

RI Department of Labor and Training Agricultural Outreach Plan

Program Year 2014

INTRODUCTION

In the context of RI agriculture, the role of the RI Department of Labor and Training (RI DLT) is to act in the capacity of the State Workforce Agency (SWA) to provide workforce and labor exchange services to agricultural employers and Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFW's) located in the state.

RI DLT will continue to comply with the requirements 20 CFR Subpart B, Service to MSFWs to ensure that any identified MSFWs are offered the same range of employment and training services, benefits and protections as non-MSFW customer. Such services would mirror those that are provided to non-MSFWs and would include counseling, skills assessment, job search assistance (including resume writing & interviewing skills workshops), and suitable Job training program referrals. Every effort will be made to achieve the Equity Indicators of Compliance as well as the Minimum Service Level Indicators.

RI DLT will continue to increase and pursue activities statewide where there is a variety of agricultural activity taking place in the attempt to identify previously unknown migrant workers in order to provide access and information regarding Job Service information and other Job Center services. This will be accomplished by performing on site visits to local farms to speak with Farm Owners and potential MSFW's to explain services and provide information.

Rhode Island is not a significant MSFW state, although we will continue to provide information and assistance to employers and workers regarding assistance and services available to them. RI DLT acting in its capacity as the State Workforce Agency (SWA) and in conjunction with the State Monitor Advocate (SMA) will report any Labor Law violations such as wages, hours, working conditions, certifications, recruitment and hiring of migrant workers ensuring the right to free access to intercede on behalf of individuals to its Labor Standards Division and/or Federal Wage & Hour Division. Technical assistance and other business services designed to support and grow business will be provided as well.

"A significant state is one that has" the highest number of Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFW) applicants that utilized services under the Wagner-Peyser act and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998. The employment and Training Administration (ETA) designates annually the top twenty states with the highest MSFW activity based on data received from state and local offices."
<http://doleta.gov/programs/who.msfw.cfm>

A. ASSESSMENT OF NEED

(i) REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS YEAR'S AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN THE STATE

- ❖ During PY2013, the major labor-intensive crop in RI was apples.
- ❖ In 2013 there were currently twenty four apple farms in RI.
- ❖ The months of heavy activity are April through October
- ❖ The bulk of the farms are located in the Northern end of the state, with some on Aquidneck Island.

(ii) A REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS YEAR'S MSFW ACTIVITY IN THE STATE

- ❖ Typically, Agricultural Employers do not seek qualified U.S workers through placement of job orders with RI DLT. Part of RI DLT's strategy for outreach is to pair a Business Service Specialist with the State Monitor Advocate and a representative from the New England Farmworker's Council to encourage RI Farm Employers to utilize the public workforce system for recruiting workers. (3) Employers were allowed to recruit foreign labor due to a shortage and lack of interest from U.S. Workers when job orders were posted. Three farms have placed a job order in conjunction with requesting H2A VISA workers with the RI DLT in EmployRI, the state sponsored job board.
- ❖ To date, 2 requests for (3) workers have been made with the anticipation of (1) more request for H-2A workers for harvesting local apple orchards.
- ❖ There were two staff referrals that resulted in no hires from the One-Stop Career Center.
- ❖ Four internet self referrals were made.
- ❖ Total MSFW registrations in RI from PY2013 through the present indicate 0 Migrant Farm Workers and 0 Seasonal Farm Workers.
- ❖ netWORKri One-Stop Career Center staff outreached to individuals self identifying as MSFW's revealing incorrect designation as such during their registrations in Employri, RI's online Labor Exchange instrument. Correct classification of the registered participants would fall under Seasonal Farm Workers, not necessarily working with crops, rather retail functions at farm stands, and also numerous landscaping activities.
- ❖ Regardless, information was given regarding netWORKri services and the MSFW Complaint System.

(iii) A PROJECTED LEVEL OF AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN THE STATE FOR THE COMING YEAR

RI has 1,243 farms. The average farm size was 56 acres and the median farm size was 24 acres. Although the State of RI has lost 80% of its farmland to development and forests that have grown and abandoned field and pastures, the number of farms in RI grew by 2 percent since 2007 with land in farms at 69,589 acres. RI has demonstrated a trend in the state from fewer nurseries, turf and flower farming to more fruit, vegetable, livestock and aquaculture farming. The two groups each represent about half of all farming in the state.

