Observatory of
Public Sector Innovation

What's possible? Finding and filtering innovative ideas

ALPHA VERSION: FOR DISCUSSION AND COMMENT

The Observatory of Public Sector Innovation collects and analyses examples and shared experiences of public sector innovation to provide practical advice to countries on how to make innovation work.

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BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

An OECD public sector innovation lifecycle study on idea generation

Intent: The intent of this study is to explore how public sector organisations and public servants can find and filter ideas to solve problems where a new approach might be needed.

Audience: It has been written for:

- Senior leaders who are looking to develop innovation capability within their organisations
- Those departments and teams that have, or that are developing, formal innovation strategies
- Individual public servants seeking to innovate, or promote innovation, within their organisations.

Alpha Version – March 2017

This study is the second in a series of studies looking at the innovation lifecycle. This series of studies is being undertaken by the OECD and funded under a European Commission Horizon 2020 grant.

This study, looking at the generating ideas stage of the innovation process, has been drafted as an 'alpha' version of the intended product. This 'early release' has been undertaken with the aim of seeking input from the intended audience to ensure the final product will meet the needs of public servants and their organisations.

After feedback has been obtained and refinements made, an improved 'beta' version will be released, with the intent of seeking further advice and feedback. It is intended that a more definitive version will then be published after the finalisation of the other studies in this innovation lifecycle study series.

Further information about this work can be found on the Observatory of Public Sector Innovation website.

Report 'Cheat Sheet' – Key Points

Is this report for me?

If you are in the public sector and want to know more about how you or your organisation can come up with new and better ideas, then yes, this report is for you.

What really is idea generation?

Ideas are alternative notions of what might be possible – e.g. a different way of doing something, a different way of thinking, or a different way of working.

Coming up with ideas is relatively easy – anyone can have ideas, and there are lots of tools and methods for coming up with more. But how do you know which ideas are worth looking at further? Basically idea generation is about these two things:

- how you come up with new ideas (finding ideas)
- how you work out which of those you should investigate, test and develop further (filtering ideas).

Why does idea generation matter?

Idea generation matters because the process you use will:

- shape the ideas that come forward
- influence which ideas rise to the top of the pile
- impact how the ideas are received by decision-makers, stakeholders and citizens.

In turn, these things will influence which ideas are tested and acted upon, which will shape what gets invested in and done, which will determine how (or whether) the ideas achieve their aim(s). **Section 2** of the report discusses these issues.

Hasn't ideas generation always happened? If so, why do we need to do anything differently?

Yes, the public sector has always come up with and prioritised ideas. However the public sector now operates in a different world, one where it has to be much more collaborative, and where it is expected to engage much more with the ideas of others. This has implications for how the public sector undertakes idea generation. **Section 3** of the report looks more closely at this changed context.

So what does that mean for me? What might I need to do?

Effective idea generation requires an understanding of four things:

- What's involved in finding and filtering ideas? Anyone can come up with ideas, but there are elements of the idea generation process that will influence what you come up with. What determines whether you come up with the right sorts of ideas for the problem and the context? **Section 4** examines these issues in-depth
- What supports an environment and process that will effectively find and filter ideas? Your ability and opportunity to come up with ideas is going to be shaped by your environment.

What are the factors that can help ensure a good idea generation process? **Section 5** explores some of the relevant conditions

- Who are the contributors of ideas to your organisation, and through what channels might those ideas come? The ideas generated are going to be shaped by those you connect with and the means by which you interact with them. Who is your organisation getting its ideas from, and how? **Section 6** suggests some different categorisations of contributors and channels
- What are the tools you use to engage people with the process of generating ideas? There are a lot of different tools and methods that can be used. Which tools are useful for what things? **Section 7** provides an assessment of the contributions that different methods can make.

This report is an 'alpha' version – does that mean it's not finished?

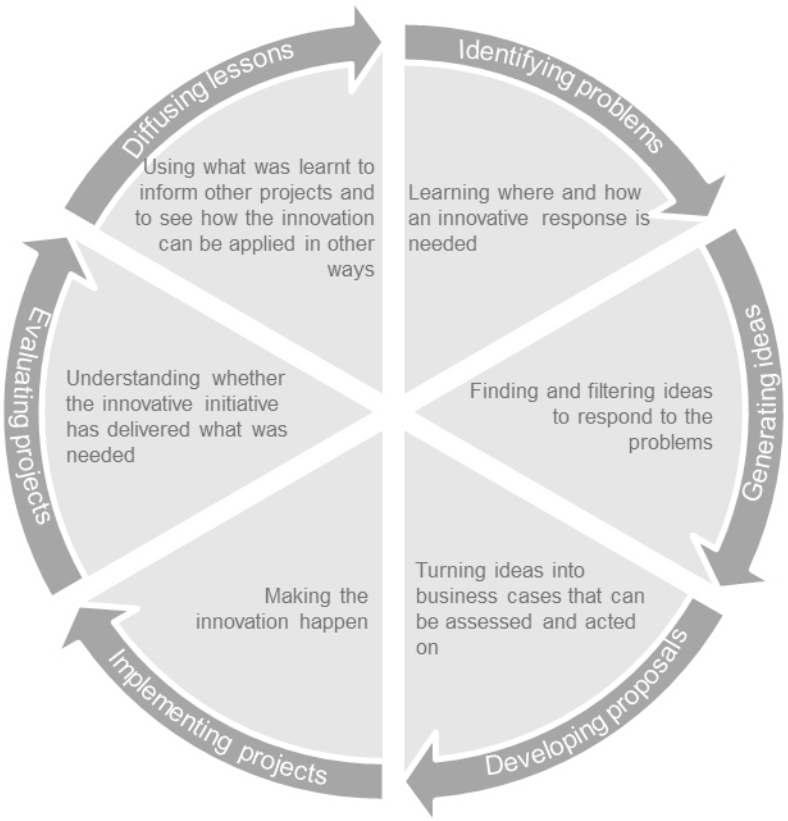
We have developed this report as an alpha version because we want to test that we are on the right track. In software, an alpha version is the early, not fully developed version. With this report, an alpha version means that it is the version that explores the issues, but does not yet make a judgement on which are the most important. It is open to critique and for readers to say "that's not right", or "that doesn't fit with my experience". The alpha version is an invitation to share your experiences, to share your thoughts, and to share your stories. This will allow us to develop a beta version, and then a final version, in which we better identify what really matters and why, illustrated by relevant stories and examples that show how idea generation happens.

Executive Summary

For a range of reasons, public sector organisations need to become more sophisticated at innovation – the implementation of novel ideas that have an impact. This report is the second of a series of studies being conducted by the OECD with the support of the European Commission to look at the fundamentals of the innovation lifecycle. The aim of these studies is to understand what helps or hinders at the different stages of the innovation process, and how and when different innovation tools can be useful, and under what conditions.

This study looks at the second stage of the innovation lifecycle – how to generate ideas.

Figure 1: The Innovation Lifecycle



Idea Generation

In the innovation process, ideas are alternative possibilities of how things might be. Idea generation is a structured process for both finding (comping up with or sourcing from elsewhere) and filtering (screening and prioritising) ideas. It can be a large process involving people from multiple countries, or it can be something that is done quickly by one person at their desk with a scrap of paper. Idea generation may often be a quick process, but that only makes it more important to understand what is involved in effective finding and filtering of ideas.

Idea generation matters because it will affect the rest of the innovation process. An innovation process that acts on the wrong sorts of ideas will be one that will have difficulty in successfully making things better.

A Changed Context

One of the longstanding roles of the public sector has been coming up with new ideas and mediating between different possibilities of what could be done. However the context for the public sector has changed, and governments need to be both faster and more collaborative in their consideration of ideas. Idea generation is now often much more open, involving more people and perspectives, and governments are often confronted with a multitude of ideas rather than a shortfall.

Effective Finding and Filtering of Ideas

There are a number of aspects to the core process of finding and filtering ideas including appreciating the appetite for ideas, understanding that different problems require different sorts of ideas, having criteria for filtering ideas, and ensuring that the idea generation effort is a repeatable process. The report outlines some of the core consideration in finding and filtering ideas for problems that require a novel response by the public sector.

Enabling Effective Finding and Filtering of Ideas

How does an organisation support the effective finding and filtering of ideas? There are number of aspects identified, including factors such as confronting the status quo, leadership, having a clear sense of the problem, having involved decision makers, legitimacy, political engagement and diversity. This report suggests that these aspects can be grouped into three broad categories – innovation maturity, respect for systems, and respect for system players. While no idea generation process will likely address all aspects equally, knowledge of each can help ensure that the process does not overlook anything.

Contributors and Channels for Ideas

While ideas can come from anywhere (and anybody), a number of categories of contributors are suggested as well as some likely channels by which their ideas or perspectives will reach an organisation. This may assist organisations to reflect on who ideas are coming from, how, and what that might signify about existing idea generation, and where additional focus might be needed, including through the use of supplementary tools or methods.

Tools for Ideas

There are many tools available to help with finding new ideas, and some of these tools also assist with the filtering of ideas. Yet which tools are most useful for which aspects of idea generation? This report examines a number of tools and considers their contribution for the following criteria:

- Help foster legitimacy
- Challenge assumptions and better define the problem
- Provide new insight into what's possible (including existing solutions)
- Identify and build on ideas (including filtering out poor ideas)
- Provide insight into how ideas may play out
- Contribute to support and ownership of ideas.

A Work in Progress

This report, as an alpha version, is a work in progress. It is intended that the report will be refined in response to feedback, before being released as a beta version, and then a final. Feedback is welcomed.

Contents

1. Introduction

Governments operate in a world of change (and sometimes turmoil) where there are increasing or changing expectations from citizens about what public services are and can be. As new possibilities are demonstrated around the world – by other governments, by industry or not-for-profits, in consumer products and in services – there is a legitimate expectation by citizens that their own governments can and will do better. If, or when, such expectations are unmet, the level of trust in public institutions and the corresponding faith in their ability to deliver will suffer.

Governments are also operating in a world of constraints (financial, political and legal). Rarely is it the case that governments can simply mandate for something to be or spend their way out of a problem. Governments need to become more effective and more productive, to make the most of the resources they do have. To achieve an increase in effectiveness and productivity will require changing how things are done.

Government also face the challenge that they cannot act alone and that many problems (e.g. obesity) require the active participation of citizens if there is to be progress. So governments need to look to new ways of thinking and doing if they are to achieve better results, and many of these new ways will involve a changed, and potentially more inclusive, relationship with citizens.

For these reasons and more, the public sector is faced with a need to do things differently. That means doing new things (and stopping old ones), thinking about things in new ways (and ceasing to think in old ways), and organising and working with others differently. That means innovation – the implementation of novel ideas that have an impact (OECD, 2015: 14).

1.1 OECD and European Commission Studies on the Innovation Lifecycle

The OECD is undertaking a series of studies to better understand the innovation process. This series of studies, funded under the European Commission's Horizon 2020 program, aims to take stock and review what is known, identify possible gaps in that knowledge, and to provide guidance about:

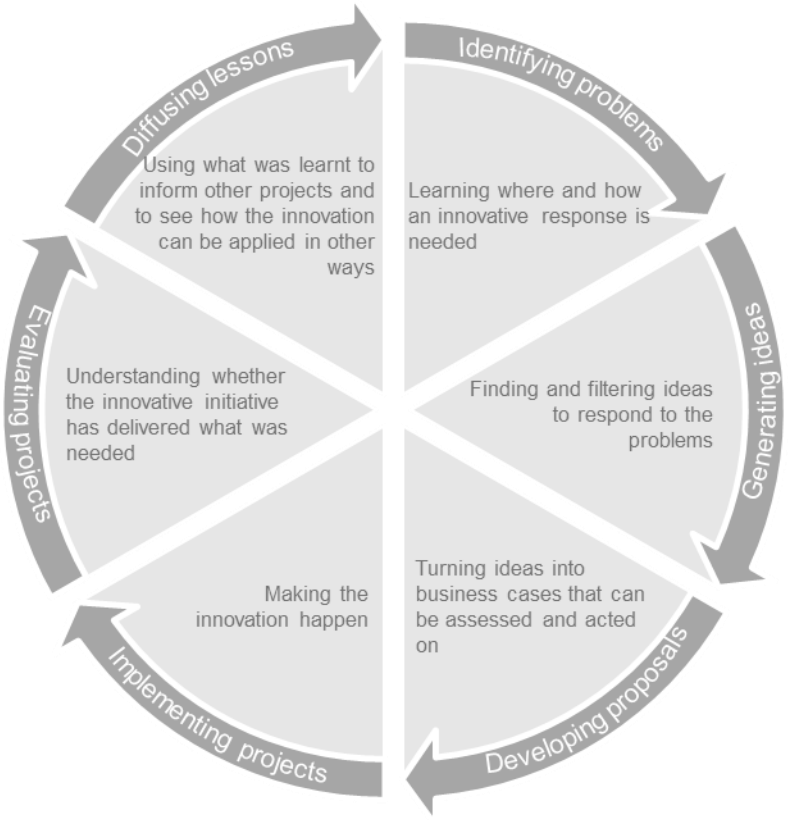
- The issues faced by innovators and organisations when trying to introduce novel initiatives or ways of thinking
- What tools and methods are most appropriate at different stages of the innovation process and under what conditions
- How a stronger innovation capability may fit with existing processes and initiatives.

The studies will contribute to a better understanding of how public sector organisations can effectively use the innovation process to get better outcomes, including by:

- Identifying problems and learning where and how an innovative response is needed
- Generating and sourcing ideas to respond to those problems
- Developing proposals that turn those ideas into business cases that can be assessed and acted upon
- Implementing the innovation projects that proceed
- Evaluating (and integrating) the outcomes of those innovation projects and whether the innovative initiative has delivered what was needed
- Diffusing the lessons from those evaluations, and using those lessons to inform other projects and how other problems might be responded to.

The cyclical and interconnected nature of the innovation process is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The Innovation Lifecycle



The insights from these studies, and the feedback received on them, will feed into the development of an innovation toolkit for public servants and their agencies. This toolkit will be developed in order to better connect public servants with the resources, tools and guidance that can support them throughout the innovation process.

The first study in this series, *What's the problem? Learning to identify and understand the need for innovation*, outlined the importance of understanding the problems that require an innovative response, and how organisations can learn about them.

This second study, *What's possible? Finding and filtering innovative ideas*, is the second in the series, and covers the 'Generating ideas' stage of the innovation process.

1.2 Generating Innovative Ideas

Generating ideas is fundamentally a process of scoping what is possible. It is about identifying options and considering which are likely to be the most promising, the ones that may have the best chance of becoming a reality. A problem, a reason for change, is vital, but there also needs to be something to be worked towards, that provides the clarifying call to mobilise people and resources. An idea is a promise of a different state of affairs, of a different world. It may not be the biggest change, but it is about change that matters in some way.

Yet the commonly focused on aspect of idea generation – coming up with ideas – is never usually the weakest aspect of the innovation process. There are always a lot of ideas around and, as this report

will demonstrate, there are many tools available to assist in coming up with even more. Finding ideas is likely to be the easiest part. However getting ideas is only one aspect of the idea generation process.

Rather, the challenge with innovation at this stage is usually to work out *which* of the many ideas are the best ones, the ones where it is worth spending the effort and resources to test and develop them further.

How then can public sector organisations both find *and* filter ideas, and prioritise which might be the best options?

This study considers how organisations and those that work within them can reliably generate ideas to help them respond to problems that require an innovative response. It offers a look at what is involved in the idea generation process, the enabling conditions that can support it, the contributors and channels by which ideas can reach an organisation, and the tools that might assist. It is intended to be a practical resource as well as an explanation of the issue.

2. Sourcing Ideas for Innovation

"Politics is the art of the possible, the attainable — the art of the next best" Otto Von Bismarck, 1867[1]

2.1 What is Idea Generation?

Idea generation is the process of getting and prioritising new ideas of what is possible. An idea is an articulation of an alternative, that there is another way. Ideas, then, are possibilities.

Idea generation may be about brainstorming different ideas for different policy options, or it may be about seeking new ideas for how to improve a service. It may be a quick process that is done by an individual on the back of some scrap paper or it might be a nation-wide (or even international) process of seeking new ideas about how to do something "big" in a fundamentally new way. Ideas generation, then, is a varied process that can take many forms.

How does idea generation fit in the innovation process? Idea generation will not always be distinct from the "identifying problems" and the "developing proposals" stages of the innovation process. Sometime the three will blur and there will not be a distinct step between working out that something needs to change, having an idea, and testing it. Someone may notice a problem and simply act, with idea generation not even a conscious effort.

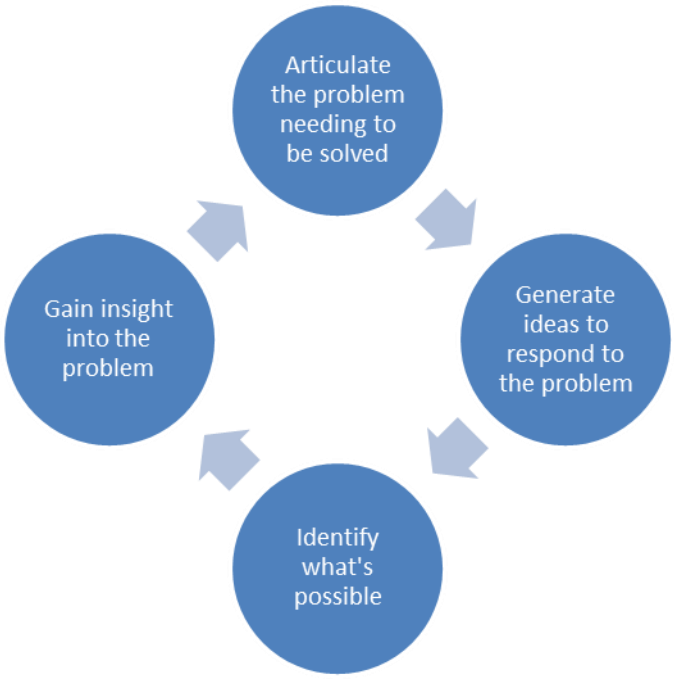
However, often in the public sector, an innovation process will need to have regard to matters of accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and procedural fairness. In other words, it may be important to be able to know and show who was involved in coming up with ideas, how, when and through what means. A deep dive into idea generation can also help uncover assumptions and considerations that might otherwise remain implicit. Therefore it is valuable to focus on idea generation as a separate stage, to draw out the particulars.

Idea generation, then, is related to, but separate to the process of identifying problems. Idea generation can provide insight into what is the issue. The ideas generated can help reveal any assumptions about the nature of the problem and help clarify whether that is really the problem that needs to be solved. For instance, if the problem is "how might we improve the delivery of our commercialisation assistance for small businesses" and many of the ideas that come forward are about building links between researchers and business, then that provides important intelligence about the problem to be solved. The focus of the ideas might reveal that the current service is not needed or working, that the emphasis of the service is wrong, or that the wrong audience is being engaged with in the idea generation process. In this and other ways, the idea generation process can provide insight, and help refine the understanding of the problem to be solved.

Figure 3 shows how the relationship between understanding the problem and idea generation.

[1] http://www.qotd.org/search/single.html?qid=16851

Figure 3: How Idea generation can Impact the Understanding of the Problem

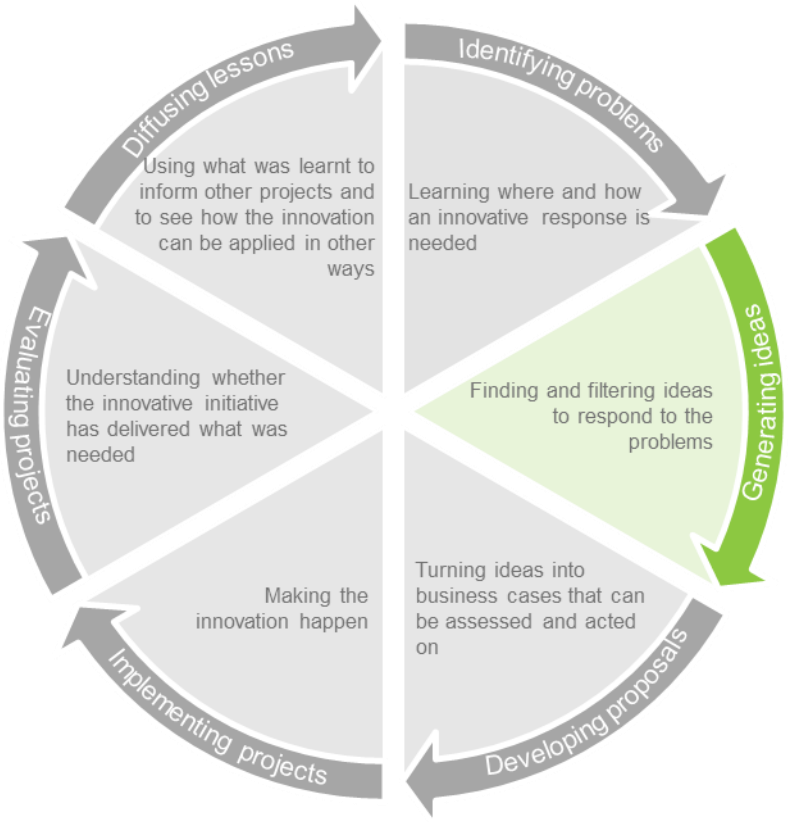


This cycle may be simply a matter of writing out the problem and then putting some quick ideas down in response, to help check that the understanding of the problem is right. Or it might be a more involved process of testing the problem with a larger audience, getting their ideas, and then rearticulating the problem in a new way that better fits with what those ideas say about the current state of affairs.

Idea generation is also related, but separate to, making a decision about which idea to proceed with. Idea generation involves a degree of prioritisation and selection of which ideas are likely to be more promising, but the idea generation stage itself should not be a judgemental process of which ideas should be chosen to test and investigate further. It is about trying to come up with a diverse range of ideas, and then filtering those to a manageable shortlist for further consideration.

Figure 4 identifies how this generating ideas stage fits between identifying problems and developing proposals in the overall innovation process.

Figure 4: Generating Ideas



Idea generation may involve deep consideration and testing of ideas over an extended period of time, or it might be a fast process to help work out different options for something to be done on the same day. Often there may be political constraints, time and resource pressures, and other limitations that mean idea generation may be conducted quickly. A need for speed, however, makes it only more important to understand the fundamentals of idea generation, in order that it can be both fast *and* functional.

2.2 Why Does Idea Generation Matter?

If innovation is about the application of new ideas, then it might seem obvious that generating new ideas matters. Innovation without ideas is chance. However a closer look at the 'why' can help provide a better understanding of what really needs to be considered when developing new ideas.

The quality of the idea generation process can have an impact for organisations and their innovation processes in a number of ways:

- **The scope:** The ideas generated set the scope and the vision for the innovation process – the range of ideas establishes what's considered possible and outlines what the appetite for change is. If all the ideas are modest or only propose something incremental in nature, then the resultant innovation process is going to be limited to an incremental path even if a fundamentally different approach might be needed. If the ideas include only 'blue-sky' thinking or more radical ideas, then the resultant innovation is going to be something very different to the status quo, regardless of whether a more limited intervention would be more appropriate.
- **Who is involved:** The scope of the ideas generated will set the scene for who might be, or might not be, involved in the solution. Is an idea about what government will do? Is an idea about

regulating other players in the system? Is an idea about how to work with different players in new ways or is it about setting the rules or incentives to get others to behave in certain ways? The idea generation process can be about how to empower or 'activate' certain players, about removing choices or options, or it might be about stopping current activity. Each of these shape who will be involved.

- **What is expected of others:** An idea says "this is what we need to do". The scope of an idea and the articulation of who it involves reflects how the problem is understood, of who is in the ecosystem surrounding the problem, and the possible roles and responsibilities. These roles and responsibilities may be in contrast or conflict with current perceptions of the problem and roles. The idea generation process has implications for how different parties will be involved.
- **Signalling effect:** The ideas generated can have an impact even if they are not chosen or implemented, in that they can send a signalling effect about what is allowed to be considered, or in what they signify about a problem (or the understanding of a problem). This signalling might be to those within the organisation (e.g. to staff about what the concerns of the organisation are), to partners (e.g. to industry about what government understands the problem to be), or to society more broadly (e.g. to citizens about what the government values or is looking for).
- **Filtering ideas:** Idea generation is not just about finding ideas, it is also about filtering ideas. Which ideas appeal and why? What is in scope and what is not? Idea generation, primarily through how the problem is framed, will help filter the ideas that come up. Many idea generation processes will, in addition, provide intelligence about which ideas are seen as promising, where ideas may have support, where there may be challenges or shortfalls, and where there might be impacts or interconnections with other systems or processes. Good idea generation will help not only generate options but also help filter them.

A poor idea generation process can have very detrimental impacts, resulting in:

- **Missed opportunities:** There might have been other ideas available that could have better responded to the problem.
- **Bias towards the status quo:** Poor quality ideas will make it harder to shift from the status quo, as the alternatives may not seem desirable or they may have more obvious flaws that make the limitations of the current approach seem more acceptable.
- **Poor filtering:** The ideas generated might have predictable or expectable flaws that might have been avoidable had a better idea generation process identified them.
- **Illegitimate ideas:** The ideas generated might not be seen as legitimate or credible if the idea generation process has not been run in good faith. In such a case the ideas, no matter how good they are, may not succeed as the innovation process may be rejected by partners or stakeholders as illegitimate or flawed from the beginning.

The idea generation phase of the innovation process therefore shapes the quality of any resultant innovations. Without the right mix of ideas and a credible generation process, the innovation process will be hampered in ways ranging from undue consideration of low quality options, to reduced engagement from stakeholders and partners. A good process will help match the problem identified with the right sort of ideas and provide a suitable shortlist of ideas that can be developed into more considered proposals and assessed for implementation.

Of course not all idea generation will be run as a formal structured process. People will be coming up with new ideas all the time, and sometimes nothing more will be needed. However, in an interconnected and changing world, anyone who thinks they know what is the best idea without working through some sort of considered process is very brave. Even in an informal setting, giving thought to the nature and context of the idea generation process can greatly assist in arriving at good ideas that can then be tested and decided upon.

> *"Because of social complexity, solving a wicked problem is fundamentally a social process. Having a few brilliant people or the latest project management technology is no longer sufficient."* (Conklin in APSC, 2007)

2.3 Good Idea Generation Involves Finding and Filtering Ideas

How then can organisations navigate the process of idea generation in a way that provides not only different options, but the right sorts of options, to choose from? Some considerations include being able to:

1. Identify what is now possible (What are the options for acting? Why would that option be possible now, when it wasn't before?)
2. Identify the right sort of idea (What types of ideas will best match the type of problem that is being responded to?)
3. Identify what the possible implications of an idea might be (What might happen if that idea is introduced? What if it is *not* introduced?)
4. Identify the appetite for a new approach, and whether or how that appetite changes in response to the ideas generated (Is there a clear sense of how big a change is prepared to be taken? Does that willingness for a changed approach change in light of the ideas generated and the different visions of what's possible?)
5. Identify who has a stake in the ideas (Is that different to who was seen as having a stake in the problem as originally framed? Does the idea generation process allow for others with relevant, but unknown viewpoints, to contribute?)
6. Identify which ideas are worth pursuing further (Can the idea generation process be managed so that it not only provides new ideas, but also gives intelligence about the quality or the practicality of the ideas put forward?)

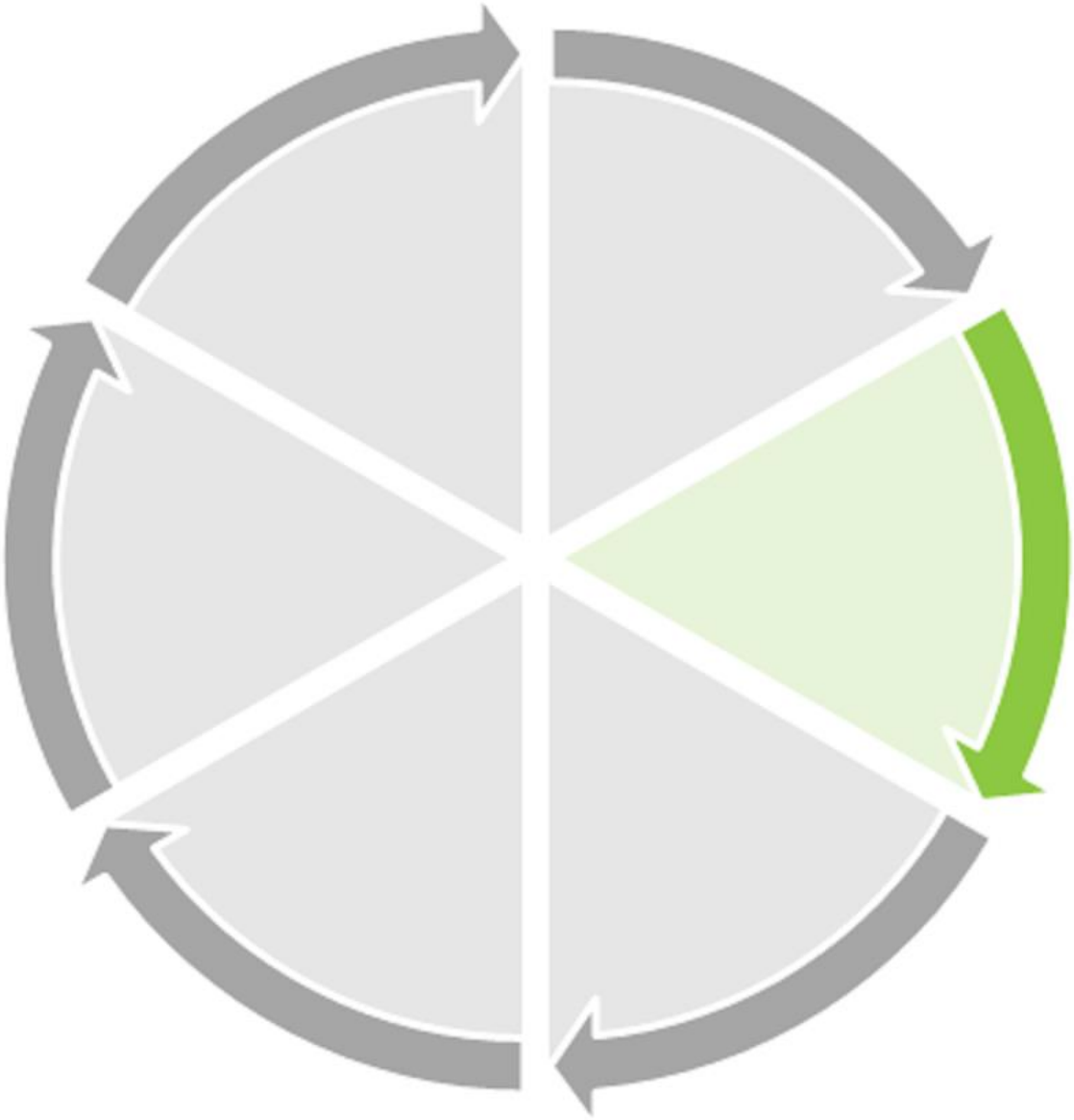
All of these considerations relate to the broad issue of being able to find and filter ideas.

Finding involves not only coming up with the different options, but finding those that will best match the problem, finding the right participants in the idea generation process, and finding the relevant insights about the ideas put forward.

Filtering involves understanding the comparative merits, opportunities and challenges presented by the different ideas, matching the ideas with the problem and understanding their potential to address it, and matching the scope of the problem with the appetite for change.

In short, organisations need to be able to **find** ideas and understand *what's possible* (the range of ideas) and **filter** for *what is accepted as possible* (the range of tenable ideas) within the context of the problem at hand.

Yet the public sector is, and always has been, fundamentally driven by political considerations. It has always been about mediating between differing and competing interests, about looking for appropriate compromises, and about facilitating the selection of preferred options. What is different now that requires increased attention to, and consideration of, idea generation? How is the need for effective idea generation any different than previously, when public administration and policy making has always had an element of identifying and assessing different options?



3. A Changing Context – From 'Consider' to 'Collaborate'

One of the fundamental roles of the public sector is to support the political process of making choices. These choices might be between fundamentally differing visions of the future, between different systems and policies, between regulation and incentives, or between how particular services are run or delivered. They may be about things momentous and large scale, or they might be about matters relatively minor and procedural.

The public sector might play this supporting role through the provision of advice about the feasibility of different options or on the logistics and costs of delivering the different options. It might be by acting as a channel for feedback about the implications or advantages of particular paths, and by collating and synthesising different perspectives.

Quite often however the public sector often plays a role in helping flesh out the political intent ("we want to achieve stronger and more inclusive economic growth" or "we want to reduce climate change emissions") with specific options for how government might achieve that.

In this way the public sector has always been about helping generate ideas, about finding different options for what might be possible, and filtering for what is feasible and/or tenable.

Yet, as described in the first innovation lifecycle study, *What's the problem? Learning to identify and understand the need for innovation* (Alpha version), the public sector operates in a changed (and still changing) environment. A more interconnected digital world is one where information is no longer a scarce resource, and that shift is changing the operating environment for the public sector.

