



Reimagining Innovation

Unlocking Creativity in Public Procurement

PROCUREMENT
EXCELLENCE
NETWORK

Partners for Public Good

Training | April 23, 2026

Meet your *Facilitators*



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We are glad you are here!
Please share in the chat your name, role, and government or organization.

How can you engage in this session?



Please turn on
your camera
to create a more
inviting experience!



Share your
thoughts...
raise your hand or
comment in the
chat!



Get involved in
interactive
activities...
Join the fun!

Let's Hear From You!

How do you approach new cooking or baking recipes?

- A. I follow the recipe exactly as written.
- B. I modify where I see fit.
- C. *What recipe?* I often create something new and unique!



Share your response in the chat. We will call on a few people to share their responses aloud.

Procurement... is for the public good.

As soon as we step out on the street, the impact of public procurement is everywhere!

Procurement is the engine that powers communities daily, building the infrastructure...

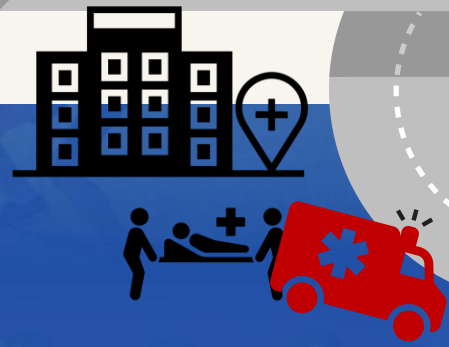
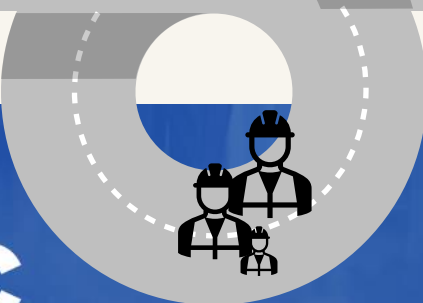


...and depends on **dedicated public service servants** who believe in its transformative power!



EVERY PUBLIC DOLLAR
tells a
STORY

...and **delivering critical services and supports** that help communities thrive...



The Big Idea: Amid fiscal, technological, capacity, and market disruptions, procurement teams have a *responsibility* to be innovative in mindset and practice, unlocking new ways of working to reshape what public procurement can be—and *achieve!*

- ❑ **What is Innovation, Really?:** How should teams define innovation in public procurement, and what makes it challenging?
- ❑ **Innovation in Action:** In what ways are governments overcoming barriers and testing new solutions to solve pressing procurement challenges?
- ❑ **Unlocking Creativity:** What techniques can help inspire teams to “think beyond” and ideate to tackle procurement challenges in new ways?



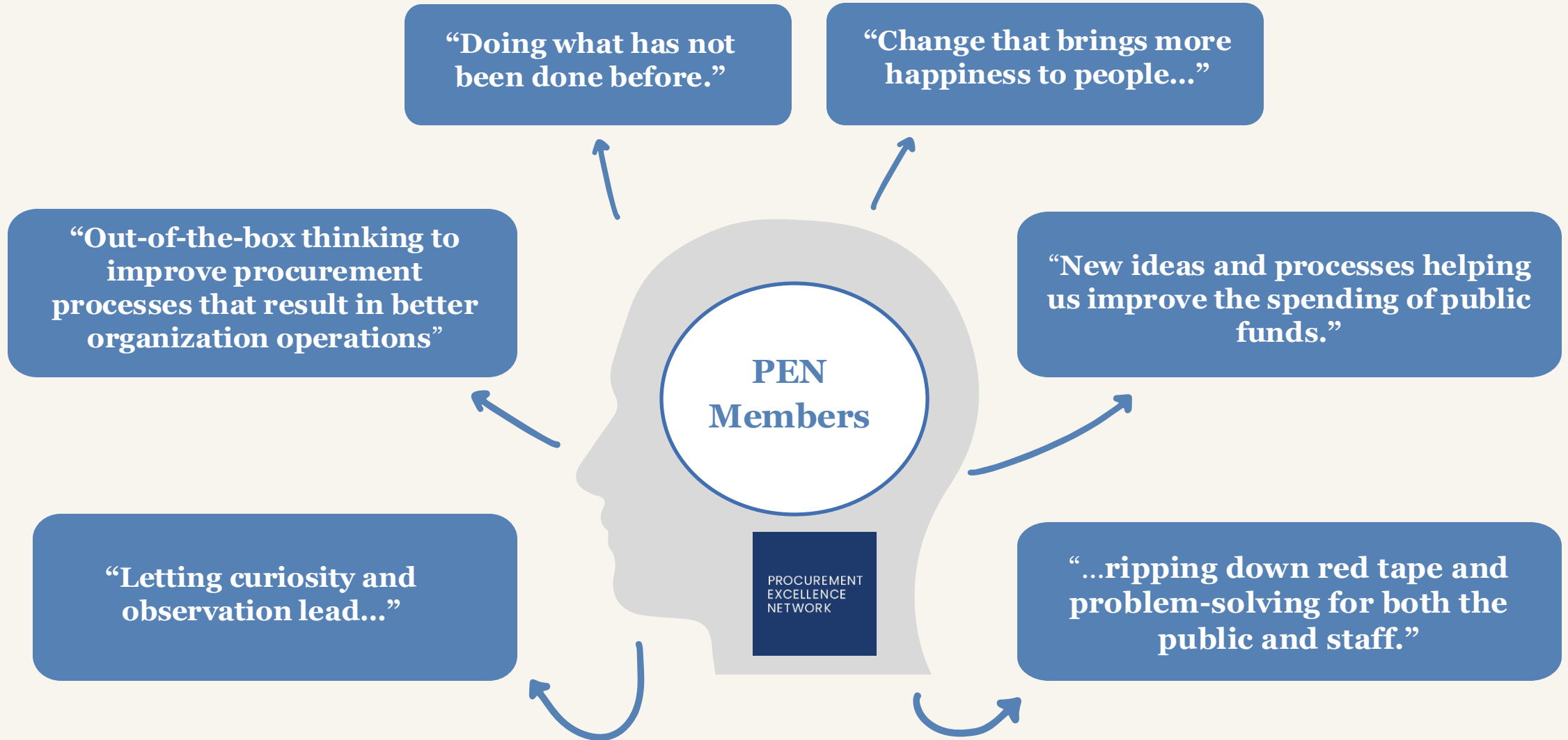
Join the “**PEN Innovation Lab**” after this session to explore innovation opportunities in your government with PPG experts!

