

The “Mindset Challenge” approach

To build a better world for people and the planet, UN Member States have adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Implementing these by 2030 will require strong, effective institutions. The latter will involve more than formal changes to rules and structures, they need public servants who can rise to the challenge. To achieve this the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) of UN DESA has developed a Curriculum on Governance for the SDGs. The Curriculum on Governance is a comprehensive set of training of trainers’ capacity development toolkits, which contain ready-to-use training material on key governance dimensions needed to advance the implementation of the SDGs. By facilitating training of trainers, the Curriculum can help equip public servants with the knowledge and capacities to effectively implement the SDGs. A change in mindset is crucial to better implement the SDGs and this is why we're developing this “Mindset Challenge” training toolkit.

The work is built upon practical experiences of using learning programmes to shift/develop mindsets, including the [States of Change programme in Victoria](#), Australia, [States of Change programme in Canada](#), [creating an experimental culture in the Colombian government](#) and the [Mindset Challenge](#), carried out with a UK County Council. The curriculum will be informed by tried and tested activities drawn from social psychology/behaviour change theories (i.e. social modeling, social norms), and include reflection tools created to identify personal biases.

What response is needed to the current context?

Public challenges are complex. Our governments face emerging and mounting pressures, from economic to social and environmental challenges. This makes the SDG agenda more relevant than ever. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a plan of action for people, planet, and prosperity. It outlines bold steps to a peaceful, just, and inclusive world, with equal access to justice, respect for human rights, an effective rule of law and good governance at all levels. The 17 SDGs guide this ambition agenda across the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

But governments are struggling to effectively deal with the SDGs and solve public problems that involve high levels of interconnectedness, uncertainty, indeterminateness and instability. At the same time, we see the pace of change is rapid, and governments often lack the agility to respond to this acceleration accordingly. The backdrop to this complexity and pace of change is a pressure to do more with less. The financial cost of Covid19 will make this more keenly felt.

Taking sustainable development from theory into practice forces countries to rethink their governance. The SDGs demand a different response, one that public servants are still learning how to approach. There's no lack of commitment nor momentum to turn sustainable development from concept to concrete, but there are major challenges for public institutions that need new cultures, capacities and knowledge to make this happen. It is a great challenge for bureaucratic organisations to change their operational models and performance structures. This is a challenge of shifting organizational cultures over providing specific technical support.

What we mean by “mindset”¹

The definition of mindset finds its roots in different disciplines ranging from anthropology to psychology, sociology, and statistics (see Table 1.1). Generally, a mindset consists of beliefs and attitudes that a person has assimilated throughout a lifetime about themselves and the world around them (worldview). Mindsets affect the way we think, see (frame reality) and act. Mindsets are important because they shape the way people behave, i.e., how they act or conduct themselves, especially towards others. According to Dweck (1986), our mindsets play a massive role in the way we think something is possible and, in the actions, we believe are available and purposeful to take. In other words, mindsets comprise the attitudes and beliefs, worldview, and self-perception that matter for individuals as psychological factors governing how choices are made and habits are formed. These include value-based, motivational, or non-cognitive factors that can matter even more than cognitive factors for day-to-day decision-making.⁷ A key question then is: what are beliefs and attitudes? A belief is what we hold to be true. It is a conviction that not necessarily corresponds to reality that, however, influences a person's interpretation of and response to events. It refers to "the attitude we have, roughly, whenever we take something to be the case or regard it as true". Beliefs come from several sources and life experiences. For example, a belief can be: "we live in a friendly world" or "we live in a hostile world." Likewise, a belief can be that "anything is possible versus everything is difficult" (Dweck, 2007). Attitudes are "a settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something, typically one that is reflected in a person's behavior".

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¹ This paragraph is an extract from the UN DESA publication on Changing Mindset in Public Institutions to Realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Table 1.1: Definitions of mindsets

Definitions of mindsets	Source
Mindsets form the "core" of people's meaning systems, bringing together goals, beliefs, and behaviors to shape people's thoughts and actions	Dweck & Yeager, 2019
Mindsets refers to people's beliefs about the nature of personal attributes, such as intelligence	Alexander P. Burgoyne, 1 David Z. Hambrick, & 2 Brooke N. Macnamara, 2020
In cognitive psychology, a mindset represents the cognitive processes activated in response to a given task.	French, 2016
In system thinking, mindset is associated with cultural and social values	Magoroh Maruyama, 1980
Mindsets can be formed and shaped by different factors, including culture, socialization processes, spirituality and religion, and media exposure	Crum & Zuckerman, 2017
"In a fixed mindset, people believe their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits. They spend their time documenting their intelligence or talent instead of developing them. They also believe that talent alone creates success—without effort. They're wrong". "In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment. Virtually all great people have had these qualities."	Carol Dweck, 2015

