

Exploring AG - Career Exploration with Extension

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INTRODUCTION

According to the 2017 USDA Census of Agriculture the average agricultural producer was 57 years old. As these producers continue to age, we naturally see the sale or transition of farms and retirement from agricultural careers off the farm. These careers are not only coming readily available, but they are highly rewarding, diverse, and well paying. Ohio Means Jobs estimates over 1,200 annual job openings for Farmers, Ranchers, and Ag Managers, but this doesn't even begin to touch off farm careers with agricultural agencies and businesses.

We believe that Extension needs to play a key role in working with local communities to introduce high school youth to agricultural careers to help fill this demand. We propose the opportunity to do this through community partnerships, but specifically with Exploring. The Exploring program, which began in 1935, teaches important life and career skills to young people from all backgrounds through immersive career experiences and mentorship provided by community and business leaders. This program has been nationally successful focusing on many career fields but has never ventured into the field of Agriculture, until now.

Through successful partnerships, the Seneca County Extension program has been able to establish the first Agricultural Exploring Post in the nation. We believe that due to the low cost and great need of agricultural career exploration; this is an easily duplicable and customizable program that can work into many county Extension programs.

GOALS

To introduce youth, age 14-20, to careers that exist in agricultural businesses and agencies in their local community and help them follow a selected career path through mentorship and guidance.

CURRICULUM

The beauty of this program is that curriculum is not needed, but can be included. Ideally, Explorers will all meet at the businesses where a board member will introduce the individuals/company hosting the "Post", and the business representative will provide information about the company. These meetings need to be engaging, so we encourage host businesses to include a tour of their company with employees sharing how their jobs play into the success of the business and how interested students could continue down that career path. We hope to include additional activities into meetings like "Real Money, Real World", writing resumes, and understanding college curriculum/degree sheets. We also are working on grant funding to send Explorers to Farm Science Review and/or Farm Bureau's Summer Explore Ag Camps.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND EXAMPLE SCHEDULE

- Establish a Post "Host" in County or Region
- Select Community Leaders as Board Members
- Identify Ag Businesses/Agencies and their careers to Explore
- Establish Program Meeting Format/Schedule
- Recruit Students
- Hold Kickoff Meeting and run program series
- Collect registration forms and nominal fee from participants to cover liability insurance during the year

Meeting	Business Location
September "Kickoff"	Extension/SWCD
October	POET BioRefining
November	Terra State College
December	Kalmbach Feeds
January	Ag Credit
February	Sunrise Cooperative
March	Tiffin Airport
April	ST Genetics/Bull Farm

PARTNERSHIPS



IMPACT

Each program can measure successes and impacts in their own way, but each Exploring Ag Post will be provided with an end of year survey to identify students' most and least enjoyable meetings and careers that they would like to learn more about the following year. Engagement with business partners wanting to host meetings, sponsor the program or contribute a scholarship to Explorer Graduates also help to identify successes and room for growth.