

## CONNECT News

Community Support, Networking, and Assistance  
 for Environmental Career Training

August/September 2020

The Hazardous Materials Training and Research Institute (HMTRI) with a cooperative agreement from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency assists communities establish environmental job training programs supported by the Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Program (EWDJT). To better exchange ideas among EWDJT grantees, HMTRI distributes CONNECT a bimonthly e-publication featuring topics of interest among those interested in participating in the EPA environmental workforce grant program. Ideas presented do not represent EPA policy, guidance or opinions and should not be taken as such. This month's issue presents a checklist for reviewing FY21 Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training applications.

### ***FY 21 Request for Applications - Review and Tune up***

#### **A checklist of potential landmines prior to submitting EWDJT applications.**

With only days left before final drafts need to be submitted to grants.gov for funding consideration, HMTRI thought it may be useful to present a compilation of reviewer comments from previous funding cycles. It should be noted that these are reviewer suggestions. Some comments may not necessarily result in point deductions or may not be applicable to specific proposals. Our tune up begins with general comments, then presents proposal critiques and concludes with ideas for supercharging EWDJT applications. They do not represent EPA policy and should not be taken as such.

#### **If it's not in the application, it does not exist to program evaluators.**

Every EWDJT program is expected to meet and hopefully exceed commitments made as part of the application. Conversely, if activities and commitments are not sufficiently described, evaluators cannot assume they will occur. Do

not expect that good intentions or implied goals will result in a positive evaluation. Include every goal, outcome, and commitment in the proposed plan. Do not over promise but clearly present all that can be expected from the program.

#### **Applications have been rejected for the following reasons...**

- Applicant's [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov) account is inactive.
- Applicants use the wrong DUNS number.
- The submitter is not the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR).
- Applicant failed the pass/fail threshold evaluation.
- Proposal is difficult to comprehend.
- Applicant did not follow guidelines.
- Applicant did not respond to criteria in sequence.
- Applicant response to sub-categories were not on point, and/or incomplete and were unclear.

- Applications were not received by the published due date.

### **1.A. Community Description (10 points)**

- Did not discuss specific environmental concerns as a result of the presence of brownfields in the community.
- Environmental, social and economic issues not linked to impact of the presence of brownfields in targeted area.
- Demographic stats are provided but no contrasting data (from state, county, city or national stats) to show need.
- Demographic stats are provided but ineffective and is not drastically indicative of need.
- Sensitive population is not discussed.
- No discussion of specific population to be trained.
- No discussion of social and public health issues.
- No discussion of specific population to be trained.
- Environmental Justice issues are not discussed.
- Demographic data is provided but it is sporadic and not cohesive to comprehend the relationships.

### **1.B. Labor Market Demand (10 points)**

- No employer survey is evidenced.
- Section does not refer to any direct surveys or polling of local employers.
- Job data by employment type sector concentration from table earlier years may not be current and relevant to year of application.

### **2. Training Program Description (10 points)**

- Student health and safety issues were not addressed specifically in proposal.
- Training cycles unclear.
- Need more specifics on facility's health and safety procedures.

- Applicant's experience with delivery of training is vague and unclear. More detail is required on experience in training delivery.
- Applicant failed to discuss in detail delivery of life-skills and other non-environmental training (what partner will provide, where training will take place, how training will be funded (EPA funds cannot be used)).
- No discussion regarding Training facilities, especially access to facilities and transportation options.
- Applicant failed to link labor market assessment to curriculum.
- Certifications are discussed but no breakdown as to what certs are programmatic, state, or federal. Need breakdown.
- Licensing/certificate fees, PPE, and incidental student expenses should be more detailed and specific. (NO cost to student is a stronger competitive edge). Also, collected fees will be considered programmatic income and must be discussed as such.

