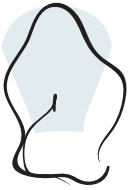# Implementing Innovation

A User's Manual for Open Government Programs

Implementing Innovation

A User's Manual for Open Government Programs

Acknowledgements

This manual would not have been possible without the support and insights provided by a great number of people, whose willingness to share their experiences working on innovative open government programs is a powerful demonstration of our shared ideal of transparency.

About This Manual

Open Government Innovation: A Road With No Signs

In 2012, two Mexican civil society leaders were on the cusp of a big decision: whether to take jobs in their federal government. They did not take the deliberation lightly. They had previously founded a non-profit focused on citizen participation in public policy, but had never served in government. They were wrapping up public policy-related graduate degrees. They believed in the ability of government to make a difference, but were more used to going against its bureaucracy than working with it.

But when asked to join an innovation unit within the Office of the President of Mexico, they decided to seize the opportunity to push their values into practice on a national scale.

Those familiar with open government or public sector reform initiatives will recognize the daunting questions they faced next. How would they make the complex, all-encompassing goals of "innovation" and "open government"

meaningful and actionable? How would entrenched bureaucrats within the Mexican government respond to reform? How would they secure the specialized talent and funds they needed to realize their ambitions?

As the number of open government programs proliferates around the world, more innovators are finding themselves in similar situations. While guidelines for general and public sector program management abound, the implementation

of open government policies and programs remains largely uncharted territory. Many who sign up to pursue innovation in government find themselves challenged to be innovative in their own program management. Case studies of these programs are common, but advice for the nitty-gritty work of execution is still sparse.

This manual was created in response to this widespread need. It benefits heavily from the experience of innovators within the Mexican government. With an openness towards learning and, importantly, toward taking calculated risks, the leaders of the aforementioned innovation unit curated a team to design and launch a portfolio of programs that would advance public sector innovation.

And you can too.

A global community is creating new models for effective design and management of government innovation programs. Although too many practitioners are working in isolation, the field is rich with their collective experience and hard-earned wisdom. This guide is one small contribution to that community, as it increasingly comes together to share and exchange insights in the spirit of greater transparency, accountability, and civic participation worldwide.

Who Is This Manual For?

This manual is for those who care about government openness and innovation, and who want to be more effective in carrying out programs that advance these values.

Perhaps you work within the government agency or office that is responsible for the open government agenda in your country. Maybe you are a reform-minded public servant working in a line ministry who wants to do more to put open government principles into action in your work. You could be a community organizer or a social entrepreneur, looking to support your government in working in more transparent, participatory, and accountable ways.

You might be responsible for designing a new government innovation program; you might be in the middle of running one; or you might be reflecting on a program you have already implemented and want to improve.

Wherever you fall in the categories above or beyond, wherever in the world you work, we hope that this manual will provide relevant lessons and helpful guidance that will support your work towards these globally shared goals.

The Experience Behind This Manual:
Mexico's Coordinación de Estrategia Digital Nacional (CEDN)

This manual draws heavily from the experience of the Government of Mexico in implementing ambitious innovation programs, and specifically from the work of the Coordinación de Estrategia Digital Nacional (CEDN, or Coordinating Office for the National Digital Strategy) between June 2014 and June 2015.

Coordinaciones (or "coordinating offices") like CEDN are units within the Office of the President of Mexico, and are formed to support the implementation of national strategies and presidential initiatives. One major such initiative is the National Digital Strategy, for which CEDN is responsible. A five-year strategy to be implemented through the President's entire term, the National Digital Strategy is ambitious, including goals for expanded Internet access, open data, improved online government service portals, and much more.

CEDN is also responsible for coordinating the government's OGP commitments (as is the case for innovative, technology-focused government offices in other OGP-member countries). While there is an agency or ministry responsible for each commitment, CEDN manages the interagency coordination between them. In addition, CEDN has developed a suite of programs to support the implementation of those commitments and to build an enabling environment for open government and digital innovation in the Mexican federal government.

We studied and documented one of these programs, Innovation Agents, from launch to wind-down, and thus it comprises the majority of lessons featured in this manual; it is supplemented by research on three other programs within CEDN's portfolio. The next pages offer a snapshot of all four programs.

Supporting Open Government Partnership Commitments

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is a multilateral initiative that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. Since its launch in 2011, OGP has reached a membership of 65 national governments, supporting and motivating them to strive for greater transparency, participation, and accountability through specific commitments, or National Action Plans.

This manual is designed to bolster open government programs that seek to support existing OGP Action Plans as well as those that create an enabling environment for open government more broadly. For support developing, updating, and implementing National Action Plans, you may reference the Open Government Guide, published by the Transparency and Accountability Initiative. It is available online, at www.OpenGovGuide.com, and is a comprehensive directory of examples and guidance for crafting open government commitments, organized by theme.

This manual provides public sector innovators and reformers with the operational guidance they need to implement effective programming in support of their open government goals and commitments. In other words, we hope this can be a handbook for turning your ambitious open government vision into a reality.

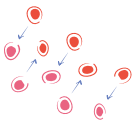# Mexico's Digital Innovation & Open Government Pilots

The programs below represent a subset of the pilots implemented by Mexico's Digital Strategy Unit. To demonstrate the range of designs in government innovation programs, they have been compared across several aspects:

Emphasis on one or more of the three pillars of open government

Whether the program actively promoted its services to recruit partners or relied on partners requesting to participate

PUSH ●———— PULL

Whether the program linked directly or indirectly to achieving commitments from Mexico's OGP National Action Plan

DIRECT OGP CONNECTION ————●———— INDIRECT OGP CONNECTION

Whether citizen participation in the program was broad-based or relied on specific types of citizens.

BROAD PARTICIPATION ————●———— SPECIALIZED PARTICIPATION

Innovation Agents
Agentes de Innovación
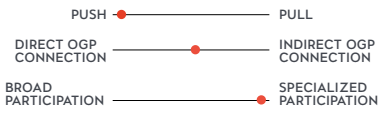
This civic innovation fellowship paired five social entrepreneurs from outside of government with five innovators in key government ministries. Each pair of "innovation agents," with a supporting team, was asked to develop a technology-based solution within one of the five themes of the National Digital Strategy: Health, Education, Finance, Entrepreneurship, and Security.
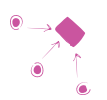
Priority emphasis on open government principles:

Transparency
Accountability
Participation

PUSH ●———— PULL
DIRECT OGP CONNECTION ————●———— INDIRECT OGP CONNECTION
BROAD PARTICIPATION ————————●— SPECIALIZED PARTICIPATION

Public Challenges
Retos Públicos

This public procurement program seeks to "democratize government purchasing" by providing more opportunities for small firms to compete for government contracts. CEDN works with government agencies to identify needs that may benefit from a technological solution, then puts them out to bid through a unique stage-gated process targeting smaller technology firms. Interested firms submit proposals and develop prototypes with the chance to win a government contract.

Priority emphasis on open government principles:

Transparency
Accountability
Participation

PUSH ————●———— PULL
DIRECT OGP CONNECTION ●———————— INDIRECT OGP CONNECTION
BROAD PARTICIPATION ———●———————— SPECIALIZED PARTICIPATION

Data Squad
Escuadrón de Datos
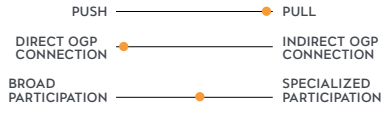
This government capacity building program sends a team of open data experts to support an agency in the process of releasing its datasets in an open format. The team also supports the development of processes for ongoing use of open data, and identifies potential opportunities for efficiencies through new applications of that data.
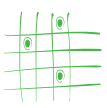
Priority emphasis on open government principles:

Transparency
Accountability
Participation

PUSH ————————● PULL
DIRECT OGP CONNECTION ●———————— INDIRECT OGP CONNECTION
BROAD PARTICIPATION ———————●———— SPECIALIZED PARTICIPATION

Data for Development
Datos para el Desarrollo

This program brings together government, the private sector, and academia to analyze complex datasets and inform public policy decisions. The program team identifies policy questions that would benefit from deeper analysis of existing datasets, collaborates with relevant agencies and actors to acquire the data needed, and calls on external data scientists for analytical support. One recent project sought to identify trends in (and potential opportunities to reduce) maternal mortality rates in Mexico.

Priority emphasis on open government principles:

Transparency
Accountability
Participation

PUSH ●———————— PULL
DIRECT OGP CONNECTION ————————●— INDIRECT OGP CONNECTION
BROAD PARTICIPATION ●———————— SPECIALIZED PARTICIPATION

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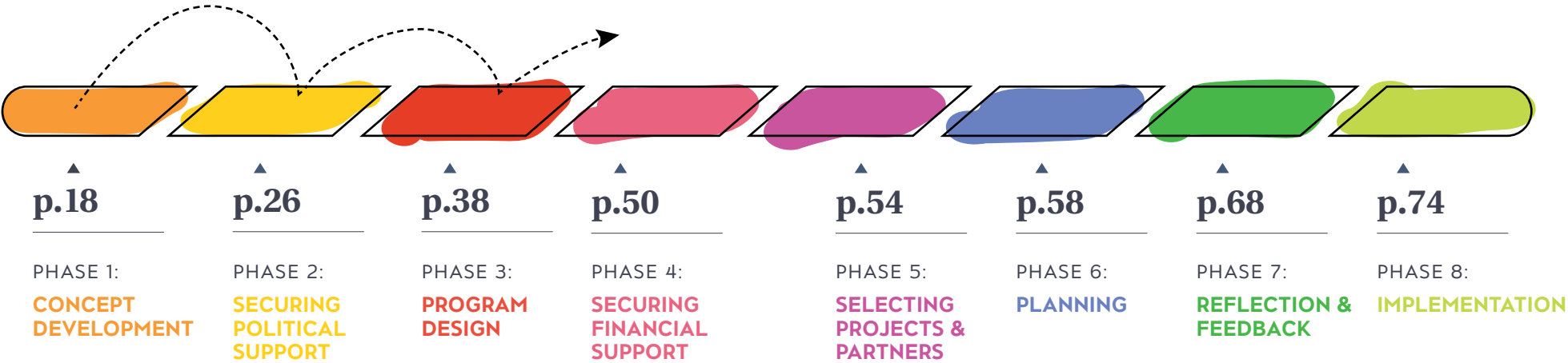
How to Use This Manual

This resource is a companion for program designers and implementers, providing targeted guidance to help them (you!) tackle the specific challenges (and seize the opportunities) that tend to arise due to the unique nature of government innovation programs.

This is not "Government Program Management 101," nor an exhaustive resource of best practices for all public sector programs. Rather, it focuses on phase-by-phase principles and guidelines that are especially relevant to the subset of programs that seek to innovate and promote open government.

Although we have included each phase in chronological order, we recognize the likelihood that you have picked up this manual at a later point in the project lifecycle, or perhaps even after your program has come to an end. Each section is also intended as a stand-alone reference; we encourage you to browse through and skip around, spending time on the topics that are most relevant to your current needs.

Finally, we have also included short checklists at the beginning of each phase.

These checklists will help you identify the phase that best corresponds to your own point of progress. Additionally, while this manual focuses on considerations that are unique (or at least specific) to government innovation, we recognize that managing any ambitious program will come with a daunting to-do list. We believe these short checklists can serve not only for wayfinding, but as helpful reminders of general best practices in program management.

YOU ARE AT THIS PHASE IF:

☐   ☐   ☐

1 **STEPS:** Each section of the manual deals with a different phase of the program design and implementation process for government innovation programs. Within each phase, several "steps" offer clear directions for achieving necessary milestones.

