

April 13, 2016



Notes from Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Cycle 14, Session 5

This was the fourth session of PLC Cycle 14 that will feature informal, 20-minute discussions with EPA EWDJT grantees, alumni, and interested stakeholders. The goals for this new cycle include:

- Highlighting EWDJT programs, and identifying successes and challenges
- Exploring proven strategies and activities used by established EWDJT programs
- Discovering resources and leveraging opportunities
- Helpful hints and open discussion

Topics: 1. News from Washington and HMTRI
2. Memphis Bioworks Foundation
3. Waiting for the EWDJT announcements—What to expect when funding notification arrives
4. HMTRI Annual Grantee Update Webinar—April 19, 2016
5. Making connections, networking, and items of interest
6. Opportunities—Getting involved in other Brownfields programs

1. News from Washington and HMTRI

EWDJT proposals are in their final review stage. Reviews appear to be on schedule with funding announcements in May.

If you have not yet registered for the 2016 Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting, please do so soon. See #5. Making connections, networking, and items of interest in these post-session notes for more information.

2. Memphis Bioworks Foundation

Joining a larger nonprofit to expand employment opportunities for city residents

Dana Dorsey

Thanks, Dana, for showing us how partnering can work for EWDJT programs.

While Memphis is recognized for medical research and cutting-edge medicine, it remains a community with huge disparities in education, health, and income. Poverty, crime, and unemployment rank high among mid-sized distressed cities.

Memphis Bioworks is located in the heart of the downtown [Memphis Medical Center](#), which is also home to internationally recognized clinical, research and educational institutions like [St. Jude Children's Research Hospital](#), [The University of Tennessee Health Science Center](#), [Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare](#), and the [Memphis VA Medical Center](#).

Memphis Bioworks Foundation is an organization with a 15-year track record for creating companies, jobs, and investments in bioscience. The organization has an established record of job creation by investing in entrepreneurs, building state-of-the-art labs and facilities, and training workers to fill newly created positions.

In 2010, the Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) program was established as part of Memphis Bioworks' larger workforce development effort. By 2011 a new environmental training program was awarded their first EWDJT grant from EPA. In 2014 the Memphis Bioworks Clean and Green Job Training Program re-competed and received funding to continue their environmental workforce program.

A few of the lessons learned from Memphis Bioworks include the following strategies:

- To strengthen and leverage environmental workforce development, the EWDJT program attached to a large, well-established community organization. This approach allowed the EWDJT program to leverage facilities, and administrative and support services.
- The new environmental training program allowed the existing Memphis Bioworks training program to expand community offerings. Previously their workforce program focused training primarily in the biomedical field. Note that although these two programs are different, they provide strength and sustainability to both.
- The new EPA EWDJT program called the "Memphis Clean and Green Job Training Program" uses extreme partnering across all facets of their operation. Partnering with local employers, other established nonprofits, governmental organizations, and national resources, Memphis Clean and Green is much bigger than its funding would indicate.

Under the original grant, Memphis Bioworks served inner-city neighborhoods in North Memphis. The area has significantly lower median incomes and a higher level of poverty than rest of the state and the country. With a smaller service area than larger programs, they have been able to expand their target community to include the greater Memphis area. This strategy allows for better recruitment and placement opportunities.

Program overview

Memphis community originally targeted:

- Unemployed and underemployed city residents of Memphis
 - Originally targeted those living within the federally designated Memphis Urban Renewal Community (population 52,021)
 - Current grant (3 cycles of training) expanded the target community to include the greater Memphis metropolitan area
- 75 percent of residents are minority
- Poverty rates range from 20.9 to 35.6 percent
- More than 350 brownfields are located in the area
- Abandoned industries include tire plants, chemical manufacturers, fertilizer companies, crude oil refineries, stockyards, meat packing plants, and lumber mills
- 384 out-of-service underground storage tanks in the target area

Labor market assessment

Occupational areas in demand with input from the 15-member Advisory Board include:

- Hazardous materials removal workers
- Forklift operators
- Materials handlers
- Insulator workers
- Healthy home construction—lead, mold, and asbestos
- Hazardous waste and recycling transportation—FedEx hub

