



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs

CONCEPT NOTE

Capacity Development Workshop

“Strengthening Innovation in Public Service to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”

5 to 8 December 2023

Livingstone, Zambia

Held in the context of the 42nd AAPAM Annual Conference on
“Building Resilient Societies through Effective Governance and Public
Administration in Africa: An Imperative for the Realisation of the SDGs and
Agenda 2063 Aspirations”

*organised by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN
DESA), Division of Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG)*

Overview

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG), will organise a capacity development workshop entitled **“Strengthening Innovation in Public Service to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”** under the umbrella of the 42nd Annual Roundtable Conference of the African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM). It will take place in Livingstone, Zambia from 5 to 8 December 2023. The workshop will link to key activities of the AAPAM Roundtable Conference, which is being held on the theme of “Building Resilient Societies through Effective Governance and Public Administration in Africa: An Imperative for the Realisation of the SDGs and Agenda 2063 Aspirations”.

UN DESA based at UN Headquarters, New York, holds up the development pillar of the UN Secretariat. Its Divisions and Offices work together towards a common goal to promote the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. UN DESA collaborates closely with its partners at regional and country levels in helping countries to translate policies into formulation and implementation of national sustainable development strategies and preparation of roadmaps for national implementation.

UN DESA's mission, to promote development for all, underscores the need for all stakeholders – governments, UN and other international organisations, civil society and the private sector – to do their part to improve economic and social well-being and prevent environmental degradation and leave no one behind.

UN DESA's Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) provides secretariat support to the United Nations Programme in Public Administration. Through its normative and operative work, it assists countries on transformative governance and innovative public administration and services in advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Background

UN DESA/DPIDG has supported previous AAPAM Roundtable Conferences contributing to the development of Member States' capacities to promote innovation and digital transformation in public sector institutions to enhance service delivery.

The 42nd AAPAM Roundtable Conference theme highlights the critical role of governance and public administration in promoting sustainable development in Africa, and provides an opportunity for policymakers, practitioners, and academics to discuss the challenges facing Africa and explore innovative ways of addressing them through effective governance and responsive public service delivery.

African leaders, along with other world leaders, adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015. It is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity that requires all countries and all stakeholders to work in a collaborative partnership to tackle global challenges, shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path, and achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With only seven years left to achieve the SDGs, embracing innovative solutions in the public sector is key to accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

The African Union has also adopted the "Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want", a blueprint and masterplan for transforming Africa into a global powerhouse for the future. Agenda 2063 represents the vision of an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens to reposition Africa to become a dynamic force in the international arena.

Both the 2030 Agenda and Africa's Agenda 2063 emphasize the importance of effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions that foster innovation and transformative leadership as key elements towards an equal society that supports vulnerable groups including women, youth and children towards global development and achieving the SDGs.

The need for an integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Africa Agenda 2063 is imperative for they are complementary. For successful implementation of both agendas, Governments must leverage innovative solutions that incorporate digital transformation. They

also need to create sustainable innovative partnerships and inclusive governance to reduce inequalities, leave no one behind, and effectively achieve the SDGs.

Innovation stands as a pivotal driver of progress, essential for addressing complex global challenges and fostering sustainable development. Its criticality lies in its capacity to fuel transformative change, enhancing efficiency, and creating new opportunities for growth and advancement. Given the intricate and dynamic nature of modern challenges, peer-to-peer learning emerges as an indispensable tool for fostering innovation. By facilitating the exchange of knowledge on innovative practices, it fosters collaboration, encourages cross-pollination of ideas, and enables the replication of successful models. This collaborative approach not only bolsters the collective capacity for innovation but also contributes to the goals outlined by the United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA), promoting excellence and best practices in public service delivery worldwide.

Central to these efforts is enhancing the education and training of public servants at all levels. In this vein, UN DESA/DPIDG and its Project Office on Governance (UNPOG), and the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA) established a Task Force in 2023 to review and/or update the [Standards of Excellence for Public Administration Education and Training](#).

