

September 11, 2013

Notes from Brownfields Professional Learning Community (PLC) – Cycle 9, Session 5 (session 93)

Topics: Current Happenings / Updates from Washington as of 9/11/13

Metropolitan Energy Center, KC Environmental Workforce Development Partnership, Kansas City, KS

Opportunities and News

Current Happenings / Updates from Washington as of 9/11/13

Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting

The Annual All-Grantee Meeting for PLC members and EPA-funded grantees will be held in Alexandria, VA, on September 18-19, 2013. If you have materials you would like to share, there will be 120 participants interested in receiving copies. Materials previously submitted will be distributed to all participants on a flash drive.

For questions or for more information, please contact Glo Hanne at ghanne@eicc.edu, or by phone at 563.441.4081 or toll-free at 1.866.419.6761.

If you are not attending, see **Opportunities and News** at the end of these notes announcing a Web event on the September 18, 2013.

Metropolitan Energy Center, KC Environmental Workforce Development Partnership, Kansas City, KS
Warren Adams-Leavitt. Thanks, Warren, for your presentation.

The lead applicant in the KC Environmental Workforce Development Partnership is the Metropolitan Energy Center (MEC). MEC is a 30 year old, nonprofit organization that promotes energy efficiency, environmental sustainability, and economic growth in the greater Kansas City area. MEC is recognized for its innovative work in three areas that define the primary goals of the environmental workforce development and job training program.

1. Student recruitment—MEC has pioneered the use of student “tryouts” as an assessment and screening tool to find those most deserving to receive training.
 - a. MEC markets their program in traditional ways with videos, ads, and radio announcements. The objective is to have those interested attend an orientation session where the environmental workforce development and training program is explained.
 - b. At each orientation, prospective students are introduced in detail to the environmental job development program and the selection process. Those with proper documentation are invited to a 2-day “tryout” from 8am to 2pm.
 - c. Evaluators consisting of program partners, graduates, potential employers, and staff work with “tryout” participants to observe and identify those most likely to succeed in the program. A few of the qualities that evaluators look for include:
 - i. Punctuality
 - ii. Positive attitude

- iii. Fitness
 - iv. Problem solving abilities
 - v. Critical thinking skills
 - vi. Verbal, math, and writing skills
 - vii. Work ethic
 - viii. Teamwork
- d. As mentioned by other grantees, the ability to work on teams along with a good work ethic and attitude rank high on mandatory qualities for good program participants.
- e. At the conclusion of the 2-day “tryout”, evaluators use a team approach to select applicants for entry into the program. Those not chosen (about 50%) are encouraged to look at and are presented with alternative programs. Some applicants are encouraged to reapply for the next cycle.
2. Assisting ex-offenders—MEC has actively reached out and worked extensively with ex-offenders, developing jobs which allow them to find meaningful employment.
- a. MEC, more than most other grantees, has made a concerted effort to work with ex-offenders, giving them a second chance. As Warren said, “The environmental/remediation/construction industry is perhaps the best fit for ex-offender employment opportunities. Many owners of those small remediation/construction businesses are ex-offenders and/or appreciate the difficulties that ex-offenders face when trying to obtain work.”
 - b. Warren does not find well-trained, credentialed ex-offenders difficult to place. In some cases, restrictions may be placed on their license (sex and violent convictions). Special cases may require specialized training accepted by employers. MEC has worked with and has attempted to develop programs with prison populations.
 - c. Those interested in working with ex-offenders may wish to discuss this special population in more detail with Warren.
3. Community service—MEC engages students with hands-on training in a way that combines volunteerism and community service.
- a. Student volunteers, on-the-job training, and community service—MEC has combined student training with community service. MEC may be unique in that student volunteers work with a licensed remediation firm on targeted community projects to give students actual remediation experience. In some cases, stipends are provided by the companies using the students as cleanup volunteers. Warren has provided us with a consent form (we will be happy to share) that he uses to be signed by students when working on city projects, and to protect remediation firms contracted to perform cleanup operations.