Source: Elaboration by the author: Stefania Senese

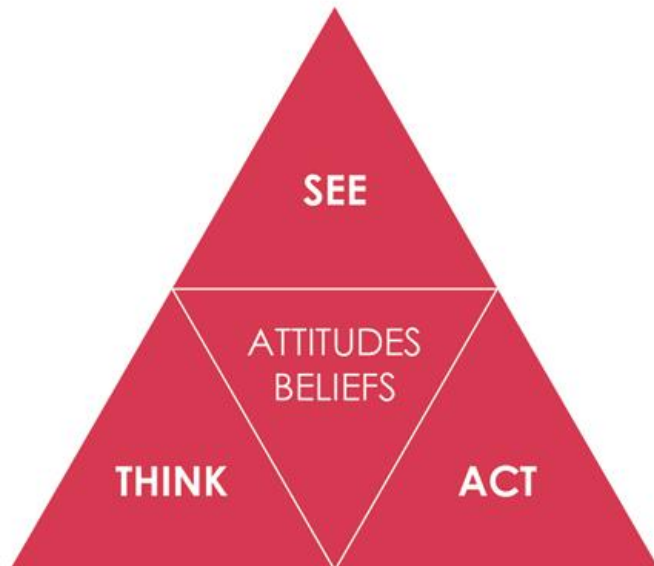
Table 1.2: Definitions of principles, values, belief and attitudes

Principles	Propositions that are a guide for behaviors
Values	Prescriptions for being ¹⁵ which contain an ethical dimension
Belief	What we hold to be true
Attitudes	A way of thinking or feeling about someone or something, typically one that is reflected in a person's behavior

Source: Elaboration by the authors

Our mindsets determine how we interpret and respond to events, circumstances, and situations. Shaped by our attitudes, experiences, beliefs, education, and cultures, they inform how we see and make sense of the world around us, how we make decisions and where we choose to act. They affect how we see ourselves, our abilities and our self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-development. They help us spot opportunities, but they can also trap us in self-defeating cycles. Our mindset determines how we take ownership of new innovation approaches, and whether we can put them to effective use in working towards the SDGs.

If mindsets inform how you perceive situations, what you pay attention to, how you make sense of them, and ultimately, how you decide to act, then essentially, they are a set of beliefs which shape how you **see, think, and act**.



“See” refers to our perception system - what we see and hear, not just in the physical world, but socially, culturally, politically. How we ‘see’ things is largely determined by the ‘frames’ we use to make sense of reality. These are often shaped by our education, work experiences, and cultural backgrounds. For example, when an urban planner looks at traffic congestion, they may see infrastructure as the main issue. When a psychologist looks at it, they may think about human behaviour.

“Think” refers to the way we make sense of situations (consciously or subconsciously). We develop mental models of how the world works and anticipate how causes and effects may lead to certain situations. This also affects the way we interpret information, create patterns and ask critical questions.

“Act” refers to the ways we use the data and signals we see and think about to inform the behaviours and activities we deem possible and appropriate, and the manner in which we’ll carry them out.

Why mindsets are important

Integrating new ideas, skills and knowledge into our sense of self and what we care about is crucial for real learning. It is important to link new knowledge to values and outcomes, showing how a new method will solve a deep and important problem and why it is necessary. Mindset matters every bit as much as method. If the goal is to enable and empower creative, entrepreneurial, problem-solving public servants, it is then essential to cultivate different mindsets, attitudes and behaviours as well as new ways of thinking and acting. It is important to link the formal and informal, cognitive and non-cognitive learning.

