



**United Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs



**SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

## United Nations Public Service Awards 2021 Submission Rules and Guidelines

The **United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA)** recognizes excellence in public service at the local, regional and national levels. It was launched in 2003 in order to promote and support innovations in public service delivery. With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>1</sup>, the UNPSA is focused on promoting and recognising transformative action that promotes creativity and innovation in public service delivery and the work of public sector institutions to enhance effectiveness, transparency and inclusiveness to leave no one behind.

The UNPSA is managed by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), through its Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG), in collaboration with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

### PURPOSE

The purpose of the UNPSA is to promote and reward innovation and excellence in public services in support of the realization of the SDGs and the principle of leaving no one behind, which is at the core of the 2030 Agenda. It takes into account the various development levels of countries while reflecting the universal nature of the SDGs.

Through a global competition that promotes the role, professionalism and visibility of public service, the UNPSA aims to:

- ✓ **Highlight** innovations in governance
- ✓ **Reward** excellence in the public sector
- ✓ **Motivate** public servants to further promote innovation
- ✓ **Enhance** professionalism in the public service
- ✓ **Raise** the image of public service
- ✓ **Collect** and **disseminate** successful practices for possible replication

### MANDATE

The UNPSA was created pursuant to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution of 2002, which endorsed a recommendation of the Group of Experts on the United Nations Programme on Public Administration and Finance (ECOSOC resolution, E/RES/2001/45). ECOSOC called for “the proclamation of a United Nations Public Service Day to celebrate the value and virtue of service to the community at the local, national and global levels, with prizes to be awarded by the Secretary-General for contributions made to the cause of enhancing the role, prestige and visibility of public service”.

The importance of the Awards was subsequently reiterated in 2015 by the General Assembly in its

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<sup>1</sup> The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by all countries members of the United Nations in September 2015. It has 17 Sustainable Development Goals at its core  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

resolution A/RES/69/327, which requested “the Secretary-General to continue to provide assistance, in particular to developing countries, at their request, in their efforts to strengthen public institutions and public services for sustainable development ... including through the United Nations Public Service Day, the United Nations Public Service Awards and the United Nations Public Administration Network...”. In 2016, ECOSOC further requested the Secretary-General to continue to promote and support innovation and excellence in public services for sustainable development through the United Nations Public Service Awards (ECOSOC resolution, E/Res/2016/26).

## AWARDS

The Awards are usually given on 23 June, a day designated by the General Assembly as the United Nations Public Service Day to “celebrate the value and virtue of public service to the community” (A/RES/57/277). The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/277, encourages Member States to organize special events on that Day to highlight the contribution of public service in the development process.

The UNPSA Ceremony is part of a United Nations Public Service Forum, which is held annually, in different regions of the world.

Up to five winners can be selected under each category of the Awards. Winners are considered within their UN regional groups<sup>2</sup> as follows:

- ✓ Africa
- ✓ Asia and the Pacific
- ✓ Latin America and the Caribbean
- ✓ Eastern Europe
- ✓ Western Europe and other Groups

For further information about the past UNPSA events, please visit the DPIDG website at <https://publicadministration.un.org>

## ELIGIBILITY

- ✓ The Award is open to all public-sector institutions at the national, sub-national and local levels from all UN member states. In the case of partnerships (including civil society, private sector, academia etc.), the nominee must be a public-sector institution
- ✓ Both self-nomination and nomination by third parties are accepted. Applications should be made by an organization
- ✓ The initiative must be innovative and relevant to one of the UN Public Service Awards categories <sup>3</sup>
- ✓ The initiative must have been implemented for a minimum of two years, with demonstrated and documented impact

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<sup>2</sup> The UNPSA Regional Groups are listed in Annex I

<sup>3</sup> Once the application is submitted, the category cannot be changed even if it is found later that it was submitted under the wrong category. Nominators are therefore requested to pay special attention to the criteria of the various categories when choosing a category under which to submit an application.

- ✓ The application must be duly filled out
- ✓ The submission must include all the required supporting documents
- ✓ The initiative must not have already received a UNPS Award
- ✓ To avoid conflict of interest, the initiative must not be implemented by the United Nations System

## CATEGORIES

The objective of the UNPSA is to recognize efforts that advance effective, efficient, transparent, accountable, innovative and citizen-centred public governance, administration and services for sustainable development, in line with SDG 16.

