



Lethbridge Polytechnic Workshop Report

June 16-27, 2025



IWK Health



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MicroResearch

MicroResearch (www.microresearch.ca) is an innovative research training strategy aimed at building the capacity of local health care professionals to better address community health care problems by finding local solutions for local problems. The program was cofounded 2008 by Jerome Kabakyenga at Mbarara University of Science and Technology Drs Robert Bortolussi and Noni MacDonald and Dalhousie University. Since then, the research capacity building workshops have been held in 11 countries with over 1,700 participants.



MicroResearch was brought to Canada in 2016, first being piloted in Nova Scotia. Since then, it has expanded to other provinces, with 15 workshops in NS, NL, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia.

Rationale for MicroResearch Canada

Public safety in Canada has lagged behind healthcare in applying evidence-informed approaches. Not all public safety and community agencies or organizations are funded equally. Additionally, many do not have formal research units or individuals with the skills and competencies honed through MicroResearch that help shape decisions based upon evidence.

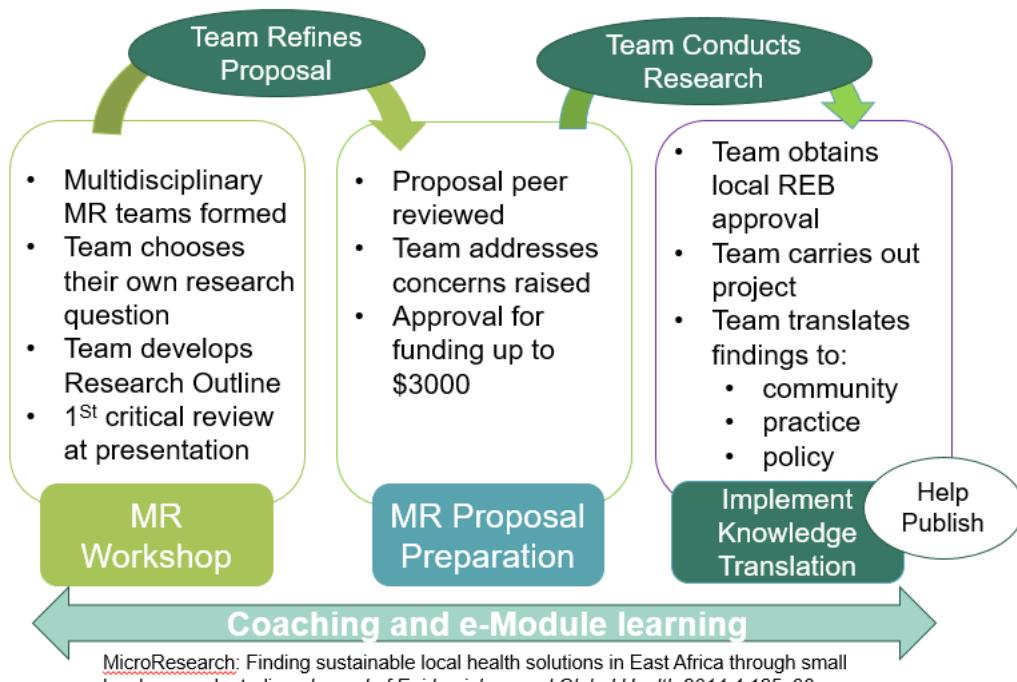
Although Alberta is considered a “have province”, not all areas of Alberta are created equally – there are regions and subpopulations who fare poorly compared to others. Many factors impact on health, wellbeing and safety, with healthcare access being just one component, albeit an expensive one. Healthcare funding is becoming an increasing issue with needs outstripping resources, making prevention and improvements in community management critical, especially for the best use of acute care resources. The gaps in knowledge translation, adaptation, and implementation at the community level are widening and there is a need to better align local resources to improve the situation. Building on this need, MicroResearch Canada aims to develop local community-focused research capacity to find solutions to local health problems deemed important by local participants.

“The goal of MicroResearch is to improve health care outcomes with innovative community-based research that assures quality and integration of research into the fabric of the local health system and the community”.



MicroResearch Process

The MicroResearch process advances in three phases: (i) Training Workshops are the first phase in the process where the team selects their research question, develops a research proposal overview that is adjudicated and critiqued at the end of the workshop. (ii) If the research questions and methods are deemed relevant and feasible by the judges, the Teams then refine and improve on the research proposal overview and form it into a grant submission to MicroResearch, which is reviewed by an international panel of research experts. Once the research teams have responded to the reviewer recommendations with changes to their proposal, approval is granted based upon scientific merit. (iii) Teams are then able to submit their proposal to their local Research Ethics Board (REB) for approval, the small grant money is released, and the team carries out their research with the local coaches' help. They are also encouraged to bring their findings back to the community through a Knowledge Translation plan. This report outlines the Research Training Workshop held at Lethbridge Polytechnic from June 16-27, 2025.





