

MONITORING, EVALUATION, REPORTING AND LEARNING S2 | FINAL REPORT | 20 JUNE 2025

An Evaluation of the AgCAREERSTART Pilot Program COMPRISING OF COHORTS 1-3 (2022-2024)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The AgCAREERSTART pilot program was established with funding support from the Commonwealth Government to address critical workforce challenges in the Australian food and fibre production sector. In its first three years (2022–2024) it has provided accessible, supported pathways for 178 young Australians over three calendar year-based Cohorts (C1–C3) to explore and pursue careers in agriculture through a supported on-farm employment placement.

This Final Report evaluates the program's performance according to a comprehensive set of intermediate-level outcomes and associated data indicators as specified in AgCAREERSTART MERL S2 Framework.

Through multiple data points, each indicator assesses the programs impact on its stakeholders: participants; farm businesses; and the broader agricultural industry. Drawing on three years of implementation data, survey responses, stakeholder feedback, and monitoring and evaluation insights, the report highlights the program's achievements, identifies areas for improvement, and outlines recommendations for future sustainability and growth.

Below is an overview of each indicator and its evaluation status.

INDICATOR A.1 – Young Australians and farm businesses identify AgCAREERSTART as a pathway to the AgriFood workforce



Achieved

The program has demonstrated consistent growth in participant applications (n=565) and stable host engagement. Participant survey responses (C2–C3 n=42) show promise of strong retention of young people (90%) in ag-related employment or study after program completion.

INDICATOR A.2 – Young Australians from non-agricultural backgrounds gain access to explore AgriFood careers



Achieved

44% of placed participants (C1–C3 n=171) came from metropolitan areas, many with limited prior exposure to agriculture. Participant respondents (C2–C3 n=42) indicated the program successfully increased their knowledge and confidence, with nearly all (41) indicating improved understanding of ag industry at exit.

INDICATOR A.3 – Underrepresented, minority, and gender groups are increasingly accessing careers in agriculture



Partially Achieved

Female participation (58% of C1–C3 n=178) and ATSI representation (6%) exceeded national and Ag. Industry averages. However lower retention among female participants – 65% (n=102) as compared to male rate of 79% (n=76) – and early exits (reported in previous Progress Reports) among those with disabilities or born overseas, highlight areas for improvement and targeted support.



INDICATOR B.1 – Young Australians engaged in AgCAREERSTART have improved: capacity (skills and knowledge); capability (leadership and networks); and employment prospects in Ag. industry



Achieved

Participants demonstrated dedication to improved skills, knowledge and employability through high engagement in formal training (75% of n=173) during the program. Survey results (C2-C3 n=42) showcased the pivotal role of on-farm experience, in demonstrating and deepening respondents skills set and confirming the program's impact on capacity, capability, and career readiness.

INDICATOR B.2 – Young Australians establish and foster peer to peer and industry networks and career opportunities in ag



Achieved

Survey result indicated that participant respondents built strong peer and industry networks through on-farm placements with early data showing promise with 77% (n=20) respondents maintaining and continuing to build their networks well after program completion. Through the Training and Engagement Bursary, 97 participants (C1-C3 n=173) attended 140 industry events, establishing connections and gaining insight into the breadth and depth of the food and fibre industry and its many and various career pathways.

INDICATOR B.3 – Young Australians have positive experience of AgCAREERSTART and promote in their sphere of influence



Achieved

Early survey data from participants (C2-C3 n=42) indicated high satisfaction ratings, strong advocacy at exit, and continued promotion of the program. 91% of participant responses demonstrate a consistently positive experience and strong influence within participants' networks.

INDICATOR C.1 – Farm businesses understand the value of employing young Australians



Achieved

Strong endorsement from farm hosts, with 96% of survey respondents (C2-C3 n=23) recommending the program and 83% reporting productivity gains, demonstrates that farm businesses recognise the value of employing young Australians through AgCAREERSTART.

INDICATOR C.2 – Farm businesses engaged in AgCAREERSTART are continuing practice of employing young people post-program



Achieved

Host survey respondents demonstrated increased willingness to hire unskilled youth (60% at exit, C2-C3 n=23) and sustained positive attitudes (81% post-program, C1-C2 n=16) to employing young people. These factors along with a rise in returning hosts (from 16% to 40%) indicate that AgCAREERSTART is influencing long-term hiring practices in the sector.

INDICATOR C.3 – Farm businesses have a positive experience in AgCAREERSTART and promote in their sphere of influence



Achieved

With an average host respondent (C2-C3 n=23) program satisfaction rating of 8.47/10 and 100% of surveyed hosts stating the program met or exceeded expectations, farm businesses indicated they had a positive experience and actively promote AgCAREERSTART within their networks.

INDICATOR C.4 – Farm businesses have systems and access to support to accommodate needs of young people entering the workforce



Achieved
(with areas for improvement)

Hosts demonstrated strong capacity to support young workers, with participant surveys (C2-C3 n=42) indicating high ratings for mentorship (98%) and workplace environmental factors include WHS scoring well (94% rated average or above) with participant respondents (C1-C2 n=33). Responses revealed some variability in workplace training and communication which highlights opportunities for further program improvement.

INDICATOR D.1 – Farm businesses engaged in AgCAREERSTART are considered best practice workplaces by AgriFood industry



Partially
Achieved

While many host respondents (C2–C3 n=23) indicated they had improved workplace practices and received positive participant feedback, a stark shift downwards in participant welfare, health, safety, and gender retention outcomes in Cohort 3 (2024) provides a call to action. A recommendation relating to animal-based sectors indicates that best practice standards are not yet consistently met across the industry.

INDICATOR D.2 – Program is accessible to farm businesses nationally and engages all ag sectors



Partially
Achieved

AgCAREERSTART has engaged a diverse range of agricultural sectors and expanded into intensive industries. Its geographic delivery includes all States of Australia, with the majority of placements being located in the eastern states of New South Wales (40%), Victoria (15%) and Queensland (22%). There is an opportunity to address geographic balance to enable full national accessibility.

INDICATOR D.3 – AgCAREERSTART industry partners have a positive experience in AgCAREERSTART and promote in their sphere of influence



Achieved

Interviews with 4 out of 9 Industry partners reported strong support for AgCAREERSTART's delivery structure and impact. Also there has been promising support from non-financial industry organisations who have achieved almost 20% (50 out of n=270) of host application attributions. 26 industry organisations have seen key benefit from the Training and Engagement Bursary with 157 participants from C1–C3 attending key industry events.

INDICATOR E.1 – The AgriFood industry understands the value of AgCAREERSTART and subsequently invests in and promotes the program



Partially
Achieved

While industry organisations recognise the value of AgCAREERSTART and make modest in-kind contributions, there remains a reluctance to provide direct financial investment in the program. There is an opportunity to build on the 'goodwill' achieved in the pilot program by communicating/ demonstrating sector specific outcomes and co-designing an investment framework to drive industry investment.

INDICATOR E.2 – Recommendations of next steps to investigate a self-sustaining business model for AgCAREERSTART post-program funding



Achieved

A set of high-level recommendations for a future business model have been developed and refined based on MERL insights, stakeholder feedback, and funding context, noting that there appears to be limited appetite from former Host farm businesses surveyed (C1–C2 n=16) for a user-pays model.

INDICATOR E.3 – Efficient and targeted marketing of AgCAREERSTART to potential participants



Achieved

Strategic marketing investments and a maturing of the marketing strategy over the course of the pilot period to focus on high-performing recruitment channels have established AgCAREERSTART as a recognised brand with strong digital engagement and focus on person-to-person outreach activity.

Economic Analysis – Econisis

The Cost Benefit Analysis undertaken by Econisis confirms that the program delivers strong economic and social value. A combined CBA of Cohorts 1, 2 and 3 yield a BCR of 3.82 at the 7% discount rate. This combined evaluation includes establishment costs incurred in setting up the program.

The Net Present Value of Cohort 3 of the program is \$6.14m at the 7% discount rate. The Benefit Cost Ratio is 5.56. Sensitivity tests conducted included halving the participant share of agricultural worker productivity and only considering benefits yielded during the program timeframe. These tests brought the BCR down to 3.98 and 2.83 respectively.

1. INTRODUCTION

This Final Report presents the monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) outcomes for the National Farmers' Federation's (NFF) AgCAREERSTART program over its first three years of implementation—Cohorts 1 (2022), 2 (2023), and 3 (2024). Table 1 outlines the primary stakeholder groups and associated terminology used throughout the report.

The third stakeholder group, the food and fibre industry (also referenced as AgriFood industry), is engaged primarily through industry organisations, referred to as Industry Partners. However, structured MERL engagement with these partners has been limited and participation inconsistent.

Table 1 Overview of primary stakeholders for Cohorts 1–3					
MEL Engagement Data		C1 2022	C2 2023	C3 2024	Combined C1–C3 MEL Participation
Participant Respondent (Young Australian)	Participants Placed vs completed	30 vs 28	70 vs 50	78 vs 48	178 vs 126
	Exit survey	*n=10	n=20	n=22	C2–C3 n=42
	Post-Program survey	n=7	n=26		C1–C2 n=33
Host Respondent (Farm Business)	Farm Hosts Placed vs completed	28 vs 26	52 vs 41	55 vs 35	135 vs 102
	*Mid-year Feedback		*n=28		
	Exit survey	*n=12	n=14	n= 9	C2–C3 n= 23
	Post-Program survey	n=5	n=11		C1–C2 n=16
Industry Partner Respondent (Food & Fibre/ AgriFood Industry)	*Delivery Reports (May 2022)	*8			
	Structured Interviews (July 2024)			4 (plus Hay Inc.)	

*Indicates MEL engagement under previous framework MERL S1 developed by AgSTAR and not utilised in final report evaluation.

This report comprises four key sections:

- *Evaluation of Intermediate Outcomes* (Section 2), supported by detailed analysis in Appendix A.
- *Cost-Benefit Analysis Summary* (Section 3), conducted by Econisis. The full report is in Appendix B.
- *Recommendations* (Section 4), updated from Progress Report 3 (PR3) to guide NFF and AgriFutures in transitioning to a post-pilot phase.

1.1 Data sources and analysis

This report covers program activities and data from inception 2022 to 2024. The pilot phase of AgCAREERSTART has evolved through continuous learning, with program delivery adapting based on feedback, anecdotal insights, and MERL findings.

MERL frameworks applied:

- Cohort 1 (2022): Evaluated under MERL S1 (AgStar Projects)
- Cohorts 2–3 (2023–2024): Evaluated under MERL S2 (agdots)

Key Program MEL reports provided to and accepted by AgriFutures (and NFF) to date include:

- Cohort 1 Evaluation – AgStar Projects (March 2023)
- Cohort 2 Activity Measures – Progress Report 2 (PR2) by agdots and Econisis (June 2024)
- Combined Outcomes (C1–C2) – Progress Report 3 (PR3) by agdots and Econisis (August 2024)
- Cohort 3 Activity Measures – Progress Report 4 (PR4) by agdots (February 2025)

Note that all reports and accompanying data evaluation and data sets were submitted via AgriFutures K2 platform and subsequently approved. Copies of these reports may be requested through AgriFutures.

In addition to MEL Engagement data (identified in Table 1), agdots utilised program delivery information and data sets for MERL analysis including:

- Participant and host application data (C1–C4)
- Cohort Welfare Reports (C2–C3)
- Training and Engagement Bursary tracking data (C2–C3)
- Various other data sets including recruitment and marketing activity tracking, program documentation and financial reports (limited).

Complete list of data sets (and their sample sizes) utilised by agdots in MERL S2 analysis and reporting is provided in Appendix D.

Data quality and consistency improved significantly from Cohort 1 to Cohorts 2 and 3, this complicated cross-cohort analysis. Additionally, variability in survey delivery process, data timeliness and format from NFF impacted analysis efficiency. Agdots endeavored to address this by consolidating and standardising data from multiple sources (see Appendix D).

Where discrepancies exist between raw data and NFF-reported figures (stated in Activity Workplan Reports), raw data has been treated as the authoritative source for analysis.

1.2 Sample size

The AgCAREERSTART pilot cohort (identified in table 1) is classified as a small population for evaluation purposes (typically comprising fewer than 500 individuals). In such contexts, a survey participation rate of 50% is generally regarded as a robust sample size, as it enhances the representativeness and statistical reliability of the data collected.

While MERL survey participation in this instance falls below that benchmark (see Table 1), the data remains valuable and can provide insights for decision-making. This is particularly relevant given that data has been collected across multiple cohorts, contributing to a broader demographic spread and mitigating potential response bias.

agdots acknowledges the limitations associated with smaller sample sizes and has therefore provided detailed data tables in Appendix A for all Intermediate Program Data Indicator data points. Where sample size falls below 50% threshold, the sample size has been noted as $n=x$ next to statistics. Where applicable, data has also been disaggregated by cohort to highlight consistency of trends and support the integrity of the evaluation.



2. EVALUATION OF INTERMEDIATE PROGRAM INDICATORS

A key objective of MERL Stage 2 (S2) was to evaluate the contribution of AgCAREERSTART to workforce development strategies outlined in the Australian Government's Delivering Agriculture 2030 Package. To support this, agdots developed a Theory of Change (Figure 1) that illustrates the program's alignment with the Australian Government's AgriFood goal of achieving a \$100 billion industry value by 2030 (Figure 1).

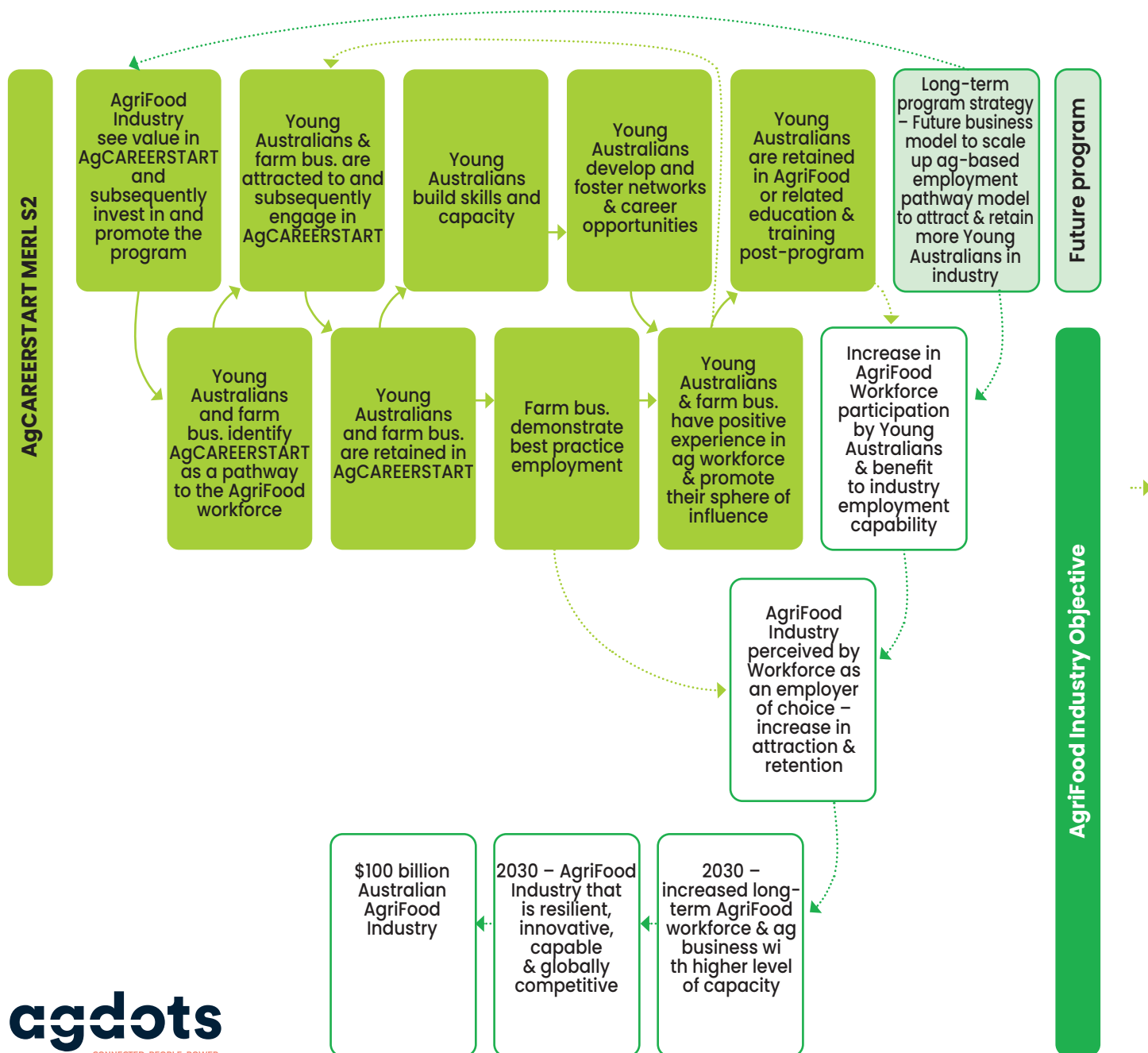


Figure 1 AgCAREERSTART MERL S2 Theory of Change (2023, agdots)

With input from AgCAREERSTART team (NFF) and AgriFutures, agdots then developed a Program Logic model to illustrate the program's role and intended impacts within the context of national workforce development. This outcomes-based framework establishes a hierarchy of data indicators that link program activities and outputs to long-term impacts, identified as Outcomes A–E in Figure 2. These long-term indicators are aligned with a 2030 evaluation horizon.

Each tier of the Program Logic corresponds with specific agdots MERL reporting milestones, forming a structured, data-driven evaluation pathway (Figure 2). Previous reporting milestones have addressed:

- PR2 and PR4: **Intake/ in-program activities**, and **output measures**.
- PR3: **Program-based outcomes**. In response to a request from NFF, Agdots also advanced recommendations for the Future Business Model (Indicator E.2 from the **Intermediate Outcomes**

tier) as part of PR3.

This Final Report represents the culmination of the MERL S2 evaluation process, focusing on **Intermediate Outcomes and Impacts**. The relevant Intermediate Outcome Statements are outlined in Appendix C, with supporting evidence drawn from corresponding data indicators (Appendix A) and an independently developed Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) report (Appendix B).

Rather than presenting a detailed analysis of each data indicator within section 2, a summary evaluation is provided. A comprehensive breakdown, including visualisations and data tables, is available in the Intermediate Outcomes Data Indicator Report (Appendix A), which serves as a companion sub-report section 2 of this report.

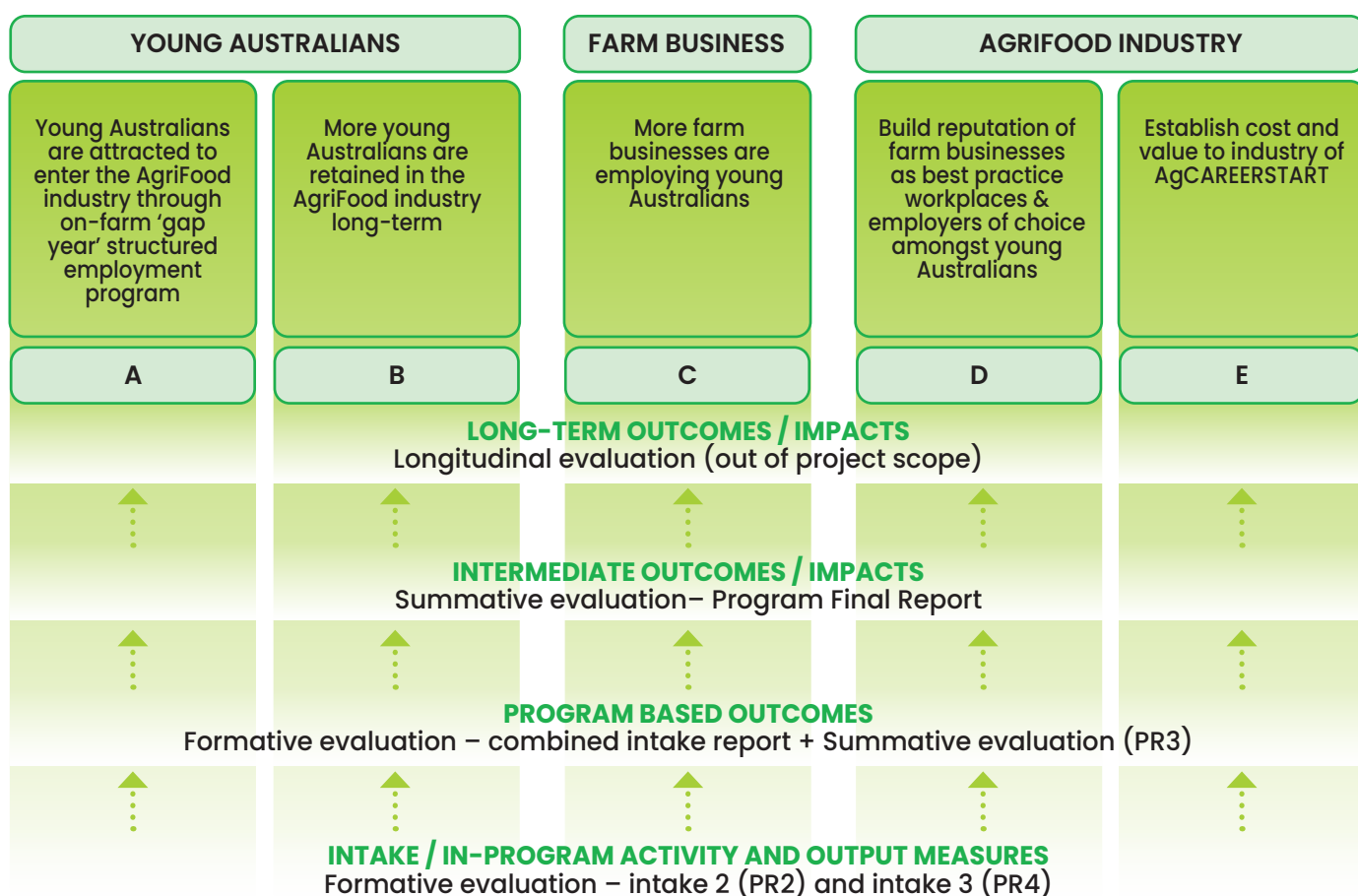


Figure 2 AgCAREERSTART MERL S2 Program Logic

2.1 Young Australians: Addressing Long-term Outcomes A and B

A.1 – Young Australians and farm businesses identify AgCAREERSTART as a pathway to the AgriFood workforce



Achieved

Recruitment of young people into the program has shown positive growth, with a total of 565 applications received between 2022 and 2024, including those for the C4 (2025) intake (Figure 3).

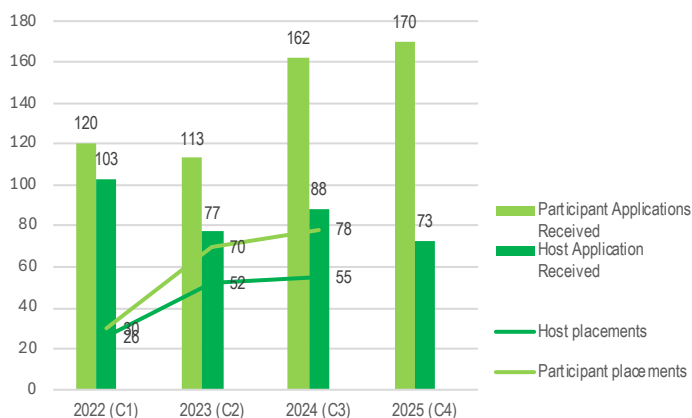


Figure 3 Year on Year Program Applications (n=565)

Applications from host farm businesses have stabilised at approximately 70 per year. This consistency can partly be attributed to a steady increase in repeat applicants from former host farms who are known to the program.

Participant respondent (C2-C3 n=42) retention within the agriculture industry following program completion is strong. Survey data indicates that 90% of respondents who completed the program remained in the sector, either through employment or further study.

Follow-up participant respondent data (C1-C2 n=33) collected 12 to 18 months after program exit indicates that the majority of respondents (67%) remained engaged in the industry.

Notably, data from the C2 (2023) respondents (n=26) shows:

- 63% of respondents that completed the program (n=19) remained in the agriculture sector; and
- 57% of respondent early leavers (n=7) also remained in the industry 12-18 months after the program.

This indicates that the program delivers sustained value, even for participants who do not complete the full duration.

A.2 – AgCAREERSTART provides young Australians from a non-ag background greater access to explore a career in the AgriFood industry. Distinguish those who don't necessarily have pre-disposition to ag career



Achieved

Over the first three years of AgCAREERSTART (C1-C3), 44% of placed participants (n=171) have come from metropolitan or Greater City areas (Figure 4), highlighting the program's success in reaching young Australians without traditional agricultural backgrounds.

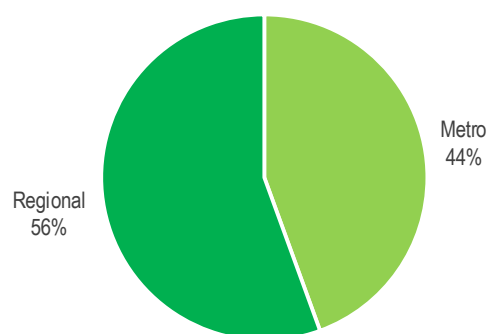


Figure 4 Placed Participants location of origin (C1-C3 n=171)

On average, these placed participants rated their knowledge of agriculture at entry as 5.8 out of 10, indicating a relatively basic understanding of the industry. For many, particularly those from urban environments, farming and rural life are unfamiliar. AgCAREERSTART often represents their first experience living independently and undertaking full-time employment, a significant life transition, compounded by relocation to a completely new setting.

This transition can pose a substantial barrier to recruitment from metropolitan areas. However, the high placement rate of metro applicants demonstrates the effectiveness of the program's coordinators and marketing efforts in breaking down these barriers and creating viable pathways into the agriculture sector.

At program exit, all but one participant respondent (C2-C3 n=42) reported an increase in their knowledge of the agriculture industry, with 26 out of 42 respondents strongly agreeing with this statement. This outcome underscores the program's impact in building industry awareness and capability among young people who might otherwise never have considered a career in agriculture.

A.3 – Under represented/ minority / gender groups of young Australians are increasingly likely to be able to access a career in ag through the AgCAREERSTART program



Partially Achieved

According to an ABARES Research Report Published in 2023¹, 33% of agricultural workers identified as female, significantly lower than the 48% female representation across the broader Australian workforce². In contrast, AgCAREERSTART has demonstrated strong progress in gender inclusion, with 58% of placements (n=178) allocated to female participants over its first three years.

It is important to note that in-program retention of female AgCAREERSTART participants has seen a year on year decrease from 93.3% retention rate in C1 2022 (n=12) to 50% in C3 2024 (n=46). Whilst male retention rate has also decreased from 89% in the first year (n=18), it was 78% in 2024 (n=32). For the pilot period C1-C3 female retention is 65% (n=102) and male is 79% (n=76). It is recommended that the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) conduct further analysis into the declining retention rates among female participants and implement targeted strategies to improve outcomes.

AgCAREERSTART has also made strides in attracting participants from diverse backgrounds (Figure 5):

- 6% (10) of participants identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI). This is significantly higher than industry average with data from ABARES indicating just 1.8% of Ag. workforce identified as Indigenous in 2021¹. It also exceeds the 5.1%³ ATSI representation of 15–24-year-olds in the general population (ABS, 2019).
- 10% (17) of participants identified as having a disability, slightly above the ABS 9.3% national average for this age group³.
- 7% (12) participants were born outside Australia and 3% (5) were from non-English speaking backgrounds. These statistics are below the industry average with data from ABARES indicating 13% of Ag. workforce were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in 2021¹.

