ESDC Lab

2019/20

Annual Report

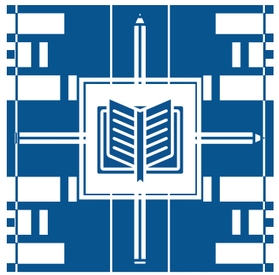
with Canadians, for Canada

ESDC Lab

Annual Report 2019/20

Celebrating Our Five Years

Employment and Social Development Canada Lab



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5Th CELEBRATING OUR FIVE YEARS

This is the story of the Lab: an organization made up of passionate people who are honoured by the fact that the work they do makes a difference in the lives of Canadians.

Every year our Lab team develops an annual report for an in-depth look at the progress and impact of our work. This year's report reflects on our journey through 2015–2020 and our growth along the way, including our fiscal 2019/20 accomplishments.

We are incredibly thankful to have shared this journey with our Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and Government of Canada colleagues, Canadians from all across Canada, as well as other government and international colleagues.

This year we are guiding you through our journey through the power of allegory, covering key reflections from each of our business lines: Full-Design, Focused-Design, Behavioural Insights Research and Design, and the newly launched Innovation Fund.

In addition, with the Lab celebrating its fifth anniversary this year, we took the opportunity to review and evolve the Lab's name and logo. Here is the Lab's new and simplified name: The ESDC Lab.

Happy reading!

Jeannie Dempster,
Lab Director

ESDC Lab

Meet the Lab

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Rebecca Friesdorf

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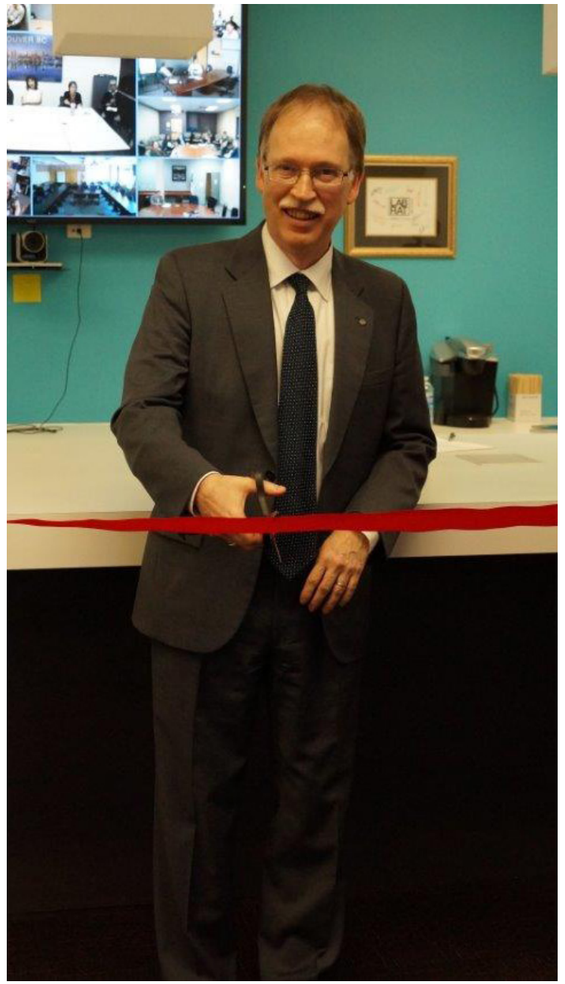
THE LAB STORY … WITH A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

It is after eight in the morning and employees in business-casual attire are taking to their cubicles. For many in this space, they regularly interact with a core circle of direct team-mates and extended colleagues but want to break down boundaries on shared files and work across teams, directorates, branches and departments. They can see the enormous benefits of collaboration and want to have a greater impact, but they aren't always sure how to navigate the complex hierarchy, silos and processes they encounter. Reflective of any workplace, this desire to work differently and with end-users in mind, sparked ESDC's interest in human-centred design.



Former Deputy Minister of Employment and Social Development Canada, Ian Shugart, cutting the red tape at the launch of ESDC Innovation Lab

Five years ago, the rapidly changing environment, along with rising needs and expectations of Canadians, demanded a shift in deeply ingrained behaviours and ways of working in the department. Inspired by the success of other labs around the world, Ian Shugart, former Deputy Minister of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), founded the ESDC Innovation Lab. The Lab was to introduce new, more collaborative ways of working together and bridge the communication gap. The goal? To better connect the dots between policy, program, and service delivery so that Canadians get the services they need when they need them.

