

## What is innovation?

When you think of innovation a number of things might come to mind, like technology, sci-fi and Steve Jobs. You might think that innovation is done by specialists, entrepreneurs and scientists. But at its simplest, innovation is **the creation and implementation of new ideas, methods, products or ways of working.**

Innovation often happens by **responding to the needs of a service, service user or population group or by identifying a problem and exploring a solution.** Innovation can be done by anyone: if you have implemented a new model or way of working that has made things better, **you are an innovator!**

### Defining Innovation

While we have offered a definition of innovation above, there is no one set definition of innovation. This might seem to make it more confusing and intangible, however it seems to reflect the nature of innovation. [Idea to Value](#) asked 26 innovation 'experts' how they would define the term and there is much variation, but if we have a look at some of the answers, hopefully there will be a definition that is relatable to you and highlights that you might be already innovating in your organisation without realising it.

Turning an idea into a solution that adds value

Anything that is new, useful and surprising

Approaching every situation saying 'how can we make this better?'

The introduction of new products and services that add value to the organisation

You approach a problem or challenge in a way that turns out better than before

Innovation should make a difference

If you want to see more of the 26 definitions, take a look at [the full article](#).

## Are all innovative things new?

When Steve Jobs made [his keynote speech](#) at MacWorld on January 9th 2007, he announced the development of three products:

- A widescreen iPod with touch controls
- A mobile phone
- An Internet communicator

None of these three things were new. What made it innovative was combining the three elements into one single device – the iPhone. This shows that not all innovative things are new, in the sense that you don't have to start completely from scratch.

Many innovations are a result of building on and adapting what already exists, it can be an evolving process. However, when adapting and building on existing ideas, products and methods, it is crucially important to consider intellectual property implications. To learn more about intellectual property, read [our guide](#) and if in doubt, speak to an experienced colleague or a specialist in intellectual property.

## Are all new things innovative?

While innovation can be defined as the creation of something new, not all new ideas, methods, products or ways of working are innovative.

For example, imagine you are looking for a new method for turning bread into toast. You have identified that to do so, you'll probably need a source of heat. You know that when you drive your car around the engine gets hot. So you take a slice of bread, pop it on your car engine and ride it around for an hour.

You open up the bonnet and tada - you've found a new way of turning bread into toast!

But is this new method innovative? You might have found a new way of doing it but:

- It takes more time than a toaster
- It uses more energy than a toaster
- It costs more money than a toaster
- The toast isn't edible because it's covered in oil, leaves and whatever else is under the bonnet of your car!

## Value

A common theme in the definitions collated by Idea to Value, and something that is missing in the above toast example, is value. Value is a crucial element of innovation. When people think of value, they might think of money and cost, and while value also includes that, it also goes far beyond it. In a recent [annual report](#), Cardiff and Vale University Health Board's Executive Director of Public Health, Fiona Kinghorn, breaks value down into four types or 'pillars':

**Personal value:** What outcomes are important to the person from the services they receive, and how the actual outcomes relate to the outcomes the person was hoping for

**Societal value:** What is important to our local population. Also known as 'population value,' it considers the value services contribute to society (e.g. helping more people stay in employment to support the economy)

**Allocative value:** Where can the resources we have be best allocated. For example, the work to encourage all households to fit smoke alarms has reduced deaths and injuries from fire in the UK over the last 30 years

**Technical value:** Do the interventions actually deliver? Technical value considers how well are the resources we have chosen meeting our desired outcomes and goals

So when you are implementing a new idea, ask questions like:

- Does it deliver better outcomes for people?
- Is it more efficient?
- Is it more sustainable?
- Is it more cost-effective?

Organisations might place value on different things, so understanding strategic context might give you an indication of what your organisation considers valuable. For more information on this, take a look at our guide on [Understanding Strategic Context](#).

## Additional Information

To innovate successfully, there are a few things to consider. The Hub has addressed some of these in our Cardiff and Vale RIC Hub Guides series. We will keep adding to these, so check back regularly to learn more and get in touch if there is an area you would like to more about.

### [RIC Hub Guide - Understanding Strategic Context](#)

Understanding the strategic context and direction of your organisation can help you know what your organisation values

### [RIC Hub Guide - Successful Pilots](#)

Piloting is an integral part of testing innovations and demonstrating how ideas can be adapted to local conditions

### [RIC Hub Guide - Governance](#)

Complying with legal and organisational requirements supports effective and safe innovation

### [RIC Hub Guide - Performance and Outcome Metrics](#)

Harnessing data helps to tell the story of your innovations and demonstrate the impact your work is having

### [RIC Hub Guide - Intellectual Property](#)

Innovating often creates or makes use of intellectual property. Understanding this supports effective innovation and adoption

### [RIC Hub Guide - Values Based Approach](#)

Putting value at the heart of decision-making means that we need to rethink how services are delivered, adding value at every step

### [Why do we need inclusion in innovation?](#)

Zoe Hilton, Innovation Program Manager at Shaping Change, Cardiff and Vale UHB outlines why great ideas and innovations come from anyone and should be for everyone.

### [What is innovation? 26 experts share their innovation definition](#)

Idea to Value asked 26 leading innovators how they would define innovation.

### [7 keys to creating a culture of innovation](#)

Big Think offer 7 key components of creating a culture of innovation in your organisation

### [Back to Basics: What is innovation?](#)

Robyn Bolton, founder and chief navigator of MileZero, provides a definition of innovation and how we can categorise innovation

### [The eight essentials of innovation](#)

McKinsey & Company discuss eight essentials of innovation

Take a look at our [website](#) for more of our work or get in touch via [Dylan.John4@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:Dylan.John4@wales.nhs.uk)