

March 26, 2014

Notes from Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Cycle 10, Session 6

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

Topics: Current Happenings / Updates from Washington as of March 26, 2014

Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board

Opportunities

Job Openings

### **Current Happenings / Updates from Washington as of March 26, 2014**

#### Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Grants

EPA's review of the EWDJT proposals is on track. The announcement of those selected for award is anticipated to take place in May. Unsuccessful proposals will also be notified at that time. Successful programs will receive funds later this summer.

#### 2015 EPA Budget to Congress

Gina McCarthy, EPA Administrator, is presenting the fiscal year 2015 EPA budget to Congress. Funding requests support the need for community job development and environmental justice. The Administration's request for \$ 7.89 billion includes \$1.33 billion for superfund, RCRA, and leaking underground storage tanks. Emergency response, chemical awareness, and safety funding requests total over \$680 million. While not specifically addressing environmental workforce development, Mrs. McCarthy emphasized the importance of programs each of which have an opportunity to create sustainable jobs for our graduates.

### **Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board**

Many thanks to Ray Sullivan, NW Regional Workforce Investment Board/Green Jobs Innovation Fund Manager for this week's PLC presentation. The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board in Waterbury, CT has received workforce development grants in 2009 and again in 2013 with placement rates exceeding 90%.

The NW Regional Workforce Investment Board worked hard to develop close relationships with other state and local governmental organizations. As a result, the organization plays a key role in economic development in the western part of the state. Training and placing unemployed residents extends beyond environmental positions to include construction, electrical, and plumbing trades. As a result, the NW Regional Workforce Investment Board is able to leverage funds from multiple sources such as the Green Jobs Innovation Fund; and job opportunities such as *Rebuild Education*, tank removal, brownfields remediation, fracking, water/wastewater, and gas pipeline improvements.

Ray attributes his success (with a 90-95% placement rate) to the following attributes of his program.

- Close ties with city and state government, taking advantage of "hire local" job ordinances.
- Coordination and utilization of services provided by organized labor—instruction and guidance.
- An extremely selective participant selection system using the "funnel" approach with pre-training.
- Working with employers—employers first—guiding the program.
- Close ties with city and state government. Being a WIB provides the NW Regional Workforce Investment Board access (and sometimes preference) among other governmental organizations.

Current economic and political conditions place job growth as a top priority. State funding and federal block grants can provide resources to the WIB not available to non-governmental organizations.

- Coordination and utilization of services provided by organized labor. Bringing organized labor into the training and workforce development process not only provides leveraged training, it provides a path to pre-apprentice programs related to environmental remediation. Ray's program provides pre-apprentice training in addition to training in the construction trades. They are able to leverage these training programs with the addition of environmental remediation training for selected students.
- An extremely selective participant selection system. The NW Regional Workforce Investment Board uses a "funnel" selection process and pre-training to select students that best fit the environmental workforce development program. As discussed in earlier PLC discussions, selecting a sufficiently large target community can be important in this type of selection process.

With awareness sessions held every month, large numbers of prospective applicants must be reviewed and filtered to find 20 of the most motivated to receive environmental remediation, health, and safety training. Below is the approach used by the NW Regional Workforce Investment Board EWDJT program.

- Bi-weekly awareness sessions (constructions, energy, and environmental trades)
- Preliminary screening and paperwork
- Call back
- CASA employment competency (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System)
- Remedial math classes twice a week
- Call back—drug test
- Individual service plans branching applicants into alternative training programs
- 30 hours of pre-training (OSHA 10, construction math, green tradesman)
- Selection process for additional environmental training based on observation and interviews
- 200 hours—5 weeks of environmental training under EWDJT program
- Drug testing before placement
- Follow-up
- Recertification training

Notable in the process used by the NW Regional Workforce Investment Board is the integration of environmental training with other alternatives. Students may select construction trades, solar, electrical, plumbing, BTI (LEEDS), home energy, and pre-apprentice training in addition to consideration for the EWDJT program. Refresher and recertification training allows NW Regional Workforce Investment Board to track students.

Ray's top recommendation for new and prospective grantees is to develop a close relationship with employers. It is extremely important to find what employers are looking for in the graduates they hire. This demonstrates the need to have potential employers engaged in the EWDJT program as advisors, instructors, and program supporters.

Ray would be happy to answer questions and can be reached at [raymond.sullivan@nrwib.org](mailto:raymond.sullivan@nrwib.org).

### **Opportunities**

Federal grant opportunities that reoccur each year need funds "out the door" by the end of September. With this date in mind, the time required to announce, review, award, and process grant proposals

requires FY2014 grant requests be completed by early spring. As a result, summer should be expected to be a quiet time for federal grant opportunities. However, among those interested in leveraging resources, this is a great time to focus on available state and local funding opportunities. It is also a time to look forward and plan for the next federal funding cycle beginning October 1.

Below are a few available federal funding opportunities. While these grant opportunities are not directly involved in environmental training, those interested in environmental justice, community education, and public health can find involvement a synergistic addition to ongoing environmental training activities.

#### FY14 Brownfields Training, Research, and Technical Assistance Grants

Closing date: April 18, 2014

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) notice announces the availability of funds and solicits proposals from eligible entities, including nonprofit organizations, to conduct research, or provide technical assistance to communities facing Brownfields cleanup and revitalization challenges. Focus areas of this announcement include: 1) technical assistance to environmental workforce development and job training grantees, 2) technical assistance on the integration of environmental justice and equitable development for brownfields-impacted communities, 3) research on the benefits of Brownfields redevelopment, and 4) technical assistance on Brownfields financing and economic development strategies.

#### Environmental Education (EE) Grants—Fall 2014

The purpose of the Environmental Education Model Grants Program is to provide money to support environmental education projects that increase the public's awareness about environmental issues, and provide them with the skills to take responsible actions to protect the environment. Since 1992, EPA has received between \$2 and \$3 million in grant funding per year and has awarded more than 3,500 grants.

Under this program, EPA seeks grant proposals from eligible applicants to support environmental education projects that promote environmental stewardship and help develop knowledgeable and responsible students, teachers, and citizens. 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.

EPA is no longer accepting applications for this year's EE Model Grants Program. The next grant solicitation will open in fall 2014.

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

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

National Council is requesting letters of interest from all conservation and youth corps programs that would like to be identified as a 21CSC member organization. USDA is initiating this outreach in order to catalyze the establishment of a 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC) to engage young

Americans and returning veterans in public lands and water restoration. For more information, contact:  
USDA Forest Service  
ATT: Merlene Mazyck  
1620 Kent Street, RPC,  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Arlington, VA 22209  
[21CSC@fs.fed.us](mailto:21CSC@fs.fed.us).

The GreatEST Institute is full but you may be able to get on a waiting list

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

**Job Openings**

Check out Brownfield Renewal for press releases and articles at [www.brownfieldrenewal.com](http://www.brownfieldrenewal.com). Below is a new job opportunity that may be of interest.

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

Next PLC Session: April 9, 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.