

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Q. Who participates in AALP?

- A. Anyone involved in Ontario's agriculture and food industries or rural communities may participate. Classes include participants from across Ontario's agriculture, food, and rural sectors, including primary producers, government, agricultural finance, crop protection, insurance, media, marketing, consulting, and a wide range of agricultural, food, rural community businesses, organizations, and associations. The goal is for primary producers to make up 30% to 35% of each class. Over ~45% of AALP graduates are primary producers.

The program's intent is NOT about teaching agriculture production. Instead, it helps leaders in Ontario's agriculture, food, and rural sectors build the skills, knowledge, and understanding they need to navigate the forces shaping the ag-sector and rural Ontario.

Q. What is involved in the selection process?

- A. Selection of AALP participants is based on a written application, virtual interviews that include a short presentation and a final selection process by the AALP recruitment team. Typically, 200 nominations and between thirty 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. Personal/Individual Criteria:
- 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 ag-sector and 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 based on age, gender, location, occupation, agri-food value chain contribution and agricultural/food commodity or sector and rural community representation.

Participants are chosen so that peer-to-peer mentorship, interrelationships and a broad network are developed. Class participants are chosen for their different backgrounds, offering unique viewpoints and enabling thought-provoking, balanced discussion of critical issues.

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. 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 requires time away from normal activities. 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 often the practice of learning to manage commitments when away at seminars is a great learning experience for aspiring senior leaders.

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 and community organization(s). Federal job training grants may be available to farmers, employees and others. 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 more costly.

Q How might participants offset some of their tuition costs?

- A. Here is a list of options for participants to consider to help offset tuition costs:
- Individual participants might 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 during the program.
 - There have historically been educational/job training funding programs available through the provincial and/or federal governments.
 - Participants 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. Also, other participants in financial difficulty may be eligible for a grant of up to 20% available through the ROI's emerging leaders' fund. Further information on this award is available through the Rural Ontario Institute.
 - Several commodities and farm organizations fund further education scholarships, and often AALP is included as a potential scholarship qualifying program. Contact these organizations directly for details.
 - Local organizations have been known to support AALP participants. Ideas of groups to ask: local co-ops, clubs, local federations of agriculture, organizations you now volunteer for, etc.

AALP participants are responsible for approximately a third of the full cost of this experiential leadership development program. OMAFA contributes approximately one third of tuition. There are several generous sponsor organizations and individuals who contribute another third, through direct sponsorship and fundraising events such as the biannual Dream Gala. We are thankful for the continued support of the many ways the industry supports AALP participant journeys.

Q. What technology do we need to participate in AALP?

A. Participants will need access to a computer with basic functions and access to high-speed Internet and email. A portion of the program is delivered by webinar. Future leaders will need to be comfortable with, and take advantage of, the benefits of online new and expanding technology. Past classes have used WhatsApp to communicate, as well.

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. ROI is a registered Canadian charitable organization.

Q. How is the program curriculum determined?

A. The curriculum is designed to address leadership skills that will help meet the challenges facing the entire agriculture industry. Topics include 360-degree leadership assessment, self-awareness, team synergy, change leadership, communication, conflict resolution, decision-making, problem solving, issues debates, working with the media, diversity, equity and inclusion, government and political systems, national and international trade, environment/economic/social trends in agriculture, rural and society. It includes opportunities to visit communities across Ontario, developing networks and a broader awareness of the agriculture community throughout the province.

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. It is unique by providing a cross-sector experiential executive leadership program that emphasizes practice rather than book work. Other executive development programs and MBA's have tuition costs of between \$10,000 and \$115,000 and range in length from 5 days to 15 months.

In comparison to most MBA programs, AALP will give you a more experiential curriculum leading to an 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, instead you receive an Award of Achievement, a Certificate from the Office of Open Learning at the University of Guelph. This is eligible for tax credit and AALP alumni are recognized as leaders in the industry.

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 because of their participation in the AALP?

A. Graduates have applied their leadership skills to:

- Federal, Provincial and Municipal government
- Industry leadership – over 133 organizations/businesses have AALP alumni leading teams/projects
- Local organizations (i.e. churches, schools)
- President, General Manager, Director or other executive roles within farm/commodity/rural organizations
- Their own farming operations and agri-businesses
- Global development and trade
- Youth and emerging leaders mentorship
- Economic, Environmental and Social Innovation

***AALP is a TERRIFIC investment
for you, your business and your community!***

Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP)

A program of the **Rural Ontario Institute**

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