



California Ag Workforce Housing & Transportation Project (WHTP)
Summary Report on Pre-Summit Stakeholder Interviews
May 8, 2013

In advance of the WHTP Stakeholder Summit held on May 8, 2013, Ag Innovations Network conducted 34 interviews with stakeholder participants to gather the perspectives of the stakeholders in the system.

Stakeholders were asked four broad questions:

1. What are the challenges and obstacles facing ag workers and employers with regard to housing?
2. What are the challenges and obstacles facing ag workers and employers with regard to transportation?
3. What are the successful models, and current opportunities and possible solutions?
4. What advice, suggestions or warnings do you have for this project?

The following is a broad summary of the main points that were made in the interviews by multiple respondents, or overall impressions of the interviewer.

Overarching impressions from the interviews:

- High degree of agreement on the nature and severity of the problem, even with differing motivations.
- High degree of agreement on the timeliness and necessity of this effort.
- Significant differences throughout state so whatever we come up with needs to acknowledge the diversity and not try to impose a one-size-fits-all solution everywhere.
- There seems to be a lack of sufficient, reliable data on the current conditions and needs, the anticipated future need, as well as on the efficacy of past efforts.
- Silos of public agencies reduces coordination among needed resources from all levels of government – especially with poorer communities where under-resourced local agencies don't have time or power for coordination. This needs to be a priority for and led by the State.
- The California ag workforce is becoming more settled and less migratory, shifting the traditional demand and nature of “farmworker housing” away from dormitory-style “labor camps” and toward more typical affordable housing

developments of single- and multi-family dwellings in complexes with attendant social services.

- There is broad acknowledgment of the need for all involved to come out of their comfort zone and change their thinking about the issue, to recognize a shared responsibility for developing a solution, and to work together to find common ground and move something forward.

Challenges and obstacles in housing:

- Severe lack of decent affordable housing throughout most of rural California.
- Farmworkers live in the worst conditions in the state – largely hidden and unknown to most people.
- For the most part, employers no longer provide housing due to increased costs, regulations, litigation and liability concerns.
- Government funding for development of farmworker and affordable rural housing is gone.
- Rural affordable housing projects are at a competitive disadvantage with urban projects for funding because of emphasis placed on proximity to transportation and other infrastructure resources that rural areas lack.
- Many local community members oppose farmworker housing in their neighborhoods.
- There is an expectation that current immigration reform will lead to an influx of seasonal, immigrant labor that will create a new level of demand for housing.
- Rural communities are ill-equipped, under-resourced, and often unprepared to deal with the seasonal and year-round housing demands of their local ag industry labor force.
- The role of farm labor contractors as the biggest employers of ag labor creates a responsibility barrier between growers and workers, lessening growers' perceived responsibility for being part of the solution.

Challenges and obstacles in transportation:

- Remoteness of ag job sites and lack of on-site housing create significant transportation demands and requirements.
- Most rural areas have little or no reliable public transportation, and virtually none for the locations and schedules required by farmworkers.
- Growers are increasingly backing away from providing transportation due to liability concerns and increasing insurance costs and requirements.
- Farm labor contractors are often providing transportation but are likewise challenged by the insurance costs, leading many to abandon the practice.
- Most typical form of transportation is the private car, often in a car pool in which the driver charges his riders a daily fee for the ride (and often lunch and drinks) which the worker has little choice but to accept, regardless of how overcrowded or unsafe the vehicle might be.

- Many drivers are unlicensed, without basic safety and “rules of the road” training in the California vehicle code.
- Out of legitimate fear of vehicle impoundment should they be stopped, many drive cars that are unsafe, old, fuel-inefficient, and polluting.
- Vanpools are often under-utilized due to lack of awareness, cultural preferences, and pressure from co-workers and FLCs.

