

## Class 17 Orientation/Interview Information Notes & FAQ

### 1) What is AALP

- 19-month leadership development opportunity for men and women in the agricultural and agri-food sectors and rural communities who want to broaden their horizons, deepen their understanding of Ontario's diverse agri-food industry and expand their networks.
- Classes are made up of **up to** 30 men and women, farmers and business people, ages from mid-20's to mid-50's (usual range).
- Participants examine social, political, environmental and economic issues as they relate to agriculture, the agri-food industry and society.
- Learning is done in a variety of formats including lectures, discussion forums (face-to-face and electronic), webinars, formal briefing sessions, study tours and practical application.
- The program consists of eight 2 and 3-day seminars held in different Ontario locations, one 7 to 10-day North American Study trip, a 2-week international study tour and a variety of webinar, email and Internet activities.
- Participants increase the effectiveness of their leadership through:
  - Exposure and experience with the best practices in leadership;
  - Gaining broader knowledge of the agri-food industry in a global context;
  - Networking with peers and industry leaders provincially, nationally and internationally; and
  - Improving self-confidence and enhancing positive attitudes for the future.

### Tuition Cost - \$11,000.00 - \$12,000.00 (including administrative fees)

- Tuition is tax-deductible and is payable in up to 2 installments by Visa, MasterCard or cheque.
- Class members will also pay an administration fee to the University of Guelph of approximately \$75.00 for tuition processing.
- If paying by credit card, class members will also pay a credit card administration fee of approximately \$350.00.
- Tuition covers many expenses except transportation to and from seminars, study tour start & return points, some meals, and other incidentals.
- The cost participants pay is about 1/3 of the total cost of the program. Program and industry partners and sponsors contribute financially to the program as well as private corporations, rural and agricultural organizations and interested individuals through regular donations and fundraising campaigns.
- Class 17 members are expected to participate in, and contribute where possible to, various fundraising campaigns, activities and initiatives.
- \$1500 to \$3000 in additional personal expenses can also be anticipated.

### Time Commitment

- Approximately 25 seminar days over 19-months dedicated to formal group study (both face-to-face & electronically) plus approximately 20 to 24 travel study tour days.
- An additional 8-10 days in travel to/from seminars is likely.
- Further time in independent study analyzing a specific issue through an Issue Analysis Project or other group project.
- Preparation for seminars (background reading/ daily chair preparations).
- Follow-up after seminars and tours (daily notes, web-site reports, media releases, thank-you letters).
- Additional time spent promoting AALP events and supporting fundraising endeavours.

### Study tours (Approximate timing)

- 7-to-10 day North American Study Tour (anticipated July 2018).
- 12-to-14 day International Study Tour (anticipated February 2019).
- Dates and locations for North American and International Study Tours to be determined in early 2018.

### Issue Analysis Project / Group Project

- Early in the program participants select issue of interest to them and work in groups of 4 to 5 individuals.
- This team-based leadership project is intended to increase participants' ability to think critically.
- Working with representatives of selected agri-food and rural organizations, on issues identified by these organizations, class teams will analyze the issues and present concepts, ideas and options for change. Groups have worked with Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority, Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee, Ontario Agri-Food Education Inc., Ontario Agricultural College, Ontario Cattlemen's Association, Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association, Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO), Fresh Vegetable Growers of Ontario (FVGO), Indian Agricultural Program of Ontario (IAPO), Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians (OAVT), Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association (OFFMA), Ontario Livestock and Poultry Council (OLPC).

### Fundraising

- This is critical for keeping tuition costs at an affordable level.
- Participants and graduates have a responsibility to raise funds throughout the program.
- Specific responsibilities include:
  - Dream Auction
    - Formal event held every second February (February 10, 2018).
    - Involves soliciting donations of items to be sold – everything from trips to t-shirts – and selling tickets.
    - In 2016, almost 400 people attended and over \$100,000 was raised for the AALP program.
  - Wm. A. Stewart Lecture & Reception
    - Held every second March/April in conjunction with the final seminar (late March 2019).
    - Wm. Stewart Endowment helps to support the seminar.
    - Class participants help sell tickets.
    - Approximately 250 tickets are sold.
  - Class fundraising
    - Historically every class has its own fundraising campaign – raising between \$2500 and \$11,000 for the next class.
    - Ideas have included fines, raffles, auctions and the sale of CD's or books. Class 9 initiated a baseball tournament that was held in August for over 5 years. Class 13 initiated a 'Fun-draising Curling Bonspiel.

