

Design for Government: Human-centric governance through experiments

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1 Introduction

The report for the Design for Government project published in June 2015 proposed a new, quick-to-implement model for including experiments and behavioural approaches into Finnish policy design. The use of behavioural approaches as part of governmental steering has been shown to make policy more user-orientated, targeted and efficient. The project was inspired by international examples, including experiments such as the one from the UK where tweaked tax return notices resulted in millions of pounds of savings in three short weeks (Hallsworth et al., 2014), or the scheme that personalised text message reminders on unpaid fines, which was estimated to benefit the UK government by over 800,000 pounds worth of additional payments each week (Haynes et al., 2013).

Chapter 3 has now been translated into English for a broader audience and use. Originally this chapter advised that the Finnish government should incorporate a two-year behavioural knowledge based experimentation system into its government plan this parliamentary term. In practice, this meant that while planning its policy, the government should evaluate its decisions based on knowledge about human behaviour. This addition would help make Finnish government both more open and effective in its operations.

The proposed model consists of three parts: firstly, **understanding the problem**, secondly, **implementing an experiment**, and, finally, **evaluating the impacts identified**. The suggested model was built specifically for understanding benefits of policy through experimentation. Its starting point is in existing literature and best practice: the model's process begins with a thorough review of the relevant literature, as well as an overview of the experiments and practices already tested or in use today. Should there not be enough information available on the behavioural aspect in question, the Prime Minister's Office would initiate a two-phase experiment financed from governments reporting and research budget. The Ministry responsible for that experiment – as well as the party implementing the experiment and the facilitator, would study the relevant behaviour and identify new ways to influence it. The design of the experiment would first concentrate on building empathy and broad understanding of the problem by using qualitative methods and design thinking. Secondly, the experiment would emphasise measurability of its impact, and would end with a thorough evaluation of its results.

The report was drafted as part of the Prime Minister's Office's Design for Government project, implemented by think tanks Demos Helsinki and Avanto Helsinki. The project consortium included the Department of Design at Aalto University and its **Design for Government** course.

The current government has included the introduction of experimental culture in its programme. It has been stated that experimentation will aim at innovative solutions, improvements in services, the promotion of individual initiative and entrepreneurship, and the strengthening of regional and local decision-making and cooperation. Experiments will make use of citizen-driven operating practices. An experimentation programme, including extensive trials and several smaller experiments, will be implemented. Systematic experimentation will be introduced and a legal basis will be created to make the arrangement of experiments easier. Experimentation will reduce response times and improve anticipation during the process of solving social problems, and the Government's strategic aims will be promoted.

The English introduction presented below includes the chapter 3 of the original report. It has been used to inspire the current government programme's commitment to culture of experimentation. Further, it is also used to plan the experiments to be undertaken and programme implemented for supporting experimental culture.



Sirpa Kekkonen

Head of the Secretariat for Government Strategy Work

2 An experimentation programme for Finland

This study was commissioned for the creation of an operating model for experimentation and the use of behaviour-based methods when developing various steering mechanisms, e.g. legislation and taxation. The proposal presented in this chapter is based on knowledge gained from the international examples described in the previous chapter.

The purpose of the proposed operating model is to

1. make steering mechanisms more effective by using behaviour-based knowledge
2. identify, make use of and proliferate existing best practices
3. measure and forecast the usefulness of measures before their extensive implementation
4. enhance competence in the public sector in the use of experimental and behaviour-based knowledge
5. develop steering mechanisms in collaboration with citizens

The explored method will also promote innovative cooperation between ministries. It will generate cultural change as the planning of steering mechanisms becomes more open and makes use of people-driven tools. In principle, the people-driven approach crosses sectoral boundaries.

The proposed operating model consists of an experimentation programme embedded in the structure of the Government Programme. The result will be a development process for steering mechanisms that make use of behaviour-based knowledge.

As illustrated in figure 2, the operating model can be implemented during the 2015–2019 government term as a two-year programme. This time span will leave time for several experiments, whose final number depends on their scope and which will enable actors to compare and learn from experiments, and to apply the various results in the planning of steering mechanisms. It will also be important to assess the quality of steering during the experimentation programme. Experiments chosen for the development of steering mechanisms must fulfill two criteria: 1) the involvement of a behavioural element in the attainment of the societal objective in question and 2) the responsible ministry being interested in utilising new types of behaviour-based approaches in the planning of steering.

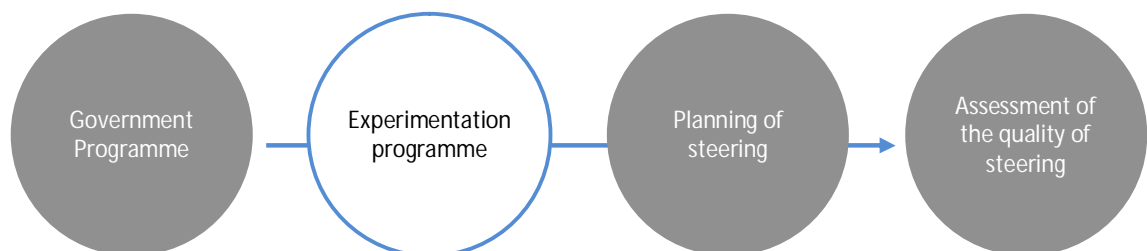


Figure 1. Implemented within the framework of the new Government Programme, the experimentation programme will enable the development of steering mechanisms both during the programme and based on its outcome.

By taking a more strategic approach, the new Government Programme enables the direct linkage of a behaviour-based approach to the planning of steering mechanisms. The usefulness of behaviour-based information over traditional approaches can be evaluated by selecting certain objectives to which the experimentation programme is applied.

