



LDC Fellowship 2015

Leadership for public sector innovation



Executive summary...

This report outlines the key experiences, lessons and insights from a 2015 LDC Fellowship programme designed to examine leadership for public sector innovation. Public sector innovation requires an 'innovation infrastructure' comprising demonstration projects (applying innovation methods to real policy and delivery challenges), capability (skills, tools and knowledge of what method to apply when), as well as organisations and a public management system that support and enable experimentation (to 'do things differently' and 'do different things'). Leadership is crucial - at the project, organisation and system levels. Leaders who support and enable innovation do not need to be innovation experts, but they tend to be collaborative 'host' as opposed to command and control 'hero' leaders, who are also curious, empathetic, embrace diversity, invite challenge and continually test their assumptions. The report concludes with some key considerations for building an innovation infrastructure in New Zealand.

About LDC Fellowships: www ldc.govt.nz



Fellowship recipient - Sally Washington

Sally Washington is Programme Manager of the Policy Project in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The project is designed to improve the quality and performance of policy advice across government. See www.dPMC.govt.nz/policyproject She has a long-standing interest in innovation, including the public sector innovations that followed the Canterbury earthquakes in NZ, on innovation capability in organisations and innovation leadership. She has worked in NZ and internationally (at OECD and UN/FAO) and has a body of publications covering a range of public policy issues (gender equality, government ethics, public sector employment, globalisation, fisheries governance, ecolabels and private standards, policy systems and public management reform).



Note: Sally's fellowship was awarded jointly with Lis Cowey, Principal Advisor on Strategy, Change and Performance, The Treasury. Sally and Lis have worked together for several years to promote 'new ways of working' and collaboration to create public value. They applied for the Fellowship together to promote collaborative learning (learning is more effective as a team sport than an individual pursuit) and collaborative leadership. They believe that together they can have greater impact as leaders including in building a 'coalition of the willing' for user-centered and innovative policy design and delivery.



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Fellowship objectives and method

The study tour was designed to...

Learn about leadership for innovation through:

- Observing practical examples of innovation practice and understanding the methods involved
- Discussing leadership for innovation with both those leading and those experiencing innovation projects
- Understanding how innovation projects feed into public policy design and delivery (the innovation infrastructure)

Using the following research methods:

- Formal study
- Embedded experiences
- Ethnographic research and participant interviews

And shaped by the following 'lines of inquiry':

- What innovation methods are being applied in the public sector and how?
- What drives successful innovation?
- What does innovation leadership look like – from the perspective of the leader and the 'led'?
- Where do innovation capabilities thrive best?



Fellowship programme

Darden Business school

**Formal study
21-24 April**

Course on 'Design thinking
for Innovative Business
Problem Solving'

New York

**Embedded experiences
27 April – 1 May**

See the real world
application of innovation
and design methods,
leadership of innovation
projects and supporting
design functions.

London

**Innovation
infrastructure
5 - 12 May**

See how the various
innovation capabilities and
functions feed into policy
and service design and
delivery.

OECD

**International
comparisons
13-15 May**

Test our thinking against
international evidence of
innovation capability and
exemplars.

Key experiences

Formal study – Darden Business School, University of Virginia

Professor Jeanne Liedtka's course in design thinking for innovative problem solving at the Darden Business School is a condensed version of the design thinking module from her MBA course (7 weeks into 4 days). Her method is compelling as it merges business and design principles into a practical step by step approach to problem solving. It is highly relevant to a public sector environment and could be applied to strategy, policy or service design. Her book is the most accessible overview of design methods I have encountered and I highly recommend it. *Designing for Growth: A design toolkit for managers* (co-authored with Tim Ogilvie, Colombia Business School, 2011). The course involved groups actually designing and testing a solution to a real business challenge. It showed the power of learning by doing.

Details of the course are included in blog entries in the annex or watch Jeanne on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIBAJCPNR6M#t=12>



Storyboard of design and criteria



"Design thinking is not about generating more creative ideas, it's about ways of managing collective conversations to create higher order solutions".

Key experiences...



Embedded experiences – observing leaders in their natural habitats

A key objective of the study programme was to observe leaders and their teams in action. Sometimes this took the form of ‘shadowing’ a leader, sometimes being a ‘fly on the wall’ in meetings, and in other cases we were invited to participate in discussions or asked to give our feedback at the end. We were privileged to be allowed into discussions that involved critical strategic decisions including on organisational direction and strategy (eg. UK innovation Unit leadership team, NYC Mayor’s office, GovLab) and had access to very senior leaders (e.g NYC Deputy Mayor Richard Buery).

All of these methods enabled us to observe relationships, language (verbal and body) and approaches to decision making. What struck me most about the leaders and organisations that embraced innovation was:

- Leaders ‘curated’ or facilitated rather than controlled discussions. They did not appear to impose views up front or drive their preconceived ‘solutions’
- Challenge and diversity was deliberated invited (all voices counted), decisions were typically made collectively, the team was paramount, with the use of ‘we’ rather than ‘I’ language. Feedback was respectful – with “yes...and” responses to ideas rather than “no...but”
- Meetings sometimes appeared chaotic – it wasn’t always clear who was ‘in charge’ - but they got the job done (decisions taken) nonetheless. Hierarchy was not a feature.

We also conducted more traditional interviews with leaders and organisations and sometimes with their stakeholders and clients. The latter enabled us to test how leaders and their teams were perceived and experienced by their interlocutors (e.g shadowing an Innovation Unit leader and team in the field and being able to speak with individuals from partner organisations and clients). This gave a more rounded picture of methods, style and impact.

Key experiences...



International comparisons – outside looking in

Our programme was designed to see a variety of different levels of government (NYC city government, UK central government, and OECD for an international overview), to observe innovation projects and to learn how innovation capability is developed and supported at the system level. This enabled us to test a number of factors:

- The role of high level sponsorship and central support for innovation
- Where innovation capability sits – inside/outside government – and with what implications
- How innovation is incentivised at a system level
- How the pieces of the innovation infrastructure fit together to create an environment conducive to innovation (innovation system and culture)

Lessons and insights...



What innovation methods are being applied in the public sector ?

The innovation toolbox includes a range of different tools, methods and approaches. The right technical skills (ethnography, design methods, behavioural insights, random control trials, big data) need to be applied to the right challenge. Our study tour included getting up close and personal with:

- Design methods (Darden Business School, Public Policy Lab, Innovation Unit, NESTA, UK Policy Lab, UNDP)
- Behavioural insights and random controlled trials (Behavioural Insights Unit, What works centres)
- Meta evidence, big data, IT driven innovation (What Works Centres, GovLab)

Key lessons: Whatever method or combination of methods, successful application of those methods to public services or policy requires:

- **a focus on user needs** (deep insight and/or evidence/data, preferably a combination of quantitative and qualitative information)
- **co-design** - designing solutions 'for' and 'with' those likely to be affected by the policy or service
- **an experimental approach** (testing and iterating solutions, prototyping rather than piloting, inviting critique, continually testing assumptions, evaluation)
- **appropriate capability** (skills, guidance, technical support). IT is an important innovation tool but is generally not an innovation in itself. 'Showing' and 'doing' (visual aids, interactive methods) is more effective than 'telling' for a 'build as you go' approach to capability and for demonstrating the value of innovation methods,.

