

Enhancing public sector productivity in Jordan

POLICY NOTE

In Jordan, governments depend on capable and motivated civil servants to design policies, deliver services, and manage scarce resources. Research shows that productivity depends not only on what skills officials learn through training, but also on who is recruited into the civil service, how careers advance, and how staff are managed and incentivised on the job. Economists describe these two dimensions as the extensive margin (outreach, recruitment, selection, onboarding/assignment) and the intensive margin (management practices, financial and non-financial incentives, career progression and promotions, workplace support).

This policy note draws on IGC research and global evidence to highlight lessons for Jordan. It emphasises that while IPA's core training mandate is an important entry point, it is not a complete solution. Training only produces lasting gains when embedded in broader systems of merit-based recruitment, clear career incentives, and effective management practices.

Policy takeaway: Effective reforms strengthen recruitment and promotion systems, balance financial and non-financial incentives, embed training into HR frameworks, and are sequenced gradually through piloting and evaluation.

Salma Shaheen

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
The extensive margin (recruitment and entry)	5
Civil service recruitment: attracting, screening, and selecting the right people	5
The intensive margin (management, incentives, career progression/promotions, and workplace support)	7
Incentives and civil service motivation	7
Promotions: Turning effort and learning into advancement	9
Management practices	9
HR systems and workplace support.....	10
Training – a critical but incomplete lever	11
Does training improve productivity in the civil service?	11
What kinds of training work best?	12
Institutional factors that enable training impact.....	12
Comparative models	13
Implementation and sequencing	14
Why sequencing matters.....	14
IPA as a reform laboratory	14
The role of administrative data	15
Sequencing steps for Jordan	16
Conclusion and way forward	17
References	19

Introduction

Civil service effectiveness is central to state capacity, citizen trust, and economic growth. Governments depend on a motivated and capable bureaucracy to design and implement policy, deliver services, and manage resources. For Jordan, strengthening civil service productivity is a core priority of both the Public Sector Modernisation Vision (PSMV), which emphasises professionalisation, merit-based advancement, and efficiency, and the Economic Modernisation Vision (EMV), which places capable public institutions at the heart of job creation and investment.

At the request of the Prime Ministry and Government of Jordan (GoJ), IGC Jordan has prepared this policy note to frame how productivity can be enhanced through reforms centred on the Institute of Public Administration (IPA). As Jordan's national training institution, IPA is uniquely positioned to shape the skills and ethos of the civil service. However, global evidence makes clear that training alone cannot deliver sustained improvements. Productivity gains arise from two interconnected dimensions:

- **Extensive margin:** who is recruited into the civil service and how they are screened for skills and motivation.
- **Intensive margin:** once they are on the job, how civil servants are supported, managed, and incentivised to perform, including how their careers advance through promotion systems.

Training sits across both dimensions. It can be transformative when linked to recruitment and promotion (for example, tied to career advancement or competency frameworks). When isolated, its effects are often temporary.

This note synthesises economic literature and IGC research to provide practical lessons for Jordan. It is structured around four core sections:

- **Recruitment (extensive margin):** Evidence shows who enters the civil service and how candidates are screened for ability and mission fit shape productivity from the outset.
 - ✓ *Policy takeaway: Transparent, merit-based recruitment and mission-fit screening increase the effectiveness and motivation of new civil servants.*
- **Management, incentives, career progression, and workplace support (intensive margin):** Productivity depends on how civil servants are managed, incentivised, and supported once on the job, including how their careers advance through promotion systems.
 - ✓ *Policy takeaway: Balanced financial and non-financial incentives, performance-linked promotions, and supportive management practices drive sustained improvements in motivation and performance.*

- **Training (IPA's mandate):** Training is a critical but incomplete lever. It works best when embedded in HR systems, linked to promotions, tailored to local needs, and reinforced by mentoring and follow-up.
 - ✓ *Policy takeaway: Position IPA as a driver of reform by moving towards blended learning, integrating training with promotion criteria, and systematically evaluating impact.*
- **Implementation and sequencing:** Even the best-designed reforms fail without careful sequencing and adaptation.
 - ✓ *Policy takeaway: Pilot reforms through IPA, measure outcomes, iterate, and scale gradually-while leveraging low-cost technologies for monitoring and performance support.*

The Prime Ministry's request for an impact assessment of IPA provides a concrete entry point. Training is central to IPA's role and will be the first focus of collaboration between IGC and the government. However, IPA should not be seen only as a training provider – it can become a laboratory for reform, testing new approaches in recruitment, incentives, promotions, and management, and feeding evidence into national HR and PSMV reforms.