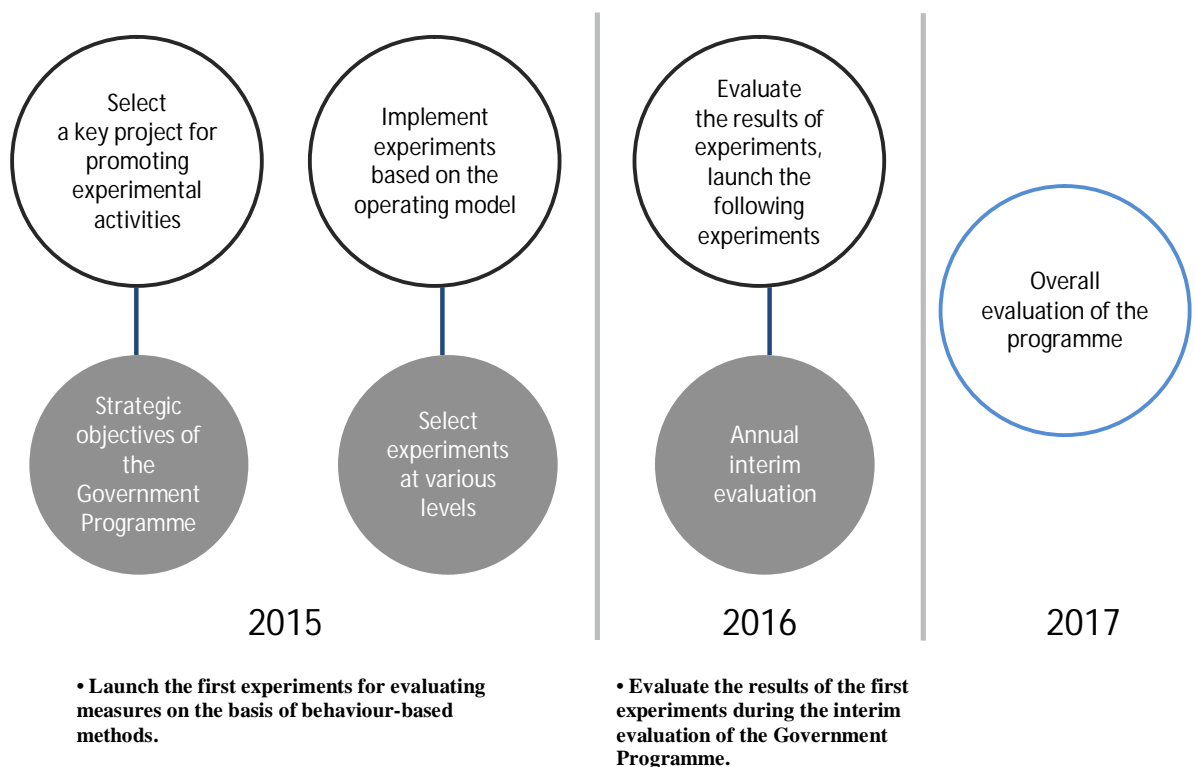


Figure 2. The operating model will be tried out for two years, with the results being evaluated on an annual basis.

The operating model complies with the recommendation of OHRA – the project to reform the Government’s steering frame – for the assessment of the annual implementation of the Government Programme. Correspondingly, the implementation and usefulness of the operating model will be evaluated on an annual basis (see Figure 2). If the societal objectives are challenging, it may not be possible to collect sufficient data for evaluation within a 12-month period. Before the experiment, it should be possible to determine the indirect impacts which will enable the forecasting of events forming part of the change in question. The impact assessment of measures should be continued over a longer period of time.

2.1 Operating model in brief

Based on the operating model, the use of behavioural research data when planning steering will entail describing and understanding the problem and its broader systemic dimensions first, rather than directly planning the steering mechanisms on the basis of societal objectives. The operating model will enable experimentation to understand how legislation, taxes or other measures work in a test environment and, on the basis of the experience obtained, to forecast how they will function in other environments.

The progression of the operating model summarised in Figure 3. The first phase involves attaining a broader and more detailed understanding of the problem by seeking the related best practices and experts, and by compiling a systematic expert review of behavioural research data linked to the subject in hand. Both a lighter qualitative experiment and a more systematic, quantifiable and verifiable experiment will be implemented on the basis of this information. The experiment will be assessed during the final phase.

Several projects are in progress during the experimentation programme. Although the open application procedure and the expert review can be implemented rapidly, verificatory experiments can differ greatly in terms of their objectives and test arrangements. This makes a precise estimate of their duration difficult in the absence of more detailed information on the experiment. It takes a minimum of six to nine months to implement all phases of an experimental project, but less complex versions of such programmes can be implemented more rapidly. Ministries can also implement projects on their own initiative for objectives they find compatible with this operating model. Training sessions will be organised for public servants for the development of the related skills.

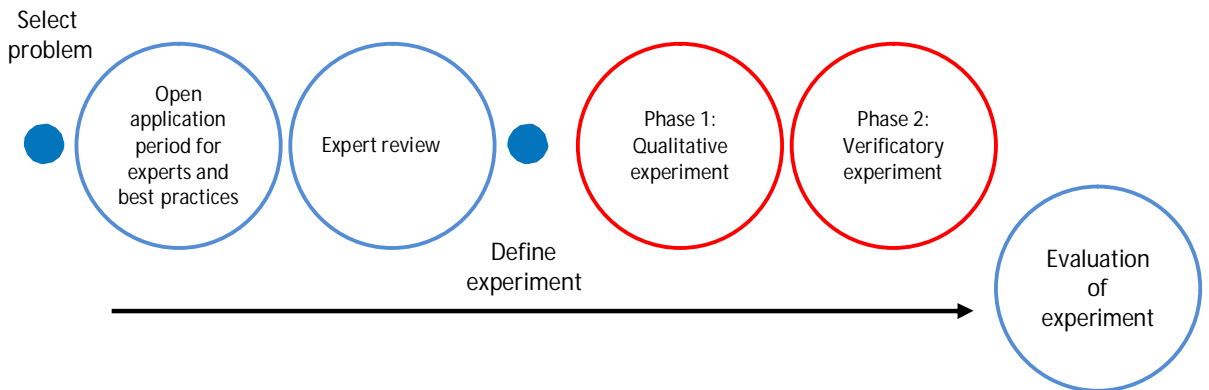


Figure 3. Steering will be developed through familiarisation with the best practices related to the selected problem, behaviour-based information, and testing measures based on these. The figure presents the model in outline, whose phases described in more detail in the following chapters and table 4 below.

The experimentation programme begins with an assessment of the Government Programme's objectives, in order to identify those for which an understanding of human behavior is essential. These include issues related to health, well-being and education. According to the experts interviewed, this approach could be highly beneficial in issues such as those relating to transport choices, energy consumption and developing our competitiveness in general. At a fundamental level it would be more challenging, but still possible, to apply the experimentation programme to foreign policy, industrial policy and other such areas. A thorough and goal-specific assessment of the objectives is necessary in order to identify the behavioural component and determine whether using the experimentation programme would be appropriate. The first phase of the experimentation programme follows this assessment and the definition of objectives.

In collaboration with stakeholders, the problem is defined in greater detail during the open application process and expert review, by charting the challenges and possible solutions related to the objective in question. The first phase comprises the expert review and best practices. The first section differs from a traditional consultation session in that it entails a systematic, facilitated review of two types of qualitatively different information: practical solutions and scientific data. The open application period and expert review are not intended to replace traditional consultations, as they are special measures related to the operating model which form the knowledge base of the experiment.

Open application period for experts and best practices

This section introduces the best practices that may prove useful in meeting the overall challenge. Best practices are sought in Finland and abroad. A notification service will be made available for all for, announcing and describing practices or solutions related to the objective. Correspondingly, anyone may propose experts in possession of information or perspectives on the problem related to the field in question. Such expertise may be academic, professional or based on experience.

Expert review

The next phase involves a review of the existing scientific data on behaviour, which is deemed relevant to attaining the objective. This review is implemented in a workshop, where invited experts conduct a multifaceted review of the behavioural science literature related to the objective. The workshop also involves a review of the practices related to the open application period and an exploration of the related theoretical data and evidence. Depending on the scope of the topic, the estimated number of workshop participants is 6–8 and the duration 3–5 days.

The aim is to gain a rapid understanding of the existing information and methods.

Based on the information collected during the open application period and review sections, the need for new information is defined together with the ministry or ministries responsible. If necessary, an order is prepared for an experiment aimed at gaining more behaviour-related data directly from the Finnish application environment.

Experimental phase

An experiment is conducted if there is a need for behavioural information. This experiment involves seeks to build on the behaviour-based data and best practices charted during the first phase. The experimental phase involves a qualitative and verificatory experiment. This involves the small-scale testing of the assumptions formulated during the previous sections. The purpose of the verificatory experiment is to attain a precise quantitative assessment of the results and their wider applicability. Accurate, measurable objectives, linked either directly or indirectly to the intended result, are defined if results crucial to attaining the objectives cannot be obtained during the experiment. The primary aim of the qualitative experiment is to gain a better understanding of the views of the target groups. The verificatory experiment tests those solutions that seem applicable to achieving the best and most effective steering. This experiment is conducted by the facilitator of the experimentation process, the ministry or ministries responsible, and the possible external implementer or research institution. The experiment takes account of the experimentation platform – e.g. a municipality or NGO.

