

July 1, 2015



Notes from Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Cycle 13, Session 2

This was the second session in a new cycle of Professional Learning Community conversations. During this cycle, we will focus on the following themes:

- Establishing Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) Programs
- Peer-to-peer mentoring and idea exchange
- Discovering resources for enhancing EWDJT programs
- Helpful hints and open discussion

Topics: News from Washington and HMTRI

Resources for Communities Interested in Environmental Workforce Development & Job Training
Comments and Discussion Regarding the Grant Review Process

Networking

Items of Interest

News from Washington and HMTRI

Two major announcements regarding networking and peer-to-peer mentoring come from EPA and HMTRI:

2015 National Brownfields Training Conference

Held every other year, the 2015 National Brownfields Training Conference provides an opportunity to attend workshop sessions, meet with potential employers, and network with others interested in Brownfields and environmental restoration.

This year's conference will be in Chicago, IL on September 2–4, 2015. The Conference will be held at the Chicago Hilton on Michigan Ave. Additional environmental justice sessions will convene on September 1 at the Palmer House. See below under **Networking and Items of Interest** for more information. Register and see more information at www.brownfieldsconference.org.

2015 Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting

The 2015 *Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting* will be held Wednesday–Thursday, August 19-20 in Alexandria, VA. Accommodations are provided for people attending from out-of-town. Participants must assume costs of transportation and some meals. This workshop specifically addresses the development and implementation of EWDJT programs with small group discussions and mentoring experiences.

All EWDJT programs and PLC participants are invited to attend.

Please email Glo Hanne at ghanne@eicc.edu for more information and a registration form. See below under **Networking and Items of Interest** for more information.

Resources for Communities Interested in Environmental Workforce Development & Job Training

During our first PLC session of this cycle, we did not have an opportunity to introduce participants to the PLC, HMTRI, and the resources available to communities interested in establishing an environmental workforce development and job training program.

The Hazardous Materials Training and Research Institute (HMTRI) is an academic, nonprofit organization supported by Eastern Iowa Community Colleges under a cooperative agreement with EPA to provide communities guidance in establishing and promulgating environmental workforce development and job training.

HMTRI provides technical assistance to the following groups:

- Communities interested in starting EWDJT programs.
- Organizations receiving support to implement EWDJT programs.
- Organizations providing environmental training not currently funded by EPA.
- Guidance and support in placing trained EWDJT graduates.

We accomplish our goals with a number of peer-to-peer mentoring and collaboration activities including the following active projects:

- An Annual All-Grantee meeting and mentoring workshop.
- A mid-year All-Grantee webinar with special topics and presentations.
- A repository website (www.brownfields-toolbox.org) with EWDJT references and informational materials.
- An Environmental Professional Learning Community (PLC) with bi-weekly telephone conversations.
- A dedicated EWDJT Listserv for peer-to-peer mentoring and communications.
- Special one-on-one mentoring and peer-to-peer collaboration opportunities.
- EWDJT scans providing employers with graduates available for employment.
- Outreach programs to communities and employers regarding EWDJT opportunities.

Some of the above activities were discussed in this week's PLC session. Others will be discussed in detail as part of future PLC conversations.

Comments and Discussion Regarding the Grant Review Process

As part of the last PLC session, Kathleen Curry provided a number of guides which we passed on to participants via our Listserv and PLC participant distribution list. (If you did not receive the package of PDFs, email Mike Senew at msenew@aol.com.) In that package was a 36-month chart of required deliverables including quarterly reports, ACRES data entry reminders, and requests for reimbursement. This is a great chart to post on the wall as a reminder of EPA required reporting requirements.

Also in that package of materials was a checklist specifically addressing the question "Just funded—What now?"

As noted at the beginning of our PLC sessions, all conversations, observations, and ideas are strictly the opinion of the individual presenting. They do not represent EPA policy or guidance and should only be taken as individual opinions.

With that in mind, our PLC discussion addressed the EWDJT grant review process and why some really good programs fail to be funded.

EPA does an excellent job allocating limited resources and has worked hard to bring in additional programs, expanding funds available to communities for environmental job training. It should be noted

that requests for proposals have been funded every year since 1998 with over \$54 million awarded to over 256 proposals.