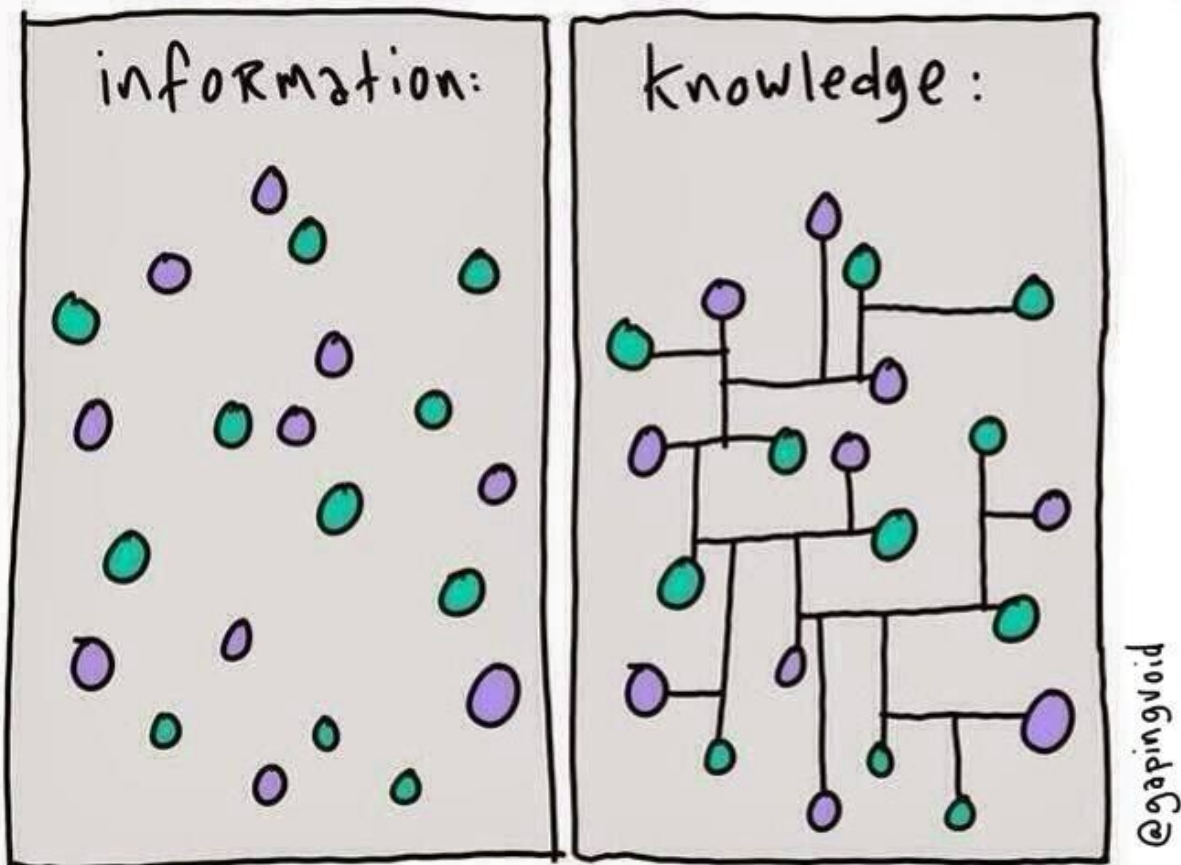
In this light, there is an acute need to adopt fresh mindsets around innovation, policy development, and governance practices. Public workforces have to act as change agents, navigating uncertainty and complexity and using new sets of innovation approaches, skills and tools. And doing so to accelerate learning about new possibilities and ways of addressing the SDG agenda. This will not happen with the

current provision of training.

The supply of learning approaches to upskill the public workforce is a fragmented pattern of one-off training sessions that concentrate on analytical and technical skills. These skills are useful. But with a focus on cognitive learning or learning associated with the acquisition of knowledge or development of a specific ability it is difficult to get what is needed.

New skills with a new way of *thinking* will allow the public workforce to navigate the complexity and uncertainty they face and deal effectively with the SDGs through experimental innovation. The very nature of learning to deal with the SDGs should be transformative: it should inspire and enable learners to shift their ways of working on a consistent basis, applying new mindsets and behaviours across projects, programmes and operations to increase the effectiveness of their roles and organisations.

We need to challenge learners to adopt new thinking and embrace mindsets that help them shift their fundamental set of assumptions and perspectives. We need to help them reframe their understanding of reality as well as their own role, practice and potential as a change agent. We must challenge learners to change their style of acting, help them to adopt new – more effective – behaviours and to unlearn ineffective ones. Such changes need a conducive environment and continuous rehearsal to turn new behaviours into habits, which should ultimately become the new normal.



Key mindsets for experimental problem solving

To ensure the toolkit aligns with the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, the curriculum will build upon work developed by UN DESA on high-level governance mindsets and competencies. This is framed around the 2030 Agenda principles, and the ECOSOC Principles of Effective Governance.



This approach will go from the governance level to the operational level and focus on one of the key activities within this agenda: namely experimental problem-solving for bringing about innovation. This activity cuts across a large number of the mindsets and competencies covered in the 2030 governance

agenda but will also feature its own unique synthesis building on the competency frameworks from UN DESA and Nesta² for experimenting and public problem solving³ -. The frameworks are particularly useful because they work at the level of behaviours and actions. Supporting mindset change needs a practical focus on concrete activities and behaviours that can function as vehicles for in-practice learning. Consequently, other syntheses could be made concretizing the 2030 agenda within the key lines of activity making up the governance principles.





Mindsets must go in hand in hand with new competencies, which call for specific knowledge, skills, and attributes. In this respect, governments may need to make urgent investments in retooling public services and equipping civil servants with new knowledge, skills, and competencies (CEPA, 2018). A competency should result in essential behaviors from the application of a set of theoretical knowledge and of technical and practical skills expected from those working for an organization”. The new competencies in the public sector should be aligned with the mindsets required to implement the SDGs (See Table 1.3).

