

EXPLORE, CONNECT, SUPPORT TO THRIVE:

A CASE STUDY OF PROGRESS FOR CAREERS IN AGRICULTURE

Table of Contents

Introduction	03
Goal Identification	04
Barrier Identification	05
Best Practice Holistic Approach	06
Opportunity Identification	08
Definition of Success	09
Action4Youth Three-Stage Approach	11
Intended Outcomes	13
Coordinating Suppliers	14
Maintaining Relationships	17
Scaling Projects for Impact	18
Summary	19

Introduction

ACTION4YOUTH IS A PURPOSE-DRIVEN, BESPOKE PROGRAM DEVELOPED BY ACTION4AGRICULTURE TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE FROM ALL BACKGROUNDS AND EXPERIENCES TO THRIVE IN A CAREER IN AGRICULTURE.

Few areas are more critical to the security and well-being of young people than meaningful and purposeful work. It impacts every aspect of their lives: independence; mental health and well-being; and social interaction.

Action4Youth aims to offer young people an enriching experience of work that sets them on the path to independence and future security.

Program outcomes include:

- Increased employer engagement in work-based learning pathways. Improved
- learning and skills development experienced by young people. Increased entry-
- level jobs offered to young people.
- Improved understanding of, and access to, meaningful work.

How can this eBook help you?

In this eBook, for project delivery teams, we will delve into ten crucial steps that have been meticulously researched and curated. Drawing upon comprehensive data from the National Farmers Federation, national and international insights, we aim to futureproof the Australian Agricultural Workforce by increasing jobs behind the farmgate and addressing the pressing challenges faced by the industry.

Throughout these pages, you will discover a holistic approach to stakeholder management, encompassing the EXPLORE, CONNECT, and SUPPORT stages of development. By understanding the barriers hindering agricultural progress and identifying the unique opportunities in this two-sided marketplace— comprising employers and young individuals aged 15-24—we aim to harness home-grown talent and foster a sustainable workforce.

You will be equipped with the knowledge and tools to define success for your project, ensuring alignment between stakeholders. With our Action4Youth project as a guiding example, you will gain valuable insights into how to execute each phase and achieve your intended project outcomes.

Step 1: Goal Identification



This project started with a core question, “How do we futureproof the Australian Agricultural Workforce?”

The Action4Agriculture team explored background research from the National Food Chain Alliance and National Farmers Federation finding:

- *There is a shortfall of 172,000 workers from paddock to plate,*
- *On-farm employment has fallen by 25% over the past 3 decades, getting young people interested and engaged in agriculture faces the dilemma of poor public perception and limited understanding of the industry,*
- *There is an unsustainable ongoing reliance on migrant labour, and*
- *Education and training is not currently fit for purpose.*

Furthermore, employment opportunities in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing are projected to grow by 16,200 (or 5.1%) by the end of 2026.

This project identified its goal as increasing the number of young people joining the agricultural on farm/on ocean workforce by 10% per annum.

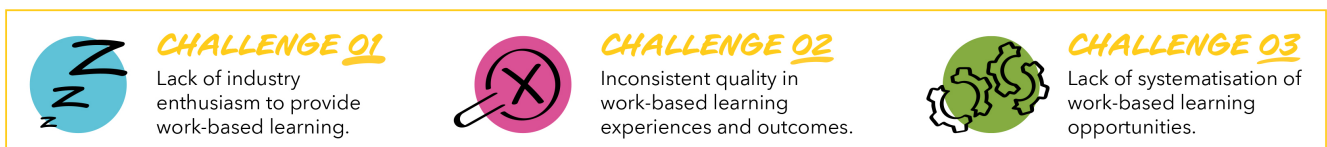
Key Question for the Project Delivery Team

What is the core question and primary goal of your project?

Step 2: Barrier Identification

With the goal identified, barriers were explored relating to 3 core challenges in the project across **industry**, **work-based learning experiences** and **opportunities**.

AUSTRALIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS DO NOT HAVE UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY WORK-BASED LEARNING DUE TO THREE MAIN REASONS



SCHOOL STUDENTS

- 01 I don't know what jobs or careers exist, nor do I know what I want to do.
- 02 I don't know what I'm good at.
- 03 I don't know what skills are required for the careers of the future.

