

May 8, 2013

Notes from Brownfields Professional Learning Community (PLC) – Cycle 8, Session 9 (session 87)

Topics: Updates from Washington

Getting ready for Brownfields 2013 – May 15-17<sup>th</sup>

Student recruitment and Workforce Investment Boards (WIA)

Opportunities

### **Updates from Washington**

Latest news as of May 10:

Hopefully proposal submitters have not heard from EPA regarding the rejection of their proposals due to qualification criteria. EPA is currently reviewing ranking criteria and it appears that awards will be made in June. We will keep PLC participants up-to-date as announcements are made.

### **Getting ready for Brownfields 2013 – May 15-17, 2013**

Note: The objective of our Professional Learning Community (PLC) is to pool participants' collective wisdom, experience, and knowledge to provide guidance and information to everyone involved. This is additionally the objective of our Marketplace of Ideas session at Brownfields 2013, and the Annual Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training All-Grantee Meeting held in Alexandria, VA each year. Below are details of those events.

*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>.

### **Student recruitment and Workforce Investment Boards (WIA)**

Working with WIA "On-The-Job Training (OJT) Programs" as a recruitment and placement tool

While opportunities vary from location to location, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) provides federal funds to support business and jobseekers. The WIA-sponsored "On-The-Job-Training Program" can be used not only as an excellent placement incentive to employers, but as a recruitment tool for program applicants.

Currently enrolled WIA participants can provide employers partial reimbursement (from 50–90% of gross wages) for up to 6 months. Additionally, materials such as work boots, additional certification training, and other items required of the job can also be reimbursed.

Typical requirements for OJT participation includes:

1. The participant must be WIA enrolled (more about this later).
2. The participant cannot be a former employee.
3. The OJT opportunity must be a full-time position lasting at least a year.

4. The participant must be a resident of the community administering the program.
5. Wage standards must apply (i.e. \$12.12/ hour).

It should be noted that OJT does not obligate the employer or the employee from terminating the job.

Another strategy often used by Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Programs includes the reverse enrollment of applicants as WIA participants. This is an important point. For example, Christine Campbell from Clover Park Technical College works with the local job center to screen all new environmental workforce participants for WIA eligibility. If participants do not qualify for benefits, it does not affect their participation in the program. Those who qualify, however, are entitled to additional benefits and are reverse enrolled in WIA programs.

#### Workforce Investment Boards – recruitment, screening and placement

The last PLC session discussed the various student assessment tools used by Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Programs to find candidates most likely to succeed in this rigorous program. Assessment tests included:

- Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE)
- WorkKeys
- Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS)

Often these tests are administered by the “job link center” as are other additional screening services. Each student assessment test has advantages and drawbacks. Each can provide certificates for potential employers and provides a good measure of a student’s knowledge of reading, math, and informational skills. While TABE tests are most common among Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Programs, all are being used depending on local preferences.

Standards for accepting students into the environmental training program vary from 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade. It is acknowledged, however, that student assessment tests do not provide the most important indicators of successful candidates. As previously discussed, subjective student qualities include:

- Sticking with the program
- Determination
- Working well in groups
- Attending all classes
- Accepting new and difficult challenges
- A passion for their new career
- Appealing to potential employers

Subjective applicant qualities, while the most important, are hardest to document. Documentation is the responsibility of program staff rather than the local job center. Over the years, grantees have used a variety of strategies to address subjective criteria. Try-outs, referrals, interviews, family visits, open house, and program visits are a few of the strategies employed.

#### Applicant rejection – documentation and support

What happens when an applicant is rejected? Has he or she passed assessment tests but does not appear to have the desire or interest required of successful participants?

A common response to the rejected applicant is, “Seats are limited. Please reapply for the next cycle.” With limited seats (25 or less) every non-motivated participant is depriving a motivated, deserving

community resident a chance to better his or her life. It is important to reserve this valuable resource for the most deserving and the most likely to benefit.

Those of us familiar with this program understand these concepts. We cannot assume that all community residents will understand the severe limitation of resources. Clearly, some residents may view the Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Program as *somewhere to go, better than nothing, or a right* rather than an opportunity. For this reason, it is recommended to begin a conversation about establishing a policy for documenting acceptance and rejection of applicants. This conversation may additionally expand to the development of an objective, documented methodology for student recruitment. Use of ranking criteria, as does EPA, in selecting grantees may provide a starting point for such conversations.

### **Opportunities**

*Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting, September 18-19, 2013*

The Hazardous Materials Training and Research Institute (HMTRI), under a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. EPA, invites PLC members and past grantees to attend the Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting. This meeting provides a unique opportunity to share a variety of approaches to environmental job training and development. The focus of the meeting is for grantees to exchange information and ideas with each other and with EPA Regional and Headquarters representatives. All grantees and PLC participants are encouraged to attend.

This year's meeting will be held in Alexandria, Virginia, on September 18-19, 2013. As in past years, the agenda will include both small- and large-group sessions. The cost of the conference and 2 nights lodging are covered for all grantees and ACTIVE PLC members. Participants will have to pay travel expenses.

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

*Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership*

To apply for Fiscal Year 2013 Implementation Strategy grants, please visit:

<http://www.eda.gov/challenges/imcp/>. For more information on the entire IMCP, visit <http://www.commerce.gov/news/fact-sheets/2013/04/17/fact-sheet-investing-manufacturing-communities-partnership>.

The first step in networking is to contact the Mayor's office of Economic Development regarding community interest in this program.

### **MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

Next PLC Session:      May 22, 2013  
   2:00pm EDT

Topics:                      Last session in 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.