

NZ Innovation Barometer



The NZ Innovation Barometer presents a set of detailed case studies which are a practical demonstration of how innovation has been applied for the benefit of New Zealanders. This document shares the themes from the case studies to date for other public sector organisations to learn from. We are adding more as they are developed through the 2021 Barometer cycle.

Innovation in the public sector is driven by public good as opposed to competitive advantage in the private sector. Government operates in a non-competitive environment, positioning it to share learnings and scale what works. The Barometer aims to contribute to this by developing a Library of case studies and growing it with resources over time.

Themes from the case studies

1. People are the drivers

We heard a mix of the following ingredients helped projects succeed:

- Allowing the team a degree of ownership of the project and its direction meant that the team felt a sense of autonomy and creative freedom.
- Projects often had someone in particular as the champion, driving it forward, who is informally responsible for navigating and managing the relationships.
- That sense of autonomy can only be realised when there is trust between the team / individual and their manager. How might managers signal and create an environment where people feel trusted and listened to?
- Diversity within teams helps; be it skills, experiences, personalities or mindsets.

2. Managing ambiguity

Case studies highlighted that a mix of the following delivered better outcomes:

- Greater comfort levels of the team in dealing with uncertainty and ambiguity. This was created through team communication, expectations setting, and having high trust.
- Staying in the divergent space for longer - this requires a release of control and preconceived ideas of the outcomes.
- Involving stakeholders, be it staff or communities, without already knowing the content/output you're seeking; not jumping to solutions.
- Being upfront with ministers and leaders about the realities of this approach; they need to be on board.

“ *It's really unnerving to have to release control, which you are taught to have in your career. It was upside down from everything I thought I knew. The objective is not control but to give the speaking stick to others.* ”

3. Innovating on BAU

Some of the case studies had these ideas in common:

- Innovating on their everyday work; innovation isn't always a separate project with a specific budget.
- The team doing the work are often best placed to lead the improvements as they know what's needed best.
- Innovating on the process while they did the task at hand in the existing required way.
- Recording how and why the innovation has been done so someone else can pick it up either; in another team, a community of practice, or if you leave.

“ *I was able to think and create how to do something differently, while delivering a project the old way.* ”

4. Technology efficiency gains

Technology was used in some of the following ways:

- Digitising work from manual or paper based approaches
- Merging data systems to be more efficient and effective.
- Gathering new data through the use of new technologies for new insights, which could be used to inform and target messaging, and future work.
- Greater transparency of data

5. Phased approach

Projects benefited from adopting the following:

- Proof of concept to prove value before larger investment
- Separate processes that need improving into chunks and do one part at a time. Don't do the full shabam at once.
- Automating some datasets first to test the approach before scaling.

You can find the case studies on [our website](#). The four 2020 pilot organisations were

