



**Iron Range Brownfields Community**

**IV.D.1. Applicant Identification**

City of Virginia  
327 1st Street South  
Virginia, Minnesota 55792

**IV.D.2. Funding Requested**

**IV.D.2.a. Assessment Grant Type**

Community-wide

**IV.D.2.b. Federal Funds Requested**

Funding Amount Requested: \$500,000.00

**IV.D.3. Location**

Babbitt, Biwabik, Chisholm, Cook, Ely, Eveleth, Gilbert, Hibbing, Hoyt Lakes, Virginia  
Saint Louis County  
Minnesota

**IV.D.4. Target Area and Priority Site Information**

**IV.D.5. Contacts**

**IV.D.5.a. Project Director**

Britt See-Benes, Administrator  
327 1st Street South  
Virginia, Minnesota 55792  
Voice, 218.748.7500  
Email, britts@virginiamn.us

**IV.D.5.b. Chief Executive/Highest Ranking Elected Official**

Larry Cuffee, Mayor  
327 1st Street South  
Virginia, Minnesota 55792  
Voice, 218.748.7500  
Email, mayor@virginiamn.us



**IV.D.6. Population**

42,942

**IV.D.7. Other Factors**

Sample Format for Providing Information on the Other Factors	Page #
Community population is 10,000 or less.	1, 2
The applicant is, or will assist, a federally recognized Indian Tribe or United States Territory.	
The priority site(s) is impacted by mine-scarred land.	1, 2, 5
The priority site(s) is adjacent to a body of water (i.e., the border of the priority site(s) is contiguous or partially contiguous to the body of water, or would be contiguous or partially contiguous with a body of water but for a street, road, or other public thoroughfare separating them).	
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain.	
The reuse of the priority site(s) will facilitate renewable energy from wind, solar, or geothermal energy.	
The reuse of the priority site(s) will incorporate energy efficiency measures.	
<p>The proposed project will improve local climate adaptation/mitigation capacity and resilience to protect residents and community investments.</p> <p>At least 30% of the overall project budget will be spent on eligible reuse/area-wide planning activities, as described in Section I.B., for priority site(s) within the target area(s).</p>	8
The target area(s) is located within a community which a coal-fired power plant has recently closed (2013 or later) or is closing.	

**IV.D.8. Letter from the State or Tribal Environmental Authority**

Please find attached a letter dated November 9, 2023 from Minnesota Pollution Control Agency acknowledging our intent to apply for FY24 grant funds and conduct assessment activities.

**IV.D.9. Releasing Copies of Applications**

This application does not have confidential, privileged, or sensitive information.

November 9, 2023

VIA EMAIL

Britt See-Benes, City Administrator  
Iron Range Brownfields Coalition  
c/o City of Virginia  
327 First St S  
Virginia, MN 55792-2623

RE: Iron Range Brownfields EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant Application  
Letter of Support from the MPCA Brownfield Program

Dear Britt See-Benes:

On behalf of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), we are writing to acknowledge and support the proposed assessment activities for the Iron Range Brownfields Coalition in fulfillment of the criteria of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Fiscal Year 2024 Brownfield Assessment Grant guidelines.

The Iron Range Brownfield Coalition has informed the MPCA that they intend to perform petroleum and hazardous substances assessment activities through a Brownfields Community-wide Assessment Grant focused on the cities of Aurora, Babbitt, Biwabik, Buhl, Chisholm, Cook, Ely, Eveleth, Gilbert, Hibbing, Hoyt Lakes, and Virginia. Assessment activities would include assessments and remedial planning at brownfields throughout the region.

The MPCA is supportive of the Iron Range Brownfield Coalition's application for an EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant. Should this grant be awarded, the MPCA will partner with the Iron Range Brownfield Coalition to help them improve the environment and build a better future for residents in the region.

If you have any questions, please contact Shanna Schmitt at 651-757-2697 or by email at [shanna.schmitt@state.mn.us](mailto:shanna.schmitt@state.mn.us), or Stacey Hendry-Van Patten at 651-757-2425 or by email at [stacey.vanpatten@state.mn.us](mailto:stacey.vanpatten@state.mn.us).