We perceived a tendency for organisations to favour (almost to the point of fetishisation) one innovation method to the exclusion of others. This is also a risk in the NZ context which could be mitigated by an understanding of which method, or combination of methods, is most appropriate to which task or challenge. For example, behavioural insights using random controlled trials is best applied to policy challenges where compliance is a factor. Some sort of matrix of methods and where and how they are best applied would be helpful, but does not yet seem to have been developed anywhere. This would help to reduce competition between methods and their proponents and potentially encourage collaboration and an interesting use of combinations of methods or new hybrids.



What drives successful innovation?...testing the assumptions

What in practice are the critical success factors for enabling innovation ?

Innovation capability and demonstration projects (to inspire and to show the value of 'doing things differently') are important (albeit not sufficient) for building organisations and a system that enables, encourages and supports innovation.

In a Policy Quarterly article (*Seismic Shifts: designing and growing innovation capability, Policy Quarterly, February 2013*) Rachel Groves and I analysed the characteristics of organisations that support and enable innovation. We argued that those organisations:

- Are led by leaders that are passionate about outcomes but flexible about how to reach them,
- Encourage experimentation and tolerate (bounded) risk
- Focus on the customer/user, solicit ideas from and engage with diverse internal and external sources
- Build capability, skills and experience in innovation methods adequately supported by resources (funding, time and space)

We further argued that a public management environment to enable innovation – an “innovation infrastructure” - was needed, including to overcome some of the barriers we saw in the NZ system including:

- The challenge of collaboration between agencies and with private sector and NGO partners (on innovation projects but also in sharing capabilities and information)
- Difficulties with jointly funding initiatives
- Business cases and performance reporting that require a level of specificity that does not enable the iteration and adjustment involved in prototyping and experimentation

This study tour allowed me to further test my analysis and assumptions and to dig deeper into the leadership side of the innovation equation. It confirmed my earlier analysis and also showed that NZ is not alone in this challenge to build a public sector system and leaders that encourage and enable innovation. We found no easy answers but many common questions.



What drives successful innovation?...what we found

We did not find any deliberate systemic approach to innovation in the centres we visited (NYC, UK). Like NZ, these centres have capability in innovation (albeit arguably more advanced) but like NZ those capabilities do not appear to be joined-up and in some cases, are more competitive than collaborative. Moreover, their influence on policy settings is often sub-optimal or non-existent. For example, the What Works centre related to education works within existing policy settings – random controlled trials are in areas that fall within the ambit of school principals not experiments designed to test existing or design new policy (although arguably the results of trials could be used in that way subsequently). Moreover, innovation capabilities tend to still be applied to challenges at the delivery level or organisational change - the use of innovation methods in policy design remains a new frontier where few have yet ventured.

We also found that the innovation activity that had attracted us to the centres we visited seemed to depend on:

- **high level sponsorship** – this creates a risk when that sponsor moves on, especially when the sponsor is political. For example, the NYC school i-zone, once described as one of the most inspired public sector innovation programmes in the world, fell prey to political change in NYC. It was strongly associated with former Mayor Bloomberg. Mayor de Blasio has his own valuable innovation priorities and projects, but the i-zone has lost its central support. 'Not invented here' is a common risk for the sustainability and spread/scaling of innovation.
- **Inspiring, energetic and connected individual leaders.** For example, 3 leaders – David Halpern, Geoff Mulgan and David Albury – have had a significant impact on the UK innovation scene. All worked together in former PM Blair's strategy unit, and now lead respectively; the Behavioural Insights Unit and What works centres, NESTA, and the Innovation Unit. Interestingly all have moved their capability from inside to outside government although remain highly connected to people and agencies within government.

We confirmed that leadership is crucial in the innovation equation – of projects, of organisations, and of the overall public management system. So what do innovation leaders look and act like?



What does innovation leadership look and feel like?

What sort of leadership is required for innovation, what does it look like in day-to-day practice?

Personal style – the innovation leaders we observed exhibited the following behaviours/characteristics:

- **Curious** – including about us (in the more traditional spaces people were more inclined to focus on themselves and their own stories)
- **Leans back and listens** – leaning back in the chair, lots of positive body language, listened more than spoke (we wondered if gender would be a factor here; would women leaders - challenged to 'lean in' not 'lean back' be considered indecisive and judged differently in this scenario?)
- **Enabling/empowering** – let others draw their own conclusions, seemed permissive about people experimenting and trying new things rather than telling them what to do
- **Values diversity and challenge** – invited challenge and diversity of views and backgrounds (either in the team or exhibited a desire for stakeholders/users to be bought into the conversation/project), uses safe and constructive feedback techniques (“Yes...and”, not “No...but” type language)
- **Empathetic** – questioned how people ‘feel’, regularly gauged levels of comfort with direction, raised how those impacted by their work would experience them
- **Nurtures the team and individuals** – this was palpable at the UK Innovation Unit where discussion about strategic direction included the importance of creating a good working environment, and staff having the space to develop their ‘dream projects’.

These characteristics are all consistent with the notion of ‘host’ (enabling, brokering, facilitating) as opposed to ‘hero’ leaders (command and control or what Harvard Professor Dean Williams in his book ‘Leadership for a fractured world’ refers to as “big man leadership”).

Leadership types – we observed diverse forms of leadership associated with innovation including:

- **Sponsor** – a sponsor may not be the technical expert or innovator per se but is able to see the value of innovation methods, brings it in, resources it, protects it, and allows it to be applied to real challenges where it will count (eg. NYC Mayor’s office supported projects, support from the Cabinet office for the UK Policy Lab, UK Dept of Education projects with the Innovation Unit)
- **Challenger and champion** – Promoter of innovation methods, pushes the boundaries and challenges others to experiment (often individuals working under the radar and building coalitions of innovators eg. NYC innovators network) The UNPD has consciously enlisted ‘innovation champions’ in project areas to bring expertise and help broker projects or solve development bottlenecks.
- **Co-leader** – innovative environments are more likely to experiment with alternative forms of leadership. The UK Innovation Unit has several co-leadership arrangements which appear highly successful (and durable) because they are based on mutual respect, complementary skills and capabilities, and a shared vision (these were very inspiring).



Where do innovation leadership capabilities thrive best?

Where are innovation leadership and technical capabilities best placed in the system to lead across boundaries? (e.g. embedded? Clustered? Outside?)

