

23BG02 – Output A7

# **Innovation Competition**

Strengthening the Strategic Approach and Innovation in the  
Civil Service in Bulgaria

June 2024



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# Policy Brief: Innovation Competition

## Key messages

- The existing innovation competition led by the Institute of Public Administration should be expanded and enhanced, through collaboration with the Council of Ministers, to meet identified challenges for increasing innovative capacity.
- The design of future innovation competitions should prioritise:
  - increasing awareness and normalising public sector innovation;
  - demonstrating leadership support and providing formal incentives for innovative behaviours;
  - building a case study library of innovations in Bulgaria;
  - supporting skills development.
- The OECD recommends expanding and enhancing the existing innovation competition in three ways:
  1. Developing an 'Innovator Awards' programme. This should recognise completed innovations and innovators across the public sector through a high-profile open-call for innovations and awards ceremony.
  2. Enhancing the support available for winners of the existing innovation competition.
  3. Exploring the role of a 'Challenge-based' competition to address innovation priorities as part of a future public sector innovation action plan.
- Existing innovation competitions and awards programmes around the world provide valuable insights for consideration.

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## I. Proposal for innovation competition

### 1. Background

Innovation competitions are used by governments to recognise, stimulate, enhance or diffuse innovations in the public sector (OECD, 2017<sup>[1]</sup>) (Rosenblatt, 2011<sup>[2]</sup>). As governments aim to meet citizens' needs and keep pace with the rate of change in the world, supporting public sector innovation (PSI) is vital<sup>1</sup>.

The Institute of Public Administration (IPA) in Bulgaria has had an innovation competition since 2023. Its primary goal has been to stimulate and develop new ideas that optimise work processes. The current competition is considered low-aware among public servants, as previous calls only collected 18 ideas in 2023 and 10 in 2024. However, the competition is driving concrete innovative projects. As of the contest in 2023, one idea is fully implemented, one is in process, and a third is being discussed due to resource constraints. In 2024, two shortlisted ideas will be supported. As Bulgaria's State Administration collaborates with the OECD to develop a vision and action plan for increasing innovative capacity, this is an opportunity to review the existing competition.

IPA and the Council of Ministers' Administration (CoMA) could further collaborate to enhance and expand this competition. This paper sets out proposals for the future innovation competition, drawing on preliminary findings of public sector innovation needs in Bulgaria and examples of similar initiatives in other contexts around the world.

### 2. Summary of recommendations

The OECD recommends that:

1. IPA and CoMa collaborate to expand the current innovation competition to include an 'Innovation Awards' programme. This programme should recognise completed innovations and innovators across the public sector through a high-profile open-call for innovations and awards ceremony.
2. CoMA develops an online case study library of good practice using shortlisted entries to the 'Innovation Awards' programme.
3. IPA and CoMa enhance and expand the support available for winners of the existing innovation competition to enable high-potential ideas to be implemented as pilot projects.
4. CoMa explores using a 'Challenge-based' approach to address innovation priorities as part of a future Public Sector Innovation Action Plan.

### 3. Objectives for an innovation competition in Bulgaria

Preliminary findings from the ongoing assessment of innovative capacity in the State Administration have identified a number of challenges for innovating in Bulgaria at the individual, organisational and system levels. Some of these are well suited to being addressed by an expanded and enhanced innovation competition.

Table 1 describes five proposed objectives that the expanded and enhanced innovation competition should prioritise in response to the challenges identified.

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<sup>1</sup> The project was funded by the European Union via Technical Support Instrument, and implemented by the OECD, in cooperation with the European Commission.

