



Key Takeaways – Day 1: Setting the Scene – Mindsets and SDGs

1. Why Mindsets Matter for Implementing the SDGs

- Mindsets—how public servants *see, think, and act*—shape decisions, behaviours, and institutional culture.
- The 2030 Agenda explicitly calls for *transformation*, not incremental reform. Achieving the SDGs requires a profound shift at individual, organizational, and institutional levels.
- Public servants must navigate uncertainty, legitimize decisions, balance bold action with adaptation, and remain citizen-focused.

Main message: *Mindset transformation is foundational for accelerating SDG implementation.*

2. Understanding Mindsets, Beliefs, Attitudes, and Mental Models

- Mindsets = the way people interpret reality, shaped by beliefs and values.
- Beliefs = what we accept as true; attitudes = how we interact with the world based on those beliefs.
- The workshop framework:
 - See: how we perceive issues and signals.
 - Think: how we make sense of information, causes, and patterns.
 - Act: how we behave or intervene based on perceived possibilities.

Main message: *Changing how we see, think, and act is essential for shifting public-sector culture.*

3. The Polak Game – Revealing Future Orientations

- Participants explored four archetypes and how they view the future:
 - Optimistic / active
 - Optimistic / passive
 - Pessimistic / active
 - Pessimistic / passive
- This exercise uncovers underlying "theories of the future" that influence decision-making and openness to change.

Main message: *Our assumptions about the future determine how bold or constrained our public action is.*

4. Overview of SDGs, VNRs, VLRs, and Policy Coherence

- The SDGs require integrated, cross-sectoral governance approaches.
- Policy coherence is critical: many SDGs are interconnected and cannot be solved in silos.
- VNRs and VLRs are tools that help governments monitor progress, engage stakeholders, and assess gaps.

Main message: *A systems approach to SDG implementation is necessary because development challenges are interdependent.*

5. Wicked Problems and Why Traditional Approaches Fall Short

- SDG challenges are wicked problems:
 - Multiple problem definitions
 - Many stakeholders with conflicting priorities
 - Uncertainties and unknown consequences
 - Interdependent causes
 - No single “right” solution
- Traditional linear planning models are insufficient.

Main message: *Wicked problems require adaptive, collaborative, and experimental mindsets.*

6. Barriers to Change in the Public Sector

- Institutional inertia, rigid hierarchies, limited incentives for innovation.
- Biases in policy processes limit creativity and new solutions.

- Crisis of legitimacy—citizens question whether institutions can address complex challenges.

Main message: *Recognizing structural and cognitive barriers is the first step toward enabling innovation.*

7. The Role of Innovation and Experimentation in Government

Examples shared from Finland, UAE, South Korea, Colombia, and Canada illustrate:

- Experimentation as a mindset—not only as a tool.
- Testing ideas early, involving citizens, and using data to validate assumptions.
- Moving from “proven solutions” to *testable hypotheses*.

Main message: *Public-sector innovation requires courage to test, learn, and iterate.*

8. SDG Mapping Exercise

Participants mapped SDGs to understand:

- Interconnections across goals
- How different priorities reinforce or contradict each other
- The importance of integrated policy design

Main message: *Mapping reveals system dynamics and shows why SDG work must break silos.*

9. Idea Generation: The Room of the (Un)Obvious

- Groups brainstormed ideas and categorized them:
 - Will certainly work
 - Will probably work
 - We don’t know if they will work
- The workshop emphasized transforming ideas into testable hypotheses using the formula: If [we do X], then [Y will happen].

Main message: *Innovation experts test hypotheses; they do not rely on assumptions.*

10. Identifying Challenges for the Week’s Learning Journey

Suggested thematic challenges included:

- Improving collaboration across government
- Reaching vulnerable groups

- Incorporating intergenerational equity into policymaking
- Addressing fragmentation in policy design and service delivery

Main message: *Participants should choose challenges that are concrete, relevant, and learning-rich.*

11. Wrap-Up Reflections

- Understanding the importance of mindset shifts for SDG acceleration
- The value of experimentation and testing assumptions
- The need to rethink public-sector culture to enable transformation

Overall message of Day 1:

Transforming mindsets is the foundation for transforming institutions—and without it, progress on the SDGs will remain too slow.

Key Takeaways – Day 2: Leadership Mindsets

1. Leadership Mindset as a Driver of SDG Transformation

- Leadership is not only a function or position—it's a mindset that shapes how public servants navigate complexity and uncertainty.
- The SDGs require leaders who are imaginative, outcomes-focused, and courageous, capable of challenging the status quo and inspiring new ways of thinking and working.

