**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**New Grantee Orientation Series – National Farmworker Jobs Program**

**Understanding Your Customers, How Data Can Help, Day 3**

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GRACE MCCALL: And welcome to "Understanding Your Customers, How Data Can Help." Without further ado, I'm going to turn things over to Thoa to kicks things off properly today. Take it away, Thoa.

THOA HOANG: Thank you, Grace. Hello and welcome to day 3 of the National Grantee Orientation for NFJP. My name is Thoa Hoang and I'm a workforce analyst in the Specialty National Programs unit. Today I'll be presenting with Daniel Carroll from the Office of Policy Development and Research and Laura Tramontana, who recently joined our team as acting national monitor advocate.

All right. Let's start with an icebreaker. Along with your name and organization, please share why you think NFJP is important. And I'll share as well.

For me, NFJP is important because it is providing career services and housing to people who play a really essential role in feeding the country. Ernesto, thank you for sharing – helping farm worker families get a better life. Gloria, you share, providing support for NFJP participants to reach their full potential. Aaron you shared, it provides assistance in obtaining skills, education, and employment opportunities. Please continue to share why you think NFJP is important in the chat box, and I'll move along.

Here is an agenda for today. Today's presentation will focus on the data and how it can help you understand your customer. The webinar will be split into two parts. First, we'll share some national trends. And then we'll break out into smaller groups because we really want to hear from you and give you an opportunity to share what you know with us. The last week was a lot. You received an overview about the grant and discussed components about the NFJP grant and the laws and regulations. And then today let's talk about why data matters.

To receive funding to implement NFJP per 20 CFR 685.200, grantees are required to understand the problems of MSFWs. Many of you demonstrate your knowledge of the community you serve in your project narrative.

How does ETA use this data? Many of you are aware the National Farmworkers Job Program is a formula-based program. Per Section 182 of WIOA, the department allocates funds for career services and training grants through an administrative formula. The Department of Labor uses four data sources to inform how much money to allocate.

In the next couple slides, Daniel will expand on these four data sources that impact the funding allotments and share some national agricultural trends with you. As you listen to Daniel's presentation, here are three questions to consider – are you using the four data sources mentioned to inform your work? What are some data sources you are using that we did not include? What kind of data do you wish we had that isn't available now? You don't have to answer these questions, but consider them; and it's something that you can share in the discussion in the breakout groups. Take it away, Daniel.

DANIEL CARROLL: Thank you, Thoa. I'm going to scratch the surface on some important agricultural production and farm labor data sources today, and talk a little bit about how NFJP grantees might use information from those sources in their work.

First, I'd like to talk a little bit about some general changes over the last 20 years and try to relate these to what you do. And the upshot is that it's mostly going to be changes in the non-farm economy that impact the work that you do and the services that you provide to farm workers. But there are also things changing in the farm labor market that have a direct impact on agricultural work and the types of job training services that farm workers might need.

Generally, we're eating more fruits and vegetables because we know that they're good for us. But increasingly, we're importing more of those fruits and vegetables. For example, we get about half of our fruits and about a third of our vegetables from Mexico. Mexico and the United States, in a large sense, are competing for the same farm labor supply. So another big change that we've seen over the last 20 years is an increased difficulty finding workers. So how does this relate to what NFJP grantees do? If we could go back to that previous slide.

Essentially, agricultural employers are responding to the slowdown in workers from Mexico and Central America by doing four things. They're either trying to satisfy the existing workforce by providing better working conditions or training. They try to stretch the existing labor force by adopting labor-saving technology, such as conveyor belts in the fields. They might substitute domestic workers with H-2A workers, or they might try to replace workers with machines.

This has been characterized as a race in the fields between migrants, machines, and imports. And COVID-19 is speeding up this race. Next slide. One of the biggest changes is the slow down or the decrease in the supply of new workers from Mexico and Central America. Twenty years ago, almost 4 in 10 crop workers crossed the border to work in the United States sometime in the prior year to being interviewed in the NAWS. Today it's down 1 in 10. So there's a lot less international migration happening. Next slide.

There's also been a decrease in domestic migrants. So overall, what we see is a lot less movement among farm workers. They're tending to stay in the same place. Workers are also aging. The average age has gone up almost 10 years. And that is also largely attributed to the slowdown in newcomers. And we see that a larger share of crop workers are females. We don't have a census of farm workers. We have a census of agriculture, but it doesn't tell us how many farm workers there are. So we have to use 3 of the 4 data sources that inform the NFJP formula to help us estimate the number of farm workers.

