



Improving Lives from Farm to Table

August 8, 2023

High Road Training Partnerships
California Workforce Development Board
800 Capitol Mall
Sacramento, CA 95814

To Whom it May Concern:

Andrew and Williamson Fresh Produce is a grower shipper of quality berries and tomatoes from California and Mexico under our Good Farms brand. We agreed to become a founder of Equitable Food Initiative more than a decade ago because we know how much our business depends on a skilled and engaged workforce. A&W was the first company to certify our Oxnard, CA operation to EFI standards, and since then have certified all of our proprietary farms and most of our contract farms to the program. We also piloted the "Produce and Reduce" waste management program on our Santa Maria, CA ranch, and have helped to pilot a number of other EFI programs.

A&W has definitely seen the benefits of an engaged workforce, and now believe more than ever that creating channels for workers to share suggestions and concerns has made us a better company. But those workers are getting harder and harder to find in California, and turnover remains a real challenge even when you can offer conditions that meet EFI's high standards. A&W therefore invests heavily in training and retention strategies to make sure we have enough of the agricultural professionals we will need to compete. I chair the EFI board, and have encouraged the organization to seek formal recognition for the training EFI provides, and to develop a broader credentialing system that will help A&W and other employers to identify workers with the skills we need for our business.

That's why I am writing to ask that you support EFI's proposal to continue developing the High Road to Better Agricultural Jobs. I want EFI to succeed in pulling together the stakeholders in this system because I know A&W will be competing for a scarce pool of workers with the skills to interface with the evolution of farming as more and more new technologies are introduced. If the grant is approved, I will work with EFI to engage my fellow grower-shippers and our trade associations in the process. I also look forward to bringing some of the waste management training from "Produce and Reduce" to my other California operations.

Thank you for your consideration of the proposal.

Sincerely,

Ernie Farley
Partner



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California Workforce Development Board
800 Capitol Mall
Sacramento, CA 95814

To whom it may concern:

On behalf of Jobs for the Future (JFF), I am writing to support the application of Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) for a one-year planning and development grant from the High Road Training Partnership Program.

JFF is a national leader in workforce development and education. For almost 40 years, we have worked across sectors to achieve economic advancement for individuals who face barriers to economic mobility. This includes significant work in California's agriculture sector (such as our skills mapping of agriculture career pathways in [California's Central Valley](#)), as well as designing programs for learners from immigrant and refugee backgrounds (such as our work with [Tyson Foods](#) to create advancement pathways for food production workers).

JFF has been working closely with EFI for the past year to lay the groundwork for a first-of-its-kind credentialing program for agriculture professionals. Our shared vision is a skilling and credentialing ecosystem that can effectively train and qualify agriculture workers to meet the needs of a 21st-century food economy.

If this grant is approved, as detailed in the proposal, JFF will work with EFI to build on the consultation we have already conducted with stakeholders from across the California agriculture and training sectors. We intend to formalize a network of organizations overseeing a common approach to frontline skilling in agriculture, beginning with a cross-sector convening in early 2024. Together with EFI and these partners, JFF will support the development of a validated skill taxonomy that will allow EFI and other network partners to begin designing pilot curricula, training and assessment processes to test in the next phase of the project.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions. And thank you in advance for your consideration of the proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tameshia Bridges Mansfield".

Tameshia Bridges Mansfield
Vice President, Workforce and Regional Economies



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August 8, 2023

Mr. Tim Rainey
Executive Director
California Workforce Development Board
800 Capitol Mall
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Rainey,

As president of United Farmworkers, I am writing to express support for Equitable Food Initiative's (EFI) proposal for a planning and development grant from the High Road Training Partnership program to support development of a High Road to Better Agricultural Jobs. As you know, UFW has been working for over six decades for a safer and just food supply, and fighting to uphold the dignity, voice and agency of the agricultural workforce. UFW was also a founder of EFI, and we continue to serve on its multi-stakeholder board to find common ground on strategies to improve the lives of farmworkers.

While strong collective bargaining agreements provide the most enforceable protections for farmworkers, a range of approaches will be needed to improve wages and working conditions across the entire agricultural workforce. The COVID pandemic taught all Americans how essential farmworkers are to a functioning food system, and the current farm labor shortage has certainly made that point clear to employers. This situation creates an opening where labor and management interests can align: providing and formally recognizing skills, credentials and career ladders to farmworkers will make farms more productive and provide new economic opportunities to workers.

UFW has consulted with EFI staff on their plans for a formal system to document, train, assess and credential agricultural skills. We will partner with EFI and other stakeholders across California to discuss the details of a credentialing system, and work with employers and state agencies to expand access to skill training for farmworkers. To advance this work, I hope you will favorably consider EFI's proposal to support the next step in the process of formalizing a skill credentialing system for farmworkers.

Sincerely,

Teresa Romero
President