When the Lab launched, our core focus was using Design Thinking to address complex organizational challenges with the direct engagement of Canadians and endorsed by senior management. Innovative design and research techniques led to insights and recommendations, but the implementation levers were often in the hands of our clients and set on a predetermined destination. It wasn't always easy. We learned a lot about cultivating a shared model of client partnership and accountability and what it takes to bridge policy, program and service delivery in a large, complex organization.

Other smaller-scale activities such as design jams and hackathons created enthusiasm and hype about new ways of working and helped generate solutions quickly. However, these events didn't result in the greater impact we desired - the broad perspectives and the lived experiences of Canadians were missing. The addition of a Behavioural Insights team brought specialized knowledge and an understanding of human behaviour to build and test communication with Canadians. These early days provided an opportunity for us to try out different ways of working that stretched our organization's comfort zone and helped our colleagues experience the benefits of collaboration first hand.

The Lab is now braver, bolder and prepared for our next challenge: delivering innovation at scale through a redefined partnership model and the addition of an employee-led Innovation Fund. After five years of growth and plenty of lessons learned, the Lab is ready to continue to work alongside project partners and Canadians, particularly through the unprecedented challenges of recovery and post-recovery from the current COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing social and economic reality.

FULL
DESIGN
TEAM

CHAPTER 1

FULL-DESIGN

MINDFUL PROBLEM SOLVING THROUGH THE EYES OF CANADIANS

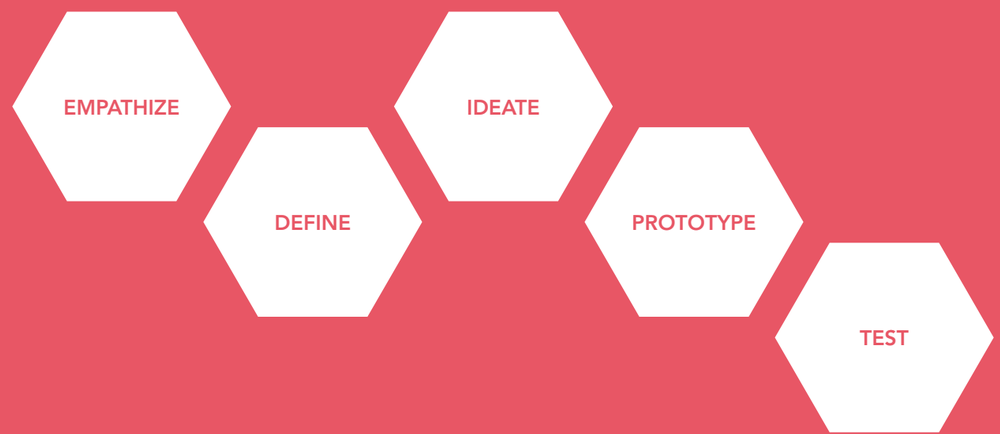
Guranteed Income Supplement session - Jespal Panesar shares user insights - Oct 2019

Since the launch of the Lab, Full-Design projects have used Design Thinking to address complex programmatic challenges with the direct involvement of Canadians. These projects require a fundamental shift in perspective, uncovering deeply rooted organizational assumptions and guiding ESDC project partners away from traditional problem-solving methods to find new and innovative solutions.

When embarking on a new Full-Design project, one could compare applying Design Thinking to first stepping onto a yoga mat. When we first sign up for a yoga class the practice is new, challenging and unfamiliar and we often don't know if we can complete the physical moves as demanded. What we often don't realize when beginning such a practice, is that it is less about our physical limitations and more about determination, persistent practice and, more importantly, cultivating a growth mindset.

Institute of Design at Stanford University (D.School) Model:

Design Thinking is a design methodology that provides a solution-based approach to solving problems. The five stages of Design Thinking, according to d.school, are as follows:



"Empathy: the art of stepping imaginatively into the shoes of another person, understanding their feelings and perspectives, and using that to guide your actions."

Kryznaric, 2015

On Full-Design projects, our role is to guide and support our project partners with navigating change and moments of uncertainty. Experimenting and embracing failure is part of the process and learning from it requires fostering trust, strengthening communication and adapting to each others' styles. Most importantly, it is about engaging in empathy.

Our full design projects are typically a year-long and selected according to departmental priorities and with the support of senior management. They are defined by connecting directly with Canadians from across the country and guided by the five stages of the design thinking approach. The nature of the Full-Design process drives us as individuals and as an organization to be more mindful and be better problem-finders and problem-solvers. The key to success? A strong relationship with our project partners built on open communication and trust - the very foundation of a co-development approach.

