

December 16, 2015



Notes from Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Cycle 13, Session 10

Wednesday was the tenth session in this cycle of ten Professional Learning Community conversations. Although this marks the end of this cycle, HMTRI will be conducting a special PLC session on January 6, 2016, before EWDJT proposals are due. As part of our informal discussions, we plan to showcase experienced and new grantees, and seek input from government, nonprofit, and private sector mentors. During this cycle, we will focus on the following themes:

- Establishing Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) Programs
- Peer-to-peer mentoring and idea exchange
- Discovering resources for enhancing EWDJT programs
- Helpful hints and open discussion

The PLC will take a holiday break with a special session to be held on Wednesday, January 6, 2016 at 2:00 p.m. EST. The topic will be EWDJT tune-ups.

Topics: News from Washington and HMTRI  
Questions from PLC members  
Things to do now  
Graduate placement and tracking strategies  
Making connections, networking, and items of interest  
Grant opportunities  
Looking forward—an EWDJT schedule of events

### **News from Washington and HMTRI**

EWDJT Proposals (RFP) are due January 14, 2016. The link to the RFP and supporting documents is <http://www2.epa.gov/brownfields/fy2016-ewdjt-documents>. For an overview of other EPA brownfield-related grants and general information about the OBLR grant program, go to <http://www2.epa.gov/brownfields/types-brownfields-grant-funding#tab-6>. Questions or comments should be directed to EPA Regional Job Training Coordinators listed on page 36 of the RFP.

### **Questions from PLC members**

*Can you elaborate on this year's funding limitations for various types of environmental training?*

During this PLC, we discussed this issue in detail. You may wish to listen to the audio recording for a review of the discussion. Since the majority of EWDJT funds support brownfields hazardous waste assessment and cleanup training including petroleum cleanup training (over \$3.3 million), it is important that job training related to those activities be accomplished. Other EPA programs have also contributed to the EWDJT effort and proper allocation of their funds is also necessary.

Questions related to specific courses and certifications included or excluded under these criteria (page 12 of the RFP) should be addressed to Joe Bruss or your EPA Regional Coordinator.

Following is correspondence with Joe Bruss, USEPA Headquarters, specifically addressing this issue.

“Thank you for your email and question/concern. I am copying the rest of the JT Coordinators as well given the importance of this issue and concern. As mentioned on the webinars, I wanted to be very clear and emphasize to applicants this year, that given the budget limitations associated with the various types of money and statutory authorities we have (aka the pots of money) that applicants need to be very careful how they design their training curricula keeping in mind the funding limitations we have. There is also some confusion it seems regarding what types of training fall under what category as you raised below. Everyone needs to carefully read the RFP to see what types of training fall under what category (solid waste, emergency response, Superfund-innovative and alternative treatment technologies, wastewater management, etc. and finally brownfields hazardous waste training). Yes, lead and asbestos abatement, RRP, confined space entry, forklift operator, heavy machinery operations, HAZMAT/CDL, and OSHA would fall under the brownfields hazardous waste training statutory authority/category/pot of money.

Also, as mentioned on the webinar, I said if there is any confusion anywhere, it would more than likely be in differentiating between brownfields hazardous waste training and enhanced environmental health and safety/chemical safety training - where the line is a bit fuzzy. My understanding is that proposals and applicants that specifically emphasize "chemical safety" as a component of their curricula would receive TSCA Title 10 funds, as appropriate - even though one could argue lead abatement, RRP, and HAZWOPER could be classified as enhanced environmental health and safety training.

