

REGIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL BC: CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of this industry-led economic development initiative is to support the development and implementation of strategies and pilot projects that provide competitive advantage for target clusters in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region. This initiative is guided by the Kootenay Workforce Development Initiative (KWDI), a CBT-funded, Selkirk College-College of the Rockies-supported partnership designed to advance training, skills and workforce development efforts in the region specific to the region's target clusters. KWDI was launched in 2015 to advance the [Kootenay Regional Skills Training Plan](#)¹ and has evolved to support the KWDI's current goals²:

- Goal 1: Grow Competitive Clusters
- Goal 2: Build a 21st Century Workforce
- Goal 3: Facilitate Inclusive Access to Quality Jobs
- Goal 4: Enhance Regional Industry/Education/Community Collaborations

The Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute (RDI) at Selkirk College is also working in partnership with KWDI and the College of the Rockies, Okanagan College and College of New Caledonia to help the region collectively assess comparative workforce development strategies in ways that inform future policy, planning, and action in the region through a social innovation project entitled, *Regional Workforce Development in Rural BC*. This Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) funded project is designed to ensure regional workforce development efforts are informed by research and supported by knowledge exchange and capacity building activities.



Phase 1: Engage Cluster Advisory Teams

Cluster Advisory Teams (CATS) will be formed to identify industry-driven, action-oriented pilot projects that demonstrate direct measurable impacts on industry and businesses. **CATS will have access to up to \$10,000 in seed funding from the Columbia Basin Trust to advance pilot projects** (pending approval from CBT on a project by project basis). The CATs will also review and respond to relevant research and labour market information, identify emerging research questions, and support strategy development, implementation, and evaluation. Target clusters include technology, mining & metallurgy, advanced manufacturing, tourism, and forestry.

Phase 2-4: Research, Strategy and Action

The KWDI Regional Coordinator will work to implement pilot projects and track related metrics under the direction of the KWDI Steering Committee and CATS. Complementary research support by the RDI (using SSHRC funding) will be pursued in order to support evidence-based decision-making.³ The RDI will also work with the KWDI Steering Committee and CATS to design comprehensive cluster-focused strategies focused on building competitive advantage for the region.

Phases 5: Evaluation, Knowledge Exchange & Capacity Building

A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed, informed by the KWDI Steering Committee and CATS. In addition, using SSHRC funding, a series of learning opportunities will be facilitated to support knowledge exchange and capacity building, including: an Annual Learning Summit, a webinar series, and the production of Knowledge Briefs, Labour Market Profiles, and Research Reports.

For more information on the Kootenay Workforce Development Initiative please contact: Carol Curries, ccurrie@selkirk.ca

¹ <http://www.cbrdi.ca/wp-content/uploads/KootenayRegionalSkillsTrainingPlan-2013-2020.pdf>

² While the focus of 2017-18 activities is on cluster-driven, action-oriented pilot projects, elements of goals 2-4 are expected to be embedded in strategic actions.

³ Please see [Regional Workforce Development in Rural BC: Research Agenda](#) document for additional detail.