There does not appear to be any one answer to the question of where innovation capabilities and leadership is best placed in the system. We saw a range of options and impacts:

- Not-for-profit innovation units acting as external capability (Public Policy Lab, Innovation Unit, NESTA) or advocating for public sector innovation (GovLab)
- Central government units acting as internal consultants providing innovation capability (UK Policy Lab)
- Internal units promoting, advocating and brokering innovation projects (UNDP, NYC Mayor's office)

The UK has a pattern of capability being seeded inside government and then moving outside (eg. the Behavioural Insights Unit following an initial 2-year proof of concept moved from the Cabinet Office to become a 'mutual' able to work with a wider range of 'clients' on a cost-recovery basis. A similar scenario is envisaged for the Policy Lab). Many of the organisations we visited were funded through endowments. Very few had direct central government financial support beyond initial seed funding (although we know this is more common in the Scandinavian context which was not part of our study tour). In the NZ context philanthropic financial resources are rare. Moreover, we are also short on think tanks and centres of research/evidence (such as the Institute for Government, What works centres in the UK) which are part of the innovation infrastructure in other jurisdictions.

While there is no 'one-size-fits-all' some **critical success factors** include:

- **External but connected** – embedded innovation capability runs the risk of being subsumed in BAU while external capability can be remote, academic and not applied to real public sector challenges. The key seems to be ensuring that any capability is connected to real problems but has some 'space' to think and operate outside traditional organisational operating models
- **New partnerships/collaboration with shared goals** – we saw interesting partnerships collaborating on innovation projects (eg. the Innovation Unit partnering with private sector partners, including one of the big consulting firms, with shared risk, a generous approach to sharing IP, and each partner playing to their strengths.
- **'Build as you go' capability** – successful and sustainable innovation benefitted from processes whereby capability was built within the host organisation/sector/community, rather than being helicoptered in and out (e.g innovation unit projects in the education sector using innovation 'coaches' and 'coaching the coaches' processes, NYC Mayors office projects, UNDP innovation champions).



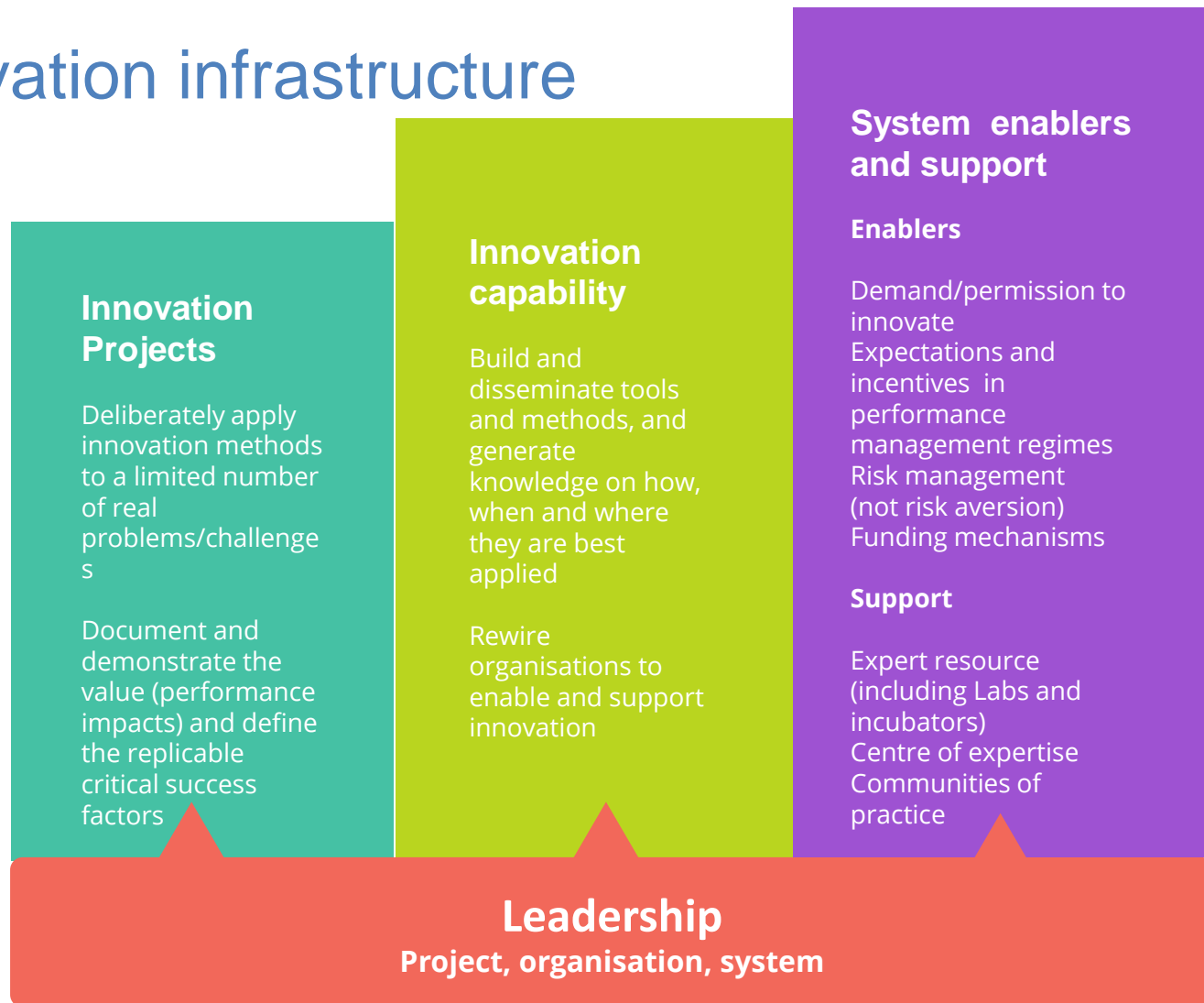
Building an innovation infrastructure – critical considerations

Considerations for building an innovation infrastructure in NZ (see visual on the next page), based on local and overseas observations during this Fellowship, would include:

- **Better matching of supply and demand.** While we have fledgling capability (design thinking, behavioural insights, big data and analytics, continuous improvement, design labs) the supply is often not driven by or applied to policy challenges (demand). This risks a scenario of 'playing with methods' rather than seeking the right method for the challenge at hand. How might we build a more deliberate and experimental approach to applying innovation methods to significant policy, delivery, and organisational challenges.?
- **Capability building and deployment** – There is a need to map, support and join-up the current fledgling capability and methods with some deployable resource to help build capability across the system. How will we, as a system, learn from and build on the Auckland co-design lab test? How can we better draw on the expertise external to the public service including in some new partnerships (university design schools, not-for-profits, social entrepreneurs)? How might we build an accessible repository of information and resources that agencies and individuals can draw on?
- **Governance and management** – who should have responsibility for the innovation infrastructure at the system level including a deliberate approach to the strategic selection of experiments/demonstration projects? How might we develop some collective system support?
- **Systemic incentives** – how might we strengthen and incentivise innovation, 'doing things better and doing better things' into our overall performance management regime (CE/staff performance agreements, PIF, agency reporting systems). In general, our current mechanisms increasingly call for innovation, collaboration and system contribution but still tend to reward agency-centric, BAU, risk-averse results and 'safe pair of hands' individuals. How do we incentivise and grow innovation leaders?
- **Strategy** - How might we have a collective conversation about how we build an innovative public management system, including the right balance between BAU/stability and innovation (keeping the home fires burning while venturing into experimental new territory).

