

Gov Buys Innovation

nido
Innovation lab of the public sector

Nido empowers employees to take the lead in the quest for innovation to promote innovation and change management.

By rethinking the way civil servants look for solutions and work with the private sector, the initiative Gov Buys Innovation supports government actors in working together efficiently, to allow extensive market research, including experimentation.

The GBI way of working

The GBI approach is started by addressing the problem, as well as a description of the institution looking for the solution on the GBI platform. These “challenges” are formulated as clear open questions, determining all necessary specifications but leaving enough space for creativity. The civil servant looking for an innovative solution will hereby take on the new role of expert of the problem, instead of expert of all possible solutions.

If the public administration desires to have an overview of possible solutions or wants to

have an insight about which types of contracts and experimentation paths to use, Nido will accompany it in a market consultation prior to the challenge. In order to gather the broadest possible range of solutions, Nido makes the call for entries accessible and easy to process for businesses.

Businesses of all kinds and sizes can get subscribed to the platform and be informed about incoming challenges. Nido also tries to reach all possible candidates by contacting as many hubs, networks and groups channelling specific categories of providers, as well as specific companies and inviting them to participate in the challenges.

To reduce the administrative burden for all participants, the application process is organised in three phases. First businesses introduce a brief description of their idea and an explanation of their vision on how it could solve the problem (less than 500 words). The second round consists of a discussion, a pitch and if possible a proof of concept. The final round is the actual introduction of an offer for an experiment with the presented solution.



After every round all solutions are evaluated and graded and businesses receive extensive feedback on how their solution was perceived. Companies whose results were not withheld to a next phase are also provided with comprehensive feedback, in order for them to enhance their product or idea and to learn how to collaborate with public administration.

This staggered procedure allows businesses of all sizes and resources to introduce a tender, given that they are only encouraged to put effort into the procedure as long as they have a realistic chance of it being awarded to them.

Also, Nido's constant follow up allows businesses that are not familiar working with government institutions to participate without gathering too much expertise beforehand. A procedure via GBI allows to only buy experimentation with an idea. To present their product, businesses therefore do not need the in-house capability to produce on a large scale. Evidently, tested solutions can be further developed and eventually be implemented if information gathered during experimentation proves to be successful.

Marketplace between civil servants and creative business

Our platform can also be used as a marketplace for meaningful dialogues between civil servants and creative businesses in a direct and transparent way. Ideas that were not chosen to be tested or experimented solutions that turned out not to be a perfect fit, will be presented on our platform, in order for other institutions to adopt it. Businesses can also decide to present their product on our platform, in order for market researchers to get inspired by it.

Our approach promotes experimentation to avoid big projects failing and tax money being wasted. Challenges are evaluated by a jury consisting of the most important stakeholders for a project, being civil servants from the challenging government institution, experts on the field of the challenge and experts in innovation from Nido.

Throughout three short evaluation phases, submitted ideas are assessed on the following criteria: effectiveness, prospects of success, innovative or unique character, expected professionalism of the business in carrying out the experiment, achievability of a final implementation, price and team. This will be bundled into a consistent feedback which will be communicated to each company individually. The companies may ask for this assessment to be expanded at any time, ensuring a fully transparent procedure and allowing companies to learn from their participation.





Transferability

Given every project can have another topic and will require different areas of expertise, GBI does not cover one specific area or sector. The platform can actively be used by any public institution, government or administration. Nido's work consists in the support and expertise to find the best and most innovative result(s) for every specific project and in asking the right questions,

helping to formulate and frame the problem and guiding civil servants in the process of open mindedness and creativity. Nido would like to expand its network of users of the platform, by rendering as many civil servants able to autonomously work with our approach. Nido also likes to teach challenge-owners how the GBI procedure works and then gives them all the tools to autonomously continue making challenges via our platform and to teach their own colleagues how to use our approach and platform as well. The more public institutions use our platform, discover innovative approaches to their problems and implement them, the more businesses of all kinds and sizes will be enthusiastic to participate. This will lead to a continuous flow of innovation and continuous modernisation reaching government and administration and its implementation on a large scale.

Legal aspects

There is a great deal of uncertainty and even fear in the public sector concerning public procurement law. The law on public tenders however, allows much more flexibility than many expect. Using it with all its possibilities, rather than applying the same procedure in a rigid manner, is often to the advantage of the civil servants, the companies and even the legislator himself.

The two main legal risks to be considered are procurement splitting and insider trading. Splitting is avoided by including everything that should logically be worked on at the same time into one same public tender. However, if this is not feasible, for example because the situation has changed after a tender was granted or because new knowledge has been acquired, then the law allows further tenders to be focused on these new elements. When a tender is published, that is a continuation or an implementation on a large scale of another project, it is advisable to describe it in such a way that it is clear it could not be merged with the previously tender(s). It may be useful in this respect to explain clearly why the project in question is being published in a separate tender. Insider information is countered by respecting the principles of equality and transparency. In case of public tenders following previous ones, the results of the first tender must be shared with all potential candidates in order to preserve equality. Sharing information proves the governments honesty and complete transparency, allows civil servants to proceed step by step without the risk of losing money due to the failure of a project and allows businesses to participate only in the part of a project they are really proficient in.

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