**Table 1. How proposed objectives respond to challenges for innovation capacity identified.**

Challenge identified on Bulgaria's Innovative Capacity Assessment	Objective
<b>Low awareness of public sector innovation:</b> Public sector innovation is not a widely used term, and there is not a commonly understood definition among public servants. Case studies of public sector innovation in Bulgaria are not collated and used to guide public servants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase awareness of public sector innovation among civil servants.</li> <li>• Create a case study library of innovation best practice in Bulgaria.</li> </ul>
<b>Lack of incentives to innovate:</b> Despite personal motivation, there is a lack of formal incentives or rewards to increase innovative behaviours in the Administration, spanning from leadership recognition to salary increases and career advancements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide formal incentives for innovative behaviours.</li> </ul>
<b>Innovation driven by senior leaders:</b> While 52% of Bulgarian public servants have acknowledged their involvement in innovation, this percentage rises significantly among executives and middle managers, with 74% and 65% respectively. Permission to innovate is recognised by only around 30% of administrative and professional staff, while it rises to 40% among more senior staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate permission for innovation among civil servants at all levels of seniority.</li> </ul>
<b>Shortage of skills required to develop, test and implement innovative solutions:</b> Only 27% of public servants surveyed indicated confidence in skills relating to applying innovation, suggesting that many need additional support to put innovative ideas into practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide civil servants with the skills and support necessary to implement innovations.</li> </ul>

Source: OECD Forthcoming Innovative Capacity Assessment of Bulgaria, 2024.

#### **4. The design of innovation competitions**

The design of innovation competitions globally varies considerably, depending on their objectives and the resources available. We can identify three overarching categories of innovation competition based on their objectives: 'Awards'; 'Challenge-based' competitions; and competitions to reach 'Scale or adapting'. Each category has a set of typical design features, described in Table 3: *'Innovation competition categories, objectives and typical design features'*.

Of course, many innovation competitions combine elements of multiple categories. However, these typical features are useful in considering the most appropriate design for the objectives of the expanded and enhanced innovation competition in Bulgaria.

**The design of the expanded and enhanced innovation competition should combine features from the 'Awards' and 'Challenge-based' categories.**

Four of the objectives proposed for the expanded and enhanced innovation competition in Bulgaria (Table 1) match primarily with the 'Award' category (increase awareness of public sector innovation among civil servants; create a case study library of innovation best practice in Bulgaria; provide formal incentives for innovative behaviours; demonstrate senior leadership support and permission for innovation among civil servants at all levels of seniority). One of the objectives proposed matches with the 'Challenge-based' category (provide civil servants with skills and support necessary to implement innovations).

#### **5. The current IPA innovation competition Model**

The current IPA innovation competition Model has some features typical in 'Challenge-based', but other features which are more common in other categories of competition. In particular:

- It is open to new ideas (not implemented innovations). This is a typical feature of 'Challenge-based' competitions.
- It addresses a specific challenge (optimising work processes within the public administration). This is a typical feature of a 'Challenge-based' competition.
- It is open to public servants only and includes an event with some emphasis on celebration. This is more typical of 'Awards'.

**Table 2. The current IPA innovation competition**

Objective	Eligibility	Evaluation criteria	Benefits for participants
Develop new innovations which optimise work processes within the public administration.  Provide civil servants with skills and support necessary to implement innovations.	Innovative Ideas (not implemented projects).  Open to all civil servants	1. Maturity: How stable and consistent the idea is. 2. Impact: The degree of impact on the daily work environment that the new solution is expected to achieve. 3. Short-term results: Measure the amount of "quick wins" that can be achieved through the project. 3. Degree of feasibility: The extent to which the project can be rapidly implemented. 4. Planned timelines: Foreseeable timeframes for implementation. 5. Capacity: short- or/and long-term purposes and its impact.	Applicants with shortlisted ideas are invited to an event organised by IPA. The event provides methodological support from speakers and mentors – with a particular focus on design thinking – to shape the concept into a prototype or project that the respective administration can fund and implement later.

Source: (Institute of Public Administration, n.d.[3]) and OECD Interview, 2024.