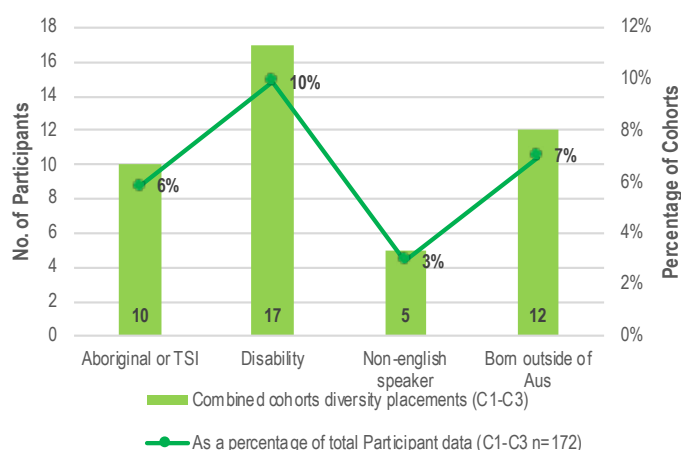


Figure 5 Participants placed from diverse backgrounds (C1-C3)

Previous analysis undertaken as part of PR4 indicated that while ATSI participants show strong retention, those with a disability or born outside Australia are more likely to exit the program early. These findings highlight the need for targeted support mechanisms to improve retention and ensure equitable outcomes across all participant groups.

NEW RECOMMENDATION – PROGRAM DELIVERY (REF: SECTION 4, RECOMMENDATION 11)

Investigate declining female retention and develop improvement strategies to address in-program retention for the following groups:

- Female participants
- Participants with a disability
- Participants born outside of Australia

¹ Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES), Issue 3 2023 'Snapshot of Australia's Agricultural Workforce' [<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/products/insights/snapshot-of-australias-agricultural-workforce>]

² Source: Barr, N & Kancans, R Trends in the Australian Agricultural Workforce: What can data from the Census of Population and Housing tell us about changes in agricultural employment? 2020, ABARES Research Report 20.19, Canberra, November, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25814/F8QC-DY41>

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) 'Demographics of Australian young people and their families', Australia's youth web report [<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/australias-youth/contents/demographics>], accessed July 2024

B.1 – Young Australians engaged in AgCAREERSTART have improved: capacity (skills and knowledge); capability (leadership and networks); and employment prospects in Ag. Industry



Achieved

Over 75% of participants (n=173) in the pilot cohorts undertook formal skills training through their Training and Engagement Bursary. Additionally, participants in Cohort 3 (2024) attended an Orientation Week event, which included supplementary farm-readiness training. While specific data from this event was not provided to agdots for evaluation, it is noted as an important complement to the bursary-supported training activities.

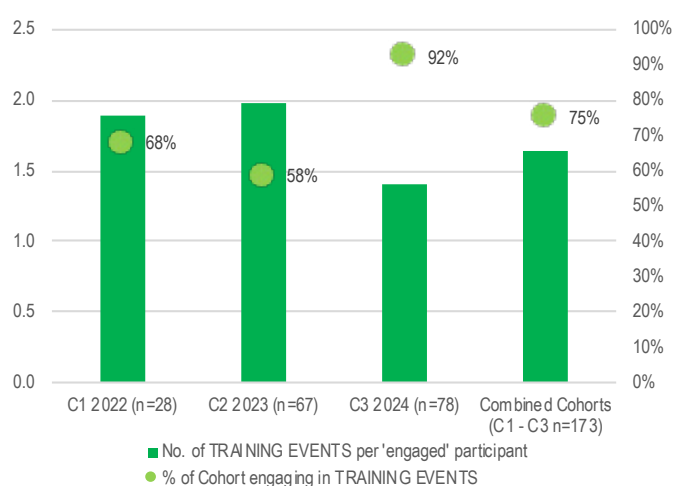


Figure 6 C1-C3 Participant Training Activities Undertaken via Bursary (n=173)

The on-farm employment placements played a pivotal role in enhancing participants' practical skills and professional preparedness for the agriculture sector. C2-C3 Participant responses (n=42) indicate that through direct involvement in a variety of farming operations, participants develop technical competencies, improved their teamwork and adaptability, and gained confidence in applying their knowledge in real-world settings. These experiences are also reflected in respondent survey data relating to strengthened employability and long-form commentary which indicated a deepened understanding of agricultural systems, sustainable business practices, and farm operations—insights that classroom learning alone could not provide.

"The practical experience has taken me from negligible agricultural skills to a full understanding of the operations of a vineyard."

Data from C1-C2 Host respondents (n=14) indicated that participants were trained to perform a wide range of tasks, including operating agricultural machinery, livestock handling, crop management, and ag. Tech operations. Participant survey respondents from C2-C3 (n=42) indicated that the on-farm experience also fostered the development of essential workplace soft skills such as communication (37), teamwork (39), time management (35), problem-solving (37), and leadership (30).

The gap year structure of the program supported a broader transition to adulthood, with many C2-C3 participant respondents (n=42) reporting growth in confidence, independence, resilience, and problem-solving abilities. When asked which skills had improved most, these attributes were the most frequently cited by respondents, highlighting the program's impact on both professional and personal development.

"So incredibly valuable to my personal development, resume, future employability and fundamental knowledge... I have loved growing as a person and employee and developing new skills. I have met so many incredible people and made some amazing friends through the program and placement."

B.2 – Young Australians establish and foster peer to peer and industry networks and career opportunities in Ag



Achieved

56% of C1-C3 participants (n=173) engaged in industry events such as conferences and headline field days through support from the Training and Engagement Bursary. These events provided valuable opportunities

for participants to connect with the broader agricultural sector, expand their professional networks beyond the farm and their immediate AgCAREERSTART peer group, and gain exposure to current industry trends and innovations. Given the financial and logistical barriers typically associated with attending such events (often held in major cities or regional centres) early-career individuals may not otherwise have access to these experiences. The bursary enables participants to gain a deeper understanding of the scale and diversity of the agricultural industry, broadening their career perspectives and aspirations.

“By networking at conferences or courses I also learn about people’s different roles in ag outside of being a farmer.”

The on-farm experience played a critical role in building participants’ leadership capabilities. Through exposure to real-world challenges and diverse management styles, participant respondents reported an increase in self-confidence and initiative. Survey commentary (C2-C3 n=42), indicated that respondents recognised a gradual build-up of confidence throughout their placement to pursue further opportunities in the agriculture sector. Some respondents also noted that observing both effective and ineffective leadership in action provided valuable insights into what constitutes strong leadership, while also highlighting

potential pathways for leadership roles within the industry.

The integration of on-farm placements with participation in formal industry events enabled participants to build meaningful and enduring professional networks. Participant respondents (C2-C3 n=42) articulated establishing valuable connections with employers, peers, and industry leaders—often describing the opportunity as a critical “foot in the door” to the agricultural sector. The open-ended responses indicate that the on-farm placement enriched respondents immediate learning and employment opportunities whilst also laying the groundwork for ongoing mentorship and long-term career development.

Although limited, survey data from C2 respondents collected 12-18 months post-program (n=26) indicates that the value of networks established in the program extends beyond the duration of the program. 77% (20 out of 26) of participant respondents remained in contact with the connections they made through AgCAREERSTART. Furthermore, the same number of respondents reported having expanded their professional networks through these initial relationships, demonstrating the lasting impact of the program in supporting continued engagement and growth within the agriculture industry.

Overall, the AgCAREERSTART model of experiential learning is equipping participants with practical skills, leadership confidence, and professional networks that support long-term success in agriculture and beyond.

“I have so much more knowledge and skills that will enable me to make connections in my learning ... as well as provide me with a year of experience for my resume.”



B.3 – Young Australians have positive experience of AgCAREERSTART and promote in their sphere of influence



Achieved

C2-C3 participants who completed the exit survey (n=42) rated their overall experience in the Program highly, with average scores ranging from 8.4 to 8.95 out of 10. A significant majority (37 out of 42 respondents) felt that the program had a strong positive impact on their career trajectory. Additionally, 88% of participant respondents reported feeling more confident in their ability to advocate for the agricultural industry as a direct result of their involvement in the program.

This positive experience translated into strong program advocacy. At the time of exit, 100% of participant respondents (C2-C3 n= 42) stated they would recommend AgCAREERSTART to family and friends. Survey data collected 12 to 18 months post-program from C1-C2 participants (n=33) showed that 91% (30 respondents) had actively recommended the program. Figure 7 C1-C2 Respondent Program Recommendation Data (n=33) Figure 7 can provides insight into the program's lasting influence on former participants and strong word-of-mouth endorsement.

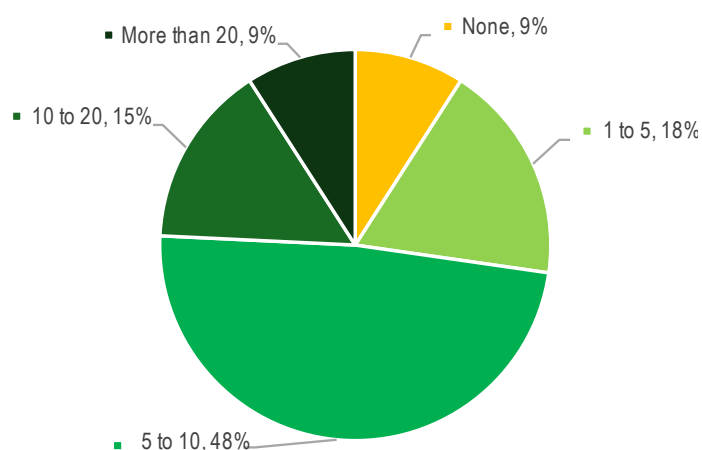


Figure 7 C1-C2 Respondent Program Recommendation Data (n=33). Estimate of program recommendations made by respondents in 12-18 months since program completion.



HIGHLIGHT ANALYSIS: TRAINING AND ENGAGEMENT BURSARY

At the request of the National Farmers' Federation (NFF), agdots conducted an analysis of the utilisation and expenditure associated with the Training and Engagement Bursary during the AgCAREERSTART pilot period (2022–2024). Of the 178 participants placed during this time, program delivery records indicate that 138 accessed the Bursary to support their training and industry engagement activities.

Expenditure data from Cohorts 2 and 3 reveals an average bursary spend of \$2,933.81 per engaged participant (n=113). The majority of costs (56%) were attributed to training and industry event registrations, followed by travel expenses (27%) and accommodation (14%), see Figure 8.

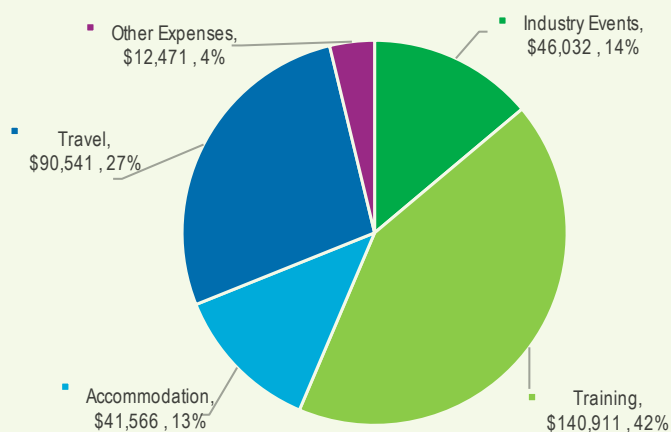


Figure 8 Training and Engagement Bursary by Cost Centre (C2–C3 n=113)

Analysis of just C3 Participants (n=78) Industry Event engagement data revealed that 13 out of the 43 participants that engaged in Industry Events through their Bursary attended multiple Events, with one participant attending 4.

Participant experience strongly supports the value of training and networking opportunities, highlighting their contribution to career development and industry networking.

agdots recognises there are challenges with access to training in rural and remote Australia and supply and availability of relevant training courses underpins decision making around the Program's training and engagement bursary model. That, said there may be an opportunity to reduce training overall expenditure without jeopardising training and networking outcomes by identifying opportunities to reduce travel/accommodation cost components. Two opportunities to for cost efficiencies to be achieved are suggested:

- Investigation into a local/ regional training and engagement options for compliance-based training programs. Compliance level training is often available in regional centres (and sometimes rural communities) where demand from the local agriculture sector supports regular delivery. Exploring models that encourage participants to investigate training opportunities in their placement region could reduce the quantum of travel and accommodation expenses. These local/ regional training events could also assist in fostering local networking opportunities that enhance both social and professional connections during placement.
- Limiting each participant to one major industry event (e.g. conferences or large field days), which are typically held in capital cities or major regional centres and incur higher travel and accommodation costs. Implementing a one-event limit could contribute to cost efficiencies within the bursary budget.

NEW RECOMMENDATION – PROGRAM DELIVERY (REF: SECTION 4, INTEGRATED INTO RECOMMENDATION 8)

Consider integrating the following into the Training and Engagement Bursary Model:

- Investigate local/ regional training engagement options to promote program cost efficiencies (reduce travel and accommodation burden) and foster local networking opportunities for the participant;
- Limit industry event attendance to one event per participant

2.2 Farm Businesses: Outcome C

C.1 – Farm businesses understand the value of employing young Australians



Achieved

Exit surveys revealed strong endorsement and positive outcomes from C2-C3 Hosts respondents (n=23). Of the 23 respondents, 22 stated they would recommend the program to other farmers, indicating a high level of satisfaction with the program. Additionally, 83% (n=19) respondents reported that their businesses experienced improvements in productivity and efficiency as a direct result of their participant's contributions.

"It's great to have young enthusiastic people come into our business looking to learn new skills and to see them become a part of the community and flourish as people."

Host respondents consistently expressed appreciation for the dynamic input of their AgCAREERSTART employees through survey commentary (C2-C3 n=23), highlighting several key benefits. These included:

- The injection of energy and creativity into the workplace, with fresh perspectives from young participants sparking innovation and encouraging the exploration of new ideas.
- Addressing workforce shortages by providing capable young workers, enabling farms to manage capacity constraints more effectively and undertake projects that might otherwise have been unfeasible.
- Knowledge transfer with the presence of young talent fostering a two-way learning environment, enhancing knowledge transfer as experienced staff refined their mentoring skills while participants gained valuable insights.
- Stimulating business reflection of existing practices and processes, and refining these to ensure they remained current and fit for purpose.

"(AgCAREERSTART) Provided a young, enthusiastic and energetic person into the workforce who had ideas and made us think outside the box."

While the host respondent feedback was overwhelmingly positive, a small number of hosts offered neutral or tentative responses, citing the short-term, "gap year" nature of the program as a reason for withholding definitive judgments on long-term benefits.

C.2 – Farm businesses engaged in AgCAREERSTART are continuing practice of employing young people post-program



Achieved

Host survey data indicates that the AgCAREERSTART program has demonstrated a meaningful shift in employer attitudes toward hiring young and unskilled workers in the agricultural sector. At program exit, 60% of C2-C3 Host respondents (n=23) reported being more likely (8) or much more likely (6) to employ an unskilled person as a result of their involvement in the program. This suggests that the program is effectively challenging preconceived notions and fostering greater openness to engaging emerging talent within the industry.

Further reinforcing this trend, a summative evaluation conducted with C1 and C2 hosts 12 to 18 months post-program found that 13 out of 16 Host respondents acknowledged a positive influence on their attitudes toward employing young people, with only one respondent indicating a negative impact. This sustained positive sentiment over time highlights the program's lasting effect on employer perceptions.

Another indicator of the program's success is the increasing rate of returning hosts identified in Host Application data for (C2-C4). Repeat host rate rose from 16% (12) in the 2023 cohort to 40% (25) in the 2025 cohort. This strong growth in returning hosts indicates growing confidence and satisfaction in the program among past farm business hosts.

Feedback from C1-C2 host respondents (n=16) that chose not to reapply provides important context, highlighting that while some influencing factors are within AgCAREERSTART's control, many are not. Key reasons cited by respondents included:

- Adverse external conditions such as drought and financial pressures, which limited capacity to host again.
- Burden of annual training and inefficiency of starting from scratch with a new employee each year.
- Mismatch between candidate experience and business needs with some businesses expressing a preference for more experienced workers.
- Concern around candidate fit and professionalism, with some hosts suggesting that the program could provide stronger guidance on workplace etiquette to better align participants with operational expectations.

Together, these findings underscore the program's positive impact while also identifying areas for refinement to enhance its long-term sustainability and effectiveness.

C.3 – Farm bus. have positive experience in AgCAREERSTART and promote in their sphere of influence



Achieved

The AgCAREERSTART program received strong endorsement from C2-C3 Host respondents (n=23), with an average respondent satisfaction rating of 8.47 out of 10 at program exit. All surveyed hosts reported that the program met or exceeded their expectations, underscoring its effectiveness and relevance to the agricultural sector.

“(AgCAREERSTART is) An excellent resource to find enthusiastic future farmers.”

When asked to reflect on their overall experience, the majority of host respondents (C2-C3 n=23) described the program as highly positive (17), citing its role in launching careers, the strength of its support structures, and the quality of its communication and coordination. Several respondents specifically praised the program’s organisation and responsiveness. While two host respondents noted areas for improvement in program communication and execution, and a few (3) mentioned mixed experiences or specific challenges, these were framed within an overall positive context.

A key insight emerged when hosts respondents (C2-C3 n=23) were asked why they would recommend the program to other farm businesses. Without prompting, many highlighted the program’s strategic value in addressing the agricultural sector’s workforce challenges. Two dominant themes emerged from host responses:

- Attracting and engaging future talent (14 respondents): Hosts highlighted that recruitment remains a persistent challenge for the farming sector and that AgCAREERSTART was a critical tool for attracting and engaging enthusiastic young people who might not otherwise consider a career in agriculture.
- Tangible return on investment to farm business and sector (8 respondents)-.the program provides both immediate labour needs and contributes long-term value by increasing the pool of well-trained, motivated employees. This dual benefit of operational support and strategic workforce development makes the program a compelling proposition for farm businesses and the broader industry.

“The investment made by hosting a participant will not just provide returns in their lives, it is an investment and will provide positive returns in your business, its processes and culture.”



C.4 – Farm businesses have systems and access to support to accommodate needs of young people entering the workforce



Achieved
(with areas for improvement)

AgCAREERSTART has demonstrated that participating farm businesses are generally well-equipped to support and mentor young people entering the workforce. Participant responses (C2-C3 n=42) indicates a high level of satisfaction with host mentorship, with 55% (23) rating their host as effective and an additional 43% (18) stating their host was “sometimes” effective. Only one respondent reported their host was not effective. Similarly, 65% (27) of participant respondents felt they received adequate support and guidance from their employer, with a further 29% (12) indicating partial support.

Host responses (C2-C3 n=23) reflected confidence in mentoring capabilities, with 79% (18) considering themselves effective mentors and 17% (4) acknowledging they were “sometimes” effective. Beyond mentoring, host respondents also reflected on professional development benefits from the program, particularly in communication and team management (10), coaching (5) and providing pastoral care (3).

“Each gappy provides a different learning on how we can better manage our people. As mentioned, it also provides our managers with opportunities to develop their own management skills with new participants each year.”

The farm business workplace environment was also rated positively by participant respondents (C2-C3 n=42), with an average score of 7.51 out of 10 at program exit. Follow-up surveys with participants 12–18 months later (C1-C2 n=33) showed strong ratings across key workplace factors as identified in Figure 9. 94% respondents rated work health and safety as average to very high, 91% for professional development opportunities, 85% for flexible work arrangements, and 70% for workplace culture and communication.

“It was a positive work environment, where everyone helped each other to do our best with no judgment at all. Everyone wanted everyone to be their best which helped create an efficient and caring environment.”

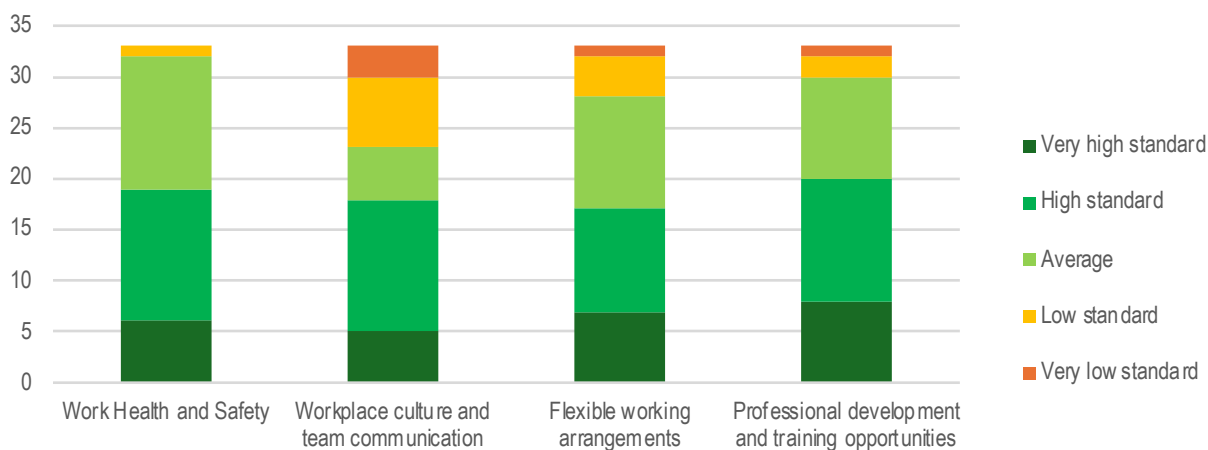


Figure 9 Participant Ratings of Host Business Workplace Environment (C1-C2 n=33)

Most participant respondents (29 out of 33) agreed or strongly agreed that their host employer enhanced their gap year experience, and 91% (26) felt that living rurally contributed positively to their year.

Qualitative feedback from C2-C3 participant respondents (n=42) highlighted several strengths in the host business workplace context, including:

- A supportive, team-oriented culture that encouraged collaboration and personal growth (20-25)
- Opportunities for learning and development, with participants feeling comfortable to ask questions and build skills (7-8).
- A welcoming, family-oriented atmosphere that fostered a sense of belonging and support (4-5).

Some critical feedback from respondents pointed to areas for improvement:

- Lack of support and communication, with some participants feeling undertrained or unsupported in their learning (6-7).
- Poor management or toxic leadership, where inconsistent or unprofessional behavior from supervisors negatively impacted the experience (5-6).

Overall, the participant survey data suggests that while most Host businesses provide a positive and supportive environment for young workers, there are opportunities to strengthen consistency in training, communication, and leadership practices to ensure all participants have a high-quality experience.



2.3 Food & Fibre Industry: Outcomes D and E

D.1 – Farm businesses engaged in AgCAREERSTART are considered best practice workplaces by AgriFood industry



Partially
Achieved

As highlighted in Indicator C.4, participant respondent post-program ratings (C1-C2 n=33) of their host employers reflect a broadly positive perception of farm business workplace environments. C2-C3 host respondents (n=23) also reported making tangible improvements

to their business practices as a result of their involvement in AgCAREERSTART. The percentage of host respondents indicating improvements in key areas included:

- 83% (19) – Development opportunities for staff
- 74% (17)– Staff management
- 74% (17) – Farm culture
- 61% (14)– On-farm safety
- 52% (12)– Human resource practices

This survey data indicates that not only are participating farm businesses providing environments rated as average or above by participant respondents, but Host respondents are also actively enhancing their workplace systems and practices through their engagement in the program.

Analysis from PR4 of Cohort 3 (2024) Participant Welfare incident data (Welfare reports n=420 was filtered by ‘reported incidents’ n=101) revealed notable variances in participant welfare (and health and safety) outcomes and participant retention across sectors. Welfare records indicated that cattle-based industries (Dairy and Beef), which represented 39% of total placements, accounted for 55% (55) of all incident reports in 2024 – highlighting a disproportionate share of welfare, health and safety concerns.

Dairy, in particular, demonstrated the poorest performance and had the lowest participant retention rates. 18% of females (n=11) and 33% of males (n=3) placed in dairy sector in 2024 completed the program. Female retention in the sheep sector was also low in C3 at 44% (n=9).

As outlined in Indicator A.3, declining female retention rates are a growing concern. These findings suggest that certain sectors (particularly animal-based industries) may require targeted strategies to address both health and safety risks and gender-specific retention challenges.

NEW RECOMMENDATION – DELIVERY (REF: SECTION 4, INTEGRATED INTO RECOMMENDATION 9)

Working with industry partners from dairy, beef (cattle) and sheep, develop a targeted strategy for high-risk, animal-based sectors (such as dairy and cattle) that strengthens participant welfare outcomes and host health and safety practices and improves female retention through tailored training, host support, and gender-sensitive initiatives. This will enhance participant wellbeing and ensure more inclusive, sustainable program outcomes.

D.2 – Program is accessible to farm businesses nationally and engages all ag sectors



Between 2022 and 2024, AgCAREERSTART placements were primarily concentrated in the following agricultural sectors (n=280): Grain (72), Cattle (75), Sheep (43), Cotton (40), Dairy (26), and Horticulture (14) (Figure 10).

Notably, sheep sector participation varied from 16% in 2022 (n=37), 24% in 2023 (n=98) and 9% in 2024 (n=145). This decline in C3 could be a result of broader National flock rationalisation occurring as a response to the Federal Government's live export phase-out policy. Conversely, placements in Grain and Beef (Cattle) sectors have increased year-on-year. Grain from 19% in 2022 to 28% in 2024 and Beef (cattle) from 19% in 2022 to 29% in 2024.

Geographically, the program delivery remains heavily concentrated in the eastern states (Figure 11), with 52 C1-C3 host farm businesses located in New South Wales, followed by Queensland (28) and Victoria (20) and Western Australia, South Australia, and Tasmania collectively account for the remaining 21% of Hosts placed (C1-C3 n=130).

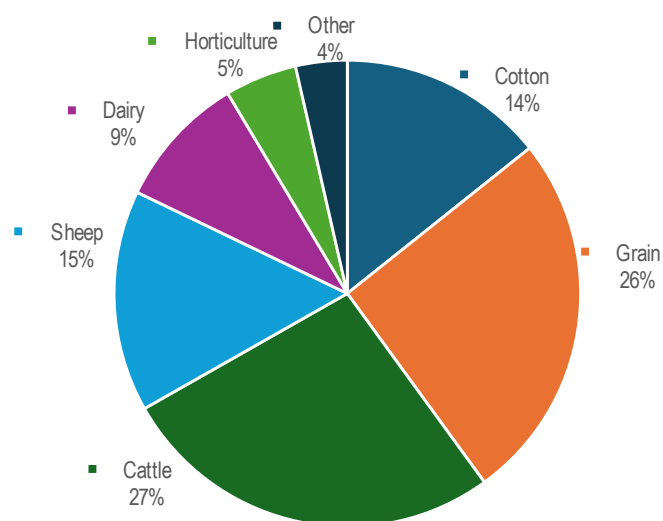


Figure 10 C1-C3 Placements by Sector (n=280)

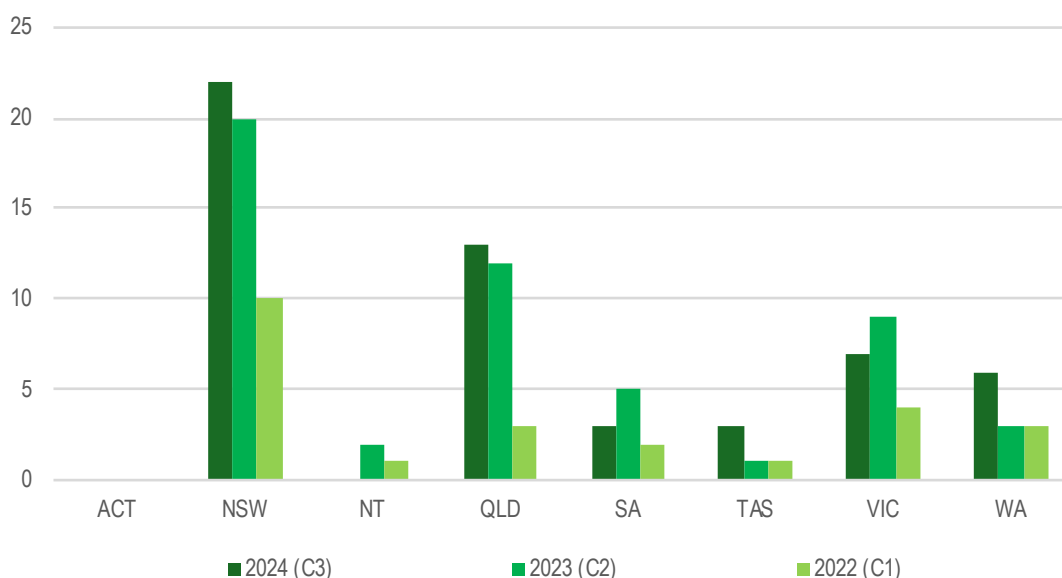


Figure 11 C1-C3 Farm Hosts (placed) by State and Cohort (n=130)

D.3 – AgCAREERSTART industry partners have a positive experience in AgCAREERSTART and promote in their sphere of influence



Achieved

Throughout the pilot period (C1-C3), NFF has engaged with a cross-section of Industry Organisations to promote AgCAREERSTART and support farm business recruitment. While nine partners were financially engaged in 2022, ongoing financial partnerships have continued only with Cotton Australia and Dairy Australia.

