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Innovation for Social Programs

ZSI Discussion Paper, Nr. 17 (2012)
ISSN 1818-4162



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Innovation for Social Programs

Editor and Publisher:

Zentrum für Soziale Innovation – Centre for Social Innovation

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www.zsi.at

ISSN 1818-4154

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Introduction

Social invention and innovation are extremely important for the renewal of social programs to ensure that they meet the needs and characteristics of populations at risk. Typically, federal provincial social programs have no research and development service intended to improve their programs. Not do they have an “early watch” service that scans innovative social projects for ideas which might enhance their services. They often do, however fund small and relatively isolated projects conducted by non-governmental organizations that are allowed to innovate in their methods as long as they abide by the department’s jurisdiction.

In Canada today there are a number of university courses for would-be social innovators, a few centres dedicated to supporting social invention or innovations, and a few foundations also in support of innovating in social programs. The purpose of this article is to compare and contrast three types of innovation projects and to suggest their relative likelihood of introducing innovations that become accepted on a widespread basis.

A few national governments, notably South Africa, Australia, Singapore and the United Kingdom introduced programs to encourage innovation by front line workers on the assumption that the workers want change and have ideas how their work procedures or organization could be more effective but are not making their recommendations known because of peer or supervisory contentment with the status quo. Furthermore, they may be aware of workers who did propose innovations and as a result were badly treated by the organization.

Other countries, such as Canada, contract with independent agencies to deliver services and allow, perhaps even encourage, some innovation in the process. In many such cases the workers in the non-governmental agencies are better educated, more optimistic, and more dedicated to making a change than their counterpart front line workers in government agencies. This article aspires to inform them of some of the challenges in getting their innovations accepted and implemented on a widespread basis.

A report by Ipsos Mori (2009) on a survey it conducted of British public servants, to gain their perception of the possibility of innovating from the bottom up stated that “there was a strong perception across a number of sectors that while user-centred innovation was preferable, cost savings were a stronger driver to innovations being implemented and sustained. These perceptions point to a hierarchy of innovation outcomes where innovations leading to cost savings are privileged over those which improve conditions for service providers and users. Given the broad preference for user-focussed innovations in teaching, health and policing, this ‘hierarchy of innovation outcomes’ has implications for frontline workers’ satisfaction with and interest in contributing innovations.

The Australian department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (2009) recognized the problem of getting the creative ideas of front line workers to the attention of senior policy makers and program administrators and proposed a ladder of innovation agents to support the ideas from the bottom to the top of each department.

The faith of governments in the potential for acceptable and important innovation by front line workers is indicative of their ignorance of their own staff. Many social workers, employment counsellors and other workers dealing with the public do not believe in the policies of their departments and frequently subvert them by not providing full entitlements to some clients as has been well documented by Lipsky (1980). Employment counsellors have had to refer unemployed clients to adult retraining programs, for example, to meet quotas even though they know the trainees will drop out early in the program (the dropout rate is often as high as 30%). If these workers were to give suggestions for innovations their sensible recommendations for lower quotas and better screening would be received with accusations of their not believing in the mission of the department, when their ideas could save significant dollars wrongly given in support of the education and training programs.

The reliance of governments on front line workers to create significant innovations in the delivery of social services can result only in recommendations for modest improvements in procedures amounting at best to some cost savings. This may reveal the true interest of governments in innovation: cost cutting leading to greater efficiency rather than innovation producing increased effectiveness.

The disaffection of front line workers with their jobs is suggested by an unpublished study of the attitudes of unemployed workers to the Canadian employment offices: the job seekers were more satisfied by the service if they simply looked at the job boards than if they spoke to a staff member.

The disconnect between the front line and policy makers is often based upon the ignorance on the part of the latter about the clients. The author witnessed a stunning example of this when the strategic planning division of the Canadian employment service anticipated an increasing level of unemployment and recommended that all government offices should be prepared to protect themselves from rioting unemployed workers. The economists had no idea that unemployed workers are depressed; blame themselves for not having got more education, for not having worked more diligently for their employers, and question whether they should have supported their unions in making certain demands over the years. Unemployed workers retreat into their homes and avoid the streets let alone engaging in activities that might be prejudicial to their later employment.

