



TOGETHER WE
grow

CULTIVATING DIVERSITY
HARVESTING POTENTIAL



2023-24
ANNUAL REPORT



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Letter from the Executive Director

As the newly appointed Executive Director of Together We Grow, I am deeply honored to step into this role at a pivotal time for our organization and the industry we serve. First, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to Lauren Baer and Bill Hendrix for their exceptional leadership and unwavering support over the past year. Their dedication has been instrumental in guiding our organization through a year of significant progress and challenges.

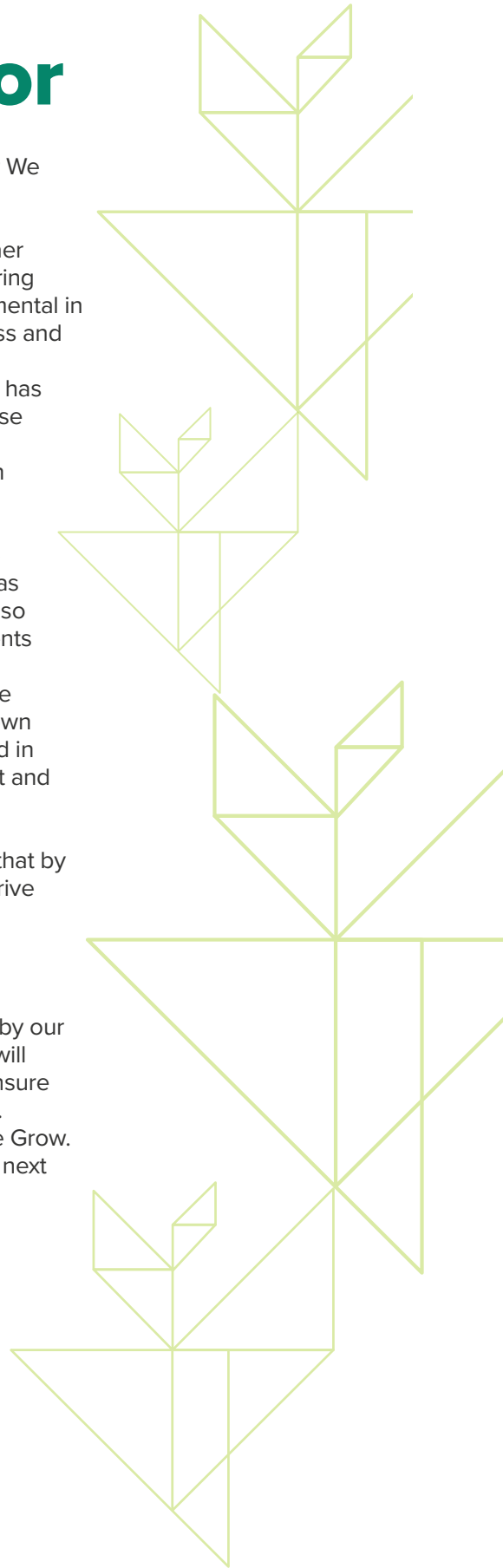
I'd like to share a message from Bill Hendrix, a leader who has been steadfast in advancing our mission: "I'm grateful for those who came to the table in 2016 with Secretary Vilsack and an idea and dedication to make positive progress and change in the agriculture and food sector. Many are still involved and engaged today. I'm thankful for the first Executive Director of this organization, Kristin Kirkpatrick, who brought structure and organizational credibility to Together We Grow, not only as the new leader of a forming entity, but also as one who led also during the COVID pandemic and social upheaval around events such as the murder of George Floyd, which drove home the importance of our mission as an organization. I'm appreciative of a board of directors committed to this work beyond their own individual organizations, and of a membership that is invested in making strides in diversity, equity, and inclusion in our current and future workforce."

Bill's words resonate deeply with me as I take on this responsibility. Together We Grow was founded on the belief that by bringing together diverse voices and perspectives, we can drive meaningful change and create a more inclusive industry for future generations.

