Since CAPAM’s founding in 1994, public service has become more challenging. We have shifted from the 1994 theme “Government in Transition” to this year’s “Public Service Transformation”, from the more casual “transition” to the more comprehensive “transform.”

The 2014 conference was reflective of the CAPAM experience – we have for two decades been the organization for cooperation, dialogue, and exchange concerning good public sector administration and management. Founding Chair Sir Kenneth Stowe put it: “The essence of CAPAM is to enable Commonwealth governments to perform better by fostering an environment of shared experience and collaboration.”

One speaker likened public service in 2014 to “The Red Queen’s Race” in Lewis Carroll’s book, Through the Looking Glass. In it, Alice and the Red Queen are running hard but making no progress.

“Well in our country,” said Alice, still panting a little, “you’d generally get to somewhere else – if you ran very fast for a long time, as we’ve been doing.”

“A slow sort of country!” said the Queen. “Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!”

To provide better public service at lower cost, we cannot simply run faster, or work harder. We need to transform the way we do things.

“How does a public service transform?”

The “new conversation” on this question was divided into three themes: **1. Shaping the Future Together**, the people dimension, highlighting engagement with citizens and public servants; **2. Towards a Better Future**, looking at the mechanisms of change, the processes, technologies, policies, and management tools that will help us transform for a better future; and **3. Building**
Global Resilience, building a public service that is nimble and able to react to shifting trends.

CAPAM’s original mission was to share experiences, to provide a forum for the active exchange of innovations, knowledge, and practice in citizen-centred service delivery, leadership development, and public service management. CAPAM continues to serve as a centre of excellence. It is a networking organization. It is not in the business of dictating solutions, but is in the business of promoting the practical requirements of good governance, just and honest government across Commonwealth countries and beyond. It promotes excellence in good governance and supports the building of more responsive and dynamic public services.

The 2014 Biennial Conference contributed to that mission. The speakers, most of whom were practising public servants, shared their conceptual models and their experiences putting the models into practice in their organizations.

OPENING PLENARY

The new strategic direction emerging across the Commonwealth emphasizes leadership, process, and implementation. Leaders increasingly understand that success depends on clear articulation of mission and strategies, and the involvement/engagement of employees and citizens. It is a move from top-down silos to collaboration.

Delegates were welcomed by the Hon. Tan Sri Dr. Ali Hamsa, Chief Secretary to the Government of Malaysia, (and incoming CAPAM President), and by Mr. Paul Zahra, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of European Affairs, in the office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Government of Malta, (and outgoing CAPAM President).

Hamsa noted the need to humanize the public service. Values for speed, accuracy, integrity, productivity, creativity and innovation are needed. In Malaysia, one-stop service is now being provided at urban transformation centres, which are open seven days a week, and public-private partnerships are thriving.

Zahra noted the warm hospitality and excellent planning of our host, Malaysia, and the many admirable characteristics of their public service.

“One of the great things about the Commonwealth,” he said, “is that we share the same goals of improved service at reduced cost, and are subject to the same principles. Yet how we implement varies, adapting solutions to the situation, learning from each other, and leap-frogging over each other as we learn and improve.”

He reinforced that he was there for the same reason as most of us: to network with colleagues, and to take some practical ideas back home to implement.

Keynote speaker, the Hon. Jocelyn Bourgon, President of Public Governance International and former President of CAPAM, continued the theme, noting that we need to leverage the power of others – for example, through crowd-sourcing, co-creation, and public-private partnerships. The silos which have served us well in the past need to be destroyed,
and replaced by relationships that propel society forward.

She said: “People are not born citizens. We become citizens as we accept the constraints and responsibilities that come as a result of being a member of a broader community. Public institutions create citizens… some of the most intractable problems are not due to too much government but to a lack of State able to forge a united citizenry governed by a common rule.” No organizational model lasts forever. Now is the time to rethink how to best organize to fulfil our missions. See the full article on Hon. Bourgon’s keynote speech on page X.

