The Alberta CoLab experience: Embedding Systemic Design in government.
Ryan, Alex and Perla, Keren

Suggested citation:

Systemic Design in Government: Experiences from the Alberta CoLab

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Outline

• The CoLab business model
• CoLab in action: Open government
• Lessons learned
CoLab Business Model as a System

Legend

/\ Delay
The CoLab Studio

Legend

/ / Delay
The typical Government meeting room

- Artificial lighting
- Fixed seating
- No useable wall space
Building a studio space for Government
A space for collaboration & co-creation
What CoLab Feels Like

Here is a picture that represents my experience of the course:

1. WTF?
2. Humm...
3. My brain hurts
4. Wow.
One Year Review

• Project work
  Results: 62 design workshops on 38 projects that engaged stakeholders from all ministries and helped advance cross-ministry challenges led by 14 different ministries.

• Capacity building
  Results: 38 graduates of a six day training course from 13 ministries, monthly meetings of the community of practice, and six prototypes taken forward by the Reaching Our Full Potential Evaluation Team.

• Advocacy
  Results: 6 presentations at international universities and 70 active members of the community of practice representing all ministries.
Cross-Government Projects
Open Government

Community of practice

Strategy Team

6-Day Intensive Training

Image sources:
http://networks.mersoft.com/professional-services/
http://networks.mersoft.com/professional-services/
http://api.ning.com/files/UmTyztg8h6JfaE5yfx*5GEoardzh3bAvubIntP*gvQLmBER8p1KAXZgaB02S16uRrbzDPEaNTMueTgridKuFFk95*SQIESVPV/udlicenter_hands.jpg
Open Government

FROM
How can we affect changes to the “system” of data and information publication, and leverage or modify governance process to ensure we make significantly more, and the most valuable, data and information open and available?

TO
• How might we shift the culture towards open government and embrace collaboration, engagement and transparency?
• How might we design for information exchange that the public wants, avoids harm and promotes the public good
Leverage points for prototyping
An Open Government learning system
The New Open Government Strategy

http://open.alberta.ca/documentation/strategic-plan
Be a Catalyst not a Bottleneck

- 6 day immersive training
- All ministries and levels
- 20 graduates per quarter
Use Project Selection Criteria

• Currently we do not have the capacity to meet demand for systemic design & strategic foresight

• We prioritize projects that:
  – Cross ministry boundaries
  – Contain conflicting stakeholder perspectives
  – Are of strategic importance to GOA
  – Are open to reframing
  – Have client commitment and realistic timelines
  – With strong follow-through to implementation
Create “Sticky” Artifacts
Create narratives rather than minutes
Use Multi-modal Evaluation Consistently

Systemic Design Training Course Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The instructors were knowledgeable about the subject:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The instructors were prepared and organized for class:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The instructors kept the participants actively engaged:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned new knowledge and skills from this training:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can explain what is meant by systems thinking:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can explain what is meant by design thinking:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident in my ability to construct visual maps of a system:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident in my ability to design prototypes to improve and learn about a situation:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident in my ability to participate in systemic design projects:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident in my ability to apply systemic design methods to facilitate team discourse:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ROFP case study helped me understand the systemic design methodology:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The physical environment was conducive to learning:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This training was a worthwhile investment in my career development:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This training will improve my job performance when taking on complex challenges:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will be able to apply the knowledge and skills learned in the class to my job:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will be provided adequate resources (time, money, equipment) to successfully apply this training to my job:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After training, my manager and I will discuss how I will use the learning on the job:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The value of systemic design is:

Create a platform for understanding more comprehensive picture or diverse dimensions of a challenge to increase ability to manage it better.

What I will tell others about this course:

It's an absolute compulsory training to experience.

The thing that surprised me the most about this training:

It shook some more of my traditional approaches, and reinforced my changing thought process.

The thing I changed my mind about because of the training:

Problems vs Mess / Solutions vs prototyping
Continuous improvement vs destructive creativity

Here is a picture that represents my experience of the course:

Structured linear approaches

Confused

After 2 days

Structured linear approaches

Endless Possibility

Creative thinking

Diverse ideas

After training
Make Your Toolset Legible & Shareable
Make Change From Inside & Outside
Questions?