

October 21, 2015



Notes from Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC)—Cycle 13, Session 6

This was the sixth session in this cycle of ten Professional Learning Community conversations. As part of our informal discussions, we plan to showcase experienced and new grantees, and seek input from government, nonprofit, and private sector mentors. During this cycle, we will focus on the following themes:

- Establishing Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) Programs
- Peer-to-peer mentoring and idea exchange
- Discovering resources for enhancing EWDJT programs
- Helpful hints and open discussion

Topics: News from Washington and HMTRI

Questions from grantees and PLC members
Partnerships for strength and sustainability
Making connections, networking, and items of interest
Details regarding the FY2016 EWDJT RFP schedule

News from Washington and HMTRI

Joe Bruss with EPA anticipates the EWDJT Request for Proposals (RFP) will be issued to the public within the next 3 weeks. Please note that EPA will also hold one or two Adobe Connect webinars as done in the past for prospective applicants. Rachel Congdon or Joe will share webinar information and call-in registration details when dates are confirmed. According to Joe, there are not substantive changes to the RFP this year but there are a few minor, yet important, changes. An expanded estimated schedule appears later in these notes.

The primary contact for communities engaged in environmental workforce training is at the regional level. Those thinking of applying for federal assistance should contact their EPA Regional Job Training Coordinator. Contact information is included near the end of last year's RFP at <http://www.epa.gov/oswer/docs/grants/epa-oswer-oblr-15-01.pdf>.

FY2016 Assessment, Revolving Loan, and Cleanup (ARC) Guidelines have been released

The FY2016 ARC Guidelines are now publically available on the EPA OBLR website and on www.grants.gov. ARC grants are “sisters” to the EWDJT program. Grantees and prospective grantees should connect with communities requesting ARC assistance. Note that these grants are made primarily to city and county governments or to redevelopment organizations. The guidelines and supplemental guidance documents are available on the homepage at <http://www2.epa.gov/brownfields/apply-brownfields-grant-funding> and the landing page at <http://www2.epa.gov/brownfields/new-request-proposals-fy-2016-brownfields-assessment-revolving-loan-fund-and-cleanup>.

Assessment Guideline:

http://www2.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-10/documents/assessment_15-04_oblr.pdf

Revolving Loan Fund Guideline:

http://www2.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-10/documents/rf_15-05_oblr.pdf

Cleanup Guideline:

http://www2.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-10/documents/cleanup_15-06_oblr.pdf

Proposals are due December 18, 2015 for ARC grants. (NOTE: These are not the EWDJT proposals.)

Questions from grantees and PLC members

Where can I find environmental training curriculum materials?

An excellent resource for curriculum may be from other EWDJT programs with similar offerings and training priorities. Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ) has implemented the use of tablets to replace printed materials for several years with great success. It should be noted that FSCJ, like most EWDJT programs, has customized curriculum specific to their target area and employer needs and may not be applicable to other grantees. Below is contact information for Jorge Gutierrez at FSCJ.

Jorge Gutierrez

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904.633.5976

Advanced Technology Environmental and Energy Center (ATEEC)

ATEEC has a large body of information related to environmental careers, curriculum, and resource materials at www.ateec.org. Go to Resources and then to eERL Library to search for materials on any environmental topic.

OSHA Health and Safety Training materials from NIEHS

A complete guide to materials and activities associated with the NIEHS worker training program can be searched and downloaded at the NIEHS Clearinghouse at www.tools.niehs.nih.gov/wetp/.

Browsers can search the Online Curricula Catalog by one of the four program areas listed; by awardee/training provider; or by course subject, title, and language. As you browse through the catalog, you will see that course material is specified as provided by the Clearinghouse, awardee, or other entities. Only material listed as provided by the Clearinghouse can be downloaded through the online system. Material provided by awardees may be obtained by contacting the individual listed for that particular training organization.

Materials and activities associated with the PETE NIEHS worker training program can also be accessed from the PETE website at www.nationaPETE.org. Go to downloads and then to resources.

I am a full-time faculty member for the Environmental Specialist curriculum which trains students as environmental technicians. Our curriculum is under review and proposed for inactivation due to low job growth and low enrollment. Do you have any data or details pertaining to environmental technician occupational growth and employer needs? Have any surveys been completed recently in relation to this occupational category?

Labor market assessments will be the subject of our PLC on November 4, 2015. It should be noted that labor market assessments are highly local in nature and customized. Environmental training is required across many traditional occupations. For this reason, state merit systems have had a difficult time with labor market assessments. Below are additional sources to review regarding environmental occupations.

