# Strengthening the Center of Government in Latin America and the Caribbean

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# Abstract*

There is a growing interest in Latin America and the Caribbean in strengthening the strategic Center of Government (CoG). *Stricto sensu*, the CoG refers to the institution or group of institutions that provide direct support to the Chief Executive (President or Prime Minister) in the management of government. This paper provides a conceptual framework of the CoG, describing its principal purpose, core functions, and typical structures. In addition, it presents exploratory empirical evidence to analyze to what extent the CoGs in Latin America and the Caribbean are performing these functions. Based on an analysis of the regional trends that will be presented herein, this paper will outline a possible work agenda for CoG strengthening in the region. Finally, the paper proposes an Institutional Development Matrix (IDM) as a tool that can help countries diagnose the capacity gaps between what CoGs *are doing* and what they *should be doing* to achieve their stated goals.

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# Introduction

There is a growing interest in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region on the work of the Center of Government (CoG), parallel to a renewed interest among member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).[1] This paper provides a conceptual framework of the CoG, describing its main purpose and the core functions it should perform to achieve it. In addition, this paper presents exploratory empirical evidence to assess to what extent the CoGs in the region are performing those functions. Based on an analysis of regional trends, it outlines an agenda of CoG strengthening for the LAC region.. Finally, the paper also proposes an Institutional Development Matrix (IDM), derived from the conceptual work, that can help to diagnose the capacity gaps between what the CoG in each country *is doing* and what it *should be doing* to perform its core functions.[2]

The CoG is meant to provide strategic thrust, address coordination challenges, and promote whole-of-government approaches. Many of the problems that governments face are crosscutting and multidimensional, in the sense that they pass through functional boundaries and demand the involvement of multiple departments. These *horizontal problems* cannot be solely addressed by *vertical responses*, such as the ones traditionally provided by the ministerial "silos." Therefore, stronger central participation is critical to produce a coherent response to the problems that governments face.

In some countries, in addition, previous waves of government reforms have decentralized the decision making and implementation authority to autonomous agencies or to nongovernmental actors. These changes may have led to a diminished capacity of the highest political leadership to provide strategic guidance to the government. In this context, strengthening the center's steering role is crucial to deliver unified and coherent direction to the whole of government, and to ensure that the government's agenda is being firmly implemented.

Finally, the increased demand from citizens in recent years for improved public services, combined

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[1] As examples of this interest, it is worth mentioning projects on *"Alto Gobierno"* launched by the Latin American Center for Administration and Development (CLAD, 2011); the projects to strengthen the presidential offices funded by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) through its *Sistema de Gestión para la Gobernabilidad* (SIGOB) and other programs; the creation in 2013 of a research group focusing on the Executive at the Latin American Political Science Association (ALACIP); and the meetings of the *Red Iberoamericana de Ministros de la Presidencia y Equivalentes* of the Ibero-American General Secretariat. The OECD's Network of Senior Officials from Centres of Government, existent since 1981, has also i gained additional traction in recent years, as the Centre's steering role during the economic crisis has become even more relevant. In addition, this paper is part of the regional project, "Strengthening and Promoting Innovation in Center of Government Institutions (CoG) in Latin America and the Caribbean" of the Inter-American Development Bank. The first steps of this project include a revision of the CoG literature (Alessandro, Lafuente, and Santiso, 2013) and this technical note.

[2] The IDM is still a work in progress, which, with further consultations with CoG experts and officials in the region, will continue to be refined and enhanced.

with a more consolidated fiscal situation in many countries, has led to a greater focus on improving performance and enhancing the impact of government policies. The CoG has an important role to play here, as it is ideally suited to set the government's key priorities, promote innovative solutions, monitor the performance of departments and agencies, and assist the ones that are lagging behind.

These challenges demand a strengthening of the strategic CoG and its key institutions, providing them with the necessary tools to perform these roles. Although CoG institutions play an important political role, as they are placed at the apex of the government structure, they must also have sufficient technical capabilities. They can better perform their functions—and therefore better serve the government—if they possess strong technical expertise and if they apply advanced tools and processes to support their work.

A clear distinction between political and technical CoG roles may not always be possible, since much of their work lies at the interface between politics and administration; nonetheless, having *a technically strong CoG should be of interest to any government that seeks to implement its program and achieve results*.

It is true that Presidents and Prime Ministers may neglect the importance of establishing a strong CoG, but if citizens are demanding solutions to horizontal and multidimensional problems and high-quality public services, or if the Chief Executive has entered office promising those results, relying on a competent CoG would make it easier to respond to those demands. The benefits of an effective CoG become clear in those contexts.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a **conceptual framework of the CoG**, which includes an analysis of its purpose, functions, typical structures, management styles, and staffing. Section 3 presents exploratory empirical evidence about the **current situation of CoGs in Latin America and the Caribbean**, describing general trends in the region from data collected through surveys of governments and experts. Section 4 sets out a possible **agenda for strengthening CoGs in Latin America and the Caribbean**. Finally, the Appendix proposes an **Institutional Development Matrix (IDM)** that can help to diagnose potential capacity gaps between what the CoG in each country *is doing* and what it *could be doing* to perform more effectively its core functions.

# A Conceptual Framework of the Center of Government[3]

The concept of CoG refers to the institution or group of institutions that provide direct support to the Chief Executive (President or Prime Minister) in the management of government (James and Ben-Gera, 2004; World Bank, 2010a).[4] Unlike ministries and agencies, CoG institutions are not directly involved in service delivery and do not focus on a particular policy area but, rather, deal with the strategic management, coordination, monitoring, overall improvement, and communication of the government action. Despite working directly to support the Chief Executive, furthermore, the CoG serves the entire government, as the quality and impact of all key policies can be strengthened by the leadership and facilitating role of the center.[5]

This general CoG definition, however, does not translate into a predetermined and fixed institutional model for organizing the CoG functions. It cannot indicate exactly which institutions or units make up the CoG in each country. The same CoG functions can be performed across countries by different institutions and be organized in different ways. In addition, the make-up of the CoG is not permanently set in stone; it evolves over time to adjust to the political necessities, defined by Chief Executives, and is tailored to specific country contexts and circumstances. While institutions might have similar names, or be located in the same position within the structure of the Executive, they may actually perform different tasks. Thus, it would be inappropriate to try

to produce a list of CoG institutions that is applicable to all LAC countries. Instead, it is more convenient, first, to describe the **purposes** of the CoG; second, to define the **functions** that have to be performed to achieve them; and, third, to identify typical **structures** that usually perform these functions.

Therefore, Subsection 2.1 discusses the main purpose of the CoG, highlighting the value it adds to the work of government. Subsection 2.2 analyzes the core functions performed by the CoG to fulfill

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[3] This section is based on the literature review on the subject prepared by the Institutional Capacity of the State (ICS) division of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) (Alessandro, Lafuente, and Santiso, 2013), and on the discussions with senior former practitioners at the Center of Government Experts Workshop, held in Washington, DC, June 12–14, 2013.
[4] Although this report focuses on the national level of government, the CoG also exists in subnational governments, and many aspects of this paper's analysis are applicable to subnational levels of government, in particular at the state level.
[5] As the CoG is an emerging field of study in public administration research, the evidence about the effects of alternative CoG configurations on government performance is still very scarce. Most of the findings are supported only by theoretical arguments or by anecdotal evidence, and most case studies are descriptive, rather than explanatory. Quantitative analyses are even more rare and limited to the function of performance monitoring, where quantitative indicators are more readily available (see Bevan and Wilson, 2013; Kelman and Friedman, 2009; Propper et al., 2008). Thus, as is proposed in the concluding section, a future work agenda on this topic should include studies on the impact of the CoG work.

this purpose, and Subsection 2.3 describes the usual types of institutions that exist to perform them. Subsection 2.4 presents typical models of CoG management styles and Subsection 2.5 discusses the issue of resources and staffing.

## 2.1  Purpose

The CoG is uniquely placed to provide a general perspective of the government's work that can only exist at the center. A key question, then, is what does this broader perspective add to the government's work? The answer can be summarized in five points, which reflect the CoG's purpose:

i.    *Securing the coherence of government action.* Governments face the risk of producing inconsistent policies, especially as the goals of different ministries or agencies may be in tension. Only the Center can align all these separate units to ensure that their actions are compatible and coherent, and that they generate synergies that maximize their impact for the citizens. The CoG also seeks to ensure the coherence of the regulations, produced by the different ministries and agencies, by defining a unified orientation to guide them.[6]

ii.   *Improving the performance of the whole government.* Government policies are expected to produce positive outcomes and impacts for citizens. CoG institutions are ideally placed to drive performance by establishing a framework that clearly (a) expresses the goals to be achieved; (b) effectively communicates to everyone in government—and in the wider delivery system—what these goals are; (c) aligns the budget to meet those goals; (d) monitors progress toward their achievement; and (e) intervenes to help make adjustments or build capacity, when results are lagging behind. The CoG is also critical to lead change and incubate innovation by promoting whole-of-government approaches to the modernization of government through the coordination of key horizontal poli-

cy innovations (including, among others, e-government and government transparency).

iii.  *Providing a coherent narrative of the government's actions.* Governments not only need to produce coherent policies, but also should communicate them in a consistent way. While departments may have an interest in highlighting their own sector agenda and delivery achievements, the CoG can ensure that the contents and timing of the government's communications respond to government-wide strategy and priorities.

iv.   *Steering the political direction of government.* Governments come to office with a general vision that they intend to translate into public policies. This process usually involves negotiating with other key stakeholders (the Legislature, bureaucracy, civil society, and the private sector) that may have their own interests and goals. Thus, CoG institutions provide the support required by the Chief Executive to lead this process and ensure that the government's program, chosen by the citizens in democratic elections, actually guides the adoption and implementation of policies.

v.    *Ensuring an adequate engagement with the citizens.* Democratic governments have a responsibility and an interest in listening to the citizens, responding to their expectations, engaging with them, and promoting their participation. The CoG can establish a framework to guarantee that all departments and agencies are following consistent practices in this regard.

