



# Demystifying Public Sector Innovation

Final Report on the Developmental Evaluation  
of Mexico's Innovation Agents Program

**REBOOT**

With the generous support of the  
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

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## Context

Programs that seek to increase transparency, participation, accountability, and innovation within government abound. This abundance of efforts from the global open government community is encouraging. Yet as interest in open government—and the number of initiatives launched under its umbrella—grows, the evidence base to guide learning has not grown apace.

There is often much attention paid to the innovative design of new programs at their launch, but this attention seldom carries through to their conclusion. As such, it is often difficult to understand and dissect impact—specifically, why programs did or did not achieve what they set out to do.

The sheer variety of activities and programming falling within this space is certainly a contributing factor. Despite the variation across open government programs, there are common aspects such as multi-sector intersectionality, collaboration between new partners, and a drive to innovate without clear precedent.

With generous support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, from May 2014 to July 2015, Reboot undertook a deep developmental evaluation of one such open government program. Innovation Agents (Agentes de Innovación in Spanish) is a civic technology fellowship run by the Coordinating Office for the National Digital Strategy (Coordinación de Estrategia Digital Nacional or CEDN in Spanish), a group within the government of Mexico. The program paired five social entrepreneurs from outside of government with a government innovator from each of five priority agencies—as defined by the country’s current National Digital Strategy—and asked them to develop a technology-based solution to a pressing problem.

Fellowship programs such as Innovation Agents are not new. Yet despite a familiar program design and examples of the products it can produce, we know relatively little about the change processes set into motion when asking government insiders and outsiders to work closely side-by-side. Multi-sectoral collaboration is a common feature in many open government efforts, and the opportunity to help the open government community understand it more deeply was the principal motivation for this project.

This project had three overarching objectives:

1. **Understand the factors that influence the success of public sector innovation initiatives.**

The project sought to identify the factors—human, contextual, and institutional—that promote, inhibit, and/or sustain creative approaches to achieving open government goals and improving public service delivery.

2. **Inform process iteration for the Innovation Agents program.**

The project team regularly shared findings and lessons with the program implementation team in order to support immediate improvements while the program was ongoing, rather than offering recommendations only after its conclusion. Working with the Innovation Agents program team, individual project teams, and partner agencies, Reboot sought to incorporate lessons to improve program design and implementation in real time.

3. **Advance the open government community's understanding of how and why innovation processes succeed or fail.**

Ultimately, this project sought to generate relevant insights and lessons that could advance the discourse on what works and why in open government programs among the global community of practitioners.

To pursue these objectives, Reboot closely accompanied the implementation of the Innovation Agents program as a process evaluator and advisor. From program launch to wind-down, Reboot staff undertook deep interviews, observation, and complementary design research and testing for each of the five Innovation Agents projects. In order to better understand the context in which this program was being implemented and to test our lessons, deep primary research was also undertaken into several other programs within CEDN's portfolio. Throughout the process, Reboot advised the program implementation team through structured reflection workshops as well as ongoing dialogue.

This report documents the implementation of the Innovation Agents program and presents key insights learned over the course of Reboot's developmental evaluation. It is intended to provide useful evidence to those who wish to better support the design and implementation of open government programs.

In addition to this report, Reboot has produced a companion product entitled "Implementing Innovation: A Users' Manual for Open Government Programs." The manual is aimed specifically at the reformers working at the frontlines of public sector innovation: government officials and staff who are designing and implementing open government and public sector innovation programs.

# Methodology

From its inception, this project prioritized learning from the lived experiences of stakeholders involved in the Innovation Agents program, and using these lessons to inform timely program adjustments. For this reason, the methodology included both deep, embedded research and periodic reflection and advisory activities. A detailed description of all project activities is included in Annex A.

Research was conducted at three levels, focusing on:

1. **Program implementation**, as conceived and executed by the implementing team;
2. **Project implementation**, as executed by each of five Innovation Agents project teams); and
3. **Product reception and usage by intended users**—both targeted citizens and institutional stakeholders—based on prototypes and solutions developed by the project teams.

The research sought to understand the processes and factors that influenced outcomes at each level, recognizing that the ultimate success of the Innovation Agents program would be based on their cumulative impact.

Six months into the Innovation Agents program, it was clear that the implementation team was increasingly pulled in several directions as it stretched to manage an ambitious (and growing) portfolio. At this point, Reboot expanded the scope of this research to incorporate three other open government programs that the office was implementing concurrently. The goal of this scope expansion was twofold: First, to appropriately situate Innovation Agents within the broader implementation context and second, to validate emerging findings from the fellowship program against other approaches to open government.

The expanded scope was implemented through targeted, deep research that included interviews, document review, and a workshop to validate findings with the various program teams. While Reboot did not accompany the implementation of these programs as deeply as with Innovation Agents, the broadened scope provided rich evidence for our analysis. It also enabled this project to produce a more robust analysis of open government implementations, one that is more relevant to a broader practitioner audience.

## Research Activities

Research activities included:

- **Semi-structured interviews with program stakeholders** (*biweekly from June 2014 to November 2014, then every 1 to 2 months through March 2015*).
- **Research meetings with program implementers** (*weekly*).
- **Ethnographic observation of program milestones** (*as opportunities arose; approximately 40 incidents*).
- **Design research and user testing** (*at key milestones; two incidents*).

*A list of the organizations represented in the research activities and the key program participants may be found in Annex D.*

## Advisory Activities

As process advisors to the Innovation Agents program, Reboot undertook two principal sets of activities:

**Advisory meetings with program implementers** (*weekly*).

**Structured reflection workshops** (*at key milestones; four incidents*).

### Program-Level Strategic Communications Planning

(*at program kickoff, June 2014*).

- **Theory of Change session** (*July 2014*).
- **Project-Level Design Research Assessment**  
(*during projects' research phase, August 2014*).
- **Program-Level Implementation Reflection & Forward Planning**  
(*at end of the product development phase, January 2015*).
- **Portfolio-Level Strategic Reflection**  
(*following synthesis of portfolio research, March 2015*).

## Limitations

While Reboot's application of the planned methodology was largely successful, there were two areas in which challenges limited this project's ability to execute against its approach:

First, significant changes in the Innovation Agents implementation schedule (notably that it was extended by several months) prevented observation of the conclusion of the program. Given uncertainty around the official program end date, Reboot conducted a closeout research trip in March 2015, with final interviews continuing through April 2015. It was not possible to observe a period of piloting to determine citizen or institutional responses to the products that were developed, a crucial signal of their likely impact.

A second, though less significant challenge, was obtaining access to program participants and key informants. Reboot faced particular challenges in securing interviews with more senior public officials, who would have provided better evidence of whether the program was on track to achieve its more systemic impact goals.

*Further process reflection may be found in Annex B.*

A group of people are seated around a table in a meeting room, engaged in a discussion. The image is overlaid with a teal filter. The text 'The Innovation Agents Program: Overview' is written in white on the left side of the image.

# The Innovation Agents Program: **Overview**

## Objectives & Approach

Innovation Agents had an ambitious vision: To make the Mexican government a platform for innovation. This platform would allow citizens to engage in sustained collaboration with government, and would enable government to scale solutions that were co-created with citizens.

It sought to do so by attracting innovators from outside of government to partner with insiders with technical expertise, and asking them to apply methods of human-centered design (HCD), agile software development. In short, it asked government to embrace 'open innovation', a notion embraced and promoted by the private sector, in which companies recognize the importance of seeking innovation from outside of their own organizations.

The program implementation team, situated within the Office of the President of Mexico, would support this vision by providing the political capital and incentives for its government peers to experiment, and by connecting project teams with technical experts at key points to provide mentorship and feedback. Funding was to be provided by the National Institute for Entrepreneurs (INADEM), an autonomous governmental institution that provides funding and other support to advance entrepreneurship in Mexico.

