



## *Washington Guide to Sustainable Viticulture*

# HUMAN RESOURCES

Growing quality grapes is dependent on quality labor—from getting vineyard tasks done on time to having labor available at harvest. Human Resources involve developing an employment and labor management plan, training workers in safety and protection, and complying with a multitude of state and federal regulations.

## CHECKLIST OF QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

### HOW DO I MEET MY LABOR NEEDS?

#### **Employment/Labor Management Plan**

An employment/labor management plan includes ways to manage and reduce unemployment insurance rates, work instability, and turnover, as well as recruitment and hiring goals, and overall goals for seasonal and permanent employees.

#### **1. What is my goal as an employer?**

- What kind of employer do I want to be?
- What is my contribution through employment?
- What is my long-term objective for balancing hand labor tasks and mechanization?

#### **2. Have I developed an employee handbook?**

- Does it set forth employment policies, recruitment and hiring processes, employee orientation, and format for documentation, and career opportunities?

#### **3. Have I developed an employment/labor management plan?**

- Advance planning is key to meeting your seasonal labor needs. Successful planning and implementation of a plan will reduce your risk of not being able to hire the right people for the right job at the right time. Planning will yield an opportunity to maximize returns on labor expenses and can lead to an overall reduction in your labor requirements.

#### **Components of a plan:**

- Ethics
- Cultural responsibility/sensitivity
- Communication
- Expectations
- Safe work environment
- Proactive
- Source of labor pool
- Hiring procedures
- Documentation
- Orientation
- Disciplinary action
- Worker Retention

# STEPS TO TAKE IN MEETING YOUR SEASONAL LABOR NEEDS:

## 1. Develop, maintain, and use a recruitment and hiring plan for seasonal workers

- Develop a self-perpetuating recruitment system.
- Have a written recruitment and hiring plan and document all activities.
- Stay in contact with employees.
- Ensure that all employees have contact information for you and or the vineyard manager/foreman.
- Develop a recruitment/interviewing training program for managers and others to use in recruitment for the operation.
- Enlist current employees to recruit for the operation.
- Communicate your plan to employees so expectations are clear.
- Spread the word about hiring.
- Tell new hires, neighbors, other business owners, WorkSource and/or other community based organizations that you are/will be hiring.
- Be specific with numbers of people needed, length of employment and job skills required.

## 2. Know your operation

- Use schematics and timetables to visually map out your labor needs on a long term, annual and seasonal basis, including competing labor needs and complementary crops.
- Review plan if there has been or will be a change in your operation (acquisition, contraction, or diversification).
- Assess what your seasonal labor needs are (skills and number of people) and the time period that you will need to have seasonal employees employed.
- Continually review and update plan as season progresses, taking into account estimated yield, vine death, crop loss, estimated maturity/harvest dates, etc.
- Develop a back up plan.
- Continually evaluate the replacement of labor with capital (purchase and use of machinery)
- Hiring fewer numbers of people for longer periods of time should always be one of your human resource goals.

## 3. Know your local workforce

- Who is your local seasonal workforce? (Local, migrant, in or out of state, gender, age.)
- What does the historical supply/demand graph look like for labor-intensive agriculture?
- Who am I competing with?
- Who might I partner with?
- Will my employment conditions attract a competitive work force?

## 4. Know the current status of local labor supply and demand

- What is the situation in the area?
  - Any news of shortages or surpluses at other vineyards, orchards or in row crops?
  - Will they affect your ability to recruit and hire when you need to?
- Any major activities in the region that might impact your ability to get the right people at the right time?
  - Booms or busts in competing industries or nearby states?
  - Level or intensity of ICE activity in the area?
  - Collective bargaining / job action at other vineyards or orchards?
- What is the current season's prevailing wage for the various jobs you will need to fill?



- What are your neighbors paying?
- What are competing industries paying?
- What are employees asking for?
- What wage rates are employees receiving on a regional basis?
- Have I identified what successful employers do to keep their workforce content?

