



IV.D. Narrative Information Sheet

1. Applicant Identification:

- a. **Municipality of Orocovis, Puerto Rico**
P.O. Box 2106 Orocovis, P.R. 00720
(787) 867-5000

2. Website URL:

- a. <https://www.oroconvipr.org/inicio>

3. Funding Requested:

- a. Assessment Grant Type: Community-wide Assessment Grant
- b. Federal Funds Requested: \$500,000

4. Location:

- a. Municipality of Orocovis
- b. Orocovis
- c. Puerto Rico

5. Target Area and Priority Site/Property Information

- a. Target Area: Northern District (ND)
- b. The Northern District is bordered to the north by the northernmost areas of Orocovis and the municipalities of Ciales, Morovis, and Corozal, and to the south, east, and west by agricultural, mountainous land within the municipality, the ND covers an area of 12.45 mi² and is located within Census Tracts (CT) 9551, 9549.01, & 9550.01. The ND includes portions of the main urban, industrial/commercial, and tourism sectors of Orocovis, with high visibility due to its location near three major highways at PR-155, PR-156 and PR-157 make the ND a natural “gateway” to the municipality and neighboring cities.
- c. Priority Sites Addresses:
 - i. Clothing Factory – PR-155, Orocovis, PR 00720
 - ii. Vocational/Work Center – PR-156, Orocovis, PR 00720
 - iii. Roman Diaz School – PR-157, Orocovis, PR 00720
 - iv. Barrio Gato School – PR-156, Orocovis, PR 00720
 - v. Botijas 3 School – PR-156, Orocovis, PR 00720
 - vi. Barrio Cacao School – PR-157, Orocovis, PR 00720

6. Contacts:

- a. Project Director:
Lilian M. Melendez, Director of Federal Programs
Municipality of Orocovis
P.O. Box 2106 Orocovis, P.R. 00720

(787) 867-5000
[REDACTED]

- b. Chief Executive/Highest Ranking Elected Official
Jesús E. Colón Berlinger
P.O. Box 2106 Orocovis, P.R. 00720
(787) 867-5000
[REDACTED]

7. Population: Municipality of Orocovis – 21,434 (US 2020 Decennial Census)

8. Other Factors Checklist

Other Factors	Page#
Community population is 15,000 or less.	
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.	
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).	Page 2
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain.	Page 2
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.	Page 3
The proposed project will improve local climate adaptation/mitigation capacity and resilience to protect residents and community investments.	Page 3
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).	
The target area(s) is located within a community in which a coal-fired power plant has recently closed (2014 or later) or is closing.	

9. Letter from the State or Tribal Environmental Authority.

- a. Letter from the Puerto Rico Department of Environmental and Natural Resources is attached.

10. The Municipality of Orocovis is not making any claims for confidential, privileged, or sensitive information, in this application/document.



GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

OCT 29 2024

Hon. Jesús E. Colón Berlingeri

Mayor
Municipio de Orocovis
PO BOX 2106
Orocovis, PR 00720

Honorable Mayor Colón-Berlingeri:

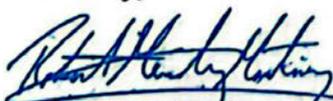
MUNICIPALITY OF OROCOVIS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT LETTER FOR THE INTENTION TO APPLY FOR FY-25 US EPA BROWNFIELD'S PROGRAM FOR A COMMUNITY-WIDE BROWNFIELDS ASSESSMENT GRANT

The Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER) Superfund Program has received a letter from the Municipality of Orocovis informing its intention to apply for a Community Wide Brownfields Assessment Grant for the Fiscal Year 2025.

DNER acknowledges and supports the initiative taken by the municipality. The identification, inventory development, assessment, cleanup and redevelopment of Brownfields sites will provide an opportunity to enhance the social, economic and environmental conditions in this municipality. DNER encourages the Municipality of Orocovis to maintain open communication with federal and state agencies and to request any support needed.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Edwin O. Malavet Santiago, Environmental Emergencies Response Area Manager, at (787) 999-2200, extensions 5914, 5915 or by e-mail at edwin.malavet@drna.pr.gov.

Cordially,


Lcdo. Roberto Méndez Martínez
Acting Secretary
EOMS/MAG

San José Industrial Park, 1375 Ave Ponce de León, San Juan, PR 00926

787.999.2303

www.drna.pr.gov

787.999.2200

1. Project Area Description & Plans for Revitalization, a. Target Area & Brownfields, i. Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Area:

Founded in 1825, the Municipality of Orocovis (Orocovis) is located in the heart of Puerto Rico's (PR) mountainous region in a predominantly rural region 47 miles southwest of the San Juan Metropolitan Area and is known for its scenic landscapes and cultural heritage. With a population of 21,378 (2022 ACS 5-Year Est.) and an area of ± 71 mi², Orocovis has a long economic history centered on agriculture, particularly coffee, tobacco, and small-scale livestock farming, contributing to local and regional markets. Industrial (i.e. fruit juice, traditional candy, textiles, etc.) and commercial development also plays a role in our more populated urban areas. In recent years, the economy has diversified with attractions like Toro Verde Adventure Park bringing visitors from around the world, boosting local businesses and service industries through tourism. But our target area residents are grappling with economic challenges, primarily due to issues with infrastructure, loss of jobs, and the persistent impacts of natural disasters. High energy costs in PR has stifled local businesses, making it hard for smaller economies like Orocovis to thrive. Hurricanes (Maria-2017 & Fiona-2022) severely impacted Orocovis, intensifying extreme socioeconomic and financial pressures. Damaged properties became brownfields, releasing chemicals such as lead paint, petroleum, and other hazards. As a result, a 42% reduction of the commercial sales and revenue and a loss of around \$2.8 million after all municipal and federal economic assistance/response was accounted for. Abandoned brownfields (former schools, industrial, and commercial properties) litter our community due to the economic and environmental impacts experienced in recent years. Our current challenges are attracting and retaining commerce, in part, due to the many brownfields in the municipality and incentivizing acquisition of sites where commercial developers may operate to prevent the abandonment of industrial/commercial structures.

