



Australian Government



PUBLIC SECTOR
innovation

APS Innovation Action Plan



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Introduction

The role of the Australian Public Service (APS) is to support the Australian Government in responding to economic, social and environmental challenges, through effective policy development and service delivery. It needs to employ the most up-to-date thinking and approaches to deal with increasingly complex issues including demographic pressures, fiscal constraint, and ever-increasing expectations of the public and the business community. To thrive in the continually changing world environment, the APS needs the leadership and mandate to deliver innovative solutions to address multidimensional issues and problems.

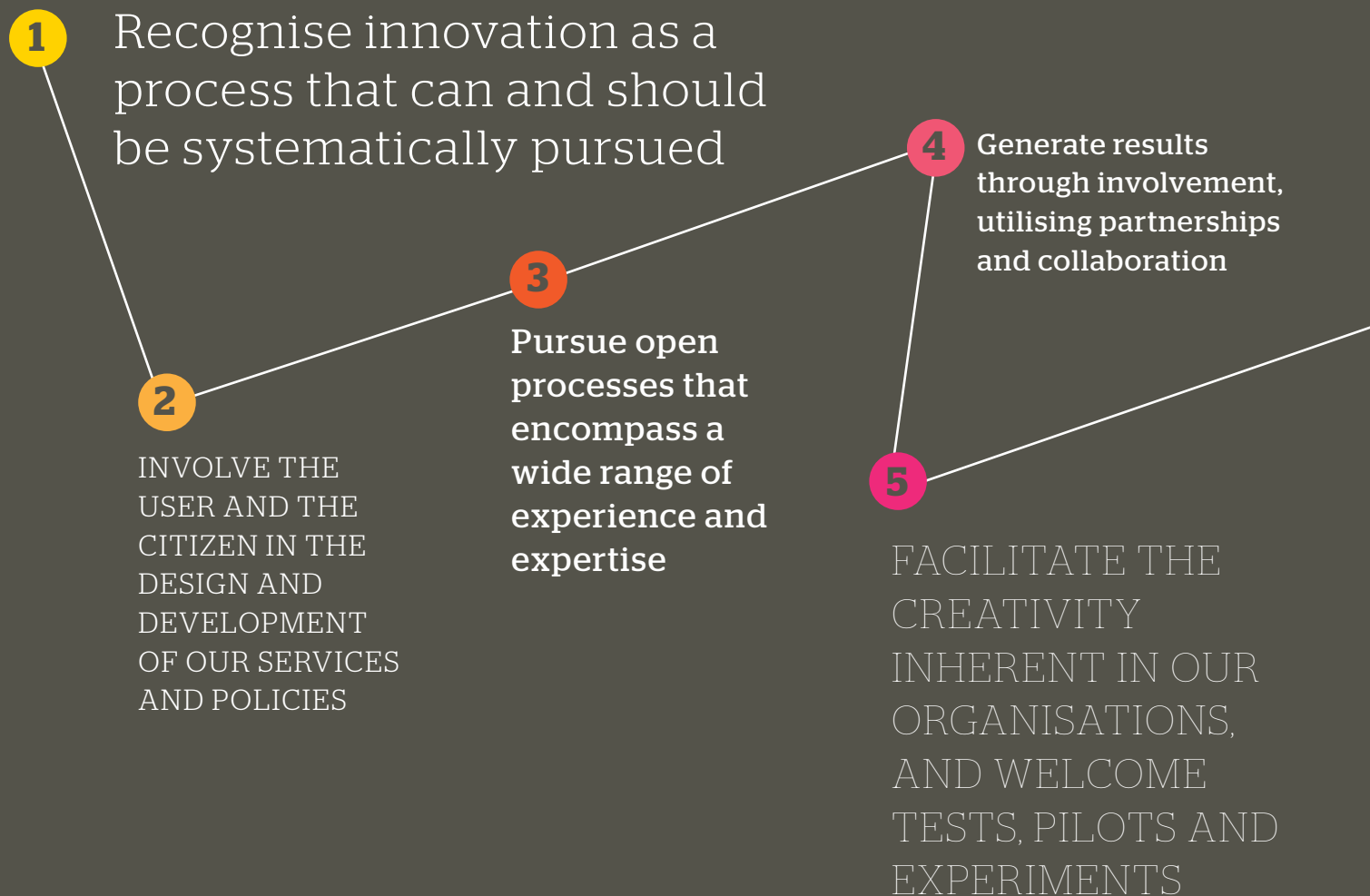
The Innovation Action Plan, endorsed by the highest levels of the APS, provides that mandate. It acknowledges that harnessing the innovative potential of the APS and the wider citizenry is critical to success, and so it sets out principles and a structure to achieve this. Complementing other APS reform initiatives, the Action Plan provides a framework for embedding innovation in the APS to achieve better outcomes.

