

Rural Adaptation Needs Assessment Final Report

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Executive Summary

There is ample evidence that agricultural producers and their families have had several years of income pressures. Agricultural producers have responded to these pressures by trying to adapt their farming operations, seek off-farm employment, exit agriculture or plan for inter-generational transfer with varying degrees of success and failure. The current financial pressures in agriculture are also keenly felt at the community level. Many rural communities must address the realities of a decreasing and aging population, youth out-migration and decline in their asset base. Governments also face considerable public pressure for policy and program responses to the issues confronting agricultural producers and rural communities.

The Rural Adaptation Needs Assessment (RANA) project was designed to:

1. investigate the needs of agricultural producers as they attempted to carry out rural adaptation plans – specifically, adaptation, succession and transition;
2. determine gaps and deficiencies in existing programs; and,
3. examine the experience of past programs designed to assist farmers transitioning out of agriculture.

The process of investigating the needs of agricultural producers, gaps in existing programs and the experience of past programs experience involved a number of major activities:

- an environmental scan helped determine the framework of areas of need;
- individual interviews and focus groups provided the perspective of agricultural producers;
- a focus group session in a rural community provided a community perspective.

A Steering Committee, Advisory Committee and stakeholder-based research team assisted with guidance and information.

Ultimately, more than 180 agricultural producers, key informants and community members provided information on rural adaptation needs of agricultural producers. Analysis of this information resulted in the following concluding remarks:

1. strong, healthy rural communities are needed to mitigate the negative effects of income pressures in agriculture;
2. succession, adaptation and transition needs of agricultural producers vary from farm to farm, and individual to individual;

3. transitioning out of agriculture is considered an option of last resort; and,
4. participation in programs or utilization of services and resources are limited by the barriers of awareness, accessibility, affordability, appropriateness and availability.

The major recommendations of the Rural Adaptation Needs Assessment are that:

- *rural development* should become a policy and program goal across all levels of government;
- the federal and provincial governments should give urgent and explicit attention to the rapid and persistent change affecting rural areas;
- the federal and provincial governments should develop communications strategies that identify and actively promote the policies, programs and action that they provide;
- the federal and provincial governments with community representatives should monitor and document their services and programs for factors that enhance or deter utilization of various services or programs;
- rural human resource development and capacity building should become a targeted and key component of rural development programs and policies;
- a comprehensive rural development research agenda should be adopted by governments and implemented at the local rural community level.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Summary of Project

Over the past decade, agricultural producers and rural communities throughout Manitoba have faced economic, demographic, social and environmental challenges. For example, many farm families have responded to these challenges by adapting or diversifying their farming operations. Older and retiring agricultural producers have faced the challenge of succession planning for current and next generations to continue the farming operation. Still other agricultural producers have needed to leave or transition out of agriculture. The cumulative effect of these challenges has had a significant impact on farming families as well as rural communities.

During the year preceding the implementation of the Rural Adaptation Needs Assessment project, the WESTARC Group Inc. held discussions with a number government agencies, community organizations and stakeholder groups. The intent of these discussions was to investigate how agricultural producers and communities could or should take steps to respond to the challenges of succession, adaptation or transition. Evidence from these discussions indicated that there may be gaps in programs or services for agricultural producers in the following areas:

- transition programs or services for agricultural producers affected by inadequate income and/or lack of re-capitalization resources or age;
- succession programs or services for producers needing to plan inter-generational succession; and,
- adaptation programs or services for agricultural producers who are currently financially sound but may be wanting to develop diversified revenues through value-added or diversified ventures, or by seeking off-farm employment.

There was also evidence from this initial investigation to suggest that rural communities may also need programs or services that would:

- encourage retiring farmers to remain in the local community;
- assist rural communities to attract and retain young people;
- identify and help implement value-added and diversification opportunities in the community; and,
- help identify and prepare suitable workforce required by existing employers or by new and emerging value-added or diversified opportunities.

Based on the evidence obtained from these initial consultations, the WESTARC Group Inc. proposed and later designed a formal needs assessment framework that would develop an understanding of the adaptation, succession and transition needs of agricultural producers in rural Manitoba.

Thus in March 2001, the WESTARC Group Inc. began the Rural Adaptation Needs Assessment (RANA). Specific objectives of the project were to:

- investigate the adaptation, transition and succession needs of agricultural producers;
- describe past agricultural transition programs;
- describe existing and available adaptation, succession and transition programs and services; and,
- identify gaps in or barriers to services, supports and resources to agricultural producers faced with the challenge of succession, adaptation or transition.

1.2 Guidance and Advice

The Rural Adaptation Needs Assessment project team received guidance and advice from the following committees. A full listing of committee members can be found in Appendix A.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee consisted of representatives from the Rural Secretariat, Agriculture and Agri-food Canada; Manitoba Agriculture and Food; Manitoba Education, Training and Youth; and Manitoba Intergovernmental Affairs. The role of the Committee was to help define the objectives of the project and areas of focus for the research and provide information on programs and services.

Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee provided advice to the project team members on the key issues faced by agricultural producers. The Committee was comprised of representatives from the Manitoba Women's Institute, the Manitoba Rural Adaptation Council, the Dauphin office of Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, Assiniboine Community College and the Winkler Economic Development Corporation.

Research Collaborators

Representatives from stakeholder groups and government agencies helped identify and organize the in-kind contributions of resources needed to conduct the field work. The research collaborators included representatives from Manitoba Agriculture and Food, Parklands Community Futures Development Corporation, the Rural Development Institute and the Russell Employment Resource Centre.

2.0 Processes and Sources of Information

Processes and sources of information for the Rural Adaptation Needs Assessment were outlined in the research methodology (Appendix B). These processes include:

- an environmental scan of key informants;
- individual agricultural producer interviews;
- agricultural producer focus group sessions; and
- a community focus group.

2.1 Environmental Scan

The investigation began with an environmental scan of nearly 50 key informants familiar with the unique challenges and needs of agricultural producers and rural communities. Selection of the key informants was based on geographical location and involvement with agriculture or rural issues. The four Manitoba Agriculture and Food regions served as a basis for the geographic representation. The key informants included:

- producers of a variety of agricultural products;
- service providers such as government departments;
- educational institutions;
- agricultural and rural organizations;
- counsellors; and,
- businesses providing services to rural residents.

The project team asked for the following information:

- planning, counselling, information provision and awareness of supports;
- support for skill development and whether training was available, appropriate, accessible and/or available to agricultural producers;
- areas of need related to new technology, techniques and access to professional or business expertise;
- areas of need related to sustainable rural communities; and,
- areas of need related to financing and funding to agricultural producers.

The information gathered from the environmental scan of key informants was organized into the 6 main types or organizing themes. These organizing themes were used to develop the interview questions for the individual agricultural producer, the focus group sessions, and the community focus group. The themes were also used to analyze the data.

Table 1: Organizing themes of services, supports and resources for adaptation, succession and transition

<p>SPECIALIST SERVICES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • financial assessment • conflict resolution • succession, adaptation, transition planning 	<p>SKILL DEVELOPMENT / TRAINING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formal courses • on-the-job training • mentorship 	<p>EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES / LABOUR POOL</p>
<p>COUNSELLING / PEER SUPPORT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal • career • legal or business 	<p>HEALTHY RURAL COMMUNITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health • technology • highways 	<p>FINANICAL RESOURCES</p>

2.2 Individual Agricultural Producer Interviews

The project team used 6 main types of programs and services (Table 1) as a starting point to develop the interview guide used to collect information from individual agricultural producers and the series of focus groups. The interview guide began with a small number of demographic questions followed by questions designed to gather more detailed information on succession, adaptation and transition needs of agricultural producers, their experience with past or existing programs and their suggestions for new programs.

Demographics of Producer Interviews

Researchers conducted interviews with fifty-nine individual agricultural producers over the months of July through September. Interviewers completed interviews with individuals from 51 different rural municipalities. Seventy-six percent of those interviewed were male producers and 24% were female producers. Ninety-seven percent of agricultural producers indicated they were an owner/operator and 71% indicated their operation was diversified, that is more than grain and/or oilseed production.

Table 2: Ages of producers interviewed by number and percentage in each age category

Age Category	#	%
25 – 34 years	5	8
35 – 44 years	21	36
45 – 54 years	17	29
55 – 64 years	11	19
65 – 74 years	3	5
75 + years	1	2
No response	1	2
TOTAL	59	100

Forty-six per cent (46%) of those interviewed indicated they had at least some post-secondary education, while 56% indicated they had taken additional training/workshops. Examples of additional training include:

- farm business management course;
- accounting;
- computers;
- industry-related seminars, e.g., grazing, HACCP, dairy herd management.

Table 3: Education levels of producers interviewed by number and percentage

Education Level	#	%
Less than grade 9	4	7
Grade 10	5	8
Grade 11	5	8
Grade 12	15	25
Some post-secondary	4	7
Post-secondary certificate	1	2
Post-secondary diploma or degree	22	37
No response	3	5

Producers indicated the type of operation they farmed. The following table shows the number of times each type of operation was cited (frequency). Seventy-three percent (73%) of producers indicated their operation was diversified, which is defined as more than grain and/oilseeds.

Table 4: Frequency of type of operation as indicated by agricultural producers

Type of Operation	Frequency
Grain	37
Oilseeds	30
Forage	30
Cattle	28
Pulses	11
Equine	6
Dairy	4
Poultry	2
Eggs	2
Vegetables	1

2.3 Agricultural Producer Focus Groups

To augment the individual interviews with agricultural producers, members of the research team facilitated focus group sessions in four regions of the province, specifically in the communities of Melita, Russell, Morden and Selkirk. A total of forty-two agricultural producers from 20 rural municipalities participated in the focus groups. Thirty-four males (81%) and eight females (19%) participated in the focus groups.

Table 5: Number of participants () in focus groups by rural municipality

Winchester (1)	Brenda (4)	Arthur (2)	Cameron (2)
Russell (2)	Silver Creek (1)	Ellice (1)	Shell River (1)
Pembina (2)	Thompson (1)	Rockwood (6)	St. Andrews (4)
Rosser (1)	Shellmouth-Boulton (3)	Albert (2)	Roblin (2)
Whitewater (1)	Louise (2)	Stanley (3)	Gimli (1)

Table 6: Ages of focus group participants by number and percentage in each age category

Age Category	#	%
15 – 24 years	5	12
25 – 34 years	20	48
35 – 44 years	9	21
45 – 54 years	6	14
55 – 64 years	1	2
65 – 74 years	1	2
TOTAL	42	99*

**Numbers do not add up due to rounding.*

Table 7: Education levels of focus group participants by number and percentage

Education Level	#	%
Less than grade 9	0	0
Grade 10	0	0
Grade 11	1	2
Grade 12	7	17
Some post-secondary	7	17
Post-secondary certificate	0	0
Post-secondary diploma or degree	23	55
No response	4	10

Participants indicated the type of operation they farmed. Eighty-three percent (83%) of producers indicated their operation was diversified, which is defined as more than grain and/or oilseed production.

Table 8: Frequency of type of operation as indicated by agricultural producers in focus groups

Type of Operation	Frequency
Grain	35
Oilseeds	27
Forage	24
Cattle	19
Pulses	7
Poultry	3
Vegetables	2
Dairy	2
Equine	1
Eggs	1

When the participants in the focus groups were asked if they considered themselves an owner/operator, 88% said yes. Nineteen percent indicated that they considered themselves as a paid worker, while 7% considered themselves as an unpaid worker.

2.4 Community Focus Group

The Board of the Parkland Community Futures Development Corporation (PCFDC) provided the opportunity to discuss a community perspective of the needs of agricultural producers. The Parkland Community Futures Development Corporation supports economic development in the Parkland region. The region encompasses approximately 25,000 square kilometers bordered by Lakes Manitoba and Winnipegosis in the east and border to the west. Nearly 10,000 square kilometers of the area are located in national and provincial designated parks and forest reserves. With a population of approximately 45,000 residents the regional economy is a combination of tourism, agriculture, small manufacturing, and government services.

Board members involved in the focus group came from a variety of backgrounds (Table 9).

