

May 11, 2011

Notes from Brownfields Learning Community (PLC) Session #41 (Cycle 4)

Session Leader: Paula Paris, JFY Networks

Topics: Environmental Job Placement Strategies
Labor Market Needs Assessments
Job Banks and internet resources

NOTES FROM SESSION 41

Thanks to Paula Paris from JFY Networks for her discussion regarding labor market assessments. JFY has provided environmental job training and placement to the Boston community for over 13 years. The organization has been associated with job training and placement for a much longer period. Paula has an extensive background in labor market assessment, one-on-one needs assessments, and the DACUM process. Paula can be reached at pparis@jfynet.org.

Labor market, needs assessment and the DACUM process

Labor market assessment, needs assessment, and hiring criteria can be visualized as proceeding from general data gathering to specific identification of hiring criteria. General assessments start with Web site scans such as www.greencollar.org, www.greenforall.org, and www.ejobs.org. These sites provide generalized information related to labor supply and demand in various industries. In the case of sites like www.ejobs.org, links can be found to local environmental employers by state and/or occupation.

Surveys and labor market assessments become a second level of data collection. The objective of broad-based surveys is to construct a database that is used to identify general trends, identify specific employers, and gather contact information. A major weakness of some labor market surveys is the manner in which questions are asked and the target population chosen for the survey. (i.e. Ask the wrong question to the wrong person and the result is a wrong answer.)

The following two steps are most informative and involve individual interviews resulting from follow-up of the above research. Person-to-person discussion provides benefits beyond the needs assessment. Contacts made during this needs assessment phase result in the identification of advisory board members, instructors, mentors, program supporters, and potential employers. Person-to-person discussions focus on current and future staffing needs. Specifically, the skills, knowledge, and credentials in demand today and in the future. Hiring plans and schedules also need to be part of the discussion. The final question should always center on interest in program participation and/or program support.

DACUM stands for **D**eveloping **A** **C**urriculum. "Old timers" used to call this process Task Analysis. One difference between these two approaches to define the skills and knowledge required for a specific job is the way the data is collected. Task analysis was traditionally conducted with one-on-one observations followed by interviews and discussions with those being observed and their supervisors. The DACUM process involves group interaction and consensus in defining skill and knowledge metrics. In either case, the DACUM or task analysis serves to define learning objectives that prepare students for specific jobs (hopefully high demand jobs).

The advantages of the DACUM process are clear. Not only does the DACUM process provide learning objectives for training, but it also provides a team of advisors, mentors, and potential employers who can identify with the training program. This is equally important. The assembled DACUM team can be called upon for additional future assistance in identifying job opportunities and training resources.

The short story regarding labor market assessment

Labor market assessments provide a path for recruitment, training, and placement of program participants. As a bonus they serve to identify program supporters, contributors, and potential employers. Rather than being an afterthought or justification for training, labor market and needs assessments should serve as the foundation for a sustainable environmental job development and training program.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Next PLC Session: Wednesday, May 25, 2011
 2:00pm EDT

Topic: Continuation of job placement strategies, including job banks and needs assessments.

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.