



## **WORKSHOP 1**

Creating an Enabling Environment for Public  
Sector Innovation

### **CONCEPT NOTE**

## Introduction

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The 2025 United Nations Public Service Forum will take place in Samarkand, the Republic of Uzbekistan from 23-25 June 2025 under the theme 'Five Years to 2030: Accelerating Public Service Delivery for a Sustainable Future'.

The Forum will be comprised of a series of workshops where various elements related to the overall theme will be explored in more detail. Workshop 1 will explore challenges to public sector innovation and what is needed to foster creativity in public institutions to accelerate progress towards sustainable development.

## Objective

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The workshop aims to address some of the key obstacles that institutions and public servants face in creating an enabling environment for innovation from the institutional level down to the day-to-day work of the public servant, and how those barriers can be addressed.

Participants will gain insights into overcoming barriers and driving meaningful change by focusing on key enablers, such as leadership, institutional structures, funding mechanisms, and legal and regulatory frameworks. The role of public servants as change agents will be highlighted, with discussions on building skills, fostering collaboration, and overcoming resistance to change.

## Context

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Governments today face complex and evolving challenges, from improving service delivery and policy effectiveness to constrained budgets, shifting societal demands, and the need for greater transparency and accountability. To address these challenges, public sector innovation is increasingly recognized as a critical driver of effective governance, enabling governments to respond to individualized services, technological advancements, and economic challenges.

Governments can accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the next five years by embedding innovation in governance structures and processes. In an era where citizens demand more efficient, transparent, and accessible public services, fostering an environment that supports innovation within the public sector is becoming essential - not just in adopting new technologies but in rethinking processes, public service delivery models, and organizational culture and working methods to enhance efficiency, responsiveness, and effectiveness.

However, unlike the private sector, where market forces naturally incentivize innovation, fostering innovation within government institutions can be challenging, often butting up against high levels of bureaucracy, rigid legal and regulatory frameworks, an aversion to risk, and siloed structures and working methods that can discourage transformative change.

This workshop will examine key enablers of innovation, such as strong leadership that champions change, institutional structures and human resources policies and practices that support collaboration and agility, and sustainable funding mechanisms that allow for

experimentation and scaling of innovative solutions. Additionally, conducive legal and regulatory frameworks that encourage flexibility while maintaining accountability and risk management will be discussed. By focusing on the broader systemic conditions that enable public sector innovation, the workshop will help participants move beyond individual initiatives and toward creating institutions that are more agile, inclusive, and responsive.

## Structure

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*This workshop will be composed of five thematic sessions and a concluding and recommendation session. At the closing of each thematic session, the rapporteur will present key messages. Each session will include group discussions, offering participants an interactive platform to share insights and experiences.*

### **Session 1: Understanding public sector innovation**

This session will provide an overview of the workshop by looking at the current state of innovation in government, emerging trends and developments shaping the field.

*Guiding questions:*

- 1. What does innovation in the public sector mean, and how does it differ from innovation in the private sector?*
- 2. Why is public sector innovation important in today's governance landscape?*
- 3. What are the key drivers of innovation in public institutions?*
- 4. What are the emerging trends in public sector innovation?*

### **Session 2: Leadership for public sector innovation**

Leadership plays a crucial role in driving and sustaining innovation in the public sector. Effective leaders set a vision for change, foster a culture of experimentation, and empower teams to think creatively while managing risks. This session will explore the key leadership skills and strategies for enabling innovation, overcoming resistance to change, and building cross-sector collaborations.

*Guiding questions:*

- 1. How can leaders create a culture that encourages innovation in public sector organizations?*
- 2. How can leadership help overcome resistance to change within public institutions?*
- 3. What strategies can leaders use to balance accountability and flexibility in innovation efforts?*

### **Session 3: Legal and regulatory framework and strategies for public sector innovation**

This session will explore how legal and regulatory frameworks and innovation strategies can foster innovation in the public sector. While regulations are essential in ensuring accountability and transparency, they must also be adaptable to encourage experimentation.

Additionally, the session will explore the impact of innovation policies and strategies in driving public sector innovation.

*Guiding questions:*

1. *How can legal and regulatory frameworks support innovation while maintaining accountability and transparency?*
2. *How have public institutions aligned innovation strategies with national development goals and what impact has this had on service delivery?*
3. *What are the biggest challenges in developing and implementing an innovation strategy, and how can they be addressed?*

**Session 4: Institutional setup for public sector innovation**

An institutional structure is important for fostering innovation in the public sector by providing the necessary framework, resources and support mechanisms. This includes dedicated innovation labs or dedicated units and cross-sector collaboration platforms. Sustainable funding and resource allocation are essential to support experimentation and scaling up successful initiatives.

*Guiding questions:*

1. *How do institutional structures impact the success of public sector innovation?*
2. *What role do innovation labs and dedicated units play in fostering public sector innovation?*
3. *What funding models are available to sustain innovation?*

**Session 5: Public servants as agents of change for public sector innovation**

Public servants play a crucial role as agents of change in driving innovation within government institutions. Their ability to embrace new ideas, challenge traditional processes, and collaborate across sectors is essential for creating more efficient, citizen-centered public services. Furthermore, building a workforce that fosters innovation requires strategic recruitment, continuous skills development, and clear career pathways that reward creativity and problem-solving. Governments must attract and retain talents with needed expertise while upskilling existing employees to adapt to emerging challenges. By empowering public servants and equipping them with the tools to innovate, governments can enhance service delivery, improve responsiveness, and build a culture of continuous improvement.

*Guiding questions:*

1. *How can public servants be empowered to drive innovation in government?*
2. *What skills are most critical to drive innovation and how can they be developed?*
3. *How can public institutions attract professionals with technical, analytical and problem-solving skills necessary for innovation?*
4. *What barriers prevent public servants from embracing innovation and how can they be overcome?*

5. *What are examples of career tracks that are designed to foster long-term public sector innovation and retain high-performing, innovation-driving public servants?*

### **Session 6: Conclusion and recommendation**

The final session will draw on conclusions, key messages, and recommendations from the previous sessions. The workshop rapporteur will lead a discussion among participants to identify key messages that will feed into the Forum's outcome report.

### **Organisational Details**

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- This workshop is organised by the **Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG)**.
- Participants are expected to include officials from central and local governments and public sector institutions, policymakers, government experts, practitioners, and representatives of civil society, academia, and the media.
- The workshop will be conducted in English and Uzbek.

### **Contact Persons**

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