Setting the Stage: What is Innovation, Really?

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How *PEN Members* define “Innovation in Public Procurement”



How **PEN** defines “Innovation in Public Procurement”



“

Continuous improvement in action – taking calculated risks to challenge the status quo by adapting, building, and pioneering new ways of working and transforming team culture (mindsets, behaviors, policies, and processes), **leading to better outcomes for the public good.**

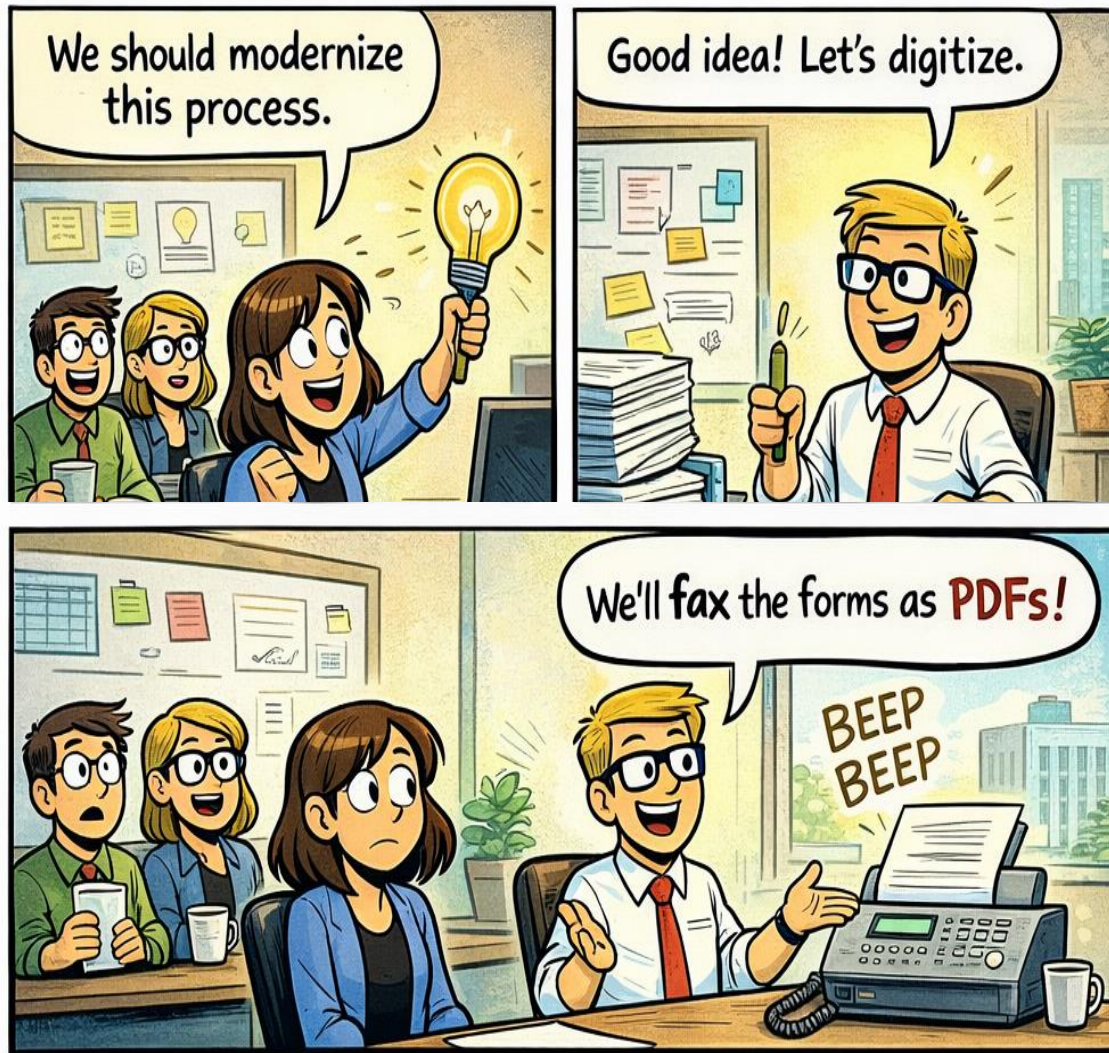
We want to hear from you! In the chat, share: **What word(s) in this definition resonate most with the way you think of innovation?**

