



PEER LEARNING GROUP

On the Road to Net Zero: Global Lessons from Place-based Skills Development

The [Future Skills Centre \(FSC\) Community of Practice \(CoP\)](#) is a pan-Canadian network for skills and workforce development stakeholders across sectors and industries to connect, share, and learn from each other. As part of the CoP, [Research Impact Canada \(RIC\)](#), in collaboration with FSC, hosts virtual themed Peer Learning Groups (PLGs) to facilitate open discussion among peers in an informal, shared space.

On December 9, 2025, FSC and the [Institute for Research on Public Policy \(IRPP\)](#) hosted a webinar titled [On the Road to Net Zero: Global Lessons from Place-based Skills Development](#). The webinar explored how countries are connecting local economic development with targeted skills training in an effort to help workers and communities adapt and thrive in the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Following the webinar, RIC, FSC, and the IRPP convened a Peer Learning Group to provide participants with a dedicated space to reflect on the research

WHAT WE HEARD

Place-based approaches are essential, but uneven capacity remains a major challenge. Participants strongly agreed that place-based strategies are critical to supporting workers and communities through the net-zero transition. However, many noted that the capacity to plan and implement these approaches varies widely, particularly for small, rural, or resource-based municipalities.

Several participants shared that smaller communities often lack access to:

- Specialized expertise in labour market forecasting and green skills
- Local data tools to anticipate workforce transitions
- Dedicated staff or funding to coordinate long-term planning

This capacity gap can make it difficult for communities to move from high-level net-zero commitments to actionable, locally grounded workforce strategies.

findings, share regional experiences, and discuss practical actions underway across Canada to support a fair and inclusive net-zero transition. Participants were invited to consider what Canada can learn from other jurisdictions and to explore how place-based approaches to skills development can support workers and communities through economic and industrial change.

The audience included workforce development professionals, community-based organizations, educators, training providers, policymakers, researchers, and intermediaries working across diverse regions and sectors.

Participants were invited to join small, facilitated breakout room discussions to respond to the question:

“What is one opportunity or challenge your community or region is experiencing as Canada moves toward a net-zero economy and how is your organization responding to it? What do you see as a priority for future action?”

Community engagement and co-governance strengthen transition outcomes. Across the conversation, there was strong agreement that net-zero transitions are most effective when planning begins early, is grounded in local realities, and meaningfully involves communities in shaping solutions. Reflections from the webinar and PLG emphasized that successful net-zero transitions require meaningful community engagement and shared governance, rather than top-down approaches.

Participants highlighted the value of:

- Engaging workers, employers, training providers, and community organizations early in transition planning
- Recognizing local assets and existing economic strengths
- Building trust through transparent communication and sustained collaboration

International case studies discussed in the webinar reinforced that proactive, long-term planning combined with local co-governance leads to more resilient workforce outcomes and stronger community buy-in.



WHAT WE HEARD

Coordination across policies and systems remains a key barrier. Participants echoed findings from the webinar that policy fragmentation can hinder effective transition planning. Workforce development, economic development, immigration, infrastructure, and climate policies are often developed in silos, creating challenges at the local level.

Several attendees noted that global economic conditions and immigration policies can significantly affect local labour markets, sometimes in ways that are misaligned with regional transition plans. There was strong agreement that better coordination across government departments and levels of government is needed to support place-based workforce strategies.

Workforce transitions require wraparound supports, not just training. A recurring theme in the PLG discussion was that skills training alone is not sufficient to support workers affected by the net-zero transition. Participants emphasized the importance of wraparound supports that enable people to participate in training and employment opportunities. Examples of gaps included:

- Housing affordability pressures
- Income supports during periods of retraining
- Limited access to child care
- Transportation barriers, particularly in rural regions

Without these supports in place, participants noted that even well-designed training programs may fail to reach those most impacted by economic transitions.

Youth engagement and local innovation offer promising pathways forward. Participants identified youth-focused programs as an important opportunity to support innovation, employment readiness, and long-term resilience in net-zero transitions. Youth engagement was seen as a way to:

- Build future-ready skills aligned with green and emerging sectors
- Foster entrepreneurship and innovation at the community level
- Retain young people in smaller and transitioning regions

Several participants noted that community-led youth initiatives can act as testbeds for new approaches to training, employment, and local economic diversification.

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RESOURCES

Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP): Research on [sustainable jobs and place-based policy](#) examining how Canada's Sustainable Jobs Action Plan can better support workers and communities through locally grounded, inclusive transition strategies.

Smart Prosperity Institute: Research on [Canada's Green Skills Transition](#) and the skills ecosystem needed to support green growth, including implications for training providers, employers, and policymakers.

Green Economy Canada: A national non-profit supporting businesses and communities to reduce emissions, build sustainable operations, and strengthen workforce capacity for a net-zero future. Initiatives include the [Climate Action Boot Camp](#).

Iron & Earth: A worker-led organization supporting energy workers, Indigenous communities, and equity-deserving groups to access training and jobs in the clean economy, with an emphasis on reducing barriers to participation.

Canadian Renewable Energy Association (CanREA): A national industry association representing wind, solar, energy storage, and related clean energy sectors in Canada. CanREA supports the growth of the renewable energy industry, advocates for effective policy and regulation, and focuses on skills training, and inclusive recruitment.

Future Skills Centre's research on [building sustainable jobs](#) in Canada in the transition to a low-carbon economy, with a focus on regional and place-based impacts.

Natural Resources Canada's Green Jobs for Hiring Organizations offers information and support for employers to recruit, train, and retain workers in green and emerging sectors across Canada.

Government of Canada's Sustainable Jobs Plan Canada's federal plan outlining actions to support workers and communities through the transition to a low-carbon economy between 2023 and 2025.