

*The goal of RCIP is to increase the ability of rural communities and organizations in Nova Scotia to access and use social science research to influence and develop policy that contributes to the health and sustainability of rural communities.*

## **BACKGROUND**

Everyday, our lives are affected by policies from various levels of government, business, and community organizations. Despite the importance of public policy in our lives, most Canadians tend to play a relatively small role in the development of policies affecting them. This issue was raised in dialogues held in communities across Nova Scotia by the Coastal Communities Network and across Canada by the Canadian Rural Partnerships between 1996-1999.

There is potential for more community involvement in the policy-making process, but individuals and community-based organizations, particularly those in smaller communities, may not feel they have the time or skills to become active in shaping policy. To be more involved in the policy process, rural citizens indicated the need for:

- Information about their rural communities
- Access to tools to impact policy
- Knowledge around the policy-making process

## **THE PROJECT**

Rural Communities Impacting Policy (RCIP) is a five-year project with the goal of helping rural Nova Scotians take a more active role in policy development. RCIP aims to achieve its goal primarily through:

- **Developing resources that provide individuals and community organizations with easier access to information relevant to the issues facing their community.**
- **Providing communities with practical, hands-on tools and training for influencing and developing policy.**

***“Development of good policy is carried out by and with people, not on or to people. It improves both the ability of individuals to take action and the capacity of groups, organizations or committees to influence change”***  
***(World Health Organization, 1997)***

## **ACTIVITIES**

To meet the goal of helping rural Nova Scotians become more involved in shaping the policies that affect them, the main activities of RCIP are:

- **Community Training:** Offering workshops about policy change and how to make it happen.
- **Student Training and Rural Research:** Summer interns are placed with community groups working on research and policy change strategies.
- **Rural Policy and Data Forums:** These Forums demonstrate putting “ideas into action” in support of community groups working toward policy change.
- **Rural Report – “Painting the Landscape of Rural Nova Scotia”:** A wealth of information about rural life – population trends, economy, education, environment, and health.
- **RCIP Website and Rural Tackle Box:** Practical tools and information to help carry out research and develop policy change strategies.

## PARTNERS

RCIP is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) through the Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) program. An important element of RCIP is to find ways to help develop “alliances” between communities and academic institutions. RCIP is made up of two primary partners that reflect this community-academic orientation.

**Coastal Communities Network (CCN)** is a voluntary association with a mission to provide a forum to encourage dialogue, share information, create strategies, and undertake actions that promote the survival and development of Nova Scotia’s rural communities. CCN was established in 1992 and now has over 270 members. For more information, contact Ishbel Munro at (902) 485-4754.

The **Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre (AHPRC)** at Dalhousie University was established in 1993 with the primary goal of conducting and facilitating health promotion research that influences policy and contributes to the health and well being of Atlantic Canadians. For more information, contact Barb Kehoe at (902) 494-2240.

## WORK GROUPS

**Community Data Work Group:** Providing input into developing tools and information sources that are accessible, easy to use, and relevant to rural communities.

**Rural Policy Work Group:** Helping individuals and community-based organizations to better understand the policy-making process and providing access to practical, hands-on tools that support policy change efforts.

**Student Training Work Group:** Helping develop student internship opportunities that benefit both the student and the community.

**Community Training Work Group:** Assisting in the development of workshops and other training materials to help community members make effective use of the tools and information generated by the RCIP project.



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# Rural Communities Impacting Policy



*A Community-University  
Research Alliance*