What is Innovation, *Really*?

- **Intentional, collaborative efforts to continuously improve** services, overhaul processes, or achieve outcomes
- **Creating opportunities and psychological safety for staff to define problems** and collaboratively ideate and implement new solutions
- **A context-driven, introspective process** shaped by a government's unique environment, regulations, and constraints



Innovation is not...



- **Just adopting new technology** – true innovation requires better policies, practices, and procedures, not just new systems
- **Disruption without thoughtful change management and collaboration.**
- **Making processes less efficient or reinventing the wheel**—it's about using what works to move forward in better ways.

Why Innovation Matters

Why should procurement teams prioritize innovation in their work?

Innovation powers procurement reform
—shifting the focus from *navigating* challenges to **actually solving them.**



Barriers & Challenges

What makes *innovation* difficult in public procurement?



MINDSET

- **Risk-Aversion:** *“We’ve always done it this way; it gets the job gets done!”*
- **Fear of Failure:** *“We tried changing the process before. What if it doesn’t work now?”*
- **Lack of Psychological Safety to Ideate:** *“Ideas go into a black hole – why bother suggesting anything?”*



BEHAVIORS

- **Groundhog Day Effect:** Teams talk about change, but do not take any action beyond conversation.
- **But, what about Tech?:** common approaches in the sector limit creative or customized solutions.
- **Silos Stifle Collaboration:** Departmental and cultural divides influence the ideation and adoption of solutions.



POLICIES

- **Antiquated Laws:** Outdated rules and policies are slow to change, stifling creativity.
- **Competing Priorities:** Bureaucratic constraints lead to overly cautious guidance interpretations.
- **Policy Latency:** Updates are reactive align with evolving needs.



PROCESSES

- **OCPD Syndrome:** Overly-complicated procurement decisions = less experimentation.
- **Inefficient Workflows:** Navigating broken systems and workarounds becomes a necessary skill.
- **Involuntary Innovation:** Change occurs only when systems fail, audits emerge, or public scrutiny arises.



Are there more barriers to innovation you have experienced? Share in the chat!

Zoom Poll: How often does your team intentionally create space to brainstorm innovative procurement solutions?

- Not at all
- Informally / ad hoc
- Occasionally, but planned
- Regularly scheduled
- Embedded in how we work

How can procurement teams adopt innovation as a core value?



Capacity-Building

Train and empower teams to broaden their understanding of what innovation is and how to harness it!



Collaboration

Foster a collaborative environment that encourages and redefines how ideas are introduced, approved, and executed.



Communication

Communicate the value of innovation and advocate for experimentation, sharing outcomes of wins—and *failures!*

City of San Antonio, TX



DFW - Dallas Fort Worth International Airport

Transforming Operators into Everyday Innovators

Michigan launches 'Shark Tank'-style competition to meet state's transportation needs

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer recently announced the PitchMI competition to boost innovation in the state.

Innovation in public procurement is like a muscle—

- build it,
- flex it/practice it,
- and make it a mindset.



Activity



Idea Lab: Developing a Culture of Team Innovation

Developing a Culture of Team Innovation

Brainstorming strategies to build confidence, collaboration, and creativity

Blue Sky Brainstorming



Collective
brainstorm of new
ideas

How it works:
Everyone shares
their best ideas. No
introducing
constraints!

Build, Don't Break



Refining an idea
already introduced by
someone

How it works:
Add something new to
the idea to build it out.
No critiques or
corrections of
previous ideas.

Test it Tomorrow



Making a good idea
actionable

How it works:
Take the good idea
and design ultra
small steps that can
be piloted tomorrow.

