

# Rural Ontario Institute

## Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP) Evaluation

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Ontario agriculture and food industry has experienced steady growth and development for decades. The continuing prosperity of this sector is important for government and rural communities in Ontario. The Rural Ontario Institute (ROI) has played an active role in the area of leadership development in Ontario by developing and delivering the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP). AALP is an executive program that aims to improve and develop leadership skills among people involved in the agricultural, agri-food, and rural sectors in Ontario. The reach of AALP includes primary producers, agri-business and agri-service employees, food processors, wholesalers and retailers, bankers, executives of different agricultural associations, educators, marketers, and journalists who want to enhance their leadership skills.

With a goal to understand, improve the effectiveness, and renew AALP, Dr. Cummings and researchers from the School of Environmental Design and Rural Development at the University of Guelph were retained by ROI in the fall of 2012 to conduct a summative and formative evaluation of the program. The research was carried out between September 2012 and January 2013. This research highlights the impacts of AALP on individuals working in the agricultural, agri-food, and rural sectors in Ontario and suggests areas that need to be addressed in order to improve the role of AALP in the agri-business industry in particular and rural Ontario communities in general.

AALP was established in 1984 to respond to the critical need of leaders to be able to promote and make powerful agricultural communities in Ontario. It was established at a time when the Michigan based Kellogg Foundation was supporting the establishment of similar leadership programs across the United States. Today AALP is a 19-month program administered by the ROI. AALP provides leadership skills and knowledge to farmers, executives, entrepreneurs, and others committed to the agricultural, agri-food, and rural sectors of Ontario, enabling them to be competitive at the local, provincial, national, and international levels. It is regarded by many as the foremost agricultural leadership program in the country. In total, five of the current Ontario Federation of Agriculture directors are graduates of AALP.

Over the past four classes (Class 11, 12, 13, and 14) up to 30 participants per class have been enrolled in the program. The average age of all participants has been 36, with 44 per cent of participants being female.

The evaluators reviewed the literature, did numerous interviews, carried out focus groups, did five on-line surveys, reviewed the curriculum, and met regularly with program managers.

### **Results: Relevance**

Surveys of Class 14 participants revealed that they consider the program to be relevant to their current positions. In Class 14, 91 per cent of respondents felt that the content met or exceeded expectations. Communication and organizational skills; marketing, economics, and business; and decision-making were identified as the most relevant to current positions. Societal issues covered by the program, concerning rural and agricultural sectors in general, remain relevant aspects of the program today.

### **Results: Reach/Equity**

The program reaches people across the province from diverse agricultural and food related sectors (see Map 1.1, page 10, and Graph 4.2.1, page 21). Some stakeholders and participants feel the program needs greater diversity by focusing less on Southern Ontario, and by having a greater inclusion rate of new farmers, farmers of different ethnicities, and with smaller size operations. There may be a need to adjust the curriculum in order to accommodate the busy schedules of today's leaders.

### **Results: Effectiveness**

In the Alumni Survey, the following were ranked highest (6 or 7) in terms of skills and knowledge acquired during AALP on a 7-point scale with 7 being a substantial increase:

- Trends in the agricultural industry and rural society (54 per cent),
- Government and political system (37 per cent),
- Networking (61 per cent),
- Public speaking (49 per cent).

AALP alumni were asked to rank AALP components based on their usefulness. A total of 76 alumni responded to this evaluation question. Responses indicated that the most useful parts of the program were the International Study Tour (mean of 6.27 out of 7); Seminar #2 - Personality, Self Understanding, and Development (mean 5.97); and the North American Study Tour (mean 5.99). The least useful components of the program were Fundraising Moments and individual and class fundraising during the

program, with scores ranging from 3.8 to 4.4, and 22 to 30 per cent of respondents ranking these items as of little use.

### **Results: Impact**

AALP alumni were asked to indicate their most significant professional accomplishment. Approximately 73 per cent of 76 responses were positive, with the most frequently mentioned benefit being gains within their current job (mentioned by 42 per cent of participants). This benefit was followed by increased participation in farm organizations (14 per cent), better leadership skills and increased roles in municipal organizations.

With respect to personal gains, the most mentioned gain was in confidence (21 per cent of respondents gave it a 7/7, or very useful). Networking was the next most identified personal gain from the program (14 per cent), followed by respect for differences (12 per cent), and effective leadership (12 per cent).

An interesting statement on both effectiveness and impact is provided by the answer to the question of cost. In the alumni survey, participants were asked their willingness to pay more for AALP in relation to the amount they had paid. One question asked, "Do you feel that the amount you paid was worth what you received from AALP?" In response, 94 per cent of respondents said yes, while 66 per cent indicated that they would have paid \$1,000 more for participation in AALP.

### **Recommendations**

Recommendations are based on the identified results and cover areas of program scheduling, curriculum delivery, communications and advertising, evaluation, alumni relations, and certification.

### **Program Scheduling Options**

There are a variety of ways that AALP can maintain its excellent reputation in leadership, while reducing expenditures and staying current in today's dynamic and tech savvy environment. Three options have been provided for consideration. Following these options are recommendations that can be incorporated into any program design chosen. It is recommended that regardless of the option chosen, the ROI should increase tuition by \$1000.

**Option 1**

19-month program format: Reduce number of seminars from eight to six, reduce North American Study Tour by two days, and maintain International Study Tour (See Appendix A).

**Option 2**

14-month program format: Reduce seminars from eight to six, maintain North American Study Tour, and eliminate International Study Tour (See Appendix B).

**Option 3**

19-month program format: Reduce length of seminars while maintaining current number, reduce North American Study Tour by two days, and maintain International Study Tour (See Appendix C).

Additional detailed recommendations on seminars, program certification, alumni engagement, evaluation, and communication and advertising are provided in the body of the report.



## 2. INTRODUCTION

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The Ontario agriculture and food industry continues to grow and develop as it has for decades. The continuing prosperity of this sector is important for government and rural communities in Ontario. The Rural Ontario Institute (ROI) plays an active role in this performance in the area of leadership development in Ontario through the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP). AALP is an executive program that aims to improve and develop leadership skills among people involved in the agricultural, agri-food, and rural sectors in Ontario. The reach of AALP includes primary producers, agri-business and agri-service employees, food processors, wholesalers and retailers, bankers, executives of different agricultural associations, educators, marketers and journalists who want to enhance their leadership skills.

With a goal to understand, improve the effectiveness, and renew AALP, Dr. Cummings and researchers from the School of Environmental Design and Rural Development at the University of Guelph were retained by ROI in the fall of 2012 to conduct a summative and formative evaluation of the program. The research was carried out between September 2012 and January 2013. This research highlights the impacts of AALP on individuals working in the agricultural, agri-food, and rural sectors in Ontario and suggests areas that need to be addressed in order to improve the role of AALP in the agri-business industry in particular and rural Ontario communities in general.

In fact, the literature suggests that leadership plays a critical role in sustaining communities, organizations, and their institutions (Lopes & Theisohn, 2003). Fritz and Brown (1998) attest that the traditional education system has not been successful in producing effective leaders, despite its ability to train skilled managers and expert professionals. The dynamic and volatile environment in which organizations and communities evolve provides a major impediment for the traditional education system to develop needed leaders. This requires a continuous adaptation of leadership development programs that expose executives and emerging leaders to different skills and knowledge in real time in order to improve their leadership effectiveness. The goal of this research is to contribute to the renewal of AALP in order to improve the effectiveness of the program in addressing the needs of leadership development in the agricultural, agri-food, and rural sectors of Ontario.

## 2.1. GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

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This investigation sought to identify the gaps existing in the provision of leadership training by AALP with regard to the current context in the agricultural, agri-food, and rural sectors in Ontario. In addition, it sought to review the effectiveness and efficiency of the program in the past and suggest changes to make AALP more effective and efficient in the future. In order to attain this goal the investigation pursued two main objectives.

First, the researchers conducted a literature review to help in constructing a theoretical view of agricultural leadership programs and to design the appropriate questions. The literature review attempted to achieve the following:

- Provide a comprehensive overview of the concept of leadership,
- Describe the function and characteristics of a leadership development program, and
- Define the relevance of leadership in the context of community and organizational development.

The second objective was to determine the extent to which AALP has improved leadership skills amongst its participants, and the impacts that AALP alumni have had in their communities and organizations. Lastly, this investigation will identify various issues that undermine leadership performance in the agricultural, agri-food, and rural sectors of Ontario and examine different initiatives that would effectively address these issues.

## 2.2. BACKGROUND

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Farmers and people who occupy executive positions in the agri-business sector in Canada experience many challenges concerning the evolution and modifications that occur in their work environment. Specifically, these challenges include technological development, demographic changes, and institutional changes related to public policies and regulations – notably, environmental and food safety regulations. Further, the agri-business sector has to cope with the repercussions of an increasingly competitive global market (Martens & McLean, 2002). To address these complex challenges, the agri-business sector in Canada has put in place several leadership programs to empower their communities.