SCHOOL STAFF

- 01 I don't have time to organise placements for 200 year 10 students.
- 02 There is too much red tape for sending to work placements.
- 03 I find it hard to find the right people to talk to in large corporations, and when I do I don't know how to talk to them.

GOVERNMENT

- 01 I think the Government funds a lot of initiatives to improve work-based learning already.
- 02 However, I do find it difficult to engage large employers effectively for school level work-based learning.
- 03 I do want to work with industry more if they can take the lead or show their commitment to improving work-based learning for school aged students.

EMPLOYERS

- 01 I can't articulate the return on investment for providing work-based learning to school students.
- 02 I find it difficult to know what a high school student can do and therefore use their time effectively during work experience.
- 03 I don't always know how to get involved in delivering work-based learning to school students, nor do I have the time.

Across these areas, stakeholders including **school students**, **school staff**, **government** and **employers in industry** were considered, finding 12 unique limiting beliefs (perceived challenges - real or imagined).

Key Questions for the Project Delivery Team

Who are your key stakeholders?
What are their current beliefs about the goal of this project?
What barriers do they see and how do they see them?

Step 3: Best Practice Holistic Approach (part 1)

This project utilized five best practice principles, including:



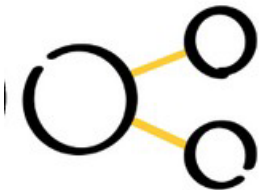
Create awareness in grades K-12 to introduce students to agriculture at an earlier age, support educators and improve access.



Support educators and build the workforce pipeline by providing young people with the opportunity to **explore** careers in agriculture and **connect** with employers, mentors and opportunities to be **supported**.



Deepen collaboration and cooperation amongst stakeholders and support employers to understand what young people are looking for in work.



Share best practices and data to replicate and scale proven strategies across the industry.



Maximise investment to promote more effective funding platforms and future opportunities.

Key Questions for the Project Delivery Team

What are the key stages for your project?
Who is involved in each stage?
What are the outputs/outcomes of each stage?

Step 3: Best Practice Holistic Approach (part 2)

These five stages can be summarized as:



Action4Agriculture assessed the landscape and concluded:

- For the **AWARE** stage, agriculture has a plethora of short-term and longer-term **AWARENESS** programs. These include [The Archibull Prize](#), [Paddock Pen Pals](#), [Kreative Koalas](#), [Young Environmental Champions](#) and more;
- For the **THRIVE** stage, there are many workplace programs to support early career professionals (such as [Young Farming Champions](#));
- Therefore, this project focuses on the **EXPLORE**, **CONNECT** and **SUPPORT** stages of development.
- Action4Agriculture is experienced, equipped and supported to deliver the highest-quality solutions across these stages.

Key Questions for the Project Delivery Team

What stages are already being serviced in the impact landscape?
 What stages are you most equipped to service?
 Who are the best partners to work with to deliver these stages?

Step 4: Opportunity Identification



The marketplace for on farm and on ocean jobs is two-sided:

1. **Employers**
2. **Employees**

To maximise the opportunity for a successful project, a development pipeline and program must be created to capture the attention and interest of young people (aged 15-24 years old) and the availability and support of employers with current and future job opportunities.

This combination will harness young, home-grown talent to improve the sustainability of the agricultural workforce.

Key Question for the Project Delivery Team

Who are the key beneficiaries of your project?

Step 5: Define Success (Part 1)

To define success for this project, four major stakeholder groups must be considered:

- Schools
- School staff
- Industry (employers)
- Students (future employees)

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE FOR ***SCHOOLS***

- ➔ Career Development is covered in initial teacher training so that all educators understand that student futures is everyone's job.
- ➔ Students have time and resources for explicit careers education from the upper primary years in addition to subject areas linking their content to the real world.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE FOR ***STUDENTS***

- ➔ Students can identify, articulate and apply their skills, strengths and learning styles.
- ➔ Students are curious and ambitious to find out more (LMI, Career Exploration).
- ➔ Students are aware of and talk more about a range of careers beyond the 15 most common occupational expectations ([OECD - Dream Jobs](#)).
- ➔ All students have a 'live' career plan and goals.
- ➔ Students see the benefit in career exploration through work-based learning - to confirm career interest or redirect to new career interests/pathways.
- ➔ Students are confident in undertaking and engaging with workplace opportunities.
- ➔ Students are empowered and become managers of their own career journey.
- ➔ All students have multiple opportunities to learn from employers about work and skills that are valued in the workplace (Gatsby Benchmarks).
- ➔ Every student should have had at least one experience of a workplace additional to part time jobs they may have ([Gatsby Benchmarks](#)).

