

Skills, attitudes and behaviours that fuel public innovation

**A guide to getting the most from Nesta's
Competency Framework for Experimenting
and Public Problem Solving**

Citizen & Stakeholder Engagement

Actively involving citizens, stakeholders and unusual suspects

Creative Facilitation

Creatively processing different perspectives and deliberating multiple options

Building Bridges

Orchestrating interaction to find common ground and create shared ownership

Brokering

Mediating contrasting interests and reducing friction between multiple stakeholders



Political & Bureaucratic Awareness

Operating political dynamics and bureaucratic procedures to ensure strategic support

Financing change

Understanding the many ways to liberate and use financial resources for innovation

Intrapreneurship

Being insurgent and use business acumen to create opportunities

Demonstrating Value

Articulating the value of new approaches and solutions for decision-making purposes

Storytelling & Advocacy

Using narratives and media to articulate vision and information in compelling ways

WORKING TOGETHER

Engaging with citizens and stakeholders to create shared ownership of new solutions

Empathetic
Understanding others' experiences and frames of reference

Resilient
The perseverance to deal with resistance

Imaginative
Exploring and envisioning new possible futures

Outcomes-focused
Strong commitment to real world effects



LEADING CHANGE

Mobilising resources and legitimacy to make change happen



Competencies for
EXPERIMENTING & PUBLIC PROBLEM SOLVING

Agile
Responding to changing environments with flexibility

Action-oriented
Biased towards action and learning by doing

Curious
The desire to explore multiple possibilities

Reflective
Habit of critically reflecting on process and results

Courageous
Willingness to take risks

CORE SKILLS
KEY ATTITUDES



ACCELERATING LEARNING

Exploring and iterating new ideas to inform and validate solutions

Future Acumen
Connecting long-term vision with short-term achievable tasks

Prototyping & Iterating
Testing ideas and systematically improving them

Data Literacy & Evidence
Using different kinds of data effectively to accelerate sense-making

Systems Thinking
Combining micro and macro perspectives to grasp complexity

Tech Literacy
Understanding technological developments and use their potential

COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR EXPERIMENTAL PROBLEM SOLVING



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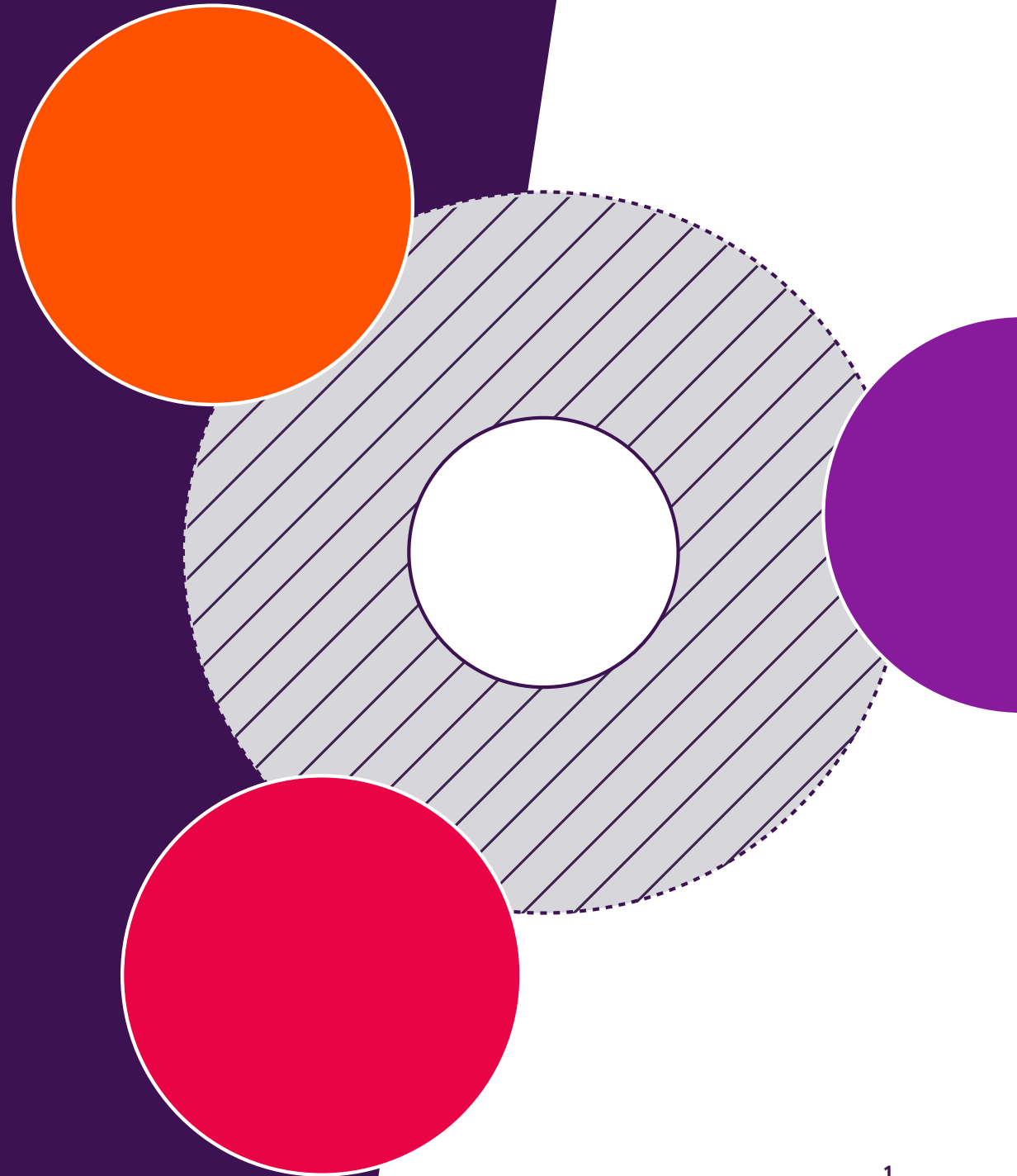
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1. The Competency Framework

The Competency Framework visualises the skills and attitudes that underpin Experimenting and Public Problem Solving.

We launched our Competency Framework in 2017. It identifies the core skills and attitudes that teams of innovators in the public sector combine in order to experiment and adopt innovative approaches to public problems. For us, that means a continual process of exploring problems from new perspectives, and testing and iterating possible solutions to learn what works and what doesn't.

We've attempted to provide a view on what it takes to set up and run processes that fuel innovation, while also creating an environment that allows for innovation within an administrative and political context.



Why we developed it

Innovation practice in the public sector has often focused on learning new methods. Methods, tools (and the training sessions they come with) are valuable, but we've found that on their own they are not enough.

To use any method effectively, you also need to understand how to create the appropriate conditions for it to work, and how to then manage innovative projects within the politics and bureaucracy of government.

We need to go beyond methods and tools to focus on the core set of attitudes and skills that underpin them. That's what our Competency Framework is about.

Why it's useful

If experimental problem solving is at the heart of how governments should operate, then we need to demystify the skills and attitudes behind it. By highlighting what we mean by 'innovation skills', we showcase the attitudes and mindsets that are needed for public innovation.

The competencies are framed around experimental problem solving to emphasise what teams of public servants need to do in order to tackle those complex or 'wicked problems' that governments across the world face.

It also shifts the focus from individuals using or learning a single innovation method (like Human Centred Design) to teams making the most of the array of approaches available to them. We don't believe in heroic individuals; true innovation comes from empowered teams.

How the framework has been used

At its heart, the framework is a tool for reflection, allowing people to have conversations about skills and attitudes that we've found to be fundamental to innovative teams. It was also designed with people in human resources in mind, so they could spot and develop the skills and attitudes we've highlighted here.

Since its release, we've seen the framework used in a number of other ways. The below isn't an exhaustive list, and we're sure that there will be other ways in which the Competency Framework could be useful to you. We've also included some example activities you can use. These are on page 58. If you've thought of others, please let us know:

- Team organisation: exploring the skills and attitudes of an existing innovation team to uncover any blind spots.
- Defining the aims and outcomes of training or capacity building programmes - which could also apply to 'unlearning' the behaviours we need to lose.
- Identifying strengths and weaknesses when setting up an innovation team.
- Assessing or diagnosing the innovation capacity of an agency or department.
- Crafting and designing new job roles when recruiting.
- Being adapted to work as an cross-government competency framework.

And how it shouldn't be used

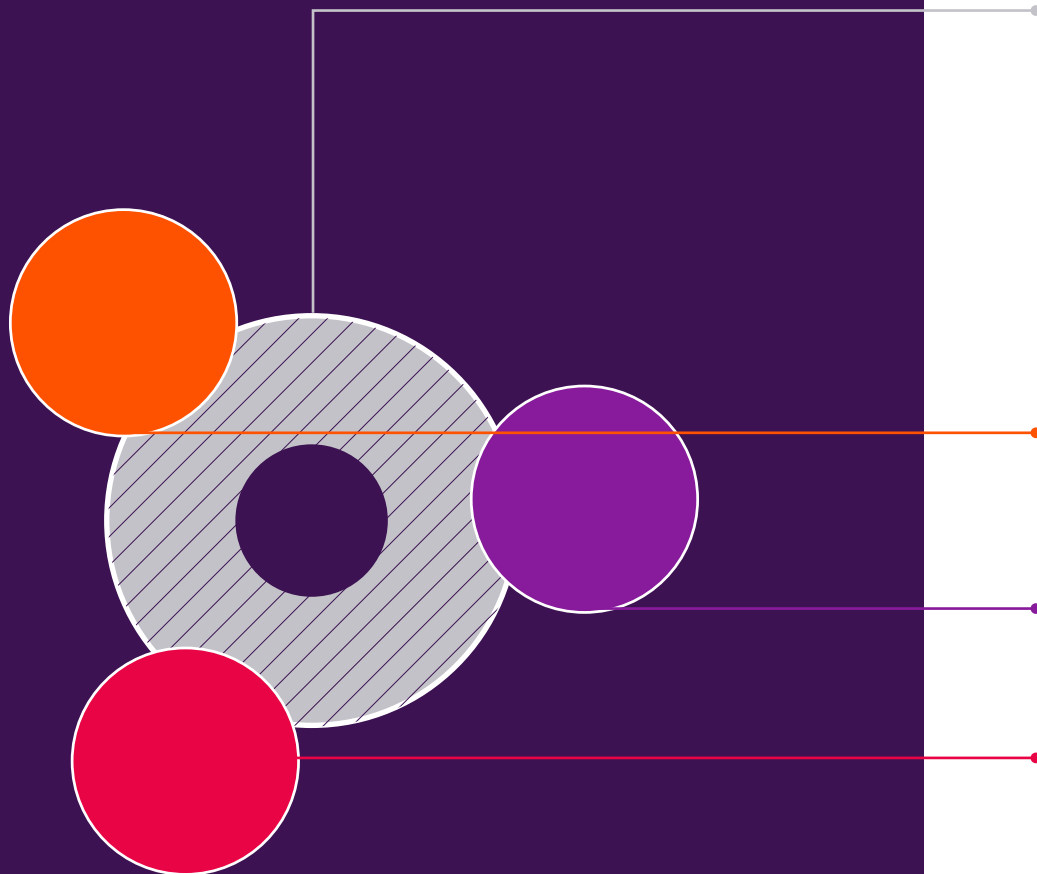
Please don't think of the framework as a checklist. It's emphasis is on developing strong **teams** rather than individuals. To date, we've not met or heard of anyone who has all the skills and attitudes we've outlined here, so please don't look at the framework and use it as a tick box exercise.

It's a diverse range of skills and attitudes that need to be present within the wider team, because empowered and well-balanced teams are where the change happens. The challenge is to combine these skills and attitudes in ways that make the team greater than its individual members.

How we developed it

What started as a project in Nesta's Innovation Skills team grew into a global research project with a diverse range of partners, from governments to leading innovation practitioners. We interviewed over 30 people experienced in making innovation happen in government, and since then we've tested the framework with governments and innovation experts, from Portugal and Colombia to Canada and Australia.

Understanding the Competency Framework



THERE ARE THREE PARTS TO THE FRAMEWORK

1. THE CENTRAL CIRCLE

It is the desired focus of innovative teams: to solve public problems through experimenting. This is the core aim.

2. ATTITUDES

These surround the core aim, and create the fertile ground for experimenting and public problem solving. Attitudes can change, but they tend to be deeply ingrained so they don't change easily. It takes a significant amount of time to develop certain attitudes (we're talking about years, not weeks or months). That's why we believe it's important to take attitudes into account when hiring people for roles.

3. CORE SKILLS CATEGORIES

These are three distinct skill areas: *Work Together*, *Accelerating Learning* and *Leading Change*. They enable our key aim of experimenting and public problem solving, and feature crucial skills that make up each area. Skills are easier to learn and develop than attitudes. Obviously, you recruit for skills as well but think of them as things that can be developed, learned or taught.

WORKING TOGETHER: Engaging citizens and stakeholders to create shared ownership of new solutions

ACCELERATING LEARNING: Exploring, testing and developing new ideas to inform and validate solutions

LEADING CHANGE: Creating space for innovation and driving change processes to mobilise people, inspire action and ensure strategic outcomes. Mobilising resources and creating legitimacy to make change happen.

2. Behaviours

If an awareness of the skills and attitudes of innovative teams is the first step, then illustrating what behaviours they might shape is the second.

The Competency Framework on its own is a useful starting point. But not everyone understands what being 'tech literate' is at first glance, or how 'curiosity' might manifest itself. These can feel a bit abstract. So we've described them as behaviours; tangible actions or habits that you can see. We want you to be able to observe them, in yourself, your team or your organisation and recognise where they are and where they're missing.

Because for experimental problem solving, these are the behaviours likely to be most useful in making public innovation happen.

Use the descriptions in this guide to think about how you or your team relate to the different behaviours and prompt the important discussions needed around the areas you want to develop. Use it to shine a light on what you think might be missing and then create the opportunity for you to do something about it.

Common vs innovative behaviours

We've included two types of behaviours for each skill: **ones we commonly see in government** and others **we want to see more of - the innovative ones**. Few people display one or the other outright, and the same goes for organisations too. But we've seen that a shift to more innovative behaviours can bring better outcomes, which is the reason we're in government in the first place. We hope this helps steer you towards them.

COMMONLY OBSERVED BEHAVIOURS

These are often the more established norms, 'the way things are done around here'. They could be woven into the culture of where you work and are frequently what the organisation is set up to support. These behaviours aren't necessarily 'bad' but they are often limiting when it comes to experimental problem solving.

Recognising these in yourself or your team likely indicates that you are working within your comfort zone (or are not allowed out of it). These behaviours have probably been useful - that's why we've been doing them - but there's evidence all around that they need to change. These are the behaviours you'd want to see less of.

INNOVATIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL BEHAVIOURS

These behaviours begin to challenge the status quo. They build upon, or provide an alternative to the default behaviours, enabling more open, explorative and imaginative problem solving. Problem solving that leads to new solutions better addressing the challenges we face. We see these behaviours time and again when innovations have been successful. These are the behaviours of the 21st century civil servant. Seeing, championing and of course **doing** more of these will help you become a more effective public problem solver.

