

**United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs**  
**Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG)**

**Capacity Development Workshop on "Changing Mindsets for Innovation and  
Public Sector Transformation" Key Messages**

*24-26 March 2025  
Nassau, The Bahamas*



***Workshop 1 - Monday, 24 May 2025***

**Changing Mindsets for Innovation and Public Sector Transformation**

- Mindsets consist of beliefs and attitudes that a person has assimilated throughout a lifetime about themselves. Beliefs are about how we interpret the world, while attitudes are about how we interact with the world.
- Public sector transformation must begin with a shift in individual mindsets, including openness to change, adaptability, and a willingness to take calculated risks.
- Leaders must foster psychological safety, empowering teams to experiment, learn from failure, and collaborate across departments.

- There is a need to develop a public service that is agile, empathetic, inclusive, and equipped with 21st-century competencies like emotional intelligence, systems thinking, and design thinking.
- Public servants should be trained to not only understand new technologies but also critically apply them to improve service delivery and trust in government.
- Institutional transformation requires reforming human resource strategies, linking performance management to new behaviors and competencies.
- Schools and training institutes for public administration should establish peer learning networks to foster a regional ecosystem of continuous learning.
- Governments should publicly recognize innovation through awards, spotlight initiatives, or showcasing champions of change within ministries.
- Public sector transformation should align with broader global frameworks, including the SDGs and the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS, by promoting transparency, accountability, and citizen-centric approaches.
- Emphasized the importance of aligning national digital strategies with administrative reforms to ensure transformation is systemic and not fragmented.

### **CARICAD Public Sector Transformation Schema**

- A structured transformation schema was shared, composed of six pillars: leadership and governance, human resource transformation, citizen-centric service delivery, digital government, innovation, and monitoring & evaluation.
- The schema provides a roadmap for public service renewal, ensuring reforms are not ad hoc but strategically aligned to long-term national goals.
- Governments must institutionalize transformation embedding it into legislation, performance systems, and national development plans rather than treating it as a short-term project.
- Citizen-centricity is a foundational pillar; services must be designed based on citizen needs and feedback, ensuring accessibility, equity, and responsiveness.
- Digital transformation was emphasized as a key enabler across all pillars, with a focus on service automation, e-governance, and internal process optimization.
- Leadership development is critical to support transformation; leaders must be trained to think strategically, inspire staff, and manage organizational change effectively.
- Competency frameworks should be modernized to reflect skills such as problem-solving, data literacy, ethics, and innovation.
- Governments were encouraged to use diagnostic tools to assess where they are in the transformation journey and identify capacity gaps.
- Examples were provided of successful reforms across the Caribbean, demonstrating that transformation is possible even in resource-constrained environments.
- Organizational change must be supported by internal communication strategies, change agents, and mechanisms for feedback and iteration.

### **Harnessing the Potential of AI to Create Public Value in the Caribbean**

- AI can be a transformative tool for the public sector, helping governments analyze data, automate services, and make more informed decisions.
- Highlighted real-world applications of AI in health (predictive analytics), education (adaptive learning tools), and civil services (chatbots and automated form processing).

- Urged governments to take a proactive stance on AI governance including by creating national strategies, legal frameworks, and ethical guidelines to ensure inclusive and responsible deployment.
- Emphasized that AI must enhance not replace the human aspect of public service, particularly in high-touch areas like healthcare, education, and social protection.
- Acknowledged the risks of deepening the digital divide if AI is rolled out without parallel investments in connectivity, data infrastructure, and digital literacy.
- Data privacy and protection were underscored as essential to public trust in AI; governments should establish safeguards and clear rules for data use.
- Encouraged the use of open-source AI tools adapted to regional languages, contexts, and public sector needs, reducing dependency on costly proprietary systems.
- Capacity building for public servants was described as a prerequisite; AI should not be viewed as purely technical but must be integrated into policy, planning, and public engagement.
- Highlighted the need for intergovernmental and regional collaboration on AI such as shared data standards, innovation hubs, and joint pilot projects.
- Encouraged countries to invest in talent development, especially among youth, to build a future-ready workforce capable of co-creating AI solutions with government.

