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# Community Economic Development Education and Training in Manitoba: A Program and Course Analysis

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## **KEYWORDS**

*Rural Capacity; CED Competencies; Education; Training; Community Capitals*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This knowledge brief plays a key role in a much larger research project conducted over the last three years by the Rural Development Institute (RDI) that focuses on building the capacity of rural communities to engage in development projects. The project's central aim is to develop a CED competency framework that details the knowledge and skills required to plan and implement community projects (McNeely & Kelly, 2025b; McNeely & Kelly, 2024). This framework is paired with a prior learning assessment process designed to enable individuals and organizations to identify the CED competencies they already possess, recognize new knowledge and skills acquired informally through community projects, and identify CED gap training needs to enhance their local capacity (Rural Developed Institute, 2025). The goal is to align the education and training requirements for engaging in CED with rural communities' realities and priorities when undertaking community development projects to promote resilience, inclusivity, and sustainability (Markey et al., 2015; Main et al., 2019; Rich et al., 2021; OECD, 2024).

This brief focuses on analyzing the CED education and training offered in Manitoba, which is expected to cultivate the knowledge and skills necessary for rural communities to pursue development projects. The goal of the analysis is to understand the current CED educational landscape and how it aligns with the province's capacity-building needs for enhancing community economic development opportunities. The question remains whether there are gaps between what the CED programs contribute to capacity building and what rural communities indeed need.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 The Capacity Issue in Rural Communities**

RDI's research project recognizes that rural communities in Canada continue to face capacity challenges that limit their ability to undertake CED projects. These challenges stem primarily from limited human and financial resources. Many rural areas depend on small staff or volunteers, who often experience burnout and frustration when tasked with designing, implementing, and evaluating development projects. Without adequate supports, projects can stall or collapse, weakening community morale and engagement. Another complicating factor is that rural regions struggle with out-migration of young adults seeking post-secondary education or employment opportunities, leaving fewer to be involved in development projects. While community leaders, residents, and organizations do step into multiple roles, their contributions in CED are frequently based on informal learning and experience rather than having completed formal education and training in CED. This creates a mismatch between the competencies expected of those involved in CED and the lived realities. While community leaders,<sup>1</sup>

residents, and organizations do step into multiple roles, their contributions in CED are frequently based on informal learning and experience rather than having completed formal education and training in CED. This creates a mismatch between the competencies expected of those involved in CED and the lived realities of rural development practice. Recognizing this context of rural communities is an acknowledgment that capacity is fundamentally a place-based issue and that rural communities operate at varying levels of capacity. Whereas higher-capacity ones demonstrate independent problem-solving, resource mobilization, and sustained collaboration, low-capacity communities are reactive, reliant on external supports, and lack coordination. This distinction highlights the importance of focusing on the CED education and training priorities for low-capacity communities to address the challenges they experience in community development projects.

## 2.2 The importance of CED Education & Training

CED is fundamentally dependent on building local capacity, which is cultivated through targeted education and training. At the community level, scholars such as Johnson, Thompson, and Naugle (2009) advocate for a "place-conscious capacity-building" model, which leverages university-community partnerships to foster asset-based, culturally responsive learning for local revitalization. This bottom-up approach is often undermined, however, by systemic gaps at the program and curriculum level. As McNeely and Ashton (2019) argue, Canadian public policy programs have critical deficiencies in graduate training specific to rural contexts, leading to the misapplication of urban-centric models that can hinder rural innovation. Similarly, a neglect of rural specificities regarding the broad range of knowledge and skills required to undertake CED can create a damaging disconnect between CED training and the on-the-ground practice of undertaking CED projects. This gap underscores the need for effective assessments to gauge whether capacity requirements are addressed through higher education institutions and CED professional organizations.

