

St. Nick's Alliance

2 Kingsland Avenue, 1st Floor

Brooklyn, NY 11211

Phone: 718.388.5454

<http://stnicksalliance.org/SNA/>



This Brooklyn community has become home to over 113 major pollution sources with 13 toxic waste emitters, over 390 hazardous waste sites, and two highly polluted waterways. Like Hunter's Baypoint Family, St. Nick's chose to organize. Formerly known as the St. Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corp., St Nick's started in 1975 to preserve and improve their threatened urban area of more than 9,000 low- to moderate-income residents.

St. Nick's provides services in five main areas:

1. Affordable housing,
2. Health care,
3. Workforce development,
4. Economic development, and
5. Youth and education.

St. Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation was first funded by EPA in 2002. By 2006, 135 graduates were finding local jobs paying \$13–\$32 per hour in environmental occupations. Since 2002, St. Nick's has been awarded five EPA Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training grants, and has received national recognition for their efforts. During the post 9/11 World Trade Center cleanup, St. Nick's, in collaboration with Clean Harbors, played a significant role in recruiting and training workers.

Despite their excellent track record, St. Nick's EWDJT program was not able to secure EPA funds in 2012. While part of a large community organization, it was necessary for the program to find resources to support itself as an independent division.

This raises a major issue associated with many EPA EWDJT programs. When EPA support ends, does the EWDJT program also end? What did St. Nick's do? What sustainability issues should grantees consider when applying for an EPA EWDJT grant?

1. EPA Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training funds have been designed as start-up funding. This means that there is no guarantee that an EWDJT program (even a successful one) will be refunded at the end of their existing grant.
2. It makes sense that successful programs should be continued. Unfortunately, limited funds do not allow for refunding some of the best programs. Historically, about half of available grant money has refunded exemplary existing programs (about 6–9 grants each year). Remaining funds go to communities interested in starting new programs. (This is just an observation and

not EPA policy.) That leaves about 6–9 existing grants without EPA assistance to continue their EWDJT program.

3. Sustaining support can come from a variety of sources:
 - a. Internal support (in the case of larger institutions such as community colleges, universities, and nonprofits such as Youth Build, Salvation Army, Goodwill, Strive, or Conservation Corps).
 - b. State funding (EWDJT programs written into the state budgets or supported by state agencies).
 - c. Foundation and private sector support (similar to “year-up” program in finance or Strive).
 - d. Contract support providing environmental training for a fee.
 - e. Grant support provided by other workforce development, research, or social service agencies.
 - f. All of the above works best.

St. Nick’s Alliance was able to secure funding under the Social Innovation Fund (Corporation for National and Community Service, www.nationalservice.gov). Their Innovation grant allowed St. Nick’s to enhance workforce development and sustain their program. This year they submitted and were awarded an EPA FY 2014 EWDJT grant leveraged by work performed under the Innovation grant.

New Jersey Youth Corps (NJYC) is another example of using EWDJT grants to develop a strong environmental workforce program but no longer requiring EPA assistance to sustain its operations. NJYC expanded and sustained itself with support coming New Jersey rather than EPA.

Securing jobs at cleanup facilities where organized labor dominated workforce positions

1. When the local economy has “tanked” with little hiring and extreme competition from local organized labor, placing graduates in pre-apprentice or apprentice programs can be difficult if not impossible. Local business managers find it difficult to bring in new workers when existing members are still “on the bench” waiting for employment.
2. Conversely, when demand for labor is high, EWDJT programs can be a ready source for screened, certified workers for union employment. It is important to establish long-term relationships with local labor business managers even when there are no openings. While jobs may not be immediate, workers will be needed as deconstruction and remediation picks up and the EWDJT program can become the first point of contact.
3. Cultivate relationships as St. Nick’s did with large remediation firms such as Clean Harbors. When a spike in demand for certified workers hit as in post 9/11, relationships with major contractors becomes a lifeline for both employers, the community, and program graduates.