Sincerely,

*Shanna Schmitt*

*This document has been electronically signed.*

Shanna Schmitt, PG, CPG  
Hydrogeologist  
Remediation Division

*Stacey Hendry-Van Patten*

*This document has been electronically signed.*

Stacey Hendry-VanPatten  
Supervisor  
Remediation Division

SS/SVP:svp

cc: Jenny Holmes, Northeast Technical Services (electronic)  
Rick Crum, Northeast Technical Services (electronic)  
Jerry Minor-Gordon, US EPA (electronic)

## Narrative/Ranking Criteria for Community-Wide Assessment Grants

### IV.E.1. Project Area Description and Plans for Revitalization

#### IV.E.1.a. Target Area and Brownfields

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

The Mesabi Iron Range (Range) is a narrow corridor of land that is the place of historic underground and active open pit mining operations. The Range is a rural area located approximately 200 miles north of Minneapolis, Minnesota – the **target area** consists of the micro-communities of Babbitt, Biwabik, Chisholm, Cook, Ely, Eveleth, Gilbert, Hibbing, Hoyt Lakes, and Virginia. The rural location presents limitations to the ability of these micro-communities to achieve an effective brownfields program without financial assistance. Demographics reveal **challenges** of an aging population, a sub-standard housing stock, low income levels, and high unemployment in the community.

Community	Total Population	Low income %	Un Employment rate %	Over age 64 %	Pre 1960 housing
Babbitt	1,364	34	2	29	0.6
Biwabik	725	32	1	21	0.59
Chisholm	4,784	47	6	31	0.66
Cook	569	37	11	25	0.33
Ely	3,283	28	3	19	0.65
Eveleth	3,513	38	2	15	0.66
Gilbert	1,829	34	3	23	0.61
Hibbing	16,227	31	4	22	0.6
Hoyt Lakes	2,204	21	16	21	0.76
Virginia	8,444	39	7	23	0.69
<b>Totals/Avg</b>	<b>42,942</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>1</b>
Minnesota		23	4	17	0.33
USA		31	6	20	0.3

These communities are affected primarily by two types of brownfields. The first is **historic mine-scarred lands** that envelope the area. The general public has easy access to historic mine-scarred lands for all-terrain vehicle use, hunting, illegal dumping, etc. This uncontrolled access causes environmental and safety concerns that generally fall into three categories 1) steep and unstable slopes around mine pits and on un-reclaimed waste rock piles, 2) sites known to be used for maintenance, fueling, electrical generation, and other infrastructure with the potential for petroleum and hazardous substances, and 3) un-reclaimed waste rock piles with sparse vegetation that are prone to fugitive dust lift-off on windy days.

The other type of brownfields, **abandoned / blighted commercial and industrial sites**, are consequence of the up-and-down economy of mining industry that create blight in downtown areas or along highways and main street corridors. These communities were growing through

the early to mid-1970s when the taconite (a low-grade iron ore) industry was going strong and many workers were needed. Schools were full and so were the downtowns, businesses districts, and industrial parks. However, with a long downturn in the 1980s, many mine and rail workers endured long-term layoffs. Many businesses did not survive the lean times and many commercial and industrial sites simply were never re-opened. These types of sites constitute many of non-mine-scarred brownfields such as, abandoned gas stations, defunct factories, and vacant storefronts in aging buildings.

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

A total of 10 sites and / or one site per micro-community will be addressed with the grant funds. Some examples are here -- **Babbitt** has a population of 1,364 and is where historic Peter Mitchel Mine. A residential area is planned for the majority of approximately 57 acres on the west side of town and there are currently fourteen sites that have either a hazardous substance and/or petroleum release identified proximate to this development. **Biwabik** has a population of 725 and is home to Giants Ridge, one of the largest golf and ski resorts in Minnesota, which is located near recreational lakes. Giants Ridge has grown to a four-season recreation destination that attracts 100,000 guests each year and has identified a need for added commercial and industrial economic development to support tourism. Biwabik priority is to reuse blighted areas near an industrial concrete production plant, and a dilapidated school that has been vandalized and is unoccupied. **Hoyt Lakes** has a population of 2,204 and is the youngest of the mining towns on the Range. Hoyt Lakes was hit hard economically by the closing of the nearby mining operation. Hoyt Lakes priority brownfields are the now blighted school located on nine acres of land which will be used for redevelopment into new housing stock with 15 lots platted for residential expansion.

