

**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
AGRICULTURAL SERVICES OUTREACH PLAN
PROGRAM YEAR 2014**

(Modification to 2012-2016 State Strategic Workforce Plan)

D. WAGNER-PEYSER AGRICULTURAL OUTREACH

1. Assessment of Need

The agricultural industry in Florida employs approximately two million people and contributes more than \$104 billion to the state's economy. There are an estimated 47,500 commercial farms in Florida which produce nearly 300 different commodities.¹ Florida is the nation's leading citrus producer, accounting for 63 percent of the total U.S. production in the 2012-2013 citrus season. During the season, Florida farmworkers were responsible for harvesting 524,640 acres of citrus trees. The state's citrus production dropped by nine percent from the previous season.² Florida is also ranked first for sales of a number of vegetable and specialty crops.³ Farmworkers harvested approximately 184,700 acres of vegetable crops, watermelons and strawberries during the 2013 season⁴ and 410,000 acres of sugarcane in 2012. Cash receipts for all agricultural products totaled \$8.26 billion in 2011.⁵

Some pre-harvest activities such as planting, transplanting, tying, staking and pruning are also performed by farmworkers, as well as post-harvest activities such as packing and juice processing. Citrus, vegetables, sugarcane and nursery crops comprise Florida's major agricultural commodities. Broken down, citrus is the major crop activity with oranges leading the way followed by grapefruit and other specialty fruits (tangerines, limes, etc.). Tomatoes lead the way in vegetable production followed by sweet corn, bell peppers, cabbage, cucumbers, snap beans and squash. Other special commodities include potatoes, watermelons, strawberries and blueberries.⁶ The blueberry industry in Florida has grown significantly over the years. Florida's climate allows for an earlier blueberry season than the rest of the country, which means during this time the market is available almost exclusively to Florida growers.

The following is a breakdown of Florida's top major labor-intensive crop activity during the 2012-2013 season.⁷

¹ Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, *Florida Agriculture by the Numbers 2013*

² Florida Agricultural Statistics Service, *Florida Citrus Statistics 2012-2013*

³ Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, *Florida Agriculture by the Numbers 2013*

⁴ USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, *Vegetables 2013 Summary*

⁵ Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, *Florida Agriculture by the Numbers 2013*

⁶ Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Florida Agricultural Statistics Service

⁷ Data obtained from both internal and external agencies and organizations such as career centers, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service, Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, outreach workers, farmworker organizations, etc. Additional data was obtained from agency reports.

CROP		USUAL HARVESTING DATES		PRIMARY GEOGRAPHICAL AREA OF ACTIVITY	LABOR POOL
		Begin	Most Active		
Citrus	Oranges	Mid-September	September - June	Polk, Highlands, DeSoto, Hendry, Hardee, Collier, Manatee, Lake, St. Lucie, Martin, Hillsborough, Pasco, Osceola, Indian River, Lee, Charlotte, Glades, Orange, Okeechobee	60,000
	Grapefruit	September	September - June	Indian River, St. Lucie, Polk, Hendry, Highlands, Osceola, Charlotte, Collier, Lake, Okeechobee	12,000
	Specialty	June	June - April	Polk, Lake, Highlands, Hendry, Charlotte, Hardee, St. Lucie, Collier, De Soto, Indian River, Hillsborough, Lee	8,000
Vegetables	Tomatoes	Mid-October	November - May	Manatee, Collier, Hillsborough, Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Hendry, Gadsden, Hamilton	10,500
	Sweet Corn	Mid-September	November - May	Palm Beach, Miami-Dade, Hendry, Orange	3,100
	Bell Peppers	Mid-October	November - April	Palm Beach, Collier, Hillsborough, Manatee	5,000
	Cabbage	Mid-October	January - April	Flagler, St. Johns, Palm Beach, Manatee	1,500
	Cucumbers	Mid-September	November - April	Manatee, Palm Beach, Hillsborough, Collier, Hardee, Hendry, Miami-Dade	1,500
	Snap Beans	Mid-October	November - April	Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Suwannee, Hendry, Alachua, Jackson	5,000
	Squash	September	November - May	Miami-Dade, Collier, Lee, Hillsborough, Gadsden, Jackson	2,500
	Potatoes	Mid-December	February - May	St. Johns, Putnam, Flagler, Okeechobee, Suwannee	2,800
	Watermelons	April	May - June	Hendry, Levy, Gilchrist, Highlands, Collier, Suwannee, DeSoto, Alachua, Manatee, Marion, Hardee, Jackson, Sumter	2,500
	Strawberries	Mid-December	February - March	Hillsborough	5,000
	Blueberries	March	March - May	Polk, Alachua, Hardee, Hamilton	2,000
	Sugarcane	November	November - February	Palm Beach, Hendry, Glades, Martin	3,500

