

# Chapter 13

## Digital Public Intrapreneurship and Digital Public Entrepreneurship

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter provides an examination of the landscape of entrepreneurship within public administration, focusing on the integration and implications of digital technologies. It begins with the historical evolution of public sector entrepreneurship, identifying milestones and shifts towards more inclusive and innovative practices. The chapter transitions to the emergent field of digital entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship, underscoring the transformative potential of digital technologies in public organizations. The chapter presents concepts, theoretical frameworks, and definitions for understanding the dynamics of digital entrepreneurship within the public sector. Emphasis is placed on the roles of digital public entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs, whose efforts are pivotal in navigating challenges and seizing the opportunities from the digital era. The chapter concludes by presenting the strategic importance of fostering a culture of innovation and adaptability within public institutions, aiming to enhance service delivery and public value creation in an increasingly digital world.*

### INTRODUCTION

In an era of digitalization, public sector organizations are increasingly recognized as pivotal actors for innovation and transformation. Academics are advocating for the development of new theoretical approaches taking those changes into account (Hinings et al., 2018). This chapter sets out to explore the dynamics of digital public intrapreneurship and digital public entrepreneurship, key processes reshaping the landscape of public sector innovation against a backdrop of technological upheaval and evolving societal needs.

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On one hand, digital public intrapreneurship refers to an unsolicited use of digital technologies and innovation methods by public servants at any level within public organizations to create public value (Moore, 1995; Bozeman, 2007; Talbot, 2009; Benington, 2011; Cui & Osborne, 2021). On the other hand, digital public entrepreneurship refers to any entrepreneurial action initiated in the public sector by a public servant in a management position based on its organizational strategy. Digital public entrepreneurship aims to leverage opportunities presented by digital technologies and innovation to create value for the public. Both phenomena (digital public intrapreneurship and entrepreneurship) are driven by a combination of technological, motivational, social, and institutional factors that enable and constrain the potential of public innovation in the digital age.

This chapter aims to demonstrate that entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship within the public sector can no longer be understood solely as a management role but as a collective and cooperative effort within the organization. This chapter will provide to scholars and practitioners in the field of digital government a better understanding of this orientation to foster digital innovation and to seize technological opportunities for the benefit of the public and the organization. This chapter is structured to meet three main objectives.

Firstly, it aims to provide an overview of entrepreneurship in the context of public administration, covering its historical evolution, current implementations, and potential future directions. This foundation is intended to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurship's significance and effects within this field.

Secondly, the discussion extends to an examination of digital entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship in public organizations, focusing on the integration processes of digital innovations, the challenges encountered, and the opportunities available. This section highlights how these practices contribute to the transformation of public service delivery and the internal dynamics of organizations.

Finally, the chapter provides definitions and theoretical frameworks for those interested in the digital government area, aiming to deepen the analysis of entrepreneurial activities in this sector. It specifically focuses on the identification and description of digital public entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs, offering insights into the innovative concepts that are pivotal for exploring digital entrepreneurship in the public sector. Central to this exploration is the theoretical approach of these concepts, informed by a critical review of existing literature and augmented by contemporary empirical insights.

## **THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT IN PUBLIC MANAGEMENT**

### **The Roots of Public Entrepreneurship**

According to Moe (1984), New Public Management (NPM) began to emerge when the neoclassical movement addressed two basic mechanisms of social choice: markets and voting. Moe (1984) noted that hierarchy was left relatively unaddressed in public administration literature, leaving the decision-making process of public organizations in relation to getting optimal outputs a black box. To better understand how to optimize public organizations to get the best outputs from citizens' input, he argued to apply an economic standpoint mobilizing contractual relations by using the principal-agent model (Ross, 1973; Spence & Zeckhauser, 1971; Jensen, 1983). Moe concluded that a contractual paradigm (Alchian & Demsetz, 1972) could be applied to political science and public administration from which a new analytical framework would emerge to better understand public bureaucracy. In this framework, citizens acted

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