Step 5: Define Success (Part 2)

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE FOR SCHOOL STAFF

- ➔ School staff have the administrative support to coordinate work experience opportunities (SPR process is administratively heavy).
- ➔ School staff have the leadership support to implement career exploration and industry exploration initiatives.
- ➔ Industry partnerships with local schools developed and connect with classroom learning (Make learning real, link to curriculum).

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE FOR INDUSTRY

- ➔ Agricultural employers can clearly articulate the ROI for providing work-based learning for school students and young people not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET).
- ➔ Agricultural employers are confident they have the skills and knowledge and mentoring capacity to ensure students/NEET can use their work-based learning time effectively.
- ➔ Agricultural employers commit the time and energy into learning how to engage with workplace learning providers.
- ➔ Agricultural employers are confident they can meet their workforce requirements.

Key Questions for the Project Delivery Team

What does each of your core stakeholders value?
How does your project assist them?
How will you measure success?

Step 6: Action4Youth Approach



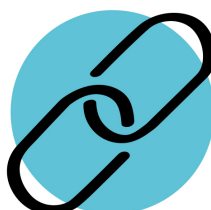
**ACTION4
YOUTH**

EXPLORE - CONNECT - SUPPORT
YOUNG PEOPLE THRIVING IN A CAREER IN AGRICULTURE



EXPLORE

ACTION4YOUTH brings together community groups, schools, TAFE, universities, and industry to support young people from all backgrounds, especially those from disadvantaged places, to EXPLORE a career in agriculture.



CONNECT

Through the program, young people CONNECT with businesses and new job opportunities in the agriculture sector. Participants who complete the whole program will be offered work placements with our agriculture project partners from the wool, dairy, and fishing industries.



SUPPORT

ACTION4YOUTH will provide SUPPORT in the form of personal growth, leadership development and workplace/career mentors to navigate work placements offered by our trusted industry partners. In addition, ACTION4YOUTH participants will be involved in training focusing on workforce engagement to ensure they have all the necessary skills to be successful, confident employees.

Stage 1 of the Action4Youth program is **EXPLORE**:

ACTION4YOUTH **EXPLORE PHASE**

**300
STUDENTS**

participate in a series of careers awareness activities, with supported self-reflection on motivators, barriers, aptitude and interest across three key commodities: dairy, wool and fishing.



DISCUSSION AND GROUP ACTIVITIES

Students participate in facilitated discussions and group activities that build awareness of diversity of careers in agriculture and fisheries.



TASTER OPPORTUNITIES

Students participate in hands on incursion and/or excursion agriculture and fisheries taster opportunities and meet young people working in the industries they are exploring.



ACCESS TO BECOME APP

Participants (including careers advisors at the schools students attend) are given ongoing access to Become App beyond the life of the project.



BUILD AND REFINE IDEAS

Students learn to build and refine ideas for their future from the inside out using the tools provided through their Become App subscription.



1:1 COUNSELLING SESSION

Participants will complete a 1:1 counselling session with a career advisor. This session allows individually tailored conversations to occur, building confidence in the decision making of what a career in agriculture could look like.



The Australian Government supports ACTION4YOUTH through National Careers Institute Grant Program funding.