Commonwealth Secretary-General Kamalesh Sharma, in a video appearance introduced by Dr. Joan Nwasike of the Commonwealth Secretariat, also reinforced that private sector growth and good public governance are inseparable. He stated that the role of the Commonwealth is to disseminate good practice based on shared values of democracy, development, respect for diversity, and the goal of transforming public service for our citizens.

The Hon. Tan Sri Dato’ Hj Muhyiddin Hj Mohd Yassin, Deputy Prime Minister, represented the political level in his welcome. He noted the growing prominence of CAPAM, and the support for the practical learning and exchange of good practices that it provides.

PLENARY SESSION ONE
Tan Sri. Dr. Madinah binti Mohamad, Secretary General for the Ministry of Education in Malaysia, introduced the morning’s “people” theme by providing an overview of the host country’s transformation activities and outlining its various approaches towards preparing stakeholders for this change.

To wrap up the morning, the Hon. Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan, Minister of Public Administration in Trinidad and Tobago supported the sharing of political and public service power with citizens. They are building a public service where officers at all levels are able to engage citizens and support open government.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS: THEME 1, SHAPING THE FUTURE TOGETHER – PEOPLE

The first theme, “Shaping the Future Together,” focused on the people aspect of transformation, highlighting the critical importance of active engagement with citizens and the public service. Prevailing models of public service need to change in order to deliver improved services at reduced cost.

The following is a distillation of the concurrent sessions, prepared with the assistance of a team of reporteurs from the Malaysian Public Service.

Session 1.1 Leadership - Driving Change
Peter Achterstraat
President, New South Wales Division, Institute of Public Administration (Australia)

Dr. Joan Nwasike
Head, Thematic Programmes Group, Governance & Institutional Development Division, Commonwealth Secretariat

Dato’ Dr. Mazlan Bin Yussof
Director, National Institute of Public Administration (Malaysia)

“Are we driving too slowly in the fast lane?” one speaker asked. Public service used to be about being in the slow lane – making steady but not spectacular progress,
Readers can find submitted presentation materials at www.capam.org under “CAPAM 2014 Biennial Conference Resources”.

taking no risk. Now some are venturing into the fast lane, but not always accelerating as much as is needed. They are in effect slowing down their economy and their society’s development. Do we need to transform into fast lane drivers?

Ultimately, we need to transform into leaders of change. During this session, several techniques to do so, and the accompanying personality and behavioural patterns, were described.

**1.2 Motivating the Public Service in Uncertain Times**

Daniel Watson  
Chief Human Resources Officer,  
Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat

Tan Sri Dr. Zulkurnain bin Haji Awang,  
Former Director of INTAN, and  
former Secretary General of Ministry of Education (Malaysia)

Dorothy Mpabanga  
Director, University of Botswana,  
CESPAM (Botswana)

Recruiting, developing, and retaining motivated staff is important, as motivation tends to be intrinsic. Some organizations have an internal locus of control where the staff want to provide better service while reducing costs. Other organizations have an external locus of control exhibiting an attitude of “poor me, I’m being forced to do more with less.” To improve motivation in both types, it is important to provide a compelling sense of purpose, build trust in institutions, deliver services, give staff the freedom to do better, and celebrate successes.

“There is no magic elixir,” a panellist commented, “but there are tools you can use to promote motivation.”

Another questioner asked “How do you celebrate success if it doesn’t recognize the Minister?” The answer: “phrase it in such a way that the Minister takes pride in the accomplishments of ’his/her’ public service.”

**1.3 Bridging the Gap between the Public Service and the Public it Serves**

Dato’ Saw Choo Boon  
Co-Chair, Special Task Force to Facilitate Business (Malaysia)

Juma Gabriel Okumu  
Deputy Director, Training and Development, Public Service Commission (Kenya)

How do you gather useful information and opinions from citizens – some of whom are experts in the area, and some who have at best a weak understanding of the issue? Government can inform the public and create dialogue. One of the Award-winning projects aims to do just that, through their Information, Resolution and Communication Portal in Trinidad and Tobago.
Becoming more citizen-centred bridges the gap, as does building trust in public institutions. A good way to do that is through open government and greater efficiency, business process re-engineering, technology, social media, and one-stop service.

