



VIRGINIA BUSINESS READY SITES PROGRAM

SITE CHARACTERIZATION GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION

Contents

VIRGINIA BUSINESS READY SITES PROGRAM (VBRSP).....3

Article I. Introduction.....3

 Section I.1 Program Background.....3

 Section I.2 Program Priorities.....4

 Section I.3 Program Funding.....4

Article II. Site Characterization Report Grant.....4

 Section II.1 Grant Purpose4

 Section II.2 Eligible Applicants5

 Section II.3 Eligible Sites5

 Section II.4 Site Characterization Report Application5

 Section II.5 Awards and Disbursements6

 APPENDIX A Site Characterization Tier Levels7

Appendix A.1 VBRSP Site Characterization Tiering Matrix8

 APPENDIX B VBRSP Site Characterization Application9

 APPENDIX C VBRSP Site Characterization Report Requirements11

Appendix D Site Characterization Matrix.....12

VIRGINIA BUSINESS READY SITES PROGRAM (VBRSP)

Site Characterization Guidelines and Application

Article I. Introduction

Section I.1 Program Background

The Virginia Business Ready Sites Program (VBRSP) was established pursuant to [§ 2.2-2240.2:1](#) 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 VBRSP has three components:

- (i) **Site Characterization Report** (25 acres), to ascertain and designate a site's level of development, and
- (ii) **Accelerated Site Characterization** (50 acres), to further ascertain and assess the site's suitability for site development, and
- (iii) **Site Development** (50 acres), to develop further the sites for marketing to economic development projects.

Current versions of these Guidelines and the corresponding guidelines for the Site Development component of the VBRSP are available for review by the public online at:
<https://www.vedp.org/vbrsp>.

The mission of VBRSP Site Development is to establish a pool of potential sites across the Commonwealth that are well prepared and positioned for selection and development by economic development projects. To be well prepared and positioned for selection, potential sites are typically ranked at a Site Characterization Tier Level (each, a "Tier Level") of either 4 or 5. See Appendix A to these Guidelines for a breakdown of the five different Tier Levels.

Section I.2 Program Priorities

The goal of the VBRSP is to further business attraction and expansion in the Commonwealth of Virginia through site development. Funds available through the VBRSP program will be awarded to projects that best align with the following program priorities:

- **Improve project-ready site inventory**
- **Create “high-win-potential” sites**
- **Advance sites from lower tiers**
- **Focus on sites with the potential for regional and statewide impact**
- **Ensure geographic diversity**
- **Practice fiduciary stewardship**

Section I.3 Program Funding

VBRSP is funded through an allocation by the General Assembly into the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program Fund (VBRSP Fund) in accordance with Section 2.2-2240.2:1 of the Code of Virginia. For purposes of these Guidelines, “Fiscal Year” means the Commonwealth’s fiscal year, which runs from July 1 of one calendar year through June 30 of the immediately succeeding calendar year.

Article II. Site Characterization Report Grant

Section II.1 Grant Purpose

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

- (i) assessing the site to establish the current level of existing development;
- (ii) evaluating the additional development required to bring the site to higher Tier Levels (through Tier 5) and estimating the costs of such development; and
- (iii) designating to such site one of the Site Characterization Tier Levels set forth in Appendix A; and

- (iv) creating a Site Characterization Report containing the elements set forth in Appendix C.

The information contained in the Site Characterization Report will provide insight on development opportunities and challenges presented by the site, and the related cost estimates – essential information for making informed decisions regarding further investment in the site.

Site Characterization Report Grants are available for sites 25 acres or larger to reimburse for retaining a Site Development Professional for Site Characterization and receiving a designated Site Characterization Tier Level and Site Characterization Report.

The maximum Site Characterization Report Grant awarded to an applicant will be 50% of the cost of site assessment, up to \$5,000. A 1:1, state to local match is required (Local Match). The applicant 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.

Section II.2 Eligible Applicants

An applicant for a Site Characterization Report Grant must be:

- (i) counties, cities, and towns of the Commonwealth, and local industrial or economic development authorities created in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth (each, a “Locality”); and
- (ii) regional industrial or economic development authorities created in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth (each, a “Regional Authority”).