By providing a protective umbrella—and independent funding stream—for project teams to develop of innovative solutions, the program implementation team hoped to make government programs bureaucratically lighter and more conducive to innovation, co-creation, and citizen-centered policy making.

## Program Design

The original design of Innovation Agents was deliberately lightweight and maintained an openness to adjustment; this decision proved smart. As with most pilots, the program design shifted significantly over the course of implementation in response to contextual realities. A full description of the differences between the program as-designed and the program as-implemented may be found in Annex C. Several key differences include:

**Timeline and Milestones:** The overall timeline of the program was extended, and each team undertook activities at their own pace. As of July 2015, the implementation team was still in the process of determining the plan for an official closeout event.

**Team Structure and Roles:** The team structure was expected to include one external fellow, one internal fellow, and four technical team members. In many cases, the fellow delegated to colleagues, and each team hired their own profiles of support staff.

**Key Activities:** While the original design envisioned a highly-collaborative co-creation process and the application of human-centered design (HCD) methodology, this was not formally enforced by program managers. Teams chose to undertake these activities to varying degrees.

## Key Actors

### **Program Implementers: Coordinating Office for the National Digital Strategy**

The Coordinating Office for the National Digital Strategy (Coordinación de Estrategia Digital Nacional or CEDN) is responsible for supporting the implementation of the President's National Digital Strategy and also for the Mexican government's role in the Open Government Partnership (OGP). Such coordinating offices within the Office of the President do not typically take on programmatic portfolios. CEDN developed and implemented an ambitious set of open government pilot programs that included Innovation Agents.

The Innovation Agents program was implemented by a Program Director, Deputy Director, and Project Manager, all of whom were new to government. The Program Director was a political appointee whose portfolio included several open government initiatives, of which Innovation Agents was one.

The Program Director and Deputy Director co-developed the concept and led the recruitment for participants and partners. Once launched, the Director provided leadership to the initiative as one of the General Directors of CEDN. The Deputy, with a background in civic technology and entrepreneurship, was responsible for coordinating with project teams and facilitating their progress. The Project Manager played a coordinating role initially, but gradually took on more responsibility. Several months in to the program, the Deputy Director left CEDN to pursue his startup. While he remained involved after this point, the remaining team members then took on more responsibility, with the Project Manager absorbing the bulk of his role.

## Five Project Teams

The fellowship program brought together teams around five sectors of high priority to the National Digital Strategy: Finance (Ministry of Finance and Public Credit), Education (Ministry of Education), Health (Mexican Institute of Social Security), Security (Ministry of the Interior), and Entrepreneurship (National Entrepreneurs Institute). Below is a description of the host agency and team, the problem each team sought to address, and their chosen approach.

## Other Partners

In addition to Reboot's role as process evaluator and advisor, two other partners were involved in Innovation Agents.

The Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE), a university and think tank in Mexico, undertook an evaluation focused on understanding the impact of the Innovation Agents program within the Mexican government.

Public Works from the Stanford University d.school provided training in HCD methodology for project teams at kickoff and "deep dive" mentoring meetings at several points throughout implementation. While initially these were meant to teach and reinforce the HCD methodology, in the end, they responded to each team's progress more generally.

## Education



### TEAM

**Internal Fellow:** Deputy General Director, Educational Television Unit, Ministry of Education

- Fellow was supporting the nationwide broadcast of educational content to rural schools.
- Left the project late in the fellowship and was not replaced.

**External Fellow:** Co-founder and director of a social enterprise focused on innovative approaches to education in Mexico

- Due to capacity constraints, a colleague with experience in closing the digital achievement gap was brought on to lead the bulk of the project's implementation

**Technology Team:** A content specialist, graphic designer/web developer, and video production team that was in part drawn from the external fellow's own organization.

### PROMPT

How might we re-think distance education using new technological tools?

### SCOPE

Focused on students at high risk of dropping out of high school

### PRODUCT VISION

A website that would help students appreciate and learn the "soft skills" that could help them persevere in difficult family or life situations situations that cause many students to drop out of school.

## Entrepreneurship



### TEAM

**Internal Fellow:** General Coordinator of Strategic Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation, National Entrepreneurs Institute (INADEM)

- Fellow is responsible for planning and evaluation at an autonomous government institution that provides a range of resources to advance and support entrepreneurship in Mexico.

**External Fellow:** Founder and director of a public policy consulting firm and a policy think tank.

- The external fellow's firm was already engaged on a research project to improve the processes of the fund, and the team decided to extend this work for the Innovation Agents project.

**Technology Team:** Variety of technical specialists drawn from the external fellow's own organization, and a technology firm already working with INADEM.

### PROMPT

How might we make INADEM's Entrepreneurs Fund more transparent and easier to use for Mexican entrepreneurs?

### SCOPE

To improve the experience of applying for and being reviewed by the National Entrepreneurs Fund, which runs open calls for various types of support to Mexican entrepreneurs.

### PRODUCT VISION

Improve the way that the Entrepreneurs Fund communicates with applicants through the online platform.

## Finance



### TEAM

**Internal Fellow:** Director of Budgetary Performance Information Analysis, Office of Performance Evaluation, Ministry of Finance and Public Credit.

- Fellow was supporting the evaluation of all programs funded by the Mexican government.
- Original fellow left the project early in the fellowship to attend graduate school, and her replacement took on the role.

**External Fellow:** Founder and director of a non-profit dedicated to improving livelihood opportunities for women in rural Mexico

**Technology Team:** Two software developers from an open data and civic technology start-up.

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### PROMPT

How might we integrate citizen feedback on government programs into their performance evaluation?

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### SCOPE

4–8 federally-funded programs

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### PRODUCT VISION

A technology platform that collects beneficiary feedback on program performance and integrates it into the scoring algorithm used to evaluate overall program performance. Results would then inform future budget allocations provided to programs.

Ultimately, the team decided that the feedback platform would be a website with an online survey that could be customized for different programs.

## Health



### TEAM

**Internal Fellow:** Technical Coordinator, Technical Coordinating Office for Digital Channels and Information, Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS)

- Fellow was supporting development of new tools for IMSS, which operates a vast network of clinics and hospitals for formally-employed citizens in addition to administering Mexico's social security benefits

**External Fellow:** Social entrepreneur and physician who had just completed his MBA in the United States prior to joining the program

**Technology Team:** Initially a team of software developers from a small engineering firm; after some disagreements with this partner, was replaced by another firm that had previously worked with IMSS.

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### PROMPT

How might we, through social innovation, bring the services of IMSS closer to the citizen?

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### SCOPE

The maternal healthcare experience, and specifically the administrative process by which expecting mothers complete the requirements for their maternity leave benefits

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### PRODUCT VISION

A mobile application that would help women navigate and streamline IMSS' administrative procedures around prenatal visits, and eliminate the need for duplicative clinic visits.

## Security



### TEAM

**Internal Fellow:** General Director, Citizen Participation for the Social Prevention of Violence and Crime Unit, Ministry of the Interior

- Fellow led a newly-created unit responsible for advancing community engagement approaches to preventing violence and other crime.
- Due to capacity constraints, his deputy took on a strong leadership role in the project, which was important because the original fellow left his job to run for office prior to the end of the project.

**External Fellow:** Founder and director of a civil society organization that operates a platform for citizens to report community incidents.

**Technology Team:** Variety of technical specialists drawn from the external fellow's own organization.

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### PROMPT

How might we involve citizens in the prevention of violence?