Target Area: Northern District (ND) – bordered to the north by the northernmost areas of Orocovis and the municipalities of Ciales, Morovis, and Corozal, and to the south, east, and west by agricultural, mountainous land within the municipality, the ND covers an area of 12.45 mi² and is located within Census Tracts (CT) 9551, 9549.01, & 9550.01. The ND includes portions of the main urban, industrial/commercial, and tourism sectors of Orocovis, with high visibility due to its location near three major highways at PR-155, PR-156 and PR-157 make the ND a natural “gateway” to the municipality and neighboring cities. Unfortunately, the ND contains many aging, shuttered, and underutilized properties in our main commercial/industrial district. Past economic struggles brought brownfield challenges such as abandoned buildings, legacy pollution (Table 1), blight, increased crime, and strain on public resources. Because of unfunded due diligence costs, brownfields add to financial burdens (reduced income, increase poverty, lower tax revenue and wages, etc. – 2.a.i) and health impacts (high cancer and infant mortality rates – 2.a.ii(2)) in ND. According to the 2010 and 2020 US Census, the ND population (over half of Orocovis’) has declined by 11.6% since 2010 (from 12,552 to 11,117), due to job losses, lost economic opportunities, lack of basic and emergency services in more remote sectors, and from declining quality of life. Residents living among brownfields in the Damian, Gato, Pueblo, and Botijas Wards experience low income (Median Household Income (MHI) of less than 25% of that in the US) and high poverty (just under 5x higher than in the US (2022 ACS)) (see 2.a.ii).

Within the ND (less than 1/5 of Orocovis as a whole), there are 6 vacant schools in low-income areas, closed as a result of the 2018 Educational reform act. The closures unintendedly intensified the challenges for lower-income families, illuminating broader issues around economic inequality and access to quality education. Prolonged abandonment has caused these properties with great reuse potential to carry the stigma of environmental contamination, driving down property values, increasing criminal activity, and exacerbating environmental justice issues. Since the economic downturn, the federal government made significant investments in disaster response/recovery to facilitate redevelopment and resilience in PR, but these funds require that assessment and cleanup be performed, if needed prior to their use. With so much redevelopment potential, we are making a focused effort to address priority brownfields (1.a.ii) and leverage funding for this hardest hit part of our community. We are already working hard to repurpose and reshape the ND economy. For example, we are making a \$77.8M investment in public infrastructure and municipal office development, road and bridge repairs within our urban center, and constructing a market square and recreational center.

1.a.ii. Description of the Priority Brownfield Site(s): While our preliminary inventory lists 19

brownfield sites in ND (±75 acres), Table 1 priority sites offer the best opportunity for successful reuse.

Table 1 – Priority Brownfield Sites and Impacts

Priority Site, Size, Proximity to Target Area Residents	Historic Use / Current Use & Condition / Planned Reuse	Suspected Contaminants*
Clothing Factory – PR-155, 3.3 acres in industrial area; adjoins low-income, minority residential; in flood plain	Former Industrial clothing factory / <u>abandoned, deteriorated</u> / <i>Industrial ice factory</i>	PCBs, VOCs, PAHs, metals, petroleum, asbestos, PFAS
Vocational/Work Center – PR-156, 16.9 acres in commercial area; adjoined by low-income, minority neighborhood	Former study/work vocational center / <u>vacant & deteriorated</u> / <i>local govt offices & commercial</i>	PCBs, metals, petroleum, VOCs, PAHs, lead paint
Roman Diaz School – PR-157, 35.3 acres in western area; within low-income, minority neighborhood, adjoins water body	Former school and community storage / <u>Vacant</u> / <i>Mixed-use community services, commercial, & rec. greenspace</i>	VOCs, PAHs, metals, petroleum, asbestos
Barrio Gato School – PR-155, 1.6 acres in mixed-use area; adjoins low-income, minority residential, & water body	Former school and community venue / <u>Vacant</u> / <i>physical therapy clinic</i>	VOCs, PAHs, asbestos, metals, lead paint
Botijas 3 School – PR-156, 4.4 acres in low-income minority neighborhood	Former school / <u>vacant good structure</u> / <i>community resiliency hub & services</i>	PCBs, metals, petroleum, VOCs, PAHs, asbestos
Barrio Cacao School – PR-157, 2.67 acres in low-income minority neighborhood	Former School and community center / <u>vacant</u> / <i>in good condition</i> / <i>Medical offices</i>	PCBs, metals, petroleum, VOCs, PAHs, asbestos

*According to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), the contaminants listed in Table 1 pose a real threat to human health. Health threats include damage to skin, liver, kidneys, heart, spleen; nervous, respiratory, hormonal, blood, & immune systems; may also cause neurological damage, birth defects and cancer (www.atsdr.cdc.gov).

These highest priorities sites will meet the ND’s immediate needs, align with our revitalization plans, and redevelopment is imminent due to funding already committed (\$6.8M from private and public investors). Redevelopment of commercial, medical, public, and industrial assets on priority brownfield sites in the ND and throughout Orocovis will serve as examples of success, triggering further investment. For example, the Clothing Factory (industrial site) potentially impacts the adjoining neighborhood with PFAS, PCBs, solvents, and other industrial chemicals. After addressing its environmental threats, the municipality plans to partner with private investors to reuse it as an ice manufacturing plant, bringing needed economic development and high-paying jobs (per our Revitalization Plans (1.b.i.)). EPA grant funds will strategically serve as matching leverage for completing this and other federally funded projects and assist in bringing environmental justice to areas surrounding the present brownfields.

1.a.iii. Identifying Additional Sites: If grant funds remain after addressing target area/priority sites, we may choose to invest in properties outside the ND (in census tracts containing underserved residents or disadvantaged areas defined by EJScreen and/or CEJST). Additional sites will be identified using the brownfield inventory and community/stakeholder input and prioritized based on demographic and environmental justice conditions that are similar to sites in the ND. Demographics areas mentioned outside the ND are similarly disadvantaged and share similar environmental justice challenges.

