

# 2021

## PHASE II

### Output Report



# Collaborative community action on climate change in Nelson

Climate change is a complex and systemic challenge. The health of our community, ecosystems and economy depend on how we respond to it.

In 2021, we saw an unprecedented increase in concern and investment towards adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic caused massive disruptions to our ways of life and challenged the economic and societal health of our communities. This confluence of crises has created momentum to more ambitiously and creatively explore solutions to the many challenges that confront our community.

Nest Lab is a place for Nelson's innovators and influencers to work together to build on this momentum and advance near-term, implementable solutions around this convening question:

*How might we harness Nelson's collective resources and creativity to build our economic and community health through solutions to climate change?*



## Nest Lab at a glance



### Convene community members

From June through December 2021, we convened a diverse group of Nelson community members to explore local issues and prioritize solutions through a series of dynamic and interactive on-line workshops.



### Design and test initiatives

Participants of the Lab developed four initiatives aimed at addressing climate change within a local context. Together we tested and refined the initiatives through a process of rapid prototyping.



### Tackle complex problems

The challenges of climate change are compounded by equally present challenges associated with economic and community health. The Lab applies systems thinking to confront these wicked problems and come up with actionable initiatives.



### Inspire community solutions and actions

The impact of the Nest Lab has gone beyond just the portfolio of initiatives and the participants. Participants have deepened their understanding of climate change, built community connections, and felt empowered by the collaborative, solutions-focused action.

# Background of Nest Lab

The Nest Lab was hatched in 2019 after a series of cross-sectoral community round-table conversations about climate change hosted by Nelson at its Best. Phase I took flight in the spring 2020, with 15 community members participating from April through June. The success of Phase I made it clear that the Nest Lab can and should be used as an ongoing convening tool to engage the broader community around climate change.

Planning for Phase II started in the fall of 2020. Thanks to considerable funding from the Trottier Family Foundation, Phase II was able to take the lessons learned from Phase I and provide a more comprehensive experience with increased support for the participant-led initiatives, including seed funding. The City of Nelson also provided financial support by fully funding the communications campaign and leading the back-end management of the Lab.

In spring 2021, Phase II of the Lab welcomed 23 community members. These participants were selected after a short application process. Special attention and effort was given to ensure that participants represented a diversity of sectors, demographics and viewpoints. Between June and December 2021, there were 10 on-line workshop sessions, 4 social gatherings and innumerable initiative working-group meetings.

## Phase II Nest Lab Team

- George Chandler, Nelson at its Best
- Kady Hunter, Interior Health
- Natalie Douglas, City of Nelson
- Kate Letizia, City of Nelson
- Lauren Rethoret, Selkirk College
- Pong Leung, Travesia Partners
- Steven Cretney, theforest.ca



### What's in a name?

A nest represents safety, security and nourishment. The name "Nest Lab" was suggested by local art therapist Monica Carpendale. The nature-linked name is not an acronym, but deliberately intends to remind us that our efforts to address the climate crisis have to be grounded in caring for the earth.

The Nest Lab strives to be a safe space for relationships and ideas to develop and a nurturing environment that can cultivate the community work that is needed in addressing the climate crisis.