PRINCIPLES: Under each of these steps you will find "principles," which offer general guidance for decision-making based on your specific circumstances.

[ ] **LESSONS LEARNED:** Complementing the principles, "Lessons Learned" include real-life stories of government innovation that will help illustrate key insights.

What We Mean by "Government Innovation"

In recent years, one major driver of public sector innovation around the world has been the open government movement, and specifically the Open Government Partnership (OGP). Although many efforts and new ways of thinking about government, transparency, participation, accountability, and innovation are happening under this mantle of "open government," you may use any of a wide variety of terms to describe your work. Rather than try to capture all of the possibilities, this manual uses the broadest term: government innovation.

When using buzzwords (or buzz-phrases), as we have done with "government innovation," it is important to have an extremely specific definition in mind, to avoid miscommunication or false assumptions later on. For the purpose of this manual, our working definition of government innovation is: new, unexpected, or recombinant approaches to public sector work that 1) incorporate transparency, civic participation, and/or accountability into problem solving, and that 2) seek to further those principles as an outcome. See Phase 1: Concept Development for a deeper discussion of buzzwords.

Whatever you call them, these programs represent an unusual degree of multidisciplinary collaboration, bringing together participants from different technical backgrounds, experiences, and fields who do not traditionally work together or within a government context. All of this makes the work exciting, but it can also be isolating and difficult. It is common for government innovators to encounter resistance to their efforts, and many lack access to peers working on similar initiatives, who may provide guidance or support on shared challenges.

If this is your experience, don't worry: you are not alone. You have colleagues around the world who have experienced (and overcome) similar obstacles. You may not see your exact program and experience reflected in this manual, but it is likely that you have encountered some of the implementation experiences on the following page.

So whether or not you use the term "government innovation," you should find common ground within these pages. We hope this reference can help fill in the gaps in tools and advice available to program designers, implementers, and participants like you.
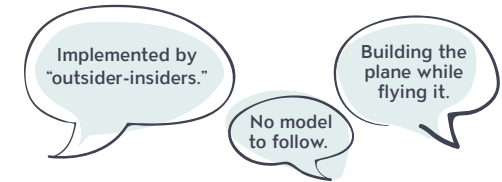
Common Characteristics of "Government Innovation" Programs

Building the plane while flying it.
Innovation is, by definition, experimental. Many programs are pilots, and need to get "quick wins" to prove themselves while also working for long-term gains and to institutionalize success.

No model to follow.
Most programs operate in an unknown, ambiguous space that does not have precedent within the government. Lines of authority and decision-making are not always clear. For example, even when everyone agrees that open data is good, who gets to say which datasets can and should be strategically, legally, ethically, and logistically opened?

Ambitious goals, limited budgets.
Because they often represent new models of programming, it is not always clear the scope of work entailed and budget required for a government innovation initiative. Policy commitments are sometimes made before sufficient analysis is done on whether there is resource availability to implement. In other cases, demand for a new government offering may outpace planned supply.

Non-traditional funding.
Many programs receive funding from streams outside of traditional government budgets; this offers opportunities, but may also create unique challenges or additional constraints.

Implemented by "outsider-insiders."
Like the team at CEDN, many innovators come to government from civil society, the private sector, or academic backgrounds. They appreciate the potential of government, but also seek to push the boundaries of the bureaucracy.

Much of the work is done in coordination.
While programs are often mandated or implemented from a central or executive office, innovators must coordinate between, monitor, collaborate with, persuade, and otherwise engage with a variety of counterparts across ministries, departments, and agencies throughout government. Programs may or may not have the "teeth" to insist that others participate.

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

Perhaps you have been asked to design a government innovation program to address a specific challenge. Or perhaps you were inspired by an idea at a conference, or a success story from another sector or country. No matter where it came from, the first inkling of an idea for a program signals an exciting time. You see big needs and new channels for impact. Everything is a potential source of inspiration.

If you are just starting out in your program, the following guidelines will help you create a vision that you can communicate with passion and persuasion. If you are already past the conceptualization stage, the principles in this section may help you identify outstanding needs in your current program, and refocus or adjust as needed.

YOU ARE AT THIS PHASE IF:

☐ You have an idea

☐ You have a role in government (or will soon)

☐ You have a potential government partner

STEP 1

Clearly define the problem, not just the solution.

While hammering out the details of a solution may seem like the exciting part, it is vital at this early phase to stay grounded in the problem you want to solve. Whether or not you already have an idea for a program, make sure the problem is well-defined. This includes both the issue to be solved and the scope at which you'll be able to tackle it. Consider the range of problems that your community or country is facing, and which one(s) you, your colleagues, and your future collaborators might be well-suited to address.

As you flesh out your program concept, keep coming back to the problem. Test your ideas for programmatic features and concepts against it; make sure your developing concept makes sense for your goals.

This clarity will also aid communication as you win support for your idea, and it will help you prioritize when it's time to develop a budget and timeline. After all, the problem will determine which program components are truly essential. The sooner you can distinguish between the essential components and the shiny, exciting "nice-to-haves," the easier it will be to let go of distractions (however innovative) and get down to the business of impact.

PRINCIPLE

Specifying the "what" of a problem provides the space to creatively define the "how" of your solution.

It may sound obvious that "every good solution is targeted to a specific problem." But it is common for programs to get sidetracked by technology or innovation program trends, sometimes to the point of losing focus on real-world goals. For example, you may be inspired by an exciting solution: to create a fellowship model that brings fresh ideas and talent into government. A fellowship model is a potential solution to a specific set of problems, for example, the challenge of business-as-usual approaches in government that are unable to address today's increasingly complex challenges.

But what if the problem you seek to address is a lack of accountability in government budget allocations for social programs? If you're really trying to solve that problem, it may be wiser to create broad-based opportunities for civil society to actively monitor program funding and performance, rather than providing participation channels to a small number of fellows. But if you began with a solution in mind, you might never arrive at that intervention.

Starting with the solution may limit your creativity. Start with the problem, and you will have space to identify a range of solutions with greater potential.

Buzzwords & Fuzzwords

As you crystallize your concept, be mindful of your language. Any innovation program is at risk of drowning in "buzzwords," vague concepts that can become so overused that they can mean just about anything to anyone.

When used strategically, these broadly relatable concepts do have a function in open government. Innovators must create coalitions of people from different groups or sectors; it can be useful to have language that invites people to embrace new concepts, break old boundaries, and define new possibilities (while leaving the specifics intentionally hazy).

But buzzwords also carry risk: They can mask ambiguity to a degree that will later become an issue during implementation, and can encourage trendy-but-impractical solutions.

Resisting Buzzwords

As you're setting down your concept, use this table to check that you're not getting lost in buzzwords.

If you hear these words...

...Ask yourself these questions.

Transparency

| Which information is being made transparent and to whom? | Is this information something that has been asked for, and for which there is existing demand? | How does revealing this information advance specific outcomes (e.g. improving citizens' lives) related to my defined problem? |

Accountability

| Which specific linkages and interactions between individuals and institutions am I referring to? | What incentives drive the behavior that I define as negative, and are there specific ways I can modify incentive structures (or introduce new incentives) that may change this behavior? | What channels of feedback exist between individuals and institutions? Which can be strengthened (and are there opportunities to introduce new channels) to encourage the behavior I define as positive? |

Participation

| Who exactly will be involved in the activity? (Think of real-life individuals and groups you know, rather than general categories.) | Do I mean broad-based involvement from all sectors of the population, or specific types of individuals or organizations? | What specific activities do I expect these participants to undertake? How will their participation further my goals, and is there a "critical mass" of participants needed before I will see desired results? |

Innovation

| What is the nature or scope of innovation that I am expecting? Is it in the actors involved, process utilized, outcomes produced, and/or some other way? | Is this a new solution, an existing solution brought to a new context, or a recombination of existing and new ideas? | Do I just mean "technology"? If so, is there a good reason to use the word "innovation" instead? |

Co-creation

Who should provide input into the shape of the program? Am I including key actors who will participate in or be affected by implementation?

What pre-existing power dynamics normally prevent these groups from having input? How does the co-creation process I am proposing mitigate the impacts of such dynamics?

How will the solution benefit from an invested community of collaborators?

Citizens

Which citizens specifically will benefit?

Do these citizens comprise one identifiable group with shared characteristics, or multiple groups that may have differing reactions to this program?

Government

Which level or area of government am I referring to?

Am I referring to the government apparatus or to specific individuals who work within it?

If specific individuals, do I mean:
- Elected officials?
- Political appointees?
- Civil servants?
- Specialists in a certain technical area?
- Frontline service providers?

Civil Society

Am I referring to the full sphere of society that exists between the family and the government/state? If not, which slice of civil society am I referring to?

Do I mean civil society organizations or individual activists?

In terms of organizations, do I mean advocacy, service delivery, politically affiliated, and/or professional association organizations?

Engagement

What is the collection of specific conversations, interactions, or other activities that I expect my program to enable?

What is the scope and depth of involvement or interaction that I am envisioning?

PRINCIPLE

Define your buzzwords.

Use clear, simple language that is easy to understand and (to the extent possible!) free of buzzwords. Replace words like "innovation", "co-creation", and even "open government" with very clear descriptions of the key components or characteristics of each, at least for internal planning. You can think about which buzzwords may be strategic for external messaging later. For example, "open government" references an entire movement and nods to an associated global, multilateral partnership in a way that "government in which all public spending is posted weekly on the Internet" may not.

Avoiding the use of buzzwords is itself innovative: it can be a refreshing thing to listen to someone who avoids them, and it will likely set you apart from many of your peers.

LESSON LEARNED

Dreaming Big, Even before Gaining a Foothold

While many innovation programs involve working either within government or in collaboration with government partners, you may not start out as a part of government. The leaders of CEDN had big dreams and ideas well before they were officially government employees: that early, "blue sky" excitement was contagious and helped them win over potential supporters and partners within government who were looking for new ideas. It also meant that they were ready to hit the ground running once they joined government. While our advice so far has encouraged you to keep your work realistic and grounded, do not let that cut off your inspiration and excitement for ambitious work.

STEP 2

Research existing efforts.

Most likely, you are not the only person who has been thinking about this problem or this kind of solution. And that is a good thing: You do not have to start from scratch.

Look at how the problem is being addressed both domestically and internationally. Are there programs in the region or other parts of national government, NGO efforts, or even private sector ventures? What is working? What is not? If you find something that looks promising, reach out to those responsible and see if they would be willing to share their experience.

Domestically, examine tangential efforts: Are there political priorities, policy goals, or other efforts that may dovetail with your goals? Answering these questions will not only help you refine your own concept, but will be crucial for winning political support—a topic that will be addressed in Phase 2.

PRINCIPLE

Build support based on others' success.

Government innovation programs might be unfamiliar or perceived as risky by key decision-makers. Research on international efforts can help allay these concerns. Highlighting instances of successful implementations (and the benefits they bring) can help build trust and gain political capital.

STEP 3

Define the first draft of your idea.

Armed with knowledge of (and connections to) other efforts in the field, you can now create a solid description of your concept: a presentation, a narrative description, or other format to be pitched. At this phase, it is important to find the right level of detail.

Open government program concepts can be nebulous, especially to new audiences. That uncertainty can be used to your advantage in this phase, as various components of your program are likely to appeal to different political and donor audiences. But make sure your vision is clear and communicable, with at least a few specific program features that can help you discuss your idea and its potential impact in a concrete way.

PRINCIPLE

Stay open to opportunities.

