



**CareerSource
PALM BEACH COUNTY**

MIGRANT & SEASONAL FARMWORKER OUTREACH LOCAL PLAN

2024-2028



CareerSource Palm Beach County
careersourcepalmbeach.com
3400 Belvedere Rd
West Palm Beach, FL. 33406

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Introduction:

This plan complies with the Wagner-Peyser Act requirements for providing equitable, non-discriminatory services to Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFWs) under Title 20 CFR Part 653, Subpart B. This outreach plan aligns with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified Plan, covering program years from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2028.

- Local Agriculture Outreach Plan for **Program Years 2024-2028**
- Local Workforce Development Board: **CareerSource Palm Beach County**
- Date Submitted: **November 21, 2024**
- Contact: **Steven Gustafson, Chief Operating Officer (Tel: 561-340-1060)**

Assessment of Need:

Review of Agricultural and MSFW Activities

Agriculture is a core component of Palm Beach County's economy. The County leads the nation in the production of sugarcane, fresh sweet corn, and sweet bell peppers. It leads the state in the production of rice, lettuce, radishes, Chinese vegetables, specialty leaf, and celery.

Of the county's total land mass, 36% or about 456,001 acres is dedicated to agriculture. Data from the Palm Beach County Cooperative Extension Service estimates \$1.397 billion in total agricultural sales has been generated by the County and leads the State of Florida and all counties east of the Mississippi River. It is one of the ten largest county agricultural industries in the United States.

Palm Beach County is third in the state in nursery production. It leads the state in agricultural wages and salary with over \$316 million. The peak agricultural season typically runs from **November to April**, coinciding with Florida's cooler months when labor demand is highest.

- **Crop Activity:** The county's agriculture is diverse, with a mix of row crops, nursery operations, and specialty crops. The growing season attracts many workers for planting, maintenance, and harvesting.
- **Peak Season Workforce:** During the peak season, thousands of MSFWs are employed in various agricultural roles across the county, many returning annually.
- **Low Season Workforce:** In the low season (**May to October**), the number of MSFWs decreases significantly, as many workers return to their home countries or seek alternative employment.

Palm Beach County's diverse agricultural infrastructure includes:

- Two major sugar manufacturing mills
- One sugar refinery
- A major sugar and molasses port shipping facility
- A rice processing and packaging mill
- Nine fresh vegetable packing houses
- 476 horticultural nurseries
- A major hydroponic tomato growing operation
- An agricultural by-product electrical cogeneration plant

Palm Beach County's University of Florida agricultural extension programs introduce growers to new plant varieties, pest control techniques, alternative agriculture methods, business management skills, practical skills from conversational Spanish for the farm manager to Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and farm equipment operation. Extension agents also assist government and private agencies in developing policies for land use, tax assessment, and water use and conservation.

Challenges and Barriers:

MSFWs in Palm Beach County face unique challenges and needs. According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, there are more than 6,000 hired farm laborers in Palm Beach County. However, unemployment continues to be a challenge for MSFWs. In the tri-city region of Belle Glade, Pahokee, and South Bay, collectively known as (The Glades region) unemployment is typically five times higher than the county region.

Lack of training and language barriers contribute to higher unemployment rates among MSFWs. Thirty percent of households in the Glades speak Spanish at home while those who speak Haitian Creole as a first language make up 11% of households (2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates). Many workers lack access to vocational training that could enhance their employability in higher-paying roles.

Reliable transportation poses a significant barrier for MSFWs, many of whom lack access to personal vehicles and public transit options. Transportation issues limit their ability to reach job sites, attend training programs, and access essential services such as social assistance.

MSFWs often face challenges in accessing healthcare services, including insufficient health insurance and language barriers. Health issues related to occupational exposure, such as pesticide exposure and heat-related illnesses can occur and pose a challenge if healthcare is not easily accessible and affordable.

Lastly, the lack of quality, affordable housing contributes to the challenges that MSFWs face. There is a scarcity of affordable and safe housing options for MSFWs in Palm Beach County, leading to overcrowded or substandard living conditions. Inadequate housing can negatively impact health and job performance, contributing to instability in the workforce.

Needs of Agricultural Employers

Agricultural employers have unique needs as well. Employers need access to readily available labor. In some cases, employers need labor with the flexibility to move around the United States as they harvest different crops during the season.

Furthermore, as agricultural production becomes increasingly automated, employers are looking for higher skilled employees. In addition, agricultural producers are also increasingly looking for higher skilled labor including welders, heavy equipment mechanics, and tractor operators to replace an aging workforce. Hence, there is a pressing need for training programs that focus on agricultural skills, safety protocols, and career advancement opportunities.

