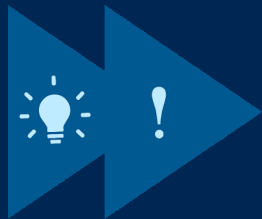
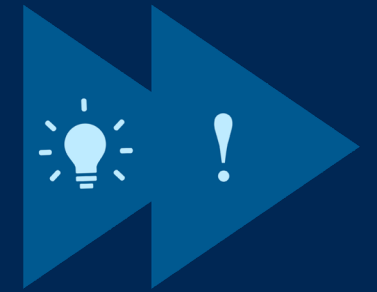


Innovation Adoption Guiding Principles



INNOVATION ADOPTION

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE [IA CoP]



Introduction

The Innovation Adoption Community of Practice (IA CoP) is a community of federal employees who support each other in learning, sharing and adopting innovative approaches and new ways of working within our organizations.

The IA CoP created Guiding Principles to support federal employees as they navigate the innovation and modernization efforts occurring within their organizations and across government.

The Guiding Principles are a collection of key ideas, considerations and lessons learned from putting innovative and modern techniques into practice.

These are ‘living’ principles that are designed to keep pace with new and emerging modernization goals and priorities.



Innovation Adoption CoP Guiding Principles

1

Everyone can build a better government.

2

Be aware of culture, priorities, and direction.

3

Keep stakeholder needs at the center of innovation.

4

Be curious and have an agile mindset.

5

Embrace change and experiment.

6

Collaborate with partners.

7

Harness the power of diverse experiences.

8

Let data inform your decision making.

9

Innovation is scalable, customizable, and iterative.

10

Employ a clear and open approach to communication.



**“Leverage
people stories
to gain buy-in.”**



1 Everyone can build a better government.

Building a better government is not limited to “innovation professionals.” Great ideas come from all walks of life and innovation works best when everyone can participate and provide feedback.

- Incentives, accountability, and a sense of urgency can encourage the government and the public to work on and collaborate towards meaningful solutions.
- Identify and replicate proven methods that deliver more responsive and effective results.
- Explore opportunities to apply proven effective methods to your work – enable innovators of all kinds, regularly question your methods and think about how you can do your work better.



PRO TIPS

Question your methods.

- Regularly evaluate work to determine if results are being delivered effectively.
- Identify potential areas for improvement. If you are not sure, ask coworkers and your “customers” for their input.
- Identify existing solutions and evaluate their potential for impact in your office.
- Identify incentives to foster innovation.
- Identify quick wins that can help obtain leadership buy-in.
- Choose people (colleagues, supervisors, leadership) and resources to facilitate your solutions.
- Identify proven solutions and pilot them.
- Implement your solutions.



2 Be aware of culture, priorities, and direction.

Organizations that focus solely on technological solutions often overlook the cultural barriers to change within and across federal agencies.

An organization's innovative style requires a different type of leadership from the top; but bureaucracy tends to have a starting culture that is reluctant to innovate. Therefore, it is key for innovators to develop a keen understanding of the organization's culture, priorities, and direction.

- It is important to be cognizant of where your organization's culture is currently and anticipate and design for potential challenges and diverse reactions.
- Develop an approach to identify the cultural style of your stakeholders relative to how they will experience interacting with you.



PRO TIPS

Leverage "people" stories to gain buy-in.

- Expand beyond data to incorporate emotional arguments, present a strong business case and persuade stakeholders of both the why and the how.

Take a rational approach to gain support.

- Better solutions result when following the rational approach of gathering facts and weighing the evidence thoughtfully.
- Take the time to understand why some ideas and solutions were discarded, but if confronted with new ideas, you may require new methods. Avoid frequenting the 'garbage can' to recycle old ideas and discarded solutions.
- Seek investment decisions by identifying "best value" projects to receive further investment.



3 Keep stakeholder needs at the center of innovation.

It is important to understand and consider the stakeholder and customer needs in designing and conducting innovation.

To understand our stakeholders and customers, we must take a broader, more holistic approach to understanding the values, needs, mission statement and primary objectives to harmonize any innovation with those broader goals.

