

CULTURE OF INNOVATION

A baseline report



What is i4?



The i4 innovation process aims to grow the capacity of High Desert ESD staff to increase the excellence, equity and efficiency of services for students, families and community by igniting, investigating and incubating our innovative ideas.

Background Statement

Institutional innovation, is defined as novel, useful and legitimate change that disrupts, to varying degrees, thinking, norms, or even regulations. Like all innovation, institutional innovation is both novel and useful, but differs in that it is also appropriate, credible and legitimate. A cornerstone of institutional innovation’s legitimacy is that it is socially constructed and culturally embedded in the organization. (1)

This survey and analysis creates a data-informed baseline of where we stand by measuring personal values and the culture of the organization. This information will help us leverage our strengths and assets to build a culture of innovation and continuous improvement. We received 82 unique responses, and 37 of those chose to write a narrative about their experience implementing new ideas.

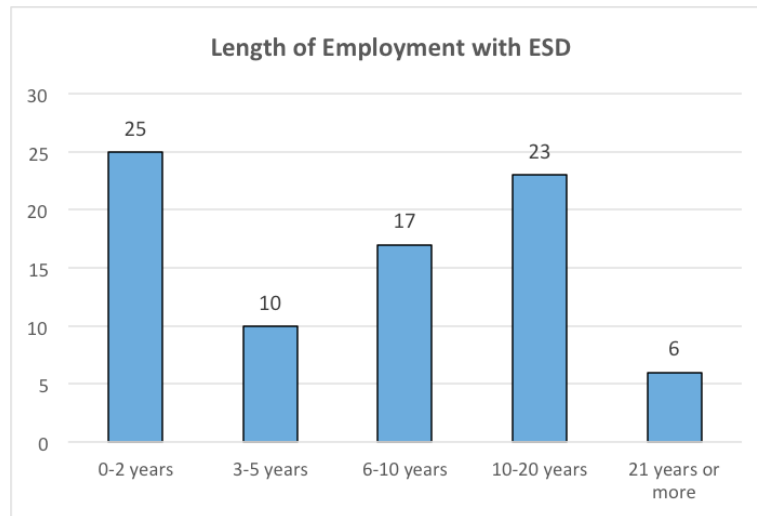
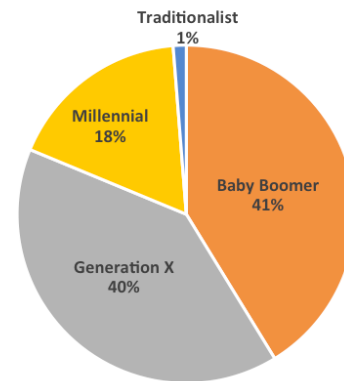
¹Raffaelli, Ryan, and Mary Ann Glynn. "[Institutional Innovation: Novel, Useful, and Legitimate.](#)" In [The Oxford Handbook of Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship](#), edited by Christina E. Shalley, Michael A. Hitt, and Jing Zhou. Oxford University Press, 2015.

Who we are

Four generations are working side by side. Traditionalists tend to be disciplined and value workplace loyalty, Boomers are more likely to be innovators and experimental, Gen X are free agents who value independence, Millennials are confident and value diversity and immediacy. Many employees are new, with two years or less with the ESD, but there is a range of tenure across the generations.

This potent combination of institutional knowledge and generations working together creates an environment ripe for intergenerational tension and intergenerational learning, and meaningful mentorship.

Which generation do you identify with most?



We are unaware of our reputation: as an organization, we are not particularly concerned or aware of what our stakeholders, partners, and parents think of us. Given the opportunity to answer questions from the perspective of “other people view the HDESD as...” the largest number of responses were a combination of ambivalent responses of “I don’t know” and “neither agree nor disagree.”



Leverage our assets

If innovation is socially created and culturally embedded, then we have an imperative to understand and leverage our assets to build our culture on our own foundation.

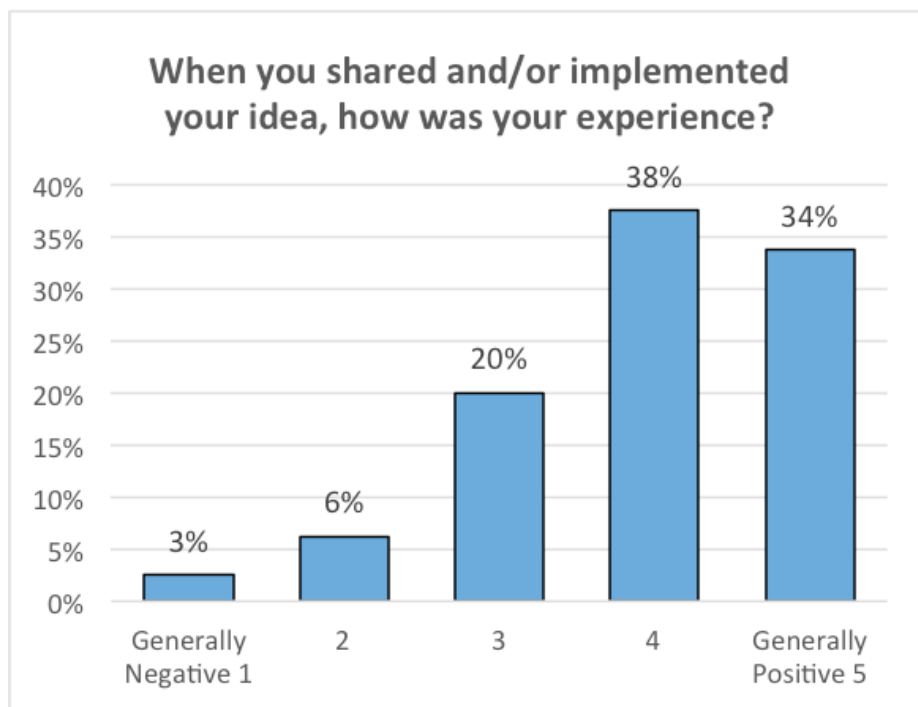
- We are collaborative, almost universally. Moreover, people who *most strongly* identify as a collaborator have the *most positive* experiences implementing ideas.
- We have a range of longevity at the HDESD (newbies, long-timers)
- We are creative: 78% of staff identify as creative.

