The FEU-Galing Pook
Public Innovation Field Lab

Transforming local governments, one young mind at a time

For years, the Galing Pook Foundation (GPF), the country's leading institution in promoting innovations in local governance, has recognized and documented the best solutions that emerge from local governments towards safe, smart, and sustainable cities.

In the last couple of years, it has witnessed how the COVID-19 pandemic presented new challenges in delivering much-needed services to keep local businesses, citizens, and communities thriving, while surfacing the persisting ones.

Hence, the new normal context requires LGUs to go beyond being *magaling, mahusay, at matino.* The development of much-needed Innovations in public policy and service, will give a new meaning to what it means to be a *magaling na pook* today – *ang magaling na pook ay dapat ligtas, matalino, at matatag.*

Banking on the potential of the youth to develop fresh ideas for social and economic change at the grassroots, the FEU Public Policy Center (FPPC) and the FEU Institute of Technology (FEU Tech) partnered with GPF to connect students through an internship program with select LGUs.

For eight to 12 weeks, FEU Tech students who will undertake this internship opportunity will apply their knowledge in Engineering and Information and Communications Technology in helping Galing Pook winning LGUs solve real-world challenges.

Particularly, this innovation-driven internship program aims to:

1. Encourage active citizenship by allowing students to acquire firsthand knowledge on how local government works, and to contribute to finding solutions to issues and challenges at the local level.

2. Allow students to appreciate the potential contribution of their FEU Tech education to the solving of challenges in public policy and service delivery; and to test their proposed solutions in practical settings.

3. To further encourage LGUs to improve effectiveness by collaborating with students and drawing on their creativity and familiarity with technology.

Internships under the Innovation Field Lab allow Engineering and Computer Studies students to fulfill the required 520 hours and 1040 hours of online, hands-on work with the host LGUs, respectively.

Criteria for LGUs

FPPC and the Galing Pook Foundation will select host LGUs from GP-winning LGUs—those that have demonstrated the ability to generate simple but transformative solutions to local development challenges. They will be chosen through the following criteria:

Local governments are past Galing Pook awardees or participants of Galing Pook program on Adaptive and Innovative Leadership in Local Governance

Have existing innovative programs related to cultural heritage, education reform, urban development, public health and safety or technology

Have sufficient time, human resources, Internet connectivity, and other resources to host interns under an online and remote arrangement

Internship Process

Pre-identify Host LGUs based on selection criteria

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Consultation meeting and stock-take with host LGUs ➡ Formal commitment from LGUs signed

⬇

Identification of project for intern

⬇

Call for internship applications

⬇

Selection of interns; matching of competencies to LGU needs

⬇

Start of Innovation Field Lab internships ➡

Inception meeting with LGU, interns, FPPC mentors and Galing Pook mentors

⬇

Work plan development by the intern and approval by the LGU

⬇

Check-ins with mentors

⬇

Meetings with interns to discuss updates, challenges, and strategies

⬇

Final presentation to LGU and other stakeholders

Hello ProMDI other side
An intern's experience in breathing life to an innovative concept for Irosin farmers

Despite their increasing appreciation for data, local government units grapple with capacity issues such as limited human resources and technical know-how to allow for collection, generation, and use of data. As a consequence, LGUs miss on the benefits of planning, policymaking, and service delivery that are informed and enriched by evidence.

Such is the case in towns like Irosin, Sorsogon. The town has a vision of bringing this a notch higher by helping farmers reach potential buyers and the local agriculture office right at their fingertips. But they do not know where to start in bringing this vision to life until Jester Tono, the first intern under the Public Innovation Field Laboratory, collaborated with them for his internship.

Jester's journey demonstrates the potential of the Public Innovation Field Lab to address the innovation roadblock LGUs are facing, and eventually, give rise to a generation of young developers for local development:

It's the road less traveled, so to speak. When other ICT graduates vied for an internship spot at the industry's brightest firms, I chose to virtually collaborate with the local government of Irosin, Sorsogon, some 560 kilometers from home.

An LGU internship looks a lot less glossy than one in any of the well-known tech luminaries. But it is definitely not less in terms of excitement and impact. I was enticed by the prospect of setting up systems to help local governments improve the way they do things.

In Irosin's case, it wishes to use technology to manage the needs of, and opportunities for its farmers, who remain to be the main drivers of the town's economy. I have been told this idea has long been in their drawing board. In fact, they already have a name for it —***IMAProMDI****, or Integrated Management of Agriculture Production and Market for the Development of Irosin.*

But they do not have the technical know-how to design it for actual use.

