

The Brownfields Job Training Program

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established the Brownfields Job Training Program to help ensure that the residents of communities most affected by brownfields would share in the benefits of their cleanup and reuse. The Job Training Program transforms lives by empowering unemployed and underemployed, predominantly low-income and minority residents of Brownfields communities. The Program does this by providing funding and technical assistance for environmental cleanup and health and safety training to organizations currently training residents of brownfields-impacted communities who are seeking new skills and greater earning potential. The Program helps clean up brownfields, spurs sustainable economic development, and creates a pool of skilled workers capable of meeting the environmental cleanup and green jobs industries' demand for workers.

The first seeds of Brownfields Job Training—and of the Brownfields Program itself—emerged in the early 1990s, when EPA staff discovered that many communities affected by Superfund sites weren't benefiting from the job opportunities related to site cleanup. At the time, cleanup-related jobs were being filled by professionals from other cities due to a lack of environmental training in the local workforce. EPA designed its Brownfields Job Training grants to help ensure that graduates would benefit from local job opportunities.

To date, EPA has provided 144 Brownfields Job Training grants totaling over \$25 million. Of the more than 5,000 who have completed EPA-funded training, more than 3,250 obtained employment in the environmental field, earning an average starting hourly wage of \$13.81. The graduates of these programs promote EPA's goals of sustainable land reuse and environmental protection, not only through cleanup of site contamination and sustainable redevelopment of brownfields, but also by applying knowledge that reflects today's environmental and smart growth opportunities. Skills gained through Brownfields Job Training programs include green remediation techniques, recycling of demolition materials, installation of solar panels and other renewable energy systems, and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification of new development. The overall benefits of the Program reach even farther, promoting EPA's core goals of promoting partnerships and strengthening the marketplace. By seeking input from local stakeholders—including workforce development entities and representatives from private industry—these training programs strengthen community bonds and produce graduates that are attractive to local employers.

Job Training Highlights

- EPA has provided 144 total brownfields job training grants
- Job Training Grants total more than \$25 million
- More than 5,000 participants have completed EPA-funded training
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—Ronald Simmons,
LACC Graduate

L.A. Conservation Corps Los Angeles, California

Within Los Angeles' Alameda Corridor—a densely populated, former industrial area with extreme poverty and unemployment rates—the L.A. Conservation Corps (LACC) has offered job training and work skills classes to area youth for the past 23 years. Upon receipt of its first EPA grant in 2005, the LACC teamed with the local college district to develop a 240-hour environmental curriculum with instruction in Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER), lead and asbestos abatement, forklift certification, and other environmental cleanup technologies. The course included additional job and life-skills training, funded through the LACC and local work source centers. The organization advertised these training opportunities and held orientation sessions for potential candidates. Alex Lopez, Senior Manager with LACC explains, "Most of these applicants have been under- or unemployed their whole lives, so they're enthusiastic at the idea of getting a well-paid job."

As the demands of the economy and the needs of the environmental market have evolved, so have LACC's job training programs and related partnerships. The organization has teamed with Grid Alternatives, a non-profit organization specializing in renewable energy, to provide students with expert instruction in solar power array installation. LACC also collaborated with L.A. Trade Technical College to provide training in commercial/residential energy auditing and modern weatherization techniques.

One of LACC's graduates, Ronald Simmons, recalls his training with LACC. "All of the training was good," he explains, "especially learning the equipment; and HAZWOPER, which prepared me the most for what I'm doing now." Simmons now works for TerraTherm, a company that uses an innovative, environmentally friendly cleanup technique called "In-Situ Thermal Desorption" in which heat is used to remove contaminants from soil.

With five training sessions now complete, the LACC has graduated more than 175 students from its Brownfields Job Training Program. Approximately 85% of graduates have found employment. The LACC collaborates with the city's Brownfields Advisory Board, consults with local labor unions, and conducts job fairs to place students—often finding them work before they even graduate. Recent additions to the Brownfields Advisory Board include a local



A student participating in LACC's Job Training class.



Students learn asbestos remediation within a "decontamination station" as part of LACC's Brownfields Job Training.

solar panel manufacturer that has expressed interest in LACC trainees. "For anyone looking into the Brownfields Job Training program, I would tell them you have to give it a try," says Simmons. "The information you get from the program is going to help you in your life and in the job market."

