

# THE CENTER OF GOVERNMENT, REVISITED

A DECADE  
OF GLOBAL REFORMS

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## Preface

Governments are large, complex organizations with a variety of objectives and, like all organizations, they need both great leadership and management to be effective. This publication looks at the management side of government and how it can ensure coherence and urgency in the delivery of policy priorities through the work of the Center of Government (CoG). Since you are likely to be a leader in a government (currently or preparing to be so), working in the public sector, or interested in improving governments' ability to deliver results, we hope you will find this publication stimulating and useful.

This report is particularly about how those at the apex of government act to ensure that it is able to translate the aspirations that got it elected to tangible results for citizens. Managing government has never been straightforward, and a series of factors (a 24/7 communications ecosystem, accelerated global disruptions, reduced trust in institutions, more complex policy issues, etc.) have made governing even more challenging. A well-functioning CoG is critical to help leaders navigate turbulence and complexity, aligning the vast machinery of government to deliver results for (and, increasingly, *with*) citizens. No single ministry or agency can address these challenges on its own. Making government more than the sum of its parts requires strong coordination and effective management from the center.

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) established its CoG practice a decade ago. Since then, the Bank has produced a range of studies on CoG reform, working with over 15 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) to strengthen the work of government at the center. This analytical, operational, and technical experience has provided evidence and insight for this publication, alongside a review of the CoG policy and academic literature and a series of interviews undertaken with practitioners and experts from LAC and other regions. This publication reflects the Bank's updated conceptual framework on the core functions of the CoG, combined with an analysis of the practices and instruments that have been developed to perform these functions in the real world.

The publication is structured from the standpoint of the CoG practitioner who is seeking to gain insight into how other governments have fashioned an effective center that delivers their goals. It addresses a series of critical questions confronting CoG practitioners in their daily work: Why and how should the CoG establish priorities? How can key actors be aligned behind them? How can we ensure that those priorities are implemented in a timely and coordinated manner? What can be done to keep track of progress and to intervene when required? How can the capabilities and culture required for delivery be developed? How should priorities (as well as progress and challenges) be communicated effectively to enhance citizen trust?

Chapter 1 presents an analysis of the shifting context confronting governments around the world, characterized by greater complexity, volatility, and urgency to deliver results. It examines the main social, political, economic, fiscal, and technological challenges that impact the role and practices of the CoG, as well as evolving ideas and techniques about governance and public management in recent years. The chapter also provides an overview of the main findings and learning that can be distilled from a decade of continuous CoG reforms, including perceived successes and failures in LAC and globally.

Drawing on the analysis presented in the first chapter, Chapter 2 provides an up-to-date assessment of the core functions of the CoG in this new context. It explains the rationale and describes the key components of each CoG function. It will be particularly useful to practitioners who are assessing the current practice of the CoG within a country and how its functions can be organized and strengthened in light of new governance challenges. For those familiar with the IDB's original framework, this updated version incorporates new components within the original five functions and introduces two additional cross-cutting functions that aim to support and enhance the effectiveness of the other functions in our framework. For instance, a rapidly emerging role for the CoG in coordinating cross-government data and digital frameworks can catalyze significant improvements in the more traditional function of monitoring and improving performance, expanding the availability of real-time, granular information about service delivery. The updated framework also highlights the key role of culture in providing the context for governments to achieve their ambitions: culture matters internally in

building effective and resilient organizations; culture matters externally in forging relationships with stakeholders and frontline agencies to achieve governments' shared ambitions.

For those actively engaged in enhancing CoG practice, Chapter 3 presents a set of specific routines, instruments and step-by-step actions that should be considered in the process of strengthening the capacity of the CoG. The chapter presents a full menu of tools to be applied selectively according to the needs, resources, and context in each case. Real-world examples from LAC and other regions are presented to illustrate how CoGs operate in practice, as well as the factors that facilitate the successful adoption of CoG reform strategies.

**No government has achieved optimization across all of its functions, and no organization can undertake improvement efforts across all of its functions simultaneously.**

All governments have a CoG, whether or not it is formally codified. Successful governments seek to enhance the effectiveness of each function of their CoG by focusing on particular priority areas. Each function is on a continuum of establishing, improving, strengthening, or optimizing performance. No government has achieved optimization across all of its functions, and no organization can undertake improvement efforts across all of its functions simultaneously. Chapter 4 offers a self-assessment tool (the CoG Institutional Development Matrix) to guide practitioners in identifying the key functions and activities most in need of development or enhancement in their particular context.

Overall, the publication summarizes the best available evidence about the results that can be achieved by strengthening CoG functions, presenting relevant cases across multiple policy areas. An even more important piece of evidence about the value of the CoG is the continuing interest of those leading governments to revamp and update the work of the strategic core. Government leaders clearly understand that these functions matter for the government's success, by helping to minimize policy blunders, aligning the work of ministries and agencies that may otherwise pull in their own direction, accelerating the pace of delivery, and communicating more effectively and consistently with citizens. By expanding the collective knowledge of ways that CoGs can be improved, we hope this publication will be a helpful tool to all those who share our passion of achieving better outcomes for citizens.

