

Agriculture Economic Development



A Resource Guide for Communities

First Edition
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Foreword

This Agricultural Economic Development Guidebook is designed to help economic developers, land-use planners, municipal councils and community leaders explore agriculture as an economic development opportunity. Many are aware of the importance of the agri-food sector to the economies of rural communities across Ontario. This guidebook focuses on use of a community-led planning process to enhance the prosperity of the sector and boost the rural economy. Communities can benefit from using this guidebook regardless of their current capacity or the stage they are at in exploring agriculture as an economic development opportunity. This guidebook can be adapted to all different community circumstances and capacities.

This resource:

1. Emphasizes how economic development practitioners can work with the agricultural system to increase a region's overall economic strength and sustainability.
2. Raises awareness about the importance of agriculture in regional economies.
3. Increases the understanding of the opportunities that can be created and processes that can be used to support agriculture and related businesses.

This guide is intended to serve communities across Ontario. In addition, as the agricultural system approach is implemented in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, it will be a key resource for implementing strategies that sustain and enhance that system and the agri-food sector's economic prosperity and viability.

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Introduction

Agriculture as a System

Agriculture and food are shaped by a complex web of relationships between people, businesses and the land. This web of relationships is a "system" or a group of interconnected elements. A successful agri-food sector in Ontario depends on a protected land base and complete supply chain. As we look to agricultural economic development, it is important to evaluate the potential for growth and improvements across the entire agricultural system.

There are two primary aspects of any agricultural system:

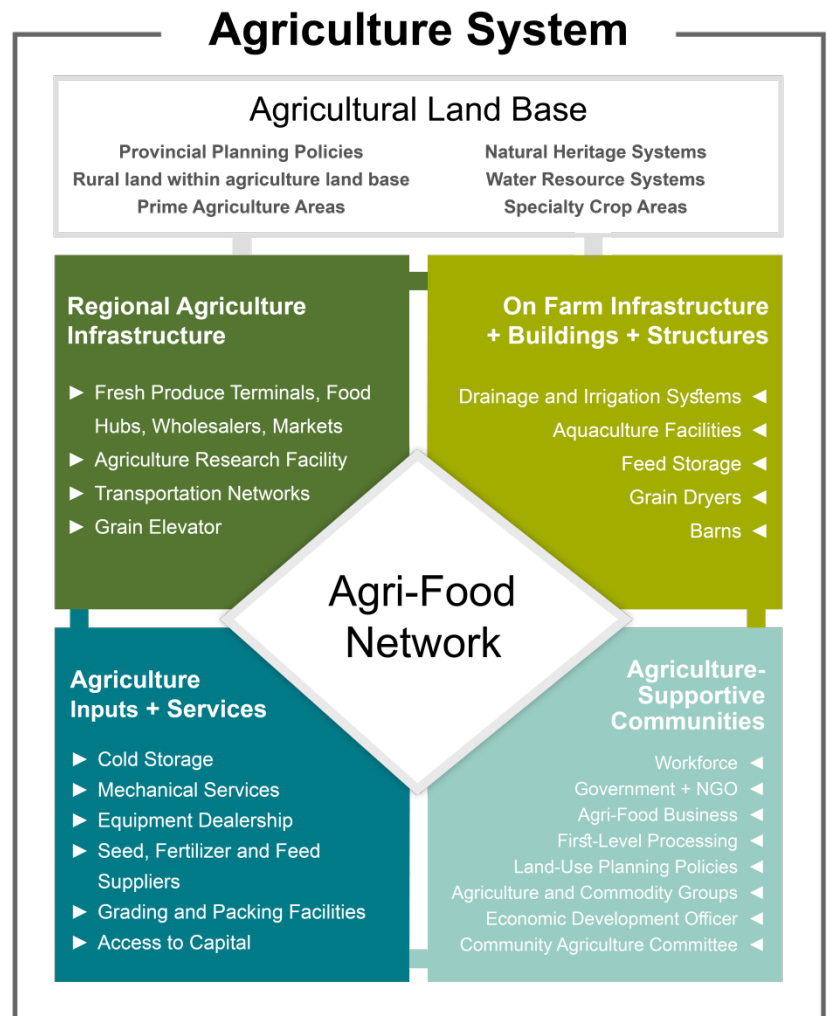
- Agricultural land base
- Agri-food network¹

The first component of an agricultural system, the agriculture land base, includes prime agricultural areas, specialty crop areas, and rural lands. Together, these areas create a continuous productive land base for agriculture — the foundation of both Ontario's and Canada's agri-food sector.

The second component of an agricultural system, the agri-food network, consists of interconnected infrastructure, services and agri-food assets important to the viability of the agri-food sector. The agri-food network includes:

- Regional infrastructure
- On-farm infrastructure, buildings and structures
- Agricultural inputs and services
- Agriculture-supportive communities

¹ OMAFRA has prepared mapping and Implementation Procedures to identify and support the agri-food sector in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH). Outside the GGH, the agricultural system approach may be considered a best practice. For more information, see <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/landuse/agsys-ggh.htm>.



The Opportunity for Agriculture

Canadian Agriculture and Global Demand

Canada's agri-food sector was recently highlighted in the federal government's Advisory Council on Economic Growth report (February 2017) as one of Canada's high-potential sectors for growth.

Roughly one in nine jobs depend on the agricultural system — a value chain that stretches from farm gates to consumers' plates. Canada is the world's fifth-largest exporter of agricultural and agri-food products and the sector generates over \$100 billion for the Canadian economy — close to seven per cent of Canada's gross domestic product (GDP). In 2016 the total value of Canadian agricultural exports was in excess of \$55 billion, with products exported to almost 200 countries.

From coast to coast, Canada produces a rich diversity of agricultural products that are well adapted to temperate and northern climates. There is great opportunity for further growth and prosperity if the Canadian agricultural and agri-food industry is prepared and well-positioned to take advantage of new and emerging opportunities both domestically and globally.

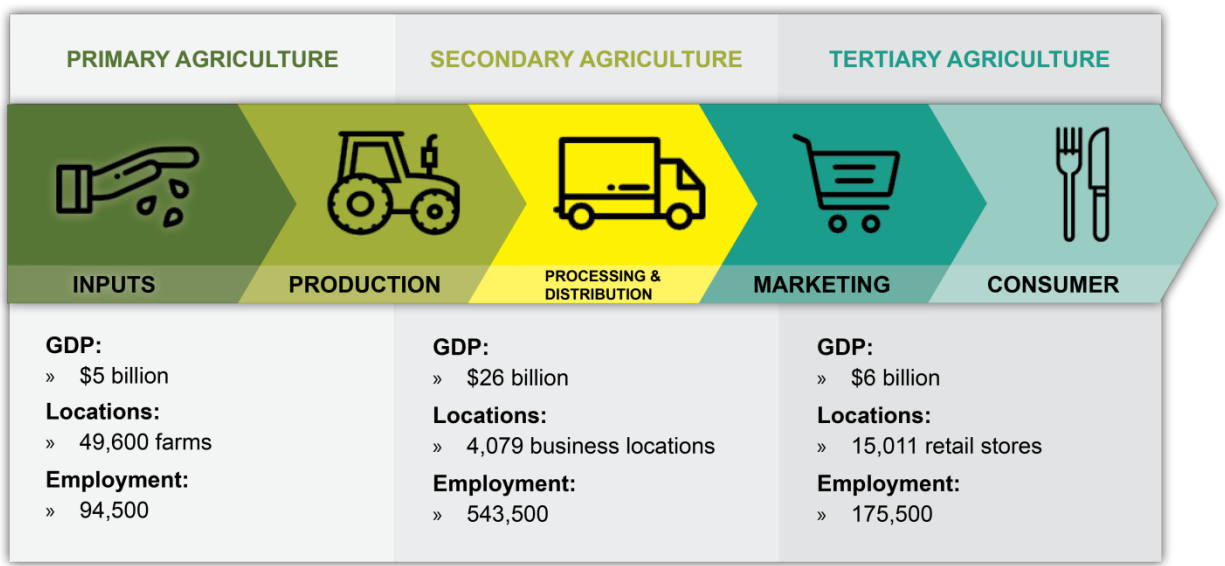
Ontario's Agricultural Sector

Ontario's agricultural sector is a significant driver of the national, provincial and local economy.

Ontario has a significant natural advantage with its concentration of prime agricultural land and a favourable climate for productivity and high-value crops. Ontario has over half (51 per cent) of Canada's best (Class 1) farmland. Paired with a relatively moderate climate, Ontario's agricultural lands are capable of producing a greater diversity of crops than most other parts of Canada. There are over 200 different commodities produced in Ontario including tender fruit and vegetable crops, grains and oilseeds. Additionally, there are significant and mature livestock and dairy sectors in Ontario that also take advantage of this rich growing environment for feed.

This land and the diversity of production it provides, lays the foundation for the prosperity of Ontario's agri-food sector, one of the province's largest economic contributors. Agricultural productivity in Ontario comes from more than 49,000 farm businesses, of which 98 per cent remain family owned and operated. In 2016 Ontario's broader agri-food industry contributed approximately \$37 billion in gross domestic product (GDP) to the provincial economy and jobs for over 800,000 people (roughly 11.5 per cent of provincial employment).

