



**VIRGINIA BUSINESS READY SITES PROGRAM  
SITE CHARACTERIZATION**

**GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION**

**Virginia Economic Development Partnership**

**FY 2022**

## **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 conduct Site Characterization for a potential site. A licensed civil engineer or equivalent (Site Development Professional) will conduct Site Characterization 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 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 and Site Characterization Report.

The maximum Site Characterization 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.

### **Eligible Applicant**

An applicant for a Site Characterization 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”).

### **Eligible Site**

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

- (i) is listed in VirginiaScan; and
- (ii) contains at least 100 contiguous, developable acres

### **Application**

An applicant must submit a VBRSP Site Characterization Grant Application (provided at [vedp.org/vbrsp](http://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.

The Project Review Committee will accept VBRSP Site Characterization Grant Applications on a rolling basis beginning October 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 Grants can be applied for in advance of characterizing the site, or can be applied for to reimburse the applicant for a characterization that has already occurred and been paid for, so long as the characterization occurred within the fiscal year in which the applicant is applying. For purposes of VBRSP, a fiscal year is defined as running from July 1<sup>st</sup> of each year to June 30<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **Award and Disbursement**

An applicant will be informed of the Project 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 recorded by VEDP, 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 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 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 considered “shovel ready” with all site permits in place or identified such that building construction can begin as soon as necessary land disturbance permits can be obtained by prospective industry.*

**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 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, beginning October 1<sup>st</sup> of the fiscal year, 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 Report (Reimbursement)
- Attachment C - Assessment Invoice or Estimate
- Attachment D – Applicant’s W-9

\* In some cases, more than one document may be needed for a particular attachment. In this instance, please label the documents A-1, 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:

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, 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 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.



## APPENDIX C

### VBRSF 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.