For our team and project partners, this mindful problem-solving entails going in-depth, creating a common vision through shared experience, identifying challenges that stand in the way of goals, and consistently challenging the information presented to come out with new ideas. It also means that decision-making is informed by the knowledge that reflects people's lived experiences. If we are to connect with Canadians and understand their day-to-day realities, yoga has a lot to teach us about cultivating self-awareness and compassion through patience, genuine care and trust-building.

At ESDC, we administer programs and services that impact the lives of millions of Canadians, therefore it is critical to ensure our policies and programs are fully connected to the reality on the ground. The challenge for the Lab in reflecting that reality is often two-fold:

1. Translating the lived experiences of Canadians back to the department in a way that brings (sometimes abstract) policy, program, and service delivery down to a human level.

2. Becoming powerful storytellers to be able to effectively advocate for the inclusion of what we hear from Canadians in decision-making.

Guaranteed Income Supplement Uptake Ideation Design Sprint Vancouver Workshop - May 2019

Our full-design projects have centred on understanding and cultivating empathy on a wide array of challenges to answer questions such as: Why do some seniors, like Henry from Montreal, choose early retirement despite the financial gains of postponing it? What prevents young Canadians, like Alex from Kamloops, from being more involved in their communities or engaged in civic life? Whether through interviews with young Canadians or speaking with vulnerable seniors and their circle of care, problem reframing with end-users helps us to break free from our judgements and to find and experiment with creative solutions.

As we celebrate our 5th anniversary, we find ourselves asking: how has the Lab, and our respective partners, undertaken this journey of mindfulness and empathy-building? It started, and will always start, with Canadians. Understanding their stories – their realities, needs, and wants as users of the services we provide – that is what we are about. We speak directly with Canadians in their homes and communities to co-develop solutions that resonate with them. By building a sense of trust between the federal government, community organizations, and Canadians, we aim for more empathy-driven policy, program, and service delivery.

Reference: Krznaric, R. (2015). Empathy: why it matters, and how to get it. London: Rider Books.

Full-Design Highlights:

This past year we partnered with our colleagues in Service Canada to explore the persistent challenge of increasing take-up of the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) for eligible seniors. We designed nudge interventions and travelled from coast to coast to meet seniors and their circles of care, Service Canada front line workers, as well as community organizations. The client's openness to exploring change across the spectrum of service delivery, program and policy development, as well as a co-development approach, led to insights and prototypes with impact. Increasing the take-up of this program helps raise the most vulnerable seniors in Canada out of poverty.

1. 2015-2016: Canada Pension Plan (CPP) – discovering how to best increase the use of a new Service Canada online application.

2. 2016-2017: Youth Service Initiative – supporting the design of the new Canada Service Corps program dedicated to young Canadians.

3. 2017-2018: Increasing the take-up of the Canada Learning Bond (CLB) – understanding perceptions of education and financial decision-making among low-income families.

FOCUSED

DESIGN

TEAM

CHAPTER 2

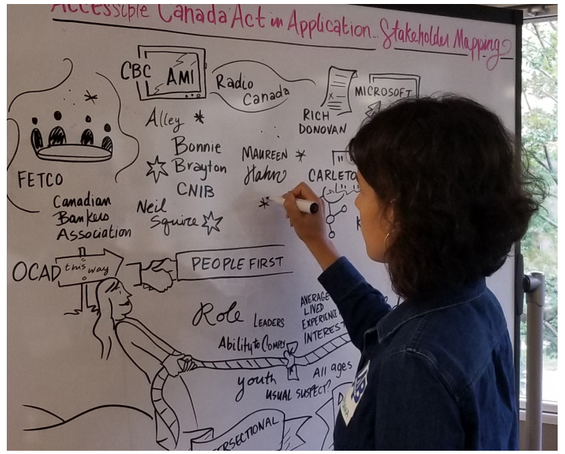
FOCUSED-DESIGN

FORGING NEW PATHS THROUGH BOTTOM-UP INNOVATION

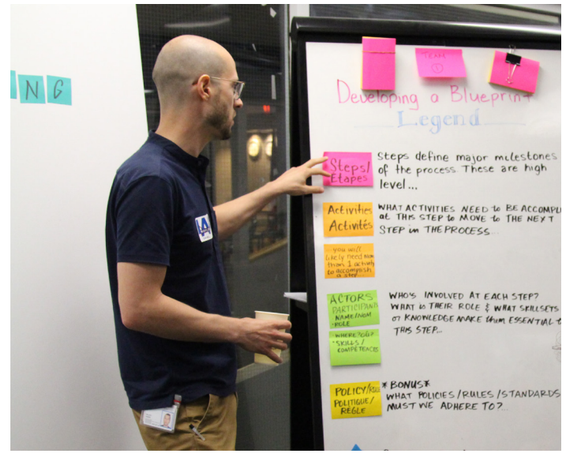
Focused-Design in the Lab started with small scale projects to teach new design thinking methods. These projects simulated air-dropping travellers into an untamed jungle where we trained them in the basics: survival skills. These short journeys were fun and low-risk, giving participants a glimpse of what adventure could feel like with temporary discomfort.