Opportunities, successful models, possible solutions:

- The Napa County experience is the “gold standard”. Three housing centers are paid for by a self-assessment of \$10/acre, subject to renewal every 5 years. Under the direction of the County Housing Authority, the nonprofit California Human Development manages the centers.
- The Workforce Housing Proximity Program in Napa County is a revolving loan fund for legal workers to apply and receive up to 10% (silent second, paid back when sold) of the purchase price of their new home if it is in close proximity to their job site. The program won an American Planning Association award this year.
- In Ventura County, the local Ag Futures Alliance’s “House Farm Workers!” program has built a community group of farmers, labor advocates, businesses and local food consumers who support farmworker housing through advocacy of specific projects, and lobbying of local planning authorities, elected officials, and affordable housing developers to increase farmworker housing supply overall.
- Sierra Cascade Nursery’s partnering with local counties to house seasonal workers at County fairgrounds facilities with rent and improvements paid for by the company is an example of a creative public-private partnership.
- The “service enriched” community-style affordable housing developments of many nonprofit housing developers are lauded as successful housing models that encourage the type of community-building and integration needed to develop and sustain a stable workforce.
- The CalVans program has been very successful in many regions (now in 17 counties) and could be expanded further with additional funding, private-sector partnerships, and education and outreach to potential riders.
- AgSafe had a project several years ago to educate farmworkers on basic driver safety, rules of the road, reading signs, etc.
- The California Homes & Jobs Act (SB391) would provide an ongoing funding source to the State Housing Trust Fund.
- The California Safe and Responsible Driver Act (AB60) would allow undocumented residents to procure a driver’s license.
- Current immigration reform offers an opportunity to institute a program that could “legalize” current undocumented workers, provide a future supply of seasonal workers, and create demand for new housing to be built.
- All levels of government need to be more flexible and open to creative solutions.

- Examples of these include:
 - Allowing for higher densities in certain ag regions or for qualified farmworker housing developments;
 - Changing the definition of “transit oriented development” in rural areas;
 - Allowing modular or mobile units;
 - Expanding financing rules and regulations to make it easier for rural projects to qualify for some programs;
 - Making government and military land and/or facilities available for temporary or permanent farmworker housing;
 - Exemptions for redevelopment of old labor camps;
 - Exemptions for on-farm housing for ag interns; and
 - Partnering with Native American Tribes for farmworker housing development on tribal lands.
- Development of low-income subsidized rentals is a key strategy. Not all workers will want to own, and even as those who do are able to move into home ownership, there will always be a need for affordable rentals. Partnerships with third party nonprofit housing developers to build and manage these projects are essential to their success.

Advice on project process:

- Need to proactively include the workers in the process. It’s not enough to rely on the labor advocates to adequately and accurately reflect the workers’ concerns and preferences.
- How is the ag industry involved? Can they connect with their constituencies and create new partnerships and opportunities?
- Avoid finger pointing at each other. See the common interest and recognize the political obstacles and do something together. Look at the bigger picture and get creative.
- We need to stress the importance of the opportunity now and the need for cooperation and trust and have the Secretary lead the effort and the coordination of efforts.
- Need good data to understand the various regional needs and the overall need.
- Don’t just focus on “farmworker housing” – need to look at workforce or affordable housing because farmworkers will move on to other employment.
- Anything we come up with will require funding – we need to incorporate that into our planning.
- Need farm bill language to make it real.
- Need to take this out to the regional and local levels and get their involvement and buy-in.
- Maintain awareness of and connection to immigration reform debate and how it will impact this effort.



OVERVIEW— California Agricultural Workforce Housing and Transportation Project

Project Purposes

To bring together leaders from agriculture, labor, housing, transportation, and government to examine the local, state and federal policy barriers and community issues that make it difficult to house and transport the workers required by specialty crop producers.

To prepare the State and the California specialty crop industry for the housing and transportation needed by the increased number of migrant workers anticipated in the coming years as new federal immigration policies and programs are enacted.

To lay the groundwork for a broader ongoing institutional dialogue between and among the stakeholders for improving the relationships between ag and labor, improving working conditions, stabilizing the labor supply for growers, and sustaining the California specialty crop industry.

Desired Outcome

A set of concrete recommendations to local, regional, state, and federal government agencies, the specialty crop industry, nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations, and communities on how they can act to increase housing and transportation resources for specialty crop workers, increase their access to jobs in the sector, and sustain the specialty crop industry.

Deliverables

1. Policy, business, and community recommendations to reduce housing and transportation barriers to workforce availability for the specialty crop industry.
2. Communications of these results to all major stakeholders and decision-makers impacting housing and transportation for specialty crop workers.
3. Creation of a strong and effective coordinating and advocacy body committed to the implementation of these recommendations.