- Hazardous substances remediation
- OSHA certifications including 40-hour HAZWOPER

Curriculum

Responding to labor market assessment and Advisory Board recommendations:

- Includes 84 hours of instruction
- Students can choose one of two advanced technical tracks:
 - Energy efficiency/retrofit (40 hours)
 - Healthy homes/construction (40 hours)
- 40-hour HAZWOPER
- Lead abatement
- Mold abatement
- Asbestos abatement
- DOT HAZMAT transportation
- Several awareness-level courses including
 - Solid waste management
 - Recycling
 - Underground storage tank remediation
 - Green remediation
 - Wastewater treatment
- Seven federal certifications are offered
- Opportunities to participate in community service projects and internships

Key partners

- Memphis Workforce Investment Network
- Memphis Re-entry and Second Chance nonprofits
- Operation Hope and United Way
- City of Memphis
- University of Tennessee Extension
- Veterans Affairs Medical Center
- Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation
- Numerous community-based organizations
- Local environmental employers
- 15-member Advisory Board
- Partnering for Financial Literacy Education
- United Way and Operation Hope to leverage two financial literacy courses
 - Operation Hope—HOPE Financial Dignity Centers are a network of community-based locations providing financial literacy, resources, and counseling to people in underserved neighborhoods. See more at <http://www.operationhope.org/Program/pid/3#sthash.4rrLCRUK.dpuf>. Operation Hope also provides online financial literacy instruction at <https://www.operationhope.org/guidanceandresources>.
 - United Way—United Way, like Goodwill, is organized into local chapters. Many provide instruction and resources in financial literacy in addition to other life skill resources. For more information, see <https://www.unitedway.org/our-impact/mission>.

Recruitment

- Multiple partners enhance recruitment efforts by expanding the pool of applicants
 - Partners with the local college for both recruitment and placement
 - Local workforce board provides recruitment and screening services along with other leveraged resources
 - Weekly information sessions for prospective applicants
 - Graduates become informal recruiters and are encouraged to stay engaged in the program
 - Program staff actively screens and coordinates all recruitment and acceptance efforts

Applicants must have the following attributes:

- Resident of Memphis, TN
- Minimum 18 years of age
- High school/GED graduate
- Eligible to work in U.S.
- Able to pass drug screen
- Able to pass pre-training assessments
- Able to pass medical evaluation
- Unemployed or earning less than \$15/hour
- Veteran status (if applicable)—VA is an advisory board partner
- Ex-offenders—Working with the local office of re-entry and second chance program

Placement and tracking

- Uses multiple resources and organizations
- Partners with the local college for both recruitment and placement, providing a path into environmental occupations
- Local workforce board provides placement resources along with their other leveraged services
- 15-member advisory board is also used as a placement resource with members which include public utilities and major employers
- Graduates from previous cycles are invited to participate as graduate mentors and as placement resources.
- Staff coordinates and complements their partner placement network

Frequent placement occupations

- Variety of jobs requiring 1910.120 and other OSHA certifications
- Environmental technician
- Emergency response technician
- Energy auditor
- Abatement specialist
- Construction

Land mines—“We don’t know what we don’t know.”

Memphis Bioworks is not alone in basing their first cycle on employment demand resulting from projects planned or in process. Often these projects are delayed or even cancelled, resulting in a collapse in graduate employment opportunities. Under these circumstances, it is always wise to have a plan B. By expanding the employer base, a huge issue (graduates with no jobs) can be avoided. Another mitigation strategy is to offer a broad range of certifications and awareness training allowing for

graduate flexibility. Memphis Bioworks had this issue and was able to overcome it because of their diversity of training and certifications.

Those interested in learning more about leveraging with established foundations can contact Dana or Ann.

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3. Waiting for the EWDJT announcements—What to expect when funding notification arrives

Last year, after the city of Detroit received their first EWDJT grant, LaReina Wheeler and Jessica Carr described what grant applicants might expect in coming months. We thought it would be informative to pass on those experiences.