All of these aspects of the CoG purpose share the fact that *they can only be done from the center.* No department has the broad perspective that CoG institutions have, and this is the added value of the CoG that contributes to improve government action.

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[6] In many OECD countries, a whole-of-government approach to the governance and oversight of regulatory policy was originated in (and championed by) CoG institutions (World Bank, 2010c).

## 2.2  Functions

Fulfilling the purpose presented in the previous subsection requires performing certain functions, associated with CoG institutions. These functions can be classified as follows: (i) assuring a strategic management of government; (ii) ensuring policy coordination; (iii) monitoring and improving performance; (iv) managing the politics of policies; (v) communicating the government's actions and achievements and being accountable to the citizens.

i.  *Assuring a strategic management of government.* Presidents and Prime Ministers are elected on a political platform, presented to the citizens during the campaign. Electoral programs vary greatly in their levels of specificity, but they will never have the level of detail needed to become an actual plan of action that can be implemented without further refinement. The CoG plays a leading role in coordinating the formulation of the government program, as it has the broader perspective to ensure the consistency of its objectives (OECD, 2007). It can also help sector ministries, working collaboratively, to propose and review their goals and to focus on the priorities of the highest authorities, by whom they are usually appointed.

    The CoG should concentrate on a few (certainly less than 10—and the fewer the better, according to international experiences) strategic objectives that reflect the government's and the Chief Executive's true main priorities. This does not mean that the other departments should not effectively plan and manage the other work of government, but the key priorities of the government, as a whole, require special CoG attention. Departments need to develop actionable work-plans to cover all the issues within their jurisdiction; but the CoG should work with them only on those that are critical for the success of the government. The CoG must

be aware that if everything is a priority, then nothing is a priority.

Unexpected events and crises may impose new priorities to governments and alter existing plans. However, governments should always have a clear indication of where they want to go and how to get there. This strategic management process, which is more dynamic and flexible than a simple one-time planning activity, can only be performed from the center. Strategic management is also helpful to sustain a systemic and systematic focus and to avoid being sidetracked (Barber, 2008). It is also required to ensure that all key decisions share the government's strategic orientation, and do not just come from ad hoc appeals to the Chief Executive, when he or she meets with ministries and other officials.

On occasions, government programs are framed within broader long-term development plans for the country. Leading the elaboration of these plans, which usually involve the participation of multiple stakeholders inside and outside the government, is a task usually conducted from the center.

ii.  *Ensuring policy coordination.* Public administrations have traditionally been organized along vertical functional lines (departments and agencies), which allow for the division of labor and specialization, but pose the challenge of fragmentation and lack of coherence of the government as a whole. Lack of effective coordination can lead to problems being "dumped" by one agency to the other and not being solved; to unintended duplications that cause confusion and waste; and to an increase in bureaucratic conflict, among other problematic situations (Gaetani, 2011). Central coordination is the response to these potential challenges and to the need for whole-of-government approaches.

The coordination led by the CoG refers, mainly, to the processes of making and implementing decisions. CoG institutions, with their

whole-of-government perspective, are especially suited for this. The center can not only provide vertical coordination by resolving the conflicts between the different departments, but it can also facilitate horizontal coordination across them. The CoG can foster coordination by (Ben-Gera, 2004):

- adopting a broad perspective, indicating to the departments the need to adjust proposals to fit the government's overall orientation and priorities;
- being the "guardian of the process," ensuring that proposals are submitted through the appropriate channels and receiving the necessary consultations;
- resolving conflicts and making arbitrages by chairing interministerial meetings when disagreements exist; and
- briefing the Chief Executive when these conflicts have not been resolved at a hierarchically lower level, and demanding his or her decision.

Coordination is particularly relevant in cross-cutting issues, as horizontal problems cannot be solved purely with vertical approaches and in ministerial "silos." These issues may arise in a specific context (such as the response to natural disasters), or belong to policy areas that necessarily involve multiple departments (such as civil service and public administration reforms, government modernization and innovation through e-government, regulatory policy for sector regulatory frameworks, and cross-sector international negotiations), or be structural features of the system of government (such as relations with subnational governments in federal systems).

When situations of crisis or conflict arise, the CoG is generally capable of pulling all departments together to work in solving the problem. A critical challenge for the CoG is to institutionalize such collaboration for normal times, as well.

Coordination is required at both the policy *design* and the policy *implementation* phases.

In the first instance, it seeks to promote whole-of-government decisions and approaches, and to prevent the adoption of inconsistent, or even contradictory, policies by different departments; in the second case, it seeks to ensure that the programs or activities carried out by the departments or agencies remain aligned to policy priorities and do not collide with each other. In revitalizing certain deprived geographic areas, for example, programs by multiple government agencies may be needed. These programs not only need to be conceptually consistent, but also have to be implemented in the right sequence. With their broader perspective, and without having their own bureaucratic turf to protect, CoG institutions are the best ones to provide cross-governmental coordination for the design and implementation of policies.

Coordination also involves promoting the contestability of policies, ensuring that all relevant actors and perspectives have been included in the decision-making process. This not only favors the consistency of the policies being adopted but also their quality (World Bank, 2010a), which is jeopardized if the policymaker has not received multiple and independent sources of information and advice before making a decision.

The quality of policy formulation and implementation is also improved by the systematic use of empirical evidence throughout the policy cycle. The CoG has the political authority to set standards for ministries and agencies in this regard, and can provide the necessary assistance for the adoption of evidence-based policy, especially in areas that have fewer capacities. This effort needs to be driven by institutions that are close to (and have the support of) the Chief Executive. CoG institutions are, thus, ideally suited for this task (although, in certain contexts, line ministries or agencies may be currently leading this process, and strengthening their capacities would be a valid strategy).

iii. *Monitoring and improving performance.* By leading the definition of the government's strategic priorities and coordinating the design and implementation of policies, the CoG supports the Chief Executive in providing coherence to his or her administration. A related function that the CoG has to fulfill is the monitoring of these commitments in the implementation stage to ensure both high-quality services and accountability to citizens. With timely and actionable data, the CoG can appropriately broker solutions when performance is lagging behind, and can raise it to the attention of the Chief Executive when the problem is serious enough or if it is not being solved. Moreover, the CoG monitoring should provide an incentive for departments to improve performance *before* intervention is needed.

As with most institutional reforms, it is difficult to determine the impact that a rigorous follow-through of the government's key initiatives has on the results achieved by the departments. There is usually no counterfactual that can be used to estimate the impact attributable to CoG monitoring. However, Alessandro, Lafuente, and Santiso (2013) discuss several cases, such as Australia, Chile, and the United Kingdom, among others, where this oversight has shown to be useful to orient the departments' work toward outcomes and evidence-based interventions. In this sense, monitoring can produce a powerful incentive to focus the government's work on achieving results for citizens.

The review of the literature (Barber, 2008; Dumas, Lafuente, and Parrado, 2013; Chakabrarti, 2007; Lindquist, 2007; Richards and Smith, 2006; Wanna, 2006) leads to other lessons that can be learned from past experience:

- *Leadership and personal support provided by the Chief Executive* are critical elements for the success of the monitoring process. By devoting even a very small part of his or her time (usually the most expensive commodi-

ty in government) to regularly meet with the head of the performance unit, the Chief Executive can send a clear signal of his or her commitment to this process to the departments and agencies being monitored.

- *The CoG should focus only on a few strategic priorities to monitor.*[7] Among those, it is likely that it should be more involved with the ones that are the responsibility of departments that have relatively weaker capabilities and those that are most central to the government's pledges. Routines and procedures need to be set in place to organize these interventions before the need for them appears, so they can be rapidly deployed when problems arise. These collaborations should be relatively quick; it is expected that, in a few weeks, the bottleneck causing the problem should have been resolved.

- *Having a clear mapping of the delivery system for the government's priorities* helps to fully exploit the data gathered in the monitoring process, in order to clearly define the expected goals, identify roles and responsibilities, and detect the risks and vulnerabilities that might be affecting the achievement of results.

- *Technology currently allows for a continuous monitoring of performance*, which is critical to track progress, provide early warnings, and rectify problems. Setting permanent feedback mechanisms (in the form of delivery reports, balanced scorecards, regular monitoring meetings within each department, meetings with the CoG or even with the Chief Executive, etc.) is essential.

- *Helping to unblock the obstacles that are causing the substandard results*, when certain key

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[7] This applies to the strategic management function at the selection stage, but it applies to the monitoring and improvement of performance function during the implementation stage.

targets are not being met, is a critical part that only the CoG can perform. This process can take more adversarial or more collaborative forms. If departments fear being exposed and admonished, they may have incentives to "game" the system by reporting questionable data instead of working to fix the problems. Thus, the CoG may prefer to intervene in a more collaborative way, providing its expertise in the problem solving.

- *The CoG can promote evidence-based initiatives* by fostering the collection and use of data for performance monitoring and improvement. The use of objective data on performance can help incorporate the value of rigorous evidence in all phases of the policy cycle.

- *The CoG can help to develop solutions*, as these institutions can share good practices across the government with the objective of improving performance. Public administration modernization and reform are frequently driven by the Center, which can push for innovation by providing the incentives (or the directives) to do so. This is particularly relevant in public administrations with lower levels of institutional development, in which only the center can push for certain reforms, acting as an "incubator" that promotes changes in frontier areas of public administration (for example, digital government and e-government modernization).

iv. *Managing the politics of policies*. Chief Executives seek to implement a coherent set of political priorities and policies, while negotiating their approval and/or implementation with a diverse array of stakeholders, some within the Executive (for example, other members of the governing coalition, powerful individual ministries, bureaucracies, and autonomous agencies); some outside of it, but within the public sector (the Legislature and, on occasion, the Judiciary); and some outside of the state apparatus (political parties, civil society, interest groups).

Leaving this process to the departments could lead to inconsistent policies, since each of them would be mostly interested in their own sector agenda, regardless of its broader impact. Also, the balance of political power or the influence of certain actors may outweigh that of specific sector ministries, requiring the CoG to weigh in. Only the CoG has a cross-government view of the government's priorities and the sufficient political bargaining power. In addition, only the Center can assemble the necessary political resources to lead these simultaneous interactions and negotiation of tradeoffs with multiple actors. Thus, political coordination is best performed from the Center, providing the Chief Executive with the information and advice needed to broker on behalf of the government.

