Governance for the Sustainable Development Goals
Capacity Development Curriculum

Changing Mindsets in Public Institutions to Implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Toolkit

Day 1: Mindsets and SDGs
Transforming Public Servants’ Mindsets to Implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Related SDGs: SDG 16
Keywords: Mindsets, Attitudes, Competencies
Language: English

Objective:
The training course aims to provide a set of methodologies and tools that can contribute to a change in the environment, culture and mentality of public servants in implementing the SDGs in the context of the 2030 Agenda. The course approaches transforming mindsets in the public sector as the result of three interlinked factors: transforming mindsets (1) at the institutional level through new human resources laws, regulations, policies and regulations; (2) at the organizational level through a new organizational culture inspired by the principles of the 2030 Agenda; and (3) at the individual level through new beliefs, values, competencies and skills.

Upon completion of the training, learners will:
• Enhance knowledge of the underlying principles of the 2030 Agenda; and of why public servants need to change mindsets and behaviours to accelerate action on the SDGs;
• Gain insights about the new values, mindsets, competences and skills needed to realize the 2030 Agenda;
• Expand awareness of the changes needed at the individual, organizational, and institutional levels to effectively change mindsets;
• Acquire practical hands-on knowledge (and skills) on how to trigger change at different government levels (individual, and organizational);
• Develop a roadmap and an action plan to apply relevant knowledge.
Syllabus
The Toolkit is comprised of the following modules and sessions that can be used to conduct a five-day regional or national training workshop. Selected sessions can also be used for shorter trainings.

Day 1: Setting the scene: Why is transforming mindsets critical to the implementation of the SDGs?
Welcome & Course Introduction
Module 1.1: Setting the Scene
Module 1.2: Changing Role of Public Administration

Day 2: Exploring Mindsets: Collaborative Mindset
Module 2.1: Exploring Mindsets: Collaborative Mindset

Day 3: Exploring Mindsets: Learning Mindset
Module 3.1: Exploring Mindsets: Learning Mindset

Day 4: Exploring Mindsets: Leadership Mindset
Module 4.1: Exploring Mindsets: Leadership Mindset
Module 4.2: Tranforming Mindsets

Day 5: Transforming Mindsets: Strategy and Tactics
Module 5.1: Strategy and Tactics
Module 5.2: Action plan - What does this mean for my role?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Why change mindsets?</th>
<th>Exploring the Collaborative Mindset</th>
<th>Exploring the Learning Mindset</th>
<th>Exploring the Leadership Mindset</th>
<th>Changing mindsets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Elaborate why the focus is on mindsets, and why they are critical when seeking to speed up action on SDGs.</td>
<td>Identify what experimental mindsets look and feel like in practice, and what approaches can be taken to spread these mindsets and ways of working across the organisation.</td>
<td>Explore how these mindsets can be applied at an individual, team and institutional levels. And how these mindsets can be embedded into their organisations.</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Confusion in the fuzzy front end…
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09:00 - 9:30</td>
<td>Welcomes, introduction, icebreaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 - 10:00</td>
<td>What's my mindset?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 - 10:30</td>
<td>Presentation - setting scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:40 - 10:55</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:55 - 12:00</td>
<td>Mapping the SDGs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 - 13:00</td>
<td>LUNCH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:00 - 13:30</td>
<td>PAs role (presentation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:30 - 14:30</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:30 - 14:45</td>
<td>BREAK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:45 - 15:30</td>
<td>Competency Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:30 - 16:45</td>
<td>Introduce challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Room of the obvious activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:45 - 17:00</td>
<td>Wrap up/ reflection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Polak Game:
An exercise to help reveal your theories of the future
Expectation of the future

Optimistic

Pessimistic

Pessimistic

Optimistic
Optimistic

Pessimistic

Pessimistic

Optimistic

Ability to shape the future
Optimistic

Things are good and getting better.
We can't do anything about it, but why worry?
Things are okay.

Pessimistic

Things are bad and getting worse.
There is nothing we can do about it.

Optimistic

Things are good and getting better.
And, we can act to make things even better.

Pessimistic

Things are bad and getting worse.
But we can act to change things and avert disaster.
What do we mean by mindsets?

- Mindset is referring to a way of thinking and understanding the reality of facts and that it characterizes a person, or people. It is associated with principles and values.

- If mindsets inform how you perceive situations and how you decide to act, then essentially, they are a set of attitudes and beliefs which shape how you see, think, and act.
What do we mean by 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".

