



posAbilities



THE FRASER SOCIETY
FOR COMMUNITY LIVING

4 organizations
1 partnership
9 months
7 solutions

Mark, Fay, and Greg all lead decent enough lives. They are safe. They are housed. They are supported. And yet, their day-to-day revolves around their disabilities. Not their curiosities or could-be passions.

Opening Words

A year ago, our team was introduced to Mark, Fay, Greg and to the community living sector. It's a relatively new sector, 60 years in the making, with some audacious individuals, families and staff at its core. These are people who fought to end institutionalization and create more integrated communities.

Still, it's not easy shifting from a system that operates as a safety net to one that functions as a trampoline for people to bounce up and forwards. As much as we talk about quality of life for individuals with a developmental disability, the DNA of social systems remains that of care and protection.

There is no single solution for transitioning our static social safety nets into trampolines, and creating the conditions for people to flourish.

Instead, we believe in spreading & embedding the capacity to make, test, and re-make solutions from the ground-up with individuals, families, and staff. Because human services are about highly

variable humans - not standardized widgets - we cannot simply innovate at one point in time and scale-up the product. We must continuously innovate and spread-wide the insights.

This is what led us, nine-months ago, to partner with three brave disability service providers to build a shared service development function alongside their individual service delivery functions. Whilst the corporate sector spends between 3-10% of their budgets on research & development, there is no equivalent resource spend, incentive structure, or methodology in the social sector. What we wanted to create, then, was a 'secondary' operating system for social R&D - akin to Linux versus Windows.¹

Similarly, where Windows is developed top-down by experts, Linux is developed by the community for the community of users. But our 'secondary' operating system wouldn't be a tech-based platform, it would be a people platform. Our key resource would be

¹ We've borrowed the 'secondary operating' system metaphor from John Kotter's work. Read, "Accelerate!" in the November 2012 issue of Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2012/11/accelerate>

staff time. We would bring staff across agencies together, in one space, and invest in a rigorous way of collecting data, generating ideas, and beta-testing solutions. All using a blend of design and social science methods.

Just like Linux developers subscribe to a value set around openness & collaboration, we also subscribe to a value set: All the solutions we create would:

1. Redistribute power & decision-making authority from the top to the bottom.
2. Blend giving help/support with receiving help/support.
3. Simultaneously address supply and demand for information and opportunities.
4. Develop people's competencies and capacities over time.
5. Be situated within people's existing contexts.
6. Give people ownership over the change process and the data that comes from it.
7. Feel fun, delightful, surprising and NOT stigmatizing, shameful, or

boring.

8. Be continuously iterated in collaboration with end users

But, we recognized that these values and principles needed some strong grounding. So we got to work building a live case study, as a way to model and rehearse grounded innovation. Rather than teach how to develop new solutions in the abstract, we would make one, Kudoz, as a proof of concept.

This is a collection of 3 short stories about Kudoz, an exchange for splendid adult learning. Adults earn badges for widening and deepening their skills, via a catalogue of in-person learning experiences hosted by people passionate about what they do.

This is also a collection of 3 short stories about the 27 staff who have spent 20% of their time, in interagency teams, making & testing six solutions to challenges as varied as boredom in group homes to supervisor motivation.

