



FIELD BASED RECRUITING

PRESENTING THE PROGRAM

Since Migrant students and their families are often highly mobile, Migrant Education Programs have to be skilled in finding migrant students and youth in a quick and effective manner. Much of a recruiter's time is spent out in the "field". In this document, we will outline "field" recruitment as recruitment of migrant students and their families that takes place outside of the local school district.

Migrant Recruiters have to be able to introduce effectively the MEP and its purposes to various audiences. This can sometimes be a tricky process since the same explanation does not yield the same results with all people. There is no one size fits all approach to program introduction in recruiting.

One key part of tailoring an explanation of the program to a farmer or a crew boss, is to be able to read and gauge a recipient's response to adjust a program description if what is being said is not working. Part of the ability of a recruiter to adjust a response or explanation effectively comes from a general understanding of the business or industry which they are visiting. It is important for recruiters to do their research before hitting the field to be prepared for future conversations as they work in the community.



"I find one of my most effective approaches of program introduction with farmers is to explain how the addition of MEP program resources actually helps the local school system by helping students overcome some of the gaps in their education. They usually like to help the local school district.

- MEP recruiter

BEFORE YOU GO ...

- Do your research: Find out information such as farmers and or crew boss name, human resource manager, plant owner etc.
- Become knowledgeable about the seasonal agricultural cycles by using agriculture census information or through conversations with local agriculture extension agents, crop specialists, 4-H Leaders, or labor specialists.
- Call farms on a rainy day or in the evening before 8:00 pm to gather information on their workforce. Ask specific questions: Is your farm family run? Do you hire seasonal or temporary workers? Do you hire locally or bring workers in from another area?
- Contact the farmer or agribusiness employer to inform them that you will be visiting the area and will stop by. Remember if you ask for permission they may deny you permission to visit over the phone so use precaution in asking any questions that could be better addressed by a face to face visit.
- Use web resources such as USDA Crop Scape and Google Earth to find locations of various crops.
- Contact the department of health inspectors, housing agencies, water inspectors, human services, department of labor to network. Many of these agencies work directly with farms.
 - Prepare to be a diplomat: provide positive information to people who are resistant to the idea of migrant education.
 - Set up or attend meetings with community agencies.
 - Watch the weather – workers may not be present at farms in rainy weather so plan accordingly. (For example, they may all be home so plan to visit housing instead of places to work.)
 - Dress appropriately – jeans, plastic boots when appropriate. Meat packing plants are often very cold.

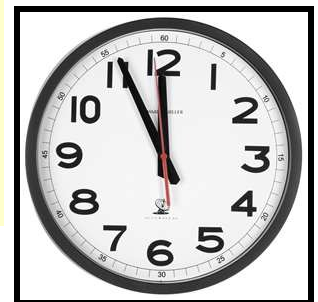


HOW TO FIND FARMS

- It is helpful to keep a database or listing of where workers were found the previous year. This can involve obtaining a list of old addresses where migrants have been signed up in the past or could include making a database using resources such as Google Maps or Multiplotter.com to keep maps with notes and comments of recruiting visits and contacts.
- One tool to document recruitment efforts specifically with farmers or other agriculture employers could be the creation of a Farm Data Sheet. Included on this datasheet could be the following: best time to visit, last date visited, current students working there who are enrolled in the program, previous students enrolled in program, notes on relationship with farmer, owner or crew chief. It may be helpful to document this information first on paper and then work to make it electronic.
- Platt maps can also be a good resource to review to determine who owns different fields as they show land parcels over five acres, the number of acres, and name of the landowner.
- Word of mouth is always helpful – stop in laundromats, cafes, and gas stations. Talk with colleagues, staff in ethnic stores, city or county staff such as town clerks, etc. Thorough recruiting efforts include good recruiting leads and information from just about anyone.
- There are many associations that work directly with farmers and agriculture related businesses such as Agencies of Agriculture, State Farm Bureaus, Farming Associations, Department of Labor, State Workforce Investment Boards, and Temp Agencies.



“We keep GPS coordinates of hard to find farms so that they are easier for recruiters to find in the future. I add the coordinates to a Google Map I have made of all of my farm locations and contacts.”



FLEXIBILITY– WHEN TO GO RECRUIT

There is no specific ideal time to recruit. What is certain though is how ineffective it would be for a recruiter to always work the same schedule. Flexibility is required to find eligible youth. Flexibility in recruiting means that recruiters work when OSY & farm employers are available. This can include the following;

- Evenings and weekends
- Mornings for those who work in late afternoon and early evening
- Midnight, if necessary
- 5:00am –before workers go to the fields or start a shift

Recruitment efforts should be at the convenience of OSY and their employers. An effective field recruiters mantra is *“I will come back whenever it works for you.”* Persistence in field recruiting will pay off. Make sure to leave your contact information through a brochure, business card and or website information.

