

The background features several overlapping, organic shapes in various shades of blue, ranging from light to medium. A thick, vibrant orange line curves across the left and bottom portions of the page, partially overlapping the blue shapes.

nonprofit
resilience lab

YEAR ONE SUMMARY

Acknowledgments

The Nonprofit Resilience Lab, as a collaborative community project, is located on Treaty 7 Territory in Mohkinstsis (Calgary). In the spirit of reconciliation, healing, and reciprocity we acknowledge the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy and the people of Treaty 7 territory including the Siksika, the Piikani, the Kainai, the Tsuut'ina and the Stoney Nakoda First Nations. Mohkinstsis is also home to the Metis Nation of Alberta Region 3.

We are deeply grateful to the members of the Nonprofit Resilience Lab Guide Group who have generously given their time, knowledge, wisdom and insight into our process.



Heartfelt thanks to all the workshop participants and interviewees who generously shared their stories and contributed to our learning in the first year of the project.

FOR COMMUNITY. BY COMMUNITY.

Introduction

The Calgary Foundation, in partnership with MRU's Trico Changemakers Studio, is embarking on a multi-year social innovation lab to explore how we might reimagine and transform how the non-profit sector co-creates thriving and resilient communities in the context of increasingly complex pressures and challenges. Using a systems-based, co-creative approach, the lab will deepen our understanding of the complex challenges facing the sector and will focus on building resilience and adaptive capacity while prototyping, testing, and implementing solutions. We will engage actors and stakeholders from across Calgary's social sector and integrate the work and expertise of MRU faculty and students throughout the lab process.

THE CONTEXT

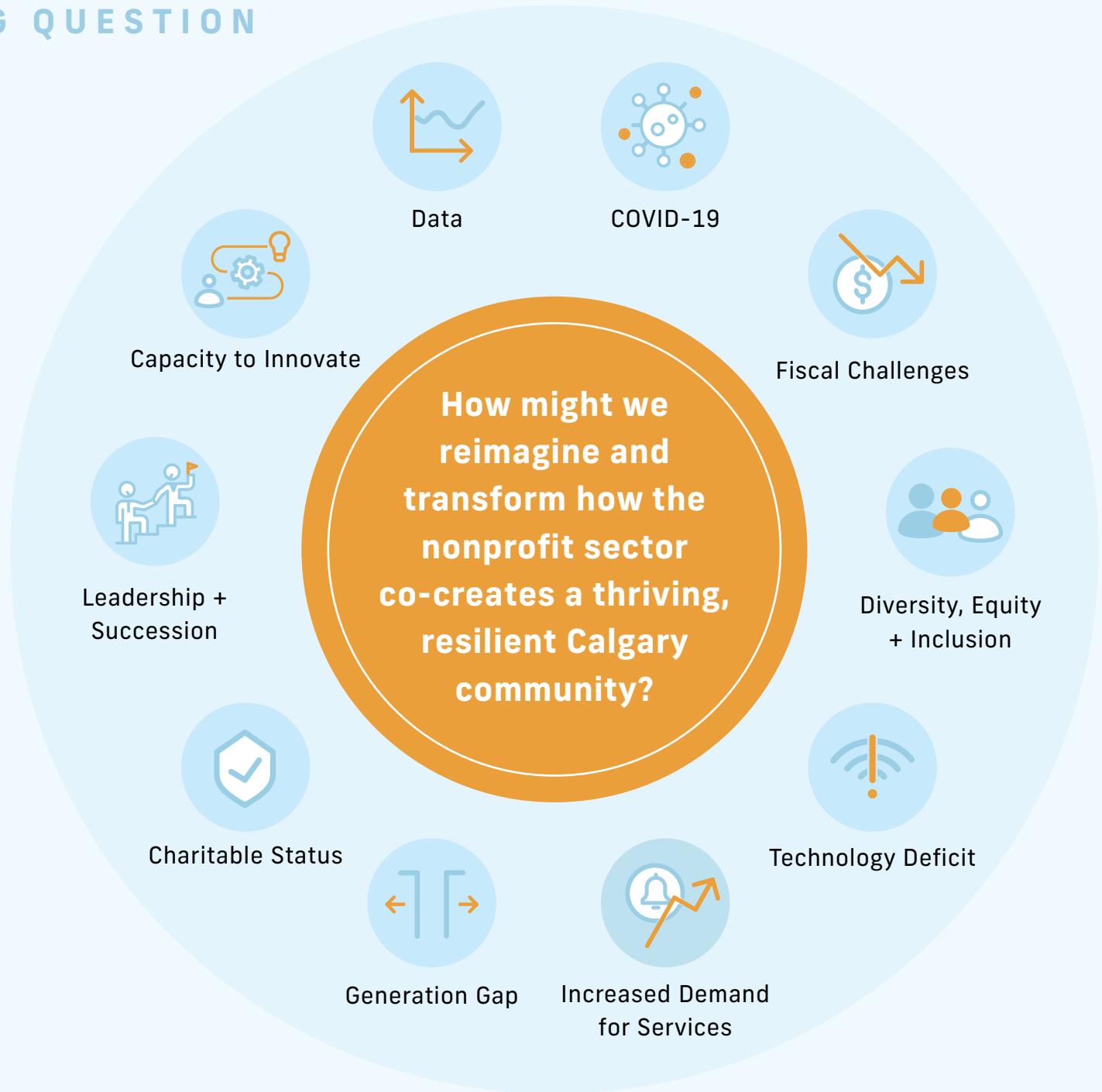
Calgary's nonprofit sector is navigating increasingly complex and intersecting challenges while trying to meet rising demand for services. For example, the struggling economy and the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 have increased demand for mental health services. At the same time, the resources needed to address this demand are also negatively affected by the same struggling economy and COVID-19 realities. The vast majority of nonprofit organizations in our city could share further stories of interacting forces that are challenging their ability to have the meaningful impact our communities need to thrive.

