we have a lot of expertise! we have Tools!

TIMING is everything!

WHO OWNS THE DISCUSSION?

Be open to emergence

...TTING UNSTUCK

...HED ...a ...R WHO ...ERSTOOD CONTEXT.

Be grounded in the people who are most affected by the work we do.

a STRONG TEAM is essential!

LOOK AT THE BiG PICTURE

DON'T BE TRAPPED BY PROCESS

CELEBRATE BABY STEPS

IDENTIFYING THE ISSUES BENEATH THE RESISTANCE TO CHANGE.

IT'S A JOURNEY THERE WILL BE EBBS & FLOWS

WORK THAT TOUCHES OUR SPIRIT.

LISTEN TO DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES.

SHARING

How TO CHANGE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S CULTURE?

CURIOSITY

SELF-awareness

COMMUNICATE

VULNERABILITY

Boxes are Barriers

...W DO i ...KNOW ...AT i ...DON'T KNOW?

CONFLICT

Being TRAPPED IN THE PAST

MAPPING THE BARRIERS

How THE ORGANIZATION evaluates itself

TOOTH

gamble

COCKTAIL

Use Ran...

INSTITUTIONAL memory is Lacking

BOOK LEARNING

Life experience

WERE always BEGINNING...

Reinventing THE WHEEL

BUS

ISLAND

the "DIVERG... THiNK... BOOST...

is JUST ONE exercise... TODA...

imbalance

feedback from peers, funders, partners

INNOVATIVELY CAPTURE INSTITUTIONAL memory & Research

TUNNEL

...P" ANALYSIS

OWNERSHIP FOR OUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CEO & BOARD

SUCCESSION PLANNING (all Levels)

imagine ... and Solv...

iSOLATION

COMPETITION CAN BE HELPFUL!

NETWORKS DON'T NECESSARILY INTERSECT

CREATIVITY IS CONNECT...

...DING ...s exploration ...ovation

fail FORWARD

PERCEIVED VS. REAL COMPETITION

BALANCE important & urGent WORK

...NCHARTED ...RITORY...

fear of evaluation

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT

...V

BUILDING TRUST

IMPLEMENTATION

BALANCING YOUR WORK LOAD

OPPORTUNITY FOR COLLABORATION

THERE'S INTEREST & ENERGY!

making a space for change.... IT JUST MIGHT WORK!

...eate ...bility

CAPTURING WHAT'S DIFFERENT

USING VISUALS!!

BRINGING

THE ...missing... SECTORS...

KNOWLEDGE-SHARING RELATIONSHIP: HOW?

THE 'same PAGE

WE SHOWED UP!

moving forward

GREAT ...

Led by ECVO, the Leadership Lab is an ongoing effort for Edmonton's non-profit and charitable sector to collectively explore how to best nurture and grow a diverse, thriving group of leaders – one that is well-positioned to address the most pressing complex challenges of today and the future.

For more information on this project, please contact:

Ms. Gemma Dunn
Director of Programs and Initiatives – Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations
programs@ecvo.ca

Leadership Lab Team

ECVO is a member-based nonprofit organization serving nonprofit and charitable organizations in the Alberta Capital Region. Its mission is to strengthen the public service voluntary sector in metro Edmonton by leading in the voluntary sector, building capacity within the voluntary sector, and giving voice to issues that impact the ability of the voluntary sector to be effective.

ECVO works as a catalyst, promoting the ongoing development of leaders in the nonprofit sector.

Its work includes:

- ♦ Convening the sector to strengthen government relations strategies;
- ♦ Negotiating with international service providers to deliver leadership skills training;
- ♦ Publishing the Sparesmarts calendar of learning opportunities; and,
- ♦ Partnering to offer Edmonton nonprofits and businesses access to Edmonton Spacefinder, a resource to match available space with organizations in need.

