



Australian Government

IP Australia

March 2023

IP Australia's Innovation Framework



Contents

Foreword	5
Introduction	6
What is innovation?	6
How does IP Australia support innovation?	8
How can individual staff contribute?	9
How will the agency ensure its commitment to innovation is supported on an ongoing basis?	10

Revision History

Date	Amendments
31/03/2022	Draft discussed by Executive Board
18/11/2022	Revised draft paring back to essential elements
28/11/2022	Revised draft discussed by Executive Board
07/02/2023	Draft revised to incorporate feedback from November Executive Board Meeting
10/03/2023	Revised to incorporate feedback and reflect endorsement from March Executive Board Meeting

Foreword

Innovation is at the heart of what we do at IP Australia. The IP rights that we administer are all about helping to facilitate, promote, protect and spread innovation.

Innovation must also be a core part of how we work. As the world changes around us, whether in bigger ways like a pandemic, or in smaller ways like changing customer expectations, we have to change along with it. We need to challenge ourselves and our ways of working, to make sure that they are the best options we have. We have to stop ourselves from assuming that just because that's the way it's been done before, that means something better, smarter or more efficient has not come along.

Not every idea will be groundbreaking, and not every one of them will go on to be a success. The key is that we keep learning and trying, while also delivering on our work to ensure reliable, high-quality service for our customers.

All of us have a role to play, and different strengths that we can lend to ensure IPA meets its innovation objectives.

Innovation is not always easy or simple, and so it is helpful to have some 'guardrails' around it. This framework helps to provide these.

I encourage everyone to think about how they can contribute to our innovation efforts, and to use this framework as a starting point.

This Framework also helps to keep us honest. While all staff have a role in contributing to innovation, the Executive, and the Accountable Authority, have a duty to ensure we set the risk appetite, and the resources, to embed innovation as an element in all of our work.

Michael Schwager

Director General

Introduction

IP Australia is an agency committed to innovation as a part of its ongoing operations. That means integrating innovation into our governance, our operational practices, our capability framework and supporting staff in making it a part of their day-to-day. This framework outlines key elements of this, including:

- why the agency needs to innovate
- what we mean when we talk about innovation
- how the agency supports innovation
- how individual staff can contribute
- how the agency is experimenting with, and learning from, its approach to innovation.

Why does IP Australia need to innovate?

To achieve our vision of a world leading IP system we need to continually test and challenge our assumptions about what such a system should look like, how it should work, and how it adds value.

As our operating context changes – such as shifts in technology, economic activity, or societal expectations – we also need to change to ensure that we remain relevant and ready and able to deliver. Just as our customers need to continually innovate to achieve competitive advantage, so too must we continually innovate to ensure we are delivering ongoing value.

This importance of innovation is reflected in the Innovation objective (No. 4) articulated in our Corporate Plan:

- Increase innovation and adaptiveness in our administration of the IP rights system (**Objective 4.1**)
- Provide continually improving contemporary digital customer services and staff experiences (**Objective 4.2**).

What is innovation?

Innovation is “implementing something novel to the context in order to achieve impact”.¹

Thus, innovation at IP Australia will display the following characteristics:

- **Novel** – it doesn’t have to be new to the world or even new to Australia, but it must be at least new to our organisation and our context.
- **Achieves impact** – it must make a real or significant difference to what has happened before.
- **More than an idea or an invention** – it must be something implemented and used. It doesn’t matter how great an idea is if it is never put into practice.