Table 9: Profile of board members attending the community focus group

Gender	Age Category	Occupation	Education
Male	55-64	financial management ag producer community volunteers	post-secondary certificate
Female	55-64	ag producer community volunteer	secondary education
Male	35-44	community volunteer ag producer small business owner	university diploma
Male	55-64	business owner community volunteer	correspondence
Male	45-54	business operator	certificate management
Female (staff)	15-24	community development coordinator	university degree
Male (staff)	35-44	community development coordinator	Masters of City Planning

3.0 Findings

Findings from the various sources of information have been organized into the following sets of information:

- environmental scan;
- interviews with individual agricultural producers;
- focus group sessions with agricultural producers;
- community focus group session; and,
- review of past and existing programs.

3.1 Environmental Scan of Key Informants

The environmental scan of key informants helped develop questions that would investigate the adaptation, succession and transition needs of agricultural producers. Many of the findings are based on the six organizing types of services, supports and resources, specifically specialist services, skill development, employment, counseling and peer support, Strong, Healthy Communities and Rural Infrastructure and financial resources (refer to Table 1). Another major theme from the environmental scan of key informants focuses on succession.

Overview of Findings

The environmental scan revealed that:

- Strong, healthy communities based on a community development approach are needed.
- Strategies should encourage cooperation, strategic alliances and private and public investment.
- Rural infrastructure in schools, hospitals and highways are key components of the rural economy.
- There is a need for a rural strategy with federal and provincial government support.
- Formal and in-formal training opportunities should be provided to agricultural producers.
- Producers are lacking in awareness of the programs that are available to them.
- Barriers to programs, services or resources include availability, distance, flexibility, accessibility and affordability.
- Financial supports are needed for education and training.

- Producers need access to specialist services such as extension personnel, professional assessment services, accountants, lawyers and industry specific specialists.
- Employment opportunities and the availability of skilled labour are concerns for agricultural producers.
- A variety of financial supports and resources are needed to assist producers with adaptation, succession and transition.
- Succession planning is a significant issue among producers.

Detailed Findings

The following information provides more detail on the major themes given through the environmental scan of key informants.

Strong, Healthy Communities and Rural Infrastructure

A large portion of the comments made by key informants revolved around rural communities and the health of their economies. One spoke of a “community-building policy”, that is, rural development, with agriculture one of the players. This policy would recognize that off-farm income is part of a rural development policy in which income can be earned without having to relocate.

Key informants identified the need for a community approach that would:

- foster cooperation between neighbouring communities;
- investigate various business structures such as strategic alliances, New Generation Co-operatives; and,
- encourage private and public investment for community development.

The community should also have a human resource development plan, an overall strategy for workforce development that provides for on-the-job training, pooling of workers, worker co-ops and job-sharing. This plan needs to include promotion and public education. It needs to be characterized by the cooperation and coordination of agencies, groups and government departments.

Rural communities have concerns around education and health. These include:

- closure of small schools;
- inability to address special needs;
- reduced course offerings;
- health-services no longer available locally;
- expenses of transportation;

- safety for children; and,
- rural daycare services.

One key informant spoke of the need to focus some attention on the children and young adults involved. Youth need to be presented with career options and exposure to them, education opportunities and access to them, as well as, entrepreneurial ventures.

Another concern was the lack of attention paid to adult learning. The use of prior learning assessment recognition needs more discussion, as do community learning, distributed learning, EI eligibility and the value of unpaid work.

Others spoke of “healthy communities”, ones which saw a balance of environmental concerns with others, that encouraged the participation of youth and the retention of youth, that held a quality of life that included arts, recreation, safety, , and that evinced a cooperative, community spirit. Cooperation should be explored to maintain education and health facilities and services. Producers need to find opportunities to work together, allowing for the reduction of costs to the individual and enhancing a sense of community.

Some key informants called for a review of existing programs that would examine their effect on diversification and their impact on community development. One key informant stated:

There is a need for a long-term vision for agriculture, one that looks at the parts that federal and provincial governments will play and one in which programs recognize the importance of agriculture to rural areas.

Rural residents needed assistance with understanding the process of establishing an industry or business in a rural area through examining potential benefits and environmental concerns, for example. This information needs to be realistic and there is a need for the urban population to be linked to the rural population, perhaps through a Community Support of Agriculture organization.

Counselling and Peer Support

Although key informants stated that both personal and career counselling were needed by agricultural producers, most also said that such services were available.

Historically, only a small percentage of people make use of supports that are available. This is likely due to a number of factors, including a stigma that may be attached to asking for help — pride — not wanting others to know the problems you may be facing, and being unaware of what’s available and at what cost.

Personal counselling should be provided to individuals and families experiencing pressure and stress. Elements could include conflict resolution and communications in succession and intergenerational transfers. As well, counselling could be provided to agricultural producers around the uncertainty and risk associated with the consideration

of new ventures. Peer support groups dealing with health, business, rural issues, could be helpful, especially for young farmer groups. Agricultural producers could be provided with assistance with the identification and exploration of career opportunities, alternatives and options for new careers. Assistance could include helping producers identify and understand their skill strengths and weaknesses.

Communities need to plan for immediate and continuing support, and they need a resource listing. Counselling services may be provided by the community, at the local level, and could involve emotional support groups or religious groups.

Another element of peer support would be the encouragement of mentors and advisors. These mentors would identify available resources and facilitate their access, assist in securing special advice and/or counselling and encourage people to act. Mentorship programs should have trained people who could take the time to listen and help with planning. They could also take the form of a peer support group comprised of people in the local area, each of whom could provide specific information to a new business enterprise. For example, the peer support group could include such expertise as that provided by a veterinarian, a farm management specialist, a feed dealer, an ag rep and a banker. One key informant said that government may need to be responsible for initiating this type of support.

Skill Development and Training

Some key informants observed that both formal and informal training opportunities should be provided to agricultural producers, both for on-farm and off-farm opportunities, and for farm employees. On-the-job training would enhance appropriate skill development. Some mechanism to assess skill levels would assist in the provision of appropriate training and skill development. Key informants also stated that there needed to be improved awareness of existing resources for training.

Certain skill types that needed to be developed were identified. These included the following:

- computer skills (basic, record keeping, planning, Internet for research, electronic mail);
- business management skills (marketing, accounting, operations, human resources and financial analysis and planning, including creating and updating a business plan);
- leadership skills (interpersonal communication, public speaking, meetings);
- specialized training may be required in production techniques;
- trade / technical skills; and,
- resource training (air, water, soil).

One key informant suggested that Project 2000 could provide planning in business management.

Also identified as needed were skill upgrading (including traditional farm skills), the utilization of apprenticeships (including preparation for farming) and training in new specialized processes (e.g., food processing). Skill upgrading was also required for attaining a high school diploma or GED and for basic literacy (reading, writing, numerics, information, computer). Key informants also identified the need for safety and quality assurance skills and certification, for example, International Standards (ISO), Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Protocol (HACCP).

As the agricultural sector sees a need for more highly skilled workers, there is a need to re-assess the training needed for farm employees. There is a need for training to be appropriate to the need. Programs such as the Green Certificate provided for the certification of farm training. Certifying skills would assist with furthering self-esteem, help to promote a business and help to obtain off-farm employment.

Training for farm employees was also identified as needed to increase the number of skilled workers available. There is a need for skill identification and certification procedures, as well as, specific courses such as a Class 1 or 3 driver's license. Training should be available to existing workers to improve their skills and opportunity for advancement. For value-added ventures, specialized skills may be necessary, so access to training is an important issue. Apprenticeship experience and training should be transferable between provinces.

Key informants identified some barriers to training, including availability, distance, flexibility in delivery modes, accessibility, and affordability. Training needs to be appropriate, geared toward an older age group, and relevant to the local geographic area and the opportunities that are available within it. Some financial assistance may be necessary to deal with barriers such as distance to training. Duration of the training was also mentioned. One key informant had received comments that week-long training sessions were useful and therefore should be continued. Another mentioned that training courses should be short-term, from two to six weeks. Training also needs to be accessible, community-based if possible. One suggestion was to make training available within the community as a shared responsibility between community and educational institutions. The training needs to be of a high quality, more experiential and less formal, concentrate more on skills and more responsive to address demand. Awareness about training opportunities could be improved by using a variety of media (local newspapers, coffee shops, local agricultural offices, word of mouth, open house, high school).

The key informants recommended financial supports for education and training. These included tuition support, wage subsidies for farm employees and the certification of skill levels. Other ways to financially support training included the provision of venture capital and some tax incentives. A financial assistance program for training could be focused on the individual, and one in which the government matches or tops-up the individual's contribution. Since agricultural producers are self-employed and not eligible for Employment Insurance benefits, there is a need for financial assistance for retraining. Often retraining funding is tied to EI eligibility. Government could also play a role in providing a subsidy to a farmer who is providing training to his employees, as the cost of providing training is substantial.

New technologies, such as fibre optics and other infrastructure, could decrease the barriers to training by allowing for distributed learning opportunities. The use of publicly-owned facilities (e.g. schools) could help support training efforts. A variety of industry sectors make use of training coordinators to help support their industries, integrating training programs. Government and industry association partnerships have also provided funding for training.

Specialist Services

Specialist services included extension personnel, professional assessment services and other professionals, such as, accountants and lawyers. Specialist services could also be supplied by organizations, such as, the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association, or by government agencies like Manitoba Agriculture Credit Corporation (MACC), who along with Manitoba Agriculture and Food, has information on grain operations changing to beef production. There was a need for information which is industry specific and provided by someone with experience in the industry. The Food Development Centre at Portage la Prairie was also mentioned as source of expertise in the area of production and marketing.

Some work needed to be done to ensure that producers are aware of these specialist services. For example, program proponents could use success stories to increase interest and awareness in business opportunities. Some of those interviewed also stated that specialist services should be made available at a reasonable cost. One key informant suggested that there needed to be greater contact by extension personnel with individuals in rural communities.

The key informants identified the following areas of expertise needed by agricultural producers:

- food processing advice (understanding and protection of quality of food, understanding the processes in the growing of food);
- non-food production / processing advice;
- processing services information;
- marketing information;
- financial feasibility;
- human resource management;
- taxation;
- regulatory compliance;
- computer and internet (single access to pertinent information); and,
- e-business (e-procurement, asset management, tracking / logistics, one-to-one marketing, co-op ventures, worker listing).

When it came to discussing new ventures as a means for adaptation, key informants recognized that agricultural producers needed assistance with:

- planning the venture;
- the identification and exploration of opportunities, alternatives and options for new ventures (market intelligence, niche markets);
- the assessment of the feasibility of a venture and developing a business plan;
- understanding various business structures (employee ownership, sharing of assets such as machinery through partnerships / co-ops); and,
- implementation of the venture.

As well as needing planning and assessment expertise, they also needed ongoing support for the enterprise. Additional support may be needed in dealing with the “regulatory jungle”, particularly with respect to value-added processes.

Employment Opportunities and the Labour Pool

Key informants stated that Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and Manitoba Education, Training and Youth (METY) each could play a role in the area of employment for agricultural producers. HRDC could make EI training dollars available to producers and their employees, while METY could design and offer employment assistance programs. As well, HRDC could design and implement an electronic labour pool dedicated to agriculture. Some coordination to identify opportunities for workers and match them with the needs of employers would be helpful. For example, in the past Agricultural Employment Services provided a useful service, and it could be expanded to involve identifying training needed. Finally, community organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce could become involved in the identification and provision of employment positions.

With the varied types of skills in farm work, certification of skills was identified as a need for farm workers. One key informant stated there is a need for a collective vision in the development of skill sets, a need for community involvement perhaps in the form of worker co-ops. Individuals should also be informed about the information and resources available through the Canadian Farm Business Management Council.

Key informants also discussed employment conditions and employee benefits. The provision of a benefit package including Workers Compensation, insurance, was needed. There was a need for legislation and regulations regarding health and safety and hours of work. One key informant mentioned the availability of housing for farm workers.

