

CONNECT News

Community Support, Networking, and Assistance
 for Environmental Career Training
 January 2023

The Hazardous Materials Training and Research Institute (HMTRI) with a cooperative agreement from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) assists communities establish environmental job training programs. To better exchange ideas, HMTRI distributes CONNECT, featuring topics of interest among those interested in participating in the EPA Brownfields Environmental Job Training (BJT) grant program. This month's issue presents the new FY23 Brownfields Job Training awards, reviews the direction of the BJT program and discusses HMTRI resources available to organizations interested in moving forward in developing a successful environmental workforce training program.

FY23 Brownfields Job Training Announcements -Resources for Moving Forward

Today's Brownfields Job Training Program (BJT) has evolved from its origins as the Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training program (EWDJT) first piloted in 1998. At that time, hazardous materials training was authorized under section 104(k)(6) of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA). Subsequent to those early demonstration programs, legislation and executive orders codified and expanded the role of Brownfields training as part of EPA's responsibility in promoting environmental justice and community revitalization.

EPA has laid out the goals and objectives of today's BJT program. "A critical part of EPA's Brownfields Job Training program is to further environmental justice by ensuring that residents living in communities historically affected by economic disinvestment, health disparities, and disproportionate and adverse exposures to environmental contamination, including low-income, minority, tribal and indigenous communities, have an opportunity to reap the benefits of revitalization and environmental cleanup."

"The objective of the Brownfields Job Training Program is to recruit, train, and place unemployed and under-employed residents of solid and hazardous waste-impacted communities with the skills needed to obtain full-time, sustainable employment. This program promotes the facilitation of activities related to assessment, cleanup, or preparation of contaminated sites, including brownfields, for reuse, while simultaneously building a local workforce with the skills needed to perform remediation work that are supportive of environmental protection and environmental health and safety."

Expansion of Brownfields Job Training

Until recently, Brownfields Job Training has remained relatively stable since the first 11 projects graduated 100 participants in 1999. With successful completion of the initial program, the program was expanded to include two years focused on training and a third year added for graduate tracking, placement, and closeout. Grant funding has remained at \$200K for the past 24 years. All of that changed with the current administration's emphasis on environmental justice and community engagement. FY23 Requests for BJT

applications (RFAs) dramatically increased from 3 to 5 years with funding not to exceed \$500K and an overall budget almost tripling the previous year's budget.

Including FY23 announcements, EPA has awarded 400 grants totaling over \$93 million. Over 19,700 individuals have been trained and 14,500 have been placed in careers related to land remediation, environmental health, and safety. Since the beginning of the program in 1998, the cumulative placement rate has been approximately 75% with an average starting wage of \$14 per hour.

To demonstrate the recent expansion of BJT, below is snapshot of EPA funding awards over the past six years. (Note BJT competition was suspended in FY19, to resume with an expanded competition in 2020.)

- 29 grantees - FY2023 - \$14.5 M
- 19 grantees - FY2022- \$3.8 M
- 18 grantees - FY2021- \$3.6 M
- 26 grantees - FY2020- \$5.2 M
- 0 grantees - FY2019 – no competition
- 18 grantees - FY2018- \$3.6 M
- 6 grantees - FY2017- \$1.2 M
- 7 grantees - FY2016- \$1.4 M

Active Brownfield Job Training Programs

Including FY23 BJT awards, 59 organizations across the country will be receiving assistance through the EPA Brownfield Job Training program. Prior to FY23, successful applicants were funded annually for three years. As a result, BJT is staggered with new organizations entering the program, expiring programs re-competing for additional funding, and others returning after placing training on hold. Here is a list of programs currently funded and recently recommended for funding in FY23.

Eight programs were funded for three years in 2020 these programs have not received or did not apply for additional funding.

Colorado Department of Local Affairs
Earth Conservancy
El Centro
The Fortune Society, Inc.
Lorain County Board of Commissioners
City of New Bedford
Southern University at Shreveport
Training to Work an Industry Niche

Fourteen programs were funded for three years in 2021 and have not received or did not apply for additional funding.

