

September 24, 2014

Notes from Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Cycle 11, Session 7

Topics: Current Happenings / Updates from Washington as of September 24, 2014

Featured Guest: Zender Environmental Health & Research Group, Anchorage, AK

Networking News

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Health and Safety Training for grantee trainers—CCCHST GreatEST Institute

Current Happenings / Updates from Washington as of September 24, 2014

The FY2015 Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Program (EWDJT) RFP is anticipated to be issued in October. No significant changes are anticipated this year. NOTE: All applicants will be required to submit through grants.gov. Those organizations not familiar with using grants.gov need to research the site as soon as possible as it takes some time and effort for first-time users to register.

Brownfields 2015 Conference—September 2-4, 2015—Call for Ideas

HMTRI will be organizing a panel session. We would like to get a cross section representation of EWDJT grantees. If you are interested in participating and will be at Brownfields 2015, email us at msenew@aol.com.

The deadline for submitted session ideas is November 3, 2014. More information on the Call for Ideas, including our proposed “Tracks” for the educational programming, can be found at: http://www.brownfieldsconference.org/en/Article/201/Brownfields_2015_Call_for_Ideas_Announced.

Featured Guest : Zender Environmental Health & Research Group, Anchorage, AK

Rural Alaska Community Environmental Job Training Program (RACEJT) serving scattered rural communities.

Lynn Zender and April Reed-McCoy reviewed the operation and challenges associated with their Environmental Workforce Development and job Training Program called (RACEJT) Race Jet. Thanks, Lynn and April, for your presentation.

Perhaps the two most challenging EWDJT programs include those in rural areas and those in tribal communities. These challenges are associated with the scarcity of potential local employers, the disparities in community culture, and the large geographic areas served. Zender Environmental Health & Research Group not only services a rural area, they also have learned to work with multiple and diverse tribal communities.

Techniques they have developed in areas of marketing, recruitment, training, and placement can be equally useful to programs in more populated and urban communities. In the face of these challenges, RACEJT has been able to place their entire graduating class. Some of the efforts that may contribute to their 100% placement rate include the following attributes:

1. The entire RACEJT program is clearly presented on their website at www.zendergroup.org. Employers, partners, supporters, and participants will see the entire program in detail with links to additional information including:
 - a. Program summaries and purpose
 - b. Program brochures

- c. Application packets
 - d. FAQs
 - e. Informational flyers
 - f. Informational flyers for employers
 - g. Schedules and timelines for training (see this year's schedule below)
 - h. Course lists
 - i. Testimonials from graduates
2. RACEJT has established a priority application process for unemployed community residents who can find an employer who will hire them upon completion of training. Employers must provide letters of support and participate in the application/interview process.
 3. RACEJT recruits from a distance but maintains a comprehensive and deep application and screening process. The application packet can be found on their website.
 4. Training is structured as a full work day with students living and working together as a team.
 5. RACEJT has extensive representation of employers as active partners and supporters.
 6. RACEJT training and curriculum is based on a comprehensive needs assessment. RACEJT staff identified employers and jobs having the "best fit" for their graduates. Those employers are on their partnership/supporter list and on their website.
 7. RACEJT staff are "all in." Zender staff demonstrate the dedication and positive energy they have in making their EWDJT program work for the communities and students they serve.

Below is a summary of the Zender's RACEJT Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training program.

Background

- Zender is targeting unemployed residents of small and rural Alaskan Native Villages located throughout Alaska. Many are off the state road system and can be reached only by plane or chartered boat.
- Zender Environmental Health and Research Group's job training program serves up to 40 of the 197 remote and rural communities in Alaska.
- Their mission statement is "providing environmental job training to support local hire in rural Alaska communities..."

