



2026

COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT



AGRI BUSINESS

TALENT COUNCIL - WEST MICHIGAN

ABOUT THE COUNCIL

MISSION AND VISION



The Agribusiness Talent Council is a partnership of businesses, educators, workforce and economic development organizations working together to strengthen West Michigan's agribusiness industry through career awareness, workforce training, talent recruitment and employee retention initiatives.

INDUSTRY IMPACT

West Michigan's agribusiness industry is a key driver of the region's economy, supporting more than 33,500 jobs across food processing, production agriculture, greenhouse and nursery operations, distribution and agricultural services. According to Lightcast's 2026 workforce data, the industry has grown 13% over the past five years and is projected to continue growing through 2030, with nearly 9,900 job postings from more than 300 employers in the past year.

The council helps ensure employers have the skilled talent needed to support business growth, innovation and West Michigan's economic success.



While the numbers prove agribusiness is an economic powerhouse, the real engine of West Michigan's success is its people. The Agribusiness Talent Council serves as a bridge between classroom to industry. We aren't just filling jobs; we are intentionally building sustainable, modern career pathways that ensure our food processing, farming and agricultural sectors don't just grow, but lead. Investing in this talent pipeline today is how we guarantee Michigan remains competitive, resilient and thriving tomorrow.

- Ben Zorn, Vice Chair, Agribusiness Talent Council



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.



DISCOVER MANUFACTURING TOURS

Recognizing the need for more opportunities to connect middle and high school students with careers in food systems, the Agribusiness Talent Council joined Discover Manufacturing Tours in 2025. Through talent tours, open houses and hands-on experiences, students explored careers in food processing and manufacturing while gaining a deeper understanding of how agricultural products are grown, processed, packaged and delivered to consumers.

Riveridge was proud to participate in Discover Manufacturing Tours. Students were excited to recognize brands we supply and learn how our apples are grown, processed, packaged and shipped to consumers across the country.

- Jamie Kober, Riveridge Produce Marketing, Inc.



7
EMPLOYERS

235
STUDENTS

29
TEACHERS



BE THE DIFFERENCE

AGRIBUSINESS TALENT COUNCIL SCHOLARSHIP

The Agribusiness Talent Council Scholarship Program supports current college students and high school seniors from West Michigan's seven-county region. These students are pursuing, or plan to pursue, agribusiness-related fields at an accredited two- or four-year U.S. college or university. Now in its second year, the program continues to invest in the next generation of agricultural leaders by providing financial support and recognizing students committed to careers that will strengthen the future of Michigan's agribusiness industry.



Paying for college on my own isn't easy. Thanks to the generosity of the businesses and industry leaders supporting this scholarship, I can continue working toward my goal of building a career in agribusiness.

- Olivia Porter, 2026 ATC Scholarship Recipient



28
APPLICANTS

3
RECIPIENTS

\$3,000
AWARDED

BE THE CHANGE

SPOTLIGHT ON AG-READERS



Spotlight on Ag-Readers connects students with agriculture through interactive classroom visits led by agribusiness professionals, community partners and volunteers during National Agriculture Month and National Reading Month. The program helps students understand where their food comes from, introduces them to careers in agriculture and builds meaningful connections between classrooms and industry professionals. Through engaging books, personal experiences and hands-on activities, this project sparks curiosity, increases agricultural awareness and helps students discover the many careers involved in bringing food from farm to table.

**Agriculture is so much more than farming.
It doesn't take much time to make a
difference, but the impact can last a
lifetime. Spotlight on Ag Readers
is the best 45 minutes you'll
spend all year.**

- Becky Huttenga,

Ottawa County Economic Development



33
PROJECT
VOLUNTEERS

1,869
STUDENTS
REACHED



\$210,335
TRAINING
DOLLARS
INVESTED



93
PROFESSIONALS
TRAINED



107
ENGAGED
BUSINESSES



147
PROJECT
VOLUNTEERS

MICAREERQUEST

At MiCareerQuest, the Agribusiness Talent Council provides students with an interactive introduction to the many careers that support our food and agriculture system. Through financial support from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Specialty Crop Block Grant, the council expanded awareness of specialty crop careers, with one-third of exhibitors highlighting opportunities in this sector. Through hands-on activities and conversations with industry professionals, students explored careers in specialty crops, food processing, packaging, food safety, logistics, transportation, animal and plant science and conservation.



Students know where food is purchased, but not how it gets there—or how many people it takes. MiCareerQuest connects them to the careers and businesses that move food from farm to table. Agriculture today is much more than farming!

- Natalie Hart, Kent County Farm Bureau

8,331

STUDENTS ENGAGED

12

BUSINESSES PARTICIPATED



11,506
STUDENTS
EXPLORED
CAREERS



16
EVENTS
ATTENDEES



1,015
LINKEDIN AND
NEWSLETTER
FOLLOWERS





COUNCIL MEMBERS

- JESSICA VANDENBOSCH
COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON
DYKHUIS FARMS
- BEN ZORN
KOEZE CO.
- BRIAN GARDNER
MSU INSTITUTE FOR
AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY
- BECKY HUTTENG
OTTAWA COUNTY
- STEPHANIE KEMPA
HERBRUCK'S POULTRY RANCH
- JAMIE KOBER
RIVERIDGE PRODUCE MARKETING
- DEANNA NELSON
ZEELAND FARM SERVICES
- DIANNE COTE
WALTERS GARDENS
- JOE TENBUSCH
ALLEGAN TECH CENTER
- RYAN STRUCK-VANDERHAAK
SCHREIBER FOODS
- LIZ WEAVER
GTF TECHNOLOGIES
- AMY LEBEDNICK
WEST MICHIGAN WORKS!

FUNDERS

- MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL
DEVELOPMENT
- MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT
OF LABOR AND
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
- AMERICAN FARM BUREAU
FOUNDATION FOR
AGRICULTURE
- WALTERS GARDENS
- GRAND RAPIDS
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
SCHOOL OF WORKFORCE
TRAINING
- KENT ISD
- HERBRUCK'S POULTRY RANCH
- RIVERIDGE PRODUCE
MARKETING
- AGROLIQUID
- DYKHUIS FARMS, INC
- GREENSTONE FARM CREDIT
SERVICES
- KEYSTONE COOPERATIVE
- KOEZE CO.
- 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/.