

Cypress Mandela Training Center, Inc.

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Cypress Mandela Training Center organized after the 1989 earthquake caused major damage just a few blocks from the current training center. The need for trained community workers precipitated the formation of the Cypress Mandela Training Center.

Cypress received its first \$125,000 in EPA funding in 1998 as one of the early Brownfields Job Training Pilot programs. The initial pilot cooperative agreement was then with the Oakland Private Industry Council (PIC) using Cypress Mandela for training. The successful pilot project was funded again in 2004.

In 2008, Cypress Mandela branched out on its own receiving a \$200,000 Brownfields job training grant. Demonstrating they could exceed expectations, Cypress Mandela was awarded a stimulus \$500,000 grant in 2009. With among the highest graduation and placement rates, Cypress competed and was awarded another Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training grant in 2012.

What makes Cypress Mandela's program sustainable? It requires about \$1.5 million per year to sustain the Cypress Mandela Training Center. Funds are constantly being sought after from numerous partners and supporters. Leveraging—combining resources from multiple sources—remains the key to sustainability. In addition to being independent of any single funding stream, leveraging raises the quality and effectiveness of the entire program. Leveraging eliminates duplication by combining and sharing limited resources, and establishing a “critical mass” needed for training and student support.

The director's advice for sustainability: “Provide employers with well trained, disciplined employees who have the skills needed for employment. Provide the community with a solid, well-run organization where everyone is on the same page. Keep close to your graduates, supporters, and employers.”

How does it work? At Cypress Mandela, everyone is “on the same page.” Maintaining funding requires constant attention to quality training and graduate performance after employment. Cypress Mandela operates on a Boot Camp model with intensive training from 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. five days per week. No stipends are provided. All participants must demonstrate a positive attitude and discipline. In addition, physical training is required. Participants must remain drug free.

What are their placement strategies? Placement and tracking efforts are intensive at Cypress Mandela. Not only are graduates tracked through their apprenticeship, they are tracked for the five years required to reach Journeyman. Extensive use of alumni as mentors and recruiters contributes to the public awareness of the program, as well as marketing efforts.

Overview of the Cypress Mandela Training Center environmental workforce program

Demographics:

- The target area for this grant is the city of Oakland, CA with a population of 411,755.
- The target community has an unemployment rate over 20 percent.
- Over 55 percent of the residents live below the poverty level.
- 94 percent are minorities.
- Manufacturing jobs have significantly declined, and former industrial sites are now Brownfields.

Cypress Mandela targets economically disadvantaged residents of Oakland, San Leandro, Berkeley, Emeryville, and Richmond, including women, minorities, veterans, and ex-offenders.

Objective:

- 3 training cycles per year
- 45-55 participants per cycle

Key partners include:

- Oakland Housing Authority
- Alameda County Workforce Investment Board
- East Bay One Stop Career Centers
- California Department of Transportation
- Peralta Community College District
- Multiple union organizations
- Numerous additional contractors & private sector employers

Curriculum is guided by employers:

- 190+ hours of instruction including construction trades
- General construction
- Life skills
- First aid and CPR

Core environmental training program (includes EPA mandatory training):

- 40-hour HAZWOPER
- Emergency response and chemical spills
- Disaster site worker
- Advance HAZMAT specialist
- 32-hour lead abatement
- Mold inspection
- Mold abatement
- 32-hour asbestos abatement

- Incident command

Certifications:

- Twelve state or federal certifications are provided

Placement & tracking:

- Track graduates for 5+ years
- Extensive use of alumni and mentoring job clubs
- Extensive use of Project Labor Agreements (PLA's)
- Extensive use of Direct Entry and First Hire agreements on city projects

Student recruitment:

- Extensive use of graduates and alumni nights
- Well known in the community for high starting wages at \$15/hr.+

Student screening and support:

- Graduates of the 16-week pre-apprenticeship training program apply for the supplemental environmental training program.
- 7th-8th grade math and reading
- Drug and alcohol free
- Fitness test