



Photo: Sara Tunheden

Innovation Guide offers help for self-help

The Innovation Guide is a development programme and methodological support tool designed to enable participants from the public sector in Sweden to work by themselves with user-driven innovation and service development in their own field of activities. Two previous participants of the programme that have gained insights about their residents' daily lives are the City of Gothenburg and Uddevalla Municipality.

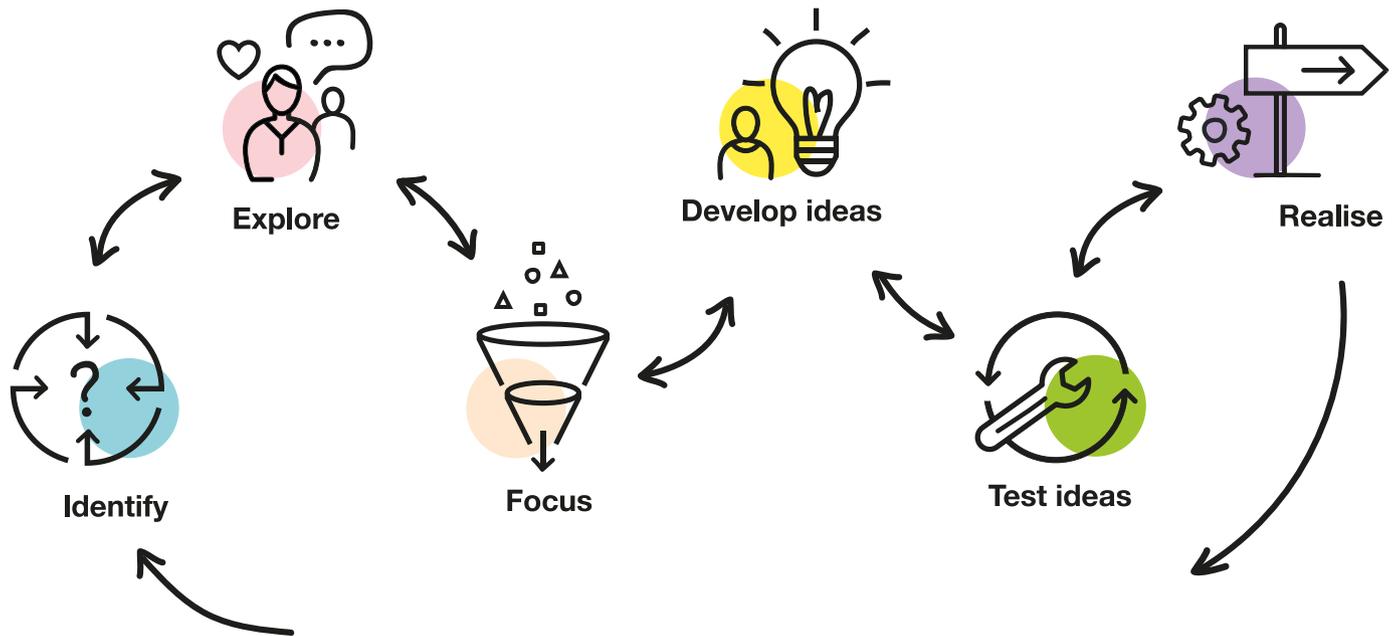
By **Caroline Lundén-Welden**

INVOLVING USERS CAN BE AN EYE-OPENING EXPERIENCE.

When the City of Gothenburg signed up for the Innovation Guide programme and began to involve users in the development of its services to raise the quality of life for parents or other legal guardians of children with functional impairments, city officials became strongly moved by the insights they gained.

Officials already knew that parents had a difficult situation, involving contacts with nearly 40 different government agencies and authorities. But when the parents were interviewed in depth and asked to write daily journals, it became clear that their everyday existence was even tougher than had been realised. A number of the legal guardians felt extremely alone

The Innovation Guide's six steps to renewal



The Innovation Guide's model is divided into six steps, which methodically take the development project from challenge to realisation.

and abandoned when they received the diagnosis. They said “I would have liked to have met someone when we got the diagnosis – it’s been four years and four days since then” and “We’ve been given a diagnosis – what can we do?”

Based on the acquired insights, the project developed a prototype of a web-based safety kit. It is designed to make it easier for legal guardians to get through the first year after the child has been diagnosed – a critical period for the family. Parents in this situation will now test the prototype kit.