## 2.3 The range of CED Competencies

To identify the knowledge and skills required for CED, RDI conducted a series of comparative analyses of the competencies expected to be applied by the community actors commonly involved in CED projects. These actors include community leaders, businesses, regional politicians, community organizations, and concerned residents. This analysis employed Canada's Occupation and Skills Information System (OaSIS) (Government of Canada, 2023). The findings revealed a set of common knowledge, skills, and attributes across these roles, emphasizing management, communications, economics, and accounting, as well as critical thinking, decision-making, collaboration, and leadership, suggesting a shared core of transferable competencies. The analysis also revealed technical expertise for specialized roles like planning.

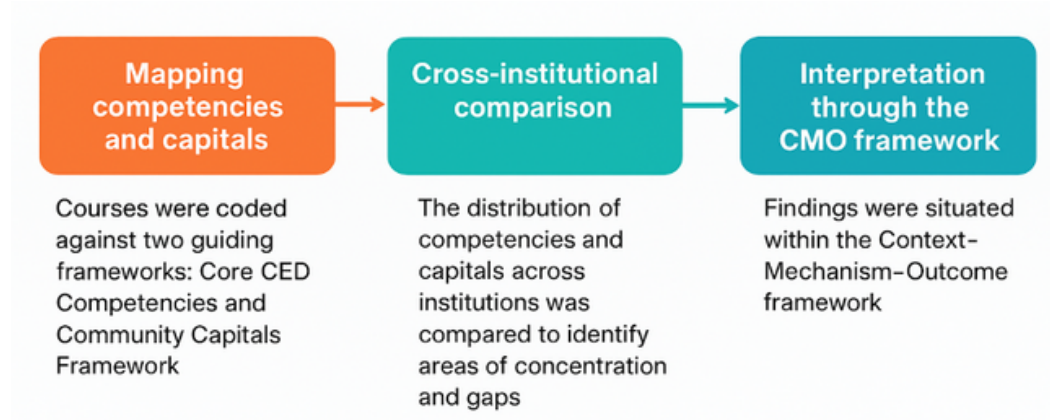
This distinction has led to a more resolved CED Competency Framework that includes a set of core CED competencies and more specialized CED skill sets (McNeely & Kelly, 2025a). The core was reduced to five, including: Communications, Community Collaboration, Leadership, Project Management, and Research and Data Analysis. The more technical expertise was identified as project-specific knowledge and skills, which were aligned with the Community Capitals Framework (CCF), developed by Flora and Flora (2008). This framework provides a holistic lens to evaluate a community's vitality across seven key capitals: human, social, cultural, political, financial, built, and natural. For a practical perspective, however, the capitals serve as the resources to access and utilize when initiating and implementing a CED project.

### 3.0 METHODS

#### 3.1 Descriptive Analysis

This project involved a descriptive and comparative research design. The primary method was a scan of education and training opportunities related to CED in Manitoba. This type of scan aims to establish a baseline picture of the landscape of available programs rather than provide an exhaustive evaluation of curriculum delivery or learning outcomes. In this case, the scan focused on publicly accessible course catalogs, program descriptions, and training outlines offered by universities, colleges, and professional associations, including Brandon University, University College of the North, Red River College Polytechnic, University of Winnipeg, University of Manitoba, and the Economic Developers Association of Manitoba. The categorized courses and training programs provided the basis for the comparative analysis of their respective training on the Core CED Competencies and Community Capitals Framework.

