



# Agricultural Services Program

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## **Helping growers find qualified workers**

The Employment Security Department manages a 21-county Agricultural Services Program to help growers recruit skilled workers in a timely manner. The counties involved in this continuing effort are Yakima, Kittitas, Klickitat, Okanogan, Chelan, Douglas, Grant, Adams, Ferry, Stevens, Pend Oreille, Lincoln, Whitman, Columbia, Garfield, Asotin, Walla Walla, Whatcom, Skagit, Benton and Franklin.

## **Expanding offices and extending hours**

The department uses several strategies to help agricultural employers find enough qualified workers.

- Establish temporary satellite offices near agricultural employers and deploy mobile tents along roadways to help match workers with employers.
- Open some WorkSource offices on weekends and early mornings during peak cherry and apple harvests for maximum efficiency in connecting growers and workers.
- Send outreach staff into communities to contact employers about their labor needs and to recruit workers. WorkSource employees contact farmworkers at places where they gather, work or live, such as churches, community events, stores, clinics, farm-labor camps, community-based organizations and state community-service offices. Outreach is conducted on weekends and early mornings during peak harvest of cherries and apples.
- Inform community-based organizations that serve migrant and seasonal farmworkers about WorkSource services and current labor needs, and seek their help in recruiting workers.
- Assign Spanish-speaking employees to local WorkSource centers and satellite offices that screen and refer qualified farmworkers to job openings.
- Use English and Spanish radio, TV and newspapers to promote agricultural job openings and WorkSource services.
- Hold conference calls and meetings with grower organizations, as needed, to stay informed about crop sizes, harvest start dates and estimated labor needs.
- Obtain updates from farm-labor contractors and employment-service offices in other states about the status of their harvests or issues that could affect Washington growers and workers.
- Identify farmworkers who are receiving unemployment benefits, for possible referral back to their former agricultural employers who have job openings. The strategy gives employers quick access to experienced workers, gets claimants back to work faster and helps to contain unemployment taxes.
- Coordinate moving farmworkers between farms to meet growers' needs.

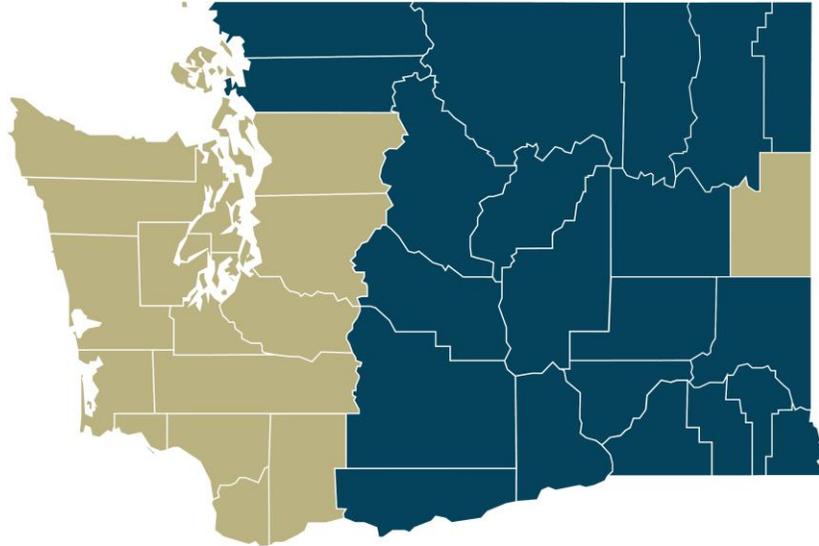
## **Increasing awareness about job openings and WorkSource services**

## **Actively recruiting workers**

## **Helping farmworkers stay employed**

**Responding  
to customer  
needs**

- Provide agricultural information online at [www.wa.gov/esd/farmworkers](http://www.wa.gov/esd/farmworkers). The website contains helpful information about Washington crops, harvest seasons, housing, education, health care and more.
- Continuously train WorkSource employees to effectively recruit and refer qualified farmworkers. Specially trained staff may help growers apply for the inter-state Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) and federal H-2A (guest-worker) programs. H-2A allows growers to bring temporary foreign workers into the U.S., while the ARS helps employers recruit temporary workers from other states.
- Immediately inform the federal Department of Labor of changes in crop conditions that may not have been anticipated by H-2A employers in order to enhance administrative processing of emergency applications or requested changes to contract terms.



**Note:** Blue areas of the map represent the 21 Washington counties served through the Employment Security's Agricultural Services Program.

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