

# Innovation Lab Review 2023

The Innovation Lab's vision is that The City of Calgary moves beyond the status quo, delivering equitable and effective services to meet the evolving and real needs of Calgarians. Our mission is to support The City and its employees to innovate - collaboratively tackling big challenges, designing better services, and building capacity and culture - to create a more resilient Calgary, together.

## OUR GOALS



### Drive Impact

Partner with City staff and Calgarians to unblock our biggest challenges and create change we can measure



### Build Capacity

At all levels, increase the ability of City staff to learn and apply innovation skills in their daily work



### Shape Culture

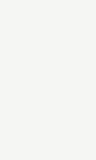
Strengthen the use and integration of innovation City-wide to amplify our collective impact



### Advance Collaboration

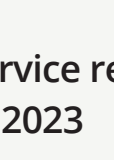
Build collaborative cross-departmental problem-solving teams that implement innovative programs, policies, and services

In pursuit of our goals, we offer 3 services to all City staff across the organization:



**Project consulting to understand, and solve problems:**

- Consultations
- Accelerators
- Design thinking cycles



**Professional learning to build staff capabilities and capacity to innovate in their work:**

- Custom learning
- Innovation moments
- Professional learning sessions



**Innovation networks to help increase collaboration and shape an innovation culture:**

- Workshops
- Collaboration support

## PROJECT RESULTS TO DRIVE IMPACT

The Lab uses innovation methodologies to build people-focused solutions. The Lab drives innovation by helping The City focus on understanding and solving the actual problems Calgarians are facing, not what we might assume. This approach helps services be both more efficient and effective, and to ensure that The City continues to meet the needs of Calgary's increasingly diverse population. Three examples of projects that demonstrate how we can build better City services are:

### EXAMPLE PROJECT 1

#### Green Line Understanding Youth Safety in Ogden

Construction for the Green Line LRT project will be taking place in close proximity to residential homes in the community of Ogden. For some of the houses, their backyards will be as close as 30 meters from the construction site. The Innovation Lab spoke with over 200 households and used some unconventional research methods to gain insights from youth (including an obstacle course to understand their perceptions of safety in the community). The result of the research was five community insights and six recommendations on youth safety for the Green line project to consider for future construction projects, and a confirmation that the original safety concerns expressed were not validated by youth in the community.



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Working with The Lab saved us time and money as The Lab was able to have more in-depth conversations and a greater reach of residents than we would have been able to with our capacity at the time. [...] The construction project will continue into 2025 and [this work] will set the foundation for long term relationships in the neighborhood that Green Line can continue to build on.

-Green Line Project Lead

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### EXAMPLE PROJECT 2

#### Village Square Leisure Centre Increasing Pool Safety

The Village Square Leisure Centre is a vibrant community center in the North East of Calgary, and Recreation and Social Programs wanted to find ways to improve Calgarians' safety at the pool facility. Through a people-centred approach, the Innovation Lab gathered Calgarians' and staff needs and insights on safety. As a result, new safety measures have been introduced including:

- decreasing the pool wave strength
- improvements to pool tiles to increase traction

Other intervention are being evaluated to improve overall pool safety including:

- a “pool deck concierge” for general inquiries from pool users to free lifeguards to focus on pool safety
- improved signage that is accessible to the diverse user base that do not have English as first language



### EXAMPLE PROJECT 3

#### GamePLAN Recreation Future Planning

Recreation programs in Calgary are managed not only by The City of Calgary, but a mixture of private and public providers. The Innovation Lab supported the development of a long-term strategic vision and guiding principles to create a more cohesive delivery approach of recreation programs for Calgarians.

Through a series of seven workshops and interviews, the Innovation Lab heard from 36 representatives from recreation and sport sector agencies, civic and community partners, and community associations with and without community assets. The Lab team developed recommendations and themes to improve recreation for the next decade around capacity building, increasing accessibility and inclusion, and improving Calgarians' recreation experiences.

### OTHER NOTE-WORTHY PROJECTS



#### Water Bylaw Compliance

Developed a greater understanding of businesses and City needs to increase compliance to Water Services Bylaws which would ultimately decrease pollution and protect water infrastructure.



