

CMHC Housing Solutions Labs



Co-Designing a Solutions Lab Approach to Address your Housing Challenge

The National Housing Strategy is a unique opportunity to address the many layers of sticky issues involved in ensuring Canadians have access to affordable housing by bringing together the public, private and non-profit sectors. To maximize the discovery of robust, innovative solutions to this challenge, CMHC is calling for the use of Lab approaches. This approach allows participants to deeply explore a challenge, see the housing system from different perspectives, identify key issues and barriers preventing innovation, and jointly prioritize, test, and implement actions and solutions.

We can help in a variety of ways that we would tailor to suit your needs. Examples include working with you to co-design the overall Lab according to Lab processes, principles and philosophy (see below); critically thinking through the framing of the challenge(s) you are interested in working with; selecting the best tools and methods for each purpose and group configuration; supporting the overall stakeholder engagement design (who do we need, when, and how); providing background or current state research using innovative data collection and analysis techniques that create the opportunity for new insights; and/or ensuring groups with key roles are included (e.g. end-user, or any groups with ownership over solutions). We facilitate events so that you can participate in a meaningful way, and we keep the project in scope, on time and on budget.

Lansdowne is recognized for our ability to engage large numbers of individuals through distributed and citizen ethnography. We use state of the art narrative software to analyze information. This serves as input to the Lab's design phase and allows us to evaluate Lab outputs throughout the project. We apply Labs as a way of organizing people and efforts to create a safe environment and to test ideas that emerge from lived and shared experience (e.g. see the What Works Lab). We have worked on affordable housing issues with builders, policymakers and service delivery organizations through initiatives from the GTA Housing Action Lab to the federal Actions for Housing Now, and Ottawa's A Way Home initiative.

We engage people directly to bring ideas to the open innovation processes that Labs promote. We operate with a principle of inclusivity, ensuring that all elements of the system get involved and promote co-created solutions that build on what works. The purpose of the Lab is to create the space where ideas are nourished as small "safe to fail" experiments that can be developed into workable, scalable solutions. We are experienced at working directly with the different needs and cultures of groups, organizations, and all levels of government on issues affecting citizens' wellbeing. We have worked with persons who:

- cannot find adequate housing;
- face social and economic barriers;
- struggle to make ends meet financially;
- are integrating or reintegrating into the local community;
- are first responders or deliver security services;
- are developers or builders;
- are public servants who design government policy and programs;
- implement or deliver programs or services.

Our team offers unique capabilities to engage large numbers of individuals, organizations, and governments on complex issues. It includes:

- experienced and energized facilitators who work at the community, institutional, and policy level on design, prototyping and implementation of a large number of initiatives;
- subject matter experts in sustainable development, data analysis, gamification, innovation, evaluation, housing security, and Inuit issues;
- internationally recognized researchers;
- experience working extensively with all three levels of government;
- connections to an extensive network of government and not-for-profit organizations involved in housing.

Lansdowne applies a rigorous project management and risk discipline approach to all initiatives. We have strong direct experience in both housing and many related fields, including skills and training, integration, addictions, conflict with the law, domestic violence, exclusion and minority cultures, security and risk assessment, and science-based sustainability analysis.

Locations (Offices and Lab Facilities)

Our team and toolbox are mobile – we can create a collaborative space both online and at a physical location outside of Ottawa. Our Ottawa office and lab space (for up to 35 participants) is located at 275 Slater St, Ottawa. We have affiliate space available in Ottawa (for larger groups), Toronto, Montreal, and other locations across Canada.

Expertise in relation to CMHC priority areas

The Lansdowne Consulting Group has expertise in each of the priority areas, as detailed below. For more information, please see our complete submission to CMHC.

PRIORITY AREA	EXPERTISE	RELEVANT PROJECTS
Housing for those in greatest need	Engagement and facilitation of diverse stakeholders to align priorities and resources.	GTA Housing Action Lab
Community housing sustainability	Familiarity with the Toronto Tower renewal program. Financing mechanisms for sustainable community projects.	GTA Housing Action Lab \$LearnSave Employment and Skills Strategy in Canada (OECD)
Indigenous housing	Research Ethnography Policy framework	A Way Home: Understanding the Housing and Shelter System for Homeless and At-Risk Youth in Ottawa OECD Reviews on Local Job Creation in the Yukon and Sask.
Northern housing	Research Facilitation	Housing Benefit Application in Iqaluit Culturally Appropriate 2nd Stage Housing Empowering Inuit Women to Strengthen Communities
Sustainable housing and communities	Design, engagement, facilitation and preparation of sustainable community plans.	Amazing Neighbourhoods GTA Housing Action Lab
Balanced supply of housing	Research Policy learning Policy formulation	GTA Housing Action Lab

Toolkits - Tools and Methods

Our consortium uses a variety of tools and methods to design and deliver labs in a way that meet client needs. Our strength is creating Labs and Lab processes that fit the needs of those involved. Below are a few examples:

