

# Exchange Lab Partnership Agreement

For program areas applying for a residency at the Exchange Lab, this partnership agreement outlines **requirements for entering the lab and the expectations for partnership.**

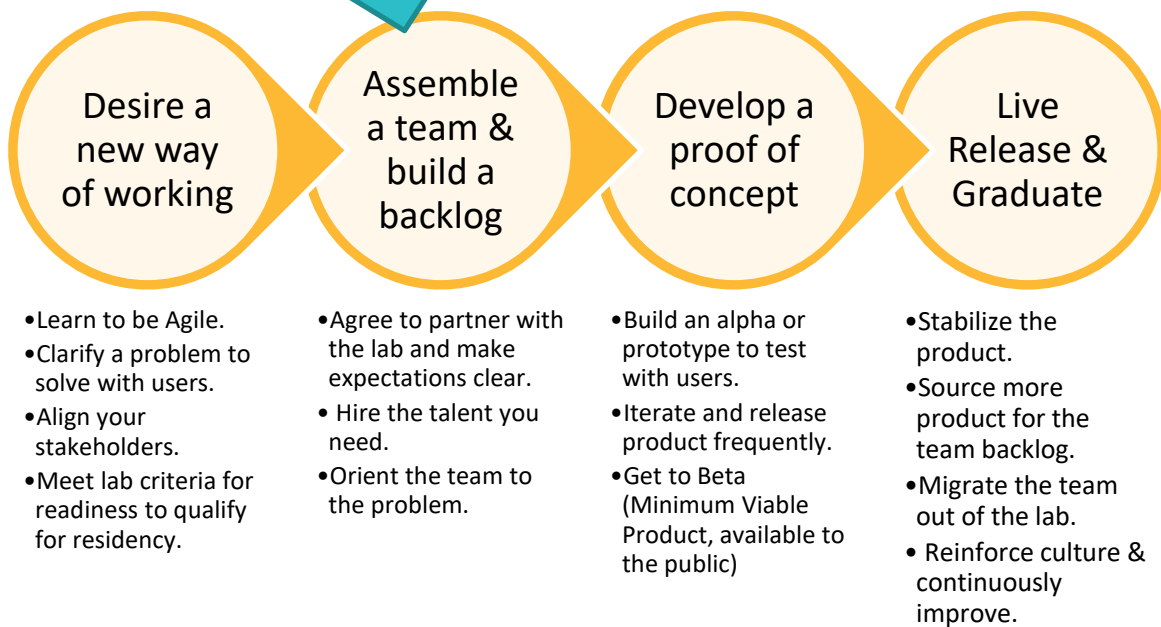
**Ministry:**

**Business Area:**

**Proposed Product:**

This document is a template for BC Public Service programs to work from in reaching an agreement on partnership with the Exchange Lab – an organization within the Office of the Chief Information Office, in the Ministry of Citizen's Services.

If you are considering signing this agreement, you might be here.



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# Partners in Continuous Service Improvement

Each of the individuals listed below are sponsors and champions of the product team. Each person will become familiar with this agreement so they can support the team in this new endeavor.

Champions might include subject matter professionals or agencies with aligned mandates who are informing the Product Owner of what to consider prioritizing in the team's backlog. We also refer to this group of people as an "Alliance team." They are expected to regularly attend sprint reviews.

Partners are asked to read this entire agreement, discuss any points of misalignment, and communicate to the Product Owner or Executive Sponsor their level of clarity and comfort.

	Discussion and Agreement date
<b>Continuous Service Improvement Lab</b>	
Rumon Carter, Executive Director of the Exchange Lab and the BC Developers Exchange	
Heather Remacle, A/Director of Exchange Lab Operations	
<b>Business Area</b>	
Assistant Deputy Minister:	
Executive Director:	
Product Owner:	
<b>Other Key Champions – Alliance Team</b>	
Consider partners in service delivery including policy development, IM/IT, privacy and security professionals.	



