Improving the Local Landscape for Innovation
Part 1: Mechanics, Partners, and Clusters

By Gigi Georges, Tim Glynn-Burke, and Andrea McGrath

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Letter from the Editor

The Roy and Lila Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation advances excellence and innovation in governance and public policy through research, education, and public discussion. Three major programs support our mission:

- The Program on Democratic Governance researches those practices that resolve urgent social problems in developed and developing societies.
- The Innovations in Government Program recognizes and promotes creative and effective problem-solving by governments and citizens.
- The Rajawali Foundation Institute for Asia promotes research and training on Asia to disseminate best practices and improve public policy.

Our Occasional Papers series highlights new research from the Center that we hope will engage our readers and prompt an energetic exchange of ideas in the public policy community.

The work of our Innovations in Government Program has revealed that innovation is evolving in cities across the country from a value-based concept into a concrete goal with specific targets—similar to the way that governments have addressed values such as efficiency and transparency. Indeed, city leaders are increasingly designating "innovation" as an area of direct responsibility under city government. While some cities choose to focus on community and private partnerships to promote innovation, others are looking inward and rethinking policies to create more opportunities to test, develop, and implement innovative ideas.

This paper is part of a miniseries that explores emerging strategies to strengthen the civic, institutional, and political building blocks that are critical to developing novel solutions to public problems—what the authors call the "innovation landscape." The miniseries builds on past research addressing social innovation and on *The Power of Social Innovation* (2010) by my colleague Stephen Goldsmith.

In the first paper, the authors introduce readers to the nature of the work by highlighting current efforts to drive innovation in Boston, Denver, and New York City. They also orient the miniseries within the robust discourse on government innovation. In the second paper, the authors introduce a framework for driving local innovation, which includes a set of strategies and practices

developed from the Ash Center's recent work on social innovation, new first-person accounts, in-depth interviews, practitioner surveys, and relevant literature. The authors explore the roots and composition of the core strategies within their framework and provide evidence of its relevance and utility.

In the third and final paper of the miniseries, the authors focus on implementation of their framework's strategies, primarily through the introduction of a unique assessment tool that includes key objectives and suggested indicators for each component of the framework. This final paper also includes a brief case study on New York City's Center for Economic Opportunity, an award-winning government innovation team, to demonstrate and test the validity of the assessment tool and framework. The paper addresses some likely challenges to implementation and concludes with an invitation to readers to help further refine the framework and to launch a conversation among cities that will help improve their local landscapes for innovation.

I am happy to present this miniseries to practitioners and fellow scholars alike. As the authors make clear, this project is not a definitive statement on the most effective innovation strategies but rather is intended to stimulate a much needed, and what we think will be a welcomed discussion on how to drive innovation in public problem-solving.

You may find all of the Ash Center's Occasional Papers online at ash.harvard.edu.

Tony Saich, *Series Editor and Director*
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I. Introduction

Cities across the nation increasingly face the challenge of doing more with less. Persistently high unemployment and poverty levels are driving heightened demand for public programs and services while rising personnel costs, aging infrastructure, and downward economic pressure constrict public coffers. Because local government officials are responsible for direct service delivery, these leaders are rethinking the institutions and processes responsible for delivering basic services such as protecting residents, educating children, and sheltering the homeless. Across the country, promising efforts to achieve greater efficiency and greater impact with fewer dollars are taking hold. New York City's Michael Bloomberg, New Orleans' Mitch Landrieu, and Oklahoma City's Mick Cornett are just a few of the current city mayors recognized for driving transformational approaches to local challenges.[1] But their high-profile reforms did not happen overnight. Effective mayors set the stage for future innovation by explicitly devoting attention, time, and resources to spurring new ways of thinking about local government.

City leaders today are generating and adopting a variety of strategies to improve the local innovation landscape, defined here as the civic, institutional, and political features involved in developing novel solutions to public problems. While some mayors direct their enthusiasm for innovation across city government agencies, others deploy a designated official or team whose portfolio includes responsibility for driving innovation. Chief innovation officer roles, for example, have emerged in a handful of cities, including Philadelphia and San Francisco.[2] Mayor Thomas Menino launched an innovation team in Boston—a model he calls the Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics—that has since spread to other cities. A boost for this team-based approach to local innovation came from Bloomberg Philanthropies in the summer of 2011 when the foundation funded the launch of "Innovation Delivery Teams" in five cities: Atlanta, Chicago, Louisville, Memphis, and New Orleans.

No matter the structure of their approach, city leaders are reframing innovation as a value-based concept to a concrete goal with specific targets—similar to the way that governments have addressed other values such as efficiency and transparency.

