

December 14, 2016



Notes from the Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Cycle 15, Session 10

This was the tenth and final session of PLC Cycle 15 that featured informal, 20-minute discussions with EPA EWDJT grantees, alumni, and interested stakeholders. The goals for this cycle included:

- Highlighting EWDJT programs, and identifying successes and challenges
- Exploring proven strategies and activities used by established EWDJT programs
- Discovering resources and leveraging opportunities

Topics: 1. News from Washington and HMTRI  
2. Questions since last PLC session  
3. Graduate placement and tracking strategies  
4. Things you should do now  
5. Webinars and items of interest  
6. Training opportunities for EWDJT instructors

### **1. News from Washington and HMTRI**

The FY2017 Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) Request for Proposals (RFP) has been delayed. We will send copies as soon as the RFP becomes available.

The latest news is that the RFP is currently going through review channels and is expected to be issued end of December or early January. The due date will be adjusted accordingly.

Until then, it is expected that the FY17 RFP will be very similar to the FY16 guidelines. This is a great time to be working on RFP information requests that require time to collect. (See section 4 of these notes: Things you should do now.)

**SAVE THE DATE** for 2017 Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting to be held August 9–10, 2017 at the Crowne Plaza Old Town Alexandria in Alexandria, VA. More details to follow at a later date.

### **2. Questions since the last PLC session**

I missed the last session about curriculum. Where can I find notes from previous PLC sessions?

*HMTRI's [Brownfields Toolbox](#) website is a repository for all things related to the EWDJT program. [Post-session notes](#) from all previous PLC sessions are housed here and include topics such as community and labor market assessments, establishing partnerships, recruitment and retention strategies, and curriculum in addition to this session on placement and tracking strategies.*

Will EPA cover the cost of OSHA construction training such as OSHA 10-hour training?

*Response from EPA headquarters: "Yes, EWDJT funds can be used for OSHA 10-hour. This course covers many topics related to enhanced environmental health and safety including training in PPE, as you mention. Applicants who are able to leverage this course are encouraged to do so in order for them to maximize usage of their grant funds, but they are not required to do so."*

### **3. Graduate placement and tracking strategies**

EPA allows a full year to complete placement and initiate graduate tracking activities. Placement and tracking activities need to be emphasized in the proposal and written into the program plan as the primary goal of the EWDJT program. Our best programs identify staff members responsible for placement and tracking to ensure this function is not neglected or becomes an afterthought in program operation. A few of the following strategies have been used successfully to place and track students beyond graduation.

#### Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) and the importance of assigning placement responsibility

Opportunities vary from community to community. In past PLC sessions, we have discussed the importance of WIBs, sometimes called OneStop Centers or Career Centers, in recruiting and placing EWDJT participants. It is important for EWDJT programs to take control of recruitment and placement services internally. Programs should not require students to secure environmental employment without assistance. EWDJT grantees accept the responsibility to place and track their graduates. These activities can be shared with recruitment and placement partners such as OneStop Centers, but program managers need to have a direct stake in the future success of their graduates.

#### The importance of labor market assessments in placement

When it comes to graduate placement, it becomes clear why labor market assessments are so important. Done correctly, labor market assessments provide a pathway for training and employment. During labor market research, employers are identified and asked to take an active role in the program and consider program graduates for employment. PLC participants can refer back to the PLC session that addressed community and labor market assessment to examine the importance of comprehensive assessments.

#### Using employers as trainers

Smart grantees will recruit potential employers as guest instructors and speakers. These employers would have been identified in the labor market assessment. In addition to serving on advisory committees, employers serving as instructors provide other advantages as well.

1. Experienced local employers will train to current labor market needs.
2. Employer trainers will get to know the EWDJT participants on a personal level.
3. Employer trainers become employers for the graduates.
4. Employer trainers can serve an advisory, support, and even a leveraging role in the EWDJT program.

