

September 10, 2014

Notes from Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Cycle 11, Session 6

Topics: Current Happenings / Updates from Washington as of September 10, 2014

Feedback From PLC participants:

—NIEHS vs. the EPA Environmental Workforce Development Job Training

—Feedback from alumni grantee and PLC participant—Paula Paris, JFY

Fortune Society, Queens, NY

Networking News

Health and Safety Training for grantee trainers—CCCHST GreatEST Institute

### **Current Happenings / Updates from Washington as of September 10, 2014**

The EWDJT RFP is anticipated to be issued in October. No significant changes are anticipated this year. Perhaps training will be funded in air emission reduction and/or integrated pest management (IPM). In FY15, all applicants will be required to submit through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). No more hard copy submissions will be accepted.

Reminder for grantees: Develop success stories related to your programs and submit with accompanying photos. Stories can be submitted to your Regional Job Training Coordinators or to Joe Bruss at EPA Headquarters.

Registration for the *Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting* to be held on October 22–23 is now open. The registration deadline is September 22.

The *2015 National Brownfields 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). “Call for Ideas” is open. HMTRI will be organizing a panel session. We would like to get a cross section representation of EWDJT grantees. If you are interested in participating and will be at Brownfields 2015, email us at [msenew@aol.com](mailto:msenew@aol.com). The deadline for submitting session ideas is November 3, 2014. More information on “Call for Ideas” including our proposed “Tracks” for the educational programming can be found at [http://www.brownfieldsconference.org/en/Article/201/Brownfields\\_2015\\_Call\\_for\\_Ideas\\_Announced](http://www.brownfieldsconference.org/en/Article/201/Brownfields_2015_Call_for_Ideas_Announced).

### **Feedback From PLC participants:**

—NIEHS vs. the EPA Environmental Workforce Development Job Training

—Feedback from alumni grantee and PLC participant—Paula Paris, JFY

“Excellent distinction, Mike. I had forgotten just how complicated it was to administer both funding streams (NIEHS and EPA). If I could add my two cents, the Minority Worker Training Program (MWTP) also funds consortia like the Center for Construction Research & Training (CPWR) and OAI who partner with programs across the country. JFY and Cypress Mandela used to be part of CPWR and ran both program types successfully. So although it is probably difficult to break into a consortium and too late to start one now, it is another way to think about broadening the funding base. Folks could start thinking about cultivating those relationships now for the next five-year cycle if it could make sense for them.”

All the best,

Paula, JFY

We strongly suggest all EWDJT grantees and those interested in environmental workforce development locate the closest NIEHS consortia member. While the NIEHS and EPA programs cannot overlap, they often can work together and exchange resources.

### **Fortune Society, Queens, NY**

Serving re-entry populations. Featured guest: Laura Senkevitch, The Fortune Society, Inc., Queens, NY

Thank you, Laura, for this week's presentation.

The Fortune Society is a nonprofit organization in the New York City area founded by author/playwright David Rothenberg with a 40-year history of serving those touched by the criminal justice system. Last year, the Fortune Society participants saved the city 88,000 days of resident incarceration.

Traditionally in housing, health, and mental health services, the Fortune Society began expanding into vocational education in the early 2000s. Primed with interest and funding for environmental studies, the Society applied for EPA funding in 2011 to establish an Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training program with three cohorts of 20 participants. The program successfully competed for additional funding in 2013.

The Fortune Society illustrates how an established community service organization, with the assistance of EPA workforce development funding, can expand their capacity to provide excellent career opportunities to underserved community residents. Additionally, the Fortune Society illustrates how social media can extend the reach of any EWDJT program.

### Community background and history

Founded in 1967, The Fortune Society's vision is to create a world where all who are incarcerated or formerly incarcerated can become positive, contributing members of society. Fortune Society serves approximately 4,500 men and women annually via three primary New York City area locations: Long Island City, and both the Fortune Academy (a.k.a. "the Castle") and Castle Gardens in West Harlem. The environmental program works closely with employers, city services, and re-entry organizations to leverage their expertise in environmental workforce development and training.

### Key partners

- NYC Department of Corrections
- NYC Department of Environmental Remediation
- NYC Workforce Investment Board
- Re-entry Education Network
- NYC Brownfields Partnership
- Robin Hood Foundation
- Numerous environmental employers and stakeholder organizations

### Wages

Participants of the program have opportunities far greater than other traditional labor programs. With their education, credentials, and certifications, Fortune Society environmental workforce graduates can double the wages paid for traditional vocational occupations. The average post-training reentry job opportunities are approximately \$11/hr. Basic environmental training pays approximately \$13/hr. and asbestos/lead training pays approximately \$23/hr.+.

With basic screening/training and six weeks of environmental workforce development and job training, serious students are provided jobs with sustainable futures. Many have an opportunity for internships as well as apprenticeship programs with Local 78 Environmental Technicians Union.

#### Curriculum and certifications

- 232 hours of instruction—6 weeks (currently 3 weeks of awareness and 3 weeks of specialty training)
- One state certification
- Five federal certifications
- OSHA 40-Hour Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER)
- Urban agriculture
- Lead abatement
- Asbestos handler
- Leaking underground storage tank corrective action
- Site assessment and remediation / awareness
- Innovative treatment technologies
- Urban agriculture
- Solid waste management
- Disaster site cleanup

#### Student recruitment

The Fortune Society is targeting unemployed or underemployed ex-offenders, primarily from high-poverty neighborhoods across New York City. Participants include all those touched by the criminal justice system. Prospective applicants are screened and referred by multiple re-entry organizations.