### **3. Budget (6 points)**

- Costs are not explained as to whether costs exist and what is covered or not covered by EPA funds.
- Budget numbers do not add up.
- Fringe benefit cost is high.
- Mileage costs are stated but without substantive detail, more is needed to justify mileage costs.
- Personnel costs are too high.
- Travel to National Brownfields and Job Training conferences are not included.
- Physicals or vision screening associated with CDLs or equipment operations are not discussed in detail, only mentioned. (Again, better if fees for such screening is included in cost of training and not passed on to student)

#### **4. Program Structure, Anticipated Outputs, and Outcomes (19 points)**

- No discussion regarding outreach/recruitment to target specific populations, i.e., unemployed, underemployed, ex-offenders, etc. with justified need for training.
- Overall training number is too low and no placement targets are provided.
- Training and recruitment numbers are low in comparison with projected placement rate. (Focus should not be on training but rather on job placement.
- Proposal does not seem to have a targeted placement goal.
- Screening requirements not discussed. Need to test for minimum grade and skill level. (Generally 8<sup>th</sup> grade language and math skills are required for most programs, partner with the WIBs.
- No explanation regarding fees and if student will be burdened with paying them.
- No mention of drug testing in screening process or required minimum educational background prerequisites.
- No discussion regarding projected placement target.
- No milestone and timeline chart provided.
- Outputs and outcomes not clear and do not easily link back to proposed work plan.
- No discussion regarding retention and attrition.
- Applicant failed to discuss how it will handle retention and attrition through case management.
- Hiring incentives not discussed.

#### **5.C. Employer Involvement (12 points)**

- Missing direct coordination with local employers.
- Applicant made no distinction between EPA funds and non-EPA funds.

- Very little leveraging with no discussion of plans how Applicant will generate additional funding.

#### **5.B. Community Partnership Building (8 points)**

- Letters of Support do not state roles and/or commitments only support.
- Community involvement and notification, regarding proposed EWDJT project, is not discussed in detail.
- No discussion of public meetings, attendance records, and community roles in the development and composition of the proposal.
- Applicant lists organizations but grassroots neighborhood organizations, labor organizations, fraternal organizations, public health and community influencers are not represented. (Must have community partners).
- Ensure that principal partners receive a copy of proposal and letters of support.
- Letters of support with project support, project role and commitment need to be included in the proposal.

#### **6. Leveraging (6 points)**

- Leveraging not addressed.
- No discussion of in-kind commitments with assigned monetary value.
- Applicant made no distinction between EPA funds and non-EPA funds.
- Very little leveraging with no discussion of plans how Applicant will generate additional funding.
- No value given to in-kind commitments and no letters of support to substantiate claim for in-kind commitments.

#### **7. Programmatic Capability (20 points)**

- Program sustainability after grant ends not discussed.

- Applicant did not address tracking program graduates.

### **Ideas for supercharging EWDJT applications.**

#### **Participate in and document public meetings**

EWDJT applicants are strongly urged to hold public meetings. Unlike ARC grantees, public meetings are not required in the RFP but to supercharge the EWDJT application, prospective grantees should hold public (or participate in) meetings with formal announcements, especially in target communities with an opportunity for public comment. If possible, have a city council person announce plans for the EWDJT program at a City Council meeting or as part of an associated public announcement. In every case, document meetings in the proposal.

#### **Partnerships are the most important quality of supercharged proposals**

- Work with faith-based organizations and local churches in the target community announcing intentions to organize an EWDJT program.
- Contact community organizations to discuss environmental workforce training at their next meeting.
- Contact City Hall to coordinate with city government, community, and neighborhood development organizations announcing EWDJT intentions.
- Work closely with potential employers.
- Share your proposal with leveraged partners.
- Coordinate and partner with local Assessment, Revolving Loan, and Cleanup (ARC) grantees.
- Meet and document discussions with as many governmental organizations as time permits informing them of your intentions to develop a local environmental job training program.
- Encourage partners to become part of the advisory board.

#### **Respond to every Ranking Criteria question**

- EPA's priorities are reflected in evaluation points.
- A complete response is required for every request for information.
- Leave no question unanswered.
- Be as specific as possible providing names and numbers when possible.
- Special attention needs to be given to priority topics with heavy weighting.
- Sufficient consideration should be given to activities that involve community need, partnerships, outreach, and relationships with potential stakeholders.
- Remember, EWDJT is an Environmental Justice and a job development program.
- Focus on partnerships and placement.
- Address "Other Factors" and checklist

### **Join Our Listserv**

HMTRI is part of Eastern Iowa Community Colleges and has provided environmental workforce development technical assistance since the inception of EPA's Brownfields Initiative.

*CONNECT notes presented represent individual opinions and ideas from Professional Learning Community participants and EWDJT grantees. They do not represent EPA policy, guidance or opinions and should not be taken as such.*

*For more information on HMTRI technical assistance services or to be added to our Grantee and Community Outreach Listserv, please contact Heather Ballou at [hkballou@eicc.edu](mailto:hkballou@eicc.edu).*



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