In short, this note situates IPA within the broader challenge of improving civil service productivity. Training is the starting point, but not the end point. The broader objective is to help Jordan gradually build an evidence-based system of civil service management, aligned with PSMV and EMV, to deliver a more capable, professional, and citizen-oriented public administration.

The extensive margin (recruitment and entry)

The extensive margin covers everything that happens before and at entry to the civil service: outreach and attraction, recruitment and selection, posting or initial assignment, and probation. It is essential because it determines who joins the state and in what roles. If systems fail to attract capable, motivated people at entry, later fixes – whether through training, pay reforms, or IT systems – deliver much less. Put simply: getting recruitment right makes every other reform more effective (Dal Bó, Finan, & Rossi, 2013; Ashraf, Bandiera, & Lee, 2014).

Civil service recruitment: attracting, screening, and selecting the right people

Recruitment is pivotal.

Public jobs are heavily oversubscribed in many countries – there are far more applicants than available posts. This oversubscription creates an opportunity: even without raising pay, governments can raise entry standards and screen for mission fit (motivation to serve) and job-relevant ability (Dal Bó, Finan, & Rossi, 2013).

What the evidence says.

- **Wages vs. screening.** Higher wages attract stronger and more pro-social applicants (Dal Bó, Finan, & Rossi, 2013). However, when budgets are tight, better screening-aptitude tests, situational judgement tasks, work-sample exercises, and mission-fit measures can lift entry quality at low cost. (Dal Bó, Finan, & Rossi, 2013; Uganda teacher recruitment studies).
- **Career incentives at recruitment work – and do not crowd out pro-social.** In Zambia, IGC field experiments varied the recruitment message for Community Health Assistants. Emphasising career incentives (a visible path to higher-ranked posts) attracted more able applicants without reducing pro-social motivation; recruits hired under the career message delivered more services on the job (for example, +29% household visits, 2× more community meetings) with no drop in retention (Ashraf, Bandiera, & Lee, 2014, 2016)
- **Screening for mission fit.** Evidence shows that governments can screen for both ability and public-service motivation. IGC's research in Zambia found no trade-off: "career-minded" recruits were equally community-oriented and performed better overall (Ashraf, Bandiera, & Lee, 2014, 2016).
- **Diversity and fairness.** Transparent, rules-based recruitment reduces patronage and expands the pool of capable women and underrepresented

groups – improving equity and average performance (global recruitment studies; IGC synthesis).

Recommendations for policy design.

- ✓ Treat oversubscription as an asset. Raise the bar with structured tests and reduce reliance on generic interviews.
- ✓ Signal a career ladder at the vacancy stage (clear paths, timed promotions, competency requirements); this attracts better applicants and sets expectations early (Ashraf, Bandiera, & Lee, 2014, 2016).
- ✓ Use work-sample or case-based exercises linked to the actual job (for example, a short policy brief for analysts; a citizen-service scenario for front-office staff).
- ✓ Add mission-fit screens (short situational items on integrity or citizen orientation) alongside ability tests.

IGC evidence insight: Zambia health workers recruitment study

This study focused on recruiting community health assistants (CHAs) in rural Zambia. These were entry-level health workers with limited formal education, recruited to serve remote communities. While the context differs, the findings illustrate broader lessons about how recruitment messaging shapes the quality and motivation of applicants.

Key findings:

Career incentives do not crowd out "do-gooders." Job ads that highlighted career progression attracted applicants with stronger ability, without reducing pro-social motivation (Ashraf, Bandiera, & Lee, 2014, 2016).

Career incentives improved services. Recruits hired under the career-ladder message delivered 29% more household visits (their primary task) and organised twice as many community meetings, with no reduction in retention (Ashraf, Bandiera, & Lee, 2014, 2016).

Policy impact was significant. Findings shaped the government's scale-up of the Community Health Assistant programme. In October 2018, the WHO issued a guideline recommending a career ladder for community health workers – explicitly grounded in this IGC study (WHO, 2018).

What "career incentives" mean here: clear, forward-looking advancement opportunities (promotion pathways, eligibility for higher-ranked posts) signalled at recruitment to attract applicants with stronger ability and ambition – without losing pro-social motivation.