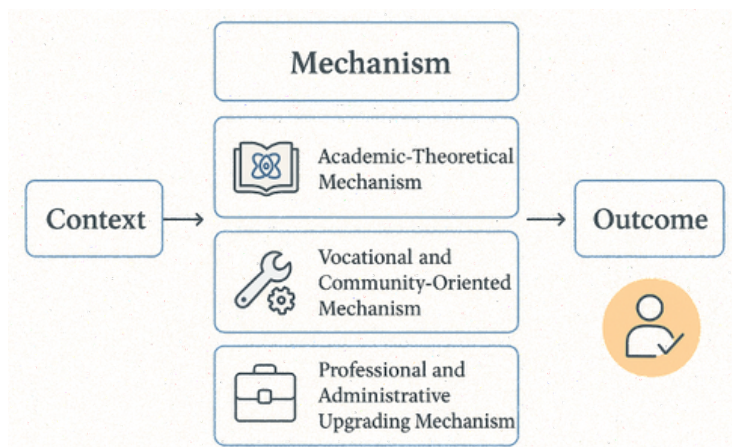
Figure 1. Research Process Flowchart



#### 3.2 Analytical Lens: Context-Mechanism-Outcome (CMO) Framework

The thematic analysis draws on a Context–Mechanism–Outcome (CMO) framework as an interpretive lens (Ramanadhan et al., 2023). The CMO framework helps explain not only what exists but also how and why it works in a particular setting. In this project, the framework is applied to interpret the findings from the course scan.

Figure 2. CMO Mechanism Display



The rural development landscape in Manitoba provides the background contexts and conditions shaping education and training in CED. Rural communities in the province are characterized by dispersed geography, limited access to institutional resources, and reliance on local governance and volunteer leadership. The context also includes the diverse institutional environment, like universities, colleges, and professional associations, each with its own mandate and orientation toward CED.

As we emphasize the education of capacity building, the mechanisms refer to ways in which education and training are expected to produce capacity-building effects. In this study, mechanisms include the design and delivery of courses that cultivate core CED competencies, which include communication, collaboration, project management, leadership, research methods and data, and strengthen community capitals, including human, social, political, natural, financial, built, and cultural. Different providers adopt different mechanisms: some emphasize academic knowledge and research skills, while others prioritize experiential learning, community engagement, or commercial internship.

## 4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Program Description

The community and economic development education landscape in Manitoba is diverse, with programs offered by various institutions. Brandon University provides academic, graduate-level studies focused on rural development theory and research. For more practical, community-oriented training, programs at University College of the North and Red River College emphasize hands-on, project-based learning that includes a specific focus on Indigenous perspectives. Additionally, a range of professional programs, such as those from the University of Winnipeg, the University of Manitoba, and the Economic Developers Association of Manitoba, provide targeted skills in applied project management and municipal administration for practitioners.

Table 1. Program Descriptions

Institution	Program Title	Program Description	Delivery Mode	Number of Courses
Brandon University	Rural and Community Studies Program	The Rural and Community Studies Program (RCSP) provides students with the opportunity to design an individually tailored degree that combines courses in rural and community studies with courses from traditional disciplines (e.g., Sociology and Geography). The purpose of this program is to provide students with a better understanding of the social, economic, and environmental issues facing rural regions, and in doing so, provide the skill base to assist those in rural regions to prepare for and adapt to such issues. Relationships with the graduate program in Rural Development and opportunities within the Rural Development Institute allow students to gain practical experience through research work. In addition to the core courses within the Department of Rural Development, the RCSP is based on collaboration with six other departments: Business Administration, Economics Geography, Native Studies, Political Science, and Sociology.	In-class	50
Brandon University	Master of Arts in Rural Development	The MRD degree provides students with the following: Knowledge of current development theory; The ability to apply knowledge to their selected area of interest; Skills in understanding and participating in rural governance; Technical skills in research design and reporting; Basic training in community relations, networking, group facilitation and development planning; An understanding of the formulation and role of policy in rural development; Knowledge of the structure and functioning of rural society.	In-class	27
Brandon University	Graduate Diploma in Rural Development	The Graduate Diploma in Rural Development is designed to provide graduate-level study to those who wish to extend their knowledge of theory and practice through coursework but are not interested in the research training component of graduate study.	In-class	
University College of the North	2-year Diploma in Community Economic Development	University College of the North's Community Economic Development two-year diploma program provides graduates with the knowledge and skills required for a range of employment and self-employment opportunities, including contributing to the health of the natural environment, building on community resources and capacities, increasing community control and ownership, and stabilizing local and community economies. Upon successful completion of all program requirements, students will graduate with a Community Economic Development diploma.	In-class	25

