

The Northern Ontario Value-Added Agriculture (NOVA) Program

Empowering Agri-Food Entrepreneurs to Succeed

The **NOVA Training Program**, led by the **Rural Agri-Innovation Network (RAIN)**, is designed to support and strengthen Northern Ontario's vibrant agri-food sector. This innovative program helps entrepreneurs develop the skills and knowledge needed to create successful value-added products and build sustainable businesses in the competitive marketplace.

Program Highlights:

- **Concept Development:** Learn strategies to launch your business and create a compelling brand.
- **Product Development:** Understand the steps to develop a physical prototype and production strategy.
- **Finance Planning and Management:** Explore financial strategies and funding opportunities.

11-week Program Outline:

Course 1: FOOD BUSINESS FEASIBILITY

- **Thursday, November 7, 2024 – 6:30p.m. to 8:00p.m.**

- **Learn techniques for assessing opportunities and business viability.**
- **Exploring planning concepts (business model canvas, business plan).**

Trainer: Taylor Trecroce (Sault Ste Marie Innovation Centre)

Course 2: MARKET RESEARCH IN THE AGRIFOOD SECTOR

- **Thursday, November 21, 2024 – 6:30p.m. to 8:00p.m.**

- **Learn strategies for conducting market research.**
- **Understand consumer behavior and identifying trends**

Trainer: Nicole Marenick (Maren Marcoux Marketing)

Course 3: BUILDING A STRONG BRAND STORY

- **Thursday, December 5, 2024 – 6:30p.m. to 8:00p.m.**

- **Learn basic concepts for building a strong brand identity.**
- **Explore marketing plan concepts.**
- **Explore strategies to apply your brand story across your business.**

Trainer: Pam Hamel (Foods by Nature)

Course 4: FOOD SCIENCE AND RECIPE DEVELOPMENT

- Thursday, December 12, 2024 – 6:30p.m. to 8:30p.m.

- **Understand the basics of innovation in value-added agri-food production.**
- **Analyze principles of sourcing and procurement.**
- **Develop steps to create a product prototype.**
- **Explore food science principles (quality control, shelf life, etc.)**
- **Assess test markets, evaluation, and results.**

Trainer: Food Venture Program

Course 5: SANITATION, FOOD SAFETY AND TRACEABILITY

- Tuesday, December 17, 2024 – 6:30p.m. to 8:30p.m.

- **Understand compliance with health regulations and traceability standards.**
- **Explore food safety and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) management.**
- **Understand record keeping and quality control.**

Trainer: Food Venture Program

Course 6: FOOD PACKAGING AND LABELLING

- Thursday, January 9, 2025 – 6:30p.m. to 8:30p.m.

- **Explore effective food product packaging and labelling criteria.**
- **Understand The Canada Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) regulations.**
- **Analyze packaging sourcing and costing for your business.**

Trainer: Food Venture Program

Course 7: SOCIAL MEDIA AND ONLINE MARKETING MANAGEMENT

- Thursday, January 23, 2025 – 6:30p.m. to 8:00p.m.

- **Learn techniques for effective digital marketing.**
- **Gain knowledge on marketing performance through analytics.**

Trainer: Monique Morrison (Success with Digital)

Course 8: E-COMMERCE OPTIONS FOR GROWING BUSINESSES

- Thursday, February 6, 2025 – 6:30p.m. to 8:00p.m.

- Understand key concepts and trends for online sales.
- Learn best practices for conducting e-commerce and online business

Trainer: Monique Morrison (Success with Digital)

Course 9: AGRI-FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN AND DISTRIBUTION

Thursday, February 20, 2025 – 6:30p.m. to 8:00p.m.

- Understand value chain and food distribution.
- Analyze wholesale and export opportunities for your business.
- Explore strategies for effective food sales and sustainability in northern Ontario.

Trainer: Martin Gooch, PhD (Value Chain Management International)

Course 10: FINANCIAL ANALYSIS AND FEASIBILITY

- Thursday, March 6, 2025 – 6:30p.m. to 8:00p.m.

- Understand basic business analysis, budgets and cash flow.
- Strategies for tracking income and expenses.
- Explore the basics of small business financial systems.

Trainer: Carson Beauregard (Plant Farm Co.)

Course 11: PITCHING TO INVESTORS

- Thursday, March 20, 2025 – 6:30p.m. to 8:00p.m.

- Understanding different types of financing.
- Strategies for a successful elevator pitch.

Trainer: Ian Lane (Northern Ontario Angels)

KNOWLEDGE SHARING SESSIONS

– Entrepreneurs can join sessions with other agri-food entrepreneurs to discuss a variety of topics

Dates for these sessions will be announced throughout the course.

Meet the Trainers!

