

(e) Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP). Each State agency must develop an AOP every four years as part of the Unified or Combined State Plan required under sections 102 or 103 of WIOA. The AOP must include—

- (1) *Assessment of Need*. Provide an assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers in the area based on past and projected agricultural and farmworker activity in the State. Such needs may include but are not limited to: employment, training, and housing.

***Review of the previous year's agricultural activity in the State.***

In PY 2014, there was no change from PY 2013, in the estimated number of farms or MSFWs working in Connecticut. Approximately 4,900 farms are located in Connecticut with a total of 400,000 acres dedicated to farming based on census data. CTDOL estimates 5,920 farm workers present in the state, based on Connecticut's Labor Market Information. Connecticut is not a significant state in regards to MSFWs.

During PY 2014, agricultural employers in Connecticut continued to seek qualified U.S. workers through the placement of job orders with CTDOL. Several employers were allowed to recruit foreign labor due to a shortage of U.S. workers available for agricultural positions. The majority of growers continued to recruit on their own through word of mouth, while others obtained workers through Farm Labor Contractors.

In PY 2014, 36 agricultural employers participated in the H-2A program. These employers placed 58 job orders and requested a total of 506 workers. Approximately 44 referrals were made to these positions. Referrals included both local workers and workers from Puerto Rico, Connecticut's primary supply state.

The SMA performed 22 peak-harvest field checks/visits on agricultural worksites to which JS placements were made, and 7 peak-harvest migrant housing inspections. During these visits, the SMA verified field sanitation standards, general working conditions, and housing conditions. All housing checks were in compliance and no deficiencies were found. A few employers were found in possible violation of field sanitation standards, but corrective action was taken by these employers and the apparent violations were resolved through informal resolution, eliminating the need to elevate or notify U.S. Wage & Hour.

CTDOL records also indicate that in PY 2014, approximately 7,040 non-agricultural job orders with entry-level experience and less than high school educational requirements were placed in Connecticut's job bank, CT.Jobs. These counts do not reflect job orders placed by employers through indexing.

***Projected level of agricultural activity in the State for the coming year***

Connecticut Labor Market indicators, as calculated by the CTDOL Office of Research, project an increase in agricultural related employment by 11.2 % from 2012 to 2022. During this period, employment growth across all industries is projected at 9.4 %, with sectors such as construction and manufacturing growing by 22.8 % and 0.8 % respectively. For PY 2015, agricultural employment levels are expected to increase by less than 30 positions.

(A) An assessment of the agricultural activity in the State means:

- 1) Identifying the top five labor intensive crops, the months of heavy activity, and the geographic area of prime activity.

***Review of the previous year's MSFW activity in the State.***

<b>Major Crop Activity in Connecticut PY 2014</b>		
<b><i>Crop</i></b>	<b><i>Months of Heavy Agricultural Activity</i></b>	<b><i>Primary Region</i></b>
<b>Tobacco</b> (Shade & Broadleaf)	June through September	North Central
<b>Fruit</b> (Apples, Peaches, Pears)	July through October	Central
<b>Nursery</b>	February through July	South Central
<b>Greenhouse</b>	March – June, and October - December	South Central

<b>Review of Previous Year's MSFW Activity in Connecticut (Estimates from Connecticut's Labor Market Information) PY 2014</b>		
<b><i>Crop</i></b>	<b><i>MSFWs Employed</i></b>	<b><i>Labor Shortage</i></b>
<b>Tobacco</b> (Shade & Broadleaf)	1000	Yes
<b>Fruit</b> (Apples, Peaches, Pears)	350	Yes
<b>Nursery</b>	550	Yes
<b>Greenhouse</b>	800	Yes
<b>Other</b>	760	Yes

Crop activity and the projected number of MSFWs in each crop activity are projected to remain the same for PY 2015:

<b>Estimated Major Crop Activity in Connecticut PY 2015</b>		
<b><i>Crop</i></b>	<b><i>Months of Heavy Agricultural Activity</i></b>	<b><i>Primary Region</i></b>
<b>Tobacco</b> (Shade & Broadleaf)	June through September	North Central
<b>Fruit</b> (Apples, Peaches, Pears)	July through October	Central
<b>Nursery</b>	February through July	South Central
<b>Greenhouse</b>	March – June, and October - December	South Central

<b>Estimated MSFW Activity in Connecticut (Estimates from Connecticut’s Labor Market Information) PY 2015</b>		
<b><i>Crop</i></b>	<b><i>MSFWs Employed</i></b>	<b><i>Labor Shortage</i></b>
<b>Tobacco</b> (Shade & Broadleaf)	1000	Yes
<b>Fruit</b> (Apples, Peaches, Pears)	350	Yes
<b>Nursery</b>	550	Yes
<b>Greenhouse</b>	800	Yes
<b>Other</b>	760	Yes

