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THE IMPORTANCE OF ORGANIZATION CULTURE, VISION AND VALUES

*“Do you know what my favorite renewable fuel is?
An ecosystem for innovation.”*

–Thomas Friedman

Every organization and its leaders and employees express values, norms and practices through their actions. We know what matters in the organization by how we see people treating each other, customers, stakeholders, and all those that the organization serves. We also know that it starts at the top; organizations whose leaders support a healthy climate of collaboration, change and renewal, guided by data-driven decision making and a reasonable tolerance for risk, will be most likely to succeed at being judged by their citizens and their employees as effective and desirable places in which to work and thrive over the long term.

In particular, certain values and behaviors will have a dramatic effect on the organization’s willingness to seek out and embrace innovation and continuous improvement: openness to new ideas, integration of innovation into the strategic plans and management initiatives, willingness to listen to the voice of the customer on what changes might be needed and valued, support for teamwork and creative problem-solving, systems and metrics to identify problems and opportunities and to evaluate the success of various solutions, and an appropriate tolerance for risk, combined with an understanding of how to methodically mitigate risk and to reward both failure and success.

An organization will show evidence of its commitment to innovation and continuous improvement in many ways. Please respond to the following questions individually, then share and discuss answers with your Innovation Team.

EXERCISE

Can you describe how innovation and creativity are referenced in your organization’s vision and values statements?

Are innovation and/or continuous improvement reflected in your organization’s strategic plan? How?

Is innovation linked to systems for recruiting, selecting, training, evaluating, recognizing and rewarding employees?

Is there an office or group in your organizations identified as being the central coordination point for innovation and suggestions for improvement?

How does the organization solicit and manage new ideas for improving services and processes?

How do employees find out about how to use the suggestion program to advance their ideas?

Do the organization's leaders publicly recognize and celebrate new ideas and innovations?

How welcome are ideas, criticisms, and suggestions from citizens and other stakeholders?

Does the organization have a strong network of partnerships and external collaborations?

How well are new ideas and proposed changes communicated throughout the organization?

How well are teamwork and collaborative problem-solving encouraged and supported?

Does the organization regularly establish criteria or measures to define success and are results tracked and shared with stakeholders?

Does the organization routinely debrief what worked and what didn't, and share learning about these observations?

Answers to these questions will help guide the organization in building and enhancing the culture of innovation going forward. Don't be discouraged if from where you sit, the organization is not a beacon of innovation yet! We all have work to do. You and your organization's leaders will have an opportunity to complete a more comprehensive Organizational Assessment during the Innovation Academy, and the anonymous responses from team members and leaders will be shared and compared in order to help identify strategies to advance the culture of innovation in the organization.