It was up to me to translate this long-imagined dream into an actual system. After helping them convert their CBMS*, RSBSA** and other databases into CSV*** format to make them more open and accessible for analysis and policymaking, I buckled down to begin my work on the app.

Bulk of the work entailed designing the database and user flow models. From how I designed it and how the LGU sees it working, the farmers should be able to see the market demand based on the needs identified by potential buyers. They should also be able to find which support services (soil, climate) they could access from the local government to improve the type, volume, and quality of their yield. Potential buyers, on the other hand, should see the commodities farmers are offering at a given time.
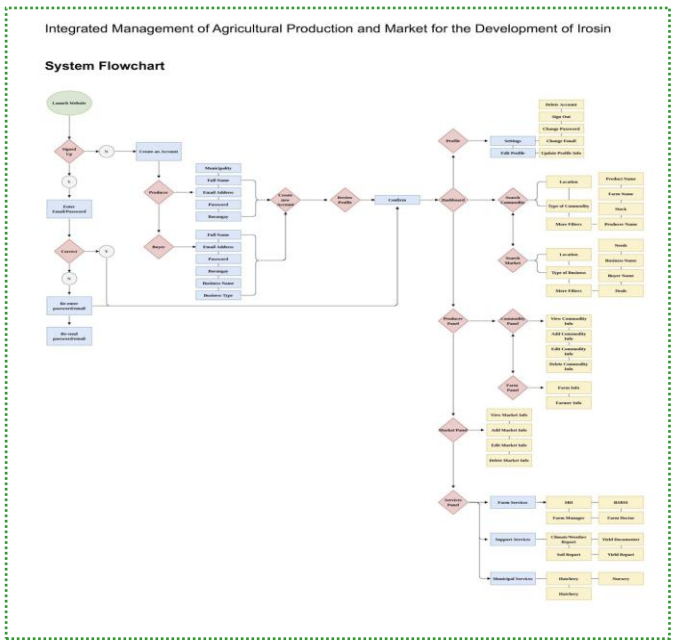
This allows them to plan when, how, and to whom they will purchase their needs. By monitoring the app traffic, Irosin LGU could better determine the farmers' immediate needs – seedlings, drying facilities, weather forecasts, among others–as well as keep track of the extent of help it has rendered to them.

I wanted to have a very simple interface for the farmers. After all, they might have had little interface to digital tools. I want the app to function with as few buttons as possible—*konti lang ang kailangan nilang pindutin*. I tried simplifying the login process by requiring only a small number of fields. Once they log in, they will immediately see a dashboard that offers quick glances of buyer demand, climate/weather information, soil profiles, and other essentials. Once clicked by farmers, the commodity tab allows them to type in or edit the crops, livestock, and other agricultural produce they are offering.

I really took great pains determining what user flow will best allow for those who have little access or know-how to technology to use it with ease. So, whenever I felt the flow was getting complicated, I took a few steps back to figure out which steps or functions can be crossed out. For instance, I used to have navigation bars on both the top and the right side. For less distraction and a more straightforward interface, I took out the sidebar on the landing page.

In three months, I was able to finish the initial phase of IMAProMDI. I was already in the process of doing the wireframe by the time the internship ended. I was also able to design the landing page for the app. I realized so many things in such a short time:

First, contrary to what people like me would think, LGUs are actually thinking of ways to change the lives of their citizens. Galing Pook has been recognizing these efforts. I read in one of Galing Pook awardee profiles how a simple information drive helped them fight an e.coli outbreak and improved the health and sanitation of its communities. But these efforts have to come to our attention, so we all can figure out how we can help in making them successful.

Integrated Management of Agricultural Production and Market for the Development of Irosin

System Flowchart

Related to the first, if LGUs are capable of ideating simple ideas that can yield great impact, how much more lives can they change if these ideas are driven by innovative tools and systems? **Technology is an inevitable aspect of reform, as it is generally steering the way things are done**. But this is an area where many LGUs, even the exemplary ones, are lagging.

One way of bridging the technology gap can be to usher in more IT students like me and industry people in the arena of government and local development. I was lucky enough to be part of an institution like FEU Tech that gave me an avenue to work for the government and pioneer the assembly of systems that enable new and faster ways of serving local communities. This is theory in practice at work, in line with what we always say in our school: **Technology driven by innovation!**

Three months went by quite fast. I wish to be given more time to finish what I started, so I asked Galing Pook if I could do volunteer work. I wanted to see through the development of the app and see Irosin farmers use them to improve their yields, incomes, and their overall quality of life. I am aware that opportunities from the big names in IT would look good in my resume. But working towards change at the local level is not something everyone in the IT industry can boast about.