

March 4, 2015



HMTRI Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Cycle 12, Session 7

Topics: Current happenings / Updates from Washington as of March 4, 2015

Mott Community College, Flint, MI

Adapting programs in a changing economy

Program awareness and student recruitment

Issues, potential problems, and advice for new grantees

Networking Opportunities

National Environmental Justice Conference and Training Program, March 11–13, 2015

Good Jobs, Green Jobs 2015, April 13, 2015

Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting, August 19–20, 2015

2015 National Brownfields Training Conference, September 2–4, 2015

Funding and Coordination Opportunities

### **Current happenings / Updates from Washington as of March 4, 2015**

The proposals for Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) competition are in process. Proposals not meeting qualification guidelines should have been notified. The remaining proposals are being evaluated according to ranking criteria and additional factors. The estimated schedule for announcement of funded proposals is now sometime in May. We will keep everyone posted as information becomes available.

Please get registered for the 2015 National Brownfields Training Conference being held in Chicago, IL, on September 2–4, 2015. For more information, see below under Networking Opportunities.

A reminder to all grantees to report your numbers in ACRES.

EPA is continuing to collect stories and identify cases where graduates have been placed in non-brownfields related occupations such as Superfund site cleanup, wastewater, UST removals/cleanups, chemical safety, etc. A publication will be developed that highlights the expanded training under the EWDJT program and will be distributed at the National Brownfields Conference as well as shared with senior EPA management. Please send your stories to Joe Bruss at [bruss.joseph@epa.gov](mailto:bruss.joseph@epa.gov).

### **Mott Community College, Flint, MI**

Thank you, Jonathan Jarrett, for an informative discussion regarding events in Flint, Michigan and the issues addressed in implementing the Mott Community College (MCC) EWDJT program.

In recent PLC discussions, we have addressed EWDJT programs in Detroit, and today Flint. When it comes to dislocated workers, layoffs, and unemployment, Flint and Detroit are among the most difficult EWDJT target urban communities. Plant closures, deteriorating housing values, urban flight, and increased crime are just a few of the issues presented to EWDJT programs in “old industry centric” communities. MCC has faced these issues in addition to unexpected program and staff changes.

### Adapting programs in a changing economy

Events at MCC are not unique and have occurred with other EWDJT grantees. What is special is the way Jonathan addressed and overcame unexpected staff changes at their college. Today was a great opportunity to discuss events that occur when programs or staff change.

Shortly after receiving their EPA EWDJT award, the principal program manager left the college. With an unfilled position, Jonathan was asked to take over an unfamiliar program. Imagine becoming responsible for a program with limited knowledge of its origins, program plan, content, or deliverables. Staff changes can occur in any EWDJT program for a variety of reasons, and often has. It is important consider ways to mitigate those transitions.

To Jonathan's credit, he approached his new responsibility with an open mind and willingness to learn. Jonathan attended the HMTRI 2013 Annual All-Grantee Meeting just a few months after the EPA award. New to the program, many of the strategies and experiences presented were foreign. Successful strategies used by other grantees were not part of MCC's program plan. As the first cycle proceeded, Jonathan learned how difficult the first year of an EWDJT program can become. He discovered the importance of recruitment and close relationships to employers emphasized at the Annual All-Grantee Meeting.

### Program awareness and student recruitment

Jonathan feels the real breakthrough came during the second Annual All-Grantee meeting he attended last October 2014. Jonathan brought three key staff to the meeting with him who had many issues and questions. Together they discussed techniques and strategies used by others that could apply to their program. He feels their first-year program has now been reinvented. Most significant was the development and adoption of a version of the tryout recruitment process used by OAI. Staff focused on the importance of program awareness in the community, recruitment, and matching curriculum to local employer needs.

### Issues, potential problems, and advice for new grantees

New grantees need to recognize the first year of a new EWDJT program will be filled with unexpected consequences and a learning curve unlike other workforce development programs. Those who are new to EWDJT would be wise to learn from mistakes and successes of other more experienced programs. EPA has established mechanisms for mentoring through HMTRI's Professional Learning Community, Grantee and Community Outreach Listserv, and Annual All-Grantee Meetings; and EPA Regional Coordinators. New programs should not hesitate to revise strategies that do not appear to be working and to also discuss those changes with your EPA Regional Coordinator.

