

# So You Think You Want to Innovate?

Emerging Lessons and a New Tool for  
State and District Leaders Working to  
Build a Culture of Innovation

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Created in partnership between



“People driven by a pursuit that puts them on the edges are often not on the periphery, but on the frontier, testing the limits of what it is possible to withstand and discover.”

Sarah Lewis

Curator, Author and Art Advocate

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# Introduction

At the beginning of every school year, we are filled with hope and optimism regarding what's possible for our students. At the same time, we are increasingly aware of how fast **the world is changing, which places new demands on how we prepare and support young people to succeed** in the complex future that awaits them.

Across the country, committed educators and organizational leaders at every level are working hard to design and implement new approaches they believe can be more effective for students than those we currently have in place. Through sheer force of will, many of these new ideas will have the chance to be tested in practice—and some will prove effective. However, each of these ideas, whether at the state, district or classroom level, inevitably passes through the context of one or more organizations. How receptive an organization is to new approaches will determine whether or not they succeed and, more important, whether ideas that prove effective will have a chance to spread to other parts of the system. Therefore, if we want to accelerate positive change for America's students: **What more could we be doing to help organizational leaders across the education sector develop and sustain a culture of innovation?**

It was with this question in mind that The Learning Accelerator (TLA) and 2Revolutions (2Rev) teamed up earlier this year in an attempt to make some progress. Specifically, we sought to better understand the factors that contribute to innovation culture, what it takes to build and sustain it over time and what we could learn from other organizations that appear to be doing this well both inside and outside of the education sector. Like any strong partnership, we approached this question through the lenses of

our respective organizations. TLA is a not-for-profit working to accelerate the implementation of high-quality blended learning in school districts and states across America. 2Rev, a national education design lab, is focused on designing and launching future of learning models and catalyzing the conditions within which they can thrive. Although the experiences and context of our organizations are somewhat different, we share a sense of urgency around the importance of this work and the desire to produce something that might be of tangible value to leaders wrestling with these complicated questions.

This document represents the progress we've made so far. In it, we've tried to share what we learned and define what we believe are the necessary components of an innovation culture. We have also synthesized this learning into a new framework and self-assessment tool that we hope can help organizational leaders determine how they are doing, where they are in the process and what steps might be prioritized to make additional progress in building a culture of innovation.

Although we are excited to share what we've learned, we do not believe this is finished or "right." This represents a first draft—our collective best thinking. Version one of what we anticipate may take several iterations to revise and refine. If this work about innovation culture and risk-taking has taught us anything, it's that relearning, rethinking and revision is a necessary and continual process. We invite you to use and adapt this tool in whatever ways might help inform and drive your work forward. Most important, **we are eager to continue to learn together with you as you strive to build and sustain an innovation culture** within your organizations. Good luck!

## Methodology

Recognizing that we weren't the first to take an interest in building an innovation culture within organizations, we began by reviewing existing literature and research from both within and outside the education sector. We discovered a range of interesting and relevant insights (see Consulted Works on page 54), which we used as the jumping off place for our more targeted explorations. Next, we engaged in two rounds of primary research, conducting roughly 45-minute interviews with more than two-dozen leaders across the field, ranging from state educational leaders, district superintendents, principals, heads of foundations and representatives from other for- and not-for-profit organizations within the K-12 education industry and beyond. During our conversations, we invited participants to define innovation from their perspective; to explain what innovation means within their organizations; to identify the factors they believed enabled or constrained innovation within organizations; and to share specific examples of where they have seen it work more and less well.

The resulting framework and tool is our best attempt to synthesize our learning into a form that we felt could be useful to organizational leaders at the state and district level. We extend deep gratitude to our many colleagues who gave so generously of their time and insights—without them this work would not be possible. We look forward to continuing the conversations and learning as we work to build sustainable innovation culture across each pocket of the education ecosystem.

### A Note on Audience

As we got deeper into our exploration of innovation culture, we appreciated the many layers of complexity we encountered. For example, how one defines—and how you might pursue—a culture of innovation can, and often will, look different at various levels of the education sector. Midway through the project, **we elected to focus on organization as the primary unit of analysis**. Specifically, this is intended to include: state education agencies; school districts; regional service centers; foundations; state membership organizations; and for- and not-for-profit education organizations working at the state and district level. While we believe many aspects of the framework and tool will likely resonate and have utility within a range of other organizations, we felt that school-level culture was unique enough to warrant separate treatment, which we will be eager to address in a more targeted way in future efforts.

# Understanding the Context for Innovation

Before we define and prepare you to self-assess against the various factors we believe comprise effective innovation culture, it's important to establish some broad context for how to think about the challenge.

## What Is Culture of Innovation?

Through our research and conversations with industry leaders, it became clear to us that the term “innovation” is overused, under-defined and often means something different depending on who you ask. In order to build a culture that champions and supports innovation, **it's critical that each organization develops a shared definition of what innovation means within the context of its work.** Nonetheless, we offer the following descriptions to establish shared context and to serve as a reference point for the remainder of this document.

### “Innovation”

- Means leveraging new or unproven methods or tools to improve practice or solve persistent problems
- Includes identifying tools or practices from another field to be applied in a new context
- Often represents an entirely new way of thinking
- Has no rules: There is no “right” or “wrong” way to innovate
- **Always forces important choices and trade-offs**

### “Culture”

- Lives both in the policies and processes of organizations, but also in the specific, daily actions of individuals
- Represents the habits of individuals that get repeated over and over as they work together
- Is the context within which innovative efforts either fail or succeed
- Is often confused with specific policies or programs
- Will look different depending on organizational context and purpose
- Must be explicitly valued and nurtured
- Can be deliberately built and managed over time

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”  
– Aristotle

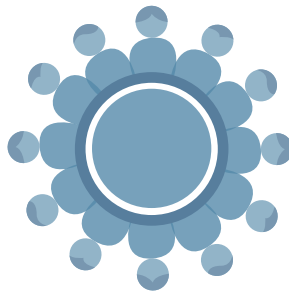
## Putting It Together: “Culture of Innovation”

By merging what we learned about “innovation” and “culture,” we offer this shared definition of what “culture of innovation” can mean within an educational context.



Innovation

The act or process of introducing new ideas, devices or methods to solve problems



Culture

The way of thinking, behaving and working that exists in an organization, such as districts or states



Culture of Innovation

Nurturing an environment that continually introduces new ideas or ways of thinking, then translates them into action to solve specific problems or seize new opportunities

## Why Education Innovation Can Be Difficult

We recognize that the process of moving from a culture of improvement focused on fixing current problems, to a culture of innovation that builds and tests new solutions, is incredibly challenging and requires fresh thinking.

**Figure I: Why Innovation Is Hard**

It's often difficult—in any context—to make a compelling argument for new approaches that do not yet have evidence of effectiveness.



"This really is an innovative approach, but I'm afraid we can't consider it. It's never been done before."

**Figure II: And Especially Hard in Education**



"Look on the bright side, you can contribute your data to the Failed Reactions Database."

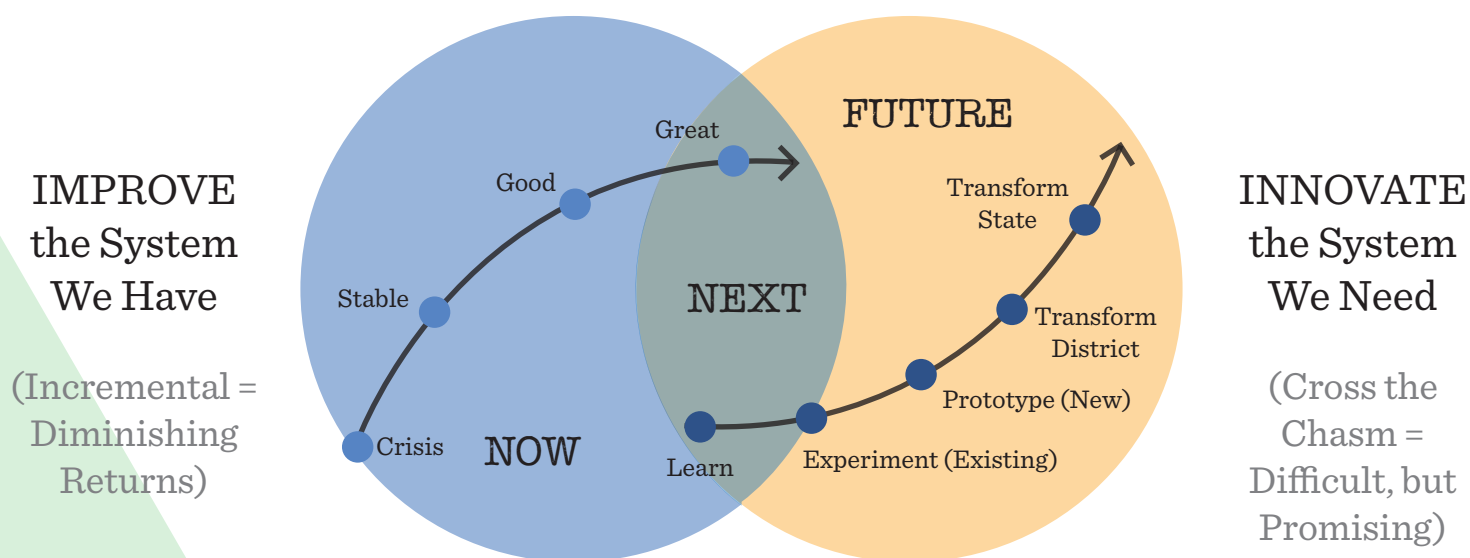
It's even harder in a high-stakes accountability culture that discourages risk-taking, rewards standardization and understandably eschews the notion of "experimenting" on kids with unproven approaches.



## Building Culture Within a Shifting Landscape

As if the dynamic on the previous page was not challenging enough, any efforts to build innovation culture exist within a broader context of transition. Leaders of educational organizations are morally obligated to do as much as possible to improve the current system, while simultaneously building the conditions from which a new system can emerge.

