

- 2023 All-Grantee Meeting
- Applicant Screening, Selection, and Assessment

PLC Session 294 - June 7, 2023

• 2023 All-Grantee Meeting



• Applicant Screening, Selection, and Assessment

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Today we will present highlights of this year's All Grantee Meeting. Additionally, we will discuss applicant screening, selection, and assessment. Among the various components that make a Brownfields Job Training Program successful, screening, selection, and assessment of incoming students is critical. In the FY24 Request for Applications, these issues have been incorporated into the "Program Structure, Anticipated Outputs and Outcomes" evaluation.

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1. Latest News Impacting Brownfield Job Training Programs

The FY2024 Brownfields Job Training Grants solicitation is open.

Applications are due **August 2, 2023**. For more information and a copy of the RFA from EPA - click [here](#). You may also go directly to the Grants.gov website for a formal application package - click [here](#). Completed applications are due August 2, 2023, and must be submitted through the grant.gov website.



FY24 Brownfields Job Training Guidelines Outreach Webinar

Wednesday June 14th

1-3:30pm ET

Join EPA on Wednesday June 14th from 1-3:30pm ET for a FY24 Brownfields Job Training Guidelines Outreach Webinar. No prior registration required.

link to join:

<https://usepa.zoomgov.com/j/1603942069>

New EPA Grants Trainings Available

EPA's Office of Grants and Debarment

EPA's Office of Grants and Debarment is pleased to announce the availability of several new and updated training resources for grant applicants and recipients.

- NEW—Learn how to [Register in SAM.gov and Grants.gov](#) to apply for EPA grants. This webpage will help you register your organization in SAM.gov, create an applicant profile in Grants.gov, and get familiar with using Workspace.
- The [How to Develop a Budget training](#) was recently updated. This course will help you prepare work plans, budgets, and budget narratives for EPA grants.
- The [EPA Grants Management Training for Applicants and Recipients](#) course introduces key aspects of the grant life cycle starting with preparing an application through closing out a grant. The six modules can be completed individually.

EPA's Office of Grants and Debarment periodically hosts webinars for the EPA grants community. If you are interested in applying for EPA grants or are currently managing an EPA grant, please consider attending one of these webinars.

[Subscribe to the EPA Grants Update Listserv](#) to receive updates about these webinars.

[Competition Process](#)

June 13, 2023,

1:00-2:00pm ET

This webinar is intended to help grant applicants learn how to find and successfully apply for competitive EPA grants. EPA will also provide an overview of the competition process from application through evaluation and selection.

[Training for EPA Pass-Through Grant Applicants, Recipients, and Subrecipients](#)

June 20, 2023,

3:00-4:00pm ET

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This training is intended for EPA grant applicants and recipients that plan to use EPA funding to provide grants to other entities through “subawards.” This type of EPA grant recipient is considered a pass-through entity because the goal of the grant is to further award EPA funds. This training will focus on:

- Oversight responsibilities of EPA pass-through entities
- Federal regulations that govern pass-through entities and the recipients of subawards (subrecipients)
- EPA’s specific requirements for subrecipients
- EPA pass-through entities are encouraged to share this training information with their subrecipients.

Procurement, Subawards, and Participant Support Costs

June 27, 2023

1:30-2:30pm ET

This training will cover procurement regulations and requirements. Specific topics include:

- Best practices for contracts, consultants, equipment, and supply purchases
- Review of subawards (grant awards provided by a pass-through entity to a subrecipient)
- Participant support costs (payments to individuals who participate in grant activities but are not employees of the grant recipient)

2023 Environmental Justice Caucus for Brownfields 2023

Monday, August 7, 2023, 5:00 – 7:00 pm

Huntington Place,

Portside Ballroom, Room 260

The EJ Caucus is a locally driven event where people and organizations involved in Environmental Justice convene, share ideas, build relationships, and communicate directly with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

[Click Here to Sign Up](#)

Registration is Open for Brownfields 2023 National Conference

August 8 - 11, 2023

Detroit, MI

With over 180 educational sessions, exciting mobile workshops, and inspirational speakers, this event offers a unique opportunity to learn about the latest trends and best practices in brownfields remediation, redevelopment, environmental justice, and sustainability.

