

Developed and proposed by: The Labor and Workforce Development and Systemic Inequities Program Teams

Position title: Agricultural Workforce Mobility and Economic Development Advisor

Headquarter location and coverage area: The proposed headquarters for this position is the UCCE Napa County Office, with a multicounty coverage area that includes Napa, Sonoma, Solano, and Lake Counties. Napa County is centrally located within the proposed service area and is well-positioned to support regional workforce development efforts across a diverse agricultural economy.

The region produces more than 80 agricultural commodities and sits at the intersection of coastal specialty crop production, the Sacramento Valley, and the Delta. Agricultural employers are adapting to changing consumer preferences, climate pressures, labor constraints, mechanization, and evolving production systems. These transitions are creating new workforce development needs that cut across commodities and industries.

Combined, the four counties are home to approximately 27,000 farmworkers and numerous agricultural employers. The region offers a unique opportunity to develop workforce training programs that help agricultural workers strengthen existing skills, diversify technical competencies, advance into higher-paying careers, and prepare for emerging workforce needs associated with evolving agricultural technologies and equipment.

The Napa office benefits from strong regional partnerships and serves as a hub for multicounty Cooperative Extension collaboration. Established relationships among agricultural producers, workforce development agencies, educational institutions, and community-based organizations provide a strong foundation for programming that addresses agricultural labor needs, supports career pathway development, and contributes to regional economic development strategies. Given the significant Spanish-speaking agricultural workforce throughout the proposed service area, this position would also strengthen UCCE's capacity to deliver culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate educational programming.

Position overview: This Advisor will develop an applied research and extension program focused on agricultural workforce mobility, workforce readiness, and economic opportunity within agricultural communities.

The Advisor will provide professional training and educational opportunities that help agricultural workers strengthen technical, communication, leadership, and problem-solving skills; diversify agricultural competencies; prepare for emerging technologies and equipment; and advance into higher-paying and more stable agricultural careers.

The Advisor will also support agricultural employers and organizations in implementing workforce development strategies that improve recruitment, retention, employee engagement, organizational effectiveness, and long-term workforce sustainability and will promote the role of farmworkers and agriculture workforce as a viable and significant aspect of community and economy.

In collaboration with community economic development practitioners, workforce development organizations, educational institutions, and agricultural stakeholders, the Advisor will identify emerging workforce needs, labor market opportunities, and strategies that contribute to economic mobility, workforce retention, and community prosperity.

Applicants should possess education and/or professional experience in workforce development, economic development, agricultural labor economics, business management or administration, adult education, organizational development, agricultural education, or a related field. Spanish language proficiency is required. Experience working with agricultural worker communities is preferred.

Justification: California agriculture is undergoing significant transition as producers respond to labor shortages, climate variability, mechanization, changing production practices, and evolving consumer preferences. These changes are creating increasing demand for workers with specialized technical, operational, communication, and leadership skills.

Despite significant agricultural employment throughout the region, there is currently no coordinated, research-based Cooperative Extension program focused on agricultural workforce development, workforce mobility, and economic opportunity across commodities. Stakeholder input from commodity organizations, workforce development agencies, educational institutions, and community-based organizations consistently identifies gaps in bilingual training, equipment operation, leadership development, communication skills, and career advancement pathways.

This position fills a critical gap within the UC ANR network by providing dedicated expertise focused on workforce readiness, workforce mobility, and economic development across agricultural sectors rather than within a single commodity or discipline.

The position will address three key issues:

1. Agricultural workforce needs are rapidly evolving as technologies, production systems, and labor markets change. UC ANR is uniquely positioned to connect research, innovation, and workforce training to help prepare today's workforce for tomorrow's agricultural economy.
2. Farmworkers and their families represent a significant and underserved population within the proposed service area. This position will strengthen connections between agricultural worker communities and UC ANR resources while expanding access to educational opportunities, career advancement pathways, and economic mobility.
3. Agricultural workforce development is increasingly recognized as a critical component of regional economic resilience. This Advisor will help agricultural communities identify workforce needs, strengthen labor force participation, improve workforce retention, and support local economic development strategies that benefit both employers and workers.

This position aligns with UC ANR Strategic Vision 2040 by advancing resilient agricultural and food systems, supporting thriving people and communities, promoting economic opportunity, and facilitating innovation and workforce readiness within California agriculture.

Extension: The Advisor will collaborate with UCCE Advisors, Specialists, faculty, Research and Extension Centers, growers, commodity organizations, workforce development agencies, community colleges, adult education providers, and community-based organizations to develop and deliver workforce education programs.

Extension activities will include bilingual field-based trainings, workshops, short courses, train-the-trainer programs, leadership development programs, workforce resource fairs, and educational materials designed to reach both entry-level and advanced agricultural workers.

Programming may address technical agricultural competencies, equipment operation, communication skills, leadership development, workplace effectiveness, workforce retention, organizational development, and emerging workforce needs associated with changing agricultural technologies and production systems.

Research: Applied research activities may include evaluation of workforce development programs, agricultural labor market trends, career pathway development, workforce mobility, organizational practices that support employee development and retention, and approaches for delivering culturally and linguistically responsive workforce education.

Additional research may examine the intersection of workforce development, technological change, economic resilience, climate adaptation, and agricultural community well-being. Research outputs may include peer-reviewed publications, California Agriculture articles, technical reports, extension publications, needs assessments, workforce analyses, and educational resources.

UC ANR network: The Advisor will actively participate in the Labor and Workforce Development Program Team and collaborate closely with UCCE Advisors, Specialists, AES and non-AES faculty, and Research and Extension Centers working in production agriculture, agricultural economics, engineering, community development, health and safety, and adult education.

The position would complement existing UC ANR workforce development efforts by providing county-based expertise, regional partnerships, and applied research opportunities focused specifically on agricultural workforce mobility and economic development.

Network external to UC ANR: Potential partners include the Napa Valley Farmworker Foundation, Fundación de la Voz de los Viñedos, Lake County Winegrape Commission's Master Vigneron Academy, California FarmLink, Center for Land-Based Learning, workforce development boards, community colleges, adult education programs, agricultural employers, commodity organizations, Farm Bureaus, Agricultural Commissioners, Resource Conservation Districts, and community-based organizations.

Support: The Area Director for Sonoma, Napa, and Marin Counties has confirmed support for this position and will provide office space, office supplies, county vehicle access, and administrative support. The Area Directors for Mendocino and Lake Counties and Yolo, Solano, and Sacramento Counties have also confirmed support for this position.

Other support: Potential funding sources include state and federal workforce development programs, agricultural workforce initiatives, economic development grants, community college and adult education partnerships, commodity organizations, foundations focused on workforce advancement and economic mobility, and agencies supporting rural and agricultural economic development.