## **6. Proposal to expand and enhance the innovation competition**

**The OECD suggests expanding and enhancing the current innovation competition in three ways:**

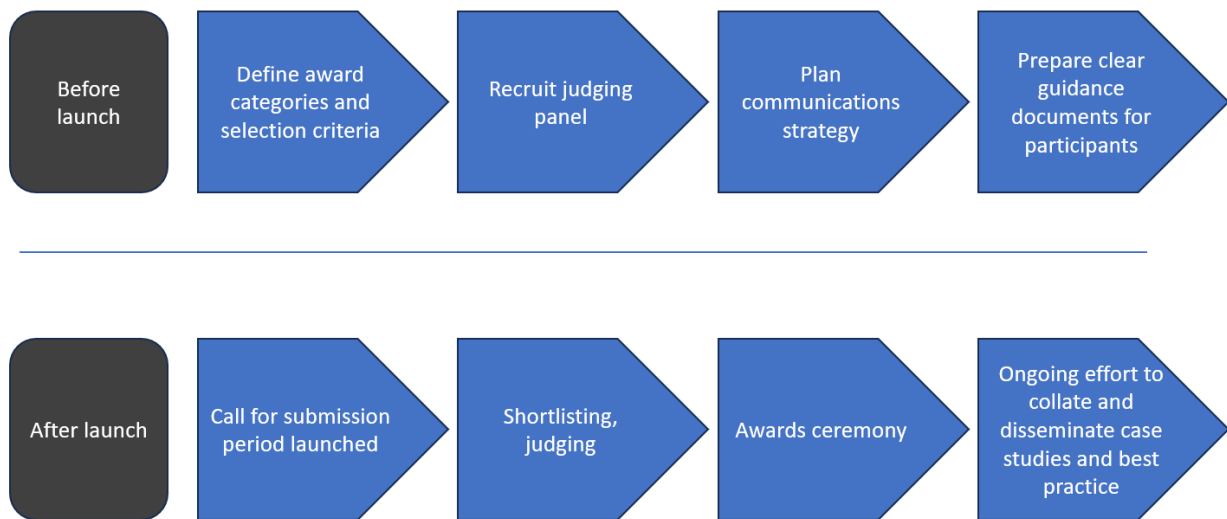
1. Developing an 'Innovator Awards' programme (distinct from the existing innovation competition).
2. Enhancing the support available for winners of the existing innovation competition.
3. Explore using a 'Challenge-based' approach to address innovation priorities as part of a future PSI action plan.

### **6.1 Developing an 'Innovation Awards' programme**

**Overview and objectives:** The 'Innovation Awards' programme will be a competition which awards prizes to celebrate examples of particularly innovative practice. The 'Innovation Awards' programme aims to:

- Increase awareness of public sector innovation among civil servants.
- Recognise and reward innovative civil servants.
- Demonstrate senior leadership support and permission for innovation among civil servants at all levels of seniority.
- Create a case study library of innovation best practice in Bulgaria.

**Figure 1. Overview of stages involved in a typical awards programme**



Note: Figure elaborated by the author.

**Eligibility and award criteria:** The 'Innovation Awards' should use multiple award categories to demonstrate the wide range of innovative activities in the public sector. Potential categories include:

- Best innovation using technology and data.
- Best innovation using a new method, tool or approach.
- Best innovation of an internal process.
- Best innovation to improve the work environment.
- Best innovation collaborating with citizens.
- Outstanding Individual Changemaker Award (targeting professional and administrative employees, with candidates nominated by their co-workers).

Application forms for the awards should be kept as short as possible to encourage widest levels of engagement and reduce barriers to entry.

Eligibility criteria should remain broad, allowing all public sector individuals or teams to enter. However, all submissions are required to be implemented and operational. To ensure buy-in at all levels of the administration it is advised that some awards require submissions at the organisational level (e.g. Best innovation to improve the work environment), while more detailed categories (e.g. Best innovation using a new method, tool or approach) could be submitted by any public sector individual or team.

Award criteria should be used to shortlist and assess submissions. This can be adapted to specific award categories, but are likely to include:

- Eligibility: Does the submission meet the eligibility criteria?
- Impact: How much impact has the innovation had?
- Replicability and growth: What potential for scaling and wider implementation?
- Innovation: How innovative are the methods or outputs?

An 'Awards Jury' should be appointed to make final decisions about award winners. Ideally, this jury should bring together high-profile people with varying expertise (senior politicians, civil servants, international innovators, technology experts).

**High profile benefits for participants:** The 'Innovation Awards' should have clear benefits for participants which are specified from the outset. CoMa and IPA should consider what can be offered as recognition or tangible prizes for Award winners (see Box 1.1 for examples from existing Innovation Awards in Denmark and the UK). It is suggested that winners should receive training opportunities. Where possible, these opportunities could involve covering travel and accommodation costs to visit innovation organisations in neighbouring countries as part of peer-exchange missions.