Note: Through its Observatory of Public Sector innovation, the OECD is attempting to document and categorise public sector innovation in OECD countries. We suggested to the OECD Public Governance Directorate that analysis on innovation infrastructures – what systems, structures and supports create a public management environment that enables innovation - would be more useful for national administrations than analysis of innovation projects which are often country specific (what is deemed innovation in one jurisdiction might be BAU in another). This would follow a similar approach to the OECD's work on government integrity (which I initiated with analysis on the 'ethics infrastructure' in the 1990s). A similar systems approach would emphasise systemic support for innovation – how to shift from random innovation to innovation 'by design'. Our suggestion was met with interest.

An innovation infrastructure



Learning and impact – bringing it home

Contacts and connections

Through the Fellowship I was able to create and build connections that add value to the NZ state sector, including:

- Solidifying the relationship between the UK and NZ Heads of the Policy Profession (agreed regular video conferencing to take place and regular contact between the two HoPP support teams)
- Brokering (with Lis Cowey) a visit by Jeanne Leidtka (Darden Professor) to NZ where she reached a senior public service audience including the Tier 2 Policy Leaders Network (<http://www.dpmc.govt.nz/policyproject/news-and-events>)
- Distributing a request from the UK PPSU for NZ candidates to apply for a senior role in the UK Civil Service learning around the central senior HR community (including Chief Talent Officer and LDC)
- Facilitating the secondment of a senior analyst from the UK Institute of Government to work with me on the Policy Project (jointly funded secondment will occur in Nov/Dec 2015)
- Brokering contact between the CE of Veterans Affairs and the US Head of innovation for Veterans Affairs to discuss using user centred design for identifying and meeting veterans needs

Sharing the insights

To date I have shared insights from the Fellowship through:

- Individual briefings (including SSC DCE, GCIO senior staff, innovation insiders)
- Delivering a Master Class to ANZSOG EMPA alumni on collaborative leadership as part of the 2015 ANZSOG conference (see <https://www.anzsog.edu.au/alumni/news-and-events/empa-refresher-2015/speakers>)
- Preparing collateral and developing interactive material for workshops on the Darden design thinking method (supporting Lis Cowey)
- Planned – Fellows seminar @ LDC

Learning and impact – bringing it home

Value added to current role

My work leading the Policy Project has benefitted from the Fellowship in multiple ways, specifically I have:

- Adapted a UK fledgling policy skills framework using a co-design approach to develop a prototype framework appropriate to the NZ policy context
- Developed a proposal for analysis on the range of methods for innovation in a policy process (BI, design-thinking, big data, developmental evaluation) what they offer and where they are most appropriately deployed (TBC)
- Employed techniques learned (eg. poster gallery, personas, empathy mapping, design methods) in sessions with the Tier 2 Policy Leaders Network and other cross-agency policy groups

Personal development

The Fellowship contributed to my personal leadership and style by:

- Refreshing my interest in and energy for innovation, building my technical skills and expertise in innovation methods and strategy
- Reinforcing my commitment to collaborative leadership – ‘Host’ as opposed to ‘Hero’ – and my view that system change, and addressing complex cross-cutting public policy issues requires a collaborative rather than a ‘command and control’ approach.
- Confirming my career trajectory as one focused on collaboration for system change rather than climbing the hierarchy in any one organisation (although realising roles in this domain are limited or do not yet exist)
- Reassuring me that system change takes time, many are wedded to the status quo and will resist it, but sharing experiences and challenges with others helps to define the right questions and future pathways.

“...even on a small scale, systemic innovation is much harder to orchestrate than innovation in products and services; and it takes longer to happen” NESTA (Systems Innovation)

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following:

- **LDC** for enabling the opportunity
- **Helen Wyn** (then DCE) and **Andrew Kibblewhite** (CE) of DPMC for supporting my Fellowship application
- **Fiona Ross** (Deputy Secretary, The Treasury) and **Jim Scully** (ThinkPlace) for singing my praises as referees
- **David Albury** (UK Innovation Unit) for brokering contacts and for his ongoing innovation inspiration
- All of the groups and individuals we met with on our Fellowship tour for generously sharing their time and insights
- **Lis Cowey** – for being an energetic, insightful and supportive Fellow traveller.

Fellowship programme — links to organisations visited



Executive course: Design thinking for Innovative Business Problem Solving

<http://www.darden.virginia.edu/>

New York

NYC Mayor's Office



Discussion with 2 founders of the Department of Education innovation unit (i-zone). Currently undergoing restructuring

<http://thegovlab.org>

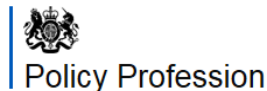
<http://izonenyc.org>

<http://www.nyc.gov/ceo>

<http://publicpolicylab.org>

<http://www.undp.org/innovation>

London



<http://www.innovationunit.org>

<http://www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk>

<http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/civil-service-policy-profession>

<http://www.openpolicy.blog.gov.uk/>

<http://whatworksgrowth.org>

www.eif.org.uk

<http://www.nesta.org.uk/>

<http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk>

<http://www.oecd.org/gov/public-innovation>

<http://www.oecd.org/governance/observatory-public-sector-innovation>



Nesta...

Paris



Annex 1. Blog entries...<https://www ldc.govt.nz/news/blogs/ldc-2015-fellows-sally-washington-and-lis-covey/>

Design thinking – thinking design

Posted by on 21 April 2015 | 0 Comments

We arrived today at the Darden Business School, University of Virginia, for the first step of our leadership for innovation discovery adventure.



Our home for the next four days

The course – Design thinking for innovative business solutions – starts tomorrow, but we've had pre-course assignments to complete, case studies to read, an ethnographic interview to conduct, and the first couple of chapters of Jeanne Liedtka and Tim Olgilvie's book to read, 'Designing for Growth - a design thinking toolkit for managers', Colombia Business School Publishing. We've also been asked to come up with a challenge to work on while we're here.

Seeing the list of classmates, we'll be in interesting company – from international organisations (World Bank) to US government (including Defence) to private sector business people. A number of classmates have 'innovation' in their titles. We'll be put in study groups tomorrow.

We'll share our insights and activities from the course over the next four days. Following that, we'll be moving on to shadow and question people applying innovation methods in their work. In the meantime here's how an executive studied by Liedtka and Olgilvie summed up the beauty and value of design thinking:

"A lot of us are taught critical thinking – and the belief that if we go into a conference room with enough intelligent people we can come out with the perfect answer. Doing this [design thinking] made me realise that there is never a perfect answer, and you won't come up with one that is close by sitting in a conference room. You've got to get out and get hands-on with what you are trying to do. You've got to be involved with the people you are trying to change the experience for, to understand what their real needs are".

This resonates for us – we're here to learn the tools and the discipline of design to apply to the world of public policy that we work in. While design has been applied to products and services – understanding and meeting customer needs – it has not featured widely in policy. We hope to move into this new frontier with others looking for new and better ways of doing things.

Design thinking tools

Posted by on 23 April 2015 | 0 Comments

Day 1 of the course was focused on "What is design thinking and why do we need it?" Turns out that most of the group is familiar with the concepts – some quite expert – so that the course is being reframed as learning about the tools of design thinking as well as how to teach and coach others to use the tools. Perfect for us.



