

CONNECT News

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

November 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.

TIPS FOR PREPARING FY2018 EWDJT PROPOSALS

EPA issued the FY2018 EWDJT Request for Proposals (RFP) on October 16, 2017, with a due date of December 15, 2017. By now, those who are serious about submitting a proposal should be well on their way to developing partnerships and have a good idea of the communities and employers who will be targeted.

December 15 is right around the corner. Before it's too late, verify that grant submission processes are current. Go to [Grants.gov](#) for information. They also have a [tutorial](#) and an [online users guide](#) for those who have not applied for a federal grant in the past or just need to be updated. Accounts must be used at least once per year to remain active.

To check an account status, go to [SAM](#) and enter the organization's DUNS number. Make sure passwords are current. Conduct a practice run early before the proposal is ready to

submit. If you need guidance, call the SAM help desk at 800.518.4726.

ALLOWABLE COSTS FOR CORE OFFERINGS

Questions always arise over allowable costs. The RFP provides a detailed list of allowable and disallowed costs. In general, if the activity is directly related to training and placing participants in one of the categories listed, it becomes an allowable cost. Of concern, however, is the allocation of funding within those categories.

The only required training is OSHA 29 CFR 1910.120 40-hour HAZWOPER. Many grantees also choose to offer OSHA 10-hour training along with a variety of other environmental training based on local employer needs.

Advanced courses can be funded, but keep in mind that if advanced courses fall in a category

with limited funds, EPA may not be able to fund that course in its entirety. Applicants should take this into consideration when deciding on the types of training to offer and the level at which they will be delivered. Applicants will not be able to revise, substitute, or alter training curricula if the proposal is selected for funding and certain types of training are unable to be funded. For example, the office of air programs has chosen not to contribute funds to the EWDJT program. As a result, EPA would not likely fund an advanced course in air monitoring unless it involved cleanup of hazardous pollutants.

Funds available for the EWDJT program are in the various categories itemized below.

- Brownfields hazardous waste assessment and cleanup training, including petroleum cleanup training: \$2,865,000
- Solid waste management or cleanup training: \$10,000
- Superfund site cleanup and innovative and alternative treatment technologies training: \$25,000
- Wastewater treatment training: \$40,000
- Emergency planning, preparedness, and response training: \$20,000
- Enhanced environmental health and safety training: \$15,000
- Integrated pest management (IPM) training: \$10,000
- Alternative energy technologies training (e.g. solar installation, preparation of formerly contaminated sites for renewable energy purposes, etc.): \$15,000

The above categories are general in nature and many courses and certificates will fit under one or several of the categories. Page 4 of the RFP provides detail into specific training that fits

under one or more of the abovementioned categories.

DO NOT GET DISCOURAGED

Some applicants participating in this funding cycle have been funded several times and have a deep understanding of their community, partners, and stakeholders. Many applicants attended the Annual All-Grantee Meeting and PLC sessions during the year. Others have been rejected in the past, resolved issues, and improved their program plan. For some, the EWDJT program is a new adventure that may appear overwhelming. Do not get discouraged.

1. Submit a proposal no matter what, and give it your best shot.
2. All proposals are evaluated on a level playing field. Awards are made on the quality of the proposed plan and an understanding of program goals with no favoritism.
3. Unfunded proposals can provide a launching pad for improved and successful programs during the next funding cycle.
4. EWDJT programs can become a permanent part of the community with diverse community support.
5. Do not be discouraged if the program appears difficult to organize at first.
6. Grantees are often surprised by the amount of external support available.
7. Keep a positive attitude. Local external support will not be forthcoming to those who do not have a positive attitude.

Competition is stiff. In the event EPA support does not come this year, continue planning for next year. A new EWDJT funding cycle will begin again in the fall. EWDJT programs have been surprised to find local funding and support,

even when federal assistance is not immediately available.

TIPS—CRITICAL ISSUES IN PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

Deconstruct the RFP to ensure that every request for information is addressed in the proposal. Failure to address even one question can make the difference between a funded or unfunded proposal.

1. Establish a team of individuals to be active in proposal development.
2. Select a project coordinator to be the facilitator and general editor.
3. Make sure the grant writer is familiar with the project and has read the RFP in detail.
4. Deconstruct and identify every question and request for information, and assign each to the individual best qualified to respond.
5. Establish milestones, meetings, and deadline schedules for each team member.
6. Obtain firm time commitments from each team member for all deliverables.
7. Allow for delays and an early completion date as the proposal is developed.
8. Present deliverables to the entire team for peer-to-peer review and revision on a regular basis.

It is the project coordinator's responsibility to ensure all criteria have been adequately addressed.

If the seven ranking criteria were ordered by the effort and time it takes to respond properly, that order might look something like the list below. Some of the criteria overlap such as labor market assessments, leveraging, and

community and employer partnerships and can be done simultaneously.

1. Community Need—20 points—Community and labor market assessments
2. Leveraging—3 points—Life skills, student services, and non-funded EWDJT activities
3. Community and Employer Partnerships—26 points—Employer involvement, public meetings, and working with Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund, and Cleanup (ARC) grantees.
4. Training Program Description—10 points—Curriculum (note allowable funding levels)
5. Program Structure, Anticipated Outputs, and Outcomes—15 points—Outcomes, recruitment, support, and sustainability
6. Programmatic Capability—20 points—Management systems, experience, past performance, and audits
7. Budget—6 points—Ensure all numbers are consistent across the proposal

The first three criteria alone represent 49 of the 100 total evaluation points and will take the most effort and time. It is essential that immediate attention be given to activities that involve partnerships, outreach, and relationships with potential stakeholders.

PROJECTED TIMELINE AND SCHEDULE

An estimated EWDJT award timeline is below. It provides a rough idea of the EWDJT award process that is useful when talking with potential partners.

- Next PLC—November 29, 2:00 p.m. ET—Landmines to avoid when developing EWDJT proposals
- National Brownfields Conference—December 5–7, 2017

- HMTRI roundtable session at National Brownfields Conference—12/6/17, 1:45 p.m.
- Proposals due December 15, 2017
- Rejections for not meeting threshold criteria—First or second week of January 2018
- Awards announced—April/May 2018
- Award letter and acceptance by applicant—May/June 2018—Funds may be spent up to 90 days before final paperwork after official acceptance.
- Terms and conditions with approved work plans—July/August 2018
- HMTRI Annual All-Grantee Meeting—August 8–9, 2018
- Official notice that funds are available for spending—August/September 2018
- Training and execution of work plans including quarterly and ACRES reports—September and ongoing
- FY2019 EWDJT RFP—Late fall 2018

NATIONAL BROWNFIELDS TRAINING CONFERENCE

The [National Brownfields Training Conference](#) will be held in Pittsburgh, PA on December 5–7, 2017. The conference is co-sponsored by the EPA and the International City/County Management Association (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 will have a booth in the exhibit hall (booth #506), and a roundtable session on December 6 from 1:45–2:45 p.m. titled *Employing Community Residents through Training and Certification*.

HMTRI TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Technical assistance services provided by HMTRI for EWDJT grantees and prospective grantees 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.

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