

Addendum

Considerations for Conducting Rapid Community Assessment in Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Communities



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Purpose

This document outlines considerations and guidelines for working with migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSFWs)¹ as part of a Rapid Community Assessment (RCA). A full RCA guide with detailed steps and adaptable tools is available on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#).

RCA Step 1: Identifying Objectives & Communities of Focus

Identify Your Objective(s)

An RCA may be conducted with MSFWs and other agricultural-related workers for many reasons. Some example objectives include:

- Understand what agricultural workers are thinking about vaccines use and access, including access to information.
- Characterize MSFWs in and around a geographic area to aid public health authorities in planning and delivering vaccination services (i.e., vaccination clinics, vaccine education) in their community(ies).
- Understand demographic and other sociocultural characteristics and types of migration patterns in the community(ies) for the purpose of increasing vaccine uptake.
- Understand communication channels and how MSFWs use and consume media in order to promote vaccine uptake more effectively.
- Identify opportunities for culturally- and linguistically-appropriate partnership and local program and service changes to increase accessibility, confidence in and uptake of vaccine.
- Identify specific migration status legal concerns that some MSFWs may have that might prevent them from seeking vaccination and develop strategies that consider such concerns.

When identifying objectives, consider how they might be integrated with other existing programs and plans affecting MSFWs, such as efforts to promote flu vaccines or other health and education promotion.

Identify Your Community(ies) of Focus

When thinking about MSFW communities to focus on for the RCA, consider the following relevant characteristics to better define that population:

- Geographic area (e.g., statewide, specific county(ies), specific agricultural region)
- Time or season of the year (e.g., peak harvesting season, times when migratory workers arrive to the area)
- Type of work contracts (e.g., permanent, seasonal, direct hire vs. hired by contractors, H-2A or H-2B temporary worker visa contract)
- Type of worker (e.g., seasonal local, regular border crosser, migration within the U.S., migration from overseas)
- Types of industry and job roles (e.g., crop, livestock, packinghouse)
- Immigration status (e.g., undocumented worker, H-2A worker, legal permanent resident, U.S. citizen)

¹There is no single, standard definition of MSFW or agricultural worker in the U.S. In general, farmworkers or agricultural workers include a variety of occupations, including field crop workers, nursery workers, livestock workers, and workers in food produce packinghouses. The term "migrant farmworker" is often used to refer to persons who travel from their home base to another location within the U.S., or from another country to the U.S., to perform agricultural work. See the 2017-2018 National Agricultural Workers Survey and the U.S. Department of Agriculture for more information.



- Country of birth
- Primary language spoken and English language proficiency (speaking and reading)
- Racial/ethnic group (e.g., Hispanic/Latino, Black, specific indigenous Mesoamerican groups such as Mixtecos or Zapotecos, Haitian, Mexican, Salvadoran)
- Gender
- Age
- Family status
- Education and literacy
- Housing (e.g., owned or rented house or apartment, migrant camp, employer provided housing, H-2A housing)
- Farm or other worksite locations
- Other locations and times when MSFWs tend to congregate (e.g., ethnic markets and restaurants, places of worship, national, religious and other events)
- Health insurance status
- Established healthcare provider relationships

If you have limited information about MSFWs in your area, conduct a literature review and speak with multiple key local contacts (see the [Identify Community Partners](#) section in RCA Step 2 below) to learn about the population and how to best identify sub-groups. However, since MSFW migration patterns are rapidly changing, key local contact insight/opinions should be balanced with data and on-the-ground observations.

Review Existing Data

There are a number of sources that may be useful for gathering published data:

- Local and state health departments (including programs or projects focused on MSFWs)
- U.S. Department of Labor
 - » [Monitor Advocate Systems](#)²
 - » [Office of Foreign Labor Certification](#) (e.g., data on number of H-2A workers, employers, work and housing location, arrival and departure dates)
- [U.S. Department of Commerce census](#) by industry for each state³
- [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) (e.g., crop information)
- [U.S. Census of Agriculture](#)
- [National Agricultural Workers Survey](#)
- State farmworker [enumeration studies](#)

²The Monitor Advocate System is a federal/state monitoring system that ensures MSFWs have equitable access to career services, skill development, and workforce protections. It also has H-2A/H-2B job information.

³This data may be found on the jurisdiction/state's department of labor website.