Privately held sites are eligible to receive funding. The grant must be awarded to Locality or Regional Authority and since it will be awarded from a public entity to another public entity all application documents are subject to disclosure laws.

Section II.3 Eligible Sites

An applicant may apply for a Site Characterization Report Grant for a site of at least 25 acres suitable for industrial or commercial development that:

- (i) is listed in VirginiaScan; and
- (ii) The site’s intended use is for industrial and/or commercial development use.

Section II.4 Site Characterization Report Application

An applicant must submit a VBRSP Site Characterization Report Grant Application (provided at vedp.org/vbrsp) for evaluation by the Project Review Committee. The Project Review Committee is a project management team that oversees the VBRSP and reviews project applications, supported by relevant subject matter experts on an as-needed basis. (see Appendix B for what is required in an application)

The Project Review Committee will accept VBRSP Site Characterization Report Grant Applications on a rolling basis beginning July 1 of each fiscal year, until the monies available for the Site Characterization portion of the VBRSP for that fiscal year have all been allocated. Site Characterization Report Grants should be applied for in advance of characterizing the site. For purposes of VBRSP, a fiscal year is defined as running from July 1st of each year to June 30th of the following year.

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) and provide the full Site Characterization Report containing the elements specified in Appendix C to these Guidelines, following completion of the characterization.

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

Section II.5 Awards and Disbursements

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

The Site Characterization must be completed within 90 days of the award. Upon completion, the grantee must submit a Site Characterization Report. At such time, the Site Characterization Tier Level will be recorded by VEDP, a letter confirming the Site Characterization Tier Level will be issued, and the Site Characterization Report Grant will be disbursed.

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:

Tier 1: *Site is under (a) public ownership, (b) public/private ownership, or (c) private ownership, and of which such owner(s) are agreeable to marketing the site for economic development purposes and allowing access to the property for site assessment and marketing purposes. The site has no established sales price, has minimal or no infrastructure, and has been subject to minimal or no due diligence.*

Tier 2: *Site is 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; permit access to the site for site assessment, construction, and marketing; and market the site for industrial or commercial economic development purposes. Comprehensive Plan reflects that the site is intended for industrial or commercial development land use, but site is not zoned as such and a rezoning hearing needs to be scheduled. Preliminary evaluation is complete to confirm site has minimal or no infrastructure and/or minimal or no due diligence in place.*

Tier 3: *Site is zoned for industrial or commercial development land use. Site could have minimal or no infrastructure in place. Due diligence is complete including, but not limited to, a waters of the US (wetlands and streams) delineation with US Army Corps of Engineers approval within the last five years (i.e. a Preliminary Jurisdictional Determination or Approved Jurisdictional Determination letter), geotechnical borings and preliminary evaluation (i.e. Preliminary Geotechnical Report), boundary survey with easements and encumbrances identified (ALTA preferred), one-foot topographic survey completed for the purposes of design or real property improvements signed and sealed by a duly licensed professional in the Commonwealth of Virginia, a current cultural resources review, a current threatened and endangered species review, a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment within the last five years and, if necessary, a floodplain study or geological / karst evaluation. Master planning and preliminary engineering work is complete with associated reports and estimated costs and timelines for infrastructure development quantified.*

Tier 4: *Site is positioned to support development such that building construction can take place in 12-18 months or less, with all infrastructure improvements in place, or plans for necessary infrastructure improvements completed and approved and deemed deliverable within 12-18 months by a licensed Professional Engineer in the Commonwealth of Virginia. All infrastructure permit issues are identified and quantified.*

Tier 5: *Site is “shovel ready” and building construction can begin as soon as necessary land disturbance permits can be obtained by prospective industry. Utilities must be to the site or able to be extended in less than 12 months.*

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 costs to perform those tasks.

See the example Characterization Report as a guide.

Appendix A.1 Site Characterization Tiering Matrix

All Characterization reports will be reviewed prior to approving a tier status. Each characterization will be reviewed to ensure it meets the minimum requirements outlined within each category in the [Characterization Matrix](#).