1.b. Revitalization of the Target Area, i. Reuse Strategy & Alignment with Revitalization Plans: After extensive community engagement efforts, our 2022 Recovery Plan, 2021 Territorial Plan, and 2020 Hazard Mitigation Plan (Revitalization Plans) were finalized and specify the reuse of vacant and underutilized properties as a high priority, specifically urban infill by developing quality healthcare, tourism oriented development, municipal infrastructure (roads, parks, government offices, etc.), commercial and industrial expansion, and climate resiliency infrastructure will create job, improve access to quality healthcare, while focusing on the most vulnerable residents. Redevelopment of brownfields into industrial/commercial facilities and community/resilience-based centers in the ND will allow residents to live, work, shop, and recreate within their neighborhoods. Priority site reuse plans are consistent with our Revitalization Plans, directly address community needs and align with key initiatives identified in the planning processes. We will diversify and modernize our employment sectors to minimize future job cutbacks/closures and encourage commercial development. With funding already secured, these reuse activities will address our need for jobs and residential options and will encourage people to return to Orocovis to restore our community and enjoy the redevelopment benefits.

Orocovis is requesting \$500,000, most of which will be used for Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs), providing the initial, highest risk investment necessary to

access leveraged funds and achieve our revitalization goals. Significant resources have been pledged for reuse of ND properties (1.c.i), including a leveraging commitment for redevelopment of public infrastructure and municipal offices and recent flood mitigation around areas most affected by landslides and road reconstruction/improvements (PR-155, PR-156, and PR-157). With EPA funds to cover environmental assessment and planning costs, we will realize the outcomes and benefits outlined below.

1.b.ii Outcomes & Benefits of Reuse Strategy: **The redevelopment of Table 1 priority sites will create an estimated 145 construction jobs, 95 permanent jobs, resiliency and service hubs in, at least, two mountainous sectors, and modern commercial development, an estimated \$738K in annual tax revenue and eliminate threats to less fortunate and vulnerable residents.** Redevelopment of the Study/Work Center, Barrio Gato and Barrio Cacao Schools will remove environmental contamination (PCBs, metals, petroleum, VOCs, PAHs, lead paint) and eliminate a health hazard to the adjoining neighborhood. Removing blight will help end criminal activity (2.a.i) that is lured by abandoned property. Once this site is redeveloped into medical facilities, jobs will be created, lifting area residents from poverty. New development and capital investment in the Roman Diaz School will create more high paying jobs and increased tax revenue by attracting tourist dollars to area businesses.

During all phases of the revitalization process, we will encourage the reuse of existing buildings and infrastructure, consistency with building codes that require or promote energy efficiency measures: energy efficient lighting, low-flow showers/toilets, geothermal heating/cooling, etc. Addressing priority sites will supply our vulnerable residents with needed services, workforce development (new jobs), and remediate/reduce legacy pollution in areas with high concentrations of low-income residents. **EPAs investment in brownfields in the ND will help meet Justice40 goals by creating energy efficient, sustainable development, conserving and preserving greenfields, improving health by reducing exposure to contaminants, and turning brownfields into assets. This will deliver justice to disadvantaged residents (due to low-income, high minorities, distressed neighborhoods, disproportionate exposure to environmental impacts from brownfields, etc.).**

1.c. Strategy for Leveraging Resources, i. Resources Needed for Site Reuse: The municipality has a history of leveraging investment in projects throughout the community. For example, **Orocovis has leveraged over \$13.9M in grant funding to improve energy and stormwater infrastructure and create a resiliency hub in recent years to help revitalize the community.** Federally funded reconstruction projects requiring environmental assessments present an opportunity to leverage funds with the EPA grant. This strategic investment will help revitalize the ND, attract businesses and visitors downtown, and strengthen resilience in mountainous communities. Redeveloping priority sites will free our economy from the negative impact of brownfields. Our Municipality currently has \$4.4M available to invest in the ND. In addition, Orocovis is eligible for and will seek additional funding from the following sources that support anticipated assessment, cleanup, infrastructure, and redevelopment: EPA Brownfield Clean-up and Multipurpose grant funds (\$2M/\$1M), US Dept. of Agriculture Rural Economic Development Loans and Grants (\$300K grants/\$1M in loans for community and economic development aid), Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), CDBG-DR (Disaster Relief) of which over \$9M is available to Orocovis for demolition, infrastructure, and economic development of brownfields, Federal Emergency Mgmt. Agency (FEMA) (over \$17.7M available for hurricane-related clean-up and redevelopment), US Economic Development Administration (USEDA), Dept. of Transportation (DOT) grants, and new funding opportunities/incentives available in the future. Funding from these resources is available for remediation, demolition, site development, infrastructure improvements, streetscape improvements, building rehabilitation, job training, etc., to encourage and complete our reuse strategies. Should EPA funds be awarded for environmental assessment, the EPA grant qualifies as required match to CDBG-DR, FEMA, and other funding discussed above, further leveraging resources for brownfields redevelopment. Additionally, some funding sources require environmental assessment prior to becoming available and would be unlocked with the use of EPA assessment funds on the properties.

We will also seek funds from the Puerto Rico Economic Incentives Act, which will be used to encourage investment and development of commercial businesses as planned for some of our priority brownfields. As properties are assessed, it will stimulate partnerships with many agencies (U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), FEMA, PR Dept. of Housing, PR Dept. of Economic Dev. &

Commerce, etc.) to fill funding gaps such as demolition funding and reuse incentives, ensuring successful redevelopment. A detailed funding plan will be developed based on individual status and eligibility for each brownfield site or area as assessment projects are realized. CDBG, CDBG-DR, and FEMA funds were just recently released, and we will seek to utilize them immediately. Other funding noted above will also be sought as it becomes available. These funds coupled the EPA Assessment Grant will enable us to realize and document revitalization success within the next 2-4 years.