The conference also offers unparalleled networking opportunities with other like-minded professionals. You’ll have the chance to connect with peers from across the country and forge new relationships that could lead to future collaborations.

To subscribe for updates and conference news, go to:

<https://brownfields2023.org/about/conference-overview/>

To register, go to:

<https://brownfields2023.org/registernow/>

Brownfields Job training Grantees Will Have an Opportunity to Exhibit at Brownfields 2023

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HMTRI is sponsoring booth 113 at Brownfields 23 in Detroit Michigan August 9-10. The focus of the exhibit will be on the network of Brownfields Job Training Grantees and opportunities for employers to hire BJT graduates. The booth will act as a “home base” to meet potential employers, display program materials, and network. Grantees are encouraged to bring business cards and informational handouts. For additional information and ideas, contact Steve Fenton, HMTRI at sfenton103@aol.com

Mark Your Calendar for this BJT Panel at Brownfields 2023

Training for the EJ Terrain

3:15 – 4:15 Room 321

Thursday, August 10th, 2023

Abby Wolensky; Thomas Guentner; Gianna Rosati

Track 5: Environmental Justice and Public Participation

Learn how two inspiring and unique Job Training Grantees work cooperatively to trek the diverse needs of the underserved Environmental Justice communities around the urban landscape of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Auberle Employment Institute (AEI) job training focuses on training individuals to assess and mitigate hazardous substances and contaminants at traditional brownfields. The U.S. Department of Labor twice named AEI as the number one workforce development program in the country. Within the same underserved community, Landforce takes a less traditional job training approach focusing job training on Environmental Stewardship that includes vacant lot stabilization, trail building and maintenance, and green stormwater infrastructure maintenance. AEI and Landforce use similar strategies to help prepare students to be leaders and have successfully leveraged multiple funding sources to achieve common goals.

2. Questions Regarding Applicant Selection

Question: *Is drug testing a screening requirement for accepting applicants into BJT programs?*

Response: No, drug testing is not a requirement for participation in the BJT training program. Grantees determine if and to the extent they wish to test for drugs depending on each organizations policy and local attitudes towards testing as a screening tool.

Question: *What are the minimum aptitude requirements for accepting students into brownfields job training?*

Response: Each program establishes their own aptitude and physical requirements for successfully completing the training program. While TABE tests are the most common aptitude test among Brownfield Job Training Programs, a variety of tests are being used depending on local preferences. Standards for accepting students vary from 9th to 10th grade verbal and math skills with some grantees bypassing assessment tests requiring a high school or GED diploma.

Question: *Are notes and recordings available from previous PLCs sessions.*

Response: HMTRI's Environmental Workforce Professional Learning Community (PLC) meets biweekly on Wednesday afternoons. For those who have missed a previous session, notes and recordings may be found on the Brownfields-toolbox.org website.
(go to the PLC Corner <https://brownfields-toolbox.org/plc-sessions/>)

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3. Highlights from the 2023 All-Grantee Meeting



The 2023 HMTRI All-Grantee Meeting was held at the Hilton Alexandria Old Town in Alexandria, Virginia on May 24 – 25, 2023.

One-hundred and six (106) participants and staff attended the meeting.

Breakdown of attendees:

- Participants: 74
- EPA Staff: 30
- HMTRI Staff: 2

Notes from breakout sessions and links to video presentations will be posted on the Brownfields Toolbox.

David Lloyd, Director, Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization announced historic brownfields funding in brownfields cleanup projects and community technical assistance. Details appear in section 7 of these post session notes.

As previously noted, this year's FY24 Request for Brownfields Job Training Applications is due August 2, 2023. The RFA remains about the same as last year's guidelines with the following updates.

