



# **Practical Implementation Guide: Mission-oriented Approach**



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# 1 Introduction

The Urban Transitions Pathways review series aims at supporting Urban Transition Mission (UTM) cities<sup>1</sup> globally in providing additional instruments to strengthen their approach towards climate neutrality.

Built by experts of the UTMC consortiums, the practical implementation guides aim at helping staff in each UTM city in shading the light on selected high impact, holistic methodologies and providing them with instruments to strengthen their approaches towards climate neutrality.

The current guide will look into the Mission-oriented Approach (hereinafter “MOA”), which has been explored and developed in a number of projects and programmes around the world, with the main objective of reaching a given objective in the shortest possible amount of time. The mission-oriented approach takes its roots from the NASA Moon Missions of the 60s and 70s and has been widely implemented in the medical research sector, and nowadays in the sustainability sector, for high-impact, result driven governance methodologies aimed at producing transformative change.

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<sup>1</sup> UTM Cities is the cohort of cities selected by Mission Innovation Urban Transitions Mission to receive support to accelerate their climate action journey towards net-zero. For further information: <https://urbantransitionsmiission.org/city-cohort/>

## 2 Definition

There is no agreed definition of the MOA from a governance and managerial perspective. However, mission-oriented approaches are widely used to mobilise resources in the context of innovation. The most comprehensive definition of a MOA comes from the OECD:

*“a Mission oriented approach is a **co-ordinated package** of policy and regulatory measures tailored specifically to mobilise science, technology and innovation in order to address well-defined objectives related to a societal challenge, **in a defined timeframe**. These measures possibly span different stages of the innovation cycle from research to demonstration and market deployment, mix supply-push and demand-pull instruments, and **cut across various policy fields, sectors and disciplines**”<sup>2</sup>.*

In the context of innovative approaches to economic development, the MOA has been analysed and defined in the work of professor Mazzucato<sup>3</sup>, later taken up and enshrined in the strategic plan of the EU for the Horizon Europe programme.

The approach is based on a set of interventions dedicated to triggering innovation across different sectors, actors and disciplines while incentivising socio-economic co-benefits – notably economic growth and job creation.

Mazzucato’s vision on the MOA puts innovation at the centre of economic growth, and it builds on the interdependence of three key dimensions:

- 1 public sector capabilities** - the tools of government—from procurement to prize schemes—to drive goal-oriented experimentation
- 2 financing mechanisms** - the ways that public financing can crowd in and galvanise other forms of investment
- 3 citizen engagement** - ways to harness social movements and citizen participation in a creative, open and empowering process of challenge-led innovation

On the bedrock of this definition, the European Commission has elaborated five mission-oriented pathways addressing some of the most significant global challenges, among which adapting to climate change, and creating climate-neutral cities aiming to accelerate green and digital transition in cities and regions.

Following similar innovative, time-bound and disruptive approaches to urban sustainability, other governments have set up MOAs for local climate action, such as the [Indian Smart Cities Mission](#), as well as the [100 Climate Neutral Zones](#) deployed in Japan.