Travellers were guided through day trips such as hackathons, design jams, and workshops. The scope was narrow and covered only a slice of the Design Thinking methodology. The projects created brief windows of opportunity for fast idea generation, dabbling in problem framing and solution-finding. Projects often leveraged ethnographic research done by the Lab or external partners to be agile and maintain a human-centred focus. They typically didn't include fieldwork with Canadians.

In the spring of 2018, we shifted away from these journeys and created a dedicated Focused-Design unit to help our ESDC clients solve complex problems with the perspective and voice of Canadians to develop user-centred policies, programs and services. This required an overhaul of project intake criteria, new practices, team growth and an incubation period to assess partnership readiness.



Accessibility Interdepartmental Meeting - Jordana Globerman graphic records during stakeholder mapping - Sept. 2019



Emergency Response Protocol Session - Daniel Villate explains the development of a blueprint - July 2019

Picture again the jungle. We shifted from teaching basic survival skills to leading immersive multi-day group expeditions for eight to ten months. We now expect our project partners and clients to have the capacity, and dedicated time and resources for an expedition of extended length. We plan our itinerary together, but we travel light and adjust accordingly when the unexpected arises. To prepare us for our journey together we assess readiness with a negotiated project charter which outlines the scope, research frame, partners, timelines, milestones, shared accountability, risk mitigation strategies, and potential activities for the project.

We intentionally select a variety of project scopes tailored to our client's operating contexts and the mix of participants involved. Each project brings new knowledge about how the organization functions and how Canadians experience our programs and services. Some expeditions fare better than others, and we don't know which ones will lead to better outcomes until we try.

We work closely with our clients to understand their reality, organization's complexity, and historical context, taking a system-wide view. When our clients feel pressure to follow more traditional paths, the Lab's neutrality helps them work through these challenges and forge new paths. Our clients come back transformed with a thirst for more. Last year alone, our expeditions grew in length and complexity across the gamut of Design Thinking, with hard to reach populations.

With each focused-design project, we document our research and design findings, observe patterns in the ecosystem, and create opportunities for co-design with Canadians. These exchanges allow new partnerships and perspectives to develop, similar to the comradery you might develop with your fellow travellers on an immersive multi-day expedition. Through the course of multiple projects, the Lab has heard from clients and project participants about how their experience helped them reframe beliefs and attitudes that were deeply ingrained.

"(...) I have grown so much [on the Indigenous Skills and Employment Internal Change Management Project] and I can say that I am more confident in the messages that I am trying to deliver. This project has affected me personally and professionally in ways that I can't even begin to describe."

Daphne, Service Canada

Accessible Canada Act (ACA) Co-Design Workshop with Industry and Persons with Disabilities - Catherine Charbonneau provides guidance during workshop activity - March 2020

"(...) there are people here, I call them my friends, they shared their experience with me, they explained to me what they live each day, discrimination, lack of accessibility, they told me their story. There are all kinds of things that we all take for granted and yet, there are obstacles, barriers for other people, they must be removed."

Industry participant, Montreal ACA workshop

In the fall of 2018, we created weekly Open Design Hours to welcome colleagues across ESDC, other departments, and beyond to informally pitch projects and incubate ideas that help drive innovation from the bottom-up. A new employee-driven advisory service began to take shape. Our visitors come for guidance and advice. We listen and provide a challenge-function, on how to work more collaboratively, how to tackle their complex problems, and how to employ different tools and methods, for example. This also resulted in us onboarding new ESDC projects, building our network, and collecting information about barriers to innovation.

With over 15 design projects under our belt, each project builds on our knowledge and learning to strengthen our offerings. Our projects have made headway covering policy innovation and medium-term planning, combining performance measurement and program assessment methodologies with design thinking, as well as bringing complementary methods such as behavioural insights, organizational development, coaching and systems thinking to our work.

Over the last two years, Focused-Design has transformed into an established expedition team, with departmental recognition and emergence in the international ecosystem. While the ripple-effect of our work was organic, much of the progress and evolution was by design with bottom-up innovation serving as a complementary approach to the Lab's Full-Design projects. Bringing different actors together infuses a diversity of perspectives into the way we think about and solve departmental problems, with and for Canadians.