Table 1. Program Descriptions

Institution	Program Title	Program Description	Delivery Mode	Number of Courses
Red River College Polytech	1-year Certificate in Social Innovation and Community Development	SICD features a common first year of foundational studies with a certificate exit, followed by a specializing second year in which participants take one of two groups of electives leading to a diploma in Indigenous Social Entrepreneurship or a diploma in Community Development. The program focuses on the social, political, cultural, and economic factors that contribute to the urban, rural, local, and global development of Indigenous peoples. Participants gain a deeper understanding of community development and economic reconciliation as observed through Indigenous perspectives. The program features collaborative courses and assignments using a team-based approach. The delivery model focuses on experiential and project-based learning principles with capstone projects uniting multiple dimensions of learning and introducing potential employment.	In-class; Hybrid	31
Red River College Polytech	2-year Diploma in Community Development	After completing the foundation year in the Social Innovation and Community Development program, you will have the option of choosing to complete your diploma year in Community Development. Courses within this program are experiential and project-based. The faculty and participants operate as an integrated team, collaborating on course content, instruction, multi-course projects, and work placement experiences. The program is laptop-based to increase convenience and flexibility. The program consists of eight courses and two six-week work placement experiences.	In-class; Hybrid	
University of Winnipeg	Applied Project Management - Certificate	This program consists of five courses that prepare students to lead and manage projects. Students are systematically taken through the project management life cycle using a variety of assessments and case studies. Tailor the learning process by choosing one of four electives to enhance your skill set, no matter the industry. The Applied Project Management Certificate is designed for individuals with a desire to enhance their education and gain the foundational knowledge and skills needed to successfully manage projects of any size. Learn how to manage projects that stay on time, on budget, and within scope with this applied certificate.	Hybrid	7

Table 1. Program Descriptions

Institution	Program Title	Program Description	Delivery Mode	Number of Courses
University of Manitoba	Certificate in Municipal Administration	<p>Whether you work in municipal administration or you would like to, this program provides you with the knowledge and skills to be an effective administrator within a municipality. The program is offered in partnership with the Manitoba Municipal Administrators' Association, representing Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) of Manitoba municipalities, and is recognized as important professional development within their organization. Representatives from the Association of Manitoba Municipalities are also on the program's advisory committee, supporting continued refinement of this program, which has been offered for many years.</p>	Online	6
Economic Developers Association of Manitoba	Community Edge Training	<p>The MB Community Edge Municipal Building Project is an initiative that will deliver CED capacity-building training to over 300 municipal officials and community leaders across all of rural and northern Manitoba. The project will see Community Edge, Manitoba's CED Certification Program, offered in ten regional centres across the province. Sessions will be offered with two modules in each region. The project will teach practical skills and strategies to help Manitoba communities build strength, stability, and resilience. The program is targeted toward economic development practitioners, elected officials, administrators, and community development champions. The program consists of eight modules, with the first four modules focusing on the foundations of what CED is, why it is important, how it can be structured, and how it integrates into municipal planning and financial investments.</p>	In-class	11

## 4.2 Program / Course Statistical Analysis

The landscape of CED education in Manitoba is diverse, with various institutions offering programs that emphasize different competencies and community capitals. To provide a comparative overview, the following table presents a descriptive statistical analysis of seven key programs. The data is expressed in percentages, indicating the proportion of courses within each program that address specific CED competencies and community capitals. This normalization allows for a meaningful comparison across programs of different sizes.

### 4.2.1 Core Competencies Analysis

It is revealed that significant differences in the emphasis placed on core competencies across programs. Project Management and Research Methods & Data Analysis have the highest average coverage, indicating they are central to the curriculum. For instance, programs at the University of Manitoba (UMB) and the University of Winnipeg (UWpg) highly prioritize Project Management, while Brandon University's (BU) programs focus on developing Research Methods and Data Analysis skills. In contrast, Financial Literacy and Leadership have lower average coverage, suggesting these skills are relatively underrepresented in the current curricula.

