UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence
Singapore

What we offer to UNDP Offices and Partner Governments
All countries are committed to achieving the UN’s 2030 Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Goal 16 on ensuring peaceful and inclusive societies through effective, accountable and inclusive institutions.

The Global Centre for Public Service Excellence (GCPSE) was established in 2012 as a collaboration between the UNDP and the Government of Singapore.

The Centre believes that the successful states of the 21st century will be those that invest in developing their public service capacities. GCPSE champions public service excellence by applying research findings towards the improvement of government policies and UNDP’s programming.

To achieve these aims, an effective public service is essential. That requires the pursuit of excellence: public officials must be adaptive, innovative, motivated and selected by merit. Through a ‘Social Contract’, perceived as fair, such public service excellence strengthens the legitimacy of the state and builds the trust of citizens.

By acting as UNDP’s catalyst for new thinking and action on public service reform, GCPSE helps partner countries address the ambitious 2030 agenda on the SDGs. In so doing, the Centre supports more effective reform, stronger evidence, and better South-South collaboration.
What we do...

GCPSE offers 7 themes:

1. Be Inspired!
   The ‘Singapore Story’ of Public Service and Development

2. What is the problem?
   Theories of Change & Political Economy

3. Futures & Foresight – 2030 and beyond...
   Empowered Futures Initiative (EFI)

4. What motivates public officials?
   Global Public Service Motivation Index

5. Fostering Innovation in the Public Service:
   Pursuing excellence through new thinking and action.

6. Learning better through shared experiences:
   Peer-to-Peer Learning

7. Research into action, action into evidence:
   Evidence for Public Service Practitioners
How we do it...

Our team includes UNDP staff with broad experience, two secondees from the Singapore Public Service, and international experts on foresight, peer learning, and other areas of focus.

Our approach: being lean, we usually work in partnership with suitable institutions. Our partners include:

- Government of Singapore, including Singapore Cooperation Programme, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Economic Development Board and other Ministries and Statutory Boards
- Astana Civil Service Hub, Kazakhstan
- Civil Service College, Singapore
- Centre for Economic and Public Administration.
- Centre for Liveable Cities, Singapore
- Centre for Public Impact, UK
- Collaborate, UK
- GovInsider, Singapore
- KPMG Indl. Development Assistance Services Knowledge Hub, USA
- Microsoft Asia-Pacific, Singapore
- Nanyang Technological University (incl. Technopreneurship Centre, Centre for Public Administration, Complexity Institute)
- National University of Singapore (incl. Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, Institute for Systems Science, eGovernment Leadership Centre)
- OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), France
- UN Global Pulse / Pulse Lab Jakarta, Indonesia
- US Agency for International Development, USA

Country partners include:

- Prime Minister’s Office, Bangladesh
- Prime Minister’s Office, Cabo Verde
- Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Fiji
- Public Service Commission, Kenya
- Vice-President and Cabinet Office, Malawi
- Civil Service Commission & Ministry of Finance & Planning, Maldives
- Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, Mauritius
- Union Civil Service Board, Myanmar
- Ministry of Planning, Development & Reform, Pakistan
- Civil Service Commission, Papua New Guinea
- Governance Board, Rwanda
- Cabinet Office, Kingdom of Tonga
- Centre for Public Service Innovation, South Africa
- Prime Minister’s Office, Timor Leste
Theme 1

Be Inspired!
The ‘Singapore Story’ of Public Service and Development

*Nation, island and city:* since independence, Singapore has sought to unite its people. Its population was the country’s main asset, so the government invested in its human capital.

*Purposeful pragmatism characterizes Singapore’s public service.* The art of its success has been incremental improvement. Public officials have institutionalized continuous change.

*Honest government is essential.* Singapore since independence has always been ruthless in applying zero tolerance to corruption.

*Leadership* proved visionary, dedicated and determined.

What we offer:

In partnership with the Government of Singapore, its Cooperation Programme (SCP) and partners such as the National University (NUS) and the Civil Service College, we offer tailor-made programmes, including ‘learning journeys’, lectures and opportunities to reflect with public sector leaders on why the country has thrived.

Outcome:

Can the ‘Singapore Story’ simply be replicated? No, times and contexts vary. But can the guiding principles it demonstrated be imitated? Of course: come and be inspired!
Theme 2

What is the problem?
Theories of Change & Political Economy

What? Our objective is to strengthen the political and administrative leadership interface, by applying good principles - but not fixed prescriptions - to improving public sector performance.

Why? Reforms are often too normative (that is, ‘best practice’ not ‘best fit’) and not sufficiently grounded in recognition of ‘what doesn’t work’.

How? We ask what is working in the public service, on which to build appropriate reform.

What we offer:
Political economy analysis for public sector reform:

- In partnership with the University of Cape Town, we help to identify ‘best fit’ options for public sector reform.
- In partnership with SIGOB, we seek to improve practical whole-of-government approaches.