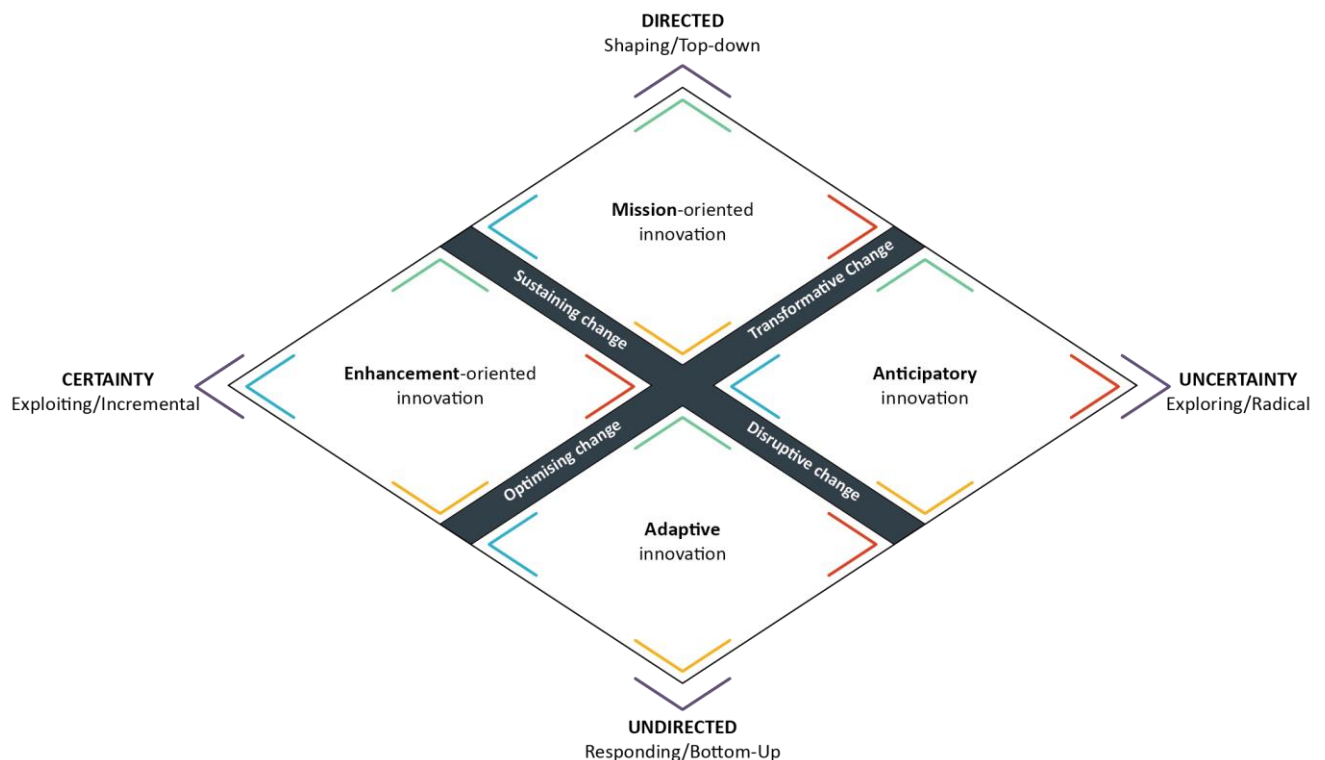
When we talk about innovation, it might refer to:

¹ OECD Declaration on Public Sector Innovation,
<https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/oecd-legal-0450> [OECD Legal Instruments](#)

- **An innovative thing** – e.g. a new process, a new product, a new way of interacting with our customers or stakeholders, a new IP right. It might be internally focussed, such as a change to our examination processes, or it might be aimed at our customers, such as a new way of doing public education and awareness about the value and importance of IP.
- **The innovation process** – i.e. how we arrive at or achieve the innovative thing. It might be about the use of human centred design to arrive at new insights about what staff or customers need, it might be the use of behavioural insights to help understand how to communicate best to our customers, or it might be some other practice or method that helps us develop, test and implement new approaches.
- **Our innovation approach** – i.e. how the agency supports innovation, such as through [Improve@IP](#), the [Cognitive Futures Working Group](#) or [IPA Ventures ideation workshops](#), for identifying, testing and investing in innovative opportunities.

The final piece of innovation is that it can have different underlying intents or purposes, such as:

- Improving upon what already exists by doing something new – such as using data in new ways to achieve more efficient processes (enhancement-oriented innovation)
- Responding to changed circumstances on the ground – such as changing how we interact with customers because of changes in their preferences (adaptive innovation)
- Working towards achieving a big audacious goal that requires things to be done in new ways – the classic example being putting a man on the moon (mission-oriented innovation)
- Engaging with weak signals about how things might be changing to shape emerging change – such as thinking about what AI as an inventor might mean for IP (anticipatory innovation).