#### Link to Brownfields employers as part of a state or regional association

Many states have formed Brownfields associations. An excellent introduction to local Brownfields employers are state and regional associations. State and regional Brownfields associations hold annual conferences with working groups and special events during the year. Membership usually comes with contact lists of members. This is an easy way to begin an employer needs assessment. In the Southeast, the Florida Brownfields Association reaches across the entire Southeastern region providing contacts with every Brownfields stakeholder and potential employer in the region.

In December 2017, EPA's national Brownfields conference will convene in Pittsburg, PA. At his conference, as many as two to three thousand Brownfields stakeholders provide an abundance of networking opportunities for program managers and EWDJT graduates.

### On-the-job training programs (OJT)

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA), now called the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), provides federal funds to support business and jobseekers. The WIOA-sponsored OJT program can be used as a placement incentive to employers.

Currently enrolled WIOA participants can provide employers partial reimbursement (from 50–90 percent of gross wages) for up to six months. Additionally, materials such as work boots, additional certification training, and other items required of the job can also be reimbursed. Typical requirements for OJT participation includes:

1. The participant must be enrolled in WIOA.
2. The participant cannot be a former employee.
3. The OJT opportunity must be a full-time position lasting at least one year.
4. The participant must be a resident of the community administering the program.
5. Wage standards must apply (e.g. \$12.12/hour). It should be noted that OJT does not obligate the employer or the employee from terminating the job.

### Engage graduates in current EWDJT activities

Graduates can be a program's best employer advocate. Many students are placed based on the recommendation and performance of alumni. Likewise, graduates can be a company's best recruiter. This resource needs to be recognized and utilized by program staff. Email and social media is an excellent venue for engaging EWDJT graduates. Participants may change address, phone, or classmate friends. More than likely, their email and social media contact points will remain the same. In future discussions, we will explore the importance of social media. As part of the placement discussion, social media needs to be considered as an important placement and tracking strategy.

### Student volunteers—OJT and community service

A few EWDJT grantees have combined student training with community service. A former EWDJT grantee provided some excellent ideas for placing students with special situations. The Metropolitan Energy Center (MEC) program engaged student volunteers to work with a licensed remediation firm on targeted community projects to give students actual remediation experience. In some cases, stipends were provided by the companies who used EWDJT students as cleanup volunteers. A consent form was signed by the students when working on city projects and to protect remediation firms contracted to perform the cleanup operations.

### Giving ex-offenders a second chance

MEC, as well as other grantees, have made a concerted effort to work with ex-offenders. MEC worked with and developed programs with prison populations as well as with ex-offenders. MEC's program director said, "The environmental/remediation/construction industry is perhaps the best fit for ex-offender employment opportunities. Many owners of those small remediation/construction businesses are ex-offenders and/or appreciate the difficulties ex-offenders face obtaining work." MEC did not find well trained, screened, and credentialed ex-offenders difficult to place. In some cases, restrictions may be placed on their license (sex and violent convictions). Special cases may require specialized training acceptable for employers. Some states have special bonding programs for ex-offenders, and others employ "ban-the-box" guidelines to give applicants with criminal records a second chance for an initial interview.

### Graduate tracking

Graduate tracking is essential in providing student support after graduation. Graduate tracking can assist graduates in their new work life and assist if their current job is not working out. Keeping in touch with former students is not easy. Below are a few suggestions to help maintain relationships with former students.

- Offer refresher courses (may require a fee).
- Offer certification updates and recertification when necessary.
- Hold alumni nights.
- Recruit alumni as special guests at graduation.
- Recruit graduates to assist with recruitment and student counseling activities.
- Develop graduate mentoring programs.
- Hire graduates as instructors.
- Employ graduates as full-time staff.
- Utilize social media for announcements and employment opportunities to graduates.

### **4. Things you should do now**

Those participating in previous PLC discussions should be well on their way to developing their FY2017 Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) program. Below are some critical steps that need to be addressed in the early stages of program development.