**Eveleth** has a population of 3,513 and is home to United Taconite Mine and surrounding historic mine lands. Eveleth down-town is landlocked which creates a need to redevelop a tax forfeited property that is blighted with petroleum and hazardous waste approximately 12 acres of property is a risk to human health and the environment. **Virginia** has a population of 8,444 and was established as a mining town in 1892. Old infrastructure, the high cost of steam heat, significant remodeling costs, parking concerns, vagrancy, and the illusion of high crime are contributing factors to blight in the city. Brownfields development will be focused on bringing back small market businesses and promoting arts and culture by acquiring and renovating vacant buildings in the downtown district. **Ely** has a population of 3,283 and was established in 1886 making it the second to the oldest town on the Range. Ely would like to restore an old mining area to an aesthetic that represents its historic origins, leaving the space as a blank slate full of possibilities in a community with an establish arts and culture infrastructure.

#### **IV.E.1.b. Revitalization of the Target Area**

##### **IV.E.1.b.i. Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans**

The community plan for reuse and revitalization corresponds to the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation (agency) plan to foster vibrant grown and economic prosperity in northeastern Minnesota with a strategic plan of long-term economic growth that increases the well-being of all people in northeastern Minnesota. The agency's mission helps focus funding priorities around

leveraging capital, improving quality of life and retaining and creating good paying jobs – with four long-term goals related to community development, asset reinvestment, business development and workforce development. Communities invest in their foundational, business and social assets to ensure quality of life for all residents through 1) infrastructure funding is available to improve, replace and modernize foundational assets such as sewer, water and broadband; 2) redevelopment programs provide funds to improve business assets including interior and exterior renovation, energy efficiency and retrofits; 3) community development grants fund the construction, maintenance and improvement of social assets such as parks, recreation, trails, and arts and culture organizations; and 4) opportunities to expand or create new child care facilities and programs are actively pursued.

#### **IV.E.1.b.ii. Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy**

The target area brownfields projects have an incredible potential to stimulate economic development. Funding will create an avenue for predevelopment site work, enabling significant private redevelopment, which would otherwise remain undeveloped, across the Range. These areas are slated for significant development infrastructure funding on these sites for a variety of projects, including single-family housing development, retail development, medical/office, parks and greenspace and new or expanded manufacturing. These projects greatly contribute to an increased tax base, new job creation and improved quality of life on the Range.

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

##### **IV.E.1.c.i. Resources Needed for Site Reuse**

Additional resources will be required to accomplish site cleanups, extend utilities and roads, and prepare for development. This area has widespread options of resources available for the successful redevelopment of a brownfields which include, but are not limited, to the sources presented below.

**Minnesota Department of Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation (IRRR)** is a development agency whose mission is to promote and invest in business, community, and workforce development for the improvement of northeastern Minnesota. This agency is funded by a portion of local taconite production tax, paid by mining companies on each ton of iron ore pellets produced. These taxes are paid in lieu of local property taxes. This agency provides funding, including low or no-interest loans, grants and loan guarantees, for businesses relocating or expanding in the region. Four community programs are offered from IRRR which are 1) commercial redevelopment, 2) downtown streetscapes, 3) infrastructure, and 4) residential development.

**Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)** is a principal economic development agency (state-wide), with programs promoting business recruitment, expansion, and retention; workforce development; international trade; and community development. Since its inception in 1993, the Contamination Cleanup Grant Program has awarded over \$195 million in grants, which paid for assessment and cleanup of 3,792 acres of land, allowed for the creation or retention of nearly 50,500 jobs and cleared the way for 23,806 new housing units. The program has also leveraged over \$8.6 billion in private investments and added over \$138 million to local tax bases.

**Saint Louis County** accesses Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs for communities and nonprofit agencies including the Home Investment Partnership (HOME), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and Homeless Assistance Programs. Saint Louis County also obtains Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) that Saint Louis County distributes to local communities and non-profit agencies through an annual competitive process. CDBG funds (last published total \$67.27 million allocation to Saint Louis County from 1993 to 2018) have been used for projects in these major program areas 1) community facilities and public infrastructure, 2) housing, 3) public services, 4) economic development, and 5) planning.

**City of Virginia** in-kind services are offered with staff assistance, database information sharing, providing printed media for the public, and facility use for meetings and presentations.