Focused-Design Highlights in 2019/20

We developed a structure and trained a cohort of regional ambassadors across Canada for a peer-led internal change management initiative towards Reconciliation. This major policy transformation positioned the front-line service experience to ensure Indigenous Peoples could fully benefit from our labour market programs. We surfaced conflicting perspectives, highlighted organizational patterns, and offered concrete solutions to help bridge the gap between policy vision and implementation.

We brought together a diverse group of youth, youth-serving organizations and public servants together to prototype learning pathways from high-school to post-secondary education, which was funded to be further developed and tested in the field.

We also developed an internal emergency protocol for another program bringing integrity, program operations, front-line service, and policy leads together to react to real-life scenarios.

For the first time, we worked in the regulation space to develop supporting guidance for industry to meet their legislative requirements for the Accessible Canada Act (ACA). An intensive co-design project, with federally regulated industries across sectors of varying sizes, it included a diversity of people with disabilities from across regions. We modelled the requirements of the Act to learn, expose challenges and identify solutions, all while offering the highest possible standard of accessibility.

Behavioural
Insights
Research
Design
TEAM

CHAPTER 3

BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS RESEARCH AND DESIGN

AN ENGINEER'S GUIDE TO HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

Looking back, our Behavioural Insights Research and Design (BIRD) team was like a fresh-eyed junior engineer just entering the workforce. We were excited to start using our academic skills and knowledge to solve real-world problems, but inexperienced in bringing people along through the process.

As one of the core business lines of the Lab, the BIRD team provides behavioural science knowledge and application. Our team is specialized in fields like social psychology and economics, bringing an understanding of why people behave the way that they do.

We use our specialized knowledge to build and test interventions so we can help Canadians access government programs and services more easily, safely and effectively. You can think of us as a type of engineer that designs, builds and maintains environments that help individuals make good decisions, and promotes an added layer of evidence-based decision making in government.

Over the last five years, we have had to work hard on two key challenges that stand between theory and application:

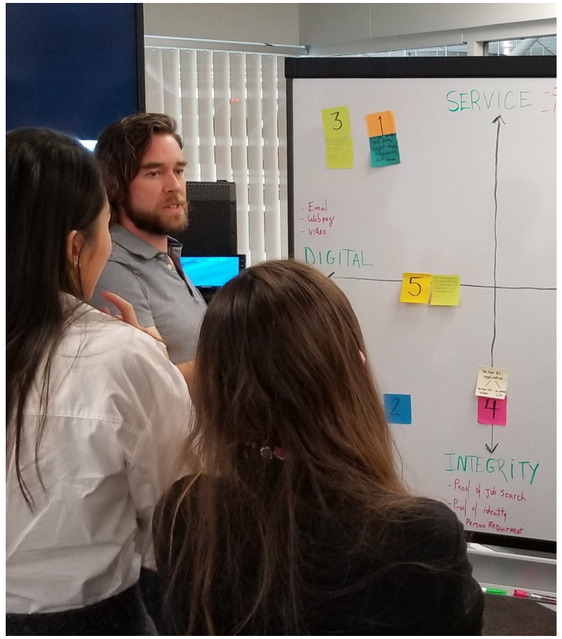
1. How to communicate and establish strong relationships with partners across the department who are new to behavioural science.

2. How to connect knowledge from academic research findings and program data to design interventions for the real-life context of Canadians, as well as the ESDC operational context.

Let's bring back the junior engineer. At the start, we were able to draw blueprints for effective solutions, but, without including our partners early on and walking them through the plans, we didn't get very far. We heard countless times from our partners: "that can't be done" "we don't have the resources to do that" and "the legislation doesn't allow us to change anything." To tackle this challenge we invested more time in learning our partners' languages and perspectives, and in making our approach more digestible.

We started integrating additional approaches, such as Design Thinking: a creative problem-solving process that brings together a broad range of perspectives. This addition has helped us to challenge assumptions together, and quickly build and test new solutions that could be iterated and rapidly improved. This allowed us to reach a common understanding with our project partners and build trust-based relationships. By doing so, we accomplished a challenging feat: we learned how to translate the technical designs we have in mind into advice and guidance that our partners can understand and embrace.

However, just like any engineering project, and even after establishing a working relationship with your partners, a multitude of challenges stand between the clean, clear lines of a blueprint and the final product. For us, a major gap exists between the best solution based on academic literature and available data, and the real-life feasibility and context of our end users (Canadians).



Employment Insurance Client Information Session - Mathieu Audet explains problem framing and prioritization activity - May 2019

Constructing a Condo Building

The importance of this challenge may not be immediately clear. Think of a client looking to construct a condo building: they might have an initial vision in mind, but the project needs additional information, such as soil conditions and zoning laws, to be realized. Similarly, the construction of behavioural projects requires thorough investigation beyond the immediately available information. For example, without a good understanding of Canadians' experiences through their eyes such as digital literacy, language on forms and application processes, our programs and services can't provide the right support.