So using the latest data from 2017, we estimated that there were about 2.1 million farm workers. And of those, 1.6 million were crop workers. And about 500,000 were livestock workers. Next slide. When you look at some of these data sources, what you're going to find is that agricultural employment is concentrated in three ways – by geography, by employer size, and by commodity. For example, 7 states hire almost 60 percent of all crop workers. And 11 states hire a little over 50 percent of all livestock workers.

Similarly, a small share of large employers hire most workers. And most workers are employed in a small number of commodity groups. For example, California has, I believe, 35 commodity groups – for example fruits and vegetables is a commodity group – but 5 of those 35 commodity groups employ 95 percent of the farm workers. Next slide.

The main data source that informs the National Farmworker Jobs Program allocation is the USDA Census of Agriculture. It's conducted every five years. The last one was done in 2018. And the next one will be done in 2023. The census of ag provides a lot of information, but it only provides a few things about farm labor. It can tell us how many workers were directly hired. And it can tell us what the hired and contract labor expenses were. And this information – at least for the number of workers and the labor expenses – is available at the county level. Next slide.

Thoa put together this really neat slide of some of the census of ag data products. And they all have links, so I hope that you will take some time and click on those, and see what you can get from the census of ag that might help you with your work. Next slide.

Another important data source that you should check out is the farm labor survey. This is administrated by USDA's National Agricultural Statistic Service. If you click on that link at the bottom – farm labor – it'll take you to a site and you can pull up reports for almost every quarter of every year starting in 1930. So there's lots of data there.

Essentially, what you can get from the farm labor survey is for each region of the United States; you can get the number of workers that were employed, the hours that they worked per week, and their average hourly earnings. And you can get that for crop and livestock workers. So I highly recommend this as a data source that you use frequently in your work. Just a quick footnote on the survey – unfortunately, USDA NASS announced September 29 that they are going to discontinue the survey. But we're hoping that it will continue in some shape or form. Next slide.

Another important data source is the National Agricultural Workers Survey. That's what I work on. It's a survey of crop workers that started in 1989. Every year up to 3,000 crop workers are interviewed. It's different from other surveys like the American Community Survey in that we find farm workers at their jobs. It's a reliable source of information on crop worker demographics. However, like all data sources, it has its limitations. One of those is data are only available at the regional level. So for example, you can't look at the demographic characteristics of workers in a particular county.

Another weakness is that it does not include H-2A workers. However, we are undertaking a feasibility study right now to see if we can expand the NAWS to include H-2A workers. Next slide. You can look at NAWS data in a couple of ways. This map shows a regional breakout. If you go into our public data file, you can get demographic and employment data for each of the NAWS public access regions of which there are six. And you'll notice that California is a standalone region in the public data file. Next slide.

If you have an interesting research project that requires you to look at the characteristics of crop workers at a smaller geographic breakout, you can access the NAWS restricted data file and look at data for 12 regions. And at this breakout, Florida is also a standalone region. Next slide. Another data source that we use in the NFJP formula is the American Community Survey. This is conducted every month every year and it's ongoing. It's sent out to about 3.5 million households in the 50 dates, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

For the NFJP formula, we're only using a little bit of information from the ACS. However, it's a very rich data source. And you can get information on the characteristics of farm workers. And also, you can get information on other things that are going on in your state and at the county level. Next slide. We're going to look at some demographic and employment characteristics. In the NAWS, we ask respondents what they did over the prior year – what kinds of jobs they had, how many days per week and weeks per year they were employed, how much they were paid, etc.

One of the things we can look at is the average number of weeks that crop workers are employed each year. For 2017 and 2018 on average, crop workers were employed 35 weeks per year in agriculture. They worked on average 8 weeks in a non-farm job. They were unemployed/not working for 9 weeks on average. And they were out of the country on average for 2 weeks. Next slide. Surprisingly, almost a quarter of all crop workers also have a non-farm job. And in the Midwest, it's almost 60 percent. Next slide.

Among crop workers who have a non-farm job, on average, they work about 25 weeks per year in agriculture. The highest number of weeks in a non-farm job is in the eastern part of the United States at 28 weeks per year. Next slide.

This slide is from our NAWS web page. It's an employment data table on California crop workers. It's just a small segment of that table. I hope you will access these data tables when you have some time because there is a lot of information that might be illuminating to the work you do.

