Tool 0

Recruiting your innovators

World Food Programme

INNOVATION ACCELERATOR

The first step in building impactful local moonshots

Description

The first step in designing an impactful moonshot innovation process is to recruit local or regional individuals that possess an innovation mindset, and bring to bear a diverse but targeted set of skills and expertise to the process.

Suggested time	2-6 week
Level of difficulty	High

Steps

1. **Develop recruitment criteria** (see recommended criteria)
2. **Build candidate inventory**
3. **Screen candidates**
4. **Interview and select final candidates**

Check how we used this in WFP-X:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1weaj4J_GMLg1YnVak51og_n9J9T6kzcW/view

WFPX2.0 Innovation Team Criteria, Selection Process and Results

In order to design a successful moonshot process, we believed that the innovation team needed be **inter-disciplinary** covering a spectrum of issues associated with Dar es Salaam food systems. At minimum, this should include aspects of landscape and urban planning, water resources, food processing, horticulture, nutrition, agribusiness, waste management and innovation players associated with emerging technologies in agriculture (rural and urban). The size of innovation teams should be **no more than 10**, should be **gender-balanced**, and represent a mix of **public, private, and research/ academia**. Most importantly, team members should be **material experts** in their field as well as **stakeholders** who are vested in the solutions generated. In addition, team members should have an **innovation mindset**.

STEP 1
Selection Criteria

Based on this overview we propose the following criteria

A

Technical diversity: We should seek to have 90-100% of the relevant sectors and areas critical to understanding and improving Dar es Salaam's future food security ecosystem represented on the team including:

- Landscape & Urban planning
- Water systems
- Food production/horticulture
- Food processing
- Nutrition
- Waste management
- Innovation / design
- Industrial/civil/mechanical engineering
- Sofware Engineer, Data Analyst, GIS, Machine Learning
- Behavioral science
- Energy

B

Gender balance: We should seek to achieve gender parity (50/50) within the team

C

Sector Diversity: We should seek to have relative equity in the mix of public, private, and research / academia

D

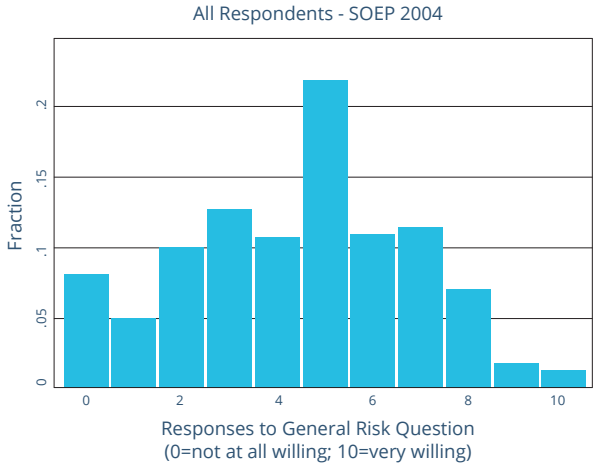
Innovation Mindset: An innovation mindset will be critical for the creative process. There are a number of qualities one could filter to help predict whether or not one has an innovation mindset. Four characteristics we think are important and potentially discernible during a short interview process are

Risk Tolerance

As failure is critical to the innovation process, we seek individuals that generally have a higher risk tolerance. This will indicate their willingness to try things that may be untested and unconventional.

Interview Question**:**
"How willing are you to take risks, in general?" Scale of 1-10 (A large study of 22k respondents conducted in Germany applied this general risk question to study demographic variations. A second study using quasi experimental and area specific risk experiments found that the general question was a strong predictor of actual risk-taking. (Dohman, 2011). Among our innovation team, we would want most to be in the 7-10 range.

Figure 1: Willingness to take risks in general I
Source: Dohman 2011



Failure Value

An openness to talk about failure and what can be learned from it is the corollary to risk tolerance above. We want people who can easily speak to their own failures and what they learned from it.

Interview Question:
What was your biggest professional failure and what did you learn from it?

Objective Scoring:

- **Low**: Those who struggle to identify any failure
- **Moderate**: Those who identify a "failure" that they really don't own – i.e. it failed because of something outside of their control.
- **High**: Those who can articulate clearly identify a failure in their career and demonstrate some ownership for it – i.e. can articulate what they would have done differently to render a different outcome.

T-Shape Personality

T-Shaped people are material experts in one area but are innately curious and fearless in exploring and developing capacities in other areas as well. T-Shaped individuals on an innovation team will allow us to do more with less as they can help in areas of their own expertise but are capable and interested in exploring areas in other fields and cross-fertilizing. T-shape people also tend to be good collaborators and attribute their successes to what they have learned from others.

