Introduction to Solutions Lab work and firm offerings

BGM designs Solutions Labs that overcome silos, push beyond the status quo, and foster systems-level change. We specialize in process design, public policy, and helping diverse groups create shared solutions to complex issues. We have experience working with actors from across the housing ecosystem and all levels of government to address Canada's most pressing housing challenges.

We believe form should follow function and treat every Solutions Lab as a bespoke process. We work closely with clients in the project definition phase to design a process that leverages each client's unique strengths, while incorporating the following foundational elements:

- **Human-centred design:** We ensure the needs and perspectives of end-users and stakeholders are at the centre of each activity and solution, recognizing the unique expertise that each person brings.

- **Systems-thinking:** We draw on our experience bringing together actors from across sectors to design Labs that take a comprehensive view of the housing ecosystem.

- **A focus on outcomes:** We prioritize meaningful engagement and collaboration with stakeholders, to ensure solutions are met with uptake and have buy-in from those responsible for implementation.

- **Generating lasting value:** We believe the Solutions Lab should not only produce innovative solutions, but also build capacity and strengthen our clients.

Our housing specialty and expertise in NHS priority areas

BGM works heavily with agencies in the community and voluntary sector, particularly around housing and service delivery for people who require affordable housing with supports. Our housing expertise also extends to the public and private sectors, who are often critical partners in implementing housing solutions. Alongside these areas, we bring expertise in the following National Housing Strategy (NHS) priority areas:

- **Housing for those in greatest need:** Our projects have involved several NHS priority populations, including people with disabilities, people experiencing homelessness, people dealing with mental health and addiction issues, and women and children fleeing domestic violence.

- **Community housing sustainability:** We have experience working with non-profits, co-ops and housing providers to drive innovation in community housing sustainability. Our projects have helped actors from across sectors design mechanisms and strategies to create new affordable rental supply, increase community housing sector capacity, and preserve existing stock.

- **Balanced supply of housing:** We have worked across sectors to ensure all Canadians have access to housing that meets their needs and that they can afford. This included coordinating research for the Tower Renewal Partnership, serving as Secretariat for the Canadian Housing Policy Roundtable, and helping Toronto's supportive housing sector strategically align resources to grow the supply of supportive housing in Toronto.

Sample relevant project highlights

My Home My Community: My Home My Community is a national, multi-year initiative creating new pathways to inclusive, affordable housing for adults with developmental disabilities. We've worked to co-design the project from the ground up and provide hands-on support. This has included designing and facilitating a CMHC Solutions Lab to explore how RDSP funds can be redesigned and leveraged to facilitate affordable homeownership for people with developmental disabilities. The Lab brought together people with developmental disabilities and their families, disability organizations, and experts in policy, finance, law, and disability to develop actionable policy proposals that would unlock the potential of the Canada Disability Savings Program to support homeownership. Other project streams we have supported include two CMHC Demonstration Initiatives showcasing pathways to homeownership and other innovative models of inclusive, affordable housing for people with developmental disabilities; designing a portable housing benefit for people with disabilities; an asset inventory to understand Canada's development potential for new housing for people with developmental disabilities; and creating a Housing Inclusivity Model to help developers and municipal partners plan for more inclusive housing.

United Way – P & L Odette Charitable Foundation Homelessness Solutions Lab: The United Way – P & L Odette Charitable Foundation Homelessness Solutions Lab was a strategic initiative to identify solutions to support a shift from managing to ending homelessness in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Bringing together key actors from across the homelessness service systems in Peel, Toronto and York, the Lab developed solutions to help system managers and networks, funders, and service providers implement coordinated interventions to integrate and fill gaps in homelessness plans and programs. BGM worked with United Way to co-design and facilitate this project, culminating in an action-oriented final report to guide action and investment in evidence-based practices that need to be built up to end homelessness in the GTA.

Toronto Supportive Housing Growth Plan: Co-convened by CMHA Toronto, the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness, and the Wellesley Institute, the Toronto Supportive Housing Growth Plan is a sector-led initiative to develop innovative opportunities for strategic coordination and collaboration to grow Toronto's supportive housing supply. BGM has served as the Secretariat for the Growth Plan since its inception, providing strategy, engagement, process design, government relations, project management, research, and communications services to equip diverse supportive housing providers in developing a comprehensive, 10-year plan to grow the supply of housing with supports in Toronto and deepen the sector's ability to respond to changing and growing needs.