Where we are working

Another revelation is that the bulk of our classmates are government officials, and official stakeholders, that are attempting to put together a community of practice of design thinking in Washington DC, with the view to developing a type of fellowship programme in partnership with the Darden business school. This puts the learning experience on three levels – learning the tools, learning how you might coach how to use them, and learning how you might develop a coalition to build capability across a system. It all mirrors our learning objectives so a perfect environment to be in (alongside an incredibly talented and diverse bunch of people).

Quote of the day on design thinking from Jeanne Liedtka:

"Design thinking is not about generating more creative ideas, it's about ways of managing collective conversations to create higher order solutions".

We compared two 'types' of leaders – those with a fixed mindset and those with a growth mindset, and their different approaches to uncertainty, new experiences and 'customers' (including the concept of "unarticulated need"). Much of this is spelt out in Jeanne's paper 'Helping Business Managers Discover their appetite for design thinking', Design Management Review, March 2012. It's a compelling and accessible read. It's 'reassuring' to know that the success rate for business venture capital projects is about 1 in 10 – we wonder how that sort of 'success' would be viewed in our public sector world. Jeanne quipped that the 'required' rate of success for the government sector was more like 11 out of 10. How we deal with risk and learn from inevitable 'failure' is the challenge.

Our day included a tour of the University of Virginia 'lawn' (the original campus) designed and executed by Thomas Jefferson, articulating his vision of what education (and democracy) should look like. It was a powerful example of deliberate design. Our guide was Richard Guy Wilson, an architecture historian from the university. While Jefferson was a visionary – "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" – advocating for democracy and freedom of religion (unlike other universities of the time, UVA was not linked to religion) he also designed and owned the Monticello plantation where "enslaved people" laboured to execute his vision. Even visionaries have blind spots!

Design thinkers think 'empathy'

Posted by on 23 April 2015 | 0 Comments

Today we powered through a design methods exercise using a prepared brief, based on a multinational steel company's challenge to enhance its employee health and wellness programme.

We learned that the investment in understanding the problem and generating opportunities for solutions sets the foundations and can typically take more than 50 per cent of a good project's time. Of this, the critical ingredient is to develop a deep understanding of people's unarticulated needs (which design thinkers often refer to as 'empathy').

"Leaders of innovation are designers of conversations. Their key strategic choices are:

- *who needs to be in the conversation*
- *when and how to bring them into the conversation, enabling tensions and conflicts to be surfaced and worked through in ways that don't destroy the conversation*
- *confront each other in an open process of learning."*

This is best done at the early stage when defining the problem and exploring what success looks like, and well before identifying options for solutions.



Developing design criteria

Prototyping, learning launches and creating the space for critical conversation

Posted by on 28 April 2015 | 0 Comments

Last days at Darden took us into the prototyping of our design and what Jeanne calls a 'learning launch'.

While many think of innovation as risky, we heard how risk is managed by prototyping, testing hypotheses and creating the conditions where people can experience the idea and give critical feedback. Critical feedback helps us to not invest in ideas that won't work. It means surfacing and testing assumptions – "what would have to be true for this to be a good idea?". We thought this was a crucial point for policy – often we aren't explicit about the underlying assumptions of what we are trying to do or what success would look like.

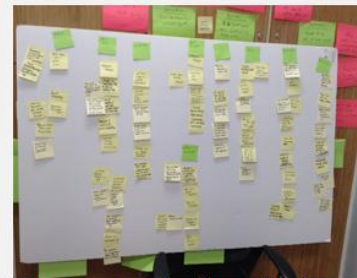
Testing assumptions and prototyping also means not being wedded to any one solution – Jeanne described this as "being able to call you own baby ugly"! It involves creating space for conversation with users and stakeholders, space for iteration, and space for allowing divergent views to surface and be worked through. This seemed to us to be the opposite of traditional notions of planning!

Learning launches are a way of isolating and testing key variables – deep insight into these variables requires engaging with users.

What struck us was that even though the various groups of classmates converged on design criteria – based on our common challenge of having to design a wellness programme for a large company – we had divergent views on potential solutions (there is no one best answer!). We were also challenged to come up with how we would measure impact – how to demonstrate that the option would achieve what was intended – another vital component of good policy design.

Each team had to pitch their idea to the class, whereupon we all gave feedback. A big insight for us was that an unpolished product allows more space for feedback. Sally's team produced a video as part of the launch – but the feedback was that it was so slick people didn't feel there was space for input. As Jeanne noted in our evaluation, "I was so entranced by the presentation I kind of forgot to listen to the specifics". There is a real lesson in that!

Here's a visual depiction of our design challenge journey from empathy with users, to design criteria, to developing ideas to the learning launch.



Post it notes - structuring the wild range of ideas into a manageable set of combinations



Storyboard of design and criteria

Do – learn – do

Posted by on 30 April 2015 | 0 Comments

"Do – learn– do" is the slogan of GovLab where we spent Monday, both in conversation with leaders and observing internal research and training sessions (such a privilege to be let in as a 'fly on the wall'). We had rich conversations with the principal actors – Alan Kantrow, Stefaan Verhulst and Beth Simone Noveck.

GovLab is relatively new – in operation for the last two years – so it was great to see how they have built their operating model: to provide research and evidence, working with people to build their own solutions (in the US and beyond), sharing evidence on what works and providing coaching and training in methods to support innovation.

Alan outlined for us his take on the ingredients for system change to enable innovation. The ingredients resonated with us:

- Showcase the value proposition – in an informed evidence based manner. What will we get out of this?
- Experimentation – try and learn, and learn from others, share.
- Technical infrastructure – policy frameworks (engagement and data governance), toolkits, and data and evidence. Opening or 'unlocking' data so that it can be used in conversations. Taking the meaning from data, e.g. OIA requests we see as compliance exercises, but they could provide important insight into what is concerning people.
- Capability – expertise and skills in framing conversations, asking the right questions and saying 'we don't know' as a way of bringing people into the conversation and enabling their input.
- Impact assessment and being able to show the value you are creating – we can take models from other sectors to apply to this challenge, which includes quantitative and qualitative information.
- Building a movement around the challenge – creating a 'coalition of the willing'.

We took away ideas and techniques that we can apply on our return.

At the New York City Mayor's Office

Posted by on 30 April 2015 | 0 Comments

We were warmly hosted at the New York City Mayor's Office in the Centre for Economic Opportunity led by Matthew Klein, and had a range of different experiences of leadership:



- Sitting in on business meetings led in a 'host' rather than 'hero' leadership style.
- Meeting the Deputy Mayor at City Hall (built 1821) responsible for leading strategic projects that span departmental boundaries (e.g. The Children's Cabinet of Departmental heads that is driving place-based experiments, and the 'Young Men's Initiative', which has particular resonance in the current context, with the most recent young black man's death in Baltimore at the hands of police).
- Briefings on the development of very broad-based social indicators, which the Mayor's office intends to use to lead and focus policy debate and action. Evidence and evaluation-driven policy is a very strong focus here. In this context, we were privileged to be here on the day they released their poverty report, which describes and measures poverty levels in New York City.
- The poverty report is a great example of leading through influence and expertise, rather than position: the Mayor's office set up its own methodology for calculating poverty levels, taking a different approach than the established Federal methodology (which only calculated poverty based on percentage of income spent on food). This has now been picked up at Federal level, as a supplementary measure to its established one.
- A discussion with a skilled entrepreneur, who works guerrilla-style within government using a 'just do it' approach to using his networks to build networks of innovators inside and outside government to form joint projects.
- An example of how the office is leading by "designing the conversation" (see post from our course at Darden): Two ways of keeping the end user in mind , even when we are 'stuck in the office'...