Box 1.1: UN DESA's Competency framework for public servants to achieve the SDGs In its work of developing a competency framework for public servants to achieve the SDGs, UN DESA, in collaboration with schools of public administration (Table 1.4), has identified key mindsets and associated competencies as critical to moving forward with the realization of the SDGs. They are forward-looking and describe officials' skills and attributes to build a new organizational culture and meet future challenges. The competencies proposed in the UN DESA competency framework are designed to advance the achievement of all 17 Goals and 169 Targets of the 2030 Agenda. The framework helps to identify competencies that entail specific behaviors. Supporting mindset change calls for a practical focus on concrete behaviors associated with specific competencies that can function as vehicles for in-practice learning. Changing mindsets by doing and solving complex problems is a valuable approach. Playing out scenarios to do things differently and rehearsing what new behaviors would be like can bring about change in mindsets. UN DESA's competency framework is framed around the principles of the 2030 Agenda and the Principles of Effective Governance.




² Researched and developed in partnership with the OECD

³ Alignment of UNDESA term/Nesta term: Forward thinking/Future acumen; Creativity-design/Imaginative,Prototyping; Result based man/Outcome oriented; Information literacy/ Data literacy and evidence; System/ Systems thinking; Prioritizing/Action focused; Collaboration/ Citizen engagement, building bridges; Open to diversity/engaging citizens and stakeholders; Emotional intelligence/ Empathy; Responsive/Agile





Table 1.3. Mindset and Competencies for SDGs Implementation

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS			
MINDSETS	BELIEFS	ATTITUDES	COMPETENCIES
<p>Agile Mindset</p> 	<p>Change is possible and necessary to address multiple possibilities before quickly reaching a solution; failure is momentary, and any obstacles can be quickly overcome.</p>	<p>Is proactive, comfortable with the uncomfortable and complexity, uses inquisitive thinking and critical reasoning, adopts a holistic view of challenges, eager to learn and improve, willing to fail, and embrace constant change and encourage collaboration and trust.</p>	<p>To have an agile mindset, public servants need to develop competencies in systems-thinking to perceive the links, cause-effect relations, and dynamics affecting sustainable development; risk-informed adaptation to maintain effectiveness when experiencing change and continue delivering results within new structures or despite external shocks; and collaboration to perceive problems of common interest and positively conceive that dialogue, coordination, partnerships, and networks can address problems.</p>
<p>Innovative/ Problem-solving Experimental Mindset</p> 	<p>Human capacities are not fixed; it is possible to continuously improve through efforts and learning.²⁸</p>	<p>Is a risk-taker, eager to experiment, problem-solver, creative, resilient, driven and motivated to achieve excellence, thinking outside of the box.</p>	<p>An experimental problem-solving/experimental mindset is characterized by strategic problem-solving to develop and break down problem scenarios to ensure solutions that can be presented in a stepwise approach towards the achievement of a target; creativity to actively seek to improve programmes or services, offering new and different options to solve problems and meet client/citizen needs and innovation to value the improvement of process and new solutions in work situations, while perceiving different and novel ways to deal with public challenges and opportunities.</p>
<p>Evidence-based Mindset</p> 	<p>Data is critical to make good decisions.</p>	<p>Is driven and motivated to using, validating, and documenting data.</p>	<p>A competency associated with the evidence-based mindset is data and information literacy to recognize the need to locate, retrieve, analyze, and utilize data and information for problem solving as well as to promote transparency for better public policy and service design and delivery. Public Financial Management (PFM) competency is also needed for effective public administration and service delivery, especially in fragile and post conflict environments (see chapter 12).</p>
<p>Foresight Mindset</p> 	<p>Present and future transformation in support of the SDG is possible. The future can be influenced, and trends anticipated if we ask the right questions, plan, and prepare for the future.</p>	<p>Is open to using techniques and methodologies for discovering and designing future trends to anticipate challenges and solutions.</p>	<p>A foresight mindset includes short and long-term planning to develop clear goals that are consistent with agreed strategies such as the 2030 Agenda and specific SDG targets; forward looking and proactivity to ensure anticipatory, flexible and action-oriented behaviors to implement potential solutions and address challenges. as well as risk-management competencies to identify and assess issues and risks and create a plan that allows to contain or control those identified and their consequences.</p>





INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

MINDSETS	BELIEFS	ATTITUDES	COMPETENCIES
<p>Results-oriented Mindset</p> 	<p>Good decisions are those that are focused on results.</p>	<p>Is focused on taking actions and achieving results.</p>	<p>To develop a results-oriented mindset, public servants need to possess results-based management competencies to manage for results. Also, public servants need to have a life-long learning competency to share and apply knowledge learned across the organization to advance the realization of the SDGs. Finally, public servants need to manage performance, ensure that a set of outputs meet the goals effectively and efficiently, define strategic and operational objectives, and link them to resources.</p>
<p>Collaborative Mindset</p> 	<p>Working with others results in higher impact.</p>	<p>Is willing to learn, co-create, share experiences, and have a dialogue with others.</p>	<p>By developing a collaborative mindset, public servants are better prepared to develop a skillset that focuses on coordination, integration, and dialogue across teams, levels of government, and functional areas. Public servants will be able to build multi-stakeholder partnerships by bringing together a range of partners with the opportunity to interact, learn from others, and collectively help strive to achieve the same goals.</p>
<p>Digital Mindset</p> 	<p>If properly leveraged, digital technology can help address a multiplicity of challenges.</p>	<p>Is focused on leveraging the advantages of technology in support of governance transformation while addressing its risks.</p>	<p>A digital mindset is not just the ability to use technology, but it is a set of behaviors and attitudes; it is a change of public institutions' capacities needed to keep abreast of technological developments and understand the applicability (benefits and risks) of digital technologies to solve complex problems (digital literacy). Digital transformation requires abilities to apply technology to appropriate tasks within government, seeking effectiveness, and transparency of government processes, reorganization of work, and continuous training. It also requires the ability to secure sensitive data.</p>

MINDSETS FOR INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

MINDSETS	BELIEFS	ATTITUDES	COMPETENCIES
Ethical Mindset 	The implementation of the principles of the 2030 Agenda will lead to sustainable development.	Doing the right for the right reason; is respectful of the views of others, and observes the ethical and legal standards of one's organization.	To develop an ethical mindset, public servants need to strengthen competencies in professionalism, results-based management, lifelong learning and managing performance . Public servants should be able to demonstrate professional competence and mastery of sustainable development both as a concept and value and understand its national application and relevance.
Open/Transparent Mindset 	Trust, communication, and openness are essential for better decisions.	Is open to new ideas, readily shares non-classified information. Public servants should have the ability to combat misinformation.	Competencies of a transparent mindset include ability to collect, manage, and share information and data to increase budget transparency, promote disclosure and access to information.
Personal Accountability Mindset 	Personal commitment, ownership, and responsibility for own actions and consequences are key to excellent performance.	Is committed to proactive actions and taking responsibilities to achieve results.	Competencies linked to this mindset include adaptability to respond to changing circumstances, learn new skills, and perform well communication to successfully work with new colleagues and new environments, to communicate effectively, listen attentively to others, and share information in a timely manner, and managing resources by allocating time and resources efficiently and effectively, translating strategies into plans for action; and monitor the progress of their work. Skills in collecting disaggregated data and statistical capacity, risk management, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes for poverty eradication, among others, are critical for greater transparency and accountability.
Digital Mindset 	If properly leveraged, digital technology can help address a multiplicity of challenges.	Is focused on leveraging the advantages of technology in support of governance transformation while addressing its risks.	A digital mindset is not just the ability to use technology, but it is a set of behaviors and attitudes; it is a change of public institutions' capacities needed to keep abreast of technological developments and understand the applicability (benefits and risks) of digital technologies to solve complex problems (digital literacy). Digital transformation requires abilities to apply technology to appropriate tasks within government, seeking effectiveness, and transparency of government processes, reorganization of work, and continuous training. It also requires the ability to secure sensitive data.

MINDSETS FOR INSTITUTIONAL INCLUSIVENESS

MINDSETS	BELIEFS	ATTITUDES	COMPETENCIES
<p>Inclusive Mindset</p> 	<p>All people are equal in dignity and rights and deserve equal opportunities for a better life.</p>	<p>Is committed to treating everyone with dignity and respect; empathy, tolerance, solidarity, and no discrimination.</p>	<p>Competencies that are linked to this mindset are: respect for diversity, and non-discrimination to promote public sector workforce diversity, and in line with SDG 16.7, ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels; inter-generational equity to ensure prosperity and quality of life for all, noting especially the needs of today's children and how current actions may jeopardize the basic needs of future generations; empowerment and participation and develop awareness of own and communities' beliefs, values and expectations and ensure a culture of caring; and negotiation and facilitation to find solutions to a shared problem. Successful negotiators will analyze a problem, identify the interested parties, and reach a consensus. Communication, persuasion, planning, strategizing, and cooperating are essential skills of negotiation and facilitation.</p>
<p>Empathy Mindset</p> 	<p>Understanding the experience and feelings of others is crucial to make decisions that leave no one behind.</p>	<p>Is attentive and focused on understanding the feelings and needs of others, particularly vulnerable groups and those that are left behind, and takes actions to address their needs.</p>	<p>Competencies of an empathy/relation mindset include emotional intelligence, socially conscious awareness, responsibility, and collaboration. Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize, manage and communicate with emotional regulation, and respond appropriately to the emotions of other people. With socially conscious awareness, responsibility, and collaboration competencies, public servants will be able to develop an awareness of their own and communities' beliefs, values, and expectations and ensure a culture of caring, being flexible to recognize the different needs of employees, and the people. Finally, they will be able to collaborate with stakeholders from different backgrounds.</p>
<p>Inter-generational Equity Mindset</p> 	<p>Young and old generations deserve to live in a sustainable planet and have their needs met.</p>	<p>Is compliant with the principle of environmental, social, and economic equity.</p>	<p>Competencies that are linked to an intergenerational equity mindset include the abilities to construct administrative acts that balance the short-term needs of today's generation with the longer-term needs of future generations. Also, skills in management and planning are critical for long-term public debt management, long-term territorial planning, and spatial development, and ecosystem management. Finally, skills in assessing the impact of the SDGs are critical for the decision-making process.</p>
<p>Responsive Mindset</p> 	<p>Public Institutions exist to respond to people's needs and protect human rights, and fundamental freedoms for all.</p>	<p>Putting people first by effectively anticipating and responding to their needs and creating an enabling environment for sustainable development.</p>	<p>Very important competencies linked to this mindset are the abilities to respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, and ensure equitable access to public service delivery provided on general terms of equality (without distinction of any kind, as to race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status).</p>



