

ACTivate – Building Strong and Resilient Communities Expression of Interest Details – Government Agencies

Background

The Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism (GMIST) and its partner the Coady Institute at St. Francis Xavier University (Coady) have embarked on an ambitious and exciting project which takes a fresh approach to community development in Atlantic Canada. Through the development and delivery of this new program, we are seeking to flip traditional thinking about tourism to viewing it as an asset for community development that can enhance community well-being. This will not be a destination development program, but rather is focused on building the community from within through a strengths-based approach, rather than a deficit-based approach. The ACTivate Program takes a citizen-led approach and aims to provide participants with tools, knowledge and skills to enhance and build on the strengths in their communities.

The program will build on the belief that a good place to live is also a good place to visit. Each participant's journey through this program may lead them to different outcomes within their work and within their communities. We are looking to the future with a goal to help facilitate a culture of wellbeing in communities throughout Atlantic Canada. We believe that every community is unique, but all can find success with tools, resources, skills and support.

This call for Expressions of Interest (Eoi) is an invitation to participants who wish to engage alongside GMIST, Coady and partners to explore community development through a different lens. Throughout the learning journey, everyone will learn collectively from each other, experiment and share ideas and discuss a wide range of topics. GMIST and Coady definitely do not have all of the answers when it comes to community development, but we invite you to come along with us as we learn about and explore new approaches.

What is Asset Based Community Development – (As described from [Nurture Development](#))

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) builds on the assets that are found in the community and mobilizes individuals, associations, and institutions to come together to realise and develop their strengths. This makes it different from a Deficit Based approach that focuses on identifying and servicing needs. From the start an Asset Based approach spends time identifying the assets of individuals, associations and institutions that form the community. The identified assets from an individual are matched with people or groups who have an interest in or need for those strengths. The key is beginning to use what is already in the community. Then working together to build on the identified assets of all involved. It is essentially development BY the community as opposed to FOR the

community. ABCD is a perspective rather than a model or blueprint and cannot be tied directly to one specific set of best practices.

The first key method of the ABCD approach is that development begins with the recognition of asset categories that can be uncovered in any community and place. When applying ABCD principles communities are not thought of as complex masses of needs and problems, but rather diverse and capable webs of gifts and assets. Each community has a unique set of skills and capacities it can channel for community development. Empowerment and community connections have to start at the micro level. Working alongside communities to build on what is important to them can be a very powerful form of support and will enable them to be able to identify the resources, whether internal or external, that they need to move forward.

Asset Based Community Development categorizes asset inventories into five groups, Individuals, Associations, Institutions, Place Based and Connections.

INDIVIDUALS – EVERYONE HAS ASSETS AND GIFTS.

At the centre are residents of the community who all have gifts and skills. Individual gifts and assets need to be recognized and identified. In community development you cannot do anything with people's needs, only their assets. Deficits or needs are only useful to institutions.

ASSOCIATIONS – PEOPLE DISCOVER EACH OTHER'S GIFTS.

Small informal groups of people, such as clubs, working with a common interest as volunteers are called associations in ABCD, and are critical to community mobilization. They don't control anything; they are just coming together around a common interest by their individual choice.

INSTITUTIONS – PEOPLE ORGANISED AROUND ASSETS.

Paid groups of people that generally are professionals who are structurally organized are called institutions. They include government agencies and private business, as well as schools, etc. They can all be valuable resources. The assets of these institutions help the community capture valuable resources and establish a sense of civic responsibility.

PLACE BASED ASSETS – PEOPLE LIVE HERE FOR A REASON.

Land, buildings, heritage, public and green spaces are all examples of assets for the community. Every place where people choose to be was chosen for good reasons, and whilst people remain those reasons remain. A place might be a centre of natural resources, a hub of activity, living skills, transit connection or marketplace. Whatever the strengths of a place are, the people of the community will be the closest to understanding it.

CONNECTIONS – INDIVIDUALS CONNECT INTO A COMMUNITY.

Asset Based Community Development recognises that the exchange between people sharing their gifts and assets creates connections, and these connections are a vital asset to the community. People whose gift is to find and create these connections are called connectors. It takes time to find out about individuals; this is normally done through building relationships, person by person. The social

relationships, networks and trust form the social capital of a community. ABCD recognises the value of these assets, and is a practical application of building relationships to increase social capital.

Program Schedule

Level I

Program participants will be selected in January 2023 and the program will start in February. Please note that in order to receive the certification, all elements of the program must be completed.

February 28	Onboarding
March 21 & 23	Two 90 minute online introductory sessions
April 17 - 20	3 ½ days of in person learning in Gros Morne National Park, NL
May – mid June	Choose a program or initiative that you have worked on or are familiar with and analyse how the process could either shift toward a citizen-led process or how it could stimulate, support or sustain community development. Work on a sustainable Action Plan to make this shift with coaching and support provided by the GMIST/Coady team (5-6 weeks)
Mid June	Issues & Challenges session (online) + certificate celebration

Level II

We anticipate that some participants from Level I will be interested in furthering their learnings and working more closely with their fellow citizens in their own communities/organizations to advance initiatives following the ABCD approach. These participants will be invited to apply, on behalf of their communities/organizations, to move to Level II of the program and to have additional colleagues to join them in the learning. Several communities will be selected to move into Level II which will commence in Fall 2023. A number of provincial and federal government agencies will be selected to join this Level and learn alongside the community change makers:

Mid September	Additional community members and government agents will participate in two 90 minute online introductory sessions
Mid-October to mid-November	In-person community-based workshops will be held in each selected community over three days with support from the GMIST/Coady team. These will engage a broader group of citizens in working toward a project or initiative. At least two provincial government and one federal government agents will accompany the process in each of the four sites.
Early February	Issues and Challenges Session - The leadership teams (4-5 per community) will attend this 3 day in person session at a central location in Atlantic Canada. The government agents will attend this session as well to assess how they can support the citizen-led processes that each is working on. This session will allow space for brainstorming and peer-to-peer sharing in addition to interacting with the community leaders at various touch points throughout. Concurrently we will create space for government agents to work through challenges and issues that they are facing around policy/programs and how the ABCD process is or may impact these issues.
Feb – September	Community teams will work through their Action Plans with support and coaching from the GMIST/Coady team. Meanwhile, the enabling agents will

continue to interact with the communities and within their own agencies to advance their learning. It is anticipated that either at a departmental level, or perhaps across department jurisdictions, government participants will be able to work towards some new approaches to policy/development that they may be able to test/apply within the four learning communities.