- GED required.
- 9–10<sup>th</sup> grade TABE for literacy and math.
- No drug test performed by the EWDJT program—monitored by partners.
- Applicants complete and are screened with a customized application for the environmental program.
- Participants complete a basic training program before certification training begins.
- Participants physically able to perform occupational tasks.
- Participants demonstrate a genuine interest in environmental careers.

Issues that may impact retention rates and the ability to complete training:

- Verify that participants have stable housing.
- Verify that participants can support themselves during training.
- Verify that participants are not delinquent or overburdened by child support.
- Verify that participants are established with food stamps and other social services to avoid missing class and instructional sessions.

#### Student support

Issues resolved above are directly related to student support and retention. The Fortune Society retains a lawyer on staff to assist participants with legal issues. Partners provide back up and support to struggling participants. Extensive use of Twitter, Facebook, and a traditional website enhances student and community engagement in the program.

### Student placement

Fortune Society works specifically with environmental employers and local 78 Environmental Technicians Union. Six participants were selected from 200 applicants for the Local 78 apprenticeship program.

The Business Advisory Council has been divided into “sector focus” allowing for two meetings per year with employers specifically in the remediation field. Internships play a key role in student retention as well as student placement. As many as five participants have participated in three-month internship programs externally funded providing wages and transportation subsidies (metro cards). The internship programs work well for graduates not ready for full-time employment and for employers hesitant about re-entry employees.

### Lessons learned

1. Those communities touched by the criminal justice system can be reliable, hard-working, and as trustworthy as others in the community.
2. The ability to bring additional training and student contact “in house” saves resources and control over training.
3. Extensive use of established partners specializing in re-entry and re-entry services is essential.
4. Supplementing an established organization with environmental training allows maximum attention and resources to be devoted to environmental workforce development and training.
5. Student desire and motivation are most important but student “baggage” and personal issues can undermine student retention.

Laura Senkevitch would be happy to discuss their program and may be contacted at:

Laura Senkevitch  
The Fortune Society  
Queens, NY  
[lsenkevitch@fortunesocietys.org](mailto:lsenkevitch@fortunesocietys.org)  
718.517.7942  
[www.fortunesociety.org](http://www.fortunesociety.org)

### **Networking News**

HMTRI, in cooperation with EPA, has confirmed the *2014 Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting* to be held October 22–23, 2014. Participants must travel and check in on October 21 and are expected to stay the two full days leaving on October 24. There is no cost to attend and three nights lodging will be provided.

PLC members along with current and past EPA EWDJT grantees are invited to this full two-day workshop. If you have not received registration and hotel information, please contact Glo Hanne at [ghanne@eicc.edu](mailto:ghanne@eicc.edu).

REMINDER—If you have already registered for this year’s meeting, please remember to send materials that you want to share to Mike Senew at [msenew@aol.com](mailto:msenew@aol.com) or mail to:

Martini Print Media, Inc.  
6320 Capital Blvd., Suite 116  
Raleigh, NC 27616

Emailed materials need to be in PDF format. All participants will receive a flash drive loaded with information from all grantees and other resources. If your materials are brochures, printed in color, or other formats difficult to copy, please mail 130 copies to the address above to be included in the workshop binder.

#### First Annual Southeast Brownfields Conference

October 28-31, 2014 at the Rosen Plaza Hotel, Orlando, FL

Registration fees:      Private Sector—\$500  
                                 Public Sector—\$300  
                                 Nonprofit Sector—\$200  
                                 One-day Only—\$375

Location:              Rosen Plaza Hotel  
                                 9700 International Drive  
                                 Orlando, FL  
                                 Rooms are \$125 (+ tax) per night  
                                 Call 1.800.627.8258 for reservations or follow this link to reserve online:  
                                 <https://bookings.ihotelier.com/bookings.jsp?groupID=1257538&hotelID=2019>

If you need more information or assistance, please call Becky Buice at 850.402.2954 or email [becky@nstephens.com](mailto:becky@nstephens.com). Hope to see many of you in Orlando in October!

#### 2015 National Brownfields Conference

The next national Brownfields Conference is scheduled for September 2–4, 2015, in Chicago, IL. Please visit the conference website for additional information at [www.brownfieldsconference.org](http://www.brownfieldsconference.org).

#### 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.

#### **Health and Safety Training for grantee trainers—CCCHST GreatEST Institute**

Many of you are familiar with the CCCHST GreatEST Institute, the annual two-week Train-the-Trainer sponsored by HMTRI's partner, the Partnership for Environmental Technology Education (PETE). Many of you have been selected to attend in past years.

The 2015 dates have just been confirmed. The Institute is for your trainers only. This is not a first come/first served program. Applications will be reviewed by a team who will select participants based on the trainer's experience, and the entity's affiliations, and projected number of students to be trained.

NOTE: The 2015 applications will be on the PETE website at <http://nationalpete.org/> on October 1. As a partner, HMTRI is able to distribute this announcement before a public announcement is made. Please contact Patti Thompson at [pattijthompson@gmail.com](mailto:pattijthompson@gmail.com) for an early application. You may want to look at an old application on PETE's website which may be helpful to you in pulling together the information you will need for 2015.

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

Next PLC Session: September 24, 2014 at 2:00 p.m. EDT

Feel free to invite a guest! Send your contact information to Mike Senew at [msenew@aol.com](mailto:msenew@aol.com).

Visit our *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* Web site 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.