

**MDCH 666 - Health Policy**  
**Policy Brief Consultancy Description: Community Partners**

**Description**

The University of Calgary's Cumming School of Medicine offers a graduate-level Health Policy course that is offered during the fall semester (Tuesdays from 4-7pm) to Master's and PhD students who are pursuing a degree in Community Health Sciences with specializations in Population/Public Health, Health Services Research, Health Economics, or Epidemiology, among others. The course also includes students from the Master's of Public Policy Program. A course objective is to develop and apply skills in health policy research, brief writing, and knowledge user engagement. To this end, our course includes a project-based component for students to interact directly with community partners who are working on open health policy questions.

**How does it work?**

Students will devote 3-5 hours weekly over the 14-week term (September 6 to December 6) to their projects. Teams of 4-5 students will be matched with each community partner. On September 20, a kick off meeting will be held for students to meet their community partners, inquire about their assigned topics, and discuss their plan to complete the consultancy project over the semester. The following 6 weeks (September 20-November 1) will be dedicated to understanding the policy problem and taking full stock of alternative policy approaches to the status quo. On November 1<sup>st</sup>, the students will meet with community partner to present their findings (i.e., 3-5 alternative policy solutions), which will be narrowed through discussion with their community partner to 1-2 policy solutions for fuller analysis and direct comparison against the status quo (i.e., the current policy approach). Each team will then work collaboratively to produce a single policy brief that includes their full analysis, rationale, and recommendations of which policy options or status quo is preferred. Each team will present a draft of their brief to the community partner on December 6 to receive any feedback to further guide the relevance and quality of their work. *Students will deliver final written policy brief to Drs Clement and Beall as well as their community partner for evaluation by semester end on December 13.*

**Benefits for community partners**

- Receive project support (approximately ~200 hours collectively per team) with a diversity of perspectives on a key issue of significance to your organization
- Evidence-based rigorous analysis on a key policy dilemma for your organization with the option to publish
- Connect with future graduates who have interest and training in health policy work
- Impart valuable insights, skills, interests, and priorities to the future health policy workforce

**Expectations of community partners**

- Field a limited number of team questions via email or phone as needed throughout the term (requiring approximately 2 hours for the entire semester)
- Identify, discuss, and finalize the policy brief topic with Drs Clement and Beall before Sept 1 with sufficient details for the student teams to begin preparing and planning for the kickoff meeting on Sept 20
- Availability to meet with student teams in-class for ~30 mins on Sept 20, Nov 1, and Dec 6 between 4-7pm
- Acknowledge student's work as appropriate throughout dissemination and subsequent work

**Ideal topics for policy briefs**

- *Topics with an established status quo (i.e., current approach) and some known alternative approaches*
- *Policy problem that can be framed as making a choice between Option A (i.e., current approach), Option B, or Option C (Note: Students will also help to identify and select alternative approaches for comparison).*
- Feasible to address within one semester's work (~200 hours per team) and an 1,800-word brief
- A subject that the community partner is comfortable with the class openly discussing their perspective
- A health-relevant policy brief that your organization has previously generated which needs updating