Figure 5: Move from Scarcity to Abundance of Information

As identified in Figure 5, the shift from a scarcity of information to one of abundance is reflected through a number of characteristics, from the vast increase in data and global knowledge to the number of actors of potential influence, from the number of external forces that have a bearing to the range of possible futures that can be considered. Governments face a world where there are

many possible futures that can be considered, and numerous opportunities to experiment and try new ideas.

In regards to idea generation the changed nature of the operating environment for public sector organisations can be seen in a range of areas.

- **Engagement versus consultation** – traditionally public sector organisations may have consulted on proposals or areas of reform through consultation practices such as issues papers and seeking written submissions, through meetings with key stakeholders, or through advisory bodies and expert panels. Due to the time-consuming and limited nature of these forums, participation often self-limited to those with the strongest interest or who had the time and resources to contribute. In a digital world, the transaction costs of participating have been dramatically lowered, and it is far easier for citizens to put different ideas forward in a casual and quick fashion. Online platforms also foster an expectation of conversation, of to and fro, rather than one-way communication or feeding input into a 'black box' of government, with no clarity about how the final outcome is reached.
- **Feedback versus assumption** – such a shift means that governments cannot make or rely heavily on assumptions about different options and ideas without being challenged. Where once an idea might be developed in the absence of a full understanding of how it might be received, information flows much more quickly now, and social media provides an easy platform for providing feedback about ideas or options, even if it may only be a very quick or short "assessment" (e.g. criticism, a meme, or negative comments).
- **Contestability versus authority** – traditionally public sector organisations were often seen as the major source of advice for governments, with technical and administrative expertise in the matters of government. Over time however that has been challenged, and whether through industry, associations, think tanks, lobby groups or others, there are now alternate sources that politicians can look to for advice and guidance. The public sector operates in an environment of contestable advice rather than one of unrivalled expert authority. This results not only in more ideas, but ideas that may well be very different to what might have been proposed within the public sector.
- **Collaboration versus control** – this contestability plays out in other ways too. The success of government initiatives can rarely depend on government simply mandating it to be so. For many policy and service delivery matters governments require active collaboration and support. That requirement for buy-in requires belief, or trust in government and its processes. That requirement of belief or trust raises the benchmark for government about 'showing its working', and demonstrating that its processes are legitimate and that ideas have been considered and selected in good faith.
- **Partner versus supplicant** – collectively these elements change the dynamic between government and citizens. Public sector organisations are not the arbiters of which ideas are considered, nor necessarily the gatekeepers for deciding which ideas proceed. Even if an idea is not selected through the political process, alternative platforms and mechanisms such as crowdfunding, social innovation funds or even private enterprise might proceed with an idea. In such an environment, where governments and public sector organisations may not have the final (or only) say as to whether an idea proceeds, there can be legitimate expectations of greater feedback about which ideas are considered and transparency about the filtering and

selection process. Those putting forward their ideas may expect to be seen as a partner rather than a supplicant, and believe that they have the associated right to challenge aspects of the process.

- **Network versus hierarchy** – this change in power dynamics applies also to those working within the public sector. Where once public sector organisations were typically hierarchical in nature, increasingly they function as networks. In a network a person can have influence and sway independent of their organisational position, with an associated recognition that employees with skills, experiences and networks of their own are not fungible commodities. Certain public servants who feel that their ideas are not listened to may either exercise their influence through networks, potentially subverting the hierarchical order, or they may seek to change roles to somewhere they feel their ideas are valued, or they may exit and seek to share their ideas in a public forum.
- **Change versus constancy** – the ceding of control, of engagement and partnerships means that the idea generation process can become highly unpredictable. Where once issues papers might have set out the preferred parameters of the conversation, with an expectation that submissions and ideas would stick within that framework, more open processes can result in changeable and unexpected outcomes. Idea generation can then be far more uncertain, in both helpful and challenging ways.
- **Crossover versus clarity** – public sector organisations also have the challenge of facing more ideas where the impacts may be unclear. Where once ideas relating to health policy or health services might have been clearly identifiable, now there might be ideas that cut across sectoral lines and policy domains. An idea might easily have implications in each of the health, environment, industry, and social inclusion areas, meaning that the ability to assess ideas can become more difficult, with the need to consider expertise and experiences from a much wider range of actors.
- **Multitudes of ideas versus some ideas** – all of these factors, along with new technologies and new tools, contribute to an environment where far more ideas can be generated and put forward for consideration. At the same time, the opportunities for governments and public sector organisations to experiment have multiplied. A/B testing, design thinking and lean or agile approaches emphasising fast failure, simulations – these and many other approaches facilitate much faster generation of ideas.

In short then, there is an operating environment for public sector organisations where:

- there are more ideas but less certainty about how any of those ideas might play out, especially as they intersect with other new ideas and practices that are being introduced at the same time
- there is far more external knowledge, expertise, experience and perspectives that might have relevance to the problems at hand and the ideas put forward in response
- there is more and faster feedback about ideas and increased expectations that such feedback will be taken into account.

3.1 What This Changed Environment Means for Idea Generation

How do these changes affect the idea generation process and what is needed from it?

The following table (Table 1) outlines how each of the main changes can have an impact on the idea generation processes of public sector organisations.

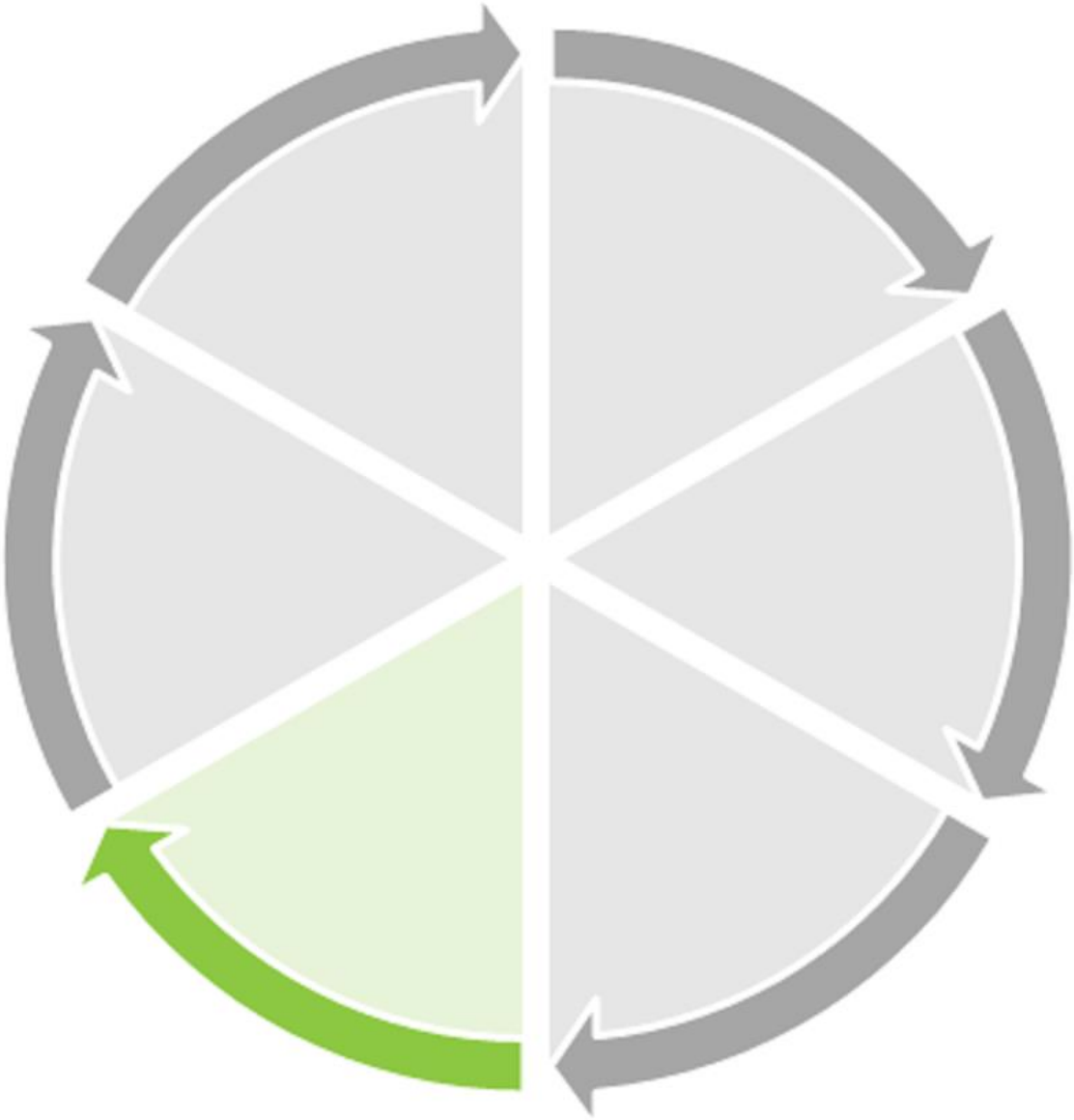
Table 1: Implications for Idea Generation

Change in Operating Environment	Why that is an Issue for Idea generation in the Public Sector	Implication for Idea generation Processes
Increase in the number and range of ideas to be considered	Too many ideas to consider and assess equally	Need for better filtering of ideas and their potential
Increase in uncertainty about how or whether ideas might work	Investing in ideas too early will risk committing resources to an idea that will fail	Need to keep options open longer until there is greater certainty of which ideas are most promising
Increase in feedback about ideas	Idea generation process needs to be defensible and seen as appropriate	Need for greater sophistication in idea generation processes
Increase in people outside of the public sector with relevant knowledge	If relevant knowledge is not accessed in a timely manner, the public sector increases its risk of being seen as investing in wrong ideas or missing opportunities	Need for greater outreach and engagement with external experience and expertise
Increase in potential for ideas to have spillover effects	Ideas about one area of government are likely to have potential impacts on other areas	Need for a 'whole-of-system' / holistic view of ideas and their potential impacts

3.2 A Changed Context Requires a Changed Approach to Finding and Filtering Ideas

In summary, government organisations cannot hope to effectively engage with the innovation process – the process of developing and implementing different options to respond to problems requiring a new approach – unless they have a sophisticated approach for idea generation.

A failure to do so risks missing the best ideas, pursuing needlessly flawed ideas for too long, or recommending ideas that will not have (or be able to get) the support they need in order to succeed. Public sector organisations therefore need to understand what is involved in effective idea generation – the finding and filtering of different ideas of what's possible – and how best to support it.



4. What's involved in the Finding and Filtering of Ideas

The traditional conception of the policy development cycle involves a stage of policy formulation or policy analysis, where different options are identified and compared. Yet what is really involved in effective idea generation?

1. **Appetite for ideas:** The first step is to understand whether there is an appetite for new ideas. Is there a willingness to consider new ideas? Just because a problem has been identified, does not mean that everyone will accept the implication that something new should be tried. Coming up with new ideas may even exacerbate tensions by being seen as undermining belief in the current approach and existing work.
2. **Framing matters:** The way a problem is framed will shape the idea generation process – for example asking "How might we reduce spending on welfare?" will result in very different ideas to asking "How might we create new employment?", even though they are related issues. Two of the main framing aspects of relevant to idea generation are the political aspects and those of discipline/subject-matter expertise.
3. **Type of problem equals type of ideas:** The third step is to understand what sorts of ideas are needed for the problem faced, and how to match different types of problems to different types of ideas. What sort of problem is it, what sort of ideas will respond to that type of problem, and what does the idea generation process need to do in order to find those sorts of ideas? If it is a highly technical problem, such as needing a new way to model the financial impacts of climate change, then ideation and brainstorming is unlikely to be much help. On the other hand, brainstorming and ideation may be very appropriate for generating the right sort of ideas for how to streamline a briefing process.
4. **Idea generation context:** Fourth is the broader context of the idea generation process. What else needs to be considered about the idea generation process and the ideas that come out of it? For instance, if this is the first attempt in getting ideas for a newly emergent problem then a different approach is likely to be more appropriate to that used for a well-established problem where numerous idea generation attempts have taken place previously.
5. **Appreciating where good ideas come from:** Fifth is to recognise some of the sources of inspiration for good ideas and what that might mean for the idea generation process.
6. **Ensuring a good feedstock of ideas:** Sixth is to look at what is needed from any idea generation process – ideas. How can organisations and individuals ensure their idea generation process provides the appropriate 'feedstock'? What can be considered a successful idea generation process in terms of its output of ideas?
7. **Start small or start big:** Seventh is to note the differing contributions that "big" and "small" ideas can add to idea generation.
8. **Idea implications:** Eighth is to better understand the implications of different types of ideas. Some ideas may be straightforward, but others could have significant implications once implemented. How can the idea generation process help provide insight into the possible consequences of different ideas, and assist in the filtering of the most relevant and appropriate ideas?
9. **Criteria for filtering:** Ninth is having criteria for filtering the ideas further. What are the most important characteristics for the ideas that are to be shortlisted and developed and tested further?

10. **Repeatable process:** Tenth is to consider the idea generation stage as part of a broader process. Is there a process for responding to input? How will participants view the experience, and will they be likely to participate in any future processes if asked? The idea generation process needs to deliver results for the problem at hand, but should not be seen in isolation. How will it contribute to getting ideas now, but also strengthen (or at least not harm) the ability to get more into the future?
11. **Learning:** Eleventh is to appreciate the interplay between idea generation and understanding the problem at hand. The ideas that come forward can provide insight into the problem, and help the organisation better learn about what they are actually trying to achieve, in turn providing better understanding of what ideas are really being sought.
12. **Build enthusiasm:** Twelfth is to consider whether the idea generation process builds enthusiasm for solving the problem at hand. An effective idea generation process will be one that assists in developing support and mobilising effort to sustain the rest of the innovation process.
13. **Decision point:** Thirteenth is to consider where the decision point is in the process for the shortlisting of ideas, and whether or how that is communicated to participants. What feedback, if any, will they receive about their contribution?
14. **Caveat 1 – Fuzzy ideas, concrete proposals:** New ideas can be very fuzzy, but sometimes (often) there will be an expectation for an idea generation process to deliver very specific and tangible recommendations. Where this is the case, there might need to be a conflation of idea generation and developing the proposals through experimentation, testing and refinement.
15. **Caveat 2 – Ideas are political:** It is vital to note that ideas are political. Idea generation should not be viewed as simply a technocratic exercise, but one that is about choosing between different possibilities, and thus different futures. Even small ideas can have big implications, and an effective idea generation should understand and consider the political values and ends embedded within the process.
16. **Caveat 3 – Ideas are not the (whole) answer:** Having an idea is only the second part of the innovation lifecycle. Once articulated, ideas do not take lives of their own. There needs to be continued work and support to make it happen.
17. **Caveat 4 – Good ideas are not inevitable:** No matter how good an idea seems, it is not inevitable that it will happen, even if it does not happen this time. An idea generation process cannot rely on a good idea happening on its own.

An appreciation of these aspects of the idea generation process may help organisations and individuals better find and filter the ideas they need for responding to problems. The following sections consider each of these aspects in turn.

4.1 Understanding the Appetite / Receptiveness for New Ideas

No one likes to be suddenly told that what they are doing is not working and may even be contributing to a problem. In such a situation, an individual or organisation is more likely to be defensive or hostile to new ideas which may seem like criticism rather than constructive input. Alternatively, if there is common agreement that there is a problem, and that everyone is committed to finding a better solution, the attitude towards coming up with new ideas is likely to be much more positive.

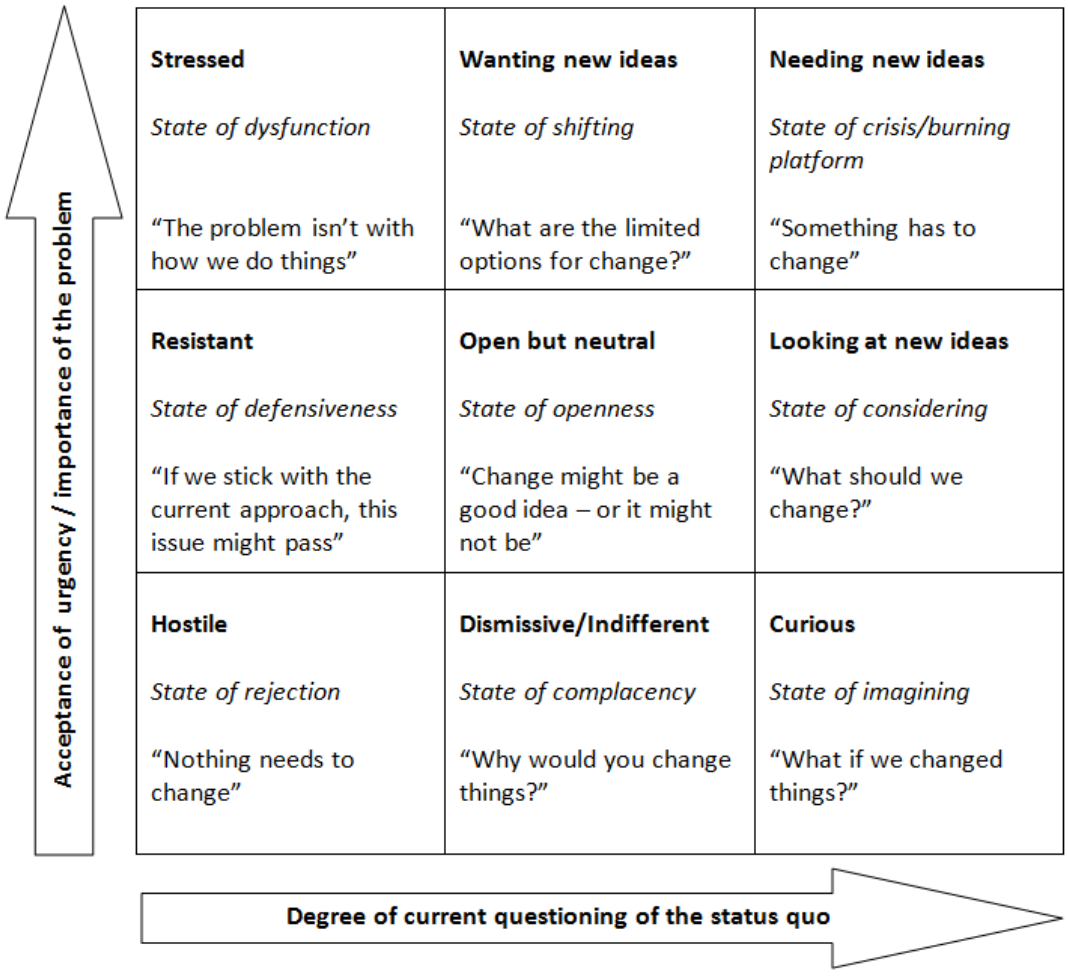
An effective idea generation process should then start with an understanding of how receptive relevant stakeholders might be to new ideas. Are they likely to be willing and eager participants in

the idea generation process? If not, how might the idea generation process be devised to best engage them and learn from their experience and give insight into what they see as working now?

One aid for this might be to consider both the level of acceptance that a problem is urgent or important, and to what extent there is already questioning of the status quo and how things are currently done.

The following model provides a prompt to consider the attitude of different stakeholders (i.e. how they might feel about new ideas in regards to the problem at hand), a descriptor for the state of affairs, and a statement reflecting the attitude/state of affairs.

Figure 6: Likely Receptivity to New Ideas



This model will not reflect all situations, and the view of key stakeholders (e.g. those in the organisation with prime responsibility for the problem/issue that has been identified) may well be more nuanced. However, the aim of the model is to reflect that there will be different attitudes held by those connected to the problem towards new ideas, and that those attitudes are likely to be strongly shaped by whether:

- There is acceptance that there is a problem that needs to be acted on, and acted on now

- There is openness to changing the current ways of doing things or whether they believe that the problem can be dealt with by existing ways of working / current approaches.

In addition, stakeholders may move through multiple states during an idea generation process depending on their engagement, their experience, and whether they see it leading to positive change and impact.

With those caveats noted, the following explores each of the states, their identifiers and what that might mean for the idea generation process.

- **Hostile:** In this position it is unlikely that people will see the need for innovation, as it will appear that the current situation is working and there's broad acceptance of the current way of working. In this state of rejection, someone instigating innovation and idea generation may be seen as more of a troublemaker than an aid. Idea generation is unlikely to get much engagement as it will be seen as a distraction from core work. Idea generation is unlikely to succeed here, and may be best focussed on engaging with leadership around their concerns, how that links to the problem(s) at hand. Alternatively it may be best focused on smaller, more incremental ideas about how to improve on current efforts rather than questioning how things are done. To move from this state may require a worsening of the problem, a change of signals from (political) leadership, a shock to the system, or efforts to socialise or make the problem 'real' and tangible to current priorities. It should also be noted that there may be good reasons for hostility to innovation, including fears that existing hard work will be derailed or that there may not be capacity for a change in approach. The idea generation process may be able to also identify the reasons for hostility and help build a conversation around why there might be divergent views about whether there really is a problem and whether the current approach is effective in dealing with it.
- **Resistant:** In this position there may be recognition that there is an issue, but a state of resistance about accepting that the problem requires real change. It might be that the problem is viewed as temporary. It might be that the problem is viewed in a different way, and that the real issue is that the current approach has not been given a chance to succeed. There may be a state of defensiveness, with new ideas being seen as a form of criticism. The faith in the status quo may make it difficult to get engagement with the idea generation process, unless it is around how to remove barriers that may be affecting the current approach, or looking at incremental improvements to how the current approach could be made even better. If there is a need to change from the current approach in order to address the problem, then the idea generation process may help by uncovering any existing dissatisfactions or pain points experienced by those with exposure to the status quo. Resistance may be justified however, and it may be important to for the idea generation process to also consider what is working and what the positive elements of the current approach are.
- **Stressed:** In this segment it is likely there will be a state of dysfunction – one where there is investment in the status quo but where there is a big problem that needs to be dealt with. In such a situation the default position may be one of stress. There may be blame-attribution or a belief that responsibility for the problem lies somewhere else in the system – e.g. with a partner organisation that is not doing their share, or with another team or area within an organisation that does not understand what needs to be done. The answer may also be seen as being more of the same – that things would work if only there was more money, more time, more resources or

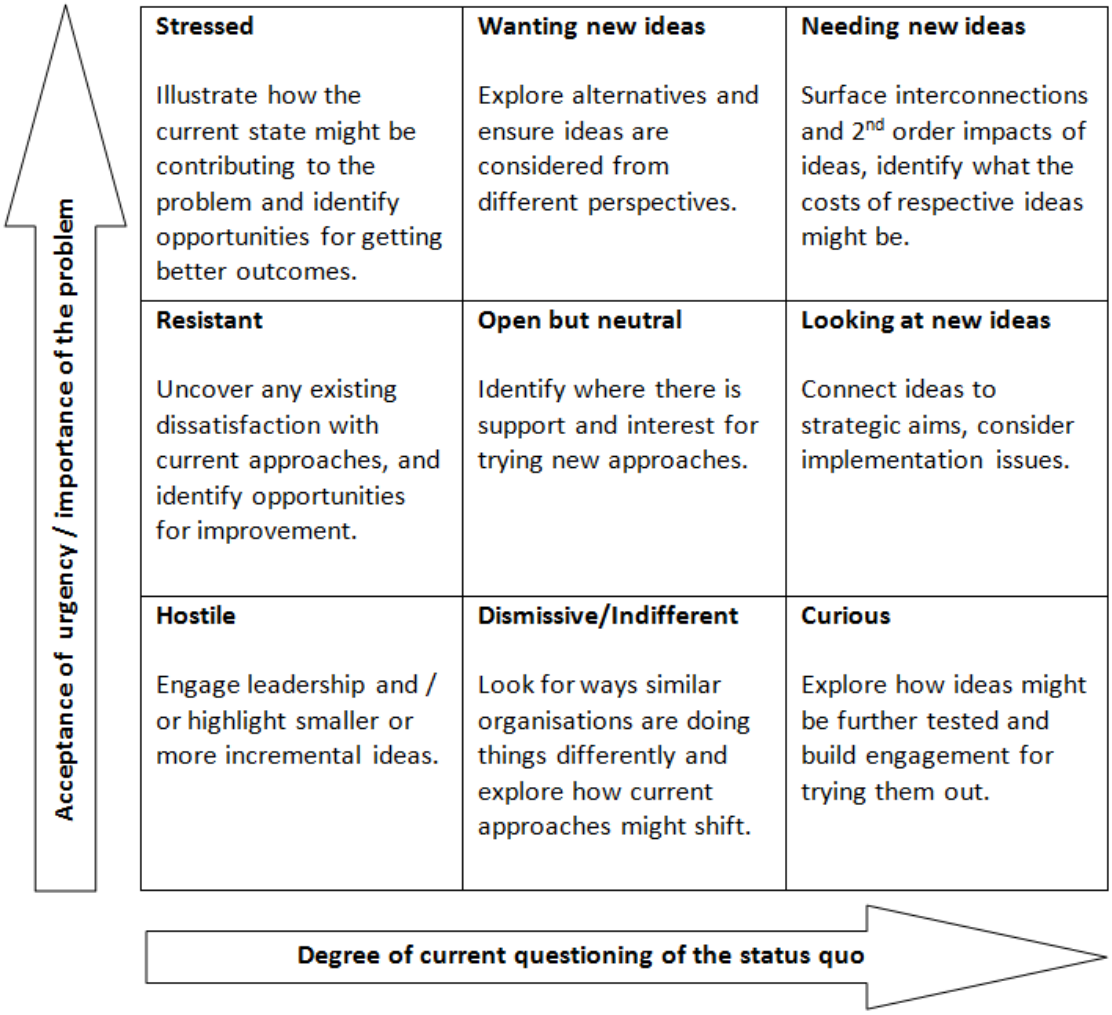
more influence. Alternatively the accepted wisdom might be that the answer is seen as removing responsibility for the problem and giving it to someone else – "this isn't working but the problem is that someone else should be dealing with it". The role of idea generation might be to help connect the current problem with the current way of working, by revealing how each part of the system is contributing to the lived experience of the problem. The state of dysfunction might also be a reflection that the current approach is not being supported sufficiently and idea generation might help look at ways that could be ameliorated or changed.

- **Dismissive/Indifferent:** In this segment there may be complacency, with the problem not being seen as an issue, but where there is no inherent hostility or strong feeling towards a process of idea generation. In such a situation those instigating an idea generation process may be viewed as wasting their effort, and engagement will likely be low. An idea generation process may help build interest through looking at how similar organisations are doing things differently or by exploring what would be needed for a change in approach to take place.
- **Curious:** In this position there may be a lot of thinking about what might be, but not a lot of follow-through. Ideas might be viewed as an almost academic exercise, one of intellectual curiosity, rather than as something pressing or needed right now. Idea generation may get a lot of engagement at the beginning but there may be difficulties in getting ownership of ideas or for engagement with more than anything but a preliminary investigation or interest in the ideas. In response to a state of questioning, the idea generation process may need to consider how to build ownership of ideas and empower people to start testing and trying the ideas out in practice.
- **Open to:** In this segment there is likely to be a willingness to think about new ideas and recognition that there is a problem, but equally a preparedness to stick with the status quo if it looks like new ideas do not reveal a (much) better alternative. In response to a state of openness the idea generation process may usefully identify where there is most support and interest in trying new approaches. It may be useful to emphasise that new ideas may at first be inferior but can potentially offer significant improvements.
- **Looking at new ideas:** In this position there is likely to be an active consideration of new ideas and a movement towards adopting new approaches. In such a situation the idea generation process may best be directed at ensuring that the ideas put forward are in line with strategic aims, and avoid ideas that may seem 'shiny' or the natural thing to do. It may also be useful for the process to pay particular attention to possible risks, flaws or implementation issues if there is a shared preparedness to proceed with a new approach and the sceptical side may not be as pronounced as in other segments.
- **Wanting new ideas:** In this segment there is likely to be a state of shifting with acceptance both that there is a problem and that there needs to be change to how things are done. New ideas may be wanted, however there may be definite limits as to what type of options will be considered and what options are seen as appropriate. The idea generation process may wish to encourage the exploration of alternatives and whether there might be more varied approaches that could respond to the problem differently. Ensuring that ideas are considered from different perspectives, including that of those affected by the issue, may help the idea generation process ensure that the problem is kept at the forefront rather than a default loyalty to the current way of doing things. In a state of shifting it may also be useful for the process to consider what the appropriate limits of change might be, and where it might be risky to push beyond it.

- **Needing new ideas:** In this position there is a pressure to do *something*. The problem may be so severe that there is a willingness to be completely open to new approaches, or the urgency might be such that the most important thing is to respond, regardless of whether that response has been tried before or not. An idea generation process in a situation where there is a crisis (where there is urgency) or a 'burning platform' for change (important but less urgent) may face difficulties in ensuring consideration of a range of ideas, as there is likely to be a pressure to focus on action rather than to gather more ideas about what to do. In such a situation the idea generation process might usefully focus on the longer term impacts of ideas and not just their impact on the immediate situation. A state of crisis or having a burning platform for change might also provide significant engagement and momentum, and care might be needed to ensure an idea generation process does not interfere with or delay getting a much needed response to a problem.

A summary of the possible areas of emphasis needed for the idea generation process for the different levels of receptivity to new ideas is provided in Figure 7. The model should not be seen as prescriptive, but again as more of a prompt for considering how the idea generation process may need to achieve different things or be focussed in different ways depending on what acceptance of new ideas there might be.

Figure 7: Receptivity to New Ideas and Needed Emphasis of the Idea generation Process



4.2 How the Problem is Framed Shapes the Ideas Being Sought or Offered

Idea generation will inevitably reflect how a problem is framed – how it is articulated and the beliefs and expectations implicit in that. Often that framing will be deliberate (e.g. using the tools listed in *What's the Problem?*), however the design of an idea generation process may benefit from explicit recognition of the less deliberative, but just as important, influences.

The first set of influences to recognise are the political or ideological lenses. In the public sector there will always be a political aspect to how problems are articulated and understood, and therefore the type of ideas that will be seen as feasible responses.

For instance, a problem such as climate change might be viewed as intrinsically being a problem around markets and inefficient pricing. It might primarily be seen as a problem of regulation and enforcement. Or a particular ideological or political view might mean that it not viewed as a problem at all. While an idea generation process need not accept the dominant political framing of a problem (indeed, doing so may cut-off promising new ways of thinking about it), the process will benefit from recognising that there is a political aspect to the problem and its conception. A process that mismanages or ignores the political dimension of a problem type is one that will very likely result in

the wrong sorts of ideas being put forward, and may jeopardise engagement with the problem, as well as creating tensions with the political support for the process.

The second set of influences are the other aspects of how people understand the world, e.g. education, subject matter expertise or experience, or personal biases. These can greatly affect how a problem is thought of and thus what is possible in response.

For instance, a problem (e.g. obesity) might be conceived of as being primarily:

- A technical problem, one requiring specific expertise and domain knowledge (e.g. what are the health interventions that work in tackling obesity?)
- A social problem, one that will continue unless there is buy-in or engagement from a range of actors (e.g. what are the socioeconomic conditions contributing to obesity and what can be done to change or mitigate them?)
- An economic problem, based on an understanding of markets (e.g. is there a pricing dimension that means that the products disproportionately contributing to obesity are too cheap?)
- A regulatory problem, based on rules-based interventions (e.g. are there options to regulate, such as banning advertising of certain categories of high-calorific products to children?)

Every field of academic study has its own way of thinking about issues and conceiving of problems, and this will feed into how problems are framed and categorised, along with individual, organisational and social biases. If those influences are recognised then the idea generation process may be able to better ensure that alternative perspectives are considered or that biases are challenged (albeit carefully). This may involve a process as simple as having participants share their background and noting any obvious concentrations of perspectives.

4.3 The Type of Problem Dictates the Types of Ideas Needed

Another fundamental component of effective idea generation is being able to match the type of problem that needs to be responded to with the type of ideas right for dealing with that type of problem.

Not all problems are the same. Some problems will require very specific types of solutions. Others may be much more open to a range of types of ideas. A comparison of two different types of problems can help illustrate this.

One problem might be how to improve the processing speeds for welfare claims at the same time as increasing accuracy. A second problem might be how to develop a national climate change policy that reduces carbon emissions but also enhances economic growth.

While these problems obviously differ in terms of scale (and therefore also the degree of effort that is likely to be invested in idea generation), they are also clearly different in the types of ideas that will be of most use. An idea generation process that does not consider the type of problem faced and how to best match it with the right types of ideas may result in frustration, distraction from inappropriate ideas, or wasted effort.

How then can organisations and individuals match different types of problems with an idea generation process that is most likely to provide them with the right types of ideas?

There exist a number of models that have been devised to classify problems.

Models for Classifying Problems

There are a range of models for classifying or thinking about problems. The following are some of those that exemplify some of the key considerations or differing perspectives that have implications for idea generation.

Innovation Matrix: Greg Satell (2013)

This 2x2 matrix considers two dimensions:

- How well defined is a problem?
- Who is best placed to solve it (how well is the domain defined)?

