

Agriculture Leadership Programmes: The international context

Origins of rural/agricultural leadership programs

The New Zealand programme for rural leadership development is based on a model developed in 1965 in Michigan, USA. Between 1965 and 1985, 19 programmes were given start-up funding by the W.K.Kellogg Foundation, including the programme set up in 1979 in New Zealand, referred to as the Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme. There are currently 40 agriculture leadership programs which are members of the International Association of Programs for Agriculture Leadership (IAPAL). Thirty-five of these are US State or regional programs, with two programmes in Canada, a national programme in Australia, and a programme in Scotland. The UK Nuffield programme is also a member. By 2003, more than 8,500 alumni had completed these various programmes. In 2005, there were 894 people enrolled in on-going programs.

Aims of the original program

The original program was a series of weekend seminars held over 24 months with about 30 participants. The program included an out-of-state visit including a trip to Washington DC.

The original aims were for a program to expand and broaden the educational effort to develop agricultural leaders by giving them:

- a broad knowledge of public issues that influence agricultural and rural communities
- increased knowledge of local and national politics and the structure of political institutions
- the ability to make informed, independent and critical judgements
- an interest in life-long learning

“Every effort was made to equip the farmers with the necessary resources and skills to assume leadership roles. But whether and how these tools would be used were deliberations for each participant and his community to answer.” (from a report to the Kellogg Foundation on the original Michigan program.)

Current programs

Aims of the program

All of the programs would agree with the general aims outlined above.

Length of programme

The majority of the US programmes have maintained this general format, as does the Australian Rural Leadership Programme, set up in the 1990s. Leadership New Zealand, a non-agriculture programme set up following the Knowledge Wave Conference, took the format of the Australian programme.

Most of the programs (31 of 34 in a 2003 survey) run for 18 months or 2 years, most starting every second year. A few, including the California program, one of the few programs running longer than NZ having started in 1969, starts a new 2-year program every year, and thus has two programs running concurrently.

Participants

Over half the IAPAL programs in 2003 have between 26 and 30 participants per program. A further quarter reported between 20 and 25 participants. Most of the programs have an application / interview selection process. The programs report about 30% female participants. Many programs require employer and partner commitment forms to be signed and submitted with the application.

Tuition fees

In 2003, the programme cost varied between \$US 100,000 to \$US 600,000 per class. Only 2 programs charged no fee. (One of these is specifically for tobacco growers and is fully sponsored by a tobacco company.) Tuition or participant fees for the other programs ranged from \$US 1,500 to \$US 5,000 per person (median \$US 2,500). The fees are sometimes described as 20 – 25% of the total cost per person. Participants pay for travel to and from the venues, and incidental expenses. The higher fees are paid in instalments during the programme. The Australian

programme costs \$AUD 46,000 per person per programme, with a tuition fee of \$AUD 4,000 per person per class, paid over 18 months.

Visit to capital city

Almost all programmes include this.

Visit to overseas country

Of the 34 programmes surveyed in 2003, 25 reported an out-of-country visit of 10-20 days.

Applied demonstration of leadership

This is a critical aspect of most programs, but not generally reported on their websites or mentioned in surveys. Examples include: participants interviewing community people to gather local information on each seminar topic; having a personal 'community goal' project; individuals recruiting an advisory committee to develop and implement a project for their community; dividing a cohort into public policy discussion groups; assigning individuals to conduct a 'community leader study'. Participants on the Ontario programme conduct an individual research project.

The format of the New Zealand programme

Aims of the programme

The content of various sessions changes over time in response, or anticipation of, changes in the focus of the agriculture and rural sectors. However, the aims of the New Zealand programme are remarkably consistent with those of the original US program.

Length of programme

In 1979, the logistical challenges and cost of bringing New Zealand rural people together for multiple 3-day seminars suggested a different format. The New Zealand programme opted for two intensive sessions in a calendar year – 10 days at the beginning and 6 days at the end – covering much the same content as is covered in other programs. This format has been continued.

Participants

The New Zealand programme aims for 24 participants each year. The participants are selected from written applications. The extensive personal connections in the agriculture sector of the Director of the programme in 1979 reduced the need for personal selection interviews. Logistics and the cost of travel around New Zealand were no doubt also an issue. Since 2000, selection has been done by a panel of two alumni, and a representative each of the Primary Industry Council and Lincoln University. Just over 30% of the participants are female.

Tuition fees

There are no tuition fees. Participants pay for transport to and from the venues, incidental expenses, accommodation and some meals. This may change in 2007.

Visit to capital city

This is an important component of the second residential segment (Phase 3).

Visit to overseas country

The high cost in time and money in 1979 made this component not a high priority. In addition, the extensive overseas working experience of most applicants (frequently 1 – 2 years) generally gives a greater in-depth appreciation of a country than can be gained in a 10 to 20 day visit.

Applied demonstration of leadership

This is an integral part of the New Zealand programme. In the first intensive session, small groups research current issues and present their findings to the larger group. In addition, each participant conducts a research project on a topic of their own choosing in Phase 2 (between the first and second residential segments). They present their findings to the group in the second intensive group session, have discussions and get verbal and written feedback on both the content of the project and the way it was presented.