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### SCOPE

Expanding an existing platform to new cities

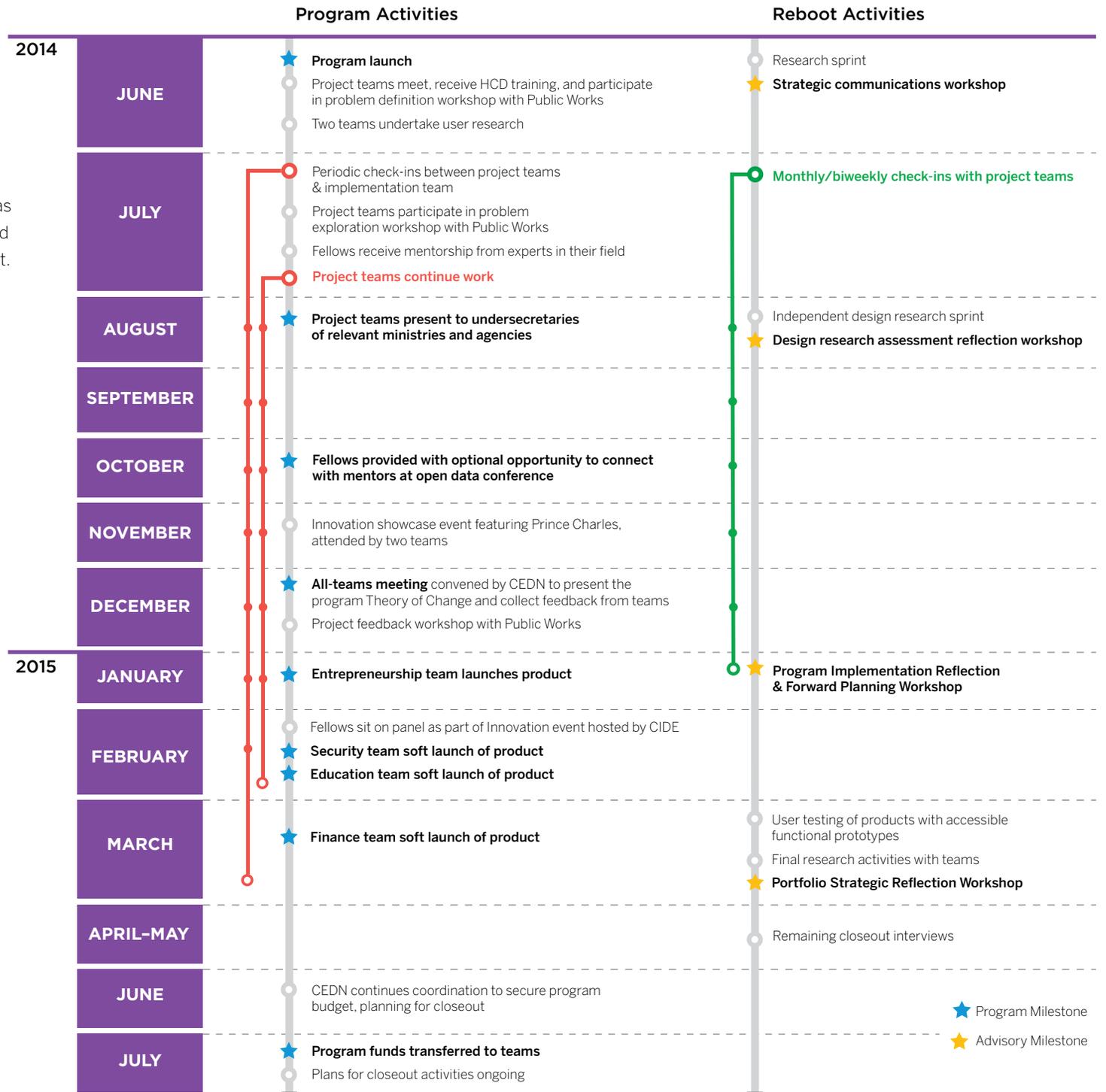
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### PRODUCT VISION

Scale the existing citizen crime reporting platform to new cities within Mexico, in collaboration with civil society partners.

## Program Chronology

The timelines at right present the activities undertaken by the Innovation Agents team throughout the program, as well as the complementary research and advisory activities carried out by Reboot.



★ Program Milestone  
★ Advisory Milestone

A group of people, primarily women, are gathered in what appears to be a meeting or workshop. They are looking at documents and talking. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent yellow filter and a white border. The text 'The Innovation Agents Program: Outcomes' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

The Innovation  
Agents Program:  
**Outcomes**

# Project-Level Outcomes

The products designed by the project teams provide the most tangible evidence of successful outcomes, but the Innovation Agents program also sought to promote another key outcome: very specific changes to the ways of working among the government insiders and outsiders that it united.

The program design emphasized the application of HCD methodology as well as a process of “co-creation” characterized by deep collaboration between government and civil society. Ultimately, each of the five project teams developed a unique approach that responded to the characteristics and capabilities of the individual team members, host agency, partner organization, and product concept.

The original ways of working that the Innovation Agents program sought to promote were likewise also embraced by each project team to varying degrees. The sliders in the boxes that follow represent the degree to which each team demonstrated the program’s intended ways of working.

## Education



### PRODUCT

**A fully-developed website was launched and was well-received by target users, but the project team was not able to identify and secure an institutional owner to enable its further development and sustainability.**

The product was well-received by targeted students because the team had undertaken user research and testing of their content and platform with middle school students through the product development process. Content and design adjustments were informed by user feedback, as well as by data analytics on site usage.

However, as the website focus (helping students build soft skills) did not fit into the existing priorities of the internal fellow’s government unit, the team struggled to secure Ministry of Education support. The departure of the internal fellow during the project further weakened institutional links.

While the external fellow and team actively sought to partner with other areas of the Ministry, they were not ultimately able to find an institutional sponsor and the future of the website remains unclear.

### WAYS OF WORKING



## Entrepreneurship



### PRODUCT

**The Entrepreneurs Fund System launched as originally planned, but was unable to incorporate all the project recommendations to improve the applicant experience.**

In incorporating the Innovation Agents focus on applicants’ experience of the Fund to its existing engagement, the external team sought to develop and emphasize process recommendations related to communication with the end user.

Few major changes to the applicant’s experience of communication through the portal were able to be implemented, partly due to the internal requirement to implement all changes before January 2015. Legal concerns (related to the Fund’s competitive nature) precluded an opportunity to pilot the new system with real potential users prior to its official launch.

### WAYS OF WORKING



## Finance



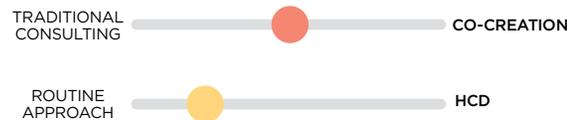
### PRODUCT

**A beta website for collecting citizen feedback for three government programs was launched, but the project team was not ultimately able to link the feedback to the institutional processes through which it could be incorporated into program evaluation and future budgeting.**

The website hosted an original survey and collected survey responses from beneficiaries of a youth program related to Prospera (the conditional cash transfer program previously known as PROGRESA). It also uploaded data from surveys undertaken by the National Entrepreneurs Fund, and an Innovation Stimulus program. The website displays per-question results, and allows visitors to download the underlying dataset.

Information from the Performance Evaluation Unit suggested that the sampling and targeting strategy for the youth program survey would prevent the use of its findings in the official program evaluation methodology. Further, conversations with the Prospera implementers suggested those same limitations would prevent the survey from being useful for the program's self-evaluation, and that a web-based tool was inadequate for reaching the program's population.

### WAYS OF WORKING



## Health



### PRODUCT

**A functioning prototype for a mobile application that has the potential to dramatically improve the maternal care and maternity leave experience was developed. The product was not able to launch within the pilot period, and unclear institutional ownership has stalled further development.**

The project team undertook deep design research to identify a pressing problem in the Mexican health system that affects many women, and they developed an innovative and cost-saving solution that bridged technology and analog processes. The team worked collaboratively to research existing policy, and built political interest and support within IMSS for its proposed solution. This team was arguably the most successful in cultivating high-level institutional interest in an Innovation Agents project.