- [National Center for Farmworker Health \(NCFH\)](#)
 - » Farm labor estimates for crop and animal production
 - » Webinar resources
- [Migrant Education/Migrant Head Start](#)
- [Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages](#) (e.g., seasonality data)
- [Federally Qualified Health Centers](#) (FQHCs)
- [Migrant Health Centers](#)
- [Local Farmworker-Serving Organizations](#)
- Local Mexican, Central American, or other relevant consulate branches
- Local universities that work with MSFWs

When reviewing existing data, keep in mind that:

- Literacy levels, on average, may be at or less than 8th grade school equivalent.
- MSFWs may only speak the language predominant in their community of origin. For example, some people from predominantly Spanish-speaking countries may only speak non-Spanish indigenous languages. You should aim to gain a sense of the population, seasonality, migration, and geography of the community as well as languages spoken and literacy levels.
- Data sources about MSFWs may have limitations and may contain bias (e.g., relying on employer permission to collect data from workers). Data is also generally coarse/aggregated or may not take into consideration seasonal workforce fluctuations; thus, local communities you work with may look different than what existing data show.
- Community members will likely have a better understanding of seasonal migration patterns than public data sources, so you will need to compare data with their insights.

Therefore, consider gathering information from:

- Local community organizations that represent and interact with specific groups, such as indigenous Mesoamerican groups
- Migrant and community health centers
- Churches and other religious organizations
- Employers and employer associations
- Industry academic researchers, who can be found by searching publications and websites of local universities
- Local placement agencies or labor contractors who may have key, current, and specific information on the MSFWs they hire in a specific area
- Migrant education programs
- Farmworker rights advocates and labor unions



Human Subjects Clearance

If your organization or agency has Institutional Review Board requirements (IRB), submit your RCA plan for IRB approval and/or other type(s) of research determination approval. It is important that the rights of participants are respected and prioritized, including protection of personal or identifying information during data collection. The following protective practices are recommended when working with MSFWs:

- It is preferable for those conducting the RCA to reflect the culture of the community of focus and be fluent in their spoken language.
 - Being affiliated with a respected community partner can help to build trust and gain access to the community of focus. If those implementing the RCA are not from the community themselves, they might consider asking a trusted partner to accompany them.
 - Avoid taking photos or collecting personally identifiable information unless it is strictly necessary for the assessment, and you are sure consent is truly understood and given, and you can adequately protect data confidentiality.
 - Steps should be included in the data collection process to ensure participants fully understand the purpose of the community assessment and any possible risks or benefits (to them or community), given that education and literacy levels may be at 8th grade or lower, and language/translation can be challenging.
 - Be sensitive to language regarding immigration status; do not directly ask for unauthorized immigration status. Ask questions related to this topic and avoid public health research terms like “informants” or “surveillance” that can have associations with government related institutions like ICE/immigration.
 - Avoid asking for personal identifiers such as state ID and addresses. Confidentiality is the highest priority.
 - Be aware that using aliases is common among MSFWs, especially among undocumented people or those with mixed documentation status families (i.e., with both documented and undocumented family members).
 - Consider adding clarification or assurances to address any concerns (e.g., not providing their real names) the MSFWs may have related to public charge.
 - If visiting a worksite and crew leaders’ permission is not obtained first, data collectors may be asked to leave or removed from the worksite or workers may experience retaliation for participating. You can further protect MSFWs from the risk of retaliation by not asking for identifying information of their employers, such as employer names.
 - While employer and crew leader or contractors support is encouraged, it is preferred to conduct interviews or listening sessions without employers or crew leaders present as there may be significant power dynamics between MSFWs and employers that may change the way employees respond.
 - Be prepared to offer information or resources to MSFWs while conducting surveys or interviews (e.g., where to get vaccinated, transportation resources, legal aid assistance resources).
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RCA Step 2: Planning for the Assessment

Identify Community Partners

It is critical to work closely with community organizations (especially those that work with MSFWs) that represent and serve your communities of focus. These include:

- Faith-based groups
- Promotoras/es (i.e., community health workers)/traditional health workers
- Farmworker-serving and other grassroots organizations
- Workers unions
- Labor contractors or agencies
- Advocacy groups
- Schools/migrant education
- Low/no barrier clinics/FQHCs
- Legal aid/immigration services
- Unemployment office
- Other social service organizations
- Agricultural Extension offices
- Academic institutions with expertise in MSFW communities
- Consulates representing the population
- Other health programs (e.g., WIC, hospitals, education departments, public housing agencies, fire/EMS, public safety)

NOTE: Some very rural communities may not have many resources or organizations but have local advocates. Visiting local gathering places (e.g., food trucks, stores, check cashing or money order locations, churches, funeral homes) can help identify these unconventional partners.