As we look ahead, I am excited to build on the strong foundation laid by our previous leaders. I am committed to continuing the work that has been so thoughtfully advanced by our board, our members, and our dedicated team. Together, we will strive to expand our impact, deepen our partnerships, and ensure that our mission remains at the forefront of everything we do.

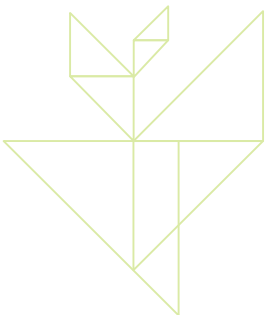
Thank you for your continued commitment to Together We Grow. I am eager to work alongside all of you as we embark on the next chapter of our journey.

Stephon Fitzpatrick, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Together We Grow





Who We Are



Together We Grow is a consortium of some of the world's largest agriculture and food interests — major agricultural and food companies, educational institutions, government agencies, and national nonprofits — focused on building a more diverse and capable workforce in food and agriculture. We foster collaboration among our members and partners to advance workforce diversity initiatives and broaden the talent pipeline entering the sector. TWG exists to directly address the challenges and the opportunities for the agriculture and food sector, both now and in the future.

THE CHALLENGE

World Population and Food Production

- By 2050, the world population is expected to grow to almost 10 billion; to meet the demand, we will need to increase food production by more than 50% from where it was in 2010.¹
- We will need to produce the same amount of food over the next 50 years as we have in the history of civilization.²

U.S. Agriculture and Food Workforce

- Almost 40% of the U.S. agriculture and food workforce will come from non-traditional/non-agriculture pathways.³
- Only 25% of college students in food and agriculture programs are non-white, compared with 50% of typical college-age people in the U.S. being non-white.⁴
- A 2019 study for TWG involving 260,000 employees across 11 companies in the food and agriculture sector identified multiple potential

areas for progress to be made in working toward a more diverse sector benefitting from the opportunities created through a diverse workforce.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Diversity

- Companies with diverse management teams have almost 20% higher innovation revenue than companies with non-diverse teams.⁵
- Diverse companies have an increased likelihood of above-average profitability as a result of better decision-making and performance.⁶
- Two out of three Americans indicate that their social values shape their shopping choices (inclusive consumers).⁷
- Diverse workforces have direct and positive impacts on innovation, problem solving, attraction and retention of top talent, creativity, adaptability, flexibility, financial performance, employee engagement, risk management, legal compliance, and reputation.

TWG and its member organizations are focused on making positive progress for a diverse workforce to ensure the innovation needed to feed the world, cultivate diversity, and harvest potential.

¹World Resources Institute, *How to Sustainably Feed 10 Billion People by 2050*, in 21 Charts

²ABC News, *Can We Grow More Food in 50 Years Than In All of History?*

³Purdue and USDA, *Employment Opportunities for College Graduates*

⁴Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities

⁵Harvard Business Review, *How Diversity Can Drive Innovation*

⁶McKinsey & Company, *Delivering Through Diversity*

⁷McKinsey & Company, *The Rise of the Inclusive Consumer*

Our History

Together We Grow started in 2016, when Michael D'Ambrose, who led the HR function for ADM, and Secretary Tom Vilsack — who served as Secretary of Agriculture for four years in President Joe Biden's administration and for eight years under President Barack Obama — brought the agriculture industry together to think about the state of the world in 2050. Leaders from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government, higher education, and agribusiness realized that to address the monumental challenge of feeding a rapidly growing global population with fewer resources they would need to work together.

Since 2016, Together We Grow's members have shared best practices and data, and made collaborative investments to build a more skilled, diverse, and inclusive workforce for the U.S. food and agriculture industry, to welcome the innovation needed to feed the world for generations to come.

In 2022, TWG recognized the value of bringing even greater clarity to our organizational purpose and strategies for achieving progress, leading to the launch of a strategic planning process in 2023.



