



Futureproofing farming

Growing your farm workforce

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands of Cardinia Shire, the Bunurong and Wurundjeri people.

We value and respect the deep and continued cultural connection and care for the land, waters and environment and recognise that Indigenous land management practices are sustainable and help build resilience to a changing climate.



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Introduction

Cardinia Shire has a rich and diverse agricultural industry. Connecting employers to enthusiastic local young people who are ready to build their knowledge and skills in the industry is one way to support a thriving local food system, now and for the future.

This toolkit is a comprehensive resource for businesses of all sizes within Cardinia Shire's agricultural sector. The toolkit explores options for employers to engage a local workforce and in particular, young people, in agricultural-based hands-on activities and learning experiences, expanding the potential for training and work pathways.

A snapshot of Cardinia Shire's agricultural workforce

Cardinia Shire is one of Victoria's major food bowls



Note: These statistics are accurate as at December 2024. Source: [Economy.id.com.au/cardinia](https://economy.id.com.au/cardinia)

Benefits for your business

Giving experience, training and employment opportunities to young people can be beneficial for businesses in many ways, including their enthusiasm, willingness to learn and diverse perspectives. Additional benefits include:

- Local students and employees can fill skills and workforce gaps and respond more quickly to seasonal peaks in workforce needs.
- Employing local residents increases employee wellbeing, with reduced commute times linked to improved health, wellbeing and productivity.¹
- Increasing local retail trade, with more local employment linked to increased use of local businesses and services, and customer loyalty and support.²
- Reduced administrative burden associated with recruitment, by attracting and training young people while they are still studying to complete entry level roles.
- Position your business as an employer of choice with young people, their families, schools, careers councillors, local employment networks and the wider community



Listen to farmers in Cardinia Shire about the benefits of engaging young people



¹ Raza et al., Commuting Distance and Behaviour, 2021, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34081935/>

² [National Growth Areas Alliance, 2020](#)

Benefits for the farming community

Engaging young people in agriculture is crucial for the sustainability and innovation of the industry:

- **Knowledge transfer:** Providing knowledge and support through the onboarding process to local residents helps retain local experience and skill in the region and reduces the need for annual onboarding.
- **Industry reputation:** By develop young people's understanding and appreciation for agriculture and its wider benefits to communities, you can build a loyal local appreciation for the professional.
- **A pipeline for the workforce:** Creating partnerships with local schools and training organisations, helps your business become the 'go-to' place for prospective graduates. Additionally, evidence shows that when young people study regionally, they're likely to stay and work regionally also³.
- **Grow and maintain a resilient agri-economy:** By working with young people who have studied contemporary farming practices and technology you business will gain fresh perspectives, while also being able to share those perspectives with real-world realities.
- **Increase demand for farming jobs:** By raising young people's awareness of the varied roles available in the agricultural industry, supporting young people to pursue a career in agribusiness or farming.
- **Workload reduction:** By working alongside schools, your business can benefit from getting extra hands-on tasks which can be completed through course content.



Sharing local stories

Tony and Sue are passionate about regenerative farming and growing the industry. They have employed many local young people in various operations on Orchard End Farm, where they rear cattle, grow blueberries and garlic.

³ An Essential Ingredient: The Food Supply Chain Workforce. 2025. Jobs and Skills Australia

Education and training pathways

There is a variety of education and training pathways within the agricultural industry, each of which provide opportunities for continuous learning and development. The following table highlights the informal and formal types of training employees may have and continue to engage in:

	Informal and non-accredited training		Formal education – at school and post-secondary education	
	On-the-job training	Non-accredited training and specific learning	Vocational and education training	Higher education
Description	Informal learning that usually happens through interactions with co-workers during regular work activities	Non-accredited training or learning that occurs outside interactions with co-workers during regular work activities	Nationally recognised training to develops skills for certain job roles, tasks and industries	Generalist and specialist education for higher-level occupations
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day-to-day instruction • Instruction, demonstration and feedback from co-workers, supervisors and managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction processes • Entry programs • Non-accred upskilling • Supplier-delivered training e.g. tech, feed, equipment • Specific learning e.g. EggStart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cert III in Agriculture • Cert III in Horticulture • Cert III in Animal Care • License to operate a forklift truck 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Agriculture • Bachelor of Agriculture and Technology • Bachelor of Food Tech • Doctor of Veterinary Medicine • PhD in Agricultural research