In year 2 and 3 of the program NFF positively engaged with a wide range of Industry Organisation's representing a diversity of sectors. Organised delegations of AgCAREERSTART participants have attended and contributed to industry conferences and NFF has continued to promote the program through Industry Organisation channels (both paid and unpaid).

While previous Progress Reports have reported on direct referral outputs of Industry Partners (which have been limited), this report has considered Host applicant membership attribution to Industry Partners (Figure 12) which indicates strong year on year applications from Partner memberships such as Grain Growers (50) and NSW Farmers (49).

In July 2024, interviews with four financial partners (Grain Growers, Cotton Australia, Dairy Australia, and VFF) revealed strong overall support for the program. Partners praised AgCAREERSTART's structure, impact, and ability to attract new entrants to agriculture, particularly in sectors like dairy. They also highlighted the program's effectiveness compared to previous initiatives and its value in addressing workforce challenges.

Key feedback included:

- Program strengths: Effective structure, strong participant support, and positive impact on career pathways.
- Engagement: Active involvement from Cotton and Dairy Australia; GrainGrowers expressed interest in re-engagement.
- Challenges: Acknowledged the need for better candidate readiness. Partners expressed a desire for high-level sectoral program outcomes/ impact data.
- Program design: Are in favour of the current program structure which encourages a 12-month duration starting in Jan/Feb to align with seasonal and school-leaver timelines.
- Improvement suggestions: More regular industry engagement, use of case studies, enhanced employer support, and scaling through national coordination and government backing.

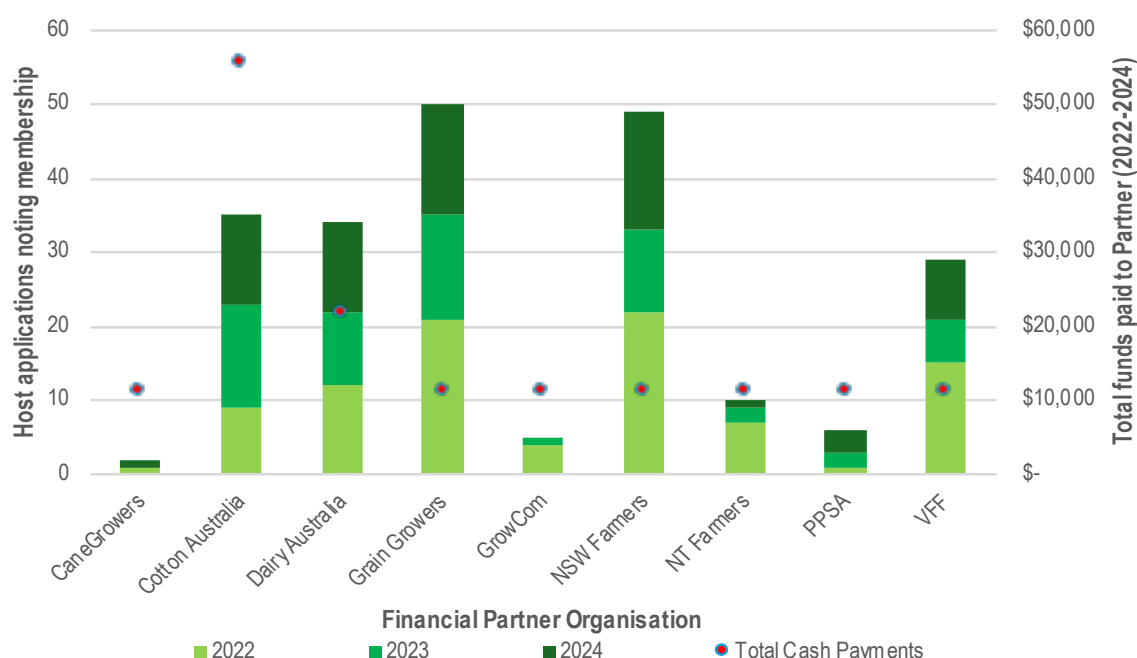


Figure 12 Host Applicant Membership Attribution to Partner Organisations (C1-C3 n=220)

E.1 – The AgriFood industry understands the value of AgCAREERSTART and subsequently invests in and promotes the program



Partially Achieved

In the pilot period (up to and including December 2024), there was no direct financial contribution from Industry Organisations to support the AgCAREERSTART program. In contrast, as outlined in Indicator D.3, the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) has provided a total of \$156,475 to nine organisations to assist with program promotion and farm host recruitment.

Analysis by attributing membership of Host applicants to the nine partner organisations (C1-C3 n=220) showed best value from this expenditure was: Grain Growers Partnership (the lowest cost per application at \$226); NSW Farmers (\$230); and the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) (\$389). The least value was observed from the partnership with Cane Growers (\$5,638).

Figure 13 illustrates how membership attribution analysis also highlights the in-kind promotional contributions made by non-financial partner organisations (C1-C3 n=50) such as AgForce (19 attributed applications), Cattle Australia (8), and WA Farmers (6).

In-kind support (in addition to general promotion such as sharing social media content) has included complimentary display space at events, speaking opportunities, and advertising in industry publications. However, the level and consistency of this support vary significantly across organisations, with some charging fees or offering only modest discounts.

As detailed in Indicator D.3, there is clear recognition within the Industry of the value and efficiency of AgCAREERSTART as a multi-sector workforce development initiative. Despite the alignment of the program with industry interests and member needs, there remains a notable reluctance among Industry Organisations to provide financial or substantial in-kind investment to the program. There is a clear opportunity for NFF to build on the industry 'goodwill' achieved in the pilot period by communicating/ demonstrating sector specific outcomes and co-designing a framework to drive industry investment.

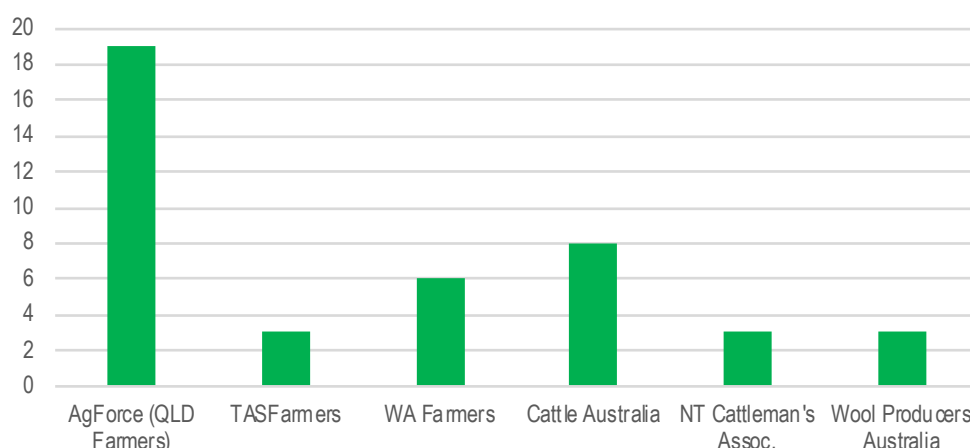


Figure 13 Member Attribution of Host Applicants (C1-C3) to Non-financial Partner Orgs. (n=50)



E.2 – Recommendations of next steps to investigating self-sustaining business model for AgCAREERSTART post-program funding



Achieved

To assess the potential for alternative funding sources, the MERL S2 framework incorporated post-program surveys to gauge farm business hosts' willingness to adopt a user-pays model. Survey questions distributed to C1-C2 Hosts explored current use of paid recruitment services and willingness to financially contribute to a program like AgCAREERSTART.

Findings revealed that only 6 of the 16 host respondents had previously used recruitment services to hire young people, with just one indicating regular use. When asked to rate their willingness to pay for AgCAREERSTART (on a scale of 1 to 5), only 4 host respondents expressed any willingness to contribute financially. These results provide as an indicator of the appetite among farm businesses for a user-pays model- the short-term employment tenure of the program (10-12 month gap year) may also be a limiting factor in viability of a user-pay model.

In PR3 (Section 4), agdots identified six key drivers (Figure 14) to inform NFF in their development of a future business model for AgCAREERSTART. This was supported by detailed analysis and evidence (please reference PR3 for further details).

These six drivers were used as a base for a series of future program recommendations (Section 5 of PR3) presented both strategic and program delivery recommendations. Although such high-level recommendations are typically reserved for a final MERL report, the uncertainty surrounding future program funding prompted their early inclusion in PR3. The intention was to provide NFF and its consortium partner, AgriFutures, with timely and actionable guidance to support planning and transition to a post-pilot phase.

These recommendations are provided in an updated form in Section 4 of this Report. Amendments and the additions have been made to reflect further MERL insights and program design improvements.

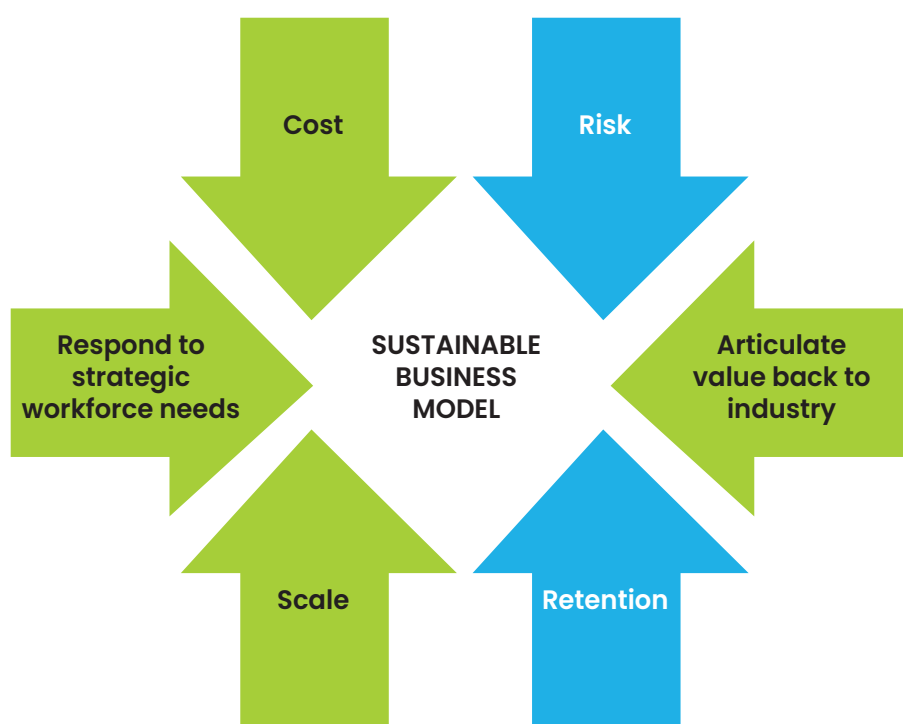


Figure 14 Future Business Model Drivers for the AgCAREERSTART Program (presented September 2024)

E.3 – Efficient and targeted marketing of AgCAREERSTART to potential participants



Achieved

Agdotes understands that as of December 2024, the approximate paid advertising and marketing spend for the life of the project was \$380,000 (itemised marketing data for the lifespan of the project was not made available to agdotes at the time of writing this report). In addition, significant, though unquantified, investment was made in foundational communications infrastructure, including the development of the program's website and branding templates. It is understood that the majority of these establishment expenses were incurred during the Years 1 and 2 (2022–2023).

From 2024 onwards, the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) strategically redirected marketing efforts toward channels that consistently yield high-quality applicants. The largest referral sources of C2 and C3 placed applicants (n=162) were person to person based with direct referrals from family, friends (30) and through the schooling/ career guidance system (34) being the highest performing referral sources. Social media (24) and career's expo (n=19) were secondary but effective recruitment channels, it is worth noting that Teachers and Career's Counsellors also use Careers Expos as a key

informing source for student referrals.

AgCAREERSTART has increased its presence at recruitment events (2022–2024 n=60) which serve to raise awareness among educators and parents while also facilitating direct engagement with prospective applicants. In 2024, NFF participated in over 30 such events to promote the program.

The program has also continued to grow its social media presence (Figure 14), maintaining active engagement across six platforms. Instagram and Facebook are the most prominent, with a combined following exceeding 4,000.

Social media reach and impressions have now stabilised, with noticeable increases aligning with the program's annual application cycle peak in October.

Overall, early investment in foundational marketing, combined with a sustained commitment to targeted, on-ground recruitment, and active social media engagement has successfully established AgCAREERSTART as a recognised brand with a strong and engaging digital presence.

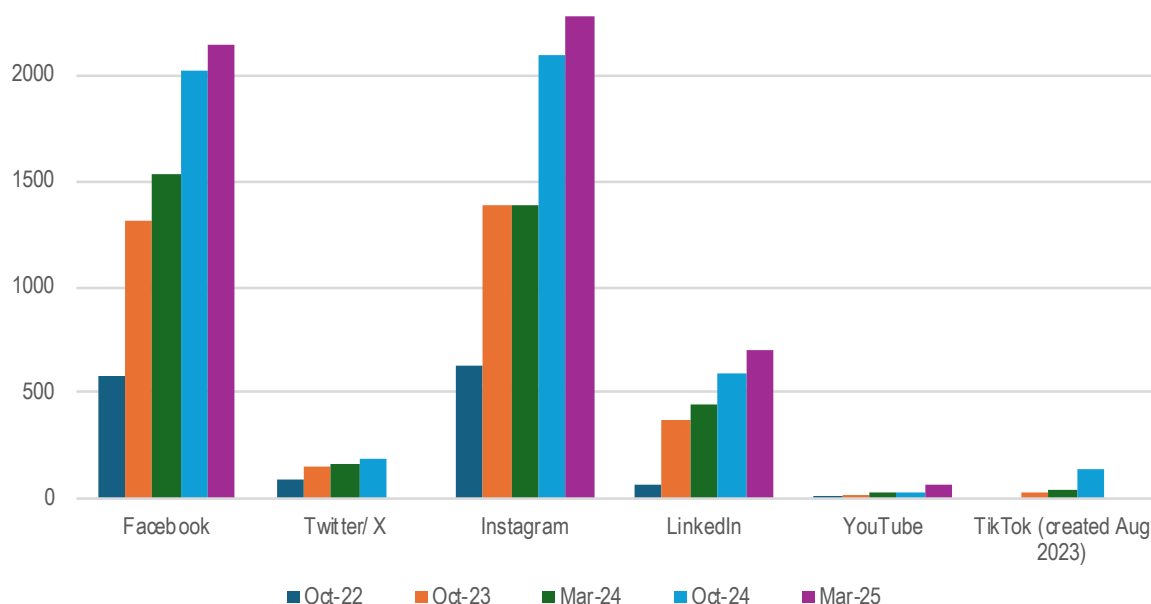


Figure 15 AgCAREERSTART Social Media Account Statistics (Oct 22 to Mar 2025) – Total number of Followers/ Subscribers over time.

3. ECONOMIC ANALYSIS- ECONISIS

Econisis previously conducted an economic evaluation of Cohorts 1 and 2 of the AgCAREERSTART program. This current evaluation provided in Appendix B, focuses on Cohort 3 and includes a comprehensive analysis of all three intakes combined.

Central to this evaluation is a cost-benefit analysis (CBA), a widely used economic evaluation method that compares the monetized benefits and costs of a program to assess its overall value.

3.1 Cohort/ Intake 3 Analysis

For Cohort 3, the total program cost, as reported by AgCAREERSTART for the period January to December 2024, was \$1.346 million.

The Benefits assessed included training participation and skills development, soft skills development, recruitment assistance and support, participant on-farm industry value added, increased workforce and skills availability, improved on farm OHS, and increased long-term economic productivity.

The present value of benefits of the program is estimated at between \$7.21m at 10% and \$7.83m at 4%. A slightly higher share of benefits are expected to yield during the program (present value of \$3.81m at 7% discount rate), compared to in-program. This reflects the fact that the concurrent and long-term economic productivity linked to worker participation in the agricultural sector is the largest and most significant benefit at 7% discount rate across both In-Program and Post-Program categories. The benefits relating to worker productivity are valued at \$2.84m during the program, and \$2.49m for the 20 years post-program.

The net present value of the assessment ranges between \$5.87m at 10% discount rate and \$6.49m at 4%. Similarly, the ratio of benefits to costs (benefit-cost ratio or BCR) for the project ranges from 5.36 at 10% to 5.82 at 4%. This means that for every \$1 the program costs, it generates \$5.56 of benefits at the 7% discount rate.

In addition to the application of various discount rates, two sensitivity tests have been undertaken for the CBA results (Figure 16).

- Test 1 –halving of Participant share of average agricultural worker productivity from 50% to 25%. This resulted in the BCR decreasing to 3.98 at the 7% discount rate.

- Test 2 – the consideration of In-Program Benefits only. This resulted in the BCR falling to 2.83 at the 7% discount rate. Despite this lower figure, it highlights that the program still remains a high value for money proposition (i.e. remains well above 1.0) even when post-program values are excluded. This is important as the values of In-Program benefits are based on actual activity and participation that has already occurred and therefore is less subject to estimates as Post-Program benefits.

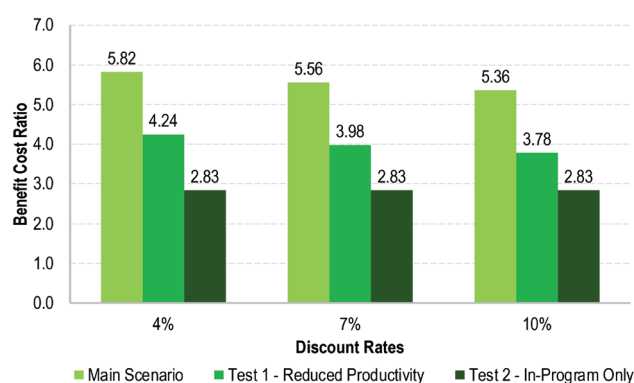


Figure 16 Benefit Cost Ratios, Intake 3 Only, Sensitivity Test

3.2 Combined Evaluation of Cohorts 1 to 3

The costs for Cohort/ Intakes 1 and 2 included the sunk costs incurred in establishing the AgCAREERSTART program prior to its beginning. These additional costs decrease the BCR compared to Intake 3 alone which only includes costs incurred in 2024. The whole program has an estimated BCR of 3.82 at the 7% discount rate. This ranges from 3.56 at the 10% discount rate to 4.13 at the 4% discount rate (Figure 17).



Figure 17 Figure 8 Benefit Cost Ratios, Main Scenario and Combined Intakes, by Discount Rate

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

High-Level and Strategic

These articulate areas requiring high-level initiative and provide reference to suggested key planning, communications and informational approaches/ outcomes/ activities.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Further define direct and indirect benefits/ value back for industry and farm businesses

- Benefits are itemised, quantified and clearly communicated to industry and Government
- Identify points of difference of AgCAREERSTART in relation to other farm-based recruitment pathways and workforce education programs
- Undertake further price discovery exercise to determine price point tolerance level of farm businesses and realistic user-pay approach

RECOMMENDATION 2: Investigate options for regionalised or localised participant delivery support through existing organisations and industry networks to enable increased program scale

To provide efficient program delivery and scalability to support participants including:

- Peer networks
- On-ground pastoral support
- On-boarding support and assistance including local provision of compliance-based training for participants

RECOMMENDATION 3: Continue to explore opportunities to align and engage in existing State Government programs, initiatives and resources to enable program participants and or host farmers improved access to training and early career employment resources and programs.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Advocacy to Government & Industry for continuation of a scaled-up program

- Focussed advocacy campaign to communicate success of establishing AgCAREERSTART and its in-program and post-program benefit back to industry (e.g. CBA)
- Flag that industry investment is critical to a future AgCAREERSTART program- highlighting economies of investing in a 'one industry, one pathway' program
- Beyond 2025- Identify potential of program in next stage (strategic, scaled, increased cost-efficiency)

RECOMMENDATION 5: Development of a business model for a continuation of the program

- Undertake industry needs analysis to identify and define ag workforce industry future/ projected requirements in terms of targeted sector, skill-set and or geography (suggested collaboration with AgriFutures Workforce team)
- Undertake stakeholder engagement process with Industry to inform investment model and establish buy-in
- Consider strategies for leveraging other investment/ funding sources: Australian Government, State-Government early career programs, philanthropic sector support
- Undertake value for money assessment of current program to inform investment requirement and program economies (scale).
- Integrate MERL into investment model development and consider opportunities for improved engagement, delivery efficiency and investor reporting through an automated technology solution.

Program-Delivery

Many of these recommendations were tested with NFF and AgriFutures as part of previous Progress Reports. agdots has incorporated NFF's feedback, focussed and refined recommendations to directly address the business model drivers.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Remove compliance risk by increasing program participant minimum age and driver license requirements

- Minimum of 18 years
- Minimum probationary driver license for all participants

RECOMMENDATION 7: Explicitly address themes of isolation, independent living and unique farm workplace requirements as part of recruitment and vetting process of young people

Incorporate direct discussion and engagement into interview process to:

- identify participant pre-existing expectations of farm life/ work
- engage in self-reflection and self-directed strategies to address challenges of full-time farm employment and mental and emotional preparation rural life (moving away from home and peer networks) .

RECOMMENDATION 8: Implement a structured approach to application of participant bursary to maximise in-program benefits to farm host and ensure long-term outcomes for participant and broader industry

- Re-allocate proportion of bursary budget to deliver mandatory pre-start farm WHS training for participants
- Structure in-placement training and engagement to: Month 1-6 employment related training and skills development; and Months 6+ PD and career development events;
- Investigate local/ regional training engagement options/ models to promote program cost efficiencies (reduce travel and accommodation burden) and foster local networking opportunities for the participant (NEW)
- Limit participant industry event attendance of Bursary to one event per participant (NEW)

RECOMMENDATION 9: Structured improvements to delivery of welfare and pastoral support processes to improve resource efficiency and reduce risk to all parties

- Introduce a 'triage' approach to welfare engagement (and documentation) with response support guided by decision tree process.
- Identify normal ranges for pastoral support 'engagement activity' and 'welfare rating' and develop appropriate processes to manage when these ranges are exceeded. Focus to be on minimising harm to participant and farm host which includes strategy for communicating and managing pathways to exit.
- Active and appropriate management of mental health issues including: encouraging disclosure of mental health at application; developing a mental health management plan for impacted participants; and engaging a suitably qualified case management specialist.
- Working with industry partners from dairy, cattle (beef) and sheep, develop a targeted strategy for high-risk, animal-based sectors (such as dairy and cattle) that: strengthens participant welfare outcomes and host health and safety practices; and improves female retention through tailored training, host support, and gender-sensitive initiatives (NEW).

RECOMMENDATION 10: Ensure integrity of MERL and maximise participant, host and industry engagement with focus on increased response rates to Exit and Post-program surveys

A high level of Exit and Post-program MEL engagement is critical to proving long-term impact and building an evidence base for industry and Government investment.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Investigate declining female retention and develop improvement strategies to address in-program retention for the following groups :

- Female participants
- Participants with a disability
- Participants born outside of Australia

5. CONCLUSION

The AgCAREERSTART program has made a meaningful and measurable contribution to strengthening the food and fibre workforce by providing young Australians—particularly those from non-agricultural and metropolitan backgrounds—with a clear, supported pathway into agricultural careers. The program's strong participant engagement, promising survey data which indicates a trend towards high satisfaction rates, and post-program retention in agriculture reflect its success in building skills, confidence, and long-term interest in the sector. Farm business hosts have also responded positively, with survey respondents indicating productivity gains, improved workplace practices, and a growing willingness to employ young people, even beyond the program's formal structure.

Cost Benefit Analysis undertaken by Econis estimated the whole of program (C1-C3) Benefit Cost Ratio at 3.82 with a 7% discount rate applied. Noting that majority of sunk/ establishment costs of the program were incurred in C1-C2 the BCR calculated for just Cohort 3 was stronger still, at 5.56 (7% discount rate).

To value-add to these achievements, the evaluation highlights areas where further development is needed. While representation

of women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants exceeded both national and agricultural industry averages, retention challenges among some underrepresented groups point to the need for more tailored support.

Additionally, inconsistencies in workplace standards—particularly in animal-based sectors — and limited reach to smaller sectors and more remote States suggest that broader systemic improvements are necessary to ensure equitable access and best-practice experiences across the board. The program's limited financial backing from industry, despite strong goodwill and in-kind promotion, also underscores the importance of refining the Program's value proposition and exploring sustainable funding models.

Overall, AgCAREERSTART has proven to be a highly effective and well-regarded initiative that is reshaping how young Australians engage with agriculture. With its strong foundation, demonstrated impact, and clear areas for strategic enhancement, the program is well-positioned to continue driving positive change in the Agricultural industry and to evolve into a sustainable, nationally inclusive model for workforce development.



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Appendix A

APPENDIX A: INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES REPORT - COMBINED COHORT 1 (2022), 2 (2023) & 3 (2024)

Appendix A



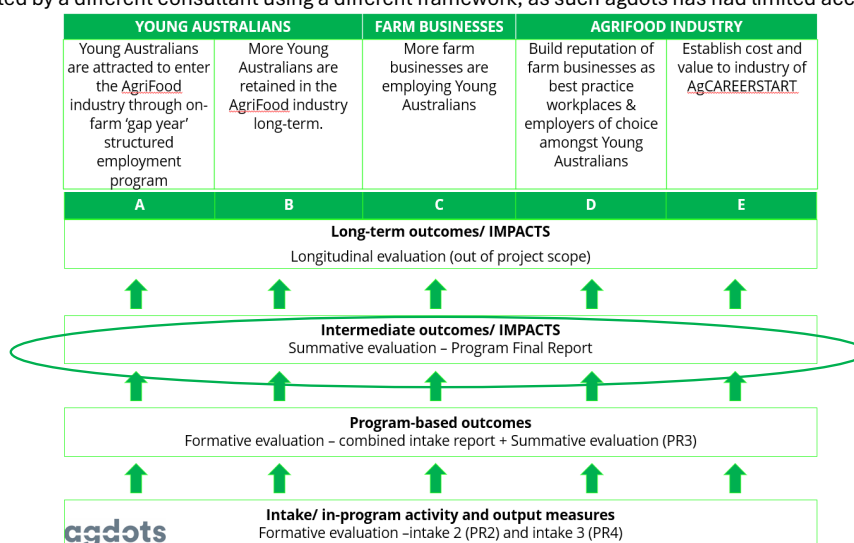
Final Report Intermediate Program Indicators – combined cohort C1-C3

20 June 2025



AgCAREERSTART MERL S2 Framework: Final Report Data Analysis

- This report is limited to the pilot phase of the AgCAREERSTART program consisting of Cohort 1 in 2022 calendar year (C1), Cohort 2 in 2023 calendar year (C2) and Cohort 3 in 2024 calendar year (C3)
- This evaluation is based on **Intermediate Outcomes/ IMPACTS of MERL S2**, taking into account program delivery, demographic and survey data from Participants (young people), Hosts (farm businesses) and associated industry stakeholders including industry organisations. Full list of data sources and sample size is provided in Appendix D to main report.
- Data indicators prepared in response to Program Logic in MERL S2 are provided with short commentary to highlight key information.
- Cohort 1 (2022) was evaluated by a different consultant using a different framework, as such agdots has had limited access to C1 data.



