

May 22, 2013

Notes from Brownfields Professional Learning Community (PLC) – Cycle 8, Session 10 (session 88)

Topics: Updates from Washington

Brownfields 2013 – May 15-17, 2013

How environmental workforce development and job training evolved, where it is now, and the future of EPA Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Opportunities

**NOTE:** This was the last PLC call in Cycle 8 of 30-minute conference calls. PLC Cycle 9 will begin in June and consist of ten bi-weekly, 30-minute conference calls. The exact date is to be announced.

### **Updates from Washington**

News as of May 23: EPA should soon be announcing the proposals that will be funded this year. Hopefully, awards will be made in June. We will keep PLC participants up-to-date as announcements are made. Regardless, communities interested in developing environmental workforce job training programs should continue working and networking with potential stakeholders. We are now looking forward to the next request for proposals, hopefully next winter.

### **Brownfields 2013 – May 15-17, 2013**

HMTRI conducted a workshop discussion/roundtable on May 17, 2013, as part of the Marketplace of Ideas at the *Brownfields 2013* conference. The session was called *Environmental Workforce Development Programs: How Can a Community Build a Success?*

Many thanks to contributors and participants of our session: Lena Miller, Hunters Point Family; Tippi Reed, OAI; Warren Adams-Leavitt, Metropolitan Energy Center, Inc.; Kathleen Curry, EPA Job Training Coordinator Region 4; and those sharing their experiences with the group.

### Wish list for the next Brownfields Conference

Among excellent presentations describing new development, smart growth, and environmental remediation, not enough was said about jobs for residents of disenfranchised communities. Plenary sessions did not address those issues. It's up to us. We need to be proactive. Remind community leaders that displaced residents, and jobs created but filled by others with beautiful infrastructure do not make a vibrant community.

### **How environmental workforce development and job training evolved, where it is now, and the future of EPA Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training**

#### How has the program evolved?

The economy, at least from a jobs perspective, in the late 1990s was not much better than today. "Bucking the trend", Brownfields remediation created new jobs for environmental workers with specialized skills and certifications. The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) under section 311(b)(9) provided EPA a mechanism to fund environmental training in innovative technologies in an effort to accelerate remediation of contaminated properties. This authorization opened the doors to begin Brownfields job training pilots. Pilot training programs provided training and certifications to unemployed community residents. Skills and certifications obtained during training enabled previously underserved residents to find well-paying, sustainable jobs.

With demonstrated success and the passage of the Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act in 2002, CERCLA was amended and specifically included language authorizing job training grants under EPA's Brownfields Program.

With a small budget (around \$2million) per year, EPA has been able to fund 10-12 grants annually. The \$200,000 grants cannot duplicate other federal training programs, must be leveraged with partner assistance, and can only be used for environmentally related training. This "bare bones" program has delivered remarkable results. Over 11,000 unemployed community residents have been trained with 7,900 finding employment. This is a 71% placement rate since 1998.

#### Where are we now?

Communities interested in environmental workforce development and job training should consider an EPA grant as a way to jump start their program. EPA grants are not designed to provide financial assistance over the entire life of the program. Instead, they are designed as start-up assistance that provide resources to communities and enable the development of long-term sustainable programs. Each year, about half of the awards are made to new communities and about half to programs demonstrating excellent results and continued progress.

The following issues should be emphasized when considering EPA federal assistance.

1. EPA workforce grants are designed as start-up funding, not total program support.
2. Programs cannot duplicate or be redundant with other federal training.
3. Due to the nature of the program, EPA funds must be leveraged and supplemented with assistance from other sources.
4. While some programs are refunded, it should not be an expectation that additional EPA funds will be available following the 3-year grant period.
5. EPA workforce development grants do not allow for indirect/administrative costs. All funds must be used for environmentally related recruitment, training, and placement activities

#### What is the future of EPA Environmental Workforce Development and Training?

As with any federal program, funding and authorization is never certain. EPA is authorized under current amendments to CERCLA to provide environmental training. Funding has remained stable, allowing for 10-12 grant awards each year for almost 15 years. Unless Congress removes EPA's authority or reduces funding, we might expect continued support for this cost-efficient, successful environmental workforce program.

With these assumptions, it is important to begin planning for the next round of EPA Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Grants. If the past is an indication of future schedules, communities could expect a Request for Proposals (RFP) to be issued between November and January with awards in the early summer of 2014. While this sounds like a distance in the future, it is important to begin networking, partnering, and locating local support as soon as possible. A good place to begin this process is to participate in the next round of PLC conference calls beginning late June 2013.

#### **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, will invite 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.

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 grantees and for active PLC members. Participants will be responsible for their own travel expenses.

For questions or for more information, please contact Glo Hanne at [ghanne@eicc.edu](mailto:ghanne@eicc.edu), 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>.

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

Next PLC Session:        Cycle 9 to begin late June 2013

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/>.