

December 17, 2014

Notes from Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Cycle 12, Session 2

Topics: Current Happenings / Updates from Washington as of December 17, 2014
Using Community and Labor Market Assessments to Build a Solid EWDJT Program
Contact List of EWDJT Regional Coordinators
Networking Opportunities
Funding and Coordination Opportunities

Current Happenings / Updates from Washington as of December 17, 2014

The FY2015 Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Program (EWDJT) RFP has been issued. The due date for proposals is February 3, 2015. The announcement and FAQs may be downloaded at www.epa.gov/oswer/grants-funding. EPA's PowerPoint used during the EPA Adobe Connect Request for Proposals (RFP) Webinar can be downloaded from the *Brownfields Toolbox* website at <http://brownfields-toolbox.org/>. The link to the PowerPoint is at the top of the Homepage.

ACRES—a reminder to all grantees. Complete 2014 by making sure your ACRES reports are up to date. Remember future requests for funding depend upon previous performance.

Using Community and Labor Market Assessments to Build a Solid EWDJT Program

To properly assess and characterize a community requires extensive grass roots information gathering. Fortunately, effort in this area can also provide a solid foundation for many other program activities. A comprehensive community assessment necessitates engagement in the following areas:

1. Labor market assessments—local employers, jobs, and skill demands.
2. Community organizations and leadership.
3. Residential community profiles.
4. Local support organizations and service providers.
5. Local industrial activity.
6. Local environmental conditions and special community designations.

For those following the 2015 request for EPA funding, the general structure of the RFP review consists of the following selection criteria:

- A. Qualification Criteria
- B. Ranking Criteria
 - a. Demographics and community need—20 points
 - b. Training program—23 points
 - c. Programmatic capability—24 points
 - d. Community and employer partnerships—25 points
 - e. Budget resources—8 points
- C. Other Factors
- D. Attachments and references

While some of the requests for information (qualification, budget resources, capabilities, and training) can be completed with the help of a researcher and grantwriter, a large portion of the proposal requires personal contact, coordination, meetings, and negotiation.

Many RFP ranking criteria (particularly 1, 4, other factors, and references) are highly dependent on conducting comprehensive assessments that must be initiated early in the proposal planning process.

Comprehensive assessments often include the following activities:

1. Neighborhood assessment
2. Labor market assessment and demand for services
3. Assessment and collaboration with potential employers
4. Stakeholder assessment and partnership development
5. Employer relationship development
6. Community organization involvement
7. References and letters of commitment
8. Leveraging and support development
9. Other factors and designations attributed to target area

It is not sufficient to pull data from the Mayor's office, Internet, or published articles. Partnering with local stakeholders and engaging local community groups, informal community leaders, service providers, and employers during the planning process is essential. Recruiting stakeholders early provides many benefits during the planning and grant writing process, especially when they actively participate in the process. The good news is that developing comprehensive assessment and stakeholder recruitment plans early can address most of the questions raised in ranking criteria 1, 4, other factors, and references.

Recruiting stakeholders

Recruiting stakeholders early provides many benefits during the planning and grant writing processes, especially when they "bond" with the program.

Stakeholders to be included in the assessment effort

- Governmental representatives—Office of Economic Development, Health and Environment, Community Development, Brownfields, Health and Human services, Labor and Workforce Development (WIBs), and City Council representatives (especially in the target community).
- Community organizations—Community groups, church and religious affiliated organizations, fraternal and community nonprofit organizations, and Chamber of Commerce.
- Employer representatives—Local unions (business managers), manpower and temp firms, consultants, remediation and manufacturing firms, and municipal facilities.
- Training and student support services—Local colleges and universities, training consultants, fire and first responder teams, Workforce Investment Boards and affiliates, Goodwill and Salvation Army, and other training and outreach organizations such as Youth Build, Strive, or Conservation Corps.

As presented, the stakeholder list can be large and requires a significant effort to review. However, a systematic screening will provide information and detail to address all nine of the assessment criteria presented. Additionally, this effort represents the necessary legwork to complete comprehensive assessments, references, partnerships, employer relationships, and other factors required to score high in the EWDJT RFP evaluation.

A suggested approach to community and stakeholder assessment

1. Begin a search for stakeholders and community assessment in the offices of city government (begin with the Mayor's office).

2. Request contact information and introductions to applicable divisions including an introduction to city council members in the target communities.
3. In the offices of community and economic development, seek contact information and introduction to community groups in target communities working with the city.
4. In the offices of environment and health, seek contacts and introduction to Brownfields redevelopment and associated cleanup project managers. Seek out public hearings to announce plans for the proposed EWDJT program, and document participation in all public meetings.
5. In target communities, visit religious and civic organizations again seeking contact information for possible stakeholders and partners.