Overview of Data Utilised in MERL S2 Reporting

Complete list of data sources, noting origin of data and samples sizes is provided in Appendix D

Program Delivery Data (Large raw data sets, cleaned and cross-referenced)	MEL Engagement Data		C1- 2022	C2- 2023	C3 2024	Combined C1-C3 MEL Participation
- Application data - Tracking data (placed vs exited) - Welfare Reports - Training & Engagement Bursary Expenditure - Industry Partners Track log (agdots) - Recruitment Events Tracker - Social Media Statistics - Activity Workplan Reports - Advertising & PR data - Financial data (limited) See app. D for full list	Participant Respondent (Young Australian)	Participants Placed vs completed	30 vs 28	70 vs 50	78 vs 48	178 vs 126
		Exit survey	*n=10	n=20	n=22	C2-C3 n=42
		Post-Program survey	n=7	n=26		C1-C2 n=33
	Host Respondent (Farm Business)	Farm Hosts Placed vs completed	28 vs 26	52 vs 41	55 vs 35	135 vs 102
		*Mid-year Feedback		*n=28		
		Exit survey	*n=12	n=14	n= 9	C2-C3 n= 23
		Post-Program survey	n=5	n=11		C1-C2 n=16
	Industry Partners (Food & Fibre/ AgriFood Industry)	*Delivery Reports (May 2022)	*8			
		Structured Interviews (July 2024)			4 (plus Hay Inc.)	

*Indicates MEL engagement under previous framework MERL S1 developed by AgSTAR and not utilised in final report evaluation

Contents

Long-Term Outcome	Outputs
A. Young Australians are attracted to enter the AgriFood industry through on-farm ‘gap year’ structured employment program	A1-A3
B. More Young Australians are retained in the AgriFood industry long-term.	B1-B3
C. More farm businesses are employing Young Australians	C1-C4
D. Build reputation of farm businesses as best practice workplaces & employers of choice amongst Young Australians	D1-D3
E. Establish cost and value to industry of AgCAREERSTART	E1-E3
Author and project details	



LONG TERM OUTCOME A

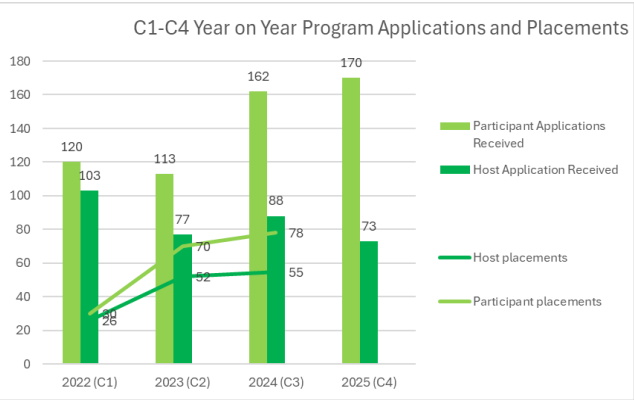
Young Australians are attracted to enter the AgriFood industry through on-farm ‘gap year’ structured employment program

5

A.1 YOUNG AUSTRALIANS AND FARM BUSINESSES IDENTIFY AgCAREERSTART AS A PATHWAY TO THE AGRIFOOD WORKFORCE

PROGRAM
ENGAGEMENT

Indicator A.1.1: Year on Year Number of Applications (Participants and Hosts)



Key Evaluation Highlights of A.1

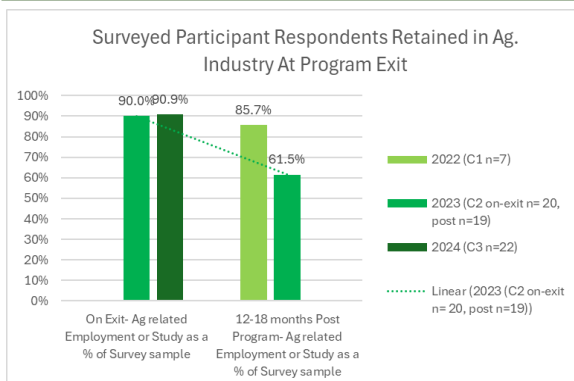
- 565 young people applied for the program between 2022–2024.
- This includes applications for the C4 (2025 intake).
- Host farm business applications have stabilised at around 70 per year.
- 90% of participant respondents surveyed at Exit (C2-C3 n=42) continue in the agriculture industry (through work or study) after completing the program.
- Follow-up data (12–18 months post-program) from survey respondents (C1-C2 n=33) indicates that the majority of respondents remain in the industry 12-18 months after program completion..
- C2 (2023) post-program survey respondents (n=26) included participants that completed the program and some that exited the program early. The results indicated:
 - 63% of respondents who completed the program (n=19) stayed in the industry.
 - 57% of those who exited early (n=7) also remained in the industry.

Year on Year Number of Applications and Placements	2022 (C1)	2023 (C2)	2024 (C3)	2025 (C4)
Participant Applications Received	120	113	162	170
Host Application Received	103	77	88	73
Participant placements	30	70	78	
Host placements	26	52	55	
Data Sources:	Participant Applications (2022-2025) Host Applications (2022-2025)			

A.1 YOUNG AUSTRALIANS AND FARM BUSINESSES IDENTIFY AgCAREERSTART AS A PATHWAY TO THE AGRIFOOD WORKFORCE

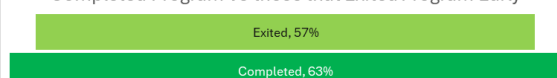
PROGRAM
ENGAGEMENT

Indicator A.1.2: Participants converting to ag related employment or study post AgCAREERSTART



% of Survey Respondents Retained in Ag.		2022 (C1)	2023 (C2)	2024 (C3)
On Exit			90.0%	90.9%
12-18 months Post Program		85.7%	61.5%	
Participant survey respondents converting to ag related employment or study <u>immediately post</u> (on-exit) AgCAREERSTART				
Total Ag related Employment or Study in sample	No Data		18	20
Ag related Employment			11	15
Ag related Study			7	5
Sample size n=42			20	22
Data Sources:		Exit Survey		
Participant survey respondents retained in ag related employment or study <u>12 months post</u> AgCAREERSTART				
Total Ag related Employment or Study in sample		6	16	No Data
Ag related Employment		4	9	
Ag related Study		2	7	
Sample size n=33		7	26	
Data Sources:		Post-Program Survey		

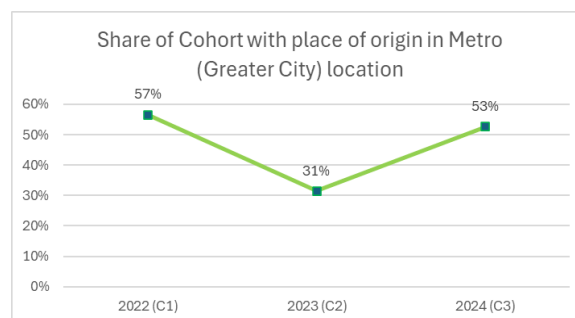
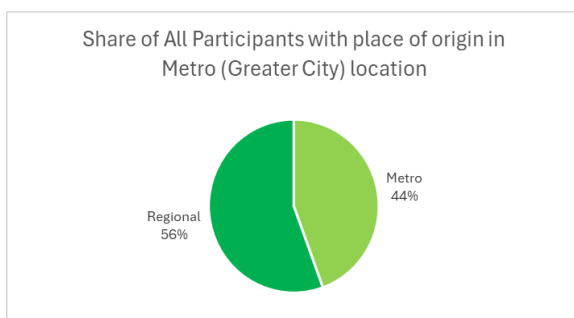
2023 Cohort (C2 n=26): 12-18 month Post-Program Retention in Ag Industry by those Respondents that Completed Program Vs those that Exited Program Early



2023 Cohort (C2) Participant survey respondents retained in ag related employment or study 12 months post AgCAREERSTART		
	Exited	Completed
Total Ag related Employment or Study in sample	4	12
Ag related Employment	2	7
Ag related Study	2	5
Sample size n=26	7	19
Data Sources: Post-Program Survey		

A. 2 AgCAREERSTART PROVIDES YOUNG AUSTRALIANS FROM A NON-AG BACKGROUND GREATER ACCESS TO EXPLORE A CAREER IN THE AGRIFOOD INDUSTRY. DISTINGUISH THOSE WHO DON'T NECESSARILY HAVE PRE-DISPOSITION TO AG CAREER.

EDUCATION & TRAINING **Indicator A.2.1: Share of Participants with place of origin in Metro (Greater City) location.**

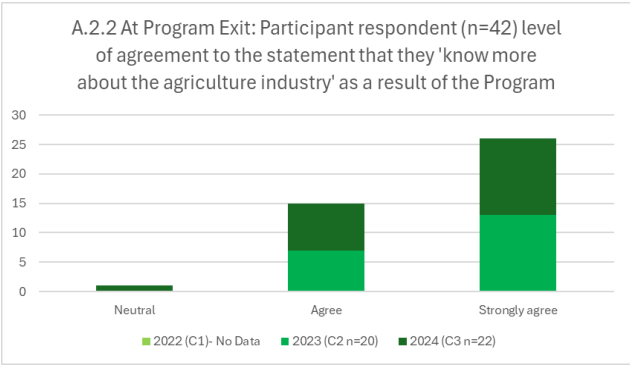


Share of Participants with place of origin in Metro (Greater City) location	2022 (C1)	2023 (C2)	2024 (C3)	Combined Cohorts
	57%	31%	53%	44%
Metro	13	22	41	76
Regional	10	48	37	95
Sample size n=171 * (2022 no location info provided for 7 participants)	23*	70	78	171
Data Sources: Participant Applications 2022-2024 (filtered by placed participants)				

A. 2 AgCAREERSTART PROVIDES YOUNG AUSTRALIANS FROM A NON-AG BACKGROUND GREATER ACCESS TO EXPLORE A CAREER IN THE AGRIFOOD INDUSTRY. DISTINGUISH THOSE WHO DON'T NECESSARILY HAVE PRE-DISPOSITION TO AG CAREER.

EDUCATION & TRAINING **Indicator A.2.2: Level of participant understanding of agriculture- entry and exit**

On- Entry: Level of participant rating out of 10 of their 'understanding of agriculture'				
	2022 (C1)	2023 (C2)	2024 (C3)	Combined Cohorts
On-Entry Understanding of Ag (rating out of 10)- Average of Cohort	4.5	6.6	5.5	5.8
Sample size n=170	24	70	76	170
Data Sources:	Participant Applications 2022-2024 (filtered by placed participants)			

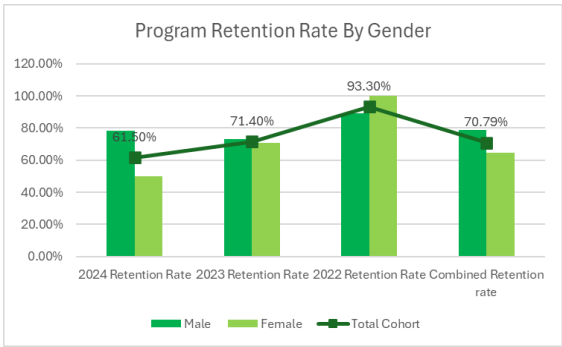
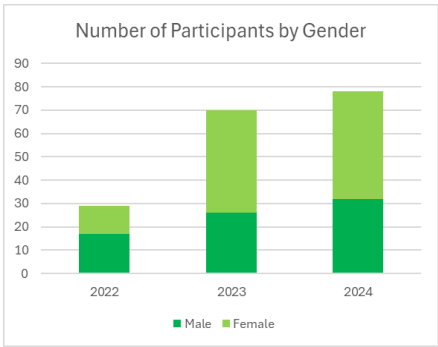


- Key Evaluation Highlights of A.2**
- 44% of participants in the first three years came from metropolitan or Greater City areas.
 - Average participant rating (C2-C3) of agriculture knowledge on application was 5.8/10, this indicates a basic understanding of the agricultural industry at program entry.
 - All but one participant respondent (C2-C3) reported increased knowledge of the ag industry in the program exit survey (n=42), over 60% respondents said they "strongly agreed" that their knowledge had improved.

At Exit- Participant respondent level of agreement to the statement 'I know more about the agriculture industry'			
	2022 (C1)- No Data	2023 (C2)	2024 (C3)
Neutral			1
Agree		7	8
Strongly agree		13	13
Sample size n=42		20	22
Data Sources:	Participant Exit Survey		

A.3 UNDER REPRESENTED/ MINORITY / GENDER GROUPS OF YOUNG AUSTRALIANS ARE INCREASINGLY LIKELY TO ABLE TO ACCESS A CAREER IN AG THROUGH THE AgCAREERSTART PROGRAM

LABOUR FORCE **Indicator A.3.1: No. of Female Participants**

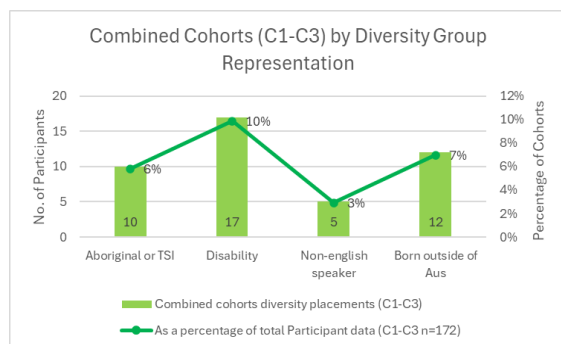


Participants by Gender	Male	Female
2022	17	12
2023	26	44
2024	32	46
Total (Combined Cohorts)	75	102
% of Combined Cohort	42%	58%
Data Sources:	Participant Applications (filtered by placed participants)	

	Placements				Exited Participants			Completed Participants			
	2024	2023	2022	Combined (C1-C3)	2024	2023	2022	2024	2023	2022	Combined (C1-C3)
Male	32	26	18	76	7	7	2	25	19	16	60
Female	46	44	12	102	23	13	0	23	31	12	66
Total Cohort	78	70	30	178	30	20	2	48	50	28	126
Data Source	Participant Applications (filtered by placed participants)										

A.3 UNDER REPRESENTED/ MINORITY / GENDER GROUPS OF YOUNG AUSTRALIANS ARE INCREASINGLY LIKELY TO ABLE TO ACCESS A CAREER IN AG THROUGH THE AgCAREERSTART PROGRAM

LABOUR FORCE **Indicator A.3.2: No. of Participants from Diversity Groups**



Key Evaluation Highlights of A.3

- 58% of AgCAREERSTART placements (C1-C3 n=178) were allocated to female participants. Only 33% of agricultural workers identified as female in 2021 (ABARES).
- Female retention in the program (C1-C3) is 65%, compared to 79% for males.
- In 2024 (C3) intake only 50% of female participants complete the program.
- 6% of participants identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI). This is significantly higher than industry average with data from ABARES indicating just 1.8% of Ag. workforce identified as Indigenous in 2021 [1].
- 10% identified as having a disability, this is slightly above overall ABS workforce statistic of 9.3% [2].
- 7% were born outside Australia and 3% were from non-English speaking backgrounds. These statistics are slightly below the industry average with data from ABARES indicating 13% of Ag. workforce were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in 2021 [1].

Participation by diversity group	Aboriginal or TSI				Disability				Non-English Speaking Background				Born outside of Australia			
	2024	2023	2022	Combined Cohorts	2024	2023	2022	Combined Cohorts	2024	2023	2022	Combined Cohorts	2024	2023	2022	Combined Cohorts
% of Total Cohort	5%	4%	13%	6%	14%	4%	13%	10%	0%	6%	4%	3%	8%	4%	13%	7%
Total Placed	4	3	3	10	11	3	3	17	0	4	1	5	6	3	3	12
Male		1	2		3	1	2		0	2			3	3	1	
Female	4	2	1		8	2	1		0	2	1				2	
Sample size	78	70	24	172	78	70	24	172	78	70	24	172	78	70	24	172

Data Sources: Participant Applications (filtered by placed participants)

[1] Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES), Issue 3 2023 'Snapshot of Australia's Agricultural Workforce' [<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/products/insights/snapshot-of-australias-agricultural-workforce>]

[2] Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2021, 'Demographics of Australian young people and their families', Australia's youth web report [<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/australias-youth/contents/demographics>]

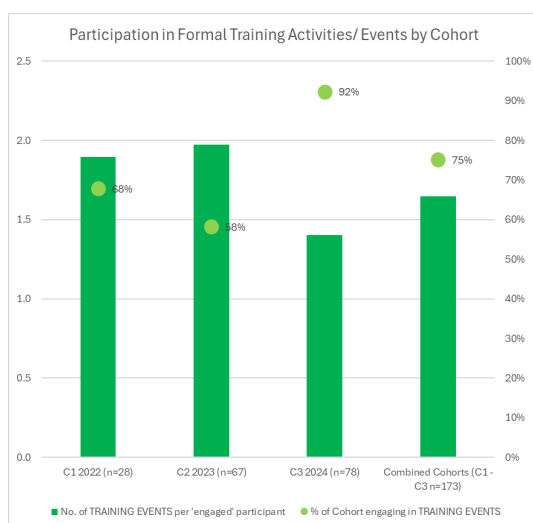
LONG TERM OUTCOME B

More Young Australians are retained in the AgriFood industry long-term

B.1 YOUNG AUSTRALIANS ENGAGED IN AgCAREERSTART HAVE IMPROVED: CAPACITY (SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE), CAPABILITY (LEADERSHIP AND NETWORKS) AND EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS IN Ag. INDUSTRY

LABOUR FORCE

Indicator: B.1.1 Share of participants that engaged in formal training (in program) to increase their skills and knowledge



		Industry Engagement	Training	Sample
2022 (C1)	No. Participants 'engaged'	23	19	28
	No. events/ activities	30	36	
2023 (C2)	No. Participants 'engaged'	31	39	67
	No. events/ activities	48	77	
2024 (C3)	No. Participants 'engaged'	43	72	78
	No. events/ activities	62	101	
Combined Cohorts 1-3	No. Participants 'engaged'	97	130	173
	No. events/ activities	140	214	
Source: Training and Event Records 2022-2024				

Source: 2024 Confirmed Placements

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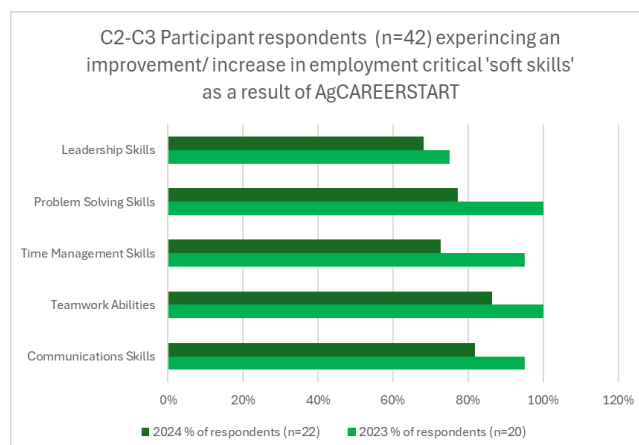
B.1 YOUNG AUSTRALIANS ENGAGED IN AgCAREERSTART HAVE IMPROVED: CAPACITY (SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE), CAPABILITY (LEADERSHIP AND NETWORKS) AND EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS IN Ag. INDUSTRY

LABOUR FORCE

Indicator: B.1.2 Participants build skills and knowledge and gain experience through their on-farm placement

Diversity of roles undertaken by their participant as identified by Host respondent (C1-C2 n=14)

Role	Host Mentions
1. Operate agricultural equipment	14
2. Muster and movement of livestock	12
3. Perform manual service or maintenance tasks	12
4. Operate technology	11
5. Care for animals (includes feed and water)	11
6. Seed/plant crops/plants	8
7. Cultivate and or maintain crop/plants	7
8. Harvest of agricultural products/produce (plant/animal)	7
9. Evaluate quality or condition of plants/crops	6
10. Maintain operational or business records	5
11. Natural conservation or restoration activities (Landcare or environmental activity)	4
Source: 2024 Host Exit Survey (9); 2022 Host Post-Program Survey (5). Listed are roles with >1 mention	
Sample size n=	14



Soft Skills	2023	2023 % of respondents	2024	2024 % of respondents
Communications Skills	19	95%	18	82%
Teamwork Abilities	20	100%	19	86%
Time Management Skills	19	95%	16	73%
Problem Solving Skills	20	100%	17	77%
Leadership Skills	15	75%	15	68%
Sample size n=42	20		22	
Data source: Participant Exit Surveys 2023-2024				

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B.1 YOUNG AUSTRALIANS ENGAGED IN AGCAREERSTART HAVE IMPROVED: CAPACITY (SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE), CAPABILITY (LEADERSHIP AND NETWORKS) AND EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS IN AG. INDUSTRY

LABOUR FORCE

Indicator: B.1.2 Participants build skills and knowledge and gain experience through their on-farm placement

	Key attributes identified by C2-C3 participant respondents (n=42)	Summary of respondents comments relating to skills and knowledge gained through on-farm experience and how this contributed to their learning and growths in the agricultural sector (summary of long-form responses).
Skills <i>"The practical experience has taken me from negligible agricultural skills to a full understanding of the operations of a vineyard and learning the tasks."</i>	Practical, hands-on experience Improved teamwork and problem-solving abilities.	- Nothing compares to being able to put learning into practice. - Gained tangible, practical skills and physical and technical task competency through applying and improving on learning in range of diverse farm contexts. - Hands-on exposure transformed participants from having minimal agricultural skills to becoming competent and confident. - Practical experience will enhance resumes - Working in a team environment was emphasized repeatedly as a core skill enhancer. - Improved participant ability to work collaboratively and problem-solve skills in real-world, unpredictable situations. - Improved adaptability and applying their skills and knowledge a diverse range of tasks and roles.
Knowledge <i>"I went from knowing nothing about agriculture to now knowing how a backgrounding property operates and all the things I learnt about cattle along the way."</i>	Deepened understanding of agricultural operations Improved insight into farm sustainability and business management	- Enriched participant understanding of agriculture and the many and various layers of the industry - Gained familiarity with the inner workings of the industry and the business of farming work - A solid grasp of farm operations and an appreciation for the immense effort required in everyday farming to the complexities of running a sustainable business. - Understanding of sustainable practices and an appreciation for what it takes to balance productivity, resource availability/ access with market demand and consumer expectations - Experiential learning helped to contextualise theoretical knowledge and gain real-life insight that classroom training and learning alone do not deliver.

Source: Exit Survey: Cohort 2, 2023 (20) and Cohort 3, 2024 (22)

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B.1 YOUNG AUSTRALIANS ENGAGED IN AGCAREERSTART HAVE IMPROVED: CAPACITY (SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE), CAPABILITY (LEADERSHIP AND NETWORKS) AND EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS IN AG. INDUSTRY

LABOUR FORCE

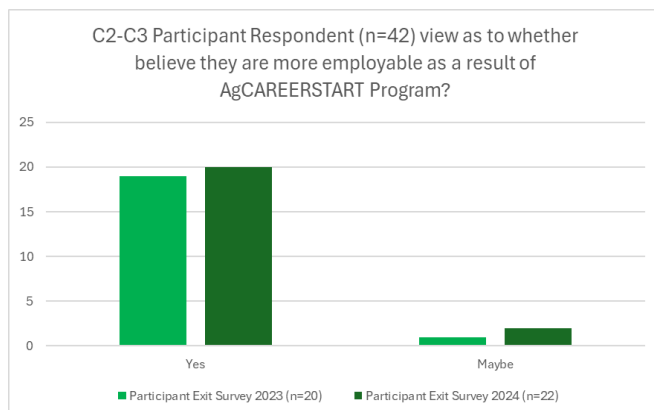
Indicator: B.1.3 Share of participants that experienced an increase in their skills and knowledge, leadership over the 12 months?

Question: Which of the below skills do you think you have improved the most since starting your AgCAREERSTART placement?				
Attribute identified by C2-C3 Participant Respondent	2023 No. times attribute selected	2023 Selected by % of respondents	2024 No. times attribute selected	2024 Selected by % of respondents
Adaptability	1	5%	5	25%
Care for Self and Belongings	4	18%	2	10%
Communication	3	14%	4	20%
Conflict Resolution	1	5%	3	15%
Confidence	11	50%	12	60%
Financial Literacy	1	5%	2	10%
Independence	8	36%	12	60%
Leadership	1	5%	2	10%
Networking	2	9%	2	10%
Performance as an Employee	6	27%	2	10%
Problem Solving	8	36%	4	20%
Resilience	8	36%	6	30%
Self Awareness	0	0%	3	15%
Teamwork	3	14%	5	25%
Time Management	3	15%	2	9%
Sample size n=42	20		22	
Source:	Participant Exit Survey 2023-2024			

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B.1 YOUNG AUSTRALIANS ENGAGED IN AGCAREERSTART HAVE IMPROVED: CAPACITY (SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE), CAPABILITY (LEADERSHIP AND NETWORKS) AND EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTSIN AG. INDUSTRY

LABOUR FORCE **Indicator: B.1.4 Improved employment prospects of participants**



Question: Do you believe that you are more employable as a result of your AgCAREERSTART experience?

	2023	2024
Yes	19	20
Maybe	1	2
No	0	0
Sample Size n=42	20	22

Source: Participant Exit Survey 2023-2024

Question: Do you believe that participating in the AgCAREERSTART program has made your Participant more employable in agriculture?

	11	9
Yes	11	9
Maybe	3	0
No	0	0
Sample Size n=23	14	9

Source: Host Exit Survey 2023-2024

Key Evaluation Highlights of B.1

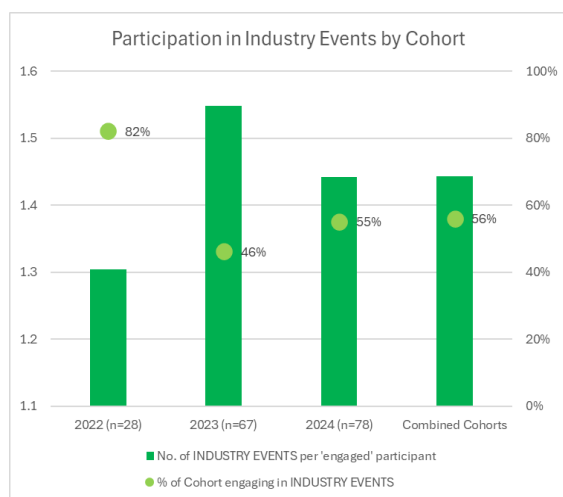
- Formal Training Participation:** Over 75% of pilot cohort participants (C1-C3 n=173)) completed formal skills training through the Training and Engagement Bursary.
- On-Farm Experience:** C2-C3 participant respondents (n=42) surveys indicated that the Program provided an immersive, hands-on learning that significantly improved respondents' technical skills, adaptability, and confidence in agricultural settings.
- Skill Development:** Host respondent feedback (n=14) from C1 (5) and C3(9) indicated that participants gained practical experience in a variety of fundamental farm roles including:
 - Operating agricultural machinery (14)
 - Livestock handling and movement (12)
 - Operating ag. Technologies (11)
 - Crop and plant management (seeding 8, cultivation 7, harvesting 7)
- Soft Skills Growth:** C2-C3 participant respondents (n=42) experienced improvement in workplace skills as a result of the Program most notably: communication; teamwork; time management; problem-solving; and leadership.
- Industry Insight:** Participant respondents (C2-C3 n=42) provided open-ended commentary which gave insight into understanding of how the on-farm experience assisted the respondents to gain a deeper understanding of business management, resource management, and the complexities of farm operations.
- Personal Development:** Other skills related responses collected from C2-C3 (n=42) suggest that the gap year structure supported a transition to adulthood, with respondents reporting growth in personal attributes such as confidence, independence and personal resilience.

