

Innovation and Creativity

All public institutions are called upon to embrace innovation and to adopt new ideas.

This section defines high level guidelines for user-centered Innovation processes as a framework to foster creativity and help develop appropriate solutions for addressing a broad range of challenges facing a public institution. This framework focuses on engagement with end-users in order to better understand and meet their needs.

The key stages of the user centered innovation processes are Challenge Definition, Idea Generation, Prototyping and then Implementation.

- Challenge Definition
- Ideation Stage
- Prototyping
- Testing Stage
- Implementation

Challenge Definition

This stage describes the role of ideation within innovation processes, providing the designers with a range of different tools and techniques to get a deep dive understanding of the end-user's problem, making them familiar with the problem.

It shall be encouraged to always start with the problem, never with a solution with first understanding of the problem to be solved. Every problem shall have a clear problem statement that consolidate and capture the end-users needs. A problem statement shall mark the starting ideation phase.

The methods to support the creation of a problem statement include:

- Context mapping which shall help to recognize contexts and patterns in the collected information.
- Cause-effect diagrams which shall help to differentiate the causes and the impact of problems.
- Questions to help to transfer the resulting problem definition into design opportunities.

Ideation Stage

After problem definition is ideation where the innovator shall learn as much as possible about a user and the user needs. Here, simple tools such as customer experience chains, personas, and explorative interviews shall be used.

Innovators shall be must be encouraged to use an empathy map as a tool to identify feelings, thoughts, and attitudes of existing or potential users and customers and understand their needs, speaking to experts who know the user-customer well and, of course, being active and doing what the user is doing. Some other tools to use shall include Customer Journey, Persona/User Profile and tasks to be done.

Prototyping

Building prototypes make ideas and proposed solutions tangible and perceptible. Prototypes shall range from simple critical function prototype to the final prototype. To build a prototype, simple materials that are good enough to test a function or an experience shall be used.

The “prototype” phase shall be closely connected to the “test” phase where feedback collected shall be used to learn more about the user and to improve or discard the proposed solution. It shall not be about solving the problem completely but instead to question elements of a possible solution. The experiments (or prototypes) shall be created in a very short period of time.

Testing Stage

The testing shall be conducted on potential users as a way to get feedback on the prototype but also to refine the view of the problem and the user. Tools such as a feedback capture grid and feedback techniques shall support the testing.

In addition, there are different test procedures. At this stage, the security of the systems and infrastructure shall be put into consideration before the final approval.

Among other things, testing shall help to learn as much as possible about the user and user needs by having the user interact with the prototype.

Implementation

A successful prototype will then be assessed for full development and implementation. This may lead to a new approved project that will be implemented at scale.