Source: [OECD OPSI Innovation Facets Model](#)

Each of the different intents represented by each innovation facet will be achieved by different methods and require different forms of support. Being good at one of these types of innovation will not automatically make an organisation good at all of them. IP Australia will deliberately consider the mix of innovation in achieving its innovation objective.

How does IP Australia support innovation?

IP Australia will maintain a portfolio approach; one with a mix of different types of innovative activity reflecting the strategic priorities and needs of the agency. This ambition will be governed through the Executive Board and its Committees.

IP Australia needs to innovate but it also needs to make sure it is committing its resources wisely and prudently.

Accordingly, the agency supports innovation through three pillars:

1. Taking a deliberate portfolio approach to innovation (strategic helicopter view)
2. Investing in promising innovative initiatives as part of its business planning (e.g. projects)
3. Ensuring staff apply strategic risk appetites for innovation in their daily activities (empowering staff to act).

IP Australia taking a portfolio approach to innovation is the **first pillar**. Innovation is achieved via the many different drivers articulated in the Innovation facets model. Given the uncertainty involved in innovation, this means the Executive Board must apply an innovation governance lens that gives assurance that IP Australia is responding innovatively to the different drivers of change. EB oversight also ensures staff feel supported to try new things. The portfolio has not always been deliberate or explicit and its needs to be balanced across the facets of change. Historically innovation becomes concentrated in the enhancement-oriented facet, such as business process or continuous improvement. The right ‘mix’ of the innovation portfolio will continually adjust over time, and will often seek to have greater targeted activity in the other facets.