B.2 YOUNG AUSTRALIANS ESTABLISH AND FOSTER PEER TO PEER AND INDUSTRY NETWORKS AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN

AG

NETWORKING &
COMMUNITY

Indicator: B.2.1 Share of Participants engaged in Industry events through Program



		Industry Engagem ent	Sample n=173
2022 (C1)	No. Participants 'engaged'	23	28
	No. events/ activities	30	
2023 (C2)	No. Participants 'engaged'	31	67
	No. events/ activities	48	
2024 (C3)	No. Participants 'engaged'	43	78
	No. events/ activities	62	
Combined Cohorts 1-3	No. Participants 'engaged'	97	173
	No. events/ activities	140	
Source:		Training and Event Records	

“By networking at conferences or courses I also learn about people’s different roles in ag outside of being a farmer “

AgCAREERSTART Pilot Program Participant

B.2 YOUNG AUSTRALIANS ESTABLISH AND FOSTER PEER TO PEER AND INDUSTRY NETWORKS AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN

AG

NETWORKING &
COMMUNITY

Indicator: B.2.2 Leadership and Networking skills gained through 'on-farm experience'

Capability	Key attributes identified by C2-C3 participant respondents (n=42)	Summary of respondents comments relating to leadership and network impact of on-farm experience and how this contributed to their learning and growth in the agricultural sector (summary of long-form responses).
Leadership <i>It's definitely made me more confident that I can go for any AG job I want without thinking I'm not good enough</i>	Built confidence and initiative through real-world challenges.	- Gradual build-up of confidence over the placement resulting in marked/ major improvements in their self-confidence. - Facing real-world challenges helped them understand their own capabilities - On-farm experience gave them confidence to further explore a career in ag and apply for new roles.
	Learned leadership by observing both effective and ineffective management styles.	- Direct exposure to farmers leading in their own business and in their community provided valuable lessons in leadership ('adage of 'leading by example'). - Some noted how witnessing effective, and sometimes problematic management practices influenced their understanding of what good leadership entails. - Gained insight into leadership pathways in the industry
Networking <i>Gave me a foot in the door meeting a lot of different so now I have connections all over the industry</i>	Developed strong connections with industry professionals and employers.	- Establishment of a robust and long-standing network through day-to-day interactions with employers, colleagues, and various professionals - Offered opportunity to build strong relationships that will serve participants throughout their careers.
	Established valuable networks that open doors for mentorship and career growth	- Gaining access to industry insiders provided a valuable "foot in the door" - These connections offered opportunities for mentorship and further career growth, enriching both academic and employment journeys.
In summary- contribution of on-farm <i>I have so much more knowledge and skills that will enable me to make connections in my learning ... as well as provide me with a year of experience for my resume</i>	The development of practical skills reinforces participant's industry knowledge, which in turn builds the confidence needed for leadership, all while fostering a network that supports continued professional and personal growth. The feedback from participants demonstrate that the AgCAREERSTART model of experiential learning can be transformative, fuelling passion, enhancing academic pursuits, and ultimately preparing individuals for a successful career in agriculture and beyond.	

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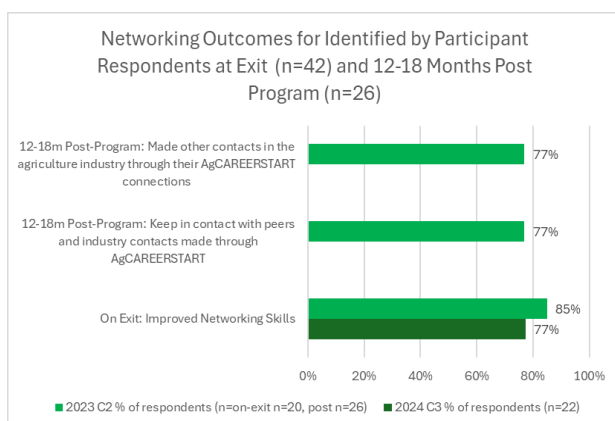
Source: Exit Survey: Cohort 2, 2023 (20) and Cohort 3, 2024 (22)

B.2 YOUNG AUSTRALIANS ESTABLISH AND FOSTER PEER TO PEER AND INDUSTRY NETWORKS AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN

AG

NETWORKING &
COMMUNITY

Indicator: B.2.3 Participants improve networking skills and establish and maintain networks in the AgriFood Industry through the Program



	2023	2023 % of respondents	2024	2024 % of respondents
On Exit: Improved Networking Skills	17	85%	17	77%
Sample size n=42	20		22	
Data source: Participant Exit Survey				
12-18m Post-Program: Keep in contact with peers and industry contacts made through AgCAREERSTART	20	77%	No Data	
12-18m Post-Program: Made other contacts in the agriculture industry through their AgCAREERSTART connections	20	77%		
Sample size n=26	26			
Data source: Post-Program Survey				

Key Evaluation Highlights of B.2

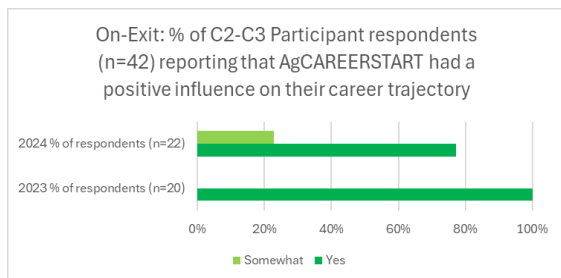
- 56% of C1-C3 participants attended Industry Events such as conferences and field days via the Training and Engagement Bursary.
- Commentary provided by C2 and C3 Participant respondents (n=42) also gave insight to how the on-farm experience provided leadership and networking value to the participant through:
 - a challenging and varied environment that built self-confidence and initiative, both important attributes of leadership development.
 - observing varied management styles.
 - developing strong, lasting connections with employers and industry professionals.
- 77% (n=26) of C2 respondents indicated that they remained in contact with networks created through AgCAREERSTART 12-18 months post-program and expanded them further.
- Sentiments of participant respondents from C2-C3 (n=42) indicated the Program experience supported long-term career growth and engagement in the agriculture industry.

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B.3 YOUNG AUSTRALIANS HAVE POSITIVE EXPERIENCE OF AgCAREERSTART AND PROMOTE IN THEIR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

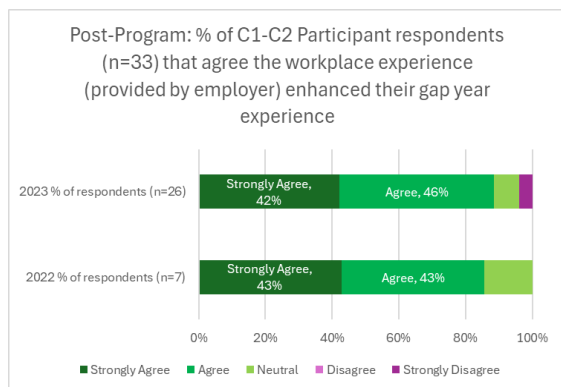
NETWORKING & COMMUNITY

Indicator: B.3.1 Share of participants who on exit from the program who viewed the program had a positive impact on their careers and lives?



	2023	2024
Average of participant rating out of 10 of overall experience with AgCAREERSTART	8.95	8.4
Sample size n=42	20	22

Data source: Participant Exit Survey



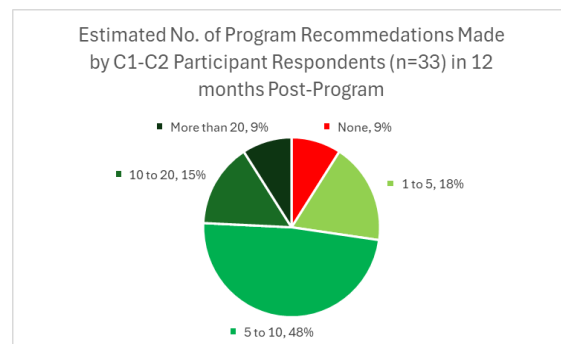
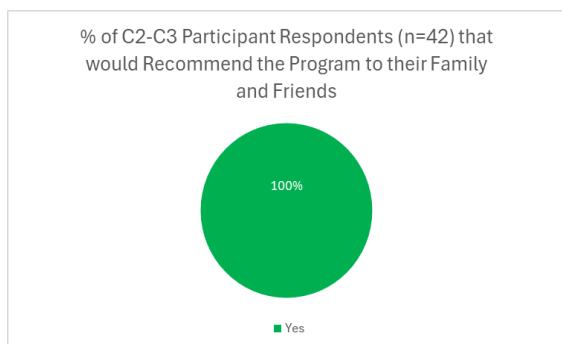
	2022	2022 % of respondents	2023	2023 % of respondents	2024	2024 % of respondents
<i>On-Exit: Do you feel that participating in the AgCAREERSTART program has positively influenced your career trajectory</i>						
Yes			20	100%	17	77%
Somewhat			0		5	23%
Sample size n=42	No data		20		22	
Data source: Participant Exit Survey						
<i>12-18m Post-Program: The workplace experience provided by my employer enhanced my 'gap year' employment experience.</i>						
Strongly Agree	3	43%	11	42%		
Agree	3	43%	12	46%		
Neutral	1	14%	2	8%		
Disagree		0%		0%		
Strongly Disagree		0%	1	4%		
Sample size n=33	7		26		No data	
Data source: Participant Post Program Survey						

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B.3 YOUNG AUSTRALIANS HAVE POSITIVE EXPERIENCE OF AgCAREERSTART AND PROMOTE IN THEIR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

NETWORKING & COMMUNITY

B.3.2 Indicator: Share of participants who would recommend the program to their family or friends



	2022	2022 % of respondents	2023	2023 % of respondents	2024	2024 % of respondents
<i>On-Exit: Would you would recommend the AgCAREERSTART program to other young people interested in pursuing a career in agriculture</i>						
Yes			20	100%	22	100%
Sample size n=42	No data		20		22	

Data source: Participant Exit Survey

	2022	2022 % of respondents	2023	2023 % of respondents	Combined Cohorts (C1-C2)	% Combined (C1-C2)
<i>12-18m Post-Program: Since completing the program how many other young people have you recommended the program to?</i>						
None	1	14%	2	8%	3	9%
1 to 5		0%	6	23%	6	18%
5 to 10	3	43%	13	50%	16	48%
10 to 20	1	14%	4	15%	5	15%
More than 20	2	29%	1	4%	3	9%
Sample size n=33	7		26		33	

Data source: Participant Post Program Survey

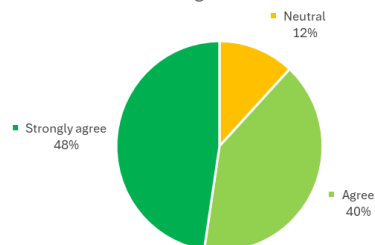
22

B.3 YOUNG AUSTRALIANS HAVE POSITIVE EXPERIENCE OF AgCAREERSTART AND PROMOTE IN THEIR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

NETWORKING & COMMUNITY

Indicator: B.3.3 Former Participants actively advocate for the Program and the boarder AgriFood Industry

C2-C3 Participant Respondents (n=42) that State they are Better Advocates for the Ag. Industry on Program Exit



On Exit- Participants respondent level of agreement to the statement 'I am a better advocate for the agriculture industry'

	2022 (C1)	2023 (C2)	2024 (C3)	Combined Cohorts (C2-C3)
Neutral		2	3	5
Agree		10	7	17
Strongly agree		8	12	20
Sample size n=42		20	22	42

Data source: Participant Exit Survey

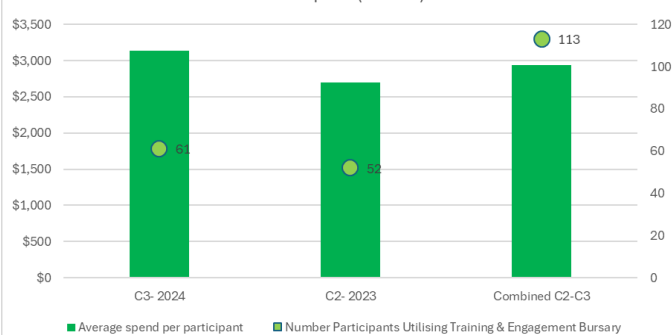
Key Evaluation Highlights of B.3

- C2-C3 Participant respondents rated their overall program experience 8.4 and 8.95 out of 10.
- 88% C2-C3 respondents (n=42) identified that they felt better equipped to advocate for the agricultural industry as a result of the program.
- 37 out of 42 C2-C3 respondents indicated that the program had a strong positive impact on their career trajectory.
- 100% of C2-C3 participant surveyed (n=42) would recommend the program to family and friends.
- Post-Program survey indicated that 91% of C1-C2 respondents (n=33) had recommended AgCAREERSTART to others:
 - 48% (16) made 5–10 recommendations.
 - 15% (5) made 10–20 recommendations.
 - 3 respondents identified they had made more than 20 recommendations.

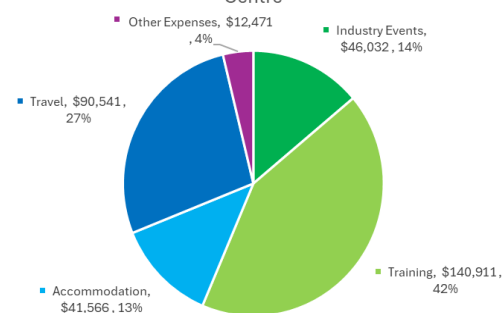
23

PROGRAM DESIGN Highlight Analysis: Training and Engagement Bursary

Average Training and Engagement Spend per 'Engaged' Participant (C2-C3)



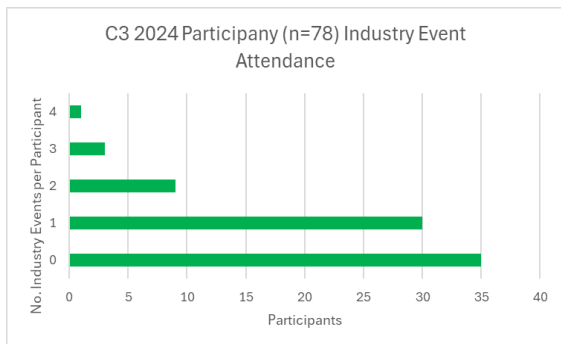
C2-C3 Training & Engagement Bursary Expenses by Cost Centre



Cohort	Industry Events	Training	Accommodation	Travel	Other Expenses	Total Training Bursary C2-C3	No. Participants Using Bursary	Average spend per participant
C3-2024	34,488	84,695	12,056	49,768	10,209	191,216	61	\$3,134.70
C2-2023	11,544	56,216	29,510	40,773	2,262	140,304	52	\$2,698.15
Combined C2-C3	\$46,032	\$140,911	\$41,566	\$90,541	\$12,471	\$331,520	113	\$2,933.81
C1-2022	Incomplete data						25	

Data source: Training and Industry Engagement Tracker

24



No. Industry Events per Participant	0	1	2	3	4
C3- 2024 Participants	35	30	9	3	1
Sample Size n=78					
Data Source	Training and Industry Engagement Tracker				

Summary of Analysis

Bursary Usage:

- 138 out of 178 participants (2022–2024) accessed the Training and Engagement Bursary.
- Analysis of Bursary expenditure for C2-C3 (n=113) indicated:
 - average spend per participant accessing the Bursary was \$2,933.81.
 - 56% of expenditure was attributed to training/event registrations, 27% on travel and 14% on accommodation.
- Analysis of C3 Participants (n=78) Industry Event engagement data revealed that 13 out of the 43 participants that engaged in Industry Events through their Bursary attended multiple Events, with one participant attending 4.

Identified Efficiencies:

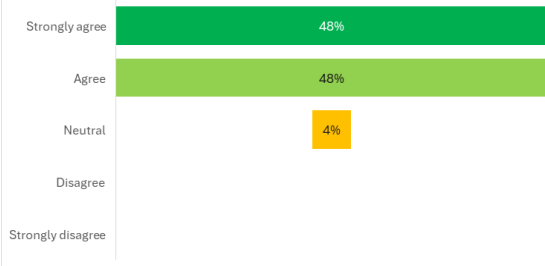
- There may be an opportunity to reduce training overall expenditure without jeopardising training and networking outcomes by identifying opportunities to reduce travel/accommodation cost components.
- Limiting participants to one major Industry Event could provide a way in which to provide a further reduction in average participant Bursary expenditure

LONG TERM OUTCOME C

More farm businesses are employing
Young Australians

C.1 FARM BUSINESSES UNDERSTAND THE VALUE OF EMPLOYING YOUNG AUSTRALIANS**LABOUR FORCE** **Indicator: C.1.1 Hosts recommend the AgCAREERSTART program to other farmers**

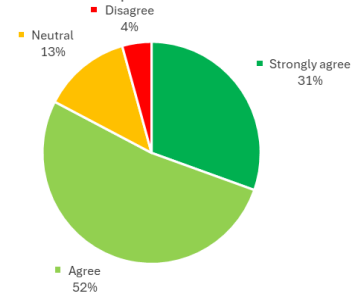
C2-C3 Host Respondents (n=23) that Would Recommend the Program to other Farmers.



On Exit: Hosts that would recommend participating in the AgCAREERSTART program to other potential Host Farmers.			
	2023 (C2)	2024 (C3)	Combined (C2-C3)
Strongly agree	5	6	11
Agree	8	3	11
Neutral	1		1
Disagree			0
Strongly disagree			0
Sample Size n=23	14	9	23
Data Source:	Host Exit Survey		

LABOUR FORCE **Indicator: C.1.2 Hosts experience value in having a Young Participant as part of their business**

C2-C3 Host Respondents (n=23) that Indicated Improvements in Productivity, Efficiency as a Result of their Participant's Contributions.



On Exit: Hosts that have seen improvements in productivity, efficiency, or any specific areas directly related to their Participant's contributions.			
	2023 (C2)	2024 (C3)	Combined (C2-C3)
Strongly agree	4	3	7
Agree	6	6	12
Neutral	3		3
Disagree	1		1
Strongly disagree			0
Sample Size n=23	14	9	23
Data Source:	Host Exit Survey		

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C.1 FARM BUSINESSES UNDERSTAND THE VALUE OF EMPLOYING YOUNG AUSTRALIANS**LABOUR FORCE** **Indicator: C.1.2 Hosts experience value in having a Young Participant as part of their business**

Summary of key values articulated by C2-C3 Host respondents (n=23) The vast majority of host respondents indicated an appreciation for the dynamic contributions their young AgCAREERSTART employee during the program duration. Key benefits Hosts identified were:		Quotes from Hosts:
Injected energy and creativity into the workplace	Young employee's fresh perspective and energy can spark creative thinking and drive innovation, pushing the farm business to explore new ideas.	<i>Provided a young, enthusiastic and energetic person into the workforce who had ideas and made us think outside the box.</i>
Assisted in addressing workforce shortages	Bringing additional, capable young workers into the farm business enables it to better manage capacity constraints and take on projects which otherwise may not have been possible due to insufficient resources.	<i>We achieved a few big jobs that would not have been attainable without the extra hands.</i>
Enabled knowledge transfer through mentoring	The inclusion of young talent creates a two-way learning environment where seasoned employees refine their mentoring and teaching skills while young employees gain valuable insights. This results in an enhancement in overall knowledge transfer within the organization.	<i>The older guys enjoy the opportunity to mentor from time to time... it's a great opportunity for self reflection when training someone else.</i>
Inspired the business to reflect on practices and processes	The process of integrating new, young employees can be a trigger review, prompting farm businesses to refine their practices and processes to ensure they are up-to-date and fit for purpose.	<i>It assisted us in reviewing our induction material, documentation etc...and making some adjustments</i>
Neutral or tentative responses:	There were a handful of neutral or tentative responses which spoke to the short-term 'gap year' nature of the program with some hosts being reluctant to identify definitive program benefits at such an early stage.	
Sample size n=23	C2 n=14, C3 n=9	
Data Source:	Exit Survey Q: 'In what ways has the AgCAREERSTART program positively influenced your individual farm business?'	

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C.1 FARM BUSINESSES UNDERSTAND THE VALUE OF EMPLOYING YOUNG AUSTRALIANS

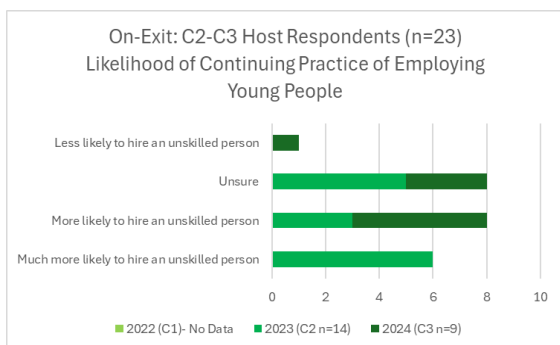
Key Evaluation Highlights of C.1

- **Strong program endorsement:** 22 out of 23 C2-C3 Host respondents would recommend AgCAREERSTART to other farmers.
- **Business impact:** 83% of host respondents (C2-C3) reported improved productivity and efficiency due to participant contributions.
- **Positive perceptions of youth employment:** Host respondents (n=23) indicated through commentary that the enthusiasm, energy, and fresh perspectives young participants brought provided positive impact to the farm business. Key benefits identified included:
 - **Innovation and creativity:** Young workers sparked new ideas and approaches.
 - **Workforce support:** Helped address labour shortages and enabled new projects.
 - **Knowledge exchange:** Fostered two-way learning between experienced staff and participants.
 - **Business reflection:** Encouraged review and refinement of existing practices and processes.
 - **The reward in observing and contributing to the professional and life journey and growth of a young person entering the ag. Industry.**
- **Minor reservations:** A few respondents were neutral or tentative, citing the short-term, "gap year" nature of the program as a limitation for assessing long-term impact.

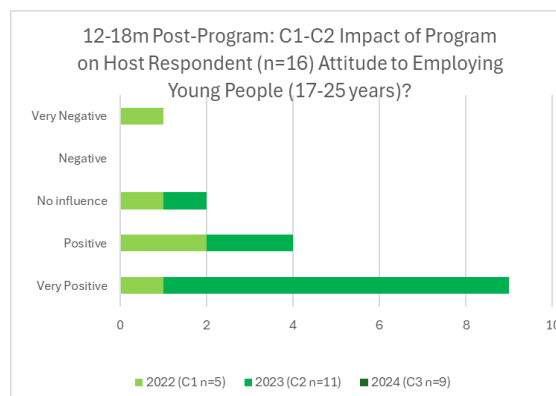
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C.2 FARM BUSINESSES ENGAGED IN AGCAREERSTART ARE CONTINUING PRACTICE OF EMPLOYING YOUNG PEOPLE POST-PROGRAM.

LABOUR FORCE

Indicator: C.2.1 Share of hosts continuing (or more likely to continue) the practice of employing young people after the Program

On Exit: How, if at all, has Host attitude or preparedness to employ an unskilled person changed?				
	2022 (C1)	2023 (C2)	2024 (C3)	Combined (C2-C3)
Much more likely to hire an unskilled person	No Data	6		6
More likely to hire an unskilled person		3	5	8
Unsure		5	3	8
Less likely to hire an unskilled person			1	1
Sample Size n=23		14	9	23
Data Source: Host Exit Survey				



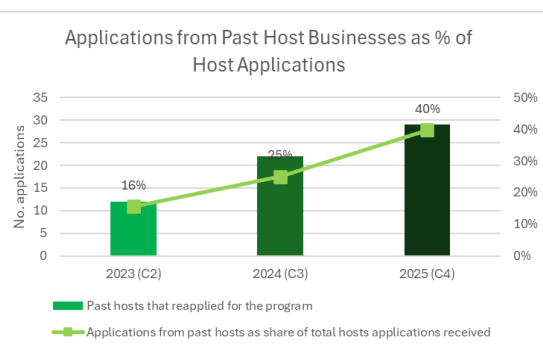
12-18m Post-Program: Has your experience of the AgCAREERSTART program influenced Host attitude to employing young people (17-25 years)?				
	2022 (C1)	2023 (C2)	2024 (C3)	Combined (C1-C2)
Very Positive	1	8	No Data	9
Positive	2	2		4
No influence	1	1		2
Negative				0
Very Negative	1			1
Sample Size n=16	5	11		16
Data Source: Host Post-Program Survey				

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C.2 FARM BUSINESSES ENGAGED IN AGCAREERSTART ARE CONTINUING PRACTICE OF EMPLOYING YOUNG PEOPLE POST-PROGRAM.

LABOUR FORCE

Indicator: C.2.2 Share of hosts reapplying for Program



Share of hosts that are reapplied for program	2023 (C2)	2024 (C3)	2025 (C4)
Past hosts that reapplied for the program	12	22	29
Past hosts as share of total hosts applications received	16%	25%	40%
Sample size n=238	77	88	73
Data Source:	Host Applications		

Reasons sighted by Host respondents for not reapplying		Quotes from Hosts:
Adverse External Conditions	Drought conditions and financial constraints made it impractical to commit to hosting another participant.	
High Training Demands	The need to start from scratch each year and the effort of training new participants placed a significant strain on resources.	<i>We had to start from scratch each year and the teaching of the participants can become exhausting.</i>
Mismatch in Candidate Experience	Some employers felt that they needed someone with greater experience and didn't have the time to give the program the in-depth support required for younger candidates.	<i>We felt we needed someone with experience as we felt we didn't have the time to do justice to the program (regrettably). I know it's hard for young people to get experience if we don't give them a go..</i>
Issues with Candidate Fit and Attitude:	There were concerns over a lack of employment etiquette guidance from the program, leading to poor candidate alignment with operational needs and unsuitable attitudes	
Sample size n=16	C1 n=5, C2 n=11	
Data Source:	Host Post-Program Survey, Qu.: Please provide a comment/insight to accompany your answer (did you reapply for ACS)?	

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C.2 FARM BUSINESSES ENGAGED IN AGCAREERSTART ARE CONTINUING PRACTICE OF EMPLOYING YOUNG PEOPLE POST-PROGRAM.

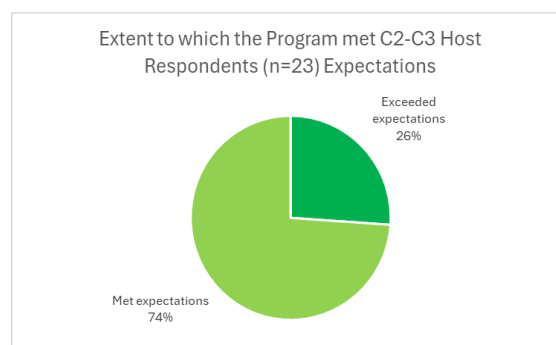
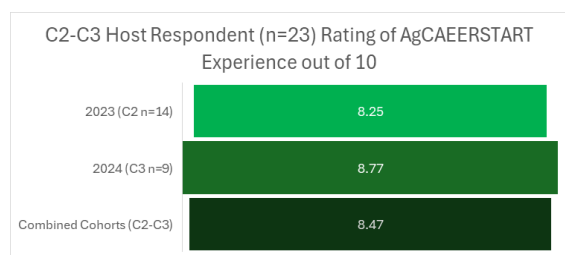
Key Evaluation Highlights of C.2

- **Shift in employer attitudes:** 60% of C2-C3 host respondents (n=23) reported being more likely to hire unskilled workers after participating in the program.
- **Sustained positive impact:** 13 out of 16 C1-C2 host respondents in a follow-up evaluation (12–18 months post-program) said the program positively influenced their attitude toward employing young people.
- **Rising host retention:** Repeat host applications increased from 16% in 2023 to 40% in 2025. This rate of host return could indicate growing satisfaction and confidence in the program.
- **Feedback from non-returning host respondents** provided some insight into reasons why they had not reapplied, which included:
 - **External constraints:** Drought and financial pressures limited capacity to host again.
 - **Training burden:** Annual onboarding of new participants was resource-intensive.
 - **Candidate mismatch:** Some respondents needed more experienced workers than the program typically provided.
 - **Fit and professionalism:** Concerns about participant readiness and workplace etiquette.