The average age of a farmer in RI increased slightly to 56.7 years compared to 56.3 years in 2007. The number of farmers between 35 and 44 declined as did those over the age of 75. Women-owned farm operators increased from 24 percent to 25 percent. Total market sales have declined by nine percent since and crop sales declined twelve percent.

- ❖ RI has mostly family run farms that generate everything from raspberries and pumpkins to Christmas trees and various vegetables.
- ❖ The level of crop activity in PY 2015 is expected to increase with a possibility that economic growth may lead to a more active agricultural economy resulting in expanding labor needs. Based on prior years the majority of the crop activities will be vegetables, strawberries and apples.
- ❖ There have been no changes from last year's crop activities
- ❖ There are no known changes in the number of MSFWs involved in crop activity.

There are 55 farmers markets statewide with nine summer farmers markets along with winter markets in neighborhoods across our state. SNAP/EBT is accepted at most of the farmers markets. The farmers markets connect rural and urban communities along with strengthening the environment, health and quality of life of local farmers.

In October 2013 Farm Fresh RI distributed its 100,000th dollar to food stamp (SNAP) recipients to support the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables at farmers markets across RI.

To increase the accessibility of our markets, Farm Fresh runs the "Bonus Bucks" program: for every \$5.00 spent with EBT, customers receive a bonus \$2 to spend on fruits and vegetables. Bonus Bucks are funded through individual, corporate, government and foundation donations throughout RI.

Bonus Bucks help attract SNAP shoppers to markets to help keep these federal dollars circulating in the local economy. This program continues to grow. During 2013 Farm Fresh RI processed more than \$61,000 benefits at its markets. This money goes directly into the pockets of local farmers and provides additional sustenance for families in need.

Farm Fresh RI also provides food to local food pantries and shelters partnering with farmers to donate unsold produce at the end of the market days and also donating unused produce from Farm Fresh RI's other programs.

Farm Fresh RI is rebuilding a year round food system driven by the needs of RI farmers and eaters. The goal to local farm production is to increase efficiency of processing, distribution and sales with year round farmers markets, continue using the market mobile and open a kitchen for processing.

There are over 200 culinary and hospitality businesses in RI that now buy from local farms. Fresh, local food produced by RI agriculture complements the state's strength in not only tourism but culinary and healthcare as locally grown food is distributed directly and through RI's Farm Fresh Market Mobile to hotel chains, restaurants, hospital cafeterias and workplaces.

RI grown food is helping to improve the nutritional health of the state's residents. Income-eligible seniors are given Senior Farmers Market Tuition Program coupons that are redeemable at various farmers' markets/stands or the mobile farmers market that visits senior meal sites.

A similar farmer's market coupon program exists for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for the Women, Infants and Children Program.

The most recent assessment of RI agriculture is found in the 2012 USDA Economic Research Service-State Fact Sheet. RI is the smallest state and as such does not support large agricultural pursuits. In terms of revenue generated RI's top five agricultural products are greenhouse and nursery products, sweet corn,

dairy products, potatoes, cattle and calves. Greenhouse and nursery products such as sod, ornamental trees, shrubs and other products account for more than half of the state's agricultural income.

Top 5 agriculture commodities, 2012	Farm receipts 1,000 dollars	Farm receipts percent of state	Farm receipts percent of U.S.
1. Greenhouse/nursery	33,300	53.6	0.2
2. Dairy products	3,584	5.8	0.0
3. Aquaculture	2,875	4.6	0.2
4. Corn, sweet	2,695	4.3	0.2
5. Apples	1,642	2.6	0.1

The “green” industry (i.e. nursery, horticulture and turf) remains vital and the largest contributor to the economy of agriculture in RI. According to a 2012 economic impact study, the industry employs more than 13,000 people in RI and produces about \$1.78 billion in annual revenues.

(iv) The projected number of MSFWs in the State for the coming year is not expected to increase. RI continues to seek new ways to identify MSFWs including outreach and will collaborate with the Unemployment Insurance Division to identify additional MSFW not registering in Employri or not identified by outreach.

