



**Sustainable Canadian  
Agricultural Partnership**

Competitive. Innovative. Resilient.

# Denise Cassidy

*Helping keep farms  
in the green*



**Canada**

# Training helps not-for-profit executive directors navigate growing list of challenges

For Denise Cassidy, there is no such thing as a typical day on the job.

When you juggle five jobs in two provinces, that is pretty much a given. The executive director of the PEI Hog Board also serves a similar role with PorcNB Pork, Apple Growers of New Brunswick, Canneberges NB Cranberries and the New Brunswick Young Farmers Forum.

The busy schedule makes it difficult to incorporate development and training, something Denise views as important for professional growth.

To meet all of these demands, Denise has been participating in training funded through the federal and provincial Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership. The United Way of Prince Edward Island's year-long ED Academy was a perfect fit.

The session is a combination of in-person and virtual training for executive directors, with a time commitment of 4-5 hours per month. Topics include network and relationship building, leadership development, fundraising, human resources and burnout prevention.

Denise began the training in February. Halfway through, she said she is already using much of what she has learned in her day-to-day duties, not only with the Island board but also the other four organizations.

“*Skills like leadership development, financial management, fundraising and communications are pretty much universal.*

- Denise Cassidy

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Not-for-profit groups also often face similar hurdles in retaining and attracting membership and Denise said the need for long-term, strategic planning is on-going. She admitted that can often be difficult to balance along with day-to-day concerns.



Denise Cassidy, Executive Director of the PEI Hog Board

The course also included tips to prevent burnout and maintain good mental fitness on the job, something Denise admits can be challenging when working with five organizations.

Since most of her work is in New Brunswick, Denise has also appreciated the opportunity to network with her PEI counterparts during the training, and to also promote Island agriculture to participants representing other sectors, including musical tourism and theatre groups.

“It has really helped me understand PEI a little bit more,” she said. “The diversity of organizations in the not-for-profit sector in PEI is amazing.”

Denise said agriculture, like other sectors, is facing challenges that weren't even on the radar ten years ago, from the growing influence of social media to climate change.

“You have to take advantage of every opportunity to improve and expand your skill set to help your organization meet those challenges,” she said. “This course is a significant commitment, but I really love it.”