2016

- Gathered in Washington D.C. to discuss future challenges

2019

- CSU becomes hosts of TWG First Executive Director hired

2020

- Formalized TWG entity
- Formed Board of Directors
- Hosted Town Hall on race and racism in the industry
- Completed member data project
- Launched TWG working groups

2021

- Launched national communications campaign
- Hired communications staff
- Created industry DEI pledge
- Launched leadership training cohort program

2022-23

- Transitioned leadership to new Executive Director
- Convened 10 working group sessions
- Hosted member event at CSU Spur
- Launched strategic planning process





Leadership and Staff

TWG is led by a skilled team and governed by a board of directors invested and knowledgeable in the agriculture and food sector, workforce development, innovation, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

STAFF

Stephon Fitzpatrick, Ph.D.
Executive Director



Russell Schiller
Social and Digital
Media Coordinator



PAST EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Bill Hendrix, Ph.D.
Interim Executive Director
2024



Lauren Baer
Executive Director
2023



Kristin Kirkpatrick
Executive Director
2022



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Melissa Werneck (Chair)
Global CHRO, Kraft-Heinz



Olga Bolden-Tiller, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Agriculture,
Environment, and Nutrition
Sciences; Tuskegee University,
MANRRS



Bill Hendrix, Ph.D.
Valent USA LLC and The
Cultivating Change Foundation



Wanda Jackson
Senior Vice President,
Human Resources,
National Urban League



Mary Kaul-Hottinger
EVP and CHRO, CHS, Inc.



Kellie Sears
CHRO, Bunge



Mark Stewart
President and CEO
Agriculture Future of America



Jeremy Williams, Ph.D.
Head of Climate, Digital
Farming, and Ecosystems,
Bayer Crop Science





2023-24 Members

INDUSTRY

ADM	Kraft Heinz Co.
Bayer	Land O'Lakes Inc.
Bunge, Ltd.	Nutrien
CHS, Inc.	Scoular
Corteva Agriscience	

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Auburn University	Tuskegee University
California Polytechnic State University	University of Kentucky
Colorado State University	University of Maryland Eastern Shore
Delaware State University	University of Montana
Iowa State University	University of Tennessee
Michigan State University	Virginia Cooperative Extension
North Carolina State University	Virginia State University
Purdue University	Virginia Tech

GOVERNMENTAL

United States Department of Agriculture

OTHER CORPORATE

AgCareers	Discovery Education
AgTools	Stride (formerly K12)
Challenger Gray	STEMConnector

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Agriculture Future of American	National Academy of Sciences
AgriCenter International	NASDA Foundation
American Indian Higher Education Consortium	National Urban League
Association of Public & Land Grant Universities	Seed Your Future
Big Green	Thurgood Marshall College Fund
Corn Refiners Association	United Soybean Board
Future Farmers of America	US Farmers and Ranchers
Jobs for America's Graduates	West Virginia University Foundation
Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources & Related Sciences (MANRRS)	
National 4-H Council	
National Agriculture in the Classroom	

Membership + Benefits

TWG is proud of our membership representation across industry, higher education, NGOs, and government agencies. We believe this membership is critical to our work and value as an organization focused on building a more diverse and capable workforce for agriculture and food in collaboration among our members and partners.

