

July 26, 2017



Notes from the Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Cycle 17, Session 3

This was the third PLC session in Cycle 17. This cycle of ten bi-weekly phone calls will focus on effective Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) strategies and how to prepare for the next EPA Request for Proposals (RFP). Calls will be a mix of open discussion, workforce development news, resources, and presentations from current grantees.

- Topics:
1. News from Washington and HMTRI
 2. Pauline Auberle Foundation—A different approach to EWDJT partnering
Featured Guest: Abby Wolensky, Pauline Auberle Foundation, McKeesport, PA
 3. Meetings and webinars
 4. Tune in to the next PLC

1. NEWS FROM WASHINGTON AND HMTRI

Getting ready for the *Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting*

August 9–10, 2017 (Travel days are August 8 and 11)
Crowne Plaza Old Town Alexandria

General reminders about the meeting:

- The entire meeting is informal. Wear comfortable clothing and shoes. Jeans are perfectly acceptable!
- We will have a working lunch each day. Most all our time will be indoors until 5:00 p.m. Dinner is on your own.
- Conference rooms may become too cool or hot. Wear layers and bring a cover-up or long sleeve garment.
- Complementary Internet will be available in the conference room and in the sleeping rooms.

Contact Glo Hanne ASAP at ghanne@eicc.edu or 563.441.4081 if you have any questions.

2. PAULINE AUBERLE FOUNDATION—A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO EWDJT PARTNERING

Featured Guest: Abby Wolensky, Pauline Auberle Foundation, McKeesport, PA

Thanks, Abby, for a great presentation.

In the last two PLC sessions, we have had presentations from two very different types of organizations. The first session focused on transitioning ex-offenders. The second session focused on transitioning foster care, homeless, and troubled young adults into sustainable environmental careers. In each case, with help from EPA, the grantee was able to join an established community service organization to provide leveraged environmental remediation training.

By merging with established organizations, each grantee was able to create more leveraging opportunities that would not have been possible otherwise. In each case, extreme leveraging provided facilities, services, staff, and organizational stability to the EWDJT program. An added bonus was an institutional history and community awareness that new grantees often lack.

Auberle is a faith-based agency that was started in 1952 and now serves over 3,000 at-risk individuals and families in southwestern Pennsylvania. Sixteen program areas include workforce development, independent living, transitional-age youth programs, foster care, in-home intervention, drug and alcohol programs, mental health programs, education, residential care, and emergency shelter. Auberle relies heavily on donations from faith communities, foundations, corporations, individuals, and government grants to provide community services exceeding \$11 million annually. A large number of volunteers supplement available resources to provide additional assistance to program participants and Auberle staff.

With help from the EPA EWDJT award in 2016, Auberle was able to establish an environmental training program as part of Auberle's Employment Institute, which also includes a Youthbuild construction program, four youth-based businesses, and an environmental remediation program.

How joining an existing service organization can benefit new start-up programs

In past PLC sessions, we have often noted that environmental training is sometimes the easiest part of delivering a successful EWDJT program. Without leveraged assistance for remedial education, life skills training, retention activities, and student support services, EWDJT grantees must scramble to find partners who can deliver the many activities necessary to run a successful and comprehensive workforce development program.

In Auberle's case, all of the non-environmental training services can be delegated to other parts of the organization, allowing EPA funds to sharply focus on the technical aspects of environmental remediation training. In addition to the availability of internal support services, Auberle works closely and receives additional assistance and in-kind services from the WIB, other governmental agencies, and local employers.

Program overview

Demographic and communities served

Auberle's EWDJT program is targeted to serve unemployed, underemployed, and transitional residents of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. The primary focus is on youth from ages 18 to 24, and may include homeless, foster care transition, ex-offenders, troubled, and mentally challenged young people. Potential applicants come from numerous social service organizations in Allegheny County which includes Pittsburgh and the surrounding areas. There is a quick transition from urban to rural communities in their geographic service area.

Working partners

- Weavertown Environmental Group provides trainers and training as a leveraged donation.
- Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board assists and supports ancillary training.
- MAX Environmental Technologies provides employer support and guidance.
- University of Pittsburgh Medical Center provides employer support and guidance.
- Sustainable Pittsburgh provides program recognition and awareness.
- Community nonprofit and faith-based agencies are located across the service area.

Training, curriculum, and certifications

Auberle plans to train 50 students in small cohorts of 15-20 students each. The core environmental training program is one month running 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. daily with 118 total hours of instruction. Prior to entry, potential applicants attend an additional week-long mental toughness program which includes team building, and attitude and aptitude evaluation.

- 40-hour HAZWOPER
- OSHA 10-hour
- First aid/CPR
- Driver's license

Auberle offers supportive services to help overcome employment barriers including:

- Mental health counseling
- Life skills development
- Leadership training
- Job readiness skills
- Professional conduct
- Resume writing and interviewing

Participants who complete the training earn nine national certifications.

Student recruitment

In addition to current Auberle referrals, 46 human service agencies recommend young people ranging in age from 16 to 24 for work readiness training, soft skill development, education services, and sustainable employment opportunities to the Auberle Employment Institute.

As part of the Auberle Employment Institute, the EWDJT program screens 18-24 year old candidates as part of the introductory one week mental toughness class. Candidates that appear to not be a good fit for EWDJT are considered for other Auberle programs. Students without a GED or equivalent have an opportunity to take advantage of Auberle's GED program for future consideration. Informal evaluations are used to determine each applicant's ability to handle EWDJT coursework.

