



Innovation in Rural, Remote and Indigenous Communities

1. Overview

Project goal: Establish a framework that enables Ontario's rural, remote, and Indigenous communities to better understand, participate in, and benefit from energy innovation to meet the net zero target.

Project focus: Creating a framework that can be used by and for multiple communities now and in the future as well as for use by municipal governments and utilities to promote innovation among communities in their jurisdiction.

What is low-carbon innovation? Research, development, deployment, new practices, new business models, and new products or services that reduce GHG emissions in the energy sector, aligning with Canada's net-zero targets.

Project motivation: Innovation in technology and business models is essential for achieving net zero across Canada, but due to resource availability and customer demand, it has predominantly focused on urban areas.

By identifying communities' diverse motivations, needs, and means, this framework allows more communities to participate and benefit from the net zero transition

2. Engagement with community innovation energy partners

We are reaching out to understand your community's net-zero innovation needs and priorities. We would appreciate your time for a one-hour interview to do so.

3. Project Overview & Understanding what the framework means

The project will develop a framework through which communities and other sector participants can assess what innovative opportunities align with their unique interests. We highlight that innovation includes more than just new technology; it can also include new practices and

business models essential for transitioning to net zero. The project will accomplish this through research and engagement with rural, remote, and Indigenous communities in Ontario.

The engagement includes interviewing communities and, thereby, understanding their needs. This will lead to the generation of the framework, which consists of several modules based on community needs.

For example, the framework may consist of a worksheet clarifying the net-zero transition and the role of innovation in achieving it. It can also guide communities on available business models and how to integrate them to implement more net-zero energy resources. In cases where communities face funding challenges, the framework can propose business models that facilitate collaboration between investors and communities.

Then, communities can independently consider and act on appropriate modules based on their needs and interests. This framework will serve Indigenous and remote communities understand, participate in, and benefit from energy innovation and their role in the energy transition. This will increase innovation in business models, technology models, and service delivery, which will help promote the energy transition in hard-to-reach geographic areas.

4. Project proponents

This project is a joint initiative of Pollution Probe and QUEST Canada, two national NGOs. This project will build on Pollution Probe and QUEST Canada's recently concluded Innovation Sandboxes project, which examines the use of innovation sandboxes in regulatory space and which held over 10 international, national, and jurisdictional workshops with energy stakeholders to inform innovation sandbox designs.

5. Outcomes

The main outcome will be creating a community net-zero framework. It will involve the following steps:

1. Establish an advisory committee;
2. Develop a draft alignment framework for innovation in rural and remote communities;
3. Conduct two Indigenous and two community workshops and produce outcome reports; and
4. Finalize the alignment framework by incorporating stakeholders' feedback.