- First, conduct a stakeholder analysis and/or value proposition analysis to define the stakeholder/customer based on roles internal to agencies, as well as external customer roles.
- Then, analyze the resulting data to empathize with stakeholder and customer needs.
- Finally, measure the journey through your program, project, product, or initiative and always seek to improve the stakeholder and customer experience.

PRO TIPS

Adopt a people-first mindset.

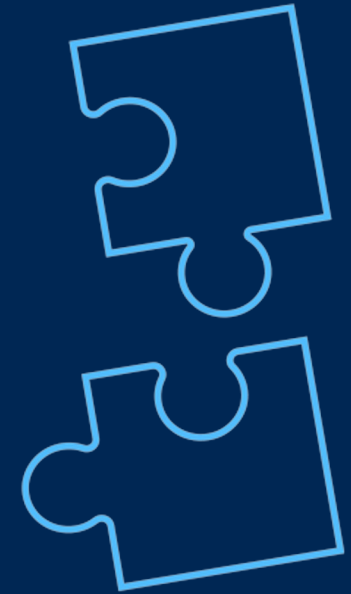
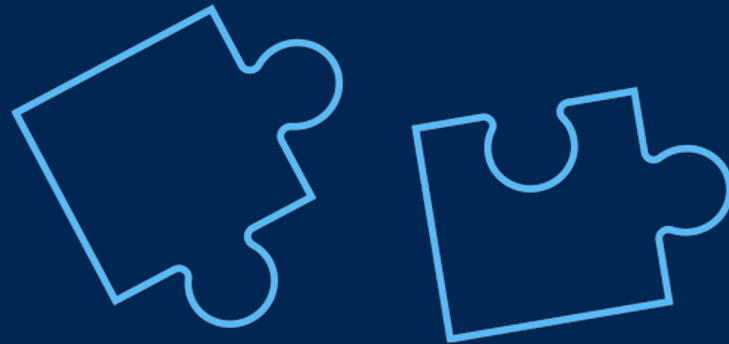
- A people-first mentality that truly understands empathy and safety tends to innovate faster.
- People are inspired to do more when given the space, respect, support, and time to try (and even fail).
- Cultivating and embodying a culture of learning and assessing learning needs is fundamental to building 'people' capacity.

Prioritize stakeholders.

- Understand their primary concerns.
- Ask "what if" questions to determine needs and test assumptions.
- Brainstorm ideas based on interviews.
- Share stories with teams to inspire ideation.
- Design solutions that address needs.
- Standardize and customize solutions.
- Test solutions, collect feedback, iterate and refine.
- Know how any implemented solution will affect your stakeholder.



**Knowledge sharing places
more pieces on the table to
see and play with.”**





4 Be curious and have an agile mindset.

Leveraging an agile mindset in quick tests is important. Leverage curiosity (yours and others) and unlock potential by staying open minded and seeking connections between problems, concepts, or ideas.

There might be a point to simply move on to a different challenge or solution. Consider the return of investment (ROI) of the duration of these efforts and the importance of getting unstuck, looking for new ways of solving, or involving others. Engage curious learning for your team or your innovation by:

- Asking questions that help expand possibilities
- Thinking about assumptions differently using the opposite thinking technique
- Observing what's happening and capturing insights that will support the innovation
- Creating prototypes to engage others and seek their questions and collect insights
- Welcoming unexpected new ideas promoting transparency with the notion of open source.



PRO TIPS

Open-source new ideas.

- For hackathons, consider:
 - Federal consultants – some information may be covered under work policies/allocated agreements
 - Non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) if inviting partners from industry (not preferred, as it limits exploration.)
 - Cleaning data and removing sensitive info
 - Providing a “use case” similar to the real challenges, but without real data
 - Inviting participants who are able to use a full set of data and authorized users – from different departments, with different prompts. Don't overlook your existing stakeholders because they can still bring new ideas!



5 Embrace change and experiment.

To achieve the desired future state, we need to challenge the status quo; often through agile change methods that require learning through failure.

