

**Washington State
Wagner-Peyser Agricultural Outreach Plan
Program Year 2014
July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015**



**Workforce and Career Development Division
Agricultural Services Unit**

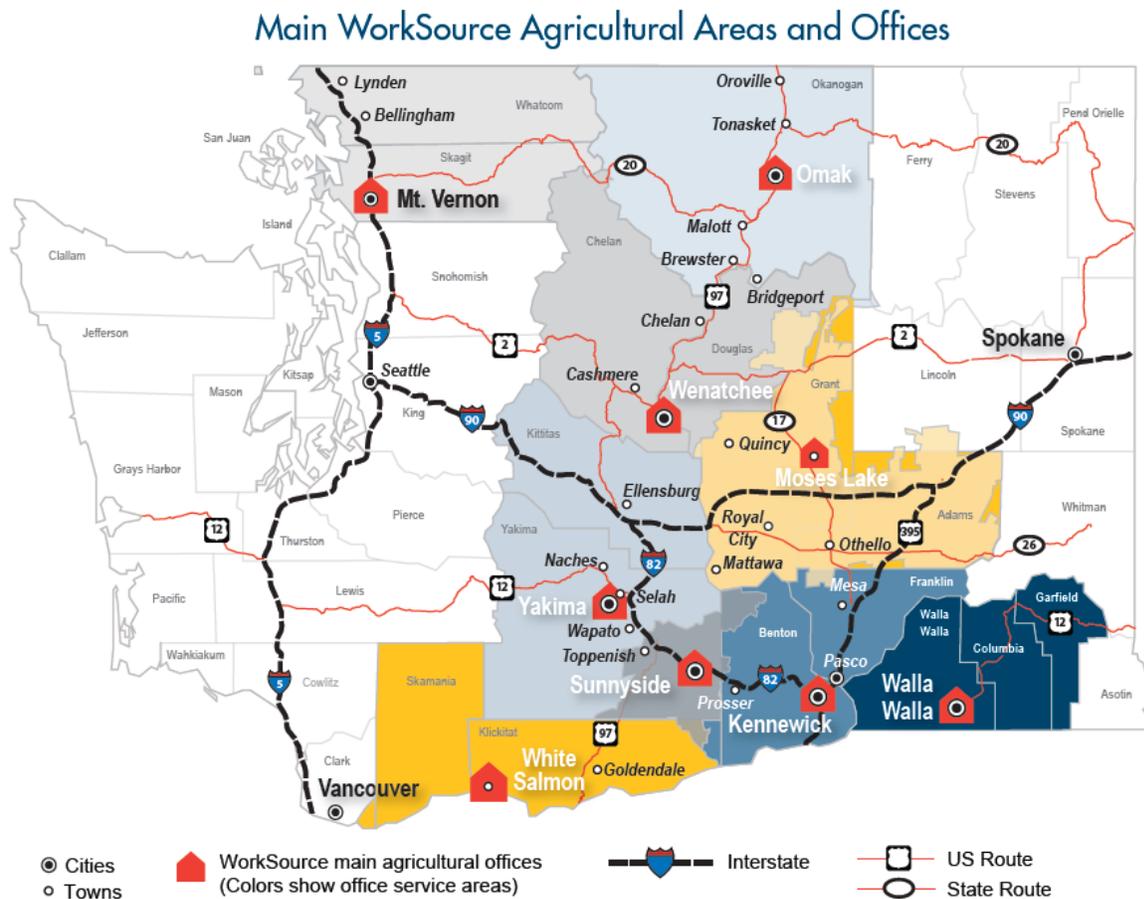
May 2014

Introduction:

The Employment Security Department (ESD) is responsible under the Wagner-Peyser grant to prepare an annual Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP) guided by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). This plan aligns with questions posed by DOL for ESD and extends to coordination through *WorkSource* – Washington’s one stop workforce development system – in the provision of employment and training services to Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFW). The plan covers federal Program Year 2014 (July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015) and will remain in effect until updated.

The plan was built in large part with the active participation of management and outreach staff located in the state’s federally-designated significant MSFW offices. *WorkSource* significant MSFW office locations are shown in *Figure 1*. Whenever possible, it includes available MSFW organization partners and joint business services planning for agricultural employer outreach. It is meant to be useful for programmatic, strategic, or operational planning purposes and has been published without extended documentation or analysis and does not include footnotes.

Figure 1. Locations of Significant Federally-Designated MSFW WorkSource Offices, PY 2014



Customer Needs Assessment:

Washington remains one of the top states in terms of average annual agriculture employment with 88,000 agricultural production and support jobs (3% of the state workforce) servicing nearly 300 diverse crops in 2012. The agricultural industry's significance to Washington's economy is far reaching, with production valued at \$9.2 billion. Ensuring the adequate supply of labor to the agricultural industry while helping MSFWs transition to stable employment continues to be a focus for the Employment Security Department (ESD) as it continues vigorous outreach to growers and Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFWs) for PY 2014 and beyond.

