



GII Innovation Excellence & EFQM Organizational Excellence

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Integrating Enterprise Excellence with Innovation Capability — Executive White Paper

Executive Summary

Organizations today face rapid technological advancement, rising stakeholder expectations, and continuous disruption. Traditional management systems alone can no longer sustain long-term success: organizations must simultaneously achieve operational excellence, strategic agility, and continuous innovation.

The EFQM Organizational Excellence Model has evolved into one of the world's leading enterprise management frameworks, integrating purpose, strategy, leadership, culture, stakeholder engagement, operational performance, transformation, innovation, and sustainable value creation into a single management system. Within it, innovation is not an isolated function or department — it is embedded throughout leadership, strategy, people, partnerships, processes, and performance management, becoming one of the critical capabilities that enable excellence.

While EFQM defines what an excellent organization looks like, organizations frequently require more specialized methodologies to strengthen particular capabilities — and innovation is one such capability. Global Innovation Institute (GInI) has developed a comprehensive body of knowledge dedicated specifically to organizational innovation, including the Certified Innovative Organization (CInOrg®) assessment of innovation maturity, governance, culture, architecture, leadership, portfolio management, and outcomes.

These are not competing frameworks. EFQM asks: how does an organization achieve sustainable organizational excellence? GInI asks: how does an organization systematically develop and sustain innovation capability? This paper therefore positions EFQM as the enterprise-wide organizational excellence framework, while GInI provides the specialized innovation enablement ecosystem that strengthens one of the many capabilities excellence requires.

1. EFQM as the Organizational Excellence Umbrella

Organizations often pursue excellence through individual disciplines — quality, digital transformation, customer experience, innovation, sustainability — yet none alone provides a complete management system. The EFQM Model addresses this by integrating all major organizational capabilities into a single management philosophy, encouraging leaders to manage the organization as an integrated system: strategy influences innovation priorities, leadership shapes culture, culture drives engagement, engagement drives innovation, and innovation strengthens stakeholder value and long-term performance.



Figure 1. Conceptual representation of organizational excellence using the EFQM Model (independent interpretation, not an official EFQM diagram).

Direction establishes purpose, vision, strategy, and governance — innovation begins here, since without strategic direction innovation becomes isolated projects. **Execution** transforms strategic intent into capability through leadership, culture, people, partnerships, operations, digital capability, and learning. **Results** demonstrate sustainable value for all stakeholders — measured across customer, people, societal, business, innovation, and sustainability outcomes, not financial performance alone.

How the EFQM Model Addresses Innovation: Criteria 2.3 and 5.3

The EFQM Model addresses innovation explicitly through two dedicated criterion parts. In practice, EFQM finds that an organisation that demonstrates sustainable performance:

Criterion 2.3 – Enables Creativity & Innovation

- Sets ambitious goals and targets that encourage creative, innovative, and disruptive thinking supporting its purpose, vision, and strategy.
- Ensures a leadership approach that enables creativity and innovation and removes barriers to change.
- Enables a culture where innovation is encouraged, rewarded, and recognised, and lessons are quickly learned and shared.
- Develops an environment where diversity and cross-functional collaboration contribute to creativity and innovation.
- Provides the right tools, resources, skills, and expertise to effect improvement and foster innovation.
- Engages in learning, benchmarking, and collaboration within and beyond its ecosystem.

Criterion 5.3 – Drives Innovation & Technology

- Provides the culture, capabilities, resources, and tools to drive creativity, innovation, and disruptive thinking.
- Establishes channels through which key stakeholders can contribute to innovation in all phases, from creation to validation.
- Allocates resources to support research, experimentation, and knowledge generation.
- Takes advantage of innovations supporting improvement today and transformation in the future.
- Evaluates and exploits new technologies, automation, and digitalisation for value creation and sustainability.
- Manages the entire technology lifecycle based on circular economy and sustainability principles.

Guidance points of EFQM Model Criteria 2.3 and 5.3 (source: The EFQM Model).

These criteria confirm that innovation is a required organizational behaviour within the EFQM Model. They also illustrate its non-prescriptive character: the criteria describe what an innovative organization looks like, while leaving the how — the structured methodologies for building these behaviours — to specialized frameworks such as GInI.

