

May 21, 2014

Notes from Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Cycle 10, Session 10

This was the final PLC session of Cycle 10. We will start a new Cycle of ten sessions on June 18, 2014.

Topics: Current Happenings / Updates from Washington as of May 21, 2014

Working with and placing ex-offenders

Metropolitan Energy Center, KC Environmental Workforce Development Partnership,
Kansas City, KS

Networking Opportunities

Funding Opportunities

Current Happenings / Updates from Washington as of May 21, 2014

Congratulations to the 18 new EPA Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) grantees. The 2014 grantees are a nice mix of governmental organizations and nonprofits. Slightly over 20% are governmental organizations, and almost 80% are nonprofit organizations. Of those selected, about half were previous grantees and half new grantees.

Fourteen of the 18 grantees selected are Professional Learning Community participants.

It is also important to note that some of the awardees are former grantees not funded for several years and now able to continue to expand their programs. Others revised unfunded proposals in the past with improvements and were successful this year. Funded or not funded, contact your EPA Regional Coordinator for a review of your grant and to discuss future plans.

2014 EWDJT grantees:

Hunters Point Family, San Francisco, CA

City of Durham, NC

Memphis Bioworks, TN

City of Milwaukee, WI

Los Angeles Conservation Corps, CA

Cypress Mandela Training Center, Oakland, CA

St. Nicks Alliance, Brooklyn, NY

Civic Works, Baltimore, MD

Community Development Corporation, Tampa, FL

Limitless Vistas, New Orleans, LA

City of Camden, AR

Energy Coordinating Agency, Philadelphia, PA

Lewis and Clark County, MT

Alaska Forum, AK

Northstar Center for Human Development, Hartford, CT

City of Detroit, MI

The Workplace, Inc., Bridgeport, CT

Mo-Kan Regional Council, St. Joseph, MO

Since the EWDJT program's inception in 1998, the EPA has funded 239 job training grants totaling more than \$50 million. More than 12,800 individuals have completed training, and of those, more than 9,100

have secured employment in the environmental field. To see the full press release, go to <http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/bd4379a92ceceac8525735900400c27/2bfb942d921c689785257cd6006049f1!OpenDocument>.

Tips for those not selected

Begin preparing for the next Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) competition expected later this year. Contact your EPA Regional Coordinator for a review of your proposal. The best proposals are not developed in a few months, but require long-term planning and coordination with partners and community stakeholders. Start NOW for the next cycle.

Working with and placing ex-offenders

Many thanks to John Mello with Civic Works, Baltimore, MD; and Ann Terry with Memphis Bioworks Foundation, Memphis, TN.

John trains and places 80–90% ex-offenders in jobs. At Civic Works, participants with “barriers to workforce entry” are not an issue. John says, “We need to reorient language and culture when working with participants having barriers to entry into today’s workforce.” Minimize the past and focus on current training, certifications, performance, and the desire to build a new career. Over 60 municipalities and several states have passed legislation banning agencies from asking job candidates about their criminal history. This program is expanding rapidly with both public and private sector advocates.

“Ban the Box” policies prohibit employers from asking about criminal arrests. After final candidate selections, background checks can be initiated. Results of those checks are discussed and reviewed with the candidate to insure that previous history will not impact future performance. See www.Bantehboxcampaign.org for more information.

Equal employment opportunity guidelines also address issues of employment screening. For those with graduates having barriers to employment, placing EWDJT graduates requires more than guidelines, regulations, and policies. Sustained placement requires earning the trust and good work of graduates to develop ongoing relationships with existing and potential employers.

Many communities within their labor agencies have special programs addressing clients with barriers to entry. From candidate screening, training, and placement assistance, working with those agencies can be an important leveraging resource. Check out your local WIB for special needs programs.

For details on the curriculum used by Civic Works or Memphis Bioworks, or their recruitment and placement strategies, contact John or Ann. They would be happy to provide additional information and discuss their programs.

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Metropolitan Energy Center, KC Environmental Workforce Development Partnership, Kansas City, KS

Unfortunately Warren was not able to present this week, but will be with us in the next cycle of presentations. The Metropolitan Energy Center (MEC) is not currently an EPA grantee but remains active in workforce development, training, and serving those with barriers to employment entry in the Kansas City area.

