

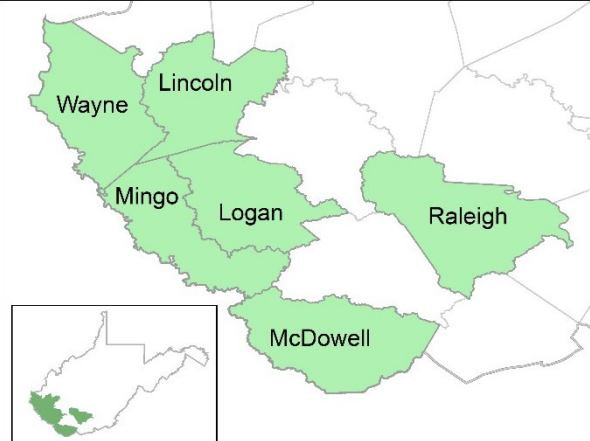
Brownfields Success Story

Integrating Environmental Workforce Development and Brownfields Cleanup *Coalfield Development Corporation (Wayne, West Virginia)*

In 2015, EPA awarded an Environmental Workforce Development Job Training (EWDJT) Grant to Coalfield Development Corporation in order to provide residents around Wayne County, WV with training needed for placement in environmental careers. The certifications and degrees earned through the trainings would enable graduates to seek employment in lead and asbestos abatement, environmental assessment, Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response, and a broad range of remediation activities at contaminated sites.

Coalfield Development Corporation was established in 2010 to combat generational poverty and economic hardships caused by the downturn of the coal industry in West Virginia and the surrounding Appalachian region. Their work is accomplished through three core capabilities: incubating and investing in employment-based social enterprises; facilitating professional, personal, and academic development for people facing barriers to employment, and; leading and collaborating on community-based revitalization projects. Since its founding, Coalfield has nurtured a successful family of wholly or partially-owned social enterprises, including Revitalize Appalachia, Refresh Appalachia, West Edge Factory, SustainU Clothing, Saw's Edge Woodshop, and Solar Holler. Not only do these businesses provide on-the-job training for Coalfield's workforce development program, they provide jobs for graduates of the program, and revenue for Coalfield to sustain the program.

Using a two-tiered approach to workforce training, Coalfield utilized their EPA EWDJT Grant to create the Quality Environmental Jobs Initiative (QEJI), a highly successful program which evolved to maximize opportunities for displaced coal miners, veterans, and other unemployed and underemployed members of the community. In addition to exceeding grant goals for number of participants enrolled and number of graduates, the program allowed for growth within Coalfield's own workforce. Recognition of Coalfield's workforce development model would ultimately lead to new partnerships and grants for the continuation of the program, and the cleanup of local brownfield sites.



Multiple West Virginia Counties benefited from Coalfield Development Corporation's EWDJT Grant

EPA Grant Recipient:
Coalfield Development Corporation

**Environmental Workforce Development
Job Training Grant (completed)**
Graduates completing program - 76
Graduates placed in full-time careers - 51

Cleanup Grant (ongoing)
Former Uses:
Black Diamond Industrial Site - metal fabrication, manufacturing, bulk fuel storage, welding, painting and transformer repair

Future Uses:
Aggregation and Distribution Infrastructure for the Appalachian ReUse Corridor, Environmental Workforce Development Training Facilities



HAZWOPER Training course in Williamson, WV
March 2018



QEJI participants receive training for safe handling of asbestos

“This training program produced a local workforce within and without Coalfield that has the skillsets and knowledge for operating in various environmentally challenging settings.”

– Jacob Israel Hannah,
Conservation Coordinator,
Coalfield Development Corporation



Members of Coalfield’s first WRAPS cohort. As of this writing, Coalfield has funded 6 WRAPS cohorts.

A Unique Model for Training

While many environmental workforce development programs are designed around certification courses for learning-level trainees, Coalfield’s QEJI program also provided a track for advanced-level trainees to work more closely with the Corporation for a longer period. Through Coalfield’s strategic 33-6-3 model (developed in 2012), Advanced-Level Cohorts would be paid for 33 hours of work per week for one of Coalfield’s social enterprises, spend 6 hours per week pursuing an associate’s degree in applied science from a local community or technical college, and engage in personal development for 3 hours per week.

Combining Learning-level and Advanced-level Cohorts, the program exceeded expectations, with 233 people enrolled, 76 graduates, 51 placed in full-time employment, and 7 who pursued higher education. A total of 400 certifications were earned by trainees over the course of the grant.

