

## 4. Craft Your Intervention

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Social innovation is different from traditional technological innovation. Transformative innovations are not only new tools or software programs; they aim to catalyze changes that dramatically lift performance across the system. The goal is not simply to replace the outdated with the innovative, but equally often to add a missing ingredient that ignites drastic improvements in programs and other assets already operating in the community— innovation as catalytic ingredient.

After completing the discovery process and identifying your best intervention points, you can choose several ingredients that will make the system itself perform better. We found four categories of such ingredients, which you might also think of as four different categories or types of innovation: civic realignment; technological glue; filling the management gap; and new pipelines for community engagement.

Below are descriptions and helpful tips related to each:

### **Civic Realignment**

One of the great assets of a civic leader is the ability to call people together to address an issue. Simple discussions can lead to new relationships and to new results when people discover the work and potential of others addressing the same issue. As an innovator, you might choose to drive value through a delivery system by organizing the players and their relationships differently.

- Engage in an early civic or system discovery process.
- Capitalize on a high-profile development or event to build broad-based support.
- Engage other actors, including providers, funders, and business, community and government leaders to serve as partners.
- Use credibility to take on the status quo and create a culture of collaboration around shared goals.
- Force realignment through focus on proven models and metrics.

### **Technological Glue**

You can use the understanding you gain in a discovery process to design a technology that unleashes potential within specific elements of the system. This form of innovation is especially powerful when used to enhance the relationship between field workers and clients. Remember that adoption of cultural change needed for new technologies (and corresponding assumptions or beliefs) is a social process based on shared meaning that requires both support and pressure. To make the most of technological glue, you might:

- Identify the inflection point for infusing technology as a catalyst for change.
- Design a technology to unleash latent potential within of the system; e.g. optimize relationship between field worker and client.
- Work closely with users to integrate technology into daily routines.
- Seek feedback to refine the technology as it is utilized.

### **Filling the Management Gap**

Good management can be the missing ingredient that turns a mediocre social service response into a dramatically effective one. If you are oriented toward better management, you can partner with existing providers to help improve their management. Another approach is to take over an existing organization and use management expertise to turn it around.

- Become the management answer that turns around an existing organization.
- As incumbent provider, find management partner who will share resources, knowledge and talent.
- As consultant, match skills with provider to help build capacity for transformative impact.

### **New Volunteer and Donor Goodwill Pipelines**

Established institutions, whether inside our outside government, are not the only or the primary forces driving transformative change. Rather, one of the best sources for improving people's lives comes from within individuals themselves. We see this in various forms, starting with citizens taking greater responsibility for their own upward mobility and success, and extending out to individuals who step up to volunteer their time, talent and energy to help build stronger communities. In crafting solutions to tough policy problems, you might determine that the immediate need is to recruit and mobilize more creative and compassionate people into a delivery system.

- Identify an unmet need and/or untapped good will.
- Unleash people's energy with activities they find meaningful and productive.
- Harness and direct the reservoir of goodwill and talent toward making a real impact.
- Bridge barriers as matchmaker, navigator and/or informational guide.

Remember that you don't always need to reinvent the wheel. Some of the best innovators identify and support exceptional successes from both within and outside their own communities. You can incubate innovation by helping grow the best programs already succeeding in your communities. Or you can study

the nation for best practices being used elsewhere and import new expertise into your organization or community.