

March 20, 2013

Notes from Brownfields Professional Learning Community (PLC) – Cycle 8, Session 6 (session 84)

Topics: Updates from Washington
2013 Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Grant Guidelines
Common qualities of successful programs
Landmines and suggestions
Upcoming environmental workforce related conferences/workshops
Grantees you may wish to contact

Updates from Washington

The 2013 Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Grant Guidelines have been issued. The due date is April 9, 2013. The RFT is available at http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/news/index.htm#fy2013_ewdjtgag. Frequently Asked Questions can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/oswer/grants-funding.htm>.

EPA presented two informative CLU-IN sessions. The Powerpoint and session recordings are available at <http://www.clu-in.org/conf/tio/bfjt2013/>.

Common qualities of successful programs

(Thank you for the contributions from previous and current grantees. Thank you to Ron Lee from St. Nick's NPC, Brooklyn, NY, for helpful hints during the development stages of an environmental workforce program.)

NOTE: The following are independent observations and may not reflect the thinking or policy of EPA or of grant evaluators.

When observing programs that demonstrate outstanding performance year after year, certain qualities emerge which may be useful when organizing or reorganizing a community environmental workforce development program.

1. Programs need leadership that consistently looks and communicates outward to the community. The project director does not have to be an extrovert, but someone on the program staff needs to continuously look and communicate with "the world outside the organization." The best programs are well-known in city government, at the Workforce Investment Board, at One Stops, and in the neighborhood. Finding an outgoing personality who enjoys engaging potential stakeholders is essential in leveraging resources and mustering community and employer support.
2. Programs need links to local government. When city officials "bond" with and "buy into" workforce programs, they ensure their survival by promoting support among local agencies and government partners.
3. Programs need to be linked to Brownfields. Remember Brownfield's roots. The EPA environmental workforce development and training program is administered and supported by the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER) under which Brownfields programs are administered. While additional EPA program offices are now providing support to the program, it is still important to link back to Brownfields. Don't forget community Brownfields.
4. Programs need to have strong partners in place. Strong partners make strong programs. Partnerships, advisory boards, and working committees should not be formed post-grant award,

but before the award and included in proposals for financial assistance.

5. Programs need to establish well defined pathways from student recruitment to training to professional development, placement, and tracking. There needs to be a clear, well defined path for unemployed/underemployed neighborhood residents to sustainable, environmental jobs. It is not only important to have a path, but it is most important to demonstrate the path to students, program staff, program evaluators and supporters.

Landmines and suggestions

Again, thank you for the contributions from previous and current grantees.

1. If you have a strong construction/weatherization program in place, don't duplicate the program. Leverage it with additional environmental clean-up skills and certifications. Depending on the local needs assessment and discussions with employers, lead remediation (RRP), asbestos remediation, recycling/solid waste management, chemical awareness, and wastewater technology are just a few complementary occupations to construction trades. Existing weatherization programs can leverage and supplement the proposed EPA program, but may not need additional federal funding. Before considering weatherization training, make sure the labor market needs assessment and review of similar grant programs validates local need for such a program.
2. Do not try this grant yourself. Contrary to many academic grants awarded to individuals and organizations for solo projects, the Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Grant requires a community. Without demonstrated group participation and leveraging of resources, goals of this program cannot be achieved.
3. At this stage in program development, "scope out" all ranking criteria questions. EPA has refined its grant guidelines to the point that those who provide comprehensive answers to every ranking criteria question will most likely succeed in establishing a sustainable environmental development workforce program. It cannot be over emphasized that every question should be answered. A suggested strategy charts out every question asked in the guidelines. Proceed to answer each question. Those not easily answered completely need additional work, research, assessment, or meetings. As questions are answered they can then be organized into a comprehensive proposal.
4. Don't hesitate to call a current or past grantee for mentoring, help, or advice. Current and past grantees are a great source for the "do's and don'ts" when it comes to organizing environmental workforce development programs. Contact information can be found at the EPA website or at HMTRI's Brownfields Toolbox Web site at <http://brownfields-toolbox.org/>. We have listed a few additional contacts below.
 - a. Ron Lee, St. Nicholas Workforce Development, 718.302.2057, rlee@stnicksnpc.com
 - b. George Paffendorf, New Jersey Youth Corps, 908.619.4463, majorgwp@aol.com
 - c. Sarah Ashbrook, Florida State College-Jacksonville, 904.633.5976, sarah.ashbrook@fscj.edu
5. It's all about community need, employer needs, and the environment. Ron Lee of St. Nicholas Workforce Development summed it up with the statement above. Focus on the community, available job opportunities, and the condition of the neighborhood.

As EPA evaluates this year's grant proposals, ranking criteria allocates 20 points (out of 100 total points) to community needs. Another 25 points are allocated to evaluation of community and employer partnerships. That means 45% of the evaluation is associated with the following parameters:

1. Labor market assessments – local employers
2. Community organizations and leadership
3. Residential profiles
4. Local support organizations and service providers
5. Local industrial activity
6. Local environmental conditions

Upcoming environmental workforce-related conferences/workshops

2013 Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conference

April 16-18, 2013

Washington Hilton, Washington, DC

The 2013 conference will focus on 1) how to grow the clean economy to scale; 2) the role of strategic partnerships between the public and private sectors in solving the country's pressing economic and environmental challenges; 3) the role of regulations in creating new markets; and 4) how people in every part of the U.S. are working collaboratively for social, economic and environmental justice, while building an economy with good jobs. Please visit www.greenjobsconference.org/2013.

National Brownfields 2013 Conference, Atlanta, GA, May 15-17, 2013. This is the most important environmental workforce related conference of the year attended by over 4,000 participants in Brownfields-related fields. Registration and housing is now open. It's important to get your hotel reservation early as the closest hotels will fill up fast. For more information, please visit <http://www.brownfieldsconference.org>.

HMTRI will conduct a workshop discussion/roundtable on May 17, 2013, 11:15 AM - 12:30 PM as part of the Marketplace of Ideas. The session is called *Environmental Workforce Development Programs: How Can a Community Build a Success?* Paula Paris from JFY, Lena Miller from Hunters Point Family, and Mike Senew will be hosting this open discussion. Earmark the workshop or go to <http://www.brownfieldsconference.org/en/Session/1974?returnurl=%2fen%2fsessions>.

It's important to get your hotel reservation early as the closest hotels will fill up fast. For more information, please visit <http://www.brownfieldsconference.org>.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Next PLC Session: April 3, 2013
 2:00pm EDT

Topics: Seventh session of PLC Cycle 8

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.