

Innovation skills

Practice guide:
What can you do next?

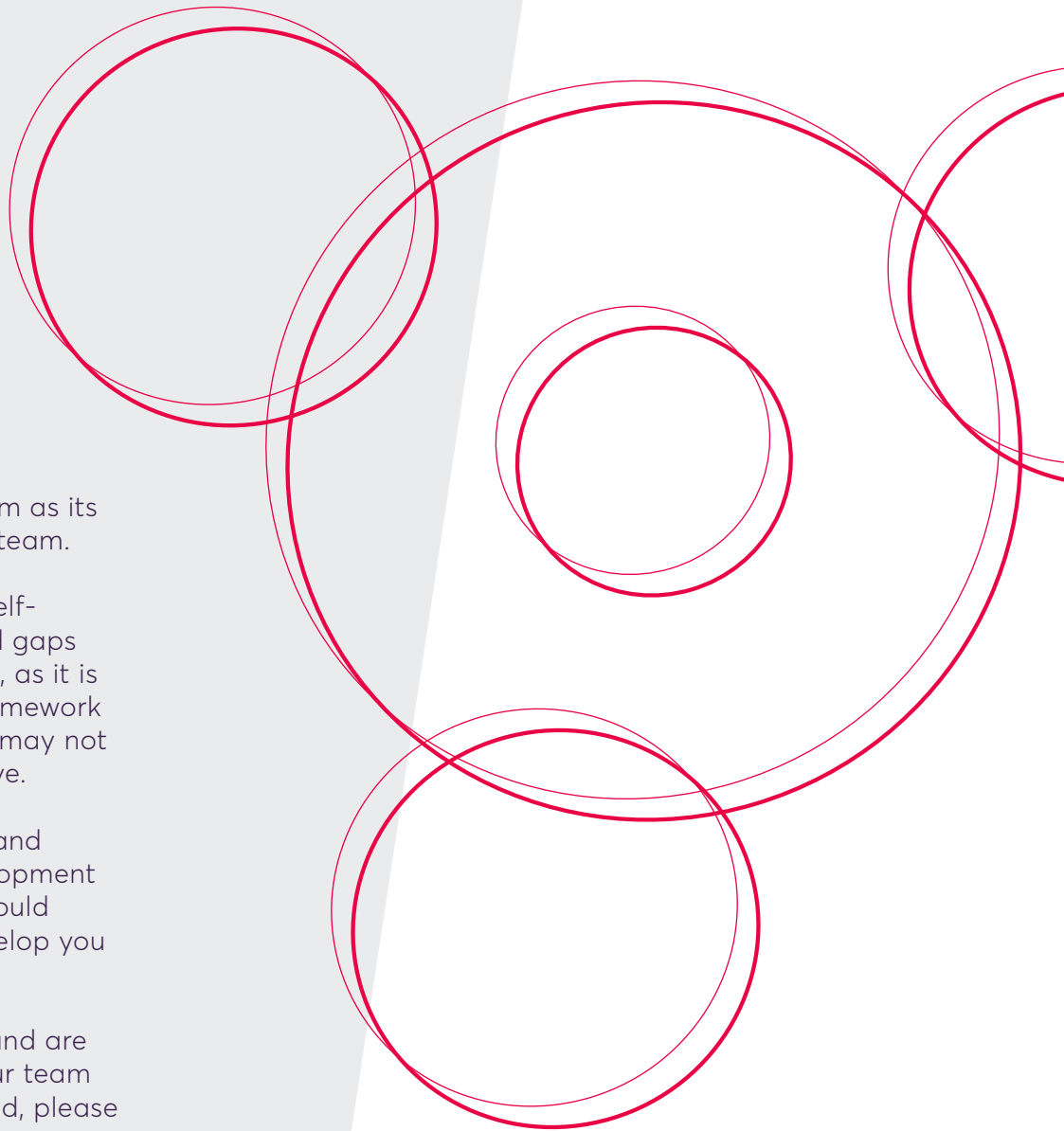
Hello again...

The Competency Framework has been created with an innovation team as its focus, so how you use it as an individual differs slightly from that of a team.

So far, you have carried out your personal competency and attitude self-assessment, and will have formed an idea of where your strengths and gaps lie. The first thing to point out is that gaps are not necessarily an issue, as it is not expected an individual will be strong in every competency. The framework represents the value of a team, meaning certain competencies simply may not be relevant to what you do in your job role or what you want to achieve.

Therefore, as an individual, you need to consider what your strengths and gaps are in relation to your role, daily activities or your personal development aspirations. If there is a competency or attitude which you feel you should possess but don't, or perhaps you feel could be strengthened, the 'develop you skills' section of the app is a good place to start.

If, however, you consider yourself as more of an innovation advocate and are looking for ways to forge and raise awareness of innovation within your team or organisation, or if you are wanting to connect with others in this field, please refer to the following FAQs.



