

AOT Innovates! Developing and Implementing a Strategy for Increasing Innovation and Continuous Improvement within AOT

PROJECT TITLE

AOT Innovates!

STUDY TIMELINE

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Introduction or Problem Statement

Innovation and continuous improvement are key to achieving organizational goals and long-term success. Innovation is the process that an individual or organization undertakes to conceptualize new products, processes, and ideas or to approach existing products, processes, and ideas in new ways. AOT aspires to a future where employees at all levels of the organization can identify a problem or opportunity, develop and implement an innovative solution, and share their improvements with others. To achieve this vision, AOT has launched an initiative called AOT Innovates! to engage employees in innovation and continuous improvement.



Methodology or Action Taken

AOT Innovates! is based upon five components:

1. Leadership. A persistent culture of innovation depends on strong leadership that establishes innovation as a core value throughout an organization. Top leaders must demonstrate their support through steady engagement with staff. However, it is also important to establish innovation leadership in multiple levels of the organization, such as through a network of innovation stewards.
2. Empowerment. The goal of empowerment is to equip every employee with the channels and knowledge they need to efficiently propose and evaluate their own or another's ideas. Creative techniques such as competitions, social media, and crowdsourced ideation platforms help stimulate engagement in innovation. We will also ensure adequate training and resources are available for staff to engage in continuous improvement and innovation.
3. Communication. To be effective, organizations must find affordable and effective ways to communicate stories about innovation across multiple channels. A steady groundswell of new content and regular reinforcement

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captures and keeps employees' attention in a world full of distractions and reinforces the message that employees have leadership's blessing to make innovation a priority.

4. Recognition. Employees who see that efforts to implement good ideas are rewarded are more likely to "give it a go" themselves. Frequent and timely recognition is a powerful way to motivate other employees to try to be more innovative.
5. Measurement. Routine tracking and communication of the pace of innovation help keep employees engaged and motivated and can increase credibility with stakeholders or the public.

Visit our SharePoint site for additional resources, tools, examples etc. and to submit ideas or successfully implemented innovations.

[AOT Innovates! \(sharepoint.com\)](https://sharepoint.com)

Conclusions or Next Steps

We have now launched a new program for soliciting employee innovations from across AOT and are planning to provide educational opportunities to increase employee awareness and interest in continuous improvement and innovation in the coming calendar year.

Moving forward, we are focused on change management with a goal of driving adoption and cementing the AOT Innovates! initiative into our organizational culture. This requires updating a communications plan, developing marketing materials, and launching our Innovation Steward Network. Innovation Stewards will assist the Performance Team and AOT leadership by serving as passionate champions and ambassadors for innovation across AOT. More specifically, Innovation Stewards will:

1. Encourage innovation and continuous improvement within their divisions and/or teams. This includes leading by example and being an innovator/improver.
2. Help communicate innovation messages from AOT leadership and the Performance Team to their divisions and/or teams. This could include requesting time on meeting agendas to discuss innovation or hanging posters in physical office spaces.
3. Gather information and feedback from employees to share with the Performance Team and AOT leadership
4. Partner with AOT leadership and the Performance Team to address roadblocks for innovation and continuous improvement

Potential Impacts and VTrans Benefits

It is important for AOT to develop and sustain a culture of innovation and continuous improvement to manage public funds efficiently and effectively and deliver increased value to the public. Furthermore, we operate in a world with rapidly changing needs, and our agency requires innovation to both meet current challenges and modernize our transportation system for the future. By leveraging innovation, we can identify and develop new approaches for solving new and persistent challenges and improve our transportation services for the public. Captured innovations will allow us to track, aggregate and share cost savings realized, efficiencies gained etc.