To address this challenge, in the last two years we added two interconnected instruments to our toolbox: qualitative research and empathy building.

We use methods such as:

One-on-one interviews and facilitated group sessions to conduct this qualitative research.

Then, we translate these data-rich recordings into digestible insights for empathy-building exercises so our partners can develop a better understanding of Canadian experiences.

As well, the abundance of data from qualitative research is further distilled into organized, but emotionally-provoking pieces of evidence. This helps our partners relate to the important contextual factors that drive the behaviours of Canadians, bringing their lived experience forward.

Example from BIRD:

Social psychological research has shown that people dislike uncertainty. By removing uncertain language (e.g., "you **may** receive a minimum of $500 up to a maximum of $2000") in a letter encouraging the take-up of a benefit for low-income Canadians, and replacing it with language presenting the exact amount (e.g., "you **will** receive $1000") of benefit, we increased the uptake of the benefit by 40%.

Behavioural science does a lot more than optimize communications. Last year, BIRD combined insights from the research literature and our user research to generate novel, cost-effective solutions to redesign integrity and Unemployment Insurance programming. These solutions are ready to be tested in rigorous experiments to provide quantitative evidence of their value.

ESDC INNOVATION FUND

ESDC

Innovation

Fund

TEAM

CHAPTER 4

ESDC INNOVATION FUND

WHEN DREAMS BECOME REALITY

Dreams are what define, empower, and trigger strong emotions. They can inspire you and others, shape your life, and bring about monumental change.

Many of our dreams can seem overwhelming or outright unattainable at first. But pursuing your dreams with passion and persistence can be very rewarding and can also facilitate meeting other dream seekers. It is a journey that requires courage, some planning, a few reality checks and hard work.

Innovation, just like our dreams, grows from creativity. In early 2019, the idea of an innovation fund was initiated to increase employee engagement, empower employees to bring their innovative ideas forward for funding, and inspire innovation at ESDC. With a dedicated budget to pilot employee-driven projects, the intent was to complement the other established innovation-focused business lines in the department and be more responsive to the needs of the innovation environment.

We started with research, conducted a scan on best practices, and then interviewed potential target users of the Fund. We sought to understand which other departments had successfully implemented an initiative to support employees, and which ones had lessons learned to share. The Fund was created directly with employees from across our different branches, classifications and walks of life. We looked beyond the typical governance, application process, intake requirements and structure to create a tailored fund to bring our own employees' ideas to life.

We officially launched the fund in late 2019, with the Deputy Minister's vision of bringing employees' needs front and center. Proposals are accepted continuously and can only be submitted by employees themselves. The ideas are reviewed by peers from across ESDC's branches and regions and must demonstrate their rational, value for money and user impact.

Since its launch, over 60 ideas have been received from across the Department and by the end of March 2020, seven projects were approved by the Advisory Panel.

Administratively light, with a small support team and a quick and easy intake process, the Fund is designed to test ideas in real-time and explore new ways of working to overcome common organizational barriers, such as information technology needs and lengthy approval processes. A healthy rate of failure is one of the conditions of success with the hope that management and employees are more open to a risk-taking mindset.

With the emergence of COVID-19, the Fund team has re-engaged recipients to ensure that ideas could still be implemented. As we recover from the pandemic, there will be a growing need for better processes and procedures, stronger collaborations and a shift in mindset, turning ideas into projects that boost our department's productivity and improve how we serve Canadians along the policy to service continuum.

The dreamers are the experts when it comes to how we can do things better. Every time someone thinks "it would be so much faster, easier, better if we did it this way", they are innovating. Our employees continuously demonstrate ingenuity, flexibility and willingness to rise above barriers and obstacles. By supporting our dreamers and their passion we hope to inspire our colleagues and challenge the status quo, giving those dreamers the freedom to innovate.