## **5. Know your Workman's Compensation and Unemployment Insurance Rates**

- Have you reviewed your rates to compare them with industry averages?
- Do you have a plan to reduce rates and reduce worker turnover?
- Are you a member of a Retrospective Rating Plan, such as Washington Farm Bureau's Retro/Safety Program?

## **ARE WORKERS TRAINED FOR SAFETY AND PROTECTION MEASURES?**

### **1. Instructions/Training**

- What is your methodology for worker safety and protection training?
- Is it effective and compliant. Follow up to assess the training and level of comprehension?
- Do they understand how to complete the task and why it needs to be done the way instructed?
- Have employees been shown how to complete a task?
- Do employees understand when the task needs to be completed and why timing is important?
- Are communication lines open to get feedback on training needs and training programs?

### **2. Environmental/Workplace Accidents**

- Is there proper notification of various agencies (OSHA, WISHA, EPA, WSDA, etc.) when accidents happen?
- Is there proper documentation of the accident?
- Is the accident thoroughly investigated?
- Are new training techniques or subjects developed in response to accidents?

## **AM I ADEQUATELY MANAGING COMPLIANCE ISSUES?**

### **1. Documentation**

- Is required documentation being done and in a timely manner?
- Is documentation stored properly and readily accessible?
- Do you have a standard operating procedure to respond to compliance investigations?

### **2. Legal Mandates and Prohibitions**

- Are you and your employees well versed on the rules and regulations governing their employment?
- Is your operation in compliance with federal and state labor laws specific to type of employment?
- Is there an identified individual who is charged with staying current on rules and regulations?
- Are networks and resources developed for this individual to stay current?
- Are employees offered the opportunity to participate in implementation of new rules and regulations?



## 2. Relationship with Government Agencies

- Is your operation receiving an inordinate amount of attention or oversight from a specific agency?
- Do you need to reestablish/improve relationship with specific agencies or agency individuals?
- Have you utilized educational services provided by government agencies or trade associations?
- What is your resource network for staying current with compliance issues (Farm Bureau, Washington Growers League, labor law attorney, etc.)?
- Are you participating in legislative focused discussions between industry and government?

## AM I ADEQUATELY COMPLYING WITH CHILD LABOR LAWS?

If I employ minor workers, am I following all applicable state and federal minimum age of employment laws, documenting compliance, and prohibiting minors from doing work that is hazardous or like to harm the minor's health or safety?



## RESOURCES

Washington State Labor Market and Economic Analysis

<https://fortress.wa.gov/esd/employmentdata>

Washington State Labor Market and Economic Analysis – County Profiles <http://fortress.wa.gov/esd/employmentdata/reports-publications/regional-reports/county-profiles>

Agriculture Employment and Wage Report

<https://fortress.wa.gov/esd/employmentdata/reports-publications/industry-reports/agricultural-employment-and-wage-report>

Access portal to all Washington State Government Agencies <http://access.wa.gov/>

USDA Agriculture Labor Affairs <http://www.usda.gov/oce/labor/index.htm>

U.S. Department of Labor information

<http://www.dol.gov>

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services information

<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>

Agricultural Labor Management

Rosenberg, H., Carkner, R., Hewlett, J., et. al. 2002. Ag Help Wanted: Guidelines for Managing Agricultural Labor. Available in print as a 242-page soft-cover book and on CD-ROM.

[www.aghelpwanted.org](http://www.aghelpwanted.org)

Billikopf, G. 2003. Labor Management in Agriculture (English and Spanish Editions). University of California Agriculture and

Natural Resources Publication #34 7. <http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor>

## Training

Safety Information and on-farm safety training materials <http://www.gemplers.com/tailgate-training-tip-sheets>

National Ag Safety Database, safety information, and on-farm safety training materials

<http://nasdonline.org/document/2125/d000101/ag-safe-agricultural-safety-training-materials.html>

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