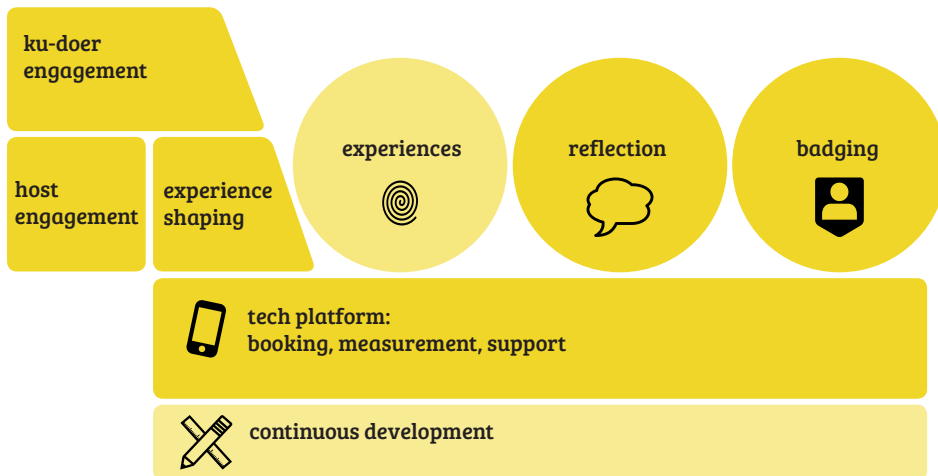
Introducing Kudoz

Kudoz is the product of three-months of immersive fieldwork and three-months of beta-testing with 16 individuals and 90 in-community hosts.

Back in spring 2014, we started with the question: how do we reduce isolation and disconnection amongst adults with a developmental disability? By July 2014, we found that people's isolation from novelty & learning often eclipsed their isolation from other people. By July 2015, we had an online catalogue offering more than 100 offline learning experiences - everything from learning how to make a wig to finding out about poisonous plants. This is just the beginning.

Here's how Kudoz works:

- 1) **Host Recruitment.** We catalyze a whole new resource base by seeking out anyone in community willing to share their passions (students, retirees, business owners, employees, government departments, family members, individuals).
- 2) **Experience Shaping.** We offer in-person coaching & virtual support to hosts to turn their interests into high-quality learning moments.
- 3) **Reflection Cafes.** We curate physical spaces for people to come together to make sense of their experiences and build a sharable portfolio of their learning. We also make & distribute tools to spark introspection and conversation.



4) **Badging.** We award badges to Ku-doers and Hosts for deepening their skills, widening their interests, and achieving personal goals. Badges can go on resumes, and assist with employment.

5) **Tech-Enabled Platform.** An online catalogue and App helps Ku-doers to find, go on, and get the most from their experiences.



Story #1: Aaron

"I'm a sit down comic," Aaron said, grinning into the on-air mic.

Over three months, Aaron's served as Kudoz beta-tester #9. Through Kudoz, he's found interests he didn't even know existed and earned a badge in storytelling & comedy. Kim, a real life comedian, gave him a space in a six-week course and an opportunity to perform on stage.

Aaron has few options for self-directed learning. Since he graduated high school, he's been going to a day program, where he spends time in group-based diversionary activities. He wanted to go to college, but not in the special education track. Food preparation, retail, or working in a warehouse weren't his things. They didn't build on his love of language or his wicked sense of humor.



the big idea

People don't know what they don't know. And yet, much of the existing service system assumes people know what they want and can set goals accordingly. In the disability sector, person-centered planning and employment discovery start with identifying interests and aspirations.

But, until Aaron was exposed to what was out there, he had no way of knowing what was possible for him and no way of setting meaningful goals. Nor did he have a clear way to pursue more 'liberal arts' interests and get recognized for his ongoing learning. We think badging can give individuals like Aaron an alternative way to certify their skills, and access to a network that can bridge them to relevant roles. After all, 80% of paid & unpaid roles come from personal networks.



Story #2: Janet

Janet runs Blue Mountain Produce, a boutique grocery in Coquitlam. She spends her days sourcing veggies, and doing all the behind-the-scenes things that keep a small family business ticking. In her 20s, she had experience working with people with a disability, but hasn't had a chance to use those skills in many years.

Jordana, after perusing the kudoz.ca catalogue, signed-up to “learn about fresh produce” from Janet. She had no idea there were so many varieties of potatoes! Jordana came home with a brown paper bag filled with strange and wonderful finds - plus lots more curiosity about local food production.

Janet is one 90 hosts, offering 120 hours of experiential learning a month, as part of the Kudoz trial. In three-months, we catalyzed 120 hours of 1:1 interaction that hadn't existed before.



the big idea

Small business owners, freelancers, retirees, students, family members, and supported individuals are a huge untapped resource - they just need to be asked, and have a platform to contribute their time, experience, and passions.

