

February 4, 2015

HMTRI Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Cycle 12, Session 5

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Current Happenings / Updates from Washington as of February 4, 2015

The FY2015 proposals for Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Programs (EWDJT) were due February 3, 2015.

Schedule for processing EWDJT awards

- Proposals due—February 3
- Rejections for not meeting qualification criteria—end of February
- Award announcements—April/May
- Grant forms, work plans, etc.—June/July
- Email that funds are available—August/September
- Annual All-Grantee Meeting—August
- Funds may be spent up to 90 days before final paperwork after official acceptance

EPA's FY 2016 budget proposal to Congress

Thank you, EPA, for continued support of the Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Program.

The President's budget has requested \$110 million for Brownfields projects. With the FY 2016 request, EPA plans to fund at least 151 assessment cooperative agreements and approximately 64 direct cleanup cooperative agreements. The EPA also will support the assessment and cleanup of up to 142 sites contaminated by petroleum or petroleum products.

The FY 2016 budget allows for the award an estimated \$3.5 million in environmental workforce development and job training grants.

"The EPA will continue to provide technical assistance for brownfields redevelopment in cities that are struggling to recover from structural changes in the U.S. manufacturing industry that resulted in significant impacts to their economies and has added to the communities' needs to address blight and brownfields properties."

"The Brownfields and Land Revitalization programs are working with USDA, HHS, and ATSDR to identify ways in which federal programs can increase food access in all communities and ensure access to quality health care."

“The Brownfields and Land Revitalization programs also are partnering with the National Park Service and its River and Trails Program to support Groundwork USA and individual Groundwork teams in their efforts to engage youth in community revitalization.”

While the proposed budget for EWDJT must be approved by Congress, it is our hope that recognition will be given to the good work and contributions made by our grantees.

City of Detroit—The first year

Thank you, LaReina Wheeler from the city of Detroit, and Jessica Carr from the Detroit Employment Solutions (DES), for an excellent presentation on what to expect during those first months after the EWDJT proposal submission.

Last year, the city of Detroit submitted their EWDJT proposal as many PLC members have just done. When submitting on grants.gov (now mandatory), submission confirmation comes almost immediately. Those having technical difficulty can access the help desk for assistance. Submitting early provides a safety net for unexpected events such as snow and ice storms.

Twelve weeks after submission, the city of Detroit was selected for Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training assistance. LaReina Wheeler and Jessica Carr described what this year’s grantees might expect in coming months.

1. The long wait—Twelve weeks is a long wait but goes by fast. As 15 days pass, qualified proposals move on for technical review. During this time, it is important to keep in touch with partners. Especially individuals who may be contacted as part of the review process. Since EWDJT is an annual competition, it is wise to keep your partners and team together to begin preparation for recruitment and training or for a resubmission of an improved program (if the proposal is not funded). EPA has indicated that many first-time proposals do not make the cut, but are subsequently funded when additional preparation and consultation strengthens their program.
2. The “good news”—Email notices are sent to program directors with a hard copy “notice of funding” sent to the Chief Executive. In Detroit, it was the Mayor’s Office. It is important to stay close to individuals listed in the proposal as program staff may be the last to receive the “good news.”
3. Funding is not a “slam dunk”—In Detroit’s case, city council and the Mayor’s office are required to formally accept the award. The Chief Executive and the board need to be “on board” with the EWDJT program, reinforcing the need for good communications between project staff and administration. Detroit’s Mayor is “totally onboard” and plans to include the effort in his “State of the State” address.
4. The check is not in the mail yet—More work still must be completed before funding begins. A specific and detailed work plan needs to be submitted to the EPA project officer for approval. While work plans follow closely with the proposed project plan, they provide more detail and timelines for project deliverables. Work plans may be tweaked after consultation with the project officer to ensure better outcomes. (Our recommendation to become “close” with the Regional Coordinator early in the proposal process comes in handy during the start-up phase). Work plans are flexible and can be changed at a later date after discussion with the project officer. In Detroit’s work plan, an unanticipated demand for trained workers in the summer of 2015 resulted in a dramatically accelerated training program and a revision in course offerings.

