

A lack of a skilled agricultural workforce is a top inhibitor of growth and expansion for many Kansas agriculture entities. To help support growth in agriculture, the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA) seeks to help the industry better understand the workforce needs among agricultural employers in the state. In an effort to link the supply of human capital to the needs of Kansas agribusiness enterprises, KDA conducted the first Kansas Agriculture Workforce Needs Assessment Survey in 2016. The survey was analyzed by the Agricultural Land Use Survey Center at Kansas State University. A total of 250 responses from agricultural businesses were received from across the state and region.



According to estimates prepared by the Kansas Department of Agriculture and based on the Implan economic data model, the agriculture, food and food processing sector has a total direct output of \$46.2 billion and supports 126,652 jobs in Kansas. Overall, these industries support 229,934 jobs, or 12% of the entire workforce in the state of Kansas. They provide a total economic contribution of \$62.8 billion, roughly 43% of Gross Regional Product (GRP).

Current Vacancies

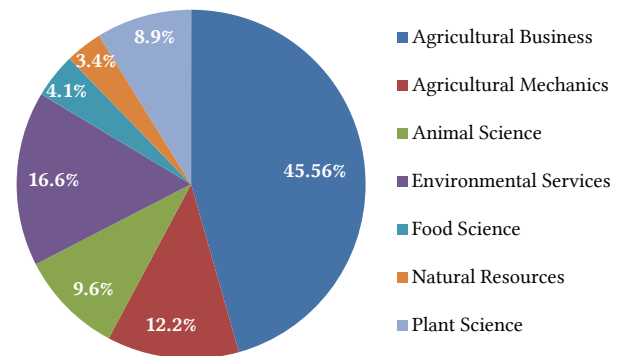
Results show that 36% of respondents have vacancies, and of these vacancies, 36% are considered entry-level positions.

Expansion

Almost 44% of respondents said they plan to expand in the next three years. Of those planning to expand, almost 80% plan to do so within the next two years.

Out of the anticipated vacancies through expansion, about 24% of these new positions will be entry-level positions. This should be indicative of a trend occurring for the agribusiness industry as a whole in Kansas. The highest ranked reasons for expansion are to increase share of existing market, enter into new markets and

Expected Increases in Positions

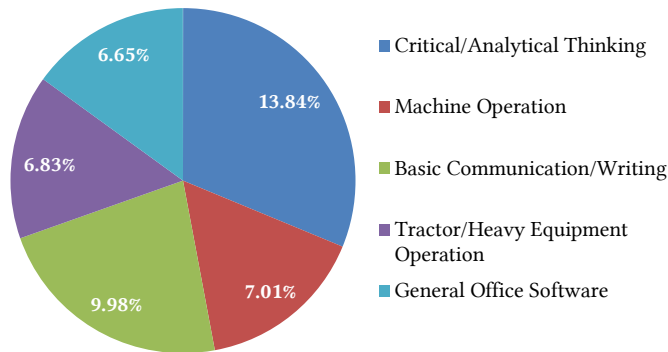


meet current market demands. The primary reason preventing expansion is the cost of additional labor, including wages and benefits.

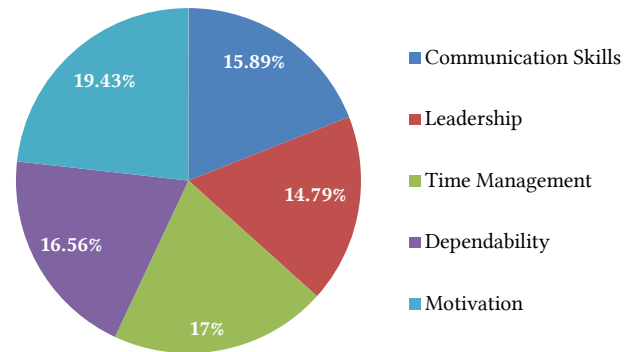
Applicants

Written communication and applied mathematics are the main basic skills that applicants lacked. Motivation, time-management and dependability are the top three “soft” skills lacking. Critical/analytical thinking and basic communication/writing are the main “hard” skills lacking in applicants.

Hard Skills General Applicants Lack



Soft Skills General Applicants Lack



Retirement

Of the retirements estimated to occur within 5 years, an estimated 34% will occur by 2017, as reported by survey respondents.

Training

Over 80% of respondents provide training opportunities for their employees. Over 66% of respondents indicated they would be interested in working with local education providers to set up a training program for employees. Fifty-two percent of employers offer internships or job shadowing, primarily at the community college and university level. Over 60% of respondents indicated that they would like to offer internships or job shadowing.

Certification

About 60% of respondents give preference to applicants who have obtained certifications. Commercial Driver's License (CDL), Pesticide Applicator, Certified Crop Adviser (CCA) and Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) are given the most preference in terms of certifications/certificates.



Recommendations

The following are recommendations based on the results of the survey:

- **Explore expanding and downsizing companies beyond the results of the survey.**

Forty-four percent of the respondents said they plan to expand within the next three years. This is an opportunity to ensure entities are provided appropriate materials to assist in their expansion process. Personal contact will help identify why a small portion of companies are planning to downsize.

- **Encourage partnerships with secondary and post-secondary schools.**

The data collected in this survey indicates that new internship and/or job shadowing programs need to be started and that the current programs would like additional external input. Only 12% respondents are currently offering internships to high school students. This is the opportune age, before they have made future educational choices, to expose individuals to all the agriculture industry has to offer.

- **Evaluate current continuing education programs for their ability to address employer concerns about the skills of the workforce.**

Given the level of dissatisfaction in employees' motivation, communication and critical thinking skills expressed by survey respondents, Career and Technical Education programs may need to be restructured to more directly address the employers' concerns. Stimulating motivation may require additional research to determine what might motivate current and future employees.

This survey was conducted from Dec. 1, 2015 to Feb. 29, 2016 by the Agricultural Land Use Survey Center at Kansas State University.