Let's Practice: Developing a Culture of Team Innovation

Brainstorming strategies to build confidence, collaboration, and creativity

Blue Sky Brainstorming



Beyonce, the CPO for Cloud City, needs ideas for how to best track P-card spend across departments.

What ideas do you have?

Build, Don't Break



Kelly suggested starting a spreadsheet that departments update with their monthly spend.

How can we build on this idea?

Test it Tomorrow



Michelle wants to integrate P-cards with the ERP system the city is planning to purchase this year.

How can Michelle innovate in the meantime?

Innovation in Action: Peer Governments Solving Procurement Challenges

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PEN Member Perspectives: *Innovation in Action*



Scot Barker

Chief Innovation Officer

Department of Finance & Administration | City of Burlington, VT

“For a government to embody innovation, they need to be **open-minded, open to change, and ready to learn from failure.**”

Innovation is finding ways to make the work YOU DO better, faster, and more efficient. **If it’s new to you and if your organization has never done it before, it’s innovation!”**

Real-world examples of **Procurement Innovation in Action**

Theme: *Staffing*



City of Phoenix, AZ

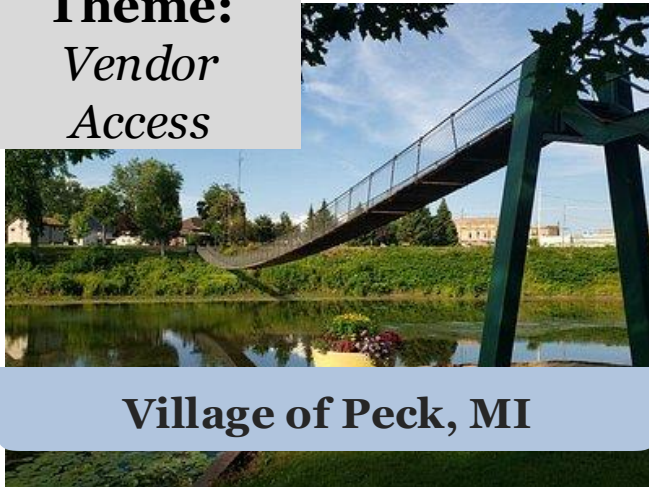
Challenge

Persistent vacancy challenges lead to increased workloads and burnout for staff. The procurement team wanted to improve retention, morale, cohesion, and opportunities for internal mobility.

Innovation

- In 2021, the city implemented a \$5,000 retention payment for central procurement staff.
- Titles were reclassified to “Finance Procurement Officer,” which increased compensation without changing responsibilities.

Theme: *Vendor Access*



Village of Peck, MI

Challenge

Urgent infrastructure needs have been met with consistently low bid participation. With a critical upcoming EPA/CDBG-funded water and wastewater project, the City Manager wanted to increase vendor engagement strategies.

Innovation

- Used eProcurement software and AI prompts to refine a vendor outreach list within 100 miles.
- Launched their first vendor survey with 25% response rate.
- Beta tested surveys with 2 vendors before launch.

Real-world examples of **Procurement Innovation in Action**

Theme:
*Technology
& AI*



City of Houston, TX

Challenge

Procurement was widely perceived as a “black box” and “Department of No,” with limited transparency, inconsistent communication, and unclear timelines—leading to frustration, delays, and low trust from departments and vendors.

Innovation

- Implemented BeaconBid and Pavilion to create end-to-end workflows
- Designed a structured intake “front door” providing real-time visibility into request status.

Theme:
*Process
Improvement*



City of South Bend, IN

Challenge

IT, legal, and procurement were not a coordinated front regarding technology procurements across departments.

Departments would loop in some teams and not others, leading to headaches at approval time.

Innovation

- Standing procurement check-ins with legal, procurement, IT: what's next, upcoming complexities, risk flagging, policy needs
- Used “marketplace.city” to catch requests/interest early so that all teams could shape the process.

Real-world examples of **Procurement Innovation in Action**

Theme:
*Codes/
Policies*



City of Columbia, MO

Challenge

Code of Ordinances allows departments to bypass Purchasing and go directly to Council for contract approvals. In FY25, Council approved 19 contracts, totaling \$6.1M, without consulting Purchasing.

Innovation

- Surveyed staff on procurement processes
- Gained buy-in from Mayor & City Manager
- Revising ordinances to standardize processes to collaborate with purchasing for all procurements

Theme:
Sourcing



City and County of Honolulu, HI

Challenge

Procurement cycle times averaged ~270 days versus the 90-day target, experiencing significant delays between requisition and the award of contracts, delaying delivery of core city services.

Innovation

- Launched RFP Fun Run pilot with 5 mayor-priority projects; award target <120 days
- Promoted “one team, one dream” to build buy-in and boost efficiency
- Conducting procurement lifecycle assessments to identify additional reform opportunities

Unlocking Creativity: Pathways to Innovation in Public Procurement

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How can we turn great ideas into meaningful change?