Ultimately, Rachel C. is going to have the joy of differentiating what types of funding and pots of money are tied to each grant award selected for funding. However, in terms of applicant outreach, we just need to emphasize that applicants carefully review the Guidelines as it specifically states what types of training fall under the categories I listed above. OGC has stated that OBLR needs to do the best job possible and make an effort to associate the various funding pots/statutory authorities to the selected grant awards. In cases where the line gets fuzzy, we would use brownfields funding - given that's where the majority of our funds are. (Please also note, as per the Guidelines, stormwater management is classified as brownfields hazardous waste training.) If anyone has a specific question related to what type of training falls under a certain category, please feel free to call or email me. I know it's a bit confusing but we want to be as flexible as possible while complying with the legal statutory authorities we have under the EWDJT program. The most important point, again, is that we have limited funds available to support non-brownfields hazardous waste related training this year, so applicants need to carefully decide what types of training they are proposing to include in their curricula. There will more than likely be instances where we will not be able to fund a component or course for proposals selected for funding this year as some of the pots of money just will not stretch and cover the demand from the applicants for those types of respective training (e.g. wastewater management, solid waste training, IPM). We will not know however until proposals are ranked and evaluated and once Mathy takes into consideration the other factors (e.g. regional distribution, etc.). Additionally, as I mentioned to everyone, rather than just not funding certain courses, Mathy may instead decide that we equally cut proposals selected for funding - meaning every applicant that proposes to deliver wastewater management gets cut at 25% across the board, so that we can still fund as many proposals as possible. Again, we will not know until we see the highest ranked proposals. Most importantly, we want to select funding scenarios that least impact grantees and select funding scenarios that are equitable. Ultimately, Mathy, the Selection Official, will decide however.

Again, please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. I hope everyone understands how we're moving forward so that conflicting guidance isn't provided to prospective applicants. I wish we had additional funding available but this is the budget climate we have to work in now, so I am remaining positive that everything will work out as it has in past years! This is also one of the challenges associated with a multi-appropriation grant program as everyone is learning.”

### **Things to do now**

Those participating in previous PLC discussions should be well on their way to developing their FY2016 Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Program. For those just joining, several critical activities representing 25% of the evaluation criteria involve outreach which in turn requires a great deal of time to put into place. Properly executed outreach activities require public announcements and meetings with partners and stakeholders. If these activities have not already taken place, they need to begin as soon as possible.

### Community and Employer Partnerships (25 points)

Today's PLC discussion is about graduate placement. However, community and employer partnerships are directly related to graduate placement success. Later in the discussion we will demonstrate the importance of mature partnerships and why they are integral in attaining high placement rates. It is also understandable why these relationships take time to develop and cannot be completed in a grant writer's office. To be funded, applicants must not only contact community and employer partners, they need to organize meetings and bring partners into the planning process.

Community stakeholders—Community organizations in affected target areas include faith-based organizations, service providers, and community organizers. These groups are especially important in marketing, program support, and recruitment activities as discussed in the last PLC.

Organizations involved with remediation—Meetings involved with area wide planning, brownfields assessment, and overseeing cleanup activities will link the EWDJT program to Brownfields economic redevelopment. These meetings are even more important given the necessity of aligning training with programmatic needs.

Potential employers—It is of utmost importance that potential employers participate in EWDJT program development, support, and ideally the training. Their participation is obvious as we discuss placement strategies later in this PLC.

New this year, all proposals must be submitted via Grants.gov. If your organization is new to the federal grant process, it may be wise to partner with an organization having “back office” and grant submission experience. Applicants must register well in advance to the proposal submission deadline. In preparation for submitting grant applications through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), new organizations first must obtain a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and register with the federal government's System for Award Management (SAM) at [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov). This process is explained in detail at grants.gov. Learn more at [http://www2.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-10/documents/grantsgov\\_tip\\_sheet.pdf](http://www2.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-10/documents/grantsgov_tip_sheet.pdf).

### **Graduate placement and tracking strategies**

While opportunities vary from community to community, we have discussed the importance of workforce investment boards, sometimes called one stops or career centers, in the recruitment and placement of EWDJT participants. Also discussed is the importance of EWDJT programs taking control of

recruitment and placement services internally. Programs should not require students to secure environmental employment without assistance. The EPA EWDJT program places the responsibility to place and track EWDJT graduates on the program. These activities can be shared with recruitment and placement partners, but in the end, program staff must take an interest in the future of EWDJT graduates.

EPA allows a full year to complete placement and initiate graduate tracking activities. Placement and tracking activities should be emphasized in the proposal and written into the program plan. The best programs use the strategies below to place and track students beyond the life of the grant.

- Refresher courses
- Certification updates and recertification when necessary
- Alumni nights
- Alumni as special guests at graduation
- Graduates for recruitment and student counseling
- Graduate mentoring programs
- Graduate instructors
- Employment of graduates as full-time staff
- Post-graduation emphasis on social media for announcements and employment opportunities

Graduates can be a program's best employer advocate. Many students are placed based on the recommendation and performance of alumni. Likewise, graduates can be a company's best recruiter. This resource needs to be recognized and utilized by program staff.

