INNOVATION TOOLKIT

Getting Started Guide

WELCOME

The Secretary-General called for the development of the UN Innovation Toolkit to help **accelerate and sustain innovation across the UN System**.

The Toolkit was developed for the UN by the UN. It provides actionable guidance based on leading practices and UN experiences to help address your innovation needs today, regardless of your innovation maturity, geography, or mission.

GUIDE OVERVIEW

This document serves as your travel guide as you progress through the Toolkit. It will provide you with the background you need to get the most out of the Toolkit, and tips for how to reflect on and share your innovation insights with others to spur meaningful conversations on innovation.

Throughout the guide, you will be asked to engage in two main types of activities:

LEARN   **Learning activities** provide you with key information on how the Toolkit works

REFLECT   **Reflection activities** help you contemplate, document, and discuss your Toolkit results

NAVIGATING THE TOOLKIT

TOOLKIT OVERVIEW

LEARN The Secretary-General defines innovation at the UN as doing different things and doing things differently. Innovation is not just about blockchain, AI, or robotics, but about bringing new ideas to solve internal, external, existing, and emerging challenges.

LEARN The Innovation Toolkit consists of 21 tools that include step-by-step guidance, worksheets, UN case studies, and references, as well as a 27-question assessment to diagnose a user's relative innovation strengths and growth areas.

LEARN The Toolkit is designed to be a "living" resource and will be refined and updated based on your needs and feedback.

S.P.A.C.E FRAMEWORK

LEARN The Toolkit is organized around five foundational modules considered critical to making innovation successful within organizations: **Strategy, Partnerships, Architecture, Culture, and Evaluation** (forming the acronym S.P.A.C.E).

REFLECT Answer a series of questions to reflect on how S.P.A.C.E. applies to your team, unit, or organization. Record your individual perspective.

INNOVATION DIAGNOSTIC

LEARN Which tool should you use first? The innovation diagnostic assesses innovation strengths and weaknesses and recommends your top five tools.

LEARN How does the diagnostic work? Learn more about the underlying factors within each of the five S.P.A.C.E. modules to help you better understand the critical ingredients for innovative organizations.

REFLECT Based on your understanding of the diagnostic and underlying factors, identify your team, unit, or organization's top five strengths and top five weaknesses. Record and reflect on your answers to compare with colleagues.

REFLECT Take the diagnostic assessment by clicking here.

PROFILES & RESULTS

LEARN Upon completing the diagnostic, you will receive one of six innovation profiles that provide a starting point for understanding strengths and growth areas.

LEARN You will also receive a summary of detailed results, including your five module scores (e.g., 75% in Strategy, 50% in Partnerships, etc.) and justification.

REFLECT What innovation profile did you receive? Record your innovation profile and reflect on the associated common characteristics.

REFLECT How were scores distributed across modules? Were there any surprises? Answer a set of questions to reflect on your scores.

FACILITATE DIALOGUE

REFLECT Creating a shared understanding through meaningful dialogue is important to create and sustain an innovative culture.

With an innovation profile and detailed diagnostic in-hand, it is time to share your results with your colleagues. Follow the provided guidance to facilitate meaningful conversations grounded in S.P.A.C.E. and supported by a real-time assessment of current innovation needs.

TOOLKIT OVERVIEW

LEARN

The United Nations Secretary-General has made innovation a priority, repeatedly highlighting the need **to shift from "accidental" innovation to innovation "by design."** To support these efforts, he called for the development of the UN Innovation Toolkit that provides actionable guidance on how to foster, scale, and accelerate innovation across the UN System.

"We can do things differently, and we can do different things…innovation is not only the most sophisticated technologies, sometimes it's the simplest of things. Be bold, be revolutionary…and disrupt…because without innovation, there is no way we can overcome the challenges of our time."

- UN Secretary-General António Guterres

WHAT IS THE TOOLKIT?

The Toolkit is a digital platform that you can access anywhere, anytime, from your computer, tablet, or mobile phone. It includes **21 tools** that are grounded in research and contextualized for the diverse operating realities of UN organizations.

The Toolkit also includes an **innovation diagnostic,** a 27-question survey that assesses a user's relative innovation strengths and growth areas.