Main message: *Transformational leadership mindsets are essential to accelerate SDG implementation.*

2. Understanding “Dark Matter” in Public Institutions

- “Dark Matter” refers to the invisible forces—rules, processes, routines, culture, history, reporting systems—that shape how organizations function.
- These elements can enable or restrict change and often explain why innovative ideas struggle to take root.
- Examples: rigid forms, budget lines, meeting norms, inherited procedures, and long-standing habits.

Main message: *Effective leaders must identify and navigate institutional “dark matter” to unblock change.*

3. Reframing Barriers into Leadership Opportunities

- Participants revisited Day 1 barriers and classified which ones stem from dark matter.
- Leadership requires asking:
 - *Where do we need to be more courageous?*
 - *Where do we need more imagination?*

– *What norms, processes, or assumptions must we challenge?*

Main message: *Leadership mindsets turn obstacles into opportunities for institutional transformation.*

4. The Power of Storytelling for Change

Leaders must advocate for new ideas and persuade diverse audiences. The workshop emphasized how storytelling strengthens influence:

Why stories matter:

- Stories activate emotional and experiential parts of the brain—far more memorable than data alone.
- Stories help frame problems, inspire action, and connect with values.

Principles of effective stories:

- Selective (not overloaded)
- Structured with narrative flow
- Meaningful and purposeful
- Simple and authentic
- Relevant to audience needs

Types of stories:

- How-to Story – explains a method or solution
- Big Idea Story – introduces a transformative idea
- Challenge Story – highlights overcoming difficulty

Main message: *Storytelling is a leadership tool that makes ideas compelling, relatable, and actionable.*

5. Crafting and Delivering a Pitch

- Teams developed and delivered pitches for their ideas using ethos, logos, and pathos:
 - *Ethos*: credibility and trust
 - *Logos*: logic and evidence
 - *Pathos*: emotions and values
- Delivery skills also matter: body language, pace, eye contact, anchoring, clarity.

Main message: *Leaders must be able to pitch ideas persuasively to mobilize support and resources.*

6. Office of Experimentation: Learning from Practice

- Real-world examples (e.g., Denmark’s MindLab) demonstrated how experimentation can reshape policy cycles:
 - Integrating citizen and frontline experiences
 - Testing assumptions early
 - Identifying unintended effects
 - Creating cross-cutting implementation teams
- Experimentation helps avoid “analysis paralysis” and accelerates feedback loops.

Main message: *Leadership mindsets embrace experimentation as a practical tool for policy innovation.*

7. Hacking the Policy/Project Cycle

Participants redesigned their policy or project cycles by asking:

- Which stages can be reimaged?
- Where can empathy, agility, curiosity, and humility enhance outcomes?
- What steps reinforce silos, and how can they be redesigned?

They learned to identify:

- Opportunities for early testing
- Spaces to integrate citizen insights
- Points where organizational culture blocks progress

Main message: *Leadership involves redesigning systems—not just operating within them.*

8. Mapping Skills and Competencies

Using the Nesta competency framework, participants reflected on:

- Their core skills
- Dominant attitudes (e.g., agile, reflective, empathetic, courageous)
- Team strengths and gaps
- Skills required to work differently for the SDGs
- Types of support needed to build capabilities

Main message: *Leadership is distributed. Teams must cultivate complementary skills and attitudes.*

9. Leadership Mindsets for SDG Transformation

The day highlighted nine core leadership attributes:

- Imaginative
- Outcomes focused
- Courageous
- Empathetic
- Humble
- Enabling
- Reflective
- Agile
- Curious

These attributes strengthen the Collaborative, Learning, and Leadership mindsets required across the public sector.

Main message: *Leadership is a practice of mindset, skill, and culture—not only authority.*

10. Final Reflection

- Leadership mindsets must work across individual, team, and institutional levels.
- Culture change requires leaders who are willing to question routines, mobilize others through compelling stories, and prototype solutions.

Overall message of Day 2:

Leadership for the SDGs means cultivating imagination, courage, and collaboration to transform policies, institutions, and behaviors.

Key Takeaways – Day 3: Learning Mindset

1. Understanding the Learning Mindset

- A *learning mindset* is foundational for navigating complexity and uncertainty in SDG implementation.
- It involves being reflective, agile, and curious, continuously questioning assumptions, exploring alternatives, and adapting based on evidence.
- A learning mindset values inquiry over certainty and iteration over perfection.

Main message: *Learning is an active, iterative practice essential for innovation and problem-solving in the public sector.*

2. Growth vs. Fixed Mindsets

- Growth mindset: believes abilities can be developed through effort, learning, and feedback.