Another area of concern for employers is regulatory compliance. Agricultural employers must navigate complex labor laws and regulations, often requiring legal assistance to ensure compliance.

Finally, employers often grapple with the issue of retaining their workforce. High turnover rates among MSFWs create challenges in maintaining productivity and operational efficiency.

Assessment of Available Resources:

The available resources in Palm Beach County for MSFWs and agricultural employers are diverse and aim to address the specific needs identified in the assessment. By leveraging these resources, the community can enhance support for MSFWs, helping them overcome barriers and access opportunities for employment, training, and health services. Continued collaboration among career centers, community organizations, and agricultural employers will be essential in meeting the evolving needs of the agricultural workforce in the region.

Farmworker Career Development Program (FCDP) provides:

- Career assessment / counseling
- Job skills training
- Job search & placement assistance

- Work experience
- Referral to ESOL and GED classes
- Support services
- Tuition assistance

Farmworker Coordinating Council provides:

- Food distribution
- Clothing & household items distribution
- Transportation assistance
- Referrals to vocational / educational / employment programs
- Emergency rental and utility assistance
- Translation and interpretation services

Financial Assistance:

Several organizations provide financial aid to individuals and families in need:

- Palm Beach County Community Action: Offers the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to help eligible households with energy costs. Applicants must have an income at or below 150% of the federal poverty guidelines and a utility bill in a household member's name.
- Palm Beach County Community Services Department: Provides emergency rental assistance to renters in Palm Beach County. Eligibility includes income at or below 110% of federal poverty guidelines and assets not exceeding specified limits.

Housing Support: Temporary shelter and housing assistance programs are available:

- **Temporary Shelter Programs:** Organizations in West Palm Beach offer temporary shelter services to individuals and families in need.
- **Help Find Housing Programs:** The Bridges to Success program provides permanent supportive housing for families in Royal Palm Beach and the Glades area, particularly those diagnosed with medical or psychological disabilities.

Food Services: Access to nutritious food is facilitated through various programs:

- **Food Pantry Programs:** Multiple food pantries in West Palm Beach offer food assistance to residents of Palm Beach County.
- **Emergency Food Programs:** Services are available to provide emergency food assistance to individuals and families facing food insecurity.

Educational and Literacy Programs: Educational support is provided to enhance literacy and learning:

- **Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County:** Offers programs such as the Adult Literacy Project, which connects adult learners with volunteer tutors to improve literacy skills.
- **Palm Beach County Library System:** Provides services including the Adult Literacy Project, which offers informal conversation sessions for those learning English as a second language.

Proposed Outreach Activities:

Outreach Plan and Process:

To effectively locate and engage Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFWs) who are not reached through normal intake activities in Palm Beach County, a comprehensive outreach plan will be implemented. This plan will also ensure that MSFWs receive the full range of career and employment services qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate to services offered to other job seekers.

Access to One-Stop programming to include:

- Assessment
- Career counseling
- Job development
- On the job training

The MSFW outreach staff will conduct year-round, full-time outreach activities, dedicating most of their time to these efforts. Through a vigorous onboarding process, staff will be trained in culturally sensitive engagement and the specific needs of MSFWs to ensure effective communication and service delivery. The onboarding process will involve cross-training with other CSPBC programs including Wagner-Peyser, WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, as well as Reemployment Assistance, to enhance assessment and referrals for MSFWs. This staff will also take part in any trainings designed to increase awareness of sexual coercion, sexual harassment, assault, and human trafficking.

The MSFW outreach staff explains the complaints system, provides brochures and information on partner programs, interagency referrals, referrals to other organizations serving MSFWs and a basic summary of farmworker rights with respect to the terms and conditions of employment.

Additionally, the MSFW outreach worker is equipped with tools and resources to effectively carry out their duties including all required forms, like 511-N, a cell phone, laptop, and information for referrals to partner agencies and support services. Utilization of social media platforms, local radio stations, and community bulletin boards to disseminate information and raise awareness about available services for MSFWs. The outreach performance goals are set to meet or exceed those outlined in the Florida Unified Plan. (**See Attachment A-LWDB-21 MSFW Local Outreach Goals PY 2024-2028**)

MSFW Outreach staff will establish a system for performing ongoing follow-ups with MSFWs who have been contacted. This may include phone calls, home visits, and invitations to events or workshops.

