

SENSEMAKING | COMMUNITY WORKSHOP SUMMARY | 3.28.19



MAKING SENSE OF OUR RESEARCH

Nearly **100** community members came together on **March 28th** at the Singhmar Centre for Learning at Norquest College for a deeper look at our research findings and to explore the combined opportunity areas to improve urban wellness.

Participants came from across the six focus neighbourhoods, **Boyle Street**, **Central McDougall**, **Downtown**, **McCauley**, **Strathcona**, and **Queen Mary Park** and included residents, business owners, service organizations as well as other Edmontonians who are interested in participating in RECOVER's social innovation process.

Building on the early research insights shared at the previous January workshop, participants had a chance to **react to and discuss** the **nine opportunity areas** that emerged from our combined set of research streams across the six neighbourhoods, including **public engagement**, **ethnographic research** and **GIS and Strategy mapping**.

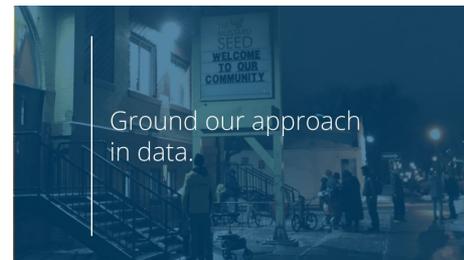


WHERE WE ARE ON OUR JOURNEY

The RECOVER social innovation framework has three main elements that structure how we work together.

- 1. Ground our approach in data**
- 2. Uncover tensions and build relationships**
- 3. Create opportunities for solutions-based collaboration.**

While we're not following a strictly linear process, this workshop was in the "making sense" phase of our work. The workshop provided time for folks to react and respond to our data and to continue to make connections with those who are interested in being part of the next prototyping phase.



OUR RESEARCH | STARTING POINTS FOR ACTION

After a quick introduction, we dove right into our research. InWithForward, our social design and research team, laid the groundwork for the evening discussion, providing an overview of their on the ground research in the six neighbourhoods.

The information we collected through ethnographic research, public engagement, and strategy and GIS mapping has given us a sense of the landscape and profiles of the issues and opportunities to tackle the complex challenge of improving urban wellness in Edmonton.

The highlights of our research, was shared in a [Playback book](#) that detailed **nine opportunity areas**, which provide a foundation to generate ideas, or what we refer to as the “*what ifs*” that we will explore through testing (prototyping). It is critical to understand that these are **starting points for action**, rather than top-down conclusions.



OUR DISCUSSION

The **nine opportunity areas** were discussed in four breakout groups.

Breakout A

New pathways for learning & contribution in community.
Expanded & bundled small jobs

Breakout B

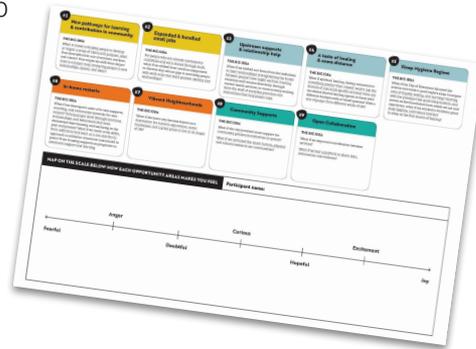
Upstream supports & relationship help
A taste of healing & some distance
Sleep Hygiene Regime

Breakout C

In-home restarts
Vibrant Neighbourhoods

Breakout D

Community Supports
Open Collaboration



Participants selected two breakout groups, using a worksheet with an emotional guidance scale to help them narrow down their choice. After reading a summary of each opportunity area, they marked on a scale how each opportunity made them feel. They selected their two breakouts using the far ends of their respective scales, one they felt most positive about and one they felt skeptical about. Folks who were new to RECOVER also had an option to attend a breakout where we provided more context about our social innovation process.

FRAMING OUR CONVERSATION

Within the breakout groups, participants were led through a series of prompts to capture how they felt about each opportunity area as individuals and also in comparison with each other.

Participants also started to discuss each opportunity area in terms of their personal energy level towards supporting the idea and how they perceived the potential for big or little difference within the community as well as impact for a particular segmentation (ie. marginalized folks, residents, business owners, etc.).





What We Heard

NEW PATHWAYS FOR LEARNING & CONTRIBUTION IN COMMUNITY

Addiction and housing programs often focus on immediate next steps: encouraging folks not to get ahead of themselves.

