Innovation Advocates Programme

Group photo of the Innovation Advocates from the Programme Launch. In the front line Dr Raed Mohamed Bin Shamsh and Mohamed Hasan Al-Sabba from BIPA, Ali Salman Saleh UNDP and Katri Sarkia and Outi Kuittinen from Demos Helsinki.

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1. Introduction

This section gives a brief overview of the program. It introduces the core elements and explains the role and process of selection of the innovation advocates. Importantly, it discusses the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on the programme and the extraordinary adaptation of Innovation Advocates as well as the organizing team in face of the changing circumstances.

The Innovation Advocates Programme is a comprehensive capacity-building programme to mainstream innovation within the Bahraini Government. The programme has been commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bahrain and it has been developed and led by Demos Helsinki in close collaboration with the Bahrain Institute for Public Administration (BIPA), and UNDP Bahrain. The aim of the programme is to support the establishment of an Innovation Lab within BIPA, to build collective innovation capabilities for the civil servants, to co-create in cross-sectoral teams and with the stakeholders and to create change in society by experimentation.

The Innovation Advocates Programme is built around three different tracks:

1) A capacity-building programme (Learning Track)
2) Hands-on innovation projects to try new capabilities acquired in practice and to test the solutions ideas in real life (Project Case/Innovation Solutions Track)
3) Co-creation with relevant stakeholders of the society and close collaboration with the management of the respective organisations (Innovation Mindset Track)

To adopt innovative approaches in the Government, there’s a need not only to strengthen the capacities of individuals through specialised training and workshops (Learning Track) but also to make sure those newly acquired innovation skills are put into practice in real life context (Project Case Track). The Innovation Advocates co-designed the experiments together with relevant stakeholders from different entities. It has also been crucial that the Programme with support from BIPA and UNDP have raised awareness of the innovation work with the senior management of the participant organisations and other relevant stakeholders so that they can support the new practices (Mindset Track). The comprehensive approach provided by the three different tracks of the Innovation Advocates Programme enhance the outcomes and results of the programme to create change and establish an active Governmental Innovation Lab in Bahrain beyond the programme.
Programme’s Core Elements

➢ 8-month-long programme from November 2019 until June 2020 (a small delay due to covid-19)
➢ Three tracks to strengthen the work of the Government Innovation Lab in a comprehensive manner
  ○ Learning Track to build new capacities
    ■ 2 intensive face-to-face workshops
    ■ 2 interactive webinars
    ■ Continuous support and coaching for the participants
  ○ Project Case Track to test out innovation solutions in real-life context
    ■ 5 societal experiments covering a range of topical issues co-designed and conducted
  ○ Mindset Track to support the collective innovation capabilities within the Government and in the society
    ■ Training of Trainers for BIPA and UNDP
    ■ Personal and peer support available for enhanced learning
    ■ Co-creation and collaboration with relevant stakeholders
    ■ Engagement with the senior management with the respective governmental entities

1.1 Innovation Advocates

The programme enhances the public sector innovation of the Bahraini Government through building new capabilities for a group of forerunner civil servants: the Innovation Advocates. They represent different governmental entities and they have an important role in leading and spreading the change of mindset towards innovation within the Bahraini Government and beyond.

The Innovation Advocates were selected by BIBA & UNDP through a competitive process including interviews and psychometric assessments of each applicant. The selected civil servants, in total 27, present different government entities (see the full list of participants and their respective entities in the attachment). They are emerging young leaders between 25 - 40 years old. Participants were divided into smaller cross-sectoral groups that have been working together throughout the programme. Individual participants are the core of the programme but only by creating teams and
alliances they are able to strive for desired societal change. In addition to identifying and engaging with different stakeholders the cross-sectoral team work has been a crucial part of the programme.

1.2 COVID-19 - Adaptive response

In March 2020, the global pandemic COVID-19 emerged in different parts of the world. This naturally had an impact also on the programme that had been planned on face-to-face interactions. However, the organising team led by Demos Helsinki was quickly able to trouble-shoot the situations, to adapt and adjust the Programme’s activities allowing it to continue without major delay or alterations. The programme activities shifted to digital platforms and an extra webinar was organised in early April to reflect together on the relevance of innovation at the time of the crisis. The Finale was held on a digital platform from distance but yet it remained interactive, human and engaging.

