

Workshop 4 Summary

The Rising Tide

The rising tide floats all boats. The theme of this workshop was in reference to the launching of the teams and their prototypes into the next phase of working outside the lab proper. After three workshops, one conference, and fieldwork investigating the system, interviewing potential users and developing solutions, teams returned to sum up their lab experience and have a last chance of learning from the entire cohort. In the welcome, Lewis re-emphasised the importance of this work to the future of the province, and Amanda shared what support is available after the wrap of the final workshop. Rose then acknowledged that we were convening on the traditional and unceded territories of the Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik nations and that we were there in a spirit of peace and friendship. It was a reminder of the story of immigration to Canada that began long before the challenges that teams are currently are engaging with, and a call to remember the ongoing story of immigration and reconciliation that all Canadians are involved in now. Out of respect for the land, the team had decided to use reusable plates instead of the styrofoam usually offered by the caterers as a demonstration of their commitment to 'walk their talk'. This token of land stewardship was greatly appreciated by lab participants.

Eager to get right into the work, teams gathered began making a 3D model of the latest version of their prototype. Getting people working with their hands and with creativity is key to be able to see all sides of the prototypes, as well as to inject some new life into the work. After the models were developed, the teams were given an hour to prepare a presentation on their prototype as it currently stood, and the actions they would be taking going forward. Following that, Patrick Richard and Adam Luo gave a presentation on the work Opportunities New Brunswick is doing to encourage business in the province.

After lunch, each team had ten minutes to share the latest versions of their prototypes as well as their evolution, their next steps and a little bit about the lab process. In attendance were members of the Leadership Council consisting of Rob Kelly of GNB, Alex LeBlanc of the Multicultural Council of NB, Adrienne O'Pray of the Business Council of NB, Angelique Reddy-Kalala of the municipality of Moncton and Kalie Hatt-Kilburn of the Atlantic Canadian Opportunities Agency. After the presentation, the entire group, including the Leadership Council, was able to give feedback. The NouLAB team once again framed the process of being able to receive feedback as a gift, reiterating that being able to call of the collective intelligence in the room is instrumental for the success of any of the prototypes. As such, teams did not necessarily have to defend their prototypes but were encouraged to take notes on the comments provided. Every person in the room was also completing feedback forms for each team to give more detailed feedback.

Following this, teams had a chance to regroup and review the feedback they received as a group. Even though they had been working together for over three months, the prototypes are always open to critique and improvement. Indeed, prototypes should constantly be changing in order to respond to the feedback generated from testing them.

The evening happy hour had the participants come to a local restaurant and the NouLAB team presented fun awards to each of the teams to acknowledge the work each person had put into the lab and the specific talents and attributes of each team.

The next day provided more time for teams to work together and make decisions on how they would move forward with the work. Teams needed to decide whether to pause, pivot, pass along or persevere with their prototype and their current course of action. They were asked to answer questions like: Who do we need to talk to? If we, as a team, do not continue with this work who will and how do we pass torch? Is there a major change we need to make based on the feedback we received yesterday? At this point coaches circulated throughout the room and gave advice on possible options moving forward.

The afternoon was all about reflection - looking back at the work done, the insights collected and the experiences shared. The NouLAB team was interested to hear about the experience people had as it would help us to design the next iteration of the lab. Throughout the process, we have tried to be as responsive as possible to the needs in the room and shift the teaches and methods used to engage participants more fully in response to what was emerging in the room. Jamie Gamble and Greg Woolner, the Developmental Evaluators for the lab, led the group through a feedback session based on three questions: What was valuable for you? What will you take forward with you? What new insights do you have about the whole economic immigration system that you didn't have before? This was all captured for use in developing an understanding of the successes and pitfalls of the lab.

To close the entire process, we came together in circle to share what we were going to leave in the room and what we were going to take away from the process. In the centre there were postcards with various pieces of the graphic recordings done by Brave Space. Each person took a card and wrote what they were experiencing in this moment, and what they wanted to be reminded of about the process. The NouLAB team will send these cards by mail to each participant in three months time to jog their memories on what ideas were flowing through their minds at the end of this process.

For the NouLAB team, cleaning up after the participants left, there was a sense of completion on one hand, and a feeling of eagerness to engage with and incorporate the learning into the next cycle on the other. Designing and facilitating a process like this almost invariably creates more questions - and more data, too. Unpacking that data, and ruminating on those questions will be the work of the coming months. In the context of the social lab movement, our work on Economic Immigration in New Brunswick is being looked at nationally - even globally. The issues surrounding immigration are vast and there is no clear picture of how increasing immigration will impact Canadian society on a whole - socially, politically, economically. In New Brunswick, with the population numbers being so dire, it is imperative that we do better at attracting, welcoming and retaining newcomers at this time. With this still as a guiding intention, the NouLAB team is taking some rest and relaxation over the holiday season so that we can come back to the challenge, with renewed vigour, in 2018. Until then.