Substantive Changes in this year's FY 2024 Job Training Request for Applications

- Total estimated funding of \$12 million and an estimated 24 grants awarded.
- Entities that were awarded a FY23 Brownfields Job Training Grant are not eligible to apply for a FY24 Brownfields Job Training Grant.
- There is additional language around the OSHA 40-hour HAZWOPER training requirement to reinforce that it's up to applicants to make sure the 40 hours of training they are providing students is in compliance with OSHA certification requirements.
- There is expanded language regarding eligible training for testing possible leaking underground storage tanks on brownfield sites.
- There is added language for the EJScreen and CEJST tool to help applicants identify disadvantaged communities for their target areas.
- There are revisions to ranking criteria which clarify existing language.

It is important that those interested in applying for this year's job training grant attend the FY24 Brownfields Job Training Guidelines Outreach Webinar, Wednesday June 14th, 1-3:30pm ET referenced above. EPA is also expected to post and update "Frequently Asked Questions" following the webinar.

In addition to student testimonials, updates regarding the ACRES Reporting System, The EJ Screening tool, and cautionary words from EPA's Office of General Council, the following breakout topics provided networking opportunities and idea exchange:

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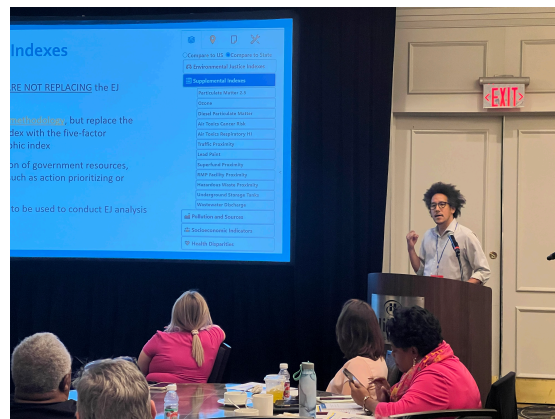
- Tips and Strategies for Recruiting, Screening, and Assessing Populations
- Challenges and minefields for BJT grantees
- Working with diverse populations including women, veterans, and returning citizens
- Grantee partnerships and advisory boards
- Recruiting and retaining students with diverse backgrounds
- Rural versus urban grantee issues
- Successful recruiting strategies

Presentations and video links will be posted on the Brownfields Toolbox at a later date.

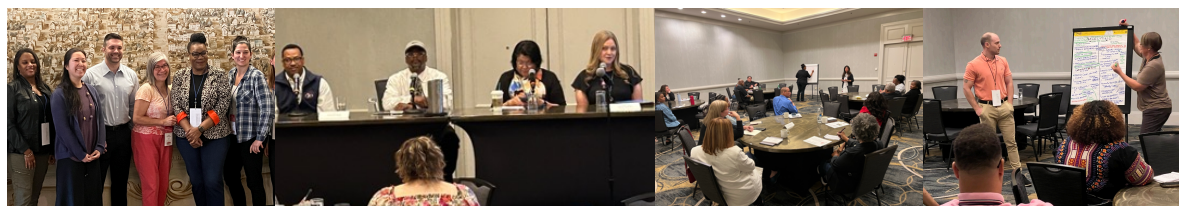
For Those Who Missed the EJScreen Webinar

On May 18, EPA hosted the webinar EJSCREEN 101: Mapping Tools and EPA Competitive Grants. EJSCREEN is an environmental justice mapping and screening tool that allows users to access environmental and demographic information for locations in the United States. Anyone can use this web-based tool to access high-resolution content about environmental justice, and compare data across state, EPA region, and national locations.

This webinar provides guidance on how to use EJSCREEN effectively, as well as how to tailor its usage to specific needs, like responding to competitive grants or other organizational needs. To learn more about EJSCREEN, please [visit the EJSCREEN website](#) and [access the EJSCREEN webinar here](#).



Thanks again to panelists, facilitators, EPA staff and breakout recorders.