1.c.ii. Use of Existing Infrastructure: Our Revitalization Plans emphasize the build-out of existing parcels, and rehabilitation and infill before additional land is used for development. For example, the buildings at the Botijas 3 and Barrio Cacao Schools are in excellent condition, thus redevelopment will be quickly accomplished once environmental assessment is complete. All priority sites have robust utilities able to handle the added capacity and need brought by the planned redevelopment in the ND, with 3-Phase electricity, water and sewer services, telephone, and fiber optic service present. Redevelopment will utilize these existing services and other physical infrastructure such as roads, curb cuts, parking, and commercial corridors (PR-155 & PR-157) to attract new investment in area brownfields, reducing redevelopment costs of these sites. Traditional transportation infrastructure is actively being complemented by pedestrian connectivity, bicycle improvements, and universal accessibility per our Revitalization Plans. Ongoing infrastructure improvements will also benefit from brownfields redevelopment progress. For example, existing infrastructure currently servicing the Roman Diaz, Barrio Gato, Botijas 3, and Barrio Cacao Schools has adequate service to support the mixed-use commercial/resiliency centers planned and provide easy access to the site. Existing infrastructure will allow for easy access to the planned mixed-use commercial development and enable residents the opportunity to work and live in the same neighborhood. Additional funding for roads, trails, or infrastructure necessary for planned reuse will be sought from the US DOT Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant program, the Infrastructure and Jobs Act, commonwealth funds (when available), and CDBG funds.

2. Community Need and Community Engagement, a. Community Need, i. The Community's Need for Funding: Orocovis does not have funds for site assessments in our budget. The only available resource to address brownfield assessments is federal funding. A large portion of our community is low income, with **60.6% of ND residents falling below the poverty line and a MHI 4X less than the US (2.a.ii.)** making brownfields investment an impossibility for us. The large number of vacant buildings on ND brownfields has resulted in an estimated twofold increase in crime within the ND compared to other parts of Orocovis (per community estimates), further limiting local government resources due to additional public safety services (police and fire calls) to brownfields. After over 15 years of setbacks and significant economic decline, we have fewer jobs, reduced tax revenues, damaged infrastructure, and limited local government resources. A recession has also left the territorial government with no resources to commit to brownfields. Locally, we estimate tax losses to be over \$3.4M/year, and more than 600 jobs were cut after changes in US tax code and recent hurricanes. Orocovis operates on a \$7.8M annual budget, which cannot fully fund essential services, let alone needed infrastructure repair. Moreover, local governments in PR do not have funding resources commonly available to governments on the mainland (e.g., Tax Increment Financing). Incentivized redevelopment through funding environmental due diligence is attractive to developers, but we lack tools at a local or territorial level. Brownfield sites add to financial burden borne by residents, suppressing property values and adding to municipal expenditures through reduced tax base and increased public safety services to brownfields for criminal activity as indicated by the high crime in the ND (65% of total crime in Orocovis).

2.a.ii. Threats to Sensitive Populations, (1) Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations: Our community's most sensitive populations (minorities, low-income residents, and individuals living in poverty, especially children & elderly), live in and around often unsecured ND brownfields and risk exposure to toxic chemicals, asbestos, soil and groundwater contamination, and unsafe structures. According to the 2022 ACS, 60.6% of ND residents are living in poverty, and MHI is less than 1/4 of the United States (Table 2), Target area residents suffer dramatic wage disparities, as observed with our sensitive populations, such as children and the elderly. Orocovis, especially in the ND, has a very high percentage of minorities. This is more evident in the ND, where nearly all of the population is minority.

Proximity to ND brownfields are potentially causing harm to our sensitive populations in area schools and recreational spaces, some of which adjoin some priority sites. Our priority sites are believed to be impacted with metals, PFAS, VOCs, PAHs, PCBs, lead paint, asbestos, and other contaminants (i.e. former clothing factory, vocational/work center) known to cause cancers, asthma, and low birth weight,

Table 2	US ¹	PR ¹	ND ¹
Median Household Income	\$75,149	\$24,002	\$18,663
Percent Minority	40.6%	99.1%	99.6%
Individuals Living in Poverty	12.5%	42.2%	60.6%
Children Living in Poverty	16.7%	56.2%	77.2%
Elderly Living in Poverty	10.0%	38.8%	58.4%

¹Stats from 2022 ACS

all experienced by Orocovis' residents at a higher rate than the nation (see 2.a.ii(2)). An infusion of funding from this EPA grant will provide capital for the assessment of blighted properties, clearing the way for remediation and revitalization of the ND to include much needed commercial options, infrastructure repair, community services, and greenspace. This grant will

better inform us of the environmental conditions at our brownfields by considering impacts on neighboring properties when developing reuse plans. Risk of exposure will be reduced, sources of contamination will be eliminated, the ecological health of our community will be improved, and livability and equitable development principles will be incorporated.

2.a.ii(2) Greater Than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions: Digestive system cancer incidences and deaths in the ND are 6.4% and 8.5% more common than in PR (PR Central Cancer Registry). 42.7% of the housing stock was built prior to 1979 (2022 ACS) and older homes have a greater risk for high lead levels from paint. Mercury, lead, and other metals, as well as lead paint, asbestos, VOCs, PAHs, and petroleum constituents are believed to be present on priority sites. These are linked to higher incidences of cancer, kidney disease, and asthma and known to be a threat to unborn children and infants. Infant mortality and low birthweight rate in Orocovis are 11.4% higher than the US, and low birthweight rate in Orocovis is 6.8% higher than PR, according to the CDC and the PR Dept. of Health. The Bayamon region (which includes Orocovis) ranks 1st in PR for lifetime asthma incidence, while PR ranked 10th highest (among 54 states and territories) in the US (CDC). Sites such as the clothing factory and the study/work center are impacted by contaminants (PFAS, PCBs, PAHs, and metals) the Center for Disease Control (CDC) links to digestive system cancer. Currently, there are 13 Orocovis properties with environmental records in EPA's EnviroFacts database. **Identification and removal of environmental contaminants present at brownfields in our target area will reduce exposure of our underserved populations to these materials and in turn, reduce disproportionate incidences of disease and other poor health outcomes residents currently experience.**

