



**INCUBATING INNOVATION
FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE**



BREAKING NEW GROUND

Launched in April 2014, the IN.spire Innovation Hub at Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) was a “first of its kind” initiative in the Government of Canada. IN.spire is a small team, but its goal is to explore ideas so bold that, if successful, have the potential to disrupt the collective wisdom on what is possible in the public sector. IN.spire’s core team has been a leader in testing new technologies and delivering groundbreaking projects at NRCan. But its ambition for public sector innovation is nowhere more obvious than in the work of its latest endeavor - the incubation model - where IN.spire and its partner teams have created an ecosystem that has led to exciting demonstrated impacts on Public Service innovation.

Moving beyond individual projects, the incubation model creates entire innovation teams inside the Innovation Hub at NRCan. These teams are effectively start-ups whose development timeline and early productivity is dramatically accelerated under IN.spire’s umbrella. Once incubated teams are fully operational, delivering results under a self-sustaining model, they are transferred to a partnering business line owner. To date, IN.spire has incubated three teams - each with a unique design, purpose and development trajectory. All three teams have delivered strong early results, and all are considered to be leading edge innovations for the Government of Canada in their respective fields (policy innovation, talent innovation and app development).

In 2015, IN.spire asked...

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What if a new innovation team could skip all the bureaucratic and operational hurdles associated with the first year, and instead put all efforts into advancing its primary target?

What if a team that was only a few months old could deliver as though it was a fully-fledged, streamlined innovation team with years under its belt?”

IN.SPIRE'S MISSION

IN-spire's Incubation Model

Under the incubation model, IN-spire shares its resources and lessons learned with the incubated teams: collaborative space, enabling culture, mandate to innovate, access to cutting edge technologies, training, tips & tricks, a small amount of financial support and access to help from IN-spire's diversely talented team. IN-spire also provides protection from the day-to-day bureaucracy that can limit innovation.

In turn, incubated teams act as ambassadors of IN-spire's culture, accelerating the reach and adoption of new ways of working deeper into diverse parts of Natural Resources Canada and across the Public Service."

To inspire a critical mass of employees to explore and adopt new ways of working in order to measurably improve NRCan's ability to innovate for the public good.

How Is The Model Innovative?

The incubation model is unique in that it addresses a persistent challenge for the innovation community:

- Should we focus on fixing culture or concentrate on business drivers to demonstrate relevance?
- Should we create isolated innovation teams (protected from corporate bureaucracy) or teams embedded in the existing corporate structures where teams are closer to those they serve, but risk being consumed by the daily corporate grind that eats away at innovation potential?

The incubation model developed navigates these dualities by maintaining a core team that is focused on culture and separate from the daily grind, but surrounding it with new teams focused on business priorities. This model allows NRCan to maximize the benefits of both an innovation hub and dedicated teams for key business priorities, resulting in accelerated culture change and adoption of innovation practices, with better cost efficiency for the department.



IN.SPIRE'S INCUBATED TEAMS



ADAPT

ADAPT (Adaptive Design Approaches for the Policy Toolkit) is a team incubated in IN.spire to help increase the Public Service's capacity to explore and apply novel policy tools. The ADAPT team is developing a new policy framework for NRCan that is expected to bolster experimentation and policy innovation in the design and delivery of future programs. Examples of areas of focus include clean technology and energy efficiency. ADAPT is also leading the development of an interdepartmental portal, featuring resources and playbooks on more than a dozen novel policy instruments like prizes, behavioural insights, citizen science and public sector mutuals.



FREE AGENTS

Free Agents is a 2-year pilot designed to test the viability of Deloitte's proposed "Govcloud" talent model. Top innovators are recruited from across the Government of Canada and offered permanent positions at NRCan. Free Agents are then able to choose high value work by taking assignments anywhere in government. These innovators are frequently individuals who were doing routine work prior to joining the program, but displayed high innovation potential in side-of-desk or after-hours initiatives. The Free Agents pilot is not only testing Govcloud; it's unlocking the undiscovered innovation potential of Public Service talent.



CAPTURE.CANADA

Capture.Canada is IN.spire's most recent incubated team, and was added to IN.spire in January 2016. Capture.Canada was one of three winners of the Public Service App Challenge and will be part of Canada's 150th birthday (2017) celebration plan. The app focuses on participatory heritage, inviting citizen photographers to share their photos of Canada and create their Canadian story. The app also offers a platform for discovering the unique beauty of Canada, engaging with other Canadians and contributing to an authentic, ever-evolving narrative. It's an app that gives purpose to the thousands of photos that we take every day.

SERVICE TO CANADIANS

When people ride in a car they sit in the seat, but if the engine is broken they won't get far. While IN.spire doesn't deal directly with the public, the team works on the inner systems of Government, like a mechanic oiling and streamlining the interlocking gears that drive value for Canadians."

IN.SPIRE'S FINDINGS

The incubation model has been tested three times and has achieved fast, significant impact. Incubated teams boot up faster and have a higher level of impact sooner than conventional approaches for creating new teams. The model would be arguably valuable if even one of the three teams had achieved such success, but it's remarkable that all three teams have reached such influence within months of starting up – each working in fields that are notoriously fraught with bureaucracy and hurdles for innovation. The “alchemy” of culture, people and mission has delivered results that are outstanding.

The IN.spire team has proven that the model is sustainable, as the core team continues to deliver on priorities identified under its mandate to support culture change and capacity building for NRCan.

Over the past year, each of the four teams – core and incubated - have created leading edge innovations that with direct benefits for the Public Service across many departments. Public servants are “doing good better” because of the work delivered by this ecosystem of innovators... each working at the heart of reimagining how the Public Service delivers on its value proposition for Canadians.