2. Innovation as an Organizational Capability

Many organizations equate innovation with projects, technologies, or idea programs. These demonstrate activity, not capability. Innovation capability is the organization's ability to consistently generate, evaluate, implement, scale, and sustain innovations that create measurable stakeholder value — embedded in decision-making, culture, and everyday operations rather than performed by a dedicated department. Where activities are individual, short-term, often department-led, and idea-focused, capability is enterprise-wide, long-term, strategy-aligned, and value-focused.

Based on the principles of organizational excellence, innovation capability spans eight interconnected domains: Strategic Innovation (ambition, priorities, and alignment with purpose); Leadership for Innovation (experimentation, intelligent risk-taking, resources, and barrier removal); Innovation Culture (curiosity, collaboration, learning from failure); People Capability (competencies, empowerment, and recognition); Knowledge & Learning (market intelligence, customer insight, analytics); Innovation Processes (opportunity identification through portfolio management to benefit realization); Ecosystem Collaboration (customers, universities, start-ups, suppliers, government); and Innovation Results (measurable outcomes in customer experience, efficiency, growth, and sustainability).



Figure 2. Innovation capability within an organizational excellence framework.

3. Where GInI Fits Within the EFQM Framework

While the EFQM Model establishes what an excellent organization should achieve, it intentionally does not prescribe detailed methodologies for every capability. Organizations routinely adopt specialized frameworks for individual disciplines — ISO 9001 for quality, ISO 31000 for risk, PMI for projects, ITIL for service management — none of which replaces the enterprise framework. GInI plays the same role for innovation: its methodologies span innovation strategy, governance, leadership, culture, portfolio management, funding, measurement, maturity assessment, and professional certification — concentrating specifically on innovation capability rather than managing the entire organization.

Dimension	EFQM	GInI
Primary Focus	Enterprise Excellence	Innovation Excellence
Scope	Entire Organization	Innovation Capability
Management Level	Enterprise	Functional / Cross-functional
Assessment Focus	Overall Organizational Performance	Innovation Maturity
Value Created	Long-term stakeholder value	Innovation effectiveness

Comparing organizational scope.



Figure 3. Innovation capability supports enterprise excellence rather than operating independently.

Integration yields strategic benefits (alignment, governance, prioritization, agility), operational benefits (structured processes, portfolio management, measurement), organizational benefits (culture, engagement, adaptability), and performance benefits (faster delivery, customer experience, efficiency, resilience).

Within EFQM, this strengthens the connection between Direction, Execution, and Results. Direction is supported because innovation choices are linked to strategy. Execution is supported because different vehicles define how opportunities are pursued. Results are supported because the roadmap clarifies whether innovation is intended to protect the current market, expand into adjacent markets, create new markets, or capture value through partnerships, ventures, or acquisitions.

Innovation Program Framework: From Strategy to Components to Results

GInI's Innovation Program Framework can be read as the operating architecture that moves from innovation strategy into program components and then into results. The framework begins with innovation strategy and is enabled through foundation, procedures, funding, enablers, participation mechanisms, and reinforcement. These components create the conditions, structures, resources, channels, and motivation needed to make innovation systematic across the organization.