Continuous improvement in action –

Taking calculated risks to challenge the status quo by

adapting, building, and pioneering

new ways of working and transforming team culture

(mindsets, behaviors, policies, and processes),

leading to better outcomes for the public good.

Exploring Innovation Frameworks to Unlock Creativity

Adapt, Build or Pioneer?

What is it?

A diagnostic framework to brainstorm new ideas or solutions to solve a pressing challenge, reflecting on a spectrum of innovation pathways!

When to use it?

To help with idea generation for a procurement reform!

Procurement Innovation Map

What is it?

A framework that clarifies key elements of an innovation idea—*goals, stakeholders, risks/tradeoffs, actions, and outcomes*—reflecting on how an idea could impact a team!

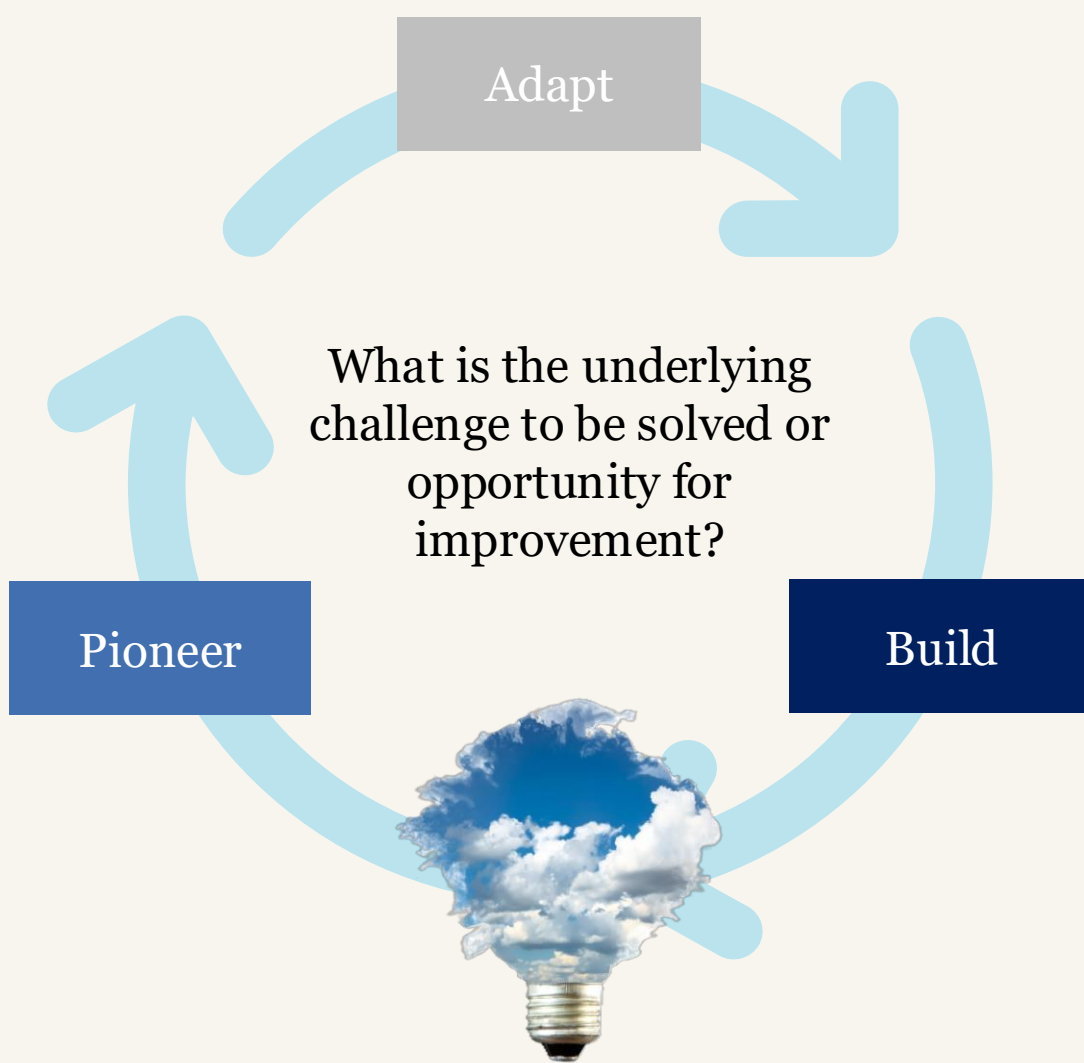
When to use it?

When pitching a new idea or highlighting the impact of an innovation already in action!



Look out for templates to practice these frameworks in the chat!

💡 Framework: Adapt, Build, or Pioneer an Innovation!



Adapt

Identify opportunities to improve existing procurement processes using available tools or resources within your government.

Build

Designing and implementing a new process or solution that is meaningfully different from current practices in your government.

Pioneer

Exploring new strategies rarely attempted among peers, transforming how procurement functions within your government.

