

November 9, 2016



## Notes from the Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Cycle 15, Session 8

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

- 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. Recruitment strategies: Finding the most deserving applicants likely to succeed
4. Training opportunities for EWDJT instructors
5. Webinars and items of interest
6. Making connections, networking, and meetings
7. Opportunities

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

The FY2017 Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) request for proposals should be released before the next PLC call on November 30, 2016. We will send an announcement out on the HMTRI listserv and to the PLC distribution list as soon as the RFP becomes available.

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

During the PLC session on community and labor market assessment, you mentioned locating nearby waste sites, cleanup activities, and brownfields. Can you repeat the EPA tools available for locating those sites?

*Cleanups in My Community (CIMC) allows users to map and list hazardous waste cleanup locations and grant areas, and to drill down for details about those cleanups. It also provides information on grants and additional related information. <https://www.epa.gov/cleanups/cleanups-my-community> Another excellent EPA tool for identifying sites and local demographic data can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen>. EJSCREEN can provide high definition demographic and geographic data as part of the community assessment process.*

### **3. Recruitment strategies: Finding the most deserving applicants likely to succeed**

The single most important step for success in training, retention, placement, and job satisfaction is the careful selection of students most motivated and likely to succeed. Conversely, poor attention to recruitment will result in low retention, placement, and job satisfaction.

EWDJT programs with catastrophic failures can usually attribute their mistake to hurried or inadequate participant recruitment. With limited seats available, EWDJT programs have a responsibility to provide training to deserving applicants most likely to succeed. Choosing a class of students is similar to selecting a basketball team. Are they motivated? Do they work as a team? Do they demonstrate abilities to learn and grow? In the case of EWDJT applicants, will they be employable after training?

### Working with employment centers

Local workforce organizations operate under a variety of names and organizational structures including JobLink Centers, [Workforce Investment Boards](#) (WIB or WIOLA), or Career Centers. These are state and local employment centers directly or indirectly supported by the US Department of Labor with the purpose of expanding the nation's employed workforce.

Working with the local WIB or career center as an initial recruitment and placement tool is a great start, but not the only or final solution. EWDJT participant slots are limited and must be granted to the most deserving residents most likely to succeed. Finding applicants who will complete the program, attend all classes, pursue opportunities presented, and most likely be hired is a multi-level screening process.

Career centers can start the process by providing a supply of interested applicants. Many programs supplement or substitute career center referrals with direct recruitment activities including open house events, awareness sessions, presentations, word-of-mouth, and marketing promotions. Both of these strategies work well together. In addition to referrals, career centers can provide services to leverage recruiting efforts.

Career centers can provide background and basic applicant information, as well as administer assessment tests to screen applicants for sufficient background knowledge to understand and learn concepts presented in the EWDJT program.

Assessment tests administered by career centers may include:

- Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE)
- WorkKeys
- Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS)

Assessment tests are administered by the career center as are other additional screening services. Each student assessment test has advantages and drawbacks. Each can provide certificates for potential employers and a good measure of a student's knowledge of reading, math, and informational skills. While TABE tests are most common among EWDJT programs, all are being used depending on local preferences. Standards for accepting students into the environmental training program vary from grades 9–10.

In addition to initial screening and applicant assessment tests, the local career center can qualify applicants for benefits that may include training materials, transportation, equipment, and other support services.

### Subjective student assessments

EWDJT grantees acknowledge that student assessment tests do not provide the most important indicators of successful candidates. Subjective assessments are best completed by the EWDJT program staff including instructors and student support and placement staff.

Subjective applicant assessment, while the most important, is the most difficult to administer. Subjective evaluations are the responsibility of program staff rather than the local career center and includes several applicant qualities.

- Sticking with the program.
- Determination.

- Working well in groups.
- Attending all classes.
- Accepting new and difficult challenges.
- Possessing a passion for their new career.
- Appealing to potential employers.

#### Applicant evaluation techniques

Over the years, grantees have used a variety of strategies for applicant screening in addition to analytical and subjective applicant assessment. These advanced screening techniques are used to further refine the short list of candidates being considered and include the activities below.

- Try-outs
- Individual and group interviews
- Family visits
- Open house and working sessions
- Pre-training such as life skills or construction trades not related to environmental training with the most motivated students offered advanced environmental training opportunities

#### Final applicant selection

After initial recruitment, preliminary screening, subjective evaluation, refinement of the applicant pool, and final interviews, the team is selected. All this effort sounds like over-kill, but the importance cannot be overstated. The rest of the program including training, retention, and placement will be influenced by the applicants selected to be trained.