The CoG political function for public policies involves other tasks, as well. It needs to anticipate potential conflicts (legislative gridlocks, strikes, protests, among others), analyze them, and intervene to solve them. Only the Center can develop a network across policy areas and subnational governments to receive early alerts of potential issues. Maintaining a permanent interaction with civil society groups is important to prevent conflicts, as well as to anticipate and manage risks. If a certain conflict could not be prevented, the CoG has to work with the relevant departments to ensure that the solution provided to it is consistent with the general orientation of the government, and the CoG has to monitor the enforcement of the course of action taken.

Finally, providing legal counsel may be an important political function in certain contexts. Chief Executives frequently have the responsibility to sign bills into law (and, in some cases, they can veto them), issue regulations, and produce intra-executive directives, and they can, usually, send bills for legislative consideration. In addition, in many countries, the legal defense of the state against a wide array of domestic and in-

ternational claims can sometimes be coordinated from the CoG or through those closely linked to it. Advising the President or Prime Minister on these matters is both a technical and a political function that usually lies on CoG institutions and advisors.

v. *Communicating the government's actions and achievements and being accountable to the citizens.* Only the CoG can provide a coherent account of what the government has been doing and what it has achieved. Producing and communicating this "narrative" is a critical function of the CoG in the digital age. The existence of a 24/7 news cycle and the increasing importance of social media mean that governments needs to swiftly respond to inquiries in a coordinated way at any time. In addition to aligning the government's message, CoG units provide support to the Chief Executive through speechwriting, managing relations with the press, and performing spokesperson's roles, as well as preparing briefs for interviews or visits to the field, and submitting information to the Legislature.

Furthermore, only the Center can create a framework for departments and agencies to ensure transparency, accountability, and participation mechanisms across government. CoG institutions can set the standards for all departments and agencies on how to publish and explain information regarding issues under their jurisdiction. For example, the CoG may issue directives to ensure the publication of information in an accessible way, including "open data" initiatives to guarantee that the information is provided in machine-readable and open formats. Many of the CoG functions, such as the monitoring of ministerial and agency performance, can be aided by allowing the public to exercise its own oversight and to demand accountability.[8]

An important element to improve the performance of government involves receiving the views of citizens and front-line civil ser-

vants about how things are going. This is best done on an independent platform, rather than from within departments, and will enable departments and agencies to systematically promote the participation of these stakeholders in the policy and delivery of services. Other relevant actors (civil society, the private sector, labor unions, universities, think tanks) should also be included.

## 2.3  Structure

This subsection describes the typical structures that have been created to perform the functions described in the previous subsection. Important variations exist across countries and over time regarding the internal organization of the CoG, depending on political priorities, constitutional provisions, institutional constraints, and administrative traditions. Even within the same country, different Chief Executives have structured their CoG in different ways and changed them over time, according to personal style or political realities. The overarching principle that underpins this conceptual framework is the effectiveness to perform these functions: there is no "one-size-fits-all" model to structure the CoG, and *governments should focus on the extent to which the functions are performed and the purposes achieved.*

Constitutions and other organic laws do not specify a CoG, its functions, structures, or boundaries. As such, a critical issue is how to define which institutions should be encompassed by this concept. The literature does not provide a homogeneous answer to this question, with certain authors stating a **narrow definition** of CoG, focusing only on insti-

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[8] A number of elements define a proper exercise of accountability: it should be public (and not only internal); decisions and actions should be explained or justified, and not merely publicized; these explanations should be directed to a specific forum (which could be the general public); the actor being held accountable should feel obliged to do so; and, finally, there should be possibility for debate and questioning (Bovens, 2005).

tutions and units directly and uniquely serving the Chief Executive (such as Ministries of the Presidency and Cabinet Offices), and others proposing an **expanded definition** that also includes certain central ministries (such the Ministries of Finance or Planning and the civil service agency) that serve the government as a whole.

This paper postulates a different approach. Instead of trying to enumerate institutions that should be included in the CoG, it analyzes which institutions—and even which units within broader institutions—perform the functions described in Subsection 2.2. For example, providing strategic management to the government involves a component of budgetary planning and allocation, in order to align resources with the government's goals and with the departments' performance. In most countries, the budget office is located within the Finance or Treasury department while, in a few others, it is placed in the President or Prime Minister's Office. Under the approach proposed in this paper, regardless of this different institutional location, budget offices perform CoG functions in both cases, as they tend to be involved, at least, in the financial aspects of strategic planning and performance monitoring. Thus, they should be regarded as part of the CoG, even if they also perform other tasks that are typical of line ministries, which are not part of the CoG.

This paper outlines eight structures that can be usually identified performing the functions of the CoG: (i) Chief Executive's direct support units; (ii) policy advice units; (iii) strategy units; (iv) policy coordination units; (v) performance monitoring and improvement units; (vi) communications units; (vii) legal counsel units; (viii) budget units.

i.    *Chief Executive's direct support units.* These are the offices of direct personal support to the President or the Prime Minister, which provide him or her with political and administrative assistance. The latter may include tasks, such as managing his or her agenda, handling corre-

spondence, and other types of personal assistance. The former refers to political roles, such as linking the Chief Executive to the governing party (or parties)[9] and to the Legislature, brokering agreements, and managing emerging conflicts. Political advisors usually assist the Chief Executive in this regard; in certain countries, a top advisor may act as a Chief of Staff, leading the political negotiations with other stakeholders and managing the entire CoG (see also Subsection 2.4. on Management Styles).

ii.   *Policy advice units.* In order to diversify their sources of technical information, Chief Executives sometimes have expert advisors on policy areas that are the responsibility of line ministries. These policy advisors are involved both in ensuring that the Chief Executive's and the government's perspective is brought to bear on policy development and in decision making. Since Presidents and Prime Ministers generally do not design policies from scratch but rather choose between alternatives that are presented to them, policy advisors can have a critical role checking and probing the alternatives presented by the departments, making sharp questions, focusing the discussions, demanding clarifications, and providing the Chief Executive with their frank and unvarnished views (Arriagada Herrera, 2012; Pfiffner, 2009; Ponder, 2000). These advisors, nevertheless, do not have formal authority over the ministers, who are the ones responsible for making and implementing policy in their areas.

iii.  *Strategy units.* The need to provide government-wide strategic direction has led to the creation, in different countries, of units devoted to the preparation of the government's long-term plan and to the translation of these plans into poli-

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[9] In coalition governments, the CoG can be even more important in this regard, due to the need to produce agreements and ensure the consistency of policies in a context in which the ministers belong to different political parties (OECD, 1998).

cies. These units also often provide long-term foresight and advise by, for example, thinking about the country's economy in the decades to come.

Strategy units work with the departments to ensure the setting of pertinent and challenging goals, and to verify that these goals are coherent and in line with the government's overall orientation. Previous experience suggests that these units should not be directly involved in operational tasks or the day-to-day activities of management, but should have a tight connection with those performing these tasks to ensure that the government's strategic priorities are being implemented.

iv.  *Policy coordination units*. Some of these units facilitate policy coordination. For example, they may contribute to the preparation of cabinet meetings or other interministerial committees, by managing their decision-making process and enforcing its rules (by collecting and analyzing the required documents in advance of the meetings, enforcing deadlines, planning the agenda, ensuring that information is complete and that proper consultations have been followed, etc.). Other types of units may be more focused on the substance of the coordination, not only on facilitating its processes but also influencing the design and content of policies. These units may be organized along policy areas (e.g., economic policy, social policy, or foreign policy) to provide coordination to the different departments that have jurisdiction on these issues.
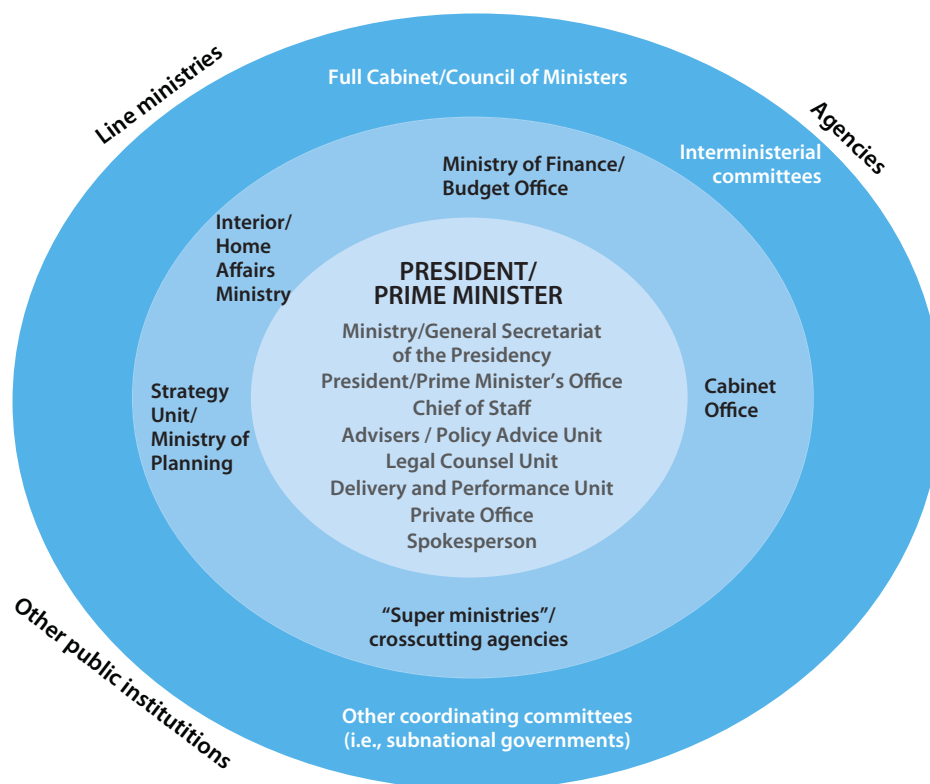
These coordinating bodies can contribute to clarifying the responsibilities and to bridging organizational subcultures when multiple departments have responsibility over a certain issue. In addition, the possibility of reaching agreements and solving conflict at technical or ministerial levels removes the need for the Chief Executive to be constantly arbitrating differences between the ministries.