### **Discussion**

- Participants emphasized the challenge of overcoming resistance to change within their institutions, especially among senior staff and mid-level managers.
- Several noted the lack of adequate digital infrastructure and inconsistent access to internet services across rural and remote areas, limiting the reach of digital transformation.
- There was strong consensus on the need for continuous capacity development for public servants, especially in leadership, digital literacy, and service design.
- Concerns were raised about the sustainability of transformation efforts given frequent leadership turnover, budget constraints, and shifting political priorities.
- Participants found the CARICAD schema practical and appreciated its clarity in outlining steps for institutional reform, some expressed interest in piloting its diagnostic tools.
- On AI, many participants were enthusiastic but urged caution especially regarding data privacy, regulatory gaps, and the need for citizen safeguards.
- Participants acknowledged the role of regional organizations like CARICAD and ECLAC in facilitating knowledge exchange and helping states co-develop policy responses to emerging technologies.
- A few participants shared examples of small-scale innovation within their ministries but admitted that scaling these efforts remains difficult without centralized coordination and political support.
- There were calls to institutionalize peer-learning mechanisms across the Caribbean, so Permanent Secretaries can regularly share successes and setbacks.
- The discussions concluded with a shared recognition that mindset change must be sustained beyond the workshop through concrete plans, leadership ownership, and external partnerships.

### ***Workshop 2 - Tuesday, 25 May 2025***

## **I. The Quintet of Change and Key Mindsets and Competencies Needed for Governance Transformation**

### **Mindsets (behavioural science)**

- Mindsets shape people's perception of the world and actions, especially how situations are approached. Growth mindset can enable people to see challenges as opportunities to improve, but someone without growth mindset people can turn risk averse. Most importantly, beliefs and what you think is possible affects your reality. As Henry Ford said, "if you think you can, you are right. If you think you can't, you are right."
- Although regulatory framework and norms are important, there will be no transformational change in ministries or government without a change in mindsets. Questions need to be addressed such as which beliefs and aptitudes are needed at the individual level and what kind of organizational culture is needed to promote innovation.
- Biases were highlighted, including that many officials resist reform not due to disagreement but because of a preference for the familiar. Nudging, framing, and designing environments that promote desired behaviors were recommended as effective strategies.
- The importance of empathy in public service was emphasized. Officials were encouraged to put themselves in the shoes of both citizens and frontline civil servants to understand how services are experienced.
- Participants were asked to reflect on personal and institutional barriers to change. Many cited hierarchical decision-making, fear of criticism, and lack of incentives for creativity as major obstacles. One participant noted the difficulty in creating space for experimentation when mistakes are punished instead of seen as learning. This led to a discussion on the importance of leadership support in cultivating a collaborative workplace.
- Participants were invited to share mindset shifts they hoped to promote in their ministries. Responses included greater openness to feedback, focus on collaboration instead of silos, and welcoming ideas from junior staff.

## **Innovation**

- Innovation was framed as a process of continuous problem-solving, not just the adoption of new technologies. Public innovation was defined as introducing new practices that create public value.
- Innovation thrives in enabling environments, including those that reward initiative, allow room for experimentation, and provide support structures.
- A key concept introduced was adaptive innovation, in which public organizations respond flexibly to emerging challenges rather than waiting for perfect plans.
- Innovation ecosystems can be built within government with internal innovation labs, sandboxes for policy testing, and cross-functional teams.
- Participants were encouraged to think about innovation as both bottom-up and top-down. Frontline employees often have the best insight into how systems fail, but they need permission and encouragement to innovate.
- Several Caribbean examples were shared, including ministries that used design thinking to co-create services with citizens or introduced e-platforms to simplify application processes.
- A group exercise invited participants to identify a service in their ministry that could be radically improved through innovation. One team mentioned a licensing process that takes six months but could be digitized.
- Innovation doesn't always require large budgets but rather willingness to question assumptions and create feedback loops.
- Most participants felt their ministries were interested in innovation but lacked strategy, sparking a discussion about the need for dedicated units or focal points for innovation.
- Participants also raised concerns about change fatigue. One participant noted that there have been so many reform initiatives, but few survive political transitions.

## **Systems Thinking and Strategic Foresight**

- This session began by contrasting linear planning models with systems thinking, which takes into account interdependencies, feedback loops, and complexity.
- Public servants were encouraged to shift from problem solving to problem sensing.
- A key concept is leverage points, which are small interventions in a system that can lead to significant long-term change.
- Strategic foresight was presented as a way to prepare for uncertainty. Tools such as scenario planning, horizon scanning, and futures thinking were discussed as methods to anticipate emerging challenges.
- Officials were shown how systems thinking can be used to understand root causes of issues like policy failure, implementation gaps, or stakeholder resistance.
- Several participants highlighted difficulties in getting whole-of-government coordination, especially when ministries compete for limited resources or recognition.
- Long-term impacts rather than just short-term outputs should be focused on.
- Emphasis was placed on building adaptive institutions capable of learning, adjusting, and iterating in real time.
- One participant noted the need to train mid-level managers in systems thinking, stating they are often the bridge between vision and reality.

