Social R&D Practices and Patterns v1.0

An exploration into what strong R&D practices look like across social missions.

| **Summer 2019**

SOCIAL R&D COMMUNITY

The Social R&D Community is a network of practitioners dedicated to growing the craft of research and development, on the frontline, to generate new knowledge and innovations that transform lives.

The Social R&D Community is curated
by the Social R&D Fellowship.

The Fellowship is an ongoing effort to seed
a vibrant ecosystem of public good R&D across
community, public, corporate and academic sectors.

The Social R&D Community acknowledges that our
work takes place across the ancestral and unceded
territories of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people.

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Acknowledgements

Introduction: what is R&D?

Among many widely accepted definitions, R&D (research and development) can be described as:

Planned creative work aimed at discovering new knowledge or developing new and significantly improved goods, programs, and services which includes:

- *Basic Research: activities aimed at acquiring new knowledge or understanding without specific immediate applications or uses*
- *Applied research: activities aimed at solving a specific problem or meeting a specific objective, and*
- *Development: systematic use of research and practical experience to produce new or significantly improved goods, programs, services or processes[1].*

Essentially it's the messy yet disciplined upfront work that will get you an early prototype of a Netflix when the only model that anyone thinks is relevant is a Blockbuster, or a Roots of Empathy when the dominant model is Character Education.

NETFLIX

BLOCKBUSTER

ROOTS OF EMPATHY

CHARACTER EDUCATION

Adapted from Dan Roam's Business Break-Lines

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[1] Adapted from the United States Census Bureau and National Science Foundation's *Business Research and Development Survey*. *https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/brds/about/faq.html#par_textimage_4*. Accessed August 2, 2019.

Roots of Empathy's mission is to build caring, peaceful, and civil societies through the development of empathy in children and adults. The Roots of Empathy innovation is the discovery that developing empathy is a key lever to building understanding and breaking cycles of violence, and that we can do this most effectively with a tiny baby providing experiential learning for children in their classrooms.

Why does R&D matter for the social sector?

From youth homelessness and social isolation in cities, to retraining pre-retirement workers and achieving economic reconciliation, there are too many areas where our solutions are not keeping pace with our challenges.

- *The suicide rate among Canadian girls has increased by 38% over the past decade.*
- *The number of food bank visits in Toronto has doubled (+100%) compared to 1995.*
- *There was a 100+% increase in duration of shelter stays for families between 2005-2014.*

This is where the process of R&D is highly relevant: it's a reliable approach, irrespective of sector, to uncover pathways to significant impact and growth.

Whether through physical community labs, research centres, dedicated teams, cross-organizational design and prototyping facilities, academic partnerships, or other means, R&D is already happening across many social purpose organizations in Canada[2].

But if we want breakthroughs across our intractable social and environmental challenges, we need to rapidly increase the quantity and quality of social mission R&D[3].

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[2] Getting to Moonshot was a first-of-its-kind positive deviant analysis of the R&D habits of Canadian social mission organizations. It found inspiring R&D practices across the social sector that clustered around cluster around three levers: capacity, culture and connectivity.

[3] There's currently no sectoral tracking in Canada, but according to research by the TCC Group, in a sample of ~2,500 social purpose organizations only 5% engaged in R&D.

"We can think about R&D [...] as the experimental process of gaining fresh insights to solve problems and find opportunities. Invention is the creative process by which new insights and personal experiences are harnessed to develop original products, tools, processes, and technologies. R&D and invention bleed into one another. Innovation happens when people use and find value in those inventions - and when rules, networks, and resources shift to enable adoption and diffusion."

Dr. Sarah Schulman

DEVELOP AND DELIVER
Making the case for social R&D infrastructure, May 2017

Social R&D Practices and Patterns:
connecting the dots...

Just like in cleantech, life sciences, or agriculture sectors, R&D in the social sector has unique characteristics.

To strengthen the sector's ability to communicate its research and development work, the Social R&D Fellowship launched a study to describe key common ingredients across the Social R&D Community's work[4].

Why does this matter?

1. There's been increasing demand for support from social purpose organizations looking to build capacity and/or set-up an R&D function.

2. There's growing interest from funders and policymakers in building innovation capacity across the social sector, which includes clarifying the role and characteristics of R&D for social missions, and how it interacts with other social innovation activities.

3. Finally, members of the Social R&D practitioner community are hungry to improve their craft, so a frame to help reflect on individual R&D efforts and situate the R&D efforts of others has long been called for.

