

October 8, 2014

Notes from Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Cycle 11, Session 8

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Current Happenings / Updates from Washington as of October 8, 2014

FY2015 Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Program (EWDJT) RFP

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.

Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting—October 22-23, 2014

There will be 136 attendees at this year's All-Grantee Meeting, including 40 EPA Headquarters and Regional representatives and other related federal agency representatives. Ten PLC members will be attending with 41 EWDJT programs represented.

The Annual All-Grantee meeting is about peer-to-peer learning. There will be minimal "talking heads" and Powerpoints. Bring your ideas and, to quote Randy Harper from the Arkansas Environmental Training Academy, "be ready to spill your guts." The meeting will be very informal with small groups, open discussion, and one-on-one mentoring. It is an event of sharing and experience exchange.

Please bring photos, CDs, and videos for our new grantee resource archive.

Brownfields 2015—September 2–4, 2015—CALL FOR IDEAS

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

The CALL FOR IDEAS submission deadline is November 3, 2014. More information on the CALL FOR IDEAS including our proposed track for educational programming can be found at http://www.brownfieldsconference.org/en/Article/201/Brownfields_2015_Call_for_Ideas_Announced.

Randy Harper—Arkansas Environmental Training Academy, Camden, AR—Being flexible when serving rural communities

Targeted Community

Camden is a small southern town with a population of around 13,000 residents, of which 56% are African American and 22% are below poverty level. In order to expand their reach, the EWDJT program recruits statewide with a particular focus on those residents within 50 miles and able to commute to Camden four nights a week for 19 weeks. Fortunately, employers eager to work with and hire program graduates reside within the targeted community.

As Randy pointed out, it is important for programs in rural communities to adapt recruitment, delivery, and placement methods that work for the residents and for employers. That is the focus of this week's PLC discussion.

Background

The city of Camden and the Arkansas Environmental Training Academy is a collaboration of state, city, and educational organizations, each providing support and guidance to the EWDJT program. The Arkansas Environmental Training Academy (AETA) is the designated Environmental Training Center for the state of Arkansas and is a training division of Southern Arkansas University Tech in Camden, Arkansas. The AETA is made up of five divisions:

1. Water
2. Wastewater
3. Backflow Prevention
4. Solid Waste Management
5. Environmental Health & Safety

The Academy has a statewide mission to provide quality training and educational programs to aid the management and operating staff of municipal, commercial, and industrial facilities in meeting state and federal licensing and certification requirements. With this background, it was a natural step to provide environmental training to the unemployed and underserved residents of the community.

Funding Sources and Resources

- Arkansas State Legislature
- Arkansas Department of Higher Education
- Arkansas Department of Pollution Control & Ecology
- Arkansas Department of Health
- Industrial contracts
- Grants
- Student registration fees (not associated with the EWDJT program)

Key Partners

- Arkansas State Legislature
- Arkansas Department of Higher Education
- Southern Arkansas University Tech
- Municipal solid waste, water, and wastewater facilities
- Economic Development Council
- Arkansas workforce development centers
- Statewide and national employers and employment agencies

Program Challenges

The primary concern during the development of the program was finding a way for local residents, some who may have part-time employment, to attend and complete the training program. As Randy explained, the road to "now" has been a learning experience.

Path to EWDJT for Community Residents

- 1967—Southwest Technical Institute was created by the Arkansas General Assembly.
- 1980's—Established the Arkansas Environmental Academy with funding from the US Environmental Protection Agency. Partnered with the Arkansas Department of Pollution Control & Ecology to begin a training program for the licensing of solid waste operators statewide.
- 1991—Partnered with the Arkansas Department of Health to begin training backflow prevention and cross-connection control technicians statewide.
- 2006—Established the Environmental Health & Safety program to provide a cost effective means for municipal and industrial facilities statewide to obtain affordable safety training for their employees.
- 2007—Applied for and received the first EPA EWDJT grant.
- 2009—Re-competed and awarded a second EPA EWDJT grant. Through an act of legislation, SAU Tech Environment Control Center officially became the Arkansas Environmental Training Academy. The Academy constructed a 6,000 sq. ft. Environmental Training Lab.
- 2012—Re-competed and awarded a third EPA EWDJT grant.
- 2014—Re-competed and awarded its current EPA EWDJT grant.

Core Training Program

- 40-hour HAZWOPER, OSHA 29 CFR 1910.120
- 19 certifications
- 3 national training cards
- 4 state licenses
- A full complement of solid waste, water, and wastewater operations
- Articulation agreements with Southern Arkansas educational system for college credit

Student Recruitment

In rural communities such as Alaska (last PLC session), Nye County, tribal communities, and Camden Arkansas, student recruitment becomes the primary impediment to running a successful program. Camden/Arkansas Environmental Training Academy started with the traditional recruitment methodologies but found that program scheduling was their answer to successful recruitment. Their experiences are described below.

Training Delivery, Services, and Retention—The secret to rural success

Early training cycles followed the traditional EWDJT training schedule—daytime classes 8:00 AM–4:00 PM weekdays. Recruitment was extremely difficult. The first cycle recruited and graduated only 6 participants.

The following cycle, the EWDJT program asked for and received permission to provide core courses via the Internet with 2 nights per week for lab and face-to-face sessions. Applications jumped from 6 to over 30. Recruitment was excellent but delivery did not prove as effective. Students were unprepared and not disciplined for distance learning. Internet training can be an effective tool, but it is limited when it comes to environmental technology.

As the learning process continued, a new revision to delivery methodology was requested shifting program delivery to night classes. Night classes from 5–9 PM four days a week for 19 weeks has demonstrated to be an excellent delivery method for rural communities such as those in Camden, Arkansas. Applications jumped to 50 with an excellent selection of candidates. Evening classes in rural

areas allow students to commute to class and participate in day work, when available. Student instruction allows for closer relationships with students and removes impediments associated with Internet distance learning.

Graduate Placement

Graduates receive a program diploma and 19 individual course certifications. Placement has not been an issue for Camden/Arkansas Environmental Training Academy. As word has spread, local employers visit and advise the program. The result is a placement rate exceeding 80%.

Summary Notes

As discussed in the last PLC, environmental workforce development in rural and disbursed communities is difficult but not impossible. Student populations are lower than in urban communities but with 80%+ placement rate, Camden/Arkansas Environmental Training Academy has discovered ways to make it work.

Randy's Advice

- Be flexible
- If your current program is not working, seek guidance from students and employers.
- Do not be afraid of changing curriculum, recruitment, or delivery methods.
- Jobs are dynamic—there are only so many treatment plant openings.
- Follow employer recommendations.
- Stay close to your partners, advisors, and students.
- Be a cheerleader.
- Make graduation and EWDJT events a big deal for students, parents, and friends.
- Your students may graduate but are always are part of the program.

Contact and Additional Information

Randy would be happy to discuss their program and issues associated with working in rural communities and evening training delivery.

Randy Harper

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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.

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!

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.

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

Due to the *Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting* on October 22–23 and the *First Annual Southeast Brownfields Conference* on October 28–31, there will be a short break in the PLC.

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.