

Spring 2021 Stewardship Report



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ABOUT

The Rural Ontario Institute (ROI):

- Develops, Informs and Connect Leaders
- Initiates dialogue and supports collaboration amongst rural stakeholders
- Identifies and amplifies key issues and opportunities
- Builds organizational capacity in rural and northern Ontario

ROI delivers one of the **most comprehensive**, leadership development programs in the world – the **Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP)**.

AALP objective: develop top leaders who are better prepared to identify and overcome challenges and to optimize emerging opportunities in agriculture, agri-food and rural sectors.

This **Stewardship Report** highlights how support from sponsors and donors helps to develop, inform and connect strong leaders, strong organizations and strong rural communities.

**LEADERSHIP COMES IN
MANY FORMS, AND
OPPORTUNITIES TO
PRACTICE LEADERSHIP
ARE ALL AROUND US,
EVERY DAY.**

**- KATIE NOLAN
AALP ALUMNUS CLASS 17**

THE ADVANCED AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM (AALP)



37 Year Track Record



Investment in AALP pays off at a rate of 25% - that's better than the rate of return on most investments!*

**According to the 2013 Social Return on Investment Study completed by the George Morris Centre.*

482



graduates in leadership positions in the **Ontario Agriculture and Food Industry** and throughout **rural communities** across the province.



Leading in over **33** agri-food value chain organizations and businesses



Networking Opportunities providing **over 5,000** networking opportunities **per class**.



36 study tours (traveling **nationally** and **internationally**)

Since 1984, AALP has had a solid track record of developing top ag-sector leaders. Presently, alumni are leading in over 33 municipal, provincial and national organizations and businesses including farms, ag-sector boards, agribusiness, media, communications, insurance, finance and governments. Alumni, credit AALP with preparing and inspiring them to take on increasingly greater leadership roles and often comment that “AALP changed my life!” The most significant indicator of program performance is showcased in the achievements of our alumni, and the valuable contributions they make after the program.

Over 480 men and women have benefited from this executive leadership development program. AALP’s seminars, study tours, self-directed learning and distance education combine hands-on experience, introduce broad industry knowledge and expose participants to contacts and networks that would otherwise take decades to accumulate.

Support from industry leaders is vital to the strength of our program. In fact, without the support of sponsors and funders, AALP would not be possible. Financial commitments from the industry are matched by a commitment from the Board and staff of ROI to achieve the program objectives and maintain exceptional quality of leadership development programming.

ACHIEVING OBJECTIVES AND MAINTAINING EXCELLENCE

We continue to deliver on program objectives by ensuring that seminar and study travel agendas focus on: excellence in core leadership skill development; exposure to innovation in the agri-food system; discovery of key topics of importance including the economic, political, social, cultural and physical environment in the ag-sector operates; exploration of local, national and global issues; and personal and professional development.

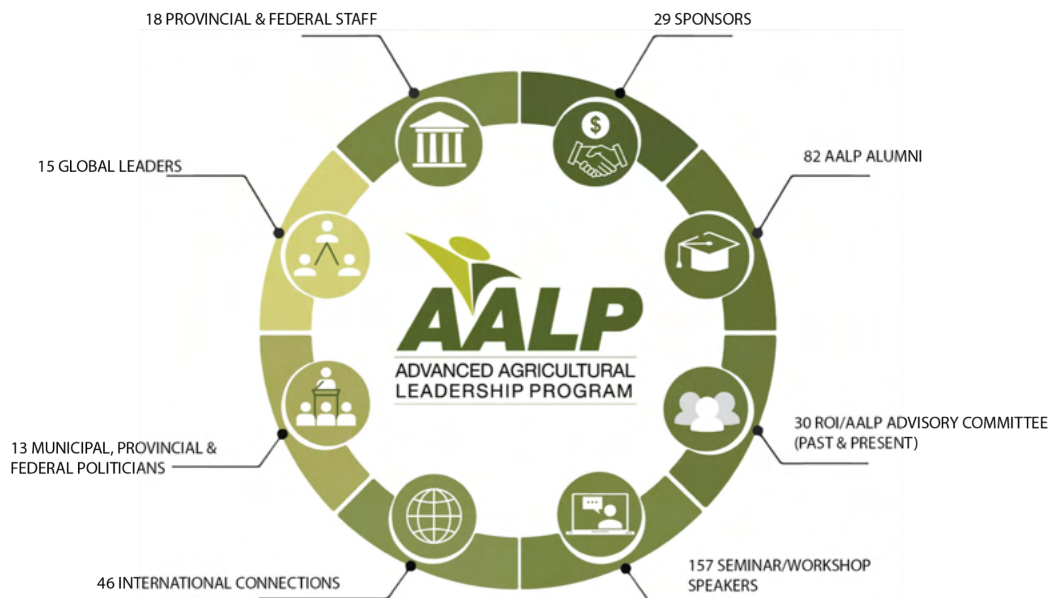
MILESTONES - AALP CLASS 17

17 men and women participated in AALP Class 17 to achieve the following curriculum highlights and milestones:

1. **Completion of Seminars 1-8:** Guelph, Belleville, Sarnia, Toronto, Ottawa, Niagara Falls, London, Thunder Bay.
2. **North American Study Tour:** Texas (July 2018).
3. **Class 17 International Study Tour:** Spain (Jan 2020).
4. **Graduation of AALP Class 17** (March 2020)



Between October 2017 and March 2020, AALP Class 17 had 455 interactions resulting in over 7700 connections made during their program leadership journey.



During the eight seminars, Class 17 participants covered the following topics:

- Leadership theory and application
- Personality, self-understanding and development
- Shaping the future
- Decision making and responsibility
- Dynamics of change
- Social, economic and political issues facing northern Ontario
- Visioning and strategic planning
- Federal government; globalization and trade
- Canadian and US government political processes, relations, economic, and trade policies, lobbying
- Political, economic and cultural comparisons
- Public speaking and presentation skills
- Facilitation, meeting management and leading groups
- Communications
- Media training and working effectively with the media
- Conflict resolution
- Getting your message across effectively
- Productivity improvement and time management
- Innovation and risk taking

ISSUES ANALYSIS PROJECT

Participants also add to their “toolbox of skills” by completing an Issues Analysis Project (IAP). The IAP is an action-based leadership project within the agriculture, agri-food and rural sectors in Ontario. Class 17 worked with the following organizations, in a consultative role, to examine an issue important to the client organization and within the industry:



MILESTONES - AALP CLASS 18

21 men and women completed the first year of AALP Class 18 before COVID 19 brought a one year postponement to in-person seminars and study tours. Participants kept involved with additional activities that included Lunch with Leaders and a Global Zoom event with international ag and rural leadership program participants from Australia, Scotland, Pennsylvania and New York. Fortunately 20 of the original 21 participants were able to commit to an additional one year in the program to complete the experiential elements that are valuable to practicing skills and building strong networks.



As of April 2021 AALP Class 18 has accomplished the following:

1. **Completion of Seminars 1-3:** Niagara-on-the-Lake, Toronto, Cornwall and Virtual.
2. **Completion of Webinars 1- 5:** Curriculum reflection; OFA/CFFO/NFU president's panel; Optimizing Class 18 in a world pandemic; Canadian humanitarian aid in war torn developing nations.
3. **Completion of Additional Activities:** Lunch with Leaders, Global Zoom with Australia, Scotland, New York and Pennsylvania and more as participants' schedules permitted.
4. **Active hybrid (in-person and virtual) programming** is scheduled for July 2021, August 2021, November 2021 with travel study tours in Winter 2022.

It's an exciting time to be exploring possibilities when the world is open to change and new paradigms. Making the time to reach your potential while navigating a world pandemic showcases the optimism and commitment to the future that Class 18 is demonstrating. It's exciting to imagine where these leaders can take the sector!

AALP EVALUATION

Developing and implementing a mentorship component in AALP

In 2019 an Issues Analysis Project completed by one Class 17 team tasked the group with developing and implementing mentorship in the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program. The group of three class members used an online survey to AALP graduates, to the International Association of Programs for Agriculture Leadership (IAPAL), interviewed targeted external groups (Ag Women's Network, BALLE, school board, Cattlemen's, etc) and the AALP listening tour data.

The online survey conducted by the group found that:

- 60% of respondents did not develop a mentorship relationship in AALP
- 75% were not disappointed by this because it was not an expectation
- 14% indicated some level of openness to mentorship, had it been an option

There was a 26% response rate out of approximately 465 alumni. The demand for mentorship is not explicit, specific or proactive, however, there was an openness to the idea. When asked if conducting a formalized mentorship component in AALP would improve the experience, 55% replied yes, however, expressed concerns about imposing a mentorship relationship on people. The surveys further concluded that 36% of respondents preferred matches to be made by AALP staff while 38% of respondents wanted to find their own match.