For some folks, the inability to imagine a life worth living, let alone the step that comes after seeking help, generates too much uncertainty and anxiety. Others avoid formal service offers as a way to maintain a sense of self. By limiting their exposure to and acceptance of help, they avoid a homeless identity. For both groups, appealing to aspiration versus just reality might help.

When it comes to enabling people to develop or regain a sense of purpose, what if we diversified the role of services, workers and clients?

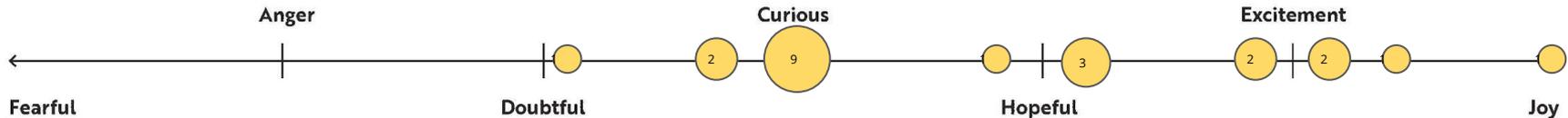
How might we shift from helper to catalyst roles, brokering people to new relationships, spaces and concepts?

WHAT WE HEARD | NEW PATHWAYS FOR LEARNING & CONTRIBUTION IN COMMUNITY

During the breakout chats

There was a lot of interest in this opportunity area, but participants felt a need for it to be fleshed out more. People were interested in having conversations about what constitutes a role and expertise, and how some knowledge is valued over others. There was a recognition that service users have skills and expertise, and that professional boundaries can often be used as a way to further divide between "us/them". Participants recognized that this could have significant impact but that a lot of work needs to be done first to better understand the concept and the goal.

How all participants mapped themselves about this idea



EXPANDED & BUNDLED SMALL JOBS

Folks new to the streets are often hustling, looking to make some money. They are appreciative of temp work agencies, but frustrated by the limited number and type of jobs, as well as by the sense of 'meaninglessness' of the work. Those who've been around awhile have found informal ways to make money but sometimes feel they lack legitimacy. Often the work is hard, and can exacerbate physical injuries that lead to increasing drug use as a form of self-medication.

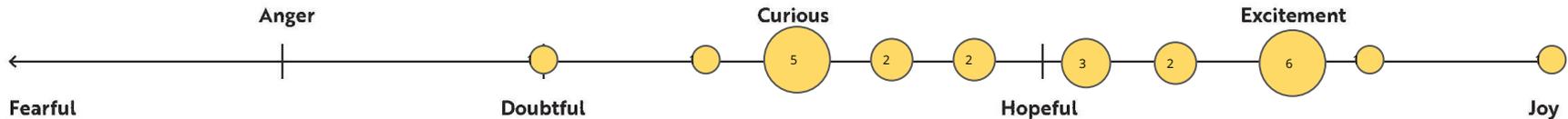
For people who are motivated to contribute and want work, what if we shifted from random assignment and discrete day labour gigs to matching people with roles that build positive identity and relationships?

WHAT WE HEARD | EXPANDED & BUNDLED SMALL JOBS

During the breakout chats

There was a lot of interest and energetic discussion about this opportunity area. Participants were excited to envision different work opportunities, small jobs, training opportunities, night-time work and live/work spaces. It was recognized that folks who are marginalized are very entrepreneurial and many are also skilled in trades; there was a sentiment that these characteristics should be supported and nurtured through innovative approaches to work.

How all participants mapped themselves about this idea



UPSTREAM SUPPORTS & RELATIONSHIP HELP

Relationships matter. Behind nearly every bout on the street is a relationship loss or breakdown. And yet, there are few services and supports that directly focus on failing and broken relationships, or take practical steps to strengthen and repair them, before shit hits the fan.

What if we shifted our focus from the individual to their relationships: strengthening the bonds between people?

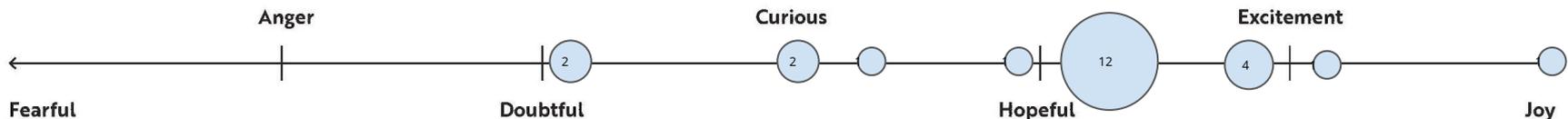
How might we move from treating emotions and trauma discreetly, through mental health services, to integrating emotions into every day practices that enhance resiliency?

