

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Recruitment is now open for Class 22 of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program

GUELPH, ON, September 1, 2026 – The Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP) is now accepting applications for Class 22. During the executive leadership program, up to 30 individuals will embark on a personal journey to realize their potential, while exploring agriculture, food and rural economic development from the local to the international level through a leadership lens. Participants will begin their AALP leadership journey in September 2027.

AALP was established in 1984, through the work of four partners – Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the University of Guelph, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Foundation for Rural Living. The program was created for those who want to broaden their horizons, expand their networks and help shape the future of the agriculture and food sectors in Ontario. The Rural Ontario Institute (ROI) has delivered AALP since 2010.

“AALP challenges you to think bigger, lead with confidence, and connect with people who are driving change across the agri-food sector,” said Peggy Brekveld, Leadership Programs Director at ROI and AALP Class 12 alumna. *“Through hands-on learning, transformative study tours, and access to an influential network of over 540 leaders, AALP equips you with the skills and relationships you need to make a lasting impact in your industry and community. In a recent survey of AALP alumni, 50% of respondents stated that they had moved to a higher level of responsibility in their job after graduating.”*

“As Ontario's agri-food sector faces growing pressure from trade disruptions and global uncertainty, the role of AALP has never been more important. For more than 40 years, the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program has developed leaders who are strengthening farms, growing businesses, leading organizations and championing rural communities across the province,” said Trevor Jones, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. *“Four decades of sustained investment in leadership development have created a strong network of people ready to tackle today's challenges. Our government is proud to continue supporting this program and investing in the leaders who will help shape the future of Ontario's agri-food sector.”*

“The AALP experiential journey is an opportunity for people to develop new skills, gain fresh perspectives, and build relationships that will positively impact rural communities and the agri-food sector in Ontario,” said Lisa Thompson, Minister of Rural Affairs. *“Applications are now open for Class 22 and, as a proud alumna of the program, I encourage dedicated leaders across Ontario to apply and help drive the future of our rural sectors.”*

Successful applicants will come together for approximately 45 days of in-session training including: in-person seminars, online webinars, small group issues analysis projects and two study tours, north American and international. While meeting with industry, government and organization influencers, Class participants will learn about government and political systems, national and international trade, leadership styles, communication, team dynamics, problem-solving, agriculture issues and innovation.



“The strength and future of Ontario’s agriculture sector relies on leaders who are ready to navigate challenges, foster strong working relationships and embrace new opportunities,” said Drew Spoelstra, President of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and AALP Class 13 alumnus. “AALP helps develop and support leaders with skills, perspectives and connections to make that meaningful impact. I encourage individuals who want to contribute to the future of our industry to consider applying for the next class.”

“The Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program continues to play a vital role in developing the leaders our sector needs to navigate change, seize opportunity, and strengthen rural communities,” said John Cranfield, Dean of the Ontario Agricultural College at the University of Guelph. “AALP challenges participants to broaden their perspectives, build meaningful connections, and develop the skills needed to lead with confidence and purpose. As graduates apply what they have learned across Ontario and beyond, they help shape a more innovative, resilient, and collaborative future for agriculture and the agri-food sector.”

“There’s something truly special about the AALP community. AALP alumni don’t just graduate, they stay connected, support each other and continue shaping the future of agriculture at home in Ontario and abroad,” said Emily Morrison, Chair of the ROI Board and AALP Class 16 alumna. “If you’re ready to grow beyond your current role and find out what’s next I encourage you to apply for Class 22.”

Interested applicants are encouraged to attend AALP’s information sessions held throughout the upcoming months to learn more about the program and have their questions answered. Attendees can register for an upcoming session here: <https://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/events>

For more information about the program and on how to apply, please visit <https://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/aalp/>. **The deadline for applications is December 31st, 2026.**



ABOUT

The Rural Ontario Institute (ROI) is a charitable organization committed to developing leaders, informing decision makers and connecting communities. ROI delivers the renowned Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP) which is celebrating its 42nd year, and the Rural Change Maker program, a youth leadership program for emerging leaders to address local priorities. We provide data research and analysis on rural trends and demographics, equipping communities with tools through the Rural Community Wellbeing factsheets and dashboards, and Rural Housing Information System - addressing the housing and homelessness crisis faced by thousands of Canadians.

AALP is funded in part by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA). Established in 1984, AALP has celebrated more than 540 graduates who are leading positive impacts across Ontario and beyond.

ASSOCIATED LINKS

[ADVANCED AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM](#)

[RURAL ONTARIO INSTITUTE](#)

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