

## CONNECT News

Community Support, Networking, and Assistance for Environmental Career Training

May 2016

The Hazardous Materials Training and Research Institute (HMTRI) provides technical assistance to communities interested in developing and delivering environmental job training programs. HMTRI also provides technical support to Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) grantees funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). These efforts are made possible with a cooperative agreement with the U.S. EPA.

HMTRI is part of Eastern Iowa Community Colleges and has provided environmental workforce development technical assistance since the inception of EPA's Brownfields Initiative.

Congratulations to EPA's new EWDJT grantees announced on May 12, 2016: Civic Works, Inc.—Baltimore, MD • City of Rochester—Rochester, NY • Limitless Vistas, Inc.—New Orleans, LA • Energy Coordinating Agency—Philadelphia, PA • Cypress Mandela Training Center, Inc.—Oakland, CA • Nye County—Tonopah, NV • Redevelopment Authority of Cumberland County—Carlisle, PA • Auberle—McKeesport, PA • Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board—Waterbury, CT • City of Tacoma—Tacoma, WA • City of Pittsburg—Pittsburg, CA • Hunters Point Family—San Francisco, CA • Los Angeles Conservation Corps—Los Angeles, CA • City of Glens Falls—Glens Falls, NY • City of Springfield—Springfield, MO • Lawson State Community College—Birmingham, AL • Alaska Forum, Inc.—Anchorage, AK • Port Gambel S'Klallam Tribe—Kingston, WA

For those who weren't awarded an EWDJT grant in 2016, now is the time to start preparations and planning for the next round of proposal requests. In this issue of *CONNECT News*, we will provide information that may help prepare for and plan a new proposal.

### CRITICAL STEPS TO TAKE NOW TO PREPARE FOR A 2017 EWDJT AWARD

Don't be discouraged if an EWDJT proposal wasn't accepted this year, as many aren't funded upon the first submission. Rejection can often be the omission or lack of clarity on a critical issue. Established programs sometimes fail to be re-funded because of an assumption that "good programs will automatically be re-funded." This isn't true. Good programs must demonstrate to reviewers the success of the program. All awards must be earned with performance and an outstanding work plan.

### REQUEST A DEBRIEFING WITH EPA

When a proposal isn't funded, the first step is to contact the EPA regional EWDJT coordinator and request a debriefing. This will not happen automatically and must be requested. Reader notes and comments will be reviewed along with your ranking in relation to other proposals. Suggestions for improvement will be offered. Regional coordinators are the primary contact points for applicants and can be helpful in answering specific questions regarding the EWDJT solicitation. Some regions may have conference calls for prospective applicants, so ask to be included on their distribution list.

Additional contact should be made with community stakeholders and local government officials. Participate in public forums. Local announcements will assist in developing relationships with community stakeholders and leveraging partners.

### ASSEMBLE YOUR TEAM

Project directors, employers, leverage partners, and all staff need to be involved in the planning process. Grant writers bring consistency to the program plan, but team members must remain involved in the grant writing. When stakeholders don't participate in the writing, proposals are usually incomplete or unrealistic.

### IDENTIFY AND CONFIRM PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are essential in developing strong and sustainable EWDJT programs. With limited support and staffing, sustaining a training program can be daunting. However, when partnered with and leveraged by programs with similar goals who already serve the target community in other ways, an EWDJT program can flourish with or without federal assistance. Identify, establish relationships, and recruit partners consistent with program goals:

- Leveraging partners
- Administrative partners
- Training partners
- Recruitment and placement partners
- Prospective employers (manufacturers, transportation, manpower, cleanup, and consulting firms)
- City and county government
- Environmental offices
- Health services
- Community services
- Workforce Investment Boards
- Mayor's office of economic development
- Faith-based and nonprofit organizations
- Community colleges or universities
- Neighborhood advocates
- Community relations and development offices

For some programs, it may be important to locate partners that can bring additional services to the partnerships such as:

- Recruitment
- Screening
- Training
- Placement
- Tracking

### BUILD AN ADVISORY BOARD

Perhaps the two most important activities undertaken by successful grantees are the development of strong partnerships and the establishment of active (not token) participatory advisory boards. Working advisory boards provide the following contributions to EWDJT programs:

- Direction regarding job skills in demand (labor market assessment)
- Curriculum guidance
- Potential employer leads
- Advice on leveraging opportunities
- Mentoring for program participants
- Experience and expertise in environmental remediation
- Assistance in marketing and awareness
- Linkage to target communities
- ...and the list goes on...