See, think, act

We've focused on three areas you might see these behaviours. What shapes our behaviour can very quickly get very complex. These vary from our thoughts and emotions, to genetics, the physical environment, and both social interaction and our social identity. There are other factors that go beyond even these.

We've used the following three to create some practical examples. Use these to recognise behaviours where you are and observe them in yourself and others.

▶ APPROACHING SITUATIONS OR CHALLENGES BY...

These relate to how people **see** or perceive a situation. Behaviours informed by their emotions and past experiences.

▶ MAKING DECISIONS BY...

Behaviours that reveal how people **think** or make sense of a situation, challenge, or in how they develop an idea. It's shaped by their cognition, knowledge, and informed by their past experiences.

▶ INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE, TOOLS OR SYSTEMS BY...

Relates to how people **act** with others, within systems and is shaped by social interaction, their identity, and the physical environment.

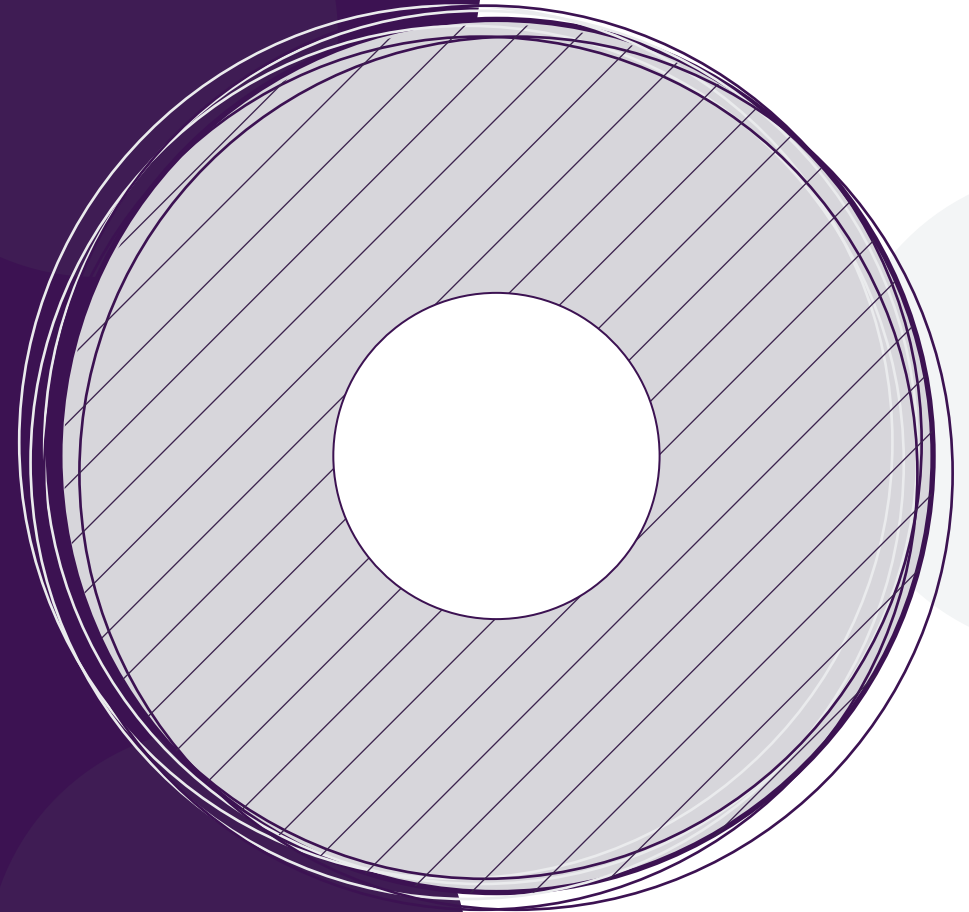
These are not prescriptive

Keep in mind that this is a loose guide. We haven't wanted to be too prescriptive; we know that the behaviours we've written about might look different depending on where you are and where you're working. So use our examples as a rule of thumb rather than something set in stone. What ever form they take, if we can bring these qualities and behaviours into the light, we can nurture them in our institutions.

3.

Key attitudes

Here we explain how the attitudes underpinning innovative and experimental behaviour relate to the different skills we've visualised on the Competency Framework. We also outline why these are important.



What attitudes are

We define them as a settled way of thinking or feeling about something. They inform our motivation and ability to act when encountering a situation. Psychologists often define them as a learned tendency to evaluate 'subjects' (which could be people, issues, objects or events) in a certain way. There are several components that make up attitudes, sometimes referred to as the 'CAB' of attitude:

- **Cognitive:** thoughts about a subject
- **Affective:** how the subject makes you feel
- **Behavioural:** how the attitude influences your behaviour

Attitudes are the result of lots of things, from experiences and observations to upbringing and social norms. They aren't fixed. You've learnt them and you can change them. Those same influences that formed our attitudes can also re-form them. While attitudes can change, they don't change fast. It takes time. When hiring, look for people with the right attitudes. It's much easier to learn a skill than to change an attitude.

While attitudes influence behaviour, they are not perfectly aligned. Researchers have discovered that people are more likely to behave according to their attitudes under certain conditions, for example if you:

- are an expert on the subject
- expect a favourable outcome
- stand to win or lose something due to the issue

A single attitude doesn't map on to a single behaviour. But they interconnect with each other (and with other skills), and depending on the context, this results in different actions. In this guide we've listed where certain attitudes play a role within a specific skill. If you recognise the attitude but not the skill, it's an indicator that you (or your team) could develop it.

On the next page are the attitudes that we've found to be most important to innovative teams.



AGILE

Responding flexibly to changing environments. Able to react to unexpected situations and developments. Adapting plans and actions in response to changing circumstances.

ACTION-ORIENTED

Bias towards action and learning by doing. Being willing to take action to deal with a problem or situation. More doing, less talking.

CURIOUS

The desire to explore multiple possibilities. Having the desire to know or learn more about a subject, situation or person. A general impulse to gain new knowledge and insights to drive change.

REFLECTIVE

Habit of critically reflecting on process and results. Critically considering the actions you take and the effects they have.

COURAGEOUS

Willingness to take risks when addressing a complex issue, even when things are uncertain. Being able to stand up to resistance and be undeterred by the possibility of failure.

EMPATHETIC

Understanding others' experiences and perspectives. Considering people's feelings and ways of thinking to develop a solution that is a better 'fit' for all.

RESILIENT

Withstanding or recovering quickly from difficult situations, setbacks or failures. Striving to achieve your objectives, even if it takes you several attempts.

IMAGINATIVE

Exploring and envisioning new possibilities. Envisioning alternate future scenarios that address current and future problems. Demonstrating divergent thinking, creativity or inventiveness when forming these solutions.

OUTCOMES-FOCUSED

Committed to real world effects. Motivated to create the change or impact you want to make. Managing actions according to this.

4.

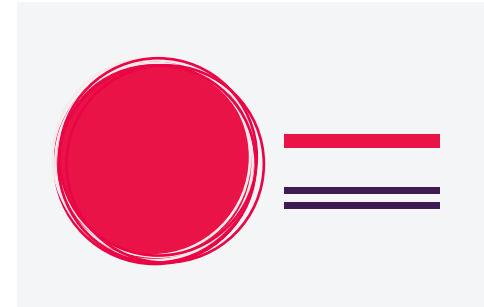
Key skills

These are the key skills that underpin innovative and experimental behaviour. We explain what they mean in the world of experimental problem solving and give examples of what they might look like.



How each skill is broken down

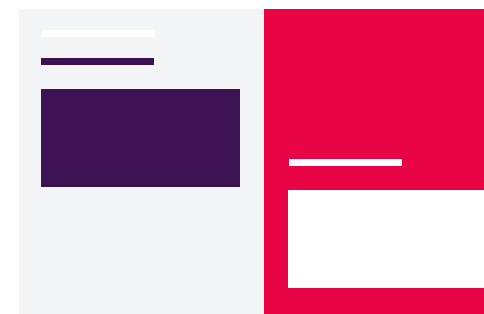
To bring more depth to the skills, for each one we have:



Introduced the skill and colour coded it to match the corresponding 'skill area'.



Defined what the skill is and illustrated both the common and innovative behaviours of the skill in action.

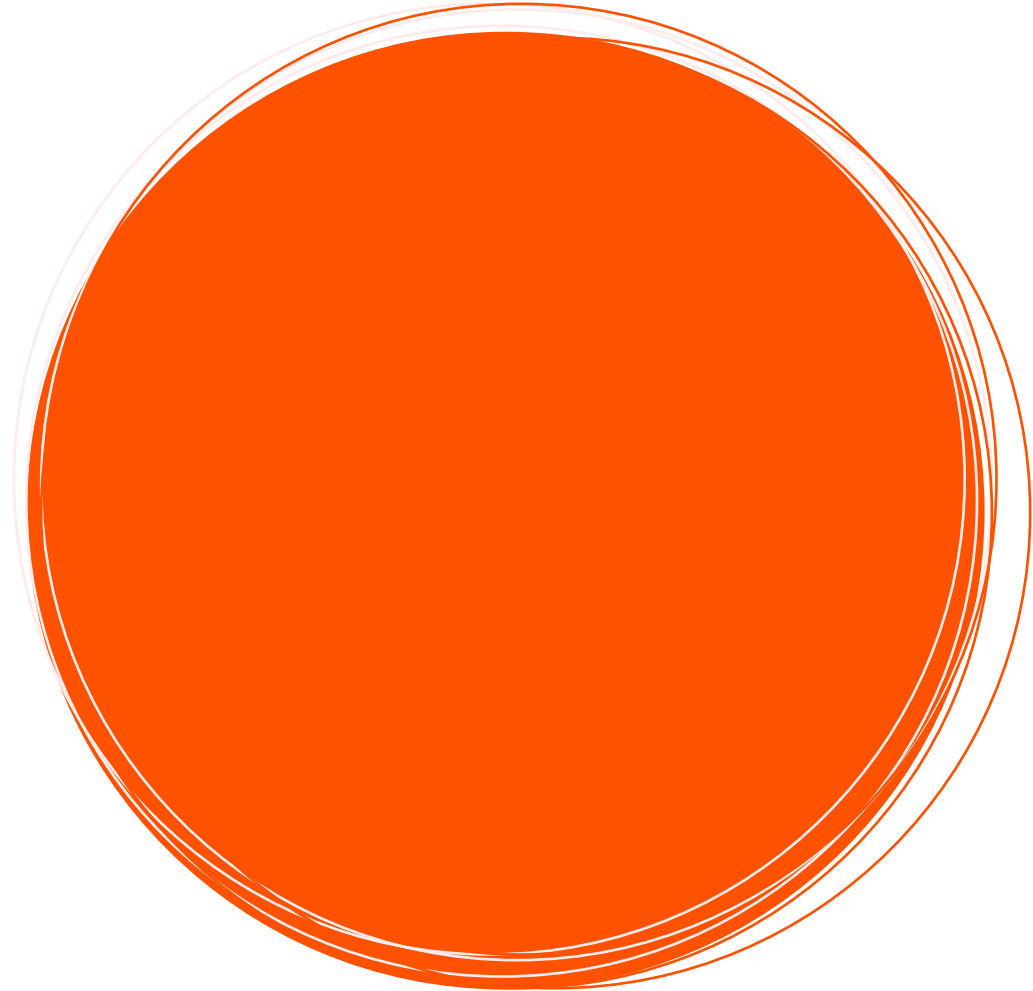


Explored how it relates to specific attitudes and suggested some reflective questions.

4.1

Working Together

Engaging citizens and stakeholders to create shared ownership of new solutions



Citizen & Stakeholder Engagement

Actively involving citizens,
stakeholders and unusual suspects

You look beyond the usual suspects to engage a wide variety of citizens and stakeholders. You can find and engage with those affected by a project (whether that is directly or indirectly). This goes right across the process; making them a vocal part of the project, from generating ideas to implementing them. You make sure a variety of people are listened to and empowered and you bring their perspective and understanding to bear.

Doing this well helps to ensure the suitability, fit and uptake of an approach as you've brought people along with you. You are actively listening; you are not imposing. This should improve the effectiveness and acceptance of a solution because you are working together.

Behaviours

COMMONLY OBSERVED BEHAVIOURS

Using the knowledge and expertise of yourself, your team and other people you usually have contact with; 'the usual suspects'.

Seeing citizens and stakeholders as people to develop solutions for, rather than with.

Using statistical data, existing theories and assumptions based on your previous experience.

Using standardised models and methods which you and your team are comfortable with and have used many times before.

◀ **APPROACHING SITUATIONS OR CHALLENGES BY...** ▶

◀ **MAKING DECISIONS BY...** ▶

◀ **INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE, TOOLS OR SYSTEMS BY...** ▶

INNOVATIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL BEHAVIOURS

Seeing the people affected by an issue as experts in their own right too and including their voice, as well as other people who often go unheard.

Involving citizens in a substantial way to generate better ideas and stronger solutions.

Challenging your own assumptions. Listening to people's everyday experiences - through engagement, meaningful conversations and in-depth research.

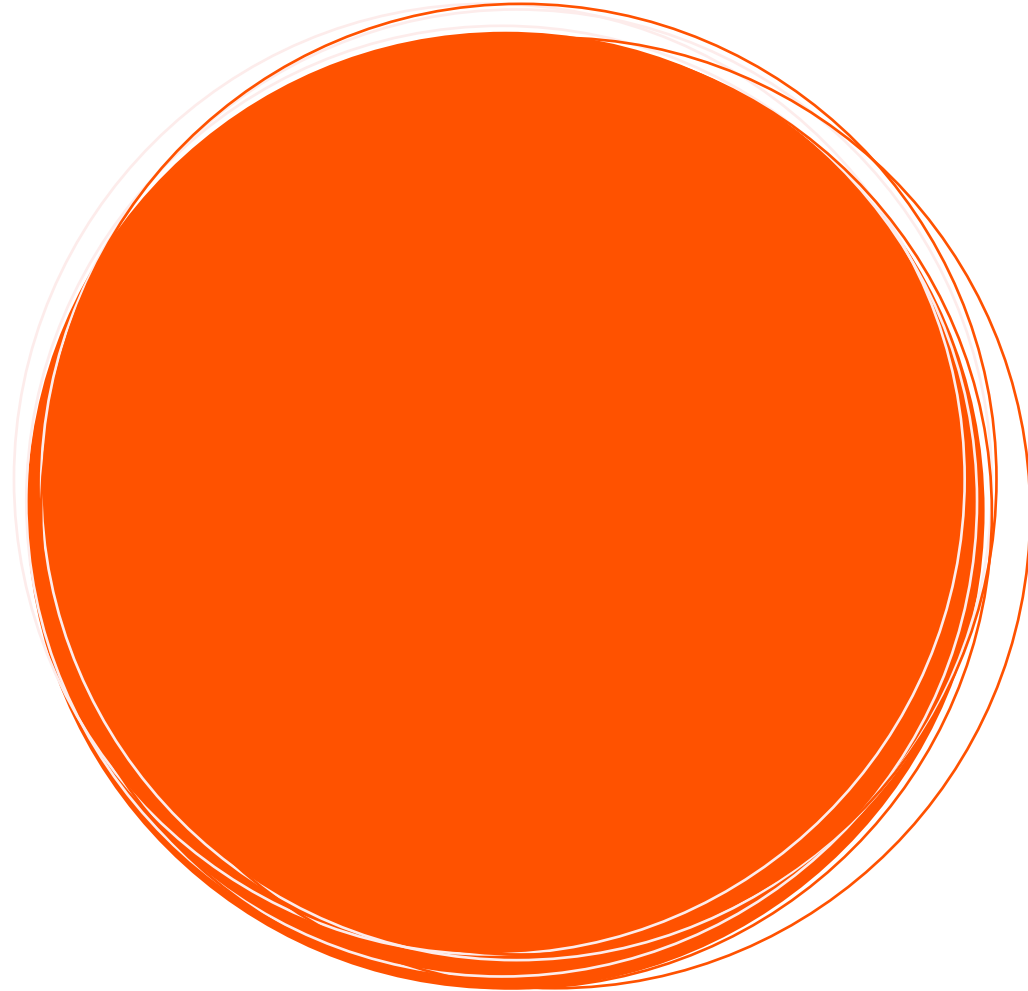
Tailoring activities for the people you're working with and trying new methods or different tools if what you've used before isn't the best choice this time. Making sure you listen to a wide group of people, particularly those who aren't often heard.