Effective, accountable and transparent institutions are essential to achieving all the 17 Goals and to ensuring efficient and quality public service delivery. They play a critical role in efforts to enhance access to services such as quality education (SDG 4), healthcare (SDG 3), water and sanitation (SDG 6), affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), as well as efforts to leave no one behind, as through enhancing opportunities for decent work (SDG 8), achieving gender equality and empowering girls and women (SDG 5), tackling inequality (SDG 10), and promoting partnerships (SDG 17).

While targeted efforts to meet individual Goals are needed, the highly integrated nature of the all the Goals calls for institutional frameworks and mechanisms that work to foster collaboration and harmonization between government agencies, policies and with other stakeholders, to achieve the SDGs. At the same time, new and burgeoning forms of innovation, such as, but not limited to, ICTs, can be leveraged by public sector institutions to provide engaging and efficient ways to reach citizens and meet development objectives across all areas.

With this in mind, four categories (below) have been selected for the 2021 UNPSA. Submissions under each category should be aligned with the 2030 Agenda, demonstrating their relevance to the SDGs and should be innovative, demonstrating positive impact, sustainability, adaptability and stakeholder engagement (see 'Evaluation Criteria' for more details).

### **Category 1: Fostering innovation to deliver inclusive and equitable services for all including through digital transformation**

The category on fostering innovation to deliver inclusive and equitable services for all promotes innovative ways to increase access to quality and affordable public services, especially to those living in poverty and the most vulnerable. Delivering inclusive and equitable services requires many public sector institutions to both reform and transform their service delivery mechanisms so as to enhance effectiveness and efficiency in public service delivery. This can be through use of a digital-by-design approach and/or the promotion of digital transformation which adopts innovative approaches and applications of existing and frontier technologies aimed at enhancing public service delivery and public administration while also taking into consideration affordable access to digital networks. A focus on user needs in public service design and delivery rather than on technology solutions and on inclusion, equity, integration and diversity sits at the heart of delivering people centric services.

### **Category 2: Enhancing the effectiveness of public institutions to reach the SDGs**

The category on enhancing the effectiveness of institutions to reach the SDGs promotes institutional

frameworks that enhance transparency and accountability as well as facilitate harmonization and collaboration in government policies. This category aims to recognize efforts to enhance the effectiveness of institutions in pursuit of the SDGs, underscoring the linkages among many of the SDGs via integrated policies and development plans. The category also focuses on enhancing transparency and accountability of public institutions, including through efforts to enhance open government data approaches, participatory decision making and engagement. Efforts to enhance the effectiveness of institutions to reach the SDGs may also be harnessed through digital transformation which adopts strategic approaches and applications of existing and frontier technologies aimed at enhancing public administration, including through promoting interoperability among institutions and enabling government platforms' use as communication and consultation tools.

### **Category 3: Promoting gender-responsive public services to achieve the SDGs**

The category on promoting gender-responsive public services to achieve the SDGs promotes innovative public policies and services that address specific needs of women and girls. Gender responsive public services play a critical role in reducing poverty and inequality and advancing the rights of women and girls. These services require enabling policy and legislative frameworks, institutional structures and administrative capacities for their full implementation. They also require leveraging digital and new technologies to ensure innovation, effectiveness and accessibility as well as building digital literacy and skills. Initiatives should address gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at all stages of planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

### **Category 4: Institutional preparedness and response in times of crisis**

This category aims to recognize efforts to ensure rapid and effective institutional responses and the continuation and enhancement of public service delivery in times of crisis. Strengthening resilience by ensuring that people, societies, and institutions have the resources, capacities and knowledge to limit, anticipate, absorb and adapt to shocks, underpins all the SDGs. Governments are responsible for pursuing policies to build resilience and assist those most affected. Crisis preparedness is central to ensuring that governments can act quickly and effectively during crisis, such as those brought on by natural disasters, climate change, health pandemics, conflict, economic shocks and more. Ensuring the continuation of public services and the ramping up of service delivery to the most vulnerable in an effective and efficient manner is critical. Preparedness requires strategic planning and forecasting, effective use of new and existing technologies, including through the development and use of artificial intelligence, open data, big data, analytics, blockchains, machine learning, cloud computing and the Internet of Things, and the allocation of appropriate budget and resources. Initiatives should address how institutions have responded to crisis through the provision, enhancement and adaptation of services.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

**Alignment with the 2030 Agenda.** The 2030 Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. The initiative should be aligned to the principles of the Agenda and its overarching priorities of leaving no one behind. It should support the implementation of the Agenda and realization of the SDGs at the global, national, sub-national and local levels.

