

Do delivery units deliver?

Assessing Government Innovation

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Innovation in Citizen Services Division

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Assessing Government Innovations

DO DELIVERY UNITS DELIVER?





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Summary

his technical note, prepared as part of the Inter-American Development Bank's (IDB) agenda on Center of Government, analyzes how *delivery units* (DU) have been adapted by Latin American and Caribbean governments, the degree to which they have contributed to meeting governments' priority goals between 2007 and 2018, and the lessons learned along the way. The analysis, which draws lessons from 14 governments in the region, shows that the implementation of the DU model has varied as it has been tailored to each country's context and that, under certain preconditions, has contributed to: (i) improved management using specific tools in contexts where institutional development is low; and (ii) attaining results that have a direct impact on citizens. The objective of this document is to serve as a guide for governments interested in applying similar management models as well as to set out an agenda for the future of DU in the region.

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coordination, monitoring, delivery unit, presidency

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Executive Summary

he loss of citizen trust in public administrations is a widespread phenomenon that has worsened in recent years in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). How can trust be restored when the issues to be addressed require complex services, which in turn depend of interventions from various sectors that require planning, and coordinated implementation and communication (such as security or improved education)? And how can efficiency be achieved if public administrations work in silos, with often overlapping mandates, fragmented responsibilities across several entities, insufficient resources, and a lack of communication strategies?

Recent public administration reforms in LAC have made it possible to meet these challenges. In Chile, the crime victimization rate fell from 33.6 percent in 2009 to 24.8 percent in 2013, while in Colombia, cell phone theft fell by 12 percent in just one year. Over a period of four years (2011 to 2015), Pernambuco, Brazil moved up from 16th place among 27 states to first place on the standardized high school achievement test, and from 11th place to first place in terms of lowest high school dropout rates. Such achievements were made in complex and multisectoral public policy areas that usually require the intervention of different sectors, institutions and levels of government. In these and other success stories, the governments' strategy was common: strengthening the Center of Government¹ by implementing delivery units (DUs).

The deconcentration, decentralization, and privatization of government functions demand increased coordination between central governments and service providers, to guarantee their adherence to central government policies and complementarity in producing the inputs needed to provide services. The experience of OECD countries shows that the shift away from central government's provision of services has been coupled with an oscillation

¹ Center of Government refers to organizations and units that provide direct support to the executive head of government (president, prime minister, governor, mayor, etc.) for the planning, monitoring, coordination, political management, and communication around the top government priorities (Alessandro, Lafuente, and Santiso, 2014).

between greater policy implementation autonomy for service delivery agencies and greater central government control. As a result, there is a tension between autonomy and control which, in many cases, has led to central governments being accused of breaching service providers' independence and limiting their creative capacity. This, in turn, has generated confusion with respect to the roles and responsibilities between different levels of government and service providers.

To achieve a good balance, OECD countries have strengthened their "Center of Government" to ensure that the various implementing agencies maintain consistency across their policies, through prioritizing government goals, identifying how each agency contributes towards these objectives, and monitoring the delivery of these goals. All Center of Government models feature a horizontal and integrated collaborative approach to service delivery, across all relevant agencies and at all levels of government.

The literature on the topic confirms that specialization and differentiation of functions entails a need for greater coordination. The need for coordination has also emerged out of the trend in OECD countries to implement results-based management models. These models require reducing the fragmentation of government goals, and defining guidelines aimed at prioritizing and strengthening control.²

The challenge posed to the LAC region proved similar and has demanded actions to integrate the public policy cycle through a better alignment between central government and executing agencies, in order to: (i) ensure that functions are executed in response to key government objectives; (ii) ensure that the public budget offers the fiscal capacity to address these priorities; and (iii) define the relationship among ministries, and between these ministries and executing agencies, as well as determine the necessary inputs for achieving those key objectives.3

Therefore, over the last five years, LAC governments have been major players in the global trend towards strengthening Center of Government institutions. The coordination difficulties faced by OECD countries as a result of government function specialization also emerged in LAC countries. Governments recognized that many of their development challenges (such as citizen security or poverty reduction) required multisectoral approaches. In addition, they acknowledged that restoring the public's trust in public administrations and governments meant fulfilling public policy promises made in campaign by the politicians who won the elections. Finally, that enhancing the government's capacity for delivery is the key to tackle the problem of eroding trust in government.

Center of Government development in the LAC region had its own unique features. The main goal was to ensure that the government's highest priorities were achieved through strengthening Center of Government's typical functions, such as coordination, monitoring, and performance management. 4 This was accomplished through the creation of DUs. These

² See, for example, Bouckaert, Peters, and Verhoest (2010).

³ This issue is analyzed in more detail in World Bank (2010, 2013) and Mosqueira and Del Villar (2012).

⁴The IDB's flagship publication on the Center of Government proposes a conceptual framework with five functions: strategic management (focus, planning, budget); coordination; monitoring and performance improvement; political management; and communication and accountability. For more information, see: Alessandro, Lafuente, and Santiso (2014).

units are small teams that report to the president or prime minister and focus on enabling the achievement of top government priorities. To do so, they support line ministries in charge of those priorities by strengthening their capacities in: (i) defining their vision, purpose, and priorities; (ii) detailed implementation planning; (iii) generation of reliable data to continuously measure performance and determine whether good progress is being made; and (iv) provision of adequate spaces and political incentives to intervene when objectives are not being met.

Implementation of the model in the region has not been uniform. Each country's particular model has responded to different expectations and needs. Each model has been adapted to different levels of institutional development, and to particular planning and monitoring institutional structures. The surveyed DUs had an average of 35 priorities, usually distributed across 4 to 7 pillars or areas. They have had different approaches and levels of complexity: some focusing on accomplishing more complex objectives, such as reducing chronic child malnutrition or decreasing the rate of victimization, while others have had a greater focus on speeding up public investment or specific projects. In addition, they have brought innovations, such as the management of a portfolio of rapidly deployable, high-impact priorities to deliver quick wins and contribute to greater governance, and making publicly available the progress towards reaching the goals or the failure to do so.

The functions led by the DUs are not new. As mentioned above, all countries in one way or another have a Center of Government that coordinates policies and interventions. What varies is the team's level of specialization and methodology for achieving results, the methodical allocation of times and roles, and the commitment they make to achieving long-term objectives. This important variation allows the Center of Government to move away from reactive short-term practices that are part of daily management, to using its coordination power to carry out the complex but necessary steps to transform the living conditions of citizens.

Have the DUs delivered the highest government priorities in the LAC region? This study analyzes 14 country cases, taking into consideration the perspectives of the members of the DUs, the ministers of the presidency or equivalent under whom they are mapped (their most direct users), the institutions tasked with leading the implementation of priorities, and other key stakeholders such as officials in the ministries of finance and planning. To complement this analysis, a literature review on international experiences and cases was included.

A first finding is that DUs contribute to achieving intermediate results, which are highly valued by governments and, in particular, by political authorities, insofar as they increase the chances of achieving the government's priority objectives. Intermediate results include: (i) the aspirations and campaign priorities of the chief executive are defined and concrete and measurable goals are set, with a clear definition of who is responsible for achieving such targets; (ii) ambitious, realistic, and demanding targets for main priorities; (iii) detailed strategies and plans for achieving the priority objectives, technically and politically designed and validated by the responsible sector and the Center of Government; (iv) discipline in management (production and provision of data), sector alignment and articulation (at the policy and technical levels), and greater accountability among ministers; and (v) increased and timely responsiveness to identify deviations from achieving the targets, allowing to timely adapt the strategy and actions to get back on track.

Second, DUs' value added appears to be greater when faced with challenges that require multisectoral interventions. This has taken place in the areas of citizen security, education, health, infrastructure, and citizen services, among others. Although no results can be attributed to the existence of a DU, and it is possible that other factors may have played a role, the outcomes from numerous international experiences across a range of contexts, as well as the assessment of different actors involved in the management of government priorities, suggest a link between introducing the DU and achieving results.

Under what conditions have the DUs been able to achieve positive results? The successful implementation of a DU requires political empowerment from the head of the executive branch, the unit's technical capacity to add value, its subsidiary role vis-à-vis the sectors and responsible agencies, its implementation at the beginning of the president or prime minister's mandate, clarity in the roles and responsibilities inside the Center of Government, quick wins to affirm the chief executive's interest, the generation of added value for line ministries, and credible accountability processes for citizens' priorities.

Looking to the future, the DUs are an innovative public administration tool that can enable governments to rapidly deploy adjustments in their organization and establish coordination mechanisms and incentives for quickly improving the delivery of services to citizens.