The Toolkit was endorsed by the Secretary-General, Members of the Chief Executives Board, and tested **by over 120 staff from 36 UN entities** as well as the UN High Level Committee on Management.
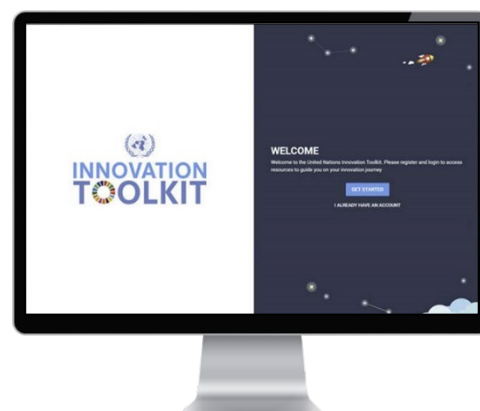
INNOVATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE UN

Innovation can take a number of forms – from process and policy changes, to new business models and ways of engaging stakeholders – and can be both programmatic and operational in nature. The Secretary-General has challenged all UN entities to think creatively, work collaboratively, and take smart risks. Innovation consists of **doing something new and different** whether solving an old problem in a new way, addressing a new problem with a proven solution, or bringing a new solution to a new problem.

The Toolkit is designed to help UN entities accelerate and sustain innovation, regardless of the problems they are trying to solve or the "newness" of the solutions they are seeking to explore.

S.P.A.C.E. FRAMEWORK

LEARN

WHAT IS S.P.A.C.E. AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The Toolkit is organized around five foundational modules considered critical for innovative organizations: **Strategy, Partnerships, Architecture, Culture, and Evaluation** (forming the acronym, "S.P.A.C.E.").

STRATEGY

Without a clear direction to orient their activities, teams and organizations risk launching innovation efforts that are siloed, not complementary, or do not strike the right balance between risks and rewards. The strategy tools help users chart the course for their innovation efforts by guiding them through the key decisions they need to make today to get where they want to be tomorrow.

PARTNERSHIPS

Partners can fill resource gaps, generate innovative solutions, and maximize the overall success of innovative efforts in a programmatic or operational area. But finding and selecting the best partners can be a challenge. The partnership tools help end users effectively identify and secure new partnership opportunities.

ARCHITECTURE

Innovations rarely fail because of a lack of creativity. Rather, they fail because organizations lack the systems, structures, and processes to repeatedly turn ideas into testable and scalable solutions. The architecture tools help end users build the platforms they need to execute across the innovation life cycle and sustain innovation over time.

CULTURE

Culture is consistently cited as one of the primary barriers to innovation within organizations. Employees need support, incentives, and opportunities to innovate. The culture tools help UN entities foster work environments that promote strategic risk taking and enable employees to innovate more consistently.

EVALUATION

Organizations unable to measure the effectiveness of their innovation efforts may struggle to justify their investments and communicate their successes to stakeholders. The evaluation tools help organizations assess and report on the efficacy and impact of their projects, portfolios, and pipelines throughout the innovation life cycle.

S.P.A.C.E. FRAMEWORK (CONT.)

REFLECT

HOW DOES S.P.A.C.E. APPLY WITHIN MY CONTEXT?

Reflect on the S.P.A.C.E. framework by considering the questions below. Consider answering the questions from multiple perspectives. For example, do your responses change if you answer from the view of your unit as opposed to your team?

Oftentimes perspectives vary, even amongst the same team or office. Understanding why there is variation in opinion can help uncover new insights and facilitate rich discussion on how to best address areas of strength and weakness and how to prioritize efforts.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Of the five modules, which do you anticipate reflects your team's, unit's, or organization's greatest strength?
- Of the five modules, which do you anticipate reflects your team's, unit's, or organization's greatest weakness?
- What module – if any – is of the highest priority to your team, unit, or organization right now?

RECORD YOUR INITIAL REACTIONS

Strongest Module:_____

- Why do you believe this is your strongest module?

  _____
  _____

Weakest Module:_____

- Why do you believe this is your weakest module?

  _____
  _____

Which module is of highest priority to your team, unit, or organization?

_____
_____

INNOVATION DIAGNOSTIC

LEARN

THE INNOVATION DIAGNOSTIC & HOW IT WORKS

How do you know which tools are right for you? The UN Innovation Diagnostic is designed to help you determine where to start across the S.P.A.C.E. modules and which tools are best-aligned to your needs.

The diagnostic includes a **short ten minute survey** designed to provide users with a summary of their strengths and weaknesses across the five S.P.A.C.E. modules.