This review was intended to offer another[5,6], but more granular, look at what strong R&D looks like across social mission spaces.

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[4] The Social R&D Community is a network of practitioners dedicated to growing the craft of research and development, on the frontline, to generate new knowledge and innovations that transform lives.

[5] The Social R&D Declaration to Action was drafted by an initial alliance of front-line innovators, professionals, advocates, academics, nonprofit and foundation leaders, entrepreneurs, and public policy professionals. The Declaration described Social R&D as complementary and reinforcing activities that unleash continuous process, product, policy, service, structural, and systems innovation across society. *http://socialrd.org/social-rd-declaration-of-action-seeding-a-vibrant-ecosystem-for-social-mission-rd-in-canada/*

[6] Ibid, Page 7
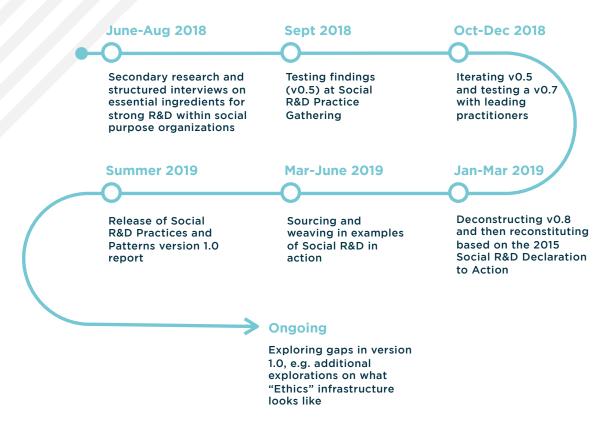
Study Method

To assist the Community in this exercise, Supriya Syal of Dulcimer Labs was engaged to

i. interview members of the Social R&D community on what constitutes "strong" Social R&D

ii. review how R&D creates value in other sectors and how "social" R&D may be different.

In this exploration Supriya was also asked to draw from her experiences leading R&D initiatives in private, academic and public sectors.

Timeline

June-Aug 2018

Secondary research and structured interviews on essential ingredients for strong R&D within social purpose organizations

Sept 2018

Testing findings (v0.5) at Social R&D Practice Gathering

Oct-Dec 2018

Iterating v0.5 and testing a v0.7 with leading practitioners

Summer 2019

Release of Social R&D Practices and Patterns version 1.0 report

Mar-June 2019

Sourcing and weaving in examples of Social R&D in action

Jan-Mar 2019

Deconstructing v0.8 and then reconstituting based on the 2015 Social R&D Declaration to Action

Ongoing

Exploring gaps in version 1.0, e.g. additional explorations on what "Ethics" infrastructure looks like

SOCIAL R&D COMMUNITY

Social R&D Practices: version 1.0

A strong R&D process is a dance between a number of inter-related practices that uncover new knowledge, and transform this knowledge into solutions that have the potential to create significant new value.

Like other sectors, R&D work can take a number of guises within social purpose organizations:

- Some organizations have a problem-first orientation and others have a curiosity or discovery-first orientation.
- Some have a dedicated R&D group independent from or adjacent to the core business, while others embed R&D into everyone's job descriptions. Some R&D functions are shared across organizations and others are in service to a single initiative.
- Some use social labs, ethnography, data science, co-production, behavioural science, performance art, prototyping and/or positive deviance analyses, etc. to power their R&D.

Regardless of how R&D work is organized and what methods are used, strong R&D leads to strong innovations that are radically more efficient and/or effective than current approaches.
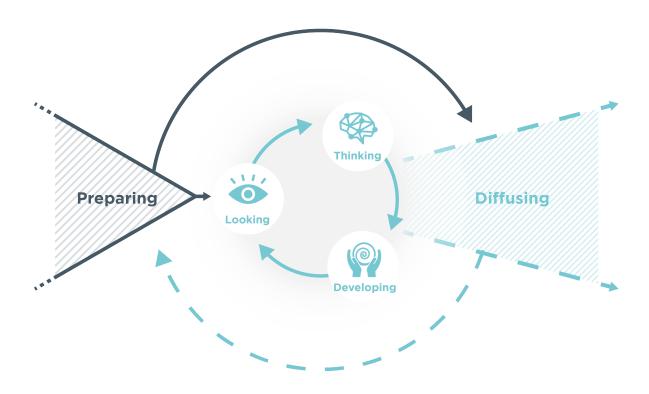
Growing from the Declaration to Action[7] and the results of the Social R&D practices study, here is our current understanding of key practices that lead to strong Social R&D.

