

Introducing the On-Line Course  
**Developing Rural  
Business Clusters**



# Developing Rural Business Clusters

## **An on-line course for rural development practitioners across western Canada**

Canada's rural communities are facing major economic challenges. In light of this, rural development practitioners need tools and strategies to assist their communities in the move to a long-term sustainable future.

The future of rural economies lies in the development of rural businesses, businesses that bring new wealth to their communities. The strategy of development rural business clusters aligns with the move to diversifying and broadening an economic base, while creating a balanced and stable economy. For this reason, students will learn strategies to build upon a community's comparative advantages and define business clusters that have the potential to grow and create more jobs and generate more wealth. Students will develop a business cluster project throughout the course.

This practical 13 week, interactive on-line course includes:

- Real world case studies of business cluster development
- Strategies to identify business clusters with potential to grow
- Strategies for working with business clusters to support their growth
- Planning and partnering effective cluster development
- Developing rural business cluster projects and writing proposals for project funding.

As a Canadian rural development practitioner, you will find this course engaging and relevant to your daily work. This course is interactive, with video conference learning events, discussion forums, face-to-face interviews and culminates in a rural business cluster project work plan for your region. Throughout the course, students are encouraged to interact and learn from each other.

An added benefit of the course is the alignment with the Community Futures competencies of project management, proposal writing and community economic development.

This on-line course includes nine modules as outlined below:

<b>Module Title</b>	<b>Module Description</b>
<b>Business Clusters in a Rural Economy</b>	Includes the identification of regional business clusters and how to research and prioritize business clusters with the potential to grow.
<b>Cluster Development Model</b>	Explores a nine step model for developing rural business clusters and links this model to case studies, along with the introduction of a project management plan checklist for cluster development.
<b>Development of Rural Business Clusters</b>	Explores business cluster development strategies, analyses growth opportunities and defines the role of a cluster advisory team.
<b>Players in Business Cluster Development</b>	Defines the various players in business cluster development, i.e. cooperatives, associations and post secondary institutions, while exploring potential forms of cluster development.
<b>Funding Cluster Initiatives</b>	Examines the options for funding business cluster initiatives, the partners and the process for funding applications.
<b>Clusters and Export Markets</b>	Defines the connection between business clusters and export market opportunities.
<b>Facilitating Cluster Development</b>	Explores the role of a business cluster facilitator, the skills required and the relationship between a cluster facilitator and the players within a cluster initiative.
<b>Evaluating Cluster Development</b>	Defines a cluster initiative evaluation strategy, evaluation models and the linkages to evaluation and funding.
<b>Developing a Rural Cluster Development Initiative</b>	Provides a basis for developing a business cluster development plan as a foundation for moving ahead with a cluster project.

- Course dates:** April 1 to June 30, 2012 (13 weeks)
- Course Tuition:** Tuition is \$750 (includes resource book)
- Enquiries:** Contact Judy McMillan-Evans, Community Futures Network of Alberta ([judy@cfna.ca](mailto:judy@cfna.ca) or call 403-652-9664).
- Registration deadline:** March 23, 2012
- Registration process:** Payment by VISA or MasterCard only. On-line registration is available through the following link:  
  
<http://www.cfna.ca/event-registration/index.php>
- Pre-requisites:** A thirst for knowledge

**Note:** Just prior to the course start date, you will receive log-in and password information to access the course on-line.

**For more details on the on-line courses offered Community Futures Alberta, visit: [www.ruraldiversification.com](http://www.ruraldiversification.com).**