The first part of this paper introduces efforts in three US cities to improve the local landscape for innovation in public problem-solving. These cities' stories introduce readers to the nature of trending innovation efforts, including both the diversity of and commonalities among the mayors' approaches. The vignettes also highlight some of the challenges to prioritizing innovation-specific efforts in light of the competing priorities, traditional mindsets, institutional structures, contractual rules, and budgetary pressures that characterize the public sector. The second part of this paper introduces a framework designed to help cities in their efforts to become more innovative jurisdictions.

This paper is the first of three in a miniseries on the innovation landscape in cities, and is part of the Occasional Paper Series published by the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. The miniseries' foundation rests on research in which the authors participated beginning in 2008 under the direction of Harvard Kennedy School Professors Stephen Goldsmith and Mark Moore. Their combined efforts resulted, in part, in the publication of *The Power of Social Innovation: How Civic Entrepreneurs Ignite Community Networks for Good* (Goldsmith, Georges, and Glynn-Burke, 2010), a book that draws from the experience of more than 100 innovators in the public, nonprofit, and private sectors. Since 2010, the authors have further developed this research, primarily through the Ash Center's Project on Social Innovation. As in *The Power of Social Innovation*, the Project explores innovation through the lens of delivery systems or networks comprised of providers, funders, constituents, advocates, and others. It defines innovation broadly as the spark that brings this complex system of actors together to help people in their everyday lives. The authors also build on the book's assumption that innovation in public problem-solving results from operational, political, financial, and cultural changes that city leaders make in their jurisdictions.

Since the publication of *The Power of Social Innovation*, the authors of this miniseries have engaged with several cities across the country on their pursuit of local innovation. Through online forums, first-person accounts, and surveys, as well as working in the field as participant-observers, the authors incorporated the experiences of dozens of additional innovators into their body of research. The authors also conducted in-depth interviews with senior officials in 10 US cities whose mayors have made innovation a priority. Each of these cities is promoting innovation focused on a variety of issues

including business and economic development, education, health, and government efficiencies. In order to introduce and illustrate the framework provided in this miniseries, the authors chose to focus on specific initiatives from three cities. The authors did not conduct, nor did they have access to, formal assessments of these efforts. The selection of the three cities—Boston, Denver, and New York—was instead based on length of time each has been active in formal innovation efforts (for at least two years), level of commitment by the city (whether it has been built into the city's infrastructure), and robustness of the strategies deployed.

It is important to note that the authors do not intend for readers to consider these brief cases—or even the miniseries itself—as a definitive account of current best practices in public-sector innovation. Rather, the authors seek to contribute to the existing work of scholars and practitioners in three ways:

1. bring together in one place a number of existing ideas on local innovation strategies;
2. explore those ideas, not from the perspective of an innovator, as is most common in the discourse, but rather through the unique lens of the operational, political, and cultural context in which innovators operate; and
3. propose a new framework for creating an innovative jurisdiction in an effort to generate discussion among practitioners, students, and fellow researchers.

To help achieve these goals, the authors welcome and hope for ample feedback on this miniseries, particularly from leaders engaged in driving innovation in their own jurisdictions, whose practical experiences and insights provide detail and nuance and are foundational to discussions such as this.

II. Three Efforts to Drive Local Innovation

Boston Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics

As he entered a fifth term, Mayor Thomas Menino increasingly focused on driving a spirit of innovation more commonly associated with Boston's private sector and academic institutions. In 2010, Menino launched the Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics (MONUM), a small team mandated to engage residents while solving public problems and reinventing city services. In some ways, MONUM is an office of research and development

for the city. Reporting directly to the mayor and the city's chief information officer, MONUM Co-chairs Nigel Jacob and Chris Osgood have been granted the flexibility and political cover to identify and develop nontraditional solutions to challenges such as neighborhood safety, accessible health services, and public school performance.

A common thread across the authors' conversations with Osgood and Jacob was the city's focus on broadening and deepening civic engagement—what it calls "participatory urbanism." In practice, MONUM maintains a strong focus on mobile and other information technology platforms; in particular, on relatively small-scale applications costing approximately $10,000 each.[3] MONUM's flagship effort, launched in 2010, is "Citizens Connect"—a web- and mobile-enabled portal tied into the city's 311 call system, which allows residents to report broken street lights and graffiti to the city through the use of a simple and accessible smartphone application. Other IT-related innovations in MONUM's portfolio include "Community PlanIt,"[4] a web-based social network that allows Boston residents to engage with the planning process in their community, and "Street Bump," a pothole sensor that relies on drivers' smartphones. These apps have quickly attracted the interest of dozens of city officials outside Boston and have been adopted by at least two cities as of 2012. In a nod to these innovations, Jacob and Osgood were recognized by *Governing* Magazine as two of its "Public Officials of the Year" in 2011.[5]

MONUM's key strategies include creating platforms for encouraging new ideas and new innovators, helping to develop and shepherd along those ideas and innovators, and transforming the culture of innovation in the City of Boston.