Table 2. Percentage of Courses Covering CED Competencies by Program

Program		BU (RCSP)	BU (MARD)	UCN	RRCP	UWpg	UMB	EDAM
<b>Competencies (%)</b>	Communications	36	66.7	20	35.5	28.6	33	18.2
	Collaboration	10	11.1	28	3.2	28.6	16	18.2
	Project Management	12	18.5	28	25.8	42.9	83.3	54.5
	Research & Data	86	92.6	64	48.4	28.6	83.3	36.4
	Leadership	4	7.4	8	3.2	42.9	16.7	0

### 4.2.2 Community Capitals Analysis

In terms of community capitals, all programs show a strong and widespread focus on Human Capital, with its average percentage being significantly higher than all other capitals. This indicates that enhancing individual skills and knowledge is a universal program objective. Social Capital also receives considerable attention, particularly in vocational and community-oriented programs. However, Natural/Built, Financial, and Political capitals have relatively low average percentages. This suggests that while some programs (e.g., UCN and RRC) may have high coverage of specific capitals (like Financial Capital), these areas receive insufficient attention in the curriculum design.

Table 3. Percentage of Courses Covering Community Capitals by Program

Program		BU (RCSP)	BU (MARD)	UCN	RRCP	UWpg	UMB	EDAM
Community Capitals (%)	Social	18	7.4	36	38.7	71.4	33.3	45.5
	Cultural	42	18.5	16	19.4	0	0	9.1
	Political	42	59.3	28	6.5	0	50	27.3
	Built	2	3.7	0	0	0	0	0
	Natural	24	11.1	8	0	0	0	0
	Financial	12	14.8	28	38.7	0	33.3	36.4
	Human	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

From these two tables, several trends emerge. Human Capital is a universal focus, with every program covering it extensively. University-level academic programs, such as Brandon University's RCSP and MARD, show a very strong emphasis on Research Methods & Data Analysis. In contrast, professional and college-level programs, like those at UMB, EDAM, and UWpg, place a greater emphasis on practical competencies like Project Management. RRC and UCN stand out for their strong focus on Financial Capital. Notably, competencies like Leadership and capitals such as Built and Natural Capital receive comparatively less attention across the board.

#### 4.3 Analysis of Educational Mechanisms

To interpret these findings, we can apply the Context-Mechanism-Outcome (CMO) framework. It turns out that the programs in Manitoba can be categorized into three types of mechanisms.

##### 4.3.1 Academic-Theoretical Mechanism

This mechanism, exemplified by Brandon University's undergraduate (RCSP) and graduate (MARD) programs, prioritizes the development of a strong theoretical foundation and analytical skills. The curriculum is heavily weighted towards research methodologies (104% and 92.6%, respectively), critical thinking, and understanding complex social, political, and cultural systems. The goal is to produce graduates with a deep, systemic understanding of rural issues, preparing them for roles in policy analysis, research, and academia. The emphasis is on building high-level human capital, though with less direct focus on applied financial or project management skills.

#### 4.3.2 Vocational and Community-Oriented Mechanism

This approach is characteristic of college programs like UCN and RRC. The mechanism here is grounded in practical application and direct community engagement. There is a balanced emphasis on foundational business skills (Financial Capital at 28% and 38.7%) and collaborative, hands-on project work (Project Management at 28% and 25.8%). A key feature of this mechanism, particularly at UCN and RRC, is its focus on Indigenous perspectives, reflected in the coverage of Cultural and Social Capital. The aim is to equip students with the tangible skills needed to work directly in community organizations, manage local projects, and foster social enterprise.

#### 4.3.3 Professional and Administrative Upgrading Mechanism

This mechanism is tailored for existing or aspiring practitioners in municipal and economic development roles, as seen in the programs from UMB, UWpg, and EDAM. The curriculum is highly specialized and instrumental, focusing on the direct application of skills required for administrative and management functions. This is evident in the strong emphasis on Project Management (83.3% at UMB, 42.9% at UWpg, 54.5% at EDAM) and understanding governance structures (Political Capital at 50% at UMB). This mechanism functions as a form of professional development, designed to enhance the operational effectiveness of individuals already working within the CED field.