1. Managers Responsible for the Implementation of Innovations

Thus far, we have intimated that the opposition to the introduction of an innovation is based on group and individual perception of the possible threat posed by the innovation. Resistance to change is not solely the function of an individual's insecurity or indifference. The very nature of organization and the types of people found at each level represent unique challenges to the innovator. The following four characterizations of people who actually deliver services to the public and of their supervisors shed light on the task of the change agent.

Lipsky (1980) examined what happens at the point where policy is translated into practice, in various human service bureaucracies such as schools, courts and welfare agencies. He argued that in the end policy implementation comes down to the people who actually implement it (e.g.

teachers, lawyers, social workers). They are the 'street-level bureaucrats', and they exercise a large amount of influence over how public policy is actually carried out. Lipsky discussed several pressures that determine the way in which *street-level bureaucrats* implement policies. These include the problem of limited resources, the continuous negotiation that is necessary in order to make it seem like one is meeting targets, and the relations with (non-voluntary) clients. Some of the patterns of practice that street-level bureaucrats adopt in order to cope with these pressures are different ways of rationing the services, and ways of 'processing' clients in a manageable manner.

The street level bureaucrat decides what benefits, programs or services each client will receive in spite of the clients' entitlements. Their decisions are based on what they think of the policy or program and the extent to which they think each client is worthy of the program. They can cripple an innovation by denying it to some clients, or half-heartedly implementing it, or indeed in distorting the program. Thus, the street level bureaucrat must be made a partner in the innovation, and the innovator must be ready to adapt the innovation to the realities as seen by the front line worker.

Maccoby (1978) described three types of supervisors, which provides the basis for inferring the degree to which they would support innovations within their part of an organization. The immediate supervisors of the front line workers tend to be either "craftspersons" or "organization" persons, as he called them:

"The craftsperson as supervisor tends to be quiet, sincere, modest and practical and primarily interested in the work itself, the problem to be solved, and the challenge of doing quality work. They have a strong sense of self-worth based on knowledge, skill, discipline and self-reliance. They see others, workers as well as managers, in terms of whether they help or hinder them in doing good work. Rather than engaging and trying to master the system with the cooperation of others who share their values, the craftspersons tend to do their own thing and go along, sometimes reluctantly, toward goals they do not share, enjoying whatever opportunities they find for interesting work. These supervisors are likely to ignore any innovation except those that allow them to do their work more to their liking."

The organization person as supervisor is primarily interested in the good of the total organization; they believe that their future is tied to that of the organization. At best, the organization person exhibits a concern for other people and emphasizes the human side of the organization. At their weakest, the organization person is fearful and submissive, concerned with security even more than success. Identifying with the organization, and seeking safety as part of the organization family, they are also overly sensitive to interpersonal undercurrents and may suffer severe anxiety about the security of their position. These supervisors are likely to see threats in any proposed changes.

It is clear that these supervisors are not seeking innovations, and to get them interested in new ways of doing the work requires that issues of job security and quality of the results must be addressed up front.

The type of manager who loves innovation (not necessarily for the merits of the innovation itself as perhaps for being perceived as forward thinking) is the "gamesperson".

The gamesperson as a supervisor is a risk-taker whose main interest is in the challenge and whose main goal in life is to be a winner. As the label suggests, he or she views life and work as a game, is fascinated by technique and new methods, and takes delight in the tactics and strategies involved in the organization contest. The gamesperson tends to be interested in new developments, is likeable, engaging and gregarious, but enjoys autonomy. Their attitudes are liberal but more pragmatic than idealistic, and they are not convinced social reformers. The gamesperson is the best prospect to support an innovation, but risks having a short life as the opponents of change gang up on him or her.

To a large extent I have dealt with the risks to the innovator in a large organization, they are quite different in a small agency. As personnel director of a small manufacturing company I recommended to the president that we introduce an employee performance review system similar to those in larger firms. He instantly agreed and told me to implement the program. His approval was similar to senior executives in many organizations when they liked the idea on first hearing of it: implement it without reservation and without additional resources; and no naysayers were prepared to voice reservations.

