



# RETREAT SUMMARY REPORT



2023

PREPARED BY  
**AB SEED**

PREPARED FOR  
**TRANSITION COALITION**

MAY 9 AND 10, 2023 | RED DEER, AB

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# MAY 9-10

# SUMMARY

Welcome to our report of the gathering that took place in Red Deer, May 9-10 2023. During our time together, advisors and managers from ABSI Connect and AB Seed came together and decided to formally integrate the two entities into one. Together, we will create a powerful network that amplifies courageous actions in Alberta communities for equitable prosperity.

The first part of this report summarizes our time together and the collective journey we took. We took time to reflect on our past, connect with each other, and dream of our shared future.

The key outcomes of the event can be summarized as follows:

1. We decided to move forward in integrating ABSI Connect/AB Seed into one entity
2. We agreed upon a new, shared purpose/mission statement: “We amplify courageous actions in Alberta communities for equitable prosperity”;
3. We dissolved the steering committee, management committee, and advisory group, and all members were invited to be a part of the Transition Coalition, tasked with stewarding this new iteration;
4. We identified the key pieces of work to be accomplished to sunset AB Seed and ABSI Connect in their current iterations, and build something new in service of our new purpose statement.

And while we don't have it all figured out yet, we do have a starting place. Jump to page 18 if you want to start with what happens next.

As always, the members of Alberta's social enterprise, social finance, and social innovation ecosystems came ready to engage and participate in making sure Alberta is a leader in this space. Thank you to all those who contributed in the past, attended the event, and will support this work in the future.

# POST-GATHERING NEXT STEPS

As we concluded our time together, we collectively agreed on our next steps as outlined below.



## Structure/strategy

- Transition coalition replaces the steering/advisory groups and the management group
- A transition meeting ASAP (possibly June 13)
  - Christine to check if ABSI folks can make it
  - Christine, Sarah, and James coordinate the transition meeting with help from Juniper
  - Prework: identify a list of who should be involved in building what comes next
  - Agenda shaped from transition categories from flip charts



## Communications

- Juniper, Sarah & Christine create summary report from the meeting
- Christine will craft talking points and share for feedback - with help from Monique.
- Summary sent to all members of ABSI/AB Seed steering/advisory groups; also shared in newsletter



## Operations

- AB Seed keeps commitments to funders, community, and partners, but doesn't begin new work (Curious conversations, Namada, Communities of Practice, Design Cafe with change management)