Inevitably, the COVID-19 crisis did result in some delays in the implementation of the experiments. It also challenged the innovation teams to adapt to the new situation quickly in the way they worked together, but also their approach to experimentation. For example, the Raising the citizen voice in the parliament team highlighted that the crisis pushed key stakeholders to change their priorities and this resulted in delays in getting the experiments off the ground. The Traffic Brain team reflected on their ability to see the change in conditions due to COVID-19 as an opportunity and not as a setback.

Overall, not only were we able to continue with the Programme but the crisis has demonstrated and underlined the burning need and importance of innovation within the Government to help to prepare for the unexpected and to deliver wellbeing at all times. COVID-19 can be seen as a practice round for other, even more serious crises, such as climate change. The work has continued and the teams demonstrated perseverance and adaptability, using digital tools and way of communications, and altering their original plans. This adaptive approach was a major achievement for the participants and organizers of the programme. The Programme did not change but shifted successfully to a more digitised process.
2. Programme Tracks

This section elaborates on the three tracks of the programme: the Learning Track, Project Case / Innovation Solutions Track and the Mindset track. The Learning track showcases the different capability-building modules and reflections throughout the programme, such as the intensive F2F training workshops, webinars and coaching sessions. The Project Case / Innovation Solutions Track section describes the solution ideas and the experiments conducted by each of the participating teams. Lastly, the Mindset track discusses the comprehensive approach to evoke collective cultural shift towards innovation within the Bahraini Government.
2.1 Learning Track

The core of the programme is to deliver an innovation capacity-building programme with different modules supporting the Innovation Journey of the Innovation Advocates. The Programme consisted of intensive face-to-face capacity-building modules led by the expert team of Demos Helsinki and independent group work between the modules. The participants also got tailored expert support throughout the Programme between the modules.

In the Learning Track we covered the whole innovation process (image below), focusing on different tools and methodologies (see Annex for further info). This process also served as the basis for the Project work.

The Programme Launch in November 2019

In November 2019 (17th to 21st), Demos Helsinki led a 5-day specialized workshop for the Innovation Advocates to launch the Programme. The workshop focused on building the capabilities of public sector innovation, its multiple approaches, methods and methodologies, as well as insights to best practices and case studies from around the world. The workshop facilitators Katri Sarkia and Outi Kuittinen also gave expert presentations on different topics to deepen the knowledge of the participants on public sector innovation.
During the workshop, we built a shared understanding among participants about the importance of innovation within the Government and how to use it in practice. The week-long workshop developed the innovation capabilities of the participants from the mindset through different methods to conclude the week with their initial innovation plans. The co-creative group work modules included facilitated sessions on identifying relevant societal challenges, critically assessing, re-defining and decomposing the challenges and finally, co-developing and evaluating the most impactful solution ideas to those challenges. In addition, the workshop covered modules on mapping the right stakeholders and how to engage with them in a meaningful way. The final day, all the groups presented their initial innovation plans and received both expert and peer feedback on their plans to help them move forward.

To strengthen the impact of the workshop further, there were facilitated innovation reflections every day of the workshop. The individual reflections were designed to enhance the accountability and leadership of each participant, whereas the collective reflections offered a safe space for sense-making and shared learnings.

As a concrete outcome of the workshop, each of the five teams had created a preliminary innovation plan with a well-identified societal challenge and a co-developed solution idea as well as a plan to iterate it further with stakeholders. In addition, they had learnt and used innovation methods such as design-thinking, co-creation, ideation tools and evaluation axis in practice.
The first intensive week of learning and co-creating together also built trust and empathy within the group which is essential when trying to solve complex challenges and transform the culture within the Government — which is exactly what this Programme is aiming at. The cross-sectoral teams were formed and they have been the core units for creating change throughout and beyond the Programme. The launch workshop formed a solid basis for the continuation of the programme and the next steps.

![Stakeholder mapping](Image 4: Stakeholder mapping as an example of the methods of training session)

**Ongoing support in between the face-to-face workshops**

After the launch workshop, teams co-developed the innovation plans further together with the stakeholders. Teams were supported by online coaching sessions led by the experts of Demos Helsinki. There was also support from BIPA and UNDP available especially for the contextualisation and partnership building for the successful development of the innovation plans.

