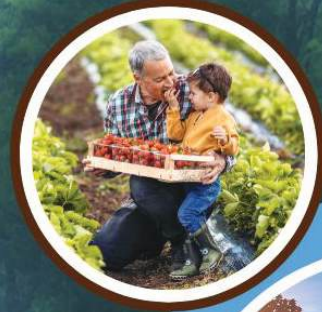


# *Building* **vision, voice & leadership**



**RURAL ONTARIO  
INSTITUTE**

**2023 - 2024  
Annual Report**

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## TRADITIONAL TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Rural Ontario Institute would like to acknowledge that our office in Guelph, Ontario is located on land that has been inhabited by Indigenous peoples from the beginning. As settlers, we're grateful for the opportunity to meet and work here and we thank all the generations of people who have taken care of this land - for thousands of years.

Long before today, there have been First Peoples who have been the stewards of this place. In particular, we acknowledge the traditional territories of the Haudenosaunee peoples (the Six Nations including the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca and Tuscarora) and the Attawandaron peoples (Neutral Nation) and the territories represented in the Upper Canada and Haldimand Treaties.

We recognize and deeply appreciate their historic connection to this place. We also recognize the contributions of Métis, Inuit, and other Indigenous peoples have made, both in shaping and strengthening this community in particular, and our province and country as a whole. As settlers, this recognition of the contributions and historic importance of Indigenous peoples must also be clearly and overtly connected to our collective commitment to make the promise and the challenge of Truth and Reconciliation real in our communities, and in particular to bring justice for murdered and missing Indigenous women and children across our country.

## PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

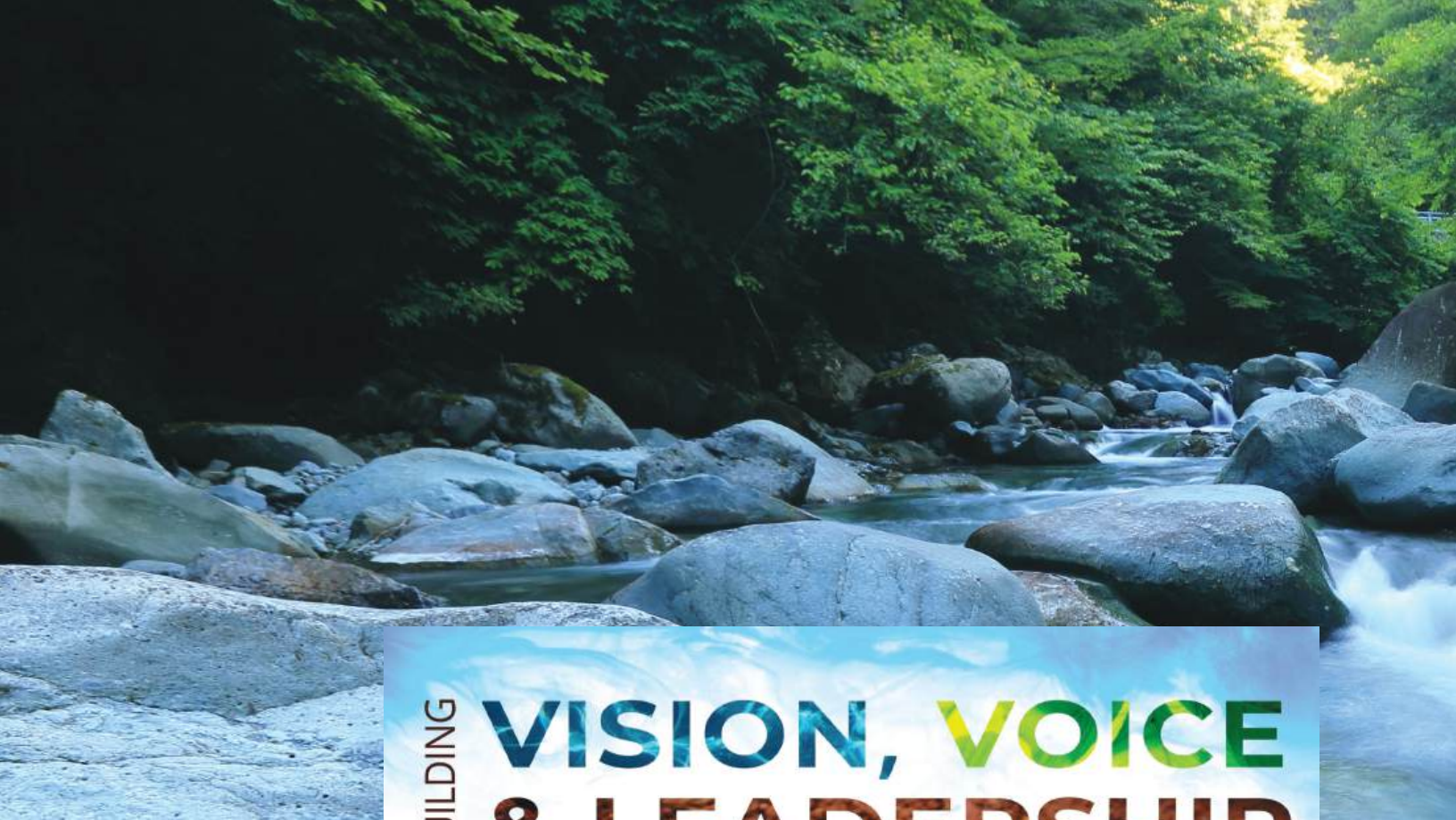
Beyond our important agricultural sector sponsors and partners, ROI also collaborates with a wide variety of organizations, municipalities, and universities to accomplish our diverse, wide ranging rural mission. Some of these reflect ongoing formal partnerships and others project specific connections. We value all these relationships. The logos below are among those we collaborated with in 2023/2024.



Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program Sponsors	
PATRON	Ontario
GUARDIANS	Weston Family Foundation
PACESETTERS	Ontario Federation of Agriculture 
CHAMPIONS	  GLACIER
ALLIES	Chicken Farmers of Ontario
LEADERS	 
BUILDERS	ONTARIO AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE ALBERT FOUNDATION
BOOSTERS	



Rural Change Makers Program Sponsors & Donors	
Community Futures HURON	Foundation



BUILDING

# VISION, VOICE & LEADERSHIP

## Mission

Building vision, voice and leadership.

## Vision

Thriving Vibrant Communities.

## Key Values

- Diverse perspectives and collaboration
- Respectful, open and honest communication
- Innovation and entrepreneurship
- Economic, social and environmental sustainability in rural and northern Ontario
- Continuous Improvement and excellence

## Key Result Areas

- **Developing** leaders through core programming like the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program and the Rural Change Makers Program.
- **Informing** leaders and rural communities through our knowledge and data resources.
- **Connecting** rural communities, leaders and partners through specialized partnership projects like the Rural Housing Information System, Ontario Community Transportation Network, webinars and special events.



## Celebrating 40 years of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program

In 2024 we are celebrating 40 years of AALP advancing agriculture leadership in rural Ontario!

Like us, we know you care about developing those who will shape the future of the agrifood sector. It takes a team of funders, sponsors, alumni, founding partners and other friends to support those who commit time and focus on reaching their leadership potential.

**Join us for a special anniversary milestone - where your gift of \$40/month will build top agriculture leaders and advance diverse capacity along the full agrifood value chain. Together we prepare Ontario agriculture to compete on the world stage.**

**40 for 40**

**AALP**  
ADVANCED AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

**DONATE TODAY**



## Message from the Chair and Executive Director

Welcome to the Rural Ontario Institute's 14th year of developing leaders, informing decision makers and engaging communities. From the visionary amalgamation of The Ontario Rural Council and the Centre for Rural Leadership in 2010, to our current role as a champion of grassroots rural development, ROI remains focused on rural issues, trends and leadership excellence.

While 2024 marks ROI's 14th year, our flagship program, the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP), celebrates 40 years of developing outstanding leaders and visionaries who have served their communities, this province, nationally and beyond.

ROI is proud to deliver this exceptional program and is committed to its continuous growth and ongoing innovation into the next decades. Congratulations to all AALP Alumni – your AALP designation places you in the esteemed company of 520 agricultural leaders that have and are shaping our province's and our county's wealth and healthy rural landscape.