4. Applicant Screening, Selection, and Assessment

Among the various components that make up a successful Brownfields Job Training Program, applicant screening, selection and assessment of incoming students is critical. Screening acts as a method of selecting the best qualified most deserving applicants to fill a limited number of seats available in the training cohort. Not all BJT programs have the luxury of selecting 15-20 students from many applicants. However, it is far better to delay or cancel a training cohort than to begin one destined to fail. Retention, graduation, and placement rates can be directly linked to student screening, assessment, and selection. The objective of applicant recruitment

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(discussed in the last PLC) is to generate as much interest in BJT as possible. Next comes the process of selecting the best student cohort.

Orientation sessions act as an initial screening tool eliminating applicants not serious about or willing to be inconvenienced as a condition for entering the program. Orientation sessions may include the following topics including requirements to enter the program.

- The question of drug testing and drug use should be addressed if required for entry, program participation or graduation.
- At the time of graduation, participants must be at least 18 years old and a US Citizen or permanent resident.
- Students must attend the entire program and complete certification requirements to graduate.
- Graduates must be willing to report salary employment tracking information after graduation.
- There may be a physical test (fit test or minimum lifting requirements).
- Applicants must be unemployed, underemployed, or low income.
- In some programs, students will be required to sign a “Student Contract” itemizing student expectations and program policies.

The following additional screening techniques can be used to further refine a list of potential candidates to be considered for training.

- Assessment tests
- “One on One” and group interviews
- Family visits
- Try-outs - Open house and working sessions
- Preparatory training
- Final applicant selection

Assessment tests

In addition to background and basic applicant information, job centers administer assessment tests. Assessment tests ensure that applicants will have sufficient background knowledge to understand and learn concepts presented in the BJT curriculum. Assessment tests administered by career centers may include:

- Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE)
- WorkKeys
- Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS)

Each type of assessment test has advantages and drawbacks. Each can provide certificates for potential employers and provides a good measure of a student’s knowledge of reading, math, and informational skills. While TABE tests are most common among Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Programs, all are being used depending on local preferences. Standards for accepting students into the environmental training program vary from 9th to 10th grade. Some job training grantees bypass assessment tests requiring a high school or GED diploma.

“One on One” and group interviews

Program managers acknowledge that student assessment tests do not provide the most important indicators of successful candidates. Subjective applicant assessment, while one of the most important indicators of student success, is the most difficult to administer. In person assessments are best completed by the BJT program managers including instructors, student

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support and placement staff rather than the local job center. Attributes of exceptional candidates include the following applicant qualities:

- Sticking with the program
- Determination
- Punctuality
- Attention to detail
- Working well in groups
- Attending all classes
- Accepting new and difficult challenges
- A passion for their new career
- Appealing to potential employers

Family visits

Some Brownfield Job Training programs will follow in person interviews with family visits. This particular approach may be useful when transportation or childcare stipends are involved. Family visits are usually reserved prior to final acceptance into training. Coordination with case workers provides an opportunity to determine if external issues will interfere with successful completion of the training program.

Try-outs - Open house and working sessions

Orientation sessions and even in person interviews will not always reveal how a candidate will work in a group or team setting. Working with hazardous materials relies heavily on partner trust and team cooperation. Try-outs consists of simple and sometimes challenging team building exercises allowing program staff to observe how applicants work together. Anger issues and the ability to work in a team environment is best observed completing simple tasks requiring team cooperation.

Preparatory training

Pre training (training such as life skills or construction trades not related to environmental training) provides an opportunity to observe students in a classroom setting. Preparatory training works best in larger organizations where training alternatives are available. Providing life skills training prior to the technical curriculum gives applicants a chance to determine if the BJT program is a good fit. Another variation of this strategy is an advanced training program coupled with construction skills training. Students successfully completing construction skills training may be given an opportunity to additionally receive environmental remediation training with entry into the BJT program.

Final Applicant selection

After initial recruitment, preliminary and advanced screening, the final step in the application process is to present the student contract, signed by accepted applicants. The student contract is not a legally binding document but rather a promise, from both sides, of program goals and expectations. Student contracts and program expectations are usually discussed early in the application process, but formal signing adds importance and significance to the selection process.

