

January 15, 2014

Notes from Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC) – Cycle 10, Session 1 (session 100)

This was the first PLC session in this cycle of ten 30-minute conference calls held every other Wednesday.

Topics: Current Happenings / Updates from Washington as of January 16, 2014

EPA webinar and support materials

How do programs track graduates who are no longer at the same job, without a phone, or have moved?

Simplifying the RFP response

Partners and community involvement

Opportunities (NOTE: The GreatEST Institute has a few openings left. See announcement below).

Current Happenings / Updates from Washington as of January 16, 2014

The 2014 requests for federal assistance to establish and deliver environmental workforce development and job training programs are due February 13, 2014. Submission can be either by hard copy or through www.grants.gov. Hard copy submissions require two mailings (one to the EPA regional office).

Approximate notification schedule:

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| February 13, 2014 | Deadline for submission of proposals to EPA |
| Early March 2014 | Applicants who failed to meet “Threshold Criteria” are notified |
| May 2014 | Anticipated announcement of grant selections |
| August 2014 | Grants are awarded; budget and project periods begin |

EPA webinar and support materials

If you missed the EPA webinar last week, you can still download PowerPoints at <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/pdfs/fy14-ewdit-clu-in.pdf>. An alternative is to go to the Adobe webinar site (at the URLs below) where downloads of PowerPoints and additional reference materials will be posted for a limited time.

Webinar 1 URL:

https://epa.connectsolutions.com/fy14jobtraining_1/

Webinar 2 URL:

https://epa.connectsolutions.com/fy14jobtraining_2/

How do programs track graduates who are no longer at the same job, without a phone, or have moved?

It's easy to say that program participants will be tracked after graduation and results will be reported to ACRES (the EPA reporting system). But what happens when students change jobs, phone numbers, move, or just drop out of site? This is a major problem for grantees and one where innovative ideas have demonstrated results.

From John Mello, Baltimore Center for Green Careers:

- Gather no less than 5 contact numbers (friends, relatives, significant others, etc.) at orientation and tell participants that these numbers will be used to follow up with them in the event that the current number is inactive.
- Contact the employer to verify employment or to schedule a visit/communication with the graduate.
- Observe participant relationships during training and reach out to a friend when they are unreachable.
- Make friends with family members during graduation and let them know that they are a critical part of the collaboration. Request permission to reach out to them when trying to reach a graduate.
- Others have had success with a program-administered Facebook account. While numbers disconnect and change regularly, Facebook accounts remain steady and unchanged.

From Cynthia Neubauer-Lee, City of Tacoma:

- Use tools provided by the local WIB. The city of Tacoma's program uses the SKIES system and utilizes TAXIS to determine if participants are working. If you do not have access to SKIES, your Work Source office may be able to assist you with tracking.

Another grantee provides graduates with inexpensive "e-readers" with email, forming a community of program participants and alumni. Engage graduates. Free refresher programs, alumni nights, socials, and speaking invitations as part of program presentations all keep graduates engaged.

Simplifying the RFP response

A "first read" of the EPA Request for Proposals can intimidate and discourage program managers and grant writers alike. The EPA environmental workforce development cooperative agreement is not like many grant programs that allow for generalizations and obscure narratives. The EPA Request for Proposals requires concise answers to specific questions. Answers to each question must stand on their own merits, and will be given point scores. Applicants must "nail" the answers to these questions as competition requires scores in the mid 90%.

What is the "take away" from this? Answer every question, and be concise—even redundant when necessary.

One approach suggested by an experienced grantee:

Write down every question on a separate piece of paper. This will generate a large stack of paper—a digital approach may even work better. Assign papers (questions) to participating partners, identify weak areas, share and exchange results. This approach engages partners and ensures a response to every question. Three to five participants may be involved in this process requiring a coordinator and a grant writer to act as filters, editors, and wordsmiths. It brings partners into the grant development and program planning process.

