



Mentorship and Internship Options for the Agriculture and Food Processing Sector in Northern Ontario 2018

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The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs engaged the Agri-Food Management Institute to review current mentorship and internship options for agri-food producers and assess the possible adaptation or adoption of existing programs for Northern Ontario.

An *internship* is the position of a trainee who works in an organization, sometimes without pay, to gain work experience or satisfy requirements for a qualification. An internship can be an excellent way to “try out” a certain career.

A *mentorship* is a relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. The mentor may be older or younger than the person being mentored, but he or she must have a certain area of expertise. It is a learning and development partnership between someone with vast experience and someone who wants to learn.

Input was gathered for the study through in-person meetings, interviews and on-line polling with stakeholders.

A literature review was completed, and an overview prepared describing existing mentorship and internship programs in Canada and globally that focus on farm and food as well as resources from those programs which could be adapted or adopted for future use.

Findings from the study generally showed producers had little interest in hosting an intern, except for food processors and horticulture crop producers. Producers were more interest in a mentoring program and continuing education for existing operations.

The study suggests that given the size and diversity of Northern Ontario, it is unlikely that a one fits all program will be suitable for all commodity groups. Rather, it may be more successful to have a centralized and focused goals for each region, and perhaps each subsector of farming operations or processor type. For organizations interested in advancing an internship program, the study provides factors that may contribute to its success.

Next Steps

A report was shared with the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC) and Fednor for their program consideration. Agriculture Development Advisors are available to work with their regional commodity groups interested in establishing a management group.

To improve knowledge transfer between generations, the agriculture sector is encouraged to facilitate networking between young and more mature farmers and encourage younger farmers, particularly women get involved in the industry organizations.

