

Wisconsin Agricultural Education & Workforce Development Council: Summarized Survey Results

June 23, 2021

Establish where you want to be.

What are your goals?

- ▶ Identify best practices; clarify resources as to lay path for others to follow
- ▶ Develop or strengthen an Agricultural Apprentice Program
- ▶ To help create a viable pool of quality and prepared workers to engage in the vibrant Wisconsin Agriculture economy providing rewarding careers for them / Have all positions fill with qualified employees
- ▶ To better understand alignment and pathways for students at all levels of education
- ▶ We need to increase the number of graduates with post-secondary training focused in the Agriculture career cluster
- ▶ Provide educational opportunities for immigrant workforce
- ▶ Develop an FFA Chapter at Menominee Indian School District and Menominee Tribal School that teaches sustainable and organic methods of agriculture
- ▶ Ensure all students in the state have access to high quality agriculture education programs (also known as Agriculture Career Pathways)
- ▶ Develop a marketing campaign for youth about career opportunities in the agricultural industry

What are sub-goals that accompany the big goals?

- ▶ Make the process more efficient and opportunities more clear / Help predict what skillsets will be needed to prepare employees
- ▶ DATCP and DWD working together with the private sector to develop
- ▶ Find people that are willing to work. Train new employees or identify people that already have the skills that we need. Retain employees.
- ▶ Collaboration and willingness to set aside beliefs to work toward the common goal, which is educational opportunities for all.
- ▶ We need to increase diversity across the agricultural career cluster in order to reach these goals.
- ▶ Establish specific education programs that allow access for diversity at all levels.
- ▶ Educate consumers as to the importance of agriculture
- ▶ Implement a statewide career pathway in Agriculture for regions to adopt. Support regional adoption of pathways to make transparent the opportunities in the Agriculture Career Pathway such as dual credit, work-based learning, and FFA opportunities.
- ▶ Identify opportunities to expand the annual report and use it as a tool to better educate and advertise to the public about agricultural education programs. Engage with the universities and ensure that both the ag industry and educational industries have knowledge and information regarding existing opportunities.
- ▶ Properly train managers and employees by offering opportunities, certifications, eventual state licensing, and continuing education. Appropriate pay and year-round employment for managers and employees.

Where are you right now with this goal?

- ▶ Shortage of Ag workers
- ▶ Rural WI is hurting. As the dairy sector is changing rapidly, there are great needs for highly skilled labor and a huge opportunity for people with an array of skill.
- ▶ We are currently trying to recruit more students to post-secondary agriculture programs.
- ▶ No one else is talking about it.
- ▶ Just beginning in many aspects, laying the groundwork.
- ▶ DPI is ready to engage with employers to determine support for this idea.
- ▶ Unsure what the current outreach in this area is, would need to survey existing current state.
- ▶ Other than off the record chats, nothing has been done to change the status quo.

What are the issues and challenges?

- ▶ Need to understand what exists today before can say what needs change
- ▶ Need ag organizations and mentors
- ▶ Shortage of workers and competition for other industries like healthcare and manufacturing / Old paradigms about the industry that need to be de-mythed
- ▶ Awareness. Funding. Understanding. Biases.
- ▶ Finding people in a rural area that are unemployed. Finding people that have the skills that we need.
- ▶ Not all levels of leadership at all institutions have the same goal
- ▶ Not as many students are familiar with agriculture as have been in the past. The current job market is providing high school graduates with many options.
- ▶ The attitude of some policy makers of making immigrants unwelcome is a short sighted way to make farming more difficult. Ag education needs to counter that attitude as agriculture depends on immigrants.
- ▶ Creating K-12 curriculum; Developing working farms or agroforestry sites in the community; Building infrastructure
- ▶ The field of agriculture is widespread and covers many areas
- ▶ Lack of knowledge, respect, qualified employees, and qualified management. Seasonal work limitations

What strengths can you use to achieve your goal?

- ▶ Agencies, PDPW, DBA, WFB, Processors
- ▶ Positive voice for agriculture
- ▶ Background. Understanding. Desire to help connect resources. No hidden agenda.
- ▶ The power of social media and passionate people leading the charge / Positive voice for agriculture
- ▶ Longevity. Our company is willing to train people. We pay competitive wage with good benefits.
- ▶ I'm a peacekeeper and always want to hear all sides. With respect a commonality can be found.
- ▶ The post-secondary institutions in the state have great Facilities, Faculty and Staff to prepare students for careers in Agriculture.
- ▶ Advocacy and empowerment
- ▶ Native people were always agriculturalists, just by another name. We are now clarifying that perspective so it is recognized that agriculture and related are part of our history and heritage. We are developing a tribal college sustainable agriculture degree which will reflect community wants and needs.
- ▶ Expertise of this committee, passion and determination of current group re: subject matter and industry, connections of those involved in the project, access to networks

What are the options for overcoming the obstacles in your way?

