

# WORKING WITH BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY PARTNERS

*Your local business community will be very important to you and your agriculture program. Members of the business community can be your program’s advisors, benefactors, advocates and partners—as well as the “consumers” of your final product, career-ready students. Becoming familiar with and to members of the business community could be vital to your success.*

## STEPS TO SUCCESS

1. Explore your business community by researching and/or visiting businesses and industries located in your area. Make a list of these businesses and place asterisks next to those that could prove helpful or important to your program.
2. Compile information about the people you meet and the businesses and industries you visit.
3. Involve the business community in your program and FFA chapter.
4. Stay in touch with the local agriculture-related community for long-term partnership and success.

## IN THIS SECTION

Tips:

**Explore Your Business Community**

Tips:

**Involving the Business Community**

Tips:

**Staying in Touch with Your Agriculture Community**

## EXPLORE YOUR BUSINESS COMMUNITY

*Check off each category as you obtain information about the businesses located in your school district and within the geographic area in which local citizens work.*

- agricultural production enterprises
- agriculture-related businesses —
  - sales/service to production enterprises;
  - ag marketing or communications firms
  - ag-focused financial institutions
- regional agriculture-related sales/service divisions
- school district suppliers
- retail businesses
- business-to-business services
- consumer services
- financial services
- health care services
- small businesses and entrepreneurs
- agriculture-related agencies
- agriculture-related organizations

### CONTACT OPPORTUNITIES

Look for every opportunity to meet members of the business community. Some good opportunities may be —

- community events
- Visit their businesses.
- Seek out their displays at community events.
- Attend civic organization meetings and Chamber of Commerce activities in which they participate.

Introduce yourself as the new agriculture instructor, and give them your business card. Be prepared with pertinent information about you, your program and how the business might become involved.

Arrange for FFA officers and other students to give presentations to civic and business organizations.

Make sure to keep a log of the businesses that you have contacted. This may be beneficial at the end of the school year.

# INVOLVING THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

*Your business community and its members can be vital resources for your agriculture program. At the same time, your program and its students provide businesses with current and future workers, as well as leaders who will take charge of tomorrow's agriculture industry and local community. Try some of these suggestions for involving business contacts with your program and FFA chapter.*

Your business community can provide

- guest speakers (on everything from specific businesses or agricultural career options to personal and leadership development topics);
- Advisory Committee members (see Section 14, Developing and Managing an Advisory Committee);
- CDE judges and coaches;
- current, real-world information and examples;
- real-world experiential learning opportunities for students, including supervised agricultural experiences (SAE) and other work-based learning experiences;
- field trip sites;
- interactions for student learning experiences/projects such as job shadowing, industry interviews, research, etc.
- student employment (paid or unpaid);
- graduate placement;
- program promotion, including quotes in brochures or videos and presentations to students, parents, school board, etc.;
- validation that your program's goals, curriculum and lesson plans to prepare students for the world of work;
- evaluation of students' performance;
- borrowed resources (merchandise, equipment, literature, handbooks, displays, industry guides);
- assistance with purchasing decisions for program equipment, materials and resources;
- equipment and materials for your agriculture program (donations of new or used materials usually provide tax deductions for the business);
- financial support.

# STAYING IN TOUCH WITH YOUR AGRICULTURE COMMUNITY

- Meet all business, industry and agriculture organization leaders important to your program area.
- Stay in touch with these people on a regular basis.
- Ask to be put on their mailing lists.
- Keep them informed about your program. (Involve students in this effort.)
- Mail them holiday greeting cards from your program (being conscious of people from various faith communities).
- Invite them to program functions and events.
- Invite them to your classroom and laboratory.
- Organize an appreciation banquet for your business community.
- Ask them for their assistance, and be willing to offer your assistance to them.
- Say thank you, thank you, thank you!

## COMMUNICATING WITH BUSINESSES

1. Introduce yourself and program.
2. Be personable.
3. Tell the business how their support will be used. Be specific.
4. Sign the letter.

[Sample Sponsor Letter and Sample Fundraiser Donation Request Letter](#)