



**BC Family Transitions Lab:  
A Clear Picture of a Promising Way Forward**

June 24, 2014

DRAFT



**Context**

Recognizing that this is a critical time for catalyzing and strengthening efforts in service of better outcomes for children and families experiencing separation and divorce in BC, in early June 2014, a diverse group of concerned stakeholders gathered to explore how to address this question:

- “How can we improve the journey of children and families throughout BC experiencing transition, such as separation and divorce, in order to increase resilience and well-being?”



**BC Family Transitions Lab: A Promising Way Forward**

*“No problem can be solved with the same thinking that created it.”*  
- Albert Einstein

At Reos we know that if we always do what we’ve always done, then we’ll get what we always got. So if we want to be able to make progress on our most complex social challenges, we need a new approach. Our experience shows that this new approach must be systemic rather than piecemeal; it must involve stakeholders rather than rely only on authorities and experts; and it must be creative and emergent rather than merely replicating existing best practice.



**Objectives**

- To summarize insights from the June workshop
- To provide guidance for moving forward with a social lab approach



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1. The Complex Problematic Situation of BC Families in Transition
2. A BC Family Transitions Lab as a Way to Address this Situation
3. First Steps

Appendix 1: Social Labs to Address Complex Problematic Situations

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## 1. Patterns that Characterise the Current System

- The current system faced by families in transition is too complicated, difficult to navigate, and 'one size fits all'
- It is characterised by:
  - Lack of coordination and integration among institutions
  - Insufficient legal aid
  - Increased financial tensions for families
  - More self representation
  - Children affected but not necessarily seen by the system
  - Lack of safety; physical and emotional harm



## Mental Models that Characterise the Current System

- "Family issues are legal issues"
- "The rule of law protects us"
- "Justice emerges from an adjudicated clash of opposing positions"
- "Father is right"
- "Western values are best"
- "Experts are required"
- "Divorce is bad"



## 2. The Current System Could Be Transformed Through Working in an Unconventional Way

- Bringing together stakeholders (including users) from across the whole system—not only the usual professionals
- Looking for leverage across the whole system—not only within particular silos
- Learning what works through disciplined experimentation in practice—not only planning on paper
- Creating results more effectively through working together—not only separately
- Building a platform and the capacity to enable stakeholders to work in this unconventional way



## Reos Social Lab: A Collaborative Platform for Addressing Complex Problematic Situations

A social lab is a multi-stakeholder platform through which a diverse team of people work together — using their heads, hearts, and hands — to solve problems in a way that is systemic, participative (involves the users and clients themselves, rather than just consulting them) and experimental.



## Reos BC Family Transitions Lab: Purpose and Initial Strategic Direction

**Purpose:** To improve the journey of children and families throughout BC experiencing transition, such as separation and divorce, in order to increase resilience and well-being.

**Initial Strategic Direction:** To convene a diverse group to develop, implement, and evaluate innovative initiatives based on the following values:

- Safe
- Collaborative
- Participative
- Affordable
- Equitable access
- Understandable
- Timely
- Family-centred
- Integrated
- Effective
- Empowered
- Early
- Proportional



## Reos BC Family Transitions Lab: Possible Initiatives

- **Focus on research data:** e.g., find out what has worked for families
- **Inter-sectoral initiative in a small community:** e.g., collaborative early resolution experiment with all those working with a small number of families
- **Virtual counselling and assessment:** e.g., a resource or website that helps to achieve early resolution
- **Changing process through early intervention:** e.g., simplified and expedited process for interim dispute resolution (e.g., child support within 30 days)
- **Sliding scale for publicly funded justice model:** e.g., affordable access to wide range of services including legal and mediation
- **Domestic violence courts:** e.g., more specialized courts for safer and more timely resolution



## Reos BC Family Transitions Lab: Key Stakeholders

- Families & children
- Government (Moj, MCFD, Health, Educ, other)
- Business community/corporations
- Courts
- Political sector
- Lawyers
- Aboriginal organizations
- Multicultural organizations
- Support network/front line services
- Violence against women sector
- Financial counselling
- Foundations
- Health/mental health
- Police
- Schools/educational institutions
- Faith groups



**BC Family Transitions Lab: Teams**

- **Secretariat:** Responsible for coordinating and supporting the Lab, often comprised of staff and sub-contractors *(see next slide for Secretariat functions)*
- **(Interim) Steering Committee:** Diverse perspectives to advise and govern the Lab
- **Champions:** Well-connected supporters
- **Lab Team:** A diverse group of 20-30 change makers with the thinking, creativity and commitment needed to grapple with and act on the purpose:
  - The Commitment: Willing to dedicate at least one day a month toward the strategic bet that the learning, relationship development, and insightful innovation that will occur through their participation will enable them to more effectively get their work done, and make a meaningful contribution in an area they care deeply about.
  - Prototype teams: example?