Targeted Community

- The target community has a combined population of 70,473 with populations greater than 30 percent Alaska Native. The unemployment rate in some villages can be as high as 19 percent, and approximately 22 percent of the residents live in poverty.
- The state has approximately 6,287 known contaminated sites, with much of the contamination resulting from inadvertent spills, careless chemical handling, and unregulated waste disposal during the last century's development.
- In addition, thousands of remote mining sites likely contain high concentrations of heavy metals and processing chemicals.
- Recent program participants have been 95% native Alaskan (previously 10 % female—currently 30% female)

Key Partners

- Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
- Association of Village Council Presidents Housing Authority

- Total ReClaim
- Tribal programs throughout the state
- AK Department of Labor
- State of Alaska Response Team—training provider
- Northern AK Tribal Education Programs—training provider
- University of Alaska Fairbanks (10 credit articulation and tuition program)
- Multiple leveraging partners and employers identified on their website

Program Challenges

- Working with multiple Tribal governments, cultures, and populations
- Training non-English speaking participants
- Providing training to disbursed communities not accessible by road
- Environmental workforce placement in rural locations
- Cold weather and short construction seasons with major impacts on training and placement scheduling

Training Objectives

- Due to severe weather conditions and employment cycles, training takes place in early spring for summer work. Class size has 18-19 participant openings.
- Students are required stay in Anchorage for two-week training sessions.
- Leveraged funding allows for transportation, telephone, and meal allowances.
- To provide graduates employment in their home communities, efforts are made to create local environmental jobs. For example, as communities expand, resident waste manager positions can be justified. The same applies to local spill response and fuel tank assessment jobs.
- The same approach applies to wastewater treatment facilities. However, existing training programs provide adequate wastewater treatment operator training. Solid waste, landfill, and spill response appear to be most in demand across the state and in local communities.

Core Training Program

- HAZWOPER 40-hr, OSHA 29 CFR 1910.120
- AK Village Solid Waste Management & Resource Recovery Technician PTI
- UAF credentialed
- Forklift Operation—National OSHA Standard 29 CFR 1910.178
- CPR/First Aid—American Heart Association Standard
- Freon Recovery—EPA Section 608 Universal Technician Certification
- OSHA Confined Space Entry 29 CFR 1910.146
- Oil Spill Response, State of Alaska Response Team
- Advanced Job Readiness
- AK Village Home Fuel Tank Assessment
- Water & Soil Sampling
- Rural Alaska Landfill Operation (RALO) Training
- Construction Safety
- Leaking Underground and Above-Ground Tank Introduction
- Additional cultural, life skills, and employment readiness is included as part of the program

Training Delivery and Schedule

- Due to severe weather conditions and employment cycles, training takes place February 22–March 6 with a spring break and continues March 22–April 3, 2015.
- Training is centralized in Anchorage, requiring students to travel from remote communities, remain in Anchorage for 2 weeks of training, return home, and then return for 2 weeks of final instruction and graduation. Classes consume the entire day simulating a working environment.

Anticipated RACEJT 2015 Timeline posted on their website for all to see:

- Sept 17: Applications available on Zender website at <http://zendergroup.org/racejt.html> or call 717-4754, or email April at areed@zendergroup.org
- Oct. 1: Optional Q&A Conference Call, 2 pm–3 pm
- Oct. 9: Optional Q&A Conference Call, 2 pm–3 pm
- Nov. 3: Applications Due
- Dec. 19–22: RACEJT 2015 Participants notified of their selection
- Dec. 30 or Jan 6: Mandatory Q&A Conference Call, 2pm–3pm
- Jan. 9: Acceptance Paperwork Due/Deadline
- Feb. 3: Mandatory Conference Call on logistics, travel, expectations
- Feb. 21: Participant Travel Day
- Feb. 22: Full Day Orientation (Sunday)
- Feb. 22–March 6: Session 1
- March 9–13: Spring Break
- March 22–April 3: Session 2
- April 3: RACEJT 2015 Graduation

Graduate Placement

Graduates receive a Program Diploma and individual course certifications. In addition to oil spills and small communities with their own water and waste operations, graduate placements include the following:

- Wastesite Worker
- Landfill Operator
- Contaminated Site Worker
- Tank Inspector
- Brownfields Technician
- Hazardous Materials and Spill Response
- Wastewater Technician

Student Services, Retention, and Placement

- Scholarships available with leveraged funding
- Extensive job readiness training
- Non-English speaking assistance
- Placement services and job fairs
- Transportation and meal reimbursement
- Additional social services with leveraged assistance
- Additional leveraging with the Alaska Communication System
- Phone cards available to call home with leveraged funding

- Graduates can earn 10 credits from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks and go on to complete the University's Occupational Endorsement program for Rural Waste Management and Spill Response Technicians.

