota Townships creates attractive spaces for new, energy-efficient, affordable/attainable housing; eliminates potential hazards to residents; and allows for potential future growth for these communities. When applicable, the county intends to encourage shoreline infrastructure improvements and creative storm water management systems due to coastal climate vulnerability. All of these projects align with the county's Master Plan goals to support new housing projects while at the same time creating a sense of place that embraces the county's large tracts of forested lands and the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore.

#### **1.c. Strategy for Leveraging Resources**

##### 1.c.i. Resources Needed for Site Reuse

Funding resources are very limited in Michigan; however, the Authority intends to use Brownfield Plans or tax increment financing plans to leverage future tax increment from new investment on a brownfield site to pay for eligible activities, such as Phase I/II Environmental Site Assessments, Baseline Environmental Assessments, Due Care Plans, demolition, soil and groundwater cleanup, and lead and asbestos abatement. The Authority can use the tax increment capture from a project to repay and leverage the EPA Grant funds that were invested in the project, and once the developer is fully reimbursed, the Authority can capture another five years for a Local Site Remediation Revolving Fund. This fund, which typically is at the end of the Plan, is locally controlled and can only be used for eligible activities on other brownfield sites. The Authority adopted its first Brownfield Plan with previous EPA Assessment Grants, which will repay the \$4,000 in EPA Grant funds used for a project in 2017 and will bring in approximately \$84,000 from 2035 to 2040. The Authority will also pursue Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) Brownfield Grants and Loans, which are annually funded with \$5 million for petroleum sites and \$10 million for other sites of contamination. The county, through the Authority, has pursued and received funding from EGLE to remove chemicals from two locations in Trenary, which supported the demolition of a collapsing building and allowed for the reuse of a garage. The Alger County Land Bank Authority (ACLBA) additionally has access through the State Land Bank to \$3,000,000 in competitive blight elimination funding, which can be used to remove blighted structures throughout the county. In round 2, the ACLBA was awarded \$699,990 to complete blight elimination activities for two sites in our Onota Township target area, and one site in the City of Munising target area, the **Former Fire Hall**. Activities anticipated for the fire hall include removal of the failed roof and a new roof, windows, and doors to stabilize the structure from the elements. The Authority will continue to pursue various funding sources to complement the EPA Grant.

##### 1.c.ii. Use of Existing Infrastructure

Electricity rates are 25% higher in the U.P. than the rest of Michigan because of the extreme distances energy companies have to run and maintain power lines (Alger County Board of Commissioners, 2014). According to Bridge Michigan, UPPCO (the U.P.'s biggest electricity provider) charges some of the highest rates in the U.S. Water and sewer lines must be buried extra deep to prevent freezing during our famously harsh winters—a precaution that did not prevent freezing pipes and millions in damages during the winter of 2013/2014. These limitations on expansion make it more attractive for the businesses that are interested in coming here to build or renovate an existing building in our main city

(Munising) and other target areas, where infrastructure is already in place. The Michigan Department of Transportation and the City of Munising are investing about \$15.5 million over three years to rebuild and improve almost 5 miles of their main highway artery M-28 including other streets and water and sewer infrastructure.

Our focus on brownfield redevelopment encourages infrastructure reuse in Munising. Master planning in Munising also encourages mixed-use development, dense parking, placemaking (planning), and reusing existing buildings—goals assisted by this grant. The additive effect of new businesses and workers will encourage others to locate in this community’s downtown. By reusing existing infrastructure, developers may also gain access to state and federal incentives to manage storm water on-site, before it enters the municipal system. The end result will be reduced fuel and energy consumption from extending utilities to the urban fringe and reduced energy use to provide municipal services. When available, our more rural communities will continue to encourage the use of existing infrastructure.

