

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Community Futures launches first Artificial Intelligence upskilling program for small businesses on Vancouver Island

Duncan – [Economic Development Cowichan](#) and [Community Futures Central Island \(CFCI\)](#), in partnership with [Hufnagel Consulting](#), are bringing the first regionally focused Artificial Intelligence (AI) training program to Vancouver Island. It is designed specifically for small businesses, nonprofits, and solopreneurs.

The program, titled **AI Upskilling Central Island for Small Business: Work Smarter, Not Harder with AI**, offers practical, hands-on learning to help participants harness Artificial Intelligence to save time, streamline operations, and boost productivity. With support from the Province of British Columbia, the program combines expert-led workshops, one-on-one support, and a collaborative learning community.

“We are proud to lead the way in supporting Cowichan businesses that want to leverage AI in practical ways to improve operations,” said Barry O’Riordan, Manager of Economic Development Cowichan. “Sign up soon, as space is limited.”

Over three months, participants will attend three interactive workshops and access ongoing support including four AI office hours with industry experts, access to the local AI community of practice, and tools, templates, and practical resources to put ideas into action. By the end of the program, participants will have the skills and strategies to confidently integrate AI into their business.

This program is ideal for business owners and nonprofit leaders across the Regional District of Nanaimo and the Cowichan Valley Regional District, including rural communities and the municipalities of Duncan, Lake Cowichan, Ladysmith, and North Cowichan. It is designed for leaders facing staffing shortages, burnout, operational inefficiencies, or pressures to modernize.

Valued at \$2,999, the program is offered at a deeply discounted rate. The first 10 seats are offered at \$199; the next 5 at \$249; and the final 5 seats at \$299. Complete all three workshops and receive a \$100 credit toward future Advanced AI sessions launching in 2026.

Program Dates

- Group 1: Sept 9, Oct 20, Nov 17 at 8:00 a.m.
- Group 2: Sept 8, Oct 27, Nov 24 at 12:00 p.m.
- Group 3: Sept 15 at 3:00pm, Nov 3, Dec 1 at 4:00 p.m.
- Group 4: Sept 15, Nov 10, Dec 8 at 6:00 p.m.

Register by **August 29** to secure your spot. Space is limited: www.cfnanaimo.org/aiupskilling

For more information, please contact:

Brittany Taylor
Economic Analyst, Economic Development Cowichan
edc@cvrd.bc.ca