CivicLabTO: Dynamic City-Higher Education Collaboration

ISCN Online Advisory Programme: Smart Cities and Universities - Cooperations, projects and joint challenges

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Before we start ...

our land acknowledgement

The Ring Sculpture: Matthew Hickey and Jacqueline Daniel, Two Row Architect

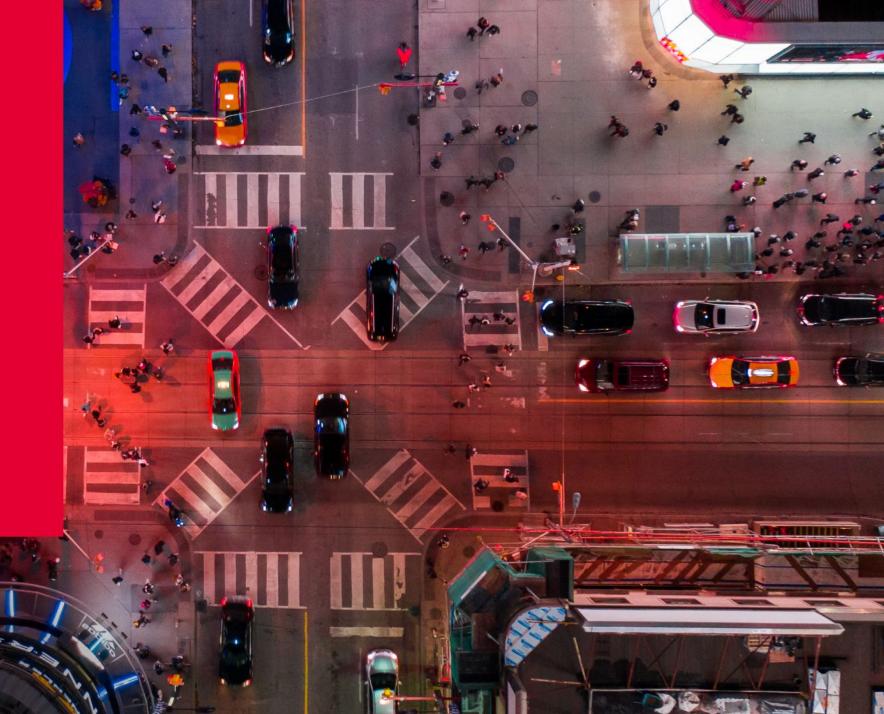Toronto Metropolitan University

If it was easy, it would be done!

Smart Strategy:
How can higher ed and local governments work together more impactfully?

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CivicLabTO
https://www.civiclabto.ca/

- what is it?
- what do we actually do?
- case study: City of Toronto course
- city-university research partnerships
- city-university research partnerships + smart city efforts

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CivicLabTO: what is it?

"CivicLabTO is a strategic initiative to create a more systemic approach to collaboration"

How: brings together students, faculty, researchers, and City staff who seek opportunities for sharing information and best practices.

What? Living lab to encourage engagement with real life problems and complex challenges. Offer the City opportunities for innovation, intellectual exchange of ideas, critical analysis, research and evaluation, and the ability to raise research funds.

Why? Engage in strategies for change and innovation, to test theories, conduct research, use experiential learning, and increase networking.

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CivicLabTO: what do we actually do?

The CivicLabTO program aims to create and strengthen academic research collaborations, knowledge-sharing opportunities, and experiential learning experiences guided by a commitment to equity, inclusion and reconciliation through:

1. teaching

2. research collaboration

3. bi-annual symposium

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case study: City of Toronto course

- 4 colleges + 4 universities
- +300 students from different programs
- 8 professors + over 25 city staff
- 12 week course

6 weeks of learning in City Hall chambers
1. The City's Strategic Priorities and the Role of Local Government
2. A Well-Run City & Intergovernmental Affairs
3. Building an Equitable City
4. Community Resilience – People, Housing and Neighbourhoods
5. Art, Culture and the Public Realm
6. Climate Action, Resilience, & Mobility

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7

bi-annual symposium

2021: Building Back Better, a Summit on Post-Pandemic Recovery
Pillars: Public Health; Planning and Adapting Public Space; Stronger, Safer, More Just Communities; Arts, Culture, and Recovery; Housing and Health; Transit and Transportation ; Technology, Innovation, and Equity; Climate Change and Green Recovery; Economic Resiliency

2023: Collaboration in Action
5 working groups: Public Health; City Building & Mobility; Housing & Neighbourhoods; Inclusive Economic Development; Climate & Resilience

- Connect with City of Toronto staff
- Gain important insight into City research and data needs, funded research opportunities
- Share data and ongoing work at the researcher and institutional levels in these key areas
- Form communities of practice and working groups for continued, strategic collaborations

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city-university research partnerships

Partnership goal: "create pathway for the City of Toronto and Toronto HEIs to further activate the considerable expertise within the city in support of research priorities and an informed, innovative future"

New platform to enable city-university research partnerships
- OCIP, https://ocip.ecampusontario.ca/expression-of-interest/)
- bi-directional

Scale and accelerate research collaborations strategically

city-university research partnerships

Examples:

- **Constructed environment by artificial intelligence:** Physical design improvements to Public space in Toronto to improve sustainability
- **The Journey to the Rexdale** - Casino Woodbine Community Benefits Agreement: A Toronto Case Study
- **Showcasing the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of electrifying small businesses:** Existing Buildings Team, Environment and Climate Division
- **The Climate Action and Resiliency Research Fund (CARRF)** - 3 year fund, $1m to fund small and mid-sized action projects via CivicLabTO.

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city-university research partnerships + smart city efforts

what's working?

- students are keen - recruitment, common reference point, research happening, wiring new connections

what's challenging?

- partnerships take attention and need capacity
- how do we know its working: impacts & outcomes?

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city-university research partnerships + smart city efforts

- **the spirit of this collaboration**

  - new ways of working

  - transparent points of entry

  - different techniques

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CivicLabTO: NEW TOOL IN PEOPLE-CENTRED SMART CITY TOOL KIT

existing: guidelines, **UNITAC** accelerator (Hamburg), playbooks, digital rights efforts, challenge driven innovation, compendium of people centred practices ...

CivicLabTO: new governance working model for durable, impactful change