

November 09, 2011

Notes from Brownfields Professional Learning Community (PLC)

Topics: Status update of the EPA grant review process
 Job placement strategies in this challenged economy, job banks, and working backwards
 to develop or review your program

Announcements

From manufacturing wind turbines; to retrofitting commercial buildings and weatherizing homes; to producing cleaner, safer chemicals, the green economy is emerging in cities and towns across the country.

Registration for the first of four Good Jobs, Green Jobs Regional Conferences, which is taking place in Atlanta on February 23-24, 2012, is now open.

To register for Good Jobs, Green Jobs South. Google "Good Jobs Green Jobs Atlanta"

Other Workshops include:

- Los Angeles: December 2
- Philadelphia: December 19
- Detroit: January 25

Status of the Current EPA Grant Review Process

Recent communication with EPA Headquarters indicates that requests for EPA Environmental Job Development and Training Proposals will likely be issued in early December. Drafts of the document are currently being reviewed by EPA staff.

Given an early December "Request for Proposals" release date, communities interested in receiving federal assistance will have about three months to respond resulting in a February or March due date. After the review process is complete, the awards will be announced sometime in July or August. As communities plan their training schedules, they need to be mindful of the seasonal demand for environmental workers.

Not as much an issue in Southern climates as in colder climates, the demand for environmental and construction workers picks up in the spring for summer and fall projects. Training cycles in sync with hiring cycles can improve placement results and shorten the time graduates may need to wait for openings to materialize. Working backwards from hiring cycles to placement to graduation to training to student recruitment was the theme of this week's PLC.

Working Backwards

Working backwards begins by properly assessing employers and potentially available jobs in the community. Lead or asbestos training in new communities where these materials were not incorporated in construction makes little sense. In older communities, however, lead and asbestos are "must have" certifications. Likewise with mold in hot wet climates vs. cold dry climates. Everyone needs 1910.120 hazardous materials health and safety training.

The best place to begin searching for local jobs is by talking to employers. The PLC will begin discussing needs assessments in the next PLC session on November 23rd.

Establishing Your Mission

Working backwards requires definition of the scope and depth of the program.

What is the target community?

- City
- State
- Region
- Inner city
- Rural community
- Empowerment zone
- Economically depressed
- Disaster zone
- Tribe
- Special institutions for specific purposes

What is the target population to be trained?

- Unemployed
- Underemployed
- Disabled
- Veterans
- Ex-offenders
- Women
- Ethnic
- Minority

Defining a target community is essential before job needs assessments can begin. After a preliminary needs assessment, program planners can get a better idea of the target population that may be the best match for available community jobs.

It may not be advisable, for example, to develop a disabled veterans program in a community where employers are looking for workers to perform physical labor. Instead, an ex-offender program may be a better fit for that particular community. If, however, labor market assessments indicate little tolerance for ex-offenders with jobs requiring clean criminal records, target student populations may need to be reconsidered.

Identify Potential Employment Barriers

Programs need to identify potential employment barriers before establishing target populations for student recruitment. While identification of the target community can be easily established, the target population of potential program participants may become a mix or combination of various groups. Diverse participant populations provide broader educational opportunities, but can make training more difficult. It should also be noted that targeting specific populations may increase chances of leveraged funding provided by organizations such as HHS, Department of Justice, State Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Department of Defense, Veterans, or Disabled Veterans organizations.

What are the Target Jobs to be Trained?

Defining a service community, talking to community employers, targeting student populations, and targeting jobs to fill resemble a large jigsaw puzzle that becomes the foundation of the environmental job development and training program. Job opportunities can be classified into two general categories.

In a broader sense, all environmental jobs are green jobs, while not all green jobs are environmental when discussing the EPA Environmental Job Development and Training program.

Primary Environmental Jobs

- Environmental Remediation – Clean Up
- Assessment – Testing & Monitoring
- Environmental Enforcement – Inspection

Secondary Environmental jobs

- Construction and Deconstruction
- Equipment Operation and Installation
- Clean Energy Production
- Conservation
- Reuse and Recycling
- Transportation and material handling
- Communications
- Administration

As one reviews general categories of primary and secondary environmental jobs, it becomes clear how target participant populations and employers in target communities help define a new Environmental Job Development and Training Program.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Next PLC Session: November 23, 2011
 2:00pm EST

Topic: Continue discussion on job placement strategies, job banks, and needs assessment
 Establishment, implementation, and sustainability of Environmental Job Development and Training Programs

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.