

April 12, 2017



Notes from the Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Cycle 16, Session 8

- Topics:
1. News from Washington and HMTRI
  2. EWDJT funding awards update
  3. St. Nicks Alliance
  4. For your information
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## **1. NEWS FROM WASHINGTON AND HMTRI**

### PLC schedule change

The next PLC session will be held May 3. The annual HMTRI Annual Grantee Update Webinar will take place on April 25 at 1:00 p.m. CT (2:00 p.m. ET). This year’s webinar will feature John Morgan, HMTRI master trainer, to present “The Application of Hazardous Waste Standards to Brownfields Sites.” John will answer the following questions:

- What training is required to work on a hazardous waste site?
- What is required of the training?
- Where can you find trainers?
- Who needs to be trained?

No registration is necessary. To join the webinar on April 25, go to <http://connectpro51639880.adobeconnect.com/grantee-update-meeting-2017/>.

### Certified Employee Finder

Grantees—It is time to update the “Certified Employee Finder.” The Certified Employee Finder is a compilation of program information regarding certificates, certifications, and core curriculum knowledge that EWDJT students will possess upon graduation.

This information is meant to assist placing graduates. The final document will be distributed on our listserv and posted to our [Brownfields Toolbox](#) website. EPA and potential employers have found this useful information for helping to place graduates.

Program information requested includes:

- 2017 graduation dates
- Approximate number of students graduating on each date
- Certificates / certifications held by graduates
- Other core competencies
- Name, phone number, and email address to list in the document as a contact for your program

As in the past, all currently funded EWDJT programs will be included in the update with or without specific program information. Please send your information to Glo Hanne at [ghanne@eicc.edu](mailto:ghanne@eicc.edu) by Friday, May 5.

## **2. EWDJT FUNDING AWARDS UPDATE**

Proposal ranking criteria are now being reviewed for the next round of EPA Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) awards. Award notices should be sent out in late May or the beginning of June. It is important to keep partners and stakeholders informed regarding the progress of the grant review. Primary partners may be contacted by reviewers to confirm their involvement in the program. Keep stakeholders and leveraging partners informed as well.

What's next?

- May/June—Awards announced.
- July/August—Administrative and work plan approvals. Funds may be spent up to 90 days before completion of final paperwork after official acceptance is made.
- August/September—Official notice that funds are available for spending.
- August 9–10, 2017—Annual All-Grantee Meeting in Alexandria, VA.
- September and ongoing—Training and execution of work plans including quarterly and ACRES reports.
- November 2017—FY2018 EWDJT Request for Proposals issued (tentative).
- December 5–7, 2017—National Brownfields Training Conference, Pittsburgh, PA

## **3. ST. NICKS ALLIANCE**

Thank you, Seekqumarie Kellman, Skills Training Program Manager, and Bob Din, Account Manager, for your update of the St. Nicks Alliance EWDJT program and sharing your approach to graduate job placement.

St. Nicks Alliance is an underserved Brooklyn community that has become home to over 113 major pollution sources with 13 toxic waste emitters, scrap yards, transfer stations, and over 390 hazardous waste sites with two highly polluted waterways. After a neighborhood fire in 1974 that left 18 families

homeless, parishioners of St. Nicholas Roman Catholic Church responded immediately to help their neighbors rebuild their lives. By 1975, St. Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corp. organized to preserve and improve their community of more than 9,000 low- to moderate-income people.

Since then, St. Nicks has served Brooklyn neighborhoods with numerous community and social services in five main areas:

1. Affordable housing
2. Health care
3. Workforce and economic development
4. Youth
5. Education

St Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation was first funded by EPA in 2002. By 2006, 135 graduates were finding local jobs paying \$13–\$32 per hour in environmental occupations.

Reorganized as St. Nicks Alliance, the environmental workforce program has competed and been awarded six EPA EWDJT awards and has received national recognition for their efforts.

### Challenges

Things have not been easy for St. Nicks. Between 2009 and 2014, the recession delivered the challenges listed below as discussed when the PLC visited St. Nicks in 2014.

1. The local economy tanked, with little hiring and extreme competition from local organized labor. St. Nicks found itself with 75 program graduates waiting for sustainable environmental job opportunities.
2. With a flooded job market, employers were less likely to consider ex-offenders even with excellent training and credentials. (EWDJT programs need to reconsider the number of difficult ex-offenders entering any one training cycle. Also, the number and types of offences are of major importance and must be considered as part of the recruitment screening process.)
3. EPA funding was limited and very competitive. When EPA assistance ended, St. Nicks had to rethink the entire program. Fortunately, as part of a larger organization, other programs helped sustain operations in the short term. Sustainable funding for mature, well-run training programs remains a major issue for most community organizations.

