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### Project Title:

Identify social innovation capacities in solving water and energy industry problems

<b>Department:</b>	Management & Social Science Department	<b>Employer:</b>	Deputy of Research and Human Resources of the Ministry of Energy
<b>Project/Program Manager:</b>	Hanieh Arazmjoo	<b>Executor:</b>	Gholamreza Heidari
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<b>Type of Project/Program:</b>	Contract project	<b>Assistant:</b>	Research

### Project Staff:

Hanieh Arazmjoo, Sadegh Peyvasteh, Ashraf Sadat Pasandideh, Ali Zolghadr

### Keywords:

Social Innovation, Power Innovation Ecosystem, Social Innovation Ecosystem, Participatory Management

### Project Necessity:

The nature of the problems and challenges that human beings face today is different from what has existed before. When the nature of challenges and crises is different, confronting and drawing solutions to these problems cannot be the same as before. In general, the multifaceted and complex problems and challenges in today's fast-paced world cannot be solved by governments alone and without reliance on diverse local and civic capacities, and only through social innovations can we hope to solve them sustainably. Social innovation policy has two facets:

1. Public policy can enhance supply of and demand for social innovation, as well as creating a wider environment in which social innovations can thrive. We call this 'policy for social innovation'.
2. Policymaking can in itself be socially innovative, when it adopts the principles and processes of social innovation. We call this 'policy as social innovation'.

The reasons for policymakers' interest vary. Social innovation is often promoted, for example, as a way to:

- Tackle persistent social challenges
- Create jobs, particularly for disadvantaged people
- Promote economic growth, particularly inclusive growth
- Improve public services, making them more responsive, and potentially, cheaper and/or more efficient
- Create greater legitimacy for public institutions
- Foster resilience in communities, giving people the means to solve their own problems
- Change relationships between state and citizens

## **Project Goals:**

Social innovation is about developing and implementing new ideas to meet social needs and create new social relationships. Social innovations can take many forms - from products and services, to institutions, initiatives and ways of doing things.

Based on our analysis, four types of (potential) contributions that social innovations make to energy industry:

- 1) Accelerating the energy transition through bottom-up innovation;
- 2) Addressing issues of democratization and equity;
- 3) Mainstreaming new practices; and
- 4) Creating new (local) actor configurations and relations.

## **Abstract:**

In order to fill the structural, institutional and communication gaps in the energy innovation ecosystem, the launch of the Energy Social Innovation Center was proposed. The goals of this center are:

- Develop the application of social science-based approaches to the development of innovative products and services in the water and energy industry
- Using innovation as a tool to meet and address managerial, economic, social and environmental challenges in the water and energy industry
- Playing a role as a platform for the formation of innovative centers and teams in the field of social sciences
- Directing the activities of local communities in order to solve the challenges and problems of the water and energy industry

To achieve this goal by considering the dominance of the ecosystem perspective (to comply with the upstream document of energy innovation) and using social science approaches as a means and an end and emphasizing free access to data and activating civil society and the private sector to The title of auxiliary arms of good governance, the need to set up and the potential of the Niroo Social Innovation Center were identified. After examining internal and external examples, the conceptual model of the center was identified in the form of vision, mission, core values, tasks and structure of interactions and its components.

## **Steps and Methodologies:**

The development of social innovation in the water and energy industry requires the creation of appropriate formal and institutional mechanisms to the context of this infrastructure. In this report, after mentioning the initial definitions and concepts, the capacities of the topic of social innovation in general and then specifically for the field of water and energy have been mentioned. Given that the nature of social innovation is soft, environment-dependent and influenced by the values and norms of the target community, it is not possible to prescribe and use only the models in other countries, societies and institutions. But definitely examining them will make us face the issue with a more open mind, avoid repeating the mistakes of our predecessors, and try to implement the topic in better ways. Therefore, in the second chapter, an attempt is made to describe internal and external experiences in the field of social innovation.

In the final chapter, according to the studies performed, the vision, mission and scope of tasks of the Center for Social Innovation are explained, and at the end, a structure of interactions between the components of this ecosystem is mentioned.

**Main Results (technical outputs, patents, papers, books, reports, etc.):**

The output of this project is presented in the form of a technical report to the employer. Given that this step of the work was only to identify the capacity for social innovation in solving the problems of the water and energy industry, in the continuation of this project, another project was defined with the employer to implement the issues and is underway.

Based on the project outputs, due to the novelty of this topic in the Ministry of Energy, 3 workshops and scientific meetings were held on different occasions to promote the topics with the participation of the esteemed employer.