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[7] Ibid. Page 9

Practices for Social R&D
version 1.0

1. Preparing

Building the mindset, resources, skills and permissions for maximizing impact of R&D efforts.

Example activities and practices:
R&D training and practice, R&D benchmarking, reflective practice community partnerships and co-production, resource allocations and organizational readiness.

Social R&D Community example:
Shift Lab's use of developmental evaluation, peer networks and learning metrics to create learning loops. See Page 36 to learn more…

Here's how:
Build Mindsets
  - Be curious and reflective; bold, but mindful of power and privilege

- Build relationships within and across sectors to monitor trends and be constantly exposed to fresh insights, techniques and tools

Build Resources
- Ensure sufficient allocation of resources so that R&D initiatives include multiple solution iterations

Build Skills
- Identify what measurable thing(s) would need to happen for your R&D initiatives to be a success (e.g. learning goals, efficiency goals, engagement goals, population-level outcomes, etc.), and benchmark current R&D activities to past efforts in order to strengthen practice
- Consistently refine your R&D practices and develop new ones

Build Permissions
- Socialize existing innovations from local and international contexts across your organization, as well as R&D theory
- Be clear and specific in defining how your R&D initiatives connect to organizational objectives and the broader system
- Establish mechanisms to receive feedback from your organization, the community, and the broader system
- Establish strong protocols around informed consent, ownership, protection, and R&D outcomes reporting
- Work with the community that you serve along each stage of your R&D process

2. Looking

Seeking and uncovering new pathways for social transformations.

Example activities and practices:

Community-led inquiry, ethnography, literature reviews, case studies, data sourcing.

Social R&D Community example:

Antara Global Health Advisors uses a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods and human centred design to help international

development organizations improve access to essential medicines like ORS & Zinc for childhood diarrhea. See Page 37 to learn more...

Here's how:
Situate Yourself
- Gather knowledge, understanding, and insights from a variety of sectors and sources; and identify possible applications to your work
- Identify baseline data that are relevant to the problem and metrics of success

Search for New Signals/Paths
- Use strong methods for uncovering patterns and phenomena (i.e. both culturally relevant and technically sound)

Pick a Signal/Path to Explore
- Ask good research questions and document assumptions

3. Thinking

Refining observations and insights into deeper understanding of i) the challenge/opportunity, and ii) the characteristics of new solutions.

Example activities and practices:
Brainstorming; generating hypotheses; triangulating across small, big and open data.

Social R&D Community example:
Teach For Canada's analysis of teacher 'check-in' survey data to uncover trends in teachers' emotional high and low points over their 2+year teaching contract with a northern First Nation. See Page 38 to learn more...

How:
Explore the Signal/Path
- Document research plans, and implement systems to maintain research integrity
- Use strong methods for developing theories and testing hunches (i.e. both culturally appropriate and technically sound)

4. Developing

Converting new and deeper understanding into new solutions and/or adaptations of existing solutions.

Example activities and practices:

Designing and testing, piloting, prototyping, designing feedback loops, co-production.

Social R&D Community example:

Winnipeg Boldness' use of indigenous teachings and social lab methodologies to achieve the community's goals in ways that also shift the practices of conventional social service providers. See Page 39 to learn more...

How:

Convert Knowledge Into New Things
- Apply new knowledge via strong methods for designing processes, programs, services, or products, etc. (i.e. both culturally appropriate and technically sound)

Iterate
- Test solution options using right-sized experiments and frameworks for measurement and data capture; iterate designs based on findings

Make Shareable
- Build in practices for capturing test parameters such that insights and learnings can be applied elsewhere

5. Diffusing

Contributing to collective knowledge and socializing innovations, while ensuring a strong ethical framework.

Example activities and practices:
Building/sharing capacity, aggregating/sharing lessons from success, failure and process development, leaping by learning

Social R&D Community example:
Open North's practice of facilitating knowledge sharing across stakeholders, documenting the process, and producing toolkits for others to adapt demonstrated processes. See Page 40 to learn more...

