

POLICY BRIEF

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Engaging Youth to Future-Proof Viet Nam's Public Sector

Executive Summary: Viet Nam is making steady progress on its sustainable development path. The ongoing public sector reforms and upcoming elections create a new opportunity to build a future-ready and agile public administration. This will allow the country to manage emerging challenges and achieve its long-term development goals. This policy brief is grounded on findings from a UNDP's study on Vietnamese youth's perception and readiness for a public sector career, along with lessons learned and examples offered by international best practices and country cases. It discusses key challenges and proposes actionable solutions to make Viet Nam's public sector more attractiveness to young talents, thereby fostering innovation, adaptability, and inclusive governance.

Introduction

A global imperative for future-ready governance

With the adoption of the [Pact for the Future](#), United Nations member states have collectively recognized the urgency of equipping public institutions with the tools and competencies necessary to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to emerging challenges. The Pact calls for governments to institutionalize strategic foresight, science, and data-informed decision-making to safeguard the needs and interests of future generations. In particular, Paragraph 24 commits the signatory countries (Viet Nam included) to leverage evidence-based planning and anticipatory governance frameworks to ensure that

polymaking is more adaptive, resilient, and aligned with long-term development objectives. This vision sets a clear mandate for public administrations to modernize their structures, re-skill their workforce, and create governance ecosystems capable of navigating complex, fast-evolving global challenges.

National context: opportunities and challenges in Viet Nam

As Viet Nam advances toward its ambitious goals of upper-middle-income status by 2030 and high-income status by 2045, enhancing the future readiness of its public sector is essential. Recent policy developments offer an enabling environment to advance this agenda. The 2025 mergers of ministries and provinces, and the

upcoming National Assembly elections present a strategic moment to elevate youth leadership in policymaking, particularly among individuals equipped with skills in technology, artificial intelligence (AI), and innovation. In December 2024, [Resolution No. 57-NQ/TW](#) of the Politburo of the Communist Party of Viet Nam on breakthroughs in the development of science, technology, innovation and national digital transformation was issued, offering a supportive framework to advance digital transformation and innovation within public institutions. At the local public administrative level, the district-level administration was abolished, while the number of commune-level administrative units were cut by two thirds from more than 10,000, and as a result the number of commune-level governments were reduced to 3,321 units.

These changes are aimed at streamlining the public administrative system, allowing the system to work more efficiently, reducing lengthy procedures, and creating space for more agile, citizen-centric service delivery. At the same time, reduced public sector workforce requires each individual to be more versatile, efficient, and to take on greater responsibilities to meet citizens' increasing demand and greater expectation. In this context, having a talented and skillful workforce is necessary to meet the expectations of the new system.

Considering these elements, improving policy-makers' skillset, ensuring more opportunities for capacity building and life-long-learning in the public sector, and strengthening youth engagement will ensure that future policies are shaped by diverse perspectives and new hard and soft skills. All these efforts will lay the foundation for a resilient, forward-looking, inclusive and people-centered public administration in alignment with Viet Nam's aspirations.

Yet, public officials and civil servants are assessed to often lack essential technical competency in areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), AI and transversal skills needed to regulate and foster innovation and more efficient, often tech-savvy, public service delivery. Expecting limited new recruitment in the coming years due to the recent government reform, there is an urgent need to retain current talents and upskill the current workforce in the public sector.

Furthermore, as research shows, youth and marginalized groups often face systemic barriers to accessing and understanding government policies, participating in decision-making, and benefiting from public services and training. Strengthening digital infrastructure, simplifying policy language, and embedding inclusivity at every level of

governance are critical steps to ensure that no one is left behind in Viet Nam's development journey.

UNDP in Viet Nam's Research on Youth's Perception and Readiness for a Public Sector Career: Key Findings

To provide insights on how the public sector can continuously attract and nurture young generations of talents, UNDP in Viet Nam has undertaken the study entitled "*Youth's perception and readiness for a public sector career.*" Drawing on insights from the Viet Nam Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI), this study explores the public sector's appeal to youth, and strategies to strengthen the sector's attractiveness towards young talents in a highly competitive labour market, and at the same time to develop capacity for the current workforce.

The research highlights that Vietnamese youth prioritize personal growth, learning opportunities, and a supportive work environment when selecting jobs. They seek dynamic, inclusive workplaces where they can develop professionally, even if it means compromising salary. Employer reputation and ethical standards are also critical factors, with corruption and lack of transparency acting as deal-breakers. Youth prefer job-seeking methods that emphasize independence and merit, without too much reliance on leveraging networks.

Perceptions of youth towards the public sector reveal a mixed picture. While valued for its job stability and potential to contribute to society, the public sector is largely seen as rigid, hierarchical, and lacking innovation. Respondents pointed out major systemic barriers, including the lack of clear and accessible job-related information, the use of complex legal and technical language in recruitment notices and policy documents, lengthy and opaque hiring processes, application fees and perceived informal costs, limited internship or trial opportunities, and widespread concerns about transparency, fairness, and inclusivity, especially for women, LGBTIQ+ individuals, and persons with disabilities. Addressing these systemic issues will be essential to attract and retain young talent in Viet Nam's public sector.