The UN Innovation Diagnostic works by asking users to assess how well a series of 27 statements reflects their team, unit, or organizational capabilities. Each statement is derived from research and leading practices.
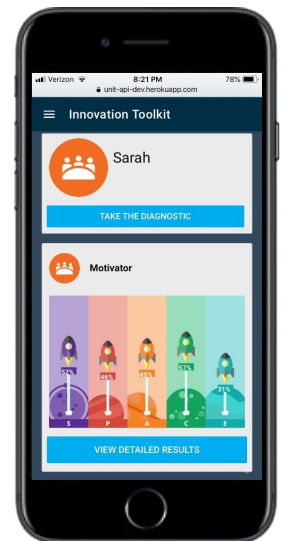
STRATEGY MODULE questions explore the degree to which the user's team, unit, or organization:

- establishes a clear set of **innovation goals** to drive its innovation efforts;
- understands what **resources and capabilities** are required to execute its innovation activities and achieve its goals;
- treats innovation efforts as **portfolios of investments** that balance risk and reward;
- assesses broader **trends** and emerging technologies when charting the course for its innovation efforts;
- considers its broader programmatic and operational **ecosystem** when selecting innovation tactics and strategies to execute.

PARTNERSHIP MODULE questions explore the degree to which the user's team, unit, or organization:

- understands how to **communicate value to attract** potential partners;
- **prioritizes** potential partnerships to maximize shared value;
- finds new partners that provide unique value, and effectively **engages** with them;
- **manages** and proactively mitigates risks associated with its partnerships.

ARCHITECTURE MODULE questions explore the degree to which the user's team, unit, or organization:

- **sources new ideas** effectively and from a wide range of stakeholders;
- applies **user-centered design** techniques to ensure that solutions reflect the needs of end users and critical stakeholders;
- **plans for scaling** throughout the solution development and piloting processes;
- **Organizes** to effectively execute innovation.

INNOVATION DIAGNOSTIC (CONT.)

CULTURE MODULE questions explore the degree to which the user's team, unit, or organization:

- established a **culture of learning** based on both innovation successes and failures;
- provides guidance on identifying what constitutes "acceptable" **risk limits**;
- **creates incentives** for taking strategic risks through innovation;
- understands how to **engage governing bodies** effectively around innovation.

EVALUATION MODULE questions explore the degree to which the user's team, unit, or organization:

- Assesses its **enabling environment** for innovation;
- Understands which of its innovation projects are having their desired **impact**;
- Analyzes the health of its pipeline of projects across the **innovation lifecycle**;
- **Communicates effectively** to stakeholders.

REFLECT ON THE INNOVATION DIAGNOSTIC

REFLECT

Now that you have a better understanding of the diagnostic's underlying factors, consider which factors you believe to be your team's, unit's, or organization's top three strengths and top three weaknesses. As with the S.P.A.C.E. questions above, consider answering from multiple perspectives, and document how your responses change, if at all.

STRENGTHS

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Why do you consider these factors to be strengths?

_____

_____

WEAKNESSES

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Why do you consider these factors to be weaknesses?

_____

_____

PROFILES & RESULTS

LEARN

WHAT ARE INNOVATION PROFILES?

Upon completing the diagnostic, you will receive one of six innovation profiles. The profiles represent general strengths and weaknesses for users sharing similar innovation traits as measured using the innovation diagnostic.

There is no "right" profile. Rather, profiles are intended to be a starting point for understanding which tools may be right for you based on the perspective from which you took the diagnostic. As you use the tools within the Toolkit, you can re-take the diagnostic and receive different results. The "profile" tab of the Toolkit will allow you to track how your profile results have evolved over time.
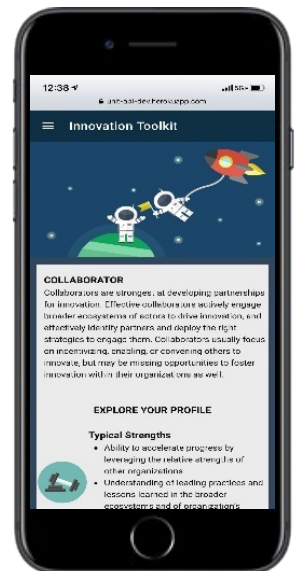
Motivator

Motivators are strongest at developing an innovative culture. Effective motivators foster a culture of innovation where innovation happens organically and staff feel both encouraged and empowered to innovate. However, motivators may struggle to effectively direct and implement the innovative ideas and initiatives being generated.

Strategist

Strategists are strongest at setting a strategy for innovation. They typically understand and create alignment around common goals and objectives for innovation efforts. While strategists tend to know where they want to go and how they want to get there, they may lack the right structures or processes to effectively execute on their plans.