This proposed outreach plan aims to ensure that MSFWs in Palm Beach County receive comprehensive career and employment services tailored to their unique needs. By employing targeted strategies, dedicated staff, and a variety of outreach tools, the program will work to engage this vital workforce effectively, fostering their access to opportunities and resources.

Coordination and Documentation:

CareerSource Palm Beach County maintains a partnership with all community groups, public agencies, and advocacy groups interested in the welfare of the agricultural workers and growers. We are in close contact with the Department of Business and Professional Regulation, which interacts with crew leaders. The current make-up of crew leaders is 75% Hispanic, 15% African American and 10% Haitian Creole speaking.

CareerSource Palm Beach County's Belle Glade area partner agencies providing services to the MSFW population concurrently include:

- Farmworker Career Development Program
- Catholic Charities
- Children and Families Services
- Florida Rural Legal Services
- Goodwill Industries
- Palm Beach State College
- West Technical Education Center
- Head Start Centers
- Farmworkers Coordinating Council
- Boys & Girls Club
- Families First of Palm Beach County

- Palm Beach County Department of Community Services and
- The Glades Initiative

CareerSource Palm Beach County works closely with the Farmworker Career Development Program to increase co-enrollments, increase placements, and provide quality services to MSFWs. Our Associate Vice President of Business Services sits on the Farmworker Program Advisory Board representing the Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA).

A log is kept for MSFWs who inquire about WIOA training to ensure that proper follow-up is completed. CareerSource Palm Beach will develop a Smartsheet and Microsoft Business Intelligence dashboard to report program activities to the State Monitor Advocate, to reduce administrative burden on staff, allowing them to focus on outreach and engagement activities. This software will also enable tracking of referrals made to other internal CSPBC departments/programs and external partners. It will provide an avenue for a shared communication platform where we can facilitate real time updates on outreach activities, available services, and scheduled events. With the use of Smartsheet, CSPBC will be able to generate periodic reports and dashboards that can help assess outreach effectiveness and adjust strategies as needed.

Referrals are made to the Farmworker Career Development Program (FCDP) for appropriate services and vice versa. Outreach efforts are coordinated between the Outreach Specialist and the Farmworker Career Development Program with joint outreach being conducted. FCDP staff will accompany Outreach Specialist into the field to provide information on both organizations' programs and services for MSFWs. Representatives from the Farmworker Career Development Program also conduct outreach at the West Career Center as well. (**See Attachment B-MOU Between LWDB-21 and FCDP**)

These efforts have contributed to the significant progress that has been made since unemployment in the Glades communities peaked at nearly 40 percent during the "Great Recession" in 2010/2011. At that time, the unemployment rates in Belle Glade, Pahokee and South Bay were among the highest in Florida and the nation.

Due to these conditions, collaborative efforts with our business, community, governmental and educational partners led to the development of initiatives to increase employment and economic development opportunities in the Glades communities. The success of these initiatives, led in March 2015 to the cities of Belle Glade, Pahokee and South Bay along with the Business Development Board, Palm Beach County, Lake Okeechobee Regional Economic Alliance, Palm Beach State College, the School District of Palm

Beach County, and CareerSource Palm Beach County being jointly selected to receive the U. S. Department of Agriculture's national Community Development Award.

Since these initiatives have taken place, our collaborative efforts have:

- Boosted resources to increase employment and economic development. While the population in the Glades communities is less than 3 percent of the county at large, about 18 percent of CareerSource Palm Beach County's total budget, including 14 percent of training funds, goes to serving the Glades communities. In 2020, we completed an extensive renovation of our West Career Center in Belle Glade to support improved and expanded services to the area.
- During the past 5 program years, CSPBC has helped place several Glades area residents into 3,508 jobs and provided \$1.6 million in training funds to local employers and residents.
- CSPBC engaged with 122 unique companies providing 1,492 services in the Glades communities during the past 5 program years to provide recruiting, hiring, training and related services to help them connect with local talent.
- Increased outreach to actual and potential major projects in the area. A direct result of this has been the addition of 400 new jobs over the past few years and there are nearly 350 additional jobs from several projects in the pipeline. We also connect project developers and organizations to buy local with purchases of products and services from businesses in the Glades communities.
- Held the Glades Job Fair, outreach to migrant and seasonal farmworkers, new training classes taking place in the CareerSource Center, and the Everglades Restoration Agricultural Community Employment Training program.
- Other community involvement activities include participating on the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies committee, Farmworker Career Development Program Advisory board, Glades PATCH (Planned Approach to Community Health) board and working with LORE and the Business Development Board of Palm Beach County to help local businesses grow and attract new businesses to the area.
- Hosted Glades Business Day where 40 area employers learned how to apply for training grants and to take advantage of special funding and tax incentives to help their business grow.