**Figure III: Shifting from Improvement to Innovation**



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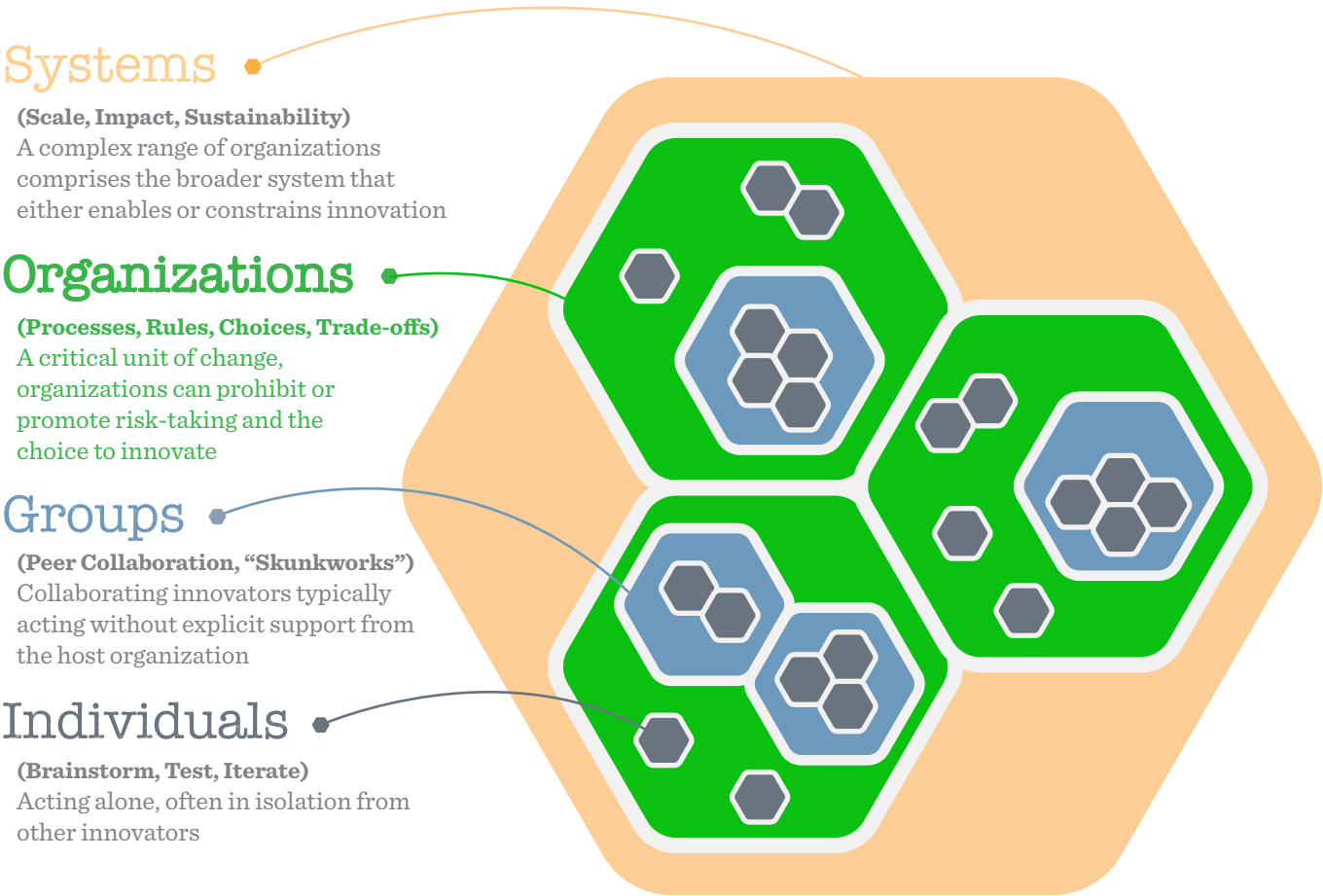
# Organization as the Unit of Change

The systems and organizations that each of us work within create “top-down” context for innovation—through policies, leadership, resources and procedures. The individuals and groups that comprise these systems and organizations simultaneously create a “bottom up” push; whether that is through educators who are acting alone, with, or often without, explicit permission to try new things for the sake of their learners, or more formalized structures within an

organization. Each factor of this ecosystem influences, and is influenced by, the others. Effective leadership is essential at all levels.

Within this dynamic, we elected to focus initially on **organization as the unit of change** because we believe this is where many key types of decisions are made that either enable or inhibit innovation within states and districts.

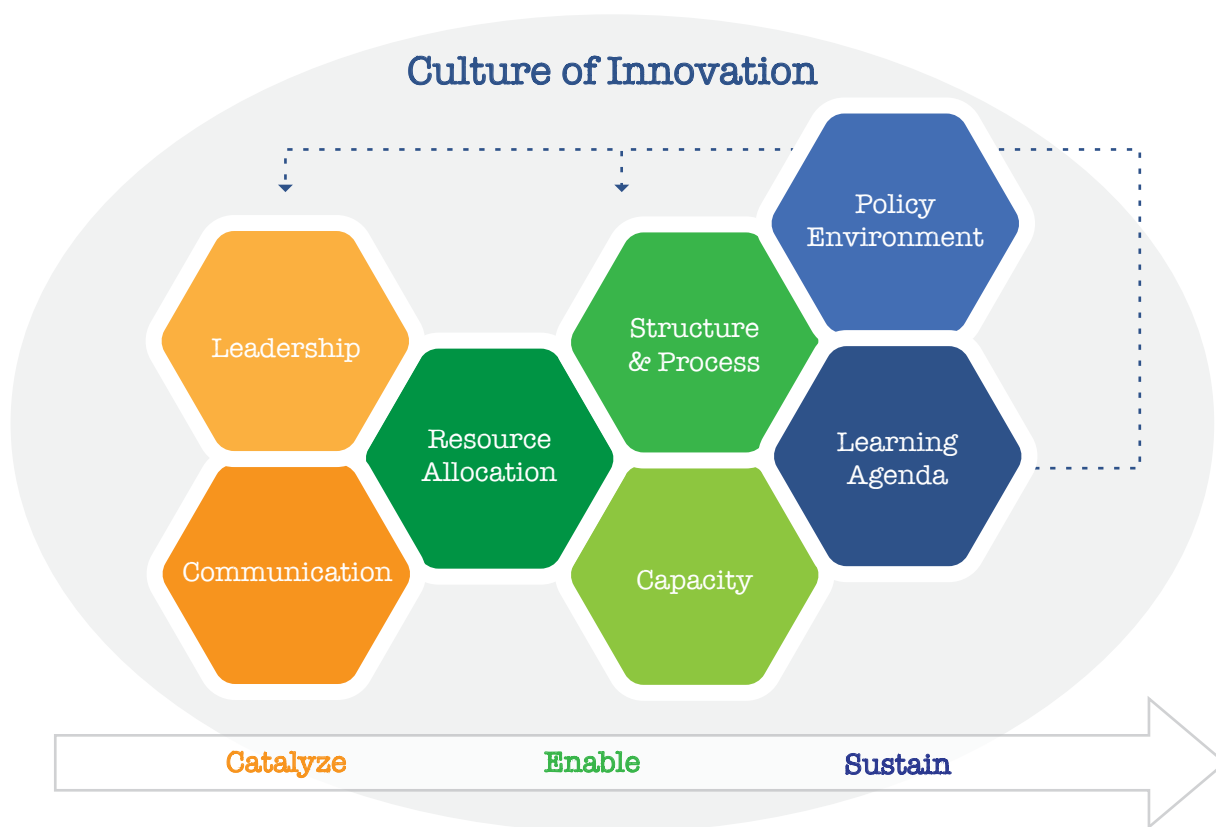
Figure IV: Context for Innovation



## Factors Driving Innovation Culture

Based on our research and considering our working definition for culture of innovation, we have identified **seven factors** that we believe are required to enable and sustain an effective culture of innovation over time. These factors, illustrated in Figure V, are dynamic and interactive, working together to enable or constrain the culture you seek. Similarly, each of these major factors are comprised of constituent elements.

**Figure V: Seven Factors Driving Innovation**



Beginning in the next section, we provide detailed working definitions of each of the factors and sub-factors reflected in the above framework, as well as a self-assessment tool that leaders can use to determine their organization's current level of progress in establishing a culture of innovation. It is our hope that the tool will provide a new way for leaders to determine what action steps to prioritize and how to track their progress over time.

# A New Tool for Organizational Leaders

*Self-assessing Your Organization's Progress in Building a Culture of Innovation*





**Learn** from compelling research, thought leaders and experiences of others in the field.



**View** inspiring videos and virtual tours related to culture of innovation.



**Apply** these tools to help you design and sustain your culture of innovation.

## How to Use This Tool

The purpose of this self-assessment tool is to provide “on-ramps” for leaders of educational organizations and teams to assess where you are on the path toward building a culture of innovation, and explore examples and resources from inside the education field and beyond. Before getting started, here are a few, quick instructions to help orient you to how to use this tool:

### Determine Your Objectives

- There are a number of ways to leverage this tool, so you should start by being clear about what you’re hoping to achieve and who will need to participate. For example, this tool could be completed individually and then be aggregated to generate insights and trends at the level of team or full organization. Alternatively, a single individual could complete the assessment as a method of gaining insight to the factors driving innovation culture. Or a small team could complete the self-assessment collaboratively through discussion. There is no right answer, but we encourage you to be as explicit as possible up front regarding your desired outcomes.

### Define Key Terms

- On pages 13-15, we offer detailed working definitions of each of the terms that comprise the innovation culture framework. We invite you to adopt them, if helpful, or to modify them in whatever way(s) you like. If working in a group, we encourage you to begin by having a discussion among participating team members to identify where you might have similar or different definitions at work. It will be helpful to resolve any major differences before completing the assessment, as this will make it easier and more powerful to interpret your data in the end. If you are reviewing electronically, you can use the embedded hyperlinks to navigate to specific sections of interest.