## **2. COMMUNITY NEED AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

### **2.a. Community Need**

#### 2.a.i. The Community’s Need for Funding

Although Alger County (pop. 8,842) is a place of beauty, its beauty and remoteness present many challenges and consequences. The Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) for state-owned public land and the flat annual fee for forest reserve land (70% of land in the county) provide us with a fraction of what would be available if the land was on the regular tax rolls (Alger County budget report, 2021). Alger County has seen an 8.59% decrease in population from 2000 to 2020 (2021 Upper Peninsula Community Health Needs Assessment, or CHNA). With over 1.2 million visitors coming to our small, rural county over a 150-day period to witness the beauty of the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, a tremendous burden is placed on our county (a designated rural county) and the City of Munising. The boat cruise lines that transport visitors all originate in Munising. This small city with 1,986 residents must bear the traffic, exhaust, garbage, and people typically associated with a city nearly the size of Dallas, Texas (1.3 million, worldpopulationreview.com).

Even with this successful tourism industry, the residents in the county struggle with day-to-day life. 49% of households in the county are below the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed (ALICE) threshold. Many of the jobs in our county are service jobs that do not always provide a livable wage or are part-time jobs. The county, City of Munising, and Census Tract 1 (which includes our target areas of the City of Munising and Munising Township) have median household incomes (\$48,822, \$42,281, and \$38,953, respectively) that are less than Michigan (\$66,986) and, in some cases, nearly half of the national rate (\$74,755) (U.S. Census 2021-22). 58% of households in Munising live below the ALICE threshold, and the city is considered an Eligible Distressed Area, which according to the Michigan State Housing Development Authority exhibits higher than statewide average levels of economic distress. These include a declining population since 1970, a lower increase in state equalized value of real and personal property since 1972, and a higher poverty rate and unemployment rate. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has designated Census Tract 1 as a food desert because of the number of residents who live more than a mile from the nearest supermarket and do not own a vehicle. According to Kids Count 2021, nearly 55% of kids in K-12 in the county are receiving Free and Reduced-Price lunches. Alger County had the third highest percentage of children aged 0–4 in the state living homeless (11.1% for Alger County vs. 2.8% for Michigan). Poverty is a social determinant of health that disproportionately impacts children, as evidenced by 5% of children who remain uninsured in Alger County, one of the highest in the U.P. (2021 CHNA).

The County Board of Commissioners established the Alger County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (Authority) because our rural, small communities (all qualifying as “micro-communities” with populations well under 10,000) do not have the resources or the financial wherewithal to address the number of sites in the county with similar challenges economically, socially, and environmentally. Without assessing sites, it is difficult to understand the additional funding or resources that will be necessary to prepare the site for reuse. The EPA Grant provides the impetus for attracting and leveraging both public and private investment on brownfield sites including state grants and loans, bank financing, private funding, tax increment financing through Brownfield Plans, etc. Our economy is in worse shape than the national average and in most measures worse than the state. The trend toward higher poverty, lower household income, and lower per capita income increases toward our smaller, more rural, areas. There is a clear impact—and a clear cost—to brownfields in this county.

## 2.a.ii. Threats to Sensitive Populations

### 2.a.ii.(1) Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations

In the U.P., older adults account for a higher percentage of the total population than the rest of the state or the nation (2021 Upper Peninsula Community Health Needs Assessment, or CHNA). Alger County is one of the oldest counties in Michigan with 26.3% at 65 years of age or older; the City of Munising has 23.6% 65 years or older; and Census Tracts 1, 2, and 3 have 30.8%, 19.8%, and 23.7%, respectively, compared to 17.2% in Michigan and 16% in the U.S. (2021 CHNA and ACS 5yr). 17.4% of those 65 years and older live alone and require additional help. This data is corroborated by the EJScreen tool, which identifies all three census tracts exceeding the 81st percentile for people 64 years or older. Senior citizens are one of the most economically vulnerable demographic groups in Michigan and the United States, as the vast majority over 65 are retired and on a fixed income. For most Michigan residents aged 65 and older, Social Security benefits are their primary source of income, and for about one-third of them, Social Security accounts for 90% to 100% of their income. Seniors face a complex set of needs and must balance a loss of earnings, increased health concerns, service shortages, decreased mobility, and limited housing options. Many may not be immediately aware of potential contamination problems in their community. With age, the immune system declines; hence, seniors are also more susceptible to the effects of contamination. These limitations place this sensitive group at a high risk for exposure and problems related to brownfield sites and the chemicals typically associated with these sites. EPA Assessment Grant funds will help reduce the environmental risks that our significant and growing senior population faces each day by assessing, evaluating, and providing relevant information from brownfield sites that can inform on the level of contamination, if any. This information will help direct reuse and cleanup, which could support the development of safe, energy-efficient housing for our workforce and our increasing senior population.