The Innovation Action Plan provides the platform and agenda to build an innovative culture in the APS by supporting creativity, responsiveness and delivery excellence. Innovation is not new to the APS, with many agencies having implemented innovative initiatives and many individuals having embraced innovation. However, efforts to systematically embed innovation into the operation of the APS are relatively recent.

Openness to ideas and new ways of doing things will keep the APS at the forefront of public administration. Our aim is that the APS will be a stimulating and rewarding environment for our staff and this will be reflected in our results and achievements.

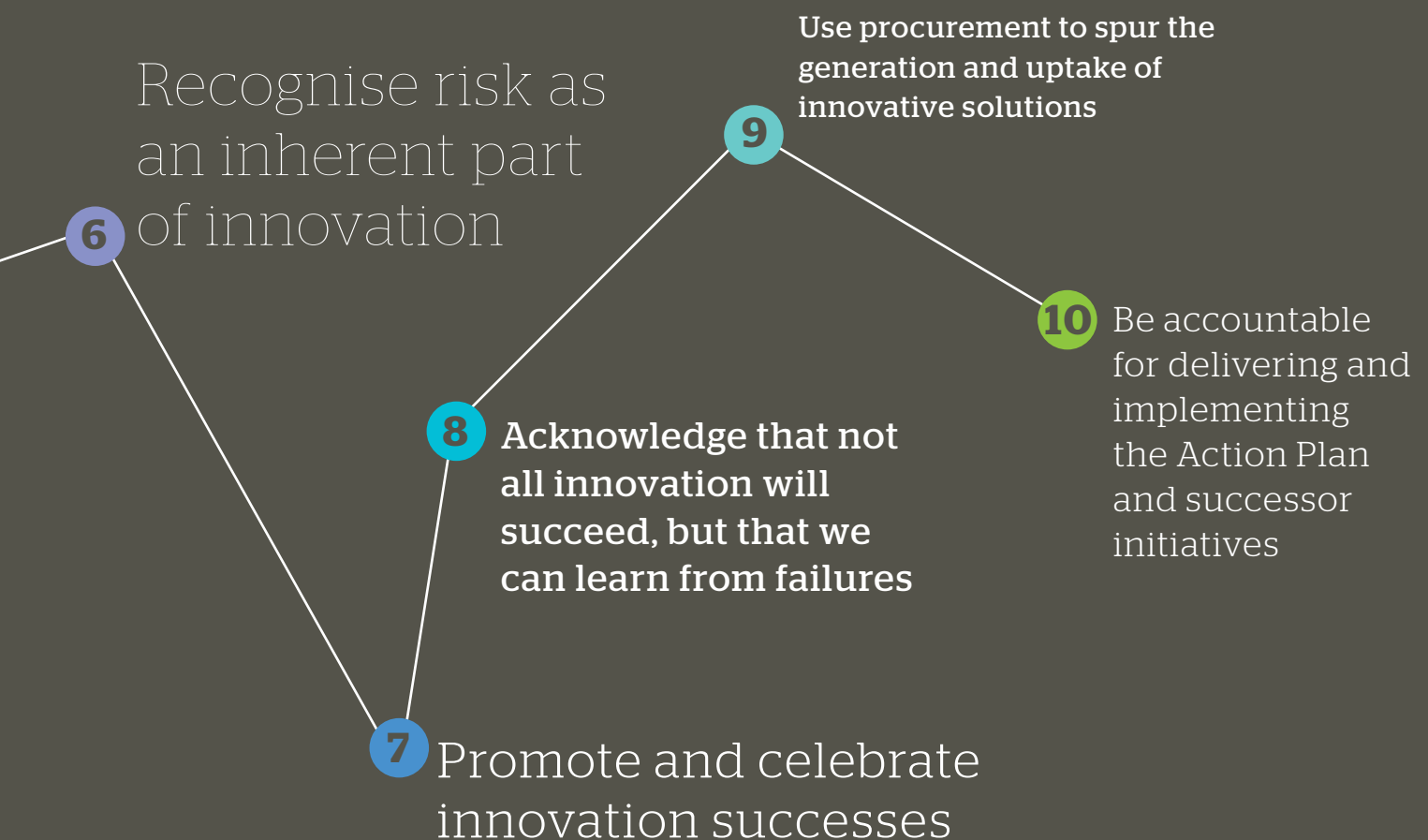
To formally demonstrate our commitment to a more innovative APS, we, the members of the Secretaries Board, commit to implementing and adhering to an Innovation Compact and Innovation Action Plan for our organisations. We recognise that implementing the Innovation Compact and the Innovation Action Plan is a crucial step on the ongoing journey to position the APS for the future.