How:
Ethics
- Report back to communities in ways that are accessible (e.g. provide thick and thin data in useable formats)

Field Building
- Use and contribute to shared language within the social sector, and across other sectors when appropriate

Collective Intelligence
- Contribute to shared learning by tracking and communicating R&D outcomes (positive and negative) in ways that are consistent with your peers
- When sharing out, situate and contextualize your work by capturing your mandate, objective(s), time horizons, community situation, approach, etc.
- Contribute to the open data economy by being both a contributor (where possible and appropriate) and a user

Intellectual Honesty
- Acknowledge when leveraging the intellectual effort of others
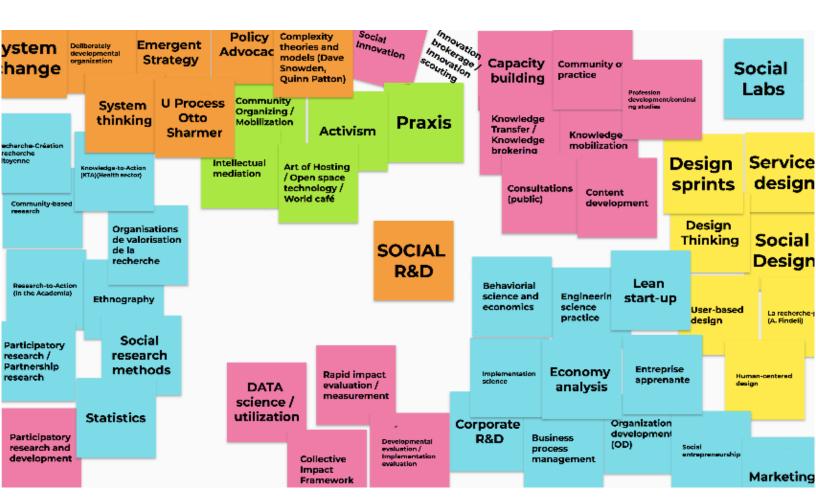
Priority updates for version 2.0

This is just a small glimpse into R&D practices across social mission organizations. As more organizations begin to share their journeys of discovery and development, a clearer picture of what Social R&D is will emerge.

Until that time, here are some recommendations of things to focus on for a Practices for Social R&D version 2.0:
- additional explorations on what "Ethics" infrastructure could and should look like e.g. lived-experience ethics boards, co-researcher protocols, etc.; and
- examine and cross-reference the R&D practices of social movements.

A snapshot of the many methods being used to power Social R&D work. Increase the strength of your R&D craft by drawing on multiple methods.

Social R&D Case Study
Kudoz

Kudoz is a community learning platform. It connects people with and without developmental disabilities to novel experiences in their city. The Kudoz team is disrupting the stuckness and stagnation that contributes to declining quality of life, greater service dependencies, and rising costs among adults with developmental disabilities.

1. Preparing

Before launching Kudoz, the then 3-person team at InWithForward had intensive apprenticeship in design and sociology. The team had also three prior service (re-)design projects across New Zealand, Australia and the Netherlands, where they were able to develop processes that merged ethnography, service design, and lean startup methodologies.

2. Looking

Three months of deep ethnographic fieldwork with adults with developmental disabilities in social housing complexes.

3. Thinking

InWithForward's research showed that adults living with developmental disabilities were not always socially isolated but they were often isolated from novelty and learning. We reframed the problem as one of a poverty of experiences, expectations and meaningful connections.

Underpinning Kudoz are five theories:

1. social cognitive career theory
2. learned hopefulness
3. bridging social capital
4. growth mindset
5. positive psychology

Taken together, they suggest that a focus on building interests and drawing on strengths can improve people's sense of self, create connections that ladder people to meaningful relationships, and employment opportunities.

4. Developing

Six months of experience prototyping and a year of beta testing with adults with developmental disabilities using co-design and prototyping methods. Kudoz was run with a larger group of users and beta tested different kinds of business models.

5. Diffusing

A longitudinal follow-up study is in progress including pre/post testing.

Here's a significant insight/innovation:

InWithForward's research showed that adults living with developmental disabilities were not always socially isolated, but they were often isolated from novelty and learning.

Here's a significant change story:

Aaron loves language. After graduating high school he wanted to go to college and study English. But the only program he was eligible for was warehouse packaging. Through Kudoz Aaron learned screenwriting from a professional actor and comedy writing from a local comedian. These days Aaron can be found at the local comedy club where he performs as a sit-down comedian.

Social R&D Community member InWithForward is a social design organization that makes human services more human.

The Vivo Play Project

The Play Project is the first full-scale R&D venture in Vivo's 10-year initiative, Gen H, which aims to leverage 'play' as a transformation vector to achieve positive 10% shifts – shifts in people's lifestyles, shifts in the care and design of communities and shifts in decision making at organizational and government levels.