Student retention, support, and drug issues

With Auberle's mission of service to young adults and the community, the Auberle EWDJT program has perhaps the most comprehensive student retention, support, and drug treatment program of any EPA EWDJT program. A few of the support and retention services available include:

- Case management for all participants
- Mental health services
- Legal services
- Meal and food pantry assistance
- Housing assistance
- Drug counseling and rehabilitation services
- Transportation services and bus passes
- Child care and assistance
- Financial literacy programs with a goal of saving for an automobile purchase

Like the Fortune Society, Auberle has chosen to work with (rather than dismiss) applicants with continuing drug issues. Drug testing occurs before entry into the program but does not exclude applicants from entry. Testing, counseling, and rehabilitation services are provided throughout the program. Graduates are drug-free before placement with interventions provided as required.

Student placement

Weavertown Environmental Group has taken an active and proactive role in providing in-kind trainers and employing graduates.

The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, in addition to employing graduates, has opened a new avenue of employment opportunities for graduates with hazardous materials certificates in the area of cleaning, rehabilitation, and restoration.

Auberle supports four youth-based businesses to place graduates who may not be ready for full-time employment. EWDJT graduates requiring additional services from Auberle can obtain short-term employment with one of the four businesses. Transitional employment also provides an employment record which graduates can leverage into a full-time job.

As part of Auberle's Employment Institute, EWDJT participants have an opportunity to participate in internships, and work study and pre-apprenticeship programs.

Challenges facing new grantees that first year of operation

As expected, below are a few of the challenges that face new EWDJT grantees.

- Developing a community-wide awareness and reputation
- Applicant recruitment and understanding of environmental careers
- Establishing employer relationships
- Fine tuning curriculum to employer needs
- Exploring new opportunities for employment
- Establishing trainer relationships
- Auberle has not faced challenges confronting many new grantees in the areas of program awareness, unsupported training, student services, retention leveraging, and placement.

Auberle's advice to this year's grantees and prospective applicants

- Choose your partners and stakeholders carefully.
- Establish a quality team of staff and service providers.
- Utilize social media including Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube as much as possible.
- Have your infrastructure in place in the early stages of grant development.

Visit Auberle's website, Facebook, and YouTube posts at www.auberle.org.

Abby would be happy to discuss their program and may be contacted at:

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3. MEETINGS AND WEBINARS

2017 Southeast Brownfields Workshop

November 7–9, 2017

Georgia Tech Research Institute Conference Center, Atlanta, GA

EPA Region 4 and the Georgia Brownfield Association are hosting the 2017 Southeast Brownfields Workshop on November 7–9, 2017, at the Georgia Tech Research Institute Conference Center in Atlanta, GA. More than 200 people attend including grantees, state environmental agencies, Tribes, urban and rural local governments, nonprofit organizations, environmental professionals, and community members.

Your input and insights are key to making the Southeast Brownfields Workshop a timely event that educates attendees about revitalization in their communities.

To learn more about the southeast Brownfields Workshop, visit their website at <http://georgiabrownfield.org/>.

National TAB Webinar:

The Basics of Site Remediation for Communities

Wednesday, August 2, 2017

3:30–5:00pm EDT

You are invited to attend a free webinar on Wednesday, August 2, from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. EDT. The webinar is being co-hosted by Technical Assistance to Brownfields (TAB) providers: CCLR, KSU TAB, and NJIT. Tune in to learn about various aspects of choosing a remediation technology, including advantages/disadvantages, success, and long-term effects of different types of cleanup. You can learn about the differences between remediation corridors vs. single sites, and how to work with the regulators.

Cost is free but registration required. Please use this [link](#) to register.

A confirmation email with information on how to join the webinar will be sent to you. Speakers will include:

- Mark Walker, Kansas State University
- Elizabeth Limbrick, New Jersey Institute of Technology
- Ignacio Dayrit, Center for Creative Land Recycling

Who should attend? Anyone interested in learning about brownfield remediation.

National Brownfields Training Conference

Mark your calendar for the [National Brownfields Training Conference](#) to be held in Pittsburgh, PA on December 5–7, 2017 with pre-conference workshops on December 4. The conference is co-sponsored by the EPA and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The conference, offered every two years, is the largest gathering of stakeholders focused on cleaning up and reusing formerly utilized commercial and industrial properties.

4. TUNE IN TO THE NEXT PLC

Due to the Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting taking place on August 9–10, the next PLC will be held on August 16, 2017, where we will discuss and give a summary of the meeting and the resources provided at the meeting.

The schedule for the remaining sessions in PLC Cycle 17 is below.

1. August 16
2. August 30
3. September 13
4. September 27
5. October 11
6. October 25
7. November 8

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Next PLC Session: August 16, 2017 at 2:00 p.m. ET
319.527.3513, access code 550105#
Please call in five minutes early.



Feel free to invite a guest! Send your contact information to Mike Senew at msenew@aol.com.

Visit our [HMTRI Brownfields Toolbox](#) website for more information on Brownfields Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training programs. All [PLC session notes and recordings](#) are also located on the website. For those interested in providing content or suggestions, please contact Glo Hanne at ghanne@eicc.edu.

NOTE: The PLC brings together ideas and opinions of individuals interested in environmental workforce development and job training. Ideas and opinions are not those of EPA or its policy and should not be taken as official guidance.