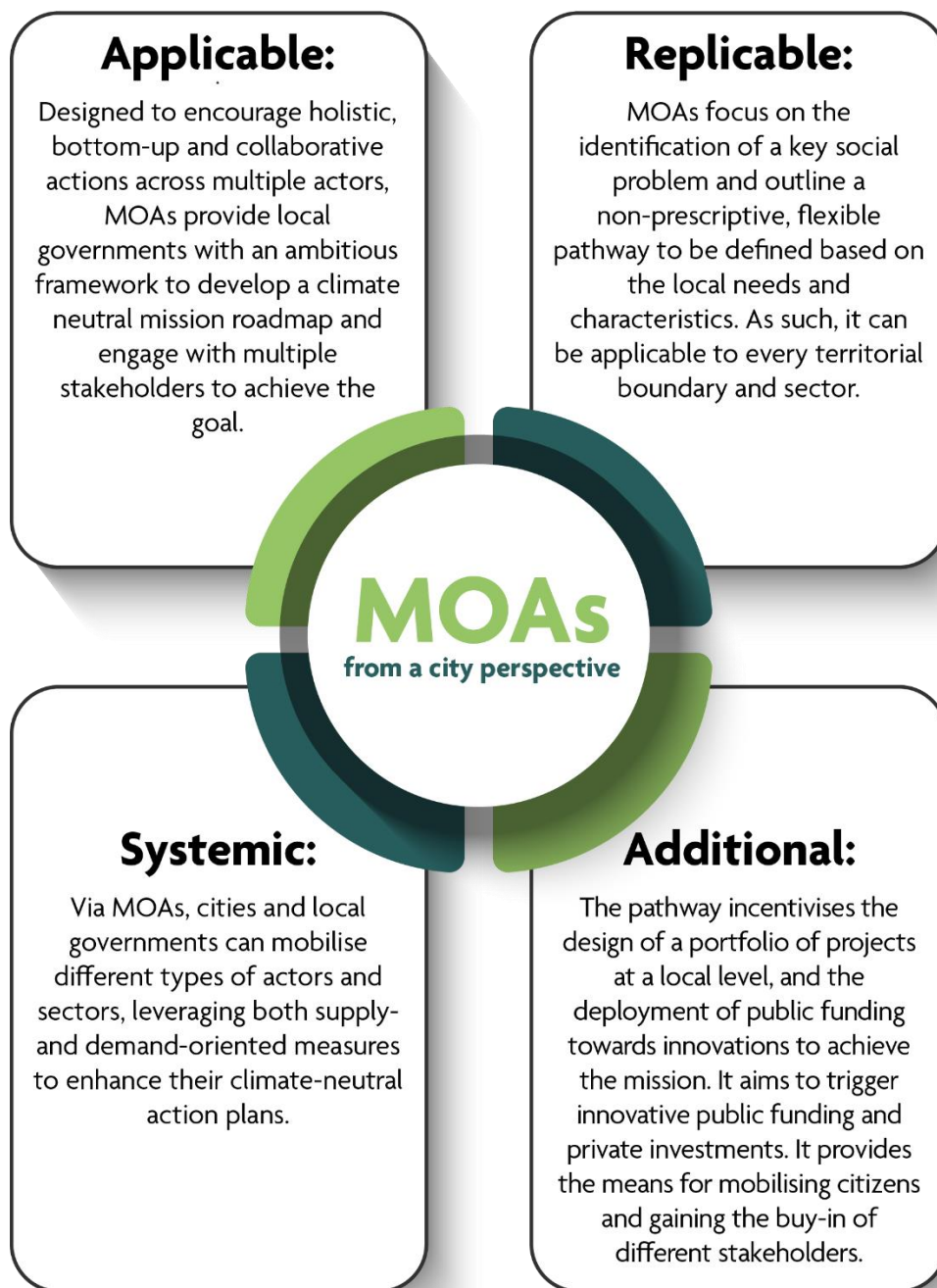
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<sup>2</sup> Larrue, P. (2021), "The design and implementation of mission-oriented innovation policies: A new systemic policy approach to address societal challenges", *OECD Science, Technology and Industry Policy Papers*, No. 100, OECD Publishing, Paris, [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/science-and-technology/the-design-and-implementation-of-mission-oriented-innovation-policies\\_3f6c76a4-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/science-and-technology/the-design-and-implementation-of-mission-oriented-innovation-policies_3f6c76a4-en)

<sup>3</sup> Mazzucato, M., 2021. *Mission economy: A moonshot guide to changing capitalism*. Penguin UK.

From a city perspective, MOAs fulfil the following conditions, and can be used in conjunction with already existing plans and actions:



### 3 Action Strategy

The OECD strategic mission-oriented framework lays down the principles of MOA’s implementation based on the three dimensions:

- **Strategic orientation:** by identifying societal challenges and involving local stakeholders, a local government can gain legitimacy for policy action and target setting.
- **Policy coordination:** at organisational/administrative level, the approach can help break the silos and get different departments in the city, as well as local stakeholders, in coordinating towards the definition of a new policy context.
- **Policy implementation:** by developing cross-sectoral task forces with specific objectives, a mission-oriented approach at city level can help in coordinating both private and public efforts towards the same goal.

A MOA can be developed depending on the needs and thematic focus; a basic framework of a mission-oriented approach, following the OECD online toolkit<sup>4</sup>, is outlined below:

	Main tasks	Process
<p><b>Strategic orientation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform and select specific societal challenge(s)</li> <li>• Strengthen legitimacy of focused policy intervention on these challenges</li> <li>• Translate the broad challenges into clear and precise objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify interconnected societal challenges</li> <li>• Identify top sectors to promote innovation and co-develop the strategic agenda</li> <li>• Define strategic agendas for a practical action plan</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy coordination</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define the appropriate governance setting to co-ordinate interventions across silos</li> <li>• Create a sense of ownership / ‘co-leadership’</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify multi-year public interventions between different policymaking institutions</li> <li>• Enhance cross-sectoral collaboration, such as joint training programs and knowledge-sharing sessions between different policymaking institutions</li> <li>• Promote inter-departmental communication through established regular meetings and forums, and/or digital communication platform</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy implementation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement appropriate coordinated instruments</li> <li>• Create adequate incentives (including with co-financing by private actors)</li> <li>• Set the appropriate arrangements for monitoring and evaluation of systemic policy initiative, including a robust MEL framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define one multi-year financial commitment contract for the overall programme</li> <li>• Scout for adequate and innovative financial instruments, regulatory reforms and pricing mechanisms, including public procurement</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> OECD Mission-Oriented Innovation policies online toolkit, available at: <https://stip-pp.oecd.org/moip/questions>

