
Virginia Business Ready Sites Program

Site Characterization
Guidelines and Application
FY 19

Virginia Business Ready Sites Program (VBRSP) Site Characterization

Purpose

The Virginia Business Ready Sites Program (VBRSP) was established pursuant to § 2.2- 2238 C. of the Code of Virginia of 1950, as amended (the Code), to identify and assess the readiness of potential industrial or commercial sites in the Commonwealth of Virginia (the Commonwealth) for marketing for industrial or commercial economic development purposes, thereby enhancing the Commonwealth's infrastructure and promoting the Commonwealth's competitive business environment.

The initial step under the VBRSP is to obtain a Site Characterization for a potential site. A licensed civil engineer or equivalent (Site Development Professional) will provide the Site Characterization by:

- (i) assessing the site to quantify the current level of existing development and the additional development required to bring the site to the next required level; and
- (ii) designating to such site one of the Site Characterization Tier Levels set forth in Appendix A.

Site Characterization Grant

Site Characterization Grants are available to reimburse for retaining a Site Development Professional for Site Characterization and receiving a designated Site Characterization Tier Level.

To be eligible for a Site Characterization Grant, an eligible applicant must have had the Site Characterization made no earlier than one year prior to the application for a Site Characterization Grant or have the Site Characterization completed no later than ninety (90) days after a Site Characterization Grant has been awarded.

The maximum Site Characterization Grant awarded to an applicant will be 50% of the cost of site assessment, up to \$5,000. A local match of at least 100% is required (Local Match). An applicant further is responsible for covering any remaining amount of the cost of Site Characterization. Such match must be in cash and may be funded from public and/or private sources. Funds previously expended on other work related to the site will not be considered a part of the match.

Eligible Applicant

An applicant for a Site Characterization Grant must be:

- (i) a political subdivision of the Commonwealth, including a county, city, town, industrial/economic development authority, redevelopment and housing authority, or regional industrial facility authority; or
- (ii) a public-private partnership that includes among its members at least one political subdivision of the Commonwealth.

Applications may be made individually, or where an agreement to partner on a site exists, may be made jointly.

An applicant is required to demonstrate a commitment to bringing the site to a level of development that will enable the site to be marketed for industrial or commercial economic development purposes.

Eligible Site

An applicant may apply for a Site Characterization Grant for a site that:

- (i) is listed in VirginiaScan; and
- (ii) meets or is expected to be able to meet the following minimum criteria of a site suitable for marketing for industrial or commercial economic development purposes:
 - Acreage: For Site Characterization Grants approved through Fiscal Year 2020, at least a minimum of 25 contiguous, developable acres, or for Site Characterization Grants approved thereafter, at least a minimum of 100 contiguous, developable acres.
 - Zoning: Appropriate for industrial and/or commercial development and use.
 - Ownership: Public, public/private, or private. If the site is under private ownership, there must be an option agreement or other documentation of a commitment by the private owner(s) to a competitive sales price, to permit access to the site for site assessment, and to market the site for industrial or commercial economic development purposes.

Application

An applicant must submit a VBRSP Site Characterization Grant Application (Appendix B to these Guidelines) for evaluation by a committee of the VBRSP Working Group members (Review Committee).

The VBRSP Working Group is a team of state, regional, and local stakeholders including the Virginia Economic Development Partnership Authority (VEDP), the Virginia

Department of Environmental Quality, railroad representatives, utility representatives, civil engineers, and other government, business and industry representatives, convened to develop the VBRSP.

The Review Committee will accept VBRSP Site Characterization Grant Applications on a rolling basis, until the monies available for the Site Characterization step of the VBRSP have all been allocated.

An applicant will be required to: (i) provide specific site information including site ownership; (ii) describe the costs associated with the Site Characterization and include an estimate or invoice, if available; (iii) evidence of the Local Match; (iv) provide documentation of the designated Site Characterization Tier Level, if available; and (v) demonstrate the connection between the potential site and the local/regional industrial or commercial economic development targets, strategies, complementary assets, and workforce availability.

The Review Committee has the sole discretion to award a Site Characterization Grant.

Award and Disbursement

An applicant will be informed of the Review Committee's decision to award a Site Characterization Grant.

If the Site Characterization has already been made, the Site Characterization Tier Level will be included in VirginiaScan, a letter confirming the Site Characterization Tier Level will be issued, and the Site Characterization Grant will be disbursed.

If the Site Characterization has not already been made, the Site Characterization must be completed within 90 days of the award. Upon completion, the grantee must submit documentation of the designated Site Characterization Tier Level. At such time, the Site Characterization Tier Level will be included in VirginiaScan, a letter confirming the Site Characterization Tier Level will be issued, and the Site Characterization Grant will be disbursed.

The proceeds of a Site Characterization Grant may be expended only for paying or reimbursing the costs of a Site Characterization. None of the proceeds of a Site Characterization Grant may be expended on site development.