**Workshop on Experimentation and Community-Building**

In February 2020 (12th to 13th) a two-day workshop was held focusing on experimentation and community-building. It was led and facilitated by Demos Helsinki experts Katri Sarkia and Johannes Mikkonen. The workshop focused on providing insights, tools and support on planning and implementing the experiments based on the initial innovation plans of the groups. As a mid-way face-to-face get-
together, it offered an important safe space for collective innovation reflections and sense-making. The innovation in practice is far more messy than in theory, so it was important to offer a forum for expert and peer support and feedback.

In addition to experimentation, its tools and methods, we focused on the prospect of building a community in Bahrain for public sector innovation. This was supported by modules on the importance of communication as well as strategies and methods for community-building. This work continued for the rest of the programme.

As an outcome of the workshop, each team had elaborated on their experimentation plan with concrete next steps on how to proceed. The aim was to get all experiments running in March but the experimentation phase got slightly delayed due to the global pandemic.

**Webinar: Reflections at a time of a crisis**

In March 2020, there was a global outbreak of COVID-19. A webinar titled “Significance of innovation at the time of crisis” was arranged for participants in April. The goals of the webinar were to elaborate and reiterate the relevance of the Innovation Programme and experimentation in the context of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, as well as to re-energize the teams to keep going with the experiments they have started.
The webinar kicked off by a presentation by Katri Sarkia, where she contextualized the importance of innovation especially in these turbulent times, and provided a brief retrospective on what the teams have already learned and achieved during the programme. In the following discussion reflecting on the future role of the Innovation Advocates, a number of participants highlighted the need for the advocates to become ambassadors for innovation and play a role in spreading their knowledge and forming an innovation community within the government. Some also expressed the need to use the newly learned skills to address challenges related to COVID-19, for example in using innovation methodology for supporting the transition to remote working and re-skilling in light of change in the economy. Importantly, in the third part of the webinar, each of the Innovation Advocates teams briefly presented a status update of how their experiments were progressing. All teams highlighted the effects of the pandemic on their projects (such as delays) and their strategies for adapting and remaining persistent in their approach.

Following the webinar, all teams have received individual and customized support from Katri Sarkia from Demos Helsinki, and Mohamed AlSabba from BIPA. In these mentoring sessions, the teams were asked to be explicit about the challenges and roadblocks they are facing (such as the need for obtaining Ministry approval, or challenges with getting participants for the experiment). Based on this, concrete further steps were identified on how BIPA and Demos Helsinki can support the progress of the experiments.

The webinar (which gave a space to reflect together) combined with follow-ups (which gave concrete and tailored advice to all groups) has helped to ease the stress and uncertainty around the project work the Advocates were supposed to be carrying out. The programme was delayed until June which also gave some extra time for all teams to conclude their experiments and project work.
The Programme Finale was held online, and attended by representatives of BIPA, UNDP Bahrain and Demos Helsinki, the Innovation Advocates as well as many of their supervisors. The highlight of the event was the five team’s presentations on their learnings and reflections from their innovation journey, and the following discussion, which crystallized the achievement and hard work of the teams. Despite the lingering COVID-19 crisis, there was a palpable positive spirit in the air and strong sense of community and human connection between those present. There was also a strong sense that the finale is not the end, but only a start of a new chapter. In the new chapter, the Advocates continue their work as ambassadors and their experiments in a larger community of practice for innovation. To mark the completion of the Advocates Programme, certificates were granted to the participants.
The Innovation Advocates developed solution ideas and experiments around five different themes relevant for the Bahraini society. The Innovation Advocates programme’s timeline was admittedly short, and some delays were caused by the COVID crisis. Therefore many teams have signaled an intention to continue with their solution ideas after the initial programme is over. The next part of the report briefly presents the experiments and their outcomes.

1. Raising the citizen voice in the Parliament

The challenge and its relevance: The team identified that the link between citizen’s voice and the legislators is weak. Addressing this challenge in the long run could result in a more accountable and transparent government, an increase in citizens’ understanding of the parliamentary processes, and strengthened link between citizens and the parliament.
Solution idea: An interactive application offering a two-way communication platform between the citizens and their representatives.