If there are many potential community partners and/or if you need introductions to community groups, start with organizations that are already engaged in vaccination and/or health services (e.g., clinics) and build from there. Consider partners' bandwidth and capacity and engage them early in the process.

Obtain Support

Once you have identified potential community partners:

- Meet with partners to understand their concerns about vaccine-preventable diseases among MSFWs and offer the RCA as an option for addressing these concerns.



- Obtain permission from farm owner or employer before conducting any outreach or data collection activities at the work location. If data collectors are visiting farms or work sites without advance permission, they should quickly identify and speak with the farm owner or employer/crew leader/contractor/mayordomo (person in charge) regarding the visit. When visiting farms or worksites, ensure that data collectors obtain the farm owner or employer or crew leader's permission to avoid getting removed from the site or employer retaliation toward the workers.

NOTE: When engaging employers or industry representatives, it is important to inform them that activities are not regulated or audited. This can help improve participation and promote candid information sharing.

Identify Resources

In addition to the RCA team, here are some key resources you may need:

- Local community partners who are familiar with where MSFWs live, shop, work, worship, and congregate.
- Training for staff awareness on how to safely conduct surveys or interviews in a farm setting.
- Translation and interpretation services.
- Printed educational materials (developed with literacy and language needs in mind) to provide to MSFWs who have questions. The following organizations may have materials for farmworkers:
 - » [National Center for Farmworker Health, Inc](#)
 - » [UC Davis Western Center for Agricultural Health and Safety](#)
 - » [Migrant Clinicians Network](#)
- Resources or Frequently Asked Questions related to public charge and immigration status to mitigate fears of using public health services. For examples, see the following:
 - » [National Immigration Law Center Webinar](#)
 - » [Immigrants Rights to Health Care: Treatment and Coverage](#)

Choose Assessment Methods

If possible, and to make the assessment more comprehensive, it is important to use a combination of methods to gather information from employers, healthcare providers, community trusted representatives, and MSFWs and their families. These methods can include surveys, focus group discussions, community interviews, intercept interviews, and observations.

Considerations for choosing assessment methods with MSFWs:

- Survey methodology may be strongly affected by low literacy levels and translation challenges. If used, it is recommended that surveys are conducted verbally.
- Phone calls and texts may be costly for workers, and some may not have a reliable network connection in rural or remote locations. If phones are used, WhatsApp is preferred as it is free of cost.
- Conducting intercept surveys at both community sites (such as stores and restaurants) and at work and housing sites ensures that you are capturing information from temporarily unemployed MSFWs and employed farmworkers who may not have transportation. It may also help to provide a more representative sample of MSFW communities and be more convenient to potential participants.



A methodology for consideration, not included in the RCA Guide, is participatory mapping. This exercise involves creating a visual map of the community with the input of the community members. This can be helpful in characterizing mobility (reasons for movement, trends, and patterns), areas of community congregation, and increasing understanding of community perceptions and access to resources. This may be particularly relevant for MSFW communities as populations shift and change frequently which may not be captured in publicly available data. For more information see the [Population Connectivity Across Borders toolkit](#).

Form the Assessment Team

Once you have determined the scope of data collection, assess how many team members will be needed and the level of commitment from them over the course of the RCA to achieve your objectives.

In forming the RCA team:

- Rural areas may require larger teams to visit dispersed areas.
- Consider the particular importance of trusted relationships for people in these communities and include members from the community of focus in the RCA team, when possible.
- Project staff from outside the community of focus should position themselves as guests and defer to local community knowledge and relationships.
- Promotoras/es are trusted by the MSFW community and can often be engaged in data collection.
- Engaging MSFWs and key partner organizations representatives in the planning, implementation, dissemination, and evaluation phases as content experts is recommended.
- Train and orient the team as needed on special considerations for working in MSFW communities including establishing rapport with MSFW, reducing bias in data collection methods, how to work with interpreters, and confidentiality protocols.

