



# Regional Workforce Development in Rural British Columbia

## 2016-2018

### Lead

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### Co-Investigators

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Rural restructuring has created new challenges and opportunities for rural economic development across Canada. Rural regions are trying to build resilience as they transition from natural resource extraction economies to service and knowledge-based economies. At the same time, rural communities are challenged by the withdrawal of provincial and federal development support. The growing body of New Regionalism literature suggests regional development should focus on competitive advantage based on key assets, skills, and knowledge. A movement to a more holistic understanding of rural development is also required, where innovation and learning occur in communities and the economy is embedded within a larger socio-economic-ecological system. Innovation, learning, and knowledge flows have become critical to economic outcomes.

This project brings together existing and emerging networks with a focus on workforce development through the creation of a regional Learning and Innovation Research Network. The proposal responds to the SSHRC's future challenge area focused on exploring new ways of learning, particularly in higher education, that will allow Canadians to thrive in an evolving society and labour market. The project will explore the role of colleges in collectively promoting and supporting the life cycle of knowledge, including co-creation and mobilization across sectors using a learning regions approach-providing a potential model for other colleges across the country. The research will also explore the role of students, faculty and community partners as change agents and the conditions under which innovation and collaborative learning can be stimulated in a regional setting.

Dr. Ryan Gibson is a co-investigator on this research initiative.