### Complete the Self-Assessment

- The tool itself stretches from pages 18-47 and is separated into discrete sections that correspond to the seven factors and their sub-topics that drive an innovation culture.
- For each sub-topic within the seven factors, we provide a rubric that describes actions and characteristics that follow four points along a continuum: from Entering to Emerging to Adapting to Transforming. Where possible, we have included examples—both from within and/or outside of the education sector—that we hope will help you understand the ideas and determine where your organization fits in.
- After reading the descriptions, use the **Innovation Scorecard** to mark where your organization is on the continuum. (Most pages of the tool also include space for additional notes and reflections.)

### Identify Action Steps

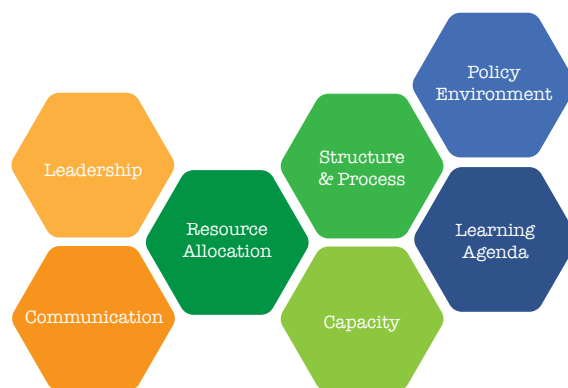
- Depending on whether you are completing the tool individually or as part of a group, a great first step is to analyze and discuss results with your colleagues. On page 48, we offer additional suggestions for potential next steps.

#### **Innovation Scorecard:**

On pages 16-17, we share a simple scorecard that can be used to capture data as you move through the self-assessment tool.

## Defining Key Terms

Each of the seven factors that comprise a culture of innovation are made up of a series of subfactors. Explore each working definition below.



## Leadership

Vision	You must first recognize and define the problem(s) to be solved and the need to innovate toward radically better solutions for kids and families.
Purpose	The work should be imbued with a clear sense of purpose and strategic intent regarding the role of innovation.
Permission	Team members need to be given explicit permission to design and try new approaches, which includes the freedom to fail.
Routine	Because it's unfamiliar, team members often need to develop "habits of mind" (i.e., rhythm, schedule) to enable innovation.
Urgency	You must approach the work with an incredible sense of urgency, if you are to make tangible progress.
Trade-offs	Team members at all levels must recognize and be willing to make the hard choices that are required, and which often come at the expense of something else you also value.
Humility	This is complex work, so it is wise to remain humble about what is known, not known and not yet knowable.

## Communication

Clarity	Leaders should strive to establish clear definitions, objectives and desired outcomes for innovation, so you know what you're aiming at.
Framing	Effective communication is not just explaining and describing the goals of innovation, but also framing the need for it, its place in history and how it builds on the experiments and work of the past.

## Communication (continued)



- Champion** It is important to advocate – both for specific innovations and for the environment that will make individuals and groups feel comfortable trying new things.
- Engagement** You should engage key stakeholders as often and authentically as possible in the process – including active listening and two-way dialogue.
- Transparency** By sharing lessons honestly – even when they arise from failures – you model the behavior(s) you want the system to promote, reward and value.
- Frequency** Share stories of your work early and often.

## Resource Allocation



- Team** It is essential that organizations invest in their teams' capacity to develop and implement new approaches.
- Time** Organizations need to explicitly dedicate time for innovation into individual team members' schedules, as well as that of the organization itself.
- Dollars** In a perennially resource-constrained environment, where and how an organization spends scarce resources demonstrates its commitment to innovation.

## Structure & Process



- Structure** Organizations need structures – formal and/or informal – that are deliberately designed to value and support ongoing innovation.
- Process** Organizations need clear, consistent processes for how innovation is to be promoted, supported and rewarded.
- Habit** With structures and processes in place, team members can begin to develop “habits of mind” – the cadence and routines of regularized innovation.
- Reinforcement** The structures and processes an organization puts in place must continually reinforce its commitment to innovation – even when those efforts do not always lead to clear “wins.”

## Capacity



Mindset	Individuals must develop a tolerance for risk, comfort with the fear of failure and a “growth mindset.”
Knowledge & Skills	Team members at every level of the organization must begin to develop the knowledge and skill competencies to be effective innovators.
Ability to Execute	Without the essential capacity to execute, the impact(s) from innovation will be limited and temporary.
Support	Individuals and teams need continual training, support and opportunities to practice their pursuit of new approaches.

## Policy Environment



Orientation	District or state policy environments can be preventive (constrains innovation), permissive (allows, but doesn’t support) or enabling (actively promotes, supports and rewards risk-taking).
Leverage Enablers & Remove Barriers	Leaders should actively seek to create more policies that promote and reward the innovative behaviors you seek while also stopping the policies that inhibit innovation.
Aligned Incentives	Wherever possible, system-level incentives should be aligned to the outcomes you seek.

## Learning Agenda



Testable Hypotheses	Leaders should be explicit about what tangible problems or barriers innovation will help overcome, and what specific ideas you’re testing.
Measuring Progress	Innovation can be messy and difficult to manage with precise metrics, but in order to track progress you must have a clear sense of your intended outcomes and what you’re aiming at.
Managing Change	Effective and sustainable innovation culture typically does not emerge by itself, but it can be intentionally pursued and managed over time through a focus on clear metrics and continuous improvement.



# Innovation Scorecard

As you explore this tool, use this scorecard to self-assess where you are on the path toward building and sustaining a culture of innovation.



entering emerging adapting transforming

## Leadership

Vision	1	2	3	4
Purpose	1	2	3	4
Permission	1	2	3	4
Routine	1	2	3	4
Urgency	1	2	3	4
Trade-offs	1	2	3	4
Humility	1	2	3	4

Total Leadership

+  +  +  / 4 =

## Communication

Clarity	1	2	3	4
Framing	1	2	3	4
Champion	1	2	3	4
Engagement	1	2	3	4
Transparency	1	2	3	4
Frequency	1	2	3	4

Total Communication

+  +  +  / 4 =

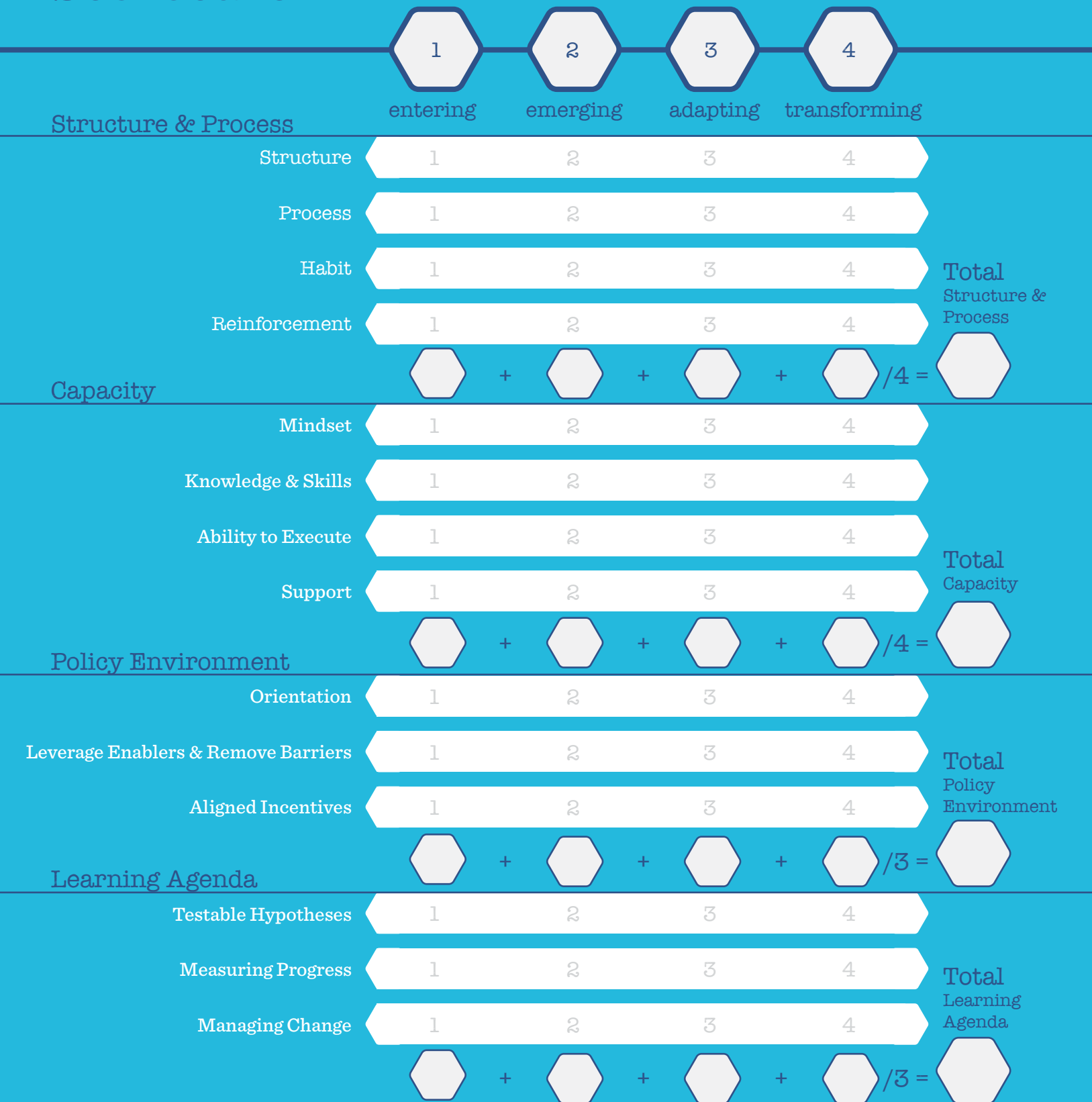
## Resource Allocation

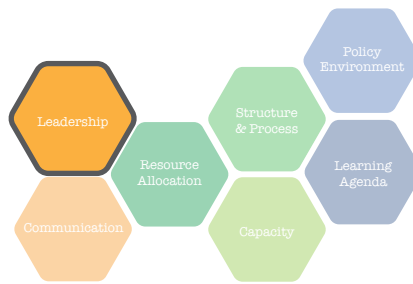
Team	1	2	3	4
Time	1	2	3	4
Dollars	1	2	3	4

Total Resource Allocation

+  +  +  / 3 =

# Innovation Scorecard





# Leadership

vision • purpose • permission • routine • urgency • trade-offs • humility

## Vision

**You must first recognize and define the problem(s) to be solved and the need to innovate toward radically better solutions for kids and families.**

### entering



Unclear or no vision established.

