

Illinois Agri-Food Workforce Collaborative

Student Engagement Exercise



Why Are We Here?

- ▶ Advance Illinois' potential to be a top-tier destination for qualified, diverse workforce
- ▶ Address Illinois' struggles to fill current and projected workforce needs
- ▶ Address key issues:
 1. **Perception & Awareness:** There is a misperception and lack of awareness around opportunities for employment in food and agriculture.
 2. **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, + Justice:** There is a pressing need to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion in our educational opportunities and in the agri-food workforce pipeline
 3. **Changing Trends, Technologies, and Skillsets:** As the agri-food sector faces changing trends and technologies, workplace skillsets are being redefined. In turn, companies must adapt to stay competitive in increasingly tight markets
 4. **Location:** Rural areas often lack certain amenities to attract qualified talent, while urban areas struggle to recruit talent in overly competitive environments (COVID-19 may have leveled the playing field in term of work accessibility)
 5. **Socio-Economic-Cultural Dynamics:** Substance use, lack of public transportation, affordable childcare, and other factors and amenities impact the sector's ability to attract talent

Career Video Inventory Database

A database was initiated to create an inventory of existing videos related to seven (7) food, agriculture, and natural resources (AFNR) career clusters:

1. Agribusiness Systems
2. Animal Systems
3. Environmental Service Systems
4. Food Products and Processing Systems
5. Natural Resource Systems
6. Plant Systems
7. Power, Structural and Technical Systems

Video Criteria

Criteria was developed so aggregated videos were diverse, concise, and informative.

- **Time:** Average 3-4 minutes in length.
- **Source:** YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, company/organization websites
- **Quality:** Ranging from raw footage to professionally crafted
- **Location:** Illinois focused – but was not a hard requirement
- **Interviewees:** Diversified demographics and backgrounds

Video Hits List. A Hits List was curated of select videos showing diversity in gender, race, age, education level, and video editing quality. Consideration was given to videos with interviewees who have a non-traditional AFNR background and/or a non-traditional educational approach to their career as well as showing demographic diversity.

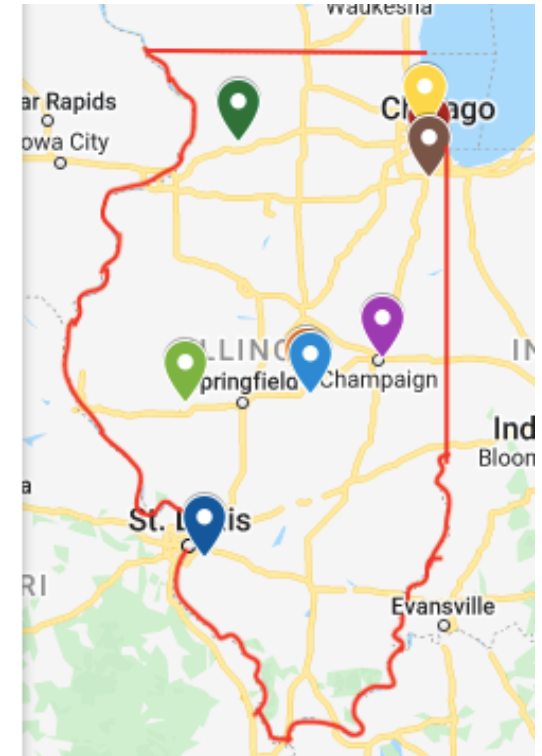
Student Engagement Exercise:

The Collaborative wanted student input on what makes for informative, relatable, and engaging career video content. An effort was undertaken to engage a select number of students at urban and suburban schools to review the Hits List of 7 career videos and respond to a survey to capture feedback.

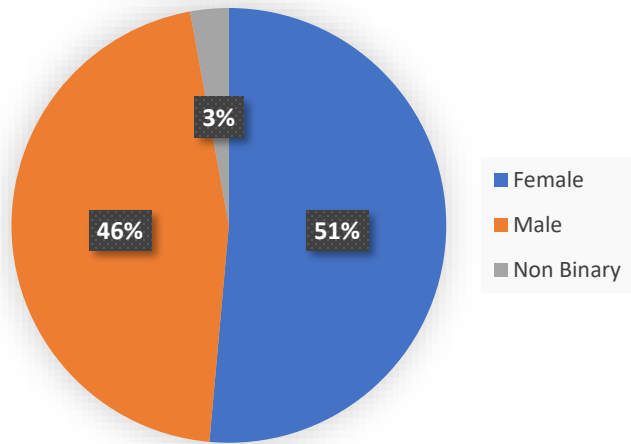
- **70 students from 9 participating schools have responded**