MEMBER BENEFITS

Benefit Category	Description
Leadership Positions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to hold leadership positions that guide TWG initiatives and programs Opportunities to be elected to TWG boards (executive and advisory) Access to hold leadership roles on committees and councils
Voting Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voting rights in TWG board elections and other matters in TWG bylaws (voting rights by organization, not individual)
Connect Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complimentary or discounted registration to TWG's Connect Conference and Annual Meeting Opportunities for speaking engagements at Connect Conference Access to showcase your organization to attendees Ability to participate in other engagement and awareness opportunities, as available
Members-Only Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to TWG's members-only online portal for resources and networking information (in development) Access to members-only working groups, events, and development programs
Visibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visibility of member organization name and webpage link on TWG website Access to include TWG logo and website link on member organization website (e.g. illustrating commitment to ESG, DEI, etc.) Opportunity to write educational articles for publication on the TWG website, newsletter, and social media channels, as well as potential speaking opportunities at TWG events Opportunities to collaborate on social media and online storytelling campaigns from the individual, organization, and sector perspectives
Job Postings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complimentary job postings on TWG social media channels Visibility on TWG's "Hot Jobs in Ag and Food" website job board if posting with AgCareers.com
Communications and Reports/ Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to participate in TWG studies and reports (as available), with discounted and/or complimentary reports if fee-based for non-members Monthly communications from TWG

MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

- National presence in the agriculture and food sector, higher education institution, NGO, or government agency focused on agriculture, food, workforce, and/or diversity initiatives
- C-suite engagement and commitment to diversity and inclusion, including commitment to the TWG Pledge to Diversity and Inclusion
- Completion of the TWG membership application
- Member attendance at TWG meetings and convenings
- Identification of primary contacts for TWG communications and correspondence
- Payment of the annual fee per the membership fee structure

FEE STRUCTURE

To further the work toward TWG's purpose and ensure the longevity of the organization and its impact over time, members are required to pay an annual membership fee based on their membership category and member size. Membership fees are based on organization and do not limit the number of representatives from the organization who may participate in TWG efforts.

JOIN US.
TWG.CSUSYSTEM.EDU



What We Do

Together We Grow brings our strong representation of members together to focus on efforts that:

Broaden the pipeline of diverse talent entering the field by collaboratively engaging people in new and different ways.

Connect organizations and professionals in food and agriculture to foster collaboration and nurture inclusive cultures.

Support the diversification of the workforce in food and agriculture through industry-wide assessment and benchmarking, and by curating best practices, marketing, advocacy for diversity initiatives.



2023-24 Snapshot

ORGANIZATION

53
MEMBERS



- 17% INDUSTRY**
- 11% CORPORATE**
- 32% HIGHER ED**
- 38% NGO**
- 2% GOVERNMENT**

Milestones

- Assembled Strategic Planning Committee and completed strategic planning process
- Two new members – New Mexico State University and The Cultivating Change Foundation

BROADEN

CREATING AWARENESS

Agriculture and Food as a Place for Opportunity and Belonging

2 ACTIVATIONS TO COLLECT STORIES FROM STUDENTS AND PROFESSIONALS

480K+ impressions online from collaboratively shared stories with TWG members



2 EXTERNAL SPONSORED EVENTS: WATER IN THE WEST AND GFRAS

3 partner events and speaking engagements to represent TWG

- Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS)
- STEMconnector
- AgCareers

CONNECT CONFERENCE

70
LEADERS



ATTENDED CONNECT CONFERENCE

STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSIONS: 2



27 SPEAKERS

on diversity, inclusion, and workforce development

96%

POSITIVE RESPONSE IN POST-EVENT SURVEY

SUPPORT

7 WORKING GROUP SESSIONS

PEER SHARED BEST PRACTICE SESSIONS 4

4 MEMBER ADVISORY COUNCIL

Representing higher ed and industry member categories

100+

Individual interactions in aggregate across NGO, Higher Ed, Industry, and Government

2 EXPERTS

brought in to share on inclusion and communications in DEI efforts

BUILDING THE WORKFORCE PIPELINE ONLINE:

SOCIAL MEDIA

12.8M+ Impressions
5.7K+ Interactions
8.5K+ Total audience (20% growth)

WEBSITE

266% Growth in website visitation
3K+ Views of New Hot Jobs in Food and Agriculture



Strategic Plan

PROCESS AND OUTCOME

Recognizing that strategy drives focus and member engagement, TWG launched a process in December 2022 to revisit the purpose of the organization and develop clear strategic priorities to guide future work. A Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) selected by the TWG board worked in tandem with consultants to lead this process. From January through June of 2023, TWG gathered input from member organizations and other key stakeholders via online surveys, interviews with organizational leaders, and focus groups at the 2023 Connect Conference and Annual Meeting. These data were used, along with publicly available data about workforce needs and university student populations, to identify areas of need, create a purpose statement and tagline, and develop overarching strategies and prioritized initiatives.