Collaborator

Collaborators are strongest at developing partnerships for innovation. They tend to actively engage broader ecosystems of actors to drive innovation, and effectively identify partners and deploy the right strategies to engage them. Collaborators usually focus on incentivizing, enabling, or convening others to innovate, but may be missing opportunities to foster innovation within their own organization.

Implementor

Implementors are strongest at setting up an architecture for innovation. They frequently engage in innovation activities and tend to have a robust process for managing ideas through implementation. However, they often struggle to measure the impact of these activities in order to know whether they are collectively advancing the organization towards achieving its goals.

Early-Stage Innovator

Early-Stage Innovators may have projects here and there but are often not yet systematically cultivating innovation, and may face or perceive barriers to innovating further. Early-Stage Innovators can accelerate innovation by developing the right strategy and structures to effectively identify, elevate, and direct their efforts.

Trailblazer

Trailblazers effectively drive and set the direction of innovation, with a strong understanding of the broader innovation ecosystem. Trailblazers may miss opportunities to assess and adjust their innovation activities to ensure that they are both sustainable and delivering impact.

PROFILES & RESULTS (CONT.)

VIEW YOUR DETAILED RESULTS

REFLECT

Click on the blue button under your innovation profile to view your detailed results. Your detailed results explain specific areas of strength and development across the five modules of S.P.A.C.E. Review your results and reflect on them by responding to the questions below.

REFLECT ON YOUR RESULTS

REFLECT

Take time to reflect on your profile and results, and record your reactions below. Bring your notes with you when you discuss your results as a group.

➤ Do you believe the "Typical Strengths" and "Biggest Risks" associated with your profile reflect your team, unit, or organization? Why or why not?

_____

_____

_____

➤ Do you suspect the profile will be the same if taken from a different perspective? Why or why not? (If you have time, consider taking the diagnostic again and test your hypothesis)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

➤ After reviewing your scores across each of the five S.P.A.C.E. modules, were any of your scores higher or lower than you expected? Why or why not?

_____

_____

_____

➤ What immediate steps might your team, unit, or organization take to begin addressing its weaknesses and taking advantage of its strengths, as detailed in your innovation profile and detailed results?

_____

_____

_____

FACILITATE DIALOGUE

REFLECT — SHARE YOUR RESULTS WITH OTHERS

Some of the greatest value offered by the UN Innovation Diagnostic can be derived from sharing your results with others to spur meaningful conversations around a common innovation framework.

Invite your colleagues to take the diagnostic (if they have not already) and organize a conversation around your respective results.

Depending on who is in attendance, you may seek different goals for this conversation. Regardless of the size of the group, it is recommended that you **dedicate at least 90 minutes** to the initial discussion.

Below are sample facilitation activities to help guide your conversations.

REFLECT — STRUCTURING THE CONVERSATION

Below is a sample facilitation guide with curated questions to help spark debate and discussion, and ultimately provide a productive and collaborate roadmap for next steps.

Activity	Time

Introduce Attendees
 	
• Use a creative opener to engage participants early and bring energy and focus to the discussion. Using the innovation profiles is one good option (i.e., I am Santiago from XXX office, and I received the Implementor profile). Combining introductions with an interactive exercise can also be effective; below are some examples:
 	
   • **Walk-the-Room:** Place posters around the room with each profile type. Ask participants to go to the poster that represents the profile they received. Conduct introductions by poster.
 	
   • **Self-Selection:** Set up six tables. Ask participants to group themselves by profiles, with one table for each profile. Participants introduce themselves to the table, then to the room by table.
 	
   • **Card Sort:** Print pictures of different activities, animals, etc. Ask participants to select an image that most represents the profile they received. When introducing themselves, participants announce their profile and explain why they believe the image they selected represents their profile.
 	
• When providing introductions, attendees should state their name, the team, unit, or organizational perspective from which they took the diagnostic, and their innovation profile.
 	
• **Materials Needed:** Flip charts, markers, tables, profile cards
	15 min

Activity	Time

Discuss Innovation Profiles
 	
• Hold a group discussion amongst the participants in the room. Consider the following guiding questions:
 	
    • How diverse are the innovation profiles represented in the room? Are you surprised by the distribution? Why or why not?
 	
    • Do those who share the same profiles find themselves in similar situations when it comes to innovation?
 	
    • What are each of your biggest strengths and biggest areas for improvement? What implications might this have on your approach to innovation going forward?
 	