There's rightly a big focus in the disability sector on connecting people into community. And yet, people tend to be connected to existing services and community groups. By diversifying the available resource base, we can increase the supply of natural supports and cool opportunities. This is both a way to meet rising service demand and reduce service dependencies over time.



Story #3: Natalie

Natalie is Anthony's little sister. She's super patient, and likes to give Anthony space to talk. Together, she and Anthony went on a Kudoz experience to Sophie's Pet Palace and learned all about animal care. They took pictures and recorded some sounds with the Kudoz Ipod. Back at home, they added the pictures to Anthony's online profile and used a special dice to have a conversation about what they remembered, the highs, and the lows.

Natalie gets support from Kudoz to have reflective conversations with Anthony. Family members, friends and staff can get up-skilled as 'reflective assistants' and gain access to a range of prompting tools. Anthony can also come along to Reflection Cafe: a space for folks to convene, over a coffee, and process what they are doing. There, they can amend their profile and see their badging progress. Kudoz tracks changes in how people talk about themselves over time, the breadth versus depth of their interests, their goal specificity, and self-efficacy.



the big idea

“We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience,” said the philosopher John Dewey. We believe what differentiates an activity from a learning experience is reflection. There are plenty of activities in the disability sector. Individuals go swimming, bowling, to the movies, and to the park regularly. What’s less common is deeper conversation about daily activities, and building up peoples’ reflective capacity to know what they are feeling, thinking, and wanting.

Knowing what you feel and want is really important for setting meaningful career goals. Social Cognitive Career Theory identifies the factors that shape choosing and finding a job. Direct and vicarious learning experiences are at the core: they influence people’s sense of confidence & control (self-efficacy) and their beliefs about the value of pursuing further activities (outcome expectations).

Introducing the Fifth Space

The Fifth Space is a small-scale experiment of a new organizational function: Research, Development, and Innovation. We've taken 27 staff, given

them 20% time to work in interagency teams, and supported teams to make & test six solutions from the ground-up.



Here's some of the components of The Fifth Space:

Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Setting-up flat, interagency teams with 1 day/week to work together > Creating team accountabilities
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Recruiting unusual suspects at the frontline, mid-level, and senior levels > Drawing on unused talents: animation, film-making, social work, etc. > Adding a new discipline - service design - into the mix
Skills	Up-skilling teams in observational research, design thinking, analysis, visualization, idea generation, curating space, making physical materials, running experiments, writing copy, documentation, pitching, team communication
Systems	Developing project management platforms for team sharing
Shared Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Creating a common language: ethnography, prototyping > Making explicit what makes a 'good' and 'ethical' solution
Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Normalizing failure, iteration, not knowing the answers > Emphasizing doing & making over talking & meeting
Strategy	Supporting both a project and practice strand. Projects are about big ideas. Practice improvements are about incremental shifts.
Space	Curating a physical environment conducive to making things.



Story #1: Frankie

“I’m not sure I’d be the right person for this kind-of thing,” Frankie told us, from the back bedroom of the RV. *“I’ve been in the field a long time, and I’ve seen a lot of initiatives come and go.”*

For six weeks, we hit the road, showing up to day programs, group homes, and head offices across the lower mainland with our mobile pizzeria and nap lab. We were on the search for the usual and unusual staff: the eager, the weary, the skeptical, the loud, the unheard, the creative.

Frankie was a weary skeptic. We cajoled her to apply to be a Fifth Space Fellow. Six months later, Frankie and her team have developed 55 on air: a way to motivate other supervisors like her.



the big idea

Budgets are always amongst the biggest barriers to doing re-search, development, and innovation. Social sector organizations don't have big admin budgets, and there is consistent pressure from funders to re-direct funds towards delivery.