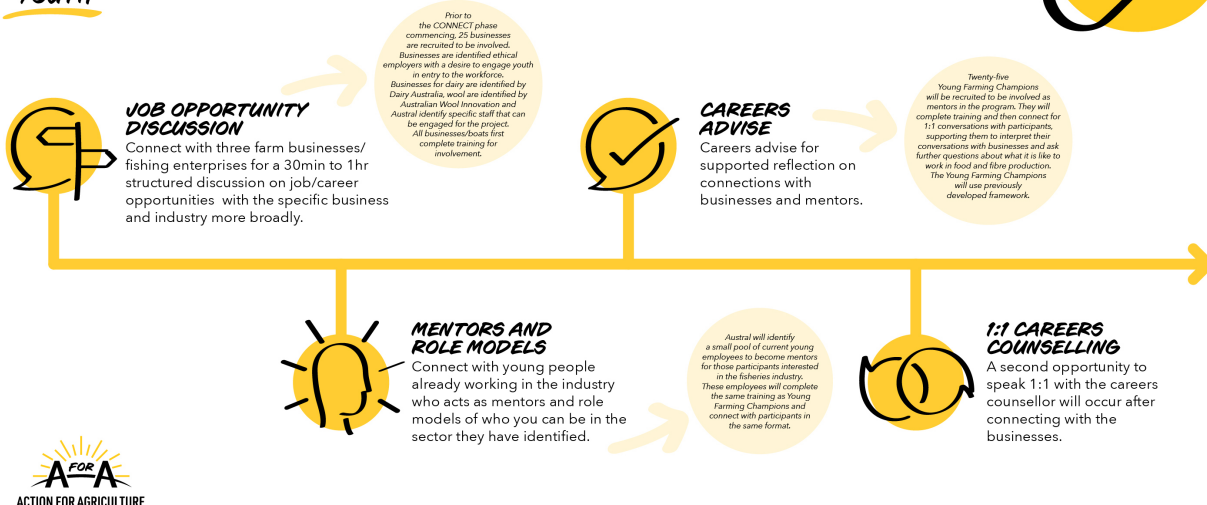
Step 6: Action4Youth Approach

Stage 2 of the Action4Youth program is **CONNECT**:

ACTION4YOUTH **CONNECT PHASE**

**30
YOUTH**

who identify as interested in working on-farm/on-boat, are transitioned to the **CONNECT** phase.

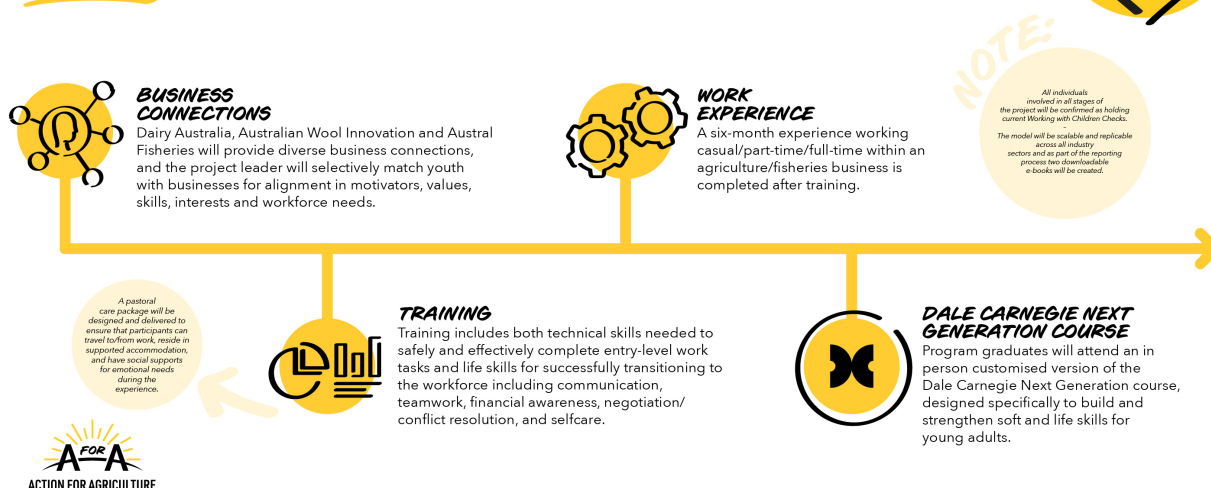


Stage 3 of the Action4Youth program is **SUPPORT**:

ACTION4YOUTH **SUPPORT PHASE**

**15-30
YOUTH**

who have identified they would like to trial working in dairy, wool or fisheries will move to the **SUPPORT** phase:

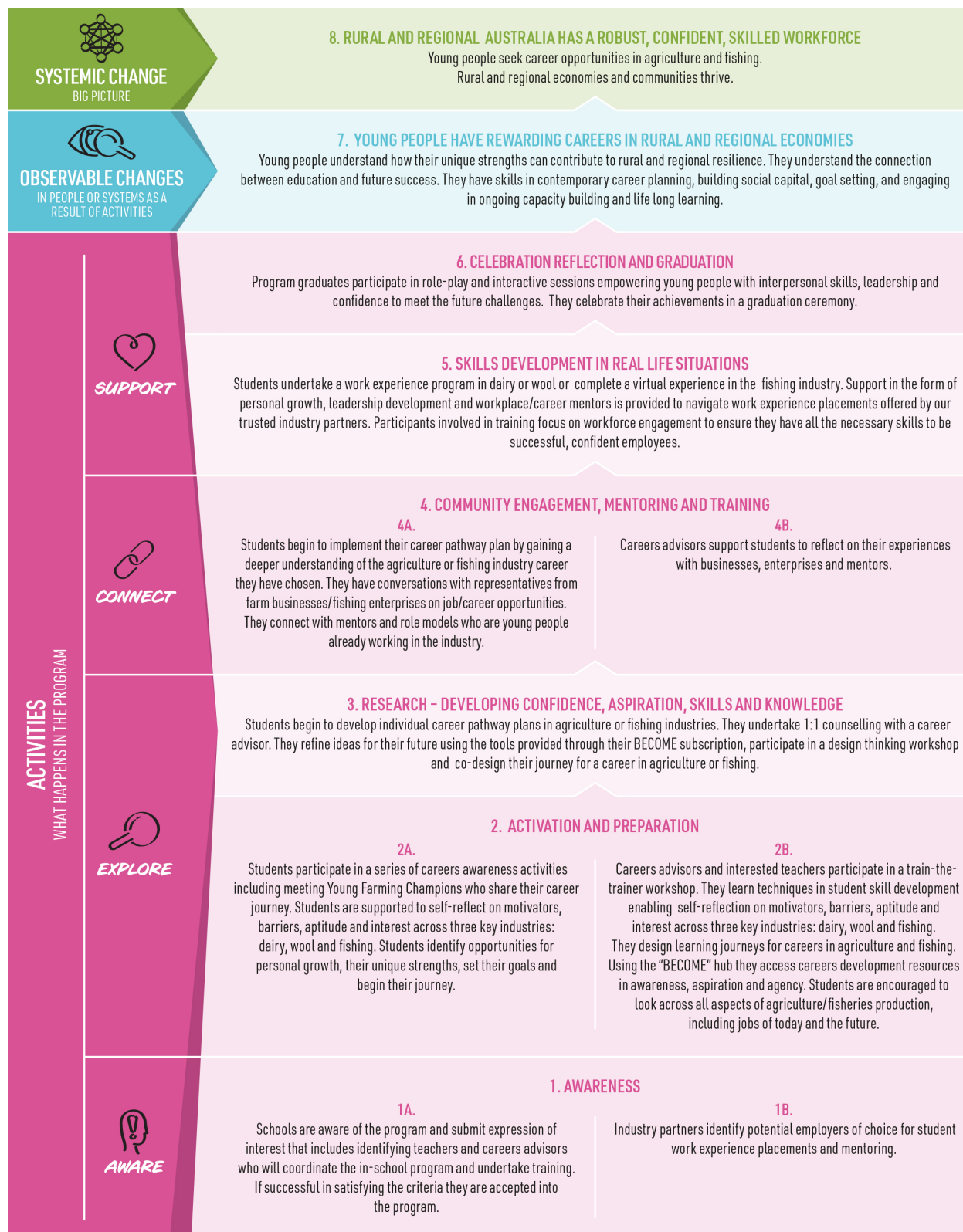


Key Question for the Project Delivery Team

How could you present your project plan and theory of change in a visually compelling way for all to see and understand?