Project delays prevented the completion of a prototype that could be tested with users prior to the end of the external fellow's engagement. Following this, the mandate for carrying on the work of finishing and launching the app was unclear; at the time of writing, further product development remained stalled.

### WAYS OF WORKING



## Security



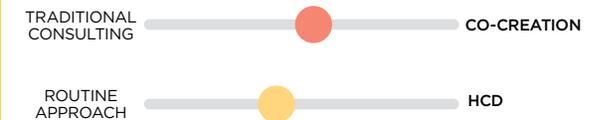
### PRODUCT

**The citizen reporting platform was successfully replicated in one new city and is enjoying active usage by citizens, as well as actively engaging with relevant government units in the city. The project team has made strong progress towards launching the product in another city.**

Given that the product already existed, the project team focused its efforts not on a design process to develop the solution but rather on convening key stakeholders whose support would be critical for the product's replication.

By collaborating with stakeholders from government, civil society, and the private sector, the team successfully launched the platform and an organization to support its implementation in one new city. From its soft launch in February 2015 through July 2015, the platform had received over 3,900 reports from citizens on a variety of civic topics. The reports are then directed to the relevant local government units for processing.

### WAYS OF WORKING



# Program-Level Outcomes

The Innovation Agents program had ambitious goals to change the way that the Mexican government works. It had hoped that the five demonstration projects developed would make a compelling case for a new mode of citizen-government collaboration. Overall, this evaluation did not find evidence of the program enabling lasting change in government processes as intended. This may be due to several factors:

## Limitations to Systemic Impact

### **Difficulty in implementing (or enforcing) co-creation approach**

Among the project teams, there were a variety of styles of collaboration between the internal government fellow, external fellow, and their technical team. The program design sought to foster a co-creative working relationship that would then be a model for future collaborations between government and external innovators.

CEDN expected that each team would find its own rhythm of work, and opted to allow the collaborations to develop with minimal intervention. In the end, only some teams achieved a collaborative relationship that broke the model of a typical engagement between external consultants and government. Even for those teams that did achieve this mode of working, there was not strong evidence to suggest it signaled a paradigm shift for the government unit.

### **Little deliberate dissemination of program's innovative approach**

There is not yet evidence that the necessary linkages between the program and other groups within government were cultivated. One of the key links in the theory of change was for actors within government to be exposed to the innovative process as well as its outputs, building interest in the Innovation Agents program and its approach. However, there was limited dissemination of the program's existence and innovative approach during the implementation period.

Respondents from government (who were either directly involved in a project or who were involved with other programs within CEDN's portfolio) were uniformly unclear as to what the program entailed. When they did express knowledge of the program, it was framed as related only to the themes of the project happening in their own agency. Institutional counterparts who were engaged in the development of individual projects did not know that this was part of a larger fellowship initiative. Further, individuals participating in CEDN's other programs did not know the Innovation Agents program. If they recognized the name, they found it difficult to describe the model or its objective.

### **Missed opportunity to develop participants as program ambassadors**

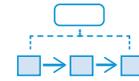
While the program's theory of change viewed the five projects as the vehicles by which the broader government would become interested in new ways of working, individual teams were not made fully aware of the program's broader goals and their expected roles in achieving them. Project team incentives centered on successful delivery of a product, not on outreach to promote the program's methodology. When they did discuss the program, participants also tended to boil down its essence to the pairing of an insider and an outside innovator, rather than the program's goals and larger design components (HCD, co-creation). Without a clear understanding of the program's theory of change, and how they might advance the broader impact goal, program participants were not equipped to promote the program to a wider government audience.



# Findings for the Open Government Community

# Insights for Open Government Program Designers, Implementers, & Funders

The developmental evaluation of Innovation Agents uncovered insights relevant to those who design, implement, and fund open government programs. The findings are tagged by the relevant program facet they represent: Structure, Inputs, or People & Relationships. While the findings here are visually grouped by phase (design, development, or implementation), they are relevant across the program experience.



## Structure

The decisions open government program designers and managers make about the policies, format, and organizational architecture underlying their programs.



## Inputs

The active contributions that program designers and managers provide to open government programs, and may include financial, political, technical, or other resources.



## People & Relationships

The human side of open government programs: the interactions, motivations, expectations, and personalities of individuals from various sectors and backgrounds who come together to define and execute a program vision.



### Program Management

Programs that create spaces for innovation still require significant structure and leadership; there can be too much room to experiment. (p. 16)



### Participant & Project Selection

Program success is highly impacted by the mix of individual participants, counterpart agencies, partner organizations, and the scope of projects. (p. 18)



### Program Management

While a strong program concept and design are necessary for a successful open government initiative, challenges in implementation can seriously hinder potential impact. (p. 20)



### Politics & Institutional Integration

When it comes to gaining political support for a program, there is a "sweet spot". Identifying issues that have the "right" level of institutional buy-in prevents programs from being overwhelmed by too much political interest, or stalled due to too little interest. (p. 17)



### Innovation Processes

Even when there is appetite for new innovation processes and methodologies, it is difficult to learn new approaches without project-based training and close support. (p. 18)



### Innovation Processes

Proximity alone does not multiply innovative processes or create spillovers, especially in bureaucratic environments. (p. 21)



### Innovation Processes

Assuming a technological solution can be risky, but it does not have to be if technology is complemented with analog solutions and not treated as an end in itself. (p. 16)



### Program Management

Offices implementing open government programs have a unique set of "hats" they can wear—convener, political dealer, advisor, confidant—but they may not know when to wear which one. (p. 18)



### Politics & Institutional Integration

Politically powerful open government offices should proactively identify opportunities where their influence can help advance projects, as teams who need political levers pulled are not always in a position to identify if or when it's needed. (p. 20)



### Funding

Pursuing innovative funding sources is a risk worth taking, if there are the time and resources to do it right. (p. 17)



### Program Management

Intentional redundancies and distributed responsibilities between team roles can mitigate the impacts of personnel transitions. (p. 19)



### Participant Experience

The experience of participation in the program is a critical indicator of its potential for longevity and future iterations. (p. 21)



### Insider-Outsider Dynamics

Pairing government officials and external innovators can build empathy and learning for both sides, especially when each is enabled to shine in their specialty. (p. 17)



### Insider-Outsider Dynamics

To be the most effective "outsider", one must understand "insider" ways of working. (p. 19)

Program Design

Program Development

Program Implementation

## PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

**Programs that create spaces for innovation still require significant structure and leadership; there can be too much room to experiment. Processes to define clear boundaries, continuously assess progress, and direct efforts toward constructive ends are critical in ensuring such spaces are well-utilized.**

Innovation Agents recruited driven, accomplished innovators from inside and outside of government and sought to give them a “bubble” within which they could freely innovate. The desire to provide the teams with space to apply their specific knowledge and expertise, and an assumption that the self-starters would drive their own progress, resulted in a relatively hands-off approach.

While this provided teams with freedom, it was a missed opportunity to enforce—and therefore test—aspects of the program design. For example, while HCD was the primary innovation methodology incorporated into the program design—through early training, then the ongoing engagement of Public Works—it was presented as a resource that teams may or may not choose to use. This respected the individual innovators, but independent design research surfaced assumptions in the product designs and gaps in project teams' understanding of their issues that could have been addressed had a robust design process been enforced.

Further, the program's lack of structure created uncertainty and decreased motivation for some fellows. Participants in any open government program are pushing boundaries and taking risks to their career; those in a pilot are also certain to have other competing demands for their time. As such, even the most self-motivated among them will need support in navigating the uncharted waters of many open government program, as well as defined milestones against which they can assess their progress. Programs should be structured and designed to provide such support to ensure participants remained engaged and willing to push forward.

