

January 4, 2017



Notes from the Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Cycle 16, Session 1

- Topics:
1. News from Washington and HMTRI
  2. Questions HMTRI has received
  3. Getting the most out of EPA's informational webinars next week: Ideas for writing a better proposal
  4. Things you should do now
  5. Webinars and items of interest
  6. Training opportunities for EWDJT instructors

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

#### FY2017 Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) Request for Proposals

The FY2017 Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) Request for Proposals (RFP) has been posted to grants.gov. The proposal submission deadline is February 24, 2017. All proposals must be submitted through grants.gov. Later in these post session notes, requirements for posting proposals will be discussed.

Guidelines and support documents can be downloaded from EPA at the following site.

<https://www.epa.gov/brownfields/brownfields-current-news-and-events>

Downloads include the following guidance:

-[FY2017 Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Grant Guidelines](#)

-[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

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

#### Informational webinars

To assist applicants with proposals, EPA will hold two informational webinars. The content of each webinar will be the same but questions from participants may be different. If you plan to submit a proposal this year, it is highly recommended that you attend one or both of these webinars. No registration is required.

- January 10—12:30 p.m. ET
- January 12—2:00 p.m. ET

Both webinars will be recorded, include PowerPoints, and will be posted to the Brownfields website. To access the webinars live, please go to <http://epawebconferencing.acms.com/fy17ewdjt/>.

If you do not have Internet access or cannot hear the audio on the webinar, you can call 866.299.3188 and use the code 202 566 1564.

#### 2017 National Brownfields Conference Call for Ideas

The Call for Ideas for EPA's 2017 National Brownfields Conference has been posted. Participants can now submit session ideas for the conference which will be held December 5–7 in Pittsburgh. For details, go to the [conference website](#).

### Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting

Save the date for the 2017 Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting to be held August 9–10 in Alexandria, VA. Travel days are August 8 and 11. Current, past, and PLC members are invited to attend. Details and registration information will be out soon.

EPA documents including RFP guidelines, PLC post-session notes and recordings, and much more about environmental workforce development programs are available on HMTRI's [Brownfields Toolbox](#) website.

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

Openings are still available for the 2017 Great Environmental Safety Training (GreatEST) Institute train-the-trainer to be held June 4–June 16, 2017. See section 6, Training opportunities for EWDJT instructors, in these post-session notes for additional information and application.

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

Are state career readiness certifications an expense that can be covered by the EWDJT funding or would that be considered a soft skill training?

*Your instincts are correct. A good rule-of-thumb would be instruction that is directly related to environmental issues, remediation, and associated health and safety can be supported with EWDJT funds. Other instruction needs to be leveraged perhaps from the local employment agency or a community nonprofit organization. It should also be noted that only certain environmentally related programs can be supported as outlined on page 9 of the RFP guidelines.*

Do you know if it is okay for grant recipients to disqualify ex-felons for acceptance into the EWDJT program? Can grant recipients require a clean criminal record as a screening criteria for applicants?

*We have been asked the same question regarding graduates that must be able to obtain a security clearance. Not speaking for EPA, individual organizations, or local policy, we would suggest the following.*

*All individuals should have the right to apply to the EWDJT program (similar to ban-the-box application policies). However, if your labor market assessment determines that individuals with certain issues cannot be placed, those issues may be a factor in determining if an applicant is accepted for training. For example, if potential employers will not hire graduates that are not drug-free regardless of local ordinances, an acceptance criteria may include drug testing.*

*With only approximately 20 openings, EWDJT programs need to ration seats and accept the most deserving and best qualified candidates who are most likely to succeed. A similar issue may exist for applicants without GEDs or are unable to qualify on a TABE evaluation, wear a respirator, or lift 50 pounds if required by potential employers.*

*In the best case, we would suggest finding employers who are willing to hire qualified graduates with certain physical, social, or legal issues. This should be part of the labor market assessment. Graduates with special needs can then be guided to those programs. Many employers will work with ex-offenders and those with special needs.*

*If there are no employers willing to give these graduates a chance, we would suggest guiding applicants to other training programs where graduates may not have stringent conditions for employment.*

*Again we are not in a position to speak for EPA. Also, state or federal mandates may apply. For those, the EWDJT program may wish to consult with local employment centers.*

### **3. Getting the most out of EPA's informational webinars next week: Ideas for writing a better proposal**

During the next several PLC sessions, we will be discussing each of the components necessary to develop a sustainable EWDJT program. These are the same components EPA will be addressing to evaluate proposals for funding. The first and most important component is understanding the guidance that EPA provides for developing a fundable EWDJT proposal. Read carefully and digest the documentation identified earlier in these notes and attend the EPA webinars. If your region has additional guidance sessions, get on the list.

Prepare for the EPA webinars by reviewing the EWDJT RFP and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). Most participants attend webinars with minimal preparation. After all, we attend to be informed. But the EPA EWDJT webinars are different. EPA staff will review the guidelines in detail—step-by-step with background information, evaluation criteria, submission requirements, and finally questions. With so much information being presented in a limited time, it will be easy to become confused or miss important bits of information.

For this reason, we recommend reading the guidelines in detail before the webinar, followed by the FAQs. Next, assemble a list of issues that are unclear or confusing. As the webinar proceeds, listen to the answers to these questions. If issues are still confusing, present them during the session. Other participants will likely have the same questions.

We would also recommend downloading the PowerPoint presentation after the webinar. PowerPoints provide a great outline of threshold, evaluation, submission, narrative, and appendix requirements for future reference.