Identify opportunities to improve existing procurement processes using available tools or resources within your government.



Is there a challenge with *how* a process is executed, rather than the process itself?



Is there an opportunity to simplify or omit an existing process to achieve more efficiency?



Are there existing tools, resources, or platforms that are underutilized that could mitigate challenges?



Are there targeted improvements to existing templates, policies, or procedures that could bring meaningful change?



More likely to be a “quick win” with high impact!

Designing and implementing a new process or solution that is meaningfully different from current practices in your government.



Are existing tools, resources, and processes within your government insufficient to solve an existing challenge, even if improved?



Are you trying to achieve a new outcome that current internal systems weren't designed to support?



Is your team lacking the expertise to solve this challenge without additional support or resources?



Would continuing to refine processes within existing constraints still yield similar inefficiencies or gaps?



Opportunity to create new value or overhaul a process to be more impactful!

Exploring new strategies rarely attempted among peers, transforming how procurement functions within your government.



Is your government ready to innovate beyond standard solutions that have not adequately solved existing challenges internally or elsewhere?



Have past ways of working yielded insufficient outcomes, making a transformative solution necessary to achieve better results?



Is there an opportunity to redefine what a function could achieve or operate to create public value?



Are you ready to take risks and embrace uncertainty to create or adopt a new solution?



Do not limit creativity by focusing on how the pioneering will happen– focus on the idea first!



Let's Practice: Adapt-Build-Pioneer Framework

Challenge

The City of Cloudlandia has a vendor performance evaluation process that requires user departments to complete a scorecard template at the end of the contract.

However, vendor performance is tracked inconsistently, and there is little shared data to inform future decisions because there is no centralized system for tracking.

As a result, vendors who have previously underperformed have been selected for awards by other departments.

Think about An Innovation

How can we innovate and inspire new ways of working?

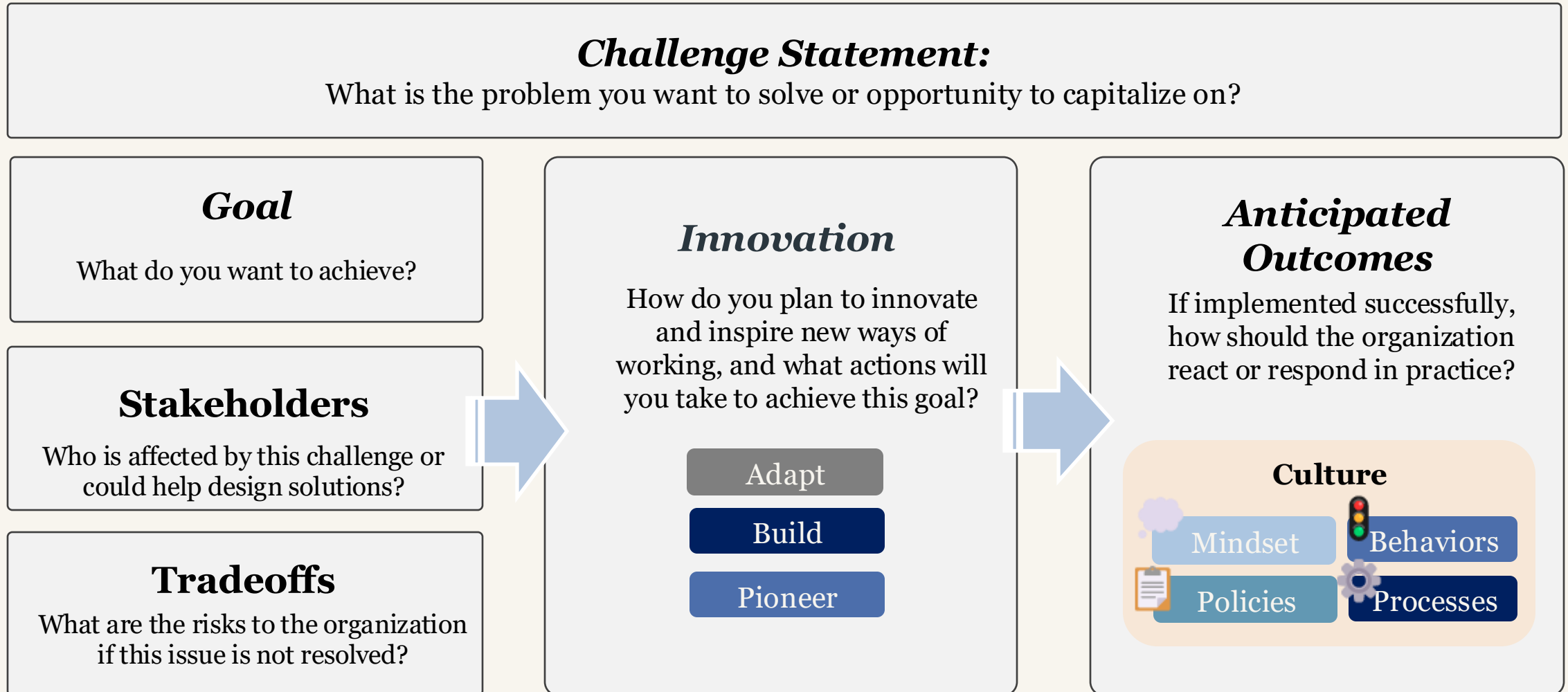
Adapt

Build

Pioneer

💡 **Framework: Procurement Innovation Map**

A framework that clarifies key elements of an innovation idea supporting early-stage ideation.



