



**Future
Skills
Centre**

Centre des
**Compétences
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Free education for an inclusive economy

Partners

University of Alberta

Participants People from rural, remote, and northern communities; People without post-secondary education

Locations

[Alberta](#)

Additional Partners

Town of Drayton Valley

Topics

Inclusive Economy
Pathways to Jobs
Skills Training

Related Tags

[future skills](#), [rural](#),
[Rural remote and
northern communities](#),
[shock-proofing](#)

This radical research project will examine the impact of free education in Drayton Valley, Alberta – a town grappling with unemployment and recession. To build an economy less susceptible to threats and shocks, a zero-fee education initiative is being

studied

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daring

approach

to

economic

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in

Canada.

The town of Drayton Valley has long been susceptible to the boom-and-bust cycles of oil and gas. Since 2014, it has experienced a significant recession, with a nearly 80% increase in unemployment. The pandemic has added further pressure, compromising the remaining sectors that sustained the community. This research by the University of Alberta, in partnership with the town, will examine the implementation and outcomes of

free
education.
This
strategy
aims
to
stimulate
the
economy
and
provide
hope
by
enabling
residents
to
pursue
education
without
leaving
the
community,
while
also
offering
free
education
to
other
Canadians.



Future Skills Centre is investing \$659,174 in this 2-year project. By researching both the implementation and outcomes of the zero-fee education initiative, this research can provide an innovative model for other towns and regions seeking to become more resilient in the face of dwindling industries and other shocks to their economies.

Free education will enable community members to upskill or reskill for employment, while promoting economic development. Zero-fee education has the potential to reinvigorate the region by removing financial barriers and creating locally tailored educational opportunities.

Evaluation Strategy

This project is evaluated using tools and approaches aligned with its goals, context, and stage of development. The evaluation focuses on generating the right evidence at the right moment to move the intervention forward. [Read more about our evaluation strategy.](#)



The Future Skills Centre acknowledges that the Anishinaabe, Mississaugas and Haudenosaunee share a special relationship to the 'Dish With One Spoon Territory,' where our office is located, bound to share and protect the land. As a pan-Canadian initiative, FSC operates on the traditional territory of many Indigenous nations across Turtle Island, the name given to the North American continent by some Indigenous peoples. We are grateful for the opportunity to work in this territory and commit ourselves to learning about our shared history and doing our part towards reconciliation.

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