The intensive margin (management, incentives, career progression/promotions, and workplace support)

While recruitment determines who enters the civil service, productivity ultimately depends on what happens after entry. The intensive margin covers the daily practices, incentives, career progression systems, and workplace conditions that shape how civil servants perform once on the job, including how staff are managed, motivated, and supported and how their careers advance through promotions.

Even the most talented recruits will underperform if they are poorly managed, face distorted incentives, or lack the tools and authority to act. Conversely, well-designed management and promotion systems can transform average workers into highly effective ones. Therefore, the intensive margin is where recruitment investments are consolidated – or wasted – depending on how staff are managed and motivated throughout their careers.

Incentives and civil service motivation

A central question in civil service reform is: what motivates public officials to perform?

Economic research shows both the potential and the risks of incentives. Properly designed incentives can raise effort, but poorly designed systems may backfire – discouraging initiative, crowding out intrinsic motivation, or encouraging workers to game the system. This is often described as the "multitasking problem" (Finan, Olken, & Pande, 2017): when officials are rewarded only for outputs that are easy to measure (for example, number of forms processed), they may neglect equally important but harder-to-measure tasks (for example, quality of service or citizen engagement).

Financial incentives.

- Performance incentives can work. A series of randomised experiments conducted by tax authorities in Punjab, Pakistan, in collaboration with IGC researchers from 2010 to 2014, found that offering monetary (performance pay) and non-monetary incentives (better job postings) for property tax collectors to improve their job performance helped increase tax revenues (see our tax impact case for more). The large monetary bonuses increased revenues collected by 9-13 percentage points, more than covering their cost. Interestingly, non-monetary incentives – such as merit-based transfers to more desirable postings – had an even greater effect, increasing revenues by 44-80% at no extra cost to government (Khan, Khwaja, & Olken, 2016).
- However, financial incentives are not always good. IGC evidence from Ghana's police service shows the limits of salary-based reforms. The study

found that raising base salaries alone did not reduce corruption. In fact, while bribes were solicited less frequently, the average size of bribes increased by 23%, suggesting that salary increases without accompanying accountability measures can simply inflate rent-seeking behaviour (Foltz & Opoku-Agyemang, 2015).

Non-financial incentives.

Governments can also shape motivation through recognition, career development, and organisational prestige. In Ethiopia, a nationwide IGC survey revealed that civil servants identified a lack of motivation and prestige as core challenges. Recommendations included introducing competitive entry exams, providing resources for frontline work, and focusing leadership training on staff motivation. The government has since adapted its Civil Service Proclamation (2018) to introduce competency-based HR systems and update its Balanced Scorecard and Citizens' Charter tools (Somani, Dercon, & Rogger, 2018).

Key takeaway: Balancing intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is key.

We have seen that cash can work but also backfire, and non-cash recognition often helps. The deeper lesson is that civil servants are motivated not only by pay and promotions (extrinsic incentives) but also by professional pride and public service ethos (intrinsic motivation). Reforms must therefore balance the two. Overemphasising financial rewards can crowd out intrinsic drive, while relying only on ethos risks complacency. The most effective approach is to:

- ✓ Select intrinsically motivated individuals at entry.
- ✓ Strengthen ethos through training and recognition.
- ✓ Reinforce with transparent promotions, accountability, and fair career progression.

For instance, in Pakistan, training bureaucrats in empathy increased citizen-oriented behaviours by 33% – but only when managers reinforced these behaviours through recognition and feedback (Ashraf & Bandiera, 2018).

Case study: Rwanda's *Imihigo* performance contracts

In 2006, Rwanda launched *Imihigo*, a system of annual performance contracts signed between government officials and the President. District mayors, ministers, and senior managers commit to clear, measurable targets each year, and progress is reviewed publicly through high-profile ceremonies and media coverage.

The results have been striking. Studies show that *Imihigo* increased project completion rates, improved service delivery, and strengthened coordination between ministries and districts (Chemouni, 2014; World Bank, 2020). By combining modern performance management with Rwanda's traditional practice of public pledges, the system created strong accountability and motivated officials to deliver. Crucially, it worked through non-monetary incentives: visibility, recognition, and career consequences for failing to meet targets.

For Jordan, *Imihigo* offers two key lessons: 1) accountability does not need to be purely financial. Public recognition, transparency, and visible reporting can be powerful motivators. 2) Performance contracts can strengthen alignment. Ministries could sign annual performance agreements linked directly to PSMV and EMV, with progress tracked through simple dashboards and reinforced by IPA's training and evaluation role.

Promotions: Turning effort and learning into advancement

Promotions matter a lot.