To attract and identify a pipeline of novel ideas, MONUM has sought to make its office a trusted channel for city employees to bring forward ideas that they were previously unable or unwilling to risk pursuing on their own. MONUM also focuses on outreach to hackers and programmers, corporate partners, local nonprofits, and city residents themselves. Another prime source of potential innovations (and potential innovators) is the office's collaboration with students and professors at local public policy and design schools to develop new ideas through applied learning exercises in courses. Osgood sees an additional longer-term benefit to working with university students, as well—the training of future government innovators.[6]

MONUM follows a multitier approach to monitoring the robustness of its pipeline—one of the more advanced among the cities with whom the authors spoke. The office records the quantity of new ideas and the diversity of sources for those ideas. One important measure is whether MONUM considers an idea truly experimental and novel, as opposed to being an adaptation or replication of an existing innovation. Osgood and Jacob also track the number of projects piloted and how quickly each innovation moves through the pipeline for the sake of operational improvements. And, they record how many projects are adopted by additional city agencies or by outside cities.

MONUM also assists in the growth and development of innovations while supporting individual innovators. Promising ideas benefit from the backing of the mayor's office when needed, and—in some cases—a small amount of capital to help with further development. The office provides innovators with connections to its extensive network and assistance in thinking through models and solutions. One role of these partnerships is to infuse development teams with the necessary expertise that the office lacks in-house. For example, at every stage of the innovation process for the "Street Bump" app—from prototyping to refining the data analytics—the team reached out to its network of external partners to secure essential expertise.[7] MONUM also builds useful skills among the innovators within its portfolio, in particular around best practices in project management and innovation: prototyping, testing, measuring, and reflection. Moreover, Osgood and Jacob focus on messaging and communication, which is a critical component in the context of city politics. MONUM helps innovators from both within and outside city government manage their relationships with the mayor, the media, city employees, and the community. When needed, the office might simply act as a cheerleader or step in as a protector if failure is imminent.[8]

MONUM's development assistance and support not only help to advance ideas with merit, they also bolster the skills and confidence of innovators within city government, increasing the likelihood that they continue to generate ideas in the future. In providing these tools, MONUM hopes to slowly reshape the landscape for innovation in the City of Boston. Above all, Jacob and Osgood view MONUM's mission as culture change.[10] As Jacob asks, "It is easy to come up with one good idea. But what about the next time?"[11] It is a challenge to balance the work of shifting culture within city government with the work of identifying, testing, launching, and adopting the projects in its pipeline. Individual innovations like Citizens Connect and Street Bump

Philadelphia: Champions of Cultural Change

As a burgeoning endeavor for cities, committing resources to drive innovation strikes a balance between incorporating existing strengths and building on outside best practices. The City of Philadelphia is working to institutionalize innovation through two models: a chief innovation officer and an Office of New Urban Mechanics (based closely on the Boston model). The White House recently honored Philadelphia's Chief Innovation Officer Adel Ebeid as a "Champion of Change" in local-government innovation for initiatives such as KEYSPOT, which has provided computer and Internet access to over 100,000 residents. According to Ebeid, KEYSPOT and other efforts such as Philly Rising are "re-casting the role of government through community engagement and civic collaboration . . . in order to positively influence social outcomes in under-resourced neighborhoods." Meanwhile Story Bellows and Jeffrey Freidman, the new co-directors of Mayor Michael Nutter's Office of New Urban Mechanics, plan to attract and support new solutions proposed by local "civic hackers and entrepreneurs." The office says it will also work to change the culture within city government by providing government innovators with political cover, empowerment, and connections to outside resources.[9]

are what capture the attention of the media and the imagination of the general public. They are both novel and tangible. In contrast, when Osgood says that his group within the Mayor's Office aims to be the "willing face of failure in government,"[12] the goal might be novel but it is intangible.

It is perhaps obvious to state that actively courting failure is politically risky. However, this emphasis both reinforces, and is reinforced by, Mayor Menino's vocal call for more innovation across city government. Menino's public pronouncements and speeches, echoed regularly by senior advisors, make the case to residents and external stakeholders of the need for innovative ideas and new experiments. At the same time, the mayor is signaling to city employees that novel solutions are not only acceptable but also encouraged.[13]

One of MONUM's challenges is evaluating its impact. While reporting on the number of pilot projects and number of cities that have expressed an interest in a new app is fairly straightforward, there has been no comprehensive effort to determine whether and how MONUM's efforts are changing the culture within Boston city government or increasing community engagement. Indeed, measuring these types of changes in any innovation effort is a difficult, and often elusive, task. Osgood envisions "the more that people like frontline employees and Department of Public Works step forward to say, 'I'll try that' or 'I've got an idea' or 'I'm willing to work with somebody on something new' . . . is the most clear, tangible impact of the approach."[14]

Finally, similar to Mayor Menino's broader efforts to promote innovation outside of city hall—such as the new Innovation District on Boston's waterfront—Osgood and Jacob look to promote innovations outside of city government. The pair often seeks to leverage its contacts with universities, nonprofits, and high-tech startups to make introductions and nurture collaborations between external institutions, many of which cross disciplines.[15] Similarly, for almost a decade, the Denver Office of Strategic Partnerships, profiled in the next section, has shared MONUM's belief that cross-sector collaboration can be a key to unlocking latent ideas and opportunities across a jurisdiction.