Innovation is a unique field in which failure is an expected and positive force. When you fail, you learn your limits and can actively adapt your innovation to enable best success. Experimentation allows you to:

- Use quick, low-barrier experiments to test assumptions, fail in small increments, and incorporate insights to make a better product or service.
- Approach problems with a growth mindset and stay flexible, improve, and learn continuously.



PRO TIPS

Experiment with growth in mind.

- Understand the different ways people obtain the service.
- Identify key barriers to adopting changes within your organization.
- Identify mechanisms for quick, low-risk experiments.
- Assess the product for areas needing improvement.
- Consider which changes could improve stakeholder experience.
- Take minimal steps to implement each solution.
- Test the product again to determine whether the solution was beneficial. If so, repeat the above. If not, try another solution.



6 Collaborate with partners.

Diversity of backgrounds and thought makes for better overall experience, products and services. Innovation often happens at the intersections of fields.

To build a culture of collaboration, look outside of your team or organization to deliver your mission, and include them in your process to co-create the future. Also, celebrate your successes and your failures.



PRO TIPS

Connect and communicate.

- Open lines of communication between staff and leadership.
- Contact innovators with the Federal community by participating in the Innovation Community of Practice (18F, Presidential Innovation Fellows, United States Digital Services, and The Lab at OPM).
- Open lines of communication with the public.
- Include stakeholders in all stages of innovation, from the evaluation of your services to the evaluation of the solutions.
- Consider the successes of external partners and ask your stakeholders how your agency can replicate those successes.



7 Harness the **power of diverse experiences.**

The benefits of collaboration come from the diversity of different experiences that each participant brings to the table.

However, a compounding benefit occurs when we not only include individuals with diverse backgrounds and fields of practice, but also when those participants themselves have diverse experiences.

- By involving individuals with diverse experiences, you obtain more bang for the collective buck as each participant has a higher contribution value to the whole.
- By engaging individuals that bring more individually broad experiences and diverse team participation, we can get to a viable solution more quickly.
- The less we "don't know what we don't know," the less avoidable mistakes will be made and the less "trial and error" mistakes.

PRO TIPS

Gather feedback from diverse sources.