Evaluation of experiment

Finally, an evaluation is conducted on whether the tested measures are useful with regard to attaining the objective and what use can be made of them when planning steering mechanisms. The expert evaluation is based on criteria, whose implementation or otherwise can be clearly established, formed before the experiment. The experiment and information gained from it must be transparent and open to public evaluation. Finally, a workshop is organised for representatives of the target group, the facilitators, researchers, public servants and the other parties involved in order to determine the usability of the results.

The key criterion is that the operating model bolsters the effectiveness of various steering mechanisms through a behaviour-based approach and experimentation. [The results may include the specification, based on behaviour-based information, of issues such as taxation or regulation, the better targeting of informative guidance or the proliferation of various behavioural interventions.](#)

A behavioural approach requires that the public administration understands people and human behaviour and takes an open and interactive approach that can assist in learning and the development of activities. An interactive approach can improve the effectiveness of steering. Behaviour-based steering must be planned in collaboration with the “end users”, i.e. citizens, not from above. Based on the operating model, this is achieved by identifying suitable steering mechanisms together with stakeholders during the first phase, and by ensuring that evaluation is conducted openly.

2.2 Phases of the operating model

The core of the operating model is a process that generates behaviour-based information and can be proliferated. The operating model can be applied to objectives that involve a human behaviour-based element. Table 1 presents the process in full. The main phases of the operating model are explained in more detail below the process table.

0.1. The development of experimental activities as a key project of the Government Programme
0.2. Selection of the objectives to which the model is applied forms part of the Government Programme Action Plan.
0.3. The selected objective is examined: is there a behavioural element and is the ministry (or ministries) responsible willing to adopt new approaches. If these terms are met, proceed to point 1.
1. Launch the open application period for best practices for municipalities, organisations and businesses. The aim is to gain a better understanding of problems and to seek out existing best practices and solutions. At the same time, an opportunity is created to appoint experts who understand how to attain the objective. This phase in particular will involve making use of the expertise of the Government's working group coordinating research, foresight, assessment and analysis activities, and the Council for Strategic Research.
1.1. Organise an expert review of scientific data related to the objective. The review will be conducted in a 3–5 day workshop in which theoretical data and evidence related to practices and solutions discovered during the earlier phase are sought.
1.2. Organise a status review workshop (no. 1), in which researchers, public servants, implementers and other key parties familiarise themselves with each others' perspectives on the experiment and form a common overall view of the situation.
2. The facilitator of the experiment reviews the best practices identified and the results of the expert review. If there is sufficient review data, it can be used in the policy process without experimentation. The expert review includes an assessment of whether direct use can be made of the data. If experimentation is necessary, together with the responsible ministry the facilitator of the experiment prepares a two-phase invitation to tender on the basis of the information generated by the expert review, using the Government's appropriations for analysis and research activities.
2.1. The tenders are assessed on the basis of the following a) methodological skills of the consortium, b) innovativeness in the selected approaches and c) the ability to understand the problem's systemic nature and human activities in relation to the problem. Based on this assessment, the provider is selected and lean funding is provided for the implementation of a qualitative experiment. The need for a verifactory experiment is evaluated after the first phase of tenders.
2.1.1. In a status review workshop for researchers, public servants, implementers and other key parties, the participants review the experiment from each others' perspectives and form an overall common view of the situation.
2.1.2. Place an order for a verifactory experiment. The tender requires an assessment of the experiment's effectiveness and suitability for implementation, including a cost estimate and the charting of its acceptability and adverse impacts. If an external evaluator considers the experiment to have sufficient impact, capable of wider application and feasible on the basis of moderate resources, the next stage is a verifactory experiment. The facilitator of the experiment is responsible for such an evaluation, using the experts involved in the first phase.
2.2. Implement the verifactory experiment. The purpose of this experiment is to compile the behaviour-based data required in order to attain the selected objective. The experiment is designed on the basis of existing data on the various factors influencing behaviour. Before the experiment, criteria are identified which, if they are met, indicate that the results can be exploited. Impact assessment should be developed by taking into account people's wellbeing and behavior. The experiment is implemented together with an external implementer, the ministry and the facilitator of the experiment.
3. The methods, successes and results of the experiment are evaluated by the facilitator and implementer of the experiment and the first-phase experts, and perhaps by an external evaluation team.
3.1. An interactive consultation event is organised under the leadership of the facilitator of the experiment. In such an event, the service providers related to the objective, members of the target group, public servants, decision-makers and other key parties jointly develop proposals for measures to be taken on the basis of information gained from the experiment
4. The responsible ministry prepares steering. If necessary, the ministry may request support from the facilitator of the experiment on how to apply the information in its the planning of steering activities.
5. Finally, the experiment and the experiment programme are evaluated based on two perspectives: whether behaviour-based information was utilised in steering and whether the operating model was useful in attaining the objective

Table 1. Operating model as a process.

Understanding the problem

In the first phase of the operating model, the aim is to understand the problem, existing behaviour-based information and best practices. If necessary, on the basis of the knowledge gained during the experiment, an invitation to tender is prepared in order to supplement the information deemed significant to attaining the policy objective. At this stage, the objective of steering is specified and the administration's understanding of the underlying problem is enhanced. This is the prerequisite for identifying the appropriate measures.

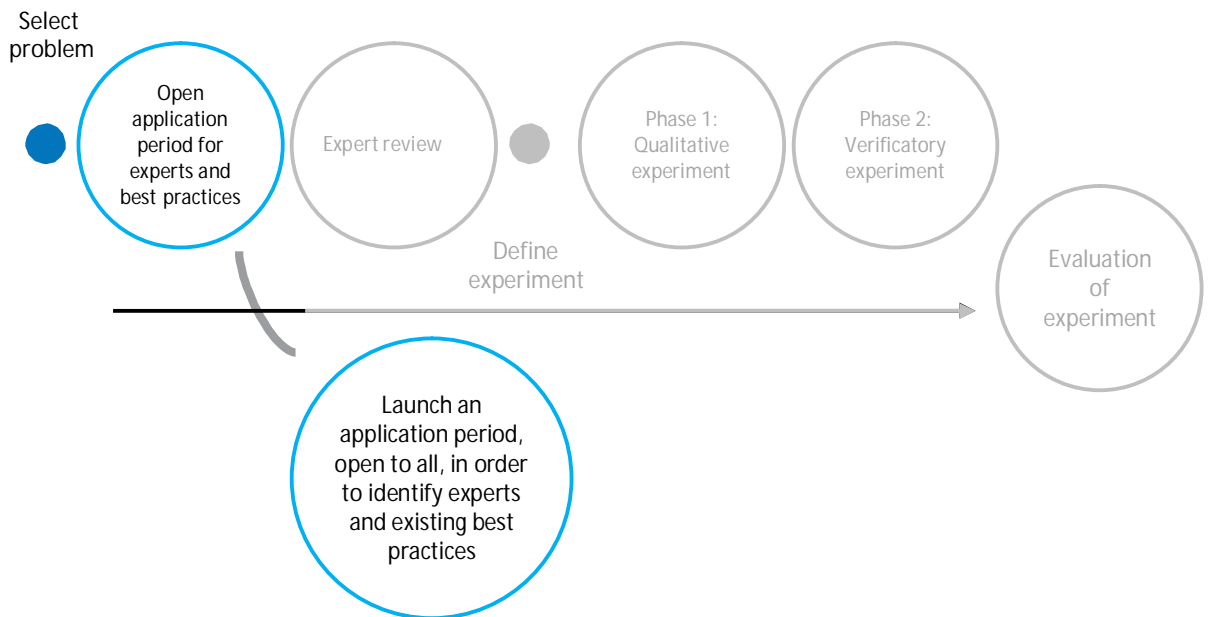


Figure 4. Existing relevant practices are charted at the beginning of the problem comprehension phase.