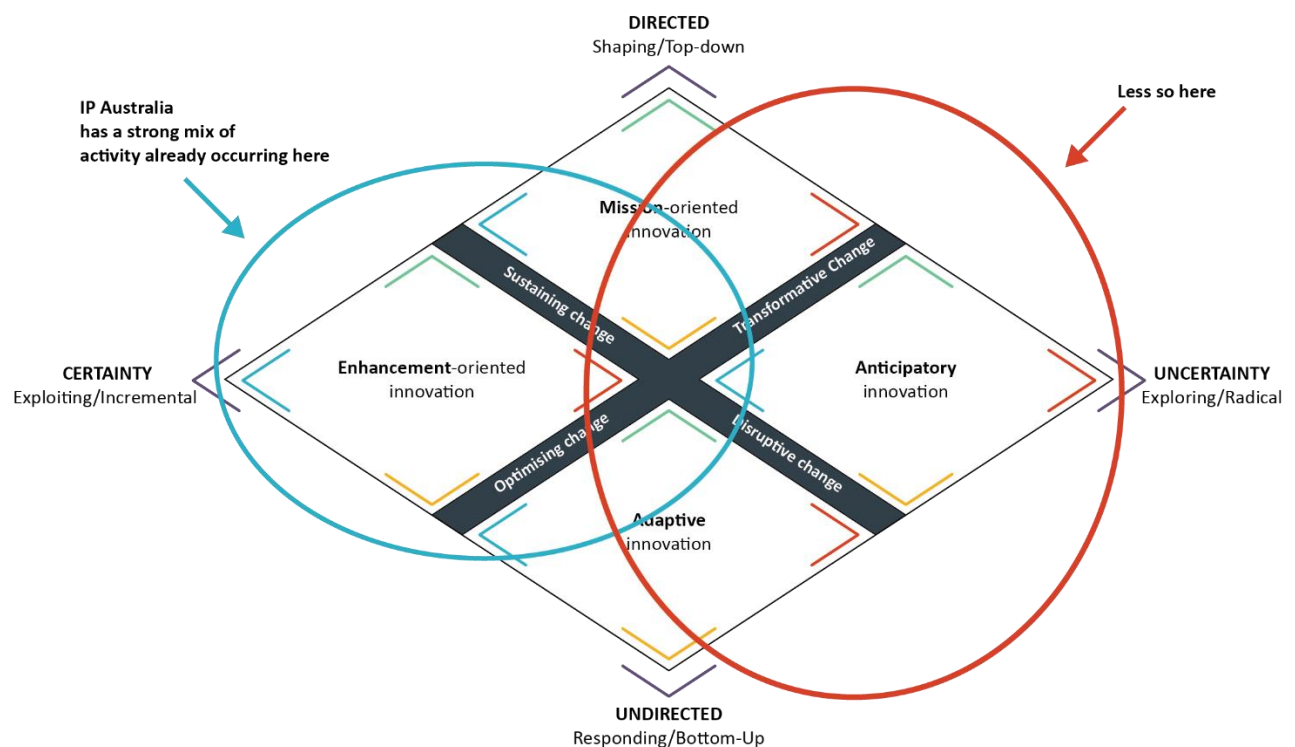


Figure 1: The current bias of IP Australia’s innovation portfolio

The **second pillar** is ensuring there is appropriate investment in innovation. The organisation will continue to invest in promising innovative initiatives through its current investment process, including business planning, with an eye to the overall innovation portfolio and ensuring the agency continues to push the boundaries as well as ensuring we have the capabilities to deliver on our responsibilities. The agency will also continue to invest in and support staff members to uplift their skills, with innovation identified as a core capability.

The **third pillar** is ensuring that our risk framework reflects our risk appetites for innovation, and that this cascades to empowering staff through their Achieve plans. As an organisation we are committed to enabling staff members to confidently engage with risk as part of their day-to-day work and are adaptable in responding to the uncertainties and opportunities presented through innovation.

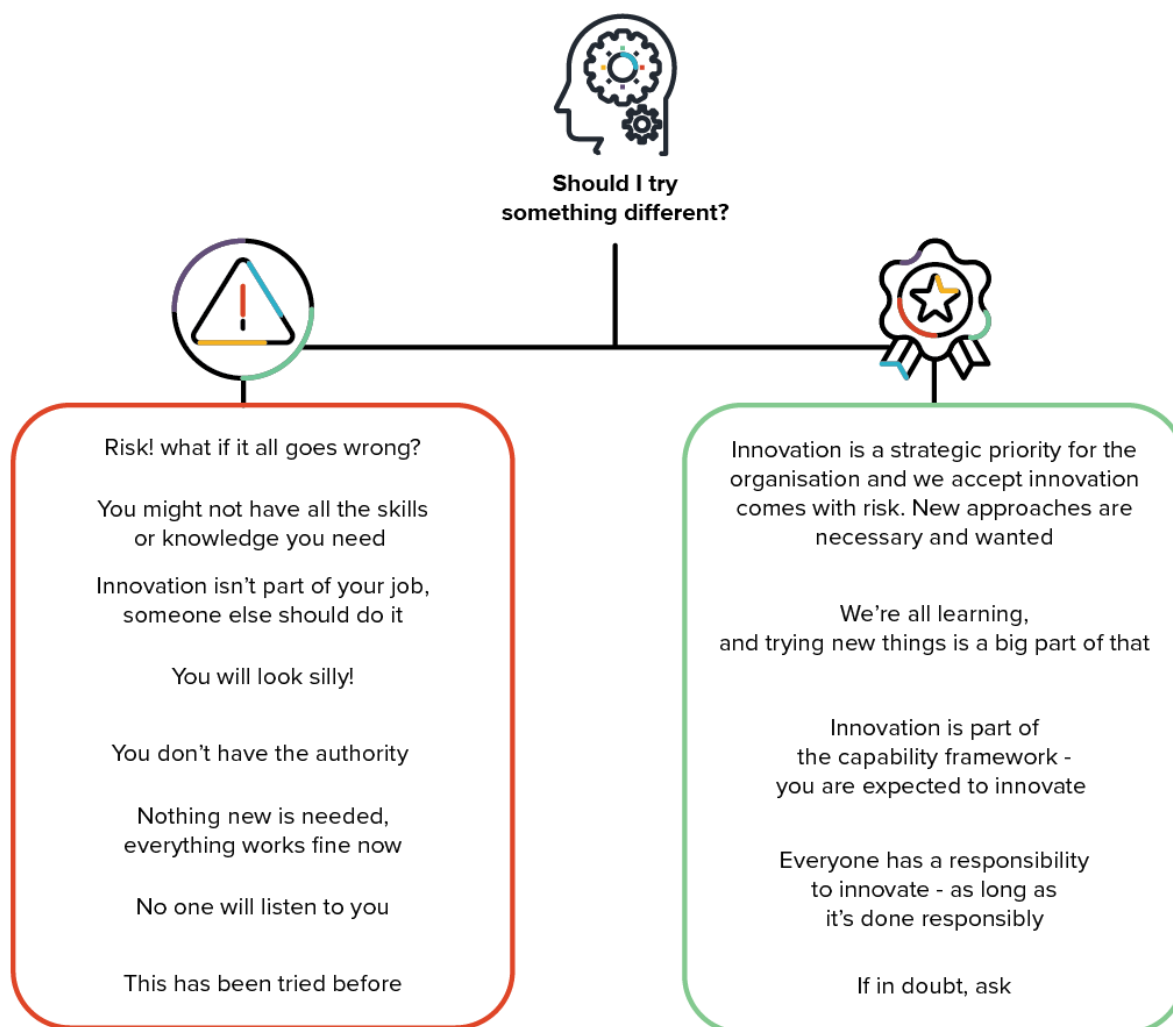
How can individual staff contribute?

