

February 18, 2015

HMTRI Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Cycle 12, Session 6

Topics: Current Happenings / Updates from Washington as of February 18, 2015
Traditional and digital social media applications used by EWDJT programs
Traditional marketing vs. digital social media applications
Program awareness and student recruitment
Social media as an aid for student retention and tracking
Issues and potential problems with social media

Resources

www.brownfields-toolbox.org

Networking opportunities

National Environmental Justice Conference and Training Program—March 11–13

Good Jobs, Green Jobs 2015—April 13

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

2015 National Brownfields Training Conference—September 2–4

Funding and coordination opportunities

Current Happenings / Updates from Washington as of February 18, 2015

The review of the FY2015 proposals for Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) Programs is in process. The proposals not meeting the qualification guidelines will be notified in the next week or two. All other proposals will continue to the ranking criteria evaluation. It would be wise to brief your partners on a regular basis. Keep in mind that partners and stakeholders named in the proposal may be contacted as part of the evaluation process.

Schedule for processing EWDJT awards

- Award announcements—April/May
- Grant forms, work plans, etc.—June/July
- Email that funds are available—August/September
- Annual All-Grantee Meeting—August

Traditional and digital social media applications used by EWDJT programs

Thank you, PLC participants, for your contributions related to the use of traditional and social media in your programs.

Over the years, EWDJT grantees have used a variety of traditional and digital approaches to market their program, recruit students, and place graduates. Grantee experience has demonstrated that different applications work best for various program goals when coordinated and used in tandem. Today's PLC session addressed the value of various approaches as they apply to specific program activities.

Traditional marketing vs. digital social media applications

In less than 12 weeks, 17 new and existing EWDJT programs will receive federal support to establish and enhance environmental workforce programs in their communities. With federal support comes the commitment to train and place deserving residents in sustainable environmental jobs. For new programs, this responsibility can be challenging. For existing programs, revised proposals provide an opportunity to tune up and improve the good work already completed.

For both new and existing EWDJT programs, the first critical step in finding, training, and placing the best and most deserving students requires community awareness and an understanding of EWDJT program benefits. Similarly, placing graduates requires gaining the trust of employers that EWDJT graduates will become productive employees.

Branding and stakeholder education applies to EWDJT programs just as it does for other products and services provided to the community. Student recruitment as well as graduate placement relies heavily on the reputation or expectation of well-trained graduates. Tools at our disposal include traditional media coupled with the use of digital social media resources. Neither should be used exclusively or independently. Instead, using a combination of traditional and digital applications provides the best results. While many options are available, below is a quick overview of the most widely-used traditional and digital media resources being used by EWDJT grantees.

- Print—Brochures, flyers, posters (used for community awareness, recruitment, placement)
- News outlets—Newspaper classified, press releases, informational stories, television, CD's (used for community awareness, recruitment, placement)
- Public appearances, lectures, church and community presentations (used for community awareness, recruitment, placement)
- Governmental and non-governmental meetings and briefings, conference calls (used for community awareness, leveraging)
- Social media used by EWDJT programs
 - Cell phones (used for retention and student communication)
 - Email, listserves (used for retention, student communication, placement)
 - Websites (used for community awareness, recruitment, placement, leveraging)
 - Facebook (used for community awareness, recruitment)
 - YouTube (used for instruction, awareness)
 - Twitter (used for retention, student communication)
 - LinkedIn (used for placement)
 - Webinars (used for retention, student communication, awareness, leveraging)
 - Pinterest (used for stakeholder awareness)
 - Google + (used for retention and student communication)

Program awareness and student recruitment

Program outcomes such as retention and placement are highly dependent on the determination and commitment of program participants. With only 20 spots for training, it is of utmost importance that available seats go to those most deserving and likely to succeed. Finding qualified candidates can be a daunting task when new programs without a reputation or track record attempt to recruit participants. That job becomes much easier after the EWDJT program earns the trust of community residents.

Gaining stakeholder and community trust is the reason program awareness activities are so important. Developing program awareness in the community is a continuous activity. Many grantees find that traditional media applications work well in reaching a large audience such as posters, flyers, brochures, and public events with presentations to community gatherings. Whichever vehicle is used must be targeted and delivered to prospective applicants and their community. Traditional media described above provides broad distribution and a quick-start approach to getting the word out. While established programs have the advantage of word-of-mouth networking, new programs must communicate the value of their program with expectations of well-trained graduates. Emphasis on marketing is more important in newly established EWDJT programs when outcomes have not yet been demonstrated.

With no track record, grantees' first training cycles often have difficulty finding a good candidate pool. This is an indication that more emphasis needs to be placed on up-front traditional marketing programs, bringing awareness of the program to a broader audience. Fortunately, most programs find the second and subsequent cycles have a much easier time attracting excellent applicants.