The matrix identifies a number of methods or problem solving mechanisms for each segment.

Wicked Problems: Australian Public Service Commission (2007)

Building on the work of Rittel and Webber, the Australian Public Service Commission identifies a number of traits of 'wicked' problems:

- They are difficult to clearly define
- They have many interdependencies, are often multi-causal, and often involve conflicting goals
- Addressing a wicked problem will often lead to unforeseen consequences
- They are not stable (e.g. the problem and/or the understanding of it is not fixed)
- They have no clear solution
- They do not conveniently sit within the responsibility of one organisation
- They involve changing behaviours
- They may be typified by chronic policy failure.

Taxonomy of Problems: Karl Ulrich (2013: 16-18)

This taxonomy identifies six different, but not necessarily discrete, problems.

- Design problems: problems that requires a new response and involves the exploration of alternative options
- Selection problems: a subset of design problems, where the alternatives are somewhat clear, but the challenge is evaluating them and then selecting one
- System improvement problems: problems of how to improve existing artefacts or systems through modification or adjustment, and involving the exploration of alternatives for achieving that improvement. This process is more incremental in nature than creating a new system or approach
- Tuning problems: a subset of system improvement problems, these involve incremental adjustments to already existing artefacts or systems – fine tuning rather than introducing new elements
- Crises: problems that needs to be solved quickly. These can be design or system improvement problems

- Wicked problems: “problems for which stakeholder objectives are fundamentally in conflict”.

Archetypal Models of Public Sector Innovation: John Bessant, Tim Hughes, Sue Richards (2010)

This work looks at several different innovation models, when to use them, and how to support them.

- R&D led: ideas developed by specialists; used for scientific and technology based products, but should not be used in areas that require high discretion
- High involvement: all employees engaged in incremental problem solving; used for developing incremental process innovations where there is little discretion and high uniformity
- Network: ideas developed and spread through networks; useful where there are high levels of discretion
- Radical / discontinuous: radically different ideas; used for developing radically different ways of doing things
- Entrepreneur driven: small scale ideas developing within the organisation or from outside; used to tap into social entrepreneurship
- Recombinant: translating an idea from one setting to another; useful for bringing in new ideas
- User-led: users innovate through co-production with professionals; useful for all sorts of innovation.

(Source: Bessant, Hughes and Richards 2010: 3)

Cynefin Framework: David Snowden and Mary Boone (2007)

The Cynefin framework identifies five different contexts that might be faced:

- Simple contexts: where there is stability and clear cause-and-effect. In such a situation, the recommendation is to sense, categorise, then respond using established practice
- Complicated contexts: a situation where there may be multiple right answers and there is clear cause-and-effect relationship, though not everyone can see it. In such a context, the recommended path of action is to sense, analyse and respond using good practice (rather than best)
- Complex contexts: where there are no known answers, and where cause and effect may only be understood in retrospect. The suggested approach here is to probe, sense, and then respond once a solution has emerged
- Chaotic contexts: a state of constant shifting where cause-and-effect cannot be determined because there is no stability. Here it is necessary to act (in order to establish order), then sense, and then to respond. It is suggested that this is a context most amenable for spurring innovation.

Governance and Policy Platforms: B. Guy Peters and Jon Pierre (2015)

This work looks at different types of policy problems and suggests a number of problem dimensions:

- Divisibility: is the good created to solve the problem something that is universal or can it be allocated?
- Solvability: is the problem truly solvable, or is it likely that the symptoms will be treated rather than the causes?

- Scale: is the problem large scale, and thus requiring of a large-scale response? Is there a time dimension to this scale (i.e. will it extend across years with a gap between commitment and result)?
- Complexity: is the problem complex in political terms (having competing, and possibly conflicting, interests) or substantively (i.e. having the characteristics of wicked problems)?

Adaptive and Technical Problems (Work of Ronald Heifetz in Pascale, Sternin, and Sternin 2016: 21)

"Adaptive problems are embedded in social complexity, require behavior change, and are rife with unintended consequences. By way of contrast, technical problems (such as the polio virus) can be solved with a technical solution (the Salk vaccine) without having to disturb the underlying social structure, cultural norms, or behavior."

There are likely many additional models that might be of relevance in helping understand the type of problem, and what that means for how to respond, and each model can provide important insights into how organisations and individuals should respond to challenges.

To assist the process of idea generation, are there any particular factors that can help consider problems and the implications for idea generation?

Drawing on these models, and the public sector context, the following factors are suggested considerations and how they may impact the idea generation process:

A. **Problem definition:** is the problem clearly defined? Does the problem, as understood and articulated, clearly convey what's involved and what's at stake? If the problem is not clearly defined then idea generation may suffer. It may be difficult to engage people to contribute ideas to an ill-defined problem, or alternatively the ideas coming forward may vary dramatically and cover things that might not feel as falling within the desired scope. A poor definition will also likely make it harder to filter ideas, as it will be difficult to know which ideas are of relevance to the problem. Idea generation can potentially help with the problem definition if it considers the ideas that come forward and reflects on what they say about the problem. Some ideas that come forward may help if only by giving a sense of "no, that's definitely not what the problem is about". The process can also seek to get insight from others or generate feedback about the problem and what should be done about it. Alternatively, if a problem is extremely well defined, the idea generation process might be used to give insight into other perspectives. An extremely tight problem definition may be too restrictive, and be framed in a way where it seems like there is only one logical answer, and miss out on better ideas of how to respond.
B. **Certainty:** Is there certainty about the nature of the problem? Is it understood what causes it, and its relationship to other issues or parts of the system? If the problem is highly uncertain, then it will be difficult to filter ideas for those that are most relevant or appropriate. It will also be difficult to assess what the potential impact, and thus effectiveness, of the ideas might be. The idea generation process might assist by focussing on ideas that might help reduce the uncertainty – i.e. what might be done to get a better understanding of the problem. Alternatively, if there is very little uncertainty, and thus little room for innovation (why would you try something new if you know exactly how things relate), it may be desirable to use the idea generation process to bring in new perspectives and new ideas about alternate understandings of the issue and what might be done about it.

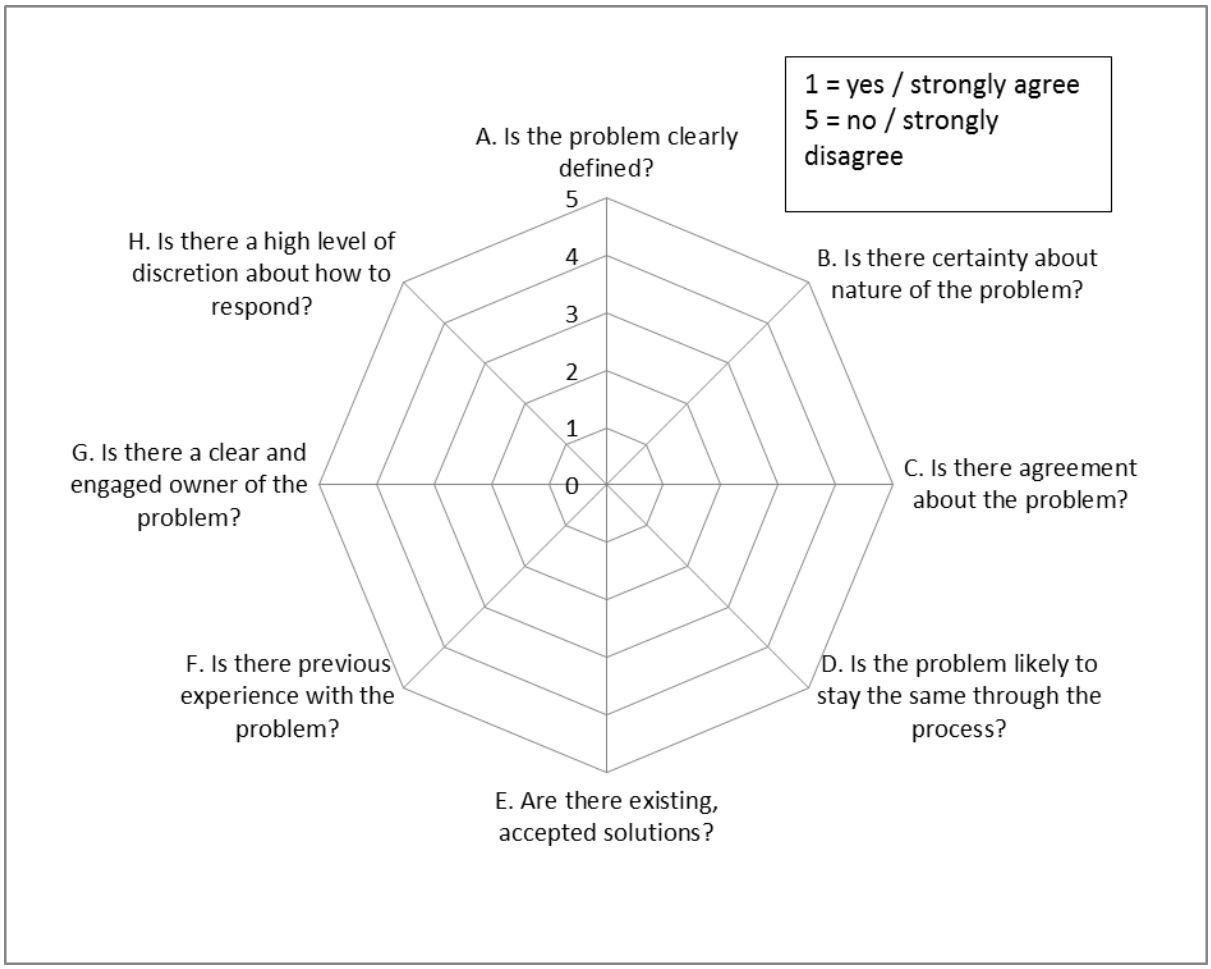
C. **Agreement:** Is there agreement about the problem? That it is a problem, about the nature of the problem, and what is desired from responding to the problem? If there is no agreement about the problem, this it will be difficult to get agreement about what sorts of ideas are considered appropriate, and participants to idea generation may either not be inclined to participate or they may provide ideas that are not within scope or that conflict with the understanding of the problem. The idea generation process may be able to assist in building agreement around the problem by highlighting or emphasising the current experience of the problem and asking for ideas that will specifically address the pain points. This might be done through providing specific examples and providing very tangible, emotionally resonant examples, i.e. how the problem actually affects specific individuals. If the disagreement about the problem is around competing tensions of what needs to be addressed (e.g. some see the problem as being about a need for better outcomes and others see it as about reducing expenditures) then the idea generation process may need be designed to help stakeholders see the respective merits of the differing perspectives. Alternatively, if there is very strong agreement about the problem there may also be very strong views as to what the solution should be. In such a case it may be appropriate to use the idea generation process to encourage ideas that provide a different understanding of the problem, and ensuring the innovation process is not missing an opportunity to do things differently.
D. **Stability:** Is the problem likely to stay the same through the process? Is the problem (or the understanding of the problem) likely to change in nature during the process for responding to it? If the problem is extremely fluid, and will change throughout the process of developing and implementing a response to it, then it may be hard to source ideas that will be relevant no matter how the problem shifts, or to know who should be involved in the process. In such an instance, it may be desirable for the idea generation process to involve some foresight aspects to cover different eventualities, or focus on ideas that will be appropriate under all circumstances. Alternatively, if the problem is extremely stable (and possibly long-standing) the opportunity for innovative interventions may be rather limited. If that is the case, then the idea generation process may be advised to look for more 'out-there' ideas, ideas that can disrupt the current state and provide space for new approaches.
E. **Existing solutions:** Are there existing, accepted solutions? Are there existing options for how to respond, and that are accepted as possible options? If there are no accepted existing solutions, then it might be difficult to come up with truly new ideas. Where that is the case, the idea generation process may need to look at how to tap into new audiences that might have different ways of thinking about the issue and experience with problems that might have transferrable lessons. Alternatively, if there are many existing solutions that are seen as appropriate, but a new approach is desired, it might be necessary for the idea generation process to explicitly emphasise that a new approach is desired. It might even be necessary to be upfront about what options are being excluded, and why.
F. **Experience:** Is there previous experience with the problem? Is it a familiar problem, or a familiar type of problem with relevant, comparable experience? If there is no experience with the problem at all, then it may be difficult to generate ideas that really respond to the problem and idea generation may need to connect the problem to very tangible examples and how it impacts people. It may also be challenging or uncomfortable for organisational leadership, with no precedents to guide how to respond. This might require the idea generation process to have the active engagement of leaders, to ensure that they see how the ideas are arrived at.

Alternatively, if there is considerable experience, there may well be existing set views as to how the problem should have been solved, and it may be difficult to get participants to come up with new ideas. In such an instance the idea generation process may need to be explicit about why this time is different, and to encourage people to critique previous ideas as part of coming up with new ones.

G. **Ownership:** Is there a clear and engaged owner of the problem? Is it clear who is responsible for addressing the problem, who has the authority for addressing the problem, and is there strong engagement from those responsible/with authority to address the problem? If there is no clear owner, it might be difficult to get the necessary engagement from participants as part of the idea generation process, or to provide contributors with a sense of how the ideas will be used. To assist, the idea generation process may try to build competition between possible alternate owners, or focus on how the ideas can build shared value. Alternatively, if there is a very clear owner, it may be useful for the idea generation process to encourage ideas of how others might be able to contribute to addressing the problem.
H. **Discretion:** Is there a high level of discretion about how to respond? If there is no or little freedom, then an idea generation process can set up expectations that will not be met – why ask for ideas if there is a very limited set of options that will or can be pursued? The idea generation process will then risk being seen as a token effort, rather than true engagement. To mitigate this, the idea generation process may wish to concentrate on looking for ideas to address possible implementation issues for the likely responses. Alternatively, if there is lots of discretion, it might be a sign that there is very low engagement with the problem ("I don't care what you do in regards to this, as I don't see it as a high priority or as something that will matter"). If that is the case, then the idea generation process might be used to build engagement, and ensure that the possible options and possible impacts are well understood.

Figure 8 outlines an informal prompting framework for considering each of these factors and what it means for idea generation. As a suggested guide, any problem that is primarily rated with '1s' is unlikely to require that innovative a response as currently framed. Any problem that is primarily rated with '5s' is likely to be too challenging, and is likely to benefit from some consideration of how to reframe it so that it is more amenable to intervention.

Figure 8: Factors to Consider in Matching Problems to Types of Ideas



This framework will not provide an answer to the best types of ideas for a particular problem or mechanisms to get those types of ideas but it will hopefully assist in reflecting on the nature of a problem and what an idea generation process needs to consider in response.

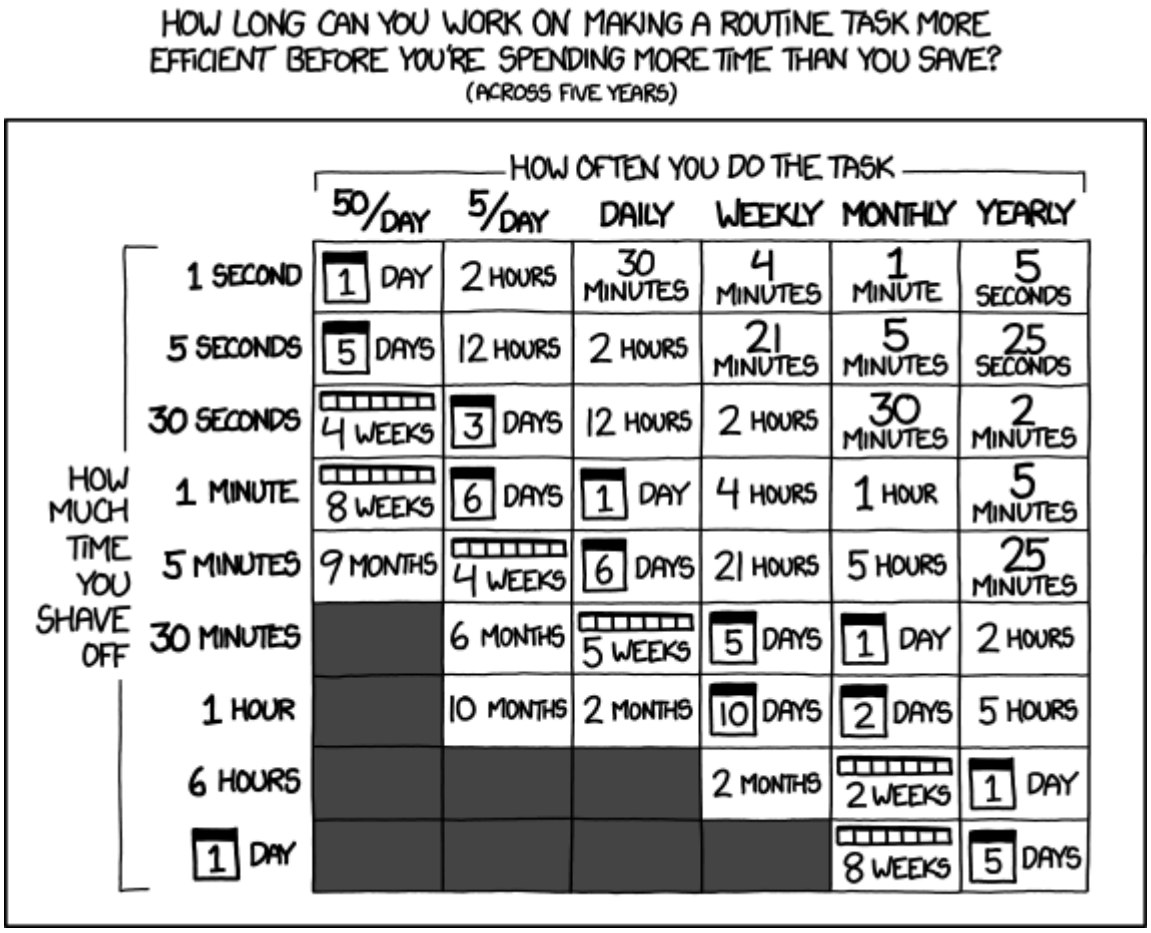
4.4 Understanding the Idea Generation Context

Considering the likely receptiveness to new ideas, how the problem is framed and constituted, and what that means for idea generation will provide a lot to think about in the idea generation process. However there are a number of other factors that are likely to have a bearing on both the ideas that are generated and how they are perceived. Thought should be given to the context in which the idea generation process is taking place. The following are some areas that may provide greater insight into the context, and thus what the idea generation process might need to reflect.

- **Previous attempts:** Have there been previous attempts at this problem within or by the organisation responsible for the idea generation? Is this a problem characterised by "we've tried that" or "I'd never thought of it like that"? Is this something where there have been a lot of previous attempts that never got anywhere? Or one where things have been tried and then abandoned (for reasons political, due to reallocation of resources, or simply through a lack of enthusiasm)? If there have been previous attempts, it may be difficult to engender enthusiasm for the process, or to convince participants that this time will be different.

- **Existing investment:** How much has already been invested in the current approach? For instance, has there has been a lot of money, time and resources invested in setting up an organisation that works on the problem? Are there are actors who have received some sort of support or that profit from the existing approach? Has there been a lot of lobbying, mobilisation or political investment in the current approach? Does the current approach rest on a well-established and understood theoretical/conceptual framework? If there is already considerable investment in the current response, then this may affect participation in any idea generation process. It might mean participation only comes from those likely to win, or alternatively those with the most to lose. It might also mean that some may not enter into the process in good faith, as they are committed (or vehemently opposed) to the existing approach.
- **Fit for purpose:** Ideally the sophistication and the effort involved in the idea generation process should be commensurate to the importance and scale of the problem. If the issue is something that is widespread, where there is significant political engagement, and a clear, pressing need for something to be done, then the idea generation process will be very different to a problem involving how to improve the workflow of a backend administrative process. One suggestion (Ulrich 2011: 19) is to compare the opportunity cost against the approximate value of an optimal solution – so what is the cost of not having a solution as compared to the value of getting the right solution. Another way to think about it may be the time involved (see Figure 9), and whether it makes sense to have a time-consuming process such as crowdsourcing versus a short one, such as a quick brainstorm. Sometimes there may be political or other reasons that mean a more involved process is appropriate, regardless of the time implications, or there may be timing and process constraints that require a quicker idea generation process than the scale of the problem might initially suggest.

Figure 9: Is It Worth The Time?



Source: xkcd.com[2]

- **Not invented here/Invented elsewhere:** is there a "not invented here" attitude? i.e. is there an expectation that the only good ideas are ones that come from within the organisation? Or is there an "invented elsewhere" attitude, a tendency to only accept ideas that have come from or been tried elsewhere? The idea generation process may need to adjust to either of these preferences, either demonstrating how ideas have been adapted, developed or targeted to the specific context, or by identifying links between new ideas from within the organisation with approaches that have been tried elsewhere.
- **Broader context:** What else is going on that may impact the idea generation process? For instance, are there already government announcements about the policy direction that will limit the ideas that can be considered? What might affect the direction of the idea generation process and how the results of the process are received?

Even if the idea generation process is limited to a quick brainstorm, it is likely to benefit from a quick reflection of the context. For a larger and more sophisticated process, inattention to the context may harm the chances of the results being able to successfully feed into decision-making processes.

[2] See https://xkcd.com/1205/

4.5 Appreciating Where Good Ideas Can Come From

How do good ideas arise? What inspires a good idea as opposed to a not so good one? The facets of creativity are slowly being more understood but it is still a fundamentally uncertain process that involves the collisions of experiences, insights, knowledge, technology, circumstances, needs, methods and serendipity.

The following quotes provide a glimpse into four different approaches: that ideas come from prototyping, from having the time and space for reflection and different modes of thinking, from looking for a result rather than a problem, or by looking at things differently.

- **Prototyping:** "The conventional wisdom that "innovation processes" drive prototype development is misleading. Empirical observation of organizations with effective innovation cultures confirms just the opposite: changes in prototypes and simulations drive the innovation process." (Schrage 2000: 27)
- **From reflection/different modes of thinking:** "In other words, creativity is the result of interplay between conscious and rational thought and unconscious and apparently random or dream-like association and activity. For people to be creative, they need the space and time to undertake activities that enable both conscious and unconscious modes of thinking." (Bruce 2009: 43)
- **From looking for a result, rather than an idea:** "Looking behind familiar doors for new ideas is the very trap we want to avoid. On the journey from idea to results, 'The Opposite of an Idea' is a result. So, if you are looking for a great idea, don't look for an idea. Instead, look for a great result, and behind it you will undoubtedly find the great idea you seek." (Eggers and O'Cleary 2009: 40)
- **From looking at things differently:** "In case after case, we find that the innovators come to their insights by:
    1. **Challenging orthodoxies:** Questioning deeply held dogmas inside companies and inside industries about what drives success
    2. **Harnessing discontinuities:** Spotting unnoticed patterns of trends that could substantially change the rules of the game
    3. **Leveraging competencies and strategic assets:** Thinking of a company as a portfolio of skills and assets rather than as a provider of products or services for specific markets
    4. **Understanding unarticulated needs:** Learning to live inside the customer's skin, empathizing with unarticulated feelings and identifying unmet needs." (Skarzynski and Gibson 2008: 46)

The point is not to answer definitively where good ideas come from, but to appreciate that for most organisations it will likely involve a diverse range of activities, people and thinking styles.

4.6 Ensuring a Good Feedstock of Ideas

Like many aspects of innovation, there are tensions involved in the idea generation process. One is that while it is important to understand contextual factors such as the likely receptivity to new ideas, the framing of the problem and how that reflects the type of problem to be solved, it is equally important for idea generation to push against constraints. If idea generation is about identifying what's possible, then it requires new ways of thinking and new ways of seeing the problem and opportunities. It is inherently an activity of thinking about how to overcome constraints and the existing ways of doing things.

Idea generation then must balance an appreciation of the current situation with a willingness to consider previously unthought of possibilities that may open whole new ways of understanding the problem. Idea generation needs to challenge the status quo, to accept that new realities are possible regardless or in spite of the current state; otherwise it is unlikely to come up with other than minor adjustments to the existing approach.

Managing this tension may be assisted by identifying what is involved in having a good 'feedstock' of ideas – plenty of supply that can then be filtered down to the most promising ideas for selection and development.

Key to a good supply is the diversity of ideas. Idea generation should place a great emphasis on variety, or risk being stuck with too narrow a range of options to pick from. An essential element of variety will be quantity, and the sheer number of ideas. But what is enough and does the quantity sufficiently cover a range of possibilities?

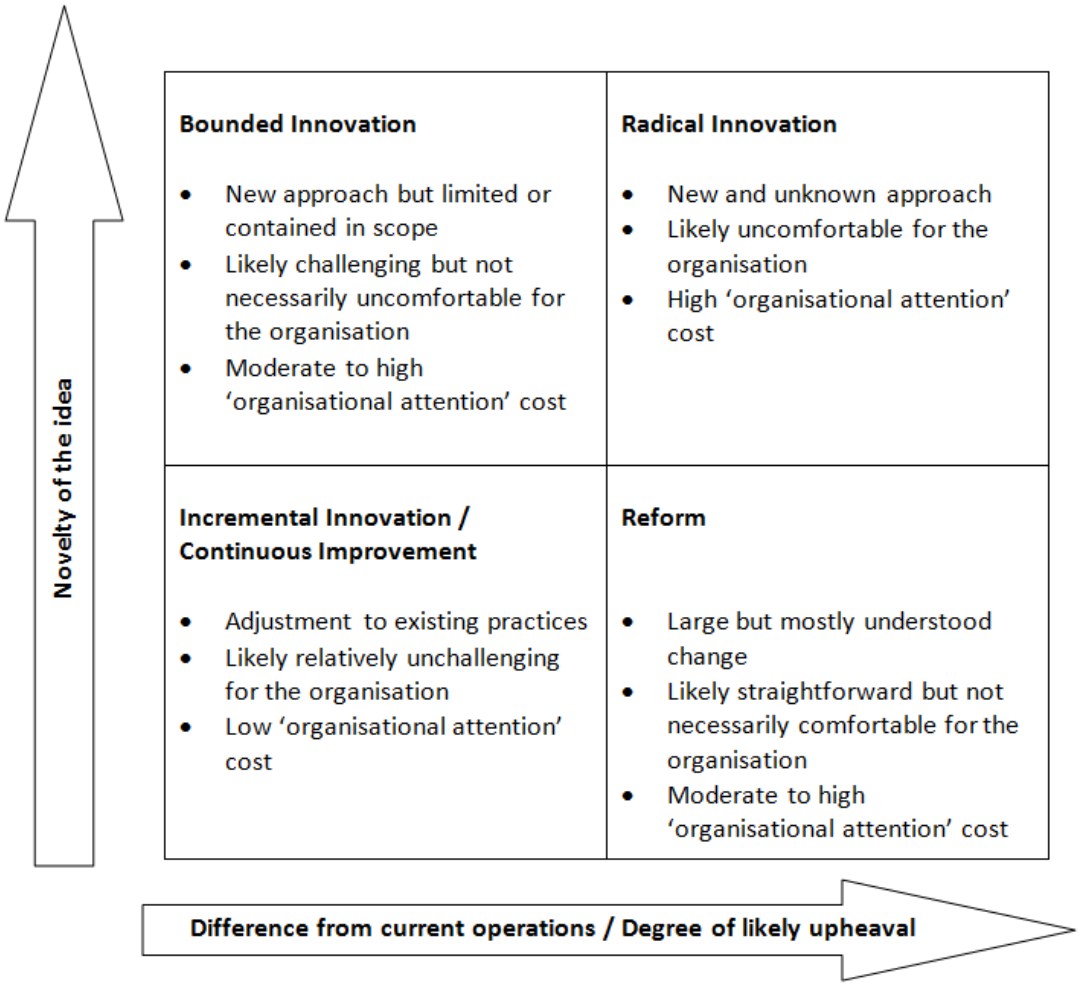
> *"When* supply *is low, or more likely, of low quality, one tends to see a kind of* idea inflation*, meaning that opportunities are presented (often unintentionally) with an inflated sense of their value." (Skarzynski and Gibson 2008: 201)*

There may be a number of ways to think about range, but two elements are to consider the novelty of the idea and its difference from how things are currently done.

- Novelty – how new is an idea? Is it something that has never been done before – whether within the organisation, in the public sector, in the country, or in the world? Or is it something that is an adjustment on something that is already being done?
- Upheaval – how different from current operations, how much upheaval would an idea cause if it was implemented? This is not an actuarial assessment, more a question of does the idea feel like it would create a lot of upheaval? i.e., does it feel like enacting the idea would require a big change in how things are done, in how the organisation is run or managed, or to the dominant way(s) of thinking and understanding issues?

Using these two factors, it is possible to identify four different types of ideas (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Range of Ideas



These different types are elaborated on below:

- **Incremental Innovation / Continuous Improvement:** The idea is not especially new or different, and it is likely to integrate relatively well with existing operations. Such an idea may be a minor adjustment to existing practice, possibly doing the same thing, but better. These sorts of ideas are unlikely to be challenging for the organisation – they do require rethinking core assumptions, introducing significantly new ways of delivery, thinking or reporting. For this reason, the idea is likely to have a low 'organisational attention' cost, i.e., it is unlikely to require significant attention from, or action by, senior decision makers.
- **Reform:** The idea is not especially new or different, but does require a new way of operating and thus will involve a degree of upheaval, such as restructuring the way a service is delivered, or introducing a new organisational approach. The change may be significant in scope, but it may be relatively well understood. Such an idea might be straightforward and thus relatively unchallenging – e.g. the introduction of a new reporting or briefing system, or of an updated IT system – but it may not be comfortable for the organisation as it requires changed behaviours and processes. Such ideas may have a moderate to high organisational cost, in that they may require consistent effort and reinforcement from senior decision makers.

- **Bounded Innovation:** The idea is novel but it is relatively contained in its likely impact for the organisation. This might involve the introduction of a new IT system that changes workflows and the services possible, but does not change the overall work or nature of the organisation. Such an innovation may be challenging in that it introduces new ways of thinking or new arrangements but it does not really change the work of the organisation or current operations. Bounded innovations may have a moderate to high organisational attention cost, in that they involve helping the organisation master new approaches (and the possibility/risk of failure or unexpected results).
- **Radical Innovation:** The idea is novel and also likely to introduce significant upheaval because realising the idea would require completely new ways of thinking or working. Such ideas are likely to be quite uncomfortable for the organisation, as they may challenge some fundamental assumptions and require different beliefs, behaviours or understandings of roles. Radical innovation is likely to have a high organisational attention cost, involving considerable attention and effort from senior decision makers, and ongoing effort to manage transitional experiences for staff or stakeholders.

Other possible lenses for considering variety include the type of innovation (see box), or whether the idea is something primarily within the organisation or something that mainly affects outside the organisation. Novelty in the public sector may also be about not doing something, rather than always about introducing something new – for instance, stopping a service or removing a regulation.

A Public Sector Innovation Typology (Windrum 2008)

1. Services innovation—a new or improved service
2. Service delivery innovation—a new or different way of providing a service
3. Administrative or organisational innovation—a new process
4. Conceptual innovation—a new way of looking at problems, challenging current assumptions, or both
5. Policy innovation—a change to policy thinking or behavioural intentions
6. Systemic innovation—a new or improved way for parts of the public sector to operate and interact with stakeholders.

A good feedstock of ideas will have a good variety of ideas, and such lenses can help provide a prompt to consider whether the ideas generated are really diverse or not.

A diverse mix of ideas will provide insight into the problem and what's possible, as well as helping flesh out the nature of the problem to be addressed.

4.7 Start Small or Start Big

Is a "big", transformational idea best or is it better to start small and build up as more is learnt about what works and what really might be possible?

In most instances it is likely that the right idea will be one that builds in stages, with "quick wins" and demonstrable progress as more is learnt. Occasionally though it may be more appropriate to start with a big idea, one that lifts expectations, energises stakeholders with a new sense of possibility, and thinks large from the beginning. While it may be difficult to deliver on such a big idea, it might also be difficult to later shift a small idea into being a big idea if needed.

Idea generation, as an act of setting out what is possible, what is acceptable thinking, and what is not, can change a conversation around a problem and how each player understands their role. Sometimes the level of the conversation may be as important as the idea itself, as an act of creating shared understanding of the problem and shared purpose. Therefore the act of including a "big" idea may be appropriate even if it is intended to start small.

4.8 Understanding Implications

Finding a wide variety of ideas, that vary in scope, is clearly important for the innovation process, but success at diversity poses problems for the second stage of idea generation – the filtering of ideas. Which ideas are the most promising? Which might best address the problem at hand?

While there will be a number of context-specific considerations (practicality, feasibility, political, financial, skills) in determining whether an idea is right for the situation, the most important is understanding the potential implications. What will an idea lead to – and not just for the problem at hand, but more broadly? How might it intersect with other elements of the system?

For any innovative idea this is immediately problematic – if it is something that has not been done before, or if it is being applied in a new context, how can you be certain of what will happen? There is an inherent amount of uncertainty around a new idea, and at an early stage of ideas development it may be difficult or impossible to really understand the implications.