Denver Office of Strategic Partnerships

In early 2004, reflecting his own cross-sector experience, then-new Mayor John Hickenlooper created the Denver Office of Strategic Partnerships

(DOSP) to be an "intentional bridge"[16] between the City of Denver and the local nonprofit, business, and philanthropic sectors. The DOSP ran trainings, collaborated on foundation and federal grant proposals, and helped mobilize the Denver community in volunteer service.[17] In 2009, under the leadership of Director Dace West, DOSP sharpened its focus on the local nonprofit sector. As in most cities, Denver's nonprofits deliver a variety of publicly funded services. In a typical year, approximately 150 nonprofits contract with Denver to provide critical services, representing 300 social-service contracts valued at more than $40 million.[18] These nonprofits play a significant role but represent only a small fraction of the city's total nonprofit community. DOSP has engaged an additional 3,000 local organizations, representing almost one in four nonprofits in metro Denver. In a typical year, DOSP delivers 10 trainings to representatives of more than 350 nonprofits and city agencies with good results—up to 50 percent of participants typically report engaging in new cross-sector partnerships after DOSP trainings.[19]

By 2011, DOSP had established itself within Denver city government and remained in place under the new administration of Mayor Michael Hancock. While DOSP has evolved to reflect the new mayor's priorities, the purpose of DOSP's engagement with local nonprofits remains the same: leverage each sector's assets to develop better solutions to Denver's toughest public problems.[20] Three of DOSP's key strategies are providing a platform through which city agencies and local nonprofits create new connections and partnerships, building the capacity and otherwise supporting local providers across all sectors in their collaborative efforts, and eliminating administrative hurdles within the public purchasing system of nonprofit services.

To facilitate and encourage new connections, DOSP organizes, facilitates, and participates in collaboratives specific to an issue or need that the city or community has identified and that might benefit from better coordination of effort.[21] For example, DOSP worked with nonprofits and other local organizations to conduct a robust assessment of Denver's affordable housing needs. These new collaborative efforts can serve not only to better align city and nonprofit activity, but also as pipelines for innovative organizations and community groups to engage as providers of public services, bringing potential innovators to the city's attention. Indeed, DOSP often recruits a diverse cohort of actors—younger organizations, those other than the "usual suspects"—into DOSP's collaborative projects and events.[22]

Colorado Springs: Innovation Narrative
Any city's effort to drive collaboration or innovation needs to demonstrate to the mayor, stakeholders, and community the value of the investment, linking activities and results to progress toward the city's priorities. After eight years in operation, DOSP still struggles with making that link, as it seeks to calculate and effectively communicate the value of collaborative efforts compared to what the city and local nonprofits would otherwise have accomplished on their own.[25] Denver is not alone. While city governments regularly employ a variety of tools and methods to measure their performance, evaluating and communicating efforts to promote innovation remain a challenge. Nick Kittle, manager of Colorado Springs' Office of Innovation and Sustainability, is constantly measuring and reporting on the cost recovery and savings from his office's activities. As of early 2012, the office had generated cost savings equal to 123 percent of its operating costs—effectively paying for itself. His team developed a concept they call "innovation value," which includes both the forecasted actual cost savings to the city and the efficiency value, or immediate dollars generated and reinvested into city activities. These quantitative measures of the value of innovation create an effective narrative on their work in the city's fiscally conservative environment. In addition to this identification of cost savings, Kittle also tracks the number of ideas in the office's pipeline and their progress toward tangible results.[26]

Also at the core of DOSP's approach are outreach and education in support of collaboration. DOSP runs workshops and trainings that annually reach hundreds of nonprofit providers and colleagues within city government. These trainings focus on essential skills and on developing the tools needed to form cross-sector partnerships. DOSP also facilitates exchanges of ideas through meet-and-greet events in which a city agency shares information on its work and affords opportunities for providers to meet agency representatives. A 2012 addition to the development assistance that DOSP provides local nonprofits was the Denver Shared Space Project,[23] multitenant centers that help nonprofits operate more efficiently, share resources, and establish new relationships. DOSP has a well-established system for measuring its work in building skills and making connections. The office asks for immediate feedback from participants in its workshops and other sessions on the specific skills and knowledge they have gleaned. After six months, DOSP follows up with participants to assess their skill retention and any behavior change, which might include steps to ready themselves to partner, outreach to another sector, or actual collaboration.[24]

