

Mission Innovation Introductory Primer

For Participants at Session 7c | Rm C108 David Strong Bldg | 4:50pm
Victoria Forum | 25 August 2025

Background on mission-oriented innovation policies

Faced with mounting societal challenges and acknowledging the limitations of traditional STI policies, such as weak directionality, lack of holistic co-ordination and fragmentation of the policy mix, a number of countries have started experimenting with various types of systemic interventions, commonly labelled as 'mission-oriented innovation policies' (MOIPs).

A MOIP is defined as a co-ordinated package of policy and regulatory measures tailored specifically to mobilise science, technology and innovation in order to address well-defined objectives related to a societal challenge, in a defined timeframe. These measures possibly span different stages of the innovation cycle from research to demonstration and market deployment, mix supply-push and demand-pull instruments, and cut across various policy fields, sectors and disciplines (Larrue, 2021).

To allow for a finer-grained characterisation of MOIPs initiatives, the OECD has defined their expected features along three dimensions:

- **Strategic orientation** - The ability to engage a wide array of public and private actors in the selection of well informed societal challenge(s) and the legitimisation of focused policy interventions towards these challenges.
- **Policy coordination** - The ability to ensure the consistency of the action frameworks of different public and private bodies covering various policy fields and actors in order to address the targeted societal challenges.
- **Policy implementation** - The ability to implement, monitor and evaluate in a consistent way an integrated package of instruments / modes of interventions covering different sectors/areas, stages of the innovation cycle and/or disciplines to address the targeted societal challenges.

In this regard, missions are expected to deliver beyond what traditional STI policies can in reaching their goals. Through collectively developed agendas, missions should encourage broader scope and ambition by governments. Through a dedicated governance structure to coordinate missions, they should mobilise greater resources and higher engagement from relevant actors. Through a tailor-made and integrated policy mix, missions should result in a more systemic and comprehensive range of policy instruments (OECD, 2024).

This sort of approach is not new. Coming out of World War II, 'traditional' mission-oriented policies encouraged small groups of experts from government agencies, the military and the research community to address defined technological challenges (e.g., related to nuclear energy, aerospace and weapons technology). The concept of a 'third framing' or 'new mission-oriented approach' has emerged over the last 30 years, with policymakers using STI instruments to address societal and environmental challenges rooted in transformative system failures – the misalignment between STI and societal challenges (Schot and Steinmueller, 2018). In a comprehensive study of MOIPs across OECD countries, the OECD identified 101 "net zero missions" across 30 individual initiatives, most of which were instigated since 2017 (OECD, 2024). This reveals how common mission-oriented policies are becoming to tackle systemic challenges around the world.

The Canadian context

In May 2025, Prime Minister Mark Carney released a [government-wide mandate-letter](#) with seven-priorities, which have mission-oriented characteristics:

1. Establishing a new economic and security relationship with the United States and strengthening our collaboration with reliable trading partners and allies around the world.
2. Building one Canadian economy by removing barriers to interprovincial trade and identifying and expediting nation-building projects that will connect and transform our country.
3. Bringing down costs for Canadians and helping them to get ahead.
4. Making housing more affordable by unleashing the power of public-private cooperation, catalysing a modern housing industry, and creating new careers in the skilled trades.
5. Protecting Canadian sovereignty and keeping Canadians safe by strengthening the Canadian Armed Forces, securing our borders, and reinforcing law enforcement.
6. Attracting the best talent in the world to help build our economy, while returning our overall immigration rates to sustainable levels.
7. Spending less on government operations so that Canadians can invest more in the people and businesses that will build the strongest economy in the G7.

Canada is no stranger to a mission-oriented. It has integrated aspects of this way of working in recent programmes, such as the NRC's Challenge Programmes, PCO's Impact Canada, DND's IDEaS, and its commitment to connect 100% of Canadians to high-speed internet by 2030. However, if it is going to achieve these new missions, it will have to embrace these principles and lessons-learned from other jurisdictions if it is going to succeed. This includes:

- Engaging a large group of stakeholders (including citizens) affected by the challenges and who hold the levers to address the challenge, building consensus on the approaches to tackle the missions
- Developing a strategic agenda (e.g., theory of change or roadmap) that breaks down the missions into more achievable and measurable sub-objectives, identifies key actions, and assigns responsibility to the relevant stakeholders
- Bringing together the relevant actors from federal, provincial, territorial, municipal, and First Nations communities
- Using the strategic agenda to ensure there is a consistent package of policy instruments to support the missions, mixing different disciplines, sectors and areas, and including both demand- and supply-side instruments across the whole innovation chain (i.e., from basic research to demonstration and deployment)
- Establishing a robust monitoring and evaluation system to assess its results and learn from its implementation in view of continuous improvement

RESOURCES

MISSION INNOVATION POLICY CALENDAR

[Victoria Forum](#), August 24-25-26, 2025

[Canadian Science Policy Conference](#), November 19-20-21, 2025

[Canadian Collaborative for Science, Innovation and Policy](#): The Common Room speaker series (2026 dates tbd)

[Canadian Forum for Social Innovation](#), Calgary, 2026 (date tbd)

WEBSITES

[Institute for Collaborative Innovation \(ICI Canada\)](#)

[Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose \(IIPP\) Mission-Oriented Policy Hub](#)

[OECD Mission Oriented Innovation Website](#)

[OECD Mission-Oriented Innovation Policy Online Toolkit](#)

[OECD Mission Action Lab](#)

[OECD Mission Community of Practice - Observatory of Public Sector Innovation](#)

[EU Missions implementation at national level: Mutual Learning Exercise](#)

[Social Innovation Canada](#)

REPORTS

Hamida Ali, Shadi Brazell, James Somerville, and Grace Wyld, Future Governance Forum & New Philanthropy Capital, [MISSION CRITICAL 03: Mission-driven partnerships with civil society organisations](#), (January 2025)

Tim Draimin and Geraldine Cahill, [Mission Innovation and Moonshot Philanthropy in the UK: Becoming The Experimenting Society](#) Summary & Primer (March 3, 2025)

European Commission (Directorate-General for Research and Innovation), [Moving forward on the implementation of national missions. Final Report of Mutual Learning Exercise on EU missions implementation at national level](#) (August 2024)

Thomas Goldsmith, [Canada's Moonshot: Solving Grand Challenges Through Transformational Innovation](#), Brookfield Institute (February 2022)

Larrue, P. (2021), "The design and implementation of mission-oriented innovation policies: A new systemic policy approach to address societal challenges", *OECD Science, Technology and Industry Policy Papers*, No. 100, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/3f6c76a4-en>.

Mariana Mazzucato, Sarah Doyle, Luca Kuehn von Burgsdorff, [Mission-oriented industrial strategy: global insights](#). IIPP Policy Report No.2024/09, UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (July 2024)

Mariana Mazzucato and George Dibb, [Mission: A Beginner's Guide](#), IIPP Policy Brief 09, December 2019

Mariana Mazzucato With Sarah Doyle, Nick Kimber, Dan Wainwright and Grace Wyld, [MISSION CRITICAL 01: Statecraft for the 21st century](#), Co-published Future Governance Forum (FGF) & Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (IIPP), (May 2024)

PODCASTS

Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP), [Future Canada: What is “Mission-Driven” Government? And Can it Work Here?](#) **Sarah Doyle** of the UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose, **Jack Pannell** of the U.K.’s Institute for Government, and **Dan Honig** of University College London School of Public

Nesta, [Unlocking better governance: Dan Honig in conversation with James Plunkett](#) (23 July 2024)

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE: UK Mission Innovation Context May 2024

