



*August 2025*

# Missouri Farm Labor Guide

***MX199***

 **Extension**  
*University of Missouri*  
an equal opportunity/ADA institution

# Missouri Farm Labor Guide

The following authors revised this guide:

Ryan Milhollin	Assistant Extension Professor, Agricultural Business and Policy
Robert Russell	Senior Program Director, Labor and Workforce Development
Wesley Tucker	Field Specialist in Agricultural Business
Matt Ernst	Independent Writer

In agriculture, employees are important resources. The decision to hire additional labor begins by recognizing a work need. From that point, employers must make many decisions and create a fair, effective process to attract job candidates, hire employees, support the human resource function and ensure that employees are contributing to the business.

This guide outlines multiple factors that affect agricultural employers who establish and manage a workforce. It divides the employment process into six segments: recruitment; hiring; on-boarding, training and mentoring; operations; retention; and termination. By understanding these

six steps, employers will establish a good approach to human resources management.

*Note: This guide is meant to share general information about developing an approach to human resources management. Information shared within this guide is assumed correct at the date of publication but is subject to change in the future. The material in this guide should not be used in place of legal, accounting or other professional opinions. Agricultural employers are encouraged to engage an attorney, accountant, consultant and other necessary professionals to ensure their specific policies and human resources systems satisfy all necessary labor laws and business standards.*

Find this [Missouri Farm Labor Guide](#)<sup>1</sup>  
and other MU Extension [farm labor resources](#)<sup>2</sup> online.

1. [extension.missouri.edu/m199](http://extension.missouri.edu/m199)

2. [extension.missouri.edu/programs/agricultural-business-and-policy-extension/farm-labor](http://extension.missouri.edu/programs/agricultural-business-and-policy-extension/farm-labor)



National Institute of Food and Agriculture  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

*This material is based on work supported by USDA/NIFA under Award Number 2015-49200-24226.*

# Table of contents

<b>1. Recruitment.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Job description.....	1
1.2 Finding job candidates and applicants.....	3
1.3 Job applications.....	5
1.4 Resources list.....	5
<b>2. Hiring .....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Interview.....	7
2.2 Background, drug and reference checks .....	10
2.3 Eligibility verification.....	11
2.4 Extending an offer .....	12
2.5 Probationary period.....	12
2.6 New hire paperwork filing .....	12
2.7 Independent contractors .....	13
2.8 Resources list.....	13
<b>3. Employee development.....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1 Onboarding.....	15
3.2 Training .....	16
3.3 Coaching .....	18
3.4 Mentoring.....	19
3.5 Resources list.....	20
<b>4. Operations.....</b>	<b>22</b>
4.1 Safety.....	22
4.2 Compensation.....	22
4.3 Benefits.....	26
4.4 Taxes .....	28
4.5 Youth labor .....	30
4.6 Insurance.....	31
4.7 Other laws.....	32
4.8 Employee manual.....	33
4.9 Recordkeeping.....	34
4.10 Resources list.....	36

<b>5. Retention .....</b>	<b>40</b>
5.1 Human resources system .....	40
5.2 Communication .....	40
5.3 Feedback .....	41
5.4 Resources list .....	43
<b>6. Termination .....</b>	<b>45</b>
6.1 Employment-at-will .....	45
6.2 Final wages .....	45
6.3 Reporting .....	45
6.4 Insurance benefits .....	46
6.5 Exit interviews .....	46
6.6 Resources list .....	47
<b>7. Appendix .....</b>	<b>48</b>

# 1. Recruitment

---

The recruitment process begins with identifying a work need in your operation. Start by brainstorming parameters for the job position. For example, does the business need full-time or part-time help? What time of day and day of the week — mornings, afternoons, evenings, weekdays, weekends and so forth — does the business need help? Is the work need seasonal or year-round? After considering questions like these, employers can start creating a job description.

## 1.1 Job description

For employers, job descriptions are important for several reasons. When recruiting workers, a job description clearly lists a particular position's needs and expectations. It should help job-searchers determine whether they would qualify for and have interest in the job.

**A job description** communicates needs and expectations for a particular position.

During the interview process, a job description can help an employer consistently track whether potential hires can fill a position's needs and meet its expectations. With a clear job description, an employee — and the company at large — may better understand his or her role in the business and the relationships he or she should create with coworkers, vendors and others.

After hiring a worker, an employer may look for differences between the job description and the new hire's background to identify

areas in which the employee could benefit from training. On a routine basis, a job description may help employers review worker performance. Comparing duties and responsibilities listed in a job description with actual performance can highlight areas where workers have excelled, need to improve or require extra help.

Written job descriptions may serve as legal documents. They should not contain any discriminatory language, including references to religious affiliation, sex, race, age, nationality, and physical or mental disabilities.

### 1.1.1 Job analysis

Before writing a job description, perform a job analysis. The analysis should outline the details of the required work for the position. Conducting a job analysis involves three steps: defining a job's tasks and responsibilities, listing required qualifications and explaining the environment where the employee will work.

#### 3 steps of a job analysis

1. Identify tasks, responsibilities and decision-making requirements.
2. Outline necessary qualifications.
3. Describe the work environment.

Tasks and responsibilities refer to specific duties and decisions for which the employee would be held accountable. Qualifications include skills, knowledge, experience, education and licenses needed to perform the job. For jobs that involve physical labor, a qualifications analysis should also note the physical demands. Environmental

factors include the physical location where the employee will perform the job and the working conditions. Work environment also includes the type of interactions an employee may have with coworkers, managers, customers and vendors, and if the employee will supervise others.

To analyze an existing job, an employer could interview current employees and collect views about their work. While analyzing a job, consider whether certain duties are being overlooked. In those cases, a business may need to hire additional labor or expand the scope of current positions to fill the needs.

Although a job analysis should be specific to a position in your business, reviewing general information about similar jobs can help you ensure your job analysis aligns with industry expectations for a particular position. [O\\*NET OnLine](#),<sup>1</sup> which is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, has resources to help with conducting a job analysis.

### 1.1.2 Writing a job description

Based on information collected during a job analysis, an employer can write a job description for a certain position. In most cases, written job descriptions have at least six parts:

1. Title. A job title should concisely summarize the position and indicate its level of seniority, which could be described with terms such as “manager” or “trainee.”
2. Job summary. A job summary is a short paragraph that explains the position’s duties, responsibilities, expected qualifications and physical demands. Because the summary reflects

### 6 parts of writing a job description

1. Title
2. Job summary
3. Job duties
4. Job qualifications
5. Work relationships
6. Work schedule and environment

information included throughout the job description, consider writing it after finishing the other sections. Employers can use the summary for promotional purposes.

3. Job duties. A job typically involves a set of duties and tasks. In this section, list all required duties for the position. Estimate the percentage of total work time each duty will take, and list the duties in order starting with those taking the most time. Because job positions might evolve, employers may state that a position could involve “other duties as assigned.”
4. Job qualifications. Qualifications are the skills, knowledge, experience, education, certifications and other personal characteristics that are essential for an employee to do the job.
5. Work relationships. Generally, employees will collaborate with coworkers. Note where an employee fits in the organizational hierarchy by naming reporting relationships. In other words, who’s the employee’s supervisor, and who does the employee supervise?
6. Work schedule and environment. Schedule refers to typical hours; overtime needs; and the potential for work during evenings, weekends, holidays or other irregular times. Environment involves working conditions such as if the work is inside or outside



and whether the job entails working mostly with a team or independently.

In a job description, employers may choose whether they mention salary and benefits, which include paid time off, insurance coverage, retirement contributions, housing and training programs. Some employers prefer not to share that information. Instead, a description could state “salary commensurate with qualifications and experience.” Regardless of whether a description mentions pay, employers should determine the range the business would like to spend and job seekers would accept.

University of Missouri Extension provides a [Farm Job Description Checklist \(PDF\)](#)<sup>2</sup> you can use to outline key elements of a job description.

CareerOneStop, a resource sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, provides tips on how to use artificial intelligence (AI) software to develop job descriptions on its webpage [Create a Job Description](#).<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 Finding job candidates and applicants

To find job candidates, assemble a plan for publicizing your operation’s open positions. Depending on your local labor market and your work needs, participating in the H-2A program may help your operation to recruit seasonal and temporary farm laborers.

### 1.2.1 Promoting a position

Employers have several options for promoting job openings. You could consider advertising in local newspapers, publicizing

#### Where to publicize job openings

- Social media
- Newspapers and radio
- Community bulletin boards
- Industry association newsletters
- University job search websites
- Job posting or career websites
- Word of mouth among current employees

on local radio stations, or placing flyers on community bulletin boards.

Networking within the community or industry can also help spread the word about job openings. Networking might also help to pinpoint possible job candidates. Connecting with representatives from nearby universities and colleges and with local FFA or 4-H leaders may direct you to potential new hires. Drawing on a strong network of contacts can be a particularly effective recruitment strategy in a tight labor market.

If you’re hiring skilled labor, a professional recruiter may help to identify potential talent. You could also encourage your current employees to suggest qualified candidates from people they know. Some employers offer incentives to current employees who recommend a successful job candidate who is hired and continues working for a specified time.

Jobs can also be publicized on career websites. Several sites specifically serve the agriculture industry and provide job posting services. Such websites include AgCareers.com, Hansen Agri-Placement, agriCAREERS and AgriSeek. Other services that can help to match employers with job candidates include

Ag 1 Source and AGRI-SEARCH. Employers might also consider posting job descriptions to more general career websites, such as Indeed, Monster and CareerBuilder. Finally, Craigslist is a website where employers can post job listing classified ads to recruit employees in a local area. When posting job openings online, it is important to note that some websites might generate lots of leads but few qualified candidates.

Social media accounts maintained by the business or its employees can also be used to promote job openings. Posts to Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn and Instagram can attract attention to open positions. Plus, social networks encourage sharing, so ask your followers to spread the word.

University of Missouri Extension's [Farm Job Promotional Plan \(PDF\)](#)<sup>4</sup> is a worksheet you can use for developing a plan to promote your job opening.

Your farming business could consider offering internship or apprenticeship programs, which are types of work-based learning, to attract workers. In many cases, a business offering an internship program must pay interns the minimum wage and compensate them for overtime. However, depending on the internship's fit across seven conditions, it may not constitute employment. If it doesn't, then the business would not be required to pay minimum wage and overtime. The seven factors, established through case law, are known as the internship "test." The U.S. Department of Labor outlines the seven conditions in its fact sheet [Internship Programs Under the Fair Labor Standards Act](#).<sup>5</sup>

Apprenticeships, also known as "earn-and-learn" programs, combine paid work and an educational experience. Apprenticeships offer businesses several benefits, including building a pool of highly skilled, diverse workers; minimizing turnover; and encouraging high levels of productivity.

Often, large employers or trade associations facilitate apprenticeship programs. The U.S. Department of Labor operates a registration program for apprenticeships that satisfy a set of criteria. The process to register an apprenticeship is complex and can involve multiple steps. In some cases, an occupation may first need to gain approval as a recognized "apprenticeable" occupation before it could be considered for registration. You can find resources that will help with creating an apprenticeship program on the U.S. Department of Labor's webpage [Apprenticeship USA: Employers](#).<sup>6</sup> The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development provides resources for employers, providers and partners who would like to offer registered apprenticeships at [Apprenticeship Missouri](#).<sup>7</sup> You can also contact the agency to receive assistance with registering an apprenticeship.

Require all prospective employees to go through your operation's hiring process. Don't feel pressured to make exceptions for friends and family.

### **1.2.2 Participating in the H-2A program**

Temporary agricultural workers can enter the U.S. as foreign nationals through the H-2A program, which helps employers who lack enough domestic workers to bring foreign workers into the country for temporary or



seasonal work, normally lasting 10 months or less. This work includes farming activities for row crops and specialty crops, such as fruits, vegetables and nursery crops; jobs such as detasseling seed corn; and some livestock farm tasks.

Employers eligible to hire temporary agricultural workers must satisfy certain criteria and complete significant paperwork with government agencies, starting with the Missouri Office of Workforce Development. Typically, you must start the standard process 60 to 75 days prior to the work beginning. You can hire external agents or attorneys to help you streamline the H-2A visa process. More information about the H-2A visa program, employer requirements and contacts can be found in MU Extension publication G703, [Farmers Guide to the H-2A Visa Program](#).<sup>8</sup>

The **H-2A visa** program can help you recruit seasonal and temporary farm workers.

## 1.3 Job applications

Ask candidates interested in a job opening to complete an application. The application gives employers information that they need to decide whether an individual would do well in a job. In an application, avoid asking inappropriate, illegal or discriminatory questions. Consider packaging job applications with the job description. Then, potential applicants can review the job requirements before they apply. Go to the [job application template in the appendix](#) to find a sample application you can adapt to your needs.

### Screen job applicants into 3 groups

1. Those you want to interview
2. Those you might interview
3. Those you won't interview

Based on an applicant's on-paper presentation shared through an application or resume, employers can select strong candidates to move to the next phase of the selection process. To simplify the review process, divide applicants into groups, such as those you want to interview, those you might interview and those you won't interview. As you get to know job candidates, remember that personal characteristics such as attitude and work ethic are important to identify in the workers you ultimately hire.

## 1.4 Resources list

The information in this section was adapted from resources including the following, which may provide additional insights into the employee recruitment process.