After years of helping new nonprofits navigate the bureaucracy of city government, DOSP turned its attention to the complex financial relationship between the city and its nonprofit providers, and the processes of applying for, negotiating, and reporting on contracts and grants. DOSP had received feedback from the nonprofit community that city purchasing practices and policies were at times opaque and overly time-consuming, and the processes varied widely across the six different agencies and 13 funding sources that purchased nonprofit services. In November 2011, DOSP launched its Funding and Contracting Efficiency Initiative with a citywide self-assessment tool designed, with the Ash Center's Project on Social Innovation, to gauge the consistency, efficiency, and transparency of the funding process. DOSP then analyzed contract information, conducted small group interviews with key city-agency staff, and analyzed forms used across all steps in each agency's procurement process.

The office found issues ranging from inconsistent procurement processes for service-based contracts, lack of training for staff, significant duplication of information being requested of nonprofits across different agencies and funding sources, lack of transparency in the selection process, and inconsistent monitoring and reporting requirements. By late 2012, DOSP had shared its findings and organized participating agencies around three initial priorities: alignment of outcomes across funding streams, coordinating mechanisms for

advertising funding opportunities across the city, and documenting recommended best practices in the selection process (as well as supporting agencies in adopting those processes).

From her early days as DOSP director, West has championed nonprofits within city government and been a vocal advocate of the benefits of engaging nonprofits to her colleagues across the city.[27] Collaborative projects can not only help create better alignment of goals and outcomes, but also can be effective mechanisms for identifying and spreading innovation as participants share knowledge and experience. Moreover, through collaboration, the new ideas generated and tested by smaller providers—possibly those on the margins of the community—often have a greater opportunity to reach more-established providers.[28] West also see a benefit in engaging nonprofit leaders more broadly and deeply into the city's concerns: she regularly invites them into conversations around public challenges where they previously might not have been included. In this way, the relationships between nonprofits and local government developed by DOSP provide a mechanism for stimulating inventive thinking within city government.

Similarly, partnering with nonprofits can impact the culture of innovation within city government. More partnerships might encourage more city employees to take risks on new ideas, or they might provide political cover for those who are unable to garner the necessary authority from a risk-averse or otherwise unwilling supervisor.[29] DOSP exemplifies efforts to use cross-sector partnerships and collaborations as a core strategy for influencing cultural change and driving better outcomes. In the next section, the authors explore how an office of innovation within the country's largest public school system is relying on development assistance and the power of peer networks to similarly develop a culture of collaboration and innovation.

NYC Department of Education iZone

After leading New York City's Department of Education (DOE) through a series of reforms both structural and pedagogical in nature, former Chancellor Joel Klein was not ready to settle. While high school graduation rates were rising, the performance of graduated students in college or career was ripe for improvement. Klein shared a commitment to innovation with Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who, upon gaining direct control of the school system in 2002, had appointed Klein as his first chancellor. Among Klein's many efforts to promote innovation during his eight years as chancellor was the creation of

an office of innovation in the DOE, called the iZone, whose primary goal is to diagnose the causes of this lack of college and career readiness and to identify potential strategies in response. Soon after its 2010 launch, the office decided to concentrate on the individualization or personalization of learning, based on its belief (largely guided by education research) that this strategy would help motivate students.[30]

Towards this end, a number of promising ideas of emerged from the iZone's work with hundreds of NYC public schools. One of its initiatives, iZone360, is a community of school leaders methodically repurposing their schools' budgets, classroom space, teaching, and other assets toward personalized learning. This network doubled to 50 schools in the 2012–13 school year. A second community of innovators focused on digital technologies like online learning, iLearnNYC, boasted 200 schools in 2012.[31] Two examples of the innovations borne from these efforts include advanced placement US History teachers instructing students virtually in other schools that lack qualified teachers, and a novel approach to utilizing student assessment data to identify and replicate the most effective teaching units.[32] The iZone's innovation model has caught the attention of the federal Department of Education, which launched in 2012 a $400 million round of Race to the Top grants for school districts that propose innovations directly related to individualized learning. The federal DOE also bestowed upon the iZone an i3 grant, which provides "seed funding to incentivize early stage innovations."[33]

Three of the iZone's key strategies are supporting innovators and their ideas with resources and through communities of practice, utilizing real-time student data and program evaluation data, and making an impact on the common hurdles presented by the cultural and policy environment.

