

SUMMARY REPORT
VOLUNTEER
SCREENING
LAB



Edmonton Chamber of
Voluntary Organizations



VOLUNTEER
ALBERTA

THE VOLUNTEER SCREENING LAB

is a learning lab convened by the Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations in partnership with Volunteer Alberta. The Lab sought to answer the question: how might we increase the capacity of organizations to engage volunteers through adaptive screening practices?

Through the lab, we discovered rich ideas and practices currently being done by organizations as well as new questions about volunteer engagement and what it truly means to successfully utilize people's passions for greater community impact.

ULTIMATELY, THE LAB GAVE PARTICIPANTS THE OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGES THEY WERE FACING.

WHY A LEARNING LAB?

Edmonton non-profit and charitable organizations face various challenges when it comes to effectively screening volunteers into their programs. Currently, many organizations are performing their screening practices according to best practices such as privacy, protection and participation. However, they are facing external factors that inhibit their continued ability to screen effectively. These factors include, inclusion of individuals with criminal records, disabilities, New Canadians, episodic and crisis volunteering along with limited time, high volunteer turnover rates and the increasing demand for skilled volunteer roles.

WHO WE ARE

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Big Brothers Big Sisters Boys & Girls Club,
Edmonton Chapter
City of Edmonton
Catholic Social Services
Information & Volunteer Centre Strathcona
St. Albert Information & Volunteer Centre
Volunteer Alberta
Alberta Culture and Tourism
Volunteer Management Group Edmonton

DESIGN TEAM

Kari Readman
Annand Olliviere, *Lab Facilitator*
Chelsie Puligan, *Lab Facilitator*
Sharon Ruyter, *Lab Facilitator*

GUEST SPEAKERS

Keith Fedoruk
Catholic Social Services
Alan Mackenzie
Good Samaritan Society

The Volunteer Screening Lab
was designed for change
ready organizations with
the capacity (time, energy,
will) to take on an intensive
process. The Lab is for
those ready to explore how
“we” (Edmonton non-profits
and charities) can be more
efficient and/or effective in
★engaging community.★ The
lab is for those tired of
working in silos and ready
to work together to make
internal and external
change.

LEARNING OUTCOMES



COLLABORATION

Build collaborative connections and enrich knowledge and access to resources through peer-to-peer learning opportunities.



ADAPTABILITY

Learn the value of flexible screening processes and design volunteer screening strategies that support organizations adaptability and increase community inclusion.



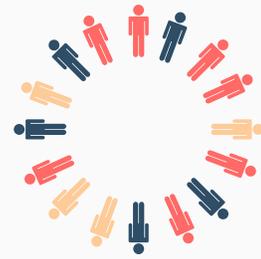
CULTURE SHIFT

Challenge assumptions of current systems and increase their capacity to shift mindsets and design new ways of working in the non-profit sector.

2017

JUNE

First meeting of the advisory committee



OCTOBER



"How might we..." (HMW) question created.
Lab purpose solidified.

2018

JANUARY

First design team meeting



JUNE

Presented final design to advisory committee-
approved!

