



EPA Brownfields Job Training Grants — Building Careers and Cleaning the Environment

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PA's commitment to promoting economic revitalization and safeguarding the health of the environment and the public can be found in its Job Training grants. Over the past several years, EPA has partnered with other federal agencies and local environmental employment and training programs to develop plans for fostering workforce development in brownfields communities and to fill the critical link between environmental cleanup and safe, sustainable community redevelopment. Those eligible for Job Training grants include colleges, universities, regional workforce investment boards, community job training organizations, nonprofit training centers, states, counties, municipalities, federally recognized Indian tribes (except Alaskan Tribes), and U.S. Territories.

Job Training grants are usually located within or adjacent to EPA-funded Brownfields grant areas. These grants complement existing renewal efforts by both facilitating cleanup of brownfields and also promoting employment of environmental job trainees. To start addressing their brownfields, the Town of Phillipsburg, New Jersey sought and was awarded an EPA Assessment grant. Two EPA Job Training grants, awarded to the New Jersey Youth Corps program, have assisted in providing qualified environmental professionals to the Town of Phillipsburg. Although the grant program's primary objective is to provide environmental training for disadvantaged residents of communities affected by brownfields while at the same time facilitating brownfields cleanup, it helps in other ways. The program also ensures that local communities share in the short- and long-term economic benefits of brownfields cleanup efforts; that under or unemployed residents find sustainable employment in the environmental field; and that environmental justice objectives are met. This is especially important as Job Training grants are typically awarded in urban, low-income, and high-minority areas. Many of the grant areas lie within state/local Enterprise Zones, federal Enterprise Communities, and/or federal Empowerment Zones. Job Training grants not only target minority residents of communities affected by brownfields, but also those in public assistance programs (including Welfare-to-Work), single mothers, youth at risk, and veterans. Various recruitment strategies are used, including working with community and city organizations, college and high school alumni, existing job training and placement programs, local Welfare-to-Work programs, and the media; conducting house-to-house visits, meetings, forums, and open enrollment sessions; and relying on word-of-mouth.

Job Training



JFYNetWorks Job Training grantees in Boston, Massachusetts participate in training exercises.

JUST THE FACTS:

- Job Training programs help individuals to receive the qualifications necessary to obtain quality environmental jobs while providing communities with the labor force necessary to help revitalize their brownfields.
- New Jersey Youth Corps has used EPA Job Training grants to provide qualified environmental professionals to the Town of Phillipsburg, an EPA Brownfields Assessment grant recipient.
- Brownfields Job Training graduates assisted with environmental cleanup and recovery efforts following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

“EPA Job Training grants are a way to create local employment opportunities for Phillipsburg residents by linking workforce development with the brownfields redevelopment process.”

– New Jersey Youth Corps grantees

Program graduates continue to demonstrate that they are well prepared to compete in the environmental job market. Participants of the JFYNetWorks Job Training Program in Boston, Massachusetts, graduate with certificates of completion in environmental science, chemistry, chemistry lab, math and business writing, as well as five professional environmental health and safety certifications. A single mother who graduated from the

NetWorks Job Training Program found employment as a lab technician at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). She was soon promoted to manage a lab of PhD researchers working on the Human Genome Project at MIT. Trainees of the Williamsburg Works Job Training Program in Brooklyn, New York graduate with nine professional certifications and/or licenses in the environmental area.

Trainees of the Lawrence Ambiente Training Initiative Brownfields Job Training Program in Lawrence, Massachusetts graduate with seven professional certifications or licenses in the areas of HAZWOPER, lead, asbestos, mold, first aid, OSHA construction, and confined space, making them the most highly-trained environmental technicians in their region. The Brownfields Initiative for Local Development (BILD) Job Training Program in Lewiston, Maine offers participants supervisor level training in lead and asbestos abatement through their core training track. BILD also offers participants two advanced training tracks: Advanced Hazardous Waste Transport and Advanced Brownfields Redevelopment. To date, 56 students have participated in EPA-funded cycles of BILD's Job Training Program, with 43 students



A Job Training graduate in St. Louis, Missouri celebrates his success.

graduating. Approximately 80 percent of those graduates are employed, earning an average wage of \$11 per hour.