City of East Point
Groundwork Denver
Groundwork Rhode Island
Kern County Builders Exchange
Nye County
People United for Sustainable Housing Inc. (PUSH Buffalo)
Pittsburgh Conservation Corps dba
Santa Fe Community College
Southwest Economic Solutions Corporation
The HOPE Program, Inc.
The Research Foundation of CUNY of the City College of New York
The WorkPlace, Inc.
Vermont Rural Water Association
City of Worcester

Eight programs were funded for three years in 2022 and have not received or did apply for FY23 funding.

Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes
Coalfield Development Corporation
Great Lakes Community Conservation Corps, Inc.
Heartland Conservation Alliance
Hunters Point Family
Laborers' Local 17 Training & Educational Fund
Pioneer Bay Community Development Corporation
Pittsburg, City of (Pennsylvania)

Twenty-nine programs will be funded in FY23 for the next 5 years.

Alaska Forum, Inc.
 Auberle
 Baker Technical Institute*
 Civic Works, Inc.
 Corporation to Develop Communities of Tampa, Inc.
 Cypress Mandela Training Center, Inc.
 Energy Coordinating Agency
 Full Employment Council, Inc.
 Green Door Initiative*
 Kaunalewa*
 Limitless Vistas, Inc.
 Los Angeles Conservation Corps
 Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board, Inc.** 1
 OAI, Inc., Chicago
 PathStone Corporation
 Pittsburgh Conservation Corps d/b/a Landforce
 Richmond, City of (California)
 City of Rochester
 Springfield, City of (Missouri)
 St. Louis Community College
 St. Nicks Alliance
 Sustainable Workplace Alliance*
 City of Tacoma (Washington)** 2
 The Fortune Society, Inc.
 The HOPE Program
 West End Neighborhood House, Inc.
 Workforce, Inc., dba Recycle Force
 The WorkPlace
 Zender Environmental Health and Research Group

(* Indicates organization receiving 1st time EPA Funding. ** Indicates resumed funding for programs that had previously suspended their EPA programs.)

¹The Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board submitted three successful applications between 2009 and 2016.

²The City of Tacoma is returning to BJT after successfully competing for eight grants between 2000 and 2018.

It should be noted that grantees receiving EPA assistance are generally small community organizations. BJT programs are especially suited to service local communities. Smaller grants with annual requests for applications allow nonprofits to compete with large well-funded organizations.

BJT provides for annual competitions.

Unsuccessful applications are not necessarily a reflection on the effectiveness or quality of a nonprofit organization. Annual competitions allow aspiring grantees a chance to rethink their proposals and resubmit an application as part of the next RFA.

Smaller grants allow community organization to compete.

Massive training grants typically offered by Federal agencies may be easier to administer but are not accessible to small community nonprofits. Many local organizations do not have the ability to “ramp up” and digest large grants.

The number of BJT grantees are small allowing for networking among other grantees and individualized technical assistance.

Because the number of active BJT grants is small, grantees can participate in peer-to-peer assistance. Exchanging ideas and strategies for successful grant implementation enhances the effectiveness of the entire program.

EPA attempts to level the playing field for new and returning programs.

EPA acknowledges that experienced grantees have a distinct advantage in responding to RFAs than new programs or programs that have not been in operation for several years. BJT Evaluation criteria take into consideration lack of experience and special factors including issues that may disadvantage new or returning programs.

Resources for Moving Forward

For organizations interested in starting a Brownfields Job Training Program, EPA Regional Coordinators are the first stop. BJT Regional Coordinators become the ‘Point of Contact’ for environmental training in their region. They are well versed regarding questions about BJT grants, resources, and funding application guidance. Many Regions maintain a listserv for past, current and potential grantees. It is important to be on their contact list for conference calls and newsletters. Below is a contact list for EPA Regional Brownfield Job Training Coordinators.