### Job descriptions

- [Job Description Generator](#),<sup>9</sup> University of Vermont Extension
- [Assembly of Farm Job Descriptions \(PDF\)](#),<sup>10</sup> Iowa State University Extension and Outreach
- [Developing Effective Job Descriptions for Small Businesses and Farms \(PDF\)](#),<sup>11</sup> Purdue Extension
- [Job Description Generator for the Dairy Industry](#),<sup>12</sup> Penn State Extension

## Other recruitment resources

- [A Quick-Start Toolkit: Building Registered Apprenticeship Programs \(PDF\)](#),<sup>13</sup> U.S. Department of Labor
- [Frequently Asked Questions About Apprenticeship](#),<sup>14</sup> U.S. Department of Labor
- [Get the Right Start in Hiring Employees](#),<sup>15</sup> Iowa State University Extension
- [Help Wanted: How Farmers Are Tackling a Labor Shortage](#),<sup>16</sup> Successful Farming
- [Hiring the Right Fit: Interview Questions](#),<sup>17</sup> AgCareers.com
- [Internship Programs Under the Fair Labor Standards Act](#),<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of Labor
- [Labor Readiness Assessment](#),<sup>19</sup> University of Vermont Extension
- [Recruiting and Retaining Good Employees: Strategies That Work](#),<sup>20</sup> Progressive Dairyman
- [Unpacking the Farm Labor Puzzle](#),<sup>21</sup> Women in Ag Learning Network

---

## Web addresses in Chapter 1

1. onetonline.org
2. extension.missouri.edu/media/wysiwyg/Extensiondata/Pro/AgBusinessPolicyExtension/Docs/FarmLabor/FarmJobDescriptionChecklist.pdf
3. careeronestop.org/BusinessCenter/RecruitAndHire/IdentifyYourHiringNeeds/create-a-job-description.aspx
4. extension.missouri.edu/media/wysiwyg/Extensiondata/Pro/AgBusinessPolicyExtension/Docs/FarmLabor/JobPositionPromotionalPlanWorksheet.pdf
5. dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/71-flsa-internships
6. apprenticeship.gov/employers
7. dhewd.mo.gov/workforce-development/apprenticeship-mo
8. extension.missouri.edu/publications/g703
9. uvm.edu/aglabor/dashboard/job-description-generator
10. extension.iastate.edu/agdm/wholefarm/pdf/c1-73.pdf
11. extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/ec/ec-728.pdf
12. extension.psu.edu/job-description-generator-for-the-dairy-industry
13. apprenticeship.gov/sites/default/files/apprenticeship\_toolkit.pdf
14. apprenticeship.gov/help
15. extension.iastate.edu/agdm/wholefarm/html/c1-70.html
16. agriculture.com/farm-management/estate-planning/help-wanted-how-farmers-are-tackling-a-labor-shortage
17. agcareers.com/newsletters/interview-questions.htm
18. uvm.edu/aglabor/dashboard/assessment
19. agproud.com/articles/31157-recruiting-and-retaining-good-employees-strategies-that-work
20. youtube.com/watch?v=kkA7MilP6zM

## 2. Hiring

---

After job candidates have been recruited, the hiring process proceeds to interviewing the top candidates; checking their backgrounds including references, criminal records and drug offense records; validating their skill sets; verifying their work eligibility; extending an offer; and filing the appropriate forms and paperwork.

Using the [hiring checklist in the appendix](#), you can track a candidate's progress in the hiring process.

### 2.1 Interview

During an interview, employers should learn about the person being interviewed and share information about the position and business. Listening skills are important. If an interviewer talks too much, the interviewee doesn't have as much time to speak. As a general rule, the interviewer should speak only about 20% of the time and the person being interviewed should speak the other 80%. Listening more than you talk gives you the opportunity to learn as much as possible about the interviewee in the allotted time. You can still ask follow-up questions and share information about the position or the business, but the key is to listen closely and talk sparingly.

During an interview, ask open-ended questions, not questions that could be answered with only a yes or no. Open-ended questions help you get to know a job candidate better. Use the same questions for all people interviewing for the same position.

#### General interviewing rules

- Ask open-ended questions.
- Use the same questions for all interviewees.
- Listen.
- Take notes.
- Avoid unacceptable questions.

Doing so adds consistency to the interview process and helps you easily compare answers from each candidate. Also, take good notes because remembering specific responses after the interview concludes can be difficult.

#### 2.1.1 Acceptable questions

To ensure interviewers collect information they need to evaluate a job candidate, they could group questions by categories. For example, interviewers might start by asking questions about a candidate's education or work experience. Specific questions could include the following:

- What education or job training have you had?
- What positions have you held during previous employment?
- Tell me about job tasks for which you've been responsible in the past.
- What types of tasks have you enjoyed the most? Why?
- What types of tasks have you enjoyed the least? Why?

Then, interviewers could transition into questions focused on a prospective employee's fit for the specific position. At this

point, use the job description as a guide. For important tasks associated with a job position, interviewers could ask questions about a job candidate's experience and interest in similar work. If a job requires physical labor, then ask whether the interviewee is capable of handling the physical requirements.

- \_\_\_\_\_ is an important task in this job. What related experience do you have?
- If a particular scenario (explain a possible scenario) happens, how would you respond?
- Why are you interested in this position?
- How does this position fit your long-term career goals?
- Workers in this position may need to lift as much as 50 pounds and stand for three-hour shifts. Are you able to do both?

In some cases, prospective employees may not have the exact experience needed to perform various job tasks. However, interviewers can ask questions to assess if a potential new hire has the ability and willingness to learn the needed skills.

- Think of a skill you previously had to learn on the job. What was your approach to making sure you learned it?
- If you need to learn a new skill to do well in this job, what steps would you take to learn it?
- What efforts do you take to continue learning while on the job?

Performing specific tasks is an important part of holding a job, but the ability to work with people can be equally important. New hires might need to interact with coworkers,

### **Crafting interview questions**

1. Use the job description to guide the questions you ask.
2. Group similar questions into categories.
3. Ask questions that can reveal how well the interviewee works with others.
4. Avoid unacceptable questions (see [Section 2.1.2](#)).

managers, suppliers, buyers and other people who support the business, so their ability to develop positive relationships with these people can impact their job performance — and the employer. These are some possible questions to ask about a job candidate's willingness to work with others:

- Describe a situation in which you had a challenging relationship with a coworker or supervisor. What did you do in that situation?
- What types of people create an enjoyable work environment for you?
- If you have supervised other people in previous jobs, describe how you managed those employees and what the experience was like for you.

### **2.1.2 Unacceptable questions**

Interviewing prospective employees can create risk if employers ask the wrong questions. Several types of questions should be off-limits, including those listed below.

- Avoid questions about age, race, ethnicity, religious preference, political affiliation, living arrangement, sexual orientation, disabilities or medical conditions. Because answers to these questions don't explain someone's ability

to perform job tasks or duties, they are irrelevant.

- Avoid questions about an applicant's family or marital status. Again, answers to these questions don't affect the ability to perform job tasks or duties. If working days and hours or schedule flexibility are concerns, then present the requirements for the job, and ask whether the prospective employee could meet those needs. For example, you may ask, "Our operation occasionally needs help on evenings and weekends. Do you have the flexibility to work during evenings and weekends?"
- Do not ask questions about vehicle ownership unless it is a requirement of an employee's job. Otherwise, what matters is that an employee can get to work. For job positions that require on-the-job vehicle use, you may ask whether a prospective employee is licensed to operate the type of vehicle required.

### 2.1.3 Other interview elements

Generally, interviews are considered a question-and-answer time. However, an interview can also include a skills test.

During a skills test, prospective employees would be asked to apply their skills and perform a task that would be required if they were hired. A skills test can show whether a potential new employee has the skills necessary for the job or if the person could benefit from extra training. However, the results should only be used as one tool to screen applicants, and the test itself shouldn't create problems with respect to equal opportunity employment.

**A skills test** assesses whether an applicant has the skills needed to do the job.

For example, a basic skills test could involve counting change or writing an email.

**A personality inventory** evaluates whether an applicant would fit well in your organization's culture.

Personality inventories are other tools for determining whether a prospective employee would fit well within your operation. They can help employers understand candidates' personality traits, their work styles and how they like to work with others. However, personality inventories do have several potential drawbacks. For example, the test should have controls to prevent respondents from selecting only socially desirable responses. Controls are questions designed to assess test takers' honesty and consistency in their responses. These tests shouldn't be used as medical exams or invade respondents' privacy. If you'd like to use a personality inventory as part of your applicant screening process, then identify a testing program that's effective in gauging job performance.

### 2.1.4 Closing an interview

Before concluding an interview, give the job candidate an opportunity to ask questions. Not only does this practice address remaining questions, but it also creates an opportunity for an interviewer to learn about an individual's ability to develop questions.

Then, establish the next steps the interviewee can expect during the hiring process. If you have a timeline in mind, you can mention it. Share whether you're planning to schedule second-round interviews with the top candidates. Last, thank the interviewee for

### **Closing the interview**

- Let the candidate ask questions.
- Share what the next steps are in the hiring process.
- Thank the candidate.

### **Types of background checks**

- Reference checks
- Online or social media inventories
- Public database reviews
- Drug tests

showing interest in the position and participating in the interview.

#### **2.1.5 Post-interview evaluation**

After conducting interviews with multiple candidates, rank the acceptable candidates based on their qualifications, attitudes, abilities to learn and other soft skills, such as interaction with people. Ideally, a candidate will “check all the boxes.” If not, prioritize characteristics based on their importance. If no acceptable candidates were identified, you may need to repeat the hiring process for new candidates. Candidates who possess abilities in the characteristics you prioritize as the most important may be your top contenders.

## **2.2 Background, drug and reference checks**

Employers may use background checks, drug tests and reference checks to see if a candidate is suitable, reliable and safe for their workplace.

### **2.2.1 Background checks**

Background checks are important because the employees your operation hires will directly interact with other employees and possibly your family. You want to respect the safety and security of your current team and ensure new hires will be upstanding people.

Background checks can be formal or informal. Informal checks involve reviewing publicly available information about a job candidate. Start by doing an online search. Use a search engine such as Google or Bing. Narrow the search with keywords such as school names, state of residence, former employers and hometown. You can also review an applicant’s social media activity on platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn and Instagram and validate addresses on sites such as [whitepages.com](http://whitepages.com) and [411.com](http://411.com).

Employers should also consider checking public databases to learn more about applicants. You can use public information to check whether applicants have a sex offender or court judgment history. The Missouri State Highway Patrol maintains the [statewide sex offender registry](#).<sup>1</sup> Users can search the registry by name or location. The Missouri court system maintains the [Case.net database](#),<sup>2</sup> which shares case history from Missouri courts. Users can search by litigant name to find cases that mention a specific individual.

For positions involving sensitive information or managerial responsibilities, a more extensive, and formal, background check may be necessary. Several companies offer background check services. Consider comparing the options available and choose a company that can provide the types of information that will help you to make your



hiring decision. Before engaging a third-party company to help with a background check, get written consent from the applicant.

### 2.2.2 Drug testing

Alcohol and drug use may contribute to work-related injuries or fatalities. Not only does an employee under the influence create a hazard to himself or herself, but that employee also

has the potential to harm coworkers and bystanders. Requiring a drug test can send the message that drug or alcohol misuse among employees won't be tolerated. This section offers some general thoughts about drug testing for prospective or current employees; however, operations may need to consult an attorney to develop policies that are specific to their businesses.

To conduct a drug test, an operation may elect to use an on-site testing kit that provides results nearly instantaneously. As another option, employers may choose to work with an external testing specialist. Tests may use urine, hair, blood or saliva samples.

Employers may require a preemployment drug test between having a job offer accepted and welcoming the new hire at work. The offer letter should mention that passing the drug test is a requirement to begin working and that failing to take or pass the test will terminate the offer.

Employers may also require post-employment drug tests in certain circumstances. If an accident or injury occurs, a drug test could

be used to determine whether drug misuse contributed to the situation. If a supervisor sees suspicious activity, a drug test could help identify whether that activity might be related to drug use.

If a current employee struggles with addiction, the [Missouri Department of Mental Health](#)<sup>3</sup> could provide assistance.

### 2.2.3 Reference checks

With a reference check, employers can confirm information an applicant has provided and learn about the applicant from people who know him or her well. When questioning references, employers can ask about previous job positions the applicant held or work the applicant has done. Also, simply asking whether the reference would hire the applicant can suggest employability. Possible references include past employers, teachers and other professional contacts.

## 2.3 Eligibility verification

Before hiring any employee, proof of the individual's authorization to work in the U.S. is required. U.S. citizens or authorized foreign citizens may work here legally. Using

### Eligibility verification

- All employees must fill out an I-9 form to verify work authorization prior to hire.
- The E-Verify system can help employers check a person's work eligibility.
- You must verify an employee's work eligibility even if you think you know their work authorization status.

[Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification](#),<sup>4</sup> employers must validate employee identity and work authorization status through birth certificate, passport or green card records.

For help checking an employee's work eligibility, use the [E-Verify system](#).<sup>5</sup>

## 2.4 Extending an offer

Before extending an offer, you might consider hosting multiple interviews with a prospective new hire. Scheduling multiple interactions can expose candidates to different settings (e.g., phone interview, in-person interview) and allow them to meet different people in the business.

After making a hiring decision, employers can call the new hire to extend an offer. However, a written offer should follow the phone call. The letter should outline details — including compensation, benefits, tasks, responsibilities and work schedule — pertaining to the hire's new job.

## 2.5 Probationary period

Some employers choose to hire employees on a probationary basis. During that time, the employer can determine whether the employee has the necessary skills, conducts himself or herself in an acceptable manner and fits well with the operation's culture. Plus, observing employees during a trial phase can help employers identify training needs. A probationary period can also benefit new hires, giving them an opportunity to learn whether they like the work and the team.

## 2.6 New hire paperwork filing

### 2.6.1 Employer identification number

Any employer who operates in Missouri and pays workers must have an employer identification number (EIN) provided by the federal government. Employers, partnerships, limited liability companies and corporations may [request an EIN from the IRS](#).<sup>6</sup>

Additionally, employers must register for a Missouri employer tax identification number. This number is used to report state tax withheld from worker pay. To register, use the [Missouri Online New Business Registration system](#)<sup>7</sup> or the [Missouri Tax Registration Application \(PDF\)](#).<sup>8</sup> For information about tax withholding requirements, go to [Section 4.4](#).

