Mon Valley Initiative

The Mon Valley Initiative (MVI) is a 501(c) (3) grass-roots coalition comprised of 10 Community Development Corporations (CDCs) and representing twelve municipalities in the Monongahela Valley. The coalition was formed after steel mills and related industries closed, leaving member communities with thousands of people unemployed and without the tax base of those major landowners.

At that time, individual CDCs were formed, either newly organized or from existing groups. In 1988, all of the groups agreed to form a coalition that would provide shared staffing and support for CDC projects – The Mon Valley Initiative.

MVI was formed with a three-part purpose:
1. Provide staff to be shared by its member CDCs that would assist the all-volunteer boards of those organizations in identifying and implementing development strategies.
2. Raise funds to support development projects.
3. Join together for regional action and advocacy.

MVI has four program areas, each with its own team leader and staff, which form our four teams:
- Community Outreach
- Workforce & Business Development
- Housing and Real Estate Development
- Housing Counseling

Workforce & Business Development

Mon Valley Initiative Workforce program is geared to assist job seekers in gaining employment as a primary step toward individual self-sufficiency. We know that individual financial self-sufficiency contributes important benefits to the community as a whole, particularly by increasing the personal incomes of residents and thereby the tax base. The purpose of MVI’s Workforce & Business Development program is to assist unemployed and under-employed job seekers to become prepared for and able to access employment opportunities that exist in the region. In addition to the assistance provided to potential employees, the Team works concurrently with regional employers to assess and understand their human resource needs; and also to link them to financial and other resources to help them grow. We offer these services from our main office in Homestead through classroom work and one-on-one counseling.

The Workforce & Business Development program uses a career development advice process to assist people who may be unemployed or under-employed. The process is called “Know Yourself, Know the Market, Make the Match.”

As job seekers work through this curriculum, they will make an appointment to meet with one of the Workforce Development Specialists to explore personal and professional goals one-on-one, learn about job searching, and work through decision-making as they apply for jobs or choose a career.

“Know Yourself”

Activities in this part of the program include taking self-assessments using standard tools like Holland Code and taking a national career readiness testing process called WorkKeys.

WorkKeys is a job skills assessment system measuring “real world” skills that employers believe are important for success in whatever occupation a person may have and at whatever level of education they may have received. Employers usually have to review stacks of job applications for only a few open positions. WorkKeys assessment scores can make a job seeker’s application stand out from the others.
The Holland Code is a system that breaks up jobs by categories or interests. In the Holland Code, categories such as “Realistic,” “Social,” “Artistic” represent “work personalities.” Job seekers can use this assessment to find out their own personality type.

“Know the Market”
The second aspect of the Workforce Development curriculum includes activities such as researching job options and finding important job search information such as “in-demand” jobs, educational requirements, and average pay.

MVI also hosts weekly Job Club meetings that job seekers attend to learn new job skills, share job leads that they may have found, and network with one another. Employers often attend Job Club sessions to discuss their companies and hiring policies.

“Make the Match”
Once job seekers are familiar with their work skills and personality and they have reviewed their options for employment, they can begin to specifically identify careers that are a match for them. At this part of the process, job seekers will learn and practice interviewing skills and receive assistance developing their resume and cover letter. The Workforce staff will also provide advice on appropriate personal presentation and workplace conduct.

Role of the Intern
An intern in our Workforce and Business Development program should expect to gain hands-on experience working directly with job seekers. Specifically, the intern will gain:

- Direct Service Provision: The intern will gain experience working directly with job seekers in the following capacities:
  - Helping job seekers apply for jobs online.
  - Enrolling job seekers in JobGateway. JobGateway is a job search engine managed by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry that houses more than 200,000 job openings.
  - Participating in Job Clubs. The Workforce and Business Development program hosts Job Clubs every Monday and Thursday from 1:30pm to 3pm.
  - Administering the WorkKeys Assessment to job seekers. The WorkKeys assessment is offered to job seekers twice a month on Fridays from 9am to 12 noon.

- Data Collection and Report Writing: The intern will collect data from job seekers who have participated in the WorkKeys Assessment and compile the data into reports.

- Information and Referral: The intern will provide job seekers with relevant information and referrals to Mon Valley Initiative partner agencies.

- Community Outreach: The intern will attend meetings and fairs and share information gathered at these events with Workforce staff.