“In my experience, gaining farmer support is always worth the work it takes. One time a farmer asked me to come at 5:00 in the morning. I think he asked me that to see if I was serious about really working with his workers. I came and now he lets me come in any time I want” MEP recruiter with 8 years working in field recruitment.

“Farmers (Employers) are interesting people. It takes a while to gain rapport, trust and access to the farm-worker population. You have to work at it. More often than not, you need to have several encounters until you gain their confidence. You may need to go ‘above and beyond’.”

-MEP Recruiter



THE FARM VISIT: BEST PRACTICES

Once a recruiter is at a farm there are several things to consider to ensure that the visit will be helpful to recruitment efforts. Recruiters must remember that timing and presentation of the program is key. First impressions matter, and the ability of a recruiter to gain rapport quickly is essential. Things such as where a recruiter parks his/her car, wearing the proper attire, and bringing along identification should all be planned and carefully thought out.

There are some key introduction points that can be helpful. Good eye contact and a firm handshake is a good start. The following are all essential for recruiters to explain. Farm staff should clearly know who the recruiter is and why he/she is there. Explaining the program is free and information is confidential are important points to share as well as asking for the appropriate person to speak to at the company. A clear explanation of program services to migrant families and youth and the benefits to both the farm owner, staff, schools and community is helpful. A sample of the kinds of materials that will be provided can be presented. The same program explanation is not always appropriate at each farm or agri-business. The introduction points depend on a number of factors. These can include the time available to discuss the program for whoever the recruiter is speaking with, the role or position of the person engaged in the conversation, the interest or resistance the person is showing, etc.

Recruiters should always have a clear plan of what they would ideally like to have as the outcome of the conversation with farm staff. One possible outcome could be approval to be able to come back on a lunch break to talk with farmworkers. Another possibility could be gaining permission to go out in a field and talk with workers while they are working or being granted access to farm housing during off hours to speak with workers. If a farmer is particularly resistant it may be permission to hang up a program flyer in a visible place or to have farm staff put a flyer for the program in the workers next check. Recruiters need to be flexible in their approach of how they try to gain access to a chance to talk with workers. It is helpful to be persistent but not pushy. If a farmer doesn't offer access to workers during a lunch break, he may be comfortable with a recruiter placing a flyer on the car windshield of a worker. This could potentially open up an opportunity for a recruiter to be contacted by a family or OSY. In this case a recruiter should always have a flyer available for posting, something that will peak the interest of any farmworker.

A farmer might also offer access for the recruiter at a later date. Recruiters should provide as many options of when they can return as possible to best meet the schedule of the farmer and the workers. If they are reluctant to set a firm date or time, a recruiter can always leave some materials for the farmer to review and let them know that they will be re-contacted at a later date.

KEY GENERAL SERVICE POINTS

For the EMPLOYER

ELL services

Information related to community resources can be provided to staff

Possibilities of training for staff such as safety, first aid

For OSY

ELL Survival Skills Materials & Services

Advances in education such as GED classes

Specialized classes

For the Community & Schools

Funds to help migrant students overcome gaps in education

Credit recovery programs for students moving

Supplemental Interpretation services



YOU'RE IN...NOW YOU NEED TO BEGIN RECRUITING

If a recruiter gains access to be able to speak with workers on a farm there are several factors to consider in order to determine what is the most appropriate recruitment approach. These can include the amount of workers available at the site, the time allotted to recruit, whether the workers are working or on break, whether they have just arrived to work or are leaving, etc. Just as important as it is to gain the farmer's rapport, the recruiter needs also to work quickly gain rapport with workers.

One strategy that works well with a large group of workers and limited time is to conduct a quick group interview. After explaining to all present in a matter of a couple of sentences why the recruiter is there, they can then address the group and ask who has moved into the area in the past three years. It is helpful to provide a specific date. The recruiter can ask them to raise their hands if they have moved to the area after the date the recruiter specifies. Those with their hands raised can then be asked if they have children and or if they are under the age of 22 who have not yet graduated school. If they don't have children or are not under the age of 22 they would be asked to put their hands down. Then the recruiter could ask those with their hands remaining to either provide their contact information so they can be contacted at a later date if there is not enough time to conduct the eligibility interview, or if sufficient time is available the initial eligibility interview can be conducted. Those without hands raised can also be asked if they know of anyone who fits the criteria for a possible referral for the recruiter to follow-up on.

Other recruitment strategies could include having all workers fill out a quick survey that a recruiter can use to follow up on later or seeing if it is possible to conduct several recruiting sessions at a particular site. Each farm is a bit different so a recruiter should be ready for all sorts of possibilities for recruitment opportunities.