Economic Impacts along Ontario's Agricultural Value Chain

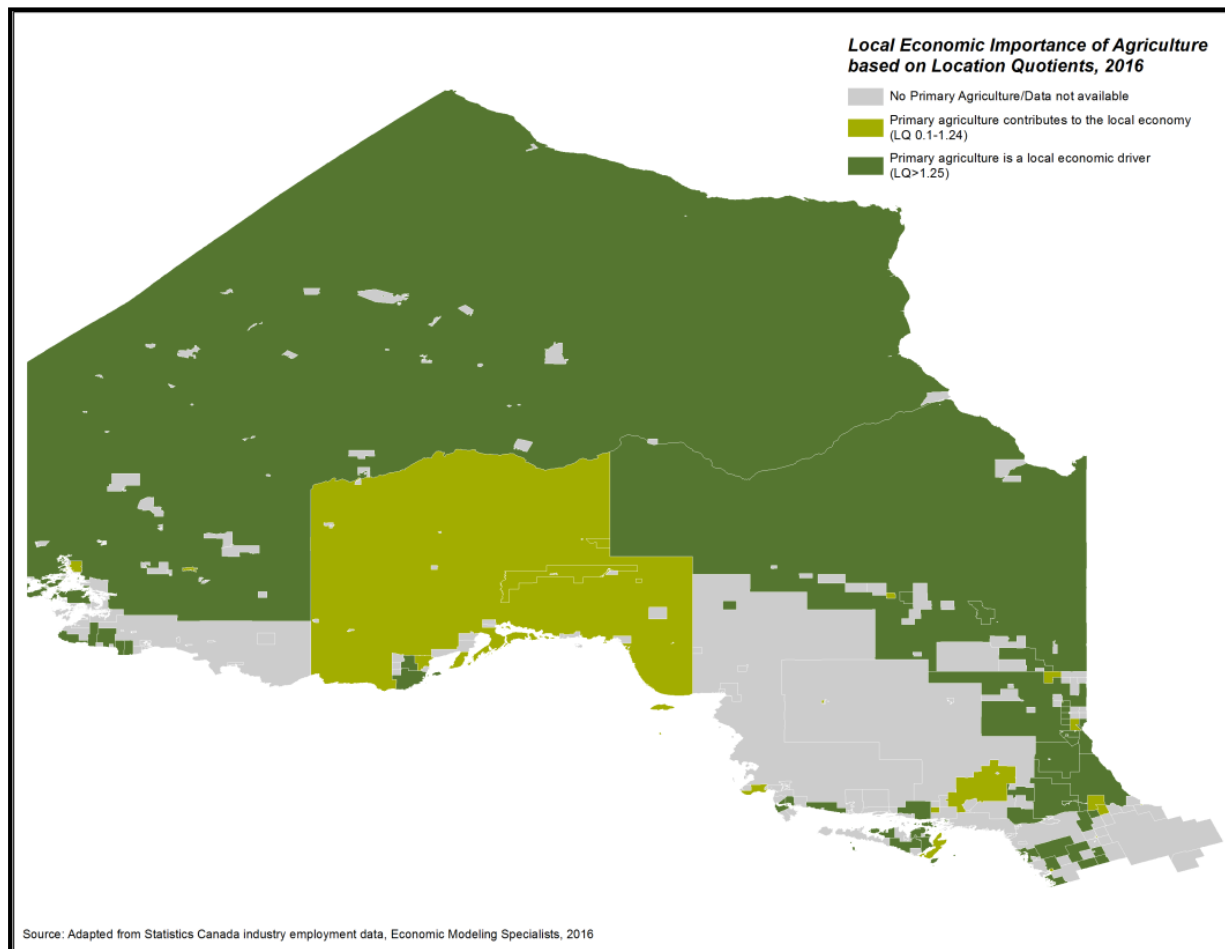


Ontario is not just a leader in productivity, it's also a leader in emerging and ground-breaking new research and development. New technologies and agricultural practices are continually being developed in Ontario — ready to be used close to home and exported around the world. The future of agribusiness in Ontario is promising. Through the efforts of producers, processors and distributors along the value chain, as well as governments, the sector's impact will continue to grow.

Agriculture Close to Home

Agriculture is an important sector to many communities across Ontario. Using location quotients, we can evaluate the importance of agriculture for local employment relative to the rest of Canada. The dark green in the map below shows those regions where primary agriculture is a more significant employer in communities across Ontario, when compared with the national average. The map incorporates farms and support activities for farms in the calculations.

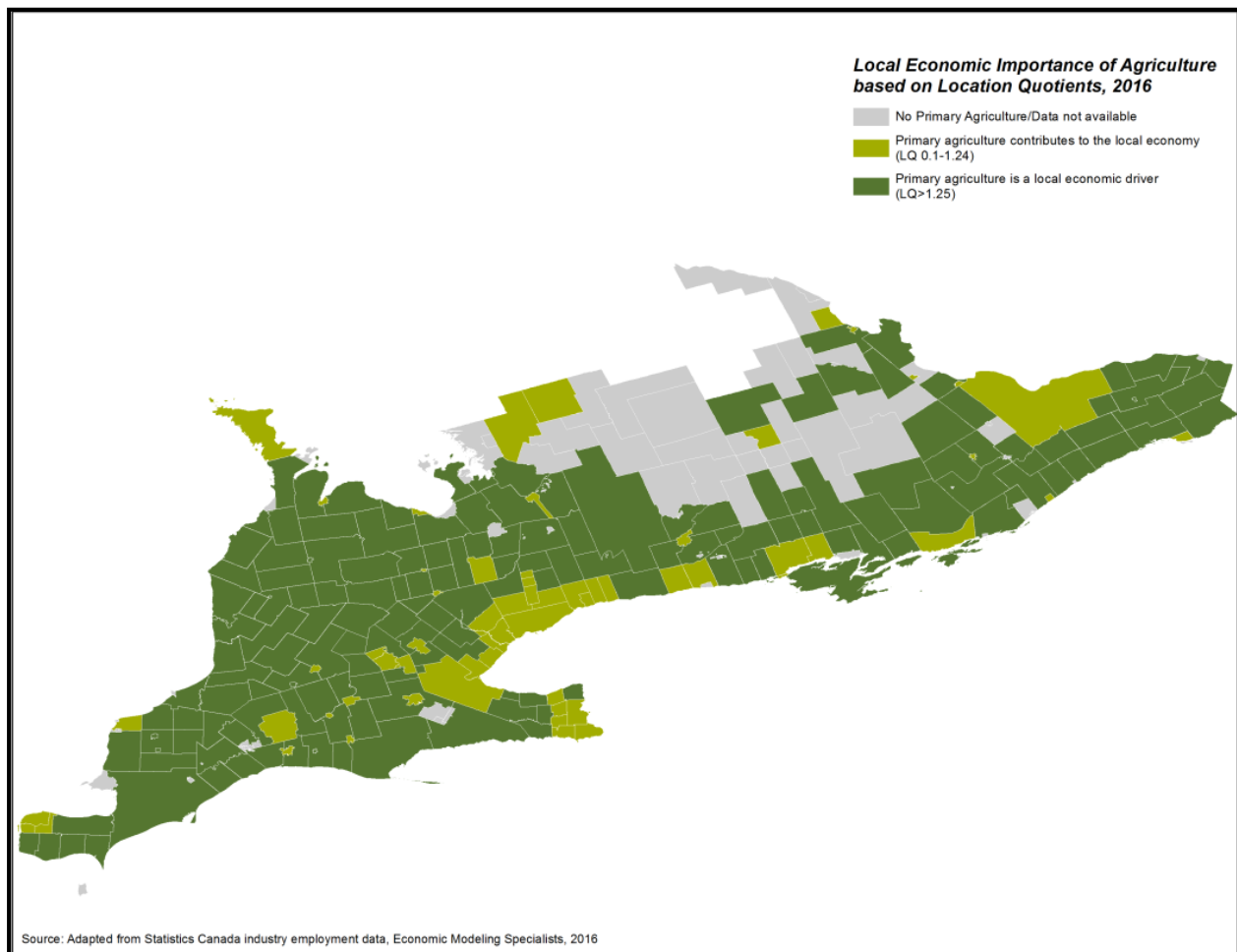
Local Economic Importance of Agriculture, 2016 – Northern Ontario



In many rural communities, primary production of livestock, crops and horticulture is well-established, generating significant economic activity. These farms are the foundation of our agribusiness sector — supplying local food to processors, purchasing of crop inputs and agricultural services, and inspiring entrepreneurship and innovation in the burgeoning bioeconomy. Farm businesses produce great opportunities to build on existing productivity by

increasing or diversifying local production, adding value to existing production through processing or preserving, and identifying new connections in the local value chain.

Local Economic Importance of Agriculture, 2016 – Southern Ontario



In some regions across the province, we are also seeing growth in new forms of primary production, from greenhouses and covered agriculture to advanced aquaculture operations. Ontario's emerging aquaculture operations are making innovative use of existing agricultural techniques, buildings and infrastructure. From shrimp to tilapia, these producers are challenging what is possible for Ontario agriculture.

Identifying where these opportunities lie, and how to foster this type of economic development involves a process of data analysis and in-depth consultations with individual communities. Building support in communities to explore these opportunities is important. Leveraging existing agricultural knowledge and experience in a community can lead to embracing a wider vision for agricultural economic development as a whole.

Defining Agricultural Economic Development

The International Economic Development Council states that no single definition incorporates all aspects of economic development. Economic development can be described as a process influencing growth or the restructuring of an economy to enhance the economic well-being of a community. Just as there is no single definition for economic development, there is no single strategy, policy or program for achieving successful economic development. Agricultural economic development, quite simply, involves traditional community economic development practices tailored and adapted to the agricultural sector.

In the past, a top-down approach may have been standard, but the focus in economic development today is shifting. Today's expectation is that communities will mobilize to stimulate growth in their economy. Supporting agriculture through community economic development strategies begins with the recognition of agriculture's many contributions, challenges and opportunities, as well as an awareness that the community itself can be the source of solutions.

