



Creating a Culture of Innovation in Departments of Transportation

As transportation technology continues to advance, and private companies take advantage of it, public transportation departments are at risk of falling behind. As revenues shrink and maintenance of old infrastructure becomes more expensive, NCHRP states that adopting a culture that promotes innovation can help alleviate these problems. NCHRP's report includes numerous examples of how DOT's across the country have created an effective culture of innovation.

Creating a culture of innovation requires collaboration between leadership and employees, where everyone is encouraged to generate ideas. Establishing a clear vision or goal for the organization and a system that allows to people to pitch, review, and implement ideas are crucial to maintaining this kind of culture.

An innovation culture often creates enthusiasm throughout a department, where everyone feels fully invested in the organization.

The NCHRP outlined five building blocks that are important to sustaining a culture of innovation.

The Five Building Blocks of Innovation

- Leadership:** Management needs to highlight the importance of innovation. Leadership should create clear goals and values for everyone to work together on, keep everything streamlined, and provide time and a structure for employees to work on ideas.
- Empowerment:** All employees must be welcomed to contribute to the organization's growth. This is done by crowd-sourcing ideas, offering innovation training, and encouraging teamwork.
- Communication:** Within an organization and outward to the customers: Share innovation ideas with employees and constituents with branding, newsletters, and innovation fairs.
- Recognition:** Rewarding employees for innovation and valuing their sense of investment in a new culture of innovation.
- Measurement:** Innovation needs to have clear goals and measurable achievements. Track cost, time and satisfaction to make sure that the approach to innovation is effective.

Adapted from Guide to Creating and Sustaining a Culture of Innovation for Departments of Transportation by NCHRP and based on the article from N-CATT Tech News March 2020.

N-CATT helps translate emerging transportation technologies for states and localities across the United States.

NCHRP Source: www.nap.edu/catalog/25307/guide-to-creating-and-sustaining-a-culture-of-innovation-for-departments-of-transportation

N-CATT Source: n-catt.org/newsletter/march-2020/



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