PLANNING TEAM

In addition to drawing on the leadership of the TWG staff and board of directors, the TWG board appointed a Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) and retained consultants to design the planning process, collect information, and synthesize recommendations over a seven-month period. Those members are:

Pamela Bachman

Director, Sustainability and Outreach at Climate, LLC Bayer

Crystal Andrews Banks

Global Head, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB), Kraft Heinz

Karl Binns

Former, Black Farmer Equity Manager, Cargill

Kellie Bray

Chief of Staff, Crop Life

Lakiah Clark

Program Manager, Tuskegee University

Ronda Hamm

Global Academic Relations Leader, Corteva Agriscience

Wendy Fink

Executive Director, Academic Programs Section and Associate Vice President, Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU)

Kemba Marshall

Founder, Marshall Recruiting

Kendell Monk

Senior Director, Business Executive Exchange Program, National Urban League

Rachel Sorenson

Director, Human Resources (North America), Bunge

CONSULTANTS

Polly Ruhland

CEO, United Soybean Board

Ben West

Founder and CEO, Risora Consulting

Michele Sides

Risora Consulting

Kemba Marshall

Risora Consulting

Sarah Lupis

Risora Consulting





Strategic Plan

PROCESS

In conjunction with the consultants, the SPC, TWG staff, and TWG board of directors, a seven-month, stepwise process was developed and implemented to create the TWG strategic plan. This process encompassed four phases.

1. Design

The TWG staff and board worked with the consultants to build the SPC, assembling a team made up of leaders from among TWG's membership, along with key constituent representatives. Together, they developed the framework for the discovery, vision, and goals phases during a one-day, in-person planning session.

2. Discovery

TWG members and stakeholders were engaged via four primary methods: an online survey, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews and feedback sessions during the TWG 2023 Connect Conference and Annual Meeting. Through these avenues, the team explored TWG value perceptions, needs, and challenges relating to diversity in agriculture and food, talent recruitment, and retention issues.

3. Vision, Mission, Need

At a retreat after the TWG 2023 Connect Conference and Annual Meeting, the team used the data collected during the Discovery phase to develop draft

statements of purpose and stakeholder need. These statements provided direction and boundaries to develop the strategies and initiatives.

4. Strategies and Initiatives

With all the data collected and ongoing dialogue, the team developed three overarching strategies for TWG, along with specific and prioritized initiatives to guide TWG's work and focus for the next five years.

DATA

Through the Discovery phase of the strategic planning process, qualitative and quantitative data were collected from members and stakeholders. Additionally, publicly available datasets were evaluated.

Member and Stakeholder Data

Analysis of data collected from members and stakeholders pointed to thematic issues and overarching themes related to the knowledge and perception of food and agriculture careers, recruiting and pipeline challenges, barriers and discrepancies related to inclusivity and culture, and professional development needs. Additionally, this analysis revealed substantial opportunities for TWG to help broaden the pipeline of talent, build the brand for agriculture and food, influence culture and inclusivity, build connections within the sector and among

Strategic Plan

professionals, and support the assessment and benchmarking of best practices.

Publicly Available Datasets

Analysis of publicly available datasets yielded two conclusions that provide a solid foundation for TWG's purpose of building a more diverse and capable workforce in food and agriculture.

