

January 8, 2014

Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTES—UPDATES & QUESTIONS

Between Professional Learning Community conference calls, we have been sending out reminders and notes to PLC members regarding environmental workforce development issues. “Front and center” are discussions with organizations interested in starting a workforce development program with EPA assistance. Earlier this month, EPA issued a Request for Proposals for funding up to \$200,000 for nonprofits, tribes, and communities. Proposals are due February 13, 2014.

The current schedule for responding to and receiving notice of awards is below. (Note that other than the deadline for submission of proposals to EPA, dates are estimated and may change.)

February 13, 2014	Deadline for submission of proposals to EPA
Early March 2014	Applicants who failed to meet “Threshold Criteria” are notified
May 2014	Anticipated announcement of grant selections
August 2014	Grants are awarded; budget and project periods begin

IMPORTANT NOTE: PLC discussions are informal and do not reflect EPA policy, rules, or regulations. They are opinions of PLC participants and grantees, and must be received with caution regarding accuracy and completeness. The purpose of these discussions is to enhance dialog and information exchange among individuals interested in environmental workforce development and training.

Topics: Current Happenings / Updates from Washington
Issues of note from EPA’s first EWDJT webinar
Opportunities

Current Happenings / Updates from Washington

Tomorrow, January 9, EPA will conduct a second webinar overview of the FY14 EWDJT grant guidelines. This is likely the last EPA webinar concerning this subject before grant proposals are due. Everyone needs to attend. This is your best chance to ask EPA questions regarding grant proposal guidelines. These are excellent presentations by those who developed the guidelines. The webinar is comprehensive lasting 2 hours.

We suggest reviewing the EPA guidelines and Frequently Asked Questions before participating in the webinar.

The second webinar will be a repeat of the first, perhaps with some additional clarifications from the first webinar. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions. Anyone who has the URL for the meeting can enter the room. Test the site beforehand, and download reference materials. If you prefer to call in to the session, call 1.866.299.3188. The participant code is 2025662772#.

Webinar #2—January 9, 2014 | 2:00–4:00 PM EST

URL: https://epa.connectsolutions.com/fy14jobtraining_2/

If you are not able to attend, you can download the resources below on the webinar website.

- PowerPoint slides of the presentation
- EPA guidelines

- Frequently Asked Questions
- Additional reference materials

Issues of note from EPA's first EWDJT webinar

Chances of obtaining a EWDJT grant can be good for organizations that are persistent, but maybe not on the first try. FY2014 EPA funding will likely allow for twelve \$200,000 awards this year. In past years, about half of the awards went to outstanding programs that have previously received assistance and about half to new programs. This is not a rule or guideline—just an observation that may or may not occur this year.

The number of proposal submissions can easily be in the range of 60 and up. Thirty participants were in the first webinar chat room with more on the phone. Many were gathering information and may not submit proposals this year. Some may be disqualified during the first phase of proposal evaluations. Others will not be serious contenders, as they have not prepared sufficiently to be competitive. This results in a smaller group of organizations truly serious and committed to developing an EWDJT program in their community.

While the twelve proposals to be funded will likely have ranking criteria scores in the mid 90's out of 100 total points, unfunded proposals have an opportunity to further develop their programs, consult with regional coordinators, and submit an expanded, improved, and developed program for funding next year. Persistent organizations willing to invest the effort in developing community programs have an excellent opportunity for support in future competitions.

Chances of obtaining a EWDJT grant are highly dependent on focused attention and response to ranking criteria questions. With funded proposals receiving ranking criteria scores in the mid 90's, it is imperative to strive for a perfect score. As emphasized in the EPA webinar, every question must be answered. Kathleen Curry, EPA Region 4 Coordinator, suggested the following approach.

Do not repeat every question in the narrative but do answer every question. A PLC member suggested identifying and writing every question on a worksheet. Then answer every question in the narrative (not repeating the question in the narrative). Every narrative section must stand on its own merits. Respond to each section as if it will be read independently by a different person unfamiliar with your proposal. In this case, repetition is acceptable.

Direct your response to the target community need. General statements do not work. Promises do not work. Proven track records, mindful preparation, and community interaction is easily recognized by reviewers and scores points.

Stay away from token support letters, advisory boards, stakeholders, and partners.

The EWDJT program is different than other programs. It is not a research grant but rather a program with a mission to develop community-based environmental workforce development and training programs. The primary goal is to place local residents into sustainable careers. As such, extensive participation is required by community partners, residents, and potential employers.

Choose partners wisely. Every community partner, leveraged, sub grantee, or contracted service needs to participate in the development of the program. Regular meetings during proposal development need to include partner input.

Choose advisors wisely. Token advisors are of negative value to EWDJT programs. Advisory boards are best established before and during the program development process and should be included in proposal development.

As indicated during EPA's webinar, it is important to make sure your proposal is not duplicating another federally funded program. While the EPA Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Program is unique, other federal and state programs may provide similar training. It must be demonstrated that the proposal addresses curriculum and target groups not duplicated with other federal funding.

Possible overlaps may occur in OSHA, health and safety training, wastewater training, and energy related training. It is ok if other training programs exist as long as the demographic and geographic areas are unique. Uniqueness must be demonstrated in the proposal. It may also be wise to search for potential overlaps with state and local programs. Emergency response, wastewater training, weatherization, and safety training may be provided by local government. While EPA guidelines apply to federal duplicate programs, it is important to partner and not duplicate local programs.

Opportunities

2014 Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conference

February 10-11, 2014, Washington, D.C. at the Washington Hilton Hotel

Advance registration for the Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conference ended November 6. The Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conference gathers an interesting mix of organized labor, tribal, city government, and environmental organizations with a common goal (green jobs). For additional information, please visit www.greenjobsconference.org/.

EPA Announces Request for Applications for the 2014 Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreement Program

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s Office of Environmental Justice announces the opening of its Request for Applications (RFA) for the 2014 Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving (EJCPS) Cooperative Agreement Program. The (EJCPS) Cooperative Agreement Program provides funding for eligible applicants for projects that address local environmental and/or public health issues within an affected community. Awards will be made in amounts of up to \$120,000 per award for a two-year project period. Interested applicants are invited to participate in conference calls with EPA to address questions about the EJCPS Program and this solicitation.

<http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/grants/ej-cps-grants.html>

EPA Seeks Environmental Education Grant Applications

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is currently accepting applications for environmental education projects under the Agency's Environmental Education Grant Program. The program works to engage communities across the country through a wide variety of educational projects that have a lasting impact on people's health by facilitating environmental stewardship. Projects in the past have engaged students in stream monitoring, created sustainable mentoring communities, and provided professional development to teachers on subjects including science, technology, engineering and math.

Eligible organizations include local education agencies, colleges or universities, state education or environmental agencies, tribal education agencies, 501(C)(3) nonprofit organizations, and noncommercial educational broadcasting entities working in education.

This competitive grants program will total \$2.77 million. Each of the ten EPA regional offices will award two or three grants and one or two grants will be awarded from EPA's headquarters in Washington, DC. Each award will be an estimated \$75,000 to \$200,000. EPA expects to award between 22 and 32 grants nationwide.

For more information about the program and how to apply, please visit <http://www2.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants>.

Grant Funding Guidance for State and Tribal Response Programs

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 2014 section 128(a) funds. The application deadline is January 31, 2014.

http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/state_tribal/fund_guide.htm

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/>.