Efforts to enhance employment opportunities should be orientated to the rural community as a whole rather than focused on agriculture. There is potential income for others in the community, an opportunity for part-time, seasonal employment, perhaps suitable for the semi-retired individual. The increasing demand for workers should be recognized, and strategies such as employee ownership and involvement of non-rural youth should be

explored. Also, since employees may be prospective owners or managers, some assistance in assessing alternatives and developing plans may be needed to encourage this group of new farm owners. Other incentives included opportunities for profit sharing, opportunities and incentives for employees to acquire ownership, including involvement in a New Generation Co-operative, for example and the possibility of loan guarantees to permit moving from employee to part owner.

Recruitment of farm workers is an issue, particularly in specific situations, such as, potato harvesting and for dairy operations. Matching employees to employers would be a worthwhile service. This matching service could consist of a pool of workers, a workers' co-op, job-sharing arrangements and a central screening process.

Rural communities lack employment opportunities for all types of individuals. Certainly, jobs utilizing farmers' skills and providing reasonable income are scarce in rural areas. A majority of agricultural producers work off-farm to provide additional income. Rural communities need employment opportunities for all farm family members, including spouses of producers. Many people prefer to live in rural areas and work in larger communities. However, off-farm employment needs to be considered carefully because of negative features such as transportation costs.

Financial Resources

Key informants indicated that a variety of financial supports and resources were needed to assist producers with adaptation, succession and transition issues. Financial resources to support research and development, as well as feasibility, were needed in the pre-business planning stages of a new enterprise or diversification venture. Crop insurance with more flexibility and off-farm employment were seen as ways to manage risk. Equity financing, such as, ethical mutual funds, should be available for cooperative ventures.

Key informants suggested that in order to qualify for loans, producers should have to meet requirements around appropriate skills or training, that is, lending should be tied to skills or training. One key informant said:

There is a need for government financing to act as a catalyst for the partners in a particular sector to produce a sustainable plan for their sector. This plan could include financial assistance for specific training projects.

Issues surrounding succession again drew substantial attention. Financial supports for succession included retirement incentives, pension top-up, CPP for unpaid labour, income tax concessions and succession bonus - possibly through Net Income Stabilization Account (NISA). Another suggestion was to allow the use of RRSP funds to start a business.

Awareness of available funding and access to it were barriers identified by key informants. Some said that financing should be easier to obtain and that loans should be

flexible, with lower interest rates and a longer term repayment schedule. As well, producers should have access to locally controlled funds with a government guarantee. Improved awareness of and access to venture capital, in the form of Grow Bonds, for example, was another issue identified by key informants. Some existing programs, such as, Manitoba Rural Adaptation Council (MRAC) and Agri-Food Research & Development Initiative (ARDI), provided a source of funding, but there should be assistance with the cost of preparing a business plan.

One key informant notes that:

There is a continued need for funding assistance to conduct feasibility studies and develop business plans. Manitoba Agri Ventures Initiative (MAVI) provides 50% of the costs, up to \$5000 for individual and \$10,000 for an organization. For example, with growing potatoes, the needs include the provision of storage and the development of irrigation pipelines.

There might be a need for government financial assistance in the conversion process of diversifying or starting a new venture. A rural diversification program could include elements like wage support, child care and travel. The former Manitoba Agricultural Training Project (MATP) provided appropriate assistance with training.

Several key informants spoke of producers facing acute financial stress and their need for supports similar to those provided by past programs, such as, the Canadian Rural Transition Program (CRTP) and the MATP. There is also an opportunity to provide direct financial assistance by allowing for the alternative use of farmland, either in conservation plans or for managed hunting. Other systems should be considered; for example, in Europe stewardship payments are made to farmers and rural residents. “Set aside” programs for the least productive areas of farms should be further investigated. Alternative use of farmland may enable a farm family to remain on the farm and to retain the home quarter.

Succession

Given that Canada is experiencing an aging farming population, succession was a topic to which key informants paid particular attention, discussing it from the perspectives of both exit and entry. They identified a number of services and supports, including:

- assistance with the identification of goals for both the farm as a whole and for the individuals involved for multi-generational succession planning;
- awareness about existing resources for succession;
- using success stories to increase interest and awareness in succession planning;
- retirement incentives;
- pension top-up;
- CPP for unpaid labour;

- income tax concessions;
- succession bonus (possibly through NISA);
- review EI & CPP eligibility for farmers; and,
- the need for adjustment assistance.

There were some very specific suggestions on how to impart information and encourage discussion on the topic of succession. For example, forums could be held to examine issues such as:

- alternatives for transfer of land and non-land farming assets;
- characteristics of viable farm units for succession planning;
- appropriate use of mediation processes; and,
- information on new and existing projects and programs such as Project 2000 and the Farm Transfer Program.

Another needed support is creating an awareness of the importance of succession planning, that planning needs to take place early, that it is a personal subject and that assistance is available. In intergenerational transfers, there is a need for family communication and goal setting. As well, there is a need for reassessing attitudes. There is a need for facilitation supports, and in serious financial situations, there is a need for mediation and / or counselling, and these services do currently exist.

Financial assistance may be needed by the younger generation at the time when the farm may be required to support an extra family. Financial supports could include:

- access to a machinery cooperative;
- access to a purchasing cooperative; and,
- the opportunity to exchange labour for equipment.

Because of the substantial investment required, financial resources need to be secured before the individual enters farming. For example, low interest loans may be needed to encourage entry by young farmers. To qualify for such loans, the recipient should be required to demonstrate or provide certification of certain skills (or take training in accounting, business management, human resource management, communication). Special provisions for lending from Farm Credit Canada (FCC) and Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation (MACC) could include lower interest rates, partial forgiveness, insurance coverage from Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation (MCIC) and increased risk coverage for the first few years. There is a need to change the attitudes of lenders, however. As one key informant put it,

The younger generation is often discouraged from starting new ventures by the older generation or by lenders such as MACC and FCC.

Another key informant spoke of the need to reassess the rules and regulations in lending policies concerning the purchase of farmland. Having a full-time job should be considered as an asset / collateral for the purchase of land. When it is not, it makes it difficult for individuals who do not have the backing of family already in farming to have their loan applications taken seriously.

In intergenerational transfers, the farm must support two families — exit and entry — during the transfer period. For those exiting farming or “retiring”, there could be financial incentives, such as early payments of Canada Pension Plan (CPP) or government “top-up” to CPP could be considered. Government could provide financial assistance for new business ventures, and opportunities for “buy out” options. As well, there could be some retraining dollars provided to exiting producers.

3.2 Interviews with Individual Agricultural Producers

Fifty-nine agricultural producers were interviewed. At the onset of the interviews, agricultural producers (n=59) were asked a series of questions relating to their current plans for succession, adaptation or transition.

Table 10: Indication from producers of current plans for adaptation, succession and transition*

Are you currently looking to ...	Yes %	No %	No response %
Transfer the farm to the next generation?	73	24	3
Enhance income through additional activities on-farm?	63	32	5
Enhance capacity to earn off-farm income?	41	54	5
Choose non-farm options?	20	75	5

**Respondents may have answered yes to more than one question.*

The significance of the responses can be distilled into the following main points:

- the high percentage (73%) of producers wanting to transfer the farm to the next generation;
- the high percentage (75%) of producers not wishing to transition or exit out of farming; and,
- the notable percentage (63%) of producers wanting to enhance income through additional activities on the farm.

Overview

The agricultural producers interviewed provided researchers with an abundant amount of information. Much of the information echoed that of the key informants. Highlights of the findings include:

- rural communities need improved infrastructure as well as access to technology, employment opportunities and a skilled labour force.
- producers raised concerns about the potential barriers of access, affordability, appropriateness of the resource, availability. They also indicated a lack of awareness of programs.
- producers had financial concerns that were focused primarily on lenders, both commercial and financial institutions.
- skill development and training opportunities are needed at the local community level.
- there are needs for both employment opportunities and a skilled labour force.

- producers were unsure of the availability and accessibility of counselling and peer support services.

Details

Detailed findings arising from this information follow the major themes from the environmental scan of key informants follow.

Strong, Healthy Communities and Rural Infrastructure

Given the aging population, especially in rural areas, it is probably of no surprise that producers mentioned that health services were one of their top concerns when it came to discussing their rural communities. Highways and transportation, as well as technology access, were also major concerns.

Some of those interviewed were satisfied with the health services available to them. Others spoke of the need to ensure that health care facilities stay in rural areas. One producer said: We need more information about the way rural health is financed as compared to the cities and a change in attitude among the general population toward illness prevention and an exploration of why there is a need for the rural stress line.

Suggestions for improving health care services included better access to doctors and health care facilities, appropriately staffed health services and suitable ambulance training that reflects rural needs.

With just one or two exceptions, producers all commented on the poor condition of rural roads as well as highway transportation routes. Poor roads, according to one producer, “make traveling to off-farm jobs in the city more difficult.” Adequate, ongoing road maintenance is increasingly more necessary because, with the loss of local grain handling facilities, producers need to truck their grain farther.

There is a need to think long-term and to improve highways. With railway closures, highway budgets have not been topped up accordingly to offset increased truck traffic.

A suggestion was to return the gas tax money to roads. Hopefully, increased funding would lessen differences in road conditions from one municipality to the next, transferring the burden for road maintenance and upgrading from the local government to provincial and federal governments. Designated truck routes within municipalities would lessen the load on all roads.

One producer suggested:

Put additional funding into maintaining and improving infrastructure (such as highways and technology) so that the population of rural areas will be stabilized. This would permit businesses that provide needed services to remain and thrive in rural areas.

Producers spoke of technology as one means of enhancing rural communities. However, most rural communities cannot access high-speed Internet service, and the cellular service has many dead areas. Technology services also need to be affordable. Access to markets and weather conditions via the Internet is crucial for successful business.

Access to the Internet when required is very time-consuming and has driven up the cost of doing business. The slow, dial-up technology forces me to use the Internet at 6 a.m. before the students get to school to tie up the service. I also can't use it after the students get home from school because access is virtually impossible.

Specialist Services

Agricultural producers who were interviewed echoed many of the key informants' comments about specialist services. While many of the specialist services were available, some concerns were raised about the following potential barriers:

- accessibility;
- affordability;
- awareness;
- appropriateness; and
- availability.

For example, some producers were not aware of where to look for resources and supports on succession issues. One producer accessed succession information by chance:

I accessed a resource by chance. A life insurance/financial advisor has been helping with the transfer, in conjunction with an accountant and lawyer. I bought life insurance from the financial advisor, and he has been advising on succession issues.

Some producers also cited the appropriateness of the information and services as a barrier. Sometimes while the information was available, it was not geared to the specific needs of the agricultural industry. Producers believe there is a need to have succession information and specialists who understand farming. One producer stated:

You need to have a specialist who has all the information. In private industry, accountants and lawyer can provide a broader scope but need to be more specific to farming. Specialists should provide a whole mess of options and the farmers have to decide how to pick and choose what is best for them.

Cost can be an issue for accessing specialist services. Some producers stated that succession advice should be provided at no cost, while another stated that he has utilized the services of a private consultant for succession.

Producers also stated that lawyers and accountants are an important resource for succession planning. Other specialist services used in succession planning included Farm Credit Canada, Women's Institute (providing both training and resources), Manitoba Agriculture and Food (Ag Transfer Program), Credit Union and life insurance/financial advisor. While these specialists provided valuable information and advice, producers believe that more follow-up helping them through the process is needed. In the words of one producer:

I have attended workshops and lectures for general information but I still feel unprepared to handle the situation because there is no one to help me put all the information together.

Many producers recognized that succession is an important issue and that planning for it needed to begin early. However, many currently do not have a succession plan in place. Producers identified a number of topics around succession issues for which information and/or training was needed. These included conflict resolution, facilitated family discussion, financial planning and structures for intergenerational transfers, and awareness of ownership options (to help improve planning of new enterprises and succession plans). Supports could include loans for young farmers and a pension plan for farmers to be available to ease the transition upon exit. One producer stated:

A pension program for farmers is needed. I will encourage my children to farm but the financing necessary may be a challenge. A pension would make the transfer much easier.

However, another producer commented that Registered Retirement Savings Plans are available to farmers. "You can only do so much hand-holding. Farmers need to plan for their own future."