Components of Agricultural Economic Development

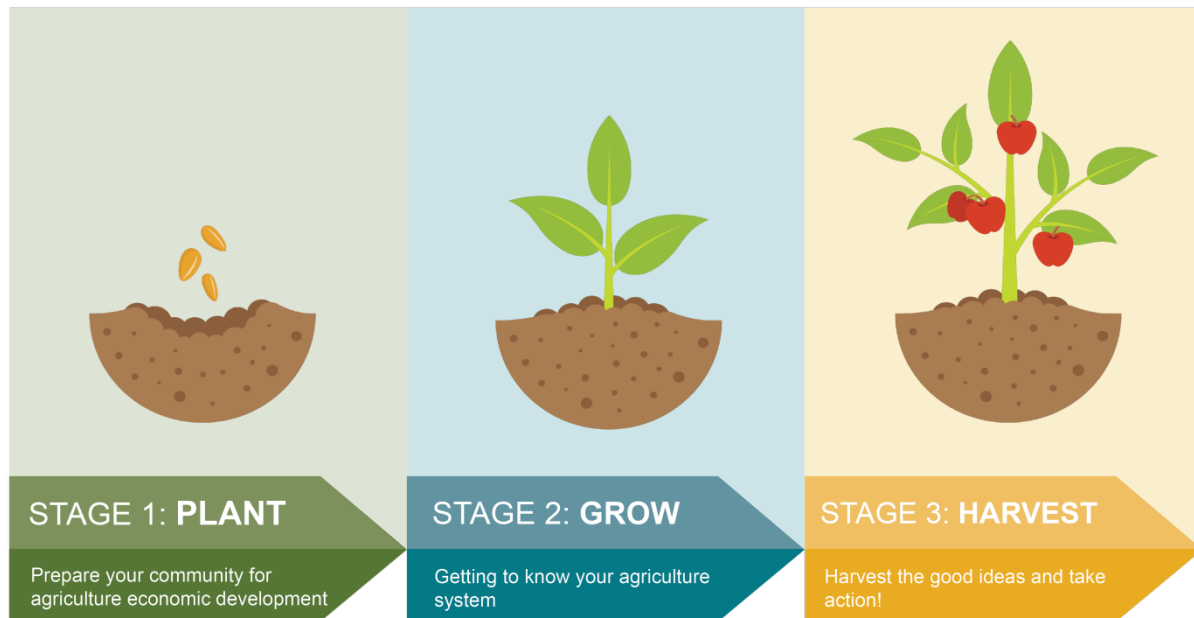
There are many economic development activities that can be undertaken to support agriculture. These categories include:

- Stakeholder engagement
- Communications and marketing
- Business development
- Workforce and leadership development
- Investment attraction
- Agricultural infrastructure and land-use planning
- Research and innovation

These categories and their associated activities will be discussed in greater detail later in this guidebook.

Agricultural Economic Development Process

There are many different ways to undertake agricultural economic development in your community. For the purposes of this guide we use a three-stage process called plant, grow and harvest.



While each of the steps in the process is important, it is designed for flexibility. If one of the steps does not seem to fit well with what is happening in your community, or if the timing of some events would make more sense in a different order, modify accordingly. Agricultural economic development is a process for change and needs to be tailored to your community. This guidebook is set up to support communities in carrying out community-led plans.

Examples of Strategic Plans Specific to the Agri-Food Sector:

[Durham Region Agriculture Strategy 2013-2018](#)

[Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Action Plan 2012 - 2021](#)

[Halton Region – Rural Agriculture Strategy](#)

[Kawartha Lakes Agricultural Action Plan](#)

Your Many Roles in Agricultural Economic Development



Promoter

- Local Food Map
- Community Agricultural Profile
- Local/Regional Branding Initiatives



Connector

- Local Food Conference
- Dinner on the Farm
- Value-chain analyses



Educator

- Evaluating Value-Added Opportunities (EVAO) Workshop
- Food-E Entrepreneurship Seminars
- On-Farm Familiarization Tours



Enabler

- Agricultural/Rural Community Improvement Plans (CIP)
- Official plan updates: language supporting on-farm value-added processing
- One-window municipal services



Organizer

- Agricultural Economic Development Strategic Planning
- Local/ Regional Farmers Market
- Agricultural Advisory Committee

As a **promoter** of local agriculture, you help spread the word of all the great things going on in the sector. This can range from direct promotion of local businesses, to regional branding initiatives to building support from community leadership.

As a **connector**, you bring people together throughout the agricultural value chain and the local economy. Building new relationships and identifying mutual interests creates new synergies and new opportunities for the agricultural sector to work together.

As an **educator**, you help decision makers better understand agriculture and help to spark new ideas amongst farmers and business owners. From councillors learning about local farming practices, to farmers learning about food processing and handling, new ideas bring new opportunities!

As an **enabler**, you work to make sure the entrepreneurial drive and hard-working spirit of your agricultural community are able to take root. From access to funding to agriculture friendly municipal policies, your work in creating a supportive environment that will help your agricultural sector flourish.

As an **organizer**, you see the bigger picture and work to ensure your community has a plan. Not everything will happen on its own. Agricultural business operators are busy people, with a lot of responsibilities and don't always see opportunity where it lies.

Tips for Successful Agricultural Economic Development:

- Visibly demonstrate the importance of the agricultural sector (e.g., tours, brochures, infographics).
 - Understand that agriculture is about the long game; results are rarely instantaneous and are often long term. Be persistent, keep trying, and celebrate the small wins as part of a long-term process.
 - Accurately assess the needs of the local agricultural sector; base decisions on information obtained through systematic and sound analysis.
 - Build networks and capacity in the community, recognizing the value of community knowledge. Use a participatory approach to mobilize individuals and harness the resources and talents of community members and organizations.
-

STAGE 1: PLANT

Prepare your community for agriculture economic development

This stage includes:

- ☐ Community Readiness for Agricultural Economic Development
 - ☐ Evaluating Community Readiness
- ☐ Building a Preliminary Snapshot of Agriculture in Your Community
- ☐ Organizing for Action
 - ☐ Identifying Partners
 - ☐ Building Community Leadership
 - ☐ Structuring the Work — Developing Terms of Reference

Community Readiness for Agricultural Economic Development

Community readiness is the degree to which a community is prepared to take action on agricultural economic development initiatives. Readiness can vary greatly from one community to another. Understanding your community's readiness will give you a sense of where you stand today and will allow you to develop a realistic approach to what the community is willing and able to accept and support. Some communities may need to get started with simple actions like networking events, while others may be ready to take on more ambitious projects like the Business Retention and Expansion program (BR+E). This exercise should give your community an understanding of where it can get started and where it may need to focus greater attention.

Evaluating Community Readiness

There are five aspects of community readiness to take action on agricultural economic development, which include:

- Knowledge and awareness
- Leadership
- Collaboration
- Resources
- Engagement

The table below provides the community readiness questions related to these aspects that will help evaluate community readiness.

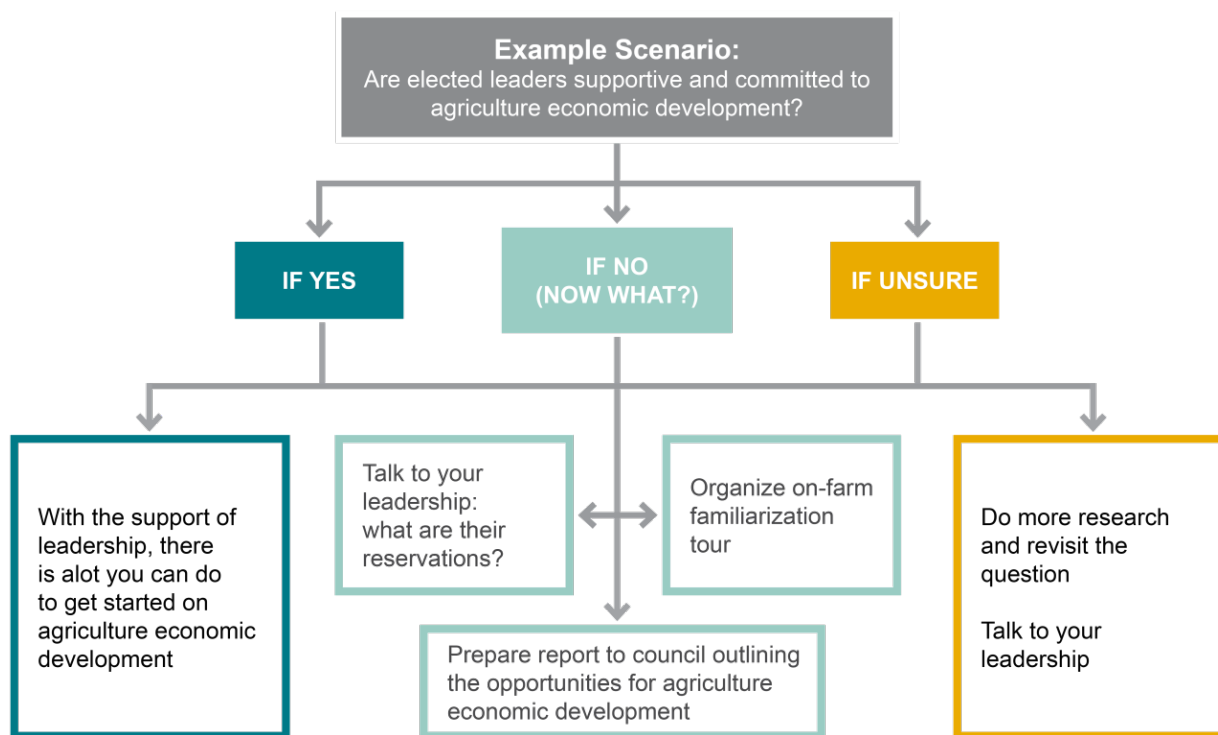
Readiness Questions		Response
Knowledge and Awareness	Is agriculture seen as a priority sector (e.g., economic development strategic plan, or official plan)?	Yes No Unsure
	Has your community identified opportunities to support the local agricultural sector?	Yes No Unsure
	Does your community understand the local agricultural sector's social and economic impacts?	Yes No Unsure
Leadership	Are elected officials supportive and committed to agricultural economic development?	Yes No Unsure
	Are there community leaders or volunteers that have time and interest to support and commit to agricultural economic development?	Yes No Unsure

Collaboration	Are local businesses, organizations and community leaders working with the local agricultural sector on common initiatives?	Yes No Unsure
	Does your community have existing working relationships or networks with other communities and development organizations?	Yes No Unsure
Resources	Are there resources available to support agricultural economic development today?	
	Time	Yes No Unsure
	People	Yes No Unsure
	Budget	Yes No Unsure
Engagement	Is there a positive prevailing attitude in the community regarding agriculture?	Yes No Unsure
	Is the agricultural community open to growth or change, and is it engaged in the process?	Yes No Unsure

As you work through these questions, remember they do not offer an exact formula for readiness. These questions do, however, lead you toward some important considerations:

- If you answered yes to any of these questions, it is a good indicator of some level of community readiness. Note, sometimes ongoing work is necessary to maintain this yes position.
- Answering *no*, is not a reason to give up on this process. Rather, this identifies an opportunity for action — an area to focus on first. By taking small steps forward that take into account your community's ability and openness to take action, you can make steady progress. Maybe nothing is needed.
- Where you are *unsure* of where your community stands on a question, take some time to look into this more. The act of inquiry is all part of the process of getting to know where your community stands. This inquiry process is important in and of itself.