CoMa and IPA should lead a high-profile communications campaign around the Awards programme, culminating in a high-profile event for shortlisted applicants to reward and celebrate their success.

**Case Study Library:** CoMa should collate shortlisted entries (not just winning entries) to develop a 'Case Study' library. This can be used in two ways. Firstly, it is a repository of examples that can be used to inspire scaling and adapting of innovations and as part of training programmes. Secondly, it is a database of innovations which can be used to monitor and measure the quantity and quality of innovations over time across multiple years.

**Innovation Network:** CoMa and IPA should explore synergies between the Innovation Awards the Innovation Network convened by IPA. Awards are likely to be more powerful when combined with a range of other elements aimed towards similar objectives (Jamie Berryhill, 2017<sup>[4]</sup>). For example, individuals shortlisted for awards could be encouraged to join the Innovation Network – and vice versa – and case studies of award winners used by the Innovation Network for learning opportunities.

## 6.2 Enhancing the support available for winners of the existing innovation competition

**Overview and objectives:** Enhancing the support available for winners of the existing innovation competition aims to increase the likelihood of submitted ideas being implemented and scaled across the public sector.

### Suggested enhancements to the support available for winners:

- CoMa and IPA should explore securing funding in advance of the competition to enable development of prototypes or 'minimum viable products' of winning ideas.
- CoMa and IPA should extend the duration of support available to winning ideas beyond a single event through the use of external consultants. Consultants should have relevant expertise in design, digital product development or prototyping of innovations. As well as extending the period of time that support is available, this will also reduce the burden of implementation on competition applicants, who will need to juggle participation with their existing responsibilities.
- CoMa and IPA should explore providing mentors from private sector or civil society partners to provide additional support to winners and broaden engagement with the programme.
- Training provided through the 'Competition Event' could be expanded to include 'pitching training', to help participants make the case for why their idea should win.
- The criteria for shortlisting should include extra emphasis on: a) feasibility of implementation, ensuring that shortlisted ideas have more potential of being implemented; b) an executive sponsor indicating willingness to pilot the idea in their organisation if it is successful through the competition.

### Box 1. Case Study: Innovation Awards in Denmark and the UK

#### Denmark

The Danish Innovation Awards programme, the 'New Together Better' award, has two objectives: to normalise public sector innovation by drawing out examples of excellent practice; to build a set of case studies and examples for the Centre for Public-Private Innovation (CO-PI) to build communication efforts around.

The Awards programme is open to all public sector organisation to submit innovations. Innovations must be implemented, and there is particular weight in the assessment of entries towards innovations which were facilitated by a new collaboration, embedded evaluation of the innovation from an early stage, and are of particular relevance for others with potential for sharing knowledge. The 2021 iteration of the Awards received submissions from 80 public sector workplaces.

A 'Jury' made up of representatives from the Danish Design Centre, CO-PI, Associations of Regions and Municipalities, and major labour unions selects the winner. In addition, participants in an 'Innovation Day' vote for the winner of the 'Audience Award' from a shortlist of 5 submissions.

There are a number of features of the Danish Awards which are notable:

- Particular emphasis is put on efforts to share further information about the innovations identified through the programme. To celebrate the 2021 Awards, podcast episodes with the nominees were recorded. In addition, details of case studies were published in print and online (Krogh Jeppesen and Jensen, 2021<sup>[5]</sup>).
- Winners of the awards received funded study visits to exchange experiences with neighbouring countries.
- A big effort is made to reduce barriers to entry and the application stage. Applicants are only required to send an email answering three questions, and are free to attached any further documents. It is then CO-PI who take this information and create case studies in more consistent formats.

#### The UK Civil Service Awards

The Civil Service Awards is an annual awards programme which has taken place for the last 19 years. Recently iterations have used changing award categories to align the programme with the Cabinet Office's Modernisation and Reform Strategy, 'A Modern Civil Service' ((n.a.), 2021<sup>[6]</sup>). Categories related to 'An Innovative Civil Service' include 'Best use of data, science and technology award', 'Creative solutions award', 'Evaluation and analysis award'. Awards are available for innovative projects and teams, as well as inspirational leaders and employees.