Plant nurseries and ferneries are also important commodities to Florida's agricultural industry. Florida has the second largest nursery industry in the country, after California.⁸ There are an estimated 100,000 farmworkers employed in plant nurseries and ferneries throughout the state. Additionally, an estimated 2,000 or more farmworkers are employed in sod farming for commercial sale. The nursery commodity is increasing and although many workers are employed year-round, this workforce is important to quantify for purposes of determining housing, education and social service needs of the farmworker population.

The transient nature of seasonal farmworkers makes it difficult to develop accurate and consistent estimates of Florida farmworker numbers and farmworker numbers in the state

⁸ "2007 Census of Agriculture: Greenhouse, Nursery and Floriculture Operations."

are largely dictated by the extent of agricultural activity in an area. The peak number of MSFWs working in Florida during Program Year (PY) 2013 was estimated to be 143,591.

Although it is too early for a forecast, there are no major changes expected in crop production for the 2014-2015 picking season, unless affected by natural disasters and extreme temperatures. The agriculture labor pool in general is expected to be slightly lower this year, evidenced by trends from previous pool seasons and an increase in the number of employers using the H-2A Temporary Non-Immigrant Alien Agricultural Worker Program. Employers of crops that have not seen such shortages in the past are now joining the H-2A Program, such as tomatoes and blueberries.

2. Proposed Outreach Activities

Florida is the second most MSFW significant state in the country, behind California. In PY 2012 the state had a total of 20,560 MSFW applications in its labor exchange system. The main objective of the Department and its partner outreach programs is to actively locate and contact those MSFWs who may not be reached through normal intake activities conducted at career centers. In making contact with MSFWs, outreach workers will explain the services offered and the types of training and employment opportunities available, provide information on protections and rights of MSFWs, as well as provide information regarding other organizations that provide services to MSFWs. Staff performing outreach will, whenever possible, be bilingual and have a MSFW background or be a member of a minority group representative of the MSFW population. The outreach program is further supported by a full-time State Monitor Advocate position with all the previously mentioned criteria.

To accomplish the maximum level of outreach activities, a full-time year-round outreach worker position will be assigned to each designated significant career center. Outreach workers will specifically be assigned to areas where there is significant agricultural activity and where a large number of job applicants are MSFWs. Outreach workers trained in the recruitment and provision of services will be available directly through the significant career center network. The Department will consider and be sensitive to the preferences, needs and skills of individual MSFWs and the availability of jobs and training opportunities.

Outreach will be accomplished through personal contacts, printed material, the media, community involvement and cooperative ventures with private and public agencies. Outreach workers will make personal contacts with MSFWs on a daily basis to explain the services available through the career centers and other agencies. They will also provide this explanation in writing by way of the DEO Form 511N. Outreach workers will visit sites where farmworkers live, work and gather, including pickup points, migrant health clinics and locations where social services are provided, in order to contact the maximum number of MSFWs possible. Posters and other printed materials will be distributed at these locations to maximize penetration into the farmworker community. Follow-up contacts will be made with MSFWs to help ensure that needs have been met and to determine if any other assistance can be provided. The Department and its partners will continue to establish new linkages and use existing relationships with local and statewide networks to solicit information and suggestions from appropriate public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other groups representing and advocating on behalf of MSFWs.

Processing job applications, assessments and job referrals for MSFWs will be emphasized to assist in year-round employment. Outreach workers will encourage MSFWs to complete applications during outreach to receive services onsite. This will also facilitate easier access to services when the customer decides to visit the career centers in the future. In completing applications, a full description of the work history will be made to assess the MSFWs' knowledge and skill level. Should demand or organizational considerations require, other trained staff would be made available to assist in service delivery. Collaboration will be made with the local providers of the WIA Section 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantee to maximize training opportunities.

Outreach workers are fully trained in all aspects of employment-related services to MSFWs, including taking complaints while in the field. Further, staff who observe, have reason to believe or are in receipt of information pertaining to an apparent violation of employment-related laws are required to document and refer the suspected violation to the career center manager, who is required to follow established procedures in resolving such allegations. Outreach workers are encouraged to make routine visits to worksites to observe whether field sanitation and pesticide regulations are being followed by employers. They are also trained to ask questions of the farmworkers they come into contact with to determine if violations have taken place. The State Monitor Advocate provides training on the complaint and apparent violations systems and encourages outreach workers to refresh their knowledge on policies and procedures through online training materials. These systems are closely monitored by the Monitor Advocate during annual on-site quality assurance visits and quarterly desk reviews.

