

Closing the Gap: creating a more profitable business

In 2016, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry’s (AF) Explore Local implemented a two year project with local farm direct marketers to increase the efficiency of their businesses by applying productivity principles.

Productivity principles (the ongoing effort to improve products, services or processes by identifying and eliminating waste) are commonly practiced by businesses in large-scale processing, manufacturing, distribution and retail industries.

Increased demand for local food has put greater pressure on small-scale direct marketers to expand, improve their processes and collaborate with other producers. Explore Local felt that, like their larger cousins, these local businesses would also benefit from applying lean principles.

Thirty-two participants engaged in an introductory workshop where they were encouraged to discuss their concerns, collaborate with one another and share their findings—all in an effort to better understand how to improve their business bottom lines.

Participants who completed the introductory workshop and all pre-workshop assignments were then

eligible to apply for acceptance into the Advanced Workshop and Coaching Program.

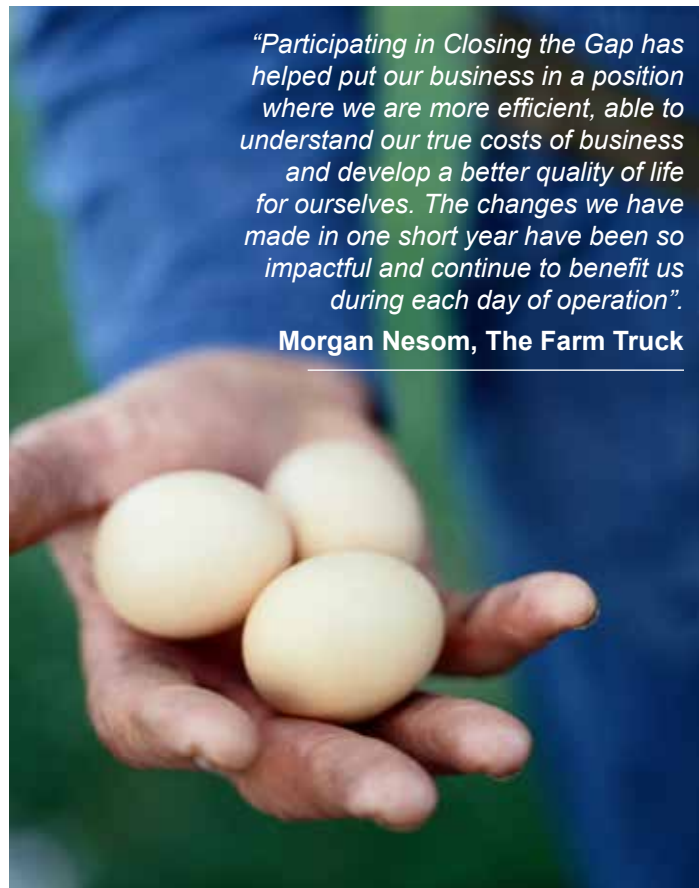
Advanced workshops, offered in year one, were scheduled one month apart, giving participants time to apply what they had learned to their businesses and report back to the group on their results.

The workshops covered diverse continuous improvement topics such as finance, leader standard work, mission and vision identification and standard operating procedures.

Prior to the workshops, participants reported limited to no understanding of these critical and sustainable business tools.

During the second year of the program, each business was allocated two one-on-one site assessments with the consultant and AF project team members in order to work on issues specific to their businesses. At the conclusion of each visit a list of action items with time lines was created to help the operator address specific issues.

Regular contact, including monthly phone coaching sessions, with each client was maintained to keep them on track.



Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

Additionally, as an indication of the synergy, engagement and cohesiveness of the group over the three workshops, every participant indicated they would like to continue to meet as a group after the program concludes.

Evaluations from 2017-2018 project year activities including on-site assessments, workshops, and phone coaching sessions have also been exceptional:

- 100% of respondents would recommend this program to others

- 100% of respondents, as a result of participating in this program, have businesses that are now in a position to be more profitable (decreased costs and/or spending, and/or increased revenue)
- 100% of respondents, as a result of participating in this program, have businesses that are more efficient (less wasted time, material, efforts)
- 100% of respondents have increased their understanding of the value of continuous improvement concepts to their business.
- 100% of respondents have applied productivity tools and practices within their organizations.

The project demonstrated successful client engagement throughout. Participants fully engaged in the process, investing considerable time and money to attend workshops, perform the on-site assessments and implement the action plan changes. Additionally, many businesses have hired a productivity consultant to work with them as they continue to improve their business practices.

Through the project's activities, client businesses have developed more focused, strategic and cohesive operations with predictable and more formalized processes and procedures, becoming more efficient with less wasted effort, time, and material.

This, combined with improvements in marketing, operations, logistics, and strategic management has increased revenue, decreased costs and resulted in higher profitability and improved long term sustainability.

For more information, contact vince.ohama@gov.ab.ca. ●

"I highly recommend this program to any small farmer or food processor looking to improve not only their business but also the quality of their lives."

Joey Halter & Lisa Kennedy
The Meadows

"We have benefitted greatly from the hands-on training, consultation and coaching that was tailored to our company's needs. Without a doubt, we would not be as organized, efficient, and productive today were it not for participation in this program!"

Graham Nichol
The Organic Box

Updates to CFIA food regulations

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has updated their webpage on the proposed Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR) to include additional guidance materials on preventive food safety controls.

To view these materials and more information on conducting a hazards analysis and related procedures, [click here](#). The CFIA has also updated their glossary section with more key terms. To view the new list, [click here](#).

And lastly, Phase III of the Food Labelling Modernization Consultations is now complete and a report has been published which contains feedback from consumers, industry, CFIA staff and other stakeholders on proposals to modernize Canada's food labelling system.