1. Traditional degree programs in food and agriculture will not produce the sheer number of graduates needed in the sector. Job growth in food and agriculture continues to be strong, with projections of 59,400 job opportunities annually for college graduates. However, traditional university academic programs will not be sufficient to meet these workforce needs, producing only 61% (36,100) of these workers. As a result, 39% (23,300) of the new workers in food and agriculture will be filled by college graduates with degrees in allied fields, including basic sciences, engineering, business, communications, and others (www.purdue.edu/usda/employment/).
2. Traditional degree programs in food and agriculture are not diverse. Among the U.S. population of typical college-age people, almost 50% are non-white. But among the student body of food and agriculture programs, less than 25% are non-white. If the food and agriculture industry is to make progress diversifying its workforce, it must engage in university programs above and beyond traditional programs in food and agriculture.

STATEMENTS OF NEED

The data collected both through the outreach process and from publicly available sources informed seven statements of need developed as drivers for TWG's strategic plan.

- Solving the world's challenges in food and agriculture requires a more diverse workforce to drive innovation.
- The current pipeline of college-educated talent coming from university agriculture programs is not sufficient to meet current workforce needs, either in terms of sheer numbers or to meet diversity goals.
- Building a more diverse workforce requires a broader pipeline of people entering careers in food and agriculture, which will require engaging nontraditional audiences in new and innovative ways.
- The food and agriculture sector needs to speak with a unified voice to educate people about careers in food and agriculture and to correct common misperceptions.
- Food and agriculture companies need to cultivate more inclusive cultures to foster workforce diversity.

- The industry and education sectors need to coordinate their efforts to increase workforce diversity in the food and agriculture sectors.
- TWG could be the industry leader in fostering collaboration and innovation to educate people about career opportunities in the sector, broaden the talent pipeline, and advance workforce diversity initiatives.

PURPOSE, STRATEGIES, AND INITIATIVES

The culmination of the process resulted in TWG's revised purpose statement, strategies, and a 5-year plan of initiatives to achieve progress toward the strategies identified.

Purpose Statement

Together We Grow helps to build a more diverse and capable workforce in food and agriculture. We foster collaboration among our members and partners to broaden the talent pipeline entering the sector and advance workforce diversity initiatives.

Tagline

Cultivating Diversity, Harvesting Potential

Strategies

- **Broaden** the pipeline of diverse talent entering the field by collaboratively engaging people in new and different ways.
- **Connect** organizations and professionals in food and agriculture to foster collaboration and nurture inclusive cultures.
- **Support** the diversification of the workforce in food and agriculture through industry-wide assessment and benchmarking, and by curating best practices for diversity initiatives.





Broaden Strategy

Creating Awareness of Agriculture and Food as a Place for Opportunity and Belonging

In 2023, TWG increased the awareness of the agriculture and food sector as a place for career opportunities and belonging for new and existing audiences by:

- Activating at the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS) National Conference in Atlanta, Ga., to collect attendee stories about their reasons for working in, or seeking to work in, the agriculture and food sector. These stories were shared throughout 2023, generating more than 6 million online impressions in a diverse viewing audience.
- Engaging with The Cultivating Change Foundation Summit in Washington, D.C., to collect stories from professionals and students in the agriculture and food sector, and to support research on the topic of belonging in the sector for the LGBTQ+ community. These stories will be shared in 2024, in collaboration with The Cultivating Change Foundation, to reach new audiences for agriculture and food. The information also will be used to inform a Ph.D. candidate's research on the topic.

TWG also increased its reach in elevating the organization and increasing awareness of the agriculture and food sector in 2023 by:

- Sponsoring CSU Spur's 2023 Water in the West Symposium, which brought together speakers and audiences from across sectors — from utilities and government agencies to businesses and agriculture — to share best practices and connect professionals. The 2023 event centered

on the theme Next Gen Water: From AI to Gen Z, exploring solutions aimed at building the next generation of leaders to address water challenges around the world.