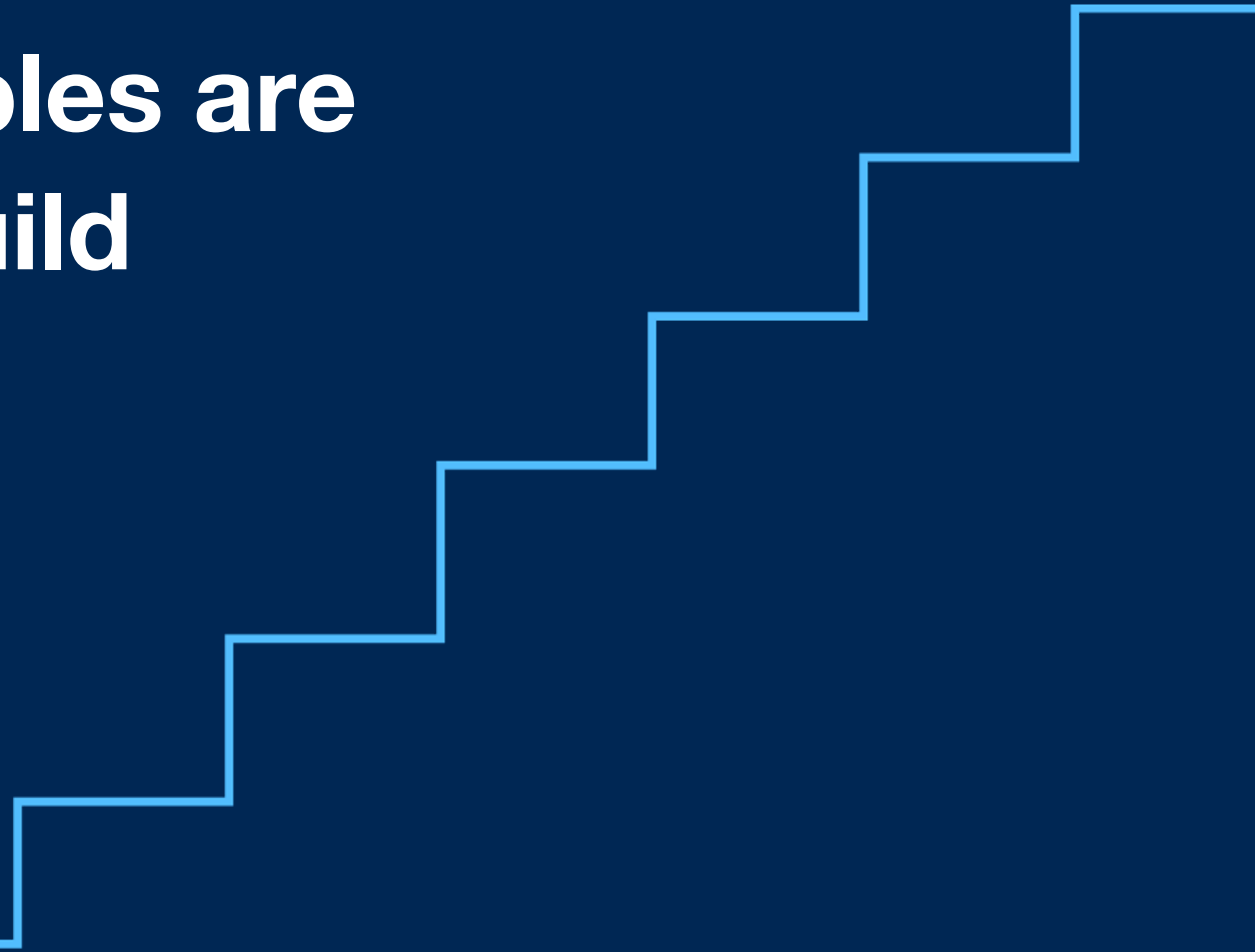
- Solicit feedback from diverse groups (stature, age, race, ethnicity, religion, and other factors).
- Consider, and implement feedback and solutions offered by your stakeholders. Meet in person wherever possible.
- Energize your colleagues around identifying opportunities for improvement and generating solutions.

Build a collective brain trust.

- Obtain a clear picture of the root causes of issues we wish to address.
- Achieve thorough knowledge sharing by all participants.
- Manage the conflict that comes with diversity.
- Apply your team's collective brain trust to the innovation effort at hand.
- Knowledge sharing places more "pieces on the table" for all participants to see, "play with" and synthesize to ultimately derive viable solutions.



**Guiding principles are
bedrocks to build
upon.”**





8 Let data inform your decision making.

Data is more available than ever before, and is used by government, civil society, and the private sector to improve processes, products, and services.

Data presents an incredible opportunity for innovators to track and analyze progress and results in near real time.

To conduct data-driven design:

- Establish a data baseline and focus on measurable outcomes that reasonably define changes from the status quo.
- Monitor progress and determine if what you are testing confirms success or failure.
- Track costs and quantify benefits to evaluate return on investment.
- Give important context to quantitative results by using qualitative data to describe the problem you are trying to solve and tell the story of implementing the innovation.
- Don't be afraid to fail and continue to test and measure results and value.



PRO TIPS

Get the most out of your data.

- Understand the data you are measuring and the impact on decision-making.
- Consider the quality and relevance of potential data sources.
- Hypothesize about which data points should change to achieve success.
- Develop methods to measure the changes to those data points over time.
- Determine whether the changes to the data are the result of innovation or external factors.
- Repeat this process while considering previous results.
- Determine whether the changes to the data confirm success or failure.



9 Innovation is **scalable**, **customizable**, and **iterative**.

Innovation and creativity is a messy process and is not the same every time. Innovations can be small and impactful while systemic change is long and slow.

To customize innovative methodologies to meet your own needs, be deliberate about the kinds of innovations you want to do. Learn from others but forge your own path. Scale innovation to:

- Ensure it matches the scope of the effort.
- Manage the time available to develop options.
- Bring the right-sized group of participants (scaling up or down as needed) together to develop solutions.
- Focus on what the solutions are seeking to accomplish and the pain points that will be alleviated for the stakeholder.