National Housing Collaborative: The National Housing Collaborative brought together an alliance of non-profit and private housing associations and major philanthropic organizations to influence the Government of Canada's development of the National Housing Strategy. This diverse group tasked itself with developing innovative, cross-sector policy solutions that had support from across the housing system, were backed by evidence, and addressed Canada's pressing housing affordability challenges. BGM was invited to design and facilitate the process to enable the Collaborative to achieve these goals. Following the adoption of three out of the Collaborative's four policy proposals in the National Housing Strategy, BGM continues to support the ongoing alliance of housing policy actors, now called the Canadian Housing Policy Roundtable.

Key areas of expertise and experience in Labs

Solutions Labs are an ideal methodology when more is known about the challenge to be solved for than what the solution itself needs to look like — and when involvement from multiple stakeholders is needed to effectively address a challenge. BGM is often sought out to support just this kind of work. Our Solutions Lab work reflects the following key areas of our expertise and experience:

- **Subject matter expertise:** BGM brings deep knowledge of the housing ecosystem, the history and evolution of key housing challenges and solutions in Canada, and established and emerging evidence to inform the development of new solutions.

- **Process expertise:** We are adept at designing the right process to foster innovation based on the unique needs of each project, and working flexibly to ensure the process is responsive to new learnings and project needs that emerge along the way.

- **Engagement:** We are experienced in multi-stakeholder engagement and working with people with lived experience, staff at all levels of an organization, government partners, and a wide range of other stakeholder groups across sectors. We create safe, inclusive environments where people feel comfortable testing assumptions and experimenting with new ideas.

- **Social innovation:** Our work is centred on helping organizations and cross-sectoral groups develop new practices and solutions to address the complex challenges. We bring a deep familiarity with social innovation methods that result in actionable solutions with lasting value.

- **Systems thinking:** Housing challenges often sit at the intersection of multiple sectors and systems related to public policy and the social determinants of health. We look at problems and solutions through a systems lens, helping groups overcome siloes and achieve change at the systems level.

Tools and methods

We bring expertise in Solutions Lab methodology and a Swiss-army knife skillset to match the right tools with the perimeters of each project. We don't believe in a one-size-fits-all approach, but in working with clients to map the route to a project's destination based on the unique problem to be solved. We bridge our expertise in process design with dedicated project management to oversee every step in the innovation process and ensure all milestones and deliverables are met. Tools and expertise we commonly draw on include:

- Stakeholder mapping
- Engagement strategy
- Environmental scanning
- User segmentation
- Strategic foresight
- Interviews, focus groups, co-design workshops, and surveys
- Backcasting
- Prioritization tools

- Three Horizons Model
- Journey mapping
- Blueprint design and development
- Prototyping
- Roadmap visualization
- Policy recommendations
- Advocacy and communications strategy

Team member profiles

Dana Granofsky

Dana is Principal of BGM and an accomplished strategist and Harvard trained mediator. With more than a decade of experience in strategy formation and innovation across the public, private and non-profit sectors, Dana excels at unravelling complex challenges to help people find shared solutions. In Canada, Dana has led local, provincial, and national initiatives, spanning from health and housing policy to non-profit change management to corporate leadership in local economic development. Dana leads the design of Solutions Labs, supervises all research, collaborates on analysis and facilitates Lab activities and engagement.

Liz McGuire

Liz is a certified Project Management Professional and brings nearly a decade of experience working in policy advisory roles at the Housing Services Corporation and the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association. Liz draws on her experience in cross-sectoral research to help clients ensure work is always evidence-based. In addition to spearheading research activities, Liz's role in Solutions Labs includes agile project management — working attentively and flexibly with all collaborators to ensure work is completed on time and on budget, while being responsive to new learnings and project needs that emerge along the way.

Amber Krogel

Amber excels at communications, report writing, and synthesizing complex information into clear, actionable ideas. Amber studied housing and homelessness throughout her BA in International Relations and MA in Political Science, and now brings this academic grounding into her work with stakeholders from across the housing and homelessness ecosystem. Amber's role in Solutions Labs includes ensuring all collaborators have the information and tools they need to meaningfully participate, analyzing research and engagement input, and translating ideas and solutions into effective knowledge dissemination materials.

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