



**Capacity Development Workshop on
“The Future of Governance:
Changing Mindsets for Innovation and Public Sector
Transformation”**

**25 – 27 May 2025
Bridgetown, Barbados**

Working Concept Note

Description of the Event

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG), is organizing a Capacity Development Workshop on “The Future of Governance: Changing Mindsets for Innovation and Public Sector Transformation” in collaboration with the Caribbean Centre for Administration Development (CARICAD) and the Caribbean Office of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). It will be held in person on 20-22 May 2025 in Bridgetown, Barbados.

The Workshop is being organized within the framework of the project on “Developing Capacities for Innovation, Digital Government Transformation and Changing Mindsets in the Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) (DA2427J)” which is being implemented by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs’ Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (UN DESA/DPIDG) in collaboration with the Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the UN Resident Coordinator Offices in the region. The project aims to strengthen public sector national capacities for innovation, digital government transformation and changing mindsets by strengthening public servants’ skills, knowledge, and understanding of the importance of public sector transformation. The project also aims to strengthen the capacity of selected countries in the Caribbean SIDS to mobilize their institutions and public servants to enhance effectiveness and institutional coordination, public accountability, and engagement of key stakeholders in the implementation and review of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Lessons learned and experiences will be shared among countries in the region during the life of the project.

Background

The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) – a Renewed Declaration for Resilient Prosperity highlights that “the next ten years are critical for SIDS. A new context is emerging wherein the economic, social and environmental as well as geopolitical threats to SIDS development are so great that they can only be ameliorated by a reinvigorated enabling environment that gives meaningful effect to their sustainable development.”(para.12) In the Caribbean SIDS, progress towards the achievement of the SDGs is stagnant or faces significant or major challenges as indicated by the United Nations Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for the Caribbean 2022-2026¹. Despite economic and social advancements in recent years, several adverse factors (from COVID-19 to the war in Ukraine, inflation, impact of climate change, etc.) have resulted in both domestic and external challenges in the Caribbean region. Given the region’s prevailing economic and social inequalities, strong unemployment effects will disproportionately impact the poor and the vulnerable middle-income strata, possibly leading to even higher levels of economic inequality. The public sector in the Caribbean region continues to face a capacity challenge in delivering change and transformation, with challenges being experienced in relation to mindsets, capacity, processes, and right skill sets.

At the Fourth SIDS Conference held in 2024, Member States have also agreed that it is necessary to build strong institutions by, among other things, investing in continuous education and training and professional development programs for public servants, and building public sector skillsets for the future, including in improving the agility of public service delivery and public procurement.” (ABAS, para. 25, (ii)

¹ <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Caribbean%20Multicountry%20Sustainable%20Development%20Framework%202022%202026%200.pdf>

d). The 2024 Pact for the Future², adopted by the UN General Assembly, also underlines the need for increased capacity-building efforts to bridge digital divides and foster innovation, futures thinking, and foresight among Member States. It underscores that strategic foresight is necessary to ensure long-term thinking and planning. As such, United Nations Member States have agreed “to develop and implement sustainable practices and the institutional reforms necessary to ensure evidence-based decision-making, while making governance more anticipatory, adaptive and responsive to future opportunities, risks and challenges. They agreed to ensure inclusive and equitable access to knowledge, science and information, while promoting innovation, critical thinking and life skills to create generations of citizens that are agents of positive change and transformation” (para.25).

Creating a forward-thinking culture is also the focus of work at the United Nations, as presented by the United Nations 2.0 Quintet of Change. The Quintet of Change offers a useful framework by focusing on innovation, strategic foresight, data-driven decision-making, digital transformation, and partnerships. It encourages a culture of agility and resilience, empowering governments to address emerging challenges with inclusive policies and sustainable solutions. By emphasizing systems thinking and integrated approaches, the Quintet can help to drive public sector transformation, enabling impactful outcomes in a dynamic global environment. As noted, the framework outlines a modernized system with enhanced expertise in data, innovation, digital technology, foresight, and behavioral science to accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Caribbean’s commitment to the ABAS and the SDGs and the vision and priorities of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member states, require more innovative, responsive, and transformed public services. The Caribbean region must be prepared to take advantage of developments in technology, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), to create an environment which will lead to adaptability in mindset, resilience, and innovation. A holistic strategy is essential for transforming public service delivery and requires fostering new mindsets and behaviors in public servants. Governments may need to make urgent investments in retooling public services and equipping civil servants with new knowledge, skills, and competencies (UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration -CEPA, 2018) that are supportive of accelerating transformations for SDGs implementation in a more volatile, unstable, complex, and ambiguous world. This process involves promoting practical, competency-based learning and a culture of innovation and problem-solving.