- Sponsoring and presenting at the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) Annual Meeting, at which close to 200 agriculture leaders and global experts in extension gathered to engage in conversations about building the next generation of leaders in agriculture.
- Representing TWG to build the network of partnerships at the STEMconnector Innovation Forum in Denver, CO, focused on activating collaborations to advance an inclusive STEM workforce.
- Representing TWG at the 2023 AgCareers Roundtable and leading a panel discussion focused on people management during economic uncertainty for professionals and faculty across the sector.

Building the Workforce Pipeline through Awareness and Access

TWG focuses on elevating the awareness of opportunities within agriculture and food to expose new audiences to this important sector. TWG's online presence started to take shape in July 2021. In a short time, the organization has built a strong following and increased engagement online to benefit the sector, as well as the members of TWG. In 2023, TWG achieved strong results in building awareness of the organization, as well as agriculture and food, and the opportunities available.



Social Media Channels	Website
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8.5K people in TWG's total audiences across combined social channels • 12.8+ million impressions • 5.7K+ interactions with content • 6K+ posts promoting ag and food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6K+ user visits to TWG's website • 8.4K+ individual sessions on TWG's website • 266% increase in page views compared to 2022, driven primarily by new job board

In 2023, TWG launched its first job board on the TWG website in partnership with AgCareers.com. The job board highlights jobs among TWG member organizations and is highlighted on TWG's social media channels to drive job seekers to member job openings. In 2023, the site was viewed over 3,000 times and was a significant driver of the 266% growth in page views on TWG's website compared to 2022. This vehicle drove increased traffic to hot jobs in the agriculture and food sector while also increasing the visibility of TWG members as top employers in the industry.

Looking Ahead

With the launch of TWG's new strategic plan and the shift toward implementation, two initiatives will be

directly focused on the strategic pillar, BROADEN, in the next five years.

- Within two years, in coordination with an Advisory Board of TWG members and partners, TWG will develop an engagement program for two and four-year universities that don't have programs in agriculture, have rigorous and respected programs that could prepare students for a career in food and agriculture, have a diverse student body, and are located in an agriculturally rich area. Key facets of this initiative may include selecting universities for a pilot program, assembling a regional team of industry representatives to build relationships with the university leadership, developing programs and opportunities to engage students on campus, offering internships to students at the universities, developing a student mentor program, and providing opportunities for students to develop the essential skills needed to pursue career opportunities.
- Within two years, TWG will have made progress educating high school career counselors about careers in food and agriculture through partnerships with the American School Counselors Association, which includes 43,000 members, and other groups, as appropriate. These partnerships will be aimed at increasing awareness among students in grades 9-12 about opportunities and career options in the agriculture and food sector.





Connect Strategy

The best part of CONNECT was:

“The opportunity for “bigger” thinking”

“...the networking of diverse leaders in agriculture”

“Community/speakers – every person in the room had tremendous knowledge and contributions.”

2023 Connect Conference and Annual Meeting

In 2023, TWG held the inaugural Connect Conference, as well as its first in-person annual meeting in several years, in conjunction with the MANRRS Diversity Summit and National Conference in Atlanta, Ga. The event engaged 70 stakeholders across the agriculture and food sector. Leaders from industry, higher education, NGOs, government agencies, and DEI networks had unmatched opportunities to collaborate and advance discussions on topics related to workforce development, diversity, equity, inclusion, and TWG’s strategic plan.

Attendees Experienced:

- 2 Keynotes
- 2 Working Sessions for TWG’s Strategy
- 1 Formal Networking Opportunity
- 1 Fireside Chat
- 1 STEM-focused Presentation
- 3 Panels
- 1 Roundtable Discussion
- 2 Days of Learning, Connecting, and Sharing
- 27 Speakers

Looking Ahead

With the launch of TWG’s new strategic plan and the shift toward implementation, four initiatives will be directly focused on the strategic pillar, CONNECT, in the next five years.

