

IncluCity Calgary

Inclusive Usability Testing

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What We Do

Usability testing is the process by which you engage the users of your product or service in order to ensure that the technology is working for them. Usability testing isn't a new idea, but with IncluCity Calgary, we're doing something different: usability testing with a model of inclusion. To really understand the impact of our work, we need to unpack exactly how that word — "inclusive" — changes what it means to do usability testing. By changing the 'when, where, how and with whom' of usability testing, we're turning the process on its head, and providing opportunities for diverse and often under-represented residents to weigh in on the products, processes and services that impact them. When we add inclusion to usability testing we reconsider the design process with the notion that if it doesn't work for someone, it doesn't work for everyone. As Calgary's first and only inclusive usability testing initiative we are united in the mission to plan, design and run testing sessions with an inclusive and representative group of Calgarians to improve the usability of technology enabled services and solutions for teams in public, private and non-profit sectors.



The Traditional Usability Testing Model

Traditional methods of user testing were typically done in a downtown office tower or lab settings during working hours and with seasoned focus group participants, often resulting in less authentic feedback, an unrepresentative group of testers and resulted in less inclusive services and solutions. These testing methods presented models of exclusion that were and are often transactional, not trust-based relationships and produced biased results. A civic-focused model of inclusion in the form of a usability testing service will allow for a more representative group of testers, more authentic feedback and result in more inclusive services and solutions that are more usable for all citizens of Calgary.

Inclusive Usability Testing in Other Cities: Chicago

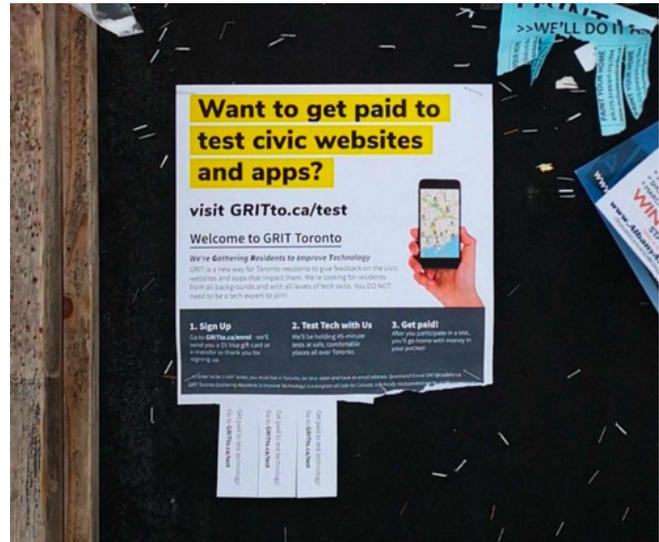
A civic-focused testing method of inclusive usability testing was introduced as part of the Smart City Collaborative (now the City Tech Collaborative) in Chicago in 2014 under the name CUTgroup (Civic User Testing) Chicago to integrate the voices of the users with the technologies that would shape their lives. These groups run 'programs that facilitate better, more inclusive and accessible usability testing that engages residents in the creation of the technology that's meant to serve them.' CUTgroup's model combines User Experience (UX) testing, civic engagement, and digital skills training to provide a unique perspective for technological solutions. Usability test participants get paid to give input on products and develop technical skills in the process.

City Tech Collaborative now coordinates the national Civic User Testing Network. The mission of the Network is to bring together current and future Civic User Testing groups to share resources and develop best practices, building a more robust framework to make local technology more user-friendly, accessible, and relevant. Cities across the United States such as Seattle, Detroit, Seattle, St. Louis, Cleveland, Oakland, Miami, Chattanooga, and San Jose have become part of the [Civic User Testing Network](#). We have noticed overlapping themes of these CUTgroups in the realm of tackling socioeconomic inequities and exclusion that exists within products, processes and services by engaging with communities and providing organizations with representative feedback.