Promotions are among the strongest day-to-day incentives civil servants encounter. If advancement is automatic with seniority, staff have little reason to stretch, learn, or apply new skills. Merit-based promotions, by contrast, create a powerful link between effort, training, and advancement.

What the evidence says

- **Merit vs. seniority.** In Sierra Leone's health sector, linking promotions to performance raised worker output by around 22%, with the largest gains among high performers who finally saw a credible path to advance (Deserranno, Kazianga, & Poupakis, 2025).
- **Information and discretion can help if well-aligned.** Evidence from Pakistan's Administrative Service shows that when senior officials had discretion over promotions, they often used private information (such as observed competence in day-to-day work) to identify "hidden gems" and advance high-merit juniors; this suggests that carefully bounded discretion, with the right incentives for supervisors, can surface talent better than rigid seniority-based rules (Rana, 2019).

Recommendations for policy design.

- ✓ Make promotions contestable and criteria-based (transparent rubrics; evidence portfolios; peer/supervisor inputs).
- ✓ Link promotions to demonstrated application of skills (for example, post-training projects, improved team KPIs), not just course attendance.
- ✓ Allow bounded managerial discretion where supervisors have clear incentives and are audited with data – so discretion is used to surface merit, not favouritism (Rana 2019).

Management practices

Beyond incentives and promotions, the quality of management plays a central role in civil servants' performance. Research shows that differences in practices – clear targets, feedback, and monitoring – explain large productivity gaps across organisations (Bloom et al., 2015).

In the public sector, IGC studies underline this lesson.

- **In Nigeria**, analysis of over 6,000 projects showed that ministries with greater bureaucratic autonomy completed more projects successfully. By contrast, systems centred on strict monitoring and performance pay were linked to lower effectiveness, suggesting that excessive control can undermine autonomy and performance (Rogger, Attanasio, & Rasul, 2017).
- **In Ghana**, introducing more supportive management practices improved motivation and service quality, shaping the curriculum of the Civil Service Training Centre (Rasul et al., 2017).
- **In Pakistan**, reforms to procurement built the Punjab Online Procurement System (POPS), covering 1,500 public bodies. By enabling data-driven oversight, POPS improved transparency and efficiency and was scaled up after high-level policy engagement (Bandiera, Best, Khan, & Prat, 2018).

HR systems and workplace support

Effective management requires reliable HR and payroll systems to allocate staff and track performance. In Zambia, IGC collaborated with the Cabinet Office to clean and digitise civil service payroll and HR records. The exercise revealed substantial mismatches in postings (for example, ghost workers, misallocated teachers) and created tools for better personnel monitoring, feeding into broader teacher and health workforce reforms (Ashraf, Bandiera, & Walter, 2018).

Training – a critical but incomplete lever

Training is one of the most visible tools governments deploy to improve civil service performance, and in Jordan, it is the core mandate of the Institute of Public Administration (IPA). The Prime Ministry has requested IGC Jordan to conduct an impact assessment of IPA's programmes – this makes training the natural first step in collaboration. However, evidence is clear: training is not a silver bullet. It can improve skills and behaviours, but it rarely delivers lasting productivity gains unless integrated with recruitment, promotion, incentives, and management systems.

In other words, training amplifies what happens at the extensive and intensive margins. If the right candidates are recruited (extensive margin) and civil servants are well-managed, incentivised, and promoted on merit (intensive margin), then training can act as a catalyst that reinforces and scales improvements. If these conditions are missing, training risks becoming a box-ticking exercise.

Does training improve productivity in the civil service?

Evidence consistently shows that training increases knowledge in the short term, but the challenge is sustaining behavioural change and productivity gains over time. Studies of training programmes for teachers, health workers, and bureaucrats highlight this pattern: immediate improvements in test scores or knowledge, but more modest effects on workplace performance unless complementary systems support the transfer of learning (World Bank, 2017; Williams, Rogger, & Rasul, 2018).

Yet when training is designed with application and follow-up in mind, it can shift both technical practices and public service ethos. In Pakistan, training senior policymakers in data analysis increased their use of evidence by 50% and made them three times more likely to fund rigorous evaluations (Bandiera, Khan, & Levy, 2023). A complementary programme on empathy and pro-social behaviour increased altruistic behaviours by 33% – from service site visits to citizen-oriented communication (Ashraf, Bandiera, & Lee, 2014). These results demonstrate that civil service training can influence technical skills, motivation, and values.