The lead applicant in the KC Environmental Workforce Development Partnership is the MEC. MEC is a 30-year-old nonprofit organization that promotes energy efficiency, environmental sustainability, and economic growth in the greater Kansas City area. MEC received an EPA EWDJT grant in 2011 and is a current alumni.

MEC is recognized for its innovative ideas in working with and training participants with employment barriers in its environmental workforce development and job training program.

- Assisting ex-offenders—MEC has actively reached out and worked extensively with ex-offenders, developing jobs which allow them to find meaningful employment. Giving ex-offenders a second chance benefits the individual, the employer, and the community. There are many opportunities for trained graduates to find meaningful jobs. As Warren says, “The environmental/remediation/construction industry is perhaps the best fit for ex-offender employment opportunities. Many owners of those small remediation/construction businesses are ex-offenders and/or appreciate the difficulties ex-offenders face obtaining work. Warren does not find well-trained, credentialed ex-offenders difficult to place. In some cases, restrictions may be placed on their license (sex and violent convictions). Special cases may require specialized training acceptable for employers. MEC has attempted to develop programs with prison populations while they are still incarcerated and scheduled for release. Thus far, the program has not been able to overcome resistance on the part of prison staff with concerns about liability and safety.
- Community service—MEC engages students with hands-on training in a way that combines volunteerism and community service. As part of their EWDJT program, MEC combined student training with community service. MEC student volunteers work with licensed remediation firms on targeted community projects to give students actual remediation experience. In some cases, stipends may be provided by the companies using the students as cleanup volunteers.

Below is an overview of MEC’s environmental workforce program.

- Demographics and target population
 - MEC targets its job training activities in Kansas City and Independence, MO with a combined population of 593,330.
 - In western Independence and in Kansas City’s urban core, 13 to 25 percent of residents live below the poverty level.
 - Approximately one-third of Kansas City residents are minorities.
 - The unemployment rate in one area is 58.4 percent.
 - In Independence, the steel mills and oil refinery that employed have closed. The unemployment rate is 10.3 percent.
 - There are 2,181 potential brownfields in Kansas City, and 180 potential brownfields in a 2.25-square-mile area in Independence.
- Active partners
 - Local remediation firms (Era Environmental for training and for student on-the-job training)
 - Local hospital (as leveraged training provider)

- Multiple municipal partners
- City remediation projects
- Correctional officers
- The core training program is 6 weeks
 - 83-hour training cycles of core and supplemental training courses. Participants are offered either a 174-hour environmental remediation track, or a 190-hour environmental assessor/inspector track guided by students' interests and abilities.
 - 40-hour HAZWOPER
 - 32-hour Lead Abatement Worker
 - 16-hour Asbestos Operations and Maintenance
 - Underground Storage Leak Prevention Awareness
 - Solid Waste Management
 - Innovative/alternative Treatment Technologies
 - 8-hour Mold Abatement
 - 10-hour OSHA Construction Safety
 - Stormwater Awareness
- Additional curriculum
 - 40-hour Asbestos Abatement Supervisor
 - Operations and Maintenance—Water Collection Systems
 - Operations and Maintenance—Water Treatment Systems
 - Extensive Life Skills Training including:
 - First Aid/CPR/AED
 - Environmental Justice
 - Healthy Homes
- Training objectives
 - Two training cycles per year (Summer graduates began in the spring)
 - Twenty participants per cycle
- Placement and tracking
 - Track graduates (also used in “try out” selection process)
 - 70% placement rate
 - Extensive use of local employers for student selection, training, and placement
 - Extensive use of students as volunteers on local community projects
- Student screening and support
 - High school diploma or GED
 - Drug and alcohol free—notified of testing
 - Birth certificate/ID
 - Social security card
 - Fitness test
 - Driver's license not required

Warren would be happy to discuss his program, including use of student volunteers, working with special populations, and the MEC recruitment process.

Warren Adams-Leavitt

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Networking Opportunities

The Georgia Brownfield Association

9th Annual Georgia Environmental Conference

August 20-22, 2014

Location: Jekyll Island Convention Center
Jekyll Island, GA

Cost: \$350 Early Bird / \$425 Regular

The Georgia Brownfield Association is a premium sponsor of the 9th Annual Georgia Environmental Conference and is hosting the conference's Breakfast Keynote Panel, *Driving Economic Growth & Stewarding Environmental Resources*, on Thursday, August 21, 2014.

