

Capacity Development Workshop on

“Changing Mindsets for Innovation, Digital Transformation, and Improved Public Service Delivery for SDGs Implementation”

Organized by
Latin American Federation of Cities, Municipalities and Associations (FLACMA)
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)

24 – 25 November 2025
Teatro Municipal
Municipio San Mateo, Toluca, Estado de Mexico, Mexico

Concept Note and Agenda

Description of Event

The Latin American Federation of Cities, Municipalities and Associations (FLACMA) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), through its Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG), are co-organizing a capacity development workshop with the objective of applying the contents of UN DESA’s Curriculum on Governance for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular the main modules of the toolkits on Changing Mindsets in Public Institutions to Implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Innovation and Digital Government for Public Service Delivery, and Effective National to Local Public Governance for SDG Implementation.

The toolkits are part of the Curriculum on Governance for the SDGs which was developed by UN DESA/DPIDG. DPIDG's mission is to advance effective, accountable, and inclusive governance and public institutions for sustainable development, including through innovation, digital government, and digital transformation. The Curriculum on Governance for the SDGs aims to promote critical understanding of sustainable development issues, enhance governance capacity, and strengthen public servants' awareness of their active role in contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.

The Latin American Federation of Cities, Municipalities and Associations (FLACMA) is an international organization that brings together and represents more than 16,000 Municipalities and Local Governments in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as 33 regional associations, whose vocation is the municipal and regional development of the region. FLACMA adheres to, and promotes, the conventions and agreements regarding local and regional governments signed by the national states of the region. It is the official representation in the region of the Union of Cities and Local Governments, UCLG, a world organization representing subnational levels of government.

Background

The 2030 Agenda highlights the need to build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels, in line with Goal 16. General Assembly resolution 60/34 of 17 March 2006 also emphasized "the need to improve the efficiency, transparency and accountability of public administration". Strong public institutions and efficient service delivery are crucial to the achievement of all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Thus, the importance of building transparent, accountable, innovative, and citizen-oriented institutions to accomplish sustainable development.

In its seventeenth session in 2018, the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) adopted 11 principles of effective governance. The principles, endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2018/12, highlight the need for pragmatic and ongoing improvements in national and local governance capabilities to achieve the Sustainable Development. CEPA has developed a wide range of commonly used strategies for operationalization of the principles. One of the principles is on competence which highlights that to perform their functions effectively, institutions are to have sufficient expertise, resources, and tools to deal adequately with the mandates under their authority. Commonly used strategies to operationalize this principle include the promotion of a professional public sector workforce, strategic human resources management, leadership development and training of civil servants, performance management, results-based management, financial management and control, efficient and fair revenue administration and investment in e-government.

In his 2021 report "Our Common Agenda"¹, the UN Secretary-General proposed key actions to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs to make a real difference in people's lives by encouraging solidarity, respect for human rights, better management of critical global commons, and global public goods.

The 2030 Agenda makes reference to subnational efforts and local governments. All of the SDGs have targets that relate to the role of local government in terms of their responsibilities in basic service delivery as well as their ability to promote and integrate inclusive and sustainable territorial development. Two SDGs explicitly relate to SDG localization: SDG 16 ("Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for

¹ https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/assets/pdf/Common_Agenda_Report_English.pdf

sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels") and SDG 11 ("Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable"). Implementing these goals requires effective, accountable, and participatory institutions and places a particular responsibility on local governments. This is especially the case for SDG 11, which, as a standalone goal for sustainable cities and communities, recognizes sustainable urban and local development as a fundamental precondition of sustainable development.

While the SDGs are global in their ambition, their achievement will depend on local action, leadership, and ownership. Local and regional plans, policies, and frameworks that help promote innovative processes of effective governance at the subnational level to deliver quality public services are crucial step to achieving the 2030 Agenda. Digital transformation offers a unique opportunity to harness the power of innovative technologies to improve the delivery of public services.