Ben Weinlick is the founder of Think Jar Collective and an Innoweave coach/consultant. In addition to his consulting work, Ben has led innovation and systems change in human services for the past 18 years. Currently, Ben is the Senior Leader of Research and Social Innovation at Skills Society and recently launched the Action Lab: A Space to Think Differently and Make Ideas Happen. His work has been featured in the Stanford Social Innovation Review and he has received numerous awards, including the 2013 MacEwan University distinguished alumni award and the Avenue Magazine, Edmonton Top 40 under 40 award. Ben writes for the New York-based *Creativity Post*, gives keynotes and workshops around complexity navigation, service design thinking and social innovation labs, and curates content for Think Jar Collective. Learn more at thinkjarcollective.com.

This workshop narrative was prepared by Roya Damabi, AKA 🐦 @_missroya.

Welcome and Introductions

On August 14, 2017 a group of emerging leaders from Edmonton's nonprofit and charitable sector gathered at the Skills Society Action Lab. Convened by the Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (ECVO) as part of its work to build sector capacity, this workshop is one of a series of 'leadership labs' designed to bring diverse gatherings of Edmonton's nonprofit and voluntary sector together to meet, discuss, explore, and experiment with ideas around sector leadership: where it is, where it is heading, and how it may be best guided.
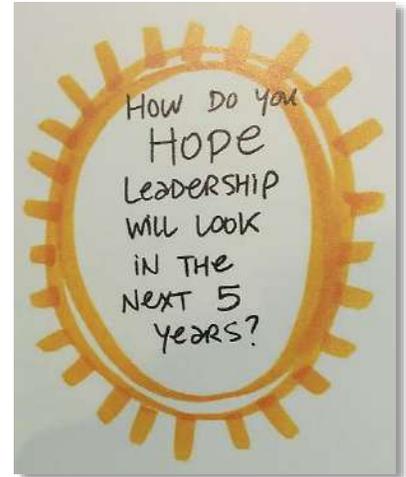
With everyone fortified by baked goods and pots of Action Lab coffee, Ben Weinlick, founder of Think Jar Collective, opened the workshop by welcoming everyone to the Action Lab space. As co-pilot for the leadership lab with Gemma Dunn, ECVO's Director of Programs and Initiatives, Ben began by outlining their hopes for the workshop.

> Hopes for the Session
> ♦   Learn more about what is necessary to shape and support leadership in Alberta's non-profit sector;
> ♦   Create artifacts that convey to ECVO the best next steps to build and strengthen leadership capacity in the nonprofit and voluntary sector;
> ♦   Explore interesting engagement processes to tap into our collective wisdom; and,
> ♦   Have fun and strengthen relationships of people and organizations in the room.

Noting that a key part of her role in the workshop is to listen, Gemma provided some background on ECVO's work on sector leadership. When beginning to explore questions around leadership in the nonprofit and voluntary sector, ECVO held a one-day leadership lab on February 7, 2017.

Several key themes emerged from that one-day lab: that change is constant, that no one organization acting alone can match the impact of organizations working together on complex challenges, and that there is a need for stronger relationships and networks in the sector. From this first leadership lab, ECVO committed to growing the conversation, convening networking and mentoring events, and further exploring the different types of knowledge needed to build leadership capacity in the nonprofit and charitable sector with other groups.

This leadership lab brought together emerging leaders: those individuals in the metro Edmonton area who are recognized for their meaningful work, community contributions, and collaborative spirit. These individuals may not yet occupy the most senior ranks of their organizations – but they have the potential and the capacity to do so. Working in a variety of organizations and issue areas, these emerging leaders offer an important, future-oriented perspective about leadership in the nonprofit and charitable sector, as the futures trajectories of both these emerging leaders and the sector in which they work are linked.

Getting to know one another with Visual Explorer

At the back of the Action Lab is a wall filled with cards of different images, referred to as Visual Explorer. Ben asked each person to choose one image card that represents what they hope leadership will look like over the next 5 years in Edmonton's non-profit and charitable sector. Each person took turns introducing themselves and sharing their chosen image with the group, explaining why they chose it. Emerging leaders chose a range of images to represent their hopes for sector leadership, including the following:

- Puzzle Pieces: a greater understanding of how things fit
- Clocks: a transfer of knowledge to develop leaders over time
- Exercising: leadership as a developmental opportunity for all
- Rock Climbing: taking risks
- Ripples: bring out the whole team's strengths
- Whale: having passion for staff development and the subject matter
- Child and Parent: seeing beyond what is immediately visible
- Cheetah and Cubs: developing new leaders while holding onto existing knowledge
- Skateboarding: radical fearlessness, embracing new directions
- Construction: laying strong foundations
- Relay Team: the importance of collaboration
- Tree Trunk Rings: working less in silos and more in a collaborative way
- Night Sky: having the wisdom to know when to stop, reassess, take a breath
- Skydiving Team: being daring and collaborative
- Student and Teacher: learning together
- Chick and Egg: the importance of using our beginner's minds
- Weather Patterns: connections to global issues, being open to new ideas
- Market: riches and resources that all can access
- Rowing Team: bringing out the best in everyone
- Interstate Highways: finding multiple paths to get to our destination
- Surveying Team: collaborating to break new ground
- Woman Speaker: celebrating successes
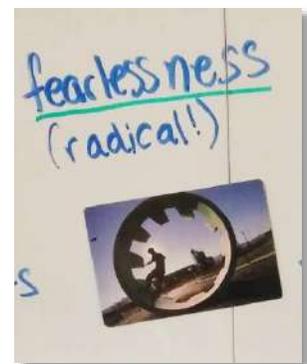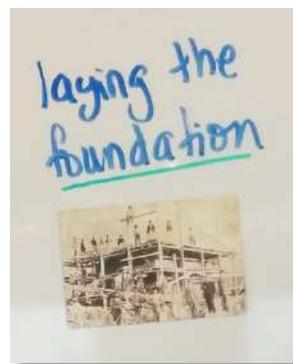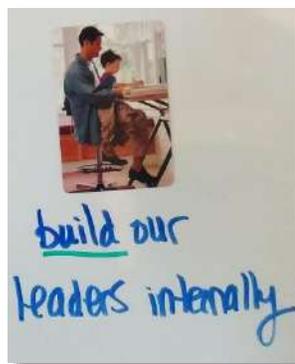
Strong themes that emerged from the images include the importance of relationships and collaboration, the need for multiple generations to work and learn with and from each other, and the need to understand how the various pieces fit. The importance of diversity was also a strong theme – diversity of perspectives and ideas, and the related notion of approaching challenges with an open, beginner's mind, as if through the imaginative eyes of a child. Diversity of paths was also mentioned – there may be many paths to take on this leadership journey, and many different ways to arrive at the desired destination, or outcome.

Sense Making and Storytelling

Before introducing the next activity, Ben gave the group some reminders to help everyone have their best conversation. He noted the importance of giving each other space, and to be aware of how much each person is talking in group discussions – to make space for everyone to share their perspectives. He reminded participants that some of the activities might seem weird at first, but that feeling would subside once they got going.

For the next activity, Ben asked each individual to think of a time when they became unstuck from a challenge related to a project or initiative. He gave each person a journey map to work on for 10 minutes at their tables.

The journey map involved thinking of a story about overcoming a challenge, writing down important events and learnings, and reflecting on what made overcoming the challenge possible. Once each person completed the journey map, they were invited to share with each other in their table groups, considering the following questions:

- What was your challenge?
- What advice, knowledge did you get engaged in or receive?
- What made the knowledge stick and connect with you?
- What was it that helped you get over the hump or stuck-ness?

In their discussion, each table was asked to look for key principles in the stories: what principles guided the change? The learning? What helped them get unstuck? Ben asked each table to come up with the following:

- A list of things that helped them get unstuck in their challenges; and,
- Their top five guiding principles or ideas for getting unstuck.

Key themes from participants' table discussions are outlined in Table 1.0.