# How Product Teams Qualify

Is your team ready to apply the mindset and methods of Agile product development? Teams that are invited to the Exchange Lab demonstrate a need for acceleration towards this new way of working, but **they are ready for the challenge**. This includes teams from organizations that do not yet have Agile or Continuous Service Improvement capacity or culture, yet a desire to work differently and champions in the right places.

There are also expectations related to the nature of the product, as the Lab is designed to support the development of Agile teams and digital products, or products that advance the delivery of government's Digital Framework (see [digital.gov.bc.ca](https://digital.gov.bc.ca)).

Prior to coming to the lab, and signing this agreement, teams must establish the potential product is:

- **Solving a real problem:** Enough service analytics and/or user research has confirmed the users needs requires development of a new product.
- **Priority for the Ministry:** receives funding, requires timely delivery, is connected to mandate, and generally has the attention of the senior executive.
- **Complex:** requires focused attention to define the problem and explore and test solutions using Agile methods.
- **Digital:** requires a digital or online expression (this may also lead to policy and procedure changes) or advances broader government digital objectives.
- **Broadly valued:** includes at least one business capability that serves the needs of other program areas, such that the product built can be leveraged by others.
- **Continuous:** will deliver value into the foreseeable future, such that a program will dedicate a team to continuously improve the product after it leaves the Lab.

These qualifying conditions are to be confirmed PRIOR to the signing of this partnership agreement. **A Value Canvas** is an appropriate document for facilitating a conversation about readiness with Lab Leadership.

**Note:** A team is not an "organization" – it is nine people or less solving ONE problem. Residency under this agreement is limited to one team per organization.



# Exchange Lab Investment

## What Teams Receive

The Office of the Chief Information Officer spends between approximately \$50,000 and \$100,000 per month to host teams who receive value from:

- Dedicated team space for up to a year
- Basic office provisions
- Access to and support for a Developer Operations platform (OpenShift)
- A Lab Operations team who facilitate training, coaching, and culture change.

This cost is covered by the OCIO.

Lab teams get additional value through the support of an experienced and diverse community of Agile and DevOps practitioners.

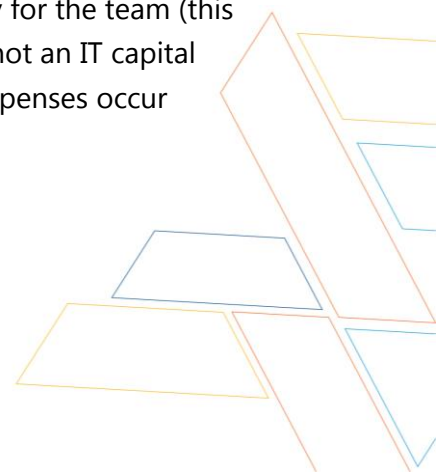
## Experts in Residence

The Exchange Lab is partnered with the OCIO, Government Experience Division (GDX), the Public service Agency, and other Ministries to invest in the success of product teams. Public sector experts ("Experts on Tap") are available to teams, offering guidance in:

- Service Design
- Innovation practices
- Privacy and Security
- Behavioural Insights
- Integrated Data
- Social Media
- Developer Operations
- Agile mindset and methods

## The Cost of a Team

Senior leadership and lab project teams should budget for \$800k-1.3M to pay for the team (this includes staff and contractors, as well as continuous training). \$800K-1.3M is not an IT capital budget number – it means "being able to pay for the team" however those expenses occur (salary, contract fees, training, etc.).



It is common for vendor teams to be procured through “Sprint With Us” (BCDevexchange.org) and multiple vendors may work on a single team. Some teams also commit early (at start-up) to hiring developers and other digital talent.

While the Exchange Lab pays for physical space at the lab, hosting/platform costs, Lab operations, and some training, Ministries are expected to pay for unique resources, including:

- Specialty office equipment and supplies, including computer hardware
- Special software
- Training not offered freely by the Lab

**Please note:** *the approach to funding a modern organization that includes digital talent and product management is new. Partners across the BC Public service are working together to make this process easier... but we're not there yet. We do have lots of teams to learn from.*

## Benchmarks for Success

We have found that shared benchmarks set the stage for mutual success.