For issues that are necessarily crosscutting, such as civil service regulation, international negotiations and, in federal systems of government, the relation with subnational governments, the CoG has an even more important role.

v.  *Performance monitoring and improvement units*. Some CoGs focus on a basically formal or legal approach to monitoring (equating "implementation" with the passage of the appropriate legislation or regulation). However, there is a growing interest in actually measuring the results that policies are producing, in terms of outcomes for the citizens. In this sense, a number of units have been established in different countries (Australia, Chile, Indonesia, Malaysia, among others) since the creation of the British Prime Minister's Delivery Unit in the early 2000s.

None of these units seek to replace the departmental bureaucracies, or to deal with broader long-term reforms. They focus on the continuous tracking of a few and fairly simple performance indicators—those of top priority for the government. They are not involved in more complex evaluations, and they generally leave the auditing of the data to other units. They work to detect specific bottlenecks and to assist departments in adopting the adjustments needed to remove them. To perform these tasks, they cannot simply rely on policing and reprimanding; this approach would lead to resistance by the departments and to "data gaming." Instead, they collaborate with the ministries, help them resolve problems, and provide advice to program managers on how to enable performance (Barber, 2008; World Bank, 2010b). By showing the value they add to their work without seeking attention or political benefit, CoG monitoring units can gain the trust of ministries and agencies to develop a mutually beneficial relationship. They need, in addition, to be empowered by the Chief Executive to proactively lead these problem-solving activities with senior officials. They also need the existence

Figure 1:  Center of Government "Concentric Circles"



**Line ministries**

**Full Cabinet/Council of Ministers**

**Agencies**

**Ministry of Finance/ Budget Office**

**Interministerial committees**

**Interior/ Home Affairs Ministry**

**PRESIDENT/ PRIME MINISTER**

Ministry/General Secretariat of the Presidency
President/Prime Minister's Office
Chief of Staff
Advisers / Policy Advice Unit
Legal Counsel Unit
Delivery and Performance Unit
Private Office
Spokesperson

**Strategy Unit/ Ministry of Planning**

**Cabinet Office**

**"Super ministries"/ crosscutting agencies**

**Other public institutitions**

**Other coordinating committees (i.e., subnational governments)**

*Source:* Authors' elaboration.

of a planning exercise that defines the government's priorities, outlines actionable goals, and sets measurable indicators.

vi.  *Communications units*. These offices, which may be subunits of the President or Prime Minister's Office, are in charge of coordinating the government's communications and acting as liaisons with the press and the public. The Chief Executive's spokesperson is part of this team. His or her place at the CoG allows for the preparation of a coherent "narrative" of the government's actions and achievements.

vii.  *Legal counsel units*. These offices review the legality of the proposals submitted by the departments to the Chief Executive, and advise him or her on the best strategies to implement the government's legislative agenda (submitting bills to the Legislature, issuing decrees or other executive orders, etc.) so as to prevent any legal problems.

viii.  *Budget units*. Budget offices are frequently based in a line ministry, such as Treasury or Finance. However, their role in the planning and allocation of budgetary resources is key to various CoG functions, including the strategic management of government and the monitoring of departmental performance. Therefore, budget offices are included in the definition of CoG used in this paper, as they perform tasks that are necessary for the work of the entire government and for performing CoG functions.

The image of "concentric circles" can be useful to visualize the CoG.

•  The inner circle includes the institutions and units that, in almost every case, are present in the center: the Chief Executive with his or her private office and special advisors; the Ministry or General Secretariat of the Presidency, or the

Chief of Staff when this figure exists (or Jefe de Gabinete, Presidente del Consejo de Ministros, and similar denominations); the Communications Unit, including the Chief Executive's Spokesperson; the Legal Counsel Unit; and the Delivery and Performance Unit. This is the strategic core of the CoG.

- The next immediate circle includes other institutions that perform CoG functions, but that are also responsible for non-CoG tasks. This includes ministries that are responsible for political affairs, such as Ministries of the Interior or Home Affairs (Ministerios del Interior or Secretarías de Gobernación), and Ministries of Finance. Although these ministries usually perform non-CoG functions, as well (such as providing internal security or collecting taxes), some of their units support the Chief Executive in managing political or technical CoG functions (e.g., managing relations with subnational administrations or the Legislature, and allocating resources to the government´s objectives), and therefore are part of the CoG. This circle also includes Ministries of Planning or Strategy Units, if they exist and have a role in defining the overall strategic direction of the government (the strategic planning function); Cabinet Offices, which may play an important coordinating role in parliamentary countries; "super ministries" that coordinate an entire policy area; and other whole-of-government ministries and agencies.

- Finally, the outer circle includes institutions and units that, in different contexts, may or may not be part of the CoG. The Cabinet or Council of Ministers, for example, is usually a key body that provides coordination for the adoption of policies in parliamentary countries. In certain presidential systems, however, the Cabinet may meet only ceremonially, or not meet at all. Similarly, some countries make extensive use of interministerial committees for the coordination of policy design and implementation in cross-cutting issues, steered by core CoG stakeholders

(inner circle), but, in other contexts, these may exist only intermittently or formally, with no real decision-making authority, or they may only respond to a particular sector ministry's agenda and, therefore, do not represent a mechanism to exercise effectively the coordination function.

- Outside of the circle are the line ministries, government agencies, and other public sector institutions, which are in charge of actually delivering the services under each sector.

As previously mentioned, this description of typical units does not apply to any specific country; multiple institutional arrangements are possible to structure the CoG tailored to the specific context. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to organizing the CoG. For example, the monitoring of performance may not necessarily be performed by a separate unit; the same unit can provide both policy coordination and performance monitoring for a certain policy area (economic policy, social policy, etc.). *What is critical is that the functions described in Subsection 2.2. are being performed, regardless of which institutions and units are responsible for them.* If those functions are being performed from the CoG, the center will be able to steer the government's overall direction, ensure policy coherence, improve performance and communicate its achievements, among other beneficial actions.

## 2.4  Management Styles

In addition to considering the CoG structure, it is important to regard its actual internal *processes and dynamics*. These are usually highly contingent on the Chief Executive's style and preferences. It is possible to define three *basic models of managing the CoG processes* (George and Stern, 1998), noting that these are simplified representations of much more complex dynamics:

i.   *A competitive process.* This model is defined by ambiguous lines of responsibility and over-

Figure 2: Competitive Process



*Source:* George and Stern (1998).
*Note:* U = Unit.

Figure 3: Collegial Process
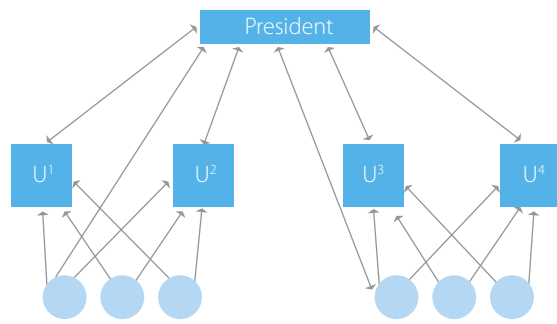


*Source:* George and Stern (1998).
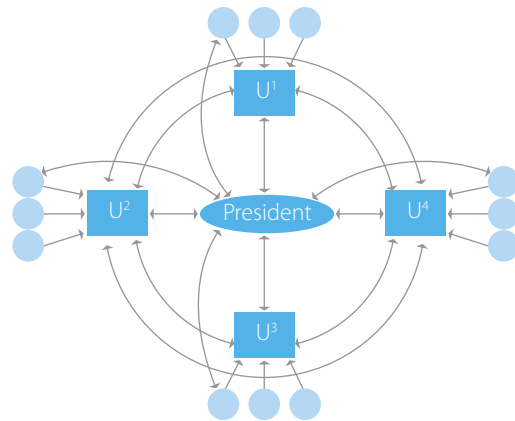*Note:* U = Unit.

lapping jurisdictions between the CoG units, with the Chief Executive interacting bilaterally with each of them and promoting competition instead of cooperation between them. This structure can be regarded as "pluricephalous" (Goetz and Margetts, 1999), as several senior appointees are heads of separate institutions at the center. Certain Chief Executives have resorted to this radial approach, in order to ensure the availability of multiple sources of information and advice, avoiding hierarchies and formal structures to obtain them. Nonetheless, this model demands extremely high levels of the Chief Executive's time, attention, and skills if it is to work properly; the risk is that coordination will fail, especially with the growth in the number and scope of the issues that require governmental action.

ii.  *A collegial process.* A second way of structuring the CoG is to avoid adopting rigid hierarchies, but this approach does not encourage competition among the units. On the contrary, it promotes a more congenial give-and-take of ideas, sharing of information, contestability of options, and group problem solving. As with the competitive approach, a disadvantage of this model is the need for the Chief Executive to devote important time and skills to manage the teamwork. In addition, in order to maintain a collegial relationship, advisors may prefer to reach deci-

sions that protect the group's internal cohesion, instead of probing for policy alternatives that might be preferable, but could strain the group.

iii.  *A formalistic or hierarchical process.* The third option involves a rationalization of the policymaking, with established procedures and channels for the flow of information; an emphasis on reaching agreements at hierarchically lower levels, in order to avoid overloading the Chief Executive with information; and the presence, sometimes, of a top advisor in the form of a strong Chief of Staff, Secretary-General, or Minister of the Presidency. Thus, this structure is "monocephalous" (Goetz and Margetts, 1999), with the

Figure 4: Formalistic process
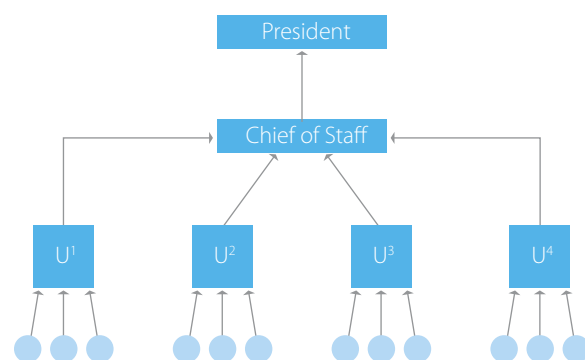


*Source:* George and Stern (1998).
*Note:* U = Unit.

other units placed under a single head of office. Staffers and advisors are hierarchically organized, with clearly established jurisdictions. The overall trend in several countries appears to be toward a managerial style that resembles this model, with an increased institutionalization of the CoG, characterized by hierarchy, division of labor, specialization, and standard operating procedures. Nevertheless, it is possible that Chief Executives prefer different structures for decisions that occur under different settings. For example, on issues marked by uncertainty or limited information, they may prefer collegial or competitive approaches to ensure that all perspectives reach their desks (Bonvecchi and Scartascini, 2011).