These three issues, discussed in 2014, are still relevant today and are likely shared by other grantees working in difficult economic environments. The important thing to remember is that St. Nicks continued and survived with a little help from friends and partners.

## Program overview

St. Nicks has graduated this year's cohort and is in the process of placing graduates.

### Target group

St. Nicks is targeting unemployed and underemployed residents of north and central Brooklyn with an emphasis on recruiting veterans, young adults, and public housing residents.

### Key partners

- NY Department of Environmental Protection
- NYC Mayor's Office of Environmental Remediation
- NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
- Big Apple Occupational Safety Corp.—prime trainer
- Newtown Creek Alliance
- Black Veterans for Social Justice
- OUTRAGE
- Southside Mission
- Local community-based organizations
- Potential environmental employers

### Training goals

St. Nicks Alliance plans to train 56 students over the current grant.

### Placement goals

- Place 45 graduates in environmental jobs.
- Track graduates for two years.

### Core curriculum

The core training program includes 126 hours of instruction that runs over six weeks, 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. weekdays. St. Nicks and its partners also will leverage 45 hours of job readiness and life skills training. Participants who complete training will earn up to six state or federal certifications.

- 40-hour HAZWOPER
- OSHA construction health and safety
- Mold and asbestos remediation
- Confined space entry

- Innovative technologies
- Introduction to environmental industry
- In lieu of mold and asbestos training, some participants may elect to obtain a Class B truck driving license with HazMat endorsement.

Life skills training begins early in each cohort giving participants an opportunity for teambuilding and a chance to decide if EWDJT is the “right fit” for them. Training mimics a typical work day and attendance discipline.

#### Drug testing

Drug tests are provided throughout the program, primarily for marijuana. In a departure from some programs, St. Nicks may accept positive testers and work with them to clean up. An interesting observation discussed during this PLC session is that drug use may be a greater impediment to employment than previous encounters with the legal system.

#### Ex-offenders

New York has a “ban-the-box” program that prohibits potential employers from denying consideration for employment to ex-offenders. Depending on the offense and situation, graduates have a reasonable chance for employment. Remember, EWDJT programs are providing screened and certified graduates to employers. As noted above, drug issues may be a bigger issue than encounters with the law.

#### Placement strategies

St. Nicks placement strategies are innovative and comprehensive. The program works closely with its partners, vendors, and stakeholders to track job opportunities for graduates.

- Before every graduate is placed, students are asked to look ahead 90 days and identify any time when the graduate may have to take off from work. Before employment, issues are discussed with the employer to avoid surprises or tardiness by the new hire. This approach results in excellent relationships between the program, employer, and newly placed graduates.
- St. Nicks has been able to establish a relationship with Local 12, the local environmental remediation union. This agreement allows for direct entry into the apprentice program, bypassing a lengthy application process.
- Working with the NY Department of Environmental Protection, graduates have additional opportunities for environmental pathways.
- To assist graduates, St. Nicks offers a limited free recertification program which brings graduates back as mentors and as potential advocates for recent graduates. Graduates are also invited to graduations and program events.

- Close relationships with potential employers are important. It is important to be available when they are seeking screened, trained, and certified workers. It is most important to maintain that contact even when they have no immediate openings. When openings arise, the EWDJT program needs to be first in line.
- Invite employers to graduations.
- Email a list of certifications and the training provided to the graduates. Distribute program brochures as widely as possible early in the cohort—do not wait until graduation approaches.
- In addition to inviting potential employers to graduation, invite local government officials. Many grantees send invitations to local congressmen, mayors, and state representatives with surprising success. Elected officials enjoy photo opportunities with the programs and students they support.

For more information about the St. Nicks Alliance program, visit their [website](#). You may also contact them at:

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#### **4. FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

As President Donald Trump seeks to slash funding for the Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfields program, U.S. Rep. John Katko wants to preserve the initiative—and fund it at higher levels than it receives now. Katko, R-Camillus, and U.S. Rep. Elizabeth Esty, a Connecticut Democrat, unveiled legislation Thursday that reauthorizes the Brownfields program, which technically expired in 2006, through fiscal year 2022. The members of Congress also want \$250 million a year to fund the program and increase the cleanup grant amounts from \$200,000 to \$600,000. The bill would also expand eligibility to include community development organizations, limited liability corporations, and nonprofits.

The grant program was initially established in 2002 and assists local and state governments with the cleanup of contaminated commercial and industrial sites.