To have a public service that is eager to engage the public, political and administrative leadership must, of course, first engage the public service. And the public service must realize that, after they’ve had their input, they are still responsible for implementing government policy.

Several good examples from Malaysia were described, including Urban Transformation Centres, the task force to facilitate business, and Malaysia Inc.

1.4 The New Sustainable Development Goals and the Post-2015 Development Agenda: Implications for Cities and Local Government

Carl Wright
Secretary-General, Commonwealth Local Government Forum (United Kingdom)

Dato’ Seri Arpah binti Abdul Razak
Secretary General, Ministry of Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local government (Malaysia)

Bruce Findlay
Director, Christchurch Rebuild Programme, Inland Revenue (New Zealand)

Dr. Limin Hee
Director of Research Centre for Liveable Cities (Singapore)

Max Everest-Phillips
Director, Global Centre for Public Service Excellence, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (Singapore)

Local government must work with regional and national governments to achieve the internationally developed Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals. Coordination of efforts is crucial to support development. The panel shed light on the challenges and some good practices that can build connections with stakeholders, and move toward shared goals.

This session also highlighted that, amid the efforts for sustainability and growth, sometimes there were unexpected crises that divert attention and delay goal achievement, such as the earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand.

1.5 Citizen-Centred Service and Citizen Engagement

Florence Nyokabi Wachira
Director, Recruitment and Selection, Public Service Commission (Kenya)

Suzanne Walker
Assistant Director, Ministry of Communications and Information (Singapore)

The shift in style of management of service delivery and the methods of delivery, are a major area of transformation. Citizens are more
Readers can find submitted presentation materials at www.capam.org under “CAPAM 2014 Biennial Conference Resources.”

Leaders succeed who focus on establishing a compelling sense of purpose, build trust, and serve citizens. The people orientation must include the citizen, putting them at the centre.

PLENARY SESSION TWO

The plenary featured Dato Sri Dr. Sharifah Zarah Syed Ahmad, Deputy Director General of the Public Service of Malaysia. While supporting transformation, she noted the difficulties some organizations have in moving from rowing to steering, with executives who are more into hierarchical compliance than innovation and service improvement. The challenges to be met, she said, were that public service is still too centralized, hierarchical and bureaucratic, lacking in transformational leadership, low on innovation and creativity, low on analytic ability, low on responsiveness, and stuck in silos with limited external engagement.

For Malaysia to move to its 2020 goal of being a high income, inclusive nation with a sustainable economy, they need to:

- re-engineer processes, to be open, lean, and agile;
- be citizen-centric, providing effective, efficient services;
- be inclusive, get out of silos and into networks
- share values; and
- rely on both good policy and good implementation.

Readers can burrow down into the 46 strategies and 190 initiatives designed to support the transformation, but realize the cycle of transformation never ends, there is always redesign based on monitoring, evaluation, and assessment of impacts.

Professor Dennis Hilgers of Johannes Kepler University in Austria spoke on the subject of crowd sourcing. He suggested government could use methods like those employed by InnoCentive.com to crowd source solutions to difficult problems. He further explained that unobvious outsiders are a major force for innovation that networking with your obvious stakeholders won’t reach.

There is a tremendous intrinsic motivation to solve problems and contribute to solutions. Extrinsic rewards don’t hurt, but intrinsic motivation is powerful. Ask for help.

Public service delivery used to be based on the hierarchical model – the law and policy documents tell you what to produce. It moved to a market style under New
Public Management, steer don’t row, buy don’t provide. Now good governance is seen as networking and collaborating. The next stage is open platforms with open data and open government. Government is to be a platform provider, not a solution provider.

Hilgers gave several examples of where this latter approach has been effective.

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS: THEME 2, TOWARDS A BETTER FUTURE – THE MECHANISMS OF TRANSFORMATION**

The concurrent sessions focused on the tools and techniques to make the transformation to the new model of public service.