Further surveys and interviews to 30 IAPAL member programs, 8 responded (27% response rate), found that none of the programs had an active, formal mentorship component. One common theme was that alumni relationship building activities contribute to opportunities for mentorship, as well as other program goals. There was a concern that traditional mentorship programs are resource intensive, with an uncertain and difficult to measure outcome.

The 4 concluding recommendations when considering a mentorship component are:

- Must be low cost: cannot lead to an increase of tuition fees
- Must not place significant additional demands on ROI and AALP staff
- Must not require extensive volunteer time by mentors or mentees
- Mentors and mentees must both get something out of the mentorship program

Upon completion, guiding principles and four recommendations were created for ROI and the AALP Advisory Committee: recruitment with mentorship in mind, peer mentoring triad, speed/mini mentorship, alumni relationship building. Conclusively, mentorship within AALP already occurs without targeted mentorship; when given the proper tools, leaders became mentors to their peers.

Measuring the Impact of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program on Agriculture and Rural Affairs

In 2017 an Issues Analysis Project by one AALP Class 16 team measured the impact of AALP on agriculture and rural affairs. The team used an online survey, a filmed focus group and commodity board polling to develop this report. An online survey provided quantitative results that AALP graduates have gained valuable leadership skills.

- Participants agreed (94%) that AALP met their goals or reasons for applying.
- When asked if AALP had an impact on their personal or professional lives, 88% agreed.
- Sixty-one percent of alumni stated that they currently have an active leadership position within the agricultural industry.
- AALP graduates volunteer an average of 5.6 hours a week in their community, using the lowest possible values.
- According to the online survey, graduates on average sit on 1.8 boards and or committees, with commodity boards representing 43%.
- Polling commodity boards, excluding companies and agencies, revealed that 73 of their previous and current members were, or are, AALP graduates.
- 16 percent of alumni have sat on boards, 18 alumni volunteering more than once. This figure is greater when only eligible alumni are considered.

Results prove that AALP graduates provide much needed leadership in agriculture by serving on our commodity boards and committees. They step forward to lead and volunteer in their communities on town councils, sports organizations and churches, all of which strengthen the social fabric of rural Ontario.

The future of farming and rural life depends on the commitment, knowledge and leadership skills of qualified top leaders. The Rural Ontario Institute supports agriculture and rural Ontario by delivering the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program.

George Morris Centre Study & University of Guelph Evaluation

In 2013, the George Morris Centre completed the study: [Social Return on Investment from AALP](#). The study reaffirmed the tremendous value of AALP to Ontario society and the economy. Social return on investment is a method to track and capture the impact a program has on the lives of its participants. The social return on investment from AALP is 25%. That means for every \$1 invested in AALP, the social return on investment is \$1.25.

In 2012, Dr. Harry Cummings and researchers from the School of Environmental Design and Rural Development at the University of Guelph set out to understand, improve and renew the overall effectiveness of the program. Research was conducted between September 2012 and January 2013, which looked at the rural sectors in Ontario and provided recommendations to improve the program.

[Study results](#) showed overwhelming agreement that AALP continues to provide relevant content – based on feedback from participants and industry stakeholders. The study also provided some opportunities for changes and many of the suggestions made have now been implemented. Both studies are available at:

<https://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/aalpresourcesreports>

CURRICULUM: EVOLVING AND RE-AFFIRMING

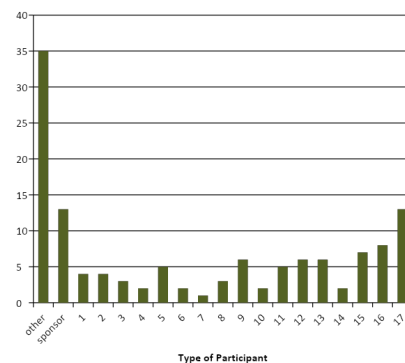
The ROI Board of Directors, staff and the AALP Curriculum Advisory Team proactively ensures that curriculum keeps pace with leadership, agriculture, agri-food and rural issues of the day, the advances in educational trends and the potential impact and challenges of the national and global marketplace.

ROI's Leadership Programs Director conducted a listening tour to hear what AALP alumni, sponsors, donors and other interested stakeholders had to say about the future of AALP and ag-sector/rural leadership.

The listening tour was completed from October to December 2018 with representation from across the Province (Ridgetown, London, Thamesford, Guelph, Niagara Falls, Woodville, Kemptville and Thunder Bay).