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compact for APS leaders





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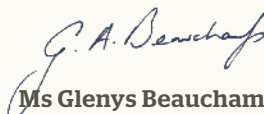
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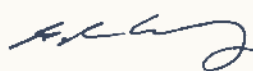
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The plan will better
mobilise resources in
the APS to respond to
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experimentation and
ongoing learning.

Action areas

The APS Innovation Action Plan is designed to assist the APS to develop an innovative culture. It will build innovation performance within the APS to provide better outcomes for the broader constituency.

The generation, selection, implementation, sustainment and diffusion of ideas will be explicitly supported at all levels, and agencies will formulate and implement strategies to harness innovation for delivery of high quality policy and services.

The Action Plan will better mobilise resources in the APS to respond to challenges through collaboration, experimentation and ongoing learning. It supports harnessing new technologies, analytical disciplines and applying new perspectives.

The Action Plan focuses on the following four action areas:¹

1. Developing an innovation **consciousness** within the APS
2. Building innovation **capacity**
3. Leveraging the power of **co-creation**
4. Strengthening leadership so there is the **courage** to innovate at all levels

Initiatives associated with each action area are outlined overleaf.

¹ The four action areas have been adapted from Christian Bason, 2010, *Leading Public Sector Innovation: Co-creating for a better society*, The Policy Press, Bristol.

1 Consciousness

To embed innovation in public sector organisations we need to build, share and maintain a common language about what innovation means and create awareness of key innovative practices and insights. Without shared concepts and notions of what it means to engage in innovation, a climate receptive to change will not take hold. The **Consciousness** component of the Action Plan provides a framework to embed a common understanding of what innovation means and why it is important in the public sector context. To improve connectivity, access to information, and communicate the importance of innovation, which are critical to raising consciousness, this Action Plan proposes the following initiatives.

Innovation Network

The Public Sector Innovation Network is a community of public servants, academics and practitioners interested in innovation in the public sector. Innovation is rarely easy and requires support, advice and encouragement.

The Network provides a community of peers who can assist each other in creating, applying and sharing innovative ideas and will, over time, provide a rich source of innovative capability. Public servants (including state, territory and local government employees) who wish to join the Network can email the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research at: PSI@innovation.gov.au.

The Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research also facilitates a practitioner sub-network of those responsible for driving innovation in their agency.

Innovation Blog and Innovation Showcase

The Public Sector Innovation Blog is a platform to assist innovation practitioners in the APS to share experiences of, and insights into, public sector innovation.

The Public Sector Innovation Showcase will enable government agencies and departments to share and celebrate case studies of innovation, and to consider how they might apply such innovative practices within their own operations to achieve better outcomes.

Agencies are encouraged to contribute to both of these platforms and share their stories about how innovation is being applied in their organisation. These platforms are open to state, territory and local government agencies and can be accessed through the Blog at <http://innovation.govspace.gov.au> and the Showcase at <http://showcase.govspace.gov.au>.



Public Sector Innovation Events

Recognising that long term value is captured through dissemination and diffusion of innovations, the APS and its agencies will institute mechanisms to recognise, celebrate and share innovation efforts. This will be done by:

- > agencies being encouraged to introduce their own innovation awards, potentially as a part of the existing Australia Day Awards processes
- > supporting the Australian Public Service Commission to include public sector innovation as a key theme in its event planning, including for SES breakfasts and APS 200 events
- > supporting the Australian Public Service Commission in organising innovation related events around key opportunities such as visiting experts
- > agencies holding innovation themed events to discuss, share and celebrate public sector innovation within their agencies.