Classes 19 & 20 hosted the AALP Dream Gala and Auction with a Roaring 20's theme, paying homage to AALP's 40 years and its 20th class! Our Annual General Meeting features keynote speaker, Ken Knox, one of the original architects of AALP with recent graduate Vicky Morrison of Class 19, and, on September 11th, at Canada's Outdoor Farm Show, ROI is excited to host a special AALP reunion event - Four past and present AALP Directors invite all alumni and supporters to join them for an engaging panel discussion on the topic of leadership through the years and into the future, moderated by the honorable Minister Lisa Thompson. Mark your calendars!

ROI continues to deliver more. Our Rural Change Maker Program, leadership development training for people aged 18-35 had a banner year with 32 participants representing a dynamic and diverse cohort of emerging leaders, ready to impact rural communities throughout the province. On September 7th ROI is proud to host, in partnership with the United Way Hastings Prince Edward County, the Rural Youth Summit, an opportunity for Ontario's youth the gather, learn, network and grow!

Collaboration and partnerships are the cornerstone of ROI's ability to reach across the province and Canada to increase capacity in rural communities. This year we are thrilled to support the Ontario Association of Agriculture Societies as they launched their Building Community Leaders' workshops for over 200 agricultural societies doing good work locally. Through excellent teamwork we also helped to customize, plan and deliver the BUILD program for the Canadian Dairy future leaders' workshop in Manitoba, the Beef Farmers of Ontario leadership and governance program and we met with many agriculture and community organizations to design workshops to meet their needs. As we continue to offer services that INFORM rural communities, we are thrilled to launch, this July, the Rural Community Wellbeing project, a comprehensive data base of wellbeing indicators informed by the recently adopted Canadian Standards Association suite of indicators for rural health and wellbeing. This is a highly innovative, user-friendly, useful and informative tool for rural planning and development. The dashboard includes an Ecological Footprint and Biocapacity accounts section that offers rural Ontarians a full picture of how their communities are stacking up in terms of climate change amelioration. Our Rural Housing Information System is gaining traction as well and is providing a one-stop resource for municipal planners, developers, and housing specialists from all sectors, to see at a glance what is happening with housing at a rural community level.

As we reflect on this past year, we're filled with immense pride and gratitude for the remarkable achievements and milestones our organization has accomplished. This annual report encapsulates a year of growth, resilience and innovation driven by the unwavering commitment of our board, our team, our partners and our communities.

These achievements would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of our team. Their passion and professionalism have been the bedrock of our success. We are also deeply grateful to our board of directors for their unwavering support and guidance.

Our heartfelt thanks to each of you – our donors, sponsors, partners, volunteers and staff. Your belief in our vision – Vibrant Thriving Communities, and in our Mission – Building Vision Voice and Leadership, and your continued support empower us to make a lasting difference in the lives of those we serve. Together we are shaping a bright future for rural Ontario.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Borowec', written in a cursive style.

**Dan Borowec**, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ellen Sinclair', written in a cursive style.

**Ellen Sinclair**, Executive Director

## A Message from the Honourable Lisa M. Thompson

Dear Friends,

As the Minister of Rural Affairs, I recognize that this annual gathering is a moment for everyone to reflect on the achievements from the past 12 months, as well as embrace opportunities for the coming year.

The road ahead for rural Ontario is filled with promise and potential. Our government deeply values the cultural and economic richness that small towns bring to our province, which is why we are committed to continuing our support through meaningful investments in projects and programs that make a true difference in the lives of rural Ontarians. But we cannot do it without working together.

That is why I am proud to acknowledge the incredible efforts of the Rural Ontario Institute's board members and staff. Your dedication to cultivating strong leaders and thriving communities in rural Ontario is truly inspiring. Through your innovative programs, tireless advocacy, and participation at events such as the Rural Summit, you have made a significant impact on the lives of countless individuals and communities. Your work stands as a testament to your commitment to excellence and your vision for a vibrant rural Ontario.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Rural Ontario Institute for its Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program, which is now in its 40th year! As a graduate myself, I can personally attest to the value of this program and its importance to the agriculture and food industry.

The Government of Ontario believes in the great work the Rural Ontario Institute doing and is honored to collaborate on ways to empower rural communities, like the good work you have done with the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies (OAAS) to promote amazing careers in Ontario's agricultural and food and beverage sectors. Again, thank you for your tireless contributions and commitment over the years.

I wish you a productive meeting and a year of great success and growth.

