

July 12, 2017



Notes from the Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Cycle 17, Session 2

This was the second 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. Partnering with large community organizations for leveraging and sustainability
Featured guest: Laura Senkevitch, The Fortune Society, Inc., Queens, NY
 3. Items of interest
 4. Meetings and webinars

1. NEWS FROM WASHINGTON AND HMTRI

PLC call-in number

The application that we use for PLC sessions (freeconferencecall.com) has changed the call-in number to provide enhanced conferencing services. The new number, 319.527.3513, was effective July 12 and will be used for future PLC calls. The access code (550105#) to be connected to our session has not changed.

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. PARTNERING WITH LARGE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS FOR LEVERAGING AND SUSTAINABILITY

Featured guest: Laura Senkevitch, The Fortune Society, Inc., Queens, NY

Thanks, Laura, for a great presentation.

We are beginning this series of PLC calls with discussions about partnerships. Successful EWDJT programs need to establish partnerships to supplement and leverage available EPA funding. Resources from contributing partners provide all the goods and services that are not funded by the EPA grants. Partnerships allow existing local organizations to donate resources for virtually every program activity, including applicant recruitment, screening, student services, training, and placement. Additionally, partners often provide technical and financial assistance contributing to long-term program sustainability.

Several mechanisms have been used by EWDJT grantees to engage established organizations as contributing partners.

- Recruiting partners as subgrantees and contractors to enhance program experience and capabilities.
- Establishing partnerships that leverage program offerings and resources.
- Merging with established community organizations that enhance their capabilities to include environmental training and workforce development.

The Fortune Society, with the assistance from EWDJT funds, was able to expand community services and career opportunities in the field of environmental remediation to ex-offenders in New York City (NYC).

Program overview

Community background and history

The Fortune Society is a NYC area nonprofit organization with a 50-year history of serving community residents touched by the criminal justice system. EPA awarded EWDJT grants to the Fortune Society in 2011, 2013, 2015, and 2017 with a proven track record in working with challenged populations.

The Fortune Society was first organized in the late 1960s by playwright David Rothenberg to help NYC residents marginalized by the criminal justice system. In 2016, Fortune Society helped over 7,000 participants, saving the city over 80,000 days of resident incarceration.

The Fortune Society illustrates how an established community service organization, with the assistance of EPA EWDJT funding, has been able to expand their capabilities to provide opportunities for career-challenged residents in environmental remediation.

Target demographic

The Fortune Society's vision is to create a world where all who are incarcerated or formerly incarcerated can become positive, contributing members of society. The EPA EWDJT program is primarily working with ex-offenders in the following areas of New York:

- South Bronx
- Mid-Upper Manhattan
- Brooklyn neighborhoods of Brownsville, Bedford-Stuyvesant, East New York, and Crown Heights
- Jamaica, Queens

Working partners

Expanded services available from the Fortune Society are provided by several stakeholders.

- NYC Department of Corrections
- NYC Office of Environmental Remediation
- Newtown Creek Alliance
- New York City Workforce Development Board
- Reentry Education Network
- NYC Brownfields Partnership
- Robin Hood Foundation
- Numerous environmental employers and stakeholder organizations

Training, curriculum, and certifications

The Fortune Society's EWDJT curriculum is a 240-hour, certification-driven program featuring a six-week program delivery. In the first three weeks, clients are provided environmental awareness, health, and safety training. During the next three weeks, they receive advanced training in:

- OSHA 10-hour Construction
- OSHA 40-hour HAZWOPER
- OSHA Confined Space

- EPA Lead RRP and Lead in Construction
- NYS/NYC Asbestos Handler (Initial)
- Disaster Site Worker
- Global Hazard Communication
- 4-hr Scaffolding
- Participants who complete the training program will earn up to eight state or federally recognized certifications.

Student recruitment

The Fortune Society is targeting unemployed or underemployed ex-offenders, primarily from high-poverty neighborhoods across NYC. Participants include all those touched by the criminal justice system.

- Prospective applicants are screened and referred by multiple re-entry organizations.
- GED is required.
- Grades 9-10 TABE for literacy and math.
- No drug test is performed by the EWDJT program—monitored by partners.
- Participants must be physically able to perform occupational tasks.
- Participants must demonstrate a genuine interest in environmental careers.

Student retention and support

The Fortune Society EWDJT program has chosen to take a more tolerant approach to student missteps rather than a boot camp—two strikes and you’re out—approach. The boot camp, low tolerance approach was tried early in the program and did not demonstrate to be more effective than working with participants and their individual issues. Grantees need to decide which retention model works best for their demographic.

Several issues can impact retention rates and the ability to complete training.

