

Agriculture Industry Council
PIPELINE Program - Department of Labor and Industry
October 22, 2018 2:00 pm – 3:15 pm

Welcome and Introductions: Annie Welch

PIPELINE Program updates: Annie Welch and Dan Solomon

1. Launch of [Speaker Series](#):
 - a. May 24 focused on different generations in the workplace;
 - b. September 13 focused on leadership development within organizations;
 - c. December 6 will focus on diversity and inclusion.
2. Presented at or participated in 65 meetings with Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Groups, Employers, etc. focusing on agriculture;
3. Publication of [tools to help develop and track dual training programs](#);
4. Kick-off of [Community Workforce Conversations](#) all around the state over the next several months;
 - a. Mankato: October 16
 - b. St. Cloud: October 30
 - c. Marshall: November 14
 - d. Rochester: November 27
 - e. Alexandria: December 3
 - f. Bemidji: December 11
 - g. Duluth: December 18

*Thank you to Senator Senjem for his willingness to share information and help promote these meetings.
5. Welcome to Amanda Follmer, PIPELINE Program Specialist.

Agriculture Industry Council Updates – Annie Welch and Dan Solomon

The PIPELINE team wants to be a stronger resource for employers. The more information the employers provide, the better we can help. The meeting began a discussion on Industry Trends and Employers noted new developments in the industry:

- Workforce is aging; average age of a grain elevator manager is 56.
- Agriculture industry is getting bigger businesses in many instances and consolidating. For example, there used to be well over 150 grain cooperatives in the state, now there are 67 unique grain cooperatives.
- Huge increases in H2A visa use, now being used by both small and large agricultural producers. For year round industries, they are cycling H2A into dairy, poultry and hogs.
- Rainfall this season has been hard and put considerable constraints in Southern MN on harvest season.
- Commodity pricing is at a point where meeting cash flows is a real challenge for farmers.
- Tariff/ trade seems to not have taken too big of a hit to farmers this year but could be a very big concern going forward. Most worry is really just about the highs/ lows and volatility in the agriculture markets.

Why are people drawn to agriculture?

Responses:

- Agriculture draws people who often want to carry on the family business/ legacy and to help the family operation.
- Students like the people and the work ethic that has been traditional in agriculture.
- Some students are drawn to the international side / possibilities of feeding the world and doing work all over the globe.

- Many people get into agriculture because they have an interest in food and then that becomes a deeper interest into food systems and how to feed people. Many like the social benefit of being the ones who literally feed the world.

How can the dual training model draw people into manufacturing?

Responses:

- Student exposure at high school and an interest gap remains a significant challenge.
- Lack of guidance counselors and general knowledge from educators about the breadth and scope of the agriculture industry is a challenge.
- Battling perceptions of the industry with parents continues to be a challenge, especially around earning potential and the lack of a four year degree.
- Dual training can be used as a tool to recruit current agriculture students and/or high school students with an interest in agriculture to come work for agriculture employers and benefit from having training paid for with no student debt.

New Tracking Tools and Related Instruction Inventory Updates – Annie Welch

Annie spoke about the new on-the-job training tracking tools available on the PIPELINE website and discussed that all occupations will be updated with tracking tools available by early next year. Annie also highlighted the updated related instruction inventory and invited educators to review. Please contact Amanda Follmer if you have any questions at Amanda.Follmer@state.mn.us.

Competency Council Updates – Dan Solomon

- Currently seven eligible
- New occupations discussed to potentially be added were:
 - Agriculture Finance
 - Veterinary Technician
 - Grain Merchandiser
 - Poultry Merchandiser
 - Agriculture Educator
 - Board of Soil and Water technicians
 - Agro-tourism managers...i.e. wine, pumpkins, etc., culinary sciences.
- Also discussed potentially changing our title of Mechanic/ Industrial truck to Mechanic/ Agriculture Equipment Technician.
- PIPELINE will review these potential occupations to identify the top priorities by March 2019. Employers are welcome to contact us at any time to participate in the Competency Council work or if they have an occupation to add to the list.

Dual-Training Grant updates: Jacquelynn Mol Sletten

The next Dual Training Grant for new and existing employers will open for application on April 1, 2019 and close on May 17, 2019. (Contact Jacquelynn.Mol.Sletten@state.mn.us at the Office of Higher Education for more information). OHE awarded over \$2 million in 2018 to 41 different companies.

Next Agriculture Industry Council Meeting

Please save the date for February 20, 2019 from 2:00 pm – 3:30 pm for an in-person or webinar meeting opportunity.