In a study of community empowerment in Canada, Cranford and Ladd, (2003), noted that the development of leadership skills amongst people in the community pushes them to address their issues

collectively. Cranford and Ladd assert that broad-based leadership is a prerequisite for an enduring community that can face social changes and convert political challenges into opportunities (Cranford & Ladd, 2003, p. 52).

Harry Cummings and Associates investigated the agricultural sector in Elgin County, Ontario. This investigation, conducted in 2000, concluded that the agricultural sector in Ontario is very prosperous and represents a wealthy resource that many people depend on now and in the future. They asserted that agri-business, agriculture, and related industries in Ontario have a considerable potential to create added value through farming, processing, manufacturing, and exporting. They concluded that public officers and business people in the agri-business sector have an essential role to play in the development and the sustainability of the agriculture, agri-food, and rural sectors.

AALP was established in 1984 to respond to the critical need of leaders to be able to promote and develop powerful agricultural communities in Ontario. It was established at a time when the Michigan-based Kellogg Foundation was supporting the establishment of similar leadership programs across the United States. Today AALP is a 19-month program administered by the ROI. AALP provides leadership skills and knowledge to farmers, executives, entrepreneurs, and others committed to the agricultural, agri-food, and rural sectors of Ontario, enabling them to be competitive at the local, provincial, national, and international levels. AALP Class 14 is currently underway, running from 2011-13. The program consists of a series of seminars and networking activities that allow participants to enhance their leadership skills and gain knowledge with regard to agri-business systems, and perspectives on critical issues in the industry. They also have the opportunity to network with international players and learn about the institutional changes that occur in the agricultural sector at the national and international level.

The program includes eight seminars and two study tours over the period of 19 months. Highlights include seminars in Toronto and Ottawa, as well as study tours in Washington and a major international destination. Approximately 25 per cent of costs are paid through tuition fees, with the balance covered by government, private sector, not for profit funders, and by fundraising initiatives. Participants represent farm organizations, agricultural business, farmers, and government.

The following represents the current goal and objectives for AALP.

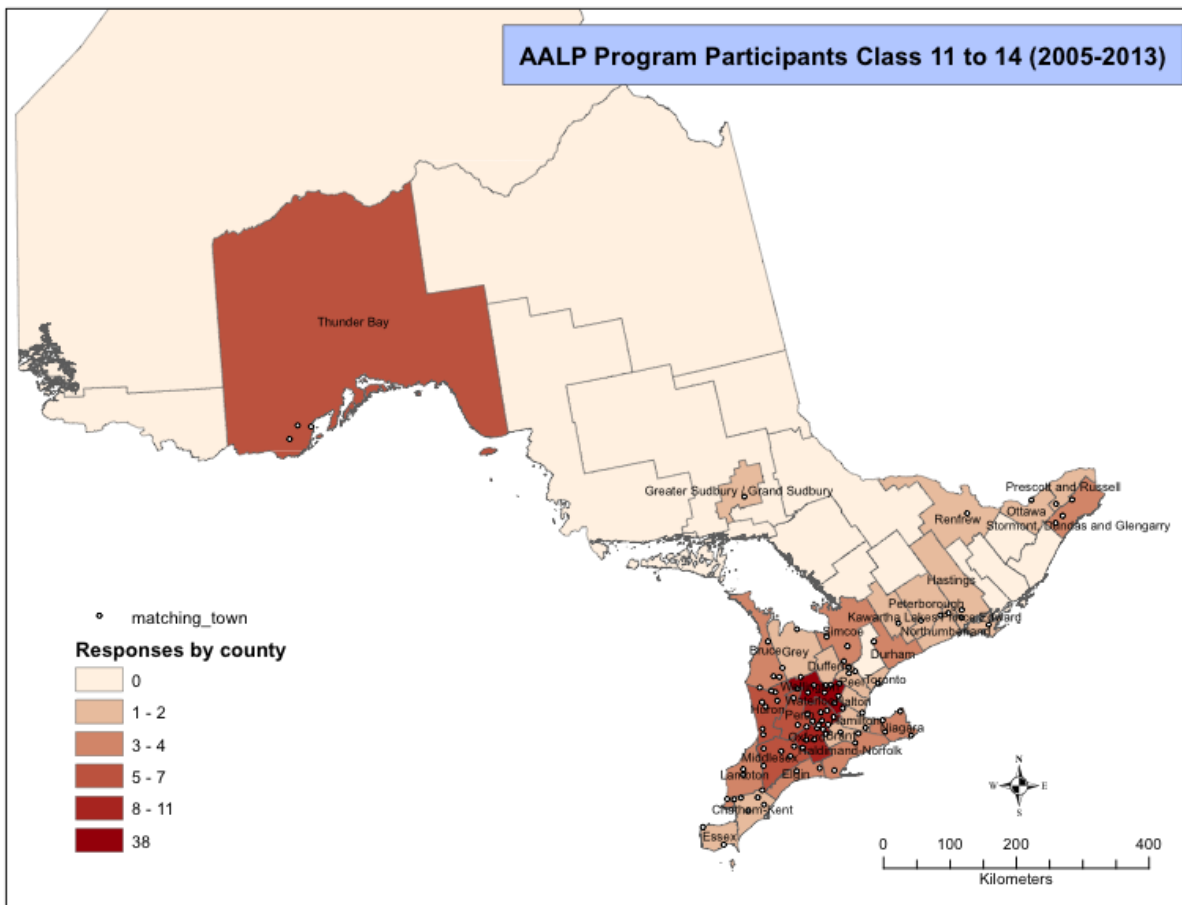
Goal: To help shape the future of Ontario's agriculture and agri-food industry by developing leadership capacity in Ontario's agricultural, agri-food, and rural sectors.

Objectives:

1. Learn and practice leadership skills, such as communication, motivation, critical thinking, issue analysis, decision making, volunteer and group management, and organizational change,
2. Acquire knowledge of the agri-food system and the economic, political, social, cultural and physical environment in which it operates,
3. Broaden perspectives on local, national, and international issues, and
4. Gain confidence and develop the positive attitude needed to provide effective leadership in a complex industry and diverse society.

Over the past four classes (Class 11, 12, 13, and 14), up to 30 participants per class have been enrolled in the program. The average age of all participants has been 36, with 44 per cent of participants being female. Map 1.1 (pg. 10) indicates the distribution of participants across Ontario.

*MAP 1.1: AALP PARTICIPANTS – CLASS 11 TO 14 (2005-2013)*



### 2.3.THEORY OF CHANGE FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

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The benefits of conducting an evaluation of a leadership development program are twofold. First, the evaluation provides an understanding of the relationship between the individual and organizational, institutional, and systemic changes. Second, the evaluation offers the capacity to comprehend and assess abstract changes. In other words, an evaluation examines the inner changes that lead to outer, social change (Gutierrez & Tasse, 2007). However, it is not easy to measure the objectives and outcomes of a leadership development program. To overcome challenges related to measurability of leadership development outcomes and effects, several authors (Gutierrez & Tasse, 2007; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Northouse, 2012) suggest the use of the theory of change. Weiss (1995 cited in Gutierrez & Tasse, 2007, p. 49) gives a comprehensive description of the theory of change approach. Weiss suggests that the theory of change of a program describes the premises, assumptions, and hypotheses that explain how, when, and why the process of change happens. The process involved is referred to as “articulating an initiative’s or a program’s theory of change”. An explicit theory of change gives the evaluator a foundation from which to assess and test the intervention, outcomes, and effects produced.

Recently, Stein and Valters (2012) in their review of existing knowledge of the theory of change, identified three main concepts that construct the theory of change: assumption, evidence, and social theory. Assumptions or hypotheses are the required conditions that produce change. Assumptions define how change occurs and the advantage of using one strategy over another. The definition of assumptions is difficult but very critical, since it helps the evaluator to avoid any uncertainties with regard to the causal relationship between strategy and change.

Evidence is the information that expresses the concrete outcomes of an intervention. Evidence combines quantitative and qualitative data that make the theory of change plausible. It is advisable that multiple sources and a mixed method approach are used to collect and analyse data that build evidence. Social science theory is useful for the theory of change because it is effective in describing the contextual basis of evidence. Diverse social science theory components, such as political economy, rights-based approach, and power analysis are critical for understanding the theory of change’s fundamental process. The analytical perspective and the worldviews provided by social science are essential to construct assumptions and relate them to evidence (Stein & Valters, 2012).