B.
OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

(i)
NUMERICAL GOALS

- ❖ The DLT plans to conduct outreach activity to MSFWs throughout the State during the peak harvest season of April through October offering information on our programs and services available in PY2014.
- ❖ The RI SMA has conducted MSFW outreach activities to five (5) H2A workers in order to make sufficient amount of information available in the temporary farm worker community. The RI SMA also outreached to eight (8) farms located throughout RI to make them aware of the services available to MSFWs. The SMA attended the RI Spring Flower Show to interact with the nursery and farm owners who were in attendance and also the Women in Agriculture Conference along with a Business Service Representative from the DLT Business Workforce Center. The DLT would like to see these efforts increased to reflect a minimum of 10 days of outreach to MSFWs and more if the need is determined.
- ❖ Quarterly reviews have been scheduled for each of the four local netWORKri Career Centers to review MSFW activity and to continue to keep staff informed of MSFW activity and the necessary posters that must be displayed.
- ❖ The DLT will continue to offer information on services and programs for MSFWs and business services to promote growth and retention. To support this effort, a Business Service Representative will accompany the SMA on all outreach visits.

- ❖ The RI DLT will conduct outreach activities to locate and to inform migrant and seasonal farm workers about the core, intensive training services available through the netWORKri One-Stop Career Centers. The State Monitor Advocate (SMA) is available to assist the netWORKri staff in the conduct of outreach activities.
- ❖ RI continues to establish collaborative atmosphere between state agencies, nonprofits and the farming community. Continued coordination is critical to maintain a flourishing agricultural region.
- ❖ We will continue to work cooperatively to improve existing employment and training programs to emphasize the quality of service and customer satisfaction.
- ❖ Prevailing wage and Prevailing Practice surveys will be done in the beginning of May to determine

(ii)

ASSESSMENT OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- ❖ DLT has available .5% of an FTE (Full Time Equivalent) to provide outreach services to MSFWs. If continued outreach identifies the need to increase this percentage, DLT will allocate the necessary funds to meet the needs and demands identified.
- ❖ The SMA will document and maintain a file of on-going and regular reviews of services provided to MSFWs by the netWORKri One Stop Career Centers. The SMA will ensure that the netWORKri One Stop Career Centers staff are trained in the requirements of the regulations in respect to services offered to MSFWs.
- ❖ Outreach contacts are conducted by the SMA during the peak harvest season. As many MSFWs as possible will be made aware of the full range of services, benefits and protection provided under 20 CFR653, Subpart B. The majority of contacts with MSFWs will be conducted between the peak harvest season and during routine agricultural employer's visitations.

(iii)

For the quarter ending March 31, 2014 the RI DLT's SMA conducted four days of outreach at the local netWORKri Career Centers and attended the Women in Agriculture Conference with the New England Farm Workers Council Representative and a Representative from the Business Service Center at DLT. The plan for 2014 is to provide ten days of outreach activity to farms and the local netWORKri Career Centers

(iv)

SMA in conjunction with the New England Farm Worker's Council representative, located in the Providence netWORKri Career Center will develop a schedule for the purpose of coordinating outreach efforts. A schedule of contacts and visits will be made to address the noted increase of fruit farms to provide farm workers with information regarding employment and training services, supportive services and distribute printed netWORKri promotional material as appropriate.

(v)

- ❖ Outreach will be accomplished through personal contact. The DLT and the One-Stop Career Centers will continue to establish new and existing relationships with local and statewide networking groups on how to better serve the MSFW population.