Sincerely,



**Lisa M. Thompson**  
Ontario Minister of Rural Affairs



Good things grow in Ontario  
À bonne terre, bons produits





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## A Message from the Dean of the Ontario Agricultural College, University of Guelph

The Ontario Agricultural College at the University of Guelph has a long history of partnership with the Rural Ontario Institute (ROI) and in the development of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP). We are thrilled to see the ongoing and growing success of the AALP program including excellent enrolments in classes 19 and 20. The need for leadership for the agriculture and food sector and for rural Ontario has never been greater with daunting challenges including climate change and equally compelling opportunities including the adoption of new technologies that will accelerate the growth of the sector, its contribution to local and provincial economies and the creation of jobs. We look forward to continuing to support ROI and to working together for a bright future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Van Acker', written in a cursive style.

**Dr. Rene Van Acker**  
Dean, Ontario Agricultural College  
University of Guelph



**ONTARIO  
AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE**

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## A Message from the President of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Rural Ontario and the agriculture sector are key pillars of the provincial economy. Their strength, sustainability and prosperity are essential to the health and well-being of Ontario and its economic and social fabric. That's why it's important for all of us to amplify their voices, make sure their concerns are heard and ensure their priorities are given the attention they need.

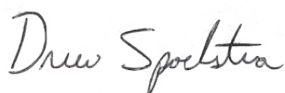
The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) has long been a strong advocate for investment in rural physical and social infrastructure and in distributed economic development. We know that unlocking the unrealized potential of these communities will benefit all Ontarians, rural and urban.

Fostering and encouraging agricultural and rural leaders is a key priority for the OFA and we are proud to support the Rural Ontario Institute and its work on behalf of our rural communities.

We are particularly proud of our long-standing support of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program. In fact, OFA was one of AALP's founding partners when the program was first launched in 1984. I'm a proud AALP graduate, as are six other current OFA board members.

On behalf of the OFA, congratulations on another successful year and we look forward to ongoing partnership and collaboration in support of rural Ontario, its people and its leaders.

Sincerely,



**Drew Spoelstra**  
President, Ontario Federation of Agriculture  
AALP Class 13



## Developing Leaders

The Rural Ontario Institute continues to embark on initiatives that build rural leaders and represent the critical rural voice on issues of importance to rural Ontario. With a commitment to developing strong leaders, ROI's leadership programs strive to impart the vision and commitment to lead change and ensure the sustainability of Ontario's agricultural economies and rural communities.

### Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP)



#### AALP Class 20 Milestones

The 20 participants of Class 20 bring a range of backgrounds and educational experience to the class. Class members are livestock, horticulture, cannabis, grain and oilseed farmers and/or involved in agri-business and agri-food, financial sectors, non-government and commodity associations and small business. The Class ranges in age from 25 to 54. Participants come from as far east as Ottawa and as far west at Thedford. Delhi is the southern limit and Oakwood the northern limit in Ontario.

AALP Class 20 accomplished the following:

- **Seminars 1-3:** Niagara-on-the-Lake, Sarnia and Toronto.
- **Webinars A - C:** Orientation, curriculum introduction/review/practice, World Soils Day, Canadian diplomacy and optimizing seminars.
- **North American Study Tour:** Washington DC and Florida.

• **Issues Analysis Projects:** Small groups of Class 20 participants selected agricultural topics of interest through "Dragon's Den" pitches. Each will present on these topics and the team process in September 2024. The seven projects focus on the following topics:

- Increasing adoption of Soil Health BMPs
- Bitcoin, sowing the seeds of change
- Taking AALP National
- Environmental Farmers
- Financial literacy
- Local Food in Schools
- Agriculture in the Classroom across Ontario

AALP workshop curriculum covered includes:

- Global leadership competency framework (Gordon,2021)
- Class 20 Board meetings
- Ready for the future – 360 leadership index, agents of adaptability, Gridworks team synergy, DiSC, DEI workshops
- Mental health, alumni roundtables, MPP visits, elevator pitch, food justice, capital markets, precision fermentation
- Research – Soils @ Guelph, round table about soil health conversations

#### Recruitment for AALP Class 21

We are now accepting nominations for AALP Class 21. You are an important part of the process! When interviewed, AALP participants say their reason for joining, in large part, is because someone encouraged them to do so. On average it took them 3 to 5 years to make their commitment and 2 nudges to get the confidence. Our objective is to see the full agriculture and food value chain represented from across all parts of Ontario. Farmers with operations of all sizes and types are encouraged to apply. Limited financial aid is available, and angels are welcomed. Out of province applicants have been accepted into the program in the past.