#### Important new hire paperwork

- Federal employer identification number
- Missouri employer tax identification number
- Forms W-4 and MO W-4
- Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification

### 2.6.2 Form W-4

New employees must complete a [Form W-4 \(PDF\)](#).<sup>9</sup> Based on information shared in the form, employers will withhold the necessary federal tax. Employers aren't accountable for whether information provided on a Form W-4 is accurate.

### 2.6.3 Form MO W-4

When a Missouri employer hires a new employee, the employer must alert the Missouri Department of Revenue about the hire. That communication must occur

within 20 calendar days of the earlier of the employee signing a [Form MO W-4 \(PDF\)](#),<sup>10</sup> the employee first working on the job or the employee carrying out the job's required duties. An employer that doesn't report the necessary paperwork to the state may be fined.

## 2.7 Independent contractors

In some cases, you may choose to hire an independent contractor instead of an employee. Unemployment insurance, workers' compensation and tax responsibilities would vary for those two arrangements. An arrangement that meets all of the following conditions would, in most cases, classify someone as an independent contractor instead of an employee.

An **independent contractor** is a worker not defined as an employee under common law.

- The employer provides the person with only broad objectives and gives him or her the flexibility to meet those objectives.
- Independently, the person working supplies his or her own tools for the job and chooses a work schedule.
- Profit and loss from work is the worker's responsibility.
- The person working markets similar services to businesses other than your own.
- The person working offers services other than those considered to be a business' core function on a relatively short-term or project basis.

For further assistance determining whether a worker should be categorized as an employee or an independent contractor, consider using the [Worker Misclassification Assessment](#)<sup>11</sup> from the Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations. In [Classifying Employees for Unemployment Insurance Tax Purposes](#),<sup>12</sup> the state references the IRS 20-factor test to identify whether a worker is an employee or independent contractor. An attorney could also offer guidance specific to your operation.

## 2.8 Resources list

The information in this section was adapted from resources such as the following, which may provide other insights about the employee hiring process.

### Interviewing

- [7 Interviewer Interview Questions for First-Timers](#),<sup>13</sup> AgCareers.com
- [7 Interview Mistakes Most Managers Make](#),<sup>14</sup> Robert Half
- [Sample Interview Questions \(DOC\)](#),<sup>15</sup> The University of Texas at San Antonio
- [The Job Interview, and What Questions Can I Ask? \(PDF\)](#),<sup>16</sup> Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

### Employee checks

- [Background Checks: What Employers Need to Know](#),<sup>17</sup> U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- [Farm Drug Testing – Should You Test?](#),<sup>18</sup> AgHires
- [Applicant Background Checks \(PDF\)](#),<sup>19</sup> Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

- [Pre-Employment Testing: A Helpful Way for Companies to Screen Applicants](#),<sup>20</sup> Forbes
- [Workplace Drug Testing in Missouri](#),<sup>21</sup> Nolo

### Other hiring resources

- [Farmers Guide to the H-2A Visa Program](#),<sup>22</sup> University of Missouri Extension
- [H-2A Visa Program](#),<sup>23</sup> USDA
- [Doing Business in Missouri: Hiring Employees](#),<sup>24</sup> Missouri Business Development Program
- [Evaluation and Selection of Job Candidates](#),<sup>25</sup> Iowa State University Extension
- [Get the Right Start in Hiring Employees](#),<sup>26</sup> Iowa State University Extension and Outreach
- [Off the Books: Worker Misclassification](#),<sup>11</sup> Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations
- [Testing and Assessment: An Employer's Guide to Good Practices \(PDF\)](#),<sup>27</sup> Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor
- [Understanding Employee Probation Periods](#),<sup>28</sup> AgCareers.com

---

### Web addresses in Chapter 2

1. mshp.dps.missouri.gov/MSHPWeb/PatrolDivisions/CRID/SOR/SORPage.html
2. www.courts.mo.gov/cnet/welcome.do
3. dmh.mo.gov/behavioral-health
4. uscis.gov/i-9
5. e-verify.gov
6. irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/get-an-employer-identification-number
7. dor.mo.gov/register-business
8. dor.mo.gov/forms/2643.pdf
9. irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw4.pdf
10. dor.mo.gov/forms/MO%20W-4.pdf
11. labor.mo.gov/off-the-books
12. labor.mo.gov/media/pdf/m-inf-310-ai
13. agcareers.com/newsletters/7interviewer.htm
14. roberthalf.com/us/en/insights/hiring-help/7-interview-mistakes-most-managers-make
15. www.utsa.edu/people-excellence/documents/people-leaders/interviewquestions.doc
16. extension.iastate.edu/agdm/wholefarm/pdf/c1-71.pdf
17. eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/background-checks-what-employers-need-know
18. blog.aghires.com/hiring-advice-blog/farm-drug-testing-should-you-test
19. extension.iastate.edu/agdm/wholefarm/pdf/c1-80.pdf
20. forbes.com/sites/lisaquast/2011/09/13/pre-employment-testing-a-helpful-way-for-companies-to-screen-applicants/#569bbc152606
21. nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/workplace-drug-testing-missouri.html
22. extension.missouri.edu/publications/g703
23. farmers.gov/working-with-us/h2a-visa-program
24. missouribusiness.net/how-to-hire-employees-in-missouri
25. extension.iastate.edu/agdm/wholefarm/html/c1-75.html
26. extension.iastate.edu/agdm/wholefarm/html/c1-70.html
27. dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/publications/99-testassess.pdf
28. agcareers.com/newsletters/Understanding\_Employee\_Probation\_Periods.htm

## 3. Employee development

---

It is important to develop your employees into highly productive workers for your farming operation. Onboarding, training, coaching and mentoring can work together to provide structure in starting new employees, improving their skills, increasing their job performance and growing the employees long-term.

### 3.1 Onboarding

Onboarding refers to a system employers use to assimilate new hires into their business within the first few days or weeks of employment. It serves as a time for new

**Onboarding** refers to how an employer assimilates new hires into the business.

employees to experience a job's social and performance expectations and check that they have the attitudes and qualifications to fit the job and business. During onboarding, new employees should also have a chance to learn more about the business and understand how they have an opportunity to help the business succeed. Through onboarding, employers will want to ensure new hires feel welcome and like they're part of the team.

During the onboarding process, employers should strive to create a good initial experience for new hires. When employees begin their jobs on a positive note, they're more likely to begin feeling a commitment to the business. If the job experience begins

badly, they may soon begin searching for another job and ultimately may not stay long.

Note that onboarding is essential for employees who are new. However, employees who transition into new positions within your business could also benefit from onboarding. They might need to learn more about the new job description, connect with a new mentor and ask questions about their new roles and responsibilities.

#### 3.1.1 Create an onboarding plan

Before a new hire's first day, create an onboarding checklist with important topics you need to address. For help with the checklist, ask a recent hire to highlight what's important to cover during onboarding. That person might have suggestions that will improve the process. Some onboarding items will likely apply regardless of a new hire's position, but you might want to customize the checklist for different positions to ensure each employee's specific onboarding needs are met.

University of Missouri Extension provides an [onboarding schedule \(PDF\)](#)<sup>1</sup> that can be customized for the employee's first day of work. Cornell Agricultural Workforce Development provides some [onboarding templates and other resources](#).<sup>2</sup>

#### 3.1.2 Tips for onboarding

To make a good first impression, consider these tips. Start by sharing your business' vision, mission and goals. Highlight other details, including who owns and runs the business and what the business values. Follow

that introduction with a tour, and allow the employee to meet his or her coworkers. While on the tour, point out basics, such as when the workday starts and ends, where to park, when and where to eat lunch and where the bathrooms are.

#### **Sample onboarding priorities**

- Share your business vision, mission and goals.
- Explain the position.
- Tour the business.
- Meet coworkers.
- Discuss expectations and policies.
- Review emergency contact and safety information.
- Leave time for questions.
- Send paperwork packet home.

At that point, explain the job's important tasks, guidelines, policies, dress code, appropriate cellphone usage and other key pieces of information. Employees should be directed to the employment manual for detailed policies. To give more specifics, demonstrate how to record and submit a time sheet; highlight items in the employee handbook; review the job description; share important contact information, including that for emergency services personnel, supervisors and direct reports; and discuss safety practices. If a new hire needs access to technology resources such as a tablet, computer, phone or email address, then reserve time for getting those devices and login information into the new hire's hands.

As the day progresses, leave plenty of time for questions. Also, ask a few questions of your own to learn whether the new hire has the resources needed to excel and whether

he or she has suggestions to improve the first day for future hires. Discuss maintaining open communication between the manager and employee to help address questions and provide support needed to be successful.

Some paperwork might need to be handled on the first day, but avoid spending too much time on paperwork. Instead, communicate with new hires about the documentation they need to bring or return to work, and create a packet with important forms they can take with them to read and return later. Alternatively, some paperwork could be shared in advance of day one for review.

## **3.2 Training**

Training refers to ongoing educational opportunities available to employees. For new employees, training is particularly important during the first few months. However, routine training sessions after initial hiring can ensure your team members have the latest information to use in doing their jobs and helping the business meet its goals.

**Training** refers to ongoing educational opportunities available to employees. Select from formal and spontaneous methods that meet your employees' needs and accommodate their learning styles.

To guide your training efforts, write broad, general goals and then define specific, measurable objectives to achieve those goals. When establishing training objectives for your employees, tie the objectives to a timeline that specifies the dates by which employees should master those objectives.



Creating a timeline communicates learning expectations for the employee and helps the employer track progress. Current employees can provide insights during the goal-setting phase of the process. After all, they have firsthand experience in knowing what they need to learn to do their jobs well.

### 3.2.1 Customize training to your operation

Training needs will vary by operation. Livestock farms might need to teach employees about livestock management, animal welfare, reproduction, feeding animals, and worker and product safety. Crop operations might need to train employees on using equipment; scouting fields for disease, weed and pest pressure; managing grain quality postharvest; and collecting, understanding and using precision agriculture data. Regardless of operation type, written standard operating procedures can help ensure work is done correctly and training is provided consistently.

### 3.2.2 Know your audience

When developing training programs, accommodate various learning styles. Some employees may learn best when they **watch** how to do something. Some may need to **hear** how to do a task or may learn through **reading and writing**. Others may learn best through **doing**. To ensure employees absorb and retain critical information, offering training through all four of these approaches is a good practice.

Recognize that training will take time. Sharing too much information at one time may lead to information overload and cause employees to retain relatively little. Additionally, employees without

### Successful training strategies

- Customize training to your operation.
- Recognize that people have different learning styles.
- Allow adequate time for training.
- Show employees why it is important to complete tasks in a certain way.
- After training, engage in a question-and-answer session.

an agriculture background may require assistance in learning the basics before they can grasp more complex information. So, be mindful of an employee's understanding of the subject matter when you're designing training programs.

### 3.2.3 Select a method of training

Some employers may choose to train employees in a seminar-style environment. Depending on training needs, online courses may be an option. Such formal training methods, with their structured approach and defined curriculum, have their place, but spontaneous training also has value. This informal method of training can occur naturally and unexpectedly while performing tasks. It can take the form of regular feedback shared with employees. Let them know what they're doing well and where they need to improve.

When training employees, strive not only to show them how to do something but also to indicate why it's important to complete a task in a certain way. Follow training efforts with a question-and-answer session. This time enables employees to ask follow-up questions or clarify information. Plus, employers can ask questions to ensure employees retain information from training,

or they can see whether the training caused employees to have ideas that could help the business succeed.

For employees who feel motivated to learn, training is more likely to be an enjoyable experience. To make the training experience most effective, try to intersect lessons that need to be taught with topics that interest your workers. Vendors such as veterinarians, chemical suppliers, seed salespeople, nutritionists and machinery dealers may be willing to provide employee training for good customers. Vendors are also a valuable source of training materials.

### 3.3 Coaching

The purpose of coaching is to help an employee perform certain aspects of the job better. It is a

one-on-one training approach. By engaging a coach who can provide support, accountability, and guidance for specific skills, an employer is often looking to enhance an employee's performance in certain job tasks or components. Coaching is typically a short-term relationship with an emphasis on developing targeted skills, and coaching outcomes are often specific and measurable. Most importantly, coaching helps an employee who has already mastered basic job-related competencies refine and enhance his or her skills. Coaching differs from basic training programs in this way, as training programs should be designed to teach new skills. If the employee achieves the desired performance improvement in

**Coaching** centers on helping an employee perform better at a certain task or job.

a specific area, the coaching process was successful. Typical coaching relationships are often short, around six months to a year. Effective coaches can be current staff, former employees or even someone with specific expertise that you hire to teach that expertise.

#### 3.3.1 Process for developing a coaching plan

Coaching relationships vary, with some coaches — and learners — preferring an autocratic, or dominating, approach and others preferring a democratic, or collaborative, approach. Try to consider the employee's preference, experience, confidence level and goals to be achieved when identifying the style of coaching that will be the most effective. Start the process by meeting with the employee, finding areas for improvement and framing the coaching plan. Below is a general outline of the steps involved in developing and implementing a coaching plan.

1. *Assess needs and identify areas for improvement.* Begin by identifying the specific needs for the employee and the areas of greatest potential for improvement. New employees' coaching needs can be extensive as they learn how to do the job and operate within your culture. For experienced employees, coaching can focus on specific performance gaps and particular areas of improvement.
2. *Prepare the coaching plan.* Carefully select individuals with the appropriate interpersonal and technical skills to be good coaches. Not all employees make good coaches no matter how excellent they are at their job, and a coach that is effective for one employee might not be

as effective with a different employee. Be sure to provide sufficient training and resources to assist the coach. Establish clear objectives and a timeline for the relationship between the coach and the employee, including framework and frequency of visits and how progress will be tracked.