The final step in the application process is to present the student contracts signed by all of the accepted applicants. The informal student contract is not a legally binding document but rather a promise from both sides of program goals and expectations. Student contracts and program expectations are usually presented early in the application process, but the formal signing of a contract adds importance and significance to the selection process.

#### Applicant rejection

What happens when an applicant is rejected? Often applicants pass assessment tests but do not appear to have the desire or interest required of successful participants.

It cannot be assumed that applicants will understand the severe limitation of resources associated with EWDJT programs. Clearly, some residents may view the EWDJT program as “somewhere to go,” “better than nothing,” or a “right” rather than an opportunity.

For this reason, it is recommended to begin a conversation about establishing a policy for documenting acceptance and rejection of applicants. This conversation may additionally expand to the development of a documented methodology for student recruitment. Use of ranking criteria, as does EPA, in selecting grantees may provide a starting point for such conversations.

Rejected applicants, especially those passing several filters, need to have alternative opportunities presented. Perhaps another trade or occupation with feedback to the career center for additional assistance is in order. When applicants are qualified, waiting lists for the next cohort may also be a reasonable approach.

### Student retention and support services

EPA funding can only be used to recruit, train, and place participants in environmental jobs. Where do other resources and student services come from to deliver a credible environmental training program? The answer is why partnerships and leveraging are essential to EWDJT success.

While the EPA EWDJT program supports job placement activities, it does not provide for life skills training, remedial training, and student support. In simple terms, activities associated directly with student recruitment, environmental training, placement, and tracking are allowable expenses. This funding gap becomes a wake-up call for the importance of leveraged partners. Fortunately there are many potential partners that provide these services.

Student support directly relates to student retention. There are several issues associated with a program's ability to provide student support. They include the issues below, none of which are supported by EPA EWDJT funds.

- Life skills education
- Remedial education and literacy issues
- Child and dependent care
- Financial literacy
- Personal and legal issues
- Transportation

Many of these support services can be provided by local workforce centers to qualified program participants. It is important that EWDJT programs coordinate with local career centers to learn what benefits may be available to EWDJT participants. Services not provided by career centers may be provided by additional partners such as the types of organizations listed below.

- Local banks (in-kind financial literacy training)
- Health and human services
- Local departments of transportation (reduced or free transportation passes)
- Legal aid and re-entry nonprofit organizations
- Faith-based organizations (support services)
- Corporate organizations and foundations (in-kind support)
- Local community development corporations
- Nonprofit organizations and community foundations

This incomplete list demonstrates the importance of partnership development as a means of leveraging student support and retention services.

#### **4. 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).

## Disaster Site Worker Institute

January 9–13, 2017 | Fort Pierce, Florida

Participants must arrive by Sunday, January 8, 2017. The Institute starts Monday morning at 8:00 a.m. ET. Participants are responsible for attending all workshop activities as outlined in the agenda (TBA). The training day runs from 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. If the Institute objectives for the day are not completed by

5:00 p.m., the day may be extended to as late as 6:00 p.m. Participants will be able to depart on Saturday, January 14, 2017.

Participants are prepared through a 5-day program called the Disaster Site Worker Institute to obtain required certifications for public and private responders and workers including:

- Disaster Site Worker 15-hour
- Hazard Awareness and Communication
- Incident Command System

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.

#### Training Site

- Indian River State College (IRSC), Treasure Coast Public Safety Training Complex, 4600 Kirby Loop Road, Fort Pierce, FL 34981. Telephone: 772.462.7150

The Treasure Coast Public Safety Training Complex at IRSC is the most comprehensive, technologically advanced public safety training facility in the nation. The 50-acre, eight-building complex has gained national and international attention for its proactive approach to disaster prevention, response, recovery, and relief.

#### Travel

- Travel arrangements to and from Fort Pierce, Florida are the responsibility of participants. Cost of travel by air, car rental, or through mileage reimbursement will be paid by PETE up to a maximum of \$480. Applicants are responsible for their airfare purchase even if they must withdraw from the Institute and cancel or change flights.
- The Institute is located about 112 miles southeast of the Orlando airport and about 60 miles north of the West Palm Beach airport. The Residence Inn Hotel is located 10 miles south of the training site along Interstate 95 at exit 121.