## 2024 AALP Dream Gala



ROI is pleased to announce the record-breaking fundraising results of \$110,438 by the 2024 AALP Dream Gala. Initiated in 1984, AALP builds the skills and networks of individuals in the agriculture and food sector who in turn lead innovation and collaboration that contributes to economic, social and environmental good locally and globally. The theme of the April 2024 event, produced by AALP Class 19 and Class 20, transported attendees back in time to “The Roaring Twenties” and featured a semi-formal dinner, silent and live auction. The auction offered unique items and experiences, and featured a Giving Back item where fresh produce was donated to a local Foodbank in the buyer’s name.

## Rural Change Makers (RCM)



2023 was an exciting and transformative year for the Rural Change Maker Program, an initiative that builds youth leadership and rural development capacity throughout Ontario. It was year of leadership and economic development programming co-designed directly from the perspectives of hundreds of rural, remote and Indigenous youth engaged as part of the 2022 Young Rural Resilient Project. The outcome of

this collective approach was tremendous with applicants to the program spanning far and wide across Ontario including 24 First Nation communities in northwestern Ontario, Timmins, the Kawarthas, southwestern, central and eastern Ontario regions. Foundational program partnerships were formed early on in 2023 with Opiikapawiiin Services LP (representing a collective of 24 First Nations working together on the Wataynikaneyap Transmission Project), Timmins Youth Wellness Hub and Community Futures Huron.

Thirty-two emerging leaders aged 18-35 began a shared leadership journey together in August of 2023 and undertook intensive self and core skill development ranging from Bridges Resource training, Indigenous Governance, Future Visioning, Communication & Leadership training to Fundraising, Financial Literacy, Project Management & Evaluation, Community Development and Civic Engagement. Change makers were led on this journey by the experience and skills of over 30 industry experts including City of Peterborough Social Services Bridges out of Poverty trainers, Libro Credit Union and Each One Teach One, Tanya Rumble Inclusive Fundraising, Trillium Youth Opportunities Fund Staff, Goodroots Consulting, Laura Calmwind Indigenous Leader and Elder, United Way of Perth- Huron, Community Futures Huron, ROI Project Leaders and Centre for First Nations Governance Open Space Facilitator Amsey Maracle. These curriculum partners brought a wealth of knowledge and understanding to change makers guiding them toward the creation of SMART action plans at an Ignite Action Weekend held at Camp Kintail on the shores of Lake Huron in January of 2024. This was an exciting and electric weekend for change makers where they began to put into practice all they had learned. Local municipal and community leaders from Huron County accompanied change makers at this event to mentor and coach the development of SMART plans for youth-led community initiatives.

Since then, change makers have been busy actioning their community plans, initiatives and enterprises. These young leaders are doing

incredible things in their lives and communities. To discover the full breadth of youth initiatives we encourage you to follow the journey of change makers on [ROI Connect | Building Community](#).

We look forward to welcoming the next leaders of change to the 2024-25 program in the Fall and we thank the more than 30 regional partners coming alongside youth in the upcoming program. [Discover 2024 Rural Change Maker Program partners here on our website](#). Be sure to follow us on social media as we share details about the program and exciting new Youth Summit kicking off the 2024-25 Change Maker journey this Fall.

## BUILD Leadership Program

ROI, carrying on from its roots, has been building leaders for decades. In the past year ROI has collaborated to plan, coordinate and deliver governance, leadership and/or strategic development workshops for the Canadian dairy future leaders, the Beef Farmers of Ontario, the Northern Producers Animal Health Network, the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies along with many other rural and agricultural organizations looking for advice on their member training strategy. It is rewarding to see the large percent of workshop attendees that go on to hold leadership roles on Boards at the community, provincial and federal level.