Thank you, LaReina Wheeler from the city of Detroit, and Jessica Carr from Detroit Employment Solutions, for an excellent review on what to expect during those first months after EWDJT proposal submission.

When submitting on [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) (now mandatory), submission confirmation comes almost immediately. Those having technical difficulty can access the help desk for assistance. Submitting early provides a safety net for unexpected events (like snow and ice storms).

Twelve weeks after submission, the city of Detroit was selected for Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training assistance.

1. The long wait—Twelve weeks is a long wait but goes by fast. As 15 days pass, qualified proposals move on for technical review. During this time, it is important to keep in touch with partners, especially individuals who may be contacted as part of the review process. Since EWDJT is an annual competition, it is wise to keep your partners and team together to begin preparation for recruitment and training or for a re-submission of an improved program (if the proposal is not funded). EPA has indicated that many first-time proposals do not make the cut but are subsequently funded when additional preparation and consultation strengthens their program.
2. The good news—Email notices are sent to program directors with a hard copy notice of funding sent to the Chief Executive (in Detroit, it was the mayor's office). It is important to stay close to individuals listed in the proposal as program staff may be the last to receive the good news.
3. Funding is not a slam dunk—In Detroit's case, the city council and the mayor's office are required to formally accept the award. The chief executive and the board need to be on board with the EWDJT program, reinforcing the need for good communications between project staff and administration. Detroit's mayor was totally onboard and included the effort in his State of the State address.

4. The check is not in the mail yet—More work still must be completed before funding begins. A specific and detailed work plan needs to be submitted to the EPA project officer for approval. While work plans follow closely with the proposed project plan, they provide more detail and timelines for project deliverables. Work plans may be tweaked after consultation with the project officer to ensure better outcomes. (Our recommendation to become close with the regional coordinator early in the proposal process comes in handy during the start-up phase.) Work plans are flexible and can be changed at a later date after discussion with the project officer.
5. Getting paid—If a fiscal agent is not registered with SAM (System for Award Management), grantees will be directed to complete training and set up a payment account. This process can take about two weeks. PLC members may wish to visit sam.gov for useful background information on the federal payment process.
6. At last—Grantees are now ready to begin their good work. Twenty weeks may have passed, but much of that down time could be used to begin preparation for the first recruitment and training cycle. Newly awarded grantees are allowed to incur costs up to 90 days prior to final funding. Billable costs must conform to the work plan and approved budget. It would be wise to discuss any of these plans with the EPA project officer. For example, attendance at the All-Grantee meeting in August can be covered if the award has been made but the accounting system is not yet operational. Note—While EPA may allow those expenditures, each individual organization may have internal restrictive regulations.
7. City of Detroit’s experience going through the award and funding process: They did not feel the process just described was burdensome or difficult. The proposal, work plan, and relationships with partners were well developed such that everything went smoothly. Suggestions during refinement of the work plan and timeline were constructive and resulted in revisions to the proposed training curriculum. As a result of the massive deconstruction activity in Detroit and the relationship with the Detroit Housing Authority, HAZWOPER and asbestos and lead abatement training took center stage.

4. HMTRI Annual Grantee Update Webinar—April 19, 2016

Tuesday, April 19, 2016 | 1:00 p.m.–1:30 p.m. CDT (2:00 p.m.–2:30 p.m. EDT)

HMTRI, in coordination with EPA and SRA International Inc., will be presenting a Web demonstration of the EPA EWDJT Grantee reporting system: Assessment, Cleanup, and Redevelopment Exchange System (ACRES). The ACRES reporting system must be used by all EWDJT grantees, and allows grantees and EPA to track the progress and accomplishments of their programs.

Prospective grantees can learn early about this important EWDJT reporting system. New and existing grantees can learn the latest developments and find out how to get the most out of ACRES.

To download the PowerPoint before the webinar, go to the HMTRI Brownfields Toolbox website at <http://brownfields-toolbox.org/2016-grantee-update-webinar/>.

To join the webinar on April 19, go to <http://connectpro51639880.adobeconnect.com/grantee-update-2016>.

No registration is necessary. This webinar is open to everyone interested in EPA environmental training.