Most evaluators use the term logic model and theory of change as synonyms. However, it is important to note that the logic model places greater attention on the outcomes of the program while the theory

of change articulates hypotheses of changes that can happen as a result of an intervention. Harry Cummings and Associates (2003) define a logic model as a picture or a diagram that details the components of a program. Harry Cummings and Associates outline the following components:

- Inputs: Human, financial, organizational, and physical resources used for program implementation,
- Activities: Program activities or events conducted with inputs,
- Outputs: The products or services that result directly from program activities,
- Outcomes: The short or medium-term outcomes that take place as a result of program service or delivery. Outcomes are often based on program beneficiaries' change in knowledge, skill acquisition, attitude, and behavior, and therefore reflect the overall effectiveness of the program,
- Impacts: The long-term intended or unintended changes that result from the program or project being evaluated. These changes can take place within the individual beneficiaries, organization, or community where the program or project was implemented.

For the purposes of this evaluation, the evaluation team developed a theory of change for the ROI's AALP. The logic model is an adaptation of the leadership development theory of change model developed by Hannum and Reinelt (2007) and Leiderman (2007). These two models, along with the contribution of ROI staff and stakeholders, were used to develop a theory of change model for AALP.

Leiderman's (2007) investigation facilitates our understanding of the effects that leadership development produces at the individual level. Leiderman evaluated three "inside-out" leadership development programs: Healing the Heart of Diversity in Virginia, The Community Leadership Program in New Haven City, and the Americans for Indian Opportunity Ambassadors Program. These programs are located in the United States. Their program strategies include guest speakers, international traveling, networking, and community action projects. In his theoretical framework, Leiderman defines personal transformation and asserts its advantages with regard to a leadership development evaluation. He suggested that personal transformation focuses on improvements that promote "inside-out" change. This change allows individual leaders to align their initiatives with their values. These values include assisting others, competence, and a sense of freedom and commitment to engage in ways that promote organizational, community, and institutional performance. Leiderman suggests that personal transformation is the starting point for the development of leaders who have the ability to govern

organizations and communities through uncertain futures in a multi-cultural environment. He claims that personal transformation offers evaluators a comprehensive understanding of the “inside-out” change that leaders experience as a result of leadership development.

An evaluation based on this framework provides several advantages. First, such an evaluation provides a thorough understanding of the circumstances that promote specific types of personal transformation. Second, the evaluation informs program measures that can improve program efficiency and effectiveness by identifying the elements and strategies that create an effective outcome in terms of personal transformation. Finally, the evaluation of personal transformation assesses the impact of activities that are critical to create and sustain fundamental change at the community and organizational level (Leiderman, 2007).

Gutierrez and Tasse (2007) assert that the theory of social change provides a framework that explains people’s thinking, relations, and organization. They purport that this framework determines the way people create systems to identify and respond to their needs. Gutierrez and Tasse (2007) claim that leadership development for social change is an intervention that allows people to gain leadership skills to change communities, systems, and the economic sector according to their desired outcomes. Social change theory is able to explain the impacts of leadership development interventions that are designed to tackle social and system changes. System change refers to changes in policy, allocation of resources, and institutions that are concerned with both organizations’ and communities’ needs. Social change outcomes appear in the long-term and present challenges to those who wish to relate these changes to the interventions of a program. However, external evaluators, in collaboration with different stakeholder organizations and communities, can overcome these challenges by working with internal evaluators, who may focus more exclusively on short-term outcomes. External evaluators who focus on social change impacts can inform the program of initiatives that have accelerated desired impacts and strategies, and those which improve leadership developmental efforts (Gutierrez & Tasse, 2007). These two frameworks – the logic model and theory of change – provide the basis on which this evaluation is structured. The following graphics represent the theory of change and the logic model for AALP.

The first graphic is an explanatory flow chart that depicts the hypothesis associated with the intervention proposed and the change expected. It starts by highlighting the context that created the need for change. Based on assumptions, AALP adopts different strategies to address the need for change. AALP then considers new assumptions to implement these strategies. These activities produce changes among AALP participants that in the long run are expected to create a desired result. In this

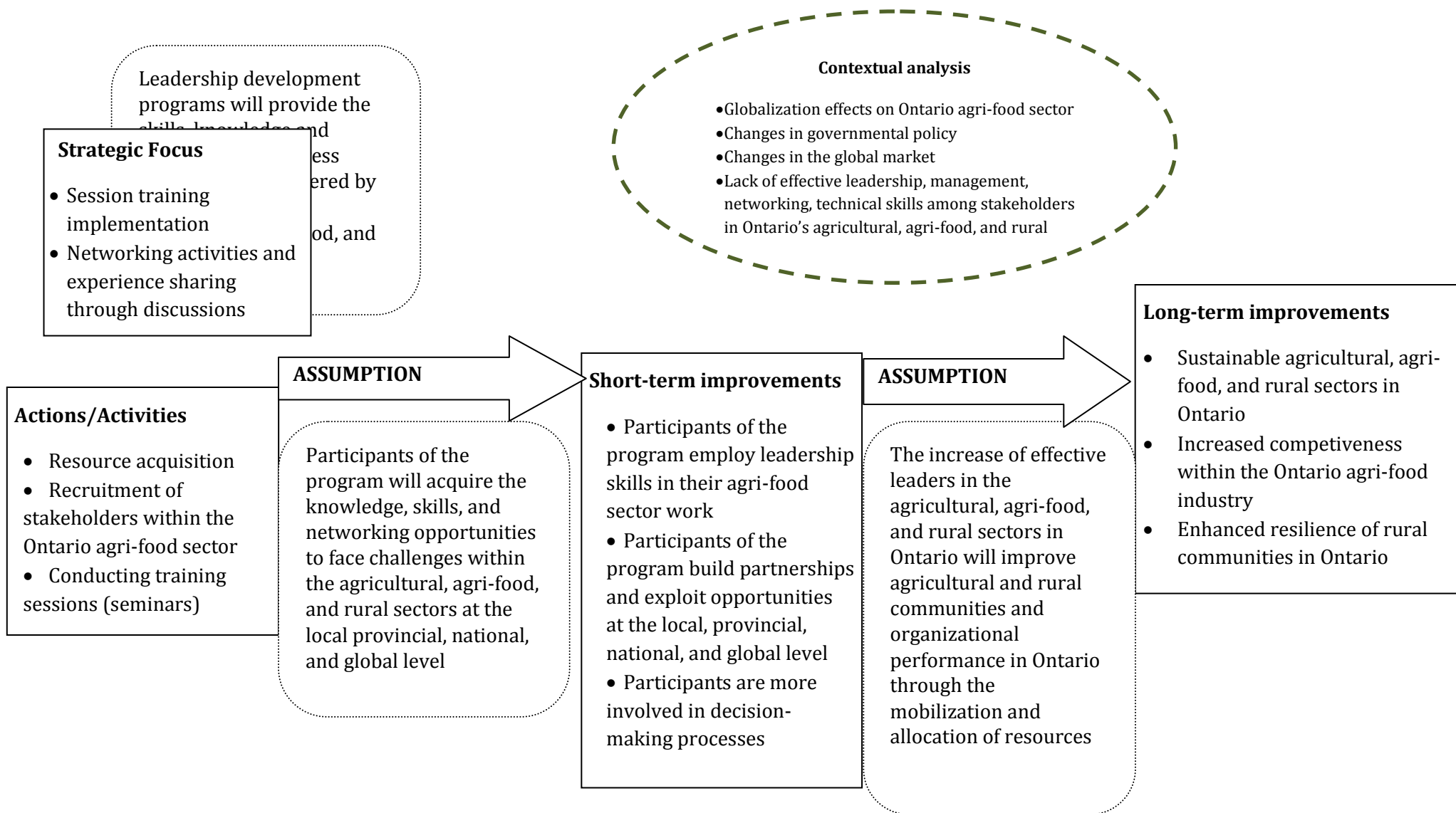
regard the evaluation is a powerful tool for helping an organization improve its theory of change in order to improve outcomes of its program. In addition, evaluation can assist the program adapt its theory of change to the dynamic social context that tends to be transformed over time. Further, evaluation identifies shortcomings of the program and provides suggestions for improvement.

The second graphic is the logic model for AALP. The logic model identifies the outcomes and impacts that AALP interventions create over time. The logic model gives a sequential view of the program components throughout the program cycle. It draws from program inputs to conduct its activities. Each activity contributes to the creation of a given set of outputs. These outputs then contribute to program outcomes, which in turn lead to the ultimate impact of AALP in the agricultural, agri-food, and rural sectors of Ontario.