Why Are Delivery Units on the Rise in Latin America and the Caribbean?

he establishment of delivery units in LAC Centers of Government has been a non-political phenomenon. LAC governments have played a major role over the last five years in the global trend towards strengthening Center of Government institutions. The rise of multisectoral problems, the importance of safeguarding the presidential legacy beyond daily emergencies, and the need to address growing citizen demands for building trust and government legitimacy have perhaps been three of the main drivers behind the emergence of DUs in national and subnational governments of different political orientations. The fact that all levels of government are responsible for the effective delivery of goods and services to citizens has been another major factor in requiring a more active Center of Government in the vertical coordination with subnational governments.

This reality has led to an evolution in the Center of Government, which has become the first line of support for the chief executive. Although the Center of Government may be strengthened by emphasizing different functions⁶ or structures, the most widely used vehicle in the region has been the creation of Delivery Units (DU). These teams, which are small in size, report to the head of the executive branch and focus on ensuring that the highest government priorities are met. Broadly speaking, they support line ministries in charge of the priority areas by strengthening their capacities to: (i) define their vision, purpose, and focus, (ii) have detailed implementation plans, (iii) generate reliable data for

⁵The Center of Government refers to organizations and units that provide direct support to the country's chief executive (president or prime minister), generally in the political management of government activities, strategic management of priorities, coordination of policy design, steering policy implementation, performance monitoring and compliance management, and communication of results. See Alessandro, Lafuente, and Santiso (2014).

⁶The IDB's flagship publication on the Center of Government proposes a conceptual framework with five functions: strategic management (focus, planning, budget); coordination; monitoring and performance improvement; political management; and communication and accountability. For more information, see Alessandro, Lafuente, and Santiso (2014).

routinely measuring performance, and (iv) develop mechanisms and incentives to intervene when objectives are not met (adapted from Barber, 2008).

The DU model was created in the United Kingdom in 2001 under Prime Minister Tony Blair and has since been adapted in more than 30 countries (Gold, 2017, see Figure 1). In some cases, such as the United States, similar management models known as *PerformanceStat* (Behn, 2014) have been widely used at the subnational level, with leaders such as Martin O'Malley in Baltimore City and the State of Maryland. In 2016, Canada created its DU at the federal level after implementing the methodology at the provincial level in Ontario. Other instances of successfully adapting the methodology are Malaysia, Indonesia, Punjab (Pakistan), Tanzania, Romania, and Australia.⁷

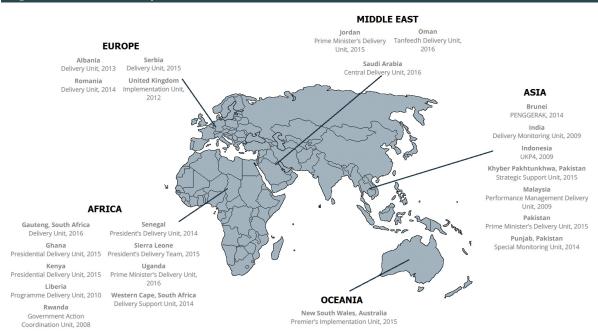


Figure 1. Some Delivery Units Outside of Latin America and the Caribbean

Source: Gold (2017).

At least eleven LAC countries have implemented the DU model, under different mandates and at different levels of government. The management model of the State of Pernambuco in Brazil (2007) and Chile's Presidential Delivery Unit (2010) have been two of the region's forerunners in the implementation of DU models (Alessandro, Lafuente, and Santiso, 2014). Since then, several governments, both at the national and subnational levels, have followed this trend, particularly since 2013 (see Table 1).

⁷ See Gold (2017) and the reference section for more information on cases outside of LAC.

This study explores the lessons learned from 14 DU cases recently implemented in Latin America. This paper is organized into this introduction and three sections. The first section describes the delivery management model and how it has been adapted in the region, incorporating a number of innovations. The second analyzes the intermediate and final outcomes to which the DUs included in this study have contributed and presents some reflections on the limitations of attributing these contributions. The final section presents lessons learned when implementing a DU in LAC and outlines both necessary preconditions for its success as well as some negative experiences.

Table 1. Some Delivery Units in Latin America and the Caribbean (2013-18)					
Argentina	Government of the City of Buenos Aires. Delivery Unit, under the General Secretariat and Foreign Affairs (2015-) Government of the Province of Buenos Aires. Undersecretariatfor Management Coordination, attached to the Chief of the Cabinet of Ministers (2016-)				
Bahamas	National Government. Delivery Unit, under the Office of the Prime Minister (2018-)				
Brazil	Government of the State of Pernambuco. Secretariat of Planning and Management (SEPLAG) (2007-18)				
Chile	National Government. Presidential Delivery Unit, under the Ministry of the General Secretariat of the Presidency (SEGPRES) (2010-14)				
Colombia	National Government. Implementation Unit, under the Office of the Presidency of the Republic (2015-17)				
Costa Rica	National Government. Support Unit, under the Ministry of the Presidency (2015-17)				
Guatemala	National Government. Commission for Strategic Management, under the Presidency of the Republic (2016-)				
Paraguay	National Government. Center of Government, under the General Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic (2013-)				
Peru	National Government. Government Delivery Unit, under the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (2016-)				
Uruguay	National Government. Policy Advisory and Monitoring Unit, under the Office of the Assistant Secretary (2016-)				

Source: Prepared by the authors.

What Is the Delivery Unit Model and How Has It Been Adapted in Latin America and the Caribbean?

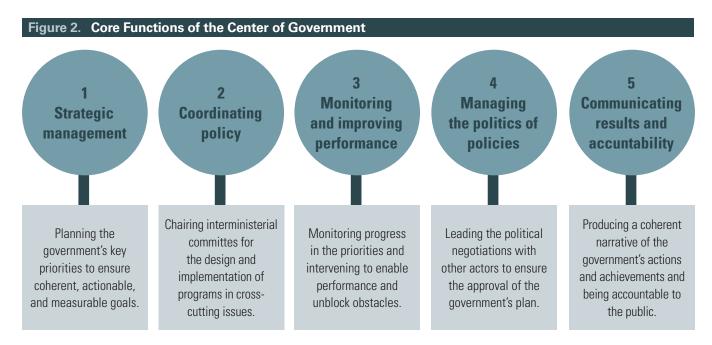
2.1. The Initial Delivery Unit Model

Us are only one of many possible structures for strengthening the functions of the Center of Government (Figure 2).8 In the traditional model, DUs often have strategic management functions (e.g., goal setting and strategy planning), as well as monitoring and performance improvement duties (e.g., ongoing data analysis and follow-up tasks to identify and intervene in situations of underperformance), and in some cases they have important coordination functions between different entities working towards achieving a key objective. While they can provide timely information to communication and accountability teams, it is not very common for DUs to exercise a political management role.

Several of the functions are not new to the Center of Government and some are carried out in the absence of a DU. What DUs bring to the table is the systematic way in which they address the challenges they seek to tackle: by specializing in achieving results, the methodical allocation of time and roles, and the commitment to achieving long-term goals. This model allows the Center of Government to move away from reactive and short-term activities related to governments' daily affairs, particularly when related to politics and use its ability to coordinate to carry out the complex but necessary tasks to transform the living conditions of citizens.

The DUs are introduced in a pre-existing institutional framework of entities, data, and information systems. At the institutional level, institutions such as the Treasury or

⁸ Because several experts have looked at this topic in detail, this section will be limited to giving a very brief description of the model. For more details on the delivery unit model, see Barber (2008, 2011, and 2015), Behn (2014), and Delivery Associates (2018).



Source: Alessandro, Lafuente, and Santiso (2014).

Cabinet Office have a broader and less selective mandate with comparison to what DUs are meant to focus on. However, since they are more formal entities, with more experience and greater human and financial resources, it was critical for the DU's success to be seen by them as a partner rather than a rival. At the same time, the existence of protocols, routines, and information systems is a welcomed requirement for reducing transaction times and costs. There are clearly no perfect information systems, and the availability of timely and reliable data can also be built up alongside the DU, but its preexistence eases the DU initial setting efforts and speeds up the attainment of results.

The original DU model was implemented in a unitary national government with expertise in the provision of key services such as education and health. The first pilots focused on priorities that had a direct impact on citizens, such as student performance in school aptitude tests, waiting times in hospitals, or reducing homicides or robberies, among others. The DU, in its initial form, helped the presidential cabinet address four key questions on how to achieve the main government priorities articulated during the election campaign: 1) What exactly are we seeking to achieve?; 2) How are we going to do it?; 3) How do we know at all times that we are on the right path?; 4) If we are not on the right path, what are we going to do to fix it? (adapted from Delivery Associates, 2018). This strategic approach of the DUs is constant throughout the entire mandate and limits any other type of involvement of the DU team in other short-term issues that might divert their attention from the presidential legacy.

