



Maryland Business Ready Sites Program Program Guidelines - FY2026

I. Purpose

The Maryland Business Ready Sites Program (MBRSP) aims to enhance Maryland's industrial and commercial infrastructure by identifying and improving potential development sites across the state. The program provides financial support to public and private sector applicants for the purpose of site characterization and site improvements, with the goal of making properties more attractive for business relocation, expansion, and investment.

The MBRSP was created on December 19, 2024 through an Executive Order of the Governor of Maryland, Wes Moore. This Executive Order sought to strengthen Maryland's business climate and catalyze more economic growth throughout the state. The program was funded by the Maryland General Assembly at the level of \$3.5 million for FY2026.

II. Program Components

There are three pillars of support available through the MBRSP:

1. Site Characterization Grant

- o **Purpose:** To assess the readiness of a potential site for industrial or commercial development. This grant covers the costs of retaining a site development professional to evaluate the site's current development status and its potential for future use.
- o **Grant Amount:** Up to \$10,000
- o **Local Match Requirement:** 1:1 total cash match from any source

2. Site Improvement Grant

- o **Purpose:** To support infrastructure development and improvements necessary to make a site competitive for industrial or commercial use. This grant supports costs associated with infrastructure upgrades, environmental remediation, and other site development needs.
- o **Grant Amount:** No maximum funding limit (based on project needs and funds availability)
- o **Local Match Requirement:** 3:1 total cash match from all sources expected for competitive applications, with preference for higher match scenarios.

3. Collaborative Marketing Support

- o **Purpose:** To assist local jurisdictions and the State with marketing sites that have received Site Characterization or Site Improvement Grants through the Maryland Business Ready Sites Program.

III. Eligibility Criteria

Eligible Sites

The Maryland Business Ready Sites Program is intended for sites, or portions thereof, that meet the following conditions:

- Are greenfield, brownfield, or redevelopment sites in a pre-development phase.
- Are a minimum of 5 acres.
- Are intended for solely industrial or commercial purposes.
 - Horizontal mixed-use is allowable if the industrial/commercial portion of the site meets all other eligibility criteria.
- Are intended to be occupied primarily by private sector companies in the following industries: *life sciences; information technology; aerospace; defense; computational biology; quantum computing, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence; position, navigation, and timing.*
 - Jurisdiction-specific industries of focus may be eligible if the applicant provides evidence of a coordinated local strategy. Tourism and agricultural farmland will not be eligible.
- Are not forbidden from further development for the purposes described above due to any local, state, or federal statute, judicial ruling, or any standing agreement with another party.

Eligible Applicants

- **Public Sector:**
 - Counties, municipalities, and authorities thereof (including economic development authorities, redevelopment authorities, and industrial development authorities).
- **Private Sector:**
 - Private sector entities that own and/or have development rights to the land may be eligible to apply if they meet the following conditions:
 - For all grants:
 - Have a letter of support from their county and, if applicable, municipality.
 - Allow access to the site.
 - Demonstrate commitment to future or continued site improvement.
 - Demonstrate commitment to utilizing the site for business growth in high-value-added sectors.
 - For Site Improvement Grants only:
 - Provide a significant portion of the total cash match.
 - Agree to a reasonable post-improvement price per acre, developed in coordination with MBRSP, prior to application approval.
 - Agree to financial claw back provisions if the site is used for a purpose outside of MBRSP Program Guidelines.

IV. Site Characterization Grant

Objective:

To assess the current development status of the site and determine what additional steps are required to bring the site to higher readiness levels. The site will be assigned to one of the Site Tier Levels (listed in Section VI) within the Site Characterization Report.

Site Characterization Process:

1. **Site Assessment:** A licensed civil engineer or equivalent (referred to as Site Development Professional) will assess the site to:
 - o Evaluate the existing development and infrastructure, including road access, utility capacity, etc. Coordinate with the local utility provider for a Conceptual Load Study, which will be included in the report.
 - o Identify any additional development required to bring the site to higher Tier levels.
 - o Estimate the costs of necessary improvements.
 - o Provide insight on end-use industries to target based upon the site's size, location, and estimated utility capacity.
2. **Tier Designation:** Based on the assessment, the Site Development Professional will designate a Tier Level for the site. These levels will range from underdeveloped (Tier 1) to fully prepared for construction (Tier 5).

Application Requirements:

- A completed application form.
- Proof of property ownership or legal agreement to develop the site.
- Evidence of the local match.
- Letters of support from county or municipality, where applicable.

Award and Disbursement:

- The Site Characterization Grant can solely be used as reimbursement for a new third-party characterization that strictly adheres to MBRSP guidelines.
- Funds are not eligible to be used as reimbursement for any other studies or pre-development work, or for any analyses that took place prior to the grant award.
- Grants will be awarded on a rolling basis until funds are depleted for the fiscal year.
- Upon notification of grant award, MBRSP will work with the applicant to select a third-party vendor to perform the analysis.
- MEDCO will contract directly with the third-party vendor and invoice the applicant for their cash match portion of the total cost on a reimbursement basis.

