

Public Servants take a Deep Dive Course on Economic Instruments to Improve Canada's Environmental Performance

THE OPPORTUNITY

Learning how Economic Instruments can Promote Sustainable Behaviour

Canada is rich with natural resources and deep reserves of water, land and biodiversity, yet clear opportunities to protect natural capital and improve environmental performance exist. International studies have pointed to the fact that the measures Canada has used historically to manage and control environmental impact have not been effective in driving change for improved environmental performance over time.

In 2004, the OECD found that “market-based instruments are insufficiently used to foster integration of environmental concerns into sectoral policies; too much emphasis is given to soft instruments like voluntary guidelines or partnerships”.ⁱ Underlined again in the 2017 report on Canada, the OECD concludes that “there has been little use of economic instruments to limit water use, waste generation, or air and water pollution”.ⁱⁱ

The [Ivey Foundation](#) took notice of these findings and decided to lead with a practical solution: funding a collaborative partnership between [Canada's Ecofiscal Commission](#) and [Stratos Inc.](#) to develop and launch a professional development course on economic instruments. In line with Ivey's mission, the purpose of this professional development course was to support improvement of Canada's environmental performance by augmenting federal and provincial government employees' knowledge of economic instruments,

including their design, implementation and where they fit amongst the other policy tools.

“To help create a shared vision for Canada's future—one that integrates economy and environment, achieves resource efficiency, and fosters innovation and investment for a smarter, sustainable economy”

Ivey Foundation Mission, Program Focus

THE IMPACTS

Understanding the Change as a Result of the Course

In total, five courses were offered in three different cities to over 100 public-sector officials. The courses helped to increase participants' understanding of economic instruments in support of achieving a greener economy, while also encouraging the adoption of such instruments.

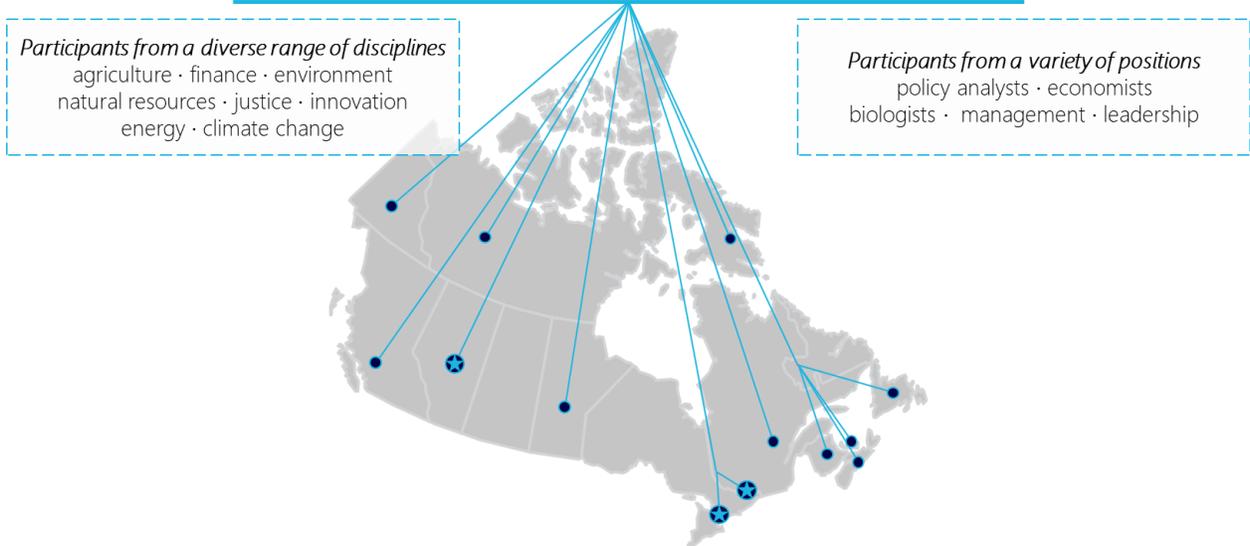


“I'm feeling much more confident in my knowledge of economic instruments and will carry through in giving fearless advice”

Workshop participant

100+ PARTICIPANTS

8 provinces · 3 territories · 7 federal departments



With the range of jurisdictions that participated in the course the impact of the professional development course will extend beyond the original granting initiative, as participants share information, tools and guidance gathered from the training with their colleagues and their leadership. The initiative also lends itself to further scaling through the improved capacity of Canada's public servants, as they move throughout various organizations and advance to different positions in their careers, either within or outside government. Through the expert delivery and instruction of this course, participating public servants have been empowered to build and apply their skills in a world that is constantly shifting.

"Being more literate and mindful of cost implications and market impacts will help me develop policies that are realistic and achievable as well as impactful"

Workshop participant

They are better equipped to create and implement economic instruments that are driving change towards a smarter, sustainable economy that prioritizes resource efficiency and fosters innovation and investment. These instruments not only help

to "put an accurate price on environmental externalities" but also "ultimately send the signals required to level the playing field and drive the actions of businesses, the public, and other stakeholders so that they become more sustainable" (adopted from Ivey's Draft Economy and Environment Program Framework).