Related Attitudes

Empathy and **curiosity** are both vital for reaching beyond the usual suspects. To understand both problem (and possible solution) from the perspective of others, you need the desire to understand and learn others' point of view. We can't avoid our blind spots; we all have them. By **reflecting** on what these are, and understanding the limits of our own perspective, we can ensure they do not (1) unduly influence those you are engaging with or (2) limit the solutions you are able to produce with them. You come with an open mind. You also recognise there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to engaging with different people and organisations. For a deep understanding, you need the **agility** to adapt and change the approach you might use to engage with different groups.

Reflective Questions

- ▷ What do you know about the people you work with or for (i.e. their motivations, ambitions, experiences and needs)?
- ▷ How do you know you are engaging the right people? Where do you find them? And how do you engage with them?
- ▷ What barriers are there to interacting with these people? How might you overcome them?
- ▷ How can you capture and use their insights?
- ▷ How do you generate insights, can you be sure they are authentic?



Creative Facilitation

Creatively processing different
perspectives and deliberating
multiple options

CREATIVE FACILITATION

You support people to communicate their needs or concerns and encourage them to share a broad range of perspectives and goals. You're aware that not everyone communicates the same way. You are creative in bringing the best out of people; using different approaches tailored to fit the people in the room. You can bring these ideas together and generate shared ownership of them. The people involved feel listened to, included and are positive about the experience.

Creative facilitation looks different depending on who is doing it! Done well it will produce similar outcomes; creative exploration of possibilities and the shared understanding or ownership of ideas. This could be through high energy workshops, meetings, events or conversations.

Behaviours

COMMONLY OBSERVED BEHAVIOURS

Following a strict plan and not responding to group dynamics or energy levels, and as a result, limiting people's contributions and interest.

Giving greater attention to certain ideas and perspectives that might align more closely with your own. Making decisions based on these rather than on a range of ideas.

Seeking feedback on your own idea or perspective. Not having the time or opportunities to bring new and different ideas into the mix.

◀ **APPROACHING SITUATIONS OR CHALLENGES BY...** ▶

◀ **MAKING DECISIONS BY...** ▶

◀ **INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE, TOOLS OR SYSTEMS BY...** ▶

INNOVATIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL BEHAVIOURS

Being flexible; adapting and changing approaches in response to the needs, abilities and energy levels of attendees.

Drawing out the perspectives and ideas of each individual, and making decisions through deliberation and discussion across a group.

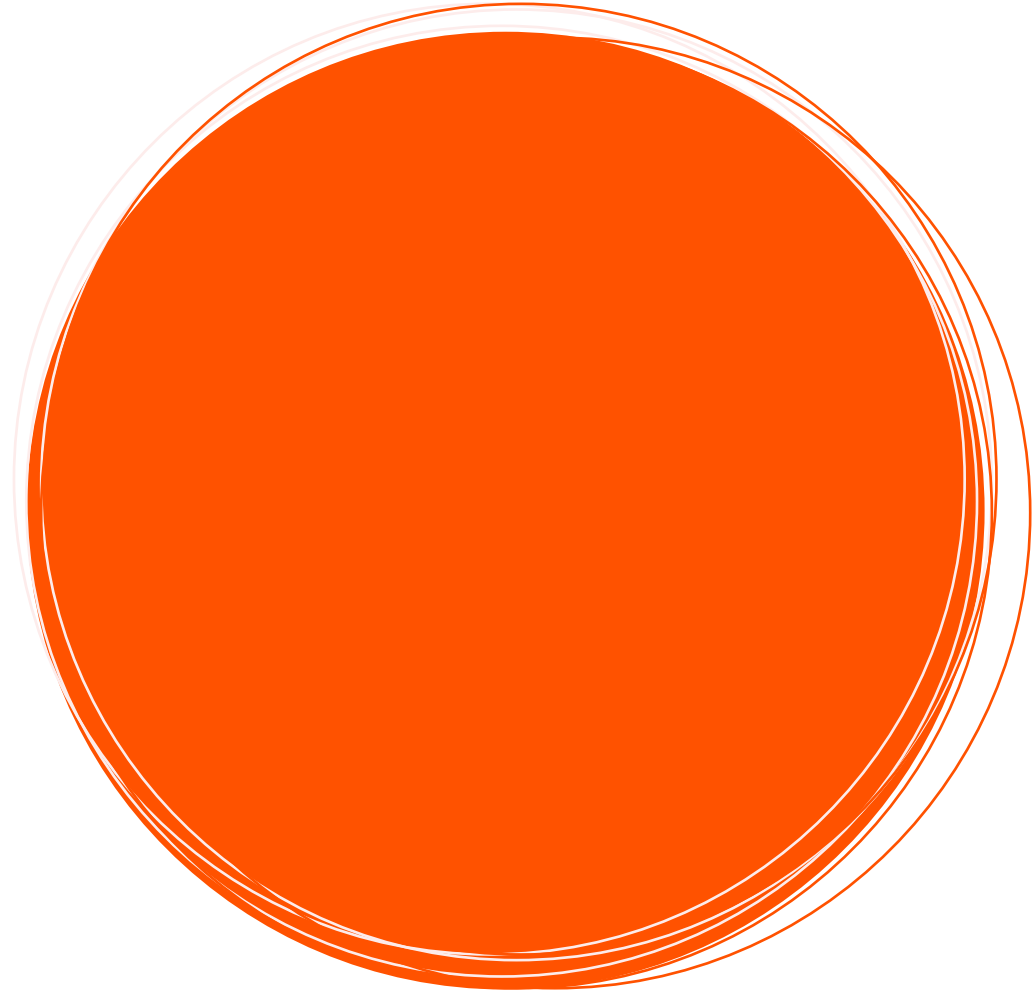
Creating a safe space where attendees feel comfortable to share their views as collaborators; supporting this with a range of tools to stimulate them. Working with a diverse set of people.

Related attitudes

Being **action oriented** is a vital attitude to encourage people to go beyond thinking and talking about ideas, and into actually 'doing things' that communicate or visualise their thoughts. Being **reflective** and **agile** enables you to recognise and understand what works for different individuals and when to change approach. **Empathy** is crucial to be sensitive to the needs of others. It helps ensure you get the best from people so they see genuine value in sharing their opinions and ideas.

Reflective questions

- ▶ How do you make sure you have the right mix of different perspectives in your session/process?
- ▶ How can you make sure everyone contribute to the session/process?
- ▶ How do you manage differences in opinion, beliefs, working styles, goals?
- ▶ How do you create a safe space that enables a meaningful discussion?
- ▶ How are you able to draw these perspectives and opinions into meaningful conversation?
- ▶ What prevents a safe and trusting environment? And what can be done to overcome this?



Building Bridges

Orchestrating interaction to find common ground and create shared ownership

BUILDING BRIDGES

By reaching out and making new connections between different groups, you help stakeholders with different interests find common ground and orient them towards a shared goal.

Stakeholders often have different aims around a single issue. They might come with a vast difference in understanding, language or experience. Looking beyond these differences, spotting the similarities and aligning them to a common goal is the art of bridge building.

Doing this involves establishing mutual trust between stakeholders by creating a shared language that everyone accepts and uses. That might mean translating the different perspectives and ideas of one group into terms another would understand. Misunderstandings breed distrust. This is no doubt hard. But if done well, varied groups will trust you (and each other) despite and beyond their differences to a shared goal.

Behaviours

COMMONLY OBSERVED BEHAVIOURS

Concentrating on a single concept or view that needs to get done. This can come across as expecting people to accept and adopt it.

Setting a common ground based on the authority of a small group of actors. Careful planning and messaging brings other people on board with the work.

Using formal platforms to have a conversation, which can stifle debate and make it hard for outsiders to engage in the discussion.

◀ APPROACHING SITUATIONS OR CHALLENGES BY... ▶

◀ MAKING DECISIONS BY... ▶

◀ INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE, TOOLS OR SYSTEMS BY... ▶

INNOVATIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL BEHAVIOURS

Being open and inclusive to other viewpoints. Actively seeking the opportunity to establish a shared language, beliefs and understanding so that people are on the same page.

Creating common ground to be inclusive; through engagement and bringing different people's ideas and beliefs into the process.

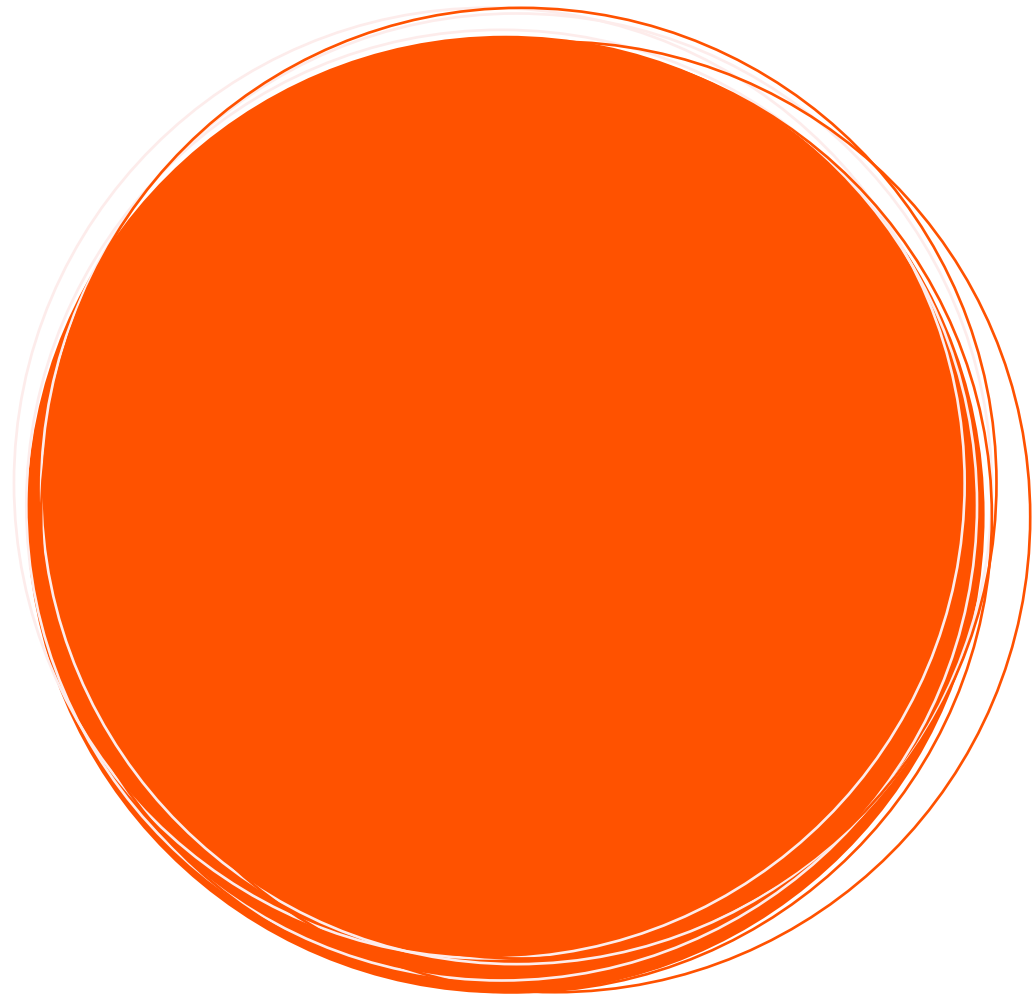
Helping people to make sense of different points of view and translating concepts from one domain into another to create common ground.

Related attitudes

You need to be **empathic** and **curious** to understand where someone is coming from and why. This is essential for building trust and establishing common ground. However, this isn't straightforward; it requires **agility** and being **reflective** to adapt an approach that might not be working.

Reflective questions

- ▷ What are the differences (in language, beliefs, perception/frames, mental models, working styles) you observe that don't work well together?
- ▷ What kind of activities or mechanisms help to build a common language and/or understanding? What kind of tools (e.g. diagrams, metaphors, stories, etc) may support these activities?
- ▷ How can you tell that others (in your team, stakeholder network) share the same understanding about the problem, or solution?
- ▷ What hampers the development of common ground? What needs to change to accelerate it?



Brokering

Mediating contrasting interests and reducing friction between multiple stakeholders

BROKERING

You can recognise differences and manage potential conflicts and tensions to avoid individual interests dominating collaborative efforts.

To do this you're able to identify the conflicting interests and motivations of different groups. And you ensure nobody's views are exploited or neglected.

This skill is particularly useful in situations where there are (1) many contrasting points of view and/or (2) lots of opportunities for misunderstanding! This depends on stakeholders being either open about their underlying motivations, or in using your skills to work out what these might be.

Successful brokering is often informal. And where successful, it sees a variety of partners working in common cause despite their differences.

Behaviours

COMMONLY OBSERVED BEHAVIOURS

Reacting to differences in stakeholder motivations and goals, when they become a barrier (rather than in advance).

Focusing more heavily on the interests of either the dominant partner or largest funder. Having a bias towards views that align with your own agenda.

Approaching interactions without the opportunity or time for an honest discussion with different stakeholders.

◀ APPROACHING SITUATIONS OR CHALLENGES BY... ▶

◀ MAKING DECISIONS BY... ▶

◀ INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE, TOOLS OR SYSTEMS BY... ▶

INNOVATIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL BEHAVIOURS

Seeking the goals and motivations of different stakeholders early on to identify potentially troublesome differences, as well as similarities, to build negotiations upon.

Considering the motivations and goals of multiple stakeholders, in order to inform choices.

Striving to uncover differing stakeholder interests and form an honest basis for meaningful discussions. Carving out or allowing the time and space to do this.

BROKERING

Related attitudes

Empathy and **curiosity** are the foundations of this skill. You need these to care and learn about others' motivations and the differences between stakeholders. Being **outcomes focused** keeps the ultimate goal of agreement in mind, and your **resilience** when faced with potential conflict sees you right through uncomfortable situations.