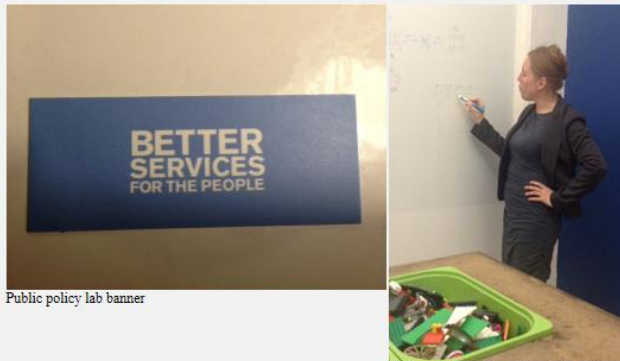
Speed dating – matching design skills with public policy needs

Posted by on 5 May 2015 | 0 Comments

Chelsea Mauldin from the Public Policy Lab inspired us with her insight and deep commitment to the human centred core of design thinking. Technical skills (such as ethnography) need to be matched with the right mindset centred on designing 'for' and 'with' others, or "perceiving yourself as someone's hand" (being led by people's needs not your pre-conceived 'solutions'). She stressed that if you are asking people to innovate then you need to give them permission to do things differently, including accepting staff using their time differently (time out of the office, getting out working with and engaging people where they are). People at all levels need to be part of the process and the enabling infrastructure: senior leaders need to champion the change, operational people need to be part of the process, embedded in projects at the research and design phases so that they can "help to birth the baby and then to adopt it" (ensuring that 'solutions' are implemented and work for both users and providers).

Connecting policy and design experts is a challenge. The Public Policy Lab facilitated a very successful speed dating event for 10 designers and 10 senior public officials with an audience of a larger number from both worlds. Five questions related to the policy world and five from the design world framed the 'daters' conversations. We saw a video of this and thought it could be replicated in our world.

Public Policy is a relatively new non-profit 'start up' providing an important offering in the public sector innovation space. We heard about fascinating projects related to the prison population (feedback from someone involved in this one was that it was "the first time I've come in on a project where prisoners and staff were listened to equally"), school transportation for children with disabilities, and school enrolments. Check out the webpage: www.publicpolicylab.org



Public policy lab banner

Chelsea Mauldin in action at the Public Policy Lab

Innovation through human centred design at UNDP

Posted by on 6 May 2015 | 0 Comments

We rounded out our tour of the New York innovation 'system' with a meeting with three officials in the Innovation Programme of the United Nations Development Programme, Patrick Tiefenbacher, Benjamin Kumpf and Bernardo Cocco. To the UNDP, human-centred design is very much part of their tool kit for democratic governance, with its strong emphasis on citizens as participants, rather than passive recipients or subjects of the State. We identified many common challenges when it comes to building innovation into the system.

- how to catalyse different ways of working, and build the skills needed to do so
- how to draw 'outside' voices into our processes for greater impact.

They had several promising approaches to catalysing new ways of working. These include cutting across the hierarchical nature of the organisation through development of a network of innovation champions at all levels. The champions can be drawn on to bring in expertise in helping to solve development 'bottlenecks'. The programme also hosts innovation labs in several countries in Eastern Europe and Africa.

Outside voices are drawn into their processes by mechanisms such as innovative financing schemes, including crowd funding of solutions (e.g. Green energy/solar power in schools in Croatia) and they are also exploring social impact bonds. They are also experimenting with crowd-sourcing, through setting up innovation camps aimed at developing solutions on tough issues such as sexual harassment and violence.

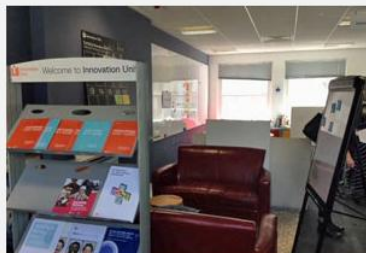
Huge increases in their public transparency in recent years have also been squarely aimed at providing the information people need to engage meaningfully with their work and hold them to account, and the UNDP provides the forums to do so. To a great extent this revolves around data, and UNDP was recently deemed the world's most transparent organisation.

Innovation Unit Inside Out

Posted by on 8 May 2015 | 0 Comments

We were privileged to be invited in to observe some of the inner workings of the unit. We were struck by how deeply they have collaboration built into their DNA, with a strong distributed leadership culture, with several co-leadership arrangements that play to people's strengths and build on their ethos of mutual respect and valuing diversity. This ethos also translates into relationships across the organisation, with staff actively encouraged to develop "dream" projects that would inspire them and keep them engaged. It also is evidenced in a leadership style designed to engender "fantastic relationships as people", for example, leaders sharing very early thinking and explicitly seeking both feedback and feelings from the team.

The Unit comprises both social sector teams and a design studio that supports both their work and drives new human centred design projects. This gave us insight into where design thinking capability might sit, in this case both embedded to support expert consultancy on social and community projects and protected to demonstrate the value of applying design methods to critical public sector challenges. As such, the Unit focuses on building capability and an appetite for human centred design – to improve public services in pursuit of radically improving people's lives.



We spent the afternoon shadowing two leaders within the organisation: Lis was a 'fly on the wall' in discussions on strategic direction and work programme, while Sally went out in the field where the Unit was working with a local borough and a multi-agency/NGO/council group called "The Collaborative". The discussion was around developing a new project on community wellness, but the group has previously been involved in mental health projects including using 'alliance' contracting models (such as those used by the Canterbury DHB) to bring diverse public private and community groups together on a specific initiative.

Despite our jet-lag we left feeling energised and inspired about the prospects for radical public sector innovation.

Institute for Government – if only we had one

Posted by on 11 May 2015 | 0 Comments

Many of us are avid readers of [Institute for Government](#) (IfG) reports – so having the opportunity to discuss issues and challenges with the people who research and write them was a treat. Jill Rutter entertained us with policy and regulatory stories that were only too familiar – where change is introduced to drive efficiency but because it is designed around the needs of 'providers' often makes life easier for departments but more complicated for end 'users'.

The day before we arrived, the IfG hosted a session on 'experimental government' to expose and discuss methods such as design thinking, behavioural insights and random controlled trials which have the potential to improve the responsiveness of public services to users. The forthcoming report will be one to watch out for.