Experiment: The hypothesis of the team was that citizen engagement is low in parliamentary processes and citizens lack knowledge about how parliament works. The main experiment of this team surveyed citizens and the MPs. The survey of the citizens inquired about their needs and interests around interacting with the MPs and about their level of knowledge on parliamentary processes. The survey of the MPs inquired about their perceptions on the importance of inclusion of citizens in decision making, and current levels of inclusion. A second experiment, consisting of a focus group was not possible to execute during the program due to the COVID crisis but is planned for the near future.

Findings: The survey findings overall validated the needs and problems that the team identified. Over 700 citizens responded to the survey, and they expressed a strong desire to share their views with MPs. They also indicated that they would be motivated to use an application to interact with the MPs. To the team's surprise, only a few of the MPs responded to the survey but those that did indicated a strong need and interest for increased citizen participation in parliamentary processes. Overall, the experiment received very positive feedback and the team is determined to continue implementing the solution idea.

2. Data Driven Traffic Brain

SOLUTION IDEA: TRAFFIC BRAIN

The challenge and its relevance: Traffic congestion is a very common issue in Bahrain, where more than 70% of the travelers face high traffic daily during rush hour. Traffic jams have a negative impact on health (e.g. stress and
accidents), on the environment (e.g. pollution) and negatively impact productivity of workers and students. It is an issue that relates closely to the action plan of the Bahraini government to improve workers morale and productivity.

**Solution idea:** A data-driven map-application using AI and machine learning to help ease the traffic jams by encouraging drivers to utilize alternative routes and/or leaving at different times. Phase 1 of the idea includes the development of the data system, and phase 2 would utilize the data system to inform policies and practices, such as different school and work starting times, and work and study from home.

**Experiment:** The team planned an experiment to test a small part of the system, which was the route redirection functionality through nudging. However, the COVID-19 crisis has offered a different, large scale experiment on the effects of working and studying from home on traffic.

**Findings:** The COVID-19 crisis has made it clear that working and studying from home (which was included in the larger, phase 2 vision of the project on how to reduce traffic) can have a major impact on traffic use. In Bahrain, it resulted in a 90% drop in all traffic. The team showed resilience and an ability to pivot, and seems dedicated to continue with experimentation.

### 3. Smart Portal of Defining Challenges

**The challenge and its relevance:** The public sector faces many undefined challenges, which may relate to the dissatisfaction with the public services provided. Since the strategic goal of the Bahrain government is to improve the services that are provided, creating a system that helps identifying and addressing challenges that are identified is important.
Solution idea: A smart portal to collect and cluster emerging challenges from different governmental and private entities and to utilize the research community to create informed solutions for them.

Experiment: The team created a form that invited public and private leaders to formulate their challenges through a series of questions. This enabled the team to measure the ability of leaders to identify challenges and to gather an initial list of challenges which the research centers could address.

Findings: Majority of the respondents indicated that they face challenges, and most classified them as major. While many responded saying that they have the ability to frame the challenge, a majority of them did not say they have done a study on the challenge. Initially the team struggled with getting responses to their form because of the format, but were able to change the form and gather responses. Each member of the team highlighted strong individual and team learning outcomes.

4. Strengthening the roles of housewives in society

THE EXPERIMENT

Creating a unified identity to Al Saya center (the artwork was designed by housewife/productive family member @zahra_graphics)

The challenge and its relevance: Housewives in Bahrain face a strong stereotype where their role and possibility is limited to household chores. The current approach limits the ways women can contribute to society and does not support their integration and larger contribution and results in social isolation, gender inequality and loneliness of housewives.

Solution idea: create a model for a social/productive family center where housewives can sell their products and services to customers with ease and success
**Experiment:** The team created a model to be first tested by one social/productive family center, and to be scaled by other similar centers. The model includes creating a better identity for the center, setting up social media accounts and creating a smooth buying and accounting experience including delivery of the items sold.

**Findings:** Because of the COVID-19 crisis, the team was not able to test the model but is in high spirits and with a solid plan to execute the first test in July.

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### 5. Engaging citizens in the policy-making process

**The challenge and its relevance:** There is a lack of a defined framework that organizes and integrates citizen engagement efforts offered by government entities at different stages of decision-making. This results in lack of citizen participation. Increasing citizen participation has many benefits for society, such as increased trust and stronger communities.

**Solution idea:** The short term solution idea of the team was to enhance the existing National Complaints and Suggestion platform (Tawasul) to include a window for citizen to engage with government entities in the decision-making process, and in the long term look to Develop Bahrain's Unified e-Participation Solution (the Framework and digital platform).