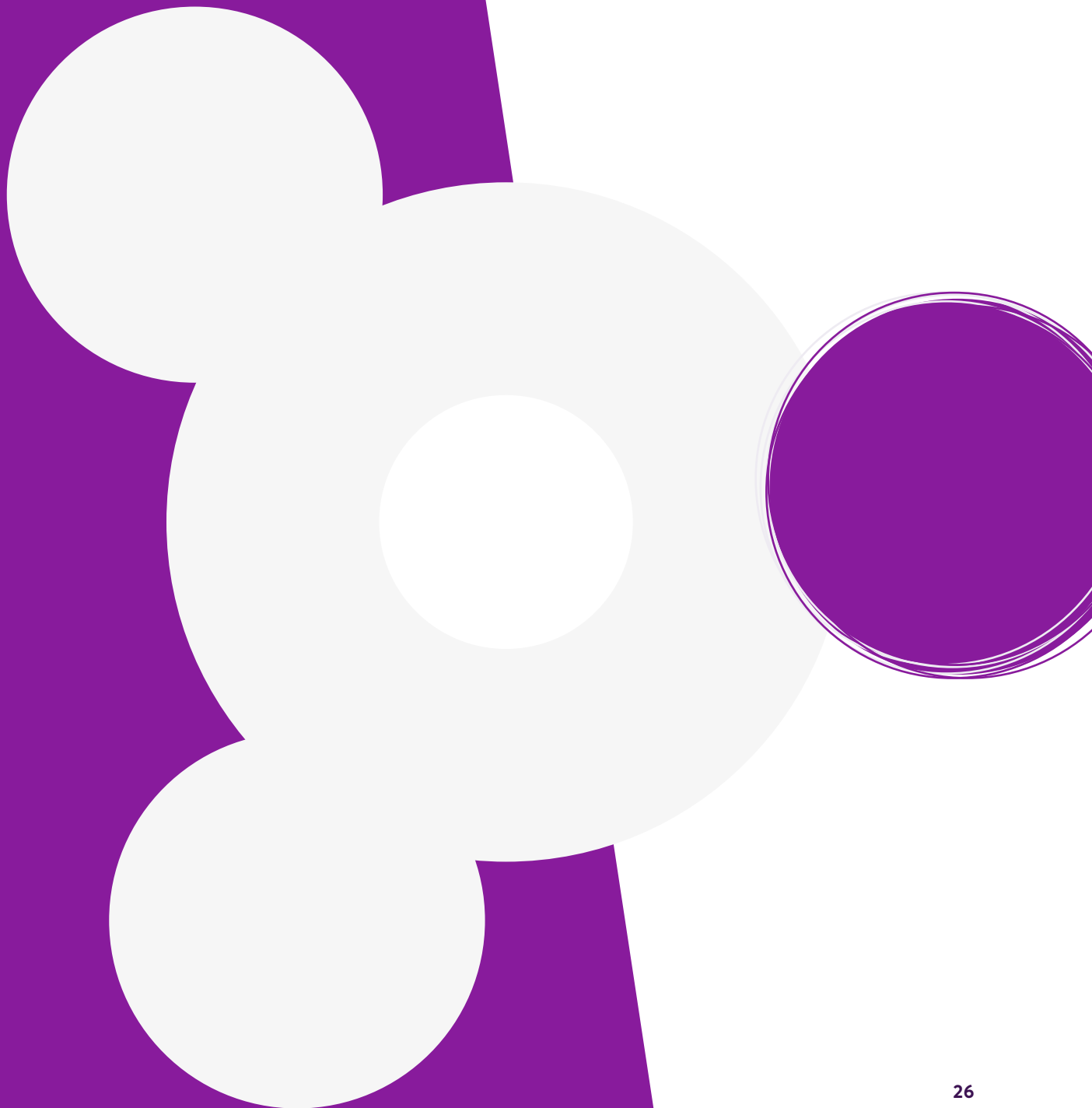
Reflective questions

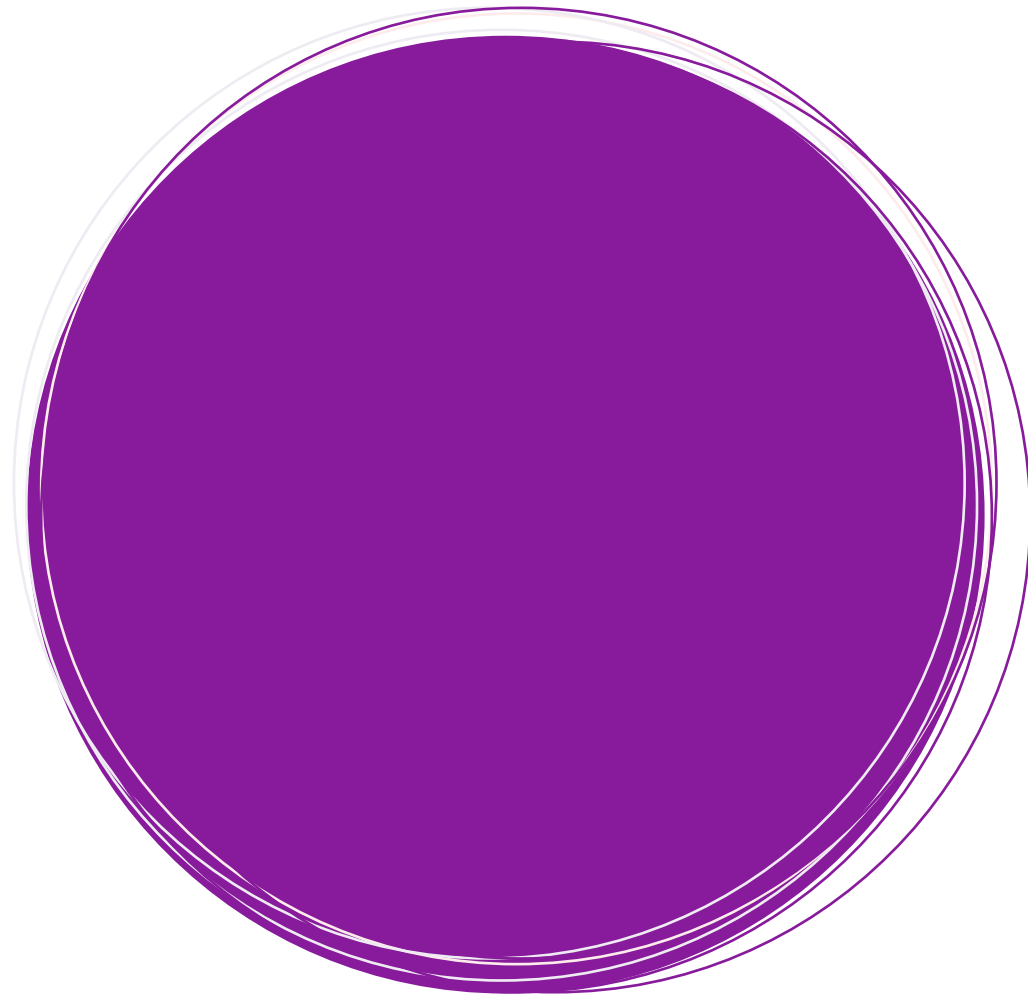
- How can you recognise if multiple stakeholders respect the opposing interests of one another? What might signal acceptance or appreciation of different views and perspectives?
- What currently harms mediation between stakeholders, and what could be done to overcome this?
- What has brokering enabled you to accomplish that you wouldn't have been able to otherwise?

4.2

Accelerating Learning

Exploring, testing and developing new ideas to inform and validate solutions





Future Acumen

Connecting long-term vision with
short-term actions

FUTURE ACUMEN

You are comfortable exploring many possible future scenarios and experimenting with ways to deal with them. You are able to look over the horizon, beyond immediate issues, to develop a long-term vision. This drives the desired change you want to see and informs the short-term tasks that get you there. Working environments where uncertainty and unpredictability are accepted, support this forward looking skill. This goes hand in hand with prototyping.

Behaviours

COMMONLY OBSERVED BEHAVIOURS

Concentrating on short-term goals and quick or immediate successes. Too busy to consider how they relate to a long-term vision.

Giving greater attention to certain ideas and perspectives that might align with your own thoughts. Decisions based mostly on these.

Seeking feedback mostly on your own idea or perspective, with fewer opportunities to genuinely bring different ideas or people into the mix.

◀ **APPROACHING SITUATIONS OR CHALLENGES BY...** ▶

◀ **MAKING DECISIONS BY...** ▶

◀ **INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE, TOOLS OR SYSTEMS BY...** ▶

INNOVATIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL BEHAVIOURS

Exploring (rather than predicting) what the future could be because nothing is certain. Identifying small steps that might contribute to reaching a long-term vision.

Drawing out the perspectives and ideas of each individual and making decisions through deliberation, discussion and exploring the potential of different possibilities.

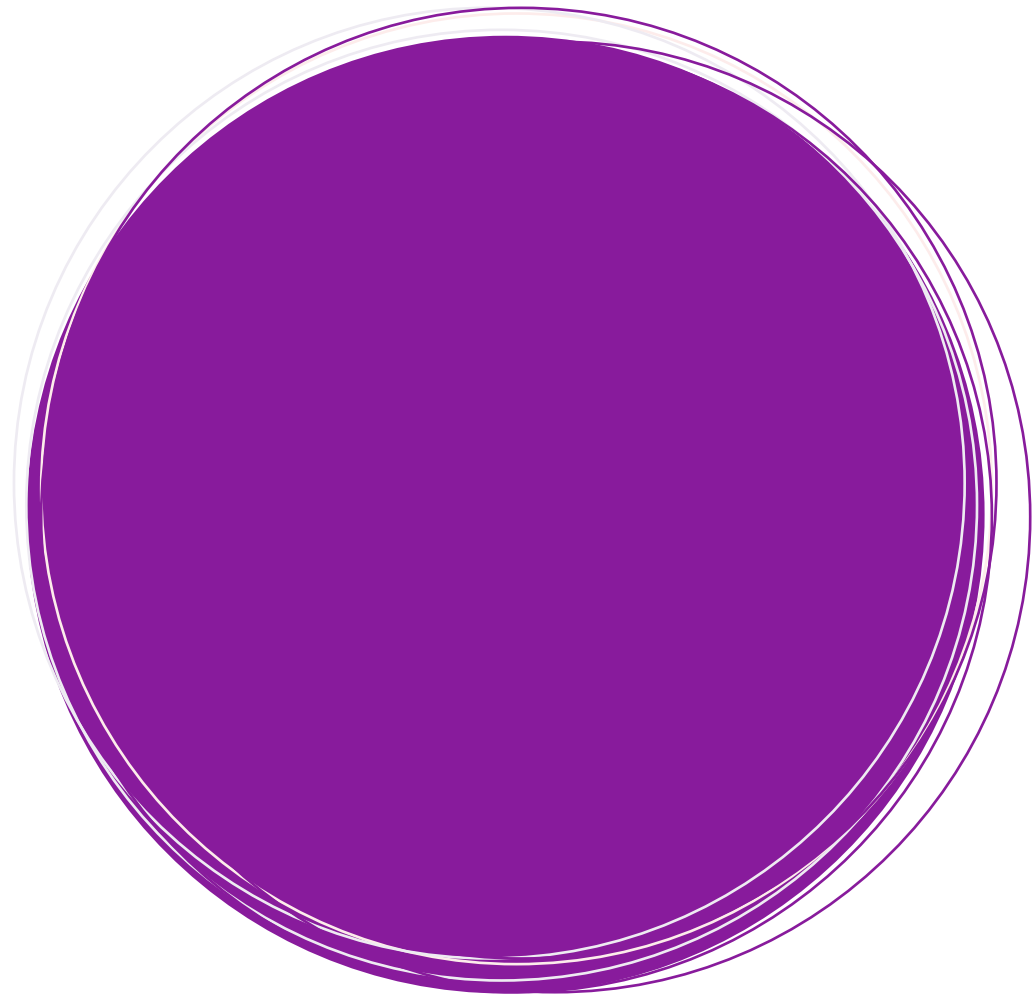
Creating a safe space where all people feel comfortable sharing their views as collaborators; supporting this with a diverse range of tools to stimulate participants.

Related attitudes

Being **outcomes focused** and **action orientated** helps to form a vision and actually achieve it. Being **reflective** makes you aware of what is working (and what isn't) and helps identify what needs to change. And **agility** supports knowing when and how to change course, making sure you reassess the vision when circumstances change.

Reflective questions

- How can you be confident that short-term actions relate to long-term goals? What do you look out for to identify this?
- How do you form a shared vision of the future? What steps do you take to achieve this?
- What are the difficulties in maintaining a future focused approach? What can you do to ease these?
- How can you best use multiple scenarios for the future to accelerate learning about what is possible?



Prototyping & Iterating

Testing ideas and systematically improving them

PROTOTYPING & ITERATING

You test ideas before you put them into practice. You learn from those tests to create better solutions to a problem. There are lots of ways to test an idea and you've got a good knowledge of these methods. You pick the right ones to turn an idea into a hypothesis to test. By recording what you learn (about what works and what doesn't), you make sure to take these insights into the next, improved version of an idea. You test your assumptions throughout a project and adapt to what you discover. This helps to develop robust solutions to problems and avoids risky 'big bang' implementations (usually expensive ideas you hope will work but have no idea if they will or not). This saves on time and money as you spend more resources developing and improving ideas before implementing them.

Prototyping doesn't deliver a perfect solution right out of the gate. So you see 'not getting it right first time' as an opportunity to learn rather than a failure.

Behaviours

COMMONLY OBSERVED BEHAVIOURS

Putting lots of resources into one well analysed 'big bang' implementation that looks good on paper but has yet to be tested properly in reality.

Deciding on a full course of action based on what has worked on a previous project, but might not work in every instance.

Carefully planning outcomes by predicting what might happen. Using existing knowledge or methods.

◀ APPROACHING SITUATIONS OR CHALLENGES BY... ▶

◀ MAKING DECISIONS BY... ▶

◀ INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE, TOOLS OR SYSTEMS BY... ▶

INNOVATIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL BEHAVIOURS

Quickly and cheaply testing ideas in order to learn what works and what doesn't. Using these lessons to inform the next version.

Developing insights from testing ideas, often, and quickly with those affected by the intervention. Being open to unexpected and unintended consequences.

