



THE LEGACY OF THE AG LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM:  
RICH HERITAGE CULTIVATES FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES



## ABOUT THE KELLOGG FOUNDATION

Since its inception in 1930, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation has focused on building the capacity of people, communities, and institutions to solve their own problems. Kellogg Foundation programming is guided by the organization's mission:

“To help people help themselves through the practical application of knowledge and resources to improve their quality of life and that of future generations.”

Programming activities center on a common vision of a world in which each person has a sense of worth; accepts responsibility for self, family, community, and societal well-being; and has the capacity to be productive.

Established programming areas include Health; Food Systems and Rural Development; Youth and Education; and Philanthropy and Volunteerism. Within these areas, attention is given to the cross-cutting themes of leadership; information systems/technology; capitalizing on diversity; and social and economic community development.

Most grants are awarded in the United States, Latin America and Caribbean, and six countries in southern Africa, including Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe.

Information in this publication was derived from a retrospective study commissioned by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation – 2000 (Linda W. Helstowski, consultant). Helstowski, an independent consultant based near Detroit, works closely with Michigan-based foundations in the area of program management, development and evaluation. In addition, she conducts evaluations for non-profit organizations involved in land and water education and protection programs.

For more information about the Kellogg Foundation, please visit the Web site at [www.wkcf.org](http://www.wkcf.org).



**W.K. KELLOGG**  
FOUNDATION

## INTRODUCTION

From east to west, north to south, effective agricultural leaders are found working in state and national policy development, tilling the soils and leading agribusinesses and non-profit agricultural organizations to greater success. Many of these leaders have one thing in common. They are alumni of Agricultural Leadership Development Programs:

- Programs that span 28 U.S. states and beyond, and 35 years of rich history.
- Programs that have provided more than 7,200 participants with firsthand exposure to the global agricultural picture and their leadership role in it.
- Programs that make agricultural leaders passionate about the difference they can make, whether they walk the halls of Congress, lead a local school board or serve in commodity associations.

“There are no words to describe what the program meant to me. The program changed my life and made me what I am today. Next to my parents, this program has had the greatest impact on me.

“My parents emigrated to this country. Before the program, I did not have exposure to people outside my small world ... the classroom, my small town and the farm. The Ag Leadership program provided me with the skills to speak in front of 30, then 50, then 18,000 people. It opened me to other perspectives. It put a human face on policy decisions. It made me understand that everyone has a place at the table. And if you fall off from the table, you need to get up and keep on going back.”

CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLYMAN ABEL MOLDANADO

## STEEPED IN HISTORY

What began 35 years ago as a vision has become today a validation—a validation of the importance and continued potential of agricultural leadership development programs operating across the nation and beyond.

The original program, known as the Kellogg Farmers Study Program, was created in 1965 at Michigan State University through support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF). The goal of the program was to provide young agricultural and rural leaders with a broader view of society, as well as a greater sense of the world and how they fit into the bigger picture—one of the same purposes that continues to drive and connect the programs today.

## BROADENING THE SCOPE

Based on that early model, WKKF funded three additional state programs in the early 1970s. Beginning in 1981, 12 additional state programs and one consortium of six New England states began their planning work. A pilot test in Washington state set the groundwork for these additional programs.

Through the mid-1980s and 1990s, the concept took hold and spread farther, as similar agricultural leadership programs developed in additional states from a myriad of other support sources.

Agricultural Leadership Development Programs number 38 today, including 28 existing state programs, four emerging U.S. programs and six international programs. The 28 U.S. programs have graduated more than 7,200 leaders and garnered an estimated \$111 million in additional support. The total WKKF investment to date has been \$5.3 million.

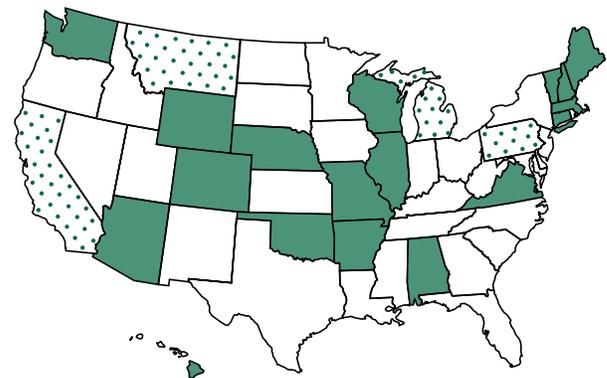
More than half the programs were initiated without WKKF support, although most clearly identify the Foundation's influence as a significant component and based their work on the early models. Throughout the years, the basic premise, philosophy and parameters of the programs have remained intact, although they have been tailored along the way to change with the times, including increased participation of women and addressing the growing challenges of diversity and globalization.