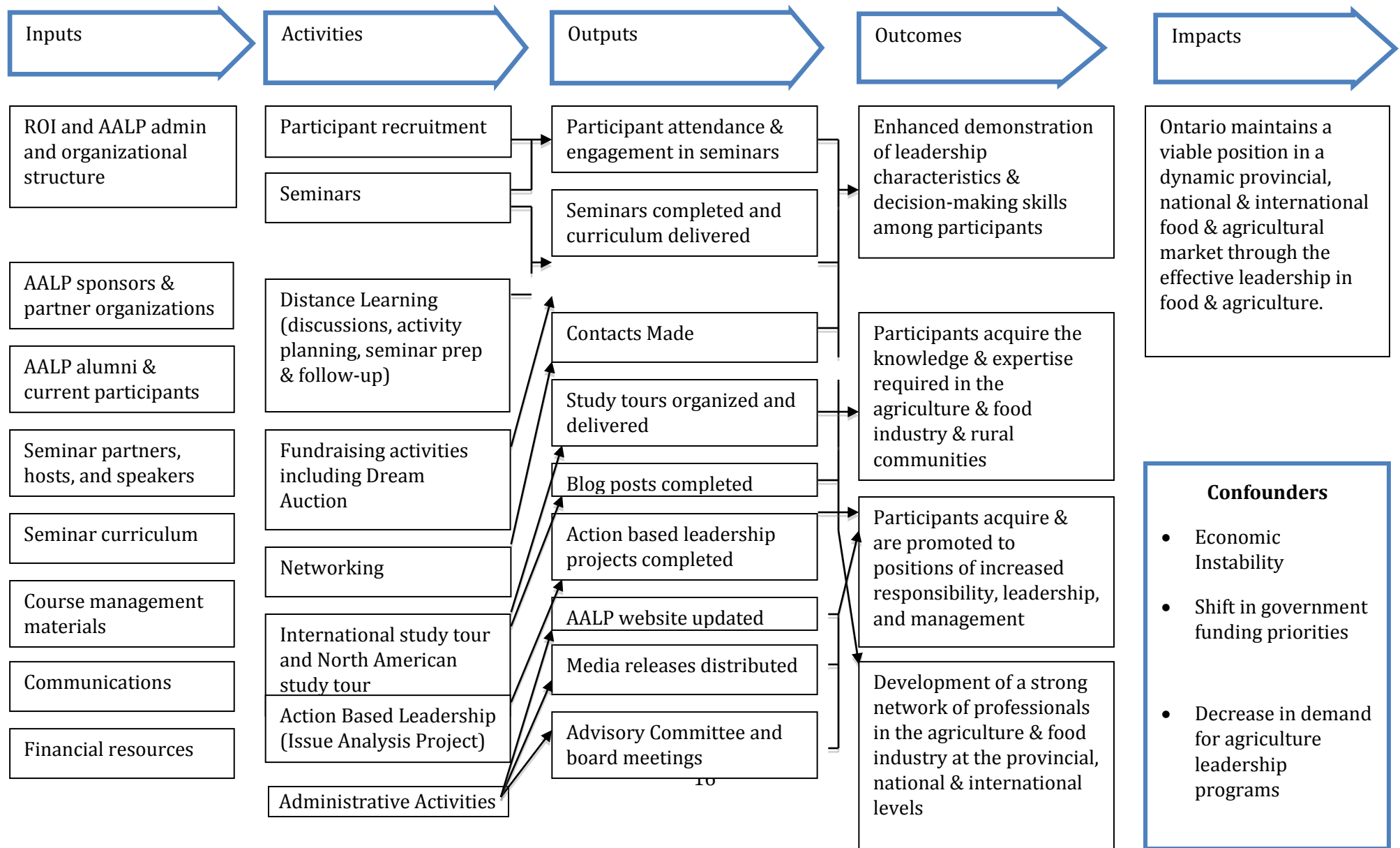


## 2.4.AALP THEORY OF CHANGE

### ASSUMPTION



## 2.5.AALP LOGIC MODEL



### 3. EVALUATION METHODS

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The research work was carried out between July of 2012 and January of 2013. The evaluation methods depended in most cases on the perspectives of participants and stakeholders surveyed in 2012-2013, their thoughts on the strengths and weaknesses of AALP, and the impacts the program had on the lives of participants.

The following are the main evaluation methods:

- a) A review of the literature on leadership programs generally and agricultural leadership programs more specifically,
- b) The development of an AALP Logic Model and AALP Theory of Change model,
- c) A review of data from participants in AALP classes 11,12,13, and 14,
- d) A detailed review of the curriculum from AALP seminars based on AALP Class 14,
- e) A review of student seminar evaluations from classes 12, 13, and 14, and a review of an AALP survey of participants before the commencement of the program (pre) and at the end of the program (post),
- f) A focus group questionnaire and focus group notes from the AALP class 14 seminar in Ottawa, which was held jointly with participants from LEAD New York Class 14,
- g) A survey of AALP alumni with 89 responses,
- h) A survey of AALP advisory committee members and a focus group with 7 members,
- i) A survey of ROI board of directors with 11 responses,
- j) Interviews with funders and miscellaneous organizational stakeholders in the food and agricultural industry in Ontario (5 interviews),
- k) Interviews with 10 International Association of Programs for Agricultural Leadership (IAPAL) directors from Australia, Canada, Scotland, and the United States,
- l) Interviews with 5 community stakeholders who have participated in projects completed by AALP students,
- m) Interviews with ROI staff (3 interviews),

Together these methods have produced a quantitative and qualitative perspective on the role of AALP, past, present, and future. The results are presented in the following chapter.

## 4. RESULTS

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The evaluation used major themes to generate data and report on results. The evaluation themes include relevance, reach/equity, effectiveness, impact, and curriculum delivery.

Relevance, sometimes referred to as rationale, focuses on the degree to which a program or project is judged to be important by key stakeholders. Reach/equity refers to the degree to which a program benefits the target population for the program. Effectiveness tells us the degree to which the program objectives have been achieved and beneficiaries have changed as a result of the program. Impact refers to the degree to which the program has produced long-term sustainable change in program participants and their communities. Finally, curriculum delivery highlights the strengths and weaknesses of AALP based on student seminar evaluations and interviews with IAPAL and community organization representatives. In the following sections each of the evaluation themes are presented along with the evidence related to the evaluation issues, from all sources.

### 4.1. RELEVANCE

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Surveys of Class 14 participants revealed that they consider the program to be relevant to their current positions. In Class 14, 91 per cent of respondents felt that the content met or exceeded expectations. Communication and organizational skills; marketing, economics, and business; and decision-making were identified as the most relevant to current positions. Societal issues covered by the program, concerning rural and agricultural sectors in general, remain relevant aspects of the program today.

The AALP advisory committee was asked to rank seminars and other aspects of the curriculum in terms of relevance to the agricultural, agri-food, and rural sectors. With seven respondents and on a 7 point scale, with 7 being very important, the most frequent response was 7 for networking; 7 for marketing, economics and business; 6 for organizational skills; 6 for national and international trade, consumer and social issues; and 6 for trends in the agri-food industry and rural society. This suggests that for the Advisory Committee these items had a high degree of relevance. On the other hand, globalization and fundraising both received modal scores of 4, suggesting they were of less relevance in the eyes of the Advisory Committee.

The ROI board of directors was asked to comment on the program. With respect to relevance, directors were asked to comment on which major activities were most critical to the program's success. With 11 directors responding, all 11 agreed on the importance of "leadership skills training". This was followed

by the trip to Toronto with 9 responses. The next most important elements were the issues analysis project; exposure to agricultural and agri business issues; and the seminars in general, with 8 respondents each. These were followed by the trip to Ottawa, the North American study tour, and exposure to rural issues, each with 7 respondents. The international study tour and fundraising for AALP, received the least support from this group (4 respondents).

Interviews with 10 directors of IAPAL produced additional insights. These leaders emphasized the importance of the leadership programs for engaging participants on current issues so that they can provide leadership in the rural community. In addition to issue awareness, basic leadership training remains relevant. Communication skills were often emphasized as one of the most critical leadership skills. These skills became most important when issues of major concern to rural and agricultural sectors arose. Examples given included genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and relationships between animal and human health. Finally, challenging participants to engage in issues beyond their own typical comfort zone was often seen as important and relevant.

Funders and other stakeholders also confirmed AALP's relevance. They often noted the benefits that participants had gained from participation in AALP. One of the important parts of the program is the presence of participants from a wide variety of organizations, locations, and stages in life. Participants gain a lot as evidenced by promotions they receive in their organizations. On other occasions, even after leaving their employer, AALP alumni showed increased confidence and went on to lead successful projects elsewhere. Funders and stakeholders also noted the need for an up- and-coming youth leadership group for the rural and agricultural community. AALP has the potential to contribute to this.

Interviews with community organization representatives exemplify the relevance of AALP in agricultural, agri-food, and rural sectors in Ontario. AALP participants engage with a variety of organizations for their Issues Analysis Projects (IAP), with subjects ranging from agriculture to education to community. The main contributions of AALP participants to organizations through the IAPs are as follows:

- Providing a range of strategies to organizations,
- Expanding the contacts available to the organizations,
- Research design and reporting,
- Communication planning,
- Providing fresh perspectives and new ideas.

When asked about the type of project AALP participants were best suited for, respondents reported that the diverse backgrounds of AALP participants helped provide innovative solutions to the projects. Further, respondents preferred to highlight the achievements of AALP participants in order to communicate the benefits of these diverse backgrounds. IAP achievements that were mentioned include the design of a communication strategy using social media for the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee, research for the Economic Development Corporation involving rural grocery stores, and a report that allowed the Ontario Agri-Food Education Inc. (OAFE) to launch a new program.

