

TBS and Partner Department MOU

Experimentation Works - Memorandum of Understanding 2020-2021

Memorandum of Understanding
between

Treasury Board Secretariat

And

(PARTNER DEPARTMENT)

Background

Experimentation Works (EW) is a Government-of-Canada-wide initiative to build public servants' capacity in experimentation skills and practice through a unique learning-by-doing model that supports and showcases experiments in the open.

By showcasing and supporting department-led experiments from start to finish in an open-by-default manner, EW seeks to build capacity and practical understanding related to the value and process of experimentation, while generating new examples of federal experiments and ensuring open access to related learning modules, progress updates and results for broad impact.

Purpose

The purpose of this MOU is to ensure that TBS and partner departments are clear on their roles and responsibilities throughout the EW process.

Responsibilities:

TBS will:

- **Play the lead role in running EW**, including:
 - **Ensuring the overall running of the initiative** - e.g. developing planning, information and presentation materials, recording meetings and decisions, capturing best practices and lessons learned, course-correcting as needed.
 - **Working closely with participating and support departments**, with regular and primary contact at the working level, to gather input, advice and suggestions and adjust plans and materials accordingly, where possible and appropriate.
 - **Reporting on EW updates, progress and lessons learned** at the federal level (e.g. ADM Committee on Experimentation, other fora), and publicly.
- **Provide support to department-led experiments** through a variety of roles, connections and resources, as outlined but not limited to the following:
 - **Develop, curate and deliver materials and capacity-building training events** such as learning events, an experimentation course, and additional resources as required.

- **Connect teams to dedicated experts as well as to fellow federal colleagues working on experimentation** through the expert-matching function of EW as well as regular cohort meetings and events.
- Support **senior-management exposure** for EW experiments (e.g., at the ADM-level Experimentation Committee) and seek to **unlock barriers** where possible.
- **Assist where possible with translation costs** that are over and above what a department would normally undertake and are specific to reporting on EW (e.g. translation of blogs and final report for EW).

Partner departments refers to all departments and agencies that are partnering with TBS through the EW initiative. Partner departments can play one or both of the following roles:

- **Participant departments:** refers to departments that will be partnering with TBS by running one or more projects as part of the EW cohort.
- **Support departments:** refers to departments that will be partnering with TBS by supporting the success of EW, such as by providing financial support and/or experimentation expertise.

Participant departments will:

- **Lead their EW experiment** using departmental resources, ensuring access to expertise needed above and beyond EW expert support, and following all necessary internal management frameworks and internal approval processes (e.g. the level of approvals deemed appropriate by each departmental team).
- **Commit to publicly sharing key elements of their experimental projects** including: pre-registration of design, lessons learned, project results and (envisioned) impact of experiment on future activities and decisions - in coordination with TBS which will be managing the schedule of public postings.

Support departments:

- **Support** the success of EW by committing to agreed-upon resources, such as a financial contribution or making departmental experts available to support the EW cohort. Recognizing that the availability of each expert support to EW will vary, it is envisioned that EW experts would support EW in some or all of the following ways:
 - **Be part of the assessment panel** convened to review submitted project proposals and make selection recommendations;
 - **Provide input on elements of EW design**, development of **supporting materials** and development of **key learning events** (e.g. 1-3 days in total, bringing the cohort together for a combination of group learning, sharing, expert advice sessions, and co-working to advance their experiment).
 - **Be available for consultation sessions with participating departments** (e.g., an average of 3 hours per week with fluctuations based on project needs)
 - **Author at least one blog post** documenting the EW experience from an 'expert' perspective; and **review of other EW update materials** (to provide input and feedback)

All partner departments (participant and support departments) will:

- **Actively engage in EW activities**, including:
 - Participating in weekly or bi-weekly conference calls at the working-level (other check-ins at a higher level may be proposed); and
 - Attending in-person meetings (e.g. participation in kick-off/mid-point/closing events and attend monthly learning events).

- **Adhere to the Open by Default principles** of EW including but not limited to the use of digital platforms and tools (in so far as departments have access) to facilitate open collaboration (see Annex 1).
- **Allow TBS to collect and share non-sensitive information** vis-a-vis the experimentation process, challenges, and outcomes (including sharing in the public realm, where appropriate).

Contact Information

TBS Contact: _____ (Name) _____ (Role) _____ (Contact info)	
Participating Department Contact: _____ (Name) _____ (Role) _____ (Contact info)	Support Department Contact: _____ (Name) _____ (Role) _____ (Contact info)

Signatures

_____ (TBS Contact) _____ (Date)	
_____ (Participating Department Contact) _____ (Date)	And/or ¹ : _____ (Support Department Contact) _____ (Date)

Annex 1

Experimentation Works Commitment to Open by Default

From the inception of its design in 2017, Experimentation Works has always been guided by an unwavering commitment to working in the open.

What do we mean by open?

¹ A single department may be acting as both a Participating Department (i.e. running a project) and a Support Department (e.g. providing finances or expertise) at the same time. In this case, the respective Departmental Contact (e.g. DG or ADM) signs in the relevant section for each type of EW partnership that they are responsible for. This may be two different departmental contacts, or the same person.

The primary way that EW operates in the open is by a commitment to share EW design, documentation, lessons learned and outcomes both within and outside government:

- EW experiments will be *documented along the way* through updates to the ADM Committee on Experimentation as well as updates on GoC platforms (e.g. GCpedia) to allow all interested GoC employees to better understand all of the needed steps to design and implement an experiment.
- Useful excerpts of the EW design, process, insights and results will be made accessible to the public (e.g. Medium blog) so that citizens, other levels of government, and international partners can follow EW progress.
- New for the second cohort of EW (2020-2021), all EW teams will be required to pre-register their experimental design to foster greater learning and awareness. This will be hosted on a public-facing Government of Canada Experimentation Inventory.

Why is this important?

A default to working in the open is a practical way to achieve EW goals:

- The [2016 Deputy Head Experimentation Directive](#) is explicit about the level of openness that is expected from departmental experimentation efforts: “*Departments are expected to share the results of their experiments, positive, negative or neutral/null, as broadly as possible, with a strong default to public release.*”
- Broadly sharing the documentation and results of EW is aligned with EW’s goal to strengthen ties with external experts and other levels and types of government and increase federal government experimentation capacity.
- An open by default approach to EW is also aligned with a variety of themes linked to public sector reform, such as a more accountable, collaborative, networked, transparent, agile, innovative and effective federal government.