

May 25, 2011

Notes from Brownfields Learning Community (PLC) Session #42 (Cycle 4)

Session Leader: George Paffendorf, New Jersey Youth Corps

Topics: Environmental Job Placement Strategies
Job Banks and Internet Resources

NOTES FROM SESSION 42

Thanks to George Paffendorf from the New Jersey Youth Corps regarding labor markets, job placements and working with employers. New Jersey Youth Corps has been an early and successful adopter of the EPA Brownfields environmental job development and training program. New Jersey Youth Corps training began in 1998 and continues today with several locations in the New Jersey area. The program has operated with and without federal grant assistance. It has maintained its sustainability with leveraged and supplemental funding from state and local sources including university assistance.

During George's discussion, an issue related to weatherization jobs surfaced. Last year, actions by HUD and some state agencies resulted in the "ramping up" of local weatherization programs. Activities were enhanced with assistance from federal stimulus funding. The issue of creating a "weatherization training bubble" has emerged in many parts of the country. Clearly many temporary jobs were created and some have resulted in longer term employment opportunities. Before moving into weatherization, training programs should consider the following issues:

- Is the local demand real for weatherization jobs that your program graduates will be able to fill?
- Will your graduates have the proper credentials to fill available weatherization jobs?
- Are available job openings being filled by currently unemployed, experienced construction workers?
- Have other weatherization jobs training programs in the area been identified?
- Are available weatherization jobs the result of temporary stimulus funding?
- When stimulus funding has exhausted, will weatherization programs with sustained job opportunities continue?

The above issues are not meant to discourage weatherization programs. Rather they are mentioned to forewarn trainers from blindly initiating programs without due diligence.

Similar issues hold true for alternative energy training. In each of the following examples, answers can be best found in a comprehensive needs assessment, and by determining supply and demand for specific occupations, skill requirements, and experience:

- Are unemployed electricians filling available solar related jobs?
- Are machine technicians being used in wind and turbine related jobs?

George can be reached at majorgwp@aol.com.

Status of this year's environmental job development and training grant review

Announcements of this year's grant awardees are expected in late June. We will put an update on the listserv when additional information becomes available.

Working backwards, assessing employer needs, providing certifications, DACUM and recruiting participants

It may appear counter-intuitive to work backwards starting with employer needs, identifying key certification and skill requirements to recruiting program participants. With the primary mission being participant placement, working backwards makes perfect sense.

- Nobody wins when a participant cannot successfully complete the program.
- Nobody wins when a graduate lacks qualifications and background for available openings.
- Everyone fails when a program's participants cannot be placed.

Job Banks

Currently, several job banks match environmentally trained workers with environmental job openings. Here are a few of the more popular job banks.

ejobs.org

- For example, has links to employers with environmental positions
- Has links to environmental employers by state
- Also provides Information for Military personnel and Federal openings

Many websites, including the following, provide job information on a state and local level.

- <http://www.greencollar.org/greenforall.org>
- <http://www.careerbuilder.com>
- <http://www.americorps.gov/>
- <http://www.eco.org/>

Department of labor sites

- <http://www.dol.gov/dol/location.htm>
- <http://servicelocator.org/>

Issues associated with these sites include the following.

- Job definitions are not specific enough to address the occupations of interest.
- Jobs posted are not appropriate for those being trained. Many sites post jobs requiring university degrees rather than occupational certifications.
- Nationally posted jobs are not appropriate for participant populations.

An innovative approach to job banks may take the form of developed digital communication linkages between potential employers and training providers. Organizing employers with trainers provides two-way communications; directly linking employer needs with training programs. Graduation schedules, certification requirements and supplemental skill requirements can be coordinated with employer needs.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Next PLC Session: Tuesday, June 7, 2011

2:00pm EDT

Topic: Funding Sources

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.