

April 3, 2013

Notes from Brownfields Professional Learning Community (PLC) – Cycle 8, Session 7 (session 85)

**Topics:** Updates from Washington

Last minute tweaks for a stronger proposal

Landmines and suggestions

Upcoming environmental workforce related conferences/workshops

**Updates from Washington**

2013 Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training grant proposals are due April 9, 2013.

REMINDER: The RFP and Frequently Asked Questions can be found at

<http://www.epa.gov/oswer/grants-funding.htm>.

EPA also presented two informative CLU-IN sessions. The Powerpoint and session recordings are available at <http://www.clu-in.org/conf/tio/bfjt2013/>.

**Last minute tweaks for a stronger proposal**

NOTE: The discussion this week included independent observations and may not reflect the thinking or policy of EPA or grant evaluators.

The RFP guidelines have been reviewed, the FAQs checked, and notes from the EPA Web cast studied. Here are a few last minute tweaks which may be considered for a stronger proposal.

1. Make sure the advisory committee is informed. Keep them up-to-date. If an advisory committee is not in place, organize one before submitting the proposal. Advisory committees with community members, employers, and governmental/nongovernmental representation provide visibility and input from key community stakeholders.
2. Revisit links to local government. Government partners are essential to the sustainability of job development programs. City officials are fine, but agency staff associated with labor, economic development, and the environment will open doors to additional resources.
3. Make sure to include Brownfields as part of the workforce development plan. In addition to Superfund sites, landfills, polluted rivers, scrap yards, and other industrial polluters, don't forget to describe the local Brownfields program.
4. Include partners from the community. Strong partners make strong programs. Partnerships, as with advisory boards, should not be formed post-grant award, but rather before the award and included in the proposal narrative.
5. Establish a defined pathway from student recruitment to placement and tracking. If a clear path cannot be described to an unemployed community resident, it may not exist. Illustrating that path as part of the proposal process strengthens the program plan.
6. Employer commitments and participation. A simple commitment from potential employers to look at your participants as possible future employees is an excellent first step in developing a strong placement plan. Have potential employers engage and participate in the program as guest speakers, adjunct instructors, and "special activity" participants.
7. Focus curriculum on employer needs. Because a community in urgent need of environmental assistance does not translate to job placement. For example, Freon removal may be in demand. However, if contractors are providing existing certified HVAC technicians with removal training, graduates without HVAC training and experience may be shut out of the employment market.

Similar situations exist in other areas such as solar installation and energy efficiency training. These issues can be mitigated with additional supplemental training.

8. Sync the curriculum to EPA interests. The RFP clearly presents the areas of interest associated with the Environmental workforce development and job-training program. Additional training is encouraged and often necessary (life skills, construction trades etc.) but make clear that supplemental training is performed with leveraged resources.
9. Clearly define the recruitment process. The program is no stronger than the character of program participants. Describing how the most worthy and most likely to succeed will be selected is critical part of the best proposals.
10. Demonstrate how employers will interact with the program. Placement, thus employers, becomes the “end game” of all training programs. Demonstrating exactly how those employers will interact with the program and students provides clear evidence of a well thought out proposal.

### **Landmines and suggestions**

1. Respond to EVERY question. While EPA has indicated it does not want proposals that list every question, every question must have an answer. As the grant is prepared, list every question, answer the easy ones first, and then tackle the more difficult issues. Above all, have an answer for every question.
2. Clearly spell out leveraged resources. Every grant needs supplemental support. Life skills, supplemental training, recruitment/placement assistance, instructional assistance, facilities, equipment, transportation, and services are just a few of the many leveraged resources available to workforce development programs. It is easy to skip over obvious leveraged resources, but DO NOT skip them. Leveraging is a critical component of sustainable workforce development programs. It is equally important that proposal evaluators are made aware of those leveraged resources.
3. Be repetitive. Every section should be able to stand alone. Assume the proposal will be cut apart such that each section will not have the visibility of other sections. Repetition is OK. In fact, it may be necessary to best answer many questions describing the program.
4. Don't try to be overly creative beyond the scope of the program. Innovation should be encouraged. It makes a proposal stand out among others. It should be noted that EPA has specific guidelines describing the type of workforce development program it considers sustainable. This is a grant which allows grantees to be creative, but stay within guidelines it has established.
5. Don't promise what you cannot deliver. Those writing the grant proposal need to be close to those who must deliver as promised. Grantees will be expected to execute their programs as described in the proposal.
6. Seek help and have a great week. Current and past grantees are super mentors. All are encouraged to share their experience. Contact information can be found at the EPA Web site or at HMTRI's Brownfields Toolbox Web site at <http://brownfields-toolbox.org/>.

Here are a few additional contacts in addition to those from previous PLC sessions:

- Art Shanks, Cyprus Mandela Training Center, 510-835-3726, [dmiller@cypressmandela.org](mailto:dmiller@cypressmandela.org)
- Chris Litzau, Milwaukee Community Service Corps, 414-372-9040, [investinyouth@wi.rr.com](mailto:investinyouth@wi.rr.com)
- Warren Adams-Leavitt, OAI, Inc., 816-225-4573

## **Upcoming environmental workforce-related conferences/workshops**

*2013 Good Jobs, Green Jobs Conference*

April 16-18, 2013

Washington Hilton, Washington, DC

The 2013 conference will focus on 1) how to grow the clean economy to scale; 2) the role of strategic partnerships between the public and private sectors in solving the country's pressing economic and environmental challenges; 3) the role of regulations in creating new markets; and 4) how people in every part of the U.S. are working collaboratively for social, economic and environmental justice, while building an economy with good jobs. Please visit [www.greenjobsconference.org/2013](http://www.greenjobsconference.org/2013).

*National Brownfields 2013 Conference*, Atlanta, GA, May 15-17, 2013. This is the most important environmental workforce related conference of the year attended by over 4,000 participants in Brownfields-related fields. Registration and housing is now open. It's important to get your hotel reservation early as the closest hotels will fill up fast. For more information, please visit <http://www.brownfieldsconference.org>.

HMTRI will conduct a workshop discussion/roundtable on May 17, 2013, 11:15 AM - 12:30 PM as part of the Marketplace of Ideas. The session is called *Environmental Workforce Development Programs: How Can a Community Build a Success?* Paula Paris from JFY, Lena Miller from Hunters Point Family, and Mike Senew will be hosting this open discussion. Earmark the workshop or go to <http://www.brownfieldsconference.org/en/Session/1974?returnurl=%2fen%2fsessions>.

It's important to get your hotel reservation early as the closest hotels will fill up fast. For more information, please visit <http://www.brownfieldsconference.org>.

### **MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

Next PLC Session:      April 23, 2013  
   2:00pm EDT

Topics:                      Eighth session of PLC Cycle 8

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.