Agency Corporate Plans

In order to build the broader case for innovation and to explain why it is important, agencies will incorporate innovation into their strategic plans. This will help agencies harness the power of innovation and help staff know how they can contribute to the innovation efforts of their agency. This process will begin immediately.

2 Capacity

Building innovation capacity increases the ability of public sector organisations to effectively generate and execute new solutions to today's complex problems. The **Capacity** component of the Action Plan aims to enhance the public sector innovation skills and knowledge base. As new skills will be needed and agencies will need to monitor innovation capabilities, this Action Plan supports innovation skills development through the following initiatives.

Innovation Toolkit

The Innovation Toolkit is a package of practical innovation resources to support the APS at all levels to generate innovative solutions. It will include:

- > advice to help people understand innovation and how it can be harnessed
- > guidance on how to implement innovative ideas
- > a description of innovation tools and how they may be best utilised
- > information that assists agencies to adopt the tools as needed
- > links to other resources.

The Toolkit resources will be evolutionary, recognising that we still have much to learn about these approaches and how they are best used. Further information on the Innovation Toolkit can be obtained by emailing the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research at: PSI@innovation.gov.au.

The Innovation Toolkit can be accessed through <http://innovation.govspace.gov.au>.

Secondments/Mobility

The Australian Public Service Commission, as part of its considerations in enhancing APS capability, will look to develop secondment/mobility options for APS staff to expose them to new ideas and influences from the public, private and community sectors.

Secondment and mobility options will broaden the knowledge of APS staff and enable better connections with the broader community. Participants will bring different perspectives, knowledge and networks to their work in the public service.

Australian Public Sector Innovation Indicators Project (APSII)

The APSII project will develop indicators to facilitate the measurement of innovation performance by public agencies. The project will survey innovation in the APS to better understand our innovation capability and to enable agencies to better assess their innovation capabilities and performance.

3 Co-creation

Until recently, the innovation process was primarily thought of in “black box” terms, with organisations utilising unique, internalised capabilities to turn inputs into innovative outputs. This view has shifted towards a recognition that the public sector now needs to more effectively use the innovative capacity of a much broader base. **Co-creation**, through design and experimentation, embodies this thinking, with the public sector requiring new processes and platforms to more effectively integrate design, delivery and user areas. To enable the APS to meet the challenge of delivering solutions to today’s complex problems and to explore new methods in solution formulation, development and delivery, this Action Plan proposes the following initiatives.

APS Design Centre

A centre (or centres) dedicated to innovative approaches could assist to:

- > develop and test new approaches to complex policy challenges and to enhance government program delivery
- > build agency and institutional capability for collaboration and innovation
- > apply and test tools/processes and bring new skills to support innovation in the APS
- > capture, synthesise and disseminate examples of best practice in Australia and overseas
- > respond to citizen demand for responsive and innovative services.

The proposed initiative could inspire creativity and collaboration and provide a platform to test innovative solutions. It could help practitioners to adopt new perspectives in thinking about a problem.

Such an approach would facilitate cross-agency interaction involving public servants, academics, citizens and businesses to create solutions for societal problems. It could fast track building the capacity of the APS to develop innovative policy and service delivery, keeping the APS at the forefront of citizen delivery and responsiveness.

Development work on this approach is underway, with an outcome expected in late 2011.

Innovation Outreach

All members of the APS are potential innovators. As part of the broad responsibility for efficiency initiatives the Department of Finance and Deregulation will look to identify and communicate across government, innovative suggestions for efficiency gains and productivity improvements which may be made by public servants or the public. In doing this the Department of Finance and Deregulation will investigate the merits of (a) an Improvements Register which is able to be shared across agencies to build expertise and momentum, and (b) public sector outreach initiatives like the US SAVE Awards.

4 Courage

To generate transformational change the APS must display the courage to innovate, despite day to day pressures and entrenched constraints. The **Courage** component seeks to embody this ethos through measures that recognise leadership, and reward innovative achievement. To provide a platform for the APS leadership, this Action Plan proposes the following initiatives.