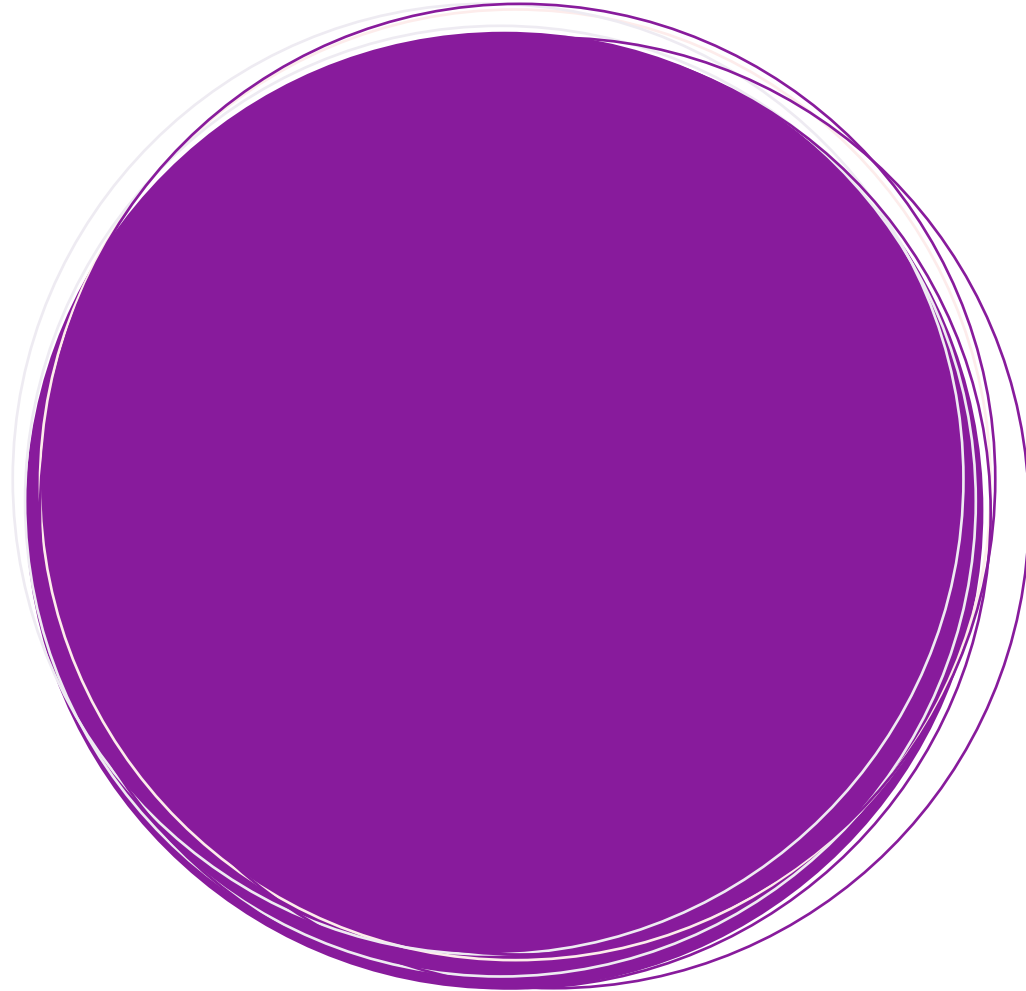
Exploring outcomes using a trial-and-error approach. Testing to see what works, improving and testing again. Or tapping into other sources of knowledge beyond your usual.

Related attitudes

Thinking about how a thing could be different, producing a new idea and turning it into a prototype takes **imagination**. These ideas might work out very differently to what you expected, so the **agility** to react and adapt is inherent in prototyping. As is **reflecting** on what works and why. Finally, being **action oriented** makes sure solutions are tangible quickly, without overthinking or becoming too precious about them.

Reflective questions

- ▷ How do you currently generate insights from prototyping? How do you know what to measure?
- ▷ Who do you currently test your prototypes with? Is this the right audience?
- ▷ What currently limits your ability, or opportunity, to prototype?



Data Literacy & Evidence

Using different kinds of data effectively
to accelerate sense-making

DATA LITERACY & EVIDENCE

You understand and use different sources of data with confidence. It doesn't matter if it is quantitative or qualitative (or both!) you use it to inform and make better sense of your project.

Understanding many sources of information helps you to uncover a more complete picture. It leads to more joined up thinking and deeper insights. You know that not all answers will come from the same source and by looking across a variety you are more likely to identify insightful patterns. This wide understanding of data underpins the decisions you make. People trust what you say as they can be sure you can evidence it.

Behaviours

COMMONLY OBSERVED BEHAVIOURS

Using previously tested data collection methods, datasets and/or evidence that can support the work.

Using data to support your current thinking or applying the same data to answer lots of questions. Unable to test whether these are reinforcing an inherent bias or not.

Using methods that are tried and tested. Favouring familiar data collection or generation approaches even if you know they might not give you the full picture.

◀ APPROACHING SITUATIONS OR CHALLENGES BY... ▶

◀ MAKING DECISIONS BY... ▶

◀ INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE, TOOLS OR SYSTEMS BY... ▶

INNOVATIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL BEHAVIOURS

Taking a broad view. Using a mix of data sources, whether that's quantitative, qualitative or real-time techniques to develop new ideas or theories about what might work.

Using a wide range of data to identify previously unnoticed patterns. Making decisions based on both quantitative and qualitative insights, not favouring one over the other.

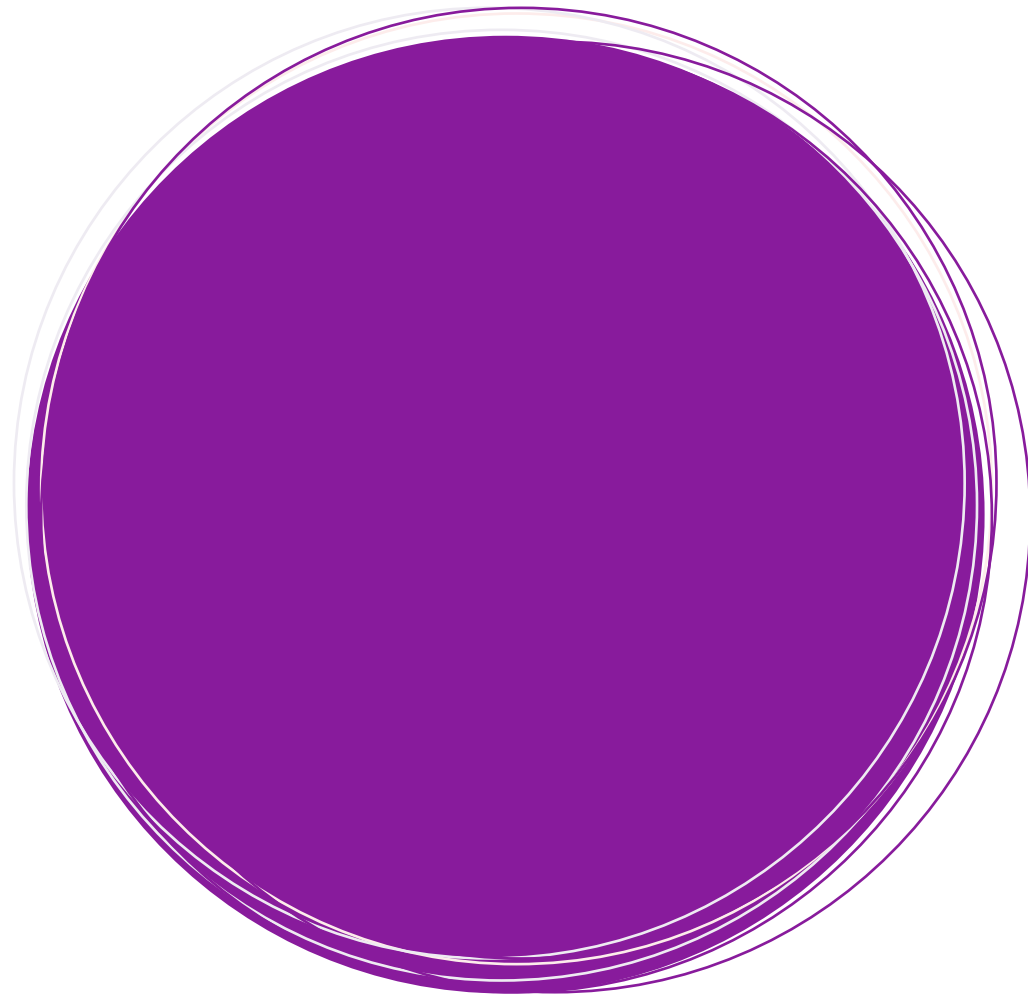
Exploring new data generation and collection approaches, which help view a problem in a different light and open up new possibilities.

Related attitudes

To seek out facts and explore different approaches to data gathering, you need to be **curious**. To make sense of and analyse the data you need to be **reflective** of the limits of different approaches. And when using unfamiliar or novel methods and data sets, you'll need to be **resilient** to the inevitable resistance to a new approach.

Reflective questions

- ▷ In what ways do you currently enhance and develop your awareness and use of new approaches to data and evidence?
- ▷ What are the main barriers or limitations you face in using new methods in daily practice? In what ways might these be overcome?



Systems Thinking

Combining micro and macro perspectives to grasp complexity

SYSTEMS THINKING

You understand that the details of an issue are as important as how they fit in the 'big picture'. You recognise that public problem solving operates in an interconnected mess of small actions in large complex systems.

Identifying the relationship between the smaller elements and the 'big picture' is crucial. You explore how change at one scale might affect a whole system over time. Coming at this from different perspectives gives you a more complete and wider understanding of how interventions might affect your aims.

Effective systems thinking behaviour leads to a more holistic view of a complex situation, in which the multiple elements (be that people, processes or structures) are understood in terms of their relation to each other. Successful systems thinking identifies how the design of services and intervention points can become a productive part of wider systems change.

Behaviours

COMMONLY OBSERVED BEHAVIOURS

Viewing a situation from your specific area of interest and expertise.

Focusing on a single issue and using information from that one area of concern to make decisions about actions to take.

Interacting with people who you have often either worked with before or who are confined to a similar policy area. Rarely exploring different areas of interest.

◀ **APPROACHING SITUATIONS OR CHALLENGES BY...** ▶

◀ **MAKING DECISIONS BY...** ▶

◀ **INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE, TOOLS OR SYSTEMS BY...** ▶

INNOVATIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL BEHAVIOURS

Consistently thinking about the relationship between the finer details of a situation and the bigger picture. Identifying where actions in one area might have a ripple effect across other areas - for better or worse.

Using knowledge gained from various and many parts of a system that go beyond your area of specific interest. Exploring their interconnectedness to reveal patterns and important relationships that will help you make better decisions.

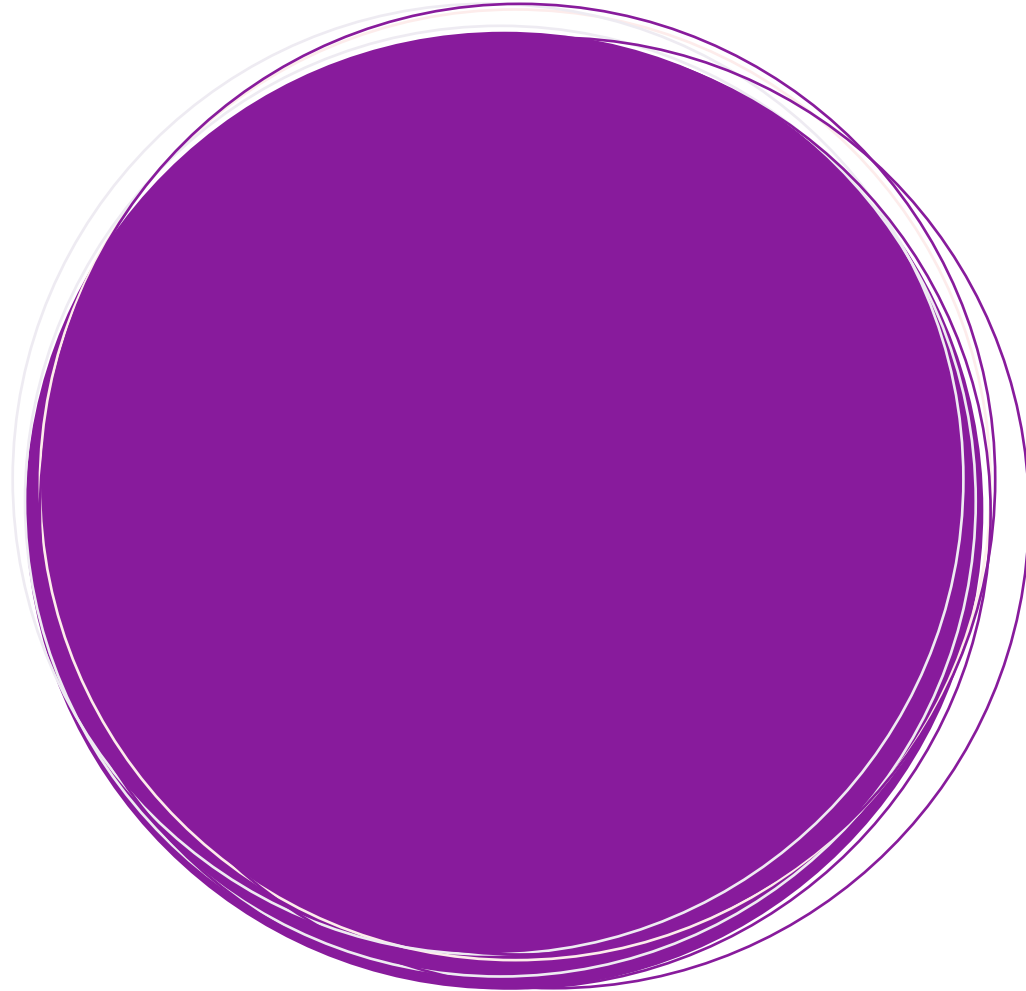
Engaging with different stakeholders, sectors, disciplines and levels around an issue. Understanding and better exploring what solutions could help shift the system and help solve an issue.

Related attitudes

You need to be **curious** to explore the smaller details of a system, understand how they might fit into the wider landscape and spot connections in unobvious places. To look across a whole system from the perspective of others requires **empathy**; you'll need plenty of this. To pause and assess whether what you are doing is working takes **reflection**. Using **imaginative** thinking around an issue to see the possible cause and effect leads to fresh opportunities. Using this information to understand how to get your desired change requires an **outcomes focused** approach.

Reflective questions

- ▷ How can you maintain the balance between the bigger picture and the smaller, important details?
- ▷ How can you identify what parts of the system affect each other? What is measurable?
- ▷ How do you know you're not missing anything? What can you do to avoid this?



Tech Literacy

Understanding tech developments
and their potential

TECH LITERACY

You recognise and understand the *potential* in technological developments that might help your work. You know that the tech isn't the 'innovation' or necessarily the answer per se, but a tool to help you get closer to a solution. You use it to generate fresh insights and solutions, or to improve existing work in areas like accessibility, democracy, experimentation, data analysis (for example!). Tech literacy can create opportunities to carry out the most up-to-date thinking in problem solving, and being aware of what's new makes sure organisations aren't left behind. This skill develops in organisations that enable and support their staff to access and use developing or sometimes state-of-the-art technologies.

Behaviours

COMMONLY OBSERVED BEHAVIOURS

Making use of familiar technologies that you are comfortable with, as they feel easier to deal with than learning something wholly new or building something yourself.

Seeing technology as 'the answer' without the scope to test how well it works in real life, or whether people's needs are met.

Using familiar tools that suit the existing set of expertise, but not considering the potential of new ones.