# NAME JAR

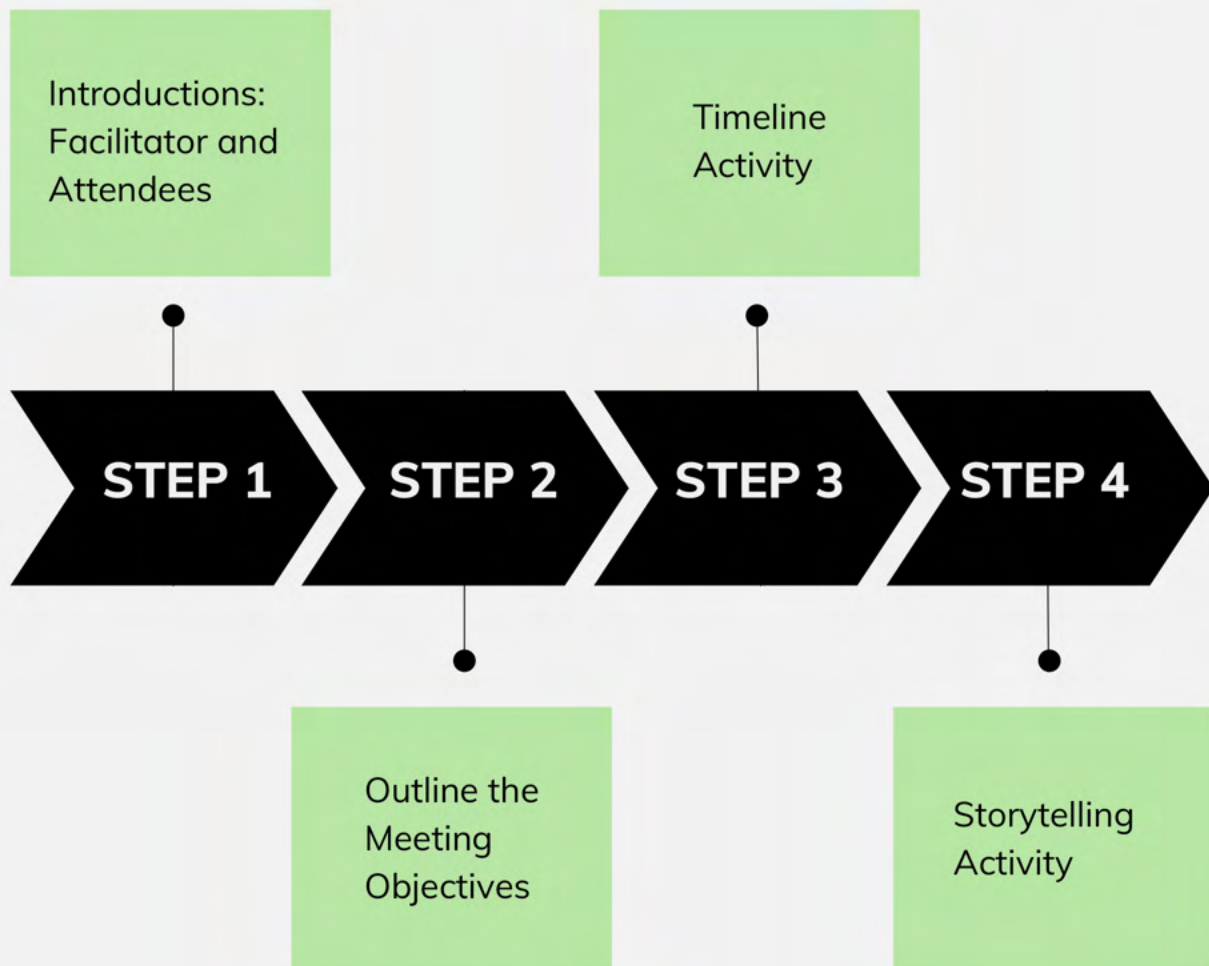
What became known as "Name the Baby" we had a little fun and started collecting ideas for what we might name this new thing we are building together.



# DAY 1

# OUTLINE

We started day one in the breakfast nook of the hotel, although not during breakfast! The meeting ran from 5pm to 9pm at night. During this time we focused heavily on strengthening our relationships with each other and building cohesion. We took time to look at where we have connected in the past, and shared stories celebrating the work by both ABSI Connect and AB Seed.



# STEP 1 INTROS



## RED DEER 17 (ISH)

Attendees: Brooks Hanewich, Geoff Couldrey, Jane Bisbee, Jeff Loomis, Jerome Morgan, James Stauch, Keltie Gower, Monique Blough, Natalie Eng, Susannah Cameron, Jordana Armstrong, Kelli Stevens, Roya Damabi, Sarah Leeson-Klym, Christine Spottiswood, Gary Zander, and Elise Martinoski.

Regrets: Annand Ollivierre and Katharine McGowan.



## JUNIPER BELSHAW

Juniper Belshaw is a bilingual facilitator and coach with a focus on elevating leadership, optimizing team performance, and fostering positive organizational culture change.

# STEP 2

# OBJECTIVES

## Meeting Objectives:

1. Build cohesion and deepen working relationships among members of ABSI Connect and AB Seed
2. Appreciate the work that has been done thus far. Identify what will be important to carry forward from each project.
3. Dream something new: what should be the future purpose and structure of the new AB Seed/ABSI Connect collaborative?