## 2.5  Staffing

The literature presents data on the size of CoG for multiple countries, but these comparisons are usually misleading. Each study defines the CoG differently, and therefore the institutions and units that are included for these estimates are not homogeneous across countries. Although the larger share of CoG staff is usually devoted to administrative tasks, this report does not focus on these staff members, nor does it seek to define the correct average number of CoG staff. Nevertheless, the number of individuals that perform the political, policy, and technical functions that define the CoG is generally fairly small (James and Ben-Gera, 2004). The Prime Minister's Delivery Unit in the United Kingdom, for example, which is regarded as one of the strongest monitoring and performance improvement units set up in any country had, on average, approximately 40 staffers. This team was able to track progress in the 30 main priorities defined by the government, and to assist departments in unblocking obstacles that hindered the achievement of results.

Thus, an important conclusion from the literature and the practice in LAC countries is that *performing the core CoG functions does not require large numbers of staff.* It does require, however, that these staffers are highly skilled, competent, and credible to the rest of the government. High levels of expertise are critical for the CoG to obtain acceptance from the ministries, when coordinating and monitoring their actions, as ministries will gauge the added value that CoG institutions bring to their work. A right combination of profiles and competencies is generally needed to cover the different functions, including technical experts and political operatives (Peters, Rhodes, and Wright, 2000).

Regarding these different profiles, "political operatives" refer to the political appointees that are designated by the Chief Executive to manage the government's politics. In terms of "technical experts," certain countries tend to recruit generalists, who, especially if they come from an administrative *grand corps* or senior executive service, bring with them a network of connections in the bureaucracy that can be valuable as an unofficial tool of interdepartmental coordination. In terms of sector expertise, the CoG cannot replicate the level of specific expertise present at the department or agency level, nor should it, as it would be an excessive intervention in their work. However, the CoG may include units or individuals with in-depth technical knowledge of certain broad policy areas (especially those that are a priority for the government, such as economic or social policy) that can serve as independent sources of analysis and advice for the Chief Executive. Rotating, assigning, or seconding the personnel from the departments to the CoG can also bring sector expertise to the CoG.

The capabilities available at the CoG in terms of technical, policy, and political expertise partly define what role the CoG can play vis-à-vis the departments: a CoG that expects to have a strong policy role needs a level of expertise and of seniority in its staff that is up to that challenge. Therefore, *securing high technical levels at the center is critical to strengthen the capacity of the CoG to perform its core functions.* Quality is more important than quantity in this regard.

# The Situation of the Centers of Government in the LAC Region

This paper presents the first exploratory empirical evidence produced, so far, on the current situation of CoG institutions in the LAC region, based on surveys of key CoG institutions in 12 countries[12] and of experts (mostly former senior CoG officials) in 13 countries.[11] The questionnaire sought to investigate the structures and processes of these institutions in each country to produce a preliminary assessment of CoG performance in the LAC countries. This assessment informs the proposals for future work on CoG strengthening, included in Section 4.

The data are presented here as general trends for the region. The large heterogeneity that exists in some of the functions makes it difficult to identify common themes, especially as CoGs seem to be at different stages of development across countries. However, country-level analyses are beyond the scope of this paper and of the available data, so an analysis of broad regional trends was preferred. Nonetheless, the Appendix presents an Institutional Development Matrix (IDM) that could be useful to diagnose capacity gaps in CoG performance. With in-depth information about each case, the IDM can be a useful tool for CoG institutions in the region.

At the beginning of each function, a brief checklist or proposed benchmark of what would constitute a strong CoG performance is presented, and then the actual performance of the function based on the surveys is discussed.

## 3.1 Strategic Management

### Proposed benchmark
A strong performance of this function would require:

- the existence of a government plan with a small number of clear priorities, and protocols to guide Ministries in the concrete definition of these goals. In particular, each priority sector should be able to develop specific proposed steps to achieve the priorities (e.g., through programs or other means), as well as the appropriate performance indicators and their targets, which will show if the priorities have been met;
- consistency and articulation between the CoG units responsible for providing strategic management to the government action, avoiding duplication and overlap;
- mechanisms to anticipate future challenges and to adapt the government's plan to new circumstances, ensuring that while a dynamic and responsive plan is in place, the strategic focus and orientation is maintained throughout the President's or Prime Minister's term in office; and

[10] Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay.
[11] Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay.

- an alignment of the budget to fulfill the objectives established in the government's plan, and well-defined protocols to ensure this alignment actually occurs.

### *Practice in the LAC region*

Approximately a third of surveyed countries have a long-term national development plan, but in most countries there is a government plan or other document that defines an orientation for the policies to be implemented during the term of the Chief Executive. The President or Prime Minister and certain CoG institutions generally make the final decisions on the contents of the plan, but the ministries and agencies and (sometimes) the parties in government participate in their elaboration as well.

Despite the existence of these strategic management instruments, in few cases the plan actually appears to guide the formulation of policy, by aligning, for example, the government's budget each year behind the goals defined in the program. In many cases, a high number of relevant policy decisions adopted by governments in the region were completely absent in the programs. Unforeseen topics or initiatives will always appear, but this should not be the general rule in policymaking. In most countries, then, there is a very limited or even purely formal activity of strategic planning. It is unlikely that a merely *pro forma* planning exercise is capable of producing strategic coherence to the government action, which is the ultimate purpose of this function.

Coherence can also be affected by the *duplication* of planning instances, when different institutions and units (inside and outside of the CoG) are involved in strategic planning. This phenomenon is also present in the region. Moreover, sector-specific plans, in many cases, are not aligned to the general government plan led by the CoG, which again means that the purpose of ensuring coherence will not be met.

In turn, the government plan is usually not subject to revision through established processes that indicate the updates. Any adjustments are made implicitly, either driven by a communication from the Chief Executive stating new priorities, or by the annual budget allocation process. Thus, the most dynamic aspect of the strategic management function—which is not limited to an initial planning activity, but is a continuous exercise and systemic examination of how to get from the present situation to the desirable one—is virtually absent in all cases.

Finally, the instances conducting prospective analysis and strategic foresight are only incipient in a few countries, aside from macroeconomic analysis exercises undertaken by ministries of finance. For the whole of government and most policy areas, however, there are no institutionalized mechanisms for this type of analysis.

Overall, the performance of the strategic management function appears to be moderately low. A few countries have made greater progress in establishing actionable government programs but, in most cases, there is a limited role of the CoG in providing strategic guidance to the whole of government. These findings are in line with analyses that specifically studied the strategic planning function in the LAC region (García López and García Moreno, 2010), and suggest there is room for improvement in this regard.

## 3.2  Coordination

### *Proposed benchmark*

A strong performance of this function would require:

- the existence of protocols to ensure actual consistency across policies designed and implemented by the different departments and agencies, preventing and dealing with duplication or conflict;
- the consultation of stakeholders inside and outside of government for making high-level policy decisions, with adequate analysis and advice by the CoG for the Chief Executive's final decision;

- established mechanisms, with CoG participation, for the exchange of information, collaboration, and decision making in policies that, in their design and/or implementation phases, would have to bring together multiple ministries and agencies; and
- the promotion of cross-agency initiatives and collaboration throughout the delivery system.

### Practice in the LAC region

The majority of countries have bodies whose mission is to coordinate the whole of government or, at least, for specific policy areas (such as sector committees or cabinets that bring together the relevant ministries on a certain issue).[12] However, again, this formal existence does not imply an actual or effective performance of this task. In fact, in a large group of countries, the decision-making channels are almost exclusively informal, ad hoc for each issue, and without the necessary inclusion of all government agencies with jurisdiction over the matter. In these cases, the CoG is not performing the coordination function.

In most cases, however, the situation is more complex. There are coordinating bodies and mechanisms which are functioning, but they cover only certain policy areas (such as social policy), they are generally led by one of the sector ministries, they may not have regularly scheduled meetings, and they are quite often overlooked by the Chief Executive in the issues where he or she prefers to act bilaterally with each minister. In these cases, the coordination function is exercised partially, without being consolidated or institutionalized for all governmental activities that require it, and it tends to focus on policymaking, with much less attention devoted to coordination during implementation—perhaps one of the most difficult tasks in the public sector.

It is important to note that all countries pursue policies that bring together multiple ministries or agencies for their design or implementation and that, in many countries, these have multiplied in recent years.[13] Governments recognize the need to ad-

dress certain problems outside the logic of separate ministerial "silos." However, the weak systematization of coordinating mechanisms implies that, in general, collaborative processes depend on the ability and willingness of the participating agencies to coordinate in each specific case.

Finally, only some CoGs are staffed with advisors specializing in certain key policy areas; many others only include generalists that have to cover all sectors. This lack of specialization in the technical areas of the government's key priorities can harm the CoG's ability to analyze and probe the ministerial initiatives, and to advise the Chief Executive appropriately.[14] Overall, this function could be signficantly strengthened in LAC countries.