◀ APPROACHING SITUATIONS OR CHALLENGES BY... ▶

◀ MAKING DECISIONS BY... ▶

◀ INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE, TOOLS OR SYSTEMS BY... ▶

INNOVATIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL BEHAVIOURS

Actively keeping up-to-date with new technology developments to understand whether they hold any potential in the public sector. Open to developing and adapting tech, potentially in-house, rather than buying whole IT packages by default.

Seeing technology as a means to an end. Identifying where it can add value and being aware of its limitations. Applying a user perspective when making decisions about new tech.

Applying new digital tools or adapting their original use to create new insights or fresh perspectives.

Related attitudes

You're **curious** about new developments and the potential of new technologies. Your **imagination** allows you to see the possibilities of creatively using new tech. New ideas often face resistance and the same is true of new technology. You must be **resilient** to push back on those wanting to continue with business as usual. Not all tech is relevant or useful. **Reflecting** on this - what works, what might work and what doesn't - develops your skill at spotting how it can improve your work, not distract from it.

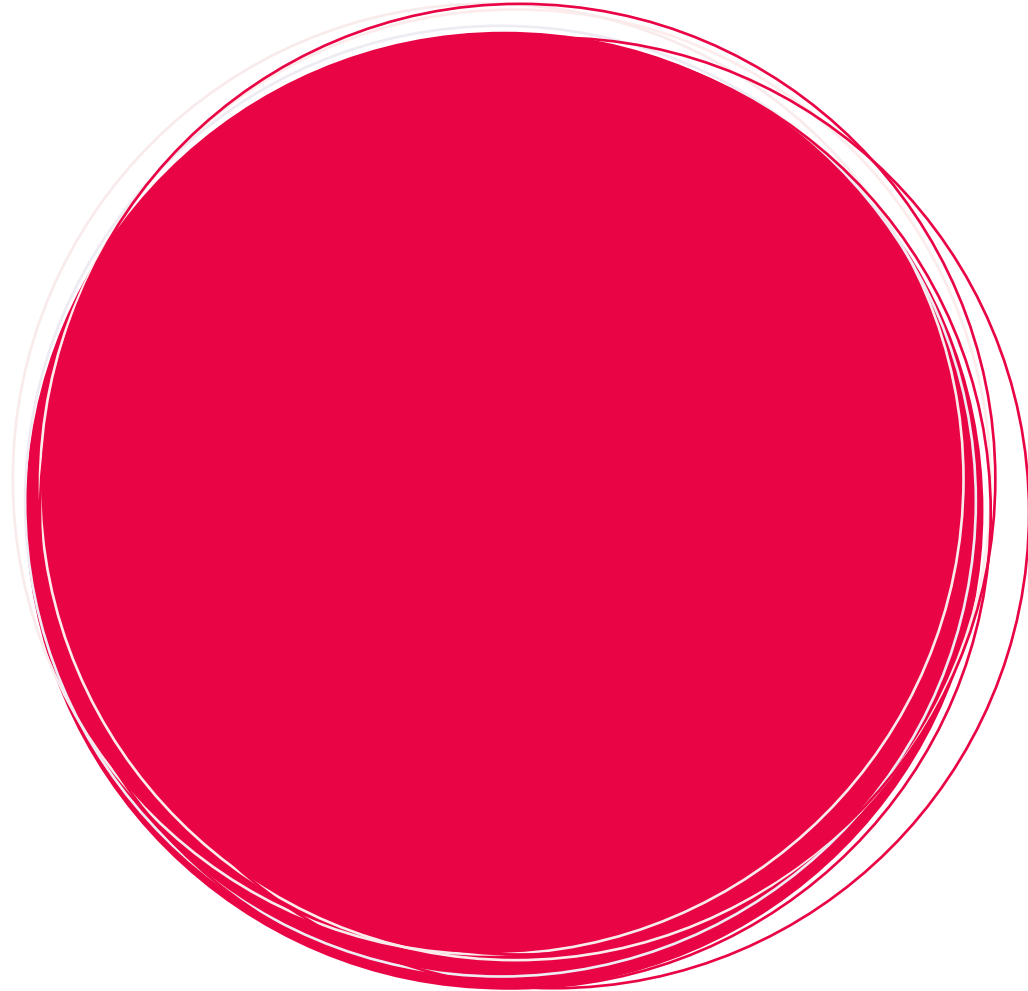
Reflective questions

- ▷ How do you keep abreast of new technologies?
- ▷ Do you consider how they might help with your work?
- ▷ Have you got easy access to technological developments? If not, how might these be overcome?

4.3

Leading Change

Mobilising resources and legitimacy to
makes change happen



Political & Bureaucratic Awareness

Ensuring strategic support through political dynamics and bureaucratic procedures

You're able to win strategic support for your work with canny operating across the politics and bureaucracy of an organisation. You know who needs convincing and the procedures to make use of.

Experience of the public sector and understanding its culture, unwritten rules and people allows you to open doors for advancing innovation. You are savvy. Working in the public sector gives you an understanding of the nuance and conditions of it. Learning how to take advantage of these to win support and buy in from across the organisation is the measure of success.

Behaviours

COMMONLY OBSERVED BEHAVIOURS

Using political insights and connections to advance or protect your personal career, and focusing less on how best to use them to drive a bigger change.

Going ahead with ideas on principle without considering the broader political or organisational climate and timing.

Focusing on singular goals for projects, meetings or conversations. Less aware of or concerned with the needs of others.

◀ **APPROACHING SITUATIONS OR CHALLENGES BY...** ▶

◀ **MAKING DECISIONS BY...** ▶

◀ **INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE, TOOLS OR SYSTEMS BY...** ▶

INNOVATIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL BEHAVIOURS

Using every political insight or connection you have to influence and gain support for the change that the people you serve need.

Realising who your allies might be. Finding support almost every step of the way and leaping on chances when the opportunity comes up. Knowing who to approach, when and where changes are possible and which will have a greater impact.

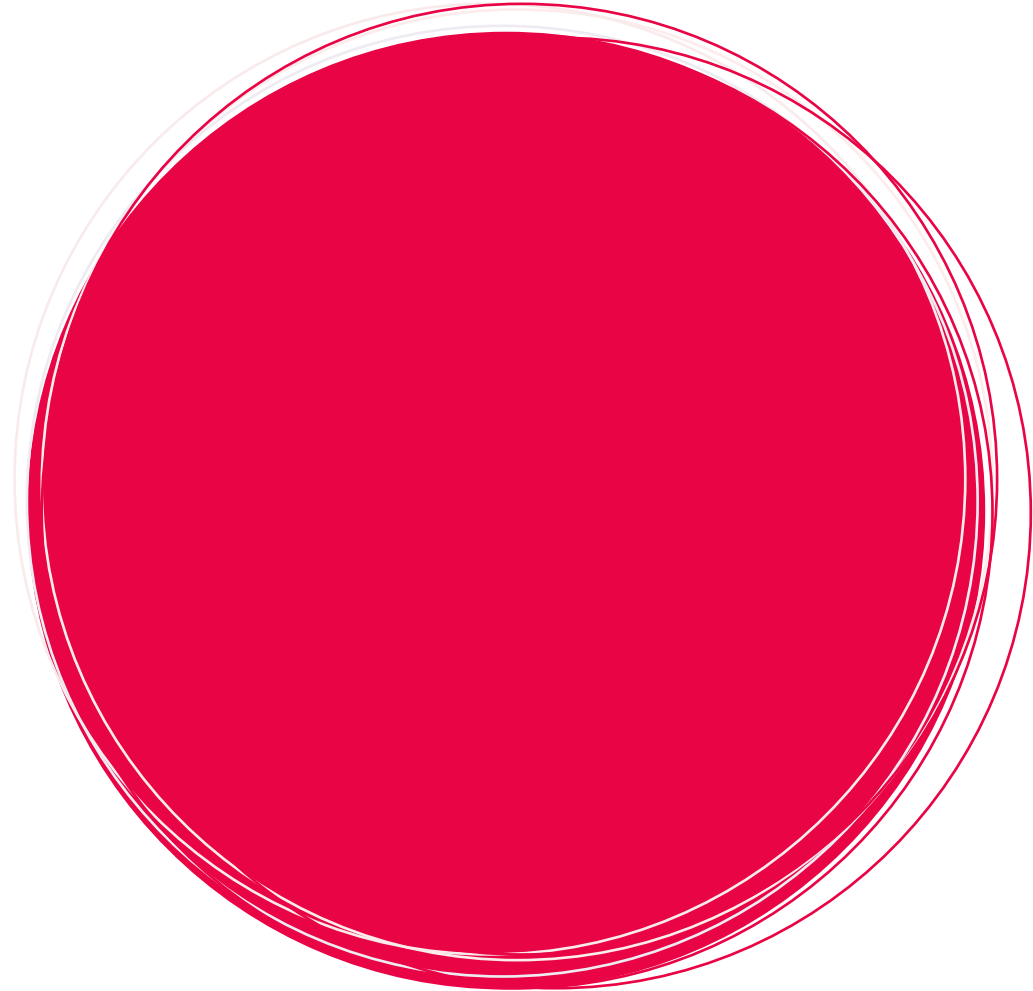
Setting up meetings and conversations to achieve a desired goal, but also recognising opportunities when they appear. Knowing your audience and how to engage with them.

Related attitudes

To understand the constraints and ambitions of colleagues, stakeholders and staff you need to **empathise** with their needs. You know who and how to approach the right people to get them on board with change. You're **agile**, responding to different circumstances, people and situations and **reflective** to identify when and where something might be possible. Being **action oriented** supports your decisions to do things to make change.

Reflective questions

- ▷ How do you currently assess when and how to move an innovative change forward?
- ▷ Where do your needs and others align?
- ▷ How do you find out what people's pressures are?
- ▷ How do you ensure these opportunities are not missed?



Financing Change

Understanding the many ways to liberate,
mobilise and use financial resources

FINANCING CHANGE

You are financially savvy. You use various financial instruments and mechanisms to support innovation processes and create the space for experimental problem solving.

This could be alternative ways of financing like R&D funding, impact bonds, challenges, crowdfunding or innovation grants (and others!). Financing in this way helps improve the processes and outcomes of public decision-making by getting funding to go further.

This might look like a willingness to stand up and promote new ways of financing change. By challenging existing models of procurement or public spending, you create more possibilities with the resources available.

Behaviours

COMMONLY OBSERVED BEHAVIOURS

Sticking to long-term, rigid funding schemes, where there is little possibility to reframe problems or support the testing of ideas.

Using existing and traditional financial tools. Going with what has been used before rather than exploring what might be a better fit for the issue at hand.

Using proven or common tools that help avoid any risk. A tendency to look towards already well established market incumbents and tried-and-tested solutions.

◀ **APPROACHING SITUATIONS OR CHALLENGES BY...** ▶

◀ **MAKING DECISIONS BY...** ▶

◀ **INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE, TOOLS OR SYSTEMS BY...** ▶

INNOVATIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL BEHAVIOURS

Using shorter-term, more flexible funding schemes that allow for the reframing of problems, testing multiple ideas and accelerating learning about what works.

Thinking about new opportunities and the possibility of 'what can be learned' through different funding methods.

Exploring new ways to mobilise resources and finance change, such as R&D funding, impact bonds, crowdfunding, challenges or innovation grants.

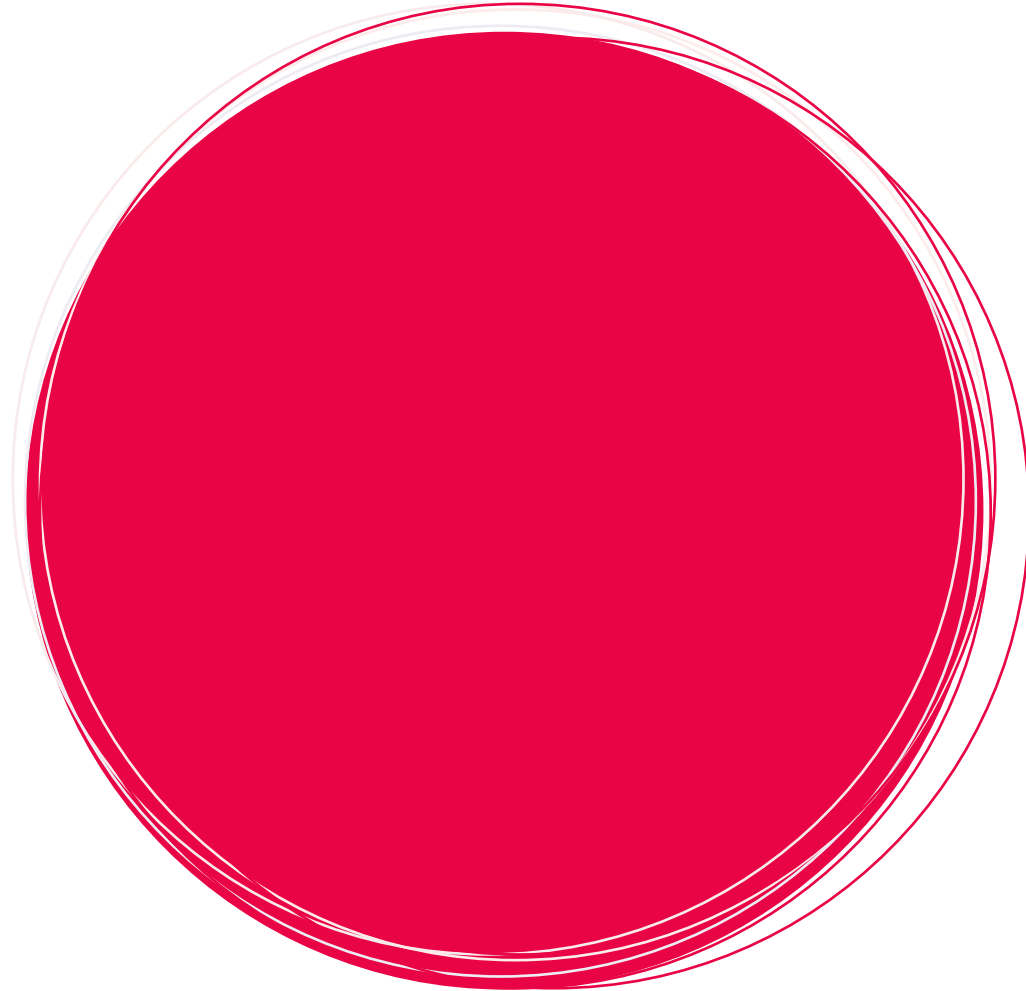
FINANCING CHANGE

Related attitudes

This skill is particularly useful when applied with a strong commitment to real-world **outcomes**. This should be supplemented by a **courageous** and **imaginative** outlook that results in ambitious investments into explorative projects which don't have to promise a direct link between input and output, but are instead seen as ways of accelerating learning about the overall value-creation of the organisation.

Reflective questions

- ▷ What resources are available to you?
- ▷ How can you find out what else there might be?
- ▷ Who can you learn from?



Intrapreneurship

Being insurgent and using business acumen to create opportunities

INTRAPRENEURSHIP

You disrupt the system. You question and challenge the status quo and use your business acumen to create space and opportunities for change within an organisation. You take calculated risks to develop and embed new ideas and business models for the benefit of an organisation and those it serves. This helps to break down existing barriers to shake up and improve practice. You are entrepreneurial within an organisation - hence 'intrapreneurship'.