The ultimate aim of the DU is to ensure that promises are kept. The DUs support line ministries with a rigorous methodology based on gathering data for each priority issue, identifying all elements of the delivery chain, defining performance indicators, analyzing previous trends, and setting targets. Once the intended goal and corresponding implementation strategy have been defined, the DUs provide technical teams with reliable and timely information to evaluate the progress of the priority over time. The methodology provides routines for monitoring progress with the highest authority and making rapid, evidence-based public policy decisions. The DUs also help sectors to identify alternative solutions when they are not progressing on schedule. Thus, they ensure that line ministries are aligned to fulfill the top government authority's legacy.

2.2. The Delivery Unit Model in Latin America and the Caribbean

The implementation of the DU model in LAC countries has not been uniform. It has been adapted by at least 14 governments, both at national and subnational levels, with different levels of institutional development and diverse planning and monitoring structures. The variety among models highlights the adaptability of the DUs. While all models may serve the same purpose, the distinctions lie in: (i) pre-existing built-in capabilities that allow for greater levels of sophistication (e.g., presence of diagnostics and information systems); (ii) allocation of state powers (different models of centralization or decentralization in government functions); (iii) the level of government which they represent (local issues versus national issues); and (iv) the unique mark which the head of government leaves on his or her model of administration (each head of government defines management guidelines with different degrees of delegation).

The needs and expectations have also been very different. In the case of national governments, the DUs have mainly formed at the unitary government level, where in most cases they are directly responsible for the delivery of key public services. The subnational governments analyzed in this study, on the other hand, come from federal countries, so they too have direct responsibility in the delivery of key services such as education, health, or citizen security. What, then, are the elements that distinguish the DUs in the region?

• Types of objectives. Their approaches and levels of complexity differ. Some governments, such as those of the City of Buenos Aires, Chile, or Peru, have focused on achieving more complex goals at the outcome level, such as reducing chronic child malnutrition, increasing the number of high-scoring children on mathematics tests, or decreasing the rate of victimization. Other DUs, such as those of the Province of Buenos Aires in Argentina, the Bahamas, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Paraguay,

⁹ All of the cases that support the national level of government included in this study have had the highest authority of the Executive Branch as their client. Although there have been some instances of a DU in line ministries, such as the Ministry of Education in Peru between 2014 and 2016, they have been few or have had low visibility. This contrasts with the case of the United States, for example, where the adaptation of the model at the federal level has taken place exclusively in the State secretariats, with the application of the *PerformanceStat* model (Behn, 2014).

have had a greater focus on public investment projects (roads, housing, water and sewerage, structuring public-private partnerships in key public services) or on other priorities related to outputs or processes, such as the supply of medicines in hospitals, the creation of regional markets, administrative reforms to improve competitiveness, or compliance with the open government plan adopted by the country, among others. In most cases, however, results-based objectives have been combined with the delivery of initiatives, projects, and outputs.

- **Number of objectives.** The DUs analyzed in this study have an average of 35 priorities or strategic objectives, normally distributed across 4 to 7 pillars or areas. In almost all cases, the objectives are limited to the areas of security, health, education, employment, poverty, economic growth, and infrastructure. In several cases, these areas had multiple indicators being monitored. The greater the number of priorities and indicators, the greater the complexity, which can lead to a counter-productive result: if everything is important, nothing is important.
- Functions. The focus of the DUs has been to enhance and develop the functions related to strategic management, monitoring, and improving performance and coordination. In particular, DUs have played a key role in strategically managing multisectoral priorities, as in the case of Pernambuco (Brazil), Colombia, and Peru. The role of the DU has been less intensive when a priority focuses on only one sector, particularly in contexts of increased institutional capacity. In every case, they contribute in one way or another to the functions for which the Center of Government is responsible: they manage diverse agendas and they address both structural and circumstantial issues. Although they have little responsibility for the *political direction of public policies* (which is often handled directly by ministerial teams), there are examples where the DU has made high-profile projects one of its priority functions.

Paraguay's DU played a very important role in the coordination role, removing bottlenecks related to structuring and execution of public investment. One of its main added values was to establish agreements at the political level and then ensure that they were achieved at the technical level. The Province of Buenos Aires DU also focused on its coordination role to reach agreements at the political level in the implementation of the Expenditure Improvement Program, by setting savings goals for each ministry.

For its part, the City of Buenos Aires DU played an important role regarding interinstitutional coordination, but also in the communication and accountability of public commitments, both through a website and in annual public accountability events with the head of government. 10 Uruguay's DU played a key role in ensuring accountability through minister council meetings open to the public through the "government close at hand" initiative.

¹⁰The City of Buenos Aires' government website, with the government commitments that the DU works on, is an outstanding reference in this area: http://www.buenosaires.gob.ar/compromisos

• **Human Resources**. In the absence of a single type of DU, the composition and profile of the teams, as well as their cost, inevitably have been diverse. The teams analyzed for this study vary in size, profile, and knowledge of public affairs. This is due to constraints in (i) administration (modifying government structures is complex and, in some cases, hampers the hiring of talent), (ii) finance (budget rules are rigid and respond to cycles that often do not coincide with the urgent need to set up such teams), and (iii) institutional status (each country has an institutional baseline with entities that can perform roles relevant to a DU). Notwithstanding Table 2 presents a standard unit as a reference.¹¹

Table 2. Common Roles and Profiles among Delivery Unit Members

Role	General Profile Criteria	Role is present in the region?
Head. Coordinates the team and manages client relations (reports directly to the Minister of the Presidency or Chief of Staff)	Has training in project management/public policy and is able to lead bilateral dialogue with ministers. Recognized for generating results	All DUs (although not all coordinators fitted the profile)
Priority Managers. Support planning, monitor and evaluate performance, while supporting the identification of alternatives to overcome delays	Professionals between 30 and 40 years old with training in project management and ideally some sectoral knowledge. Good interpersonal skills (usually 1 manager per priority or sector)	All DUs (although not all priority managers met the profile)
Report Producer. Produces reports in a systematic, standard, and visually appealing manner	Person trained in efficient presentation of information and the use of reporting tools	Nearly all DUs
Information Validator. Captures progress information and ensures its accuracy and quality	Persons trained in information and indicators management (usually 1 per sector).	Colombia (in DNP, external) Province of Buenos Aires (internal)
Trajectory Builder. Analyzes information and builds prospective performance scenarios	Persons trained in public policy evaluation as well as impact evaluations.	Colombia (in DNP, external) Peru and City of Buenos Aires (internal)
Budget Manager. Analyzes the flow of required financial resources and their relationship with the budget cycle	Persons with training in budget management. Good interpersonal skills with the Treasury and Public Finance sector	Chile (in DIPRES, external) Province of Buenos Aires, Pernambuco (internal)

Source: Prepared by the authors.

¹¹ While costs vary based on salaries in each country, the typical DU with 5 priority managers has an average human resource cost of between US\$250,000 and US\$400,000 per year. DUs do not require technological investments to operate effectively.

• Reporting line and institutional structure. DUs are usually located in the Center of Government and report directly to the Minister or Secretary General of the Presidency or his equivalent. Only in one case it was assigned to a planning ministry (which did not work out), and in only one case has it reported directly to the president. Political support for DUs from the highest executive has mainly taken the form of: (i) an initial announcement on the role of the DU by the President to the Cabinet (or to the Ministers in charge of priorities) where he/she has given his/her full support to the DU; (ii) the participation of the President or an empowered minister of the Presidency or equivalent in the follow-up meetings coordinated by the DU with line ministers; (iii) the reaffirmation of priorities in public statements, which clearly reflects the fact that the work of the DU represents what is most important to the President; and (iv) the participation of the DU in bilateral meetings between the President and the line minister, among others.

As for how the existing institutional framework influences DUs' structure, it depends on built-in government capacity. An example of this is the existing mechanisms to capture information on progress indicators, which has been a significant variable in the adaptation of the DU model, given that the information verification processes are essential for its tasks.

In the case of Colombia, the National Planning Department's presence since the 1960s and the National Results-Based Management and Evaluation System (Sinergia) for more than a decade have generated a culture of monitoring and evaluation that has permeated the central government. As expected, the DU relied on this structure without the need for a larger team. On the other hand, during the first year of implementation, the delivery unit in the Province of Buenos Aires (Argentina) was able to establish the necessary protocols for the systematized collection of information, generating process maps and milestones for priority projects, and tools for linking physical and budgetary performance.

In their adaptation of the original DU model, the governments of the region have also introduced innovations, some of which are highlighted in Box 1.

