




Growing Your Opportunities

2008 Value Plus Workshop

CFBMC Innovation Day
June 3, 2008
Guelph, Ontario

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs 

History


2004 Needs Assessment and Environmental scan

Business Management Unit of OMAFRA works with producers to provide leading edge resources and knowledge regarding the 'business' side of farming

Learned from colleagues and external clients that some 'good' news was needed for the agricultural community (BSE, low grain commodity prices)

Put the word out to internal and external clients if community interested in such an workshop

Focus on awareness building and success stories of peers who have taken control of the marketing of their agricultural products and/or services



History

Launched pilot Growing Your Opportunities – Food and Farm Conference April 2005 in Durham Region

- Speakers focused on trends in the agriculture industry, drivers of food sector, understanding personal and business change, and a panel of success stories of producers who have adapted to meet new market opportunities
- Wrapped up with business planning information and programs – particularly focusing on Agricultural Policy Framework - Farm Business Advisory Services

Results:

- 75 participants, 40 evaluations completed
- Overall evaluation – strongly agree that the conference was timely and improved their understanding of capturing opportunities.


"We are in the process of changing our farm and attended to see future possibilities"
"Great to hear new opportunities that are valuable – also independent marketing of farm products"
"Come up with a plan (projection of goals) maybe change way of thinking of type of farming"

Growing Your Opportunities – Farm and Food Conference Series

A series of one-day conferences focused on advancing the agriculture and food sector by exploring industry trends, farm business success stories, new marketing ideas and strategies to adapt to today's changing agriculture and consumer markets.

OMAFRA Partnership approach to delivery with local stakeholders and CFBMC

2005 – 2007 a total of 17 one-day workshops across Ontario
Over 1,000 participants



60% - 70% attendees primary producers
85% satisfied to very satisfied

Included 2 day pilot value-added workshop in Norfolk County Spring '07

Taking it to the next level

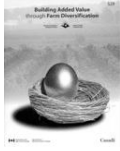
- Following 3 successful years of GYO workshops – what did farmers say? . . . they wanted more in depth training and resources regarding:
 - "Value-added"
 - "Moving from commodity to alternative markets"
 - "Local food/direct marketing opportunities"
 - "Organic farming"
 - "Renewable energy"
 AS well as 'how to' implement an idea or opportunity" in the context of value adding
- Summer 2007 began discussions with CFBMC to offer a series of 2 day intensive workshops focusing on value-adding products and services.
- Gary Morton was contracted by CFBMC to prepare a proposal for a comprehensive 2 day workshop

The Content

- Training Workshop focused on "How to Steps" of identifying a market opportunity, analyzing & testing the concept, and building a solid business case.
- Taking a farm diversification idea to a new business enterprise e.g. processed food products, agri-tourism, farm service, grain business or non-farm diversification.
- 2 day course with the sessions one to two weeks apart.
- Minimum 15 – maximum 25 per session.
- Trainer, Workbook and CFBMC resources.
- Suggested registration is \$75 per person for the 2 day workshop. This is a real bargain – thanks to CFBMC

Based on 2 CFBMC Publications

Value Added & Farm Business Planning
Gary Morton – Nova Scotia



The Roll Out

OMAFRA commitment to innovative tech transfer and its ability to partner with local stakeholder groups to offer a wide variety of programs and services resulted in a commitment by six local committees to host 'Growing Your Opportunities – Value Plus workshops' across the province.

OMAFRA staff and resource commitment from Business Management Unit in partnership development, content development, marketing and tech transfer.

Local stakeholders provided assistance through encouraging participation and registration, marketing & public relations, securing venue, catering, and handling registration.

Local stakeholders/sponsors included:
Community Futures Development Corporations, Business Enterprise Centres, Farm Organizations (e.g. OFA, CFFO), Municipalities, Local Training Boards, etc.



