

H-2A Agricultural Work Visas

The H-2A program is a vehicle by which agricultural employers facing a certified labor shortage may recruit workers abroad to work on a temporary basis (less than one year). It was codified in the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 as one of the mitigations to potential effects of the new ban on hiring unauthorized workers. The program permits issuance of work visas only if and after the Department of Labor (DOL) certifies that a local labor shortage exists after the employer actively recruits locally and through the interstate public job service. H-2A rules specify several conditions of the employment contract, including wage, transportation, and housing provisions.

In recent years Congress has considered legislative proposals that would significantly revise or augment the H-2A program. Detailed information and forms related to the H-2A program are available from DOL and updates on proposed rule changes from the USDA Labor Affairs Coordinator, both available at *AgHelpWanted.org*.



What knowledge, abilities, and other characteristics would a person have to possess to be suited for the job?

Assessing Applicants

In getting ready to assess applicants, employers need to be clear about (1) what the job qualifications are, and (2) how to get information about whether individuals possess them. The list of functions, duties, and responsibilities on a job description states what the position incumbent will have to do. What would the employer need to know about applicants to decide whether they are capable of performing the job? What knowledge, abilities, and other characteristics would a person have to possess to be suited for the job? Answering these questions translates the job *description* into a job *specification*, or list of qualifications, which usually becomes a section of the description document. The description characterizes a job, the specification a person.

Suppose a business needs to fill a position with the duties shown in Figure 3.5. It can afford neither the time nor other resources to train an unskilled person. A department manager wants someone who can do the job right now. What are the characteristics of a well-qualified applicant? And once those characteristics or qualifications are established, how could the employer determine whether applicants possess them? Systematic approaches to employee selection depend on information that measures applicants on criteria related to requirements of the job. Casual approaches are not designed to carefully sort workers according to qualifications, so the information requirements—and the costs of meeting them—are less.

Through what sources can information be obtained about the degree to which individuals possess each of the qualifications in a job specification? A combination of sources (Figure 3.4, p. 74) is needed to develop information on