*“The report gave us a foundation for launching another program; within a year we were able to launch the program. The report had enough data that we could implement it.”*

(Interview with community organization representative)

Community organization representatives pointed out that the adaptability and innovative capabilities of AALP participants provided them with opportunities to expand their projects. The main improvement that respondents noted was the need for participants to be more prepared. Some suggested that partnering AALP participants with organizations based on location and more time working with AALP participants would better benefit organizations.

## 4.2. REACH/EQUITY

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Funders and other stakeholders frequently commented on the diversity of participants in terms of geographic and sector representation. Map 1.1 (pg 10) reveals that since 1984, when AALP began, participants from across the province have completed the program. In recent years respondents reported that there have been fewer primary producers and a wider age range among AALP participants.

In our analysis of reach we also looked at diversity with regard to different sectors represented in AALP in the current class.

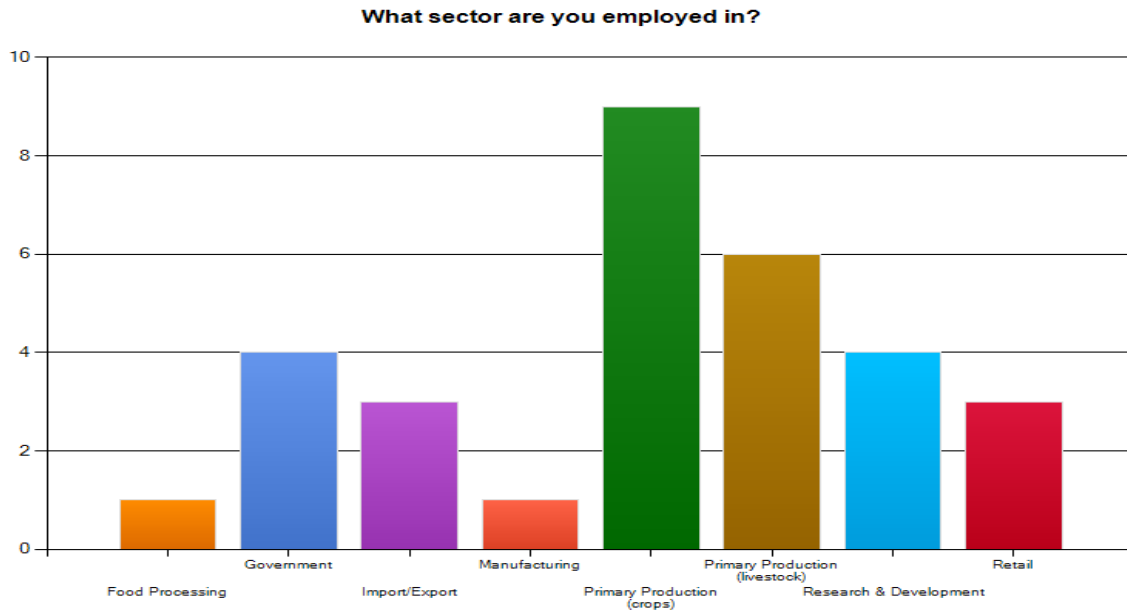
The result shows that

- Primary production is the most common sector of the participants’ economic activities, showing that 15 participants engage in primary production,

- Government, research, import/export and retail are next most commonly represented sectors, and
- One respondent is employed in each of the food processing and manufacturing sectors.

*GRAPH 4.2.1: EMPLOYMENT DISTRIBUTION OF AALP PARTICIPANTS*

(21 respondents from Class 14)



In various interviews, comments were made about the diversity or lack of diversity of participants. Some felt there should be more ethnic and cultural diversity among participants, particularly with respect to visible minorities. Others pointed out that rural Ontario has relatively few visible minorities and participants reflected this reality.

One of the reach/equity issues relates to the problem of getting busy producers to participate in the program. Some view the current 19 month program, with 48 days of contact time, as a constraint. Situations change quickly and people may not be able to commit over 19 months. Smaller producers may not feel they can spare the time away from the farm since it is difficult to find farm management support.

One of the consistent comments mentioned by IAPAL interviewees and other key stakeholders was the probability of extending the reach of AALP through the use of on-line course content. Virtual delivery could improve reach, reduce costs, improve learning effectiveness, and serve as a way to keep the

program up-to-date. This combination of benefits has contributed to ROI's directors giving this course enhancement 6.45 out of 7 as an approval rating for change.

Alumni responding to the survey mentioned several items related to reach. One issue was the difficulty the program had in getting poor farmers with small operations engaged in the program. They cannot take time away from their operations nor afford the tuition. The dominance of southern Ontario and Guelph participants in the seminar was also mentioned. It should be noted that many alumni felt that no changes were necessary.

### 4.3.EFFECTIVENESS

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The current class (Class 14) was asked in a survey to indicate what action they would take based on their participation in AALP. In response they listed the following items:

- Team work,
- Working to build bridges,
- Networking,
- Public speaking,
- Thinking outside the box,
- Involvement in agricultural committees,
- Teaching others,
- Promoting agriculture, and
- Lobbying.

In a subsequent section, Class 14 was asked to name a benefit of the AALP program. Of the 24 responses, 13 mentioned networking, and 6 mentioned agriculture sector knowledge. The rest of the responses dealt with personal growth in diverse environments.

During the pre-focus group survey class 14 participants were asked to estimate the degree to which the program has been worth their personal investment of time and money (1 = not worth it, 7 = very worthwhile).

- The benefits of the program outweigh the cost for most participants. The knowledge and network opportunities that AALP offers are considered to be of exceptional benefit.



- This opinion was not unanimous among participants. Some disagree with the cost of the program and reproach AALP for being too costly, involving too many fundraising activities that are not beneficial and various costs that they were not prepared to bear.

*GRAPH 4.3.1: ALUMNI PERSPECTIVES OF PROGRAM VALUE*



In the Alumni Survey, with respect to skills and knowledge, the following were ranked highest (6 or 7) in terms of skills and knowledge acquired during AALP by alumni on a 7-point scale with 7 being a substantial increase:

- Trends in the agricultural industry and rural society (54 per cent),
- Government and political system (37 per cent),
- Networking (61 per cent), and
- Public speaking (49 per cent).

AALP alumni were asked to rank AALP components based on their usefulness. A total of 76 alumni responded to this evaluation question. Responses indicated that the most useful parts of the program were the International Study Tour (mean of 6.27 out of 7); Seminar #2 - Personality, Self Understanding, and Development (mean 5.97); and the North American Study Tour (mean 5.99). The least useful components of the program were Fundraising Moments and individual and class fundraising during the

program, with scores ranging from 3.8 to 4.4, and 22 to 30 per cent of respondents ranking these items as of little use. Table 1 below provides additional detail.

TABLE 4.3.1: USEFULNESS OF AALP COMPONENTS

**Q 21 Please rate the following AALP components based on their usefulness to you since graduating from AALP. (1 = not useful at all; 7 = very useful)**

	N		Mean	Median	Mode
	Valid	Missing			
North American Study Tour (Canadian/American Relations)	75	14	5,99	6,00	7
International Study Tour (Political, Economic, & Cultural Comparisons)	73	16	6,27	7,00	7
Issue Analysis Project	75	14	4,68	5,00	5
Seminar #1 on Leadership Theory and Application	73	16	4,97	5,00	6
Seminar #2 on Personality, Self Understanding and Development	73	16	5,97	6,00	7
Seminar #3 on Decision Making and Responsibility	71	18	5,18	5,00	6
Seminar #4 on Political Process, Urban Society and Media	72	17	5,35	5,00	5 <sup>a</sup>
Seminar #5 on Examining and Dealing with the Issues	72	17	5,08	5,00	6
Seminar #6 on Federal Government, Globalization and Trade	75	14	5,47	6,00	6
Seminar #7 on Making Your Case & Modeling Leadership	72	17	5,04	5,00	6
Seminar #8 on Looking Ahead	72	17	5,01	5,00	6
Fundraising Moments	66	23	3,85	4,00	4
Off the Cuff	67	22	5,27	6,00	6
Through the Lens of Our Experience	54	35	4,44	5,00	4
Individual Fundraising During Program	60	29	3,88	4,00	2 <sup>a</sup>
Class Fundraising During Program	65	24	4,42	5,00	6

#### 4.4. IMPACT

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AALP alumni were asked to indicate their most significant professional accomplishment. Approximately 73 per cent of 76 respondents were positive, with the most frequently mentioned benefit being gains within their current job (mentioned by 42 per cent of participants). This benefit was followed by increased participation in farm organizations (14 per cent), better leadership skills, and increased roles in municipal organizations.