- Attitudes shape how we interact with the world based on how we see the world. So, while beliefs are in essence about how we see the world, attitudes are about how we interact with the world.
### Table 1.1: Definitions of mindsets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitions of mindsets</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mindsets form the &quot;core&quot; of people's meaning systems, bringing together goals, beliefs, and behaviors to shape people's thoughts and actions</td>
<td>Dweck &amp; Yeager, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindsets refers to people's beliefs about the nature of personal attributes, such as intelligence</td>
<td>Alexander P. Burgoyne, 1 David Z. Hambrick, &amp; 2 Brooke N. Macnamara, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In cognitive psychology, a mindset represents the cognitive processes activated in response to a given task.</td>
<td>French, 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In system thinking, mindset is associated with cultural and social values</td>
<td>Magoroh Maruyama, 1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindsets can be formed and shaped by different factors, including culture, socialization processes, spirituality and religion, and media exposure</td>
<td>Crum &amp; Zuckerman, 2017</td>
</tr>
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</table>

"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.”

Source: Elaboration by the author: Stefania Senese
Why are mindsets important? What is their impact?

“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.

“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.
Module 1.1 Setting the scene

Mindsets and SDGs
People
We are determined to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment.

Planet
We are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations.

Prosperity
We are determined to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature.

Peace
We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.

Partnership
We are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalised Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focussed in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people.
A Decade of Action

With just under ten years left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, world leaders at the SDG Summit in September 2019 called for a Decade of Action and delivery for sustainable development, and pledged to mobilize financing, enhance national implementation and strengthen institutions to achieve the Goals by the target date of 2030, leaving no one behind.

The UN Secretary-General called on all sectors of society to mobilize for a decade of action on three levels: global action to secure greater leadership, more resources and smarter solutions for the Sustainable Development Goals; local action embedding the needed transitions in the policies, budgets, institutions and regulatory frameworks of governments, cities and local authorities; and people action, including by youth, civil society, the media, the private sector, unions, academia and other stakeholders, to generate an unstoppable movement pushing for the required transformations.
It is necessary that we address “transformation” as one of the values embedded in 2030 Agenda. It is important to note that the 2030 Agenda is titled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” and contains several references to transformation. Some references are extracted for emphasis:

“we are determined to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path”

“we will strengthen the productive capacities of least developed countries in all sectors, including through structural transformation”

“we have adopted a historic decision on a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Goals and targets”

“we are setting out a supremely ambitious and transformational vision”

The 2030 Agenda is thus calling for transformation, not just change or reform. One would say that it is calling for replacing reforms that have been on-going in many institutions with transformation which is a profound change that would lead to creating good societies in all countries.
Towards a culture change in government, institutions and organisations...

- **PREDICTABLE**
  Intended outcomes result from careful analysis

- **DISCOVERABLE**
  Intended outcomes result from trial-and-error

- **"WE KNOW"**
  Developing & implementing policy behind your desk

- **"WE DON'T KNOW (FOR SURE)"**
  Involving others & testing to see what works

- **REARVIEW-MIRROR**
  Decisions are based on historical data

- **FUTURE-ORIENTED**
  Decisions are based on indicators from experiments

- **HIGHLIGHT AND VALIDATE**
  Generalizable assumptions at a point-in-time

- **UNDERSTAND AND GENERATE**
  Capturing human experience over time

- **PRESCRIPTIVE**
  Prescribing a predefined course of action

- **EXPLORATIVE**
  Processes that allow for exploring new possibilities

- **AVOIED**
  Failure is something to be avoided

- **EMBRACED**
  Failure is accepted as part of iterative learning

- **PURPOSE OF KNOWLEDGE**
  Tools

- **FAILURE**
Why are mindsets important? What is their impact?

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“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.
information:

knowledge:
Public servants need to:

• make decisions in the face of uncertainty while being able to legitimize these decisions;
• set out a bold course of action while adapting to and improvising for unforeseen situations;
• explore new possible futures while focusing on outcomes and committing to real-world effects;
• keep the big picture in mind while also considering citizens’ needs at an individual level;
• be reflective and critical while having a strong bias towards action.

Managing such dynamics effectively requires that right mindsets lead the change.
Public servants still need:

The classic management skills of good diagnosis, planning, and implementation, as well as contextual legal and political knowledge.

Emerging approaches drawing on design, digital, data, experimentation, behavioural insights, regulatory methods, and public engagement.
New Competencies

- 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.
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, 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.