For example, if you look at the last row of this slide, the variable is the crop worker plans to continue working in agriculture for at least 5 years or as long as able to do so. And if you look for the last two years of data, almost 80 percent of all crop workers said that they planned on working in ag for as long as they are able to. This is all crop workers – this is not NFJP-eligible crop workers.

But I think this finding gives you an indication that a lot of farm workers are actually wedded, if you will, to their farm job. So it's just something to keep in mind when you're conducting outreach with agricultural workers.

And now I think I'm going to kick it back to Laura.

LAURA TRAMONTANA: Hi, everyone. This is Laura Tramontana. We're going to talk a little bit about some changes from the National Monitor Advocate perspective. And on Thursday, we're going to go over eligibility for NFJP, including definitions of eligible seasonal farm worker, eligible migrant farm worker, and dependents of eligible or seasonal farm workers. The state's workforce agency, their Wagner-Peyser Program, also serves farm workers as a common customer with the NFJP; and therefore, we have some common interests.

Wagner-Peyser is an important partner of NFJP. But before we can effectively partner, we need to know and understand what Wagner-Peyser really does. Wagner-Peyser Employment Service, or ES, Program is operated by the state workforce agency. And it provides universal access to job seekers seeking employment and careers services. It provides referrals to partner programs, and it provides reemployment services to individuals receiving unemployment insurance as well.

Wagner-Peyser programs conduct outreach to MSFWs, but their definition of MFSW is a little different than the NFJP definition of eligible MSFW. And the purpose is to make sure that MSFWs know about the full scope of services that are available to them through the American Job Centers. Overall, NFJP and Wagner-Peyser have shared very similar customers. And Wagner-Peyser additionally serves customers who are both MSFW and non-MSFW. Next slide.

Within Wagner-Peyser Programs, each state has a state monitor advocate, or SMA, whose job it is to review state services, MSFWs, and to liaise with MSFW-serving organizations, including NFJPs. SMAs and state outreach staff data and contact MSFWs. They can be important partners to a successful NFJP because they and the NFJP can share data, refer customers between their programs, and coordinate outreach to MSFWs.

The state workforce agency also receives grant funding to develop and disseminate essential state and local workforce labor market information – or WLMI, or sometimes LMI, we call it – for a range of customer groups, which might include the NFJP. NFJPs can resource that information to understand MSFWs and employer characteristics and their needs. State workforce agencies also complete an agricultural outreach plan as a part of their state plan, which includes assessment of MSFW needs and describe how state agencies provide appropriate services through Wagner-Peyser.

The agricultural plan is a source that the NFJPs can use to understand state workforce agency interpretation of MSFW needs, including peak seasons, locations, and peak numbers of MSFWs in the state. As you know, MSFWs face several challenges to accessing services and enjoying stable, healthy employment. Currently, COVID-19 is impacting farm worker housing because their communal booking facilities, bathroom facilities, and sleeping quarters. It also impacts social distancing, which can be difficult in packing houses and in the field.

And it can also be difficult to complete outside work in the heat following CDC guidelines for using face coverings. Field sanitation continues to be a challenge for MSFWs. This includes things like access to bathrooms, hand-washing facilities, and water. There are also other workplace hazards, as we know. According to the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, or NIOSH, their data in 2017 shows that 460 – (inaudible) – farmers and farm workers died from a work-related injury resulting in fatality.

And that fatality rate equals to about 20.4 deaths per 100,000 workers. Transportation incidents, which include tractor overturns, were the leading cause of death for these farmers and farm workers. Other challenges include things like language, immigration, and visa concerns, and basic needs like housing, childcare, transportation, and health care. ETA will also start collecting data on sexual harassment, coercion, assault, and trafficking in the farm worker communities. As you can see, these are very serious challenges.

And this is one area where we can reach out as NFJPs to our partners at the American Job Centers and Wagner-Peyser employment services, because their outreach staff and their state monitor advocates can help MSFWs with these issues through what we call the employment service and employment – (inaudible) – complaint system. NFJPs should work with their SMA, their state monitor advocate, to coordinate and refer complaints and other issues that appear to violate employment-related laws to the SWA, state workforce agency, for resolution.