The same lesson appears in Ghana, where the IGC's *Training for Productivity* project experimentally evaluated new training methods for bureaucrats. Modules on applied problem-solving, role-playing, and simulations improved engagement. Group-based follow-up sessions generated collective ownership of new practices, showing that reinforcement within teams is critical (Williams, Rogger, & Rasul, 2018).

What kinds of training work best?

Skills taught.

Training content matters. Technical skills (for example, IT, procurement, data analysis) are easier to measure and directly tied to tasks, but "softer" skills – including leadership, ethics, communication, and management skills – are equally critical for long-term productivity. In Pakistan, empathy training produced measurable increases in citizen-oriented behaviours (Ashraf, Bandiera, & Lee, 2014). The most effective training combines these domains: technical competencies to perform tasks efficiently, and managerial/soft skills to deliver services with integrity and responsiveness.

Tailored versus generic.

Generic, off-the-shelf courses often yield low engagement. Tailored programmes that use local case studies and agency-specific problems have far stronger effects (Williams, Rogger, & Rasul, 2018). Even small adaptations – such as embedding Jordan-specific reform priorities (for example, EMV implementation, service delivery bottlenecks) – can improve uptake.

Follow-up and reinforcement.

The strongest evidence highlights post-training reinforcement. A World Bank meta-analysis of teacher training showed coaching tripled the impact of initial workshops, improving instructional quality by +0.58 SD and student learning by +0.15 SD (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018). In bureaucracies, supervisors who reinforce lessons through recognition and feedback also increase the likelihood that skills are applied (Williams, Rogger, & Rasul, 2018).

Institutional factors that enable training impact

Training outcomes depend heavily on institutional design.

- **Integration with HR systems.** Training has a greater impact when linked to promotions and competency frameworks. In Sierra Leone's health sector, merit-based promotion rules raised worker output by 22% (Deserranno, Kazianga, & Poupakis, 2025). Linking IPA certification to promotion in Jordan would similarly raise the stakes for engagement.
- **Organisational alignment.** Training tied to reform priorities yields stronger results. Singapore's Civil Service College explicitly aligns its programmes with long-term national plans, ensuring learning is relevant (Ong, 2020).
- **Performance accountability.** Without accountability, training effects fade. Rwanda's Imihigo contracts create accountability for applying new skills, fostering a culture of delivery (Chemouni, 2014; World Bank, 2020).
- **Enabling environment.** Training in digital tools, for example, will only translate into productivity gains if infrastructure (functioning IT systems) is in place.

Comparative models

- **United Kingdom.** Civil Service Learning uses a four-level framework (reaction, learning, behaviour, results). Early reviews found that while most trainings met knowledge goals, only two-thirds showed observable behaviour change (Civil Service World, 2013). More recent evaluations (NAO, 2021) highlight ongoing challenges in linking training to productivity outcomes – underlining the importance of measuring behaviour and results, not just satisfaction and knowledge.
- **Singapore.** The Civil Service College ties training to long-term national strategies and tracks not just individual learning but contributions to inter-agency collaboration and policy adoption (Ong, 2020).
- **Rwanda.** The National Induction Programme embeds values of citizen service from day one, instilling a “Team Rwanda” ethos. Graduates are tracked throughout their careers, ensuring accountability and alignment (PEMANDU Associates, 2023).

Recommendations for Jordan.

For Jordan, IPA's central role makes training the logical entry point for reform, but the evidence is clear: training works best when embedded in broader systems of recruitment, incentives, and management. To maximise impact, Jordan can consider:

- ✓ Integrating training into HR systems. Make IPA certification and demonstrated application of skills part of promotion and career progression criteria.
- ✓ Tailoring training to reform priorities. Ensure curricula directly address Jordan's EMV and PSMV priorities (for example, service delivery bottlenecks, citizen-orientation).
- ✓ Reinforcing learning on the job. Strengthen managerial practices (coaching, feedback, recognition) so that lessons from IPA are applied in daily work.
- ✓ Evaluating outcomes. Use multi-level evaluation frameworks (reaction, learning, behaviour, results) to assess whether training translates into real productivity gains, drawing on recent UK and Ghana lessons.

If embedded in HR systems and national reform priorities, IPA can evolve from a training provider into a driver of civil service productivity reform.