Yet idea generation has to involve the rapid elimination of possibilities or otherwise involve impractical and wasteful efforts of working through what might be hundreds of ideas. A good idea generation process will then be one that builds in mechanisms for filtering the ideas, including a sense of the possible issues or advantages of particular ideas.

This can be aided by ensuring that the process has access to:

- Insight – that there are differing perspectives, backgrounds, experiences and skillsets involved with the idea process, that can provide alternate understandings of how different ideas might play out in practice
- Expertise – that there are different sets of expertise (specific technical or practice-based understanding, such as legal, financial, IT or specific domain-related expertise) brought to bear on the ideas, to provide an understanding of potential implementation issues.

Such insight and expertise, when structured and accessed in the right ways, can help filter which ideas are important, and which can be safely discarded as an input.

Other possible considerations include:

- **2nd order impacts:** If the idea works as expected, what might follow from it? For instance, if there is a new medical technology that allows a certain type of operation to be done much faster, that may then create new bottlenecks in the system (García-Goñi, 2008). Increased demand may reveal limitations in the rest of the hospital – e.g. number of beds available, need for nurses for post-operative care, etc. So while a new idea may be a clearly good thing, there may be second order impacts that cause or reveal new issues and that, sometimes, may be less desirable than fixing the problem at hand. Idea generation should give some thought to second

order impacts, though the detail of that may be left for the more promising ideas to the developing proposals stage of the innovation process.

- **Pathway dependencies:** Some choices may be irrevocable or lock-in courses of action that eliminate alternate options. For instance, an idea might be to decommission a particular service. Once that is done, that will likely affect a broader system of players and processes. It would likely result in changed behaviours and expectations. Even if the decision to decommission the service was later reversed or the service was reintroduced, how people interact with it will be changed in all sorts of ways. Therefore idea generation should give some attention to the possibility of pathway dependencies, and recognise that proceeding with some ideas rather than others may be irreversible.
- **Innovation portfolio:** Every organisation will have a range of ideas and innovative options that it is considering or pursuing at any one time. Many of these are likely to be smaller in scale (e.g. incremental or bounded innovation) with limited, if any, "big" innovations going on at any one time. Noting the idea of "organisational attention cost" (Figure 10), any one organisation is only going to be able to sustain a certain amount of innovation effort, or otherwise risk being in a state of continual uncertainty where too many things are up in the air and day-to-day operations are jeopardised by a lack of standardisation. An idea generation process needs to consider its place in the broader innovation portfolio, and recognise that even if the best sorts of ideas may favour a large (or small) course of action, that may not be the most appropriate thing in the context of the organisation's (or government's) broader innovation efforts.

The aim of an effective idea generation process will not be to deeply understand all of the possible implications and perfectly predict what will happen; this will not be feasible or practical. Rather, the aim is to consider the possible implications so that the ideas that do move forward have the best chance and the likelihood of unexpected surprises is reduced.

4.9 Criteria for Filtering

Understanding, or at least appreciating, the possible implications of ideas will provide some insight into which ideas are useful and which are not. Yet a successful idea generation process should provide a ready supply of potential ideas that are to be drawn from, more than can be realistically tested or analysed. How can a shortlist of the most promising ideas be arrived at? How can the ideas that are unsuitable be quickly eliminated?

Every innovation project will have a specific context and a specific problem that it is relating to, and that will provide the ultimate arbiter of whether an idea is suitable or not. Ideally that understanding of the problem would be grounded in good insight into the users, the context, trends, and stakeholder reactions. More often, however, an effective idea generation process will be one that can articulate, and potentially share, a set of clear criteria as to how ideas will be judged or assessed.

Such criteria might include:

- Likely financial costs (including foregone revenue) – e.g. what might be the upfront cost of the idea?
- Likely administrative or implementation costs – e.g. what might be the running costs of the idea?

- An assessment of the combined viability, feasibility, and desirability of an idea – e.g. is it something that people might want to use, that is feasible to deliver and is a viable proposition?
- The potential political impacts – e.g. is the idea likely to be politically attractive?
- How much support for the idea has been garnered through the idea generation process – e.g. is it a popular idea?
- Likely capability needs to deliver on the idea – e.g. do the needed skills, resources and organisational systems exist?
- Likely capacity needs to deliver on the idea – e.g. are the needed skills, resources and organisational systems available?
- Possibility of a quick fix – e.g. can the idea provide a quick fix to an immediate problem?
- Likely problem avoidance – e.g. might it make the problem go away (for now)?

The most appropriate criteria will vary, but it will be difficult to quickly filter many ideas without some.

Two notes of caution:

- A clear set of criteria may act as an automatic and unintended filter for idea generation. For instance, if cost is identified upfront as the primary criteria, then it is unlikely that many elaborate or expensive ideas will be put forward, even though some of those ideas might, in turn, have led to whole new ways of looking at the problem and what is possible. Therefore it may be better to suspend the criteria at the beginning of the idea generation process, for the finding of ideas, and only bring the criteria in explicitly towards the filtering end of the process.
- Any innovation idea will take work and will likely suffer when it is compared to what's already in place. Therefore the idea generation may need to avoid filtering too much on an "as is" basis, and build in some allowance for the experimentation, testing, and development that may be needed.

> *"All too often, great ideas get prematurely squashed." (Skarzynski and Gibson 2008: 125)*
>
> *"… avoid rejecting ideas too quickly. Ideas need time to develop; premature rejection of ideas will hamper the idea generation process. An idea has to be nurtured to explore its full potential before it is subjected to rigorous risk assessment and other forms of evaluation." (Eggers and Singh 2009: 20)*

4.10 Part of a Repeatable Process

Idea generation is often not a discrete activity. It may be about coming up with some ideas, working through them, and then coming up with even more. It may be about filtering and then developing some ideas and then realising that the problem is different to what was initially understood, and so needing to generate a fresh set of new ideas. In short, it may be difficult to tell if the idea generation process has finished, or not, and whether further assistance will be needed.

This aspect of idea generation implies some basic concerns, for pragmatic, if not more altruistic reasons:

- that there should be respect for participants and their time
- that the contributions of participants are considered and valued appropriately
- that there the outcomes of the process are communicated back to participants or would-be participants in some way.

Idea generation should not be seen as an isolated process, but one of a broader innovation/problem-solving ecosystem, where there will likely be future need for people to participate. The experience of one idea generation process may determine whether people are willing to engage with another in the future (by/within the same organisation or somewhere else in government).

An effective idea generation process will not just help find and filter ideas for one particular problem, but at the very least, will not harm or hinder the efforts of future processes to access the necessary expertise and insight.

4.11 Ideas can Help with Learning About the Problem

The ideas generated in response to a problem will help provide insight into the nature of the problem. For instance:

- Do the ideas reflect what is really thought to be the problem? If not, is that because the framing of the problem is not clear?
- Do the ideas generated provide realistic and desirable options? If not, is the scale of the problem right, or should it be tackled at a different level?
- Does the scope of the ideas seem right? Would the cost and effort involved in the ideas be worth it, or in retrospect is the problem manageable in a more incremental fashion?
- Does a particular idea, a particular possibility, change the conversation around the problem? Does the articulation of a possibility change the sense of what's possible and thus what's expected as the appropriate response to the problem?

Innovation is an uncertain process and the initial understanding of a problem may change significantly. Idea generation, through the exploration of what's possible and conceivable, will aid learning about the problem, which in turn can provide a better understanding of what ideas are really needed.

In this way idea generation can also act as a mechanism of double-loop learning or deuteron learning (see *What's the problem?* OECD, 2016). Ideas that come forward can help with the questioning of existing mindsets and challenge assumptions about the what's possible (and desirable), and act as a means of learning about what makes for a good idea and how to generate ideas in future.

An effective process for finding and filtering ideas will be one that emphasises learning and can allow the idea generation process to be tweaked or altered accordingly.

4.12 Build Enthusiasm

No idea will arrive fully formed and developed. If it is a new idea then there will inherently be uncertainties about how it might work, what would be involved and what the results might be. Any idea will need work and will require support over time as it is developed and difficulties are encountered.

One of the functions of an effective idea generation process then will be not just to come up with a shortlist of ideas but also to attempt to build enthusiasm and mobilise support for addressing the problem. Without such support it may be difficult to maintain sufficient momentum for the innovation process to keep it going when challenges arise.

Building enthusiasm can have its drawbacks however. For instance, if there is a lot of enthusiasm for one particular idea which is then not developed or implemented, then the idea generation process may actually harm the chances of a successful innovation being introduced. A successful process will be one that maintains enthusiasm but does not lock support in behind particular ideas at the cost of the overall aim or goal of addressing the problem(s) at hand.

> *"Moreover, our experience suggests that many of the failures of innovation are social failures. Promising ideas, with real potential business value, often get left behind during the development process… Often, the root cause is poor social interaction; the right people simply don't engage in productive dialogue frequently enough." (Charan in Lafley, 2008)*

In addition, not everyone should be expected to be enthusiastic. There will be people who are challenged by the idea, who might not benefit from the idea, or who might not have the requisite emotional or cognitive energy or time to fully engage with the idea. Some will be sceptical due to previous events, or there might be those who do not trust the motives of the organisation. And sometimes that scepticism or resistance to an idea will be well-grounded.

> *"Individual members of staff will be winners and losers. It is essential for the credibility of the manager that this is not glossed over, or an attempt is made to portray everyone as a winner. Staff will know that this is not the case and the attempt to portray it as so will only damage the credibility both of the innovation and of the manager concerned." (Osborne and Brown, 2005: 194)*

Building enthusiasm involves a careful balance between optimism and belief in the power of the ideas being put forward, but also a recognition that there will be resistance or push-back, some of which will be justified and emotionally potent.

4.13 Decision Point

What is the decision point for the idea generation process? At what stage in the process will the filtering occur, and a shift be made to experimenting and testing those ideas? While the line may often be blurry, it will likely be important for participants to have a clear sense of what will happen with the ideas, what the next steps of the process will be, and what came about because of their involvement.

The process might also need to give thought to decision-making structures. Who is determining which ideas are short listed? Is that appropriate to the level of responsibility or impact of the ideas?

> *"In hierarchical systems, ideas can die fast. When only a single person or committee at the top of an agency decides which ideas move forward, many ideas may never get anywhere. To give good ideas a fair chance, a more open and less hierarchical process is needed." (Eggers and Singh, 2009: 22)*

4.14 Caveat 1 – Fuzzy Ideas, Concrete Recommendations

> *"After all, the original innovation was not a single, coherent idea that one individual conceived while contemplating a sunset." (Behn, 2008: 154)*

Ideas can be messy. New ideas can be fuzzy and hard to nail down or box in. Where does one idea stop and another begin? When does a variation of an idea veer into becoming a completely new idea? If a single idea encapsulates or necessitates multiple other ideas, is it still one idea?

An idea generation process may result in a number of variations of one idea, or one idea that links a lot of others. The outcome may not seem very clear, yet sometimes there will be political or process pressures that require a definitive outcome or a clear set of proposals, e.g. a set of specific recommendations. Such pressures can sometimes result in the packaging of ideas in a way that may be somewhat misleading about how developed or thought-through they are. Where this is likely to be the case, the idea generation process may need to build in the testing and developing of ideas at the same time. (These issues will be explored in the third lifecycle study on developing proposals.)

4.15 Caveat 2 – Ideas are Political

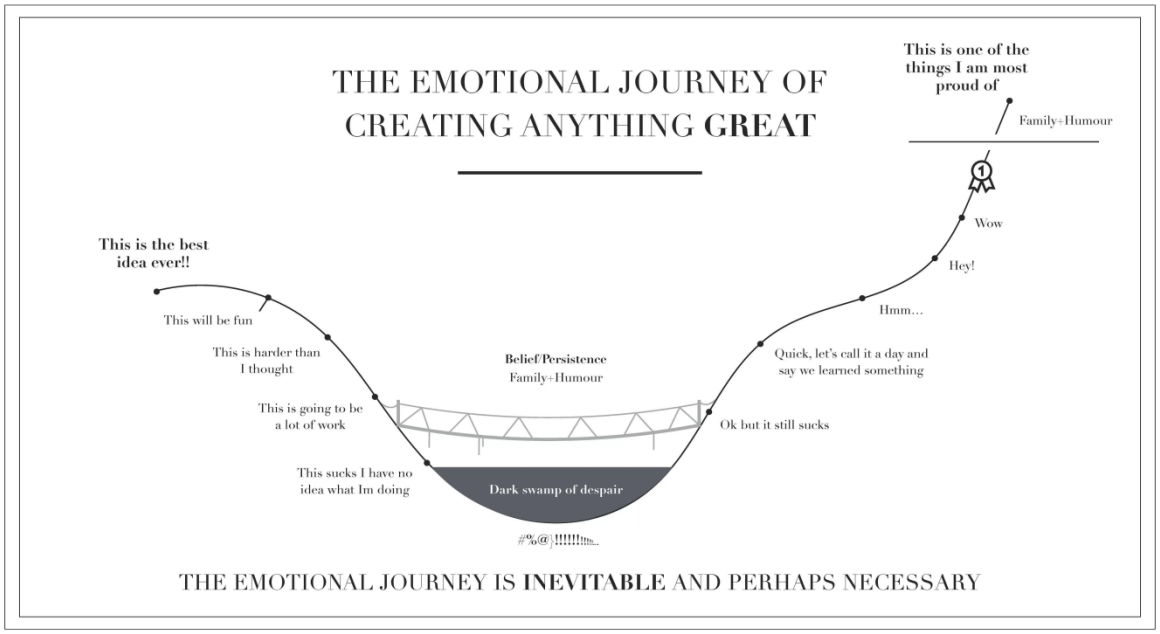
Innovation is an inherently political act. Innovation is about deliberate change to the status quo and involves choosing between different possibilities – and therefore choosing between different futures. No idea is context or value free. Idea generation, by its nature as a problem solving process, can seem like a technocratic or logical process of working through the options and pursuing the best course of action. However, an effective idea generation process should recognise that it is inherently a political process and that innovation can create winners and losers. Without such recognition there is a danger that the innovation process may be blindsided by otherwise unexpected negative reactions ("But why would anyone complain? This is a great idea") or ignore broader questions of values and beliefs that may affect how an idea plays out in reality. This consideration may be even more important for small ideas where the impact is expected to be minor and it can be implemented without much fuss, than it is for big ideas where there is more likely to be an explicit process of political deliberation and discussion, and where concerns will be made very apparent.

4.16 Caveat 3 – Ideas Are Not the (Whole) Answer

> *"It is rare, even when academics are among those sitting around the table trying to solve a real-world problem, that some truly new idea turns out to be more than a minor part of the answer." (Donahue, 2008: 103)*

Ideas are how new possibilities are opened up, how new ways of unlocking problems are conceived, how new futures are created. New ideas are vital to the innovation process and the right ideas can unleash energy, action and enthusiasm within the system. Yet an idea itself is a small thing. To have an impact, it requires the belief and support of people, a willingness to change and to act in new ways, and the optimism that things can and will be different. It is very easy to be attached to an idea, to think it is the answer, but effective idea generation recognises that any idea is not *the* answer. The factors outlined here can assist in finding and filtering for the ideas with the most promise, but even if everything goes smoothly, there are still going to be challenges in realising it. Idea generation processes will ideally maintain a degree of realistic optimism and acknowledge the work still to be done. Figure 11 provides a candid glimpse of these realities.

Figure 11: The Emotional Journey of Creating Anything Great



Source: John Saddington, 2016[3]

4.17 Caveat 4 – Good Ideas Are Not Inevitable

There is nothing inevitable about a new idea. The characteristics of a new idea – its fuzziness, its political nature, and its interconnection with existing systems, processes, peoples and beliefs – mean that there is much that can go wrong or awry. Despite these realities, there is a risk of believing that an idea will happen, that it will be inevitable. Even if that is the case, that inevitability may run on timeframes well outside expectations, and thereby it may not be as useful as it could have been, it may no longer be as relevant to the problem as it once was, or it may mean that there was a significant opportunity cost.

> *"The 'natural' selection fallacy: This asserts that good ideas will always succeed. In the long run this may be true – but then few managers live in the long run. Consider the case of scurvy amongst sailors. In 1601 an English sea captain demonstrated the effectiveness of lemon juice in*

[3] See https://john.do/emotional-journey-creating/

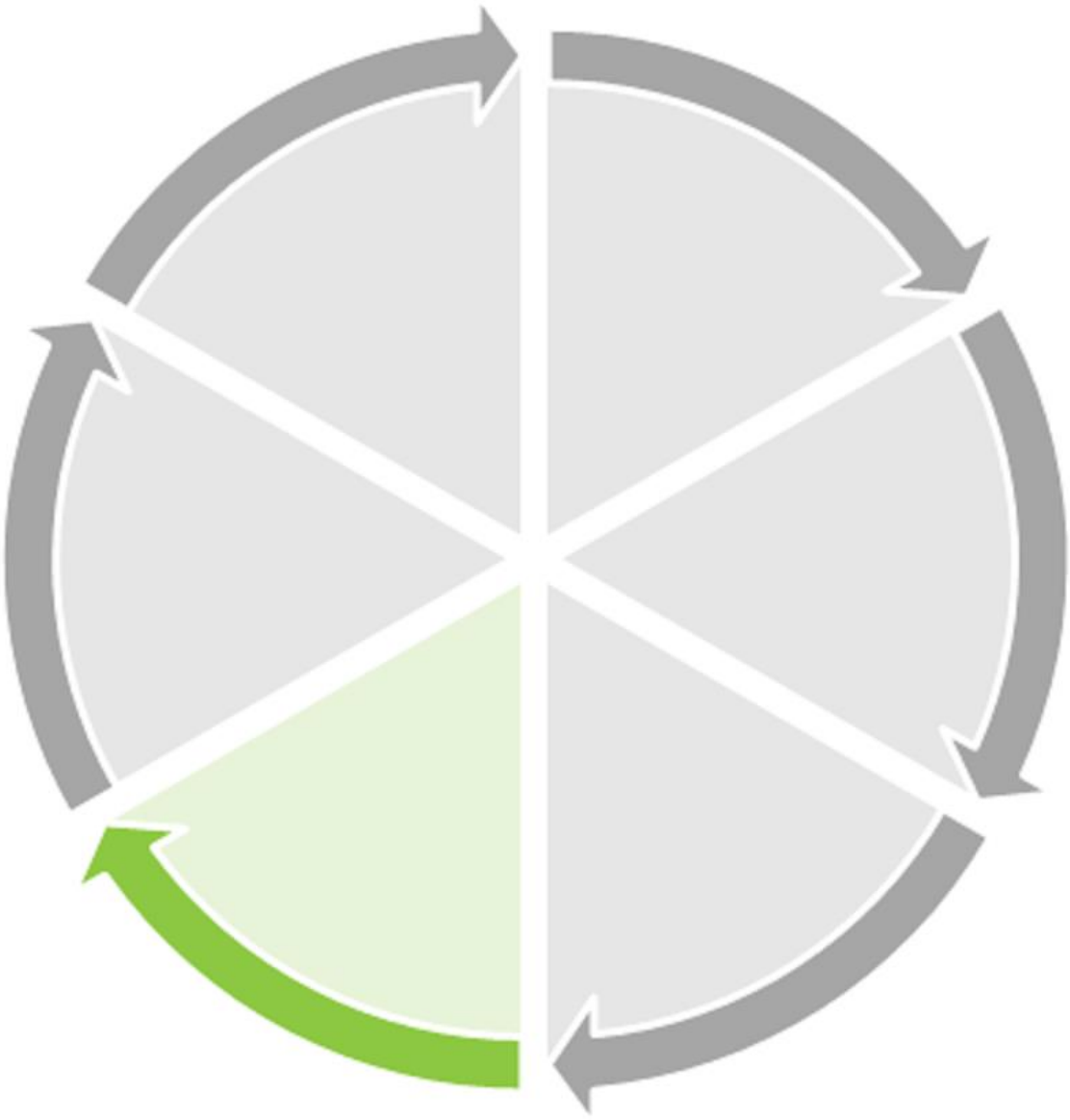
preventing scurvy amongst ocean-going sailors. Some one hundred and fifty years later British Navy doctors confirmed this – but it was a further forty years before the navy introduced lemon rations onto their ships in 1790. Finally it took a further seventy years before, in 1860, the English Board of Trade introduced lemon juice as a preventative to scurvy on civil ships. The 'good idea' did indeed succeed – it just took two hundred and sixty years for it to happen!" (Osborne and Brown, 2005: 196)

In Summary, Effective Finding and Filtering of Ideas Requires …

This discussion has attempted to identify some of the core considerations of finding and filtering ideas for problems requiring a novel response by the public sector. These include:

- Understanding the appetite and desire for new ideas. If there is no willingness for new ideas, then it is likely more needs to be done on getting engagement with the problem.
- The framing of the problem. How a problem is framed will shape what ideas come forward in response.
- That different types of problems may require different types of ideas as responses, in which case the idea generation process will need to be structured in a way to elicit that particular type of ideas.
- That the process needs to consider the broader idea generation context, such as whether this is the first attempt at generating ideas for a particular problem or one of many, the extent of the existing investment or efforts involved in the current approach, and whether the process is fit for purpose.
- Appreciating where good ideas come from and what that might mean for the idea generation process and who is involved.
- The importance of variety in the ideas generated. Without a diverse set of ideas produced, the idea generation process may easily be locked into current patterns of thought, and miss alternative and more fruitful options.
- The contribution that can be made by big visionary ideas that may shape the conversation, and smaller, more specific ideas that might point to action.
- Appreciation that novel ideas may have implications beyond the problem being looked at, including second order impacts, the potential for locking in particular paths, and that any idea generation process will be part of a broader portfolio of efforts that may be impacted by it or in competition with it.
- A clear set of criteria for filtering ideas and narrowing down on those that are the most relevant, while avoiding unnecessarily deterring ideas that might not initially fit or that are not yet developed.
- That the process needs to consider when and how decisions will be made about ideas and filtering of ideas, and how that will be communicated to contributors, along with a sense of how their participation shaped the process.
- That an idea generation process participants should be treated with due regard, not least because it can be difficult to always identify when a process is complete and where further assistance may be required.

- Recognising that the ideas that come forward may reveal more about the problem to be solved, and that this learning may then require a change to the scope and nature of the idea generation process.
- The role that the idea generation process can have in building enthusiasm for the next stages of the innovation process, and the risks of having participants locked in behind one particular idea, rather than supporting the aim of solving the problem.
- Recognising that sometimes there will be pressures for very specific outcomes for an idea generation process, when often the ideas may still be in development and need testing and refinement.
- Appreciating that innovation, and thus generating ideas, involves values and beliefs and is a political rather than technocratic exercise. Idea generation should be recognised as a political act and respected accordingly.
- An idea, any idea, is only one (vital) part of the process. Ideas rarely beget themselves or allow organisations to avoid the effort of actually realising the possibilities that it opens up.
- Ideas are rarely inevitable, no matter how good they are.



5. Enabling Effective Finding and Filtering of Ideas

Finding and filtering of ideas is an ongoing part of any organisation. Coming up with ideas is something that is a part of many people's roles and responsibilities, even if only in small ways. Yet with the speed of change, the extent of new options that are possible, and the considerations outlined for effective idea generation processes, support will be needed. What is involved in enabling the effective finding and filtering of ideas in the public sector?

> *"There is no established theoretical framework for cultivating innovation – no immutable laws that, when applied, will start good ideas rolling off an assembly line. But successful organizations create an atmosphere that welcomes suggestions – and adopts them when appropriate." (Eggers and Singh, 2009: 33)*

The following factors have been identified as helping provide an environment and context conducive to effective idea generation.

1. Confronting the status quo – new ideas are about new possibilities, but does the organisation emphasise or focus on possibilities that are a continuation of what is, rather than an exploration of new worlds?
2. A common / shared vocabulary around ideas and innovation – does the organisation talk about ideas and innovation?
3. Leadership – are new and different ideas encouraged and welcomed (and even rewarded) by the organisation's leadership?
4. An idea versus my idea – is the organisation mature in its approach to ideas?
5. All the players are involved – are all those with a stake in the problem represented or involved in some way in the generation of ideas?
6. Clear sense of the problem – is there a shared clear sense of the problem?
7. Openness – is the organisation truly open to new ideas and what that will mean for how it works?
8. Ownership / autonomy – are staff or stakeholders empowered to come up with and develop ideas, and can do so in a way that does not challenge the operations of the organisation?
9. Involved decision makers – are decision makers sufficiently involved in the process so as to understand or appreciate how ideas have been arrived at?
10. Experience with ideas – has the organisation had sufficient experience at idea generation to develop the judgement about what makes for a good idea?
11. Option thinking – does the organisation quickly determine and pursue an idea or does it understand the value of delaying decisions about which options to close off?
12. Legitimacy – does the organisation have the legitimacy it needs to run or be involved in the idea generation process in order to generate the engagement and buy-in appropriate to the problem at hand?
13. Political engagement – is there political engagement with the process? Or, at the least, is there a strategy for ensuring possible surprises from the process are flagged early on?
14. Diversity – is a diversity of perspectives, experiences and thinking styles appreciated in the organisation, and involved in idea generation processes?

15. Capacity – do the people who are needed for the idea generation process have the capacity and the 'slack' to fully engage with idea generation?
16. Capabilities – do the people who are needed for the idea generation process have the capabilities to properly contribute to idea generation?
17. Ready for serendipity – is the organisation open to serendipitous ideas and possibilities?
18. Access to insight and expertise – does the organisation have access to, and potentially relationships with, the audiences with relevant insight and expertise to aid the idea generation process?
19. Problem-solving ecosystem – does the organisation operate in an ecosystem with the necessary problem-solving capabilities?
20. Ready for mischief – is there a preparedness for how the process might be mischievously (as opposed to maliciously) used?

5.1 Confronting the Status Quo

> *"Organizations have built-in resistance because they can't quickly change their culture or the mindsets of individuals. The need to maintain the status quo is a powerful force that is difficult to overcome." (Saint-Onge and Wallace, 2003: 58)*

Coming up with new ideas can be very easy, but the quality of the ideas will be improved if there's a willingness to confront the status quo, to question whether the ideas coming forward are simply a continuation of what is. Questioning the status quo can be uncomfortable however, as it involves questioning beliefs, assumptions and current power dynamics.

> *"Once again, staff are unlikely to want to take risks if it means that they may end up the focus of a media campaign." (Osborne and Brown, 2005: 42)*

Particularly in the public sector, where there are political considerations and where not absolutely *everything* can or should be questioned, it may seem easier to avoid certain types of ideas that might raise awkward questions. However an idea generation process that does not challenge the status quo may be missing out on valuable ways of reframing the opportunity for action.

Organisations may need to consider their willingness to question the status quo, or whether there is a tendency for the ideas that are put forward to reinforce existing systems. Those working within a public sector organisation may also find it difficult to be associated with ideas that challenge the status quo and bring up uncomfortable questions. It may be sometimes necessary to provide safe spaces for the discussion of such ideas, or stipulate that an idea generation process is explicitly looking for difficult ideas. In such cases, there should be a preparedness for any political or media attention and a willingness to defend the exercise as one that was deliberately looking for provocative ideas.

At the same time, there can be very good reasons for the status quo. Innovation can be risky and disruptive and there may be legitimate concerns or anxiety about change. Asking questions that hit at existential matters for the organisation may make some people very uncomfortable and lead them to react with stress responses. There will not be an easy answer, but it is likely that for most organisations there will be too much deferment to the status quo rather than not enough.

A guiding question for an organization might be “Does the organisation routinely explore possibilities that are dramatically different from the status quo?”

5.2 Building a Common / Shared Vocabulary to Enable Collaboration

New ideas can be hard to communicate, and truly new ideas will have few readily available comparisons, few existing things that can be pointed to and described as “it’s similar to this”. Putting forward new ideas can also be intimidating as it may be exposing ignorance or revealing gaps in understanding. Ideas may also reveal different understandings or beliefs that can make participants feel vulnerable – they are offering up a part of themselves, wrapped up as an idea and their sense of what is possible. Idea generation can also be a fun and playful process that creates truly “out there” ideas that are a part of coming up with a diverse range of options, yet mean that there will be some ideas that may seem silly or foolish.

In other words, idea generation can be a messy process, filled with ambiguity and the potential for misinterpretation (and judgement). In a traditional setting this may not have mattered, as there may have been clear lines of responsibility and established relationships with the key players. However in an interconnected world where problems and ideas bleed across organisational silos and new perspectives are needed from across hierarchical levels, a more deliberate approach may be appropriate.

Establishing a common understanding of the concepts around idea generation can help avoid confusion, ensuring that participants have a better idea of what to expect and how to contribute, and what is appropriate or not. It can provide a sense of the “manners” and protocols of idea generation, reducing some of the potential friction involved in collaboration in new endeavours.

For instance:

- Does the organisation have a language around brainstorming, for demarcating when an idea is something that is emergent and playful, to be built upon further, rather than something to be assessed or evaluated as “good” or “bad”? (e.g. “We’re at the initial stage of the ideas process, so there are no bad ideas here” rather than “We only want well-thought through ideas here”)
- Is there a default of respectful language for how to respond to a new idea or for how to clarify the elements of something truly new? (e.g. “That’s an interesting idea, can you help me understand how you arrived at it, and how it might work” as opposed to “No, that idea won’t work/we can’t do that”)
- Is there a shared sense of how to build on the ideas of others and developing shared ownership? (e.g. “What if we did X for that idea, and have you asked Janet about her thoughts of how we could do Y?” instead of “I think your idea is what Janet’s already proposed and her idea is better”)

The more an organisation is able to have a shared language around ideas and negotiating the uncertain process of exploring different options put forward by different people, the more it will make involvement in idea generation accessible and “safe”.

A guiding question for an organisation might be “Are new ideas typically responded to in constructive and respectful language?”

5.3 Leadership

In any organisation there is likely to be an implicit understanding of what's a normal part of the conversation, and what is "out of bounds", and that includes for ideas and innovation. What ideas would seem heretical or counter-cultural, subversive or dangerous?

The leadership (those with positional authority) of an organisation plays an important role in signalling what's acceptable, what's valued, and what's needed. In a traditional bureaucratic setting, with defined responsibilities and clear lines of reporting, it may not have been appropriate for people in different parts of the organisation to discuss and contribute their ideas about how something should be done. In an organisation dealing with issues requiring new perspectives and insights, a different approach to idea generation is likely to be needed.

An organisation and its leaders may need to consider what signals they have sent about the expectations of staff (and partners and stakeholders) when it comes to playing with new ideas. In some organisational cultures there may also be a tendency for the ideas of leaders to be accepted with little questioning. In such instances, it may be necessary for leaders to deliberately withhold their views at the initial stages, to encourage others to put forward ideas and to foster variety of viewpoints, or risk having their ideas going unchallenged and missing out on alternate possibilities.

An organisation with a preparedness to question the status quo and with an agreed vocabulary may find it easier to enable leaders who are willing to support staff to have and play with new ideas.

> *"In many organizations, senior executives behave like oligarchic political leaders: they are not generally inclined to usher in sweeping democratic reforms that promise to threaten their prerogatives, privileges and power. Many senior managers are highly talented at corporate gamesmanship without ever having played* World of Warcraft *– and they intend to keep it that way. Democracy is a noble ideal, but in most corporate hierarchies it has never been in vogue." (Fraser and Dutta, 2008: 144)*

A guiding question for an organisation might be "Are new ideas recognised as valuable, even if they do not immediately contribute to the day-to-day operation of the organisation?"

5.4 An Idea vs My Idea – Innovation Maturity

If someone comes up with only one idea, it can be very easy to get attached to it, to think of it as special and something precious. If a group closely connected to a problem come up with some ideas about what to do, it may be difficult to have those ideas critiqued by others. If an organisation has invested effort and resources in a particular idea, it may be challenging to then have that possibility dismissed or called out as not good enough. Innovation can feel very personal and ideas can be seen as "my idea", as a sort of external piece of the self.

Alternatively, if someone comes up with lots of ideas, or a group works with others with a different relationship to the problem, or if an organisation shares an idea (to the extent it can) early, then idea generation is likely to have a very different feel.

In short, it can be very easy to invest in an idea and then feel challenged when others do not react to that idea with the same enthusiasm. With practice and an appreciation of the innovation process, it

is possible to have a more mature response, one that grasps that there are lots of ideas, too many to love equally, and that killing them as early as possible can be kindest in the long run. Building a maturity around innovation, based on understanding and experience of the idea generation process, can help an organisation navigate the challenges of innovation more easily. That is not to say that innovation can or should be emotionally distant. No matter how mature an organisation is when it comes to innovation, there will always be a necessary and expected degree of emotional investment in ideas and possibilities – but maturity can help recognise that attachment and respond to it accordingly.

A guiding question for an organisation might be "Is it normal for people within the organisation to have lots of ideas?"