Their independent status allows IfG to enter areas that could be difficult territory for those inside government to enter. We were interested in the work to bring together political advisors and Principal Private Secretaries as well as work with opposition shadow ministers and other political actors needing knowledge and skills to navigate the policy world. The IfG provides a 'safe space' for them to reflect on policy and reform goals.

In reflecting on austerity and likely future budget cuts, Jill noted that civil servants will "have to innovate to stand still". Some methods like random controlled trials have been part of the health space for some time but are only just starting to be applied to other policy domains. New models of leadership will also be required. We had an interesting discussion with other IfG colleagues on 'integrative leadership' and discovered a mutual interest in 'adaptive leadership and strategy' that we had explored in our Darden Business School design thinking course at the beginning of our fellowship journey.



Outside the Institute for Government

Getting to grips with what drives people and what works

Posted by on 11 May 2015 | 0 Comments

Along with a delegation of EU colleagues, we got to peek into the workings of two of the What Works Centres (the Education Endowment Fund and the What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth), which provide impressively high-quality review of available literature, as well as running randomised control trials to generate new evidence on what works in areas where evidence is lacking.

It seems important for them to be viewed as independent institutions, while at the same time they are wound into government systems through mechanisms such as Cabinet Office support and departmental networks, and are referenced in the Policy Head of Profession Programme.

Their recipe combines (in some cases, very large) funds to invest in research, Ministerial support – with independence, credible research partnerships, an ‘inquiry’ mindset, and humility (the centres are also training their evaluative lens on their own operations). We were struck by their practical focus: “Even when we have evidence, what we want to know and communicate is how you put it to work”. The Education Endowment Fund had a particularly nice example in its toolkit on the state of evidence about a range of education approaches that can be implemented by schools. We have slide packs of the presentations for anyone who is interested.

Our day was rounded out with a session with colleagues from the Cabinet Office Implementation Unit, the new incarnation of the previous Prime Minister’s delivery Unit, which had been abolished when the Conservative Government came to power.

They resist the temptation of a ‘blame’ or ‘command-control’ culture in favour of seeking to work collaboratively with agencies, in what they describe as a “high challenge–high support” approach. Their role includes having a “mandate to fix” implementation problems where they emerge, which they referred to as “whack-a-mole”. Speaking of small, furry underground creatures, we were amused to note that one of these projects focused on the Badger Cull.

Their modus operandi is to get as close to citizens’ experience as possible in their problem diagnosis, and it is routine for them to undertake front-line observation, and, at times ‘mystery shopping’ government services.

Head of the Policy Profession – ‘steal with pride’

Posted by on 18 May 2015 | 0 Comments

Discussions with the Head of the Policy Profession Support Unit (PPSU) Richard Banks and Helen Anderson (knowledge management lead) was like holding a mirror to our own attempts to improve the quality and capability of policy advice across government. Their work is similar to NZ’s Policy Project (see www.dpmc.govt.nz/policyproject).

The Head of Policy profession is Chris Wormald, who holds the position concurrently with his role as Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education. Sally had previously participated in a video conversation between Chris and Andrew Kibblewhite (as NZ’s Head of the Policy Profession). Andrew and Chris have also met in person. We got a strong message from the team that Chris wanted this contact to be regular, open and direct.

Chris Wormald has monthly sessions with the Policy Profession Board (the Heads of Policy Profession from government departments) akin to, but more formalised than, our Tier 2 Policy Leaders Group. The various departmental Heads of Policy Profession have signed up to ‘Twelve Actions’ to improve the policy profession (literally – their signatures appear up front in the written action plan).

Chris’ ‘functional leadership’ role was described to us as ‘federalist’ whereby each of the main ‘Actions’ is led by a departmental HoP, but with ‘permission’ and the freedom to shape that area of work (with an expectation that they would also allocate staff and time to the role).

Our approach is more about voluntary collaboration and co-production (a few Tier 2s are actively sponsoring Policy project activities) with cross agency and policy project teams working on specific bits of the work programme.

Funding in the UK is via a levy contrasting with our voluntary ‘club funding’ approach. While Chris Wormald sits in a line department, Jeremy Heywood (the Cabinet Secretary) takes a keen interest in the work as do two Ministers (prior to the election these were Francis Maude and the ‘Minister for Policy’, the latter we were told “sees the extremes of policy quality”). Active and senior leadership was seen as crucial to improving the performance of the policy function.

The PPSU challenge was very familiar mirroring some of the Policy Project’s main areas of work:

- Building policy people capability. They are developing a standardised qualifications and assessment framework (drawing on the services of the Cabinet Office Policy Lab to help co-design the framework) to show the knowledge and skills required of policy people and to shape learning and development strategies, including a new Masters in public policy working with LSE.
- Policy audits; early days yet but this sounded like a combination of our work to develop a policy standards and assessment framework and the fledgling policy unit capability maturity model.
- Improving the Evidence base for policy – here they have arguably more mature capability with the network of What Works centres, the Behavioural Insights Unit, the Implementation Unit and other specific groups all listed under ‘Action 7’ of the policy side of the policy profession agenda (although they acknowledged that in practice the ‘policy infrastructure’ was less joined-up than they would like – no surprises there for anyone trying to map and synergise the various parts of the policy ecosystem).

We very much appreciated the PPSU team offering us the ‘warts and all’ discussion that we had asked for which made for a rich and useful sharing of insights and lessons. Like us, they are trying to create a community, networks and connections to spread good policy practice across government, building system capability and encouraging departments to adopt good policy process and practices from others (including using design methods for generating insights relevant to policy and capability). Their motto is “steal with pride” – we agreed to continue to share and steal with them.

Opening up the policy process: The Policy Lab

Posted by on 18 May 2015 | 0 Comments

The day after election results that surprised everybody, we started the day with a colleague from the policy lab. There was an air of frenetic activity as the Cabinet Office was already in full swing gearing up for the next term of government.

While the Policy Lab sits within the Cabinet Office, they work hard to achieve the right balance between pushing the boundaries and adopting a style and practice of close working with government departments. While the Cabinet Office is usually expected to "tell agencies what to do", they deliberately avoid this. Creating a neutral, non-hierarchical and 'safe' place to collectively examine current policy and positions is a key feature of their practice. The Lab's location within the Cabinet Office has some real advantages here, with officials perhaps being more comfortable to openly ask the hard questions if the Cabinet Office is inviting them to do so.

Several Ministers apparently have been very interested in their work, and invited the Lab to involve them in the unfolding design process along the way, even on one occasion having a joint working session to develop a journey map plotting the experience of citizens on a 'live' policy problem.

The UK, in common with New Zealand, still has not found the magic solution to funding units such as the Policy Lab, and they have been experimenting with a combination of levies on government departments, and some additional central resourcing, primarily to fund consultants. Other models we have seen on this trip ran the gamut from large endowment funding bases to project-by-project funding.

Being a very small unit of three people, they have to 'buy in' experts for their projects. Like a number of people we have visited on this trip, they are wrestling with how to get the right balance between building skills and knowledge within the civil service, and accessing expertise needed for success. One clever way they seek to strike the balance is to contract out only bits of projects, and carefully design project teams to include a policy lab member, an ethnographer, a data scientist and a policy lead. The method is founded on mutual respect for the range of perspectives and different types of expertise within and outside departments.