Transformation is a journey. It starts with creation of a vision for the future and cuts across needs evaluation, the workplace culture, design, finance and people management. A culture of continuous improvement requires management tools, information and communications technology (ICT), and adoption and adaptation of new and old technologies. Six sessions looked at these issues.

Many of the “mechanisms” dealt, of course, with “people,” and how to manage/lead. Central to the mechanisms discussion was the concept that open data, a chief tool, is not just about putting data out there. It is about seeking and including the discoveries and expertise of others. It is about providing a platform for solutions, not always providing the solutions. Open data is a dialogue, not a dump.

**2.1 Delivering the Change Agenda: Structure and Process Issues**

Leighanne Naicker
Assistant Director, Skills Development, Department of Trade and Industry (South Africa)

Christine Burton
Director General, Marketing, Service Canada (Canada)

Dato’ Sri Alias bin Haji Ahmad
Secretary General, Ministry of Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism (Malaysia)

Organizational culture is key. How do you foster a culture of continuous change? What structures and processes are effective? The South African Department of Trade and Industry managed a massive reorganization, using transformational leadership. Shared Services Canada distinguished discretionary change from mandated change, and identified five key drivers: vision; competencies; resources; action plan; and incentives. And the Malaysian example showed change does not always have to be big – small changes can result in big differences in outcome.

**2.2. E-government for Modern and Responsive Public Services**

Elida Reci
Public Administration and Governance Officer, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)

Encik Wan Mohd Rosdi bin Wan Dolah
Head of ICT Advisory MAMPU (Malaysia)

Information and communications technology (ICT) / E-government
(e-gov) is seen by many as the chief mechanism to drive improved citizen service, cost reduction, transparency and accountability. It requires cross-agency consultation and collaboration, often forcing cultural change.

Different models of e-gov in use across the Commonwealth were described. Government support for ICT was seen as critical to private sector economic development. The do’s and don’ts of managing ICT are an important topic, as many ICT projects run over budget, over time, and do not deliver on their promise. The drivers of failure and the strategies for success were outlined.

Efficiency (doing things right) and effectiveness (doing the right things), attention to people issues, and bridging the digital divide, within and across countries, are all important.

2.3 The Digital Era – The Impact on Public Service
Marie Johnson
Managing Director and Chief Digital Officer, Centre for Digital Business Pty Limited (Australia)

Cassandra Crowley
Former CEO of Local Government Online Limited (LGOL), (New Zealand)

How is social media changing and helping public service delivery and citizen engagement? Studies have shown 60% or more of major government information technology (IT) projects fail to achieve their objectives: “a massive wastage of resources.” Improved management techniques were discussed. The result is a move to “government as a platform” and use of social media.

2.4 Accountability Now!

Fayezul Choudhury
Chief Executive Officer, International Federation of Accountants (IFAC)

Vinod Rai
Former Auditor-General of India, IFAC (India)

Johan Idris
President, Malaysian Institute of Accountants

Rajat Narula
Senior Financial Management Specialist, Governance Global Practice World Bank

Public finance reform is a supporting tool for transformation, especially in transparency. Complex financial statements can be translated into booklets the public can understand. Trusted systems build trust in government. Accrual accounting needs to fully replace cash-based accounting.

2.5 Human Resource Management
Gillian Macintyre
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration (Trinidad and Tobago)

Datin Dr. Rosslina Bt Ahmad Mokhtar
Service Division, Public Service Department (Malaysia)

Odette Ramsingh
Group Human Resources Executive, Metropolitan Health (South Africa)

Transformation in public service delivery requires a renewed architecture of the public service, including more professional middle managers supporting the core work of the public service. Developing a new corporate culture is key, where public servants learn to deconstruct and manage risk, stay resilient, and are rewarded for their work.