Applicant Rejection

What happens when an applicant is rejected? When applicants pass assessment screens but do not demonstrate the desire or interest required of successful participants, program managers can be faced with a challenging situation. It cannot be assumed that applicants will understand the severe limitation of resources associated with BJT programs. Rejected applicants, especially



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those passing several filters, need to have alternative opportunity recommendations presented. Perhaps another trade or occupation with feedback to the career center for additional assistance is in order. When applicants are qualified, waiting lists for the next cohort may be a reasonable approach.

Establishing a Policy for Documenting Acceptance and Rejection of Applicants

Clearly, some residents may view the Brownfields Job Training program as somewhere to go, better than nothing, or a right rather than an opportunity. For this reason, it is recommended to begin a conversation about establishing a policy for acceptance and rejection of applicants. This conversation may additionally expand to the development of an objective, documented methodology for student recruitment. The use of ranking criteria in selecting grantees may provide a starting point for such conversations.

5. Online Zoom Calls and Technical Assistance Environmental Justice - Meetings and National Environmental Justice Community Engagement Calls



National Environmental Justice Community Engagement Calls

The purpose of these calls is to inform communities about EPA's environmental justice work and enhance opportunities to maintain an open dialogue with environmental justice advocates. As environmental justice continues to be integrated into EPA programs and policies, the Agency hopes that these calls will help reaffirm EPA's continued commitment to work with community groups and the public to strengthen local environmental and human health outcomes.

**June 20, 2 - 4 p.m. Eastern
EPA environmental justice initiatives
Listening Session and Dialogue:
Q&A about ongoing EJ initiatives**

For more information and registration, go to:

<https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/national-environmental-justice-community-engagement-calls>

6. In Person Meetings and Workshops

**Northeast Sustainable Communities Workshop (NSCW)
September 19-20, 2023
Worcester, MA**

NSCW is the premier conference for brownfield professionals in the northeast. Brownfield Coalition of the Northeast (BCONE) are looking for professionals from throughout the region to share their experiences, best practices, and innovative ideas on ways to revitalize contaminated or underused properties. Their 2023 theme is "Reimagining Brownfields: Strategies for Successful Redevelopment."

[For more information visit the conference website.](#)

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The Pennsylvania Brownfields Conference

Save the Date

March 25-27, 2024

Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center in State College, PA

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Land Recycling Program is pleased to partner once again with the Engineer Society of Western Pennsylvania in presenting the 2024 Pennsylvania Brownfields Conference.

More details coming soon.

7. EPA Funding Awards

Historic Brownfields Funding Announced

Last week, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced more than \$315 million from President Biden's Investing in America Agenda to expedite the assessment and cleanup of brownfield sites across the country while advancing environmental justice.

[Click Here to Learn More](#)



EPA selected 262 communities to receive 267 grants totaling more than \$215 million in competitive EPA Brownfields funding through the Multipurpose, Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund, and Cleanup (MARC) Grant programs. Thanks to the historic boost from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, this is the largest ever funding awarded in the history of the EPA's Brownfields MARC Grant programs.

You can read more about this year's [MARC selectees](#).

Non-competitive Supplemental Funding Through the Existing Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Grant Program

The Agency is announcing \$45 million in non-competitive supplemental funding to 22 successful existing Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Grant programs that have already achieved success in their work to clean up and redevelop brownfield sites. RLF Grants provide funding for recipients to offer loans and subgrants to carry out cleanup activities at brownfield sites. The funding announced today will help communities continue to address the economic, social, and environmental challenges caused by brownfield sites.

Read more about this year's [RLF recipients](#).

