

Brief: MaRS, Evergreen, and The Natural Step

For: Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC): Solutions Lab Consulting Services

Date: April 2019

Introduction to our Labs and Corresponding Services

The [MaRS Solutions Lab](#), [Evergreen](#) and [The Natural Step](#) are offering a unique blend of established approaches that are ready to apply to Canada's most pressing housing challenges. We are three national organizations that bring a combination of subject matter expertise, facilitation experience, national networks, and capacity to deliver solutions labs that drive impact on complex societal challenges in and across communities. Our organizations offer a vision for sustainable, inclusive communities and deep expertise using lab processes to create, lead, and implement innovative solutions to complex problems.

Our team's services, led by the MaRS Solutions Lab, range from conducting and writing research reports, ethnographic research, facilitation of diverse groups, prototyping initiatives, evaluation, gamification, design, and communications; all resting on a solid project management foundation.

Our Expertise

Our team has developed strong relationships with networks of housing experts, providers, financial institutions, governmental personnel from across the country, and community members. We have direct experience working with diverse stakeholders including municipalities across the country: communities with lived experience of homelessness, mental health crises, and addictions; Indigenous populations; non-governmental organizations; energy developers, small- and medium-sized enterprises; provincial and federal departments, youth; and rural farming communities.

We are recognized thought leaders in housing policy who are sought after to contribute to expert advisory panels, such as for the Ontario Minister's Fair Housing Roundtable, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce Infrastructure and Environment, Canadian Home Builders' Association Urban Council, and Sidewalk Labs Housing Advisory Committee.

Our team brings the following skills:

- > Expert facilitation of solutions labs
- > Research and jurisdictional scans
- > Strategic communications and storytelling
- > Multimedia event reporting

- > Participatory prototyping of solutions, including: prototyping policy, regulations, governance, strategy, programs, services, products, built environment, and infrastructure
- > Smart city technology literacy and data analytics
- > Impact assessment and developmental evaluation
- > Project management

Additionally, MaRS Solutions Lab is well-positioned within MaRS Discovery District to leverage the deep expertise among its systems change teams, such as the [MaRS Centre for Impact Investing](#) on social finance, or [MaRS Data Catalyst](#) on metrics, and data use, visualization and analysis.

Members of our team are able to deliver consultation sessions in both French and English.

Our team has experience working on the priority areas noted below. Additional details may be found in our submission to CMHC.

Housing for those in greatest need

- > Housing Action Lab: Co-designed the Ontario Portable Housing Benefit Pilot Program; secured new policies for laneway housing in the City of Toronto; and supported new policy development at York Region and in Hamilton to support the development of new affordable housing programs.
- > National Housing Collaborative: Coordinated support from across private, public, development, finance, and non-profit sectors to promote the development of the [Canadian Housing Benefit](#); developed new data and analysis to support papers on [options to reduce homelessness in Canada](#) and [Strengthening Social Housing](#).

Community Housing Sustainability

- > Through the [Tower Renewal Project](#), we are working to transform isolated apartment tower neighbourhoods into more convenient, livable, and resilient vertical villages. We are currently working with building owners and six municipal governments in Ontario to retrofit apartment towers and install renewable energy systems while maintaining affordable rent.
- > Our partners in the Tower Renewal Partnership produced research to inform the design of the Co-Investment Fund, which will support the redevelopment of apartment towers across Canada.

Sustainable Housing and Communities

- > [The Sustainable Neighbourhoods Initiative](#) collaboratively developed and piloted a sustainable neighbourhood planning approach; together with city planners, neighbourhood associations, experts and residents in Alberta. The lab provided policy recommendations to all three levels of government and developed a 'how-to' guide on sustainable neighbourhood planning.
- > [The Energy Futures Lab](#) is working to build a sustainable, resilient and innovative energy system for Alberta and is exploring how Canada can become a global leader in this space. The lab works to bring together government, corporates, First Nations groups and environmental organizations.

Balanced Supply of Housing

- > Through the Housing Action Lab, we worked with partners to propose new policy solutions that promote new purpose-built rental housing; innovative housing (such as mid-rise and laneway housing); as well as models for affordable home ownership. Currently, we are working with a group of housing experts to propose new approaches for zoning to produce a larger variety of housing options in the City of Toronto.
- > Together with members of the National Housing Collaborative, we proposed that the Federal Government refocus and expand the current toolkit of housing supply mechanisms. This includes neutral ownership by providers to achieve a range of housing outcomes and to promote affordability across the spectrum of housing types.

Our Methods and Tools

We offer a synthesis of the lab methodologies of the MaRS Solutions Lab, Evergreen, and The Natural Step.

- > MaRS Solutions Lab contributes the [Periodic Table for Systems Change](#), which provides a theory of change that guides a solutions lab through the innovation arc.
- > Evergreen contributes know-how on grassroots community activation, as well as backbone lab support and communications structures.
- > The Natural Step provides a cohort model for lab recruitment and governance structures for national-scale labs following the Sustainable Transition Lab approach.

This synthesis is possible because our organizations have been collaborating and advising on one another's lab projects for the past three years, including the [Housing Action Lab](#), [Energy Futures Lab](#), and [Future Cities Canada](#).

By working with us, you will tap into a wide range of tools and facilitation methods that have been successfully used and developed by our team. This includes systemic design methods and human-centred design tools used across the innovation arc. Examples of our process and approaches include: [the Sustainability Transition Lab](#), [Housing Action Lab](#), and [Innovation Partnership: Procurement by Co-Design](#) project and tools for community prototyping, such as the [RECOVER prototyping toolkit](#).

Our Lab Locations and Offices

Our organizations are all national in scope. Together, we have convening space available in Toronto at Evergreen Brick Works and the MaRS Discovery District, in Vancouver at The Amp, in Hamilton at the Evergreen Community Storefront and in Moncton at NouLab. Through our national lab practitioners' community of practice, we have strong existing relationships with public and social innovation labs from Whitehorse to Charlottetown and beyond.

Appendix

Price – as in the Request for Standing Offer

LEVEL OF EXPERTISE	ROLES
Senior Consultant	Lab Director - Alex Ryan
Consultants	Project Manager Lead Researcher Research Team Members Workshop Designers (Process & Materials) Workshop Facilitators Data Analysis Team Writers & Communication Experts
Junior Consultant	Information Design and Layout Graphics Design Administration Support and Logistics

Our team includes

- > Dr. Alex Ryan, VP, MaRS Solutions Lab
- > Claire Buré, Program Manager, MaRS Solutions Lab
- > John Purkis, Senior Associate, The Natural Step
- > Michelle German, Director, Action Labs, Evergreen
- > Amanda Hachey, Senior Associate, The Natural Step
- > LeaAnne Ross, Director, Communications, Evergreen
- > Sergio De Lara, Senior Associate, Civic Innovation Catalyst, MaRS Solutions Lab
- > Peter Rose, Senior Associate, MaRS Solutions Lab
- > Mikayla Zolis, Associate, MaRS Solutions Lab
- > Julie Fader, Program Coordinator, Evergreen

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