Key Takeaways: Innovation in Public Procurement

PEN defines “innovation in procurement” as...

Continuous improvement in action – *Taking calculated risks to challenge the status quo by adapting, building, and pioneering new ways of working and transforming team culture (mindsets, behaviors, policies, and processes), leading to better outcomes for the public good.*

Innovation is...

- Intentional, collaborative efforts to continuously improve services, overhaul processes, or achieve outcomes
- Creating opportunities and psychological safety for staff to define problems, ideate and implement new solutions
- A context-driven, introspective process shaped by a government’s unique environment, regulations, and constraints

Create a team culture of innovation through...

- Capacity-building
- Collaboration
- Communication

...and use PEN’s Innovation Frameworks to help unlock new ideas!

- 💡 **Adapt-Build-Pioneer Framework** – diagnostic framework to help with ideation for a procurement reform!
- 💡 **Procurement Innovation Map** – to give your idea structure and explore impacts on team culture and outcomes!

PEN Member Perspectives: *Innovation in Action*



Chris Belasco

Chief Data Officer

City of Pittsburgh, PA

“Innovation in procurement isn’t about moving fast and breaking things—it requires creating guardrails that let teams **test, learn, and deliver real value in big and small ways every day.**”

Start trying things and failing because you will eventually succeed.
Apply the lessons of failure to what you’ll do next and see what happens.”

Wrap-up & Key Takeaways: What's Next in PEN

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Have 30 minutes to chat about Innovation?



“

Stay on for **PEN Innovation Lab** immediately following this session!

Why join? → 💡 Get real-time support from PPG experts to make progress on your Procurement Innovation Map!

Your Feedback Matters: Event Experience Survey



**Please complete the Zoom poll on your screen.
Your feedback is anonymous!**

Procurement Excellence Network: Become a Member!

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Procurement Excellence Network. At the top left is the logo 'PROCUREMENT EXCELLENCE NETWORK'. To the right are navigation links: 'About', 'Resources', 'Events', 'FAQ', 'Contact', and 'Search'. A circular button with the text 'SIGN IN MEMBER SIGN IN MEMBER' is also visible. The main headline reads 'When procurement works, communities thrive' with a 'Become a Member' button below it. Below this is a banner image of cityscapes. The central text says 'Embark on a Procurement Excellence Journey with PEN'. Three key features are highlighted with icons: 'Community of Peers' (a circle icon), 'Model Templates & Tools' (a starburst icon), and 'Free Coaching' (a double-line icon). Each feature includes a brief description and a link to the corresponding resource.

PROCUREMENT EXCELLENCE NETWORK

About Resources Events FAQ Contact Search

SIGN IN MEMBER SIGN IN MEMBER

When procurement works, communities thrive

Become a Member

Embark on a Procurement Excellence Journey with PEN

Community of Peers
Connect with 2,400+ innovators at the local, state, and federal level to replicate best practices
Member Directory →

Model Templates & Tools
Access exclusive resources such as process maps, evaluation forms, and more
Resource Library →

Free Coaching
Receive support from experienced advisors to help guide you through a procurement challenge or reform
Request Coaching →

The Procurement Excellence Network has connected **3,000+ government staff from 1000 unique jurisdictions** to procurement resources, best practices, and community support.

- ✓ Attend monthly **virtual webinars**
- ✓ Access over **80+ resources**
- ✓ Connect with peers in our **Member Directory!**
- ✓ **Community Conversations** Dashboard



Continue the Conversation on Innovation!

NASPO Pulse Podcast

Check out this episode:

“The Simmer Strategy – How Michigan Transformed its Procurement Approach”

 27 min |  [Podcast](#)


Statecraft Podcast

Check out this episode:

“Do we Need Innovation at City Hall?”

 61 min |  [Podcast](#)

 *Interested in discussing innovation ideas to solve procurement challenges?*
Sign up for a PEN Coaching Call!

 *Join us for our next event!*

On Time, Every Time: Strategies to Improve Vendor Payment Processes

Has your government ever struggled to get vendor payments out the door in a timely manner?



Register Today!

Join PEN for a robust discussion on common government barriers to prompt payment and explore strategies to diagnose & mitigate process inefficiencies.