Brownfields Technical Assistance Providers and Research Grants

EPA is also announcing funding selection for two Brownfields technical assistance opportunities. The Technical Assistance to Brownfields (TAB) selectees provide specialized technical knowledge, research, and training to help stakeholders understand brownfields-related subject matter, and guide them through the brownfield assessment, clean-up, and revitalization process. This assistance is a key part of the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to advance economic opportunities and address environmental justice issues in underserved communities. This technical assistance is available to all stakeholders and comes at no cost to communities. The two funding opportunities announced today come entirely from the historic \$1.5 billion investment from President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and include the following:

1. EPA selected five Technical Assistance Providers for a total of \$53 million in grants to provide training and technical assistance to communities across the country under the

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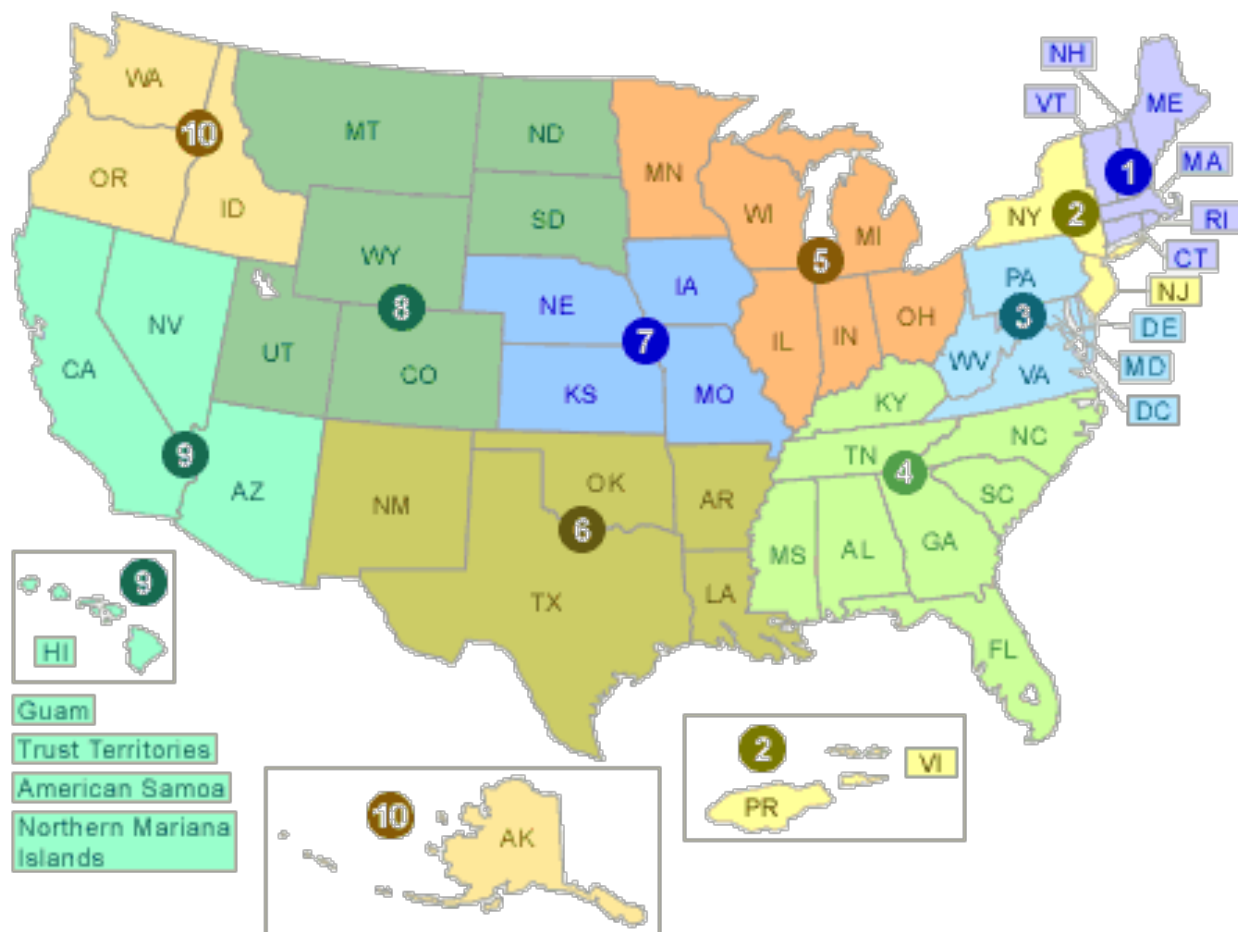
Technical Assistance to Brownfields (TAB) Program. This investment will fund non-profit technical assistance providers in all ten EPA regions. Read more about this year's [TAB selectees](#).