This method has been received so positively that the city is now continuing to implement it in other areas of its activities as well. User-driven development will become a method in the process for innovation and service development that the city is developing.

“Julia Olander and I have been out in the city telling people about our project,” explains Gunilla Gudmunds, operations developer at the Administration for Consumer and Citizen Services at the City of Gothenburg. “There’s great interest in this method in the city. We’ve had a workshop for operations developers and this autumn we will continue to work on what the methodological support in the city should look like. We want all the city administrations to be able to work in this way.” In Uddevalla Municipality a simple solution turned out to have a major impact. The municipality wanted to increase the sense of security for users of its homecare programme. In general there was a good level of security but users worried about not

knowing which caregiver would be making the next home visit to them. During the municipality’s participation in the Innovation Guide programme, officials developed a simple but effective service. It enables users to see a photo of which caregiver will visit them next time.

“It was terrific to get the users’ perspective because usually we think we know what they need,” comments Ulrika Olsson, head of the social services unit of Uddevalla Municipality.

Involve the user

The Innovation Guide is a development process that involves producing new, innovative solutions based on users’ needs and experiences.

“The fundamental aspect of this method is to involve the users in order to discover what their real needs are, and then to test and co-create the ‘right’ solutions together with the users,” explains Sara Tunheden, service designer and project manager of the Innovation Guide.

The Innovation Guide is partly a digital platform with step-by-step instructions, templates and films, and partly a development programme. The development programme lasts for about nine months for the various project groups. They must attend three training sessions where they are given theory about innovation work interspersed with practical know-how and training in approaches and methods. The teams also get to compare experiences and exchange knowledge with other project groups

Photo: Ulrika Lundin



Prototyping during one of the training workshops.

that are undergoing the same process but have other challenges or areas of development.

Each team is given a coach who has good knowledge of the method and can guide them and be a sounding board throughout the entire process.

The website – innovationsguiden.se – offers the groups instructions and advice, methods and templates for downloading, and inspiring documents that can provide support for their work when they are back on the job.

Build capacity

By the end of 2018, 100 groups totalling about 600 people will have taken the Innovation Guide development programme. The idea is that they will pass on this work method within their own organisations.

“We want to support the participants by giving them tools so they can do this themselves,” Sara Tunheden explains. A two-day basic course in service design plus a training course for coaches have been developed in parallel with the development programme in order to ensure the project’s coach capacity and quality.

Important to prioritise and budget for innovation

A number of the participants said what a powerful experience it was to meet the users and how it had affected them emotionally.

“Whatever the result, the project and meeting the children has made us better social workers,” says Cecilia Hast Wagneryd, a social worker in Borlänge who has taken the Innovation Guide programme.

Many innovative solutions or proposed solutions emerged during the project. Researcher Jon Engström followed the project and interviewed the participants in depth.

“The digital support and the long-distance coaching are appreciated and create efficiency,” he says. “The participants have learned new methods, and many also say they can apply the method to other projects and contexts. Perhaps the most important lesson learned by the participants is the importance of understanding the users in depth and not jumping immediately to offering solutions.”

One important lesson learned from the Innovation Guide work is to carefully gain support for the development work within an organisation – among both the management and the employees. For many participants, time resources and organisational changes have been obstacles to the work.

“A good method as the one suggested in the Innovation Guide is necessary,” Jon Engström says. “There must also be clear support from management. The public sector must become better at prioritising and budgeting for innovation.”

There is strong demand from municipalities and county councils who want to learn more about user-driven development. At the same time, there is a need to create opportunities for working in a user-driven way within the existing structures.

“If many good new solutions are developed then there must also be enough room to turn them into reality,” Sara Tunheden says.

The development process has now successfully been used within parts of the Swedish public sector but it also has great potential to be used in other sectors such as industry and government agencies. ■

Facts

The Innovation Guide is a methodological support tool for the public sector developed by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR). Project manager of the initiative is SVID, the Swedish Industrial Design Foundation.

By 2018, 100 groups with a total of 600 participants will have gone through the programme.

The Innovation Guide was initially funded by Sweden’s innovation agency Vinnova and the Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs.

During 2017-2019 a similar programme is being offered to small and medium-size enterprises via SVID in cooperation with various partners.

Read more about the Innovation Guide at www.innovationsguiden.se