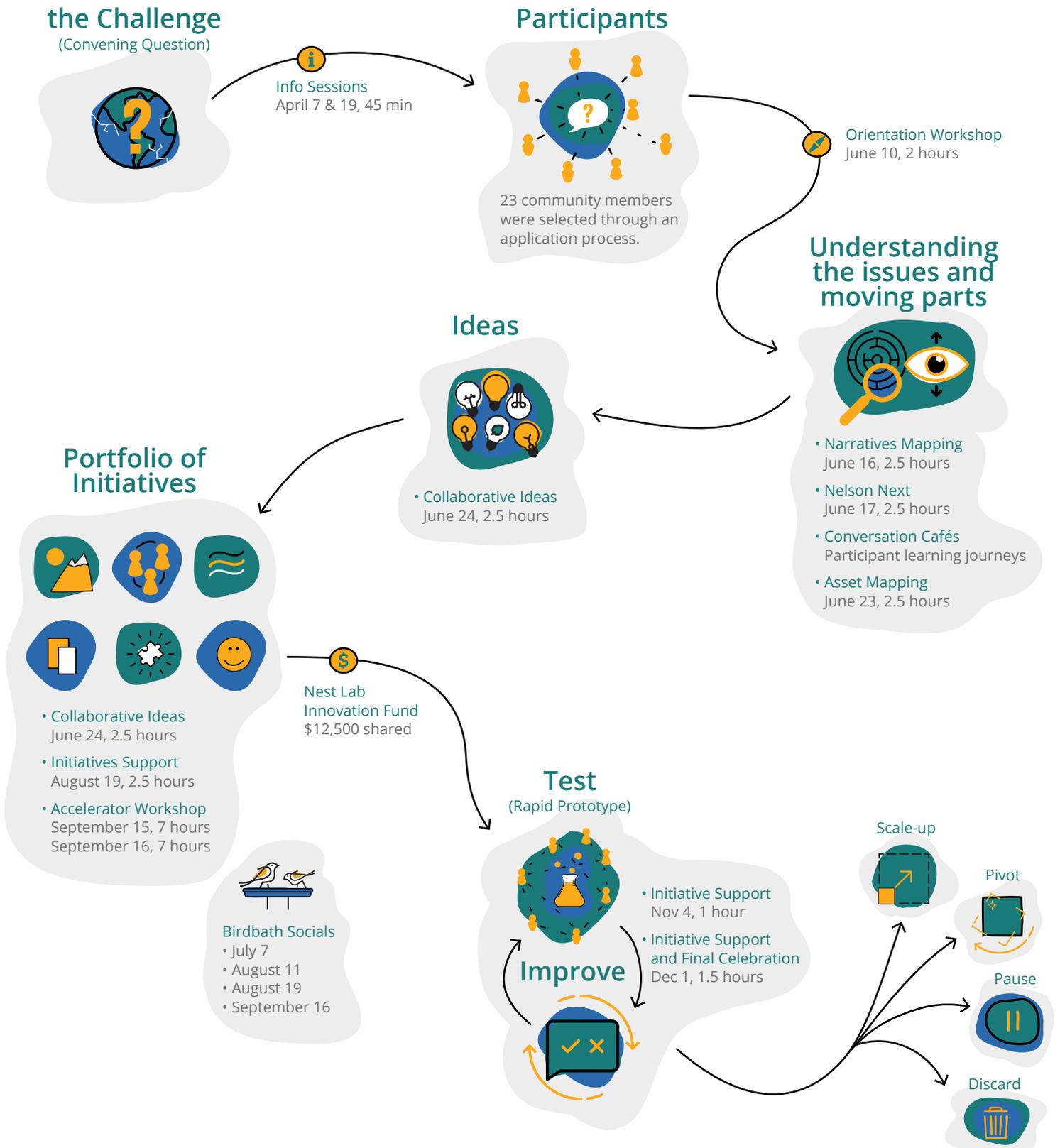
## Convening Partners



## Funders



# Flow of Nest Lab, Phase II





## Workshops & Gatherings

### Info Sessions

April 7 & 19, 45 min

We hosted two virtual webinars for prospective participants looking to learn more about the Nest Lab and the social innovation principles it supports.

### Orientation Workshop

June 10, 2 hours

This workshop saw the 23 successful applicants get acquainted, learn more about the social innovation lab approach, and the plans for what was to come next. Participants connected and built trust through exercises like journaling, “paired walks”, and Zoom breakouts.