### 2.a.ii.(2) Greater Than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions

According to the 2021 CHNA, age is the number one factor for chronic diseases. Chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, and arthritis are the leading causes of death and disability in the U.P. Heart disease and cancer are responsible for half of local deaths. In Alger County, the prevalence of heart disease among adults aged 18 years and older is 7.8%, which is higher than the national average (6.7%), and the prevalence of cancer among adults aged 18 years and older is 8.3%, which is higher than the national average (7.3%) (CDC PLACES). The county had three EJ Indexes that were elevated for the state including lead paint (55), underground storage tanks (39), and traffic proximity (29). The sensitive senior population is likely affected by these conditions. According to Germany's Environmental Authority (Umweltbundesamt), "environmental risk factors are now thought to cause or at least influence age-related diseases such as Parkinson's or Alzheimer's disease." These typically old-age neurological diseases have a common element: brain cell damage. Although the cause of these diseases is still not known, we do know that certain chemicals cause brain cell damage, including heavy metals such as lead and mercury, solvents such as toluene, and pesticides, among others (atsdr.cdc.gov). Our **priority sites** have lead-based paint, gasoline, oils, and various solvents that have contributed to soil, groundwater, surface water, and likely airborne contamination. In addition to the known/suspected contamination issues, the presence of asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) and lead-based paint (LBP) is also suspected at the sites with old buildings on them. Over 62% of the homes in the county and 77% in our target city of Munising were built before 1980 (ACS 5-yr estimates). ACMs and LBP are especially concerning considering the number of blighted priority properties identified in our communities of Au Train Township and Onota Township. Hazardous materials surveys and material sampling are needed to confirm the presence and extent of these materials and develop a mitigation plan. This does not always happen, unfortunately, with the result that children and adults are chronically exposed to materials that can cause learning development problems and lung disease. Using EPA Grant funds to educate county residents about brownfields and their associated hazards will help address existing sites and identify new brownfield sites that can be assessed for potential risks. These risks can then be mitigated and reduced through proper reuse and/or cleanup.

### 2.a.ii.(3) Environmental Justice

#### 2.a.ii.(3)(a) Identification of Environmental Justice Issues

There are 52 sites of known environmental contamination in the county based on databases maintained by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), and 20 more have been identified by residents as perceived to be contaminated. Over 62% of our housing in the county was built prior to 1980 with likely asbestos and lead-based paint; this housing presents an extreme risk for

childhood lead poisoning since it may contain lead-based paint. Many of the properties that are affordable are substandard. Further, the residents of this housing (primarily low-income families and seniors) are disproportionately affected by brownfield sites since many of them reside close to blighted or contaminated areas, which tend to reflect areas of lower property values. Therefore, low-income households have a much higher exposure risk to chemicals like asbestos, lead-based paint, lead in soils, and solvents, translating to a higher risk of direct contact or inhalation, resulting in lead poisoning, respiratory problems/diseases, low birthweights/deforities, and cancer. Additionally, CT1 (including four priority sites: **Former Fire Hall, Cherry Street Vacant Lots, 200 Block of East Superior Street, Indiantown Road Property**) is a CEJST disadvantaged community based on the following: average annual energy cost (92nd percentile), low-income population (74th percentile), heart disease (96th percentile), the presence of one or more former defense sites within 5 kilometers, and the percentage of people ages 25 years or older whose education is less than a high school diploma (10% percentile).

**2.a.ii.(3)(b) Advancing Environmental Justice**

The EPA Grant will be used to conduct Phase I and II Environmental Assessments of vacant, blighted buildings and substandard housing in our target areas and underserved communities, identifying brownfield conditions that need cleanup, exposure mitigation, asbestos or lead abatement, and improved infrastructure. The Authority and Land Bank can bring resources to these communities to reuse sites for the construction of energy-efficient, affordable housing, creating opportunities for building generational wealth and improved well-being. The projects conducted under the EPA Grant will not cause the displacement of residents or businesses in the target areas.