The biggest chunk of social sector budgets - upwards to 80% - goes towards staffing. Figuring out how to tap into and leverage the motivations and talents of staff teams is a key point of leverage. Rather than hire individuals, we've seen the power of assembling dynamic teams that tap into underutilized skills. Before the Fifth Space, Fellows Hayley, Bobae, Irena, and John didn't have a way to use their film-making, animation, social work, and sexual health know-how. But, as a team in the Fifth Space, they are drawing on all of this experience to build their solution, Ask a Dude.



Story #2: Ben, Krista, Vinita, Nick, and Shane

“We’ve failed so many more times than you,” Nick shouted across the room. His teammate, Ben, was equally fired up, “Look how many iterations we’ve been through, there’s no comparison!”

Nick, Ben, Krista, Vinita, and Shane had just returned from a group home, where their ninja-inspired solution was pretty thoroughly rejected. But, they weren’t dejected. Their co-design sessions with staff helped them see a fresh angle to their solution. Plus, the more they iterated, the more they were in the running for the #failforward award.

Over six months, Nick, Ben, Krista, Vinita and Shane formed a tight-knit bond, despite being from 3 different agencies and 3 different organizational levels. Outside of the Fifth Space, Vinita is a senior manager and Shane is a frontline worker. Inside the Fifth Space, they are equal collaborators with shared decision-making power.



the big idea

We think structure, incentives, and culture eat training for lunch. Typically, human service organizations invest in one-off trainings, conferences, and workshops as a way to shift behavior. But, then staff return to their same jobs, same reporting hierarchies, and same pressures.

With Fifth Space, we wanted to create an alternative job, reporting hierarchy, and work vibe for at least one day a week. All so we could test what happens when we treat research, development and innovation not only as a skill but as an organizational function, with distinct pacing, expectations and routines. Our goal was to emphasize making over talking; not knowing over expertise; and rapid iteration over careful planning.



Story #3: Gareth

“What should I take with me?” Gareth muttered to himself, as he cast his eyes over his bare office. It was a Thursday, and Gareth was back in his familiar habitat after spending Tuesday with his Fifth Space team.

In twenty minutes, Gareth was to lead a team meeting. As Director of Family and Children’s Services for Simon Fraser Society for Community Living, he facilitates a lot of meetings. This time, he wanted to re-think the interaction, and bring in some different props to get conversation flowing in a more generative way. But, what was becoming a natural way of thinking on Tuesday suddenly felt unnatural back in his own environment. His Fifth Space Coach jumped in to help. “What if we drew something on the wall, and had people standing rather than sitting?”

So that’s what they did.



the big idea

Research, development, and innovation can be applied to really big social problems. But, it can also be applied to much smaller process challenges. Initially, we put all the focus on the really big social problems. But, then, Fellows told us about the disconnect they were experiencing. It wasn't obvious how to apply the core concepts - ethnography, prototyping, behavior change theory - to the more mundane tasks - be it meetings, payroll, or 1:1 work with families.

We now believe the best way to embed social R&D is through a combination of project and practice work, where staff both have the opportunity to do fast-paced team work and slower-paced individual work, with the help of coaches. In the future, we'll create a pool of service designers and social psychologists to assist with coaching, as we've learned these are two skill sets which are harder to find within the agencies. Indeed, just like innovation within the tech or pharmaceutical sectors requires some distinct disciplines (e.g engineers, biochemists, ethicists), we believe innovation in the social sector demands an infusion of new disciplines.

It's time for a new talent pipeline into the human services sector.