Public sector human resource management is more complicated than in the private sector, especially with the role of unions. Many countries work on life-long employment, focused on attracting, retaining, and developing staff. There tends to be more of a focus on individual performance than on the organizational culture. Engaged and motivated staff are needed. The ability to “carry deadwood” is long gone.

Still, the first fundamental step is to provide clarity on the mandate and a deep understanding of the country and agency’s vision. Then it is important to provide the tools, evaluate performance, and deal with poor performance.

2.6 Good Governance and Public Service Transformation
Ian Macdonald
President Emeritus of York University (Canada)

Dr. Patrick M. Sokhela
Chief Director, Research and Public Administration Discourse, Department of Public Service and Administration (South Africa)

Datuk Dr. Md. Tap Salleh
President, Institute of Integrity Malaysia
New arms-length delivery systems are being developed, but in some cases the governance and oversight lags, so confidence in the new systems drops. There is a constant press for better governance and control over government spending.

Traditional models need to change, but the new models must be governed and accountable. Privatization of functions and some public-private partnerships cede government governance, and reduce accountability. Government needs to retain some policy control. South Africa described its change management model. Malaysia described its experience in promoting integrity through governance mechanisms, including the Anti-Corruption Commission, whistle-blower protection, and integrity pacts.

External verifications, such as Transparency International ratings, were cited as useful measures of progress.

**PLENARY SESSION THREE**

What does public service need to transform in order to adapt and thrive, to be sustainable?

**Graham Teskey**, Principal Governance Specialist, Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia, looked at what works in aid and development. How do you build resilience and more effective institutions? Different countries face different challenges, so different solutions are needed. There is no one best model for international agencies to impose.

But there do seem to be key success factors, including: voice and accountability; political stability up, terrorism down; effective governance; regulatory quality; quality of public administration; and reduced corruption.

*In other words, the basis for development is trusted, honest governance and public service.*

As a result, initial focus should be on core government management (treasury, HR, ICT), then, later on, focus on improved service delivery. Without the former, you won't get the latter.

Asking the right questions helps focus: why (the vision, purpose); what (clarify the problem); how (the mechanisms, tools); whether (is there enough support?).

At its heart, one problem with delivering good public service is that in some places politicians do not value citizens. Politics is too important to be left to politicians and political scientists, so everyone needs to be involved.

**Mark Rozario**, CEO of the Malaysia Innovation Agency stressed the need to “embrace” innovation, not just seek minor improvements. Leaders should demand results, with integrity, creating value through continuous improvement. Resilience and sustainability will come through empowered people providing excellent service. Better tools, design thinking, enhanced delivery, public-private partnerships – are all mechanisms that can be used. Set goals, break the “mental ceiling,” provide a map to the stars.

*In response to a question about how governments often respond well in a crisis, Rozario observed that crisis managers often take risks they wouldn’t in normal situations, and these risks pay off. People accept that there will be failures, and to learn from them.*

Several concurrent panels supported the theme of taking risks.

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS: THEME 3, BUILDING GLOBAL RESILIENCE**

3.1 Enabling Framework for Transformation in the Public Sector

**Margaret Saner**
President, United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration (United Kingdom)

**Margaret Kobia, PhD**
Chairperson, Public Service Commission (Kenya)

**Dr. Matyawa Busieka**
Acting Chief Director, International Cooperation Programmes, Department of Public Service and Administration (South Africa)

The president of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration reviewed implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the agenda for 2015, which focuses on building trust in government in
pursuit of sustainable development goals in three broad areas:

- redefining relationships to support participatory governance and responsive public service delivery;
- strengthening innovation, informed decision-making, and policy development for enhanced impact; and
- promoting accountable institutions, ethical leadership, and integrity.

The specific example of Kenya’s efforts was described, which includes revising the constitution and building a framework for public service delivery reform keying on accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness.

The African Charter was described as a framework for public service transformation. It includes a focus on equality between men and women, harmonization of policies, and networking and cooperation among member states. Rigorous implementation, rather than a laissez-faire attitude, is needed.