The conference is the state's largest and most comprehensive educational opportunity and will be attended by an estimated 600+ state, local, and federal government officials, business and industry leaders, attorneys, consultants, engineers, developers, land owners, architects, agribusiness leaders, energy experts, water planning districts, universities, public health officials, solid waste and recycling experts, and many others with a strong interest in Georgia's and the Southeast region's environmental programs.

Over the three-day period, this conference will host an elite group of environmental professionals seeking to exchange knowledge and share ideas around environmental concerns in Georgia and the Southeast region. The curriculum, designed and developed by the 56-member steering committee, offers over 50 unique courses, allowing attendees to design their own personalized curriculum by selecting nine educational courses while receiving approved continuing education credits. With the combined efforts of the state's leading environmental organizations, the Georgia Environmental Conference is a valued educational experience focused on Sustaining the Future for the People of Georgia™.

To learn more, please visit the Georgia Environmental Conference Website.

Funding Opportunities

Below are a few available federal funding opportunities. While these grants are not directly involved in environmental training, those interested in youth, veteran's programs, community education, and public health can find involvement in these programs a synergistic addition to ongoing environmental training activities. For details and RFPs, go to www.grants.gov.

Workforce Innovation Fund

The solicitation is posted at <http://www.doleta.gov/grants/pdf/SGA-DFA-PY-13-06.pdf>. Additional related content can be found at http://www.doleta.gov/workforce_innovation/.

The DOL press release: \$53M in grants to expand and test unique workforce development strategies available from the US Labor Department. Applications due June 18, 2014.

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Labor today announced the availability of up to \$53 million in grants through the Workforce Innovation Fund, an initiative designed to strengthen public job training programs by: delivering employment and training services more efficiently and effectively, facilitating greater cooperation across workforce programs and funding streams, scaling best practices, and implementing rigorous evaluation techniques. Workforce Innovation Fund grants will invest in both the

scaling of proven ideas and the development of promising ideas that are being implemented for the first time.

"Developing more efficient and effective job training solutions is crucial to building the pipeline of skilled workers needed to compete in the global economy," said U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez.

"Workforce Innovation Fund grants encourage innovation to help programs fund what works and fix what doesn't."

This is the second round of grants available under the Workforce Innovation Fund. Approximately \$171 million in grants were awarded in the first round, which included \$147 million for 26 grants in July 2012 and \$24 million for two Pay for Success grants in October 2013.

"We at the Department of Commerce are thrilled to be working with the Department of Labor to break down the silos between the private sector, the workforce system, training organizations, academic institutions and government to create a collaborative ecosystem that supports the needs of our workers and our businesses," said U.S. Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker. "We know that workforce training works best when we have businesses at the table to define precisely what they are looking for as they hire employees and to help design the programs to address those needs."

The goals of the Workforce Innovation Fund are closely aligned with the administration's job-driven training principles. Many grantees funded in the first round are working with local and regional employers, industry groups, and their state commerce and development agencies to strengthen public-private partnerships.

This second round of funding will help catalyze and expand similar efforts.

Eligible grantees include state workforce agencies, local workforce investment boards and institutions eligible to apply for Workforce Innovation Act Section 166 grants.

To access this Solicitation for Grant Applications announcement (SGA/DFA PY 13-06), please visit <http://www.grants.gov>.

Additional grant information is also available at <http://www.doleta.gov/grants/>. Applications are due by Wednesday, June 18, 2014, and awards will be made in September 2014.

Prospective applicants are encouraged to visit department's Workforce Innovation Fund website for more information and to access tools and resources to improve the quality of applications. An online tutorial for prospective applicants, "Grant Applications 101: A Plain English Guide to ETA Competitive Grants," is available through the department's Workforce3One website at http://www.workforce3one.org/page/grants_toolkit.

Project summaries from all first round applicants and full technical proposals for funded programs are also available online.

To read about how the Workforce Innovation Fund and other federally-funded job training programs that are making a difference in your community and to find resources that can help connect jobseekers and employers, visit <http://www.dol.gov/findyourpath/> and contribute to the conversation on Twitter using #FindYourPath.