Closing Words

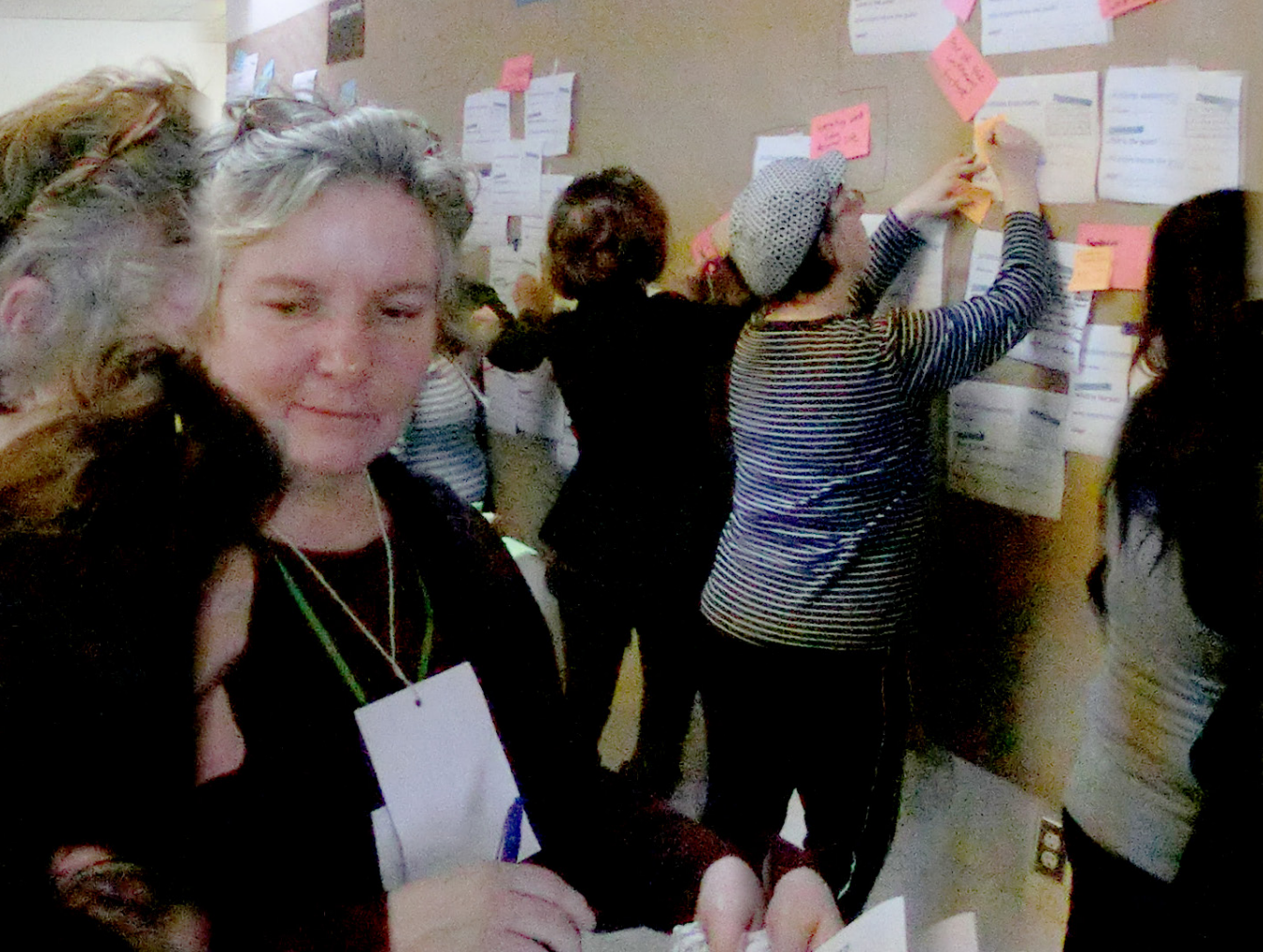
Innovation isn't a nice to-have. It's an imperative. If we keep on delivering the same services, we risk unsustainable costs and insufficient outcomes. We don't think 'getting by' is a good enough outcome for individuals with a developmental disability. We want to support all individuals to flourish: to grow their capacities over time, develop great relationships, and spend their time meaningfully.