Box 1. Innovations to the Original Model

In their adaptation of the original DU model, LAC governments also introduced a number of interesting features, not included in (and sometimes opposed to) the purer version of the delivery unit management model:

- 1) Inclusion of short-term priorities that are not necessarily part of the legacy, given the direct link that these projects had with improving governance conditions, especially at the beginning of the mandate. Two cases that introduced this feature were the Strategic Commission of Guatemala and the Undersecretariat for Management Coordination of the Province of Buenos Aires (Argentina).
- 2) While it is common practice to publish the state of progress on goals, only in a few cases the failure to achieve the goals on time was publicly shared. Among the benefits of this practice are: (i) spreading the political cost for not reaching the goals over time and among stakeholders (such as the responsible minister); otherwise, the head of government fully pays for the failure at the end of his or her term; (ii) managing citizens' expectations; (iii) enhancing the model's credibility; and (iv) sending a clear message to the rest of the cabinet that failing to achieve the goals has consequences. The benchmark for this practice has been the City of Buenos Aires (Argentina) DU.
- 3) Managing the portfolio of priorities with a differentiated approach. Not all priorities require the same degree of support. Sectors with high institutional capacity in charge of priorities that require little intervention from other sectors do not get much added value from a DU. The Delivery Unit in the Government of Colombia and SEPLAG in Pernambuco introduced this differentiated approach for managing the priorities, particularly in the area of public works (with a specific team for more costly projects).
- 4) Some DUs put in place specific routines for better coordination with finance ministries or equivalent entities in charge of budget allocation. These routines enhance the ability to reallocate resources in a timely manner, in order to support interventions when anything deviates from the trajectory. They range from "Boards of Directors" to which the DU reports (as in the case of Costa Rica) to identification of and budgeting for programs that impact government priorities (Chile, Pernambuco in Brazil, and the City and Province of Buenos Aires in Argentina).

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Impact: What Results Are Delivery Units Producing in the Region?

ave the DUs been successful in achieving the highest government priorities in the LAC region? Judging by the pace of its expansion, there is no doubt that it is a highly attractive government reform and is likely contributing to good public policy outcomes. However, there is little empirical evidence in this regard so far. The short time span of several of these initiatives, the necessary low political profile of these units, and the difficulty of isolating their contributions due to the fact that line ministries are responsible for implementing the government priorities are some of the reasons that explain the lack of evidence on DUs' impact.

The best guarantee of survival for DUs is to confirm their real effectiveness. In a context of low institutionalization of this innovation in the LAC region – given its close ties to the head of the executive branch, DUs are often discontinued when the government changes – the importance of identifying the concrete results of these initiatives is even greater. If the benefits of the DUs are evident, they will have a better chance of being maintained, renamed, or reoriented under a new head of government, or of seeing their methodology adopted as common practice by the planning or monitoring offices of specific sectors (as has been the case in the United Kingdom since its first inception in 2001 during Prime Minister Blair's second term).

Unfortunately, empirically measuring the impact of the DUs in terms of reaching strategic objectives is quite complex. On one hand, the results achieved by some of these units are still very recent and the time frames for achieving the results have yet to be met. On the other, as stated by Behn (2017), Gold (2017), and Scism et al. (2015), it is difficult to measure the added value of delivery units because they usually do not have internal mechanisms to capture their impact (such as formal impact evaluations), they can be part of a more comprehensive public policy and administrative reform, and they are careful not to take credit for the results obtained by ministries or entities.

Despite this, the analysis of the 14 LAC cases and the review of the specialized literature provide evidence for the contributions of the DUs both in *intermediate results* (understood and considered as fundamental contributions to achieving better government results) as well as in *final results* (directly linked to meeting government priorities).

3.1. Intermediate Results: Stronger Management Mechanisms

- 1. The head of state's aspirations and campaign priorities are grounded in concrete, measurable objectives with clearly defined responsibilities. An obvious benefit from this model is having a clear definition and segmentation of the portfolio of initiatives to be developed by a government, using criteria such as presidential legacy, political and social relevance, complexity, and risks related to implementation. In particular, a DU (i) simplifies managing government for senior management; (ii) gives signals to the different levels of government on which issues to prioritize and how resources should be allocated; (iii) increases the chances of achieving priority goals by having objectively determined them from the mandate's outset. While in all the cases analyzed this benefit was noted, three cases are of particular interest:
 - Colombia: a portfolio of initiatives, segmented by levels, and with differentiated management according to the needs of each case. The levels were: 21 government priorities (one per sector), 170 sectoral targets (8 per sector), and 6 Presidential initiatives.¹²
 - Guatemala: 5 government priorities stemming from the 29 goals set out in the 2016-20 General Government Plan, which in turn are based on the Katun 2032 National Development Plan. In addition, a portfolio of priority projects aimed at strengthening governance at the national government level was defined (75 projects).
 - Province of Buenos Aires (Argentina): 1,050 projects classified into three levels based on their complexity and strategic importance: A+/A/B, applying differentiated targeting and monitoring criteria only to those classified as A+ and A. For a fourth category of projects, Rapid Implementation and High Potential (IRAP), a differentiated monitoring system was put in place to overcome roadblocks.
- 2. Ambitious, realistic, and demanding goals. The DUs enhance the government's analytical capacity to define goals in line with its competencies, resources, and constraints. This support (i) makes possible to raise warnings about possible underestimates of the State's real efforts and capacities through trend analysis, (ii) recognizes that the achievement of results depends on diverse variables and that the quantification of the goal must be in accordance with such a reality, and (iii) adjusts the real expectations of what is sought, can, and should be achieved. With regards to DU's contributions to define targets, two cases are of particular interest:

¹² For more information, see Acosta and González (2018).

- City of Buenos Aires (Argentina): Under the commitment to provide urban infrastructure and public services to 80,000 residents in at-risk neighborhoods, the DU set up an inter-ministerial round table with the four areas responsible for urbanizing at-risk neighborhoods, and defined by consensus a methodology for quantifying beneficiaries and tracking the goal.
- Colombia: The DU met with the head of each sector to pin down the sectoral target to which it would commit, within the presidential priorities framework for 2018. For example, in the case of Defense, the top indicator was the homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants. The DU scenario analysis which combined factors such as the impact of peace negotiations with the FARC, historical homicide trends not tied to the armed conflict, and the possible rise in urban violence as an adverse effect of signing a peace agreement with the FARC indicated that reaching the initial target would not be realistic. Thus, the decision was made to keep the goal, but launch a number of additional initiatives to increase the likelihood of success.
- 3. Highly concrete strategies for achieving the key objectives, designed and politically endorsed by the responsible sector and the Center of Government. There is a clear and logical sequence of interventions, with specific responsible parties and expected timeframes. DUs provide several benefits in this respect, among which are: (i) making visible the delivery chain through which the desired transformation is expected to be achieved; (ii) reducing uncertainties in terms of sequences, of who is responsible for each action or intervention, and of the expected timeframe for achieving the goal; and (iii) allowing for more effective monitoring, by identifying milestones and deadlines, as well as the expected performance trajectory against which actual results can be compared and decisions can be made in the event that objectives are not being met. 13 Three noteworthy cases:
 - Pernambuco (Brazil): By designing and implementing strategy maps, the Secretariat
 of Planning and Management was able to successfully articulate the following: (i)
 strategic objective; (ii) expected outcome; (iii) specific milestones and deadlines
 with expected trajectory; and (iv) program budgeting. This was accomplished particularly in the Pacts for Life (citizen security), Education, and Health.¹⁴
 - Peru: The DU was crucial in targeting and focusing the activities within the strategies for all the priorities, by supporting the relevant sectors with methodological tools and by facilitating technical workshops to identify the best way to reduce

¹³ In this area, in particular, the DUs have provided methodological support in determining the causes of problems and developing solutions, although they have made smaller contributions to sectoral technical aspects, especially in countries with more solid public administrations. Thus, the DU's added value has been perceived as greater when the priorities are multisectoral, especially in terms of its ability to convene and assist in problem solving. In cases where priorities depend almost entirely on a single sector, the DU's relevance seems to be lower for the sectors, regardless of whether it is useful to the president or prime minister as a monitoring tool alongside what the sector reports. In the case of governments with generally low management capacity, the DUs' technical methodologies were very useful even in the case of purely single-sector priorities.

¹⁴ For more information, see Alessandro, Lafuente, and Shostak (2014).