Thematic Focus

Progress towards the achievement of the SDGs in the Caribbean is stagnant or faces significant or major challenges as indicated by the United Nations Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for the Caribbean 2022-2026. In particular, the public sector continues to face a capacity challenge in delivering change and transformation, with challenges being experienced in relation to mindsets, capacity, processes, and right skill sets. The way Caribbean states govern themselves play a crucial role in determining the well-being of people and of sustainable development.

In order to define future governance systems in the Caribbean, a deep understanding of the critical drivers of change as well as of the needs and aspirations of today's society is required. The capacity development workshop will focus on supporting Caribbean public sector leaders to advance innovative transformation in their respective contexts. The workshop will explore practices and approaches to support changing mindsets for innovation and digital transformation of public services, as well as capacity building

² <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sof-the-pact-for-the-future.pdf>, Pact for the Future, 2024

strategies to support a whole-of-society and public sector transformation, defined as a “a continuous process of leading and managing change in the public service for innovative adaptation to enable the delivery of services and results in a resilient and sustainable manner” (CARICAD, 2021).

UN DESA, in collaboration with schools of public administration, has developed a competency framework outlined in the publication 'Changing Mindsets to Realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'.³ This framework identifies key mindsets and associated competencies crucial for advancing the achievement of all 17 SDGs. Changing mindsets, defined as beliefs and attitudes that affect the way we think and behave, is needed among government officials and society to promote policy change and better services. The competencies focus on forward-looking attributes to build a new organizational culture, emphasizing practical behaviors aligned with the Principles of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development and the 2030 Agenda to drive mindset change and address complex challenges.

Building foresight and innovation mindsets among public sector officials in the Caribbean SIDS is critical to enhance public service delivery. Approaches rooted in systems thinking support governments to progress in the three dimensions of sustainable development, including economic, social, and environmental.⁴ Innovation and foresight mindsets are needed to promote sound policymaking, as it fosters resilient and adaptable approaches for future challenges and opportunities. Governments and people need to rethink the values that should inform their social contract and how these are being interpreted and implemented, what kind of society they wish to live in and what governance system is going to deliver meaningful freedom and well-being to the largest number of people.

Methodology and Format

The workshop will feature presentations by experts and hands-on interactive exercises and discussions to promote changing mindsets. Participants will learn about governance futures and be involved in hands-on exercises. Innovative governance strategies, which can be applied to participants' specific contexts, will be discussed. The workshop will involve participants prioritizing their individual, organizational, and institutional needs for public sector transformation and developing action plans for implementation.

Format: It will be conducted in person in Bridgetown, Barbados for 2.5 days, from 25-27 May 2025.

Target Audience:

- Senior government officials and general directors of the DA project beneficiary countries (Bahamas, Barbados, St. Lucia, Guyana).
- Permanent Secretaries, General Directors, Senior Public Officers at the level of Director Generals, CEOs and Heads of Agencies in charge of public policy implementation across the Caribbean, including Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, The British Virgin Islands, The Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

³<https://publicadministration.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/2023/Changing%20mindsets%20report%20-%201%20October.pdf>, Report on Changing Mindsets to Realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, New York, 2021

⁴ [https://desapublications.un.org/policy-briefs/un-desa-policy-brief-no-158-how-can-we-accelerate-transformations-achieve-sustainable-:-:~:text=It shone light on two challenges the world is facing,](https://desapublications.un.org/policy-briefs/un-desa-policy-brief-no-158-how-can-we-accelerate-transformations-achieve-sustainable-:-:~:text=It%20shone%20light%20on%20two%20challenges%20the%20world%20is%20facing,) UN DESA Policy Brief No. 158, 2024

- Representatives of public sector's schools and training institutes of public administration are being invited to the regional workshop to enhance their understanding of the new competencies and skills needed for the public sector of the 21st century.