1. Preparing

Vivo was originally established as a conventional recreation centre in Calgary 15 years ago. Before launching the Gen H mission and The Play Project, Vivo did the following:

1. Spent a number of years developing data on baseline incidence rates for their community (program efficacy, health, social connection, physical literacy, open space utilization), and benchmarking their existing services and interventions to best-in-class models.

2. Brought their organization to a point where they were able to invert their organizational structure from being primarily service delivery with a small R&D portfolio, to R&D being a core function of all services to accelerate solutions that meet baseline and projected needs. Vivo also became a Charitable foundation to support this work.

3. Made critical hires, and built new partnerships (with the tech sector, Public Health Agency of Canada, post secondary institutions) to support this new direction and the Gen H agenda.

2. Looking

A series of preliminary R&D projects included:

1. The GenH Instructor Program and 4in1 Physical Literacy Longitudinal study;
2. A baseline study of Early Childhood Education Spaces for the Calgary Public Library;
3. Livingston Legacy, a partnership with Brookfield Residential to baseline pioneer family health in the new suburb;
4. The Play Ambassador Program, a first exploration of outdoor play activation; and
5. Northern Hills Connect, a small business incubator program.

3. Thinking

The early-stage R&D clarified a theory of change to drive the next 10 years of work: people get healthier when they do at least two things:

1. Move more (Physical Activity)
2. Connect to each other (Social Connection)

Vivo hypothesizes that spontaneous, unstructured, cross generation play is the most accessible, inclusive, efficient and impactful way to inspire those changes.

"The recipe for raising healthier generations doesn't have to be complicated. When people move more and are socially connected, their lives improve. Open-ended, spontaneous outdoor play is one of the most accessible, adaptable and inclusive ways of bringing those two ingredients to a community."

4. Developing

Short term (1-10 years) is about using play to change population behaviours:

The Vivo Play Project is a 4 year Lab/Research study that involves co-designing and deploying play experiences in north-central Calgary. Impact will be measured across 5 areas: 10% shifts in Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour, Social Connection, Inter-generation Socialization and Spontaneous Outdoor Play.

It aims to increase knowledge, understanding, value and participation in active play by offering free facilitated play opportunities in outdoor spaces in the north-central Calgary area. Over the 4 years it will co-create 6-8 play hubs in the community, reach 11000 participants with play experiences, and complete qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the project impact (including tracking the specific impacts on a cohort of 500 kids and families with a range of methods including a child & family health dashboard, wearable technology, and community impact data portal).

Medium term (5-15 years) is about using play to trigger change in built environments so that they support health:

Vivo is launching a major facilities expansion in the next 24 months, which will add new community gathering space, indoor park amenities, and social environments. They'll also support the community to lead its own community open space planning and redevelopment through projects like Creating Coventry (a community led, greenspace master plan).

Long term (10-30) years is about recoding the mindsets and governance structures that work against play and health improvement:

Located in North Central Calgary, the catchment area of this former recreation centre is a microcosm of Canada's demographic future (Diverse, Suburban, Economic Stagnation). (34% of individuals having immigrated from another country and 44% self-identifying as a visible minority.) Vivo intends to work strategically to use this and other social R&D projects to shift community thinking and government policy development. Key to this will be the development and use of data infrastructure, dissemination strategies and co-creation capacity development.

Vivo is also exploring new organizational models to support long term work. As a civic commons, this may include some combination of a foundation (Relationships & Governance), an institute (R&D, startups & Evidence) and a centre (living lab to root and test concepts).

📣 5. Diffusing

The Vivo Play Project includes pre/post testing, and a partnership with the Public Health Agency Of Canada, which opens up access to a network of similar change agent projects for sharing and diffusing learnings.

Also, assets generated by The Play Project (Hubs etc.) are being co-created such that they can be integrated into community governance structures, and eventually operated independently by community play coalitions.

Here's a significant insight/innovation:

To accelerate the solutions needed to meet their community's current and projected needs, Vivo flipped their organizational structure from being primarily service delivery with a small R&D portfolio to R&D being a core function across all services (i.e. recreation facilities, recreation programs, lifestyle and wellness programs, etc.).

Here's a significant change story:

Ihouma moved from Nigeria to Calgary in 2014 and found living in a new neighborhood in a new country made her feel isolated. When the Play Ambassadors popped up during the summer months in Panorama, her children loved it and met many other kids living in the neighbourhood. The kids grew so close that they soon began hanging out on their own time - riding bikes and going over to each other's houses. Best of all, as the kids connected, so did the parents. Setting new patterns that lead to lifelong health and wellness.

