

Policy prompt sheet

Applying the seven principles of social innovation to policy



Social Innovation Community has developed a framework outlining how policy can both support social innovation and can be socially innovative in itself. Following on from our 'Seven principles of socially innovative policymaking', this prompt sheet is intended to support policymakers to apply these principles to current policy challenges.

1 Challenge-focused

Public authorities are tasked with dealing with some of the thorniest societal challenges we face: from climate change to poverty. Socially innovative policymaking seeks to find solutions for these complex challenges using collaborative, social innovation tools and approaches.

- Have you thought about who is affected by this challenge?
- Is there anyone else's perspectives you should consider to help reframe the challenge?
- Have you taken steps to fully understand the context of this challenge? For instance, have you taken steps to explore whether this challenge is a symptom of a broader more entrenched issue?
- Have you looked to identify and draw on other examples of policy approaches that have tackled similar challenges - nationally or internationally?
- Have you planned the key parts of the challenge you would like the policy solution to address?

2 Openness

To effectively design and deliver better solutions, socially innovative policymaking needs to be open to new insights, new methods and approaches, and new forms of knowledge and expertise.

- Could you design your policy approach so that taps into the experience and/or expertise of citizens, social innovators and other stakeholders?
- Could you use crowdsourcing or citizensourcing to help gain new insights on the public's ideas or suggestions on this policy topic?
- Could you use citizen reporting to deepen awareness on a policy issue? (For instance, using social media to live report environmental data or transport issues)
- Would problem-based procurement or other open social innovation methods be an appropriate approach to help drive ideation and identify possible policy solutions?

3 Human-Centered Design (HCD)

Public authorities are tasked with dealing with policymaking. Policymaking is often developed in a public agency with an emphasis on administrative rather than user needs. HCD is a process which attempts to invert this logic, by having policymakers approach a policy challenge with 'professional empathy'. A number of methods and approaches support the use of HCD in policy. User research, ethnographic methods, service safaris are just a few of the many tools available to policymakers.

- Have you done a network map of actors and users to identify the key actors and unusual suspects who are impacted by this policy? (Your map should include actors from government, civil society, the advocacy and lobby sector, social innovation practitioners and users)
- Have you considered how the policy solution will meet the needs of target users' (including unusual suspects such as remote communities)? (Methods to do this include user research, user personas, service mapping and service safaris)

4 Collaboration/co-design

Socially innovative policymaking goes a step beyond consulting users and citizens to meaningfully involve them in the policy process. It is premised on the belief that policy solutions will be better if they incorporate the inputs and ideas provided by citizens and other stakeholders.

- Have you considered what the anticipated outcomes of this policy approach should or might be?
- Have you considered how you could design a policy pilot in order to assess whether your policy approach is having its intended outcomes?
- Does your organisation already have the skills and know-how to design and evaluate an experimental policy approach? If not, have you considered other options (e.g. a research partnership with universities)?
- Have you considered what you will do if evaluations show the policy approach does not achieve the intended outcomes?

5 Experimentation and evidence

Socially innovative policymaking is ultimately outcomes-focused, and seeks to identify whether a policy intervention is achieving its intended goal in a real-world setting. Designing experimental and evidence-informed policies enables policymakers to make better decisions, to monitor and evaluate what is working, and stop what isn't.

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6 Iteration

Socially innovative policies seek to adopt an agile approach to policy development where policy solutions are continually refined and revisited around a series of feedback loops. In this sense, an iterative policy development approach is at odds with the traditional 'waterfall' or 'big bang' policy models - where a top-down policy strategy is devised and the policy solution is arrived at prescriptively

- In what ways could you phase the roll-out of your policy approach so that it can be refined, improved and scaled over time?
- Have you designed your policy approach so that there are opportunities for feedback to occur at key points in the policy process?
- Would it be appropriate for you to use policy sprints when developing your policy approach?
- Are there tools you could use to gain insights of user satisfaction with the programme or service?
- Have measures been taken to ensure that stakeholder/user feedback and suggestions are acted upon properly?
- Have you taken steps to plan in flexibility to your policy approach so that it responds to user research and other insights that emerge as the policy process develops?

7 Connecting/scaling

Scaling up of policy refers the expansion, replication, adaptation and sustaining of effective policies, programmes or projects in geographic space and over time to reach a greater number of people. Ongoing policy scaling requires political support, and regular monitoring and evaluation to assess a policy is still creating impact as it grows. Embedding and sustaining change also requires creating synergies with other policies and programmes, while forging connections and alliances with others affected by or working on the policy challenge.

- Have you taken adequate measures to assess whether your policy approach works?
- Have you identified relevant partners inside and outside government who can support with implementation of the policy solution?
- Have you planned for budgets and considered how your policy will fare in the event of legal and administrative changes?
- Are there ways that you could plan to build a social movement around this policy solution? Have you consider what actors would you involve and what role they might play in sustaining your policy solution?
- Could you support others looking to address similar policy challenges elsewhere - either nationally or internationally - by packaging your learnings into policy playbooks and guides?

