PURPOSE AND MANDATE

The United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA) recognizes excellence in public service at the local, regional and national levels. It was first introduced in 2003 to promote and support innovations in public service when the General Assembly designated 23 June as Public Service Day through resolution 57/277. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) called for "the proclamation of a United Nations Public Service Day to celebrate the value and virtue of service to the community at the local, national and global levels, with prizes to be awarded by the Secretary-General for contributions made to the cause of enhancing the role, prestige and visibility of public service"[1].

The programme has supported the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and has been subsequently revised to align with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The relevance of the programme was reiterated in 2015 by the General Assembly "to strengthen public institutions and public services for sustainable development … including through the United Nations Public Service Day, the United Nations Public Service Awards and the United Nations Public Administration Network…".

The UNPSA is committed to promoting and recognizing creativity and innovation in public sector institutions to enhance effectiveness, transparency and inclusiveness as recognized by SDG 16. It seeks initiatives that are creative, inspiring and dedicated to providing quality public services for the realization of leaving no one behind.

ELIGIBILITY

The UNPSA will continue to be open to all public sector institutions at the national, sub-national and local levels from all UN member states. In the case of partnerships, the application must include the public sector institution. There is no personal nomination or recognition.

The initiative must be relevant to one of the categories

The initiative must have been implemented for a <u>minimum of two years</u>[2], except for the special category which will be specified, if different.

To avoid conflict of interest, the initiative must not be implemented by the United Nations System.

---

[1] E/RES/2001/45

[2] The requirement for the special category may be different and will be specified

CATEGORIES

The objective of the UNPSA is to recognize efforts that advance effective, efficient, transparent, accountable, innovative and inclusive public governance, administration and services for sustainable development, in line with SDG 16.

Developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels (SDG 16.6) are essential to achieve all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by way of delivering efficient and quality public services. For example, they play a critical role in providing social safety nets (SDG 1 and 2), quality healthcare (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), water and sanitation (SDG 6), affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), as well as leave no one behind through gender equality (SDG 5), enhancing opportunities for decent work (SDG 8), tackling inequality (SDG 10), and promoting partnerships (SDG 17).

Category on Innovation in Public Institutions

Does your institution have creative solutions for improving public service delivery? Have you improved ways to increase access to quality and affordable public services? Did you improve efficiency by adopting non-traditional approaches? Has your new legislation addressed underserved needs and policy gaps? Have you done anything to increase transparency to foster people's trust?

Innovation in public institutions has been growing in importance since business-as-usual is no longer sufficient to achieve the SDGs. Public institutions need to be creative in meeting higher demands and increased expectations for greater customized services. Many have been successful in leveraging ICTs for digital transformation however, the digital divide persists.

Delivering inclusive and equitable services requires public sector institutions to be creative, flexible, and resilient. Institutions need to create enabling environment for innovation, having appropriate policies and resources in place and take measured risks. They will have to be creative in addressing the complex and interrelated challenges of the SDGs to make sure no one is left behind.

Category on Gender-Responsive Public Services

Is your institution mindful of the specific public service needs of women and girls? Are you proactive in providing targeted services to address inequality? Have you instituted enabling policies and legislative frameworks to meet the needs of women and girls?

Gender-responsive public services play a critical role in reducing inequality and advancing the rights of women and girls. While public services have improved to provide more targeted services to different demographics, innovation is not inherently inclusive and more can be done to empower women and girls as they continue to be under-represented and underserved. It is important to garner the active participation of women and girls in all stages of planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation so they are not only the recipients of services but also co-creators and contributors to solutions.

Special Category on Tackling Climate Change

What plans does your institution have in the face of climate change risks? How are you helping people and businesses to manage climate-induced challenges? How are you encouraging green initiatives from the private sector? What kind of programmeme do you have in place to encourage the use of renewable energy, sustainable transportation or to protect oceans and forests?

Urgent action is needed to combat climate change and its impacts. Extreme weather patterns are more frequent and intense droughts, storms and heat waves will make more places on Earth uninhabitable. It is threatening biodiversity. Many Small Island Developing States (SIDS) already face an existential crisis with rising sea levels. Other impacts of climate change – from having clean water and air, stable food supply, deforestation, desertification, and displacement – will affect us all but the most vulnerable segment of the population will be disproportionately hurt. It is a global challenge that requires concerted efforts to mitigate the negative effects and make society more resilient.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Innovation

The initiative should present an innovative idea, policy, new approach, or an improved mechanism that supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It could be improving the delivery of public services, solving a problem of public concern, or strengthening public institutions.

How is innovation defined for UNPSA?

While technology plays a significant role in improving services and engaging people for public participation, it is not an end in itself. Innovation is not only limited to digital

transformation but a new way of problem-solving, different ways of doing, improving existing systems and taking risks in creating something original.

