

Career Connect Washington Agriculture & Natural Resource Sector Intermediary

Agronomy/Pre-Harvest Activities Stakeholder Meeting, April 24, 2023

Overview of Project Purpose & Process

1. Creation of industry aligned statewide agriculture sector workforce plan
2. Mapping Career Connected and Non-Career Connected learning
3. Data collection
4. Project focuses on three industry sub-sectors

Career Connected Learning Introduction

Career Connected Learning: <https://careerconnectwa.org/programs/>

- Career Explore
- Career Preparation
- Career Launch

Data Presentation

1. SJI Data Report (Agronomy/Pre-Harvest), Dr. Kathleen Carson and Dr. Elodie Marlet

Initial Workforce Data Findings: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/k16zd1huk51enw4/CCW%20Agriculture%20-%20Agronomy%202023.4.24%20Convening%201.pptx?dl=0>

Employer Discussion Questions

1. What are the biggest opportunities?
2. What could drive growth in the next few years?
3. What is going to be required to capitalize on these opportunities?

Industry Feedback and Perspectives

What are the biggest opportunities?

- Partner with companies to send employees to colleges (young people working with companies with more upward mobility)
- Playing up the earnings
- Middle school and high school interventions to raise awareness
- Market the lifestyle of rural living and promote the variety of ag jobs
- Let young people know that staying in rural communities is an option so they can support their families while making a good living in ag
- Outline prerequisites for 1st gen students (especially basic math)
- Ensure that HS grads have the basic skills so ready for on-the-job training (e.g., algebra)
- Pushing the CTE programs at high school levels. We see a void between entry level positions and management
- Scheduling educational opportunities (providing flexible education schedule to allow youth to work or OJT simultaneously)
- Diversify 4H & FFA to include 1st gen students, children of laborers
- Job shadow toolkit for professionals

- Address liability issues for job shadow (colleges/universities providing liability insurance to students)
- Managerial/supervisory training in Spanish and indigenous languages
- Rebrand ourselves/change the narrative that our people are smart, sophisticated, and highly capable. It is just centered around food

What could drive growth in the next few years?

- Guidance for 1st gen students from middle school to high school to college. Good, high paying jobs industry (ag is not as visible like teacher, nurse, etc.)
- Guidance on ag pathways for K-12 counselors
- Videos (YT & Tick Tok) in multiple languages (e.g., interviews with people in industry)
- Educating the educators providing them with ag-related topics in STEM
- Better understanding priorities of younger workers
- Holistic toolkit and adapt to priorities of younger generations
- Improve work-life balance in sector to attract youth and speak to their values
- Lean into the connection/community aspect of the industry
- Working conditions are important but so is “meaning”. The ability to have direct impact by producing food is more meaningful to many young people than moving paper in a large organization.
- Connect with students who might want to switch majors
- Talking to industry organizations and associations to spend more time and resources on recruitment
- Connect with students who don’t know their major but could be interested
- The chance to help change the demographic profiles of agriculture by being in leadership themselves would be attractive to many young POC
- Communicate that’s its OK to not go to college right away. There are opportunities in our field that do not require a college education to get started.
- More on/off ramps for students (stackable credentials) so that students can change tracks easily (e.g., industries trades program)

What is needed to capitalize on these opportunities?

- A platform that everyone can go to (students, employers, speakers bureau)
- Finding a way to capture students who don’t know about job opportunities in ag
- One consolidated effort. Everyone on this call has a day to day responsibilities and would be happy to support efforts but we don’t have a lead
- Provide mental health support and navigators for students to usher them into school and through the process of getting started
- Out of the box process for internship job shadow, etc.
- Getting a point person or team of leads to speak at conferences and conventions with employers, resources and toolkits
- Connecting current employees with opportunities to acquire pre-requisite skills so they can enter the pathway to training and promotion opportunities
- Engage K-12 students with ag career days but need funding to get students and employers to campus
- High school programs need to understand they have a role to play in showcasing careers
- Ag classes don’t count towards general transfer credits in college (need to connect with state board)

Next Steps

- Finalize the Sector Strategy Recommendations for submission to Career Connect Washington