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FROM: Kjeld Mizpah (KJ) Conyers-Steede, Founder & C.E.O, Future Civics
EMAIL: kj@futurecivics.ca
DATE: 2nd of November 2026
SUBJECT: RESEARCH ASSOCIATE – RURAL CONTRACTOR ECOSYSTEM & MARKET DEVELOPMENT
POSITION TYPE: Part-Time, Fixed-Term Contract
COMPENSATION: $20.00 CAD PER hour
DURATION: 10 Weeks (15 hours per week)
TOTAL CONTRACT VALUE: $3,000.00 CAD (150 hours)

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Future Civics is a community-focused organisation working at the intersection of rural development, social finance, and institutional innovation.

Through the Saltbox Fund, we are developing a community-based financing model to make housing repairs and energy retrofits more affordable and accessible in rural Nova Scotia.
Our work focuses on smaller residential improvement projects, typically ranging from $5,000 to $15,000, that often fall between existing public funding programs and conventional financing options.

One challenge our research highlights is that access to capital alone does not guarantee housing improvements can be delivered. Rural communities also face constraints related to contractor availability, business capacity, geographic coverage, and market coordination.

We are seeking a Research Associate to help us understand these challenges and identify opportunities to strengthen the local contractor ecosystem.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To assess the capacity, operational readiness, and business-development needs of the regional contractor ecosystem to support affordable, energy-resilient housing maintenance and retrofits in rural Nova Scotia.
The research will identify gaps in workforce availability, technical skills, business support, geographic coverage, and market coordination, while examining how community finance and targeted sector-development interventions could strengthen contractor participation and support long-term investment in rural housing stock.

CORE RESEARCH QUESTION

What workforce, business-development, and market coordination constraints limit the delivery of affordable, energy-resilient housing maintenance in rural communities, and how can community finance help strengthen the contractor ecosystem needed to sustain rural housing stock?

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Research Associate will support the design and implementation of an applied research project focused on rural residential construction and renovation.

Responsibilities include:

1. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Identify, contact, and coordinate interviews with residential contractors, small renovation businesses, industry associations, and relevant sector organisations across Nova Scotia.
2. **Qualitative Research:** Conduct approximately 15 semi-structured stakeholder interviews to understand contractor experiences, operational constraints, and business-development needs.
3. **Contractor Ecosystem Mapping:** Develop an organised database of contractors and service providers, identifying their geographic coverage, service specialisations, and capacity to undertake smaller residential improvement projects.
4. **Market Coordination Research:** Investigate whether coordinated project pipelines, reliable homeowner financing, or other intermediary services could improve the viability of smaller rural retrofit projects.
5. **Research Analysis and Reporting:** Organise interview findings, identify recurring themes and market gaps, and contribute to a final research report with practical recommendations for Future Civics.

QUALIFICATIONS

We welcome applications from undergraduate students, recent graduates, graduate students, and early-career researchers with backgrounds in:

- Rural development, economic development, public policy, sociology, business, or related fields.
- Qualitative research methods, stakeholder interviews, and applied research.
- Research organization, data management, and report writing.
- Community engagement and professional communication.

Knowledge of Nova Scotia's residential construction sector, energy efficiency programs, or rural economic conditions would be an asset, but is not required.

We are particularly interested in candidates who demonstrate intellectual curiosity, can work independently, and are comfortable engaging with industry professionals.

CONTACT

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