

FINAL REPORT

ACO00012

GRDC Seed to Store More than Gumboots and Tractors Careers Advisers Events

PROJECT DETAILS

PROJECT CODE: ACO00012

PROJECT TITLE: GRDC SEED TO STORE MORE THAN GUMBOOTS AND TRACTORS CAREERS ADVISERS EVENTS

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Summary

'More than Gumboots and Tractors' was a professional development event for secondary school career advisers that provided an insight into careers and opportunities in the Australian grains industry. The day featured presentations portraying the grains industry, on-farm innovation, research and industry careers plus university and training entry prerequisites, pathways and scholarships. Participants also toured research centres and industry sites to view careers in action. Participants received a show bag with a grains kit, career information and resources. The day concluded with a networking dinner which linked participants with industry, creating valuable networks for future student work experience.

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Conclusions

The events were highly successful with feedback suggesting career advisers simply had no idea how many opportunities are available to students or the diversity of pathways they can take to get there. The survey provided interesting data which clearly showed that teachers and career advisers do not have the training or support necessary to accurately advise students on the career opportunities or study pathways in agriculture or the grains industry. In fact, only 33% of respondents indicated that they had received any form of professional development in agricultural careers in the past. This means approx. 70% of teachers have no professional development in agriculture. If this is the case - how can they be expected to provide accurate advice to students?

The research also found that only 20% of those surveyed were confident advising students about careers in agriculture or grains at a tertiary level (44% were somewhat confident and 36% were not at all confident). Confidence levels were even less for advising students about trade careers in the agriculture and grains industry, with only 16% indicating they were confident advising students about these trade careers (34% were somewhat confident and 42% were not confident). While almost all participants were likely to encourage students to enter the grains and agricultural industries, no one indicated that their level of knowledge was excellent, indicating that significant industry training is needed.

By holding a structured event, it is possible to change confidence. This is evident with 75% of participants stating involvement in the day increased their confidence in advising students on grains career pathways 'a great deal' (22% said it increased their confidence a little and only 3% stated no change in confidence, mostly as they were already skilled in this area).

Overall, this initiative suggests that it is possible to change the perceptions of career advisers in the grains industry. A hands-on, engaging approach is required which provides career advisers with contacts, support and tailored learning outcomes. It is also essential to build networks and provide attendees with a point of contact so they can continue a relationship with the sector.

This work will change how career advisers will advise students on not only the opportunities that are available within the sector, but how and where they can study, the prerequisites they need and the pathways they can take. They also have a unique suite of contacts within the industry so they can place students on work experience or seek further grains industry support.

Recommendations

The AgCommunicators team would like to prepare the survey and pre and post survey data for a publication which can be peer reviewed. The data and outcomes will remain the property of GRDC, however the data collected are unique and of huge benefit to educators across Australia who currently have little or poor understanding of how career advisers perceive the Australian grains or wider agricultural industry. By developing a peer reviewed publication, the potential engagement of career advisers is expected to be significantly increased, leading to the increased potential of agricultural and in particular, the Australian grains industry, as a career choice.

Outcomes

The project was developed in response to initial research which found that more than 50% of career advisers (N=52) had little or poor knowledge of careers in agriculture or grains and that they did not always have the confidence to advise students on how to navigate or enter this career. Therefore, six events were delivered throughout Australia (Perth, Wagga Wagga, Toowoomba, Canberra, Horsham and Launceston) to upskill career advisers and build their knowledge and confidence.

The ultimate aim of these workshops was to build a network of career advisers and teachers with increased knowledge and understanding of career pathways and opportunities available in the Australian grains industry. This aim was achieved and an innovative event was delivered which has changed perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of 104 career advisers and teachers throughout Australia (average of 17 participants per workshop).

The outcomes received from feedback at all workshops (N=86) include:

- AgCommunicators' facilitation of the day was rated a 9.5 out of ten.
- 100% would recommend this event to a colleague.
- 96% said attendance at the event has changed their perception of the grains industry, with many indicating they will now promote these careers to students.
- Prior to attending the event, 76% of participants rated themselves as having only 'fair, little or no' knowledge about careers in the grains industry. 24% of participants stated their knowledge was 'good' and no participants stated they had 'excellent knowledge'.
- After attending the event, there was a large shift in participants' self rated knowledge of careers in the grains industry with 32% stating they now had excellent knowledge, and 63% having good knowledge. Only 5% had fair, little or no knowledge.
- The event helped build confidence with 75% stating involvement in the day increased their confidence in advising students on grains career pathways 'a great deal' (22% said it increased their confidence a little and only 3% stated no change in confidence, mostly as they were already skilled in this area).
- 100% felt they were given opportunity to interact, network and engage.
- 94% of participants learnt what they hoped to.
- 94% of participants said they will change the way they will advise students on careers in the grains industry following the event as they now have new information, understanding of prerequisites and entry pathways and understanding of the grains industry.
- Increased insight into research, new networks and new opportunities for students were cited as the most valuable outcomes of the day.
- Participants rated the day 8.6 out of 10 with 10 being the best event ever.
- Participants rated the dinner and networking hour 8.5 out of 10.

The event was highly successful with feedback suggesting career advisers simply had no idea how many opportunities are available to students. Teachers left highly enthused and positive.

Achievements/Benefits

The professional development experience is designed to be highly interactive, engaging and creative. All content is delivered using enquiry based learning principles and the 'learning pyramid' concept which embraces active learning. In this mode of learning, participants receive, participate and do. Essentially, the workshop utilises multiple learning styles for better learning outcomes and retention of information.

Following the successful pilot, the education team from AgCommunicators secured funding to deliver the More than Gumboots and Tractors event in Perth, Western Australia (WA), Horsham, Victoria (VIC), Wagga Wagga, New South Wales (NSW), Launceston, Tasmania (TAS), Brisbane, Queensland (QLD) and Canberra.

Prior to attending one of the workshops, participants were invited to complete a pre-attendance survey. Of the 104 who attended the workshops, 68 completed this survey. Data found that teachers and career advisers hold a range of roles from full time career advisers, to teachers who hold an 'ad hoc' career advice role, providing this on an occasional basis. Only 33% of respondents indicated that they had received any form of professional development in agricultural careers in the past. Those who had received professional development indicated that they had completed a degree in agriculture and had moved into teaching. A small percentage had attended GRDC Updates, one attended a Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia (PIEFA) event and two attended Primary Industry Centre for Science Education (PICSE) events.

Only 20% of those surveyed stated that they were confident advising students about careers in agriculture and grains at a tertiary level (44% were somewhat confident and 36% were not at all confident). Confidence levels were even less for advising students about trade careers in the agriculture and grains industry, with only 16% indicating they were confident advising students about these trade careers (34% were somewhat confident and 42% were not confident). While almost all participants were likely to encourage students to enter the grains and agricultural industry, no one indicated that their level of knowledge was excellent, indicating that significant industry training is needed.

Each of the six career advisers event was delivered with high success. Each workshop met the required deliverables and promoted careers in trades, tertiary and industry and profiled growers, students, researchers and agribusiness experts, industry tours and site visits, updates on the Australian grains industry, promotion of GRDC funded research, promotion of a diverse range of careers, extensive networking opportunities and the provision of grains based food to demonstrate the paddock to plate concept. Following the event, 86 participants (of the 104) completed a post event survey.