You will need a clear vision to pitch, but do not get too attached to the specifics of how it may be realized. Leaving room for adjustment will make it easier to explore new partnerships, contributions, and input from various audiences and to seize new opportunities as they arise.

LESSON LEARNED

Using International Examples to Pique Interest at Home

When they began designing the program, the team behind Innovation Agents knew already that a government innovation fellowship wasn't a new idea. Before they developed their own concept, they invested time and attention into researching programs that had been implemented in the United States and the United Kingdom, and had conversations with people who had conceived and evaluated these efforts (making important connections with other innovative thought partners in the process). Showing that the concept had been successfully implemented elsewhere helped them convince high-level officials in the Mexican government that Innovation Agents was worth the investment.

LESSON LEARNED

Creating a Presentation That Turned Heads

The first permutation of Innovation Agents in the real world was a PowerPoint deck. The presentation was well-designed, polished, and professional. It included a number of tangible details, which conveyed confidence and showed that the idea was well thought-out. For example, it listed potential partners who had supported similar efforts. But it was also not yet too specific. Striking this important balance made the first presentation an effective stakeholder engagement tool. It was used as a mechanism through which potential allies could make suggestions or identify alignments with their own work, so that they could help shape the program and feel ownership over its success.

SECURING POLITICAL SUPPORT

Once you have turned your great idea into a solid concept, it is tempting to dive right in and start laying out the details that will make your vision a reality. But before you get too far, you must gather political support.

Depending on your role, you may not have the authority to move forward without a decision-maker's approval. Even if it is within your authority to approve a new program, it is wise to secure additional allies, which will ensure a higher likelihood of success.

This stage is about convincing strategically-placed stakeholders of the strength of your vision, and inviting them to be part of its eventual success. Most likely, the concepts or activities you are proposing will be unfamiliar, or may be perceived as a challenge to the status quo. These guidelines will help you craft a pitch that responds to your counterparts' motivations and concerns. With their validation, you can move forward with confidence.

Identify supporting policies, initiatives, and political priorities.

It is easier to rally support for (and easier for a decision-maker to sign off on) something that has "already been approved," in the sense that it references, or is aligned with, existing political priorities and policies. Your government audiences will be primed to think in such frameworks, and the enabling structures are more likely to be in place. Government innovation initiatives are often experimental, but can appear less risky when they fit within a widely-accepted existing strategy.

You will need to align with both high-level policies (such as a directive from an executive-level leader) and on-the-ground plans (such as an initiative that is already being implemented by a government ministry). On its own, a high-level policy may not be enough to enable budget or personnel commitments; similarly, operational support on its own may not have enough political momentum to see your program through.

Consider aligning with as many existing goals as possible, and make these connections clear to your audience when making the case for your program. At the same time, be aware of how this alignment may affect your ability to experiment and risk failure. There are benefits to remaining a bit removed from an agency's mainstream programming, as this distance can leave your program the freedom it needs to push boundaries.

YOU ARE AT THIS PHASE IF:

☐ You have a presentation, concept paper, or other document that describes your work

☐ You have an established relationship with the relevant government parties (either through your own role or that of a partner)

LESSON LEARNED

Aligning with Existing Priorities to Ensure Support

Each of the programs studied for this manual was connected to a pre-established political priority or policy: the National Digital Strategy and/or Mexico's OGP National Action Plan. These connections were a strategic decision by CEDN, in addition to being part of its mandate. They significantly helped the programs garner political support, since their success would help achieve the policy goals and thus reflect well on participating partners.

Identify your audience.

For most traditional government programs, it is fairly clear who can give the critical approvals. It might be your boss; if you are the boss, your mandate defines your boundaries. But with innovative new programs, it is not always clear who has the authority to "say yes."

Your innovation concept may require you to speak to people at higher levels or different sub-units, or across different agencies. Often you need both official approval as well as informal buy-in. When developing a pitching strategy, strive to understand who are the key actors you need on board, and how they relate to each other and to your program.

Of course, this is an important step for anyone pitching any kind of program. But it's important to remember that open government programs come with unique challenges in winning support, in part because of the new concepts and approaches they often entail. When thinking about how to explain your government innovation program, keep coming back to what you know about your audience's priorities and goals. This step will also help you identify connections, relationships, and commonalities you may be able to draw upon in building a coalition for your program's advancement.

LESSON LEARNED

Identifying Decision-makers Takes Time (and Persistence, and Chance)

The groundwork of contacts and information you establish in this phase may be useful throughout your program's lifecycle. For example, although the Data Squad team was very successful in finding volunteer partner agencies, team members (along with their agency partners) sometimes had difficulty finding the person with the authority to "say yes" on matters of open data.

Open data was a priority for this administration, but also a new area, and many agencies had no protocols around which datasets could be released and how. One decision-maker who participated in the pilot, for example, reached out to the team independently after he heard about the program through the grapevine ("It's me! They should talk to me!" was his immediate reaction). Most programs cannot count on this kind of lucky break and need to budget time for the (often long) processes to identify and then work with decision-makers.

Some of the faces of government innovation...

SCOTT
The Skeptic
p. 32

TERESA
The Techie
p34

AKITO
The Activist
p33

ADELE
The Idealist
p31

INÉS
The Insider–Innovator
p35

Meet Your (Potential) Audiences

The following personas can help you think about the individuals to whom you may be pitching in this phase—and with whom you will likely be collaborating throughout implementation.

A *persona* is a sketch (often both verbal and visual) that represents a composite of multiple people with common traits and stories. Designers often use personas to conceptualize counterparts and beneficiaries as real people (with needs, motivations, ambitions, and histories) rather than as abstract categories such as "citizens" or "consumers."

But personas are not only for professional designers. Using this tool to think in new ways about the types of people whose support you will need can help you refine your pitch; later in the process, it can help you collaborate more effectively at the sometimes-challenging intersections of skills and experiences inherent to this work.

These profiles are not exhaustive or even mutually exclusive, they simply represent the types of actors who may play a role in government innovation programs. You may even recognize yourself in one or more of them.

In reviewing the following profiles and ways of working of the personas, one of the most important things to realize is that each individual comes from a different place, but they all ultimately want the same thing: to succeed professionally and improve their country/state/city the best way they know how. Collaboration across sectors and agencies is always a challenge, but it is easier when the focus is on common ground and goals rather than differences.

ADELE
The Idealist

GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE → **Low. Relatively New to Government**

Profile:

Adele studied law as an undergraduate, and was always active in volunteer and student organizations. Her first job was with a small non-profit focused on delivering health and education services to rural communities. After working there for several years, she came to realize that she was interested in the role of governmental responsibility, and how the government could provide better services to its citizens.

Adele completed a graduate degree in public policy and, upon graduating, took a leadership role with a civil society organization.

Although she had previously sworn she would never be pulled into the public sector, Adele was recently recruited to lead an innovation unit within the federal government. She now has big, ambitious ideas for how to transform her country's bureaucracy from within. She also serves as her country's Point of Contact for the OGP.

Adele has never felt settled working in just one sector, and she is energized by her colleagues' diverse backgrounds. Most of her colleagues in the unit have previously worked for CSOs or private companies; only one has previous experience working within the government.

Assets:

Networks outside of government, and interest in applying strategies from various sectors

Critical thinking, and a tendency to challenge the status quo

Willingness to experiment, try new strategies, and discard what is not working in order to get things done

She is an "outsider" to government who dislikes the politics of public sector work but sees the benefit of working from the inside. Based on her own experience having "seen both sides", Adele views the border between government and civil society as fluid. She firmly believes that social change will require collaboration between government, civil society, and the private sector—and believes that a symbiotic relationship between the three is possible.

She sometimes forgets that others don't see it that way.

Adele has a clear vision for how to transform the way that government interacts with citizens, and is passionate about developing the strategies that will help her carry it out.

Way of Working

SCOTT
The Skeptic

GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE

Extensive

Profile:

Scott has worked in the public sector for 25 years, ever since graduating from university with a dual degree in engineering and philosophy.

Scott prides himself on being dedicated to the public good, and has always wanted to do work that has the highest potential for improving the lives of the greatest number of people. He views the public sector as the only platform from which he might realistically achieve that.

Scott began his career working as a junior staff member in the provincial government, where his intellect and ambition helped him rise quickly through the ranks. He then moved to the capital city to join the national government, first as a director within the Ministry of Health. Since then, he has watched colleagues and political appointees come and go, working across three different agencies and weathering the transitions of five different political administrations and their attendant strategies and policy priorities.

Scott was recently appointed to lead a cross-cutting citizen feedback initiative at the Ministry of Social Development, a concept he has been championing internally for years. The initiative represents one of the government's OGP National Action Plan commitments, so Scott liaises frequently with the OGP Point of Contact.

Scott believes that government is ultimately a force for good, and that the bureaucracy functions as it does for a reason: to ensure a publicly account-able way of working based on tried-and-true methods.

Assets:

Deep knowledge of government processes, both official and unofficial

Way of Working

He is skeptical of approaches that claim to be innovative or boundary-push-ing, as he's seen them come and go. Those approaches also represent risk, and he doesn't think they're worth it. While he agrees with the goals behind things like the open data movement, Scott is concerned they're all talk and little action.

Scott prioritizes excelling at fulfilling official requirements because he has seen this as the way to advance in his career and gradually build up the influence needed to make a real difference. This belief has been validated with his latest appointment.

AKITO
The Activist

GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE

Significant exposure, but often it has been as a counterpoint or challenger

Profile:

Akito is one of the leaders of a national civil society organization. He has been involved in advocacy activities since high school, when he attended protests against the then administration's youth and education policy. At university, he studied law and organized student protests on campus.

Akito is equally as comfortable speaking at formal meetings with senior government officials and civil society consultations as he is shouting demands through a megaphone at a rally.

He is passionate about government reform, and believes that civil society must engage government to make lasting institutional change. At the same time, he remains mostly unconvinced of the authenticity of govern-ment's attempts to consult with civil society and seriously integrate their inputs.

Assets:

Connection to the needs of communities

Willingness to be critical and push government towards "stretch" reforms

Way of Working

While Akito has a fair amount of experience critiquing government policy, he is not familiar with the processes and procedures of the public sector through which policy change could be effected. His efforts are often siloed from those of government officials, even in cases when they are working on issues of shared interest.

Akito believes in the importance of advocating for change, and that main-taining independent, non-governmental voices is a critical component of ensuring that public services and outcomes are truly representative of citizen needs.

TERESA
The Techie
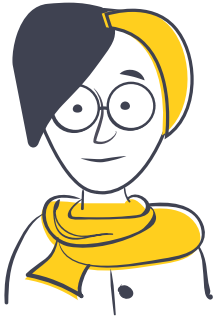
GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE

Little to None

Profile:

Teresa has been entrepreneurial from a young age, starting her first technology company at the age of 15. She studied computer science for a year at university before deciding to drop out and develop several promising business ideas. Teresa now runs a technology development company, and advises several startups that are developing mobile apps.

In the past few years, Teresa has begun to attend hackathons and other civic tech events. She was encouraged to attend by her developer friends, and was excited to realize that her skills could be applied to some of the problems facing her city.

Teresa doesn't usually get involved with politics or policy issues, but she is excited about the promise of open data and the useful tools she might be able to develop with newly-released datasets.

Teresa is above all focused on producing useful, successful products and services. She doesn't think too much about "the bureaucratic system" or whether and how her government should change.

While Teresa believes personally in her ability to make incremental change—through a citizen-led platform for example—she doesn't know whether the government is worth breaking in to directly, and questions whether that would even be possible for someone like her.