New ideas

Expressing *ideas* is easier than expressing *concerns*. When reflecting on the most recent time we had a new idea or better way of doing something, the majority of employees, 73%, had a positive experience. Not all who have a positive experience with innovation consider themselves creative or are comfortable with change, but all identify as collaborators.

Turning new ideas into action requires the ability to take risks. 63% of staff identify as risk takers, but curiously, 10% of risk takers chose not to identify their department.

Through an entrepreneurial lens, it is best to express concerns within the context of generating new ideas, and given the high number of staff who identified as “collaborators”, a collaborative setting for generating new ideas is also encouraged. When there is a problem to solve, there is an idea to test for increasing excellence, equity and/or efficiency. Opportunities for staff to collectively bounce their innovative solutions between each other is recommended.



Creative Capacity

The 37 qualitative narratives could be divided roughly into thirds: positive experiences, neutral experiences, and more negative experiences. In each set of qualitative experiences a theme emerged: time and/or support as a barrier to implementing new ideas.

Positive:

When I bring ideas to my supervisor, supporting specialists, and educational assistants I feel heard. What usually gets in the way is resources (time) to implement ideas.

I have a direct manager that is willing to let me try anything. He doesn't always let me implement them but he does not stop me from developing the ideas/proposals. If find this approach motivates me to continue to try new ideas.

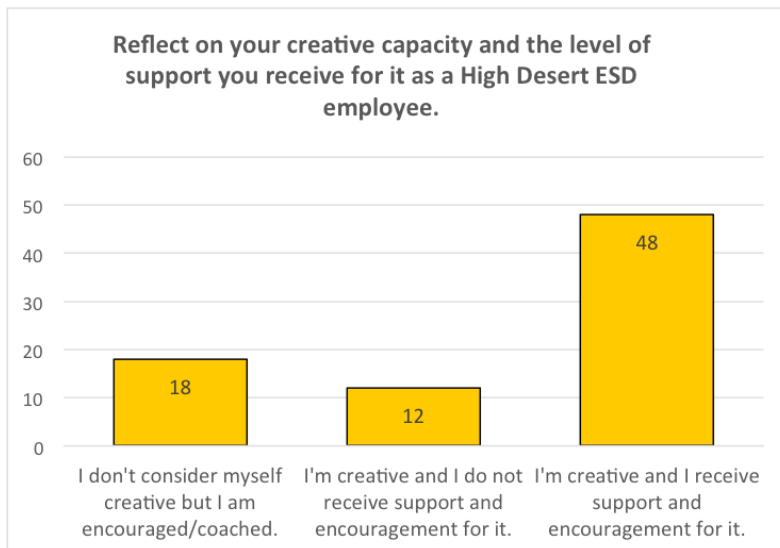
No is never the first response!

Less Positive:

Usually get quick reactions of "how will this affect me" and very specific questions about details not yet established.

My ideas were appreciated, but ultimately we are all so busy just doing what we do that they got pushed to the back burner.

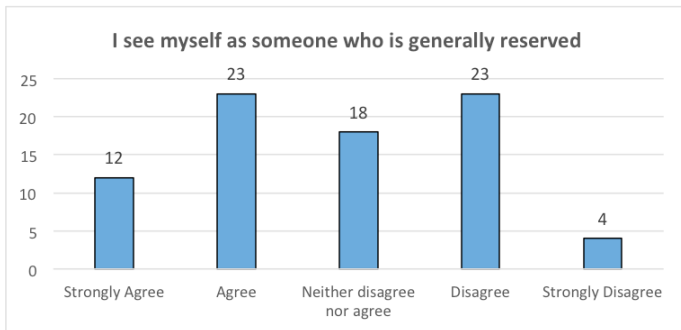
I feel like some ideas cannot get off the ground, there are always financial or time barriers.



Carpe Diem Creatives

70% of staff identify as both someone who is creative and seizes opportunity.

Strategies, or “the how” to incubate and implement good ideas will be varied. Just as varied as the creative people and good ideas themselves are varied. How we make time and space for new ideas will depend on the department, manager, and employee.



Also varied is personality type. We are a nearly even distribution of those who consider themselves generally reserved. We identify as creative, collaborative, and trusting across this spectrum.

Even the self-identified reserved personalities are also our Carpe Diem creatives, which may challenge our notion of “creative types.”

We have the assets and the energy to innovate; we can harness this by providing resources and removing barriers.

We should ask ourselves, especially as leaders, how we enable the hunches of our staff? How do we make it okay to not have the entire idea thought out before it is brought forward? How do we provide more time, space and resources for innovative ideas?

The baseline confirms that our foundation is a strong one to build a dynamic, systematically embedded culture of innovation at the High Desert ESD.



Our continued work is to unlock and remove barriers at the individual and organizational level that systematically reinforce the importance of innovation.