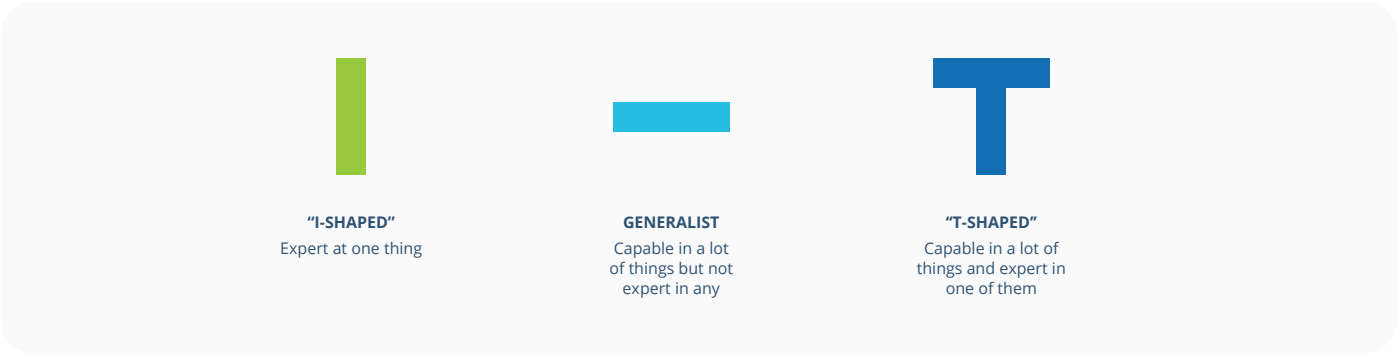
Interview Question:
What areas outside [blank technical expertise] have you studied or applied yourself, and feel relatively knowledgeable about?

Objective scoring:

- **Low**: 0-1 areas
- **Moderate**: 2-3 areas
- **High**: 4+ areas

Figure 2: SEQ Figure

* ARABIC 2: https://medium.com/@jchyip/why-t-shaped-people-e8706198e437



Entrepreneurial spirit

As failure is critical to the innovation process, we seek individuals that generally have a higher risk tolerance. This will indicate their willingness to try things that may be untested and unconventional.

Interview Question**:**
Can you tell us a time when you have observed either a problem or opportunity to fill a need that was not directly apparent to others, and created a means, product or process to fill it?

Objective scoring:

- **Low:** 0-1 ideas
- **Moderate:** 2-3 ideas
- **High:** 4+ ideas

Future-back Thinking

Mark Johsnon, founder of Innosite and author of Lead from the Future states that Present-forward leaders build their organizations in increments, following the rules and procedures that work today. Future-back leaders, in contrast, visualize what their organizations could be, starting from a clean sheet, and then mobilize whatever they need in order to bring it into being. Future-back thinking doesn't replace present-forward thinking—it complements and completes it. Thus, we wanted to acquire some understanding of top selected candidates ability and insights as it pertained to DSM's future state within their sector. Could they identify trends, imagine the future and the role their area of expertise might play with regard to it.

Interview Question**:**
Given the state of Dar es Salaam today and where it is projected to head by 2030, what challenges or opportunities do you anticipate [X expertise] to play in the role of food security?

Objective scoring:

- **Low**: Very generic response with little or no insights
- **Moderate**: Some insights but based primarily on current conditions
- **High**: Strong insights based on future scenarios for the city

STEP 2
Selection Process

The selection of the innovation team is perhaps one of the most important steps in this process. While we had limited time and resources to vet and evaluate based on the criteria above, it was important that we endeavored to do so. Fortunately, both WFP and PCI have done some advance work in identifying prospective candidates. Next, we leverage our networks (particularly Asia Sultan) and scoured the internet (google, linkdin, etc) trying to identify candidates that would not only have expertise but also appeared to be creative by nature of their description, resume, or written works. This could include innovation awards they've one, studies conducted on cutting edge technology or networks and associations they belonged to. We defined a 3-step process to develop and select our candidates: 1) Create/complete candidate inventory by technical area; and 2) Screen candidates to determine interest and availability and 3) interview top tier candidates to assess innovation mindset, following with second and third tier only if the first proves to lack an innovation mindset.

Create inventory of candidates

1. Identify at least 3 candidates for each technical area
2. Add where we may have gaps
3. Set up candidate profile and scoring sheets
4. Each management team member selects in order of preference their top three candidates per technical area, while also considering overall mix for gender and public/private/ research. (see table example)

Based on aggregate scores, the individuals with the highest points are the candidates to be prioritized for interviewing (Step 3), incumbent upon a positive response to screening email (Step 2). If they do not respond or are not able to commit, we will go to the second highest scoring candidate and so on.

Table 1

Management Team Member Asia Sultan

	Preference		
Sectoral Representation	**First (3pts)**	**Second (2pts)**	**Third (1pt)**
Urban planning	Donal Duck	Mikey Mouse	Goofy
Waste management	Superman	Wonder Woman	Batman
Water	etc	etc	etc
Food production			
Food processing			
Ag technology/ innovation			
Nutrition			
Behavioral			

STEP 3
Screen candidates

1. Send out an email to all candidates describing the WFPX 2.0 purpose, process, commitment, and compensation.
2. All candidates need to express their interest within the week.
3. If candidates confirm interest, send them a link to schedule for an open slot (Arrangr).

STEP 4
Interview highest scoring candidate

1. Create interview script template to measure innovation mindset (See Annex A).
2. Conduct a 30-minute interview per candidate.
3. Interview next highest scoring candidate or source a replacement as needed.

Approximate breakdown of interview:

- **Introductions** [2 minutes]
- **Hard/soft skills** [4 minutes]
- **Motivation to participate** [1 minutes]
- **Risk tolerance** [5 minutes]
- **Failure value** [5 minutes]
- **T-Shape** [5 minutes]
- **Entrepreneurial spirit** [5 minutes]
- **Closing** [3 min]