Assets:

Problem solver with experience in experimenting and iterating her way to a strong solution

Focused on successful design for the user experience and efficient delivery

Way of Working

INÉS
The Insider-Innovator

GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE

Significant

Profile:

Inés studied history during university and was always interested in the systems and ideologies that affect her and her fellow citizens. But in her first job at a consulting firm, Inés became attracted to the challenge of business and strategy. She then completed an MBA with the intention of continuing to work in the private sector, but instead ended up accepting an exciting offer to develop a new entrepreneurship policy with the Ministry of Economy. That was 15 years ago, and Inés has since continued to build her career, earning a number of promotions that have placed her at a senior position within the Ministry of Finance.

In her role, she has spearheaded initiatives related to increasing the mechanisms for accountability between government and citizens. She wanted to join the Ministry of Finance in order to direct funding more efficiently to high-impact policies, and she believes that greater transparency will empower citizens to advance that effort.

Inés is an avid reader of business publications, and often sees her former business school classmates and colleagues, few of whom currently work in the public sector.

Inés recognizes that there are inefficiencies in public sector bureaucracy, and accepts them in part because she has learned strategies to work effectively within the system (and has risen in the ranks doing so).

She is passionate about the goals of open government and intrigued by innovative ideas for their realization, but does not think that government outsiders understand how to get things done within the public sector.

Her business background makes her keenly aware of how incentives in the civil service impact public sector performance, but she thinks that those who want government to run more like businesses are misguided.

Assets:

Knack for identifying the entry points where innovative ideas might find traction

Relationships and respect that give her influence over colleagues when introducing new ideas

Way of Working

Target pitching to gatekeepers and decision-makers.

There is no need to pitch your idea to everyone. It would not only be exhausting, but may end up raising flags with people who do not need to be involved at an early stage, potentially making the process more difficult. Broad-based interest is important, but the key to advancement is to speak directly to the individuals who hold decision-making power and the ability to direct institutional resources.

Principles for Pitching

1 **PRINCIPLE ONE: SPEAK THEIR LANGUAGE.**

Rather than emphasizing the language and framing that make you feel most comfortable, be deliberate about reframing concepts for your audience.

Remember that some ideas may seem threatening or confusing. Many of the words associated with open government can either be unfamiliar or have baggage attached. Words like "transparency," "accountability," and "participation" have different resonances (and associated assumptions) for different audiences. Whether or not you have had a long career in government, it is likely that you think about these concepts differently than many of your counterparts. Think critically not just about what you say, but about what your counterparts may hear.

2 **PRINCIPLE 2: BUILD LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS.**

Think of pitching as the first opportunity to build relationships for the future of your program. Getting approved is only the first step; you will need political support for the duration of your program, as well as future iterations. Treat each early conversation as an opportunity to establish ongoing communication. Ask each person how he or she would like to receive updates as the program moves forward, set expectations for what you will be able to manage, and be sure to follow through on those commitments.

3 **PRINCIPLE 3: MAKE IT EASY TO SAY "YES".**

Speak directly to your audience's priorities and potential gains. In general, it is better not to expect anyone to participate based purely on (potentially presumed) shared values. Open government programs often ask participants to push boundaries, take risks, or move beyond their comfort zones. While your audience may appreciate the abstract values that your program represents, you must present the positive outcomes they can expect if they take the risk of supporting and participating in your work.

These potential benefits will vary based on your office and the individual's aspirations. When speaking to a potential partner, consider some of the following questions:

- **Recognition:** What types of platforms for recognition could your office provide? Can you attach prestige to participation?

- **Operational Efficiency:** Can your program speed your partners' progress towards their operational targets, or save them money?

- **Technical Skills:** What skills might your partners gain from participation? Are these skills important for them, but otherwise difficult to acquire?

- **Additional Capacity:** Does the program provide technical or operational capacity that an agency or unit typically is unable to access?

- **Connections:** Is your office able to play the role of convener, bringing your partners together with key influencers and building their network?

- **Other Support:** How will the program make it easier, faster, or more pleasant for your partner to achieve an existing policy or political commitment?

LESSON LEARNED

Playing Up Exciting and "Buzzy" Details

CEDN as a unit benefited from its direct connection to the Mexican President's National Digital Strategy and the Open Government Partnership agenda. Innovation Agents as a program flowed from those overarching policy directives. In early conceptualizations, the team sought to emphasize even more ways Innovation Agents connected to specific aspects of executive priorities that seemed to be garnering attention. For example, a growing interest in open data (which would later be confirmed by a Presidential Decree on Open Data) inspired the more structured inclusion of open data in the prompt for individual fellowship projects. In its final permutation, the Innovation Agents program had sufficient support under broader mandates, but the early, specific connection to open data helped spur interest in collaboration from a variety of individuals and groups.

PROGRAM DESIGN

While most government programs are built on long-established processes and protocols, yours probably has few blueprints to follow, if any. You will likely be drawing on sectors or areas of expertise that are not common in government programming. Even if you are starting with a concept that has been implemented in other countries, meeting your specific goals in your context will require significant design modifications. The following guidelines will help you develop a comprehensive, realistic outline for your concept from start to finish.

Remember: this stage is still about the theoretical program mechanics; concrete planning comes later. For now, your job is to make choices about the ideal form and structure of your program, setting aside for now the inevitable constraints of time and resources—those will come soon enough.

YOU ARE AT THIS PHASE IF:

☐ You have reviewed existing similar solutions *(and ideally had conversations with their implementers)*

☐ You have official support to move forward with a program

☐ You have an understanding of the legal frameworks and government protocols that may affect your program

☐ You may not yet have a budget
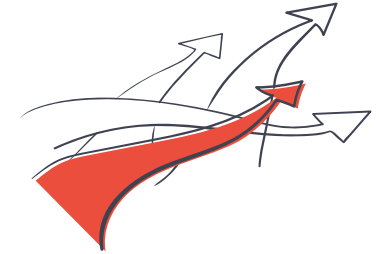
STEP ①

Determine a pathway to impact.

Everything you do should advance your program's ability to achieve its target impact. To manage effectively, you must be able to understand how each piece of your program contributes to this goal, *and in what sequence.* A theory of change diagram can help you clearly map (and then track!) these pathways to impact. There are various approaches to creating a theory of change or mapping intended pathways; the most important thing is to lay out clearly the steps required to address target needs and arrive at the end goal.

PRINCIPLE

Watch for your own assumptions.

Use your theory of change to spot areas of your program narrative that rely on assumptions. How does each step of your concept respond to the specific need you have identified? What makes you confident that each step will lead to the next? (And, what further inputs will be required to ensure that they do?) On what unstated resources, attitudes, or contextual enablers are you relying? Make adjustments when you spot a missing linkage between action and outcome.

Design Considerations in Government Innovation

As you create your theory of change, you will need to start narrowing down from the broad category of "government innovation," which will mean calling out common assumptions. The following list will help you test a few of the common choices and tensions within government innovation programs, surfacing decisions that are best made early in the design process. These can be tough decisions, as each will require trade-offs, but establishing more realistic parameters for your ambitions at this stage will help you set up an implementation that shines.

- **Transparency and/or participation and/or accountability:** To what degree should your program's design emphasize one or more of the three pillars of open government?

- **Push vs. pull:** Should your program actively promote and push out its services to recruit participating agencies and individuals, or should it seek to stimulate interest and allow agencies/individuals to request the support?

- **Direct vs. indirect connection to OGP National Action Plan:** Should your program tie specifically to the achievement of an OGP commitment, or should it promote an enabling environment for open government innovation more generally?

- **Broad vs. specialized participation:** If your program emphasizes citizen participation, should it seek to provide opportunities for the widest range of citizens, or focus on a particular profile of citizen?

- **Government implementation vs. civil society partnership:** Where should responsibilities for program implementation fall across government agencies and external partners?
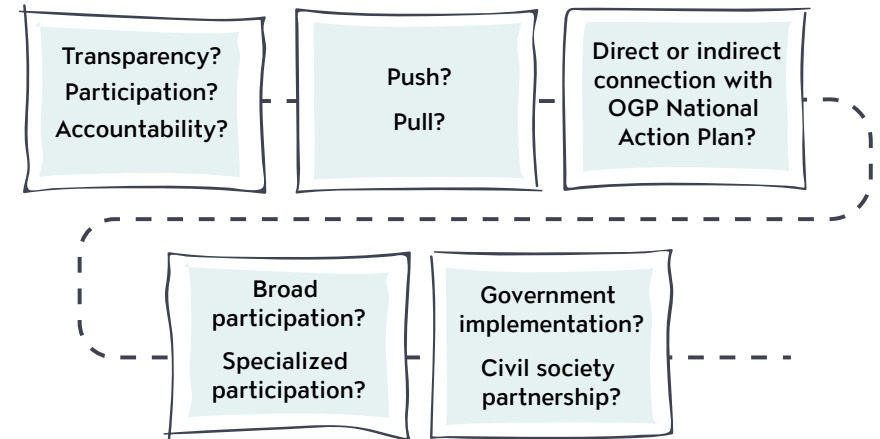
PRINCIPLE
Establish your non-negotiables.

Identifying the highest-value and "non-negotiable" aspects of your program design now will help you more easily prioritize and make trade-offs later on, during budget negotiations and program implementation.

PRINCIPLE
Understand your value and capabilities.

Your unit has something of unique value to offer this program. Focusing on the inputs and activities that you are well-positioned to deliver will strengthen the likelihood of impact. And you must be able to rely on yourself, perhaps more than anyone else, throughout the program; being honest about your capabilities and value at this stage is essential.

Sample Theory of Change

This is an abridged version of the Innovation Agents program's theory of change. It has been streamlined and shortened for easy reference, and is presented as a real-world example, not necessarily an ideal model. We have provided notes for each section to help you get started on your own.

1　Needs or Problems to be Addressed

Place the citizen at the center of policymakers' considerations

Have an isolated space where new ideas can be born, nurtured, and developed

Infuse government with new talent and expertise

Make project development bureaucratically lighter, faster, more effective, and efficient

Have a continuous project design and implementation feedback loop

> Note that this goal is inextricable from the program idea: the Innovation Agents program is this "isolated space."

> The theory of change starts with clearly identifying your problem (see Phase 1). Here, CEDN framed it in terms of the solution it wanted to see.

> Your inputs should be inspired by the needs you are addressing. For example, HCD was chosen as one way to help "place the citizen at the center..."

> ...and the outside entrepreneurs invited to participate were another way, since they brought experience in engaging with target communities (in addition to "infusing government with new talent and expertise").

> Note that the theory of change includes facets of the program structure that are vital to the goal. Here, the budget structure is part of how the program streamlines project development

2　Inputs & Activities

Human Centered Design (HCD) methodology and mentoring

Political capital

Specialized human capital

Project budget independent from traditional allocation of public resources

Strategic advice, follow-up, mentoring, and public exposure for teams

Communications efforts

> Every programmatic theory of change includes a set of underlying assumptions about how the program will play out. They typically deal with how effectively your inputs will bring about the desired outputs, and how external factors will contribute to your program.

> Each of your outputs should clearly flow from at least one of your inputs.

3　Outputs

Five creative and unexpected tech-based solutions to long-standing problems

A "bubble" for the incubation of new ideas

A process of knowledge, problem-solving skills, and expertise transfer

Cross-cutting relationships that support the implementation of the National Digital Strategy

Extensive documentation and research, with communications to disseminate

Target users widely adopt the tech-based solutions developed by Innovation Agents teams

> For simplicity, we've only included short-term outputs and have not included the program's medium- and longer-term outputs; you should plan to include these. The short-term outputs here are expected to be achieved within 9 months (the length of the program's first pilot), but timelines for each program will invariably differ.