Outreach activities will be documented on the Log of Daily Outreach Activities. The log form includes the number of MSFWs contacted, the amount of time expended, the services provided and information on complaints received. All outreach workers will utilize standard forms such as the job application, complaint forms and logs of apparent violations. Monthly reports that summarize all outreach efforts and activities will be submitted to the State Monitor Advocate. These reports will include an analysis of the outreach activities performed by the outreach worker on a qualitative and quantitative basis and a summary of the total career center outreach effort. Monitoring of the outreach activities will be conducted to assess and report on the parity of services provided.

There are currently nine Regional Workforce Boards designated as significant MSFW locations in Florida. Within those regions, there are eleven career centers designated as significant bilingual sites in Florida, including Clewiston, the newest addition. Each significant office is assigned a full-time year-round outreach worker.

Florida will continue to operate its eleven designated significant MSFW career centers during PY 2014. Following is a list of these significant career centers for PY 2014, along with corresponding outreach goals.

Significant/Bilingual Office Location	Regional Workforce Board	# of Assigned FTE Positions	# of MSFW Outreach Contacts	# of Quality MSFW Outreach Contacts	# of Staff Days
Quincy	Region 5	1	1,000	800	190
Plant City	Region 15	1	2,000	1,650	190
Winter Haven	Region 17	1	1,950	1,250	190
Bradenton	Region 18	1	2,000	1,800	190
Sebring	Region 19	1	2,000	950	190
Wauchula	Region 19	1	1,900	950	190
Port Saint Lucie	Region 20	1	1,600	1,100	190
Belle Glade	Region 21	1	1,950	1,100	190
Homestead	Region 23	1	2,000	1,375	190
Immokalee/Naples	Region 24	1	2,000	1,300	190
Clewiston	Region 24	1	1,100	800	190
Total		11	19,500	13,075	2,090

At the state level, planned MSFW outreach contacts will be based in part on accomplishments during the prior two program years and estimated number of MSFWs in the state in order to set achievable goals. Florida also reports “quality” outreach contacts made with MSFWs, meaning a contact where a reportable staff assisted service is provided and documented. Florida made 10,481 quality contacts in PY 2012. During PY 2014, Florida plans to make approximately 19,500 total outreach contacts, 13,075 of which will be “quality” contacts. Outreach workers will be required to spend a total of 190 staff days, or 80 percent of staff time, conducting outreach. They will also be required to make a minimum of five quality contacts per day.

To maintain service levels, outreach services will be supplemented to the extent possible through partner agencies. Informal cooperative agreements with other public and private social service agencies, such as local providers of the WIA Section 167 NFJP grantees, will be established in order to provide joint outreach efforts to the MSFW population. Approximately 500 additional contacts will be made via nonfinancial agreements with cooperating agencies. Career centers having some agricultural activity but that do not meet the ten percent criteria for the significant career center designation will also be required to set up nonfinancial agreements with cooperating agencies.

The MSFW outreach workers will maintain a continuing relationship with all community groups, public agencies and advocacy groups interested in the welfare of farmworkers. Contact will be made with agricultural employers for possible job openings, and the outreach workers will assist career center staff with recruiting MSFWs for those specific job orders.

3. **Services Provided to MSFWs through the Career Center Delivery System**

Florida ensures that all Regional Workforce Boards and career centers serve all applicants, including MSFWs. Bilingual staff are available at all significant centers as well as many

other centers across the state. In the career center network, staff are trained on the assistance needs of MSFWs. As part of the registration process, customers will be identified as MSFWs at the initial point of contact/intake and provided with a verbal and written explanation of services available in English, Spanish or Creole. A MSFW desk aide is available to all staff to assist in identifying MSFWs.

Services including core, intensive and training services will be provided as necessary. Core and intensive staff assisted services will be provided through outreach and in the career center to MSFWs. Florida's electronic system, Employ Florida Marketplace (EFM), allows for self-services at any location, without the need of visiting a career center. Customers utilizing self-services at the career center, however, will have access to staff assistance. Regional Workforce Boards will have the option to work with their partner WIA Section 167 NFJP local provider to grant them staff access into the EFM system. This will allow NFJP staff to assist MSFW customers in registration, certain staff assisted services, and self-services.