#### **IV.E.1.c.ii. Use of Existing Infrastructure**

These communities are land-locked by past mining and current mining activity which leaves reuse of the existing infrastructure key to the planning strategy. Existing infrastructure (power, gas, water, sewer, telecommunications, and existing roadways) are fulling in-place for most of these sites. This grant funding will help these communities prepare their key sites for development of the needed housing, infrastructure, commercial and recreational space or green space needed to grow and accommodate an up-coming influx of new jobs and new residents as well as increased demands on existing infrastructure. Development close to new and existing industrial facilities can minimize long-range commuting on the limited highways and roads in the area. By redeveloping properties in the existing communities, infrastructures such as roads, water and sewer can be re-used instead of developing new ones on undeveloped land. This strategy presents a more sustainable use of the land and existing infrastructure in the area.

### **IV.E.2. Community Need and Community Engagement**

#### **IV.E.2.a. Community Need**

##### **IV.E.2.a.i. The Community's Need for Funding**

The local economy has not completely recovered from when it was devastated in the 1980s after the bottom fell out of the steel market. Since steel mills are the sole customer of iron ore mines, the iron ore industry is parallel to the steel industry. When a depressed local economy, high unemployment, low income, and low average property values are met with new industry and new facility developments, the result is tremendous financial pressure on communities that have very few resources to effectively manage brownfields. Ely, Hibbing, and Virginia communities are located in Internal Revenue Service (IRS) designated Opportunity Zones which encourages long-term investment in economically distressed communities. Unfortunately, Minnesota Department of Revenue Local Government Aid (LGA) a general purpose aid, is inadequate on its own and is also intended to be used for property tax relief. When state aid is decreased, residents pay higher property taxes to add to city revenue sources. The Range has a low tax base and a high tax rate which leaves little for local government and struggling residents -- in general, only 1.6% of these funds are appropriated to the community. A rural location presents limitations to the ability of these micro-communities to achieve an effective brownfields program without financial assistance. Demographics reveal of an aging population, a sub-standard housing stock, low income levels, and high unemployment in the community.

**IV.E.2.a.ii. Threats to Sensitive Populations**

**IV.E.2.a.ii.(1) Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations**

There are high poverty rates within the community – the Small Area Income and Poverty estimate for Saint Louis County is 14.7% while the poverty rate for the United States as a whole is 10.5%. According to the EPA Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping tool, a low income percentage is higher than the national average, there is a high unemployment rate, an elderly population that is higher than the national average, and aging housing stock which all contribute to the need for this funding.

	<b>Low income</b>	<b>Unemployment rate</b>	<b>Population over age 64</b>	<b>Pre 1960 housing</b>
<b>Community</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>1</b>
Minnesota	23%	4%	17%	0.33
USA	31%	6%	20%	0.3

The grant will greatly contribute to an increased tax base, new job creation and improved quality of life on the Range. The grant will be used as site development for the opportunity for single-family housing developments, retail developments, medical/offices, parks and greenspace and new and / or expanded manufacturing which will also decrease the unemployment rate.

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

According to the EPA Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping tool, there is a high percentages of low life expectancy; and occurrence of heart disease, asthma, cancer; and persons with disabilities that live within the community as presented below.

	<b>Low life expectancy</b>	<b>Heart disease</b>	<b>Asthma</b>	<b>Cancer</b>	<b>Persons with disabilities</b>
<b>Community</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>17%</b>
Minnesota	17%	5.6%	9%	6.4%	11.4%
United States	20%	6.1%	10%	6.1%	13.4%

The grant will be used as site development for the opportunity for housing developments, medical/offices, and parks and greenspace which will increase the quality of life for people on the Range to reduce the incidences of disease and adverse health conditions.

**IV.E.2.a.ii.(3) Environmental Justice**

This project will help to address the environmental justice challenges for those that are greatly affected by low income, high unemployment rate, an elderly population that is higher than the national average, and aging housing stock which all contribute to the need for this funding. The grant funding will mitigate health risks, restore economic vitality, increase social wellbeing in a community that has been excessively affected by historic mining and the periodic downturns in the mining industry. Which has left the community surrounded by mine scarred lands including waste rock piles, mine pits, tailings basins, and abandoned industrial sites. The supporters of this application are committed to protecting human health and the environment and promoting environmental justice.