### Overview of the MCC EWDJT program

#### Training goal

- Train 51 students
- Place 36 graduates in environmental jobs
- Track graduates for at least one year

#### Core curriculum (core training program includes 370 hours of instruction)

- Applied math and science
- Site assessment
- Soil and groundwater sampling and treatment

- Lead and asbestos awareness
- Mold awareness
- Site remediation preparation
- Leaking underground storage tank corrective action (e.g., site assessment or remediation) awareness including procedures for tank removal when necessary to perform corrective action
- Wastewater treatment
- Greening techniques
- Four state certifications
- Four federal certifications

#### Target population

- Unemployed and underemployed city residents
- Veterans
- Minorities
- Residents impacted by manufacturing plant closures

#### Key partners

- Center for Community Progress
- Genesee County Land Bank Authority
- The city of Flint
- Career Alliance, Inc.
- Flint River Watershed Council
- A number of environmental employers

For more information about the MCC program, contact:

Jonathan Jarrett

Mott Community College

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### **Networking Opportunities**

#### National Environmental Justice Conference and Training Program

Leaders from various sectors will engage in three days of free exchange of new ideas and new approaches to environmental justice. This interactive training session will feature voices of experience, research, discussions, and thought-provoking dialogue. The program format will feature needs and challenges of communities, governments, municipalities, tribes, faith-based organizations, and others with an interest in environmental matters and environmental justice. It will highlight programs and collaborations that work, as well as initiatives that will not prove successful. Program speakers will feature representatives from Federal and state agencies, local governments, tribes, community groups, business and industry, public interest groups, academia, and other entities. This interactive forum will give conference participants the opportunity to network with a variety of interests from diverse quarters. All conference participants will realize informative and productive resources that can support their individual program goals and objectives. Conference participants will also see examples of approaches that produce positive results through innovation and collaboration. All in all, the conference will prove beneficial and informative to participants.

The 2015 National Environmental Justice Conference and Training Program will be held at The Howard University School of Law and The Washington Marriott at Metro Center on March 11–13, 2015.

#### Good Jobs, Green Jobs 2015

The Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conference will begin on April 13, 2015, at the Washington Hilton Hotel. Registration will open soon, but for now, make sure you're free to join hundreds of labor, environmental, business, non-profit, and civic leaders for Good Jobs, Green Jobs 2015.

#### Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting

The HMTRI Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting is mandatory for all EWDJT grantees. Active PLC members are also invited. The 2015 meeting will be held Wednesday and Thursday, August 19–20, 2015, in Alexandria, VA, with travel days of August 18 and August 21.

The dates and location were based on feedback after last year's meeting:

- 82% want to continue holding the meeting in Alexandria, VA
- 94% want the full two-day format to continue
- 91% want the participation of EPA upper-level management to continue

Active PLC members will also be invited to this informative workshop.

Lodging costs for three nights lodging will be provided. Participants need to budget for transportation and meals.

#### 2015 National Brownfields Training Conference

The National Brownfields 2015 Training Conference will be held in Chicago, IL, on September 2–4, 2015. The conference will be held at the Chicago Hilton on Michigan Avenue. Additional meeting space and sleeping rooms will be available at the Palmer House Hilton. Please visit the Conference Website for additional information at [www.brownfieldsconference.org](http://www.brownfieldsconference.org). Registration for Brownfields 2015 is now open with reduced registration for early birds until February.

What topics are included in the program?

- Environmental assessment and cleanup
- Traditional and innovative financing approaches
- Marketing, real estate and economic development
- Planning strategies for better communities
- Incorporating sustainability into redevelopment activities
- Civic and community engagement
- Addressing liability and enforcement issues
- State, tribal and local partnerships

HMTRI has submitted a request to conduct a roundtable session for EWDJT grantees. We would like to organize an open discussion with all our EWDJT grantees and interested stakeholders.

#### **Funding and Coordination Opportunities**

##### Environmental Education Grants Program

Under the Environmental Education Grants Program, EPA seeks grant proposals from eligible applicants to support environmental education projects that promote environmental awareness and stewardship, and help provide people with the skills to take responsible actions to protect the environment. This

grant program provides financial support for projects that design, demonstrate, and/or disseminate environmental education practices, methods, or techniques.

The 2014-2015 EE Grants Program includes two Requests for Proposals (RFPs), also known as Solicitation Notices. Proposals under the EE Model Grants RFP are being accepted through February 2, 2015. Proposals under the EE Local Grants RFP are being accepted through March 6, 2015. For more detail, visit <http://www2.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants>.