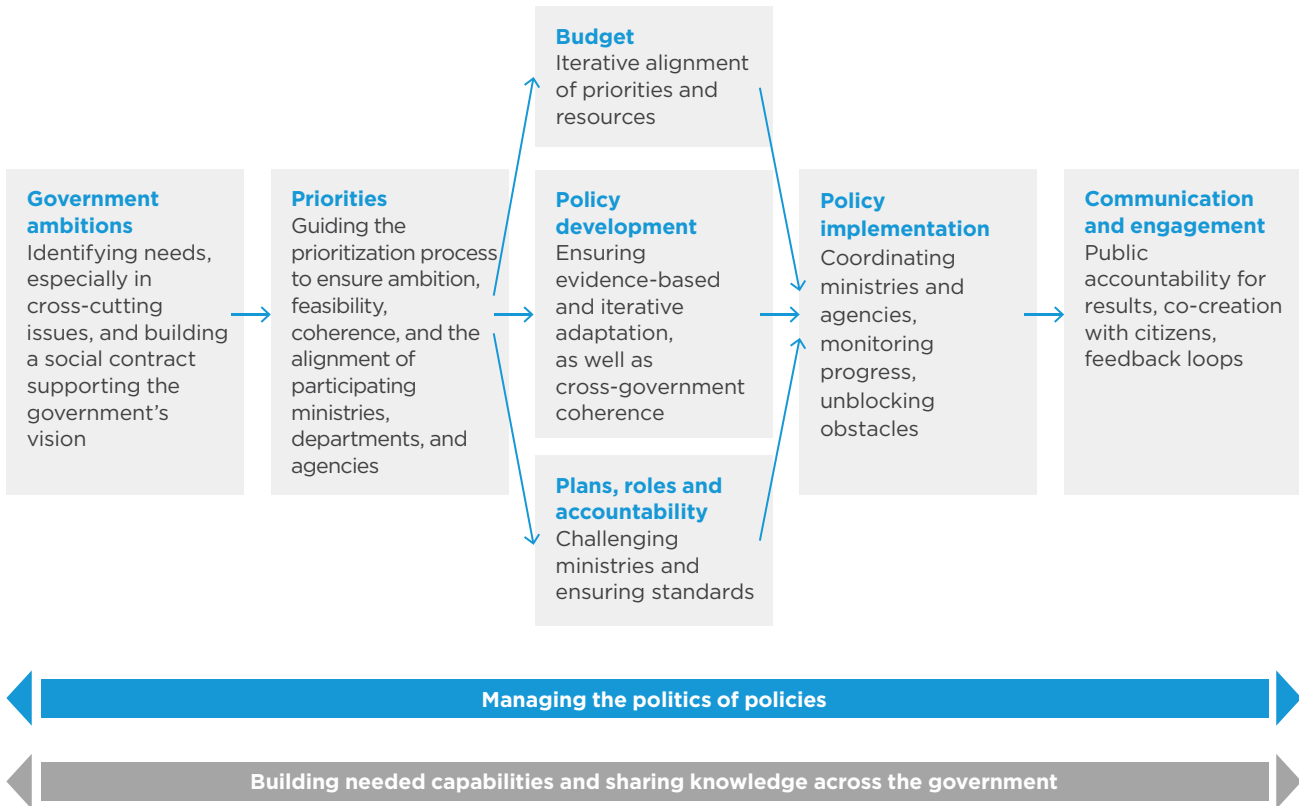
# Executive Summary

## The Mission and the Challenge

**The mission for the Center of Government (CoG) is to provide managerial direction and coherence to the complex machinery of government to accelerate the delivery of its priority objectives.** By managing government actively and collaboratively, the CoG can apply the chief executive's and senior leaders' political leverage toward more effective governance and better outcomes for (and, increasingly, *with*) citizens. In recent years, several important changes occurring inside and outside of governments have reinforced the critical mission of the CoG. These economic, social, political, and technological transformations have reshaped the functions of the CoG, as well as the tools available to CoG practitioners. This publication takes stock of these innovations, based on learnings from a decade of CoG reforms, both globally and in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

**The CoG works across the policy cycle to turn government ambitions into concrete results for citizens, with a particular focus on policy priorities.** With its cross-government perspective, the CoG is well positioned to lead the definition of priorities for the whole of government: to guide the iteration between policy development, budget allocation, and implementation planning in these priorities; to monitor the execution of such plans and to coordinate across the delivery system to unblock obstacles; and to ensure that the results achieved (and the challenges faced) are communicated consistently to citizens. Throughout these processes, the CoG plays a role in the management of key political and societal stakeholders and in ensuring that the needed capabilities and intelligence are in place to effectively deliver results. Figure 1 presents a stylized version of this role across the end-to-end policy cycle. When seeking to strengthen the work of the CoG across these tasks, it is critical for practitioners to select and sequence their efforts based on a clear assessment of the main performance gaps in their context and the resources available to meet them.

**Figure 1.**  
**The Work of the Center of Government across the Policy Cycle**



Source: Authors' elaboration.

**The CoG comprises the leaders, institutions, units, and advisors that collectively perform the core cross-government functions needed to achieve priority policy objectives.** While each CoG has its own institutional configuration, certain roles are typical across countries. The *senior leadership of the government* includes the chief executive (president, prime minister, governor, or mayor, depending on the country and level of government), the senior political and policy advisors (including a chief of staff or similar figure), and the ministers leading institutions that perform one or more CoG functions, such as the ministry of the presidency, the department of the prime minister, the cabinet office, the ministry of planning, or the ministry of finance, depending on the country. The CoG is also formed by *institutions that perform the core cross-government functions* needed to deliver the government's objectives. These include planning, performance, or delivery units; offices that coordinate relations with key external stakeholders, such as subnational governments and the legislature; and central

communications units. Finally, there are *teams that may be considered part of the CoG in certain contexts or for specific priorities*, such as chief data and digital offices, innovation units, and regulatory offices. Unlike line ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), the CoG has no specific sectoral focus, nor does it provide services directly to citizens.

**In recent years, a range of internal and external changes, as well as learnings from multiple reforms in LAC and globally, have reshaped understanding about what works in CoG practice.** In the past decade, a range of social, political, economic, fiscal, and technological changes have altered the environment in which CoGs operate and enhanced and revamped their role. Certain functions and tools of the CoG have become more salient as these changes unfold. These changes include:

- *A more pressing economic and fiscal context*, which stresses the value of having clear priorities and of “making the whole greater than the sum of its parts” through cross-ministerial synergies that maximize the impact for citizens.
- *A decline in citizen trust*, which no MDA can address by itself, and which can only be tackled through a culture of transparent performance, coherent and timely communication, and collaborative engagement with citizens and non-state actors (especially for priorities that demand co-creation of results).
- *The acceleration of major transformations and disruptions*, including pandemics, climate hazards, technological developments, global conflicts, which highlight the value of anticipatory governance and foresight, real-time performance information, and integrated whole-of-government responses.
- *The growing importance of cross-cutting policy issues*, such as economic recovery, social inequality, and gender disparities, which require collaboration across MDAs, levels of government, and non-state actors.
- *The increased complexity of policy challenges* such as climate change, the growth of artificial intelligence, and the regulation of key sectors like big tech and financial services, that demand consistent and evidence-based regulations and interventions from multiple MDAs.



**Changes in the conceptualization and practice of governance and public management reform have also influenced the functions and instruments of the CoG.**

These transformations, internal to the government, can be summarized in three key factors that influence the work of the CoG:

- First, the *data and digital revolutions* have created new possibilities at almost every stage of the policy cycle. These include how the CoG uses new insight for decision-making, how it performs its core functions, and how it improves services. However, an obstacle to realizing these opportunities has been the persistence of administrative silos that limit the sharing of knowledge and information. Thus, the establishment of cross-government data and digital frameworks has emerged as a potential new role for the CoG, at least in their initial phases of development.
- Second, a *revised understanding of the instruments available to lead and manage government* has expanded the CoG's toolbox. Most policy priorities do not depend solely on actions taken by the central government; they often depend on actions and behaviors taken by subnational governments, the private sector, community organizations, or citizens. To induce such behaviors, frameworks for collaboration and partnership based on mutual cooperation in networks motivated by shared goals can complement the CoG's more traditional performance frameworks and instruments.
- Finally, *multiple policy and management techniques have emerged or been refined in recent years*, and the CoG has often acted as its incubator or promotor. For instance, in several countries, the CoG has led the adoption of more rigorous standards of evidence in the design of policies and regulations. It has also promoted innovative, citizen-centered approaches in policy design to minimize the traditional approach of fragmented, discrete interventions from separate MDAs, and it has sponsored the incorporation of behavioral insights, backed by rigorous evaluations, into the way programs are being implemented.

**Most policy priorities do not depend solely on actions taken by the central government; they often depend on actions and behaviors taken by subnational governments, the private sector, community organizations, or citizens.**

**The learnings from multiple experiences of CoG reform, including successes and failures, have led also to a revised understanding of the role, functions, and tools available to CoG leaders in different contexts.**

These learnings can be summarized as follows:

- First, efforts in CoG reform have led to significant improvements and results across multiple policy areas. Still, *many CoG reforms have been short-lived*, due to a waning of the chief executive's initial drive, a turnover in CoG personnel, a sudden crisis, or a change in administration. In these cases, initial improvements have proven difficult to embed and institutionalize. This suggests that, for the government's top priorities where a sustained new way of working is needed, the CoG may need to extend its focus to the capabilities, routines, values, and culture that exist across the key actors in the delivery system. In these cases, simply establishing a delivery unit or other CoG unit is not enough.
- Second, and connected to this, experience has shown that given the increased diversity of implementing actors, *multi-level coordination is essential to achieve results*. Decentralization to subnational levels of government and service provision through private and civil society organizations have led to increasingly complex implementation chains. In such contexts, CoGs need to consider the set of levers at their disposal. These include multi-level plans and coordinating forums, funding rules, standards' setting, and the dissemination of good practices and methodologies to promote multi-level alignment and coordination with subnational governments, thus creating incentives for them to focus on shared priority objectives.
- Third, most new CoG practices and units work best when properly *integrated with other cross-government processes, especially the budgetary process*. An effective performance framework connects prioritization, planning, and budgeting in an iterative process, ensuring that plans consider the fiscal realities and that sufficient resources are allocated to the government's main objectives and its plans for delivery. Therefore, the budget office (and, more generally, the ministry of finance) is a key partner when introducing CoG reforms.
- Finally, CoG units need to be aware of the *risks of mission drift and CoG overload*. It is inevitable that competent teams receive additional requests from senior leaders, thus expanding from their original missions. But when new CoG units are not established with a clear need and mandate preceding them, they congest an already crowded CoG and increase the burden on MDAs as well.