**IV.E.2.b. Community Engagement**

**IV.E.2.b.i. Project Involvement**

**IV.E.2.b.ii. Project Roles**

Name of entity, organization, or group	Point of Contact (Name, Email and Phone)	Specific Involvement in the Project or Assistance Provided
Babbitt	Sara Powell, sara@babbitt-mn.com, 218-827-3464	public outreach and advisory committee
Biwabik	Jeff Jacobson, administrator@cityofbiwabik.com 218-865-4183	public outreach and advisory committee
Chisholm	Susan Trunk, strunk@ci.chisholm.mn.us, 218-254-7900	public outreach and advisory committee
Cook	Theresa Martinson, cityadmin@cookmn.us 218-666-2200	public outreach and advisory committee
Ely	Harold Langowski, elyod@ely.mn.us, 218-365-3224	public outreach and advisory committee
Eveleth	Jackie Monahan-Junek, jackie@evelethmn.com 218-744-7444	public outreach and advisory committee
Gilbert	Jill Zallar, JillZallar@gilbertmn.org, 218-748-2232	public outreach and advisory committee
Hibbing	Betsy Olivanti, BOlivanti@ci.hibbing.mn.us 218-262-3486	public outreach and advisory committee
Hoyt Lakes	Becky Lammi, blammi@hoytlakes.com, 218-225-2344	public outreach and advisory committee
Virginia	Britt See-Benes, britts@virginiamn.us, 218-748-7500	public outreach, advisory committee, host of meetings and in-kind services, provides oversight of grant activities and reporting to EPA

Community leadership listed above will serve as brownfields ambassadors and advisors throughout the project duration. Leadership will meet quarterly to review project progress, ensure project alignment with community interests and needs, promote the project, and communicate with the public.

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

The city of Virginia provides in-kind services which will use quarterly meetings and / or quarterly electronic updates as a forum for distributing information on the assessment projects and for receiving input on plans and approaches to those listed above. This is an effective venue for community members and is a useful tool to planners, developers, existing land owners, and industry in the area. Additionally, the city of Virginia website hosts information regarding brownfields projects and is used to provide awareness to the communities. This structure will capitalize on previous outreach successes in each micro-community.

**IV.E.3. Task Descriptions, Cost Estimates, and Measuring Progress**

**IV.E.3.a. Description of Tasks/Activities and Outputs**

<b>Task/Activity:</b>
<p><b>IV.E.3a.i. Project Implementation:</b> the grant will be overseen by Britt See-Benes for grant management and compliance with EPA grant terms and conditions. This task encompasses the obligations to meeting the requirements of a cooperative agreement and implementing the grant in its entirety, including but not limited to, financial reporting. Additionally, two municipal staff to travel to a National Brownfields Conference and staff to attend site meetings (in-state) with state agency staff and site owners/developers.</p>
<p><b>IV.E.3a.ii. Identifying Additional Sites:</b> the community uses an internal site selection process to gauge the readiness of each project for development and ask the following questions: is the site eligible within the context of Brownfields Law definition, does each community partner have immediate access to the property or how lengthy of a process is required to gain access, is there a ready development plan or proposed end-use and is it consistent with surrounding community vision, is the development plan consistent with existing infrastructure or is there a need for infrastructure improvements, will there be a reduction of threat to human health and the environment, and is the site attractive for private investors. The community participates in quarterly meetings to discuss brownfield revitalization opportunities and to prioritize the selection process. The City staff will manage these tasks with assistance from an environmental consultant. This task is vital and brings Brownfield Inventory and Prioritization projects to the forefront which will be presented on the Community-wide website inventory. The Community-wide inventory is already quite extensive; however, with each new development additional possibilities arise.</p>
<p><b>IV.E.3a.iii. Anticipated Project Schedule:</b> it is anticipated that it will take approximately three years from inception of the project to obtain completion and involvement with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.</p>
<p><b>IV.E.3a.iv. Task/Activity Lead:</b> the site selection process is overseen by the grant administrator, to determine appropriateness and readiness for the community. The grant administrator directs environmental consultants who are utilized for production of Phase I assessments, Phase II investigations, and Response Action Plans.</p>
<p><b>IV.E.3a.v. Outputs:</b> a Quality Assurance Project Plan, at least 10 Phase I Environmental Assessments and at least 8 Phase II Investigations; and 8 cleanup plans.</p>