**2.b. Community Engagement**

**2.b.i.–2.b.ii. Project Involvement and Project Roles**

<b>Name of Organization / Contact</b>	<b>Involvement in Project</b>
Alger Conservation District (Matt Watkeys, matt.watkeys@macd.org)	Technical assistance with “green” alternatives on redevelopment sites.
Greater Munising Bay Partnership for Commerce Development, DDA (Dr. Katherine Reynolds, kathy@algercountychamber.com)	Support outreach and education on brownfields and funding to 200+ members including the business community.
Alger County Transit (Paige Eaton, altrandirector@jamadots.com)	Support community outreach, providing flyers and info to riders throughout the county.
City of Munising – <i>Target Community</i> (Devin Olson, CityManager@cityofmunising.org)	Identify sites and coordinate reuse strategies. Inform city residents about EPA funding.
Munising Township – <i>Target Community</i> (Lisa Howard, muntwpsuper@jamadots.com)	Identify sites and coordinate reuse strategies. Inform township residents about EPA funding.
Au Train Township – <i>Target Community</i> (Michelle Doucette, michelledoucette@charter.net)	Identify sites and coordinate reuse strategies. Inform township residents about EPA funding.
Alger County Land Bank Authority (Darlene Dishong, ddishong@algercounty.gov)	Acquire/hold/stabilize properties for assessing blight and brownfield conditions and assist with affordable housing.
Onota Township – <i>Target Community</i> (Terry Pihlainen, Pih4legs@tds.net)	Identify sites and coordinate reuse strategies. Inform township residents about EPA funding.
Community Action Alger Marquette County (Michelle LaJoie, mLaJoie@communityaction.org)	Assist with outreach to low-income populations in the community, educating them about brownfields and their potential hazards.
Central Upper Peninsula Planning and Development (Dotty Lajoie, dlajoie@cuppapad.org)	Help outreach efforts to local units of government, educating on brownfield programs and funding assistance.
Michigan Association of Counties (Gabriel Zawadzki, zawadzki@micounties.org)	Provide grant writing support to leverage other funding for brownfield cleanup and reuse.
Alger County Commission on Aging (Kris Lindquist, coakl@jamadots.com)	Provide education on brownfields to our senior sensitive population.

**2.b.iii. Incorporating Community Input**

Our partners in this application have committed to providing locations for public meetings throughout Alger County including our target communities, where we will hold grant kickoff meetings to inform

residents about the new grant and will hold follow-up information events when we hit project milestones. It will be critical to identify opportunities to interact with disadvantaged, underserved community members in the county and target areas during times they can meet, which may not be during normal business hours due to their work schedules; for instance, having meetings after 5 p.m.

The Authority Board was selected to represent various groups within the county, which allows it to engage a larger countywide community. These individuals will assist the Authority with ensuring that their various constituencies, as well as others, are aware of the presence of brownfield sites and the tools and resources available to redevelop and clean up these sites. Additionally, the Authority holds monthly public meetings to review and approve projects, solicit public comment, and plan for future activities. Thus, there is a standing opportunity for public input into site selection, cleanup decisions, and reuse planning with opportunities for responses to questions and input.

Grant information, site progress, and meeting notifications will be published on county and community partner websites, Facebook, and other media. Unfortunately, The Munising News, the local newspaper, closed after 125 years in circulation due to the pandemic. Due in large part to our community’s rural nature and spotty cell phone service, efforts to distribute information through our community partners will be the best way to reach the majority of our residents. Efforts will be made to inform and notify residents and businesses in the target communities through mailings or posting information at local retail/restaurant establishments, churches, community centers, and convenience stores. During our previous grant, Grant Fact Sheets, brochures, PowerPoint presentations, and a performance dashboard were developed and were regularly used for presentations at area meetings; we intend to provide similar resources for this grant. Opportunities for remote access via Zoom will be provided as needed.

### **3. TASK DESCRIPTIONS, COST ESTIMATES, AND MEASURING PROGRESS**

#### **3.a. Description of Tasks/Activities and Outputs**

The Applicant is not charging salary and fringe dollars for programmatic/administration activities for any tasks noted below. Implementation schedule will meet 35% within 18-month spend rate.

