

June 28, 2017



Notes from the Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Cycle 17, Session 1

This was the first PLC session in Cycle 17. This cycle of ten bi-weekly phone calls will focus on effective Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) strategies and how to prepare for the next EPA Request for Proposals (RFP). Calls will be a mix of open discussion, workforce development news, resources, and presentations from current grantees.

- Topics:
1. News from Washington and HMTRI
 2. Unfunded proposals and preparation for the FY18 RFP
 3. What's next for newly funded programs
 4. Welcome to the PLC
 5. Items of interest
 6. Meetings and webinars

1. NEWS FROM WASHINGTON AND HMTRI

EPA staffing and funding

General EPA staffing and funding levels have been in the news lately, but at this point we have little information regarding Brownfields and EWDJT specifically. It was reported that 1,200 EPA employees agency-wide would be offered retirement packages. Over 3,000 employees were eligible for retirement. There are more than 15,000 EPA employees.

Otherwise, we do know that Brownfields and EWDJT have demonstrated remarkable results and have shown to be a cost effective way of boosting economic development and creating jobs. Until we hear otherwise, the assessment, revolving loan funds, and cleanup (ARC); and the EWDJT programs will continue.

Our sister program that provides technical assistance to ARC communities had their welcome webinar today as we had our first PLC of this cycle. Both programs are proceeding under the assumption that FY18 RFPs will be issued later this year. Both programs require a lengthy lead time in order to develop fundable proposals. This is the reason we are starting this cycle with hints, tips, and idea exchange.

Registration deadline for the Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting is July 17

DATE: August 9–10, 2017
8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
Travel days: August 8 and 11

LOCATION: Crowne Plaza Old Town Alexandria
901 N. Fairfax Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

ATTENDEES: Present EPA-funded EWDJT grantees
Past EPA-funded EWDJT grantees
EPA regional and headquarters staff
Active PLC members
Organizations who will submit a proposal in response to the FY18 EWDJT RFP

Contact Glo Hanne at ghanne@eicc.edu for more information. The deadline for making hotel reservations is July 17, 2017.

The meeting is hosted by HMTRI in cooperative agreement with EPA. The meeting, lodging costs for three nights, and some working meals are provided. Participants are responsible for transportation costs to Alexandria, VA, and some meals. This All-Grantee meeting provides the opportunity for grantees and prospective grantees to network with EPA regional and headquarters staff, and current and past EWDJT grantees.

2. UNFUNDED PROPOSALS AND PREPARATION FOR THE FY18 RFP

With limited funds available this year, EPA was able to fund about half of the proposals submitted. Unfortunately this left many excellent organizations without federal support. It should be kept in mind that the only way reviewers can evaluate the potential success of a program is by critically reviewing the proposal submitted for consideration. Unfortunately, reviewers cannot visit or interview applicants. Because of this, the evaluation is totally dependent on the written submission. The resulting outcome thus depends on the quality and depth of the written word in relationship to other proposals submitted. This year, the best 14 proposals out of 28 have been recommended for funding.

Important

EPA encourages those not funded in FY17 to reapply for the next round of EWDJT grants. The RFP is usually issued as early as November. Preparation is detailed, so now is the time to begin planning, developing partnerships, and conducting community and labor market assessments.

If your proposal was not accepted for funding, please contact your EPA regional job training coordinator and ask for a review of your application. While your request should have been made within 14 days of notification that the proposal was not recommended for funding, many coordinators would be happy to go over your proposal and provide a constructive critique.

If possible, register for the All-Grantee meeting as soon as possible. At the meeting, you can network with current grantees and meet with your EPA regional coordinator in preparation for the next RFP.

Those interested in submitting a proposal to develop an EWDJT program in their community need to begin now and learn as much as possible about environmental workforce development before program planning begins.

3. WHAT'S NEXT FOR NEWLY FUNDED PROGRAMS

The good news this year was that ten returning grantees of the 19 eligible to reapply were recommended for funding. Three first-time proposals and a program that has not been funded for several years also received approval. Below is a breakdown of the types of organizations that were funded.

- Eight community nonprofit organizations
- Four colleges
- One city government
- One Workforce Investment Board (WIB)

Our congratulations go out to the 14 funded programs. Below is a complete list.

- The Fortune Society, Inc., New York City, New York—Funded in 2013, 2015, and 2017
- Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc., Portland, Oregon—Funded in 2012, 2015, and 2017
- Santa Fe Community College, Santa Fe, New Mexico—Funded in 2011 and 2017
- Florida State College at Jacksonville, Jacksonville, Florida—Funded in 2013, 2015, and 2017
- People United for Sustainable Housing, Inc., Buffalo, New York—New grantee
- PathStone Corporation, Arecibo, Barceloneta, and Manati, Puerto Rico—Funded in 2015 and 2017
- Zender Environmental Health and Research Group, Anchorage, Alaska—Funded in 2013, 2015, and 2017
- Great Lakes Community Conservation Corps., Racine, Wisconsin—Funded in 2015 and 2017
- OAI, Inc., Chicago, Illinois—Funded in 2013, 2015, and 2017
- Salish Kootenai College, Inc., Flathead Indian Reservation, Montana—New grantee
- Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board, Lawrence, Massachusetts—Funded in 2013, 2015, and 2017
- St. Louis Community College, St. Louis County, Missouri—Funded in 2013, 2015, and 2017
- City of Richmond, California—Funded in 2013, 2015, and 2017
- Earth Conservancy, Ashley, Pennsylvania—New grantee

Successful applicants

Successful applicants have only been recommended for funding. The money is not yet available to spend. Before the formal award and drawdowns can be made, several important milestones must be completed.