#### Lodging

- During the Institute, everyone will be staying at the Residence Inn by Marriott, 1920 SW Fountainview Blvd., Port St. Lucie, Florida 34986. Telephone: 772.344.7814. Each participant will be provided his/her own room. The hotel room (\$115/night) and tax (11.5%) will be reimbursed by PETE on a reimbursement form to be completed after the course ends. PETE will not cover any incidentals. Participants can stay at another location, if desired, but will only be reimbursed at the rate not to exceed the secured hotel rate listed above. Participants must call the hotel to make their own reservations no later than Friday, December 9, 2016.

#### Meals

- Breakfast is provided at the hotel as well as an evening snack on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday nights. Noon meals will be provided during the Institute Monday through Friday and an evening meal will be provided on Friday night. A registration fee of \$75 is charged to participants (reimbursed on travel forms) to cover the cost of snacks, beverages, five noon lunches, and the closing banquet. All other meals, including those during travel, will be reimbursed on a GSA per diem basis (\$11/breakfast, \$23/supper, \$5/incidentals). For the

Sunday and Saturday travel days, participants will receive \$38.25/each travel day. Participants will need to submit a reimbursement form no later than 30 days following the end of the Institute.

For more information and an application, please contact Patti Thompson at [pattijthompson@gmail.com](mailto:pattijthompson@gmail.com).

#### National PETE—DOT HazMat Regulations Train-the-Trainer and Awareness Courses

National PETE has been awarded a one-year grant from the Department of Transportation to prepare DOT HazMat Transportation Regulations trainers. There are several levels of training to be provided:

- 16-hour DOT Haz Mat Regulations course
- 40-hour Regulations and NESHTA Instructional Technology training
- 2-hour Regulations Awareness courses to be offered with CCHST Refreshers

Those who enroll in the 16- or 40-hour courses must take an online prerequisite.

Nearly all costs, including travel to training, will be covered by the grant. (\$425 towards transportation by air or by car, plus reimbursement for overnight accommodations at a PETE-designated hotel and per diem for meals.) These expenses will be reimbursed by National PETE. Attendees are expected to bring laptops for use in class.

January, 2017: The 40-hour course on HazMat Regulations and Instructional Design for 15 instructors will be held in Florida.

May, 2017: The 16-hour Instructor Workshop on DOT HazMat Regulations for 35 instructors will be held in Portland, Maine.

Registration will be on a first come/first serve basis. Please email Hilary Kessler at [kessler@maine.rr.com](mailto:kessler@maine.rr.com) with your name, address, email, and which course you are interested in attending.

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

##### Leveraging Resources for Brownfields Revitalization: Meet the Funders

Webinar Series (#3) | December 14, 2016, 1:00-2:30 pm EST

This second “Meet the Funders” webinar will highlight the resources for brownfields revitalization available from one or two more federal agencies outside of EPA. It is the part of OBLR's webinar series focusing on what communities need to do to successfully leverage resources for brownfields revitalization. Register at <https://clu-in.org/training/webinar/BFLeveraging1/>.

##### Environmental Justice 2020 Action Agenda (EJ 2020)

The US EPA released the Environmental Justice 2020 Action Agenda (EJ 2020), the Agency's environmental justice strategic plan for 2016 to 2020. EJ 2020 will further integrate environmental justice considerations in all of the Agency's programs, strengthen EPA's collaboration with partners, and demonstrate progress on significant national challenges facing minority and low-income communities. EJ 2020 builds on the foundation established by EPA's previous strategic plan, Plan EJ 2014, as well as decades of significant environmental justice practice by the Agency, communities, and other environmental justice stakeholders.

“EPA is committed to ensuring every community in the United States has access to clean air, water and land,” said EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy. “EJ 2020 is a product of listening to people in communities to better understand the challenges they face, and working closely with local leaders to identify solutions together.”

The EJ 2020 Action Agenda has three overarching goals.

1. Deepen environmental justice practice within EPA programs to improve the health and environment of overburdened communities.
2. Work with partners to expand positive impact within overburdened communities.
3. Demonstrate progress on critical national environmental justice challenges.

Earlier this year, EPA released both the draft framework and final draft of the plan for public comment, and received thousands of comments from stakeholders and communities working on environmental justice. Additionally, Agency staff conducted over one hundred meetings across the country and held four national webinars to discuss the plan and answer stakeholder questions. EPA plans to continue its unprecedented level of dialogue with environmental justice stakeholders and governmental partners as it moves forward to implement the plan in the coming years.

Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. EPA's goal is to provide an environment where all people enjoy the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to maintain a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work. EPA works with all stakeholders to collaboratively address environmental and public health issues and concerns.

EPA's environmental justice mandate extends to all of the Agency's work, including setting standards, permitting facilities, awarding grants, issuing licenses, regulations, and reviewing proposed actions by the federal agencies.

To read EJ 2020, visit <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/ej-2020-action-agenda>  
<https://blog.epa.gov/blog/2016/10/ej-2020-the-next-generation-of-environmental-justice-at-epa/>

## **6. Making connections, networking, and meetings**

### Connect the Dots Now for a Self Sufficient Energy Future

Every year, the Energy Coordinating Agency (ECA) hosts an energy conference that brings together the most current information on low income energy policy and practice in the face of climate change. This year's event will be held on Thursday, November 17, from 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. ET. The location is:

Temple University Student Faculty Center  
3340 North Broad Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19140

The agenda is available at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sustainable-energy-conference-2016-tickets-27098633743>.

For more information, contact:

Thomas Flaherty, ECA, at [ThomasF@ecasavesenergy.org](mailto:ThomasF@ecasavesenergy.org) or 215.609.1054

Rachael Barrett, ECA, at [RachaelB@ecasavesenergy.org](mailto:RachaelB@ecasavesenergy.org) or 215.609.1057



## 7. Opportunities

While 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.

The U.S. EPA has awarded \$1.3 million to 22 organizations in 18 states to help protect and restore urban waters and to support community revitalization and other local priorities. “Often underserved communities in our nation’s cities face disproportionate impacts from pollution, and too often they lack the resources to do something about it,” said Joel Beauvais, EPA Deputy Assistant Administrator for Water. “EPA provides support to empower these communities to improve the quality of their waterways and to help reconnect people and businesses with the water they depend on.”

This year’s Urban Waters grantees will inform and engage residents in storm water management and pursue community-based plans to address pollution in waterways. To accomplish these goals, many projects will address trash in waterways; test rivers, streams and lakes for pollutants; and prepare the next generation of environmental stewards for careers in the green economy.

The Urban Waters Small Grants are competed and awarded every two years. Since its inception in 2012, the program has awarded approximately \$6.6 million in Urban Waters Small Grants to 114 organizations across the country and Puerto Rico, with individual award amounts of up to \$60,000.

To learn more about the funded projects, visit <https://www.epa.gov/urbanwaters/urban-waters-small-grants>. For more information on EPA’s Urban Waters program, visit <https://www.epa.gov/urbanwaters>.

### Assessment and Cleanup (AC) grants

Is your community in need of grant money to assess and clean up brownfield properties? EPA is now accepting grant proposals for the FY 2017 Brownfields grants competition. The grant funds may be used to address sites contaminated by petroleum, hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants. Opportunities for funding this year include Assessment and Cleanup (AC) grants. The proposal submission deadline is December 20, 2016.

The FY16 AC Guidelines are now posted at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

[FY17 Guidelines for Brownfields Assessment Grants \(EPA-OLEM-OBLR-16-08\)](#)

[FY17 Guidelines for Brownfields Cleanup Grants \(EPA-OLEM-OBLR-16-09\)](#)

The Guidelines, supplemental guidance documents, and resources are also available at [EPA's Website](#).

[FY2017 Brownfields Assessment Grant Guidelines](#)

[FY2017 Brownfields Cleanup Grant Guidelines](#)

[FY2017 Summary of Brownfields Assessment and Cleanup Guideline Changes](#)

[FY2017 Assessment Guideline Checklist](#)

[FY2017 Cleanup Guideline Checklist](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Grants.gov Tip Sheet for Applicants](#)

IMPORTANT! Please read the tip sheet to avoid any problems when submitting your proposal.

### Groundwork USA

Groundwork USA is now accepting letters of interest from communities wishing to begin the process of applying for Groundwork USA program funding and technical assistance and to join the Groundwork Network. Funding is currently available to select up to two new communities for the Groundwork Program. They will be eligible for up to \$200,000 in funding and technical assistance from the National Park Service, US EPA, and Groundwork USA to plan, establish, and build the capacity of Groundwork Trust organizations in their communities. For more information about Groundwork USA, please visit [www.groundworkusa.org](http://www.groundworkusa.org).

### **MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

Next PLC Session:           November 30, 2016 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.