    • Do you think your profile would have changed if you had taken the diagnostic from a different perspective – team, unit, or organization? How and why?
 	
    • Are there other UN entities you believe that you should seek to partner with given our collective strengths and weaknesses?
	20 min

Share Detailed Results
 	
• Now it is time to discuss your detailed results. Consider using the following exercises to help guide your discussion.
 	
    • **Find a Match:** Within tables, discuss the highest and lowest scoring areas for innovation across the five S.P.A.C.E. modules. If possible, find one or more other participants that share your lowest scoring and/or highest scoring areas, and share your experiences.
 	
    • **Yin and Yang:** Within tables, discuss your highest and lowest scoring area for innovation across the five S.P.A.C.E. modules . If possible, find one or more other participants that have their highest scoring area of strength to be your lowest scoring area. If you find someone fitting this profile, raise your hands.
 	
        • Discuss what the other person has done to make their highest scoring area so successful. What can you learn from them? Write it down. **Remember, you may also find someone different for whom your highest score was their lowest. Return the favor by telling them what have done to become successful!**
 	
• Now have a conversation as a group. Consider the following guiding questions:
 	
    • Within our detailed results, what is everyone's highest and lowest scoring module? Were you surprised by your results? Why or why not?
 	
    • Who was able to find someone that shares their greatest strength? Greatest weakness? How about pairs where someone's greatest strength was someone else's greatest weakness? What did you learn?
	30 min

Activity	Time
Collaboration Opportunities and Immediate Next Steps	25 min

- Now it is time to create an action plan. Consider the following guiding questions for the group.

- **5x5x5:** It may be helpful to ask the group to answer each question from the perspective of what can be accomplished in 5 days, 5 weeks, and 5 months.

  - How can we collectively work on our areas for growth? Who might be a natural partner to work with given our needs?

  - Did you identify someone with a particular strength in one of your areas of improvement? If so, what steps can you take to learn from their successes?

  - What other steps can we take in the next 5 days, 5 weeks, and 5 months to improve on our areas of weakness and help others based on our areas of strength?

- **One thing:** Have everyone go around the table and identify *one thing* they will do based on the conversation. Make sure that a facilitator documents the commitments and shares them with the group after the meeting.

- Discuss who else should be invited into future conversations

- Schedule your next meeting before you conclude! Now that you shared a common framework for innovation and established a baseline using the diagnostic assessment, continue to meet and discuss progress. Hold more meetings to share feedback and experiences using Tools in the Toolkit.

- Agree to take the diagnostic again in four months and see how results evolve.

UNITED NATIONS
SYSTEM STAFF COLLEGE

UN INNOVATION NETWORK

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Ah-Ha Moment: An unexpected failure during an innovation activity that presents significant opportunities for learning

Adjacent Innovation: An innovative solution that represents the reconfiguration of an existing solution, or the application of an existing solution in a new way; these solutions tend to represent a moderate level of risk

Agile: A solution development methodology that emphasizes iteration, constant monitoring, and adaptation as a project progresses

Barriers to Success: Challenges that must be overcome to achieve an innovation goal

Baseline: A starting point against which future progress is measured

Bold Failure: A failure that results from a high-risk innovation activity

Business Unit: Refers to the office or division in which your immediate team resides

Calculated Risk: An experiment that fails due to an unlikely, but known, risk

Challenge Statement: A question designed to prompt – and provide constraints for – ideation around a specific topic

Cognitive Psychology: A field in the social sciences that studies the mental processes relating external, sensory stimulation and the processing of information including perception, learning, and thinking

Crowdsourcing Campaign: Process for putting tasks, questions, or funding requests out to a large group, usually online, to collect their input or contributions

Data Collection Techniques: Approaches for gathering, storing, and making sense of qualitative and quantitative information; common methods include observation, one-one-one interviews, and focus groups

Design Statement: A concise description of your intended ideation activity

Digital Divide: The gap between individuals with and without access to the internet

Disruptive Innovation: A new solution applied to a challenge never-before addressed, with the potential to completely transform conventional ways of thinking or doing; these solutions tend to be high-risk

Enabling Environment: Refers to underlying organizational elements that make innovation more or less likely to be successful; specifically the organization's innovation architecture, partnerships, and culture

End-User: The stakeholder that will ultimately be using an innovative solution

Ethnography: A qualitative research product that involves observing and interacting with individuals in their own environment. It is a key step in "human-centered design."

