Workshop 3 - Deep Dive

It had only been two and half weeks since the end of the Rapids workshop when the Economic Immigration Lab reconvened in Fredericton at the UNB campus. On the Saint John river once again but at a place where the water flows much clearer. The workshop was held at the Student Union Building on the top floor with a wonderful view across the city and over the river. Originally this workshop was to be titled 'Flow', but upon further consideration by the hosting team, the name was changed to 'Deep Dive' to reflect the importance of slowing down, going deep and taking a closer look at was lies beneath the problems - or symptoms - being tackled in this lab process.

Welcoming the participants back into the space, Lewis Muirhead gave a rundown of what we had accomplished in the last workshop and what the teams would be working on in the upcoming 'Deep Dive.' It was again a time to come together as teams and reassess working strategies as well as feedback on the ideas that were forming so far. To warm-up and check-in, Rose Mosse led the teams through an exercise to assess some of the group dynamics. Participants were asked to physically place themselves on a scale of 0 - 10 when thinking about working effectively as a team, being heard, incorporating feedback, and ownership of the prototype, zero being not feeling they were working effectively or were being heard, etc. and ten being feeling as though their team was working very effectively and they felt completely heard, etc. Team members would stand were they felt they were on the spectrum. This activity led into a revisit of the Google teams research which showed that the two most important elements of effective teams are an equal amount of conversational time and a sense of psychological safety. The teams then went back and had 30 minutes to discuss what they needed to most effectively work together.

After a break, Nick Scott made his return from judging a government innovation contest in Dubai to delve deeper into the learning around innovation and a prototyping mindset. The emphasis was on having clarity about the user, and understanding what a user goes through when experiencing a service or system. Sharing stories from new government initiatives worldwide, Nick inspired the participants and gave solid context to the importance of the work occurring in the lab. One standout was the realisation that, at two and half months into their projects, the teams have already received more input on policy than most government projects ever do.

After this shot of good energy from Nick, the teams went back to develop a clearer picture of the prototype they had developed during the last workshop. Still in the mockup phase, the questions were again: Who is your user? What is the problem? How can we address this problem with a well-designed prototype?

In order to generate feedback on the prototypes as they were coming together, the NouLAB team wanted to tap into the talent that was in the room. To do this, as well as to get the teams out of their routine, Amanda Hachey and Lewis Muirhead reintroduced the KUMU visualisation

of who was in the room, complete with affiliated organizations, sectors and lived experience. What the KUMU showed was very diverse crowd, from all levels of government and across many sectors, many ethnicities, nationalities and ages. The teams, however, showed less diversity in their makeup. The activity to generate feedback and new ideas was a type of 'feedback speed-dating', as all participants broke from their teams and had 'dates' with participants from other teams. Ideally, participants were looking for a 'date' with someone who had an interest in the prototype, a potential end user or someone working in a department essential to the success of the prototype. This process went well - people circulated and had specified time to share and receive feedback on their prototypes. Returning to their groups, the teams had a chance to share the feedback they received and incorporate it into a new iteration of their prototype. From this activity, we had one team break into two as they realized that they had two specific prototypes that they wanted to explore, each with a different end user.

The next section was a return to Theory U. Rose Mosse expertly led the group - in circle, of course - through understanding what it means to be at the bottom of the U, in the moment of presencing. Presencing is a state and a moment of transformation, it is being fully aware of your Self and your work in the world and it is also a threshold experience where your current self and your future self - the self you are on your way to becoming) begin to dialogue with each other. Taking a practice from the u.lab process, participants then took their seats at the tables and went through a personal journalling practice. Rose and Lewis guided them through seventeen questions designed to delve deep into their experience, their Selves, their work and how it connects to the journey of the lab. The journalling was a personal practice not shared with the team, but aimed to help open participants up to new potential and opportunity, and to record it as part of the lab process. This physical record will allow people to look back to see how they were feeling and what insights were coming up for them. Journalling can be described as having a conversation with oneself, and this was our aim. Participants are used to having conversations with their team, with other people in the lab, with potential users but it is also important to check-in with oneself, with one's inner thoughts to see if they align with the work being done. From experience, the NouLAB team knows that this place from which the most important work will happen. Connecting to purpose and passion is the only way these prototypes will continue to have a life after leaving the safe-space of the lab and are subject to the trials of the real world.