**Innovation.** The initiative should present an innovative idea, policy, new approach, or a unique mechanism that supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In the context of a given country or region, it could be to improve delivery of public services, solve a problem of public concern, or strengthen public institutions.

**Significance.** The initiative should have made a positive impact on a group(s) of the population and address a significant issue of public concern within the context of a given country or region.

**Adaptability.** The initiative should be applicable and adaptable to other contexts for possible upscaling or replication. Ideally, it should be conducive to similar innovations in other public-sector institutions within a given country, region or at the global level.

**Sustainability.** The initiative should be sustainable in financial, social and environmental terms, that the desired outcome can be achieved and maintained.

**Partnership.** The initiative should demonstrate that it has engaged relevant stakeholders and partners. It should not be limited to public institutions and government entities but inclusive of non-state stakeholders of community, civil society, and private sector.

## HOW TO APPLY

**Who can nominate?** Public sector institutions, schools of public administration, UN agencies (only for initiatives which they have not supported), universities, non-governmental organizations and private sector entities.

**Who can be nominated?** All public institutions at the national, sub-national, and local level from all UN member states are eligible to apply. In the case of public-private partnerships, the lead nominee must be a public-sector institution.

**What is the application process?** Application can only be submitted through the Online Application Form at the UNDESA/DPIDG website. <https://publicadministration.un.org/unpsa/en/>

For technical assistance, please contact the UNPSA team by email [UNPSA@un.org](mailto:UNPSA@un.org)

**The deadline for submitting an application is 18 November 2020.**

**The Online Application Form** must be fully completed. All fields must contain the requested information. In the event that any field is left blank, or if the answer does not directly correspond to the question asked, the initiative will not be evaluated.

The applications can be made only in one of the **six UN official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish)**. However, it would be preferable, if possible, that applications be submitted in one of the working languages of the United Nations Secretariat, which are English and French. Application and/or supporting document in a language other than one of the six UN official languages will not be accepted.

### What supporting documents are needed?

1. Evaluation Report: An internal or external evaluation/audit report or similar documentation of the initiative is **required**.

The evaluation report must include:

- ✓ Executive Summary: Brief summary of the report
- ✓ Scope: What the evaluation aims to measure
- ✓ Methods: How the evaluation is conducted by explaining methodology used
- ✓ Findings and recommendation: Main findings of the evaluation and recommendations

2. **Two reference letters**

Reference letters from two sources (not internal), such as from partner institutions and agencies, programme beneficiaries, external stakeholders, or other sources, who can attest to the initiative are required. If provided in a non-UN Official language, a translation must also be provided in one of the six UN Official languages.

3. **Website**

You should provide a website link to the initiative. If no such website exists, you should provide a link to the website of the nominated institution.

4. **(Optional)** Up to five additional supplementary materials can be provided to demonstrate and highlight the initiative's impact and outcome. This could be in the form of case studies, programme or policy briefs, project documents, newspaper articles or publications, outreach materials, videos, selection for other awards etc.

If more than five supplementary materials are provided, evaluators will choose five at random to review. Therefore, it is within the nominees interest to limit material to five. Supplementary materials must be in one of the six UN official languages (by way of translation, subtitles, etc.) to be considered.

## EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation process consists of several rounds. In the first round, the UNPSA Evaluation Team evaluates online applications vis-a-vis the evaluation criteria. Each initiative is evaluated taking into consideration the context of a given country or region. In the second round, a working group of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA)<sup>4</sup> conducts further reviews and

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<sup>4</sup> CEPA is a subsidiary advisory body of the United Nations Economic and Social Council comprising 24 experts acting

recommends a short-list. The Short-listed initiatives then undergo a process of validation to ensure congruence between the application documents and substantiated findings. Final selection of the winners among the validated initiatives is made by the UN Secretary-General.

The evaluation process is strictly based on the specific initiative in application, not on general programme or other initiatives undertaken by the nominated institution. If the preliminary validation for a specific initiative reveals misconduct, the application will be disqualified.