- existing gaps in delivery, and by offering opportunities for quick wins in order to achieve better political traction.¹⁵
- Colombia: The Colombian government set a goal of reducing monetary poverty by four percentage points (p.p.) between 2014 and 2018, a period in which the economy and income of the nation were estimated to be growing at a lower rate than in the previous period. The analysis conducted by the Government defined a strategy based on: (i) creating jobs in road infrastructure projects for low income populations to increase their wage income; (ii) increasing the supply of housing; and (iii) improving subsidy targeting systems. For each of these strategies, a delivery chain was put in place at the activity and output level.
- 4. Greater discipline in line management, alignment, and articulation of strategies with relevant sectors (at the political and technical levels) as well as increased ministerial accountability. Line ministries commit their efforts to achieving the priorities set by the head of government, and if they succeed, receive the resulting political reward. They are also held to account for progress made in reaching the goals. This intermediate result also includes several benefits, among them: (i) assessing a priority's progress levels through routines of accountability inside government (provision of information); (ii) providing higher quality information and data systems agreed between the DU and the sector to aid in decision-making, through the use of information validation protocols, with verification chains and clearly defined management responsibilities, thereby reducing information asymmetries among state entities; (iii) providing a predetermined slot of time where the highest political authorities can engage in decision-making using these higher quality data; (iv) enabling all public institutions to align with government priorities, and for those that do not lead a priority, providing them with incentives to support ministries that do; (v) raising the profile of issues and problems and forcing decision-making oriented at solving them, and making visible whether or not institutions and individuals are engaged in achieving government priorities or not; and (vi) offering the head of government alternatives to solutions proposed by the line ministry when results are not achieved. Five noteworthy cases:
 - Chile: Bilateral follow-up meetings convened by the President on an ad hoc basis, albeit usually on a monthly basis, with the ministries leading priorities along with the DU, presidential advisers, and the budget office. The DU and the sector would analyze performance information prior to the meeting (when no independent,

¹⁵ For example, in the case of education, the disparity in the quality of urban and rural education was a major challenge. Results from the Student Evaluation Survey (ECE) in Reading Comprehension highlighted the growing gap. With the aim of increasing the percentage of students who attain the "in progress" or "satisfactory" reading comprehension level in rural schools, the effort focused on seven regions where around 65 percent of students in rural areas were at the "beginner or in progress" level of reading comprehension. In addition, the strategy comprehensively addressed all the factors associated with improving learning, including interventions that not only improve pedagogical practices (e.g., pedagogical support, school enrichment, boundary realignment, efficient delivery of materials), but also provided incentives for attracting better teachers in hard-to-reach areas, optimized management of principals, and ensured access to basic services such as drinking water and Internet access.

- third-party information was available), and the DU would act as the meeting's technical secretariat and follow up on the agreements.
- Pernambuco (Brazil): Follow-up meetings for each of the 12 priority areas every six weeks, with the governor, the DU, and all ministers involved in achieving the priorities. The governor dedicates one day a week to these meetings. The DU validates and enters performance data into the monitoring system, prepares the presentation, supports the sector in preparing for the meeting, and then follows up on the agreements (which are also recorded in the system).
- Peru: A reporting structure that supports three types of routines: (i) a monthly report sent to the line minister and the Prime Minister; (ii) a quarterly stocktaking meeting between the prime minister and the responsible minister or ministers; and (iii) a six-month report to the Council of Ministers.
- City of Buenos Aires (Argentina): Nearly ten years ago, the city established procedures for tracking the government plan, including monthly meetings per ministry or cross-cutting theme, chaired by the head of government and coordinated by the Planning Secretariat. In addition to designating specific spaces in these pre-existing tasks for monitoring public commitments, a web-based dashboard has been set up to show the progress made on commitments, making both commitments and progress available to the public. This has raised awareness around the goals set by the administration, as well as the cost of non-performance for sectors.¹⁶
- Paraguay: Ad hoc meetings at the request of the President, the Minister of the
 Presidency, or the leading sector when there is a need to remove roadblocks.
 Senior DU advisers convene the institutions involved in achieving the priority in
 order to reach political agreements when original deadlines are not met. DU project
 managers then follow up on such political agreements at a technical level, provide
 technical assistance in project structuring, and clear roadblocks.
- 5. Enhanced and timely reaction capacity. The DUs allow for early detection of any deviations from projections in activity performance and output delivery, thus allowing for the reallocation of human, financial, and technological resources to mitigate such deviations. The benefits of this intermediate result include: (i) continuous review of the strategy and of the existing institutional capacity to implement it; (ii) obstacle identification and mitigation; and (iii) better articulation between programming, budgeting, and implementation. Three noteworthy cases:
 - City of Buenos Aires (Argentina): One of the commitments of the 2016-19 mandate is to create 110 hectares of additional public green space, an ambitious goal that requires the effort of several ministries. The DU coordinates an inter-ministerial round table, with the various relevant line ministries and other areas of the Center of Government (the Planning Secretariat) participating, to (i) identify, prioritize, and plan projects that will contribute to achieving the goal within the dead-line; (ii) reconcile criteria and definitions; (iii) detect potential red flags on time;

¹⁶ See <u>www.buenosaires.gob.ar/compromisos</u>

- and (iv) report periodically to the head of government on progress, challenges, and decisions as required.
- Chile: All follow-up meetings with the President were attended by the deputy budget director or another focal point from the Ministry of Finance, with the objective of providing an immediate response to requests for an increase in budget either from the sector or from the President so as to identify opportunities for reallocation and stay on track to achieve the goal in a timely manner.
- Pernambuco (Brazil): In the Pact for Life, which aims to reduce lethal and violent crimes, the DU set monthly targets for districts throughout the State, both for the outcome indicator (homicides) and for output indicators (arrests, seizures of weapons, etc.). The outcome-level information was updated daily and forwarded to the coordinating DU minister by text message. If the crime rate increased beyond the target range, emergency meetings were called, and reinforcement measures taken for specific districts, including the reallocation of human and financial resources. At the beginning of the Pact, meetings with the governor were held on a weekly basis, attended by all stakeholders and key public servants, with the idea of exchanging ideas about what worked across the different districts.¹⁷

While these intermediate results contribute to the government by improving management and its ability to deliver results, there are specific benefits that the DUs provide (when properly implemented) to different stakeholders (see Box 2).

Moreover, specific examples of intermediate outcomes in LAC cases are consistent with cases in other countries around the world (see Box 3).

¹⁷ Despite being inspired by the New York's *Compstat* and Baltimore's *CitiStat*, Pernambuco's management model has been marked by a more collaborative rather than accountability-based approach.

Box 2. Some of the Benefits of Delivery Units, by Client

There are three types of delivery unit clients: (i) main clients: head of government and/or minister of the presidency, head of cabinet, or equivalent; (ii) secondary clients: line ministers or secretaries critical for meeting priorities; and (iii) tertiary clients: managers and officials within public entities who interact with delivery units. The fieldwork carried out showed that each of them saw clear intermediate results in distinct ways.

Main clients: heads of government and/or minister of the presidency, head of cabinet, or equivalent

- 1. Streamlines and consolidates priority projects that focus on the presidential legacy or improved governance.
- Translates campaign ambitions and promises into tangible actions that are easy to understand and explain, facilitating the narrative and assigning roles and responsibilities accordingly. Thus, the transactional and political costs associated with tensions between entities and political actors can be reduced.
- 3. Allows synergies and efficiencies in the allocation of resources and strengthens the position of the head of government vis-à-vis the entity in charge of budget management, given that it maintains resource allocation models based on government priorities.

2) Secondary clients: line ministers and secretaries

- 1. Positions the sectoral agenda in the president's agenda, which results in direct and recurrent access to the head of government, media exposure, and consolidation of the official narrative around the desired intervention.
- 2. Leverages resources and unifies criteria from other sectors normally unrelated to achieving the intended objectives.

3) Tertiary clients: managers and sectoral officials

- 1. Makes visible the contributions of career staff to improving operations and management.
- 2. Increases coordination, not only with other sectors, but also within ministries, given the shared sense of urgency and priority.

4) Partners: ministries of finance and planning

- 1. Enables and facilitates budget allocation criteria.
- 2. Enhances and highlights past systemic work carried out by these types of institutions to improve planning, monitoring, and evaluation capacities throughout the public administration (that is, if such work was carried out at the time of the DU's creation).

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Box 3. Delivery Units' Contributions in Other Regions of the World

In the **United States**, with the introduction of a management model similar to the DU, a culture of routines and monitoring was born. In most places where it has been put in place, this culture has been adopted and has led to increased discipline in government. At *CitiStat* in Baltimore (United States), the mayor met weekly with department heads and secretariats to track proposed goals and determine, through data analysis, whether corrective action should be taken to meet the goals and explore possibilities for interdepartmental collaboration (Behn, 2014). The model spread to more than 100 cities and several states across the country, and was also adopted by the federal government at the departmental level (and formalized through the *GPRA Modernization Act of 2010*).