With respect to personal gains, the most mentioned gain was in confidence (21 per cent of respondents who gave it a 7/7 or very useful). This benefit was followed by networking (14 per cent), respect for differences (12 per cent), and effective leadership (12 per cent).

In terms of life changes, 63 per cent of 89 respondents indicated they had changed their volunteer activity as a result of AALP. At least 72 per cent of alumni are currently involved with a non-profit or charity organizations' board, with general agriculture associations or organizations attracting the interest of 35 per cent of alumni respondents. Alumni occupy important positions on various boards. For instance, 60 per cent of alumni volunteers who are involved in commodity organizations are directors. Further, the other 40 per cent are either chairs or committee members. Agricultural associations or organizations are another set of entities where most of the respondents occupy important positions, with 80 per cent of them being a chair, committee member or director. Here again the predominance of the director position is noticeable, represented by 32 per cent of respondents.

Approximately three quarters of those who volunteer in government organizations are committee members. More than half occupy a chair or a director's position. This trend is evident in other types of organizations that are less related to agriculture such as non-profit, charity, community, and religious organizations, including churches and synagogues. For non-profit organizations, 87 per cent of alumni volunteer as committee members, directors or chairs; whereas for community and religious organizations, 88 per cent and 74 per cent, respectively, represent the number of alumni that are involved in decision making and decision implementation positions.

TABLE 4.4.1: VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

Q 4: What volunteer positions do you currently hold?

	Chair (1)	Coach (2)	Committee Member (3)	Director (4)	Fundraiser (5)	General Volunteer (8)	Secretary (6)	Treasurer (7)	Response Count
Agri-business	16.7 % (3)	0.0% (0)	<b>33.3% (6)</b>	<b>33.3% (6)</b>	0.0% (0)	11.1% (2)	11.1% (2)	0.0% (0)	18
Commodity Organization	20.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	26.7% (4)	<b>60.0% (9)</b>	0.0% (0)	6.7% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	15
Community Organization	24.2% (8)	3.0% (1)	27.3% (9)	<b>36.4% (12)</b>	3.0% (1)	24.2% (8)	9.1% (3)	3.0% (1)	<b>33</b>
Church / Synagogue	14.8% (4)	3.7% (1)	40.7% (11)	14.8% (4)	3.7% (1)	<b>51.9% (14)</b>	3.7% (1)	0.0% (0)	<b>27</b>
<b>General Agricultural Association or Organization</b>	24.0% (6)	0.0% (0)	28.0% (7)	<b>32.0% (8)</b>	4.0% (1)	20.0% (5)	8.0% (2)	8.0% (2)	25
Government	23.1% (3)	0.0% (0)	<b>69.2% (9)</b>	30.8% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	13
Hospital	100.0 % (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1
Non-profit / Charity	13.6% (6)	0.0% (0)	<b>43.2% (19)</b>	31.8% (14)	18.2% (8)	22.7% (10)	6.8% (3)	6.8% (3)	<b>44</b>
Seniors Home	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0
Sports Team	5.9% (1)	<b>47.1 % (8)</b>	11.8% (2)	5.9% (1)	17.6% (3)	35.3% (6)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	17
Youth Group	0.0% (0)	25.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	<b>75.0% (3)</b>	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4
4-H	7.1% (1)	7.1% (1)	35.7% (5)	<b>42.9% (6)</b>	0.0% (0)	<b>42.9% (6)</b>	21.4% (3)	7.1% (1)	14

Note that some respondents are able to occupy more than one position in the same or different organizations

The evaluation suggests that 43.2 per cent of the respondents attest that they have changed their lobbying activities. The analysis of the responses related to the reasons why alumni participate, or not, in lobbying activities shows that for most respondents, involvement in such activities has improved after participation in AALP. Respondents report that their involvement is more organized and focused. The knowledge of the political system, as well as the different organizations capable of influencing policies was highlighted as being the most important factor for improvement.

Most of the respondents claim that they lobby municipal council, political parties, and agricultural organizations. Some of the significant impacts mentioned by respondents because of their participation include participation in the application of a 25 per cent farmland tax rate to tenant farmers of the crown and the designation of certain trails for horses by the National Capital Commission.

Despite the fact that the majority of AALP alumni reported that their lobbying activities have improved after they completed the program, some of them mention that they do not lobby. This is mainly due to the nature of work that these alumni are involved in, especially, those who work for the government. Indeed, most of the respondents who claimed that they do not lobby, pointed out that the positions they hold in government organizations restrain them from lobbying. Personal preference not to lobby and lack of opportunity to do so are other reasons that prevent a very few number of alumni from lobbying.

With respect to advocacy activities, 44 per cent of the respondents claim that they have changed the way they participated in advocacy activities after they graduated from AALP program. The main change reported by participants is the increase in advocacy activity, especially in terms of environmental, agricultural, farmer, and social services issues. Another major change is the improvement in the quality of their advocacy interventions. Respondents pointed out that they approach issues more logically and constructively by searching for points of consensus. Their means of advocating has improved as well, since alumni attested that they use their networks, write letters to officials, and use social media technology to transmit their messages.

The analysis of the impact also involved the investigation of skills gained from AALP by alumni that are still relevant for their work as shown in the Table 4.4.2.

*TABLE 4.4.2: SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE INCREASE OF AALP ALUMNI*

**Q 9 Please rate the degree to which your skills and knowledge have increased due to AALP.  
(1 = no increase and 7 = substantial increase)**

Skill	N		Median	Mode
	Valid	Missing		
<b>Fundraising</b>	75	14	4.00	4
<b>Environmental Impacts</b>	79	10	4.00	4
<b>National and International Trade</b>	79	10	5.00	4
<b>Marketing, Economics, and Business</b>	81	8	4.00	5
<b>Debate Skills</b>	80	9	5.00	5
<b>Working with the Media</b>	81	8	5.00	5
<b>Conflict Management</b>	82	7	5.00	5
<b>Consumer and Social Issues</b>	80	9	5.00	5
<b>Globalization</b>	80	9	5.00	5
<b>Public Speaking</b>	81	8	5.00	6
<b>Organization Skills</b>	79	10	5.00	6
<b>Government and the Political System</b>	78	11	5.00	6
<b>Networking</b>	81	8	6.00	6
<b>Trends in the Agri-Food Industry and Rural Society</b>	81	8	6.00	6

The analysis of the medians rank of knowledge and skills shows that nine out of the fourteen have a median of five, two have a median of six and three have the median of four. This illustrates that 11 out of 14 items have a median greater than the midpoint of 4 on the 7 point scale. The mode measurement displays the most frequent rank for each skill or knowledge considered in the analysis. The most frequent mode is 5, followed by 6 and the least 4. These modes were repeated respectively six times, five times and three times. The examination of the distribution of the median and the mode of these responses shows that the median and the mode are close and similarly distributed. When exploring the figure that displays these distributions it appears that most of the responses were close to the mode. For instance, the distribution of public speaking displays very well this image. This graph displays a bell

curve with most respondents condensed around the mode, in this case six. The minimum and the maximum are respectively one and seven for each skill.

An interesting statement on both effectiveness and impact is provided by the answer to the question of cost. In the alumni survey, participants were asked their willingness to pay more for AALP in relation to the amount they had paid. One question asked, "Do you feel that the amount you paid was worth what you received from AALP?" In response, 94 per cent respondents said yes, while 66 per cent indicated that they would have paid \$1000 more for participation in AALP.

Finally it is useful to provide some quotes on the benefits from the alumni survey:

Personal benefits:

*"I have been able to more effectively lead projects and committees with the organizations I volunteer with."*

*"Thinking outside the box."*

*"Have been able to establish and accomplish more of my organization's vision, goals, and objectives in a clear, direct, and effective manner."*

Professional Benefits:

*"I have been able to secure a new job based on the experience and skills gained from the program."*

*"Being a better boss/leader. This has made me more content in my role and has allowed my business to prosper as my efforts are better invested."*

*"I have become an elected director for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture."*



## 4.5. CURRICULUM DELIVERY

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The data from seminar evaluations of AALP classes 12, 13, and 14 were analyzed for the purposes of this evaluation. In addition a pre and post self-assessment of participant knowledge was analyzed for classes 11, 12, and 13, as data was not yet available for Class 14.

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### PRE AND POST SELF-ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

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The pre and post assessment covered nine areas of curriculum: leadership, communications, problem solving/decision making, meeting management, working with others, planning and organization, understanding the impact of my leadership, building alliances, and understanding community activity. Participants were surveyed on the changes they had experienced using a five point scale, with five being the most positive and one being the most negative.

Results show that overall the change was positive on all dimensions, with the greatest positive change between pre and post being 1.1 points for problem solving/decision making (class 11, 12, 13), leadership skills (class 12 and 13), and understanding community activity (class 12). Class 12 showed the greatest positive change. The lowest scores, indicating less positive change, were found in communication skills (0.6), meeting management (0.7), and understanding the impact of my leadership practices (0.7).