**Experiment:** The team looked to increase the participation on one of the existing platforms (iGA Platform) through a marketing campaign. The hypothesis was that if more people know about the platform, then there would be an increase in participation. After the initial results which showed
low participation, the team conducted follow up interviews to better understand the reasons for this.

**Findings:** What the team uncovered was that increased marketing did not increase participation, and that there were serious barriers for citizens to participate (e.g. lack of incentives and motivation), despite the many existing platforms that invite citizens to participate. This brought the team to reconsider their initial challenge definition, and that larger strategic support is needed for their ambitious solution idea. The team showed maturity in their thinking and a willingness to change their understanding of the problem, all of which are key skills for innovation.

### 2.3 Mindset Track

Navigating through 21st Century challenges requires an ability to adopt new ways of governance. The world is undergoing rapid changes, and as a consequence many processes and tools used by governments are becoming outdated. To respond to the emerging challenges, many governments have proceeded to shift away from old mindsets and move towards ‘innovative governance’. This has involved the introduction of new approaches and methods for the design and delivery of services.

Developing governance, however, is not easy. Bringing new ideas into a government is not enough and, having innovative individuals inside a government often falls short of renewing governance as old practices, structures and everyday routines are often very resistant to change. The most efficient and sustainable way to renew governance is to do it collaboratively. This is why this Innovation Advocates programme has had a strong emphasis on collaboration and co-creation. The programme encourages the participants to work together, and to systematically map, contact, and engage with relevant stakeholders that are crucial for arriving at functioning solutions to real-life challenges. To make change happen within the Government, the support from the management is also crucial which is why they were invited to take part especially in the experimentation phase and sharing the lessons learnt. In fact, at the end of the programme, there is not only a network of Innovation Advocates within the Government but also an expanding network of managers and stakeholders to support the future work of the Innovation Lab.
Co-creation and engaging stakeholders

The whole Programme was based on co-creation and collective learning. The Innovation Advocates worked in cross-sectoral teams and the intensive workshops were a central part of the Programme to learn and reflect together. The Advocates have also actively engaged with multiple stakeholders including both governmental counterparts and other relevant stakeholders. They have received both expert views and feedback as well as collaborated in concrete terms to implement the experiments on the ground.

Building partnerships

As the third track of the programme is aiming at a collective shift of the Bahraini Government towards a more innovative mindset, building partnerships with different actors during the programme is essential for long-lasting and sustainable results.

For this aim, Dr Raed and Mr Al-Sabba from BIPA together with Ms Sarkia from Demos Helsinki met with His Excellency Shaikh Abdulla bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, Board Chairman of Demos Helsinki and his team to discuss the potential collaboration between the Innovation Lab and Derasat to improve the wellbeing of the people in Bahrain. There have also been discussions to collaborate with the Innovation Hub at the University of Bahrain. These engagements were limited due to COVID-19 for the remainder of the programme but hopefully will continue in the near future.
Ongoing support in between the face-to-face workshops

The participants were given the opportunity for tailored support between the modules. Each group has had possibilities to discuss their specific needs and challenges together with the experts of Demos Helsinki. They have also been able to use the Innovation Lab space at BIPA and get on-going support from BIPA as well. The COVID-19 did not change this practice as the support was then given through digitised means. The regular, tailored reflections’ points strengthened the participants’ shift towards a more innovative mindset and helped them develop their capabilities individually.

Train the Trainers module

As part of the programme, Demos Helsinki offered a Train the Trainers modules for coaching the experts of BIPA and UNDP. It contributes towards the overall aim of the programme to enhance the collective capabilities for public sector innovation. The Train the Trainers module offers a toolbox of the methods and tools used during the programme as well as clear instructions on how to facilitate the innovation work using those tools. The Train the Trainers approach also deepened the cooperation between Demos Helsinki, UNDP and BIPA and the whole programme was implemented in close collaboration.

3. Outcomes and reflections of the innovation journey

This section outlines the tangible and intangible outcomes of the Innovation Advocates Programme. It briefly highlights the significance of the experiments conducted during the programme, and describes the new capabilities that the Innovation Advocates developed. Lastly, we highlight the rich reflections of the participants on the experience and challenges of their innovation journey.

