

August 7, 2019

The Honorable Gretchen Whitmer  
Governor  
P.O. Box 30013  
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Governor Whitmer,

On behalf of Riveridge Companies (Riveridge Produce Marketing, Inc., Riveridge Land Co., LLC, Riveridge Packing, LLC and Riveridge Cider Co., LLC) as well as our industry partner, Rasch Brothers Apple Storage, I would like to express our appreciation for the workforce development services provided by West Michigan Works!

Riveridge started as a produce sales and marketing agency 30 years ago. Since, then the company has become a vertically integrated grower, packer, processor, and shipper. Working with nine packing facilities and over 200 growers, Riveridge markets 50% of the fresh apple crop in Michigan. Partnerships with packers and growers, like Rasch Brothers Apple Storage, along with their multi-generation grower/owners, are an essential part of our mutual success. During peak harvest seasons, our combined operations will employ 300+ people between harvest and packing operations.

I connected with West Michigan Works! because I needed assistance with finding and implementing efficiencies in a complicated supply-chain. As labor becomes more of a concern in agricultural industry, it becomes essential to have the right people in place with the right training. We identified the right training as being a Lean Six Sigma program which empowers our people to communicate more effectively and be proactive in problem solving and efficient production.

In addition to the Going Pro activities, we have also been able to send people to training through the Incumbent Working Training program. This has made training more accessible to our employees and make them better contributors to the company.

Michigan Works! helped me reach my goal of moving our industry toward best-practice in Lean Six Sigma. We are now positioned to be leaders in our industry among our peers in the state and even a national level.

My company has benefited by working with West Michigan Works! because we were able to obtain grant funding which made this training possible. Without the assistance of Michigan Works!, we would not have been able to offer this training to our employees.

What I find most valuable about partnering with West Michigan Works! is the variety of programming offered. Since beginning our partnership with Michigan Works! only a year ago, we have sent employees to more training by leveraging the programs available.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jamie Kober". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jamie Kober  
Riverige Produce Marketing, Inc.  
Enhancement Director  
616-205-6345

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dan Schwallier". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with a large initial "D".

Dan Schwallier  
Rasch Brothers Apple Storage  
Plant Manager  
616-784-0380