Advisory boards aren't used to evaluate program performance, direct policy, or approve activities or staff expenditures. Members aren't necessarily political or prominent members of the community.

It is important to choose motivated advisory board members who have a variety of experiences and skills. Examples of advisory board members may include:

- City government representatives
- Community organizers
- Church leaders
- Organized labor representatives
- Contractors and temporary employment firms
- Environmental trainers/consultants
- Workforce Investment Board representatives
- Program graduates
- Environmental remediation workers

Invitations should be individualized and include the purpose for their selection and their importance to the program. It should also include the purpose and objectives of the program, background information, attributes and contributions they will bring, frequency of meetings, and membership responsibilities.

Advisory boards need to be dynamic, with additions and subtractions occurring depending on the program needs. Fifteen board members allows for illness and schedule conflicts. Frequency of meetings may also vary from semiannually to quarterly. Additional working committees and individual contributions may supplement regular meetings.

### ASSESS THE COMMUNITY

A huge disservice to students will be done if the proper analysis isn't performed addressing the program's occupational focus. If done correctly, a labor market assessment (LMA) could provide a path for recruitment, training, and placement of graduates; identification of program supporters, contributors, and potential employers; and a path for sustainability with

potential new partners and program leveraging opportunities.

One-on-one, face-to-face meetings with individual employers usually yield more successful results for most EWDJT programs. This method also serves to provide employer references and commitment to look at EWDJT graduates as possible job applicants.

Issues that may be discussed when conducting an LMA include:

- Type and size of organization as well as its products and/or services
- Wage for entry-level personnel
- Minimum level of education, skills, knowledge, and certifications required for employment
- Required work experience for employment
- Interest and ability to provide leveraged resources
- Other organization referrals

Always leave the meeting with an action plan, commitment, or closure.

EPA's Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool (EJSCREEN) may provide support for assessing communities, demographics, and pollution sources. To access the tool, visit <http://www2.epa.gov/ejscreen>.

Please see the March 2016 issue of *CONNECT News* for more information on labor market assessments on the Brownfields Toolbox website at <http://brownfields-toolbox.org/newsletter-archive/>.

### WRITE THE PROPOSAL

It is unfortunate, and perhaps unfair, that experienced grant writers familiar with the EWDJT program may have an advantage over excellent programs lacking grant writing skills and experience. Find or assign a good writer to

the final proposal, or attend a grant writing workshop.

A proposal for the EPA EWDJT program is different from many other grants for the following reasons:

- The entire program needs to be well-researched, planned, and presented in detail before the proposal is written.
- Partners, resources, employers, and governmental organizations need to be on board as part of the proposal writing process.
- Proposals require collaborations that take months—not weeks—to develop.

Proposals require close collaboration between writers, program managers, and staff. They cannot be written in isolation.

If an organization is resubmitting, do not submit the same proposal. Some EPA regional coordinators keep track of old proposals for reference. Partnerships, associations, and assessments must be current.

Over the years, EWDJT grantees have expressed the value of peer-to-peer mentoring and sharing ideas with other programs. Perhaps the best way to accomplish this is to participate in HMTRI's *Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting* (details below) and Professional Learning Community phone conference sessions.

It takes a good part of the year to assemble, coordinate, and institute a working partnership team and all of the necessary data. EWDJT proposals cannot be written in a month without several months of preparation including networking, team building, community outreach, and assessment. The best advice is to start now to develop an outstanding proposal for EPA's next EWDJT Request for Proposals, usually issued in the fall.

## 2016 ANNUAL ENVIRONMENTAL JOB DEVELOPMENT ALL-GRANTEE MEETING

The 2016 Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting will be held Wednesday and Thursday, August 17 and 18, 2016 in Alexandria, Virginia. This meeting provides a unique opportunity to share a variety of approaches to job training and development. The focus of the meeting is for EWDJT grantees to exchange information and ideas with each other and with EPA regional/headquarters representatives. The meeting is open to:

- Present EPA-funded EWDJT grantees
- Past EWDJT grantees
- Professional Learning Community members

All present EWDJT grantees are strongly encouraged to attend. The registration and hotel reservation deadline is **Tuesday, July 26, 2016**. To register, contact Glo Hanne at [ghanne@eicc.edu](mailto:ghanne@eicc.edu).

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on HMTRI technical assistance services, please contact Glo Hanne at [ghanne@eicc.edu](mailto:ghanne@eicc.edu).

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