Like MONUM in Boston, the iZone offers significant development assistance and support for both aspiring innovators and their ideas. Supports to innovating school leaders include new software tools, the hardware required to use them, and money to pay teachers for planning new school models. The iZone also helps build school capacity for developing and executing innovations, such as training for school leaders and teachers around ideation and rapid prototyping. Many iZone supports come directly from nonprofit and for-profit partners. A school might partner with a company like Apple, for example, for its design expertise or innovative thinking. Together they develop a plan to modify the school's schedule, and as a next step the school engages an educational nonprofit with expertise in school scheduling.

Another key iZone support is connecting innovators to like-minded trailblazers at other schools. They base this tactic on the theory that communities of practice are platforms through which proven ideas are replicated, adopted, and disseminated. Through this 'cluster' approach, the iZone seeks to create an environment where innovating school leaders are not only supporting one another and sharing lessons learned, but also pushing one another through an informal system of social pressure.[34] In turn, the iZone supports the clusters with leadership development training, structured design processes, and dedicated staff.[35]

The collection and utilization of data is another central component of the iZone's approach. Schools participating in the iZone still fall under the DOE's normal accountability measures. However, through its hardware and other technological supports, the iZone has equipped a number of teachers with the tools to collect and put to use real-time data on student performance. Students are encouraged to progress through lessons at their own pace, and teachers are encouraged to provide additional focus on students who need the attention.[39] The research team at the iZone also uses data to evaluate whether an innovation better prepares students for college and careers. When an idea does show promise, having data-based evidence increases the likelihood of adoption by other schools.[40] Further, Anne-Marie Hoxie, the iZone's research director, notes that the team views measurement and reporting on its findings as an important means for educating the public. Certainly, being transparent about what happens inside iZone classrooms is important because parents should be concerned about any experimentation as it pertains to their child's education. But, these findings are also critical because they can be deployed by successful innovators to mobilize public support for change and reform in anticipation of the inevitable opposition from incumbents invested in the status quo.[41]

The mandate to scale has led not only to the iZone's commitment to data but also to a culture of sharing. In addition to the pull of social pressure to collaborate that takes place within the peer networks and clusters, participating schools are held accountable for sharing innovations that show promise of improving student outcomes. The iZone endeavors to provide a safe space for school innovators to rethink norms and experiment with new ideas without fear of retribution or punishment. As in Denver, a focus on external partnerships also encourages schools to try new approaches and help them sidestep hurdles like fear of failure and opposition from incumbent providers.

Bloomberg Philanthropies: Creating Innovation Capacity

Bloomberg Philanthropies strongly believes that designated innovation units inside government can bring the creative talent, risk-taking protection, and flexible resources necessary for successfully executing on novel programs and policies. The foundation is accelerating mayor-led solutions to public problems by supporting teams of full-time innovators in five US cities: Atlanta, Chicago, Louisville, Memphis, and New Orleans. The $24 million commitment will cover personnel costs over three years for what Bloomberg Philanthropies calls "Innovation Delivery Teams." The teams' goals and priorities are diverse. For example, Louisville has set out to increase recycling by 25 percent and decrease its abandoned properties by 40 percent, among other initiatives.[36] Memphis will focus on reducing handgun violence, incubating new businesses and improving available data and analysis.[37] Overall, the teams will be judged on not only finding and disseminating solutions to critical public problems, but also on what Bloomberg Philanthropies describes as "increasing the innovation capacity within municipal government."[38]

Another priority for the iZone is identifying and tackling structural and policy hurdles that impede schools' ability to innovate or otherwise incorporate a personalized learning model.[42] For example, the New York State textbook law restricted schools' ability to move funds across categories, such as from textbooks to hardware or software. Many schools reported that the state would not allow them to spend money on needed technologies, prompting the iZone to work with the state to revise the regulation. The iZone also advocated successfully for students taking online courses to be able to earn proper credit, and, in a related issue, fought to eliminate the requirement that students must be physically in the classroom for a minimum number of hours in order to earn class credits. [43]

Although Hoxie and Gillett do not yet know the impact that the iZone's strategies are having on school innovation,[44] exploring ways to evaluate these efforts has become integral to the iZone experiment. The challenge of finding appropriate measures related to innovation is a key theme that cuts across all cities included in the research for this miniseries. In the third paper, the authors introduce an assessment tool that cities and communities might utilize. But, first, an introduction to our framework.

III. Toward an Innovative Jurisdiction

Is there a comprehensive framework that local governments might follow to create a more innovative jurisdiction? To help answer this question, the authors engaged with city officials from across the country through a variety of methods (online forums, first-person accounts, surveys, and fieldwork), and conducted in-depth interviews with 10 cities to assess how they designed, implemented and measured their strategies to drive innovation.

