

## **Innovation in the public domain needs better conditions : readiness, reward, involvement and transparency**

### **Blog at Local Government Improvement and Development:**

**Is Government the place for innovation? is an interesting question put out on the Blogs recently.**

In a way this is a bit of a non-sequitur. The more critical question is 'how do we make government innovative'. If it is not a place for innovation then we may as well sell up, shut up shop and leave it to the perils of the market to determine our public services fate. Instead we need to create the *conditions* in which innovation can take place. In the swings and roundabouts of the free markets, measuring innovation is essential due to the rewards of capturing markets, and the financial penalty of business failure. It is futile for the public sector to ape business behaviours as these conditions simply do not apply.

Instead it needs to create the "conditions for innovation". These include:

- 1) - **A readiness to change** and seek better solutions to problems
- 2) - **Rewarding people for experimentation** and doing things differently, otherwise the public sector can not locate change and improvement let alone begin to seek it out
- 3) - **Involving all the players** who can make a difference and design better public service solutions. That means citizens, the frontline staff, managers and policy makers. Otherwise knowledge, capability, understanding and 'do-ability' simply will not be maximized.
- 4) - **Being transparent open and honest** – we need to put in place systems that incentivise these behaviours. Otherwise excessive caution and protective behaviours will continue to prevail. The public sector needs to be allowed to try and fail.

The public sector needs to be bold and unpredictable especially where it is clearly not making progress and meeting challenging outcomes (reducing imprisonment, combating obesity and enabling all children to attain at school are merely three examples). Now may not be the best time for bold innovation, experimentation and change but as resources diminish it is probably more necessary than ever to do different and do better!