

September 25, 2013

Notes from Brownfields Professional Learning Community (PLC) – Cycle 9, Session 6 (session 94)

Topics: Current Happenings / Updates from Washington
Summary and Review of the Annual All-Grantee Meeting
EPA Regional Job Training Coordinators' Contact Information

Current Happenings / Updates from Washington

The *Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting* was held in Alexandria, Virginia, on September 18-19, 2013. Thank you to everyone who participated. As always, it was nice to see everyone again—new grantees, PLC members, and experienced grantees and alumni.

The time we had together provided some great opportunities to share our experiences and discuss the difficulties associated with delivering great programs with limited resources. With six large-group sessions and 14 small-group discussions, we still had time for one-on-one discussions.

Summary and Review of the Annual All-Grantee Meeting

This week, the PLC summarized and discussed some of the “take-away” ideas generated in breakout and group discussions including observations of presentations made by representatives of EPA.

Observations from EPA presentations

Mathy Stanislaus, Assistant Administrator of the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER), provided encouragement and support to all Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training grantees. Mathy has made this program a key part of the OSWER's mission and has worked hard to maintain funding. He emphasized the importance of reporting accomplishments allowing communities to share their successes with those evaluating the effectiveness and worth of EPA programs. Joe Bruss (bruss.joseph@epa.gov) is an excellent contact for sending pictures, accomplishments, graduations, and other news.

Mathy shared thoughts regarding possible new directions. His interest and appointment to the President's taskforce on manufacturing provides an opportunity to examine environmental jobs as they relate to the nation's growth in manufacturing.

In short—keep up the good work. Send results and accomplishments to Joe Bruss. Begin assessing environmental job opportunities in manufacturing.

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Joe Bruss, Office of Brownfields Cleanup and Redevelopment, provided some encouraging news. While things remain in flux, it is possible that the FY 2014 Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Request for Proposals will be issued in November. Last year the date was delayed several months, but that is no indication of what will happen this year.

Take-away—It's important to start working on partnerships and leveraged support now. If a grant has not been funded in the past, it is important to study the reviewer comments with EPA Regional Coordinators. They can provide summaries of scores allowing those resubmitting a chance to strengthen their proposals.

For those who have never submitted a grant, it is as important to contact the EPA Regional Coordinator informing them of your intentions. Coordinators can be a great source of information and potential partners. Their personal assistance must end when RFP's are issued, so contact them immediately. There is no cost or commitment.

Contact information for EPA Regional Job Training Coordinators appears at the end of these post-session notes.

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Jeff Barnett, EPA Region 3 Job Training Coordinator, emphasized feelings expressed in the past. While it is great that programs have proven themselves exceptional and have been successful in obtaining multiple grant awards, the EPA program was originally designed to provide start-up funding with intentions that grantees would leverage and merge their programs into longer term, sustainable organizations. In recent cycles, it appears that about half of the awards funded established programs and half new programs. That is a general observation, not policy or process, and may just reflect the quality of proposals submitted. Another observation—many programs received funding after being rejected in previous years and strengthening their proposals.

Take-away—As communities consider partners and supporters, it is important to consider how programs can become self-supporting or merge with existing sustainable program, with or without federal support. Do not give up if your proposal is not accepted the first time.

Observations from small-group breakout sessions at the All-Grantee Meeting

Due to the limited time (30 minutes) of our PLC meetings, we were not able to discuss issues addressed in small group breakout sessions. Listed below are talking points addressed at breakout sessions. While they may appear incomplete, they will provide topics for future PLC discussions.

- Partners – traditional and non-traditional
 - State Department of Labor
 - Trainers
 - County commissioners
 - City and social worker organizations
 - Court system connections
 - Metro development commissions
- Advisory board composition – traditional and non-traditional
 - Former students
 - Employers
 - Equipment manufacturers
 - Civic leaders
 - Organized labor
 - People who can leverage (supplies & equipment)
 - Use “job clubs” for advisors
 - Involve elders in tribal areas
- Obstacles relating to partners and advisory boards
 - Do they understand the depth of commitment? (same as students)

- Keep advisors involved in day-to-day activities.
- Bond advisors and partners with the program.
- Invite all of the above to graduation. Use local restaurants.
- Tryouts as an assessment and screening tool
 - Orientation
 - Prospective students are introduced in detail to the environmental job development program.
 - Those with proper documentation are invited to a two-day tryout.
 - Evaluators consist of program partners, graduates, potential employers, and staff.
 - Qualities that evaluators look for include:
 - Punctuality
 - Positive attitude
 - Fitness
 - Problem solving
 - Critical thinking
 - Verbal, math, and writing skills
 - Work ethic
 - Teamwork
- Obstacles for applicants
 - Drug testing (drug-free)
 - Ex-offenders and court
 - Driver's license
 - Biggest obstacle
 - Cannot pay outstanding fines
 - Project CLEAN SLATE – clean up records
 - Working in construction
 - Students with a history have the best opportunities
 - Cost of transportation – major obstacle
 - Child care – major obstacle
- Curriculum
 - Include one hour of physical training
 - Provide refreshers (an allowable expense)
 - In-house training provides more control
 - Program participants need more soft skills
 - General construction is extremely useful
 - HAZWOPER (mandatory)
 - Forklift training (extremely useful)
 - Lead remediation (extremely useful and expensive)
 - Water/wastewater (extremely useful – check needs assessment)
 - Mold (extremely useful)
 - Reduced training cycle to 6-8 weeks (depends on curriculum)
- Placement
 - HAZWOPER (extremely useful)
 - Forklift operator (extremely useful)
 - Employer dialog (bonding with program)
 - Engage students in professional meetings for exposure
 - Find out about employer tax credits
 - USGBC (green employers)

- Establish a “Build-a-Buddy” system for workplace tracking
- Family involvement for retention and tracking
 - Involve entire family
 - Involve social workers
 - Get multiple phone numbers
 - Use family ties (get mom’s phone number)
 - Use Facebook
- Tracking aids
 - Use certifications as a tracking tool
 - Use WIB to locate students
 - Use job verification forms
 - Tracking software
 - Efforts to outcomes
 - Form stacker

EPA Regional Job Training Coordinators’ Contact Information

- Region 1 – Kathleen Castagna, 617. 918.1429, castagna.kathleen@epa.gov
- Region 2 – Schenine Mitchell, 212. 637.3282, mitchell.schenine@epa.gov
- Region 3 – Jeff Barnett, 215.814.3246, barnett.jeff@epa.gov
- Region 4 – Kathleen Curry, 404.562.8660, curry.kathleen@epa.gov
- Region 5 – Linda Morgan, 312.886.4747, morgan.linda@epa.gov
- Region 6 – Amber Perry, 214.665.3172, perry.amber@epa.gov
- Region 7 – Charlie Foley, 913.551.7710, foley.charlie@epa.gov
- Region 8 – Christina Wilson, 303.312.6706, wilson.christina@epa.gov
- Region 9 – Nova Blazej, 415.972.3846, blazej.nova@epa.gov
- Region 10 – Robert Tan, 206.553.2580, tan.robert@epa.gov

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Next PLC Session: October 9, 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/>.