EPA Region 1

CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT

William “Bill” Lariviere

E-mail: lariviere.william@epa.gov

EPA Region 2

NJ, NY, PR, VI

Schenine Mitchell

E-mail: mitchell.schenine@epa.gov

EPA Region 3

DE, DC, MD, PA, VA, WV

Gianna Rosati

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EPA Region 4

AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN

Olga Perry

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EPA Region 5

IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI

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EPA Region 6

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EPA Region 9

AZ, CA, HI, NV, AS, GU

Nova Blazej

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EPA Region 10

AK, ID, OR, WA

Angel Ip

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Technical assistance available for organizations interested in brownfields job training

For those new to environmental Job Training, EPA provides technical assistance to organizations interested in establishing community based BJT programs. The Hazardous Materials Training and Research Institute (HMTRI), in cooperative agreement with EPA is tasked with providing assistance related to the development and successful operation of Brownfields Job Training Programs.

HMTRI has worked with EPA technician training programs since 1987 under a variety of cooperative agreements. Grants have included technician training, curriculum development, capacity building and technical assistance to communities interested in establishing local environmental workforce programs. HMTRI draws upon and leverages efforts and assistance from related environmental training programs including The Environmental and Natural Resources Technology (EARTH Center) funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), The Partnership for Environmental Education (PETE) supported by the National Institute of Environmental Health science (NIEHS) and Eastern Iowa Community College (EICC).

Since the beginning of EPA's Environmental Workforce Development Program, HMTRI has assisted communities in establishing and sustaining quality environmental training to community residents. Here are some of the resources HMTRI uses to engage and support the BJT effort.

Brownfields-Toolbox.org – A website and repository for all things related to workforce development and job training. (<http://brownfields-toolbox.org/>)

Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Meetings - Networking grantees for peer-to-peer idea exchange. This year's All Grantee Meeting will be held in Alexandria, VA, May 24-25. Current, prospective, and past grantees are invited to network and exchange program implementation strategies. (<https://brownfields-toolbox.org/all-grantee-meetings/>)

Annual Environmental Job Development All-Grantee Update Webinars – Updating communities on the latest developments and best practices of successful BJT programs. (<https://brownfields-toolbox.org/webinars/>)

CONNECT News is a bimonthly e-publication - CONNECT is HMTRI's acronym for community support, networking, and assistance for environmental career training. Each issue of CONNECT News features contentious issues faced by BJT programs. (<http://brownfields-toolbox.org/newsletter-archive/>)

The Certified Employee Finder – Collecting and sharing BJT information regarding program competencies, training schedules and graduate certifications with potential employers and other grantees. (<https://brownfields-toolbox.org/certified-employee-finder/>)

BJT Social Media Directory – Grantee websites, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Google + social platforms are “hot linked” for

easy navigating. (<https://brownfields-toolbox.org/social-media-directory/>)

Best Practices Guide – A compilation of best practices and strategies from successful BJT programs. (http://s3-us-east-2.amazonaws.com/bf-toolbox/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/19162438/BP_toolbox_report_formatted_20180411_onlineversion_w_cc.pdf)

Environmental Workforce Development Professional Learning Community (PLC) – Biweekly informal conference calls featuring successful grantees and discussions on BJT topics of interest. (<https://brownfields-toolbox.org/plc-sessions/>)

HMTRI Technical Assistance Listserv – The HMTRI Technical Assistance Listserv provides a forum to ask questions, post announcements and disseminate information.

Individualized Technical Assistance – HMTRI provides “one on one” assistance regarding BJT issues when requested. Visitors to Brownfields-toolbox.org may also want to look at the Start Your BJT Program section. Click on the Program tab along the top.

CONNECT is sponsored under Cooperative Agreement with The US Environmental Protection Agency in affiliation with the Hazardous Materials Training and Research Institute (HMTRI)

CONNECT notes represent individual opinions and ideas from Professional Learning Community participants, HMTRI staff, and EPA Environmental Job Training grant recipients. They do not represent EPA policy, guidance or opinions and should not be taken as such. Copies of prior CONNECT issues can be found at Brownfields-toolbox.org.

HMTRI is part of Eastern Iowa Community Colleges providing technician training and environmental workforce technical assistance since 1987. For more information on HMTRI technical assistance services or to be added to our Grantee and Community Outreach Listserv, please contact us at: HMTRI@eicc.edu.



HMTRI

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