

# Building bright futures in Alberta municipalities

Organizations are helping communities begin their community energy journey by exploring what is possible through engagement, education and capacity building.



Grants in action

## Sometimes a little know-how leads to lot of progress

In our recent blog [Powering Communities](#), we highlight different communities around the province who are building renewable energy projects to create energy autonomy. Building support is a key component of their success. These organizations are helping communities begin their community energy journey by exploring what is possible through engagement, education and capacity building.

Community benefit and partnerships agreements are a tool that allows residents to share in the benefits of a community generation development. They allow the community to have a voice in

shaping a project, provide fit-for-purpose benefits, and ensure developers meet their obligations. With Energy Efficiency Alberta funding, Rural Routes to Climate Solutions helped communities engage their citizens in the partnership agreement process. Partnering with the Alberta Community and Co-operative Association to host the Community Generation Network, they launched weekly lunches to highlight projects like the Peace Energy Co-operative and the Airport Solar Project. Learning from the experiences of municipalities who have been through the process helps others understand the necessary early steps to support funding for community renewable energy projects.

The Miistakis Institute understands the value of combining science and community knowledge. They launched an initial version of their Municipal Suitability Land Use Tool, a digital tool that uses ecological, agricultural and cultural layers in addition to community input to determine the least conflict land for renewable development. Working with communities like the M.D. of Pincher Creek, they engaged with municipal staff, council and experts to determine most suitable and no-go areas specific to their community. Webinars, surveys and workshops are a key part of the process in building this critical knowledge.

Through the Pembina Institute's series of webinars and workshops all over Alberta, hundreds of Albertans heard from experts and experienced municipalities about the benefits, challenges and lessons of implementing energy efficiency and renewable energy projects on a commercial scale, as well as the benefits of renewable energy projects as a means of diversification. This process helped municipalities understand what tools they already have to enact change. Through their work, Pembina also fostered a network of progressive leaders, elevating the voices of those who are thinking outside-the-box and connecting them with peers who are at the outset of their projects. As a result, five groups are now in conversation with the Business Renewables Centre to join as large-scale buyers of renewable energy. A further five groups are developing their renewable energy procurement plans, and dozens more are engaged in their planning and design phase.

*“Thank you for arranging the webinar. The municipalities in the Capital Region really appreciated the format. The information was thought provoking and I look forward to its greatly appreciated!” – Meghan Myers, Environmental Coordinator, City of St. Albert*



Participants listen to students from Lacombe Composite High School talk about renewable energy at the Pembina Institute’s workshop in Red Deer.

Newo Energy is all about reducing GHGs in a way that leverages learning, creates employable skills long term and supports other non-profits. Their five-day solar training program will run in parallel with installing a 50kW solar system on the iHuman building in Edmonton, complete with internships and hand’s on installation experience. Newo Global Energy also partnered with the Bissell Centre to put 78 solar panels on its roof. The panels supply 18 per cent of the Centre’s

electricity needs and include a section that can be assembled and disassembled for training purposes, providing a pathway for workers from Bissell’s casual labour program to participate in the new green economy. In March, a class of 12 students became the first to use the training array.

***“I am so impressed with Bissell and Newo for offering us this training. Joe Blow living on the street would never have access to this kind of training, or even know that it exists.” – Participant Vincent Markiewicz***



Participants of Newo’s five-day solar training program learn how to install panels on the Bissel Centre in Edmonton.