Ben hands out sheets for groups to capture their ideas

Participants share their stories in table groups

Table 1.0

Theme	Principles for Getting Unstuck	Things that Help
Courage	♦ Bravery (not knowing and that's ok) ♦ Risk taking (why not!)	♦ Unconventional thinking ♦ Courage ♦ Get out of comfort zone ♦ Risk taking – stepping outside of one's comfort zone/current path
Openness	♦ Open mindedness ♦ Engagement/connection ♦ Open to multiple pathways to the solutions	♦ Listening to everyone ♦ Talking to others, gaining new perspectives ♦ Don't keep it to ourselves
Asking for Help	♦ "Swallow your pride and ask others" ♦ You are not alone	♦ Support from Executive Directors, co-workers ♦ Using personal connections (outside the agency) ♦ Engaging stakeholders ♦ Asking for help (we don't know everything) ♦ Get buy-in from everyone ♦ Ask: are there options? ♦ Develop a common understanding ♦ Dollars and data ♦ Knowledge
Goals	♦ Define outcomes based on inputs ♦ Create a plan, have specific goals	♦ Having realistic expectations ♦ Have a concrete goal ♦ Solution-focused
Take Action	♦ "Meet people where they are at" ♦ Start now! (avoid analysis-paralysis)	♦ Urgency permits innovation ♦ Start with what you have now ♦ Start small
Fail Forward	♦ "It's ok to go backwards, to restart"	♦ Revisiting, trying new things ♦ It's never too late to make adjustments, changes ♦ Redefining success and failure ♦ Self-assessment, reflection, reflective practice ♦ Obstacles don't stop us
Time and Trust	♦ "Trust my gut" ♦ "It's ok to go backwards, to restart" ♦ Embrace that things take time	♦ Embracing that things take time
Encouragement	♦ Engagement/connection	♦ Not everyone wants to be in a senior position, and that's ok – recognize importance of work-life balance

For the second round of World Café discussion, participants switched up their table groups and talked about knowledge transfer between generations. Ben asked them to explore what works and what helps, and to come up with a list of their top five tactics for stellar knowledge transfer.

Participants generated the following list of top tactics for **knowledge transfer**:

- Documenting: recording organizational history using formal and other formats (e.g., storytelling).
- Mentorship: role modelling, debriefing, and building the confidence of emerging leaders through exposure to various leaders and leadership styles.
- Formal Training: leadership development through formal training opportunities.
- Trust: fostering an open environment where information and knowledge is a positive-sum game.
- Time: for succession planning, for transitions to take place, and for leaders to grow and develop.
- Open Information Sharing: taking an open-by-default approach to knowledge and information.
- Humility and Inclusion: taking a team approach, where everyone is both a learner and a teacher.
- Learning by Doing: job shadowing and experiential learning – giving emerging leaders the opportunity to work with those already in leadership positions, and in other positions throughout the organization.

Participants explore tactics for knowledge transfer during the World Café

Leadership Development Program Prototyping

After spending the first part of the workshop exploring and understanding the challenge space, after a break it was time to prototype.

Ben asked participants to imagine that they are in charge of developing innovative ways to ready emerging nonprofit sector leaders to take on leadership roles in their organizations within the next five to ten years. Not only are they tasked with readying these individuals to manage existing staff and services, but also to lead in a rapidly changing world where challenges are increasingly complex and there are fewer resources to go around.

Ben tasked participants to form groups and create a team prototype, considering the following questions:

- ♦ What might you create to help ready emerging leaders?
- ♦ What would you create to build competencies, learning, and knowledge transfer?
- ♦ What would *you* want from a leadership development program?
- ♦ What do you think emerging leaders need most to be become competent, stellar leaders in the nonprofit sector over the next five to ten years?

Participants self-organized into three groups and started working. They could use any of the materials in the Action Lab to create any type of prototype – paper, toys, LEGO, whiteboards, markers, and more.

Collectively, participants imagined three prototype leadership programs in response to the above questions:

1. The Learning Web
2. Emerging Leaders 101
3. An All Inclusive and Progressive Leadership Program

The following pages tell the stories of these prototypes.

*Participants create prototypes for leadership development*

Co-pilots Gemma and Ben huddle during prototyping

The Learning Web

The learning web depicts all the different needs and levels involved in leadership as a way to meet the general and more specific needs of sector-wide and organizational leadership.

Multiple, integrated pathways connect organizational leadership opportunities with sector-focused networking, learning, and mentorship. These pathways can be revisited, retraced, and reworked as needs and goals shift over time. The web may appear complex and tangled, but its interwoven strands are easily navigated.