A key aspect of this workshop was a deep land acknowledgment exercise. Participants were asked to speak from the heart and consider why their relationship to the land is important to them. Additionally, it was asked that participants actively think through what their role and responsibilities are in creating a future where we actively create partnerships that move us toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Due to the overwhelmingly positive response to this exercise, coupled with the belief of the core team that this is an important component of equitable climate work, a personal land acknowledgment was shared at the start of all following workshop by a different participant or team member.

### Narratives Mapping

June 16, 2.5 hours

Participants explored a range of perspectives, narratives and stakeholders that exist in Nelson related to climate action using the “spectrum of allies” framework. We identified important stakeholders and discussed ways to engage them.

Participants then brainstormed initiatives to shift stakeholders up from “neutral” and “passive allies” toward “active allies”. The stakeholders were categorized within one of the following groups: education, leadership, communication / normalization, co-benefits, partnerships, policy, economic development, and transportation.

## Nelson Next

June 17, 2.5 hours

This workshop sought to deepen participants understanding of climate change in the Nelson context by using the City of Nelson's community climate action plan: *Nelson Next*. Participants really appreciated how thorough *Nelson Next* is and felt it provided a good foundation for work being done in Nest Lab.

Participants worked in small groups to discuss ideas for initiatives that the "Aspirations" of *Nelson Next* spark (e.g., Nelson is a sustainable economy and renewable energy leader).

## Conversation Cafés

Participant learning journey, ~ 1 hour

Participants hosted individual Conversation Cafés with people in their own personal and/or professional networks to engage them on thoughts and ideas for climate action in Nelson.

Highlights for participants included:

Enthusiasm from friends and colleagues for the opportunity to discuss this topic, connecting with others about things that matter to them, hearing from others who are willing to get involved in making things better, lack of awareness and knowledge from workplace colleagues, unexpected shift from nihilism to hopefulness in young adults, see a lot of promise in collaborative action vs individual action, and seeing ideas emerge.

## Asset Mapping

June 23, 2.5 hours

Participants discussed, organized and labeled community assets according to the *Nelson Next* "Aspiration" it may support.

This process was used to inform the brainstorming of collaborative initiative ideas. Participants were encouraged to individually come up with as many ideas as possible ranging from incremental actions to "wacky" ideas.

## Collaborative Ideas

June 24, 2.5 hours

Participants reviewed and added to the collaborative ideas from the previous session, then evaluated them for impact (GHG reduction/mitigation, economic and health co-benefits) and feasibility (personal commitment level, resources and relationships needed, scalability).

The concept of prototyping was introduced and participants self-organized into groups to bring some of the ideas forward.

Participants felt some discomfort making decisions around impact and feasibility but were instructed that they could gather more information during the prototyping stage.

Leaving this session, groups were to work on prototyping their initiative during the summer.



“ The Nest Lab connected me with local professionals and reinvigorated the work I have been doing towards sustainable environmental solutions for years. I found that the *Nelson Next* climate action plan offered helpful guidance for getting started on community led initiatives. It has been a rewarding experience – I highly recommend!

– Colleen Doyle, Executive Director at Kootenay Carshare and Nest Lab Participant

## Initiatives Support

August 19, 2.5 hours

Participants provided updates on their prototype activities and initiatives. Experts / “Faculty members” also attended this session to provide guidance as initiative groups shared feedback and clarified next steps using coaching questions.

## Birdbath Socials

July 7, August 11, August 19, September 16

To help participants develop connections, four optional social events took place. A few were out-door in-person, while the others were on-line. Given that all workshops took place over Zoom, offering these socials provided participants, facilitators and faculty to connect on a more personal level while also maintaining momentum throughout the summer months.

## Accelerator Workshops

September 15, 7 hours  
September 16, 7 hours

Originally intended to be in-person, these workshops moved online due to the COVID-19 situation in Nelson.

After participants shared successes and needs to move their initiatives forward, they worked in their groups to refine their initiative’s vision, problem statement, identity, and action plan to develop a case for support for gaining support and securing additional funding and resources.