4　Outcomes

The Mexican Government becomes a platform for innovation. This means that:

Citizens can engage in sustained collaboration with government agencies to co-create and co-produce solutions that make more efficient use of public resources.

Government attracts the best minds from outside to work with insiders who have technical expertise.

There are increased incentives for government agencies to try new approaches and deliver results.

Government uses rapid prototyping techniques, and breaks with traditional bureaucratic processes for efficient project development.

> Think carefully about your target outcomes, and how you will measure success at the end of your program. Broad, visionary, and somewhat vague outcomes may serve the needs of your program, but remember that you'll want to be able to know (and share) whether you have achieved what you set out to do.

Assumptions

External fellows have unique technical expertise that is difficult for the government to attract through traditional hiring mechanisms.

Internal fellows are knowledgeable enough to represent their agency's perspective and needs.

Internal and external fellows will co-manage and spend time working together collaboratively.

There is effective knowledge transfer between the fellows and their teams.

Project teams will see value in and commit to the HCD process and carry it out as planned.

At least one project will be successful enough for the government to release and promote.

The program, and the projects it supports, can be sufficiently isolated from political priorities and external pressures.

Considerations for Developing a Theory of Change

Needs and Problems to Be Addressed

This example theory of change demonstrates a common tendency: listing needs and problems based on the lack of specific inputs, rather than as general needs. A framing more focused on the problem might state, instead: "The citizen is not currently at the center of policymakers' considerations" and "Project development is bureaucratically heavy, slow, and inefficient."

Inputs and Activities

Each input should be tightly linked to a problem or need. If you have delineated an input or activity that doesn't directly respond to one or more of the needs identified, you either have superfluous inputs (and could save resources by trimming) or you have intuited a need that you haven't yet stated.

Outputs

This is where you must take an especially critical eye to your theory of change. Converting inputs into outputs is no easy task. By listing the outputs here, you are committing your program to making them a reality. Think about what additional inputs—whether provided by you or the programmatic context— will be needed to achieve each output. For example, this example theory of change could be more clear about which inputs will ensure there is a process of knowledge transfer, and how "cross-cutting relationships" will be built from the inputs and activities.

Outcomes

Consider each of your outputs and whether they represent a clear step towards this broad goal. Are there other intermediate outputs that you may need to accomplish in order to get to your desired outcome?

Assumptions

Stating and unpacking assumptions is helpful in identifying risks or surfacing dependencies that should be monitored or otherwise managed.

Once you have listed your assumptions, review them to make sure they are thorough and realistic. Some may require you to return to the list of inputs and think about what you can do to increase the likelihood that they will turn out to be true.

Align with legal and regulatory frameworks.

When pushing bureaucratic boundaries in your program, there may be a tendency to put off reviewing the relevant legal and regulatory frameworks that govern how your program can be structured and executed. But government innovation programs are still government programs, and thus subject to all of the same regulations and protocols. Understand the letter of the law and comply with it. This will avoid unnecessary delays and risks, and later save you from having to expend energy catching up on compliance.

As you explore new territory, there will certainly be legal ambiguities (such as access to and use of open data) that may pose risks or challenges for your program. You may choose to push harder on the boundaries in some places, but you should lean in to ambiguities judiciously. Focus your effort on places where it is most likely to bring significant benefits; stay well within the lines elsewhere. When an existing process is straightforward, ensure compliance—this helps cushion your program, so that later you can assume the risks that are actually necessary (and that have the highest potential rewards).

LESSON LEARNED

Avoiding Innovation Orphans

At the end of the Innovation Agents pilot, lack of clarity around legal ownership and responsibility of the final products created challenges with (and even halted) their completion and public release. It also jeopardized their future. For example, one team released a functional prototype, but was unable to host the public-facing site on its servers, due to the risk of unauthorized access. Another team reached an advanced stage with its prototype app, but its completion and release was stalled in part because the hosting government unit did not have clear legal precedent or a documented responsibility to release and manage an app for citizens.

Carrying forward a new project requires resources, and without a pre-existing, clearly-defined mandate or documented responsibility, it may be difficult to identify an owner at a critical juncture. Establishing the frameworks for ownership and responsibility for every step of the program is vital in this early design phase.

Design an institutional legacy.

Because of the intersectional, multi-stakeholder, and boundary-pushing nature of innovative government programming, there is often no clear line of responsibility and accountability to maintain momentum around program outcomes once your official implementation period comes to a close. During the early stages, strive to establish an institutional and/or legal channel that will provide a home for the next iteration of your program and the lessons learned.

STEP 3

Develop your timelines.

Your program's timeline is a critical element of its design. A well-considered timeline will set expectations, help participants plan their commitments, and help you measure and share your success. Strive for an ambitious but realistic timeline. With any program, and innovative pilots in particular, there will be pressure to deliver outputs quickly.

While you need to be ready to demonstrate "quick wins," an overly grueling timeline will rob your participants of the ability to deliver well on a complex project. Conversely, an overly lax timeline may result in participants losing interest in even relatively straightforward tasks. Balance the pressure of deadlines with respect for the ambitious nature of your final program outcome.

As a rule of thumb for timelines, if you want participants to design, pilot, and implement a brand new product, you will likely need to provide at least 9 to 12 months. If your ideal endpoint is the development of a product concept or policy recommendation, the timeline could be as short as 3 months.

LESSON LEARNED

Conservative Project Choice in Light of Tight Timelines

One of the participants in Innovation Agents, an experienced social entrepreneur, was excited about joining as soon as he heard about the opportunity. He had an idea for a new platform that he felt was ideal for such an "incubation" type program. However, the original program timeline accounted for only six months of design and development and three months for a pilot implementation. Feeling that this was far too little time to bring his ambitious idea to its full potential, he nearly declined to participate altogether. In the end, he joined, but instead of incubating a brand new idea, chose to scale an existing platform. The aggressive program timeline meant a lost opportunity to support a potentially valuable new innovation.

LESSON LEARNED

Uniformity of Requirements, Diversity of Participants

Although each of the five Innovation Agents teams was housed within different ministries and government institutions, they were all asked to follow the same timeline. Some offices found the program deadlines overlapping or interfering with other internal calendars.

The Ministry of Finance, for example, is completely booked during budget season. While the Finance team was scheduled to use those months to finalize a testable prototype of their project, they were unable to move forward due to other office priorities. On the other hand, the team working with the National Entrepreneurs Institute had an internal deadline that required a full public release of the project by January 1. In the original program timeline, this was the target date for launching "version 1.0" for piloting. The team struggled to follow the program as designed in part because they had more stringent timelines of their own. While timeline shifts are often inevitable, delays (or required advances) can be anticipated and accounted for in program design.

Account for busy schedules.

Individuals and units that are motivated to participate in innovative new programs are typically ambitious. This often means that they have many other commitments to manage simultaneously. While these high-achievers will be largely self-motivated, their competing demands—and the frustrations of pushing boundaries to innovate within government—may sidetrack their focus on your program. Design your timeline with realistic and enforceable milestones and periodic check-ins throughout; these will help keep your program's participants motivated to stay on track amidst already-full agendas.

Account for delays.

With their innovative, agile approaches, many government innovation programs can seem capable of the aggressive timelines that are more often expected in technology or private sector contexts. But such ambitious expectations are typically unrealistic. Innovative government programs are just as subject to the timelines of government bureaucracy as traditional programs, and sometimes even more so because lines of responsibility and decision-making domains aren't clear. Often, there is no existing official process for approving certain activities, requiring you to first find out who needs to make a decision before you can move forward. This can further slow momentum and progress, so it should be taken into account during timeline planning.
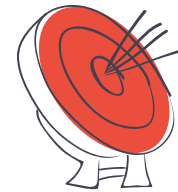
STEP ④
Define roles and target profiles.

People are the core to the successful implementation of any program. It is important to recruit strong matches for your team and—when you have the freedom to do so—your agency counterparts, with the appropriate technical skills, time availability, and (if needed) political position.

It is also important that each person on your team knows exactly what he or she is expected to do, as there may be over-lapping responsibilities that could lead to confusion. Open government programs will be unfamiliar and may require your colleagues and participants to take on responsibilities or lead activities that are new to them. Bringing together individuals from inside of government with those from outside introduces potentially different expectations for what roles or titles entail. To mitigate the associated risks, you must clearly define all roles and target profiles for both the program implementation team and program participants.

LESSON LEARNED

The Complicated Team Dynamics of Driven Innovators

The strength of Innovation Agents came from the diverse expertise of its participants: By design, each core team included an internal government innovator, an external social entrepreneur, and a technology development team. Each of these roles was defined at a high level, but the specific responsibilities and expectations were never clearly established. While this was by some accounts an intentional choice to allow participant ownership of the projects, it also left a great deal of room for confusion and frustration as the teams worked through their collaboration dynamics. In two of the teams, disagreements about roles and responsibilities ultimately led to the original technology team's decision to leave the project. This caused disruptions prior to and after the change, which might have been avoided with more upfront discussion.

SECURING FINANCIAL SUPPORT

There is a chance that securing funding for your program will be relatively straightforward. The funding process may match that of any other budgeted program. But many government innovation initiatives are housed within agencies or units that do not have a budgeting model that will work for your concept. Or, you may wish to deliberately fund your program outside of the traditional structures to ensure more autonomy or to build a coalition of supporters.

It goes without saying that financial support will make or break your project, but do not despair if the traditional funding channels are closed. Many innovators are able to secure the necessary funding through other means.

These guidelines will help you explore non-traditional ways to meet your budget while avoiding common pitfalls. You may also consider this stage a reality check, as it is a time to make choices about how to implement your "ideal" program design in the realm of the possible.

YOU ARE AT THIS PHASE IF:

☐ You have developed a realistic, itemized budget

☐ You have established a pathway to impact or theory of change document

☐ You have the political support to ensure that, if funded, your program can move forward

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STEP ❶
Secure innovative funds carefully.

Due to their intersectionality, open government programs have the ability to attract funding from non-traditional sources, including channels that are outside government. However, these commitments will not always deliver as planned; innovative funding sources may not be accustomed to supporting government-led programs, or may not be attuned to your budget and program cycles.

Confirm the timetable for approval and ultimate receipt of funds with all funders, and be sure to have the sign-off for funds from your legal department. Avoid the temptation of starting a program with funds committed but not yet in hand—that is a major and avoidable risk to program success.

PRINCIPLE
Be transparent about your funding sources

As with anything unfamiliar, your choices about innovative funding sources may be perceived by outside observers as suspect, just because they do not align with typical funding approaches. Your credibility and the perception of your program depend on your ability to provide assurances that the funding streams, while unfamiliar, are above board. Ensure that your program participants are informed as well, so that they feel secure in the financial undergirding of the program.

Making the effort to communicate openly about your budgetary sources not only ensures transparency, it is also an opportunity to help inspire your fellow government innovators. Embrace the innovative channels you found and the boundaries you pushed. By actively acknowledging the limits of traditional funding channels, you can make it clear to potential detractors that you have been deliberate and are holding yourself accountable.

LESSON LEARNED

Breaking New Ground with Familiar Funders

Innovation Agents found a natural partner in the National Entrepreneurs Institute (INADEM), an autonomous governmental institution that provides funding and other support to businesses of all sizes within Mexico. INADEM was excited about the program, and agreed to provide much-needed financial support. The collaboration was an exciting and innovative opportunity for INADEM to support entrepreneurship within the federal government. However, since this was a first-time opportunity, the legal precedent for the partnership was brought into question when it came time to transfer funds, causing detrimental delays.

STEP 2

Use your budget to make a strong pitch.