## The Functions of the Center of Government

**All of these changes and learnings point to an updated conceptual framework of the CoG's core functions.** A well-functioning CoG can ensure a whole-of-government perspective on these tasks, as well as a focus on outcomes for citizens that cut across ministerial boundaries. This updated framework consists of the following (see also Figure 2):

- *Strategic management* of the government, with a focus on policy priorities. This refers to establishing a framework to manage performance across the government's objectives, guiding the prioritization process within these objectives, ensuring that robust and coherent plans for delivery are developed to achieve them, and allocating the resources needed for implementation. Across these components, the CoG applies instruments to move from an "institutional" approach to planning to a "priority" approach, seeking to align the work of MDAs towards shared outcomes for citizens. It also emphasizes the value of detailed, step-by-step implementation planning to enable accelerated delivery.
- The *horizontal and vertical coordination* of the actors that contribute to these priorities. This involves horizontal coordination across MDAs; vertical alignment with subnational governments; the building of coalitions with external delivery partners; and the coordination of interventions in key contexts that cut across multiple sectors, such as major crises. This function seeks to ensure that a whole-of-government approach is adopted for multidimensional policy challenges, as well as citizen-centered perspectives in policy design and implementation (rather than discrete or fragmented interventions from each MDA). Increasingly, this requires aligning efforts with subnational and external partners across the delivery chain of priority goals.
- *Monitoring and improving performance.* This function requires establishing timely performance data flows; regular reporting to the chief executive and senior leaders; routines to review progress and make timely corrections; and the active engagement to resolve bottlenecks (understanding that the responsibility for delivery always lies with the implementing MDAs). The rapid emergence of digital tools to collect real-time performance information has emphasized the need for structured routines that put such data to use, as well

the value of developing analytical capacities to organize and extract actionable insights for decision-makers.

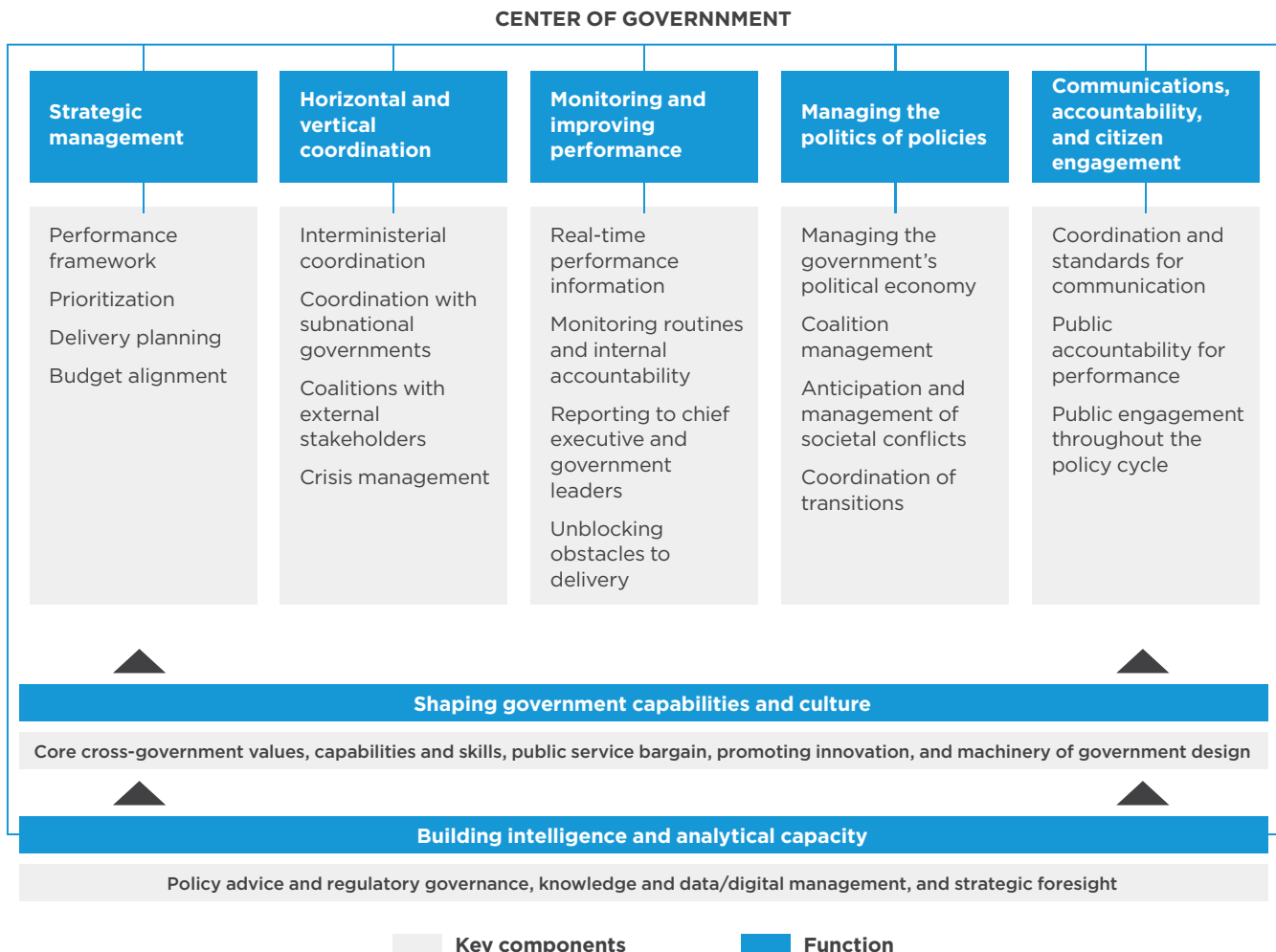
- The *political management of priority public policies*, which involves coordinating the government's internal political economy and its engagement with key stakeholders; managing decision-making processes in coalition settings; anticipating and coordinating responses to relevant societal conflicts; and establishing orderly processes for government transitions.
- The *communications, accountability, and citizen engagement* function, which involves developing cross-government strategies and standards in communication, ensuring public accountability for performance, and establishing frameworks to facilitate the engagement of citizens throughout the policy cycle, particularly in the co-production of priority outcomes. The evidence shows that a combination of effective delivery and transparent communications can enhance citizen trust, which is one of the key challenges faced by governments throughout the world.