Partners and community involvement

The process just described involves close interaction with working partners. That is why it is so important to establish advisory boards and partnerships early. As discussed in this week's PLC, there are essentially four types of organizations acting as prime grantees:

1. Community nonprofits

2. City or county government organizations
3. Academic or other training oriented organization
4. Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs)

All of these organizations appear to work equally well, but only when they engage all of the other organizations in their target community. Meetings with representatives from each of these organizations need to be taking place. Participants need to be engaged and be part of the program development process described above.

In addition to major partners described above, additional partners common to most grantee programs include:

- Local Brownfields projects and programs
- Local Veterans programs
- Local housing authority (for lead and asbestos)
- Local academic institutions or environmental consultants
- Local organized labor organizations (mostly in urbanized areas)
- Local community/tribal/religious organizations
- First responders, fire, and hazardous materials cleanup teams
- Sanitary districts, and utility and highway departments
- Health and human services
- LOCAL AND NATIONAL EMPLOYERS

Opportunities

The GreatEST Institute has a few openings left.

The Partnership for Environmental Technology Education (PETE) is accepting applications for enrollment in the Community College Consortium for Health and Safety Training (CCCHST). Annually, nineteen instructors are accepted to attend a no-cost, ten-day Great Environmental Safety Training (GreatEST) Institute that provides standards, curriculum, and hands-on methods for delivering Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response training. Your participation in the GreatEST Institute will provide you with:

- An annual CCCHST trainer certificate
- A license to use and duplicate CCCHST curriculum
- CCCHST technical assistance
- CCCHST instructor support materials
- National marketing for your program

The GreatEST Institute will be held at the Eastern Iowa Community College District in Davenport, Iowa, on June 2–13, 2014. To apply, please contact Patti Thompson at pattijthompson@gmail.com.

2014 Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conference

Advance registration for the Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conference ended November 6. The Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conference gathers an interesting mix of organized labor, tribal, city government, and environmental organizations with a common goal (green jobs).

February 10-11, 2014, Washington, D.C. at the Washington Hilton Hotel

For additional information, please visit www.greenjobsconference.org/.

EPA Announces Request for Applications for the 2014 Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreement Program

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s Office of Environmental Justice announces the opening of its Request for Applications (RFA) for the 2014 Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving (EJCPS) Cooperative Agreement Program. The (EJCPS) Cooperative Agreement Program provides funding for eligible applicants for projects that address local environmental and/or public health issues within an affected community. Awards will be made in amounts of up to \$120,000 per award for a two-year project period. Interested applicants are invited to participate in conference calls with EPA to address questions about the EJCPS Program and this solicitation.

<http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/grants/ej-cps-grants.html>

EPA Seeks Environmental Education Grant Applications

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is currently accepting applications for environmental education projects under the Agency's Environmental Education Grant Program. The program works to engage communities across the country through a wide variety of educational projects that have a lasting impact on people's health by facilitating environmental stewardship. Projects in the past have engaged students in stream monitoring, created sustainable mentoring communities, and provided professional development to teachers on subjects including science, technology, engineering and math.

Eligible organizations include local education agencies, colleges or universities, state education or environmental agencies, tribal education agencies, 501(C)(3) nonprofit organizations, and noncommercial educational broadcasting entities working in education.

This competitive grants program will total \$2.77 million. Each of the ten EPA regional offices will award two or three grants and one or two grants will be awarded from EPA's headquarters in Washington, DC. Each award will be an estimated \$75,000 to \$200,000. EPA expects to award between 22 and 32 grants nationwide.

For more information about the program and how to apply, please visit

<http://www2.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants>.

Grant Funding Guidance for State and Tribal Response Programs

Section 128(a) of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), as amended, authorizes a noncompetitive \$50 million grant program to establish and enhance state and tribal response programs. Generally, these response programs address the assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment of brownfields sites and other sites with actual or perceived contamination. This document provides guidance that will enable states and tribes to apply for and use Fiscal Year 2014 section 128(a) funds. The application deadline is January 31, 2014.

http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/state_tribal/fund_guide.htm

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Next PLC Session: January 29, 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 *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/>.