[Click here](#) to visit the CFIA website and read the full report. ●

Helpful online tools

These free online resources developed by Agriculture and Forestry (AF), will help you set product prices that make a profit and determine your cost of production (CoP).

You can use the tools online, or download them to your computer or tablet.

- Learn different ways to price your products and the importance of pricing your products properly with the [pricing tool](#).
- Understand your CoP and how to use it in making effective business decisions with the [cost of production tool](#). ●



Commercial kitchen space for rent

Looking for the right space to start or grow your existing culinary business? [Kaladi Collective Commercial Kitchens](#) offers fully licensed and Alberta Health Services approved kitchens for rent by the hour or by the month, with various flexible options available.

The spacious, professionally cleaned, fully HVAC ventilated, WET certified kitchens contain commercial-grade burners, ovens, coolers and freezers, with locations available in both Calgary and Edmonton.

For more commercial kitchen rental opportunities, visit the Alberta Agriculture website and check out their [kitchen rental listings here](#). ●

Meeting customer requirements

Are you a processor or producer wanting to enter a new market and are uncertain about whether you can meet regulations and standards?

Alberta Agriculture and Forestry has a free online tool to help you determine exactly what you need to succeed. This 4-module course will help you:

- evaluate whether your business is ready to access a new market;
- take the necessary steps to meet the regulations and standards;
- maintain your system through an

internal audit; and,

- demonstrate that you are meeting requirements through an external audit.

The resource is designed in a way that allows you to choose any particular section. You do not have to go from start to finish. If you can't finish it in one sitting, no problem, you can resume where you left off.

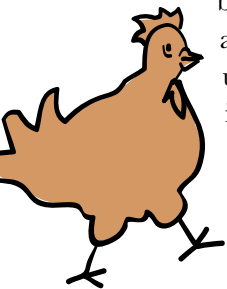
Download it to your computer or tablet [here](#). If you have questions about the e-resource, e-mail meetingrequirements@gov.ab.ca ●

Raising small-flock poultry

The Alberta Agriculture and Forestry (AF) website's [Small Flock Poultry](#) page contains useful resources and information on husbandry practices, disease prevention tips and good management practices for backyard and urban chicken owners.

Small poultry flocks provide many benefits to those who keep them,

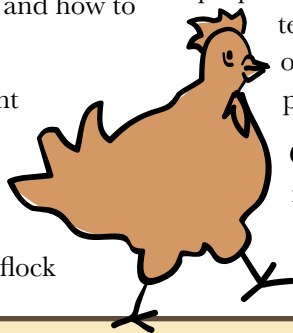
but before you purchase any poultry, you need to understand the regulations in your own community, and the health and safety guidelines required for owning small-flock livestock.



Raising chickens in Alberta

This 10-module [workbook](#), available on the AF website, is designed as a guide for small flock, backyard and urban chicken owners. Use this guide as a resource to help you raise your chickens. After you have completed the workbook, you will be able to:

- determine if regulations allow you to raise chickens in your area;
- meet the basic needs of your chickens including feed, water, light, ventilation and housing;
- identify diseases and inappropriate behaviours of chickens and how to prevent them;
- adjust your management of the flock to address Alberta's extreme weather conditions;
- take steps to keep your flock



safe from predators and disease (biosecurity); and,

- keep your family safe from disease that can come from live poultry and poultry products.

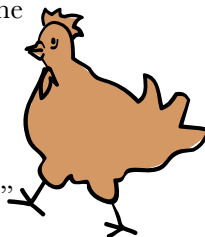
Keeping your flock, your food, and your family healthy

Did you know that even healthy birds, their eggs, and meat can all be sources of bacteria that can make you sick? With some basic hygiene and handling practices you and your family can care for your birds safely.

This [online pamphlet](#) contains tips and advice to help you care for your birds in the best way possible.

Egg handling and cleaning

Bacteria can be found in many places in a chicken coop: in the dirt, litter, nest boxes, or manure. Egg shells may seem solid, but they have microscopic openings called "pores" to allow gases and moisture to move through. Bacteria can also enter the egg through these pores and create a food safety hazard.



Proper handling of eggs is crucial to keep these pores clean. The use of proper egg handling and washing techniques can reduce the risk of unwanted bacteria, and promote food safety.

Check out the full list of resources for small flock poultry operators [here](#). ●

Upcoming Events

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS INFORMATION SESSIONS

Alberta Labour is partnering with Alberta Chambers of Commerce to deliver 14 information sessions. To register for the in-person sessions [click here](#), locations, dates and how to register are included at the link. For anyone unable to attend one of the in-person sessions, webinars on changes to the Employment Standards Code are available [here](#).

OPEN FARM DAYS: SAVE THE DATE

August 18-19, 2018

The deadline for farms to register to participate is May 31. Similar to last year, farms can choose which day(s) they would like to participate (Saturday, Sunday, or both).

Open Farm Days is a catalyst for stimulating economic prosperity by promoting the Alberta agriculture story. Last year's event had over 20,000 visits and \$146,000 in on-farm sales at over 100 participating farms and 22 farm-to-table culinary events.

Interested farms can learn more by emailing openfarmdays@gov.ab.ca or by calling 780-638-4302. Online registration will open soon at www.albertafarmdays.com.

EVENTS



For more information on any of these, or future events, [click here](#) or call [1-800-387-6030](tel:1-800-387-6030).

Field Notes

is published up to four times per year and is available online at explorelocal.ca. For further information about anything you've read here, or to be included on our email list, please contact Donna Skoworodko at donna.skoworodko@gov.ab.ca.