Everyone has a role to play in helping IP Australia be the best agency it can be, including supporting and contributing to innovation efforts across the organisation. To contribute, staff members can support the innovation process in a number of ways. Some people will love initiating new ideas and follow them through to implementation. Others can make different contributions by finding and sharing examples for inspiration, helping test ideas, supporting new initiatives, inspiring others to participate, supporting implementation, or making decisions on what projects should be prioritised.

Staff have several ways to add their insights and ideas or getting involved, including:

- Exploring new ways of working as part of their professional development in line with the 'agility and innovation' component of the [Capability Framework](#), including through training and placements
- Ongoing learning and testing of different ways of doing things within their own roles and teams, such as exploring different tools and methods (such as those on the [IPAVentures Resources page](#) with details and examples of different tools or those in the [OECD Toolkit Navigator](#))
- Submitting their feedback and ideas for improvement through [Improve@IP](#)
- Providing input to the technical/Process Improvement Working Groups in IP rights
- Participating in workshops and sessions with the [IPAVentures team](#)
- Raising ideas for digital improvements with the [Cognitive Futures Working Group](#).

Does the agency really want us to innovate? The answer is yes



How will the agency ensure its commitment to innovation is supported on an ongoing basis?

Innovation as a practice is not a 'set and forget' thing. A questioning, but respectful, culture is encouraged. Just as what is innovative keeps changing, so how we support innovation will continue to evolve and shift too.

Just as the Executive ensures appropriate oversight of finance, HR, IT, and legal issues, the agency will consider an innovation governance lens to ensure that the innovation portfolio that exists is both appropriate and deliberate. This will involve continual learning and for the Executive Board to adapt this framework as more is learnt. It will do this by:

- Continuing to report on the agency's innovation achievements and lessons as part of our annual reporting activity

- Considering and reflecting how staff rate the organisation on ‘enabling innovation’ through the APS Employee Census
- Measuring engagement in capability uplift activities as part of our [capability framework](#)
- Through the Executive Board, undertaking a yearly a stocktake of the agency’s innovation portfolio
- Through the efforts of the Portfolio Management Office, continuing to support integration of an innovation and change capability and mindset across the Agency, which includes awareness and alignment with the [IPA Benefits Management Framework](#) and the [IPA Program and Project Management Framework](#)
- Each of the General Managers considering their work through the lens of this innovation framework
- Continuing to develop and embed an evaluation mindset which helps us understand what works and what does not and identify the right innovation approaches given our objectives and strategic context.

The Executive Board will review this innovation framework twice yearly and each of the strategic governance committees will use this framework to add in an innovation lens to their own work and discussions.

Relevant resources and links

- [Improve@IP](#) – where you can submit ideas about improvements in the agency.
- [IPAVentures workshops and training](#) – for those who want to get involved or learn more about ideation and innovation.
- [IPAVentures resources](#) – to learn more about workshops from the IPAVentures team and some of the tools they have used.
- [Cognitive Futures Strategy 2022-2024](#) – ensures that we unlock new value and achieve real transformation across the organisation for our staff and customers.
- [OECD OPSI Toolkit navigator](#) – a platform for navigating different toolkits and methods for practically applying innovation in your context.
- [IP Australia Corporate plan](#) – to understand how innovation fits with our broader vision and purpose.
- [Strategic Risk Framework](#) – to understand the appetite for innovation.
- [IP Australia Capability Framework](#) – to understand how innovation fits with the broader capability mix.