If a vision does exist, it is disconnected from students' needs and ignores the role of innovation in meeting organizational goals.

### emerging



An innovation-focused vision is emerging.

The vision is still only loosely aligned to and integrated with the organization's broader values and goals. There is acknowledgement, though, and recognition that innovation can play a role in attaining these goals.

### adapting



The vision is clear and aligned and integrated with the organization's values and goals.

The role of innovation in supporting the vision and overcoming barriers is explicit.

### transforming



A focus on innovation drives the vision, which is explicitly linked to students' needs.

A majority of participants at all levels of the organization can articulate the vision and innovation's role within it.

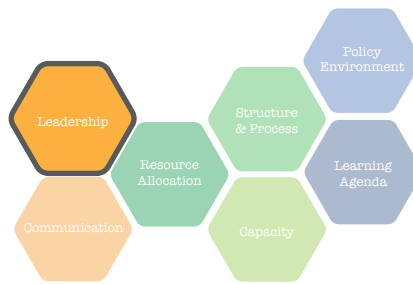
"Discovery consists of seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought."

– Albert Szent-Györgyi



New Hampshire Department of Education has developed a clear and well-articulated vision that is part of their core mission and they are 18-months into executing against an innovation-focused statewide strategy, but there are still many pockets that are not fully engaged or are resistant to/skeptical of the work.





# Leadership

vision • purpose • permission • routine • urgency • trade-offs • humility

## Permission

**Team members need to be given explicit permission to design and try new approaches, which includes the freedom to fail.**

### entering

Innovation is not discussed, encouraged or celebrated.

New approaches often suffer critique, with no safe space to share challenges or learn from these early experiences.

Those willing to innovate attempt new approaches at their own risk and suffer the consequences of failure.

### emerging

Innovation is permitted in pockets, but not encouraged or celebrated.

New approaches are maintained and talked about by individuals or small groups, but not spread across the organization.

Innovators still feel weary and nervous of “failure,” but there’s a growing space within the organization to talk about these experiences and learn from them.

### adapting

Innovation is encouraged widely across the organization.

New forums are established between pockets of innovators to share ideas. Designated time and space is allocated towards these conversations.

“Failed” experiments are viewed as lessons to learn from, and time and space exists for these conversations.

### transforming

Innovation is explicitly encouraged, celebrated and studied across the organization.

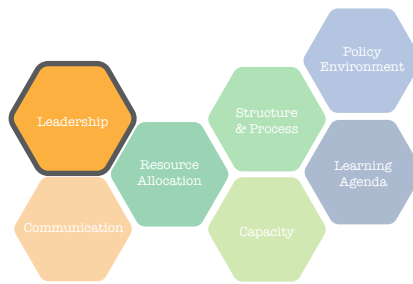
All members of the organization feel empowered to design and try new approaches.

Attempts and “failures” are routinely shared and openly discussed across the organization. They are not only tolerated, but are recognized as a vital part of the innovation process.

“The fear factor is real,” says Paul Herdman, President and CEO of the [Rodel Foundation of Delaware](#). “How do you build a culture of experimentation when most people got into teaching for its predictability? Creating a system of unpredictability runs counter to most people’s thinking—this anxiety is compounded by no one being comfortable with experimenting with children.” Herdman notes that trying to figure out how to overcome existing cultures and create a comfort with trying some things on a small scale is likely the only way the system will ultimately flip to something that is much more in tune with the way the world works outside our schoolhouse walls.

For more, consider reading *Change Is What It Means* by Robert Evans with your team.

How do you encourage your staff to take risks? Aaryn Schmuhl, Assistant Superintendent for Learning and Leadership at [Henry County Schools](#), in Atlanta, Georgia, which recently won a Next Generation Systems Initiative planning grant, shares: “Really, it wasn’t about anything other than letting them know that, ‘You already have permission to do this, I’m just saying it out loud.’ Teachers already do this work when they are trying to do the best things for their kids, but they try to not get caught. We’re surfacing the stuff that used to be hidden.”



## Leadership

vision • purpose • permission • routine • urgency • trade-offs • humility

### Routine

**Because it's unfamiliar, team members often need to develop "habits of mind" (i.e., rhythm, schedule) to enable innovation.**

#### entering



Little or no routine exists; innovation is random and sporadic, if it happens at all.

#### emerging



Pockets of individuals and teams are beginning to develop innovation routines, but they are inconsistent and not aligned with other colleagues across the organization.

#### adapting



Teams have consistent routines for innovation, which are shared with colleagues across the organization to enable collaboration and learning.

#### transforming



Teams expect to innovate continually and have developed clear, shared routines for doing so, which are continually iterated upon and improved, as needed.



Tools for time management.

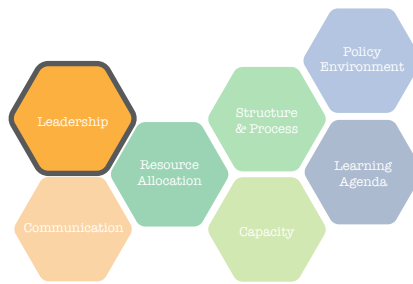


"The more an organization can experiment, the more likely they will innovate," says Calestous Juma, Professor of the Practice of International Development and Director of the Science, Technology and Globalization Project at Harvard University.



Although organizations are continually studying, prototyping and rethinking their processes, this does not necessarily mean all members of the organization need to be innovating all the time. Consider the perspective of [Colorado Education Initiative's](#) former President and CEO, Helayne Jones: "There are many unintended consequences of going into a process thinking everyone has a drive for innovation. You need both innovators and implementers, and they are often not the same people." With that in mind, it's important as an organization to decide what competencies are necessary in your team members and how to cultivate talent accordingly to meet your overall mission and vision.





## Leadership

vision • purpose • permission • routine • urgency • trade-offs • humility

### Trade-offs

**Team members at all levels must recognize and be willing to make the hard choices that are required, and which often come at the expense of something else you also value.**

#### entering



Lack of awareness or acknowledgement of the trade-offs and choices needed to invest time and resources in innovation.

#### emerging



Leaders acknowledge that innovation might require difficult trade-offs, but it is given low priority and minimal resources.

#### adapting



Innovation is considered essential and leadership is willing to make trade-offs, and has already begun to do so, in order to support innovation.

#### transforming



Choices are transparently made and communicated across the organization—explicitly sharing the rationale for the trade-offs that make ongoing innovation possible.



Former Superintendent Steve Dackin increasingly devolved decision-making authority to principals during his tenure with [Reynoldsburg City Schools \(RCS\)](#) in Ohio.

The increased autonomy was aimed at facilitating innovation: a rethinking of what teachers, students and schools could do, and how they were organized to do it.

Starting in the 2014-15 school year, RCS principals controlled an estimated 90% of their budgets.

In this scenario, a principal may choose to use funds solely for staffing, or distribute the resources across multiple drivers, such as redesigning learning environments, accessing new technologies, hiring external experts or providing professional development support. With this change come some inefficiencies, since each school spends time researching, exploring and negotiating the best options for their students.

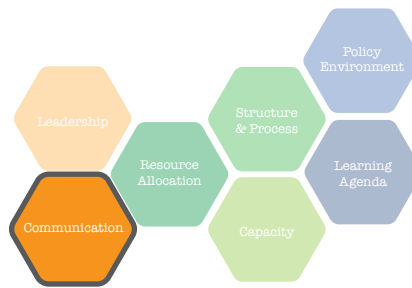
Dackin, though, embraced this trade-off: “The most important thing is that our principals are empowered to make the best decisions to create conditions for adult and student learning to occur. I would gladly trade some of the inefficiencies that come with this because it promotes an environment that honors efficacy and autonomy.”



Explore [decision-making tools](#) to help with this work, such as brainstorming, cause and effect and SMART matrices, from the American Society for Quality (ASQ).







# Communication clarity • framing • champion • engagement • transparency • frequency



## Clarity

**Leaders should strive to establish clear definitions, objectives and desired outcomes for innovation, so you know what you're aiming at.**

entering



Clear, shared definitions, objectives and outcomes for innovation does not yet exist, and there is little to no recognition of the need for these definitions.

emerging



The organization is in the process of trying to understand and develop early definitions, including surveying those adopted by other organizations.

adapting



Initial definitions have been established and communicated across the organization, but there is room for growth in the definitions' use.

transforming



All leaders, teams and individuals refer to shared definitions, objectives and outcomes. Strategies are in place to monitor adherence to shared definitions, while also explicitly supporting efforts to modify definitions over time based on new learning.



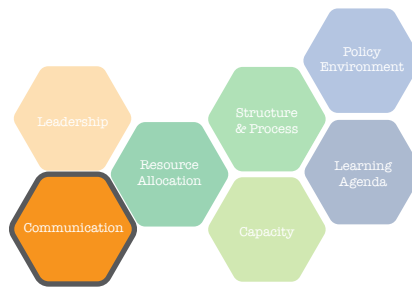
Director of Planning and Special Projects, Ashley Bryan, at Dallas Independent School District (DISD) defines innovation as “solving long-entrenched problems in new and creative ways.” Check out [DISD's vision for what school looks like in 2020](#).



Explore [New Hampshire's Story of Transformation](#) to see how one state department has portrayed its vision of innovation. “A comprehensive communication strategy regarding all aspects of innovation is critical to success in a state where the bedrock culture is founded on rigorous local control and personal liberty,” says New Hampshire Department of Education’s Deputy Commissioner Paul Leather. “Especially as New Hampshire continues to move to a fully competency-based system, where our emphasis is on supporting our educators in addressing student mastery.”