# STEP 3

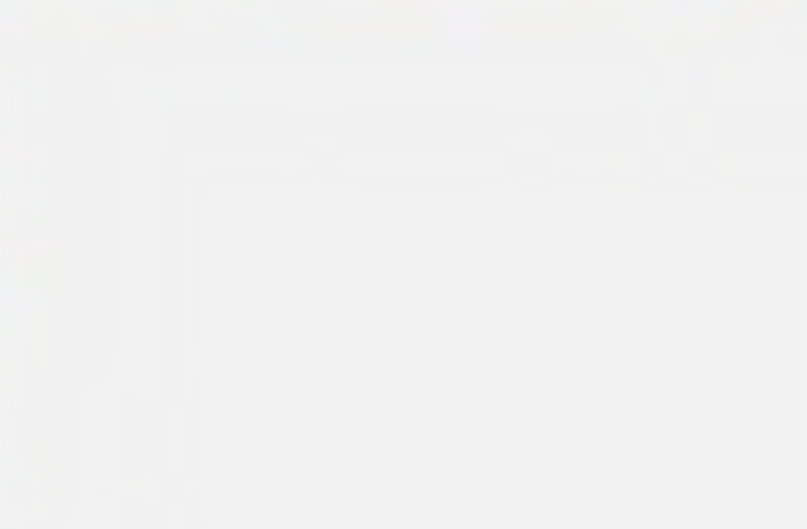
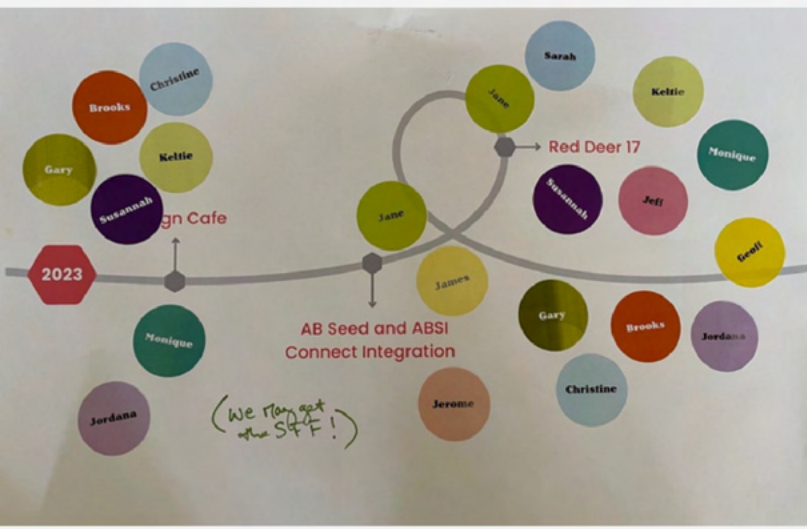
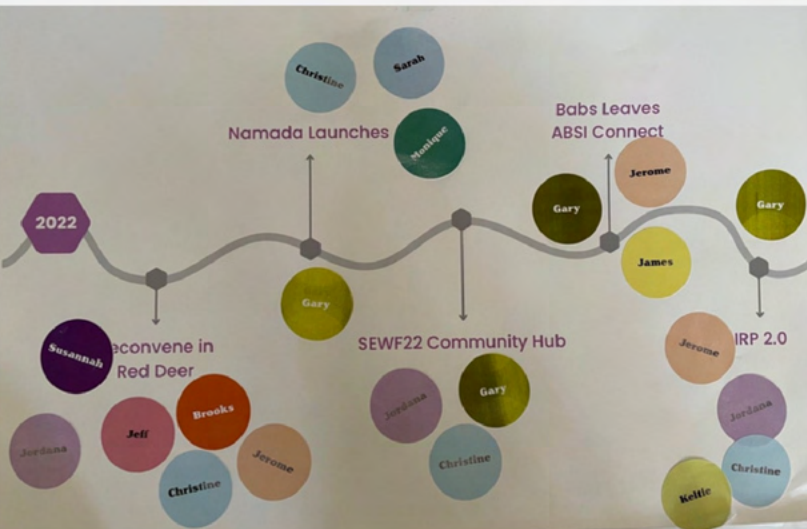
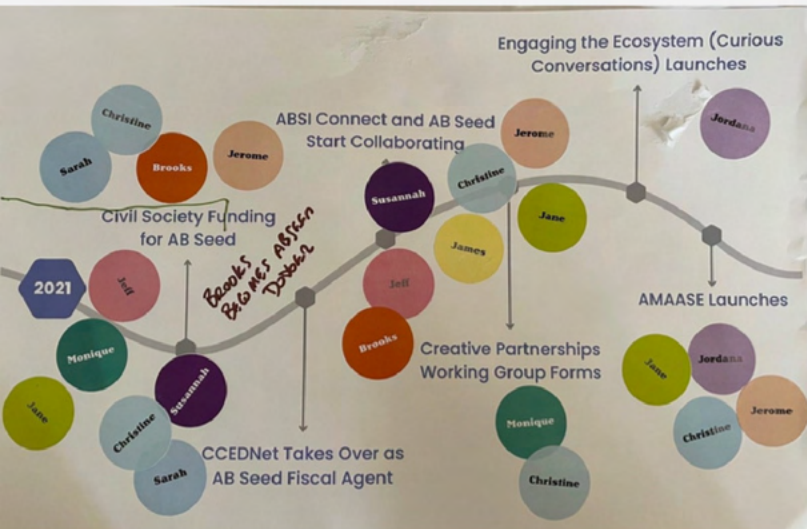
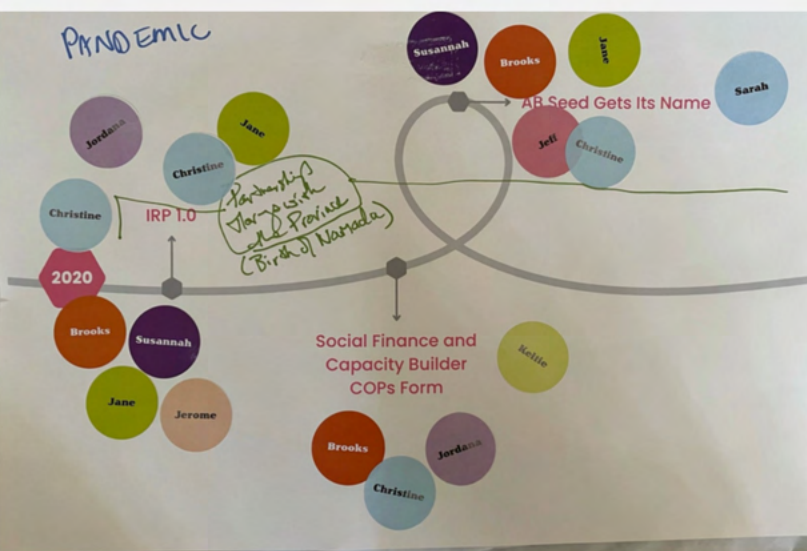
# TIMELINE