What participants are saying about the program:

*"From governance, communicating with journalists, and talking to decision makers this program has given me the skills to be confident and successful."*

*"I learned the importance of a board with a diverse background and using everyone's strengths to move the industry forward."*

*"After the BUILD program I now better understand myself and how to better interact with other personalities."*

*"It helped explain why I do things the way I do and allowed me to understand how best to approach problem solving and communicate with other personalities."*

For more information on customized leadership programming, please contact [info@ruralontarioinstitute.ca](mailto:info@ruralontarioinstitute.ca)

## Informing Stakeholders and Supporting Collaboration

### Rural Ontario Facts

ROI continued publishing Rural Ontario Facts products in 2023. Factsheets provide insight and analysis of rural facts and trends featured in the dashboards.

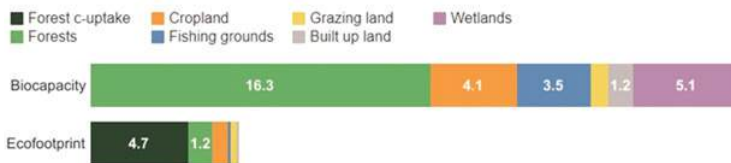
- 
**PUBLISHED 1 NEW DASHBOARD AND UPDATED 5 EXISTING DASHBOARDS WITH NEW DATA AND CONTENT**
- 
**PUBLISHED 5 NEW FACTSHEETS**
- 
**TOGETHER, THESE NEW PUBLICATIONS WERE VIEWED MORE THAN 8,000 TIMES**

### Rural Ecofootprint

ROI continued our work with York University to calculate [Ecofootprint and Biocapacity](#) accounts for rural communities. We completed the calculations for all communities in Ontario. The results of this project will be presented as ecofootprint, biocapacity, and biocapacity balance indicators on ROI's Wellbeing Dashboard. Ecofootprint measures the demand on natural resources while biocapacity measures the supply of ecosystem services.

The results of this project show that rural areas have highly productive ecosystems that produce goods and services for people in Ontario. We look forward to raising awareness of the incredible contribution that rural communities are making to the wellbeing of Ontarians.

The chart below shows the biocapacity and ecofootprint accounts for rural Ontario (the unit of measure is global hectares per capita).



## Rural Community Wellbeing

ROI is halfway through Phase 2 of this project. We established a Steering Committee with approved terms of reference and a consensus based decision making process. The project team developed a beta version of the dashboard with an improved design and user experience. Through engagement with rural communities and the Steering Committee, we finalized the list of indicators that will be displayed on the dashboard.



We welcomed 10 additional members to our focus group of Data Champions. We also attended over 50 meetings with 37 organizations to discuss opportunities for participation, collaboration, and data sharing. Through these meetings, we developed data-sharing

agreements with 3 organizations for insightful data about mental health, climate change, and the arts sector.

ROI shared information about this project at conferences and meetings throughout the year, including:

- Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation Conference in Lethbridge, Alberta.
- Rural Ontario Municipal Association Conference in Toronto, Ontario.
- Rural Ontario Medical Program Resident Retreat, virtual.
- International Ecological Footprint Learning Lab, partners meeting in Toronto.

The project team is now testing the beta version of the dashboard with our focus group of Data Champions. We look forward to launching this innovative tool in 2024. When complete, this dashboard will enable rural communities to assess their wellbeing and measure progress over time. ROI hopes that this project will help remove barriers and build capacity in rural communities for data-driven decision making and performance measurement.

## Rural Housing Information System (RHIS)

The Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus (EOWC) was awarded \$1.2M in 2022 from CMHC's Housing Challenge to work with the Rural Ontario Institute (ROI) to develop a data solution to support affordable housing in rural communities. This digital tool provides local, reliable, salient, and current rural data to assist proponents & municipalities in the planning and construction of new affordable housing.

In 2023, the Rural Housing Information System was scaled from the 103 rural Eastern municipalities to the 120 rural Western municipalities with the support of South-Central Ontario Region Economic Development Corporation, Western Ontario Wardens Caucus, CMHC and Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Rural Economic Development fund.

Utility training was provided for municipal members and promotion was provided to non-profit and private housing sector groups.

In December, the Northern Policy Institute, Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities and FedNor came together to see the system expanded to the 145 municipalities of Northern Ontario over 2023-2026.

Testimonials include the EOWC assessing dig ready properties for their regional 7 and 7 Build Project. The Rural Ontario Medical Program assessing the true cost of living of most of this site's featured municipalities to advocate to the Ministry of Health that intern nurses and doctors need higher living stipends to be placed in rural Ontario clinics and hospitals. And the County of Simcoe is adding their separated town's data to provide a comprehensive view of the actual cost of living in their region for their social sector service providers.