“You can have brilliant ideas, but if you can’t get them across, your ideas won’t get you anywhere.”

– Lee Iacocca



# Communication clarity • framing • champion • engagement • transparency • frequency

## Framing

**Effective communication is not just explaining and describing the goals of innovation, but also framing the need for it, its place in history and how it builds on the experiments and work of the past.**

### entering



Because the role of innovation within the organization is not yet explicitly valued by the organization, little or no effort is invested in framing innovation's role.

### emerging



Some individual leaders are beginning to communicate the need for, and role of, innovation within a historical context, but these are sporadic, inconsistent and not part of an aligned communications strategy.

### adapting



Organizational leaders are communicating the need for, and role of, innovation within a historical context, with increasing clarity and consistency.

### transforming



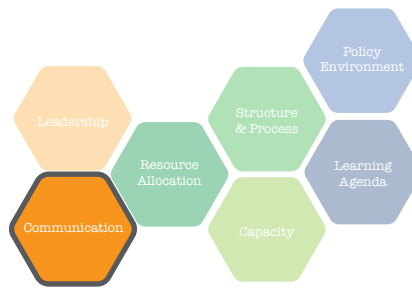
The role of innovation within the organizational life cycle is framed in consistent and compelling ways through the lens of the organization's past, present and future. Deep understanding exists across all stakeholders of where and how "innovation" fits within the organizational narrative.



Read Atul Gawande's *New Yorker* piece "[Slow Ideas](#)" on how innovations spread—and why some spread slower than others and how to change that.



Watch 2Rev's [Future of Learning](#) video and TLA's [Blended Learning](#) video to see how each of our organizations frame the work we do.



# Communication clarity • framing • champion • engagement • transparency • frequency

## Champion

**It is important to advocate – both for specific innovations and for the environment that will make individuals and groups feel comfortable trying new things.**

entering



Organizational leaders are not advocating for the role of innovation, and they respond to the suggestions of potential innovators in ways that curb additional risk-taking from others.

emerging



Some individual organizational leaders explicitly champion the role of innovation and risk-taking, but this is not an organizational value and tends to be driven by individual preferences.

adapting



Multiple leaders across the organization are collaborating to create innovation-friendly environments, with increasing alignment and consistency across the organization.

Leaders are beginning to identify and engage with their colleagues, championing the work they are doing.

transforming



Leaders at multiple levels of the organization are held accountable for creating environments that promote innovation, risk-taking and new approaches.

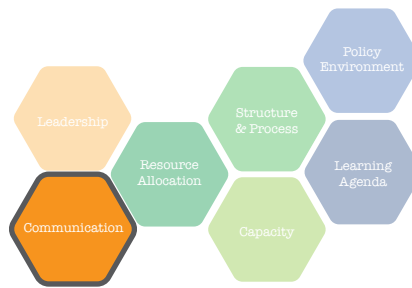
Leaders are consistently championing innovation with all key internal and external stakeholders.



Sometimes an external organization can help play the role of champion in a state or district context. For instance, in Washington, D.C., [CityBridge Foundation](#) has helped accelerate innovation by pioneering two regionally-based programs for educators to design, or in many cases redesign, classrooms and schools. CityBridge runs The Education Innovation Fellowship for teachers and a school design competition called Breakthrough Schools: D.C. Program Director Margaret Angell reflects that “our programs launch educators into a design process that they can immediately take back to their schools and classrooms. That permission and safe space gives practitioners the opportunity and roadmap to innovate.”



Rhode Island’s Department of Education championed its belief in innovation and technology through its [2012 Innovation Powered by Technology Model School Grant](#) awarded to Pleasant View Elementary School. The grant process was open to any proposal that rethought and restructured teaching and learning through technology.



## Communication clarity • framing • champion • engagement • transparency • frequency

### Engagement

**You should engage key stakeholders as often and authentically as possible in the process – including active listening and two-way dialogue.**

#### entering



Early internal innovators feel isolated, and external innovators are excluded almost entirely from discussions.

#### emerging



Organizational leadership recognizes and is taking early steps to include ever-wider rings of internal organizational stakeholders in the conversation around innovation. Some early efforts to include key external stakeholders are taking hold.

#### adapting



Internal members of the organization feel “included” in the conversation about change and innovation. Efforts to engage external partners in two-way dialogue and active listening are becoming more explicit, robust and organized.

#### transforming



Current and potential innovators—both within and outside the organization—feel valued, listened to and are consistently included in the conversations and work.



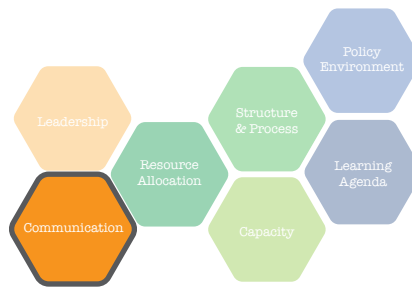
Try Stanford University's d.school's “I Like, I Wish, What If” method as a starting point for two-way dialogue with stakeholders.



Maryland's Montgomery County Public Schools regularly hosts [student town hall meetings](#), to provide a forum for their learners to ask questions, share ideas and give feedback.



[Pennington Elementary](#), a Title I school in Wheat Ridge, Colorado, has engaged in deep community partnerships to build a network of more than 90 businesses, non-profits, after-school programs, parents and families that offer enrichments during expanded learning time for their kindergarten through sixth grade students. This collaborative effort has brought together the community to dialogue about what innovation can look like in their school.



# Communication clarity • framing • champion • engagement • transparency • frequency

## Transparency

**By sharing lessons honestly – even when they arise from failures – you model the behavior(s) you want the system to promote, reward and value.**

### entering

Any attempts by rogue innovators are regarded as mistakes and might be ignored, covered up or even penalized. Given the environment, there is a lack of willingness to share lessons for fear of retribution.

### emerging

Some (but not all) leaders embrace a transparent approach to learning and believe failure is an inherent component of learning. However, because of the inconsistency in viewpoints, many within the organization may be confused about when and whether transparency is, in fact, valued.

### adapting

Leaders embrace transparent learning with increasing consistency. The value of, and desire to move toward, increasing transparency is communicated across the organization and increasingly with external stakeholders.

### transforming

The organization not only explicitly values transparency around lessons learned, but it has systems in place to regularly communicate lessons learned. What could be considered failures and “mistakes” are viewed as building blocks for addressing future needs.

There is recognition, both within and outside the organization, for the messiness of innovation.

All industries wrestle with failure and how to approach and share it broadly. [Watch this TED talk](#) by physician Brian Goldman on “medicine’s culture of denial” and its impact.

Explore how Clark County Schools in Las Vegas handles transparency with this [interactive tool](#) that illustrates budget decisions, food service analysis, staffing and other choices for their community.

“A stumble prevents a fall.”  
- Chinese Proverb

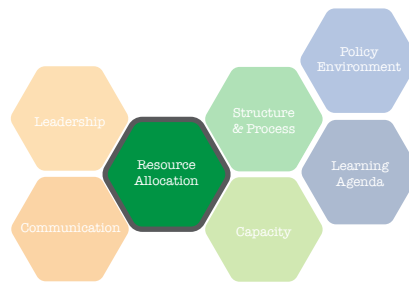


**Share stories of your work early and often.**

transforming

Lessons are regularly shared across all leaders and stakeholder groups. There are specific strategies or mechanisms in place to promote regular sharing.

*What structures does your organization have in place to enable regular storytelling?*



# Resource Allocation team • time • dollars

## Team

**It is essential that organizations invest in their teams' capacity to develop and implement new approaches.**

### entering



Little or no investment is made in internal organizational capacity to innovate.

### emerging



Some investment in leadership capacity to support innovation is made, but it is inconsistent, episodic and not followed by adequate investment in team capacity.

### adapting



Explicit and consistent investment is made by the organization to support capacity for innovation—at the level of leadership, team and within other departments or divisions within the organization.

### transforming



Explicit decisions to invest in organizational capacity to innovate are both made and communicated across the organization as a way to signal its importance.

Leaders across the organization are held formally accountable to develop their own teams' capacity to innovate.

#### Notes

*What roles does your organization need to support innovation? Is this consistent with how resources are allocated?*

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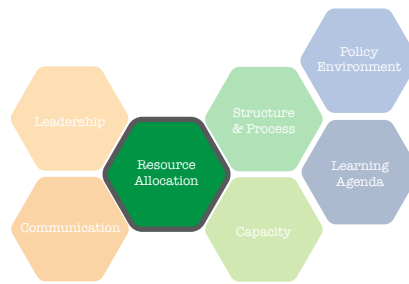
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See how leaders at West Ada, a school district in Idaho and a member of Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools, instill a [bottom-up team approach](#) to innovation.





## Resource Allocation team • time • dollars

### Time

Organizations need to explicitly dedicate time for innovation into individual team members' schedules, as well as that of the organization itself.

#### entering



Little or no time is created in the schedule to support an investment in innovation or experimentation.

Innovation is considered an “add-on” (i.e., might happen during professional learning days or targeted conversations, but no time is carved out of the day-to-day schedule).

#### emerging



Some attempts are made to create dedicated portions of key leaders' and team members' time, but this time is often deprioritized or repurposed.

Innovation is still more or less considered an “add-on” to the daily responsibilities and needs of the organization.

#### adapting



Time that has been dedicated to support an innovation agenda—both in dedicated roles and portions of other team members' time—is protected.

Choices are made to deprioritize other legitimate demands on time in favor of a continued focus on the innovation agenda.

#### transforming



Time for innovation is built explicitly into the schedule through dedicated roles and portions of other team members' time, and is consistently honored by all organizational leaders and staff.

Required trade-offs to protect time for innovation are communicated explicitly across the organization.