Farm labor is concentrated in the arid and sunny central and eastern regions of the state. Abundant irrigated acreage continues to develop around the Bureau of Reclamation's massive Columbia Basin Project, which allows for the production of high value and labor-intensive fruit crops. The cool lowlands on the western side of the state, mainly in Skagit and Whatcom counties, have also seen modest growth in berries and nearly 90 other crops that merit outreach to ensure labor and farm worker needs are met.

MSFWs are essential for a large part of Washington agricultural production and will continue to be needed, especially in the critical peak months of July and September. On a human level, MSFWs bring us the fruit of their hard labor— fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry and other sustenance. However, many continue to face barriers include language, lack of steady work, poor housing conditions, low literacy levels, health care risks, and a lack of benefits. Therefore we continue to partner with organizations serving MSFW's, including WorkSource offices, to provide outreach and assistance to MSFWs and their families. For all service providers, including WorkSource, an ongoing challenge is adequately enumerating the service population of MSFWs. This has been particularly challenging for health care providers trying to establish baseline resources for community farmworker clinics.

MSFW Enumeration in Washington State:

One important issue for WorkSource and the agriculture industry is the availability of seasonal farm workers in Washington. There are several studies that have produced varying estimates of seasonal farm workers in Washington, strengthening the notion that a precise measurement of the number of MSFWs is difficult to obtain. The most current enumeration study based on a *demand for labor model* done for Migrant Health Centers in 2000 arrived at an estimate of 176,044 MSFWs. Meanwhile, the Northwest Regional Primary Care Association published a 2011 Farmworker Population Profile showing about a 30-70 split between 71,860 migrant and 157,400 seasonal farm workers in Washington for a total of 229,260 MSFWs. While these studies are noteworthy, ESD presently relies on seasonal agricultural workforce data published by our Labor Market and Performance Analysis (LMPA) branch, who reported that peak seasonal employment in Washington State for calendar year 2012, peaked at 92,840 in the month of July.

Proposed MSFW Outreach Activities and Numeric Goals for Planned Outreach Contacts

Knowledgeable and resourceful MSFW outreach staff based in WorkSource one stop centers and affiliate sites strengthen customer service in federally-designated significant agricultural locations. The table below provides list of MSFW outreach positions and the areas they currently serve. As evaluation of our budget continues, the distribution of these positions may change. However, one full-time position per significant office will remain in alignment with federal requirements.

Table 1: PY 2014 MSFW Positions by WorkSource Office

WorkSource Office (City)	Serving Significant Agricultural Counties	MSFW Staff FTE
WS Skagit (Mount Vernon)	Skagit, Whatcom	1.0
WS Central Basin (Moses Lake)	Grant, Adams	2.0
WS Okanogan County (Omak)	Okanogan/North Douglas	1.0
WS Wenatchee Affiliate	Chelan/South Douglas	2.0
WS Yakima	Yakima, Kittitas	1.0
WS Sunnyside	Yakima	1.0
WS Columbia Gorge (White Salmon)	Klickitat	1.0
WS Columbia Basin (Kennewick)	Benton/Franklin	2.0
WS Walla Walla	Walla Walla	1.0
	Total	12.0

WorkSource MSFW outreach staff along with the WIA 167 Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker partner agencies continue to provide services to agricultural employers and MSFWs that are demand-driven and consistent with ESD’s mission to help Washington’s workers and employers succeed in the global economy by delivering quality services. As required by 20 CFR Subpart B, 653.101, WorkSource will ensure that MSFWs are offered the same range of employment services, benefits and protections, including counseling, testing and job training referral services, as are provided to non-MSFWs. To assure statewide compliance, ESD will make every effort to achieve the federal requirements for “qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate services” to MSFWs.

As a form of engaging MSFWs at WorkSource centers, MSFW outreach staff will report on a monthly basis to the State Monitor Advocate on their efforts to contact, inform, and educate MSFWs. These outreach efforts will include, but are not be limited to, contacts with local public Spanish and English media such as television, radio, newspapers, classroom training sessions, community service agencies and organizations, churches, and places where MSFWs live, work or gather. Labor camps, employer sites, public housing, businesses and educational institutions are also included.

The majority of MSFWs are not reached through normal office intake activities. Therefore, resources are allocated through ESD’s budget for specialized staff dedicated to outreach activities to MSFWs on a year-round basis in significant agricultural offices. WorkSource planned outreach contacts for PY 2014 are shown below on Table 2.

