

## CONNECT News

Community Support, Networking, and Assistance for Environmental Career Training

May 2017

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 [Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training \(EWDJT\)](#) grantees funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). These efforts are made possible with a cooperative agreement with the U.S. EPA.

HMTRI is part of Eastern Iowa Community Colleges and has provided environmental workforce development technical assistance since the inception of EPA's Brownfields Initiative.

### FUNDED OR NOT FUNDED:

### WHAT TO EXPECT AND THINGS TO CONSIDER

EPA EWDJT grants are designed to provide funding to eligible entities, including nonprofit organizations, to recruit, train, and place predominantly low-income, minority, unemployed, and underemployed residents of solid and hazardous waste-impacted communities with the skills needed to secure full-time, sustainable employment in the environmental field. Applications that do not meet eligibility requirements are notified within 15 days of submission. All other applications proceed to EPA's well-defined grant review process to be evaluated and prioritized for funding.

Depending on available funds, applicants are notified of their funding status within approximately 90 days from submission. Public announcements and listserv posts announce the awards. A formal notification is sent to the principal contact identified in the proposal.

#### FUNDED PROPOSALS

When an EWDJT proposal is funded, continued preparation and administrative work needs to be completed before funds are available. Release of funds cannot be made until "EPA Terms and Conditions" are met and a detailed work plan has been approved.

Paperwork and final approvals can take up to three months and must be completed before the end of the federal fiscal year (September 30).

#### KICKOFF MEETING WITH EPA REPRESENTATIVES

New grantees will benefit from a kickoff meeting with the EPA regional coordinator assigned to the grant. The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Acquaint the EPA regional coordinator with the community and the target area.
- Help the new grantee understand their responsibilities under the EWDJT agreement.

- Identify issues to avoid future surprises.
- Develop a schedule and make expectations and responsibilities clear for all involved.

Several items should be discussed.

- Roles and responsibilities for each participant and partner.
- Grant terms and conditions.
- Hiring incentives (state, municipal, and federal).
- Community involvement including plans and techniques for disseminating information regarding the program.
- Reporting requirements including quarterly reports and [ACRES](#), and the expected time frame to report accomplishments.
- Other program deliverables such as job training status forms and federal finance reports.
- Project timelines.
- Proposed curriculum.
- Financial requirements and payments.
- Performance expectations (e.g., 35 percent of funds spent within first year).
- Targets and projected output by year.
- Review and update of work plans, training plans, and budgets.

Attendees to this meeting may include:

- The EPA regional coordinator.
- Principal recipient of the award.
- State or local government staff, if they are involved in the program.
- Project personnel.
- Advisory board members.
- Consultants and partners critical to the program.

#### KICKOFF MEETING WITH COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

After establishing relationships with EPA representatives and key personnel, and

understanding how the EWDJT award will be implemented, a kickoff meeting with local stakeholders is appropriate.

The agenda for a local stakeholder public kickoff meeting may include several talking points.

- Introductions of key personnel with brief descriptions of their roles and responsibilities.
- Introductions of other partners such as other agencies, and city and state contacts.
- Introductions of all attendees and the importance of networking for program success.
- Description of planned efforts for engaging the public.
- Explanation of the program timeline.
- Presentation of the proposed curriculum.
- Targets and projected output by year-end, based on approved work plans.
- Networking opportunities.
- Request for community support and feedback.

#### UNFUNDED PROPOSALS

Many EWDJT proposals are not funded the first year they are submitted. Do not be discouraged. One or two evaluation points may make the difference between a funded and unfunded proposal. Consider the following questions.

- Is the EWDJT program something the community really needs?
- Is the EWDJT program something the potential stakeholders really want?
- Is the EWDJT program something partners are willing to support?
- Are resources available to continue pursuing an EWDJT program?

- Are sustainability opportunities and leveraged resources available on a long-term basis?
- Do organizers and supporters have the desire to continue working on a new, expanded proposal?

If the answer to these questions is yes, then now is the time to begin preparing for the next EPA Request for Proposals (RFP). Often proposals are rejected the first time, and then funded after expanding and improving the program plan.

