

ServiceLab Innovative Service Laboratory

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Organisation: Public Service Development Agency of Ministry of Justice of Georgia

Country: Georgia

Level of government: Central government

Sector: General public services

Type: Organisational Design, Partnerships, Public Service

Launched in: 2014

Overall development time: 2 year(s)

Link to the innovation's website

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Description

ServiceLab – the innovative service laboratory for public services was founded in 2014 with the support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), as part of the Public Service Development Agency (PSDA) of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia. The ServiceLab serves as an incubator of ideas, developing prototypes and researching citizen's needs to analyze the most-needed services and products. First of its kind in the region, the public service laboratory aims to tailor public services to the needs of the citizens and design new services with several principles in mind: the design should be user-centric and made by incorporating citizen feedback, preferably using the design thinking process wherever possible; final products should be user-friendly and intuitive; the products and services should be made with the "minimum cost, maximum impact" value in mind; final beneficiaries should benefit from the services and products in a way that will improve and simplify their lives.

Why the innovation was developed

- Georgia is a rapidly-transforming country and in some ways, it has achieved a high level of progress, but in other ways, it is still catching up. In the process of designing and implementing reforms, as well as public services for the population of Georgia, it is important to consider innovative methodologies in order to respond to the needs of the target groups as effectively, as possible.
 - Transforming public services to meet the true expectations of the citizens and create public value is indisputably a challenge. It is this task that the Public Service Development Agency of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia (PSDA) has taken on since 2014 by establishing first in the region Government Innovation Lab with a focus on rethinking public services.
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Objectives

Enhance public trust, Enhance transparency, Improve access, Improve effectiveness, Improve efficiency, Improve service quality, Increase citizen engagement

- This innovation practice is highly replicable and its replication is dependent more on political will and the will of the management, than any other aspect.
 - The management decided to allocate the needed resources and raise relevant funds from donor organizations to train relevant staff to lead the push towards using innovative methodologies, such as design thinking and reverse engineering, in the process of public service creation and delivery.
 - Despite the relative ease of replicability, in fact, ServiceLab is still the only in-house service laboratory within the Government of Georgia, as the innovative methodologies of idea creation and product development are fairly new and an uncharted territory.
 - ServiceLab is the only in-house service laboratory within the Government of Georgia, operating within the framework of the Ministry of Justice, in the Public Service Development Agency. Its unique approaches are evidenced by using cutting-edge innovative methodologies to solve public sector challenges, using the "reverse engineering of services method" and also, by using a more established but innovative "design thinking" methodology for service creation and prototype testing.
 - ServiceLab is the only entity in Georgia trained to analyze public services using customer journey maps and stakeholder charts, creating prototypes and using feedback of potential beneficiaries to improve the prototypes. Hence, this approach towards public service creation and delivery is different and innovative, compared to the traditional methods used in other public sector entities in Georgia, as well as in many other countries.
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Main beneficiaries

Civil Society, Ethnic or racial minorities, Government bodies, Government staff, High-risk populations, People with disabilities

Existing similar practices

MindLab

In other countries' public administrations

MindLab is part of 3 Ministries in Denmark

MindLab is part of three ministries and one municipality in Denmark: the Ministry of Business and Growth, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Employment and Odense Municipality and we form a collaboration with the Ministry for Economic Affairs and the Interior. MindLab is a cross-governmental innovative laboratory involving a variety of stakeholders in their problem-solving process, as well as design and delivery of services.

Results

Efficiency

- An example of ServiceLab's projects whereby the efficiency level increased significantly, is the IdeaBox introduction in PSDA. IdeaBox is an efficient new way of managing innovations within the Agency, a forum allowing agency employees across departments to work together towards new and creative solutions.
 - Several ideas from the IdeaBox have already been put into place as new or improved services of the Agency and several more are undergoing development currently, to be implemented as pilot projects with the financial support of Sida.
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Service quality

Accessibility:

- ServiceLab's Mobile Service Delivery Vehicles (Express Community Centers) initiated, developed and implemented by ServiceLab offer more than 200 public and relevant banking services to the residents of over 1000 remote villages in Georgia by 70 service delivery vehicles, which was a very low cost and hence, efficient solution compared to the impact of increasing access to public services to residents of over 1000 remote villages.

Responsiveness:

- ServiceLab's contribution to the 112 Emergency Services 112 in Georgia in their Design Thinking approach to create services for people with hearing impairments improved the responsiveness of the 112 Georgia services to the needs of the deaf community and increased their access to medical care, police and fire department.
- As a spillover effect of ServiceLab's involvement in the prototype testing workshops of the pilot services, all four of these aspects (112 Services, Police, Fire Department and Emergency Medical Care) improved their responsiveness towards persons with disabilities.