Emerging leaders have individualized action plans, tailored to their learning needs and styles. Whatever one needs, one can access.
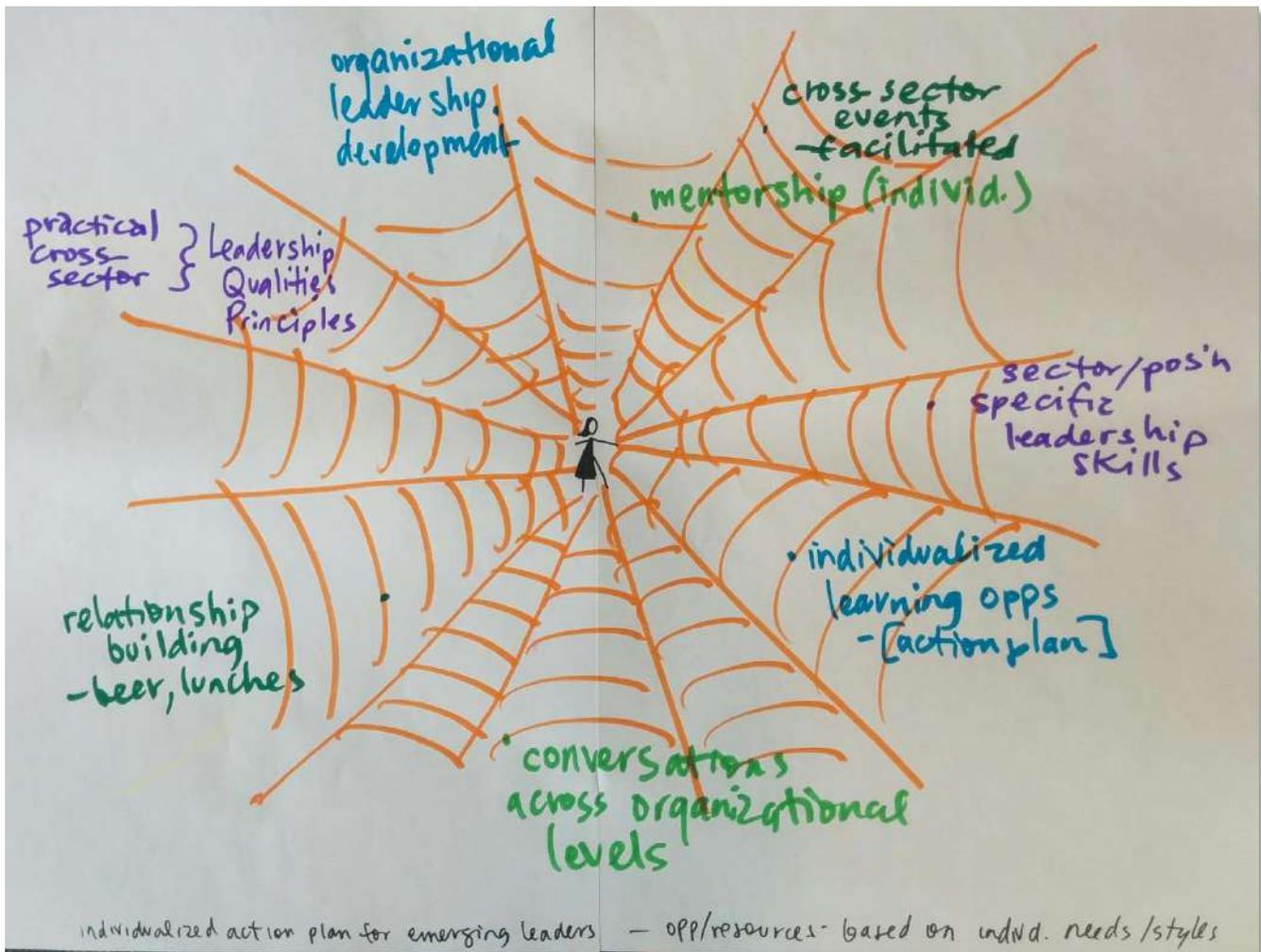
Emerging Leaders 101

The Emerging Leaders 101 program is a modular-based capacity building and knowledge transfer certificate program with a mentorship component. The program is transferable between organizations and prepares leaders for the nonprofit and charitable sector writ large, rather than for just one organization. This addresses the transient nature of new leadership in the sector by enabling skill transfer between organizations.