There were more than 125 participants. Over 16% of AALP alumni participated in the tour with representation from all Classes 1 to 17 completed from 1984 to 2020. In addition, 46% of sponsors and 35 supporters shared their opinions.

The feedback from the listening tours indicated that AALP alumni, sponsors, donors and other interested stakeholders wanted to keep the program advanced, enhance the diversity of participants and leverage the network of almost 500 alumni.



Moving forward the goals for strategic re-visioning will focus on the following:

- Maintain AALP as the preeminent leadership program for Ontario Agriculture
- Ensure program structure and curriculum are relevant and responsive to the emerging needs of the Ag sector
- Enhance diverse, multi-sector participation
- Engage industry and alumni to resource and support AALP

LOOKING FORWARD...

As a result of these studies, ROI remains confident that AALP is valuable to participants and to the agriculture and agri-food sectors and rural and northern communities across Ontario.

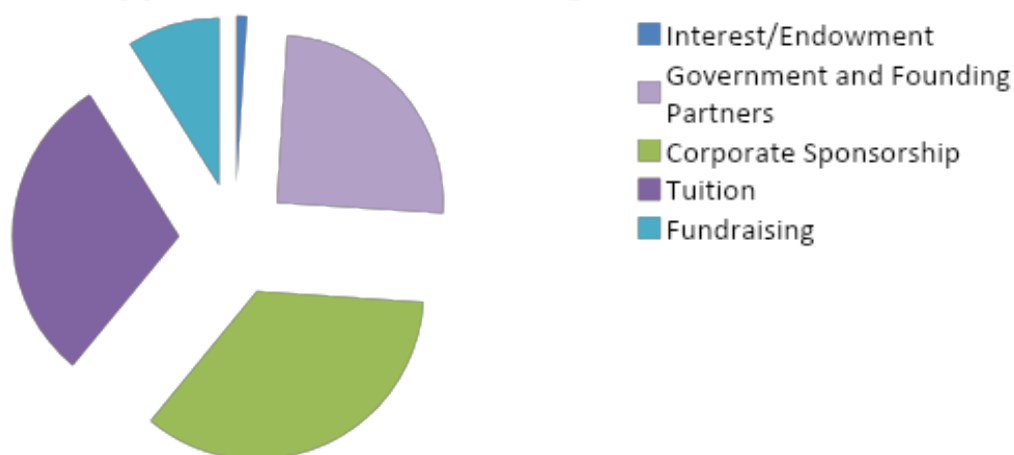
Because of the overwhelming affirmation received, the core of the program remains the same going forward: face-to-face seminars, team projects and North American/International Study Tours. Changes to the program include fewer, longer seminars; the addition of virtual components for seminar review/reflection and guest speakers; Lunch with Leaders; and Global Zoom leadership program networking events. Enhancements to curriculum topics are diversity, equity and inclusion; change leadership and foresight; positive discourse and open-mindedness. AALP will use the Global Leadership Competency Framework published in 2019 by Ann L. Gordon as the foundation building curriculum content. These revisions reflect the input of participants and stakeholders and the financial realities of providing the program.

Tuition for Class 17 and Class 18 was \$11,500 which represents approximately 1/3 of the costs required to deliver the program. The COVID pandemic necessitated changes to accommodation, meals and the way the participants gather. Both increased costs and new efficiencies to the way AALP is delivered have occurred and along with enhancements to leadership skills programming the net effect is slightly increased costs. We will continue to bring the latest leadership science together with innovative insight to the agrifood sector and rural community building while managing the program budget effectively.

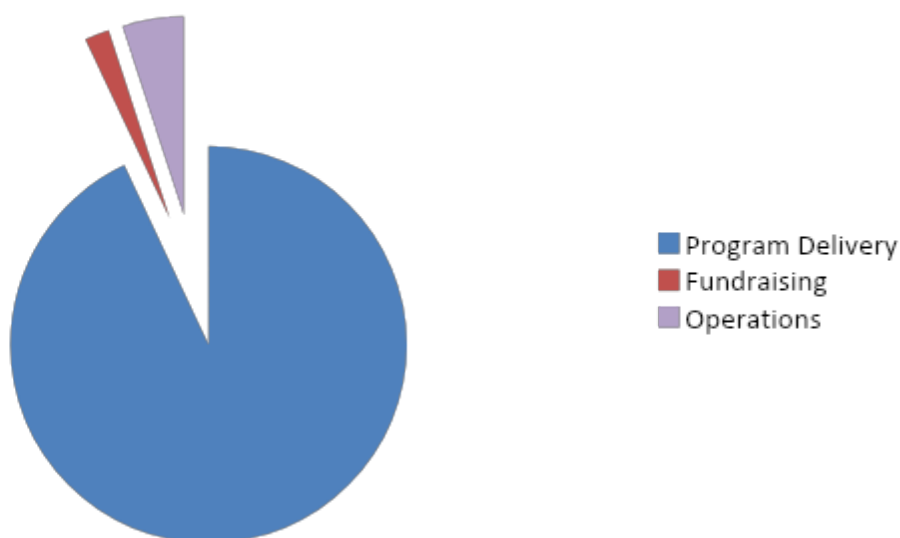
HOW YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT IS USED

