

March 2, 2011

Notes from Brownfields Professional Learning Community (PLC) #39

Session Leader: Mike Senew

Topic: Responding to EPA's Request for Proposals

NOTES FROM SESSION 39

This is the last session of PLC Cycle 3. During this session, we discussed issues and questions regarding the attachment section of the proposal request strategies for submitting successful proposals. We also answered general questions regarding the RFP submission.

Announcements:

- RFP Due Date is March 18, 2011. The anticipated date of award announcement is June 2011.
- Brownfields 2011 – April 3-5 at the Pennsylvania Convention Center in Philadelphia. Plan to attend our session on Monday, April 4, from 11:00 am – 12:15pm in room 124 of the Convention Center. Please visit our booth in the Exhibit Hall. Our booth number is 512.
- The Annual Grantee meeting for new, current, and alumni awardees will be held in August 2011. Details will be sent after dates are confirmed.

If you have last minute questions regarding the new RFP, email them to Mike Senew at msenew@aol.com. We will share them with the group.

RFP questions

For applicants who have received EPA funding in the past, are ARRA funding and EPA funding considered the same? You also made statements about negotiating with existing programs to extend funding. Can you explain?

Job Training Grants awarded in or before 2009 (which include the ARRA grants) are eligible to apply for funding under this year's competition. While all of these grants are considered as EPA funding in the past, ARRA grants are eligible to compete this year because they were awarded in FY 2009. If you receive ARRA funding, make sure you respond to questions regarding previous EPA funding and project performance.

Comments regarding linkages with existing programs relate to two different strategies.

If you do not have experience with job development or training and are interested in establishing a program in your community, consider partnering with an existing program in your community. Such a program may be a Youth Corps, Youth Build, or Community Job Development and Training program. Many of these existing programs are well established but do not have an environmental component. Adding an environmental component to an existing job training organization brings enormous leverage, experience, and expertise to the program you wish to start. Ramp-up, infrastructure, and services not funded by EPA are already in place.

If you already have a program in place, consider partnering with other job development and training programs who do not have but would like to engage environmental activities in their offerings. This strategy is an easy way to leverage or extend your resources, remain independent, and provide more comprehensive services.

Please clarify to whom letters of commitment should be addressed.

Address letters of commitment to the applicant.

Is 40-Hour HAZWOPER necessary even when advisors and needs assessments say it is not?

Yes. 1910.120 OSHA training is mandatory for this cooperative agreement. Even when needs assessments indicate otherwise, it is unpredictable when or if a program participant may have to enter a site with hazardous material. Additionally, 40 hours of 1910.120 training is an excellent primer or basic training program for any environmental curriculum.

What should we be doing now? – Last minute issues and questions.

- Double check your numbers to make sure they correspond to your grant request.
- Affirm that your proposed training is not in excess of two (2) years with a cost to the federal government not to exceed \$300,000. Of course, it is the best of all worlds that your program will become self-sustaining and continue for an extended period of time with funds from other sources. EPA, with this requirement or statement, is limiting its commitment to \$300,000 and two years.
- Make sure you include only allowable costs in the budget. No indirect costs are allowed. Costs should be environmentally-related awareness, recruitment, training, placement, tracking, and program management.
- Funding match is not required, however leveraging is essential. Additional sources of funding and leveraged resources need to be presented (not in the budget matrix).
- Focus on Ranking Criteria. The narrative proposal and attachments are 18 pages max. Ranking criteria provides an objective mechanism for grant evaluation. With 100 points as a perfect score, as previously noted, narrative proposals must not exceed 18 pages. Attachments to narrative proposal may not exceed 20 pages. Pages beyond these limits will be removed before moving to reviewers for evaluation.
- If you have not contacted your EPA regional Job Training Coordinator, contact them now with your intentions to submit a proposal. Even if you are submitting an application to continue your program, it is advisable to let your intentions known. EPA Regional Job Development coordinators are friendly and helpful.
- It may be possible to obtain examples of previous grant submissions from your regional coordinator. However, cookie-cutter proposals are highly discouraged. Every community has special characteristics and community needs not suitable for cookie-cutter type programs.
- Collect your reference list with contact information. Make certain they are briefed on your plans and their possible involvement in your program. References will be contacted by proposal reviewers.
- Make sure you can offer the required training (OSHA 29 CFR 1910.120 40-HOUR HAZARDOUS WASTESITE WORKER [(HAZWOPER])). Other courses will depend on your local needs assessment, but you do need to at least provide awareness training in underground storage tanks, solid waste, and innovative and alternative treatment technologies. These may be combined or incorporated in other courses but need to be addressed as part of a comprehensive training program.
- Formulate a plan to show that your program will become self-sustaining and continue for an extended period of time with funds from other sources. Expand your plan for leveraging resources during the two year development period.