Do not assume the same or similar application will be accepted. Some EPA grant reviewers keep old proposals for reference. Partnerships, supporters, and assessments must be current. It takes several months to assemble, coordinate, and institute expanded and perhaps new working partnerships and support teams.

#### THINGS TO DO WHEN RESUBMITTING

First and most important, contact the EPA regional coordinator in the region of the location of the job training program to request a debriefing session. **This must be done within 14 days of receiving the official rejection notice.** During this session, the regional coordinator will identify weak areas in the proposal. Seek suggestions for proposal improvement and ask questions. **No question is too small or insignificant to ask.** Regional coordinators may also be able to provide additional suggestions in terms of partners and resources to consider when expanding the proposal.

Consider the following additional hints when resubmitting a proposal.

- Express your intentions to EPA and local stakeholders.
- Stay involved with local community and governmental organizations.
- Attend public hearings, especially Brownfields-related meetings.
- Learn about new potential leveraging partners.
- Get close to local employers.
- Attend Brownfields conferences (state, regional, and national).
- Join the HMTRI Professional Learning Community (PLC) for hints and ideas. PLC is a biweekly telephone conference held on Wednesdays at 2:00 p.m. ET to discuss all topics related to environmental job training.

EWDJT grantees have expressed the value of peer-to-peer mentoring and sharing ideas with other programs. Take advantage of networking and consulting with existing and past grantees. The best way to accomplish this is to participate in HMTRI's **Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting**. As a PLC member, organizations can attend this invitation-only meeting allowing them to network with current and past grantees, and with EPA headquarters and regional staff. (See page 4 of this newsletter for more information about the 2017 meeting.)

Additionally, the EPA and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) co-sponsor the **National Brownfields Training Conference**. This conference provides an excellent opportunity to connect with peers, employers, and potential partners. Statewide Brownfields conferences provide similar opportunities on a smaller scale.

Outstanding EPA EWDJT proposals cannot be written by a single grant writer in a month's time frame without preparation networking, team building, community outreach, and assessment. The best hint to writing a proposal is to start team building and pre-proposal preparation as early as possible.

## ANNUAL ENVIRONMENTAL JOB DEVELOPMENT ALL-GRANTEE MEETING

Registration is now open for the 2017 **Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting**. This year's meeting will be held August 9–10, 2017 at the Crowne Plaza Old Town Alexandria hotel in Alexandria, VA. Travel days are August 8 and 11. This meeting is open to:

- Present EPA-funded EWDJT grantees
- Past EWDJT grantees
- Members of HMTRI's Professional Learning Community (PLC)

There is no fee to attend. HMTRI will cover the cost of lodging for three nights for participants attending from out-of-town. The deadline for making hotel reservations at the group rate is Monday, July 17, 2017.

Contact Glo Hanne for more information at [ghanne@eicc.edu](mailto:ghanne@eicc.edu).

## NATIONAL BROWNFIELDS TRAINING CONFERENCE

The [National Brownfields Training Conference](#) will be held in Pittsburgh, PA on December 5–7, 2017 with pre-conference workshops on December 4. The conference is co-sponsored by the EPA and ICMA. The conference, offered every two years, is the largest gathering of stakeholders focused on cleaning up and reusing formerly utilized commercial and industrial properties.

## HMTRI TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Technical assistance services for EWDJT grantees and prospective grantees provided by HMTRI include:

- Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meeting
- Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Update Webinar
- Grantee and Community Outreach listserv
- Environmental Workforce Development Professional Learning Community (PLC)
- MentorLink program
- Individualized technical assistance
- Certified Employee Finder (directory of certified EWDJT graduates available for employment)
- Directory of EWDJT grantee websites and social media sites
- Bi-monthly "CONNECT News" newsletter

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on HMTRI technical assistance services or to be added to our Grantee and Community Outreach Listserv, please contact Glo Hanne at [ghanne@eicc.edu](mailto:ghanne@eicc.edu).

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