Sponsorship support goes directly toward funding AALP's executive leadership development program. Throughout the long history of AALP, costs have increased and so has our commitment to deliver a program of exceptional quality. This requires a large investment from many stakeholders within the industry. Participants are aware that they are only paying about 1/3 of the cost of AALP and that 2/3 is provided through the generosity of sponsors and funders and fundraising endeavours.

Typical AALP Funding Sources



Typical Class Expenditures



RECOGNIZING COMMITMENT TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Program sponsors play a significant leadership role in our industry and provide tremendous support to AALP. We continue to recognize this leadership and showcase sponsor support at every opportunity.

In each class, we acknowledge our sponsors in a number of formal and informal ways including:

- AALP class participants work in teams to research and present Sponsor Spotlight presentations that are shared at seminars throughout the program. Each presentation focuses on a specific sponsor, exploring their business and activities and highlighting their sponsorship of AALP.
- Sponsor logos are included in printed and online communications - newsletters, selected media releases, on our website and in the Rural Ontario Institute Annual Report. Individualized social media posts are used to thank each sponsor.
- Signage and printed materials at seminars.
- Sponsors receive special thanks (verbally, in printed materials and on signage) at our key events:
 - Class Opening Event/Banquet
 - AALP Dream Auction
 - Wm. A. Stewart Public Lecture and Reception
 - Class Graduation Banquet



AALP Class 17
Graduation

Hear From Our Alumni

"When we graduate, we continue to benefit from our experiences here for years to come. I'm going to miss seeing you all regularly, but I know that the relationships we made will surely last a lifetime."

- AALP alumnus

"Through the AALP program I have developed some amazing friendships and strengthened and enhanced skills and abilities in my toolbox. It has reaffirmed goals and passions that were previously overlooked."

- AALP alumnus

"AALP is that rare chance to step out of that day to day rhythm, to look critically at what we do every day, how we do it, and how we can shape those activities to make our dreams come true."

- AALP alumnus

WHY SPONSOR AALP?

Align your organization with top leaders who are needed to move our industry forward – in businesses, in associations and organizations and, in communities and on farms.

AALP graduates go on to hold many different influential positions within the industry and their communities. Many credit their AALP experience as a cornerstone that helped them get there. You make this possible.

Sponsor representatives have many opportunities to interact with each Class and keep a pulse on what is happening in the industry.

Agriculture, food and rural issues are high priorities for the province. Together we have an opportunity to shape the future of our sectors and rural communities across Ontario.

Investment in AALP pays off at a rate of 25% - that's better than the rate of return on most investments!

AALP CLASS 17 IS POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS

PATRONS

Ontario 

PACESETTERS

AG Careers.com

Farms.com™

Better
Farming

The Farms.com Group of Companies

CHAMPIONS

Grand River
Agricultural Society



ONTARIO
Farmer

get cracking.
Egg Farmers of Ontario

OFA

syngenta

ADfarm

TD

CountryGuide
STRATEGIC. BUSINESS. THINKING.

ALLIES

Agricorp

cfo

MONSANTO 

LEADERS

aocp
Association of Ontario
Chicken Processors

ffc

Gay Lea



THOMPSONS

ontario mutuals™

BUILDERS

AgEnergy
CO-OPERATIVE

Libro
CREDIT UNION

CHRISTIAN FARMERS
FEDERATION OF ONTARIO

OAC
ONTARIO AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE
Alumni Foundation

Miller
Thomson

BOOSTERS

VERITAS

SeCan

Robinson
Many views. One vision.

ROI 

AALP CLASS 18 IS POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS

PATRONS



GUARDIANS



PACESETTERS



The Farms.com Group of Companies



CHAMPIONS



Bayer CropScience

ALLIES



LEADERS



BUILDERS



BOOSTERS





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