The fiscal challenges of decreasing donations, declining corporate sponsorships, and restricted use of funds make it difficult for nonprofits to maintain adequate staffing and deliver on programs while meeting increasing needs in the community.

The charitable model itself limits the ability of organizations to generate or diversify revenue at a time when diverse revenue streams are needed more than ever to ensure long term sustainability. COVID-19 revealed a technology deficit within the sector as many nonprofit organizations struggled to transition to online operations and program delivery. Furthermore, there is a plethora of data, but a dearth of meaningful analysis creating blind spots within the sector. Many of these factors challenge the sector's ability to innovate and respond creatively to changing contexts and circumstances.

The nonprofit sector as a whole is grappling with issues of diversity, equity and inclusion as well as leadership and succession as the boomer generation retires and a new generation with different values, priorities, approaches and perspectives on philanthropy steps to the fore.

OUR GUIDING QUESTION



Next Level Collaboration

CALGARY FOUNDATION + TRICO CHANGEMAKERS STUDIO

Since 1955, Calgary Foundation has been nurturing a healthy, vibrant, giving and caring community. The Foundation facilitates collaborative philanthropy by making powerful connections between donors and community organizations for the long-term benefit of Calgary and area. Calgary Foundation inspires philanthropy, supports the charitable sector and builds a permanent endowment to address the current and future needs of people in our community.

By applying resources, expertise, and leadership, Calgary Foundation acts as a catalyst and convener, creating a meeting place that fosters partnerships to build a strong charitable sector that serves the needs of all members of the community. Calgary Foundation is committed to meeting the needs of the community today while equipping organizations with the tools and knowledge to address the complex social challenges in our community.

