

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**

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

Mindsets (behavioural science)

- A mindset is composed of beliefs and attitudes internalized over a lifetime, shaping how we interpret and interact with the world, ultimately influencing behaviors and decision-making.
- Institutional change is not only about changing rules but also about transforming mindsets, beliefs, and values of public servants to support new behaviors aligned with institutional goals.
- Biases such as functional fixedness, confirmation bias, groupthink, and the "not invented here" syndrome can hinder policy development and innovation within public institutions.
- Public servants are called to make decisions under uncertainty, set bold courses of action, and remain adaptive, while keeping both the big picture and citizens' individual needs in focus.

- New mindsets and competencies are needed to implement the SDGs, including agile, collaborative, innovative/experimental, evidence-based, results-oriented, foresight, and digital mindsets.
- Ethical, open/transparent, and personal accountability mindsets are essential to foster institutional integrity and a culture of accountability.
- Inclusive and empathic mindsets support leaving no one behind, non-discrimination, participation, subsidiarity, and inter-generational equity.
- Transforming mindsets requires strategies at individual, organizational, and institutional levels, such as training, organizational socialization, and adapting human resource policies.
- Changing mindsets involves the following steps: identifying, realizing, understanding, adopting strategies, changing beliefs, and ultimately transforming behaviors.
- A culture change in government is critical to enable innovation and public sector transformation, demanding investment in retooling services and reskilling public servants.

Systems Thinking and Strategic Foresight

- Systems thinking is crucial for understanding complex, interconnected policy environments, enabling the identification of leverage points and avoiding unintended consequences. Strategic foresight is a structured approach to anticipate future challenges, using tools like scenario planning and horizon scanning to develop resilient, forward-looking policies.
- The combination of systems thinking and foresight supports anticipatory governance, ensuring policies remain adaptive, integrated, and future-ready in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world.
- Traditional sectoral approaches are ineffective, therefore integrated, holistic solutions are required to address interconnected challenges such as climate change, economic shifts, and digital transformation.
- Systems thinking helps reveal deeper patterns and underlying structures.
- Causal loop diagrams are used to map system relationships, highlighting reinforcing and balancing feedback loops and identifying key leverage points for intervention.
- Scenario planning explores multiple plausible futures, enabling policymakers to test strategies against different potential developments and align actions with desired long-term outcomes.
- Implementing systems thinking and foresight enhances cross-sector collaboration, breaks silos, and supports agile policy development through experimental approaches like policy labs and regulatory sandboxes.
- Adaptive governance informed by foresight helps anticipate disruptions (e.g., climate and technological shifts), allowing timely adjustments to maintain progress toward the SDGs.
- Investing in capacity building for systems thinking and foresight empowers public institutions to design and deliver resilient, sustainable, and inclusive development plans.

Data and Digital Governance

- A new paradigm in governance emphasizes experimentation and learning.
- Regulatory sandboxes allow live time-bound testing of innovations under regulatory oversight, helping balance fostering innovation with safeguarding public interest.
- Examples from the UK, Singapore, and Australia were discussed, outlining how sandboxes promote innovation, provide limited regulatory exemptions, and offer case-by-case flexibility.
- In the Caribbean, 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.

- Effective data governance requires comprehensive rules covering the full data lifecycle, including generation, collection, sharing, security, and deletion, all aimed at value generation and risk minimization.
- Mechanisms like data marketplaces and data sandbox platforms foster experimentation and collaborative data exploration to solve public sector and citizen challenges.
- Data trusts create secure, structured frameworks for data sharing, grounded in legal agreements and technical platforms that protect privacy and ensure transparency.
- Diverse, flexible, and agile data governance models are needed to adapt to rapidly evolving realities and to empower data owners, especially concerning personal data. These new models must align with institutional frameworks, adopt technical and ontological approaches, foster trust, and facilitate efficient data exchange with the private sector.

Innovation

- An innovation or experimental mindset focuses on generating and implementing valuable new ideas across products, services, and processes.
- The innovation mindset is driven by beliefs in continuous improvement, risk-taking attitudes, and competencies centered on creative problem-solving, resilience, and thinking outside the box.
- A growth mindset is essential for innovation, encouraging learning from challenges, embracing failure as part of progress, and continuously evolving rather than proving fixed abilities.
- Experimentation is crucial to innovation, involving structured, time-bound processes that allow for testing ideas and refining solutions before wider implementation.
- Successful innovation in public services requires cross-sector collaboration, public-private partnerships, and high levels of trust among participants to co-create effective solutions.
- Innovation aims to improve access, quality, inclusion, responsiveness, and accountability in public service delivery, putting people at the center of design and outcomes.
- Resistance to change, fear of failure, and challenges in adopting user-centered approaches are common barriers to fostering an innovative mindset in public administration.
- A holistic approach to innovation includes systems thinking, strategic frameworks, stakeholder analysis, clear strategies, and concrete action plans.
- Transformational leadership is vital, focusing on creating positive change at organizational, institutional, societal, and individual levels, and encouraging openness, learning, and shared vision.

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

- 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.
- 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.
- Group reflections encouraged participants to analyze success factors supporting their national transformation agendas, identify existing and missing elements, and determine actions needed to close gaps.