The performance review system was similar to most; it required the supervisor to describe the employee's performance over the past year and to recommend performance targets for the forthcoming year along with suggested developmental activities. This was reviewed by the supervisor's manager and then discussed with the worker.

The results were surprising and dismaying: the employees discovered how little their supervisors actually knew of their work; the employees were terrified of even the slightest hint of criticism being put in their files; the managers discovered that the supervisors were afraid to criticize a worker. Nothing could have been more harmful to company morale than the performance review system. In this case, the innovation was readily implemented but the results were the opposite of those intended.

Like front line workers, front line supervisors have an enormous influence on how an innovation will be implemented. It is essential to understand their personal agenda in the process of persuading them of the merits of the innovation.

2. Innovation at high and low levels in a department

The scope of a social invention centre would have the mandate to propose laws and to generate organizations and procedures that affect the ways that people relate to themselves individually or collectively. There are a number of significant differences to be considered if a decision is to be made whether to seek innovation at the front line, by a funded organization such as a consultancy, an NGO, an incorporated society, or a semi-autonomous research centre, these are discussed below. Innovations developed by the front line or by a funded organization are most likely to be incremental in the changes that it effects whereas an invention centre may have the power of making major reforms. A comparison is presented in Table 1, below. It compares high-level research centres in the department, front line innovators and grant-receiving organizations.

| Characteristics | Departmental Invention Centres | Front line Innovators | Funded innovators |
|---|---|--|---|
| Principal function | To identify social needs and problems of clients and create practical and new ways to resolve them. To promote the adoption of the inventions by the department and other appropriate agencies. | Identifies one or more problems with the implementation of policies, programs or procedures and make recommendations to align the work more in line with the intent, and within the limits of the jurisdiction of the unit as well as budget considerations. Evaluates policies and programs against the needs and characteristics of clients and make recommendations. | Evaluates policies and programs against the needs and characteristics of clients and make recommendations to develop and implement new ways of achieving the intent of legislation or policies. |
| Access to decision makers | A social invention centre constantly cultivates senior policy makers and administrators in order to: (1) carry out the research and development that it knows is required; (2) obtain necessary funding, facilities, etc. (3) obtain approval for experimental field tests of new methods being developed.; (4) make arrangements to gather data through surveys and other means; (5) promote adoption of the methods developed, and (6) obtain feedback from users to gain information that can be used in re-development. | The front line innovator has no access to senior levels and gets no additional funding for dissemination work. | Ready access to the branch of the department that awards the contracts. |
| Isolation from non-productive events | Staff are free from such time-consuming events as meetings on operational issues, preparing responses to complaints, and preparing reports on operational matters. | Front line staff have such distractions from their work. | No distractions except those imposed by the funding branch such as to make presentations, receive auditors, etc. |

| Characteristics | Departmental Invention Centres | Front line Innovators | Funded innovators |
|---|---|---|---|
| Funding | Senior management provides support based on concept papers submitted by the centre. They top management usually do some monitoring but not second-guessing. | Must select innovative ideas that fit within the budget of the operating unit. | As contained in their contract. May also receive funding from other sources... |
| Certainty of success | Uncertain, as the centre attempts to resolve an issue previously unsolved. Chances of success are increased by the thoroughness and originality of the concept paper, the quality of staff assigned to it, and the time at their disposal to do the necessary work | High, as ideas are based in the immediate work of the unit. | Moderate as the plan is for an experimental project, but determination and flexibility to change their procedures as they project proceeds... |
| Territoriality or jurisdiction | Centres are expected to ignore jurisdictions and find what works regardless, and this is why they need funding without strings to current jurisdictions. | Projects respect the jurisdiction boundaries of the department and unit. | As determined by the contract but usually has the freedom to cross boundaries if they deem it necessary. |
| Department's tolerance of failure | High, as senior management is prepared to gamble that the Centre can do what it thinks it can do. | Low, as the operating unit expects concrete results that can be accommodated within its regular budget. | Relatively high as the department knows it can refuse future grants or contracts to the organization if they fail. |
| Promotion of adoption of the invention or innovation | Fairly extensive activity required as the successful invention: (1) may have been prepared and tested with little or no involvement with front line; (2) may not fit comfortably within the scope of programs, services and jurisdictions of the department; (3) advocacy may be required to get the department to adjust its regulations and | As the innovation has taken place in the front line it may not have been visible to senior administrators and policy makers and in this case will require considerable and respectful advocacy at those levels to achieve widespread adoption. Typically the unit does not have money for advocacy. | Keen to promote what they have done as a means of getting additional contracts. |