The Trico Changemakers Studio (the Studio), located at Mount Royal University is a social innovation, collaboration and learning space at the intersections of campus and community. The Studio brings together community stakeholders, students and faculty from across disciplines, sectors and backgrounds to tackle complex social and environmental challenges. The Studio offers

consulting and facilitation services to organizations, agencies and businesses in Calgary and across Alberta looking to deepen their understanding of systems change and social innovation and create greater social impact in our community.

Calgary Foundation and the Trico Changemakers Studio began working together in 2018 to bring a systems perspective to the Foundation's reconciliation journey. Since that time, the two organizations have worked together on numerous projects to expand and deepen learning and application of systems thinking, social innovation tools and practices to address various social issues.

Shortly after the initial COVID-19 lockdown in the spring of 2020, Allison Schulz, Vice President of Capacity Building at Calgary Foundation and Lena Soots, Director of the Trico Changemakers Studio sat down to discuss the complexity of challenges faced by nonprofit organizations in Calgary and the social sector as a whole. Complex challenges are not new to the nonprofit sector, however, the pandemic and global social justice movements such as Black Lives Matter, have magnified the deep inequities and barriers in our community and have highlighted the need to reimagine how we work together toward transformative change.

Building on our strong foundation of collaboration and our shared commitment to systems change, Calgary Foundation and the Trico Changemakers Studio decided to combine resources and expertise to create a supportive space for diving deep and examining the complex challenges facing the nonprofit sector. The Nonprofit Resilience Lab was launched in January 2021.

The Non-profit Resilience Lab is not owned by Calgary Foundation or the Trico Changemakers Studio – our shared role

is to convene, provide resources along with design and facilitation expertise to support organizations in the change process. We are prioritizing inclusion and the removal of barriers for organizations to participate in this work, with a focus on co-design and a community model of care that supports organizations in their participation without compromising their services or stretching their staff. Innovation cannot happen off the side of the desk. We are intentionally creating new spaces and ways of working together. Innovation: for community, by community.

What is a Social Innovation Lab?

Social innovation labs are an approach to addressing complex social, environmental, political and economic challenges. Complex challenges are multidimensional, constantly changing, interconnected, nonlinear and... messy. In a social innovation lab, we bring together diverse stakeholders from across traditional boundaries who bring different perspectives on an issue. Together, we dive into the patterns, structures, and mindsets that are keeping a particular

challenge entrenched in order to uncover root causes and take action. In the lab process we are purposefully experimenting and learning throughout to test, adapt and iterate on our ideas. This approach allows us to invest in our highest potential solutions with a greater degree of confidence. Through this guided process, we are increasing trust and collaboration, building capacities, knowledge and skills, and co-creating solutions.

IN ESSENCE, SOCIAL LABS ARE THREE THINGS: SYSTEMIC, SOCIAL AND EXPERIMENTAL:



SYSTEMIC: We seek to understand the systems, connections and dynamics contributing to and upholding a particular problem instead of looking at problems in isolation. At the Nonprofit Resilience Lab, we started this process with an in-depth systems map, based on the stories and experiences of Calgarians in different parts of the sector.



SOCIAL: Problems cannot be solved by one individual or a single group. In our process, we focus on relationships, connections, and building trust. By doing this, we elevate the participation and voices of those with lived experience. The Nonprofit Resilience Lab uses participatory design methods to engage a diverse community in the facilitation process.



EXPERIMENTAL: Complex problems don't only have one solution. In a social innovation lab, creativity is used to collectively generate new ideas and co-design potential solutions. Through continuous experimentation, learning and improving on ideas we can discover something with significant impact.