At the insights generation stage of a design process, they insist on having the relevant department's policy team deeply involved in the process, as this ensures both that policy expertise is brought to bear along with other perspectives, and also that the policy team owns the insights that emerge. This is a great example of Jeanne Liedtka's point at Darden ([see earlier blog](#)) about innovators needing to be 'designers of the conversations' during the design process, focusing on who should be drawn into the conversation, when, and how.

They also had a novel approach to prototyping through role play, which has definite appeal for those of us who cringe at the idea of "treading the boards": they use amateur actors from across the civil service to act out the role plays for them. Creative talent deployment!

Governance is critical to their operation, and the approach they use is different from some. They have carefully constructed the group so it is 'small but interested'. Reporting to the group does not follow the usual conventions of formal reports, traffic lights, etc, but instead is more in the style of inviting collective reflection, challenge and direction setting.

This looks to be the stuff of adaptive leadership. No doubt, more adaptation and evolution will be required of them in the new government term.

Social innovation every day and everywhere

Posted by on 18 May 2015 | 0 Comments

NESTA, a financially independent entity focusing on innovation, particularly in the public sector, has an impressive suite of roles, operating from outside the formal system of government.

Staff generously shared their insights: Geoff Mulgan, Chief Executive (described by one of his staff as a 'Yes, and...' leader), Kirsten Bound, responsible for work on private sector innovation, as well as research and evaluation, Theo Keane, who works on building people's skills in innovation, and Adam Price, who is setting up an Innovation Lab in Wales. We also met with David Halpern who leads the Behavioural Insights team, and whose team also supports the What Works Centres. His team is partly funded and co-located with NESTA.

NESTA has a strong profile both within the UK and internationally. Kirsten's team is working with our own Callaghan Innovation in New Zealand, while her colleague Brenton Caffin is working to support the establishment of an innovation lab in Chile. The Behavioural Insights team has underway a capability building project in Melbourne with VicHealth.

Their work focuses on encouraging application of innovation methods to real world problems. They have identified there is a risk of getting stuck at the stage of 'playing around with methods and tools'. A further focus is to support rigour and evidence: moving beyond information sharing to the development of 'collective intelligence' to inform purposeful action, along with work to establish standards of evidence. Their work on research and evaluation is broad-based. From a NESTA point of view, methods such as randomised control trials, while valuable, are only applicable to a small set of public sector activities. Where their value lies is the generation of rich information on the nature of impacts and effect sizes.

While a large part of their stock in trade is innovation projects, they are committed to sharing their knowledge to build others' capability, codifying what NESTA does and creating learning materials. Upcoming products include advice on scaling up initiatives, and a joint paper with OECD and the World Bank on the 'science of delivery', as part of the Global Delivery Initiative.

They have a large capacity building project underway with the health system, in which they are working both top down (on leadership styles, risk, building a 'porous' culture) and bottom up/outside-in (small innovation projects, and building collective intelligence through working with patient groups). They deliberately work from the margins of the system, generating data and information, trying things out 'away from the spotlight', and bringing what they have learned back in.

Their perspective on innovation labs is that they fill a very real vacuum, providing space for prototyping and rapid innovation, but that it is important that they are not over-burdened with expectations, and that we avoid using labs as a way to 'release others in the system from the need to innovate'. Labs need to strike the right balance between capacity building on the one hand and solutions generation on the other.

Adam Price shared his perspective from building sustainable innovations in Wales (of similar scale to NZ) noting that "In a small country, to be effective you need all parts of the system in the room".

The arms-length position of NESTA provides it with some unique opportunities in how risks can be managed in work with Government. The bargain with Ministers that they have struck on particular projects has been along the lines of, 'Whatever we succeed at, you can take the credit, but if it goes wrong, it's our fault'. An advantage of them 'not being government' is that it is easier for them to start from the standpoint of the citizen, or the desired outcome, and invite the relevant agencies into a conversation, avoiding taking departments and services as the starting point of analysis.

The challenge is to be away from the spotlight to try things out, while having the visibility when you need it.

Going international – OECD

Posted by on 21 May 2015 | 0 Comments

Our main target for discussion in the OECD was the Directorate for Public Governance with a particular interest in their efforts to build an Observatory of Public Sector Innovation as well as their ongoing work on policy making systems (built around the 'Centres of Government' CoG network).

In a free ranging and open discussion with the Deputy Director of GOV, Luiz de Mello, Edwin Lau and Stefane Jacobzone we were reminded that OECD itself is effectively a microcosm of a national administration with similar challenges around breaking down silos, encouraging innovation and aligning budgets (in their case based on committees reflecting portfolio silos in national administrations) and performance systems to support strategic goals. Sadly no easy answers – at least we are collectively refining the questions. Earlier over breakfast, Stefano Scarpetta, Head of the OECD Directorate of Employment, Labour and Social Affairs told us about his attempts to work across the organisation's silos including in work on cross cutting issues like social inequality and gender (the gender theme came through in several of our discussions at OECD).

Edwin Lau and Marco Daglio gave us an inside look at the fledgling OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation – an attempt to build a repository of public sector innovations from across OECD countries.

Jo Hickling from the Treasury attended their conference last year alongside the rockstars of the public sector innovation world (e.g. Geoff Mulgan, Christian Bason). Edwin's insight resonated with us that 'innovation had the potential to change the relationship between citizens and civil servants' and that we should be talking about "citizen driven" rather than "citizen centric" public services. The notion of an 'innovation infrastructure' that we had alluded to in our Fellowship outline seemed to resonate with them. Edwin noted that while leadership was important, civil servants needed the skills (methods and capabilities), motivation (feeling empowered and incentivised) and a working environment that was conducive to innovation (performance management systems, support, permission, enabling risk management arrangements). We think that this capability and 'infrastructure' level of analysis will be of more use to countries than descriptions of actual innovations (which is a relative concept anyway - what is innovation in one country could be business as usual in another). How, why and with what methods, support and enablers innovation occurs seems to be a more fruitful avenue for international exchange and learning.

Andrea Uhrhammer gave us an overview of the Centre of Government work. The CoG network comprises the Heads of Prime Ministers/Presidents Offices (Sally was in charge of CoG in a previous incarnation at OECD). CoG meetings are very high-level Chatham House rules sessions dealing with issues at the political-administrative interface. Participants are a mixture of career public servants (e.g. UK, Canada, France) and political appointees (e.g. White House and some of the Nordics). How to build public sector innovation – in policy systems and processes – has been part of their recent discussions.

OECD is hungry for more participation from New Zealand: you get what you contribute and we felt that there was scope to help shape their work. They were particularly interested in NZ being represented at the Public Governance Ministerial later in the year (in Vienna) and at the Centre of Government meeting that will piggy-back on the Ministerial.

We were impressed with the renovated OECD digs - in particular the staff cafe (see below) with a pink theme that is - we have on good authority – affectionately referred to as 'The Barbie Lounge'.



Sally and Lis





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