Enhancing Public Sector's Future Readiness: International Best Practices

In response to these insights above and in line with the solutions proposed by the youth involved in the consultation process, the following key categories and topics reflect efforts in a select of countries in transforming the public sector into a more attractive, inclusive, and future-ready employer for young people:

1. Employer Branding and Talent Acquisition

Strategies: Initiatives to build the public sector's image as a meaningful and dynamic career path, and to reform recruitment processes.

2. High-Level Education, Training and Lifelong Learning

Programmes: Programmes focused on equipping public officials with future-ready skills and continuous development opportunities.

3. Fellowship and Experiential Programmes

Immersive programmes that offer young people practical experience in public institutions,

increasing their understanding and motivation to join the sector.

4. Participation and Co-Creation Platforms

Mechanisms that involve youth directly in policymaking and institutional innovation, fostering a sense of ownership and contribution.

Box 1 presents examples and case studies to inspire the design and implementation of similar initiatives in Viet Nam, based on the four categories mentioned above.

Box 1. Strategies and Key Areas to Enhance Public Sector's Future Readiness

1. Employer Branding and Talent Acquisition Strategies

- For instance: Public campaigns and youth-oriented storytelling strategies showcasing the impact and purpose of public service; Youth-oriented recruitment platforms; Internship and Traineeship programmes; competitions, hackathons and policy challenges; Public-private career fairs
- In France, the [Choisir le Service Public](#) programme aims to establish a transversal identity for the public sector as an employer, including through the creation of a dedicated website that consolidates all relevant information on entry into the public service. Moreover, through educational content, it allows young people and those unfamiliar with the public service to access comprehensive information on recruitment processes and career opportunities within this sector. France has also launched the [Talent du service public](#), a plan designed to enhance diversity within the public sector and promote access to equal opportunities through partnerships between high schools and "public service schools", preparatory courses for public sector examinations, special recruitment processes, as well as apprenticeships and internships for people aged 16-29.
- In Italy, the Department for Public Administration has recently launched "[InPA](#)", a single gateway for the recruitment of PA staff aimed at citizens and Public Administrations. The webportal aims to improve the quality of recruitment of the PA through an innovative digital system that simplifies and speeds up the meeting between supply and demand for public work.

2. High-level education and training, and life-long learning programmes for public officials and civil servants

- For instance: National public administration schools and institutes; Scholarships and government-sponsored degrees; Digital and future-readiness training; Cross-sectoral training with academia or the private sector; Anticipatory governance and foresight capacity-building programs are good practices to learn and start with.
- Singapore has launched "[MySkillsFuture](#)", a national one-stop online portal that enables Singaporeans to chart their own career and lifelong learning pathways, through access to industry information and tools to search for training programmes. The goal is enabling Singaporeans of all ages to make informed learning and career choices for skills and career development throughout life. The portal has tools and resources to help you discover industry insights, as well as explore training programmes based on different career and learning needs.

3. Fellowship and experiential programmes

- For instance: Initiatives offering short-term learning and on-the-job opportunities are, for instance, National youth fellowships in government; Regional/Global innovation fellowships and programmes; Rotational programmes across ministries; Policy Labs offering the opportunity to design, prototype, test and experiment policy sandboxes and public services solutions; Reverse mentorship schemes for civil servants and public officials; Youth innovation labs or public sector accelerators).
- Many countries have already designed programmes to attract young people to the public sector. These programmes create a space to bring new expertise and skills in the public sector on the one hand; on the other, they offer the opportunity to young talents to have hands-on working and learning experience in the Public Administration. The following are some examples of fellowship programmes

targeting young people: [Officina](#) (Italy) [Tech4Germany](#) and [Work4Germany](#) (Germany); [Blue Book Traineeship Programme](#) (European Commission); [Indian Administrative Fellowship](#) (India); [Canadian Public Service Policy Fellowship](#) (Canada); and, [White House Fellowship](#) (United States).

4. Participation and Co-Creation Platforms

- For instance: Initiatives involving young people in shaping public policy before and in addition to recruitment, ensuring engagement and fostering innovation and future-oriented approaches and mindsets are, for instance, Youth advisory boards and shadow governments; Civic tech and open government initiatives, such as participatory budgeting; Crowdsourcing policy solutions from youth, such as [Youth4Climate](#) (Viet Nam); Gamified policy simulations; and Young ambassadors for public innovation.