Advanced Technology Environmental and Energy Center—information on environmental careers
<http://ateec.org/downloads/curricula/>

Another interesting source for job openings is provided by Brownfields Renewal with over 1,100 jobs posted
<http://www.brownfieldrenewal.com/jobs.html>

For a more global perspective of environmental jobs, go to the Bureau of Labor Statistics which shows an 18% annual growth with 3,500 new jobs from 19,000
<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/architecture-and-engineering/environmental-engineering-technicians.htm>

Partnerships for strength and sustainability

Partnerships are essential in developing strong and sustainable EWDJT programs. EPA assistance for EWDJT was designed to provide seed funding for the development and expansion of workforce programs to include specialized environmental training to underserved communities.

Target groups include unemployed and underemployed individuals in areas impacted by environmental degradation and abandoned property. With limited support, developing, staffing and sustaining a completely autonomous training program is a daunting endeavor. However, when partnered and leveraged by programs with similar goals, a successful EWDJT program can flourish with and without federal assistance.

A comparable analogy

Resources required to build and operate a train, train track, and infrastructure when compared to attaching an additional car to an existing train on its way to a destination provides a demonstration of how EWDJT programs can accomplish their goals with leveraging and limited resources. Many communities already have established traditional job training programs. These may be associated with publically supported or nonprofit workforce programs. Due to the specialization and technical aspects associated with environmental technology, most traditional job training programs lack an environmental component. The EPA EWDJT program provides an opportunity for existing workforce programs to expand their offerings by providing unemployed residents a path to stable environmental careers.

With limited EWDJT support and leveraged resources, communities can add environmental training to their workforce programs. It also demonstrates why leveraging is critical in the selection of EWDJT programs who receive EPA assistance. This observation can be confirmed by looking at the list of 2015 grantees and grantees from prior years. Go to the EPA website at http://cfpub.epa.gov/bf_factsheets/index.cfm to review the fact sheets for all current and prior EWDJT grantees.

In 2015, of 18 awarded grants:

- 3 were WIBS
- 4 were colleges
- 4 were community development corporations
- 1 was a city
- 4 were large nonprofit organizations
- 2 were smaller community organizations

These statistics demonstrate the importance of bringing in established resources and infrastructure when constructing or updating a program plan.

Finding partners

If your organization does not fall into one of the programs described above, it does not exclude you from federal assistance. It may, however, be important to locate partners that can bring additional recruitment, screening, training, placement, and tracking services to the partnership. This may involve partnering with several organizations with one becoming the principle grantee.

Examples of qualified primary grantee partners may include:

- City or county government
- Offices of community or economic development
- Faith-based community nonprofit organizations
- Workforce investment boards
- Community development organizations
- Community colleges or universities

Additional partners (while not able to be the primary grantee organization) may include:

- Consultants/trainers
- Local employers
- Community leaders
- Pastors and neighborhood advocates
- Community stakeholders

Linking up with assessment, revolving loan, and cleanup grants

Existing and prospective grantees need to link up with communities applying for an EPA ARC grant that was recently announced. ARC grants have been described earlier with proposals due in December.

As part of the ARC proposal process, grantees need to hold public meetings to announce their intentions. This provides an excellent opportunity for prospective EWDJT grantees to publically announce their intentions of developing or continuing an EWDJT program for residents of impacted communities.

Linking with ARC grantees may also lead to a network of employer partners and leveraged resources. In summary, it would be wise to become acquainted with city staff working on assessment, revolving loan, or cleanup projects.

Remember to check out other EWDJT grantees that may be in your area. EPA will not allow programs to overlap, but they may be in the same general vicinity if different geographic and demographic groups are targeted. Current grantees can be an enormous help in mentoring and providing guidance to newer programs. Additionally, previous grantees no longer active, may become valuable partners in a new, expanded program.

Making connections, networking, and items of interest

In case you missed the webinar on equitable development by Deehon Ferris, materials are available at <https://clu-in.org/conf/tio/BFEqDev/>.

The Role of Brownfields Renewal, Community Land Trusts, and Employee-Owned Businesses in Neighborhood Stability

The foundation for creating strong, economically resilient, and livable communities is increasingly built upon a spectrum of place-based activities that develop improved tools and strategies. This workshop is designed to give participants practical tools and share insider views about pioneering community building models. The webinar topic is community driven equitable development strategies focusing upon two models: (1) Employee-owned company(s) that creates jobs and career pathways for local residents; and (2) Community land trust that provides permanently affordable housing programs for local residents.

Community contacts

Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, Roxbury, MA

[Tony Hernandez](#), Director, Operations and Stewardship, Dudley Neighbors Incorporated
thernandez@dsni.org

Evergreen Cooperatives, Cleveland, OH

[Ted Howard](#), Executive Director, Democracy Collaborative
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Recipients of 2015 Environmental Justice Small Grants

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced nearly \$1.2 million in competitive grants selected for award to 40 nonprofit and tribal organizations working to address environmental justice (EJ) issues nationwide. The grants enable these organizations to conduct research, provide education, and develop solutions to local health and environmental issues in minority and low-income communities overburdened by harmful pollution. In addition to the 36 projects receiving funding from EPA's Office of Environmental Justice, the program is bolstered this year by the funding of four additional projects in Gulf Coast communities by the EPA Gulf of Mexico Program.