WHAT WE HEARD | UPSTREAM SUPPORTS & RELATIONSHIP HELP

During the breakout chats

A high number of folks were hopeful about the potential power of networks, and using the collective power of organizations and individuals to help leverage resources. Others spoke of their frustration with some of the existing barriers that exist in current formal upstream supports (like barriers in the form of insurance companies). Others expressed curiosity about uplifting the great work that is currently taking place through informal supports (like volunteer-run support groups). Some folks expressed frustration that there is the perception that this work isn't already being done.

How all participants mapped themselves about this idea



A TASTE OF HEALING & SOME DISTANCE

Healing services that bring people with shared trauma together around a set of rituals and practices are powerful, with some beautiful examples in religious and Indigenous-run services. What if spiritual healing -- feeling connected to something greater than oneself -- wasn't just the domain of culturally specific services? How might we extend healing spaces to those with different backgrounds or belief systems? How might we share healing practices with a mix of people from different walks of life?

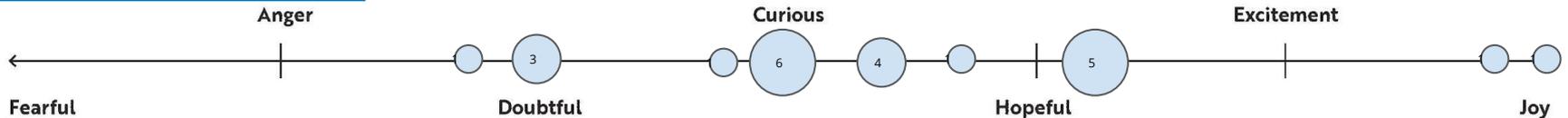
What if we stopped thinking about spiritual practice as the domain of culturally specific groups and embraced it as a basic human need, for everyone, everyday?

WHAT WE HEARD | A TASTE OF HEALING & SOME DISTANCE

During the breakout chats

Some folks in the room commented that there was quite a bit of work happening to support spiritual healing and connectedness already. There were some questions about how this integration would happen to ensure that this work is culturally sensitive and appropriate. There were questions about what would happen to Indigenous cultures and whether they would be suppressed. People were also curious about how we might create a common spiritual experience. Some folks spoke of the importance of doing the personal work to begin healing.

How all participants mapped themselves about this idea



SLEEP HYGIENE REGIME

What if the City of Edmonton followed the science and made a good night's sleep an urgent area of inquiry, testing, and learning? Starting with the principle that good sleep matters and serves as the foundation from which we act and experience, what if we worked to facilitate great sleep hygiene, and reduce barriers to sleep as the first source of healing?

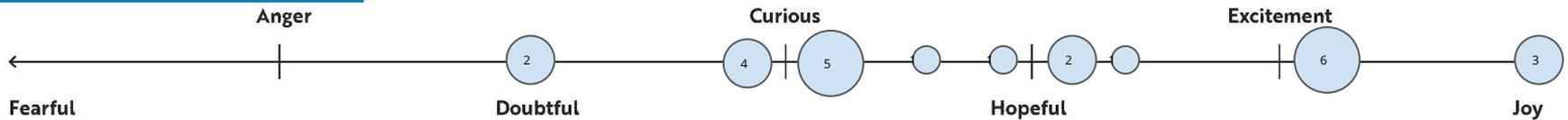
What if we strove for a culture that values and invests in cultivating good sleep practices and opportunities, to promote the conditions for flourishing, moving past a minimum entitlement to a warm, dry, environment at night?

WHAT WE HEARD | SLEEP HYGIENE REGIME

During the breakout chats

Overall, there was a high level of interest and excitement about the Sleep Hygiene Regime opportunity. People agreed that sleep is foundational and fundamental, and should be something that everyone can have access to. People expressed some amazement that they hadn't previously considered a healthy sleep as being a privilege denied to many, but now view it as a vital right that everyone should have access to. Participants spoke of their personal experiences with sleep, and how a good sleep improves decision making, mental health and the regulation of emotions. Folks in the room also commented that when we sleep we are in such a vulnerable state, so providing a safe space for sleep could be highly impactful.