### WHO RECEIVES THE AWARD?

Awards can only be conferred to public sector institutions that have ownership of the nominated initiatives. Implementing agencies working on a consultancy basis are not eligible for UNPSA.

The award goes to the initiative and the institution that is responsible for implementing it, not to the individual that initiated or implemented it, nor to the country as such. An individual cannot be awarded.

In the case of public-private partnerships, the recognition goes to the public-sector institution.

### DISQUALIFICATION

**Applications will be disqualified for the following reasons:**

1. Failure to observe the submission rules for the application
2. Any conflict of interest and non-adherence to the process by those concerned
3. Presenting misleading and false information and supporting documents
4. Inability to provide sufficient documentation to review the initiative
5. Unethical behaviour, including undue pressure on any person involved in the evaluation and selection process

### REVOCAION OF THE AWARD

An award can be revoked at any point, if it has been established that an institution has failed to observe the UNPSA rules.

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in a personal capacity who meet annually at UN Headquarters in New York. The Committee is responsible for supporting the work of ECOSOC concerning the promotion and development of public administration and governance among Member States notably in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in support of the implementation and progress reviews of the Sustainable Development Goals.

## ANNEX: UN REGIONAL GROUPS

### Africa

Algeria	Ethiopia	Niger
Angola	Gabon	Nigeria
Benin	Gambia	Rwanda
Botswana	Ghana	São Tomé and Príncipe
Burkina Faso	Guinea	Senegal
Burundi	Guinea-Bissau	Seychelles
Cabo Verde	Kenya	Sierra Leone
Cameroon	Lesotho	Somalia
Central African Republic	Liberia	South Africa
Chad	Libya	South Sudan
Comoros	Madagascar	Sudan
Congo	Malawi	Eswatini
Côte d'Ivoire	Mali	Togo
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Mauritania	Tunisia
Djibouti	Mauritius	Uganda
Egypt	Morocco	United Republic of Tanzania
Equatorial Guinea	Mozambique	Zambia
Eritrea	Namibia	Zimbabwe

### Asia and the Pacific



Afghanistan	Kyrgyzstan	Samoa
Bahrain	Lao People's Republic	Saudi Arabia
Bangladesh	Lebanon	Singapore
Bhutan	Malaysia	Solomon Islands
Brunei Darussalam	Maldives	Sri Lanka
Cambodia	Marshall Islands	Syrian Arab Republic
China	Micronesia (Federated States of)	Tajikistan
Cyprus	Mongolia	Thailand
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Myanmar	Timor-Leste
Fiji	Nauru	Tonga
India	Nepal	Turkey*
Indonesia	Oman	Turkmenistan
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Pakistan	Tuvalu
Iraq	Palau	United Arab Emirates
Japan	Papua New Guinea	Uzbekistan
Jordan	Philippines	Vanuatu
Kazakhstan	Qatar	Vietnam
Kiribati	Republic of Korea	Yemen
Kuwait		

### Eastern Europe

Albania	Estonia	Romania
Armenia	Georgia	Russian Federation
Azerbaijan	Hungary	Serbia
Belarus	Latvia	Slovakia
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Lithuania	Slovenia
Bulgaria	Montenegro	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Croatia	Poland	Ukraine
Czech Republic	Republic of Moldova	

### Latin America and the Caribbean

Antigua and Barbuda	Dominica	Nicaragua
Argentina	Dominican Republic	Panama
Bahamas	Ecuador	Paraguay
Barbados	El Salvador	Peru
Belize	Grenada	Saint Kitts and Nevis
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Guatemala	Saint Lucia
Brazil	Guyana	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Chile	Haiti	Suriname
Colombia	Honduras	Trinidad and Tobago
Costa Rica	Jamaica	Uruguay
Cuba	Mexico	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

### Western Europe and Other Groups

Andorra Australia Austria Belgium Canada Denmark Finland France Germany Greece	Iceland Ireland Israel Italy Liechtenstein Luxembourg Malta Monaco Netherlands New Zealand	Norway Portugal San Marino Spain Sweden Switzerland Turkey* United Kingdom United States of America
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\*Turkey, participates fully in both WEOG and the Asian and Pacific regional groups, but for electoral purposes is considered a member of WEOG only. For the purposes of the UNPSA initiatives submitted by Turkey will be evaluated under WEOG.