VIVO
for Healthier Generations™

Social R&D Community member
Vivo is on a mission to raise healthier generations in Calgary and beyond. They want Canadians of all ages to achieve their optimal health at home, school, work and play.

Social R&D Case Study
Akuk

Trickster is a 2 to 3 week intensive project through which Indigenous Youth (8-16 years old) create a theater/circus show based on a traditional tale.

IdAction is a series of workshops that builds critical thinking and social analysis skills in order to develop and test a small scale citizen action project (e.g. a radio show, a video, a zine, etc.).

Akuk (Youth Empowerment and Leadership Hub) is the combination Trickster and IdAction, co-developed with young adults across key organizations in Kangiqsualujjuaq, Nunavik, to catalyze positive changes around school perseverance, self-esteem, intellectual emancipation and employment.

1. Preparing

IdAction and Trickster are two programs that Exeko had lead for more than 10 years with partnering groups and communities across Québec, but many questions had to be examined, such as: Is Exeko's know-how adaptable and relevant in the context of Nunavik? What are the specific local needs to which IdAction and Trickster could answer directly?

The responsible Exeko team had to read up on the history and culture of Inuit people, and on colonialism. Academic literature on topics such as community mobilization, identity building, institutional gaps, demographics and school perseverance was also consulted.

Also, the Exeko team and partners sought and received the permission of the people of the town of Kangiqsualujjuaq, Nunavik, to work with them in designing and delivering the initiative.

2. Looking

Exeko spent the first month on site building relationships with people, observing, asking questions, facilitating activities and analysing the gaps for which their expertise could be relevant.

3. Thinking

Through conversations with the mayor, the school principal, front-line staff from social service providers and others, the following hypothesis emerged: Education is about being passionate and wanting to learn. The

school is not the only organization responsible for that. Therefore, in order to increase school perseverance, key employees of local organizations (Youth Center, Community center, recreation center, elder's homes, Family house, Town hall, etc.) need to better embrace their education role in the ecosystem of the community. Exeko's team should thus offer professional development trainings and facilitate collaboration across silos.

A series of meetings with key employees of local organizations were organized and facilitated using Intellectual Mediation (a theory and set of practices developed by Exeko in order to interrupt patterns of social marginalization such as homelessness, psychic disorders, addiction, feelings of purposelessness, negative self-prejudices, exclusion from social and cultural institutions and racism).

From these meetings, youth empowerment and leadership were identified as a common goal. The main means identified to reach this goal was a platform, or Hub, where staff from the different local organizations could:
1. meet regularly to exchange information;
2. identify common capacity building needs (e.g project design, project management, outreach strategies, partnerships consolidation);
3. be a space where youth could have a political voice; and,
4. collaborate on the creation of activities, such as Youth conferences, talent shows, suicide prevention programs and others.

4. Developing

Three years of testing various Hub formats (coordination style, type of incentives for participation), training content and schedule. Numerous challenges and failures, mainly due to resources limitations and geographical distance, had to be navigated.

Many valuable insights emerged from this process. For example, Exeko's team realized how crucial it was to work on self-esteem, feelings of purposefulness, identity building and relationship building while offering training on project management skills, facilitation, etc.

The Hub also realized how difficult it is for its members to access continuing studies programs. Challenges are innumerous, most young Inuit adults want things to change and have ideas they want to try, but going to CEGEP or university is almost impossible.

There is a systemic lack of access to knowledge or tools, most academic programs are not culturally relevant since they are designed for southern norms. Exeko's most recent question is therefore: How could a Hub facilitate access to a variety of relevant professional learning opportunities?

📢 5. Diffusing

Now that those three pilot years have yielded promising results (e.g. many small and big activities were created for the community, Hub members have increased communication across silos, number of partnerships have increased, pedagogical skills were acquired, the function of the Hub is better known by people in the community, etc.), new Hubs will be opening in other Nunavik communities. The Hub, called Akuk by its members, is in many regards a type of Community of practice.

Exeko is now in the process of structuring internal training to increase the awareness and skills of staff that will be joining the project. An impact evaluation/learning loop is also being consolidated to compare data between Hubs.

Here's a significant insight/innovation:

Exeko's analysis identified that young Inuit adults employed by local organizations are key stakeholders in the community. They have high potential to contribute to short and long-term social development; however, many do not feel supported, valued or empowered to do so. Offering professional development opportunities and increasing collaboration among young Inuit adults emerged as a key focus area for Exeko's work.