- Make sure you schedule your submission date well ahead of March 18th. If you have not used Grants.gov, you need a key administrator to apply as soon as possible. It can take a week or two to complete the full application process. Remember, you can still sign up even if you don't use the site to submit this grant application. Grants.gov has a lot of useful information and links even if you do not use it for proposal submission. Do not wait till the last day to submit an electronic grant proposal. If you have doubts about electronic submission, plan to submit a hard copy. Hard copy submissions (two copies) must be postmarked by March 18, 2011.
- Continue refining and increasing the depth of your needs assessment. Work backwards from employment needs assessment to curriculum offerings, matching the first two with target participant populations likely to succeed in those jobs.
- Continue contacting governmental organizations with your plans.
- Scan your locality for environmental training and job development opportunities.
- Clarify and describe your path from recruitment across training to employment and tracking.
- Update potential employers as advisors, supporters, and partners.
- Continue to expand your support network. Update your references and providers of commitment letters with the progress of your grant proposal and submission. REMEMBER, letters of commitment cannot be cookie-cutter or form letters. While employers may not be able to commit to jobs, they can offer employment consideration as part of a letter of support. NOTE: Letters of commitment and support should be addressed to the applicant.
- Update your relationship and plans with local organized labor.
- Become involved in the local job development and training community.
- If possible, participate and document participation in public hearings. Public announcements of "intention to develop an environmental job training program" demonstrate commitment to community involvement as part of a comprehensive proposal. Announcing intentions during a scheduled Brownfields public hearing is an excellent approach. Ask to have a few minutes as part of the ongoing public hearing process required by Brownfield projects. Additionally, announce intentions to submit a job development and training proposal in press releases to local newspapers, radio stations, and meetings.
- Refine your list of members to participate on advisory boards. These individuals may also become excellent references for the grant submission. Remember – the best advisors are individuals who will hire graduates or contribute to the program in a meaningful way.

Note from PLC member

For more information contact Scott Fanello, VISTA Leader 2, Appalachian Coal Country Team, 2795 Robert C Byrd Drive, Beckley, WV 25801, 304.252.4848, ext. 7, vistaleader2@accwt.org.

I've contacted you because I'd like you to know about our upcoming summer intern program that we've designed to aid federal and state agencies, tribal agencies, non-profit organizations, and community improvement groups working on water issues and environmental revitalization throughout the country. The Appalachian Coal Country Team, the Western Hardrock Watershed Team, and the Southwest Conservation Corps are proud to offer summer interns that can help with water monitoring, outreach and education, grant writing, historical research, program development GIS mapping, organizing volunteer projects, developing/updating websites, trail

maintenance and building, interpretive services and more. If you'd like to apply for an internship or have questions, please contact our Summer Programs Coordinator, Erica Calderis, at summerprograms@accwt.org and please pass this along to anyone you know of that may be interested.

Additional Resources

You may want to check out EPA's grants and debarments Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/ogd/>. This site provides detailed information of grant regulations and EPA policy.

If you are new to regulations related to tax exempt organizations, another site you may wish to check out is Stay Exempt at <http://www.stayexempt.org/>.

A valuable resource that includes information about all aspects of job development and training is our *Brownfields Toolbox* at www.brownfields-toolbox.org.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Please join our next series of 30-minute conversations on the establishment, implementation, and sustainability of Brownfields Job Development and Training Programs starting mid-April. We will begin after Brownfields 2011. Sessions will be held on Wednesdays at 2:00 EDT. We will send reminders before the new cycle begins.

To be included in the PLC distribution list, please send your contact information to Mike Senew at msenew@aol.com.