**Recent experience has shown that, for specific priorities and contexts, the CoG may also need to ensure that MDAs possess sufficient capabilities and analytical intelligence to effectively deliver results, as well as the incentives, culture, and values to do so.** Due to the internal and external changes previously discussed, the CoG may need to incorporate new cross-government activities that can strengthen performance in the five functions described above. Thus, two new underpinning functions are key in certain contexts:

- *Shaping government capabilities and culture* to enhance the ability of key MDAs to deliver priority objectives and to embed the new routines in the work of the public sector, reducing the need for continuous CoG oversight. Depending on the needs of each case, this may entail focusing on organizational and human capabilities and skills; on the values, norms, attitudes and behaviors that prevail in the public sector among both political appointees and civil service staff; on the promotion of innovation to overcome inertia and rigidity; and on the design of the machinery of government itself.

- A function focused on *building intelligence and analytical capacity*, which intends to seize on the opportunities generated by the data and digital revolutions and to adjust policy priorities in a rapidly changing world. Again, depending on the context, this function entails the provision of policy advice to the chief executive and senior leaders, the governance of the regulatory-making process across priority sectors, the establishment of cross-government data and digital frameworks and strategies, and the ability to anticipate major opportunities and risks and to adapt the government’s strategy accordingly.

**Figure 2.**  
**The Core Functions of the Center of Government**



Source: Authors’ elaboration.

**Each country is on a unique journey to improve the functioning of its government and of its CoG to meet the demands of its citizens.**

Every new administration will inherit an organization with strengths and weaknesses. The robustness of its policymaking and its ability to work with partners to translate those policies into outcomes for citizens will vary. The challenges of horizontal coordination across government and of working vertically with subnational governments and delivery partners from the private and social sectors are considerable. Thus, the tasks of every new administration are to improve the functioning of government and to leave the government stronger than they found it.

## **The Practices and Tools of the Center of Government**

**The revised role of the CoG is expressed by an expanded toolbox, which enables to selectively deploy the instruments that are the best fit to the needs and resources of each country and CoG.** This publication presents five core functions and two that underpin them. To perform them in practice, it describes over 30 different practices and tools that are available to CoG leaders (summarized in Table 1). This menu of instruments allows practitioners to identify the ones that are the right fit in their context and critical for their specific policy priorities (and, even within these priorities, to the issues that truly merit CoG involvement - priorities within the priorities). Moreover, CoG practitioners need to focus their efforts based on a clear assessment of gaps, enabling conditions, and available resources in their particular situation. It would be impossible for any CoG to reform its entire suite of functions and activities; it would also likely lead to overload and overstretch. To assist CoG leaders in this prioritization and sequencing, the publication presents a self-assessment tool (the CoG Institutional Development Matrix, in Chapter 4) to help identify the functions and practices that most require development and enhancement in each case.

**Table 1.**  
**Summary of Available Practices and Instruments in Each CoG Function**

CoG function	Available practices and instruments
Strategic management	Cross-ministerial performance and planning frameworks; prioritization matrices; delivery plans and delivery chains; targets and trajectories; shared or place-based budget funds.
Horizontal and vertical coordination	Systems approaches; interministerial committees; coordinating ministries; “czars”; intergovernmental bodies and plans; collaborative frameworks; crisis command centers.
Monitoring and improving performance	Integrated performance dashboards; data-driven stocktakes; reports and memos to senior leaders; problem-solving techniques; deep dives.
Managing the politics of policies	Political committees; stakeholder mapping; coalition agreements; tools for conflict early warning and resolution; frameworks and rules for coordinating transitions.
Communications, accountability, and citizen engagement	Whole-of-government communication strategies; public dashboards and accountability sessions; bodies for citizen participation and feedback across the policy cycle.
Shaping government capabilities and culture	Capability and functional reviews; cross-government values’ statements and recognitions; codes of conduct; innovation and nudge units.
Building intelligence and analytical capacity	Governance of high-level policy and regulatory processes; specialized policy advice; frameworks for knowledge, data and digital management; strategic foresight.

Source: Authors’ elaboration.

**The publication documents multiple cases that have achieved results in the past decade by introducing one or more of these instruments.**

Stronger performance and monitoring frameworks have contributed to improved outcomes in key policy areas such as citizen security (Colombia), education (Pernambuco, Brazil), and early childhood development (Peru). Integrated, cross-ministerial planning has helped reduce adolescent pregnancies (Argentina) and increase birthweight (Chile). CoG coordination has improved the performance and efficiency of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) (Argentina). Accountability for achieving priority goals has increased citizen trust (Buenos Aires, Argentina), and a similar result was obtained through citizen-centered communications (Chile). Outside of LAC, the use of cross-ministerial goals has helped to accelerate infrastructure projects (United States) and, after years of stagnation, to increase immunization rates in children (New Zealand), among other cases.

**These and other cases underscore the value of a well-functioning CoG, while identifying the contexts in which the different functions and tools are most critical.** For instance, in federal countries and in unitary countries with high levels of policy decentralization, vertical coordination appears indispensable to foster consistent interventions and to minimize overlap. For coalition governments, political coordination among partners may be a prerequisite to enable the remaining managerial and technical CoG functions. In contexts of constrained resources and capabilities, establishing the building blocks of delivery (such as a basic performance framework for setting and keeping track of priorities) is likely to be more urgent than attempting advanced tasks like strategic foresight or systems approaches. Finally, in countries with low levels of trust, active communication and accountability for results can be a key practice to regain a modicum of public confidence in the government. These are general insights; each case will require a more tailored assessment, which can be conducted by applying the tool in Chapter 4. More evidence is needed to fully understand the impact of different CoG reform strategies, as well as the factors that underpin success. A methodological appendix discusses options to improve the base of evidence in the years to come, suggesting options to enable impact evaluations and cost-benefit analyses of CoG reforms.

**In summary, a well-functioning CoG helps to instill a sense of urgency in government so that every day counts; in doing so, it also helps to build longer-term capabilities.** The CoG necessarily focuses on achieving results during an administration's term in office. With systematic routines and sound instruments, it can produce tangible improvements in the way policy priorities are pursued: ensuring a joined-up approach, rather than one of ministerial silos; stress-testing policy and regulatory decisions to minimize the risk of blunders; supporting and challenging MDAs to produce actionable delivery plans, rather than simply announcing a goal and hoping for the best; and enabling timely and evidence-based discussions to unblock obstacles, rather than hiding the problems until it is too late to solve them. These practices, although focused on short- and medium-term priority goals, should eventually permeate into a new way of doing things in the public sector: one that prioritizes results, collaboration, and external accountability across all of its work. In this way, CoG practitioners will be helping to build a machinery of government that is stronger and better equipped to address the country's challenges than the one they inherited.





# 1

## The Center of Government in an Evolving Context

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Defining the Center of Government and Recent Challenges

Social, Political, Economic, Fiscal, and Technological Changes

New and Enhanced Tools and Techniques of Governance

Learnings from a Decade of Center of Government Reform in Latin America and the Caribbean and Globally

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**THE CENTER OF GOVERNMENT, REVISITED**

A DECADE OF GLOBAL REFORMS

# The Center of Government in an Evolving Context

**The CoG increasingly seeks to ensure that MDAs possess the right capabilities, culture, and analytical intelligence to achieve results for, and with, citizens.**

**The Center of Government (CoG) is responsible for the overall management of the government.** The CoG in each country consists of the senior government leaders, institutions, units, and individual advisors that collectively oversee the setting and definition of policy priorities and the alignment of plans and resources to achieve them; that coordinate across the government and with external stakeholders involved in delivering the priorities; that monitor progress and support the resolution of obstacles; and that ensure coherent communication to the public. Unlike line ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), the CoG does not have a specific sectoral focus, nor does it provide services directly to citizens. In certain contexts, however, the CoG increasingly seeks to ensure that MDAs possess the right capabilities, culture, and analytical intelligence to achieve results for, *and with*, citizens. Moreover, a well-functioning CoG is critical for policies and services to adopt a whole-of-government perspective, focusing on outcomes for citizens rather than on ministerial boundaries. This is particularly crucial for issues that cut across multiple sectors and demand integrated strategies and responses. Therefore, the CoG can be the transmission mechanism to drive the government's priority objectives forward in a coherent way (Alessandro, Lafuente, and Santiso, 2014).