Understanding the issues: Structured and unstructured data analysis, SenseMaker®, Distributed ethnography for large scale capture of local experience relevant to subjects of interest, Social network mapping using data visualization (Kumu), First Principles Thinking Canvas

Ideation and Design: Collaborative Transformation, World Café, StrategicPlay® using LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®, Appreciative Inquiry, Unconferences using Transformation Architecture (large group method - +500 participants), Design Thinking, Business Model Canvas, Value Proposition Canvas, Backcasting from Principles

Prototyping: 3D Modeling using LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®, Design Thinking, Graphic facilitation, Safe to Fail approach, Rapid prototyping methods

Scaling: Evaluation (developmental, formative, summative, collective impact, others), The Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD), e-Engagement and online consultations using Survey Monkey, PowerNoodle, Gamification

Other management processes: International Association of Facilitators certified, Project Management Institute and Prince2 certified Project Managers, Certified Risk Management Professionals

Lansdowne's facilitation tools and methods are listed on our [website](#).

The right tools and methods get the right outputs.



Relevant Experience:

PREVIOUS HOUSING LABS

MICRO LABS: Improving the Delivery of Housing Policies. October 2018 to February 2019. Several micro Labs were completed across Canada, including in the north, exploring how to improve the delivery of particular housing policies and interventions. Lansdowne worked with teams at the federal, provincial and territorial levels.

MACRO LAB: Greater Toronto Area (GTA) Housing Action Lab with Evergreen CityWorks and the McConnell Foundation. September 2013 to October 2015. The GTA Housing Action Lab was a collaborative project that brought together a diverse group of stakeholders to explore and address the affordability and sustainability of housing in the GTA. The GTA Housing Action Lab identified eight focus areas. Within each, the lab and its partners co-created a series of solution-based pilots and conducted research that explored each topic: housing benefit, leveraging assets locked in social housing, new partnerships for affordable housing, affordable home ownership, purpose built rental, tower renewal, creative infill housing, and data. In addition, the lab used the collective voice of participants to recommend policy and funding changes at the local, provincial and federal levels. (Reference: Robert Plitt: 416-596-1495 x 238)

MICRO LAB: Actions for Housing Now: Creating affordable, suitable and secure housing in Canadian cities.

A Multi-Sectoral Solutions Lab on Impacting Federal Housing Policy (Ottawa Lab), Tyee Solutions Society and the Canadian Housing Renewal Association in local partnership with the Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa and Carleton University. December 2015 to March 2016. The “Actions for Housing Now” solutions labs, hosted in Vancouver and Ottawa, brought together the brightest minds in our housing sectors to develop a shortlist of achievable policy solutions for creating secure, suitable, and affordable housing in Canadian cities. (References: Kristen Holinsky (AEHO) 613-241-1573 and Michelle Hoar (Tyee) 604-689-7489)

MACRO LAB: Amazing Neighbourhood Initiative, Alberta Real Estate Foundation. December 2011 to November 2013. The Amazing Neighbourhood Initiative provided a space for city planners, neighbourhood associations, experts, and residents in Alberta to explore the relationship and power dynamics between different layers of influence that shape our neighbourhoods. Participants in this lab collaborated to develop and pilot a sustainable neighbourhood planning approach. One of the outputs from this lab was a ‘how-to’ guide for municipal governments and community associations. The lab also provided policy recommendations at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels.

MICRO LAB: A Way Home: Understanding the Housing and Shelter System for Homeless and At-Risk Youth in Ottawa. March to June 2016. The Youth Services Bureau and Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa wanted to better understand Ottawa’s system of housing and shelters for homeless and at-risk youth. A series of micro labs were designed to identify key barriers, leverage points, and success factors. The project aimed to co-envision a supportive and stabilizing system in Ottawa working toward community buy-in. The labs included youth and young adults with current and past lived experience. Methods included the use of LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® to create a 3D model of the system from various perspectives, visual journey mapping, and a series of World Cafés.

OTHER LAB PROJECT EXAMPLES

MACRO LAB: Natural Capital Lab, Chartered Professional Accountants Canada, Ivey Foundation, TD Bank, The Cooperators, Smart Prosperity, and The Municipal Natural Asset Initiative. April 2016 to March 2018. The National Capital Lab was a multi-stakeholder collaborative initiative to shape and align how we account for natural capital in Canada. (Reference: Davinder Valeri: 416-977-3222)

MACRO LAB: What Works Lab, Employment and Social Development Canada. January 2014 to June 2015. The What Works Lab employed a complexity informed approach using ethnography principles in open ended interviews with international projects identified as good practices by the OECD.

MICRO LAB: Strategic Collaboration Solutions Lab Process for six Ottawa Community Health Centres. September 2017 to April 2018. This solutions lab process focused on building a complexity-informed Joint Strategic Planning Framework. The team identified strategic issues, risks, and opportunities to build system capacity, with the goal of contributing to the transition toward a socially and environmentally sustainable society.

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