Development

Design

PSDA was inspired by the UK's experience in service design, especially as it comes to government-driven innovations, coupled with progress made by other European and Asian countries in design-led innovation in the public sector. The readiness of the PSDA management played an important role in the institutionalization of the laboratory inside the Agency. As there was already a dedicated Research & Development department at the PSDA, with staff willing to bring more innovative practices into the Georgian public sector, the Agency was ready to implement the in-house laboratory. In fact, some of the staff was already testing new methodologies, but the formalization of the ServiceLab gave them more legitimacy in the structure of the Agency. Additionally, the donor organization, UNDP, was instrumental in generating the push towards the creation of the first service-based laboratory in Georgia.

Testing

- For example: trials, pilots, prototypes. To the extent know, please also include the tools, budget, and/or other resources used for testing. Please also indicate if the innovation was not tested prior to full broader implementation.
 - Though the ServiceLab itself uses various methods of testing prototypes, the laboratory itself wasn't tested per se. However, the services created under the lab, as mentioned, undergo a variety of testing processes.
 - For example, when ServiceLab partnered with 112 emergency Services in Georgia in their Design Thinking approach to create services for people with hearing impairments, the ServiceLab facilitated testing workshops of the pilot services.
 - This was the first time in Georgia when multiple Government and nongovernmental actors and primarily the users themselves got together to co-create the public service in Georgia. The main beneficiaries, persons from the deaf community in Georgia, were actively involved and consulted during the prototype testing process.
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Implementation

Tools used:

- ServiceLab was a direct result of a political will and a management decision to form an innovations laboratory within the Public Service Development Agency of the Ministry of Justice in order to promote innovation in the public sector, specifically in terms of public services.
- The tools used for this implementation process were relatively simple, the dedicated staff completed a study tour in the UK, where they were trained in innovative methodologies, such as design thinking, to bring back the practices and methodologies to Georgia.
- UNDP funded the creation of the physical space of the laboratory, as well as training for relevant staff. The management on the other hand, gave ServiceLab the opportunity to redesign the internal processes of the Agency and create a step-by-step process of how an idea should be transformed into a product.

Resources used:

- this project was initially donor-funded, by the UNDP and the PSDA also committed to the project by dedicating its existing staff to be trained as members of the ServiceLab team.
 - The ServiceLab uses design thinking methodology to create and co-create services. For example, when ServiceLab partnered with 112 emergency Services in Georgia in their Design Thinking approach to create services for people with hearing impairments, the ServiceLab facilitated testing workshops of the pilot services.
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Challenges and solutions

- The main challenge in any process of introducing innovative practices is distrust of the novelty. Even during the introduction of ServiceLab's the online platform "IdeaBox" within the PSDA, a space which gives all employees the opportunity to share their new ideas and design new services in an online community of PSDA employees, the first couple weeks were marked with inactivity of the employees and distrust from their side, that it was in fact a valuable tool for innovations management in the Agency.
 - However, the ServiceLab staff remedied these feelings by conducting agency-wide training with the aim to introduce a culture of innovative thinking and creative co-working with the employees of the PSDA. Following these highly interactive and feedback-oriented training, the activity level on the IdeaBox platform spiked and in fact, continues to be strong today.
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Partnerships

Various partners

Civil Society, Other Public Sector, Private sector

Bank

As previously mentioned, promoting user-centric design, innovative policies, as well as an increased incorporation of citizen feedback in processes related to the design and delivery of new services or the improvement of existing ones, is one of the mandates of the ServiceLab, both within the Agency it is housed in, as well as other government entities. In this regard, ServiceLab often partners with various ministries and agencies to solve public sector challenges. The ServiceLab conducts workshops and training, as needed, to help public entities develop their products and services.

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

- Our experience has been overwhelmingly positive, with many interesting insights and knowledge accumulated since 2014.
 - The main take away, is that in a modern world, creating a high quality public service must involve citizens' needs in the design process and feedback in the prototype testing process. Innovation laboratories can be remarkably useful for governments to become more agile and responsive to the needs of various target groups.
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Conditions for success

- A “perfect storm” of political will, financial resources, creative and enthusiastic individuals, the right set of values (user-centric, citizen-oriented), good leadership, the humbleness to learn from others around you and the willingness to improve existing circumstances.
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