

City of Detroit

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In 2014, the city of Detroit submitted their EWDJT proposal. Twelve weeks after submission, they were selected for Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training assistance. Staff working on the project describe the first few months and give advice as follows:

1. The long wait—Twelve weeks is a long wait but goes by fast. As 15 days pass, qualified proposals move on for technical review. During this time, it is important to keep in touch with partners. Especially individuals who may be contacted as part of the review process. Since EWDJT is an annual competition, it is wise to keep your partners and team together to begin preparation for recruitment and training or for a resubmission of an improved program (if the proposal is not funded). EPA has indicated that many first-time proposals do not make the cut, but are subsequently funded when additional preparation and consultation strengthens their program.
2. The “good news”—Email notices are sent to program directors with a hard copy “notice of funding” sent to the Chief Executive. In Detroit, it was the Mayor’s Office. It is important to stay close to individuals listed in the proposal as program staff may be the last to receive the “good news.”
3. Funding is not a “slam dunk”—In Detroit’s case, city council and the Mayor’s office are required to formally accept the award. The Chief Executive and the board need to be “on board” with the EWDJT program, reinforcing the need for good communications between project staff and administration. Detroit’s Mayor was onboard and included the effort in his State of the State address.
4. The check is not in the mail yet—More work still must be completed before funding begins. A specific and detailed work plan needs to be submitted to the EPA project officer for approval. While work plans follow closely with the proposed project plan, they provide more detail and timelines for project deliverables. Work plans may be tweaked after consultation with the project officer to ensure better outcomes. (Our recommendation to become “close” with the Regional Coordinator early in the proposal process comes in handy during the start-up phase). Work plans are flexible and can be changed at a later date after discussion with the project officer. In Detroit’s work plan, an unanticipated demand for trained workers in the summer of 2015 resulted in a dramatically accelerated training program and a revision in course offerings.
5. Getting paid—If a fiscal agent is not registered with SAM (System for Award Management), grantees will be directed to complete training and set up a payment account. This process can take about 2 weeks. PLC members may wish to visit www.sam.gov for useful background information on the federal payment process.

6. Grantees are now ready to begin their good work—Twenty weeks may have passed, but much of that down time could be used to begin preparation for the first recruitment and training cycle. Grantees are allowed to incur costs only after the award and up to 90 days prior to final funding. Billable costs must conform to the work plan and approved budget. It would be wise to discuss any of these plans with the EPA Project Officer. For example, attendance at the All-Grantee meeting in August can be covered if the award has been made but the accounting system is not yet operational. Note—while EPA may allow those expenditures, each individual organization may have internal restrictive regulations.
7. Staff did not feel that the city of Detroit’s experience going through the award and funding process was burdensome or difficult. Their proposal, work plan, and relationships with partners were well developed such that everything went smoothly. Suggestions during refinement of the work plan and timeline were constructive and resulted in revisions to the proposed training curriculum. As a result of the massive deconstruction activity in Detroit and their relationship with the Detroit Housing Authority, HAZWOPER, asbestos, and lead abatement training took center stage.
8. Four months into the first year—The close partnership between the EWDJT program and Jessica Carr (DES) provided an ample supply of excellent candidates, screened and qualified for additional benefits. The close partnership between the EWDJT program and the Detroit Housing Authority and their contractors is resulting in an expanded demand for program graduates. Contractors, under mandate to hire local residents, have expressed interest to hire three times the number of proposed graduates for the 2015 deconstruction season. This demand is enhanced by a \$5,000 incentive provided by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to hire residents at a minimum wage of \$10 per hour for at least 30 hours per week in sustainable jobs. As a result, the city of Detroit has revised their work plan to accelerate training to include three cycles of 20 participants for the first year of their EWDJT program.

Overview of the city of Detroit’s program

Training goal

- Train 50 students. (Now expanded to three cycles of 20 students in the first year alone.)
- Place 35 graduates in environmental jobs. Looking for 100% placement.
- Track graduates for at least one year utilizing Detroit’s DESC 1 stop management and tracking system.

Core curriculum—Based on employer demand associated with \$100 million to deconstruct and remodel 4,000 structures, many with lead and asbestos issues.

- 40-hour HAZWOPER
- Asbestos abatement
- Lead abatement
- CPR
- National Incident Management Systems (NIMS) training

- Job readiness training and participant benefits provided by DESC
- Federal and state certifications

Target population

- Unemployed and underemployed city residents
- Veterans
- Minorities
- Residents impacted by manufacturing plant closures

Partners

- Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation (DESC)
- Sierra Club
- United Community Housing Coalition
- Detroit Future City
- ESK Services Inc.
- Metro Occupational Trainers, Inc.
- Numerous community-based organizations
- Environmental employers and deconstruction contractors

Recruitment and placement

- Recruitment and initial screening by DESC
- Orientation events
- Screening for interest in environmental occupations
- Assessment for 5th grade reading and math levels—those not able to qualify are provided with remedial training.
- Drug testing
- On-site interviews
- Ex-offenders welcome
- Placement and tracking by DESC
- Special consideration between employers and ex-offenders
- Job readiness training, tools, and transportation provided by city and state employment programs
- Partnerships with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to provide \$5K incentives to hire graduates for 30 hours per week at \$10 minimum wage