Example scenario for community readiness responses



Want to build support from leadership? Try a dinner on the farm.

Showcasing agriculture first-hand helps people understand the realities of what is involved and the great diversity of this sector. Local food events such as Feast on a Farm and Harvests of Haldimand bring opportunities to increase community awareness around local agriculture and build this support from community leaders.

Remember, the intent of assessing community readiness is to identify where your community might need to focus greater attention as it moves forward, or highlight that your community is poised to make significant progress right away.

Advice from an Economic Development Practitioner: Working with your Agricultural Community

Every Community has a History

1. A history exists between farmers, governments and local residents that needs to be handled with care. This history can be positive and can also be a significant barrier to collaborative work. A strong understanding of your community's past will help you build positive relationships for the future.
2. Get to know the language of your community: which ideas will resonate with farmers and lead to positive action? Which ideas will meet strict opposition and fall dead in the water?
3. Keep conversations confidential. Agriculture can be a highly competitive industry; a detail shared by one farmer about his or her operation may be seen to give an edge to another farmer, if shared.

Learning and Growing

4. Most farmers will not claim to be an expert in their field. Don't be fooled. Respect the knowledge they have for their operation and industry.
5. Start small in the support you provide and build on your repertoire of expertise.
6. Find a local mentor who you trust to answer all of your questions and someone who will connect you to their networks.
7. Reach out to neighbouring jurisdictions with agricultural economic development officers to share ideas, experiences, and opportunities.

Building a Preliminary Snapshot of Local Agriculture

Many communities recognize agriculture's contribution to the region's economy, but it is important that community leaders have an accurate understanding of what the sector is actually producing. Building a snapshot of your local agricultural sector will support you in prioritizing agriculture in your economic development planning, building relationships, harnessing support and establishing a baseline of information against which you can benchmark the impact of future actions.

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs' (OMAFRA's) [statistics website](#) has a number of data sources it maintains with summaries of agriculture and agriculture-related businesses across rural Ontario.

OMAFRA Census Profiles

[County Agricultural Profiles](#) and [County Business Profiles](#) are a good place to start building your initial snapshot with regard to the agricultural sector. Looking at both profiles allows you to see a quick overview of the agricultural productivity in your region and to compare this with other industries/sectors of the economy.

County Agricultural Profiles

The data found within the county profiles include: number of farms, types of land use, total greenhouse area, hired farm labour, farm capital value, total gross farm receipts, major field crops, major fruit crops, major vegetable crops, livestock inventories, poultry inventories, and major field crops.

County Business Profiles

The data found within county business profiles include: population, family income, employment rates, employment by industry, and number of business locations by industry.

Norfolk County – Ontario's Garden

When Norfolk County took a long, hard look at its community profile of agriculture, it was clear the region had some comparative advantage in agriculture and horticulture. Norfolk County farmers are, in fact, Ontario's number one growers of a number of crops, from asparagus, to ginseng, to strawberries and more. After analyzing the data, and noting the local agricultural know-how, Norfolk County began promoting itself as Ontario's Garden, a slogan backed up by the data. Farmers, council and the general public have bought into the slogan enthusiastically, and it continues to be widely used today.

Understanding the County Profiles - Guiding Questions

The table below provides some guiding questions to review the county profile information.

Questions	2011	2016	What is the Trend?
1. What is the total number of farms?			
2. What is the total number of farm operators?			
3. What is the average size of farm?			
4. What are the top three farms by industry group?			
5. What are your top three commodities, by farm cash receipts?			
6. Identify the highest producing:			
• Field Crop			
• Fruit Crop			
• Vegetable Crop			
• Livestock / Poultry			
7. What is the total employment in your local agri-food industry?			
8. What is the percent of provincial employment in agri-food?			
9. Other interesting facts identified from the Profile?			

Discussion Questions

- What does the data say about your community? Are realities of local agriculture different from common public perceptions?
- Does your community stand out from the provincial average in any ways (positively or negatively)?
- What do the trends suggest? Is there need for more data to look at longer reaching trends?
- How does your community compare with neighbouring regions with similar demographics?
- How does agriculture compare to other prominent industries in your community?

Sharing Data

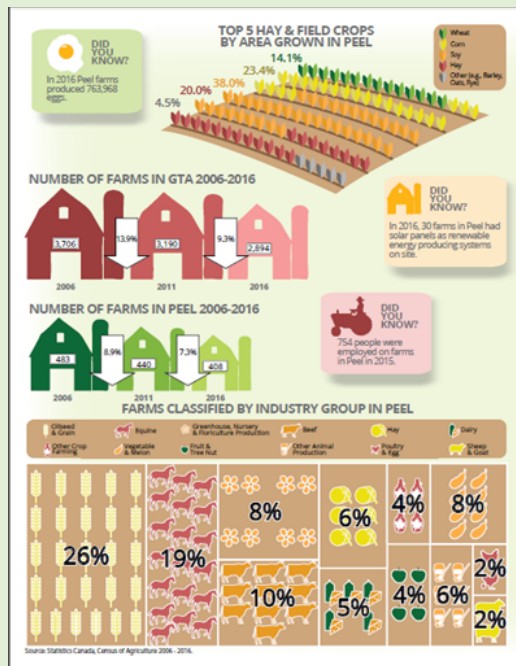
Compiling and sharing data is central to economic development because data helps people understand current strengths and identify new opportunities. Equally important is making data consumable and accessible for the right user. Creating an easily accessible and understandable data resource helps to build awareness of your local agriculture community and can be a fundamental tool in building support from community leaders and citizens.

There are a variety of mechanisms and tools communities can use to generate and disseminate data resources, such as reports, news bulletins, social media posts and infographics. Choose one that best fits your abilities and your community's needs.

Agriculture Census Bulletin: A Planning Tool for Peel Region

The Region of Peel uses a wide variety of data sources to inform policy. It recently converted Census of Agriculture data into an infographic, to serve as evidence for why agriculture is an important sector in economic development work. It was recognized by the Region of Peel that census data, if presented correctly, can help to build a storyline around agriculture.

The Region of Peel used infographics because they can be shared across a variety of platforms, and present information in an accessible way. Through effective design, complex data becomes consumable and actionable.



Organizing for Action

Identifying Partners

The partners in your agri-food sector are individuals or organizations with a stake in the sector. Partners may include agricultural producers, supportive industries, or community members who see the opportunity for agricultural economic development. Identifying mutual interests and encouraging buy in to the process is critical as this will help to ensure the long-term viability of your initiatives.

Potential partners include:

- Local chapters of farm organizations (e.g., Ontario Federation of Agriculture)
- Agricultural advisory committees
- Local agricultural societies
- Commodity groups or sector-specific organizations
- Farmers and farm employees
- Suppliers (e.g., equipment)
- Distributors
- Processors
- Community-driven agricultural groups
- Chambers of commerce
- Local health unit
- Conservation authorities
- Financial lending institutions

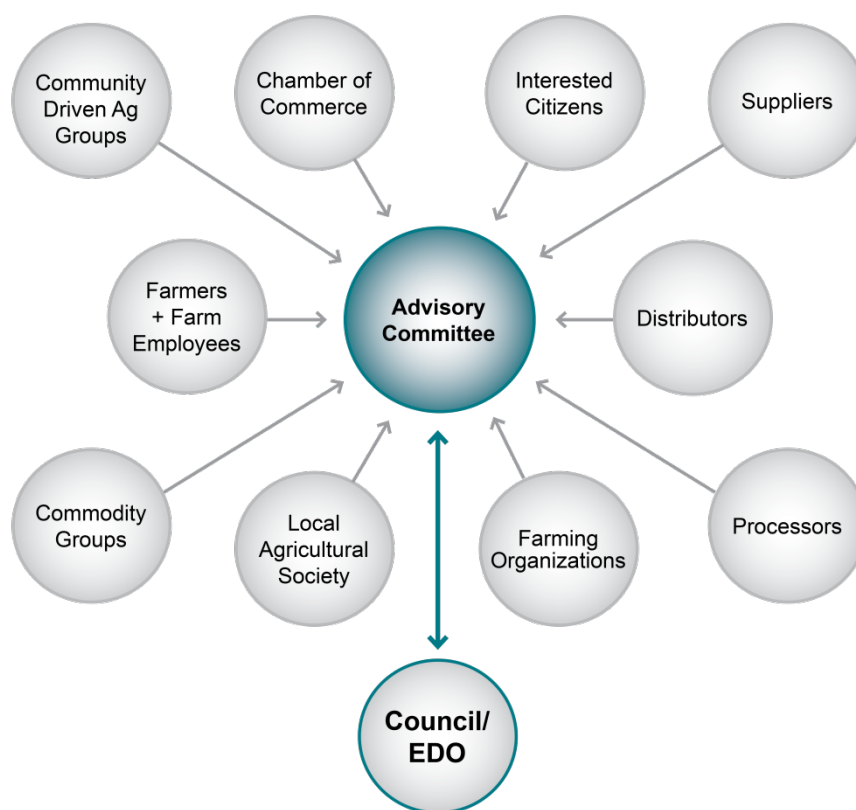
Tip: For many farmers, one's business and home are co-located. When the sun sets, the agricultural industry isn't just about making money — it is equally about a way of life. Understanding and acknowledging this will help you to build trust and acceptance.