In the **United Kingdom**, the Prime Minister's DU held regular *stocktakes* to review the strategy and the progress on target indicators, with a focus always on priorities (Barber, 2008). In fact, this model was the main point of reference for countries such as Chile, Colombia, and Peru.

The use of technological and management tools has also helped to change the way governments achieve their goals. DUs have embraced the use of *Balance Scorecards*, traffic light ratings, or other tracking tools to easily and efficiently monitor priorities. Such is the case in **Malaysia**, which used a scorecard to track each minister's progress on priorities in their respective areas (World Bank, 2017), and in the State of Maryland, which used the *StateStat panel* to show progress on each priority, which in turn were published online for transparency (Freeguard and Gold, 2015). Other governments have made use of digital tools such as heat maps and dashboards that show performance indicators in real time, such is the case in **Malaysia**, **New South Wales (Australia)**, and **Punjab (Pakistan)**, among others (Gold, 2017).

In the **Malaysian** government's DU, the launch of *Labs*, to which various stakeholders from both the public and private sectors and all levels of government are invited to intensive meetings organized around one of its priority areas, led to the identification of early solutions and substantially improved coordination between the national and local governments as well as inter-institutional coordination (World Bank, 2017). This consultative and iterative process, which incorporated different stakeholders' visions and ideas for identifying solutions to bottlenecks that impede moving forward on priorities, has been replicated by several DUs, including those in **South Africa** and **Tanzania** (Gold, 2017).

Finally, in **Sierra Leone**, the DU focused on a limited number of high-priority government projects, while building the monitoring and follow-up capacities of the unit's staff. With its location in the president's office, coordination among ministers — previously almost non-existent — was substantially improved thanks to periodic *stocktakes*, and increased accountability as they were accountable directly to the president. At the same time, it allowed ministers to promptly identify bottlenecks and problems requiring presidential intervention and to adjust their strategies accordingly (Scharff, 2012).

Source: Prepared by the authors.

3.2. Final Results: What Citizens See at the End of the Day

This section presents the qualitative evidence for the results produced by the DUs' interventions to achieve the top government priorities. Such interventions, defined in the previous section as intermediate outcomes, addressed needs for better planning, coordination, monitoring, and accountability in each of the following policy areas. Some examples for selected priority areas are presented below.

1. Improvements in the citizen security sector. Given that citizen security is the major concern in several countries of the region, this area has typically been a top priority in many of the countries where DUs have been introduced. Some of the most notable cases are:

- Chile: Improving citizen security was one of the eight pillars supported by the DU.
 Chile Seguro plan and other prioritized public policies resulted in the victimization rate falling from 33.6 percent in 2009 to 24.8 percent in 2013 (source: National Urban Citizen Security Survey), which is equivalent to a 26.2 percent fall, and a reduction of 30 percent in crimes committed in public spaces (376,000 fewer crimes). In addition, between 2009 and 2013, the number of fatalities due to alcohol-related accidents among drivers fell by 30 percent (source: National Traffic Safety Commission).
- Colombia: In September 2014, the government relaunched a strategy to reduce cell phone theft, which was implemented under the DU framework. Cell phone theft was the leading cause of perceived insecurity in urban areas. ¹⁸ At the end of 2015, all the stakeholders involved in this issue were convened by the DU and a thorough diagnosis, planning, coordination, implementation, and follow-up effort was carried out in conjunction with the National Police, the Attorney General's Office, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism, the Ministry of Information and Communications Technologies, the Communications Regulation Commission, the National Tax and Customs Directorate, including the collaboration from mobile phone operators and small business groups. As a result of these efforts, cell phone theft was reduced in the 10 priority cities by 12 percent compared to 2014, just short of the 12.5 percent target. While the results in 2016 worsened, theft rates as a percentage of active lines fell by 14 percent (source: DIJIN, National Police).
- Pernambuco, Brazil: One of Brazil's most violent states from 1996 to 2005, with 4,000 deaths per year, saw a reduction of 27.1 percent in deadly and violent crimes between 2007 and 2014 after the introduction of the Pact for Life, led by the governor with the support of the DU. The Pact for Life entailed improved data gathering and use of geo-referenced data for decision-making, used in weekly meetings organized by the DU and chaired by the Governor, in which all the secretaries involved participated and each commitment was followed up in detail through an internal accountability framework. During the same period, violent crimes in Pernambuco's neighboring states increased.¹⁹
- Peru: Among the results in the first 18 months of operation of the DU, during which the goals and objectives and the measures to achieve them were identified using the methodology proposed and coordinated by the DU, and after implementing the first of said measures, the following results were attained: (i) a reduction in the victimization rate from 28.8 percent to 25.5 percent (600,000 fewer people); (ii) an improvement in trust in the national police, from 17.6 percent to 18.4 percent (160,000 more people who reported trusting the police); (iii) an increase in the number of victims reporting a crime from 12 percent to 14.5 percent (150,000).

¹⁸ Seventy percent of citizens who reported having been victims of crimes in the country's 13 main cities reported a stolen cell phone, and estimates suggest that a total of 1.1 million cell phones were stolen each year. Source: National Administrative Department of Statistics Survey on Coexistence and Citizen Security (2015).

¹⁹ Since December 2014, however, deadly and violent crimes have increased, consistent with the deterioration of socio-economic conditions in Brazil and the widespread situation throughout the country. See SEPLAG, Relatório Anual de Ação do Governo 2017. For a detailed explanation of the Pact for Life, see Beliz et al. (2013).

more people); (iv) perceived improved quality of the work carried out by police stations, from 33.9 percent to 38.4 percent (800,000 more people); and (v) increased surveillance coverage from 19 percent to 26.8 percent (1.8 million more people), with a positive perception of the quality of surveillance rising from 61.2 percent to 67.3 percent (1.1 million more people).²⁰

2. Improvements in the education sector.

- Pernambuco, Brazil: Since the introduction of the Pact for Education in 2011, in which SEPLAG applied the DU methodology, the state moved up from ranking 16th of a total of 27 states in the secondary-level standardized aptitude test to ranking 1st in 2015. At the same time, in lowest school dropouts, the state managed to move from 11th place in 2011 to 1st place in 2013, which it maintained in 2014, 2015, and 2016.²¹ Although the Pact for Education used a similar structure to that of the Pact for Life, with the DU collecting data at the school and even class level in support of the education sector, the frequency of performance reporting in this sector (for example, results for standardized tests administered every six months or annually) is lower than that of public safety (daily data).
- Chile: Created with DU support at the beginning of its mandate, the compliance strategy in this sector included measures to improve teacher quality, motivating students with the highest scores on the university admissions examination (above 600 points) to study pedagogy through the Vocation Grant. This intervention led to an increase of 44% in the number of young people studying pedagogy between 2009 and 2013 (8,341 young people).²²
- Peru: Only 1 out of 10 primary school students in rural areas understands what they are reading or score satisfactorily in the Student Reading Comprehension Assessment. To achieve the goal of getting from 11% (2016) to 25% (2021) of students achieving satisfactory reading comprehension scores by the 4th grade of primary school, the first year of the delivery strategy prioritized the improvement of the basic school infrastructure, while carrying out in parallel the education interventions which would produce results in the mid-term. As a result, the percentage of school buildings with access to water rose from 60.7 percent (2016) to 69 percent (2017). Additionally, the percentage of rural schools with Internet access increased from 10.3 percent to 15.9 percent.²³

3. Improvements in the health sector.

 Pernambuco, Brazil: Since the introduction of the Pact for Health in 2011, in which SEPLAG applied the DU methodology, the number of deaths from preventable

²⁰ Source: National Survey of Strategic Programs (ENAPRES), INEI.

²¹ Source: SEPLAG. For more information see: SEPLAG, Pacto pela Educação http://www.seplag.pe.gov.br/web/pped/pacto-pela-educacao and SEPLAG, Relatório Anual de Ação do Governo 2017 available at: http://www.seplag.pe.gov.br/web/ra/ra-relatorios-de-avaliacao

²² Source: Government of Chile (2014).

²³ Source: Semáforo Escuela – MINEDU.

causes was reduced by 7.5% in 2014 (from 320 per 100,000 inhabitants to 296 per 100,000 inhabitants).

- Guatemala: Since the Center of Government's capacity strengthening began in August 2016, the provision of medicines and critical equipment to public hospitals has improved through weekly priority monitoring at cabinet meetings led by the DU, and better coordination and follow-up within the sector. The first 18 months yielded several positive outcomes, including: (i) availability of the stock of medicine for more than one month's supply increased from 77 percent to 91 percent; and (ii) availability of the stock of surgical materials for more than one month's supply increased from 83 percent to 92 percent.
- Province of Buenos Aires: At the beginning of 2016, the Comprehensive Plan for Hospital Emergency Services was at a standstill, which led to the lack of emergency care in several municipalities. The DU organized working groups in coordination with the Ministry of Health and relevant ministries to resolve delays in equipment procurement. The DU supported the ministry in fine-tuning the implementation plan and closely monitored the commitments made by all parties. As a result, the number of emergency services in selected hospitals increased from 0 to 30 by the end of 2017, and by 2019 is expected to hit 100 percent of the 58 hospitals in the plan.

