



COUNCIL MEMBERS

- JESSICA VANDENBOSCH
COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON
DYKHUIS FARMS
- LIZ WEAVER
GTF TECHNOLOGIES
- STEPHANIE KEMPA
HERBRUCK'S POULTRY RANCH
- BEN ZORN
KOEZE CO.
- TIM VOGELZANG
REVOLUTION FARMS
- JAMIE KOBER
RIVERIDGE PRODUCE MARKETING
- RYAN STRUCK-VANDERHAAK
SCHREIBER FOODS
- MATT GREEN
SPARTANNASH
- DIANNE COTE
WALTERS GARDENS
- JOE TENBUSCH
ALLEGAN ISD
- BRIAN GARDNER
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
- BECKY HUTTENG
OTTAWA COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- AMY LEBEDNICK
WEST MICHIGAN WORKS!

FUNDERS

- MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL
DEVELOPMENT (MDARD)
SPECIALTY CROP
BLOCK GRANT
- MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT
OF LABOR AND
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
- AMERICAN FARM BUREAU
FOUNDATION WHITE-
REINHARDT GRANT
- GRAND RAPIDS
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
SCHOOL OF WORKFORCE
TRAINING
- WALTERS GARDENS
- RIVERIDGE PRODUCE
MARKETING
- HERBRUCK'S POULTRY RANCH
- DYKHUIS FARMS, INC.
- NUTRIEN AG SOLUTIONS
- KOEZE COMPANY
- GREENSTONE FARM
CREDIT SERVICES
- WEST MICHIGAN WORKS!



West Michigan Works! is a division of ACSET, an equal opportunity employer/program and a proud partner of the American Job Center network. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. West Michigan Works! is supported by state and federal funds; more details at westmiworks.org/about/.



2025

COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT



ABOUT THE COUNCIL



MISSION AND VISION

The Agribusiness Talent Council is a collaborative of employers, educators, workforce development and economic development organizations working together to foster a thriving agribusiness sector in West Michigan. Together, we can attract and retain a skilled workforce while promoting the industry.



INDUSTRY IMPACT

West Michigan’s agribusiness sector is a powerhouse, producing one-third of Michigan’s total agricultural sales and contributing over \$13 billion to our regional economy. The food and agriculture system remains a vital source of employment, accounting for approximately 17 percent of the state’s total employment, with over 31,500 agribusiness jobs in West Michigan. This industry is comprised of five subsectors: food processing, which represents the largest share of agricultural employment, followed by farming, agricultural wholesale and retail, input supplies and regulation of agricultural marketing and commodities. The sector’s strength underscores its critical role in our state’s economy and employment landscape.

West Michigan is a hub for food and agriculture—producing over 40 percent of Michigan’s agribusiness-related sales and home to nearly 300 food and beverage manufacturers. Yet few people consider agribusiness careers. We are changing that by showing students and adults that this industry offers rewarding opportunities—and it’s growing (pun intended).

- Jessica VandenBosch, Dykhuis Farms

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (MDARD) GRANT

Farmers often face challenges accessing training grants due to the seasonal nature of their workforce, and many training opportunities for food processors fall outside the scope of existing grant programs. Through funding provided by the MDARD Specialty Crop Block grant over the past two and a half years, we have successfully supported workforce development by reimbursing the full cost of training – more than \$30,000 – for 16 employers and 38 employees in leadership and food safety.

This grant made a big impact by helping us improve our regulatory and compliance processes at a critical time. We’re truly grateful for the support and would absolutely recommend this opportunity to other businesses. It’s a well-managed program that not only provides financial help but also makes you feel genuinely supported.

- Katie Hensley, Swanson Pickle Co.



38
EMPLOYEES TRAINED

16
SPECIALTY
CROP GROWERS

356
PROFESSIONALS TRAINED USING
GPTF AND MDARD GRANTS

\$624,351
REIMBURSED



BE THE DIFFERENCE

AGRIBUSINESS TALENT COUNCIL SCHOLARSHIP

The Agribusiness Talent Council Scholarship Program is for current college students or high school seniors from our seven-county region who major in or plan to major in agribusiness-related fields at a two- or four-year accredited U.S. college or university. This exciting new initiative took four years to establish by building sustainable funding to ensure the scholarship could continue for years to come.



The scholarship reflects the council's commitment to investing in the future workforce and supporting students who are passionate about agriculture and food systems. The students awarded are invested in the industry and ready to shape the future of agribusiness, each in their own way.

- Ben Zorn, Koeze Company



21
APPLICANTS

3
RECIPIENTS

\$3,000
AWARDED

OUR STRATEGY

PROMOTE • TRAIN • RECRUIT • CONNECT



PROMOTE THE INDUSTRY

We are focused on promoting agribusiness as a great career pathway for all ages.



TRAIN

We connect businesses with resources to create your own skilled talent by upskilling your current workforce.



RECRUIT & RETAIN TALENT

We create and join projects that pull new talent into agribusiness and keep existing talent long term.



CONNECT TO RESOURCES

We create new, and share existing, beneficial resources for the agribusiness industry.



BE THE CHANGE

SPOTLIGHT ON AG-READERS

The response to Spotlight on Ag Readers was incredible, with 56 classrooms across our region registering to participate. Volunteer involvement also grew significantly—44 agribusiness professionals served as readers, including 24 first-time participants. This allowed 1,273 students to participate in this career exploration program that engages students through age-appropriate books and lessons that spark curiosity about careers in agriculture in a fun and informative way.

Our entire second-grade team participated in this program, with each class welcoming different readers from four unique agribusiness organizations. It was fascinating to hear students' questions about agriculture and farming. They love learning from experts.

- Kristin Kramer,
Jamestown Lower Elementary School

44
PROJECT
VOLUNTEERS

1,273
STUDENTS
REACHED

CAREER AG-XPLORATION

The Agribusiness Talent Council joined other businesses and community partners for STEAM Along the Lakeshore, a fun, free family event that promotes STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) learning in a community setting. More than 1,950 children and parents were introduced to careers in agribusiness by engaging in hands-on learning.

This is an incredible opportunity to showcase the world of agribusiness careers—all in one place. Many students don't initially consider this field, but the hands-on experiences sparked curiosity and opened eyes to the wide range of opportunities in the industry. We even heard parents say, 'Wow, I wish I had known about this when I was younger!'

- Michelle Kuck, Muskegon Area ISD

20+
EXHIBITORS

950+
STUDENTS
ENGAGED

1000+
PARENTS
ENGAGED



\$624,351
TRAINING
DOLLARS
INVESTED



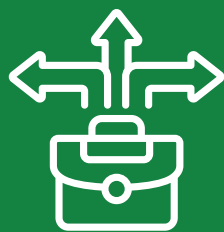
356
PROFESSIONALS
TRAINED



73
ENGAGED
BUSINESSES



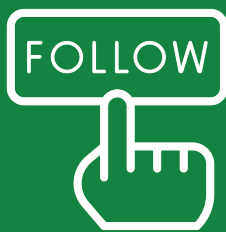
136
PROJECT
VOLUNTEERS



11,715
K-12 STUDENTS
EXPLORED
CAREERS



42
EVENTS
ATTENDEES



951
LINKEDIN AND
NEWSLETTER
FOLLOWERS