

Introduction

- ❖ As agriculture continues to change and meet the growing demands of society, leaders are needed to direct commodity organizations, influence agricultural policy, and lead in their communities and families.
- ❖ North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission Agricultural Leadership Development Program is a two-year program designed to develop personal and civic leadership skills among NC agriculturalists.
- ❖ Program has over 250 alumni representing the diverse sectors of NC agriculture. Average cohort sizes are 25-30 individuals.
- ❖ Seminars are held throughout the state focused on leadership competencies and the diversity of North Carolina agriculture. Program also includes a Washington, D.C. policy tour, a domestic study tour, and an international experience.



Conceptual Framework

Leadership programs should provide:

- ❖ realistic experiences with the opportunity to gain knowledge that will benefit participants in their own lives (Birkenholz, 1999).
- ❖ hands-on skill development while incorporating problem-solving in real-world contexts and utilizing a variety of instructional methods (Birkenholz, 1999; Langone, 1992).

Evaluations of leadership programs should be conducted periodically to provide insight for improving future programs and exploring the impacts of the program at the various levels (Gargani & Donaldson, 2011; Kaufman, Rateau, Carter, & Strickland, 2012).

Methodology

- An evaluation was developed by program leaders with input from program stakeholders and a literature review of previous agricultural leadership program evaluations.
- ❖ Open-ended questions focused on personal and professional accomplishments were developed and distributed to participants through an online survey.
- ❖ Four cohorts that consisted of both farmers and agricultural professionals were surveyed.
- ❖ Responses to the open-ended questions were coded using axial coding methods to create categorical organization.

"I was the shyest person and terribly afraid of talking in front of any size group. Thanks to the program, I developed the confidence and communication skills to state my viewpoints. Today, I am Chair of the NC Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers and have served on several national committees."

"I am a better father and husband because of the program. I learned how I operate, how I fight, and how I argue, all of which impact others. The program saved my marriage."

"I was in the 40 under 40 for Greenhouse Production in a Forbes article for women in Horticulture. The program assisted me in becoming a stronger manager & leader."

Results/Findings

Professional accomplishments included: job promotion, public speaking engagements, networking within the agricultural industry, serving on boards, making better business decisions, having crucial conversations, and advocating for agricultural issues.

Personal accomplishments: increased prioritization of their families, better communication skills, and devoted community membership.

Conclusions

- ❖ As program leaders strive to develop the curriculum and experiences, opportunities to further hone participant communication skills should be a continued focus. Communication is an area that is crucial in both personal and professional settings.
- ❖ The travel experiences in all settings allow for a greater understanding of agriculture on the local, state, national, and international levels and provide networking opportunities.



Implications/Recommendations/Impact on Profession

- ❖ Agricultural leadership programs should design their programs around state needs that will help promote agriculture within their state.
- ❖ While most leadership programs are "professionally" focused, incorporating opportunities to also address family components will provide a well-rounded leader.
- ❖ Promoting agriculture is vital component and providing participants with training to tell their agricultural story will also assist participants in advocating for policy and agriculture within their organizations.

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