Table 2: PY 2014 Planned MSFW Outreach Contacts per Significant Office

WorkSource Significant Agricultural Office	PY 14 MSFW ESD Staff FTE	PY 2014 MSFW Planned Outreach Contacts		
		Mass Event Contacts	Individual/ Small Group Contacts	Total Outreach Contacts Planned
WDA 3				
WorkSource Skagit (Mount Vernon)	1.0	325	525	850
WDA 8				
WorkSource Wenatchee Affiliate	2.0	1,000	1060	2060
WorkSource Central Basin (Moses Lake)	2.0	2280	700	2,980
WorkSource Okanogan (Omak)	1.0	450	350	800
WDA 9				
WorkSource Yakima	1.0	1,000	350	1350
WorkSource Sunnyside	1.0	750	750	1,500
WorkSource Columbia Gorge (White Salmon)	1.0	200	730	930
WDA 10				
WorkSource Walla Walla	1.0	500	250	780
WDA 11				
WorkSource Columbia Basin (Kennewick)	2.0	700	280	980
TOTAL	12.0	6,672	5,817	12,489

Table 3: PY 2014 Planned MSFW Outreach Contacts and Days by Month and Office

Significant Ag. Office	Contacts	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Total
Skagit	Contacts	110	110	55	55	45	40	40	50	50	70	100	125	850
	Days	12	12	9	9	8	8	8	8	10	11	15	15	125
Wenatchee	Contacts	130	130	120	90	60	60	60	60	100	120	1000	130	2,060
	Days	26	26	24	24	18	12	12	12	20	24	26	26	250
Moses Lake	Contacts	290	250	345	345	155	55	55	165	220	330	380	390	2980
	Days	27	25	30	30	15	5	5	15	20	25	30	34	261
Okanogan	Contacts	75	75	75	75	50	50	50	50	75	75	75	75	800
	Days	15	15	15	15	10	10	10	10	15	15	15	15	160
Yakima	Contacts	150	150	150	150	75	75	75	75	75	75	150	150	1350
	Days	15	15	15	15	8	6	6	6	6	9	9	15	125
Sunnyside	Contacts	84	144	144	144	144	96	96	96	120	144	144	144	1500
	Days	7	12	12	12	12	8	8	8	10	12	12	12	125
White Salmon	Contacts	130	150	150	100	60	40	40	30	30	50	50	100	930
	Days	13	15	13	13	8	8	8	8	8	8	10	13	125
Walla Walla	Contacts	80	80	100	100	40	20	20	20	80	80	80	80	780
	Days	14	14	16	16	10	8	8	10	10	10	12	12	140
Kennewick	Contacts	120	100	120	120	30	30	30	30	100	100	100	100	980
	Days	26	24	26	26	18	14	14	14	20	22	20	26	250

Services for MSFW:

ESD maintains a statewide Agricultural Services Unit (ASU) under the direction of the Director of Agricultural Services, who also serves as the State Monitor Advocate, and the support of a State Program Coordinator who guides service delivery. This team provides guidance, in part, through bi-weekly statewide conference calls during the agricultural harvest season for MSFW staff to share information on crop and labor activity, for the ASU to provide technical assistance and training, and to discuss ways to continually improve services to growers and farm workers. The ASU, in collaboration with field operations, also facilitates an annual training session for all MSFW supervisors and staff in advance of the agricultural season.

All MSFWs who visit a WorkSource site will be informed of the various types of employment and training services and social services available in their community and in other parts of the state. MSFWs will be given a menu of various training options offered through the state-formula WIA programs, adult and youth, community colleges, and state agency programs.

Outreach proves most effective as WorkSource and its partners maintain and improve the menu of services that MSFWs value. WorkSource direct employment assessment and placement is primarily tailored to MSFW needs through the expertise of MSFW staff in nine significant

agricultural offices serving the state. MSFW staff also work flexible schedules during key harvest periods to meet the demand for services. Active and ongoing outreach focuses on employment but also shifts to include intensive counseling to assist MSFW's in pursuit of long-term planning to ensure growth in skills, education, and abilities, based on personal interest, desire and industry/economic trends.

Concurrent enrollments with partner agencies and colleges are assessed for individuals who may benefit. A key partner in these efforts is the WIA 167 grantee, the National Farmworker Job Program (NFJP), which is currently the OIC of Washington. Their offices are located in key locations where agricultural activity is greatest, including some co-locations in WorkSource centers. The training pathway for ESL, high school equivalency certificates, and career and technical education (vocational training) is primarily through partnering with the WIA 167 grantee and community colleges. Community colleges in some agricultural areas continue to provide Integrated Basic Education Skills Training (I-BEST) for higher level ESL adults. The I-BEST model has dual instructors for language and vocational skills leading directly to a variety of certificates (e.g., CDL, welding, office technology) and agricultural or non-agricultural jobs. In acknowledgement of the value of ESL and ABE classes, in 2012, ESD changed its UI policy to allow seasonal workers (such as farm workers) to count attendance in ESL or ABE classes as a job search activity. Doing so serves as an incentive for claimants to improve their English proficiency while receiving unemployment insurance benefits.