The People

THE LAB TEAM



LENA SOOTS

Director, Trico Changemakers Studio
Lead, Process Design + Facilitation



ASHLEY DION

Research + Facilitation Assistant
Storytelling Lead, Trico Changemakers Studio



JILL ANDRES

Studio Associate, Systems Change + Social
Innovation, Process Design + Facilitation



ALLISON SCHULZ

Vice President, Capacity Building
Calgary Foundation



AMY RINTOUL

Information Designer,
Trico Changemakers Studio



KATIE MACDONALD

Cultural + Community Engagement Coordinator
Calgary Foundation

GUIDE GROUP

As we launched the lab, we established a Guide Group consisting of 12 nonprofit leaders and stakeholders with different perspectives on the sector. The purpose of the Guide Group is to bring knowledge, experience and wisdom to the process, and to keep us aligned with our purpose, values and needs of the community. With regular sessions throughout the year, the Guide Group supports decision-making at various milestones along the way.



KAREN BALL

President & CEO, Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (CCVO)



STEPHANIE JACKMAN

Social Impact & Brand Consultant, Stephanie Jackman Consulting



PRISCILLA CHERRY

Co-founder, The Colour Factor



PATTI PON

President & CEO, Calgary Arts Development (CADA)



JEFF DYER

Chief Executive Officer, Trellis



NITU PURNA

Co-founder, The Colour Factor



IFTU HARGAAYA

Co-founder, The Colour Factor



JESSICA PETERS

Calgary Foundation donor and volunteer
Founder, Wellth Coaching and Consulting



HYDER HASSAN

Chief Executive Officer, Immigrant Services Calgary



JAMES STAUCH

Director, Institute for Community Prosperity



LEEANNE IRELAND

Executive Director, Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth (USAY)