5. Making connections, networking, and items of interest

2016 Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting

August 17–18, 2016

Travel days: August 16 and August 19

Holiday Inn & Suites

Alexandria, VA 22314

The *Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting* is a networking and break-out event attended by:

- Current EPA-funded Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) grantees
- Past EWDJT grantees
- PLC members
- EPA regional workforce development coordinators
- EPA headquarters staff

Reservation deadline is Tuesday, July 26, 2016. For additional information or questions contact Glo Hanne at gghanne@eicc.edu.

Second Southeast Brownfields Conference

Save the date: October 16–19, 2016

Omni Downtown Hotel, Jacksonville, FL

Event hosted and organized by the Florida Brownfields Association with regional partners.

The Annual Great Environmental Safety Training (GreatEST) Institute

June 6–17, 2016, in Davenport, Iowa

The annual Great Environmental Safety Training (GreatEST) Institute is a 10-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 the Partnership for Environmental Technology Education (PETE). The deadline to submit your application is February 29, 2016. For more information, contact Patti Thompson at pattijthompson@gmail.com.

2016 Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conference

June 6, 2016

Cleveland, Ohio

Registration is now open for the 2016 Good Jobs, Green Jobs conference. The conference is about investing in America. Good Jobs, Green Jobs affords an opportunity to join with labor, environmental, business, and community leaders to forge the links between the economic possibilities created through protecting the environment and solving climate change.

Early registration is open (\$199) at <http://www.greenjobsconference.org>.

Annual Georgia Environmental Conference
August 24–26, 2016
Jekyll Island, Georgia

In its 11th year, the Annual Georgia Environmental Conference is the state's largest, most comprehensive and diverse educational opportunity. The conference will be attended by over 700 local, state, and federal government officials, business and industry leaders, attorneys, consultants, engineers, developers, land owners, architects, agribusiness leaders, energy experts, water planning districts, universities, public health officials, solid waste, enviro-tech, recycling experts, and many, many others with a strong interest in environmental activities in Georgia and the Southeast region.

6. Opportunities—Getting involved in other Brownfields programs

Area Wide Planning

Successful workforce development depends on expanded networks with other Brownfields programs. Area Wide Planning is just such a program. While not directly involved with workforce development, Area Wide Planning lays the groundwork for workforce needs and potential employers. Find out who and if your community is participating.

Brownfields Area-Wide Planning (BF AWP) is a grant program which provides funding to conduct activities that will enable the recipient to develop an area-wide plan (including plan implementation strategies) for assessing, cleaning up, and reusing catalyst/high priority brownfield sites. Funding is directed to a specific project area, such as a neighborhood, downtown district, local commercial corridor, old industrial corridor, community waterfront, or city block affected by a single large or multiple brownfield sites.

EPA anticipates that the next Brownfields Area-Wide Planning (BF AWP) grant competition will open later this spring. The Request for Proposals (RFP) will be released via www.grants.gov. Recognizing that some applicants find it difficult to prepare a BF AWP grant proposal within the typical amount of time (60 days) that the RFP allows until proposals are due, EPA is sharing information on how applicants can get started early on proposal preparation and the www.grants.gov submission process.

For more information, see <https://www.epa.gov/brownfields/types-brownfields-grant-funding#tab-5>.

Technical Assistance to Brownfields (TAB)

The Technical Assistance to Brownfields (TAB) program provides technical assistance to communities and other stakeholders regarding brownfields issues. While HMTRI provides technical assistance related to workforce development and training, TAB provides an increased understanding to communities regarding cleanup and revitalization in addition to moving brownfields sites forward toward cleanup and reuse.

Kansas State University (KSU), for example, services EPA regions 5, 6, 7, and 8. Other nonprofit organizations service regions 1–4 and 9–10. The KSU website provides information on funding opportunities, upcoming Brownfields workshops, and helpful tools for working with Brownfields at www.ksutab.org.

Career and job postings

Brownfield Renewal allows you to search for your perfect position, from internship to planning director, and keep track of your searches at <http://www.brownfieldrenewal.com/jobs.html>.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Next PLC Session: April 27, 2016 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.



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.

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.