

February 17, 2016



Notes from Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Cycle 14, Session 1

This was the first session of PLC Cycle 14 that will feature informal, 20-minute discussions with EPA EWDJT grantees, alumni, and interested stakeholders. The goals for this new 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
- Helpful hints and open discussion

Topics: 1. News from Washington and HMTRI
2. Things to do now
3. Noteworthy EWDJT programs in the news
4. Mott Community College, Flint, Michigan—Jonathan Jarrett
5. Making connections, networking, and items of interest

1. News from Washington and HMTRI

EWDJT proposals are beginning their critical review. By now proposals have passed the qualifying review with notifications sent to those not eligible for assistance. At this point, no news is good news. Now the long wait begins. If all goes well, funded proposals should be announced in May.

Thanks, Joe. Welcome, Rachel. Rachel Congdon has officially taken over Headquarter's EWDJT program responsibilities from Joe Bruss. We thank Joe for his service and look forward providing Rachel information and success stories she may request to support the EWDJT program. Grantees and prospective grantees should continue to address their EPA Regional Coordinators with any questions or issues concerning their grant or the EWDJT program. HMTRI is always available as a technical resource.

The Brownfields Reauthorization Act of 2016, H.R. 4463

Brownfields, supported by most state and local officials, has lingered in Congress without reauthorization for several years. While the Build Act remains in a Senate Committee, good news comes from the House—(a sister bill) HR4463 was just introduced on February 4. The Bipartisan measure would reauthorize EPA's Brownfields Program, as well as expand program eligibility. The Brownfields Reauthorization Act of 2016, H.R. 4463, would provide EPA grant authority up to \$250 million through 2021 expanding non-profit groups eligible for grants. Training and the ability to include indirect costs are a few of the issues associated with the bill.

2. Things to do now

It is important that prospective grantees keep their partners and stakeholders informed, especially during the ongoing review process. Existing grantees should keep in close contact with partners and stakeholders. Discuss the review process and schedule, confirming that references and contacts that were included as part of the proposal are aware that they may receive a phone call from EPA reviewers. In the event that a proposal is not funded, build upon established partnerships and contacts for a future, expanded proposal.

Remember—the EWDJT program is an annual competition with another Requests for Proposals less than ten months away.

3. Noteworthy EWDJT programs in the news

Congratulations to Art Shanks from Cypress Mandela Training Center. On January 13, Art was honored as a silver medalist by the prestigious Jefferson Awards Foundation. Honors are given for service by individuals committed to improving their community. The Jefferson Awards Foundation was founded in 1972 by Jacqueline Kennedy and Senator Robert Taft. The presentation ceremony can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWknUB6yyz4>.

Another excellent video in conjunction with Cypress Mandela's partnership with waste management further describes Art's program at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmtBUP1Ugk>.

4. Mott Community College (MCC), Flint, Michigan—Jonathan Jarrett

Flint, Michigan, a city of 100,000 residents, is grappling with the health and political fallout over switching to corrosive river water which leached lead from old pipes into the city water supply. Emotions and concern run high as demonstrated by local headlines:

"Federal authorities, including the FBI, have started a criminal probe into the contamination."

"Governor Snyder will ask state lawmakers in his next budget proposal to approve a \$30 million water payment relief plan for Flint residents to keep their water service on and reimburse them for lead-contaminated water they cannot drink."

A tragedy to be sure. Can the EWDJT program help?

Today's guest for discussion was Jonathan Jarrett from MCC in Flint, Michigan. Thanks, Jonathan, Kathleen, and Lourdes for your insights today.

The tragedy unfolding in Flint and its relationship to environmental workforce training is still unclear. Funding to resolve Flint's water crisis is certain to flow, but the bigger question is one of timing and sustainable jobs that may or may not be generated as a result of this disaster. MCC and the EWDJT has the capability of providing sampling, testing, and drinking water technicians but those opportunities need to be examined closely. Are the jobs sustainable? Will the immediate need for short-term workers be consistent with the EWDJT mission? Exactly what skills will be needed for the potentially expanded workforce?

The MCC EWDJT program is in the third year as part of the 2013 awards. Plant closures, deteriorating housing values, urban flight, and increased crime are just a few of the issues presented by MCC as part of its program challenges. In addition to known challenges just identified, the new EWDJT program faced unexpected disruptions just as the program began. Jonathan provides us valuable lessons and advice to new and prospective grantees who get "blind-sided" by unintended and unforeseen events that impact program plans and operation.

Much of the EWDJT training and placement plans were coordinated with General Motors massive plans to conduct a phased Brownfields clean up in the Flint community. What was to be a perfect matchup between employer needs and program graduates took an unexpected turn. At the same time, major disruptions occurred within their EWDJT program staffing which we will discuss later.