Implementation and sequencing

Designing better recruitment, promotion, incentive, and training systems is only half the battle. The greater challenge is implementation – turning good ideas into sustainable reforms that raise public sector productivity. Implementation is particularly important in Jordan, where the Prime Ministry has asked IGC to begin with an impact assessment of the Institute of Public Administration (IPA). Training is therefore the immediate entry point, but as Sections 1–3 have shown, training only delivers lasting gains when embedded in the broader system of recruitment (extensive margin) and management, incentives, and promotions (intensive margin). Sequencing reforms in the right order is therefore critical to ensure IPA's work is not an isolated exercise but the start of a broader productivity agenda.

Why sequencing matters

Global evidence shows large-scale reforms fail when introduced too quickly or transplanted wholesale from other contexts. Andrews, Pritchett, and Woolcock (2017) call this the "capability trap": reforms look impressive on paper but collapse in practice due to political resistance, administrative overload, or lack of local adaptation. By contrast, gradual, problem-driven, and adaptive reforms have the greatest chance of success.

- **In Kenya**, teacher incentive reforms succeeded only when piloted locally, adapted iteratively, and scaled up after evidence showed results.
- **In Nigeria**, reforms to reduce health worker absenteeism worked when trialled in a small set of facilities with feedback loops but failed when imposed nationwide.
- **In Chile**, teacher evaluations were gradually adjusted and strengthened, which built political credibility over time.

The lesson is clear: sequencing matters as much as design.

IPA as a reform laboratory

Jordan can apply these lessons by treating IPA not only as a training provider but as a laboratory for reform. Pilots and field experiments can be conducted in partnership with researchers, allowing the government to test models of training, incentives, promotions, and management before scaling. Examples of potential pilots include:

- **Link training to promotion:** Pilot a system where IPA certification is required for eligibility to certain promotions and rigorously evaluate whether this improves motivation and performance.
- **Test mentoring and coaching:** Embed structured coaching for IPA graduates in one or two ministries and compare outcomes against a control group without support.

- **Integrate accountability tools:** Introduce simple performance dashboards for IPA alumni teams and assess whether visible accountability improves motivation and service delivery.

By starting with small-scale trials, measuring results, and refining based on evidence, Jordan can build credibility and buy-in for more ambitious reforms. Over time, IPA can evolve into a hub for evidence-based innovation in civil service reform, directly feeding into the Public Sector Modernisation Vision (PSMV).

Using technology to support sequenced reform

Governments in resource-constrained settings can leverage low-cost technologies to monitor and reinforce reform. IGC research offers several models:

Mobile monitoring in Uganda. A mobile SMS platform reduced teacher absenteeism, but only when linked to incentives and supervisor accountability (Zeitlin et al., 2014).

Digital monitoring in Paraguay. A cell phone-based system for agricultural extension workers increased farmer visits and improved service quality by making staff feel more accountable (Schechter, Dal Bó, & Finan, 2016).

Mobile payments in Afghanistan. Transitioning to mobile salary payments improved morale, reduced leakage, and strengthened accountability in government payroll systems (Callen et al., 2016).

These cases illustrate that technology alone is not a panacea. Tools work best with the right incentives, accountability structures, and leadership support. For Jordan, integrating low-cost monitoring (for example, mobile dashboards for IPA graduates or SMS-based feedback from service users) into IPA pilots could strengthen evaluation and provide scalable, affordable mechanisms for tracking civil service performance.

The role of administrative data

A crucial enabler of this agenda is the availability of reliable administrative data. At present, Jordan's civil service HR and payroll systems are fragmented, and it is unclear what datasets (for example, postings, promotions, training records, performance reviews) are consistently collected, digitised, and usable for evaluation. Reforms risk being designed in the dark without clarity on what data exists.

As a first step, IPA – working with IGC and the Civil Service Bureau – could undertake a *stock-take of available administrative data*. The exercise would not mean IPA must compile or manage all data itself; it would map existing HR, payroll, and performance datasets, identify gaps, and propose ways to make them accessible for analysis. Comparable stock-takes in Ethiopia and Zambia proved vital for subsequent reform design, helping governments link training

records to career progression and measure whether reforms improved service delivery (Somani, Dercon, & Rogger, 2018; Ashraf, Bandiera, & Walter, 2018).

Such a stock-take would give Jordan a baseline: what can realistically be measured now, what needs to be digitised or cleaned, and how future pilots can be evaluated rigorously. Building this foundation will ensure that IPA's role as a reform laboratory is underpinned by evidence.

