CRI

Centre for Regulatory Innovation

Regulators' Capacity Fund

Performance-Based Codes

QUICK GLANCE

Lead Organization:
National Research Council of Canada (NRC)

Timeline:
May 2021 – Mar 2022

Funding:
$302,000

ABOUT THE RCF

The CRI's Regulators' Capacity Fund empowers federal regulators to better consider economic, competitiveness, and resilience factors in regulatory design and implementation.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The project aimed to explore the potential for transitioning the National Building Code (NBC) of Canada to a performance-based code (PBC), focusing on engaging stakeholders, learning from international experiences, and identifying the resource, regulatory, and research needs for a future PBC in Canada.

The Challenge:

Traditional building codes are prescriptive, specifying detailed requirements for construction. However, they can limit innovation and flexibility. A performance-based approach, which focuses on desired outcomes rather than specific methods, could foster innovation but requires careful planning and stakeholder buy-in.

The Approach:

NRC conducted a comprehensive workshop with 95 participants, including 82 external stakeholders from various sectors. The workshop included presentations, breakout sessions, and discussions on transitioning to a PBC. Key topics included the structure of a future PBC, resource needs, fire safety, and earthquake research.

The Impact:

The workshop revealed broad support for a gradual transition to a PBC, with a performance-based compliance path added to the existing NBC. This approach was seen as facilitating innovation while maintaining safety standards. The project identified the need for updated resources, more qualified building officials, and national leadership to ensure consistency and harmonization.

Lessons Learned:

Gradual Transition: A phased approach allows for adaptation and stakeholder buy-in.

Resource Updates: Current resources need to be updated to support a PBC framework.

National Leadership: Consistent and harmonized efforts are essential for successful implementation.

This project demonstrates the potential for performance-based codes to enhance innovation and flexibility in building construction, ensuring safety while accommodating new technologies and methods.