The Content

Using real life examples, and interactive case studies and discussions drawing on participants' experience the Growing Your Opportunities workshop addressed:

- Understanding the value-added process
- Developing and evaluating new product or business ideas
- Market research and developing a market strategy including collaborative options
- Product and service development
- Building a Value Added Business – SWOT analysis
- Skills assessment for value-added & creating a mentoring team
- Risks when Value Adding
- Planning – The business plan
- Financing, profit margins or Funding the new idea development

The Content

OMAFRA provided participants with tech transfer resources and materials:


- Canadian Farm Business Advisory Service
- Canadian Agricultural Skills Services
- Local Business Assistance
- Value-added and Food processing
- Direct Marketing and Agri-tourism
- Local food
- Organic
- Agricultural Education
- Regulations and Compliance

A clearer understanding of who does what in OMAFRA and who are key contacts for them for specific questions going forward

The Results

112 participants (84% farmers) invested 2 days towards their business or business idea with the following results:

- Of the 91 participant's who completed an evaluation survey,
 - » 90.2% agreed or strongly agreed that the workshop improved my understanding of capturing business opportunities,
 - » 90.2 % agreed or strongly agreed that the information provided will influence my business plans within the next two years,
 - » 90.6% agreed or strongly agreed regarding the quality of the workshop manual
 - » 97.8% agreed or strongly agreed regarding the quality of the presenter and the presentation material



The Results

"What one thing can you take home and apply to your farm value-adding situation?" included:

- Knowledge of steps I need to take to develop my ideas.
- Looking at strengths and weaknesses. How to take the idea and work towards turning it into a business.
- Making it viable and profitable.
- Business-revisit and diversify. "Plan-test-test-retest prior to major commitment / viability.
- Narrow and finish current projects before creating new ones.
- Set up an Advisory Committee.
- Seeing my product through customers' eyes, change sales approach.
- Business planning and its importance.
- Value Added process and skill assessment / it is never too late to go for it!
- Evaluate your ideas, critique them, and try to adapt in new ones. Always have the door open for new ideas and spontaneity.
- How to evaluate yourself and bring the right people to your business.
- Scrutinize idea - SWOT.

The Results

"When recommending this workshop what would you tell them that they would gain from attending?":

- A step by step guide to take an idea ahead towards market
- Process involved to start an effective business
- How to add to what they are doing to make and keep their business viable
- Idea generation and SWOT; planning guide and tools needed
- Framework for assessing and working through new ideas
- Outside look at your business. Encourage you to be critical of your plan for overall value adding opportunities
- The ability to think creatively
- Practical steps in the process of value adding.
- Ability to network with others and have their input on ideas.

Future topics/themes

"What topics/themes or other learning experiences should be offered at future workshops or conferences?":

- Regulations
- Work on specific personal business plan in addition to the "hypothetical" including "homework"
- More time spent on the financial planning aspect.
- What's hot - crops.
- Writing a Business plan. Bookkeeping for Small Business. Regulations and Liabilities.
- Ministry of Labour - Regulations for farms.
- Hands - on → site visit (Local).
- More time to go over each business represented, at least in some capacity.
- Market trends - local involvement.
- Food processing.
- Perhaps it's time to start teaching that we need self respect first to be able to move ahead with any ideas / projects.
- More brainstorming around the farmers ideas → we have the ideas but may need help with the funding and fine tuning the idea and vision.



From the Sideline Observations

- Participant concerns and issues varied due to geography and sector
 - *Near urban opportunities*
 - *Sector issues (beef, pork)*
- Common threads
 - *Some searching for short-term answers and help*
 - *Networking and sharing paramount*
 - *Concern over regulations*
 - *Need for one-on-one to get to the bottom of what is needed or what needs changing*
- Many built it – thinking they would come – but didn't!
Moving from a production mindset to a marketing mindset

Case Studies – a hit!


Remember . . .

If you are given a squash - - - SQUASH IT

Now that's Value-adding!







NEXT STEPS

Build on the success of Growing Your Opportunities – Value Plus workshops

Engage interested communities, sectors, groups in hosting workshops winter 2009

Build on OMAFRA's commitment to tech transfer and work with the sector to help them make good business decisions and understand the marketplace.

Advisory role with CFBMC in roll-out across country

Thank-you

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