**The aim of this chapter is to consider the changing context facing CoGs around the world and in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), and how it is reshaping the role of the center.** Major shocks and crises require governments to alter how they work. In addition, a decade of reforms offers opportunities to learn lessons from the reforms that have been tried and tested elsewhere. The chapter defines the term "Center of Government," drawing on a wide-ranging literature. It then addresses the sources of change that impact directly on the work of the CoG. Finally, it presents some of the new techniques and tools that have influenced the work of governments over the last decade, as well as some specific experiences of CoG reform.

## Defining the Center of Government and Recent Challenges

Each country's constitutional provisions, administrative traditions, and political contexts shape its CoG's institutional configuration. However, certain roles and units are typical in CoGs in many countries.

- The *senior leadership of the government*, such as the chief executive or head of government (president, prime minister, governor, mayor, etc., depending on the country and level of government); their chiefs of staff and senior political and policy advisors; and ministers leading institutions that perform one or more CoG functions (ministry of the presidency, department of the prime minister, cabinet office, finance,<sup>1</sup> planning, communications, etc.).
- The *institutions that perform core cross-government functions needed to deliver the government's objectives*, including offices that provide support and coordination to the cabinet or council of ministers and the interministerial committees; those responsible for coordination with subnational governments; those leading cross-government performance frameworks for strategic management and monitoring (including, in certain cases, smaller units, such as delivery units, that focus on top-level policy priorities); and those that manage relations with the legislative branch and other stakeholders.
- Finally, some institutions may be considered *part of the CoG in certain contexts or for specific priorities*. Recent experience has shown that improving only the apex of government is often not enough to sustain whole-of-government coherence and performance improvements. Thus, depending on the context, the CoG may need to assume direct leadership or oversight for enhancing the values, capabilities, and skills needed in the civil service to deliver priority goals; to manage a cross-government framework for data and digital development; to catalyze evidence-based innovation and citizen-centered approaches;

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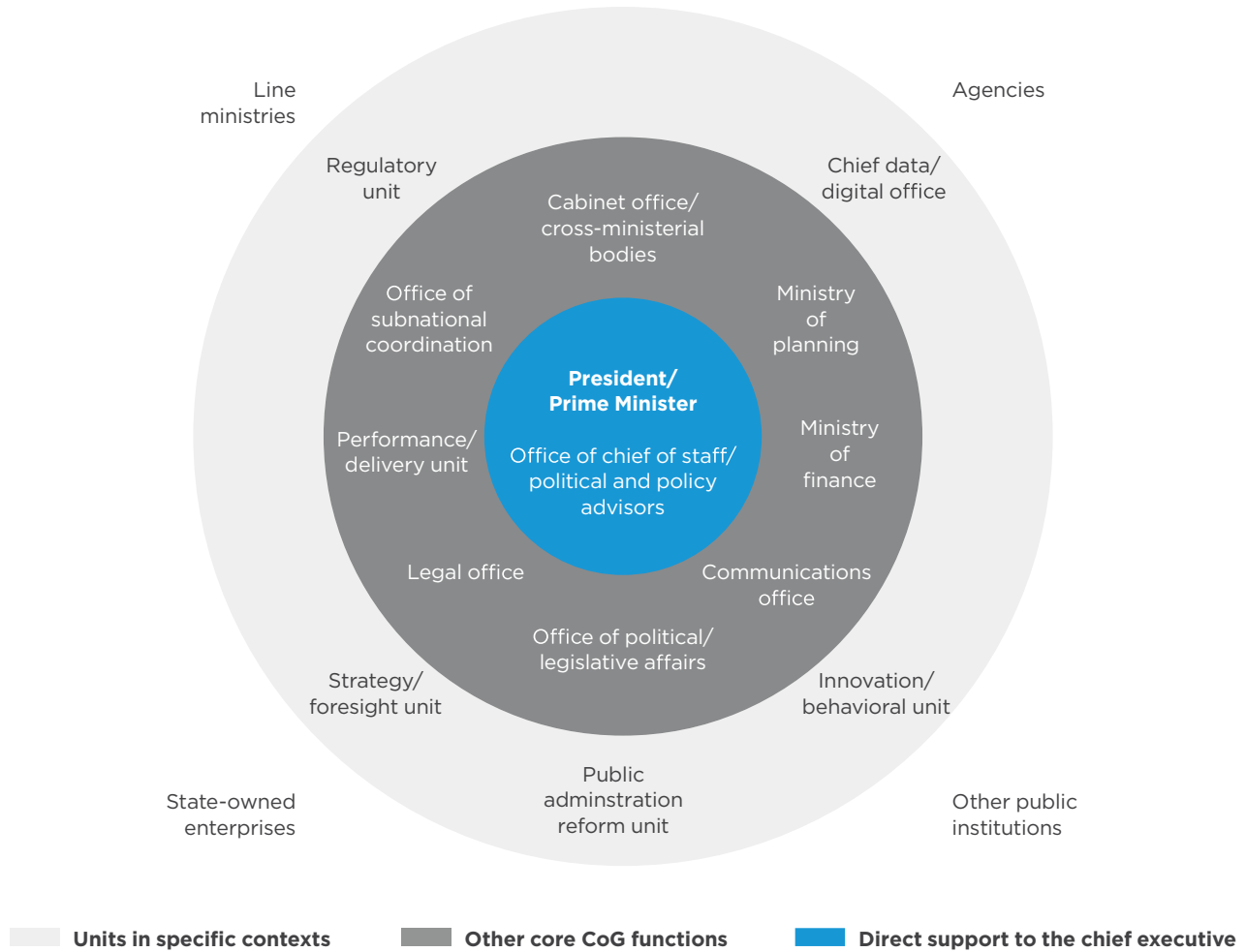
<sup>1</sup> Ministries of finance often have a “dual” perspective: they perform certain CoG functions (in terms of budget allocation for strategic management, and sometimes in monitoring performance) while also fulfilling a “sectoral” role typical of a line ministry (economic policy, tax policy, financial regulations, etc.). Nonetheless, it should be noted that in certain countries the Budget Office is based in the Presidency (as in the United States), and in some LAC countries the preparation of the investment budget is led by a Planning Ministry, as in Colombia. Thus, the role of the MoF as part of the CoG is not uniform across countries.

and to revise the structure of the machinery of government. Some of these institutions may also perform other day-to-day operational roles, but in particular contexts part of their mandate should be treated as a core CoG function.

**The CoG can also be conceptualized as three concentric circles.**

The inner circle includes the teams and individuals that support and report directly to the chief executive, such as the president or prime minister's office or department, her chief of staff, and individual policy and political advisors. A middle circle consists of institutions that perform other core CoG functions, such as cabinet offices (usually responsible for policy coordination); offices in charge of coordinating relations with subnational governments (and sometimes external stakeholders); ministries responsible for budget allocation as part of strategic management (such as finance or planning), teams that monitor progress in priority objectives (such as performance or delivery units), those responsible for coordinating political and legislative affairs, the central communications team, and the office of legal review or counsel. Finally, the outer circle is comprised of units that have recently been established in certain countries or that can be considered part of the CoG in particular contexts or for some priorities, including chief data and digital offices; regulatory units; behavioral and innovation labs; strategic foresight or futures teams; and units that lead high-priority aspects of public administration reform. Figure 1.1 depicts this conceptualization.

