

Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board

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The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board (NRWIB) in Waterbury, CT has received workforce development grants in 2009 and again in 2013 with placement rates exceeding 90%.

The NRWIB worked hard to develop close relationships with other state and local governmental organizations. As a result, the organization plays a key role in economic development in the western part of the state. Training and placing unemployed residents extends beyond environmental positions to include construction, electrical, and plumbing trades. As a result, NRWIB is able to leverage funds from multiple sources such as the Green Jobs Innovation Fund; and job opportunities such as *Rebuild Education*, tank removal, brownfields remediation, fracking, water/wastewater, and gas pipeline improvements.

They attribute their success (with a 90-95% placement rate) to the following program attributes:

- Close ties with city and state government, taking advantage of “hire local” job ordinances.
- Coordination and utilization of services provided by organized labor—instruction and guidance.
- An extremely selective participant selection system using the “funnel” approach with pre-training.
- Working with employers—employers first—guiding the program.
- Close ties with city and state government. Being a WIB provides the NRWIB access (and sometimes preference) among other governmental organizations. Current economic and political conditions place job growth as a top priority. State funding and federal block grants can provide resources to the WIB not available to non-governmental organizations.
- Coordination and utilization of services provided by organized labor. Bringing organized labor into the training and workforce development process not only provides leveraged training, it provides a path to pre-apprentice programs related to environmental remediation. The NRWIB program provides pre-apprentice training in addition to training in the construction trades. They are able to leverage these training programs with the addition of environmental remediation training for selected students.
- An extremely selective participant selection system. The NRWIB uses a “funnel” selection process and pre-training to select students that best fit the environmental workforce development program. Selecting a sufficiently large target community can be important in this type of selection process.

With awareness sessions held every month, large numbers of prospective applicants must be reviewed and filtered to find 20 of the most motivated to receive environmental remediation, health, and safety training. Below is the approach used by the NRWIB EWDJT program.

- Bi-weekly awareness sessions (constructions, energy, and environmental trades)
- Preliminary screening and paperwork
- Call back
- CASA employment competency (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System)
- Remedial math classes twice a week
- Call back—drug test
- Individual service plans branching applicants into alternative training programs
- 30 hours of pre-training (OSHA 10, construction math, green tradesman)
- Selection process for additional environmental training based on observation and interviews
- 200 hours—5 weeks of environmental training under EWDJT program
- Drug testing before placement
- Follow-up
- Recertification training

Notable in the process used by the NW Regional Workforce Investment Board is the integration of environmental training with other alternatives. Students may select construction trades, solar, electrical, plumbing, BTI (LEEDS), home energy, and pre-apprentice training in addition to consideration for the EWDJT program. Refresher and recertification training allows NW Regional Workforce Investment Board to track students.

NRWIB's top recommendation for new and prospective grantees is to develop a close relationship with employers. It is extremely important to find what employers are looking for in the graduates they hire. This demonstrates the need to have potential employers engaged in the EWDJT program as advisors, instructors, and program supporters.