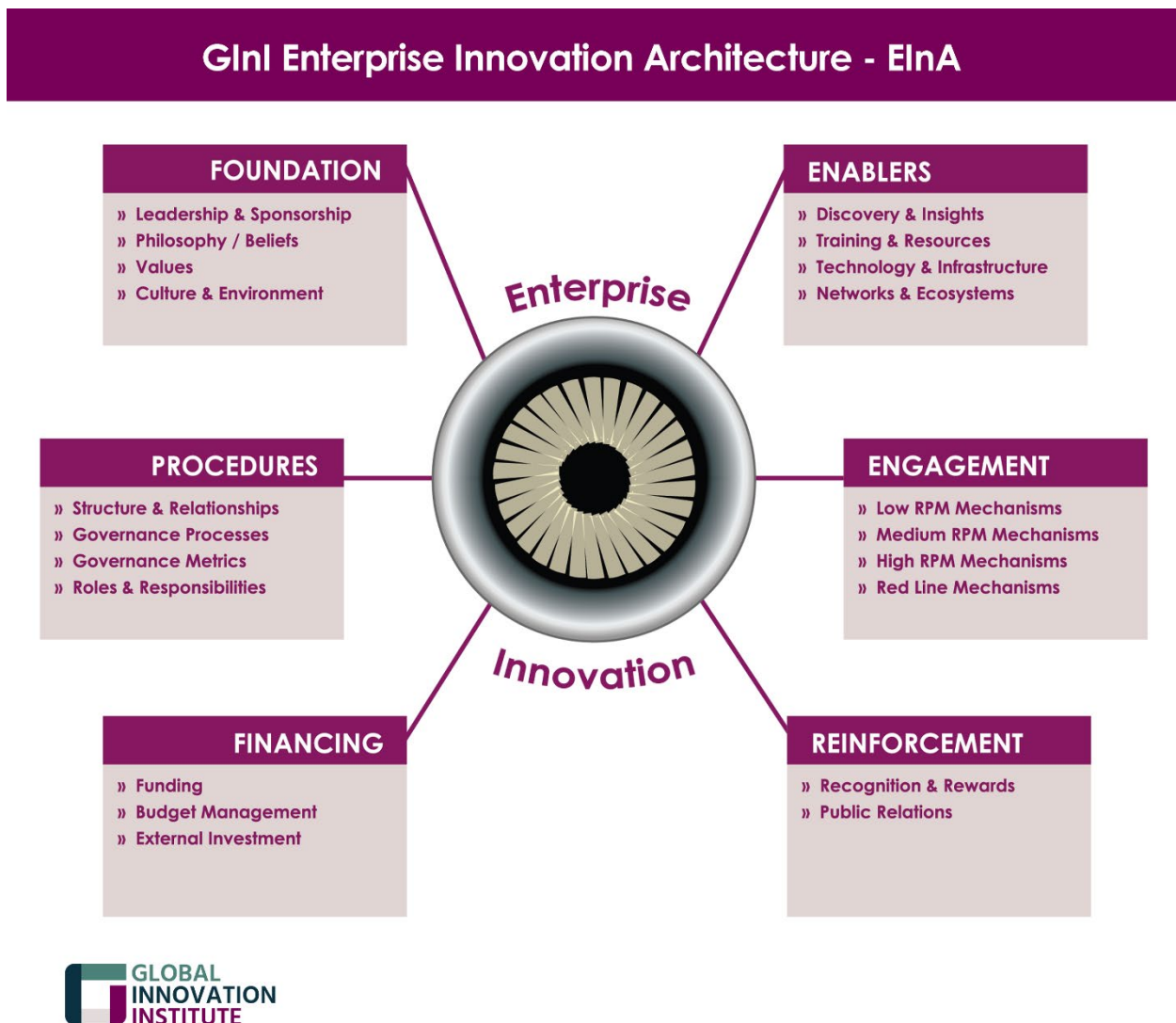


Figure 5. GInI Innovation Program Framework: strategy, components, maturity assessment, and results. The foundation component covers sponsorship and leadership, philosophy and beliefs, values, culture, and environment. Procedures cover structures and relationships, governance, governance metrics, and roles and responsibilities. Funding covers innovation funding and budget management. Enablers cover

intelligence resources, discovery and insights, technology infrastructure, networks, and the ecosystem. Participation mechanisms create structured ways for people and stakeholders to contribute. Reinforcement sustains the system through appreciation, rewards, and public relations.

Participation Mechanisms as Practical Deployment Channels

Participation mechanisms are important because they turn innovation culture into visible organizational activity. They may include low, medium, and high engagement mechanisms such as structured idea capture channels, idea campaigns, brainstorming sessions, innovation workshops, idea conferences, innovation forums, hackathons, challenge-based participation, and cross-functional opportunity sessions. These mechanisms allow employees, teams, partners, customers, and other stakeholders to contribute to innovation at different levels of intensity and maturity.

In the EFQM context, participation mechanisms help demonstrate that creativity and innovation are not only encouraged by leadership, but are also deployed through practical channels. They also provide evidence that the organization enables collaboration, knowledge sharing, experimentation, stakeholder engagement, and learning across its ecosystem.

Results as the Evidence of Innovation Capability

Innovation results should be treated as a reflection of the whole innovation system. They reflect the strength of the innovation strategy, the maturity of the culture, the quality of governance, the effectiveness of participation mechanisms, the adequacy of funding, and the discipline of measurement. Results are therefore not limited to the number of ideas submitted; they include innovation KPIs, portfolio balance, implementation rates, value created, customer and stakeholder impact, efficiency gains, learning outcomes, ecosystem contribution, and evidence that innovation supports the organization's broader excellence agenda.

This reinforces the shared logic between EFQM and GInI: EFQM expects evidence of sustained value creation, while GInI helps the organization build the innovation capability, program architecture, participation channels, governance, and measurement discipline required to produce that evidence.

