



**United
Nations**

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs

COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR PUBLIC SERVANTS TO REALIZE THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Why is it important to develop a competency framework for public servants to realize the Sustainable Development Goals?

Examining how public institutions work, particularly in terms of delivering public services, is key to understanding what actions must be undertaken to realize the SDGs. Critically, public servants form the backbone of such institutions, with the success of implementing the key principles of the 2030 Agenda resting on the ability of the civil service to adapt to the changes in mindset and behavior required by the 2030 Agenda.

In order to make institutions effective, accountable, and inclusive, as elaborated in SDG 16, public administration systems must define new competency frameworks that can advance the principles of the 2030 Agenda across public service and ensure that they are put into practice. They must also reflect the principles of effective governance for sustainable development, which were developed by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) and endorsed by the Economic and Social Council on 2 July 2018. The principles highlight the need for pragmatic and ongoing improvements in national and local governance capabilities to reach the SDGs^[1].





What is a competency framework in support of the Sustainable Development Goals?




As the UN Competency Framework highlights, competencies are forward-looking, describing the skills and attributes officials need to build a new organizational culture and meet future challenges. However, “they also provide a sound basis for consistent and objective performance standards by creating shared language about what is needed and expected.”^[2] Equally, mindsets comprise the 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.^[3]

The competencies proposed herein are designed to advance the achievement of all 17 Goals and 169 Targets of the 2030 Agenda. The competencies are based upon the key principles of the 2030 Agenda and the three main areas of effectiveness, accountability, and inclusiveness which cluster the 11 Principles of Effective Governance. The principles serve to guide public service values, mindsets, and competencies of the public sector that in turn can also strengthen performance measurement systems of civil service. As such, the following competency framework is organized around the three clusters of effectiveness, accountability, and inclusiveness. The framework is developed for further consultation and adaptation to national contexts.





Schools of public administration and civil service colleges may wish to compare and adapt the framework according to existing performance management frameworks. Countries may also add competencies in an iterative process that can inform south-south, north-south, and triangular cooperation among public administration systems.

Mindsets and Competency Framework for SDGs Implementation





INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS			
MINDSETS	BELIEFS	ATTITUDES	COMPETENCIES
Agile Mindset 	Change is possible and necessary to address multiple possibilities before quickly reaching a solution; failure is momentary, and any obstacles can be quickly overcome.	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.	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.
Innovative/ Problem-solving Experimental Mindset 	Human capacities are not fixed; it is possible to continuously improve through efforts and learning. ²⁸	Is a risk-taker, eager to experiment, problem-solver, creative, resilient, driven and motivated to achieve excellence, thinking outside of the box.	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.
Evidence-based Mindset 	Data is critical to make good decisions.	Is driven and motivated to using, validating, and documenting data.	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).
Foresight Mindset 	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.	Is open to using techniques and methodologies for discovering and designing future trends to anticipate challenges and solutions.	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.

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<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

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Inclusive Mindset 	All people are equal in dignity and rights and deserve equal opportunities for a better life.	Is committed to treating everyone with dignity and respect; empathy, tolerance, solidarity, and no discrimination.	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.
Empathetic Mindset 	Understanding the experience and feelings of others is crucial to make decisions that leave no one behind.	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.	Competencies of an empathetic/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.
Responsive Mindset 	Public Institutions exist to respond to people's needs and protect human rights, and fundamental freedoms for all.	Putting people first by effectively anticipating and responding to their needs and creating an enabling environment for sustainable development.	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).
Inter-generational Equity Mindset 	Young and old generations deserve to live in a sustainable planet and have their needs met.	Is compliant with the principle of environmental, social, and economic equity.	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.


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Figure 1: Mindsets for SDGs implementation