## Box 1: The EU Cities Mission – an example of implementation of a multilevel mission-oriented approach

The [100 Climate - Neutral and Smart Cities Mission](#) (hereinafter Cities Mission) is one of the five EU Missions. The goal of the Cities Mission is twofold. It aims to

- deliver at least 100 European climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030
- ensure that these cities also act as experimentation and innovation hubs for others to follow, to enable all European cities to become climate-neutral by 2050.

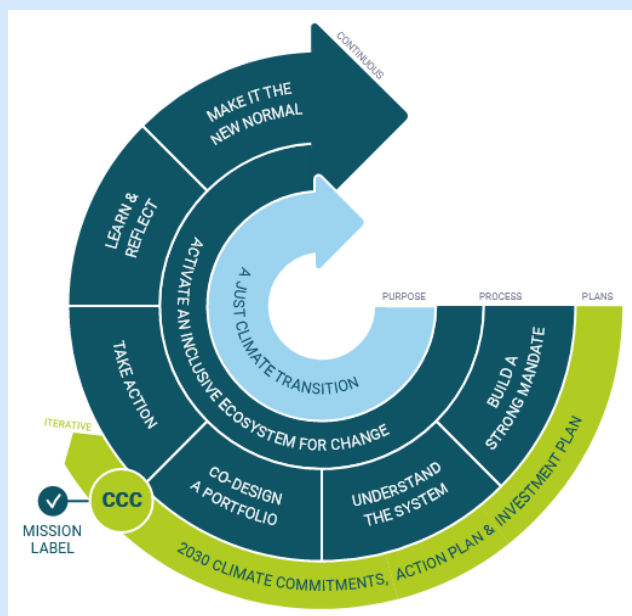
Acknowledging the climate crisis as a complex challenge, the Cities Mission promotes systemic change based on a comprehensive, all-in approach that cuts across the boundaries of policies and different levels of governance.

The innovative governance device required from each Mission City is the Climate City Contract (CCC). CCCs are living and iterative documents composed of three elements:

- [Climate Neutrality Commitments Document](#)
- [Climate Neutrality Action Plan](#)
- [Climate Neutrality Investment Plan](#)

CCCs are non-binding documents that constitute a clear and relevant political commitment to the European Commission, the national and regional authorities, as well as to citizens.

Cities will develop CCCs in close cooperation with citizens, public and private stakeholders, civil society organisations and universities.



Started in 2021, [Net Zero Cities](#) (NZN) is the official platform of the EU Cities mission, designed to help cities overcome the current structural, institutional, and cultural barriers they face in order to achieve climate neutrality by 2030. It counts on the support of experts and practitioners to provide cities with access to tools, resources and expertise promoted into a one-stop platform and accessible through [an online portal](#). Under the framework of NZC, Climate-neutral City Advisors assigned to individual cities, play a key role in overcoming the capacity gap at a local level and supporting local administrators in the process of co-designing local roadmaps to climate neutrality by 2030.

## 4 Theory of Change

To develop an effective MOA for a topic or action cities should clearly articulate their impact pathways through a solid logical framework, or theory of Change (TOC), to make explicit the fundamental mechanisms by which positive impacts will be produced across a timeline.

Objective	Impact	Actions/ Interventions	Rationale
To accelerate systemic transition to Climate Neutrality or Net Zero by 2030	The direct benefit (climate mitigation and adaptation) and co-benefits (economic development, social inclusion)	The specific actions that are envisaged with relevant stakeholder to co-develop and design a portfolio that allows to reduce emissions	The rationale behind each action, checked against the systemic thinking needed to accelerate change while addressing complex societal challenges

In MOAs, timing and experimentation play a crucial role; the ability of a project to reach its objectives as fast as possible is a key element in every MOA. As such, TOCs should reflect the need to monitor and intervene in non-linear and iterative processes that foster strategic experimentation. Feedback loops, where the actors involved asked themselves key questions (*What matters? What is possible? What is going on?*) and learning from past experiences are key to adjusting actions according to the foreseen impact. This process is called **Sensemaking**<sup>5</sup>, and it is a key decision-making process for MOAs.

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<sup>5</sup> Katz, D., & Kahn, R. L. (1966). *The Social Psychology of Organizations*. New York: Wiley. Second edition published in 1978.