3. *Implement the coaching plan.* Once a coaching plan is in place, allow the relationship to begin. Be sure to create a culture with adequate time for the coaching relationship to develop. Encourage regular check-ins and feedback. Good communication is essential for trust in the relationship.
4. *Monitor the process and adjust as needed.* Continually monitor the progress of the coaching relationship. Encourage communication and feedback so adjustments can be made to improve the process. By tracking progress and being flexible when needed, the process can be continually fine-tuned.

### 3.4 Mentoring

Mentorship may help employees grow, learn and feel supported. Employees may form mentor-

mentee relationships with individuals who work for the same employer or for different organizations. Outcomes connected to mentoring are less defined and are focused more on overall employee development than are those connected to coaching.

**Mentoring** focuses on facilitating long-term professional development.

Mentoring concerns itself with enriching the mentee's long-term development. In a mentoring relationship, the mentee typically asks the questions to draw out the mentor's knowledge. The mentee sets the agenda according to his or her development interests and needs.

Mentoring relationships also tend to last longer than coaching relationships. The length of a typical coaching relationship is six months to a year, but mentoring may occur over a multiyear period.

#### 3.4.1 Establishing a mentorship program

Before starting an employee mentoring program, first consider the goals the program should achieve. For individual employees, those goals may include improving time management, building leadership skills or becoming a better communicator. For the business, the goals of a mentorship program may be to sharpen skills and improve internal networking.

##### 3 steps to design a mentorship program

1. Consider goals.
2. Develop mentoring framework.
3. Pair ideal mentor with mentee.

With a mentoring program's ultimate goals in mind, an employer can then develop a framework for the mentoring program. Businesses that prefer to formalize processes and programs may choose to request applications, establish the duration of the mentor-mentee relationship, require a certain amount of time spent on mentoring or a certain number of mentoring interactions, and develop guidelines for mentor-mentee

groups to follow. Other businesses may prefer to make the process less formal and let mentors and mentees choose an approach that works best for them.

After establishing a general structure for your mentoring program, look for opportunities to pair mentors and mentees. An ideal pairing may match employees based on similar interests or backgrounds, aptitudes, mentoring expectations, individual choice or other characteristics. After matching mentors and mentees, periodically check the status of the mentoring relationship. If a pairing doesn't work, offer the employee the option to change mentors.

Facilitating a mentorship relationship is helpful for less experienced workers; however, employees with more experience can also benefit. Through mentoring, experienced employees can teach those who are less experienced and make themselves better managers. Employees with less experience — the mentees — can contribute new ideas that veteran employees can help to foster. Mentoring can fulfill personnel development needs that other onboarding or training efforts may overlook.

Employees may need some convincing that mentoring is a good use of their time. Help them understand the value by explaining the mentoring program's goals and benefits. By sharing a story about a beneficial mentor-mentee relationship, you can help employees better visualize the payoff.

## 3.5 Resources list

The information in this section was adapted from resources including the following, which may provide additional insights into onboarding, training and mentoring your operation's employees.

### Onboarding

- [7 Tips for Onboarding New Employees](#),<sup>3</sup> The Business Journals
- [Bringing 'Em Safely Onboard: Launching New Employees Successfully](#),<sup>4</sup> Feed and Grain
- [Getting Onboard With Your Employees](#),<sup>5</sup> Country Guide
- [Onboarding Farm Employees](#),<sup>2</sup> Cornell Agricultural Workforce Development

### Training

- [Practical Concepts for Employee Training and Dairy Performance](#),<sup>6</sup> Progressive Dairy
- [Reduce Training Frustrations With 4-Step Process](#),<sup>7</sup> Farm Futures
- [Unpacking the Farm Labor Puzzle](#),<sup>8</sup> Women in Ag Learning Network

### Coaching

- [Coaching vs. Evaluations to Improve Ag Employee Performance](#),<sup>9</sup> South Dakota State University Extension
- [24 Tips for How to Coach Employees](#),<sup>10</sup> PerformYard
- [Are You Training When You Should Be Coaching? The Costly Mistake Farm Owners Make!](#)<sup>11</sup> Enable Ag

## Mentoring

- [5 Things Great Mentors Do](#),<sup>12</sup> Inc.
- [How to Start a Mentoring Program](#),<sup>13</sup> Inc.
- [Know the Difference Between Coaching and Mentoring](#),<sup>14</sup> Kent State University

- [Seven Ways to Be an Effective Mentor](#),<sup>15</sup> Forbes
- [What to Know About Employee Mentorship Programs](#),<sup>16</sup> Robert Half

---

## Web addresses in Chapter 3

1. extension.missouri.edu/media/wysiwyg/Extensiondata/Pro/AgBusinessPolicyExtension/Docs/FarmLabor/OnboardingFirstDaySchedule.pdf
2. agworkforce.cals.cornell.edu/onboarding
3. bizjournals.com/bizjournals/how-to/human-resources/2015/07/7-tips-for-onboarding-new-employees.html
4. feedandgrain.com/grain-handling-processing/grain-facility-management/article/15401823/bringingem-safely-onboard-launching-new-employees-successfully
5. country-guide.ca/2016/06/01/how-onboarding-can-help-your-new-employee-on-the-farm/49094
6. agproud.com/articles/26232-practical-concepts-for-employee-training-and-dairy-performance
7. farmprogress.com/commentary/reduce-training-frustrations-with-4-step-process
8. youtube.com/watch?v=kkA7MilP6zM
9. extension.sdstate.edu/coaching-vs-evaluations-improve-ag-employee-performance
10. performyard.com/articles/how-to-coach-employees
11. enableag.com.au/magazine/training-and-coaching
12. inc.com/jay-steinfeld/5-ways-to-be-a-better-mentor.html
13. inc.com/guides/2010/04/start-mentoring-program.html
14. www.kent.edu/yourtrainingpartner/know-difference-between-coaching-and-mentoring
15. forbes.com/2010/06/30/mentor-coach-executive-training-leadership-managing-ccl.html
16. roberthalf.com/employers/hiring-advice/employee-retention/new-hire-orientation/mentorship-programs

## 4. Operations

---

A business' operational plan outlines the activities and processes that will help it reach its goals. When evaluating your operational plan, think about the work environment from your employees' perspective. Ask yourself, "Would I want to work here?" Then, make adjustments accordingly. This section describes operational considerations for a farm.

### 4.1 Safety

The Occupational Safety and Health Act holds most private-sector employers to certain health and safety standards. Some exemptions exist, though, and one includes a farm employer's immediate family.

To protect employees, the [Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(OSHA\)](#)<sup>1</sup> mandates that workplaces protect employees from recognized hazards that may cause or are likely to cause worker death or serious harm. The OSHA [Small Business Safety and Health Handbook \(PDF\)](#)<sup>2</sup> may help small-business owners navigate OSHA requirements.

University of Missouri Extension publication G1961, [Agriculture and the Occupational Safety and Health Act](#),<sup>3</sup> explains how OSHA standards and agriculture interact with each other.

The [Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program](#)<sup>4</sup> is a workplace safety initiative administered by the Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations.

It recognizes small businesses that create programs designed to protect worker safety and health.

### 4.2 Compensation

A key to attracting good employees is offering competitive compensation. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports employment statistics for various occupations. Its [Occupational Outlook Handbook section on farm workers](#)<sup>5</sup> can inform employers about setting competitive, fair wages for employees. The U.S. Department of Agriculture also conducts a [semiannual survey of farm labor rates by region](#).<sup>6</sup> If hiring other types of workers to support an agricultural business, employers can review the Bureau of Labor Statistics' [Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics Tables](#)<sup>7</sup> to set competitive wages for them.

University of Missouri Extension provides a [Farm Employee Compensation Plans template \(PDF\)](#)<sup>8</sup> you can use to outline key elements of a compensation plan for your farm employees.

#### 4.2.1 Minimum wage

In 2024, Missouri voters approved Proposition A, which raised the [minimum wage rate in Missouri](#)<sup>9</sup> through Jan. 1, 2026. See Exhibit 4.2.1.1 for minimum wage rates by year in Missouri. Many Missouri businesses must pay workers at least this rate. However, some employers are exempt. Employers who are engaged in retail or service businesses with an annual gross income less than



\$500,000 are not required to pay the state minimum wage rate. Minimum wage law in Missouri also does not generally apply to agriculture employers in any of the following situations:

- The employer did not, during any quarter in the preceding calendar year, use more than 500 “man days” of agricultural labor. One “man day” is any day in which an employee spends at least one hour doing agricultural work.
- The employee is an immediate family member.
- The employee is paid on a piece rate basis.
- The employee is principally engaged in “range production of livestock.”

Agriculture, as defined in the Revised Statutes of Missouri (RSMo), Section 290.500, includes growing or raising agricultural commodities such as crops, dairy products, livestock, poultry and aquaculture.

#### **Exhibit 4.2.1.1 – Missouri minimum wage rates by year.**

Effective date	Missouri minimum wage (per hour)
Jan. 1, 2025	\$13.75
Jan. 1, 2026	\$15.00

[Federal minimum wage provisions](#)<sup>10</sup> are contained in the Fair Labor Standards Act. As of July 2009, federal minimum wage was \$7.25 per hour. According to federal law, minimum wage requirements may also vary for agricultural employers. With respect to minimum wages paid, the Fair Labor Standards Act exempts agricultural employers who record 500 or fewer “man days” during a given calendar quarter within

the preceding calendar year. The act provides a few other exemptions for agricultural employers. To learn more about those exemptions, refer to the U.S. Department of Labor fact sheet [Agricultural Employment Under the Fair Labor Standards Act \(FLSA\)](#).<sup>11</sup>

#### **4.2.2 Overtime**

As a general rule, employees who work more than 40 hours a week must earn at least 1.5 times their hourly rate after exceeding the 40-hour time total. However, the Fair Labor Standards Act has exempted agricultural employees who work on a farm from overtime pay requirements. Agricultural employment encompasses on-farm work that’s incidental to or performed in conjunction with a farming business. For more information about overtime and agricultural workers, refer to the U.S. Department of Labor fact sheet [Agricultural Employment Under the Fair Labor Standards Act \(FLSA\)](#).<sup>11</sup>

Generally, employees who do agricultural work on a farm are exempt from **overtime pay** requirements. To verify whether your farm must pay overtime wages to an employee, seek guidance or clarification from the U.S. Department of Labor.

Agricultural operations with multiple business entities may employ some workers who require overtime pay. Examples could include agricultural processing or custom cropping. Seek guidance, if needed, from employment law attorneys or human resources professionals to determine if workers are required to receive overtime pay.

Like the minimum wage exemptions, overtime exemptions are also provided to agricultural employers in any of the following situations:

- The employer did not, during any quarter in the preceding calendar year, use more than 500 “man days” of agricultural labor. One “man day” is any day in which an employee spends at least one hour doing agricultural work.
- The employee is an immediate family member.
- The employee is paid on a piece rate basis.
- The employee is principally engaged in “range production of livestock.”

For further details about exemptions, refer to the U.S. Department of Labor fact sheet [Agricultural Employment Under the Fair Labor Standards Act \(FLSA\)](#).<sup>11</sup>

Effective Jan. 1, 2020, eligible white-collar employees who earn at least \$684 per week and are paid on a salary basis are exempt from earning overtime wages. The rule considers white-collar employment to include work done by executive, administrative, professional, outside sales and some computer employees. For more details, refer to the Department of Labor fact sheet on [overtime exemptions](#).<sup>12</sup>

#### **4.2.3 Nonmonetary compensation**

Compensation provided to employees may include some benefits that can’t easily be valued with a cash amount. These benefits may be called “nonmonetary compensation.” Such compensation includes access to farm equipment or tools; the opportunity for employees to continue their education; and

#### **Nonmonetary compensation examples**

- On-farm housing
- Access to farm equipment or tools
- Meat, milk or produce
- Meals or snacks
- Farm apparel
- Hunting and fishing privileges
- Extra time off

a supply of meat, milk, produce or other farm products. Other possibilities include offering meals, hosting social recognition events or providing farm apparel. Items like these may cost little but create reasonable value for workers. Employees themselves, not the employer, determine the specific value, so get to know your employees and what they enjoy. Note that tax implications for nonmonetary compensation may vary by item. Such benefits may be a tax-free form of compensation.

If you plan to offer your employees nonmonetary compensation, choose items they would like. Offering housing on the farm may be crucial to attracting immigrant labor but have less value to local part-time employees. Giving employees options may ensure they receive something they’ll enjoy. Then, in a compensation package, do your best to share information about nonmonetary compensation with employees, and estimate the value of those benefits.

#### **4.2.4 Incentive pay**

An incentive pay system rewards employees for their part in the business achieving certain production, marketing or financial goals. Based on performance, incentive pay encourages a productive work environment and strong workplace morale. It also may

make employees proud of their work and attract workers who enjoy the opportunity to earn more as they perform well.

To develop an incentive pay program, first consider your business' objectives. If your goal is to improve product quality, then your incentive pay system could be based on the grade assigned to your harvested products. If your goal is to increase productivity, then your system could reward employees for handling or harvesting a certain quantity of product in a certain time period.

