

# Creating Creativity in Public and Social Services: For What and How?

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# Why is Creativity Important?

- Firms and cities need to be more innovative and creative in order to have competitiveness
- Creativity adds Value/Productivity
- Creativity and Innovation are drivers of the New Economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Knowledge Era
- ***The Rise of the Creative Class*** - Richard Florida, 2002
- The “Creative” Industries
- The Creative Professions
- ***Creativity is the catch-word!***

# What about Public & Social Services?

- Public & Social Services (PSS) are essentially “*human*” services, services about people
- PSS is about: solving problems, improving living situations, and delivering better outcomes.
- Traditionally the main criteria to appraise PSS are the **5Es** – Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Efficacy, and Equity.
- *How can Creativity fit in?*

# Why is Creativity Important in PSS?

- At the end of the day, what do we want PSS to achieve? – people becoming wiser, less dependent and more responsible.
- This cannot be achieved by just continuing to provide *more* of the same services – not only because there is a resource limit, but more crucially because this does not solve the root problem.
- Quantity (more of the same) is not the answer.

# Tackling the root

- The root problem has to do with the structure, the mentality, and the values of system which produces and reproduces those ills and deficiencies requiring PSS interventions.
- This is where creativity comes in: **how to transform work, leisure, community and everyday life** (paraphrasing R. Florida 2002)
- In a gist, we need to tackle the “culture” of the problem → reforming conditions, contexts & mindsets: *New Ideas and New Ways of Doing*

# “Unlocking creativity in Public Services”

(Jane Steele and Kerri Hampton, 2005)

## 7 Essential Ingredients:

1. Curiosity
2. Motivation
3. Long-term vision (of better outcomes)
4. Diversity (of experience)
5. Understanding of the setting (or medium): creative agents, change agents
6. Ability and readiness to use information (information sparks imagination and generate new ideas)
7. Confidence and stamina to act (“thinking the unthinkable”)

# Dare to Challenge, Dare to Change

- Question assumptions and established policies and ways of working
- Explore new possibilities, allow new perspectives on problems and new interpretations of what causes problems
- Strong public service ethos
- Strong belief in change being possible  
(*“Change We Can!”* – Barack Obama)



# Making way for Creativity

- **Creativity has to overcome:** inertia; being too comfortable with the comfort zone; linear thinking; just opting for traditional solutions (more funding, more staff, more of the same...); not daring to question *modus operandi* – existing structure, rules, procedures, and values system
- **Creativity (change) always comes at a cost:** cost of upsetting *status quo*; cost of displacement of old beliefs and skills; cost of getting rid of one's pre-existing role and *raison d'être*



# Grooming a Culture of Creativity

- *“If creativity is to survive and flourish, it needs to be embedded within the DNA of an organization”*  
(*The Benefits of a Culture of Creativity*, Richard Beresford, 2008)
- Innovation Unit vs. Innovating Organization
- Creativity needs to be facilitated and “grown”
- A creative organization believes that everyone can become creative. Hence the challenge is to make the organization a “learning, thinking and creative” organization → ***Organizational Intelligence***
- A creative organization requires taking risk, listening to diverse views and experiences, and trust.

# Rethinking and Retooling in PSS:

## Doing things more creatively

- In PSS much of the time and resources is spent on: meetings, paperwork, procedures and handling people – i.e. **BUREAUCRACY!**
- **How to be creative in doing:** Meetings made more creative – less paperwork and more thought sharing? Forms and documents made more simplified – avoid preparing documents people don't read? (*beware of Parkinson's Law*) Spotting problems earlier and not allowing them to escalate into crisis? Using one-stop approach? Cutting down number of “clearance” in implementation chain? More trust hence less control costs? ...
- **Turning ‘People’ from problems/liabilities/costs into assets/resources?** PSS can be creative if users and recipients are not “passive objects”: from dependents to creators?
- Christopher Hood (1976)'s **NATO** model

# Making Creativity the Ordinary and Sustainable

- Creative doing usually involves “adaptation, re-adaptation, and re-use” – reinvention, retooling, re-engineering: Learning from past wisdom, liberation of people and ideas.
- A creative organization requires **the right HR strategy** – in recruitment, incentives & rewards system, performance appraisal, staff training & development, and way of organizing
- Ultimately, is creativity recognized and rewarded?
- Each organization should conduct its Creativity Audit – *a SWOT Analysis of Creativity*