

## Vermont WIA/W-P Annual Agricultural Outreach Plan PY 2013 -2014

### A. Assessment of Need

#### a. A review of the previous year's agricultural activity in the state.

- The major agricultural activity in Vermont in 2012 was the recovery from the effects of hurricane Irene. The Vermont Agency of Agriculture reports that 110 farms were destroyed of which only 49 had recovered by the end of March 2013. The 110 were those that officially requested State and Federal assistance, many others were damaged but did not formally request assistance.

Damage ranged from loss of prime "river bottom" soil being washed away, impacting dairy farming and crop growing, contamination of soil previously certified as organic, loss of roads and bridges restricting farmers access to production acreage, and wind damage to trees.

- On October 25, 2012, the Agency of Agriculture issued a bulletin to farmers in the state to prepare for hurricane Sandy. Damage from Sandy was not significant compared to Irene but continuous rain impacted the harvesting of crops, for example, apple picking was delayed due to not being able to pick wet fruit.
- Maple Syrup production is considered a seasonal agricultural business in the State of Vermont. A warm winter in 2012 resulted in a reduction of production by 34% with a total of 750,000 gallons being produced. Vermont is the largest Maple Syrup producer in the USA accounting for 39% of the national production and the largest in New England with 61% of the total production.
- Primary seasonal crops for the State are vegetables, fruits, berries, and apples.

#### b. A review of the previous year's MSFW activity in the State:

- The MSFW activity in Vermont is extremely low. At the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of PY2012 calendar year 13 of the approximately 25,000 registrants in the VJL MIS system identified themselves as MSFWs. The majority of identified crop workers (about 400) in the state are through the H-2A program and so are not included in the MSFW count.
- Most of the seasonal farm work in the State is in the area of vegetables, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, and apples. The majority of seasonal workers hired were local and were able to return to their permanent place of residence at the end of the work day.
- A review of the Vermont Crop Overview from USDA NASS Report 2008 through 2012 shows a steady decline in the yield per acre, for example 6,100 to 4,200 acres for strawberries, and an increase in price per pound, strawberries \$2.50 to \$3.00, based on between 34 and 41 reports over the 5 year period.

#### c. A projected level of agricultural activity in the State for the coming year.

- Based on the results of the previous years no significant change is expected in the base agricultural, crop, and horticultural activity in Vermont. The majority of agricultural activity continues to be from the small family farm producers.
- One area of potential growth is the production of grapes. The University of Vermont Extension Service has developed, in conjunction with other Universities, training and support for farmers in the area of "cold climate grape production" for Wineries and Vineyards.
- There is a trend towards business diversity by the producers in the State. This includes:
  - Partnering with the tourist industry to develop a specialty market, "agritourism".The official website of the Vermont Farms Association, <http://www.vtfarms.org/>,

lists farms in the association open to the public, farm stays, group tours and a calendar of events.

- The Vermont Grape and Wine Council web site, <http://www.vermontgrapeandwinecouncil.com/>, advertises tours and events demonstrating the “cold climate grape production”, and specialized associated products being marketed.
- Additional programs, included in the Governors Strategic Plan ( December 2012), Priority 6 – Working Landscape, outlines the objectives that will help maintain and grow the overall agricultural industry in Vermont.
  - The Vermont Agency of Agriculture received a USDA grant to work with four food “hubs” to support 56 schools in a “Farm to Plate” program and programs to encourage institutions, such as schools and hospitals to use local produce.
  - The Community Supported Agriculture, CSA, program, (<http://nofavt.org/find-organic-food/csa-listing>), as the name implies, is a form of direct sale that invites consumers to directly support a farm or group of farms by enrolling in a seasonal share in the farms’ operations. The Governor showed his support for this program by encouraging approximately 7,500 State workers to participate in the program.
- The growth in organic production of crops results in specialized local markets to health food stores and organic food distributors also works to sustain the vegetable and berry production.
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- U.S. Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis announced, October 3, 2012, a \$3.4 million grant that will enable a new institute at the Vermont Technical College (VTC) to establish certificate and degree programs for careers in agriculture, food production, waste disposal and energy production. (<http://vtdigger.org/2012/10/03/vtc-earns-grant-for-specialized-career-training/>)
- All of these programs assist in sustaining agriculture in Vermont but do not significantly grow the industry. They also create a generation of new jobs requiring additional and specialized education.

d. Projected number of MSFWs in the State.

- With the nature of the agricultural business in the State of Vermont, as described above, there will not be a population of migrant workers traveling to harvest the crops in this program year. The workers will come from the local community and return to their permanent residence in the same day. Some of the workers may meet the guidelines of seasonal farm workers, that number is anticipated to be approximately 100 or less. This takes into account information from PathStone, the NJFP WIA 167 grantee. PathStone’s input for the current PY 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter indicates 0 migrant farmworkers and 15 seasonal farmworkers. Their annual estimate is for 50 seasonal farmworkers. This is not expected to change.

e. A statement of the consideration given to the State Monitor Advocates (SMA) recommendations.

- The State Monitor Advocate will continue to handle all activity, including job orders, associated with H-2A Labor Certification Program.