Below is a quick overview of the MEC's environmental workforce program.

Demographics and target population:

- The Metropolitan Energy Center targets its job training activities in Kansas City and Independence, Missouri (combined population 593,330).
- In western Independence and Kansas City's urban core, 13 to 25 percent of residents live below the poverty level.
- Approximately one-third of Kansas City residents are minorities.
- The unemployment rate in one area is 58.4 percent.
- In Independence, the steel mills and the oil refinery have closed.
- The unemployment rate is 10.3 percent.
- There are 2,181 potential brownfields in Kansas City, and 180 potential brownfields in a 2.25-square-mile area in Independence.

Active partners:

- Local remediation firms (Era Environmental for training and student OJT)
- Local hospital (as leveraged training provider)
- Multiple municipal partners
- City remediation projects
- Correction officers

Core training program:

- 6 weeks
- 83-hour training cycles of core and supplemental training courses
- Participants also offered a 174-hour environmental remediation track or a 190-hour environmental assessor/inspector track guided by students' interests and abilities.
- 40-hour HAZWOPER
- 32-hour lead abatement worker
- 16-hour asbestos operations and maintenance
- Underground storage leak prevention awareness
- Solid waste management
- Innovative/alternative treatment technologies
- 8-hour mold abatement
- 10-hour OSHA construction safety
- Stormwater awareness

Additional curriculum:

- 40-hour asbestos abatement supervisor
- Operations and maintenance—water collection systems
- Operations and maintenance—water treatment systems
- Extensive life skills training including:
 - First Aid/CPR/AED
 - Environmental Justice
 - Healthy homes

Tracking objectives:

- 2 training cycles per year (summer graduation begins in spring)
- 20 participants per cycle

Placement and tracking:

- Track graduates (also used in “tryout” selection process)
- 70% placement
- Extensive use of local employers for student selection, training, and placement
- Extensive use of students as volunteers on local community projects

Student recruitment:

- Extensive use of graduates, employers, and partners in the recruitment process
- “Tryout” student recruitment and selection as described

Student screening and support:

- High school diploma or GED
- Drug and alcohol free- notified of testing
- Birth certificate/ID
- Social security card
- Fitness test
- Driver’s license not required

Contact information:

Warren would be happy to discuss his program, including the use of student volunteers and the “Tryout” recruitment process.

Warren Adams-Leavitt

Metropolitan Energy Center, Inc.

3810 Paseo Blvd.

Kansas City, MO 64109

Phone: 816-830-0294

warren@kcenergy.org

www.kcenergy.org

Opportunities and News

If you are not able to attend the Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting, you may want to check out the webinar below being held on the same date: September 18. This information was provided by Paula Paris of JFY Networks. Thanks, Paula.

Another Part of Being Job Ready: A Webinar on Worker Rights Education in Workforce Development

Do you want to learn more about common labor law violations workers are experiencing in today's economy? Are you interested in how you can educate workers about their rights in the workplace? Or do you want to know how you can train your front-line staff about these issues?

This webinar will discuss the growing need to incorporate worker rights education into job training programs and services. The webinar will also offer attendees practical advice on how to build this essential component of job readiness into their programs.

Register for the webinar at <https://cc.readytalk.com/cc/s/registrations/new?cid=hbs4pok5ca8o>.

Webinar presenters:

Rebecca Smith, Coordinator of the Immigrant Worker Justice Project, National Employment Law Project

Alma Couverthie, Director of Education and Centers, CASA De Maryland

Alison Dickson Quesada, Labor Education Specialist, University of Illinois School of Labor and Employment Relations, Worker Rights Project

Webinar date and time:

Wednesday, September 18, 2013

2:00-3:15 p.m. Eastern

1:00-2:15 p.m. Central

12:00-1:15 p.m. Mountain

11:00-12:15 a.m. Pacific

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Next PLC Session: September 25, 2013 at 2:00 p.m. EDT

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/>.