Building Community Leadership

Agricultural economic development doesn't happen at a single point in time — there are a host of issues that come up on an ongoing basis that will affect the agriculture sector.

For a community to support agriculture, it is important to develop guidelines for municipal actions that take into account the unique needs of the agricultural sector. When evaluating municipal actions, there are many things to consider that might affect agriculture. Some of these include future growth areas, road or bridge design and construction, port development, municipal signage, trails, and economic development. The ongoing involvement of agricultural advisory committees helps ensure the agricultural sector has a voice in the municipality.

We recommend developing agriculture-focused committees that provide advice to municipal staff and councils.



An agricultural advisory committee may take on an advisory role, or may take on a more active role in implementing projects. You might choose to use this committee as a project leadership team, or you may need to recruit agricultural partners as needed for specific agricultural economic development initiatives.

No matter how it is structured, it is important to have a leadership team of engaged people to support agricultural economic development.

- **Agriculture advisory committees** provide advice and guidance to staff and council and bring important considerations to the forefront that affect the local agricultural sector. These committees help council to see decisions from an agricultural perspective.
- **Agricultural action committees** take a more active role in the community and focus on the design and delivery of local initiatives, often taking the role of agriculture-focused economic development officers.

Staff Resources

A coordinator may also be identified or hired to work with the community to provide information, organization and guidance through all stages of the agricultural economic development process. The hiring of a staff person will depend on your community's financial resources.

Halton Agricultural Liaison Officer

Halton Region created its Agricultural Liaison Officer position in 2012 to ensure staff support existed for the local agricultural sector. An agricultural liaison officer brings emphasis to the importance of agriculture, builds a broader understanding of issues, and builds capacity to take on more complex initiatives.

Provincial Staff Advisors

OMAFRA Regional Advisors are available to support agricultural economic development projects by providing coaching and guidance. For more information on your local advisor, please contact the Agriculture Information Contact Centre (AICC)

By phone: 1-877-424-1300

By email: ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca

Online: www.ontario.ca/omafra

Structuring the Work: Developing Terms of Reference

With a group of local key partners identified from across your local agricultural sector, it is now important to now consider the process you would like to follow in developing a plan for agricultural economic development.

A terms of reference will help to build a more detailed work plan which sets out the tasks, and steps you will take to complete them, over the course of the agreed upon time period.

Due to the diversity of agriculture, and often a wide array of strong opinions, developing a well-laid-out terms of reference is a good idea to guide your leadership team/committee. Developing a terms of reference is a communal activity that should be done with all members present. Check with your municipality or neighbouring municipalities as they may have an existing template to work from.

A good terms of reference document will:

1. Define the purpose
2. Establish the mandate
3. Set parameters and limitations
4. Define accountability
5. Define the time frame
6. Determine resources required
7. Determine potential membership
8. Determine the communication process

It is a good idea to use a third-party facilitator, if feasible, to ensure this process maintains objectivity. Once consensus has been reached on the structure and expectations for the committee, members are required to sign off on the terms of reference document, and this represents their ongoing commitment to the group. For support in facilitating a terms of reference, contact your OMAFRA Regional Advisor.

Tip: Sunny Skies Matter — Farmers who grow feed for animals, field crops, and horticultural crops make their income during the growing season. During sunny summer months when planting, spraying and harvesting are happening, farmers will likely not be available to provide input to your work. Try to plan your project accordingly, or move meetings to rainy days to accommodate farmers' unique schedules.

Quick Wins

The **plant** stage is also an opportunity for the committee to identify some quick wins. It is important for your team to tackle, where possible, some visible, high-impact, short-term projects to build and maintain buy in from leadership and from the community. The objective of these smaller projects will help to promote and garner support for agricultural economic development.

City of Kawartha Lakes' Food Charter

The City of Kawartha Lakes' Food Charter was a good example of a low-capacity, highly visible exercise that brought together a diverse group of stakeholders in the agriculture community. The final product was eventually turned into a life-sized document for community members to sign, and take ownership of.

STAGE 2: GROW

Getting to know your agriculture system

This stage includes:

- ☐ Developing an inventory of your agriculture system
- ☐ Talking to your agriculture sector
- ☐ Conduct an environmental scan
 - ☐ Political Economic Social Technological Other (PESTO) Analysis
 - ☐ Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats (SWOT) Analysis

There are certain guiding questions that can underpin your examination of your local agricultural sector:

- What type of agriculture is most prevalent, emerging, or struggling?
- Within your local agricultural sector, what makes your community unique?
- What are the issues, challenges or barriers to growth?
- What are the opportunities for growth or expansion?
- Who are the partners throughout the local agricultural system?
- Where are the opportunities for building connections along the value chain?

Developing an Inventory of Your Agriculture System

Developing an inventory of your agricultural system is a good first activity for your committee or leadership team. The goal of this activity is not to be a full and complete inventory of the agricultural system, but to build your initial understanding of its components.

An inventory will help you identify and build on what you already have, and uncover potential opportunities for further development.

Components of an Agricultural System Inventory

- Existing Land Base: prime agricultural areas, specialty crop areas, and rural lands in (or out of) agricultural production
- Agriculture Activity: this includes the types of products grown in the area

Agri-Food Network

- Regional infrastructure
- Agricultural services
- Retail and direct sales
- Distributors
- Processors
- Agricultural partners

Agricultural Economic Development Underway

- What is your community currently doing to actively support/enhance local agriculture?

OMAFRA's Agricultural System Portal is a handy source of information that can be used to visually represent the agri-food supply chain. The portal identifies agri-food assets, clusters and supply chains within and across municipalities. While some datasets cover the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH), others have full provincial coverage.

Data sources that can support this process include:

- [OMAFRA Agricultural Information Atlas](#)
- [Census of Agriculture](#)
- [OMAFRA Agricultural Census Maps](#)
- [AAFC Soil Survey Reports](#)
- [County Agricultural Profiles](#)
- [County Business Profiles](#)
- [OMAFRA Asset Mapping Tools](#)
- [OMAFRA's Analyst tool](#)

Talking to Your Agriculture Sector

As you start to engage with your agricultural sector in conversation, there are three important questions to ask:

1. Who should I talk to?
2. How should I talk to them?
3. What are the right questions to ask?

1. Who should I talk to?

A broad list of agricultural partners from across the agricultural system is a good place to start. Look at the list of potential partners in agricultural economic development as well as the composition of your leadership committee or agricultural advisory committee. As you continue with data collection and you notice certain themes begin to emerge, you may want to focus more specifically on certain individuals.

2. How should I talk to them?

Consultations can take different forms: interviews, surveys or focus groups. While you can choose which method works best for your needs, we recommend using a combination of these options for a well-rounded consultation process.

Interviews: An interview-style survey provides an opportunity to build a relationship between your organization and business owners, something particularly important to long-term success in agricultural economic development. The surveyor is able to ask in-depth questions, clarify responses and ask for elaboration on key concepts. This method, however, can be time-consuming, which may limit the number of businesses that can be surveyed.

Print or Online Survey: Surveys may be distributed to agriculture businesses as a mail out, an insert into a newsletter, or as a link in an email message. This approach is less time consuming than interviews and allows businesses more flexibility in responding to survey questions. Online surveys should consider the number of businesses with computer and Internet access, as this might limit the participation. Print or online surveys often result in a lower response rate and, as such, will be most effective if used as in conjunction with interviews, focus groups or a combination of both.

Focus Groups: Focus groups typically involve six to eight people and can dive into greater depth on specific topics. The discussion questions included in the survey would be good references to start your planning. Focus groups can be used in addition to individual surveys to analyse the survey findings and probe for further information on questions of interest. We recommend using focus groups to conduct analysis and build on findings generated through either

individual or online surveys. Sharing data (i.e., survey results, community agricultural snapshot and inventory data) in advance of focus group meetings is useful to help guide the conversation.

Tip: If you are meeting in person, engage with your agriculture community where they already meet: field visits, kitchen tables, coffee shops, fair grounds and occasionally more formal venues. Take the opportunity to get involved with local committees and agriculture organizations. Reaching out to these groups and attending their meetings helps to build a relationship of trust. It provides an opportunity to learn about their priorities and shows you are looking to work together toward common interests. Show you're committed beyond your job responsibilities.

3. What are the right questions to ask?

To help you better understand your local agricultural system, a draft survey and discussion questions have been prepared to support your data-gathering efforts. This survey is flexible and can be adapted according to your community's capacity and project needs. This survey gathers:

- Information to assist communities' strategic decisions for the local agri-food sector
- General business information to support an inventory of community assets
- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing your agribusinesses

Leadership Review

Before conducting community consultations with agricultural operators and agri-business owners, take the opportunity to test your chosen methods with your leadership team or advisory committee. This is a good opportunity to engage them in the process and will help to build support for the process.

Getting the Word Out

The agricultural community is a small world. Leveraging your existing networks through referrals and word of mouth can go far in bringing together participants. Recruit community champions who believe in this work and can spread the word amongst their peers. These referrals are important in working with your agricultural community.

Hold Consultations, Summarize and Share Your Results

It is recommended that a small group prepare a summary of all of the survey results and the other data which then informs the larger team.

- What data stands out either positively or negatively?
- What surprised you about the data?
- Are there any trends?

Share and present a summary of the data to inform your leadership team. It is

AGRICULTURAL BR+E PROGRAM

Carrying out an OMAFRA-guided, community-driven, Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) is another option for getting to know your agriculture community. This option requires significant commitment of time and resources. A BR+E survey is a structured, action-oriented and community-based approach to economic development. It promotes economic and job growth by helping communities learn about issues as well as opportunities for local businesses and sets priorities for projects to address these needs.

