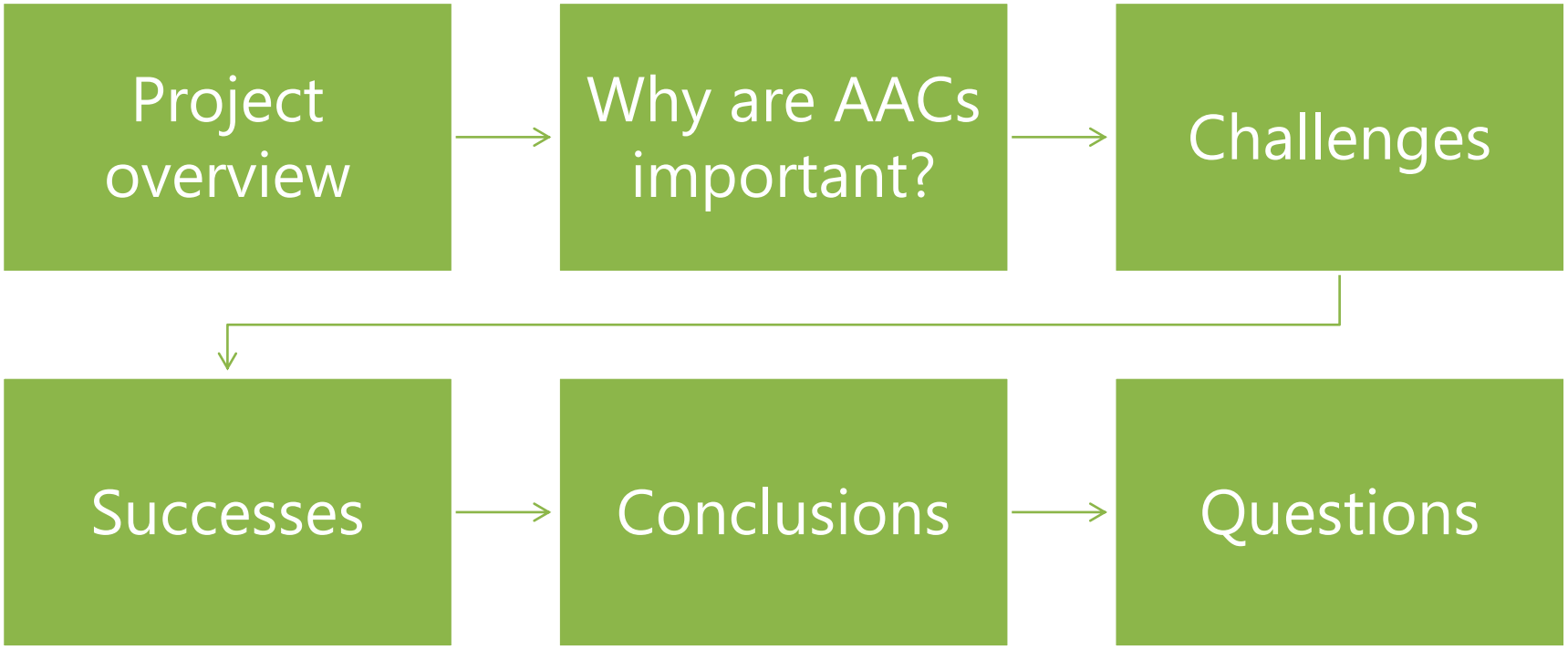
AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES (AAC) – CASE STUDIES AND LESSONS LEARNED

PRESENTATION TO HAMILTON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Sara Epp
September 9, 2019

UNIVERSITY of GUELPH
Design it. Plan it.
Create a Better Planet.
School of Environmental Design and Rural Development


Project overview
Why are AACs important?
Challenges
Successes
Conclusions
Questions

OUTLINE

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Supported by the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance and Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation

Participants included Councillors, farmers and municipal staff from across the Golden Horseshoe

Reviewed terms of reference, committee agendas, meeting minutes and work plans

WHY ARE AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES IMPORTANT?

IMPORTANCE

Role

- Most direct connection between policy decisions and the farming community
- Opportunity for revision based on impacts to farmers/farm sector
- Potential to elevate the voice of the farm community

Education

- Council
- Staff
- And more broadly

WHAT ARE SOME CHALLENGES WITH AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES?

CHALLENGES

- Terms of Reference and mandate

LESSON LEARNED

A detailed Terms of Reference is necessary and, at a minimum, should include a mandate, membership, meeting frequency, and reporting structure

CHALLENGES

- Terms of Reference and mandate
- Membership

	Farmers/ Farm Org	Council Reps	Residents	Youth	Total
Durham	13	1	3	-	17
Halton	10	2	4	1	17
Hamilton	8	2	4	-	14
Niagara	9	6	-	-	15
Peel	6	3	3	1	13
York	5	1	1	-	7

MEMBERSHIP BY AAC

LESSON LEARNED

It is important that young farmers be part of the Committee and explicitly incorporated into the Terms of Reference

CHALLENGES

- Terms of Reference and mandate
- Membership
- Meeting structure

Meeting Frequency	Region
Monthly	Durham*, Halton, Hamilton*
Quarterly	Niagara, Peel, York

LESSON LEARNED

Effective meetings require a clear agenda with substantive content

LESSON LEARNED

Meeting times should accommodate the agricultural sector's unique work schedule

CHALLENGES

- Terms of Reference and mandate
- Membership
- Meeting structure
- Role of committee

LESSON LEARNED

Committee members should feel empowered and supported in their advisory roles

LESSON LEARNED

The work of the AAC is given greater profile and importance when reporting directly to council

CHALLENGES

- Terms of Reference and mandate
- Membership
- Meeting structure
- Role of committee
- Bias

LESSON LEARNED

Personal and industry bias cannot influence decision making

CHALLENGES

- Terms of Reference and mandate
- Membership
- Meeting structure
- Role of committee
- Bias
- Knowledge, understanding and competencies

LESSON LEARNED

Dedicated and supportive staff are imperative to the success of the committee

LESSON LEARNED

Agriculture makes significant contributions to local economies and economic development staff need to be part of the AAC

WHAT ARE SOME SUCCESSES WITH AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES?

SUCCESSES

Evidence-based success

- Changes to policy
- Greater understanding/awareness of agriculture

LESSON LEARNED

Work plans are a guiding document that contribute to an AAC's success

SUCCESSES

Evidence-based success

- Changes to policy
- Greater understanding/awareness of agriculture

Agricultural champions and clear leadership

- Role of council and chair is critical

LESSON LEARNED

Councillors assigned to the committee should be champions of rural and agricultural issues and be prepared to educate Council

LESSON LEARNED

The success of the Committee is dependent on a Chair that has the skills to effectively guide and manage the committee

SUCCESSES

Evidence-based success

- Changes to policy
- Greater understanding/awareness of agriculture

Agricultural champions and clear leadership

- Role of council and chair is critical

Increased profile of AAC

- Consultation
- Recognition

LESSON LEARNED

Annual reports should be presented to Council to demonstrate the work the AAC has completed, reinforcing the value of the Committee

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: OPPORTUNITIES FOR AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Need to understand the impacts of municipal decisions on the farm sector

AACs provide a critical voice for the farm community

Maintaining momentum is tough

Flexibility must be encouraged

Allies/champions are necessary

CONCLUSION

QUESTIONS?

- Thank you!
- Contact details:
  - Sara Epp – sepp@uoguelph.ca