3.2 Women as Equal Partners in the Public Sector.

Meredith Edwards
Professor Emeritus, Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis, University of Canberra (Australia)

Julius Mukunda
Senior Programmes Director, Forum for Women in Democracy (Uganda)

Dato’ Sabariah Hassan
Secretary General, Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (Malaysia)

Since earlier sessions identified the need for the public service to engage with citizens and staff, and to be changeable, there is a need for women to be equal partners. Not simply as representatives of half the population, but also for their communication, collaboration, consensus building skills, and attention to family values and relationships.

There is considerable variance in the extent of women’s contribution to public service, across the Commonwealth. Some are underrepresented throughout. Others have many women at the lower levels but not top management. Even in countries where women are well represented in the public service management, they are not well represented in the elected class, the primary source of policy-making, which ultimately controls and directs the public service.

Barriers to be overcome were identified, strategies to do so discussed, and examples of progress described. It is a continuum, from educational opportunities, to childcare, to setting quotas and passing legislation. In developing countries, the education of women is increasing dramatically and putting pressure to involve them more in public service.

Ultimately, it is a cultural shift to value women’s contributions, remove the glass ceiling, and transform how politics and public service is done.
3.3 Public-Private Partnerships for a Better Impact.
Ahmad Zamri Khairuddin
Senior Director, PPP Policy Section
Prime Minister’s Department (Malaysia)

Ian MacDonald
President Emeritus, York University (Canada)

Jamie Tibbetts
Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Financial Officer, Health Canada

The potential contribution to global resilience is the ability to fund projects that government wouldn’t normally be able to support, and to get them completed more rapidly, creating employment, improving the infrastructure and the economy.

One speaker who, described PPPs as “politically popular partnerships”, sounded a more cautious note. PPPs do have risks, and while the intent is to transfer the risk to the private sector, caution is needed that it isn’t reversed onto the public.

The potential for corruption needs to be managed. It is important that government retain policy control, and the risks be absorbed by the private sector.

Project definition and project management were seen as crucial. Lessons learned include: diagnose and plan; don’t underestimate the costs, including management costs; and ensure a win-win situation.

3.4 Innovation is the Solution!
Elida Reci
Public Administration and Governance Officer
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)

Dato’ Sri Dr. Noorul Ainur binti Mohd Nur
Secretary General, Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MOSTI) (Malaysia)

Dr. Atolagbe Alege Gambari
Director of Studies, Department of Research & Publications, The Administrative College of Nigeria (Nigeria)

Innovation is central to sustainability. For developing countries, aligning national priorities with international development goals and focusing on innovation in those areas is recommended. Innovation should be demand driven (bottom up) and mandated (top down).

The impediments to innovation tend to be cultural and organizational, and the stimulants are to reduce the rigidity of regulations, change the fear of risk-taking, and have a society that values innovation.

The Commonwealth is a good source of innovative ideas, as is the United Nations. Collaboration among all sectors (government, public service, academia, industry, the public, and internationally) contributes to creativity.

3.5 Overview of Financial Reporting Systems in the Public Service and Country Experiences in Adoption
Thomas Mueller-Marques Berger
Partner, Head of International Public Sector Accounting Standards, Ernst & Young (Germany)

Ken Warren
Chief Accounting Advisor, New Zealand Treasury (New Zealand)

Rachid El Bejjet
Head, Department of Accounting Cooperation, Treasury General of the Kingdom of Morocco

Datuk Wan Selamah Wan Sulaiman
Accountant General of Malaysia

Continued deficit financing is not sustainable. Accrual accounting was described as superior to cash accounting, and the experiences of New Zealand and Morocco were discussed. Implementation keys mentioned were: the need for support of the transition from the political and executive levels; education of and consultation with citizens; and the use of information technology.

Good financial reporting systems and accrual accounting were mentioned in the “mechanisms” section, and reinforced in the “resilience” section. Resilience also requires deficit reduction and debt reduction. Countries that have lower debt tend to have greater fiscal transparency.

The International Public Sector Accounting Standards Board provides good guidance for
improved financial management. Panellists advocated that nations should move to IPSAS standards.