Executive Champions: Organizational leaders who support your innovation goals and have a similar or higher tolerance for innovative risk

FailFaires: A technique for normalizing conversations around failure, where groups – including internal and external partners – come together to discuss something they succeeded at, something they failed at, and something that confused them

Failure Friday: A technique for normalizing conversations around failure, where teams come together on Fridays to discuss something they succeeded at, something they failed at, and something that confused them

Failure Report: Formal reports that detail failure experiences and lessons learned from them

Focus Group: A data collection technique during which a small group of individuals are guided through a facilitated discussion to learn more about the needs, preferences, and pain points of potential end-users of an innovation

Go and No-Go Decision: Decision points across the innovation life cycle during which you decide whether an innovative solution should be advanced with additional resources, refined through further iteration, paused in its current stage of development, or sunsetted with no additional resources provided

Human-Centered Design: A methodology for creating innovative solutions that focuses on understanding and addressing the needs and desires of stakeholders impacted by the solution

Ideation: The first stage of the innovation life cycle, in which new ideas for innovative solutions are generated

Incremental Innovation: A solution that addresses existing challenges through minor enhancements to existing solutions or products; these solutions represent a low level of risk

Incubation: The second stage of the innovation life cycle, during which ideas are turned into testable solutions through ethnographic research, prototyping, and other methods

In-Depth Interviews: A data collection technique in which one-on-one interviews are used to collect feedback on isolated user experiences during the User-Centered Design process

Innovation Goal: The end-state an organization or team is attempting to achieve through innovation

Initiative: An activity or effort focused on executing a phase of the innovation lifecycle

Innovation: The creation of "new" value for stakeholders and end-users; it can be considered both doing things differently and/or doing different things

Innovation Focus Areas: Identified opportunities for innovation (often via trends analysis, scenario planning, or user-feedback) that have not yet been converted into specific innovation goals

Innovation Life Cycle: The process through which innovative ideas are generated, developed, piloted, and scaled

Innovation Metric: A measurement used to describe some characteristic of an innovation initiative or project (quantity, impact, etc.)

Journey Maps: A tool that visually displays the high points, low points, and opportunities for

innovation across an individual's experience to inform solution development

Last-Mile Delivery: The final steps in a process needed to reach the end goal

Mad-Lib: A framework through which blanks (omitted words) in a statement are used to create structurally similar sentences

Minimum Viable Product: A version of a solution that has only the most basic features necessary for functionality and can be used to test features and identify what does and does not work

Observation Techniques: Data gathering techniques used to understand a subject's behavior in the environment in which they work or live

Pilot: The third phase of the innovation life cycle, during which a working prototype of an innovative solution is tested with a subset of end-users

Pipeline: The set of projects currently under some stage of development across the innovation lifecycle

Pre-Mortem Analysis: A risk-mitigation method through which you identify what might go wrong before starting a new partnership instead of at the end of a partnership

Prize Challenge: An innovation initiative in which participants submit their ideas in response to a challenge statement, the best of which wins a prize

Project: An innovative idea in one of the four phases of the innovation lifecycle (ideation, incubation, pilot, scale)

Reputational Risk: A threat to a group's status or perceived status as a result of a specific activity

Risk Tolerance: The amount of risk a team, unit, or organization is open to taking in its innovation activities

Scaling: The fourth phase of the innovation life cycle, during which an innovative solution is introduced to new end-users beyond the initial pilot population

Scenario: A data-driven depiction of a plausible way that the future could evolve

Simple Error: An expected and unavoidable mistake caused by an unintended oversight or natural human error

Social Innovation: Innovation with the goal of developing effective solutions for pressing social and environmental issues

Stage-Gate: The decision point at a go/no-go decision is made across the phases of the innovation lifecycle

STEEP Framework: A methodology for analyzing the social, technological, economic, environmental, and political factors shaping the future

Strategic Risk: A risk taken in accordance with the risk tolerance of a team, unit, or organization and its stakeholders

Synthesis: The process through which raw data about a stakeholder group is converted into insights

Theory of Change: A sequence of steps that outlines necessary activities to achieve a stated end goal

User Advisory Groups: Technical working groups, functioning like a standing focus group, that give the end-users of an innovation a voice throughout the development process

User-Centered Design: A collaborative design process that focuses on creating an innovation solution with the desired end-users as opposed to delivering one for them

User-Persona: A depiction of a cluster or segment of stakeholders impacted by an innovation who exhibit similar behavioral patterns or preferences

Workshop: A gathering of individuals for a discrete period to engage in an innovation activity