In addition, apply a more macro approach by conducting a traditional labor market assessment. Labor market assessments provide a path for recruitment, training, and placement of program participants. As a bonus, they serve to identify program supporters, contributors, and potential employers. Rather than being an afterthought or justification for training, labor market and needs assessments should serve as the foundation for a sustainable environmental job development and training program.

Yellow Pages and Google searches identify potential employers including labor unions, consultants, service providers, and large manufacturing firms. Seek out temp and manpower organizations for possible interest in environmental technicians. Contact local municipal agencies regarding possible stakeholder interest. This effort will be useful in establishing a responsive curriculum.

The key to a useful labor market assessment is contact (preferably face-to-face visits) with potential employers for specific labor needs. In this way, the labor market assessment serves to provide references from employers and commitment to look at EWDJT graduates as possible job applicants.

Establish relationships with potential employers beginning with the labor market needs assessment. This will take time and is perhaps the most important component of developing sustainable job development programs. Start now with the labor market needs assessment. As potential employers are identified, bring them into the training process as participants in training, advisory board members, and curriculum guidance and advice. Document meetings and begin expanding an employer contact file. The employer contact file will be used later when placing graduates. This process also becomes part of the needs assessment. Whenever possible, ask potential employers to consider program graduates for available jobs. If documentation can be obtained, include it in the proposal.

In every interview, ask the following questions:

1. Will the stakeholder be interested in the program if funded?
2. To what extent will the stakeholder participate in the program (references, meetings, emails etc.)?
3. To what extent can the stakeholder provide leveraged resources?
4. Is there interest, time, and resources available to become an active partner?
5. Are there additional contacts, programs, or organizations that may be interested in the proposed EWDJT program?
6. Always leave with an action plan, commitment, or closure.

Community and labor market assessment can be much more than simple information gathering efforts. When done properly, they form a solid base upon which to direct and implement the entire EWDJT program.

Contact List of EWDJT Regional Coordinators

Region 1—Kathleen Castagna, 617.918.1429, castagna.kathleen@epa.gov

Region 2—Schenine Mitchell, 212.637.3282, mitchell.schenine@epa.gov

Region 3—Jeff Barnett, 215.814.3246, barnett.jeff@epa.gov

Region 4—Kathleen Curry, 404.229.6354, curry.kathleen@epa.gov

Region 5—Linda Morgan, 312.886.4747, morgan.linda@epa.gov

Region 6—Amber Perry, 214.665.3172, perry.amber@epa.gov

Region 7—Alma Moreno-Lahm, 913.551.7380, lahm.alma@epa.gov

Region 8—Christina Wilson, 303.312.6706, wilson.christina@epa.gov

Region 9—Noemi Emeric-Ford, 213.244.1821, meric-ford.noemi@epa.gov

Region 10—Robert Tan, 206.553.2580, tan.robert@epa.gov

Networking Opportunities

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. Registration for Brownfields 2015 is now open with reduced registration for early birds until February.

What topics are included in the program?

- Environmental assessment and cleanup
- Traditional and innovative financing approaches
- Marketing, real estate and economic development
- Planning strategies for better communities
- Incorporating sustainability into redevelopment activities
- Civic and community engagement
- Addressing liability and enforcement issues
- State, tribal and local partnerships

HMTRI has submitted a request to conduct a roundtable session for EWDJT grantees. We would like to organize an open discussion with all our EWDJT grantees and interested stakeholders.

EPA grantees are encouraged to submit ideas showcasing their individual accomplishments and good work.

Using the HMTRI Listserve to Ask Questions

The EWDJT Grantee ListServe has been updated to include all of the new grantees who attended the last *Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting* in Alexandria, VA. For some of you, this is new information. For others, this is a reminder of the benefits of using this ListServe as a networking tool.

Using this ListServe is just like sending a normal email. The only difference is that a single email address includes many recipients. Members of this ListServe include attendees of this year's All-Grantee meeting and past grantee meetings. The email address to use to post a message to this ListServe is jtgrantees@ateec.org. You may want to add this to your email address book.

When you send an email to the ListServe, you will receive an automated response telling you that your message is waiting for approval by the moderator. The ListServe is set up this way to prevent spam and automated Outlook Office Assistant messages from being sent to all members. The moderator is Glo Hanne who attends to these approvals as quickly as possible.

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.

Funding and Coordination Opportunities

FY15 Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Grants

EPA is announcing the availability of funding to nonprofit organizations and eligible entities to deliver environmental workforce development and job training programs focused on hazardous and solid waste management, assessment, and cleanup associated activities, chemical safety, emergency response, integrated pest management, and waste and stormwater management. These grants are provided to organizations to develop environmental programs that recruit, train, and place unemployed and under-employed, including low-income and minority, residents historically affected by hazardous and solid waste sites and facilities with the skills needed to secure full-time, sustainable employment in the environmental field and in the assessment and cleanup work taking place in their communities. Please note that under this competition, applicants will be required to submit their proposals through www.grants.gov. Hard copy submissions will not be accepted under the FY15 competition. Proposals are due February 3, 2015.