Student Recruitment

In Alaska, perhaps one of the best communication, awareness, and marketing approaches is extensive use of radio. Dispersed communities make radio an essential marketing and recruitment media. Internet is important and extensively used by the RACEJT program. The www.zendergroup.org website is one of the best grantee websites and is used for instructional materials, resource distribution, marketing, recruitment, and application processing. RACEJT Applications are online at www.zendergroup.org/racejt.html. Additional program information, schedules, recruitment materials, and much more are posted on the site. The website was developed with leveraged funding from an environmental justice grant.

Student Screening in Remote Communities

In Alaska as with other rural communities, it is not feasible for participants to commute. For this reason, recruitment and training is handled differently than most, more concentrated grantee programs. Applicants download and complete applications available online with telephone assistance and support. While a GED is required, the primary screening methodology involves personal communications.

The next step is a series of telephone interviews providing RACEJT staff an opportunity to assess the applicant's desire and interest in the program. This essentially replaces the on-site interview used by most programs.

The final step is board review of the application and final orientation. The system works surprisingly well with most applicants graduating with jobs.

Participant Eligibility (from the website)

- Must be a resident of a rural Alaska Native community (defined as 30% or greater Alaska Native population).
- Must be 18 years of age or older, or an emancipated minor.
- Must be unemployed or under-employed (less than 20 hours/week).
- Must be able to attend two 2-week training sessions in Anchorage on February 22–March 6, 2015, and March 22–April 3, 2015.
- Must have a high school diploma or GED, or obtain a GED by November 3, 2014.
- Much of the environmental work for which you will be trained requires heavy lifting and working outdoors. You must be physically fit, able to work in confined spaces, and able to wear a mask respirator. Are you unable to perform heavy lifting or other essential job functions, but have an employer who is willing to hire you? Then you may submit an employer letter stating this, and you will still qualify for the program. Letter must be received by November 3, 2014.
- Must provide two completed personal reference forms found in the application packet.
- If accepted, you must provide a copy of your social security card.
- Must consent to a criminal background check.

Summary Notes

Environmental workforce development in rural and disbursed communities is difficult but not impossible. Student populations may be lower than in urban communities, but with 83-100% placement rates RACEJT demonstrates that rural and Tribal programs can flourish.

Rural communities have the ability and necessity to leverage with other rural programs bringing multiple resources to students. It is important that organizations in small communities seek out all available partners and resources to help offset constraints imposed on rural programs.

Contact and Additional Information

Lynn and April would be happy to discuss their program and issues associated with working with Tribes, non-English speaking students, rural, and disbursed communities.

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Networking News

2015 National Brownfields Training 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. Additional meeting space and sleeping rooms will be available at the Palmer House Hilton. Please visit the Conference Website for additional information at www.brownfieldsconference.org.

Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting

HMTRI, in cooperation with EPA, has confirmed the 2014 *Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting* to be held October 22–23, 2014. Participants must travel and check in on October 21 and are expected to stay the two full days leaving on October 24. There is no cost to attend and three nights lodging will be provided.

PLC members along with current and past EPA EWDJT grantees are invited to this full two-day workshop. If you have not received registration and hotel information, please contact Glo Hanne at ghanne@eicc.edu.

REMINDER—If you have already registered for this year's meeting, please remember to send materials that you want to share to Mike Senew at msenew@aol.com or mail to:

Martini Print Media, Inc.
6320 Capital Blvd., Suite 116
Raleigh, NC 27616

Emailed materials need to be in PDF format. All participants will receive a flash drive loaded with information from all grantees and other resources. If your materials are brochures, printed in color, or other formats difficult to copy, please mail 130 copies to the address above to be included in the workshop binder.

First Annual Southeast Brownfields Conference

October 28-31, 2014 at the Rosen Plaza Hotel, Orlando, FL

Registration fees: Private Sector—\$500
 Public Sector—\$300
 Nonprofit Sector—\$200
 One-day Only—\$375

Location: Rosen Plaza Hotel
 9700 International Drive
 Orlando, FL
 Rooms are \$125 (+ tax) per night
 Call 1.800.627.8258 for reservations or follow this link to reserve online:
 <https://bookings.ihotelier.com/bookings.jsp?groupID=1257538&hotelID=2019>

If you need more information or assistance, please call Becky Buice at 850.402.2954 or email becky@nstephens.com. Hope to see many of you in Orlando in October!

