

CONNECT News

Community Support, **N**etworking, and Assistance for **E**nvironmental **C**areer **T**raining

March 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 EPA-funded Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) grantees. These efforts are made possible with a cooperative agreement with the U.S. EPA.

HMTRI is part of Eastern Iowa Community Colleges and has been providing environmental workforce development technical assistance since the inception of the Brownfields program.

Recently there have been several requests for information on developing programs which give participants a better chance of gaining employment in their own communities. This has been an issue with job training programs for many years. The answer may be related to whether or not a labor market assessment was properly conducted during the development phase of the program. In this issue of *CONNECT News*, we will discuss the importance of and the steps needed to conduct a proper labor market assessment in your community.

LABOR MARKET ASSESSMENTS

Conducting a labor market assessment (LMA) is one of the most important components to building an EWDJT program. You can potentially do a huge disservice to students if the proper analysis isn't performed addressing your program's occupational focus.

Conducting an LMA is difficult and takes time and patience. If done correctly, an LMA could provide the following results:

- A path for:
 - Recruitment
 - Training
 - Placement of graduates
- Identification of:
 - Program supporters
 - Contributors
 - Potential employers

- A path for sustainability with:
 - Potential new partners
 - Program leveraging opportunities

An LMA may be done on a large or small scale. In the context of EWDJT programs, the LMA is usually a local effort and is essential to assess the extent and type of education and training needed by local employers.

There are three primary methods for conducting an LMA:

- Distribute a survey instrument to potential employers, either the entire population or a representative sample.
 - Can include a large number of employers, but return rate is usually low, and identifying employers who should receive the survey and their addresses can be time-consuming.

- Convene a focus group of potential employers to collect information through a strategic group interview.
 - Smaller, more intimate group but difficult to find a date and time that works for everyone invited.
- Conduct one-on-one, face-to-face meetings with individual employers.
 - For this application, face-to-face meetings with individual employers usually yield more successful results for most EWDJT programs.

A face-to-face LMA can provide useful contact with potential employers for specific labor needs. In this way, the LMA serves to provide employer referrals and commitments to look at EWDJT graduates as possible job applicants.

Establish relationships with the potential employers. This takes time and is labor intensive but is perhaps the most important component of sustainable job training programs. As employers are identified, take the following steps:

1. Bring them into the training process as participants in training.
2. Ask them to serve on advisory boards.
3. Ask them to provide curriculum guidance.
4. Document your meetings.
5. Start and/or expand an employer contact file. (You will use this later when placing graduates in jobs.)
6. Ask them to consider your graduates for available jobs. (Document in writing if possible.)

Below are some examples of employers looking for EWDJT graduates with environmental certificates and certifications.

- Local unions
- Manpower and temp firms
- Consultants—remediation and service providers

- Manufacturing firms
- Chemical and refining facilities
- Municipal facilities and utilities
- Painting companies
- Construction and deconstruction companies
- Transportation and material handling operations
- Scrap, recycling, storage, and landfill operations

Use yellow pages and search engines to identify potential employers including labor unions, consultants, service providers, and large manufacturing firms. Seek out temp and manpower organizations for possible interest in environmental technicians. Contact local municipal agencies regarding possible stakeholder interest. This effort will be useful in establishing a responsive curriculum.

Additional issues that may be discussed when conducting an LMA include:

- Type and size of the 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
- Employer's interest/ability to provide leveraged resources
- Other organization referrals that may also be interested in hiring well-trained graduates

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

LMAs can be much more than simple information gathering efforts. When done properly, they form a solid base upon which to direct and implement the entire EWDJT program.

2016 ANNUAL ENVIRONMENTAL JOB DEVELOPMENT ALL-GRANTEE MEETING

The 2016 Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting will be held Wednesday–Thursday, August 17–18, 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.

2016 ENVIRONMENTAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND JOB TRAINING GRANTS

Proposals for EPA’s FY2016 EWDJT are being reviewed. Successful applicants will develop job training programs that recruit, train, and place local, unemployed, and under-employed residents in full-time employment in the environmental field. EPA anticipates awarding approximately 17–18 EWDJT cooperative agreements at amounts up to \$200,000 each over a three-year period.

Tentative schedule:

- Awards announced—May 2016
- Administrative/work plan approvals—July/August 2016
- HMTRI Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting—August 2016

- Execution of work plans—September 2016
- Program reporting—Ongoing throughout funding cycle

Those not awarded a cooperative agreement for FY2016 should not be discouraged. EPA’s funds are limited—it is not possible to fund all of the proposals submitted. Start now to prepare for the next cycle tentatively scheduled to be issued around November 2016.

If a proposal is not funded under this year’s competition:

- Schedule a debriefing with the EPA regional job training coordinator to identify proposal deficiencies and areas to strengthen.
- Revisit community and employer needs.
- Identify and confirm partnerships.
- Make associations and contacts.
- Connect with prospective employers.
- Take part in HMTRI’s Professional Learning Community sessions to receive informative tips from experienced EPA-funded grantees.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on HMTRI technical assistance services, please contact Glo Hanne at ghanne@eicc.edu.

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