5. Getting paid—If a fiscal agent is not registered with SAM (System for Award Management), grantees will be directed to complete training and set up a payment account. This process can take about 2 weeks. PLC members may wish to visit www.sam.gov for useful background information on the federal payment process.
6. Grantees are now ready to begin their good work—Twenty weeks may have passed, but much of that down time could be used to begin preparation for the first recruitment and training cycle. Grantees are allowed to incur costs only after the award and up to 90 days prior to final funding. Billable costs must conform to the work plan and approved budget. It would be wise to discuss any of these plans with the EPA Project Officer. For example, attendance at the All-Grantee meeting in August can be covered if the award has been made but the accounting system is not yet operational. Note—while EPA may allow those expenditures, each individual organization may have internal restrictive regulations.
7. LaReina did not feel that the city of Detroit’s experience going through the award and funding process was burdensome or difficult. Their proposal, work plan, and relationships with partners were well developed such that everything went smoothly. Suggestions during refinement of the work plan and timeline were constructive and resulted in revisions to the proposed training curriculum. As a result of the massive deconstruction activity in Detroit and their relationship with the Detroit Housing Authority, HAZWOPER, asbestos, and lead abatement training took center stage.
8. Four months into the first year—The close partnership between the EWDJT program and Jessica Carr (DES) provided an ample supply of excellent candidates, screened and qualified for additional benefits. The close partnership between the EWDJT program and the Detroit Housing Authority and their contractors is resulting in an expanded demand for program graduates. Contractors, under mandate to hire local residents, have expressed interest to hire three times the number of proposed graduates for the 2015 deconstruction season. This demand is enhanced by a \$5,000 incentive provided by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to hire residents at a minimum wage of \$10 per hour for at least 30 hours per week in sustainable jobs. As a result, the city of Detroit has revised their work plan to accelerate training to include three cycles of 20 participants for the first year of their EWDJT program.

Congratulations to the city of Detroit and their EWDJT program.

An overview of their program:

Training goal

- Train 50 students. (Now expanded to three cycles of 20 students in the first year alone.)
- Place 35 graduates in environmental jobs. Looking for 100% placement.
- Track graduates for at least one year utilizing Detroit’s DESC 1 stop management and tracking system.

Core curriculum—Based on employer demand associated with \$100 million to deconstruct and remodel 4,000 structures, many with lead and asbestos issues.

- 40-hour HAZWOPER
- Asbestos abatement
- Lead abatement
- CPR

- National Incident Management Systems (NIMS) training
- Job readiness training and participant benefits provided by DESC
- Federal and state certifications

Target population

- Unemployed and underemployed city residents
- Veterans
- Minorities
- Residents impacted by manufacturing plant closures

Partners

- Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation (DESC)
- Sierra Club
- United Community Housing Coalition
- Detroit Future City
- ESK Services Inc.
- Metro Occupational Trainers, Inc.
- Numerous community-based organizations
- Environmental employers and deconstruction contractors

Recruitment and placement

- Recruitment and initial screening by DESC
- Orientation events
- Screening for interest in environmental occupations
- Assessment for 5th grade reading and math levels—those not able to qualify are provided with remedial training.
- Drug testing
- On-site interviews
- Ex-offenders welcome
- Placement and tracking by DESC
- Special consideration between employers and ex-offenders
- Job readiness training, tools, and transportation provided by city and state employment programs
- Partnerships with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to provide \$5K incentives to hire graduates for 30 hours per week at \$10 minimum wage

For more information about the first year of the city of Detroit's EWDJT program, contact:

LaReina Wheeler

City of Detroit

wheelerla@detroitmi.gov

313.471.5110

For more information about recruitment, training, benefits, and placement issues, contact:

Jessica Carr

Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation

jecarr@detempsol.org

313.664.5639

Resources

HMTRI Brownfields Toolbox website

All of the resource materials from the *2014 Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting* are now available on the HMTRI Brownfields Toolbox website at <http://brownfields-toolbox.org/announcements/2014-annual-job-training-grantee-meeting/>. These resources include:

- Meeting agenda
- Attendee list
- Compilation of notes taken during small-group sessions
- Meeting presentations (ACRES, OSHA Safety Course, etc.)
- EPA Office of Water (everything that was included on the EPA flash drives)
- Grantee contributions (everything that was included on the HMTRI flash drive)
- Fulfilling EPA Grant Requirements (information distributed in small-group session)

Networking opportunities

Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting

The *HMTRI Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting* is mandatory for all EWDJT grantees. Active PLC members are also invited. The 2015 meeting will be held Wednesday and Thursday, August 19–20, 2015, in Alexandria, VA, with travel days of August 18 and August 21.