The awards programme is supported by funding from sponsors. It culminates in a high profile awards ceremony, attended by senior leaders.

Source: OECD.

### 6.3 Explore using a 'Challenge-based' approach to address innovation priorities as part of a future Public Sector Innovation Action Plan.

As CoMa coordinates work to develop a PSI action plan, there is potential to use Challenge-based approaches (also known as Challenge Prizes approaches) to stimulate a diverse group of actors around public sector challenges. As identified in Table 4, there are circumstances where Challenge-based



approach is more suited – such as to address problems where there is a market failure, high risk and development costs, or where approaches from different disciplines may be required.

Further work between now and Autumn 2024 should consider the suitability of this approach, based on the priorities for public sector innovation identified as part of the ongoing assessment of public sector innovation capacity in Bulgaria being led by CoMa in partnership with the OECD.

### Box 2. Case Study: Supporting the development of ideas into test projects through a Challenge-based approach in Sierra Leone

The ‘Governance Innovation Bootcamp’ is a collaboration between the MIT Governance Lab and Sierra Leone’s Directorate of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI). The ambition of the programme is to identify governance problems and develop creative, evidence-based solutions.

The challenge prize bootcamp is two weeks long, combining non-financial and financial support. Participants take part in workshops, lectures and a facilitated process to support them to develop a prototype for a solution to an identified problem. At the end of the two weeks, participants pitch their idea to a panel of judges.

Winning pitches receive significant financial and non-financial support. \$80,000 was awarded across three winning teams to enable development of preliminary versions of products which can be used to gather feedback from users. In addition, the DSTI provide six months of ongoing technical support to winning teams – including physical spaces to meet, technical assistance with product development and design, and brokering introductions for future financing.

Source: (Sullivan, 2021<sup>[7]</sup>)

## 6.4 Resources and timelines

The table below sets out indicative resource requirements and timelines. However, the exact resources required will vary depending on final competition design considerations.

**Table 3. Indicative costs and timelines**

Recommendation	Resourcing	Timeline
1. Develop an ‘Innovator Awards’ programme	<p>This recommendation requires relatively little resource.</p> <p>Key cost involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Staff to manage the awards programme:</b> Staff are required to coordinate the project, review submissions, coordinate the event. This typically involves intensive work for 2-3 staff for a period of several months.</li> <li>• <b>Costs of awards:</b> Awards can vary in cost. For example, the Danish Innovation Awards provides study trips to winners. The UK Civil Service Awards provides certificates.</li> <li>• <b>Venue and catering:</b> Awards typically involve a major event with drinks and catering to recognise the achievement.</li> </ul>	<p>CoMA and IPA should consider how the timeline of a potential awards programme could be aligned with the application process for the existing innovation competition.</p> <p>Typical awards programmes include these stages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Preparation: Definition of award categories; recruitment of judging panel; definition of selection criteria; event planning.</li> <li>2. Launch: Major communications effort to launch the awards and invite submissions.</li> <li>2. Open for submissions: A limited time window during which submissions must be made.</li> <li>3. Shortlisting and selection: Typically shortlisting is carried about by the core team (CoMA and IPA) before a judging panel selects winners from a shortlist.</li> <li>4. Prize giving: Awards ceremony.</li> <li>5. Dissemination: Ongoing effort after the awards ceremony to disseminate best practice.</li> </ol>

<b>2. Enhance support available for winners of the existing innovation competition</b>	This recommendation requires additional resource. The exact costs would vary depending which of the proposed enhancements were adopted.	CoMA and IPA should aim to incorporate these support into their existing timelines for the innovation competition.  This proposal would require an extension to the timeline in order to extend the duration of support available to winners. For example, support could be offered over a 6-month period following selection of winners.
<b>3. Explore a 'Challenge-based' approach to address innovation priorities (Also known as Challenge Prizes).</b>	<p>Launching a Challenge-based approach to address innovation priorities would require significant investment. Challenge-based competitions vary in scale, but typically include a significant financial incentive to encourage innovators to address a specific challenge.</p> <p>Key costs involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Staff to manage the competition:</b></li> <li>• <b>Non-financial support:</b> Participants receive non-financial support to help develop their solutions to a challenge. This may include commissioned external support (e.g. support to develop digital prototypes).</li> <li>• <b>Financial support:</b> Cash prizes are available for winning teams. Prizes vary in size from 10k EUR to well in excess of 1m EUR.</li> </ul>	This option should be assessed by CoMA, with OECD support, during the development of the Action Plan for public sector innovation during Summer and Autumn 2024.