September/October Celebration and Graduation.

Who Should Apply?

We are really looking for leaders in government who are open to learning new approaches to development and want to bring back these ideas and concepts to be applied to their organizations to support a more citizen led approach to development. Most importantly we want participants who will be active participants within this process, who will give back to the learning cohort and will be open to where this process may need to go.

As a Participant, What Will I Get from the Program?

Participants who complete the first Level or the second Level of the program will receive a St. Francis Xavier University *Certificate in Asset Based Community Development* Level I and Level II.

In addition to the certification, each participant will:

- Gain a strong foundation in Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) through online and in person learning.
- Exposure to new processes and practices grounded in ABCD.
- Learn about various community development tools and gain skills such as asset mapping and designing effective action plans. We will work with government agents to understand how this can be applied at an organizational level.
- Learn about the possibilities that can be realized when a shift is made to citizen-led projects and development.
- Work with like-minded colleagues and create a network of practitioners which will be helpful in supporting future work, projects and partnerships.
- Have access to strategic resources and connect with community/government leaders throughout the region.
- Gain an understanding of evaluation and monitoring tools which can help to assess potential projects and measure project success.

I'm Interested.... How Do I Apply?

We encourage interested government agency staff working in various sectors with an interest in community and tourism to apply for this program. You may also reach out to info@gmist.ca at any time with questions or inquiries.

You will be required to fill out an application form and you are encouraged to be as complete as possible in your application as it will be a competitive process. Should we require further information or

clarification about the information you have provided, we will reach out to you directly so please ensure that your contact information is complete.

Application Deadline: January 18, 2023

Notification to Selected Participants for Level I: By January 23, 2023

[APPLY NOW](#)

How Do I Apply for Level II?

After completing Level I, you may be interested in moving into Level II. There will be an application process for this as well and further information about the information required will be shared as we move through Level I. Level II of the program will commence in September 2024. The Level I participant will identify and engage with 4-5 additional community-minded and action-oriented citizens from their community. This leadership team will work together to develop and action plan for a community initiative. New team members will have the opportunity to learn some of the tools and skills from Level I of the program and will help to apply that learning to their community work. The team, with support and guidance from the GMIST/Coady team, will engage with the broader community to move their initiative forward. Each community will have an on-site workshop, followed by additional immersive online and in-person learning opportunities which will create space for collaboration and support the leadership team over a 12-month period. In Fall 2024, each of the four Level II communities will host a 2-day Learning Series for their respective province. The four participating communities may become Learning Sites for future offerings of the ACTivate Program.

Level II will also include additional government agency participants who wish to further their learning and/or wish to work more closely with the selected communities. In general, we are looking for government participants who:

- Have an interest in sustainable community development and are interested in working across disciplines to assist communities advance their overall well-being
- Are open minded and interested in learning new approaches and considering how they can positively influence policy and practice within their own work
- Have an interest in tourism, community well-being and governance
- Are willing to learn in a peer-to-peer setting, sharing information with others doing similar work throughout the region, both those working in community and within various agencies

About GMIST

The [Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism](#) was established as an NGO in 2003 to support tourism development at the community and business level across the four most Eastern Provinces of Canada – New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Over the past 20 years GMIST has been instrumental in supporting the industry and communities as they move to more experiential approaches to tourism offerings.

GMIST does this primarily as a developer and facilitator of regional training programs that are hosted onsite in NL or within regions or communities in Atlantic Canada. To date, GMIST has trained close to 4500 tourism operators from the region and across the country.

GMIST and its main parent organization Gros Morne Cooperating Association (GMCA) have been recognized regionally and nationally for their excellence with many awards and have become one of the most well respected and funded tourism support agencies in Canada. Recently, GMIST has embarked on a new chapter that will see the institute focus on two key areas over the next three years. One is experience development within tourism and the other is community development with a focus on the role of tourism.

About Coady Institute

Established in 1959 by [St. Francis Xavier University](#) (StFX), Coady Institute is committed to accompanying **generations of global leaders** skilled in the application of citizen-led, asset-based, and community-driven **leadership for economic and social change**. The Institute was named in honour of [Rev. Dr. Moses Coady](#), a prominent founder of the [Antigonish Movement](#) – a people’s movement for economic and social justice that began in Nova Scotia during the 1920s.

In collaboration with partners in Canada and across the globe, the Institute is committed to reducing poverty and transforming societies by **strengthening local economies**, by **building resilient communities**, and by **promoting social accountability and good governance**. Coady Institute is committed to breaking down and transforming the North-South divide by bringing people together to exchange innovations and learn from each other. Through relevant adult education programs, effective partnerships, and applicable research, Coady Institute is equipping community leaders and their organizations with the knowledge and practical tools needed to bring about the change they want for themselves.

Located in Mi’kma’ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi’kmaq People, on the campus of StFX, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Coady Institute **includes a network of more than 10,000 graduates in 146 countries globally**.