



Brownfields Job Training

Professional Learning Community (PLC)

September 24th, 2025

Please mute your lines when you're not speaking.

We welcome open discussion and invite participants to unmute or raise their hand at any time during this call if you have a question or something to share.

We encourage participation through the Teams Chat.

Out of respect for everyone's time, we ask that lengthy discussions be held in the open Q&A session or taken offline with a followup meeting.

Meeting Logistics



Disclaimer

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NOFO Disclaimer

The EPA's Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization (OBLR) currently has an open Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and grant competition. Please be advised that EPA employees will not address any questions beyond Threshold Questions, nor discussing topics related to the NOFO or the competition during this conference. For Threshold Questions, we will refer only to the information available in the Frequently Asked Questions Document or the NOFO itself.

Grant Application Support

- Regional TAB staff will provide a thorough review of your EPA Grant application for FREE!
- Review Time: ~3 to 4 business days.

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Agenda

1. Introductions & Resource Updates (5 min)
2. Feedback Session (10 min)
3. Learning Topic & Open Discussion: Mental Health (25 min)
4. Open Q&A – Any Topic (Optional – 20 min)



Introductions



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Connect with Us!

- If you or an associate would like to receive notice of upcoming meetings and events, send your contact information to: brownfieldsjobtraining@adaapta.com
- Submit an inquiry or request for technical assistance at www.epa.gov/brownfields/forms/brownfields-job-training-program-technical-assistance-inquiry-form



BFJT August Recap

- **National Brownfields Conference**

- Brownfields University – Building Futures: Supporting Communities with U.S. EPA's Brownfields Job Training Grant
- How to Promote Local Hiring and Leverage Job Training Programs
- Powering Resilience: Workforce Development Through Solar on Brownfields
- Fostering Lasting Community Partnerships to Promote Workforce Development
- Empowering Chicago's Future: The Impact of the U.S. EPA Brownfields Job Training Program on Students' Lives and Careers
- The Impact of Western Pennsylvania Brownfield Job Training Programs on Communities
- Building Futures: Tailored Job Training for Thriving Communities

- **Tribal Lands & Environment Forum**

- Brownfields Job Training Grantee Success Stories

Key Takeaways: Opportunities & Strengths

- High energy and enthusiasm for peer learning; grantees value sharing practical tools, resources, and success stories with each other.
- Interest in building an inventory of BFJT success stories for inspiration and replication.
- Continued need for tailored support, particularly from rural programs.
- Growing curiosity about green infrastructure and its relevance to BFJT training.
- Desire for peer-to-peer exchange of resources (e.g., screening questions, employer surveys).
- Interested in site visits and cross-program learning opportunities.



Key Takeaways: Challenges & Needs

- Recruitment and retention remain consistent challenges, even for experienced grantees.
- Placement and program tracking can be difficult, especially with participants navigating unemployment systems.
- Grantees want more clarity on:
 - Eligible courses and certifications
 - Career pathways for graduates (beyond entry-level jobs)
 - Collective tracking and standardized strategies
- Want to learn how to leverage labor market assessments for curriculum and employer engagement.



Conference Feedback Session

- Brownfields University
- National Brownfields Conference

Learning Topic: *Mental Health*



Why Mental Health Matters in Job Training



- BFJT participants typically come from communities with high rates of unemployment, disinvestment, and exposure to trauma.
- Stress, depression, and substance use disorders can directly affect:
 - Attendance
 - Focus
 - Retention
- Supporting mental health and recovery = removing obstacles to graduation, certification, and job retention = supporting long-term graduate employability.

Mental Health Impacts on BFJT

- Graduation & Certification Rates: Untreated mental health and substance abuse issues increase dropout risk.
- Job Placement: Employers prioritize reliability and teamwork; harder to achieve if participants are struggling.
- Program Reputation: Graduates who succeed in the workforce strengthen trust with employers and the community.



Normalizing Mental Health

- Use people-first, non-stigmatizing language (“person in recovery” vs. “clean”).
- Frame mental health & recovery as part of overall health.
 - Emphasize that seeking treatment or support is a sign of strength, not weakness.
- Establish norms early: confidentiality, respect, non-judgment.
 - Create space where participants can feel safe disclosing struggles.



Normalizing Mental Health

- Incorporate conversations around mental health & recovery regularly.
 - Build in small rituals like check-ins (“How’s your energy level today?”) or 5-minute mindfulness/reflection breaks.
- Train staff to recognize distress and refer participants to support providers.
 - Trauma-informed approaches can reduce stressors that can be triggers.



Building Resilience & Coping Skills for Trainees

- Stress, if unmanaged, can be a major trigger. Teaching coping strategies helps participants manage both classroom and job-site stress.
 - Teach stress management skills: mindfulness, grounding, journaling, exercise.
- Frame wellness as employability: “Being rested and on time isn’t just good for you, it’s a professional skill.”
- Peer support builds accountability: Participants often keep each other on track, reducing isolation, which is a known risk factor for relapse.



Building Resilience & Coping Skills for Trainees

- Normalize seeking help, including recovery supports.
 - Design programs to be flexible for treatment & support group attendance.
- Training programs themselves provide structure and purpose, which research shows are protective factors against substance misuse relapse and mental health challenges.



Program-Level Strategies

- Adopt a wellness policy that explicitly includes mental health and recovery support.
- Build in wellness debriefs after demanding modules (e.g., confined space, HAZWOPER), which can trigger anxiety or stress.
- Train staff in Mental Health First Aid, with a focus on substance use recognition and response.



Program-Level Strategies

- Support your staff as well: working closely with people in recovery can be emotionally taxing.
- Create referral systems to local mental health & substance abuse disorder services.
- Engage with local “Recovery-Friendly Workplace” programs to support participants through challenges post-placement.