### Core strengths of the AALP Program

- Graduate support – 99% of graduates have indicated their experiences provided good value for their time and money.
- Excellent track record in leadership training which fosters sector networks and alliances, agricultural competitiveness, collaboration and internationalism.
- Increased leadership activities (44% provincial level, 12-16% on a national and international level).
- 97% of graduates felt AALP helped to make them better leaders and their leadership has been applied to farm/commodity/rural/local organizations; municipal gov't; director and/ or executive roles within farm organizations; increase competitiveness of own businesses.
- A strong history with strong industry support - AALP started in 1985, through a unique partnership between the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, University of Guelph and The Foundation for Rural Living. The Rural Ontario Institute, a non-profit, charitable corporation now delivers AALP.

## 2) Applicant Interviews (April / May 2017)

All applicants are interviewed and regional interviews will be held across the province. The selection committee will ask the same questions of all applicants to assess their:

- Leadership potential after the program;
- Open-mindedness and vision;
- Linkages to the rural, agriculture and agri-food community;
- Demonstrated leadership ability;
- Breadth of perspective on rural issues;
- Support from personal and business networks; and
- Level of respect in their community and business.

References may be called following the interview process.

## 3) Provincial Selection (June 2017)

The AALP Advisory Committee, an operational committee of the Rural Ontario Institute, selects the Class 17 participants based on their applications, the results from the regional interviews, geographic location and demographics.

Although it is not a primary determinant, diversity among class members is desired since the interaction between participants is crucial to the success of the program. Representation will be sought on the basis of age, gender, location, occupation and agricultural commodity or sector.

## 4) Notification of Selection Results & Participant Acceptance (late June/ early July 2017)

All candidates will be notified shortly after the provincial selection by telephone and written correspondence.

## 5) Class 17 (2017-2019) begins – September 2017

Upon acceptance, Class 17 participants commit to:

- Attend and fully participate in **ALL** seminars, study travel sessions, and other electronic activities as required.
- Set aside time outside of formal sessions to prepare for and follow-up from seminars and study tours (background reading, daily notes, thank you letters, sponsorship introductions etc.).
- Complete an Issue Analysis Project or other group project as identified. The time commitment can vary from 25 hours to 80 hours.
- Pay tuition fees, transportation costs to and from Ontario seminars, study tour start and return points and some meals.
- Become competent with the use of Internet, email and PowerPoint.
- Be proactive ambassadors of the program and help promote and support fundraising activities.
- Provide leadership in the agricultural and agri-food sectors and rural communities upon completion of the program.

## 6) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

### Q. *Who participates in AALP?*

A. Anyone involved in Ontario's agriculture and agri-food sectors or rural communities. Over 200 graduates are primary producers. Classes are made up of producers representing all facets of agriculture in Ontario as well as representatives from the agriculture and rural sectors including government, agricultural finance, crop protection, insurance, marketing and consulting and various agricultural and rural community businesses, organizations and associations.

### Q. *What is involved in the selection process?*

A. Selection of AALP participants is based on a written application, a series of regional interviews and a final provincial selection process undertaken by the AALP Advisory Committee, an operational committee of the Rural Ontario Institute. Typically between forty and fifty applications are received for the up to 30 positions within the class.

**Q. What does the selection committee look for when choosing participants?**

A. The Selection Committee looks at personal/individual criteria such as:

- Leadership potential after the program
- Open-mindedness and vision
- Linkages to the rural, agriculture and agri-food community
- Demonstrated leadership ability
- Breadth of perspective on rural issues
- Support of personal and business networks
- Well-respected in their community and business

Class Composition Criteria:

- Diversity - Although not a primary determinant, diversity among the up to 30 participants is desired, as participant mix and interaction is crucial to the success of the program. Representation will be sought on the basis of age, gender, location, occupation and agricultural commodity or sector.

**Q. Didn't the program used to be just for farmers?**

A. Farm operators and primary producers made up the majority of AALP's first class 30 plus years ago. However, feedback from that class indicated that participants were being limited by a singular farming perspective. It was widely felt that much more could be gained for farmers, and agri-business, by introducing other industry and government perspectives into the mix. As a result, AALP moved to integrate farming leaders with industry and rural leaders to learn from each other.

While our goal is to have primary producers make up between 30% - 35% of the participants, it is important to have a broad cross section from agri-business, food processing, agriculture financing, marketers, journalists, rural developers, civil servants, agriculture and rural organizations and municipal officials. The program's intent is NOT about agriculture production. It is designed to provide leaders in Ontario's agriculture and agri-food sectors and rural communities the opportunity to gain skills, knowledge and an understanding of the forces shaping rural Ontario.

**Q. Can applicants who are turned down, reapply?**

A. Yes. All applicants are notified of their result personally. Unsuccessful applicants are given suggestions for improvement. Candidates who take these suggestions seriously are encouraged to reapply and are very often successful the second time.

**Q. In previous years there seems to have been a lower number of farmers in the program?**

A. In fact in the last three or more classes the number of primary producers has been stable at 10 to 15 per class. At the same time ROI's Board Directors remains concerned about ensuring appropriate participation by Ontario's primary producers. Barriers to farmer participation have been identified and solutions have been put in place.