- 2) *Summarize the agricultural employers’ needs in the State (i.e. are they predominantly hiring local or foreign workers, are they expressing that there is a scarcity in the agricultural workforce);*

Currently all employers utilizing Connecticut’s Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) are participants of the H-2A program. The larger operations taking part in the H-2A program employ a combination of foreign workers, migrant workers, and local seasonal workers, with the latter being the largest contingent of this population. Smaller participants of the H-2A program almost exclusively employ foreign workers. All employers utilizing the ARS agree that the demographics of the former “U.S. worker” have drastically changed over time as the majority of the local seasonal workforce is comprised of immigrants.

and 3) Identifying any economic, natural, or other factors that are affecting agriculture in the State or any projected factors that will affect agriculture in the State.

Tobacco crops in Connecticut have experienced a steady decline in recent times, due in part to foreign competition from Central America, whose production costs are lower than those found here.

(B) An assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers means summarizing Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) characteristics (including if they are predominantly from certain countries, what languages they speak, the approximate number of MSFWs in the State during peak season and during low season, and whether they tend to be migrant, seasonal, or year-round farmworkers). This information must take into account data supplied by WIOA Section 167 National Farmworker Job Program (NFJP) grantees, other MSFW organizations, employer organizations, and State and/or federal agency data such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration.

Connecticut's Labor Market Information and CTDOL outreach efforts estimates there were 3,460 MSFWs in PY2014. Approximately seventy (70) were migrant workers. The majority of the farm workers in Connecticut are from Mexico, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Central America, and Haiti. Many farm workers including MSFWs in Connecticut experience challenges with language barriers, lack of education, lack of knowledge of worker's rights, health care options, legal status, and self-sustainability.

(2) *Outreach Activities.* The local offices outreach activities must be designed to meet the needs of the MSFWs in the State and to locate and contact MSFWs who are not being reached through the normal intake activities. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

(A) *Contacting Farmworkers who are not being reached by normal intake activities conducted by the employment service offices.*

The SMA will continue to explain to farmworkers the services available to them at local one-stop centers and other entities through his farm visits, as well as his visits to meetings held at New England Farm Workers Council (NEFWC.)

To augment CTDOL's outreach efforts, the SMA continues a cooperative agreement with the NEFWC, in an effort to integrate the employment and training services of both agencies and avoid the duplication of services to MSFWs. This partnership also enhances CTDOL's ability to achieve maximum penetration into the farm worker population by reaching seasonal as well as migrant workers. The SMA has also developed additional strategic partnerships with community based organizations to maximize resources and provide support services to MSFWs as well as agricultural employers.

Written and oral presentations to MSFWs, in both Spanish and English, at their living quarters and in common gathering areas will continue to be delivered by the SMA. The information presented will include the following:

- Agricultural and non-agricultural job openings
- Training options
- Support services (Statewide Legal Services of CT, Migrant Health programs)
- Vocational testing
- Career counseling
- Job development
- Information on the Job Service Complaint System
- Farm worker rights (Federal and State Law, employment related protections)
- Terms and conditions of employment
- Unemployment Compensation Insurance Information
- Services provided by the New England Farm Workers' Council (NEFWC)

The SMA will also provide workers with wallet-sized cards that include his contact information as well as the names and phone numbers of other organizations offering support services, such as U.S. Wage & Hour, ConnectiCOSH (CT OSHA), NEFWC, Statewide Legal Services, and a number of Community Health Centers. Other outreach material that may be distributed to the workers includes information on Migrant Clinics (administered by the CT River Valley Farmworkers' Health Program), pamphlets on a number of CTDOL's own programs/services, Unemployment Compensation Filing, and the addresses and phone numbers of all of the American Job Centers throughout the state.

The SMA also provides MSFWs with information on seasonal or short-term non-agricultural job openings, as well as agricultural opportunities in other states, that they may transition to when their agricultural contract has ended.

*(B) Providing technical assistance to outreach workers. Technical assistance must include trainings, conferences, additional resources, and increased collaboration with other organizations on topics such as one-stop center services, (i.e. availability of referrals to training, supportive services, and career services, as well as specific employment opportunities), the employment services complaint system, information on the other organizations serving MSFWs in the area, and basic summary of farmworker rights, including their rights with respect to the terms and conditions of employment.*

Connecticut is currently not classified as a significant MSFW state and has its SMA conduct all outreach activities and efforts. The SMA had attended various training conferences to stay up to date on best practices and to disseminate information on services available through the One-Stop Career Centers, the Job Services Complaint System, and information on the entities serving MSFWs in Connecticut. The SMA also provides information on farmworker rights.