Email and social media are excellent venues for engaging EWDJT graduates. Participants may change address, phone, or classmate friends. But usually their email and social media contacts remain the same. In future discussions, we will explore the importance of social media. As part of the placement discussion, social media needs to be considered as an important placement and tracking strategy.

Use the Department of Labor's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to support graduate placement. WIOA provides federal funds to support business and jobseekers. The on-the-job training (OJT) program can be used as a placement incentive to employers.

Currently enrolled WIA participants can provide employers partial reimbursement (from 50–90 percent of gross wages) for up to six months. Additionally, materials such as work boots, additional certification training, and other items required of the job can also be reimbursed. Typical requirements for OJT participation includes:

1. The participant must be WIA enrolled.
2. The participant cannot be a former employee.
3. The OJT opportunity must be a full-time position lasting at least a year.
4. The participant must be a resident of the community administering the program.
5. Wage standards must apply (i.e. \$12.12/ hour). It should be noted that OJT does not obligate the employer or the employee from terminating the job.

Search for Brownfields employers at the Environmental Law Institute—Brownfields Center. This resource database is intended to provide users with a thorough listing of the government agencies, regional and national non-profits, community groups, and businesses working on brownfields-related issues in their state and region. The database includes local, state, and federal government offices and

programs; businesses; insurers; environmental consultants; web-based resources; community groups; community development corporations; associations; national organizations; and regional organizations. The tool may be used on a regional level providing contact information for potential employers. For more information, visit <http://www.brownfieldscenter.org/big/searchdatabase.cfm>.

Link to brownfields employers as part of a state or regional association. Using the resource above, find a brownfields organization in your region. An excellent introduction to local brownfield employers are state and regional associations. State and regional brownfield associations hold annual conferences with working groups and special events during the year. Membership usually comes with contact lists of members. This is an easy way to begin your employer needs assessment.

See the next section, **Making connections, networking, and items of interest**, for examples of two active brownfields associations in the Southeast:

- Florida Brownfields Association
- Georgia Brownfields Association

### **Making connections, networking, and items of interest**

#### Florida Brownfields Association (FBA)

Membership in the Florida Brownfields Association (FBA) is designed to create an effective venue for anyone who has a sincere interest in or is involved in the many disciplines related to the state and national brownfields programs. It allows members to participate in the personally rewarding process of reclamation, redevelopment, and revitalization of communities while helping to preserve natural resources. It also provides a forum of education and information exchange in an atmosphere of professional and social service.

The effectiveness of becoming a member is in the diversity of the stakeholders who are all working toward the same goals. The benefits derived from membership span a broad spectrum of opportunities from career to service and include educational, professional, and personal contacts with those who have similar interests and objectives.

With individual membership in the hundreds from every corner of the state, up to fifty affiliates from dozens of related fields, and partnerships with national and interstate organizations, the FBA is a strong advocate for the Brownfields program and a recognized influence in the legislation that governs the activities associated with brownfields redevelopment.

Individual memberships are \$25 for students, and \$35 for nonprofit organizations.

For more information go to <http://www.floridabrownfields.org/?page=A4>, or contact them at 850.402.2954 or [info@floridabrownfields.org](mailto:info@floridabrownfields.org).

#### Georgia Brownfields Association (GBA)

Join to support GBA in its mission to ensure the state benefits from the continued cleanup of and reinvestment in environmentally impacted and underutilized properties in Georgia. Membership will provide access to the GBA membership database that includes local brownfields stakeholders and employers, individual reduced attendee rate for all applicable GBA events, and the GBA e-newsletter.

