



# GovDesign

A guiding framework to re-engineer public institutions



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# GovDesign

## IN BRIEF

**GovDesign** is a guiding framework to help public institutions become better fit for purpose. It addresses the frequent mismatch between evolving societal expectations and institutions' performance, which can erode trust and strain the social contract between the state and citizens.

Anchored in the notion that institutions are instruments for delivering public value, **GovDesign** provides a structured yet adaptable tool to guide reform processes across three distinctive stages—the articulation of societal needs and demands, organizational diagnosis and organizational redesign, and operationalization—while accounting for political, fiscal, and cultural enablers of change.

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## THE CHALLENGE

Public sector organizations today are under increasing pressure to deliver greater public value—while demonstrating stronger accountability for the resources entrusted to them. Yet, in many contexts, public institutions are not “fit-for-purpose.” They are often perceived to be outdated, inefficient, and insufficiently responsive to the needs and expectations of citizens and the public at large.

Such a gap—between expectations and performance—can strain the social contract between the state and the public, eroding trust in public institutions and, in some cases, contributing to social unrest and political fragility.

While political and administrative leadership may be committed to reform, institutional transformation is inherently complex. Managing such complexity can be a major challenge, a seemingly unsurmountable obstacle to ensure a better fit between public institutions and the expectations placed on them.



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## THE OFFER

**GovDesign** provides a systemic framework for institutional re-engineering. Anchored in the premise that governmental institutions are instruments for delivering public value, GovDesign helps public organizations align their mandates, structures, processes, and capacities with evolving societal needs and expectations. It provides a structured yet adaptable pathway to guide institutional reform processes across a diverse range of contexts—and it can be customized to varying degrees of ambition, political space, and fiscal capacity.



**GP GS**

Governance for Public  
Goods and Services

# THE GOVDESIGN JOURNEY: THREE STAGES

*GovDesign structures institutional reform around three interconnected stages:*

# 1

## Understanding societal needs and demands

Before looking inward, institutions must develop a clear understanding of the evolving needs, expectations, and experiences of those they serve. This stage focuses on generating an evidence-based understanding of societal needs and demands from an end-user perspective, recognizing that as these expectations evolve, institutions must evolve accordingly.

# 2

## Institutional diagnosis and Institutional development roadmap

Building on the insights derived from Stage 1, GovDesign examines the degree of “fitness” of the public institution against societal needs and demands. It conducts a systematic assessment of the organization across five core pillars:

- ▶ Mandate, functions and strategy (foundational)
- ▶ Organizational structure
- ▶ Processes (for line and support functions)
- ▶ Human resources and capacities
- ▶ Technological tools, including AI

# 3

## Operationalization: Delivering Change

At this stage, the findings and recommendations drawn from the two prior stages are translated into tangible “change on the ground.” The roadmap—and its associated recommendations—are operationalized, through a workplan and budget, and relevant responsibilities are assigned for implementation. This process also draws from best practices in change management. At the end of the process, tangible improvements in key performance indicators are expected to materialize, contributing, ultimately, to closing the gap between expectations and organizational capacities to meet those expectations, with a degree of ambition that is sensitive to the political space, the organizational culture, and fiscal constraints. Before embarking on ambitious organizational re-engineering processes, the roadmap can also prioritize interventions that contribute to improving the enabling conditions for reform.

## KEY FEATURES

A key feature of the approach centers on the need to ensure the “congruence” of five pillars—as misalignment between two or more pillars can erode organizational effectiveness, e.g., organization structures that do not adequately align with functional assignments, or human resource capacities that do not adequately match process requirements or suitable technological tools.

FutureGov Design identifies both strengths and challenges across these five dimensions—and the organizational roadmap provides a set of recommendations that can range from short-term (“Quick Wins”), to medium (e.g. capacity development) and long-term recommendations (e.g. structural realignment).

Both the diagnostic and roadmap design are carried out through an inclusive and participatory process—placing a premium on transparency and effective communication—while taking into account the enabling environment and the “viable” space for reform (i.e. the enabling conditions in the political, fiscal and cultural space for reform). The approach also encourages the use of Artificial Intelligence, with a “human the loop”, to support the generation of insights from available data and promote greater cost-effectiveness in the process.



## KEY PARTNERS

*GovDesign* is implemented in partnership with national and local reform champions.

In addition, the approach leverages expertise across UNDP’s Governance for Public Goods & Services team, UNDP’s Digitalization, AI and Innovation Hub, and UNDP regional initiatives such as “Sistemas de Gestion para Gobierno (SIGOB)” in Latin America and the Caribbean. Partnerships with the OECD and the World Bank are also being explored to capitalize on synergies between the *GovDesign* approach and broader public administration and civil service reform agendas.

# GOVDESIGN IN PRACTICE

*GovDesign builds on UNDP's longstanding experience in institutional reform across a variety of contexts, including crisis and post-crisis contexts.*

**In Yemen**, between 2006 and 2009, in the midst of an increasingly fragile environment, the Ministry of Local Administration (MoLA) undertook a comprehensive reform process informed by the GovDesign approach. Through a greater focus on local authorities as its end-clients, MoLA realigned departmental functions, structures, and processes to more effectively advance a decentralization reform agenda. In turn, the decentralization process paved the way for greater local resilience – at district and community levels – when the broader enabling environment, and national institutions, came under increasing strain in subsequent years.

**In Lebanon** (2025–present), the *GovDesign* approach is being applied to support institutional reform efforts in the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR). The reform process seeks to transform the effectiveness and efficiency of the CDR in the management of a national strategic investment portfolio, while also putting in place robust safeguards and risk mitigation measures to leverage additional finance.

## WHAT GPGS PROVIDES

Under the GovDesign solution, UNDP can support governments through:

- ▶ Facilitation of multi-stakeholder engagements; including engagements with relevant client organizations, civil society and end-users.
- ▶ Capacity development and training for national and local change champions.
- ▶ Advisory services and technical accompaniment across any stage of the reform cycle.
- ▶ Technical support in process and workflow re-engineering, including, inter alia, in updated SOPs.
- ▶ Advisory support on suitable digital and AI solutions, in partnership with UNDP's Digital, AI and Innovation Hub.



Learn more at [gpgs.futuregov.org](https://gpgs.futuregov.org)

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## Contact us

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This activity is supported by the UNDP Funding Window on Governance, Peacebuilding, Crisis and Resilience, with contributions from the Governments of Denmark, Luxembourg, and the Republic of Korea. The views expressed in this brochure are those of the authors and contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations, including UNDP, donor partners, or Member States.

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