### 5.0 CONCLUSION AND FUTURE STUDY

#### 5.1 Summary of Analysis

This course scan provides a descriptive overview of CED education in Manitoba, covering programs offered by universities, colleges, and professional associations. Applying the Context-Mechanism-Outcome (CMO) framework, programs were categorized into three mechanisms: Academic-Theoretical, Vocational and Community-Oriented, and Professional and Administrative Upgrading. The analysis shows a strong emphasis on Human Capital, with universities focusing on research skills and professional programs prioritizing practical competencies such as project management. While communication and collaboration skills are widely addressed, notable gaps remain in Leadership, Financial, and Natural/Built Capital development.

#### 5.2 Research Limitations

The study relies on descriptive analysis of publicly available course information and does not evaluate instructional quality or pedagogical effectiveness. The sample is limited, focusing on selected programs rather than providing a comprehensive analysis of the programs' curricula. For instance, the analysis does not account for the programs' composition of required and elective courses, or the sequence of courses leading to attainment of the CED and project-specific competencies. Also, the analysis does account for the attainment of the range of CED competencies when the various programs are not designed on competency-based principles. Most importantly, the competency outcomes were inferred from the curriculum content rather than empirically measured, limiting conclusions about actual impacts on student skills or community capacity.

### 5.3 Future Study

Future research should address these limitations by incorporating qualitative methods (interviews with administrators, instructors, and alumni) and quantitative assessments (surveys or graduate tracking) to evaluate the actual impact of these programs. Such follow-up work is essential to validate the inferred findings and support evidence-based policy and curriculum development. Another avenue of research is to expand the analysis of CED programs offered in other provinces with an aim to develop a Pan-Canadian overview of CED education and training opportunities. This would be followed by a review of program analyses by CED practitioners from the respective provinces. Finally, there is the potential to review CED education and training programs in different countries that could address whether their respective studies align with the context of these rural regions.

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## Rural Development Institute

Brandon University established the Rural Development Institute in 1989 as an academic research centre and a leading source of information on issues affecting rural communities in Western Canada and elsewhere.

RDI functions as a not-for-profit research and development organization designed to promote, facilitate, coordinate, initiate and conduct multi-disciplinary academic and applied research on rural issues. The Institute provides an interface between academic research efforts and the community by acting as a conduit of rural research information and by facilitating community involvement in rural development. RDI projects are characterized by cooperative and collaborative efforts of multi-stakeholders.

The Institute has diverse research affiliations, and multiple community and government linkages related to its rural development mandate. RDI disseminates information to a variety of constituents and stakeholders and makes research information and results widely available to the public either in printed form or by means of public lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences.

For more information, please visit [www.brandonu.ca/rdi](http://www.brandonu.ca/rdi)

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## Time Log: What, Why and How?

### Purpose

The Time Log tracks your weekly hours during the Co-op Experience. It helps ensure you're meeting the course expectation of approximately **6+ hours per week**, while giving your instructor a snapshot of your engagement.

### When to Use

**Update the log at least once per week.** We recommend keeping it open while you work or adding your hours at the end of each day.

### How to Use It

1. Open the Co-op Experience Time Log spreadsheet.
2. Go to your assigned project and only update your specific row (has your name).
3. For each day you work:
  - Enter the number of hours worked in 30-minute increments (e.g., 0.5, 1, 1.5).
  - Leave days blank if you didn't work that day — no need to enter a zero.
4. The sheet will automatically calculate weekly and cumulative totals.
5. At the end of the term, this log will be submitted as part of your final deliverables.

### Things to Know

- You don't need to track every task — just the number of hours.
- Rounding to the nearest half hour (0.5) is detailed enough for this course.
- This is a tool for accountability and self-awareness, not for perfection.
- If you're ever unsure how to log something (e.g., orientation sessions, reading background materials), ask your lead.

To access the Time Log, go into the "General" Channel on the left hand side of the Teams Page, then click "Files"

The Time Log will be pinned to the top of the page, here