## 7. Comparing innovation competitions around the world

There are many different forms of innovation competitions around the world. The design of innovation competitions reflects their objectives, and the resources available. We can identify three categories of innovation competition based on their objectives: 'Awards'; 'Challenge-based'; and 'Scale or enhance'. innovation competitions in each of these categories have a set of typical design features which reflect those objectives. A key takeaway from comparing innovation competitions globally is that the design of a competition should reflect its key objectives, and it is unlikely that a single competition can deliver on multiple divergent objectives. Awards and competitions are likely to be more powerful when combined with a range of other elements aimed towards similar objectives (Jamie Berryhill, 2017<sup>[4]</sup>).

**Table 4. Innovation competition categories, objectives and typical design features**

Category	Objectives	Typical eligibility or award criteria	Typical features	Example
<b>Awards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase awareness of public sector innovation.</li> <li>• Signal a work environment that values proactive and innovative behaviours.</li> <li>• Build a library of case studies and good practice.</li> <li>• Recognise and reward outstanding public servants.</li> <li>• Improve public perception of the public sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open to completed innovations.</li> <li>• Award categories for individuals, teams, and organisations.</li> <li>• Broad eligibility criteria (e.g. different innovation methods and policy areas).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively low cost to implement.</li> <li>• Held on a regular (often annual) basis.</li> <li>• Major communication efforts targeted at all public servants.</li> <li>• High-profile awards ceremony with buy-in from senior management.</li> <li>• Success typically defined by engagement (e.g. number of entries) and attitudes of public servants.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Denmark, UK, South Africa</a>
<b>Challenge-based</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stimulate new ideas and the application of diverse approaches to address specific pre-defined</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open to ideas (not just completed projects).</li> <li>• Open to a wide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High costs.</li> <li>• One-off competitions, often across multiple years.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Canada, USA, Sierra Leone</a> (see Box 2)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>challenges.</li> <li>Develop new ideas into scalable solutions.</li> <li>Develop solutions to problems where some factors – such as a market failure, high development costs, high risk of failure – prevent innovators from attempting to address it.</li> <li>Encourage innovators from different fields and disciplines to address a particular challenge.</li> <li>Provide additional support to help and upskill innovators.</li> <li>Target innovation efforts towards particular policy objectives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>range of individuals and organisations inside and outside the public sector.</li> <li>Narrower eligibility criteria around a precise problem.</li> <li>Award criteria emphasising feasibility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication efforts targeted at organisations and networks with a mandate for innovation.</li> <li>Financial support provided to develop ideas further.</li> <li>Non-financial support (e.g. skills, tools) provided to develop ideas further (e.g. as part of an ‘accelerator’ programme).</li> <li>Success typically defined by quality of ideas and number of innovations developed and scaled.</li> </ul>	
<b>Scaling or adapting innovation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scale innovations across government.</li> <li>Provide additional support to help and upskill innovators.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open to early-stage or completed innovations with high potential for scaling.</li> <li>Award criteria emphasise feasibility and availability of collaborators for scaling.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Variable costs, depending on the support offered.</li> <li>Communication efforts targeted at organisations and networks with a mandate for innovation.</li> <li>Financial and non-financial support provided to competition winners to develop and scale innovations.</li> <li>Evaluation support to monitor and measure impact of innovation.</li> <li>Success typically defined by number and impact of innovations developed and scaled.</li> <li>Use of ‘Hackathon’, ‘Accelerator’ or ‘Incubator’ formats.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">South Africa</a>

Note: Table created by author (2024)

## 7.1 Awards

Innovation awards can help increase innovation capacity at the individual, organisation and system levels. At the individual levels, awards can impact on extrinsic motivation for innovation. At the organisation levels, awards can impact on leadership and organisational culture. At the system levels, awards can support the normalisation of innovation across the public sector (Kaur et al., 2022<sup>[8]</sup>).