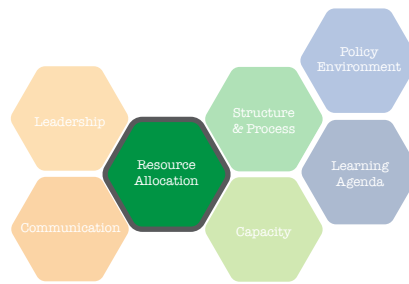


Here are three examples of how organizations can rethink time to support innovation:

**Twenty percent time.** Made famous by Google, 20 percent time, and organizations that allow, permit and encourage it, give their employees space to experiment and build new ideas. At Google that equated to one full day of work per week carved out to allow individuals to pursue their own inventions, ideas and experiments to solve problems or seize new opportunities for the organization. In some companies, these experiments are unveiled to other team members and the best of the bunch are rewarded with prizes.

**EdChat.** Encourage your team to spend an hour or two participating in Twitter's #edchats, which provide an avenue to crowdsource knowledge, ideas and lessons learned from educators across the country.

**Electronic Learning Communities (ELCs).** As an organization, join an ELC, like [Discovery Education](#), to allow for anytime, anywhere learning across a global community of learners.



## Resource Allocation team • time • dollars

### Dollars

**In a perennially resource-constrained environment, where and how an organization spends scarce resources demonstrates its commitment to innovation.**

#### entering

Even if some rhetoric around innovation exists, little or no resources are provided to support increased organizational capacity to innovate.

#### emerging

Some initial resources to support innovation are invested, but are not followed by consistent or large enough investment to maintain a focus on innovation.

#### adapting

A commitment to support an innovation agenda receives a sufficiently large and consistent investment, especially when it requires difficult trade-offs with other organizational priorities.

#### transforming

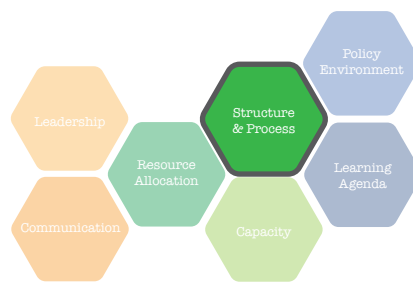
Internal and external investment in an innovation agenda increases over time. Required trade-offs to protect resources for innovation are not only embraced, but are communicated explicitly across the organization.



“If you continue to spend money in the same way, nothing changes,” says Aaryn Schmuhl, Assistant Superintendent for Learning and Leadership at Henry County Schools, in Atlanta, Georgia.



Don’t wait for grants or other external resources to support new ideas—start changing your business model in-house now.



## Structure & Process

structure • process • habit • reinforcement

### Structure

**Organizations need structures—formal and/or informal—that are deliberately designed to value and support ongoing innovation.**

#### entering



No organizational structures—either formal or informal—exist to support innovation.

#### emerging



Some informal organizational structures are emerging to support early innovators (e.g., communication, habits and routines).

No formal organizational structures exist.

#### adapting



More robust informal structures have informed the development and implementation of formalized organizational structures to support innovation. However, these formal structures may not yet be well organized or consistently communicated across the organization.

#### transforming



Informal structures continue to emerge and inform ongoing modifications to formal organizational structures.

Formal organizational structures have been designed, implemented and communicated consistently across the organization to support innovation over time.

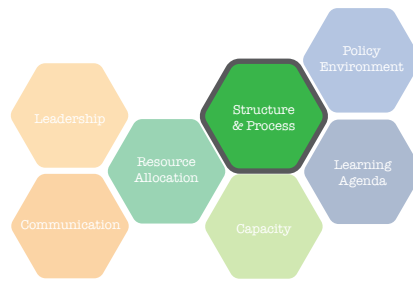


Two examples of how organizational structures can enable innovation include specific staff roles and physical space:

**Roles.** Global consulting firm **McKinsey & Company** identified four archetypes that typically make up an organization and are useful starting points to ensure people are in the “right seats on the bus” as they strive to innovate.

- **Idea generators** prefer to come up with ideas, believe that asking the right questions is more important than having the right answers and are willing to take risks on high-profile experiments.
- **Researchers** mine data to find patterns, which they use as a source of new ideas. They are the most likely members of the network to seek consumer insights and to regard such insights as a primary input.
- **Experts** value proficiency in a single domain and relish opportunities to get things done.
- **Producers** orchestrate the activities of the network. Others come to them for new ideas or to get things done. Producers are also the most likely members of the network to be making connections across teams and groups.

**Physical Space.** How you design the physical spaces of your organization reflects your values and can have a direct impact on the learning and creative processes of all those who inhabit it. To harness this power, name a member of your team “set designer,” per a recommendation of IDEO’s David Kelley in *Ten Faces of Innovation*: “The set designer creates a stage on which innovation team members can do their best work, transforming physical environments into powerful tools to influence behavior and attitude.” (Find more ideas on how to create spaces for innovation [here](#).)



## Structure & Process

structure • process • habit • reinforcement

### Process

**Organizations need clear, consistent processes for how innovation is to be promoted, supported and rewarded.**

#### entering



No organizational processes exist to support innovation.

#### emerging



Some informal organizational processes are emerging to support early innovators, but they are not clear or consistent across the organization.

#### adapting



Some leaders and teams have established formal processes to promote and reward risk-taking, but they are not organization-wide.

#### transforming



The organization has established agreed-upon processes to promote, support and reward innovation, which are communicated clearly and consistently across the organization.

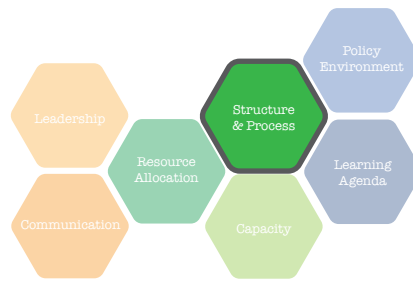
Organizational leaders at all levels are accountable for adhering to these processes.



Explore the Carnegie Foundation's [90-day cycle handbook](#) for a process to research, design and prototype.



**Summit Public Schools**, which operates seven schools in California and two in Washington State, utilizes a lean start-up model as its process for designing and trying out innovations to improve student learning. The lean start-up methodology rests on the philosophy that it's critical for organizations to build and test new ideas and learn from them quickly—through use cases and data—rather than spend lots of time and resources building out a new approach, program or product without ever testing it with the users themselves, which in Summit's case, are the students.



## Structure & Process

structure • process • habit • reinforcement

### Habit

**With structures and processes in place, team members can begin to develop “habits of mind” – the cadence and routines of regularized innovation.**

#### entering



No habits, patterns or routines exist on an organizational level.

#### emerging



Individual leaders and teams are beginning to develop the routines of regularized innovation.

#### adapting



Organizational leadership explicitly values the creation and maintenance of needed habits to support innovation, but has not yet implemented consistent strategies to enable.

#### transforming

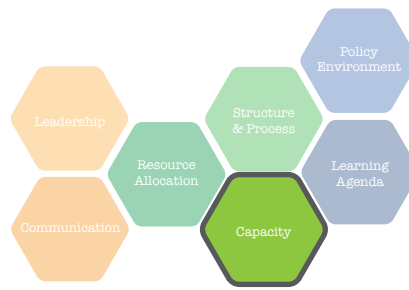


Organizational leaders have explicitly endorsed specific strategies to promote desired habits/routines, while simultaneously encouraging the ongoing development of new methods to support a robust innovation culture.



To read more on creativity and habit, explore [this piece](#) from Maria Popova’s *Brain Pickings* which tackles how to “hone your creative routine and master the pace of productivity” by documenting how many artists, writers, inventors and philosophers have done just that.





# Capacity

mindset • knowledge & skills • ability to execute • support

## Mindset

**Individuals must develop a tolerance for risk, comfort with the fear of failure and a “growth mindset.”**

### entering



Even if they talk about “innovation,” key leaders are unwilling to take risks. This, in turn, discourages team members from embracing increased risk and a growth mindset.

### emerging



Individual leaders and team members demonstrate a growth mindset and tolerance for risk, but this is not yet an explicit organizational value.

### adapting



The organization explicitly values a growth mindset and willingness to take risks, and regularly celebrates individuals and teams who set a good example for others.

### transforming



Senior organizational leaders recognize the importance of a growth mindset, and regularly take public risks in pursuit of bold outcomes. This willingness to take risks comes to be recognized and celebrated as a cultural trait of the organization.

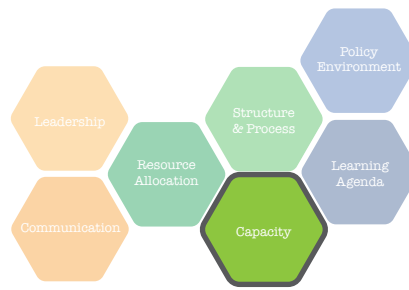


Watch how [Sci Academy in New Orleans](#) thinks about growth mindset for students and educators.



Check out [Mindset Works](#), co-founded by Carol Dweck Ph.D., for open, free tools and information on building a growth mindset.

According to Dan Gordon, former Senior Advisor for School Design at District of Columbia Public Schools, a number of system structures can make it challenging for public education organizations to embrace a growth mindset for their own work. These include: the current accountability framework; procurement rules; the absence of immediate results for many initiatives; the lack of reliable data streams to support rapid prototyping other than in a few areas (e.g., math); and a general uneasiness with “experimenting” with children’s education.



# Capacity mindset • knowledge & skills • ability to execute • support

## Knowledge & Skills

**Team members at every level of the organization must begin to develop the knowledge and skill competencies to be effective innovators.**

entering



There is little or no awareness of the range of new knowledge and skills that are needed to support innovation over time.

emerging



The organization recognizes the need to develop new knowledge and skills to support innovation and is doing so in isolated cases, but has not yet developed an organized strategy to enable ongoing growth of all employees.

adapting



The organization has developed and communicated clear definitions of the knowledge and skill competencies individuals and teams need to support innovation.

Explicit strategies to develop these knowledge and skill competencies are in the process of being developed and implemented.

transforming



As a result of explicit strategies, professionals across the organization demonstrate increased awareness and mastery of the knowledge and skill competencies needed to support innovation over time.