Mindsets and competencies are grouped according to the principles of **Effectives**, **Accountability** and **Inclusiveness**
Mindsets, and competencies for institutional effectiveness

- **Agile Mindset** for systems-thinking and strategic intelligence in support of integration

- **Innovative/Problem-Solving** or **Experimental Mindset** for innovation and critical thinking in support of transformation and competence

- **Evidence-based Mindset** in support of sound policymaking

- **Foresight Mindset** for long-term planning and sound policymaking
- **Results-oriented Mindset** for transformative action in support of competence

- **Collaborative Mindset** for better coordination, integration, and dialogue

- **Digital Mindset** is needed to embrace change by leveraging new technologies
Mindsets, and competencies to promote institutional accountability

- **Ethical Mindsets** in support of values and beliefs based on sound moral principles
- **Open/Transparent Mindsets** in support of integrity and transparency
- **Personal Accountability** Mindsets in support of an accountability culture
- **Digital Mindsets** for a digital change is needed to embrace change by leveraging new technologies

### Mindsets for Institutional Accountability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mindsets</th>
<th>Beliefs</th>
<th>Attitudes</th>
<th>Competencies</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Mindset</td>
<td>The implementation of the principles of the 2030 Agenda will lead to sustainable development.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open/Transparent Mindset</td>
<td>Trust, communication, and openness are essential for better decisions.</td>
<td>Is open to new ideas, readily shares non-classified information. Public servants should have the ability to combat misinformation.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Accountability Mindset</td>
<td>Personal commitment, ownership, and responsibility for own actions and consequences are key to excellent performance.</td>
<td>Is committed to proactive actions and taking responsibilities to achieve results.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Mindset</td>
<td>If properly leveraged, digital technology can help address a multiplicity of challenges.</td>
<td>Is focused on leveraging the advantages of technology in support of governance transformation while addressing its risks.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mindsets, and competencies to promote institutional inclusiveness

- **Inclusive Mindset** for empathetic and responsive service delivery in support of leaving no one behind, non-discrimination, participation, subsidiarity, and inter-generational equity

- **Empathy/Relational Mindsets** in support of emotional intelligence and socially conscious leadership to safeguard people, planet, and prosperity for all

- **Responsive Mindsets** for people-centric services with a special focus on vulnerable groups

- **Inter-generational Equity Mindset** will help promote prosperity and quality of life for present and future generations

- **Digital Mindsets** for a digital change is needed to embrace change by leveraging new technologies
Break
Mapping the SDGs
**SIMPLE**

- It involves a few components and actors
- Clear end state: we can tell when the problem is solved
- Procedures to solve the problem involve a few simple and clear steps

**COMPLICATED**

- It involves many components and experts
- Clear end state: we can tell when the problem is solved
- Procedures to solve the problem involve many steps and a specific order

**COMPLEX**

- It involves many actors with conflicting interests
- No clear end state: new problems may occur
- Procedures to solve the problem are unclear, not known, requires trials & error to see what works
• Multiple possible problem definitions
• Difficult to address and change with every attempt to address it
• Many stakeholders with different values and priorities
• Have causes and drivers that are interdependent
• Filled with uncertainties and unknowns
• Require multiple new solutions and impossible to predict if they work

Mapping the SDG's
Discussion

- What do you notice?
- What does this tell you about how we should be tackling these challenge?
- How are they currently being tackled?
- What are the barriers to working in a new way?
The important role of Public Administration
A crisis of public legitimacy

Are we creating the public solutions and institutional capacity that can deal with the challenges we are facing?
Space of the obvious

Space of the unobvious
Mental models
How we conceptualise reality

Cognitive biases
How we interpret reality

Frames
How we perceive (and communicate about) reality
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bias</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Implications for the development process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fixation (functional fixedness)</td>
<td>Being blind to alternatives</td>
<td>Elaborating on one solution at an early stage. Focusing on one method (e.g. design thinking)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmation bias</td>
<td>A tendency to cherry-pick information that confirms existing beliefs or ideas</td>
<td>Missing disconfirming information, ignoring &quot;red flags&quot; end up with failure at a later stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group think (bandwagon effect)</td>
<td>Individuals in a group strive for harmony and consensus and avoid raising controversial issues or alternative solutions</td>
<td>Ideas or misconceptions are not challenged, there is loss of individual creativity, uniqueness and independent thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not invented here</td>
<td>Internally-developed solutions are considered better than externally-developed solutions</td>
<td>May incur inflated development costs, while tested and proven solutions already are available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spotlight effect</td>
<td>Search for information where it is easiest</td>
<td>Explore what is already known, or explore a predictable subset of solutions, while innovation happens in the adjacent possible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Landscape of Innovation Approaches

An overview of innovation approaches for the public good.

Where do you play?
Solutions are unknown
Understanding of the problem is unclear. Risk cannot be managed.

