



**United Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs

# Innovation and Digital Government for Public Service Delivery

*Day 5*

*Bridging the Gaps in Public Service  
and Public Service Delivery*





# Module 5.4

# Socio-Technical Systems



# Socio-Technical Systems

- Based on socio-technical theory – Trist, circa 1967.
- At the foundation of social innovation, design thinking and innovation
- Contrasts with traditional methods that first design the technical component and then fit people to it
- Traditional methods often lead to mediocre performance at high social costs



# Transitioning to Socio-Technical Systems (STS)

- Transitioning from a traditional work design or organization to one based on STS principles requires a transitional structure for managing the change process:
  - Helps employees gain new skills and knowledge
  - Facilitates the learning necessary to make the new design work
  - Involves considerable innovation, learning and change and is usually both different and more complex than either the old or new design
  - Never really complete but continues as new things are learned and new conditions are encountered
  - The ability to continually design and redesign work needs to be built into existing work teams.
    - Members must have the skills and knowledge to assess their work unit continually and to make necessary changes and improvements
- STS designing rarely results in a stable work design but provides a process for continually modifying work to fit changing conditions



## Case 5.4 Overview - Healthcare.gov

- This case study highlights the challenges faced by the US Department of Health and Human Services in implementing a website to provide consumers with access to a health insurance marketplace.
- The case draws attention to the combination of factors that jeopardized the project and those innovations that were critical to turning the project around



# Case 5.4 Instructions Healthcare.gov and a Sociotechnical of Innovation

- Group Formation
  - We will form 3 groups
  - Count off by 3's
  - Move to your small group location
- Group Assignment
  - Refer to Case Instructions for 5.4.
- Group Process
  - Refer to Case Instructions for 5.4.



# Plenary Discussion

Insights from Healthcare.gov and a Socio-Technical  
Systems View



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Thank You!