How can I encourage and help create the conditions for more experimentation and creativity in my organisation?

Many people who enter the public sector do so because they want to change people's lives for the better, and an experimental approach can help achieve this. Think about what motivates your team. Where does the energy come from? And how is it created? Are they inspired by success, targets or goals? Are there ways to create more of these moments and encourage more shared success? Can you align these motivations and identify areas where you can be more experimental?

Experimentation enables the generation of more suitable and informed solutions that better meet the needs of the challenges experienced by citizens. By deliberately and systematically testing assumptions and identifying knowledge gaps - and filling these gaps by testing and adapting solutions - you can accelerate learning within an organisation. This in turn will help the public sector accelerate the exploration of new potential solution spaces. Think about how you can persuasively tell the story of how an experimental approach could benefit your organisation's culture as a whole, as well as specific projects. For example, in terms of the organisation, it is energising to learn new skills and to work collaboratively.

How can I help increase understanding and raise awareness of the value of innovation within my team?

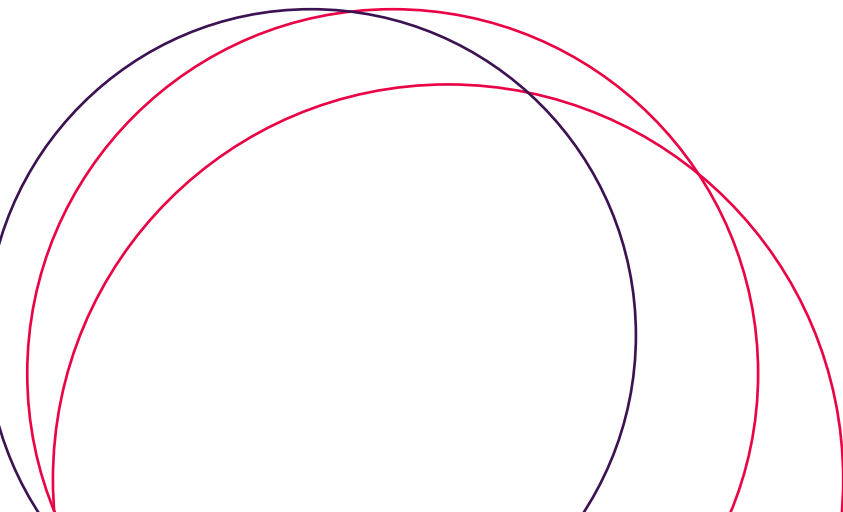
You need to build a compelling narrative around how innovation can play a role in helping to evolve public services and better meet the needs of citizens. The first thing required in order to do this is to find ways to share and develop a consistent language others can associate with. Your team can't get involved with innovation or experimentation if they don't understand the language. Introduce them to the Competency Framework.

You can also help make concepts more tangible by sharing existing examples. Use case studies to showcase the practical value and long-term impact of new approaches, so people can easily understand the potential benefit it holds for them. Select example cases that are relevant to your colleagues; consider the challenges and barriers they are facing within their own projects, and use examples which speak to overcoming these in similar contexts (i.e. the same sector or country).

How and where can I start putting these approaches into practice?

Identifying live issues or shared challenges can help focus people and highlight areas for improvement or experimentation. Reflecting on things that haven't gone so well or approaches that have not worked can channel people towards thinking differently. Work through a common project to identify what worked and how you could have tried different approaches or used different resources, methods or tools.

Capture your shared learning and frame a new project using the different approaches you have identified.



What if we identify new skills that we need to work on these new problem and challenge areas?

It's possible that you'll uncover areas of personal and professional interest or skills that aren't naturally ones you have been able to develop within your current role/team/organisation. These could be opportunities to begin to learn and implement new skills and approaches. For example, what small change could you make to your current processes? Are there possibilities for you to carry out deeper user engagement that could help you to reach a better definition of a problem? Could you start generating hypotheses and carrying out small experiments with prototypes?

If you don't feel you have the skills to undertake these actions just yet, it may be helpful to consult some resources such as Nesta's DIY Toolkit (diytoolkit.org), which contains a variety of practical tools to support a more innovative and experimental approach at different stages of a project. Nesta and Ideo's Designing for Public Services guide (www.nesta.org.uk/publications/designing-public-services-practical-guide) also details ways to embed design thinking within public sector operations.

Where can I approach others to expand my innovation network?

Of the projects you are currently working on, have you identified anyone else working on a similar problem or solution? Are they doing it differently? Reach out to them and ask questions about what they are doing, why, how and what they have discovered. Build connections with like minded people (or even people who approach similar problematic situations in a completely different way than you do).

By attending workshops and events related to experimental methods and approaches you are interested in, you will also meet all sorts of people working on similar issues, sometimes in the same context, sometimes in different contexts.