The SDGs are in place to tackle the most complex problems the world faces, in order to achieve them, institutions will need to work in a more experimental way. We consider experimental problem-solving to be a continual process of strategically exploring problems from new perspectives and testing and iterating possible solutions to learn what works and what does not.

This involves managing intricate tensions and dynamics between opposing mindsets, skill sets and behaviours. I.e. developing and implementing long term policy horizons whilst remaining inclusive and integrative; making decisions in the face of uncertainty while being able to legitimise these decisions; adapting quickly to unanticipated circumstances while involving civil society and other stakeholders. All this requires ongoing judgment and the ability to combine multiple different mindsets and skills at the same time - it is important therefore to recognise them as complex.

That said, it would be useful to prioritize selected key mindset features to focus on as a starting point and to create a useful foundation for further learning and development. Linking to the framework above, a starting point could be focusing on three overall mindset groups that need to be embraced by learners - "collaboration", "learning" and "leadership" - adding up to a whole of effectively supporting "experimental problem-solving" for the SDGs.

Consequently, key mindsets emphasized in the training curriculum include:

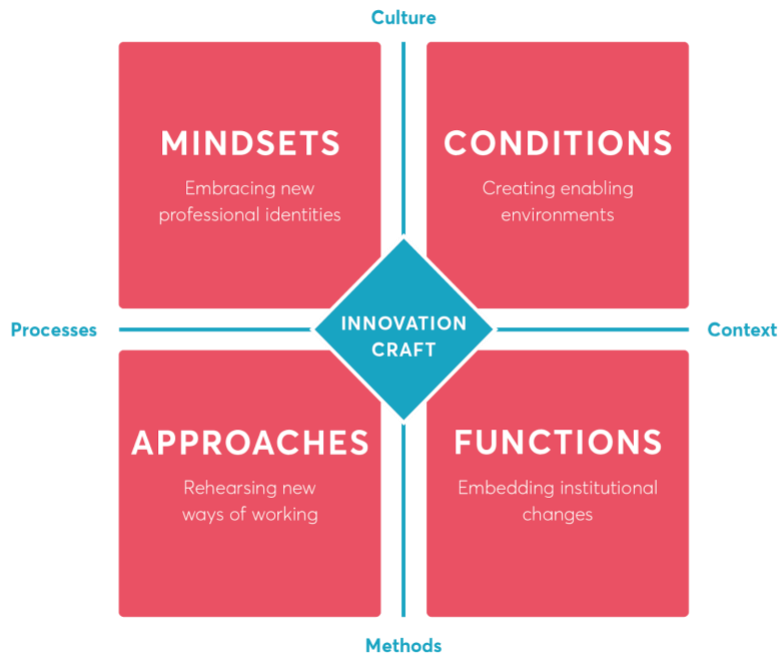
- **Collaboration:** empathetic, humble, enabling, facilitative
- **Leadership:** imaginative, outcomes-focused, courageous (risk taking), action-orientated
- **Learning:** reflective, agile, iterative, curious

Working with people in organizations, it is imperative to remember that capacity development can be a trigger for change only insofar as it happens in strategic relation with changes in the core structural components (legislation, hierarchies, political environment) that inhibit change.

Mindsets are a part of developing a new craft

Dealing with the SDGs is not a practice that can be codified into a method specification, practice guide, or any other “standard recipe”, but rather *a way of approaching your work*. Experimental problem-solving is part of what we call “[innovation craft](#)”. Innovation craft is learned and embodied over time, through practise and continuously renewing through action and sense making with changing environments in which we work.

We consider there to be four core elements which require simultaneous navigation (image below). What we need is a dynamic application of new methods and approaches that rely on developing new mindsets and habits in continuous interplay with the organisational environment - meaning a diverse, unique, and context-specific set of techniques, tactics, mental models and cultural practices. Mindsets play a crucial role in influencing these.