2. EPA is also expanding the scope of its technical assistance offerings under the Brownfields and Land Revitalization Program to include three new subject-specific grants totaling \$2 million in three areas, including providing technical assistance to nonprofits seeking to reuse Brownfields; provide research, outreach, and guidance on minimizing displacement resulting from brownfields redevelopment; and providing outreach and guidance on land banking tactics for brownfields revitalization. Read more on the [Brownfields Technical Assistance and Research cooperative agreement recipients](#).

More information about [Brownfields Technical Assistance and Research](#).

8. Contact EPA Regional Coordinators

Regional Coordinators are the first place to go regarding questions about BJT grants, extensions, budgets, or work plans. Many Regions maintain a Listserv for past, current, and potential recipients.



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<p>EPA Region 1 CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT William “Bill” Lariviere Phone: (617) 918-1231 E-mail: lariviere.william@epa.gov</p>	<p>EPA Region 2 NJ, NY, PR, VI Schenine Mitchell Phone: (212) 637-3283 E-mail: mitchell.schenine@epa.gov</p>
<p>EPA Region 3 DE, DC, MD, PA, VA, WV Gianna Rosati Phone: (215) 814-3406 E-mail: Rosati.Gianna@epa.gov</p>	<p>EPA Region 4 AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN Olga Perry Phone: (404) 562-8534 E-mail: perry.olga@epa.gov</p>
<p>EPA Region 5 IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI Linda Morgan Phone: (312) 886-4747 E-mail: morgan.linda@epa.gov Torre Ippolito Phone: (312) 353-6556 E-mail: ippolito.torre@epa.gov</p>	<p>EPA Region 6 AR, LA, NM, OK, TX Emily Jimenez Phone: (214) 665-2176 E-mail: jimenez.emily@epa.gov Rita Ware Phone: (214) 665-6409 E-mail: ware.rita@epa.gov</p>
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9. Join Us for the Next PLC June 21, 2023



Join a conversation with EPA Brownfields Job Training grant recipients, alumni, and interested stakeholders. PLCs are scheduled bi-weekly on Wednesdays at 2:00pm (EST).

To Join PLC Zoom Meetings, go to:

<https://zoom.us/j/93598658578>

Meeting ID: 935 9865 8578

On the road - Computer not available?

You can phone in using the nearest location

- +1 646 876 9923 US (New York)
- +1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)
- +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)
- +1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)
- +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)
- +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

Meeting ID: 935 9865 8578

The objective of the (PLC) is to promote and share innovative strategies among those interested in establishing community based environmental job training programs. Our sessions allow participants to stay in touch with BJT happenings, ask questions, showcase their programs, and help others. The Environmental Workforce PLC is open to all and there is no cost or obligation to attend. Join us when you can. If you would like to invite a guest, feel free to forward this email.

Showcase your program – Biweekly, the PLC will hear from one of our grantees, discuss opportunities or exchange ideas related to environmental job training. HMTRI is inviting you to participate in the next cycle of Professional Learning Community ZOOMs. If you would like to present at an upcoming PLC contact:

Mike at:

msenew@gmail.com/

PLC notes presented represent individual opinions and ideas from Professional Learning Community participants and BJT recipients. They do not represent EPA policy, guidance or opinions and should not be taken as such.



The Brownfields Training PLC is sponsored under Cooperative Agreement with The US Environmental Protection Agency in association with the Hazardous Materials Training and Research Institute (HMTRI) of the Eastern Iowa Community Colleges (EICC).