“Faculty members” (content experts and community leaders) joined the workshop in the morning of the second day to help groups clarify their objective and refine their case for supports by lending their your expertise and perspective.

Mel Reasoner, a locally-based climate scientist, presented an optional lunch time update on regional climate modeling.

Initiative groups were invited to apply for seed funding through the Nest Lab Innovation Fund. We were able to support the portfolio of initiatives with \$12,500.

## Initiative Support

November 4, 1 hour

This workshop allowed groups to provide peer-to-peer support and share what they need to take their next step.

## Initiative Support and Final Celebration

December 1, 1.5 hours

As this phase of the Nest Lab was coming to an end, this final workshop allowed participants to reflect on their lab journey and share what they most appreciated about it. We celebrated the success of their collaborative work with watching the final initiative videos and providing updates on the initiatives as the groups take flight from the nest.

“ I am so impressed by the energy, creativity and commitment of the participants of the Nest Lab, who have navigated through complex challenges of climate change, economic and community health to test and launch community action. My involvement with the Nest Lab makes me more hopeful that we as a community have the collaborative power and potential to make change.

– Kady Hunter, Interior Health and Nest Lab Convening Partner



# Participant-led Initiatives

This portfolio of participant-led initiatives was heavily influenced by participants gaining an improved understanding of Nelson's emission profile. After initial brainstorming took place, participants evaluated the ideas based on impact (GHG reductions, adaptation, economic and health co-benefits) and feasibility (personal commitment level, resources and relationships needed). Here are the four initiatives that were developed as part of Nest Lab Phase II:



## Low Speed Electric Vehicles

Transportation is the leading source of green house gas emissions in Nelson. Low Speed Electric Vehicles can be part of the solution – *low speeds for most needs.*



[Watch short video about the Low Speed Electric Vehicle initiative.](#)

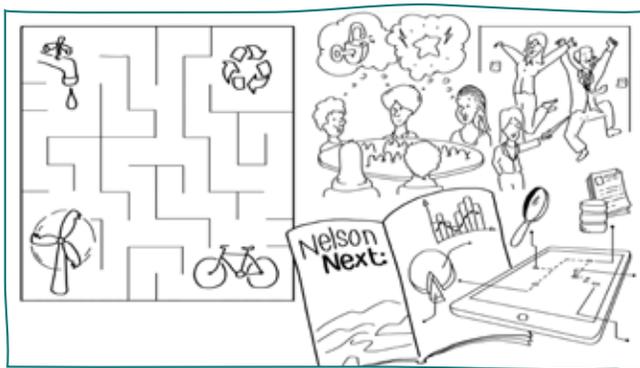


## Kootenay Hydrokinetic

As we transition away from GHG-emitting forms of energy, there is a need to increase our renewable energy supply. Small-scale, hydrokinetic turbines can deliver a local clean energy solution.



[Watch short video about the hydrokinetic initiative.](#)

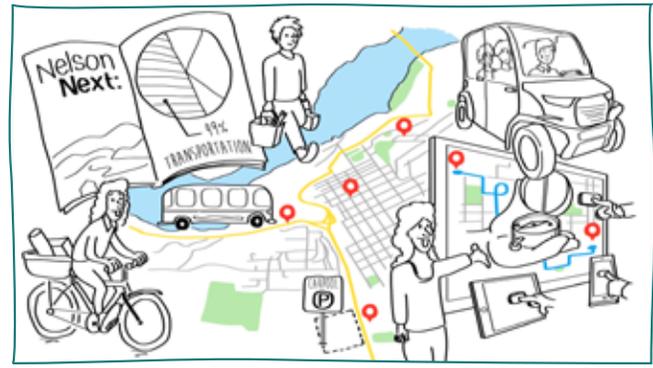


## iCAN Business

iCAN Business (Climate Action Nelson) is an initiative being developed to provide Nelson organizations climate action training and support.