Findings from the authors' interviews demonstrate a range of creativity and diversity in priorities, strategies, issue areas, and approaches. Boston's Nigel Jacob and Chris Osgood believe that a successful innovation agenda rests on having a separate space carved out for innovation, a discrete stream of funding, and a strong mayoral mandate or endorsement. The authors found that MONUM's efforts to help innovators develop their ideas through messaging support and networking are critical functions as well. Meanwhile, Dace West works to increase the collective capacity of Denver's nonprofit and public

sectors to engage in collaboration. The benefits according to West are abundant: better alignment of key services, platforms to identify new innovators and their ideas, political cover for innovating by city employees, and mechanisms to further develop and disseminate promising local innovations. The iZone's Stacey Gillett and Anne-Marie Hoxie prioritize tackling policy hurdles and prevailing school culture, collecting and utilizing real-time data, supporting schools committed to transformative personalized learning models, and convening clusters of innovative school leaders.

Yet among these and all other cities with which the authors engaged, none has employed what is introduced below and explored in detail in our second paper, namely a comprehensive approach to driving local innovation in public problem-solving. Instead, cities appear to deploy a handful of innovative strategies in their work. For example, some emphasize civic technologies—including digital media, mobile phone apps, crowdsourcing, open-sourcing, data mining, and analytics. Others rely on more traditional levers of government: convening community partners, utilizing the mayor's bully pulpit, or lobbying for policy reform. Some cities address the issue of human talent—attracting outside-the-box thinkers from others sectors, for example, or providing a receptive place for current city employees to share new ideas. While a few efforts deliberately employ a system-wide approach, looking to influence external actors and delivery networks across the city, much of the work the authors recorded focuses inward on cost savings or the modernization of basic public services.

While there is great diversity in practice, these strategies address many of the same challenges, including (but not limited to) competing priorities, unappealing political risk, disconnects between residents and their public officials, and inflexible funding. Traditionally, city governments tend to be risk averse given the scrutiny of citizens on spending public dollars and demands for reliable services. Moreover, the time and expense required to identify, develop, test, and refine an innovative service or program can be prohibitive in the face of local governments' immediate pressures and continuous demands for services. These and other barriers to innovation are well documented in seminal texts like James Q. Wilson's *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (1991) and David Osborne and Ted Gaebler's *Reinventing Government: How The Entrepreneurial Spirit Is Transforming The Public Sector* (1992).

Additional hurdles to innovation that are identified in *The Power of Social Innovation* include a lack of focus on measurable results, overly prescribed funding decisions, uncoordinated and overlapping efforts citywide, and a "curse of professionalism" among government officials who do not value the perspectives of citizens or clients. There is an imbalance between the great risks and modest incentives for city officials to try new models. Perhaps most notably, once an innovation shows promise, it inevitably faces the hurdle of entrenched political opposition from incumbent interests when one starts to incorporate or adapt it more broadly.

As the authors will review in more detail in the next paper, there is also a rich literature capturing and analyzing the process of successful government innovation. A few examples with affiliation to the Ash Center include Mark H. Moore's *Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government* (1995); Sandford Borins' *Innovating with Integrity* (1998) and more recently his edited volume *Innovation in Government: Research, Recognition and Replication* (2008); Bill Eggers, Shalabh Kumar Singh, and Stephen Goldsmith's *The Public Innovator's Playbook: Nurturing Bold Ideas in Government* (2009); and Sanderijn Cels, Jorrit de Jong, and Frans Nauta's *Agents of Change: Strategies and Tactics for Social Innovation* (2012). One of the key lessons from Moore, echoed by Goldsmith, de Jong and others, is that successful innovators are strategic in the sense that they have a novel vision of the public value that their agency or institution can create. They also understand, intimately, the assets and capacities at the disposal of that agency or institution to execute an idea. Further, innovators are strategic in that they do not just deftly navigate the political, financial, and cultural contexts in which they toil—they seek to influence that environment. Following this logic, the authors suggest that city leaders can create an innovative jurisdiction by following a set of strategies (defined in their framework) to support the civic/social innovators that Moore, Goldsmith, and de Jong describe.

Building on this discussion of challenges and opportunities in public innovation, the final section of this paper briefly introduces each of the main strategies and core components of the authors' framework. When available, and solely for the purpose of demonstration, examples from the three city efforts profiled above are included.

Strategy 1: Building the Collective Capacity for Innovation

A natural starting point for cities is their collective capacity to solve challenging public problems—what Moore identifies as operational capacity in *Creating Public Value*.

Improve Collaboration

Perhaps not surprisingly, almost all cities interviewed endeavor to improve the ability of actors across sectors to align and coordinate their existing efforts—creating the conditions where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. DOSP facilitates partnerships between nonprofits and city government through training and sparking new collaborative efforts around issues like affordable housing. Boston's MONUM taps into local organizations, specifically academic, research, and community-based entities, for new expertise, technologies, and ideas. In New York City, the iZone aggressively pursues collaboration with internationally known design firms and successful tech companies to bring their expertise to bear on school reform.