The Exchange Lab is committed to working with each team to create a partnership that leads to a high performing Continuous Service Improvement team, a solid deliverable for the business area, and a framework for using new tools and approaches.

These benchmarks create realistic expectations, and most importantly, they set lab teams up to be successful. Experience has shown that to be most successful there must be a combined partnership between the lab, ministry Information Management Branches (IMBs), ministry executive and the business area.

## Leaders learn and support each other

Senior leadership (DM, ADM, EDs, Directors) will support the team working in a new way. Lab teams:

- use Agile methods,
- work in the open,
- use open source code and tools, and
- be able and willing collaborators.

This new way of working requires that leaders support their people in ways that are typically unfamiliar to most Ministries.



As part of the change management necessary to support this corporate initiative:

- a. All leadership partners and champions will accept training offered by the Exchange Lab (between 3 hours and 2 days, depending on role) to support this accountability.
- b. ADMs will act as project champions and sponsors –including socializing the work done at the lab within their ministry;
- c. A team of committed, innovative partners made up of members of the business area (ED/D), as well as the CIO, work together to ensure success.

## Trust your People

Senior leaders that create the conditions for teams to have autonomy and alignment with organizational goals will enable high performing teams in this complex environment. Autonomy requires that traditional approval structures are evaluated for their ability to do the same and are adjusted as necessary.

Additionally, leaders must empower team members, in particular, Product Owners/Managers; especially around funding and approvals.

Why? The product manager should be able to decide how to spend project funding without incurring the time delay of seeking approvals. Teams produce on a two to three-week sprint schedule so delays for funding are delays for producing a working product.

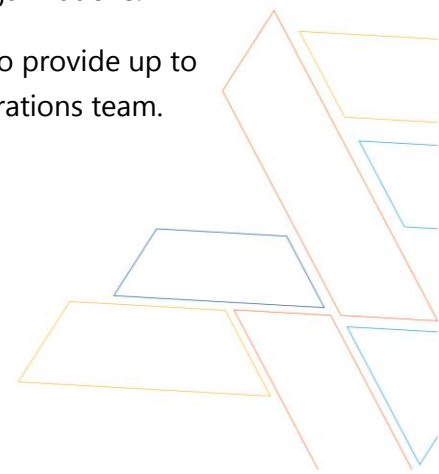
This quick cycle of releasing value is beneficial to managing risk given smaller increments. Where products fail to meet expectations, teams are trusted to quickly adjust.

## Lab Culture and Collaboration

As part of their journey at the lab, teams “pay it forward” to new teams and provide mentorship, learning events and advice as they reach maturity.

Openness and sharing are critical to success for the teams and builds capacity from within. Through collaborating with the community, we can form cross-functional, exemplar product teams that can bring their experiences and knowledge back to their home organizations.

Experienced internal government team members, on occasion, will be asked to provide up to one full day of Agile training workshops, organized by the Exchange Lab Operations team.



## Standards and Community Code

The BCDevExchange community constantly improves the support and guidance for custom code development in government. Every team is expected to use the DevHub ([developer.gov.bc.ca](http://developer.gov.bc.ca)) to efficiently kick-start and to contribute feedback and resources as they discover improvements.

As government continues to improve its approach to custom software development, teams will be immersed in the learning and building that results from an active and collaborative community. The DevHub will serve as the primary source of guidance for the community on matters that have been standardized, such as the API guidelines.

Where teams discover new or better ways of delivering, they will be encouraged to contribute this learning back to the community.

## Co-Location

The team will work together in the same space. This maximizes the team's ability to deliver.

While there are business requirements to be away from the office at times, it is expected that the team will primarily reside at the Lab. This is also important given the investment in and demand for team space.

A discussion about remote work is always welcome, particularly if the team has demonstrated maturity in their application of Agile and are high performing.

### **A note on flexibility:**

The Lab Operations team will make every effort to minimize disruptions to teams, however, there is an expectation that teams will be willing to move around within the lab environment. This is due to the flexibility we maintain in building teams as we learn what they need. Teams will grow and shrink. Additionally, we onboard at various times of the year, which can lead to shifting space.