- Fixed mindset: believes abilities are limited, leading to avoidance of challenges and fear of failure.
- Participants explored how mindsets influence behaviors, reactions to pressure, and willingness to try new approaches.

Main message: *Recognizing and shifting from a fixed to a growth mindset enables personal and institutional transformation.*

3. The Chopstick Challenge – Learning Through Prototyping

- Participants engaged in rapid prototyping inspired by the UN Medical Unit’s real challenge.
- The exercise highlighted how testing, observing, interviewing, and iterating rapidly improve solutions.
- Key elements learned:
 - Test early and often
 - Observe without judgement
 - Gather user feedback
 - Iterate based on real evidence

Main message: *Prototype → test → learn → improve. Learning happens fastest when ideas are made tangible.*

4. Knowledge Limits, Biases, and Frames

- Cognitive biases and narrow frames can distort how public servants define problems and design solutions.
- The blind men and the elephant parable illustrates how partial views create incomplete understanding.
- Shifting frames allows movement:
 - From needs → potential
 - From limitations → opportunities
 - From barriers → possibilities

Main message: *To solve complex SDG challenges, leaders must broaden perspectives and challenge their own assumptions.*

5. Ideation and Reframing Tools

Participants practiced generating solutions beyond the obvious through:

- Change Cards
- Analogies
- Reframing problem statements

- Moving from “What is wrong?” to “What could be possible?”

Main message: *Good ideas come from expanding possibilities, not narrowing them prematurely.*

6. Experimentation as a Learning Tool

- An experiment = a structured process to test what works and what doesn’t.
- Essential characteristics:
 - Learning is the top priority
 - Clear hypothesis
 - Defined structure
 - Timelines and checkpoints
- Three types of experiments:
 - Explore – outcomes unknown
 - Trial & error – some assumptions
 - Validate – expected outcomes known

Main message: *Experimentation reduces uncertainty by turning assumptions into testable hypotheses.*

7. Hypothesis Development

Participants practiced turning ideas into hypotheses:

If [we do X], then [Y will happen].

This supports:

- Clarity of action
- Measurable outcomes
- Faster learning
- Better decisions

Main message: *A hypothesis makes thinking explicit and enables evidence-based iteration.*

8. Prototyping Methods and Fidelity

Participants explored different ways to prototype:

- Paper prototypes
- Experience walkthroughs
- Mock-ups
- Wizard-of-Oz techniques

- Constructive interaction (thinking aloud)

Prototypes can test how a solution:

- Looks
- Works
- Feels
- Behaves

Main message: *Prototyping accelerates learning while reducing risk, cost, and time.*

9. Learning From Failure

- Failure is essential for innovation when it produces learning.
- Participants distinguished between:
 - Blameworthy failure – negligence, lack of effort
 - Praiseworthy failure – disciplined experimentation in uncertain environments
- If people fear failure, they avoid experimentation → leading to stagnation.

Main message: *Healthy failure culture is critical for creative problem-solving and SDG acceleration.*

10. Identifying and Managing Fixed Mindset Triggers

Steps to shift into a growth mindset:

1. Acknowledge your fixed mindset.
2. Identify triggers (pressure, uncertainty, lack of knowledge, fatigue).
3. Name the fixed-mindset character and understand its patterns.
4. Plan actions to counter triggers and maintain momentum.

Main message: *Self-awareness helps prevent mindset blocks from inhibiting innovation.*

11. Building a Learning Organization

Three building blocks (Amy Edmondson):

1. Supportive Learning Environment

- Psychological safety
- Appreciation of differences
- Openness to new ideas
- Time for reflection

2. Concrete Learning Processes & Practices

- Data gathering
- Experimentation
- Knowledge sharing
- Training & development

3. Leadership Behaviors

- Asking questions
- Listening actively
- Encouraging debate
- Modeling curiosity

Main message: *Organizations learn when people feel safe, ideas are tested, and leaders model learning behaviors.*

12. Social Psychology for Mindset Change

Tools include:

- Social modeling – showing the behavior you want to see
- Bandwagon effects – demonstrating that “people like us” are already adopting the behavior
- Credible messengers
- Respecting autonomy – avoiding coercion or blame

Main message: *Mindset change is social. People adopt new behaviors when they see them modeled, trusted, and normalized.*

13. Final Reflection

Participants closed the day reflecting on how learning mindsets can be applied to their chosen SDG-related challenges and how to build these practices into their teams and institutions.

Overall message of Day 3:

A learning mindset enables experimentation, reframing, rapid iteration, and psychological safety—key ingredients for addressing complex SDG challenges.

