**Awareness, Adoption, and Adaptation**

**Quote:**

"Innovation in government is not alien to the American tradition. It is the American tradition." Aneesh Chopra, former US CTO [Chopra, A., *Innovative State,* p. 26, Grove/Atlantic, Inc, 2016].

**Introduction:**

"Innovation refers to an idea, embodied in a technology, product, or process, which is new and creates value. To be impactful, innovations must also be scalable, not merely one-off novelties."

[“[A Strategy for American Innovation](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/strategy_for_american_innovation_october_2015.pdf),” Economic Council and Office of Science and Technology Policy, October 2015.]

Innovation in the Federal government involves encouraging a problem-solving mindset organization-wide, and empowering individuals to leverage modern using new tools and experiment with new approaches to achieve greater mission impact. This toolkit is intended as a resource for innovators seeking to argue effectively to introduce, test, and scale promising and programs in their agencies. The methods described here can be valuable tools for tackling agencies’ biggest challenges and opportunities. But the tools in the Toolkit are just that: tools. They are not self-executing. Tactical strategies are required to effectively encourage adoption, adaptation, and deployment. This toolkit is for change seekers at all levels of government: Program staff and senior leaders seeking new technologies, methods, approaches, or best practices to improve their agency’s effectiveness.

**Why:**

Motivated innovators across Federal agencies have pioneered approaches that deliver better results at lower cost for the American people. The widespread adoption of these tools can significantly improve government effectiveness. [“[A Strategy for American Innovation](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/strategy_for_american_innovation_october_2015.pdf),” Economic Council and Office of Science and Technology Policy, October 2015.] The goal now is to lessen the gap between the successful implementation of a new approach piloted within one Federal agency and the broader acceptance, dissemination, and implementation of that approach throughout the Federal government. Doing so requires that agencies foster supportive environments and cultural norms that encourage experimentation, discovery, and learning.

This Innovation Toolkit delineates a number of recommendations for building innovation within your government agency: **[crosslink to each content area as relevant]**

* Establish an innovation office or space to share ideas and support early innovators
* Designate a chief innovation officer
* Crowdsource innovative ideas from within and without (empower career staff and citizen solvers)
* Recruit talent (through tour of duty hiring, or building innovation into hiring criteria)
* Set audacious goals in a participatory framework (Grand Challenges, convening collaborations)
* Modularize your internal operations and make them more agile
* Introduce evidenced-based, multi-tiered approaches to programmatic design

Deploy entrepreneurial and design methodologies like human-centered design and Lean Startup for more effective problem-solving

* Provide training and skill building for management and staff.

**How:**

Encouraging the use of innovative methods is, at its core, a question of how to create an enabling environment that not only permits but encourages innovation. The goal is to share and learn the skills and capabilities that can help us do our work more effectively. To encourage the dissemination and adoption of these effective, modern tools, different tactical strategies can be used. Broadly, they fall into four categories:

* **Support change seekers institutionally**
* **Create enabling environments**
* **Incentivize and reward experimentation**
* **Foster an empowering culture of learning**

These tactics are not mutually exclusive – rather, they can reinforce and build on one another. An effective innovation strategy will incorporate several over these elements as appropriate for the situation.

**Case Study:**

**GSA and Challenge.gov**

[McMahon, A., personal communication with Policy Design Lab, January 3, 2017; Nelson, C., personal communication with Policy Design Lab, January 19, 2017.]

The [Strategy for American Innovation](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/president-obama-lays-out-strategy-for-american-innovation/), first announced by the White House in September 2009, urged agencies to increase their ability to promote innovation with tools such as prizes and challenges. Within six months, the Office of Management and Budget issued a[memorandum](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/assets/memoranda_2010/m10-11.pdf) providing a policy and legal framework to guide agencies in using prizes to stimulate innovation to advance their core missions. In order to support the use of challenge prizes, the General Services Administration (GSA) developed [Challenge.gov](http://www.challenge.gov) to provide a one-stop shop for agencies to announce and administer prize competitions that met all legal and policy requirements. This has allowed agencies to focus on their problem and solutions rather than the bureaucratic hurdles that need to be cleared to run prize competitions.

In the [America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010,](https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-111publ358/content-detail.html) Congress also called on GSA to “develop a contract vehicle to provide agencies relevant products and services, including technical assistance in structuring and conducting prize competitions to take maximum benefit of the marketplace as they identify and pursue prize competitions to further the policy objectives of the Federal Government.” In response, GSA launched Sub-Schedule 541 4G, “Challenges and Competitions Services” in July 2011. Contractors on the schedule offer agencies options for technical assistance, prize platforms, and access to communities of individuals and teams interested in entering prize competitions. GSA continues to assist agencies in taking advantage of the available services and to inform private-sector vendors and agencies about the schedule and its benefits. Building on the effort by GSA to engage vendors, several other agencies have also developed agency-wide prize and challenge service contract vehicles and BPAs to streamline access to vendors to support the design and implementation of prize competitions and challenges. [Nelson, C., personal communication with Policy Design Lab, January 19, 2017.]

Learn More: [Challenge.gov](http://www.challenge.gov)

**Next Steps/Checklist:**

**Relevant Policies:**

**Additional Resources:**