How all participants mapped themselves about this idea



IN-HOME RESTARTS

After repeated housing-eviction-homelessness cycles, it's only natural to give up. While Housing First advocates have long recognized that, in addition to case management, more supports are needed, there aren't too many models for long-term, socio-emotional help. Similarly the detox-rehab-release cycle can engender resignation and hopelessness. Despite research showing treatment centres don't really work, there are few other models. What if we developed a suite of in-situ supports, coaching, and community networks for new renters? How might we enable people to work through emotions, relationships, and behaviours that have threatened their housing and wellbeing in the past and present?

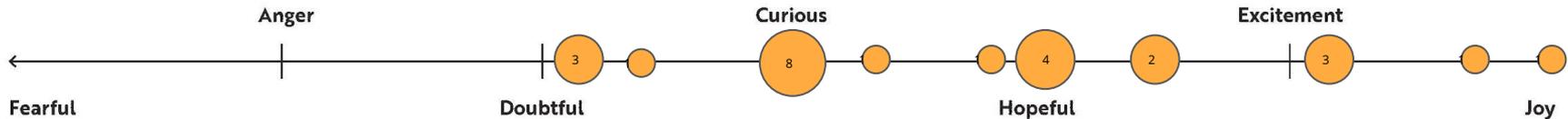
What if we made some shifts, from addiction treatment as a one-size fits all approach to addiction treatment customized in place? From housing supports as pragmatic to emotional support and co-learning?

IN-HOME RESTARTS

During the breakout chats

There was high energy around the opportunity of In-home restarts. Participants recognize that even though the housing first approach is good, it comes with its own set of challenges. When people are housed, they are expected to give up their community, their old supports. The idea of new supports that are individually targeted and customized somehow made sense and people were hopeful about the possibilities.

How all participants mapped themselves about this idea



VIBRANT NEIGHBOURHOODS

Development can create a divide between the haves and the have nots. How might we develop the inner city so that everyone has a chance to thrive? Sometimes it's hard for people to access the services and places that support their wellness needs, whether it's due to physical barriers like unshoveled sidewalks and distance or availability at an affordable price.

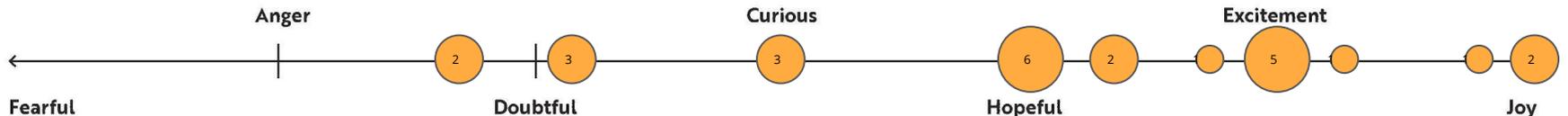
What if all the neighbourhoods became known as destinations for cultural exploration, social businesses, and a great place to live at all stages of life?

WHAT WE HEARD | VIBRANT NEIGHBOURHOODS

During the breakout chats

Participants were mostly high energy and believed that this opportunity area had a lot of potential for positive impact, and referred to *Project Welcome Mat* as a good example. A few participants were on the opposite end of the spectrum - worried about the potential to gentrify neighbourhoods and push marginalized people out. A couple of curious and doubtful participants felt that this topic was more related to the narrative/perceptions. They asked who vibrancy would be for and would you risk damaging the existing cultures, though they liked a few specific ideas related to storage and sleeping. The discussion highlighted the need to be very mindful to be inclusive, to co-design with marginalized people.

How all participants mapped themselves about this idea



COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

There is an informal network of Edmontonians that devote a lot of their time and resources to support their community. Can we make better use of what already exists? How might we tap into the creativity, energy and friendliness that Edmontonians are known for to activate spaces. How might we support them in ways that allow them to keep their autonomy and avoids “institutionalizing” their work?

What if the city provided more support for community grassroots initiatives to spread?

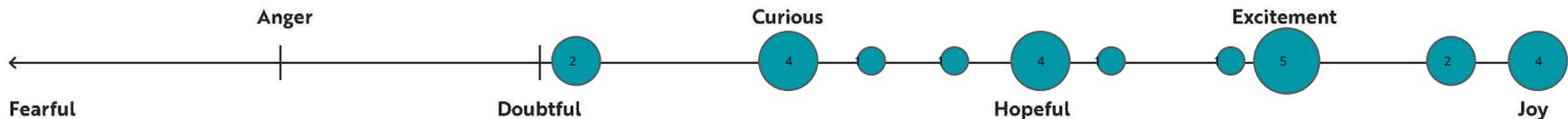
What if we activated the latent human, physical and cultural assets in our communities?