- 1) Make your interest in developing an EWDJT program known.
- 2) Continue your community and labor market assessment activities.
- 3) Identify the target community to be served.
- 4) Develop partnerships in the targeted community.
- 5) Connect with associated programs and potential stakeholders.
- 6) Link with local employers.
- 7) Partner with assessment, revolving loan, and cleanup grants.
- 8) Become comfortable with grants.gov.

#### 1) Make your interest in an EWDJT program known.

Contact the EPA Regional Job Training Coordinator in the region where the program will be located indicating intentions to submit a proposal. EPA Regional Job Training Coordinators are the primary contact points for applicants and can be helpful in answering specific questions regarding the EWDJT solicitation. Some regions may have special conference calls for prospective applicants in their region, so get on that list. Additional announcements should be made to community stakeholders, local government including city council, and in public forums. Note these announcements are intentions—not commitments. Local announcements will assist in developing relationships with community stakeholders and leveraging partners.

#### 2) Continue community and labor market assessment activities.

Assessments conducted on the community, target participants, and local labor market will define the community and individuals to be served by the EWDJT program. These assessments will also locate and assess the needs of potential employers. EPA's [EJSCREEN](#) tool provides support for assessing communities, demographics, and pollution sources.

3) Identify the target community to be served.

Identify why the target community is special, as well as other programs targeting the community that can provide leveraging assistance. Ensure that students will have easy access to training and employers after graduation.

4) Develop partnerships in the targeted community.

Identify and recruit partners who are consistent with the program's assessment results and program goals. Locate leveraging and administrative partners. Recruit training partners and coordinate with placement partners. Research sources of in-kind assistance.

5) Connect with associated programs and potential stakeholders.

Connect with city and county government, environmental organizations, health and community service offices, workforce investment boards, local economic development offices, and offices of community relations and development.

6) Link with local employers.

Examples of employers to link with may include local manufactures; transportation industry; and manpower, cleanup, and consulting firms that will work with your program. Identify partners who will take an active role in the program. EPA's [Cleanups in My Community](#) website may help to identify Brownfields sources.

7) Partner with assessment, revolving loan, and cleanup grants.

Partner with other EPA grant programs such as assessment, revolving loan, and cleanup (ARC) grant recipients and stakeholders. ARC grants are "sisters" to the EWDJT program. Grantees and prospective grantees need to connect with communities requesting ARC assistance. Note that these grants are made primarily to city and county governments or to redevelopment organizations. The mayor's office of economic development or community planning should be able to provide additional contact information.

Connecting with ARC grantees is important to assist in the connection between workforce development and the programs generating jobs for EWDJT graduates. As part of the ARC proposal process, applicants need to hold public meetings to announce their intentions. This provides an excellent opportunity for prospective EWDJT grantees to publically announce their intentions of developing or continuing an EWDJT program for residents of impacted communities. Linking with ARC grantees may also lead to a network of employer partners and leveraged resources.

In summary, it would be wise to become acquainted with city staff working on ARC projects.

8) Become comfortable with grants.gov.

Grants must be submitted to the federal grants portal (grants.gov). This site has valuable types of information regarding the grants submission process including a primer course on grants 101, all about submitting federal grant applications.

## **5. Webinars and items of interest**

### EPA Leveraging for Brownfields Revitalization

On December 14, 2016, a webinar on *Leveraging Resources for Brownfields Revitalization: Meet the Funders – Infrastructure* was presented. If you missed the presentation, PowerPoints and PDFs are available on EPA's [CLUIN](#) website.

Infrastructure needs often are an essential component of Brownfields redevelopment projects. This webinar highlighted several different federal government programs that are available to assist communities in integrating infrastructure into Brownfields revitalization projects. Representatives from the U.S. Department of Transportation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and EPA's Office of Water provided an overview of their agencies and programs, and offered suggestions for how to leverage Brownfields redevelopment dollars to include infrastructure development.

#### 2017 Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting

The 2017 All-Grantee Meeting has been confirmed to be held August 9–10, 2017 with travel days of August 8 and 11 at the Crowne Plaza Old Town Alexandria in Alexandria, VA. Save the date! Details and registration information will be out soon.