Adapted from An essential ingredient: The Food Supply Chain Workforce report, Jobs and Skills Australia, 2025

Work experience, placements and traineeship options at school

There are a variety of school-based training and work pathways, where employers can host students, including:

	Work experience	Structured workplace learning (SWL)	School based apprenticeships or traineeships (SBATs)
Overview	A short-term placement with employers to provide insights into industry and the workplace	Integrates on-the-job experience with secondary study as part of VCE, VCE Vocational Major or the Victorian Pathways Certificate	Combines part-time employment, school and training. For students over 15 yrs and enrolled in years 10, 11 or 12.
Student age	Generally year 10	15+ years	15+ years
Duration	Up to 14 days per year	1 day per week for 20 weeks or block placement available	7 hours per week for the duration of the course
Student payment by host	Minimum \$5 per day	Minimum \$5 per day	At least minimum wage in relevant award/ agreement
Host payment	None	None	Hiring and wage incentives for eligible courses
Training program providers and key contact	School to Work delivered locally by SELLEN	School to Work delivered locally by SELLEN	School to Work delivered locally by SELLEN Head Start is an alternative school-based traineeship or apprenticeship program, available in Government Schools.

Students find work experience and placement opportunities via the School to [Work Portal](#).

Promote your work experience and placement opportunities by registering as a 'host employer'. Visit the School to Work portal or contact [SELLEN](#) directly.

Additional opportunities to connect with students and young workers

Offer a tour of your facilities

Spark a young person's interest in farming by offering a tour of your farm. Consider facilitating short interactive activities for students to do during the tour, providing a practical and engaging experience for young people. [SELLEN](#) can connect you with local schools and work with you to plan your tour.

Alternatively, you can register your business on [Cardinia's Farm and Food Directory](#).



Sharing local stories

The Ubuntu Food Hub at United African Farm, is building the skills of young people to reach their full potential, through involvement in farming, community events, tours, and advocating among their communities.

Participate in events, exhibitions and career days

Cardinia Shire Council offer a range of events, workshops and opportunities throughout the year to promote your workplace to local employees.

Visit the Cardinia Business [website](#), [subscribe](#) to the monthly e-newsletter or contact the Cardinia Economic Development team: phone 1300 787 624 or email business@cardinia.vic.gov.au

[The South East Careers & Try a Trade Expo](#) is a major annual event that brings together industry, universities, TAFEs, RTOs and community service organisations to speak with local secondary school students about post school education and employment opportunities.

For more information, visit the website or contact SELLEN: expo@sellen.org.au

SELLEN hosts a range of events that your business could consider participating in e.g. STEM Futures. Visit the SELLEN [website](#) for further details.

[Farm World](#) is a premier regional agricultural event offering businesses the opportunity to boost revenue, connect with customers, community and increase brand awareness”

Explore other events also held at [Lardner Park](#).

Connect with industry networks, organisations and platforms

- Cardinia Shire Council's [Economic Development team](#)
- [Victorian Farmers Federation](#)
- [Western Port Catchment Landcare Network](#)
- [Young Farmers Network](#)
- [Cardinia Environment Coalition](#)
- [The Garry White Foundation](#)
- [Cultivate Farms](#)
- [Cardinia Farm and Food Directory](#)

Connect with employment organisations and resources

- [SELLEN](#) supports employers, students and schools and employers connect via the School to Work portal. Contact the team via admin@sellen.org.au
- [Asuria](#) helps employers find staff and has an office in Pakenham
- Workforce Australia's [Launch into Work](#) program supports the delivery of pre-employment projects, co-designed with the department and the hiring employer.



Promote your local jobs to local people

- [Casey Cardinia Jobs](#) is a centralised hub for employment opportunities within the Casey Cardinia region.

As a local business, you can list job openings on this platform at no cost. Visit the Casey Cardinia Jobs portal to upload job openings and other employment resources. This initiative is facilitated by the City of Casey and Cardinia Shire Council.

- [Workforce Australia](#) recruit for your business free of charge and offer access to additional services and information e.g. tips and tools to [help you hire](#).
- The [School to Work Portal](#) is a free portal where employers can list apprenticeships, traineeships, work experience and more. The local LLEN can help employers link with schools and students by advertising and sharing opportunities directly with the schools and careers counsellors.