**IV.E.3.b. Cost Estimates**

Budget Categories	Task 1 Program Activities	Task 2 Community Engagement	Task 3 Site Assessments	Task 4 Cleanup & Reuse Planning	Total
Personnel	\$5,000	\$5,000			\$10,000
Fringe benefits					
Travel	\$4,000	\$1,000			\$5,000
Supplies		\$3,000			\$3,000
Contractual	\$3,500	\$28,500	\$300,000	\$150,000	\$482,000
Total federal funds	\$12,500	\$37,500	\$300,000	\$150,000	\$500,000
Total budget	\$12,500	\$37,500	\$300,000	\$150,000	\$500,000

**Task 1 • Program Activities (2.5% allocation)** staff will average 150 hours at \$33 per hour for a total of \$5,000. Additionally, two staff to travel to a National Brownfields Conference and staff to attend site meetings (in-state) with state agency staff and site owners/developers with an estimated cost of \$5,000. Contractual, consultants will provide updates to ACRES and final technical reports for an average of \$83 per hour for 42 hours per year, this task is estimated for a total of \$3,500.

**Task 2 • Community Engagement (7.5% allocation)** City staff will average 150 hours at \$33 per hour for a total of \$5,000 for preparation and presentations to the community. City of Virginia provides in-kind services to keep the brownfields inventory website maintained and updated. Contractual, this task will also encompass the site eligibility determination step for EPA project officers to approve. Community-wide majority vote will decide the internal approval of projects and is estimated that approximately 375 hours at an average of \$100 per hour.

**Task 3 • Site Assessments (60% allocation)** a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) will be prepared by an environmental consultant for approval prior to any Phase II work. Selected projects will be evaluated through performance of Phase I Environmental Site Assessments (ESA) that are All Appropriate Inquiry (AAI) compliant and Phase II Investigations which will be completed in accordance with ASTM standards and MPCA Risk Based Site Evaluation (RBSE) process. An environmental consultant will complete at least one Phase I for each community and at least eight Phase II Investigations. Phase I costs are approximately \$4,000 each for an average of \$44,000; however, costs will depend on the acreage of the property. Based on past experience and property types, Phase II Investigations will average \$45,000 each.

**Task 4 • Cleanup & Reuse Planning (30% allocation)** cleanup plans and reuse plans will be developed at an estimated cost of \$20,000 per project, for a total of about eight projects with the majority of projects containing hazardous substances. Cleanup plans will be prepared by an environmental consultant in accordance with MPCA guidelines and will include evaluation of redevelopment and remediation.

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

The community tracks progress by using the already in-place system of the stakeholders advisory committee which consists of staff from each micro-community. This group is responsible for working together to perform the assessment tasks in accordance with the grant procedures and

requirements; and following the site selection and prioritization procedures. Project status and financial status is reported by the city of Virginia on a monthly basis and reports are submitted on a quarterly basis to EPA project officer by using the ACRES database system.

It is the goal of this community to approve projects for environmental assessment and investigation during the first year of the grant cycle to allow for the full three years to advance from assessment to investigation to planning for cleanup which allows for EPA and MPCA staff review and approval time. During the second year of the grant cycle is generally geared toward field work or the Phase II Investigation is implemented. Due to inclement weather, there is a very short drilling and field work season that allows for a limited number of Phase II investigations to occur and vital to be prepared in advance of the second year. The third year of the grant cycle is used to finalize each project.

#### **IV.E.4. Programmatic Capability and Past Performance**

##### **IV.E.4.a. Programmatic Capability**

###### **IV.E.4.a.i. Organizational Capacity**

The community has a solid track record on the use of both state and federal loans and grants; City staff will work closely with the EPA project officer and an environmental consultant to ensure proper contractual services procurement and performance of the technical work. These individuals will be knowledgeable of the cooperative agreement executed by the City. The lead applicant hosts Community-wide meetings and presents up-to-date information on its website. The City coordinates community outreach and financial tracking and will use the support offered from the state, county, and local resources that are available.

###### **IV.E.4.a.ii. Organizational Structure**

The City has a proven track record of managing regional, state, and federal grant funds. This includes experience using the EPA Brownfield Assessment Demonstration Pilot Grant Program in 2000 through 2002; and the lead in an awarded FY16 brownfields assessment grant. Also, using the state brownfields grant funds and petroleum reimbursement funds for assessments and cleanups at more than a dozen brownfield sites within the city of Virginia.