When pitching to internal or external funders, use the same principles discussed in Phase 2: Securing Political Support. Here, however, you have the additional advantage of a clear budget. In government innovation programs, a budget is not just a vital project management document but also a powerful communication tool. Think of your itemized budget as a way to translate the lofty, innovative goals of your program into manageable or even familiar pieces that your potential funders can recognize.

PRINCIPLE

Funding provides more than one kind of support.

Seeking funding from diverse sources provides an opportunity to build commitment, buy-in, and a network of support for the program. As you identify potential funding channels, remember that you are also building alliances that will help support you during implementation.

Consider the unique experiences and networks that your potential funders may be able to provide. If they are interested in funding your program, they likely have a wealth of lessons to share from their experiences with other government innovation programs as well. Just don't forget to ask.

Non-traditional Funding Sources

When you are fundraising, it does not hurt to explore all potential sources. Some innovators run into unexpected challenges collaborating with sources not usually associated with government programs, so it is important to learn as much as possible about the avenues available to your program.

Financial Support Options for Government Innovation Programs

- **Foundations or other private donors**
- **Bilateral or multilateral donors**
- **NGOs**
- **Private companies**
- **In-kind donations**
  Services, capacity, facilities, or other goods and services
- **Other government sources**
  Trust funds, innovation funds, entrepreneurship open calls

LESSON LEARNED

Itemizing Budgets, Maximizing Access to Funding

As part of the President's Office, CEDN has no program implementation budget of its own. Yet the team developed a successful model for securing funding from other government bodies and external funders. The team isolated specific project components in order to tap different funding sources. For example, Public Challenges partnered with Codeando México, a civic technology organization that which could be funded separately. Similarly, interim support provided to the Public Challenges finalist firms during the competition came from Mexico's National Entrepreneurship Institute. An independent project manager role was yet another donor-funded aspect.

The Innovation Agents fellowship also secured funding from distinct sources for three complementary components of the program: a training and mentorship component from Public Works was funded by a private foundation, as was the developmental evaluation by Reboot; an academic evaluation undertaken by the Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE) was funded by another.

LESSON LEARNED

Using Non-Financial Contributions for Unique Impact

The goal of the Data for Development program is to transform raw open data into insights that can be valuable for public policy decisions. To do this, the program requires both datasets and the capacity to analyze them; the first comes from the government (such as data on maternal health outcomes) and the private sector (such as phone records), while the second comes mostly from data scientists at universities and research organizations.

This model allows the program to take advantage of "in-kind" resources, such as getting private companies to donate data that they would otherwise sell, and leveraging this data to spur collaboration with the academics who need it for their research, and who can provide their analytical power toward the program's goals. It is a valuable reminder that the pool of resources available to your program may include more than financial assets.

SELECTING PROJECTS & PARTNERS

Open government initiatives often incorporate a number of individual projects—consider the collection of individual commitments in an OGP National Action Plan, or the set of products developed by a class of innovation fellows. They also usually rely on partnerships to carry out their goals. With many moving pieces and potentially challenging contexts, the selection of the projects on which to focus, and with whom to work, can make or break your program.

You will have to identify the specific projects that you want to take on to realize your program's goals. You will likely recruit participants and partners from academic organizations, citizen groups, the private sector, or other government ministries or agencies. For example, an initiative that seeks to improve health outcomes may partner with the Ministry of Health or with a specific public health project from civil society (or both). With many potential partners and projects to choose from, a few principles will help you determine which to recruit.

STEP 1
Develop selection criteria for projects.

Project selection is especially high-stakes; the success of a pilot program will be largely judged on whether or not projects achieve stated goals. You must be picky about the projects you take on. They should reflect the potential of the program; make sure each project fits well within your theory of change. Also take into account the likelihood of a project to achieve success on a given timeframe, as early victories will be important for securing ongoing support for your program and for its eventual legacy.

PRINCIPLE
Be transparent in project selection.

Strive for transparency in the recruitment and selection processes. This will build credibility, and protect your implementation team and political supporters from criticism. Most importantly, it reflects the principles of open government.

Transparency includes both the selection process and the announcements made after; it is important not only to establish criteria for selection ahead of time, but to explain the results and rationale. The latter is often missed, but it is a critical point. It builds credibility for the program with observers as well as with those who are not chosen to participate.

YOU ARE AT THIS PHASE IF:

☐ You have a project brief document ready

☐ You know the outlines of responsibilities and profiles for roles you need to fill

☐ You know the size of sub-project your program budget will allow

LESSON LEARNED

A "Pull" Strategy with Potential

When the Data Squad program was preparing to embed its first team of data experts in government agencies, it put forth a call for expressions of interest from across the federal government. The process not only allowed agencies to take the initiative in requesting open data support (which gave them ownership of their participation) but also widened awareness of the program and the open data agenda.

Demand has been strong, and the Data Squad has been over-subscribed as a result of the open call. This has strengthened the team's desire to develop new materials (such as an interactive toolkit) to better scale open data support, potentially leading the way to more innovation and impact.

LIKELIHOOD OF SUCCESS

Enough attention to secure resources, but under the radar enough to experiment

SWEET SPOT

Priority Paralysis: too much attention and too many expectations to risk failure

Has attention, but can't get needed approvals

Competing with other priorities, can't get anyone's attention

None   *High*
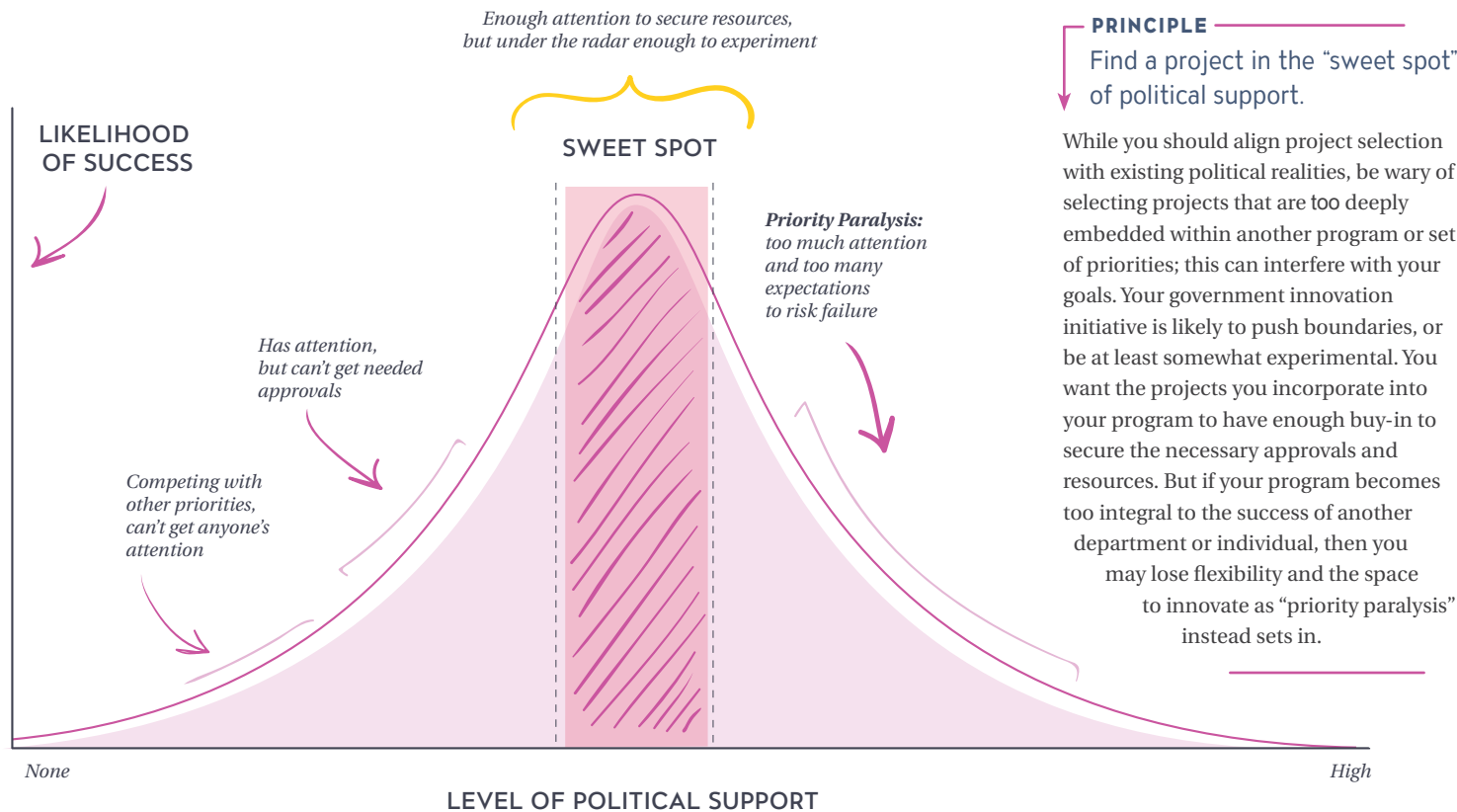
LEVEL OF POLITICAL SUPPORT

Find a project in the "sweet spot" of political support.

While you should align project selection with existing political realities, be wary of selecting projects that are too deeply embedded within another program or set of priorities; this can interfere with your goals. Your government innovation initiative is likely to push boundaries, or be at least somewhat experimental. You want the projects you incorporate into your program to have enough buy-in to secure the necessary approvals and resources. But if your program becomes too integral to the success of another department or individual, then you may lose flexibility and the space to innovate as "priority paralysis" instead sets in.

Consider the people who will make the project.

A project without anyone to implement it is, well, not much of a project. As you take care to select your program's specific projects, keep in mind that each will likely be tied to one or more responsible individuals within the partner agency or organization. Consider how (and whether) you will be able to develop productive working relationships with these counterparts, not only the project itself.

Finding the right partners is a challenge that requires substantial time investment, as does finding the best-fit points of contact within partner organizations or agencies. This process will likely begin earlier and end later than expected, and may have to happen in tandem with other phases in your checklist. It is important to invest adequate time in building strong relationships.

LESSON LEARNED

Avoiding Priority Paralysis

One of the Innovation Agents projects began the program with significant political support: in fact, it was almost totally integrated into the plans of the specific host department. At first, the project team celebrated this level of political buy-in. Over time, however, the pressure resulting from such a tight interweaving of ministry and project agendas became debilitating. What was intended as a small pilot had become a significant priority, and this inflated expectations beyond the project's intention (and available resources) for a lean, experimental prototype.

The ministry's expectations for the product nearly paralyzed progress, but the project team ultimately opted for expediency. As deadlines neared, earlier ambitions of institutional integration were abandoned and the team chose to deliver an independent project. While this resulted in a working product to meet program requirements, the future of the project was jeopardized because its lack of integration left it without it a clear institutional owner.

LESSON LEARNED

Common Traits of Successful Partners

The biggest contributing factor to the success of Innovation Agents was the strategic selection of participants and projects. While every project is different, common trends emerged amongst the fellows: the most successful external fellows tended to be strong project managers, committed, and driven to their goals. Their ability to overcome challenges was crucial to pushing their projects forward. The most successful internal fellows brought complementary assets to the table. They were influential enough to have sway within their agencies, providing important bureaucratic navigation for their projects and securing the necessary institutional resources and support. Importantly, they were not so highly ranked as to be distracted by too many other responsibilities.

PLANNING

Many innovators pride themselves on their flexible, agile management styles and the ability to "pivot." While incredibly valuable traits, these should never be used as excuses for a lack of planning; they are better served by a strong underlying plan.