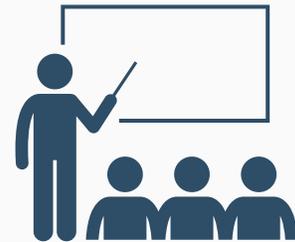
JULY



Lab goes live to the public

SEPTEMBER

Volunteer Screening Learning Lab

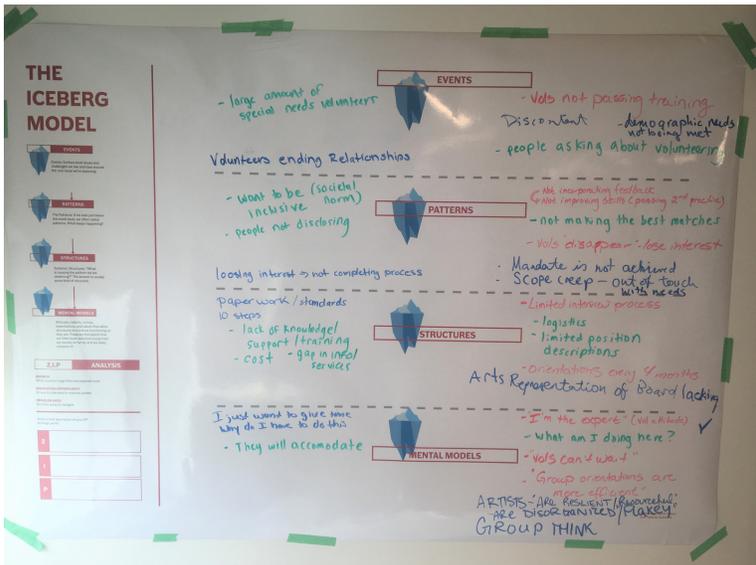


DECEMBER

DAY ONE

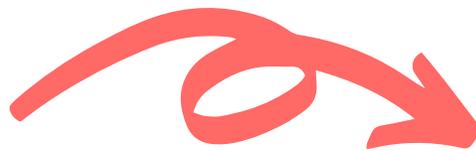
Setting the Stage & Sensemaking

Day One of the Volunteer Screening Lab was about getting acclimated with the environment, the learning methods, and, of course, with each other. Participants were introduced to the idea of labs and foundational principles such as *The 10 Steps of Screening, Human Centred Design Framework* and the *Adaptive Life Cycle*.



The Iceberg Model was used to help participants make sense of their current state and articulate the dimensions of a desired future state. The iceberg Model process explored these questions: what are they experiencing right now in relation to volunteer screening and what are the impacts on their organizations? Then, to surface a desirable future the participants explored what they wanted to see in the future.

WHAT THEY LEFT DAY ONE WITH



3

Items they wanted to focus on in the lab to create the future state they envisioned for their organization.

“

The most significant learning for me was the iceberg model, and the adaptive life cycle is extremely useful.

”

DAY TWO

Defining & Ideating

Participants zeroed in on the **one problem they would like to design solutions for**. They empathy mapped and traced how different people experience screening in their organization. They explored unconscious bias and how our experiences shape the way we view others and how that relates to screening practices.

They drew insights and were able to define the nature of their problem and brainstorm ideas that could help, roadblocks they would need to navigate, and more.

WHAT THEY WALKED AWAY WITH



1

"How might we..." statement to frame their prototype designing in the next session.

How might we create positions that build trusting & transparent relationships with volunteers?

EXAMPLE

END OF DAY Reflection



WHAT'S STICKING

Many perspectives should be taken into consideration when screening



WHAT'S PROMISING

Innovative ideas are workable



WHAT'S PUZZLING

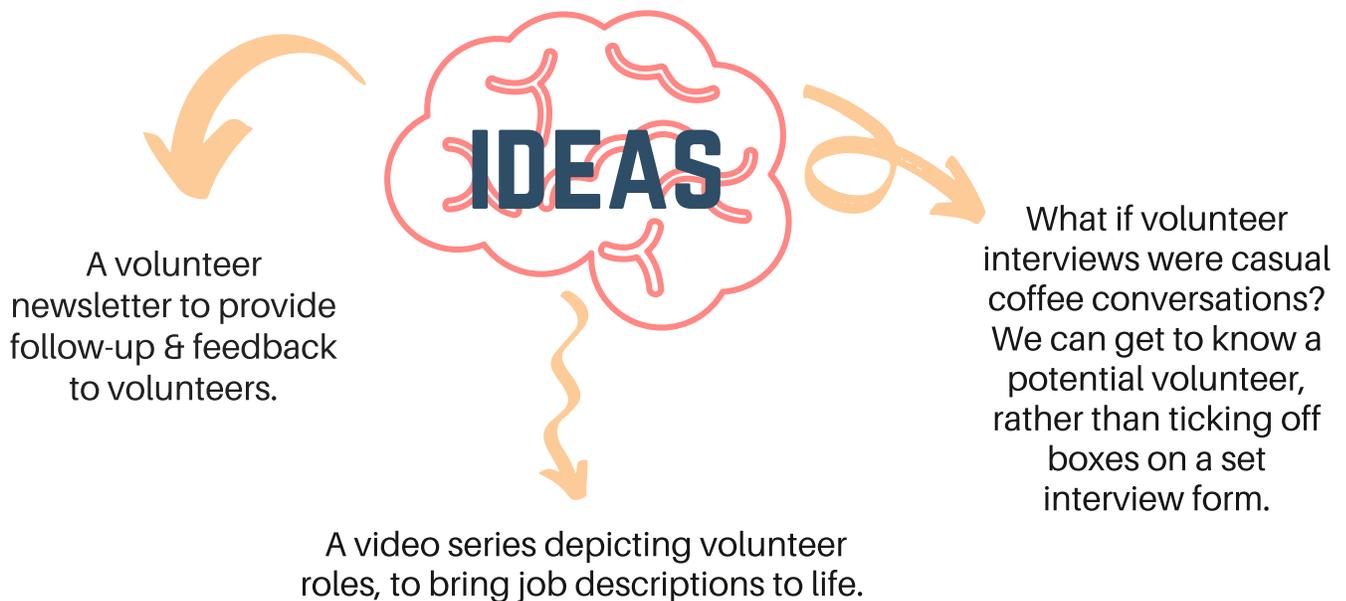
When screening volunteers, are their skills more important or their passion and care for the cause?



