

November 23, 2011

Notes from Brownfields Professional Learning Community (PLC)

Topics: Job placement strategies in this challenged economy, job banks, and working backwards in developing or reviewing your program.
The EPA grant review process.

Plan your program by working backwards from job placement

The single most important aspect of your program will be job placement. Working backwards from job placement insures your program will be relevant to your community workforce needs.

1. Assess the need for environmental workers in your community.
2. Determine the credentials, employment prerequisites, and training those workers will require.
3. Work with trainers and educators to establish a training protocol.
4. Establish background and minimal educational requirements necessary for students to be successful completing the proposed training protocol and job placement.
5. Design a recruitment plan targeting participants who can best complete the proposed program.

If the target student population is not a good fit for the proposed training protocol and employment prerequisites, the planning process must be revised. Reassess the types of local jobs that fit the target population to be trained.

Employers – where jobs can be found:

- Traditional direct employment to employers seeking environmental workers – most desirable but the most difficult placement at this time.
- Construction related employers seeking workers and temporary workers for specific construction projects – project related jobs can lead to permanent employment working on other projects.
- Manpower and temp employment firms – filling workforce needs for full-time and temporary employment. Manpower and temp jobs are a popular vehicle for many grantees in the current economic environment.

Job placement resources:

- **Internal job placement services** – The first and most important job placement resource is located in the proposed program. Every program is responsible for placing and tracking their program graduates. Placement is not an afterthought – it needs to be the centerpiece of the program.
- **Governmental job placement resources** – Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) and their “One Stop” employment centers may be statewide, county-, or locally-based. Large communities may provide additional job placement resources. While often useful, many of these programs are swamped with applicants and are not be able to provide the attention required to place workers in specific environmental jobs.
- **Academic institutions** – Programs associated with academic institutions including community colleges and trade schools have access to institutional job placement services. Schools have traditionally recognized the need for internal placement services and have standing relationships with many employers. Those relationships can include employers interested in environmental workers.

- **Job placement firms** – Sometimes linked to manpower and temporary employment firms, job placement firms find workers for a fee. While most placement firms seek professional level workers, special situations exist when employers must find a large number of certified workers quickly employing placement firms to find their qualified workforce.
- **Job fairs and events** – Sponsored by cities, associations, and local governments, these events can be an excellent resource for job seekers. **NOTE: If a job fair is planned in your community, research employer participants to determine their interest in environmental workers. Contact potential employers directly before the fair as an advocate for your students. Brief students regarding specific employers seeking qualified, certified environmental workers.**
- **Job boards** – Everything from Craig’s List to monster.com, snagajob.com, and career builder.com offer job board opportunities to program participants. Most of these, however, have not worked well for job seekers with specialized skill sets, certifications, and training in environmental technology.

In an attempt to provide a job board specially tailored to environmental workers, a working group including members of the Florida Brownfields Association, HMTRI, and *Brownfield Renewal* magazine has formed. The result of this group has been the establishment of a process for posting environmental job training program graduate resumes on the *Brownfield Renewal* Web site. HMTRI additionally incorporates a scan of all EPA grantee programs and compiles graduation dates, core certifications, and estimated availability of graduates ready for employment.

Brownfield Renewal job board – As environmental job development and training program graduates post resumes on the *Brownfield Renewal* Web site, employers will have a dedicated place to fill environmental workforce needs. There is no cost or obligation to post a resume that can be revised, updated, or removed easily at any time by any program participant, graduate, or post-graduate alumni.

Using the *Brownfield Renewal* job board

1. <http://www.brownfieldrenewal.com/>
2. Under the banner in the black menu click on **Job Board**.
3. Under Candidates – Register (Program participants, graduates, or past participants can register.)
4. Establish your log in and post your resume.
5. Keep your information current.

There is no charge or obligation. Resumes can be revised or removed any time. Employers can access this resource as a ready source of trained, certified technicians. Also, explore the job openings on the main page. Many of these jobs are for professional positions, but technician openings are also posted for specific jobs and locations. Program graduates can also use the *Brownfield Renewal* job board as they gain experience and additional training.

Status of the current EPA grant review process – soon to be released

Requests for EPA Environmental Job Development and Training proposals will likely be issued in early December. Drafts of the document are currently being reviewed. Below is an example of program planning and scheduling.

- Late 2011 – Request for proposals issued
- March 2012 – Proposals due
- July 2012 – Grants are awarded
- August 2012 – Annual All-Grantee Meeting in Alexandria, VA
- Fall 2012 – First training cycles begin
- Winter-Spring 2013 – Optimal placement opportunities

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Next PLC Session: December 7, 2011
 2:00pm EST

Topic: The establishment, implementation, and sustainability of environmental job
 development and training programs

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.