> *"Once people have succeeded at innovation, you can see the energy in the company changing. People routinely say, 'We can do this. This is feasible.' The attitude changes are incredible to watch; once people see the simplicity, durability, and sustainability of an innovative mind-set, it continually reinforces itself." (Lafley, 2008)*

5.5 Involvement of all the Players

Any problem will have a range of players that either have a stake or contribute to the experience of the problem. Idea generation will be more effective if those connected to the problem are involved and can contribute their perspectives, and feel that they (or people like them) have been heard. Without this, there may be resistance or scepticism to any of the ideas that arise, and a belief that there might be other options that should have been considered.

An organisation will benefit if it can convene or involve all of the relevant players (or fair representatives/proxies). For instance:

- Who contributes to the experience of the problem?
- Who has experience with the problem?
- Who is this idea for and how will it intersect with their lives and their experience of the problem?
- Who is needed to make the idea(s) happen?
- Who has the resources/capabilities/capacity to help?

A likely sign that this has not happened is if participants in the process can name other stakeholders who are not represented.

An organisation that understands the problem and the problem ecosystem will be in a much stronger position to generate ideas that are likely to effectively respond to the problem.

A guiding question for an organisation might be "Is it normal for the organisation to identify all of the stakeholders connected with a problem and to actively consider how they will be involved in the idea generation process?"

5.6 Clear Sense of the Problem

Of course if there is not a shared understanding of the problem (or that there is a problem) then the value of bringing the relevant players together for idea generation may be limited. As noted

however, the idea generation process can be used to help build or deepen the understanding of the problem by:

- drawing attention to the relevant pain points or frustrations with the status quo
- highlighting examples of the lived experience of the problem, including feedback from those currently dealing with the problem
- focusing on data and technical evidence
- looking at scenarios and trends that explore how the problem or issue may play out in the future.

By framing the invitation to participate around the problem, the idea generation process can help foster understanding and ownership of the problem. Yet it will also be important for those who are commissioning, supporting or providing cover for the idea generation process to also share in the understanding of the problem, or there is a risk that the ideas will not go anywhere no matter how good or seemingly relevant they are.

Therefore organisations that have a good sense of the problem and how it is perceived by others will be better placed to engage in idea generation.

A guiding question for the organisation might be "Before looking for ideas, does the organisation ensure that there is a clear sense of the problem being looked at?"

5.7 Openness

> *"The truth is, you can bring diverse people together, you can give them time and space, you can have them connect and converse, and hope that they produce some new ideas, but if those people are starting with the same old data, the same old orthodoxies and the same old perspectives, you will never get anything very radical coming out of the other end."*
> *(Skarzynski and Gibson, 2008: 43)*

There is little use in coming up with new ideas unless the organisation is accepting of new ways of thinking, new ways of seeing problems, and new ways of acting. Is the organisation prepared to give airtime to truly different or unexpected ideas? To not only question the status quo, but be open to change, whether it be about their role, their contribution or their job?

If not, there is a risk that participants in any idea generation process may feel reluctant to put forward really creative (and sometimes seemingly silly) ideas, or entertain ideas that are different to what the organisation has previously endorsed or considered. The organisation may also dismiss ideas that reflect a different understanding of the situation, that may initially come across as strange or too unusual. Unless an organisation is open to *really* new ideas, it may unintentionally inhibit *quite* new ideas.

This will not just be a matter of the organisation's leadership, but also its processes and systems. For instance, do the idea generation processes used allow for the unexpected? If not, how are potentially outlandish but great ideas allowed for? If so, how will idea generation stay focussed, and not be distracted by ideas that are most likely not in scope?

An organisation will need to find a balance between encouraging some unlikely ideas and keeping an eye on the practicalities; between encouraging alternative modes of thinking and ensuring a common conceptual framework.

A guiding question for an organisation might be "Is an openness to truly new ideas reflected in the language of the organisation and in its decision-making forums?"

5.8 Ownership/Autonomy

Who in an organisation feels empowered to come up with new ideas, and new ideas about what?

If a problem has a clear "owner", then it will have someone who is presumably motivated to get a solution and deliver a result. Such an owner can help drive the idea generation process – but they may not necessarily be keen to complicate it by considering what those not directly related to the issue may be able to offer, or give equal weight to alternate perspectives that challenge assumptions.

A problem without a clear owner on the other hand may not have anyone to help drive the process, to provide a filter for what ideas should be in or out, or to encourage involvement from other areas within the organisation or from outside.

An organisation where staff have a degree of autonomy is likely one where people may feel empowered to come up with ideas in response to problems that they see without prompting, but where there is a risk of multiple efforts being undertaken in an uncoordinated or conflicting fashion.

An organisation where staff have little autonomy is likely one where people will not feel empowered, that they do not have a stake or a role in contributing ideas to problems that are outside of their tightly defined responsibilities.

An organisation that wants to be systematically good at generating novel ideas to problems is one that will need to find a balance between empowering staff with a degree of autonomy (letting them self-identify where they can add value with new approaches) and having identified owners who can ensure that the relevant problem is responded to and managed.

A guiding question for an organisation might be "Is it common for people within the organisation spontaneously put forward ideas in areas outside their area of responsibility?"

5.9 Involved Decision Makers

An idea generation process will be supported by having organisational leaders and decision makers who understand the problems, who welcome new ideas, and ensure the organisation is open to new ideas, and that provide structures and an environment where there is an appropriate mix of ownership and autonomy. Yet, that may not be sufficient for some types of problems and ideas. Sometimes it may be necessary for decision makers to be involved in some way in the actual idea generation process, in order for them to appreciate how the ideas have been arrived at and to have the necessary level of comfort with the process. Any truly new idea can be challenging and confronting, and if a leader is going to be asked to support and possibly advocate for the idea, they may need to have been involved in the actual process of idea generation.

A guiding question for an organisation might be “Are relevant decision makers routinely involved in idea generation about truly new things?”

5.10 Experience with Ideas

Idea generation will always be an inexact process to some degree – the art of coming up with something new will always have a degree of uncertainty, even if many of the core steps of the process are understood. In addition, identifying what is and is not a good idea will involve a nuanced appreciation of the specific context and the politics (organisational and otherwise). Idea generation will also be aided by an awareness of the preferences of decision makers. Proficiency with idea generation will also involve being able to detach oneself from the ideas and being able to discard those that are not as promising. Being able to take criticism of an idea as constructive, as opposed to feeling personally criticised (and on the flipside, knowing how to critique the ideas of others constructively) is also important. In short, idea generation is something that involves a degree of judgement that will only come from experience.

That judgement also extends over to having a sense of to what extent an idea can be changed before it loses its potency or purpose. Idea generation is naturally a process of iteration, but at some points iteration can become a form of compromise. If an idea is changed too much or some inherent component is tinkered with, it may lose its resonance with the problem it is trying to address while at the same time becoming more attractive an option for action. In such instances, it may be better to say ‘no’ rather than compromise (Roberts and King, in Osborne and Brown, 2005: 173). Again, this will be a matter of judgement rather than something that can easily be explained or decided according to codified processes.

A guiding question for an organisation might be “Does the organisation give people the opportunity to engage in different forms of idea generation, to practice and develop their judgement?”

5.11 Option Thinking

When should an idea be abandoned, and when should it be kept open as an option? The language of innovation often includes the notion of “fast failure” or the ability to kill ideas quickly. This is important in order for an organisation to narrow down its focus, and not over-invest in ideas that are not going anywhere or that could distract from making progress. However, there is also the notion of option thinking, that sometimes it is valuable to not kill off an idea before one absolutely has to. In the pursuit of achieving a goal, it can be attractive to just focus on the most likely ideas but sometimes it may be worth keeping alive some alternate ideas. They may not pay off, but if they do, the value can be great. In addition, having alternate ideas still open as possibilities can keep the idea generation and innovation process from narrowing in too early, and provide more insight as to what will most likely work in the long run.

A guiding question for an organisation might be “Is it common practice to keep options open, as opposed to concentrating efforts on only the most likely ideas?”

5.12 Legitimacy

Any organisation or individual can run an idea generation process, but if there is a desire to involve others, then there needs to be a degree of legitimacy around the exercise for participants to feel it is worthwhile and appropriate. Does the organisation have the authority or convening power to be discussing this problem or question? Does the organisation have a track record in regards to the

policy or service area – and if not, is there a convincing explanation of why this time will be different? Does the organisation have the necessary relevance? Is the organisation trusted enough to be seen as having the right to undertake this process?

If an organisation is dealing with a new topic, or if it comes from a position or history that suggests it will be antagonistic to the problem or question at hand, then there may be reticence to be involved, or the process may not be engaged with in good faith. For instance if a regulatory authority is looking at a disruptive technology or a shift such as the sharing economy, it may have to demonstrate to others that not only has it the relevant authority, but that the process will not be pre-determined one way or the other.

Legitimacy can make the difference between a successful process and one that does not lead anywhere. While the novelty of being asked by a government agency to participate can provide sufficient grounds for some to get involved the first time, it will unlikely be sufficient for them to do so again or to encourage the involvement of others.

A guiding question for an organisation might be "Is the organisation (or team or individual) seen as having the legitimacy to be convening or running the idea generation process for this problem?"

5.13 Political Engagement

> *"They [politicians] can build public support for innovation before it occurs, help to deal with sceptics, listen to the views of doubters and bring them around to support, and mobilise various stakeholders, including collaborators across sectors and services. They can provide the right climate to enable managers and staff to experiment, and they can challenge technical thinking, combining it with political nous. They can help unblock problems and build coalitions to support the innovation." (Hartley, 2015: 149)*

As noted, idea generation is a political activity, as it is about exploring and arguing for different possibilities, different futures that vary from what is.

If this is the case, then how does the organisation involve relevant political players? Often this might simply take the form of ensuring that there is political cover for the process – that the potential for unwanted political surprises is minimised, and that political decision makers have the comfort that they know what is going on and why.

In some cases it might be about considering the opportunities for more active engagement, especially when the idea generation process is in response to a politically identified need or process.

An organisation that is keen to make the most of an idea generation process will ensure that the political engagement dimension is considered. A guiding question for an organisation might be "Are all relevant political interests represented in the idea generation phase?"

5.14 Diversity

As noted, idea generation is aided by having a variety of ideas. The ability to get that variety will be greatly aided by having access to a diversity of perspectives, experience and thinking styles – the things that contribute to having different perceptions and understandings of the world and what is

or might be possible. While idea generation processes can use different methods to bring in diversity, such as the involvement of people from outside of the team or organisation, the ability to make use of this diversity may depend on the diversity of the team or organisation itself. If a team is fairly homogenous it may be difficult to be receptive to truly new ideas, to be able to see a possibility that may not be clear but that could be promising.

For instance if a team is one with strong technical expertise, it might be hard to appreciate a completely new way of looking at the problem that is informed by art or theatre. Yet play-acting or using a narrative scenario might provide insights and ideas that a more traditionalist or science-based approach may miss – and vice versa.

> *"Radical innovations are spawned by the interplay of different ideas and domains that don't usually belong together. And the only way to create that interplay is through connectivity and conversation. Quite simply, the more connections a company makes between individuals and their ideas, the greater the number of possibilities for combinational chemistry." (Skarzynski and Gibson, 2008: 37)*

A guiding question for an organisation might be "Is there a diversity of people and thinking styles involved in the running of idea generation processes?"

5.15 Capacity

Do those involved in the idea generation process have the necessary capacity to come up with new ideas?

> *"Send your employees the message that you* expect *them to generate new ideas – that innovation is least part of their job, if not their whole job. Then give them the training, the time, the tools, and the space they need to exercise innovation muscles." (Skarzynski and Gibson, 2008: 90)*

Asking people who are in stressful position or who are feeling disempowered is likely to result in more negative reaction and ideas that constrained by "default" thinking than asking those who are feeling engaged and stimulated by the challenge. Alternatively, if there is no stress or pressure, then the motivation to pursue a new approach may be limited, with efforts focussed on the inevitable areas of administration where things will not be working as well.

Consideration should be given to the potential capacity for those invited to participate in the idea generation process. This might be as simple as whether they have unstructured time in the day – e.g. the opportunity for wandering and reflection to come up with the ideas (Kastelle, 2016b).

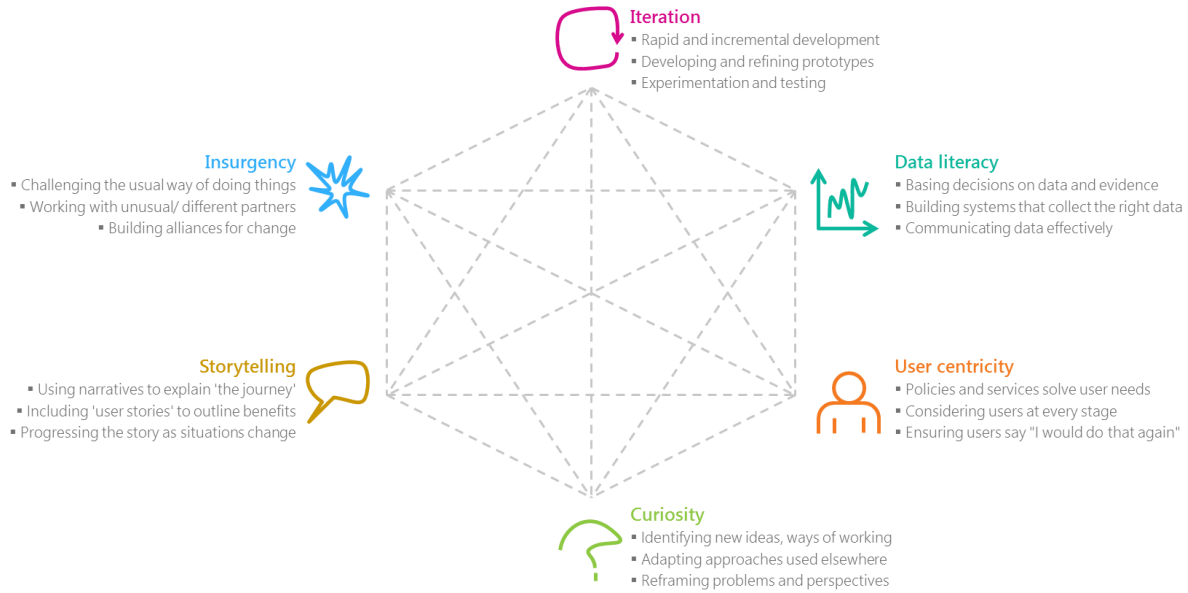
A guiding question for an organisation might be "Do employees have the opportunity (time and space) to think about things other than ongoing immediate pressures?"

5.16 Capabilities

Anyone can come up with a new idea, but that does not mean the capability will be equally developed. To make the most of the idea generation process, organisations should have regard to the capabilities of the different areas that might contribute.

For instance, the OECD (2017) has developed a public sector innovation skills model (Figure 12) that highlights key capabilities that may need to be enhanced in public sector workforces.

Figure 12: OECD Public Sector Innovation Skills Model



Each of these skills can strengthen a person's potential contribution to idea generation – both the finding and filtering of ideas:

- **Iteration** – a successful idea generation process involves being able to build on ideas, to iterate and develop them into things that better reflect the context and the problem at hand.
- **Data literacy** – ensuring that ideas fit with or build on existing evidence, and identifying ways of being able to measure the impact of the idea.
- **User centricity** – being able to identify and understand the needs of those who might interact with the idea will be crucial to knowing whether the idea is actually needed.
- **Curiosity** – a willingness to ask questions, to wonder, to make new connections will support the creation of new ideas.
- **Storytelling** – an idea will not sell itself, so it needs to be part of a broader narrative that links possibilities and problems, and conveys a sense of why the idea matters and why it might be worth the effort.
- **Insurgency** – new ideas are about changing what people see as possible, and thereby challenging what is, and require working with different partners and building support for those ideas.

There may also be capability considerations when it comes to stakeholders and citizens whose participation is sought. An idea generation process should factor in capability questions, and design processes that either help progressively develop capability, or that cater to different levels of proficiency.

A guiding question for an organisation might be "Are people with a range of skills involved in idea generation processes, including those for facilitation as well as generation?"

5.17 Serendipity

Related to capacity is the ability to be able to pick up on serendipitous discoveries or happenings. Sometimes there will be nice surprises, but in order to make the most of them an organisation will need to be on the lookout. Differentiating between a good accident and a mistake may not be easy, unless there is a capacity to connect the dots.

Ohid Yaqub (2016: 1-10, 25) distinguishes between four different types of serendipity:

- Walponian: where a targeted search solves an unexpected problem, and discovers something they were not in search of
- Mertonian: where a targeted search solves the problem in an unexpected and different way
- Browsing: where an untargeted search solves an immediate problem
- Curiosity: where an untargeted search solves a later problem.

The research also identifies a number of mechanisms by which serendipity can be noticed.

> *"Serendipity may be theory-led, observer-led, error-borne or network-emergent. Serendipity may become conspicuous because the growth of theory makes it stand out to any given observer; or serendipity may be observable to some with certain tools, techniques and attributes; or serendipity may emerge following methodological deviations, errors, and spillages; or serendipity may involve a network of actors."* (Yaqub, 2016: 13)

These notions of serendipity can provide a more structured way of thinking about the notion of accidental discovery and how it can arise, however the point of particular relevance for idea generation is to reflect on the fact that the best ideas may come about out of unrelated processes. Yet it should not be assumed that an organisation will have the ability and conditions to recognise when such serendipity does occur.

> *"The possibility of serendipity occurring through a variety of mechanisms should raise concerns among those seeking greater efficiency in research, and those framing innovation solely in terms of reducing uncertainty. The pursuit of efficiency could be suppressing the error-borne serendipity mechanism … and driving out diversity in methodological approaches needed for Mertonian serendipity to come about. Greater pressure for efficiency might also make it harder to recognise and appreciate that it is possible for research to unexpectedly solve a later problem … where research may initially appear to have little utility and be deemed inefficient."* (Yaqub, 2016: 23)

While serendipity in a bureaucratic setting may have different characteristics or causal mechanisms than that in a more scientific setting, the idea and notion that sometimes problem-solving success will be unexpected and accidental, is relevant. What it will look like, and how an organisation can "support" it, is not something that can be specifically answered however.

A guiding question for an organisation might be "In the organisation, do the solutions for problems sometimes come from unexpected avenues?"

5.18 Access to Insight and Expertise

How will the organisation access and activate the insight and expertise that can help it? Does the organisation have relationships with those that might have something to offer, or a relationship with brokers/platforms/intermediaries that might be able to mobilise, convene or alert relevant communities and audiences?

Governments operate in a crowded marketplace of idea and getting access to, and input from, the right people can be challenging. If there is no pre-existing relationship, understanding of a social expectation or bargain, or widespread understanding of why a community should participate, government organisations may need to ask themselves whether it is realistic that the right people will participate.

Sometimes it may be appropriate for there to be a financial component (prizes and procurement) given the effort expected or the time involved. Alternatively, it might be about linking it to existing relationships or compacts – e.g. if there is a strong sense of civic responsibility. Inducements or obligations might not be the only pathways to ensuring access to insight and expertise, but organisations will need to consider their context and how they can ensure the problem at hand is seen as a shared problem that is worth solving.

A guiding question for an organisation might be "Does the organisation have an existing relationship with the relevant populations that could offer relevant insight and expertise?"

5.19 Problem-solving Ecosystem

How does the organisation support the problem-solving ecosystem?

Tackling some problems will require considerable investment and capability building over time; e.g. curing a disease may take significant medical knowledge, systems and resources, while supporting a capable child protection system may require significant networks, collaboration with academia and health and education systems, as well as training. Solutions can draw from multiple fields of endeavour and require the accumulation and interaction of knowledge and experience from different technologies and disciplines. In short, systems for solving problems should not be viewed as things that can just be turned on when needed. Investment and curation may be required, and public sector organisations may need to play a part, if they expect to be able to draw on them when needed.

Sometimes it might also be necessary to establish or nurture new forms of capabilities (such as innovation labs) or new partnerships and new ways of collaborating (potentially with other governments who share the problem).

An organisation should give some consideration to the problem-solving ecosystem(s) that it operates within or relies on, and whether the requisite elements are there to provide the ideas and capabilities it might need in the future. Alternatively, how might an organisation be able to get access to these features at short notice if needed, drawing on other relationships, obligations or systems that others have cultivated or supported.

A guiding question for an organisation might be "Does the organisation see itself (and act) as part of a wider problem solving ecosystem?"

5.20 Ready for Mischief

No matter how well intentioned, legitimate, needed or serious an idea generation process might be, there may be a risk that a process is used for mischievous (rather than necessarily malicious) purposes. This may be a particular risk where there are not a clear set of community guidelines and expectations, or where there is not an engaged community. This is more likely to be a risk in processes where there is simple voting for particular ideas, where those participating may not have to invest any time or effort or care in their response, and where more frivolous responses may quickly rise to the top (e.g. see Boaty McBoatface or the COLBERT). Organisations may need to be flexible with their process rather than structuring their process to avoid such an outcome. An ability to have a sense of humour and engage with such frivolity may be more constructive than simply blocking such activity if it does arrive.

A guiding question for an organisation might be "Is it acceptable and allowable to bring humour into the idea generation process?"

In Summary, Enabling Idea Generation Requires…

Innovation and idea generation can be seen as a continual balancing act of different forces. Too many resources and the impetus for new ideas may not be there. Not enough resources, and the slack or the capacity to come up with or to grasp the significance of new ideas is unlikely to exist. Not enough diversity, and it may be hard to come up with ideas that break from the current state. Yet unless there a common reference point, both a shared language about ideas and understanding of the issues, it may be hard for people to comprehend what is being proposed and to build on it.

Not all of the factors outlined here will matter for every idea generation process. If a team is undertaking a brainstorming session for how to improve an existing activity, it is unlikely to be necessary to explicitly map out and reflect on each of the issues raised in this section. Even for a larger activity, there may be another limiting factor or enabling consideration that outweighs all of these.

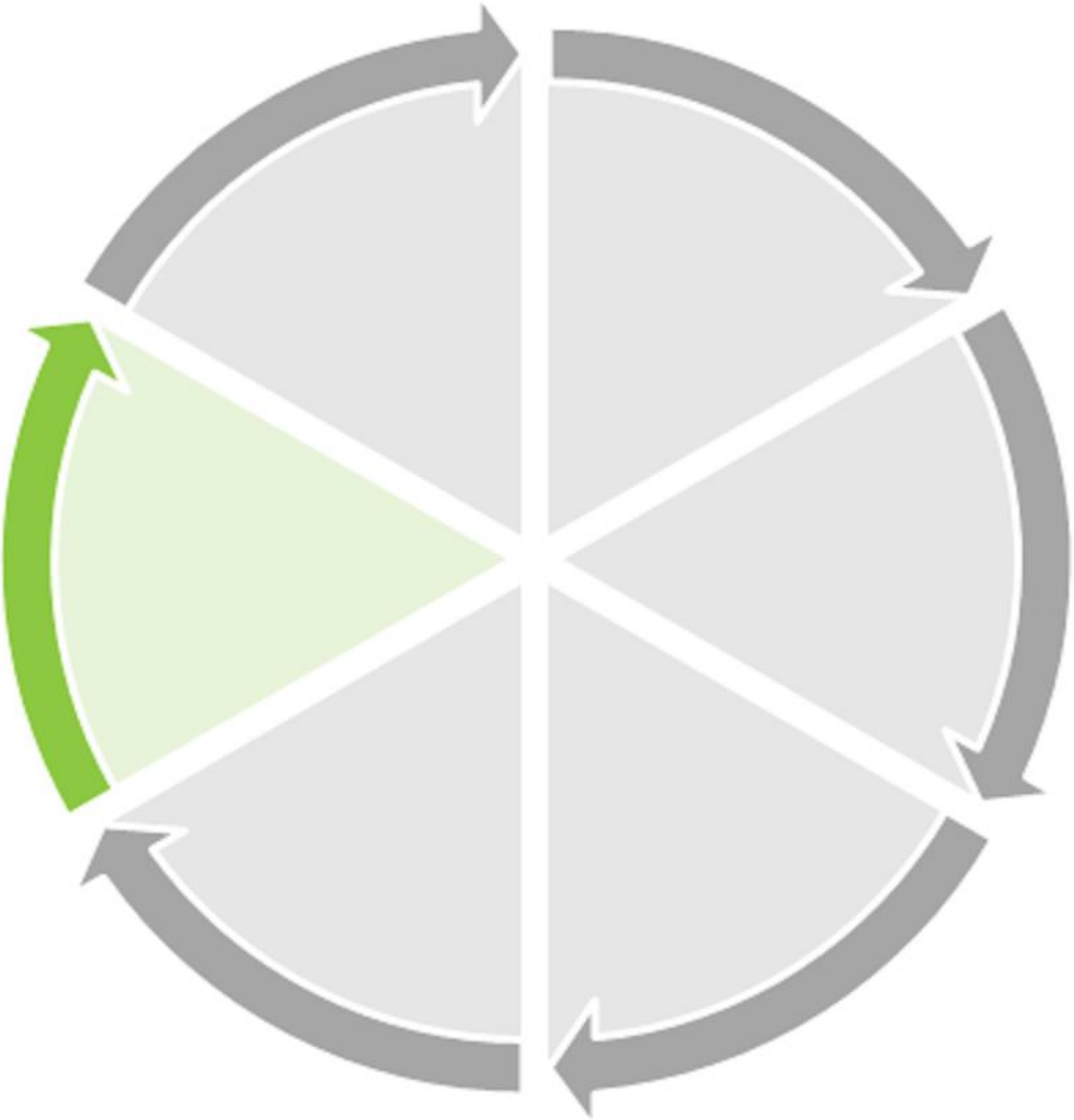
Nevertheless, if an organisation wants to consistently find and filter ideas for problems requiring novel responses, then it will need to consider what it is doing to support the conditions for idea generation.

These conditions can be considered under the broad categories of innovation maturity, respect for systems, and respect for the players.

Table 2: Key Factors for Enabling Idea Generation

Innovation Maturity	Respect for Systems	Respect for System Players
Shared vocabulary	Confronting the status quo	All the players involved
Leadership	Clear sense of the problem	Political engagement
An idea vs my idea	Empowerment and autonomy	Diversity
Openness	Involved decision makers	Capacity
Experience	Options thinking	Capabilities
Serendipity	Legitimacy	Access to insight and expertise
Ready for mischief	Problem-solving ecosystem	

Combined with these enabling factors, organisations will also need to consider how new ideas can reach the organisation. Who are the contributors of ideas, and what are the channels by which their ideas reach government organisations?



6. The Contributors and Channels for Ideas

Ideas can come from anywhere, but it can be useful to think about the different categories of contributors and the channels by which they can contribute their idea to public sector organisations. Different audiences will have different perspectives, and sometimes the provenance of an idea will matter as much, or more, than the idea itself – e.g. if an idea comes from a particular interest group, it may be seen as having less legitimacy by others than if the idea had arisen through citizens using or providing feedback about a government service. Consideration of the different types of possible contributors and the channels by which ideas come to an organisation can also help provide a prompt for thinking about if there are gaps or if there is over-emphasis on particular segments and channels.

This section provides one possible categorisation of the different contributors and the different channels. The specifics may vary between countries and organisations, however the point is to reflect on who the ideas are coming from, and what, if anything, that signifies.

6.1 Who Provides the Ideas?

The identity of who provides an idea matters. This is not only because who an idea comes from can affect the legitimacy of a proposal, but because different segments may have differing expectations associated with any ideas they propose or contribute. For instance, a politician, an activist or a lobby group is likely to have very firm views around particular ideas. On the other hand, public sector employees may be more used to proposing and dismissing ideas, given their experience with public administration. Thus, ideas from some segments may need to be treated differently, with more care and responsiveness, whereas other segments may be quite comfortable with contributing ideas with little associated expectation about what will happen next. In addition, some segments may be more experienced at developing and communicating their ideas in an attractive and "sellable" way, whereas others may not have much practice at articulating and describing their (possibly nascent) idea in a way that will resonate with a public sector audience.

Therefore, public sector organisations may wish to consider their different contributor segments, and how ideas from them may be treated differently.

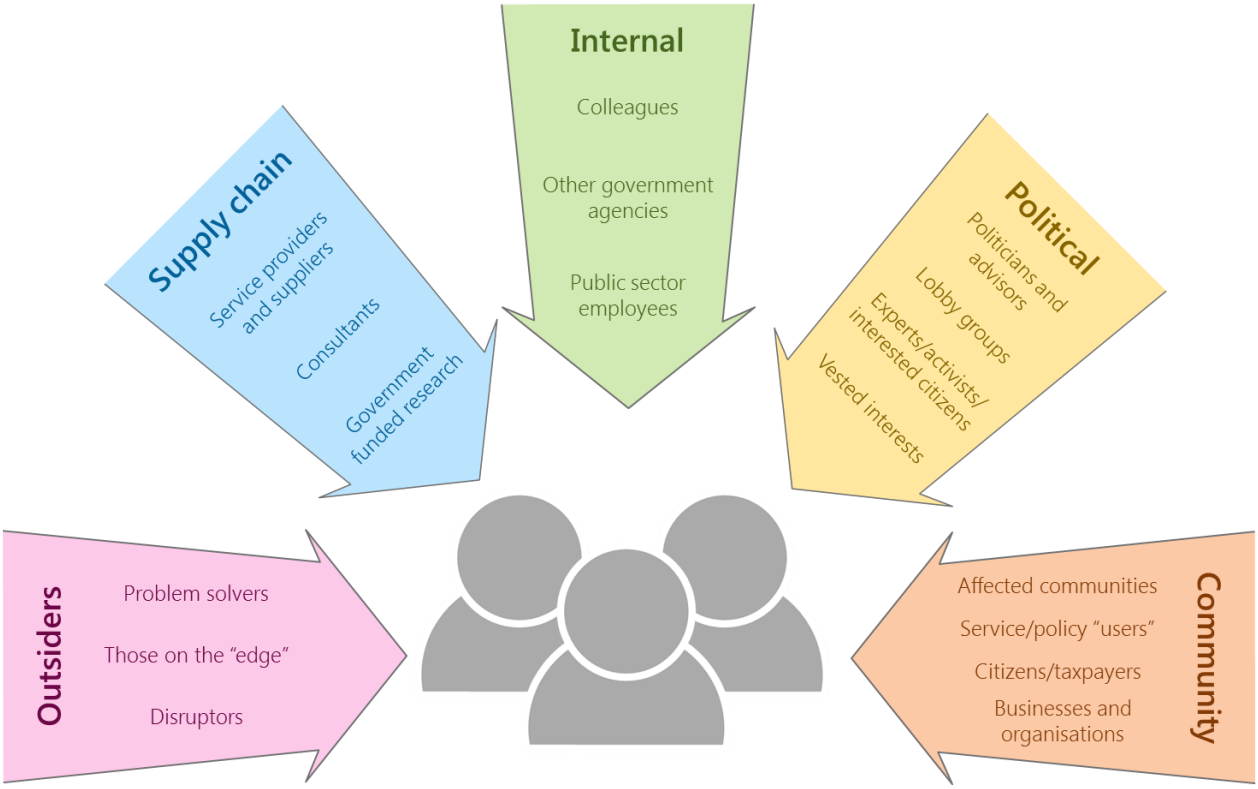
In segmenting potential contributors for ideas, five different groupings are proposed:

- The "community", meaning the broader society
- The political class, meaning politicians and those engaged in political processes
- Internal contributors, meaning those working within government and the public sector
- The broad government "supply chain", meaning those involved in the delivery of government mandated services or conducting research that is paid for by government
- Outsiders, those at the edge, that might not necessarily be reflected in the other segments.

Sometimes a contributor may fit into multiple categories at once.

The consistency (or otherwise) of ideas from a particular segment may give insight into how a problem is perceived and where there may be support or resistance around particular ideas.

Figure 13: Contributors of Ideas



Community

This segment of potential contributors includes those who live in communities that are affected by the problem that is to be addressed, and people who are using any relevant services or that interact with any relevant policy settings. It might also include general citizens and businesses and other organisations.

> *"Don't assume these people care about you or think of themselves as members of your community. Don't think that you can create a community. They're not yours." (Jarvis, 2009: 52)*

While it may be unrealistic or unnecessary to have deep engagement from the community in every idea generation process, at the minimum there should be regard to the potential reactions and perspectives of different community segments.

Political

Political actors include politicians and their advisors, lobby groups, think tanks, subject or process-matter experts, activists and vested interests, those with a stake in the current state or those with a strong agenda for change. In most instances the political segment can be the most significant as a contributor or as a stakeholder, even though they may not always be the most representative sample.

Political actors will generally have a very clear sense of what they want out of an idea generation process, which may be both a positive and negative. It can be a strength in that they are more likely to have thought through ideas and their positions, and will be able to clearly articulate them. It can be a drawback in that it may sometimes mean that their engagement with the process will come with less openness to other possibilities.

Internal

Internal contributors include public sector employees, such as colleagues within the same organisation or from within other government agencies.

> *"This finding – that innovative ideas emerge from all levels of the organization and they may be least likely to flow from the conventionally assumed sources – has important implications. If innovative ideas can come from anywhere in an organization, rather than a senior elite, then organizations will be most innovative if they can stimulate innovation throughout." (Borins, 2006: 27)*

As more problems cut across strict silo lines, the ideas of public servants from other areas in the public sector can provide useful insights. However, sometimes there may be subject-matter specific issues or considerations that may be difficult to convey, and which may limit the participation of others, even if they are interested.

