

The SFU logo consists of the letters 'SFU' in a bold, black, sans-serif font, centered within a white rectangular box. The box is positioned in the upper left quadrant of the red background.

SFU

Before this training, our community was always waiting for external actors to develop projects.

*The *DEC approach is different.*

First, we look at our own resources and then we see how we can develop our own projects ... and our own strategic partnerships to make things happen.

—Community Leader in Bolivia

**Sustainable Community Economic Development*

Sustainable Community Economic Development DEC in BOLIVIA

The Centre for Sustainable Community Development at Simon Fraser University established DEC in Bolivia as a training program for sustainability practitioners with financial support from Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and in collaboration with Bolivian university and NGO partners

In Bolivia since 2008, (and previously in Mexico and currently in Canada) this innovative program prepares learners with the skills and concepts needed to engage communities in the development of economic and social initiatives that open up opportunities for real change.

By fostering effective collaboration between government, civil society, and the private sector, graduates are engaged in creating economic development initiatives.



Special Features of DEC

Sustainable Community Development (known as DEC in Spanish) is a capacity building program that prepares learners—professionals, technical experts, city and regional planners, community leaders and elected officials—to lead community development efforts efficiently, effectively and collaboratively. Attention to community asset identification and community capital activation represents an important shift in the approach to community-based economic development. It's about valuing and empowering the people, the place and the promise of collaboration. We've seen what happens when this potential is unleashed in the leaders of these communities, and when all kinds of actors have the skills and knowledge to effectively collaborate to create change.

The program is based on a key idea—community capital—and teaches participants how to identify and mobilize the capitals of a place and people. This includes their talents, social networks, economic and human resources, the environment and, rich cultural traditions. The learners become people who take action, solve problems and create new opportunities for themselves and others. And we help these learners connect with the resources they have around them to do what they want to accomplish. From the first class, learners begin to see possibilities previously unnoticed.

“As a specialist I was not well versed in development theory but with this course I see that it's not just about economic development. I see beyond the economic. The tools are very useful and give the theory relevance in simple, practical ways. It is a rich experience.”

—NGO Leader

Program Strengths: Experienced Instructors and Engaging Curriculum

The program draws on the strengths and vision of the instructors and the world-class curriculum to prepare these learners for action. Here are **FIVE** ways DEC makes this happen:

1. **Whole Systems Thinking**
2. **New Lenses**
3. **Participatory Culture**
4. **Focus on People**
5. **Create Capacity**



DEC students from Viacha, Bolivia

1. We Teach Whole Systems Thinking.

The problems of urban and rural communities are complex, interwoven, and multifaceted. As educators and planners we train leaders to think differently about the potential of their communities. We invite them to identify and analyze the “capitals” of their communities. This means paying attention to the social, economic, cultural, human and natural capital that currently exists in a neighbourhood, town or region. Using innovative tools, methods and powerful concepts, we teach these learners how to mobilize these capitals. Our instructors are economists, agronomists, policy specialists, project managers and planners, and they are all multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary. In addition to their formal education, they’re great teachers who recognize that it takes creative learning to generate solutions to social and economic challenges.

The curriculum uses a train-the-trainer component, such that graduates can share new knowledge and tools with others to multiply the learning impact. Experienced Instructors—both academically and practically—engage the participants in meaningful learning about how to mobilize community capital—to recognize and build on the assets in the communities—the people, institutions, civil society, culture, social relations and the built and natural environment.



2. New Lenses.

Many students have said that before taking this program, they thought that economic development was what the government was going to do for them. Serious, long-term challenges like poverty, food security, and infrastructure do not disappear overnight, but new ways of thinking about possibilities give leaders more tools to deal with conflict over development priorities and ways to plan for the future. These new lenses open up fresh ways to deal with entrenched problems. The program also allows government and civil society actors to see how they can better support and work with communities to create sustainable economic initiatives and better investment of resources.

By bringing the assets of a community to the foreground, not just its problems, this allows the community to see opportunities and to decide what to do and how to do it.

3. We Foster a Participatory Culture.

Too many mistakes get made in community development when the experts from outside come into a community to tell them what they should do. The participatory planning methods in this program invite all actors in a community or organization to share what they think and know in a bottom-up, horizontal approach to planning. By fostering a culture of participation and respect for local knowledge as well as technical innovation and financial input from other sources, learners find lasting and relevant solutions. Graduates of DEC report that by increasing participation in planning for economic development, they are increasing trust and satisfaction with the results.

Learners develop strategies to address food security, improve agricultural practices, develop inclusive economic initiatives for youth and women, and to effectively participate in local decision-making.



4. We Focus On People.

Too many decisions get made by people who do not understand the local conditions. This program gets people out from behind their desks and into communities. It connects the policy maker with the local people. It creates new understandings of issues and potential solutions. Municipal staff from small towns and big cities take the program. So do agronomists, directors of community associations and social movements, nutritionists, engineers, directors of economic development and other professionals. Indigenous community leaders too

When change makers from diverse regions come together, they recognize that the key to better policy, better enterprises, and better public services is rooted in understanding people and working together.

The participants are professionals, government officials, technical experts, educators, municipal, community and business leaders.



DEC Graduates from Santa Cruz, Bolivia

5. We Create Capacity.

When people leave this program they not only have new eyes for social and economic possibilities, they know how to do things—strategic planning, community visioning, institutional mapping, business planning, fund raising, financial analysis, public dialogue and community mobilization. **DEC** graduates leave the program with the capacity to create, plan and develop new policies, programs, enterprises or services. This enhanced capacity is what drives economic development. The tools and methods we teach in the program are useful, relevant, and meaningful.



DEC Graduates from La Paz, Bolivia.

The program supports better municipal planning and neighbourhood upgrading, improved food security, community and social enterprises, and small business development.

Five Important Tools for Participatory Planning:

1. Community Visioning;
2. Institutional Mapping;
3. Project Management;
4. Collaborative Dialogue;
5. Community Mobilization



Learning is Flexible and Modular:

Modules topics include: Community Economic Development: History and Practice; Theory of Community Capital Mobilization, Case Studies in DEC; Institutional Analysis; SWOT Analysis; Participatory Planning; Business Models for DEC; Adult Learning and Dialogue for Community Mobilization.

6 MODULES = certificate

9 MODULES = diploma

Custom designed community-based workshops, training materials or short courses are also available.

Impacts of DEC Training

Graduates plan and implement projects and enterprises and are changing the way economic development happens in rural and urban settings. Participants have incorporated the DEC approach and methods into their institutions and communities, with significant impacts in economic development, food security, and municipal planning.

100% of graduates recommend the program to others



DEC graduate with newly developed policy and program materials

Contact us to bring DEC to your to your institution, community or company. Community-based workshops with popular training materials or short courses are also available.

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