Sequencing steps for Jordan

Given entrenched seniority-based promotion rules and strong demand for public employment, reform will face resistance if attempted wholesale. Sequencing should therefore:

- ✓ Begin with IPA pilots (training and incentives) that deliver visible results in productivity.
- ✓ Conduct a stock-take of administrative data to establish what information on recruitment, training, promotions, and performance is available and usable.
- ✓ Link pilot results to HR reform – for instance, connect training outcomes to promotions overseen by the Civil Service Bureau.
- ✓ Expand gradually to other ministries and cadres once proof of concept is established.
- ✓ Institutionalise evaluation systems, so pilot results and data stock-takes inform permanent HR and management policies.

This incremental, data-led approach will build confidence among stakeholders and demonstrate that reform is feasible and beneficial.

Conclusion and way forward

Improving civil service productivity is one of Jordan's most important and complex reform challenges. The Prime Ministry's request to focus on the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) reflects an opportunity to make training a meaningful entry point into a broader reform effort. Global evidence shows that training alone cannot deliver the performance gains the country needs. Recruitment, promotions, management, and incentives shape whether training translates into better outcomes.

The central message of this note is therefore twofold:

- **Civil service productivity is multi-faceted:** it requires reform across the extensive margin (recruitment), intensive margin (management, incentives, promotions, and workplace support), and training systems.
- **Reform must be evidence-based, adaptive, and sequenced:** Piloting new approaches with IPA, testing their impact, and scaling what works is the surest path to sustainable reform.

This approach aligns directly with the Public Sector Modernisation Vision (PSMV) and Economic Modernisation Vision (EMV), emphasising professionalisation, efficiency, and citizen trust. It also builds on IGC's global work, including the Growth Brief *Rewarding Bureaucrats: Can incentives improve public sector performance?* (Bandiera, Khan, & Tobias, 2017), which shows that governments can improve performance by carefully designing recruitment strategies, incentive systems, and training – but only if they rigorously test and adapt reforms to local contexts.

Key takeaways for Jordan's government.

- ✓ **Recruitment (extensive margin):** Productivity starts with who enters the civil service. [Recruitment should emphasise merit, mission-fit, and transparent entry processes.]
- ✓ **Management, incentives, and promotions (intensive margin):** Civil servants perform best when supported, motivated, and rewarded fairly. [Well-designed financial and non-financial incentives, merit-based promotions, and stronger management practices raise performance while avoiding distortions.]
- ✓ **Training (IPA as the entry point):** Training is essential but insufficient. [IPA's programmes should be integrated into HR systems, linked to promotions, tailored to Jordan's reform priorities, and reinforced with coaching and mentoring.]
- ✓ **Implementation and sequencing:** Big-bang reforms often fail; incremental pilots succeed. [IPA should act as a laboratory for reform: pilot training-plus-incentive models, test links between training and

promotions, and embed evaluation systems. Gradually scale up reforms that show measurable improvements.]

- ✓ **Leverage technology and data:** Low-cost innovations and stronger data systems can expand capacity and accountability. [Mobile monitoring and e-payments, tested in Uganda, Paraguay, and Afghanistan, show promise. A stock-take of Jordan's administrative data should be an early priority to identify what can be measured and where reforms should focus.]

Civil service reforms often fail because they are too ambitious, imported wholesale, or implemented only on paper. Evidence from IGC research underscores that reforms succeed when piloted, monitored, adapted, and scaled. Jordan's collaboration with IGC and IPA offers precisely this opportunity: to generate evidence on what works in Jordan's context, build momentum through early successes, and use impact evaluations to guide scale-up. By positioning IPA as both a training provider and a reform incubator – and by grounding reforms in robust data – the Government of Jordan can take the first step toward building a professional, accountable, high-performing civil service.

References

Extensive margin – recruitment and entry

Ashraf, N., Bandiera, O., & Lee, S. (2014). Do-Gooders and Go-Getters: Career Incentives, Selection, and Performance in Public Service Delivery. IGC Working Paper.

Ashraf, N., Bandiera, O., & Lee, S. (2016). Career Incentives and Civil Service Performance: Evidence from Zambia's Health Sector. London School of Economics, IGC Project.

Dal Bó, E., Finan, F., & Rossi, M. (2013). Strengthening state capabilities: The role of financial incentives in the call to public service. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 128(3), 1169–1218.

World Health Organization (WHO). (2018). WHO guideline on health policy and system support to optimise community health worker programmes. Geneva: WHO.

Intensive margin – management, incentives, promotions, and workplace support

Bandiera, O., Best, M., Khan, A., & Prat, A. (2018). *Improving Public Procurement: Evidence from Punjab, Pakistan*. IGC Report.