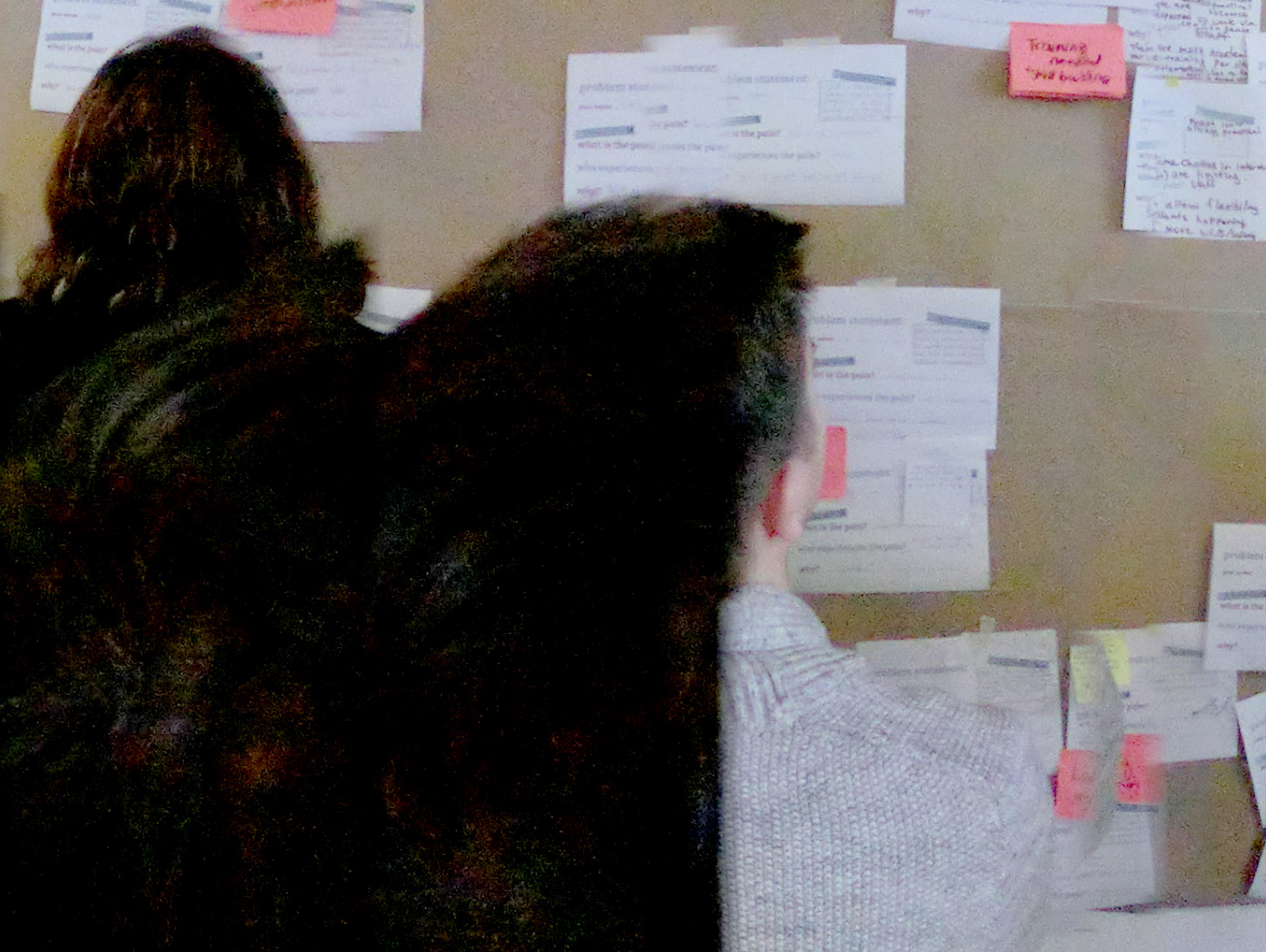
Getting closer to this big ambition requires making social R&D part of business as usual. It cannot be a one-time project or periodic initiative contracted to external consultants. Instead, we

must create the conditions, capacities, and structures within and between service providers to (re)make solutions from the ground-up - in partnership with end users, their families, community members, and policymakers.

The temptation when making new things is always to situate them outside the red tape of existing systems, but we believe unless we work within the system to transition and re-orient resources, we cannot make long-lasting change. And that's what we're after: change that takes root and spreads on-the ground.







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