ZAIN VELJI

Calgary Foundation volunteer
Partner & VP Strategy, Northweather

OUR PRINCIPLES + VALUES

Principles are rules that guide action

We will do **'WITH'**, not for

We will sit in **COMPLEXITY** and not jump to solutions

We will **CHECK OUR EGOS**

We will be **NURTURING GUIDES**

We will **NOT PARTAKE** in **TOKENISM**

We will **TRUST** each other and the process

We will **GIVE IDEAS RUNWAY**

We will provide **DIFFERENT WAYS TO PARTICIPATE**

We will create a **BRAVE SPACE** for **IMPERFECT EXPERIMENTATION**

We will keep a high level of **TRANSPARENCY**

We will **LOOK OUT** and **CONNECT IN**

We have the **RIGHT TO PASS**

We will **GET MESSY** and **HAVE FUN!**

Values are qualities and standards that guide our behaviour



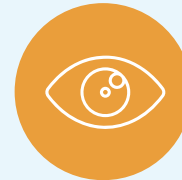
CURIOSITY



COURAGE



HUMILITY



OPENNESS



BEGINNERS MINDSET



RESPECT



KINDNESS



EMPATHY



ADAPTABLE LEADERSHIP



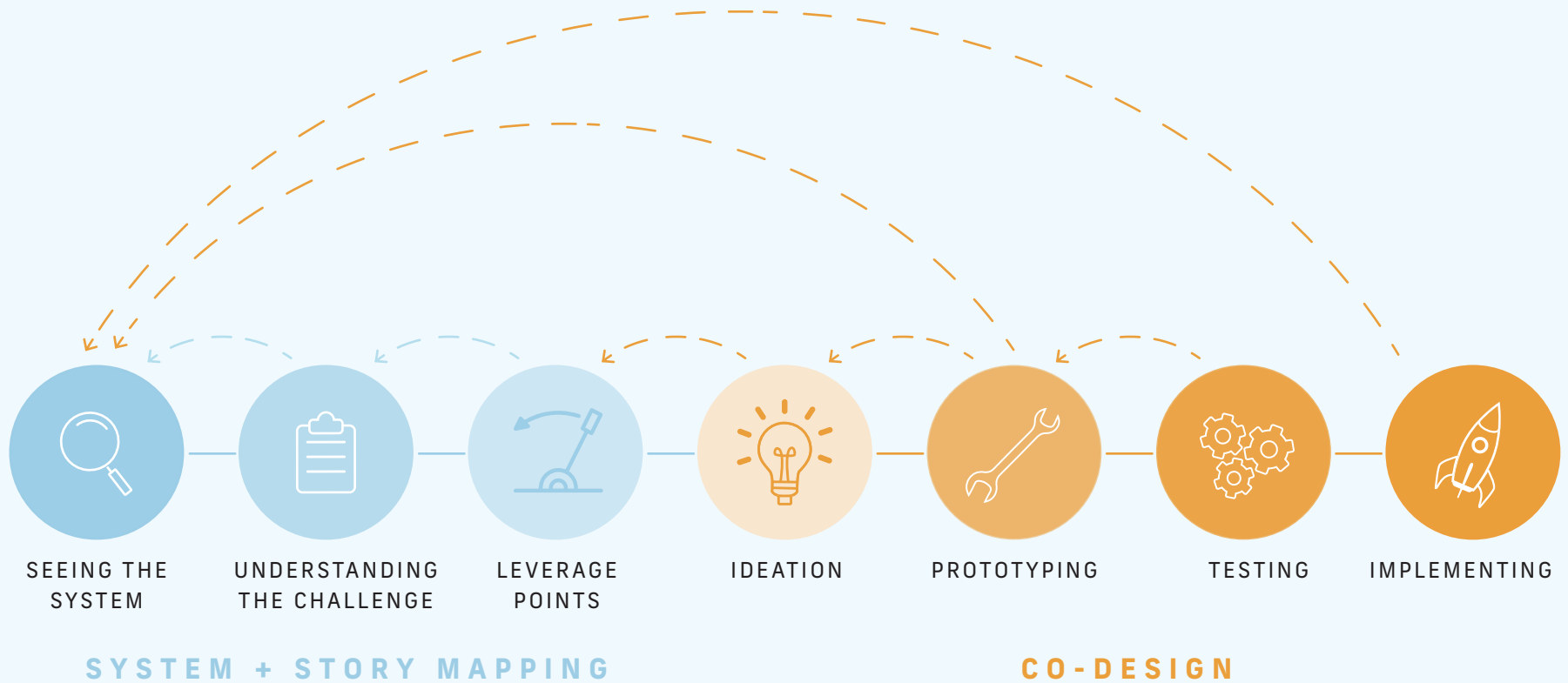
EQUITY



SHARED POWER

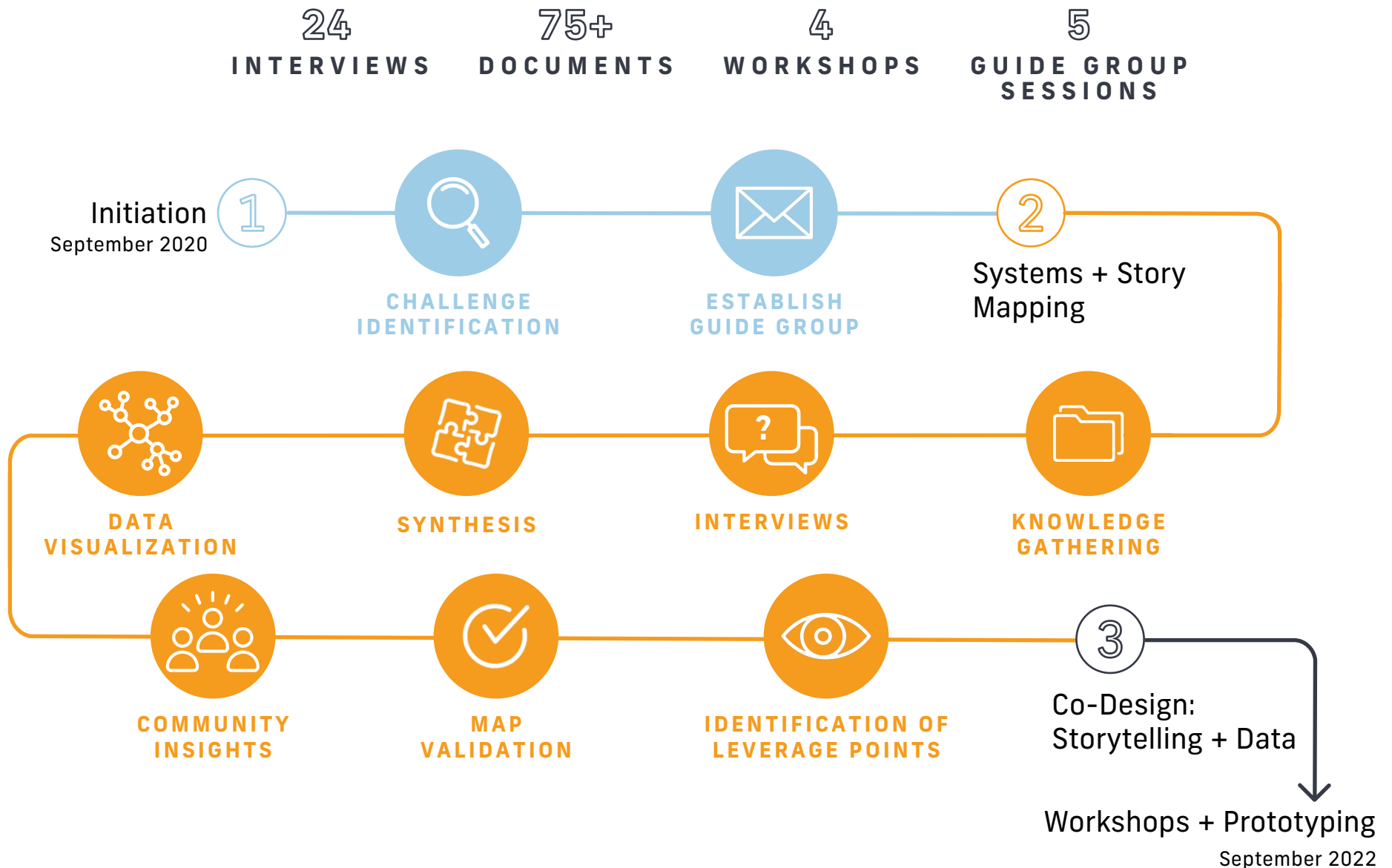
LAB PROCESS

The lab process is iterative and emergent. Although the overall trajectory of the process takes us from understanding the challenges within the system to implementing solutions, we are constantly moving through a process of listening, observing, responding and iterating.



Year 1 Activities: Systems + Story Mapping

The first year of the lab focused on Systems & Story Mapping - a process that included workshops, interviews, extensive document reviews and data visualization resulting in a challenge map that identified key issues and challenges within Calgary's nonprofit sector. This map was vetted and validated through a community insights process which led to the identification of high potential areas for change.