**Figure 1.1.**  
**Illustration of the Center of Government as Concentric Circles**



Source: Authors' elaboration.

**There are different options for organizing these multiple institutions, offices, and individuals.** At one end of the continuum, these units would be integrated within the same entity, and thus a single Head of the CoG may be identified. At the other end, each CoG unit would be an independent organization reporting separately to the chief executive. Most countries fall somewhere in between, with most of the units performing the CoG functions concentrated in a few ministries or offices. What truly matters is how these organizations are coordinated and managed. For instance, the clarity in their roles and responsibilities, as

well as the integration between their activities, contributes to the effective performance of CoG functions. When there is overlap or duplication in their mandates, or disconnections between processes that need to be aligned, there is an increased risk of overload at the center, of excessive requirements imposed on MDAs, and of an overall lack of effectiveness. This situation sometimes arises between the ministry of finance and other institutions formally in charge of planning or performance monitoring (see, for example, the case of Paraguay; OECD, 2018a). In such situations, the ministry's well-established role in budget management has generally tended to prevail, sometimes precluding a more strategic alignment between policy priorities, resource allocation, and performance management. Finally, internal CoG coordination also depends on the ability to share information and knowledge across units. In this regard, a more fragmented CoG may face greater challenges, as information flows are usually harder to establish across than within units (Egeberg, 2007). Establishing intra-CoG routines among teams with connected mandates can help overcome these obstacles.

**In addition to intra-CoG coordination, the role of these organizations is shaped by their internal capabilities, including the ability to address both urgent matters and medium-term policy priorities that demand persistent efforts.** Individuals at the apex of government are inevitably drawn into resolving daily crises and events. However, if every team within the CoG is focused on the urgent, policy priorities are likely to be neglected. Strong-performing CoGs handle the everyday crises while also ensuring that certain routines are maintained to monitor progress on the goals for the chief executive's term, to coordinate those involved in their implementation, and to anticipate and unblock any obstacles that arise. Sometimes, dedicated teams (such as delivery units) are established for this purpose, with a separate mandate from those working on day-to-day political, policy, and communications matters (Barber, 2016). A key challenge is to ensure that these teams are sufficiently empowered to align the work of MDAs even without engaging on the issues (crises, scandals, etc.) that seem to concentrate the attention in each day. Senior leaders should communicate the importance of maintaining these routines. By setting explicit priorities and ensuring public accountability, leaders can establish an irreversible commitment to delivering on these goals, and thus promote that sufficient attention is devoted to them instead of becoming relegated to day-to-day events.

**The capabilities also depend on the resources of these institutions and the skill sets of their staff.** Given the diverse set of functions and tasks performed in the CoG, it is natural that CoG officials and advisors have a range of areas of expertise and skills, including experience in project management (for instance, in performance or delivery units), sectoral policy expertise (in policy units and among the chief executive's advisors), political skills (in legislative affairs offices), and communications expertise, among others. Even within each CoG team there may be a need for multiple profiles. For example, delivery units typically combine experience in project management, some sectoral knowledge, and data analysis skills (Lafuente and González, 2018). Given the CoG's cross-government work, there is a need for strong interpersonal skills (coordination, negotiation, communication, etc.) across all CoG teams. Finally, and even if the CoG typically does not execute policies or projects by itself, CoG units may be strengthened by deploying certain resources to support the work of MDAs implementing priority goals. For instance, the Office of Management and Budget within the Executive Office of the President of the United States provides funding support to MDAs responsible for cross-agency priority goals, to be used in piloting new solutions, building dedicated teams, collecting data, and similar tasks.

**In the past decade, several countries in LAC and worldwide have sought to strengthen the technical work of the CoG.** At both the national and the subnational levels, government leaders have created new CoG institutions, reformed existing ones, and introduced new processes, routines, and tools to undertake their core functions. Several countries have reported a growth in the number of cross-ministerial initiatives and a strong influence of the CoG in promoting coordination and tracking progress (OECD and IDB, 2020). One of the drivers of institutional innovation in the CoG has been the enduring challenge of effectively delivering results in key policy areas: despite significant growth in public spending in several countries, results in education, health, citizen security, and other sectors have continued to disappoint (Chioda, 2017; Gropello, Vargas and Yañez Pagans, 2019; OECD and IDB, 2020; OECD and World Bank, 2020). Another driver of change has been the evolving societal, economic, and political context posing new demands and needs in the face of recurrent crises and shocks, which have led the CoG to assume additional roles and responsibilities. More positively, new forms of knowledge and evidence have been emerging,

spurred in part by digital transformation, which together make it possible for governments to act more intelligently in tackling current and future policy problems and improving outcomes for citizens. The multiple efforts in CoG reform have placed LAC at the global forefront of experimentation in CoG practice.<sup>2</sup>

**The internal and external environments in which CoGs operate have changed significantly in recent years, both in LAC and globally.**

Important changes occurring inside and outside of governments have impacted the work of the CoG. The latter include a more pressing economic and fiscal context, exacerbated by the fiscal impact of the measures adopted to address the COVID-19 pandemic and other global economic challenges and disruptions; a decline in citizen trust and increased social unrest and polarization in several countries; the need for more coordinated, anticipatory and rapid government responses illustrated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the lessons learned by the governments' responses to it; the growing salience of certain cross-cutting challenges, notably economic recovery, social inequality, and gender disparities; and the increased technical complexity of certain policy and regulatory areas dealing with issues like climate change, artificial intelligence, big tech, and financial services. The internal factors encompass a revised understanding of the tools available to lead and more effectively manage government and the development of new approaches and techniques. These include new approaches to collaborative government; better and more sophisticated use of data and increased citizen demand for digitized access to services; more robust standards of evidence for policymaking and regulation; the application of behavioral insights; and the focus on innovation applied to public policy. Collectively, these internal and external changes have enabled (and sometimes demanded) an important redefinition of the work of the CoG—including prioritizing both its work and its objectives for improvement actions.

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<sup>2</sup> In this context, the IDB has provided operational and technical support to strengthen CoG work in Argentina, Bahamas, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay (among other countries) including also some state and municipal governments, and documented some of these efforts in different publications (Acosta and González, 2018; Alessandro, Lafuente and Santiso, 2014; Lafuente and González, 2018).



**In addition, the experience of a decade of CoG reforms in LAC and globally has expanded the knowledge base about “what works” and what appears less likely to work.** Despite the strong interest in CoG reform, certain innovations have been short-lived or have drifted from their original purpose. Political and personnel turnovers at the CoG have sometimes led to a discontinuation of new units and routines. The introduction of new leadership and managerial tools has frequently confronted the challenge of effectively aligning the prevailing organizational culture (the traditional way of doing things in public administration), limiting their potential impact. Moreover, the integration with other key CoG stakeholders (such as budget offices) and with external actors that are crucial for delivery (such as subnational governments) has often been ineffectual. The connection with ministries of finance, which have assumed a more strategic policy role in many LAC countries, remains a challenge (Arenas and Mosqueira, 2021). These learnings from multiple experiences of CoG reform, including successes and failed experiments, have also led to a revised understanding of the role, functions, and tools available to CoG leaders. Even if some of these challenges will inevitably arise, a revised understanding of the effective levers at the CoG’s disposal can help tackle them more effectively.