The same was true for specialist information and resources for adaptation, diversification and transition. Many producers are aware of the resources that are available, but they are not sure where and how to access them. As one producer commented:

There is a lack of awareness and availability of program opportunities when it comes to adaptation and diversification. Being able to afford it is another thing.

Other concerns around adaptation and diversification included the following:

- many producers do not want to take on additional risk;
- few producers expressed an interest in working cooperatively with other producers;
- research and extension is needed;
- marketing expertise is needed, especially for niche markets and export markets; and,
- funding is needed.

For young farmers entering farming and older farmers wishing to exit farming, it is difficult financially to make the transition. Some producers believed that incentives for young farmers to enter farming are needed. Other identified needs included career counselling and a system of certifying traditional farm skills.

Financial Resources

Comments about financial resources focused primarily on lenders, both commercial financial institutions and government lending agencies. Generally, agricultural producers believed that lenders are not willing to take on risk for new ideas.

Producers believed that lenders, both financial institutions and government agencies, need to have a thorough understanding of agriculture as well as ways to adapt or diversify operations. Often, decisions are not made locally and therefore the producer has no influence with the people who make the decision. Lenders need to provide clear information about their guidelines and regulations.

There were also comments aimed specifically at government lending programs and those who were responsible for administering the loans. Some producers stated that government programs need to be broadened to include all agricultural products, not just crops. Producers also commented that government lenders have inconsistent application of rules.

Lending could be improved by:

- having repayment strategies in place;
- fixed interest rates;
- government loan guarantees;
- longer repayment terms; and,
- change in banks' attitudes towards farming.

Producers were also concerned with government support programs, such as risk management programs like crop insurance. Some stated that crop insurance coverage did not provide adequate coverage for some crops and should be expanded to provide better

coverage on specialty crops, such as forages. Improvements to crop insurance would include better access, faster processing and better payouts. Other government support programs mentioned included wage subsidies. When it came to other government support programs, such as NISA and Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance (AIDA), producers had very few positive comments.

A number of agricultural producers commented on taxation issues. Some producers stated there was a need for changes to income taxes, including a review of capital gains provisions and increased tax incentives. There were also some comments about the education tax on farmland, including the following from one producer:

School taxes farmers pay on land are out of proportion as there are fewer people in the community to pay for the local services. There needs to be more equitability in the way school taxes are collected.

Skill Development and Training

Agricultural producers provided a number of comments around the need for skill development and training, both for producers and for their employees. Key attributes of skill development and training courses are:

- locally delivered training;
- flexible scheduling;
- co-operative education opportunities; and,
- apprenticeship or mentoring programs.

Some producers were aware that there were a number of extension courses offered, but the courses were often cancelled because of low enrollment. Another comment was that some specialty livestock groups have to find and fund their own training. A need for some specific skills training was identified in the following areas:

- computers;
- farm management; and,
- marketing.

Employment Opportunities and the Labour Pool

Many producers and/or their spouses and children currently work off-farm, but finding the balance between off-farm employment and on-farm work is difficult. For those who are seeking off-farm employment, they need good skills training to augment farm income. Producers and their families also need more and better opportunities for extra income through off-farm employment.

When it comes to training agricultural workers, many producers preferred to train on-farm.

Employees need to be taught by the employer on the job because each area is different and each job is different.

However, training employees can be costly. Some producers rely on retired farmers for their labour needs. Producers identified the following needs:

- skilled and experienced workers on a casual and seasonal basis;
- wage subsidies to help agriculture compete with other industries;
- a program for employee benefit packages; and,
- an employment referral system that would help producers find skilled labour.

Counselling and Peer Support

Agricultural producers identified a need for career counselling services to identify marketable skills and peer support for “setting up and operating a business” for example. One producer said that he needed to meet with his peers on a regular basis and is “part of an informal group that meets each week.” Networking forums of producers with common interests were important events to identify opportunities in agriculture in general and specific areas within the industry.

Associations, such as the Manitoba Equine Ranchers’ Association, are helpful with sharing information and supporting each other.

Producers did discuss personal and psychological counselling and related issues such as stress. One producer stated that it was important that counselling was available. Several producers mentioned that they were aware of the Rural Stress Line however one producer commented that the Rural Stress Line was “always busy”.

One producer commented that

We need counseling to assist rural communities to develop a strategy to dispel the prevailing grieving atmosphere and change it to one of hope and optimism

Many producers were aware that mediation services are “out there and available”. They also recognized that many peer supports were informal, for example, the coffee shop. However, other producers were less sure of the availability and accessibility of counselling and peer supports. Topics such as stress needed more discussion, perhaps through a conference or seminar format.

3.3 Focus Group Sessions with Agricultural Producers

The focus group sessions with producers (n=42) were held as a validation process to confirm the findings from the individual agricultural producer interviews. Focus group participants were also asked to indicate their current plans for adaptation, succession and transition.

Table 11: Indication from focus group participants of current plans for adaptation, succession and transition*

Are you currently looking to ...	Yes %	No %	No response %
Transfer the farm to the next generation?	67	33	0
Enhance income through additional activities on-farm?	97	3	0
Enhance capacity to earn off-farm income?	46	54	0
Choose non-farm options?	33	67	0

**Respondents may have replied yes to more than one question.*

The significance of the responses is:

- the high percentage (67%) of producers concerned with farm transfer;
- the very high percentage (97%) of producers wishing to enhance income through additional on-farm activities; and,
- the high percentage (67%) of producers not wanting to transition or exit out of farming.

Seventy percent (70%) of the participants in the focus groups were relatively young agricultural producers (25-44 years of age) as compared to 44% of the individual agricultural producers that were in the same age category. Both groups were relatively similar in their responses to indications of current plans to transfer the farm, earn off-farm income and not wishing to exit or transition out of agriculture. The exception to their responses can be seen in the very high percentage of presumably younger producers wishing to enhance income through additional on-farm activities. Findings from the focus groups follow.

Overview

Responses from the agricultural producers in the focus group sessions were very similar to those in the individual interviews.

- Rural economic development is needed to bring in jobs and people to rural communities.
- Specialist services are needed for succession planning however access to affordable services is difficult in small communities.

- Producers need access to agricultural specialists who have in-depth knowledge on production or marketing of products.
- Producers need access to good employment opportunities and a skilled labour force.
- A barrier to diversification is financial risk.
- Lenders need a better understanding of farming cycles.
- Farmers are reluctant to access counselling services.
- Skill development and training are needed but so are employment opportunities in communities once training is completed.

Strong, Healthy Communities and Rural Infrastructure

Strong, healthy rural communities are needed by agricultural producers. More rural industries are needed in order to bring jobs and people. Tax incentives and economic assistance might help to bring industries to rural communities. There should also be more farmers involved in the Chambers of Commerce. One producer commented that:

Some municipal councils don't support EDOs (economic development officers), don't see the importance of economic development and are no longer equipped to deal with today's issues. We need better education for councillors.

Specialist Services

Focus group participants discussed the specialist services needed for succession planning. When looking to plan for succession, producers seemed to begin with accessing whatever resources were available through Manitoba Agriculture and Food, including agricultural representatives and farm business management specialists. Producers attended seminars, preferring short ones, and searched for succession information in the Internet. They also accessed professional services as financial advisors, lawyers or accountants. One participant stated the financial advisor's practical experience with success was very helpful. Most often, this type of expertise was found by chance or personal referral. As one participant stated:

When taking over the farm, the parents and their lawyer seem to understand the process, but the younger generation often needs a better understanding and more information on the process.

The participants at the focus group in Melita indicated that succession was not a high priority for young farmers at this time. However in Morden, the producers indicated that succession planning needed to begin early, when young.

Accessibility and affordability were two other issues raised in terms of specialist services. Accessibility to services is more difficult in smaller communities with some producers

traveling more than 60 miles to seek specialist services. Trust and confidence in the specialist's expertise are also concerns.

Producers also used or need access to agricultural specialists such as independent specialists with more in-depth knowledge of agricultural chemicals, livestock rations, and marketing. There is also need for specialist services to assist with diversification and the identification of new products and enterprises.

Producers cited services such as Community Futures Development Corporations, local economic development offices and staff from Intergovernmental Affairs as resources which could assist with business development plans and sourcing financial support.

Employment Opportunities and the Labour Pool

In the Russell areas, producers believed that there were not a lot of local employment opportunities except in agriculture-related business or health care. One individual stated that the demands of farming made it difficult to work off the farm. "I find it hard to work off-farm when I have to be there for seeding and harvest". By comparison, producers in the Altona-Morden area had a different perspective. In this area producers indicated that there was a lot of off-farm work coming from rural development initiatives and opportunities.

Producers also commented that finding seasonal farm employees was difficult. Skilled farm workers are not available as they already have a job or producers are unable to pay the wages to hire trained people. For example, a producer in the Russell areas indicated that it was hard to compete with wages paid by oil rigs. Another producer suggested that there was a need for programs to assist with hiring students to do farm work so farmers could have more time to manage the farm.

Financial Resources

Several discussions focused on the need for financial resources. Today's farmers will need off-farm investments to retire as well as pension plans and RRSPs. One suggestion was that financial support could come from retiring farmers investing in Grow Bond programs with the interest going to help young farmers.

Producers believed that banks need to have a better understanding of farming cycles. One producer commented that "instead of being familiar with the individual producer's situation and relying on that, bank policy is taking over, even in credit unions". Some producers suggested that young farmers needed a lower interest rate or have access to owner-financed loans with good terms. Both options would provide more financial stability. Producers were well aware of the importance of business plans are needed. They also commented that it was much more difficult for women to deal with lenders than it is for men.

A significant barrier to diversification is financial risk. For example, producers commented that it was difficult to get loans for diversification. “A barrier to diversification is financial risk – you could lose the farm”.

Counselling and Peer Support

Producers in the focus groups indicated the reluctance of farmers to seek counseling.

Lots of farmers are too proud and independent to ask for help. We always figure next year will be better. Sharing among farmers is getting better; look at this group. There seems to be less reluctance among many farmers to say "I just can't do it any more" and then go and do something else. In other cases, this is still hard to do. More people recognize that they are not the only ones in this situation. Many of the rest are experiencing the same thing.

Skill Development and Training

One producer questioned the value of taking training when there were no opportunities for employment in the local community. Other producers wondered where they could receive training and questioned if distance delivery or access to programs via the Internet was a reasonable option. Safety and operating training courses are needed for farm workers. Some producers wondered what happened to the subsidized training programs that used to be available.

3.4 Findings from Community Focus Group

The Board of Directors of the Parkland Community Futures Development Corporation (PCFDC) provided the following perspectives on some of the community-related issues raised by agricultural producers as they discussed adaptation, transition or succession needs.

Overview

A summary of the comments from the community focus group include:

- There is a need to build strong, healthy rural communities through improved community infrastructure and community economic development.
- People and jobs keep communities healthy.

Details

Details of comments from the Parkland Community Futures Development Corporation follow.

Strong, Healthy Communities and Rural Infrastructure

The need for strong, healthy communities and rural infrastructure was a theme heard throughout the agricultural producer interviews and focus group sessions. Community members responded to this comment by stating their overwhelming agreement to the significance of healthy rural communities. They recognized the need for more rural industries stating that “industry brings jobs and jobs bring people.” PCFDC Board members added that rural communities need processing facilities, access to market opportunities and a variety of related goods and services to support value-added or diversified agriculture. An important component to encouraging community economic development is access to financial capital and knowledgeable lenders. One member indicated that producers as well as other rural community residents need access to affordable professional services to help with succession and retirement planning. Real estate services are needed to assist with transfers and to encourage retiring farmers to stay in rural communities.

Board members were in agreement that there is a need to increase the number of farmers on Chambers of Commerce and economic development organizations. One suggestion was that

Perhaps we need to regionalize municipal services or give the provincial bodies more responsibility for economic development.

Members of the Board spent considerable time discussing rural infrastructure needs and issues. The most significant of these issues were:

- the need for improved access to health care, high speed internet, natural gas, adequate health care, home care services, educational opportunities, veterinary services, global positioning systems, public transportation and highways;
- policies and planning for environmental issues and concerns such as hog barns, watershed issues, drainage systems and conservation.