4. The EFQM–GInI Innovation Enablement Integration Model

The integration described below is an independent practical interpretation of how GInI can enable innovation capability within the EFQM enterprise excellence logic.

The integration model organizes innovation capability into three enterprise domains aligned with the EFQM logic — Direction, Execution, and Results. Direction establishes innovation intent through purpose, vision, strategy, governance, stakeholder intelligence, and future readiness. Execution develops innovation capability through leadership, culture, people, processes, knowledge, technology, partnerships, and resources. Results demonstrate innovation value across customer, people, operational, innovation, business, and societal outcomes.

EFQM Capability	Innovation Capability (GInI)	Organizational Value
Strategy	Innovation Strategy	Strategic alignment
Governance	Innovation Governance	Better decisions
Leadership	Innovation Leadership	Culture for innovation
Organizational Culture	Innovation Culture	Experimentation & learning
People	Innovation Competencies	Workforce capability
Knowledge	Discovery & Insights	Better opportunity identification
Technology	Innovation Infrastructure	Digital enablement

EFQM Capability	Innovation Capability (GInI)	Organizational Value
Resources	Innovation Investment	Sustainable funding
Portfolio Management	Innovation Portfolio	Balanced investments
Operations	Process & Service Innovation	Productivity & customer experience
Measurement	Innovation KPIs	Performance visibility
Results	Innovation Outcomes	Evidence of value creation

The EFQM ↔ GInI Integration Matrix (condensed; author's conceptual mapping).

Shared Assessment Logic: RADAR and the GInI Assessment

The two frameworks are methodologically aligned. EFQM's RADAR logic — determine the Results aimed for, plan the Approach, Deploy it, then Assess and Refine — follows the same evidence-based cycle as the GInI assessment: Results correspond to GInI's Innovation Outcomes; Approach to its Innovation Strategy; Deployment to its Innovation Architecture; and Assessment & Refinement to its evidence-based Innovation Maturity Assessment and periodic re-assessment. Both insist that intended results anchor the assessment, that approaches must actually be deployed rather than merely documented, and that assessment feeds refinement — making the two evaluations interoperable, with evidence gathered for one substantially reusable for the other.

5. Implementation and Executive Conclusions

Organizations can implement the integrated model through six sequential stages:

Stage	Focus
1. Establish the excellence foundation	Clarify purpose and strategy; assess leadership, culture, and enterprise excellence (EFQM)
2. Assess innovation capability	Evaluate innovation strategy, governance, leadership, culture, portfolio, funding, partnerships, and outcomes (GInI)
3. Develop the improvement portfolio	Translate findings into initiatives — governance redesign, competency programs, Design Thinking, open innovation, metrics
4. Integrate innovation into management	Embed innovation in planning, performance reviews, risk, investment, and budgeting — no longer a standalone program
5. Measure performance	Evaluate enterprise results (EFQM) and innovation maturity and outcomes (GInI) simultaneously
6. Continuous learning	Review, capture lessons, refine priorities and governance, and repeat assessment

The six-stage implementation roadmap.

Executive recommendations: (1) position organizational excellence as the enterprise-wide management framework; (2) treat innovation as an organizational capability, not a separate department; (3) align innovation investments with strategic priorities; (4) develop leadership capability before expanding innovation initiatives; (5) measure both excellence and innovation maturity through complementary assessments; and (6) embed innovation into governance, budgeting, performance management, and strategic planning.

Excellence Provides the System. Innovation Provides the Capability.

The relationship between EFQM and GInI should not be viewed as competitive — they operate at different organizational levels. The EFQM Model provides the enterprise architecture, integrating purpose, strategy, leadership, culture, stakeholder engagement, performance, transformation, sustainability, and innovation into a single management philosophy. GInI provides the specialized innovation capability — practical methodologies for strengthening innovation leadership, governance, architecture, culture, portfolio management, and maturity. Organizations create the greatest value when excellence and innovation are managed as complementary systems: EFQM as the enterprise-wide framework, and GInI as the operational methodology that strengthens the innovation capability excellence requires.

References: EFQM, The EFQM Model (2025 Edition), Brussels: EFQM; Global Innovation Institute (GInI), Certified Innovative Organization (CInOrg®) Framework; ISO 56002:2019, Innovation Management System — Guidance; ISO 56004:2019, Innovation Management Assessment; ISO 56000:2020, Innovation Management — Fundamentals and Vocabulary.

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