**Change is more likely to happen when there is collective leadership and coordination both within government and in the wider delivery system.**

**The core mission of the CoG is still to collaboratively manage government: to align the complex governing machinery to achieve results for (and increasingly *with*) citizens, by applying the chief executive’s and senior leaders’ political leverage through systematic management approaches and more effective governance.** That effort requires mobilizing individuals, institutions, and teams to work on behalf of the senior leadership of government (president, prime minister, governor, mayor) to promote a whole-of-government approach in delivering results, especially for priority objectives that require the contribution of multiple line ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs). The outdated view that the chief executive can singularly use their position, or simply pull a lever for change, has been replaced by the understanding that change is more likely to happen when there is collective leadership and coordination both within government and in the wider delivery system. The complexity of government requires it to be a team effort rather than an individual one. This is a leadership role that the CoG is ideally equipped to play. For this, the CoG performs a set of cross-cutting functions oriented toward creating coherent, effective, and timely government action. These functions entail establishing a

culture, routines, and capabilities for cross-government coordination in setting priorities, developing policies, planning their implementation, monitoring and supporting their progress in real time (including problem-solving), managing the politics of policies, evaluating their effectiveness, and communicating results to citizens. Increasingly, delivery also requires the co-production of outcomes with citizens, businesses, and community stakeholders themselves, demanding collaboration across the whole of the public sector and with actors outside of government.

**Each country will be unique with respect to the current maturity of its CoG capacity, capability and performance, and any reform strategy should be tailored to the specific context.** As the recent developments that have reshaped CoG practice are presented, it is essential to consider each country's context and how the different factors apply in their particular circumstances. Trying to tackle all challenges at once would present a risk of overload, both at the CoG and in the MDAs it is seeking to support, challenge, and enable.

**This first chapter analyzes how the evolved context for governments worldwide has shaped the way the CoG performs its core mission.** It covers three sources of change leading to a revised understanding of the CoG's work: (1) the changes external to government itself (social, political, economic, fiscal, and technological); (2) new or enhanced tools and techniques of governance; and (3) institutional learnings from a decade of CoG reform in LAC and globally, including both successes and perceived problems (Table 1.1). These changes jointly lead to a revised conceptualization of the functions of the CoG (Chapter 2) and of the tools available to perform these functions (Chapter 3), depending on the priorities and gaps in each case. Some of these tools have already been implemented in certain LAC countries, while others are derived from global experience.

**Table 1.1.**  
**Sources of Change that Have Influenced the Work of the Center of Government**

Social, political, economic, fiscal, and technological changes	New or enhanced tools and techniques of governance	Learnings from a decade of CoG reforms
<p>More pressing fiscal and economic context</p> <p>Decline in trust and growing social unrest and polarization</p> <p>Covid-19 pandemic and other global disruptions</p> <p>Enduring cross-cutting policy problems (social inequality, climate change, etc.)</p>	<p>Data and digital revolutions</p> <p>Revised tools available to lead government (e.g., network approaches)</p> <p>New or enhanced approaches and techniques: evidence-based policy, innovation labs, behavioral insights, regulatory impact assessments, etc.</p>	<p>Some CoG reforms have been short-lived; aligning the broader organizational culture and capabilities is key.</p> <p>Multi-level coordination with subnational governments is essential for delivery.</p> <p>Integration with the budgetary process is a challenge.</p> <p>There is a risk of mission drift and CoG overload.</p>

Source: Authors' elaboration.

## Social, Political, Economic, Fiscal, and Technological Changes

### *A More Pressing Economic and Fiscal Context*

**In the early 2010s, after a decade of continuous economic growth and the adoption of measures intended to achieve macroeconomic stability and fiscal sustainability, many countries in LAC shifted their attention toward better ways of delivering services to citizens.** In previous periods, given the recurring efforts toward fiscal consolidation, the traditional instrument for cross-government coordination in most LAC countries was the management of public expenditure by the ministry of finance. However, this coordination was mainly undertaken to ensure budget compliance, regardless of the results achieved on service delivery and policy implementation. The high economic growth of the early 2000s, combined with the modernization of fiscal management and previous structural reforms, as well as the increased demands of a

larger and better-informed middle class for better services,<sup>3</sup> enabled a *quest for better delivery* in many countries of the region, empowering core CoG institutions such as the ministries of the presidency and chiefs of staff offices (Alessandro, Lafuente, and Santiso, 2014). Thus, a focus on achieving impact and going beyond the goal of fiscal balance was among the drivers of the growing interest in the organization and performance of the CoG, combined with the emergence of cross-cutting issues such as early childhood development and climate change.

**The new economic and fiscal context looks considerably more challenging and potentially problematic for the role of the CoG.** A recent International Monetary Fund analysis expects “storm clouds” for the global economy, marked by challenges such as cost-of-living increases, energy constraints, stalled growth in leading economies, and potential financial turmoil (Gourinchas, 2022). In the region, an analysis of the fiscal situation claims that “Latin America and the Caribbean faces an economic context that remains complex and uncertain,” signaling increased budget deficits and debt levels, limited fiscal space, and overall economic fragility (ECLAC, 2021). The IDB’s 2022 Latin American and Caribbean Macroeconomic Report states that “the outlook is challenging on account of both external and domestic factors... Uncertainty increased, preexisting challenges were heightened, and new challenges arose” (Cavallo et al., 2022). The new economic context poses the risk of countries reverting to the almost exclusive focus on fiscal consolidation “at all costs,” neglecting the critical need for delivering on priority policy outcomes, including those that demand medium- and long-term efforts to show results such as improving the quality of public services. Of course, these challenges and solutions are not limited to LAC.

**However, several proposals agree on the need to strengthen government capacities for “intelligent expenditure.” This will require strong capacities to prioritize programs and expenditures, improve their implementation with enhanced coordination in the case of multi-sector programs, and better monitoring of implementation plans to ensure expected results are achieved.** These are all CoG roles.

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<sup>3</sup>See the many reports about the middle class reaching “a historic high” in the region, with over 50 million people joining its ranks during the previous decade (<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2012/11/13/crecimiento-clase-media-america-latina>). According to several analysts, this new middle class generated additional demands in terms of access to services and continued upward mobility (see, for example, Levy Yeyati, 2021).

For example, prioritizing public investment and addressing spending inefficiencies may be critical to “turn the crisis into an opportunity” (Cavallo et al., 2022). Moreover, the need to deliver is as urgent as it was a decade ago or even more so, as progress in many policy areas has been limited (see Box 1.1), and as citizen trust in government has been eroding, creating a breeding ground for increased political instability.

### BOX 1.1. THE CHALLENGE OF DELIVERING RESULTS REMAINS

Despite rising public expenditure in many countries, results in several key policy areas in LAC continue to lag behind other parts of the world. In education, the performance in most LAC countries in the region participating in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) stagnated between 2000 and 2018 and recently declined in some countries (Gropello, Vargas, and Yañez Pagans, 2019). The impact of the COVID pandemic on student learning has intensified the challenge of raising educational achievement. In addition, LAC remains the region with the highest crime rates; average homicide rates have been flat for years, while citizens’ concerns about crime have continued to increase (Chioda, 2017). In health, overall population indicators suggest some progress, but in many cases at slower rates than in OECD countries and with major disparities across countries (OECD and World Bank, 2020).