- Helped form the Glades Career Readiness Roundtable to prepare local youth and young adults for skilled jobs, including the development of the Glades Construction Academy Youth Build program, a construction pre-apprenticeship program that helps out-of-school, unemployed young adults attain their GED, earn industry-recognized credentials and gain hands-on experience.
- Participated in the Corporate College Steering Committee, formed by public and private entities to address training needs in the Glades communities. This includes initiating with Palm Beach State College a 6-week accelerated Certified Nursing Assistant training program for Glade's area residents only (health care is frequently the highest demand occupation in the county).

The effects of the COVID pandemic have presented new challenges. Outside of the Great Depression, Palm Beach County's record high unemployment rate reached 14.2 percent in April 2020 due to the pandemic (the record low unemployment rate was 2.7 percent in Dec. 2019). Agriculture in the western county communities is the nation's winter food stock source and maintaining this food supply pipeline become even more critical during the pandemic. CSPBC views its role in the MSFW program as among the most critical in our organization's history.

Services Provided through the One-Stop Delivery System

Services Provided to MSFWs:

To ensure that Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFWs) receive equitable and nondiscriminatory access to the full range of career and supportive services through the One-Stop Delivery System in Palm Beach County, a structured process is implemented. This process prioritizes inclusivity and comprehensive support for MSFW jobseekers.

The Belle Glade Career Center is equipped to provide the full range of career and supportive services, benefits and protections, and job and training referral services to MSFW jobseekers in an equitable and nondiscriminatory basis. The career center has sufficient multi-lingual staff to communicate programs and services in the farmworker's native language in a welcoming and culturally sensitive environment. Career centers are equipped with Employ Florida VOSGreeter kiosk systems that help identify MSFWs at point of entry.

Career Center staff is also trained to provide specialized assistance to farmworkers. As part of the registration process, customers are identified at the front desk and will be

provided with FloridaCommerce Form 511N, receiving a written and verbal explanation of services available in English, Spanish or Creole.

Career and training services will be provided to MSFWs as appropriate. An analysis of farmworkers knowledge, skills, and abilities will be completed to determine appropriate employment opportunities. As staff update and complete full applications in Employ Florida appropriate services will be provided in terms of referrals to employment services or training programs. Staff reviews with the farmworkers available jobs to determine appropriate referrals. Where appropriate, staff will refer farmworkers to WIOA staff for training consideration.

Services Provided to Agricultural Employers:

To increase outreach worker training and awareness across One-Stop partner programs, CareerSource Palm Beach County has implemented a structured process which involves cross training to assist our partners in connecting with MSFWs and accessing employment services.

Staff representing all departments have received training in the MSFW program including how to serve farmworkers coming into the office. Training includes completing full applications, distribution of form 511-N, and providing staff assisted services. Additionally, MSFW Outreach Specialist has received training in other programs to raise awareness of those programs among the farmworker population visited daily during outreach. CSPBC also takes every opportunity when available to receive technical assistance from the state to ensure program compliance.

The MSFW Outreach Specialist and Business Service staff conduct outreach visits to area employers providing a full range of services, which include:

- Applicant pre-screening
- Referrals to MSFW Job Seekers
- Job Order Management
- Outplacement services
- I-9 assistance
- Training grants for new and existing employees

Efforts are made to promote the Agriculture Recruitment System (ARS) as well during employer site visits. During site visits, the process for recruiting through the ARS system is explained as well as literature provided on posting job positions. Job Order forms are provided to employers so that they can utilize the ARS through CSPBC. This process for providing services to agricultural employers aims to create a robust support system that

connects MSFW job seekers with employment opportunities while meeting the labor needs of the agricultural sector. By fostering strong relationships with employers, facilitating access to job order information, and effectively marketing the Agricultural Recruitment System, the program will enhance employment outcomes for both MSFWs and agricultural employers in Palm Beach County.

Employment Service and Employment-Related Law Complaint System

In our effort to effectively market the Employment Service and Employment-Related Law Complaint System to MSFWs, FCDP grantee partners, MSFW service providers, and local farmworker advocacy groups, a comprehensive outreach plan is implemented. This plan raises awareness of available services and ensures that stakeholders are informed about their rights and the complaint procedures.

