

The Business of Agriculture

Partnership with
Business Project
Odessa High School
Washington State
2012-2013



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Introduction

The AgriBusiness Council

The AgriBusiness Council of Greater Spokane Incorporated (The AgriBusiness Council) is dedicated to supporting and promoting a strong, active and viable agriculture community in the Inland Northwest. The Council has a history of successfully supporting and showcasing the agricultural history of the Spokane region and the Inland Northwest since 1890. In 2011, the Council expanded its focus on agricultural research, traditional and value added production, alternative fuels and pharmaceuticals, processing and food systems. They work to be a voice for the industry with all agribusiness companies, universities, research institutions, nonprofit organizations and even public agencies.

Agriculture is a \$13 billion industry in Washington State, contributing as much as the Boeing Company. It makes up 11% of the state's economy. Odessa, Washington, is a small farming community of 1,000 people located in Lincoln County in eastern Washington. Lincoln County is one of the top wheat producers in the nation, raising over 25 million bushels annually. Because agriculture is vital to the economy of our area, our chapter chose to focus on agriculture for our Partnership With Business Project. We formed a partnership with The AgriBusiness Council of Greater Spokane Incorporated. With their resources and expertise, we hoped to learn about their organization and work together to make a difference in our own community. A committee of three students met with Myrna O'Leary, Manager of The AgriBusiness Council, in December of 2012 to discuss the partnership and determine how a partnership could be beneficial to both parties. It was decided that we would work together to promote agriculture at the high school level. Our chapter wanted to form a partnership with The AgriBusiness Council for three reasons:

1. The AgriBusiness Council is a voice for one of the biggest businesses in Washington State. In Odessa, agriculture plays a major role in our economy. We wanted to work with the council to support and promote a strong, active, and viable agriculture community in the Inland Northwest.
2. All major aspects of business are represented by members of the organization: finance, marketing, operations, distribution, and management, as well as other areas such as sales, accounting, law, and technology. We want to inform students about the business career opportunities within the agricultural field.
3. We wanted to increase students' awareness about the role agriculture plays in our local economy, state economy and its far reaching impact globally.

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Development

Goals of the Partnership

As our chapter discussed the Partnership with Business (PWB) Project in October, 2012, we had three ideas in mind. First, we wanted a project that would make a big impact on the lives of our members and fellow students and benefit our local community. Second, the school and hospital are Odessa's biggest employers, and most businesses are small, sole proprietorships or grain cooperatives. We believed it was important to expose our members to a large scale businesses and business professionals so they could begin thinking about their own careers. Finally, we wanted to focus on agriculture because agriculture is big business in our area. We wanted students to know that there are many opportunities in this field beyond driving a combine or working at a grain elevator. Students need to broaden their knowledge of the many opportunities in business that involve agriculture.

When our advisor, Mrs. Terri King, read about The AgriBusiness Council and their work, the idea evolved. Many of our Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) chapter members work or participate in farming and agriculture throughout our community. We knew that all the local farmers depended on many of our members to help keep their farms running. Forming a partnership with The AgriBusiness Council would meet all of our goals. We decided to call our project, "The Business of Agriculture."

"The Business of Agriculture" Goals

- Expose FBLA members to a variety of business careers to gain a better understanding of the business world with a focus on agriculture.
- Create a partnership between our chapter and The AgriBusiness Council for the purpose of promoting a strong, active and viable agriculture community locally and in eastern Washington.
- Develop a greater understanding of the many facets of employment found in agriculture, with a focus on business careers and the career paths necessary to achieve successful employment.
- Implement a project that would benefit our members, The AgriBusiness Council and our community.

Development

Planning Activities

Our chapter felt energized by “The Business of Agriculture” project, but to implement it successfully, the support of a few key people was needed. Carsen Weber, Trevor King, Jenna Shafer and Alexis Burdick enthusiastically volunteered to be the project committee for our chapter. The partnership with The AgriBusiness Council officially began when we met with Myrna O’ Leary, Manager of The AgriBusiness Council. We found her name on the Internet and wrote her a letter (Appendix A) to see if The AgriBusiness Council would be interested in working together. We explained the goals of our FBLA chapter and our desire to form a partnership with their organization for the benefit of our members, The AgriBusiness Council and for all the people in the greater Spokane area. She agreed and a meeting was planned.

Next, a meeting was held with Ken Schutz, the principal of Odessa School District, to share our ideas on forming a partnership with The AgriBusiness Council. We explained that we would work in partnership with The AgriBusiness Council and discover if some of their objectives might be beneficial to our members and the community. Mr. Schutz was very interested in seeing what our chapter and The AgriBusiness Council could offer and gave us permission to proceed. Our chapter unanimously agreed that this could be a great project. With everybody on board, the project could move forward.



Carsen Weber, Jenna Shafer, and Trevor King, with their advisor Terri King, meet with Myrna O’ Leary and Diana Gill at the Davenport Hotel.

Session Planning

Mrs. King, Carsen Weber, Jenna Shafer, and Trevor King met with manager, Myrna O’ Leary, and AgExpo Farm Forum Director, Diahne Gill, in December, 2012. We met at the Davenport Hotel in Spokane, Washington, and discussed options for our partnership. Spokane AgExpo is the largest agriculture show held in the Inland Northwest each year. It is an event that is attended by 5,500 visitors and 500 students. It was decided that this would be the perfect place to conduct a project together. In further discussion, it was decided that we should promote the goals of The AgriBusiness Council to teens, as this was an area that had never been addressed before. We decided that we would invite seven speakers from different areas of business who work in agriculture to talk about their career path and how they had gotten to where they are

Development

now. Myrna suggested we should host this session at the Double Tree Hotel during the AgExpo. To learn more about The AgriBusiness Council, Myrna suggested we contact Jay Allert, to speak with our chapter members about his company, Aslin-Finch, and his role as the Chairman of The AgriBusiness Council.

We brainstormed different agricultural careers in business and decided on seven: sales, accounting, law, banking, marketing, technology, and management. We wrote and sent out letters to the seven people who our chapter, Myrna O' Leary, and Diahne Gill all agreed would be best suited as speakers for our event. (Appendix B) All of the invited speakers agreed to speak right away, but we had to be persistent with several phone calls to get the last two. Once all speakers committed, we mailed out a confirmation letter to each one. (Appendix C) Next, we contacted different businesses working in agriculture to help sponsor our session so that we could obtain a room for the event at the Double Tree Hotel, as part of the AgExpo session and purchase a few door prizes for our event. (Appendix D) We sent out six letters and had four responses. Susan Horton, CEO of Wheatland Bank, contacted our advisor to learn more about the project. She agreed to sponsor the room on behalf of Wheatland Bank. She also offered to provide gift bags from the bank for all attendees. The Wheatland Bank agreed to sponsor the room for \$125.00 and Wilbur-Ellis, Inland Power and Light and AgVentures Northwest donated money for prizes.

Flyers were made and mailed to all Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapters telling where and when our session would be held, who would be speaking, and what prizes could be won. (Appendix E) Letters were sent to all of our area's FFA advisors, explaining the project and encouraging them to send their students. Mathew Weaver of The Capital Press, heard about the event from Diahne Gill and interviewed Mrs. King about the project. An article appeared in The Capital Press in January 2013.

Meeting with Jay Allert

To learn more about The AgriBusiness Council, Myrna suggested that our chapter should schedule a meeting with Jay Allert, the owner of Aslin-Finch and the chairman of The



Our chapter members sign in to tour the Spokane Seed Company.