The MSFWs' knowledge, skills and abilities will be assessed to determine appropriate jobs to which they may be referred. Job referrals will be provided through mass recruitments, H-2A job referrals and job developments. Effort will be made to refer MSFW jobseekers to H-2A job orders whenever possible. Aside from Florida H-2A job orders, Georgia, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, Ohio, South Carolina and Virginia H-2A jobs are also posted in EFM. Staff will ensure terms and conditions of employment are discussed prior to referral and that the jobseeker is aware of the assurances afforded. H-2A job orders are suppressed in the EFM system for the purpose of ensuring maximum protections to the applicant. Staff will be encouraged to follow up on all referrals made to H-2A job orders.

Referrals will be made to English as a Second Language classes to reduce language barriers and resume and interviewing skills workshops to enable MSFWs to become more competitive in the workforce. Staff will also provide career guidance and suggest training programs that would best serve the needs of those who are not job ready or those who are ready for a change in occupation. Referrals will be made to local WIA Section 167 training programs and local board training programs. Co-enrollments will take place when possible. Other programs MSFWs may be referred to include Vocational Rehabilitation (for disabled MSFWs), older workers programs and housing assistance agencies. Staff will also be familiar with and refer MSFWs appropriately to other community supportive services.

The State Monitor Advocate will conduct quality assurance visits to all significant offices on an annual basis to ensure that MSFWs have equal access to employment opportunities through Florida's career center delivery system. Wagner-Peyser monitoring staff will ensure MSFWs have equal access to services during quality assurance visits to non-significant Regional Workforce Boards.

Note: In accordance with 20 CFR 653.111, Florida has been exempt from developing an Affirmative Action Plan due to the high number of bilingual staff in the significant career centers.

4. **Services Provided to Agricultural Employers through the Career Center Delivery System**

Florida ensures that all career centers assist all employers, including agricultural employers, in filling job openings. To increase employer participation, links have been established with employers, employer councils and other employer groups to identify potential employers to establish a pool by which to refer MSFWs. Career center staff in significant MSFW centers will perform marketing outreach to growers, harvesters and processors. The career centers will develop new employer contacts, maintain existing contacts and encourage job order creation through the local career centers. State office staff will also promote labor exchange services to agricultural employers through participation at employer conferences and through the Department's website.

Identifying the needs of employers will continue to be a high priority. A coordinated marketing program will be used to deliver services to employers, and a proactive approach will be taken to assist employers in filling their job vacancies. Strategies that will be used to promote labor exchange services to agricultural employers include recruiting agreements, job fairs and new business relationships. Some of these efforts include advising worker advocates and groups through notifications of job orders in both English and Spanish; and providing notification to employers and advocates of any changes to foreign labor program requirements that affect workers. Increased use of the Internet will also enhance service delivery to both the employers and applicants.

A number of career centers have agricultural recruiting agreements with large employers in an effort to place more MSFWs in job opportunity situations. Mass recruitment agreements are offered to agricultural employers at the beginning of a season or when large pools of labor are needed. These agreements can include services such as marketing, prescreening, referral, and completion of applications and I-9 documents.

As noted earlier, more agricultural employers are using the H-2A Temporary Non-Immigrant Alien Agricultural Worker Program. The state office provides assistance to these employers. H-2A job orders are entered by DEO's Foreign Labor Certification Office. Thus far, during PY 2013, the Department processed 142 H-2A applications and job orders for Florida employers, an increase from the previous year. This number is expected to increase for PY 2013, according to several employer agents. As a result, the state has been required to conduct increased pre-occupancy housing inspections, prevailing wage surveys and on-site recruitment. The Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) is an alternative to the H-2A program that will be offered to employers who have temporary agricultural or food processing jobs and are in need of workers.

State and local staff participate in recruitment efforts with Florida employers and farmworker organizations to recruit domestic workers. Coordinating activities with farmworker groups will maintain dialogue on job and worker availability to help increase U.S. worker participation. Career centers in significant agricultural areas will be provided copies of approved clearance orders that will provide all staff, including outreach workers, with current information on job availability to assist in these efforts. Career centers will be provided information on out-of-state clearance orders that can be found on the EFM system. Domestic farmworker crews, family groups and individuals will also be recruited and referred to agricultural employers who submit job orders in agricultural occupations.

5. **State Monitor Advocate Review and Public Comment**

Florida has a full-time State Monitor Advocate who has been afforded the opportunity to formulate the PY 2014 Agricultural Outreach Plan. All comments, suggestions and recommendations of the Monitor Advocate have been incorporated in the plan.