The goal of the site tiering is as the tiers increase, the site understanding and certainty increases within these categories:

- Electric Utility
- Gas Utility
- Water Utility
- Wastewater (Sewer) Utility
- Sale Price
- Ownership
- Permitting
- Comprehensive Plan
- Comprehensive Schedule
- Due Diligence Studies
- Transportation
- Community Readiness: Housing Plan, Workforce, and Cultural Resources Engagement

See the [Site Characterization Matrix table](#) for more detailed information

APPENDIX B VBRSP Site Characterization Application

Application Instructions

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

Applications will be accepted, on a rolling basis, beginning July 1st of the fiscal year, until the monies available for the Site Characterization step of the VBRSP have all been allocated. Only timely-filled, completed 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 Report (Reimbursement)

Attachment C - Assessment Invoice or Estimate

Attachment D - Applicant's Commonwealth of Virginia (COV) Substitute W-9

* In some cases, more than one document may be needed for a particular attachment. 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. Application must be submitted **electronically**.

Submit questions and applications to:

VBRSP Project Review Committee
Virginia Economic Development Partnership
(804) 545 5786
sites@vedp.org

Applicant Name(s):

Provide the name of the Locality or Regional Authority applying.

Primary Contact Information:

Provide name, contact numbers, physical and email address.

Site Identification:

Identify the name, address, and location of the site (GPS coordinates), 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 acreage and 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 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 applicant's COV Substitute 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.

APPENDIX C VBRSP Site Characterization Report Requirements

The Site Development Professional shall complete a Site Characterization Report, containing the following elements:

- A Site Characterization Letter which designates the site one of the Site Characterization Tier Levels set forth in Appendix A.
- A summary of key site characteristics, including:
 - Acreage
 - Buildout Potential (SF)
 - Yield (SF/Acre)
 - Current Zoning / Land Use
 - The nearest four-lane highway, and the distance to that highway
 - The nearest interstate, and the distance to that interstate
 - The providers of the site's water, sewer, natural gas, power, and telecom services (if available)
- A summary of due diligence completed to date
- A summary of wet utility infrastructure
- A summary of dry utility infrastructure
- A summary of site transportation and access
- A summary of site features
- A description of the Tier assignment including:
 - The site's current Tier Level
 - The additional tasks needed to reach the next Tier Level and further Tier Levels
 - The estimated costs associated with those tasks
- Relevant maps of the site, including:
 - An aerial and environmental map
 - A map of the site's utilities
 - A map of development constraints on the site
 - A schematic build-out map

See the example Characterization Report as a guide.

Appendix D VBRSP Site Characterization Matrix

		<i>Non-Certified Sites</i>			<i>Certified Sites</i>	
Category	Development Item	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	Tier 5
Electric	Understanding of Proximity to Property	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Preliminary Engineering	N/A	N/A	Reviewed with a high level understanding of future development needs	✓	✓
	Cost Est.	N/A	N/A	Reviewed with a high level understanding of future development needs	✓	✓
	Timelines	N/A	N/A	Reviewed with a high level understanding of future development needs	Power study completed and idea of realistic timeline - inclusive of bridging solutions	<12 months
	Capacity	N/A	N/A	✓ (understanding of capacity)	Sized to target sectors/site size with programmed infrastructure	✓
	Easements	N/A	N/A	Routing Assessed	Plan in place, potentially begun acquiring/options	Acquired or not needed because it is on site
	Infra. Design	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	✓
	Funding Identified	N/A	N/A	N/A	If not identified, must understand the cost and how it could be funded	✓
	Infra. Built	N/A	N/A	N/A	Site Dependent: in place/programmed	Site Dependent: in place/programmed
Gas	Understanding of Proximity to Property	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Preliminary Engineering	N/A	N/A	Reviewed with a high level understanding of future development needs	✓	✓
	Cost Est.	N/A	N/A	Reviewed with a high level understanding of future development needs	✓	✓