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C.3 FARM BUS. HAVE POSITIVE EXPERIENCE IN AgCAREERSTART AND PROMOTE IN THEIR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

LABOUR FORCE **Indicator: C.3.1 Hosts have positive experience in the Program and their expectations are met**



Host respondent rating out of 10 of their Program Experience	2022 (C1)	2023 (C2)	2024 (C3)	Combined (C2-C3)
Average rating	No Data	8.25	8.77	8.47
Sample size n=23	No Data	14	9	23
Data Source:	Host Exit Survey			

To what extent did the AgCAREERSTART program meet your expectations?	2022 (C1)	2023 (C2)	2024 (C3)	Combined Cohorts (C2-C3)
Exceeded expectations	No Data	2	4	6
Met expectations	No Data	12	5	17
Sample size n=23	No Data	14	9	23
Data Source:	Host Exit Survey			

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C.3 FARM BUS. HAVE POSITIVE EXPERIENCE IN AgCAREERSTART AND PROMOTE IN THEIR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

LABOUR FORCE **Indicator: C.3.1 Hosts have positive experience in the Program and their expectations are met**

Key themes from C2-C3 Host respondent (n=23) commentary around their overall Program Experience		Quotes from Host respondents:
Overall Positive Program Experience & Impact (17)	The vast majority of responses were overwhelmingly positive. Comments consistently praise the program's ability to launch careers, the support structures, and its strong communication and coordination	<i>It was great as a formal program to get young people started in the industry An excellent resource to find enthusiastic future farmers.</i>
Effective Communication and Coordination (4)	Several respondents highlighted that the program is exceptionally well coordinated and backed by strong communication.	<i>Went well, a lot of useful information and guidance offered and regular follow up</i>
Room for Improvement in Communication and Execution (2)	Two respondents noted that while the overall experience was positive, there is room to fine-tune how the program communicates or handles expectations.	<i>I felt it was ok, some improvements probably need to be made on communication on all parties</i>
Mixed Experiences and Specific Challenges (3)	A couple of responses acknowledged that the program is rewarding but also mentioned challenges or disappointments, hinting at aspects that might be refined.	
Sample size n=23	C2 n=14, C3 n=9	
Data Source:	Host Exit Survey 2023 (c2) and 2024 (C3). Noting: no data for 2022 (C1) Qu.: How would you describe your overall AgCAREERSTART experience?	

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C.3 FARM BUS. HAVE POSITIVE EXPERIENCE IN AgCAREERSTART AND PROMOTE IN THEIR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

LABOUR FORCE

Indicator: C.3.2 Hosts view the program as beneficial to addressing agricultural domestic workforce supply issues?

Key themes from C2-C3 Host respondents when asked to provide main reason for encouraging other farm businesses to participate in the Program: Without specific prompting Host respondents consistently raised strategic industry priority of the future ag. workforce as the main reason for promoting the program to other farmers. Specifically, it's contribution to: - workforce supply: securing a future workforce by engaging young talent; and - skilled workforce: enhancing the immediate and long-term performance of their business through rigorous training and skills development. This combination of talent attraction and robust workforce development is a compelling reason for other businesses to get involved.		Quotes from Host respondents:
Attracting and Engaging Future Talent (14)	- The program is a vital tool for building a robust pipeline of future agricultural talent. - Helps attract enthusiastic young people who might not otherwise consider a career in agriculture. - It is addressing ongoing recruitment challenge in a sector where passionate candidates are scarce.	<i>We need to attract the future generation and it starts by given them an opportunity.</i> <i>Encourage people to pursue a career in agriculture that might not otherwise.</i>
Enhancing Workforce Development and Delivering Business ROI (8)	- Hosts recognised the tangible business and operational benefit that comes from hosting participants. - The program only offers training and skills development for a new generation and in doing so makes an investment in long-term industry capability and business culture. - Participants help meet immediate farm labour needs while simultaneously adding value by becoming well-trained, enthusiastic employees—resulting in a positive return for the enterprise and the wider industry.	<i>The investment made by hosting a participant will not just provide returns in their lives, it is an investment and will provide positive returns in your business, its processes and culture</i> <i>It is a great incentive to educate entry level workers into agriculture and create a pipeline of success for the ag industry.</i>
Sample size n=23	C2 n=14, C3 n=9	
Data Source:	Host Exit Survey 2023 (c2) and 2024 (C3). Noting no data for 2022 (C1) Qu.: In your own words, what would be the main reason you would encourage other farmers to participate as Hosts in the AgCAREERSTART program?	

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C.3 FARM BUS. HAVE POSITIVE EXPERIENCE IN AgCAREERSTART AND PROMOTE IN THEIR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

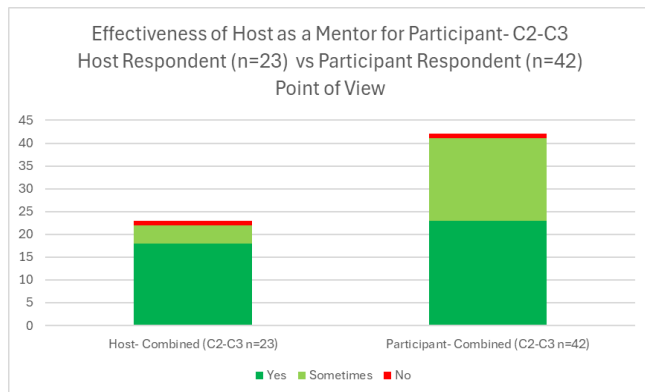
Key Evaluation Highlights of C.3 - High Farm Business satisfaction: C2-C3 Host respondents (n=23) averaged rating of the program was 8.47 out of 10 on exit; all respondents reported it met or exceeded expectations. - Positive overall experience: Key take-aways from Host respondents' commentary (C2-C3 n=23) are: - highlighted the program's key strengths as: it's important role in launching careers; strong support structures; and effective communication and coordination. - Minor areas for improvement identified by a small number of respondents included opportunities to refine program communication and execution, though overall sentiment remained positive. - Host respondents (n=23) could clearly articulate the reasons for encouraging other farm businesses to participate, citing its strategic value in addressing workforce challenges including: - Attracting future talent: Seen as a vital tool for engaging young people in agriculture, especially in a sector facing persistent recruitment challenges. - Business and industry ROI: Delivers immediate labour support and long-term workforce development, making it a valuable investment for both individual farms and the broader agricultural sector.
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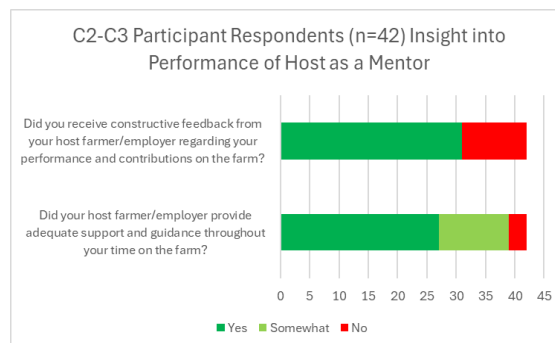
C.4 FARM BUSINESSES HAVE SYSTEMS AND ACCESS TO SUPPORT TO ACCOMMODATE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE ENTERING THE WORKFORCE.

LABOUR FORCE

Indicator: C.4.1 Hosts are effective mentors to young people



Host an effective mentor?	2022	2023- Host	2023- Participant	2024 Host	2024- Participant	Host- Combined (C2-C3)	Participant- Combined (C2-C3)
Yes		10	13	8	10	18	23
Sometimes		3	7	1	11	4	18
No		1			1	1	1
Sample n=		14	20	9	22	23	42
Data Source	Exit Surveys						



	Yes	Somewhat	No	Sample n=42
Did your host farmer/employer provide adequate support and guidance throughout your time on the farm?				
2023 (C2)	17	2	1	20
2024 (C3)	10	10	2	22
Combined (C2-C3)	27	12	3	42
Did you receive constructive feedback from your host farmer/employer regarding your performance and contributions on the farm?				
2023 (C2)	13		7	20
2024 (C3)	18		4	22
Combined (C2-C3)	31		11	42
Data Source	Exit Surveys			

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C.4 FARM BUSINESSES HAVE SYSTEMS AND ACCESS TO SUPPORT TO ACCOMMODATE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE ENTERING THE WORKFORCE.

LABOUR FORCE

Indicator: C.4.1 Hosts are effective mentors to young people

Key areas of Host skill improvement as a result of AgCAREERSTART as identified by C2-C3 Host respondents (n=23)		Quotes from Host respondents:
Communication and Team Management	10	Each gappy provides a different learning on how we can better manage our people. As mentioned, it also provides our managers with opportunities to develop their own management skills with new participants each year. Being better at communicating jobs that need doing and being aware that they need teaching all the time for new tasks.
Mentoring and Coaching	5	working with youth and remembering to take the time to train and mentor. Yes mentoring and coaching skills have improved.
Awareness of Workplace and Employment Requirements	4	Our induction papers and documents around employment improved through working with AgCAREERSTART the Participant raised my awareness of some workplace aspects and the requirements for employing younger people.
Pastoral Care for Young Employees	3	Increased my awareness of the need for pastoral care of young people in a new environment.
Sample size n=23		C2 n=14, C3 n=9
Data Source:		Host Exit Survey 2023 (c2) and 2024 (C3). Noting no data for 2022 (C1) Qu.: Do you believe any of your own skills have improved as a result of having an AgCAREERSTART Participant?

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C.4 FARM BUSINESSES HAVE SYSTEMS AND ACCESS TO SUPPORT TO ACCOMMODATE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

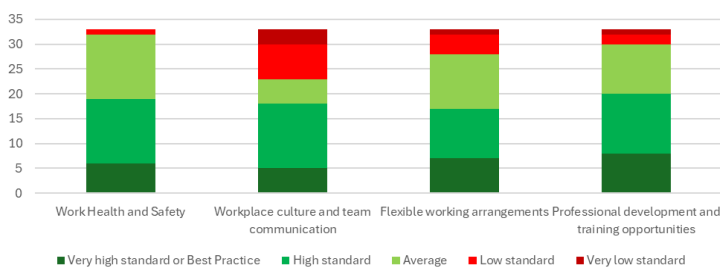
ENTERING THE WORKFORCE.

LABOUR FORCE

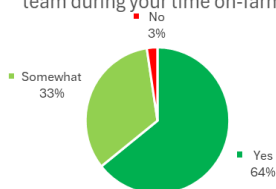
Indicator: C.4.2 Hosts provide participants with work environment and conditions suited to 'young' or 'early-career' employee

Farm Businesses/Hosts

12-18m Post-Program: C1-C2 Participant Respondents (n=33)
Rating of Workplace Environment



C2-C3 Participant Respondents (n=42): Did you feel included and valued as a member of the farm team during your time on-farm?



	Very high standard or Best Practice	High standard	Average	Low standard	Very low standard	Sample Size n=33
Work Health and Safety						
2023 (C2)	4	11	10	1		26
2022 (C1)	2	2	3			7
Combined (C1-C2)	6	13	13	1	0	33
Workplace culture and team communication						
2023 (C2)	3	10	5	6	2	26
2022 (C1)	2	3		1	1	7
Combined (C1-C2)	5	13	5	7	3	33
Flexible working arrangements						
2023 (C2)	4	8	11	2	1	26
2022 (C1)	3	2		2		7
Combined (C1-C2)	7	10	11	4	1	33
Professional development and training opportunities						
2023 (C2)	6	9	9	2		26
2022 (C1)	2	3	1		1	7
Combined (C1-C2)	8	12	10	2	1	33
Data Source: Post-Program Participant Survey						

	Yes	Somewhat	No	Sample Size n=42
Did Participant feel included and valued as a member of the farm team during your time on-farm?				
2023 (C2)	11	9		20
2024 (C3)	16	5	1	22
Combined (C2-C3)	27	14	1	42
Data Source: Exit Surveys				

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C.4 FARM BUSINESSES HAVE SYSTEMS AND ACCESS TO SUPPORT TO ACCOMMODATE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

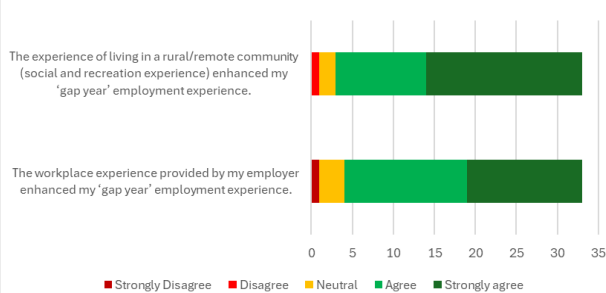
ENTERING THE WORKFORCE.

LABOUR FORCE

Indicator: C.4.2 Hosts provide participants with work environment and conditions suited to 'young' or 'early-career' employee

Farm Businesses/Hosts

12-18m Post-Program: C1-C2 Participant Respondents (n=33) reflection on 'unique' farm business context factors



	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Sample Size n=33
The workplace experience provided by my employer enhanced my 'gap year' employment experience.						
2023 (C2)	1		2	12	11	26
2022 (C1)			1	3	3	7
Combined (C1-C2)	1	0	3	15	14	33
The experience of living in a rural/remote community (social and recreation experience) enhanced my 'gap year' employment experience.						
2023 (C2)			2	7	17	26
2022 (C1)			1	4	2	7
Combined (C1-C2)	0	1	2	11	19	33
Data Source: Post-Program Participant Survey						

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C.4 FARM BUSINESSES HAVE SYSTEMS AND ACCESS TO SUPPORT TO ACCOMMODATE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE ENTERING THE WORKFORCE.

LABOUR FORCE Indicator: C.4.2 Hosts provide participants with work environment and conditions suited to 'young' or 'early-career' employee

Participant rating of workplace environment and culture	2023	2024	Combined (C2-C3)
Average rating out of 10	7.85	7.2	7.51
Sample size n=42	20	22	42
Data Source:	Participant Exit Survey QU.: How would you rate the work environment and culture on the farm where you completed your AgCAREERSTART program?		

Key themes from C2-C3 Participant respondents (n=42) commentary relating to workplace culture during farm placement.			Quotes from Participant respondents:
Positive	Supportive, Friendly, and Team-Oriented Culture	20-25	<i>It was a positive work environment, where everyone helped each other to do our best with no judgment at all. Everyone wanted everyone to be their best which helped create an efficient and caring environment.</i>
	Opportunities for Learning and Development	7-8	<i>The culture and environment was great—always felt comfortable to ask questions and develop my understanding</i>
	Welcoming, Family-Oriented Atmosphere	4-5	<i>The dynamic is family oriented and everyone is joyful, caring and willing to support you always</i>
Negative/ critical	Lack of Support, Poor Communication, and Insufficient Training	6-7	<i>Most of the time the crew would have great camaraderie... but I think fairly regularly there was a lacking of support and encouragement for training/trying to learn new things.</i>
	Poor Management or Toxic Leadership	5-6	<i>It was unprofessional and unpredictable in regards to management behaviour.</i>
	Sample size n=42	C2 n=20, C3 n=22	
	Data Source:	Participant Exit Survey 2023 (c2) and 2024 (C3). Noting no data for 2022 (C1) Qu.: How would you describe the work environment and culture on the farm where you completed your AgCAREERSTART program?	

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C.4 FARM BUSINESSES HAVE SYSTEMS AND ACCESS TO SUPPORT TO ACCOMMODATE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE ENTERING THE WORKFORCE.

Key Evaluation Highlights of C.4 98% of Participant respondents (n=42) rated their host as either effective (23) or sometimes effective (18) mentors. C2-C3 Host respondents (n=23) also self-rated their mentoring ability highly with 96% indicating they were effective (14) or sometimes effective (4). 94% participant respondents (C2-C3 n=42) felt they received full (27) or partial (12) support and guidance from their Host employer during the Program. - Host respondents (n=23) indicated they gained valuable skills in communication, team management, mentoring, and pastoral care through the Program. - C2-C3 Participant respondents (n=42) rated workplace culture 7.51/10 at exit. 12–18 months post-program, C1-C2 Participant respondents (n=33) provided ratings of average and above for workplace environmental factors: - Work health and safety (94%) - Professional development (91%) - Flexible work arrangements (85%) - Workplace culture and communication (70%) 88% C1-C2 Participant respondents (n=33) indicated that their host employment experience enhanced their gap year. 91% C1-C2 Participant respondents (n=33) stated that rural living positively contributed to their gap year experience. - Key positive factors of farm business workplace attributes identified by C2-C3 Participant respondents (n=42) via long-form commentary identified: - Supportive, team-oriented culture (20-25 mentions) - Strong learning and development opportunities (7-8 mentions) - Welcoming, family-oriented atmosphere (4-5 mentions) - Areas for improvement identified by C2-C3 Participant respondents (n=42) were: - Some participants reported lack of support, poor communication, and insufficient training (6-7 mentions) - A few cited poor management or toxic leadership (5-6 mentions)

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LONG TERM OUTCOME D

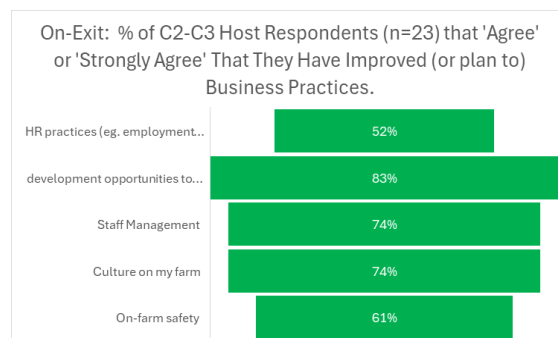
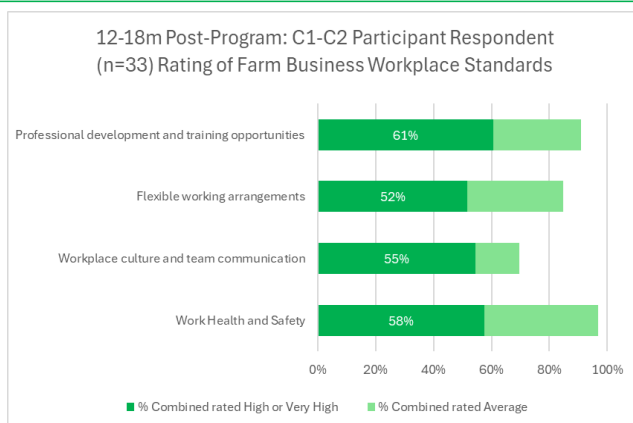
Build reputation of farm businesses as best practice workplaces & employers of choice amongst Young Australians

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D. 1 FARM BUSINESSES ENGAGED IN AGCAREERSTART ARE CONSIDERED BEST PRACTICE WORKPLACES BY AGRIFOOD

INDUSTRY
DEVELOPMENTIndicator: D.1.1 Number of host businesses that are consider best practice workplaces and employers
choice

INDUSTRY



12-18m Post Program: Participant 'High' & 'V. High' Rating of Farm Business Workplace Standards	2022 (C1)	2023 (C2)	2024 (C3)	'High and Very High' Combined C1-C2	'Average' Combined C1-C2
Work Health and Safety	4	15	No Data	19	13
Workplace culture and team communication	5	13		18	5
Flexible working arrangements	5	12		17	11
Professional development and training opportunities	4	15		19	10
Sample size n=33	7	26		33	
Data Source	Participant Post Program Survey				

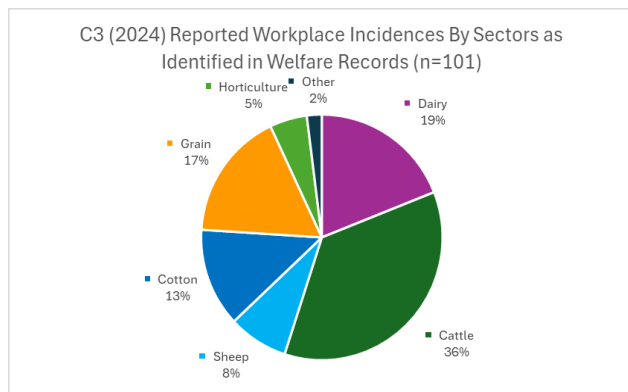
Hosts that agree or strongly agree to the statement that they have, or are likely to implement activities/ practices to improve	2022 (C1)	2023 (C2)	2024 (C3)	Combined C2-C3
HR practices	No Data	6	6	12
Development opportunities to my staff		10	9	19
Staff Management		9	8	17
Culture on my farm		10	7	17
On-farm safety		7	7	14
Sample size n=23		14	9	23
Data Source	Host Exit Survey			

D. 1 FARM BUSINESSES ENGAGED IN AgCAREERSTART ARE CONSIDERED BEST PRACTICE WORKPLACES BY AGRIFOOD

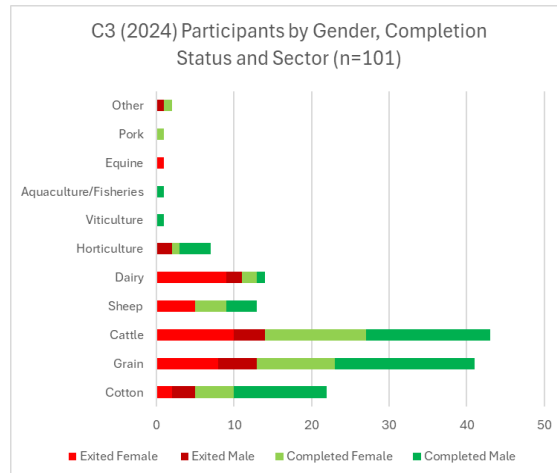
INDUSTRY
DEVELOPMENT

Indicator: D.1.1 Number of host businesses that are consider best practice workplaces and employers choice

INDUSTRY



Sector	Welfare Reported Incidences	Workplace Injuries	Sector as a % of cohort	Placements attributed to sector	Program Retention % Females	Program Retention % Males
Dairy	19	3	9%	14	18%	33%
Cattle	36	3	30%	29	57%	80%
Sheep	8	1	9%	13	44%	100%
Cotton	13	1	15%	22	71%	80%
Grain	17	3	28%	28	56%	78%
Horticulture	5	1	5%	7	100%	67%
Other	3		4%	6	67%	67%
Data source	2024 Welfare Reports			2024 Participant Data		



Detailed analysis provided in PR4: Indicators B.6 and D.6

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D. 1 FARM BUSINESSES ENGAGED IN AgCAREERSTART ARE CONSIDERED BEST PRACTICE WORKPLACES BY AGRIFOOD

INDUSTRY

Key Evaluation Highlights of D.1

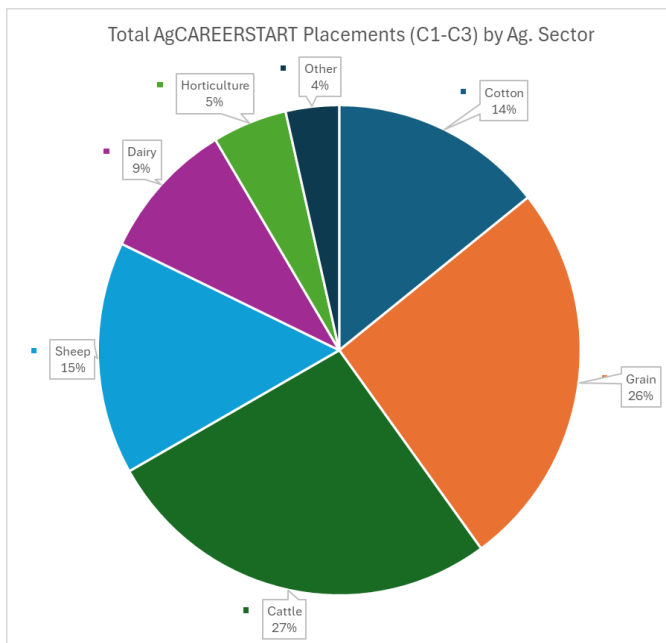
- Post-program ratings from C1-C2 participant respondents (n=33) reflect a strong overall perception of farm business workplace environments.
- C2-C3 Host respondents (n=23) reported making business practice improvements due to program participation:
 - 83% improved staff development opportunities
 - 74% improved staff management
 - 74% enhanced farm culture
 - 61% improved on-farm safety
 - 52% enhanced HR practices
- Detailed analysis of Cohort 4 Retention Data and Welfare Reports, undertaken as part of Progress Report 4 and repeated in this report identifies:
 - Cattle-based industries (Dairy and Cattle) made up 39% of placements but accounted for 55% of welfare incident reported.
 - Dairy sector had the lowest retention—only 18% of females (n=11) and 33% of males (n=3) placed in dairy sector completed the program. Female retention in the sheep sector was also low at 44% (n=9). This signalled a sharp decline in female retention rates in comparison to C1 and C2 as noted in Indicator A.3.
 - Animal-based sectors may require targeted strategies to address participant welfare and gender-specific retention challenges.

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D.2 PROGRAM IS ACCESSIBLE TO FARM BUSINESSES NATIONALLY AND ENGAGES ALL AG SECTORS

INDUSTRY
DEVELOPMENT

Indicator: D.2.1 Farm business program participation by ag sector and location (diversities of sectors represented)



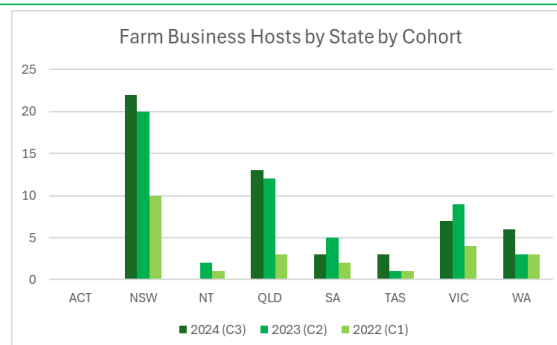
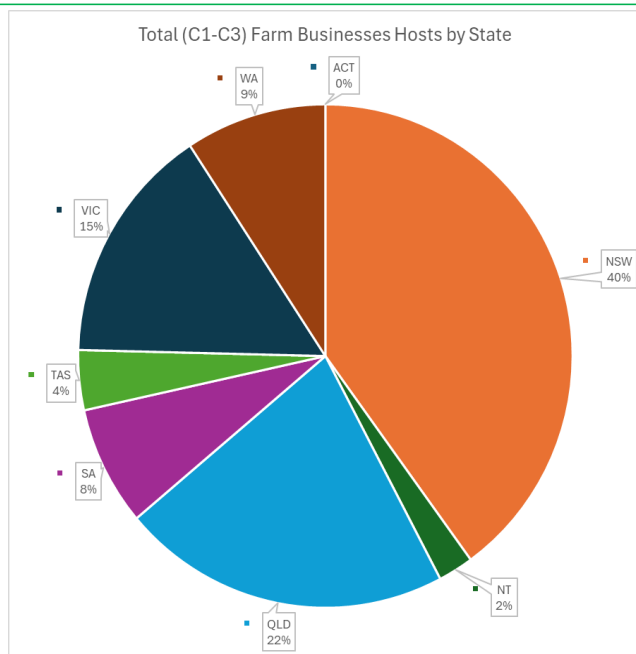
Host Sector	2024 (C3)	2023 (C2)	2022 (C1)	Combined C1-C3 Cohort
Bananas			1	1
Cotton	22	13	5	40
Grain	41	20	11	72
Cattle	43	25	7	75
Sheep	13	24	6	43
Dairy	13	9	4	26
Horticulture	7	4	3	14
Viticulture	1			1
Aquaculture	1	1		2
Equine	1	1		2
Pork	1			1
Other	2	1		3
Sub-total	145	98	37	280
Sample Size	n=280			
Data Sources:	Host Applications Filtered by Matched Participants			

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D.2 PROGRAM IS ACCESSIBLE TO FARM BUSINESSES NATIONALLY AND ENGAGES ALL AG SECTORS

INDUSTRY
DEVELOPMENT

Indicator: D.2.1 Farm business program participation by ag sector and location (diversities of sectors represented)



Host State	2024 (C3)	2023 (C2)	2022 (C1)	Combined C1-C3 Cohort
ACT				0
NSW	22	20	10	52
NT		2	1	3
QLD	13	12	3	28
SA	3	5	2	10
TAS	3	1	1	5
VIC	7	9	4	20
WA	6	3	3	12
Sub-total	54	52	24	130
Sample Size	n=130			
Data Sources:	Host Applications Filtered by Matched Participants			

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D.2 PROGRAM IS ACCESSIBLE TO FARM BUSINESSES NATIONALLY AND ENGAGES ALL AG SECTORS