For reference, check out the previous winning initiatives of the UNPSA at the Public Service Innovation Hub at https://publicadministration.un.org/unpsa/innovation-hub/

Impact

The initiative should make a positive impact and catalyze change.

Adaptability

The initiative should be applicable and adaptable to other contexts for possible upscaling or replication.

AWARDS STRUCTURE

Following the World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) report, initiatives will be divided into one of four groups: developed countries, countries in transition, developing countries and least developed countries, specified in tables A, B, C, and D.

Given the different sizes of each group, there will be a **maximum of 2 winners from developed countries, 1 from countries in transition, 4 from developing, and 2 from least developed countries per category**, with a possibility of **3 honorable mentions in each category**.

Initiatives that reach the last round will be noted as finalists on the Innovation Hub Website[3] regardless of their award status.

[Table A]

Developed Countries			
Asia and Pacific	**Europe**		**North America**
Australia Japan New Zeland	Austria Belgium Bulgaria Croatia	Ireland Italy Luxembourg Malta	Canada United States of America

---

[3] https://publicadministration.un.org/unpsa/innovation-hub/

	Cyprus Czechia Denmark Estonia Finland France Germany Greece Hungary Latvia Lithuania Iceland	Netherlands Norway Poland Portugal Romania Slovakia Slovenia Spain Sweden Switzerland United Kingdom	

[Table B]

Countries in Transition	
Albania	North Macedonia
Armenia	Republic of Moldova
Azerbaijan	Russian Federation
Belarus	Serbia
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Tajikistan
Georgia	Turkmenistan
Kazakhstan	Ukraine
Kyrgyzstan	Uzbekistan
Montenegro	

[Table C]

Developing Countries				
Africa	Asia		Latin America and the Caribbean	
Algeria	Bahrain	Pakistan	Argentina	Guyana
Botswana	Brunei	Papua New	Bolivia	Honduras
Cameroon	Darussalam	Guinea	(Plurinational	Jamaica
Cabo Verde	China	Philippines	State of)	Mexico
Congo	Democratic	Qatar	Bahamas	Nicaragua
Cote d'Ivoire	People's	Republic of	Barbados	Panama
Egypt	Republic of	Korea	Belize	Paraguay
Equatorial Guinea	Korea	Samoa	Brazil	Peru
Eswatini	Fiji	Saudi Arabia	Chile	Suriname
Gabon	India	Singapore	Colombia	

Ghana Kenya Libya Mauritius Morocco Namibia Nigeria South Africa Tunisia Zimbabwe	Indonesia Iran (Islamic Republic of) Iraq Israel Jordan Kuwait Lebanon Malaysia Maldives Mongolia Oman	Sri Lanka State of Palestine Syrian Arab Republic Thailand Türkiye United Arab Emirates Vanuatu Viet Nam	Costa Rica Cuba Dominican Republic Ecuador El Salvador Guatemala	Trinidad and Tobago Uruguay Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

[Table D]

Least Developed Countries		
Africa	**Asia**	**Latin America and the Caribbean**
Angola Benin Burkina Faso Burundi Central African Republic Chad Comoros Democratic Republic of the Congo Djibouti Eritrea Ethiopia Gambia Guinea Guinea-Bissau Lesotho Liberia Madagascar Malawi Mali Mauritania Mozambique Niger Rwanda Sao Tome and Principe Senegal Sierra leone Somalia South Sudan Sudan Togo Uganda United Republic of Tanzania Zambia	Afghanistan Bangladesh Bhutan Cambodia Kiribati Lao People's Democratic Republic Myanmar Nepal Solomon Islands Timor Leste Tuvalu Yemen	Haiti

EVALUATION

The evaluation process will be multi-stage. Once the applications have been vetted for minimum requirements, **1st round of evaluations** will focus on the common evaluation criteria of **innovation, impact and adaptability**.

2nd round of evaluation will focus on **category-specific criteria**, specified in Appendix I.

The final round will be conducted by the Committee of Experts in Public Administration (CEPA), will focus on the **Principles of Effective Governance**[4].

VERIFICATION

All proposed winning initiatives will be vetted. The programme will continue to work with the UN Resident Coordinator system and relevant special agencies for validation of the finalists.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

The UNPSA programme will continue to accept applications in all six UN official languages. However, applicants are encouraged to apply in English and French - the working languages of the Secretariat. **Applications as well as any supporting document in a language other than one of the six official languages <u>will not be accepted</u>. In the case of supporting material in non-official languages, a short summary in one of the six official languages will continue to be required.**

While the programmeme will continue to encourage and request the participation of evaluators who are fluent in official UN languages, if there are no sufficient resources, evaluators may rely on automated translation tools to conduct the assessment. This disclaimer is noted on the UNPSA application website for transparency.