#### 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21st CSC)

Letters of Interest are once again being accepted for the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21st CSC). The edited Federal Register Notice (FRN) omits specific references to dates regarding duration of membership and deadlines to submit Letters of Interest. Instead, the FRN now states that Letters of Interest may be submitted and will be reviewed on a rolling or as-needed basis.

Ten new organizations have been approved for 21CSC membership, bringing the total number of 21CSC member organizations to 162 to date. As always, the complete list of 21CSC programs can be viewed on the partnership website at [www.21csc.org](http://www.21csc.org).

Several 21CSC programs and leaders were recognized as winners for The Corps Network's Corpsmember of the Year, Corps Legacy Achievement, and Projects of the Year awards. As an additional reminder, the 21CSC Champion of the Year will be announced during the Corps Network's 2015 National Conference in February in Washington, D.C. If you haven't done so already, please consider your colleagues and partners for this recognition.

Please contact Levi Novey, Director of Communications & Marketing, at The Corps Network at [lnovey@corpsnetwork.org](mailto:lnovey@corpsnetwork.org) ASAP!

#### Operation AmeriCorps

The link to the official Operation AmeriCorps webpage is below, it offers great information about what the initiative is, and how to apply. <http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/amicorps/operation-amicorps>

#### Overview

Operation AmeriCorps is a new program to help tribal and local leaders use AmeriCorps to accomplish big things in their community. As part of Operation AmeriCorps, tribal and local leaders are being asked to identify a high-priority local challenge that AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps NCCC and/or AmeriCorps VISTA members can address in a relatively short period of time (no more than two years).

The grant competition is open exclusively to tribal and local governments, including counties, cities, towns, and school districts; and state service commissions. They are looking for proposals that are place-based, coordinated with existing community organizations, and with transformational outcomes.

The solution may be a new initiative, or it may use national service to scale up an existing successful effort, but in either case AmeriCorps must be the additive ingredient to achieve transformative change at the local level.

Year 2015 Operation AmeriCorps competition has two funding priorities. Applicants may choose to apply to either of the priorities.

- The first priority focus is narrowly tailored to focus on specific post-secondary outcomes for students.
- The second priority is more flexible and allows localities to identify their most pressing challenge.

#### Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreements

“Environmental Justice cooperative agreements empower communities to implement environmental protection projects locally,” said EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy. “With these agreements, EPA advances our commitment to communities by providing financial and technical assistance to take action against environmental harm.”

In 2003, EPA’s Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) launched the first solicitation for the EJCS Cooperative Agreement Program. Since the Program’s inception, EPA has provided funding to 50 projects to help communities understand and address exposure to environmental harms and risks. Each of this year’s recipients are awarded up to \$120,000 to support two-year projects, including identifying and reducing sources of air pollution, reducing lead exposure in homes of low-income residents, and the cleanup and repurposing of community dump sites. Projects must use the Collaborative Problem Solving model, comprised of seven elements of a successful collaborative partnership, to address local environmental and/or public health issues.

Environmental justice is defined as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race or income, in the environmental decision-making process. These awards represent EPA’s commitment to promoting localized, community-based actions to address environmental justice issues.

Please visit <http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/resources/publications/grants/cps-project-abstracts-2014.pdf> for a complete listing of the 2014 Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreement recipients and project descriptions. More information about EPA’s Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem Solving Cooperative Agreement Program: <http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/grants/ej-cps-grants.html>.

#### Environmental Education Grants

Since 1992, EPA has distributed between \$2 and \$3.5 million in grant funding per year, for a total of \$62,143,290, supporting more than 3,600 grant projects. The purpose of the EE Model Grants Program is to support environmental education projects that increase public awareness about environmental issues and provide participants with the skills to take responsible actions to protect the environment. This grant program provides financial support for projects that design, demonstrate, and/or disseminate environmental education practices, methods, or techniques, and that will serve as models that can be replicated in a variety of settings. For more information on the new awardees and on future EE grant competitions, visit <http://www2.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants>.

#### Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grants

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has posted a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grants at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). Public housing authorities, local governments, nonprofits, tribal entities, and for-profit developers are eligible to apply.

Applications must present a plan to revitalize a severely distressed public and/or HUD-assisted multi-family housing project located in a distressed neighborhood into a viable, mixed-income community.

Find additional information and see which grants have been awarded at [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/ph/cn/fy14funding](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/cn/fy14funding).

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

Next PLC Session: March 18, 2014 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/>.

**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.