PRO TIPS

Modify as needed.

- Consider which methodologies are best suited to your needs.
- Determine how those methodologies can be modified to better meet your needs.
- Implement modified approaches where applicable. Remember: even innovative processes can be improved. That is innovation!
- Consider how these modifications may improve innovative processes for others.
- Consider previous failures when designing future innovation.



10 **Employ a clear and open approach to communications.**

Strategic communications should thread many of these pieces and guidelines together, but also deserves a critical spot early on.

Any innovation adoption requires a strategic communications plan, which should include a comprehensive audit of available channels and a fundamental understanding of how an organization sends out information (and how it works or doesn't).

Communications and change management go hand in hand. In addition to learning how employees and stakeholders prefer to communicate updates and feedback, an audit offers visibility into what's taking place that might affect anyone in an organization.

PRO TIPS

Adopt agile communications.

- Make it safe for the team to experiment and take risks by promoting learning from experience, debriefing successes and failures, capturing lessons learned and disseminating them broadly.
- Promote early adopters as champions, empowering them to lead and amplify their success stories as a way to hedge against late adopters, obstructors and the change-averse.
- Create opportunities for small wins, promoting meaningful progress (and perhaps celebrating those pieces of progress).
- As a nod to agile, set incremental goals and milestones, breaking big communication projects down into achievable steps.
- Keep people focused on what they can control in their work and commit to.

**“ Ask questions to help
expand possibilities.”**



Appendix: Questions to Consider

Principles 1, 2 & 3: Build an innovation culture.

- Is your work effective in producing the intended results?
- Can you identify potential areas for improvement?
- How can you implement an idea when lacking required resources or skills?
- Do you see any other agencies or organizations conducting work more effectively?
- What aspects of other agencies' successes are transferable to your agency?
- What resources are available to help facilitate solutions?
- Are the innovative methods you are implementing having a positive effect? If not, how can you more effectively facilitate change?
- Are you and your leadership fostering an innovative environment?
- What is the business case for investing in innovation training?
- Are staff members encouraged to offer solutions?
- What changes can be made to your office environment that would make it more conducive to innovation?

Principles 4 & 5: Be agile and experiment.

- Who are the change makers in your organization?
- How do people currently obtain the product or service? Are there ways to improve their experience?
- How can we 'experiment' when program cycles are lengthy and limited by statute?
- Which solutions could be implemented to improve the stakeholder experience?
- What are the minimal changes required for each potential solution to be effectively tested?
- Did the minimal changes make a positive, neutral, or negative impact?
- If the tested solution did not make a positive impact, which other solutions could you test?
- How much testing can you do before determining that the product is failing?



Appendix: Questions to Consider

Principles 6 & 7: Collaborate and harness diversity.

- What are the rules with regards to engaging non-feds in public policy, program and service design?
- Whose feedback are you soliciting in evaluating the efficacy of your work?
- Are you speaking to your leadership? Staff? The customer?
- Is your work producing results for the public, or does it simply look good on paper?
- How do you manage the conflict that comes with collaboration and co-creation?
- Are you including a diverse group of individuals in the brainstorming and solution processes?
- Who is evaluating your work or product?
- How can you learn from external partners?

Principle 8: Inform decisions with data.

- How are you defining success and failure at the beginning of the project?
- Which data points confirm your overall success or failure?
- Are changes to the data the result of innovation? Or external factors?
- What are the benefits and costs of these changes?
- Do the changes confirm success or failure? Can you tell the story?

Principles 9 & 10: Scale and communicate.

- Where is the organization on the innovation adoption curve?
- Which methodologies are best suited to the type of innovation you are pursuing?
- Can you improve upon existing methodologies?
- Can you share those improvements more widely to facilitate greater innovation elsewhere in government?
- What lessons have you learned from innovating?
- How can you refine your approach to reflect those lessons?



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Thank you, Innovators.

Federal innovators are welcome to join our community and learn more. To join, email INNOVATION-ADOPTION-subscribe-request@listserv.gsa.gov with nothing in the subject.



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