Policy Recommendations: Strengthening Viet Nam's Public Sector Future Readiness with Youth Engagement

To ensure that Viet Nam's public sector is future-ready, inclusive, capable of nurturing talents among existing civil servants and attracting the next generation of talents, the following actions are recommended:

Modernize work conditions and career pathways

- Introduce greater flexibility in public sector jobs through rotation programmes, project-based assignments, and mission-oriented positions with clearly defined deliverables and expected impact.
- Expand flexible work arrangements—such as flexible hours, autonomy in task management, and shared responsibilities—to attract and retain diverse talents, especially youth.
- Increase the attractiveness of public employment by offering fairer benefits and more competitive salaries, particularly for entry-level positions.

Enhance transparency of recruitment processes and improve career development systems

- Ensure transparent, merit-based, and inclusive recruitment and promotion processes.
- Improve access to accurate and user-friendly information about public sector opportunities by leveraging youth-centric channels such as social media and modernized government portals.
- Create a dedicated recruitment programme for persons with disabilities and invest in accessible education and job platforms to support their long-term inclusion.

Build future-ready competencies in the current and future workforce

- Institutionalize on-the-job training and continuous learning, prioritizing digital literacy,

data analytics, data and AI governance, innovation, and strategic foresight.

- Equip newly appointed civil servants at all levels with future-facing skills to address emerging challenges.
- Enhance existing government-funded training and fellowship programmes with modules focused on improving awareness and implementation capacity for current young and mid-level government public officials and civil servants, especially those with leadership roles, in new areas such as digital transformation, digital governance, data and AI governance, and anticipatory policymaking.

Create a dynamic, inclusive, and engaging work environment in the public sector

- Foster a collaborative and open culture by promoting inclusive policies that actively involve marginalized youth — including LGBTIQ+ individuals, persons with disabilities, and rural youth — in decision-making.
- Diversify team structures to ensure wider representation of underrepresented categories and create innovation-oriented and mission-driven tasks that enable youth to contribute their creativity, energy, and problem-solving skills.

Reimagine public engagement and communication

- Reframe public communication to be more youth-accessible by simplifying policy language and using multimedia formats across digital platforms.
- Assign local public institutions with the responsibility to co-design initiatives with youth and establish two-way feedback channels to build trust, transparency, and engagement.

Connect public institutions and youth-led innovation

- Strengthen partnerships between the public sector and youth-led enterprises and networks through innovation labs, hackathons, and inclusive public procurement processes.
- Empower youth-led small and medium enterprises to co-create solutions aligned with national development goals and leverage public contracting opportunities for scale-up and sustainability.

- Explore reverse procurement models in which the government identifies key service or policy challenges, then youth-led enterprises propose innovative solutions.
- Embed young innovators through internship or fellowship programmes to co-design and test solutions that should be implemented across central and local levels to ensure grassroots relevance and system-wide learning.

Box 2 outlines the skills for future policymakers drawn from in the UN Pact for the Future that Viet Nam should consider for public sector development.

Box 2. Skills for Future Policymakers

The skills and capabilities explicitly mentioned or strongly implied in the UN Pact for the Future that mostly adapt to the challenges of Viet Nam and its national priorities in order to strengthen the future readiness of the public sector and governance systems:

- **Strategic Foresight:** capacity of institutions to anticipate future trends, risks, and opportunities using foresight methodologies and tools to inform long-term planning and policy design.
- **Data Analytics:** developing robust capabilities in data collection, analysis, and interpretation is emphasized to support evidence-based decision-making — a critical skill for anticipating and managing future developments.
- **Innovation:** cultivate a culture of innovation both in policies design and delivery to remain agile and responsive to future challenges.
- **Digital Transformation:** digital literacy and the capacity to harness digital tools, platforms, and AI are identified as essential for improving governance effectiveness and anticipating the impacts of technological change.
- **Intergenerational and Long-Term Thinking:** institutional mechanisms and competencies that ensure long-term thinking (e.g. scenario planning, visioning) and protect the interests of future generations.
- **Adaptive and Responsive Governance:** shift from reactive to adaptive governance, where policies can evolve and adjust to emerging trends and feedback loops from society.

Conclusions

The 2026 National Assembly and People’s Councils elections in Viet Nam present a strategic moment to elevate youth leadership in policy making. This is especially true for young individuals equipped with skills in technology, data analytics, data and AI governance, strategic foresight, and innovation, which aligns with the strategic ambitions of Resolution No. 57-NQ/TW. Findings from UNDP in Viet Nam’s study on youth’s perception and readiness for a public sector career underscore the urgent need to reimagine Viet Nam’s public sector as a forward-thinking, future-ready employer that can both attract and empower the next generation of talented leaders.

To utilize the potentials of young individuals and engage them in public governance in Viet Nam, it is essential to address existing barriers related to access to information, transparency, inclusion, and innovation. The recommendations in this policy brief aim to create a more agile, inclusive, and innovation-driven public sector that reflects the aspirations of Vietnamese youth and ensures resilience in the face of future challenges. By investing in strategic reforms that considers youth’s aspirations, Viet Nam can foster a dynamic public administration capable of shaping a sustainable and equitable future for all.

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