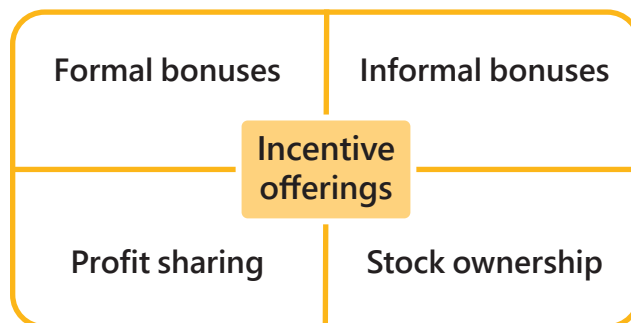
Although employers should match incentive pay to their goals, the standard set for incentive-based pay shouldn't boost one performance measure to the extent that it causes a decline in another important measure. For example, if your goal is to increase harvest yields, then an incentive pay standard may establish that it will only measure product harvested that meets a certain quality threshold. Also, focusing exclusively on individual high performance may cause coworkers to feel like they're working against one another.

#### **Incentive pay**

- Rewards employees
- Encourages workplace productivity and morale
- Can attract workers who enjoy opportunity to earn more

An effective incentive pay system requires recordkeeping that tracks employee performance relative to the certain goal. Standards should be monitored periodically, to determine how well a standard addresses and drives your initial goal, so that improvements can be made to

#### **Exhibit 4.2.4.1 – Incentive pay options.**



them if necessary and you can update your workforce about overall performance. To be fair, do not reduce or eliminate a system's potential payout in the middle of a given year, but use the monitoring information collected to improve the system for later years.

Businesses have multiple incentive pay options to consider.

- *Formal bonuses*: As bonuses that tend to be paid at defined times each year, formal bonuses are often cash-based incentives. They can serve as tools to acknowledge work anniversaries, seasonal work effort, project milestones, holidays and good safety or work performance. They're limited in their effectiveness if they create morale issues and if employees start to expect them as basic compensation.
- *Informal bonuses*: These bonuses can show employees that their unique contributions are valued, and they tend to be paid irregularly with cash. Businesses may award informal bonuses if employees demonstrate specific instances of positive performance or leadership; share beneficial ideas with the team; and celebrate personal successes or occasions, such as marriage or community involvement.

- *Profit sharing:* With profit sharing, employees earn a portion of the operation's profits. Because the amount they earn depends on the business operating profitably, employees should feel incentivized to improve the business' bottom line. They may also feel more personally invested in the operation's performance.
- *Employee stock ownership plan (ESOP):* Another tool to create an ownership opportunity for employees, an ESOP uses a formula to allocate shares, which along with cash may be maintained in an ESOP trust fund for employees. Later, if employees have vested in the ESOP and they leave the operation, they may exchange shares for cash.

Despite their advantages, incentive programs also have some limitations. They should always prioritize employee safety and health. In an attempt to increase their chances for receiving an incentive-based payment, employees shouldn't work to the extent they create liability or labor law compliance issues for the operation. You don't want employees to lack confidence in the incentive system and its fairness, so be transparent in explaining how the incentive system works and how employees can qualify for incentive payments. If needed, seek the help of an accountant, attorney or consultant to create an effective incentive pay system.

#### **4.2.5 Payday requirements**

Payday requirements dictate how often employers must pay their employees. Each state determines its own payday requirements. Missouri statute dictates that corporations pay employees as often as semimonthly. Payment is due within 16

days of the end of a pay period. Employees in executive, administrative and professional roles and those who earn commission may be paid monthly. An employer must communicate the pay period's total deductions in a statement for each employee at least monthly.

### **4.3 Benefits**

Benefits agricultural employers may provide to employees include health insurance, retirement plans and time off.

#### **4.3.1 Health insurance**

The Affordable Care Act created health care insurance provisions for employers to provide affordable coverage with a minimum value. Requirements for an employer in a particular calendar year vary according to the average number of people employed during the previous year. A full-time employee is considered to be one who works at least 30 hours per week; part-time employees are counted on a full-time equivalency basis. Use the [Full-time Equivalent \(FTE\) Employee Calculator](#)<sup>13</sup> to estimate your business' number of employees. Note that employers who offer health insurance must provide the benefit to eligible employees within 90 days of an employee's first workday.

For operations with fewer than 50 full-time employees or full-time equivalent staff on average in a year, the act's employer-shared responsibility doesn't apply in the following year. However, these businesses may offer self-insured health benefits or coverage through the Small Business Health Options Program. Visit [HealthCare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov) for details about [health insurance coverage options for](#)

[small businesses](#).<sup>14</sup> Some small businesses may also qualify for a [small business health care tax credit](#).<sup>15</sup> Employers that average at least 50 full-time or full-time equivalent staff must satisfy certain parameters specific to employer shared responsibility and information reporting. More information is available on the IRS webpage [Affordable Care Act Tax Provision for Large Employers](#).<sup>16</sup>

Beyond the Health Insurance Marketplace, other options may include association health plans or private insurance. In Missouri, qualified membership organizations may offer health care benefits by contracts starting on Aug. 28, 2025. Independent insurance agents or brokers may be able to help you find a plan suitable for your farming operation.

**Health insurance requirements** for an employer in a particular calendar year are based on the average number of people employed in the preceding calendar year.

#### 4.3.2 Retirement plan

If operations choose to offer a retirement plan to employees, they have several options from which to choose. First, a simplified employee pension (SEP) plan, which is a type of individual retirement account (IRA), enables businesses to contribute a variable rate from year to year that's consistent for each employee in a given year. With an SEP, the employer is the only contributor; employees themselves don't have the option to contribute. However, a SEP-IRA is established for each employee, and the employees are fully vested, meaning that all funds in an employee's SEP-IRA belong to the employee. SEPs are known for having

inexpensive overhead, and the setup and operational details are relatively easy to navigate. More information is available on the IRS webpage [Simplified Employee Pension Plan \(SEP\)](#).<sup>17</sup>

A savings incentive match plan for employees (SIMPLE) IRA is an option for small businesses, particularly those that don't employ more than 100 people. With a SIMPLE IRA, employers have more specific rules to follow governing their contributions to employee retirement accounts. In a year, employers either contribute 2% of an employee's salary — maximum limits do apply — or offer to match as much as 3% of an employee's contribution. Employees have the option to contribute funds to a SIMPLE IRA. Like with an SEP, SIMPLE IRA plans enable employees to fully vest, meaning the employees own their SIMPLE IRA funds. More information is available on the IRS webpage [SIMPLE IRA Plan](#).<sup>18</sup>

Visit the IRS webpage [Types of Retirement Plans](#)<sup>19</sup> for information about other retirement plan options.

#### 4.3.3 Time off

With some agriculture jobs, work must happen every day, regardless of it being a weekend or holiday or during nontraditional hours. For example, dairy cows require milking, and a pest outbreak can occur in crops at any time. Because of demands such as these, providing time off to employees can make completing a workload more challenging. However, offering time off may help to attract workers.

Employers have several choices for offering time off as a benefit for farm employees. For

example, they may choose the type of time off to provide. Options include vacation days, sick days, holidays and personal days. Some employers, particularly those with continuous operations, choose to use a paid time off (PTO) system. With PTO, employees receive a certain number of paid days away from work each year. The employees can use the paid days at their discretion, and the employer and employee don't track how a day off was used — for example, whether it was a sick day, vacation day or holiday.

**Paid time off (PTO)** refers to offering employees a certain number of paid days away from work each year.

Employers must also determine how much time off to offer. A sliding scale that provides more time off to more experienced workers is an option. Employers can also choose whether they pay employees during the time off and whether employees receive extra compensation if they don't use all or part of their paid time off. Alternatively, employers may consider allowing employees to carry over at least some unused time off into the next year.

Employers who choose to offer time off as a benefit can create guidelines to make providing the benefit more manageable. Some agricultural employers ask that employees avoid taking time off during busy seasons. Also, some require workers to coordinate their schedules and stagger their days off. Such coordination ensures that multiple employees don't take leave at the same time. Employers also have the option to require that employees submit time-off requests in advance and to grant supervisors

the authority to approve or deny those requests. If an employer requires requests, the process for submitting and reviewing those requests should be outlined clearly in the operation's employee handbook. Points to address include the process and timeline for managing time-off requests.

#### 4.3.4 Other benefit options

Benefit packages may also include items such as access to a work vehicle, on-site childcare, wellness programs, continuing education funds and donations to charitable organizations. From a health perspective, employers may choose to offer added insurance benefits, such as life, disability, dental or vision insurance. A creative, strong benefits package may enable your operation to compete with other local employers for new workers and retain employees who already work for you. Forms of nonmonetary compensation (see [Section 4.2.3](#)) may also serve as extra benefits for employees.

### 4.4 Taxes

#### 4.4.1 Federal

Employers must withhold three forms of federal taxes — federal income, social security and Medicare — and file those taxes throughout the year. The IRS webpage [Understanding Employment Taxes](#)<sup>20</sup> offers an overview of these taxes. The federal income tax withholding depends on information provided on an employee's Form W-4. For employees who don't complete the Form W-4, employers still have an obligation to withhold taxes. In that case, the withholding default is that for a single person with no allowances. More information about federal income tax withholdings is provided in the



### **Basic tax-related responsibilities for employers**

- Collect payroll tax documentation from employees.
- Withhold payroll taxes and pay employees.
- File required reports by deadlines.
- Send payroll taxes to local, state and federal entities.
- Keep good records.

IRS [Employer's Tax Guide](#).<sup>21</sup> If an employer hires agricultural workers with H-2A status, the rules for reporting their compensation and withholding taxes are different.

Employers and employees share in social security and Medicare tax payments. Depending on the employee, additional Medicare tax may be required. The IRS describes the specifics for computing the withholding. More details are available on the IRS webpage [Understanding Employment Taxes](#).<sup>20</sup>

Federal unemployment tax (FUTA) is paid exclusively by employers. This tax is different from the general federal income tax, social security tax and Medicare tax. The federal unemployment tax rules are unique for operations that employ agricultural workers. Paying federal unemployment taxes is required when an employer paid at least \$20,000 in cash wages to farm workers during a given calendar quarter in the current or preceding calendar year or the employer had at least 10 agricultural workers laboring on one day during at least 20 different calendar weeks in the current or preceding calendar year. The Internal Revenue Service details

FUTA requirements for farm operations in the IRS [Employer's Tax Guide](#).<sup>21</sup>

### **4.4.2 State**

Employers withhold state tax based on information provided on an employee's MO W-4 form. If an employee doesn't provide a completed form, the withholding default is that for a single person with no exemptions.

### **Certain state tax-related responsibilities**

- Maintain employee wage records.
- Report tax withholdings.
- If applicable, pay unemployment insurance tax.

Employers must report tax withholdings using form MO-941. Plus, the following year, employers must file an Employer's Annual Reconciliation Report of Income Tax Withheld (Form MO W-3). For more information about state taxes, consult the State of Missouri Employer's Tax Guide (Form-4282). Access these forms from [Missouri Department of Revenue Forms and Manuals](#).<sup>22</sup>

Employers may mail or electronically file state withholding taxes. They should maintain records of wages withheld. Additional necessary information to keep on file includes employee names, addresses, Social Security numbers and employment periods.

In Missouri, an employer must pay for unemployment insurance if it meets certain qualifications. Those qualifications are different from the conditions that require an employer to withhold federal and state taxes, pay Social Security tax and comply with the Federal Unemployment Tax Act. The liability to pay also varies by employment

type: governmental entities, nonprofit organizations, domestic worker employers, agricultural worker employers and general business employers. Entities mandated to provide unemployment insurance coverage, which are known as contributing employers, pay quarterly payroll tax.

An agricultural employer in Missouri is liable for unemployment insurance when it meets these conditions:

- Employs at least 10 workers in 20 different weeks of a calendar year
- Pays \$20,000 in cash wages in a calendar quarter
- Meets Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA) qualifications for agricultural employers and hires an agricultural worker in Missouri
- Is considered a successor to a liable Missouri employer

The Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations offers more information on its webpage [Liability for Unemployment](#).<sup>23</sup>

#### 4.4.3 Local

Some local municipalities also collect tax from individuals who work within their borders. These earnings taxes may be levied on residents and nonresidents. Check with your local municipality to determine whether your business is subject to withholding local tax.

### 4.5 Youth labor

Often, farm operations hire youth. The Federal Labor Standards Act outlines rules for employing young people. Note that some

jobs related to agriculture may involve too many hazards to be an option for young workers. The U.S. Department of Labor has resources available that offer more details on its webpage [Prohibited Occupations for Agricultural Employers](#).<sup>24</sup>

States may maintain their own laws specific to agricultural youth labor. In Missouri, youth must be at least 16 years of age to work on farms during school hours and must be at least 14 years of age to work on a farm at times other than during school hours. Consult [State Child Labor Laws Applicable to Agricultural Employment](#)<sup>25</sup> to compare youth-related agricultural labor rules by state.

For agricultural workers younger than 16, Missouri law sets these limits for work time:

- No more than eight hours per day on nonschool days
- No more than three hours per day on school days and those hours must be outside of school hours
- No more than six days per week
- No more than 40 hours per week

Employers also need to schedule 14- and 15-year-old workers between certain times. From Labor Day to June 1, work time is limited to 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. From June 1 to Labor Day, acceptable work hours are 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. For more information, consult the [Missouri guidelines for acceptable work hours for youth](#).<sup>26</sup>

If hiring a 14- or 15-year-old, the new hire must have a **work certificate** before beginning work.

In Missouri, 14- and 15-year-olds require work certificates before their work start dates. Employers must supply certain information — including details about the job, hours to be worked per day and number of work days per week — for a young person seeking a work certificate. The Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations provides more information on its webpage [Work Certificate and Work Permits](#).<sup>27</sup>

Missouri requires young people be paid at least the minimum wage unless the state exempts a certain employer from paying the minimum. Exempt employers are those that annually earn less than \$500,000 in gross income and operate retail or service businesses.

In situations where parents employ their minor children, labor laws for Missouri children vary. Note that these exemptions are observed only when the parent or a legal guardian both owns the business and directly controls the child during work. The Missouri laws don't permit exemptions when parents or legal guardians only supervise their children.

The Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations has an online tool to help you [determine whether your operation complies with child labor laws](#).<sup>28</sup>

## 4.6 Insurance

### 4.6.1 Workers' compensation

Workers' compensation insurance may provide medical coverage, partial lost wages and permanent disability benefits to employees who are injured at work. Coverage

also protects employers from civil lawsuits that could otherwise result from on-the-job employee injuries. Missouri employers may choose to purchase a workers' compensation policy or apply for self-insurance.

Although farm labor is exempt from workers' compensation coverage in Missouri, there can be benefits for farm employers securing a **workers' compensation policy**.

For Missouri employers, workers' compensation insurance responsibilities depend on the nature of the business. Farm labor is exempt from workers' compensation coverage. Other exempt groups include domestic servants employed in private homes, some real estate agents and people who sell directly. Construction companies with one or more employees are required to have workers' compensation coverage. Otherwise, employers who have at least five employees are required to maintain workers' compensation insurance coverage.

Although operations that employ farm workers aren't required to offer workers' compensation, securing a policy offers an opportunity to provide another benefit to employees. Plus, the coverage may help the farm operation manage its legal risk. An insurance agent can quote the cost of a workers' compensation policy. The Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations webpage [Worker's Compensation Insurance](#)<sup>29</sup> offers more information.

### 4.6.2 Liability

To minimize potential liability issues, begin by taking reasonable steps to prevent hazards from becoming a problem. Discourage

trespassing by hanging “no trespassing” signage and monitoring the people who enter a property. Liability insurance can help employers to further manage their risk. An agent can quote a policy that covers an operation’s risks. For more information about liability and insurance, refer to Penn State Extension’s article [Understanding Agriculture Liability](#)<sup>30</sup> and University of Missouri Extension publication G455, [Farm Liability Insurance](#).<sup>31</sup>

## 4.7 Other laws

All employers must agree to not discriminate against employees, according to requirements from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. For example, employers must reasonably accommodate disabled workers or applicants. Regardless of a person’s race, color, ethnicity, religious preference, creed, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, marital status, veteran status, genetic information or any other characteristic, discrimination or harassment are not allowed. An employer should ensure that all aspects of business operations — such as recruitment, hiring, compensation, advancement and termination — don’t discriminate against employees or prospective employees based on these attributes. For more details about nondiscrimination laws, refer to the U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission fact sheet [Federal Laws Prohibiting Job Discrimination Questions and Answers](#).<sup>32</sup>

Agricultural employers may be required to uphold other labor-related laws. One of those is the [Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act](#).<sup>33</sup> It

provides protections for migrant or seasonal employees who work in agriculture. Provisions include those specific to wages, housing, transportation, disclosure and recordkeeping. Among other things, the law also mandates registration of farm labor contractors.

Implemented by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Agricultural Worker Protection Standard (WPS) seeks to protect pesticide handlers and agricultural workers from harm linked to pesticide exposure. The WPS has three elements that employers should abide by:

- Train workers about pesticide safety; provide access to product labels, safety data and safety information; and share information to help workers avoid pesticide-treated areas.
- Protect workers from pesticide exposure through practices such as minimizing their contact with treated areas.
- Have mitigation practices in place in case employees are exposed to pesticides. Such practices include supplying water, soap, towels and eyewash stations and providing transportation to medical care in emergency situations.

For more information about WPS, refer to MU Extension publication G856, [Worker Protection Standard Overview](#).<sup>34</sup>

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) applies to covered employers, which are those that have employed at least 50 people in 20 workweeks of the current calendar year or preceding calendar year. Included in this definition are joint employers and successors in interest who are tied to a covered

employer. FMLA provides eligible employees 12 workweeks of unpaid, job-protected leave in a 12-month time for the following situations:

- The birth, adoption or foster care placement of a child
- Care for a spouse, child or parent in serious health
- Personal health leave if a serious condition prohibits the employee from capably working
- Other qualifying needs associated with a spouse, child or parent with active-duty military service

For an employee who works for a covered employer to be eligible, that employee must have accumulated at least 12 months of work time with the employer; recorded at least 1,250 hours of work time for the employer in the year before taking leave; and work from a location that employs at least 50 workers within 75 miles. You can find more information about FMLA, including other potential leave situations, in the U.S. Department of Labor fact sheet [The Family and Medical Leave Act](#).<sup>35</sup>

For more information about these and other agriculture-related labor laws, refer to [The National Agricultural Law Center's labor overview](#).<sup>36</sup>

## 4.8 Employee manual

An employee manual enables employers to share information about operation policies and practices in a written form. By outlining such information, employers clearly explain their expectations, which may protect them

### Components of an employee manual

- Business history and background
- Expectations
- Compensation and benefits
- Employment relationship
- Acknowledgment

from legal or compliance issues later. The manual can include a statement that explains that the written policies in the manual trump any other communication — oral or written — that may circulate about the business and its operations or policies. This statement would make clear that the manual is the official source for operational policies, practices, standards and other details.

You have the option to write an employee manual that's as general or specific as you'd like. Aim to write one that explains all of the business' policies and standards but presents that information in an easy-to-use format. A manual serves as a good tool for sharing information with employees, but it shouldn't be the only communication channel between employer and employee. Interpersonal interactions — such as frequent meetings, training and interpersonal communication — make communication more effective and foster a positive work environment.

Consider organizing your employee manual with the following categories:

- *Business history and background:* Start by explaining the history of the farm to inform employees about what the business has done. Share the business' values, vision and mission to show what the business aspires to be and what drives it.

- *Expectations*: Share information such as rules, policies and standards that employees should know to do their jobs well. The manual should answer basic questions that employees might have. Topics to address include the dress code, schedule and attendance, workplace safety, appropriate cellphone usage, training opportunities, social media practices, drug use standards, harassment policy, requirements related to appropriate use of employer resources, conflicts of interest, emergency protocol and ethics. In addition to naming standards and policies, an employee manual should also explain what would happen if an employee fails to adhere to the business' standards and policies.
- *Compensation and benefits*: Explain the business' pay and benefits practices. List pay days. Describe all forms of benefits and nonmonetary compensation — such as health coverage, insurance, time off, retirement plan — that employees are eligible to receive.
- *Employment relationship*: Explain that the position provides at-will, not contractual, employment. An at-will arrangement enables either party — employee or employer — to withdraw from the employment relationship at any time.
- *Acknowledgment*: After employees review the manual, ask that they provide a signed acknowledgment that they have read it and understand the policies and procedures that are described. Place signed copies in employee files.

When developing an employee manual, gather ideas from manuals developed by other farms and agribusinesses, or use a tool

such as The Farm Labor Dashboard [Personnel Policy Generator](#).<sup>37</sup>

Employers can also ask current employees to review drafts of their farms' employee manuals. Because current employees see the business in action, they may identify topics or subject matter that should be addressed or further explained.

## 4.9 Recordkeeping

Employers must comply with several recordkeeping requirements for their hired workers, as described below and summarized in Exhibit 4.9.1.

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) lists records that employers must keep and the length of time those records should be retained. For each nonexempt employee, employers must retain these 14 items:

- Full name and Social Security number
- Address
- Birth date if not yet 19 years old
- Sex and occupation
- Workweek beginning time and day
- Work hours per day
- Work hours per week
- How employees are paid — for example, by the week, by the hour or piecework
- Regular hourly pay rate
- Straight-time earnings per day or week
- Overtime pay per week
- Total wage additions or deductions
- Total wages by pay period
- Payment dates and associated pay periods



## Exhibit 4.9.1 – Recordkeeping requirements guidance.

Retention length	Type of record	Statute
5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Record of serious work-related illnesses and injuries</li> </ul>	OSHA
3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Name, address, job description, hours worked</li> <li>Payroll records, collective bargaining agreements, sales and purchases records</li> <li>FMLA-eligible employee records such as dates of FMLA leave, employee notices of leave, records of any disputes</li> <li>For H-2A workers, recruitment efforts, earnings, pay rate, time cards, worker address, wage deductions, time 'offered' but 'refused'</li> <li>I-9 forms (three years begins after hire date, or keep these records for one year after termination — whichever occurs later)</li> </ul>	Missouri law, FLSA, ADEA, INA, ICRA, FMLA
2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Records used to compute wages</li> <li>Youth employment records (i.e., work certificate; child's name, address and age; times and hours worked)</li> </ul>	FLSA, Missouri labor law
1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All personnel or employment records for involuntarily terminated employees</li> <li>Any employee benefit plan, written seniority plan or merit plan after termination</li> </ul>	EEOC, ADEA

For three years, employers must store records specific to payroll, collective bargaining agreements, sales and purchases. For two years, employers must maintain records they use to compute wages. Such records include time cards, work schedules and wage rates. All records must be available if a Department of Labor representative requests them for review. Employment records may be stored at a central records office or the employment location.

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) requires that covered employers retain certain records specific to their FMLA-eligible employees for at least three years. For the complete list, consult the U.S. Department of Labor webpage [Family and Medical Leave Act Advisor](#).<sup>38</sup>

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires many employers with more than 10 workers to

keep a record of work-related injuries and illnesses. For at least five years, the employer must maintain these records on site.

Additionally, the employer must submit an annual illness and injury summary between February and April. If an employee accident results in a fatality, the employer must report the fatality within eight hours. If an employee has a work-related amputation, loss of eye or hospitalization, the employer must report the incident within 24 hours. For more information, refer to [OSHA Injury and Illness Recordkeeping and Reporting Requirements](#).<sup>39</sup>

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) also mandate employer recordkeeping practices. To comply with EEOC laws, employers must retain personnel and employment records for involuntarily terminated employees for a year after the termination date. The ADEA requires

that employers store payroll records for three years and that employers keep on file any employee benefit plan and any written seniority or merit system information for the full time the plan or system is in effect and for at least one year after its termination. For more information, refer to the EEOC webpage [Recordkeeping Requirements](#).<sup>40</sup>

Employers subject to provisions of the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act (MSPA) or the H-2A visa program have additional recordkeeping requirements. For more information on the related requirements, refer to the U.S. Department of Labor fact sheets [The Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act](#)<sup>41</sup> and [Section H-2A of the Immigration and Nationality Act \(INA\)](#)<sup>42</sup> for compliance information.

Note that hiring employees through a farm labor contractor often results in a situation of joint employment and doesn't absolve either employer from recordkeeping compliance or compliance with the law. Failure to comply with the law on the part of either party makes the other party liable.

At the state level, Missouri requires employers to keep records — name, address, job description, pay rate, payment per pay period, and hours worked per day and per workweek — for each employee for at least three years. The Missouri Division of Labor Standards may request to inspect these records. For more information, consult the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations webpage [Penalties and Records Retention](#).<sup>43</sup>

A best practice is to store all employment-related documentation in an employee file

for each worker. In addition to containing federal- or state-mandated information, the file should include records from the hiring process — such as the employee's application, advertisement for the job, job description, interview notes and post-interview comments; offer letter; and benefits registrations and changes.

Performance-based records are also important to retain. Good records about employee performance history should clearly note poor performance or violations and include a time, date and explanation. In some cases and as allowed by law, employers may choose to store electronic records instead of paper ones because electronic storage can save space. Employers storing employee information electronically should adopt best practices to maintain employee privacy.

## 4.10 Resources list

The information in this section was adapted from resources such as the following, which may provide additional insights into managing the human resources-related operations of your business.

### Compensation and benefits

- [Affordable Care Act Provisions for Employers](#),<sup>44</sup> Internal Revenue Service
- [Are You Fighting Employees Over Paid Vacation?](#),<sup>45</sup> Successful Farming
- [Beyond Basic Compensation](#),<sup>46</sup> ATTRA — National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service
- [Bonus Plans for Farm Employees](#),<sup>47</sup> Iowa State University Extension and Outreach
- [Employee Cost Estimator](#),<sup>48</sup> University of Vermont Extension

- [Human Resource Management: Employee Compensation Guide](#),<sup>49</sup> Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
- [Overtime Pay](#),<sup>50</sup> U.S. Department of Labor

## **Taxes**

- [Employer's Tax Guide](#),<sup>21</sup> Department of the Treasury, Internal Revenue Service
- [Farmer's Tax Guide](#),<sup>51</sup> Department of the Treasury, Internal Revenue Service
- [Businesses With Employees](#),<sup>52</sup> Internal Revenue Service
- [Liability for Unemployment](#),<sup>23</sup> Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations

## **Youth labor**

- [Child Labor Requirements in Agricultural Occupations Under the Fair Labor Standards Act \(PDF\)](#),<sup>53</sup> U.S. Department of Labor
- [Youth Employment](#),<sup>54</sup> Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations
- [Youth in Agriculture](#),<sup>55</sup> Occupational Safety and Health Administration

## **Insurance and liability**

- [Do You Need Workers' Compensation for Your Small Farm?](#),<sup>56</sup> Cornell Small Farms Program
- [Farm Liability Insurance](#),<sup>31</sup> University of Missouri Extension
- [Health Care Insurance Options for Farm Business Operations](#),<sup>57</sup> University of Maryland Extension

- [Help for Employers](#),<sup>58</sup> Occupational Safety and Health Administration
- [Workers' Compensation FAQ](#),<sup>59</sup> Missouri Department of Insurance
- [Workers' Compensation and Farm Businesses](#),<sup>60</sup> University of Vermont Extension

## **Employee manuals**

- [Employee Handbooks](#),<sup>61</sup> Cornell Agricultural Workforce Development
- [Farm Employee Management: Do We Need an Employee Handbook?](#),<sup>62</sup> Iowa State University
- [Personnel Policy Generator](#),<sup>37</sup> University of Vermont Extension