1 Open application. The primary intention of the first phase is to sharpen our understanding of what is already known about the challenges and opportunities associated with the political objective in question, and to establish the 'unknowns' and what still needs to be clarified in terms of the steering methods and the related formation.

A 'call for what works' in relation to achieving the policy objectives (experiments or measures) is targeted at actors outside the administration. This will help in specifying the objective and outlining current progress in solving the problem. The planning of steering may also include information on and the understanding of citizens, enterprises, organisations and other non-governmental actors when gauging the value of the objective and how it can best be attained.

At this stage, the aim is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the causes of the problem. The team of experts makes use of aids such as design thinking tools.

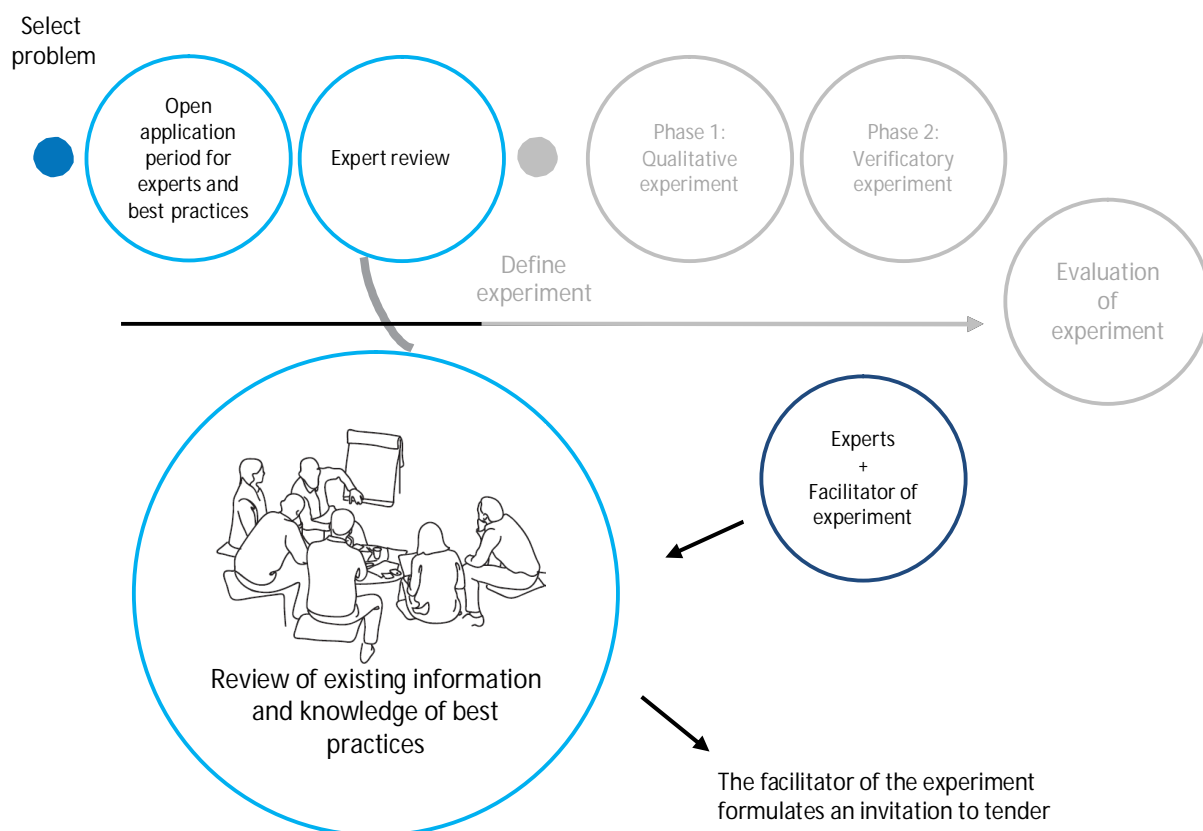


Figure 5. The next step is an expert workshop, at which a systematic review of the behavioural science literature related to the objective and the best practices is drawn up.

1.1 Literature review. The purpose of the literature review is to compile the most extensive possible base of existing behavioural knowledge related to the policy objective. This phase involves an assessment of whether the amount of behaviour-based data is sufficient to be applied to the policy process, or whether experimentation is necessary. If the data is to be applied without experimentation, it must be comprehensive and sufficiently suitable for application to the Finnish environment. The review is conducted under the leadership of the facilitator of the experiment.

2 Formulation of the invitation to tender. An invitation to tender is prepared if new information is required. A broad-based understanding is created, based on compiling usable information that supports the development of steering from the open collection of experiments performed and experiences undergone. The invitation to tender includes a detailed description of the understanding developed of a) the problem to which the policy objective is responding, b) the people and operators on whom the steering is having an impact and whose expertise would be useful to the development of steering mechanisms, and c) the first impressions of those methods which might be used to solve the problem and attain the objective. The invitation to tender can be implemented through, say, an open application process of the Government's research and analysis activities.

Experiment and joint development

The invitation to tender will seeks experimenters able to use multiple methods in presenting how behaviour-based information related to the policy objective can be obtained through experiments. The experimenter must have experience of using behavioural scientific and design methods and of the municipal sector or some other implementation environment. This two-phase experiment involves

seeking and verifying the various factors influencing behaviour. It would be advantageous if the qualitative and verificatory experiments were implemented by the same organisation, preferable the same individuals. The verificatory experiment is largely based on information obtained from the qualitative experiment.

The experiment may be implemented by a research institution, an internal consortium within the public administration, or an external party. A considerable number of public administration representatives must be involved in all experiments. Joint development methods are used in the actual experiment to ensure the sharing of expertise between implementing parties and the development of innovative cooperation methods.