Inclusive Usability Testing in Other Cities:

Toronto

In 2018, Code for Canada began piloting a civic usability testing program in Toronto. Inspired by the work in Chicago, GRIT (Gathering Residents to Improve Technology) Toronto enables residents to weigh in on new technology products that impact them and provide non-profits, governments and civic tech practitioners with access to usability testing that is more inclusive and representative of the city's diversity. GRIT Toronto has executed 18 tests



and recruited more than 350 testers in the city of Toronto, including several tests for the City of Toronto and is on the Province of Ontario's vendor of record for recruitment services. Earlier this year, GRIT Toronto worked with the City of Toronto's Shelter, Support and Housing



Administration (SSHA) team to conduct usability testing on an updated version of the intake form for their Shelter Management Information System, a centralized information management system that is used throughout Toronto's emergency shelter system. As a result, SSHA has made iterations to their intake form and will continue to conduct user research and release as part of their development roadmap.



GRIT TORONTO

Highlights of our participant pool

A diverse community of Torontonians to meet your unique product testing needs

Our participants hail from every ward in Toronto and represent a diversity of backgrounds, lived experiences and technical skill levels. We recruit **real people** to give you real feedback on your products.

361 Total participants
(as of August 2019)



Gain access to a representative sample of Torontonians

We work hard to build trusting relationships with testers, and their enthusiasm to participate tells us we've hit on something big. Our group of over 350 testers hail from **every ward in Toronto** and represent a diversity of backgrounds, lived experiences and technical skill levels.

Who are our testers?

Ethnicities include: First Nations, Métis, Black, East Asian, South Asian, Latin American, Middle Eastern and Caucasian

Identities include: female, male, genderqueer, non-binary and transgender

Highest education completed includes: grade school, high school, some college/university, college/university, graduate

21% of testers identify as **newcomers**

17% of testers identify as having a **disability**

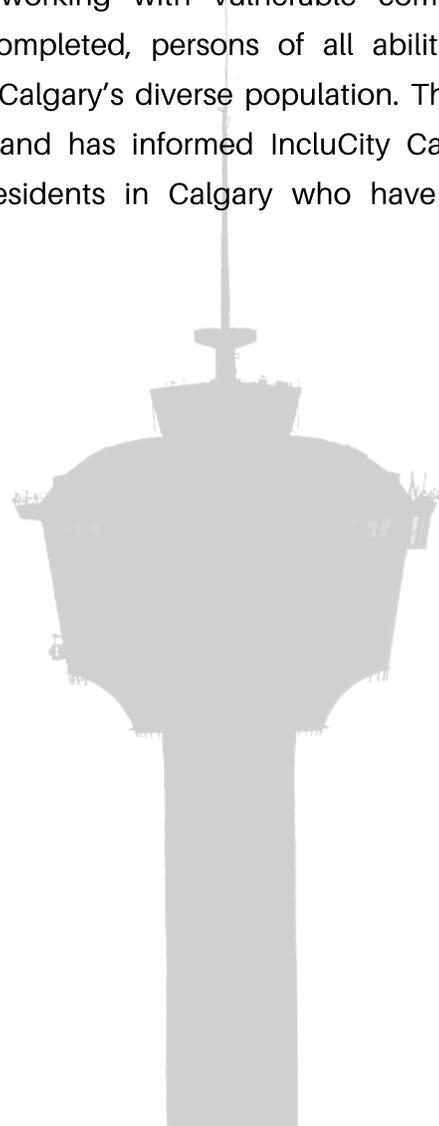
Age	% of testers
18 - 34	47%
35 - 54	38%
55 +	15%

Income	% of testers
0 - \$39k	41%
\$40k - 79k	34%
\$80k +	25%

Inclusive Usability Testing in Calgary

Inclusive usability testing was discussed at a CivicTechYYC Hackathon event in 2019 and a project team was formed between members of the CivicTechYYC and CalgaryUX communities titled: IncluCity Calgary. This project has been directly influenced by the work of Code for Canada's GRIT Toronto which was adopted by the work in Chicago. In January 2021, collaborative work with Mount Royal University led to the collaboration between CivicTechYYCs' IncluCity Calgary project and Code for Canada's GRIT Toronto program.