This skill is particularly useful when the organisation accepts a degree of considered risk in its work. Intrapreneurship is bold, and needs people to put their neck on the line to challenge existing situations. This is not business as usual. Success might look like 'risky actions' to some, but seeks high level change in the way an organisation operates or through a shift to a more experimental culture.

Behaviours

COMMONLY OBSERVED BEHAVIOURS

Thinking that things could be made better, but working in existing structures, processes and constraints without much hope that they could be radically changed.

Using existing examples and case studies that are proven to work within the public sector. Needing certainty on whether something is a good course of action or not.

Going along with existing ways of doing things or only supporting the ideas of high-up individuals.

◀ **APPROACHING SITUATIONS OR CHALLENGES BY...** ▶

◀ **MAKING DECISIONS BY...** ▶

◀ **INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE, TOOLS OR SYSTEMS BY...** ▶

INNOVATIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL BEHAVIOURS

Challenging the status quo. Taking calculated risks when identifying opportunities for doing things differently – seeking inspiration from other areas.

Seeking out informed possibilities even when there is much uncertainty. Looking to embed new actions, models or systems into an organisation – or even exploring entirely new opportunities by experimenting with a completely new hypothesis for change.

Being provocative. Instigating interactions (with people, tools and environments) to explore and pick apart current practices in order to identify possibilities for change.

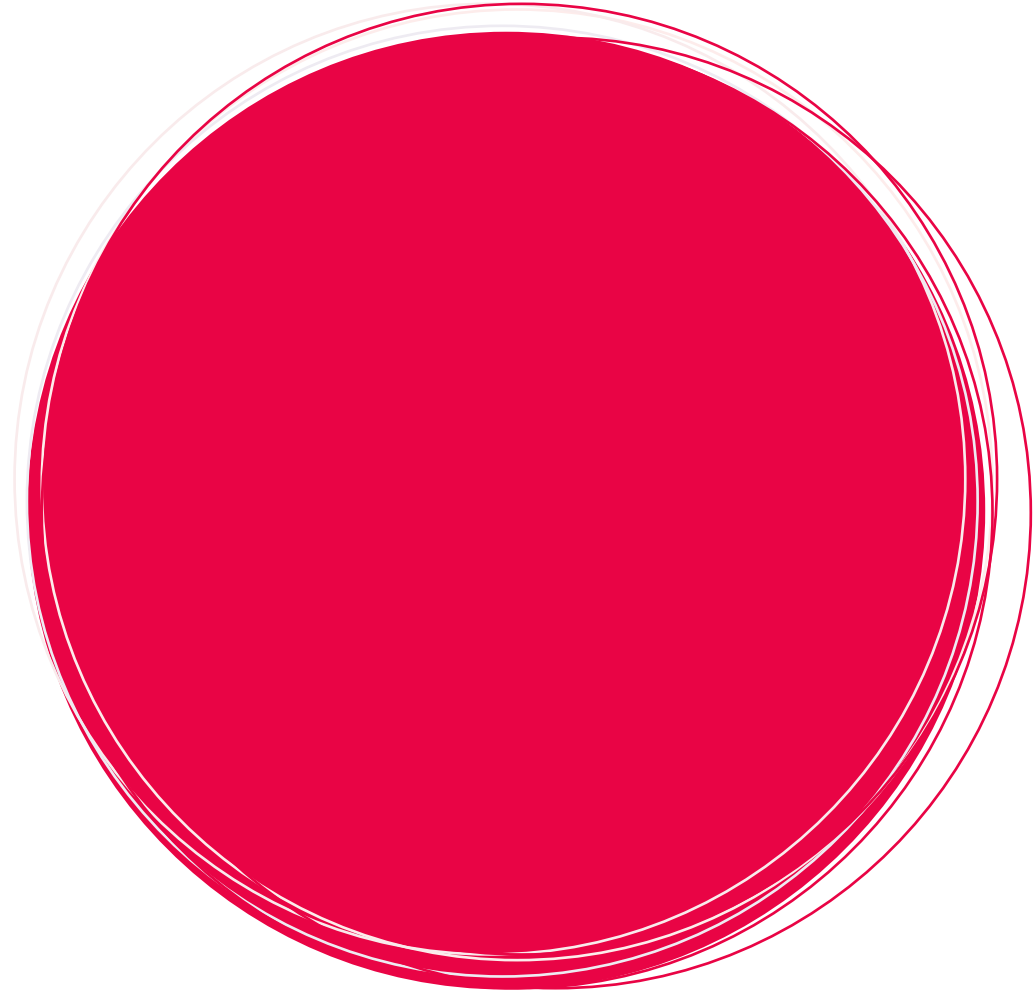
INTRAPRENEURSHIP

Related attitudes

To put yourself on the line, take risks and suggest new ways of doing things takes **courage** and **resilience**. **Reflectiveness** and **curiosity** are the drivers behind identifying where things could be different, and how they could be different. And for ideas and suggestions to become actions, you need to be **action oriented**.

Reflective questions

- ▷ How do you currently calculate whether a risk is worth taking or not?
- ▷ What prevents you from taking risks? Is it structural, process or person based? How would you like to change this?



Demonstrating Value

Making the case for change by articulating the value of it

DEMONSTRATING VALUE

You can “sell” an idea by explaining both its value and the evidence that supports it. You do so by creating meaningful messages in whatever format works best for your audience. This grows support, understanding and buy-in to move ideas forward. You are able to support the process of generating useful data and evidence that sheds new light on persistent issues, and demonstrate why action should be taken to deal with it differently. And you are able to drive an experimental process that systematically explores and tests what might work and learn from it.

Behaviours

COMMONLY OBSERVED BEHAVIOURS

Thinking about the value of a new idea or solution from your own point of view, which might miss out on demonstrating the value it could provide others.

Basing decisions on limited information that might not clearly relate to the audience, leaving them questioning ‘so what?’.

Using standardised documents or written reports to describe value.

◀ **APPROACHING SITUATIONS OR CHALLENGES BY...** ▶

◀ **MAKING DECISIONS BY...** ▶

◀ **INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE, TOOLS OR SYSTEMS BY...** ▶

INNOVATIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL BEHAVIOURS

Looking at things through other’s eyes, with different frames of reference and using a variety of methods. Covering different aspects of an issue through a mix of approaches to data and evidence.

Reframing and articulating what new kind of value creation could be possible. Getting people on board with your decisions because you speak to what they care about or need.

Tailoring the message in the clearest, most relevant way to the audience.

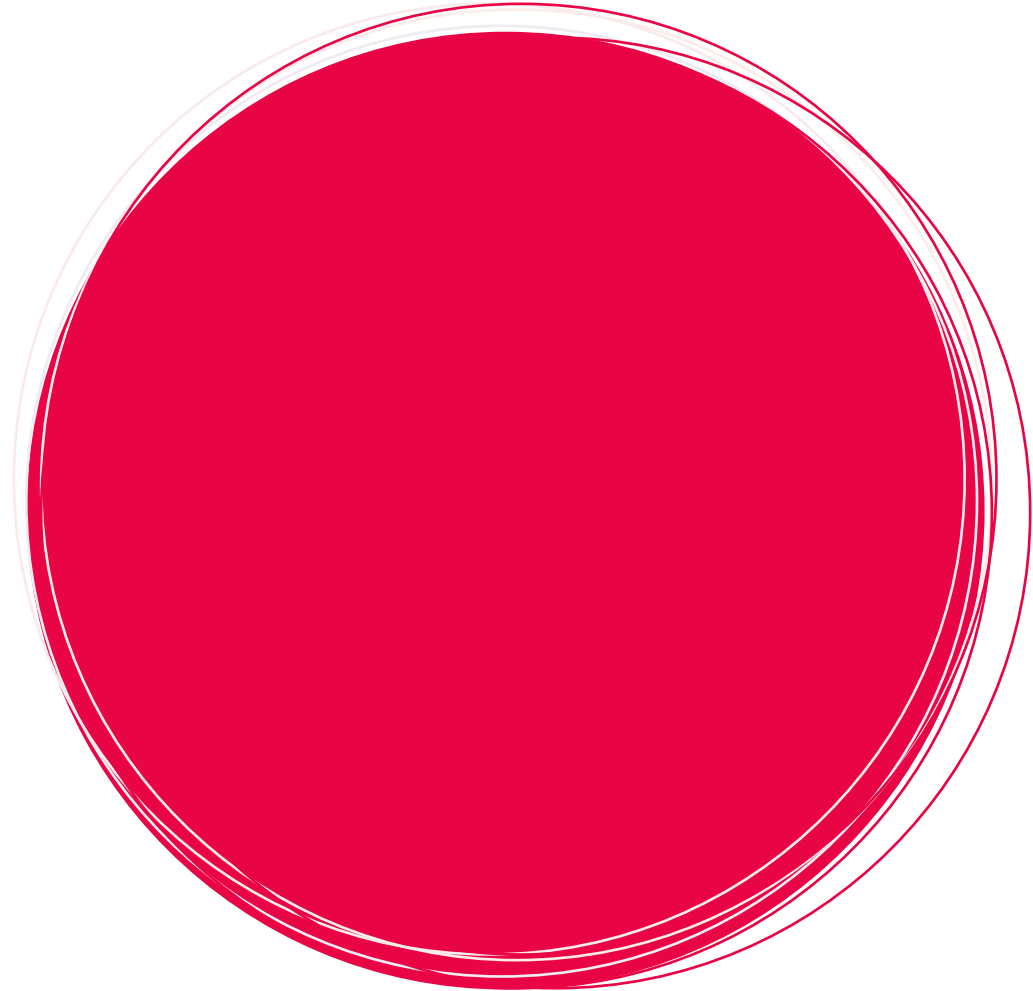
DEMONSTRATING VALUE

Related attitudes

You need a good **imagination** to effectively communicate with different people. And you are **empathic**, tailoring your ideas to what your audience will respond to best. Testing and adapting different approaches means being **agile** and **reflective**, always thinking about what resonates and being quick to adapt when it's not working.

Reflective questions

- ▷ What is the unique value you want to demonstrate? Why is it unique or important?
- ▷ What format or medium will demonstrate value to others? How do you know that? How do you ensure the message is meaningful to them?
- ▷ What barriers do you face when demonstrating value? And what could you do to address this?



Storytelling & Advocacy

Using compelling stories to articulate a vision or information

STORYTELLING & ADVOCACY

You transform a vision, insight or data into stories that resonate with people. You make it easy for people to understand the experiences of others and use this to improve what they know to be true. This sparks ideas and questions in your audience around specific issues; getting them to think about a topic or problem in a new light. The way you frame an idea makes it easy for people to share that story to justify or explain what they do. You are able to advocate for the use of new methods and approaches to challenge business as usual, translating their value into meaningful terms and articulating the value of doing something new.

Behaviours

COMMONLY OBSERVED BEHAVIOURS

Focusing on insights or statistics that describe a situation in favour of exploring the more human aspects that might evoke empathy or interest.

Using existing 'frames' or arguments that end up supporting the status-quo, and so risk limiting both understanding and potential ideas to change that situation.

Describing a situation in a 'matter of fact' way that doesn't create empathy or connection with those involved. Using standardised reports or existing case studies to tell stories.

◀ **APPROACHING SITUATIONS OR CHALLENGES BY...** ▶

◀ **MAKING DECISIONS BY...** ▶

◀ **INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE, TOOLS OR SYSTEMS BY...** ▶

INNOVATIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL BEHAVIOURS

Transforming insights, data or the use of new methods into stories that not only describe a situation, but stimulate questions, inspire thinking and generate ideas.

Linking them to real-world issues and people. Using compelling information to help stakeholders reconsider possibilities and mobilise or advocate for a change in priorities and ways of working.

Creating a variety of stories that inspire and compel people to make change. Enabling people to see themselves in the story, or stimulating empathy from others.

Related attitudes

Curiosity motivates you to discover stories and to see how they fit into the context you're using them. **Empathy** is at the heart of understanding others' experiences and generating authentic insight. For your stories to be effective you have to understand what makes them powerful. Being **agile** gives you the flexibility to use, adapt and tailor a story for different purposes. **Reflecting** on what resonates and what doesn't builds up your skills.

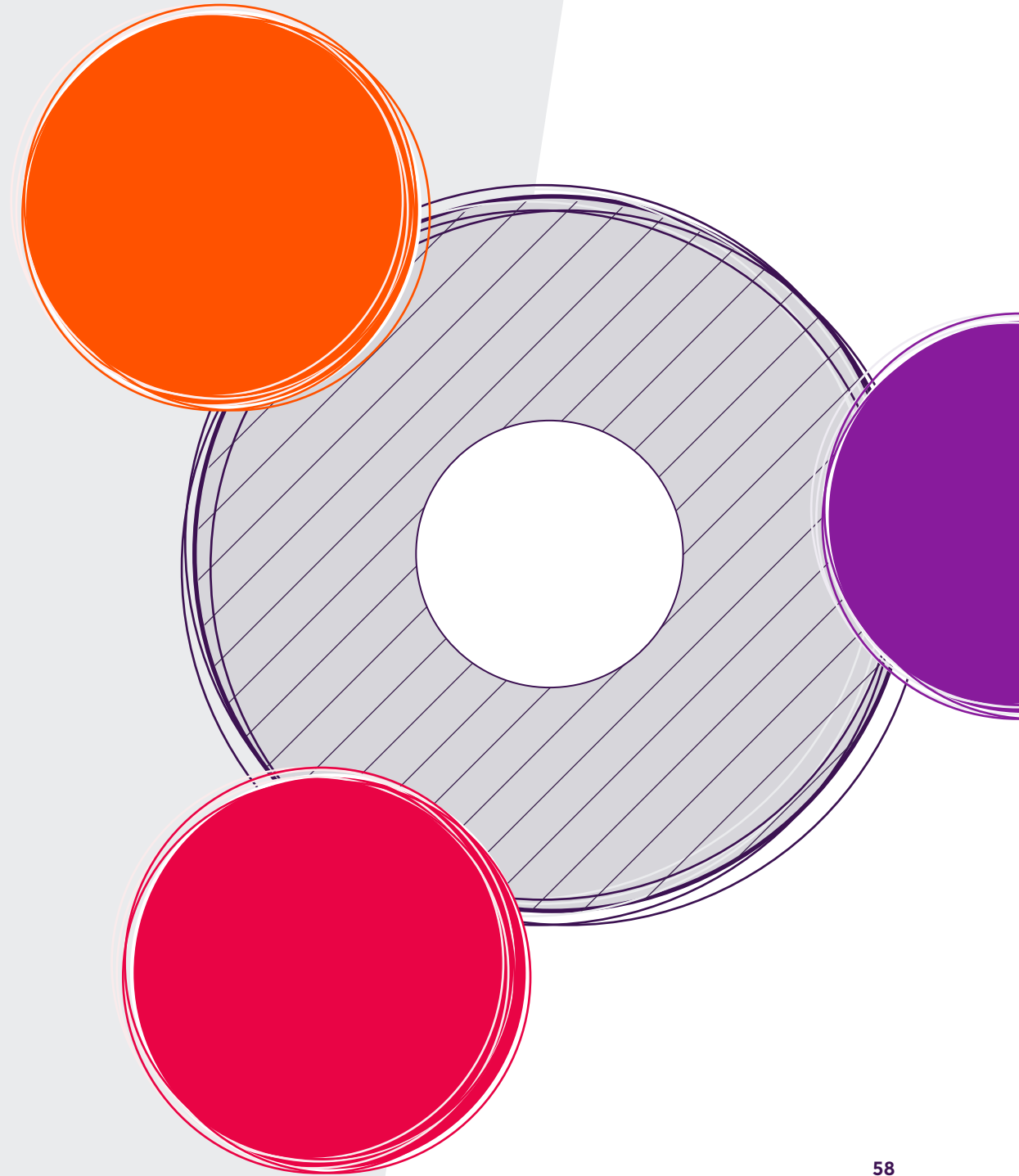
Reflective questions

- ▷ How do you know you are successful at creating a compelling story? What indicators suggest this?
- ▷ In what situations do you currently use storytelling? And for what reasons?
- ▷ What impedes storytelling? What might help your team use this skill more, or to greater effect?