Attendees added their names to the timeline where they were involved, and filled in the blanks on some of the activities.

### Timeline Insights

- There were some happenstance meetings and unknown shared experiences that contributed to big things
- Lots of crossover between ABSI and AB Seed members
- We have a lengthy and substantial collective history





# STEP 4

# STORYTELLING



## Part 1:

Share stories about times that ABSI Connect and AB Seed were at their best.

## Part 2:

Reflect on each group's strengths and core competencies that might be brought forward.

## Storytelling Group Reflection Summaries

### Group 1

- Secret Sauce in connecting disparate people together > the “odd balls” > Those who feel like they are the only one thinking this way in their organization
- Those who might not otherwise find each other at “random” events: Creates novel working relationships, ideas exchange, etc.
  - Invite those with the appetite - allowing folks to self select in
- Intersection of AB Seed and ABSI (Venn Diagram)
  - ABSI - Toolkit on different ways of doing things, networking, stories through harp
  - Joint - Convening unusual suspects, strength in collisions, unanticipated
- Value in “simply” bringing people together
  - how do we measure that, this does what we need to do
    - Can we trust that it does, can we get funder buy-in?
- Rural/indigenous connections
  - Diverse innovators connecting/showcasing
    - Generational thinking / generational commitments
  - Maintaining strong equity lens to the work
    - Diverse per specifics leading to “ahas” eg Shawn Loney event
- Reverse IRP

