

2021 WA State WSARE PDP Needs Assessment Report

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The WSARE Professional Development Program is designed to provide funding to agriculture professionals both within the academic setting and throughout the agriculture and conservation industry. This report outlines key topical interests moving forward in professional development programming.

Training Forum:

Question: I would prefer in-person education to distance education

Number of respondents: 46

Strongly agree: 6

Somewhat agree: 14

Neutral: 19

Somewhat disagree: 5

Strongly disagree: 2

Our top survey response showed that many respondents are impartial to whether the training is held digitally or in-person, and most likely depends on the other circumstances of the training. However, the respondents with a stronger inclination either way preferred in-person training to distance training. These responses show that there is room for both types of training in the future, but the interest in the training may be more contingent on the topic rather than the forum.

Topic Interest:

Overall

Question: What professional development topics are most applicable to you?

Out of 16 possible options, the top five responses are as follows:

1. Natural Resources
2. Climate Change
3. Soils & Fertility
4. Livestock & Crop Production Systems
5. Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Early Career Professionals

Question: If you are an early career professional, what knowledge and skills do you think are most important to develop? If you hire or otherwise work with early career professionals, what knowledge and skills do you think would be most helpful to them?

The top 5 responses include:

1. Specific Agriculture/Natural Resource Knowledge
2. Project Management
3. Leadership Development
4. Communication Skills
5. Grant Writing

The most common response included specific agriculture or natural resource training, including soil health, conservation planning, and staying up to date with sustainable agriculture practices. Further “soft skill” responses were also a top concern, including project management, leadership development, and communication.

Climate Change

Question: Within the topic area of climate change, which sub-topics are of most interest to you?

Out of 11 options, the top five responses are as follows:

1. Regenerative Agriculture
2. Climate Impacts on Water
3. Carbon Sequestration
4. Climate Impacts on Crop Production
5. Climate Impacts on Pests & Pathogens

Question: If you already use climate change information in your work, what information do you use (and how)? If you were to use climate change information in your work, what information would you need and how would you use it?

1. Tools for mitigation of climate change
2. More information on local impacts
3. Government directives
4. Economic impacts of climate change
5. Carbon markets

Many of the responses included a need for tools in the climate change mitigation response. While they had access to resources on the extent of climate change in a lot of scenarios, they did not have the tools to help their agencies and producers make decisions that would help mitigate future climate change impacts. In this same realm, respondents were also looking for more access to local and regional climate projections. While many responses found large scale

modeling and projections helpful to understand the big picture of climate change, they requested more regional data to help inform practices and new mitigation strategies. The economic impacts and future government directives also followed a similar line of thinking- if the respondents had more information on the local impacts of climate change, they would be better suited to informing their agencies and producers.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Question: What topics would you like to see for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?

The top five most common responses included:

1. Addressing barriers to inclusion
2. Cultural sensitivity training
3. Communication across language barriers
4. Diverse recruitment
5. Resource access training

Question: How would you use information about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within your work?

Top responses included:

1. Increased outreach
2. How to implement DEI concepts
3. Programming for diverse communities
4. Diverse hiring practice

The top area of DEI implementation is increasing outreach to diverse and potentially marginalized communities. The next area of learning how to implement DEI practices merges with the top outreach concern, as many respondents voiced concerns that they needed more information on *how* to utilize DEI when attempting outreach to the communities they serve. Providing a basis for regular DEI training in the future may address the main concerns, especially providing people with a base level of knowledge to improve from and isolate areas for improvement.