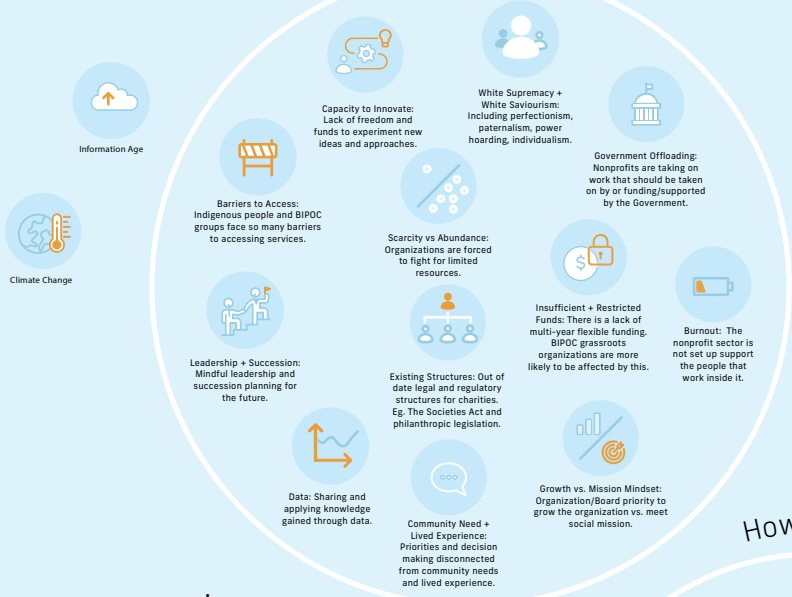
Systems + Story Map

The map on the following page is a visualization of the themes that emerged through the interviews, workshops and document review processes. We approached the creation of the map using the Impact Gaps Canvas developed by Daniela Papi Thornton in order to understand both the challenge and solutions landscape relative to our overall question.

It is important to remember that complex systems are dynamic, nonlinear and constantly changing. A system map is never complete; however, the stories and experiences shared with us through the interview process and workshops along with in-depth document reviews from local, provincial, national and international sources give us a deeper understanding of some of the challenges, dynamics and patterns within the system.

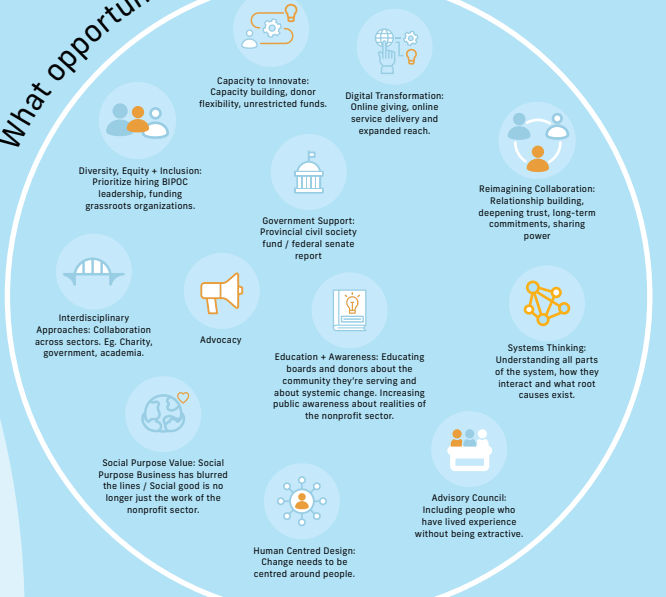
Challenge Landscape

What is the challenge?

