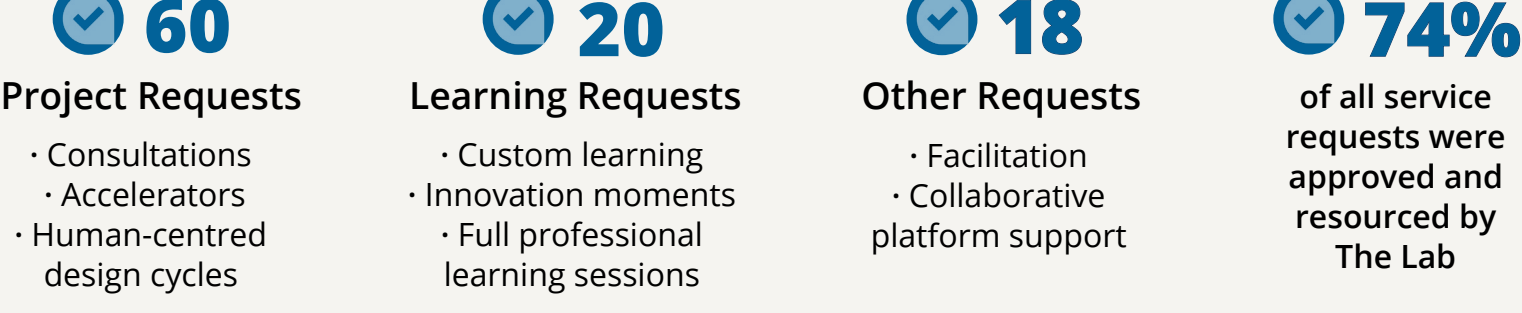


# Innovation Lab Review

# 2021

The Innovation Lab is a part of The City of Calgary's Corporate Analytics & Innovation (CAI 2.0) Business Unit. The Lab's goal is to support City staff and partners to modernize government by accelerating innovation, shifting mindsets, and scaling and sustaining innovation. The Lab supports City staff in meeting City Council's priorities and making life better every day for Calgarians. Our team of innovation experts use research-backed innovation tools to help you create a safe space to generate opportunities, collaborate, learn, and test ideas to challenge the status quo. In 2021, demand for Lab services were at an all time high with:

## 98 total service requests, which includes:



The Innovation Lab supports City staff to build and sustain innovation. In 2021, we achieved the following results:

## Catalyze projects to help modernize government through better services

The Innovation Lab partners with City teams to maintain, build or sustain innovation in their work. We aim to put people - whether Calgarians or staff - at the center of our problem solving methodologies. To do this, we offer City teams a variety of options, from quick consults and accelerator workshops to full design cycles (taking projects from from research to ideation to testing to launch).

*"The Lab [was our] strategic resource, and provided different perspectives, edginess, discomfort, and helped us in taking risks, doing thing differently, and [being] ultimately less fearful of innovating."*

-Innovation Lab client interview, 2021

Project clients benefited by:



Example of a project:

### Mayors Innovation Challenge

Led by the Mayor's Office, the Innovation Lab accelerated discussions with key stakeholders in the Calgary innovation ecosystem to explore an innovation challenge to advance energy solutions to support meeting net zero emissions.

Reported impact of Innovation Lab projects from City leadership interviews include:



\*Those reporting "saved money" include reasons such as using the Lab over an external consultant or saving staff capacity by having Lab staff involved. All money saved was then redirected internally.

## Strengthen our relationship with Calgarians by understanding and responding to their needs

The Innovation Lab uses human-centred design to build people-focused solutions. The Lab methodology drives innovation by helping us narrow in on the problems that people actually face, rather than what we might assume. By doing this, we ensure The City provides services that meet all Calgarians' needs. Three examples of projects that demonstrate how we can build better City services are:

*"Engaging, made me feel like I was being heard!"*

-Youth focus group participant

<b>Increasing Youth Influence</b>	<b>Award-Winning Innovation Research</b>	<b>More Inclusive Public Hearings</b>
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As part of the [Economic Resilience Task Force](#), 40 diverse youth were brought in to share their perspectives and influence City actions on how to make Calgary a better place to live, work and play.

Honourable Mention from the [International Association for Public Participation \(IAP2\)](#) Canada for the Lab's "Understanding the Social and Recreational Needs of Beltline, Inglewood and Ramsay" project. In partnership with [Engage](#).