Step 7: Intended Outcomes

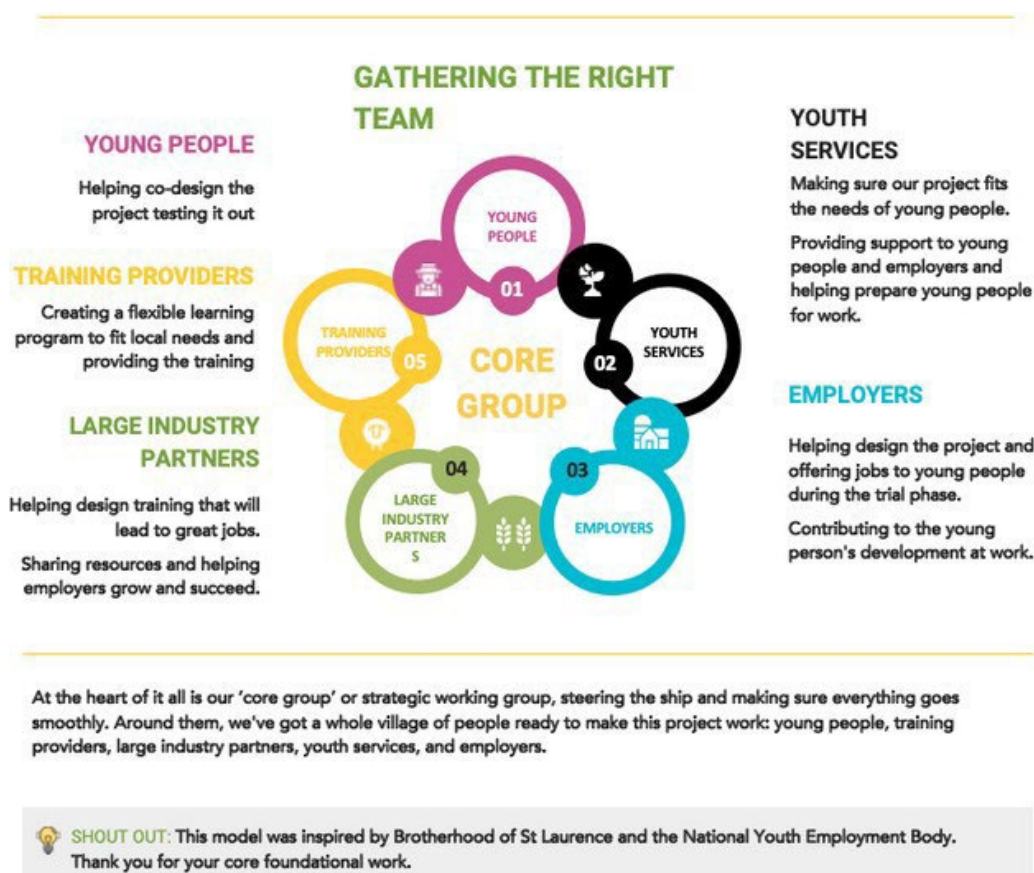
HIERARCHY OF INTENDED OUTCOMES



Step 8: Coordinating Suppliers for Action4Youth (Part 1)

An important strategy for Action4Agriculture was to identify, consult and analyse “State of Play” research to gain an understanding of where industry, education and workplace training providers aligned. This builds on the previous steps of identifying issues, barriers and gaps and then uses three steps to:

1. Seek and acknowledge existing organisations already doing great work.
2. Specifying where your organisation can and cannot overcome previously identified issues, barriers and gaps.
3. Inviting and collaborating with organisations to fill the gaps in your expertise, so that together a **core group** is formed (see graphic below)