Here' a significant change story:

Minnie is the young mother of two children and she is also the coordinator of Qarmaapik, the Family house. Like many others in her community, her personal and professional life is a constant struggle. She has been a member of Akuk for the past 3 years. For her, Akuk is a place where she can feel safe to overcome her fear of speaking in public. Here, other members don't hesitate to compliment her on her talents and skills. It is also a place where she can extract herself from emergencies and crises to find the peace of mind necessary to reflect on sensitive issues that require thoughtful concerted action. Recently, Minnie decided that she also wants to act at the regional level. She was elected as the secretary-treasurer of Qarjuit Youth Council whose mission is to "be part of the solution in improving the lives of the youth from the ages of 15 to 35 in Nunavik and Chisasibi."

exeko.org

Social R&D Community member Exeko's approach recognizes that everyone has the potential to reflect, analyze, act, create, and become a transformative member of society, irrespective of their social status or life course: they presume that all intelligences are equal.

Got a case study that you'd like to share?

Connect with the community on twitter using the hashtag

#SocialRD

Social R&D Supports: a preview

At this point, there are few dedicated supports for social purpose organizations looking to strengthen their R&D craft. To begin to address this gap, the Social R&D Fellowship initiated a Mitacs[8] supported study to help uncover R&D capacity building models for charities and non-profits.

This work included conducting a needs survey for social purpose organizations looking to boot up or strengthen an R&D portfolio; structured interviews with Social R&D capacity intermediaries like InWithForward and the Start Network to uncover what's working/not working; and compiling an inventory of R&D supports.

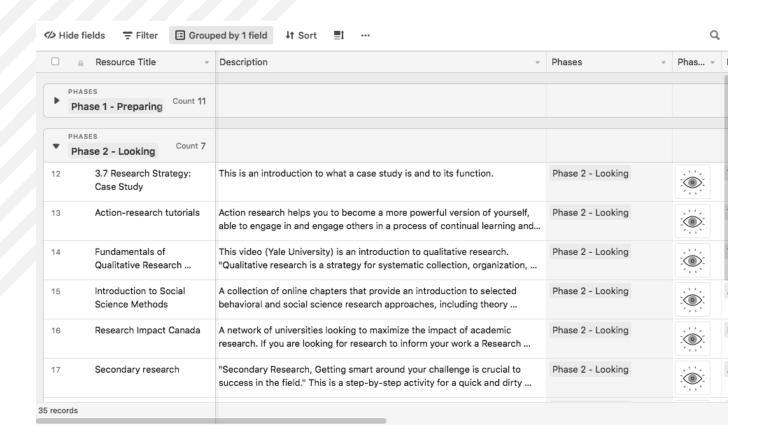The results from the first phase of the Mitacs study will be disseminated in Fall 2019.

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[8] For the past 18 years, Mitacs has pursued a mandate to build academic and industry partnerships at various scales to foster innovation and talent development via research-based internships for masters and PhD and post-doctoral students. Connect with Mitacs to explore how they can help support your R&D work.

Social R&D Supports Inventory
Version 0.6

This database is an inventory of various items that support directly or indirectly R&D practices in the social sector. It is mainly intended for practitioners and managers that want to explore and access ways of increasing the ability of their teams.

This is a very early version of the database: we think it's promising but still rudimentary.

Let us know what you think, and there is an online form where you can add missing items.

Looking to grow your R&D craft?

Add your voice:

Take the Social R&D Needs Survey

Social R&D **Patterns**

Here are some additional examples of R&D in practice by members of the Social R&D Community.

⏚ **Preparing**

Building the mindset, resources, skills and permissions for maximizing impact of R&D efforts. (See p.13)

Racism and poverty are often tightly linked. To help Edmontonians achieve the goal of ending poverty in a generation, a foundation and a service provider have launched a social lab to bring stakeholders together to develop solutions that focus on the root causes of poverty.

By integrating a Developmental Evaluation frame into all of its initiatives, Shift Lab uncovers the unique value proposition of a particular initiative and how it resonates with the community and the team: it allows everyone involved to get to maximum impact, earlier.

A partnership between Edmonton Community Foundation and Skills Society Action Lab, the Edmonton Shift Lab is an action-oriented exploration of racism in our city. We are building on the great work already done in Edmonton and approaching these challenges through a social innovation lab to steward an exploration that can provide us with insights and prototypes into how we can make change.