C. SERVICES PROVIDED TO MSFWs THROUGH THE AMERICAN JOB CENTER NETWORK

- ❖ The DLT will ensure that the netWORKri staff are trained annually in the requirements of the regulations in respect to services offered to MSFWs.
- ❖ In an effort to align and integrate workforce development services and to increase outreach to MSFWs, DLT and the New England Farm Worker's Council (NEFWC) have entered into a non-financial cooperative agreement. The NEFWC representative is located in the Providence netWORKri Career Center, the state's largest comprehensive One-Stop Career Center. DLT in cooperation with the New England Farm Worker's Council will work expeditiously to identify and assure maximum services to MSFWs.
- ❖ The SMA will ensure that all services and programs that are provided in the netWORKri Centers are available for MSFWs. The One-Stop Career Center system ensures the needs of migrant and seasonal farm workers are met through universal access and full integration of services either on-site or through electronic access.
- ❖ The employers most likely to utilize MSFWs or seasonal farm workers are the small fruits, vegetable and apple growers. These employers have a historical timeframe of when they need workers and are contacted when those times arrive.
- ❖ Services are available statewide and MSFW customers have access to a broad range of employment, training, and educational services including Adult Basic Education and ESL as this is a prerequisite to occupational skills and training.
- ❖ Training was provided to the netWORKri staff regarding services available to MSFWs through NEFWC and the netWORKri staff has provided NEFWC with information regarding all services and activities available in the One-Stop Centers. The Monitor Advocate is available to assist offices in outreach, aside from independent activities with farm workers.
- ❖ Bilingual staff is also available to effectively assist MSFW customers with the use of job order information and job opportunities. Assistance is provided in the use of the computer terminals, self registration access to Unemployment Insurance and any training opportunities.
- ❖ Federal and State mandatory posters are visibly displayed in the lobby area of each local office for public viewing. All posters are in English and Spanish.
- ❖ Information about the available services and how to access them is provided through outreach to MSFWs. The SMA and the Business Service Unit will continue to perform outreach.
- ❖ Staff assistance is available to all MSFWs for learning the Employri system. Based on the customer's needs and desire an appropriate next step is determined such as self service resource area, direct referral to partner program staff, orientations, one-on-one assistance, career counseling, Veteran's employment and training services, resume writing, job search assistance, vocational testing, reemployment workshops and job referrals.
- ❖ The integration of services is intended to increase the quality of services, focus on skills of both unemployed and current workers. This assessment is critical to ensure appropriate and seamless referrals to partner programs and services.
- ❖ Computers in the resource areas are designed to provide a multitude of employment and reemployment resources in each One-Stop. Customers may use job boards, Internet access, printers, telephones and faxes to conduct a job search free of charge with or without staff assistance, however, resource specialists knowledgeable in technology and partner services are available in the resource area to assist customers.
- ❖ Customers may also attend free, staff run workshops in job searching, resume writing and interviewing skills. Customers interested in gaining new job skills or verifying their existing skills may access Alison online training through any computer with an Internet connection. Also included are: various job banks, workforce information for job seekers and employers, cover letters, resumes, telephones and fax machines.

- ❖ Comprehensive assessments, development of individual employment plans, individual and group counseling, workshops, testing and case management are examples of intensive services that could be provided.
- ❖ In addition the One-Stop delivery system will address the needs of all farm workers, including those in need of Adult Basic Education and ESL as a prerequisite to occupational skills training in order to become gainfully employed and achieve upward mobility in the workforce.
- ❖ Services can be provided directly to customers either on site or through electronic access. Services are available statewide, at four strategically located One Stop centers. Each center offers interpretation services to individuals who require language assistance. All individuals will be able to access the core services.
- ❖ In order to improve services and meet the minimum requirements, this agency will ensure that all One-Stop netWORKri staff have been properly trained in the proper identification and coding of MSFWs as well education on the multiple barriers of employment many MSFWs confront.
- ❖ The SMA will continue to conduct on-site monitoring of the netWORKri Centers to ensure compliance with federal requirements and to offer technical assistance to staff as needed. RIDLT is committed to achieving full compliance with the federally mandated minimum requirements for providing services to MSFWs during the coming year.

D. SERVICES PROVIDED TO AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS THROUGH THE AMERICAN JOB CENTER NETWORK.

- ❖ The SMA will work collaboratively with RI DLT's Business Workforce Center to outreach to farmers to offer them Business and Workforce Development services accorded to all other RI businesses.
- ❖ Wagner Peyser Act funded Labor Exchange activities will continue to provide services in the netWORKri Career Centers throughout the State to notify job seekers of any agricultural employment opportunities listed in EmployRI .
- ❖ netWORKri Centers offer accessible employment services that effectively and efficiently meet the needs of all customers including employers. Staff in the netWORKri Centers will continue to use a variety of tools to attempt to match the job seekers' skills, interests and abilities with an initial upfront assessment and referrals to agricultural employers to ensure quality referrals.
- ❖ The SMA will continue to reinforce positive relationships with farm workers, farmers and other non-profit organizations while conducting outreach activities. During the next year RIDLT will continue to outreach to agricultural employers as a means of engaging local workers in the full range of services offered in the netWORKri Career Centers.
- ❖ RI DLT acting as the State Workforce Agency (SWA) will continue to administer the H-2A program in an effort to respond quickly to labor needs.
- ❖ RI DLT's Business Workforce Center will continue to work with the New England Farm Worker's Council to develop relationships with farm and agricultural organizations to identify agricultural employers who may not have been previously contacted by networking at farm sponsored events.
- ❖ The SMA will research and identify linkages with the Hispanic community to be able to connect with potential MSFW workers if they are present in RI through quarterly meetings with Community Based Organizations and networks within the community.
- ❖ The RI DLT's Business Workforce Center will provide assistance with the placement of local and interstate job orders and the recruitment of qualified workers.
- ❖ The State Monitor Advocate will provide compliance and technical assistance to ensure that housing requirements and meet Federal OSHA standards.