Supply Chain

Many organisations can be involved in the development and delivery of government policies and services, including many non-state actors, such as businesses, not-for-profits, and think tanks. Governments also often fund a large amount of research, and research and development activity, whether through dedicated research agencies (e.g. in health, in agriculture, or in energy), through defence related activity and procurement, or through funding for universities and other research organisations.

Each of these actors can have significant insight and experience relevant to governments, but it may not always be desirable or feasible to access that through existing commercial or contractual relationships, which may focus on fairly limited matters.

Outsiders

These are people that might be on the edge of innovation, such as early adopters, lead users, or those who through circumstance and necessity use or interact with government in different ways. It might include disruptors, such as start-ups offering new services. It might include problem solver communities from around the world, who can provide new insight even though they might not be directly linked to the problem in situ. Or it might simply be people who have, for reasons of need, passion or curiosity, have significantly different ways of looking at the issues.

Such outsiders will be outside of the regular contacts of the organisation, and may take more effort for organisations to engage with. Alternatively, their perspectives may truly be "outside" in which case, there may be "translation" issues in terms of building a common and shared understanding of the issues and establishing a dialogue.

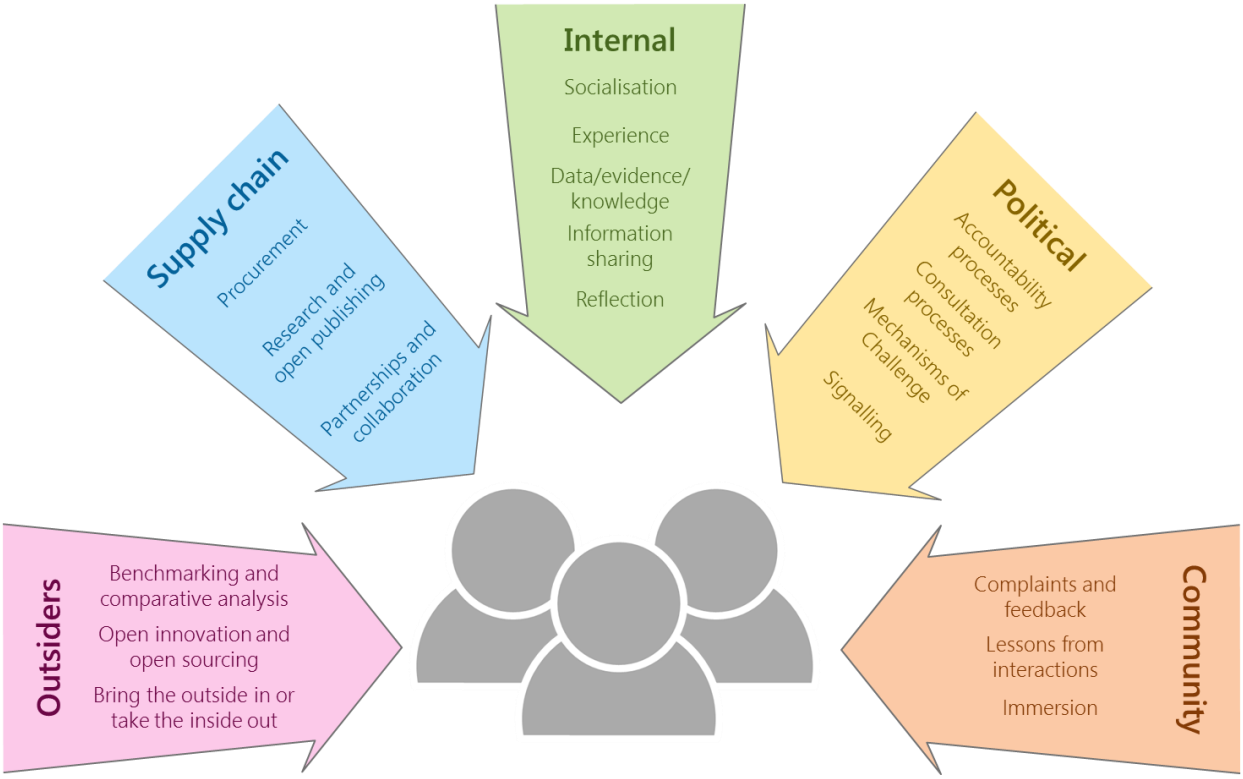
6.2 Channels for Ideas

How do these different segments of potential contributors get their ideas into the public sector? What are the channels (as opposed to specific tools) which provide a means for these ideas to be raised?

The channels are important when considering the idea generation effectiveness of an organisation. They will be how many ideas come about, but any ideas received through them may not register if the channels are not actually recognised and treated as idea generation mechanisms.

For each of the different segments, some of the most relevant likely channels are suggested. Different organisations may identify other channels, however the point is to ensure that consideration is given to what channels there are, how they are used by the organisation, and whether they are supported effectively as idea generation channels.

Figure 14: Channels for Ideas



Community – Complaints and Feedback

Complaints and feedback will often provide insight into the problem that is being looked at, but sometimes it might also contain an idea – e.g. "this service was really hard to use, it would be so much better if it was done this way". Feedback might not necessarily provide an explicit and fully-formed idea, but there may still be the germ of an idea there.

Organisations may wish to consider whether their complaints and feedback processes are a potential source of ideas, and if so, whether the ideas that arise are captured and made available for idea generation processes. It may also be valuable to communicate action/inaction back to those providing specific complaints or feedback that contains an idea.

UK Home Office Complaints Procedure[4]

[4] For details, see "Complaints Procedure", accessed at https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office/about/complaints-procedure

"If you complain in writing, we aim to respond within 20 working days. If it is not possible to give you a full reply within this time (for example, if your complaint requires more detailed investigation), we will tell you what is being done and when you can expect a full response.

We will acknowledge where things could have been done better, and tell you what will be done to avoid the same thing happening again. Equally, if we do not uphold your complaint, we will let you know why."

Community – Lessons from Interactions

Sometimes it will be those who have to interact with the system that will have the developed ideas about what could or should be done. Those interacting with processes may have a clearer sense of what is working and what is not, as compared to those inside looking out. The gaps, the 'white spaces' between processes and systems where the service experience is inconsistent, contradictory or missing, may be most observable from the outside. An example of such an interaction might be someone helping someone else navigate through the health system. The patient might be focused on their treatment, but their friends or family might notice what works, what doesn't and when there is added stress for the patient.

These ideas are likely to be more developed than those that come through as complaints or feedback, but may be harder to elicit as the mechanisms by which to share such feedback and to have it reach the right people in the organisation are less likely to be clear or well developed.

Community – Immersion

Sometimes the best way to find and filter ideas will be to be truly immersed in the problem and those who live with it/experience it. So, in order to find out about how to improve a compliance activity for small businesses, it might be appropriate to have public sector employees from the relevant agency actually spend time with small business operators. This will not only provide insight into the problem, but also give a much better sense of what options may be appropriate, and even if there might already be some work-arounds or practices in place that are used to manage the problem.

Australian Small Business Fix-it Squads[5]

"Small Business Fix-it Squads are rapid-design projects where small business owners, tax professionals, federal, state and local government agencies and intermediaries work together to examine problems affecting small business owners. The squad then develops recommendations to fix the problem." Squads have been used to look at the issues involved with selling or closing a small business, taking on an employee, and getting the balance right between regulation and the sharing economy.

Political – Accountability Processes

Political accountability processes, such as inquiries, reviews or audits, or the media can be a mechanism for identifying options and ideas about how to respond to a particular problem. They can also provide a valuable channel for assessing different options, filtering for the most promising or appropriate, and for giving an indication of the level of support or resistance around the different

[5] For details, see "Small Business Fix-it Squads", accessed at https://www.ato.gov.au/business/bus/small-business-fix-it-squads/?page=1.

options. Such mechanisms can be good at identifying expert opinion but also for highlighting community concerns or anxieties.

Such processes can involve a considerable amount of administrative or political overhead. In some contexts some of the processes may be adversarial which can mean that the problem and ideas are viewed through primarily a political lens.

Political – Consultation Processes

Consultation processes such as discussion papers, discussion forums, or structured conversations around particular issues can uncover a number of ideas, as well as providing insight into how a problem is perceived and where there might be particular support or concerns. The more open the process, the more that others will be able to provide their reflections, including how the implementation of a particular idea may or may not work.

As noted, increasingly participants may expect consultation processes to be a two-way (or even multi-directional) conversation rather than a matter of only responding to a discussion paper or providing input with no sense of how that is received or understood. This expectation may mean that there is less ability for public sector organisations to dictate the direction of the conversation, though the more an agency can be clear about the intent of the process, the more the intended limits may be respected.

There is a possibility that consultation processes may suit vested interests most. Those with less certainty about their position, with less developed thoughts or with personal experience of the issues may not find it as easy (or feasible) to articulate and contribute a defined position. Using a consultation process to support ideas generation should take into account the different capacities of different population segments to contribute.

Political – Mechanisms of Challenge

Mechanisms of challenge, processes by which government policy or rules might be challenged if they are stopping useful activity, can be another channel by which ideas are identified. The advantage of a mechanism of challenge is that it allows those who experience the problem to self-identify and propose a solution. On the other hand, it may take time to work out whether the idea is appropriate, whether there might be unintended consequences, or whether the costs of proceeding are worth the cost. There may also be questions of legitimacy, as there could be potential risks that such a process, being a case of exceptionalism, serves the interests of a very few.

Political – Signalling

Sometimes governments can make progress on a problem simply by signalling that there is a problem. If a government declares that something is a problem, then other elements of the system may react and seek to find a solution or change their behaviour accordingly. The easiest way to get ideas about a problem is to share that there *is* a problem, and that solutions are being sought. Public sector organisations may not always be able to do this directly, but it may be appropriate for the relevant political office holder to do so.

An important corollary of this is that attention will need to be paid to the resultant solutions or proposals; otherwise the signalling power may be weakened as people see no impact when they respond to it.

Internal – Socialisation

Public sector employees can get ideas about how to deal with particular problems when they have the opportunity to engage with and learn about new technologies and approaches. Once they are familiar with a particular new technology, once they are socialised in it and potential uses, it becomes easier for public servants to understand the possibilities and opportunities, and how a technology or method might be applied to a specific problem. Organisations may wish to ask themselves whether their staff are provided with the opportunities to be "socialised" in new technologies and techniques, or if they have the opportunity to learn from others who have applied such approaches elsewhere.

Internal – Experience

A major contributor to ideas will simply be through people's experience in their jobs and lives. This may not necessarily be limited to their professional experience, or their experience with a particular problem. A diversity of experience may assist someone in making connections between different ideas and proposing new solutions. Alternatively, sometimes deep and longstanding experience with an issue will assist because it will provide a thorough understanding of what has gone before, including what ideas have been tried previously. The value that experience can offer will depend on whether there is also the openness to new ideas or changed circumstances. The response "we have tried that before" can be very negative to the idea generation process as it can shut down potentially promising ideas that might now be more appropriate.

> *"Frontline employees often know more about customer needs and have better ideas about how to improve performance than their bosses. However, they often need help understanding the needs of the entire organization, explaining how their ideas address those needs, and determining how to implement changes." (Eggers and Singh, 2009: 35)*

Internal – Data/Evidence/Knowledge

Often ideas will draw on existing data, evidence and knowledge – whether by serendipity, or over time being able to see potential relationships and patterns, from seeing what has worked (or not) in one area, and which could be applied to another. Data can reveal insight into links and new ways of understanding the world; research and theory and other forms of evidence can provide new ways of thinking about what is possible.

Internal – Information Sharing

Many ideas will simply come from sharing experiences and hearing about something that has been done elsewhere in the organisation or within government. This may occur through regular dissemination channels, through networks, friendships or by simply being able to ask "does anyone know anything about x?"

Internal - Reflection

Ideas can come from public servants having the time and capacity to reflect, to consider what has happened and think about what that means for the problems faced, and what is possible. This may take the form of regular debriefs, annual planning days, workshops or structured review processes, such as an after-action review (see box).

USAID After-Action Review: Technical Guidance[6]

"The After-Action Review (AAR) is a leadership and knowledge sharing tool that helps professionals within USAID and across the partner community to better understand important events, activities, or programs. That knowledge, gleaned from and compiled by those closest to the review, can be used by senior leadership to improve results and then can be shared with others who are planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating similar efforts. Managed and conducted by those closest to the activity, AARs identify how to correct deficiencies, sustain strengths, and focus on improved performance of specific tasks, activities, events, or programs."

This channel may be less appropriate as a structured ideas generation process (e.g. one that can be turned on and off in response to a particular problem) but is likely to be an important source of ongoing learning and ideas for any organisation.

Supply Chain – Procurement

A long-standing channel for ideas is for governments to buy them in through a procurement process. By articulating a problem and then inviting suppliers to bid, governments can tap into new approaches and new capabilities.

> *"Government procurement rules, however, are designed to ensure an honest system, not encourage innovation. Procurement officers and contract managers generally display great attention to detail, but are not known for their creativity. This creates problems because the network needs to be managed around key values and performance objectives, not simply by the fine print of the contract." (Goldsmith and Eggers, 2004: 182)*

However a fast changing environment where technology is moving quickly, or where there is considerable churn in the market players, or where there are concerns about reliability and consistency, may all mean that a direct approach to the market will not be the most appropriate course of action. Procurement is likely to work best as part of an ideas generation process when there is clarity about the problem, a well-developed market, and relative stability. In other instances, it may be necessary to break the procurement process down in more discreet steps, to first gauge the capabilities of potential suppliers and to test the framing of the problem, and then to move through steps that leave open other options if a particular option is no longer deemed feasible or suitable.

Supply Chain – Research and Open Publishing

Governments can be large funders of research, both scientific and general, which can be an excellent source of ideas. While sometimes this information may be more technical and less amenable to direct transference into government work, the public service can gain much from ensuring there is, at the very least, an awareness of the research being published and ensure that those producing the research are invited to participate in relevant idea generation processes. Governments can assist this process by encouraging open publishing of research and reducing the barriers to accessing it.

[6] For further detail, see USAID 2006, "After-Action Review: Technical Guidance" http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADF360.pdf

Supply Chain – Partnerships and Collaboration

Governments can act as convenors for particular issues or sectors, and can use this role as a means of leveraging the capabilities and ideas of the broader supply chain. For instance, a government agency might work to bring together a number of suppliers and actors with an industry sector, such as housing, to talk about new ideas for increasing housing supply. Bringing together the actors in a neutral space may help realise new possibilities, new shared value that could be achieved, and where government may not even have to intervene, other than supporting the decisions of the group that have been brought together.

> *"Since new ideas seem to spur more ideas, networks generate a cycle of innovation. Furthermore, effective networks allow people with different kinds of knowledge and ways of tackling problems to cross-fertilize ideas. By focusing on getting the most from innovation networks, leaders can therefore capture more value from existing resources, without launching a large-scale change management program." (Capozzi and Davidson, 2008: 41)*

Outsiders – Benchmarking and Comparative Analysis

A time honoured practice for governments confronted by a problem is to look at what other governments have done. This can give quick insight into possible options for responding, and can help manage the perceptions associated with trying something new. By drawing on the experience of another country, a government can reduce the learning costs associated with trying something new, though there will always be a need for some adjustment and translation to the local context. This practice of scanning the environment to see how others have dealt with a problem can sometimes extend to private sector or not-for-profit organisations as well, and may draw inspiration from those dealing with similar problems rather than exact replicas.

Benchmarking can sometimes provide insight into those that are managing problem areas well, and help identify where the most promising innovations and practices might be being applied. However, for nascent issues it may not always be appropriate to look towards benchmarked countries as the situation may change quite quickly. In addition, there may be cultural, historical and system reasons that have resulted in the good results, and it may be hard to unpack that into a manageable number of ideas that can then be translated to a different country context.

Outsiders – Open Innovation and Open Sourcing

A lot of innovation comes from those on the "edge", those whose circumstances and situations mean that their needs were not met by the status quo and who have innovated in response. In an interconnected world of billions of people, there will always be such people with relevant insight, ideas and expertise that are outside of the limits of any one organisation or government.

Through the channel of open innovation and open sourcing, governments can tap into a much wider range of perspectives and ideas. Such channels are likely to be of most use where governments have established relationships with relevant audiences and communities, or where they can use relevant brokers and connectors. Though it is an issue for any idea generation channel, open innovation may need to pay particular attention to motivations and to consider the incentives that there are to participate, given the problem-solving communities may not be connected to the problem directly and there may be effort involved in contributing.

In addition, open innovation and open sourcing can be powerful channels however they may not always sit well with more conventional approaches.

> *"Closed systems benefit established interests in centralized, vertical hierarchies. Open networks foster creativity, innovation and economic value. When the two collide, an unpleasant e-ruption is inevitable." (Fraser and Dutta, 2008: 75)*

Outsiders – Bring the Outside In or Take the Inside Out

Sometimes it can be difficult to engage with the outside if there is enough in common between how the organisation understands things and how the "outside" understands them. The ideas, advice or insights may not seem well-suited or may seem too far out, and the organisation will reject them as too foreign.

> *"It's easier and more comfortable to listen to people who agree with you than to have to sort through competing evidence in an attempt to determine what is really going on – and to acknowledge the very real limitation of those that you have identified as 'your team'." (Eggers and O'Clearly, 2009: 31)*

In such cases it can be valuable to bring someone from the outside into the organisation. In the State of South Australia, for instance, a "Thinkers in Residence" program ran for a number of years as a means of bringing leaders and experts into government for a limited time to develop ideas around topics as diverse as childhood, manufacturing, climate change and social innovation.

Alternatively, it may be appropriate to take some of the team from the organisation and to expose them to the "outside". Unlike immersion in community settings, this might be about exposing the team to radical settings where dramatically different approaches are being used, where ideas that would rarely be countenanced in the organisation are viewed with favour. An example of such a setting might be with activists, with a start-up or technology firm, or with a forum dedicated to radical ideas (such as the Singularity University).

Neither of these approaches is likely to be useful for when a problem requires an immediate answer, and both possibly entail a higher degree of political risk given the results will be uncertain. Yet both can contribute to building a much wider appreciation of what might be possible, and giving the organisation a means of connecting with what might have seemed like very unlikely or infeasible ideas.

6.3 How to Make the Most of Contributors and Channels for Ideas

To make the most of the different contributors and channels requires an appreciation of why different people might contribute and how particular channels may shape the insight and ideas that come through to the organisation. This will vary between contexts but the following outlines some high level considerations that might have bearing.

Community

Why would people in the general community wish to contribute their ideas to government idea generation processes? As identified by some of the channels, this may well be about trying to make something better (or less worse) or because there is a need for things to change. Any community will

be diverse and there will be a wide range of reasons for potentially contributing. Yet even those who are particularly motivated or interested may have limited capacity or capability for contributing. The more a problem area is likely to affect more people or to affect a particular population segment with particular intensity, the more important it will be to access a diversity of perspectives and cater to differences. Alternatively, the default channels will be used to express feedback on ideas at a later stage in the process, when they begin to impact at the community level. In such cases the feedback may shift to political channels.

Political

Political actors are likely to contribute their ideas for many of the usual reasons for political engagement – to achieve something or to improve something, so that they can be allowed to do something (or to stop others doing something), or for financial, resource or political benefit or power. Political actors are likely to have strong motivations for participating in relevant ideas generation purposes, provided the link to their interests is clear and that the opportunity is well communicated to them. At the same time, some political actors might also resort to default political channels to express their position or concerns, which may mean that they do not invest in an ideas generation process that they do not regard as politically noteworthy. The more connected an actor is, the less they may feel they need to connect to a public sector process. An effective ideas generation process will again be one that ensures a degree of diversity and a situation where the conversation is not dominated by those with political weight.

Internal

Internal actors are likely to contribute their ideas for a range of reasons, such as their belief in the work of the public sector, in order to demonstrate competence or skill, in order to make something better (or less worse), to deliver on the demands of the government of the day, or as part of a general desire to make a difference. Yet the incentive structures within public sector organisations may not always be in alignment with such motives.

> *"The person whose idea finally fails should feel just as recognized and rewarded as the person whose idea pays off. What is required, therefore, is an incentive system for innovation where people understand that every idea is needed – that there is value simply in playing the game."*
> *(Skarzynski and Gibson, 2008: 207)*

If the innovation process is going to require significant change, then it will need the engagement of many people within the organisation. Therefore the idea generation process will need to ensure that staff feel a part of it, even if it is not their ideas that end up being pursued.

Supply Chain

Actors in a government's various supply chains may contribute their ideas for reasons as varied as trying to maintain access to a government market, in order to try and get an edge over others, in order to try out new products/services and develop new customers, or perhaps simply to share insights or lessons in the hope of better government. While those in supply chains may be keen to participate in idea generation processes, public sector organisations may wish to prioritise transparency and fairness so that no inappropriate influencing occurs. At the same time, there will be a need to ensure that contributors with very innovative proposals are not penalised for their first

mover advantage by providing an idea and then having other actors come in proposing to do it more cheaply if it is accepted as a good approach.

Outsiders

Outsiders may want to contribute their ideas because they are passionate about the topic or problem area, because the idea generation process lets them demonstrate what they know, because of financial incentives of forms of recognition, or simply because they have been through something similar before and just want to share what they want to know.

> *"People contribute to Wikipedia and participate in collaboration projects because cooperation validates their values and reinforces their self-esteem. Frequently they get involved simply because it's fun. True, social capital rewards like status are sometimes motivating factors. But in many cases, people participate in collective forms of action because it makes them feel good, especially when everyone places a high value on cooperation." (Fraser and Dutta, 2008: 209)*

Depending on the nature of the channels, there may be reciprocal interest in participating (e.g. from other governments and mutual learning) or there may need to be recognition of the effort involved, and thus having a financial incentive.

Purpose and Shared Value

Regardless of the specific motivations of the different contributors or the different channels through which ideas may be coming, it is likely that a public sector organisation will have the most success if it can be clear about the purpose and why the idea generation process matters. Having respect for the diversity of actors, their contributions and feedback about how that mattered will likely make the most difference in fostering future contributions, thereby making future idea generation processes easier.

Advice on Open Innovation (US Government Accountability Office, 2016: 48)

"According to relevant literature and agency officials, agencies should acknowledge and, where appropriate, reward the efforts and achievements of partners and partners to so that they can feel their contributions are valued and appreciated. This can be done in conjunction with reporting the results of and lessons learned from the initiative, or through separate venues such as announcements, award ceremonies, or recognition on the initiative website. As part of this effort, it is also important for agencies to explain how the contributions of partners and participants helped the agency achieve, or progress toward, its goals, and to communicate the next steps that will be taken following an initiative."

Balancing the Value of Collaboration with the Costs

Ideas generation is a social process, that is inherently made better through the mixing of different perspectives and experiences. Yet collaboration is not a cost-free exercise, involving as it does extra effort to build shared understandings and collective purpose, overcoming differences, as well as the many small transaction costs of building relationships.

> *"Work and innovation are inherently collaborative endeavours, but as the need for collaboration increases, the demands on people's time*

skyrocket. The answer is not more and more layers of a matrix structure or yet another collaborative technology." (Cross and Thomas, 2009: 19)

Organisations need to value collaboration and actively work to support it, but a balance needs to be found between drawing in more people and managing the potential demands that may bring. The following section looks at different tools and methods that can assist with this, as well as contributing to the different considerations identified in the previous sections.

7. Tools that can Support Finding and Filtering Ideas

Idea generation is not a new concept and there are multiple tools, methods and practices that have been developed or found to be useful in coming up with new ideas. In some ways this diversity is a challenge – when there are so many, it can be difficult to choose which might be most appropriate when. Following from the earlier sections, the most relevant tools are likely to be those that are good at:

- Dealing with a changed context, one where there is an abundance of information and ideas
- The core factors of finding and filtering ideas in the public sector
- Helping organisations provide the right conditions to effectively find and filter ideas
- Engaging a diverse set of contributors in ways that respect their contribution and which can build on or supplement existing channels rather than be in competition with them.

As the previous sections have shown, there are a great many things that can have a bearing on ideas generation and which ideally will be considered as part of the process, even if only in passing. But are there some core criteria for quickly identifying the respective contributions of the many different tools?

Six features are proposed here as criteria, acting as a distillation of what has been identified as being most relevant for an idea generation tool.

- **Help foster legitimacy:** Does the tool aid in fostering legitimacy of the ideas generation process? Does it, by its very nature, assist with establishing that this is an appropriate process being run by the right people?
- **Challenge Assumptions and Better Define the Problem:** Does the tool challenge underlying or explicit assumptions about what might be the best thing to do and help make the understanding of the problem more explicit? Does it help people take a second look at the problem, the issues, the need for change, and really think about what needs to happen?
- **Provide New Insight into What's Possible (incl. Existing Solutions):** Does the tool help expand the horizon of what might be possible, including identifying any existing solutions that might be already used but not well known? Does it provide insight into new ways of thinking about what could be done?
- **Identify and Build on Ideas (incl. Filtering Out Poor Ideas):** Does the tool not only identify new ideas, but work to build on and improve ideas, and identify what might be lower quality ideas?
- **Provide Insight into How Ideas May Play Out:** Does the tool provide an insight into how an idea may play out in reality – how it might be received, how it might work, where there might be potential implementation issues, or 2nd order impacts?
- **Contribute to Support and Ownership of Ideas:** Does the tool help build support for ideas and identify how different actors might contribute and possibly take ownership of different aspects of the ideas?

Each of these features should help not only with the finding of new ideas, but also with the filtering. If the idea process is legitimate, if it helps challenge assumptions and better clarifies intent, if it provides insight into what is possible, builds on those possibilities, and identifies how an idea may

play out as well as giving an indication of where there is support and ownership of ideas, then this should provide a good guide as to which ideas are likely worth proceeding further with.

It should be noted that there may not always be a clear distinction between each of the tools listed here – some things, such as crowdsourcing and challenge prizes, might be regarded as two aspects of the same tool. For other tools, such as brainstorming, there are also many subordinate tools or particular methods. In addition, an idea generation process might draw on multiple tools and combine them in different ways, thereby strengthening or weakening particular features. Therefore Table 3 should be considered as a prompting guide rather than a precise map. This guide is then elaborated on with a description of each of the tools and with links to more specific guidance (where known/identified).

Table 3: Tools to Assist with Finding and Filtering Ideas

Features / Tools	Help Foster Legitimacy	Challenge Assumptions and Better Define the Problem	Provide New Insight into What's Possible (incl. Existing Solutions)	Identify and Build on Ideas (incl. Filtering Out Poor Ideas)	Provide Insight into How Ideas May Play Out	Contribute to Support and Ownership of Ideas
Physical Space	X	✓	✓	X	X	✓
Comparative Analysis	X	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	X
Horizon Scanning	X	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓
Brainstorming	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
Prototyping	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Pitching	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
Idea Management Systems	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Crowdsourcing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hackathons	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓
Open Consultations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participatory Budgeting	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓✓
Citizen Juries	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓
Challenge Prizes	✓	✓	✓✓	✓	X	✓
Innovation Funds	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X
Research and Development	X	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Procurement	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X

Features / Tools	Help Foster Legitimacy	Challenge Assumptions and Better Define the Problem	Provide New Insight into What's Possible (incl. Existing Solutions)	Identify and Build on Ideas (incl. Filtering Out Poor Ideas)	Provide Insight into How Ideas May Play Out	Contribute to Support and Ownership of Ideas
Partnerships and Networks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Open Source	X	X	✓	✓✓	✓	X
Outside-In	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	X	X
Co-Design	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Positive Deviance	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓
Innovation Labs	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓	X
Art and Storytelling	X	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	X
Play	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Reverse Engineering	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Mechanisms of Challenge	✓	✓✓	✓	X	X	X
Independent Forums	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Analysis Tools	✓	X	X	✓✓	✓	✓

Table Key:

X = unlikely to contribute much on this feature

✓ = will likely contribute somewhat on this feature

✓✓ = will likely contribute strongly on this feature

7.1 Physical Space

> *"There is now a body of empirical evidence that different physical spaces can catalyse different conversation, at scales from the small group to the whole organization. These spaces can be a tool through which creativity can be encouraged or constrained. The physical geography of the office can enable new ideas to emerge and evolve." (Price 2009: 54)*
>
> *"Space is the 'body language' of the organization." (Fink in Doorley and Withhoft, 2012: 38)*

Physical places matter and can shape how we think and feel, so it should come as no surprise that physical space matters for idea generation. Organisations may want to consider how they use physical spaces to aid idea generation:

- What signals do the organisation's spaces send? Are their spaces that challenge the day-to-day ways of working and expectations?
- How do the spaces make people feel? What about for external visitors or participants who might be involved in idea generation? Would they feel welcome and that their ideas are valued?
- Do the spaces aid collaboration and working together? Or do they implicitly reinforce formal structures and established hierarchies?
- Are there other spaces that can be used to help challenge assumptions, hierarchies, and beliefs about what is possible?

Every organisation will be different and have its own constraints and challenges when it comes to space. In such cases, it might be worth considering how to turn a constraint into an advantage, as the Innovation Lab at the US Office of Personnel Management did when it converted a sub-basement into an innovation space.

Some Resources on How to Use Physical Spaces to Aid Idea Generation:

- *Make Space: How to Set the Stage for Creative Collaboration*
- "Make Space: Design Artifacts", Stanford dSchool.

7.2 Comparative Analysis

A practice of comparative analysis often simply involves looking at other "like" actors and what they are doing – e.g. other governments or other organisations that are doing work in a similar space of field. This can provide a sense of what options have been pursued in other environments and, while still new, provide a quick insight into the feasibility and effort involved in pursuing them.

> *"It is not always necessary to invent and create things from scratch, because a number of promising products and practices already exist somewhere and may be ripe for use in a different organisation or in a different context." (Hartley, 2015: 146)*

There are potential limitations to such an approach given that it can be difficult to really understand all of the factors that led to the success or otherwise of an innovative approach somewhere else, let alone translate that knowledge into a different context. However, it can provide a rapid picture of an expanded range of possibilities, help prompt consideration of whether that solution is actually

solving the problem that is being faced, and give an insight into some of the implementation issues. To make the most of such an approach it is usually necessary to talk to those who have been involved in the actual implementation, but simply knowing that a different approach was used can help kick-start a richer idea generation process.

7.3 Horizon Scanning and Futures Tools

Horizon scanning is a practice to consider how the future may be different and then to consider what that might mean for current activities.

Horizon Scanning in a Nutshell (Delaney, 2014: 5)

Why?

Horizon scanning processes should help decision-makers in government take a longer-term strategic view and make present choices more resilient to future shocks, surprises, and uncertainty.

What?

Horizon scanning is not the same as media monitoring or people paying attention to the environment in which they work. Horizon scanning focuses on how the future will be different. Horizon scanning is a structured process designed to capture, make sense of and assess the importance of emerging issues, trends and developments in train – that are often not very obvious today – and that might significantly influence current policy, service delivery, and practice.

Horizon scanning is used to identify emerging issues and challenges and to contemplate how they might evolve and interact with other characteristics of the system. If used well, it can help organisations engage with uncertainty and recognise that their assumptions are just that – assumptions. Such a perspective can help engender more flexibility in thinking and in outlook.

> *"Organizations that try too hard to eradicate the uncertainties of the future often have trouble dealing with them when they – inevitably – arise. Using models to gain insight into the future, and even to influence or create it, is healthy. Relying on these tools to predict the future is about as sensible as eating prime rib with chopsticks." (Schrage, 2000: 151)*

With regards to idea generation, horizon scanning can assist by:

- Helping envision different futures, which in turn prompt different understandings about how things might work, and thus different ideas about what might be possible
- Building skills in thinking through implications in different scenarios, and thus how an idea might play out differently in different settings, and what that might mean for how an idea is structured and what is proposed
- Helping people understand what the issues are and why the current state is deficient and likely to change anyway. This can help people feel better about engaging with a new idea and thinking about their role in helping introduce it.

In short, horizon scanning breaks the assumption that tomorrow will be the same as today, and thereby supports a richer ideas generation process that is not as limited by the status quo as it otherwise would be.

Some Resources on How to Use Horizon Scanning to Aid Idea Generation:

- "A practical guide: Introduction to horizon scanning in the public sector", Public Sector Innovation Toolkit
- "Foresight Training Manual", Policy Horizons Canada
- "Future Scenarios", MindLab.

7.4 Brainstorming

Brainstorming is the basic process of generating ideas. It can be very straightforward, and done quickly and cheaply by one or more people, or it can be a larger exercise. Brainstorming can be done in many different ways, however it is most likely to be useful if:

- Participants have had the opportunity to consider ideas on their own before collaborating with others
- Those involved have a good knowledge of different aspects of the needs / problem
- There are people with different perspectives, whether from a different part of the organisation or someone who can bring an unconventional view
- The different players are all represented
- Some structure is behind the process, including some built-in prompts to help challenge assumptions and constraints (whether it be aiming for something that is 10x better, or asking what if there was only half the current budget available)
- Those in senior positions contribute their ideas last or in ways that do not signal a preferred position, which may steer the conversation in a different direction rather than focusing on generating the best ideas.

