



Community Educator

Job Description

Community educators connect people in their region with support systems for topics relating to their field of work, which could range from food systems to water and energy systems. They help people stay informed as to how complicated systems function at the local level. This includes in-person outreach, managing education initiatives, speaking directly with people, tracking community understanding, and responding to specific needs.

Salary

Entry — \$37,000
Middle — \$62,000
Top — \$70,000+

Core Tasks

- Facilitate connections between community members and local resources
- Lead community outreach programs and event tabling work
- Travel to in-person events and workshops for face-to-face education
- Answer community members' questions through phone calls and email
- Evaluate the efficacy of outreach programs and refine accordingly

Workplace / Environment

- **Work hours**
Approx. 40 hours/week
(At key milestones overtime work may be required to meet deadlines)
- **Environment**
Mix of time spent in the office and at **community locations**, with office-work focused on providing support through **digital platforms**
- **Travel**
Frequent travel within service area to **tabling events, workshops, presentations, meetings**, and specific **people** in-need of resources

Education / Prerequisites

Education Level

Bachelor's degree in education or science field of the intended community education work. These could include Water Resources, Ecology, and Horticulture

Licensing

Usually not required

Pre-Job Preparation

Volunteer work in community education through a diverse range of organizations. Early-networking with community members

Experience

Soft Skills

- Communication
- Problem-Solving
- Emotional Intuition
- Organization

Technical Skills

- Understanding of region-specific issues
- Awareness of available resources
- Communication programs (Microsoft Suite, etc.)



Career Path: Selena Ligrano

About Me

Community Educator at Tilth

Master of Sustainable Business Systems at Pinchot – Focus in Sustainable Business, Food Systems and Agriculture

Bachelors in Wildlife Ecology and Horticulture at Washington State University

Changing Interests

"I've explored different aspects of my field and all of the different sides of it. I **volunteered** with a lot of different groups to be able to understand exactly what was involved in food systems projects. Part of what got me into doing education was volunteering with **Tiny Trees**, which is an **outdoor preschool**. Watching the kids connect with nature and learn on their own through nature was very valuable. I also worked with **Alleycat Acres** and ran one of their **community gardens** for a while."

"I had this midlife crisis of wanting to be a **wildlife rehabber** and then realizing that's not what I wanted at all. So, I pivoted to the **landscape and nature** aspect of everything—the plant side of it. I really dove into landscaping, working to plant nurseries, and I still do landscaping on the side. It's something I really enjoy doing. It is not something that I felt at one point I wanted as a career. I still love doing it, but I saw it more as a **side project**. It wasn't a passion. I really wanted a passion as a career, and I wanted something that I felt like I could continue to **grow into**."

"What changed my perspective was being at an estate where they didn't care about me as a person—it was just a job. I realized I needed more than just a job. I needed a **passion** behind that job. At that time, I was really involved in **growing my own food** and **eating healthy**—that was a big part of my life. At that point, I hadn't really understood or known too much about what food systems work was like."

Education Choices



"I started looking into different schools to try and figure out what I wanted to do. I decided to do a **Master of Business Administration** program with a focus in **Sustainable Business, Food Systems** and **Agriculture**. I felt that having some sort of a business background would help me have conversations with other businesses and talk the talk with them. I think this is especially important when you're trying to make change within businesses."

"The grad school that I chose was really focused on **personal leadership** and **personal growth** as part of sustainable business. For me, being able to learn more about myself personally helped me understand how other people work. It helped me be able to be a better person in working within communities and education. I also had food systems knowledge, because there was a **certificate** that we created to include food systems."

"That's what got me to where I am today. I think I'm still constantly trying to figure out exactly where and what I want to do, because that's just the nature of the world—things are always **changing**."

Into the Food Systems Sector

"A few years ago, I started with **Tilth** and the **Garden Hotline** as a community educator. We do a lot of outreach and find ways to **connect different groups of people** together. I spend time answering **phone calls** and **emails**. I'm a live person for people to connect with about anything from growing their food, to how to take care of chickens, to composting and water conservation. That's a really big part of my job—to be that free service for people and connect with them."



"It also helps to have a face to the voice or the person who's typing the emails. We do **workshops**, mainly for groups that can't normally afford to have this type of information given to them. We work with Seattle Housing Authority groups, the International Rescue Committee, World Relief Seattle, P-Patches or community gardens, church groups, senior centers, and anybody who wants to learn more. We provide **education** surrounding environmental or food systems work. That's a big part of what we do."

"For tabling events, we go to **farmers markets** or different **festivals** all over the city. Because of that, we're able to connect with a lot of different groups. We also have multiple publications that are translated into 30 different languages. Interpretation is available through the phone too so that we can reach a broader group of people."