A BR+E project is supported by a team of trained volunteers who visit businesses in-person to conduct confidential interviews with senior level management, owners or managers. Data analysis and action planning is then undertaken by a broader steering committee to address issues and opportunities facing businesses. Ideally, BR+E should be incorporated as a key component of the community's ongoing economic development strategy.

Sector specific BR+E surveys are very useful where communities have defined a priority sector. There have been very successful BR+E initiatives that have focussed specifically on the local agricultural sector, or on local food production and consumption.

"A BR+E is really important for small rural municipalities in the absence of an economic development strategy. As a new EDO to the area, every initiative I launched came back to the BR+E. Because it was previously endorsed by council, it gave credibility to projects and was the evidence I needed to enable action. I presented to council and said, "you've approved this, here is how we're addressing the goals and objectives and here is how we will implement the plan." – Bluewater EDO Mark Cassidy speaking about his local food focussed BR+E.

For more information or to start the BR+E process in your community, please visit:
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/business-retention-and-expansion-program>

OMAFRA's Analyst Tool

Analyst is a web-based tool that provides data on regional economies and work forces. It helps economic development organizations better understand their regions and use evidence-based decision making to build strong regional economic strategies. Analyst combines multiple data sources such as Census, Canadian Business Patterns, employment and labour force surveys, Canadian Occupational Projection System, CANSIM Demographics and Postsecondary Student Information System Education Data. It can be used to identify regional strengths, conduct workforce analysis and cluster analysis, business attraction and regional comparison/competitiveness analysis. Training on use of Analyst is available and advice and guidance may be obtained from OMAFRA's specialists and advisors.

Conduct an Environmental Scan

Drawing on the collective insights of your committee, environmental scanning processes are a good way to sort through the wealth of data you have collected. Again, this is another great opportunity for conversation and for strengthening relationships amongst those on your committee.

Some different approaches to organizing and understanding information include:

- ✓ PESTO (Political, Environmental/Economy/Education, Social, Technological, and Other)
- ✓ SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats).

Using the results of the PESTO and SWOT analysis, the group should generate a list of ideas. Some questions that may be asked to help refine the results include:

- How can we utilize our strengths to capitalize on the opportunities?
- How can we use our strengths to mitigate each weakness?
- Can any of the opportunities identified offset the identified threats?
- What will have the biggest impact?

Following PESTO and SWOT analyses, the final step is to identify if there are any potential issues not previously identified. These issues should be fundamental issues for your group (e.g., potential loss of major funding). If addressing an issue will not have a major impact on your group, it is not a critical issue. The results of these exercises will be used in the next stage to develop goals and actions.

PESTO Analysis

PESTO analysis is an exercise used to examine different factors that a group should take into consideration during their planning. Based on the following table, the group should discuss the following questions:

- What trends are apparent?
- What issues or challenges are there?
- What advantages or opportunities are there?

P	Political – political climate, shifts in thinking, changes to programs or regulations, and changes in administration or leadership. These should consider municipal, provincial or national jurisdictions (ex: Provincial Policy Statement zoning bylaws for on-farm value-added activity)
E	Environment/Economy/Education – changes in environmental trends or potential impacts, new funding opportunities, or the general economic state of the region, educational needs of staff, volunteers/citizens.
S	Social – changing demographics, cultural trends, ways of interacting. (e.g., ethno cultural food production for immigrant communities)
T	Technological – emerging trends in communications, technology and the various applications, and/or availability of technology (e.g., precision agriculture)
O	Other – trends in the sector, clients, customers (e.g., public understanding of agriculture sector)

The results of the PESTO analysis will be used to inform the external aspects of the SWOT analysis.

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis is a group exercise that examines the current state of your agriculture sector. By evaluating current conditions using a SWOT analysis, a group is better positioned to effectively set goals and define strategies.

Internal	S	<p>Strengths are positive internal aspects to the group or sector that can contribute to achieving the group's vision.</p> <p>Example: We have innovative farmers.</p>
	W	<p>Weaknesses are negative internal aspects that can hinder the group from meeting its vision.</p> <p>Example: Our agriculture community won't work together</p>
External	O	<p>Opportunities are positive aspects, circumstances or trends external to the group with the potential to contribute to successful achievement of the vision.</p> <p>Example: There is increasing demand for new crops (i.e., world foods) as our communities become more and more diverse</p>
	T	<p>Threats are negative aspects, circumstances or trends external to the group with the potential to hinder the successful realization of the vision.</p> <p>Example: Development pressure is removing cropland from production</p>

Tip: When conducting this exercise, remember to consider:

- PESTO analysis
- Agricultural systems inventory/community profile
- Survey results

STAGE 3: HARVEST

Harvest the good ideas and take action!

This stage includes:

- ☐ *Goals, objectives and action plans*
- ☐ *Actions for agricultural economic development*
- ☐ *Capacity rankings*
- ☐ *Measuring and reporting outcomes*

- ✓ *You've collected and analyzed data*
- ✓ *You've identified strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats*
- *It's time to harvest the good ideas and take action*

Goals, Objectives and Action Plans

With a good understanding of the local agricultural sector and the internal and external environments that affect and support progress, it's time to answer the question: what actions do we need to take to best support local agriculture?

Goals

Setting goals and objectives go hand in hand. Goals describe what your group wants to accomplish. They refer to the desired end results (outcome) that a group wants to achieve in fulfilling its mission and moving toward its vision. Goals describe areas of emphasis and what your group looks to accomplish.

Objectives

Objectives are the next level below the goal statements and they answer questions like: how much? or by when? The group's objectives drive strategy formation and should follow the SMART formula:

S	SIMPLE AND SPECIFIC	Is this easy to understand and communicate to others?
M	MEASURABLE	How can we measure our achievement? How will we know if we have reached our target?
A	ACHIEVABLE	Is this something we are capable of doing? Do we have the capacity to achieve this?
R	REALISTIC	In light of the day-to-day work of our group, is it realistic to expect that we can accomplish this?
T	TIMELY	Have we identified a timeframe or deadline for achieving this?

Action Plans

Action plans answer the question, what do we need to do to achieve the goals and objectives? There could be few or many actions for each goal and objective, depending on your group's human and financial resources. The collective activities from the action plan directly contribute to achieve your goals which, in turn, contribute to achieve the vision. This is the on-the-ground level in strategic planning. At this stage, each goal and related objectives are matched with the activities needed to achieve the goal.

Goal 1	Objective 1	Action 1.1
		Action 1.2
		Action 1.3
	Objective 2	Action 2.1
		Action 2.2
		Action 2.3

Actions for Agricultural Economic Development

In reviewing the list of possible actions your community can take on, look back to the agricultural system inventory you have completed with members of your leadership committee and local agricultural partners. Where is your community already taking action? What can be improved upon and where can you avoid duplication of efforts? It's useful to look beyond your borders as well to see where neighbouring communities may be able to support your action plans, or where you can get involved in existing efforts. Functional agricultural systems often extend beyond municipal boundaries.

Across the agriculture value chain, there are a number of different action areas for agricultural economic development. These include:

- Stakeholder engagement
- Communications and marketing
- Business development
- Workforce and leadership development
- Investment attraction
- Agriculture infrastructure and land-use planning
- Research and innovation

Depending on the actions you choose, your role will change and/or evolve over time. Remember there are five different roles for you to take on in doing agricultural economic development:



Promoter



Connector



Educator



Enabler



Organizer

Stakeholder Engagement

Agricultural Advisory/Action Committee	Municipalities are encouraged to establish agricultural advisory committees and consult with them on decisions that affect agriculture. The ongoing involvement of agricultural advisory committees ensures the agricultural sector has a voice in the municipality. Agricultural advisory committees can have planning and/or economic development as a priority. Many organize annual agricultural tours that provide community leaders with exposure to the local sector. Advisory committees are typically supported administratively by municipal staff who help to keep council informed on agricultural issues.
Agribusiness Networking Events	Connecting the partners along the agricultural value chain, or agricultural system helps foster resilience, can point to missing elements in the value chain or new opportunities and innovations. Whether it's bringing people together over lunch, or recruiting committees to work together toward a specific goal, don't underestimate the value in creating new connections.
Regular Communication with Agricultural Organizations	Relationships are important in working with the agricultural sector, perhaps more so than other sectors as many businesses are family run. Maintain ongoing communications with your agricultural sector to keep them informed of what you are doing and to stay abreast of any emerging issues/needs. New opportunities for collaboration and support often emerge from keeping lines of communication open.

Communications and Marketing

Agriculture Familiarization Tours	Hosting familiarization tours can involve taking a group of potential investors, community leaders and interested citizens to visit some of the agricultural operations in the community. Where people can see first-hand what is taking place in the community, they may build a greater appreciation for the sector's needs going forward.
Agri-Tourism Initiatives	Focussed initiatives such as seasonal tours, dinners, flavour trails and events including farms, markets, restaurants, wineries, ciders and other food experiences may all help to build awareness of availability, and grow the demand for local food. OMAFRA's website provides information on developing agri-tourism operations and training on value-added agriculture is available through workshops such as OMAFRA's Exploring Value-Added Opportunities and Selling Food to Ontario .

Community/ Regional Branding	This Involves overseeing all elements of the design of the community brand (e.g., logo, slogans, tag lines, colour schemes, messaging, etc.) and setting guidelines for the use of the brand. Regional brands help individual businesses to access new markets and to raise awareness of your local/regional strengths. Municipalities may consider taking on these initiatives themselves or supporting local not-for-profits or farm fresh organizations already doing this work.
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Business Development

Agribusiness Recognition Programs	Activities and events bring together business people in an effort to stimulate new business opportunities and opportunities for collaboration and cooperation. Events can also provide an opportunity to celebrate excellence within the local business community.
Export & Trade Development	Export and Trade Development Services support local businesses in understanding, assessing and reaching international markets.
Business Retention + Expansion (BR+E)	A Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) survey is an approach to economic development that focuses on nurturing existing businesses as key drivers of ongoing economic health and vitality in a community. Recognizing that the majority of new jobs created come from existing businesses, BR+E initiatives engage local business owners in a dialogue in order to fully understand the challenges they are facing and the opportunities on the horizon. Where possible, strategies are developed to assist the agri-food business community in addressing those challenges and realizing opportunities for growth. A specialized survey exists for agriculture and local food.
Local Food Procurement	Municipalities and public institutions may adopt local food procurement targets. Through actions or policies, your municipality can promote and encourage the purchase of local goods and services. Institutions, organizations and municipalities can harness their purchasing power to support local farmers, food entrepreneurs, distributors and processors who may have been unable to access large institutional markets in the past. Aside from supporting local agriculture, these initiatives fit with Ontario's Climate Change Action Plan in terms of greenhouse gas emission reductions and access to more local, healthy, affordable food choices. The <u>Association of Municipalities of Ontario</u> has a guide to best practises in local food for municipalities.