As you start identifying competencies for your innovation culture, take a look at [TLA's framework](#) for what competencies educators need to succeed in a blended learning environment.

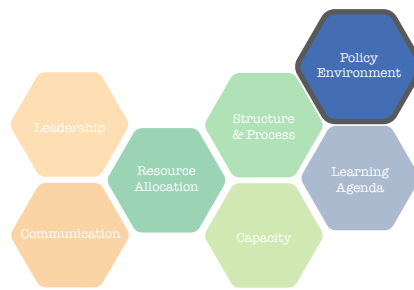


As Andrea Coleman, former CEO of New York City's Department of Education's Office of Innovation, shares, very early on leaders in their organization came to realize that their team was yearning to understand how the organization itself defined innovation; what it meant to work in an innovative way; and how they should do it. In response, the organization collectively designed the core skills and competencies they believed their organization needed to execute this work.









## Policy Environment orientation • leverage enablers & remove barriers • aligned incentives

### Orientation

**District or state policy environments can be preventive (constrains innovation), permissive (allows, but doesn't support) or enabling (actively promotes, supports and rewards risk-taking).**

#### entering



Existing policy environment is preventive. Few, if any, explicit avenues to support innovation exist.

#### emerging



Existing policy environment is transitioning from preventive to permissive.

Some helpfully explicit avenues exist to support innovation (e.g., innovation “zones”), but they are isolated and not consistently available for all system participants.

Formal policy infrastructure remains misaligned.

#### adapting



Existing policy environment is transitioning from permissive to enabling.

The organization is building on targeted examples of innovation to develop system-wide policies, programs and explicit incentives to promote and reward innovation.

#### transforming



Policy environment is explicitly enabling, incentive structures are vertically and horizontally aligned and leaders are regularly pushing to develop new formal and informal vehicles to advance the role of innovation in transforming outcomes for students.

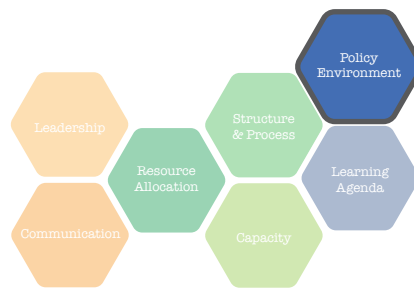


**Kentucky's Districts of Innovation**, part of Kentucky House Bill 37 enacted in 2012, allows Kentucky public school districts to apply to be “exempt from certain administrative regulations and statutory provisions, as well as waiving local board policy, in an effort to improve the learning of students.” The purpose of the legislation is to allow a district the flexibility to redesign student learning to increase engagement, motivation and career-and-college readiness.

**Massachusetts Innovation Schools Initiative**, contained within *An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap* law of 2010, provides educators and stakeholders the ability to create new “in-district and autonomous schools that can implement creative and inventive strategies, increase student achievement, and reduce achievement gaps while keeping school funding within districts.” The schools have increased autonomy and flexibility, related to six key areas: curriculum, budget, scheduling/calendar, staffing, professional development and district policies.

We invite you to explore the following additional examples of policies designed to advance innovation:

- [Colorado's 2013 High School Graduation Guidelines](#)
- [Iowa's Task Force Report on Competency-based Education](#)
- [Maine's Learning Technology Initiative](#)
- [New Hampshire's 2014 Minimum Standards for School Approval](#)



## Policy Environment orientation • leverage enablers & remove barriers • aligned incentives

### Leverage Enablers & Remove Barriers

**Leaders should actively seek to create more policies that promote and reward the innovative behaviors you seek while also stopping the policies that inhibit innovation.**

entering



Organization and system leaders are not aware of what policy changes or flexibilities could be made to advance innovation.

emerging



Leaders are aware of, but unwilling or unable to facilitate, new policies that would enable increased innovation.

adapting



Leaders are aware of, and are actively pursuing, new policies or flexibilities that would advance system-wide innovation.

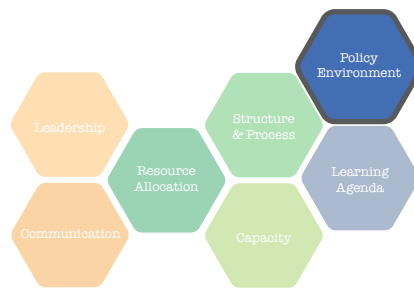
transforming



Leaders have been successful in implementing against “known” new policy needs, and are now executing against a clear, multi-year innovation policy agenda.



The Clayton Christensen Institute for Disruptive Innovation recently released a [new report](#) documenting its conversations with California superintendents regarding the barriers and workarounds they have implemented to pursue blended learning in their districts. The report is rich with policy barriers that make the pursuit of innovation challenging, but the superintendents’ and their teams’ creativity shines through. One barrier cited is that a California student’s average daily attendance is marked by educational activities supervised by a certified educator. Since blended learning enables the rethinking of staffing and often employs para-professionals and other adults to provide support while students are learning, one district changed its physical learning environment and “created lines of sight with glass walls and larger classrooms so that one certified teacher could be the instructional lead for what were previously two classrooms of students” while para-professionals provide the primary oversight and support.



# Policy Environment orientation • leverage enablers & remove barriers • aligned incentives

## Aligned Incentives

**Wherever possible, system-level incentives should be aligned to the outcomes you seek.**

entering



Incentive structures are significantly misaligned, causing innovation efforts to work at cross-purposes with the legitimate outcomes of the current system. Leaders remain largely unaware of this misalignment.

emerging



Incentive structures are still largely misaligned, but leaders recognize this and are in the process of developing solutions to address over time.

adapting



Executing against a deliberate strategy, organization and system leaders are making steady progress at achieving more consistent and explicit alignment among incentive structures in ways that promote and reward innovation and risk-taking.

transforming



All formal and informal incentive structures are vertically aligned, and explicitly communicated to all stakeholders, in ways that support the role of innovation in achieving breakthrough results for students.



For example, **Dallas Independent School District (DISD)** has encouraged schools to innovate toward more personalized learning environments for students. At the same time, the district is implementing a new teacher effectiveness system in which teachers' pay will result, in part, on student performance. This potential misalignment is being remedied by DISD by (1) including a personalized learning rubric as part of the district's Distinguished Teacher Review process and (2) exploring how student growth and alternative assessments can be incorporated in the student achievement portion of the evaluation model.

### Notes

*Can you identify examples of misaligned incentives that hinder your innovation efforts?*

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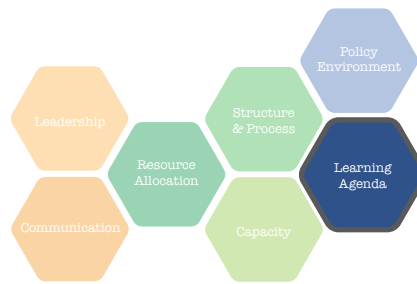
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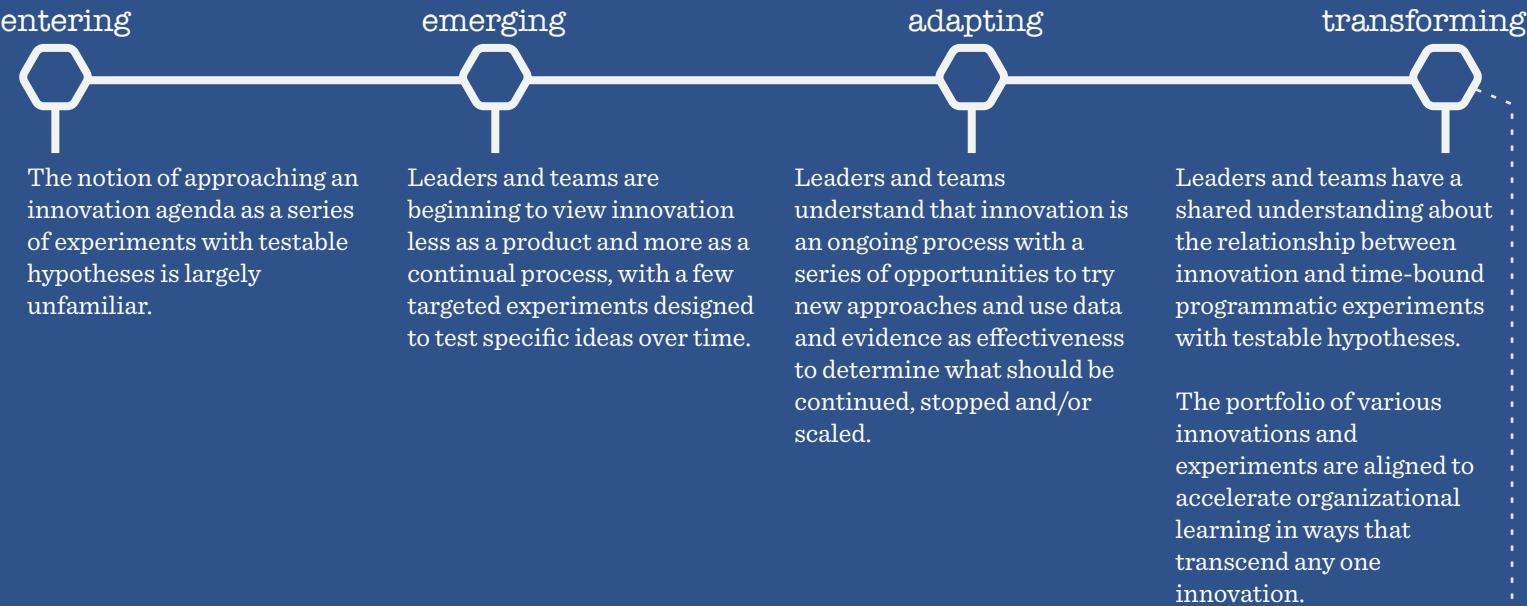
# Learning Agenda

testable hypotheses • measuring progress • managing change



## Testable Hypotheses

**Leaders should be explicit about what tangible problems or barriers innovation will help overcome, and what specific ideas you’re testing.**

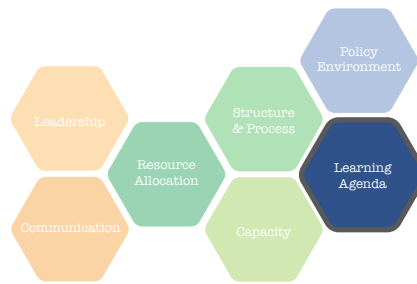


Try [IDEO’s design thinking toolkit](#) for a process to learn and prototype.