5.

Activities

Different ways to use the Competency Framework



TEAM ACTIVITY

Mapping a team's innovation competencies

Aim:

To map out the skills and attitudes of everyone in a team and create a "heat map" of the whole team's strengths. This activity is helpful when starting with a new team, at the beginning of a new project or with an existing team. Use it to discuss whether the skills and attitudes you need are present and to prompt reflection on the strengths of your team.



4-6 people



45-60 minutes



1 x A1 print of the Competency Framework (or largest size possible)



2 sets of the "skills cards" per team



Coloured sticky dots, pens (markers/felt tips)

REMEMBER!

The map focuses on developing strong teams rather than heroic individuals.

To date, we've not met (or heard of) anyone who has all the skills and attitudes we've outlined here, so please don't see this as a checklist. The framework presents a spread of skills and attitudes that need to be present within the wider team. The challenge is to combine these skills and attitudes in ways that make the team greater than its individual members.

This isn't an assessment! You are not being scored against this, nor are you being judged against others. It's about highlighting our strengths and better organising to make the most of them. Remember; this is about teams and getting the best from them.

STEP 1 INTRODUCTION

 **5 minutes**

Have the framework printed out and attached to a wall, visible to all team members. Set the skills cards out on a work surface.

Introducing the Competency Framework.

Briefly explain what the framework is, discussing the structure and content. Use the descriptions and detail from section 1 of this guide.

I.e. This Competency Framework has been developed by Nesta to visualise the skills and attitudes needed for experimentation and public problem solving...

STEP 2 IDENTIFYING SKILLS AND ATTITUDES

 **20 minutes**

Have each team member choose a colour and take eight sticky dots. Ideally, everyone should have different coloured dots.

- **Reflect individually on core skills** - Ask people to look at the skills cards. Give them a couple of minutes to read through and reflect in quiet on the description. It may be helpful if they ask themselves: "What skills would my (closest) colleagues consider my strengths?". Ask participants to write their five top skills on a post-it or note paper before going to the next step.
- **Map the skills** - With five of the same coloured sticky dots, ask each team member to mark on the framework their top five skills, placing the dot just above their chosen skill. Ask participants to add a legend to the sheet, so it's clear which dots belong to whom.
- **Discuss core skills as a team** - If they are familiar with each other, get people to discuss with their colleagues their top five skill choices. Do they recognise these skills in their colleagues? Are there skills they have but don't use at work?
- **Map the attitudes**
Repeat the process with the three coloured sticky dots but this time exploring the team's three core attitudes. Prompt the conversation by asking: "What attitudes would their (closest) colleagues consider their core ones? Or what defines them as a person/professional/innovator?".

STEP 3

IDENTIFYING 'SUPERPOWERS'



10 minutes

Everyone will need a marker or felt-tip pen for this stage.

Identify what people see as their greatest strength.

- **Everyone should now have eight dots on the framework.**

Five skills and three attitudes. Ask people to pick what they consider to be their strongest skill and their strongest attitude; their 'superpowers'. Give them a few moments to consider this in silence, and then ask them to highlight or circle their top attitude and skill on the framework using a marker.

- **Discussing superpowers** - If they are familiar with each other, get people to discuss with their colleagues their 'superpowers'. Do they recognise these skills in their colleagues? Are there any common 'superpowers'? What might this mean for your team?

STEP 4

DISCUSSING THE HEAT MAP



5-10 minutes

Stand in a circle and ensure everyone gets a chance to share their thoughts.

Reflect on what the team has mapped.

- What do they see?
- What do they consider the strengths of the team? (i.e. where are most of the dots)
- Are there any gaps? Are these a bad thing? (Often the skills and attitudes might be present but not highlighted as a strength).
- How might a team plug any gaps? By recruiting, training, or perhaps collaborating with external experts?
- Are there skills people feel they possess but don't have the opportunity to apply in their role? Why is this, and what might be done to change it?

Wrap up the activity - Any final reflections or thoughts? Would they consider using this at the start of a project with their colleagues? Or do they see other opportunities? What needs to be done to get the most from the team's strengths?



ACTIVITIES

Additional group activities

A. IN-DEPTH TEAM DISCUSSION

For teams that know each other well, you could add a more specific discussion around each other's strengths and blind spots. Use the questions below to guide the conversation.

- Are there any obvious gaps that your team has (remember: not all gaps are bad, discuss what the impact of this gap may be).
- How do you want to address the gaps?
- Is this type of work covered by an existing team you work with?
- Or would it make sense to hire somebody who has those missing skills or attitudes?
- Or is there potential to develop those skills in the team, how and who might want to develop them?

B. ICEBREAKER

The framework can be a helpful way for people from different institutions, departments or teams to get to know each other in an interactive and thoughtful way. It allows people to look past hierarchy, structure and technical skills to create a more level playing field, and demonstrates that everyone contributes.

- Follow the 'Mapping your team's skills and attitudes' exercise until step 4.
- At step 4, have a discussion around the focus of your particular session/event and how the core skills may relate to this.

C. PROJECT EVALUATION

When projects end we don't always take the time to stop and reflect on their successes and failures. The framework can be used to identify why things did or didn't go well in order to learn from them.

- Take a current or recently completed project. Map out all the highs and lows to this date.
- Follow the 'Mapping your team's skills and attitudes' exercise until step 4.
- At step 4, open a discussion around where people have observed these skills in action on that specific project. What was happening during the 'high points'? What was potentially missing during the 'low points'?
- Could a certain skill have played a positive role during one of the low points? What could be done (in terms of skills or attitudes) to avoid this 'low point' happening again?

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY

Developing learning goals

Aim:

To identify the change we want to see in our behaviour that could positively impact our projects and organisation. This activity focuses on you as an individual, exploring how you can start to activate those less obvious, enabling ways of working in your day to day work.



1 person



60+ minutes



1 x A3 print of the Competency Framework



Skills descriptions and behaviours (this guide)



'Developing learning goals' worksheet

STEP 1 REFLECTION



20-30 minutes

In order to make the most of this activity, it's vital you set some time aside to reflect on your current behaviours and established ways of working.

Behaviours and established ways of working

These are the observable actions you take when tackling a challenge or carrying out a project. They're your default setting, your initial response to a situation, your first notion of a suitable option. **It may be difficult to identify these behaviours initially.**

One starting point could be to map out your innovation competencies (page 59), where you can pinpoint your strengths and gaps (regarding attitudes and skills), and reflect on how this skill or attitude (or lack of) is affecting your behaviour. To support this reflection, read through the behaviour descriptions in this guide - is there anything you recognise in yourself? Think about which you feel are a priority to address.

STEP 2 COMPLETE WORKSHEET

 30-40 minutes

To capture your reflections from step 1, we have created a 'Developing learning goals' worksheet (see next page). The sheet is made up of three columns:

- **Column 1** - Asks you to list the five behaviours you want to do less. To complete this, a good starting point is to use one of the 'common or comfort zone' behaviours listed in the description of whatever skill gap you identified.
- **Column 2** - Asks you to list the five behaviours you want to do more. To complete this section, it can be useful to consider what the 'enabling behaviours' might be in relation to your answer for column 1.
- **Column 3** - Asks you to describe the ways in which you will make this transformation from an existing, established behaviour to a new one. This could be centred around learning (e.g. "I need to read more content specific material, take a course, engage with a subject matter expert"), or around rehearsing (e.g. "I need to try out a new behaviour, attitude or skill in practice and learn what works and what doesn't") or changing how you approach a situation.

STEP 3 PRIORITISE

 15 minutes

Changing established behaviours takes time, so trying to do five at once may be overly ambitious. Using your completed sheet, select the one behaviour to focus on initially. You can prioritise this choice by asking yourself the following questions:

- **Which established behaviour do I feel currently has the greatest negative impact on my work?**
- **Which new behaviour do I feel could have the greatest positive impact on my work?**
- **What activity from column 3 do I feel I could do in the next week or so?**
- **What is my gut telling me to do?**

Once selected, write out a brief action plan of when, where and how you'll do this new behaviour. Before and during the 'activation' of your new behaviour, try to be mindful of:

- **How you felt**
- **What the outcome was**
- **And how others responded**

BEYOND THE ACTIVITY

Keep your worksheet to remind you of the behaviour you want to change, and to reflect on how far you've come. Try keeping it somewhere you'll see it often. Update it when necessary.

DEVELOPING LEARNING GOALS

Write down the five behaviours that you believe you should do less of, and those you feel are most important to do more of, in order to tackle complex challenges in a more experimental way. Then, start to identify what actions will enable you to achieve this change.

What current behaviours do I want to stop, or do less of?

It may be useful to reflect on where your skill gaps are, or what 'commonly observed' behaviours you recognise in yourself.

What behaviours do I want to develop, or do more of?

It may be useful to refer to the 'innovative and experimental behaviours' listed in this guide as inspiration.

What do I need to do, or to learn, to make this transformation happen?

Think about how you might learn or rehearse this behaviour. Is it skill or attitude based? Where and when might you be able to try this?

Who made this

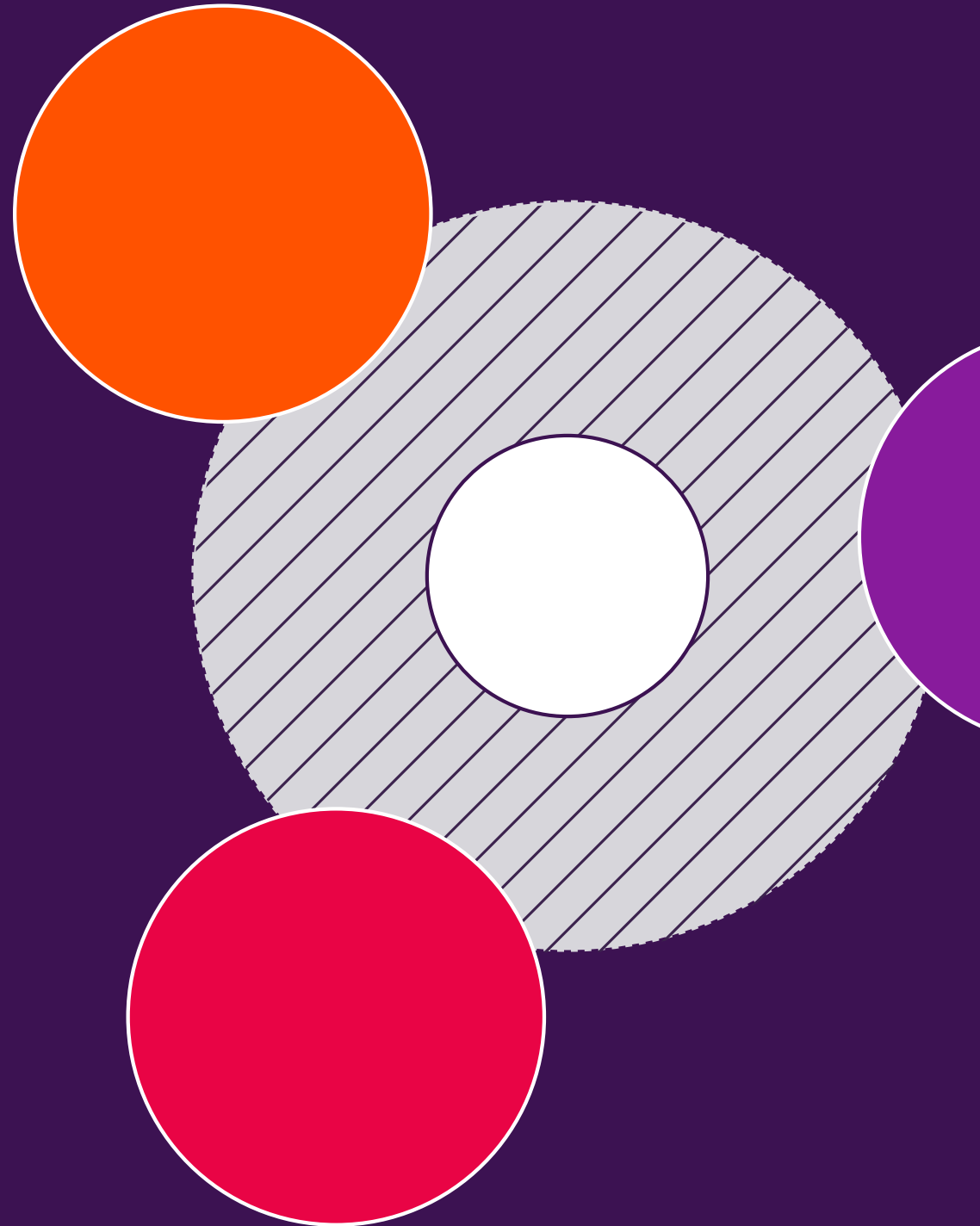
This explainer and guide was designed with government innovators across the world in mind. Many of you work explicitly in government innovation, some of you are on the margins of it and there are yet more who don't know they are doing it, but who quietly are. This is for all of you.

People from across this sector have already contributed to the guide, improved it, adapted it and generally made it more useful. In every sense, this has been a team effort, co-created with governments, partners and colleagues from across the community. Let's keep this collective learning going. This is a live experiment after all, and the results are not a foregone conclusion. There's lots still to learn from one another.

But by understanding the skills and attitudes of innovative teams and then illustrating what behaviours they might shape, we hope we are a step closer to nurturing, championing and adopting the attitudes and skills in the institutions that need them. We hope this guide helps both us - and you - on your way.

If you would like to develop this resource yourself please get in touch with us to see if we can help, otherwise, feel free to pick this up and run with it in whichever direction you see fit.

A debt of thanks to all those in the Nesta Skills team who have put this together: Kimberley Ballantyne, Nicole Barling-Luke, Brenton Caffin, Jesper Christiansen, Sonja Dahl, Kelly Duggan, Layla Gemmell, Diana Hidalgo, Bas Leurs, Elena Oyon, James Oriel, Isobel Roberts and Claire Renard. And many thanks to all those who have contributed along the way.





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