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

- A smart city is defined as an urban settlement that uses technology to enhance benefits and reduce the challenges of urbanization for its citizens, leveraging AI to optimize services like transport, health, energy, and public safety.
- 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 United for Smart Sustainable Cities (U4SSC) initiative aims to harness AI and frontier technologies to improve urban service delivery through global collaboration.
- In the Caribbean, cities like Montego Bay, Nassau, and Arima are advancing smart city development through national strategies and infrastructure projects focused on connectivity and service delivery. Curaçao has developed a National Energy Policy that includes AI-enabled energy management. Smart city projects globally, such as Singapore's intelligent traffic systems, Barcelona's sensor-based waste collection, and Lisbon's air quality monitoring were cited.
- Data generated by AI and IoT systems supports real-time insights, enabling strategic urban planning and enhancing the quality of urban life through evidence-based decision-making.

- Barriers to smart city implementation include limited funding, legal and regulatory hurdles, weak oversight mechanisms, short-term political cycles, and lack of cross-agency authority and coordination.
- Public administration plays a critical role in driving smart city strategies by managing digital assets, fostering innovation, and prioritizing citizen-centered outcomes.
- A culture of innovation within public administration, enabled by supportive leadership, is essential to digital transformation and the successful adoption of smart technologies.
- Equity concerns in smart cities must be addressed, as high-tech infrastructure can unintentionally deepen digital divides and exacerbate inequalities, especially for marginalized communities.

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

- Speak about a customer service competition for Ministers to the Cabinet Secretary. Persist until I am no longer able to stay in the public service.
- Be open to doing things differently from what I am used to. Even things that may seem foreign or unattainable at first. Commit to planning all the way to the end with all aspects of any project, to ensure implementation in full.
- Leading by example: committing to affect change and being an inspiration to those around me. Trying to be more optimistic and empathetic to those struggling to be seen and to help guide them in the delivery of their beliefs.
- (1) Share with staff what I have learnt and how it can be used to change the mindset of the organisation. Let staff know that there is a need for a change. Explain to them what the mindset change is and what they can do at the individual level. (2) Get to understand or get staff to understand the SDGs. See how they apply to my organisation. This is an area I have started promoting already but we need to go deeper since we need to measure our progress. Also tie performance measurement in some way to these goals. (3) Create strategies and an action plan that will help the organisation grow and reflect what was learnt. Ensure that the growth mindset, innovation and change for improvement in productivity is an output and driver of the plan.
- To have an empathetic mindset and engaging others to do likewise. Being a catalyst for change.
- I am committed to being more empathetic to new ideas from my colleagues, encouraging a culture that would foster innovation and learning from failure and success stories, and changing my mindset about failure. Shifting to a mindset of failure as a part of growth & learning.
- Change! Be open-minded.
- Change background screen on laptop to be reminded to incorporate the attainment of the SDGs. Include the specific SDGs in the justification for various projects / restructuring initiatives / work initiatives. Show how pursuing a course of action would assist in realising a specific SDG.
- Think critically about mindsets, processes, behaviours in my organisation and question whether they promote growth, positive & lasting change, innovation, solve problems. (Including my own). Share information learned here with my colleagues. Challenge the status quo where I can. Advocate for growth/change oriented mindsets & behaviours.
- (1) Promote the importance of having the right mindset & approach when planning & executing projects & action items with all stakeholders. Prepare specific training course with this in mind. (2) Renewed citizen centric focus with specific focus on the 2030 SDGs. (3) Promote

transparency and trust by making government data, processes & decision making more open & accessible to the public.

- Focus on lessons team learned during this workshop and engaging in behaviors that support this desired mindset. Continue to learn more about innovation and transformation as it relates to principles and values of the 2030 SDGs. Create effective communication channels.
- Assess current mode of operations in my Dept. to identify areas that would require change in mindset to allow for (better) more effective and efficient service delivery. Consult and strategize with team on ways to change the mindset that would allow for buy-in by all (workers and public) and thereby allowing for improving the service provided.
- Include "changing mindset for innovation & transformation" concepts as part of our ongoing training sessions. To educate myself & colleagues on the 2030 SDGs.
- Engage in and encourage a culture of continuous learning & improvement and to adapt to changing circumstances. Establish channels for sharing and addressing concerns.
- Identify AI tools and use them to solve basic problems that would increase my department's efficiency. Share these successes and the tools with others. Personally, be an example of the type of employee or team member that is required for growth and effectiveness in my workplace.
- Review strategy for digital transformation to align with the SDGs. Keep focus on SDGs when outlining objectives for digital transformation initiatives.

Commitments made based on the evaluation survey

- More training.
- More communication about the goals for 2030.
- Meeting with Permanent Secretary along with team to discuss how we can implement into our current work practices.
- Share materials with my team.
- Work on my action and work plan for the year and teach my staff what I learnt.
- Try to put into practice the behaviors and beliefs to change my mindset to help drive digital transformation and national development.
- Recommend including a training session on having and changing mindset for Innovation. Training can be provided at Training Institute.
- We intend to have a follow-up meeting to identify an issue at the agency level and develop a framework and action plans to resolve and address the issue with specific focus on BPR, process analysis, stakeholder discussion and engagement, and identify champions to drive the change process and minds with a view to galvanize policy support.
- Open communications with teams Integrate where possible with my project conceptualization, when making presentations, etc.
- Encourage sharing and inclusivity.
- Practice and share.
- Commence discussions.
- Make a presentation to the Head of Department and commence dialogue on how to change mindset in our department to allow to more effective and efficient service delivery.
- Speak to my supervisor about how we can improve the public service.
- Share with my staff.
- Critical thinking about mindsets and behaviours in my organisation. Advocacy for growth and action-oriented mindset and behaviours. Share information learned with colleagues.
- Have an accountability partner to remind each other to incorporate the attainment of the SDGs into our day-to-day work activities.
- Develop a proposal to inform staff of the change management initiative.