## INNOVATION PROCESSES

**Assuming a technological solution can be risky, but it does not have to be. Defining and enforcing a deliberate design process can ensure that both the opportunities and limitations of technology are well understood, and that technology is complemented with analog solutions and not treated as an end in itself.**

Many open government programs leverage technology as a vehicle for innovation, and Innovation Agents was no different. Project teams were required to develop a technology-based solution to the problems they had identified. This meant that a number of teams began with a product in mind, prior to understanding their target audiences.

The Health team initially seemed to be on that path when it decided to develop an app to provide information and social support for expecting mothers. Reboot's design research had uncovered two concerns about the solution. First, many women who relied on government clinics for their prenatal care and intended to deliver there did not use smartphones. Second, it appeared that access to information about pregnancy was not a problem for most expectant mothers. However, the requirement to attend potentially duplicative prenatal visits at public clinics in order to complete the paperwork for paid maternity leave was a significant challenge for many. (Expectant mothers have to do this even if they already completed check-ups with a private doctor.)

It seemed that eliminating the need for duplicative visits would yield high returns by alleviating congestion at clinics, and therefore reducing operating costs and saving women time. Yet doing so required an analog, policy solution. The Health team undertook significant research on the processes of maternal leave, identified the institutional actors who might also benefit from process reform, and noted that the women more likely to be duplicating visits—those who could afford private clinics—were also likely to have smartphones. Based on this research, they determined that a mobile app could be used to register prenatal visits from any clinic, public or private, as well as orient women to the often-confusing maternity leave process. In the end, their insistence on a technological solution opened up the space for a true process innovation.

## INSIDER–OUTSIDER DYNAMICS

**Pairing government officials and external innovators can build empathy and learning for both sides, especially when each is enabled to shine in their specialty. Open government programs should actively acknowledge and nurture the unique strengths of diverse participants.**

The one program component that was common across all project teams was a pairing of internal and external fellows (and supporting teams). While contracting to external firms is common in the Mexican government, as in many governments, the type of co-creation sought by this program was different. In many ways, it resembles the multi-sector intersectionality (or aspirations) common in many open government programs.

In reflecting on their experiences throughout the program, fellows consistently expressed gratitude for the skills and connections of their counterpart, which differed from their own, and acknowledged the appreciation they had gained for the constraints and challenges faced by their colleagues in other sectors. (This latter sentiment was especially common from external fellows, who remarked on their deepened understanding of the way government works.)

The more successful teams divided tasks according to specialization: internal fellows used their knowledge of public bureaucracy to identify entry points and gain political influence, while the external fellows brought their process knowledge and management skills to encourage experimental approach and drive project progress.

## POLITICS &amp; INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRATION

**When it comes to gaining political support for a program, there is a “sweet spot”. Identifying issues that have the right level of institutional buy-in prevents programs from being overwhelmed by too much political interest, or stalled due to too little interest.**

“We must get high-level political buy-in,” is a common refrain for government officials attempting risky or experimental ventures. The effects of lack of buy-in are well known: too few resources allocated to be able to sustain a project, or initiatives that are never “mainstreamed” into organizational protocol or that never see wide release. There were Innovation Agents projects that suffered from this challenge.

But too much high-level buy-in also carries risk. One of the Innovation Agents projects began with significant political support; in fact, it was almost wholly integrated into the strategic plans of a specific government department. However, this tight interweaving of priorities led to some paralysis. The project became so important that leadership at the host agency felt it needed to be near-perfect; deliberations about the details of project approach and product design became protracted.

When deadlines neared, the team decided to trade off the focus on institutional integration and instead deliver an independent project, one without the official integration with the host agency. While this shift allowed them to advance the delivery of a working product, the future of the project is now in jeopardy because it does not have an owner within any institution.

## FUNDING

**Pursuing innovative funding sources is a risk worth taking, if there are the time and resources to do it right. While program design can proceed with only a funder’s commitment, implementation should not begin until funds are in-hand.**

Many open government practitioners need to be creative in resourcing their work, as familiar sources may not be willing or able to fund programs they seek to pursue. As a coordinating unit within the Office of the President, CEDN is not typically responsible for implementing programs, and so is not allocated budget to do so. Rather, the team raises funds through external donors and other government channels to support its work.

Innovation Agents found a natural funding partner in the National Entrepreneurs Institute (INADEM). INADEM was excited about the program, and agreed to provide much-needed financial support. This collaboration presented a channel for INADEM to fund entrepreneurship within the federal government itself and so seemed like it would have no issues being approved. However, the program launched with only a promise of funds rather than a confirmed, in-hand transfer. Since this was the first time INADEM had funded a program like this, the legal precedent for the partnership was brought into question when it came time to transfer funds, causing significant and detrimental delays that ran the length of the project and impacted the morale of program participants.

## INNOVATION PROCESSES

**Even when there is appetite for new innovation processes and methodologies, it is difficult to learn new approaches without project-based training and close support. For programs that champion new ways of working, their design should include resources for hands-on, ongoing learning.**

The open government community speaks often of innovation and of user-centric design and other approaches that are uncommon in government. While there may be great interest in learning such methods, there are few good resources for doing so. Guidance on adapting such approaches to the unique character of public and social sector work is especially thin.

At the start of Innovation Agents, fellows and their teams were universally interested in the idea of HCD. However, few of them ended up actually incorporating HCD methods into their projects. Participants noted that the brief training workshop they received early in the program was insufficient to understand the approach and how to use it—some expressed disappointment at the training content, which they perceived as relatively shallow. The remote support was not widely used by the project teams, in part because the HCD methodology had not been integrated into all projects from the start and so there was little motivation to proactively seek out the specialized resource. Further, the remote nature of the resource—support could be provided via phone or video conference—presented enough of a barrier to easy engagement to make knowledge transfer difficult.

## PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

**Offices implementing open government programs have a unique set of “hats” they can wear—convener, political dealer, advisor, confidant—but they may not know when to wear which one. It can be helpful to identify these potential roles up front and understand the scenarios where they may be helpful; this makes it easier to play the right role later when needed.**

The Innovation Agents program team is in a unique position given its place within the Office of the President. Through the course of the program, it took on many different roles to support the progress of the project teams: it convened senior officials, built political relationships, and provided strategic guidance.

Upon later reflection, the team acknowledged there were areas where its unique position might have been further leveraged to seize opportunities and address barriers. Program participants agreed, and noted that they should have relied more on the program implementation team to facilitate connections or lubricate progress in ways they themselves would have been unable to.

Units implementing open government programs often hold a unique position, either in an Executive office or in another area with significant political influence. Identifying at the outset the unique skills and areas of influence that might be drawn upon helps ensure that available resources are being fully exploited for program success.

## PARTICIPANT &amp; PROJECT SELECTION

**Program success is highly impacted by the mix of individual participants, counterpart agencies, partner organizations, and the scope of projects. Clear delineation of roles and an objective assessment of the criteria for selecting or defining each element is a key early step.**

The biggest contributing factor to the successes of Innovation Agents project was the strategic selection of participants and projects. The most successful external fellows were strong project managers with a drive to deliver. They overcame many programmatic and project-level challenges and pushed their projects ahead. The most successful internal fellows had enough influence within their agencies to reach decision-makers, but were not too highly-ranked so as to be distracted by too many other responsibilities. They navigated their bureaucracies on behalf of their projects, and secured the necessary institutional resources and support.

Successful, more innovative projects tended to have broader original scopes. Those that fell within existing policy frameworks and priorities, or were able to respond to specific institutional needs (e.g. budgetary savings), also tended to advance more successfully.

## INSIDER–OUTSIDER DYNAMICS

**To be the most effective “outsider,” one must understand “insider” ways of working. Implementers can benefit from support and mentorship to help identify which government processes or approaches should be embraced and which can be de-emphasized.**

Members of the Innovation Agents program team had all recently joined government. They brought fresh perspectives and an impressive set of experiences from the private and social sectors to the management of their project portfolio. Many were understandably proud of the diverse expertise they brought to government, and regarded themselves as “outsiders” that were now working inside government.