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### SEMINAR EVALUATION FINDINGS

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Of the eight seminars, four were used in the analysis:

- Seminar #1 Leadership – Theory and Application
- Seminar #3 Shaping the Future, Dynamics of Change - Decision Making and Responsibility
- Seminar #5 Examining and Dealing with the Issues
- Seminar #6 Understanding Canadian/American Relations

This analysis provided an evolution of participant feedback, starting with first impressions and ending with feedback that is based on participants knowing what to expect from AALP and being more comfortable with the program and their classmates. The analysis of these particular seminars also ensured that data from Class 14 could be included in the analysis.

The questions analyzed were chosen for their consistency throughout the three classes and various seminars. These include:

- Did the seminar meet the objectives?
- What was the most beneficial part of the seminar and why?
- Please rate your personal participation in the seminar. Please explain
- In your opinion what could have been improved upon in the seminar?
- Please note any other comments you have regarding the seminar and/ or the program to date?

Did the seminar meet the objectives?

- Over 80 per cent of participants in all four seminars analyzed over the three classes claimed objectives were met; this number often reached 100 per cent. There were only three exceptions to this finding.
  - Most notably Objective #5 in Seminar #6 (Compare Canadian/American interactions on the international stage) was the only objective where less than 80 per cent of respondents felt the objective had been met (Class 12 = 62.5 per cent, Class 13 = 75.9 per cent, Class 14 = 79.3 per cent)
  - Objective #2 in Seminar #5 (Learn about the challenge of leadership/negotiating with people as a leader) saw a noticeable decline in Class 14 with only 46.2 per cent of respondents indicating the objective had been met. (Class 12 = 100 per cent, Class 13 = 86.2 per cent)
  - Similarly, Objective #1 in Seminar #5 (Learn about board governance and what is required of a strong and effective Board of Directors) also saw a decline in Class 14 with 76.9 per cent of respondents indicating the objective had been met. (Class 12 = 92.3 per cent, Class 13 = 89.7 per cent)

What was the most beneficial part of the seminar and why?

- Results arising from this question speak directly to the unique topics of the seminar, though the results from each seminar were fairly consistent over the three classes, with the exception of Seminar #3.
  - Seminar #1 = GridWorks and Networking
  - Seminar #3 = Class 12 and 13 Speakers; Class 14 Tours
  - Seminar #5 = Northern Perspective
  - Seminar #6 = Meeting and Visiting with LEAD NY

Please rate your personal participation in the seminar. Please explain.

- In all the seminars that this question was asked (Seminar #1, 3, 5) the majority of participants from all three classes felt they actively participated in the seminar.
- For those in Classes 12 and 13 who did not feel they had actively participated, the feeling that they could have contributed more to conversations and group work was the most common response.
- For respondents in Class 14 who did not feel they had actively participated, a busy work schedule, burning out, or personal issues were cited as impediments to full participation.

In your opinion what could have been improved upon in the seminar?

- The results arising from this question brought out a diversity of suggestions, some site-specific, and some more general. Due to the nature of the program and its tendency to change seminar locations from one class to another, this analysis focuses on general suggestions regarding course content and programming.
  - **Less Is More:** A majority of respondents from all three classes felt that changes to the pace of the program needed to be modified in order to allow participants to process information and engage with the material more fully. The most frequent suggestions included: fewer speakers, more white space on the agenda, and active breaks that allowed people to move and get some fresh air.
  - **Active Learning:** The second item respondents noted, as a deterrent to getting the most out of the program, was the amount of sitting the seminars required. Similarly the emphasis on passive learning (listening to speakers) was also noted as a barrier to making the most of the seminars. Suggestions included: fewer speakers in order to engage more deeply in the issues, emphasizing debate and questions; creating more opportunities to learn from other classmates; and more learning opportunities outside the “classroom”.
  - **Advance Agenda:** Finally, respondents noted the need to receive seminar agendas further in advance of the seminar commencing in order to allow for travel planning and understanding expectations related to dress code, extra personal expenses, and preparation for responsibilities during the seminar.

Please note any other comments you have regarding the seminar and/or the program to date?

- In all three classes and in every seminar analyzed, the majority of respondents answered this question with positive comments of the seminar or program as a whole. Other consistent comments revolved around class dynamics:
  - Class dynamics: Many participants commented on the positive (and sometimes negative) class dynamics and the deepening of friendships and class cohesion as the seminars progressed. Negative comments regarding class dynamics included observations that there was too much drinking, cliques were forming, negative attitudes of other classmates, or embarrassment of other classmates' actions (e.g. sleeping during speakers).

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#### INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PROGRAMS FOR AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP (IAPAL) FINDINGS

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IAPAL leads from ten locations were interviewed. It was found that the approach taken by AALP is very similar to other programs. They all started about the same time and in the United States were supported by Kellogg Foundation grants. The combination of seminars and travel and projects is dominant, as is the two-year cycle.

However, there are several major issues arising. One deals with the participation of producers and ways to encourage and/or support such participation. In many settings producer participation is declining because producers are too busy. Reducing the time commitment of programs is one change being considered in order to attract a higher participation level. This includes reducing the length of individual seminars and exploring a 1-year program with half the hours of the current program. A second and related topic under discussion is the degree to which the program places an emphasis on agriculture as compared to rural. Many programs have evolved to be rural with agriculture in the background, while some are continuing to maintain their strong agricultural focus.

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#### COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVE FINDINGS

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The community organization representatives interviewed reported that for them, a renewed AALP would be more recognized in the agricultural, agri-food, and rural sectors for the following reasons:

- AALP would be serving a broader community, including people from the urban area,

- AALP would facilitate the interaction of all spheres of rural and agricultural communities, including municipal, and
- AALP would use more web-based technology, including webinars.

When asked what changes community organization representatives would make to the AALP curriculum, they reported the need to increase the accessibility of AALP to a wider range of participants. Also mentioned was the need for more involvement of agricultural organizations and for the program to be more responsive to agricultural and rural issues. Finally, the need for new speakers and topics from other industries were suggested as other improvements that could be made to the program.

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## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

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Recommendations are based on the results above and cover areas of program scheduling, curriculum delivery, communications and advertising, evaluation, alumni relations, and certification.

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### 5.1. PROGRAM SCHEDULING OPTIONS

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There are a variety of ways that AALP can maintain its excellent reputation in leadership, while reducing expenditures and staying current in today's dynamic and tech-savvy environment. Three options have been provided for consideration. Following these three options are recommendations that can be incorporated into any program design chosen. It is recommended that regardless of the option chosen, the ROI should increase tuition by \$1000.

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#### OPTION 1

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19-month program format: Reduce the number of seminars from eight to six, reduce the North American Study Tour by two days, and maintain the International Study Tour (See Appendix A). Option 1 would include the following details:

- Seminars would be reduced from eight to six,
- Seminar content conducive to an on-line format would be removed from face-to-face seminars and become part of the mandatory homework to be done between seminars. An on-line forum and scheduled small group teleconferencing or webinars with the group as a whole would provide time and space for discussion and debate,

- The North American Study Tour is currently a nine-day trip; this would be reduced to seven days, and
- The International Study Tour would remain the same.

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### OPTION 2

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14-month program format: Reduce the number of seminars from eight to six, maintain the North American Study Tour, and eliminate the International Study Tour (See Appendix B). Option 2 would include the following details:

- In order to accommodate busy schedules of participants, the program would be reduced to 14 months and would avoid seasonal agricultural conflicts,
- Six seminars would take place over the course of 14 months,
- Seminar content conducive to an on-line format would be removed from face-to-face seminars and become part of the mandatory homework to be done between seminars. An on-line forum and scheduled small group teleconferencing or webinars with the group as a whole would provide time and space for discussion and debate,
- North American Study Tour would remain the same, and
- International Study Tour would be removed from the curriculum, with content on global awareness, cultural sensitivity, and other international topics covered through homework, research, and participant presentations.

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### OPTION 3

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19-month program format: Reduce length of seminars while maintaining current number, reduce North American Study Tour by two days, and maintain International Study Tour (See Appendix C). Option 3 would include the following details:

- In order to accommodate busy schedules of participants, seminars 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 would be reduced in length from the current Sunday to Wednesday format to Sunday to Tuesday. Seminars 2 and 8 would remain the same,
- The North-American Study Tour is currently a nine-day trip; this would be reduced to seven days, and
- The International Study Tour would remain the same.