2.a.ii(3) Environmental Justice (a) Identification of Environmental Justice Issues: In the ND, six schools in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods were closed due to the 2018 Educational Reform Act. These closures inadvertently compounded difficulties for communities with fewer resources for adaptation and recovery, bringing broader issues of economic disparity and educational access to light. Despite their high potential for reuse, these properties have become associated with environmental concerns and thus remain unused. The proximity of brownfields to low-income neighborhoods in our ND drives down housing values, suppresses commercial investment, and limits residents' access to adequate employment, resulting in a disadvantage for residents. The public health impact from ND brownfields like these schools and industrial sites, and their proximity to our underserved populations, including low-income and minority residents, has disproportionately exposed them to environmental pollutants, resulting in an inability to maintain their health and wellbeing. **EPA's EJScreen tool indicates that ND residents are in the 97th and 77th percentile for Toxic releases to air; 92nd percentile for Proximity to Risk Management Plan facilities; and 94th and 36th percentile for Wastewater discharge indicators compared to the US and PR.** The CEJST identifies the ND as disadvantaged for 4 categories including: energy, legacy pollution, housing, and workforce development due to proximity to hazardous waste facilities and Risk Management Plan facilities; lack of indoor plumbing; energy cost; low income/poverty; low high school education and high unemployment. These conditions have a direct impact on the health, prosperity, and wellbeing of ND residents, as evidenced by their poor health (2.a. ii(2)), poverty status (2.a.ii(1)), exposure to environmental contaminants, etc. **All the ND priority sites in 1.a.ii are located within a disadvantaged community (per the CEJST).**

2.a.ii(3)(b) Advancing Environmental Justice: Brownfield assessment, cleanup, and reuse strategies will improve the welfare of our sensitive populations in the ND by identifying and eliminating the health risks they pose. The EPA grant will play a crucial role in this, reducing threats by funding environmental

investigation needed to trigger stalled cleanup and end disinvestment in the ND. Repurposing the schools will provide needed mixed-use commercial/industrial development and greenspace in the community. Assessing lead-based paint will spur other federal programs (e.g., CDBG) to help fund abatement and other improvements. New tax revenue will be generated and reinvested in the community. The clothing factory’s redevelopment will create employment opportunities for ND residents and bring more tax revenue when redevelopment is complete. Increased employment, higher wages, and new development on brownfield properties will create a sense of pride and ownership of the neighborhood, incentivizing investment in other area properties. New jobs in our target area will create gainful employment for residents. **Health indicators such as cancer deaths and kidney disease, childhood asthma, and low infant birthweight (2.a.ii(2)) will no longer be influenced by environmental impacts caused by ND brownfields. This will be accomplished in areas where low income and minority populations are concentrated, supporting environmental justice for all Orocovis residents.** To minimize the displacement of underserved residents and businesses, reuse plans will include service centers for residents who often do not have access to these in the wake of heavy rains, hurricanes and other climate-change related events. Similarly, planned redevelopment will also offer competitive-wage jobs and attract consumers through commercial development. Residents will be involved in the planning through community engagement, where their input into brownfield design and reuse will be sought.

2.b. Community Engagement, i. Project Involvement & ii. Project Roles: Several community organizations have pledged supporting roles for our brownfields program and grant (Table 3). This diverse assemblage of community groups is suited to engage stakeholders at a grassroots level. They have regional influence, local ties, and, regularly engage in community engagement meetings held within the municipality, maximizing the benefits they bring to the project. A brownfield committee is being assembled from active residents, members of the public, developers, etc., to provide input into the inventory and site prioritization, reuse plans, economic development, and community engagement efforts, etc. The committee will meet 2-4 times/year to discuss our brownfields program.

Table 3 – 2.b.ii – Project Partners and Roles

Partner Name	Point of Contact	Mission, Description and Project Roles
Fundacion Ana D. Burgos	Idalia Burgos [Redacted]	Non-profit organization focused on assisting low-income residents with experience managing community services and centers, will aid in establishment of service/resilience centers to be developed in multiple brownfields sites
Municipality of Naranjito	Mr. Pedro Santiago psantiago@municipiodenaranjito.com 787-277-0129	Long-standing collaborating Municipality, with a history of shared workforce development, community improvement, & resiliency efforts. Will assist by sharing their brownfields program resources.
Orocovis Department of Public Works	Luis A. Rodríguez Meléndez Obraspublicasmunicipal369@gmail.com 787-867-5000 ext. 2270	Municipal department in charge of public works who will provide input on planning and logistics of cleanup/reuse needs of brownfields, while also providing project progress updates at community engagement events
PathStone Corporation	Sr. Albert Rivera arivera@pathstone.org 787-579-6923	Non-profit Workforce development corporation & current EPA Job Training Grant recipient who will provide economic development & job creation expertise by training local residents as remediation and renewal energy construction professionals to aid in redevelopment
Family Business Foundation	Yesenia Lopez [Redacted]	Non-profit organization involved in business advocacy and public services assistance. Will provide outreach meeting facilities and educate public on brownfields & benefits of reuse/redevelopment

2.b.iii. Incorporating Community Input: Orocovis has a culture of community involvement that we will maintain throughout this grant. **A total of 8-12 public meetings will be held during the 4 -year grant period** to maintain stakeholder engagement and continue to gather input on site selection, prioritization, assessment needs, cleanup decisions, mitigation measures from the cleanup and redevelopment activity, and reuse planning. Outreach events, open to the general public, will be advertised through municipal and partner websites, local papers, radio, and social media platforms, ensuring that the entire community has an opportunity to provide input. In the event social distancing or other restrictions limit in-person community meetings, we will follow existing recommendations/guidance including EPA’s Office of Land and Emergency Management *Socially Distant Engagement Ideas for EPA Brownfield Grant Applicants* that discusses Virtual Tools (online meeting platforms, social media, QR codes, web page or

email updates, etc.) and Non-Digital Approaches (phone or conference calls, flyers, newspaper ads, local TV, and radio, etc.). The community will be updated on progress throughout the grant and will have the opportunity to share input through comments on municipality and community partner websites. For residents with limited internet or cellular network access, paper surveys will be available at local businesses, enabling community input without access to digital resources. Currently, a citizen participation mailbox is available 24/7 to all our population, this has proven useful in receiving feedback when all other measures are not feasible to residents. The municipality has multi-lingual personnel available to advertise meetings, interpret presentations, or translate documents in Spanish or other languages. We have begun engaging ND residents, business owners, not-for-profits, churches, and other community advocates to solicit their input regarding our brownfield project and will continue to do so during the grant period. A public meeting will be held in the first two quarters of the grant period to discuss the goals of the grant, initial planned activities, and a schedule for future community involvement. For subsequent meetings, personal invitations will be sent to residents directly impacted by priority sites, neighborhood groups, lenders, area businesses, and developers to maximize the engagement of these stakeholders. Regional developers will be contacted through the Municipal Planning & Zoning Department, with help from the PR Dept. of Economic Development to bring awareness of the redevelopment opportunities priority sites offer. When developers are identified, they will be invited to attend public meetings to describe their plans for reuse. As a project progresses, we will involve target area stakeholders in the decision-making process regarding site prioritization, assessment, site marketing, cleanup planning, and feedback on reuse. As stakeholder input is received, we will evaluate it against our development goals and available resources, adopting input that feasibly meets these criteria.