#### Assessment Appeals

Created greater understanding of equity-based barriers to property assessment appeals process.



#### Accessible Pathways

Collaboratively developed the new teams' goals and culture to achieve a city-wide mobility network (The 5A Network).



#### Equity and Inclusion

Supported the design of The City's Experience & Inclusion Week and increased the knowledge and understanding of anti-racism literature in The City.

## BUILDING CAPACITY: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING RESULTS

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

37

Trainings offered

818

People attended

35

Business units reached

We asked attendees of Professional Learning trainings a series of questions to better understand their experience:

95%

Found The Lab's professional learning useful

91%

Saw an increase in their innovation skills and mindsets

69%

Felt confident to try new things

59%

Felt they had more tools to solve problems

Most Popular Trainings



Storytelling for Impact



Visual Communication and Sketching



Innovation 101

“

The practice was key to this learning - applying in the moment is the best way to learn, plus you walk away with a story that is likely useful to your work.

-Professional Learning Participant

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## SHAPING CULTURE: INNOVATION NETWORK RESULTS

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 2022 we did this mainly through three networking spaces: Mug Club, Tiger Team, and the Innovation Action Network.

### 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. The groups aim is to create an open space to share and inspire each other to use innovation to make small and large change in our day to day work life.

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Participating in Mug Club brings value through the ability to connect with people across business units and break those silos. Second, the ability to connect with those people as human beings through shared experiences; not just as coworkers working on a project or something. Third, it's an opportunity to have meaningful discussions about topics that we often think about but don't get to discuss “in real life”. It made me feel less alone, and gave me a lot of hope.

-Mug Club Participant

We asked attendees of Mug Club a series of questions to better understand their experience:

88%

Felt an increase in safety to learn new things

51%

Felt an increase in safety to challenge the status quo

74%

Reported that attending strengthened their relationships across the City



1293

People attended

32

Business units reached

A few Mug Club topics covered:

- Neurodiversity in the workplace
- Using AI at The City
- Introducing the anti-racism blueprint for change

### INNOVATION ACTION NETWORK

The Innovation Action Network is a community co-created by, and designed to help, innovators at The City feel confident and supported in applying what they've learned in Innovation Lab professional learning courses to make positive change in their day-to-day work. The Lab provides a safe space for staff to discuss experiments and connect with colleagues who have tried similar experiments with new ways of working across the corporation. The end goal is to shape a culture of innovation at The City of Calgary.

151

People attended

8

Innovation frameworks introduced

A few frameworks covered:

- How to prototype quickly
- Values and impact
- Reflective practice and integration

### TIGER TEAM

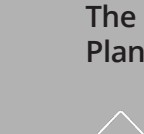
Tiger Team is a monthly workshop where a cross-corporate team of creative thinkers gather to solve problems. It's a space for new ways of collaboration and a chance to move work forward. Tiger Team is a collaborative effort between Public Spaces Project Development, The Innovation Lab, and the owner of the challenge the group is working on. This year, Tiger Team worked with the University of Calgary, The Calgary Public Library, and City groups such as Downtown Strategy and Customer Service and Communications.

100+

People attended

A few challenges explored in Tiger Team:

- Overcoming barriers to Innovation
- Improving Downtown Vibrancy
- Communicating with Calgarians on how to sort waste and recycling



## PARTNERSHIPS

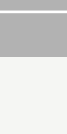
The Innovation Lab partners with internal departments and business units including Infrastructure Services, Planning & Development Services, and Water Services to have embedded staff to:



Create greater impact for Calgarians through better services



Unblock their innovation challenges



Increase their innovation capacity, skills, mindsets and toolsets



To take more risks and succeed (+ fail!) together

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Being a partner to the Lab ensures that we have ready access to a skillset that supports us in being people (staff and customer) focused. It, time and time again, provides resourcing support for “doing things differently” and helps check our assumptions to make sure we are solving the right problem in the first place.

-Innovation Lab Partner

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