## **Data and Digital Governance**

- The presentation began by posing a question about how governments are responding to emerging technologies, with three broad pathways identified as (1) wait and see, (2) test and learn, or (3) ban new technologies. The speaker advocated for the “test and learn” approach, emphasizing experimentation as a foundational principle of modern governance.
- A shift in governance mindset was highlighted, drawing from thinkers like Rodrik and Stiglitz who propose governance through learning, where state capabilities are built progressively rather than assumed to exist upfront. It was stressed that experimentation must be holistic and include regulatory learning, not only from domestic trials but from the global experience of others.
- Regulatory sandboxes were introduced as a practical tool for this type of learning. These are structured environments where public authorities allow new technologies, such as AI or fintech, to be tested under regulatory oversight for a limited period. They balance innovation and risk management.
- Examples from the UK, Singapore, and Australia were discussed, outlining how sandboxes promote innovation, provide limited regulatory exemptions, and offer case-by-case flexibility.
- Many Caribbean countries are beginning to implement sandboxes. Trinidad and Tobago was highlighted for its agreement between the Telecommunications Authority (TATT) and the University of the West Indies to create a Conformance and Interoperability Regulatory Sandbox for RF-enabled devices.
- A proposed readiness assessment methodology (RESMA) was explained, identifying five dimensions for national preparedness in launching effective sandboxes:
  - Policy framework for experimentation.
  - Clarity of regulatory questions to be tested.
  - Availability of resources.
  - Organizational methodologies.
  - Capacity to introduce policy reforms.
- Discussion transitioned into data governance. A key insight was that current governance often focuses too narrowly on data storage or compliance, and not enough on value creation,

innovation, and sharing. Instead, a new model was proposed to link governance to the entire data lifecycle and integrates strategic objectives and cross-sector collaboration.

- The Colombian experience was explored as a case study. Its national AI strategy emphasizes developing data infrastructure, while also ensuring that data protection regulations uphold citizen rights. The aim is to reduce unjustified barriers to data access and promote sharing within and across sectors.
- Several tools and proposals were presented:
  - Data Marketplace: An introductory framework to facilitate secure and strategic data exchanges between public and private actors.
  - Data Sandbox Platform: A technical environment where public sector institutions can experiment with data analytics and big data technologies in a controlled setting.
  - Data Trusts: Legal and technical frameworks to manage and share data securely and transparently. These were proposed as a way to build public trust in the data economy.
- The concept of public-private collaboration was central. Governance frameworks should facilitate more efficient and trustworthy information exchange, particularly to unlock innovation at the intersection of government and industry.
- A critical insight was that there is no one-size-fits-all data governance model. Instead, countries should develop flexible and adaptive systems suited to their legal frameworks, technological maturity, and social priorities.
- Sustainability of governance models across political administrations remains a major challenge especially in the Caribbean, where leadership transitions can derail long-term digital strategies.
- Sandboxes and data governance are not just technical solutions they are political and institutional innovations. For Caribbean countries to contribute meaningfully to the global debate on AI and emerging tech, they must invest in local experimentation, learning, and capacity-building.

## **Discussion**

- Common challenges cited included resource limitations, institutional resistance to change, and lack of cross-ministerial coordination.
- Several participants voiced the need for a shared regional platform to exchange innovation practices and co-develop digital solutions.
- There was repeated emphasis on the need to translate ideas into action, with calls for technical support, funding mechanisms, and sustained political will.
- A recurring theme was the desire to make reform efforts more resilient especially in the face of leadership changes or external shocks.
- The workshop concluded with commitments from participants to explore the creation of innovation units in their ministries, pilot digital projects, and introduce mindset change activities in staff development programs.

## **II. CARICAD Presentation on Public Sector Schema and Leadership for Innovation and Public Sector Transformation**

- The Caribbean region's long-standing vulnerability to climate-related shocks underscores the urgency of strengthening public institutions.
- The evolution of Public Sector Transformation (PST) has seen various reform waves since the 1990s. There has been a shift to measuring outcomes rather than inputs or processes, with an insistence on accountability. The results of the reforms have been mixed due to inconsistent adoption, political will, and limited institutional capacity.