Key Takeaways – Day 4: Collaborative Mindset

1. What a Collaborative Mindset Is and Why It Matters

- A collaborative mindset is essential for solving complex SDG challenges that require coordination, integration, dialogue, and shared ownership.

- Collaboration stems from three core attributes:
Empathy – understanding others’ perspectives
Humility – acknowledging you don't have all the answers
Enablement – empowering others to act and contribute

Main message: *Collaboration is not just working together. It is a mindset that shapes how we see others, share power, and co-create solutions.*

2. Mindsets Must Align with New Public-Sector Competencies

- UN DESA identifies key mindsets and competencies needed to deliver on the SDGs (CEPA, 2018).
- These competencies fall under three pillars:
 - Effectiveness (agile, digital, innovative, evidence-based, foresight, collaborative, results-oriented)
 - Accountability (ethical, transparent, personally accountable, digitally enabled)
 - Inclusiveness (inclusive, empathetic/relational, responsive, inter-generational equity-focused)

Main message: *Collaboration is one of several interconnected mindsets required to build the public service of the future.*

3. The Tennis Ball Game – Lessons on Collaboration

Participants performed an activity requiring coordinated actions, rapid strategy-making, and shared responsibility.

Key lessons included:

- Collaboration depends heavily on communication, coordination, trust, and flexibility.
- Teams perform better when they listen, co-design processes, and commit to a common goal.
- Small constraints often reveal bigger behavioral patterns around teamwork and assumptions.

Main message: *Effective collaboration emerges from shared strategy, mutual accountability, and adaptive behavior.*

4. Returning to the Challenge – Validated Knowledge vs. Assumptions

Participants learned to differentiate between:

- Validated knowledge (supported by evidence)
- Assumptions (things we think we know with no evidence)
- Knowledge gaps (what we do not know but must find out)

This exercise encouraged teams to test assumptions early—a critical element of collaborative work.

Main message: *Collaboration requires shared understanding of what is known, unknown, and assumed.*

5. Engaging the “Unusual Suspects”

- Effective collaboration requires engaging not only obvious stakeholders but also those who:
 - Are affected by the problem
 - Influence the system
 - Have unique knowledge or lived experience
- Participants used a stakeholder mapping tool (influence \times interest) to classify and prioritize engagement strategies.

Main message: *Inclusive collaboration expands perspectives, surfaces blind spots, and strengthens solutions.*

6. The Role of Empathy, Humility, and Proximity

- Empathy comes from direct engagement with people in context.
- Proximity—spending time with those most affected by the problem—is essential for understanding real needs and barriers.
- Tools introduced:
 - Ethnographic research (observations, interviews)
 - Contextual inquiry
 - Shadowing

Main message: *Deep collaboration requires meeting people where they are—not designing solutions from behind a desk.*

7. Nudging Collaborative Behaviors Using Behavioral Insights

Participants explored behavioural science principles to encourage collaboration. Key insights included:

Behaviour is influenced by context

- Memory, judgment, and preferences are unstable—meaning context shapes behaviour.

System 1 (fast, intuitive) decision-making dominates

- 95% of decisions are automatic, suggesting collaboration interventions must align with how humans actually behave, not how we assume they behave.

Nudge theory (Thaler & Sunstein)

A “nudge” subtly alters choices without restricting freedom.

EAST Framework

- Easy – simplify collaboration
- Attractive – make it appealing
- Social – leverage norms and networks
- Timely – intervene when people are receptive

Main message: *Collaborative environments can be intentionally designed using behavioral science tools.*

8. Designing Nudges for Collaborative Behaviors

Participants applied the TESTS approach:

1. Target – identify the specific group and behavior to change
2. Explore – understand barriers from a user/anthropological perspective
3. Solution – design nudges using EAST
4. Trial – test the idea
5. Scale – implement successful nudges wider

Example prompt:

“How might we nudge policymakers to proactively engage with vulnerable communities at the start of the policy cycle?”

Main message: *Small, well-designed nudges can meaningfully shift how teams collaborate and engage stakeholders.*

9. Reflecting on Personal Collaboration Patterns

Participants asked themselves:

- What are my “nightmare answers”?
- Why do I act this way?
- What drives this behaviour (fear, habits, lack of clarity, silos)?
- What could I change?

Main message: *Collaboration begins with self-awareness and willingness to adjust personal behavior patterns.*

10. Final Reflection

The day ended with reflections on how collaborative mindsets connect to learning and leadership mindsets—and how all three work together to drive culture change in government.

Overall message of Day 4:

A collaborative mindset is foundational for SDG implementation because it enables empathy, shared learning, multi-stakeholder engagement, and behavior change across institutions.