A. Assessment of Need

West Virginia Department of Agriculture Commissioner has made some prime farm land available to individuals, organizations and co-ops for commercial vegetable and fruit production. Furthermore, a new program initiative aimed at luring veterans and their family members into farming, has some West Virginians speculating there will be a rise in family-owned and operated farms. These new ventures help to shine rays of hope into the State’s agricultural industry where annually West Virginia continues to capture less than 20 cents of every dollar spent on food out of over a $7 billion total.

Most of the fruits and vegetables which are already packaged and placed on store shelves bear the label “fresh” but this produce travels cross the United States requiring hours and/or days of refrigeration. Currently there is a movement to eat healthy and to grow your own food at home or close to home. And the state has an abundance of available vacant land that may be utilized for farming. The new veteran’s project is designed to use the land for past military personnel who want to start their own agricultural business. West Virginia (WV) residents have a need for authentically fresh produce to be grown and consumed within the state. Subsequently, the Warriors and Veteran’s Agricultural Project appears to be a natural fit to increase farming and agricultural businesses by planting and harvesting produce from the fields and orchards located within our borders; produce that may be sold at local farmer’s markets. Additionally, local farmer’s markets continue to grow because patrons desire to shop for produce that is grown without the use of pesticides, synthetic fertilizers or sewage sludge. This burst of agricultural activity may encourage farmers to disburse more agricultural related dollars within West Virginia.

During my visits to wineries around the state there appears to be interest from winery owner’s outside of WV in the wines grown here. WV owners and operators of wineries stated they had been contacted by winery staff from other areas such as California and Canada. It seems that these out-of-state wine makers have determined some types of soils and the climate found in WV are beneficial for producing specific varieties of grapes. Most of the WV winery operators have other revenue sources which provide value added services such as fully functioning distilleries, restaurants and seasonal outdoor concerts co-located at the wineries.
It is important to note that at least three (3) wineries have closed while others are expanding operations. Every winery operator discussed their inability to obtain and maintain good workers. Generally, wineries are found outside metropolitan areas and employers require that all workers have reliable transportation to and from work as well as a valid driver’s license. This is a major problem for many workers who are without vehicles or driver’s licenses. Also, an individual working in the vineyards must be physically able and willing to walk up and down hilly terrain where the grapevines are planted. Therefore, finding available and willing seasonal help is challenging for these winery owners and operators.

(i) Review of the previous year’s agricultural activity in the state.
In 2013, the Eastern Panhandle had a weather pattern which was appropriate for tremendous growth in a variety of apples. Trees bloomed early and their limbs were laden down with lots of beautiful fruit, before the traditional harvest season arrived. Therefore, growers had to hastily call in workers prior to their usual start dates and contact crew leaders to find available workers. Local employers worked with the American Job Center’s (AJC) MSFW Outreach Specialist to ensure that sufficient workers were available for harvesting tasks.

Peaches, apples and berries continue to be major crops produced in the Eastern Panhandle of the state. Months for heavy crop related activities are listed below for each crop.
July through August - peaches
August through October – apples
Mid-May through September - berries
Also, owners and operators of vineyards located in the north central, central and southern areas of the state have identified their busy season for planting is April through May and for harvesting grapes peak activity is August through October.

(ii) Review of previous year’s MSFW activity in the state.
Growers in the Eastern Panhandle continue to employ about 250 MSFWs for work in the apple orchards and approximately 200 workers are utilized in growing and harvesting peaches. Additionally, a grower may employ 40 to 50 workers to harvest berries. Some of the larger farms have diversified crops wherein they have a variety of fruits to be planted and harvested like pumpkins, plums, pears, grapes and melons. In order to complete the work required to yield profitable crops, some agricultural employers may hire up to 200 or more MSFWs in a season.
Last year due to the early crop maturation, the area experienced a brief labor shortage which was quickly alleviated. However, the MSFW Outreach worker with assistance from the AJC staff filled all twenty-seven (27) agricultural job orders and placed thirty-three (33) more workers over and above the 693 workers requested.

In the wine making industry, employers may hire all the able bodied adults they can find including family members and friends to work in the family operated vineyards. Some small vineyard operators depend on hiring local seasonal workers. There hiring rates for seasonal help may be as small as one (1) to five (5) workers or as large as eighteen (18) to twenty (20) workers.

(iii) A projected level of agricultural activity in the state for the coming year.  
Every year more growers in the Eastern Panhandle are entering the business of operating local farmer’s markets to increase their profits and have a place where they can sell their own products to a larger audience. These new ventures are becoming popular with local growers who have been varying the type crops planted on their land which will yield more specialized produce to sell along with their peaches and apples. Also, they make good use of most of the land by continuously rotating fields and crops. Growers have discovered that although they may own large tracts of land which has been farmed for many years they cannot sell these acres for real estate purposes; without the owners spending exorbitant amounts of money to remove the top soil. Subsequently, it is cheaper for them to expand existing operations into local farmer’s markets.

(iv) A projected number of MSFWs in the state for the coming year.  
The estimate remains approximately 900 to 1,000 and this number encompasses the number of unknown MSFWs employed in the poultry business, turkey farms, tomato greenhouses, wineries and large tree and nursery farms. Also, this estimate contains data for those MSFWs who elect not to register with Workforce WV and identify their status for personal reasons. Included within the above referenced estimate, is the approximately twenty-eight (28) MSFWs who were served by the NFJP grantee as well as Shenandoah Valley Medical Services served approximately 250 or more workers. Then there are a few MSFWs who are served by all other community resources. Staff from these agencies has indicated services are provided to migrant and seasonal workers but the agency does not gather data specifically for this special population or any other target group.
B. Outreach Activities

The plan for the proposed outreach activities include:

(i) A numerical goal of 600 MSFWs are to be contacted throughout the state. However, the AJC’s MSFW Outreach Specialist and State Monitor Advocate will contact approximately 415 MSFWs. Staff of partnering agencies contacting 200 or more workers. The NFJP plans to contact and serve approximately 25 MSFWs and generally, the Shenandoah Valley Medical Services will plan to contact about 250 MSFWs.