This year, 19 proposals were funded from approximately 50 qualified for review. Of those, about 58 percent went to programs previously funded, and 42 percent were awarded to new communities. The split between established and new programs does not represent any preference to new or established programs, but rather the quality of proposals submitted. It has also been noted that the spread between funded and unfunded proposals was only 6 points. As a result, excellent programs that have been doing a great job will not receive continued funding this year. Likewise, many communities who have worked hard assembling working partnerships and employer relationships will also not be funded this year.

It is important to note: Do not be discouraged if your proposal was not funded this year as many are not with the first submission. Rejection can often be the omission or lack of clarity on a critical issue.

- Contact the EPA Regional EWDJT Coordinator and request a debriefing. This will not happen automatically and must be requested. You deserve and need a debriefing.
- Begin work on a new submission based on the debriefing. Do not resubmit a “retread.”
- Note that the only thing reviewers know about your program is what is presented in the proposal. If it is not in writing as part of the proposal, it does not exist.

It is unfortunate, and perhaps unfair, that experienced grant writers familiar with EWDJT may have a great advantage over excellent programs lacking grant writing skills and experience. Find or assign a good writer to the final proposal.

Additionally, the EPA EWDJT program is different from many grants for the following reasons:

- The entire program needs to be well researched, planned, and presented in detail before the proposal is written.
- Partners, resources, employers, and governmental organizations need to be on board as part of the proposal writing process.
- Proposals require collaborations that take months—not weeks—to develop.
- Proposals require close collaboration between writers, program managers, and staff. They cannot be written in isolation.

The TAKE-AWAY is that the planning process for the next RFP (expected later this year) needs to begin immediately. Future PLC sessions will address those activities.

A good starting point for new communities not familiar with the EPA EWDJT program is to obtain a copy of the FY2015 request for proposals. The RFP is available at EPA’s website (or request one from Mike Senew at msenew@aol.com). This advice also applies to current grantees considering submitting additional funds for the FY2016 competition.

Networking

2015 All-Grantee Meeting – PLC members also invited

The 2015 Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting will be held Wednesday–Thursday, August 19-20, 2015 with travel days of August 18 and August 21 in Alexandria, VA. Participants must assume costs of transportation and some meals.

This meeting is open to:

- EPA-funded Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) grantees
- Past EWDJT grantees
- PLC members

The 2015 Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting will be held as follows:

Wednesday–Thursday, August 19-20, 2015

8:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. each day

August 18 and August 21 are travel days

Location: Holiday Inn & Suites Alexandria Historic District, 625 First Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

Check-in will be Tuesday, August 18, from 6–8 p.m. This is check-in only and to receive meeting materials. No meeting will be held on Tuesday evening so that everyone can get settled after a long day of travel.

To register, email Glo Hanne at ghanne@eicc.edu and include your name, organization, address, city/state/zip, phone, fax, and EWDJT program you are representing or if you are a PLC participant.

The registration deadline is **TUESDAY, JULY 29**. If you have any questions, please contact Glo at the email address above or by phone at 563.441.4081.

2015 National Brownfields Training Conference

For those interested in this important conference, the 2015 National Brownfields Training Conference will be held in Chicago, IL, September 2–4, 2015. The Conference will be held at the Chicago Hilton on Michigan Ave. Find out more about the conference and register at www.brownfieldsconference.org.

Please don't forget to register for the EJ Caucus if you plan on attending and haven't done so already. There is no registration fee but they need to know how many will attend for food planning purposes. Here is the website to register:

http://www.brownfieldsconference.org/en/activities/environmental_justice_caucus

Annual Georgia Environmental Conference

The Annual Georgia Environmental Conference is the state's largest, most comprehensive and diverse educational opportunity. Over the four-day event, this conference will host an elite group of environmental professionals seeking to exchange knowledge and share ideas around environmental concerns in Georgia and across the Southeast region. The curriculum offers 56 unique courses, allowing attendees to design their own personalized curriculum by selecting ten (10) educational breakout sessions.

This year's conference will be held at the LEED Certified Jekyll Island Convention Center. The registration fee is \$350 for those who register on or before July 15, 2015. After July 15, the fee is \$450. The Government, University, and Nonprofit (GUN) registration fee is \$300, and the student registration fee is \$150.

www.georgiaenet.com/registration-information

Items of Interest

Provided by Ann Carroll, U.S. EPA Headquarters

EPA has an entire page of Green Apps from contests that may be helpful to share. Thanks, Ann.

http://www.epa.gov/greenapps/existing_apps.html?appSearch=health

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Next PLC Session: July 15, 2015 at 2:00 p.m. EST (date TBA)

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/>.

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.