Workshop Objectives and Organizers

The class was comprised of 12 participants (with an additional 2 auditing) from Lethbridge Polytechnic from June 16-27, 2025, with coaches and co-teachers from Lethbridge Polytechnic and facilitators from Dalhousie University and Memorial University of Newfoundland. This workshop involved two teams.

The key objectives for the participants of the MR Workshop:

- to develop skills needed for community-focused research,
- to develop skills to work in a multidisciplinary group and to become a team,
- to write a successful community-focused research proposal overview

Organizers, Facilitators and Coaches

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Guest Lecturers

Constance Sheriff, BA, MA Information Services Specialist Lethbridge Polytechnic, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada constance.sheriff@lethpolytech.ca	Andrew Malcolm, RPP, MCIP, LPM General Manager, Community Social Development City of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada Andrew.malcolm@lethbridge.ca
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Workshop Partners

This workshops and projects emerging as a result are supported by partners including:

- Dalhousie Medical School, Dalhousie University
- IWK Health
- MicroResearch private donors
- Lethbridge Polytechnic's Centre for Public Safety Applied Research (CPSAR)

Workshop Planning and Recruitment

Participants were recruited through word-of-mouth at Lethbridge Polytechnic. The 12 participants included a wide range of disciplines and professions including former police officers, sheriffs, correctional workers, parole officers, current community policing managers, probation officers, municipal community safety specialists, and faculty and staff with backgrounds in sociology, psychology, criminology, new media, Indigenous services, communications, and criminal justice.

The pre-workshop assessment was completed by 11 of the 12 participants (92%). As shown in the Pre-Workshop evaluation. The majority chose to participate in MR workshop because of interest in research, Most had not had any previous experience with health research. The major reasons for joining the workshop were to learn *How to design a research project/improve research skills* (90%) and *how to drive change in the community* (63%).

Workshop

The ten-day workshop combined lectures and daily small group interdisciplinary, interactive working sessions. Many of the lectures, support materials and tool kits were recently updated and refreshed in 2023 to include new slides on using the internet, principles in clinical research challenges in research, ethics, knowledge translation, budget, research to policy, and how to get published. Session lectures began at 8:30 am local time. Session lectures were followed by group work sessions with the coaches. The lectures, exercises, and group work over the ten days led the participants step-by-step through the development of a research proposal overview. Participants moved from formulating an idea to the development of the research question, to the selection of methods to fit the questions considering the budget available, and the formulation of the overview of a knowledge translation plan and determination of what communities to engage, when, and how. Daily workshop attendance ranged from 83% to 100%.

Team Research Proposals

As in previous workshops, the major educational component was centered on the proposal overview development in the interdisciplinary groups. There was a significant amount of content on Day 1 to orientate and support participants in shaping their own ideas into a community-focused research question based on their own experiences. On Day 2, the collaboration began when participants were



divided into 2 groups. Working in breakout rooms, the groups then discussed each member's question and applied the FINER criteria (discussed during the lecture on Day 2) and selected the "best" one to develop into a group/team research proposal throughout the rest of the workshop. On Day 3, a spokesperson for each group presented the topics to the class and noted the question selected by the group and the rationale for its selection. The questions selected on Day 3 were:

Group 1: How do volunteers at The Watch (or other volunteer quasi-police) understand their roles as they relate to vulnerable populations?

Group 2: Why are members of the homeless population utilizing encampments near the wellness shelter in Lethbridge, Alberta?

A discussion followed each group's presentation, with emphasis on the importance of narrowing and refining each question.

The series of lectures that followed provided knowledge and skills needed to develop these questions into research proposal overviews. All the lectures included core elements to the MR concept, which were essential in preparation for the presentation on the final day.

Throughout the workshop, each group became a team, working together on their proposals, guided by their coach.

Final Day of the Workshop

On the final day of the workshop, each team presented the overview of their proposal in a ten-minute presentation to a panel of 3 local experts. The review panel, along with the two Canadian facilitators, adjudicated each team's presentation and suggested how the proposals might be further strengthened.

The local review panel included:

Deputy Chief, Lethbridge Police Service, Gerald Grobmeier

Deputy Chief, Lethbridge Fire and Emergency Services, Kevin McKeown

Associate VP, Research, Lethbridge Polytechnic, Dr. Andrew Dunlop

Final Team Questions:

Team 1: How do volunteers at The Watch (or other volunteer quasi-police) understand their roles as they relate to vulnerable populations?

Team 2: Why are members of the homeless population utilizing encampments near the wellness shelter in Lethbridge, Alberta?



Review Panels General Comments

The judges were very impressed by what the two teams had accomplished in the two-week workshop. The external experts noted that both teams had clearly worked hard and presented their proposal overviews well.