Table 3 describes typical features of Innovation Awards, although specifics vary. Typically, financial and non-financial rewards for awards winners are secondary to the recognition and awareness raising benefits. This means awards can be relatively inexpensive tools. Awards programmes are common across different countries. Countries with Innovation Award programmes include: [Australia](#), [Belgium](#), [Brazil](#), [Canda](#), [Denmark](#), [Ireland](#), [Scotland](#), [South Africa](#), [UK](#), [USA](#).

## 7.2 Challenge-based

Challenge-based or Challenge Prizes approaches ‘offer a series of incentives, with a final prize given to whoever can first or most effectively meet a defined goal’ (Challenge Works, 2022<sup>[9]</sup>). Challenge-based

competitions differ from other forms of award of competition in that they reward actions to solve a problem, rather than past achievements. Typically, Challenge-based competitions shortlist ideas, awarding non-financial and financial support to enable further progress and development of innovations.

Challenge-based competitions can be used to stimulate innovation among a wide range of stakeholders. However, there are examples of Challenge-based competitions targeted at government entities. For example, the 'Governance Innovation Bootcamp' is a collaboration between the MIT Governance Lab and Sierra Leone's Directorate of Science, Technology and Innovation (see Box 2). Teams from government departments pitched for funding, with \$80,000 awarded to enabling development of preliminary versions of products which can be used to gather feedback from users (Sullivan, 2021<sup>[7]</sup>).

### 7.3 Scaling or Enhancing Innovation

Competitions can also be used to prioritise scaling or adapting innovations. The Public Sector Innovation Awards Programme in South Africa aims to achieve this in two ways. Firstly, there is a specific category of award, 'Replication and Adaptation of Innovation Solutions', which showcases the importance of replication and scaling of innovation in other contexts and environments. Secondly, the Awards programme feeds into a broader replication and scaling programme which funds at least two of the Awards programme finalists to be replicated or adapted to new contexts (CPSI, 2012<sup>[10]</sup>).

## 8. Considerations

**As CoMa and IPA expand and enhance their existing innovation competition in line with the recommendations above, international practice suggests the following considerations should inform the implementation a new Innovation Awards programme and enhanced support for winners of the existing innovation competition:**

1. **Clarifying purpose and objectives:** Clearly define the innovation competition's purpose and objectives, identifying which objectives are a greater priority than others.
2. **Publicising the awards:** Invest sufficient effort in broadcasting the innovation Competitions across the public sector to attract as many applications as possible, and to use the launch as a way to signal public sector innovation is a priority for the government.
3. **Easy application:** Consider how the design of the application process can be as streamline as possible to ensure there are very few barriers to entry.
4. **Diverse award categories:** Use multiple award categories to shine a light on different types of innovation across the public sector – such as digital innovation, procedural innovations, service innovations, and innovations involving participatory methods with citizens.
5. **Communicating rewards clearly:** Decisions on prizes, non-financial support or financial support should be clearly communicated when the innovation competitions are launched in order to manage expectations of participants and avoid disappointment.
6. **Building a repository of case studies and best practice:** Use innovation competitions to build a repository of good practice across the public sector. Over time, this database of case studies will enable monitoring and analysis of progress or trends in public sector innovation.
7. **High profile event:** Consider how a high-profile event can be used both to reward and recognise achievements, while also being a clear public signal of the importance of this agenda to the government.
8. **Allocate sufficient resources:** Ensure there is sufficient budget to cover the direct costs (e.g. event venue) and indirect costs (e.g. staff capacity to project manage the Competitions). Consider if there are opportunities for external sponsors to help co-fund initiatives or provide non-financial support (e.g. training or consultancy support for award winners).

9. **Ensure visible buy-in from leaders:** Consider how roles can be created for senior leaders in the administrative and/or political levels of government to ensure visible buy-in. For example, recruiting high-profile leaders to form part of an award jury can provide visible buy-in and endorsement.
10. **Design evaluation mechanisms from the outset:** Define the criteria for success of the innovation competitions in advance, and consider how these can be evaluated during or after the competition, for example through the use of participant surveys.

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