Bloom, N., Lemos, R., Sadun, R., Scur, D., & Van Reenen, J. (2015). The new empirical economics of management. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 14(4), 835–876.

Deserranno, E., Kazianga, H., & Poupakis, S. (2025). Promotions and productivity in the public sector: Experimental evidence from Sierra Leone. *AEA Papers & Proceedings* (forthcoming).

Finan, F., Olken, B. A., & Pande, R. (2017). The personnel economics of the developing state. In A. Banerjee & E. Duflo (Eds.), *Handbook of Economic Field Experiments* (Vol. 2, pp. 467–514). Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Foltz, J., & Opoku-Agyemang, K. (2015). *Do higher salaries reduce corruption? Evidence from Ghana's police service*. IGC Project Report.

Khan, A. Q., Khwaja, A. I., & Olken, B. A. (2016). Tax farming redux: Experimental evidence on performance pay for tax collectors. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 131(1), 219–271.

Rogger, D., Attanasio, O., & Rasul, I. (2017). Management of bureaucrats and public service delivery: Evidence from Nigeria and Ghana. *Economic Journal*, 128(608), 413–446.

Somani, R., Dercon, S., & Rogger, D. (2018). *Unlocking constraints to civil service productivity in Ethiopia*. IGC Report.

Ashraf, N., Bandiera, O., & Walter, T. F. (2018). *Understanding the impact of payroll reform on worker performance: Evidence from Zambia*. IGC Project Report.

Chemouni, B. (2014). Explaining the design of the Rwandan decentralisation: Elite vulnerability and the territorial repartition of power. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 8(2), 246–262.

World Bank. (2020). *Rwanda Governance and Public Sector Review*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Training – a critical but incomplete lever

Ashraf, N., & Bandiera, O. (2018). Altruistic capital: Empathy training for bureaucrats in Pakistan. *VoxDev Policy Brief*.

Ashraf, N., Bandiera, O., & Khan, A. (2023). Evidence-based policymaking training in Pakistan: Experimental results. *VoxDev Blog*.

Bandiera, O., Khan, A., & Levy, M. (2023). Building state capability through data-driven policymaking: Experimental evidence from Pakistan. *Unpublished manuscript / VoxDev summary*.

Civil Service World. (2013). *A cold bath for civil service training*. London: CSW.

Kraft, M. A., Blazar, D., & Hogan, D. (2018). The effect of teacher coaching on instruction and achievement: A meta-analysis of the causal evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 88(4), 547–588.

Nesta. (2024). *What can we learn from Singapore's public service leadership?* Nesta Research Report.

Ong, C. H. (2020). *Leadership development in Singapore's Civil Service College*. Singapore Civil Service College.

PEMANDU Associates. (2023). *From vision to action: Rwanda's journey to a world-class civil service*. Kuala Lumpur: PEMANDU.

U.S. Department of Education. (2010). *Evaluation of evidence-based online learning: A meta-analysis and review of online learning studies*. Washington, DC.

Williams, M., Rogger, D., & Rasul, I. (2018). *Training for productivity: An experimental evaluation of civil service reform in Ghana*. IGC Report.

World Bank. (2017). Teacher coaching: What we know and what we need to know. *Development Impact Blog*.

World Bank. (2016). *World Development Report: Digital dividends*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

National Audit Office (NAO). (2021). *The UK civil service learning system: Progress and challenges*. London: NAO.

Implementation and sequencing

Andrews, M., Pritchett, L., & Woolcock, M. (2017). *Building state capability: Evidence, analysis, action*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Callen, M., Ghani, T., & Blumenstock, J. (2016). *Mobile salary payments in Afghanistan: Reducing leakage and improving accountability*. IGC Project Report.

Chaudhury, N., Hammer, J., Kremer, M., Muralidharan, K., & Rogers, F. H. (2006). Missing in action: Teacher and health worker absence in developing countries. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 20(1), 91–116.

Mizala, A., & Schneider, B. R. (2014). Negotiating education reform: Teacher evaluations and incentives in Chile, Mexico, and Peru. *Comparative Education Review*, 58(4), 1–28.

Schechter, L., Dal Bó, E., & Finan, F. (2016). Monitoring public sector employees: Evidence from agricultural extension workers in Paraguay. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 8(3), 202–229.

Zeitlin, A., Kasirye, I., Leaver, C., Serneels, P., & Cilliers, J. (2014). *Mobile monitoring of teacher attendance in Uganda*. IGC Working Paper.