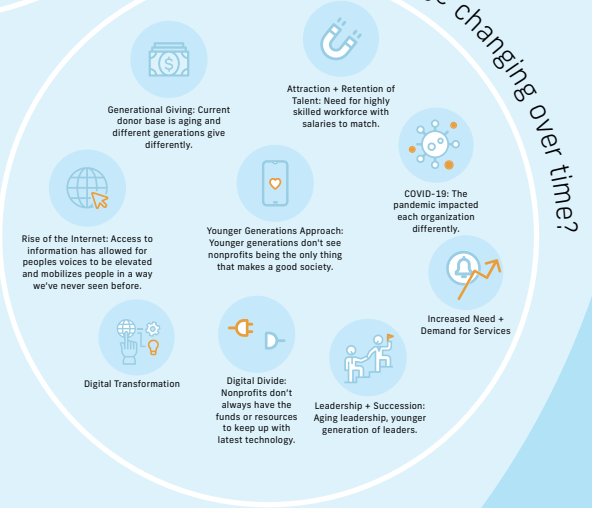


Solution Landscape

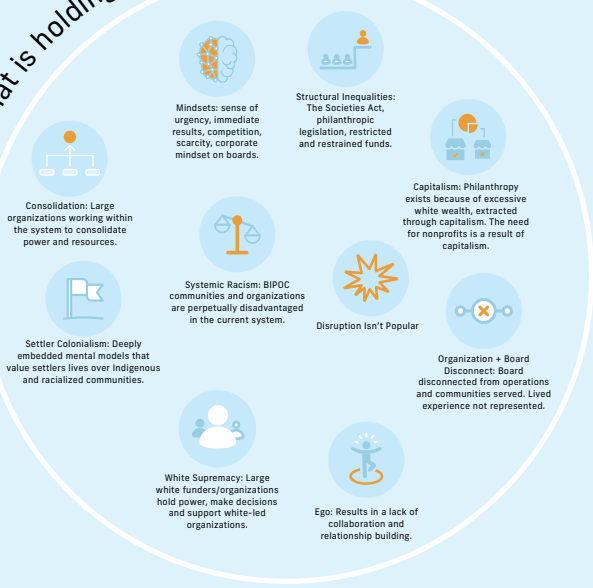
What opportunities for solutions exist?



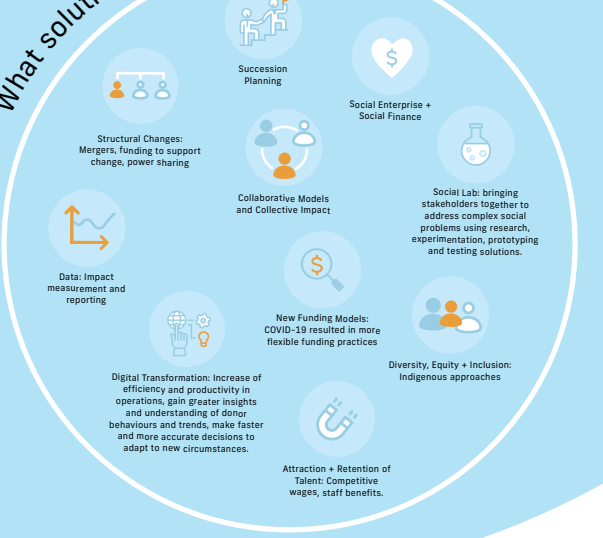
How is the challenge changing over time?



What is holding the challenge in place?



What solutions have been/are being tried?



Leverage Points

IDENTIFYING HIGH POTENTIAL AREAS FOR CHANGE

A social innovation lab goes beyond simply understanding and mapping a challenge. The Nonprofit Resilience Lab is about creating meaningful change within the sector. The second year of the lab will involve diving into co-design, ideation, prototyping, experimentation and testing new ideas. In order to do this, we need to identify high potential areas for change within the system.

The Lab team examined the patterns, relationships and connections within the system to identify points where intervention or change could potentially have transformative impact. In addition, we looked at key areas in the map and asked the following questions with the Guide Group:

- Does this area align with the overall purpose of the lab?
- Is there already work being done in this area in a substantive way?
- Will work in this area add value (rather than create fatigue, particularly for equity-seeking groups?)
- Will work in this area increase people's power and dignity (using an equity lens)?
- Is this the right time (taking into consideration what else is happening in this area)?
- Can there be meaningful progress in a ~2 year timeframe?
- What resources are available to support this area?
- Does this area have potential to positively influence other areas of the system?

Through this process the area of DATA, STORYTELLING + ADVOCACY emerged as a high potential area for change.

What's Next...

The next year of the lab will focus on co-design in the area of Data + Storytelling. Co-design is an approach to designing with, not for people. We will bring together a team of 10-12 people with different perspectives, lived experiences and voices around the topic. Co-design uses creative and participatory methods with a focus on shared power and equity. The co-design phase of the lab will run from September 2022 to September 2023.

Sharing Our Journey

This work is rooted in community relationships. In the spirit of transparency and a commitment to shared learning towards meaningful social change, we will be sharing our journey and our learning through the following:

**UPDATES ON OUR SHARED
WEBSITE [HERE](#)**

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
OPPORTUNITIES**

Watch the website and social media channels

**DOCUMENTING OUR JOURNEY
THROUGH FILM AND STORY**