MCC's goal included training 51 students and placing 36 graduates in environmental jobs. Training was to be provided in 3 cohorts with tracking for at least one year. Participants were to be recruited from

unemployed and underemployed city residents, veterans, minorities, and residents impacted by manufacturing and plant closures including the phased GM cleanup.

370 hours of instruction include:

- Applied math and science
- Site assessment
- Soil and groundwater sampling and treatment
- Lead and asbestos awareness
- Mold awareness
- Site remediation preparation
- Leaking underground storage tank corrective action (e.g., site assessment or remediation) awareness including procedures for tank removal when necessary to perform corrective action
- Wastewater treatment
- Greening techniques
- Four state certifications
- Four federal certifications

Adapting programs when unexpected internal and external events occur

Events at MCC's EWDJT program are not unique and can occur with any EWDJT grantee. What is special is the way Jonathan addressed, overcame, and adapted to unexpected events causing major disruptions to his training and placement plans. Today's PLC session provided an opportunity to discuss the need to be flexible when confronted with changing external events.

Shortly after receiving their first EPA EWDJT award, the principal program manager left the college. Major staff changes coupled with cleanup delays by a key employer partner is enough to test the determination of any new program director. To Jonathan's credit, he approached his new and challenged responsibility with an open mind and willingness to adapt.

As the initial cohort began, Jonathan learned the challenges faced by first year EWDJT programs. He discovered the importance of recruitment and of establishing close relationships with employers.

He felt their first year program needed to be reinvented. Most significant was the development and adoption of a version of the "try-out recruitment process" used by OAI. Staff focused on the importance of program awareness in the community, recruitment, as well as matching curriculum to local employer needs. Those needs changed when General Motors delayed their cleanup plans, diminishing the need for program graduates. Fortunately, MCC was able to reinvent their program, provide skills associated with other local job opportunities, and redirect graduates to alternative environmental employment.

Issues, potential problems, and advice for new grantees

- New grantees need to recognize that the first year of a new EWDJT program will be filled with unexpected consequences and a steep learning curve.
- Those new to EWDJT would be wise to learn from mistakes and successes of other more experienced programs and be open to change.
- EPA has established mechanisms for mentoring through HMTRI's EWDJT listserv and Annual All-Grantee Meetings, and especially EPA Regional Coordinators.
- New programs should not hesitate to revise strategies that do not appear to be working. Also discuss those changes with EPA Regional Coordinators.

- Stay in touch with potential employers and local government. Make yourself known in the community.
- Most of all, do not get discouraged. Remain flexible and open to change when necessary.

Those curious about Flint, Michigan and adapting to change can contact Jonathan.

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5. Making connections, networking, and items of interest

The Annual Great Environmental Safety Training (GreatEST) Institute

June 6–17, 2016, in Davenport, Iowa

The annual Great Environmental Safety Training (GreatEST) Institute is a 10-day train-the-trainer program that delivers the required certifications for public and private responders and workers including:

- 40-Hour Waste Site Worker Health and Safety
- 24-Hour Industrial Emergency Response
- DOT HazMat
- Hazard Awareness and Communication

Participants must apply and be approved to attend this training sponsored under an NIEHS grant to the Partnership for Environmental Technology Education (PETE). The deadline to submit your application is February 29, 2016. For more information, contact Patti Thompson at pattijthompson@gmail.com.

2016 Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conference

June 6, 2016

Cleveland, Ohio

Registration is now open for the 2016 Good Jobs, Green Jobs conference. The conference is about investing in America. Good Jobs, Green Jobs affords an opportunity to join with labor, environmental, business, and community leaders to forge the links between the economic possibilities created through protecting the environment and solving climate change.

Early registration is open (\$199) at <http://www.greenjobsconference.org>.

FY 2017 Budget Labor/Education "Fact Sheet" on Investments for Young Americans

From: Thompson, Kevin - ETA

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In his State of the Union Address, the President made clear that our goal is a growing economy that works better for everybody. The President's FY 2017 budget includes nearly \$6 billion in new funding to help more than one million young people gain the work experience, skills, and networks that come from having a first job. February 4, the White House and the Departments of Labor and Education announced the details of that plan, including nearly doubling last year's budget request for supporting young people who are out of school and work. To learn more, visit

https://www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/whatsnew/eta_default.cfm?id=6449.

Obama Administration's Fiscal Year 2017 budget for the U.S. Environmental Protection

The Obama Administration's FY2017 budget for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lays out a strategy to ensure that steady progress is made in addressing known environmental problems and ensuring the agency and its partners in environmental protection, states, and tribes, are positioned to meet the challenges of the future. EPA's FY2017 budget request of \$8.267 billion provides resources vital to that overarching vision. The request is \$127 million above the agency's enacted level for FY2016. For more information on EPA's FY 2017 proposed budget, visit <http://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/fy2017>.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Next PLC Session: March 2, 2016 at 2:00 p.m. EST
Please call in five minutes early.

Feel free to invite a guest! Send your contact information to Mike Senew at 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.

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.