4. Reducing time in the structuring and execution of public investment projects.

The DUs assisted with the identification and dissemination of progress at the operational level, thus helping position the presidential agenda and connect with citizens. Some noteworthy cases:

- Chile: After the earthquake of February 2010, the Chilean government added reconstruction as its eighth pillar of its top priorities. By the end of its mandate, 99.8 percent of housing subsidies had been allocated, connectivity had been fully restored, 100 percent of lost hospital beds had been replaced, and 97 percent of educational infrastructure projects had been completed. The support of the DU in coordinating the various sectors involved in public reconstruction projects, and an active monitoring and unblocking obstacles by the Presidency was critical for making progress.
- Colombia: The average delay in projects of national and strategic interest (PINES) was reduced from six months to 14.4 days²⁴ through the introduction of a delivery management model based on increased coordination, clarification of processes, and monitoring of activities with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, as well as the establishment of a high government body for monitoring and resolving conflicts in areas such as environmental, social, and property matters that impeded their agile implementation.
- Paraguay: The structuring processes of public-private partnerships took an average of three to five years. In the case of the Asuncion Airport, the process was

²⁴ This reduction was achieved in the first semester of the model's operation. Source: Secretariat for Competitiveness and Strategic Projects (September 2014).

completed in two years thanks to the intervention of the DU, which initiated a detailed work and coordination plan between key stakeholders from different institutions (the Ministry of Public Works and the National Directorate of Civil Aviation). Moreover, major urban infrastructure work, social housing projects, and priority projects such as the total renovation of the urban bus fleet were fast tracked and completed under the DU's coordination.

• City of Buenos Aires, Argentina: To stress the priority given to early childhood and increased preschool coverage, one of 50 government commitments was to build 30 new schools with classrooms for 3-year-olds by 2019. The commitment's public-facing nature – one of the features put in place by the DU's methodology – as well as its internal prominence in periodic follow-up meetings with the Head of Government helped bolster the goal and guarantee the allocation of human and financial resources needed to ensure that it was achieved. By December 2017, the goal had advanced 41 percent (with 7 schools completed and most under construction or in the bidding process).

5. Improvements in citizen services.

- Chile: As part of the State's modernization pillar, the DU supported the roll-out of measures to reduce the time to set up a company from 27 days to 5.5 days (source: Doing Business 2010 and 2014, World Bank).
- City of Buenos Aires, Argentina: Two of the Head of Government's public commitments to improve citizen services, where the DU made contributions, were reducing the time required to open small and medium-sized businesses down to 10 days well below the average of 25 days in Argentina and 13 days in Spain and tackling 100 percent of all reported potholes within 15 days (the baseline was 30 percent). Both priorities were achieved within the mandate's first two years.

6. Improvements in other policy areas.

• City of Buenos Aires: Within the framework of one of four pillars related to the quality and enjoyment of public space, the City's Government pledged to add 110 new hectares of green space by 2019, an ambitious goal given previous track records. In order to achieve this commitment, which requires the participation of several ministries, the DU is playing a critical coordinating and monitoring role. The sustained focus on this commitment allowed for better distribution and allocation of human and financial resources throughout the government to ensure that it was prioritized. The commitment was nearly 35 percent fulfilled by December 2017, two years ahead of schedule.

Having implemented similar projects for a longer period of time, a greater number of the international experiences depict more examples of final results and outcomes achieved, some of which can be found below (see Box 4).

²⁵ After the tender's launch, the Ministry of Public Works took control of the project, which was not without its political and contractual issues.

Box 4. Examples of Final Outcomes Resulting from Delivery Units' Contributions in Other Parts of the World

Despite the lack of impact evaluations that could show a causal relationship between a DU's work and its direct effect on target indicators, there are several cases in which the intended goals were indeed met or where there was improvement in the priority areas.

In **Malaysia**, eight years after the DU's inception, substantial improvements had been reported in several of the government's key target indicators. Pre-school enrollment rates increased by almost 20 percentage points between 2010 and 2015; crime, which prior to PEMANDU was on the rise each year, fell by 45 percent over the same period, decreasing by an average of 7 percent per year; the number of passengers on public transport reached 89 percent in five years; and an average of 880 km of rural roads were constructed each year, up from an average of 220 km per year (World Bank, 2017).

According to Freeguard and Gold (2015) and Gold (2017), following the launch of *StateStat* in the State of **Maryland, United States**, there was a significant reduction in infant mortality, from 8 deaths per 1,000 births in 2008 to 6.5 in 2014. In addition, crime was at its lowest level in 37 years and 100 percent of jobs lost after the 2008 financial crisis had been recovered.

In the **United Kingdom,** the number of patients waiting for more than a year to undergo surgery fell from 40,000 to 10,000 between 2001 and 2003, thanks to a program promoted by the Prime Minister's DU (PMDU) (CPI, 2016). Similarly, there was an improvement in the performance of 60 schools in London, reducing the gap in performance from the national average by 8 percentage points (previously at 17.5 percentage points) and reducing hospital emergency room wait times by 85 percent (Panchamia et al. 2014).

Brunei's economy had the greatest gains per the World Bank's *Doing Business* report for three consecutive years after the DU's introduction and the selection of the economy (along with education) as one of its two focus areas (Delivery Associates, 2018). This led to a 66 percent increase in the number of companies created between 2014 and 2016.

Barber (2013) reports a number of significant gains in **Punjab, Pakistan** as a result of education efforts made by the UD: an increase of 1.5 million children enrolled in the school system between 2011 and 2013, student attendance exceeding 90 percent, 81,000 more teachers hired on merit, and the proportion of schools with basic amenities increasing from 70 percent in 2011 to 90 percent in 2013. In addition, the rate of vaccinations for children in Punjab increased from 22 percent to 90 percent between 2014 and 2015, resulting in an increase of 46 percent in the number of vaccinated children (Gold, 2017; Delivery Associates, 2018).

In New South Wales, **Australia**, 8,300 children increased their reading comprehension in one year as a result of the focus on education goals, and 179,000 jobs were created in two years (Delivery Associates, 2018).

Again, it should be noted that none of the results mentioned here are causally attributed to the presence of a DU, and that there may be other public policy factors that contributed to achieving such results. However, the figures seem to suggest that there is a link between the introduction of the DU and achieving results.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Trial and Error: Lessons Through Experience

he establishment of DUs in LAC has not been free of institutional and political challenges. There has also been no shortage of failed attempts, which in public administration is often of greater utility than a success story. The IDB's support to of this young initiative's first years in the region, as well as the world's literature on the subject, provide important lessons learned for governments (current or future) interested in implementing the model. A few of the problems faced include the following:²⁶

1. Emphasis on monitoring and early warning, and less on substantive operations. According to Behn (2014), there are four complementary stages to these tools, which shift them from monitoring systems to systems that achieve results: (i) having information collection indicators, goals, and protocols that guarantee the quality and timeliness of information; (ii) having a clearly identified strategy that establishes the causality between the activities and results sought, the timelines, resources, and the persons responsible for their implementation; (iii) having mechanisms to align, reassign, and rapidly deploy the human, physical, technological, and financial resources required to execute the established strategy; and (iv) having monitoring, evaluation, and warning mechanisms for the identification of gaps between actual and expected performance. Some DUs have focused more on stages (i) and (iv) and less on the other two, which have been largely left to the sectors or simply not implemented. Stages (ii) and (iii) are where behaviors and incentives are modified, and where corrective measures are implemented, which end up having the greatest impact on achieving results. All of this leads to the DU having a system of traffic lights, but reaching planned milestones does not necessarily lead to a change in reality.

²⁶ It must be stated that the vast majority of the lessons learned in what went wrong relate to five cases not included in Box 1.