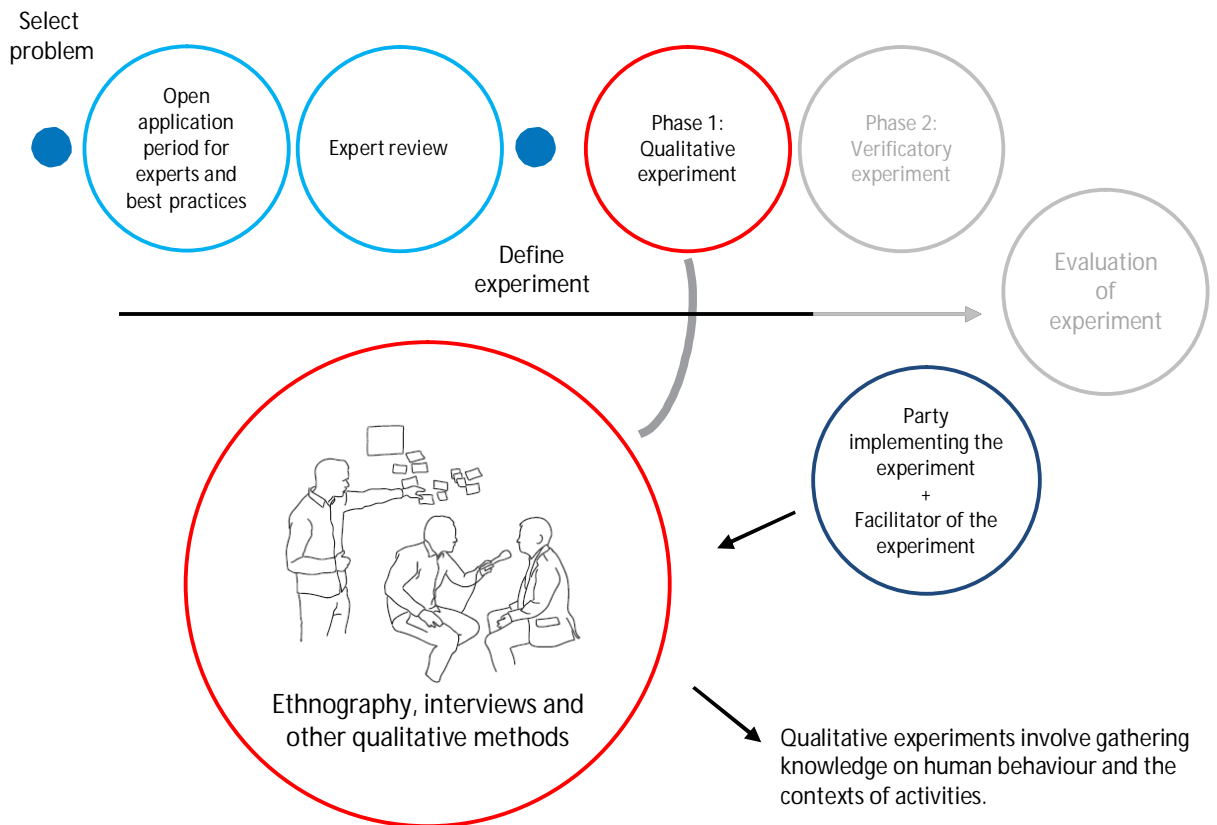


Figure 6. The qualitative stage of the experimental phase involves familiarisation with the theme based on lighter methods. A more widely applicable, precisely measurable verificatory experiment is conducted on the basis of the findings.

2.1 Qualitative experiment. Conducted through interviews and ethnographic or other qualitative methods, involves gathering knowledge on human behaviour within the scope of the selected steering objective. The qualitative experiment or study can be implemented by, say, a research institution, a municipality, a municipal unit or an external actor. Preference will be given to experimental consortia with multidisciplinary expertise and an understanding of the contents of the policy objective. The administration's expertise in behavioural science will also be enhanced by an experiment conducted together with a ministry. At the early stages of the steering process, the qualitative experiment will help in specifying possible challenges to steering and in identifying the best ways of taking account of human behaviour as part of the steering solution. Resources permitting, several qualitative experiments can be implemented. Possible qualitative test methods include interviews with the target group or experts, analyses of the service provider's reports, hackathon events, vignette experiments and scenario modelling.

The order will be specified after the qualitative experiment. If the preconditions exist for obtaining behaviour-based information useful to the planning of steering, the project will move on to the verifiatory experiment.

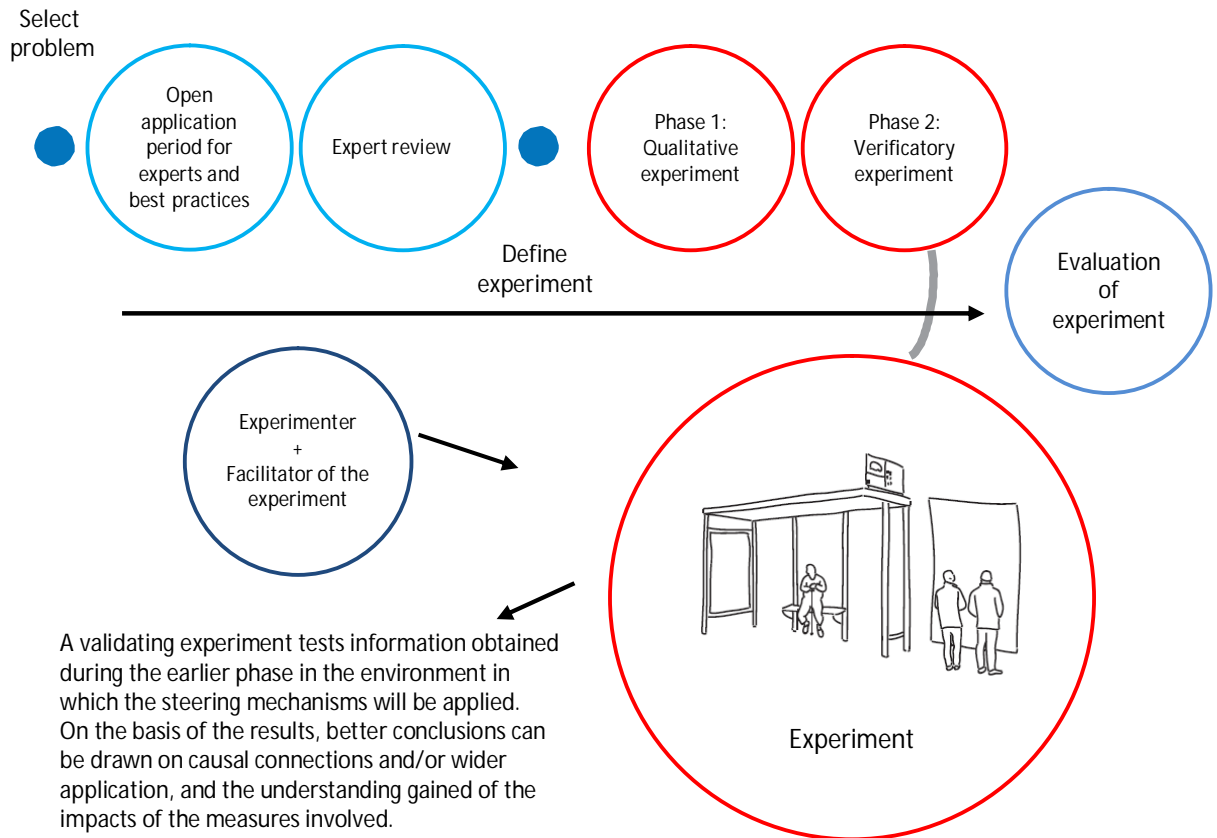


Figure 7. The verifiatory stage of the experimental phase involves familiarisation with the theme through quantitative factors that enable a causal connection to be identified. Precise measurability is the aim during the experiment.