[Watch short video about the iCAN Business initiative.](#)



## Low Impact Transportation Map

Low impact transportation solutions exist in Nelson. The LIT Map will make it easier to access and plan low impact transportation options.



[Watch short video about the LIT map initiative.](#)





## Participant Feedback

The Nest Lab was evaluated through a series of online feedback forms and open discussions throughout its duration. The intention was to support participation and facilitation of Phase II by surfacing and interpreting challenges as they happened, measuring the lab's impact, and identifying improvement for future iterations of the Lab.

Overall, participants felt the Nest Lab was a valuable, positive experience – shown by an average 'satisfaction score' of 4.14/5 (83%). Over half (64%) of the participants want to be engaged in future iterations of the Nest Lab (i.e., via organizing, recruiting, faculty, mentoring, facilitating, etc.). Over half the participants are fully (36%) or partially (50%) committed to continue working on their Nest Lab initiative.

- Feedback indicates that the Nest Lab does a good job of being inclusive, both in terms of convening a diverse group of community members and stakeholders, as well as accommodating individual needs in learning and engagement. The Lab had a good balance of experiences and ideas shared by participants, alongside the inclusion of outside experts like the Nest Lab faculty and presentations. Participants shared thanks for the Lab in bringing everyone together, providing opportunities to bond and connect, and making the online experience personal.
- There was great value in learning about climate change in the Nelson context, specifically being guided towards a greater awareness of *Nelson Next*, the City's community climate action plan.
- Participants appreciated the organized and engaging facilitation. In particular, they valued the way that the facilitators guided, supported, and shepherded the group with encouragement, resources, and clear communication throughout the process.

### Suggestions from participants to enhance the experiences for the next phase include:

- Some found it challenging to participate over Zoom for extended periods of time, although most recognize that in-person workshops were not feasible due to the pandemic. More non-screen activities, like the "walk & talks", and more time for small-group breakouts with less large-group check-ins were some suggestions.
- Additional time for the project-generating stage, with more opportunities to discuss and consider the pros and cons of ideas, doing multiple rounds of brainstorming, and allowing space for ideas to "ferment" would help reduce feelings of being rushed into selecting a project and might even result in ideas with a tighter scope.
- Having a dedicated Nest Lab team member placed in each initiative group might help with faster implementation and offer more direct support in obtaining further financial supports (i.e., grant writing etc.).
- Should elected officials be involved? While several participants shared that having city councilors participate as Faculty in the Lab was really helpful, there was also a comment that their involvement was divisive and not effective.
- The time spent working in groups on initiatives was far greater than some participants had expected or could fully commit to. Time estimates for group initiative work might want to be included up front.

## Next Steps

The response to the second phase of the Nest Lab was very positive, both from participants and from community members. The City of Nelson presented the Nest Lab with a *2021 Sustainability Leadership Award* and thanked the Lab for our “outstanding contribution to our community and hopes the Nest Lab will continue”. Other communities have reached out wanting to know how they can run similar social innovation labs in their areas, and there have been initial conversations about the feasibility and value of expanding the focus of Nest Lab beyond Nelson to create a more regional approach.

We are now pursuing funding for an additional two years. The next stage of the Nest Lab will prioritize building capacity to host the Lab indefinitely, including training local facilitators, and compiling a toolkit so the structure of Nest Lab can be replicated in other communities. We will continue to connect the Lab with existing local programs, infrastructure and organizations to help on-going community participation in solutions that align with *Nelson Next*.



George Chandler and Steven Cretney accept the *2021 Sustainability Leadership Award* on behalf of Nest Lab from Mayor John Dooley in December, 2021.



“ The second phase of the Nest Lab proved once again that committed people in our community have both the interest and capacity to take local action, including generating practical projects that help solve pieces of the climate crisis—while simultaneously cultivating hope.

– George Chandler, Nelson at its Best and Nest Lab Convening Partner



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