IncluCity Calgary has received enthusiastic support for this initiative from Vecova, The Kerby Centre, Alberta Disabilities Pride Foundation and the Social Impact Lab at United Way to gain meaningful, representative feedback so that they can effectively iterate on their offering. We engage with community organizations that are working with vulnerable communities representing the ethnicities, identities, education completed, persons of all abilities, and newcomers among other communities that make up Calgary's diverse population. The figure above is from [GRIT Toronto's Partnership Package](#) and has informed IncluCity Calgary to similarly recruit a representative cross-section of residents in Calgary who have diverse perspectives and lived experiences.



How it Works

Based on the process that is being used in Toronto that has been based on the CUTgroup Chicago model, we have developed a process for an Inclusive Usability Testing Initiative in Calgary.

Tester Recruitment:

- IncluCity Calgary recruits participants by doing direct outreach at community centres and libraries and community outreach with community organizations to gain a representative sample of Calgarians for testing.
- Project managers will also work with community organizations to recruit participants and design tests that respect the communities that will be present.
- Usability tests will either be conducted one-on-one, in-person, at a convenient, comfortable and accessible central location or offered in a remote format online.

Inclusive User Testing Clients:

- The project team communicates with potential client organizations through community outreach, civic tech community networks in each corresponding city or conventional purchasing channels.
- Clients may be government teams developing digital tools for their constituents, civic tech businesses/entrepreneurs, or civic tech groups/innovators who have developed or are improving their product, process or service.
- Clients interested in usability testing meet with the project team/manager for a consultation and needs assessment. Based on this, the staff will develop a usability test proposal.

Usability Testing Process:

Upon client approval, the project team will:

- Formalize the usability test approach/protocol.
- Recruit a diverse group of testers.
- Conduct the usability test sessions, compensating participants and covering their transportation.
- Analyze test results and prepare a test findings report for the client.
- Publish a public version of the test report on communication channels.

Inclusive Usability Testing Impacts

Representative Group of Testers

We work with community organizations and in public spaces to recruit a representative cross-section of Calgary's population - providing opportunities for diverse and often under-represented individuals to weigh in on the products, processes and services that impact them. Our commitment to include underrepresented people in usability testing aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal to empower and promote the inclusion of all ([UN SDG 10.2](#)). We do this to ensure that people of all demographics and lived experiences have the opportunity to provide authentic feedback on the outputs that are being tested so that they work for everyone.

- Ages (18 to 65+)
- Backgrounds (newcomers, 1st, 2nd generations)
- Identities (genders, ethnicities, sexual orientation)
- Household incomes
- Abilities
- Comfort with tech

Empowering And Promoting The Inclusion Of All

Respect is earned when we build trusting relationships with each unique participant and design tests that are inclusive to Calgaryans of all demographics and lived experiences. User research is part of our planning process to ensure that we are providing the most respectful testing methods possible, but we also understand that there is potential for hidden bias in our design. To mitigate bias we work with community organizations who have a special interest in specific populations we work with as well as communicating with GRIT Toronto to ensure best practices. We also ensure that all participants are fairly compensated for their participation and transit costs, which plays a small part in helping to ease financial burdens for many Individuals. These practices impact Calgaryan testers to feel that both their time and feedback are respected and that their voices have been included in the development of projects in their city.



Inclusive Usability Testing Impacts

Skill Development

We find small ways to build digital literacy by providing exposure to testers and clients about information and communications technologies and systems during testing sessions. Participants gain confidence and improve their digital literacy skills by running them through testing sessions, resulting in empowerment to become digital citizens who use technology in safe, responsible and ethical ways to improve their lives and access products, processes and services that can help them to improve their lives. This exposure is spread across the diversity of Calgary's population as we are recruiting a representative pool of testers from across the city - providing opportunities for underrepresented individuals to gain exposure to information and communications.

More Inclusive Usability of Services and Solutions

This method of testing allows for client organizations to understand the usability of their offering before it reaches the public with authentic and unbiased feedback from a representative group of end-user perspectives in Calgary. To do this, we design and plan tests that are inclusive of the unique needs of not only the client but of the testers. We facilitate testing sessions in public spaces such as libraries and community centres, in-person or online after working hours to allow for participants to access testing with as few barriers as possible. Relationships with participants are based on trust and empathy rather than traditional methods of testing that involve transaction-based interactions that produce potentially biased results.