- The CARICAD Schema is a leadership tool designed to guide senior public officials through transformation using a public value framework. The framework is a model for rethinking leadership, strategy, and collaboration across government. The schema emphasizes four pillars of value creation, including pursuing goals, managing inputs, user- and citizen-engagement, and developing system capacity.
  - Innovation is framed as a four-step targeted process involving to (1) clarify, (2) ideate, (3) develop, and (4) implement.
- 1. Clarify**
    - Questions should be forward-looking, action-oriented, and compelling.
    - Leaders must define challenges in a way that encourages creative problem-solving.
    - Gathering data and engaging stakeholders is essential at this stage, but leaders should avoid "analysis paralysis" and instead focus on creating shared understanding.
  - 2. Ideate**
    - Emphasis is placed on fostering a safe space to experiment.
    - Leaders facilitate idea generation by encouraging teams to think creatively while maintaining a realistic scope and focusing on the challenge.
  - 3. Develop**
    - Promising ideas are prototyped, tested, and refined through small-scale experimentation.
    - Collaboration and adaptation are essential to ensure relevance and acceptance. The team should also identify additional stakeholders.
    - Leaders must ensure the concepts and solutions are refined but should ensure to not get stuck in refinement.
  - 4. Implement**
    - This is the 'doing' phase, focused on rolling out solutions, learning, and adapting.
    - The leader's role is to help your team take in new information and adjust as needed, as well as keep the innovation on target.
    - Sustained innovation requires accountability and continual learning.
    - The CARICAD schema encourages a values-led leadership style centered on visionary thinking grounded in strategy and foresight; emotional intelligence, empathy, and humility in leadership practice; political awareness to navigate change within complex institutional landscapes; and courage to challenge outdated systems and advocate for systemic reforms.
    - Effective transformation leaders are expected to mobilize teams and resources with urgency and clarity; foster cultures of performance and accountability; communicate change consistently across all levels of government; and champion internal capacity development and cross-ministry collaboration.
    - The CARICAD schema is grounded in action-learning principles encouraging iterative progress, reflection, and adaptation. It is designed to help leaders move beyond planning into experimentation and execution.
    - During the workshop, participants used the schema to assess transformation readiness in their own ministries and sectors. They were asked to identify which success factors are already in place to support the public transformation journey, what elements exist and are missing, and what needs to be done to close the gaps.

### **III. Smart Cities: Adopting AI in the Public Sector to advance Digital Government Transformation**

- AI was presented as a powerful tool capable of transforming public sector delivery by enabling systems to learn from their environment, adapt, and perform tasks traditionally requiring human intelligence. The progression of AI through three stages was noted: narrow AI (e.g., Siri), strong AI (under development), and speculative super intelligent AI.

- Issues of bias, data privacy, transparency, and ethical design were discussed. AI systems can unintentionally reproduce societal biases embedded in training data, creating fairness concerns. References were made to global frameworks like the EU AI Act and UNESCO's AI Ethics Recommendation, which stress regulation not only for control but also to foster innovation. The concept of "sandbox regulation" was introduced, highlighting flexible policy environments that enable experimentation while ensuring oversight.
- National AI strategies in the region were discussed, including in the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. It was noted that the Caribbean Court of Justice has begun integrating AI for legal research through a tool named AIDA.
- A smart city was defined as an urban environment that uses technology to enhance public service delivery, reduce urban challenges, and improve the quality of life. Smart cities use sensors and intelligence. Smart cities may use AI for traffic optimization, pollution control, health service delivery, energy forecasting, waste management, and predictive analytics for public safety.
- Examples of smart city initiatives include the following:
  - Montego Bay, Jamaica with tech infrastructure upgrades.
  - Nassau, The Bahamas is exploring collaboration with ITU to integrate tech into public services.
  - Arima, Trinidad and Tobago is implementing a "Connected Arima" initiative to improve digital access.
  - Curaçao has developed a National Energy Policy that includes AI-enabled energy management.
  - Singapore's intelligent traffic systems, Barcelona's sensor-based waste collection, and Lisbon's air quality monitoring were cited.
- The main barriers facing public administration was described as include limited funding and a lack of long-term projects due to reluctance and most projects being tied to a political cycle. Many projects cannot be implemented in a 5-year term. Other barriers include legal constraints, lack of formal supervision of implementation, limited authority, and lack of smart strategy.
- Public servants were encouraged to act as digital transformation leaders. It was emphasized that what happens in government sets the tone for the rest of the country. Their role includes not only implementing digital tools and technology, but also fostering a culture of innovation. This demands supportive leadership, inter-agency coordination, and long-term visioning.