These include:

- Awareness

The farmer leaders that AALP would like to target for the program are very busy being innovators within their operations and working to grow and evolve their individual business operations. They are too busy to seek out these types of opportunities.

SOLUTION:

A focus has been added to the recruitment process to target emerging farm leaders and innovators.

- Application Process

The timing of the application and interview selection process began in early spring and was not a good fit with the crop schedule for many farm operators.

**SOLUTION:**

The application process was reexamined, streamlined and moved up to take place between November and March of the intake year to meet this timing conflict. Interviews still take place in May and every effort is made to accommodate all applicants.

- **Cost and Time restrictions for being Away from the Farm**  
There may be more of a burden for farm operators to travel to seminars and study tours and there is significant financial cost to keep the operation running when they are away from the farm.

**SOLUTION:**

Primary Producers who show a need for financial support and/or Northern Ontario participants, with unusually high travel costs, are eligible to apply for a R. J. McLaughlin Award through the Rural Ontario Institute. Further information on this award is available from staff of the Rural Ontario Institute.

While farmer participants are critical in the program, diversity among the 30 AALP participants is also desired, as participant mix and interaction across the entire agriculture and rural sectors is crucial to the success of AALP.

**Q. *How do participants manage to allocate adequate time to AALP and still maintain their business, family and other commitments?***

A. AALP participants must make the program a priority. It is not a commitment to be taken lightly as it does take a great deal of time. You must have the support of your personal network/family and business associates before acceptance into the program. Applicants might have to readjust the time they currently donate to volunteer activities in favour of their personal development. Throughout the course, participants do get time management training and often just the practice of learning to manage commitments when away at seminars is a great learning experience.

**Q. *The tuition is a lot of money for training. Is it really worth it?***

A. AALP is an investment.... in you, in your business, in your organization(s) and in your community. You don't pay it all upfront. The tuition can be payable over 2 tax years and the full amount is a deduction on your income tax through a tuition receipt received from the University of Guelph. Some participants have sought out and received individual support from their employer and/ or local/ provincial farm organization(s). It is a lot of money, but due to the generosity of sponsors across the industry, you pay only about 1/3 of the total cost of the program. Other executive development programs offered across Ontario can be much more costly.

**Q. *Do we have to own a new computer to be in the program?***

A. Participants will need access to a computer with basic functions and for access to the Internet and email. The program is moving to using more distance education as a way to deliver some of the curriculum. Future leaders will need to be comfortable with, and take advantage of, the benefits of this and ever new and expanding technology.

**Q. *How might participants offset some of their tuition costs?***

A. It is up to the individual participant to seek contributions from their employers, or from local organizations. With any contribution, participants should know that the employer or organization will expect some return on their investment. For example, if employers agree to pay part of the fee, it is often with a commitment from the participant to remain employed with them for a certain number of years. Tuition fees are also tax deductible and receipts are issued by the University of Guelph's Office of Open Learning each February.

Primary Producers who show a need for financial support and/or Northern Ontario participants, with unusually high travel costs, are eligible to apply for a R. J. McLaughlin Award.

**Q. Who is responsible for the coordination and administration of AALP?**

A. The Rural Ontario Institute (ROI) is in place to offer agricultural and rural leadership programming and is responsible for the coordination and administration of AALP.

**Q. How is the program curriculum determined?**

A. A curriculum advisor from the University of Guelph, ROI's Board of Directors, an AALP Advisory Committee and graduates assist with seminar planning, program development and evaluation, based on a knowledge and skills framework.

The curriculum deals with issues facing the entire agriculture industry. Topics include leadership, communication, conflict resolution, decision making, working with the media, dynamics of change, government and political systems, national and international trade, economics and business, marketing and trends in agriculture, rural and society.

**Q. How does this program compare to other executive development programs or MBA programs?**

A. AALP is excellent value for the money and focuses specifically on the agriculture, agri-food and rural sectors. Other executive development programs and MBA's have tuition costs of between \$8000 and \$25,000 or more.

In comparison to an MBA, AALP will give you a more extensive network base, travel opportunities and provide you the opportunity for one-on-one discussions with industry and government leaders. With AALP you do not do a thesis or receive academic credentials but you do receive an Award of Achievement, a Certificate from the Office of Open Learning at the University of Guelph and the eligibility to join the Ontario Agriculture College (OAC Alumni).

Some AALP grads describe the program as "going back to school without having to sit in the classroom. It's more real-life learning than academic instruction."

**Q. How have graduates given back to the community as a result of their participation in the AALP?**

A. Graduates have applied their leadership skills to:

- Farm/commodity/rural organizations;
- Municipal and provincial government;
- Local organizations (i.e. churches, schools);
- Director or executive roles within farm organizations; and/ or
- Their own farming operations and agri-businesses.