Create Mechanisms to Attract New Innovators (and New Ideas)

Innovative jurisdictions provide convenient entry points for new innovators and new ideas, along with new funding or investment and more volunteer service. DOSP collaborations identify innovative ideas on the margins and bring them to the attention of established providers or city officials. MONUM is developing a robust pipeline of new ideas by identifying emerging innovators from within and outside city government. Likewise, the iZone is attracting innovative school leaders and teachers.

Develop Promising Innovators (and Their Ideas)

A third component is supporting existing innovators and the development and adoption of their promising ideas. The iZone provides innovative schools with supportive tools, including new software, hardware, and training for individual teachers and school leaders, and creates communities of practice for like-minded trailblazers. DOSP looks to build the capacity of nonprofit providers to access public funding sources. Both New York and Boston connect innovators directly to an extensive network of resources to help them innovate. For example, they prepare employees to design, test, refine, and eventually share their ideas. Boston also helps with messaging and communication.

Strategy 2: Rethinking Policy to Open Space for Innovation

Policy reform that addresses the administrative, structural, and political hurdles to innovation is a second core strategy for an innovative jurisdiction.

Utilize Data

Better utilization of data to understand public challenges and to evaluate performance is critical to innovation. DOSP is helping to create a comprehensive outcome-driven system for city contracts with social-service providers. The MONUM team is collecting data on performance measures including the adoption of technologies like Citizens Connect. MONUM also tracks the quantity, quality, sources, and progress of ideas in its innovation pipeline. The iZone encourages schools to incorporate real-time data on student performance. The same measurement and reporting mechanisms also allow the iZone to expedite adoption of promising innovations.

Set Aside Risk Capital

Despite today's fiscal constraints, cities are setting aside public funds, as well as privately raised capital, specifically for innovation. One example is the small pool of funds that MONUM has created, which leverages city funds to attract private contributions. The iZone receives NYC Department of Education dollars explicitly for research and development. The iZone also attracts in-kind resources from private organizations, which helps reduce political hurdles and risk.

Eliminate Barriers

Streamlining rules and removing administrative hurdles allow more providers to compete for city contracts and make funding available to new service or program models. The iZone, for example, fought for rule changes to enable school innovations that faced bureaucratic obstacles. DOSP's initiative to reform city purchasing of nonprofit services has potential to be one of its flagship reforms, spanning multiple agencies and multiple years. This initiative focuses on making today's burdensome public agency processes—including funds application, contract negotiation, reporting the execution of duties, and the like—more efficient, consistent, and transparent.

Strategy #3: Developing a Culture of Innovation

An important third strategy for an innovative jurisdiction is creating and maintaining a culture that intentionally seeks out, values, and expects creativity and change.

Protect Risk-Taking

Clear signals from the mayor can increase a jurisdiction's risk tolerance, including mandates to recruit, reward, and protect innovators. MONUM has taken its direction and benefited from a strong mandate from Mayor Menino, who critically also explains the rationale and potential benefit of pursuing innovation to Bostonians. Likewise, the iZone uses external partnerships and other tactics to create a safe space for innovators. Both the iZone and DOSP observed that city agencies and employees appeared more willing to take more risks when partnering with local nonprofits.

Mobilize Public Will

Public awareness and support can play a key role in successful government innovation when opposition arises from incumbent or status quo providers. Raising outcome expectations and demanding improvement can also be useful levers in triggering reform. By focusing on innovations that engage constituents in improving their neighborhood, MONUM hopes to elevate public awareness of the city's responsiveness and innovativeness.

Empower Clients

The authors agree, as emphasized in *The Power of Social Innovation*, that an innovative jurisdiction empowers citizens to take increased responsibility for their own progress and involves them in the design, delivery, and evaluation of public services. While the authors uncovered few examples of cities empowering citizens in this way, there were some exceptions: Boston uses real-time resident input from new mobile apps to guide departments like Public Works and soliciting individual student feedback is deeply embedded into the iZone's philosophy of personalized learning in NYC.

IV. Conclusion

In this paper, the authors suggest a set of strategies for cities seeking to improve the local landscape for innovation in public problem-solving. By way of introduction, the authors highlight the diverse efforts of three US cities, identifying strategies they are pursuing, challenges they are encountering, and some of the results they have achieved. Next, this paper briefly introduces a framework for innovative jurisdictions developed from three years of engagement with city officials through online forums, first-person accounts, surveys, fieldwork, and interviews. By linking the framework to

the three vignettes (each of which highlights distinct innovation strategies unique to local priorities and landscape), the authors hope to establish a basis for a more systematic and methodologically rigorous understanding of what is required for a fertile landscape for innovation in public problem-solving. In the second paper of this miniseries, the authors discuss in more detail the roots, composition, and supporting evidence of this framework.

Endnotes

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