In an evolution of this work the model above and table below are used to characterize the bigger shift that changing mindsets need to be a part of. A main point is that it is not “either or” but “both and”. We need to be focusing on learning and rehearsing new ways of working while reframing and embracing new professional identities. This means a dynamic application of new methods and approaches that rely on developing new mindsets and habits in continuous interplay with the organisational environment. And we need to focus on making the creation of enabling environments as part of the learning journey, just as prioritising how to embed the changes in the institutional context needs to be a learning priority from the start.

<i>Focus area</i>	<i>Where we started...</i>	<i>What are we actually dealing with...</i>	<i>Three things (of many) that will have to change as part of the process...</i>	<i>What initial good outcomes can feel like...</i>
Approaches	Learning new methods and tools	Rehearsing new ways of working	How we learn How we collaborate How we organise our work	Increased confidence & sense of capability in challenging business as usual
Mindsets	Learning new principles and mindsets	Embracing new professional identities	Our professional (cultural) instincts, habits, & (sometimes even) values	Renewed sense of purpose & strategic ownership of your role

Conditions	Learning how to create space and support for innovation	Creating enabling environments	Leadership (on all levels), incentive mechanisms & systems, how to build coalitions for change	More empowered sense of agency & possibility in making good things happen
Functions	Learning how to embed new approaches	Embedding institutional changes	System roles & procedures, organising frameworks, programme & policy cycles	Intensified ambition & a clearer vision for your role and function

A challenge-based approach to shifting mindsets

Problem solving is at the heart of how governments operate. However, governments are very good at managing risks but are less comfortable in dealing with uncertainty (or failure). They are designed to plan policies and systems for the future, which means they are often poorly set up to acknowledge what they don't know. Learning needs to focus on improving how governments work and how they solve complex problems - and then explore, define and develop the useful and appropriate mindsets in the relevant practical contexts of learners.

Managing such dynamics effectively requires - first and foremost - that you lead change with the right mindset. They are usually tacit and very difficult to codify into teachable content. Developing them requires learning modes that expose learners to the dynamics and messiness of real-life situations and mastering them involves constant practice and rehearsal.

The training curriculum will therefore adopt a challenge-based approach where we will use concrete real-life challenges as vehicles for learning. Participants will be “learning by doing” and reflecting on experiences as core elements of the learning journey. Projects of different kinds could serve as the context for experiential learning. It is crucial to let learners experience the dynamics of making decisions in the face of uncertainty and to help them develop the mindsets and embodied knowledge that enables them to manage these dynamics effectively in future situations.

So, a challenge-based approach is useful when dealing with changing, developing and/or rehearsing new mindsets. The authenticity of practice (simulated or real-life) as a learning environment enhances the richness and depth of learning experiences. Challenge-based learning adds urgency, increases relevancy and allows learners to directly demonstrate the value of the new mindsets to themselves and their organization. This also unlocks experiential learning where learners have to be open to pass through discomfort and vulnerability. Novel locations, experiences and tasks help people to shed their comfortable outer shells and become more willing to learn. So does being thrown into uncomfortable real-world situations where the learner is exposed and challenged. Simulations and role playing can also generate the kind of emotionally compelling experiences that help with learning.

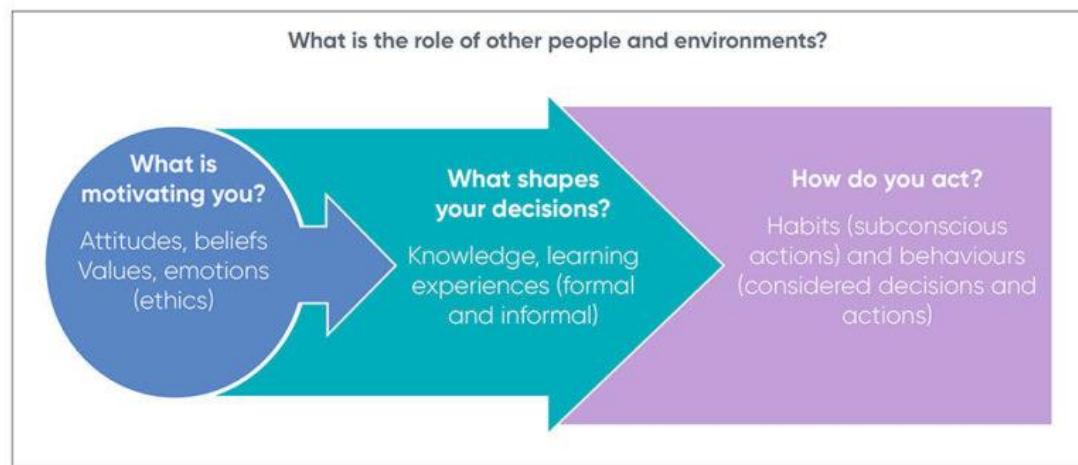
The focus on mindsets frame the nature of competencies in a new way. They are not just a set of technical skills, but need to be grounded in a diversity of contexts. These are typically permeated with uncertainty, ambiguity, lack of information, conflicting interests, opposing ideas of the problem or solution space, and

issues are constantly evolving with no clear end state. In that light, decision-making happens in unique situations where there are shifting criteria for what's right or wrong. This requires judgement with the right set of mindsets and attitudes: what is a better or worse decision, for the short and long term, and for whom? Actions are usually situated in unprecedented circumstances where pre-defined plans or success formulas frequently fail (these conditions are often referred to as VUCA - Volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity - drawing on Warren Bennis and Bert Nanus' work on Leadership Strategies for Taking Charge (1985).