| Characteristics | Departmental Invention Centres | Front line Innovators | Funded innovators |
|---|---|--|---|
| | terms of reference to accommodate the invention; (4) the invention may have value to other departments, and demonstration projects may be undertaken with them. | | |
| Interaction with potential adopters | Frequent and the staff are free to meet with potential adopters anywhere in the country. | Seldom as innovators are limited by their jurisdiction and budget. | Keen to promote their achievements with the hope of getting additional contracts. |
| Resources | Has ready access to libraries, experts, consultants, etc. | Only the resources available to the unit. | Typically they are more highly trained than front line workers and have accessed best practices of other projects. |
| Training of implementers and their supervisors | A training program must be prepared and offered by the centre for offices that are going to adopt the program. | A training manual may be required for other units if they adopt the innovation. | They may get a contract to do this if their methods are to be implemented. |
| Follow-through activity | Following the adoption by the department the Centre may monitor and promote the adoption of the innovation | Senior levels of the department may not become aware of the innovation and no further activity will be taken. | Projects get more attention by the regular service and the contract or grants branch. And may get contracts or grants to do more. |
| Evaluation | The measuring instruments may have to be invented. | Value would be readily apparent to the unit management | Important to have some form of evaluation so they do best possible job in the hopes of getting further contracts. |
| Return on investment | In a few cases the invention may be copyrighted or patented and thereby bring revenue. More importantly, it should solve problems that were previously intractable and costly | Typically, there is no revenue source for the innovation but the innovation may realize operational efficiency or effectiveness. | In its evaluation the agency typically prepares a return on investment statement. |

| Characteristics | Departmental Invention Centres | Front line Innovators | Funded innovators |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|
| Acceptance | Invention centres are protected from the enemies of change, as they are usually supported from the highest organization level | Innovators typically encounter opponents to change who may try to sabotage their efforts. . | Agencies may gain more and more acceptance as they provide improved services and keep the granting or contracting branch well informed |
| Culture of change | Invention centres are mandated to create change and the workers of different projects support each other. | Innovators are often lonely champions of their projects. | Very strong |
| Management | The manager of the centre is a convinced reformer and a great champion for the projects | The manager has many operational issues to attend to and innovation is a sideline. | Report to the granting or contracting branch. |
| Career path | | | Innovators in local independent agencies typically rise in the ranks by getting a job as the director of another agency, and after a few years of that win a competition to become a “policy analyst” in a government department that conducts social programs. |

Table 1: Comparison of departmental Innovation centres, front line innovators and local grant receiving organization dedicated to innovation

I have had the privilege of being in charge of two social invention centres of the Canadian government. In the first case I was the executive director of a social invention centre (Saskatchewan NewStart Inc.) established as a nonprofit company financed entirely by the government of Canada but owned by the federal minister for employment, a provincial minister of education and a five person board of directors, of which I was chairman.

This unusual arrangement was deemed necessary because the federal government wanted major changes in the training curriculum of unemployed workers but the design and delivery of such training was the constitutional responsibility of the provincial ministry of education, but ministries of education were not interested in causing changes to be made. It was a curious situation in that the federal government did not see the need for innovation in its operations

(assessment and referral to the training but did see the need in provincial programs and the ministries of education program and providing employment counselling to trainees) did not see that they should cause innovation in their programs and particularly in the case of adult training. Innovating within your own domain was not a popular idea at the federal and provincial levels.

It was thought that such a company could be free of jurisdictional issues, union contracts binding governments to certain procedures, practices of the public service commissions and of the government procurement agencies. These freedoms were considered necessary to allow full flexibility and prompt action. Our budget was guaranteed for five years and the monies released on acceptance of an annual proposal containing concept papers describing our intended work.