Suggestions for community infrastructure include:

- increase government funding for upgrading and maintaining roads
- promote a better understanding between rural and urban, consumer and agricultural producers;
- improve rural child care and home care services;
- work to resolve jurisdictional issues re conservation and watershed issues;
- encourage more community involvement i.e. volunteerism and leadership;
- explore inter-community sharing and pooling of community and human resources,
- foster community spirit and recognition of rural quality of life.

Board members made the following suggestions for community economic development include:

- enhance and encourage the work of community development corporations;
- implement community works loan programs;
- encourage the involvement of Intergovernmental Affairs staff and development officers for rural development; and,
- encourage communities and RMs to jointly hire economic development officers.

Employment Opportunities and the Labour Pool

PCFDC Board members were told that agricultural producers had expressed needs for both employment opportunities as well as a skill labour pool of farm workers. Board members affirmed this opinion adding that “people and jobs keep a community health” and “rural communities need to provide employment opportunities.” Board members asked about the farm labour pool service and indicated that wage subsidies could be helpful to agricultural producers.

Special mention was given on the issues of retaining rural youth in the community. One Board member commented that “many of the brightest kids leave the community. They want to move to the city for better jobs and better wages.

Skill Development and Training

PCFDC Board members agreed that opportunities for skill development and training would be beneficial to agricultural producers but that it was “difficult to provide a variety of education and training opportunities in the community”. The Agriculture Green Certificate program was acknowledged as a very helpful program and Board members wondered if could be made available in Manitoba. Apprenticeship programs were acknowledged to be helpful; however, employers in small communities are reluctant to participate in apprenticeship programs because “there isn’t enough work for any more welders in the community.” Skills certification and prior learning recognition were cited as being beneficial.

3.5 Review of Past Programs

One of the objectives of the Rural Adaptation Needs Assessment was to identify gaps in services, programs and other resources available to agricultural producers and other rural residents that could support adaptation, transition and succession activities. As a way to investigate the needs and compare gaps, an assumption was made that an examination of past transition programs would be an initial step in comparing needs. This information would then be used to compare existing programs and services over a wider range of succession, adaptation and transition needs.

The project team found however, that gathering and organizing information on past and current programs was a formidable task given the large number and evolutionary nature of past and current programs and services. The project team addressed the challenge of summarizing the experience of past programs by selecting and providing more extensive details of 6 illustrative past programs and services designed to address the transition needs of farm families. These details are featured in Appendix C of this document.

- ***The Canadian Rural Transition Program*** — This federal program of Agriculture Canada was initiated in 1986 for farm families deciding to leave farming because of financial difficulties. Several types of assistance were provided: counselling, job placement, training, self-employment, wage reimbursement and travel.

- ***Canada Agricultural Employment Services*** — This program was a referral and screening service providing farmers with workers and a placement service for workers looking for jobs on farms.
- ***Manitoba Agricultural Training Project*** — This project provided a variety of training opportunities for farm families in various rural locations. The administration of the project was established through Keystone Agricultural Producers, and the majority of the training was provided through Assiniboine Community College.
- ***Farm Diversification Program*** — Introduced in 1972, this program assisted farmers to strengthen the economic bases of their farms. It was cost-shared between the Manitoba and federal governments.

Two other programs, one a federal initiative and another a regional initiative in Manitoba, are also reviewed in this document.

- ***Canadian Rural Opportunities Initiative*** — This federal initiative was announced in August 1993 but never implemented. It was to assist farm families with inadequate incomes to take advantage of non-farming opportunities to improve their incomes.
- ***Experienced Worker Pilot Project*** — Parkland Community Futures Development Corporation compiled a needs assessment of the experienced worker and presented it to Manitoba Education, Training and Youth in December 2000. The study was to investigate the opportunity to develop and deliver a pilot project that would provide assistance to experienced workers (50+) in the agricultural industry. The pilot project, expected to begin in April, 2002, in Dauphin, will assist program participants with remaining connected to their farm and community by providing counselling, employment training or assistance with farm transition or small business development.

3.6 Inventory of Current Services, Programs and Resources

Over the course of the Rural Adaptation Needs Assessment, the project team gathered information about the current services, programs and resources available to agricultural producers and other rural residents that could support adaptation, transition and succession activities. A number of directories of existing programs, services and resources were used to prepare the inventory of current programs. This inventory should be considered as a “snapshot” of existing or known programs or resource and not an exhaustive or static compilation. Documentation of nearly 200 services, programs and resources have been organized into a data base which is contained under a separate cover.

4.0 Summary and Concluding Remarks

4.1 Summary Table

Table 12 on page 42 summarizes the most salient information from the key informants, individual agricultural producers and the community focus group.

4.2 Gaps in Services, Program Supports and Resources

One of the objectives of the project was to identify gaps in programs, services or resources needed by agricultural producers for succession, adaptation or transition. The intention of the database was to provide assistance in assessing whether the stated gaps and deficiencies identified by agricultural producers were actual or perceived.

Based on the wide variety of comments and needs for resources, agricultural producers need programs, services or resources on a farm-by-farm or individual producer basis. Farming operations are becoming more diversified and dissimilar in the type and kind of agricultural products that are produced as well as production techniques used.

Findings from the agricultural producer interviews and focus groups also indicated that producers were aware that there are a large number of programs and services “out there”. Agricultural producers indicated that their participation in programs or utilization of the resources was largely dependent on an individual’s ability to overcome the following barriers:

- awareness that the program, service or resource exists or service;
- access to programs that are bound by time and location;
- the ability to afford to enter the program or use the service;
- the appropriateness of the program or service to the producer’s needs; and,
- the availability of the program, service or resource.

The following are comments on perceived or identified gaps in services, program supports and resources.

Counselling and Peer Support

There is a recognition that counselling services do exist, but that the services available are not consistent across communities. This suggests that perhaps the differences are a reflection of the different needs of individuals in those communities.

Skill Development and Training

There is a need for both on-farm and off-farm skill development and training. Participants in the study identified the importance of business management skills, particularly for farm owners, and of traditional farm skills for farm workers. Training in a trade would provide agricultural producers with an opportunity to earn additional income or to make the transition off-farm. However, individuals may have difficulty coming up with the financing to provide for their training. As self-employed individuals, agricultural producers are not normally eligible for EI retraining dollars. There are also gaps in programming, in terms of accessibility and timing.

With appropriate infrastructure in place in rural communities, distributed learning could help fill the gaps for some agricultural producers. As well, Community Futures organizations and Community Development Corporations do provide some services for business development for those interested in pursuing a new venture.

Specialist Services

Participants in the study spoke often of the need for services, program supports and resources to aid agricultural producers, their families and their rural communities on issues of succession. Many agreed that specialist services — through extension personnel and professionals such as accountants and lawyers — were currently available. However, awareness of those specialist services is an issue. As well, it was noted that producers prefer hands-on assistance, advice and follow-up, not just information.

Employment Opportunities and the Labour Pool

There is high demand for skilled workers in the agricultural sector, on a seasonal basis as well as full-time. There is a need for a labour pool dedicated to agricultural workers and employers.

Employment opportunities for the farm worker, the producer and members of the producer family are in short supply in rural communities.

Financial Resources

Researchers can infer from participant responses that awareness of financial resources is an issue. There appears to be a multitude of programs available, but knowing about them is problematic. For those agricultural producers facing financial difficulty, there is a need to reassess how best to reach them early. There is potential, through a program such as Project 2000, to provide training to producers to help them avoid financial difficulties. At the individual agricultural producer level, financial supports, such as tuition rebates and wage subsidies, should be provided to assist with training and education.

Strong, Healthy Communities and Rural Infrastructure

There are substantial differences between communities, differences in community leadership, in creating a positive learning environment and in their willingness to invest locally. There is also the perception that economic development officers and other community support people are not there for the agriculture sector or for locals involved or wanting to be involved in small enterprises.

There appears to be a need for inter-agency planning and local delivery of program supports and resources. A pro-active approach is needed to encourage individual agricultural producers to “buy in” to the process, and a one-on-one, ongoing contact is preferred. A system of providing information through a variety of means, including word of mouth, seminars, invitations, group meetings, and utilizing other agencies, such as the local or regional economic development office, would be helpful. This proactive approach may encourage people to start accessing the supports to effect changes in time to keep them in the rural areas. Often, producers don’t initiate change soon enough. It will be crucial to have an accurate assessment of the individual’s farming situation. Some additional support may be needed in having existing resources integrate into this process (e.g., Adult Learning Centres). Having an up-to-date inventory of opportunities would enhance services provided to agricultural producers.

4.3 Concluding Remarks

The primary objective of the Rural Adaptation Needs Assessment was to investigate the adaptation, transition and succession needs of agricultural producers in rural Manitoba. Based in the information gathered and subsequent analysis, the project team presents the following concluding remarks.

Healthy, rural communities are needed to mitigate the negative effects of rapid changes in agriculture as well as to help create opportunities for growth in the agricultural sector.

Healthy, rural communities are needed to provide employment opportunities, a pool of skilled labour, community infrastructure (hospitals, schools, highways) and market opportunities. Many agricultural producers indicated the need for local employment opportunities in the community. Rural community infrastructure (hospitals, schools, highways) is needed to attract and retain workers, provide employment opportunities and assist with marketing. Professional services such as accountants, counselling and agricultural consultants need to be available in the community.

A local labour force of skilled workers is needed to assist with value-added and diversified farming operations. Considerations for determining the type of labour force skills needed include:

- the availability of community-based training programs; and,
- the unique employment needs of the community or surrounding region.

As one producer stated:

In strengthening rural communities, you also strengthen the farm community and vice versa. Finding opportunities in communities for young people outside of farming will help to ensure the survival of the community. Of course, these opportunities at times are hard to see or do not exist. By ensuring supports for families by way of health services, education and recreation, you are building communities that offer a reason to stay.

Succession, adaptation and transition needs vary from farm to farm as well as individual to individual.

By comparison, most agricultural producers were reluctant, or did not wish to consider the thought of leaving agriculture. The term succession took on a more positive note in light of older farmers leaving the farm however, the challenges of financial and legal arrangements were high. Interestingly, the term ‘diversification’ was often characterized by skepticism as being a viable option.

The succession, adaptation and transition needs of agricultural producers vary in complexity as well as the individual skills, abilities, knowledge and available financial resources. This requires individualized path-finding and integrated case management on an on-going basis in the community or region.

- Agricultural producers faced with succession needs are concerned about financial and familial implications of inter-generational transfer. Professional and counselling services are needed. Financing inter-generational transfer is difficult for both generations.
- Producers investigating value-added and diversified agricultural opportunities are leery of further debt and long-term viability to the extent that ‘diversification’ was often characterized by skepticism as being a viable option. Access to marketing and business specialists is critical.
- Producers consider community-based access to off-farm employment or training programs as a diversification strategy.

Off-farm income is needed to support many farming operations. In many cases, off-farm income makes it possible for producers to remain farming.

Off-farm income appears to be the norm. For many agricultural producers, off-farm income is used to supplement farm income. For others, off-farm income is subsidizing the farming operation enabling many producers to remain in farming. The significance of off-farm income to agricultural producers supports their demands for local employment opportunities.

Transitioning out of agriculture is considered as an option of last resort.

Those involved with the environmental scan talked of the help that farmers needed to transition out of agriculture. By comparison, most agricultural producers were reluctant, or did not wish to consider the thought of leaving agriculture. They consider transitioning out of agriculture as a last resort and equate the option with an uncaring and unappreciative urban population, government inaction or lack of policy direction; or, financial institutions that have no knowledge of agriculture.

- Transitional funding and counseling needs to be available for farmers leaving agriculture. Funding is needed for such things as re-training, relocation, transportation, and childcare. Training needs to be individualized and targeted.

Agricultural producers face a number of barriers to programs, services and resources.

Participation in programs or utilization of services and resources are limited by the barriers of awareness, accessibility, affordability, appropriateness and availability. Perhaps the most significant barrier is attitudinal, that is the disposition and receptivity of individual agricultural producers to take advantage of the available services and resources.