"I'm able to **educate people** and help them in bringing previous knowledge into the Pacific Northwest in our environment. That's part of the problem a lot of people have—they don't know what can or can't grow. They're fully capable of growing and cooking anything, it's just that they need a connection to this different space. They're trying to learn and navigate that. **I get to learn** from them just as much as they're learning from me, which I really appreciate and enjoy. It's a great job."

About My Job

"I love being able to connect people to the food system and empower themselves"

Pros

- "We do **a little bit of everything**. We have all different types of stuff happening, so I'm not just doing one thing— it's constantly shifting and moving."
- "We **travel** a lot and do a lot of face-to-face **workshops** and **tabling** to connect at a more personal level with people. For tabling events we go to **farmers markets** or different **festivals** all over the city or the county."
- "One of the things I really enjoy is that I'm **learning** just as much from people as they are learning from me, because a lot of these people that I work with have grown up farming or gardening longer than I have been alive. I'm learning from them, the ways that they, back at home, had gardened or farmed using different techniques for cooking or composting."
- "I love the **education** side of everything. I enjoy being able to help people **understand** that there's a whole chain that gets food into stores. This helps them understand the entire food system better and appreciate the farmers and the workers that contribute to it."

Cons

- "There is a **lack of funding** sometimes for the amount of work that you want to give to people. There's four of us on Tilth's Garden Hotline, and we're trying to reach all of King County. We get **pulled in a lot of different directions**. We would love to be able to create huge greenhouses for these groups of people, but that's just not in a realistic budget. That's probably one of the biggest cons for me— wanting to be able to do more and not having the ability to do it."
- "As a whole, the food system world has **not the highest paying jobs**, which is unfortunate, because it's such an important field. That means it's also hard to encourage more people to enter food systems work."

Fieldwork

- "We **travel** all over King County. We go up to Shoreline and over to Bellevue and down to Kent and over to Vashon Island. During the last couple of months, I've been **driving** about 200 to 250 miles in a month for meetings or to get supplies like food or seeds to people."
- "We drive all over the place to give **face-to-face presentations** and **workshops**. We reach all different groups of people."
- "Duties switch and change. Today I'm going to go and **drop off a zucchini plant** for somebody that we connected with who's running a community garden."

Skills

- "For this work you need to be **open-minded**, and come at it with a full heart— **understanding that everybody comes from a different place**. We're all learning from each other. A big part of being able to do community engagement is really leaning into that when you're meeting new people and coming into different spaces."
- "**Networking** is critical— because of the different volunteer groups that I've joined, or the different schools that I've gone to, I've built a network that I can always pull on and lean on to for advice and new opportunities. If you're trying to navigate some weird aspect of the job, being able to **reach those people that have experience** in different fields is really important."

Office Work

- "A big part of my job is spending 30-40% of my time answering **phones** and **emails**. I'm in the office Monday through Wednesday, and then Thursday and Friday I often do more remote work."
- "On the **Tilth Garden Hotline**, we talk to a lot of people from different countries and states."
- "We've started doing live **Zoom Q&A sessions**. It's like our phone and email services, but you're right there. You get to see our faces, and we're able to bring up articles or different websites that are helpful for explaining topics."

Education/Experience

- "It's important to find **different groups** to engage with, so that you can see if it is really what you want to do. I've explored different aspects of my field and all of the different sides of it. I **volunteered** with a lot of different groups to be able to understand exactly what was involved in food systems projects."
- "If you don't have the experience going into a job, and you just have the degree, that can be difficult sometimes. It's something important to think about— making sure that you're getting the **experience** in the career that you want before getting just the degree for it."

The Future of **Community Education**

"We're constantly getting more and more groups that we're working with"

"One of the big things that we've been doing lately is a lot of virtual **Zoom workshops** and presentations. It helps for some groups of people, but looking at the different ways that we might be able to do a **hybrid program** is important. I envision that becoming more worked into food systems education as we continue."

"We've also been **growing a lot of plants to give to people**, and I think that will be something that we'll continue to try and do. We work with a lot of people from different countries, and it's hard for them to access their native foods— they're just not available at PCC or other grocery stores. We have access to buy the seeds, and because of the Rainier Beach farm down in South Seattle, there are greenhouses. Bringing plants to people is a way for us to be able to try and provide some of their traditional and **native foods**. I think that'll also be something that will continue to grow."

"We're constantly getting more and **more groups that we're working with** because people are finding out about us. As funding develops and we get **more people on staff**, we'll be able to offer **more resources** to more people."