
Navigating the New Normal

A free online resource for finding new and better ways to deliver public services in Minnesota cities, counties, and schools

This new innovation guide covers:

- Why innovation and redesign are critical to the future of local government in Minnesota.
- What “innovation” and “redesign” really mean.
- A five-step approach to developing innovation and redesign solutions.
- In-depth exploration of seven innovation and redesign tools local governments can use.
- Eight factors leading to successful implementation.
- Many examples of successful innovation and redesign efforts for cities, counties, and schools to work from.

Navigating the New Normal is segmented into shorter sections to improve readability and to allow you to target specific innovation topics of interest or relevance to you.

**Explore *Navigating the New Normal*
at www.lmc.org/innovation**

Finding New and Better Ways to Deliver Public Services

As a Minnesota city, county, or school official, you've dealt with serious fiscal situations in the past few years and you know more challenges lie ahead. ***Navigating the New Normal: Minnesota Local Government Innovation & Redesign Guide*** was developed to assist you in finding new and better ways to deliver public services.

True innovation and redesign is not about line-item budget changes; it is about rethinking problems and deciding whether traditional solutions are working. This means taking risks and providing wholly new solutions to public problems. *Navigating the New Normal* is a guide—a compass—pointing you toward those new solutions.

What's in the Guide

Definitions of Key Concepts

In management, words like "improvement," "reengineer," "innovation," "restructure," and "redesign" are used interchangeably. But there are important differences in these concepts that are critical for local government officials to understand.

A good way to think about innovation and redesign is as a spectrum that spans from simple productivity improvements to complex system reform—or, in other words, from *incremental* to *fundamental* change. These concepts and this spectrum of change are explored more fully in the guide.

Redesign is less about improving individual components of existing business processes and more about improving the entire business process using new thinking.

A Five-Step Approach to Innovation

Navigating the New Normal outlines a five-step approach to help you think in new ways that lead to true innovation:

- **Step 1:** Clearly define the problem.
- **Step 2:** State the desired measurable outcome.
- **Step 3:** Investigate why traditional approaches are not working.
- **Step 4:** Identify alternative theories or assumptions that address the problem.
- **Step 5:** Innovate and redesign.

This five-step approach is used throughout the guide to illustrate the innovation and redesign concepts. Examples of real-life problems help bring this process to life.

New Tools for New Solutions

Navigating the New Normal discusses seven innovation and redesign tools. More than half of the guide is devoted to describing these important tools and providing many real-life city, county, and school examples for using them. The tools are:

- **Charges, incentives & targeting:** “Results-inducing incentives” can be better than compliance in achieving public good. This section shows a methodology of using incentives within an organization, with employees and with citizens.
- **Collaboration:** Collaboration and other forms of service sharing are popular redesign approaches. This section provides examples of joint efforts and discusses how they might best be accomplished.
- **Competitive contracting:** Local government needs to decide what is done, but it doesn’t always need to perform the service directly. This section outlines what to consider when it comes to contracting.
- **Prevention:** Not often thought of in terms of innovation and redesign, changing the focus to prevention can lead to effective new approaches. This section reviews the possibilities.
- **Community responsibility:** Over the years, local governments have assumed more and more of what was once private activity. This section suggests ways of focusing on what local government should and should not do.
- **Consumer choice:** For some services, it is possible—and potentially better—to let citizens choose a service provider. This section discusses the benefits and limitations of consumer choice.
- **Performance accountability:** Performance data is needed to define problems and to assess alternatives. This section presents a performance management system for local government use.

To achieve true innovation, you need to think in new ways. Consider what Henry Ford said: “If I asked my customers what they wanted, they’d have said ‘a faster horse.’”

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A Collaborative Effort

Navigating the New Normal was written by Jay Kiedrowski of the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs and Public and Nonprofit Leadership Center and funded by the McKnight Foundation.

The guide was collaboratively created to assist local government officials and staff who believe that innovation is necessary within their jurisdiction but are unsure about how to transform that belief into a successful outcome. Representatives and staff from the Association of Minnesota Counties, the League of Minnesota Cities, and the Minnesota School Boards Association reviewed drafts of the guide and provided feedback from the perspective of local officials. The local officials who served on the project's advisory committee were:

Carol Bomben, School Board Member, Eden Prairie
Kevin Donovan, School Board Member, Mahtomedi
Sara Folsted, County Administrator, Renville County
Matt Fulton, City Manager, Coon Rapids
Shawn Gillen, City Administrator, Grand Rapids
David Minke, Deputy County Administrator, Anoka County
Tom Nelson, Interim School Superintendent, Stillwater
Roz Peterson, School Board Member, Lakeville
Tom Renier, President, Northland Foundation, Duluth
Terry Schneider, Mayor, Minnetonka
Nancy Straw, West Central Initiative, Fergus Falls
Jack Swanson, Commissioner, Roseau County

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