Gas	Timelines	N/A	N/A	Reviewed with a high level understanding of future development needs	Gas study completed and an idea of realistic timeline - inclusive of bridging solutions	<12 months
	Capacity	N/A	N/A	✓ (understanding of capacity)	Sized to target sectors/site size with programmed infrastructure	✓
	Easements	N/A	N/A	Routing Assessed	Plan in place, begun acquiring/options	Acquired or not needed because it is on site
	Infra. Design	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	✓
	Funding Identified	N/A	N/A	N/A	If not identified, must understand the cost and how it could be funded	✓
	Infra. Built	N/A	N/A	N/A	Site Dependent: in place/programmed	Site Dependent: in place/programmed
Water	Understanding of Proximity to Property	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Preliminary Engineering	N/A	N/A	Reviewed with a high level understanding of future development needs	✓	✓
	Cost Est.	N/A	N/A	Reviewed with a high level understanding of future development needs	✓	✓
	Timelines	N/A	N/A	Reviewed with a high level understanding of future development needs	<18 months	<12 months
	Capacity	N/A	N/A	✓ (understanding of capacity)	Sized to target sectors/site size with programmed infrastructure	✓
	Easements	N/A	N/A	Routing Assessed	Plan in place, begun acquiring/options	Acquired or not needed because it is on site
	Infra. Design	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	✓
	Funding Identified	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	✓
	Infra. Built	N/A	N/A	N/A	Site Dependent: in place/programmed	Site Dependent: in place/programmed

Wastewater	Understanding of Proximity to Property	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Preliminary Engineering	N/A	N/A	Reviewed with a high level understanding of future development needs	✓	✓
	Cost Est.	N/A	N/A	Reviewed with a high level understanding of future development needs	✓	✓
	Timelines	N/A	N/A	Reviewed with a high level understanding of future development needs	<18 months	<12 months
	Capacity	N/A	N/A	✓ (understanding of capacity)	Sized to target sectors/site size with programmed infrastructure	✓
	Easements	N/A	N/A	Routing Assessed	Plan in place, begun acquiring/options	Acquired or not needed because it is on site
	Infra. Design	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	✓
	Funding Identified	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	✓
	Infra. Built	N/A	N/A	N/A	Site Dependent: in place/programmed	Site Dependent: in place/programmed
Sale Price	Land available for economic development projects	N/A	Sale Framework with certainty	✓	✓	✓
Ownership	Ownership or option agreement	Owner(s) are agreeable to marketing the site for economic development purposes and allowing access to the property for site assessment and marketing purposes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Permitting	Strategy	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	✓
	Utility Permits	N/A	N/A	N/A		✓
	Pad Permits	N/A	N/A	N/A	Note: ensure you have a single and complete project which includes utilities	✓

	Mitigation Strategy	N/A	N/A	Reviewed with a high level understanding of future development needs	Planned and considered	Purchased
	Mitigation Strategy – Land Acquisition	N/A	N/A	Reviewed with a high level understanding of future development needs	Planned and considered	Purchased
	Transportation Permits	N/A	N/A	N/A	Planned and considered	✓
Comprehensive Plan	Comprehensive plan	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Zoning	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	✓
Comprehensive Schedule	Schedule composed of all known development items and propose	N/A	Pro Forma of future development Items	Preliminary	✓	✓
Due Diligence Studies*	*See sheet titled "Due Diligence"	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	✓
Transportation	Master Planning	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	✓
	Preliminary Engineering	N/A	N/A	Reviewed with a high level understanding of future development needs	✓	✓
	Cost Est.	N/A	N/A	Reviewed with a high level understanding of future development needs	✓	✓
	Timelines	N/A	N/A	Reviewed with a high level understanding of future development needs	<18 months	<12 months
	Easements	N/A	N/A	Routing Assessed	Plan in place, begun acquiring/options	Acquired or not needed because it is on site
	Infra. Design	N/A	N/A	Reviewed with a high level understanding of future development needs	✓	✓
	Funding Identified	N/A	N/A	N/A	If not identified, must understand the cost and how it could be funded	✓
	Infra. Built	N/A	N/A	N/A	Site Dependent: in place/programmed	Site Dependent: in place/programmed

Community Readiness	Housing Plan	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	✓
	Workforce	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	✓
	Cultural Resources Engagement	N/A	N/A	N/A	DHR Consultation	✓