Planning is not about preparing for every single thing that may happen along the program implementation journey. It's about putting structures in place that will guide you through implementation, and provide the signposts to ensure that you are staying on track. Implementation can be chaotic, and there will inevitably be space for improvisation. This phase helps limit the demands of last-minute decisions to those that are truly necessary and productive.

*Note that this section is distinct from "design," which is also a kind of planning. The distinction we have made is essentially between theory and practice. Your design should be grounded in reality, and begin to account for anticipated constraints and available capacities. However, design is still essentially a theoretical exercise. The following principles will support you in an effective planning exercise, which will test your design against the realities of timelines, budgets, and other details, setting you up for the best possible implementation.

STEP 1

Develop a program management structure.

Participating in an innovative government program is risky. A clear program management structure that lets your participants know the relevant timelines, resources, and operating principles for how you will lead the program provides them with security and confidence. Change and adjustment to your program during implementation are inevitable, but when a program feels constantly in flux, your staff and participants may lose confidence or focus. Setting program management milestones and opportunities to reflect on progress and approach will allow opportunities to thoughtfully pivot at points that are predictable to participants.

While it is crucial to arrive at a plan for program communications and process reflection, you may find that this step better fits at a different time in the process, even during implementation. The timing will respond to your unique program design; for example, you may co-design the schedule for project reflection with participants (essentially using feedback to plan for more feedback).

Opportunities for reflection and feedback, such as program management milestones, are so important an entire section of this manual is dedicated to them; see Phase 7: Reflection & Feedback.

YOU ARE AT THIS PHASE IF:

☐

You've confirmed your available resources

☐

You know your risks

☐

You have recruited at least half of the necessary staff and agency counterparts for project execution

LESSON LEARNED

Kicking Off Consistently, with Room to Adapt

The Public Challenges and Data for Development programs both apply a structured "kick-off" meeting model with participating agency units. In that meeting, they lay out the key guidelines for participating in the respective program, as well as expected channels for communication. However, the teams' internal policies for the meetings make clear that most guidelines can be adjusted in response to each agency's needs. This allows the ultimate plan for every engagement to be co-designed at that juncture, as opposed to predefined without counterpart inputs.

Determine detailed roles and responsibilities.

You established target profiles and roles during the design phase. It is important to clearly establish these now, as you have a better sense of the individuals who will fill these roles. The profiles may require adjustment to take advantage of particular strengths, or account for preferences or limitations.

Government innovation programs not only often break paradigms and challenge traditional government structures, they also recruit staff and participants from across sectors, so don't take any roles or responsibilities for granted. Doing so will lead to confusion and delays down the road.

Develop and document agreed-upon roles and responsibilities for:

- Staff on the program implementation team
- Counterparts at government ministries, departments, or agencies
- Staff from partner organizations
- Any individual participants or points of contact
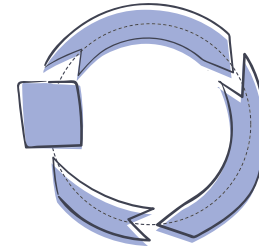
PRINCIPLE

Plan for change in what is needed from your team and participants.

All manner of change is possible over the course of a boundary-pushing pilot. Ensuring that your program needs can still be met amidst this flux is a challenge. As programs evolve, so may the roles and responsibilities needed to keep it running. Likewise, shifts in the individual priorities and interests of participants and implementers will occur throughout the program cycle and affect coverage of required responsibilities. Schedule periodic reflections to provide structured space for adjustment, as roles may drift and begin to overlap (or new gaps may appear) in response to implementation realities.

PRINCIPLE

Define now, relax later.

It is very difficult to add structure to a program once it is being implemented. Start out with a firm structure, but communicate to participants that you are open to feedback; if needed, you can relax the structure later on in response to their inputs and program developments.

LESSON LEARNED

Sharing Responsibility for Smooth Transitions

Like most open government initiatives, Innovation Agents attracted entrepreneurial personalities. Several members of both the implementing team as well as the project teams were simultaneously working on additional professional projects alongside their program responsibilities, a natural balance for many ambitious participants. But it was always a possibility that one of these other projects may unexpectedly pull a key team member away.

One of the Innovation Agents teams faced this challenge when its internal government fellow left his position to run for political office. This might have been a major source of stress for the team and a threat to the project. But the transition went quite smoothly. From the start, the project had benefited from strong managers who were responsible for the operational advancement of the project. Because the fellow had built co-responsibility for the project and delegated management from the start, the project weathered his transition successfully.

STEP ③

Document expectations
and program goals.

It's not a coincidence that "paper-pushing" is an activity almost universally (and disparagingly) associated with government bureaucracy. Documentation is typically the least exciting part of any program. But it is also one of the aspects that can ensure that you are able to carry out the exciting parts, both in the initial pilot round and in future iterations. For clarity between all parties through the program, it is vital to document all core program components from the outset.

Documentation will also standardize the program framing and description across stakeholders. This will support recruitment and signal the program's credibility, and will help set consistent expectations.

While you may emphasize different aspects of the program for distinct audiences, the foundational language you document will ensure that the core program message remains clear.

┌─ **PRINCIPLE** ─────────────────────
↓ Document for your legacy.

An additional benefit of appropriate documentation is to create a "documented life" for your program. Making records and documents that refer to your program helps it enter into the official record, moving it from a one-off pilot toward the path of institutionally-supported program. Given the rate of turnover and transitions in government, this is an important step to mainstreaming your program and protecting its legacy.

The Programmatic Risk of Project Myopia

LESSON LEARNED

Like many open government initiatives, Innovation Agents had an ambitious government-wide goal, but was composed of individual projects. Participants' incentives were entirely linked to the success of their specific projects, and not to wider adoption of the program's innovative co-creation approach. It's no surprise, then, that teams focused on producing successful prototypes but not on disseminating their experience of the program and its methodology.

While projects' successes would, in aggregate, provide evidence to support the program's approach, there was a missed opportunity to capture impact greater than the sum of the projects. Participants had not been introduced to the program's full theory of change, so were not aware of its pathways to change (and how they might support them). Upon learning, towards the end of the program, that spillover interest in the program's methodology and approach was part of its intention, participants expressed surprise and regret that they had not known this expectation.

Bringing participants into the loop regarding your program's ultimate goals will help create an even larger network of supporters and spokespeople to multiply your impact.

Comfort and Inspiration in Numbers

LESSON LEARNED

Developing cohorts is one way to enhance the benefits of program participation. It can combat the risks some feel they are taking by participating in a new program and the isolation that some innovators experience as they challenge existing norms. The five separate Innovation Agents teams were all following the same overarching model, but in very different ways. Participants enjoyed every chance they had to hear from the other teams, and consistently requested more opportunities for interaction. The scheduled convenings of all five teams were received well, and rekindled enthusiasm for the program during particularly difficult stages of implementation.

STEP 4

Document milestones and deliverables.

Deadlines and clearly defined deliverables are useful mechanisms to keep program participants on track and ensure that your program receives the attention it deserves. Innovation programs may seek to break from the typical mold of milestones and deliverables, but the truth is, these expectations help busy people prioritize their time and attention. Remember that your program is likely to be competing with other day-to-day tasks, most of which will have straightforward requirements.

You have (at least) two challenges:

1. **The outputs you're asking for are likely to require more thought and creativity, as participants are doing them for the first time.** Complex tasks are the ones that get postponed for another day. Providing clear expectations, guidance, and templates or samples for inspiration whenever possible will make it easier for participants to dig in, and less likely that the tasks will get moved down a to-do list.

2. **Your busy participants, no matter how self-motivated, need external sources of accountability.** Clearly documenting your expectations regarding deliverables and deadlines will provide accountability and motivation to prioritize work on the program.
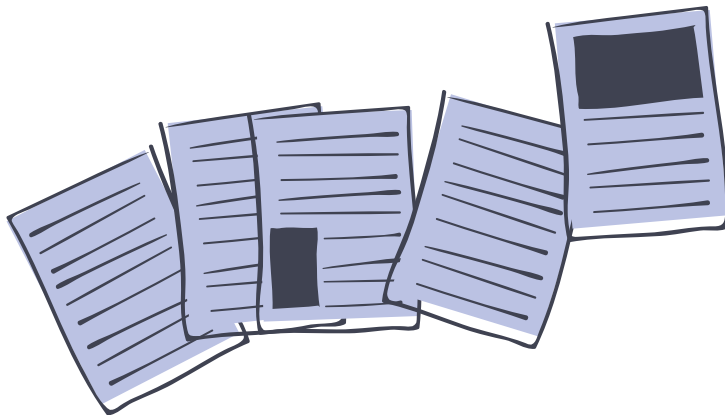
PRINCIPLE

Communicate the larger objectives.

You have a grand vision for the impact your program will make, but don't assume that your program participants will internalize these goals. Typically, their incentives are more granular, tied directly to their success in specific project activities. Participants will need guidance and direction regarding the pathways to ultimate impact, and how their individual mandates support the program's larger objectives.

PRINCIPLE

Schedule time for gathering.

Milestones are not only for tracking progress and structured reflection. Regular, informal checkpoints provide opportunities to share learning and build a support network among each cohort of program participants. The chance to establish professional contacts is likely a major incentive for participants. Providing time and space to network is a perk that will be appreciated beyond the close of the program, and is thus an important step toward building allies for the program's legacy and future iterations.

LESSON LEARNED

Small Steps, Big Importance

Government protocol in Mexico requires formal documentation for many meetings in which program decisions are made. This is especially important during procurement processes, which require higher standards of transparency.

As an open government program focused specifically on engaging in and improving the procurement process, it was especially important for Public Challenges to observe these protocols. A lack of familiarity with documentation requirements, however, meant that a few key meetings were conducted without producing and signing the requisite forms. This later caused delays and frustration for their agency counterparts, and the program manager had to chase down the attendees and do additional paperwork to verify, retroactively, that the meetings had indeed taken place.

STEP 5

Develop a risk management plan.

Government innovation initiatives come with more and different risks than traditional government programs; many of these, such as turnover and changing political priorities, can be anticipated. You may, however, be working with program staff and stakeholders for whom these will come as a surprise. Further, a pilot program looking for quick wins cannot often afford the friction and delays that weathering these changes can bring. Take this opportunity to create strategic redundancies and transition plans to mitigate potential negative impacts during implementation.

STEP 6

Finalize financial and legal processes.

Now is the time to verify and finalize the details of your budget and funding schedule. Remember that it is not only finances at stake: funding delays (or other difficulties) impact the motivation of your program participants, as well as perceptions of your program's credibility.

This is also the time to ensure full legal and regulatory compliance. Many innovators are eager to break through "red tape" and move rapidly. But it is vital to respect the process of the system you are working in. Remember that even the smallest broken or forgotten protocol can drain time and energy from your colleagues, who may face even more red tape as a result. If your program crosses into a government process with which you are less familiar, ask advice from more experienced colleagues.

STEP 7

Plan your launch.

This is the step you've been waiting for: putting your program into action! A thoughtful unveiling of your program will set the stage for implementation going forward. You only get one chance to make a first impression; the launch frames the rest of the program experience, and is the first opportunity to set expectations for program management going forward.

Moments of such energy and enthusiasm are naturally followed by lulls, so ensure that next steps to carry through that enthusiasm are in place. Keep in mind the level of political attention and external interest you plan to cultivate throughout implementation. Avoid letting a high-profile launch set expectations that aren't sustainable.

PRINCIPLE

Appreciate the moment.

The launch is one of the most high-energy points of your program and a critical opportunity to channel the energy of all participants in a productive, cohesive direction. If your plans are firmly in place, take this moment to celebrate your hard work and congratulate your team—you've earned it.