This self-conception impacted the ways in which they interacted with more traditional public offices and officials and may have limited their ability to influence. Concepts such as co-creation, HCD, and open innovation were unfamiliar to many of their counterparts in other agencies; some felt these were a fad that would soon pass. Such audiences were more receptive to these concepts when wrapped in terms and approaches that were already well-known.

An additional aspect of this is related to the same bureaucratic processes that government innovation programs seek to change. In Innovation Agents, certain considerations about typical government processes (for example related to budget disbursement and project ownership) were de-emphasized, but then arose as later blockers to progress.

## PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

**Turnover is inevitable, but is a risk that can and should be planned for with clear role definition and distributed responsibilities.**

Over the course of the program, there were transitions in both the Innovation Agents implementation team as well as on several of the fellows’ project teams. Political cycles and shifting ambitions make turnover a fact of life for those working in government, and especially for the innovators drawn to open government; no one was surprised when these transitions occurred.

Yet only one project team was able to weather a transition seamlessly. For reasons not necessarily related to potential turnover, much of the project work had been delegated to a team member who was not the fellow. On other teams, the transition created a pause in project work or was otherwise a source of disruption. The transition of the Deputy Director on the implementation team created a period of uncertainty for fellows and strained the team’s capacity. Planning for turnover by clearly defining roles, creating redundancies, and ensuring there are backstops on key tasks is critical.

## PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

**While a strong program concept and design are necessary for a successful open government initiative, challenges in implementation can seriously hinder potential impact. These risks should be identified and mitigation plans developed both before a program launches, as well as at scheduled reflection and/or pivot points throughout implementation.**

It is common to describe an open government program (or any program, for that matter) based on how it was designed to function. Yet implementing the program in line with that design is often difficult.

A number of participants in Innovation Agents shared variations on the same statement when asked their estimation of the program: “It was a great idea, but it didn’t live up to it in implementation.” This emphasized the importance of clear communication and a predictable yet adaptive program management strategy.

## POLITICS &amp; INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRATION

**Teams who need political levers pulled are not always in a position to identify if or when it’s needed, so implementation teams should proactively identify and propose opportunities to assert their influence.**

One of the values that offices implementing open government programs can often offer is a unique political influence. CEDN, like other offices that coordinate the OGP agenda, is housed within the Executive branch, providing a strategic political position. The implementation team had identified this contribution to the program from the start, and used their convening power and influence to bring together high-level officials at different points in the program. However, there were also opportunities — identified ex post by Innovation Agents teams— when further intervention on specific challenges might have lifted bureaucratic barriers and helped advance the projects. At the time, however, team members were focused on the tools and relationships immediately available to them; they did not think to request an extra “push” from CEDN.

## PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE

**The experience of participation in the program is a critical indicator of its potential for longevity and future iterations.**

When analyzing open government, and civic technology programs in particular, their success is typically judged externally by the products they produce. The reflections of the participants in the Innovation Agents program emphasized the importance of considering participant experience as a marker of success. While successful products that are taken up widely will reflect well on the program, the conversations and commentary led by participants is another key channel for program dissemination. Former participants are the best link to similar future participants, and without future participants, the programs cannot have future iterations. When someone, and especially an innovator within government, takes on the risk of an open government pilot program, they are especially attuned to whether the experience provided the return expected. While many participants suggested that they would recommend participation to a friend or colleague (if certain adjustments to implementation were made), one individual in particular shared that the tradeoff in losing professional standing from the project's challenges had not been sufficiently rewarding. It is worth noting that this participant was among the most enthusiastic in the earlier months of the program. This example demonstrates the importance of acknowledging and mitigating risks taken by internal innovators in particular when designing a positive participant experience.

## INNOVATION PROCESSES

**Proximity alone does not multiply innovation processes or create spillovers, especially in bureaucratic environments. Innovation programs require active dissemination strategies to spread their message throughout implementation.**

One of the ultimate goals of the Innovation Agents program was to attract interest in, and adoption of, innovative methods by which to approach the solving of policy problems. One assumption was that this interest would be spurred by teams working on their projects amongst their government colleagues. However, there was little to no evidence of such "innovation spillovers"; few people outside of those working directly on the projects were aware of the Innovation Agents program. Those who had come in contact with it were fuzzy on the details of what it entailed, and typically did not know that the project they had interacted with was one of five within a larger initiative. The low level of awareness and understanding from those on the peripheries of the projects, let alone within broader government, demonstrates the necessity of proactive efforts to socialize innovation processes and spread the word as they are underway.

# Reflections

A photograph of two men in an office setting, overlaid with a purple tint. The man in the foreground, wearing glasses and a white shirt, is looking towards the right. The man in the background, wearing a dark jacket, is holding up a document that features a caricature of a man with glasses and a mustache. The document also contains some text. The overall scene suggests a collaborative work environment.

## Process Lessons

Reboot's engagement with the Innovation Agents program provided a unique opportunity to undertake both process evaluation and advisory activities through the real-time implementation of the initiative. As developmental evaluations differ from common approaches to program research and evaluation, and carry unique challenges, this final section shares how the project team implemented and balanced its dual role as both evaluator and advisor over the course of this engagement. We hope these lessons are useful for practitioners interested in similar approaches, or in using evaluations to nurture and incorporate learning in program implementation.

Independence is a highly-prized component of most evaluations, so there is often skepticism or surprise when describing the dual evaluator/advisor role that a developmental evaluation entails. Reboot was highly sensitive to tradeoffs in bridging two roles which are usually mutually exclusive. Early in the project, the team asked itself: Are we evaluators producing an independent assessment of an open government program? Or are we evaluators accompanying an open government program that we wish to help improve, even if we ourselves become inputs in a process we are evaluating? As is clear from this document, Reboot opted for the latter role, with the goal of sharing learning not only through ex post reporting and communications products, but also during the implementation of a fast-paced pilot.

To balance our role in conducting process research, which requires objectivity, with our role in informing process iteration, Reboot developed a set of advisory guidelines ("rules of engagement") to clearly delineate—and track

the influence of—our interventions in the program. Our role was scoped to include advisory only at the overall program level, and not to any individual project team; this decoupled our involvement from the success of any one project. We also defined the scenarios under which we would intervene: specifically, only in predetermined program-level reflection exercises or at junctures in which an emerging risk appeared to threaten a key aspect of the program's theory of change.

Developing these guidelines early in the engagement helped delineate Reboot's role, set stakeholder expectations, and minimize the biases that could be introduced by our inputs to implementation. Where we traded our independence as evaluators for the impact we could contribute as advisors, we were deliberate in acknowledging and documenting the decision.

By being involved closely at each stage of program implementation, needs for our support were identified and responded to on an ongoing basis. Shortly after the launch of Innovation Agents, for example, it became clear that the CEDN team needed support in developing the management structures that would undergird the program. Reboot developed resources that the program team could pass on to project teams to support workplanning, role definition, and risk management. We also facilitated a Theory of Change development exercise with the program team to help identify intended pathways to impact, as well as the underlying assumptions that required further monitoring and testing.

Reboot stayed abreast of developments and emerging challenges through frequent check-ins with program implementers and stakeholders. As evaluators, we maintained a distance that allowed us to candidly discuss the program experience with individual participants and stakeholders. Importantly, our dual role of evaluator and advisor provided openings to synthesize their feedback and channel it to the implementation team through both weekly meetings and reflection workshops at key milestones.

Serving as a mechanism that “closed the feedback loop” built trust with both program stakeholders and implementers, and bridged a key communications gap that often exists between the two parties. This trust was further bolstered by Reboot’s deep experience in human-centered design, open government, and public sector reform, which allowed us to assess the program in a structured, rigorous, and credible way. And while our advisory work was primarily based on our evaluation of Innovation Agents as it progressed, our ability to draw lessons from similar efforts—including our own, firsthand experiences as designers and implementers—was appreciated by the program team.