Agribusiness Incubator	Business Incubators are designed to accelerate the development of new ventures by reducing costs and providing ready access to management advice. Tenants of an incubator might share common space, business equipment, administrative support, technical support and other overhead, thereby realizing cost efficiencies in the critical start-up phase of each enterprise.
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Workforce and Leadership Development

Workforce Development	Economic development strategies may need to consider human capital and workforce development. Local workforce planning and development boards, in partnership with industry, can develop agri-food labour force strategies that may include identification of emerging careers in agri-food and agriculture technology, attraction of newcomers to the sector and working with industry for potential job fairs for the sector. This strategy may also incorporate training and education including apprenticeships, engagement and retention of youth in the industry.
Youth in Agriculture	Opportunities to promote youth leadership in agriculture may involve organizations, such as 4-H and Junior Farmers that are already actively involved in this area. These organizations often have local or regional chapters to contact. There may be opportunities to support or expand existing programs to reach a broader audience, or tailor programs to fit agricultural employer demands.
Promote mentorship and co-operative education programs	Mentorship programs bring together seasoned business professionals with new entrepreneurs to assist the development of new businesses. Co-operative education programs likely exist through your local high school and provide an opportunity to actively engage local youth with local agri-businesses.
Future Needs for the Labour Force	Keeping an ongoing relationship with local employers in the agricultural and agri-food sector will help you identify where future demands may arise and will help you tailor other programming to support their needs. Work with local workforce planning and development boards to develop an agri-food labour force strategy for the sector. In partnership with industry appropriate training, apprenticeships or education, consider engagement and retention of youth in agriculture.

Agribusiness Recruitment Initiatives	There is an important role to be played in bridging the gap between agri-businesses and local youth – the workforce of tomorrow. Are members of your community (e.g., guidance counsellors, parents, youth etc.) aware of the opportunities for employment that exist in agriculture? Open houses and employment fairs are important in supporting ongoing productivity and helping businesses grow by educating the community about opportunities and allowing employers to recruit employees.
Workshops/ Resources for Succession Planning	The average age of farm operators across the province is increasing. With this comes the challenge of connecting the next generation with opportunities in farming, as they become available. Succession planning involves a strategy to transfer knowledge, skills, labour, management, control and ownership of the farm business from one generation, sometimes known as the founder or retiring generation, to the successor generation. This is a continuous process.
Leadership Development Training	Connect with existing organizations already working in this field (e.g., Junior Farmers, 4H and the Rural Ontario Institute). Identify opportunities for the agricultural community to get engaged in your community in other ways.
Resources for Agribusiness Entrepreneurs	Entrepreneurs are crucial to fostering a vibrant and diverse agri-food sector for the future, through the production of local food and niche-market products that meet growing consumer demands. There are a variety of ways to support emerging agricultural businesses such as developing tailored and specific training opportunities and maintaining an environment that is supportive of innovation.
Access to Farmland	Obtaining access to farmland can be a significant challenge, especially for new farmers. There are several opportunities to facilitate this and examples to draw on, whether by linking prospective farmers up with landowners, leasing public land to farmers or using agricultural easements and land trusts. FarmLink.net , for example, connects farm seekers, farmers and landowners. This online match-making service posts information on farm seekers, their vision, experience and skills. It also identifies farm businesses seeking farmers to run, or partner with in running, their farms. FarmLink also supports broader municipal efforts to attract farmers to their community.

Business Counselling	<p>Business counselling refers to one-on-one business consulting services provided to owners and managers of a single business entity. The business could be an agri-food entity that is a new start-up or an existing business. Information provided to the client might include advice on financing, marketing, exporting, human resources, or any other functional area of the operation.</p> <p>Business counselling resources for new farm businesses can be found in Starting a Farm in Ontario or Starting a Farm in Northern Ontario. The Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association also offers Growing Your Farm Profits Workshops to help entrepreneurs maximize their long-term business goals.</p>
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Investment Attraction

Investment Attraction	Municipalities with high capacity economic development departments may engage in investment attraction activities related to the agri-food sector. Generating leads, attending trade shows where buyers and suppliers connect, and marketing local assets suited to a particular industry can help to attract potential investors.
Resources for Investment Attraction	Investment attraction in the agriculture system can range from farmland purchases to new producers or processors who are looking to occupy industrial lands. It is important to have prepared resources that document your community's competitive advantages for agri-business and facilitate answering investors' inquiries for when they become necessary.
Land Inventory Database	A land/property inventory is an up-to-date listing of all the commercial and industrial lands and buildings available for sale or lease in a community. In addition to containing all of the relevant contact information related to the property, the inventory usually lists other key information such as a comprehensive description of the property (i.e., square footage, zoning, servicing, lease rate etc.).
Inquiries Office for Investors & Agribusiness	The importance of having staff available to respond to questions on short notice cannot be underestimated. Responding to site selector inquiries involves providing answers to key questions (i.e., land availability, labour costs, utility costs etc.) posed by a potential investor. It is not uncommon for a site selector to request a response within 24 hours. Engaging the province (i.e. OMAFRA and the Ministry of Economic Development and Growth) is recommended to help ensure provincial investment attraction specialists are aware of the

	assets, sector strengths and opportunities in their respective regions.
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Agriculture Infrastructure and Planning

Infrastructure	<p>Agri-food businesses depend on a variety of infrastructure including transportation assets such as bridges, roads, rail and ports; electricity; natural gas; broadband internet; water for irrigation, livestock and processing; and more. Investments into rural Ontario infrastructure can boost agri-food production, processing and distribution, while expanding the commercial and industrial tax base and creating jobs. Municipalities should consider identifying infrastructure improvements needed to support the agri-food sector. Municipalities can also develop design guidelines for roads, bridges and traffic circles to allow for safe passage of large farm equipment. Municipalities could lead or support initiatives to increase access to natural gas, broadband and multi-modal transportation. Regional agri-food strategies or BR+E studies may help identify infrastructure priorities.</p>
Open for Business Approaches	<p>An “Open for Business Approach” means a community implements policies, procedures and regulations that accomplish their underlying goals but work in harmony with the needs of the business community. Developing clear and timely municipal processes, that take into account unique agricultural timelines, is one way your community can assist both existing and new businesses in making investments.</p>
Official Plans and zoning bylaws that support agri-food & related activities e.g., value-added	<p>The Provincial Policy Statement and the four GGH land use plans permit a wide range of uses in <i>prime agricultural areas</i> which includes <i>agricultural, agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses</i>. These uses are often part of the agricultural system, making a positive contribution to the agricultural industry either directly or indirectly. They may result in new farm products or necessary and/or valued rural services. Striking a balance between good planning practice and economic development can be a challenge and OMAFRA has guidelines to assist with this. Note: Agriculture advisory committees are helpful to ensure official plan policies and zoning are supportive to agriculture.</p>
Identify Gaps and Support Expansion of Regional Infrastructure	<p>Work with regional partners and governments to promote the importance of increasing access to natural gas, broadband and cellular expansion. With your agricultural advisory committee, promote the importance of agriculture in local planning decisions (e.g., transportation networks that are suitable for agricultural equipment, grain dryers, cold storage</p>

	facilities etc.)
Develop agriculture/rural focussed Community Improvement Plan	<p>Ontario's <i>Planning Act</i> gives municipalities the power to implement Community Improvement Plans (CIPs) to provide financial incentives (grants or loans) to private property owners to undertake physical improvements in areas designated within the municipal official plan. This tool has traditionally been used in urban areas; however, a growing number of municipalities in Ontario are directing CIPs to agricultural and rural areas.</p> <p>The Ministry of Municipal Affairs has a handbook on community improvement plans.</p>
Agricultural Impact Assessments (AIA) and Edge Planning	<p>As outlined in OMAFRA's Agricultural Impact Assessment Guidelines, the <i>Growth Plan</i> and <i>Greenbelt Plan</i> may require AIAs for settlement area expansions, aggregate applications and infrastructure projects. Edge planning addresses the interface between settlement areas and active farmland and aims to achieve compatibility between these two uses. Where high quality farmland is close to areas of concentrated growth, edge planning can help ensure the two can co-exist.</p>
Food Systems Planning	<p>At least 25 rural and urban communities in Ontario have food charters and/or food policy councils (MacRae and Donahue, 2013). These initiatives often involve participants from across the food system including producers, municipal leaders, universities, schools, hospital, public health and food and beverage businesses. When developing food charters/strategies or establishing food policy councils, agricultural representation would be beneficial.</p>

Research and Innovation

Agri-food Asset Mapping	Agri-food asset mapping can highlight Ontario's agri-food strengths. It can also provide an overview of research and industry research collaborations, food and agriculture resources, unique commercialization facilities and government supports in place to drive the growth of food processing. Gaining a more comprehensive understanding your community's agri-food assets will help you to draw important connections along the value chain and tailor your economic development activities to be relevant to your local agriculture sector.
Agricultural Value Chain Analyses	Agricultural value chains can be adapted or expanded to increase local competitive advantage. Collaborations along the value chain link producers, processors, marketers, food service companies, retailers and supporting groups such as shippers, research groups and suppliers. A value chain can be defined as a strategic partnership among inter-dependent businesses that collaborate to progressively create value for the final consumer resulting in a collective competitive advantage. Gaining a better understanding of your local agricultural value chain will help you draw new connections and support the overall sector.
Celebrate Local Agribusiness Innovations	Celebrate and showcase where local agri-businesses are adopting or developing innovative technologies or practices. Sharing new innovations with farmers and agri-businesses is an important capacity-building role for a community to take on.
Share Best Management Practices	Identify and deliver education and training opportunities for local producers. Your role lies in identifying where local producers would benefit from additional information and education, and connecting them with the necessary resources and authorities on these topics. Topics range from new crop opportunities to new technologies and processes for planting, spraying, harvesting and food processing.
Agribusiness Research and Development	Research and innovation is important to produce safe and higher quality food, protect our environment, produce bio-products and renewable fuels, achieve growth and profitability and build stronger rural communities.