While websites are not considered a traditional media resource, they play an important informational role attracting potential applicants and educating the community at large. Websites today are a necessity for every EWDJT program. They act as a central go-to repository of information about the program, and its benefits and resources. Items that are found on EWDJT websites include:

- General awareness information
- History and structure of the EWDJT program
- Photos and videos of program activities and experiences
- Event schedules
- Training schedules
- Curriculum
- Application forms and procedures
- Student expectations and contracts
- Administrative forms

Using websites effectively can yield cost and time savings associated with marketing and administrative functions. NOTE: EWDJT web pages included as part of larger organizations are often lost. It has been difficult to locate EWDJT programs buried as a link in a large organizational website. In these cases, it may be wise to develop a separate website with its own identity and also linked to the larger umbrella organization.

Social media as an aid for student retention and tracking

While traditional media appears to work well for awareness and recruitment efforts, social media applications appear best suited for communication and interaction among program participants. Digital social media applications can bring students together when they are not physically together. Rural programs and disbursed communities find these programs especially attractive in communicating with and among classmates. Additionally, digital applications provide communication and bonding with former students. Classmate bonding and communication results in better retention rates and pride in the program.

Cell phone communication can almost be considered a traditional communication media. It is important to recognize that any marketing or communication application must be accessible to the target group being considered. Today, almost every student will have a smart phone capable of accessing email and other internet applications such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube. Websites can become more of a challenge, especially if forms and instructional materials must be downloaded and/or printed.

Email appears to be the basic communication link used by most EWDJT grantees. In some cases, program-specific emails are established for each student. In other less formal instances, the students' email is used. It is important that the email established for program communication will remain active when the student leaves the program. Personal emails have an advantage in that graduates are less likely to drop or change personal emails after graduation. Example email functions may include:

- EWDJT events
- Alumni events

- Class schedules
- Special notices such as class cancellations, etc.
- Homework and class assignments
- Group activities and team building
- Work study/intern opportunities
- Special and personal communications and issues
- Job opportunities
- Graduate tracking

Listserve applications can be used as a complement to email communications and works well as the number of program participants grows.

Twitter provides a similar function for a communication application and works especially well if everyone participates. It can be used to drive users to the website or Facebook page. It can also be used in conjunction with YouTube postings.

Facebook is the third most popular digital media application used by EWDJT programs after websites and emails. Establishing a Facebook page can be compared to an environmental club. Students and graduates interested in exchanging ideas and experiences can communicate in an informal forum. Facebook pages provide interaction opportunities that other digital applications cannot. Facebook adds that additional layer of social interaction lacking in email or Twitter. Continued communications with current and graduate students provides a way to inform, communicate, and track current and past program participants. More “likes” and more “posts” bind new and former classmates, increasing program trust, identity, and retention. Facebook can provide the outcomes below:

- Student bonding
- Program identity and pride
- Community awareness
- Graduate interaction

LinkedIn provides one of the most effective ways to track graduates as they leave the EWDJT program. The obvious and most useful application for LinkedIn is placement. Every student needs to be on LinkedIn and encouraged to maintain their status after graduation. In a stealth way, LinkedIn becomes an easy and effective way of tracking graduates for an extended period of time. LinkedIn combined with good email communications can inform graduates with experience of new job opportunities and refresher training. Additionally, LinkedIn provides an effective way to present graduates to potential employers.

YouTube applications can provide two good functions. As an awareness service, interested stakeholders can learn about the EWDJT program in visual context. Program participants can view instructional materials as part of the EWDJT curriculum. YouTube channels and instructional materials have become popular and cost effective as the video quality and posting capabilities of cell phones have improved.

Issues and potential problems with social media

All social media requires access to the Internet. It cannot be assumed that everyone has that access.

As previously mentioned, it is important that program participants be able to access and participate in whatever digital media programs are offered. Clearly, participants should not be shut out or

disadvantaged because they do not have the equipment or resources to take advantage of available technology. In cases where public libraries, schools, or learning centers are not available, printed materials must be available. It was not that long ago when universities began requiring all students to have a laptop. We must ask the question: Are all EWDJT participants required to have a smart phone or internet access? Below are additional issues related to the use of digital social media applications.

- Getting lost in a large institutional website
- Participant privacy and security
- Stakeholders' ability to access social media applications
- Using too many applications such that none work well
- In-house capability and time to maintain social media applications
- Matching applications to user capabilities

Traditional media for broad distribution and community awareness combined with targeted social media can provide EWDJT programs with a cost effective approach to gaining community awareness, program trust, and student interaction. Social media can increase program pride and retention rates, and can be used as an effective means of tracking program graduates.

Resources

www.brownfields-toolbox.org

All of the resource materials from the *2014 Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting* are available on the Brownfields Toolbox website at <http://brownfields-toolbox.org/announcements/2014-annual-job-training-grantee-meeting/>. These resources include:

- Meeting agenda
- Attendee list
- Compilation of notes taken during small-group sessions
- Meeting presentations (ACRES, OSHA Safety Course, etc.)
- EPA Office of Water (everything that was included on the EPA flash drives)
- Grantee contributions (everything that was included on the HMTRI flash drive)
- Fulfilling EPA Grant Requirements (information distributed in small-group session)
- Resources

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. 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.

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 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. 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.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Next PLC Session: March 4, 2014 at 2:00 p.m. EST

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/>.

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.