Passion projects, networking, mentoring, and sessions with one's Executive Director combine to create a roadmap of where the individual sees his or her future in the sector.

This roadmap includes a 'stay question session' – a conversation around how long the individual sees herself staying in the organization, her passions, and what needs the organization must fulfil for retention. This conversation can take place before or after entering the program.

Program participants have opportunities to job share or pair with an existing leader, gradually taking on more responsibility. Transitional positions like these will enable emerging leaders to take on new responsibilities gradually, enabling better work-life balance, decreasing the stress that can accompany greater responsibility, and helping to maintain and build institutional memory.
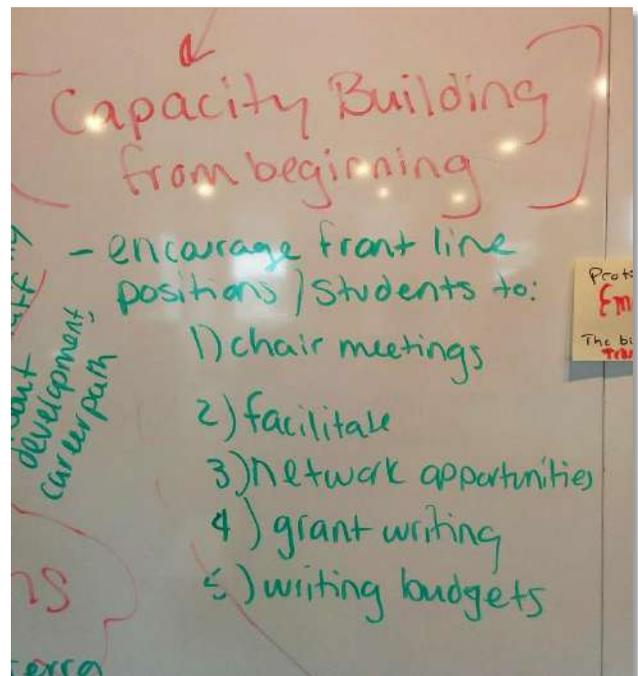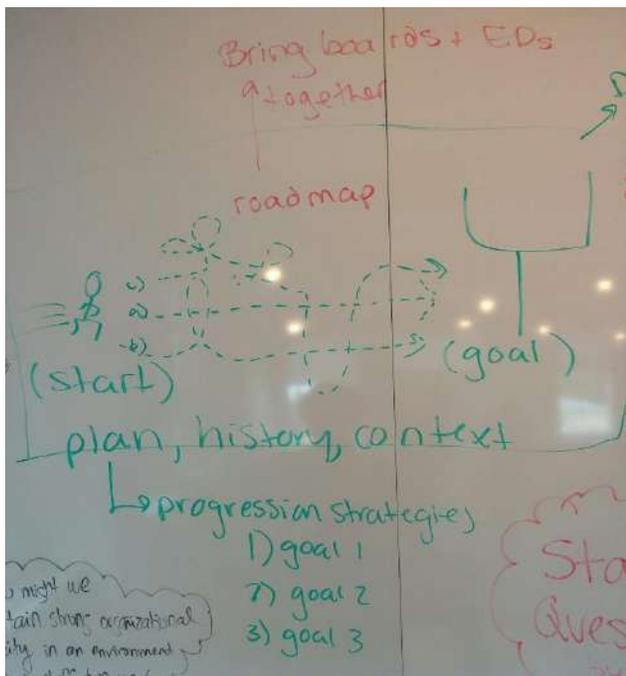
An All Inclusive and Progressive Leadership Program

This inclusive program looks at multiple stages of leadership and prepares people as they progress through their careers.

The program is part of the organizational culture, and all staff are encouraged to participate. The different roles and positions with an organization are transparent, enabling people working at different levels and fronts of the organization to interact with each other. Information and people flows are both bottom-up and top-down – all inclusive.