LESSON LEARNED

Shifting Gears from Launch to Implementation

Innovation Agents was an ambitious program, and CEDN designed an appropriately ambitious launch. It was a multiple-day event, held at a local innovation hub, and with high production value. Prominent government officials provided commentary and encouragement to the project teams, and Public Works from the Stanford d.school led a workshop on human-centered design. A camera crew from the President's Office captured the event and interviewed the teams for a documentary.

It was exciting and high-energy, but some participants were left asking what's next? While the launch oriented them to the program's overarching timelines and methodology, it did not provide the concrete direction on deliverables and next steps that some had hoped for. Further, it set high expectations regarding the political and public attention that the program would receive.

After the kickoff, CEDN turned to running the program (without fanfare), and to managing the day-to-day realities of implementing its portfolio. This translated into less overall attention on Innovation Agents. Participants then wondered whether the downturn in attention signaled similar changes in CEDN's dedication to the program. (Small details, including a website which was not regularly updated, contributed to these fears.)

The high-profile launch inspired and energized participants as intended. However, it is a reminder to consider the unintentional expectations that may be set by a launch whose fanfare is not proportional to the plans for implementation.

REFLECTION & FEEDBACK

Feedback is vital to your work. It not only offers invaluable perspectives on your program, but it is an important channel for maintaining support for the effort. By encouraging stakeholders to provide input, and then acting on their feedback, you develop allies who feel ownership over your program and its success. This section dedicated to feedback comes here, before implementation, because it is a process that is too often skipped over or underdeveloped, especially once the potentially hectic implementation period begins.

YOU ARE AT THIS PHASE IF:

☐ You are planning a program	☐ You are about to launch a program	☐ You are in the middle of a program
☐ You are ending a program	☐ You ended a program recently	☐ (You get the idea)

It's also important to keep in mind that government innovation programs often ask quite a lot of participants. They must navigate unfamiliar programmatic models, work on topics that push boundaries, and may be required to assume political risks. Participating in an open government innovation program—not to mention implementing one!—can be exhilarating, frustrating, scary, uncertain, and satisfying in turn. Capturing and understanding the granular experiences and opinions of your participants will provide invaluable information about improving the program (or protecting what works); importantly, it will also create closure for participants and strengthen the possibility of future collaboration.

These principles will help you solicit, capture, and respond to feedback as an integral part of your work, instead of a programmatic afterthought, through three distinct, crucial steps.

STEP 1

Gather feedback during implementation.

Throughout implementation, feedback is a process management tool. Hearing about participant and stakeholder experiences, challenges, and victories is a must-have input to help determine where to invest your time and influence as a program manager, and to identify where the program design may need adjustments.

Asking for feedback as participants navigate your program will help surface potential issues and allow for course correction before problems become entrenched and/or insurmountable. Participants in any government program have unique viewpoints based on their first-hand experience, but those in government innovation programs in particular can offer rich insights framed through the lens of their varied experiences in civil society, the private sector, and government.

Ways to elicit *feedback* during implementation

- ✦ Periodic check-ins via phone, instant messenger, or email exchanges; bi-weekly works well

- ✦ Communications that probe on process habits or implementation choices that are within your counterpart's sphere of influence

- ✦ Pre-scheduled, structured discussions of experience to date and reflections on implementation process

PRINCIPLE

Demonstrate your understanding of feedback.

Feedback is only useful in so far as it is analyzed and used by implementers. Soliciting and not acting on feedback may backfire, being perceived as a "box-checking" exercise. Remember: When it comes to stakeholder inputs, when you ask, you must also act. As you hear about participant experiences, offer ideas where you might be able to apply your unique position for political or moral support.

STEP ❷

Gather feedback at program closeout.

Near the end of a program, feedback is a tool for not only reflection, but for ongoing relationship building as well. Providing an opportunity for participants and stakeholders to comment on the overall experience and achievements gained marks a thoughtful close to a pilot (or any) program.

At this stage, participants will have some distance from the day-to-day frustrations and ideally will share more overarching reflections that can contribute to your assessment of the program's successes and areas for improvement. Just as important, seeking feedback once the program has closed signals a desire to remain connected to the participants and track ongoing impacts. Use this is as an opportunity to build your relationship with these allies. Individuals and agencies who have already participated in open government programs—and with whom you've already collaborated—often make great future partners.

LESSON LEARNED

Cultivating Channels for Feedback and Space for Reflection

For the Innovation Agents program, CEDN actively sought feedback from colleagues and others throughout implementation, including from an external evaluator and advisor (Reboot). In weekly calls, CEDN and Reboot reviewed program progress as well as feedback from participants and stakeholders that had been collected and analyzed by Reboot. The relationship also enabled CEDN to engage in deeper, periodic reflection.

Thanks to this bold openness to feedback in the midst of implementation, CEDN was able to make quick, responsive adjustments to the program. For example, the program team increased the frequency and variety of opportunities for participants to gather, creating important space for participant feedback as well as strengthening *esprit de corps*.

Ways to elicit feedback at program closeout

✳ Personal phone calls and emails to build relationships and hear longer reflections

✳ Anonymous web-based surveys to capture the most candid responses

✳ Facilitated small-group conversation to draw out commonalities and differences in experiences

✳ Informal, ad-hoc inquiries to solidify an especially collaborative relationship and receive ongoing updates on project impacts

✳ "Asking around" about the program to gauge how it was perceived more widely

STEP ③

Incorporate feedback.

The final step is about closing the feedback loop: when you incorporate participants' inputs into your program design and plan for the next iteration. A combination of both formal and informal requests for feedback provides opportunities to ask probing questions about what worked and what did not. In those conversations, be prepared to describe potential program adjustments and gauge reactions. Consolidate the feedback and discuss it with your team soon after program close to ensure that you can extract priorities while the experience is fresh.

Soliciting and listening to feedback is actually the easy part; ensuring that the reflections and advice from participants can be channeled back into actionable changes is often difficult. One tangible channel through which to do this is by revisiting your original program documentation (e.g., pitch presentation, theory of change, and roles and responsibilities) and making edits for a version 2.0. Another helpful step is committing to follow-up. Make a point to reach out to people after you've talked with your team, and let them know how (or whether) their feedback was received and will be incorporated. You may find it helpful to share the revised program documents with key participants for further comment.

LESSON LEARNED

Waiting to Be Asked for Feedback

CEDN missed opportunities to engage with program participants whose experiences could further inform the design of its programs. For example, at the time of our research, neither the agencies that had participated in Public Challenges nor those that went through the Data Squads had been formally contacted to discuss their experiences, even though their engagements had concluded; further, CEDN did not have plans to collect their feedback in the future. The agencies would have welcomed the opportunity to share their experiences and ideas, and would have offered helpful reflections—evidenced by their willingness to speak with candor to researchers. But they did not actively volunteer feedback; they were waiting for a sign from CEDN that such inputs were welcomed.

LESSON LEARNED

Actively Responding to Feedback for Greater Representation

Mexico's Tripartite Secretariat for the OGP, which included CEDN, is responsible for managing the consultation process to produce the country's National Action Plans. The Secretariat had received feedback that, while it had successfully institutionalized the participation of civil society, it was consulting the same group of national-level organizations and missing out on other diverse perspectives. CEDN, along with its counterparts in the Secretariat, took this input to heart and doubled the number of civil society organizations represented in the consultation process, including smaller and regionally-focused organizations.

IMPLEMENTATION

Finally, the part you've been building up to: Implementation. It's time for action! This is your chance to prove your program design and achieve your goals. If successful, you may positively influence the way your government works and, in the process, improve the lives of your fellow citizens.

Yet there are still many potential pitfalls in your path. Coordinating between multiple agencies, balancing the dynamics between government insiders and outsiders, executing a program that is likely a new experiment; these and other factors will create challenges unique to each implementation. Detailing all of these is far outside the scope of this manual, and may well be impossible. That is why this manual focuses on the planning and design process, to help you set up the structure needed to navigate the unexpected circumstances that inevitably arise during implementation. It is impossible to plan for everything, which is where your flexibility and energy as an innovator will serve you well.

However, there are a number of key principles that are important to remember during implementation. These can be applied to almost any stage of the process, from concept to evaluation, but are included here because they are especially relevant in the challenging (and rewarding) road to successful execution.

Principles for Effective Implementation

PRINCIPLE

Be an engaged, ambitious manager.

Open government programs often attract independent-minded, innovative individuals. You may have the impulse to avoid structured management out of concern for participants' autonomy, but this will only create uncertainty. Pilot programs can feel risky for even the boldest innovators and entrepreneurs. Proactive program management and high expectations are not a burden, but rather rallying points that inspire confidence and signal leadership.

PRINCIPLE

Communicate often.

Many of your participants are reformers by nature, a disposition that may be isolating when they are working within a team, unit, or ministry. Your role is to provide high-touch program management, which will nurture their ambitions and provide the motivation to continue. Frequent communication builds trust and credibility. Finally, remember that communication flows in both directions. Listen carefully, as program participants' feedback will be valuable as you weigh difficult implementation decisions.

YOU ARE AT THIS PHASE IF:

☐	☐	☐	☐
You have a program design and a complete implementation plan	Your staff team and program participants are committed and in place	You are in compliance with all the relevant legal and bureaucratic frameworks	Your budget has been secured and the funds are "in hand"

PRINCIPLE

Protect and credit your participants.

You will have many opportunities to share updates about the program and its participants, and it is likely that your unique political position provides an opportunity to credit them in high-profile ways. Use these moments to emphasize the takeaways and unique experiences of the participants, which will motivate them and support quick wins. Also, do not be afraid to intervene on their behalf. Take advantage of the political shortcuts available to you to help lift the burden of navigating the bureaucracy for program participants.

PRINCIPLE

Create a positive participant experience.

This is related to achieving the goals above, but is also an end in itself. Program participants are key spokespeople for any program, and will speak based on their personal experiences. For many government staff, participation in an open government program entails professional risk, so it is crucial to ensure that individual participants feel that the experience of the program was worth it. Even if program outcomes fall short of their ambitious goals, a positive participant experience creates a halo effect and colors subsequent discourse around your program.

PRINCIPLE

Trust your own program design.

When the going gets tough, remember the work and effort you have put into your plan. Implementation will get messy. Although you will have to make choices and changes through implementation, be wary of changing course too quickly. There will likely be times when you must prioritize some components and potentially scale back others. Refer back to your theory of change. Focus on achieving what you set out to do, strengthening the existing linkages between activities that will deliver the impact you seek.

Conclusion

So, do you *still* want to be an open government innovator?
A global community is hoping that you do.

As the guidance and candid stories shared in these pages demonstrate, government innovation is no easy task. Even though efforts are proliferating worldwide, there are still not nearly enough. Your country, state, or city needs your work to make government more transparent, participatory, and accountable, and to do it in creative new ways. This manual is meant to provide support and inspiration to make the efforts of reformers and future reformers like you more effective and impactful.

We developed this manual through deep research on one government's experience, and we know that there are more lessons out there to be learned. We hope that it sparks conversation among you and your fellow innovators, and helps advance your collective efforts.

Implementing Innovation: A User's Manual for Open Government Programs provides practical guidance for public sector changemakers around the world. This hands-on resource helps them navigate the unique challenges of implementing innovative government programs.

Through ongoing engagement with the global open government community and a year-long collaboration with the Government of Mexico, Reboot observed the remarkable dedication of individuals working to realize the ideals of transparency, accountability, and participation in their countries. Yet there are limited resources to support these reformers in the hard work of program design and execution. This manual responds to that widespread need.