WHAT WE HEARD | COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

During the breakout chats

Generally, participants were excited about the idea of expanding and catalyzing informal community supports support for marginalized people. There was a general consensus that grassroots supports develop organically, leverage local resources and are ultimately more sustainable in the long term. Participants highlighted some of the drawbacks that emerge when City or other levels government get over-involved in grassroots initiatives; participants mentioned issues such as rigorous City of Edmonton funding parameters, which impede smaller community organizations from accessing funding.

How all participants mapped themselves about this idea



OPEN COLLABORATION

There are many amazing organizations serving Edmontonians - what can we do collectively to help ensure people are meeting all of their wellness needs and not falling through the cracks? How might we provide an integrated service? How might we tap into our networks and share data sources across organizations and geographies so that we can leverage each other's insights?

What if we improved coordination between services?

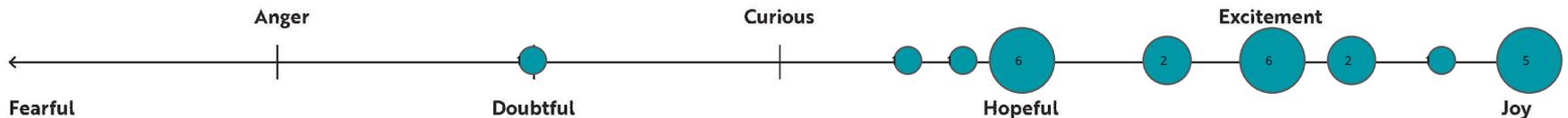
What if we had a platform to share data, information and evidence?

WHAT WE HEARD | OPEN COLLABORATION

During the breakout chats

The majority of participants described themselves as feeling this opportunity would have high impact with a high amount of personal energy to commit to any emergent solutions. They viewed the ideas of increased collaboration and data sharing among agencies supporting vulnerable communities as ideas that would greatly improve formal service supports. Participants indicated that these are ideas that they would be very willing to get involved in and perhaps be part of a prototype team, testing out some of the possible solutions associated with this idea. The discussion around this opportunity also highlighted how Edmonton is one of the cities where social service agencies are working together to improve client outcomes, programs, citing positive examples such as 24/7 Mobile Outreach and the Heavy Users of Services (HUoS) inter-agency networks.

How all participants mapped themselves about this idea





Reflection & Next Steps

REFLECTION

Participants were asked to reflect on **what was promising, puzzling, and most alive** for them during the session.

Overall, people responded with an open mind and open heart to the process we used to make sense of all of the data.

“Start with people where they are in order to reimagine where they could be.”

“Using conversation prompts! Probably works for events like this one too. I have a hard time sharing but prompts always help me.”

“How do you gain enough trust to get folks to tell you their stories?”

“Story returns! Promising”

“Wide data/thick data --> hunches + provocations --> testing/iterating”

“Designing at a granular interaction level, rather than a policy/programming level”

“Does prototyping work for such a broad set of issues as “poverty,” “wellness” or is it best applied in creating multiple iterations of prototypes of a specific program or initiative such as Housing First program?”

Jobs that give people meaning and connect to people's interests and aspirations and abilities

THE WORK AHEAD



So what's next? It's what we've all been waiting for, the fun journey of **prototyping!**

A series of **four co-design workshops** are scheduled for the month of May. **Each co-design workshop will dive in to a different series of opportunity areas.** Everyone is invited to come to any (or all) of the sessions that they are interested in exploring further.

At the co-design workshops, we'll uncover and discover the ideas that emerged from the research that we think might help improve urban wellness. We'll figure out which ideas we're most curious about testing. Then, we'll create teams that will work together in June to test a series of prototypes.

So when are these sessions? Well, we're glad you asked...

THE WORK AHEAD | UPCOMING WORKSHOP DATES

Please join us for any of the sessions
you're interested in!