After a well deserved break and a team debrief, there was a closing and an invitation to happy hour at the James Joyce pub in downtown Fredericton. The turn out was good and the intermingling of teams that began with speed dating earlier in the day continued over beverages.

Day two began with Rose presenting the opportunity for participants to share their 'stinky fish.' What is it a concern that you are holding on to? What is it that is going to get worse if you don't address it with the group? People were given five minutes to write down their 'stinky fish' and then twenty minutes to share it with their groups. Teams took to it and the room was full of chatter and relief as concerns were shared.

Next was to get the teams thinking in a future state. What is the highest potential for the prototypes? Lewis presented the idea of backcasting, where visioning is done without restrictions that are based on past events. Instead, teams were asked to imagine the best possible outcome to their specific challenge, and then to ideate how we might achieve that state from where we are today. He used the example of Estonia, a country roughly the same in size and population to New Brunswick. After the Soviet Union collapsed, Estonia was able to hit 'reset' so to speak and begin again from a place free of preconceived ideas about what should happen. As a result, they have quickly become a leader in the fields of education and technology. Participants were then asked to describe what their prototype might look like in five years time. Who is working with it? How is it supporting itself? What is the user experience? The teams were given the better part of an hour to work on this.

From here, Amanda described the process of how the teams would be going forward with this work. She outlined the type of support - both monetary and coaching - that would be available to teams following the wrap up of the lab in December. There was also the space to bring requests or concerns about support to coaches at this time.

The next activity was a prototype mashup. The idea was to carry-on iterating what the prototype is and will become, and to let go of any loyalty to just one solution. This was a bit of a 'step-back' to assessing systems again as well as a moment for some unbridled creativity as a way of checking that the prototype teams had been working on really was the best, or only, was forward at this point in time. During the prototype mash-up, teams were asked to write down all the elements of the system they were working in on one side of a piece of flip-chart paper. On the other side, they were asked to list all the elements of an event/scenario/product where their specific challenge doesn't exist or is being managed extremely well. This was a fun activity and participants came up with some great examples. The team working on newcomer's experiences of isolation looked at the example of a daycare where, making children feel welcomed and special, is an integral part of the system. Another team working on poor communications across departments looked at the example of a high-performing soccer team, and the team working on increasing diversity in GNB looked an an example of an International Youth Orchestra with progressive audition and welcoming practices.

After lunch we got to hear from Heather Boyd-Kinnie from the Pond-Deshpande Centre, who gave a presentation on the prototype fund that is available to teams for the development and implementation of prototypes. This provide participants with more clarity on what was eligible for funding as well as how to access the funding.

Finally, continuing with the emphasis on action, Nick Scott shared more information on prototyping. What is it really? Many groups had a full-fledged idea of a programme, practice or policy change, but how might they find the quickest, cheapest, most effective way to test if it was even a good idea or if it provided a solution to the end-user's challenge? Nick and Lewis, with the help of Rachel and the rest of the facilitation team, created a canvas to help teams

record their insights through this lab workshop. By the end of the second day, teams had filled that canvas with what would be their most feasible, desirable, viable and impactful next action. Coaches were available to ask probing questions, to ensure that teams had isolated their end user, identified the actual challenge they face, and the components of the system relevant to their prototype. Teams were asked to develop a learning agenda, identifying what they still needed to know, any assumptions they needed to challenge or validate, and how they were going to track their progress as a team. Then, following Nick's lead, coaches hammered home the idea that a prototype is a quick, cheap and generative way of validating a broader idea. "What is that one action you can take before we come together at the next lab workshop?", coaches asked again and again, "What can you do to test and validate that you are on the right track?"