Leadership Mandate

The APS Innovation Action Plan and its attendant **Innovation Compact**, developed by the APS200 Project on Public Sector Innovation, are endorsed by our Agency Secretaries. This is a major commitment to the future role for innovation within the APS. It is a commitment to making our APS agencies responsive and agile. The **Compact** will take effect immediately.

Ongoing leadership

The APS200 as a whole is responsible for implementing the Action Plan and embedding a culture welcoming of innovation in the APS. Senior APS executives will be responsible for implementing the innovation agenda within their agencies by including innovation as a key component of organisational performance systems, and hardwiring innovation into agency leadership systems.

The Secretaries Board, as the pre-eminent body for issues affecting the APS, will oversee the implementation of the Innovation Action Plan's initiatives and recommendations from *Empowering Change: Fostering Innovation in the Australian Public Service*. Reporting on the implementation of the Action Plan to the Minister for Innovation and the Secretaries Board will begin in 2012 (undertaken by the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research and the Australian Public Service Commission).

Awards

Awards to celebrate and share the best innovations from Australia's public sector are important, as they signal our celebration of success and effectiveness. They are important to enable others to see how it can be done and to provide models for others to adopt.

Beginning in 2011, innovative public sector projects, initiatives or change processes will be assessed for recognition as part of the Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Sector Management (run by the Institute of Public Administration Australia, ACT Division).

Agencies are encouraged to nominate relevant activities or projects and to also introduce their own innovation awards, potentially as a part of the existing Australia Day Awards processes.

Implementation

With the pressing need to act and to ensure that the Innovation Action Plan is sustained, the Secretaries Board will oversee the implementation of the Innovation Action Plan and monitor its progress.

Recognising the variation of innovation approaches and opportunities within the APS, implementation of the initiatives will proceed based on each agency's specific opportunities and needs. This offers the potential for agencies to learn and build on successes as well as create momentum for future initiatives.



Continuation

This Action Plan should be seen as the next step in work that has gone before. The APS has a long history of innovation, and a tradition of striving to become better. The development and realisation of an APS culture that welcomes and seeks innovative solutions will be an ongoing journey, not something that can be declared as 'done'.

Innovation involves iteration – trying new ideas, seeing if they work, and then trying further ideas to do even better. Just as innovation requires repeated attempts, the APS will need to try a number of approaches to foster innovation and each agency will have to assess what is most appropriate to its operations.

An innovative APS starts with individual public servants wanting to try new ideas. Following are some of the resources available to help you innovate:

- > *Empowering Change: Fostering Innovation in the Australian Public Service*
- > *Innovation in the Public Sector: Enabling Better Performance, Driving New Directions*, the Australian National Audit Office's Better Practice Guide for public sector innovation
- > The Innovation Blog
<http://innovation.govspace.gov.au>
- > The Innovation Toolkit
<http://innovation.govspace.gov.au>
- > The Innovation Showcase
<http://showcase.govspace.gov.au>

Other initiatives

Innovation Showcase

As part of the response to recommendation 12 of *Empowering Change*, a Public Sector Innovation Showcase has been developed by the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research and the Australian Government Information Management Office to showcase innovation and Gov 2.0 initiatives across the public sector.

The aim is to help government agencies and departments to share examples of innovation and to consider how innovative practice may be applied in their context to achieve better outcomes.

The Showcase went live on 4 March 2011, with a small number of examples, designed to demonstrate areas of existing innovative capabilities across both the APS and the states. We encourage agencies to support the Showcase and ensure ongoing interest by providing further examples of innovation from their experience. Examples can be provided via the Showcase site <http://showcase.govspace.gov.au>, or by emailing the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research at: PSI@innovation.gov.au.

Innovation Toolkit

The Toolkit is an online resource centre hosted on govspace (an online communications platform which hosts blogs and other websites on behalf of government agencies) that provides resources to support innovation in the APS. The Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research and the Australian Government Information Management Office are jointly developing the Toolkit platform and functionality, with consultation from external stakeholders. The Toolkit will provide an avenue for APS staff and innovation experts to contribute to build a living body of knowledge.

The Innovation Toolkit can be accessed through <http://innovation.govspace.gov.au>.

Further information on the Innovation Toolkit can be obtained by emailing the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research at: PSI@innovation.gov.au.

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