Digital transformation has become essential to sustainable development. It is no longer an add-on policy objective. In his report on Our Common Future, the United Nations Secretary-General called for further investment in innovation and digital transformation to reshape our way of working, helping us to reach more people in need and better serve them². Digital tools, whether applied in digital government, digital economy, digital data, are important drivers of sustainable development at all levels. Stimulating innovation through digital government and digital economy has become a strategic objective of many local and regional governments. It is therefore critical that developing countries are enabled to utilize digital tools for advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at national, local and regional levels.

Local governments (municipal and subnational) in Latin America, represented by FLACMA, currently have a strong commitment to innovation, changing attitudes towards Agenda 2030 and digital transformation, which is reflected by a number of activities, namely: 1) the holding of more than 45 conferences, seminars and in-person and virtual forums on these topics in the last two years; 2) the establishment and the related activities of FLACMA institutional networks and working groups on these aspects, such as the Latin American Network of Smart Cities, the Ibero-American Network of Innovation in Local Governments or the ODS-Municipal Project, among others; and 3) FLACMA and member associations' active participation in all processes convened by United Nations agencies related to these topics.

Understanding the need to support and promote innovation at all levels of the public sector, national, regional, and local governments have established various agencies and mechanisms to modernize the State, transform public management and reduce bureaucratic red tape. Although the local and regional governments represented in FLACMA have made great progress in capacity building and strengthening the public sector at the local level, important gaps persist, especially in terms of digital transformation and innovation. FLACMA representing the local and regional governments of the region, advocates for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), within the framework of the New Urban Agenda and the National Policies for Integral Development of Cities and recognizes the importance of supporting the change of mindsets and attitudes of the public sector at the local and regional level, in support of innovation and digital transformation.

The workshop on "Changing Mindsets for Innovation, Digital Transformation, and Improved Public Service Delivery for SDGs Implementation" will build on, and consolidate, previous work undertaken by UN DESA on launching the Curriculum on Governance for SDGs Implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean

² https://unsdg.un.org/resources/unct-key-documents?f%5B0%5D=country_document_region%3Acountry-bo

(November 2022). It also builds on the activities undertaken by DPIDG, in cooperation with the Center for Latin American Administration and Development (CLAD), on enhancing the integration of the 2030 Agenda into national policy frameworks, including the operationalization of the 11 principles of effective governance for sustainable development.

The two-day in-person workshop, co-designed with the Latin American Federation of Cities, Municipalities and Associations (FLACMA) and with the support of the Municipality of San Mateo Atenco, and the Mexican Confederation of Municipalities (CONAMM), will build on a previous workshop on innovation and local governments transformation organized by DPIDG and FLACMA in November of 2024 in the Dominican Republic. During that workshop, the lack of capacity at the local level to support innovation was highlighted, as well as the importance to support the public sector at the local and regional level in Latin America, to better understand the important role they play in the implementation of the SDGs, with an emphasis on changing mindsets and attitudes that promote innovation and the digital transformation of government services; contributing, through the use of the Digital Assessment Guide, to a better understanding of what is needed for innovation and digital transformation of the public sector, and provide a roadmap for its implementation.

The workshop in the Dominican Republic, also stressed the importance of innovation labs at the local and regional level as a means to promote the implementation of the SDGs, contribute to multistakeholders engagement, and the need for a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach. Thus, the workshop will include sessions on comparative approaches to successful innovation labs.

Objective

The objective of the in-person workshop is to use the training materials contained in the Toolkits on Changing Mindsets in Public Institutions to Implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, on the Innovation and Digital Government for Public Service Delivery, and the Effective National to Local Public Governance for SDG Implementation to provide local authorities with the knowledge and tools that can support their enhanced understanding of the critical role local governments play in the implementation of the SDGs by supporting collaborative and innovative mindsets.

