

June 9, 2010

Notes from Brownfields Professional Learning Community (PLC) Session #22

Session leader: Mike Senew

Topic: Program Startup: Certifications to be offered, core curriculum, training timetables, developing a green curriculum, and program length and depth

## NOTES FROM SESSION 22

Certifications provide evidence that that an individual or organization has demonstrated competency related to a particular set of skills and knowledge. This vague definition of certification illustrates the strengths and flaws associated with the certification process.

A certification can be given by anyone on any topic. The usefulness of a certification, like currency, is determined by what backs it up. The value of having a certification depends on its acceptance in the marketplace.

1. Many organizations and governmental agencies are in the business of issuing certifications and licenses. In the worst cases, the objective is to collect fees or regulate entry into a commercial activity. Other, more constructive, reasons for certification include the following:
  - Confirms that the holder has received a minimum standard of training and education.
  - Confirms that the holder has demonstrated a minimum skill and competency.
  - Provides a method of tracking and regulating service providers.
  - Allows for refresher training and competency testing.
  - Provides a quality control function to consumers.
  - Allows for the removal of incompetent or unscrupulous service providers.
  - Provides a listing and census of competent service providers.

Sometimes certifications and safety standards come under attack as being too expensive or burdensome. JFYNetWorks provided us with the following discussion about the new RR&P (Renovation, Repair and Painting) rule that just went into effect.

[http://www.brownfields-toolbox.org/upload\\_documents/Boston\\_Globe\\_NewLeadRules.pdf](http://www.brownfields-toolbox.org/upload_documents/Boston_Globe_NewLeadRules.pdf)

2. Certifications can be extremely useful when they respond to services just discussed. However, if a certification does not provide a quality/competency check on its holder, it is of little use to the consumer. For this reason, meaningful certifications have a specific and well-defined standard behind them. For example, the 40-hour Waste Site Worker safety certification (HAZWOPER) is based on numerous OSHA standards specifically spelled out in the Federal Register (29 CFR 1910). Similar OSHA, DOT, and EPA certifications are based on standards published in the Federal Register. Certifications may also be based on other standards such as those established by the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) or the Building Performance Institute (BPI).
3. The usefulness of certifications for workers depends upon their acceptance in the marketplace. Earning a well-respected and universally accepted certification enhances its value and the value of its holder. In the case of environmental remediation, the 40-hour HAZWOPER certification administered by certified instructors form the base for a well-trained environmental remediation worker. This certification alone is not enough and must be supplemented with others depending on

the types of remediation activity in which the worker is engaged. Community colleges, universities, labor organizations, as well as private training companies provide training by certified instructors.

4. Green job certifications and credentials come from a variety of organizations. Examples of certifications and the agencies or organizations whose standards they are based upon appear below.
  - EPA: State environmental and health departments – asbestos, radon, mold, lead (RR&P)
  - OSHA: Waste site worker, construction, confined space, multiple construction- and safety-related certifications
  - DOT and state agencies: Driver’s license (includes commercial driver’s license), transportation of hazardous materials
  - Non-governmental: BPI, numerous weatherization and technician certifications
  
5. Given the large number of certifications and the diversity of issuing organizations, Brownfields training programs need to determine which certifications will make participants most valuable in the job marketplace. Determination of the best certifications to offer, once again, goes back to the labor market assessment. Advisory boards and potential employers offer the best source of guidance for local communities. EPA Brownfields training grantees at a minimum are required to provide the 40-hour HAZWOPER certification. Examples of other certifications offered by grantees include the following:
  - 32-hour Asbestos
  - 16-hour Lead Worker
  - RRP – Renovation, Repair, and Painting
  - Mold Remediation
  - 10-hour OSHA Construction Safety
  - Confined Space
  - 30-Hour OSHA Construction Outreach
  - General Construction Safety
  - First Aid and CPR
  - BPI Weatherization
  - Vapor Air Intrusion
  - Electrical and Arc Flash
  - Forklift Operator
  - Driver’s License
  - Commercial Driver’s License
  
6. The following reference is a survey HMTRI conducted of certifications and training provided by current EPA Brownfields training programs.  
[http://www.brownfields-toolbox.org/upload\\_documents/BFGGrads\\_2010certs.pdf](http://www.brownfields-toolbox.org/upload_documents/BFGGrads_2010certs.pdf)

Whichever approach is used in selection of certifications offered, a comprehensive needs assessment should be conducted before proceeding.

### **Observations Regarding Certifications**

As one reviews the certifications offered by Brownfields training programs, it can be noted that certifications are a mixture of demonstration of technical skills and knowledge, and knowledge and practice of safety procedures. Safety and health are so embedded in environmental issues that there

often appears to be overlap between EPA, OSHA, NIEHS, HUD, and NIOSH. This overlap can be constructive when agencies collaborate and coordinate their efforts. Overlapping interests among governmental agencies requires more networking on the part of the training provider. The certification process is essential in the protection of the environment. Certification also requires protecting the health and safety of our community as well as the workers involved in the endeavor.

Additional discussion related to certifications can be found at [www.ateec.org](http://www.ateec.org) and [www.brownfields-toolbox.org](http://www.brownfields-toolbox.org).

### **MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

Next PLC session:       Wednesday, June 23, 2010  
                                  2:00 p.m. EDT  
Topic:                       Student Recruitment and Assessment

Feel free to invite a guest! Those who have not previously signed up, please paste <http://tiny.cc/w41fh> in your browser and complete the online form with your contact information.

OR

Send your contact information to Mike Senew at [msenew@aol.com](mailto:msenew@aol.com).