Capacity Rankings

Capacity is based on the availability of dedicated staff and volunteers, awareness of the agriculture sector and budget allocation for agricultural economic development. All communities are unique and have varying levels of capacity to take on agricultural economic development. The following section has ranked each activity according to its relative capacity. The legend describes how level of capacity is defined and is categorized by colour in the following table.

Capacity Ranking Legend

Low Capacity	
No dedicated staff with little to no volunteer support. Current staff have little familiarity with the agri-food sector. Little to no budget is available to support agricultural economic development activities.	
Medium Capacity	
1/2 FTE staff and/or some volunteer support. They have moderate experience and expertise in the agri-food sector. Moderate budget for carrying out some activities.	
High Capacity	
1 or more FTE staff and active volunteers to support economic development activities. Staff have a wealth of expertise and experience working in the agri-food sector. Significant budget is available to support agricultural economic development.	

It is important to remember that capacity rankings are not absolute. The capacity required for any given activity will vary depending on the scale and scope of your community's needs. There are opportunities to adapt each of these activities to fit your community's capacity. Collaborating with neighbouring communities, sponsoring existing initiatives, and scoping an initiative's activities may help adapt agricultural economic development initiatives to your community's capacity. Anyone can be a community champion and volunteers will join in when they see momentum building, even through small successes.

There are many other programs, tools and resources to help communities achieve their long-term sustainable economic development goals. Many initiatives are scalable and deliverable with support and assistance from OMAFRA's Regional Agricultural and Rural Economic Development Advisors. Working with an OMAFRA regional advisor can help a municipality identify which economic development tools are most appropriate for their community.

Community-Based Programs to Support Agricultural Economic Development

Agriculture Sector Support Activities	Low Capacity	Medium Capacity	High Capacity
Investment Attraction			✓
Export and Trade Development Services			✓
Agriculture / Local Food BR+E			✓
Regional Infrastructure (e.g., Food Processing Facilities, Grain Terminals etc.)			✓
Agriculture Community Improvement Plan			✓
Agriculture System Inventory - Value Chain Gap Analysis		✓	✓
Implement Local Food Procurement Policies		✓	✓
Agriculture Strategic Action Plan		✓	✓
Implement/Update Agriculture Impact Study		✓	✓
Develop & Promote Agri-Tourism and Local Food Initiatives		✓	✓
Promote Local Agri-Business Innovations	✓	✓	✓
Regional Collaborations	✓	✓	✓
Food Charter	✓	✓	✓
Familiarization / VIP Ag Tours	✓	✓	✓
Agricultural Advisory Committee	✓	✓	✓
Stakeholder Engagement	✓	✓	✓
Agriculture Innovation, Research and Development	✓	✓	✓
Agri-Business Workshops: New Crop Opportunities, Value-Added Food etc.	✓	✓	✓
Community Leadership & Volunteer Development	✓	✓	✓
Agriculture Sector Community Profile	✓	✓	✓

Additional Resources to Support Agricultural Economic Development Initiatives

Agriculture Resources: Explore OMAFRA's ["Agriculture"](#) page for detailed information on a wide variety of agricultural products and practices

Food Production Resources: Explore OMAFRA's ["Food"](#) page for detailed information on programs, tools and resources available to industry stakeholders and the public at large.

Agri-Business Resources

- [Direct Farm Marketing Business Resources](#)
- ["Selling Food to Ontario" Workshops](#)
- [Value Chains in Agriculture, Food and Agri-Products Sectors](#)
- [Best Practices in Local Food: A Guide for Municipalities](#)
- [Guide to Food and Beverage Manufacturing in Ontario](#)
- [Exploring Value-Added Opportunities – Workshops and Resources](#)
- [Growing a Food Processing Business](#)
- [Growing Your Farm Profits](#)
- [OMAFRA Business Development Consultants](#)
- [OMAFRA Investment Consultants](#)
- [OMAFRA's Ontario Food Exports \(OFEX\) Program](#)

Agricultural Data Resources

- [OMAFRA Agricultural Information Atlas](#)
- [Census of Agriculture](#)
- [OMAFRA Agricultural Census Maps](#)
- [AAFC Soil Survey Reports](#)
- [County Agricultural Profiles](#)
- [County Business Profiles](#)
- [OMAFRA Asset Mapping Tools](#)
- [OMAFRA's Agricultural System Portal](#)
- [Business Retention & Expansion Survey Data](#)
- [Statistics Canada: Canadian Census and National Household Survey](#)
- [OMAFRA's Online Analyst Tool \(includes input/ output data\)](#)
- [Municipal Property Tax Assessment \(MPAC\) data \(shared with municipalities\)](#)
- Agricultural organizations (e.g. [Food and Beverage Ontario](#))
- [Food, Agricultural and Resource Economics](#) (University of Guelph)
- Agriculture Impact Studies (where available)
- Municipal Business Count Data and Business Directories
- [Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Asset Mapping \(for GGH\)](#)

Measuring and Reporting Outcomes

As the action plans are being implemented, you and your leadership team or advisory committee will need to monitor performance measures and report on your progress. It is your responsibility to monitor progress and ensure that the community will follow through on its actions.

The leadership team should work with the coordinator to develop a process for tracking the results of the projects. This will help identify the impact your work is having on the local economy and community. Taking a purposeful approach to performance measurement will help foster a culture of continuous improvement within an organization that can lead to more successful outcomes for all initiatives.

Benefits of measuring performance

By using performance measures on a regular basis to make informed decisions, plans can be corrected mid-course or priorities can be reset to take advantage of emerging opportunities. An internal performance measurement system will drive results and enable your organization to learn from its successes and failures. Regular performance measurement:

- ✓ Provides insight on how to improve organizational practices
- ✓ Helps demonstrate and document changes in initiatives over time
- ✓ Informs decision-making processes including budgeting and staff resources
- ✓ Increases accountability by demonstrating the value of initiative activities in achieving desired outcomes
- ✓ Supports communication of achievements to agricultural partners and the public

Performance Measurement: A Guide for Agriculture and Agri-Food Organizations

OMAFRA has developed a resource guide to help organizations understand, develop and benefit from the performance measurement process. It can be applied to programs and projects that are new or ones that are already up and running. It employs qualitative and quantitative measures and can be used as a report back measure for the success of funded projects and strategic plans.

Conclusion

Agriculture is an important sector in Ontario's economy and to the rural communities throughout the province, in particular. There is unquestionably great opportunity in the agri-food sector to support growth in productivity and foster expansion of innovation.

It is important to note that every community is unique – each with its own challenges and opportunities. While your community may not implement every idea presented in this guide, there are certainly some important elements that extend to most situations. It is important to:

- build community leadership and public support for agricultural economic development;
- get to know your local agriculture sector – both the key players and the type of agriculture taking place;
- understand what businesses need and where they want to go; and
- take action, big or small.

At the end of the day, understand that agriculture does not exist in a vacuum. The actions you take are important and will make a significant difference.

Acknowledgements

The materials in this manual have been adapted from a variety of economic development resources including the Economic Developers of Alberta Agriculture as an Economic Opportunity guide.

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) would like to thank the following communities and their representatives for their input into making this guide relevant to the needs of communities across Ontario.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Municipality of South Dundas | • Northumberland County |
| • Town of Lincoln | • Ontario Federation of Agriculture |
| • Temiskaming Shores | • City of Kawartha Lakes |
| • Haldimand County | • Norfolk County |

Contact Information

Agricultural Information Contact Centre: 1-877-424-1300

www.Ontario.ca/Rural

DRAFT COMMITTEE AGENDA

The Corporation of the Municipality of Mississippi Mills

Development & Infrastructure Services Committee

Date
Time
Location

Chair's Name

A. CALL TO ORDER

B. ATTENDENCE

C. DISCLOSURE OF PECNIARY INTEREST AND GENERAL NATURE THEREOF

D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

F. PUBLIC MEETINGS at 7:00 p.m.

G. DELEGATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

H. PLANNING

G.1. Staff Reports

G.1.1 Subdivision Status Information Report – *report to provide information on new residential construction including the status and illustration of Draft Approved Plans of Subdivision, Registered Plans of Subdivision and Active Plans in Process.*

G.1.2. Property Standards & Committee of Adjustment Consent Report – *report to provide information on minor variance applications (refer to definition) and property standards appeals on orders issued.*

G.1.3 Planning Activity Report – *report to provide information on minor site plans approved under delegated authority, pre-consultation meetings and any other activity.*

G.1.4 Other Planning Reports – zoning, site plans, etc.

G.2 Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority Board of Directors Report

I. BUILDING PERMITS AND INSPECTIONS

H.1 Staff Reports

H. 1 Quarterly Building Status Report

F.2. Other Building Reports

J. PUBLIC WORKS (including Utilities)

I.1 Staff Reports

I.1.1 Capital Projects/Contracts Status Report

I.1.2 Operations Status Report

I.1.3 Other Public Works Reports

K. ENVIRONMENT

J.1 Climate Change

J.2 Waste/Recycling

L. INFORMATION AND CORRESPONDENCE

M. MEETING DATE

N. ADJOURNMENT