

**Project Title:** The Creativity Lab

**Project Lead:** Anna Griffith

**Project Team Members:** Hannah Celinski, Luke Pardy (RA), Kyla Mitchell-Marquis (RA)

**UFV Faculty Focus Group Participants:** Karin Jager (Graphic and Digital Design), Aimée Henny Brown (Visual Arts), Masud Khawaja (School of Business), Nicole Stewart (Communications), Mary Gene Saudelli (Professional Studies), Kerry Johnson (English Language Studies), Renee Prasad (Agriculture Technology), Marcella LaFever (Communications), Amir Shabani (Computer Science), and Alida Janmaat (Biology).

### **Project Overview:**

Our project began with asking the question How can interdisciplinary creativity be facilitated and what constitutes effective practices in the facilitation of creativity in interdisciplinary teams in higher education? We began the study with a Faculty Focus Group comprised of 10 faculty from different disciplines at UFV who discussed how creativity is defined, taught or fostered, measured, and assessed within their specific disciplines. The focus group was transcribed and coded by Anna Griffith using in vivo coding and grounded theory. From the data generated we compiled a “toolkit” of best practices that foster creativity. From this toolkit, however, a new guiding question emerged: How can we promote creative idea generation in transdisciplinary groups? This tweaked research question was the guiding force in the development of the Creativity Lab Facilitation Framework and the subsequent iterations of it that developed.

Our project had originally been conceived to be in-person, face-to-face, but with Covid-19 it had to move to an online format. We chose to keep the focus group and all Labs limited to 90 minutes while online. The condensed time proved to be challenging, and in our Year 2 work we will host the Labs in-person and each will be 2.5–3 hours in length. The goal of each Lab was to produce creative, transdisciplinary solutions or avenues for further exploration that would address the problem. Each Lab was comprised of students (both domestic and international) and faculty from UFV.

### **Methodological Approach:**

Using an inquiry-based, qualitative approach, we explored our research question following a dialectal paradigm of qualitative research. We combined multiple methods and perspectives in order to create breadth and depth within the research and consider competing perspectives, definitions, ideas, and arguments. This is important since broad ideas like creativity mean something different to every discipline. Our approach recognized a constructivist orientation of knowledge related to interdisciplinary creativity in higher education and effective practices of facilitation. We see understanding and knowledge created through experience and reflection on experiences. The methodological approach we took can be best described as constructivist grounded theory that employed in vivo coding and manual coding of non-text artifacts such as doodles and drawings.

**Creativity Lab Framework:**

The Creativity Lab Facilitation Framework for Lab 1 was developed out of the data from the “toolkit.” The activities, scaffolding, and facilitation script were designed to enhance transdisciplinary creative idea generation. We tested the Framework in Lab 1 where participants worked on a complex problem about supporting clients facing multiple barriers to employment, offered to us by the Mission Community Skills Centre. After Lab 1 participants reflected on their experiences and the Framework. We took this feedback as well as data from a university-wide survey about teaching creativity and made adjustments to the Framework, which we tested in Lab 2. Lab 2 was focused on a broad question about food insecurity offered by Kyle Baillie in his capacity as Executive Director of Student Affairs. At the end of Lab 2, we again solicited feedback from the participants and conducted a literature review focused on enhancing creativity in digital spaces. This data was used to inform the adjustments to the Framework, which was tested in Lab 3. The participants worked on a more specific question about food insecurity at UFV developed out of the original question from Kyle Baillie. They offered final reflective feedback at the end of Lab 3 and the research team also offered post-project reflections, which were used to generate our conclusions.

**Description of the degree to which the goals of the proposal were achieved:**

The goals of our original FIT proposal included the following learning outcomes:

- Collaborate with students and faculty from across UFV to find creative solutions to a problem;
- Identify key components of creativity within individual disciplines and pedagogical approaches;
- Report on how creativity is framed, taught, and practiced within individual disciplines;
- Identify themes, contradictions, and best-practices that run across disciplines;
- Combine knowledge to construct a toolkit for facilitating creativity in interdisciplinary environments;
- Develop creative teamwork across disciplines and between UFV faculty, staff, administration, and students;
- Create opportunity for flexible, agile learning.

Although Covid meant that we needed to re-imagine a digital version of our project, all of the project outcomes were met. The Faculty Focus Group generated a “toolkit” of best practices which was then transformed and used as inspiration for the first iteration of the Creativity Lab Framework. Lab participants worked on complex, real-world problems and developed actionable solutions to them. The Framework developed through this project enhances cohesive, collaborative idea building. The Creativity Lab project is extending into a second year (funded by the Strategic Initiatives Fund) and will expand to include participants from local communities, Indigenous groups, and businesses of the Fraser Valley. In addition, Anna Griffith has written a draft article for publication that details the findings from Year 1. This article contains a detailed report of the project, the iterations of the Creativity Lab Framework, and includes the voices of participants and the research team.