Objective:

- To increase awareness and highlight the importance of changing mindsets and futures thinking, including innovation, data, digital governance, and foresight mindsets, to enhance public service delivery.
- To enhance the understanding of what types of new competencies and skills are needed, including considerations for upskilling and reskilling of the public sector.
- Launching of an informal peer-learning network through a social media channel to support the exchange of ideas among policymakers from across the Caribbean. The network would include consenting participants from in-person and online workshops, as well as participants that completed one or more of the online learning modules. The network would facilitate discussion and information sharing across countries, portfolios, and levels. (OP2.6)

The workshop contributes to OP2.2: Organize a three-day regionally-wide peer-to-peer learning workshop (hybrid) on Changing Mindsets in Public Institutions to present the topic's importance to government decision makers as well as other relevant stakeholders.

Expected Results

By the end of the workshops, participants will have:

- Learned about mindsets needed for public sector transformation, such as innovation, data, digital governance, and foresight mindsets.
- Prioritized needs and formulated actionable improvements to successfully change mindsets at the individual, organizational, and institutional level.
- Developed a short-term and long-term implementation plan for their respective institution.
- Learned about drivers of change for the future of governance and ways to apply strategic foresight and futures thinking to public sector decision-making.
- Gained insights to inspire and guide their actions to address the challenges of promoting innovation and of implementing digital public services in their contexts.
- Strengthened collaboration with public sector leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders across the Caribbean.
- Launch of an informal peer-to-peer learning network.

About the Organizers

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat (UN DESA)

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat is a vital interface between global policies in the economic, social and environmental spheres and national action. The Department works in three main interlinked areas: (i) it compiles, generates and analyses a wide range of economic, social and environmental data and information on which States Members of the United Nations draw to review common problems and to take stock of policy options; (ii) it facilitates the negotiations of

Member States in many intergovernmental bodies on joint course of action to address ongoing or emerging global challenges; and (iii) it advises interested Governments on the ways and means of translating policy frameworks developed in United Nations conferences and summits into programmes at the country level and, through technical assistance, helps build national capacities.

The Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD)

The Caribbean Centre for Development Administration was formed in 1979 as the Caribbean Sub-Centre of the Latin American Centre for Development Administration (CLAD). The Centre became fully operational in 1980 with Headquarters established in Barbados and is an Institution of the Caribbean Community under Article 21 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. The Agreement Establishing CARICAD charges the Centre with the general objective of “rendering... assistance to the countries of the Caribbean area for the purpose of improving their administrative capability to accelerate their social and economic development”. In keeping with this mandate, CARICAD is the Region’s focal point for transforming and modernising the public sectors of Member States to better formulate and implement public policy towards the achievement of good governance which is indispensable to sustainable development.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

ECLAC is one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations which was established to promote economic and social development through regional and subregional cooperation and integration. To that end, through its substantive divisions, subregional headquarters and national offices, it undertakes studies, research and other support activities within the terms of reference of the Commission; gathers, organizes, interprets and disseminates information and data relating to the economic and social development of the region; formulates and promotes development cooperation activities and projects of regional and subregional scope commensurate with the needs and priorities of the region and acts as an executing agency for such projects; provides advisory services to Governments at their request and plans, organizes and executes programmes of technical cooperation; assists in bringing a regional perspective to global problems and forums and introduces global concerns at the regional and subregional levels; organizes conferences and intergovernmental and expert group meetings and sponsors training workshops, symposia and seminars; and provides substantive secretariat services and documentation for the Commission and its subsidiary bodies. Further, it coordinates activities with those of the major departments and offices at United Nations Headquarters, specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations with a view to avoiding duplication and ensuring complementarity in the exchange of information.

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