In summary, coordination is clearly an aspect that presents considerable potential for improvements in the region. The main obstacle appears to be the preference of many Chief Executives to manage the government bilaterally (see Subsection 2.4. on Management Styles), which may hinder the ability of the coordinating mechanisms and bodies to fully perform their tasks. In fact, in most cases, the CoG does not provide incentives for ministries and agencies to coordinate their actions. Nonetheless, it may also be a problem of capabilities or weak political em-

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[12] In a few cases, the Full Cabinet or Council of Ministers acts as a coordinating body. However, in most of these cases, the Cabinet receives limited technical support by CoG units for the preparation of meetings and the monitoring of agreements, which limits its ability to effectively produce consistency in government action.

[13] In terms of dealing with crosscutting issues, most governments have placed the government modernization agenda under the responsibility of a CoG institution or unit. In other issues (regulation of civil service; relation with subnational governments; coordination of international affairs; response to natural disasters), there is more heterogeneity, with some countries placing them within the CoG and others under the responsibility of a line ministry.

[14] It should be noted, though, that in certain contexts, the ministers may perceive the presence of specialized advisors as a source of competition and conflict; therefore, Chief Executives should be aware of these dynamics when structuring their advisory staff.

powerment by the Chief Executive; in approximately half of the countries, the CoG is regarded as having "low influence" over ministries and agencies to promote their coordination.

### 3.3  Monitoring and Improvement of Performance

*Proposed benchmark*
A strong performance of this function would require:

- continuous and robust monitoring of progress in the key government priorities, with systems that allow real-time and accurate tracking of output, outcome and value-for-money indicators;
- use of the performance information in regular feedback meetings with all the relevant ministries and agencies, to assess their performance and discuss changes; and
- the identification and assistance of agencies whose performance has been substandard, assisting them to unblock obstacles before problems become crises.

*Practice in the LAC region*
Except for a few cases with a high development of this function, the monitoring mechanisms are generally limited to using budgetary indicators (based on inputs and/or processes rather than output or outcome indicators), which are overseen by the finance ministries, or the mechanisms rely on reports produced by the ministries and agencies for other indicators, without the capabilities to check the validity of the data submitted. Thus, the CoG appears severely limited in conducting a systematic monitoring of the Chief Executive's priorities, when these have been defined as outcome-oriented goals.

Moreover, few countries have established feedback mechanisms between the CoG institutions responsible for monitoring and the relevant sector ministries and agencies. This is particularly crucial in the several countries where multiple CoG institutions are involved in monitoring the performance of ministries and agencies leading, in many cases, to a duplication of efforts and to a problem of "monitoring inflation" that burdens the ministries and agencies with repeated instances of progress reporting. Without those feedback or coordination mechanisms, it is unlikely that the data can be effectively used to correct problems and improve performance. In a few cases, however, there is a more systematic use of performance indicators with feedback processes between the CoG and the ministries. Although, even in these countries, there are weaknesses in these processes (e.g., in the information management systems that should allow monitoring performance in real time, or relating to the employee training needed for this).

Finally, the weak monitoring capacity extends to the difficulties in assisting the agencies whose performance is lower than expected. While some CoGs work to unlock managerial or political obstacles, there is often not enough technical expertise and capacity in the CoG to provide such assistance. There are also no established routines to rapidly provide assistance that could enable performance when results are not being achieved. CoGs are particularly underdeveloped in this aspect.

Therefore—and despite the progress made in the performance management agenda in the region in recent years—the development of this function is still very limited in most of the region. A few countries have established more advanced units and processes to fulfill this function, following an international trend in this direction; these experiences could influence similar improvements in countries that have little development in this regard.

### 3.4  Political Management

*Proposed benchmark*
A strong performance of this function would require:

- effective support by CoG institutions to the Chief Executive in negotiating with other stake-

holders to carry out the government's program in a steady and coherent way;

- mechanisms and established procedures to anticipate, prevent, and address potential social conflicts with participation of the CoG and of the relevant ministries or agencies; and

- legal counsel for the Chief Executive in reviewing the legality of government actions, and advice on the best strategies to advance the government plan.

### Practice in the LAC region

Political management is a core function of all the region's CoGs, with institutions that not only formally have this responsibility, but that also carry it out in practice. In some cases, what appears to be problematic is not the absence but the *duplication* of institutions performing this function, which can lead to confusion in its exercise and to a lack of coherent and unified direction for the implementation of the government's programs. While Chief Executives (as observed in Subsection 2.4) sometimes prefer this ambiguity in the management of their CoG, the resulting risk is that the function is not performed systematically, thereby hindering the implementation of the government's initiatives.

In terms of conflict and crisis management, these are usually addressed in an ad hoc manner, with participation of the relevant ministry and with a variable CoG participation, depending on how it should intervene in each case. There are usually no established bodies or mechanisms on how to process information, make decisions, and monitor compliance. Again, this is connected to the mostly informal and ad hoc style that characterizes this function. There is, therefore, room for strengthening the capacities of the region's CoGs in this regard.

Finally, it is important to note that virtually all Chief Executives have, in their CoG legal counsel, units that analyze the legality of the policies proposed by ministries and agencies. Only in exceptional cases does this task correspond to a line ministry. Therefore, this aspect appears to be in-

stitutionalized and present in almost all countries of the region.

## 3.5  Communications and Accountability

### Proposed benchmark

A strong performance of this function would require:

- the alignment of all senior government officials behind a common communications strategy, defined by the CoG, or having a coordinated narrative for the whole of government;

- standards for all ministries and agencies regarding the mandatory dissemination of information, as well as its format and timing; and ensuring its accessibility, accuracy, and the explanation of actions and results, while ensuring proper accountability; and

- receiving the input of citizens, front-line employees, and nongovernmental stakeholders in the development and implementation of policies across government.

### Practice in the LAC region

The large majority of CoGs include units dedicated to reporting on the actions and achievements of the government. However, it should be noted that, in some cases, these units have a limited ability to produce a unified and coherent message for the whole of government, as ministers and other senior officials drive their own agendas with the press. In such situations, the CoG acts as a spokesperson for the Chief Executive, but does not meet the purpose of producing a coordinated narrative for the whole of government. Thus, the key aspect of this function is not being performed.

In turn, the CoG transparency mechanisms are generally weak or have merely a formal existence, while the ones promoting the participation of citizens and public employees tend to be absent. These initiatives are often placed in line ministries and autonomous agencies, which may weaken their abili-

ty to increase the transparency and openness of the entire government, as they lack the support provided by a greater proximity to the Chief Executive.[15] In addition, one of the critical aspects of any accountability mechanism—the existence of explanations and justifications of published information to allow for debate—is generally absent.

## 3.6  CoG Functions and Practice in the LAC Region: Conclusions

It is important to note that some functions present more heterogeneity across countries than others. The functions of *strategic management* and *monitoring and improvement of performance* present wide divergences between some LAC countries that have developed a considerable capacity to perform them and a few others that have little presence of these functions in their CoG work. Thus, in terms of functions, there are regional examples that can guide a diffusion of good practices across LAC countries. On the other hand, with regard to *policy coordination,* most countries have a moderately low level of performance, with less cross-country heterogeneity. The prevalence of informal and ad hoc decision-making processes is a recurring situation that affects the institutionalization of coordination mechanisms across the region. Coordination mechanisms at the implementation phase are, in general, nonexistent. The very few instances in which this function is actually exercised tend only to take place as a result of the proactive approach of sector ministers, due to political alliances, personal relations, or other factors, which do not necessarily relate to the CoG undertaking the coordination role.

Another important finding is that the functions of *strategic management* and *monitoring and improvement of performance* appear to present an important level of intra-country correlation. When a country has a high performance in strategic management, it also tends to present a high performance in monitoring and improvement; on the other hand, if the first function results in a low performance, it is

probable that this also will occur in the second function. This connection is logical, since the effective function of strategic planning is necessary to develop the performance indicators that will enable the effective monitoring of government activities. This suggests the importance of *working simultaneously* on the CoG capacities *for both functions* to enhance their performance.

In summing up the conclusions relating to all the functions, an element that stands out from the data is that, in almost all countries, *the functions identified in this paper are present—at least formally—in the institutional organization or structure of CoGs.* The LAC governments studied in this Technical Note acknowledge, within their respective legal dispositions, the importance of establishing institutions that will carry out these functions. In all cases, therefore, there is a legal or administrative basis for an institution or unit to perform each of the functions identified in this paper. *This formal existence does not imply that the functions are actually being performed or are performed effectively.* In fact, there seems to be a large heterogeneity in the institutional development of CoGs across the various countries in the LAC region. Along these lines, it is possible to identify three groups of countries:

- *Optimized CoGs:* every function presents a medium-to-high level of fulfillment. The challenge of the countries in this more advanced group appears to be the institutionalization and systematization of the performance of CoG functions.
- *Developing CoGs*: this is the largest group of countries, which presents institutions seeking to fulfill their functions but with only moderate capabilities to do so, or that fail to extend them

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[15] The coexistence of units dedicated to communications and others dedicated to transparency in the CoG could lead to tensions, due to their different institutional goals; therefore, this position outside of the CoG can also have certain advantages.

to all priority sectors. In these countries, there are institutions and units that have a real and not only formal existence, since they have concrete practices (processes, methodologies, technologies, capacities) for the performance of their function, but they do so only partially, with relevant government decisions and actions that are taken through other channels. This is the challenge for most CoGs: *to strengthen their capacity to better fulfill those core functions and, when that performance has been satisfactorily achieved, to institutionalize and systematize those functions.*

- *Establishing CoGs:* almost all functions display a low-to-very-low level of performance; the challenge of these countries is to create these functions, essentially, afresh.

In conclusion, what is observed for most countries is a limited or partial performance of these CoG functions. Governments recognize the importance of establishing institutions or units to perform these functions but, in practice, they are unevenly fulfilled, due to limited political and technical capacities. The agenda for CoG strengthening, presented in the following section, attempts to address these weaknesses.