- Does the participant have stable housing?
- Can the participant support themselves during training?
- Is the participant delinquent or overburdened by child support?
- Will court, probation, or personal issues conflict with training, testing, and placement?
- Are food stamps and other social services being provided as part of student support?
- Are transportation services in place?
- Are childcare and family support services in place before training begins?

Every EWDJT program needs to address the student retention and support issues above. These issues are magnified when training ex-offenders and community residents with criminal histories. As previously noted, the EWDJT program is merged as a part of the larger Fortune Society. Numerous support services

are provided by Fortune Society and their established partners. Everything from case worker support, meals, mental health support, life skills, and legal aid are provided based on student needs.

Student placement

The environmental program works closely with employers, city services, and re-entry organizations to leverage their expertise in environmental workforce development and training. The Fortune Society works specifically with environmental employers and local 78 Environmental Technicians Union. EWDJT graduates have an entry path into the Local 78 apprenticeship program.

Internships play a key role in student retention as well as student placement. Selected students have an opportunity for three-month internship programs (externally funded) providing wages and transportation subsidies (metro cards). The internship programs work well for graduates not ready for full-time employment, and for employers hesitant about hiring re-entry employees.

Experience has demonstrated that EWDJT graduates have better employment opportunities than many other traditional labor programs. With the education, credentials, and certifications, Fortune Society EWDJT graduates can far exceed the wages paid for traditional vocational occupations.

Summary

1. People touched by the criminal justice system can be as reliable, hardworking, and trustworthy as others in the community.
2. The ability to bring additional training and student contact in-house saves resources and helps maintain control over the training.
3. The extensive use of established partners who specialize in re-entry and re-entry services is essential.
4. Becoming part of an established organization allows for maximum attention and resources to be devoted to environmental workforce development and training.
5. Student desire and motivation are most important, but student “baggage” and personal issues can undermine student retention.

Laura Senkevitch would be happy to discuss their program and may be contacted.

Laura Senkevitch

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3. ITEMS OF INTEREST

[Brownfields Toolbox website](#)

HMTRI has been busy updating the Brownfields Toolbox website. The layout of the new website is similar to the old site, but now meets today's standards for web design and responsiveness on mobile devices. Some of the highlights include:

- The [Start a Program](#) section has been completely rewritten. This section includes information on all the program components needed to develop and sustain an environmental job training program.
- The Downloads tab includes a [Social Media Directory](#). This is a compilation of websites, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Google+ sites for more than 35 current EPA-funded EWDJT grantees.
- The [2017 Certified Employee Finder](#) is available from the Downloads section. This is a compilation of the program information that includes 2017 graduation dates, number of graduates, certificates and certifications students will possess upon graduation, and core competencies. The purpose of this document is to assist employers nationwide in finding workers with the specific credentials needed for employment.
- Back issues of [CONNECT News](#) are available under the *CONNECT News* tab. Visitors can download all issues of *CONNECT News* back to the first issue in January 2016.
- To date, we have conducted 172 PLC sessions. The current cycle of PLC bi-weekly telephone conference calls to discuss all things related to job training began June 28, 2107. PLC [post-session notes](#) for all PLC sessions are available for download from the PLC Sessions tab.

Scheduled PLC calls

The schedule for PLC Cycle 17 sessions is below.

1. June 28—Welcome to the PLC
2. July 12—The Fortune Society
3. July 26—Pauline Auberle Foundation
Break for the Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting
4. August 16
5. August 30
6. September 13
7. September 27
8. October 11
9. October 25
10. November 8

To participate in any PLC session, call 319.527.3513. Note this is a new call-in number. Use access code 550105 followed by # to be connected to our session. All sessions begin at 2:00 p.m. ET. Please call in five minutes early. Discussions last approximately 30 minutes. To be placed on the PLC distribution list, send contact information to Mike Senew at msenew@aol.com.

4. MEETINGS AND WEBINARS

National TAB Webinar:

The Basics of Site Remediation for Communities

Wednesday, August 2, 2017

3:30–5:00pm EDT

You are invited to attend a free webinar on Wednesday, August 2, from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. EDT. The webinar is being co-hosted by Technical Assistance to Brownfields (TAB) providers: CCLR, KSU TAB, and NJIT. Tune in to learn about various aspects of choosing a remediation technology, including advantages/disadvantages, success, and long-term effects of different types of cleanup. You can learn about the differences between remediation corridors vs. single sites, and how to work with the regulators.

Cost is free but registration required. Please use this [link](#) to register.

A confirmation email with information on how to join the webinar will be sent to you. Speakers will include:

- Mark Walker, Kansas State University
- Elizabeth Limbrick, New Jersey Institute of Technology
- Ignacio Dayrit, Center for Creative Land Recycling

Who should attend? Anyone interested in learning about brownfield remediation.

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 26, 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 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.