New Capabilities of Innovation Advocates

Being able to engage and successfully carry out an innovation journey within government is not an easy feat. It requires a number of soft and hard skills, such as an experimentation mindset, being able to lead and organize processes of co-creation and to identify and engage relevant stakeholders. During the Innovation Advocates Programme, the COVID crisis also challenged the teams to take an adaptive approach and continue the work digitally. The participants have built these innovation capabilities both through expert presentation and concrete practice. The progress and their skills and mindset has been remarkable and they have demonstrated significant commitment and perseverance as they should as Innovation Advocates. The next section highlights the key innovation capabilities developed through the programme.
Innovation Mindset
The hardest and the most important part of innovation capabilities is the cultural shift in mindset. Innovation requires a new way of thinking and doing, it is often complex and demands iterations and co-creation. Participants have experienced it first-hand: the messy and non-linear process of innovation, and learned how to live with the uncertain and iterative nature of the process and how to embrace the different steps needed for the better outcomes. They have demonstrated openness, a flexibility to pivot and resilience throughout the process.

Experimentation capabilities
The Innovation Advocates have acquired capabilities to use experimentation as a tool for innovation. It is a key outcome and skill in order to continue their work beyond the confines of this initiative. The Innovation Advocates were able to connect their challenges to a larger societal context and strategic governmental vision. The participants also gained a deep understanding of the importance of learning through experiments, and their final presentation showed that they were able to reframe “failure” as something positive if it enables systematic learning about the challenge at hand.

“It is actually not failure when you learn something important. Failure is a success; to identify that something would fail in the beginning of the journey, will save resources required”
- Engaging Citizens in the Policy Making Process team presentation during the programme finale

Co-creation for change
The scale and complexity of challenges that the participants sought to address through the innovation journey required the use of a co-creative approach. The
Innovation Advocacy program training imparted the participants with the skills required for co-creation. Co-creation is an approach that is generative in nature. It brings together stakeholders in a way that combines their resources, knowledge and skills to create outcomes that none of them would be able to achieve alone, yet they are able to feel ownership of and create value for all parties. A key outcome of the program is that the participants have demonstrably engaged various stakeholders in a co-creation process, and in their reflections shared how they considered and aligned the motivations and needs of different stakeholders. Working in their teams was already a step towards co-creation, as the teams formed a cross-sectoral unit with members coming from different governmental bodies.

Engaging stakeholders

In the Innovation Advocates programme, participants applied their learnings on how to map and engage relevant stakeholders to the benefit of the shared goals. They demonstrated and learned how to communicate about their efforts, show value and entice potential partners to work with them. Participants learned to be bridge builders within and outside of government. In their final reflections, the teams particularly highlighted their experiences and learnings related to networking and relationship building as a prerequisite of engaging stakeholders. This is a very important outcome of the Innovation Advocacy Programme and demonstrates that ambitious experiments can indeed be executed through working across sectors and silos.

Societal Experiments

One of the major outcomes of the program was the implementation of experiments. Demos Helsinki supported the teams throughout the development, planning and the implementation phases. The teams have all learned from the experiments as they tested the hypotheses set, collected and analysed new data and evaluated the results. The experiments provided useful insights and learnings for the participants to help them to develop their solution ideas even further and make informed decisions about next steps. The teams used experiments to test hypotheses related to the larger solutions, which had a high level of relevance to larger societal and strategic goals of Bahrain. The experiments that the teams implemented ranged from digital application prototypes for increased citizen participation in parliamentary processes to testing a new model for enabling housewives through productive family centers. See Project Case / Innovation Solutions Track section for a more in-depth description of the experiments.

Participants’ reflections on the innovation journey

Participants highlighted their learnings and challenges through their innovation journey as leaders of change. In the programme finale, participants especially emphasized their skills development with regards to co-creation and engagement with the stakeholders. The importance and skill required to garner a networking and
build relationships and trust was particularly emphasized as a significant learning outcome of the teams. Many of the teams also emphasized their learnings on the importance of first focusing on understanding the challenge, rather than rushing to and falling in love with solutions. They also discussed the importance of team work, and that recognizing, respecting and nurturing the talents of the team members was important for the overall success of the work. These reflections demonstrate that participants did indeed acquire significant innovation capabilities during the course of the program. Naturally, there have been some challenges on the way as well. The most burning one has been to find enough time to work together. There have also been some conflicts with different perspectives and points of view within the teams. Nevertheless, the teams have been very committed to the programme and motivated to find ways around emerging challenges, and continue the work beyond the program as well.
4. Recommendations

The recommendations section suggests the needed next steps for mainstreaming innovation within the Bahraini government. It will first introduce some concrete recommendable actions for the following months to solidify the establishment of the Governmental Innovation Lab. It then discusses the different possibilities to continue the Innovation Journey further.

