



Brownfields Environmental Job Training Programs Lead to New Lives for Graduates

Brooklyn, New York

EPA's Brownfields Program is well known for funding assessments on properties with uncertain levels of contamination, and providing the guidance and oversight needed to return those sites to productive use. With more than 1,100 Brownfields Assessment grants in place that have leveraged billions of dollars for cleanup and redevelopment, it is sometimes possible to overlook a smaller aspect of EPA's Brownfields Program: its Job Training Grants. In nearly 90 communities across the country, Job Training projects funded by EPA grants are preparing real people for life-changing careers. One such program, in Brooklyn, New York, partnered with an established non-profit, job training organization to transform lives as dramatically as EPA's Brownfields Assessment grants transform properties.

In the case of the Brooklyn Job Training Pilot, EPA provided funding to support a collaboration between STRIVE—a national, non-profit, job training and placement organization—and the Williamsburg Works program of the St. Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation (SNNPC), a Brooklyn-based workforce development program founded by community members and representatives from local businesses. The result was a training program tailored to meet the needs of local residents as well as their likely future employers. According to Michael Rochford of the SNNPC, "We reached out to [local] employers, we formed an informal employer's council, they gave us advice on what the curriculum should consist of, we developed a program model to work here in Brooklyn, and we began the EPA Pilot."

The resulting program goes beyond simply training participants and releasing them into the job market. Candidates for the program are carefully screened to ensure their commitment to completing the training, as many classes start early in the day and are physically demanding. SNNPC provides "life-skills" training that prepares graduates for the expectations of their future employers. EPA Region 2 staff—from scientists to administrative support—provide students with guidance on environmental careers. And to promote job retention, support is provided to the program's trainees for two years following graduation. The EPA-funded training includes courses in innovative environmental remediation technologies, chemistry, math, site investigation and monitoring, hazardous waste handling, and the 40



Students in the Williamsburg Works program during HAZMAT training.

JUST THE FACTS:

- In Brooklyn, NY, EPA provided funding to support a collaboration between a national, non-profit, job training and placement organization and a local workforce development program.
- The resulting environmental job training program offers courses in innovative environmental remediation technologies, chemistry, math, site investigation and monitoring, hazardous waste handling, and the 40 hour OSHA-required training for hazardous waste workers.
- Since the Williamsburg Works environmental job training program was established in Brooklyn in 2002, it has graduated 520 environmental trainees who now earn an average hourly wage of \$16.43.

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—Karim Moreno,
Graduate of the Williamsburg Works/
EPA Job Training program

hour OSHA-required training for hazardous waste workers. As put by Michael Rochford, “Most of our students will have some work experience, but may not have the technical skills to qualify for a high-wage job. It’s very rewarding to take someone that may have been just getting by on a minimum-wage job and place them on a track that gets them into a job that has real, high-wage possibilities.”



Students in the EPA-funded, environmental job training program at Williamsburg Works.

One of those students was Karim Moreno, who graduated from the program’s second training cycle. Karim had originally contacted the SNNPC looking for career advice, and was encouraged to apply for the Williamsburg Works/EPA Job Training program. “The EPA training was very intense and very gratifying,” explains Karim. “Before I went I was very timid; they helped me get out of that. And that really gave me a sense of self-worth that my family sees every morning when I get up and come to work.”

Within a week of graduation Karim had secured a job at Clean Harbors Environmental Services, Inc., one of the country’s largest environmental/hazardous waste management companies, which

has hired a number of the program’s graduates. Tom Columbia, Program Manager at Clean Harbors’ Brooklyn Office, remarked, “...they have been very successful; they’ve been good employees, and when we need to hire more again, Williamsburg Works and their program are going to be the first people we turn to. The fact that the EPA is involved is great, the fact that they take local people and give them the tools to succeed in this business is, I think, a great program.”

Two years after graduation, Karim was still with Clean Harbors, and was eyeing a foreman position. “I encourage any friend, any person interested in the environmental field [to apply for the training], because the sky’s the limit,” says Karim.

Karim represents just one example of the more than 4,600 graduates of EPA-funded Brownfields Environmental Job Training programs across the nation. Since the Williamsburg Works job training program was established in Brooklyn in 2002, it has graduated 520 environmental trainees who now earn an average hourly wage of \$16.43. As a result of this success, EPA awarded additional funding to ensure the program’s continued development. Williamsburg Works has since relocated to a new, state-of-the-art training facility; now enrolls approximately 150 trainees per year, and offers 9 different certifications and licenses related to environmental remediation.

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