Comments from the agricultural producers tend to focus on external sources for solutions for succession, adaptation or transition needs.

Agricultural producers recommended a number of approaches to address their individual succession, adaptation or transition needs. Most of these were based on external sources such as the local community or the federal and provincial governments.

As a member of the Advisory Committee commented:

I do believe that the agricultural producers and rural communities have some responsibilities as well. I would much rather prefer that our recommendations would have a 'team' approach for solutions that includes all parties concerned. We need to be partners to address the problems.

Table 12 Summary Table

Theme	Key Informants	Individual Agricultural Producers	Focus Group Participants	Community Focus Group
Programs, services and resources	Producers are lacking in awareness of the programs that are available to them.	Programs and resources exist but access is limited by awareness, time and money, appropriateness, accessibility, availability.	Programs exist however time, money and location are problems.	
Rural communities	There is a need for a rural strategy with federal and provincial government support.	Strengthen rural communities and improve infrastructure. Producers need access to technology.	Off-farm employment is needed.	Enhance and encourage the work of community development corporations.
Skill development and training	Producers need access to skill development and training.	Need access at a community level.	Training is needed but so are employment opportunities.	Need skill training and development at the local level.
Specialist services	Producers need access to specialist services (food processing advice, marketing information, regulatory compliance, e-business, non-food production, financial feasibility).	Specialized services (accountants, lawyers and ag specialists) are used and needed by agricultural producers.	Need specialized services to help diversify or succession.	Improve rural access to health care, veterinary services, global positioning systems, child care
Financial resources	Financial support is need for education and training, research and development, cooperative efforts in machinery, purchasing.	Lenders need to be better informed.	Lenders need to understand agriculture.	Implement community works loan community.
Succession, transition and adaptation	Succession planning is needed. Need to discuss from the perspective of exit and entrance.	Succession planning is needed. Adaptation can be risky. No plans to transition out of agriculture.	No plans to exit agriculture. Diversification is risky.	Policies and planning for environmental issues.
Employment and labour pool	Employment and labour pool are concerns and should be targeted to the whole rural community.	Employment and labour pool are concerns. Seasonal employees are needed. Farm labourers need skills.	Jobs are needed to help income. Producers are split on whether they wish to pursue off-farm income.	Jobs and people make a community. Retain rural youth in communities.
Counselling and peer support	Producers need counseling and peer support services.	Producers are not very aware of counselling and peer support.	Producers reluctant to access counselling.	

5.0 Recommendations

The findings of this needs assessment give rise to a number of recommendations. Members of the Advisory Committee have discussed and agreed to the following recommendations.

5.1 Rural Development Policy and Programs

Recommendation:

That rural development become a policy and program goal across and between all levels of government and include the involvement of rural residents.

Agricultural producers recommended a number of specific program, services and financial needs when asked about their personal needs for adaptation, succession and transition. Certainly reforms to agricultural policy are needed. However, underlying all of these suggestions was the strong recommendation that access to and participation in a strong, healthy rural community are the best approaches to mitigating the effects of the persistent challenges facing of agricultural producers.

Key actions include:

- That federal and provincial government policies and programs be encouraged to integrate concepts of rural community development.
- Government support for rural community- or regional economic development organizations such as Community Futures Development Corporations or Community Development Corporations should be strengthened and enhanced.
- Community-based economic development organizations should take a more proactive role to encourage entrepreneurial agricultural activities. Further, a team approach of producers, communities and government should be taken.
- A holistic approach should be used for rural development that takes into consideration the quality of rural life and includes such things as physical, social and cultural infrastructures, vertical and horizontal partnerships and linkages, innovative approaches to creating capital, and use of technology.
- The concept of rural development should be promoted and integrated into existing services such as Farm Credit Canada and Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation.
- Government policy and actions should have flexibility to address individual producer needs as well as the unique economic, social and cultural characteristics of individual communities or regions.

- There should be an increased role for immigration policy in rural development. The

5.2 Rapid Rate of Rural Change

Recommendation:

That the federal and provincial governments give urgent and explicit attention to the rapid and persistent change affecting rural areas and communities.

Fundamental and significant change is confronting agricultural producers and rural communities. It goes without saying that change has always been a factor in rural areas. Concrete examples of this change can be found in the dwindling numbers of farmers, the unrelenting decline in asset base of many rural communities and rural municipalities, and the loss of physical infrastructure such as hospitals, schools and declining quality of highways.

Evidence of rapid change in agriculture includes the increased opportunities for diversification and access to improved production systems and technology. In the past, farmers could rely on their local agricultural representative for information and advice that would assist them in their farming operation. Today, there are fewer farmers, more opportunities for diversification, increased pressure to change and adapt, and a higher demand for specialized information. Many agricultural producers spoke of the heavy workload of their local agricultural representatives, as well as the need for more appropriate and more detailed information. In some cases, impediments to diversification and adaptation are in outdated or non-existent government rules or regulations.

Agricultural producers also cited examples of the rapid change in the community infrastructure most notably the hospitals, schools and highways. These changes had wide spread impact on families, the rural work force, marketing opportunities and off-farm employment income. The persistence and magnitude of the rural change is such that status quo is not an option for policies or programs.

The most persistent challenge to agricultural producers is the external set of barriers that diminish or minimize producers' options to respond to change. This means that changes in policy are significantly more important than changes to programs, services or supports. In other words, the attention of governments should be directed at agricultural policies that enhance the ability of agricultural producers and rural areas to respond to change.

Key actions include:

- Promote, stabilize and enhance the physical and social infrastructure of communities including health, highways, education opportunities, banking and access to specialist services.
- High speed internet access should be made available as quickly as possible to rural communities.
- Sector specialists and services should be available to producers in areas of value-added marketing, and non-food research and development.

5.3 Increasing Awareness of Government Programs and Activities

Recommendation:

That the federal and provincial governments' communications strategies identify and actively promote the policies, programs and actions that they provide.

Governments, educational institutions and other service providers need to be more proactive and assertive in demonstrating their efforts. Producers and communities have a reasonable level of awareness that there are a number of programs and services available; however, they are generally not aware of the details, eligibility or funders.

Key actions include:

- Governments should support and build closer relationships with producer organizations.
- Increase awareness of available resources, programs and services
- Distributed updated bulletins through government networks, producer organizations and media.
- Proactive information dissemination through program delivery agents or producer organizations.
- Individualized on-going contact through delivery agents.

5.4 Utilization of Services, Programs and Resources

Recommendation:

That the federal and provincial governments, in conjunction with community representatives, include a monitoring function of their services and programs to document factors that enhance or deter utilization of various services or programs.

Agricultural producers were, in general, aware of many services, programs and other resources that were available to them as farmers. However, in many cases they were unaware of the details of specific supports and, indeed, of where they could obtain those details. They wondered about the appropriateness of the supports for their needs, whether they could access the supports and whether they could afford the supports. Also, in some cases, the producers wondered whether the supports they needed were available at all.

Key actions include:

- Implement mechanisms to ensure regular and on-going mapping of rural and agricultural programs and services. This would help encourage a comprehensive, pro-active and timely approach to needed information, programs and services in rural areas. It would also help reduce or avoid duplication and help enhance coordination between governments and government departments. Mapping should include indications of impact as well as “lessons learned”.
- Design and develop programs and activities that are flexible and readily adapted to meet individual agricultural producer needs and assist with responding to change.
- Utilize new technology and community access sites to link communities and government services on-line.
- Service providers and educational institutions should provide information management sessions to agricultural producers on the availability, accessibility, costs, and requirements of their programs and services.

5.5 Human Resources in Rural Areas

Recommendation:

That rural human resource development and capacity building become a targeted and key component of rural development programs and policies

Agricultural producers and communities identified a number of specific issues relating to access to employment opportunities, the need for a trained labour force and skills training. Education programs are needed to expand individual opportunities through increased skills and knowledge. However, the benefits to individuals are tied to a community's ability to provide employment and earning potential.

Key actions include:

- Governments, education institutions and service providers of rural adult education and training programs should consider the specific training and labour pool needs of rural communities and agricultural producers.
- Agricultural producers need increased training and employment opportunities in their local area. Agricultural producers also need an available pool of farm labour to pursue and maintain rural opportunities.
- Training programs should be collaborative, community-based, encourage apprenticeship and formally acknowledge prior learning and acquired skills.
- Recognized farm skills mentorship training programs, such as the Green Certificate program, should be implemented.
- Encourage leadership opportunities.
- Curriculum reform could relate specifically to locally provided education focused on commitment to rural life (volunteerism, mentoring programs with production or small business, entrepreneurial).
- Agricultural producers should have access to support and programs that are flexible and have the ability to address the specific circumstances of individual producers and communities.

5.6 Rural Research

Recommendation:

That a comprehensive rural development research agenda be adopted by government and that such a research agenda be implemented at the local rural community level.

Research is a critical component of rural development policies and programs; however, research needs to provide meaningful and accurate information. Further, policy makers and practitioners need to feel comfortable and confident in asking for information and listening to the responses.

Two features characterize rural development research¹:

1. rural development research is fragmented into individual pieces of research tied to academic disciplines (economics, sociology, anthropology, health, social theory, political studies, education, health, agriculture).
2. rural development research and rural development practice remain largely isolated activities.

Key actions include:

- Rural development research should supported by increased funding through public agencies and organizations such as the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council).
- Suggested areas of research include:

Rural Adaptation and Change

Many rural areas are striving to adapt to new economic factors, technological change, shifting trade patterns, and industrial development policies influenced by globalization, deregulation and privatization of government operations. Diversifying rural economies and developing sustainable markets are essential challenges that rural communities need to overcome and to maintain their sustainability over the long-term.

¹ Galston W. & Baehler, K. (1995) *Rural development in the United States: connecting theory, practice and possibilities*. Washington, D.C. Island Press.

Flexible, dispersed community leadership

Formal and informal leadership across a community is a significant contributor to community economic development. The role, identification and development of leaders are a growing area of information and research.

Skill building and re-training programs

Skill building and re-training programs have the potential to stimulate increased economic activities in rural communities. These programs should be available on a community or regional basis however research and linked to existing or potential opportunities.

Youth

Further study is needed on the issues of youth out-migration and retention. For example, education and training programs may be helpful to attract and retain youth; however they can also hinder that attainment of these goals by stimulating out-migration of young educated workers from communities that lack competitive income and employment opportunities.

Social Infrastructure

Studies into the significance of necessary social infrastructure for sustainable community development can include a determination of public and private investment opportunities, resource development, the role and use of technology, education and training and the development of human capital.

Community and Regional Linkages

Research is needed into the ways in which community and regional linkages can build and maintain a labour pool, share information and resources, develop regional strategies and establish economic and social networks.

Appendices

Appendix A: Committee Members and Research Team

- Steering Committee
- Advisory Committee
- Research Collaborators
- Project Team

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Appendix B: Research Methodology

Research Methodology (July 2001)

Definitions

In order to ensure consistency across all data collection methods, researchers have collectively defined the following terms.

Adaptation

The pursuit of options that includes enhancing income through additional economic activities on-farm and enhancing the capacity to earn off-farm income.

Succession

Transferring the farm to the next generation.

Transition

Choosing non-farm options.

Barrier

Barriers are those factors perceived as preventing access to services, supports and resources. Keep in mind that when we are looking at barriers, we are thinking in terms of the FIVE A's: available, accessible, aware(ness), appropriate, affordable.

Environmental Scan

Researchers initiated the needs assessment by conducting an environmental scan in two stages to assist with the identification of key interview questions and issues. In Stage One, the researchers conducted twenty-two interviews with individuals identified as being “experts” in a number of agriculture-related areas. In Stage Two, researchers conducted an environmental scan to gather information on supports and gaps from the perspective of agricultural producers. The information provided by the environmental scan provided the foundation for the agricultural producer interviews.

Stage One Environmental Scan of Individuals Involved in Farm/ Rural Organizations or Government Services providing farm and rural services.

1. Instrument Design

Researchers developed the interview instrument for the environmental scan using an open-ended format designed to elicit response around the gaps and barriers to services, supports and resources that agricultural producers, their families, farm workers and rural communities encounter.