Approved Innovation Fund Projects for Implementation in 2020/21

Employment Insurance Guide for Health Professionals: The development of a guide for medical practitioners on providing medical certificates that comply with program requirements, allowing Canadians in need to obtain benefits sooner.
Internal Human Resources Information Tool: This tool would provide ESDC internal HR agents with a common location to find all related HR information, providing a faster, more efficient service to client managers and employees.
Tech-Free Zone: Equipped with comfortable chairs, the zone would encourage creativity by offering a technology-free space for ideas to flourish designed for recharging alone or for collaboration with colleagues.
Accessibility Module for Inclusion: The inclusion of targeted questions into the 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability would ensure it gathers more comprehensive data in support of more inclusive and responsive policies and programs.
Automation Tool for Canada Pension Plan Disability: This tool would automate complex calculation processes usually manually completed by Service Canada Benefits Officer, reducing human error and increasing the accuracy of payments.
Virtual Reality: This exploratory research will assess the feasibility of virtual reality telework, which would allow employees to meet in a virtual meeting space and collaborate beyond video conference and teleconference.
Improving Staffing Processes: This project would link ESDC Human Resources information with the employee profile in jobs.gc.ca to reduce the burden on employees by integrating HR information to make applying for jobs easier.

Th

Anniversary

CHAPTER 5

OUR YEAR IN REVIEW 2019/20

BROADENING AND DEEPENING OUR REACH

The Lab has had a busy and rewarding year. We were fortunate to work with frontline colleagues, community groups and directly with Canadians from coast to coast to coast to create positive, transformational change.

The projects featured below are examples of our work:

In 2019/20, over 30 project ideas were pitched to the Lab.

Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) - the Lab's full design project aimed to improve uptake of the GIS across the policy, program and service delivery continuum.

- Engaged with over 170 seniors and representatives of senior organizations
- Conducted a letter trial with 25,000 individuals, sent a research survey to 2,500 GIS recipients
- Gathered insights to explain why some seniors do not apply for the GIS
- Developed potential solutions that can increase uptake of the benefit

Employment Insurance (EI) Claimant Information Session Revitalization - exploring the lived experiences of claimants who are newly unemployed to gain a deeper understanding of program strengths and pain points, leading to the design, prototype, and testing of new solutions.

- Held 20 in-depth interviews with EI claimants from across the country
- Observed Service Canada Centre operations and directly engaged with Service Canada agents
- Developed five prototypes with regional partners, which are being further explored

Underrepresented Learners - curating evidence from an in-depth qualitative study, the Lab brought together a diverse group of youth, youth-serving organizations and public servants for a workshop series to re-define learning pathways for youth populations underrepresented in educational cohorts.

- Proposed five prototypes to inform policy options and recommendations for funding stream under the renewed Youth Employment and Skills Strategy
- Workshop outputs were included in a call for proposals from youth-serving organizations to implement activities to help underrepresented youth successfully transition from high school to post-secondary education and the labour market

Accessible Canada Act (ACA) in application - building on previous consultations, the Accessibility Secretariat partnered with the Lab to collect user information to support the development of regulatory guidance for federally-regulated industry to meet legislative requirements for Accessibility Plans, consultations, feedback mechanisms and reporting.

- Conducted 22 key informant interviews to create a body of knowledge about accessibility in federally regulated industries
- Lead three co-design workshops, including 85 persons with a diversity of disabilities, as well as federally-regulated industry representatives from different sectors and business sizes
- Developed early prototypes for the regulatory guidelines to support industry's application of the Act

Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Internal Change Management - an internal service design project for a program to better support Reconciliation through labour market integration for Indigenous Peoples.

- Established a network of frontline change ambassadors across Canada adopted by the program to increase just-in-time horizontal collaboration and redefine a service relationship across organizational silos
- Held seven peer-led regional engagements with a total of 120 frontline participants, generating over 750 solutions and 14 napkin pitches, covering training initiatives, reporting indicators, communication and planning strategies
- Explored integrating frontline knowledge to support policy transformation towards Reconciliation efforts

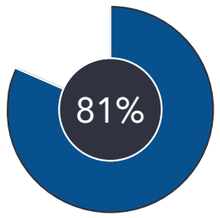
Emergency Response Protocol - collaborating with stakeholders across the department and with a partner department to develop a coordinated case management approach for emergency situations for the delivery of a complex program.

- The client realized the value in broadening stakeholder participation and shifted to include other internal partners in policy and program operations in addition to integrity, as well as a partner department
- Regional support provided valued perspective through the participation of regional employees in the workshop

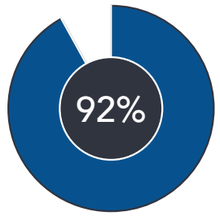
Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPPD) – exploring the lived experiences of CPPD beneficiaries including their challenges in managing their disability, work attitudes, and experiences with finding and maintaining employment.