To learn more about the Rural Housing Information System visit [www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/rhis](http://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/rhis).



## Stakeholder Engagement & Knowledge Sharing

In the past year ROI has hosted, co-hosted or collaborated in over 32 virtual or in-person events. Through event facilitation and partnership with rural community stakeholders ROI addressed topics of interest including:

- Filling the housing information gap in

Eastern and Western Ontario and beyond

- Making Rural Data Accessible - Exploring Tools & Resources
- Canadian Rural and Remote Housing and Homelessness
- Understanding governance, your personal leadership style and leading through change

In 2021, ROI launched the interactive engagement platform ROI Connect to support community development projects across the province and catalyze civic participation. Since then, the platform has welcomed over 100 new community members, 18 new community groups and over 30 community projects and initiatives shared on the site through project pages, blog contributions and member profiles. Community engagement on the site has expanded by over 150% since launch, giving community members throughout rural Ontario and beyond a platform to share their work, connect with others, join conversations and groups, and create their own online home to connect with community, share their events and raise awareness about local needs and opportunities.

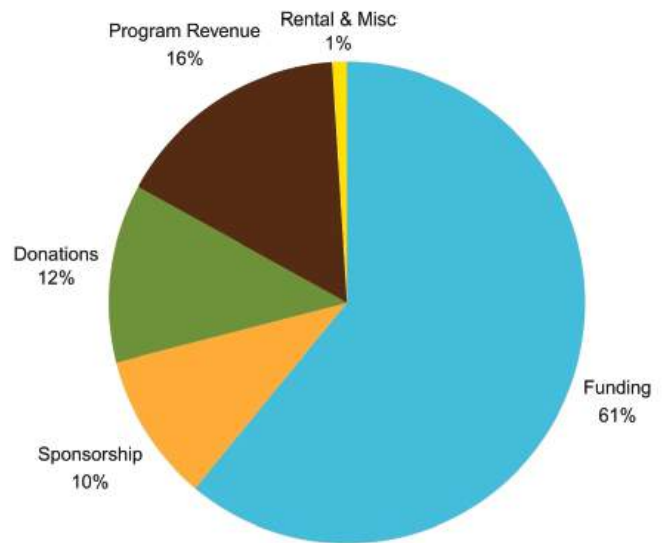
ROI connect has also evolved to incorporate critical fundraising tools that garner support for programs and projects including the special AALP 40th anniversary celebration this year. These tools were also used to garner support for the purchase of books and resources for youth in the change maker program and with the generosity of donors like Ontario Mutual Insurance Association we were able to successfully reach our target and provide young leaders with the learning materials needed for their journey.