- ▶ Networking, leadership, communication
- ▶ Higher pay for Ag workers
- ▶ Recruitment from other areas. Work with local schools to set up internships. Work with local and state government to identify potential employees.
- ▶ Develop coursework so all school districts offer students exploratory options including agriculture.
- ▶ Educating immigrants will allow them to remove the obstacles to their success
- ▶ Develop an FFA program for our tribe or intertribally with the tribes in Wisconsin.
- ▶ Collaboration with employers and higher education to ensure that the agriculture pathway represents high skill, high wage and in-demand opportunities for students.
- ▶ Obtain funding, use internal expertise, use of networks
- ▶ Begin with a public relations campaign
- ▶ Review licensing and insurance requirements for certain industries
- ▶ A match-making service could also be employed to direct full time/seasonal workers to similar jobs in related industries

If money was not an obstacle, what would you do?

- ▶ Money shouldn't be an obstacle; companies are in dire need
- ▶ Work with ag organizations, Tech Schools and colleges
- ▶ Educate the educators. Fund rural schools better. Create a more robust school to work and mentor system. Get more support and funding to rural schools.
- ▶ Create social media platforms and hire a small passionate staff to focus on this full time.
- ▶ Increase wages
- ▶ Bring in people from other areas.
- ▶ Develop a dual credit class at the high school level with articulation into the technical college system and the UW system so all students receive training in agriculture which can be utilized effectively in their future training.
- ▶ Establish education programs that make it very easy for immigrants to get educated about agriculture rather than making it very hard for them.
- ▶ Hire consultants to fast-track the development of curriculum, farm/agroforestry sites, and legal and physical infrastructure
- ▶ Begin the engagement process with employers.
- ▶ Develop outreach materials for schools, videos, social media campaign, have professional assistance with annual report, media campaign

What is the first step forward?

- ▶ What programs exist today and what are best practices today
- ▶ Evaluate current DWD program
- ▶ That is why we are here, what is the most that can be accomplished with all the resources we have
- ▶ Have this committee continue to meet and formulate plans and action items
- ▶ Finding people that are unemployed at are willing to work.
- ▶ Develop an agriculture class to articulate to post secondary schools
- ▶ Ag education specialists need to realize the potential of educating immigrants.
- ▶ Work with tribal community to get direction.
- ▶ Designate time on the WAEWDC meeting agenda to get determine interest and support.
- ▶ Annual report improvements

Who else needs to be included in the process?

- ▶ High schools; tech schools; university system; business; state
- ▶ DWD, DATCP, Industry Representatives
- ▶ Learning institutions
- ▶ Probably a funding source
- ▶ State and federal government.
- ▶ UW, WTCS, DPI
- ▶ Policy makers and the general public
- ▶ Menominee Tribal Education Committee, community members, my department's advisory council, tribal and public school administration, parent committees, and students, and this respective process duplicated on any reservations that request to be part of the goals.
- ▶ A diverse and comprehensive group of agriculture industry employers is necessary. The current WAEWDC may be sufficient. If the not, the group should determine the gaps.
- ▶ Besides the effected state agencies, any industry related trade organizations should be the banner carriers. All the trade organizations already have the mechanisms in place to offer basic and advanced training and a platform for testing.

When will you know you have reached your goal? (How are you measuring success?)

- ▶ When the system is used by many and not only those willing to put an inordinate amount of time to figure it out on their own.
- ▶ Participation by both industry, mentorships and participants increases
- ▶ Rural and urban WI will have a well-educated, trained and paid workforce. Our best and brightest will stay in our state after they graduate.
- ▶ When we have an equal amount of qualified and prepared workers to meet the job demand
- ▶ When we are fully staffed and have a pool of potential employees to hire when needed.
- ▶ Increase the total number of schools offering agriculture classes to all students.
- ▶ When immigrants emerge as farm owners and eventually ag leaders
- ▶ When tribal members start filling positions to successfully recreate our tribal/intertribal food systems.
- ▶ When any student in Wisconsin who has an interest in pursuing a career in agriculture is able to begin pathway opportunities while in high school.
- ▶ Like the plants we deal with, I think our achievements will be silent achievements. A gradual improvement of the quality of work and levels of respect could be a result of these proposed programs.

How will you be held accountable?

- ▶ We are accountable to results; which means trained employees to complete task
- ▶ Agency Responsibility
- ▶ Did I do everything I could to promote Agriculture workforce
- ▶ We need to identify what we are going to do that will really make a difference
- ▶ Watching numbers of students in advanced training programs and employers saying that unfilled worker positions are lower
- ▶ We have production goals that will not be met without enough employees.
- ▶ I will continue to push for any organization or policy maker to hear me out.
- ▶ Fulfillment of current job position responsibilities that are evaluated annually, as they relate to the goals stated above.
- ▶ Reporting results to the WAEWDC each year.
- ▶ Project plan with milestones, performance metrics, and quarterly / monthly reporting out
- ▶ Continuing to be a part of this process and to follow it to fruition would be my gauge of accountability.