**Advisory Committee** • the community will use the criteria and site selection and prioritization procedures established for previous brownfields work. This board will be responsible for directing the Project Director/Grant Administration and environmental consultants to perform the assessment tasks in accordance with the EPA Brownfields Program procedures and requirements and following the site selection and prioritization procedures.

**Project Management** • the advisory committee will appoint a Project Director/Grant Administrator for this program who will not only take care of the grant administration duties, but will also focus on providing continued community outreach and communication to ensure smooth, continuous and collaborative efforts between the coalition communities, the environmental consultants, and the EPA.

**IV.E.4.a.iii. Description of Key Staff**

<b>4.a.iii. Description of Key Staff</b>	
Administrator, City of Virginia	Britt See-Benes oversees grant admin., coordinate consultants efforts, community-wide contact grant tasks
Project Director/Grant Administrator	Britt See-Benes coordinates consultants, grant reporting, community outreach & communication, provides updates to the community-wide members
Environmental Consultants	Provide assessment & environmental reporting and planning services

**IV.E.4.a.iv. Acquiring Additional Resources**

The Range has a ready group of local professional environmental consulting firms with expertise in our legacy brownfields and are qualified to prepare Phase I and Phase II documents on the brownfields unique to our area. Numerous investigation contractors and analytical laboratories, certified by the Minnesota Department of Health, are available to help with proper implementation of assessment and investigation activities. In summary, this funding will mostly be utilized locally to support the reuse and redevelopment of brownfields projects within the community.

**IV.E.4.b. Past Performance and Accomplishments**

**IV.E.4.b.i. Currently Has or Previously Received an EPA Brownfields Grant**

**IV.E.4.b.i.1 Accomplishments**

The city of Virginia received \$550,000 for a FY16 Assessment grant and included projects in the cities of Aurora, Bovey, Ely, Eveleth, Hoyt Lakes, Nashwauk, and Virginia. This FY16 grant funded nine Phase I ESA, seven Phase II Investigations, and three Response Action Plans. More work is required on most of these projects; however, plans are in place for residential, commercial, light industrial, and greenspace developments making these previously unusable properties usable while protecting human health and the environment. This work has been updated and documented in the ACRES database.

**IV.E.4.b.i.2. Compliance with Grant Requirements**

A FY16 assessment grant in the amount of \$550,000 was liquidated on October 30, 2019. Over the three year grant cycle, 12% of funds were expended on Phase I, 68% was utilized for Phase II, 10% was utilized for response action plans and cleanup planning, and 10% was utilized for overall grant requirements and reporting. All ACRES reports were completed quarterly in this EPA database for project officer review, and all other project reporting was completed within work plan timelines. Overall compliance with the 2016 work plan varied as more Phase II work was completed than was originally anticipated. The work plan proposal was planned to utilize 33% on Phase I, 50% on Phase II, 8% on cleanup planning, and 9% for reporting and grant requirements. All projects have development plans and will move forward in development as environmental limitations have been removed. The developments range from residential to commercial ventures along with some greenspace.

## **Threshold Criteria**

### **Applicant eligibility**

The city of Virginia, Minnesota is a general purpose unit of local government and will serve in a leadership role for the Iron Range Brownfields Community for this project.

### **Community involvement**

The Iron Range Brownfields Program will continue with its advisory board for the community wide assessment program. This program is a community collaborative that is literally and figuratively changing the landscape of the region. There is a Brownfields Program tab on the home page of the City website ([https://www.virginiamn.us/website\\_in\\_progress/index.php](https://www.virginiamn.us/website_in_progress/index.php)) where community outreach and program updates can be accessed by the community and program stakeholders. The Iron Range Brownfields Program, as a coalition of 10 communities, was tremendously successful in the first grant program (2011 and 2016), assessing a variety of sites within the assessment area, effectively investing EPA funds, meeting the goals of the Coalition and the goals of the EPA Brownfields Program. Some of this success can be attributed to being able to tap into the pre- existing intercommunity infrastructure of community leaders on the Iron Range. The Iron Range Brownfields Program effectively used existing community partnerships, helping the coalition in its cooperative efforts to improve our region.

### **Named contractors and sub recipients**

A contractor / sub recipient has not been procured or named.

### **Expenditure of existing grant funds**

City of Virginia, Minnesota does not have an open EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant or Multipurpose Grant.

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