

Innovation in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors

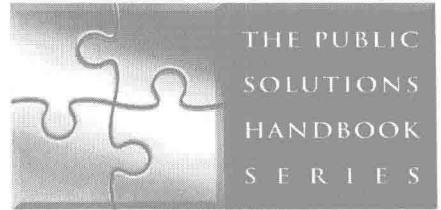
A Public Solutions Handbook

Edited by

**Patria de Lancer Julnes and
Ed Gibson**



The Public Solutions Handbook Series



MARC HOLZER, SERIES EDITOR

Innovation in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors

A PUBLIC SOLUTIONS HANDBOOK

Edited by
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Ed Gibson**

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"De Lancer Julnes and Gibson have assembled a collection that provides a much needed antidote to the view that it is only the private sector that innovates. From municipal planning and technological innovations, through coaching in community colleges and measuring culture value in museums, to collaborative governance arrangements, this collection showcases the wealth of innovation occurring in the public and not-for-profit sectors. The contributions address how to conceptualize and study innovation, explore how innovations come to be and how organizations choose, describe how they are implemented in the face of challenges, and finally, discuss how innovation success can be judged. It is a must read for anyone interested in this topic."

— Jenny M Lewis, *University of Melbourne*

"Public managers are expected to be innovative and "do more with less," but actual innovation cannot be reduced to a checklist. Patria de Lancer Julnes and Ed Gibson's textbook demystifies innovation. *Innovation in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors* is rich in current, practical demonstrations that inspire and provide lessons in how to be innovative. It is ideal as a text for professionals in training as well as practitioners."

— Alan Lyles, *University of Baltimore*

"An excellent compendium of cases from the nonprofit and public sectors that moves us well beyond traditional approaches to innovation that assume organization-centric perspectives, top-down leadership, centrally-resourced funding, and official channels of communication. These cases and their analyses point us toward the next generation of research and practice—a network-centric perspective on innovation that requires trans-organizational leadership and cross-boundary collaborations among a network of stakeholders. This shift is welcomed and much-needed in today's dynamic environment. It affords a much more nuanced understanding of innovation in all of its complexity."

— Nancy Roberts, *Naval Postgraduate School*

Innovation in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors

In the organizational context, the word “innovation” is often associated with private sector organizations, which are often perceived as more agile, adaptable, and able to withstand change than government agencies and nonprofit organizations. But the reality is that, whereas they may struggle, public and nonprofit organizations do innovate. These organizations must find ways to use shrinking resources effectively, improve their performance, and achieve desirable societal outcomes. *Innovation in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors* provides alternative frameworks for defining, categorizing, and studying innovation in government and in the nonprofit sector.

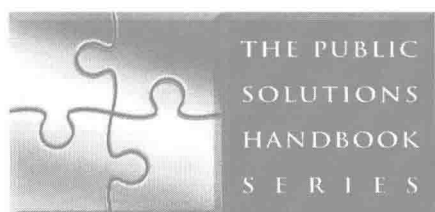
Through a diverse collection of international case studies, this book broadens the discussion of innovation in public and nonprofit organizations, demonstrating the hurdles organizations face and examining the technological advances and managerial ingenuity innovators use to achieve their goals, both within and beyond the boundaries of the innovating organization. The chapters shed light on key issues including:

- how to conceptualize innovation;
- how organizations decide between competing good ideas;
- how to implement innovation;
- how to contend with challenges to innovation;
- how to judge success in innovation.

This book provides current and future public managers with the understanding and skills required to manage change and innovation, and is essential reading for all those studying public management, public administration, and public policy.

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MARC HOLZER, SERIES EDITOR

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INNOVATION IN THE PUBLIC AND NONPROFIT SECTORS

A Public Solutions Handbook

Patria de Lancer Julnes and Ed Gibson, Editors

To George, Thomas, Peter, and Alexander
To Mary Jo and Lindsay

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Part I

The State and Study of Public and Nonprofit Sector Innovations

1

Introduction to Innovations in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors

Patria de Lancer Julnes and Ed Gibson

In the organizational context, the word “innovation” is often associated with the private sector organizations, which are often perceived as more agile in responding to social pressures, adapting their practice, and embracing change than government agencies and nonprofit organizations. There is no denying that innovation in the public and nonprofit sectors will be difficult due to the unique challenges that these organizations face. But the reality is that, whereas they may struggle, public and nonprofit organizations do innovate (Borins, 2001, 2014; Jaskyte, 2004, 2011). In particular, during the last three decades, philosophies such as Total Quality Management, Reinventing Government, and New Public Management have made innovation a necessity for public and nonprofit organizations, as expectations from citizens and other stakeholders have also increased. These organizations must find ways to use shrinking resources effectively, improve their performance, and achieve desirable societal outcomes.

Nevertheless, the apparent misconception about lack of innovation in the public and nonprofit sectors may also be fueled by the fact that innovation often entails changes and adaptation in the “relationship between service providers and their users” (Hartley, 2005, p. 27) rather than the development of new products or adoption of new technologies as is often the case in the private sector. Therefore, they lack the concrete evidence demonstrating that innovation has taken place. This, contend Moore and Hartley (2008), has also resulted in overlooking changes in the public sector’s organizational practices that have led to important societal level outcomes.