Partnerships & Community Resources

- Build formal partnerships with local treatment providers: they can provide on-call counselors or group sessions.
- Share the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) and National Alliance on Mental Illness's (NAMI) national helplines and support locator tools with trainees.
- Collaborate with recovery groups (12-step, SMART Recovery, faith-based programs) to provide peer support.



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

SAMHSA leads efforts to advance behavioral health across the U.S., offering resources for mental heal...



nami

National Alliance on Mental Illness

Homepage

NAMI is the National Alliance on Mental Illness, the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

 National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

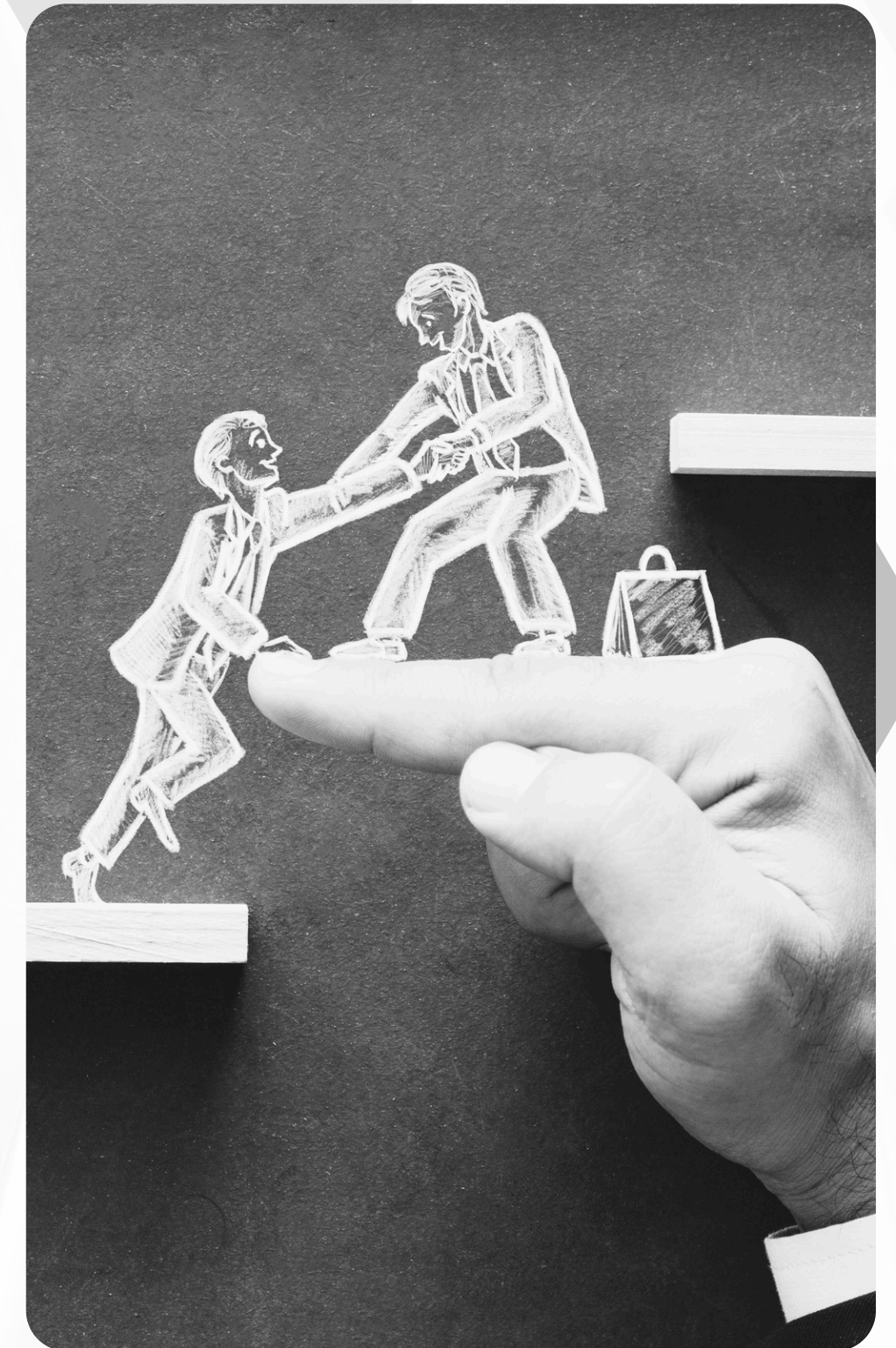
Partnerships & Community Resources

- Employer partners matter: “recovery-ready” employers understand how to support workers navigating sobriety and mental health challenges.
- Universities can provide interns or speakers to run wellness and recovery sessions.
- Guest speakers who share their recovery journey + career success can inspire participants and reduce stigma.



Practical Tools for Grantees

- Give staff a simple response if someone discloses substance use struggles: “Thank you for trusting me. You’re not alone—let’s look at resources together.”
- Use light conversation starters to normalize check-ins: “What’s one thing you’re doing for yourself this week?”
- Distribute resource cards with mental health and substance abuse disorder hotlines, so support info is always available privately.
- Reinforce boundaries—staff provide support and referral, not therapy or treatment.



More than just training

mental health building blocks



A word cloud of mental health building blocks. The words are arranged in a cluster, with some larger and more prominent than others. The colors of the words are yellow, green, and purple. The words include: peer, stability, empowerment, identity, routine, confidence, foundation, regulate, connection, support, hope, growth, adaptable, purpose, coping, community, skills, emotions, structure, and resilience.

peer stability empowerment identity routine
foundation confidence
regulate connection support hope growth adaptable
coping community skills emotions
purpose structure resilience

Open Discussion