DISQUALIFICATION and REVOCATION

Rules on disqualification and revocation are

- Failure to observe the submission rules for the application
- Any conflict of interest and non-adherence to the process by those concerned
- Presenting misleading and false information or inability to provide sufficient documentation and supporting documents

---

[4] Principles of effective governance for sustainable development, https://publicadministration.un.org/en/Intergovernmental-Support/Committee-of-Experts-on-Public-Administration/Governance-principles

- Unethical behavior, including undue pressure on any person involved in the evaluation and selection process

The Awards will continue to be conferred to **only public sector institutions** that have conceptualized and implemented the nominated initiatives. Implementing agencies working on a consultancy basis are not eligible for UNPSA but public-private partnerships will be recognized. It will not be awarded to the country or an individual.

PROGRAMME CYCLE

The UNPSA will be held biennially.

HOW TO APPLY

An online Application is required. All public sector institutions at the national, sub-national and local levels are encouraged to apply.

Required documents:

1. Application form
2. News articles, featured stories, case studies or publications such as audit and evaluation report which confirms the validity of the initiative (limit 2)

Optional documents (max of 3):

Supplementary information such as videos, outreach materials, project documents, etc.

APPENDIX I

CRITERIA

In all categories, the initiative will be evaluated according to three general criteria:

Common criteria

- innovation
- impact
- adaptability

Category specific criteria on:

Innovation in public service

- user-centered design
- openness and transparency

Gender-responsive public service

- gender mainstreaming
- inclusivity

Tackling climate change

- climate adaptation
- co-benefits

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Common Questions (regardless of category)

Innovation application questions
1. Novelty and disruption: Does the initiative introduce a new idea, concept, or approach that has not been tried before in the relevant initiative area and potentially lead to transformative change?
2. Risk-taking: Did the initiative involve taking calculated risks, with a willingness to experiment and potentially fail to learn and innovate? Justify your answer.

Impact application questions
1. Objectives and outcomes: What were the objectives and how did you meet them? How did the initiative contribute to achieving the SDGs? How the project achieves the realization of leaving no one behind?
2. Performance metrics: Explain metrics used to measure the impact of the innovation. Were these metrics tracked and monitored over time to assess the innovation's impact?

Adaptability application questions
1. Flexibility: How flexible is the initiative to adapt to changing circumstances, such as changes in political or economic conditions or changes in stakeholder needs and preferences? Explain it.
2. Scalability: Can the initiative be scaled up or down depending on the size and complexity of the problem it addresses or the context in which it is implemented?

Category-specific Questions

INNOVATION IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

User-centered design application questions
1. User research: Please describe the process followed in order to understand the intended users' needs and experiences. Please include any research methods or tools used during this process, where relevant.
2. User feedback: How user feedback collected and incorporated into the initiative design? This feedback could come from user testing sessions or ongoing engagement with the target audience.

3. User testing: Was the initiative tested with real users before implementation? How was the test conducted? User testing can reveal usability issues and identify areas where the initiative could be improved to better meet user needs.

Openness and transparency application questions

1. Stakeholder engagement: Were stakeholders and members of the public invited to participate in the initiative development process? This can include opportunities for public comment, public hearings, and other engagement mechanisms.
2. Access to information: Was information about the initiative development process and decision-making made available to the public in a timely and accessible manner? This can include posting information on a website or making documents available upon request or making data sets available online in a usable format.
3. Public accountability: Was there a mechanism in place for the public to hold the policymakers accountable for their decisions and actions? This can include public reporting and audits.

GENDER-RESPONSIVE PUBLIC SERVICES

Gender Mainstreaming application questions

1. Gender analysis: Was a gender analysis conducted to identify the gender-specific needs, priorities, and constraints of the target population? Did the initiative take into account these gender-specific factors in its design and implementation? Describe the process and the results, including the reference of the gender analysis used.
2. Gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation: Were gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation approaches and tools used to assess its effectiveness and impact on gender equality and women's empowerment? Please, describe the approach and how it was applied.

Inclusivity application questions

1. Participation and representation: Were women and gender diverse groups represented and included in the design and implementation of the initiative? How diverse was the team that designed the initiative?

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate adaptations application questions
1. Resilience: How effective is the initiative in enhancing the resilience of vulnerable communities and ecosystems to the impacts of climate change, such as extreme weather events, sea-level rise, and biodiversity loss or in minimizing losses and damages caused by climate change, such as property damage, crop failure, and health impacts?
2. Vulnerability reduction: To what extent does the initiative reduce the vulnerability of key sectors and populations, such as agriculture, water resources, health, and marginalized groups, to climate-related risks?
3. Balance: How does the initiative balance short-term and long-term goals and trade-offs in addressing climate adaptation, and ensure that it is aligned with broader sustainable development objectives?

Co-benefits application questions
1. Co-benefits: What co-benefits for public health, air and water quality, and ecosystem services have resulted from the initiative?
2. Measurement: Can the co-benefits of the climate policy be quantified or measured? How?