

Demonstration Site Summary
Yakima Valley Opportunities Industrialization Center
Yakima Valley OIC Incumbent Skills Training Program

I. BACKGROUND	
<p>Food processing is a very important industry in eastern Washington with nearly 50 plants employing approximately 4,500 workers in the Pasco area. J.R. Simplot (JRS-P) a \$2.8 billion agribusiness corporation involved in food processing, fertilizer manufacturing, agriculture, and related businesses, was the primary employer partner for the demonstration. Many of its workers speak English as a second language (ESL) (if at all) and have little education. Much the same situation faces other food processors in the region. This presents a serious challenge for maintaining quality and safety standards and, especially, for upgrading the skills of workers to keep pace with changing technology. At the time the proposal was written, the JRS-P plant was operating at only about two-thirds of capacity even though it was fully staffed. The inefficiency was attributed largely to inadequate skill levels of employees. While there were subsequently some improvements in efficiency, significant problems with quality and waste remained. The grantee had collaborated with JRS-P on past delivery of ESL, GED, and adult basic education, but only on a small scale. Through the demonstration, the grantee sought to extend its partnership to support enhancement of technical skills for workers at the plant.</p>	
II. SITE ATTRIBUTES	
<i>Targeted Industries and Occupations</i>	Food processing, with an emphasis on machine workers, lead workers, utility/inspectors, and assistant team leaders.
<i>Project Strategy</i>	The JRS-P facility chosen for this project is a modern facility with sophisticated equipment. It employed a large number of low-skilled workers with limited opportunities for wage progression and/or faced a high risk of layoffs and terminations unless their skills were upgraded. Originally, the primary goal for the workers was to provide training in the context of a career ladder for their advancement using a two-pronged strategy: (1) to develop a training curriculum covering all major pieces of equipment in the plant, and (2) to develop an operator advancement program. The grantee developed a comprehensive program including customized training, worksite mentors and tutors, case management, and systematic training reviews and updates for participants following completion of formal training.
<i>Project Partners</i>	In addition to the grantee, project partners included the employer (J.R. Simplot) and an array of training vendors. Although listed in the proposal as a project partner, the local WIB had no real connection with the project.
III. HIGHLIGHTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The grantee originally planned to conduct a comprehensive assessment of technical training information available from equipment manufacturers. This was to be reviewed by an advisory committee composed of line workers and supervisors. A professional curriculum specialist was then going to create a combined training program customized to meet the facility’s training needs. Early in the demonstration, the grantee discovered that vendors did not have the capacity to provide training on their equipment, that most companies did not have manuals to go with their equipment, and that many of the companies that sold equipment to JRS-P were no longer in business. • The project strategy was modified after discussions with a management advisory committee that recommended organizing training based on production lines rather than individual pieces of equipment. Other changes included the use of in-house trainers and curriculum and the establishment of “Vegetable University.” • The demonstration grant came at a time known as the “onset of prime pack,” a four-month peak production cycle requiring intense activity, making it difficult to launch any incumbent worker training. • A “Quick Start” program was developed to gain visibility and support for the project. This proved quite effective, as management and supervisors saw immediate improvements in performance. As a result, the 	

overall credibility of the project was strengthened.

- An Operator Advancement Program was developed to provide a vehicle for employee advancement within a structured career ladder system, including six different levels structured along the lines of the company's existing state certified apprenticeship program for mechanics.
- A training resource center, including bilingual curriculum materials covering all major production lines, a video library, and ESL training materials, was created for use by all employees at the plant.
- One of the main goals of the project was to have an impact on plant efficiency. The grantee sought to increase production volume by 2% and reduce overtime from 15% to 7.5%. It was not until the second year of the demonstration that the curriculum was developed and training began. A full production year is needed to effectively measure the impact of the training on performance.

IV. TRAINING PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES		
	Proposed	Actual
Incumbent Workers		
Number of trainees	150	163
Average % wage gain (min., max.)	-	7.7% (-21, 35)
Dislocated Workers		
Number of trainees	0	NA
Placement rate	-	NA
Average wage replacement rate (min., max.)	-	NA
LLSIL4 Wage Standard		
Proportion of 163 nonunion workers with posttraining wage data at or above LLSIL4 ¹	100%	9%
• Incumbent workers \geq LLSIL4	-	9%
• Dislocated workers \geq LLSIL4	-	NA
Total missing (union and nonunion)		0 (0%)

¹ The data did not specify union or nonunion workers; therefore, all participants are treated as nonunion workers.