- It is anticipated that approximately 60 job orders will be placed to hire 400 workers to work primarily with the crop activity in vegetables, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, and apples. The SMA will work with the Vermont Department of Labor Career Resource Centers to ensure that local US domestic workers are aware of, and referred to, the agricultural positions as appropriate.
- The SMA will provide training to the Vermont Department of Labor Career Resource Center staff, and conduct office reviews to assure that they understand and apply the requirements and regulations for services to MSFWs.
- The JS Complaint System in each of the Vermont Department of Labor Career Resource Center will be monitored by the SMA who will provide quarterly reports of the complaints and current status.

#### B. Outreach Activities.

Outreach activities will be conducted by the SMA and Vermont Department of Labor Career Resource Center staff in an attempt to contact as many Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers as possible. The Vermont Department of Labor Workforce Development Division will perform this activity primarily in partnership with the WIA 167 grantee, PathStone, and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture.

- Numerical goals for the number of MSFWs to be contacted during the fiscal year by Wagner-Peyser staff.
  - The SMA will make at least 20 contacts with seasonal farm workers to make sufficient penetration into the temporary farm worker community.
  - PathStone Corporation will make approximately 100 contacts with seasonal farm workers with a projected goal of enrolling a total of 40 participants.
- Numerical goals for the staff days to be used for outreach in the fiscal year.
  - The SMA anticipates using 6 staff days for outreach to migrant and seasonal farmworkers during the fiscal year.
  - PathStone Corporation plans to contact between 40 and 60 farm workers and utilize between 96 and 104 staff days in the fiscal year.
- Level of Wagner – Peyser funding to be used for outreach in the fiscal year.
  - The SMA is a full time Employer Resource Consultant for the Workforce Development Division. Between his responsibilities with the Labor Certification (H-2A) program, regular employer outreach as an ERC, and the time used by the Vermont Department of Labor Career Resource Center Staff, approximately one FTE will be charged to Wagner – Peyser funding.
- Tools which will be used to conduct outreach activity.
  - Outreach will primarily be by personal contact, usually through visiting and meeting with H-2A employers and employees.
  - Through the Vermont Department of Labor Career Resource Centers and review of the MIS system that records registrants who believe they are MSFWs. VDOL is partnering with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture to define and distribute a Prevailing Practices Survey. It is hoped that this will provide the contact information of additional agricultural employers across the State.
  - Partnering with PathStone on distribution of their literature, employee, and employer contacts.

- C. Services provided to MSFWs through the Vermont Department of Labor Career Resource Centers.
- a. How will the Vermont Department of Labor Career Resource Centers provide core, intensive, and training services required under WIA Title 1 to MSFWs?
    - MSFWs will be provided the services through the Vermont Department of Labor Career Resource Centers equivalent to non MSFW clients.
    - Referrals to training services will be made by partner organizations and agencies such as PathStone, the Refugee Resettlement Program, and equivalent local support groups.
    - Registration of clients in the MIS system will be tracked and registrants identifying themselves as MSFW will be contacted.
    - In the event that lack of English language skills is identified as a barrier to services, and/or training, translation services will be offered in the Vermont Department of Labor Career Resource Center.
- D. Services Provided to Agricultural Employers through the Vermont Department of Labor Career Resource Centers.
- a. Describe efforts that will be taken to provide services to agricultural employers in States with an adequate supply of U.S. workers and in those States where a shortage is anticipated.
    - The partnership with the Agency of Agriculture will identify additional agricultural employers so outreach and explanation of services for employers can be explained.
    - An emphasis will be made to make sure that the Vermont Department of Labor Career Resource Centers and Business Outreach and Employer Resource Consultant 0 staff recognize that agricultural employers can use our services, particularly on a seasonal basis.
    - Summer youth programs administered by VDOL provide good contacts with agricultural employers due to the seasonal and skill level requirements of entry level jobs. Sharing of contacts within VDOL will expand ongoing opportunities to work with those employers.
- E. Other Requirements.
- a. The State Monitor Advocate has provided input for this plan, has reviewed and commented on the final version.
  - b. This plan was sent to the WIA 167 grantee, PathStone Corporation, for review, comment, and verification of their participation in the plan.
    - An MOU between The Vermont Department of Labor Workforce Development Division and PathStone Corporation has been negotiated and signed. See attachment.
  - c. The plan was posted on the VDOL web site, [www.labor.vermont.gov](http://www.labor.vermont.gov), for public review and comment on 06/24/2013.
- F. Sources of support for this report:
- a. Input from the State Monitor Advocate on past and current field activity, experience with the H-2A program, employer and Vermont Department of Labor Career Resource Center Office visits.
  - b. UVM Extension Service, Dr. Lorraine Berkett, [Lorraine.Berkett@uvm.edu](mailto:Lorraine.Berkett@uvm.edu), specialist in cold climate grape production.
  - c. UVM Extension Service, Dr. Vern Grubinger, [vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu](mailto:vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu), fruits and berries production specialist.
  - d. USDA NASS New England Fruit and Vegetable Report 2008 through 2012, USDA Field Office 15, Concord New Hampshire.
  - e. Fruit, Vegetable, and Berry Producers Association websites.
  - f. Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Secretary Chuck Ross and staff.
  - g. VDOL Labor Market Information staff.