In the second case I was a director general in the federal department responsible for the employment, immigration and the employment insurance services. My staff of about 65 people were charged with: inventing new methods of career guidance for school children and for adults; creating new methods of job search for unemployed workers; developing and installing a competency-based professional level in-service training program for 2,500 employment counsellors; undertaking an overhaul of the Canadian Classification and Dictionary of Occupations; and, the creation and organizing of an annual national consultation on career development; etc. The projects required approval of the deputy and assistant deputy ministers on the basis of concept papers. My branch was not designated as an official innovation unit but became recognized as such because of the number and range of projects we took on over time.

As I look back over these two types of innovation centres I have come to the conclusion that independent invention centres have many advantages, and that the departmental invention centre requires very senior executives who are aware of the inadequacies of current procedures and have an appetite for innovation and risk-taking. The front line efforts at innovation have merit for incremental changes but are unlikely to produce significant improvements in services.

Anyone who has tried to introduce innovations to frontline workers knows well the reluctance to adopt new ways. When, at the strong urging of the union representing employment counsellors in the Canadian employment service (see earlier), a training program was introduced many of the counsellors took early retirement or asked for transfers to avoid being trained. Similarly, when the Canadian Revenue Agency tried to introduce computerization of tax returns and information concerning tax regulations so many of the frontline workers objected that the government had to make the introduction voluntary. These two examples of front line resistance to change are offered as indicators of the difficulty in getting workers to innovate, and indeed to show that those who might like to innovate might be actively discouraged by their peers.

3. The role of grant or contract agencies in promoting innovation in government

NGOs and consulting firms frequently get grants from senior levels of government to make studies conducting action research with populations that the ministry ultimately serves. Seldom, however, has a government funded these activities to better understand their own policies but rather to find out some answers or directions that they may recommend to other jurisdictions (usually a lower level of government that carries out the activities with some funding from it). Municipal governments, on the other hand, are more receptive to the experimental work of some NGOs such as the Social Development Center SUS and Participle both of which have extensive and innovative projects which are adopted by several municipalities. These organizations may receive additional funds from other sources to go beyond the jurisdictional boundaries or to work in greater depth established by their departmental grant. And, in these circumstances are in a better position to innovate.

Ministries of education seldom introduce innovations in education. Rather they count on the larger school boards to take on this risk-taking function and when an innovation is successful and adopted by several school boards then the ministry recommends the procedure to smaller, often rural, school boards.

One might adopt the hypothesis that NGOs might have influence in experimenting in and then influencing municipal councils and hope that a critical mass of them adopts the new procedures to the point where the provincial or national government endorses and even encourages the widespread use of the innovations. This would appear to be the strategy of Participle as it seeks resources to organize the same projects in collaboration with several municipal councils. It appears to be reasonable to think this is the same strategy that the Social Development Center SUS is using in dealing with several municipalities.

According to Van de Ven (1990) there are two common alternative strategies for adopting and implementing innovations in large organizations: a *breadth* strategy in which the innovation is implemented across all organizational units simultaneously, and a *depth* strategy in which the innovation is implemented and debugged in a demonstration site before it is generalized to other organizational units. The breadth strategy is more successful than the depth strategy because:

- a) Once the depth strategy is introduced and heralded by top management, the demonstration project loses visible attention, as their agendas become preoccupied with other pressing management problems.
- b) With a breadth strategy, top management stays in control of the innovation implementation process—thereby increasing (rather than decreasing) its power. Moreover, resources within the control of top management can ensure success better than limited budgets for innovation at a demonstration site.
- c) With a depth strategy, it is easier for opposing forces in other parts of the organization to mobilize efforts to sabotage a "favoured" demonstration site than it is to produce evidence of the merits and generalizability of an innovation.

If Van de Ven is correct then NGOs conducting individual experimental projects are unlikely to have an impact on the policies or programs of a government department.