King County Work Training Program King County, Washington

Located in northwest Washington, King County is home to the City of Seattle, a population of over 1.8 million, and more than 700 identified brownfields. To expand on training already being provided on hazardous waste removal, King County applied for and was awarded its first EPA Job Training grant in 1999. Subsequent EPA grants have extended the King County Jobs Initiative (KCJI) until 2010. In addition to training, King County partners with community organizations and local companies to find employment opportunities for graduates. Program Manager Carolyn Bledsoe explains, "The strength of King County Jobs Initiative is its ability to engage and build upon the on-going collaborative work in the community. Having a job training program located in County government enables us to provide insight and leadership through a strategic approach that also helps employers gain access to our graduates that are trained and ready to go to work."

The King County Work Training Program provides an advanced, 238-hour curriculum in topics such as HAZWOPER, soil vapor extraction, bioremediation, wastewater treatment, lead and asbestos abatement, and confined space. Graduates also receive Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and/or construction readiness certifications upon completion. So far the program has graduated over 260 students, of whom 183 have been placed in jobs with wages ranging from \$12-\$35 per hour. The program also pledges to keep graduates employed for at least one year, to ensure that they develop marketable experience.

Due to local word-of-mouth, program spots are in high demand. "Capacity is an issue," explains Bledsoe. "No classes are larger than 12-13, but we may have 15-20 apply." One of the program's graduates, Danny Benavente, has been working for the same groundwater remediation company six years after his placement there. Benavente was so fond of the program that he referred his son to it. KCJI also provides all participants with four days of Job Readiness/ Life Skills training to help address and resolve barriers through comprehensive case management and retention services.

"[The program] helped out both me and my son. It gives people a chance at life."
—Danny Benavente,
King County Graduate



Students of the King County Work Training Program participate in HAZMAT training.

JFYNetWorks Boston, Massachusetts

JFYNetWorks began its environmental job training program in 1995, with the goal of creating qualified environmental professionals to help meet environmental needs in the Boston area while providing quality jobs for un- or underemployed residents. Selected for an EPA Brownfields Job Training grant in 1998, JFY's proven record has helped them to apply for and receive subsequent Job Training grants from EPA.

JFY provides three types of environmental job training: cleanup of the environment using appropriate technology; conversion, or switching to renewable energy sources; and conservation, including skills such as weatherization techniques to conserve energy. The agency recently developed a new conservation training in which students learn how to properly weatherize new buildings and retrofit old ones. A training in solar panel assembly and installation is about to be started in Lowell, with a green jobs grant from the state. These new "green" courses were designed to prepare job-seekers for the emerging green job market. "The Lowell area has many solar companies," explains Gary Kaplan, JFY's Executive Director, "so the job market for trained technicians is good. If people have the right skills, the jobs are there. We'll make sure they have the right skills."

One of the unique features of JFY's 14-week training model is that in addition to technical skills and certifications, the program works on the communication and interpersonal skills that graduates will need to impress potential employers, and to work smoothly with co-workers. The program has an advisory board composed of representatives from local environmental services firms, including the solar companies who are involved in the training, educational institutions, community agencies and government officials. This group not only helps mold the curriculum to meet industry needs, it also conducts mock interviews with trainees to help them hone their job-getting skills. As explained by 2009 graduate Mark Jean-Baptiste, "Aside from the technical certifications, the business communication and resume courses gave me the skills to stick out from the crowd when it comes to the job search."

To date, JFY has produced 330 graduates, with an 80% job placement rate. In some years this rate has been as high as 90%. The average entry-level job pays \$27,000 per year. The proven track record of JFY's former students keeps

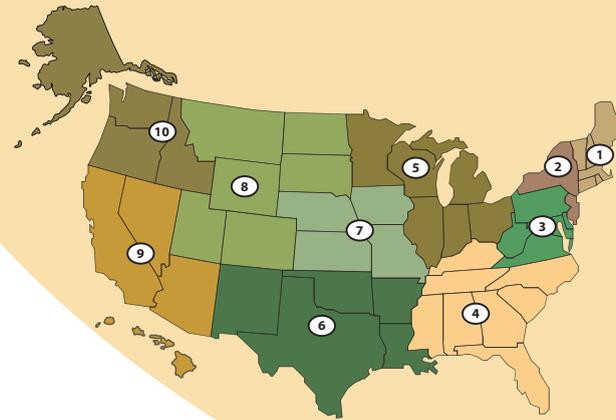


Students performing job training at JFY NetWorks in Boston.

companies returning to JFY to recruit. Kaplan attributes much of the program's success to the stability of the industry. "Unlike other fields, environmental remediation is not cyclical; there is always work," says Kaplan. "Since these jobs cannot be offshored, there is a constant demand for workers, providing job security in this industry."

For more information on EPA's Brownfields Job Training Program, please visit:

www.epa.gov/brownfields/job.htm



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EPA's Brownfields Job Training Program



Improving Land and Lives



Students participating in Tucson, Arizona's Brownfields Job Training Program