Economic Literacy for a Green Economy

Economic Literacy for a Green Economy is a new online learning program that focuses on training and knowledge-building that supports the development of a smarter and sustainable economy.

Beginning March 1, 2017, the program consists of a series of six modules that will build organizational capacity by increasing the knowledge and understanding of economic concepts and their role in supporting a green economy. The training stream takes a case-based approach to address key economic concepts, their assumptions, key measures and gaps, and their strengths and limitations.

In particular, participants will learn about the latest innovations in economics that are relevant to

- Assessing the strengths and limits of markets
- Valuing unpriced environmental benefits and damages
- Rewarding pro-environmental behaviour
- Reconciling trade-offs to inform public decisions
- (Re)defining economic progress and sustainability
- Reorienting the economy for the 21st Century.

Learn at your own pace, in your preferred setting, with specially developed video tutorials and quizzes plus live one-on-one coaching from a professional economist. No prior knowledge or experience in economics is necessary.

Who should participate?

- Urban planners
- Banking and financial services personnel
- Government
- NGOs
- University/college students and professors
- Forestry professionals.

Benefits of participating

- Learn of the latest innovations in economic theory and how they can evolve the economy
- Regular one-on-one coaching with the course instructor
- Certificate upon completion.

Course Overview

Assessing the Strengths and Limits of Markets

Learn about different brands of economics and how to anticipate when economic markets are more likely to work for, or fail, the environment.

Valuing Unpriced Environmental Benefits and Damages

Learn how society can economically value unpriced environmental gains and losses so that people can be better informed about environmental scarcities and trade-offs.

Rewarding Pro-environmental Behaviour

Learn how economists understand humans and how pro-environmental behaviour can be purposefully or perversely affected.

Registration opens
December 1, 2016

Course starts
March 1, 2017

Enrollment fee
Government and industry **$400**

Environmental non-governmental organizations **$200** *(limited to 20 organizations per year).*

sustainabilitynetwork.ca/economic-literacy-project

Reconciling Trade-offs to Inform Public Decisions

Learn about economic tools and strategies that can inform public decisions that involve contested gains and losses, over space and time, within and outside of the marketplace.

(Re)defining Economic Progress and Sustainability

Learn what is included, and omitted, by old and new measures of the economy, and how different forms of natural and human-created wealth relate to each other and the measurement of sustainability.

Reorienting the Economy for the 21st Century

Learn how ecological economic models can inform the pathways to desirable futures and strategies to manage risks, uncertainties and other unknowns.

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About the Instructor

Eric Miller is a consulting economist and contract faculty at York University. He has experience serving the Ontario and Federal governments as a public servant and has helped hundreds of students through his teaching of undergraduate and graduate students at York University and Queen's University. Eric earned economic degrees from York University and McMaster and a biology degree from Carleton. He is an active member of Canadian Society for Ecological Economics.

FAQs with Eric Miller

1) Why is economic literacy important?

Economic literacy is important because economic terms and ideas dominate everyday discussions and societal conversations about environmental issues. To engage Canadians and the world on environmental issues, one needs to understand the dominant economic paradigm. Yet there are few structured learning opportunities for Canadians about this — that's why we developed the training.

2) Why are economic considerations in environmental practice important?

Economic and environmental issues are intertwined. The training examines this interrelationship as it relates to various important issues of our times including

- Assessing the strengths and limits of markets
- Valuing unpriced environmental benefits and damages
- Rewarding pro-environmental behaviour
- Reconciling trade-offs to inform public decisions
- (Re)defining economic progress and sustainability
- Reorienting the economy for the 21st Century.

Economic strategies for the future must take the environment into account if the strategies are to yield high levels of wellbeing over several human generations. The training empowers learners to understand this and to explain it to others.

Solutions to environmental problems should consider economic approaches that reward ongoing improvements in environmental performance. The training informs learners about ways of using economic approaches to environmental objectives.

3) How long have environmental economics, natural resource economics or ecological economics been alternative economic models in Canada?

Since confederation, Canadians have used economic insights to understand and resolve environmental issues. Only in the last few decades have some Canadian economists branded their work as being "ecological economics" or "environmental economics" or "natural resource economics." These brand names are of secondary importance to the greater importance of learning about their insights.

The training introduces participants to

important Canadian innovations, including: how to best manage fisheries and other common-pool resources, techniques for economically valuing unpriced environmental losses and gains, strategies for efficiently reducing pollution, accounting systems for environmental assets, methods of estimating the natural capital requirements of economies, insights about assessing the determinants of life satisfaction and happiness, and new approaches to economic modelling in support of a greener economy.

4) Do any well-known institutes/ organizations/governments use environmental economics, natural resource economics or ecological economics?

Yes, institutes, organizations, and governments use green economics even if they aren't aware of which specific brand they're using. Examples are profiled throughout the training, with specific references that allow learners to engage in a further exploration of ideas, data, tools, and economic models. Realistic cases are used to ground learning to real-world issues, with commentary on each case by professional economists from various organizations in Canada.

5) Are there practical applications where the learning from this course on economic literacy can be used? If so, where and/or how?

The training will help whenever economic language and concepts are used, from dinner-table conversations to important public debates. Whether the learner is interested in becoming a more engaged citizen, or interested in providing more value in a professional capacity, learners will benefit from the case-based approach to learning. This approach has been successfully used for decades to train medical professionals in Canada — and also lends itself well to developing economic literacy.

A different realistic case is used for each of the six modules. The learners consider the case to motivate their learning, and then apply their new learning to the case. Beyond the case, the learning can apply to any circumstance in which economic language and concepts are used, from dinner-table conversations to important public debates. Graduates of our training become literate in understanding

- Different brands of economics and how to anticipate when economic markets are more likely to work or fail the environment
- How society can economically value unpriced environmental gains and losses so that people can be better informed about environmental scarcities and trade-offs
- How economists understand humans, and how pro-environmental behaviour can be purposefully or perversely affected
- Economic tools and strategies that can inform public decisions that involve contested gains and losses, over space and time, within and outside of the marketplace
- What is included, and omitted, by old and new measures of the economy, and how different forms of natural and human-created wealth relate to each other and the measurement of sustainability
- How ecological economic models can inform the pathways to desirable futures and strategies to manage risks and uncertainties and other unknowns.