- Conducted interviews with 4 beneficiaries, 8 subject matter experts from various organizations focused on assistance with independent living as well as clinical researchers, and 5 Service Canada call centre agents
- Held workshop with diverse participation including researchers, analysts, designers, and medical adjudicators, with members from the Canadian Digital Service and multiple branches in ESDC

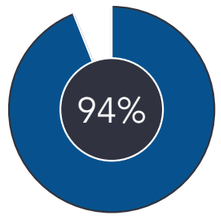
Overall participant feedback on Lab sessions



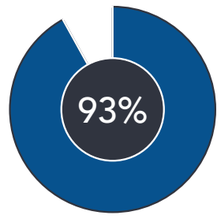
said they can apply Lab learning to their work



said their thinking has advanced after a workshop



said Lab facilitation was effective or very effective



said the Lab session met or exceeded expectations

"I really enjoyed the task of asking WHY - how does this manifest itself in actions, emotions etc.? This type of thinking is new to me."

Lab session participant

"I have learned that problems have many layers and different points of view."

Lab session participant

"Allows me and encourages me to think outside of the box and look at issues and concerns holistically from various perspectives and business levels."

Lab session participant

Lab Open Hours

The Lab opened its doors every Friday morning to share advice on tools, methods, and resources to colleagues from ESDC, across the Government of Canada, and beyond.

- 86% of the colleagues we met with said we helped advance their thinking

"We decided to take up ESDC on their offer of #DesignHours at the Innovation Lab :-) Best. Idea. Ever. I cannot say enough: if you've got a project or theory you're trying to hash out - go and see them. They are host to a wealth of resources and information."

Open Hours Participant, via Twitter

Lab Papers and Articles published in 2019/20

- *Getting the Machinery Ready: Re-imagining a Service Relationship was showcased in March 2020 in Touchpoint (Vol.11 No.3, March 2020) – the Service Designer Network magazine dedicated to service designers across the world*
- Two Apolitical opinion articles: *Here's the red tape holding back government Artificial Intelligence (AI)* and *The 6 principles for a successful design sprint*
- *Experimentation and Ethics at Employment Social Development Canada's Innovation Lab, Medium*

In December 2019, the Lab was featured in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Observatory of Public Sector Innovation, Case Studies publication for our novel approach developing human-centred alternative scenarios to program design. The project applied both design thinking and Rapid Impact Evaluation methodologies to measure the scenarios that were developed. This project was presented at the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC) conference in Winnipeg in August and at the World Qualitative Research Conference in October in Portugal.

Lab participation at conferences and other presentations

- Speak at TedxWomen with Shared Services Canada - Harnessing the Power of Cognitive Dissonance for Public Sector Innovation
- Southern Ontario Behavioural Decision Research Conference
- 5th Annual Behavioural Science and Policy Association Conference
- Presentation at 71st Annual IPAC Conference - Public Sector Transformation: Action and Meaningful Change
- Through Different Eyes, Amsterdam Design Thinking Conference
- Relating Systems Thinking and Design (RSD8), Chicago Conference
- Registered Graphic Designer (RGD) Design Thinkers Conference Toronto
- Presentation at the Financial Management Institute Professional Development Week - Experimentation and Innovation
- Annual Digital Open Government Forum
- Organizing Committee, OneTeamGov Global Unconference and Ottawa Unconference
- Panellist, Prototype learning event featuring 'I, Daniel Blake', Policy Community Week
- Participation at the Innovation Labs and Hubs Meetups hosted by the Canada School of Public Service
- Booth at the Innovation Fair in Ottawa, Ontario and Vancouver, British Columbia
- World Qualitative Research Conference, Portugal

Minds over Meals, lunch-and-learn sessions

- Visual Communications
- Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) - Introducing Profiles
- Design 101 with the ESDC Regions
- Design Thinking and Counterfactuals: A Match Made in Evaluation
- Theory of Self-Determination

ESDC Lab

CHAPTER 5

BOLDER AND BRAVER: WORKING TOGETHER TO DELIVER INNOVATION AT SCALE

We enter into this new period of our existence with a renewed spirit and energy. We promise to continue to bring the voices of Canadians to our department's work by doing what we do best— working with our partners to apply data, knowledge and insights to solve complex problems.

We will continue to harness the creative energy and specialized skills of the Lab team to listen to Canadians and bring collaborative approaches to policy, program, and service delivery design, now more than ever supporting implementation.

Ultimately, the work of the Lab will be driven by our desire to be active players in the collective recovery and post-recovery efforts from the unprecedented human, economic and social challenges created by COVID-19.

Collaborating with Canadians, especially those who are vulnerable, is what we have always done and will keep doing. In these times, we will adapt our methods and approaches to continue to reach Canadians, uniting with our partners to work toward a society of equal opportunities and equity.

The Lab story continues … A new year means new beginnings and fresh starts in finding new and lasting solutions for our complex reality.

Government of Canada Gouvernement du Canada

Canada