Brainstorming can be a quick process that can deliver many ideas, however the resultant ideas will likely need to be validated and tested against real world considerations. Brainstorming can help people connect with an issue and build support for particular ideas and engagement with the broader idea generation process.

Some Resources on How to Use Brainstorming to Aid Idea Generation:

- "Fast Idea Generator", Nesta
- "Creative Workshops", DIY Toolkit
- "Idea Development Sheet", Open Policy Making Toolkit
- "Change Cards", Open Policy Making Toolkit
- "Brainstorming Session", Project Open Data
- "Perspective Cards", MindLab
- "Brainstorm", MindLab
- "Brainstorming", Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services, "A to Z of Engagement Techniques".

7.5 Prototyping

Prototyping can be seen as brainstorming made tangible. It is about turning ideas into artefacts that can then be reacted to or interacted with, thus providing immediate information about whether the assumptions behind an idea are correct. A prototype of a new website, even if only in the form of a paper wireframe, can make an idea "real" in a way that a pitch, a presentation or a written business case cannot. It provokes responses from people that indicate what they would actually do, rather than what they might believe they would do.

Prototypes may focus on one particular aspect of an idea (e.g. one feature of a new website) or the entire idea (e.g. a physical mock-up and walk-through of how a citizen might interact with a service). The aim of a prototype is to quickly elicit information that uncovers assumptions, gives more insight into what is actually needed, and is something that is iterative that can be built upon and refined.

> *"You know when you have a successful prototype when people who see it make useful suggestions about how it can be improved. Successful innovators don't use their prototypes to persuade the right people; their prototypes enable the right people to persuade themselves. If your most important boss, client, or supplier can't play creatively with your prototypes, you have made a serious design error." (Schrage, 2000: 8)*

Prototyping as an activity is more often associated with design thinking and the developing/testing proposals stage of the innovation process, but it can also help with idea generation. Prototypes can be used within an organisation to spark conversation and to think through what might be appropriate. Prototypes can be shared with "users", stakeholders, decision-makers or clients to help make the idea generation process real, and to prompt more considered thought about what they might actually want and thereby eliciting more and better ideas. Or they can be used as a different form of brainstorming, to spark more ideas about different options and possibilities.

A related concept is that of "provotypes", artefacts that may be unrealistic as options but that can spark discussion about what is important and what is valued. In such a way provotypes, like prototypes, can act to elicit information and thoughts from people that may otherwise have remained unspoken or unrealised, and thus contribute to idea generation and the articulation of different possibilities.

Some Resources on How to Use Prototyping to Aid Idea Generation:

- "A Foundation's Guide to Paper Prototyping: An Emerging Approach to Surfacing Innovation", Rockefeller Foundation
- "Proto- & Provotypes", MindLab.

7.6 Pitching

Another form of idea generation that has been used by organisations is having staff or others pitch ideas. These are usually semi-structured processes in which there is a specific event or call for ideas where staff (or others) are invited to pitch their ideas about how things could be done differently.

This process may be semi-competitive, in which the top ideas to be pitched are selected by peers or through a screening process, or it may be entirely open. Pitches are usually time-limited and are presented to senior decision-makers or respected authorities.

Policy Idol[7]

"Policy Idol is an annual competition open to all current students and staff at King's, in which participants pitch their policy ideas to an elite panel of leading figures from the worlds of politics, academia and industry.

You can enter by yourself or as part of a team, and on the day you will have just three minutes to present your idea to the judges, who will assess your pitch on the quality of delivery and the evidence and analysis underpinning it.

Organised by the Policy Institute at King's, the competition sees the best ideas selected in a series of heats, with standout pitches from each heat put through to the final. All finalists receive bespoke training in policy analysis and communications, as well as an opportunity to improve their pitch.

The final takes place in front of a live audience, with both the judges and the audience voting for their favourite idea at the end of the evening."

A process inviting idea pitches can build engagement within an organisation (or with other stakeholders) and encourage people to think more closely about the issues. The process can build strong support for particular ideas, however this may not be matched by ownership of the ideas by those who would be responsible for acting on them. The senior sponsorship of the ideas can be valuable, but will usually need to be matched by emphasis and follow-up to ensure that the idea is appropriately investigated.

A pitch process will best support idea generation when it there are steps to ensure that the ideas that come forward are addressing specific problems, however in some cases there may be a disconnect between the perception of the problem of those pitching the idea and those who may have to act on it.

7.7 Idea Management Systems

An Idea Management System (IMS) is effectively a shared platform for brainstorming over a longer period of time. At its most basic, an IMS is usually an online system of some description by which people can share their ideas – an online "suggestion box". Such systems can be progressively more sophisticated with:

- the ability to rate the ideas of others
- to comment or collaborate on the ideas
- to link ideas together
- to form teams around ideas
- to link to resources and sources of advice around different aspects of ideas

[7] For further details, see "About the competition", accessed at http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/policy-institute/Policy-Idol/about.aspx

- to differentiate ideas according to their different levels of maturity or investigation/implementation
- to have formalised work flows and review processes built-in to the system
- to have the ability to report on idea trends and performance over time.

An IMS can also involve some form of gamification to encourage repeated engagement and to help identify people with particular sets of expertise of interest.

An idea management system can be a very simple application or something that is quite sophisticated and integrated into organisational decision making processes. An IMS can be used on an ongoing basis for general ideas, with "campaigns" where ideas are invited around specific topics/challenges/questions, or run on an occasional basis with time-bound rounds.

CSIRO Idea Management System

The CSIRO, the Australian Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, introduced an idea management system in 2015 as part of developing a more inclusive innovation approach in an organisation of over 5000 people. Based on the need for a system that could cater to a large number of people, that met security requirements, and that was easy-to-use/integrate with existing systems, a licence for a commercial system was procured for use within the enterprise's IT environment.

The first use of the system was as part of a strategy development process, where four challenges were run, each for a period of two weeks. This was one of the first times within the organisation that people could see what others were saying in an open forum. Over 40% of staff participated in the process and nearly 700 ideas were submitted, with over 7000 comments made. The process helped ensure that the development of the strategy was well informed by staff views, and that staff felt listened to.

Subsequently the IMS has been used for a mix of all-staff challenges and for specific issues within particular business areas.

Some of the key factors for making the most of the IMS included:

- consistent and ongoing communication efforts to set expectations and build engagement
- support for the team managing the IMS
- a clear sense (by both staff and the organisation) of what would happen when people participated
- enticement and encouragement for people to build on the ideas of others
- topics that connected with the interests, work and culture of staff and the organisation.

An IMS can be a valuable formalised tool for collecting, sharing and collaborating on ideas in an organisation. Doing so can be powerful for in fostering staff engagement, however only if there is a clear sense of what the ideas are going to be used for and how the process is going to work. A common risk with an IMS is to invite ideas but then be overwhelmed by the ideas that come forward and not provide contributors with a sense that their ideas were listened to, considered, or responded to. This reflects that idea generation will be most successful when it is linked to solving

particular problems or issues, though organisations may wish to leave the flexibility for staff to identify their own problems and issues outside of formal campaigns. In this way, an IMS can provide a means of identifying emerging problems (or perceptions of problems) as well as a means for staff to collaborate and develop ideas that may not be of immediate concern but that will benefit from further investigation and development.

An IMS can also extend outside of an organisation, usually as part of a broader crowdsourcing approach.

Some Resources on How to Use Ideas Management Systems to Aid Idea Generation:

- "Ideas Management Systems", Public Sector Innovation Toolkit.

7.8 Crowdsourcing

Crowdsourcing, which usually relies on some form of an IMS, is a broader engagement approach for idea generation. It seeks to reach a larger, and usually more diverse, audience of people who might contribute. It can be used for a range of purposes, including getting data or seeking participation in shared tasks, but a common use is to support idea generation and engagement around a particular issue (or organisation or product/service).

Crowdsourcing shares many of the same attributes and issues of an IMS but at a larger scale. It can help build legitimacy by sourcing ideas from a wider section of the community, but it can also have limitations in that the input of everyone can be put on equal footing, even though some may be closer to the issue or have more expertise.

> *"I'm not suggesting government should be crowdsourced. I don't want rule by the mob, even the smart mob. The internet requires filters, moderators, fact-checkers, and skeptics. So will the conversation that powers the country." (Jarvis, 2009: 219)*

> *"If tyranny of the majority is a constant danger in democratic systems, it can make a greater claim on efficiency and legitimacy than tyranny of the few." (Fraser and Dutta, 2008: 126)*

Crowdsourcing can be used for very specific topics or done at the national level across a range of topics and issues.

MyGov, India[8]

MyGov is a platform launched in 2014 that brings government closer to citizens by providing a space for the exchange of ideas and views about particular issues.

"MyGov platform has become a key part of the policy and decision making process of the country. Where the platform has been able to provide the citizens a voice in the governance process of the country and create grounds for the citizens to become stakeholders not only in policy formulation and recommendation but also implementation through actionable tasks. Given the importance of this platform in transformation of India through participatory governance, the platform has been

[8] For further details, see "MyGov: An Overview" accessed at https://www.mygov.in/overview/

constantly undergoing upgrades to ensure an enhanced level of user experience. The major attributes of MyGov includes Discussion, Tasks, Talks, Polls and Blogs on various groups based on the diverse governance and public policy issues.

Today MyGov has more than 1.78 Million users who contribute their ideas through discussions and also participate through the various earmarked tasks. In addition to this the platform gets more than 10,000 posts per weeks on various issues which are analyzed and put together as suggestions for the concerned departments who are able to transform them into actionable agenda."

To maximise the value of crowdsourcing for idea generation it will generally be advisable to set clear expectations and rules of engagement, with a clear mandate and sense of why the process is being undertaken and how it connects to people's lives. In the right circumstances a crowdsourcing process can empower participants to "police" each other and keep the dialogue constructive and positive. If not managed well, or if there is over-represented participation from either people with a very narrow interest or from those who are not really connected with the issue, the conversation may act to actually decrease engagement and put off participation from others with something to say.

Crowdsourcing can be done quickly, particularly if there is reusable infrastructure (such as a shared platform) and existing deep links with the relevant audiences/communities. Sometimes crowdsourcing will work best if it is undertaken within existing communities or forums that are outside of government, rather than creating a platform and expecting the conversation to move from where it is to where a government agency would like it to happen.

Crowdsourcing will often involve a strong online component, however it may not be wise to rely on an exclusively digital process. This will particularly be the case if the issue is less well understood, or if more work needs to be done to build the relevant government agency's profile and legitimacy in the space and if there are not well established online channels with the relevant audiences.

Crowdsourcing can help challenge assumptions by testing whether a larger population views the issues in the same ways, or whether they see the problem in a different way. A larger, and hopefully more diverse, set of inputs will also likely identify novel ideas that had not been previously considered, though depending on the level of detail of the issue there may also be a larger number of ideas which are not particularly useful or that are seen as out of scope.

Like a good IMS, a good crowdsourcing process can encourage people to build on the ideas of others rather than just adding their own, and share thoughts about how they think those ideas may play out, and what possible impacts they see the ideas as having.

A crowdsourcing process can help build support for ideas, though if not structured correctly there is also a risk that it can build support for ideas that are outside of what is being sought. This can lead to disappointment and disengagement as participants feel the process did not listen to what they said.

Some Resources on How to Use Crowdsourcing to Aid Idea Generation:

- "Crowdsourcing", Open Policy Making Toolkit
- "Federal Crowdsourcing and Citizen Science Toolkit", US Government
- "US Public Participation Playbook", US Government

- "Digital Democracy: The tools transforming political engagement", Nesta.

7.9 Hackathons

A more structured form of crowdsourcing can be seen in hackathons. Arising primarily out of the IT industry, hackathons are events for creative problem solving, bringing together different people into teams, which are usually time-limited and intensive (e.g. running for a day or over a weekend). Hackathons have traditionally had a strong focus on programming/IT or on working with data, but they are increasingly used for non-technical issues as well. They can be valuable forums for bringing together interested members of the relevant community and quickly working through new ideas.

Australian Public Service Commission Work Hack[9]

In April 2016 the Australian Public Service Commission brought together almost 50 people from across the Australian Public Service (APS) and the private sector to work on 6 longstanding problem areas. The teams hacked for five hours, which was followed by a later opportunity to pitch their solution to a group of senior leaders. The 6 problems were:

- How might the APS get higher performance out of its staff?
- How might the APS lead the pack in gender equality?
- How might the APS increase the exchange of staff and ideas inside and outside the APS?
- How might the APS overcome the barriers associated with hierarchy?
- How might the APS make all jobs flexible?
- How might the APS better compete with the private sector for talent?

The session resulted in a range of ideas that were pitched to a group of senior leaders, including the idea of "Operation Free Range" which proposed taking the best and most successful elements of posting, secondments, job swaps and knowledge sharing rotations – and making it business as usual for the APS. Operation Free Range is now being trialled as a structured staff mobility program in the APS.

Other examples of how hackathons have been used include looking at options for innovation policy in Australia (Policy Hack), looking at how to help young people access training and employment opportunities in the UK (Job Hack), and in new ways of engaging with Budget data in Finland (Hack the Budget).

Hackathons can be very successful forums for coming up with and building support for new ideas, drawing on the perspectives of diverse audiences. Hackathons will likely work best when there is a clear sense of what is to be achieved from them, that the outputs will feed into an established decision-making process (such as participants having a clear sense of what will happen with their ideas), and where the contributors/participants are willing to work in different ways. If there is sufficient interest, it may be that participants can be given/will take the lead on further developing their ideas outside of the hackathon process. This might be considered in the hackathon design and communication.

[9] For further details, see Australian Public Service Commission "WorkHack" http://www.apsc.gov.au/priorities/innovation

A hackathon may benefit from having a clear purpose, but where the problem statement is not too prescriptive. Hackathon teams will likely bring diverse experiences to the event, and part of the process may involve reframing the problem, exploring a different aspect of the problem, or playing with alternate possibilities.

Some Resources on How to Use Hackathons to Aid Idea Generation:

- "GovHack Participant Handbook and Hacker Toolkit", Australian GovHack
- "Hack days: an introduction", Open Policy Making Toolkit
- "How to run a successful Hackathon", Joshua Tauberer
- "The Hack Day Manifesto", Hack Day Manifesto
- "How to run a Hackathon", Socrata
- "Hacking the Policy Process", Public Sector Innovation Toolkit.

7.10 Open Consultations

Public sector organisations have a long tradition of consultation processes, and these have often been a reliable channel for identifying ideas and issues. As noted previously however, traditional consultation processes may not always meet the expectations of those who might contribute, and may not have been designed with identifying innovative ideas as their primary concern.

This gap has led to experimentation with more open consultation processes which are still structured but involve more conversation and interaction. An open consultation implies that there will be a response to input, that those contributing will be able to raise questions themselves, and to engage in back-and-forth, rather than simply providing input.

Australian Consumer Law Review[10]

The review of Australia's national consumer law involved a traditional issues paper and interim report for seeking input, but also sought to access a wider range of stakeholders than normal in this important topic. In conjunction with a platform provider that specialises in connecting with people with policy and subject matter expertise, the review experimented with engaging people through a different medium on the topics of digital content, product innovation and safety regulation, and awareness of consumer rights.

The process helped identify some issues and insights that were not raised through other channels. This more open consultation process acted as a complement to a standard submission process. The process was aided by having a clear sense of knowing which audiences needed to be targeted, mechanisms by which to target and engage those stakeholders, and ongoing engagement on the platform throughout the process to ensure an interactive and constructive conversation.

An open consultation process is likely to be more targeted and expect a slightly more sophisticated level of contribution than a more general crowdsourcing process, though at other times there may not be much to differentiate the two methods. Like crowdsourcing, an open consultation will be

[10] For further details see "About the Review", accessed at http://consumerlaw.gov.au/review-of-the-australian-consumer-law/about-the-review/ and "Consumer protection in the digital age: How should we treat digital content?" accessed at https://mindhive.org/issue/consumer-protection-in-the-digital-age-how-should-we-treat-digital-content

aided by having a clear sense of what is being asked, the scope of the exercise and what is in/out, and good knowledge of the relevant audiences.

An open consultation process may help in engaging those who may not be interested in providing a formal submission, but who have relevant expertise or experience that they are happy to contribute. Public sector organisations will need either established/far-reaching communications channels with the relevant audiences, or partnerships/relationships with platforms that engage relevant communities.

7.11 Participatory Budgeting

Participatory budgeting is a targeted form of crowdsourcing, seeking ideas and input on how to allocate resources.

What is Participatory Budgeting (PB)?[11]

"The process was first developed in Brazil in 1989, and there are now over 1,500 participatory budgets around the world. Most of these are at the city level, for the municipal budget. PB has also been used, however, for counties, states, housing authorities, schools and school systems, universities, coalitions, and other public agencies.

Though each experience is different, most follow a similar basic process: residents brainstorm spending ideas, volunteer budget delegates develop proposals based on these ideas, residents vote on proposals, and the government implements the top projects. For example, if community members identify recreation spaces as a priority, their delegates might develop a proposal for basketball court renovations. The residents would then vote on this and other proposals, and if they approve the basketball court, the city pays to renovate it."

Participatory budgeting can be done in a number of ways but will often involve a set sum dedicated out of an overall budget, the allocation of which being guided by direct citizen input. For instance, in Portugal a national process is being run where citizens can decide how to invest €3 million. The process can involve idea generation, where citizens put forward proposals, or one where set ideas are proposed and where citizens can provide input on which options should be invested in.

Participatory Budgeting in Paris[12]

Participatory budgeting was launched by the City of Paris in 2014 to foster participatory democracy. The process uses an online platform as well as polling stations in order to reach as many people as possible. In the first year, ideas were only put forward by city government agencies, and these ideas were then voted on. In 2016 there were 3200 projects submitted, of which 624 were put to voters for consideration.

The participatory budgeting process has seen growth in engagement (over 40,000 voters in 2014, 70,000 in 2015, and over 90,000 in 2016), and has increased the amount of money that was allocated (€17.7m in 2014, €75m in 2015, and €100m in 2016).

[11] For further details see "What is PB?", Participatory Budgeting Project, accessed at https://www.participatorybudgeting.org/what-is-pb/.
[12] For further details see "The Participatory Budget of the City of Paris", accessed at http://www.paris.fr/actualites/the-participatory-budget-of-the-city-of-paris-4151

Participatory budgeting can clearly help increase the legitimacy of an idea generation process, and build support for, and ownership of, ideas. However the framing of the process may deter truly innovative ideas, as it is likely to focus on engagement rather than setting out a set problem that needs to be solved. Participatory budgeting is also unlikely to be particularly good at uncovering insights about how innovative ideas will play out.

Some Resources on How to Use Participatory Budgeting to Aid Idea Generation:

- "Participatory Budgeting Resource Center", Participatory Budgeting Project
- "Digital Democracy: The tools transforming political engagement", Nesta
- "Participatory Budgeting – It's not what you do, it's how you do it", RSA
- "Resources", Participatory Budgeting Scotland.

7.12 Citizen Juries

A citizen jury brings together a diverse group of "ordinary" citizens around a particular topic or issue for deliberative discussion and consideration. The jury may be run over an extended period, drawing on expert advice and involving extended learning about the topic, or be run in a shorter period of time.

VicHealth Citizen Jury on Obesity[13]

"In 2015, VicHealth, with the support of newDemocracy Foundation, convened Victoria's Citizens' Jury on Obesity. Our aim was to establish community consensus for government, industry and community action on obesity.

Given how complex the issue of obesity is, the Jury was asked to specifically focus on food and the way we eat, recognising the large role food plays in society, and the range of direct and indirect influences few of us are aware of when it comes to food choices such as social setting, colour and context. The jury were invited to respond to:

'We have an obesity problem. How can we make it easier to eat better?'

After six weeks exploring evidence and questioning experts, 78 everyday Victorians came together on 17 - 18 October 2015 to determine actions they felt were necessary to make it easier to eat better.

Their 'asks' include a government-mandated health star labelling program, a ban on junk food and beverage marketing to children under 16 years, a 20 per cent tax on sugar-sweetened drinks, and fast-food exclusion zones around schools, sporting clubs, youth and community centres."

A citizens' jury can be a particularly strong way of fostering legitimacy as it has a strong citizen voice. For the same reason it can also help challenge assumptions and get to the heart of the problem because it takes a citizen perspective rather than that of a government agency. By engaging with citizens and how they think the issues affect their lives, it can also help give a sense of how particular

[13] For further details see VicHealth "Citizens' Jury on Obesity" accessed at https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/programs-and-projects/victorias-citizens-jury-on-obesity

ideas might play out. A strong citizen voice can also strengthen support and engagement with the resultant ideas, by connecting the ideas strongly to the problem and the citizen perspective.

Some Resources on How to Use Citizen Juries to Aid Idea Generation

- "Citizen Juries", Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services, "A to Z of Engagement Techniques"
- "Survey's and Citizen Juries", Scottish Graduate School of Social Science
- "Citizens' Juries", Participedia
- "Citizens' Jury – How can we ensure we have a vibrant and safe Sydney nightlife", City of Sydney
- "What is a Citizens' Jury?", newDemocracy Foundation.

7.13 Challenge Prizes

Challenge prizes are a particular form of crowdsourcing, and are used to either seek specific answers or solutions to particular problems, or to seek ideas for a more open-ended question (usually as much to help build engagement or awareness, as to solve a problem).

European Commission Horizon Prizes[14]

The Horizon Prizes are challenge prizes offering a reward to whoever can meet a defined challenge. The Prizes aim to stimulate breakthrough technologies, bring in unexpected ideas, or accelerate the development of promising approaches.

The Horizon Prize process first identifies a technological or societal challenge for which no solution has been found and promises an award for a delivered breakthrough solution. The award provides criteria for what the solutions must be capable of proving, but does not prescribe how the solution must be reached.

The defining of the challenges involves considerable work and expertise to identify the specific problem or opportunity and where a prize approach promises to deliver tangible gains.

An example of the prize towards a technological challenge is the CO2 reuse prize, a €1.5m reward for the development of innovative products which reuse CO2 in order to significantly improve net CO2 emissions, while overcoming technical, commercial and/or financial barriers.

A societal example is the upcoming challenge to stimulate ideas and proposals that address the challenges and opportunities of ageing and to improve the quality of life of senior citizens.

Challenges can range across any issues, but are often valuable in the area of technical challenges where expert knowledge is required. A well-framed challenge can leverage far more resources than the prize money might otherwise be able to procure or support.

Effective challenges require being able to get the issue in front of the right audiences, meaning that it may often be wise to partner with others who have well-established channels of communication with relevant networks. Alternatively, having a dedicated platform by which challenges can be issued

[14] For details, see "Horizon Prizes", European Commission at https://ec.europa.eu/research/horizonprize/index.cfm?pg=about

can assist in building up awareness of the opportunities and help develop the necessary problem-solving community. One such example is Challenge.gov.

A challenge prize can assist idea generation in many of the same ways as crowdsourcing.

Should I Run a Challenge Prize? (Nesta 2014: 13)

1. Can you define a clear goal (in response to your problem, need or opportunity) and see a way to measure and judge whether the goal has been met?
2. Do you think that you could generate the best solutions by opening up the problem to a wider pool of innovators?
3. Do you think you could motivate innovators to participate?
4. Do you think you could accelerate progress through a prize?
5. Do you think that the solutions will be adopted or taken to market?

Challenge prizes are likely to be less effective than standard crowdsourcing in identifying how ideas may play out as the nature of the process will focus on demonstrating why ideas are best, rather than getting insight into what might happen or unintended second order impacts. Challenges are likely to be more effective at identifying new solutions that had not been previously considered.

Some Resources on How to Use Challenge Prizes to Aid Idea Generation

- "Challenges and Prizes Toolkit", Challenge.gov
- "Get Started with Challenge and Prize Competitions", DigitalGov
- "Challenge Prizes: How Government Can Expand its use of Challenge Prizes", GovLab
- "Challenge Prizes: A Practice Guide", Nesta
- "And the winner is … Capturing the promise of philanthropic prizes", McKinsey & Company
- "Competitions and Prizes", Public Sector Innovation Toolkit
- "The craft of incentive prize design", Deloitte University Press.

7.14 Innovation Funds

An innovation fund is a tool that fits between crowdsourcing and procurement. Innovation Funds can be dedicated programs or funds that can be drawn on as and when there is a relevant opportunity. A fund can be a means of seeking novel ideas and approaches for particular problem areas, likely on a competitive basis, in partnership with the area that "owns" the problem.

Victorian Government Public Sector Innovation Fund[15]

The Public Sector Innovation Fund is a grants program designed to drive new, more effective solutions to complex policy and service delivery challenges in Victoria, Australia. The $11m Fund provides grants between A$50,000 and A$400,000 to support collaborative, small-scale projects that are led by the Victorian public sector.

Projects are assessed against four criteria:

[15] For details, see "About the Fund" Victorian Government, http://www.vic.gov.au/publicsectorinnovation/about-the-fund.html

1. Strategic fit – projects must clearly target a current or emerging need in the Victorian public sector or in an area of Victorian government service delivery, and must be endorsed by the organisation's senior leadership.
2. Innovation – projects should creatively apply new knowledge, technologies, methodologies or processes to improve the effectiveness or quality of outcomes for citizens and/or the public sector.
3. Value – applications should identify the value of the project proposal, whether quantifiable (e.g. more effective services or increased efficiency) or qualitative (e.g. better services).
4. Potential to scale or replicate – projects should identify the opportunities for project solutions, platforms, or learnings to be replicated or shared across the public sector.

Projects funded under the program have included:

- The Code for Victorian Innovation Challenge to place Code for Australia teams of designers and programmers with government agencies to create new tools for making government information more open and accessible and to improve the delivery of government services
- The Family Violence Resource register, a new online tool which provides family violence responders with real time ability to identify available crisis accommodation
- The Immunisation Behaviour Change project to determine and trial the best methods to overcome barriers that prevent Victorian children from being fully vaccinated.

An innovation fund is likely to be most useful when steering activity towards a particular goal, where the need is not yet clearly articulated or understood, but where there is a need for more than just ideas, and actual development is wanted. In this way funds are likely to cut across identifying problems, generating ideas, and developing proposals in the innovation process.

An innovation fund is likely to be a useful exploratory exercise for some problems where there is a known issue, but not quite a known answer. Innovation funds, especially if run on a competitive basis, are likely to provide new insight into what is possible, and help challenge assumptions about what the answer should be.

Where an innovation fund is run at a central level and where agencies or others have to apply for the fund to be applied to their problem space, it will be important for that agency to have a clear sense of why they are undertaking the process and how it will feed into their future decision making.

7.15 Research and Development (R&D)

Research and development (R&D) is a long-standing approach for coming up with solutions, where ideas are developed by specialists and experts in a dedicated effort. It is an approach that is most usually applied to scientific and technological endeavours, where new approaches requires new technical learning and application. R&D may be done by governments through dedicated research organisations, through or with partner organisations, or through the private or not-for-profit sectors. Common areas of application for idea generation in the public sector can include health, the environment, energy, or defence.

R&D, with its inclusion of development, can span the entire public sector innovation lifecycle, but is still relevant in particular for idea generation.

R&D can help with understanding the technical limits to the question of "what's possible?" While these limits may change over time (e.g. the ongoing increase in computing power), they can provide an understanding of where there may be hard limits, or alternatively where there might need to be additional investment if a particular idea pathway is going to be achieved. In this way, R&D will generally not be a short term avenue for idea generation, but may play an important role in longer term processes.

RedWing Program[16]

The Redwing program was introduced to help develop suite of force protection products to assist in countering the global threat posed by improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

Under the program two robust, light-weight systems were developed – a handheld version called Greengum for use by dismounted troops and a more powerful system called Greygum for fitting to light vehicles.

The Redwing devices (Greengum and Greygum) were developed by the Australian Department of Defence's Defence Science and Technology Group, and sponsored by Defence's Counter-IED Task Force and manufactured by Australian industry.

In 2016 the Redwing Program won an inaugural Institute of Public Administration Australia Public Sector Innovation Award for Innovative Solutions.

7.16 Procurement

Procurement is a time honoured approach for buying in ideas and answers. While it can still be very useful in finding answers for problems that require an innovative response, it usually requires some care if it is to deliver the most benefit for idea generation.

Traditionally procurement works best when there is a very clear sense of the need *and* the outcomes being sought. In an innovation process this is not always feasible as even where there is a clear sense of the need, it may be hard to imagine or envisage the outcomes – simply defining something in the negative ("we would no longer suffer from this") is not the same as knowing what form the outcome should take. Indeed too much certainty around the outcomes can lock in particular pathways and limit options for experimentation or reframing of the issue. This is partially why mechanisms such as challenge prizes, innovation funds and R&D exist, as they are generally better at dealing with higher levels of uncertainty.

Nonetheless, procurement can be useful if it is open to alternative suggestions and does not lock-in a particular option too early. If the procurement process can be staggered, so that initial exploratory work around an idea can be done before a commitment is made to invest in a solution, it can be an effective way of leveraging external capabilities in finding, filtering and developing an idea.

One mechanism by which procurement can be made more helpful for idea generation is through the invitation or allowance of unsolicited proposals – proposals from providers in regards to unstated or perhaps unrealised needs.

[16] For further details, see "Innovation Award for Redwing Program" and "Redwing Wins Innovation Award" accessed at http://www.defence.gov.au/casg/NewsMedia/News/innovation_award_redwing and https://www.dst.defence.gov.au/news/2016/07/28/redwing-wins-innovation-award

Unsolicited Proposals, US Department of State[17]

"An Unsolicited proposal is a written application for a new or innovative idea submitted to an agency on the initiative of the offer or for the purpose of obtaining a contract with the government, and is not in response to a request for proposals, Broad Agency Announcement, Program Research and Development Announcement, or any other Government-initiated solicitation or program.

The Department of State (DoS) accepts the submission of valid unsolicited proposals which contribute new and innovative ideas consistent with the Agency's mission. However, the requirements for contractor resources are normally program specific and must be responsive to the Department's needs.

In the case that your firm has an innovative and unique idea for which submission of an unsolicited proposal may be the right approach, you should ensure commercial availability does not already exist to the government. Also, it should not be an advance proposal for a known agency requirement to be procured by competitive methods nor should it address previously published solicitations."

In such ways procurement can help challenge assumptions and provide new insight into what is possible.

Some Resources on How to Use Procurement to Aid Idea Generation:

- "Public Procurement for Innovation: Good Practices and Strategies", OECD.

7.17 Partnerships and Networks

Sometimes there may be enough shared interest or the problem or issue may be large enough that it may not be feasible for one organisation to tackle the problem on its own. In such a case, organisations may wish to enter into a partnership or become part of a network where there is a shared problem and where there is a preparedness to collectively act or share resources to come up with a solution.

Global Innovation Fund[18]

"The Global Innovation Fund invests in social innovations that aim to improve the lives and opportunities of millions of people in the developing world.

Through our grants and risk capital, we support breakthrough solutions to global development challenges from social enterprises, for-profit firms, non-profit organisations, international organisations, researchers, and government agencies.

We are global in breadth and scope: open to the best approaches to solve any major development problem in low- or lower-middle income countries. We seek solutions that can scale up commercially, through the public/philanthropic sector, or through a combination of both in order to achieve widespread adoption….

[17] For further details, see "Unsolicited Proposals", US Department of State, accessed at https://www.state.gov/m/a/140245.htm

[18] For further details, see "About Us", Global Innovation Fund, accessed at http://www.globalinnovation.fund/about-us

GIF is nonprofit innovation fund headquartered in London. We are supported by the Department of International Development in the UK, the United States Agency for International Development, the Omidyar Network, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and the Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade in Australia. To date, these partners have pledged over USD $200 million over the next five years."

Such an approach can be advantageous for idea generation in helping pool resources and for extending reach by sharing audiences and potential collaborators. Such an approach is likely to involve some transaction costs however and may not be suited for short-run problems unless there is a very clear sense of priority and need.

7.18 Open Source

Open source is generally used to refer to software development where the source code is made available for use by others under an open licence (i.e. provides the right to change, adapt, and adopt the code for their own uses). An open source approach can allow many parties to contribute to development of what can become a shared or collective resource.

Code.gov[19]

"By making source code available for sharing and re-use across Federal agencies, we can avoid duplicative custom software purchases and promote innovation and collaboration across Federal agencies. By opening more of our code to the brightest minds inside and outside of government, we can enable them to work together to ensure that the code is reliable and effective in furthering our national objectives. And we can do all of this while remaining consistent with the Federal Government's long-standing policy of technology neutrality, through which we seek to ensure that Federal investments in IT are merit-based, improve the performance of our government, and create value for the American people."

Open licencing can also be applied in other domains, including through the use of open licences such as Creative Commons. The use of such licences can make it easier for governments and others to share not only their ideas, but the underlying resources/artefacts and materials that might be associated with the development or implementation of such ideas.