<b>Task 1: Phase I Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs)</b>
<i>i. Project Implementation:</i> 8 Phase I ESAs on priority sites in target communities. 5 Phase I ESAs on non-priority sites countywide chosen by the Authority, with community input.
<i>ii. Anticipated Schedule:</i> Complete 4 Phase I ESAs on priority sites by 4th qtr. FY25 and 4 by 4th qtr. FY26; for 5 non-priority sites, we estimate completing 1–2 Phase I ESAs every 3 qtrs.
<i>iii. Task Lead:</i> Qualified Environmental Professional for Phase I ESAs, Applicant oversight
<i>iv. Outputs:</i> 13 Phase I ESAs, eligibility demonstrations, site access agreements, ACRES updates
<b>Task 2: Phase II Environmental, Baseline Environmental Assessments/Due Care Plans</b>
<i>i. Project Implementation:</i> Completion of Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP), completion of Sampling Plans and Health and Safety Plans for each Phase II. 6 Phase II ESAs on priority sites in target communities. 3 Phase II ESAs on non-priority sites countywide as determined by the Authority, with community outreach event input. For contaminated sites (estimated 6), completion of Baseline Environmental Assessments (BEAs) for liability protection and Due Care Plans to address “continuing obligations.”
<i>ii. Anticipated Schedule:</i> Complete 4 Phase II/BEAs/Due Care Plans at priority sites by 4th qtr. FY25 and 2 by 4th qtr. FY26; for the remaining 4 non-priority sites, we estimate 1–2 Phase IIs completed every 3 qtrs.
<i>iii. Task Lead:</i> Qualified Environmental Professional for Phase II ESAs, Applicant oversight
<i>iv. Outputs:</i> 1 QAPP, 9 Phase IIs and Sampling and Analysis Plans/Health and Safety Plans, 6 BEAs/Due Care Plans, ACRES updates
<b>Task 3: Brownfield Plans and Cleanup Planning</b>
<i>i. Project Implementation:</i> 6 Brownfield Plans (estimate) to utilize tax increment financing to leverage grant funds on priority sites and community-wide. Plans will be reviewed by the Authority and local unit of government and approved by County Commissioners at a public hearing. Estimated 2 sites will require Cleanup Plans (Act 381 Work Plans) for state tax support, with state approval.
<i>ii. Anticipated Schedule:</i> Complete 3 Brownfield Plans and 1 Cleanup Plan (Act 381 Work Plan) at priority sites by 4th qtr. FY26; remaining 3 Brownfield Plans and 1 Cleanup Plan (Act 381 Work Plan) at non-priority sites are estimated to be completed by the end of the grant term.
<i>iii. Task Lead:</i> Qualified Environmental Professional for Plans, Applicant oversight

iv. *Outputs*: 6 Brownfield Plans, 2 Cleanup Plans (Act 381 Work Plans), 6 Local Resolutions, 6 Public Hearings, 2 State Regulatory reviews, ACRES updates

**Task 4: Community Outreach, Programmatic, Travel, and Supplies**

i. *Project Implementation*: Activities include working with EPA; procuring a Qualified Environmental Professional; preparation of Grant Work Plan; preparing for, attending, and participating in public hearings; municipal and Authority meetings; creating and disseminating brochures/flyers/webpages about the EPA Grant; educating and informing community groups and stakeholders about the grant and brownfields; community outreach events; attending the National Brownfield Conference; and preparing EPA quarterly/financial/performance reports.

ii. *Anticipated Schedule*: Community outreach efforts will be intense at the outset of the grant and will include 1 community open house in each target community by 3rd qtr. of FY25, 3rd community open house by 1st qtr. FY26, and monthly Authority meetings. Outreach efforts will continue throughout the grant term.

iii. *Task Lead*: Applicant will plan/initiate outreach efforts, and a Qualified Environmental Professional will assist outreach efforts and do required reporting with Applicant as review.

iv. *Outputs*: Procurement of 1 Qualified Environmental Professional, 5 community open house/education events, 48 monthly Authority meetings, 16 Quarterly Reports, 4 financial and MBE/WBE reports, numerous educational materials and outreach events, 1 trip to National Brownfield Conference for 4 Authority members/Director, final closeout report