Taylor Trecroce (Sault Ste Marie Innovation Centre)

Taylor Trecroce is the Director of Business Services at the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre, where he plays a pivotal role in driving the growth and development of entrepreneurs and small businesses in Northern Ontario. With a strong background in strategic planning, marketing, and economics, Taylor specializes in guiding businesses through the early stages of development, from refining business models to navigating the commercialization process.

Nicole Marenick (Maren Marcoux Marketing)

With over 20 years of experience in consumer & trade marketing, specializing in food and agriculture for the past 18 years, Nicole Marenick is a well-connected agri-food marketing professional. She has successfully developed and managed campaigns for new and established brands, industry associations, and non-profit organizations. Expertise includes research, digital media management, influencer collaborations, advertising, and PR. She has a Hons. BA in Political Science and Communications and a Post Graduate Diploma in Marketing.

Pam Hamel (Foods by Nature)

Pam Hamel holds a Bachelor's Degree in Health Promotion and an Advanced Diploma in Marketing. She combines her lived experiences and marketing curriculum as a Professor at Northern College in the Business Fundamentals Program. Pam is also the Project Manager of the historic Cobalt Train Station, overseeing a million-dollar renovation and brand identity, slated to open in Spring 2025. Pam is a powerful creative, attentive to detail, and is known for curating exceptional food experiences with the bounty of Northern Ontario. As chief curator at Foods by Nature for over a decade, she actively sources, promotes, and supports Northern Ontario agri-food businesses. She calls Haileybury, Ontario home, has travelled to more than 30 countries, and most of all enjoys golfing, hiking, and a backyard cookout.

Food Venture Program

Food Venture Program Inc (FVP) was founded by Kiran Bains (Registered Dietitian and previous CPG founder) and Sima Gandhi (An inventor and business coach). FVP provides online education for early and scale-up phase food product business owners. Since their conception in 2019, over 1,000 alumni have graduated from their various programs via online live learning. Some of their Alumni have gone on to pitch at Dragon's Den and many of their alumni are now selling their products in retail stores around North America including Whole Foods, Sobeys, Kroger, Cosco and more!

Monique Morrison (Success with Digital)

Monique Morrison is the founder of Success With Digital, a digital marketing training company, and BigUps Consulting, a boutique agency specializing in marketing automation and conversion optimization for local and SME businesses. A multi-award-winning marketer and founder of an award-winning marketing agency, Monique has over 15 years of experience helping businesses thrive both online and offline. She has spoken at major events like Traffic and Conversion Summit and Digital Agency Expo, sharing her expertise on conversion strategies and digital marketing.

Martin Gooch, PhD (Value Chain Management International)

Dr. Martin Gooch is co-founder and CEO of Value Chain Management International (VCMi). VCMi assists businesses in the agri-food and seafood/marine industries to enhance their long-term profitability and environmental sustainability. Since the 1990s, Martin has analyzed food value chains from a systems perspective and led projects that have received domestic and international acclaim. Numerous publications on the topic of best practice value chain analysis and value chain management have been authored and co-authored by Martin. Martin holds a PhD and a Master's degree in agri-food management, a Bachelor of International Business, and qualifications in farm management and agricultural production. In 2013, Martin received Bayer Inc.'s "Outstanding Canadian" award for his contribution to "Food Chain Partnerships." In 2017, the Ontario Produce Marketing Association awarded Martin the Cory Clack-Streef "Produce Industry Person of the Year" award.

Carson Beauregard, The Plant Farm Co.

Carson Beauregard is a farmer and business advisor with a background in economic development, social service provision, and food service. He holds a degree in Community Economic and Social Development and is the owner/operator of The Plant Farm Co, a micro-farm and consulting business in Sault Ste Marie, Ontario. He has a passion for sustainable agriculture and finds deep satisfaction in helping entrepreneurs from various industries grow their businesses. Carson is also an outdoors enthusiast, a pro home cook, and is deeply curious about all things business and personal wellness. He believes in the philosophy of constant improvement and thoroughly enjoys a good SOP.

Ian Lane (Northern Ontario Angels)

Ian Lane is the Executive Director of the Northern Ontario Angels. With a diverse career in economic development, he enjoys fostering connections between entrepreneurs and Angel investors across Northern Ontario. Ian holds a MA from Metropolitan Toronto University in Immigration and Settlement Studies. He still enjoys playing music, sports, and the odd sail.



Who is the Rural Agri-Innovation Network (RAIN)? www.rainalgoma.ca

The RAIN is dedicated to enhancing the agricultural and food sector in Northern Ontario through collaborative projects and research, aiming to build a resilient farm and food sector. The RAIN supports the agri-food sector through funding programs, market development activities (trade show delegations), training, and infrastructure development. Funding for this initiative is provided from FedNor.

Contact Information: For more information or to get involved, please contact:

David Thompson

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The NOVA Program has been generously sponsored by:



Federal Economic Development
Agency for Northern Ontario

Agence fédérale de développement
économique pour le Nord de l'Ontario

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