👁 Looking

Seeking and uncovering new pathways for social transformations. (See p.14)

With a combination of strong research methods, application of human centred design principles, and a deep curiosity for how to enable access to life saving technologies, including essential health products and services, Antara Global Health Advisors helped develop ColaLife: an award winning innovation model that emulates the value-chains of fast-moving consumer goods, like Coca-Cola, to significantly improve the design and coverage of essential medicines like ORS & Zinc for childhood diarrhea.

ANTARA GLOBAL
— HEALTH ADVISORS —

A Canadian global health advisory firm focused on helping organizations including donors, governments, foundations, private sector, philanthropists, and others in the achievement of improving population health, increasing equity, and preventing needless loss of life in low- and middle-income settings by providing global health expertise, experience, partnerships, and evidence-based public health and management advice. Specializing in monitoring and evaluation, implementation science, multisectoral collaborations and human-centred design they have worked on a range of global health challenges.

Thinking

Refining observations and insights into deeper understanding of i) the challenge/ opportunity, and ii) the characteristics of new solutions. (See p.15)

Teach For Canada works with northern First Nations to recruit, prepare, and support committed teachers who contribute to student success. Part of this includes ongoing engagement with teachers to support their personal wellbeing and retention, including a bi-weekly check-in survey.

By analysing the results of hundreds of surveys, Teach For Canada has begun to uncover trends in teacher responses over a 2+year teaching contract and when teachers may benefit from additional support.

These insights are allowing the Teacher Development team to explore better timing of supports, including support calls, care packages, letters from loved-ones.

TEACH FOR
ENSEIGNER POUR LE
CANADA

To support student success by recruiting and developing committed educators in partnership with First Nations.

Developing

Converting new and deeper understanding into new solutions and/or adaptations of existing solutions. (See p.16)

During its first year, The Winnipeg Boldness Project developed the Child Centred Model with community leaders, knowledge keepers, and the Point Douglas neighbourhood.

Since then, the team has co-developed and tested a series of initiatives that build on the model that could lead to dramatic shifts in the existing child and youth services system.

Some example initiatives include, the Indigenous Doula Initiative: Pre and Post Pregnancy Care, Canada Learning Bond: Building Bridges to Further Education, and Participation in the Arts: Providing Inclusive Opportunities for Skill Building.

THE WINNIPEG BOLDNESS PROJECT

To develop and test community-driven solutions to create better opportunities for children and families in the North End of Winnipeg.

📢 Diffusing

Contributing to collective knowledge and socializing innovations, while ensuring a strong ethical framework. (See p.17)

Whether it's related to government consultation practices, or crafting multi-stakeholder shared data governance with cultural industry stakeholders, Open North has a best-in-class process of documenting and sharing key process and implementation insights.

The level of detail shared, and associated toolkits that are generated help other practitioners adapt solutions and apply insights in other contexts.
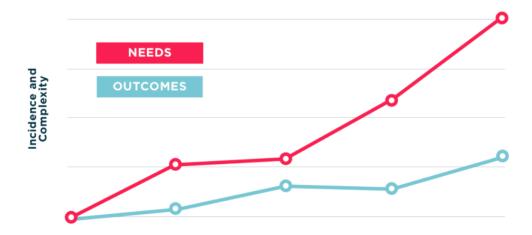
OpenNorth

Leading national and international multi-stakeholder partnerships on implementing values-driven approaches and solutions that do more than just utilize data and networked infrastructure to make decisions. We work with a wide diversity of innovative and connected public administrations and community stakeholders to build their efficient, ethical, and collaborative use of data and technology to solve complex problems. We sustain global peer-to-peer networks for knowledge sharing that improves smart and open governance practices for citizens across Canada and the world.

Reducing the Barrier to Entry

Too few social mission organizations have the know-how, tools, resources and enabling environment to do R&D well.

Over the past 4 years the Social R&D Community, working together with with funders and policymakers, have begun to craft an ecosystem that unlocks R&D for the social sector.

Why?

Well, it has been demonstrated across many different sectors that strong R&D ecosystems generate innovations of high quality and at a high frequency (i.e. new policy, process, program, service, product-classes that elevate or replace existing models).

Why not for the social sector?

If you are…
  - a service provider looking to create breakthrough solutions,
  - a foundation looking to build innovation capacity internally and across your grantee network,
  - a policymaker trying to arm the sector with innovation supports, or
  - an R&D practitioner from another sector, get in touch.

Let's work together to create the conditions for social mission R&D to thrive in Canada.

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