Key Evaluation Highlights of D.2

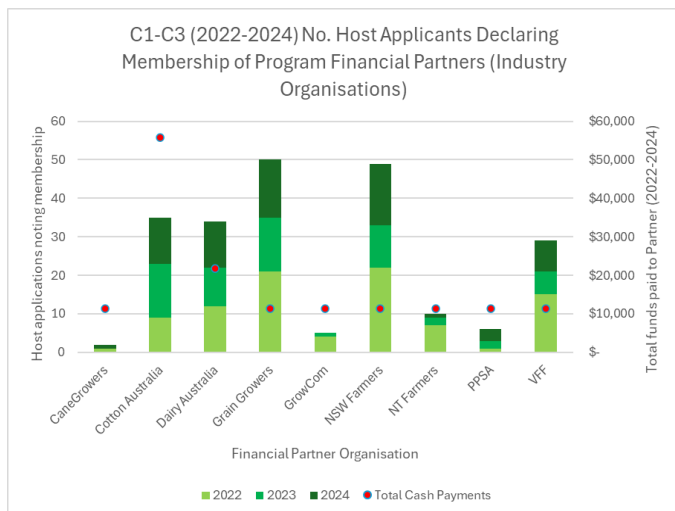
- Sector Representation (2022–2024) is dominated by boardacre industries:
 - Grain: 26% of placements
 - Cattle: 27%
 - Sheep: 15%
 - Cotton: 14%
- Sheep sector participation varied from 16% in 2022, 24% in 2023 and 9% in 2024. This decline in C3 could be a result of broader National flock rationalisation occurring as a response to the Federal Government's live export phase-out policy.
- Placements in Grain and Beef (Cattle) sectors have increased year-on-year. Grain from 19% in 2022 to 28% in 2024 and Beef (cattle) from 19% in 2022 to 29% in 2024.
- C1-C3 Geographic Distribution is dominated by eastern states:
 - NSW: 40% of host farm businesses
 - QLD: 22%
 - VIC: 15%
 - WA, SA, TAS combined: 21%

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D.3 AgCAREERSTART INDUSTRY PARTNERS HAVE A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE IN AgCAREERSTART AND PROMOTE IN THEIR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

Indicator: D.3.1 Share of Host Applications that cited different industry partners



Industry Organisation	Financial Partner	ACS Cash to Partner				Applications stating membership			
		2022	2023	2024	Total Cash Payments	2022	2023	2024	Total C1-C3
CaneGrowers	Y1 (2022)	11,275			\$ 11,275	1		1	2
Cotton Australia	Y1 - Y3 (2022-2024)	11,275	16,250	28,250	\$ 55,775	9	14	12	35
Dairy Australia	Y1 - Y2 (2022-2023)	11,275	10,500		\$ 21,775	12	10	12	34
Grain Growers	Y1 (2022)	11,275			\$ 11,275	21	14	15	50
GrowCom	Y1 (2022)	11,275			\$ 11,275	4	1		5
NSW Farmers	Y1 (2022)	11,275			\$ 11,275	22	11	16	49
NT Farmers	Y1 (2022)	11,275			\$ 11,275	7	2	1	10
PPSA	Y1 (2022)	11,275			\$ 11,275	1	2	3	6
VFF	Y1 (2022)	11,275			\$ 11,275	15	6	8	29
Sub-totals	0	101,475	26,750	28,250	\$156,475				
Sample size						n=220			
Data Source		AgCAREERSTART Program Manager				Host Applications			

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D.3 AgCAREERSTART INDUSTRY PARTNERS HAVE A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE IN AgCAREERSTART AND PROMOTE IN THEIR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

INDUSTRY

Indicator: D.3.2 AgCAREERSTART Participants engage with Industry Partners

DEVELOPMENT

Industry Event that AgCAREERSTART Participants Attended	Industry Organisation	2022- Participants	2023- Participants	2024- Participants	Combined 2022-2024 Participant Delegation*
Innovation Generation	GrainGrowers	13	15	18	46
Cotton Conf (Cotton Collective)	Cotton Australia	2	3	20	25
Young Beef Producers Forum	Future Farmers Network	2	16	4	22
Beef Week	Beef Australia Ltd			9	9
Evoke Ag	AgriFutures Australia	1	5	2	8
NFF Summit	National Farmers' Federation	1	4	1	6
LambEx	Sheep Producers Australia			5	5
Regen Ag	RegenWA,		4		4
Hort Connections	AUSVEG and International Fresh Produce Assoc.	2		1	3
Beef Ex	Australian Lot Feeders' Association (ALFA)	3			3
Bendigo Sheep and Wool Show	Australian Sheep Breeders Association	1	2		3
FutureAg	Agritechnica			3	3
MerinoLink	MerinoLink Inc.	1	1		2
Ag.X	National Farmers' Federation		2		2
Best Wool/ Best Lamb Conference	Agriculture Victoria and AWI Extension VIC		2		2
Inspire Summit	Rural Edge Australia		2		2
Dairy Conf	Australian Dairy Conference Ltd	1	2		3
Henty Field Day	Henty Machinery Field Days Co-operative Ltd	1			1
National Landcare Conference	Landcare Australia,	1			1
Dairy Youth Academy	Australian Dairy Youth Assoc., supported by Dairy Australia			1	1
Adelaide Show	Royal Agricultural & Horticultural Society of South Australia (RA&HS)		1		1
Aquaculture Conference	Aqua Farm Conference Committee		1		1
MeatUp	Meat & Livestock Australia		1		1
Sheepvention	Hamilton Pastoral and Agricultural Society Inc.		1		1
AgVision	Royal Agricultural Society of NSW			1	1
Oyster Conference	NSW Oyster Industry Conference Committee			1	1
Data Source:	Training and Engagement Records; Alumni Tracker *also includes Alumni attendance organised by AgCAREERSTART				

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D.3 AgCAREERSTART INDUSTRY PARTNERS HAVE A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE IN AgCAREERSTART AND PROMOTE IN THEIR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

INDUSTRY

Indicator: D.3.3 Sentiment of industry partners to AgCAREERSTART

DEVELOPMENT

Key Themes from Partner Interviews (4) (Conducted July 2024)	In July 2024 agdots undertook a series of interviews with four of AgCAREERSTART's Financial Program Partners: GrainGrowers, Cotton Australia, Dairy Australia and VFF. The overall sentiment was strongly positive, with interviewees expressing appreciation for the program's structure, impact, and potential. Partners also provided constructive feedback aimed at improving engagement and effectiveness.
Program Effectiveness	- ACS is seen as more effective than previous 'career pathway' initiatives like Cotton Gap. - It helps overcome entry barriers for those new to agriculture, this is particularly true for the dairy sector. - The program was praised for supporting participants closely and offering a comprehensive 'gap year' experience.
Engagement & Support	- Organizations like Cotton Australia and Dairy Australia are actively involved, sharing information widely and supporting participants. - Grain Growers (GG) expressed a desire to re-engage more actively, having previously contributed significantly. - Some interviewees indicated there had been inconsistent communication due to staff turnover within their organisations.
Challenges & Barriers	- Training and readiness of young people entering agriculture is a major concern. - Lack of feedback from farmers about candidates is noted as a gap. - Industry engagement could be more proactive and systemic.
Program Timing & Structure	- A 12-month duration is considered ideal to expose participants to all seasons and farm operations. - Start time around Jan/Feb is preferred to align with school leavers and farm season/ schedules. - There's interest in retention data to assess long-term impact.
Suggestions for Improvement	- More industry catch-ups and communication with Partners - Case studies and success stories to promote the program. - Continue support for employers (e.g., onboarding tools, incentives). - There's a call to scale up with national coordination and funding. This will require stronger industry, continued Federal Government backing and exploring access to State Government programs/ support.
Data Source:	Industry Partner Qualitative Interview Summary (Appendix B - AgCAREERSTART Progress Report 3), Author: agdots (July 2024)

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D.3 AgCAREERSTART INDUSTRY PARTNERS HAVE A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE IN AgCAREERSTART AND PROMOTE IN THEIR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

Key Evaluation Highlights of D.3

- Nine industry organisations engaged as Program Partners in 2022. Ongoing financial partnerships continued in year 2 and 3 only with Cotton Australia and Dairy Australia.
- While previous Progress Reports have reported on direct referral outputs of Industry Partners (which have been limited), this report has considered Host applicant membership attribution to Industry Partners which indicates strong year on year applications from Partner memberships such as Grain Growers (50) and NSW Farmers (49).
- AgCAREERSTART through the Training and engagement Bursary have supported numerous delegations of participants to attend 26 key industry events. 157 AgCAREERSTART Participants over C1-C3 have engaged in these key industry events
- Some Partners such as partners continue to promote the program within their networks, and recent interviews confirm positive sentiment, ongoing engagement, and a willingness to contribute to its future growth.
- Four key Program Partners expressed strong support for the program during interviews conducted in July 2024, highlighting:
 - It's effectiveness in attracting new talent to agriculture; and
 - It's value in addressing workforce challenges.

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LONG TERM OUTCOME E

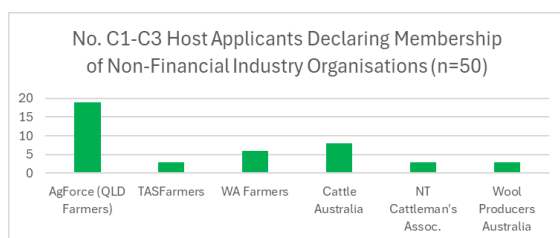
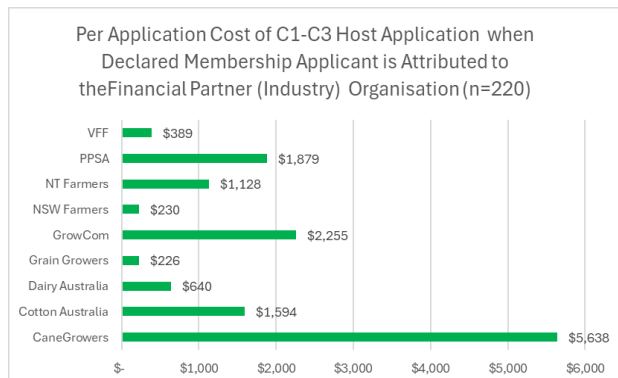
Establish cost and value to industry of AgCAREERSTART

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E.1 AGRIFOOD INDUSTRY UNDERSTAND VALUE OF AGCAREERSTART AND SUBSEQUENTLY INVEST IN AND PROMOTE THE PROGRAM

INDUSTRY
DEVELOPMENT

Indicator: E.1.1 Industry invest in program (in-kind and cash) and provide value to the program



Industry Organisation	Total Cash Payments	Total C1-C3 Application Member Attribution	Payment per application
Grain Growers	\$ 11,275	50	\$ 226
NSW Farmers	\$ 11,275	49	\$ 230
Cotton Australia	\$ 55,775	35	\$ 1,594
Dairy Australia	\$ 21,775	34	\$ 640
VFF	\$ 11,275	29	\$ 389
AgForce (QLD Farmers)		19	
NT Farmers	\$ 11,275	10	\$ 1,128
Cattle Australia		8	
PPSA	\$ 11,275	6	\$ 1,879
WA Farmers		6	
GrowCom	\$ 11,275	5	\$ 2,255
TASFarmers		3	
NT Cattleman's Assoc.		3	
Wool Producers Australia		3	
CaneGrowers	\$ 11,275	2	\$ 5,638
Australian Pork Producers		2	
Australian Pork Ltd		2	
Australian Organic Limited		2	
Rice Growers Assoc.		1	
Sheep Producers Australia		1	
Data Source:	Host Applications C1-C3		
Sample size n=270			

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E.1 AGRIFOOD INDUSTRY UNDERSTAND VALUE OF AGCAREERSTART AND SUBSEQUENTLY INVEST IN AND PROMOTE THE PROGRAM

INDUSTRY
DEVELOPMENT

Indicator: E.1.1 Industry invest in program (in-kind and cash) and provide value to the program

Partner	2024 Promotion	2024 Participant Event support	2024 Partnership Activity	2023 Partnership activity	2022 Partnership activity
Cotton Australia	✓	✓ 17 Cotton Conference valued at \$2,500 per Participant ✓ Paid	✓ Paid (Contribution to Conference)	✓ Paid	✓ Paid
Dairy Australia	✓			✓ Paid	✓ Paid
Grain Growers	Paid ad in mag	✓ Discounted tickets to IG		✓	✓ Paid
NSW Farmers	Paid engagement at Henty Field Day			✓	✓ Paid
Primary Industries Education Foundation of Australia (PIEFA)	✓ Career Harvest			Fee for Service Recruitment Partner 2022-2023	Fee for Service Recruitment Partner 2022-2023
PPSA	✓ GPSA free stall at Adelaide Show			✓	✓ Paid
TASFarmers	✓ Article in Mag				
Tasmanian Department of Education	✓ Roadshow local promo and speaking spot				
Hay Inc.	✓ Cross Promotion			✓ Cross Promotion	
WA Farmers	✓ newsletter				
Future Beef	✓ online sharing				
Aust. Nutgrowers Assoc.	✓ Article in mag				

Data Source: AgCAREERSTART Program Manager

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E.1 AGRIFOOD INDUSTRY UNDERSTAND VALUE OF AgCAREERSTART AND SUBSEQUENTLY INVEST IN AND PROMOTE THE PROGRAM

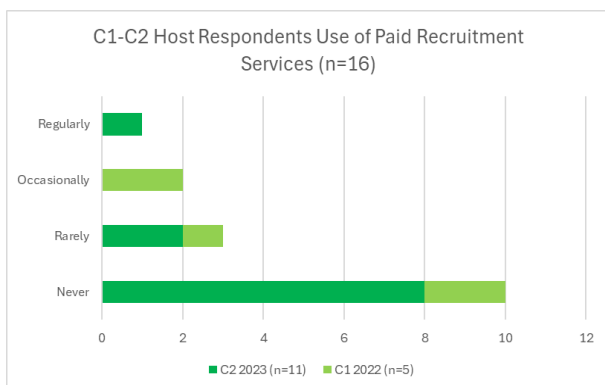
Key Evaluation Highlights of E.1

- The National Farmers' Federation (NFF) by financial arrangement engaged nine industry organisations (referred to as Program Partners) to assist with promotion and recruitment, 2022-2024 total value of these partnerships between 2022-2024 is \$156,475
- Analysis by attributing membership of Host applicants (n=220) showed best value from:
 - Grain Growers: \$226/host applicant
 - NSW Farmers: \$230/host applicant
 - Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF): \$389/host applicant
 - Least value from Cane Growers: \$5,638/host applicant
- In-kind promotional support was evidenced by Host application membership attributions highlighting contributions of non-financial Industry organisations (n=50) such as: AgForce (19 applications); Cattle Australia (8 applications); WA Farmers (6 applications)
- Additional in-kind contributions received between 2022-2024 from Industry Organisations included free event space, speaking opportunities, and advertising—noting that support varies, with some organisations charging fees or offering limited discounts.
- Despite goodwill and alignment with industry interests. No direct financial contributions have been made by Industry organisations to support AgCAREERSTART between 2022-2024.

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E.2 RECOMMENDATIONS OF NEXT STEPS TO INVESTIGATING SELF-SUSTAINING BUSINESS MODEL FOR AgCAREERSTART POST-PROGRAM FUNDING

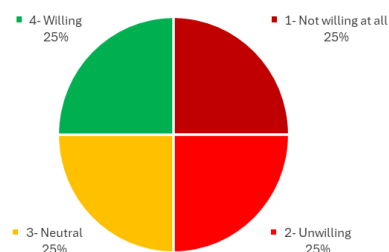
Insight into Farm Host tolerance for user-pay recruitment service



	2023	2022
Have you used or do you use paid/commercial recruitment services to employ young people (17-25 years)?		
Never	8	2
Rarely	2	1
Occasionally		2
Regularly	1	
Sample size n=16	11	5
Data Source:	Post-Program Survey	

	2023	2022
Please indicate your willingness to pay for a program such as AgCAREERSTART on a scale from 1 to 5		
1- Not willing at all	2	2
2- Unwilling	3	1
3- Neutral	3	1
4- Willing	3	1
5- Extremely willing		
Sample size n=16	11	5
Data Source:	Post-Program Survey	

Willingness of C1-C2 Host Respondents (n=16) to Pay for Program such as AgCAREERSTART

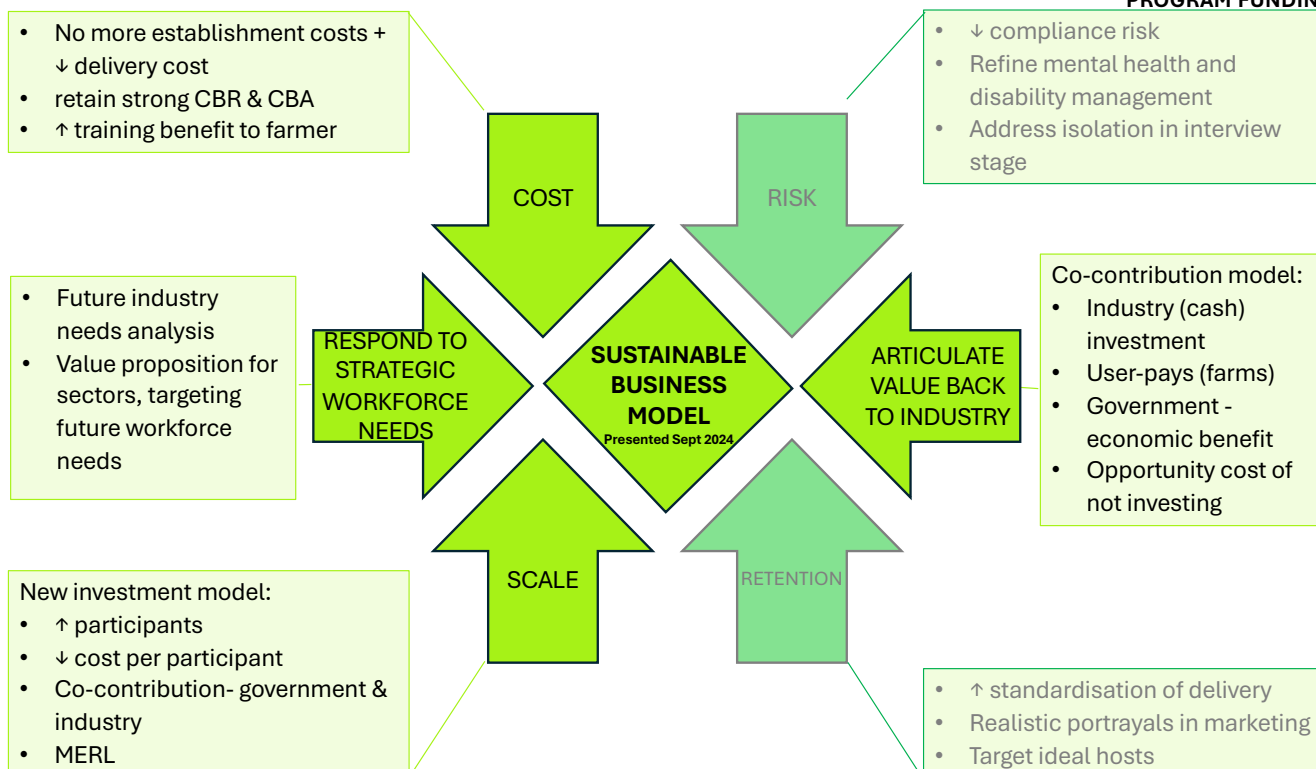


Key Evaluation Highlights of E.2

- C1-C2 Host respondents (n=16) indicate low appetite for a user-pays AgCAREERSTART model due to high delivery costs and short employment duration:
 - Only 6 of 16 respondents had used paid recruitment services; just one used them regularly; and
 - Only 4 of 16 respondents expressed willingness to pay for the program.
- As Part of Progress Report 3, agdots presented six key drivers to inform a future business model and provided associated recommendations based on MERL insights, post-pilot funding context, and business model planning. These Recommendations have been updated in the Final Report, Section 4.

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E.2 RECOMMENDATIONS OF NEXT STEPS TO INVESTIGATING SELF-SUSTAINING BUSINESS MODEL FOR AgCAREERSTART POST-PROGRAM FUNDING

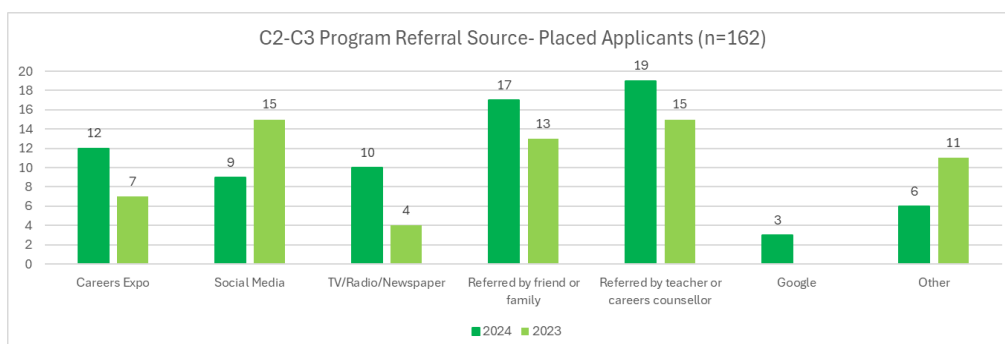


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E.3 EFFICIENT AND TARGETED MARKETING OF AgCAREERSTART TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

MARKETING

Indicator: E.3.1 Investment in recruitment and marketing channels that yield preferred applicants

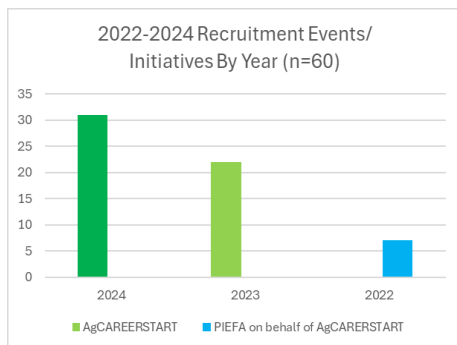


	C3 2024	C2 2023
Careers Expo	12	7
Social Media	9	15
TV/Radio/Newspaper	10	4
Referred by friend or family	17	13
Referred by teacher or careers counsellor	19	15
Google	3	
Other	6	11
Sample size n=162	76	65
Data Source:	Participant Applications (filtered by Confirmed Placements)	

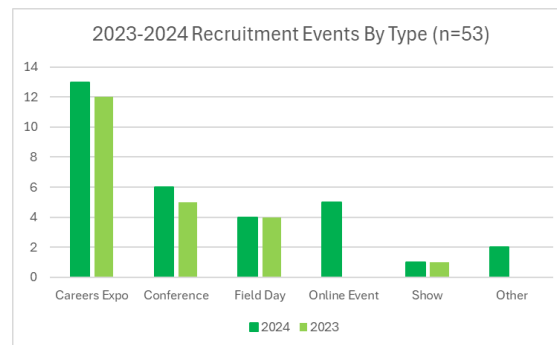
E.3 EFFICIENT AND TARGETED MARKETING OF AgCAREERSTART TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

MARKETING

Indicator: E.3.1 Investment in recruitment and marketing channels that yield preferred applicants



Events attended for recruitment purposes	2024	2023	2022
AgCAREERSTART	31	22	0
PIEFA on behalf of AgCAREERSTART	0	0	7
Sample size n=60	31	22	7
Data Source:	Recruitment Events Records		

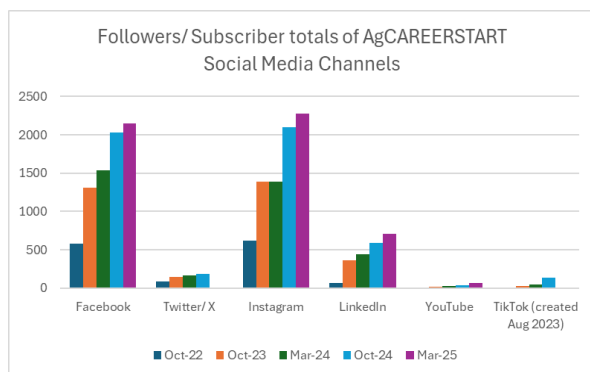


Recruitment Event Type	2024	2023
Careers Expo	13	12
Conference	6	5
Field Day	4	4
Online Event	5	5
Show	1	1
Other	2	2
Sample size n=53	31	22
Data Source:	Recruitment Events Records	

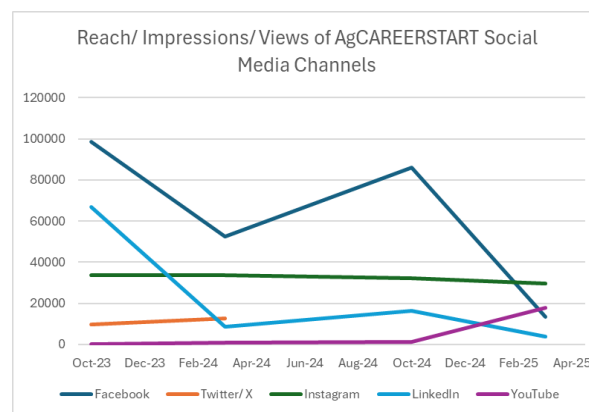
E.3 EFFICIENT AND TARGETED MARKETING OF AgCAREERSTART TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

MARKETING

Indicator: Investment in recruitment channels yielding preferred applicants



Followers/ subscribers						
	Facebook	Twitter/ X	Instagram	LinkedIn	YouTube	TikTok (created Aug 2023)
Oct-22	580	91	624	68	11	0
Oct-23	1314	146	1385	368	22	32
Mar-24	1537	162	1385	447	25	47
Oct-24	2029	184	2100	591	35	135
Mar-25	2151		2277	707	64	
Source: Activity Wok Plan Reports						



Reach/ Impressions/ Views					
	Facebook	Twitter/ X	Instagram	LinkedIn	YouTube
Oct-23	98614	9699	33741	67001	254
Mar-24	52400	12654	33741	8559	942
Oct-24	86000		32100	16522	1099
Mar-25	13400		29800	4000	18000
Source: Activity Wok Plan Reports					

E.3 EFFICIENT AND TARGETED MARKETING OF AgCAREERSTART TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

Key Evaluation Highlights of E.3

- The largest referral sources of C2 and C3 placed applicants (n=162) were person to person based with direct referrals from family, friends (30) and through the schooling/ career guidance system (34). Social media (24) and career's expo (n=19) were secondary but effective recruitment channels, it is worth noting that Teachers and Career's Counsellors also use Careers Expos as a key informing source for referrals.
- Key promotional mechanisms used by AgCAREERSTART between 2022-2024 were:
 - Recruitment events (C1-C3 n=60), noting that this was sub-contracted to PIEFA in the first year of the program (2022). This has been an expanding area for the program with 31 recruitment events being delivered in 2024, up from 22 in 2023.
 - Social Media- Statistics provided in Indicator E.3.1 show an active presence has been established and maintained on five social media platforms, with Instagram and Facebook leading (2,000+ followers each). Social media engagement aligns with annual application cycle peak in October.
 - Paid advertising through traditional print, radio and television channels (no data was made available to agdots for this report so this has no analysis has occurred)

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Appendix A End



Intermediate Program Data Indicators Report Author:
Hellene McTaggart, agdots – Output Analysis and Reporting

Acknowledgement
NFF's AgCAREERSTART team for provision of raw data

AgriFutures Project details
Project Number: PRO-017759
Name: Monitor and evaluate AgCAREERSTART program – Stage 2
Contract Manager: Sheridan Ingold, Manager, Workplace Delivery
Milestone: Final Report
Task: Intermediate Program Outcomes Report



Appendix B

**APPENDIX B: AGCAREERSTART COST BENEFIT
ANALYSIS REPORT DATE 16 JUNE 2025 BY
ECONISIS ON BEHALF OF AGDOTS**

AgCAREERSTART MERL S2 Final Report

AgCAREERSTART Cost Benefit Analysis, 16 June 2025

Author: Econisis on behalf of agdots

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Background and Context

PROGRAM SUMMARY

AgCAREERSTART, an innovative gap-year initiative, addresses the critical need for workforce development in the agricultural sector. Tailored for school leavers aged 17-25, the program provides a paid job and offers comprehensive training and development within the agricultural industry.

Launched in March 2022, this structured program collaborates with farmers across Australia, bridging the gap between the next generation of workers and the evolving needs of the agricultural landscape.

The key components of AgCAREERSTART encompass a range of initiatives:

- **Employment Opportunities:** Young Australians are provided with direct access to on-farm roles for up to 12 months, facilitating hands-on experience within the agricultural sector.
- **Farm and Employer Recruitment:** The program strategically identifies workforce needs in collaboration with the industry and matches participants with employers adhering to best-practice employment standards.
- **Onboarding and Safety Training:** Ensuring the well-being of participants and employers, the program offers comprehensive onboarding and safety training to navigate the often-complex environment of working on-farm and living remotely.