Resources for employers to support students and young workers

- Explore [WorkSafe](#)'s safety and wellbeing considerations for the agriculture industry
- Tips to support and work with young workers:
 - Casey-Cardinia Jobs portal offers a range of [employment resources](#)
 - [People in Agriculture](#) have several resources for employers in Agriculture
 - [Employer checklist – What works to support young people](#)
 - [Best practice and legal requirements – Fair Work Australia](#)
 - Headspace offer a range of [resources for employers](#) including YouTube video series about 'how to have supportive conversations'.
 - Support cultural awareness in your business by viewing Horticulture Industry Networks video: [Cultural Awareness - Resources to find labour, attract labour and manage labour.](#)
- Consider becoming a mentor to a young person through the [Cultivating Futures Mentoring Program](#)
- Financial support for young people
 - The State Schools Relief Fund provides workwear for eligible students. View the range of workwear items here: [Workwear – State Schools' Relief Online Store](#)
 - Financial support is also available for [apprentices here](#)

Support with finances

Hiring subsidies:

- The Priority Hiring Incentive is a payment for employers of Australian Apprentices training towards an occupation and qualification at a Certificate level III or above listed on the [Australian Apprenticeships Priority List](#). Eligible employers can be paid up to \$5000 in the first year of an apprenticeship, paid over two instalments of
 - \$2,000 at 6 months and \$3,000 at 12 months (full-time)
 - \$1,000 at 6 months and \$1,500 at 12 months (part-time)
- The Priority Wage Subsidy is a wage subsidy for employers of Australian Apprentices training towards an occupation listed on the Australian Apprenticeships Priority List. Eligible employers may receive:
 - 10% of your apprentices wages paid to you for the first 24 months (up to \$1500 per quarter)
 - 5% of your apprentices wages paid to you for the third 12 month period (up to \$750 per quarter)
- For more information on these subsidies, and the eligibility criteria, visit the Australian Government website: [Financial support for employers | Australian Apprenticeships](#)

Support your wellbeing

Professional support can make a difference to your wellbeing or mental health.

- [Lifeline](#) is a free and confidential helpline to support you with mental and wellbeing
- [Beyond Blue](#) is a free mental health service to help you achieve your best possible mental health. There is a free phone helpline and online support

Business counselling and advice:

- [Rural Financial Counselling Services \(RFCS\)](#) Gippsland provides agricultural industries and small rural businesses with free, confidential and independent planning and support services.
- [Money Smart](#) provides free advice on managing bills and debts
- [Centrelink – Services Australia](#) provides a free financial information service for everyone. You don't have to be claiming Centrelink benefits.

Farm safety

- The Victorian Farmers Federation project, [‘Making our Farms Safer’](#) provides a range of resources including farm safety videos and offer onsite farm safety visits, free of charge.
- Explore [WorkSafe](#)'s safety and wellbeing considerations within the agriculture industry



Acknowledgment and partner contributions

This resource was developed as part of the Futureproofing Farming project, funded through the VicHealth Local Government Partnership and led by Cardinia Shire Council.

The project aims to connect local young people with local work experience and jobs in the agricultural industry through effective employment and education pathways, to support a resilient local food system.

This resource was developed in partnership with the following organisations:



Thank you to the following farms, nurseries and supporting industries for participating in the Futureproofing Farming project:

- Orchard End Farm
- United African Farm
- The Community Grocer
- Sherwood Park Orchard
- Bellevue Orchard
- Emily Hill Farm
- Victorian Livestock Exchange
- Future Seeds Nursery
- Thriving Foods Farm
- Galaxy Plant Nursery
- Cardinia Environment Coalition
- Pakenham Hydroponics
- Tarago Valley Organics
- Red Gem Potatoes
- National Food Institute
- Agpath
- Peppermint Ridge

Cardinia Shire Council

Customer Service Centre

20 Siding Avenue, Officer

Postal Address

PO Box 7 Pakenham 3810

Phone: 1300 787 624

Email: mail@cardinia.vic.gov.au

Web: www.cardinia.vic.gov.au

National Relay Service (NRS)

TTY: 133 677 (ask for 1300 787 624)

Speak and Listen (speech-to-speech relay):

1300 555 727 (ask for 1300 787 624)

Translator Interpretation Service

131 450 (ask for 1300 787 624)

