



Rural Alaska Community Environmental Job Training (RACEJT) Program

Executive Summary

Purpose: To develop and carry out an environmental job skills program for rural Alaska communities that fills local (in-village) job training needs.

Target: Unemployed and underemployed community residents of rural Alaska communities with greater than 30% Alaska Native population. We anticipate relatively high numbers of, and will ensure recruitment strategies for, individuals of high need of employment as defined by the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), including rural veterans (many National Guard), beneficiaries of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs (SNAP), Disconnected Youth, and designated community residents.

Background: A rural environmental jobs survey was conducted of prospective local community employers early in 2011 at Alaska Forum on Environment. Respondents provided their training needs for current and future job openings. Additionally, fifteen environmental consulting firms that conduct contracted project work in villages were contacted for their needs in employing local hire. Based on these results, and within the constraints of the Job Training Grant budget, a course outline of four weeks of training was developed with two tracks: Solid and Hazardous Waste Management and Response (SHWMR), and Facility and Home Environmental Health (FHEH).

Funds Secured: USEPA Workforce Develop and Job Training Grant for each of the first two program years (federal fiscal years 2012 and 2013). This marks the first time that such a grant has been awarded in Alaska. These grants are high-profile and high priority within USEPA. These funds will cover all program functions (instruction, tracking, recruitment, placement), as well as participant airfares.

Structure: The program recruits, screens, trains, places and tracks 20 participants each year. Recruitment and screening take place in fall and early winter, and training takes place in spring. The first year training will be statewide, and located in Anchorage. The second year program may be moved to a regional level. To minimize attrition that plagues rural trainings in Anchorage, two 2-week sessions, spaced 2 weeks apart, rather than a month long schedule, are planned.

Placement and Tracking Efforts: Screening prioritizes participants that identify a "guaranteed" or likely job position if they are able to graduate with the acquired skills. Applicants must also provide two personal references and attend a short phone interview. To receive priority, the potential employer must attend the interview or write a letter verifying a high potential for hire. All participants will register with State of Alaska ALEXSYS and will be encouraged to make use of its resources. Should a trainee's planned job be withdrawn or



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delayed by their employer, Zender staff will assist RACEJT trainees and graduates in job searches and/or placement in training programs that prepare them further for specific jobs (life skills, apprenticeship, trade, etc.), or enrollment in college or military.

Planned Efforts: Zender is committed to developing the program successfully for the long-term. Via its Advisory Board comprised of entities across the state, we plan to evaluate the first year program for logistical and financial sustainability as well as job placement results. We will modify each succeeding year until we obtain a model that best fits rural Alaska needs in meeting local environmental job training and development needs.

The mission of Zender Environmental Health and Research Group, a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, is to assist underserved communities in developing programmatic capacity and community resiliency in environmental health issues. Visit us on the web at www.zendergroup.org