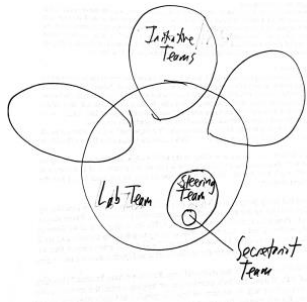


**Lab Teams: 'Version 1.0'**

- *Interim* Lab team (Ver. 1.0): (the group that met in early June)
- *Interim* Steering committee (Ver. 1.0): the current group of volunteers
- Initiative teams – there may already be initiative teams, but they may not yet recognize themselves as such
  - The lab is currently prototyping all of these; have already made a good start



**How the Lab Teams work together**



**Secretariat Functions**

1. Stakeholder mapping and convening
2. Process architecture and facilitation
3. Research and knowledge management
4. **Resource development**
5. Logistics, finance and administration
6. Network cultivation and curation
7. Communications
8. Resource mobilisation
9. Capacity building
10. Evaluation and learning

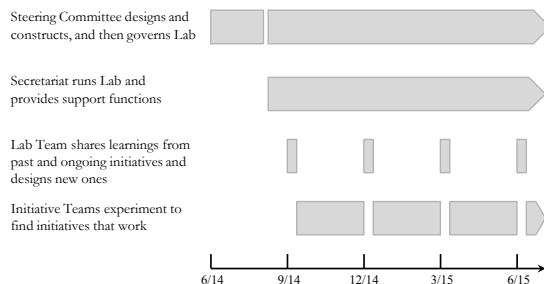


**BC Family Transitions Lab: Resource Needs**

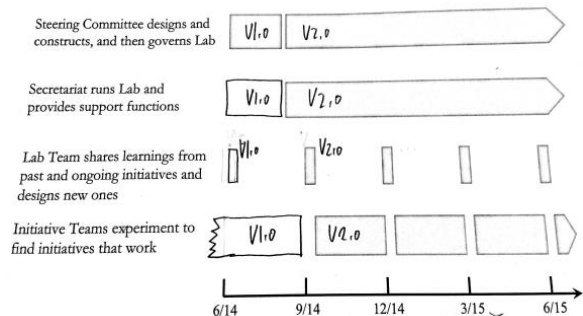
- An (*interim*) institutional home for the Lab
  - **Criteria** – credibility, capacity, leadership, burning drive for change
  - **The priority is to get going, not let the best be the enemy of the good**
- Financial resources: potentially from Gov't Ministries, Foundations, Private sector
- Human resources: participants with time and commitment, and a willingness and **enthusiasm** to work differently and **build capacity in this way of working on complex challenges in the system, in the lab team and themselves.**



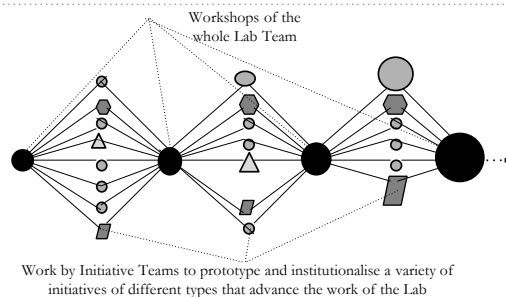
**BC Family Transitions Lab: Design Overview for Year 1**



**BC Family Transitions Lab: Design Overview for Year 1**



**The Rhythm of a Social Lab**





### 3. Next Steps

- Assemble the teams
- Identify institutional home for the Lab
- Secure resources
- Design and convene the first meetings of the Lab Team
- Consider Dialogue Interviews with formal and informal leaders in the system — very helpful for tuning into the current reality of the system, hearing of potential ways forward, and enrolling potential Lab Team members. [could be prep work by lab members – each of them interviews two people they don't know; this is a start to capacity building; rather than pre-reading it is pre-exploring; at first workshop debrief 'what did we learn?']
- Consider Learning Journeys: As John Le Carre said, "The desk is a dangerous place from which to view the world." Get out from behind the desk to visit sites where aspects of the desired future already exist or inspiring examples of innovation processes are at work. [in short-term do short ones locally; between 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting, set up longer ones]
- Getting going on advancing the initiatives



### Appendix 1: Social Labs as an Approach to Addressing Complex Problematic Situations



### Why Approaching Complex Challenges As If They Were Simple Challenges Creates Stuckness

Dimension	Stuckness	Simple challenges		Complex challenges	
		Characteristic	Approach	Characteristic	Approach
Dynamic	Fragmentation	Cause and effect are close together	Piece by piece	Cause and effect are far apart	<b>Systemic:</b> with attention to structural causes
Social	Polarisation	Actors have similar perspectives and interests	Relying on experts and authorities	Actors have different perspectives and interests	<b>Collaborative:</b> involving the actors themselves
Generative	Obsolescence	Future is familiar and predictable	Planning based on existing best practice	Future is unfamiliar and unpredictable	<b>Experimental:</b> learning through acting