10 barriers to participate in [public hearings](#) were identified through empathy interviews with a diverse subset of Calgarians, in partnership with the Clerk's Office and Information Technology Departments

## Improve City culture of collaboration, knowledge and skill sharing to enable innovation

The Innovation Lab seeks to build a network to connect people from across The City to break down barriers to innovation by learning new skills or tackling complex problems together. In 2021, we did this mainly through two networking spaces: Mug Club and Tiger Team. Past participants reported:



Mug Club

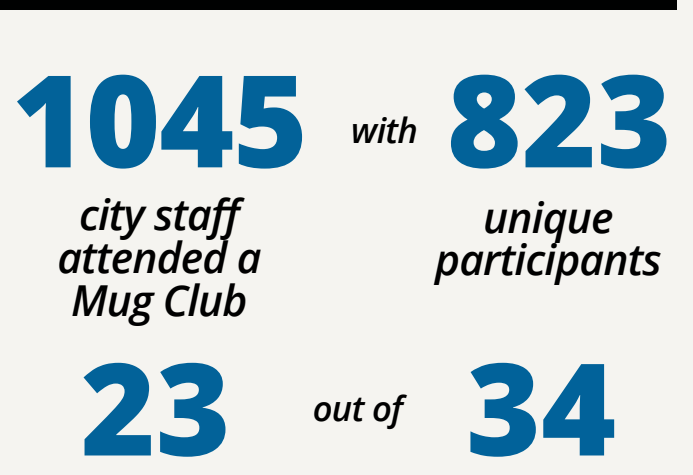
Mug Club is an innovation reading group where employees from across The City come together to discuss topics that impact our organization and our city. This brings value to City employees by giving them a psychologically safe space to explore vulnerable or sensitive topics to support them in driving innovation in their own work.

**Mug Club Topics included:**

- Connection During Covid
- Innovation Inspiration
- Communication Strategies
- Future of Work
- Resilience
- Anti-Racism

*"The Mug Club allows me to learn something new [and] engage in other people's perspectives on the topic. I really enjoy that other attendees are from across the corporation so I get to meet and hear from people I likely would not have."*

-City employee, from 2021 Innovation Lab survey



Tiger Team

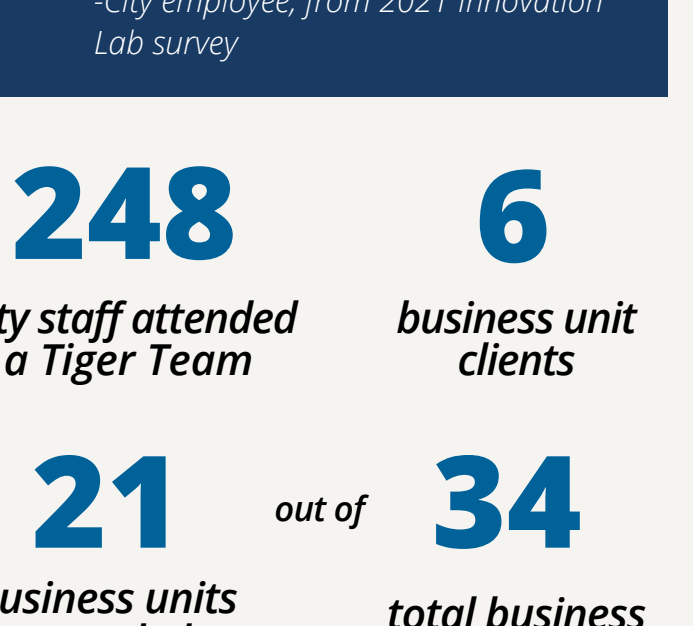
Tiger Team is a monthly workshop where a cross-corporate team of creative thinkers gather to solve problems, sometimes with the help of non-employee Calgarians. It's a space for new ways of collaboration and a chance to move work forward. Tiger Team is a collaborative effort between Liveable Streets, The Innovation Lab and the challenge owner.

*"[Tiger Team is an] opportunity to consider different types of problems, and brainstorm with staff from other disciplines; learn new tools or approaches that I can apply to my own work. [It] energizes me to approach my own work in a different way."*

-City employee, from 2021 Innovation Lab survey

**Tiger Team output examples include:**

- Support Water Resource Unit to empathize with polluters in order to ideate stormwater pollution prevention methods
- Partner with Equity Team to make the Inclusive Engagement Guide more user-friendly to ensure equitable and accessible services to all Calgarians
- Assist Human Resources Unit to gather insights on learning culture barriers at The City so that employees can better develop skills and be more responsive to emerging trends



## Increase City employees' skills, capacity and knowledge to innovate in their own work

The Innovation Lab offers professional learning and knowledge to develop skills, capacity and knowledge in order to innovate in their own work. Training ranges from innovation basics, creating psychologically safe meetings, better brainstorming, and the role of leadership in innovation.

*"[Taking this course] reaffirms that innovation and risk taking in the workplace can lead to great things!"*

-City employee, from 2021 Innovation Lab survey



Most popular: *Leading for Innovation, Innovation 101, Virtual Meetings*

Participants reported the following:



## What to expect in 2022

- Leading and supporting a cross-corporate team through application of innovation methodologies for a positive impact on Youth in Calgary through the Bloomberg Center for Public Impact at Johns Hopkins University
- Testing the creation of a cross-corporate community of practice on innovation that helps City staff apply their innovation knowledge
- Embedding equity, inclusivity and anti-racism practices into innovation methodologies to support The City's priorities
- Developing a scalable partnership model to extend the reach and impact of innovation in other business units

For more information, connect **online** or with us by email at [innovationlab@calgary.ca](mailto:innovationlab@calgary.ca)