The activity aims to:

1. Enhance capacities of the Member State to strengthen public institutions and public services delivery at the local and regional level to support the implementation of the SDGs using the Curriculum on Governance toolkits on Changing Mindsets for SDGs Implementation, Innovation and Digital Transformation for Public Service Delivery, and Effective National to Local Public Governance for SDG Implementation.
2. Strengthen the commitment and capacities of the Latin American Federation of Cities, Municipalities and Associations (FLACMA) in institutional development and the provision of public services to promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda after the pandemic through training of trainers (ToT) of the modules identified within the available toolkits of the Curriculum on Governance for the Implementation of the SDGs.
3. Provide sound and innovative advice to local and regional government officials attending the seminar and other relevant stakeholders on the importance of innovation and digital

transformation for long-term institutional development and services provision, including through innovation labs.

4. Uncover challenges and identify building blocks for local public sector transformation.
5. Define a Roadmap and Action Plan for innovation, digital government transformation and changing mindsets.
6. Learn and apply new concepts, tools, and approaches to support strategies, capabilities, and action planning.

Format

Based on previous workshop experience, an effective delivery of the interactive workshop – involving exercises, the development of an action plan based on design thinking, joint activities and discussions - will require facilitation on the ground. The workshop will provide a platform to share solutions and will benefit from the presentations of innovations in changing mindsets, innovation, and digital governments and ICT use that have been introduced in other public institutions. The workshop will facilitate knowledge exchange, provide support, and promote peer-to-peer learning. The workshop will be conducted entirely in Spanish.

Target Audience

Local and regional government officials and practitioners who have a policy, leadership and/or implementation role in the local government's innovation and digital transformation agenda to improve public service delivery, as well as training staff of FLACMA in charge of capacity building and technical assistance to local and regional civil servants.

To enhance the impact of this workshop, the key findings and lessons learned will be disseminated to all regions through the UN Public Administration Network (UNPAN) and the divisional websites.

Thematic Focus

Based on the previously identified challenges and needs, the Capacity Building Workshop will cover the following topics:

Session 1 –

- Overview of Principles of effective governance for sustainable development and the critical role of subsidiarity in promoting transformational change
 - Activity: DESA Subsidiarity Self-Assessment toolkit
- The Quintet of Change and Key Mindsets and Competencies Needed for Governance Transformation

Session 2 –

- Changing Mindsets for SDGs Implementation: collaborative, experimental, and leadership mindsets
 - **Group Activity:** What are the top three challenges in shifting mindsets in support of transformational change in public administration?

Session 3 –

- Innovation and Digital Transformation for Public Service Delivery: use of the Digital Government Self-Assessment tool to identify entry points and policy change opportunities.
 - **Group Activity:** Conducting a Situation Analysis: Innovation and Digital Government Capability Assessment with a focus on individual capacities, organizational structures for coordination, national to local governance and partnerships

Session 4 -

- Identifying Priorities and New Approaches for Inclusive Service Delivery with a focus on:
 - Innovation Labs and digital transformation at the local level
 - Promoting Digital Skills and Changing Mindsets
 - Enhancing Institutional Coordination for Effective Public Service Delivery

Session 5

- Developing a Road Map and Action Planning for Innovation and Digital Government Transformation to Realize the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level.
 - **Group Activity:** Creating a Roadmap for Transformational Change and New Mindsets

Session 6

- Overcoming barriers to implementation
 - Participants will brainstorm on barriers to implementation by identifying major challenges to actions proposed.
 - Participants will prioritize challenges by discussing at each table:
 1. Which challenge or problem is most pressing?
 2. What are the consequences of not addressing this challenge first?
 3. What solution might have a bigger impact?

Expected Results

ER.1 – Strengthened capacity of local and regional public officials to enhance and understand the significant role they play in the implementation of the SDGs by developing innovative institutional arrangements and mechanisms to deliver better public services, including through peer-to-peer learning.

ER. 2 - Enhanced capacity of FLACMA's training team in the use of the Curriculum on Governance toolkits and the use of ToT tools to advance and strengthen the capacity of local and regional public sectors.

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