Special Site Characterization Program for Fiscal Years 2019 and 2020

For Fiscal Years 2019 and 2020, VEDP may engage in an enhanced program (the Enhanced Characterization Program) to rapidly and efficiently enhance VEDP's knowledge of the number of sites in the Commonwealth that meet the criteria to be Eligible Sites, as described above, including the Site Characterization Tier Levels for such sites. VEDP may spend up to \$2,000,000 in the VBRSP to engage Site Development Professionals to perform Site Characterizations on Eligible Sites. For the Enhanced Characterization Program, there is no need for an eligible applicant, nor for a

local match. VEDP will (i) identify potential Eligible Sites, (ii) hire, oversee and compensate the Site Development Professionals, and (iii) receive and analyze the results of the Site Characterizations. VEDP shall invite participation by regional and industry stakeholders to assess potential sites, identify product shortfalls, and make recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly for marketing such sites, in alignment with the goals outlined in the Governor's Comprehensive Economic Development Policy for the Commonwealth, VEDP's Strategic Plan for Economic Development of the Commonwealth of Virginia (FY19-FY23), and other economic development initiatives.

APPENDIX A

Site Characterization Tier Levels

An applicant will retain a Site Development Professional to assess a site and to designate one of the following Site Characterization Tier Levels to such site:

- (i) **Tier 1:** Site under (a) public ownership, (b) public/private ownership, or (c) private ownership which such private owner(s) agreeable to marketing the site for economic development purposes and to allowing access to the property for site assessment and marketing purposes, but at no established sales price. Comprehensive plan reflects site as appropriate for industrial or commercial development and use, but site is not zoned as such. Site has minimal or no infrastructure. Minimal or no due diligence has been performed.
- (ii) **Tier 2:** Site under (a) public ownership, (b) public/private ownership, or (c) private ownership with an option agreement or other documentation of a commitment by the private owner(s) to a competitive sales price, to permit access to the site for site assessment, construction, and marketing, and to market the site for industrial or commercial economic development purposes. Comprehensive Plan reflects site intended for industrial or commercial development and use, but site is not zoned as such and a rezoning hearing needs to be scheduled. Site has minimal or no infrastructure. Minimal or no due diligence has been performed.
- (iii) **Tier 3:** Site is zoned for industrial or commercial development and use. Site has minimal or no infrastructure. Due diligence including, among other things, a wetlands survey with Army Corps of Engineers approval within the last five years, geotechnical borings, boundary and topographical survey, cultural resources review, an Endangered Species review, and a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, has been completed. Estimated costs of development have been quantified.
- (iv) **Tier 4:** All infrastructure is in place or will be deliverable within 12 months. All permit issues have been identified and quantified.
- (v) **Tier 5:** All permits are in place and the site is ready for a site disturbance permit from the locality in which the site is located.

In addition to providing the current Tier Level, the Site Development Professional will provide a list of tasks required to move the site to the next Tier Level and the estimated cost to perform those tasks.

APPENDIX B

VBRSP Site Characterization Application

Application Instructions

Carefully review the VBRSP Site Characterization Guidelines and the application requirements before completing and submitting an application.

Applications will be accepted, on a rolling basis, until the monies available for the Site Characterization step of the VBRSP have all been allocated. Only timely-filed, complete applications will be considered.

Use the Provided Format: Applicants must use the format provided and respond using a font size of no less than 12. *Use the Space Provided:* All questions should be answered within the space provided. The following List of Attachments* are required, as applicable, and must be placed at the end of the application, and listed in order:

- Attachment A - Documentation of Ownership
- Attachment B - Site Characterization Documentation (Reimbursement)
- Attachment C - Assessment Invoice or Estimate
- Attachment D - Applicants W-9

* In some cases, more than one document may be needed to for a particular attachment. For example, the site description documents may include an aerial image and a topographic map. In this instance, please label the documents A1, A-2, and so forth.

Application Questions and Submittal: Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until funds are depleted. Applications must be submitted **electronically**.

Submit questions and applications to:

Sites and Building Manager
Virginia Economic Development Partnership
804.545.5786
vbrsp@vedp.org

Applicant Name(s):

Provide the name of the applicable political subdivision of the Commonwealth or the public-private partnership that includes among its members at least one political subdivision of the Commonwealth.

Primary Contact Information:

Provide name, contact numbers, physical and email address.

Site Identification:

Identify the name, address, and location of the site, including the locality in which it is located.

iVS Property ID:

The site must be listed in VirginiaScan.

Site Ownership:

Provide the name of the property owner. Indicate whether property is public, public/private or privately owned. Include documentation of ownership. (Attachment A).

Site Description:

Provide the current zoning of the property. Describe any changes in zoning that may be required or planned for the site. Explain how the site aligns with the applicable comprehensive plan.

Site Characterization Firm:

Provide the name of the Site Development Professional that will perform or has performed the Site Characterization.

Site Characterization Tier Level / Anticipated Site Characterization Tier Level:

Include documentation of the Site Characterization Tier Level. (Attachment B). If the site has not yet been characterized, indicate the anticipated Site Characterization Tier Level.

Site Assessment Cost and Grant Request:

Detail the cost of the Site Characterization. Indicate VBRSP Site Characterization Grant request. Include an estimate or, if available, an invoice. Include a copy of the applicants W-9. (Attachment C, D)

Source of Local Match:

Identify each source of the funds to pay for the cost of the Site Characterization. Indicate the amount provided by each source as a share of the total cost.

Connection with Local/Regional Strategies and Assets:

Briefly describe the connection between the potential site and the local/regional industrial or commercial economic development targets, strategies, complementary assets, and workforce availability.