EPA's EJ Small Grants have been a foundational piece to the portfolios of many community organizations that have gone on to make a visible difference in their communities. The 2015 grants will help organizations in 22 states and the U.S. Virgin Islands carry out projects that will educate residents about environmental issues that may impact their health, collect data about local environmental conditions, and work collaboratively to address environmental justice issues in their communities.

For 2015 Environmental Justice Small Grant recipients and project descriptions, go to <http://www3.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/resources/publications/grants/ej-smgrants-recipients-2015.pdf>.

For more information on the Environmental Justice Small Grants Program, including descriptions of previously funded grants, go to <http://www3.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/grants/ej-smgrants.html>.

Join the EJ Listserve

If you are not already a member, the Office of Environmental Justice would like to invite you to join the EJ Listserve. The purpose of this information tool is to notify individuals about activities at EPA in the field of environmental justice. By subscribing to this list you will receive information on EPA's activities, programs, projects, grants, and environmental justice activities at other agencies. Noteworthy news items, national meeting announcements, meeting summaries of NEJAC meetings, and new publication notices will also be distributed. Postings can only be made by the Office of Environmental Justice. To

request an item to be posted, send your information to environmental-justice@epa.gov and indicate in the subject "Post to EPA-EJ ListServe". To join the listserve, go to https://lists.epa.gov/read/all_forums/subscribe?name=epa-ej.

Subscribe to the National Brownfields Listserve

By adding your name to the Brownfields Listserve, you will receive periodic announcements and press releases related to the Brownfields program. To subscribe, send a blank email message to brownfields-subscribe@lists.epa.gov.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Urban Waters Small Grants program is currently requesting proposals.

Under this announcement, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is soliciting proposals from eligible applicants for projects that will advance EPA's water quality and environmental justice goals. Proposed projects will address urban runoff pollution through diverse partnerships that produce multiple community benefits, with emphasis on underserved communities. Note that proposed project activities must take place entirely within one of the Eligible Geographic Areas, as illustrated on the interactive map provided on the Urban Waters Small Grants mapping website at <http://www2.epa.gov/urbanwaters/urban-waters-small-grants-mapping>.

The complexity and widespread impact of urban runoff pollution requires various levels of government and local stakeholders (e.g., community residents, local businesses, etc.) to work together in developing effective and long-term solutions with multiple benefits. EPA supports and empowers communities, especially underserved communities, which are working on solutions to address multiple community needs, and fostering successful collaborative partnerships. Projects should address local water quality issues related to urban runoff pollution, provide additional community benefits, actively engage underserved communities, and foster partnerships.

The total estimated funding available for awards under this competition is approximately \$1.6 million. EPA expects each award to range from \$40,000 to \$60,000. EPA Regional Offices will award the cooperative agreements resulting from this announcement. It is anticipated that each EPA Regional Office will award approximately two to three cooperative agreements. Funding is contingent upon Agency funding levels, the quality of proposals received, and other applicable considerations. Visit the Urban Waters Small Grants website to learn more about the program and how to submit a proposal at <http://www2.epa.gov/urbanwaters/urban-waters-small-grants>.

Details regarding the FY2016 EWDJT RFP schedule

As previously noted, the estimated target date for the release of the FY2016 EWDJT Request for Proposals (RFP) is November. Today, this is how a tentative schedule would look:

- Request for Proposals—November 2016
- Proposals due (grants.gov)—late January
- Awards announced—April/May 2016
- Administrative and workplan approvals—July/August 2016
- Next Annual All-Grantee Meeting—August 2016
- Training and execution of workplans and project reporting—September 2016 and on
- Quarterly reports—due every three months
- Next National Brownfields Conference—Spring 2017

We will update this schedule as additional information becomes available.

This is a long planning horizon, but those interested in establishing an EWDJT program with federal assistance need to start now as many ranking criteria require collaboration and partnership development. A good starting point for new communities not familiar with the EPA EWDJT program is to obtain a copy of the FY2015 RFP at <http://www.epa.gov/oswer/docs/grants/epa-oswer-oblr-15-01.pdf>. Note that the 2016 solicitation may have provisions not included in previous RFPs. While the basic requirements of the 2016 guidelines are likely to remain the same, organizations considering submitting proposals need to familiarize themselves with changes in evaluation criteria when issued.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Next PLC Session: November 4, 2015 at 2:00 p.m. EST

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



Visit our *HMTRI Brownfields Toolbox* Web site at <http://www.brownfields-toolbox.org> for more information on Brownfields Job Training programs. All PLC session notes and recordings are also located on the *Brownfields Toolbox* website at <http://brownfields-toolbox.org/plc-corner/>. 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 training. Ideas and opinions are not those of EPA, its policy or opinions and should not be taken as official guidance.