Many graduates of Brownfields Job Training programs have found long-term jobs in the environmental field as Asbestos Supervisors, Environmental Engineers, Field Response Technicians, HAZMAT Drivers, or HAZWOPER Trainer Safety Inspectors. Following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, eight Brownfields Job Training graduates assisted with environmental cleanup and recovery efforts. One of them is Harold Fields, who used his training to obtain employment with Environmental Restoration LLC, a company contracted to perform cleanup activities in Louisiana. Mr. Fields helped with the removal of offshore tanks and hazardous materials. Harold noted that, "Katrina cleanup has not been easy, but the Job Training program provided me with the skills I needed to be at the top of my field. Plus, it is not just about the money... I have gotten a great deal of satisfaction knowing that I am helping these people gain back some sense of normalcy." According to Rafa Agro, Harold Fields' supervisor, "on a scale of one to ten, Harold is a ten." Rafa added, "We have had to invest a lot of time and money to train local hires, Harold was a breath of fresh air—he came to us well trained and he knows what he is doing."

Six graduates of the Brownfields Job Training program in Providence, Rhode Island also temporarily relocated to New Orleans to assist with the hurricane cleanup effort. The engineering firm that recruited the graduates paid all travel expenses, and each graduate received a \$500 cash advance. The graduates made \$22.92 per hour during this assignment and averaged 60-70 hours of work per week. And 12 graduates from the EPA Brownfields grant-funded, Williamsburg Works Job Training Program in Brooklyn, New York helped to clean up U.S. Navy ships returning from Iraq.

EPA-funded, Brownfields Job Training programs have also created a sense of empowerment through opportunities for entrepreneurship. A graduate of the St. Louis Community College, Missouri Job Training Program, Ms. Christina Brooks started her own business, Brook Environmental LLC. The company has since completed multiple environmental cleanup jobs for the City of St. Louis, including one that required the removal of 8,000 square feet of asbestos-laden ceiling. The company was also

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awarded a contract to perform environmental cleanup activities at the St. Louis Airport. Ms. Brooks noted, “the Job Training Program gave me the skills and the training I needed. The program motivated me to start my own business; if it weren’t for this program, I would not be where I am today.”

While most graduates of Brownfields Job Training go to work after they graduate, some choose to continue their education. One graduate of the Williamsburg Works Job Training Program in Brooklyn enrolled in a four-year environmental degree program at Medgar Evers College, while a fellow graduate enrolled in a four-year environmental degree program at the New York Institute of Technology. Three graduates from the New Jersey Youth Corps Job Training Program in Phillipsburg enrolled in two-year degree programs, and an additional 16 graduates entered and completed supervisor training.

Brownfields Job Training grantees typically partner with and leverage resources from other federal, state, and local agencies; nonprofit and for-profit organizations; colleges and universities; and community groups to augment their training programs and ensure the success of participants. Several Brownfields Job Training grantees discovered that participants obtaining a Commercial Drivers License (CDL) with HAZMAT and Tanker endorsements greatly increased their prospects of obtaining employment in the environmental field. Many Job Training programs provide incentives to improve participation and retain trainees, such as offering life skills and job readiness courses or allowing training to count toward a two- or four-year degree. The New Jersey Youth Corps Brownfields Job Training Program in Phillipsburg pays participants a stipend that covers basic needs while in training through funding from the state. Other incentives include General Education Diploma (GED) assistance, environmental-related community service projects, diverse financial services and car leasing programs, and instruction in English and Spanish.

Other programs, such as Lawrence’s Ambiente Program, offer incentives for employers to hire program graduates, in the form of tax credits; the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, a credit of up to \$2,400 per qualifying employee, and the Renewal Community Tax Credit, a credit of \$1,500 per year for each qualifying employee, help to ensure that EPA graduates are seen as employees of choice when they finish their training.

Gary Kaplan, Executive Director of JFYNetWorks in Boston, noted that EPA Brownfields Job Training grants are filling a need: the demand for locally trained environmental field technicians qualified to clean up brownfields. Kaplan further noted, “Training programs are designed to place participants in jobs that have a career ladder... once in the industry, folks can receive additional training and certifications to find different types of work—work that leads to a career in the environmental field.” Donald Grumbine, a graduate of the New Jersey Youth Corps Job Training Program in Phillipsburg, noted that “students acquire not only knowledge but also a strong measure of empowerment: before the Brownfields Program, many of the students had been working odd jobs; now these students have highly marketable career skills and have achieved a great personal accomplishment.”



The JFYNetworks Job Training Program in Boston, Massachusetts helps participants to earn certificates of completion.

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