#### Overview of other EPA Brownfields-related grants and general information

For an overview of other EPA Brownfields-related grants and general information about the OBLR grant program, please visit [EPA's website](#).

We encourage prospective EWDJT applicants to contact and participate in these related programs. While they are not directly related to environmental job training, it is important that EWDJT grantees and prospective grantees network with organizations funded by EPA in areas of common interest. Touching base with local EPA award recipients demonstrates community coordination and may develop into leveraged partnerships.

### **6. Training opportunities for EWDJT instructors**

#### 2017 Great Environmental Safety Training (GreatEST) Institute

June 5–16, 2017 | Davenport, Iowa

Participants must arrive by Sunday, June 4, 2017. The Institute starts Monday morning at 8:00 a.m. CT. Participants are responsible for attending all workshop activities as outlined in the agenda (TBA). The training day runs from 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Participants will be able to depart on the last day of the Institute no earlier than 11:30 a.m. on Friday, June 16, 2017.

**IMPORTANT NOTE TO APPLICANTS:** If accepted to this Institute, applications are considered contractual agreements between applicant and PETE.

#### Outcome Expectations

- Participants are prepared through a 10-day train-the-trainer program called the GreatEST Institute (Great Environmental Safety Training Institute) to deliver required certifications for public and private responders and workers including:
  - 40-hour Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response
  - 24-hour Industrial Emergency Response
  - DOT HazMat
  - Hazard Awareness and Communication
- Participants use CCCHST curriculum to train workers and responders in their local area and report to PETE the number of courses they provide. PETE reports these numbers to NIEHS. CCCHST members may charge for the courses offered in their local area.

## Travel

- Travel arrangements to and from Davenport, Iowa are the responsibility of participants. Cost of travel by air or car through mileage reimbursement will be paid by PETE up to a maximum of \$420. Applicants are responsible for their airfare purchase even if they must withdraw from the Institute and cancel or change flights.
- Local travel between the hotel and the training site will be provided. The hotel provides transportation to and from airport.

## Lodging

- During the Institute, everyone, unless other arrangements are pre-approved by PETE, will be staying at the Radisson Quad City Plaza, 111 East 2nd Street Davenport, IA 52801. Each participant will be provided his/her own room. PETE will make hotel reservations for you, and hotel room and tax will be billed to the PETE master account. However, you will need a credit card to secure your room at registration, and to cover all incidentals (for which you are responsible—PETE will not cover any incidentals). Reservation codes will be provided to each participant individually.
- Payment for lodging outside of the workshop timeframe or for non-participating companions will be the responsibility of the participant.

## Meals

- Some meals will be provided during the Institute. A registration fee of \$75 is charged to participants (reimbursed on travel forms) to cover the cost of snacks, beverages, three noon lunches, and the closing banquet. All other meals, including those during travel, will be reimbursed on a per diem basis. Participants will need to submit a reimbursement form no later than 30 days following the end of the Institute.

The Institute is limited to 20 participants. For more information and an application, please contact Patti Thompson at [pattijthompson@gmail.com](mailto:pattijthompson@gmail.com).

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Next PLC Session:            January 4, 2017 at 2:00 p.m. ET  
Please call in five minutes early.

Feel free to invite a guest! Send your contact information to Mike Senew at [msenew@aol.com](mailto:msenew@aol.com).



Visit our *HMTRI Brownfields Toolbox* Web site at <http://www.brownfields-toolbox.org> for more information on Brownfields Job Training programs. All PLC session notes and recordings are also located on the *Brownfields Toolbox* website at <http://brownfields-toolbox.org/plc-corner/>. For those interested in providing content or suggestions, please contact Glo Hanne at [ghanne@eicc.edu](mailto:ghanne@eicc.edu).

**NOTE:** The PLC brings together ideas and opinions of individuals interested in environmental workforce development and training. Ideas and opinions are not those of EPA, its policy or opinions and should not be taken as official guidance.