*New pathways for learning & contributions in
community*

Tuesday May 7, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Roundhouse, 11110 104 Avenue

Expanded and small jobs

Upstream supports & relationship help

Thursday May 9, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Roundhouse, 11110 104 Avenue

A taste of healing & some distance

Sleep Hygiene Regime

Community Supports

Tuesday May 14, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Open Collaboration

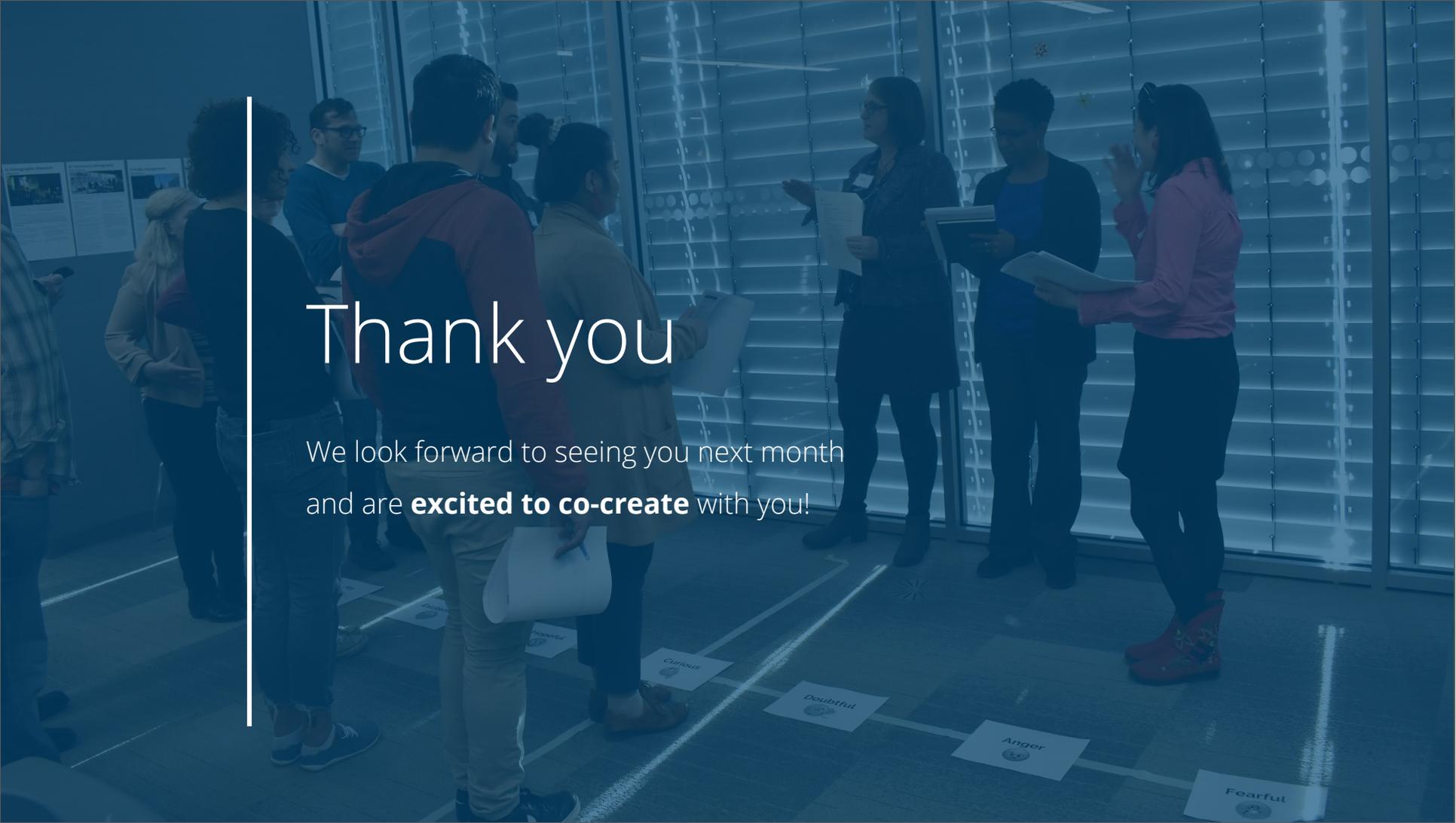
Skills Society Action Lab, 10408, 124
Street

In-home Restarts

Thursday May 16, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Vibrant Neighbourhoods

Roundhouse, 11110 104 Avenue



Thank you

We look forward to seeing you next month
and are **excited to co-create** with you!