Explore
Generating hypotheses
What might be
- Shaping direction
  Action is taken to open up new possibilities

Trial-and-error
Establishing a hypothesis
What could be
- Creating basis for redesign
  Action is taken to find out what works

Validate
Validating a hypothesis
What should be
- Legitimising initiative
  Action is taken to justify decision making

Suggested methods
- Speculative Design, Foresight, Ethnographic Research, Positive Deviance, etc
- Prototyping, Human Centred Design, Behavioural Economics, etc
- Randomised Control Trials, Pilots, A/B Testing, Multiple Parallel Experiments, etc
EXPLORE

GENERATING HYPOTHESES
What might be

Shaping direction
Action is taken to open up new possibilities

SUGGESTED METHODS
Speculative Design, Horizon scanning, Foresight, Ethnographic Research, Citizen Science, Crowdsourcing, Positive Deviance, etc
Experimentation as strategic mindsets in governments around the world...
Finland

Experimentation as mindset in both government planning and among citizens
Experimentation as mindset to foster radical experiments to explore new horizons of value creation.
South Korea

Experimentation as “listening” mindset to understand citizens better and experiment with their input and ideas.
Colombia

Experimentation as a new mindset of planning: developing the next national development plan through experimental explorations
Experimentation direction for Deputy Heads - December 2016

Context
This document reinforces the Government's commitment to devote a fixed percentage of program funds to experimenting with new approaches and measuring impact to instill a culture of measurement, evaluation and innovation in program and policy design and delivery. It provides context and directions for Deputy Heads on how to implement this commitment.

Definition
For the purpose of implementing the President of the Treasury Board's mandate letter commitment to "work with [his] colleagues to ensure that they are devoting
Towards a more experimental mindset in government...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
<th>Towards...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy and implementation</strong></td>
<td>Separating policy and implementation as two different tasks</td>
<td>Policies are developed by few people that are not involved in their implementation</td>
<td>A more experimental culture (to accelerate learning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theory of change</strong></td>
<td>Assuming that change is a product of a specific planned process</td>
<td>Policies fail to create the intended outcomes / we fail to learn about possibilities</td>
<td>Better dynamic between policy and practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Developing solutions</strong></td>
<td>Prioritising pre-planned support of obvious solutions</td>
<td>We are not solving the wicked challenges of our time</td>
<td>Incentivizing iterative exploration and learning about what works</td>
</tr>
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Towards a culture change in government, institutions and organisations...

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Failure is something to be avoided

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**FAILURE**

**OUTCOMES**

**ATTITUDE**

**DECISION BASIS**

**PURPOSE OF KNOWLEDGE**

**TOOLS**
Plenary discussion

● How does this resonate?

● What reflections should be considered to guide this week’s learning journey?

● What are the barriers to working with a more experimental mindset in your own institutions?
Break
Public sector innovators combine key attitudes and skills to successfully drive innovation in government and solve public problems.
This weeks challenges
(IF CHALLENGE IS SELF-SELECTED FROM OWN WORK CONTEXT)

**Using a timely topic:** Working on a challenge related to current contextual demands faced by public servants.

**Not too big/complex:** Although this course spans over 3.5 weeks, it’s only approx 22 hours of learning time (or 3.5 days), therefore the challenge shouldn’t be complex.

**Resonates with audience:** The challenge needs to be a topic that the audience has awareness and experience with.

**Clear mandate about the outputs:** How will the work participants do in the course be followed up on?

**Scope for learning:** The challenge should be in an area that is learning-rich. Even if the ideas generated aren’t viable, participants will have benefited from learning about the system and approaching challenge from different perspectives.
The room of the (un)obvious...
You have 5 minutes to generate as many ideas as possible with your group. Write each idea on a post it, and stick it on a flip chart.
Identify knowledge gaps

Cluster your ideas into three categories

- Ideas that will certainly work (based on what we know)
- Ideas that will probably work (based on what we assume)
- Ideas we don’t know if they will work
Identify knowledge gaps

Take one idea (post it)... from the category “don't know”, or “will probably work”
Welcome in the room of the unobvious...
“Innovation amateurs talk good ideas; innovation experts talk testable hypothesis.”

Michael Schrage (Strategyzer)
IDEAS

SOLUTION

IDEAS  ➔  HYPOTHESIS
“A hypothesis is a testable belief about future value creation”

Michael Schrage (2014)
If ... then ...

If [we do this] then [this will happen]

action/intervention observable/measurable effect
Now take your post-it with your one idea, and translate it into a testable hypothesis

If [we do this] then [this will happen]
Wrap up and reflection
Wrap up day #1

Reflections, questions, take-aways

What’s on tomorrow?