*(C) Increasing outreach worker training and awareness across core programs including the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and the training on the identification of UI eligibility issues.*

Since the SMA handles all the outreach activities, he has established a relationship with both the CTDOL UI division as well as the USDOL Wage and Hour unit. This collaboration with USDOL Wage and Hour staff and participation in the Winter Connecticut Nursery & Landscaping Association field day, introduces him to agricultural employers and helps establish a pathway for future farm visits. These farm visits assist agricultural employers as well as farmworkers in understanding unemployment eligibility and other labor laws.

*(D) Providing State merit staff outreach workers professional development activities to ensure they are able to provide high quality services to both job seekers and employers.*

Only the SMA provides outreach, training and other materials on farmworkers and agricultural employers for those staff members that are in the local offices or work with assisting farmworkers with UI eligibility. These materials can be found on the CTDOL internal network site for all CTDOL staff to access.

*(E) Coordinating outreach efforts with NFJP grantees as well as with public and private community service agencies and MSFW groups.*

In addition to collaborating and working closely with our NFJP grantee, the SMA also has established relationships with various entities across the region such as:

- Partnerships with community based organizations such as University of Connecticut School of Medicine, Connecticut River Valley Farmworker's Health Program (CRVFHP), Statewide Legal Services of CT, and Community Health Service providers.
- Distribution of informational brochures and posters on Pesticide Safety and Heat Stroke Prevention to all growers participating in the H-2A program.
- Partnered with the NEFWC to provide other support services to local farm workers in need.
- Presentation to students at the University of Connecticut in a field trip for a class titled "Migrant Workers In Connecticut." SMA provides information on his own job duties as well as the variety of employment and support services available to MSFWs through CTDOL's programs.
- Participation in the University of Connecticut Migrant Farm Worker Clinic Symposium by presenting information about MSFWs to medical students who visit farms and conduct free medical screenings for farm workers.
- The SMA presents information on MSPA and H-2A regulations to agricultural employers.

(3) *Services provided to farmworkers and agricultural employers through the one-stop delivery system. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:*

(A) *Providing the full range of employment and training services to the agricultural community, both farmworkers and agricultural employers, through the one-stop delivery system. This includes:*

i. *How career and training services required under WIOA Title I will be provided to MSFWs through the one-stop centers;*

American Job Centers (AJCs) offer integrated and universally accessible employment services that effectively and efficiently meet the needs of all customers, including MSFWs. Through existing partnerships in the AJCs, MSFWs and agricultural employers have access to the following services through a single delivery system which include: Wagner-Peyser labor exchange services such as recruitment assistance, career counseling, vocational testing, veterans employment and training services, resume writing, job search assistance, reemployment workshops, and job referrals. Other American Job Center Network programs, agencies and services include Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth activities under WIOA, Adult Education, Apprenticeship Training, Vocational Rehabilitation Training under DORS (Department of Rehabilitation Services) and BESB (Board of Education and Services for the Blind), Unemployment Insurance, Jobs First Employment Services, and referrals to supportive services. This universal access to career services guarantees barrier-free admission to all seekers of employment and training services, including individuals with disabilities. Many of CTDOL's partners working under the American Job Center Network are co-located in our AJCs, which allows for a seamless delivery of services to job seekers. Once registered into CTDOL's database, all information and referrals are maintained electronically.

Training programs available through the American Job Centers are comprehensive and flexible in meeting the diverse needs of Connecticut's population. This allows job seekers with varying levels of education and experience the opportunity to upgrade their skills in order to meet the competitive needs of employers.

Staff encourages non-English speaking customers to take advantage of the cost-free ESL classes offered through Adult Education or CTDOL's WIOA Section 167 Grantee. This is a critical component of promoting life-long learning as well as developing the basic skills needed to secure employment and pursue career growth.

Staff in the American Job Centers have been trained in the proper identification and coding of MSFWs and are well educated on the multiple barriers of employment this population may encounter. The SMA will continue on-site monitoring of the

AJCs to ensure compliance with the Job Service regulations, and will offer technical assistance to staff as needed.

*ii. How the State serves agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such services.*

The SMA maintains frequent contact with growers in the H-2A program in an effort to respond quickly to their labor needs.

The SMA will continue to reinforce positive relationships with farm workers, agricultural employers, and other non-profit organizations while conducting outreach activities. During the next year CTDOL plans to continue outreach to local workers as a means of informing them of the full range of services offered in the American Job Centers Network.

The SMA maintains frequent contact with growers in the H-2A program in an effort to respond quickly to their labor needs.

In PY 2015 CTDOL will continue to offer the following services to agricultural employers and MSFWs:

- Assistance with the placement of local and interstate job orders
- Assistance in the recruitment of qualified workers
- Dissemination of information on, and referral to organizations that assist MSFWs including New England Farm Workers' Council, CT Migrant Health Network, CT River Valley Farm workers Health Program, ConnectiCOSH, University of Connecticut Medical School, Statewide Legal Services of CT, and Board of Education Migratory Program
- Mediation and Interpretation services
- Complaint assistance
- Technical assistance to ensure that housing requirements meet Federal standards
- As needed, assist in making appointments for individual MSFWs or members of their family with appropriate agencies
- Technical assistance on compliance with employment services regulations and all other Federal and State laws

(B) Marketing the employment services complaint system to farmworkers and other farmworker advocacy groups.