## **Other labor resources**

- [Agricultural Employment Under the Fair Labor Standards Act](#),<sup>63</sup> U.S. Department of Labor
- [Cultivating Compliance: An Agricultural Guide to Federal Labor Law \(PDF\)](#),<sup>64</sup> U.S. Department of Labor
- [Employment Laws Assistance for Workers and Small Businesses](#),<sup>65</sup> U.S. Department of Labor
- [Labor — An Overview](#),<sup>36</sup> The National Agricultural Law Center
- [Recordkeeping Requirements Under the Fair Labor Standards Act](#),<sup>66</sup> Department of Labor
- [Recordkeeping Self-Audit for H-2A Employers](#),<sup>67</sup> University of Maryland Agriculture Law Education Initiative

---

## Web addresses in Chapter 4

1. [osha.gov](https://www.osha.gov)
2. [osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/small-business.pdf](https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/small-business.pdf)
3. [extension.missouri.edu/publications/g1961](https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/g1961)
4. [labor.mo.gov/sharp](https://labor.mo.gov/sharp)
5. [bls.gov/ooh/farming-fishing-and-forestry/agricultural-workers.htm](https://bls.gov/ooh/farming-fishing-and-forestry/agricultural-workers.htm)
6. [usda.library.cornell.edu/concern/publications/x920fw89s](https://usda.library.cornell.edu/concern/publications/x920fw89s)
7. [bls.gov/oes/tables.htm#45-0000](https://bls.gov/oes/tables.htm#45-0000)
8. [extension.missouri.edu/media/wysiwyg/Extensiondata/Pro/AgBusinessPolicyExtension/Docs/FarmLabor/CompensationPlans.pdf](https://extension.missouri.edu/media/wysiwyg/Extensiondata/Pro/AgBusinessPolicyExtension/Docs/FarmLabor/CompensationPlans.pdf)
9. [labor.mo.gov/dls/minimum-wage](https://labor.mo.gov/dls/minimum-wage)
10. [dol.gov/agencies/whd/minimum-wage](https://dol.gov/agencies/whd/minimum-wage)
11. [dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/12-agricultural-employment-flsa](https://dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/12-agricultural-employment-flsa)
12. [dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/17a-overtime](https://dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/17a-overtime)
13. [healthcare.gov/shop-calculators-fte](https://healthcare.gov/shop-calculators-fte)
14. [healthcare.gov/small-businesses/learn-more/explore-coverage](https://healthcare.gov/small-businesses/learn-more/explore-coverage)
15. [healthcare.gov/small-businesses/provide-shop-coverage/small-business-tax-credits](https://healthcare.gov/small-businesses/provide-shop-coverage/small-business-tax-credits)
16. [irs.gov/affordable-care-act/employers/affordable-care-act-tax-provisions-for-large-employers](https://irs.gov/affordable-care-act/employers/affordable-care-act-tax-provisions-for-large-employers)
17. [irs.gov/retirement-plans/plan-sponsor/simplified-employee-pension-plan-sep](https://irs.gov/retirement-plans/plan-sponsor/simplified-employee-pension-plan-sep)
18. [irs.gov/retirement-plans/plan-sponsor/simple-ira-plan](https://irs.gov/retirement-plans/plan-sponsor/simple-ira-plan)
19. [irs.gov/retirement-plans/plan-sponsor/types-of-retirement-plans](https://irs.gov/retirement-plans/plan-sponsor/types-of-retirement-plans)
20. [irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/understanding-employment-taxes](https://irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/understanding-employment-taxes)
21. [irs.gov/publications/p15](https://irs.gov/publications/p15)
22. [dor.mo.gov/forms](https://dor.mo.gov/forms)
23. [labor.mo.gov/des/employers/liability](https://labor.mo.gov/des/employers/liability)
24. [webapps.dol.gov/elaws/whd/flsa/docs/hazag.asp](https://webapps.dol.gov/elaws/whd/flsa/docs/hazag.asp)
25. [dol.gov/agencies/whd/state/child-labor/agriculture](https://dol.gov/agencies/whd/state/child-labor/agriculture)
26. [labor.mo.gov/dls/youth-employment/acceptable-work-hours](https://labor.mo.gov/dls/youth-employment/acceptable-work-hours)
27. [labor.mo.gov/dls/youth-employment/work-certificates-permits](https://labor.mo.gov/dls/youth-employment/work-certificates-permits)
28. [labor.mo.gov/dls/youth-employment/for-employers](https://labor.mo.gov/dls/youth-employment/for-employers)
29. [labor.mo.gov/dwc/employers/insurance](https://labor.mo.gov/dwc/employers/insurance)
30. [extension.psu.edu/understanding-agricultural-liability](https://extension.psu.edu/understanding-agricultural-liability)
31. [extension.missouri.edu/publications/g455](https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/g455)
32. [eeoc.gov/fact-sheet/federal-laws-prohibiting-job-discrimination-questions-and-answers](https://eeoc.gov/fact-sheet/federal-laws-prohibiting-job-discrimination-questions-and-answers)
33. [webapps.dol.gov/elaws/elg/mspa.htm](https://webapps.dol.gov/elaws/elg/mspa.htm)
34. [extension.missouri.edu/publications/g856](https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/g856)
35. [dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/28-fmla](https://dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/28-fmla)
36. [nationalaglawcenter.org/overview/labor](https://nationalaglawcenter.org/overview/labor)
37. [uvm.edu/aglabor/dashboard/personnel-policy-generator](https://uvm.edu/aglabor/dashboard/personnel-policy-generator)
38. [webapps.dol.gov/elaws/whd/fmla/8b6.aspx](https://webapps.dol.gov/elaws/whd/fmla/8b6.aspx)
39. [osha.gov/recordkeeping](https://osha.gov/recordkeeping)
40. [eeoc.gov/employers/recordkeeping-requirements](https://eeoc.gov/employers/recordkeeping-requirements)
41. [dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/49-mspa](https://dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/49-mspa)
42. [dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/26-H2A](https://dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/26-H2A)
43. [labor.mo.gov/dls/minimum-wage/penalties-records-retention](https://labor.mo.gov/dls/minimum-wage/penalties-records-retention)
44. [irs.gov/affordable-care-act/employers](https://irs.gov/affordable-care-act/employers)
45. [agriculture.com/content/are-you-fighting-employees-over-paid-vacation](https://agriculture.com/content/are-you-fighting-employees-over-paid-vacation)
46. [attra.ncat.org/publication/beyond-basic-compensation](https://attra.ncat.org/publication/beyond-basic-compensation)
47. [extension.iastate.edu/agdm/wholefarm/html/c1-61.html](https://extension.iastate.edu/agdm/wholefarm/html/c1-61.html)
48. [uvm.edu/aglabor/dashboard/employee-cost-estimator](https://uvm.edu/aglabor/dashboard/employee-cost-estimator)
49. [agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/asset-external/human-resource-management-employee-compensation-guide](https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/asset-external/human-resource-management-employee-compensation-guide)
50. [dol.gov/agencies/whd/overtime](https://dol.gov/agencies/whd/overtime)
51. [www.irs.gov/publications/p225](https://www.irs.gov/publications/p225)
52. [irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/businesses-with-employees](https://irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/businesses-with-employees)
53. [dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WHd/legacy/files/childlabor102.pdf](https://dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WHd/legacy/files/childlabor102.pdf)
54. [labor.mo.gov/dls/youth-employment](https://labor.mo.gov/dls/youth-employment)
55. [osha.gov/etools/youth-agriculture](https://osha.gov/etools/youth-agriculture)
56. [smallfarms.cornell.edu/2016/04/do-you-need-workers-compensation](https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/2016/04/do-you-need-workers-compensation)
57. [extension.umd.edu/resource/health-care-insurance-options-farm-business-operations-fs-2024-0706](https://extension.umd.edu/resource/health-care-insurance-options-farm-business-operations-fs-2024-0706)
58. [osha.gov/employers](https://osha.gov/employers)
59. [insurance.mo.gov/workers-compensation/workers-compensation-faqs](https://insurance.mo.gov/workers-compensation/workers-compensation-faqs)

60. [uvm.edu/aglabor/dashboard/resources/workers-compensation-farm-businesses](http://uvm.edu/aglabor/dashboard/resources/workers-compensation-farm-businesses)
61. [agworkforce.cals.cornell.edu/human-resource-management/employee-handbooks](http://agworkforce.cals.cornell.edu/human-resource-management/employee-handbooks)
62. [extension.iastate.edu/agdm/wholefarm/html/c1-72.html](http://extension.iastate.edu/agdm/wholefarm/html/c1-72.html)
63. [dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/12-agricultural-employment-flsa](http://dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/12-agricultural-employment-flsa)
64. [dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WHD/legacy/files/AgGuideEnglish.pdf](http://dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WHD/legacy/files/AgGuideEnglish.pdf)
65. [webapps.dol.gov/elaws](http://webapps.dol.gov/elaws)
66. [dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/21-flsa-recordkeeping](http://dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/21-flsa-recordkeeping)
67. [umaglaw.org/recordkeeping-self-audit-for-h-2a-employers](http://umaglaw.org/recordkeeping-self-audit-for-h-2a-employers)

## 5. Retention

---

Annually, the U.S. labor force experiences significant turnover. Employers incur expenses when workers leave their operations. The Center for American Progress categorizes the costs of turnover as direct and indirect. Direct costs include providing severance, paying staff to fill the short-term employment gap and identifying replacement candidates. Indirect costs include declining productivity as the worker prepares to leave the company, losing company know-how and harming company morale.

Adopting an effective human resources system, prioritizing communication with employees, and offering feedback and growth opportunities can contribute to better on-farm job retention rates.

### 5.1 Human resources system

The human resources system that an employer uses affects its ability to retain employees. Begin with hiring good people. Those who are qualified may be more expensive investments, but their performance may exceed that of a less qualified worker. Other components of a human resources “system” include many of the topics covered in this guide: onboarding, training, mentoring, compensation, benefits, safe environment and so forth.

Employers who support a work-life balance and offer continuing education may be more likely to retain employees. Talk with employees to help understand and address

#### Sample best practices to support retention

- Offer incentives contingent on performance.
- Promote employees who have earned it.
- Offer training and continuing education.
- Provide spontaneous feedback.
- Support a positive work-life balance.
- Give recognition.

their challenges. For example, childcare may be an issue for some employees. Understand your staff’s childcare needs by talking with them, and then brainstorm approaches to help. Learning opportunities — such as those provided by conferences, seminars and extension meetings — not only enhance the skill level of employees but also have the potential to motivate a farm’s workers.

Recognition is another tool for showing appreciation for employees and build their commitment to the business. Just saying “thank you” to an employee for doing good work can create a positive work environment. Offering a gift can further emphasize the business’ appreciation. Recognizing worker accomplishments in front of the whole team may make the acknowledgment more special for employees. Plus, it may motivate peers to work hard and earn recognition for themselves.

### 5.2 Communication

When employers communicate well, they show that they value their employees —



information is powerful — and they ensure that employee expectations are clear. When employees feel valued, they may be more likely to stay with an employer and not switch jobs. When they know what's expected of them, they may focus on strengthening their performance in certain areas in which they could improve.

Possible communication strategies include scheduling regular staff meetings; distributing a complete, easy-to-understand employee manual; outlining job expectations and employee goals; and requesting feedback from employees.

## 5.3 Feedback

Agricultural employers should establish a feedback loop within their businesses. In other words, employers should create opportunities to provide constructive feedback to employees and for employees to share feedback with the business. Performance reviews and worker satisfaction surveys facilitate opportunities for sharing feedback. Keep a written record of feedback.

If you anticipate a need to share feedback for improvement with an employee who might react hostilely, consider asking a third party to participate in the meeting. That third party can make the environment seem calmer and eventually may be called to dispute harassment or discrimination claims made by the disgruntled employee.

### 5.3.1 Performance reviews

In a performance review, an employer evaluates how well an employee has done his or her work over a specific period. Reviews

**Performance reviews** should be based on objective and subjective measures. Conduct reviews on a set schedule — for example, monthly, quarterly or annually.

enable the employer and employee to collaborate and help the employee develop a plan focused on growing professionally and moving the business closer to achieving its goals. A performance review adds some formality to the feedback process, and it summarizes overall worker performance instead of addressing just a particular project, event or situation.

Ideally, performance reviews will involve planning and good communication by the employer. Often, an employee's direct manager will lead the review because the manager has the most direct oversight of the employee's work and can offer the most relevant feedback. Employers can choose how often to evaluate their employees — for example, every quarter, six months or year — and should ensure employees know when to expect performance review. Employees should also understand what they will be evaluated on.

During a review, encourage the employee to share his or her thoughts about personal performance. The following list provides some sample questions to guide the review.

- What do you view as your top work-related strengths and weaknesses?
- What resources would help you to improve your job performance?
- How do you plan to continually develop professionally?
- How well is your work team functioning?

- Between now and your next performance review, what goals do you plan to achieve?
- What do you see as opportunities for the business?

Once the employee has shared, it is the employer's time to share performance-related comments. Because a job description highlights specific requirements, reviewing it can provide a framework for assessing whether all job duties are being addressed. During a performance review is a good time to update employees about upcoming changes in compensation, personnel or job descriptions. The employer should keep written records of the review and its contents, and the documentation should be added to the employee's file.

Performance reviews can blend subjective assessments and objective metrics. Objective metrics are quantifiable. Farms may quantify performance through measures such as bushels harvested per hour, skills learned per year, continuing education programs completed, hours worked, safety incidents recorded and attendance. A subjective view of worker performance accounts for factors such as attitude, flexibility and work ethic.

During a performance review, the employer should create an environment for discussion. The employer should identify opportunities to recognize the worker for doing well on the job and should give the employee an opportunity to ask questions and clarify information provided by the reviewer.