## Build Internal Capacity

Every potential lab team should have a minimum of two or more team members who are government employees from the business area and/or ministry Information Management Branch (or equivalent).

In particular, the business area will need to supply a product owner that has been trained in Agile methods.





The Exchange Lab's mandate is to build capacity in the public service for digital capabilities and to improve services to the public. Unlike traditional "Waterfall IT" projects, Exchange Lab teams are an integrated unit that produce results continuously and need a business area expert on hand to guide decisions on a daily basis.

Teams are expected to be kept together after final releases and graduation from the Lab. The commitment to a team results in fostering this new way of working across their home organization.

## Time to Learn

Each lab team and their senior leadership team should have the expectation of a period of learning and development, before expecting demonstrable results or a working product.

During this time, lab team members work exclusively in the lab and need to feel supported and released from their day to day duties to focus on the project.

The new approach for working at the lab takes time to learn and master. The Agile methodology challenges existing concepts for delivery and to be realistic and supportive of this knowledge leap, teams need the freedom to start small so they can eventually build better, faster and with higher quality.

## Default: Working in the Open

Teams are expected to build products in the open, using open source code. Where possible, data sets are also expected to be open.

Potential Lab projects should not involve very sensitive privacy and security requirements or needs.

There is flexibility here, but if privacy overrides the open nature of working at the Exchange Lab then research, discussion and a plan for alignment will be necessary to establish a compromise that works for all the parties involved.

The goal here is to create the right conditions for early adopters of Exchange Lab methods to be successful, so we can learn how to do this in government, and special privacy requirements may challenge this goal.



## Track your Journey

Potential Lab teams will participate in (minimal) information gathering/reporting towards cross government capacity.

As part of using technology as an enabler and working in the open, it's important to share any new products/services created in an aggregated way, for use by future teams and/or other ministries. Being in the Lab means being part of a community and sharing our findings leads transformation across government.

It is also critical to share the journey with the rest of the home organization that will support the team to be sustained after the Lab.

## Financial and Administrative Tasks

The Exchange Lab will support your team with regards to physical location, training, mentorship, coaching and the Openshift platform during residency. However, there are some financial and administrative functions that the product teams home ministry must maintain responsibility over.

Below is a list (not limited to) of some common functions that should be planned for.

- Contract management – this includes all required forms and approvals and administration
- Payment of contracted resources
- Administrative functions including iStore requests, government on-boarding requirements
- Privacy Impact Assessments (PIA) and Security Threat Risk Assessment (STRA) for your program/product
- Software licences or subscriptions
- Team HR needs

## Graduating from the Lab

By the time the team has produced their final “live” release, there must be a plan in place to re-integrate that team back to their home ministry. We call this “Graduation” and it should happen **within a year**.

The investment in a high performing team is significant and they are your greatest asset.



Our ideal situation is that this high performing team stays together. They could continue to address feature requests and maintenance needs continuously while taking on new products as part of a portfolio in the home agency.

Not all organizations will take the same approach to this, especially as vendors typically are part of the team at the start of the journey. It is wise to consider how a team might shift over time to be operational, while not disrupting performance too much.

## Flexibility of Terms

The expectations outlined in this agreement are the results of lessons learned from previous residencies, as well as the desired outcomes for advancing digital government the OCIO is seeking to achieve.

While partners are expected to meet these expectations, it is understood that we operate in a complex environment.

Should any party to this agreement be challenged to meet these expectations, a timely conversation will be held with the following individuals:

- ADM
- Executive Director
- Product Owner
- Exchange Lab Leadership
- Champions
- Partners

## Pivoting away from the Lab

If any party should be unable to meet the expectations outlined in this document (or some future version), a decision will be made to pivot a team away from the Lab Residency.

The Lab is a sensitive habitat for people learning to work in a new way and is a significant investment by the OCIO. The Leadership of the Exchange Lab will have the ultimate say in pivoting teams away from the Lab.

Every reasonable effort will be made to support the people involved in making this transition, should it be required.