- Terms and Conditions with approved work plans should be the primary focus during the next three months.
- After the award letter has been received, the principal grant recipient must acknowledge their acceptance of the Terms and Conditions. In the case of governmental organizations, acceptance may have to be approved by the city council. Community colleges, nonprofit organizations, and tribal organizations may need approval from their Board of Directors, Tribal Council, or Director. Do not assume these approvals will be automatic.
- Check to make sure you received a package or templet with all the information the EPA grants office needs to process the grant.
- After contacting the EPA regional coordinator, it would be wise to set up a meeting with partners and stakeholders who have an active role in the program.

This is the time to review and perhaps revise your work plan. Activities and the budget may have changed since the proposal submission. They may need approval before the final work plan is accepted.

4. WELCOME TO THE PLC

This PLC session was not to be an infomercial for HMTRI and the PLC. Rather we wanted to introduce ourselves to new grantees and continue our relationship with current and alumni of the EWDJT program. HMTRI has worked with various EPA programs for almost 30 years. Since the beginning of the EWDJT program, HMTRI has provided communities with technical support to develop, deliver, and sustain quality environmental training to community residents. HMTRI has been able to provide this assistance through several competitive cooperative agreements separate from the EWDJT grant program. Below are some of the strategies and technical assistance that HMTRI offers to engage and support the EWDJT effort.

- www.brownfields-toolbox.org—A website and repository for all things related to workforce development and job training.
- Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meetings—Networking grantees for peer-to-peer idea exchange. Held in Alexandria, VA each year after new grantees have been selected.
- Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Update Webinars—Updating communities on the latest developments and best practices of successful EWDJT programs.
- Grantee and Community Outreach Listserve—Current announcements and requests for information among EWDJT stakeholders.

- MentorLink Program—Identifying experts with knowledge and experience in various EWDJT program areas.
- Grantee Scans—Collecting and sharing EWDJT information regarding program competencies, training schedules, graduation dates, and graduate certifications.
- Individualized Technical Assistance—One-on-one assistance regarding EWDJT issues.
- EWDJT Social Media Directory—Links to EWDJT grantee social media applications and websites.
- Best Practices Guide—Best practices and strategies from successful EWDJT programs. (Coming soon.)
- Environmental Workforce Development Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Bi-weekly informal conference calls featuring successful grantees and discussions on EWDJT topics of interest.

5. ITEMS OF INTEREST

[Brownfields Toolbox website](#)

The Brownfields Toolbox website includes EPA documents such as the [EWDJT RFP guidelines](#) and [PLC post-session notes and audio recordings](#). Website visitors may also want to look at the [Start a Program](#) section that includes detailed information on the critical components needed to build and sustain an environmental job training program, and much more about environmental workforce development programs.

Stakeholders who are on the PLC distribution list receive PLC post-session notes before they are posted to the website. To be added to the PLC distribution list, send your contact information to Mike Senew at msenew@aol.com.

[PLC Cycle 17 Schedule](#)

There is no application necessary to participate in PLC sessions. Just call 319.527.3513 (note that this is a new call-in number effective July 1, 2017) and use access code 550105 followed by # to be connected to the session. The sessions always start at 2:00 p.m. ET and last approximately 30 minutes. Please call in about five minutes early. Reminders are posted to HMTRI's listserv, and sent to the PLC distribution list. To be added to either or both groups, contact Glo Hanne at ghanne@eicc.edu.

Cycle 17 sessions will be conducted on the dates below.

1. June 28
2. July 12
3. July 26
4. August 16
5. August 30

6. September 13
7. September 27
8. October 11
9. October 25
10. November 8

Certified Employee Finder

The [Certified Employee Finder](#) is available on the Brownfields Toolbox website under Downloads. This publication is meant to assist in placing graduates, and also provides useful information about other EWDJT programs. HMTRI has scanned 44 active EWDJT programs for the information below about their program and what to expect from their graduates.

- 2017 graduation dates
- Approximate number of students graduating on each date
- Certificates and certifications held by graduates
- Other core competencies
- Contact information for more information

Potential uses of the Certified Employee Finder include:

- Assisting employers in their search for screened, qualified, and certified remediation workers
- Referral resources of EWDJT programs when working with employers across the county
- A quick overview and comparison of EWDJT programs across the country

Contact Glo Hanne at gianne@eicc.edu for additional information or to provide updates to the Certified Employee Finder.

EWDJT Social Media Directory

HMTRI has compiled a [Social Media Directory](#) with direct links to over 35 EWDJT programs. Websites, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Google+ social platforms are linked for easy navigating. The Social Media Directory is available on the Brownfields Toolbox website under Downloads.

6. MEETINGS AND WEBINARS

Invigorating Involvement in the Environmental Movement

Date: 07/13/2017

Time: 2:00–3:00pm ET

The EPA's Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) provides annual funding to local, tribal, and community-based organizations working with communities facing disproportionate environmental and public health burdens. The Environmental Justice (EJ) grants program is designed to help communities understand and address exposure to multiple environmental harms and risks. All funded projects are associated with at least one qualified environmental statute, such as the Clean Water Act and the Solid Waste Disposal Act.

Hear directly from two EJ grantees about their success with the EJ grants program. Learn how [Groundwork New Orleans](#) and [Friends of the Kaw](#) have utilized funding from the EPA's Office of Environmental Justice to invigorate public involvement and strengthen local capacity to tackle environmental and public health challenges burdening the community.

To register for this grantee showcase webinar, click [here](#).

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: July 12, 2017 at 2:00 p.m. ET
319.527.3513, access code 550105#
Please call in five minutes early.



Feel free to invite a guest! Send your contact information to Mike Senew at 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 gianne@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.