The RFP and FAQs can be accessed at: <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/job.htm> or through <http://www.grants.gov>

EPA New Request for Proposals: Funding Available for 2015 Brownfields Assessment and Cleanup Grants

These brownfields grants may be used to address sites contaminated by petroleum and hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants (including hazardous substances co-mingled with petroleum). Opportunities for funding are as follows: Brownfields Assessment Grants (each funded up to \$200,000 over three years; Assessment Coalitions are funded up to \$600,000 over three years) and Brownfields Cleanup Grants (each funded up to \$200,000 over three years). Please note that applicants who received an Assessment grant from EPA in Fiscal Year 2014 (FY14) are eligible to apply under this competition. If the applicant was a member of a coalition that was awarded a grant in FY14, that applicant is also eligible to apply under this assessment competition. The proposal submission deadline is December 19, 2014. Please visit [EPA's Brownfields website](#) for more information.

Operation AmeriCorps Overview

The link to the official Operation AmeriCorps webpage is below. It offers great information about what the initiative is and how to apply.

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/amicorps/operation-amicorps>

Operation AmeriCorps is a new program to help tribal and local leaders use AmeriCorps to accomplish big things in their community. As part of Operation AmeriCorps, they are asking tribal and local leaders to identify a high-priority local challenge that AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps NCCC and/or AmeriCorps VISTA members can address in a relatively short period of time (no more than two years).

The grant competition is open exclusively to tribal and local governments, including counties, cities, towns, and school districts; and state service commissions. They are looking for proposals that are place-based, coordinated with existing community organizations, and with transformational outcomes. The solution may be a new initiative, or it may use national service to scale up an existing successful effort, but in either case AmeriCorps must be the additive ingredient to achieve transformative change at the local level.

Year 2015 Operation AmeriCorps competition has two funding priorities. Applicants may choose to apply to either of the priorities.

- The first priority is narrowly tailored and focuses on specific post-secondary outcomes for students.
- The second priority is more flexible and allows localities to identify their most pressing challenge.

What makes this competition different from other AmeriCorps Competitions?

- Single application for multiple AmeriCorps programs: For the first time, applicants may request AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps NCCC, and/or AmeriCorps VISTA resources in a single application.
- Focuses on transformational impact: Successful applicants will propose how AmeriCorps members will be an essential part of the solution to achieve a dramatic and measurable improvement in the given locality in a two-year period.
- Two-step application process: For the first step, applicants will submit a concept paper (maximum length: 10 pages) that describes their project. Then applicants selected for step two will receive technical assistance and be asked to submit a full application.

They also expect applicants to show how they will coordinate with national service programs in their communities. This includes coordination with other AmeriCorps programs and grantees from Senior Corps, the Social Innovation Fund, and the Volunteer Generation Fund.

As part of this coordination, applicants should reach out to their State Service Commission for details on the submission process. Preference will be given to applicants that demonstrate strong local support or are part of the Promise Zone or Strong Cities, Strong Communities initiatives.

For additional information, contact Roy Simon, Designated Federal Official for National Drinking Water Advisory Council, Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water/OW/USEPA, phone 202.564.3868 or email Simon.Roy@epa.gov.

Grant Funding Guidance for State and Tribal Response Programs 2015

Section 128(a) of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), as amended, authorizes a noncompetitive \$50 million grant program to establish and enhance state and tribal response programs. Generally, these response programs address the assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment of brownfields sites and other sites with actual or perceived contamination. This document provides guidance that will enable states and tribes to apply for and use Fiscal Year 2015 section 128(a) funds. The application deadline is January 31, 2015.

For more information and to view the guidance, please visit http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/state_tribal/fund_guide.htm.

Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreements

“Environmental Justice 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 EJCPSC 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.

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.

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

Environmental Education Grants

Since 1992, EPA has distributed between \$2 and \$3.5 million in grant funding per year, for a total of \$62,143,290, supporting more than 3,600 grant projects. The purpose of the EE Model Grants Program is to support environmental education projects that increase public awareness about environmental issues and provide participants with the skills to take responsible actions to protect the environment. This grant program provides financial support for projects that design, demonstrate, and/or disseminate environmental education practices, methods, or techniques, and that will serve as models that can be replicated in a variety of settings. For more information on the new awardees and on future EE grant competitions, visit <http://www2.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants>.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Next PLC Session: January 7, 2014 at 2:00 p.m. EST

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.