> *"The real magic of open-source innovation is not just that lots of people will offer ideas but also that lots of* different kinds of people *will offer ideas." (Taylor and LaBarre, 2006: 120)*

An open source approach can assist idea generation by lowering search or discovery costs for different ideas, and for making it easier to build on the ideas of others.

Some Resources on How to Open Source to Aid Idea Generation:

- "Tools and Resources", Code.gov.

[19] For further details, see "Introduction", accessed at https://code.gov/#/policy-guide/docs/overview/introduction

7.19 Outside-In

An "outside-in" approach is less a formal tool than a process of bringing an external perspective into the organisation to act as either a source of gentle provocation and stimulation or as a means of bringing in expertise. It differs from normal recruitment processes in that the person/people brought in is not generally expected to remain on a permanent basis, but is there for a limited period of time to help bring in new ways of thinking.

Bringing in an outsider perspective is a tricky exercise, as too strong a voice of the outside is likely to stimulate resistance or antagonism from those within the organisation who will see it as implicit or explicit criticism. Yet if an outside voice is not supported within the organisation, it will easily be buried in the day-to-day workings of the organisation and have little chance to influence how the organisation works.

For this reason an outside-in approach is one that is likely to work best when there is either or both clear leadership support and an articulated need from within the organisation of why this "outsider" is needed. These factors can help ensure that the provocation is not too acute, and that others can see why the outside perspective is needed.

Presidential Innovation Fellows[20]

The Presidential Innovation Fellows program was established in 2012 to bring high performing innovators from other sectors into government to work on projects and bring in entrepreneurial thinking. Government agencies identify particular problems or project areas where they would like or need a new approach and are matched with Fellows. The Fellow have not previously worked in government and generally have a design/development or innovation background from across a range of sectors.

Projects involving PIFs include the Blue Button Initiative, to increase the transparency and access for patients to their health information, in order to help them make more informed decisions about their health, care for their family members, and share information with their providers.

An outside-in approach is likely to be particularly helpful for idea generation in challenging assumptions and providing new insight into what is possible. It is not necessarily going to provide a better understanding of how ideas will play out however, as it may take some time for the outsider to get a richer appreciation of how the public sector system works, and for the insiders to appreciate the particulars of a the new way of thinking.

An outside-in approach may be best suited to a longer term idea generation process. This may be where there the problem is not yet clearly defined, where there are thought to be opportunity areas that could potentially be exploited, or where there is simply a need for new thinking to help challenge the dominant ways of thinking.

7.20 Co-Design

Co-design is an approach whereby those affected by a problem are involved in the process of coming up with the ideas and approaches that can be applied. More than crowdsourcing or citizen juries, co-design involves an active and ongoing role from the

[20] For further details, see "Meet the Fellows", accessed at https://presidentialinnovationfellows.gov/fellows/

public sector organisation, relevant stakeholders and those affected by the problem or issue.

Co-design is likely to be particularly effective in building legitimacy, as it involves those directly affected and gives them a voice. This will also help challenge assumptions and get a richer understanding of the problem, and can be a powerful means of progressively developing ideas that come from a deep understanding of the issues.

7.21 Positive Deviance

> *"Positive deviance (PD) is founded on the premise that at least one person in a community, working with the same resources as everybody else, has already licked the problem that confounds others. This individual is an outlier in the statistical sense – an exception, someone whose outcome deviates in a positive way from the norm. In most cases this person does not know he or she is doing anything unusual. Yet once the unique solution is discovered and understood, it can be adopted by the wider community and transform many lives. From the PD perspective, individual difference is regarded as a community resource. Community engagement is essential to discovering noteworthy variants in their midst and adapting their practices and strategies." (Pascale, Sternin, and Sternin, 2016: 17)*

Sometimes the solution (an idea that has been already applied successfully) will already exist, but may not be well known or used widely. Coming from the development community, the concept of positive deviance offers an approach where working with community outliers who are behaving in ways different to much of the rest of the community, ways that mean they do not experience the problem (or not to the same extent). Examples include improving child nutrition, helping to reduce the level of female genital mutilation, and reducing infant mortality (Pascale, Sternin, and Sternin, 2016). The approach is intensive, and requires active engagement with the community to help uncover the outliers and to socialise the positive behaviours and gain social acceptance for them.

An approach of finding positive deviance may also be applied at an organisational or sectoral level – for instance, it might be applied to finding where one part of the organisation consistently achieves better compliance or is rated as providing better service, and asking why that might be the case, and whether there are particular behaviours supporting it.

When Should a Positive Deviance Approach be Used?

"Positive deviance should be considered as a possible approach when a concrete problem meets the following criteria:

- The problem is not exclusively technical and requires behavioral or/and social change.
- The problem is 'intractable' – other solutions haven't worked.
- Positive deviants are thought to exist.
- There is sponsorship and local leadership commitment to address the issue." (Pascale, Sternin, and Sternin, 2016: 199-200).

Positive deviance is likely to be very strong on building legitimacy, working as it does with those affected by the problem, and finding those in the community who are already applying solutions. It is also likely to be good on challenging assumptions, and understanding the lived realities of a problem. This approach is also likely to build strong support and engagement with the ideas that arise, though it may not be so good at identifying how ideas might play out and what might happen when minority behaviours are extended over a wider population.

Some Resources on How to Use Positive Deviance to Aid Idea Generation:

- "Basic Field Guide to the Positive Deviance Approach", Positive Deviance Initiative.

7.22 Innovation Labs

Innovation Labs vary greatly in nature, but are generally a dedicated space and/or process for engaging with innovation within an organisation. Labs increasingly involve a dedicated core team that facilitates a project-based approach to innovation. Labs may use a range of disciplines and tools, though many have a basis in some form of design thinking or human centred design.

Labs can contribute to idea generation either as a host or facilitator of other idea generation tools, as a convenor for different types of stakeholders in a non-traditional setting, or as a set project team that brings in and applies different methodologies for the purpose of coming up with new solutions. Labs are likely to be particularly strong on building on ideas.

7.23 Art and Storytelling

Another approach that could be considered for stimulating and sourcing ideas is through art and storytelling.

Art can provide new ways of seeing (and potentially understanding) the world. Whether it be a painting, a game, a play or a novel, art can reflect back reality, highlighting things that may have gone unnoticed, and providing a new way to see the situation. Art can prompt or provoke questions about what is or what could be, and stimulate new ways of understanding what is possible.

An example is the possible importance that science fiction (SF) has, and continues to play, in innovation. As articulated by the science fiction author Neal Stephenson (2011):

> "*Good SF supplies a plausible, fully thought-out picture of an alternate reality in which some sort of compelling innovation has taken place. A good SF universe has a coherence and internal logic that makes sense to scientists and engineers. Examples include Isaac Asimov's robots, Robert Heinlein's rocket ships, and William Gibson's cyberspace. As Jim Karkanias of Microsoft Research puts it, such icons serve as hieroglyphs—simple, recognizable symbols on whose significance everyone agrees.*"

So science fiction might be a source that can provide inspiration in the form of fully realised ideas and associated realities – stories that provide a vision of what could be.

Alternate forms of art might also provide inspiration and/or a critique of the current situation that suggests opportunities for action. Art might also be used to help set the scene

for inviting others to share their thoughts and ideas, to communicate a problem in a novel or immersive way that strengthens understanding and engagement with the issue.

Sustainable Development Goals Action Campaign's United Nations Virtual Reality Series[21]

"Since January 2015, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Action Campaign has coordinated the United Nations Virtual Reality Series to bring the world's most pressing challenges home to decision makers and global citizens around the world, pushing the bounds of empathy. The UN Virtual Reality Series shows the human story behind development challenges, allowing people with the power to make a difference have a deeper understanding of the everyday realities of those in danger of being left behind."

One example of the series is *Clouds over Sidra*, the story of a 12 year old girl living in the Za'atari Refugee Camp in Jordan.

In some public sector organisations the use of different forms of storytelling may be challenging or risk being seen as frivolous. In such instances, it may be advisable to work with or collaborate with other organisations, and consider whether it may be more appropriate for another party to provide ownership or presentation of the resulting artefacts (stories, films, plays, comics, etc.).

7.24 Play

> *"Serious play … means innovation requires improvisation. It means innovation isn't about rigorously following the 'rules of the game,' but about rigorously challenging and revising them. It means innovation is less the product of how innovators think than a by-product of how they behave. Serious play is about innovative behaviour." (Schrage, 2000: 1)*

The word play can connote a lack of seriousness, of childishness, or of fun. None of these things are concepts that public sector organisations generally wish to be associated with. However 'serious play' (Schrage 2000) can be a vital component of the innovation process, and involves engaging with ideas in different ways. Sometimes difficult or challenging issues can be made safer through 'games' or play, allowing people to come to grips with big ideas in a less challenging format.

Playing in the form of play-acting can also be a valuable way of getting ideas and understanding what might be possible. Taking on the role of someone interacting with a government service can help change thinking in a very quick and powerful way – literally putting yourself in the position of those affected by the problem or issues. While there are limitations, it can provide insight that then leads to new possibilities and new ideas of what to do.

Play can also be a way of becoming familiar with new techniques, methods and technologies. Sometimes "playing around" with a new computer program or web-service might be the best way to understand what can be done with it, and how it might be applied to problems or used in the future. Such play may not result in anything but it can feel like a safe way of experimenting, as doing it in the form of play means that there is less concern about the need for a pay-off. Public sector

[21] For details, see "United Nations Virtual Reality", accessed at https://unitednationsvirtualreality.wordpress.com/about/about/

organisations may find it difficult to facilitate and endorse such play, yet it can be an activity that is very helpful to the innovation process and idea generation.

7.25 Reverse Engineering

Reverse engineering is a practice of deconstructing something to see how it works, and then applying that knowledge for other purposes. While commonly used in engineering and consumer products, it can also be applied in a public sector setting, and has been used in Georgia for the issues of waste management and road safety.

Reverse Engineering in the Public Sector in Georgia

The two day international Meet-up/Conference "Reverse Engineering in Public Sector Innovation" was held by ServiceLab of the Public Service Development Agency in December, 2015, The conference was held with a goal to bring innovative solutions to two main public policy challenges in Georgia – waste management, namely plastic bottle recycling and road safety, reducing the number of car-related deaths. The groups were facilitated by some of the best international organizations in innovations – Nesta, MindLab and Pulse Lab. As a significant partner and donor organization of ServiceLab, the United Nations Development Programme supported the conference financially.

ServiceLab, the only organization of its kind in Georgia, is an innovation laboratory, aiming to increase inter-agency cooperation in the public sector and use innovative methods to improve existing public services, as well as introduce new ones. Through conferences, workshops and other meet-ups, ServiceLab aims to spread innovative approaches throughout the public sector of Georgia.

The methodology of the reverse engineering conference focused on a two-pronged approach: firstly, the conference participants deconstructed the challenges and secondly, the solutions. This means that we first took the challenges that we faced in both road safety and recycling, which are large-scale challenges, and deconstructed them into components.

The idea is to deconstruct a larger problem into a series of smaller problems that can be addressed. And then, the groups participating at the conference deconstructed the successful cases into components and discussed which approaches and examples could be tailored to the solution that fits Georgia's case. Examples of successful case studies were used in both cases: road safety reform in Serbia and plastic bottle recycling project Plastic Bank.

Initially, the conference was held in a seminar style, where international service design experts shared their experience on public service innovation. Creating the right energy for change and a meaningful dynamic between the top-down and bottom-up approach was a significant focus.

By using a cutting-edge methodology in service design, the reverse engineering method, which has been used in hard sciences as a successful tool for problem solving, the ServiceLab encouraged its participants to identify root causes of each public policy challenge and find creative solutions that were tailor-made for the Georgian context.

The working groups were composed of various stakeholders, including representatives from the government, non-governmental organizations, media, private sector, activists of rights for persons with disabilities (especially relevant in the road safety working group), students and experts. A wide range of perspectives provided a comprehensive approach to each public policy challenge and led to inclusive, all-encompassing solutions.

These concepts were presented to decision-makers from various ministries and donor organizations, which expressed their approval of the conference and made commitments to continue to work together for the advancement of the proposed solutions.

The application of reverse engineering for the public sector is still relatively new, so the guidance on when and how to use it is relatively under-developed.

Some Resources on How to Use Reverse Engineering to Aid Idea Generation:

- "Modelling Reverse Engineering in Public Sector in Georgia".

7.26 Mechanisms of Challenge

Mechanisms of challenge are a means for people to challenge accepted wisdom about what is, or should be, possible. In procurement, a mechanism for unsolicited proposals is a form of a mechanism of challenge, allowing people to go around the normal process. In political terms, a mechanism of challenge to a public sector organisation may be an appeal to a politician or political decision making body, in order to point out something that they see as stopping (or enabling) something they disagree with.

In regards to idea generation, mechanisms of challenge do not appear to be particularly well developed outside of procurement. Many existing channels may be unsuited to responding to really

unusual ideas that come forward, as they may be dedicated to looking at specific types of information, or those processing the ideas may not be equipped or looking for the really "out-there" ideas. Public sector organisations may wish to consider if there are means by which they can otherwise invite new ideas and new possibilities, outside of these channels, for the occasional but extraordinary idea. Such a channel might be for ideas from outside of the organisation, or for those arising within the organisation, or for both.

It may be hard to balance the value of identifying and acting on an extraordinary idea with the effort involved in screening the resultant ideas, with no or little promise that the extraordinary ideas will actually be picked up on. Nonetheless, the value of the occasional extraordinary idea, one that radically challenges or reshapes the organisation's conception of what may be possible, might be worth it.

7.27 Independent Forums

Sometimes structured idea generation processes relating to issues concerning the public sector will happen independently of government. There may be processes run by other organisations – not-for-profits, universities, media organisations, by companies or by individuals. While it may not be appropriate or suitable for government to become directly involved, there may be opportunities for collaboration. Alternatively, it might simply be useful to maintain a watching brief to see what sort of ideas arise, where there is support for different types of ideas, and whether the exercise as a whole draws any conclusions about the current work of government.

Sometimes such a process may be developed with the explicit or implicit intent of criticising the government or the public sector, and drawing attention to perceived flaws and negative experiences. In such instances, valuable insights may be generated but be presented in a way that is inherently provocative or hostile towards the public sector and thus difficult to constructively engage with.

My Big Idea, Australian Futures Project[22]

My Big Idea was a nationwide competition asking Australians to submit ideas on ways to improve Australia and to vote for other ideas they felt passionate about. The top 100 ideas went before a judging panel, with the top 10 being developed and brought to life, thanks to the support of some of Australia's leading organisations. A further 500 Australians who submitted an idea were invited to take part in a 3-month innovation capability-building program.

My Big Idea was run by the Australian Futures Project, a not-for-profit organisation that works to find, test, and roll out improvements to Australia's decision-making system.

7.28 Analysis Tools

Many of the ideas presented here have analysis, filtering or screening elements built into them, but sometimes it may be appropriate or helpful to have a more explicit mechanism by which to consider the various ideas that have come forward. This can help those involved in decision-making see how ideas have been prioritised or shortlisted, and give them some comfort that there has been an explicit process undertaken if they are not familiar or fully assured by the other tools or methods.

[22] For more details see "My Big Idea" at https://australianfutures.org/my-big-idea/

Such a process may simply be a semi-formal means of categorising the ideas against particular criteria or parameters. Given there is likely to still be a relatively high degree of uncertainty, this may not be a very precise analytical process. Instead it may rely on an intuitive collective sense of how the idea compares to the other ideas (after all, the ideas will generally be competing with each other, rather than being compared to an absolute or objective standard).

This process will likely benefit from involving representation from the key stakeholders affected by the problem, though sometimes that may not be feasible or appropriate. As with idea generation in general however, some diversity of perspective is likely to be of assistance.

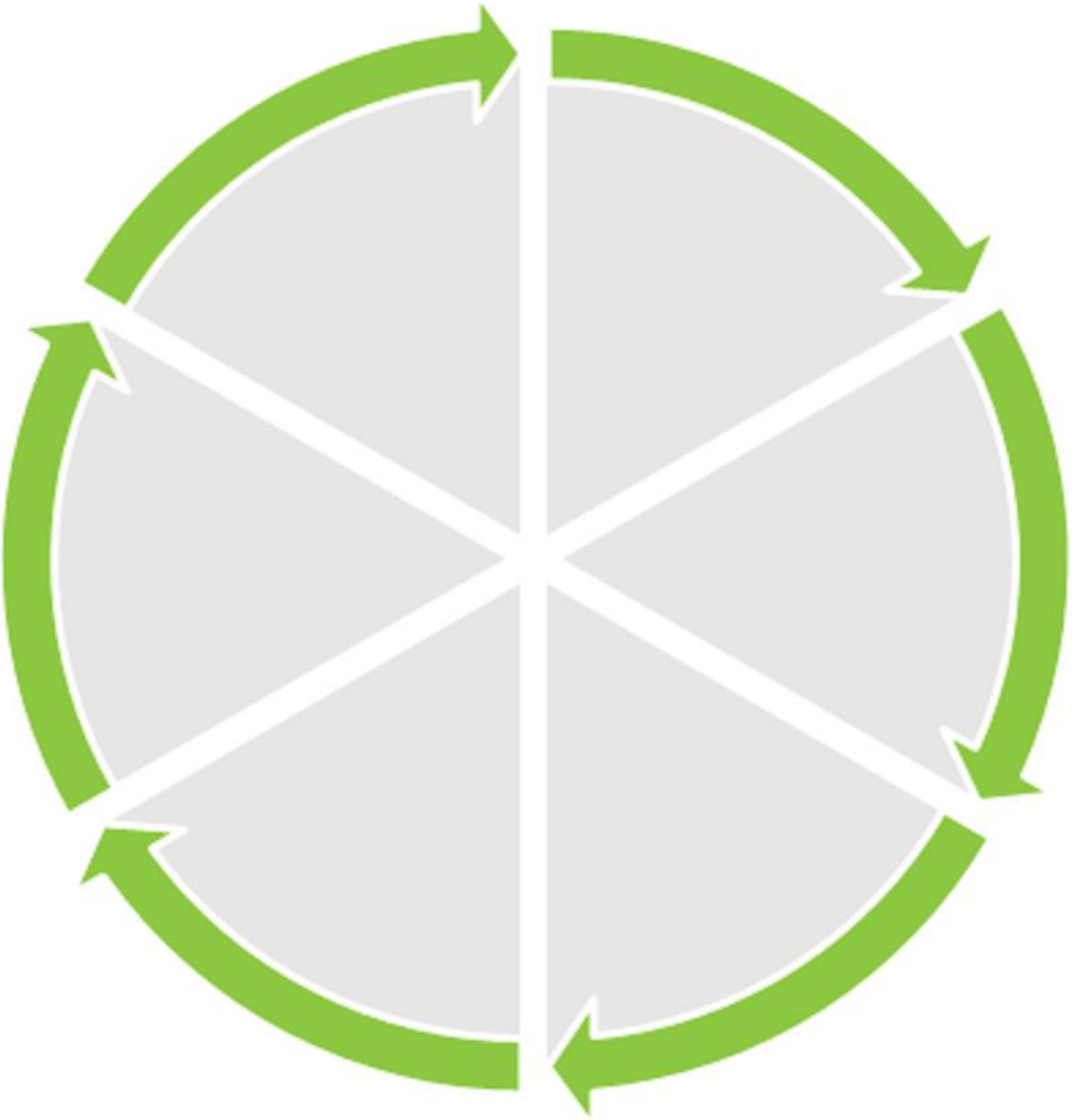
Some Resources on How to Use Analysis Tools to Aid Idea Generation:

- "Priority Grid", MindLab
- "Assessing your idea", Public Sector Innovation Toolkit

7.29 Other Tools

Idea generation is rarely the weakest aspect of the innovation lifecycle, and the collection of tools presented here help demonstrate in part why this is the case. There are a large number of tools and methods that have been developed for coming up with new ideas, and any number of combinations of how those tools can be used together. The list provided here is by no means comprehensive, but is intended to provide some examples of what is possible and what might need to be considered in the use of different tools.

Additional tools may be added for the beta version of this study.



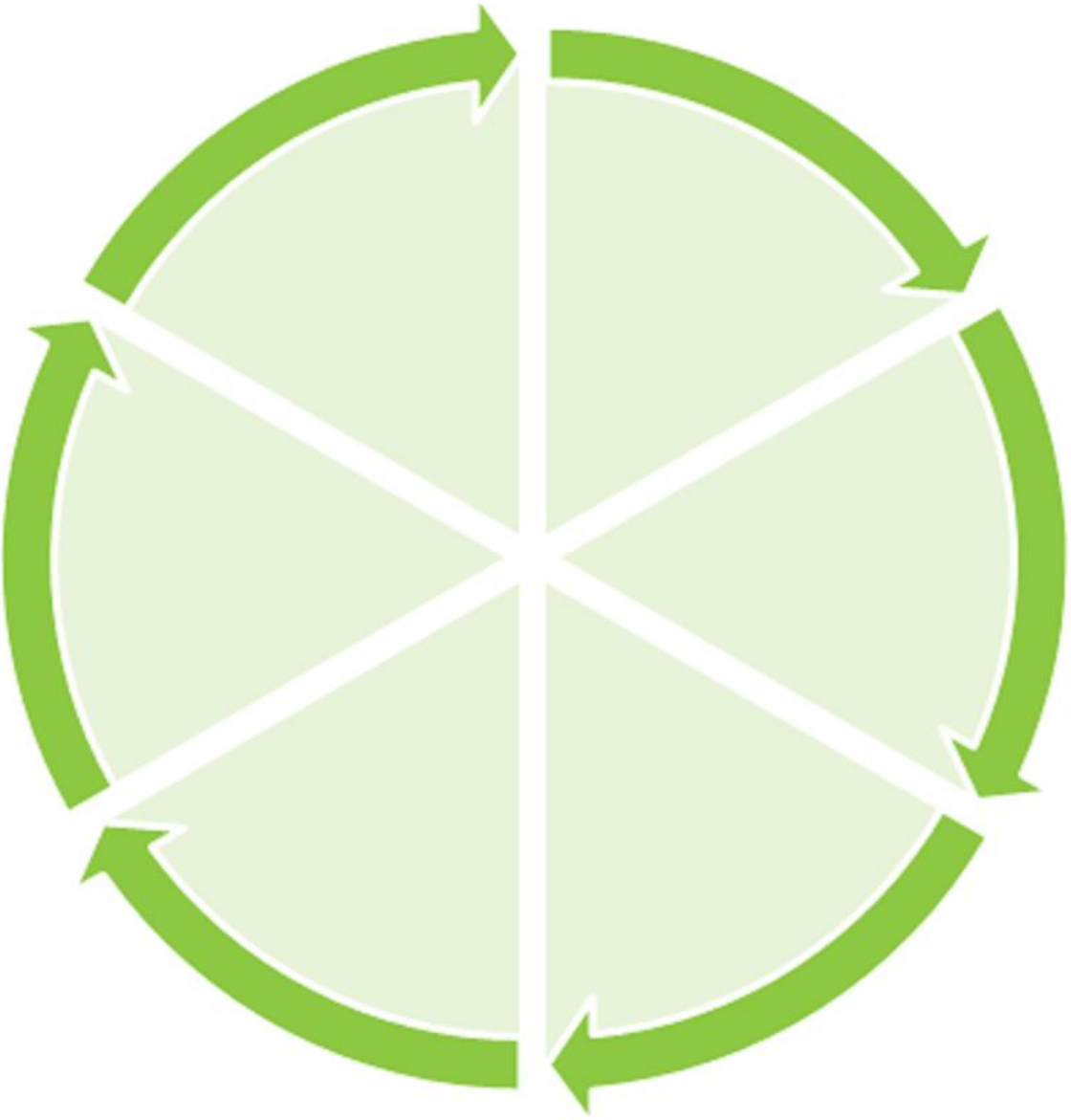
8. Remaining Issues

This is an alpha version of a study – i.e. it has been developed to seek input and test various ideas and features. In that light, feedback is sought about the report and where it may need to be improved, where there may be assumptions or arguments that should be challenged, and whether the report provides a sufficient basis for providing guidance to public sector organisations.

Some possible questions for consideration include:

- What might be missing?
- Is there anything that does not fit with the lived experience of innovation in the public sector?
- Does the report adequately provide an overview of the relevant factors for finding and filtering new ideas?
- Are there additional (or better) examples or case studies that could be used to illustrate the process of finding and filtering new ideas?
- Are there other useful resources or tools that should also be included? (Please note that commercial resources will not generally be linked to.)

Any feedback will be gratefully received, and can be provided to the Observatory of Public Sector Innovation team at opsi@oecd.org. Any feedback will be combined with lessons from the next innovation lifecycle study and will feed into the development of a beta version of this report. The beta version will then be further tested with representatives from OECD member countries and interested public servants and innovation practitioners.



Appendix 1. Guidance for Organisations – A Work in Progress

How can organisations and individuals take practical steps to support the finding and filtering of innovative ideas? The following are some potential questions to prompt self-assessment of the factors for effective idea generation.

Checklist for Organisations and Teams Regarding Enabling Factors

The following checklist of questions is designed to assist organisations and teams consider whether they are creating the right conditions for the effective finding and filtering of innovative ideas.

Factors for Effective Finding and Filtering of Ideas	**Guiding Question**	**Y/N**
Confronting the Status Quo	Does the organisation routinely explore possibilities that are dramatically different from the status quo?	
Building a Common / Shared Vocabulary to Enable Collaboration	Are new ideas typically responded to in constructive and respectful language?	
Leadership	Are new ideas recognised as valuable, even if they do not immediately contribute to the day-to-day operation of the organisation?	
Innovation Maturity	Is it normal for people within the organisation to have lots of ideas?	
Involvement of all the Players	Is it normal for the organisation to identify all of the stakeholders connected with a problem and to actively consider how they will be involved in the idea generation process?	
Clear Sense of the Problem	Before looking for ideas, does the organisation ensure that there is a clear sense of the problem being looked at?	
Openness	Is an openness to truly new ideas reflected in the language of the organisation and in its decision-making forums?	
Ownership/Autonomy	Is it common for people within the organisation to spontaneously put forward ideas in areas outside their area of responsibility?	
Involved Decision Makers	Are relevant decision makers routinely involved in idea generation about truly new things?	
Experience with Ideas	Does the organisation give people the opportunity to engage in different forms of idea generation, to practice and develop their judgement?	
Option Thinking	Is it common practice to keep options open, as opposed to concentrating efforts on only the most likely ideas?	
Political Engagement	Are all relevant political interests represented in the idea generation phase?	
Diversity	Is there a diversity of people and thinking styles involved in the running of idea generation processes?	
Capacity	Do employees have the opportunity (time and space) to think about things other than ongoing immediate pressures?	
Capabilities	Are people with a range of skills involved in idea generation processes, including those for facilitation as well as generation?	

Serendipity	In the organisation, do the solutions for problems sometimes come from unexpected avenues?	
Access to Insight and Expertise	Does the organisation have an existing relationship with the relevant populations that could offer relevant insight and expertise?	
Problem-solving Ecosystem	Does the organisation see itself (and act) as part of a wider problem solving ecosystem?	
Ready for Mischief	Is it acceptable and allowable to bring humour into the idea generation process?	

Appendix 2. Tool-Specific Idea Generation Resources

The following is a collection of tool-specific resources that may be of use for the innovation process, particularly in relation to idea generation.

Tool	Resource	Link
Space	*Make Space: How to Set the Stage for Creative Collaboration*	http://eu.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-1118143728.html
	"Make Space: Design Artifacts"	https://dschool.stanford.edu/resources/make-space-excerpts
Horizon Scanning	"A practical guide: Introduction to horizon scanning in the public sector"	http://apo.org.au/files/Resource/publicsectorinnovationtoolkithorizonscanningmodule2014.pdf
	"Foresight Training Manual"	http://www.horizons.gc.ca/eng/content/foresight-training-manual-module-1-introduction-foresight
	"Future Scenarios"	http://metoder.mind-lab.dk/en/future-scenarios
Brainstorming	"Fast Idea Generator"	http://www.nesta.org.uk/resources/fast-idea-generator
	"Creative Workshop"	http://diytoolkit.org/tools/creative-workshop-2/
	"Idea Development Sheet"	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-policy-making-toolkit/testing-and-improving-policy-ideas
	"Change Cards"	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-policy-making-toolkit/testing-and-improving-policy-ideas#change-cards-introduction
	"Brainstorming Session"	https://project-open-data.cio.gov/engagement/#brainstorming-session
	"Perspective Cards"	http://metoder.mind-lab.dk/en/perspective-cards-og-other-industries
	"Brainstorm"	http://metoder.mind-lab.dk/en/brainstorm
	"Brainstorming"	http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/about_the_department/your_car

Tool	Resource	Link
		e_your_say/a_to_z_of_engagement_techniques/brainstorming
Prototyping	"A Foundation's Guide to Paper Prototyping: An Emerging Approach to Surfacing Innovation"	https://assets.rockefellerfoundation.org/app/uploads/20160523123811/RockfellerGuidePrototyping_EXTERNAL_v15_pmp.pdf
	"Proto- & Provotypes"	http://metoder.mind-lab.dk/en/prototype-og-provotypes
Idea Management Systems	"Ideas Management Systems"	https://innovation.govspace.gov.au/tools/ideas-management-systems
Crowdsourcing	"Crowdsourcing"	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-policy-making-toolkit/testing-and-improving-policy-ideas#crowdsourcing-introduction
	"Federal Crowdsourcing and Citizen Science Toolkit"	https://crowdsourcing-toolkit.sites.usa.gov/about-the-toolkit/
	"US Public Participation Playbook"	https://participation.usa.gov/
	"Digital Democracy: The tools transforming political engagement"	http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/digital_democracy.pdf
Hackathons	"GovHack Participant Handbook and Hacker Toolkit"	http://portal.govhack.org/handbook/#home
	"Hack days: an introduction"	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-policy-making-toolkit/testing-and-improving-policy-ideas#hack-day-intro
	"How to run a successful Hackathon"	https://hackathon.guide/
	"The Hack Day Manifesto"	http://hackdaymanifesto.com/
	"How to run a Hackathon"	https://socrata.com/open-data-field-guide/how-to-run-a-hackathon/
	"Hacking the Policy Process"	https://innovation.govspace.gov.au/hacking-policy-process
Participatory Budgeting	"Participatory Budgeting	https://www.participatorybudg

Tool	Resource	Link
	Resource Center"	eting.org/resources-to-do-pb/
	"Digital Democracy: The tools transforming political engagement"	http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/digital_democracy.pdf
	"Participatory Budgeting – It's not what you do, it's how you do it"	https://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/rsa-blogs/2016/11/participatory-budgeting-its-not-what-you-do---its-how-you-do-it#
	"Resources"	https://pbscotland.scot/resources/
Citizen Juries	"Citizen Juries"	http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/about_the_department/your_care_your_say/a_to_z_of_engagement_techniques/citizen_juries
	"Survey's and Citizen Juries"	http://www.socsciscotland.ac.uk/skills_and_training/methods_resources/videos/surveys_and_citizens_juries
	"Citizens' Juries"	http://participedia.net/en/methods/citizens-jury
	"Citizens' Jury – How can we ensure we have a vibrant and safe Sydney nightlife"	http://sydneyyoursay.com.au/citizens-jury
	"What is a Citizens' Jury?"	https://www.newdemocracy.com.au/library/what-is-a-citizens-jury
Challenge Prizes	"Challenges and Prizes Toolkit"	https://www.challenge.gov/toolkit/
	"Get Started with Challenge and Prize Competitions"	https://www.digitalgov.gov/2014/03/31/get-started-with-challenge-and-prize-competitions/
	"Challenge Prizes: How Government Can Expand its use of Challenge Prizes"	http://www.govlab.com/prize-design
	"Challenge Prizes: A Practice Guide"	http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/challenge-prizes-design-practice-guide.pdf
	"And the winner is … Capturing the promise of philanthropic prizes"	http://mckinseyonsociety.com/downloads/reports/Social-Innovation/And_the_winner_is.

Tool	Resource	Link
		pdf
	"Competitions and Prizes"	https://innovation.govspace.gov.au/competitions-and-prizes
	"The craft of incentive prize design"	https://dupress.deloitte.com/dup-us-en/topics/social-impact/the-craft-of-incentive-prize-design.html
Procurement	"Public Procurement for Innovation: Good Practices and Strategies"	http://www.oecd.org/gov/ethics/public-procurement-innovation-practices-strategies.htm
Open Source	"Tools and Resources"	https://code.gov/#/policy-guide/docs/open-source/resources
Positive Deviance	"Basic Field Guide to the Positive Deviance Approach"	http://www.positivedeviance.org/about_pd/getting_started.html
Reverse Engineering	"Modelling Reverse Engineering in Public Sector in Georgia"	https://medium.com/@S_Khatuna/modelling-reverse-engineering-in-public-sector-in-georgia-6bc9f1cb96a4#.t0xqmx51j
Analysis Tools	"Priority Grid"	http://metoder.mind-lab.dk/en/prioritizing-grid
	"Assessing your idea"	https://innovation.govspace.gov.au/assessing-your-idea

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