# An Agenda for Strengthening Centers of Government in the LAC Region

The Center of Government (CoG) is the political apex of government. However, to perform its core strategic functions effectively, it is important to have sufficient technical capacity. If Chief Executives see *political* value in producing effective policies and delivering high-quality services—something that citizens more actively demand with increasing expectations—they will require considerable *technical* support from their CoGs to achieve it. This appears to be the main factor behind the growing interest in LAC countries to strengthen the technical capabilities and institutional capacities of their CoGs, regardless of how each new President or Prime Minister organizes it.

The CoG should refrain from micromanaging the government or replacing the departments in their inherent roles. However, governments require a strategic core to steer policy, ensure coherence, provide coordination, promote reform, and incubate innovation. Performing these functions would ensure the delivery of services to citizens and the realization of campaign promises. Although some countries have made considerable progress in strengthening the performance of core functions, CoG capacity in the LAC region continues to be generally weak, as discussed in Section 3. In most countries, CoG institutions fulfill their functions only partially

Different structures and institutions can be created to perform the functions of the CoG, and there is no single model that can be applied to all contexts at all times. The key is that the core strategic functions are performed effectively, and that they become more institutionalized, so that each government or transition team that takes office will not have to recreate them. Given that some of the functions are especially relevant at the beginning of a new administration, ensuring the existence of underlying technical capacities will provide additional tools to Presidents and Prime Ministers for them to lead their governments.

The analysis of CoGs in LAC countries (see Section 3) has established that these capacities are still low in most countries. From this study, **a number of initiatives can be considered to support a regional agenda for the strengthening of CoGs in the region:**

- **Establishment of a network of senior officials of CoG institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean**, to enable the exchange of information amongst peers regarding recent innovations, good practices, and lessons learned in the performance of CoG functions. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has established a similar network, since the early 1980s, which acts as an informal forum for discussion between senior CoG officials of its member countries. In the LAC region, a similar network could play a useful role to share information and experiences. Countries that have made more progress in strengthening their CoGs

could lead the documentation and dissemination of those experiences across the region.

- **Provision of tailored training for CoG officials in the region**, especially for those who are entering (or are about to enter) offices within a new administration. Such training could focus on the tools and techniques available to improve the performance of CoG functions. The experts and institutions surveyed for this Technical Note have unanimously noted the value that this training could have, especially since the concept of "Center of Government," with its specific purpose and functions, has not yet been well established in several countries within the region. Public policy, government, and management schools at universities in LAC countries could participate in these activities, especially if the CoG topic becomes a part of their post-graduate curriculum.

- **Technical assistance for the countries that require a more in-depth assessment of the key aspects of their CoG, in order to strengthen them, and the technical support to do so.** The Institutional Development Matrix (IDM) presented in this paper (see the Appendix) is a basic input for countries to assist them in assessing to what extent their CoG core functions are being performed, and therefore where they need to implement reforms. In addition, constant support to strengthen the work of CoG institutions would aid them to establish the routines and practices needed to improve performance.

- **Formation of a team of experts and former CoG practitioners from the region to support incoming administrations**, providing assistance during government transitions. This timing would be the best opportunity to design and establish processes, methodologies, and innovations to achieve the strong performance of CoG functions, prior to other practices becoming entrenched and difficult to modify.

- **In-depth studies and analyses to identify and share regional experiences with oth-**

**er countries.** As noted in Subsection 3.2, there are countries in the region that have established units or advanced mechanisms to fulfill the CoG functions. Since much of the literature on CoG comes from OECD countries, identifying and documenting the practices that have worked well (or that have not worked) in the LAC region could be valuable for other countries seeking to strengthen their CoG (see, for example, Dumas, Lafuente, and Parrado, 2013).

- **Further research to increase the evidence about the effects of CoG on the performance of government and on the quality of policies**. This is a considerable challenge in the CoG agenda, and it does not only apply to the LAC region (as stated in the literature review linked to this paper: Alessandro, Lafuente, and Santiso, 2013). It is certainly difficult to assess the impact of the CoG work, since the counterfactuals cannot easily be estimated and, therefore, the specific effect of CoG activities is hard to isolate and measure. The increased interest in performance monitoring, however, implies that outcome data may be available, in order to assess how the intervention from the CoG influences the results achieved by government. Advancing this area of research, in collaboration with universities, think tanks, and research centers in LAC countries, could place the LAC region at the forefront of the CoG agenda.

These and other lines of work will enable LAC countries to strengthen their CoGs, a critical step toward ensuring the strategic management of their governments; providing coordination in the formulation and implementation of policies; systematically monitoring the performance of ministries and agencies and assisting them to innovate and improve their work; coherently managing the political processes of public policy; communicating their actions in a consistent way; and, ultimately, being accountable to citizens in terms of results.

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# Appendix: Center of Government's Institutional Development Matrix

The discussion in Section 3 regarding the current situation of the CoGs in the LAC region was based on exploratory empirical evidence, collected through surveys of experts and CoG officials. To define specific actions for CoG strengthening in each country, however, more in-depth information will be required, which would be better interpreted using a framework that classifies the level of strength of CoGs that is essential to perform their five core functions. This Appendix proposes such a framework: a CoG Institutional Development Matrix (IDM).

The purpose of the IDM is to assess the stage of institutional development of the CoG to determine in which aspects there is more distance between the actual performance of a specific CoG and one that will ensure full compliance of its functions. The IDM is a useful tool for CoG institutions to assess the performance of their basic functions.

The IDM breaks down the CoG functions into a series of indicators that allow an assessment of whether or not these functions are being effectively performed or fulfilled. The indicators have been developed from the conceptual definition work of Section 2, which identified what kind of units, processes, and activities are relevant to fulfill each of the CoG functions. These indicators can be further disaggregated. Since this is an initial attempt at conceptualization and empirical analysis of the CoGs in the region, however, this framework can be useful in evaluating CoG performance.

The fulfillment of the five functions has been classified into three levels: *establishing, developing, and optimized*. While it is a basic categorization, it can guide the initiatives of CoG strengthening by determining where the most pressing weaknesses lie.

In an ideal scenario, a CoG will have institutionalized the processes necessary for planning the priorities and strategies for the Chief Executive's term in office; instances with real power to provide consistency in the design and implementation of policies; monitoring mechanisms for the performance of ministries and agencies and assistance when there are problems; institutions or advisors to undertake political negotiations to secure approval of the government program; and units responsible for communicating, coherently, the actions of the entire government and addressing citizens' views on the progress of public affairs, in order to promote participation.

Table A1: Center of Government Institutional Development Matrix

| Function | Indicator | Critical elements | Establishing CoG | Developing CoG | Optimized CoG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **(i) Strategic management of the whole of government** | 1. *Planning and government program* | There is a government program (which may be part of a national development plan) that defines priority sectors, actionable goals to achieve, strategies, lines of action and performance indicators, and that guides the operational plans of ministries and agencies in accordance to the priorities of the Chief Executive. | There is no government program or other formal agreements on the priorities of the administration, or the latter only exist as general statements, without guiding the policy decisions of ministries and agencies, and without indicating what would constitute success. | There is a government program with goals to achieve and strategies, but it has a limited influence in the design of policies by ministries and agencies, or its performance indicators are not entirely relevant to the goals. | The government program is integrated within the day-to-day activities of the ministries and agencies, and there is a regular performance review of each of the priorities, with appropriate action taken by both the CoG and ministries. |
| | 2. *CoG role in providing strategic orientation* | The CoG works with ministries and agencies along the entire strategic management process, ensuring that the goals of ministries and agencies are coherent and challenging, and involving the relevant actors from within and outside of government. | The CoG does not work with ministries and agencies to agree on a performance framework, or the goals it sets are only general statements with no clarity regarding the definition of success, and without specifying the resources and direction to guide the policy decisions of ministries and agencies. | The CoG works with ministries and agencies to define their goals, but it lacks political empowerment or the technical resources to ensure that they focus on the Chief Executive's priorities through goals that are sufficiently challenging and coherent. | The CoG has procedures for the effective management for results, with a clear understanding of delivery systems and the ability to mobilize ministries and agencies in a way that produces results. |
| | 3. *Alignment between the government program and the budget* | There is an alignment of the budget of ministries and agencies with the goals and strategies of the government program, through processes that include the validation of a CoG institution. | There is no alignment of the budget to the government program; therefore, the budget is de facto the plan (or there is no government program). | The budget of the ministries and agencies in priority sectors is only formally or weakly aligned to the government program, or this alignment is only achieved in some of the priority areas of the government. | The budget of ministries and agencies is very aligned to the government program through a joint annual framework by the CoG with ministries and agencies, in relation to budget formulation. |
| | 4. *Program adaptation to changing circumstances* | The government program is updated, when changes in context or unforeseen crises (including natural disasters) demand it, in order to ensure that the new priorities are within the government's strategic orientation. | The government program does not receive updates (or there is no government program). | The government program receives updates only implicitly (i.e., through budget adjustments), but there is no formalized process to incorporate changes and verify their strategic coherence. | The program receives explicit adjustments or updates through established procedures that incorporate the new priorities, ensuring they conform to the government's strategic orientation. |