E. DATA ANALYSIS

(i) Previous Years History

	PY13	PY14
Number of agricultural job orders received	3	2
Number of agricultural job orders filled	0	0
Percent filled	0	0
Number of H-2A interstate clearance job orders received	0	0
Number of H-2A interstate clearance job orders initiated	1	1
Number of non H-2A interstate clearance job orders received	0	0

(ii)

Number of agricultural job orders expected to be received	4
Number of agricultural job orders projected to be filled	0
Percent filled	0
Estimated number of interstate clearance orders received	0
Estimated number of interstate clearance orders initiated	4

F. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

State Monitor Advocate

(i)
The SMA has been afforded the opportunity to review and provide input into the PY 2014 Agricultural Outreach Plan. The SMA comments and recommendations have been incorporated into the Plan, and she will be kept informed of further plan development.

(ii)
Participation and Public Comment

The plan was posted to the Department of Labor and Training's website. Comments were accepted from stakeholders and the general public between April 30, 2014 and May 9, 2014.

Most of the demographic information was based on the RI Department of Environmental Management's Division of Agriculture's website.

(iii)
NARRATIVE

The RI DLT has partnered with the New England Farm Workers Council to provide increased services to identified MSFWs/SFWs and farm employers. A representative from the New England Farm Workers Council maintains a presence in the Providence netWORKri One-Stop Career Center to work with staff to identify MSFWs/SFWs and to refer to New England Farm Workers Council as an additional resource to meet their needs. This representative will accompany the Business Workforce Center representatives and the SMA on outreach visits to farm businesses.

One Stop staff will provide all career and job services, including navigating the labor exchange system and refer businesses to the Business Workforce Center to participate in the Agricultural Recruiting System (ARS) and utilize the recruiting available in EmployRI. The labor exchange system provides job openings in both agricultural and non-agricultural employment. There have not been significant numbers of agricultural job opportunities in the past. However, with continued outreach and collaboration with other agricultural organizations, the numbers may increase.

Other services, such as training or supportive services, through the One-Stop Career Center and New England Farm Workers Council and WIA funding will provide a pathway for MSFWs/SFWs to transition to high wage jobs and permanent year round employment in both the agricultural and non-agricultural industries.

All complaints from MSFWs/SFWs regarding violations of employment related standards and laws shall be taken in writing by designated representatives in each One-Stop Career Center and referred to the SMA for timely resolution. The SMA will make referrals as appropriate and cooperate with the US Department of Labor Wage & Hour Division or other appropriate agencies involved in addressing and resolving complaints.

The plan was sent out to the New England Farm worker's Council on March 28 and accepted with no comment. Additionally, the plan was sent out to the following Agricultural Organizations on April 9:

RI Department of Environmental Management Agricultural Division

RI Farm Bureau <http://rifb.org/>

Farm Fresh <http://www.farmfreshri.org/>,

USDA Farm Service Agency

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/stateoffapp?mystate=ri&area=home&subject=landing&topic=landing>

To date there have been no comments. The plan was scheduled to be reviewed for modification to the State Integrated Plan at the Strategic Investment Committee of the Governor's Workforce Board, the oversight entity for the State Integrated plan on Thursday, May 2. Due to unforeseen circumstances the Strategic Investment Committee meeting has been postponed until June 3 at which point the plan will be reviewed for modification to the State Integrated Plan. RI Department of Labor & Training will submit the plan to US DOL in a timely manner and forward any comments from the Strategic Investment Committee to the plan accordingly.