To learn more about the professional development course and its intended impact, please watch the following video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBuUi0TfTPk>

INCORPORATING EXPERTISE

Delivering a Quality Experience

The success of this professional development course was in large part due to the collaboration of several partners. Over the two years of this initiative, the Ivey Foundation worked closely with both Canada's Ecofiscal Commission as well as Stratos Inc., with each partner playing to their respective strengths, mandates and expertise. In addition to funding support, the Ivey Foundation team contributed to shaping the idea and scoping the initiative, as well as engaging in a review and oversight capacity throughout the duration of the

project. The team from Canada's Ecofiscal Commission developed course content and provided the instructors who delivered the course, including Commissioners Chris Ragan, Nancy Olewiler, Paul Boothe, Mel Cappe and Don Drummond. Finally, Stratos Inc. led the course design, incorporating adult learning principles and ensuring that the technical content was accessible for a range of participants. Stratos also led on the recruitment, logistics, delivery, facilitation assistance and overall project management.

THE JOURNEY

Planning and Improving Throughout the Process

This initiative was designed and delivered based on adult learning principles, with emphasis on a practical, case-study style learning approach that was highly interactive, built on the learners' experience, and offering a variety of learning techniques.



As illustrated in the figure above, a training needs assessment was initially conducted in early 2016 to determine the extent to which training in this area would be helpful. Building on the results of the needs assessment, the project team developed a detailed curriculum and related course materials to support the Pilot Session, delivered in Ottawa in February 2017. Subsequent sessions were delivered in a variety of cities, with refinements made to the course materials in response to feedback and the range of participants.

“This course will help me present a stronger case to the executive”

Workshop participant



A continuous improvement approach to the process allowed for constant learning, reflection and modifications to the course materials and delivery at each session. This integration of feedback – from both the instructors as well as the participants – strengthened the ultimate product.

THE SUCCESS FACTORS

Highlighting the Strengths of the Approach

While many factors contributed to the success of this professional development course, the list below depicts those elements that could be replicated in similar initiatives in the future to garner success:

- **Development and delivery by well-known expert instructors:** One of the most significant factors of success for the initiative was the hands-on involvement and engagement of the Commissioners. Their visibility within this sector contributed to attracting participants to register for the course, and the delivery of the content by these highly recognized experts, augmented by their first-hand, applied experience, lent the course credibility and excellence.

“The course has changed my thought process and methodology for policy proposals”

Workshop participant

- **Use of executive MBA-style case studies as a learning method:** A core component of the course design and delivery was the use of case studies, which were completed in small groups at the end of the first day of delivery and presented to the experts on the second day. This approach was instructive, as it created the

opportunity for participants to immediately apply their new knowledge and tools, replicating the kinds of discussions and decisions that would be found in their workplace.

- **Provision and practice of the course's "job aids":** Job aids such as the *Roadmap for Selecting and Designing Economic Instruments* and the related worksheets and templates provided practical tools to assist participants with the processes to follow and apply to decisions likely to be faced "back on the job".
- **Customization and continuous improvement:** The project team was committed to the rigorous collection of participant feedback and post-session reflections with the instruction team. In turn, this input contributed to improvements to the course design, materials and delivery for the future iterations of the course, with the ability to adapt and customize depending on the audience and jurisdiction in attendance.

THE LESSONS

Considerations for Future Courses

Orchestrating a professional development course such as this generates its own set of learnings – everything from the pragmatic lessons learned through to more strategic reflections.



A few key lessons learned are captured below:

- **Reaching your target audience:** Policy makers reside at every level in every department or ministry, within every jurisdiction across Canada. Narrowing down who best to reach was a challenge. In particular, it was difficult to identify and invite individuals who were not already

working in or aware of the economic policy fields, although they were likely the ones who would have benefited most from the course. Such challenges had implications for recruitment efforts as well as course design considerations. Identifying internal champions, as well as tapping into "alumni" of the course, to support course promotion and recruitment helped to address this challenge.

- **Responding to audiences with diverse expertise:** The courses drew in participants with all levels of expertise – some participants knew a lot about economic instruments and were keen to learn more from the experts, while others were brand new to the world of economic instruments and needed the basics presented first. Having that spectrum of knowledge holders in the room made it difficult to design content, learning experiences and case studies that would work across the board. Knowing this, instructors approached the delivery with flexibility, leveraging the case studies to allow participants with more knowledge to shine. In the future, consideration of a range of courses – some more applied, others more theoretical, or others offered as pre-course primer sessions in advance – may be helpful to best align with participants' needs and existing skill sets.
- **Keeping it relevant and applied:** The interactive and hands-on nature of the course design was received well by participants and will increase the practical application of the learning when back in the work environment. Expert instructors with real-life experience are crucial to applied and practical delivery.

"I am now conversant in these topics, understand development concepts, and can confidently champion a path forward"

Workshop participant

- **Pricing it right:** Keeping the course priced right so that it was affordable to restricted public sector professional development budgets was critical to obtaining participant involvement.



WHAT COMES NEXT

Building Future Capacity

This professional development course was only a start. This project has already been leveraged for the development of an online course designed to reach municipal public servants who, on a day-to-day basis, have the opportunity to create and implement economic measures for environmental

issues that are managed locally, such as water, waste and land use. Additionally, extending this course to other audiences, beyond the public service, is worth further consideration. Civil society, NGOs and other advocacy groups expressed interest in better understanding economic instruments in order to have more effective and meaningful conversations with those public servants that have the responsibility to govern Canada's precious environmental resources.

IVEY foundation

In partnership with:



CANADA'S **ECOFISCAL** COMMISSION
Practical solutions for growing prosperity



Strategies to Sustainability

¹ OECD (2004). *OECD Environmental Performance Reviews; Canada 2004*. Available at: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/environment/oecd-environmental-performance-reviews-canada-2004_9789264107786-en

ⁱⁱ OECD (2017). *OECD Environmental Performance Reviews; Canada 2017*. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/canada/oecd-environmental-performance-reviews-canada-2017-9789264279612-en.htm>