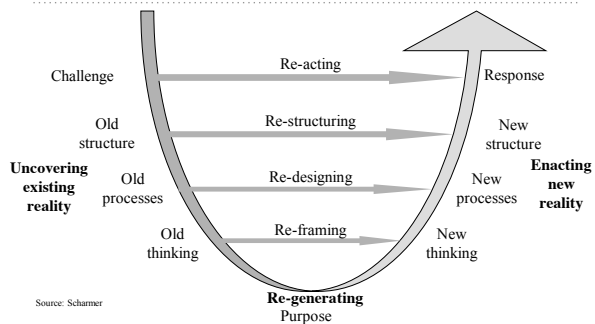


### Social Labs

From	To
Fixing symptoms or effects	Addressing structural diseases or causes
Making recommendations on paper	Developing solutions in practice
Relying on experts or authorities	Involving all key stakeholders
Learning then doing (policy preceding implementation)	Learning by doing (policy arising from implementation)
Implementing one chosen solution	Iteratively incubating, prototyping, and managing a portfolio of promising solutions
A once-off project	A stable and growing platform that delivers results over the short, medium, and long term

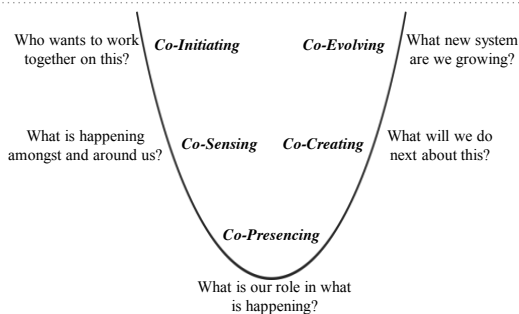
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**Change Can Occur at Different Levels**



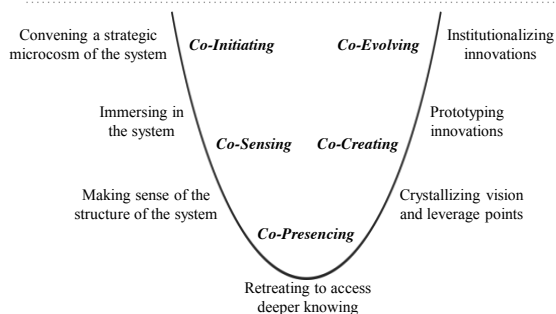
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**Social Lab Questions**



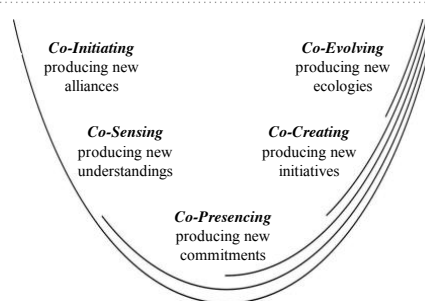
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**Social Lab Process**



**REOS**

**Cumulating Capacities and Results**





**Social Lab Results May Include Many Forms of Capital**

- Intellectual
- Human
- Social
- Physical
- Symbolic
- Natural
- Financial



***“We have learned that transforming systems is ultimately about transforming relationships”***

**- Peter Senge**



**Appendix 2. About Reos**



Reos is a social enterprise that helps businesses, governments, and civil society organisations address complex social challenges.





We help people face humanity's biggest challenges such as education, health, the environment, employment, food, energy, security, and peace.

We help people harness and focus the power of each other, discovering the most effective ways to make positive change.



## Reos

We convene, design and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships and initiatives aimed at creating systemic social change.

We work both locally and globally.

Our name comes from the Greek "rheos" and means "flow".



## Reos OUR APPROACH

**Systemic:** We address complex social problems that are resistant to traditional means of solving them. We help stakeholders see their situation with a systemic perspective and identify leverage points for change.

**Participative:** We convene diverse stakeholders from across the system in processes that enable genuine dialogue and contribution. We design together with our client and partner organizations.

**Creative:** We apply innovative tools and processes that enable participants to apply their collective creativity to developing and implementing a portfolio of new responses.



Our approach is always practical, professional, and tailored to the specific needs of the situation.

## Reos OUR OFFICES



**Reos**  
OUR PROJECT LOCATIONS



**Reos**  
OUR RESULTS

Our work produces new **social capital** in the form of networks, alliances, and partnerships of individuals and organisations operating across and beyond sectoral boundaries.

