

Types of change

Change is not one-size-fits-all. Each change has different objectives, stakeholders, challenges and opportunities. A highly participatory, engaging set of activities is only one way of delivering effective change and is not always required or desirable. There are three main types of change:

1. **Directive change** – The requirements are defined from above (i.e. top-down) involving only a few people for a narrow, contained scope. These changes are typically urgent, the solution is often known, and compliance of staff is required more than their emotional commitment. This type of change suits shorter-term projects with a limited range of consequences.
2. **Pre-planned change** – Suits projects where leaders need to deliver a solution quickly to a complex and possibly urgent problem. This is only possible when the outcome is known. This approach does not typically suit projects requiring behavioural change. Machinery of Government (MOG) changes often fall into the pre-planned category as there is limited scope for stakeholders to participate in the process. Pursue engagement with affected staff after the announcement to ensure the change is embraced.
3. **Inquiring change** – This occurs when a complex problem is less urgent and leaders are committed to making sustainable change through tailored solutions and by shifting the culture of the organisation. This approach typically delivers better results, but should only be used when the change is important enough to justify the investment in time. Your case for change will tell you when this is appropriate.

Each change initiative may include more than one type of change if, for example, they are needed for different stakeholders at different stages. Here are some examples¹ of these types of change and when they should be used.

Dimensions	Directive change	Pre-planned change	Inquiring change
Examples	New compliance requirements for a public service (e.g. prison rules)	Implementation of a new IT system or Machinery of Government change	Embedding values and behaviours
Characteristics	Top-down, 'tell' rather than 'ask'	Linear 'road map'	Guided, iterative spiral
Change goals (the end state)	Tightly defined, inflexible	Clear goal, with some modification as needed	Loosely defined, requires investigation, may be slightly different for each person impacted
Change process	Tightly constrained	Flexible, participative	Experimental, involved

¹ Adapted from Buono, F. and Kerber, K. (2010) "Creating a sustainable approach to change: Building organisational change capacity" *SAM Advanced Management Journal*, Spring



Dimensions	Directive change	Pre-planned change	Inquiring change
Role of change leaders	Tell, explain, monitor	Devise a plan and work with staff to implement	Point the way, provide the overarching vision, guide and watch over, listen, lead
Change-maker dynamics	Persuasion	Influence, cooperation	Collaboration
Pace of change	Urgent, fast, 'just do it'	Go slow during planning to go fast during implementation	Act quickly, improvise, learn, react and continue to iterate
Types of changes	<p>Small</p> <p>Procedural or process based</p> <p>Not tied to individuals' values and beliefs</p> <p>Will not impact people's roles, responsibilities or status</p> <p>Easy to control and monitor</p>	<p>Any size</p> <p>Involves individuals with some ties to the status quo who need to be persuaded to change</p>	<p>Any size, but typically those that can deliver larger benefits (to justify the investment)</p> <p>Involves changes to values, beliefs and/or behaviours</p> <p>Requires harnessing the collective knowledge of staff</p>
Drawbacks	<p>Requires strong enforcement and/or large incentives to embed the change</p> <p>Limited engagement or ownership from impacted staff</p> <p>Can face more resistance</p>	<p>Leads to engagement but not complete ownership from impacted staff; innovation is limited to the project team and leaders</p>	<p>Can be expensive and slower than other forms of engagement; can lead to change fatigue</p>