2.2 Verifiatory experiment. The verifiatory experiment is intended to confirm the preliminary results generated in the previous phases. At this stage, assumptions on the behaviour essential to successful policy steering are made on the basis of the qualitative experiment and literature review, defining default assumptions for testing in a Finnish environment. The experiment is therefore about testing previously obtained information in the actual environment in which the steering mechanisms will be used. As a default, the verifiatory experiment is constructed in such a way as to enable conclusions to be drawn on causal connections and wider applicability. Such experiments are often relatively arduous, demanding and time-consuming to construct, but the results tend to be highly usable. It is also possible to standardise variables during verifiatory experiments, thereby providing accurate information on the influencing factors and measures.

Possible verifiatory methods include a randomised experimental setting with a control group, a non-randomised quasi-experimental setting with a control group and a before and after intervention setting in which the measurements can be implemented within the entire group before and after the intervention, i.e. without a control group. For both the qualitative and verifiatory experiment, the research question defines the setting, method and indicators best suited to responding to the question. Drastic conclusions should not be drawn on the basis of excessively narrow and unrepresentative samples. Statistical power calculations, cluster randomisation and other measures are helpful in working with certain unrepresentative samples. Before implementing a verifiatory experiment, the adverse

effects, wider applicability and the costs and acceptability of the measures must be assessed.

A research unit or agency able to generate behaviour-based information, and an actor able to implement the experiment are required for its implementation. In less thorough verificatory research settings, the experimenter may be an individual research unit, but for experiments held in more demanding settings, such as a genuine behavioural environment, other partners such as local authorities are necessary. Consortia with a focus on public sector expertise and making use of experiences should be favoured in experiments. The experimenter must try to meet the criteria of a high-quality experiment, listed in table 2.

Criterion	Description
Name of experiment	The experiment must have a name that describes it concisely.
Duration	The duration of an experiment is always limited. When an experiment begins, its final date must be known.
Target	The objectives for experiments must be clear at two levels: the concrete objectives and the post-experiment change being sought.
Measurability	The experiment has pre-defined and measurable qualitative/quantitative indicators that reflect the attainment of its goals.
Target	The basic aim of the experiment is to alter the activities of a party, be it an organisation, an individual, a group or social structure. Parties possible harmed by the experiment must also be defined.
Change theory	Each experiment has a hypothesis that must be made visible. This is the only way of collecting information systematically. In practice, this means opening up the hypothesis and presenting the alternatives, depending on the results of the experiment.
Collection of information	When an experiment begins, it must be clear how the information/knowledge collected during it will be documented and to whom such information will be communicated.
Scaling	As soon as the experiment begins, there will be a review of how the potentially successful experiment will be scaled/multiplied. It is essential to consider whether the character of the experiment will change as the scale increases, because will this affect the collected data.

Table 2: Criteria for a high-quality experiment (Adapted from Michie et al. (2014))

Evaluation. Together with the responsible ministries, the evaluation team will evaluate the results of the experimental phase and provide an assessment in support of the planning of steering. The evaluation may be undertaken by actors such as the experiment's facilitator, the experts who participated in the expert review, and the Government working group for the coordination of research, foresight and assessment activities (TEA working group). External expertise will be exploited if necessary. The evaluation will focus on effectiveness and feasibility. The experiment must aim at results that are useful in terms of the objectives, and the proposed measures must be realistic with regard to costs and distributable to the relevant application environments. Simultaneously, an assessment can be conducted of how behavior-based information and experiments have been utilised or will be utilised. The implementation and results of the experiment will also be made transparent, open for public assessment. This means that the self-assessment of the experimenter will be published and the experimentation process can be evaluated e.g. by the media or civic society.

Ethics of experiments

Before executing the experiment, the experimenter must provide the facilitator with a plan of the experiment for a preliminary ethical review. The plan must explain how ethical issues were taken into account when planning the experiment. Experiments must take account of the ethical principles that apply to all human sciences (Ethical principles of research in the humanities and social and behavioural

sciences by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity, 2012), the main aspects of which are listed below:

1. **Voluntary participation.** Participation in research should be voluntary and based on sufficient information.
2. **Information for subjects.** The subjects must be provided with the best possible information on the research subject and procedures, although in such a manner that the implementation of the experiment is still feasible. Misleading information must be avoided. If any exceptions from informed consent are made, justification for this must be provided.
3. **Autonomy and research involving minors.** According to the Constitution of Finland, children must be treated on an egalitarian basis and as individuals. If a study is to be conducted without a guardian's separate consent or a guardian being informed, an ethical review must be requested if the study involves subjects under the age of 15.
4. **Avoiding mental harm.** Avoiding mental harm involves treating subjects with respect and reporting the findings in a respectful manner in research publications.
5. **Avoiding financial and social harm.** Occasionally, publication of the results of an experiment may have harmful consequences for the subjects. Consideration must be given to this when the results are published, the aim being to report findings anonymously and in a respectful manner. However, this principle should not prevent the publication of research findings that may not be pleasing to the subjects in every respect.
6. **Protecting research data and confidentiality.** Research data obtained based on experiments must be kept secret and there must be no way of connecting the related information to private individuals.

The facilitator of the experiment must assess the plan, paying particular attention to whether there are sufficient grounds for exceptions to the ethical principles. If necessary, the experimenter will be asked to modify the plan to correspond better to the ethical principles. The facilitator of the experiment may employ an external actor, for instance the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity, to support the ethical evaluation.

2.3 Who will implement the operating model?

The goal of the operating model is to create a process that helps the public administration to learn about the utilisation of behaviour-based information and how to organise experiments. At present, the public administration does not necessarily have sufficient expertise to generate behaviour-based information. In the first instance, the required expertise will therefore be acquired from external providers in such a manner that expertise continuously accumulates in both the Prime Minister's Office and the ministries. Internal expertise and research institutes, such as sectoral research institutes and universities, will initially be used to implement the operating model. The experimenters and tasks are summarised in Figure 8.

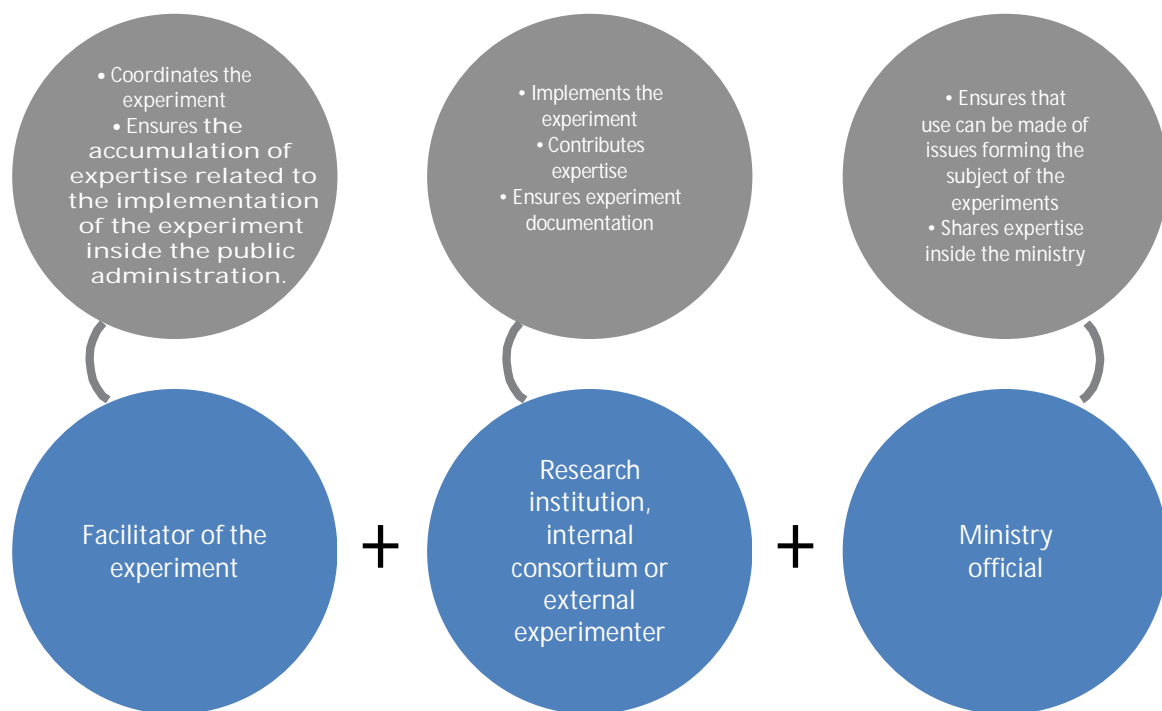


Figure 8. Summary of the parties implementing the operating model, and their responsibilities.