The trade-off between evaluator and advisor was not the only challenging decision this project navigated. As in any research study, the choice of unit of analysis is a major one: Is it better to undertake a broad survey of a variety of programs, or to delve deeply into just one? With this project, we studied the experience of only one country in great detail, which allowed us to build the relationships and programmatic familiarity necessary to develop the insights presented in this report. At the same time, we were fortunate enough to strike a balance of depth and breadth within CEDN’s portfolio. While we engaged deeply in the entire implementation of Innovation Agents, we also completed targeted analyses of three other open government programs to test the broader relevance of lessons from this singular experience.

## Value of Approach

Through the process, our confidence in the choice to focus deeply on Mexico’s experience was confirmed. Not only did we surface nuanced lessons that ultimately resonated across programs and with implementers from other countries, we also came to understand the various ways in which open government is conceived of and implemented. While national action plans remain a core anchor of the OGP, governments around the world are experimenting with diverse ways to create enabling environments for public sector innovation. Likewise, there is an interest not only in resources focused on effectively designing action plans such as the Open Government Guide produced by the Transparency and Accountability Initiative, but also for complementary practical guidance on how to operationalize innovative approaches to open government.

Lessons from this project have resonated with practitioners because they are grounded in the lived experience of open government program implementers, and because they are highly practical. At events such as the The Impact of Civic Technology Conference (March 2015) and the Open Government Partnership’s 2015 European Regional Meeting (June 2015), practitioners expressed excitement and feelings of validation as they recognized their own experiences reflected in our analysis of CEDN’s portfolio. Many were intrigued by the contributions that developmental evaluations could make to their own programs, in helping them not just develop open government priorities but executing on them as well.

Reboot is excited to add to the growing number of resources available to open government practitioners, but we are also aware of the limitations of any one publication and of lessons from any one country, however broadly resonant. We hope that by sharing insights from one deep assessment of an open government program, we can also inspire others to build on this learning and further expand the knowledge of the global open government community.

# Annexes



## Annex A: Reboot Activities

Below are detailed descriptions of the research and advisory activities completed by Reboot during the project period

### Research Activities

Research activities included:

- **Semi-structured interviews with program stakeholders** (*biweekly from June 2014 to November 2014, then every 1 to 2 months through March 2015*). For the scheduled project design and development phase, a Reboot researcher was based in Mexico City, where the bulk of program and project activities were occurring. Also during that time, and extending into what had been the intended period of prototype testing, a New York-based Reboot researcher made two-week long trips to Mexico approximately every 4 to 6 weeks. In these periods, the team spoke to program implementers, participants, and key informants.
- **Research meetings with program implementers** (*weekly*). Reboot held weekly meetings with the Innovation Agents program manager to stay updated on implementation progress and milestones. Meetings were usually conducted by phone, and in person when the lead researcher was in Mexico.
- **Ethnographic observation of program milestones** (*as opportunities arose; approximately 40 incidents*). Reboot attended program and project meetings, including public-facing and closed-door events, as observers. These sessions provided opportunities to capture and analyze the interactions, approaches, and modes of collaboration that arose during the program. It also provided a baseline against which to compare stories or reactions from the individuals who participated in those interactions.
- **Design research and user testing** (*at key milestones; two incidents*). Reboot's design research and testing provided an independent benchmark of the outcomes of the design process employed by each of the teams. Activities included interviews and observation of Innovation Agents projects' intended citizen users and institutional users and stakeholders. The latter category included front-line service staff in relevant public agencies and government officials in relevant line ministries.

### Advisory Activities

As process advisors to the Innovation Agents program, Reboot undertook two principal sets of activities:

- **Advisory meetings with program implementers** (*weekly*). In addition to receiving program updates in the weekly meetings noted above, Reboot also used these sessions to advise the implementation team. Reboot shared the synthesized experiences and reactions of Innovation Agents participants and stakeholders with program managers, along with analysis and recommendations on how to adapt implementation to address challenges or seize opportunities.
- **Structured reflection workshops** (*at key milestones; four incidents*). Reboot undertook four reflection workshops with the program team, each focused on a topic that was relevant to that specific point in implementation.
- **Program-Level Strategic Communications Planning** (*at program kickoff, June 2014*).
  - » At the start of the program, a workshop on strategic communications helped the CEDN team to identify and prioritize key target audiences, understand how to frame the program's value for different audiences, and discuss different approaches to outreach and communications.
- **Theory of Change session** (*July 2014*)
  - » Reboot led the implementation team through a session to identify the key program components and pathways to intended outputs, outcomes, and ultimate impact.
  - » Reboot had independently developed a program Theory of Change that helped guide this discussion.
- **Project-Level Design Research Assessment** (*during projects' research phase, August 2014*).
  - » During the research ("empathy and problem identification") phase, Reboot conducted design research on the Innovation Agents projects' issues and users to test and validate the findings of each team's research process. This produced an independent user needs benchmarking and identified areas for further investigation for each of the teams, which were shared with the program implementation team.

- **Program-Level Implementation Reflection & Forward Planning** (*at end of the product development phase, January 2015*)
  - » At the end of the scheduled product development phase for the projects, Reboot conducted a two-day workshop to help the program team reflect on the program implementation experience. The session also helped the team determine how to close-out the program for maximum impact and plan the design of the next generation of Innovation Agents. Activities included presentation and discussion of preliminary evaluation findings and recommendations, as well as a series of interactive exercises.
- **Portfolio-Level Strategic Reflection** (*following synthesis of portfolio research, March 2015*)
  - » After expanding the scope of this project and conducting research across a broader set of open government activities, Reboot conducted a workshop to share and validate findings from the comparative research. Participants included managers from all program teams represented in the expanded research scope, as well as the leads of the CEDN team. Activities included exercises and activities to reflect on the different implementation experiences, with an emphasis on interagency coordination, and presentation of strategic recommendations.

## Annex B: Process Reflections

Below are further reflections on Reboot’s experience as developmental evaluators, as well as a more detailed discussion of the limitations faced in carrying out this research.

### Lessons Learned

The methodology was designed to surface unique lessons related to the determinants of success or failure in open government and public sector innovation programs. In any research, among the greatest challenges are both asking the right questions and feeling confident in the answers.

All respondents filter their observations and responses through the lens of their own experiences and histories. Reboot’s high-frequency interactions with program stakeholders enabled a deep familiarity with the ongoing functioning of the program, and were instrumental in building trust between researchers and key respondents. This led to more candid responses and allowed researchers to effectively triangulate data, both factors helped mitigate the impact of respondent bias in data analysis.

As the program progressed, there were marked differences in the manner in which program participants interacted with Reboot—many more personal reflections and stories of challenges were shared. Respondents provided frank and sometimes surprising reflections in third, fourth, and beyond interactions that would not have been possible in earlier conversations.

Here, too, the dual role inherent in a developmental evaluation enabled deeper research. The Innovation Agents participants were aware that their comments might be shared back with the program implementation team, but trusted Reboot’s assurance that this would only be done in a way that protected their privacy and would ultimately improve the program. As process advisors, Reboot’s broad and deep knowledge of stakeholder perspectives allowed the team to serve as a trusted sounding board for program implementers as they considered adjustments to program design and management.

This project’s emphasis on in-person and high-frequency research interactions was also essential to staying abreast of a rapidly-changing implementation context. As in many pilot programs, there were frequent adjustments to the program plan and calendar, and each of the five projects weathered ups and downs, sometimes even over the course of a single month. Reboot’s frequent presence and ongoing conversations helped the team track these developments for inclusion in ongoing analysis. Importantly, researchers were able to hear reactions to most program events, setbacks, and achievements in real time, either alongside the participants or just after they had occurred.