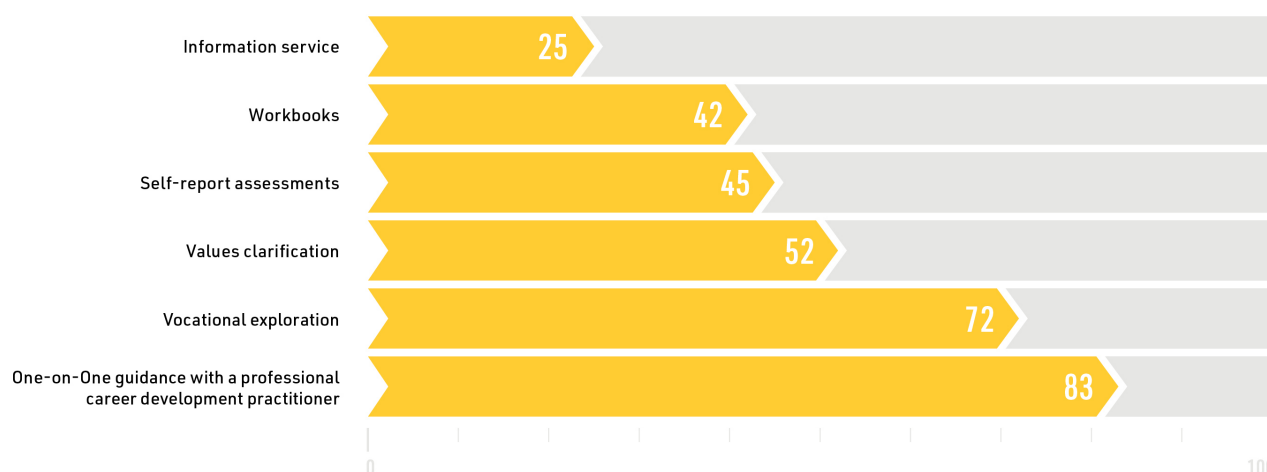


Action4Agriculture firmly believes that starting where young people are at and bringing the right people to the table to take the project forward are the keys to success for multi-stakeholder projects. This approach empowers organisations to share their 'lessons learned' from previous projects, as well as synergize and build together towards a brighter future.

Step 8: Coordinating Suppliers for Action4Youth (Part 2)

To coordinate suppliers, Action4Agriculture then identified who was best placed to deliver content to support the 3 top key influencers (graph below):

MODE OF DELIVERY - KEY INFLUENCERS



Sourced from McDonald, Lovric, Black, McIlveen & Cosby, 2022, Farm Policy Journal (Winter), p.12



For example, to ensure the **Explore** phase of the program inspires students to consider careers in dairy, wool and fisheries in two ways, BECOME Education was engaged, utilising their *Student Web App*, *Teacher Resource Centre* and *Insights Dashboard* to:

- Chip away the layers of assumptions and preconceptions.
- Build awareness and exploration of the real opportunities available.



Insights Dashboard

- Real time view of student's emerging aspirations in a stable framework.
- Individual, class, cohort, school and system level analytics.
- Ability to integrate data with existing insight platforms.



BECOME.ME Student Web App

- Opens the world of career possibilities for every student.
- Students explore based on their own strengths & interests.
- Personal framework for their evolving aspirations & ideas.

Source: [BECOME.Education](https://www.become.me)

Step 8: Coordinating Suppliers for Action4Youth (Part 3)



To deliver the Action4Youth program in totality, Action4Agriculture identified nine training providers.

- **Illawarra YES** co-designed a training model to meet local needs.
- **Australian Training Company** helped source participants and provided training.
- **Backtrack** provided an insight into the needs and challenges of disadvantaged youth.
- **Modern People** assisted with the design of training models.
- **Campus Consultancy** designed training models and collated eBooks.
- **GoAhead Business Solutions** provided agricultural industry insights.
- **Scibus** collaborated on delivery of training workshops.
- **Jaydee Events** delivered 6 dairy awareness incursions to schools.
- **Dale Carnegie** delivered skills for success workshops.

Each provider, clear timelines, deliverables, and resources were identified such that a central organising team could manage the project. By having coherence between the providers, no overlap was created, and the maximum value was delivered for participants.

Step 9: Maintaining Relationships in Action4Youth

Below is a summary of all the partners and a simple single sentence summary that speaks to their amazing contribution to this project. **Dairy Australia** identified jobs for inclusion in the **Become App** and developed an online e-learning experience, housed on their Learning Management System 'Enlight', for supporting Action4Youth participants. **DairyNSW** provided employment resources, engagement programs, career pathways, a workplace attraction and retention specialist and a valuable link between employers and employees. **Austral Fisheries** conducted student incursion workshops and identified jobs for inclusion in the Become App. **Australian Wool Innovation (AWI)** also identified jobs for inclusion in the Become App.