There are approximately 10 percent of the MSFW population which is what we call workers who are employed through the H-2A visa program. The H-2A visa program is a program where farm individuals go into the United States to fill jobs that U.S. workers are not available to fill. The total MSFW population is estimated at about 2.1 million. This number includes MSFWs who are U.S. workers and also those who are employed through H-2A visas. There are approximately 1.9 million U.S. MSFWs who are not H-2A visa holders.

So if 25 percent of domestic MSFWs are NFJP-eligible, the service population would be about 475,000 MSFWs. At the end of the 2019, NFJP grantees served a little over 21,000 MSFWs and their families. This leaves a large number of MSFWs who have not yet been reached, which is about 454,000 U.S. MSFWs. We talk a lot about our NFJP farm worker customers, but we should also remember that businesses are customers of NFJP as well, because we need to connect eligible MSFWs and their dependents to employment. NFJPs help MSFWs upgrade skills and provide on-the-job training, or OJT, which benefit both workers and employers.

NFJP can assist farm workers to stay employed with their same employer to increase their skills. In those cases, workers may benefit by increasing their wages. And employers benefit by retraining workers and retaining workers who are getting higher skill and potentially wages. The nature of farm work is also developing due to technology. Career pathways for farm work may include more specialized fields like drone operation, IT, machine repair, logistics, irrigation, hydroponics, sales, and business management among other specialties.

The training services we provide the farm workers should always be based on the farm workers' stated interest and needs, which many include training how to farm work. However, it's advantageous to provide options to develop skills within the agricultural industry, because an NFJP who can describe workforce development options within farm work to employers is more likely to build positive relationships with farm employers than the NFJP that appears to only offer non-farm work-related training. And with that, we're going to move into a breakout session, which I assume Thoa will be explaining.

MS. HOANG: Thanks, Laura. So I hope you found our presentation informative. Now we want to hear from you. We will be splitting up into three discussion rooms. Each room will have an ETA representative who will take notes, keep track of time, and if time permits, once we return to the larger session, do a share-out. The instructions are – there will be three breakout rooms. And in your groups there are four questions that we would like you to discuss.

One, how do you use data to inform your decisions? Two, how do you use data to understand your customers? Three, how do you use data to understand your employer's needs? And four, what is the national trend reflective of what you see in your community? So with that, we will breakout into the groups.

MS. MCCALL: All right. This is Grace. Thanks very much. I'm just going to go over a little bit of the technical aspect of the breakout room. Just as a note, in order to participate in this portion of the breakout rooms, you have to be called in over the phone line. You will be able to participate over your computer speakers, so please make sure you're dialed in. And in a moment, we are going to transition into the breakout rooms. And you'll be placed into either breakout room 1, breakout room 2, or breakout room 3. Figure out which breakout room you're in.

In a moment, you're screen's going to move and you're going to see that you have a message in the top left portion of your screen that says you're either in breakout room 1, 2, or 3. If you're in breakout room 1, you're going to press 1## on your phone's key pad to move your phone line into breakout 1. If you're in breakout room 2, you're going to press 2## to move your phone line over to breakout room 2. Likewise, if you see that you're placed in breakout room 3, you're going to press 3## to move your phone line into breakout room 3.

This will allow you to hear the audio of your specific breakout room, and will allow you to participate in the conversation. So again, we're about to start the breakout room component. If you're in breakout room 1, you're going to press 1##. If you're in breakout room 2, you'll press 2##. If you're in breakout room 3, you're going to press 3##. All right. With that, we're going to transition into the breakout rooms. Have a great time, everyone.

All right, everyone. We are in breakout rooms right now. On your screen, you should see that you are in either breakout 1, 2, or 3. If you are in breakout room 1, to join the audio, you need to hit 1## on your phone's key pad. If you see that you're in breakout room 2, you should hit 2## on your phone's key pad. And if you're in breakout room 3, hit 3## on your phone's key pad. That will move your phone line into the appropriate breakout room.

If you're not hearing audio, make sure you look at the top left to see what breakout room you're in. And then hit either 1##, 2##, or 3##. All right. Welcome back. This is Grace McCall. I'm just going to make sure that all of our speakers are back as well. Welcome back from the sub conferences and the breakout room discussions. We should still have everybody. I'm going to turn it back over to Thoa, who is going to be speaking as moderator again for the breakout rooms.

MS. HOANG: Yes. Again, thank you for sharing. I really enjoyed that discussion. And we do have some time. Let's go through the groups, and I'm interested in hearing what you guys talked about. We'll start with group 1.