### 3.6 Changing Systems, Changing Behaviours

**Dr. Abd Halim Bin Mohd Hussin**

Director, Psychological Management Division, Public Service Department (Malaysia)

**Dr. Suziana Ahmed Shukor, PhD**

(Law)

University of Kent (United Kingdom)

Demand management is a technique that can help shift policy and practice to improve resilience while adjusting for demographic changes and changing citizen expectations.

The Malaysian system relies on: strong leadership; a comprehensive framework; change management; outcome focus; evaluation and monitoring; and training and development.

Process improvement tools, and the use of change champions and project ambassadors were noted. And yes, it takes courage to change one’s behaviour and sustain organizational resilience.

### COMMON THREADS

To this observer, some common threads were woven throughout the conference that are worth highlighting.

1. **The principles of good public management remain the same. The practices vary, depending on the circumstances.**

Among several speakers who articulated this model, **Daniel Watson** (Chief Human Resource Officer, Government of Canada) shared how on the Canadian prairie, where he grew up, the principles of farming had always been the same: prepare the soil, select the seed, ensure moisture and nutrition, remove the weeds, and then, and only then, harvest the crop.

Those are the same principles as when land was first cultivated there in the 1880s, and the same principles apply to farming in all 53 Commonwealth countries. For example, on the Canadian prairie, a main tool is a huge, multiple-wheel drive tractor, with a six-speaker sound system, a cooler for drinks, and a twenty-bottom plough. It does a hectare in minutes. In Thailand, a main tool is the “iron ox,” a small, walk-behind motorized one-bottom plough. Each tool is used for the same principle: to prepare the soil. But the huge Canadian tractor would soon bog down in the rice paddies of Thailand; the iron ox would take forever to break sod on huge Canadian farms. Same principles, differing good practices.

Analysis is needed, as we share good practices, to understand the underlying principles and apply the tools appropriately to the situation.

2. **Government is where the tough problems come to be addressed.**

Like Alice and the Red Queen, we need to learn to transform our organizations and our approaches to deal with future challenges.

3. **Silos need to be broken down.**

Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin stated: “the silo mentality needs to be broken down and organisations have to learn to work in unison like the fingers of the hand. Structures and procedures need to be streamlined so that public servants can network with one another.” Many other speakers repeated this sentiment.

Much of the innovation in governance has been around task forces and teams, new governance structures outside the silos. But many speakers called for destruction of the silos, and creating of new collaborative structures, rather than “work-arounds” such as task forces and poking holes in the silos.

4. **An internal locus of control.**

Some public servants feel overwhelmed; they feel pressured to “do more with less” or to become “more like the private sector.” But the leaders speaking at the conference had a more positive focus, which was that they were in control and were committed to “providing better service at lower cost.” Many exchanged techniques and tools to do that.

It is not enough to have a mandate to improve; the desire to improve must be embraced by all. Public service should be seen as an exciting opportunity to be innovative and improve service while reducing costs. People need to be empowered more than pushed. They need to be provided with better tools.
5. Honesty and courage.
“Speaking truth to power” is sometimes honoured more in the saying than the doing. At this conference, there was, among some speakers, a remarkable degree of candour.

Participants especially appreciated those speakers who showed honesty and courage: for example by providing the objectives, doing a gap analysis between the current state and the desired state that is not necessarily flattering, followed however by a plan on how the gaps would be closed.

Without honest self-assessment and reflection, it is very difficult to improve, but it is also sometimes difficult to publicly state that reality. As one participant observed: “I haven’t seen this type of presentation in a long time.” It takes courage and insight. Greater use of these behaviours is part of the new conversation on transformation.

Give people the freedom to do better.

Many saw PPPs as a solution, while others noted some failures and the need for vigilance in their management.