CTDOL will continue to rely on its SMA to distribute employment service complaint system material and information to farmworkers and advocacy groups through his farm visits and networking activities.

(C) Marketing the Agricultural Recruitment System to agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such publicity.

The CTDOL will continue to promote recruitment assistance, available through the Department of Labor in outreach contacts, to agricultural employers throughout the state. CTDOL's Alien Labor Certification staff, in collaboration with the State Monitor Advocate (SMA), continues a screening process for job seekers interested in agricultural job openings. This screening process not only ensures that qualified applicants are referred but also allows the prospective applicant to gain a thorough understanding of the terms and conditions of each job opening. Carefully matching job seekers with prospective employers proves to be instrumental in establishing credibility with our agricultural employers.

*(4) Other requirements.*

*(A) Collaboration. Describe any collaborative agreements the state workforce agency (SWA) has with other MSFW service providers including NFJP grantees and other service providers. Describe how the SWA intends to build upon/increase collaboration with existing partners and in establishing new partners over the next four years (including any approximate timelines for establishing agreements or building upon existing agreements).*

As stated earlier, we have established a close working relationship with our NFJP grantee, the New England Farm Workers Council (NEFWC), the SMA also has established relationships with various entities across the region such as: community based organizations such as University of Connecticut School of Medicine, Connecticut River Valley Farmworker's Health Program (CRVFHP), Statewide Legal Services of CT, and Community Health Service providers. We continue to collaborate in outreach efforts as well as educational and training opportunities.

As such, CTDOL has also started dialog with those entities that serve the farmworker population in bordering states as well as supply states to develop relationships. This is important since many of these farmworkers cross state lines. In the next four years, it is expected that we will continue to work together and refer MSFWs and agricultural employers appropriately to each entity in order to coordinate efforts for success in the program. The SMA has also established pathways for Connecticut MSFWs to transition to other states after the term of the contract in Connecticut is completed. This effort of developing relationships with other SMAs will continue as we serve the MSFWs and agricultural employers.

*(B) Review and Public Comment. In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must: 1) Consider any*

*comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP; 2) Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the reasons therefore; and 3) Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP.*

*i. The AOP must include a statement confirming the NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.*

The WIOA section 167 NFJP Grantee, the New England Farm Worker’s Council (NEFWC) has been afforded the opportunity to review and comment on the State Agricultural Outreach Plan. No comments or additional recommendations were received.

*(C) Data Assessment. Review the previous four years Wagner-Peyser data reports on performance. Note whether the State has been meeting its goals to provide MSFWs quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFWs. If it has not met these goals, explain why the State believes such goals were not met and how the State intends to improve its provision of services in order to meet such goals.*

CTDOL is committed to achieving full compliance with the federally mandated minimum equity indicator requirements for service to MSFWs. Connecticut has achieved federal mandated standards for the MSFW programs.

*(D) Assessment of progress. The plan must also include an explanation of what was achieved based on the previous AOP, what was not achieved and an explanation as to why the State believes the goals were not achieved, and how the State intends to remedy the gaps of achievement in the coming year.*

**PY 2014 Plan versus PY 2014 Actual**

	<b>Comparison Chart – Program Year</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>+/-</b>
1	Number of MSFWs contacts by ES staff	400	512	+112
2	Number of MSFWs contacts by 167 grantee	216	411	+195
3	Number of MSFWs employers contacted for obtaining Job orders	65	36	-29
4	Number of job orders cleared	75	58	-17
5	Number of job orders on which field checks were conducted	28	25	-3
6	Total number of MSFW formal complaints received	0	0	0

In addition, the CTDOL has also recorded a 55% increase of MSFWs receiving career guidance, job development and staff assisted services from PY 2013 to PY 2014.

Due to shifts in agricultural trends in Connecticut, we did not receive the amount of job orders we had anticipated. According to the annual Agricultural Wage Survey conducted in Connecticut, the Agricultural employers utilized more family workers instead of MSFWs in PY 2014.

CTDOL's PY 2015 goal is to reach 400 MSFWs. The majority of contacts with MSFWs will be conducted between June and October. The SMA will conduct visits to agricultural employers between November and May for recruiting assistance.

The level of Wagner-Peyser funding in Connecticut, specific to outreach activity, has not changed. CTDOL will continue to provide services and outreach to MSFWs at the same levels as previous years.

*(E) State Monitor Advocate. The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed the AOP.*

The SMA has been afforded the opportunity to review and comment on the State Agricultural Outreach Plan.