## 5.2. CURRICULUM

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- Reduce number of external speakers brought in for presentations at all seminars.
- Introduce active learning into the curriculum by having participants present to the class on a topic relating to their area of expertise or by teaching the class what they have learned through a homework assignment.
- Provide two extra 15-minute “work breaks” specifically for people to check email and make phone calls for work.
- Maintain “off-the-cuff” component throughout all face-to-face seminars.
- Include a session on business and dinner etiquette as part of on-line content.
- Review the curriculum to ensure that it is not overly focused on Southern Ontario.
- Replace one or two of the current seminars with a case study competition for participants. Students are presented with a case study. They are broken into teams of approximately five, regionally based. Each team prepares a response to the case and presents it to a panel of judges. Prizes are presented to the winners. The format would follow that used in MBA programs. It would require that a case or number of cases be developed in that standard format by a case study writer. Topics to be covered might include a farm, an agricultural business, or a farm organization.
- Have each participant develop a learning contract with an action agenda from commencement. Work on the assignment for the duration of AALP and present the results in a closing daylong seminar with invited guests and stakeholders related to the themes.
- Shorten the duration of the seminars and expand the ex ante preparation and ex post analysis by using virtual tools.
- Have assignments for participants emerging from each seminar, requiring the participants to be active and submit their work at or prior to the next seminar.
- Expand the policy topics covered in the seminars to include issues such as taxation, importing, and exporting.
- Ensure that all current students and alumni understand how to access course content on the website.
- Send out skeleton agendas two weeks prior to seminar start date, with dress code, extra costs, and other expectations listed.

### 5.3. ISSUE ANALYSIS PROJECT (IAP)

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Recommendations for IAPs are based on interviews with community organization representatives.

- Have community organization representatives present their organizations to AALP participants before the IAPs begin to give participants more familiarity with their organizations before starting the project.
- Work with community organization representatives to coordinate IAP activities.
- Match AALP participants with organizations based on proximity.
- Include municipalities so they can benefit from AALP participants' perspective on issues related to agriculture.

### 5.4. EVALUATION

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- Send participants follow-up evaluation survey for whole program one to two months after participants graduate.
- Develop an evaluation plan for the on-going evaluation of the program.

### 5.5. COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVERTISING

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- Consistent and frequent use of social media (twitter and facebook) for both advertising and daily class updates. Current class members could be given social media responsibilities (on a rotating basis) as an educational component of the program, removing the responsibility from AALP staff.
- Update the website.
- Launch a promotional program including presentations to key organizations on the program.
- Add a testimonials section to the web site.
- Expand reach of communications to include smaller rural and northern communities.
- Promote the contribution of AALP to future work opportunities both on and off the farm.

### 5.6. CERTIFICATION

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- Establish AALP as a certified continuing education program. Link it to the University of Guelph. Increase the requirements to demonstrate competency by including testing and feedback on participant papers. Advertise it through continuing education at Guelph. Link it



to agreed upon standards for continuing education programs. Work with curriculum developers at the University of Guelph. Seek faculty involvement through departments like Environmental Design and Rural Development and the Center for Studies in Leadership.

## 5.7. ALUMNI RELATIONS

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Recommendations for alumni relations are based on the 89 responses from the alumni survey. Table 5.7.1 indicates the services that alumni feel would be of most value to them.

- Develop a continuing education program for alumni, starting with one or two learning events per year, or as one alumni summarized, “1-day super cool workshops for grads?”.
- Have alumni organize seminars and fundraise to support them across the province. This would be supported by AALP through the development of curriculum criteria, a system for approving content, and virtual and distance tools.
- Mentorship program to raise interest in agriculture and rural issues among youth.

*TABLE 5.7.1: ALUMNI SERVICES*

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Q25. What alumni services would be most valuable to you, if they were available? (Please check all that apply)

Alumni Services	Response Percent	Response Count
Communications	55.7	39
Networking	74.3	52
Newsletter	37.1	26
Learning Opportunities	55.7	39
Fundraising Events	20.0	14

## 6. CONCLUSION

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The Rural Ontario Institute's Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP) is a highly successful and respected leadership program. It has hundreds of graduates in influential positions in the province. A new class is recruited every two years, providing 30 participants an intense 19-month program focused on issues awareness, leadership skills, confidence building, networking, and personal and professional development.

Graduates and stakeholders strongly support the program and want it to continue. We have proposed a number of possibilities for change, while remaining faithful to AALP's original goal and objectives.

We hope to see some of these recommendations implemented and look forward to continuing to support the program through effective monitoring and evaluation work in the future.

## 7. REFERENCES

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## 8. APPENDICES

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### Appendix A :Seminars & Study Trips – Option #1

#	Date	Seminar & Study Trip Description
1	September	<p><b>Leadership – Theory &amp; Application</b></p> <p>The case for leadership and developing a positive awareness of yourself as a leader in your community and behaviours for success</p>
2	November	<p><b>Personality, Self-Understanding and Development</b></p> <p>Understanding yourself and others to work together effectively for the benefit of the individual, the family and the community</p>
3	January	<p><b>Shaping the Future, Dynamics of Change - Decision Making and Responsibility</b> Vision and strategic planning for the future of agriculture &amp; food industries and the rural community; Forces of change in society; understanding and managing change and how it influences decision making and the responsibilities of leadership</p>
4	March	<p><b>Examining &amp; Dealing with the Issues</b></p> <p>Strategies for analyzing and dealing with issues facing society - ethically, locally, nationally and internationally</p>
North American Study Tour	July (7 days)	<p><b>Understanding Canadian/American Relations</b></p> <p>Varying approaches to agriculture, trade, policy development, rural development, resource and social policies</p>
5	October	<p><b>Federal Government; Globalization &amp; Trade</b></p> <p>Canadian &amp; American government: people, policies, programs; Globalization &amp; Trade: new and emerging realities</p>
International Study Tour	January	<p><b>Political, Economic and Cultural Comparisons</b></p> <p>Global awareness; understanding our own society and others.</p>
6	March	<p><b>A Look Ahead</b></p> <p>Graduation; How will you use the knowledge and skills you have acquired through your experience in AALP?</p>

**Appendix B Seminars & Study Trips – Option #2**

#	Date	Seminar & Study Trip Description
1	January	<p><b>Leadership – Theory &amp; Application</b></p> <p>The case for leadership and developing a positive awareness of yourself as a leader in your community and behaviours for success</p>
2	March	<p><b>Personality, Self-Understanding and Development</b></p> <p>Understanding yourself and others to work together effectively for the benefit of the individual, the family and the community</p>
3	May	<p><b>Shaping the Future, Dynamics of Change - Decision Making and Responsibility</b> Vision and strategic planning for the future of agriculture &amp; food industries and the rural community; Forces of change in society; understanding and managing change and how it influences decision making and the responsibilities of leadership</p>
North American Study Tour	July (9 days)	<p><b>Understanding Canadian/American Relations</b></p> <p>Varying approaches to agriculture, trade, policy development, rural development, resource and social policies</p>
4	October	<p><b>Examining &amp; Dealing with the Issues</b></p> <p>Strategies for analyzing and dealing with issues facing society - ethically, locally, nationally and internationally</p>
5	January	<p><b>Federal Government; Globalization &amp; Trade</b></p> <p>Canadian &amp; American government: people, policies, programs; Globalization &amp; Trade: new and emerging realities</p>
6	March	<p><b>A Look Ahead</b></p> <p>Graduation; How will you use the knowledge and skills you have acquired through your experience in AALP?</p>

## Appendix C

### Seminars & Study Trips – Option #3

#	Date	Seminar & Study Trip Description
1	September Sun/Mon/Tues	<b>Leadership – Theory &amp; Application:</b> The case for leadership and developing a positive awareness of yourself as a leader in your community and behaviours for success
2	November Fri/Sat/Sun	<b>Personality, Self-Understanding and Development:</b> Understanding yourself and others to work together effectively for the benefit of the individual, the family and the community
3	January  Sun/Mon/Tues	<b>Shaping the Future, Dynamics of Change - Decision Making and Responsibility:</b> Vision and strategic planning for the future of agriculture & food industries and the rural community; Forces of change in society; understanding and managing change and how it influences decision making and the responsibilities of leadership
4	February Sun/Mon/Tues	<b>Political Process, Urban Society &amp; Media:</b> Provincial government and agricultural policies, urban issues and working effectively with the media
5	April Sun/Mon/Tues	<b>Examining &amp; Dealing with the Issues:</b> Strategies for analyzing and dealing with issues facing society - ethically, locally, nationally and internationally
North American Study Tour	July (7 days)	<b>Understanding Canadian/American Relations:</b> Varying approaches to agriculture, trade, policy development, rural development, resource and social policies
6	October Sun/Mon/Tues	<b>Federal Government; Globalization &amp; Trade:</b> Canadian & American government: people, policies, programs; Globalization & Trade: new and emerging realities
7	January Sun/Mon/Tues	<b>Making Your Case &amp; Modeling Leadership:</b> Issue Analysis presentations and exploration of leadership styles and lessons of experience
International Study Tour	February	<b>Political, Economic and Cultural Comparisons:</b> Global awareness; understanding our own society and others.
8	April  Thurs Evening  Fri/Sat/Sun	<b>A Look Ahead:</b> Graduation; How will you use the knowledge and skills you have acquired through your experience in AALP?