These numerical estimates are related to the agricultural activity in the Eastern Panhandle because that geographic area of the state has consistently received an influx of MSFWs to work in the orchards. Another fifteen (15) or so MSFWs may be employed at tree/nursery farms and at the old “tobacco farm “which has been revamped for planting other crops and with nursery greenhouses.

Each year the SMA has contacted employers involved with the poultry business, turkey farms and hydroponic tomato farms. But none of the personal visits, letters or calls has resulted in a response from the responsible employers.

(ii) An assessment of the resources available for outreach that includes:

1. The State Workforce Agency (SWA) has assigned two (2) staff positions for work in outreach activities. A full-time State Monitor Advocate and a full-time local MSFW Outreach Specialist assigned to the AJC in Martinsburg, WV, located in the area known as the Eastern Panhandle.

2. The SWA staff positions serving MSFWs has increased by .2, as a back-up person is being cross-trained for the SMA position.

3. The resources to be made available through existing agreement for outreach is with the 167 NFJP grantee, Telemon Corporation as well as contacts established with Shenandoah Valley Medical Services and Catholic Charities staff.

(iii) The tools which will be used to conduct outreach contacts in the field include personal contact, printed material, videotapes and disks.
C. Services Provided to MSFWs through the American Job Center (AJC) Network
Core, intensive and training services required under the Workforce Investment Act continue to be offered at the AJC Network throughout the state and some of these services may be delivered in the field, if needed. Staff assisted services may be offered in-person, with the aid of a translator and/or with the use of computer generated programs.

SWA staff has the capability to provide services utilizing laptop computers, telephones and modems. Services may be offered in Spanish language as well as printed materials are written in both Spanish and English. These services include guidance counseling, supportive services, job development and referrals to other services.

D. Services Provided to Agricultural Employers through the AJC Network
The SMA, MSFW Outreach Specialist and other assigned workforce staff will work with local AJC office managers to continue to identify and contact agricultural employers to describe and offer to them the full array of employment services available at the AJC and limited services offered in the field. Also, we will continue to seek assistance from community leaders and organizations throughout the state in an effort to reach MSFWs. Additionally, in the Eastern Panhandle the MSFW Outreach Specialist will continue to work with agricultural employers, crew leaders and other community contacts to locate and serve MSFWs who can benefit from using the services offered at the local AJC or the employment related services that are available in the field.

Whenever the need arises we will inform agricultural employers about the services of our community partners which may enhance their farming operations such as the nearest agricultural extension services program or farm bureau.

E. Data Analysis
(i) Previous year’s history:
Number of agricultural job orders and openings received: 27 job orders and 693 openings
Number of agricultural job orders filled: 27
Percent to be filled: 0 %
Number of interstate clearance orders received: 0
Number of interstate clearance orders initiated: 2
(ii) Plan for upcoming year
Number of agricultural job of agricultural job orders and openings: 24 job orders and 600 openings
Number of agricultural job orders filled: 24
Percent to be filled: 95%
Number of interstate clearance orders received: 0
Number of interstate clearance orders initiated: 3

F. Other Requirements
State Monitor Advocate
(i) The State Monitor Advocate has written and reviewed the 2014 West Virginia Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP).

Review and Public Comment
(ii) Beginning in March 2014, various staff from public and private entities, agricultural employers and organizations were contacted and invited to provide feedback for the 2014 AOP. These people were informed that the 2013 AOP was available for review on the Work Force WV webpage, prior to submitting comments for the 2014 AOP. Beginning April 15, 2014 through May 15, 2014, a draft AOP was published on the Workforce West Virginia webpage at www.workforce.org for review and comments. The final AOP will be submitted to United States Department of Labor (DOL) on May 15, 2014; however, this document may be updated, if additional comments are received after this date through June 30, 2014. Copies of all written comments received will be forwarded to the DOL. If the plan requires a modification, a copy of any such amendment will be sent to DOL. The final AOP which is submitted to DOL will remain posted on the agency webpage for future reference.
Below are a list of individuals, agencies and organizations contacted to provide information for the 2014 Wagner-Peyser Agricultural Outreach Plan.

**Local County Health Departments**
Berkley County
Cabell County
Jefferson County
Putnam County
Summers County

**Telemon Corporation (NFWJ Program)**
West Virginia Work Force Region Executive Directors
Work Force Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7

**West Virginia Department of Agriculture**
West Virginia Extension Services- West Virginia University
Local Farm Bureau Agencies
Catholic Charities of WV*
WV Beekeepers Association
WV Nursery & Landscaping Association
WV Grape Growers Association
WV Beef Industry Council
Shenandoah Valley Medical Services*
Aviagen Turkey, Inc.
Pilgrim’s Pride Corporation
Gritt’s Farm & Greenhouse*
G & G Nursery*
Heston Farm Winery*
Daniels Vineyards*
The Wine Tree*

*Denotes that these employers were interviewed by the SMA and they provided information to the SMA which is included in this plan, during face-to-face visits with them.