DAY THREE

Prototyping

On day three, participants were introduced to **prototyping**. They took an idea they had brainstormed to solve their HMW question and created a storyboard to map how their idea would come to life. Then they created a prototype; some made crafts from pom-poms and construction paper, while others drew diagrams and mind maps.



”PROTOTYPING = TAKING YOUR IDEAS AND MAKING THEM EXIST IN THE REAL WORLD.”

**WHAT THEY
WALKED AWAY
WITH**



A real-life prototype to tweak, test and hopefully launch in their program.

DAY FOUR

Evaluation & Reflection

Day Four marked the end of the journey. Participants received feedback on their prototype then began work planning **how they would implement it**. They asked the important questions: what needs to be done, who are the key players, what resources do they need, and when they will be finished.

They explored prototype evaluation and discussed **how they will know their prototype is successful**. They started brainstorming evaluation questions they would use to track the progress and success of their new way forward.

We invited guest speakers to be a **Living Library** and share their expertise and experiences as volunteer engagement specialists on the top issues lab participants wanted to learn about:

- **References & Assessment**
- **Interviews**
- **Follow Up & Feedback**



ON THE MOST SIGNIFICANT LEARNINGS:

“The similarities among various volunteer organizations and the different methods of actionable planning.”

“That creating a volunteer screening process is an ongoing process and that there is not just one way to do it.”

“The Screening lab was way more than just learning about screening processes for volunteers. It was learning and identifying problems that all non-profits face.”

“

I ENJOYED ANALYZING
CURRENT PRACTICES AND
BRAINSTORMING FOR
SOLUTIONS.

”

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Evaluation

WHAT THEY ARE MOST LIKELY TO SHARE WITH OTHERS:

“The 10 Steps of Screening and how all our practices should be based in that foundation.”

“How to look at problems from all perspectives before preparing a plan.”

“I will share prototyping models when we have to come up with solutions to challenges.”

“

PRACTICES TAUGHT HAVE BEEN
UTILIZED IN OUR STRATEGIC
PLANNING ALREADY, ALLOWING
US TO GAIN FEEDBACK FROM BOTH
LONG-TERM VOLUNTEERS, STAFF
IN OTHER DEPARTMENTS AND
VOLUNTEER SERVICES STAFF.

”

HOW THEIR ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY WAS STRENGTHENED:

“Our organization is now more knowledgeable in the screening process. This will allow us to better support our volunteers and build their capacity.”

“I will have better streamlined processes and application forms for the volunteers and have better communication with our office volunteers.”

DESIGN TEAM LEARNING

Evaluation & Reflection Behind the Scenes

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

We quickly realized that a lot of the concepts and ideas were new to people and/or people needed more time to digest and work through new concepts. In the next iteration of the lab, we need to closely examine the length of the lab. Does it need more sessions? Is there enough time to be able to get the outcomes we are looking for? What information and transfer of knowledge is necessary for us to accomplish our goals.

RELATIONSHIPS ARE EVERYTHING

The room was set up so that participants sat together and were able to often work in groups and with each other. However, we think there could have been more intentionality around establishing relationships through the lab. We didn't necessarily give enough time for people to get to know each other before diving into concepts.

IT'S SO MUCH MORE THAN SCREENING

Although screening was the base of the learning lab, it weaves its way into every aspect of the volunteer process. We discovered participants were experiencing a variety of issues around volunteer engagement. We needed to think more critically how to address that in the lab or give people the opportunity or resources to explore that outside of the lab.



NEXT STEPS & LOOKING FORWARD

The lab was an invigorating and fun experience. Participants enjoyed it and the evaluation feedback was overall positive. One of the biggest insights we discovered was that we kept having to bring people back to the focus of the lab.

It wasn't because they all hit their heads and forgot where they were, it's because this was their first opportunity to examine aspects of volunteer engagement. We noticed reoccurring discussions that were poking and prodding at how organizations as a whole engage people in dynamic and effect ways. We walked away with even more questions than when we began:

- What is volunteer engagement?
- How can organizations approach engagement in a strategic way for the benefit of their cause and the volunteers that do incredible work?
- What does successful volunteer engagement look like for an organization?

The solution might be to create a new learning offering, tweaking the next iteration to focus on volunteer engagement as a whole or something else entirely...

There is a need to explore some of these questions and we hope that further learnings will inform this work and help answer the tough questions individuals are asking. We will continue to talk with organizations and thought leaders in the sector to advise on the best way forward.