V. Site Improvement Grant

Objective:

To support the development of infrastructure improvements, including environmental assessments, transportation enhancements, utility installations, and other site development tasks necessary for making the site competitive for business development.

Eligible Uses of Funds:

In selecting Site Improvement Grant awardees, the MBRSP Review Committee will seek to maximize the impact of limited program dollars. MBRSP may award funds for uses outside of this list, and it reserves the right to determine which activities of a project can utilize MBRSP funds.

- Due Diligence (Later-Stage)
 - Geotechnical engineering, final site engineering and design, grading plans, rail studies, traffic impact studies, and similar
- Environmental / Brownfields Clean-Up
 - Remediation and related activities
- Site Improvements
 - Clearing, grading, flood mitigation, drainage, signage, landscaping, and similar
- Utility Improvements
 - Extensions, upgrades, redundancy, utility easement/right-of-way acquisition, and similar
- Transportation Improvements
 - Internal roadways, pedestrian access, rail spurs and access improvements, and similar

NOTE: The MBRSP Review Committee reserves the right to award funds for uses that correspond with MBRSP's Purpose but are not specifically contained within this list, and to specify which project activities MBRSP funds may be utilized for.

Matching Funds:

A total cash match of at least 3:1 is expected for competitive applications, with preference for higher match scenarios. The match may come from both public and private sources. Previous site improvement expenditure by the applicant or a supporting party may be determined to offset a portion of the match requirement, at the discretion of the MBRSP Review Committee.

Application Requirements:

- A detailed site improvement plan, including scope of work and detailed budget.
- Proof of property ownership or legal agreement to develop the site.
- Evidence of financial commitment for the required local match.
- Letters of support from county or municipality, where applicable.
- A copy of all existing due diligence reports and studies related to the site.

Award and Disbursement:

- Site Improvement Grants will be awarded on a rolling basis and can be used to cover a wide variety of infrastructure and development needs. Funding decisions will prioritize projects based on their potential to improve the state's competitiveness for attracting businesses.
- The program will provide reimbursement for eligible costs after work is completed.

VI. Site Tier Levels

The following Site Tier Levels will be used to evaluate the progress of a site's development status:

1. **Tier 1:** Site owners are agreeable to marketing the site for economic development purposes and allowing access to the site for site assessment and marketing. The site has no established sales price, has minimal or no infrastructure, and has been subject to minimal or no due diligence.
2. **Tier 2:** Site has a documented commitment from owners to a competitive sales price and owners have permitted access for assessment, marketing, and improvement. Site is intended for industrial or commercial use, but it is not zoned appropriately. Due diligence work is still in its early stages.
3. **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 or nearly complete. Master planning and preliminary engineering work is complete with estimated costs and timelines quantified.
4. **Tier 4:** Site infrastructure improvements are in place, or plans for their completion are active and approved, such that vertical construction could occur in 12-18 months or less. All infrastructure permit issues are identified and quantified.
5. **Tier 5:** Site is "shovel-ready," with all infrastructure in place, and the site is fully permitted for development. Vertical construction can begin as soon as land disturbance permits can be obtained.

VII. Application Process

1. Application Submission:

- Applicants must complete the MBRSP application form and submit necessary documentation via email to sites@medco-corp.com. Please include the project name, applying organization name, and grant category (Site Characterization Grant or Site Improvement Grant) in the title of the email.

2. Review Process:

- Applications will be reviewed by MEDCO on a rolling basis, with preference for applications submitted on or before May 31, 2025.
- For all Site Characterization Grant finalists, a remote visit will be arranged, including a PowerPoint presentation about the site and high-level discussion about potential uses.
- For all Site Improvement Grant finalists, an in-person site visit will be arranged. This site visit must include a sit-down discussion with PowerPoint presentation and a site tour.

3. Award Notification:

- Applicants who submit a complete application by May 31, 2025 will be notified of the outcome of their application no later than July 1, 2025.
- Applicants who submit a complete application on June 1, 2025 or later will be notified of the outcome of the application no more than 60 days after submission.
- Successful applicants will receive confirmation of the award amount and next steps.

4. Disbursement of Funds:

- For all grants, MEDCO, the applicant, and the holder of the title or option to purchase will jointly execute a Grant Agreement detailing each party's responsibilities and next steps for project completion.
- For Site Characterization Grants, MEDCO will contract directly with the agreed-upon third-party site development professional and invoice the applicant for reimbursement of their portion of the total cost.
- For Site Improvement Grants, funding will be disbursed upon the completion of work and submission of expense documentation by the applicant to MEDCO.



VIII. Reporting and Monitoring

Approved grantees may be required to submit reports on the status of the site development, including progress on infrastructure improvements, changes to the site's Tier Level, and business attraction efforts.

IX. Contact Information

For questions or to submit applications, please contact the Maryland Economic Development Corporation (MEDCO) at sites@medco-corp.com.

These guidelines provide a framework for applicants interested in participating in the Maryland Business Ready Sites Program, and are subject to amendment. Please review all criteria thoroughly before applying.