Some of these QEJI graduates would have the opportunity to put their skills to the test on a project close to home. In 2019, Coalfield was awarded an EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant for the remediation of a 6-acre site adjacent to their West Edge Factory. The cleanup is addressing volatile organic compounds, heavy metals, polychlorinated biphenyls, and inorganic contaminants left behind from the former Black Diamond industrial facility. Qualified QEJI graduates and trainees assisted in safe and efficient removal of vegetation overgrowth surrounding the entire perimeter of the property structures, allowing better access for structural integrity assessments of the buildings and other property assets.

Breaking Down Barriers

As the program evolved, Coalfield began to re-conceptualize QEJI to make it more accessible and provide resources for people facing barriers to employment. The Workforce Readiness and Professional Success (WRAPS) initiative was piloted as a paid 6-month course that would serve as a prerequisite to the 33-6-3 program. Through WRAPS, each participant would spend a significant amount of time on self-development, as well as earning certifications and experiencing various occupations offered at Coalfield. The WRAPS initiative allowed for partnerships with local correctional facilities and West Virginia Sober Living to transition trainees into employment with Coalfield or one of their Social Enterprise and Economic Development (SEED) partners. In 2019 and 2020, Coalfield was able to graduate 24 inmates at Beckley Correctional Institute and Mt. Olive Correctional Institute from the QEJI program, preparing them for employment upon their release.

Recognition and Leveraging

The concept of the WRAPS approach allowed Coalfield to secure additional funding in 2017 through the Appalachian Regional Commission POWER (Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic

Revitalization) Initiative, which targets federal resources to help communities and regions that have been affected by job losses in coal mining, coal power plant operations, and coal-related supply chain industries due to the changing economics of America's energy production.

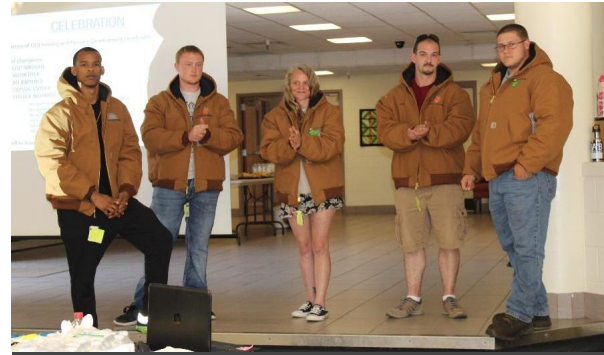
In 2018, Coalfield's 33-6-3 model was recognized on a global scale by the World Bank in their publication, "Managing Coal Mine Closure: Achieving a Just Transition for All". The publication, summarizing World Bank assistance to communities impacted by coal mine closures over the past 20 years, highlighted the importance of workforce development programs such as the 33-6-3 model in offering valuable experience to displaced workers and reducing impacts of environmental injustice in former coal-producing regions. Coalfield has since partnered with the World Bank to train coal communities around the world on their workforce development model.

In 2020, Coalfield was awarded a grant from the Honnold Foundation, established by professional rock climber Alex Honnold to focus on solar energy development. The grant provides for a 100% offset of energy consumption at the West Edge Factory in Huntington, WV, with a complete installation of 376 solar panels. Coalfield will work with members of the Solar Holler installation team, who were previously employed by Coalfield Development's Rewire Appalachia enterprise, and gained environmental remediation training through the QEJI program.

The Next Steps

Cleanup work continues on the former Black Diamond site, providing real-world experience for WRAPS trainees and QEJI graduates. Coalfield plans to use part of the site as the aggregation and distribution center for the Appalachian ReUse Corridor. The ReUse Corridor was launched by Coalfield's Conservation Coordinator to aggregate and share resources so that valuable materials currently in the waste stream can be captured and re-routed to up-cyclers, makers, and entrepreneurs who are incorporating these materials into their business models. WRAPS trainees will be helping to maintain the aggregation and distribution center. Additional plans for the Black Diamond site include facilities for social enterprise and job training in construction, craft furniture making, solar roof installation, and other courses in the QEJI program.

Coalfield's ability to connect their EWDJT Grant and Cleanup Grant has truly been a win-win for the company and the community. Their innovative and sustainable model for environmental workforce development will allow Coalfield to grow and continue their work in creating social enterprises, combating poverty and unemployment, and revitalizing brownfields well into the future.



This cohort of Coalfield Champions graduated with associate's degrees, a minimum of three professional certifications through QEJI, and the skills and resources to be successful in their future careers

Examples of careers that QEJI graduates have moved into include:

- Solar Installation
- Water/Wastewater Management
- Carpentry
- Broadband Deployment



WRAPS cohorts working at the Appalachian ReUse Corridor aggregation and distribution center

For more information:

Visit the EPA Brownfields website at www.epa.gov/brownfields or contact:
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