#### **IV. Commitments**

Workshop participants made commitments at the individual, institutional, and organizational levels to apply lessons learned during the workshop.

##### **Commitments made during the Workshop:**

- To continue Implementing technology in my organization and share it with others
- Work on a development plan to change mindsets.
- I will keep a mindset of positivity. I can help my colleagues understand the importance of changing mindsets and that we can make change happen.
- Communicate more with colleagues to increase trust.
- I will apply to Quintet of Change to my organization. I like the idea of sandboxes and see how it can be applied in my organization for innovation, strategic foresight, data governance, and changing mindsets.
- My commitment as a leader is to work harder to improve my leadership skills. Being more intentional in being a change leader.



- I will continue to have meetings with my staff, involve more the youth in my team, help them come to the table, giving them the opportunity to share information, give me ideas on how to use technology to improve training. I will evaluate myself more to see if I continue to use my growth mindset.
- My next step is to define capabilities of human intelligence, using AI and understanding how it will impact HR. I will help my colleagues by sharing some of the content we have been exposed to.
- Continue to think out of the box, experiment and try new ideas. Foster greater community engagement to the services our department provides.
- I commit to improve communication and be more open to dialogue and feedback to affect change.
- I am going to write the vision of my agency, put it on all the classrooms. I will put all the SDGs in the wall so we are reminded of their role in our lives, especially the children.
- As a trade union leader, I commit to influence my partners, my members to be agents of change, to help implement our vision. To be open minded, to be able to hear what others think. I will not be part of the problem of not listening.
- I plan to incorporate some of the strategies identified here into the National Apprenticeship program and collaborate with sister agencies so people are adequately prepared to take advantages of opportunities that will be available to them in the future.
- As an educator, I make a commitment to my organization to align itself with the National Development Plan and the SDGs (especially #4). Since placement is as important as training, I commit to reinforce that we have a tracing mechanism so we can know what happens to our graduates when they leave and what kind of jobs they can have.
- As Executive Chair of the National Training Agency, I will constantly remind myself that change takes time and that I need to be patient. I plan over the next 2 weeks is to organize a roundtable with the team and engage in finding what are our biggest challenges and strategize on solutions and on taking ownership, and how we can make a positive difference both individually and collectively in the future of the organization.
- We will use more piloting initiatives when change is needed. I commit to continue ensuring that policies are in the work continue to make our students more competitive.
- I commit as trade union leader to continue to advocate for change. We must come together as a cohort, to review that the plans are implemented in a timely manner.
- I will continue to adjust and continue to adapt to support my clients who are the most vulnerable. The growth mindset is very important for this.
- Change and transformation starts with me. My commitment is to influence my team and leaders. To be bold and courageous when expressing my views, especially in face of discrimination. I commit to be more agile and adaptable in the face of change. Not to have a fixed mindset.
- I commit, as an educator, to do a comprehensive review of the presentations given to us, then I will come up with a strategy or plan on how to implement in my life and with my team.
- Continue sharing knowledge and skills with others. Continue to be a mentor, advocating for change, being firm but fair. Seeing "no" as a possibility to discourse and change.
- My commitment is that I will speak with Ms. Martin to ensure that all these passionate people have an opportunity to meet with the technical team of the National Development Plan to give their inputs directly to ensure that our planning sessions include their views and considerations.
- We are the units of change and we need to ensure that individuals buy into the full vision in order to promote the transformation we want to see. I will work on a national strategic plan for women in the country and look into allegations of too many bars being allowed in public housing which have an impact in the quality of life.

**Commitments made based on the evaluation survey:**

- Soliciting assistance from external source after discussion within my entity.
- Share with my staff.
- Serve on a sub-committee of leaders to drive change.
- Work closely with my colleagues -sharing public/private sectors partnership collaboration to foster changing mindsets and transformation.
- To change the mindset of the team I manage.
- I will implement strategies in the National Apprenticeship Program.
- Share the resources of the National Development Plan with the participants.
- Continue to take risks and try new initiatives to foster community engagement.
- Provide a Report to my Permanent Secretary, outlining recommendations for change in the Ministry.
- We have already introduced a program which allows the department to bring services to the public rather than coming to our office. we have also introduced a survey and feedback form on how our services can be improved. My unit is not afraid to try something new.
- Change of mindset begins with self and willingness to continue learning and trying new procedures.
- Inform my staff.