LAURA IBAÑEZ: Hi. This is Laura. Can you hear me?

MS. HOANG: Yes. Loud and clear. Hi, Laura.

MS. IBAÑEZ: Wonderful. In group 1, we had our friends from Maine, Colorado, and California, who definitely gave some resources. They talked about the best place to find what data is available to them. They really thought the local workforce centers were a good place to start and was sometimes the best information to get on hand because it was something that was readily available, and they could tell you which employers are hiring at the moment.

They also shared how important it is to be a part of an economic development group and some of the connections that you can make through that, because there was also a piece about how they're learning that their farm workers, some were interested in staying in agriculture. So they've explored how to connect them to the appropriate training to learn how to cultivate the harvest. I think those are the three main points. The others have to share, so I'll leave you at that. Thank you.

MS. HOANG: Thanks, Laura. And I think I'm group 2. My group, we had Tennessee, South Dakota, California, Florida, Mississippi, so just a whole range. And we talked about how the trends observed at the national level are reflective in the community level. So, yes. Women are entering the farm labor workforce. And grantees are observing more youth, younger, the demographics, the age group is younger between 18 and 27.

So some of the challenges with reaching women is just they don't qualify because of their immigration status or there's a fear of public charge. The group from California shared that there was a national- or a state-level data bank that has great resources that they use to cater their program to the community. And I think South Dakota also shared that they use the labor market information center which has robust employment data. So with that, I will move this to group number 3.

FRANCIS: Hello. This is Francis. Can everybody hear me?

MS. HOANG: Yes.

FRANCIS: Great. In group 3, we had – I want to thank the participants. They were very engaging. They provided responses. And some of the things that were mentioned, which were very good responses, is that they use the labor market information and look at data to make decisions on what type of training to provide. Also, to better understand the customer needs, they use demographic information. They use their own reporting tool that includes information on collecting educational level, age, and work history, and demographic on types of barriers that participants have.

They also look at using this information to find out what is the best way to communicate with participants. By looking at demographics, they were able to identify methods of communication that would work best. They're also looking to industry growth trends in serving areas where services are offered. And we also have some responses that the national trend is not necessarily reflective of what grantees see in their communities. So they will have to have their own creative ways of using their own reporting tools using the labor market information and other local information that they can find to be able to better serve the needs of the customers.

MS. HOANG: Awesome. Thank you. Let's move on to pre-work for day 4. As we're wrapping up day 3, I want to share some pre-work we have for day 4 just for you to review before our session. These are some upcoming dates – day 4, day 5, 6, and we have an NGO debrief through a Zoom call. So we'll leave some room for questions. Grace, are there any questions in the chat box?

MS. MCCALL: Yes. There's currently one question that someone has typed in, although I'm sure there are more to come. Is the NAWS funded to continue this research?

MR. CARROLL: Hi, Grace. This is Daniel. If you can hear me, the NAWS is fully funded for fiscal year 2021.

MS. MCCALL: We can hear you. Good answer. Thanks, Daniel.

MR. CARROLL: You're welcome.

MS. MCCALL: Just as a reminder, please put your questions in the chat. I see there are a few people typing.

MS. HOANG: I see a question – what does NAWS mean? NAWS stands for the National Agricultural Workers Survey. It provides regional-level and demographic data.

MS. MCCALL: Again, just to make sure people can still hear, just a little pause as the presenters are formulating answers to the questions you're putting in. But please keep putting those in. Daniel, if you just want to jump right in and answer that one question we got in about how will USDA's decision to end the farm labor survey affects the NFJP grant allocation formula?

MR. CARROLL: Thank you, Grace. That's a really good question. For the current formula, the discontinuation of the farm labor survey will have no impact. However, if the survey were to disappear completely, we might be at a loss to find an alternative data source for the things that we get from the farm labor survey. So here at the Department of Labor, we're just starting to wrap our brains around this issue. And there's a lot of uncertainty at this point. But for the immediate, for the next allocation of funds, there will be no impact on the discontinuation of the farm labor survey.

MS. HOANG: All right. So I see the questions are slowing down, but feel free to keep asking away. The next slide – these are some resources that you can click on at your leisure. When you have some free time, you can go through all the data sources that we shared today. Thank you so much for your time. We look forward to seeing you at our next session this Thursday, October 15. We will focus on outreach, recruitment, eligibility and enrollment. These slides of the presentation will be shared in a couple days.

MS. MCCALL: They will.

(END)