Table A1: Center of Government Institutional Development Matrix *(continued)*

| Function | Indicator | Critical elements | Establishing CoG | Developing CoG | Optimized CoG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 5. *Prospective analysis* | There are mechanisms of prospective analysis to anticipate new challenges or crises, to maintain strategic focus with established procedures, and to propose necessary changes to prevent them, both at the strategic and operational levels. | There is no method of analysis. | There are mechanisms of prospective analysis only for few policy areas, or they are only informal, or they do not have the capacity to propose changes both at the strategic and operational levels. | There are mechanisms of prospective analysis for all the main policy areas, with defined operational procedures and the ability to propose changes, both at the strategic and operational levels. |
| **(ii) Coordination in the design and implementation of policy** | 6. *Consistency in policy design* | There are established protocols to ensure the consistency between the policies of the different ministries and agencies, and the CoG has the political and technical capacities to enforce them systematically to resolve cases of duplication or conflict. | There are no cross-government standards for policymaking, or the CoG lacks the capacity to enforce them. | The CoG has the technical skills and credibility to coordinate policy design from a whole-of-government perspective, but it performs it only in an informal and ad hoc manner for specific topics. | There are defined mechanisms to produce coordination from a whole-of-government perspective, leading to consistent, efficient, and timely adoption of policies. |
| | 7. *Contestability of policies* | The high-level policy decisions (including all those taken by the Chief Executive) arise after considering various alternatives, with a process that allows the consultation of the stakeholders inside and outside the government, who provide the decision-maker with high level political and technical advice before he or she makes the final decision. | The high-level policy decisions do not arise from processes that allow considering various options, consulting with stakeholders, or obtaining high-level political and technical advice. | Very few of the high-level policy decisions arise from processes that allow considering various options, consulting with stakeholders, and getting high-level political and technical advice, but these processes are not institutionalized and are ad hoc. | Most or all high-level policy decisions arise from processes that allow considering various options, consulting with stakeholders inside and outside of the government, and getting high-level political and technical advice, through institutionalized processes that are applied consistently and are rarely omitted. |
| | 8. *Articulation in key crosscutting issues* | Multidimensional problems are addressed in a consistent way by the relevant ministries and agencies, with established protocols for the exchange of information and the decision making, and with CoG participation to ensure their alignment with the overall direction of the government. | There is no articulation to deal with key crosscutting issues, or this only occurs in crisis situations in an ad hoc way, with no established mechanisms for information exchange and decision making. | There are instances to coordinate actions in crosscutting problems, with protocols for the exchange of information and joint decision making, and with participation of the CoG, although these may only apply in some policy areas. | The government's responses to all key crosscutting issues are addressed from a whole-of-government perspective, with CoG leadership in articulating the relevant ministries and agencies, protocols for information sharing and decision making, and pooled resources for dealing with the issue. |

Table A1: Center of Government Institutional Development Matrix *(continued)*

| Function | Indicator | Critical elements | Establishing CoG | Developing CoG | Optimized CoG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 9. *Coordination of program implementation* | The different programs within the same priority policy area are implemented in a coordinated way, with consistency in the characteristics and timing of the interventions, and with efforts to produce synergies and maximize impact. | Each ministry and agency carries out its own programs and projects without articulating its actions with other units. | Ministries and agencies that implement programs in the key policy areas engage in consultation and exchange of information, preventing redundancies and contradictions between their actions. | There is collaboration among the relevant ministries and agencies involved in the execution of programs in priority sectors, with the CoG providing the necessary incentives to seek enhanced results and obtaining more than the sum of its parts. |
| | 10. *Capacity to monitor performance* | The CoG conducts a continuous and robust monitoring of the progress of the key government priorities, tracking the evolution of different indicators (including output, outcome, and value-for-money indicators). | The CoG has not set standards for the definition of metrics, or it has defined indicators that cannot actually measure performance and results. | The CoG has set standards for the definition of metrics, but most of the indicators focus on inputs or processes, or are not entirely pertinent to reflect performance. | The CoG continuously monitors progress for the key government priorities, using mainly output, outcome, and value-for-money indicators that accurately capture performance. |
| | 11. *Monitoring processes* | Progress information is used in feedback meetings with all relevant ministries and agencies, on a regular basis, to assess their performance and discuss changes. | Monitoring systems that allow a real-time tracking of progress are not used, or the information is not used in feedback meetings with all relevant ministries and agencies, or these are conducted informally, without appropriate data. | Monitoring systems that allow a real-time tracking of progress are used for some priority sectors, and the information is used only occasionally or in limited ways in feedback meetings, with weak oversight of the agreed changes. | Monitoring systems that allow a real-time tracking of progress are used, and the information is used regularly in feedback meetings to assess performance and define changes with the priority sectors, whose compliance is verified in follow-up meetings. |
| (iii) **Monitoring and improvement of performance** | 12. *Support for the Chief Executive in performance monitoring* | The Chief Executive regularly receives reports that allow him or her to monitor the level of compliance with the priority goals of ministries and agencies, as well as the agreements reached with their heads, with information verified by CoG staff. | The Chief Executive does not receive reports that allow him or her to monitor the level of compliance with the priority goals of ministries and agencies, or of the agreements reached with their heads, or only receives reports produced by these ministries and agencies. | The Chief Executive regularly receives reports that allow him or her to monitor the level of compliance with the priority goals of ministries and agencies, and/or of the agreements reached with their heads, but in an ad hoc way, or relying mainly on information submitted by the ministries and agencies. | The Chief Executive regularly receives reports that allow him or her to monitor the level of compliance with the priority goals of ministries and agencies, as well as the agreements reached with their heads, for all or most of the relevant policy areas, with information verified by CoG staff in an institutionalized way. |

Table A1: Center of Government Institutional Development Matrix *(continued)*

| Function | Indicator | Critical elements | Establishing CoG | Developing CoG | Optimized CoG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 13. *Mechanisms to improve performance of ministries and agencies* | The CoG has mechanisms to promote innovations that improve the government performance, and to identify and assist the agencies whose performance has been sub-standard before problems become crises. | The CoG lacks the technical and political capacities needed to promote innovations that improve the performance of government, and to assist low-performing organizations. | The CoG promotes tools and techniques to improve performance and intervention strategies to unblock obstacles to delivery, although their implementation is partial or restricted to certain sectors. | The CoG is a center of excellence in results-based management, with credible expertise that is used collaboratively by ministries and agencies to learn lessons and achieve better value for money, and to produce interventions and actions that improve performance. |
| **(iv) Political management of public policies** | 14. *Institutionalization of Political Management* | There is one or several CoG institutions responsible for negotiating with other stakeholders (internal to the Executive, the Legislature, political parties, subnational governments, civil society organizations, private sector), providing support for the Chief Executive to carry out the government's program in a coherent and unified way. | The CoG does not lead the political negotiations to pass the government program, or—if it does—it does so without a coordinated strategy. | The CoG is in charge of the political negotiation for advancing the government program, but it only interacts with some of the relevant stakeholders, or does not do it in a fully unified and coherent way. | The CoG leads the negotiations to advance the government program, following a coordinated strategy and interacting with all or most of the relevant stakeholders, and with high credibility across ministries and agencies. |
| | 15. *Management of social conflicts* | There are mechanisms to anticipate, prevent, and address potential social conflicts in a coordinated and coherent way, with participation of the CoG and of the relevant ministries or agencies, and with procedures for data collection, decision making, the monitoring of commitments, and communication. | Social conflicts are not actively prevented, and are addressed in an ad hoc way, without a coordinated strategy, or with weak guidance from the CoG to ministries and agencies on how to solve them. | The CoG anticipates and addresses potential social conflict, and has established mechanisms for this, but they are only used in certain cases, limiting the consistency of the government's response. | There are mechanisms to anticipate, prevent, and address potential social conflicts in a coordinated and coherent way, and they are used systematically in all or most cases, having already defined protocols to ensure that they have sufficient information (and from multiple sources) to be used to make decisions, to verify that commitments are put into practice, and to communicate them effectively. |

*(continued on next page)*

Table A1: Center of Government Institutional Development Matrix *(continued)*

| Function | Indicator | Critical elements | Establishing CoG | Developing CoG | Optimized CoG |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 16. *Legal Counsel* | The Chief Executive receives legal counsel to assess the legality of the policy proposals of the ministries and agencies and of the legal implications of his or her actions, and to recommend the best strategies to secure the government program. | There is no team or unit in the Center of Government that assesses the legality of policy proposals and of the Chief Executive's action, and he or she does not receive advice on the available legal tools to pass the government program. | There is in the CoG a unit or a team that assesses the legality of policy proposals and of the Chief Executive's actions, but it has no political or technical capacity to rule on initiatives of all ministries, or to provide legal advice on which tool is more convenient to pass the program. | All major policy initiatives and Chief Executive's actions receive a legal assessment by a CoG unit or team, which also advises the Chief Executive on the most appropriate legal tools (political and technical) to pass the government program. |
| **(v) Communications and accountability** | 17. *Communication of actions and achievements* | There are clear standards for speaking on behalf of the whole of government to ensure that the communications respond to a common strategy, aligning all senior officials behind this strategy, and supporting the Chief Executive in speeches and other messaging | There is no central coordination of the government communications, or high-level officials do not follow a common strategy in their public messages, or the Chief Executive has limited support to prepare his or her communications and speeches. | The CoG coordinates the government communications, but it is unable to align all senior officials behind a common strategy; it does support the Chief Executive in his or her communications and speeches with generalist advisors. | The CoG coordinates and aligns the contents and timing of the government communications from a whole-of-government perspective, supports the Chief Executive in preparing speeches and other messages with a team specialized in this task, and monitors the impact of the government's communications to enhance its effectiveness. |
| | 18. *Transparency mechanisms* | The CoG sets standards for ministries and agencies on the type of information that should be disseminated to the public, ensuring that the timing and modalities facilitate their accessibility, and establishing control mechanisms to ensure the validity of the information published. | There are no standards that ministries and agencies must follow regarding the dissemination of information to the public, or there are no mechanisms to audit or validate the data being published. | The CoG sets standards for ministries and agencies regarding the dissemination of information to the public, but compliance by ministries and agencies, or the existence of mechanisms to validate the data, is partial or limited. | The CoG sets standards for ministries and agencies on the type of information that should be disseminated to the public, and can ensure their compliance, as well as the adequate accessibility to the information, with mechanisms for ensuring the validity of the data being published. |
| | 19. *Debate and Participation mechanisms* | The CoG ensures that ministries and agencies listen to the opinions of citizens, government employees, and other relevant stakeholders, and provides effective opportunities to debate the government's decisions and actions. | The CoG does not provide incentives or mechanisms to encourage the reception of the opinions and participation of citizens, government employees, and other relevant stakeholders, or these exist only formally without actually being put into practice. | The CoG ensures that the opinions and participation of citizens, government employees, and other relevant stakeholders are received and encouraged, but the government provides a limited response in this regard. | The CoG promotes that the whole government receives the opinions of citizens, government employees, and other relevant stakeholders, that they get responses in mandatory debate instances, and that their participation is encouraged with a high level of compliance. |