JMV 06/20/2013

## **Attachment 1.**

### **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING Between the Vermont Department of Labor Workforce Development Division And PathStone Corporation (NFJP Grantee)**

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is an agreement between the Vermont Department of Labor Workforce Development Division (VDOL Workforce Development Division) and PathStone Corporation (NFJP Grantee).

The purpose of this MOU is to ensure the most effective and efficient utilization of the funds provided by the US Department of Labor for administration and operation of the statewide Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFWs) and Agricultural Workers outreach program, in particular the compliance with 29 CFR 37, Implementation of the Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Provisions of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998. This also complies with 20 CFR 653.107 (c)(3)(i) as it pertains to the number of MSFWs planned to be contacted by the signatory agencies of this cooperative agreement.

VDOL Workforce Development Division and PathStone will work together as partners with the shared goal to provide a full spectrum of services to the State of Vermont MSFWs, agricultural workers and agricultural employers.

#### **I. SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED**

PathStone, as the WIA section 167 grantee will:

1. Provide outreach workers to visit MSFWs and agricultural workers in Vermont at their place of residence and/or where they work, in order to inform them of all available services from the VDOL and its Career Resource Centers, as well as community programs and services, from which they may benefit, including those available to the general public.
2. Refer MSFWs to career and training opportunities for which they may qualify (Agricultural and Non Agricultural) and employment opportunities.
3. Assist in the preparation of MSFW applications for new employment.
4. Refer MSFWs to the VDOL Career Resource Centers for training programs.
5. Provide information regarding the types of employment likely to be available when the currently-employed MSFW becomes available for new employment using available LMI from VDOL.
6. Receive and subsequently refer complaints, including farm labor complaints, to the VDOL Career Resource Centers Regional Manager.
7. Continue coordinating farm labor program activities with the VDOL State Monitor Advocate.
8. Provide appropriate PathStone staff to travel within the State to attend meetings, training sessions, speaking engagements and/or other activities deemed necessary by VDOL and PathStone.

The VDOL Workforce Development Division will provide services to MSFWs as it does to all registered applicants. The VDOL Workforce Development Division will be in compliance with the Judge Richey Court Order to provide services to migrant and seasonal farmworkers on a non-discriminatory basis.

The VDOL Workforce Development Division will:

1. Provide information about the Job Service Complaint System and refer complainants to the VDOL Career Resource Centers to document and file their complaints.
2. Document and refer to the VDOL Career Resource Centers manager any apparent violations of employment-related laws, including housing, field sanitation and potable water.
3. Make referrals to specific employment opportunities currently available to unemployed MSFWs, as well as to other job openings for which they may qualify.
4. Assist in the preparation of employment applications.
5. Refer MSFWs to appropriate training programs.
6. Provide information regarding the types of employment that are likely to be available, using LMI from VDOL, when the currently-employed MSFW becomes available for new employment.
7. The VDOL State Monitor Advocate will take job orders from employers in the applicable sectors of agriculture and enter them into Vermontjoblink following prescribed procedures.
8. Provide desk space, including live telephone and computers, on an appointment basis, to PathStone workers to attend to clients in the VDOL Career Resource Centers.
9. Provide PathStone with a list of contact people in each of its offices who are familiar with the terms of this cooperative agreement.

The VDOL Workforce Development Division will provide to PathStone a monthly a list of names and contact information for all registered customers who have indicated that they have farmwork experience.

The VDOL Workforce Development Division will assist PathStone in tracking retention rates of PathStone MSFW clients who find work through any WIA agency, as is required to continue the 167 grant.

## **II. REPORTING SYSTEM**

PathStone will make effective use of the desk space, computers, LMI, employment and training opportunities, and other programs provided by the VDOL Workforce Development Division to generate quarterly reports and submit them to the VDOL Director of Workforce Development.

Quarterly Reports will include:

- Number of estimated MSFWs currently in the State.
- Number of MSFW contacts made during each quarter.
- Number of referrals made to services.
- Number of complaints received and referred.
- Number of training applications received and referred.
- Monthly placement information on any customers who are co-enrolled, with both PathStone and the VDOL Workforce Development Division, who have entered employment.
- An outline of services provided, when necessary and requested.
- Any significant events that need to be highlighted.

## **III. AGREEMENT**

PathStone and VDOL WD will provide initial and periodic cross-training regarding program services offered by each.

The undersigned have read this “Memorandum of Understanding” between the VDOL Workforce Development Division and PathStone, to remain in effect for one year from the most recent date of signing (below), and they agree to comply with the provisions of this MOU.

**Vermont Department of Labor  
Workforce Development Division**

**PathStone Corporation**

*Rose Lucenti*

*Velma Smith*

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**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

**Rose Lucenti**  
**Printed Name**

**Velma Smith**  
**Printed Name**

**Director of Workforce Development**  
**Title**

**Sr. Executive Director, NY/VT/OH Operations**  
**Title**

*April 15, 2013*

*March 25, 2013*

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

Note: Hardcopy with signatures on file.