The Outreach Specialist is equipped to take complaints while conducting outreach in the field. The outreach specialist prepares several documents such as FloridaCommerce form 511N, farmworker rights brochure and Farmworker Helpline business cards. By calling the helpline, farmworkers can file complaints and report violations anonymously. Farmworkers are also informed in the field that they can file a complaint or report a violation with the Outreach Specialist or in person at the career center.

Additionally, information about the Employment Service and Employment-Related Law Complaint System is displayed in all CSPBC career centers in MSFWs native language. While speaking to advocacy groups, businesses, and partner agencies, these items are promoted to increase awareness of MSFW protection.

Significant Multilingual Career Center Plan

CareerSource Palm Beach County provides services in MSFWs' native language. As stated above, the career center has sufficient multi-lingual staff to communicate programs and services in the farmworker's native language in a welcoming and culturally sensitive environment. The MSFW Outreach Specialist is bilingual in English and Spanish. In addition, we also have a contract with a provider to provide translation services to our customers. See **Attachment C: CSPBC Policy 5020-Limited English Proficiency** and **Attachment D: CSPBC Policy 5053-Requesting and Processing of Interpretation Services**, which describe the process in place to provide translation services for our customers.

Equity Performance Standards

The MSFW Service Level Indicators Report in Employ Florida tracks performance to ensure that services are provided to MSFW customers on an equitable level as non-MSFW clients. Career Centers are measured on equity ratio indicators and minimum service level indicators.

Equity Ratio Indicators include:

- Referred to employment
- Received staff-assisted basic career services
- Received staff-assisted career guidance services
- Received staff-assisted job search activities
- Referred to other Federal/State assistance
- Received Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claim Assistance
- Referred to Federal training
- Received individualized career service

Minimum service level indicators include:

- Individuals placed in a job
- Median earnings of individuals in unsubsidized employment
- Individuals placed long term (150 days or more) in non-agricultural jobs
- Outreach contacts per week (40 contacts per week)
- Timely processing of complaints

Process for Meeting Equity Ratio Indicators:

As part of CSPBCs process for meeting the Equity Ratio Indicators, the needs of the MSFW will be evaluated both in the office and out in the field. Referrals to employment, staff assisted basic services, and career guidance services will be provided where appropriate. Staff will also evaluate MSFWs for the need of supportive services, make the appropriate referral, and record the referral in Employ Florida. Our Business Services unit will collaborate with staff to provide leads for job development contacts as well.

Process for Meeting Minimum Service Level Indicators:

To address the requirements under the minimum service level indicators, Business Services will collaborate with the MSFW Outreach Specialist to increase employer outreach efforts. This will increase the number of job orders obtained which should in turn increase the number of placements. Emphasis will also be put on low-skilled jobs above minimum wage outside of agriculture to increase referrals and placements.

Furthermore, vigorous outreach will be conducted to reach MSFWs not normally reached by normal intake activities. Other outreach activities, including employer outreach both to agricultural and non-agricultural employers will be done to provide more opportunities to farmworkers. While this allows the MSFW outreach worker to inform MSFWs of employment opportunities, it also provides opportunities to inform employers about career center services.

These metrics have been incorporated into our local staff performance goals to help ensure these requirements are met. Additionally, monthly monitoring of the MSFW Service Level Indicators Report helps keep staff aware of progress towards these goals.

Lastly, as mentioned above, CareerSource Palm Beach will develop a Smartsheet and Microsoft Business Intelligence dashboard to report program activities to the State Monitor Advocate, to reduce administrative burden on staff, allowing them to focus on outreach and engagement activities.

Public Comment:

We provided an opportunity for public comment and solicited input into the development of the local MSFW Outreach Plan from the Outreach Worker, MSFW partners such as the Farmworker Career Development Program (FCDP), and agricultural employers. The public notice was posted on our website providing an opportunity for public review and comment. To ensure notice to FCDP local provider(s) in the service area and other MSFW partners, they were notified directly via email.

Due to the late notice received from FloridaCommerce to submit this plan, we were unable to meet the requirement of at least 15 days for public comment. However, the plan was available for review on our CareerSource Palm Beach County website beginning Thursday, November 14, 2024, and is still up for comment at the time of submission. Comments could be submitted via email link to our local office for consideration. Any changes if needed will be communicated to the State Monitor Advocate and FloridaCommerce.

Attachments

- Attachment A - LWDB-21 MSFW Local Outreach Goals PY 2024-2028
- Attachment B - MOU Between LWDB-21 and FCDP
- Attachment C - CSPBC Policy 5020-Limited English Proficiency
- Attachment D - CSPBC Policy 5053-Requesting and Processing of Interpretation Services