The judges noted both teams had relevant and important questions for Lethbridge. They noted that the methods were appropriate in both instances and the projects appeared feasible for the money allocated, albeit the teams needed to take care in keeping the projects “micro”. The knowledge translation will be very important in both and have the potential to impact programs and policy.

The expert panel members felt that both teams showed that they worked well together, with each member contributing to the final proposal presentation. The teams made great progress in refining their research topic and plan over the two-week workshop. The KT plans and budgets were generally well done but will also need to be refined as the specific research plan is further developed. Each research proposal will need some refinement before it is ready to be submitted for a MicroResearch grant. Teams need to show their project question is well-justified, that the design/methods are appropriate, and will be understood by a reviewer from outside Lethbridge. Both the projects will contribute to the betterment of Lethbridge, and are worthy to proceed for a formal application for a MicroResearch Grant proposal in November.

Media

Lethbridge Polytechnic stimulated media attention for this MicroResearch workshop with interviews shown on Global and CTV News both in Lethbridge and in Calgary.

- CTV: <https://www.ctvnews.ca/calgary/video/2025/06/16/ctv-news-lethbridge-at-5-for-monday-june-16-2025/> (skip to 8:00)
- Global (Calgary & Lethbridge): <https://globalnews.ca/lethbridge/program/global-news-at-5-lethbridge> (skip to 7:20)

Additionally, Lethbridge Polytechnic created this video to showcase the workshop:

<https://youtu.be/7yiPjAga630>



Workshop Evaluation

An assessment of the workshop by participants, as well as how well their team functioned, was obtained using structured evaluation forms submitted with 10/12 (83%) of participants completing the form.

“At day one, I felt totally unprepared for this course. By day 9 I was engaged and ready to move forward”

Lectures that participants indicated were particularly helpful included Qualitative Methods, Quantitative Methods, Knowledge Translation, and Sampling and Statistics. Overall, respondents indicated that the lectures and workshop content helped to “demystify” research and provided participants with the tools needed to help create positive changes in their communities.

“The sampling and statistics lecture demystified stats in research and clearly explained a scientific approach to working with human subjects in a variety of ways.”

“So many takeaways to use in all the work we do- from teaching future public safety professionals to planning and implementing applied research projects. This workshop was a game changer and affirmed my own beliefs about what research should be - accessible, impactful, and democratic. Thank you!”

Most participants responded in their evaluation that working as a team enhanced their research and the workshop experience stimulated their interest in research. Several indicated potential challenges in continuing to work as a team, noting time constraints and concerns with gaining access to a vulnerable population, however, mentorship, access to experts, and community engagement could help overcome these issues.

“It was phenomenal to see how people with different experiences and backgrounds came together to focus on an important community issue. True teamwork.”

“Our team was fully engaged in the learning and planning process. We are passionate about community engagement and making a difference and it showed in the work right from day 1.”

Comments and Recommendations

Comments

This was first MicroResearch workshop held for a college in Canada and was a great success due to the hard work of the site organizers Kirsten Fantazir and Jami Albright-Tolman with support from



Faith Wanjiku. This site has great potential for growing MicroResearch in Alberta and especially for the breadth of opportunity (i.e., public safety, health and Indigenous communities). The media interest was notable as was the feedback from the judges given their roles in the community. One can see a potential for a breadth of interaction across communities not often seen in MicroResearch (i.e., next workshop might include a police team, fire/EMS team, health team, and one from Lethbridge Polytechnic).

There is an opportunity here due to longstanding relationships to explore having an Indigenous MicroResearch workshop with leadership from Jordan Head and help through Kirsten Fantazir.

1. Recommendation #1:

- The addition of the Deputy Police Chief offering 5 - 7 minutes of insights into issues of concern in Lethbridge from a police perspective added a new dimension to the MicroResearch workshop and needs to be thought through for similar potential inclusions in both other Canadian but also international MR workshops

2. Recommendation #2:

- The interest of the media and city council in MicroResearch was unprecedented. MR needs to understand how this occurred and how this can be fostered
- Look to fostering wider community engagement in future workshops given this interest

3. Recommendation #3:

- Follow up to see how a MicroResearch workshop with the Blood Tribe - Kainaiwa might be developed

4. Recommendation #4:

- Revise pre-evaluation to incorporate different sectors i.e. health, public safety to give broader understanding of participants

Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our thanks to Lethbridge Polytechnic for providing administrative and organizational support. As well, our thanks to the local volunteer coaches and co-teachers for their continued involvement in MicroResearch. Thank you to the panelists for their valuable feedback and constructive critiques on the final day of the workshop. Finally, we thank the participants for their engagement throughout the ten days.

Respectfully submitted,

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