Outcome:
The ideas, interests and incentives of the political and administrative leadership better aligned to work effectively together, in support of delivering the 2030 Agenda.
Theme 3

Futures & Foresight – 2030 and beyond...

The Empowered Futures Initiative (EFI)

Objective:
 EFI aims to promote the use of alternative futures in developing countries, in the context of the SDGs and development visions/strategies, policy coherence, resilient planning and public service innovation.

What we offer:

Advisory Services
  ▸ Assistance in adapting strategic foresight methodologies to the national planning systems;

Workshops / Trainings
  ▸ Introductory Workshops (foresightXchange) exploring and applying foresight methodologies within a given context / challenge (2-3 days);
  ▸ Hands-on foresight events, resulting in an options paper, based on alternative futures.

Our typical engagement includes a scoping mission, a follow-up event and additional remote support with documentation as well as institutionalisation.

Outcome:

Strategic engagements at leadership level, participatory visioning processes, identification of challenges and strategic opportunities. Enhanced appreciation of emergence, alternative futures and adaptive governance. Greater agency over development pathways.
Theme 4

What motivates public officials?
World Public Service Motivation Index

Objective:
The motivation of public servants significantly impacts the ability to deliver on the SDGs. In many developing countries, poorly paid public servants with a job guaranteed for life and minimal repercussions for poor performance, remain in a remarkable fashion dedicated and engaged to deliver high quality work and results.

These officials are motivated by intrinsic factors, including professional pride, passion for public welfare, and patriotism. Evidence from developing countries on what motivates public officials is thin.

We therefore launched an initiative to learn more and coined the term “New Public Passion”, used to describe this largely unknown territory of intrinsic motivation in the public service.

What we offer:
In partnership with UNDP Country Offices, Government partners and a panel of world-class experts, we are rolling out surveys at country level designed to elicit insights and build comparable evidence. A global index will be built to benchmark and understand differences.

Outcome:
A better understanding of what motivates public servants and identify ways by which motivation and performance could be improved.
Theme 5

Fostering Innovation in the Public Service: Excellence through new thinking and action.

Objective:
We recognize that increasingly complex challenges, lack of resources and the need to leverage the opportunities of rapid technological change call upon the public service to innovate, explore and find new ways of addressing development challenges.

We believe that to achieve the SDGs public services need to step up their efforts at innovation – both institutional and individual level. Innovation has become a buzz word with many Governments launching innovation teams, labs, hubs or the like. We help you to see beyond the hype, to understand that innovation happens inside and outside the public service and to take the innovation challenge seriously.

What we offer:

- **Workshops & Innovation Labs**
  Using expertise on design thinking approaches, social innovation and foresight, we can assist in the design and facilitation of innovation events.

- **Advisory Services**
  Re- and co-design public service innovation ecosystems.

Outcome:
Discover a context-appropriate and effective approach to public service innovation.
Theme 6

Learning better through shared experience:
Peer-to-Peer Learning

Objective:
There is strong interest to shift the focus from pre-defined solutions to more applied and context-specific approaches. Peer learning is increasingly used to understand the challenges faced by ‘change agents’, allowing them to tap into experiences of others.

No one knows the challenge of achieving progress better than public officials and development practitioners themselves. While privy to a wealth of knowledge and experience, their experiences are rarely transferred to others. By passing on this expertise and by ensuring it is shared within one’s own institution, practitioners can build on the experiences of others. Our evidence suggests that peer learning is effective but needs to be carefully designed.

What we offer:

> Peer-to-Peer Learning
   As the Co-Secretariat of the Effective Institutions Platform, GCPSE assists in the design and facilitation of intl. peer learning alliances.

> Thinker Practitioners-in-Residence
   GCPSE hosts sabbaticals for reflection and the sharing of experiences via knowledge products.

Outcome:
Benefit from practical experience on “how” to make reforms happen.
Theme 7

Research into Action, Action into Evidence:
Evidence for Public Service Practitioners

Objective:
Fostering knowledge transfer, learning and innovation and codify tacit knowledge that is context-specific.

What we offer:

- **Our publications**
  We have published a wide range of knowledge products on significant themes as well as reflections on current issues and the Singapore Story. These can be found online via the GCPSE websites.

- **Annual flagship publication**
  In partnership with the Astana Civil Service Hub (ACSH), we can provide a showcase for successes in fostering public service excellence. We welcome submissions as to which experiences should be covered in our upcoming publication.

- **Evidence Building**
  On demand production and publication of case studies, think pieces and papers. Past and current engagements include:
  - Study on Policy Frameworks for the Digital Economy (in collaboration with the Institute of Systems Science / National University of Singapore), commissioned by Microsoft
  - Think Piece on the Politics of Big Data, commissioned by Pulse Lab Jakarta (UN Global Pulse)
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