We build new **human capital** in the form of leadership capacities, commitments and perspectives that are important in responding to complex social challenges.

We help generate new **physical capital** in the form of innovative new initiatives and systems, which provide services and resources to people who need them.



**Scenarios on the Drug Problem in the Americas: Reframing the War on Drugs**

"These scenarios offer a new set of lenses with which to re-view drug problems and policies." - Juan Manuel Santos, President of Colombia

In spite of progress in some areas, the problems of drugs have remained terribly and frustratingly stuck, with continued high levels of addiction, incarceration, and violence. In 2012-2013, Reos was contracted, together with Colombian partners, CLG, by the Organization of American States to lead a scenario process to explore new ways of understanding and responding to the drug situation across the Americas. We conducted dialogue interviews with 75 leaders, and we designed and facilitated 7 days of meetings and a collective writing process in which 46 exceptional individuals collaboratively and iteratively constructed a set of four scenarios. New drug policies and laws are now being vigorously debated and implemented at all levels throughout the Americas and beyond. The scenario report has made an important and authoritative contribution to opening up and reframing these crucial strategy conversations.

**Aboriginal Health Care in New South Wales, Australia : Developing the building blocks for a healthier future**

In 2011, Reos was approached by the Ministry of Aboriginal Health and the Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) of the State of New South Wales, Australia, to help them develop a strategic plan for their next 10 years of work on aboriginal health. Based on 30 dialogue interviews with key stakeholders and community members, a series of eight one-day Change Labs were convened in different regions of New South Wales, enabling participants collectively to understand the core concerns, dynamics, and key leverage points within the system. Reos synthesized this work into a set of 7 Building Blocks of the Future, key strategic elements which collectively address necessary and critical leverage points in the system. This created a container of leadership, governance, and accountability which would provide the core essence of a 10 year strategy.



**Civil Society 2023:  
Four futures for  
Brazilian Civil  
Society**

In 2013, Reos entered into partnership with the D3 Articulation for Democracy, Dialogue and Rights and the General Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic to co-convene a transformative scenarios process on the future of civil society in Brazil. The scenarios process, which was labeled "Civil Society 2023", engaged a wide diversity of players from civil society organizations (CSOs), social movements, governmental agencies, the private sector, and universities. The participants took part in dialogue interviews, workshops, and collective writing to develop four potential futures.

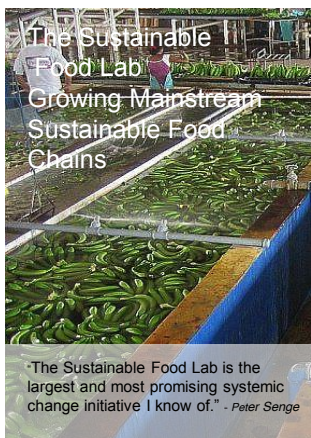
The group named their scenarios after well-known children's games: Master's Orders, Pass the Ring, Hopscotch, and Ciranda. The scenarios were widely disseminated through various forums in Brazil and incorporated in the strategic planning processes of leading NGO. In particular, they brought attention to the need for stronger communication strategies and intergenerational synergies in the civil society, cross-sectoral interdependence, and a more effective legal framework for government-CSO partnerships.



**Accelerating Innovation  
in the U.S. Electricity  
Sector**

The Electricity Innovation Lab, or e-Lab, is a group of thought leaders and decision makers from across the US electricity sector who have come together to address critical barriers to the economic deployment of distributed electricity resources. E-Lab is convened by Rocky Mountain Institute, an independent, nonprofit think-and-do tank whose mission is to drive the efficient and restorative use of resources, and is supported by Reos Partners.

In this context, e-Lab is working in understanding the real costs and benefits of distributed resources as part of the electricity system, in developing business models to enable solutions that will provide benefits to customers and society as a whole and how to accelerate the pace of economic distributed resource adoption.



**The Sustainable  
Food Lab  
Growing Mainstream  
Sustainable Food  
Chains**

In 2004, a group of pioneering leaders from multi-national food companies, farmers' associations, government agencies, and environmental, social and consumer NGOs were invited to experience a new way of learning and working together. This initiative was called the Sustainable Food Lab (SFL) and was the first large-scale, multi-stakeholder, global Social Lab.

The aim of the SFL is to bring leading stakeholders together to accelerate the incorporation of environmental, economic, and social sustainability into the DNA of the mainstream food and agricultural system. A range of global and local initiatives have been implemented, including on climate impact assessment and mitigation, more even risk/reward distribution, the development of sustainable supply chains, and new metrics for sustainability. After more than 10 years, SFL continues to be a pioneering platform for collective action.

"The Sustainable Food Lab is the largest and most promising systemic change initiative I know of." - Peter Senge