Government bodies included the **Office for Regional NSW** which provided research and connections, **Education Pathways Program** and **Regional Industry Education Partnerships** both sourced schools and supported the delivery of the program. With their commitment, time and energy we were able to work with schools to achieve impressive outcomes. The **National Careers Institute (Careers and International Skills division)** provided career guidance sessions with professional practitioners and **RDA (Regional Development Australia) Sydney** provided links to networks and insights into the training culture.

Professional education bodies such as the **Australian Association of Environmental Educators** and **NSW/ACT Geography Teachers Association** provided links to networks and an understanding of the barriers and challenges facing teachers and schools. Career exploration and showcasing services were provided by **Become Education, Study/Work/Grow**, and **The Career Department**.

We worked with community services and NGOs who all brought together connections, resources, research and shared knowledge. These were the **Brotherhood of St Laurence**, **Mission Australia** and **Shoalhaven Community Investment Committee**.

APM Employment Services co-designed training products specific to youth needs and provided support to both employers and employees. Other partners included **UNSW** as well as **Ground Creative** and **Opal Heart Media** for graphic design and reporting assistance.

As well as working directly with these partners we have introduced them to each other to facilitate ongoing and mutually beneficial relationships. For example, we have introduced AWI to ATC and introduced DairyNSW to Shoalhaven Community Investment Committee, Illawarra YES, Mission Australia and Brotherhood of St Laurence.

Step 10: Scaling Projects for Greater Impact

At the conclusion of this work, three questions remain:

- "How do you scale a project for even greater impact?"
- "How do you get young people to buy in to the process?"
- "How do you get employers to support the next generation?"

To answer these questions, you might enjoy our other eBooks from the Action4Youth project:



All these eBooks and more resources are available at the Action4Youth website here: <https://action4youth.com.au/resources>

If you are looking for organisations and people to help you go on a similar journey we suggest you reach out to Brotherhood of St Laurence who do influential work via the National Youth Employment Body.

Key Question for the Project Delivery Team

What is the next step for you to take your lessons from this eBook and continue your impact journey?

Summary

In conclusion, this eBook offers an exploration of the agricultural landscape, presenting ten key steps to inspire and empower providers to reimagine their approaches to multi-stakeholder projects. Rooted in extensive research and expert insights from Action4Agriculture, this eBook is a testament to the power of collaboration and purpose-driven initiatives in shaping the future of careers in agriculture.

Through a best practice holistic approach, we emphasize the significance of the **EXPLORE**, **CONNECT**, and **SUPPORT** stages of development, recognising their pivotal role in engaging and nurturing young talent within the agricultural realm. By identifying the barriers that impede progress and unveiling the myriad opportunities in the two-sided marketplace of employers and young people, we advocate for the harnessing of local talent to bolster the sustainability of the agricultural workforce.

We say, young people are 100% of the future.

This journey to success is guided by a definition of achievements that considers the aspirations of schools, school staff, industry stakeholders, and the future employees of the sector.

As you absorb the knowledge shared within these pages, we urge you to embrace the spirit of converting learning into action, ensuring that your endeavours thrive on both the client and delivery sides. By adopting a proactive and inclusive mindset, you can revolutionise the way multi-stakeholder projects are designed, delivered, and measured.

Together, we can create a future where talent flourishes, barriers are shattered, and the agricultural workforce not only thrives but also sets new standards for resilience and growth. As you embark on your journey, remember that the seeds of success are sown through understanding, empathy, and the unwavering commitment to fostering a brighter, sustainable tomorrow for the world of agriculture. The time to act is now.

Conclusion

You now have the knowledge, the steps and the clarity on exactly what to do to create projects that thrive, are rooted in research and follow best practice methodology. Where you start is up to you. Take a few minutes to review your favorite sections and commit to 3 actions below, then take a few minutes to schedule them into your calendar!

Action 1

Action 2

Action 3

My support people are:

-
-
-
-

Did you love this eBook?

Please share it with one employer or leader in your sector or industry so they can support their young people in all they do.

Acknowledgements

This eBook was only possible because of the input, support and guidance of a large number of people and organizations.

We would also like to extend our thanks to all the students, parents, schools, educators, employers and champions of the young people who will benefit from this eBook as well as the Action4Youth program.

Thank you for all that you do.

Would you like to know more?

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