

NEWS RELEASE

January 24, 2008



Development Fund Sponsors Five More Projects

New funding helps youth, seniors, Aboriginals and small communities

Tofield – Rural Alberta's Development Fund (RADF) announced funding today of \$4.5 million in support of five rural Alberta projects. These innovative projects will improve learning and training resources, create a unique and transferable business model, improve connectivity and bring youth and seniors together.

The *Pre-Employment and Trades-Related Initiative* is a flexible and cost-effective approach to bringing needed training closer to home for students in east central Alberta communities. For the first time, trades programs taught by college instructors will be offered from Battle River School Division facilities.

Funding support has been provided to *Alberta First Nations Economic Development Model*, a project led by the Alberta First Nations Industrial Initiatives Society in Enoch. The Society will plan and develop a business model for large economic ventures. Once completed, this blueprint will be made available to all Alberta First Nations.

Thanks to RADF's contribution, *Finishing the Dream* will see 12 south central Alberta communities gain improved access to Alberta's SuperNet through Community Engagement Sites. These sites will enable local residents to access broadband technologies, learning applications and support close to home.

The *LINKages Rural Community Initiative* sponsored by RADF will increase the engagement of seniors in rural communities while providing rural youth with leadership, communication, volunteer and life skills. Support has also been given to *Rural Safety Smarts*, a project that will develop and integrate new computer technology into a rural Alberta farm safety program operated by the Alberta Farm Safety Centre in Raymond.

"All these initiatives will provide significant benefits to rural Albertans. We expect the impacts to be both positive and long-term," commented Bob Clark, RADF chair.

"The RADF's funding of these incredibly worthwhile and timely projects shows why government invested in the RADF," said Iris Evans, Minister of Employment, Immigration and Industry. "These five projects will add to rural Alberta's long-term economic and social prosperity."

Rural Alberta's Development Fund is a not-for-profit company that inspires innovation, collaboration and growth across rural Alberta. It is funded by the Government of Alberta and is a key implementation initiative of Alberta's Rural Development Strategy. More information is available at www.ruralalbertasfund.com

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Encl: Projects Backgrounder

BACKGROUND

Summary of Approved Projects

January 24, 2008



PRE-EMPLOYMENT AND TRADES-RELATED INITIATIVE

Fund contribution is \$350,000

This project is an innovative, flexible and cost-effective approach to providing pre-employment and trades-related training to students in east central Alberta communities. Courses will be run by Red Deer College or Lakeland College instructors but held in Battle River School Division facilities in the evenings, on weekends and during the summer months.

Hands-on training for courses involving mechanics or carpentry would occur in bus garages or in high school Career and Technology Studies workshops located in communities such as Camrose, Forestburg, Bashaw and others. Classrooms or videoconferencing would be used for theory instruction. Any additional equipment needed for training would be moved from one town to another as required. Initially managed by the Battle River School Division, plans call for an Industry Education Council composed of education, industry and municipal partners to eventually govern the program. Expected results include:

- Greater access and lower costs to students for pre-employment and trades-related training.
- More skilled workers in east central Alberta.
- More youth staying and working in the region.
- Establishment of a multi-partner, locally based organization to create and broker pre-employment and trades-related training.

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ALBERTA FIRST NATIONS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Fund contribution is \$1.2 million

Funding support has been provided to the Alberta First Nations Industrial Initiatives Society for the planning and development of a business model for large economic ventures. Once completed, this blueprint will be made available to all Alberta First Nations. The initiative is led by the Enoch First Nation and has the support of Alberta's First Nation communities and the Assembly of Treaty Chiefs.

Expected results include:

- Creation of a business model for use by other First Nations that is easily adapted to any large economic initiative.
- Development of supporting studies, reports and processes to implement the business model effectively.
- Increased capacity in Alberta's First Nation communities to undertake, achieve and manage large economic projects.
- Enhanced learning, skill development, capacity and sustainability in Aboriginal communities.

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LINKAGES RURAL COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

Fund contribution is \$68,665

This project will link seniors with young people in rural communities throughout Alberta. The goal is to increase the engagement of seniors while providing rural youth with leadership, communication, volunteer and life skills. In all, 32 groups throughout Alberta have been targeted for involvement. The LINKages Society of Alberta will implement the initiative, which is based on a successful program the Society already operates in Calgary. Local seniors and youth organizations and agencies in rural Alberta will be given training, print resources and consultation support so they can operate the program independently.

Expected results include:

- Understanding, appreciation and respect between rural seniors and youth are developed.
- Increased quality of life for seniors and youth.
- Youth are provided with life and interpersonal skills development and volunteer experiences.
- The capacity of rural communities to deliver their own inter-generational programs is strengthened.

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FINISHING THE DREAM

Fund contribution is \$2.5 million

This project will result in 12 south central Alberta communities gaining access to Alberta's SuperNet through Community Engagement Sites (CES). These sites will enable local residents to access broadband technologies, learning applications and support close to home. The project is being implemented by the South Central Rural Alliance, which is composed of area municipalities and educational institutions.

To be established over a three period in the communities of Bowden, Delburne, Elnora, Spruceview, Benalto, Carstairs, Cremona, Red Deer, Didsbury, Innisfail, Sylvan Lake and Sundre, the CES sites will be linked to a hub in the Bell E-learning Centre located on the Olds College campus. A link to the Sunchild E-Learning Centre in Rocky Mountain House will also be created.

Expected results include:

- Local access to broadband, on-line technologies providing information and support in key areas such as education, health, agriculture and business.
- More young people and families are attracted to the region.
- More collaboration amongst communities, individuals, businesses and industry regarding rural sustainable and economic development.
- Improved access to government programs and services.

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RURAL SAFETY SMARTS

Fund contribution is \$498,000

Support of this project will result in the development and integration of new computer technology into a rural Alberta farm safety program. The Alberta Farm Safety Centre in Raymond has been providing important farm safety education to students in southern Alberta schools since 1998. This new initiative will also double the program's number of instructors and reach an estimated 50,000 rural students annually.

RADF's contribution will be used primarily to modernize teaching and student materials. This includes digital games and activities, videos, and other age appropriate learning tools involving computerized technologies. The Alberta Farm Safety Centre has strong corporate, community, municipal and school board support. Various partners have contributed an additional \$450,000 towards the program.

Expected results include:

- Rural children throughout Alberta get age appropriate farm safety training.
- Safer farm practices among the next generation of farmers.
- Fewer farm accidents involving children.
- Sustainability of the program through the development of partnerships and sponsorships.

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