

## Project Summary Report

This is a brief overview is intended for evaluation purposes for projects co-delivered by the City of Lethbridge and Prentice Institute (PI). Evaluation looks at the project's relevance to broader themes within the PI's mandate, as well as workplace deliverables, objectives, benefits, and challenges.

**Project Name:** Social Marketing and its implications for municipal environmental policy communication

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**Project Overview** (approx. 500-750 words): *How does the project connect to broader topics (social, political, economic, environmental, etc.)? Include the project's objectives, challenges/constraints/benefits, timelines, and any policy applications relevant to the mandate of the Prentice Institute.*

This project explored how social marketing strategies can be used to encourage water conservation in the City of Lethbridge. At its core, the project aimed to address a pressing environmental issue—sustainable water use—by focusing on the social and behavioral dimensions of policy implementation. Rather than relying on enforcement or regulation, the project examined how cooperation, trust, and shared identity could be leveraged to support long-term, voluntary conservation behavior. This approach aligns with broader social and political goals of fostering community engagement, increasing policy acceptance, and encouraging civic participation.

The environmental relevance of the project is clear. Lethbridge exists in a dry climate, where water is a limited resource and conservation is increasingly critical. However, the project extended beyond environmental concerns, engaging broader topics like public trust, group behavior, social cohesion, and identity formation. Water conservation became a lens through which to examine how interdependence, group norms, and messaging can be used to strengthen cooperation across different sectors. In this way, the project connects to social, political, and even economic themes, such as collective action, public resource management, and policy legitimacy.

From a political standpoint, the project highlighted the importance of creating policies that people are willing to follow—not just because they have to, but because they believe in them. Social marketing offers a framework for influencing behavior without enforcement,

encouraging individuals to adopt conservation practices through shared values, visible norms, and leadership modeling. These ideas are transferable to a wide range of policy areas, including waste reduction, energy conservation, public health, and climate adaptation. In this sense, the project supports the development of policy strategies rooted in behavioral insight and community-based change.

This directly aligns with the mandate of the Prentice Institute, which focuses on understanding large-scale societal changes—such as population growth, resource scarcity, and environmental pressures—within historical and global contexts. The Institute’s goal of connecting local and regional trends to global patterns was reflected in the project's design. Although it focused on Lethbridge, the project drew from international literature on social marketing and applied those lessons locally. The goal was not only to address conservation in one city, but also to develop insights that could be adapted to similar municipalities facing shared environmental and social challenges.

The timeline for the project was approximately four months, which required a focused approach. Early stages involved conducting a literature review and identifying best practices in social marketing, followed by the development of practical recommendations for the City of Lethbridge. Given the limited duration, the project did not include testing or implementation of the recommendations; rather, it served as a foundation for future applied work. Despite the time constraint, the project successfully developed a strategic framework for encouraging participation in water conservation efforts.

There were notable benefits to the project. By focusing on cooperation, the work emphasized positive engagement over punitive measures. This approach has long-term potential to build trust between citizens and government, encourage mutual accountability, and normalize conservation behavior. The project also demonstrated the versatility of social marketing principles, showing how they can be applied across policy domains to strengthen community action. At the same time, the project faced constraints. Because it was theoretical in nature, there was no opportunity to measure public response or conduct trials. Additionally, the short timeframe meant that the research had to remain high-level, without delving into detailed demographic analysis or survey work. These limitations point to the need for future studies that apply and test these recommendations in real-world settings.

In sum, this project connected local environmental concerns with global trends in social cooperation, trust, and sustainable behavior. It emphasized the value of soft policy tools like social marketing in addressing collective action problems, and it offered a flexible, people-centered approach to governance. The work not only contributes to discussions around water use in Lethbridge, but also adds to broader conversations about how to promote cooperation in an increasingly interdependent world.

**Student Reflection** (approx. 500-750 words): *Explain the ways in which you applied your academic knowledge and skills to your work placement with the City of Lethbridge. What skills did you learn through your work experience that will help you in your academic/future career? Were there any specific things you learned that were significant to you – either a skill or an addition to your academic/workplace knowledge?*

During my placement with the City of Lethbridge, I was able to directly apply my academic knowledge to practical situations, which has significantly shaped my understanding of both the public sector and my future career in policy and governance. The opportunity to work on a real-world project, focused on encouraging water conservation through social marketing, gave me a chance to hone several skills that will be invaluable as I progress in my career.

One of the most valuable skills I developed was in policy communication. Throughout the placement, I was tasked with taking complex academic research and transforming it into clear, actionable recommendations for local government. This required not only a solid grasp of policy theory but also the ability to communicate it effectively to non-experts. The experience helped me refine my ability to present ideas succinctly, engaging stakeholders in meaningful ways and making sure that key points were understood by individuals with diverse backgrounds. These communication skills will be critical as I move forward in my career, whether I'm working in a government setting, consulting, or advocating for specific policies.

Another significant area of growth was my ability to think strategically about behavior change. My project focused on water conservation, a policy area where achieving significant change requires understanding human behavior. I applied theories from environmental psychology and social norms to develop strategies that could encourage voluntary participation. This focus on behavioral insights gave me a deeper appreciation for the power of social influence in shaping public policy. I learned how essential it is to consider the psychological and social factors behind policy issues in order to design solutions that resonate with the public. This skill will be crucial in my future career, as many of the most pressing policy challenges today—such as environmental sustainability, public health, and education—require understanding and influencing behavior.

My experience also reinforced the importance of local government in addressing societal issues. While my academic studies often emphasized federal or provincial policy, working directly with municipal government allowed me to see how responsive local governments can be to the specific needs of their communities. The City of Lethbridge's efforts to address water conservation through voluntary action, rather than mandates, demonstrated the potential for local governments to lead in innovative, community-driven solutions. This insight has reshaped my understanding of governance and inspired me to focus more on local-level policy work, where I see the potential to make a direct, tangible impact on the lives of residents.

In addition to these skills, one of the most significant lessons I took away from this experience was the importance of adaptability and stakeholder engagement. Throughout the

project, I was regularly presenting findings to city officials and gathering feedback. These weekly presentations taught me how to engage with a variety of stakeholders, adjust my approach based on their needs and perspectives, and refine my ideas in real-time. Learning to be flexible and receptive to feedback is a critical skill that will benefit me in future projects, where collaboration and input from various stakeholders will be key to achieving success.

Finally, the hands-on experience of working in the public sector provided me with a deeper understanding of the challenges and constraints that policymakers face. I came to appreciate how limited resources, tight timelines, and competing priorities often shape decision-making. Understanding these real-world challenges has made me more realistic in my approach to policy design and will inform my work as I move forward in my career. It has also strengthened my problem-solving and critical-thinking abilities, as I was constantly required to find practical, feasible solutions within these constraints.

To summarize, my work with the City of Lethbridge allowed me to develop crucial skills in policy communication, behavioral analysis, stakeholder engagement, and adaptability. These are all essential competencies that will shape my future career, whether in local government, policy analysis, or any field where understanding human behavior and effective communication are key to creating positive change.

**Project Stewardship:** *Is the project complete? Who will be caring for the project after the term if it is not yet complete?*

Although water conservation is an ongoing process, the purpose of this project has been completed. Lethbridge will continue to encourage conservation and will continue to communicate the importance of sustainable water use, however research into social marketing has come to an end for Lethbridge.

*Were there any additional academic deliverables?*

1. Contribution to class discussions
2. Weekly annotated bibliography