## Summary

	Audited 2024
Revenue	1,456,078
Expenses	1,444,335
Excess/Deficiency	11,743

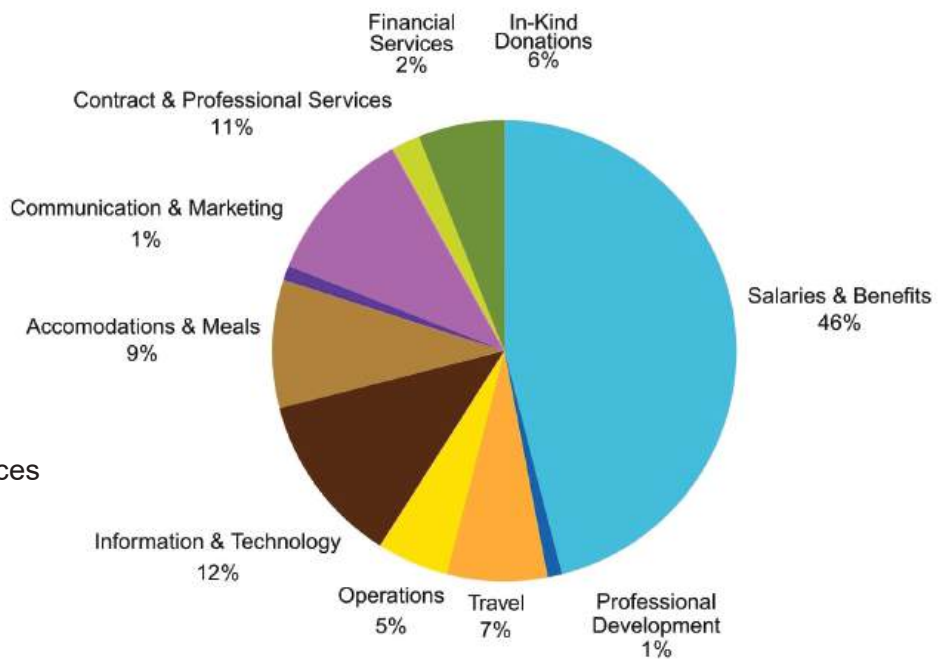
## Revenue

- Sponsorships
- Program Revenue
- Funding Income
- Donations
- Rental Income + misc



## Expenses

- Salaries & Benefits
- Professional Development
- Travel
- Operations
- Information & Technology
- Accommodations & Meals
- Communication & Marketing
- Contract & Professional Services
- Financial Services
- In-Kind Donations



The Rural Ontario Institute greatly appreciates the endowments and gifts that continue to grow and provide interest income to assist in supporting AALP and other rural leadership programming.

## Ken McKinnon Memorial Fund

The Ken McKinnon Memorial Fund is a tribute to Ken McKinnon's leadership and service to Canadian agriculture and a commitment to excellence in future leaders. During his 21-year tenure at the Ontario Milk Marketing Board (now Dairy Farmers of Ontario), Ken played an integral role in leading changes that revolutionized milk production, pricing and marketing provincially and nationally. Through donations from individuals, businesses and organizations, this fund fosters the leadership qualities needed in rural Ontario in the years ahead.

## William A. Stewart Endowment

The William A. Stewart Endowment was initiated in 1991 by the Agricultural Leadership Trust as a tribute to the late Ontario Minister of Agriculture and Food, the Honourable William A. Stewart. The fund recognizes and honours his legacy of public service, community involvement and leadership. The William A. Stewart Lecture & Reception – a prestigious public lecture event – is held every other year in London, ON as part of the final AALP seminar.

## George Dmetriuc Memorial Fund

The George Dmetriuc Memorial Fund was established by the Ontario Wheat Producers' Marketing Board (now Grain Farmers of Ontario) as part of the William A. Stewart Endowment in 1993. The fund exemplifies the spirit of George Dmetriuc as a leader in Ontario agriculture. Other commodity organizations, friends and associates contributed to this fund in recognition of George's contributions during his time as Ontario Wheat Producers' Marketing Board chair from 1984 to 1992.

## W. Garfield Weston Foundation Endowment

The W. Garfield Weston Foundation originated in 1959 and is named in honour of Willard Garfield Weston, a Canadian who established successful business enterprises across Canada and around the world. The Foundation's mission states that grants support projects in Canada for the benefit of Canadians. The W. Garfield Weston Foundation Endowment was established upon receipt of contributions from the Foundation in 1994, 1995 and 1996.

## Dean Tiessen Memorial Fund

The Dean Tiessen Memorial Fund honours the vision and memory of agriculture entrepreneur and AALP Class 10 graduate Dean Tiessen who died tragically in Brazil in 2013. Dean was president of New Energy Farms, was a catalyst in helping to establish Ontario's biomass sector and was a leader in the greenhouse vegetable industry. The fund will directly support AALP Classes 16 through 20 in their southwestern Ontario seminar themed "Dynamics of Change". Class 10 continues to accept donations toward this fund.



# Board of Directors



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Elmvale, ON

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**Melanie Bidiuk**  
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Manager - Data Strategy

**Kezia Cowtan**  
Housing Project Manager - Contract

**Brianna Pitt**  
Communications Coordinator

**Kelsey Randhawa**  
Rural Projects & Events Coordinator

**Zviko Gwekwerere**  
RHIS Northern Coordinator

**Yogesh Mandal**  
GIS Technician

**Francisca Solomon**  
Rural Development Intern

In 2023-2024, ROI bid a fond farewell to key staff members: Aisha Syed, Shaun Sullivan, Danial Salari and Charlotte.Craig. We wish them all the best in their future.



**ROI**  **RURAL ONTARIO  
INSTITUTE**

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