Schools

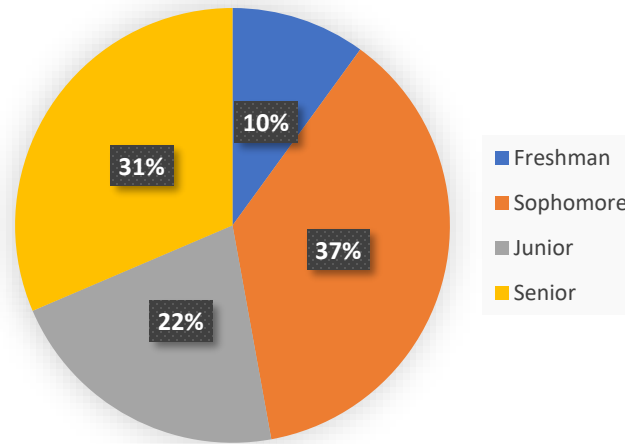
- Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences
- MacArthur High School
- Charles A. Prosser Career Academy
- Jacksonville High School
- Sterling High School
- Eisenhower High School
- Belleville West High School
- Urbana High School
- Rich Township STEM School



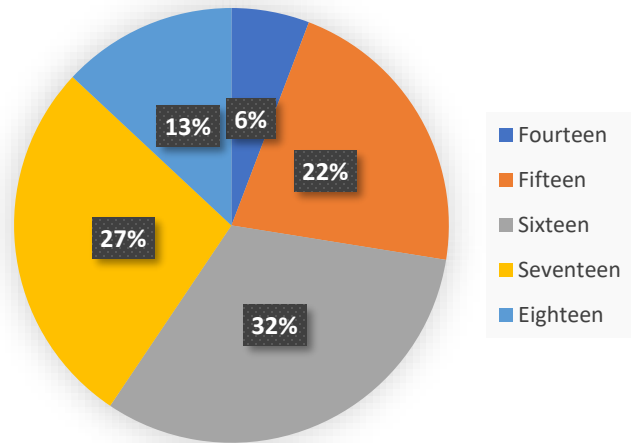
GENDER



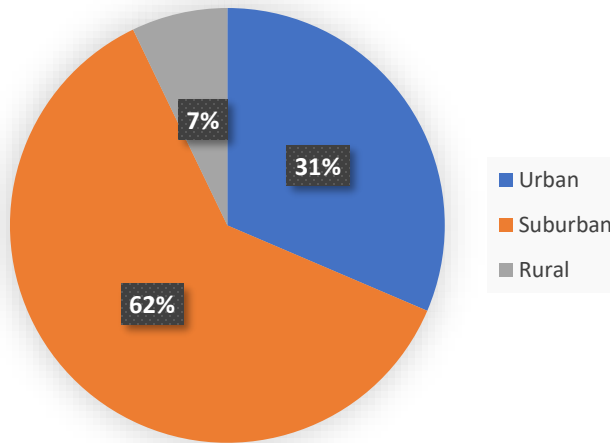
YEAR IN SCHOOL



AGE

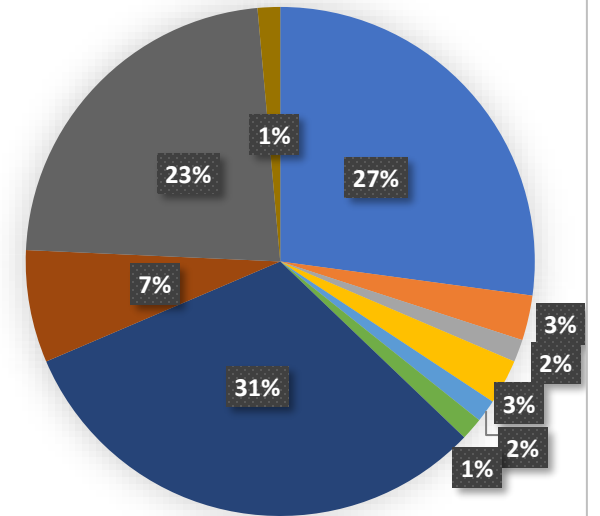


LOCATION



RACE/ETHNICITY

- African American/Black
- African American/Black, Caucasian/White
- African American/Black, Asian (Including South Asian), Caucasian/White
- African American/Black, Caucasian/White, Hispanic/Latino
- African American/Black, Caucasian/White, Hispanic/Latino
- African American/Black, Caucasian/White, Native American/Alaska Native
- Caucasian/White
- Caucasian/White, Hispanic/Latino
- Hispanic/Latino
- Prefer not to answer



Key Insights

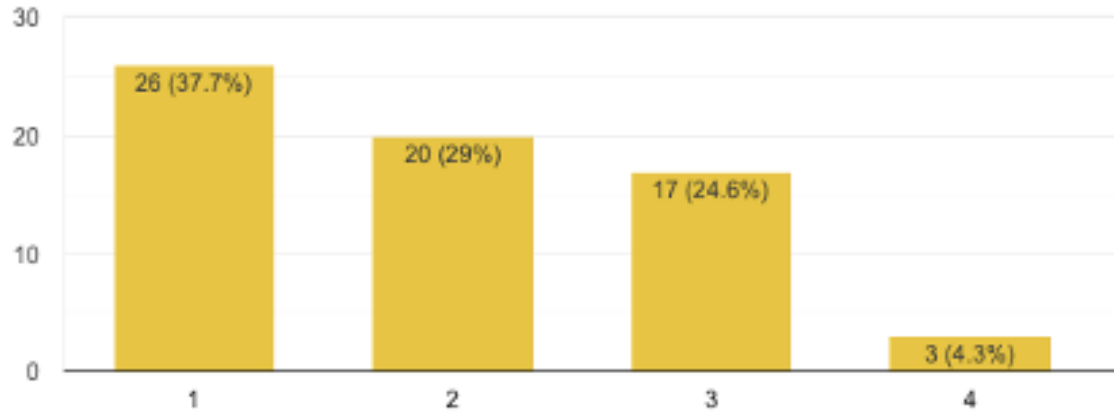
Data is still being synthesized, but early findings from the survey point to the following:

- **Broad Awareness.** Videos content is needed that represents a diversity of agri-food businesses and a range of jobs, skillsets, backgrounds, race, gender, and age.
- **Diverse Stories.** Videos that include personal stories about “why AFNR” and show unconventional journeys into the industry demonstrate “all paths can lead to AFNR”
- **Representation Matters.** Students want to see themselves in the video narrative.
- **Passionate Professionals.** Ideal video professionals exude passion about their career/company and enthusiasm about food and agriculture in general.
- **Informative and Transparent.** Students want to understand (and see) the specific ins- and-outs of a job and how to get there (classes required, degrees needed). Both the good and bad is important to them to develop informed opinions, including understanding salary and livability expectations associated with the job.
- **Video Quality.** Videos that are more polished, modern looking, and are clear in sound resonated higher. Length did not seem a factor if content was engaging.
- **Accessibility.** Students want to be able to access career content but do so within the classroom and with guidance from teachers, parents, and mentors. TikTok was not considered a valued platform for career information.

10) Agriculture...

Is a broad career field 1 2 3 4 5 Is mostly farming

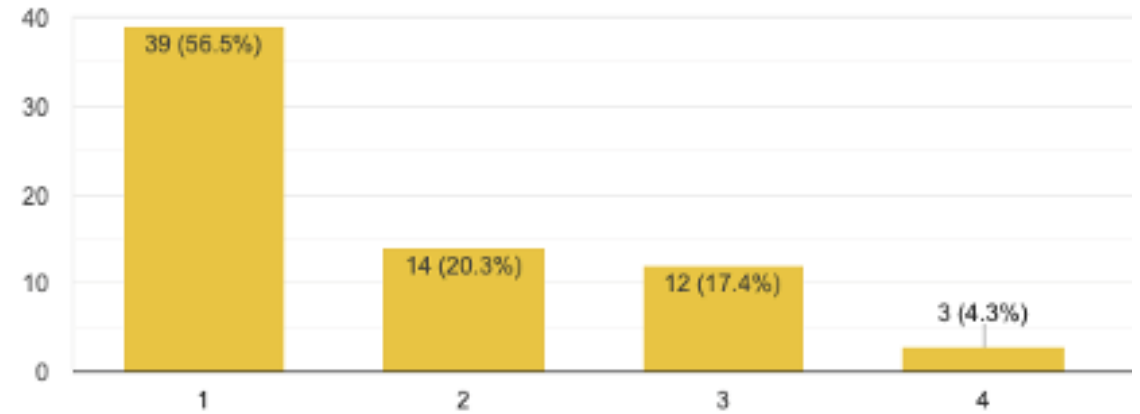
69 responses



12) Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources...

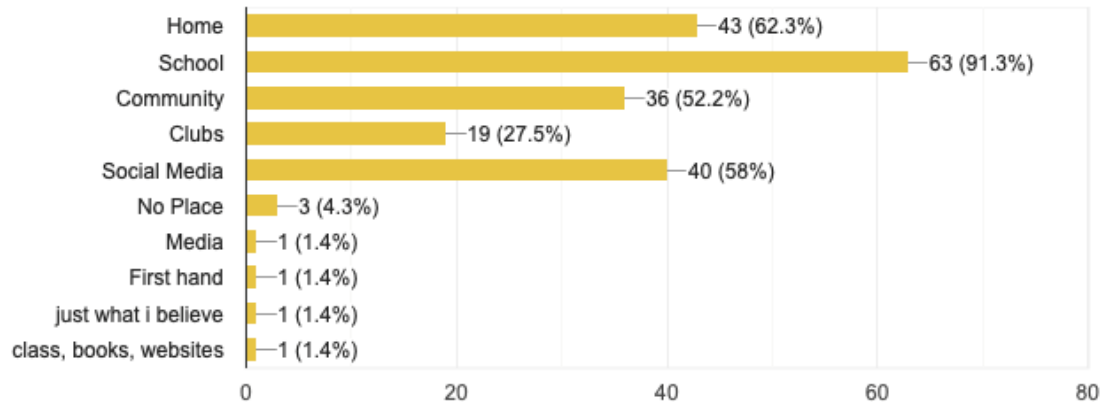
Has many job opportunities available 1 2 3 4 5 Has very few job opportunities availa

69 responses



22) Where have you developed these perceptions about jobs and careers in food, agriculture and natural resources? Check all that apply.

69 responses



23) Who has influenced your perceptions about jobs and careers in food, agriculture, and natural resources? Check all that apply.

69 responses