[Next Generation Learning Challenges](#) is a non-profit organization that invests in breakthrough learning models and provides space and opportunity for grantees to learn from each other and collaborate to ensure “innovation isolation” is not a barrier. The model of continuing to learn and relearn from grantee experiences is intrinsic in this organization’s culture.





## Learning Agenda testable hypotheses • measuring progress • managing change

### Managing Change

**Effective and sustainable innovation culture typically does not emerge by itself, but it can be intentionally pursued and managed over time through a focus on clear metrics and continuous improvement.**

entering



There is no evidence of an explicit organizational change management strategy that includes the role of innovation or building culture of innovation.

emerging



There is recognition of the need to actively manage the organizational change process, and some recognition of the potential for innovation to play an important role within the change process.

adapting



There is an explicit and clearly communicated organizational change process that highlights continual innovation as a core element.

transforming



A comprehensive organizational change management strategy that integrates the role of innovation exists and is managed against consistently and at all levels of the organization.



Explore this chart, which highlights some of the common barriers to managing complex change.



“Instilling an ethos of continuous improvement—always seeking to learn and do better—will be important. Making progress and never standing still is a hallmark of a healthy society and healthy schools, and it models the capacity for lifelong learning we seek to instill in students.”

Michael B. Horn and Heather Staker,  
*Blended: Using Disruptive Innovation to Improve Schools*



“Right now, it seems like there’s some incompatibility between fidelity and innovation, but it doesn’t need to be this way,” says Gretchen Morgan, Executive Director of Choice and Innovation at [Colorado Department of Education](#). “We should be operating schools with a purposeful relationship between innovation and fidelity.”



## Suggested Action Steps

While we are eager to work with and learn from all of you regarding what specific action steps might be most helpful in driving your organization's culture of innovation forward, we offer the following suggestions for your consideration:

### Analyze Results

- Depending on how the self-assessment tool was used (i.e., individually, in small or large groups, across the organization), a great first step is to analyze and discuss your results. If multiple individuals completed the assessment, you'll want to aggregate this data—which can be “rolled up” to align with relevant teams within the organization, as well as the full organization (if applicable). Analysis can be as limited to reviewing the full results and seeing what jumps out, or engaging in more sophisticated data analysis to identify key themes, trends or surprises.

### Discuss with Colleagues

- The opportunity to engage in discussion of self-assessment results with colleagues is often one of the most powerful parts of the process. Typically, because we do not have common language or context for the discussion of innovation culture, it can be difficult to organize these essential discussions. Or they simply do not occur at all. Team discussions become a great excuse to start the conversation, as well as to identify where specific individuals or teams within the organization might have similar or competing definitions, priorities or levels of understanding.

### Target Priorities

- Based on your analysis, you should be able to identify areas within the framework that represent relative weakness within your organization. These weak areas might represent a good place to focus your energies. If your organization has a documented strategic vision or plan, it can also be very helpful to map the existing strategic vision to what you learned through completion of the self-assessment tool.

### Identify Barriers

- Depending on what topics or areas of the innovation culture framework you prioritize, it is often helpful to identify the barriers that you believe are preventing you from having made more progress to date. Do you and your colleagues agree on the key barriers? Are these new or old barriers? Who has control over the decisions or systems that keep them in place?

### Design Solutions

- Working from the identified barrier(s), you can begin to construct potential strategies to make tangible progress. By reviewing specific examples, as well as examining the descriptions in more mature points along the sections of the rubric (i.e., in Emerging or Adapting, if you self-assessed at the level of Entering), you should be able to begin to brainstorm potential solutions to the barriers you identified. This can also represent the beginning of an explicit design process to chart a course forward for the organization.

## Share Feedback

- As we described in the Introduction, this document, and the self-assessment tool itself, only represent a first draft of this complex work. Only by working together will we all learn what is needed to truly understand what it takes to build and sustain a culture of innovation. Therefore, we invite you to access this [Innovation Culture Assessment – Feedback Form](#) and share your thoughts, questions, feedback and additional examples with us. We will use this information to inform future improvements to the framework and self-assessment tool.

## Request Support

- We would be happy to explore other ways to support you and your organizations in this essential work. If you feel you might benefit from additional guidance or support, please feel free to contact either of our organizations directly through our lead authors: Lisa Duty ([lisa.duty@learningaccelerator.org](mailto:lisa.duty@learningaccelerator.org)) and Todd Kern ([tvk@2revolutions.net](mailto:tvk@2revolutions.net)).

## Concluding Thoughts

Any effort to explicitly define what constitutes an effective organizational culture of innovation—much less to commit to deliberately pursuing a strategy to build and sustain one over time—is an inherently tricky business. The key concepts themselves are complicated and poorly understood. The language to describe these concepts is murky, overlapping and continually evolving. This is the context within which we conducted our collective work over the past several months. Nonetheless, the following fact remains true: if we are to make significant progress on radically transforming the learning experiences and opportunities for America’s students, ***we must give education leaders the tools and support they need to build and nurture organizations to do this work.*** In other words, we must help them build and sustain innovation culture within their organizations.

The framework and tool we presented here represents a start. Our two organizations pledge to work honestly and transparently with all who share our sense of urgency regarding the need to make tangible progress on this question. At the same time, while we are proud of this initial effort, we recognize that we don’t know what we don’t know. Therefore, we are currently seeking opportunities to test this new framework and tool in practice with colleagues at both the state and district levels. We are confident that the insights and lessons gleaned from these early attempts to implement the tool will lead to improvements in subsequent versions, which we look forward to sharing with you. In the meantime, we hope the first draft can serve as a helpful tool for those of you already working on this important question.

“Penetrating so many secrets, we cease to believe in the unknowable.  
But there it sits nevertheless calmly licking its chops.”  
– H.L. Mencken

## Who We Are



2Revolutions (2Rev) is a national education design lab that specializes in designing, launching and supporting Future of Learning *models*, and helping to catalyze the *conditions* within which they can thrive.

We apply a design-inspired, action-oriented approach to each of our projects. We are currently collaborating with a range of forward-thinking states, districts, funders, organizations and entrepreneurs who are striving to build or accelerate the Future of Learning.

In addition to our core work, our tagline “Do What You Love, For Good” captures the culture we’re building at 2Rev. We are passionate about helping to fix what’s broken with the way we educate kids in this country, but we also want to enjoy the work we do. After all, we believe that happy people are smarter, more creative and more productive. Learn more at [www.2revolutions.net](http://www.2revolutions.net).

### **2Revolutions Social Media:**

Twitter: [@2Revolutions](https://twitter.com/2Revolutions)

Facebook: [facebook.com/2revolutions](https://facebook.com/2revolutions)

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/company/2revolutions](https://linkedin.com/company/2revolutions)



The Learning Accelerator (TLA) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to transform K-12 education by accelerating the implementation of high-quality blended learning in school districts across the U.S.

TLA is part architect, part investor: cultivating solutions to overcome the barriers to implementing blended learning in schools and working directly with districts and states to develop implementation strategies that can be scaled and shared nationwide.

We envision a future in which every school in the country implements high-quality blended learning and all students receive an outstanding education, enabling them to reach their potential.

Learn more at [www.learningaccelerator.org](http://www.learningaccelerator.org) and <https://vimeo.com/101399986>.

### **TLA Social Media:**

Twitter: [@LearningAccel](https://twitter.com/LearningAccel)

Facebook: [facebook.com/LearningAccelerator](https://facebook.com/LearningAccelerator)

LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/company/the-learning-accelerator](https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-learning-accelerator)



## About the Authors

### Lisa Duty, Partner

Dr. Lisa Duty is a Partner at The Learning Accelerator (TLA) where she directs state strategy, partnerships and investments. Lisa has over 15 years experience in education strategy, policy and school design with deep expertise in future trends in teaching and learning. Her current work supports state actors in reimagining their roles, missions and the ways education systems can be rebuilt for innovation and high performance.

Prior to TLA, Lisa was Senior Director of Innovation at KnowledgeWorks where she led the design of a new blended education model and authored numerous pieces of legislation advancing digital and blended learning. Prior to KnowledgeWorks, Lisa spent several years as a consultant for the Ohio Department of Education leading work on multi-district programs for secondary school transformation and urban redesign. She was also a lecturer and adjunct faculty member at The Ohio State University's College of Education and Human Ecology and was a teacher for several years early in her career. She has a Ph.D. in Global Education from The Ohio State University where she also specialized in School Design and Democratization. Follow her on Twitter [@LisaDuty1](#).

### Todd Kern, Founder & Principal

Todd Kern is a systems-oriented generalist with nearly two decades of experience in varied roles across the U.S. education industry—including at the federal, state and local levels; in government, academia, for-profit and not-for-profit settings; and in strategic, analytical, advocacy and operational roles. Todd started 2Revolutions to leverage this diverse set of perspectives to attempt new ways of addressing the complex social challenges that continually hold us back.

Todd previously held senior leadership roles with New Leaders for New Schools – first as Executive Director of the NYC program, then as Chief Knowledge Officer. Before that, he was a principal at KnowledgeQuest Ventures LLC, a mission-driven boutique investment bank and strategy consulting firm dedicated to serving the emerging education industry. Todd's past experience also includes representing the legislative priorities of state education commissioners before Congress, and lobbying for increased federal investments in education. Todd has taught education policy at Teachers College, Columbia University and co-directed the Education Policy Fellowship Program. Todd completed his graduate work in public policy at the University of Chicago, earned undergraduate degrees in political science and psychology from Miami University and graduated from a public high school in Ohio.

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We are certainly not the first to tackle innovation cultures, and these works proved to be especially helpful to our research, thought process and subsequent iterations.

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