Recruiters should always have resources and materials organized to distribute when an eligible migrant is found. If a recruiter doesn't bring materials that workers will be interested in, it will be very hard to convince both worker and farmer to allow and use the time to conduct eligibility interviews. Possible educational resources to distribute at the time of recruitment include bilingual dictionaries, gloves, resource guides created by the program, etc.



Always be respectful of times when workers are working and try to get permission when possible to talk with workers before you start recruiting on a farm or field.

If time permits recruiters can gain additional rapport with the workers and farmer by teaching a quick lesson to eligible migrants on dictionary skills or using a map. A quick lesson on mapping could be as simple as helping them identify where they reside currently and showing them basic geography such as forest, lakes, airports, highways, etc. Teaching how to use a dictionary helps them gain access to an invaluable resource.

A quick tip to ensure that a recruiter has the correct phone numbers of OSY upon recruitment in the field is if the OSY has a cell to call their number then and there before they leave to ensure that they have obtained the correct phone number.



LEARNING HOW INDUSTRIES ARE DIFFERENT

Field based recruitment is not just recruitment at farms. It also involves recruitment in various agriculture and fishing industries and establishment. Every Industry is different. Field recruiters should research and familiarize themselves with the industries they are working with to prevent unwanted disturbances.

For example, some dairy farms appreciate it when outside visitors wear disposable plastic booties that prevent the transport of bacteria in your shoes from one farm that could potentially infect another.

Some agriculture industries may not allow any outside personnel on their premises for any reason. A meat processing plant may require a recruiter to have all of their personal belongings brought in for a recruitment visit in a plant cafeteria checked before the recruiter is allowed to enter into the plant cafeteria. Food processing plants may ask a recruiter to wear a hair net when working in a plant. Cafeterias at food processing plants are often very cold. If the recruiter is aware of these types of issues before hand he/she can plan accordingly.



AGRI-BUSINESS

Gaining access to recruitment opportunities at agri-business establishments requires some of the same techniques as working with farms but there are also some differences. It is often helpful with some agri-businesses to mention partnerships the MEP program has with other businesses of the same nature. For example, when introducing the program agri-business staff may be interested in learning how recruitment is conducted at a different plant in the state.

Recruiters should always dress appropriately. It may be appropriate for a recruiter to dress up when visiting a Human Resource Manager at a plant but if they are visiting a feedlot more casual attire would be appropriate. With agri-business such a processing plants, canneries and vegetable processors, it is often helpful to request permission to set up a table with large signs and free educational materials for a couple of days. MEP staff should work at the table for all shifts available. Persistence pays off. Many workers may not be comfortable approaching MEP staff at the beginning of a shift but after seeing them there for 8-12 hours and learning from others what they are doing they are more likely to approach the staff.

It is helpful if an ineligible worker is particularly interested in materials the MEP is offering, for recruitment staff to ask the worker to help them find someone who is eligible and bring them to the table to speak with MEP staff. If an eligible worker is found through these efforts materials can possibly be provided to the worker who assisted in locating the eligible worker. At agri-businesses recruiters are often not permitted to try and recruit workers when they are working on the job. It is important for recruiters to be accessible so workers can come to them.

“We post the 1-800 number and with it request people to call if they are interested in FREE materials to learn English. We post this on our table at the processing plants when we recruit. We always get calls from the fliers some have led to eligible COE’s.”

- MEP recruiter



MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

There are many agencies with which it really pays to cultivate a strong relationship. These include temp agencies that provide workers to agri-businesses and farms. One way to have on-going contact is to provide new hire packets to be given out to agriculture workers. These can include an employment survey that can be picked up by the local MEP when new workers are hired. This same type of survey can be given to agri-businesses that do their own hiring.

As appropriate-

MEP staff can send thank you cards, publicize collaboration in the newspaper, or present agri-business/farms with plaques or certificates of thanks. In addition periodically it is helpful to update the employer on services that the students are receiving. In some cases services can also be tailored to specific requests for instruction made by farm or agribusiness employers. (i.e. Materials presented to OSY or parents in an ELL class to help students understand and master job related vocabulary.)

“We have a relationship with a processing plant in our state that works very well. They let us come in every few months to set up a table and talk with their workers. We are not allowed to pull them off the line or to even approach them as they are eating. They have to come to us.

We always have all of our materials available on the table and we speak to all of them as they pass by the table. They seem to try to ignore us for the first couple of hours and then they come to use in droves. It seems as they watch us interact with others they want to find out what we are doing. If they don't qualify we have them go out and find one that does with the promise of if they bring us a good referral we will provide them with some materials for their help. This is extremely helpful. Very quickly they let us know who else is around that might possibly be eligible. We stay the entire shift rotation. It's a lot of work and a lot of fun.” - MEP recruiter

