WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §5b-2-19

§5B-2-19. Certified Sites and Development Readiness Program.

(a)(1) The Certified Sites and Development Readiness Program is hereby created and is to be administered as a program within the Division of Economic Development with appropriate rules as necessary. The program shall establish evaluation criteria and site certification levels based upon developmental readiness of an applicant's site. In developing the program, the division shall consider utilizing all available resources and technical support, both public and private.

(2) The division shall establish an application process and forms through which an applicant may begin to participate in the program and identify and describe potential sites for economic development and investment. The application process and forms should include site specific information such as property ownership and control, descriptions and mapping, historical and current uses, access to various forms of transportation, availability of various utility services, environmental studies, conceptual plans, marketing materials, and all other information requested by the department.

(3) Applicants may include only state, county, municipal, or regional governmental entities such as, without limitation, economic development authorities, economic development corporations, economic development alliances, or economic development partnerships.

(4) The division shall select applicant's sites to participate in the program from the application materials. The division will select sites to participate in the program, evaluate the selected sites, and certify each site based upon its readiness to be developed from the established criteria. After evaluation, the division shall provide a report to the applicant detailing the results of the site evaluation, identifying site deficiencies and strengths, and suggesting a prioritized list of site improvements which may be made to improve the site's readiness to develop. The division may thereafter reevaluate and recertify a site as improvements are made to a site and deficiencies cured.

(5) The division may provide to applicants funding assistance up to a 50 percent match through a matching grant program which may be spent only for directly improving the developmental readiness of sites which have been selected to participate in the program. The division shall establish criteria and an application process for awarding matching grants to improve an applicant's site readiness: *Provided*, That no single site may receive any amount greater than a maximum amount established by the division through this grant matching program. Applications for this grant matching program must include details which specifically identify what deficiency or deficiencies will be cured and through what means and all other information required by the division. Grant matching funds must be spent, contracted to be spent, or returned to the department within 12 months of the date of receipt of the grant matching funds. Grant matching funds shall be paid back to the division when a participating site is sold or leased for development. The division shall take prudent

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steps to receive a security interest in a participating site in the amount of the grant matching funds award including, but not limited to, placing of record in the county where the participating site is located, an appropriate lien against the title. All funds repaid under this section shall remain within the program for use on participating sites. The division shall monitor, and request appropriate evidence documenting the cured deficiencies and thereafter reevaluate and recertify a participating site as part of this grant matching program.

(6)(A) The division may provide funding assistance to applicants through a micro grant program which may be spent only for directly improving the developmental readiness of sites which have been selected to participate in the program. The division shall establish criteria and an application process for awarding the micro grants to improve an applicant's site readiness. Applications for this micro grant program must include details which specifically identify what deficiency or deficiencies will be cured and through what means and all other information required by the division. Micro grant funds must be spent, contracted to be spent, or returned to the division within 12 months of the date of receipt of the micro grant funds. All funds returned under this section shall remain within the program for use on participating sites. The division shall monitor and request appropriate evidence documenting the cured deficiency and thereafter reevaluate and recertify a participating site as part of this micro grant program.

(B) (i) Sites that are a minimum of five acres in size may receive an amount up to $100,000 through the micro grant program.

(ii) Sites that exceed 20 acres in size may receive an amount up to $250,000 through the micro grant program.

(iii) Notwithstanding these limitations on acreage, sites eligible for participation in the West Virginia Business Ready Sites Program, as defined in §24-2-1n of this code, are eligible for access to funds from the Certified Sites and Development Readiness Fund as established in §5B-2-19(b) of this code: *Provided*, That the Department of Commerce must approve each such application for funding.

(b) (1) The Certified Sites and Development Readiness Fund is hereby created. The fund shall be administered by the Division of Economic Development and shall consist of all moneys made available for the purposes from:

(A) Appropriations provided by the Legislature;

(B) Any moneys available from external sources; and

(C) All interest and other income earned from investment of moneys in the fund.

(2) The Division of Economic Development shall use moneys in the fund to support The Certified Sites and Development Readiness Program.

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(3) Any balance, including accrued interest and any other returns, in the fund at the end of each fiscal year may not expire to the General Revenue Fund but shall remain in the fund and be expended for the purposes provided by this section.

(4) Fund balances may be invested under §12-6C-6 of this code. Earnings on the investments shall be used solely for the purposes defined in this section.

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