

**Meeting Notes**

**Organizer:** Tammy Deets, Commerce (Organizer)

**Attendees:**

KWW Members Rich Stolz, Chairperson  
Kristin Kershaw Snapp, Vice-Chairperson  
Antonio Ginatta, Breanne Elsey, Karen Lewis, Keelcy Perez Woolley, Paul Benz,  
Sandra Rodarte, Tim Warden-Hertz, Victoria Mena

Guests: Alejandro Sanchez, Special Assistant to the Governor  
Rick Anderson, Policy Advisor, Commerce  
Glenn Davis, Rosanna Donoso Barredo – OneAmerica

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**Objective** Learn about existing workforce strategies in the agricultural industry. Discover the challenges and identify priorities.

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**Presentation** Panel discussions on education and training for ag industry workforce and discussion on the barriers and challenges.

**Moderator:** *Karen Lewis, WSU*

**Panelists:** *Trent Ball, Yakima Valley Community College*  
*Ofelio Borges, WA Department of Agriculture*  
*Jacqui Gordon, Director of Training, Education & Member Services, Washington State Tree Fruit Association*  
*Steve Mantle, Innov8*  
*Mike Zimmer, World Education Services*

**Key takeaways:**

- Challenges:**
- Barriers for immigrants & refugees with non-US based education & experience to enter the workforce and more fully utilize their skills in this country include:
    - o Complex licensing & regulatory systems
    - o International credentials not recognized
    - o Insufficient industry-specific contextualized English
    - o Career pathways are difficult to navigate
  - Ag industry is changing rapidly but the workforce is not keeping up with the change.
  - Community college graduates are not prepared to fill the roles as farm managers, supervisors, or data analysts. There is a need to provide education and training at all levels.
  - Lack of coordination between labor supply and hiring channels. On one side, there are many migrants seeking for work but without clear guidance to access legal, low cost channels. On the employer's side, access to the H2A program is complex with many stringent requirements. (Side note: employers often have to hire a consultant to navigate the system.)
  - Primary barriers for Latino farm workers to transition to farm owners include:
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- access to information of how to management a farm business,
  - access to capital,
  - lack of mentorships/guidance
- Ag sector is competing with manufacturing & tech sector in workforce.

- Opportunities:**
- Farms are hiring. There are supervisory and managerial level positions open.
  - Creative solutions to create equitable access to licensure for people with international credentials are being applied. e.g. WA is a leader in IMG (Int'l Medical Graduate) residency program. Another example is Global Detroit <https://globaldetroitmi.org/>.
  - Programs such as Agriculture Leadership Development Program supported by WSTFA, WSDA, WSU, WFB, WS, WSLNI for orchard supervisors can be expanded and modeled after.
  - Some H2A workers are highly educated. Their home country economy is so poor that they would earn better wages by being a farm worker in the U.S. These are good talents to tap into.

- Recommendations:**
- Create an assessment program to ascertain the skills and experience that migrant workers bring.
  - Support the expansion of the ag leadership development program
  - Small grants to institutions (intermediaries, community colleges, etc.) to help connect the dots
  - Study the core supply and demand issues of labor and skills, including the changing demographics (and skills) of.

Please find attached pdf and links to the presentations.

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**Work Group  
Discussions**

The work group needs to form smaller groups to hone in on the two areas of focus - Small Business Recovery and Workforce Development. Rich and Kristin will reach out to members. Each sub-group will refine the recommendations and start drafting part of the report to the legislators, Governor's Office, and Commerce.

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**Next meeting**

Topic: What do we need to do to prepare for a legalization program?  
Date: Friday, May 28, 2021

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