- **Pastoral Care and Support:** Participants receive ongoing support to ensure positive experiences, helping them navigate the challenges of working on-farm and living in remote locations.
- **Training and Industry Engagement Bursary:** A financial incentive of \$4,500 encourages participants to undertake development opportunities, building skills and qualifications for long-term careers in high-skill roles.
- **Alumni Network:** To foster long-term engagement, the program establishes an alumni network, offering ongoing support and encouraging participants to return to the agricultural sector.

Funded by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry (DAFF) and led by the National Farmers' Federation (NFF), AgriFutures Australia plays a crucial role as a consortium partner. The program's monitoring and evaluation is entrusted to AgriFutures Australia.

The AgCAREERSTART program, initiated as a pilot project, aims to provide school leavers with a unique work placement experience in agriculture, enhancing their skills and qualifications in workplace safety. The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework (MEL) serves to outline the program's intentions, track its progress, and inform improvements. It employs a continuous learning cycle through monitoring, evaluation, and learning, ensuring adaptability and efficacy over time.

The MEL Framework for AgCAREERSTART serves several objectives:

- **Accountability:** Demonstrating the Program's impact and value for money to DAFF, consortia partners, and the public.
- **Learning and Continuous Improvement:** Enhancing program performance through ongoing evaluation.
- **Guiding Decision-Making:** Providing evidence to support changes in the program for the program team and DAFF.
- **Communications:** Promoting the value of the Program and building a positive legacy for future activities.

AgCAREERSTART aims to address barriers and negative attitudes of young Australians toward long-term careers in agriculture. The program focuses on inputs, activities, people involvement, reactions, KASA change, practice change, and end results. The theory underscores the importance of an agricultural gap year in attracting and retaining young Australians in the sector.

The MEL process for AgCAREERSTART entails continuous monitoring, formative evaluation, and summative evaluation, involving the systematic collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. This information serves as the basis for refining design and assessing outcomes, conducted before and during the project as formative evaluation and at the project's conclusion as summative evaluation. The MEL framework, recognised as a "living document", undergoes regular review and updates to adapt to evolving program changes and priorities, ensuring its continued relevance and effectiveness throughout the Program's lifecycle.

PURPOSE OF EVALUATION

Econis previously evaluated Intakes 1 and 2 of the AgCAREERSTART program. This evaluation is for Intake 3 of the program and also includes a combined evaluation of all three intakes. This involves a cost benefit analysis to understand the estimated value for money of the Program.

Cost Benefit Analysis

METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

A CBA is the most commonly used, and most comprehensive, of the economic evaluation techniques. Essentially, a CBA compares the monetised benefits and costs of a Project to evaluate the desirability of a Project. A CBA provides little value if it is conducted without a base case in which with to compare options. For this report, the Concept Scenarios are therefore analysed based on only the incremental, or additional, benefits and costs with respect to a base case. This approach is the most appropriate to assess the net economic benefits that accrue from the two development options.

The CBA steps include:

- **Identify the quantifiable benefits that can be monetised** – Calculate the value (in monetary terms) of the quantified incremental benefits and capital costs in net present value (NPV) terms using the discount rates;
- **Calculate the benefit cost ratio (BCR)** – The total present value of all net benefits compared to the present value of capital costs to determine the ratio to which incremental net benefits exceed (or undershoot) incremental costs related with the upgrade; and
- Undertake a sensitivity assessment.

DISCOUNT RATES

Discounting is the reverse of adding (or compounding) interest. It reduces the monetary value of future costs and benefits back to a common time dimension – the base date. Discounting satisfies the view that people prefer immediate benefits over future benefits (social time preference), and it also enables the opportunity cost to be reflected (opportunity cost of capital). Recognising the potential for multiple audiences for the business cases, real discount rates of 4, 7 and 10% have been applied. This complies with the Australian Government's Office of Impact Analysis Cost Benefit Analysis Guidance Note¹.

Modelling of quantifiable benefits and costs are developed over a 20-year timeframe (post construction phase).

FINANCIAL COST APPROACH

The cost benefit analysis undertaken represents a financial cost-based assessment. This approach focuses primarily on the financial costs and less so on non-financial economic costs.

The principal reason for this is that the intention of the Cost Benefit Analysis is to examine the value for money and economic and social return-on-investment of the project. As such, the costs assessed are focused only on those of a financial or fiscal nature.

The costs used for Intake 3 are those provided by AgCAREERSTART for the period of January to December 2024. This sums to \$1.346 million.

¹ OIA (2024) Cost Benefit Analysis Guidance Note accessed at <https://oia.pmc.gov.au/resources/guidance-assessing-impacts/cost-benefit-analysis>

COMPARISON WITH THE BASE CASE

For this assessment, Econisis has undertaken a cost benefit analysis of the **net additional** benefits and costs above and beyond the base case. Net Present Value and Benefit Cost Ratios generated as part of the Cost Benefit Analysis are reflective of the net increase in economic and social benefits beyond the status quo.

ASSUMPTIONS

The following general assumptions have been applied.

Table 1 Key Assumptions	
ASSUMPTION	DETAILS
Average Gross Value Added per Agricultural Worker per Year	\$236,748 ²
Average Gross Value Added per Agricultural Worker per Hour	\$129.80 ³
Non-Economic Value of Time	\$20.40 ⁴
Average Farm Hand Wage	\$59,500 ⁵
Gross Value Added Share on Average Farm Turnover/Income	\$165,000 ⁶
Year of Participants in Intake 3	2024

The Gross Value Added share of average farm turnover/income assumed was \$165,000, the figure used in the previous evaluation of Intake 2. However, the Gross Value Added on the 10-year average of farm profit calculated from ABARE is substantially higher, at \$254,272. For the purpose of this evaluation, Econisis has used \$165,000 to ensure consistency with the prior evaluation and a highly conservative and defensible estimate of benefits. This ensures that there is only an upside risk to the estimated value of benefits.

BENEFIT STATEMENT

Econisis has identified two broad categories of benefits for consideration in the Benefit Statement and wider cost benefit analysis:

- In-Project or Concurrent Benefits** – benefits that are accrued to participants, stakeholders and the wider community and economy during the operation and delivery of the Project; and
- Post-Program or Long-Term Benefits** – benefits that accrue to participants, stakeholders and the wider community and economy post the operation/participation in the Project.

Econisis has identified a number of benefits for consideration in the cost benefit analysis of the Project. These benefits were originally identified in the preliminary benefit statement and have now been further refined based on data availability.

In-Project Benefits

- Training Participation and Skills Development
- Soft Skills Development
- Recruitment Assistance and Support
- Participant On-Farm Industry Value Added

Long-Term Benefits

- Increased Workforce and Skills Availability
- Improved on Farm OHS
- Increased Long-Term Economic Productivity

The following table provides the statement of benefits of the assessment. This includes descriptions of the benefits, benefiting stakeholders and calculations methods.

² .id (2025) Economy Profile – Worker Productivity. Accessed at <https://economy.id.com.au/>

³ As above, based on 48 weeks, 38 hours per week.

⁴ ATAP (2014) Parameter Values accessed at <https://www.atap.gov.au/parameter-values/road-transport/3-travel-time>. Adjusted for CPI

⁵ Talent.com (2024) Farm Hand Average Salary in Australia accessed at <https://au.talent.com/salary?job=farm+hand#:~:text=How%20much%20does%20a%20Farm%20hand%20make%20in%20Australia%3F&text=The%20average%20farm%20hand%20salary%20in%20Australia%20is%20%2459%2C280%20per,up%20to%20%24114%2C075%20per%20year.>

⁶ ABARES (2024) Financial performance of cropping farms accessed at <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/research-topics/surveys/cropping>. Adjusted to GVA by 50%.

Table 2 Benefits Statement for AgCAREERSTART

BENEFIT	DESCRIPTION	STAKEHOLDER	VALUE METHOD
IN-PROGRAM BENEFITS			
Training Participation and Skills Development	Value of formal training and skills development to Participant in short and long-term.	Participant	Valued based on the annual agricultural worker productivity by hour, applied to the number of events, assuming a full day is required per training activity.
Soft Skills Development	Value of increased soft skills on Participant employability and earnings.	Participant	Based on the non-economic time value of time spent by Participants engaged in employment with Hosts. Adjusted to 10% to account for soft skill development role in worker productivity.
Recruitment Assistance and Support	Value of assistance provided by Program on Host farm recruitment support.	Host	Valued based on 20% of the annual average farm hand wage per Participant as a proxy for market-based recruitment costs.
Participant On-Farm Industry Value Added	Value of the economic production and value added produced by Participant on farm	Industry/ Economy	Gross value added (GVA) worker productivity per Participant that completed each intake. 50% discount for first year productivity and further 50% to account for labour share in total worker productivity.
POST-PROGRAM BENEFITS			
Increased Workforce and Skills Availability	Estimated impact of increased workforce availability based on post-program employment of Participants in the industry.	Industry	Based on 5% of the average farm hand wage salary, with a 50% labour share. Applied to all years in the assessment period post Intake.
Improved On Farm OHS and Systems	Long-term impact associated with induced improvements in on farm OHS.	Host	Valued at 1% of GVA share of annual business turnover as a business processes productivity dividend. Applied for first 5 years after Intake.
Increased Long-Term Economic Productivity	Long-term economic productivity, exports and agriculture industry outputs attributable to Participant and Host Post-Program impacts.	Industry/ Economy	Valued based on 10% of the agricultural worker productivity, with a 50% labour share weighting. Applied to all applications for first 5 years post intake.

RESULTS

The present value of the costs of agCAREERSTART is \$1.135m at all discount rates. This is because all the cost is incurred in 2024, which is the first year of the assessment period and is not subject to discounting.



Figure 1 Present Value of Costs, by Discount Rate

By comparison, the present value of benefits of the program is estimated at between \$7.21m at 10% and \$7.83m at 4%.

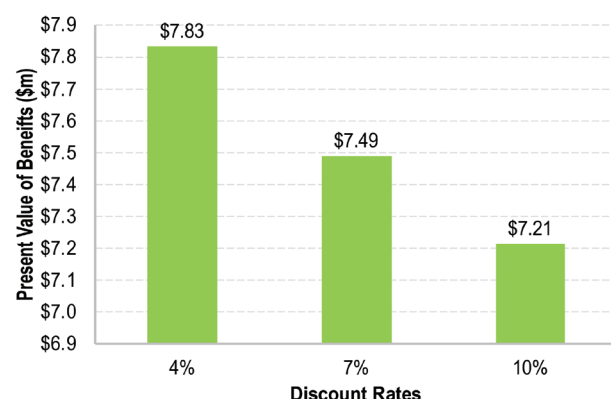


Figure 2 Present Value of Benefits, by Discount Rate

A present value of \$3.68m of benefits are expected to yield post-program – this includes long-term economic productivity, improved farm OHS systems, and increased workforce and skills availability. A slightly higher share of benefits are estimated to have yielded during the program in the form of participant productivity, skills development, training, and recruitment assistance. These benefits have a present value of \$3.81m at the 7% discount rate.

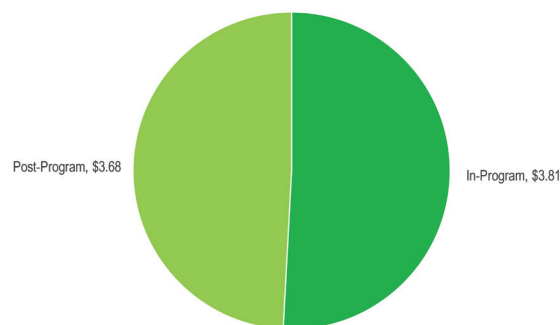


Figure 3 In-Program and Post-Program Shares of Present Value of Benefits, 7% Discount Rate

This reflects the fact that the concurrent and long-term economic productivity linked to worker participation in the agricultural sector is the largest and most significant benefit at 7% discount rate across both In-Program and Post-Program categories. The benefits relating to worker productivity are valued at \$2.84m during the program, and \$2.49m for the 20 years post-program. Other benefits are relatively smaller ranging from \$0.1m for training participation to \$0.79m for increased workforce and skills availability.

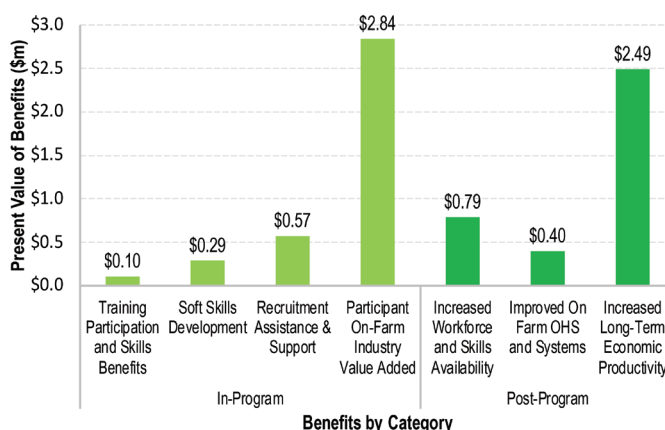


Figure 4 Present Value of Individual In-Program and Post-Program Benefits, 7% Discount Rate

A review of the net present values of the assessment confirm that the present value of benefits exceeds that of costs by between \$5.87m at 10% discount rate and \$6.49m at 4%. Any value that exceeds zero means that the present value of benefits exceed costs, resulting in a positive economic and social return to the community and economy of the project.



Figure 5 Net Present Value, by Discount Rate

Similarly, the ratio of benefits to costs (benefit-cost ratio or BCR) for the project ranges from 5.36 at 10% to 5.82 at 4%. This means that for every \$1 the program costs, it generates \$5.56 of benefits at the 7% discount rate.

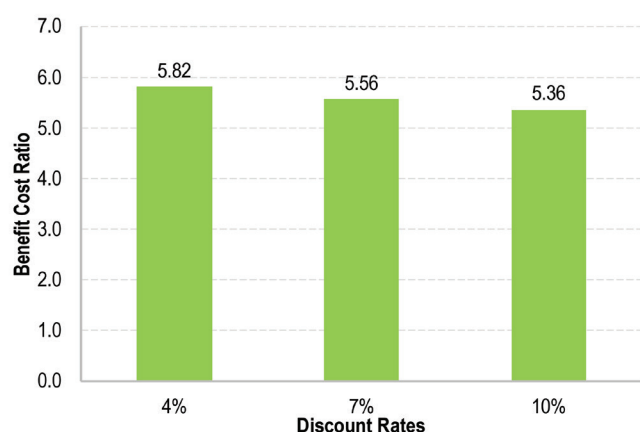


Figure 6 Benefit Cost Ratios, by Discount Rate

As with the NPVs, any BCR above 1.0 means the present value of benefits exceeds that of costs and returns a positive value. The BCR threshold for investment varies from project and sector, though State and Federal Governments typically seek a BCR exceeding 2.0. This, when combined with the application of discount rates, helps to provide further buffer when dealing with benefits that are yet to eventuate (i.e. long-term or post-program benefits).

These results are summarised in the following table.

Table 3 Cost Benefit Analysis Summary			
Summary	4%	7%	10%
Costs	-\$1.35	-\$1.35	-\$1.35
Benefits	\$7.83	\$7.49	\$7.21
In-Program	\$3.81	\$3.81	\$3.81
Training Participation and Skills Benefits	\$0.10	\$0.10	\$0.10
Soft Skills Development	\$0.29	\$0.29	\$0.29
Recruitment Assistance & Support	\$0.57	\$0.57	\$0.57
Participant On-Farm Industry Value Added	\$2.84	\$2.84	\$2.84
Post-Program	\$4.03	\$3.68	\$3.40
Increased Workforce and Skills Availability	\$0.98	\$0.79	\$0.66
Improved On Farm OHS and Systems	\$0.42	\$0.40	\$0.38
Increased Long-Term Economic Productivity	\$2.63	\$2.49	\$2.37
Net Present Value	\$6.49	\$6.14	\$5.87
Benefit Cost Ratios	5.82	5.56	5.36

SENSITIVITY TESTS

In addition to the application of various discount rates, two sensitivity tests have been undertaken for the CBA results.

In particular, amendments have been made to the assumptions and benefit calculation methods to assess the impacts of:

- Test 1 –halving of Participant share of average agricultural worker productivity from 50% to 25%.
- Test 2 – the consideration of In-Program Benefits only.

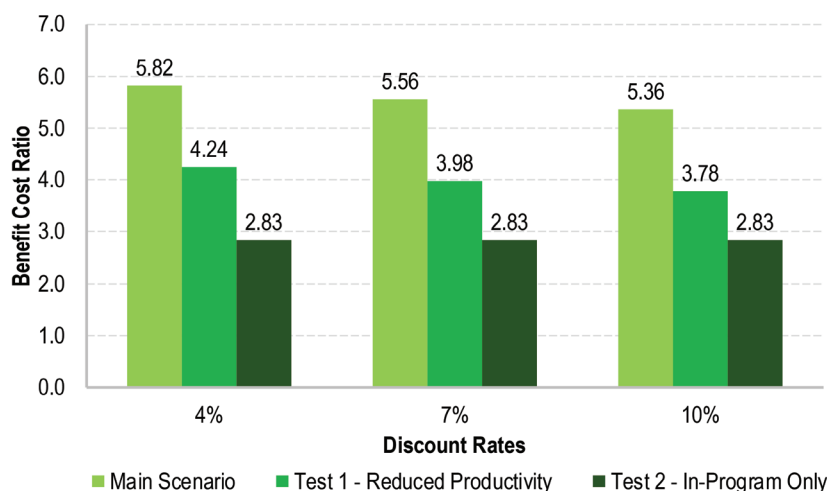


Figure 7 Benefit Cost Ratios, by Main Scenario and Sensitivity Tests, by Discount Rate

Under Test 1, the BCRs of the project decreased from 5.56 to 3.98 at the 7% discount rate. While this highlights the importance of the economic productivity of participants, both during and post the program, it also highlights the high degree of resilience of the value for money outcomes from significant changes to Participant worker productivity.

Similarly, under Test 2, the BCR at 7% falls to 2.83. This is approximately half that of the Main Scenario and is in line with the In-Program benefit share of the present value of benefits. Despite this lower figure, it highlights that the program still remains a high value for money proposition (i.e. remains well above 1.0) even when post-program values are excluded. This is important as the values of In-Program benefits are based on actual activity and participation that has already occurred and therefore is less subject to estimates as Post-Program benefits.

COMBINED EVALUATION OF INTAKES 1 TO 3

Econisis previously conducted a cost benefit analysis of Intakes 1 and 2 of the AgCAREERSTART program. A further evaluation was undertaken combining the benefits and costs of all three intakes to obtain a 'whole-of-program' evaluation.

The costs for Intakes 1 and 2 included the sunk costs incurred in establishing the AgCAREERSTART program prior to its beginning. These additional costs decrease the BCR compared to Intake 3 alone which only includes costs incurred in 2024. The whole program has an estimated BCR of 3.82 at the 7% discount rate. This ranges from 3.56 at the 10% discount rate to 4.13 at the 4% discount rate.



Figure 8 Benefit Cost Ratios, Main Scenario and Combined Intakes, by Discount Rate

Appendix C

APPENDIX C: AGCAREERSTART MERL S2 INTERMEDIATE PROGRAM OUTPUT INDICATORS MATRIX

AgCAREERSTART MERL S2 Intermediate Program Output Indicators

Long-term Outcome	Intermediate Outcome	Theme	Indicator
A. Young Australians are attracted to enter the AgriFood industry through on-farm 'gap year' structured employment program	A.1 Young Australians and farm businesses identify AgCAREERSTART as a pathway to the AgriFood workforce	Program Engagement	A.1.1 Year on Year Number of Applications (Participants and Hosts)
			A.1.2 Participants converting to ag related employment or study post AgCAREERSTART
	A.2 AgCAREERSTART provides young Australians from a non-ag background greater access to explore a career in the AgriFood industry.	Education and Training	A.2.1 Share of Participants with place of origin in Greater Capital City location.
			A.2.2 Level of participant understanding of agriculture – on entry and exit
	A.3 Under represented / minority / gender groups of young Australians are increasingly likely to able to access a career in ag through the AgCAREERSTART	Labour Force	A.3.1 Number of Female Participants
			A.3.2 Number of Participants from Diversity Groups
B. More young Australians are retained in the AgriFood industry long-term	B.1 Young Australians engaged in AgCAREERSTART have improved: capacity (skills and knowledge), capability (leadership and networks) and employment prospects in ag. Industry	Labour Force	B.1.1 Share of participants that engaged in formal training (in program) to increase their skills and knowledge
			B.1.2 Participants build skills and knowledge and gain experience through their on-farm placement
			B.1.3 Share of participants that experienced an increase in their skills and knowledge, leadership over the 12 months?
			B.1.4 Improved employment prospects of participants

Long-term Outcome	Intermediate Outcome	Theme	Indicator
B. More young Australians are retained in the AgriFood industry long-term cont.	B.2 Young Australians establish and foster peer to peer and industry networks and career opportunities in ag	Networking and Community	B.2.1 Share of Participants engaged in Industry events through program
			B.2.2 Leadership and Networking skills gained through 'on-farm experience'
			B.2.3 Participants improve networking skills and establish and maintain networks in the AgriFood Industry through the Program
	B.3 Young Australians have positive experience of AgCAREERSTART and promote in their sphere of influence	Networking and Community	B.3.1 Share of participants who on exit from the program who viewed the program had a positive impact on their careers and lives?
			B.3.2 Share of participants who would recommend the program to their family or friends
			B.3.3 Former Participants actively advocate for the Program and the boarder AgriFood Industry
C. More farm businesses are employing young people	C.1 Farm businesses understand the value of employing young Australians	Labour Force	C.1.1 Hosts recommend the AgCAREERSTART program to other farmers
			C.1.2 Hosts experience value in having a Young Participant as part of their business
	C.2 Farm businesses engaged in AgCAREERSTART are continuing practice of employing young people post-program.	Labour Force	C.2.1 Share of hosts continuing (or more likely to continue) the practice of employing young people after the Program
			C.2.2 Share of hosts reapplying for Program
	C.3 Farm bus. have positive experience in AgCAREERSTART and promote in their sphere of influence	Networking and Community	C.3.1 Hosts have positive experience in the Program and their expectations are met
			C.3.2 Hosts view the program as beneficial to addressing agricultural domestic workforce supply issues?
C. More farm businesses are employing young people cont.	C.4 Farm businesses have systems and access to support to accommodate needs of young people entering the workforce.	Program Design/ Industry Development	C.4.1 Hosts are effective mentors to young people
			C.4.2 Hosts provide participants with work environment and conditions suited to 'young' or 'early-career' employee

Long-term Outcome	Intermediate Outcome	Theme	Indicator
D. Build reputation of farm businesses as best practice workplaces & employers of choice amongst young people	D.1 Farm businesses engaged in AgCAREERSTART are considered best practice workplaces by AgriFood industry	Industry Development	D.1.1 Number of host businesses that are consider best practice workplaces and employers choice
	D.2 Program is accessible to farm businesses nationally and engages all ag sectors	Program Engagement	D.2.1 Farm business program participation by ag sector and location (diversities of sectors represented)
	D.3 AgCAREERSTART industry partners have a positive experience in AgCAREERSTART and promote in their sphere of influence	Program Engagement	D.3.1 Share of Host Applications that cited different industry partners in their application
			D.3.2 AgCAREERSTART Participants engage with Industry Partners
E. Establish cost and value to industry of AgCAREERSTART	E.1 AgriFood industry understand value of AgCAREERSTART and subsequently invest in and promote the program	Program Engagement	E.1.1 Industry invest in program (in-kind and cash) and provide value to the program
	E.2 Recommendations of next steps to investigating self-sustaining business model for AgCAREERSTART post-program funding	Program Design	Provided in PR3 – and updated in Final Report (ref: Section 4)
	E.3 Efficient and targeted marketing of AgCAREERSTART to potential participants	Marketing	E.3.1 Investment in recruitment and marketing channels that yield preferred applicants

Appendix D

APPENDIX D: DATA SOURCES LIST

MERL S2 Data Sources

Full list of data sources accessed by agdots to report against MERL S2 milestones deliverables across life of project.

Cohort	Data Source Name	Description	Provided by	Sample size (n=x)
4	2025 Producer Applications	All farm business applicants that applied to be hosts in C4	NFF Airtable Link	73
4	2025 Participant Applications	All young people that applied to be participants in C4	NFF Airtable Link	170
3	2024 Host Exit Survey Response Data	Exit Survey completed by participants 1-3 months post program	NFF Excel Doc	9
3	2024 Participant Exit Survey Response Data	Exit Survey completed by participants 1-3 months post program	NFF Excel Doc	22
3	2024 Host Applications	All farm business applicants that applied to be hosts in C3	NFF Airtable Link	88
3	2024 Participant applications	All young people that applied to be participants in C3	NFF Airtable Link	162
3	2024 Confirmed Places	73 of 78 C3 participants matched with farm hosts- includes some training and engagement data	NFF Airtable Link	73
3	2024 Cohort Welfare Reports	All communications related to welfare of participants	NFF Airtable Link	420
2-3	2023 & 2024 Recruitment Events (in person)	Details of recruitment activity of ACS team	NFF Airtable Link	74
3	Financial Summary	Program Summary of expenses for period Jan-Dec 2024	NFF Excel Doc	
2	2023 Participant Post-Program Survey	Completed 12-18 months after program completion (May 2025)	NFF Excel Doc	26
2	2023 Host Post-Program Survey	Completed 12-18 months after program completion (May 2025)	NFF Excel Doc	11
2	2023 Participant Applications	Applications from young people to be 2023 Participants	NFF Excel Doc	128
2	2023 Host Applications	Applications from Farm Businesses to be 2022 Hosts	NFF Excel Doc	114 from 81 bus.
2	2023 Participant exit survey	Exit Survey completed by participants 1-3 months post program	NFF Excel Doc	20
2	2023 Host exit survey	Exit Survey completed by farm business hosts 1-3 months post program	NFF Excel Doc	14
2-3	2023 -2024 Training and engagement spend	Bursary expenditure items allocated to each participant	NFF Airtable Link	284

Cohort	Data Source Name	Description	Provided by	Sample size (n=x)
2	2023 Cohort welfare reports	Communications log- for pastoral care and welfare of participants	NFF Airtable Link	263
2	2023 Host Feedback (renamed) aka '2023 Host Mid-year Feedback'	2023 Host details and feedback conducted mid-year	NFF Excel Doc	28
1	2022 Participant Post Program Survey	Completed 18 months after program completion (Jun 2024)	NFF Airtable Link	7
1	2022 Host Post Program Survey	Completed 18 months after program completion (Jul 2024)	NFF Airtable Link	5
1	2022 Participant applications (and withdrawn)	Applications from young people to be 2022 Participants	NFF Excel Doc	121
1	2022 Host Applications	Applications from Farm Businesses to be 2022 Hosts	NFF Excel Doc	106
1	2022 Participant Training Log	Record of training events attended by 2022 Participants (Feb-Dec 2022)	NFF Airtable (Doc Sharing Tab)	26
1	2022 Participant Feedback aka '2022 Participant Exit Survey'	2022 Participant feedback survey conducted at program exit/ completion (Dec-Feb 2022)	NFF Excel Doc	10
1	2022 Host Feedback (renamed) aka '2022 Host EXIT Survey'	Host feedback survey conducted at program exit/ completion (Dec-Feb 2022)	NFF Excel Doc	12
1	2022 Host- participant matches	Participants names matched to the Farm Host Employer	NFF Excel Doc	28
1-2	Monthly financials by cost centre July 2021-Dec 2023	Actual financial expenses by cost centre (note monthly data for some cost centres is incomplete)	NFF via email	
1-3	Activity Work Plans Report	Funding requirement submitted by NFF for periods: October 2022; Oct March 2023; March 2024;October 2024	NFF via email	
1-2	PIEFA Report	Mar-August 2023; PEIFA Delivery Report May 2022	NFF Airtable (Doc Sharing Tab)	
1-3	Marketing data	2022 Marketing Spend Summary (Supplier: Redhanded); 2023 campaign Marketing Activity Jan-Oct PR Media Status Report August 2022 (Supplier: Porter Novelli); Social media statistics to Mar 2025	NFF Airtable (Doc Sharing Tab) and various emails	