## 5 Contribution to UTM Framework

In the framework of the Urban Transitions Mission and the [GCoM City Journey](#), MOAs can be utilised to support in various steps of the process, either as means of implementation, or to reinforce commitments. MOA's related resources can be linked to some of the UTM Framework' questions, as outlined below:

Main steps of the UTM Framework	Mission Oriented Approach resources
<b>Commitments</b>	<a href="#">Climate City Contract Concept</a> (EU Mission) <a href="#">Indian Smart Cities Mission Guidelines</a>
<b>Actions</b>	<a href="#">Comprehensive Indicator Framework</a> (EU Mission) <a href="#">Investment Plan Framework</a> (EU Mission)
<b>Implementation</b>	<a href="#">Zero Carbon Cities Japan</a> <a href="#">Leuven 2030 Mission</a> <a href="#">Sonderborg ProjectZero</a>



## Box 2: Mannheim Shared Local Green Deal - implementing MOAs on the ground

*"!DEAL for Mannheim means it is ideal for our city if all come together. And it means at the same time that we need your contribution." - Agnes Schoenfelder, Local Green Deal Office, City of Mannheim*

The City of Mannheim has embraced the mission-oriented approach to accelerate its transition to climate neutrality.

Mannheim's strategy for **system innovation** depends on **strong partnerships** among **interconnected groups of stakeholders**, who collaborate on **shared portfolios of actions**. The success of Mannheim's Local Green Deal -!DEAL - is fundamentally tied to the goal of climate neutrality by 2030 by transforming knowledge into action and engaging citizens, businesses, organisations and investors. The city's approach is anchored in a **strong political mandate** and a new **organisational structure** under the mayor: **Local Green Deal Transition Team**. This team is composed of members from every department of the municipality along with recruited expert staff, specifically set up to break the administrative silos and facilitate coordinated climate action and budget planning.

Mannheim's **Climate Neutrality Commitments plan** sets the city's vision and builds on the interconnection between **strategy, structure** and **culture** detailed in its Local Green Deal. !DEAL works across eight fields of action: commitment to climate action, circular economy, clean energy, biodiversity conservation and restoration, affordable and energy-efficient buildings, climate friendly mobility, sustainable food and

healthy environment. Citizens, companies and organisations taking concrete actions can pledge their commitments through individual **deals** with the city council. To promote a culture of change that mobilises and empowers citizens and stakeholder to take action, Mannheim is a pilot city within the EU-funded project named **CoLAB** (Committed to Local Climate Action Building). Given the limited impact municipalities may achieve on citizens behavioural change, CoLAB aims to study social behaviour and test innovative and creative approaches to reduce emissions caused by consumer choices, through shared knowledge, skills, and inspirational ideas.

Mannheim's **Climate Neutrality Action Plan** depicts the city's scope of action and objectives, delving not only into the main emissions domains and actions, but also into the relevant levels of change. This plan is developed in close correlation with the city-wide **Climate Investment Plan** which details the costs associated with implementing specific interventions, and outlines sources of investment accessible within the city. In Mannheim, the largest pool of investments stems from utility companies in the building and electricity sectors; some of the interventions selected focus on the renovation of buildings and on the development of sustainable transport systems.

## 6 Initial recommendation

The MOA supports a flexible approach that allows experimentation and continuous learning during the overall process; it allows the commitment of different types of stakeholders towards the mission by promoting demand driven solutions.

Here below have been listed a few recommendations that researchers<sup>6</sup> cite as effective practices in the early phases of many MOAs:

- Gain a strong political mandate of the MOA initiative and its mission;
- Take a gradual and pragmatic approach, allowing local governments and stakeholders to enhance the features of their approaches to the mission. This involves picking 'low-hanging fruits' and leveraging on core groups of actors willing to commit to the mission;
- Leverage existing structures of governance to guide them towards collectively defined objectives;
- Ensure that existing funding schemes are integrated in the MOA;
- Embrace a participatory and inclusive approach;
- Ensure active mobilisation of actors;
- Implement monitoring and evaluation practices that facilitate learning and experimentation.

Implementing the MOA, may eventually encounter a few weaknesses to be taken under consideration when starting with this approach:

- Missions that are not politically endorsed nor provide sufficient involvement of relevant stakeholder, might mine the achievement of expected results;
- The flexibility of the MOA could yield both positive and negative outcomes, if sense making is not applied thoughtfully during the implementation phase;
- Lack of well-defined MOAs from the initial stages and insufficient consideration of gained learnings may eventually lead to "reinventing the wheel";
- Lack of solid financial planning and resource mobilisation may hinder the success of MOAs.

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<sup>6</sup> Larrue, P. (2021).

## Bibliography

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Mazzucato, M., (2021). *Mission economy: A moonshot guide to changing capitalism*. Penguin UK

OECD Mission-Oriented Innovation policies online toolkit, available at: <https://stippp.oecd.org/moip/questions>