President Trump's budget blueprint released in March calls for cuts to the Brownfields program. Reuters report that funding for the initiative would be reduced to \$14.7 million—a 42 percent cut.

Members of Congress have pushed back against the proposed cuts to Brownfields grants. Katko said communities throughout his district, including Auburn, have benefited from the program.

"Redevelopment of Brownfields sites helps to revitalize neighborhoods, spur economic development, and create jobs," he said in a statement. According to Katko's office, there are more than 450,000 Brownfields sites in the U.S. There's at least one Brownfields site in each congressional district. So far, only a fraction of the sites—roughly 59,000—have been remediated.

Proponents of the Brownfields program say the grants help spur economic development. Studies have found that every \$1 dollar spent by the EPA leverages nearly \$18 in outside investments and every acre of Brownfields that's redeveloped creates an estimated 10 jobs.

The bill introduced by Katko and Esty has been referred to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for consideration. Both representatives are members of the panel.

Source: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-epa-budget-idUSKBN1692XA>

## **5. EWDJT RESOURCES AND ASSISTANCE**

Environmental health and safety apps available for download

[Freeware](#) maintains a collection of environmental health and safety-related apps for smartphones and mobile devices. The apps provide a wide range of capabilities, such as recording, mapping, and sharing health and environmental data using your smartphone.

TechDirect

[TechDirect](#)'s purpose is to identify new technical, policy, and guidance resources related to the assessment and remediation of contaminated soil, sediments, and groundwater. Anyone interested in subscribing or viewing previous issues of TechDirect may visit their website. The TechDirect messages of the past can be searched by keyword or can be viewed as individual issues.

## Brownfields Toolbox

Post-session notes and audio recordings from Professional Learning Community (PLC) sessions and much more about environmental workforce development programs are available on HMTRI's [Brownfields Toolbox](#) website. EPA documents including RFP guidelines are also housed on the website.

Visitors to the website may want to look at the [Start a Program](#) section. Click on the Start a Program tab along the top. Many components are regularly updated, so check back often.

## **6. ITEMS OF INTEREST**

### Leveraging Resources for Brownfields Revitalization—Meet the Funders

April 25, 2017

1:00–2:30 p.m. ET

This "Meet the Funders" webinar will highlight tax and financing incentives available to communities that pursue Brownfields redevelopment projects. Speakers from the National Development Council, the Federal Housing Finance Agency, and the Council of Development Finance Agencies (CDFA) will discuss tax incentives, including Tax Increment Financing, New Market Tax Credits, Affordable Housing Community Investment funds, credit and lending support, and other financing tools. A CDFA representative will discuss the EPA-supported technical assistance it can provide to Brownfields communities. The webinar will also showcase examples of communities that have successfully used one or more of these resources for their revitalization efforts. It is the fifth in OBLR's webinar series on what communities need to know to successfully leverage resources for Brownfields revitalization. Visit the [CLU-IN](#) website for more information and to register.

### 2017 Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting

Mark your calendar and register for the 2017 Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting. The meeting will be held August 9–10 at the Crowne Plaza Old Town Alexandria located at 901 N. Fairfax Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. Travel days are August 8 and 11.

This meeting will be attended by:

- EPA regional and headquarters staff
- Present EPA-funded EWDJT grantees
- Past EWDJT grantees
- PLC members

The deadline to register and to make hotel reservations in the reserved block of rooms is **Monday, July 17, 2017**. **PLEASE REGISTER EARLY!** Contact Glo Hanne at [ghanne@eicc.edu](mailto:ghanne@eicc.edu) for more information and registration information.

### National Brownfields Training Conference

Mark your calendar for the [National Brownfields Training Conference](#) to be held in Pittsburgh, PA on December 5–7, 2017 with pre-conference workshops on December 4. The conference is co-sponsored by the EPA and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The conference, offered every two years, is the largest gathering of stakeholders focused on cleaning up and reusing formerly utilized commercial and industrial properties.

### **MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

Next PLC Session:            May 3, 2017 at 2:00 p.m. ET  
Please call in five minutes early.

Feel free to invite a guest! Send your contact information to Mike Senew at [msenew@aol.com](mailto:msenew@aol.com).



Visit our [HMTRI Brownfields Toolbox](#) website for more information on Brownfields Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training programs. All [PLC session notes and recordings](#) are also located on the website. For those interested in providing content or suggestions, please contact Glo Hanne at [ghanne@eicc.edu](mailto:ghanne@eicc.edu).

**NOTE:** The PLC brings together ideas and opinions of individuals interested in environmental workforce development and job training. Ideas and opinions are not those of EPA or its policy and should not be taken as official guidance.