

# A Leadership Team Built a Shared Language for Change — and Committed to It

INDUSTRY	ORG SIZE	DURATION	SCOPE	CLIENT
Agriculture / Not-for-Profit	Tens of thousands of members · 12-person leadership	April – May 2024	Full leadership team (12)	Provincial Farm Federation [Anonymized]

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*AQai® Certified Partner Jay Reid guided the 12-person leadership team of a provincial farm federation through a two-phase adaptability program that surfaced critical team dynamics, built a shared language for change, and produced measurable cultural shifts within six months.*

## ABOUT THE CLIENT

A provincial farm federation representing tens of thousands of farms is one of its province’s largest agricultural advocacy organizations. As a not-for-profit body, its 12-person leadership team carries responsibility for navigating an increasingly complex agricultural, policy, and regulatory landscape on behalf of a broad farming community.

## SITUATION

The federation’s General Manager identified an urgent need to strengthen trust, psychological safety, and collaboration within her 12-person leadership team. While individual leaders were committed and capable, the team lacked a shared framework for navigating change together. Early signs of defensiveness at the leadership level were beginning to affect team dynamics — and in a not-for-profit environment where mission alignment and human energy are the primary assets, fragmentation at the top carries compounding organizational risk.

The team had no common language for adaptability. Leaders were managing relationships and making decisions without visibility into how each person engaged with change, ambiguity, or challenge — and the gaps were beginning to show.

## IMPLICATION

Without intervention, defensiveness and misalignment at the leadership level risked cascading downward through the organization — creating patterns of swirling, blame, and inefficiency that would erode both productivity and well-being. For an organization representing tens of thousands of farms across an entire province, the cost of a fragmented leadership team extended well beyond internal culture. The General Manager recognized that if the top team could not model adaptable, collaborative leadership, the mission itself would be undermined.

## APPROACH

## Assessment Design

All 12 members of the federation’s leadership team completed the AQ® Assessment, generating individual AQ profiles and a composite team report. Key findings included grit as the team’s dominant strength – consistent with the organization’s not-for-profit mission and deep roots in the agricultural community – alongside a wide emotional range, an even distribution across extroversion and hope, and a critical gap in team support: not one team member reported high team support. A perceived constraint in the work environment was also identified. These results became the diagnostic foundation for the engagement.

## Engagement Structure

The program unfolded across three phases from April to May 2024. The first phase – “Teaming with Joy” – was a playful, in-person session designed to build trust through laughter, positive shared experiences, and game-based learning experiences. This established an interpersonal foundation before any data was introduced.

The second phase, “AQ Awareness,” was a three-hour group session introducing the AQai framework: defining adaptability, building shared language across the Ability, Character, and Environment dimensions, and giving each leader space to explore their individual profile without pressure to disclose scores. A physical spectrum exercise – mapping introversion and extroversion across the room – brought results to life through embodied, low-stakes experience.

Between phases, Jay Reid conducted 1:1 coaching sessions with all 12 leaders (two sessions per person). Session transcripts were analyzed to surface cross-team themes: frustration with slow change, a desire for more effective internal communication, unmet needs for recognition, and persistent dynamics within the leadership team. These themes were shared with the General Manager to co-design the final session.

The third phase, “AQ Action,” brought the full team back to explore their collective report together. Leaders examined results across the four priorities they had named: innovation, risk tolerance, retaining motivated people, and leadership development. A “Start, Stop, Continue” ideation exercise surfaced the team’s own solutions – culminating in group commitments that participants owned and voiced themselves.

## Tailoring & Integration

The engagement was designed to layer the trust-building methods of game-based learning onto the scientific rigour of AQai’s assessment framework. This deliberate sequencing – connection before data – allowed the leadership team to arrive at the deeper AQ work with an established foundation of psychological safety. The approach was tailored specifically for a not-for-profit agricultural context where pragmatism is valued and professional development is not always the cultural norm.

### ENGAGEMENT AT A GLANCE

The program paired AQai’s assessment science with game-based learning experiences – a combination that proved effective for a not-for-profit leadership team accustomed to pragmatism over professional development. The coaching phase surfaced a recurring team-support deficit that the data confirmed: not a single team member reported high team support. That finding catalyzed the most significant conversation of the program.

### KEY METRICS

12

Leaders assessed

3

Group sessions

24

## RESULTS

### Primary Outcome

Six months after the engagement, the federation's General Manager reported measurably less complaining and significantly more collaboration between meetings. The cultural shift – from guardedness and fragmentation toward accountability and mutual respect – was attributed directly to the program. Leaders had moved from operating in silos to actively supporting one another across organizational priorities.

### Supporting Outcomes

- Team members demonstrated a greater inclination to extend grace to one another – a behavioral shift the General Manager described as a lasting marker of the program's impact
- The group made and honored collective commitments during the AQ Action session: to stop gossip, assume positive intent, and move sensitive conversations to live calls rather than text or email
- Participants described the individual coaching sessions as an exceptional experience – among the most valued elements of the entire program
- The team is actively planning an AQ re-assessment, signaling sustained investment in adaptability as an organizational capability

#### ABOUT AQAI

AQai is the world's leading platform for measuring and developing adaptability. Backed by science and built for modern organizations, our assessments help leaders and teams understand, predict, and grow their capacity to adapt – so they can thrive in any environment.

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aqai.io · info@aqai.io

**Delivered by Jay Reid**

AQai<sup>®</sup> Certified Partner

The Making Box