Three alternative methods are proposed of organising the operating model.

Alternative 1: Facilitator of experiment at the Prime Minister's Office. Based on this proposal, the Prime Minister's Office and the ministries responsible for steering will be in charge of implementing the experimentation programme. A person with expertise in preparing invitations for tender for the production of behaviour-based information and on the facilitation of experiments will be recruited to the Prime Minister's Office. The experiments as such will be implemented by a team comprising the facilitator of the experiment, the responsible ministry and the possible experimenter. The facilitator of the experiment will provide support for the experiment and lead the search for ideas on new approaches to steering mechanisms, as well as being a developer of operations within central government. If necessary, the facilitator will also assist the ministries interested in the issue.

If the results are good, the role of this facilitator may evolve at a later stage. In this way, for example the experiment team assembled at the Prime Minister's Office will form a permanent support structure for behaviour-based steering. In such a case, the experiment team will continuously evaluate the policy objectives defined by the Government and recommend the application of behaviour-based knowledge in the planning of steering if it deems a behaviour-based approach useful. The experiment team may operate on a flagging basis, announcing that it can assist in acquiring behaviour-based information and, should the ministry so wish, can exploit the team's expertise. Should the ministry or ministries responsible be willing, the operating model for obtaining behaviour-based information will be implemented.

Alternative 2: A virtual unit. This alternative would involve implementing the operating model as a virtual unit. The official responsible for the unit would compile a core team for the policy objective, charged with defining the problem, evaluating the current data available and, if necessary, placing an order. The virtual unit would bring together the core developers of behaviour-based data and assist in the sharing of expertise and information.

The strength of this approach lies in the easy implementation of the operating model, which makes as much use of existing expertise available as possible. However, a virtual unit requires an official responsible for both the unit's operations and the application of the operating model.

Alternative 3: Network. The third alternative involves tendering out the acquisition of behaviour-based information to a research institute involved in some way with the experiment's objective. In health-related issues, for instance, this might be the National Institute for Health and Welfare. The research institute would ensure the implementation of the various elements of the operating model. The key issue here would be ensuring that the information is useful and can be fed back into the planning of steering.

In the long term, research institutes can form a network in order to compile data regarding existing behaviour-based information and to define the most efficient type of steering with regard to behavioural impacts. The What works network in the United Kingdom is one such network.

Recommendation

All of the alternatives emphasise the need to maintain a strong link to the planning of steering policy. It is recommended that a person with suitable qualifications be recruited to central government, to take responsibility for the implementation of the operating model. The key task of this person would be to ensure that new behaviour-based information is useful for the ministries, to provide support in making use of the operating model and to develop the model further. One opportunity for achieving this could be created by gathering together Finnish experiments and sharing best practices.

Other actors

Ministry responsible for the planning of steering. In many cases, the help of more than one sectoral ministry will be required in order to realise the policy objective. The operating model proposes that at least one responsible ministry be involved in preparing the invitation to tender and the actual experiment. This will allow the ministries to accumulate in-house expertise on novel approaches. At least the person planning steering within the ministry in question should participate.

The external implementer of the experiment. If necessary, the actual experiment will be implemented by an actor outside the ministry. The recommended external actor will be a consortium with research expertise, the ability to conduct the qualitative first phase study, and expertise in the behavioural sciences and in the experiments required for validating the information in the second phase (e.g. through randomised field tests). Expertise in design and behavioural science will be useful in implementing the experiment. A platform will be necessary in addition to the planner of the experiment. This can be a municipality, regional administration or an organisation.

The Muutoksenteijät / Changemakers network. The Muutoksenteijät / Changemakers network can help in identifying persons in ministries interested in applying new approaches. The network can also serve as a channel for sharing best practices and the results of experiments between ministries. Supporting such initiatives arising from the personal interests of officials will be helpful in exploiting behaviour-based methods.

2.4 Simulation: what might the experimentation programme launched in 2015 mean in practical terms?

The Government could launch an experimentation programme on issues such as how to promote a dignified old age, as described below. This description is based on the assumption that a facilitator of the experiment, working in the Prime Minister's Office, would be responsible for the experimentation process (alternative 1).

0.1. Promotion of a dignified old age is registered in the Government Programme as a national strategic objective.
0.2. The Action Plan of the Government specifies the objective of a dignified old age with the subordinate objective of extending the period of independent living among the elderly by one year. The Muutoksenteijät / Changemakers network identifies motivation within the ministries to explore the behaviour-based opportunities and limitations of the policy objective.
0.3. The facilitator of the experiment at the Prime Minister's Office estimates whether the implementation of the objective and its more detailed definition provide grounds for applying a behaviour-based approach, and whether the responsible ministry (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health) or ministries are interested in exploiting new approaches.
1. If this is the case, a Best Practices search is prepared and launched in order to attain the objective and to search for existing experiments and experiences on an open basis. In this way, views are gathered from actors outside the central administration on the factors that influence independent living among elderly citizens and the associated opportunities. The facilitator of the experiment activates the required parties (hospital districts, providers of elderly services and other service providers, organisations working with senior citizens) to participate in the search. If no grounds exist, the objective is transferred to the ministry's ordinary steering development process.
1.1. Organise an expert review in which selected experts gather scientific data on independent living among elderly people. The review is conducted in an extended 3–5 day workshop that also involves the examination of theoretical information and evidence related to practices and solutions explored during the earlier phase.
1.2. Organise a status review workshop (no. 1), in which researchers, public servants, experimenters and other key parties familiarise themselves with the experiment from each others' perspectives and form an overall common view of the situation.
1.3. The facilitator of the experiment compiles an invitation to tender, specified on the basis of the solutions and experiences collected during the search, seeking out multidisciplinary, participatory experiments to extend the period of independent living among the elderly.
2. Experiment consortia respond to the invitation to tender. The facilitator of the experiment and the ministry assess the tenders, based on the multi-disciplinary approach and qualifications of the consortia and the openness of the proposed experiments.
2.1. Initiate a qualitative experiment for the collection of knowledge on how human behaviour influences independent living among the elderly and which groups are the key to achieving the objective. Alongside the facilitator, an official of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health provides support and helps to enable each experiment.