DOL Announces TAACCCT and Apprenticeship Grants

President Obama and Vice President Biden announced, during a visit to the Community College of Allegheny County (PA), that the U.S. Department of Labor has released the fourth and final Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA) for the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grants program. A total of \$450 million will be awarded to individual institutions (up to \$2.5 million) and consortia of institutions located in the same state or economic region (up to \$15 million). The deadline to apply for a grant is July 7, 2014.

In addition to the work supported in previous grant rounds, this SGA also emphasizes scaling up previous efforts through partnerships with national industry groups or employers, working with partners to develop state career pathway systems, and improving the integration of state employment and education data systems. Applications that show strong partnerships with industry, the public workforce system, or registered apprenticeships will have an advantage.

The president and vice president also announced the new American Apprenticeship Grants, which will award \$100 million to partnerships to expand and improve registered apprenticeship programs. This program will be launched in the fall and is funded by the fees paid by employers for H-1B skilled worker visas.

Employment and Training Administration

Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations

Four grant awards of \$400,000 to \$650,000

The U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Women's Bureau (WB) and Employment and Training Administration (ETA) Office of Apprenticeship (OA), announced the availability of approximately \$1.8 million in grant funds authorized by the Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations.

Awards made under this announcement are subject to the availability of federal funds. The DOL plans to disburse Program Year (PY) 2013 and PY 14 WANTO grant funds to up to four (4) community-based organizations (CBO) within the range of \$400,000 to \$650,000 for a two-year grant period to develop and operate innovative ETA projects to improve outreach, recruitment, hiring, training, employment, and retention of women, women of color, and women with disabilities in apprenticeships and nontraditional occupations.

For more information and the RFP, go to <http://www.grants.gov>.

National Park Service (NPS)

40 grants with a total of \$40 million

Training, education, and employment opportunities for young people and veterans.

NPS Youth Development Programs represent the future of the Service and encompasses a full range of youth-oriented developmental programs and projects conducted in and around national park units, NPS support offices, as well as in local communities and with partner organizations. The NPS Youth Development Program is committed to evolving and advancing vibrant and relevant youth programming that emphasizes the mission of the NPS.

The Youth Development Program is designed to provide employment, education, recreational, and public service opportunities to U.S. citizens and legal residents who are between the ages of 15 and 25 years of age.

The 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC) is a collaborative effort to put America's youth and veterans to work protecting, restoring and enhancing America's great outdoors. Through the 21CSC, young people and veterans will accomplish meaningful work, and gain important personal and professional skills while building a lifelong connection to the outdoors. The 21CSC strives to achieve the following goals:

1. Put Americans to work: The 21CSC will provide service, training, education, and employment opportunities for thousands of young Americans and veterans, including low income and disadvantaged youth.
2. Preserve, protect, and promote America's greatest gifts: The 21CSC will protect, restore, and enhance public and tribal lands and waters as well as natural, cultural, and historical resources and treasures. By producing high-quality, cost-effective project work the 21CSC will also increase public access and use while spurring economic development and outdoor recreation.
3. Build America's future: Through service to America, the 21CSC will help develop a generation of skilled workers, educated and active citizens, future leaders, and stewards of natural and cultural resources, communities, and the nation.

Keep an eye on the Promise Zone Initiative

The Promise Zone Initiative is part of President Obama's plan to partner with and invest in communities to create jobs; increase economic security; expand educational opportunities; increase access to quality, affordable housing; and improve public safety.

On January 8, 2014, the President announced the first five Promise Zones. They are located in San Antonio, Texas; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Los Angeles, California; Southeastern Kentucky; and the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. These five Promise Zones include urban, rural, and tribal designees that will benefit from grant preferences, assistance in accessing resources, and access to on-the-ground federal partners to help them implement their economic and community development goals. A second round of Promise Zone designations is planned to open for solicitation in 2014. A minimum of five and up to fifteen designations will be made in this round. By the end of 2016, twenty Promise Zone designations are expected.

To learn more about the Promise Zone Initiative, please go to <https://www.onecpd.info/promise-zones>. To provide written comments on the proposed selection process and criteria, please go to <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-04-17/pdf/2014-08772.pdf>.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Next PLC CYCLE: June 18, 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.