For a comprehensive approach to reviewing employees, 360 evaluations are an option. With a 360 evaluation, employers request

A **360 evaluation** provides a complete view of the employee's performance by collecting input from multiple people who interact with the employee.

input from multiple people who have contact with an employee. Feedback might be gathered from coworkers, managers, people who report to the employee, customers, suppliers and the employee's self-assessment. As a result, the 360 evaluation provides a complete view of the employee's performance.

### 5.3.2 Informal reviews

In addition to scheduling periodic formal employee performance reviews, supervisors can routinely monitor performance and provide on-the-spot recognition to employees who have done well on the job. Informal reviews are also a time when supervisors can provide improvement tips when issues with an employee arise.

### 5.3.3 Worker satisfaction surveys

Worker satisfaction surveys ask questions of current employees. Incorporating ideas shared by employees and continually improving the business environment may help with retaining employees. Survey questions can address topics including those in the following list.

- How well does the business support innovative and creative thinking?
- How well does the business provide the necessary resources for employees to succeed?
- How well does the business communicate with employees?

- How well does the business support personal growth and development for employees?
- How well does the business encourage a healthy work-life balance?
- How well does the business fairly compensate employees based on their performance?
- How well does the business provide a safe work environment?
- How well does the business make good use of its employees' skills and experiences?
- How well do managers and supervisors work to establish good relationships with workers?
- How well do managers and others in leadership positions listen to employees?
- How well does the employee understand his or her responsibilities?
- How well does the employee understand opportunities to help the business succeed?
- How well does the employee feel personally satisfied with his or her job?

## 5.4 Resources list

The information in this section was adapted from resources including the following, which may provide additional insights into retaining employees.

### Employee retention

- [6 Tips for Keeping Good Farm Help](#),<sup>1</sup> Farm and Dairy

- [Beyond Basic Compensation](#),<sup>2</sup> ATTRA — National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service
- [How to Keep Employees When Cash Is Short: The High Cost of Employee Turnover \(PDF\)](#),<sup>3</sup> Ohio State University Extension
- [Meeting Employee Needs](#),<sup>4</sup> Penn State Extension
- [Skin in the Game](#),<sup>5</sup> Michigan State University Extension
- [There Are Significant Business Costs to Replacing Employees](#),<sup>6</sup> Center for American Progress
- [Top 10 Employee Retention Mistakes](#),<sup>7</sup> CropLife

### Performance reviews

- [5 Ways to Prepare Your Employees for 360-Degree Feedback](#),<sup>8</sup> Fast Company
- [Help Farm Workers Meet Goals With Performance Evaluations](#),<sup>9</sup> Progressive Dairy
- [How to Build an Effective Farm Employee Review System](#),<sup>10</sup> Farm Progress

### Worker satisfaction surveys

- [Employee Satisfaction Surveys: What They Are, Best Practices and Sample Questions](#),<sup>11</sup> Qualtrics
- [The Ultimate Guide to Employee Satisfaction Surveys](#),<sup>12</sup> SurveyMonkey
- [Get the Truth of Employee Satisfaction in 15 Questions or Less](#),<sup>13</sup> Alchemer

---

## Web addresses in Chapter 5

1. [farmanddairy.com/top-stories/6-tips-for-keeping-good-farm-help/367795.html](http://farmanddairy.com/top-stories/6-tips-for-keeping-good-farm-help/367795.html)
2. [attra.ncat.org/publication/beyond-basic-compensation](http://attra.ncat.org/publication/beyond-basic-compensation)
3. [dairy.osu.edu/sites/dairy/files/imce/DIBS/DIBS18-15\\_The\\_Cost\\_of\\_High\\_Employee\\_Turnover.pdf](http://dairy.osu.edu/sites/dairy/files/imce/DIBS/DIBS18-15_The_Cost_of_High_Employee_Turnover.pdf)
4. [extension.psu.edu/meeting-employee-needs](http://extension.psu.edu/meeting-employee-needs)
5. [canr.msu.edu/news/skin\\_in\\_the\\_game](http://canr.msu.edu/news/skin_in_the_game)
6. [americanprogress.org/article/there-are-significant-business-costs-to-replacing-employees](http://americanprogress.org/article/there-are-significant-business-costs-to-replacing-employees)
7. [croplife.com/management/employees/top-10-employee-retention-mistakes](http://croplife.com/management/employees/top-10-employee-retention-mistakes)
8. [fastcompany.com/3027759/5-ways-to-prepare-your-employees-for-360-degree-feedback](http://fastcompany.com/3027759/5-ways-to-prepare-your-employees-for-360-degree-feedback)
9. [agproud.com/articles/21212-help-farm-workers-meet-goals-with-performance-evaluations](http://agproud.com/articles/21212-help-farm-workers-meet-goals-with-performance-evaluations)
10. [farmprogress.com/planting/how-to-build-an-effective-farm-employee-review-system](http://farmprogress.com/planting/how-to-build-an-effective-farm-employee-review-system)
11. [qualtrics.com/blog/employee-satisfaction-survey](http://qualtrics.com/blog/employee-satisfaction-survey)
12. [surveymonkey.com/mp/employee-satisfaction-surveys](http://surveymonkey.com/mp/employee-satisfaction-surveys)
13. [alchemer.com/resources/blog/employee-satisfaction-15-questions](http://alchemer.com/resources/blog/employee-satisfaction-15-questions)

## 6. Termination

---

### 6.1 Employment-at-will

Because Missouri is an employment-at-will state, agricultural employees or employers may terminate an employment arrangement whenever they choose, with certain exceptions. The exceptions are if a contract is involved, if the termination was motivated by discrimination, or if the limited public policy exception was violated.

Missouri agricultural employees or employers generally may **terminate** an employment arrangement whenever they choose, except when a contract is involved, discrimination occurs, or limited public policy exceptions don't apply.

The limited public policy exception states an at-will worker's employment may not be terminated if one of these four conditions apply:

- The employee refused to violate the law.
- The employee reported a law breach.
- The employee chose a course of action that public policy would strongly support.
- The employee pursued a legal right, such as filing a workers' compensation claim.

University of Missouri Extension provides an [Employment Termination Checklist \(PDF\)](#) <sup>1</sup> you can use to take the appropriate steps to dismiss an employee.

### 6.2 Final wages

Upon termination of an employment relationship, the employee should receive final wages when he or she is discharged. When an employee doesn't receive final pay at dismissal, he or she may request final wages in a written letter sent via certified mail with a return receipt requested. At that point, the employer must respond and pay the owed wages within seven days. If the employer doesn't provide final wages within that time, then it is required to pay additional wages incurred between the termination date and payment date. Such additional wages may accrue for up to 60 days.

Terminated employees have the option to pursue a private legal case if they are owed wages. Small claims court is appropriate when wages are less than \$5,000. When owed wages are greater than \$5,000, the employee may proceed with a case filed in circuit court.

Note that Missouri doesn't require employers to compensate discharged employees for earned vacation time. An employee may consider court action in an attempt to collect on that time.

### 6.3 Reporting

When terminating an employee, special reporting conditions apply if the individual has wage withholding issued by the Missouri Department of Social Services (DSS), Family Support Division, Child Support Enforcement. In that case, the employer must provide

notification to the agency within 10 days of dismissing the employee. Notification details to include are the dismissed employee's last known address and contact information for his or her new employer, if known. The notification can be made online via the [DSS Termination of Employment system](#).<sup>2</sup>

## 6.4 Insurance benefits

Depending on the discharge situation, employers may need to inform employees about options to continue their health insurance coverage. The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) makes continued health coverage an option for certain employees and their families. Employers can learn more about COBRA in the U.S. Department of Labor publication [An Employer's Guide to Group Health Continuation Coverage Under COBRA](#).<sup>3</sup>

## 6.5 Exit interviews

Exit interviews are typically conducted between when an employee gives notice and when the employee officially leaves the operation. At that point, employees may feel the risk of sharing information — even negative comments — is lower because their honesty will not compromise their employment. Scheduling an exit interview with an employee who voluntarily leaves the company can provide insights into why the employee chose to leave. Employers can use that information to make changes and possibly prevent other employees from resigning. In some scenarios, the exit interview may create an opportunity to encourage an employee to stay.

### Benefits of an exit interview

- Provides insights into why an employee chose to leave
- Allows employee to provide negative comments that will not compromise job security
- Can prompt employer to make changes that could prevent other resignations
- Can provide insight into whether the employee was adequately compensated
- Could help identify needed changes to company culture

Often, employers arrange the interview between the employee who's leaving and someone who did not directly supervise that employee. The interviewer may be a manager responsible for human resources or another department, or an independent interviewer who's not employed by the business, for example, a service representative. The goal is to collect candid feedback, and the presence of a neutral interviewer can create a more impartial and comfortable environment.

Before an exit interview, an interviewer should create a list of questions to guide the process. Questions may address these and other topics:

- positive and negative experiences with the job, company and coworkers
- the reason the employee chose to leave
- ideas for improving the employee experience and retention
- whether the employee understood the job responsibilities and the company's vision



- whether the operation's training was helpful in developing the employee's skills
- whether the operation and managers provided constructive feedback
- whether the employee had the opportunity to share ideas
- whether the employee was adequately compensated
- whether the employee felt safe on the job

In addition to highlighting organizational issues, an exit interview can help the employer collect information about the status of projects the employee has been working on. The employer can then share that information with the employee's replacement.

University of Missouri Extension provides [a guide you can use to outline questions for an exit interview \(PDF\)](#).<sup>4</sup>

## 6.6 Resources list

The information in this section was adapted from resources such as the following, which may provide additional insights into terminating worker employment arrangements.

### Employment termination

- [Wages, Hours and Dismissal Rights](#),<sup>5</sup> Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations
- [Termination](#),<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Labor

### Exit interviews

- [Exit Interviews — Tips for Employees and Employers, Sample Questions and Answers](#),<sup>7</sup> AgCareers.com
- [Interviewing Employees on the Way Out](#),<sup>8</sup> Michigan State University

---

## Web addresses in Chapter 6

1. extension.missouri.edu/media/wysiwyg/Extensiondata/Pro/AgBusinessPolicyExtension/Docs/FarmLabor/EmployeeTermination.pdf
2. missouriemployer.dss.mo.gov/TerminationInfo.aspx
3. dol.gov/agencies/ebsa/about-ebsa/our-activities/resource-center/publications/an-employers-guide-to-group-health-continuation-coverage-under-cobra
4. extension.missouri.edu/media/wysiwyg/Extensiondata/Pro/AgBusinessPolicyExtension/Docs/FarmLabor/ExitInterviews.pdf
5. labor.mo.gov/dls/general
6. dol.gov/general/topic/termination
7. agcareers.com/newsletters/exit.htm
8. canr.msu.edu/news/interviewing\_employees\_on\_the\_way\_out

## 7. Appendix

---

**Application for employment** at \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

### Personal background

Applicant name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(last, first, middle initial)

Current address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(number, street, city, state, ZIP code)

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you legally eligible to work in the U.S.? \_\_\_\_\_

### Work availability

With the nature of our business, we sometimes may require help on evenings, weekends or short notice. On occasion, would you be able to help on short notice or outside of traditional work hours?

Yes    No    If necessary, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Can you reliably get to and from work? \_\_\_\_\_

How soon are you available to start? \_\_\_\_\_

### Education history

School name and location	Years attended	Did you graduate?	Degree
School name and location	Years attended	Did you graduate?	Degree
School name and location	Years attended	Did you graduate?	Degree

## Employment history

Employer name	Address	Start and end dates
Job title	Job description	Supervisor name and phone
Employer name	Address	Start and end dates
Job title	Job description	Supervisor name and phone
Employer name	Address	Start and end dates
Job title	Job description	Supervisor name and phone

## References

Name	Phone and email	Relationship to you
Name	Phone and email	Relationship to you
Name	Phone and email	Relationship to you

## Emergency contact

Name	Phone (home, email, work)	Relationship to you
Address		

I certify that all information provided in this application is as accurate and complete as possible. I understand that submitting this application doesn't guarantee employment or otherwise obligate \_\_\_\_\_ (employer) \_\_\_\_\_ in any way. I understand that providing false information could result in employment termination. I authorize \_\_\_\_\_ (employer) \_\_\_\_\_ to further investigate my personal and work history as it pertains to evaluating my qualifications for this position.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Hiring checklist for agricultural employment

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Activity
_____	Received job application
_____	Reviewed job application
_____	Scheduled initial job interview
_____	Completed initial job interview
_____	Received initial interview follow-up from applicant
_____	Scheduled second-round job interview
_____	Completed second-round job interview
_____	Received second-round interview follow-up from applicant
_____	Received consent to conduct background check
_____	Passed background check
_____	Checked applicant references
_____	Scheduled drug test
_____	Passed drug test
_____	Presented offer via phone
_____	Sent offer letter
_____	Provided proof of work authorization or eligibility
_____	Received offer acceptance
_____	Sent necessary preemployment forms (e.g., health insurance enrollment, retirement plan enrollment)
_____	Set new hire start date
_____	Established probationary employment period
_____	Received new hire's Form W-4 and Form MO W-4
_____	Received returned pre-employment forms
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Find this [Missouri Farm Labor Guide](#)<sup>1</sup>  
and other MU Extension [farm labor resources](#)<sup>2</sup> online.

1. [extension.missouri.edu/m199](https://extension.missouri.edu/m199)
2. [extension.missouri.edu/programs/agricultural-business-and-policy-extension/farm-labor](https://extension.missouri.edu/programs/agricultural-business-and-policy-extension/farm-labor)

This guide replaces MU Extension publication G700, Hiring and Managing Farm Labor, written by Joe Parcell and Melvin Brees.

Original authors: Alice Roach, Joe Horner and Ryan Milhollin