- 2. Ownership and empowerment fall short or exist in words from the chief Executive. He or she likes the idea, sends signs of being willing to adopt the model, and mentions it at cabinet meetings. However, when it comes to implementing the model, neither time devoted to follow-up meetings nor delegation to someone who can deliver occurs, nor is the DU empowered vis-a-vis the Ministry of Finance, other actors in the Center of Government, or the line ministries tasked with carrying out the priorities. Thus, a culture of accountability is not created and can even lead to a lack of information sharing among sectors.
- 3. The DU lacks technical and political capacity. The head of the DU lacks the necessary profile (for example, taking a more academic rather than managerial approach) and/or does not have influence or access to cabinet ministers. The DU team does not have the technical skills necessary for adding value to sectors, as they are not experts in implementation or project management. No results are produced, and the President loses interest.
- 4. Lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities in the Center of Government leads to a boycott of the DU. Other actors in the Center of Government (Ministry of Finance, Planning, or other institutions in the presidency) feel threatened by what they see as a duplication of effort and an intrusion into their mandate. The DU does a poor job of aligning itself with existing allies or partners who were carrying out complementary work. This normally stems from insufficient support from the Head of Government (see point 1). As a result, the DU is nether seen as relevant by the President nor by the line ministries from which it must draw support.
- 5. The DU is introduced midway through the term of office. In one instance where this has occurred, it never launched due to no one in the cabinet taking ownership, and, in another, it could not gain a foothold in the Center of Government due to difficulties with other stakeholders (point 3).
- **6. DU loses focus and becomes involved in short-term issues.** The DU solves problems concerning priorities and the chief executive begins to see it as a structure to put out fires (*firefighter team*) rather than a steward of his or her legacy (*engineer team*). The executive begins to face emergencies related to the political situation, the DU's role becomes blurred and turns its attention to more operational tasks than on focusing on results.
- 7. Trouble defining priorities and formulating delivery strategies. Priorities are not defined or constantly shift, leading to time wasted. Goals are unrealistic, and thus undermine the DU's credibility. There is a lack of clarity in the delivery strategies (milestones, sequence, responsibilities, and resources). It is possible that a public policy that establishes causality between interventions and intended effects is

poorly defined.²⁷ As such, results are promoted, but if they are not appropriately linked to the intended outcome, the overall situation will be unchanged.

- 8. Lack of quick wins results in the chief executive losing interest. Although this may happen for various reasons (delays in preparing delivery strategies, erroneous strategies, complexity of priorities, absence of a champion in priority sectors, etc.), the results are not seen in time, which increases the political cost of backing the unit in the cabinet.
- **9.** The line ministries do not see the DU as a value-adding partner. Therefore, they either not share information, have disagreements on the accuracy of data or distrust the information. The DU is not included in the search to solve deviations from objectives (normally related to point 3). In such cases, the DU often cannot leverage resources or influence key players.
- 10. Failure to engage with budget teams leads to diminished strategic impact. In the absence of dynamic decisions that directly influence the allocation of financial resources, the identified strategic measures may not be carried out. Budgetary inertia still dominates.
- 11. Accountability around priorities is not credible in the eyes of the public. It is seen as political propaganda and the veracity of the information is questioned. Therefore, even if positive results are achieved, the model loses its utility in the eyes of political actors such as the head of government or ministers.

²⁷ One of the governments included as a goal moving up in an index ranked by an international organization. However, the priority actions in the delivery strategy had no direct impact on what that index measured.

What Are the Ingredients for Success?

he successful introduction of a DU requires distinct conditions that, if not met, experience shows it is preferable not to move ahead with adapting the model. These include:

- 1. Ownership and political empowerment of the DU model by the head of government, at the outset, but also consistently over time. If the highest political authority does not take ownership of the model and supports it over time, by devoting time in quarterly or at least biannual follow-up meetings, and if it does not politically empower the Center of Government institution and the DU vis-à-vis the line ministries, the model will simply not work.
- 2. Selectivity in choosing priorities, and steadfastness in maintaining them. If everything is a priority, nothing is a priority. If the DU is asked to intervene in too many priority areas, its impact and convening power will be diluted. On the other hand, if the priorities are oriented to short-term emergencies and not to legacy objectives, it will also lose a key asset: focus. Finally, the constant change of priorities will create confusion at the model's expense.
- 3. Set realistic goals. If goals are not well thought out during development of implementation strategies, they may lead to a deterioration in a DU's credibility.
- 4. Subsidiary role. If the DU takes credit for its achievements, has a high profile and competes politically with sectors, or has sectoral specialists who could "compete" with ministers responsible for priorities, it will fail to secure collaboration from those leading the priority areas, which will make the model infeasible. In a football analogy, its role should be that of a defensive midfielder, helping others to shine, with goals scored by the President and the line ministers.

- 5. Act from the start of the mandate. A cabinet's dynamics are often defined in the first few months of taking office. Introducing a new management model of this kind after the administration's first year has not been successful.
- **6. Discipline to adhere to routines**. Planning, coordination, and monitoring routines must be respected in order for this model to be applied. While this largely depends on the first precondition, it is important to emphasize the importance of maintaining routines despite day-to-day pressing issues.
- 7. Have good priority leaders in place at the sector level. It is essential to have champions in the institutions in charge of leading priorities to increase the chances of achieving the goal. If there are none, they should be added on or consider changing the priority.
- 8. Provide adequate inputs to develop delivery strategies. In-depth studies of the issues being addressed, detailed sector-specific knowledge within the government, and clarity in the delivery chain workflows and processes are critical to delivering priorities. This precondition creates some tension with the need to act at the outset of the mandate, as information quality tends to improve once the government is in place. However, it is essential to proceed with the development of delivery strategies before the elections or during the government transition period.
- 9. Have the tools for timely information collection and quality assurance. It is indispensable to have tools and protocols for gauging progress, for the DUs to fulfill their role. When there is no timely and reliable information, often the DU and its working methodology are the ones that drive the creation of such information, which, while a concrete contribution, usually delays deploying the model and achieving results.
- 10. Introduce elements of public accountability. This acts as a critical incentive within government (particularly for line ministries) to remain focused on the President's or the Chief Executive's priorities.

A Forward-Looking Agenda

n conclusion, six key tasks were identified for making the most out of DUs' potential:

- 1. The DUs are called on to play an important role in strengthening management capacity in line ministries and agencies, especially in countries with weak institutional capacity. Along these lines, the DUs must strive to be leaders in methodologies that allow sectors to develop a well-defined strategy to establish the causality between activities and desired outcomes. In addition, DUs should define the mechanisms for rapidly aligning, reallocating, and deploying the human, physical, technological, and financial resources required to execute the strategy as defined.
- 2. DUs possess great potential for being implemented in line ministries and at the subnational level (especially in cities). The deployment and strengthening of the model in line ministries (as in the United States federal government)²⁸ or in specific areas such as public investment management (which began in 2018 in Guyana) are further aspects to be studied in greater depth in the coming years. Beyond the national level, while DUs have expanded to some subnational governments in the region, there is tremendous potential for expanding their use, especially in cities, which is where the model has been mostly concentrated in the United States, for example.²⁹

²⁸ The initiative led by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to implement and mandate the *PerformanceStat* model in the State secretariats, among other measures, has been strengthened under different administrations. For more information see: www.performance.gov. In Latin America, one of the pioneers was Peru's Ministry of Education DU in 2014 (later discontinued).

²⁹ Since April 2015, Bloomberg Philanthropies' What Works Cities program has introduced the *PerformanceStat* model, comparable to the DU model, to 100 mid-sized cities in the United States. It has also implemented a pilot in four selected cities outside the United States (one of them being Buenos Aires, implemented by the Center for Government Excellence of Johns Hopkins University - *GovEx*).

- 3. DUs can serve as a vehicle to strengthen coordination mechanisms and tools between levels of government. Vertical coordination or in other words, the effective link between national government and subnational governments in charge of delivering important services that are commonly considered to be top priorities among others, emerges as a challenge with few successful experiences. In the coming years, it will be important to consider this aspect in the agenda to improve the DU models in the region.
- 4. The DUs are destined to become part of a wider ecosystem of public management innovations driven by the Center of Government, in particular in terms of the digital transformation of government, building on the potential of Innovation Labs and leveraging data analysis.
- 5. Progress must be made in mitigating the challenge posed by the lack of DU continuity and institutionalization. Although Latin America does not seem to have a formula for success due to high turnover in the Center of Government with each change of administration, generating a critical mass of experts and public servants who adopt the DU methodology in several countries ought to serve to sustain its implementation after each change of government and to lower reduce the learning curve.³⁰
- 6. More empirical evidence of the utility of DUs needs to be gathered. With the considerable number of ongoing DU initiatives in LAC (and the world), there will be more opportunities to measure their concrete results in the next two or three years. Nevertheless, for this baseline measurement to be more rigorous, it will be important to continue to work towards isolating DU contributions as much as possible by identifying test and control groups in the interventions (either by geographical location in matters such as safety, health, and education, or by a portfolio-segmented analysis in the case of public investment projects) or by constructing counter-factual scenarios.

³⁰ In a recent study, Delivery Associates (2018) argues that closing a DU does not imply failure, but rather that its success should be measured by the results it achieves over its lifetime.

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