**3.b. Cost Estimates**

Budget Categories	Task 1: Phase I Assessments	Task 2: Phase II Assessments	Task 3: Brownfield Plans	Task 4: Community Outreach/ Programmatic	Total
Travel				\$6,000	\$6,000
Supplies				\$1,500	\$1,500
Contractual	\$45,500	\$204,000	\$32,000	\$11,000	\$292,500
Total Direct Costs	\$45,500	\$204,000	\$32,000	\$18,500	\$300,000
Indirect Costs					
Total Budget	\$45,500	\$204,000	\$32,000	\$18,500	\$300,000

83% of the Assessment Grant is designated for Phase I and II Environmental Assessments.

- Task 1, Contractual Costs: 13 Phase I site assessments at average cost of \$3,500 = **\$45,500 total**.
- Task 2, Contractual Costs: 9 Phase II site assessments at average cost of \$20,000 = \$180,000; 6 BEAs/Due Care Plans at average cost of \$4,000 = \$24,000; **\$204,000 total**.
- Task 3, Contractual Costs: 6 Brownfield Plans at average cost of \$4,000 = \$24,000; 2 Cleanup Plans (Act 381 Work Plans) at average cost of \$4,000 = \$8,000; **\$32,000 total**.
- Task 4: \$18,500 total; Travel Costs: Travel for 3 Authority Members and Project Director including airfare, lodging, food, and expenses at an average cost of \$1,500 per person = \$6,000 total; Supplies Costs: supplies for meetings, outreach events, printing, web hosting, etc. at cost of \$1,500; Contractual Costs: 16 Quarterly Reports at average cost of \$500 = \$8,000; preparation for 5 community open houses at average cost of \$600 per event = \$3,000; \$11,000 total.

**3.c. Plan to Measure and Evaluate Environmental Progress and Results**

The Authority will be able to track, measure, and evaluate our progress in achieving numerous outputs and outcomes in several ways throughout the grant program. First, assessment information (**outputs**)—including number of Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments, Baseline Environmental Assessments, Due Care Plans, Brownfield Plans, and Act 381 Work Plans funded by the grants—will be documented in the EPA’s Assessment, Cleanup, and Redevelopment Exchange System (ACRES), the grant Quarterly Reports, and also in a monthly updated Dashboard that was created for our previous grant. This Dashboard also documents the outcomes or number of grant-related outreach activities, project investment leveraged, jobs created (or planned), jobs retained, and the number of grant-funded projects per local unit of government, including our **target areas**. This Dashboard will be available on the Authority’s website and distributed at meetings and events on a regular basis. Additionally, the Authority will track the number of sites/acres that have been prepared for re-use including those that have been cleaned up, blight removed, exposure concerns removed or minimized, and can be considered “safe” for reuse. The Authority, working with community partners, will track and evaluate long-term **outcomes**—such as affordable housing units built; jobs created; infrastructure reused; acres preserved

for agriculture, open space, and improved habitats; improved property values; and health outcomes for our sensitive populations, especially those in our **target areas**, underserved communities, and near our priority sites.

#### **4. PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITY AND PAST PERFORMANCE**

##### **4.a. Programmatic Capability**

###### 4.a.i.– 4.a.iii. Organizational Capacity, Organizational Structure, and Description of Key Staff

Since the Alger County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (Authority) was formed in 2008, it has actively brought brownfield redevelopment resources to the public and received residents' concerns and input on the most important sites for redevelopment. Alger County administers its Brownfield Program and grants through the Authority. The up to nine-member Authority Board all live and work in the county and have experience in business, real estate, banking, construction, contract negotiation, planning, and finance. The Authority has an application that guides their evaluation of projects. The Authority meets monthly and at special request if needed, allowing timely and successful use of funds. Project applications are reviewed by the Authority at their publicly noticed meetings, allowing municipal and citizen input. Its members review and approve proposals for each phase of assessment work at the selected sites and monitor project progress and consultant performance.