Horne (2008) saw the need for brokers and mentors (what he called intermediaries) that would be an agent to help local projects to get recognition and be funded to scale up their projects more widely in the department and have each other integrate their successful innovations to provide an even better service to clients. He listed the values of intermediaries as follows:

1. The first is the relationship between ‘innovation creators’ and ‘innovation seekers’. Innovation is a collaborative social process that feeds on relationships between diverse groups of people. Intermediaries support social networks of innovators who may collaborate on some things and compete on others, but all benefit from the connections they make, the exposure to ideas, and the access to unfamiliar knowledge.
2. Innovation intermediaries in public services also broker relationships between policy makers and practitioner innovators. The purpose of brokering these relationships is to create new ideas for policy, and to create better conditions for an innovation to develop and grow in practice.
3. Expert consulting – they provide solutions to the particular innovation problems that their clients have.
4. Experience sharing – they transfer knowledge and learning from different organizations, sharing the lessons of innovations that have succeeded and failed elsewhere. There is an explicit role for intermediaries to help organizations look around the world and research the way others have tackled similar problems.
5. Brokering – they try to match potential partners who could best develop and spread an innovation by working together.
6. Diagnosis and problem definition – they help organizations understand and define their needs for innovation.
7. Bench marking – they help organizations to identify and engage with leading practice in other organizations, sectors and countries.
8. Change agency – they provide coaching, consultancy and training to organizations running innovation projects.

We might add to this list the following three capabilities that apply to intermediaries working with government departments: 1. Influencing policy is a role that public service intermediaries can play; 2. An advocate for the public The voice of the service user can often get lost in discussions about how to do things differently. 3. Providing a methodology and methods –

innovation intermediaries often provide a methodology for innovation, which explains how innovation occurs and provides tools and processes that can be used by the projects.

Horne wrote “Our understanding of how innovation happens has changed dramatically over the last 30 years. We have learnt that innovation ...from networks of innovators collaborating and recombining old ideas from diverse sources to create new ideas. Innovation-rich sectors tend to be highly networked, with a high number of random connections between individuals and organizations and a high level of social, cultural and professional diversity within these social networks. This model of distributed innovation explains the important role that brokers play in establishing and maintaining such networks and relationships, especially in sectors where these relationships do not form easily. Building relationships between innovators in different organizations and creating rules that make it safe to share, be open about problems and potential solutions is important. Brilliant invention does not automatically lead to innovation. Creating relationships between original inventors and those who understand how to take new ideas to scale is key. This understanding of innovation as an open and distributed process requires a strong network of relationships involving many different players, including service users – and explains in part why innovation brokers in public services become strong advocates for user participation. There is an important role for intermediary organizations in supporting innovation – and none more so than in public services.”

The combining and reporting of individual project discoveries lead to paradigm changes rather than local, often isolated innovations.

To Horne’s concept of broker I would add the role of mentor. A mentor: is a senior person or organization that coaches and opens doors for more junior people and organizations. We have several prominent examples of organizations mentoring organizations here in Ottawa most notably in the arts field. For example, the oldest and largest professional theatre company has mentoring programs for the managing artistic directors of smaller companies. The programme includes lectures, internships and advising on several topics. I know a number of theatre companies who have taken the help. Although all the companies are competitors for audiences and funding the mentoring relationship remains strong.

Why a department might fund a broker/mentor

As I have stated before I was the director general responsible for the assistance that the Canadian employment service gave job seekers. In this capacity I received many proposals from individuals and organizations to develop and conduct counselling and placement services. Some of these proposals were excellent, but many appeared to have the germ of a good idea but were inadequately developed and we could not be sure just what, in reality, they would do if funded. I am sure we missed some very good ideas because the proponents were not used to drawing up budgets, stating goals in behavioral terms, and dealing with government. Even some who got money apparently never again looked at their proposal and the terms of their contract and did things that were completely unexpected and irrelevant. Had I thought of contracting with an organization that had made excellent proposals and conducted their projects satisfactorily to help these neophytes I would have done so. In addition, I would contract with such an

organization to network with various contractors for the purpose of making proposals for next generation projects that would incorporate the best ideas from the isolated projects so we could have offered a better service to unemployed workers, and a more uniform service across the country so all citizens got the same quality service. This is the argument that I would make to government for funding a mentor/broker.