Good Jobs, Green Jobs 2015

The Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conference will begin on April 13, 2015, at the Washington Hilton Hotel. Registration will open soon, but for now, make sure you're free to join hundreds of labor, environmental, business, non-profit, and civic leaders for Good Jobs, Green Jobs 2015.

Health and Safety Training for grantee trainers—CCCHST GreatEST Institute

Many of you are familiar with the CCCHST GreatEST Institute, the annual two-week Train-the-Trainer sponsored by HMTRI's partner, the Partnership for Environmental Technology Education (PETE). Many of you have been selected to attend in past years.

The 2015 dates have just been confirmed. The Institute is for your trainers only. This is not a first come/first served program. Applications will be reviewed by a team who will select participants based on the trainer's experience, and the entity's affiliations, and projected number of students to be trained.

NOTE: The 2015 applications will be on the PETE website at <http://nationalpete.org/> on October 1. As a partner, HMTRI is able to distribute this announcement before a public announcement is made. Please contact Patti Thompson at pattijthompson@gmail.com for an early application. You may want to look at an old application on PETE's website which may be helpful to you in pulling together the information you will need for 2015.

Opportunities

EPA Awards 2014 Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreements
WASHINGTON—The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced competitive cooperative agreements with 12 community-based organizations working to address environmental justice issues nationwide. The Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving (EJCPS) Cooperative Agreement Program provides funding for non-profit and tribal organizations to partner with stakeholders from across industry, government, and academia to develop and implement solutions that significantly address environmental and/or public health issues in American communities.

“These cooperative agreements empower communities to implement environmental protection projects locally,” said EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy. “With these agreements, EPA advances our commitment to communities by providing financial and technical assistance to take action against environmental harm.”

In 2003, EPA’s Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) launched the first solicitation for the EJCPS Cooperative Agreement Program. Since the Program’s inception, EPA has provided funding to 50 projects to help communities understand and address exposure to environmental harms and risks. Each of this year’s recipients are awarded up to \$120,000 to support two-year projects, including identifying and reducing sources of air pollution, reducing lead exposure in homes of low-income residents, and the cleanup and repurposing of community dump sites. Projects must use the Collaborative Problem Solving model, comprised of seven elements of a successful collaborative partnership, to address local environmental and/or public health issues.

Environmental justice is defined as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race or income, in the environmental decision-making process. These awards represent EPA’s commitment to promoting localized, community-based actions to address environmental justice issues.

The twelve cooperative agreements total about \$1.4 million. The selected recipients are:

- * Montachusett Opportunity Council, Fitchburg, Massachusetts
- * Partners for a Healthier Community, Inc., Springfield, Massachusetts
- * Desarrollo Integral del Sur, Inc., Peñuelas, Puerto Rico
- * Greensboro Housing Coalition, Greensboro, North Carolina
- * Mississippi Conference of Black Mayors, Yazoo City, Mississippi
- * Southwest Detroit Environmental Vision Project, Detroit, Michigan
- * Groundwork New Orleans, New Orleans, Louisiana
- * Trailnet, Inc., St. Louis, Missouri
- * Conejos County Clean Water, Inc., Antonito, Colorado
- * Environmental Health Coalition, San Diego, California
- * Tolani Lake Enterprise, Navajo Nation, Northeast Arizona
- * Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition, Seattle, Washington

Please visit <http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/resources/publications/grants/cps-project-abstracts-2014.pdf> for a complete listing of the 2014 Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreement recipients and project descriptions.

In the fall of 2014, EPA plans to release a Request for Applications for the fiscal year 2015 Environmental Justice Small Grants Program. A schedule of pre-application teleconference calls will be announced at that time.

More information about EPA's Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem Solving Cooperative Agreement Program is available at <http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/grants/ej-cps-grants.html>.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Next PLC Session: October 8, 2014 at 2:00 p.m. EDT

Feel free to invite a guest! Send your contact information to Mike Senew at msenew@aol.com.

Visit our *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* Web site 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.