1965



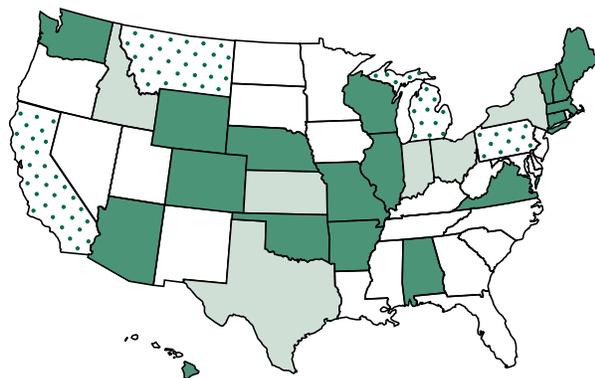
 Initial WKKF Demonstration Programs  
(International: England – early 1970s)

1978



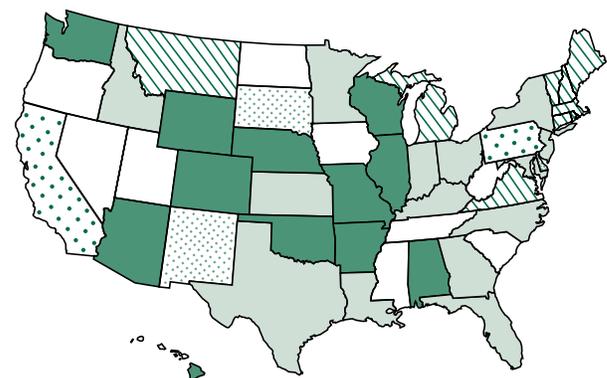
 WKKF Model Replication Programs  
(International: New Zealand)

1986



 Addition of Non-WKKF Programs (model adoption)  
(International: Ontario)

2000



 Emerging programs (not supported by WKKF)

 Programs initially supported by WKKF that do not continue today or in the same form (MI, MT, New England consortium, Virginia)  
(International: Australia, Ontario, Canada, New Brunswick, U.K. Nuffield, U.K. Scotland)

 Non-WKKF programs that exist today

 Programs initially supported by WKKF that exist today

## PROGRAM PROFILE

- The average program is 15 years old.
- Nearly half of the programs operate out of universities. One-third are coordinated by private non-profit organizations or foundations, and the rest are administered through combinations of collaborative sources.
- Most programs follow similar frameworks. Each is typically 18 months to two years long, and includes 25 to 30 people who range in age from 25 to 50.
- Program content typically ranges from local to state, national and international issues. Most programs include a national and international travel seminar.

- Nearly two-thirds of the programs indicate there are no other leadership programs with similar goals in their state. Even in states where parallel leadership programs exist, directors often view them as augmenting rather than competing with the leadership programs.
- The programs receive financial support from a number of sources, but primarily rely on corporate grants and alumni donations. Other sources include state appropriations, universities and foundation grants. In addition, programs often receive valuable in-kind support that most typically includes university space, equipment and faculty time.
- Agricultural producers represent about half of all participants. Another 20 percent are from agribusiness. The rest include agricultural organization and rural leaders, government officials and others involved in agricultural policy decision-making.

## IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP

Program alumni report gaining valuable skills by participating in Agricultural Leadership Development Programs, and applying those skills many ways. Alumni also stress that participation has contributed to success in their careers, to their involvement in public service, to helping them learn about other perspectives and to a positive impact on agricultural policies and practices. These program skills have been applied at the personal, professional, policy and practices levels.

### PERSONAL INFLUENCE

On a personal level, program participation has broadened leader perspective to other viewpoints and cultures, increased their confidence and personal growth, and given individuals a clearer sense of self and purpose.

“The greatest benefit was an improved ability to listen. Spending time with people from diverse backgrounds, listening to their viewpoints and trying to understand why they feel/believe as they do, helped me to better appreciate other people’s perspectives. It taught me the importance of listening in order to better understand.”