The Project Director, Pam Johnson, Alger County Treasurer, will be the grant point of contact. As an experienced Authority member, 36-year county employee, and 11 years as County Treasurer, she will receive and review consultant work orders and reports and prepare updates on the grant budget for the Authority. At her direction, the consultant(s) will make requested changes to their activities and reports and complete site profiles in Assessment, Cleanup, and Redevelopment Exchange System (ACRES). Ms. Johnson has managed several grants for the county, including the FY15 EPA Assessment Grants, and has extensive experience with grant implementation, funding, reporting, and compliance. In order to provide continuous project leadership if staff changes occur, Mary Ann Froberg, Alger County Clerk, would continue the program. Ms. Froberg serves on the Authority, has been intimately involved with related projects throughout the county, and is familiar with the Brownfield Program as well as managing grants.

###### 4.a.iv. Acquiring Additional Resources

A Qualified Consultant will be appropriately procured by the Authority to assist with the grant tasks as outlined above. The consultant will conduct Phase I and II Assessments, Baseline Environmental Assessments (BEAs), Brownfield Plans, and Cleanup Plans and assist with community outreach efforts, reporting, and timely updates to ACRES required by the Cooperative Agreement. We will seek assistance from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) on cleanup efforts and funding; other free services from local, regional, and state offices; EPA; and the Technical Assistance to Brownfields (TAB) Communities Program. The Authority will work with the EPA Project Officer to identify additional resources that may be available to successfully implement the grant.

##### **4.b. Past Performance and Accomplishments**

###### 4.b.i. Currently Has or Previously Received an EPA Brownfields Grant

###### 4.b.i.(1) Accomplishments

The Authority has successfully managed a \$196,100 FY2015 EPA Hazardous Substances and Petroleum Assessment Grant (\$92,050 and \$104,050, respectively) (Cooperative Agreement BF-00E01522). The term of the grant was from October 1, 2015, to March 31, 2019. With these grant funds, we assessed 14 sites in over 7 communities, including the City of Munising target area. The assessments (12 Phase I ESAs, 6 Phase II ESAs, 2 BEAs, 2 Due Care Plans, 2 Hazardous Materials Building Surveys, 1 Brownfield Plan, and 15 grant-related outreach activities) addressed over 5 acres associated with hazardous substances and over 4 acres associated with petroleum impacts, which resulted in over 35 new jobs and 25 retained jobs and leveraged approximately \$5.9 million in investment. For every dollar of EPA funds utilized, Alger County was able to leverage \$30.27 of private investment, greater than the national average of \$18 leveraged for every EPA dollar. All accomplishments/outputs were reported to the EPA in ACRES.

###### 4.b.i.(2) Compliance with Grant Requirements

The Authority has consistently met the requirements for Work Plan development, QAPP development, eligibility demonstrations, Sampling Plans, Health and Safety Plans, Quarterly Reports, ACRES reporting, Financial Status Reports, and Community Notification. All grant funds were expended. The Authority required two 90-day extensions to accommodate two projects that were in process.

**THRESHOLD CRITERIA RESPONSE  
ALGER COUNTY, MICHIGAN**

**1. Applicant Eligibility –**

**a.** Alger County is a Michigan General Purpose Local Unit of Government and is eligible to receive funding through the U.S. EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant program.

**b.** N/A

**2. Community Involvement –** Since the Alger County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (Authority) was formed in 2008, it has actively brought brownfield redevelopment resources to the public and received residents' concerns and input on the most important sites for redevelopment. Alger County administers its Brownfield Program and grants through the Authority. The Authority board was selected to represent various groups within the county, which allows it to engage a larger countywide community. These individuals will assist the Authority with ensuring that their various constituencies, as well as others, are aware of the presence of brownfield sites and the tools and resources available to redevelop and clean up these sites. Additionally, the Authority holds monthly public meetings to review and approve projects, solicit public comment, and plan for future activities. Thus, there is a standing opportunity for public input into site selection, cleanup decisions, and reuse planning.

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**3. Expenditure of Existing Grant Funds –** Alger County does not have an open EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant or Multipurpose Grant.

**4. Contractors and Named Subrecipients –** N/A, a contractor/subrecipient has not been procured or named.