### Group 2

- ABSI
  - diverse networks, diverse in many ways
    - Highlight rural
      - ABSI work with people/groups that gives us Labour, Introductions, Finance, Energy (LIFE)
  - Story telling about good things happening here
  - Thought leadership to cultivate patterns that are working
- AB Seed
  - Improve and collect intermediaries, capacity builders
- Both
  - Strength in connector role
    - Seed > Navigation
  - Powervul to include influence changemakers and make intermediaries and government better
    - Grounds the work
      - Allows for exploratory work to know whats important
  - System readiness, not just organizational capacity building
    - Influencing system players to work better
  - Reminder: Map us along, the design process

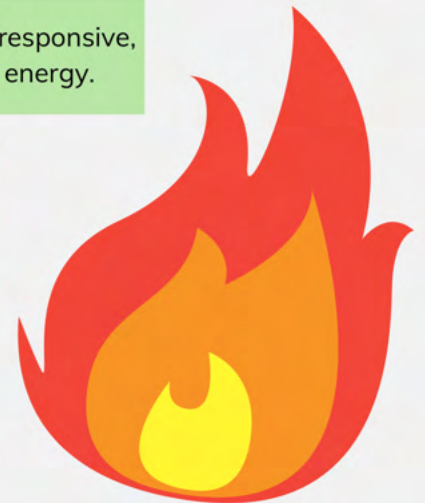
# FIRE & ASH

We wrapped up day one thinking about what we wanted to carry forward, and what we wanted to let go of as we head into day 2.

## FIRE

What do I want to make sure to carry forward?

Flexibility and responsiveness	Collective energy and expertise.	Power of many voices.	Big "C" (Community)	Indigenous connections
Openness to messiness.	Learning what I don't know.	Discovery experimentation	Flexible, responsive, iterative, energy.	
Reverse IRP. Flexibility to be responsive.	Aiming for "systems change" with collective effort.	Discovering, supporting, and profiling new changemakers.		
The ability to be flexible enough to embrace ambiguity. "Unusual suspects" and equity lens.	Interaction	Connect		
	The ground			



## ASH

What do I want to let go of?

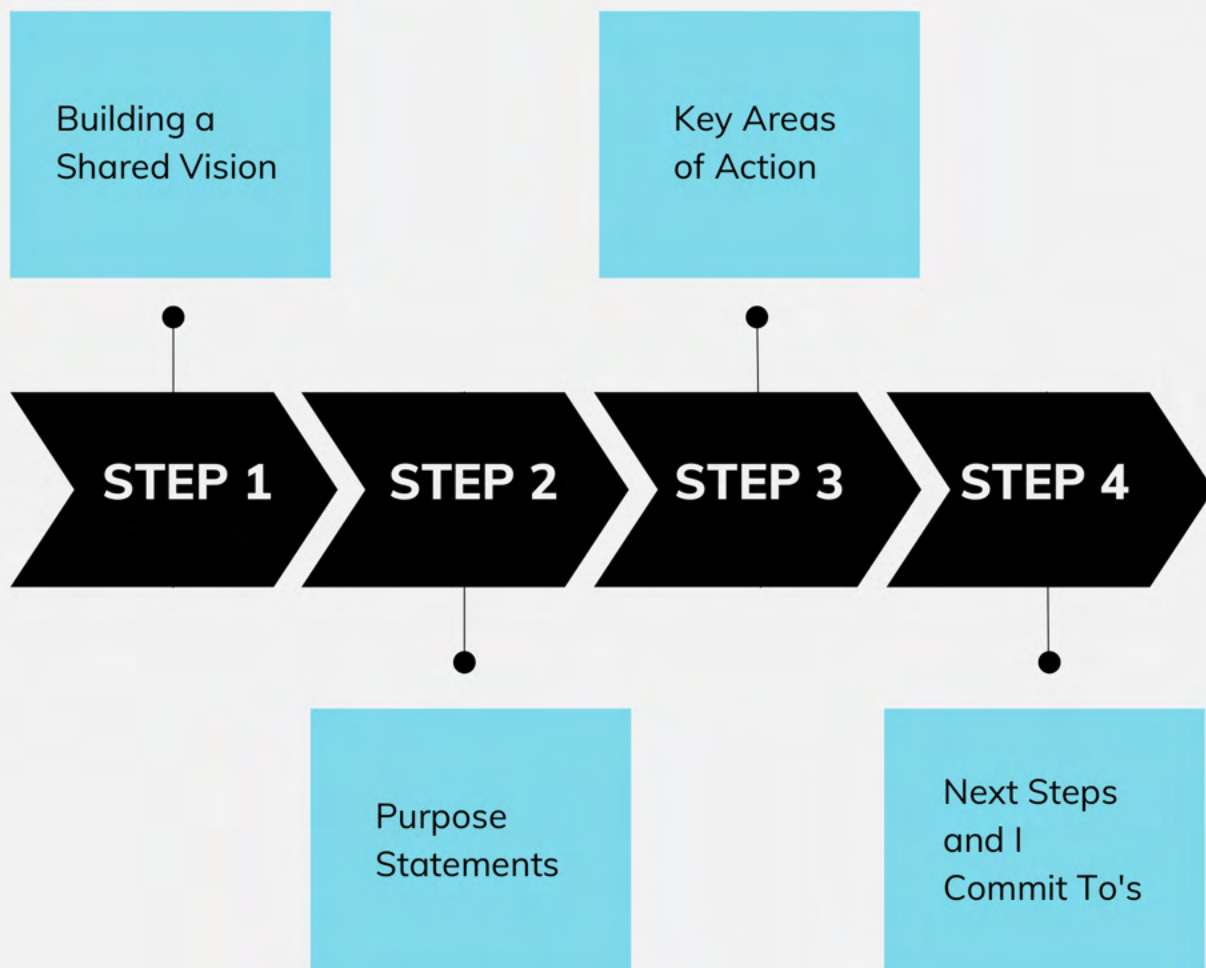
Perceptions (ask for clarity)	Silos, confusion, uncertainty	Instability. Fixed mind set.	Unhelpful uncertainty	An acronym name (words matter)
Acronyms, definitions, timidity	The need to be certain / be able to 'evaluate'	Perceptions of constraint / "reality"		
Territory	Cynicism	Zoom	Old structure	