The program offers various learning modules on topics like stakeholder relations, how to influence policy, cross-organizational mentorship, self-reflection and evaluation, interpersonal skills, internal talent nurturing, fundraising, programming skills, and general capacity building.
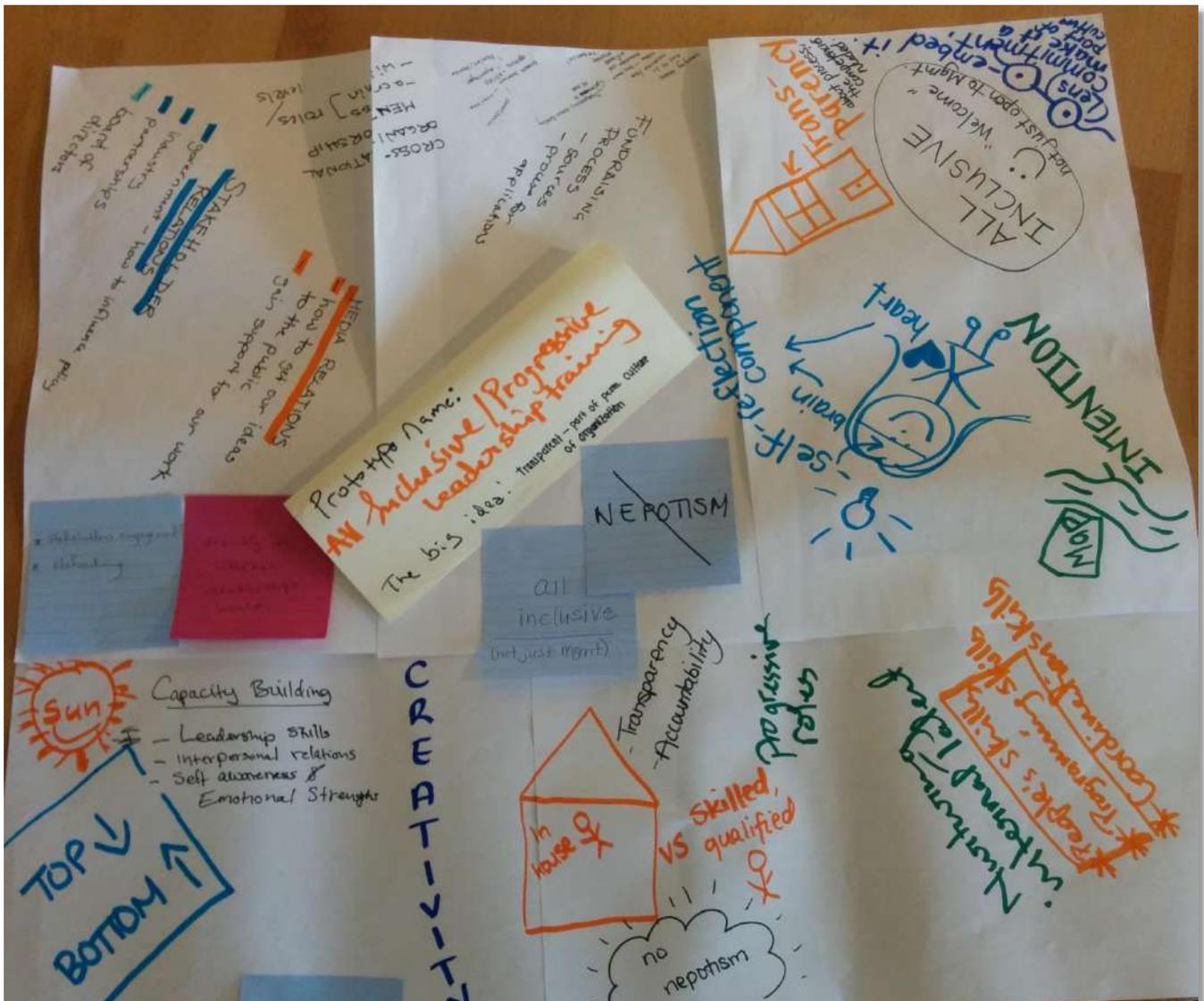
Closing Reflection

To close the workshop, Ben led participants through a closing reflection, where each person was asked to create three insights to share with the group.