4. Positioning of a Social Invention Centre

The purpose of a social invention centre is to create solutions to the social needs or problems of a large organization such as a company or government department. They typically report to senior management and their research is influential in framing new policies, programs and projects. They are well-funded and staffed by specialists and may have field research stations. Government departments representing health, agriculture, mining, and fisheries typically have extensive laboratories because they know that research is clearly important to furthering their policies, programs and services. The social departments, on the other hand, have generally not recognized the need to invent new methods of addressing the needs and problems of their clients. To a large extent they believe that adjusting policies and renaming programs will serve them adequately.

The social departments do have a grants and contribution fund to support worthy and relevant projects but they do not exercise a follow-up function to learn from these projects. They need to have their own social invention centres to invent new methods that will make them more effective in achieving their goals.

Social invention centres reporting directly to senior management stand in sharp contrast to small local experimental projects that may take place in conjunction with one or two local offices. These projects may be funded in part by the department or, perhaps more frequently, by foundations and other well-wishers. Because they are so small and isolated from senior management their inventions seldom gain the attention of the policy-makers and therefore, regardless how stellar their results there is very little likelihood that any will be adopted by the department. This is a pity because there are many idealistic social innovators working in hand-to-mouth agencies hoping that their projects will be recognized and scaled up in the organization.

It is surprising how very few countries are seriously interested in achieving efficiencies or increasing effectiveness of their programs and services. Some are keen on cost reduction but apparently don't see that creating new methods of delivering services as a means of achieving their goal. Those two or three countries that have an innovation program believe that front line workers can make significant innovations but when it comes to innovating with internet technology they have a high level team in place. The fact that senior levels of government departments rely on front line workers suggests that the executives have little understanding of what happens at the front line in the delivery of their services. From my own experience and from observing others I have come to the following conclusions:

1. The person who officially decides the organization will adopt an innovation is often not involved in its implementation.

2. Those who will implement the innovation are often not advised or consulted in advance
3. The decision to adopt does not necessarily include authorization for additional resources that may be required
4. The proponent of an innovation does not always reveal the implications and costs of implementation. A large organization, and especially those that are highly decentralized, has many levels where decisions are made and it is the innovators job to find the level that needs the innovation.
5. A large organization and especially one that is highly decentralized is rife with different priorities, values and needs. In some cases there is hostility from the bottom to the top.
6. Transient deputy ministers and ADMs have no interest in innovating as they do not understand their departments' functioning.
7. Innovators have a short life expectancy in government
8. An innovation is not a "pretty little thing" and may be seen as "a tool of the devil to undermine good practice".
9. Front line workers provide invaluable insight into what works and what does not work; they can make recommendations that only they would be aware of because they live the services daily with real clients. The front line workers are not going to innovate with major projects, that is not their role or their expertise.
10. Dedicated invention centres have great potential to create and introduce significant improvements in policies and *programs*.
11. There is a need to cultivate the neophyte innovators by means of brokers and mentors
12. NGOs conducting small innovative projects at the local level have little impact on policy or programs.

5. Recommendations

There are but four governments that are known to be interested in promoting innovations in their own delivery of services, apart from the several that are keen to replace the human delivery of services with information technology. The programs aimed at generating innovations all call upon the front line to initiate new ways of working. Creating a culture of innovation is a major challenge for the many reasons cited in this paper.

It is recommended that government departments establish at a senior level autonomous research centres to create new methods of designing and delivering the programs and services of the department. It is further recommended that these centres be established as not for profit companies or societies, possible in collaboration with other government departments, to enable them to work outside the restrictions imposed by one department's jurisdiction in order that they might create experimental programs that meet the needs of the population being addressed. The need for new integrated services is particularly evident in the very high rates of recidivism, but it is safe to assume that virtually all departments have similar, but less obvious, failures in their current programs.

The following recommendations are offered:

1. All governments need to recognize that it is possible and desirable, and indeed necessary, that they introduce new methods of delivering their programs and services for both greater effectiveness and economy.
2. Governments need to recognize the perils that would-be innovators face and provide means to protect and encourage them.
3. In seeking innovations in the human delivery of programs and services governments would do well to follow their example in creating and introducing system-wide information technology applications and create an innovation planning group at a very senior level in the organization.

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