

# Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board (MVWIB), MA

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Working with local Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) can bring significant resources into environmental job training programs. Program participants benefit with assistance from multiple established institutionalized sources. The environmental training program can plug into resources already in place as part of an already established WIB operation.

Since passage of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), local labor boards have been required to become creative in maximizing available funds in order to provide the best quality of service to unemployed residents of their community. For many progressive communities, that means seeking resources and partnering with organizations outside the Department of Labor.

Partnering with the EPA Environmental Workforce and Job Development Program provides WIBs supplemental resources to reach additional unemployed residents. Several of our best EPA environmental training programs partner with the local WIB, or use the WIB as the primary grantee.

The Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board is an example of an excellent program with the local workforce investment board as primary grantee.

Overview of the MVWIB environmental workforce development and job training program

## Targeted Community

- City of Lawrence, MA (a federally designated renewal community).
- Community residents are primarily Hispanic (75%).
- At the height of the recession, unemployment rates in seven of the nine census tracts in the community exceeded 25%.
- In August, the unemployment rate exceeded 14%.
- Approximately 33% of residents live at or below the poverty level.

## Training Objectives and Schedule

It should be noted that revisions made to a previous proposal were the result of feedback from program participants and local employers. As relationships strengthened with employers and graduates, additional input guided the direction and emphasis of curriculum and delivery.

- The 2011 program included 39 students over three cycles. Each cycle lasted 8-10 weeks.
- The 2013 proposal reduced the program delivery to 5 weeks, with 8-hour days and a goal of training 45 students. Program delivery was revised to simulate the standard 8-hour workday. The compressed training schedule also worked better for program participants, getting them to work earlier and more accustomed to an 8-hour work day.

#### Core Training Program

- 40-Hour HAZWOPER
- Introduction to careers in recycling
- Leaking underground storage tank corrective action
- Stormwater management / groundwater testing
- Recycling, reuse, and remanufacturing industry
- Confined space entry
- 10-hour construction safety
- Fall protection
- Lead and asbestos abatement RRP (Merrimac Valley communities have extensive lead and asbestos issues.)
- Life skills

MVWIB offers a total of six state and federal certifications.

In their 2013 proposal, MVWIB placed increased emphasis on recycling and remediation, especially lead and asbestos. Merrimac Valley communities have many small-scale remediation firms. Placement feedback from employers during their first grant period indicated a strong demand for graduates with RRP and asbestos remediation skills and certifications.

#### Training Delivery and Curriculum

MVWIB partners with GroundWork Lawrence for training delivery. WIB program staff must work closely with multiple partners including various divisions in their own organization. Training delivery and curriculum is jointly coordinated with each of the program stakeholders.

#### Student Services, Retention, and Placement

- MVWIB works closely with local career centers for recruitment and placement.
- A dedicated Business Services Representative specializes in placement.
- Additional assistance from other partners adds depth to the placement team.
- Employers have provided funds allowing graduates to enter organized labor programs.
- MVWIB uses career days as both a recruitment and placement tool.
- MVWIB takes measures to insure that unemployment assistance continues during training.

## Student Recruitment

Each applicant is required to perform one day of community service before entering the program. In addition to being an “attitude adjustment”, one day of community service acts a filter for those serious about committing to the program.

- Academic level.
- GED and TABE 7.
- No drug testing required.
- Transportation required.
- Bilingual materials are available. Classes are taught in English.
- Extensive use of social media, radio, and networking.

## Key Partners

- GroundWork *Lawrence*
- City of Lawrence's Community Development Department
- Merrimack Valley Planning Commission

## Summary Notes

- Observe the community.
- Where do local jobs exist?
- Is there a market?
- Who are the local employers?
- Become aware of state and federal regulations (i.e. changes in demolition rules, scrap yards, organic waste generators).
- Maintain solid contact with partners and employers.
- Stay engaged.