

Agriculture:

Quality of Work in Grand Erie 2023



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According to WPBGE's 2022 workforce survey, 6% of job seekers in Grand Erie indicated they were looking for work in the agriculture sector.

In 2023, the Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie conducted a study to assess quality of work in local workplaces.

20 agricultural businesses were surveyed. The results showed:

Top benefits offered by agriculture employers:

1. **Skill development/training opportunities** during working hours – **89%**
2. **Annual (or more frequent) pay raises** based on performance/merit – **78%**
3. **Recognition** for outstanding work and/or length of service – **78%**
4. **Protocol/policies for employee grievances** – **78%**
5. **Annual (or more frequent) pay raises** based on inflation – **72%**
6. **Fixed working hours** – **72%**
7. **Financial support** for skill development/training/education (e.g. paying for courses) – **67%**
8. **Flexible job structure**/order of responsibilities (i.e. employees can decide the order in which they want to complete their tasks) – **67%**
9. **Flexible job design** (i.e. employees have some input in what work they take on/are encouraged to take on additional projects to develop their personal skill set) – **61%**
10. **Mentorship/career pathways** coaching/guidance – **61%**



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Top benefits being considered by employers:

1. Skill development/training opportunities during working hours
2. Job rotation opportunities (e.g. employees switch responsibilities every few months)
3. Flexible job design (i.e. employees have some input in what work they take on/are encouraged to take on additional projects to develop their personal skill set)
4. Annual (or more frequent) pay raises based on performance/merit
5. Annual (or more frequent) pay raises based on inflation/cost of living

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When businesses were asked about barriers to better supporting quality of work:

- 61% said they had financial constraints
- 50% said they had too many competing priorities
- 44% said they were unable to free up the time to offer additional training/coaching
- 33% said they were unable to hire more staff to distribute workload
- 11% said their HR/management team lacked the time/capacity to make needed changes



11%

of agriculture businesses indicated they cannot consider offering any more benefits/quality of work supports.

Best Practices:

“I'm quite willing to work with a person's skill set, regardless of what it is, and make it fit here.”

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Best Practices:

“**One of our senior staff took a soft exit** in that it took about three years of wind down. **We were able to keep her by making accommodations**, and are flexible with what a person has available in terms of time, energy and other commitments”

Best Practices:

“We bought a camper trailer for several staff to live in and parked it close to us and provided transportation for them to get to and from it.”

Best Practices:

“I give bonuses and if an employee is well versed in what they're doing here, I give them extra time and then extra time off when the job's done. Some days, I'll be traveling to search out information or picking up materials and **I'll let them ride along with me**, which isn't productive for me but it gives them a little bit of a perk.”

Best Practices:

“What we have had work really well is flexibility of schedule. We have a number of roles where it's mums with kids and having flexibility around school pick up or drop off or just an understanding of, hey, if the school is closed tomorrow unexpectedly, I need to match my child care needs first before coming in. And **when we were able to provide that flexibility, we did have a lot more retention.”**

Best Practices:

“We know we're not going to keep somebody for their whole career. I think we've all recognized that has changed. But if we can have a student start with us and be interested enough in agriculture to stay for a number of years, **what can we do to make sure that that's a valuable experience for them?”**

Best Practices:

“We started this year with more mentorship, goal setting, regular meetings, career plans. **We sit down with each of those kitchen staff and ask, where do you want to see yourself in two years? Five years, ten years?** And how do you see our company as a way that they can help you get there? And we saw that impact in terms of them coming to me with ideas and suggestions for improvement.”

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Resources:

Farm Fresh Ontario: www.farmfreshontario.com/about

Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies: www.ontariofairs.com/about-oaas

Ontario Federation of Agriculture: www.ofa.on.ca

The Ontario Agricultural College (OAC) of the University of Guelph:
www.uoguelph.ca/oac

Rural Ontario Institute – Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program:
www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/aalp

Agricultural Adaptation Council: www.adaptcouncil.org

The Canadian Agricultural Safety Association:
www.casa-acsa.ca/en/canadian-agricultural-safety-association

Canadian Agriculture Human Resource Council: www.cahrc-ccrha.ca

Human Resources Professionals Association: www.hrpa.ca