To fill skill gaps, ESD has invested in statewide licenses for on-line work skills improvement using KeyTrain and SkillSoft training modules for access to the Microsoft e-learning library. Nearly all significant MSFW offices also offer Spanish computer literacy classes, which have seen higher participation rates every year during the off-season. This experience has introduced MSFWs to digital media and a new world of information. The computer classes have helped digitally-illiterate customers use computers and gain much needed keyboarding skills. Some have progressed to Microsoft Word and Outlook. Students are encouraged to attend Job Hunter workshops offered in Spanish. The plan is to continue the computer workshops in significant offices like Wenatchee, Yakima, and Sunnyside and integrate flexible work skills learning with other more traditional WorkSource services.

The need for inter-office communications and cross training is crucial. ESD headquarters, also affected by reductions, is encouraging decentralized training by available subject matter experts in the field. Strategic and operational partnerships will become more important in PY 2014. Partnerships will be fostered through statewide and local meetings to integrate services across organizations and facilitate hiring events or local MSFW resource fairs. Communication and collaboration among state agencies has also intensified, so that resources are leveraged when serving Ag stakeholders in a manner that is valued by all.

Services are also enhanced by bi-lingual/bi-cultural labor exchange staffs in significant agricultural offices. This is particularly crucial because MSFW staff spend the majority of their time, especially during the six months of the growing season between April and October, in the field providing outreach to MSFWs and agricultural employers.

It is recognized that MSFWs are a population that are difficult to serve due to barriers such as limited English proficiency and low educational attainment. In recognition of these barriers and in light of a reduced budget, ESD will continue to leverage key partnerships. These partnerships will play a critical role in ensuring that MSFWs continue to access more stable employment opportunities.

Services to Agricultural Employers through the One-Stop System:

Workgroups regularly form in both the central office and the field to address strategic and operational concerns impacting both growers and farm workers. This year a group made up of field and central office staff, will be working towards continuous improvement in the operation and the delivery of services through the use of *Lean* methodologies. During the beginning of 2014, such groups successfully developed MSFW program and H-2A program handbooks that are intended to ensure statewide consistency in the provision of services that benefit both Ag employers and MSFWs. These handbooks serve as foundational documents that will be maintained and updated as additional processes are standardized and improved. The handbooks may be located at <http://www.wa.gov/esd/1stop/policies/laborexchange.htm>.

More growers are choosing to use the H-2A program in Washington State. Under H-2A, ESD places an interstate clearance order and actively recruits U.S. workers interested in working under contract for the season. H-2A employers must hire all willing, able, qualified, and available U.S. workers who apply through 50 percent of the contract period. It is anticipated that more growers will choose to use H-2A, despite the added costs and guarantees it requires for farm workers, in order to access a stable, legal workforce. In CY 2014, Washington growers have requested over 7,000 workers as of May 15, 2014. A number that surpasses the previous high of 6,300 workers requested during CY 2013. ESD will continue to support employers by processing job orders in a timely manner, providing technical assistance to agricultural employers and by updating labor exchange processes so that we can strive to achieve our agency vision – the right job for each person, every time.

Local ESD staff members have close working relationships with agricultural employers. These relationships are especially beneficial for communicating the need for workers day by day during key harvest periods. In addition, members of the Washington State Farm Bureau, Washington Growers Clearing House, and Washington Growers League are in contact with the State office in Olympia where issues and concerns having statewide impact are addressed. They also contribute by providing the state with informative bulletins on the pear and cherry harvest.

Agricultural employers may list a local, seasonal job order in the online self-service system at <http://Go2WorkSource.com>. However, employers are encouraged to place staff-assisted job orders, which allow ESD outreach staff to recognize employer needs and respond promptly in order facilitate the orderly movement of farm workers and is thus considered the most effective means of active recruitment.

Additionally, as an ongoing response to Governor Inslee's call for more responsive and efficient state government, ESD continues to collaborate with other state agencies in order to enhance coordination and increase communication with key agricultural stakeholders. A state agency

work group assembled in July 2013. As a result, the Department of Agriculture reinstated state-led quarterly conference calls with key agricultural stakeholders. Ongoing planning has also continued among state agencies in an effort to leverage outreach efforts and update outreach materials.

Resources are also dedicated to providing nationally-recognized labor market products developed by ESD's Labor Market and Performance Analysis (LMPA) Branch, including the annual *Agricultural Workforce in Washington* report. Employment data for all employers and job seekers can be accessed at <https://fortress.wa.gov/esd/employmentdata/>.