3. Task Descriptions, Cost Estimates, & Measuring Progress, a. Description of Tasks/Activities &

Outputs: Orocovis will begin activities immediately upon award confirmation, working to prepare a Work Plan approved by the EPA PM/PO. No subawards or participant support costs are planned. After the Cooperative Agreement period begins, Orocovis and its QEP will complete the following tasks:

Task/Activity 1: Program Management, Training Support, Brownfield Inventory/Prioritization

i. Project Implementation: Orocovis staff will travel to the PR Brownfields Week and the National Brownfields Conference, participate in calls, meetings, and correspondence between Orocovis, QEP, EPA, etc. to manage the grant's Cooperative Agreement. 8-12 public meetings to update communities on the grant and seek public input and involvement; supplies: printed flyers, advertising, postage, etc. We will complete Quarterly, DBE, Annual reports, and ACRES database entries, and will track contractor costs, comparing to the budget, expenditures, project progress, and milestones to ensure timely expenditure of funds within the prescribed 4-year project period. Orocovis, with QEP support, will continue to develop a brownfield inventory and will use it to help accomplish reuse goals. Inventoried sites will be prioritized based on criteria discussed with stakeholders: 1) reuse potential, 2) environmental or health impact and environmental justice (EJScreen and/or CEJST), and 3) community input. Additional sites will be identified by Orocovis, community leaders, local governments, redevelopment investors, and through community outreach. Priority will be granted to sites within disadvantaged communities (as identified by EJScreen and/or CEJST and sites near residential areas that pose health risks to underserved communities. Priority will also be considered for sites that have a higher chance of redevelopment and a greater economic impact potential within our target area.

ii. Schedule: QEP will be selected through a competitive bidding process (compliant with federal procurement regulations - 2 CFR 200.317 - 200.326 and "Brownfield Grants: Guidance on Competitively Procuring a Contractor – May 2023") before Cooperative Agreement begins; correspondence will occur at least monthly (more frequently as specific project activities require) throughout the grant; update and prioritize brownfield inventory the first 2 quarters, then as necessary for the remainder of the grant; ACRES updates will be conducted at least quarterly throughout the grant.

iii. Task/activity Leads: Orocovis & QEP

iv. Outputs: Travel-Municipal staff to regional/national brownfields conferences/meetings; prioritized inventory; project performance reports: 16 Quarterly Reports, ACRES entries, 4 DBE reports, 4 annual financial reports, etc.; calls, meetings, and correspondence between Orocovis, QEP, EPA, etc. to manage the grant's Cooperative Agreement.

Task/Activity 2: Environmental Investigation

i. Project Implementation: Prior to applying for site eligibility, we will prepare and execute access

agreements for each site being considered. Eligibility determinations will be completed under this task, and the QEP will complete Phase I ESAs on sites selected by Orocovis. All Phase I ESAs will be conducted in accordance with the ASTM standard (E1527-21) and the All-Appropriate Inquiry (AAI) rule. Areas of focus will include those identified as priority sites listed in Table 1. The QEP will prepare a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) as well as Sampling & Analysis Plans (SAP) for EPA approval, and Health & Safety Plans (HASP). Once approved, the QEP, directed by Orocovis, will complete Phase II ESAs based on environmental conditions identified in the preceding Phase I ESAs.

ii. Schedule: Obtain site access, request eligibility determinations & finalize site access to initial sites for investigation-early 2nd Quarter of Grant period; Begin Phase I ESAs-2nd Quarter of Grant period; Submit QAPP to EPA for review/approval; QAPP approval & Phase II ESAs begin-3rd Quarter of Grant period; all Phase I ESAs completed-end of 15th Quarter of Grant period; all Phase II ESAs completed, and final contractor invoices submitted-45 days before end of grant period.

iii. Task/activity Leads: Orocovis & QEP

iv. Outputs: 10 Phase I ESAs; QAPP and SAP/HASP; estimated 10 Phase II ESAs.

Task/Activity 3: Clean-up/Reuse Planning:

i. Project Implementation: The QEP, directed by Orocovis, will prepare site specific clean-up plans/documents, including: Analysis of Brownfield Cleanup Alternatives, remediation plans, site closure letter requests, clean-up funding development, and site reuse visioning, as needed (1.c.i).

ii. Schedule: Prepared after Phase I and II ESAs are complete, contamination is present, and cleanup is even necessary. Task 3 activities will continue throughout the grant period.

iii. Task/activity Leads: Orocovis & QEP

iv. Outputs: 6-10 cleanup planning and/or reuse documents and 1 design charette/visioning session.

Task/Activity 4: Community Outreach & Involvement:

i. Project Implementation: 8-12 public meetings will be held during the grant period to update the community on ESA progress and seek public input/involvement. Print and mail material for project/site information and marketing documents will also be funded under this task. The municipality will complete this task, assisted by the QEP, who will manage the technical aspects of the community outreach program and will attend/participate in outreach events. Social media outlets and other online media will be developed/maintained, and outreach efforts will inform the public on the progress of investigation/cleanup planning activities and provide marketing resources for future development. Additional sites will be identified during public community outreach meetings. These meetings will be focused on public engagement including what sites the community views as a priority for redevelopment. Priority will be granted to sites identified by underserved communities, especially when those sites are within communities identified as disadvantaged by the EJSscreen and/or CEJST.

ii. Schedule: 2-4 brownfield committee meetings planned per year and 2-3 public meetings planned per year with the 1st planned for the 2nd Quarter of the grant period.

iii. Task/activity Leads: Orocovis & QEP

iv. Outputs: 8-12 public meetings to update the community on the brownfield assessment progress and seek public input and involvement; 8-16 brownfield committee meetings to provide input into the inventory and site prioritization, reuse plans, economic development, and community engagement efforts; supplies: printed flyers, advertising, postage, etc.