FROM THE CAPAM PUTRAJAYA CONFERENCE STATEMENT 2014
At the conclusion of the Conference, CAPAM issued a Statement summarizing what delegates had just experienced. In part, the Statement declared:

Shaping the Future Together
The conference reaffirmed the importance of the “people” aspect of transformation, highlighting the critical importance of active engagement both with citizens and within the public service itself. Commonwealth public service leaders understood that the prevailing public service models needed to change in order to deliver citizen-centred services.

Celebrating our contributions to society is important.

The conference focused on the emerging trend of employers’ strategies to motivate employees and increase workplace engagement. The willingness of politicians and public service executives to engage their workforce throughout the transformation process, of “humanizing” the workplace, will be crucial. Recruiting and retaining intrinsically motivated public servants is important. As is removing impediments to them doing a good job. Extrinsic rewards help as well.

Leadership remains fundamental. But many will need to learn a new style of leadership in order to be effective. Leaders who focus on establishing a compelling sense of purpose, building trust in public institutions, and serving citizens, will be more effective.

One of the most remarkable areas of transformation within the public service is the shift in the style of management and methods of service delivery. Public Service Organizations are being called upon to place citizens at the centre of policy-making, not merely as recipients of services but rather as active participants who can bring ideas and insights to ensure effective delivery in accordance with citizen needs. In this regard, “crowdsourcing,” “co-creation,” and “co-production” have emerged as models of collaboration between governments and citizens.

Towards a Better Future
There is a continued need to employ appropriate “mechanisms/tools/processes” in the transformation of the public service, including business process re-engineering, new technologies in service delivery and new methodologies in policy formulation. The public service should take advantage of emerging technologies, stay abreast with good practices, and sustain a culture of continuous change in the workplace. Rather than relying on an external expert to tell organizations what to do, they need to reflect on their situation, analyze the gaps, and move to improve, using the tools discussed, which are adapted to their situation.

While information and communications technologies are a key tool, managers should not rely exclusively on ICT to drive transformation. The IT tools are, however, very important to improve service while reducing costs.

Building Global Resilience
A highlight of the conference, that will have an ongoing impact, was the signing of letters of intent to establish a new Public Private Partnership (PPP) Commonwealth Centre.
Comments from participants can be seen as a call to action to:

- work together in the future,
- share our frameworks for and experience with public service transformation,
- implement the letter of understanding on the centre of excellence for public private partnerships, and
- the importance of meeting again at the 2016 Biennial Conference.

**GOING FORWARD**

One of the over-arching themes raised was that empowered people can better provide excellent service. Participants agreed to enhance public sector transformation by sharing and applying the knowledge, good practices and experiences gleaned from “the new conversation” stimulated by this conference.

**CONFERECE EVALUATION**

The conference was seen as exceeding expectations. Our hosts, the Malaysian government, invested a lot of thought, effort, and funding into making this a highly productive conference. This was very much appreciated. For the inevitable adjustments, there were crews from CAPAM and Malaysia responding, working together, and making it seem like a swan’s trip across the lake: regal, calm, and placid; but propelled by hard paddling underneath the surface.

One person remarked: “I usually come for the networking. But this conference, the content was great as well. The presentations were so interesting that, even with the time change, I didn’t fall asleep in a single session.” Another wrote: “The conference was spot on based on pragmatism and on-the-ground reality. I haven’t seen this type of presentation in a long time.” The level of honest self-reflection, compared to self-accolades, was up considerably.

“Thank you so much for an outstanding conference that was rich in contributions and ensuring we experienced as much of Malaysia as possible in such a short time.” Another wrote: “MAMPU was a phenomenal host. The hospitality contributed to an unforgettable experience.”

The substantive message was: “Thank you very much for a well-organized conference. We look forward to continuing the conversation.”

For those who attended the conference but have not yet completed an evaluation, please visit www.capam.org to access the conference survey.

The conversation will be continued, through CAPAM Regional events, bilateral and multilateral connections, and the 2016 Biennial Conference. Be sure to network, contribute, and learn.

Dr. Paul Crookall, Executive Director with Excellence Canada, prepared this summary with files from the team of reporters from the host committee of the Government of Malaysia and input from CAPAM staff.