2. Sampling

Twenty key informants were interviewed for the environmental scan. The steering and advisory committees identified the informants who represented a variety of agricultural backgrounds and perspectives and with presence in the various geographical areas of agro-Manitoba. The key informants included members of the Advisory Committee, individuals with involvement in farm or rural organizations, individuals involved in organizations providing farm and rural services, and government service providers.

3. Testing the Environmental Scan Interview Instrument

Researchers completed two interviews prior to the initial Steering Committee meeting of March 2, 2001. Since the interviews were resulting in the desired identification of supports, the decision was made to continue with that format.

4. Contacting Key Informants and Conducting Interviews

Researchers contacted key informants by telephone, providing them with a description of the project and its goals and asking them to participate in the needs assessment. For each interview, interviewers asked the key informant to identify a convenient time and place for the interview, with interviews conducted in person except for three that were conducted via telephone.

Stage Two: Environmental Scan of Agricultural Producers

The purpose of Stage Two was to use the environmental scan to gather information on supports, gaps and deficiencies from the perspective of people with knowledge and expertise related to agricultural issues who were themselves agricultural producers. Researchers conducted a total of sixteen complete interviews with key informants in Stage Two.

1. Instrument Design

Researchers developed the key informant interview instrument for Stage Two interviews based on the findings from Stage One. The Stage One findings were organized into several major themes. The major themes tended to parallel the services, program supports and resources provided for adaptation, succession and transition. These themes include: specialist services, counselling/peer support, skill development/training, community services and infrastructure, employment and financial resources.

Researchers designed questions that were intended to identify further existing services, program supports and resources and gaps. In addition, questions probed for the reasons why existing services were not being accessed (barriers).

2. Sampling

The goal was to interview approximately twenty key informants. All but three were agricultural producers who represented a cross-section of the various crops and products.

3. Testing the Key Informant Interview Instrument

Interviewers used a preliminary version of the instrument using a system to rate the importance of the supports identified in Stage One. Researchers conducted eight interviews. Since this procedure was excessively time-consuming, the instrument was revised.

4. Contacting Key Informants and Conducting Interviews

Members of the Research Team identified potential key informants in a variety of geographical areas and a variety of situations. Researchers contacted the identified individuals by telephone and provided them with a description of the project and its goals and asked them to participate in the needs assessment. For each interview, the interviewer asked the key informant to identify a convenient time and place. Researchers conducted the majority of interviews in person, with some conducted by telephone.

Agricultural Producer Interviews

5. Confidentiality

Researchers will assure agricultural producers/farm workers that they will remain anonymous. Their names will not directly be associated with any of the responses given, except to the primary researchers. Researchers will not repeat what they say. All reasonable measures will be taken to ensure that confidentiality is maintained.

6. Instrument Design

Researchers designed the interview instrument based on information gained from the key informant interviews of Stage One and Stage Two.

7. Instrument Test

From June 19 to June 30, researchers conducted interviews with seven agricultural producers to test the interview instrument. This test was to validate the content and wording of the questions and to measure the time required for conducting an interview.

8. Sampling

The goal was to interview a minimum of 100 individuals. Working with Advisory Committee members, the Research Team developed a network of contacts that can refer individual agricultural producers to the study. Members of the Research Team developed

the list of those to be interviewed, based on referrals from various organizations and departments and individuals identified via other means.

The sample will be selected using two characteristics:

3. geographical location
4. specific issue characteristics

Working with Advisory Committee members, the Research Team will develop a network of contacts that can refer individual agricultural producers to the study.

In order to ensure that the consultation process is participatory and as inclusive as possible, the Research Team will use additional methods, such as advertising and focus groups, to attract the interest and participation of agricultural producers.

Geographic Location

Measures will be taken to ensure that the sample includes agricultural producers from across Manitoba. Researchers used the four regions of agro-Manitoba identified by Manitoba Agriculture & Food. In addition, researchers conducted interviews with producers from as many agro-rural municipalities as feasible.

Specific issue characteristics

Within each geographic region, researchers identified agricultural producers as potential study participants based on issues identified in the key informant interviews. Farm employees also participated in interviews. Researchers looked to balance gender and age groups. The sample from each region contained a mix of individuals, including those who faced a particular issue or barriers and those from a specific production area. The list of characteristics included the following:

- Succession – full or partial – entry and exit – intergenerational – non-intergenerational (new owner) – consolidation (purchase by existing producer)
- Value-Added and Diversification – operators – employees – change in land use (succession)
- Under Pressure -- exit due to health or financial concerns,
- Type of Production: – grain – oil seeds – forage – pulses – cattle – equine – swine – dairy – poultry – eggs – sheep – goats – specialty livestock (e.g., elk, bison,) – other (e.g., woodlot, horticulture,)

Potential gaps

Researchers will remain aware that individuals fitting some specific issue characteristics will be difficult to identify. Measures will be taken to ensure that these gaps are filled to the greatest extent possible using methods, such as, snowball sampling (asking interviewees for names of other individuals who may be interested in participating in the study), focus groups and referrals from health and social service agencies.

1. Contacting Potential Interviewees

The identified individuals will be contacted by telephone, given a description of the project and its goals and asked to participate in the project. For each interview, the producer will identify a time and place that is convenient.

2. Conducting the Interviews

Members of the Research Team will conduct the interviews in person over the months of July and August. To assist with consistency across interviews, researchers have developed an Interviewer's Guide and have conducted a training session for all interviewers.

Focus Groups

If time and resources allow, the Research Team will undertake a small number of focus groups conducted throughout agro-Manitoba.

Appendix C: Review Of Past Programs

The Canadian Rural Transition Program (CRTP)

The CRTP was designed as a two-step program, first assisting the producer with planning for the future, and secondly, with putting the plan into action.

Program Elements

For Step 1, assistance under the CRTP included a transition grant of \$2,000 or more, depending on the size of the family. This grant helped to cover costs associated with the first four weeks of the program. Following this, applicants may have received the Supplementary Transition Assistance, a bi-weekly cheque for an additional 22 weeks.

Specialized services included in Step 1 were:

- Employment and career counselling to assist with employment and / or training initiatives;
- Personal counselling to help deal with the stress of starting a new career; and
- Legal and financial counselling to help tie up loose ends or plan for future business direction.

A CRTP representative worked with the producer and the adult members of the family to design a career plan and help with decisions around future directions.

Elements of Step 2 of the CRTP were intended to help the producer “help himself.” They included:

- Job placement services
- Training or re-training
- Self-employment grant
- Wage reimbursement
- Travel assistance

Eligibility and Application Process

There were a number of eligibility criteria for participation in the CRTP. They included the following:

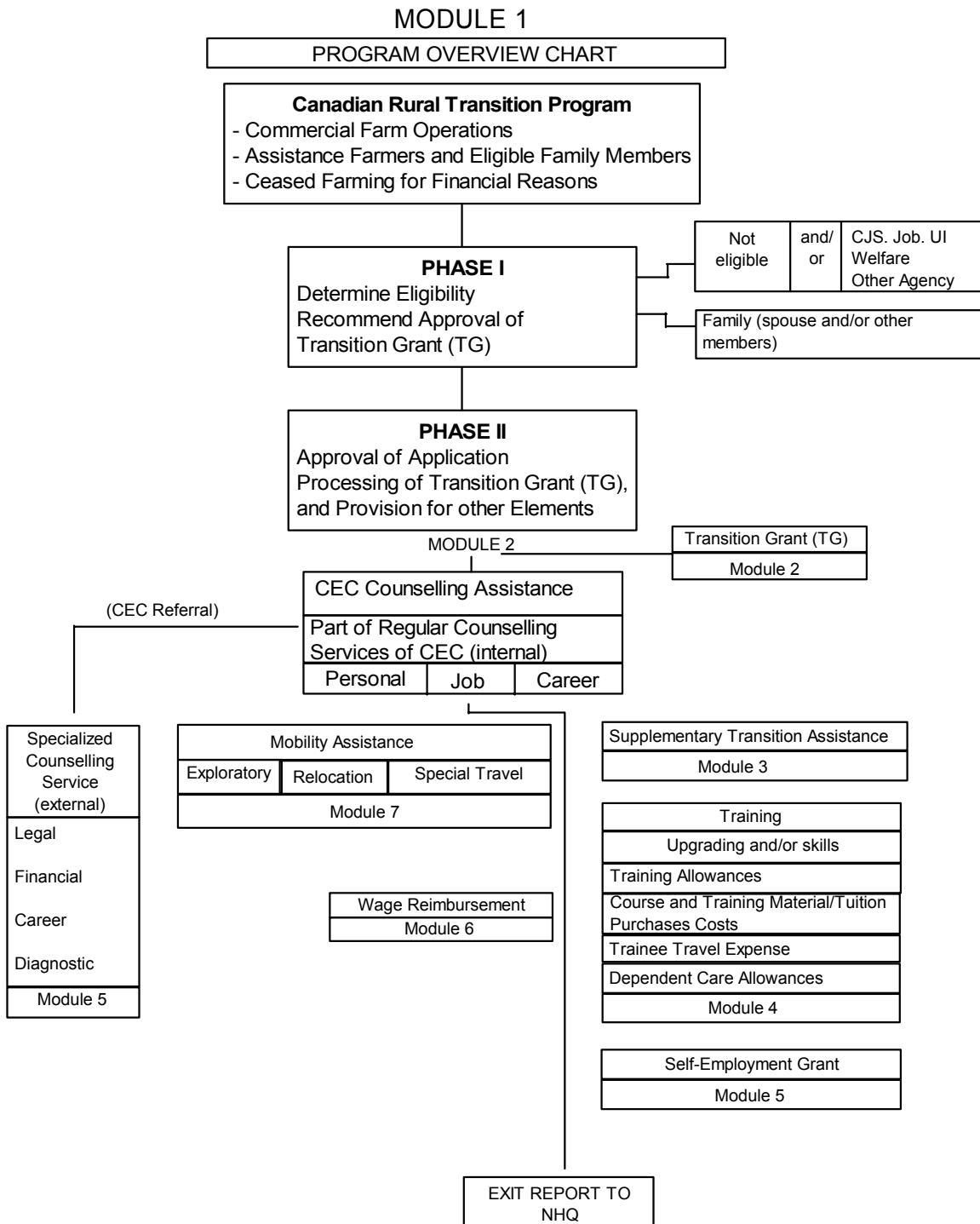
- Ceased operating a commercial farm business or about to do so, due to financial reasons (such as foreclosure, seizure of assets, inability to obtain credit, bankruptcy, quit claim,);
- No full-time, permanent employment;
- Legally entitled to work in Canada;
- Seeking employment or self-employment; and
- Not receiving Unemployment Insurance benefits.

Families receiving basic social assistance could apply. However, they were not eligible for the initial and bi-weekly payments offered in Step 1.

Individuals could obtain an application form from the following local and regional offices:

- Canada Employment Centre,
- Agricultural Employment Service,
- Farm Credit Corporation,
- Agricultural Development Branch of Agriculture Canada and
- Farm Debt Review Board.

CRTP PROGRAM OVERVIEW



Program Delivery

The CRTP was delivered by a combination of agencies, government departments and private organizations across the country. In Manitoba, WESTARC Group Inc. jointly delivered the program with Employment and Immigration Canada's regional office.

Lessons Learned

The CRTP is one of the most comprehensive of recent programs, providing a wide range of services and supports, including financial resources. However, its clients were only those farm families who were in, or about to fall into, economic crisis. Therefore, it helped those families make the transition from the farm to alternative, non-farming employment or self-employment opportunities.

