

City Innovation Snapshot | Austin, United States

Overview

- ▶ Mayor: Steve Adler
- ▶ Lead staff on innovation: Kerry O'Connor
- ▶ Population of municipality: 950,715 (2017)
- ▶ Innovation/open data website: <https://cityofaustin.github.io/innovation/>

Spotlight on Austin | Innovation a catalyst for solutions

Austin's Innovation office supports departments throughout the city to **"unpack the problem"**, utilising **human-centred design, problem framing, prototyping** and **iteration** as approaches to respond to the city's complex challenges. The Innovation office, in collaboration with the Dell Medical School, is using blockchain technology to permanently store and maintain important documents (which might be lost or stolen) of the homeless population so that they can continue to access to vital services where these documents are required.

Vision and approach to innovation capacity

The city's innovation strategy

Along with **44%** of cities surveyed, Austin has an **explicit innovation strategy**.

The city most closely associates innovation capacity with the following terms:

Human-centred design

Experimentation

Approaches to innovation capacity

Similar to over **40%** of cities surveyed, Austin approaches innovation capacity **both** from a **holistic/macro level**, as well as in **specific policy areas**.

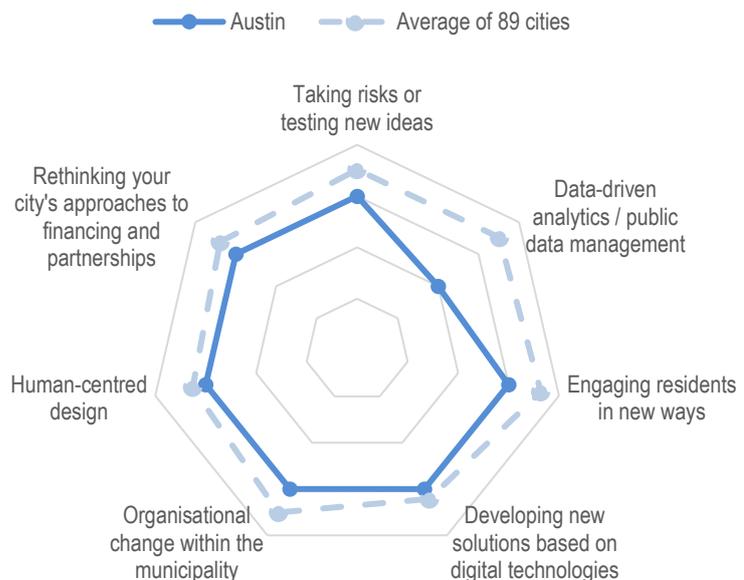
The **top two priority policy areas** for the city's innovation work include:

Housing

Social welfare / social services

Most common innovation activities

Austin uses a variety of innovation approaches which include **taking risks and testing new ideas; engaging residents in new ways; developing new solutions based on digital technologies; facilitating organisational change within the municipal administration; human-centred design; rethinking the city's approach to financing and partnerships.**



Funding for innovation capacity

<h3>Funding to support innovation capacity</h3> <p>Like 77% of cities surveyed, Austin has dedicated funding to support innovation capacity, which originates from the following sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Municipal budget (city council approved funds/operating budget) ✓ External funding (philanthropy/non-profit) ✓ Non-financial resources (staff on loan) 	<h3>Types of activities being funded</h3> <p>Launching or sustaining a project and idea generation & brainstorming are the two most commonly funded activities among all cities surveyed. Austin's funding for innovation capacity is directed towards these common activities, as well as investing in digital services and paying for services.</p> <div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid #0056b3; border-radius: 10px; padding: 10px; margin: 5px; background-color: #0056b3; color: white; text-align: center;"> Launching or sustaining a project </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #0056b3; border-radius: 10px; padding: 10px; margin: 5px; background-color: #0056b3; color: white; text-align: center;"> Idea generation & brainstorming </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #0056b3; border-radius: 10px; padding: 10px; margin: 5px; background-color: #0056b3; color: white; text-align: center;"> Investing in digital systems </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #0056b3; border-radius: 10px; padding: 10px; margin: 5px; background-color: #808080; color: white; text-align: center;"> Investing in physical infrastructure </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #0056b3; border-radius: 10px; padding: 10px; margin: 5px; background-color: #0056b3; color: white; text-align: center;"> Paying for services </div> </div>
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<h3>Organisational structure & staffing</h3> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <p>Under the purview of the City Manager, Austin's Innovation Office is a standalone department, with the opening of the Design, Technology, and Innovation Fellows Program and Bloomberg iTeam, the Office now consists of 12 staff.</p> </div> <p>Staff skills and profiles include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Designer ✓ Community engagement staff ✓ Legal expert ✓ Project manager ✓ Sociologist 	<h3>Partnerships for innovation & data</h3> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <p>Austin has developed partnerships to promote innovation capacity and with the private sector, academia/think tanks, community and civic tech groups, and philanthropy. The city highly values seeking solutions through co-creation with people impacted by the problem.</p> <p>The city's innovation capacity grew with the launch of a Design, Technology, and Innovation Fellows Program and through partnership with Bloomberg's iTeam.</p> </div>
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<h2>Measuring outcomes</h2>	
<p>Policy areas that benefit from sufficient data, or lack sufficient data, to support innovation capacity in the city:</p> <div style="display: grid; grid-template-columns: repeat(5, 1fr); gap: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; background-color: #f0f0f0;">Transport / mobility</div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; background-color: #f0f0f0;">Economic development</div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; background-color: #f0f0f0;">Housing & built environment</div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; background-color: #f0f0f0;">Policing & law enforcement</div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; background-color: #f0f0f0;">Health</div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; background-color: #f0f0f0;">Water</div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; background-color: #f0f0f0;">Waste and sewage</div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; background-color: #f0f0f0;">Labour markets & skills</div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; background-color: #f0f0f0;">Environment & climate change</div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; background-color: #f0f0f0;">Education</div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; background-color: #f0f0f0;">Culture</div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; background-color: #f0f0f0;">Social inclusion, equity</div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; background-color: #f0f0f0;">Public works</div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; background-color: #f0f0f0;">Tourism</div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; background-color: #f0f0f0;">Digital governance</div> </div> <p><i>NB: No response provided by the city for the policy areas in grey.</i></p>	<p>Innovation is helping the city to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Improve service delivery ✓ Improve resident outcomes ✓ Improve internal operations <p>The most critical success factors in supporting the city's innovation work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Dedicated funding ✓ Dedicated innovation team ✓ Leadership from Mayor ✓ Culture of innovation in city ✓ Support from outside city administration