We will work diligently to assure startup activities are completed per the tasks and schedule above. The municipality will allocate all grant funds to project properties before the final quarter of the grant period to assure that grant task activities are completed before the end of the 4-year Cooperative Agreement contract. Because there is a high demand for assessments and site access has already been obtained for two of the priority sites in Table 1, it is likely that funds will be spent prior to the end date. We are proactively communicating with representatives of privately-owned brownfields to gain access and resolve issues in anticipation of this grant funding as well as non-grant funded assessment activities. Such communication initiates the process for eventual property transfer and redevelopment. These discussions create a positive dialog between property owners, local government, and impacted citizens.

3.b. Cost Estimates: We will allocate \$399,500 to Phase I and II ESAs (or 80% of total grant funding assigned to ESAs). The costs outlined in Table 4 were developed anticipating tasks necessary to efficiently identify, characterize, and plan for the remediation of the priority sites listed in Table 1.

Table 4 Budget	Budget Categories ¹	1. Program Mgmt, Training Support, Inv / Prioritization	2.Phase I / II ESAs	3. Clean-up / Reuse Planning	4. Community Outreach & Involvement	Budget Category Total
Direct Costs	Personnel	\$4,368.70	0	\$462.50	\$795.50	\$5,626.70
	Fringe Benefits	\$1,463.51	0	\$154.94	\$266.49	\$1,884.94
	Travel	\$4,000.00	0	0	0	\$4,000.00
	Other	0	0	0	\$413.36	\$413.36
	Contractual ²	\$20,995.00	\$399,500.00	\$55,000.00	\$12,580.00	\$488,075.00
TOTAL BUDGET		\$30,827.21	\$399,500.00	\$55,617.44	\$14,055.35	\$500,000.00

¹Table 4 only includes budget categories with costs. ²In accordance with Federal, State, and local procurement regulations.

Tasks will be completed at the anticipated unit costs with the following anticipated outputs/outcomes:

1. Program Management & Training Support, Inventory/Prioritization: \$30,827.21 – **Travel:** Attend National Brownfield Conf.: airfare x 2 @ \$1,400, 2 rooms, 3 nights lodging @ \$1,700, meals @ \$650, ground transportation @ \$250 = \$4,000, **Administrative:** total \$4,368.70, includes work by the Director of Federal Programs (annual salary \$38,426), committing 95hrs for project management = \$1,757.50; and work by the Director of Finances (annual salary \$56,652), committing 96hrs = \$2,611.20 for a total of \$4,368.70, **Fringe Benefits:** total 1,436.51, calculated at 33.5%, including Retirement 20%, Soc. Sec. 6.20%, Medicare 1.45%, Unemployment Insurance 4.40%, State Ins. (FSE) Workers Comp. 1.45%, **Contractual:** total \$20,995, includes approximately 125 hrs. \$85/hr. = \$10,625 for inventory, & approximately 122 hours \$85/hr. = \$10,370 for program mgmt.

2. Env. Investigation: \$399,500 – **Contractual:** 10 Phase I ESAs at an average cost of \$3,800 each = \$38,000, & 10 Phase II ESAs at an estimated cost of \$30,000-\$45,000 (depending on site complexity/environmental conditions) = \$361,500 (@ \$36,150 average cost). Though our budget will support 10 Phase I's and 10 Phase II ESAs, we understand that large sites may need more investment requiring us to realign the budget during the grant period. Areas of focus will include those already determined in the inventories as priority sites listed in 1.a.ii.

3. Clean-up & Reuse Planning: \$55,617.44 – **Contractual:** 6-10 ABCAs/clean-up plans, \$5,000 each = \$40,000. 1 Design Charette expected to cost \$15,000 each = \$15,000. **Administrative:** total \$462.50, Director of Federal Programs committing 25hrs for planning; **Fringe Benefits:** total \$154.94.

4. Community Outreach & Involvement: \$14,055.35 – **Other:** printed flyers, advertising, grant fact sheets, outreach visual aids, advertising, postage, etc. = \$413.36, **Contractual:** approx. 148 hours at an estimated \$85/hr. = \$12,580. **Administrative:** total \$795.50, Director of Federal Programs committing 43hrs for outreach activities; **Fringe Benefits:** total \$266.49.

3.c. Plans to Measure & Evaluate Environmental Progress & Results: We will track, measure, and evaluate progress through meeting minutes, progress and budget tracking spreadsheets, Quarterly and Annual Financial Reports, quarterly review/analysis of grant performance, ACRES entries, monthly operations review/progress reports, and completion of Work Plan tasks. If planned outputs/outcomes are not achieved or milestones/project schedule outlined in 3.a. are not being met, we will create a corrective action plan to identify deficiencies and make appropriate adjustments to achieve the outputs on schedule. Further, we will have the following measurable outcomes: sites/acreage assessed, jobs created/retained, redevelopment complete, number of parcels, acreage made ready for greenspace/recreation, and leveraged monies. These and other statistics will be included in quarterly reports and ACRES submittals as data becomes available, which will allow the EPA to better evaluate and highlight the grant program's progress/success. At grant closing, Orocovis will provide a final report to the EPA and our residents summarizing project outputs and outcomes. After environmental work is complete, it is in Orocovis' best interest that redevelopment happens, therefore, close monitoring of subsequent actions will be done diligently. Outputs and outcomes following the close of the grant will be uploaded to EPA's ACRES for continued monitoring of the program's success.