Recruit Participants

There are many strategies to recruit MSFW participants for data collection, including:

- Outreach through
 - » Local community partners (e.g., promotoras/es, women and family organizations, farmworker unions, legal advocates, migrant education programs)
 - » Churches
 - » Schools
 - » Employers and contractors (can be identified by contacting the state Occupational Safety and Health Administration or agriculture department, state monitor advocate, farm bureaus, and agricultural extension agencies)
- Visits to
 - » Farms
 - » Housing development corporations or other places workers live



- » Public spaces frequented by MSFWs and their family members, such as culturally specific grocery and other stores, bodegas, tianguis, check cashing stores, and rodeos

Also consider the following:

- It is most effective to work through trusted leaders, representatives, and employers to identify workers and create a safe and open environment for them to participate in assessment activities.
 - Strive to include non-work sites for assessment activities. This will help you to meet more people from the MSFW community, provide more convenient locations for potential participants, and include more participants (e.g., temporarily unemployed MSFWs).
 - Include work or labor housing sites to ensure that workers without personal transportation can participate.
 - Informal conversations can be an important aspect of this participation.
 - If possible, include MSFW families in the assessment.
 - Recruit participants representing diverse key groups of MSFWs (e.g., genders, languages, racial/ethnic groups, occupations, immigration or visa status, agricultural or production areas) in your geographic assessment area.
 - Women might be more likely to share detailed/informed health and family well-being information, especially about children, and should be approached by another woman if possible. Similarly, men might be more comfortable speaking with another man.
 - If planning to administer the assessment at work sites, it is best to reach out to farm owners in advance to explain the project and objectives, answer questions and respond to concerns.
 - Providing cash or other incentives (e.g., gift cards) for participating in data collection activities can facilitate engagement. Ensure that any participant incentives are in a form that MSFWs can use.
 - » If providing incentives at work sites, obtain employer approval.
 - » If distributing gift cards, seek advice from local community-based organizations regarding appropriate amounts or popular stores for the local farmworker community.
 - » Pre-activated Visa gift cards are recommended. Non-activated gift cards are confusing and not recommended because many MSFWs, especially those who have recently arrived in the U.S., are unfamiliar with gift cards. Provide a piece of paper with instructions on how to use it, along with a phone number if the participant has any trouble.
 - » Company checks can be difficult to cash-in at check cashing locations for MSFWs who do not have bank accounts. If feasible, money order payments may be better for farmworkers who are migrating.
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RCA Step 3: Collecting and Analyzing Data

Data Collection

The RCA Guide offers a variety of data collection tools that can be adapted to MSFW communities, including community interviews, listening sessions, observations, surveys, and social listening.

Data collection forms, surveys, and interview guides should be prepared in languages spoken by the community of focus at appropriate literacy levels prior to the RCA and piloted before beginning data collection, if possible. If piloting is not possible, survey materials should be reviewed by team members and partners who are from the local community before distribution. Check questionnaires used by organizations with expertise in farmworker surveys. For example:

- [U.S. Department of Labor Questionnaire Content](#)
- [California Institute for Rural Studies](#) Farmworker Survey

Consider the following:

- While immigration status is often an important indicator and social determinant of health, it is also a very sensitive subject. If the data is being collected by a government agency, it is generally not advisable to collect this information, and it should never be tied to any personal identifiers or specific locations.
- Asking what language the participant spoke in the home as a child may be another way to better assess the presence of indigenous Mesoamerican farmworkers who speak Spanish and do not identify themselves as indigenous racially.
- Data collection may require more time, knowledge and expertise working with indigenous Mesoamerican communities, and team members who share the culture and language of the community of focus.
- Data collection times should be flexible (evenings, weekends) to accommodate MSFW schedules. Consider that many MSFWs work unconventional schedules at night or start working very early (e.g., 2:00 a.m. or 3:00 a.m. during the summer).
- Include an RCA representative's contact information on any survey in case participants have questions.

Data Analysis

When conducting data analysis of assessments with MSFW populations, consider the following:

- It is critical to interpret qualitative data within the socio-cultural and linguistic context.
 - After completing analysis and write up of preliminary findings, consult community partners or other community members to ensure that the findings reflect community narratives and experiences.
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RCA Step 4: Reporting Findings and Identifying Solutions

In addition to reporting findings to institutional stakeholders and partners, RCA findings should be reported in person in the communities where data collection was conducted to facilitate interpretation, validation, and discussion of solutions. It is important to acknowledge everyone's participation at these community meetings.

In addition, it is recommended that a plain language summary of findings with supporting visuals is disseminated in English, Spanish, and predominant Indigenous or other languages. Also consider other channels to reach MSFWs to share findings, such as local radio stations, Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok.

RCA Step 5: Evaluating Efforts

It is important to evaluate how well RCA efforts reached the intended MSFW communities and gathered the necessary insights. It is recommended to:

1. Assess whether any subgroups within your community of focus were difficult to engage.
2. Consider the limitations of reach due to RCA timing given the seasonality of farm work and resulting changing populations.
3. Review findings with key local contacts and experts on MSFWs to discuss unexpected findings.
4. Get feedback from RCA participants and partners about their experience with the RCA and recommendations to improve the methodology.