# DAY 2

# OUTLINE

Day 2 we headed to the Sunnybrook Farm Museum to spend the day in the old Calder School House. We focused on what we wanted to build together, working through a shared vision, crafting a purpose statement, starting the structure conversation, and firming up our next steps.



# STEP 1

# SHARED VISION

Statements about the desired outcome for the ecosystem. In 2030, in Alberta, we are celebrating...

... Alberta is recognized broadly for "having it figured out".

... how well-connected we are, the feeling of welcome is obvious.

... true excitement of people thriving and the mindset that if my neighbour is thriving I am thriving

... reducing inequality and an economy that works better for everyone

... that Alberta is a leader in generating socially and environmentally responsible (economic) activity.

... we've made room for ongoing, messy work of systems change.

... that it's not about control or ownership but rather about people and practice.

... equitable participation the development of the economy (not just a side part of the economy).

... an economy that works better for all.

## STEP 2

# PURPOSE STATEMENTS

A Collective Purpose Statement is no small feat. After some visioning, we worked in small groups to draft "good enough" purpose statements using this statement formula: We do something so that something happens (impact) for someone (a group, a community).


Then as a large group we took what we liked from each, with a little bit of dialog, some fun conversation, and a vote on some wordsmithing. The final outcome is a meaningful, collectively built purpose statement to guide us in our next steps.

Here's a few of the statements that contributed to the final purpose statement chosen:

- *We amplify courageous actions that support social, environmental, and cultural benefit for thriving Alberta communities.*
- *To catalyze positive impact for equitable prosperity in Alberta.*
- *We connect all Albertans with an interest in building the common good and an equitable economy.*



# **THIS "NEW THING'S" PURPOSE STATEMENT**



**We amplify courageous  
actions in Alberta  
communities for  
equitable prosperity.**

# STEP 3

# NAVIGATING CHANGE AND BUILDING SOMETHING NEW TOGETHER: KEY AREAS OF ACTION

As we wrapped up day 2, we started looking at how we might make this new purpose statement come to life by identifying some of what needs to be done and trying to theme it. We identified three major categories of action:

- Current tasks, to keep our commitments
- Transition tasks, as we build something new
- Operations and governance tasks, that will need to take place for the future success of the new collaborative