- Within two years, TWG will enhance and expand the TWG Connect Conference and Annual Meeting, with the long-term vision of creating an event that connects professionals across the sector, educates them about key diversity and workforce issues, spurs collaborative initiatives, and supports TWG’s financial sustainability. In 2023, TWG made strides in achieving this goal by assembling a 12-member Connect Conference Advisory Council to support the expansion of this event.
- Within two years, TWG will focus on enhancing and expanding the value of the TWG membership and increase the overall membership of the organization for the betterment of all members and the consortium.
- Within two to three years, or sooner if feasible, TWG will enhance and expand the TWG working groups, with topics targeted for specific users, and TWG will work with partners to increase engagement. The working group efforts will move from “Support” to “Connect” from a strategic alignment perspective.
- Within three to five years, TWG plans to provide specialized training and professional development programs for working professionals, with a potential focus on industry middle managers and university leadership.



Support Strategy

The best part of WORKFOCE NEXT was:

“I’ve attended many DEI sessions over the years - I enjoyed this one the most. The content, mix of videos, and breakout discussions made it feel like it was only 30 minutes. Great job!”

“Thanks for organizing and doing this much needed work.”

Workforce Next and Best Practices Working Group

TWG’s strategic pillar for supporting the diversification of the workforce in food and agriculture through industry-wide assessment and benchmarking, and by curating best practices for diversity initiatives, was directly addressed in 2023 through the Workforce Next and Best Practices working group.

Through the Workforce Next and Best Practices working group, TWG and its member organizations shared best practices, learning, and data to replicate and scale proven strategies and ensure accountability across the sector. Additionally, these groups served to support DEI and workforce development professionals and faculty. Activities in 2023 are listed below.

Workforce Next and Best Practices

- 6 meetings focused on workforce next and best practices and DEI
- 27 distinct industry, higher education, NGO, and government agency partners came together throughout the year to share learnings in DEI and workforce development
- 2 external expert organizations shared best practices and development on building everyday acts of inclusion and fostering inclusion and belonging in communications

- 6 tools and resources were provided to address data, articles, and/or toolkits related to the topics discussed
- 4 peer-shared sessions from TWG member organizations focused on best practices
- 1 survey administered to understand DEI benchmarking practices and challenges among member organizations
- 100+ individual interactions with leaders across the sector in 2023 through this working group

Workforce Next and Best Practices Advisory Council

To ensure TWG’s thought leadership from the perspective of experienced professionals and faculty in the agriculture and food sector, an Advisory Council was assembled, with representatives from member organizations from industry and higher education institutions. The Advisory Council members are leaders who are engaged in this work and who support the strategic direction of the working group.

- Crystal Andrews Banks, Global Head, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, Kraft Heinz
- Theresa Cooper, Assistant Dean for Diversity, Iowa State University, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
- Dan Harr, Manager, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Scoular
- Philomena Morrissey Satre, Director, Diversity-Equity-Inclusion and External Strategic Partnerships, Land O’Lakes

Looking Ahead

With the launch of TWG’s new strategic plan and the shift toward implementation, two initiatives will be directly focused on the strategic pillar, SUPPORT, in the next five years.

- Within two to three years, TWG plans to work with partners and a 3rd-party evaluator to develop and implement an annual “state of the industry” report on workforce diversity. Using this industry-wide report card as the foundation, TWG will provide data to companies wishing to assess their workforce diversity and DEI programs against their peers.
- Within three to five years, TWG plans to provide members and/or paying clients a third-party evaluation process, whereby TWG would assemble expert review teams to conduct an evaluation and assessment of an organization’s DEI programs, culture, and more.



Looking Ahead

2025 looks to be another promising and eventful year for TWG! As an organization, we will be focused on launching the new strategic plan, building mechanisms for implementation of the identified initiatives, creating a sustainable financial plan for the organization, bringing our members and partners together for the second annual Connect Conference, and ensuring that we are meeting the needs of industry, NGOs, and higher education stakeholders in our joint efforts to strengthen the talent pool for the food and agriculture industry. We look forward to our continued work with each of you on this journey.



TWG.CSUSYSTEM.EDU