In an early evaluation of the national CRTP (March 1988), both program participants and non-eligible individuals were surveyed across Canada. About 75% of program participants expressed satisfaction with the program, citing the following reasons:

- Helpful financial boost when needed (32%)
- Help to do things that weren't possible without it (29%)
- Counselling was good (14%)
- Program delivered what was promised (14%)
- Get training/education for a trade (16%)
- Program worked quickly (5%)
- Reasons for dissatisfaction with the CRTP were:
 - Expenses greater than funding (23%)
 - Doesn't run long enough (13%)
 - Shouldn't uproot farmers (13%)
 - Not enough information given (11%)
 - Examine cases separately (11%)
 - Not satisfied with availability of counsellor (10%)
 - Farmers should get greater percent of funds (10%)
 - Doesn't cover all occupations (10%)

Respondents to the survey indicated that the most-used elements of the program were transition grants (89%), supplementary transition grants (60%) and counselling and training assistance (31% and 30%).

Those respondents who expressed dissatisfaction with elements of the program offered some suggestions for improvement. Suggestions included: increase the funding levels and decrease waiting times for transition and supplementary grants, as well as travel assistance; counsellors should be better trained and more knowledgeable about the farming situation; and there should be more specialized courses (including university education) in the training element. In addition, the funding for self-employment grants should be increased. Overall, 80% of program participants surveyed said they had been provided with good service.

Just 10% of participants in the national program indicated some awareness of other programs that were available to help farmers in transition, and only 5% stated they had used other programs. Participants provided some suggestions for future government programs and policy initiatives. Suggestions included:

- Self-help groups (15%)
- More money for farmers (15%)
- Extend existing CRTP (12%)
- Help farmers stay in farming (10%)
- Education for farmers (8%)
- Job placement (7%)
- Better understanding between Agriculture Canada and Manpower (7%)
- Business startup program (6%)
- On the job training (6%)

Nationally, by March 31, 1990, “more than 3,000 cumulative cases of assistance were being provided under the various program elements” (CRTP Annual Review 1990), with 528 approved applications for assistance in 1989-90. During the same fiscal year, “\$6.93 million was expended to assist these farm families in making the transition from the farm to other types of employment.” Living allowances accounted for \$2.53 million or 37% of total expenditures. Administrative costs (excluding salaries) accounted for 11% of expenditures.

In Manitoba, WESTARC saw a number of new clients from 1986, at the inception of the CRTP, through to 1995. The following table provides client load by year.

Year	# of New Clients Seen
1986-87	138
1987-88	230
1988-89	194
1989-90	143
1990-91	162
1991-92	134
1992-93	68
1993-94	60
1994-95	54
TOTAL	1183

Canadian Rural Transition Program Client Load 1994-95, WESTARC Group Inc.

In fiscal year 1994-95, WESTARC saw a total of 54 clients representing 31 farm units. In that year, twenty-eight clients received Supplementary Transition Assistance, five received career and personal counselling, twenty received training, sixteen received assistance with self-employment, 2 received a wage reimbursement and 10 received various mobility assistance. Training courses approved during 1994-95 included business administration (2) and introduction to computers (3), as well as the following:

- Business skills
- Computer information systems
- Microcomputer networks
- Nursing
- Telecommunications
- Bookkeeping/accounting
- Industrial control and automation
- Business methods
- Upgrading
- Welding
- Small business
- Mechanical engineering technology
- Microcomputer
- Diabetic foot care

Self-employment grants were provided for 16 different types of businesses, for example, jewelry sales and repair, horse training, mechanical repair, drapery and painting, knitted wares, footcare, furniture building and refinishing, and leather and canvas repair. Wage reimbursement was provided to an assistant dairy herdsman and a computer technician. Ten clients utilized the mobility assistance, four for relocation and six for special travel.

During 1994-95, nine individuals and two couples utilized the counselling resources of the CRTP. Four individuals and one couple received career counselling, while the majority of referrals were for personal counselling. Thirty percent of the individuals utilizing counselling services were continuing clients from the previous year. The total amount distributed for these diagnostic and counselling services was \$3,249.50 (Counselling Report, CRTP, April 1, 1994 - March 31, 1995 submitted by Lilly J. Walker, Diagnostic Coordinator, WESTARC). Dr. Walker summarized the impact of the CRTP during its tenure:

... a variety of farm families benefited from the wholistic approach to assistance which the program provided. A majority of the clients utilizing the counselling resources selected career counselling. In this process they were able to increase their employability because the program focused on the whole person, assisted them in career assessment and facilitated the development of appropriate and flexible education programs. The program also recognized the personal and emotional needs of individuals in transition; the disruption and loss they had experienced and the resulting consequences. Those individuals who utilized the personal counselling resources were extremely fragile initially but worked diligently and persistently to overcome the emotional difficulties they were experiencing. Because the program valued flexibility, programs that fit people were designed. This approach stands in stark contrast to the usual plan in which people must fit into existing programs and is one of the strengths that the CRTP program offered its clients. Hopefully, the lessons learned in this program will be utilized in future programs.

In the 1988 evaluation of the CRTP, participants were asked their level of satisfaction with the program. Respondents indicated that their comfort level with WESTARC increased over time, as they became involved in the program.

Canada Agricultural Employment Services

Agricultural Employment Services (AES) was developed to promote a more efficient match of farm labour supply and demand. "The principal activity of AES [was] to provide farm employers with needed workers by referring local workers, and by assisting in the mobility of workers from other parts of Canada" (Evaluation of the Canada Agricultural Employment Services 1995). Nationally, AES had a budget of \$10.9 million in 1993-94.

Program Elements

Providing farm employers with casual workers (hired for 5 days or less) was a central function of AES (Evaluation 1995). AES also placed temporary workers (length of time between 6 days and 9 months).

Program Delivery

The AES program was delivered nationally through 111 points of service. Although there were variations in services across provinces, there were some common program elements. These were:

- Matching employees and employers
- Human resource planning assistance
- Labour market information

Some other services included the Off-shore program, in which foreign workers from the Caribbean and Mexico were brought into Canada on a seasonal basis, and the Seasonal Agricultural Recruitment Mobility Project that arranged for the transportation of workers to and from the farms to work each day.

Lessons Learned

Nationally, AES made 73,293 placements in 1993-94 (Evaluation 1995). The AES offices in prairie provinces had lower annual average costs than the rest of Canada, partly attributable to workload and the types of farms — with different labour needs — being served. Using national averages, the cost per worker placed was \$149.

The most commonly used AES service was referral of local workers (75%). Employers used AES for recruitment of workers from elsewhere in Canada (33%), as well as, for day haul and recruitment of foreign labour. Other AES services utilized included labour market information, human resources planning and the identification of training needs and programs. Most of these services were used over a five-month period beginning in May. When surveyed for their opinion about the quality of AES services, employers rated all services a B or B+, with the exception of recruitment of non-local Canadian workers, which they graded B-. Respondents to the survey also gave some suggestions for changing AES. Some of them included:

- Better screening for workers (to screen out unqualified workers)
- Offer training sessions
- Longer hours of operation for AES offices
- More funding for AES
- Supply more information on the workers

(Evaluation of the Canada Agricultural Employment Services 1995)

The evaluation also looked at AES at the provincial level.

Manitoba Agricultural Training Project

The Manitoba Agricultural Training Project provided for the delivery of formal training courses to farm families, in cooperation with Manitoba Agriculture and Assiniboine Community College. From August 1989 to April 1991, 3200 registrants, sponsored by Keystone Agricultural Producers, took part in agricultural training in the province. Funding was provided through Employment and Immigration Canada and Agriculture Canada.

NOTE: Little information was found on how the program was delivered, eligibility criteria and the application and selection process.

Program Delivery

Assiniboine Community College was the primary provider of training for agricultural producers. Instructional areas included production, marketing, financial and human resource management. The training needs were identified by Manitoba Agriculture in consultation with producers.

Lessons Learned

The system of training had been successful in relation to enrollment and student satisfaction. However, it was not certain that the training provided to agricultural producers met their actual needs or the needs of the future, given trends in agriculture. In an attempt to address some of these concerns, WESTARC Group Inc. developed a computerized Farm Training Needs Assessment tool for the Manitoba Agricultural Training Project in 1991.

Farm Diversification Program (FDP)

In the early seventies, the Government of Manitoba implemented a number of programs and policies designed to support rural Manitoba, including agriculture. The Stay Option was “a policy to promote the social and economic well-being of rural residents so that they might have a genuine opportunity to remain in the region of their choice without sacrifice of their standard of living” (Helgi 1977). One program within agricultural development that resulted from this general policy direction was the Farm Diversification Program (FDP).

The FDP, an Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act (ARDA) cost-shared program, was introduced in 1972 for a five-year term ending on December 31, 1978. By 1977, it had assisted over 2,600 farmers with strengthening the economic base of their

farms (Helgi 1977). The Federal and Provincial Governments shared the cost of the program on a 50:50 basis.

G. A. Therrien, Chief of the Farm Diversification Program in Manitoba, described the need for the FDP as follows:

The need for such a Program was initiated by a survey carried out in the winter of 1971 in 12 municipalities. The survey clearly indicated that there was a large number of farmers in the low to middle income group who wanted more technical and farm management advice. They expressed a need for more up-to-date information as well as individual assistance. The 1971 Census confirmed that there were 19,835 potential clients in the province and that a realistic target could be 4,626 farmers. Further negotiations arrived at a target of 2,200 farmers.

(Proceedings and Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Agricultural Extension Council, 1977)

Program Elements

The purpose of the program was “to facilitate the conversion to and the intensification of livestock production in Manitoba and increase the income of lower to middle income farmers” (Therrien). The FDP offered participating farmers intensive farm management advice through full time Farm Advisors, capital conversion grants of up to \$2,000 and loans for capital and operating expenses to a maximum of \$10,000 (Helgi 1977). The loans were processed by Manitoba Agriculture Credit Corporation.

Eligibility and Application Process

Criteria for selection to the FDP were that the Gross Value of Production was under \$25,000 and the farmer had to show some willingness to cooperate with the Farm Advisor assigned to him. As well, the farmer had to have some potential for development.

Rural Development Counsellors recruited clients and referred them to the program. An application, completed by the Farm Advisor, was submitted to the Regional Selection Committee. Once accepted, the farmer is assigned to a Farm Advisor. On average, clients remained active in the FDP for two years, then were graduated or terminated by the Selection Committee.

Program Delivery

The program was delivered regionally by 36 full time, program-dedicated Farm Advisors and agricultural representatives on a part time basis. Farm Diversification Specialists coordinated the program in each region. The Farm Advisor assisted the farmer in designing a farm plan, implementing the farm plan, providing training and applying for farm loans, grants and training expenses.

Lessons Learned

In the draft copy of An Evaluation of the Farm Diversification Program in the Interlake Region of Manitoba by Ford, Senkiw, MacMillan and Framingham, University of Manitoba, 1977, initial estimates of the income impact on 3,000 clients total a minimum of \$1,026,870 per year (in Helgi 1977). The paper also estimated that animal unit production would rise, increasing Manitoba's annual livestock output by \$15.75 million (Helgi 1977).

The FDP was "directed toward two major problems associated with low-income farmers: firstly, low levels of management of farm resources, and secondly, the large variance in farm income due to variable prices for farm production and high-risk farm enterprise combinations" (Helgi 1977).

Actual number of clients accepted was 2,628, 27% from the Southwest Region, 22% from the Northwest, 20% from Central, 16% from Eastern and 15% from the Interlake Region. The FDP reached primarily young, beginning farmers, with the average age 32.7 years. Just over seventy-two percent of the clients operated a beef enterprise, while 13.4% operated a dairy and 9.8% operated a hog enterprise. Other enterprises included honey bees, grain, earthworms, forage production, PMU, vegetables and sheep.

Program managers and staff considered the on-farm advisory services to be the most significant feature of the FDP. It provided both immediate and long-term benefits to the farmer clientele. Farm advisors, each of whom worked with about 35 farmers, emphasized individual consultation and on-farm demonstrations, and focused on farm accounting and recordkeeping. In most cases, the farmer client's management and performance improved as a result of these activities.

Rural Development Counsellors developed and conducted some training courses for farm diversification clients. They also provided general counselling out of the district extension offices, which were seen by clients as a "safe" place to request such services.

As stated in the Annual Report for 1976-1977, a total of \$1,132,357 was expended on grants to 1,518 farmers. During the same year, 1,539 clients received training allowances for a total of \$235,838. One hundred and eighty two loans in the total amount of \$1,547,012 were approved in 1976-77.