1. What's sticking? An 'ah-ha' moment from the session.
2. What's puzzling? An outstand question of point of confusion.
3. What's promising? A hope or potential related to leadership in the nonprofit and charitable sector.

The main theme of this closing reflection is relationships. In their 'ah-ha' and 'promising' sticky notes, participants expressed the importance of nurturing and building connections. This is important at the organizational and sector levels, and beyond. Participants also expressed a desire for emerging leaders as a particular group to have opportunities to network, learn from and with each other, and continue the conversations from the workshop.

Puzzling questions surfaced around resources – namely, time. Who has the time to continue these conversations? To engage in mentoring and relationship building? How might organizations and leaders prioritize these activities?

Highly promising for this group of emerging leaders was the conversations they had during the workshop, and the shared commitment and desire that exists among this diverse group to keep moving forward in the nonprofit sector. As one participant wrote, "we may come to invest in the sector by investing in people."

Participants share their reflections to close the workshop

Emerging leaders place their reflections on the whiteboard

Table 2.0	Sticking	Puzzling	Promising
Leadership Lab Process	♦ New processes, people, and environments create rich ideas ♦ Good initiative for supporting emerging leaders		♦ An understanding of the journey ♦ The diversity of people in the room (ages, positions, time spent in organizations)
Relationships	♦ Need to keep having the conversation ♦ Need for networking opportunities ♦ Emerging leaders need more opportunities to come together, share, learn, and network ♦ Focus on relational component ♦ Getting to know people	♦ Sharing ideas, knowledge ♦ How do we actually, practically, intentionally facilitate networking and connection? Who will do this?	♦ Continued conversations ♦ Future opportunities for collaboration ♦ Shared want for collaboration ♦ The willingness of different organizations to work together for the future
Sector Challenges	♦ Many common leadership challenges transcend sectors ♦ Chances for advancement need to reflect job mobility	♦ How to navigate generational gap between staff and the nonprofit sector has changed ♦ Divide between staff capacity building and structural change in sector ♦ Moving from buzzwords ♦ Boards ♦ Not enough transparency between boards, Executive Directors, and senior staff ♦ What do we mean by sector? ♦ Broad vs. sector-specific needs – integration	♦ Leadership skills ♦ The desire for intentional leadership ♦ Growth of the sector – variety, diversity ♦ The need, the desire, the hope, connected by passion, vision, goods
Change & Innovation	♦ Desire to see change is shared	♦ How to ask questions without consequence? ♦ How will it be done?	♦ New models of doing things (e.g., job sharing)
Resources		♦ Can we keep opportunities within reach? (cost, time) ♦ How do we make the time? ♦ Capacity and time	♦ We may come to invest in the sector by investing in people
Trust	♦ Time and trust ♦ Trust ♦ Vulnerability		♦ That someone values our opinions – thanks for listening

Learning	♦ Learning opportunities that we are getting from each other		♦ Mentoring new leaders ♦ More opportunities to give feedback and learn from each other ♦ Cross-organization mentorship ♦ Learning opportunities ♦ An interest and willingness to develop sector-wide leadership development for emerging leaders
Internal Leadership Development	♦ Important value of developing leaders from within organizations ♦ Organizations need to actively plan for and support emerging leaders ♦ The need to acknowledge emerging leaders and nurture their talent		
Next Steps		♦ To visualize next steps ♦ What happens next? ♦ The next step – excited to see it, but time? ♦ What will be done with our suggestions? Make it meaningful!	

Next Steps

Next steps in ECVO's journey exploring leadership in the nonprofit and charitable sector include the following:

- ECVO commits to send all workshop participants a summary report from the Leadership Lab, along with additional information on how to stay involved in this work.
- ECVO commits to exploring the themes, patterns, and insights generated by participants across the various leadership labs. ECVO will use this to inform next steps.
- ECVO aims to grow its leadership team for this work in order to understand different perspectives on leadership development. ECVO is looking for individuals to support this work.