1. Continuation of the Innovation Advocates Programme - the Governmental Innovation Lab solidified

The Innovation Lab has had a full range of innovation activities during the past half a year through the Programme. We have built new capabilities, used those acquired capabilities in practice by conducting the experiments and we have raised awareness and engaged multiple stakeholders. Now it is time to strengthen the community of innovation and mainstream innovation within the Government and beyond. A key factor for the success of this is a well-functioning Governmental Innovation Lab with a clear mandate and vision.

Therefore, we recommend following steps to be taken during autumn 2020 / spring 2021.

1. The lessons learnt and the achievements from the Programme to be documented and analysed in order to fully benefit from them. These include the reflections shared by the participants, the lessons learnt from the
experimentation phase, the capability-building and the toolbox of innovation methods etc. The future activities should be built on the basis of the lessons learnt in the Programme and the Advocates who are the trained forerunners of innovation within the Government.

2. The Innovation Lab and its purpose should be conceptualised in order to maximise its impact. The Lab needs to have a clear mandate, an ambitious vision, an understanding of the desired outcomes and its focus areas. These need to be connected to the larger strategic governmental goals, in order to ensure broad support for the lab. Once the lab has a well-defined concept, the roadmap of activities and steps can be created. This is naturally a co-creative process that needs to be done together with the key stakeholders and it should be well facilitated and coordinated. A strong basis and shared understanding of the Lab's vision will help to plan the activities and to get more people onboard which is crucial for mainstreaming innovation throughout all the governmental entities.

3. The Innovation Advocates should have a crucial role in the Lab's future activities. They can serve as mentors and peer trainers for the future cohorts of innovation advocates as well as forerunners of innovation within their respective Ministries and Authorities. Their testimonials of participating in the Innovation Advocates programme should be collected and documented, and will be helpful in attracting a new cohort of advocates.

4. The Advocates should have an opportunity to continue with their innovation projects to implement their solution ideas. This demands resources and allocated time. In turn, the successfully implemented solutions would provide concrete results and case studies of new ways of governance and co-creation in practice, underlining the value and importance of the Lab.

5. Capacity building should be integrated into the core activities of the Innovation Lab, for those that are new to innovation, as well as to enable the continued learning of the Innovation Advocates. There are multiple forms that the capacity building could take. The choice about the shape and form of capacity building should be informed by the mandate, vision and available resources of the lab, and in accordance with the desired outcomes of the capacity building.

2. Innovation Journey towards future

To mainstream innovation and to strengthen the innovation community in Bahrain further, in other words to continue the Innovation Journey, one needs to build on existing structures and processes. That is why the solid conceptualisation of the Innovation Lab is a recommended action prior to widening the activities further. However, it should not be the only actor of innovation but rather a facilitator for change in collaboration with others.

When sailing further on the innovation journey, there is a need for making clear strategic decisions. Increasing the impact of the lab demands prioritisation and de-
prioritisation of different focus areas and objectives. The activities will look very different if the objective is for example to increase the direct participation of citizens versus building institutional partnerships.

At least three different domains should be considered to widen the innovation community: across the Government, in the Bahraini society and internationally.

- Mainstreaming innovation across the Government should be a continuation of the Innovation Advocates Programme. It is a process that can take different forms and eventually innovation can become an integral strategic part of policy-making and governance. Continuous investment in capacity building and communications are important aspects to consider to achieve mainstreaming of innovation.

- The purpose of the public sector innovation is to serve the people better and to contribute to their well-being positively. During the Programme we have learnt that co-creation and collaboration enhance the design and the positive impact of the actions. That’s why the Government Innovation Lab should also reach out to the society and engage different stakeholders from different sectors: academia, the civil society, the private sector, the media etc. The form of collaboration can vary from raising awareness to co-design of policies but collectivity will enhance the impact of the innovation approach.