This brings us to another factor contributing to the misconception—what people understand as “innovation.” As far back as 1969, Lawrence Mohr noted that the concept was often used in an ambiguous way, and in many cases confused with invention. Mohr described invention as “bringing something new into being” and innovation as “bringing something new into use” (p.112). Consistent with this distinction, here we understand innovation as the adoption and implementation of “change, which is new to the organization and to the relevant environment” (Knight, 1967, p. 478). This conception of innovation suggests that recognizing innovation, particularly in the context of public and nonprofit organizations, may require more careful observation than is often practiced by critics.

AIMS OF THIS BOOK

A number of strategies including innovation awards (e.g., Innovations in American Government program at the Harvard Kennedy School's Ash Institute, Peter F. Drucker Award for Nonprofit Innovation) have contributed to the reconsideration of the common wisdom about lack of innovation in government and nonprofits (Borins, 2008). Furthermore, the literature on innovations in these two sectors has advanced considerably. Nevertheless, we agree with Franzel (2008, p. 254) who argues that in general these innovations are "often discussed piecemeal." In other words, systematic analyses are not offered because: 1) in the case of the awards, agencies nominate themselves and, thus, choose what they want to share about their innovation; and 2) journal articles and books tend to focus on the "hot" or "trendy" innovation topics of the time or those that fit the interest of the researcher. Such treatment of innovations leaves many questions unanswered and, as a result, can't effectively promote innovation in practice.

As this book will show in the chapters ahead, what we know about the context of innovations in public and nonprofit organizations suggests a gap between theory and practice; between what is happening on the ground and what we read in the literature and popular media. This book seeks to reduce this deficit by providing alternative frameworks for defining, categorizing, and studying innovation and presenting unique case studies of innovation in government and nonprofit organizations in the U.S. and Europe. Through this collection of case studies, the book also broadens the discussion of innovation in public and nonprofit organizations to explore how innovative government and nonprofit agencies make differences for their constituencies and/or clientele and examine the technological advances and managerial ingenuity these innovators have used to achieve their goals. The cases presented here also show the hurdles organizations face; one case in particular demonstrates that even when the situation suggests the possibility of success, would-be innovators may walk away from the opportunity. Finally, through lessons learned from these cases and a meta-synthesis analysis, we suggest strategies for adopting and implementing innovations that make differences beyond the boundaries of the innovating organization.

Without a doubt, the cases included in this book are not exhaustive. They represent a fraction of the myriad instances of innovation in public and nonprofit organizations. Moreover, space limitations constrained our ability to include a larger number of cases and forced us to adhere to a strict selection process that, nonetheless, allowed us to have variety across the cases (e.g., we include national and international cases with different policy focuses) while illustrating the most prominent trends in innovation approaches (e.g., collaborative innovation). The selection of these cases started with the notion advanced by Moore, Sparrow, and Spelman (1997) that the change or innovation had to be of sufficient importance to be considered an innovation. This has several implicit elements, which include: the change must not be fleeting or superficial; the impacts on those whom the innovator serves, supports, or targets must figure prominently in the implementation of the change and assessment of its results; adoption is not enough, implementation and sustainability are necessary for the continuing relevance of an innovation.

In sum, to varying degrees, the chapters ahead help to shed light on questions such as: how to conceptualize innovation; how to study innovation; how innovations come to be; how organizations decide to go with one innovative idea versus another; what the process of implementing innovations is; what challenges to innovation organizations face; and how to judge success in innovation.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The book is divided into four parts. Part I consists of this introduction to the book and a chapter on the state of the art of innovation. Part II is composed of seven case studies taken from the public sector. Part III's four cases come from the nonprofit sector. Part IV is a concluding chapter that presents the results of a meta-synthesis of the cases in parts II and III. In what follows we provide a brief summary of each of the subsequent chapters.

The Study of Innovation: State of the Art and Framework for Analysis

Chapter 2, written by Patria de Lancer Julnes, distills the literature on innovation and offers alternative ways to more clearly understand innovations in the public and nonprofit sectors. It also offers a framework for studying innovation based on the notion of innovation as a process that consists of at least two stages: adoption and implementation. Though de Lancer Julnes presents two ways of categorizing innovations, she suggests that a more productive approach to studying innovation is to look at types of innovations from the perspective of the change they bring or require in the organization (radical, architectural, modular, or incremental). She argues that this typology is a better tool for uncovering the dynamics that are set in motion by different types of innovations as well as varying levels of intensity. Also, acknowledging criticisms of current studies of innovation, which often conceptualize the process of innovation as monolithic, she argues that conceptualizing innovation as a two-stage process holds the promise of providing a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics involved.

Innovations in the Measurement of Cultural Value: The British Museum

In Chapter 3, Alessandra Allini, Francesco Dainelli, and Francesca Manes Rossi discuss the implementation of a Performance Measurement System (PMS) in the British Museum to measure and promote cultural value for present and future generations. This focus on creating and measuring cultural value, explain the authors, is in itself an innovation. Cultural value is viewed as an important public value concerned with the distribution of culture and the preservation of cultural artifacts over time. In this chapter, the authors describe the impetus for the innovation, which included a mandate in 2000 for the museum to adopt 17 key performance indicators. The authors present a model of value creation that encompasses two perspectives: value production and value-distribution. They use this model to examine the implementation of the PMS. Allini, Dainelli, and