The dates and location were based on feedback after last year's meeting:

- 82% want to continue holding the meeting in Alexandria, VA
- 94% want the full two-day format to continue
- 91% want the participation of EPA upper-level management to continue

Active PLC members will also be invited to this informative workshop.

Lodging costs for three nights lodging will be provided. Participants need to budget for transportation and meals.

2015 National Brownfields Training Conference

The National Brownfields 2015 Training Conference will be held in Chicago, IL, on September 2–4, 2015. The conference will be held at the Chicago Hilton on Michigan Avenue. 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.

National Environmental Justice Conference and Training Program

Leaders from various sectors will engage in three days of free exchange of new ideas and new approaches to environmental justice. This interactive training session will feature voices of experience, research, discussions, and thought-provoking dialogue. The program format will feature needs and challenges of communities, governments, municipalities, tribes, faith-based organizations, and others with an interest in environmental matters and environmental justice. It will highlight programs and collaborations that work, as well as initiatives that will not prove successful. Program speakers will feature representatives from Federal and state agencies, local governments, tribes, community groups, business and industry, public interest groups, academia, and other entities. This interactive forum will give conference participants the opportunity to network with a variety of interests from diverse quarters. All conference participants will realize informative and productive resources that can support their individual program goals and objectives. Conference participants will also see examples of approaches that produce positive results through innovation and collaboration. All in all, the conference will prove beneficial and informative to participants.

The 2015 National Environmental Justice Conference and Training Program will be held at The Howard University School of Law and The Washington Marriott at Metro Center on March 11–13, 2015.

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.

Using the HMTRI Listserve to Ask Questions

The *HMTRI Grantee and Community Outreach Listserv* 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.

Funding and coordination opportunities

Environmental Education Grants Program

Under the Environmental Education Grants Program, EPA seeks grant proposals from eligible applicants to support environmental education projects that promote environmental awareness and stewardship, and help provide people 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.

The 2014-2015 EE Grants Program includes two Requests for Proposals (RFPs), also known as Solicitation Notices. Proposals under the EE Model Grants RFP are being accepted through February 2, 2015. Proposals under the EE Local Grants RFP are being accepted through March 6, 2015. For more detail, visit <http://www2.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants>.

21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21st CSC)

Letters of Interest are once again being accepted for the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21st CSC). The edited Federal Register Notice (FRN) omits specific references to dates regarding duration of membership and deadlines to submit Letters of Interest. Instead, the FRN now states that Letters of Interest may be submitted and will be reviewed on a rolling or as-needed basis.

Ten new organizations have been approved for 21CSC membership, bringing the total number of 21CSC member organizations to 162 to date. As always, the complete list of 21CSC programs can be viewed on the partnership website at www.21csc.org.

Several 21CSC programs and leaders were recognized as winners for The Corps Network's Corpsmember of the Year, Corps Legacy Achievement, and Projects of the Year awards. As an additional reminder, the 21CSC Champion of the Year will be announced during the Corps Network's 2015 National Conference in February in Washington, D.C. If you haven't done so already, please consider your colleagues and partners for this recognition.

Please contact Levi Novey, Director of Communications & Marketing, at The Corps Network at lnovey@corpsnetwork.org ASAP!

Operation AmeriCorps

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>

Overview

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, tribal and local leaders are being asked 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 focus is narrowly tailored to focus on specific post-secondary outcomes for students.
- The second priority is more flexible and allows localities to identify their most pressing challenge.

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 EJCS 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: <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>.

Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grants

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has posted a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grants at www.grants.gov. Public housing authorities, local governments, nonprofits, tribal entities, and for-profit developers are eligible to apply.

Applications must present a plan to revitalize a severely distressed public and/or HUD-assisted multi-family housing project located in a distressed neighborhood into a viable, mixed-income community.

Find additional information and see which grants have been awarded at http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/cn/fy14funding.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Next PLC Session: February 18, 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 *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.