The Standards of Excellence were finalized in 2008, and while still relevant today do not refer to recent inter-governmental agreements and to the insights from the work undertaken by UN DESA/DPIDG and IASIA in the area of education and training. Most notably, the Standards were issued before the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by 193 Member States. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the importance of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Goal 4) and the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights (including the right to development), on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels. Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda specifically calls for effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. Indeed, public institutions play a critical role in the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets.

The Standards are being reviewed to mainstream the SDGs and reflect new developments in public administration. The review is ongoing and being conducted through a global and regional consultative process, running throughout 2023 and 2024.

All schools and institutes of public administration, networks, academia and representatives of international, regional and national organizations can contribute their ideas through an online [survey](#) and by attending the various meetings scheduled throughout the year. In this regard, the 42nd AAPAM Roundtable Conference will provide a platform for UN DESA and IASIA to gather input from participants on the review of the Standards.

Objective

The Workshop, comprised of different sessions, aims at developing the capacities of public officials to leverage innovation in public service delivery, incorporate digital transformation, and enhance innovative partnerships and transformational leadership towards transforming African public administration institutions.

In this context, the Workshop will specifically focus on how the integrated approaches of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Africa's Agenda 2063 can serve as catalysts for sustainable development, public sector innovation and digital transformation for enhanced public service delivery.

The Workshop will also draw on the experience and lessons learned from former winners of the United Nations Public Service Awards Programme from Africa and examine how the newly re-launched UNPSA programme can help bring visibility and recognition to innovative public service initiatives in Africa.

Finally, the 42nd AAPAM Roundtable Conference will provide a platform for UN DESA and IASIA to gather input from participants on the review of the Standards of Excellence on Education and Training.

Discussion Themes and Agenda

The Workshop will be comprised of thematic sessions, some of which will be carried out in parallel with some of the umbrella Conference sessions spread out throughout the four days of the AAPAM Conference.

Sessions will focus on the following topics:

- The need for integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Africa Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want;
- Partnerships for transformational leadership: Review of the Standards of Excellence on Public Administration Education and Training;
- Public sector innovations and digital transformation as catalysts of sustainable development;
- Innovation driving inclusive public service delivery in the region: showcase of past UNPSA winners/initiatives from Africa

Agenda

Time	Session	Room and organiser
Day one	Tuesday, 5 December 2023	
11:40 – 13:00	Plenary The need for integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Africa Agenda 2063: The Africa we Want	Plenary Hall UN DESA
Day two	Wednesday, 6 December 2023	
14:30 -16:00	Breakout Partnerships for transformational leadership- working session on the Review of the Standards of Excellence for Education and Training	Hall B UN DESA and IASIA
Day three	Thursday, 7 December 2023	
08:30- 10:00	Plenary Public Sector Innovations and Digital transformation as catalysts of sustainable Development	Plenary Hall UN DESA
10:30 – 12:00	Plenary Innovation Driving inclusive public service Delivery in the Region: showcase of recent UNPSA winners from Africa	Plenary Hall UN DESA
Day Four	Friday, 8 December 2023	
08:30 – 10:30	Reporting Back	UNDESA

Participants

The direct beneficiaries of the workshop are senior managers of public administration training schools and management institutes and researchers in the field of public administration in Africa, as well as public sector leaders and servants, including those who are in charge of design and implementation of innovation and digital government solutions. It is expected that the deliberations of this workshop will provide them with enhanced knowledge to aid their efforts in utilising emerging technologies in their work and to devise effective strategies and approaches to confront the challenges ahead.

Participants will be drawn from the AAPAM participating countries, and UNPSA winners in the Africa region.

Expected Results

The workshop seeks to foster a deeper comprehension of how to utilize public sector innovations and digital transformation as drivers of sustainable development in service delivery by addressing countries' needs and priorities, as well as to cultivate awareness of the pivotal role of partnerships and transformational leadership in achieving the SDGs, accompanied by actionable steps for implementation.

Workshop Sessions' Working Language

The workshop proceedings will be conducted in English. No translation will be provided during the Workshop sessions.

Contacts

Ms. Nosipho Dhladhla
Information Management Officer
Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government
dhladhla@un.org

Ms. Elizabeth Niland
Governance and Public Administration Officer
Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government
nilande@un.org