For EWDJT programs not located in Georgia, note that many members employ and recruit nationally. The following founding members were instrumental in the development of GBA:

- AECOM
- AIG
- AMEC
- Arnall Golden Gregory, LLP
- Brown and Caldwell
- Cardno
- Georgia Power
- MWH
- Morris, Manning & Martin, LLP
- Troutman Sanders

The 2015 corporate sponsor members are:

- Aecom
- AES Atlanta
- AMEC Foster Wheeler
- Analytical Services, Inc.
- Arnall Golden Gregory, LLP
- Astra
- Atlas Geo-Sampling
- Cardno
- CERM
- EMServices
- Enercon
- EPS, Inc.
- ERM
- GeoLab
- Geosyntec
- Georgia Power
- Golder Associates, Inc.
- Kemron Environmental Services, Inc.
- Morris, Manning & Martin, LLP
- New Ventures, Inc.
- Norfolk Southern
- O'Brien & Gere
- Oasis Consulting Services
- Peachtree Environmental
- PSI
- Resolute
- S & ME, Inc.
- Terracon
- Troutman Sanders
- United Consulting
- Wenck Associates, Inc.
- Winter Environmental
- Woodard & Curran

For more information, contact Kelly Andrews, Georgia Brownfield Association, at 828.280.9807 or [kelly@hlstrategy.com](mailto:kelly@hlstrategy.com).

#### The Annual Great Environmental Safety Training (GreatEST) Institute

The 2016 GreatEST Institute will take place June 6–17, 2016, in Davenport, Iowa. This Institute is a ten-day train-the-trainer program that delivers the required certifications for public and private responders and workers including:

- 40-Hour Waste Site Worker Health and Safety
- 24-Hour Industrial Emergency Response
- DOT HazMat
- Hazard Awareness and Communication

Participants must apply and be approved to attend this training sponsored under an NIEHS grant to HMTRI's partner, the Partnership for Environmental Technology Education (PETE) organization. The application deadline is February 29, 2016. For more information, please contact Patti Thompson at [pattijthompson@gmail.com](mailto:pattijthompson@gmail.com).

#### **Grant opportunities**

##### EPA Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving (EJCPS) Cooperative Agreement

\$1.2 million

Due February 12, 2016

Eligible entities: tribal governments, Native American organizations, and nonprofits

EPA announced funding to support community-based organizations to collaborate and partner with industry, government, academia, and other stakeholders to develop and implement solutions that address local environmental and public health issues. Proposals should include outreach to affected underserved vulnerable communities and residents about environmental and public health issues and engage them in activities to plan, access, improve, and benefit from their local environment.

For more information, visit <http://lists.icfwebservices.com/t/152176/1360017/10683/35/>.

#### Partners for Places

In partnership with the [Urban Sustainability Directors Network](#), the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities (TFN) is pleased to announce the opening of Round Eight of Partners for Places.

[Partners for Places](#) is a successful matching grant program that creates opportunities for cities and counties in the United States and Canada to improve communities by building partnerships between local government sustainability offices and place-based foundations. National funders invest in local projects to promote a healthy environment, a strong economy, and well-being of all residents. Through these projects, Partners for Places fosters long-term relationships that make urban areas more prosperous, livable, and vibrant. The grant program provides partnership investments between \$25,000 and \$75,000 for one year projects, or \$50,000 and \$150,000 for two year projects, with a 1:1 match required by one or more local foundations.

The application deadline for Round Eight is January 29, 2016 (by 11:59 p.m., any time zone). Please visit the [Partners for Places](#) webpage for more information.

<http://www.fundersnetwork.org/partnersforplaces>

### Looking forward—an EWDJT schedule of events

As previously noted, the due date for FY2016 EWDJT proposals is January 14, 2016. As of today, below is how a tentative schedule would look.

- Request for Proposals—Issued
- Proposals due (grants.gov)—January 14, 2016
- Awards announced—April/May 2016
- Administrative and workplan approvals—July/August 2016
- Next Annual All-Grantee Meeting—August 2016
- Training and execution of workplans and project reporting—September 2016 and on
- Quarterly reports—due every three months
- Next National Brownfields Conference—Spring 2017

We will update this schedule as additional information becomes available.

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Next PLC Session: January 6, 2016 at 2:00 p.m. EST

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* Web site at

<http://www.brownfields-toolbox.org> for more information on Brownfields Job Training programs. All PLC session notes and recordings are also located on the *Brownfields Toolbox* website at <http://brownfields-toolbox.org/plc-corner/>. 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 training. Ideas and opinions are not those of EPA, its policy or opinions and should not be taken as official guidance.