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

“The program improved my self-confidence by providing the opportunity to develop skills and broader education on agricultural issues. I’m more effective working with people. I have gained stronger leadership skills and have greater confidence in assuming leadership roles. I’m able to take the energy of a group and work to align that energy for clear vision and productivity.”

PRODUCER

“The program is providing our state with leadership that is honest and sustainable. The program leaves its participants with a sense of greater purpose. It takes us out of our world, the small tunnel, and unveils the universe of possibilities. With a greater sense of purpose and exposure to the larger picture, graduates are motivated to contribute. People with those capabilities are destined to achieve higher accomplishments.”

PRODUCER

### PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

As professionals, program alumni have learned innovative approaches to management, strengthened business decisions and involvement in economic enterprises, and increased their industry representation and participation in leadership roles.

“I am open to new ideas, more effective in seeking solutions, and more inclined to continue my education. I have taken on a leadership role in our family business. I am not afraid to voice my opinion, not afraid of conflict and much more willing to compromise and seek solutions.”

AGRIBUSINESS LEADER

“I utilized the agricultural leadership networks as I created an international consulting firm. The contacts, skills and confidence gained from the program have been a key factor in my new company’s initial successes.”

BUSINESS CONSULTANT

“I am starting a children’s home/family life center, a flood control project with federal agencies, and initiating an international GPS/GIS (Global Positioning System/Geographic Information System) company.”

PRODUCER

“It just amazes me how the program alumni have risen to the top—whether it’s government, trade organizations, local boards, etc. The professionalism is probably the greatest way to show how this all works out and where these people plug into the ag economy.”

UNIVERSITY/EXTENSION EDUCATOR

## POLICY AND PRACTICE INVOLVEMENT

Program alumni have established a strong network of resources, become more informed about policy, and are motivated to act and become involved.

“I spent five years working for our state governor’s administration, directing an agricultural and environmental policy unit. The agricultural leadership experience was my greatest source of support.”

AGRICULTURAL CONSULTANT

“Coming into my current position without an agriculture background (I run a state rural development council), the extensive learning about farm issues will permit me to initiate more informed policy discussions.”

STATE DIRECTOR

“After finishing the program, I decided to run for a position on the state board of agriculture. This is an election by your peers for a four-year term. The leadership program gave me the confidence and finesse to gain a position on the board. I would not have done this prior to the leadership program.”

PRODUCER

“I started the county’s visioning process and then our local leadership program. I am also working on a beautification project for a local community and will be applying for federal grants. I was never involved politically before but now am considering running for office.”

VOLUNTEER

“I went from being a dairy farmer to a state representative in Pennsylvania.”

STATE LEGISLATOR

## A LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE

Some participants indicate that the program has been a life-altering experience:

“The program changed my life. While assertive and active in my community previously, I have now focused my energies in a few areas that are most important to me. I cannot change the world but I can touch a few people in meaningful ways. It’s a terrific program and it would be wonderful, in a perfect world, to have more programs like this...we would all be better for it.”

NON-PROFIT LEADER

“The program was one of the greatest educational experiences of my life.”

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

“I found the program to be a life-altering event. When you’re in production agriculture, you have a tendency to just look at the small world right around you and feel that you’re competing with your neighbor, and this gave me an opportunity to see that there is a whole world economy working here. There are things nationally and internationally that affect what happens right here at home.”

PRODUCER

## POISED FOR THE FUTURE

The last 35 years serve as a solid foundation to the future of Agricultural Leadership Development Programs. Both state program directors and alumni agree potential exists for the programs to build on past successes and strengthen the continued cultivation of tomorrow’s leaders.

Challenges and opportunities for the future:

- Linking programs and alumni by regions, interests and other avenues, particularly in ways that capitalize on technology to increase communication and action.
- Networking with clear purposes and goals, such as around specific issues and policies.
- Affecting agricultural policies and practices at multiple levels by forging a national network of program alumni and raising the profile of the programs nationally.
- Addressing gender and diversity in program composition.
- Continuing education for alumni and program directors.

As programs continue to thrive and grow and new ones develop, second-generation daughters and sons of alumni are enrolling and continuing the legacy. The Agricultural Leadership Development Programs story promises new and compelling personal leadership chapters in the future.

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