#### Issues that can be confusing when reading the RFP

EPA provides detailed guidance regarding allowable costs supported by the EWDJT grant. Even with this guidance, applicants often have questions regarding specific situations. Examples of questions from previous competitions include:

- Funding available for specific environmental programs.
- Allowable administrative costs.
- Fundable curriculum offerings.
- Contracting for services requirements.
- Partnering and leveraging procedures.
- Reporting budget estimates.
- Allowable and unallowable costs for specific activities.

#### After the EPA webinar

After reading the EPA documentation and attending the webinar, previous grantees have suggested the following approach while everything is fresh in people's minds.

- Establish a team of individuals to be active in the proposal development, read the RFP, and attend the webinar.
- Select a project coordinator to be enforcer and overall editor.
- Deconstruct and identify every question and request for information presented in the RFP.
- Assign every question and request for information to a specific individual best qualified to respond.
- Establish milestones, meeting, and deadline schedules for each team member.
- Obtain firm time commitments from each team member regarding his or her deliverable.
- Allow for delays and an early completion date as the proposal is developed.
- On a regular basis, present deliverables to the entire team for peer-to-peer review.

Clearly, every organization has its own proposal development approach. The key is to ensure that every question or request for information is addressed in the proposal. Many of the items in the RFP are simply addressed. However, many are more complex and require a good deal of coordination, time, and effort.

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

Those participating in previous PLC discussions should be well on their way to developing their FY2017 EWDJT program. Below are some critical steps that need to be addressed in the early stages of program development. EPA regional coordinators cannot talk about your specific proposal now that the RFP has been issued, but they can provide clarification regarding the RFP guidelines.

##### On the administrative side

- Become comfortable with grants.gov. Submitting a proposal to grants.gov is not difficult, but requires advance preparation. Do not assume that requirements described below are current and active. In order to submit a proposal through grants.gov, applicants must take the following steps:
  - Have or obtain an active DUNS number.
  - Have a current System for Award Management (SAM) account in [www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov).
  - Be registered in [grants.gov](http://grants.gov) with your organization's Ebiz Point of Contact to oversee grants.gov activities.
  - Authorize a representative to submit the proposal. This person becomes the organization's Authorized Organization Representative (AOR).
  - Spend some time on grant.gov working with the help desk when necessary. The site has all types of valuable information regarding the grants submission process including a primer (grants 101, all about submitting federal grant applications).
- The registration process for all of the above items may take a month or more to complete. Occasionally, technical and other issues arise when using [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). Administrative preparation can proceed as the technical preparation continues.

##### On the technical side

- As described earlier in these notes, the amount of coordination necessary to develop a fundable proposal can be overwhelming. It is best addressed as a team effort with close coordination and information exchange. Below are some of the activities that will take time to complete and should be addressed as soon as possible.
  - Make your interest in EWDJT known to governmental organizations and other potential partners.

- Continue your community and labor market assessments.
- Identify the target community you plan to serve.
- Develop partnerships in the targeted community.
- Connect with associated programs and potential stakeholders.
- Establish relationships with local employers as part of your labor market assessment.
- Partner with assessment, revolving loan, and cleanup grants.

#### Make your interest in an EWDJT program known

Contact the EPA regional job training coordinator (page 38 of the RFP) indicating intentions to submit a proposal. EPA regional job training coordinators are 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 their distribution list.

Additional announcements should be made to community stakeholders, local government including the 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.

#### Community and labor market assessments

Community assessments, target participant assessments, and labor market assessments help define the community and individuals to be served, and locate and assess labor market needs of potential employers. EPA's [EJSCREEN](#) tool provides support for assessing communities, demographics, and pollution sources.

#### Identify the target community to serve

Identify the reasons why the targeted community is special. Identify other programs that also target the community and may be able to provide leveraging assistance. Ensure that students have easy access to training and employers after graduation.

#### Develop partnerships in the targeted community

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

#### Connect with associated programs and potential stakeholders

Connect with city and county government, environmental organizations, health services, community services, workforce investment boards, the mayor's office of economic development, and offices of community relations and development.

#### Link with local employers

Manufacturers, transportation, manpower, cleanup, and consulting firms may work with your program. Identify partners who will be active in the program. Use EPA's [Cleanups in my Community](#) tool to help identify Brownfields sources.

#### Partner with assessment, revolving loan, and cleanup (ARC) grantees 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.

The reason for accessing associated Brownfields programs is 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.

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

### CLUIN

Another great resource is EPA's CLUIN archive website where hundreds of internet seminars are available for free download and replay. There are several topics that may be of interest to EWDJT grantees such as the most recent, *Leveraging Resources for Brownfields Revitalization: Meet the Funders*. To access this archive, go to <https://clu-in.org/live/archive/>.

### Twitter

Follow OLEM on Twitter for the latest news and announcements at <https://twitter.com/EPALand>. Here you can also follow @EPAblog and @EPAwatersense.

### National Brownfields Training Conference

Mark your calendar for the [National Brownfields Training Conference](#) to be held in Pittsburgh on December 5–7, 2017. Pre-conference training will be held on December 4. The conference is co-sponsored by EPA and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). Offered every two years, the conference is the largest gathering of stakeholders focused on cleaning up and reusing formerly utilized commercial and industrial properties.

### Other related OBLR grant programs

See an overview of other EPA Brownfields related grants and general information about the OBLR grant program on [EPA's website](#).

Prospective EWDJT applicants should contact and participate in these related programs. 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 other 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 18, 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.