## CURRENT TASKS

... to keep our commitments

- Ongoing delivery of AB Seeds current work (Namada, Emerging Opportunities Grant, Communities of Practice, Curious Conversations, SEWF, Newsletter, etc)
- Oversight of AB Seed's ongoing work
- Maintain communication with transition coalition and AB Seed/ABSI communities

## TRANSITION TASKS AND PLANNING

... as we build something new

### BUILD TRANSITION PLAN

- Transition approach plan; identify priorities and next steps, integrating change management
- Write transition key messages
- Communicate transition with partners and communities, including prior networks
- Take inventory: document existing AB Seed/ABSI - funds, team, commitments, communications and systems
- Identify who should be a part of the transition coalition and any working groups

### HONOUR, HOSPICE, AND HOUSE PAST WORK

- Celebrate what was
- Retrospective:
  - What worked/what didn't related to structure
  - Gather info: stats, stories, contacts
- Hospice & house past work
  - Transfer info, docs, knowledge. House those historical docs
  - Engage "prior networks: communicate transition to existing folks involved

### NAME THE NEW THING!

- What should this be called?
- What is the process?

# OPERATIONS & GOVERNANCE TASKS

... that will need to take place for the future success of the new collaborative

## BUILD THE NEW: STRATEGY

### Figure Out Who Needs to be Involved and Engage Them

Map the ecosystem to:

- Better understand our role clarity and opportunity
- Identify strategic collaborators, and core customers, with an equity lens
- Identify communities and groups who are missing, and identify barriers

Groups we noted: Provincial and Municipal government engagement, SI Canada, AB Communities & Rural Engagement: Build new network w/ expansion beyond YYC and YEG, relevant post-secondary institutions.

From there, we will:

- Decide how we'll decide: who should steer?
- Create our customers / "membership" model, constituency
- Establish governance and structure
- Explore models (we can map and dream)
- Once you have the people whom you need, get a starting batch to sign on

### Strategic Planning: Focus and Priorities

- Identify scope, vision and write annual business plan
  - Assess existing programs/assets to align with new initiative
  - Get clear on how we identify an action as courageous
  - Define an approach to identify courageous action (PULL)
  - Identify Service Menu and menu of offerings and immediate action
- Establish measures of success, identify breadcrumbs

**OPERATE & GOVERN THE NEW ENTITY****Culture and Values**

Define and maintain culture & values

**Finances and Budget**

- Create budget
- Approve Budget
- Accounts Payable
- Fiscal Agent, way to oversee money
- Revenue Development: Funds to pay for staff and other stuff

**Governance**

- Figure out who is on the board or whatever it is called
- Create org structure
- Oversight for staff/contractors
- Decide on locations of operations

**Build the Team**

- Agreement on and write job descriptions
- Staff role and description
- Agree on staffing requirements
- Build a diverse team that reflects equitable Alberta we hope to create

**Create and Implement Work Plan**

- Create Work Plan
- Approve Work Plan
- Implement Work Plan
- Process Creation

**Convening**

- Convening courageous people
- Finding courageous actions
- Listening session to identify courageous actors in the ecosystem

**Evaluation and Impact**

- Track how courageous we are being and courageous actions
- Tending the fire, keeping the mission, keeping momentum

**Communications & Storytelling**

- Establish Comms Plan, Communication Channels and Communication Activities, Developing media for storytelling
  - Blogs/stories
  - Newsletters
  - Update Website
  - Media Engagement
  - Social Media
- Storytelling: Celebrate wins
- Engage Funders and government
  - Get funders excited
  - Engage policy makers and government reps
  - Sense make with funders, policy makers, capacity builders
- Represent entity outside Alberta

# STEP 4

# I COMMIT TO...

We closed the day with everyone in the room writing down their "I commit to" statement to help keep the momentum of this group moving forward.

The 'Next Steps' content can be found on page 3 of this document.




**AB SEED &  
ABSI CONNECT**

**THANK  
YOU**



Thank you to everyone involved for their participation, engagement, and commitment to this work. One thing we have always had in Alberta is a deep level of enthusiasm for finding a way to make this work!

## **CONTACT US**

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