

The 2024 Policy Innovation Lab: Urban Food Security and Land Use Policy

Erica Gonzalez B.A., Graduate Research Assistant, Prentice Institute, University of Lethbridge

Andrea Cuellar Ph.D., Associate Director, Prentice Institute, University of Lethbridge

Perry Stein M.A., RPP, Partner Services Manager, City of Lethbridge

Overview

The **Policy Innovation Lab (PIL)** is an interinstitutional collaboration between the **City of Lethbridge**, the **Prentice Institute**, and the **Lethbridge College** to address shared challenges within the city. By involving students in ongoing municipal policy projects, the PIL aims to develop a new Work Integrated Learning model.

In 2024, the PIL will focus on **Urban Food Security and Land Use Policy**. During the pilot year, six undergraduate students will participate in a four-week program to examine and propose policies to enhance food security in Lethbridge.. Their work will inform the city's Land Use Bylaw (LUB) renewal project.

The PIL is supported by the University of Lethbridge SSHRC Explore grant through the Prentice Institute.

Background

The emergence of cities as nodes for new food governance systems opens possibilities for policy innovation.

Using the ongoing City's **Land Use Bylaw (LUB) renewal project** as a framework, the PIL will examine possible municipal policy interventions to tackle urban food security.

The PIL will examine urban food (in)security by focusing on **structural factors** and applying an **equity framework** to land use. This approach offers an alternative to traditional "alleviation" mechanisms.

The PIL contextualizes urban food security under the UN **Sustainable Development Goals** using a systems thinking approach in its instructional content and development.

Objectives

Shared Objectives:

- Better understand the underlying structural factors of food insecurity within Lethbridge.
- Strengthening interinstitutional partnerships to understand and respond to shared challenges.
- Facilitating work experience and professional development opportunities for students.

Students:

- Gaining hands-on experience in a municipal policy setting and professional development.
- Transferring academic experience into a professional setting.

Post-secondary Institutions:

- Exploring new models of Work Integrated Learning.
- Mobilizing academic expertise and research capacity to impact our immediate communities positively.

City of Lethbridge:

- Growing its ability to access knowledge and skills to help navigate complex policy issues.
- Training and retaining students, talent and knowledge.

Key Concepts

The PIL adopts a collaborative and inclusive knowledge model:

Communities of Practice (CoPs):

- Challenge the existing power structures around knowledge production and producers.
- Empower students as subject-matter experts.

IDEA (inclusion, diversity, equity, and access) framework:

- Promotes participation from students with diverse academic backgrounds and life experiences to engage the subject matter with an equity-forward lens.

Constructivist Learning Theory:

- Acknowledges the best learning is collaborative and aware of the social context of knowledge production.
- Supports reflexive practices and student agency.

Hands-on Learning:

- Empowers students to apply academic skills and lived experience to a practical, results-oriented purpose in a professional setting.

References

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UN Sustainable Development Goals related to the PIL.