Project Phases

Phase 1: Multi-sector stakeholder mapping

- Identify and recruit system-wide representation

Phase 2: Pre-Summit Interviews

- Gather the perspectives of project members

Phase 3: Summit – Daylong event

- Build shared understanding of the presenting and underlying issues
- Begin to identify focus areas and potential recommendations/systemic solutions
- Chart a course for the remaining work of the project and the stakeholders

Phase 4: Subgroup work – Several working sessions by phone or in person

- Research additional information as needed
- Hear more from underrepresented stakeholders as needed
- Develop recommendations and culminate with consensus agreement on the final recommendations
- Publish report
- Outreach planning

Phase 5: Action Summit – Daylong event

- Release recommendations to elected officials, decision-makers, and the public

Phase 6: Outreach

- Outreach through media, project members, and others

California Agricultural Workforce Housing and Transportation Project
May 8, 2013
Stakeholder Summit Participant List

| <u>First Name</u> | <u>Last Name</u> | <u>Organization</u> |
|-------------------|------------------|--|
| Isabel | Arrollo | El Quinto Sol de America, Tulare County |
| Jose | Baer | Rancho la Viña, Buellton, Santa Barbara County |
| Dewey | Bandy | California Coalition for Rural Housing |
| Lisa | Bates | CA Dept. of Housing & Community Development (HCD) |
| Barry | Broad | Teamsters |
| Ellen | Brokaw | Brokaw Orchards and House Farm Workers!, Ventura County |
| Carol | Chandler | Chandler Farms, Selma |
| Tom | Collishaw | Self-Help Enterprises, Visalia |
| Manuel | Cunha | Nisei Farmers League, Fresno |
| Alfred | Diaz-Infante | Community Housing Improvement Systems and Planning Association (CHISPA), Monterey County |
| Josh | Eddy | CA State Board of Food & Ag |
| Sandy | Elles | Napa County Farm Bureau |
| Karen | Flock | Cabrillo Economic Development Association, Ventura County |
| Martha | Guzman-Aceves | California Governor's Office |
| Luawanna | Hallstrom | Collaborative Communications, San Diego |
| Kevin | Herman | The Specialty Crop Company, Madera |
| Cesar | Hernandez | Reiter Affiliated Companies, Oxnard |
| Ismael | Herrera | San Joaquin Valley Partnership |
| Chuck | Herrin | Sunrise Farm Labor, Coalinga |
| Jim | Houston | CDFA |
| Tom | Huffman | Driscoll's |
| Ronald | Hughes | CalVans |
| Ilene | Jacobs | California Rural Legal Assistance |
| Cesar | Lara | Teamsters |
| Bryan | Little | California Farm Bureau Federation |
| Olga | Marquez | El Quinto Sol De America, Tulare County |
| Gil | Molina | California Association of Agricultural Labor |
| Marty | Morgenstern | CA Labor & Workforce Development Agency |
| Paul | Muller | Full Belly Farm, Capay Valley, Yolo County |
| Libby | O'Sullivan | Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) |
| Chris | Paige | California Human Development |
| Jila | Priebe | California Department of Transportation |
| Dave | Puglia | Western Growers Association |
| Susan | Quale | Sierra Cascade Nursery, Susanville |
| Craig | Regelbrugge | American Nursery & Landscape Association |
| Heriberto | Rosales | CA Dept. of Housing & Community Development (HCD) |
| Karen | Ross | CDFA |
| Simón | Salinas | Monterey County Board of Supervisors |
| Sergio | Sanchez | Strawberry Commission |
| Guadalupe | Sandoval | California Farm Labor Contractors Association |
| Rosaura | Segura | Napa Valley Migrant Farmworker Housing Committee |
| Sharon | Spowls | Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) |
| Juan | Uranga | Center for Community Advocacy, Salinas |
| Chris | Valadez | California Grape and Tree Fruit League |
| Don | Villarejo | Retired Farm Labor Researcher and Advocate |
| Gail | Wadsworth | California Institute for Rural Studies |
| Amy | Wolfe | AgSafe |

Ag Innovations Network Facilitation Team:

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|--------|-----------|
| Joseph | McIntyre |
| Gisela | Wendling |
| Dan | Schurman |
| Lisa | Badenfort |