Considering this, an approach to shifting mindsets will include (at least) six steps:

1. Assessing current approach to problem solving in terms of its effectiveness and ability to create desired outcomes (including revisiting and considering current assumptions and biases that support and drive this approach) - and how they influence our motivations.
2. Identify current gaps and inadequacies in current approach and constructively challenge current assumptions about best practice
3. Considering and exploring possible new sets of mindsets and beliefs that promise to support experimental problem solving more effectively and potentially recalibrate our motivation.
4. Rehearse new behaviours grounded in the potential of new mindsets and beliefs and how they can make a difference within your project, role and work environment
5. Reflect on rehearsals and make sense of what behaviours are most useful, why, and what mindsets that ultimately help drive them (including how they can be appropriated and legitimized in work contexts).
6. Inform future choices and priorities and create action plans to support your work going forward

The challenge is to go beyond reflecting upon just our actions, and let it influence our motivations, emotions, beliefs, and cognitive biases - the architecture underlying our behaviours. These motivating factors shape what we are willing to learn and also how we understand. It provides a lens through which we make sense of the world (see model below).



When you reflect, you question yourself, others, the processes, the systems - this seeding of doubt can lead to alternatives, by eliciting the 'what if' questions fundamental to experimental problem solving - and the mindsets that help drive a more effective practice.

Our learning journey principles

Serious change-makers thrive on the prospect of creating impact, not just understanding how new approaches work. Successful change-makers have a strong bias towards action, and they create change by turning ideas and visions into a course of action that generates the desired outcome. “Doing” is a vital element because our learners experience the effects of their actions and learn from them.

Drawing on innovation learning pedagogy⁴, the learning journey will be guided by the following principles:

- **Focus on problem solving** - We generate most impact if we improve how people work to solve problems. The value of working and thinking in new ways should be clear through addressing a problem.
- **Iterating and rehearsing** - We learn things when they have been repeated, ideally many times. Learning tends to work best when you 1) are clear what is to be learned 2) know that you’re learning it and then 3) reflect on what you’ve learned, ideally applying it quickly.
- **Embed learning in practice** - Expose learners to messiness and dilemmas of real-life challenges. This makes it relevant and links lessons back to their daily work and demonstrates value to their organization. In responding to these situations, learners develop and embody their skills through doing.
- **Prioritize learning by doing and reflecting on doing** - Letting learners experience a hands-on activity and using that as the source of learning is the essence of learning by doing. Reflection helps learners to understand how they perceive and process information, assess the outcomes of their decisions, identify skills, mindset and knowledge gaps, and diagnose patterns of effective and ineffective behaviour.
- **Promote ownership of learning** - Learning happens best when learners are the owner of their learning. It is important to let learners plan their own learning journey around pressing issues, as well as helping them to fulfil their learning needs and advance their career. The curriculum should therefore allow for flexibility.
- **Create useful learning cycles.** Whereas instruction, demonstration and simulation on a specific method or tool may help learners to develop a basic skill level and build confidence, before applying them in real practice. In fact, effective learning follows a cycle of experimenting, experiencing, reflecting and conceptualising. The intent with this learning approach is to include a variety of learning activities in a learning journey to reinforce this cycle.

⁴ From Nesta's and States of Change's

- **Learn with peers and from experts** - The interaction between learners, their peers and experts is what matters most. By learning in a social context, new patterns of behaviours can be acquired by observing and imitating others. A peer can be a buddy, providing a safety net for professional and emotional support, or play the role of a critical friend, challenging the learner and helping them reflect on their practice and their role.

To take seriously what it takes to develop and/or shift mindsets, it is important to recognise that the training curriculum can by no means by itself deliver the desired impact. Mindset change requires a larger number of structural, learning-oriented and institutional interventions over time with a space to rehearse and experiment with new ways of working. It can, however, be a useful inflexion point in the learning journeys of public servants transitioning to deal more effectively with the SDGs.

It is important to highlight that learning should not end on completing a programme. Instead we should encourage continuous learning and help learners to continue to rehearse and refine the mindsets obtained and activated through the program. Shifting mindsets involves a dynamic process – not necessarily a linear path – of constant practice and renewal.



Expected learning journey