- International partnerships will help to move the Innovation Journey along. This forerunner Programme of Innovation Advocates at a time of a global pandemic and the lessons learnt from it is something Bahrain can be proud of and something that can be shared with other governments. Mutual sharing and sparring with actors across the globe will help to set ambitious goals and support reaching them.

How to mainstream innovation within the Government further

Below we outline concrete focus areas, their importance and examples of actions that can be taken to further mainstream innovation.

Raising awareness: communicating about innovation activities, demonstrating the value and process of innovation both inside and outside the organizations

Effective communication is key in order to increase the understanding and awareness of innovation practices within government, and ultimately to garner wider support for innovation activities.

- There are many possible formats to spread the learnings and insights from innovation activities to stakeholders. For example, a powerful way to share learnings could be to prepare case stories. Case stories then can then be
shared through formal and informal ways, through media, social media and informally between peers. Formats such as webinars, newsletters, Instagram stories, blog series could be utilized. Channels already visited by stakeholders and government officials need to be identified and leveraged for an effective reach.

- Through the Innovation Advocates programme, five good cases are already ready to be documented and shared. The Innovation Lab should package these experiments in an engaging and accessible format (though case stories) and share them through appropriate channels while the cases are still fresh. The documentation and sharing effort should continue as new innovation cases emerge.

**Capacity building beyond the Advocates: supporting further learning within the government.** The further spread of innovation practices beyond the graduated Innovation Advocates would ensure wider support and scaled impact.

- Forums for learning and getting support for new ways of working need to be developed. For example, a dedicated training unit which would be responsible for developing methods, training staff and supporting innovation projects and processes within government by coaching teams could be set up and integrated into existing training units within government.
- The Innovation Lab could play an important role in guiding the development of the materials and processes that encourage innovation.

**Innovative new public servants: ensuring that new public servants are exposed to and trained in innovation methods from day 1.** New public servants can be a particularly receptive audience when it comes to learning innovation approaches, because they may have less to unlearn and fewer ingrained habits and practices that need changing.

- For example, newly hired public servants could take part in innovation training as part of their on-boarding. As an additional measure, candidates that score well on traits associated with an innovation mindset could be prioritized in hiring processes.

**Community of practice for Innovation Advocates: nurturing and supporting further capacity building of Innovation Advocates.** Carrying the innovation practice further can be a daunting and lonely task. Further support is needed for the graduated Innovation Advocates, to ensure a sense of community and that further collective learning is enabled.

- The community of practice could be supported by establishing a peer-learning club or peer network such as “Gov Inno Club.” The community could host reading clubs, peer-to-peer mentorship programmes (e.g. Innovation
Buddies), create dedicated Slack channels, organize weekly scrums and working sessions for the members of the community. Furthermore, the community of practice could also join forces and learn from similar communities of civil servants around the world, by hosting regular morning presentations with invited presenters for example.

- Graduated Innovation Advocates could jumpstart the formation of the community, and through a co-creation session decide and select the most relevant and pertinent activities.

**Enabling long-term organizational change: identifying and addressing bottlenecks to innovation** The challenges that innovators face across government may point to important organizational practices, structures and processes which hold back innovation. Identifying and addressing them is of utmost importance for the long term sustainability of innovation activities.

- The innovation lab should systematically identify and collect bottlenecks and challenges that innovators face during their journey, and synthesize the findings into visuals that may be easily shared and discussed with those who can affect them.
- The innovation lab should also convene stakeholders in order to tackle and overcome the bottlenecks identified.

**Recognition and incentives for innovation:** the encouragement of innovation activities of higher management through incentives and awards would signal for the rest of the organization that innovation is indeed a priority in concrete terms. It would also encourage the buy-in and engagement of higher management.

- A high profile award could be established for those that showcase exceptional leadership and initiative in innovation within Bahraini government. Alternatively, existing awards (such as the Crown Prince’s Fikra award) could be used to reward those that show excellence in innovation, thereby getting high level support for innovation activities.
- A mentorship programme could also be established, linking senior members of the government who support innovation to the more junior innovation advocates who could benefit from the wisdom and connections of the more senior civil servants.
- Including indicators related to innovation activities in the performance reviews of public servants would further encourage civil servants to engage in innovation activities.