4. Programmatic Capability & Past Performance, a. Programmatic Capability, i. Organizational Capacity, ii. Organizational Structure & iii Description of Key Staff: Orocovis' Department of Federal Programs (DFP) will manage this grant. DFP will manage most programmatic management activities and will seek assistance from a qualified consultant for grant management. This office has previously managed many other economic development resources valued at over \$55M in the past 5 years. The DFP, supported by other municipality staff have the technical, financial, and administrative ability in place to implement this project successfully. Ms. Lilian Melendez, Director of Federal Programs will

serve as the Project Manager. Ms. Lilian Melendez has been with Orocovis for 32 years of grant management experience with the last 4 as director. The Grant Financial Manager assigned to this program will be Ms. Vilma Melendez, Director of the Office of Finances of Orocovis. She has had 36 years of experience working with accounting, acquisitions, and collections within the Municipality, with the past 8 years as Director. With a BA in Business Administration, she has managed budgets of over \$110M in Federal Assistance programs as well as the municipal funds. Director Vilma Melendez will be assisted by the office subdirector Mr. Pedro Perez Rodriguez and a long-standing team. Municipality staff have a history of working cooperatively with PR and federal environmental agency personnel and engaging qualified environmental consultants. This team will be supported by other municipality departments including finance, utilities, engineering, legal department, and office of the Mayor.

4.a.iv. Acquiring Additional Resources: The aforementioned staff will oversee the QEP procurement process and the acquisition of additional resources. Through a competitive bidding/procurement process, we will select a QEP according to federal procurement regulations (2 CFR 200.317 through 200.326 and “Brownfield Grants: Guidance on Competitively Procuring a Contractor – May 2023”) and experience conducting environmental investigation and working with the PR Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER). We will make every effort to contract with Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (women and/or minority owned) and consultants/contractors who employ disadvantaged people, when possible, and we will require our QEP to make every effort to do the same. Orocovis will also engage with Invest in Puerto Rico, a nonprofit investment promotion organization created by law, via Act 13–2017 to increase investment in the region. The team and execution plan outlined above will ensure timely and successful expenditure of funds within the 4-year project. As appropriate, we will utilize visioning sessions and other assistance/advice offered by the Technical Assistance for Brownfields (Region 2 TAB) to maximize the incorporation of community input. We will work with the PR Small Business Administration (PRSB) to identify small businesses in the area with strong labor practices who have been vetted by the PRSB as qualified to perform remediation activities and other contracted services. We will invite the vetted contractors through the competitive bidding process noted above. We will also work with PathStone (see 2.b.iii) to link our community members to job opportunities related to the investigation, remediation, redevelopment, and ultimate reuse of brownfields.

4.b. Past Performance & Accomplishments, ii. Has Not Received an EPA Brownfields Grant but has Received Other Federal or Non-Federal Assistance Agreements (1) Purpose & Accomplishments:

Orocovis has not received an EPA Brownfields grant. We have received other assistance indicated below.

Table 5 – Past Federally/Non-Federally Funded Assistance Agreements

Awarding Agency	Project	\$ Received	Accomplishments/Outputs/Outcomes/Measures of Success
Community Development Block Grants	Rehabilitation of public right of way, storm drains and residences	\$786,495	Public right-of-way/storm drain 9,934 lineal meters of repavement Rehabilitation of housing – 7 housing units
Section 8 – Housing and Urban Development	Low Income Housing Construction	\$262,488	50 families provided with safe, affordable housing units yearly.
FEMA 404 (Mitigation Grant Programs)	Hazard Mitigation / Resiliency upgrades for communities & public services	\$13,974,771	160 projects of reconstruction or improvement of: bridges, public right-of-way, retaining walls, roads, community centers, and stormwater systems.

4.b.ii(2) Compliance with Grant Requirements: All assistance agreement terms and conditions were met for the above-mentioned projects, including reporting the number of residential units constructed and who/where/how many received Section 8 vouchers under the HUD program, financial reports, quarterly progress reports, and final reports. HUD quarterly and final reports are similar to the EPA Brownfields Grant program’s and are due at the same time. We will use a coordinated effort to create a synergy in reporting outputs/outcomes of both when we have funding from these programs simultaneously. **All goals, outputs, and outcomes (Table 5) in the work plans of the aforementioned grants were achieved, and reports discussed were completed on time.** Because goals, outputs, and outcomes were met, no corrective measures were necessary or taken. Orocovis followed all reporting and performance protocols, and will continue to do so with other federal funded grants.

III.B. Threshold Criteria for Assessment Grants

III.B.1 Applicant Eligibility

The Municipality of Orocovis meets the definition of a Local Government under 2 CFR 200.64 and is a political subdivision of Puerto Rico. It is therefore eligible to apply for and receive U.S. EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant funding.

III.B.2 Community Involvement

Involving our community and soliciting feedback regarding Brownfields activities and redevelopment plans are essential to our community's Brownfields program's success. Communication is a two-way process, and our ultimate goal is to keep the community informed and involved so they remain aware of potential concerns, questions and solutions. 8 to 12 outreach events (2-3 per yr.) will be held throughout the grant period to maintain stakeholder engagement and continue to gather public input on site selection and prioritization, assessment needs, cleanup decisions, mitigation measures from cleanup/redevelopment activity, and reuse planning. Outreach events, open to the general public, will be advertised through municipal and partner websites, local papers, radio, and social media platforms (earned media and other low-cost, no-cost or in-kind methods) ensuring that the entire community has an opportunity to provide input. When social distancing or other restrictions limit in-person community meetings, we will follow existing recommendations/guidance including EPA's Office of Land and Emergency Management *Socially Distant Engagement Ideas for EPA Brownfield Grant Applicants* that discusses Virtual Tools (online meeting platforms, social media, QR codes, web page or email updates, etc.) and Non-Digital Approaches (phone or conference calls, flyers, newspaper ads, local TV, and radio, etc.). See Section IV.E.2.b. of the Narrative/Ranking Criteria for further information.

III.B.3 Expenditure of Existing Grant Funds

This criterion is not applicable as the Municipality of Orocovis is not a current EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant recipient.

III.B.4 Contractors and Named Subrecipients

The Municipality of Orocovis has not procured/named any contractors or subrecipients.