2.1.1. The facilitator of the experiment and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health evaluate the experiment and decide on whether to proceed to the next phase.
2.1.2. Organise a status review workshop (no. 2) for researchers, public servants, implementers and other key parties, where they familiarise themselves with the experiment from each others' perspectives and form an overall common view of the situation.
2.1.3. Place an order for the verifactory experiment. The tender must include an assessment of the experiment's impact and feasibility. If an external evaluator considers the experiment to be sufficiently impactful, widely applicable and feasible on the basis of reasonable resources, the next phase is the verifactory experiment.
2.2. In the verifactory experiment, the experimentation consortium implements an experiment generating measurable results that can be applied on a wider basis (for instance by using the RCT process). The consortium will also conduct a preliminary impact assessment of the experiment's effects on independent living among the elderly and prepare a preliminary assessment of the costs of realising the idea. Before the experiment, criteria for success in promoting independent living among the elderly must be drawn up. Meeting these criteria will confirm that the results of the experiment can be applied. The findings must be open and transparent and the experimenter's self-assessment will be published.
3. The experiment facilitator at the Prime Minister's Office will assess the results of the experiment alongside the ministry and issue an expert opinion on the results, regarding their wider application, validity, usefulness and whether the previous knowledge base was used.
3.1. An interactive consultation event will be organised under the leadership of the facilitator of the experiment. In such a case, the service providers linked to the objective, members of the target group, public servants, decision-makers and other key parties will jointly develop proposals for measures to be taken on the basis of information gained from the experiment.
4. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health will prepare the required steering based on information compiled during the experiment.
5. One of the factors included in the impact assessment of steering will be whether the steering developed to promote independent living among elderly citizens involved a behaviour-based approach.

2.5 Recommended measures for introducing the operating model

During the first stage, the following measures will be required for the implementation of the proposed operating model:

1. Implement the experimentation programme mentioned in the Government Programme.

Behaviour-based information will be utilised in the experimentation programme in connection with the objectives selected in the Government Programme Action Plan.

2. The Government's appropriations for analysis and research activities will be reorganised

so that one fifth of such funding is targeted at experimental projects. This funding will be spent on implementing experiments on gathering behaviour-based information in the proposed policy objectives. The experiments will involve research and generate new information.

3. Recruit a facilitator for the experiments. The experiment facilitator will possess the expertise required for supporting the experiments and, when required, preparing invitations to tender in order to acquire essential, behaviour-based information. The facilitator will be involved in the implementation of experimentation, ensuring that expertise in conducting experiments begins to accumulate within central government. The facilitator's duties will also include assembling experiments conducted in civic society and the private sector via an open application process.

4. If the systematic impact assessment of legislation referred to in the Government Programme is developed, behavioural impacts must be systematically assessed as part of impact assessment. Assessment of the dynamic, behaviour-linked impacts of steering mechanisms is difficult, but experiments may be one way of developing this competence.

5. Similar to the Heureka discussion, the experimentation programmes will begin with key decision-makers meeting to discuss the issue. The aim is to build a common vision and shared expertise within the administration on using behaviour-based approaches and experiments.

However, such measures will not be sufficient on their own. Public servants must show an interest in testing and exploiting new approaches. Such people can be sought out and identified using, say, the Muutoksentekijät / Changemakers network. Best practices and knowledge can be shared through central government's internal network. Motivating and incentivising public servants to begin using innovative approaches will speed up this cultural change. One way of achieving this would be to demonstrate how useful new tools can be in completing current tasks.

In addition to the recommended measures, the following initiatives would contribute to enhancing long term change within the administration:

Partnership with Finnish universities. Linking research and teaching to development work would assist in trying out new approaches.

A training module for public servants and decision-makers interested in behaviour-based competence. Such training would enhance the expertise and commitment of public servants to using behaviour-based methods. The training module could be prepared after the organisation and completion of the Government Programme Action Plan, for instance during the course on processing methods.

An alternative route: establish a unit

In many countries, the behaviour-based approach has been introduced to the development of the public administration by establishing special units as centres of behaviour-based knowledge, understanding and activities. This would also be possible in Finland.

Such units use different methods in different countries: Denmark decided to establish a Mindlab that utilises design methods, whereas the UK set up BIT, which applies behavioural sciences. These units typically have special expertise in a certain behaviour-based approach and start out with a staff of 5–15. In particular, the units assist in developing implementation activities and work on a project basis in collaboration with sectoral ministries or the local administration.

The advantage of behaviour-based units lies in their ability to accumulate and boost expertise within the public administration. These units have often succeeded in advocating this new, largely unknown approach in public discussion. On the other hand, international interviews reveal the challenges involved in unit-based approaches, which lie in their fragmented nature since they are not directly linked to the planning of steering or central government steering policy, but are used on the basis of orders made by officials in individual ministries or local government.



3 Conclusion: What happens after the experimentation programme?

The purpose of this study was to develop an operating model for applying behaviour-based methods to the planning of steering in a manner suitable for Finnish society. As the starting point of the Design for Government operating model it must enable a rapid start and require no new structures. The operating model and its phases can be expanded at a later stage.

The proposed operating model is one element in our broader development towards a more people-oriented administration. Implementation of the model must enhance understanding of the potential of a behaviour-based approach in steering and experiments, in the eyes of policy makers and the general public. This would help to strengthen confidence in the public administration. The key features of the Finnish model will be undermined if developments continue on their current path.

Some of the initial discussion of the issue sees a great deal of promise in the experiments: they are advocated as methods of continuously developing administration in a way that eliminates the need for major and difficult reform processes. The Design for Government operating model does not go this far. First, we must create a common goal: administration with a human focus. Thereafter, continuous development methods can be applied more extensively than before. In practical terms, this may involve a training programme implemented alongside the operating model, enabling public servants to familiarise themselves easily with concrete examples while applying behaviour-based methods.

The idea of administration and steering with a stronger human focus lies at the core of the Design for Government operating model. This model is being implemented to help officials in their work and to assist them in adopting new approaches. During the facilitated experimentation programme, officials will have the opportunity to experiment with new methods and discover those that work best for themselves, while identify aspects in which they need additional support. For the operating model to be genuinely useful in the longer term, it is crucial that officials within ministries are interested in the idea. In the best case scenario, behaviour-based information will provide steering with stronger grounds and which produces better results.

Another principle would be that of a learning administration and decision-making. Several experiments have been conducted in Finnish society in recent decades, some of which have been connected to the development of societal steering. A more systematic approach and learning from past experiences will be required during the next stage. For the future Government, this means that the annual review of the implementation of the Government Programme must involve a learning process based on successes, failures, and what could be done differently. This learning principle lies at the core of the Design for Government operating model.

There is a clear need for new tools for the steering and development of the public administration. The nation is facing major reforms that are impossible to plan to perfection beforehand. It would therefore be more sensible to experiment based on a systematic approach, while accumulating knowledge within the administration. Behavioural knowledge will play a key role in this but will not change the fact that politics is basically a matter of value-based choices.

Everything done within the operating model must therefore be transparent and open for citizens. The purpose of the operating model is to make the planning of steering, and thereby the public administration, more open and democratic by involving people more effectively in the development of steering mechanisms.

Experiments are necessary to discovering how the operating model will work in practice. For this reason, we propose a two-year experimentation programme. The experimentation programme must be evaluated on an open basis. This proposal envisages that the experimentation programme will mainly be financed from existing resources. If the operating model generates measurable value, its resourcing can be increased at a later date.