During this session, we'll unpack how the City of Jackson cleared \$10 million dollars in backlogged invoices, restoring critical services and trust with their vendor community.

May 14th, 2026 | 1:00 PM ET



PEN Innovation Lab: Exploring Ideas for Procurement Reform

Roundtable Consultations Explore Innovation Opportunities in Government

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Post-Event Discussion
Thu, Apr 23, 2026

Overview: PEN Innovation Lab Structure

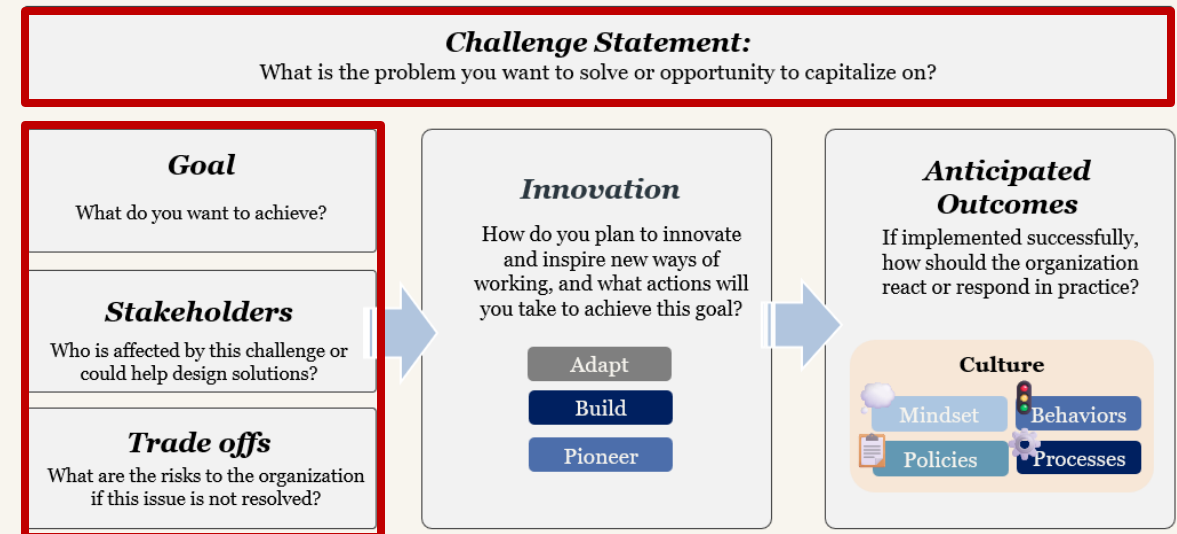
Introduce your name and jurisdiction in the chat!

Quiet Self-Reflection (5 min):

Open the Procurement Innovation template & populate the red sections!

- Challenge
- Goal
- Stakeholders
- Tradeoffs

💡 Let's Explore: Procurement Innovation Map



Consultations: PEN Innovation Lab Structure

Zoom Poll: Please select the theme that closely aligns with your challenge:

- *Procurement Sourcing Methods*
- *Technology/AI*
- *Procurement Codes/Policies*
- *Vendor / Supplier Engagement*

You will be moved into a breakout room facilitated by PPG staff to explore innovations.



What type of challenge
would you like to
workshop?

💡 Let's Explore: Procurement Innovation Map

Challenge Statement:

What is the problem you want to solve or opportunity to capitalize on?

Goal

What do you want to achieve?

Stakeholders

Who is affected by this challenge or could help design solutions?

Trade offs

What are the risks to the organization if this issue is not resolved?

Innovation

How do you plan to innovate and inspire new ways of working, and what actions will you take to achieve this goal?

Adapt

Build

Pioneer

Anticipated Outcomes

If implemented successfully, how should the organization react or respond in practice?

Culture

Mindset

Behaviors

Policies

Processes

Innovation in Action: City of Atlanta, GA

Challenge:

Lack of centralized visibility on the status of contracts after being executed by the City Clerk. The department had little visibility on when contracts were picked up, who retrieved them, and the monthly collection count which caused confusion and rework.

Goal

Improve real-time visibility of executed contracts and improve responsiveness to stakeholder inquiries

Stakeholders

City Clerk's Office
Center of Excellence
User Departments

Tradeoffs


Persistent bottlenecks in execution delays, resigning contracts

Innovation

Adapt

Develop a centralized contract tracker of all scanned contracts using **Microsoft Lists**, an existing tool within Microsoft 365 which is accessible by all staff.

Anticipated Outcomes

 *“Transparency and accountability are essential to contract management.”*



Teams proactively log, check and/or update contract status



Required monthly reporting on contract collection and status
Regular training for users



Monthly reconciliation and reporting workflow;
Standardized intake form for data hygiene

PEN Post-Event Discussion Poll



How confident do you feel
in applying the
Procurement Innovation
Map to a real challenge?



How likely are you to
apply this framework to
other innovations in your
government?