Such proximity meant that the research team observed and heard about activities that may not have been remembered or emphasized in later interviews. This allowed Reboot to map connections between program events, stakeholder interactions, and the broader political climate at an extremely granular level, and to confidently draw insights and patterns from a dataset that was both broad, deep, and rigorously tested across different sources and over time.

### Limitations

While Reboot’s application of the planned methodology was largely successful, there were two areas in which challenges limited this project’s ability to execute against its approach:

First, significant changes in the Innovation Agents implementation schedule prevented this project from observing the conclusion of the program. Changing timelines, shifting priorities, and unforeseen challenges are common in pilot programs—surfacing and addressing such issues is, in fact, why organizations undertake pilots before large-scale implementation.

In the case of Innovation Agents, the program timeline was extended by several months. Although public soft launches for all projects were planned for January to March 2015, a number of the project teams were still developing their prototypes in this period. While Reboot was able to shift research activities, this impacted research at the project and product levels. For example, while Reboot’s user testing of the products was conducted later and adapted to accommodate each project, highly uneven progress on the different products made it difficult to compare them.

Program delays also meant that it was not possible to observe a public piloting period and the degree to which the products were adopted by target users, a crucial determinant of their likely success and longevity. The Innovation Agents implementation team left the program closeout date open in the midst of administrative questions, largely around the disbursement of project funds. Given this uncertainty, Reboot conducted a closeout research trip in March 2015, with closeout interviews continuing through April. At the time of report writing, the Innovation Agents program was in the process of determining the plan for an official closeout.

A second, though less significant challenge, was obtaining access to program participants and key informants. Access to respondents for research activities is a perpetual challenge for evaluators, and even more so when the topic is a sensitive one, such as disrupting current approaches in public sector work.

Reboot faced particular challenges in securing interviews with more senior public officials, who would have provided better evidence of whether the program was on track to achieve its more systemic impact goals. In the cases where such interviews were secured, they were mostly brief, took place only over the phone, and were also attended by members of the program implementation team, in keeping with government protocol. This limited researchers’ ability to probe deeply on topics, and to determine whether the Innovation Agents program had penetrated that level of government as intended.

## Annex C: Program Changes from Design to Implementation

Below is a description of Innovation Agents' major program features, and how the program as-designed compared to the program as-implemented.

DESIGNED	Timeline & Milestones	Team Structure & Roles	Key Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (June 2014–August 2014): User research and problem identification</li> <li>• (August 2014): Checkpoint 1</li> <li>• (August 2014–September 2014): Solution ideation</li> <li>• (October 2014): Checkpoint 2</li> <li>• 2 months of prototyping</li> <li>• (January 2015): Presentation of version 1.0 of solution prototypes</li> <li>• (January 2015–March 2015): Three months of piloting and iteration</li> <li>• (Spring 2015): Presentation of results</li> </ul>	<p>Structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intended as an integrated team with:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» External fellow</li> <li>» Internal fellow</li> <li>» Technical development team (4 members)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Roles: Each fellow was expected to spend 20 percent of his or her time on the Innovation Agents project. Time expectations for technical teams were kept open-ended.</p> <p>Compensation: External fellows would receive a stipend for their engagement. Technical teams would be paid for their services.</p>	<p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human-centered design (HCD) methodology</li> <li>• Co-creation between government insiders and outsiders</li> <li>• Expert mentorship</li> </ul>
IMPLEMENTED	Timeline & Milestones	Team Structure & Roles	Key Activities
	<p>The overall timeline was extended, and activities undertaken within each period varied across teams.</p> <p>There was not a second official checkpoint.</p> <p>By January 2015, the original prototype launch date, only one of the products (an update to an existing government platform) had launched.</p> <p>By March 2015, the original final end date for the program, four of five teams had launched a working prototype—in the cases of those adjusting existing platforms, a final version—of their product.</p> <p>As of July 2015, the program was still in the process of determining plans for an official Innovation Agents closeout event.</p>	<p>Structure: Varied across teams</p> <p>Core team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External fellow and/or deputy</li> <li>• Internal fellow and/or deputy</li> <li>• External technology partner</li> </ul> <p>Other roles, specific to projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thematic Specialist</li> <li>• Project Manager</li> </ul> <p>Roles: Fellows all spent different amounts of time on Innovation Agents and it was difficult to calculate specific amounts.</p> <p>Compensation: There were significant delays regarding the funding to pay fellows and technical teams. The funds were approved to be disbursed in July 2015, with adjustments to the amounts according to team needs and the number of months that projects were extended</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Human-centered design (HCD) methodology:</b> HCD methodology was unevenly adopted across the project teams. Some undertook actively sought to apply the principles over the course of their project, while others incorporated no HCD practices beyond participation in training at the initial two-day program kickoff.</li> <li>• <b>Co-creation between government insiders and outsiders:</b> There was variation in the degree of co-creation between internal and external team members across the project teams. Some were highly collaborative, others “divided and conquered”, while in others the project was taken on almost-completely by the external team (adopted a consulting-type approach), or by the internal team (as a responsibility of their office).</li> <li>• <b>Expert mentorship:</b> Teams met once with mentors, and were provided a second opportunity to reach out to them, but there was not a concerted effort to continue that relationship through program activities</li> <li>• Only some of the other contributors initially planned were engaged. For all teams, mentors included Stanford University’s Public Works (which was initially engaged to provide HCD-specific guidance, but instead provided general guidance remotely on an as-needed basis).</li> </ul>

## Annex D: List of agencies and organizations interviewed

The research team undertook more than 150 interviews and instances of ethnographic observation with more than 70 individuals representing program implementers, participants, and key informants from government, civil society, the private sector, and academia. Below is a list of the agencies and organizations represented.

### Government

#### Directly Involved with Agentes de Innovación

Office of the President of Mexico, Coordinating Office for the National Digital Strategy (CEDN)

Mexican Institute for Social Security (IMSS), Innovation and Technology Development

Ministry of Finance (SHCP), Office of Performance Evaluation

Ministry of the Interior (SEGOB), Citizen Participation for Social Prevention of Violence and Crime

Ministry of Public Education (SEP), Educational Television

National Entrepreneur Institute (INADEM), Strategic Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation

#### Participants in CEDN Programs and Contextual Informants

Mexican Institute for Social Security (IMSS), Coordinating Office for First-Level Integral Healthcare

Ministry of Communications and Transport (SCT)

Ministry of Economy (SE), Information Technologies and Communications

Ministry of the Interior (SEGOB), Strategic Planning of the Department of Prevention and Citizenship Participation

Ministry of Social Development (SEDESOL), National Coordinating Office of the Prospera Program

National Council on Culture and the Arts (CONACULTA)

National Council on Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL)

National Council on Population (CONAPO)

National Water Commission (CONAGUA)

National Entrepreneur Institute (INADEM), Entrepreneur Programs and Financing

National Entrepreneur Institute (INADEM), Entrepreneurial Culture

Office of the President of Mexico, General Directorate of Information Technologies (DGTI)

### Civil Society and Private Sector

#### Directly Involved with Agentes de Innovación

Centro de Integración Ciudadana (Monterrey and Puebla)

Justicia Ciudadana

Enova

C230 Consultores

Crea

Gobierno Fácil

Avanzer

Innku

#### Further Context for CEDN's work

Codeando México

Open Intelligence (OPI)

Ashoka

Transparencia Mexicana

Fundar

México Evalúa

Inoma

### Academic Institutions

Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE)

Public Works at Stanford University d.school

Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

Massachusetts Institute of Technology Media Lab

### Individuals participating directly in Innovation Agents Program

#### Implementation Team

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#### Project Teams

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Lorena Rivero\*

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Boris Cuapio\*

\* assigned as an Innovation Agent at program launch

\* member of technical team