These results explain the increased dissatisfaction with public health and education services, and a stable (but very low) satisfaction with the judiciary, as measured by the World Gallup Poll (OECD and IDB, 2020). Therefore, governments still have an important challenge in delivering high-quality services. Even if some of these require sector-level solutions, the CoG’s focus on performance (as demonstrated by multiple examples in this publication) can be a catalyst for improvement.

**A key role for the CoG in this context is to redouble its efforts in prioritizing objectives and in helping to do more with less by making the government more than the sum of its parts.** With their whole-of-government perspective and close connection to the head of government, CoG institutions are well placed to guide the processes for identifying and ensuring the implementation of priority objectives with a tangible impact on citizens’ lives, as long as they develop the capabilities and tools for such a role. Even when fiscal consolidation

is needed, the CoG can support a more targeted approach than crude across-the-board spending cuts. In addition, the CoG's role in both interministerial coordination and performance management can be important for delivering synergies, minimizing duplication, delivering on the resources being invested, and setting the tone to modernize government. In summary, despite the challenges posed by a more pressing economic and fiscal context, the CoG's work is actually more important than ever, for (i) clarifying priorities; ii) maximizing the impact of budget allocations through more effective policy formulation and implementation; and (iii) defining the best organizational culture and arrangements for the public administration to operate and pursue policy results with effectiveness and efficiency. In this regard, stronger complementarities and partnerships with the ministries responsible for planning and budget/finance and other MDAs need to be established.

### ***A Decline in Trust and Growing Citizen Unrest***

#### **In LAC, as elsewhere, several dimensions of trust are low and declining.**

The proportion of people who trust others (interpersonal trust) was on average only 11 percent in LAC for the period 2016-2020—half of what it was a few decades ago—and much lower than similar measures globally (26 percent) and in non-LAC OECD countries (over 40 percent). Trust in government is also low: only 29 percent of Latin American and Caribbean citizens trust their governments, as compared to 50 percent globally and 38 percent in non-LAC OECD countries (Keefer and Scartascini, 2022). Support for liberal democracy also appears to be eroding; only 49 percent of Latin Americans and Caribbeans regarded democracy as their preferred form of government in 2020, a 14-point reduction since 2010 (63 percent). This loss of support is conveyed by indifference to democracy (which grew from 16 to 27 percent) but not to authoritarian regimes (declined from 17 to 13 percent) (Corporación Latinobarómetro, 2021).<sup>4</sup> The crisis of trust has impacted incumbent administrations: between 2018 and March 2023, incumbent parties or coalitions in Latin American countries have won only one out of 17 presidential elections held in this period.

**This decline in trust has coincided with growing polarization and social unrest.** In 2021, the number of protests in LAC was twice as high as in

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<sup>4</sup>The 2020 values are not an effect of the pandemic, as they were similar in 2019.

2018 (ACLEDE, 2022). But even before the pandemic, many countries were experiencing frequent and increasingly vocal protests. “The last quarter of 2019 shocked Latin America with massive demonstrations on the streets of Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and other countries” (Busso and Messina, 2020). The authors credit this unrest to continuing high levels of inequality, while other analysts attribute it to the failure of governments to deliver better services to citizens<sup>5</sup> (Rojas, 2021) and their inability to satisfy the increased expectations of citizens after the growth of the early 2000s (Ferreira and Schoch, 2020). The latter also mention the role of social media as a facilitator of protests.

**This crisis of trust requires a strengthened role of the CoG across several dimensions, to be prioritized selectively according to the needs and resources of each specific country:**

- First, it demands an emphasis on *regaining trust by both delivering results and communicating them effectively*. There is robust empirical evidence that this combination can help to increase trust (Alessandro et al., 2021; Keefer and Scartascini, 2022), and it requires a leading role for the CoG in promoting better performance and aligning honest communication, messaging, and accountability in a coherent way that resonates with the realities of citizens. Periodic communication of government performance can help to improve it through several mechanisms, one of which is by deterring state capture due to stronger accountability over the work of MDAs and service providers.
- According to the OECD (Brezzi et al., 2021), competence is one of the two main drivers of trust; the other is *values*, specifically, integrity, openness, and fairness. This suggests a second potentially important role for the CoG in *driving the government’s internal culture and values*. This role also connects with the need to better *engage with citizens through expanded opportunities for participation*.
- Third, the episodes of unrest highlight the value of *the CoG’s political function in anticipating emerging conflicts and coordinating*

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<sup>5</sup>The causality possibly runs in both directions. While insufficient delivery reduces trust, the decline in trust makes it more difficult for governments to deliver results. For example, low levels of trust were associated with weaker responses to COVID-19 (Hale, 2022). Trust in others and in institutions is likely to affect the capacity to achieve multiple social and economic outcomes that depend on actions by non-state actors, thus requiring a more active role for the CoG in ensuring strong engagement with citizens.

*appropriate responses* before they turn into full crises. This can also include an active role, in certain contexts, in addressing misinformation by providing timely communications based on reliable evidence.

- Finally, the trust gap has been associated with new styles of personalistic leadership in certain countries. In these contexts, the CoG may be important to *establish decision-making processes that promote contestability*, standards of evidence, and inter-agency consultations, minimizing ad hoc or impulsive policy and regulatory decision-making.

### ***The COVID-19 Crisis***

**In most countries around the world, the initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic featured a leading role for the CoG.** As with previous crises and disasters, the pandemic had massive and multi-dimensional impacts, affecting not only public health but economic activity, employment, education, transportation, supply chains, foreign relations, and a multitude of other social and economic policy areas. Decisions made in one domain impacted many others, with clear trade-offs across sectors. In this context, CoG units and individuals have played a decisive role. Either by formal or informal arrangements, the crisis has highlighted the indispensable role of the CoG in coordinating the response to multidimensional crises, as no line ministry or agency could have effectively mobilized a whole-of-government response. Of course, in many cases CoGs do not appear to have been sufficiently effective in coordinating the response, as they were hampered by the lack of instruments and capabilities. Such crises—climate hazards, global disruptions, financial instability, and pandemics—are part and parcel of the new environment for the government.

**The crisis highlighted a second valuable role of the CoG, which was absent in many countries: the strategic foresight to anticipate and plan for multisectoral contingencies.** Some MDAs develop long-term plans for their respective policy areas, which consider the trends, opportunities, and risks that may affect their sector. However, major transformations and disruptions usually have implications for several policy areas simultaneously, with interactions that no vertical or siloed analysis would consider. Therefore, the CoG is again needed to ensure



that a whole-of-government (and even whole-of-society) perspective is adopted. This can help to anticipate and prepare for potential challenges, spur new thinking and innovation on appropriate policy responses, and stress-test strategies and plans against a range of future scenarios (OECD, 2018c). The COVID-19 crisis exposed the weaknesses of many countries in terms of strategic foresight and risk assessment, and hence the need to revise and strengthen CoGs' performance in this regard. Even if foresight activities are conducted, it is critical to connect them to actionable response plans and to train and sensitize leaders and officials that have the mandate to implement them.

### ***Persistent and Worsening Cross-Cutting Challenges***

**In the past decade, certain medium- and long-term public policy challenges, such as climate change, social inequality, early childhood development, and gender disparities, have become increasingly impactful in LAC and globally.** As discussed above, the 2010s saw disappointing performance across the region in addressing social inequality (Busso and Messina, 2020), prompting protests and unrest. Some of the most significant protests have centered specifically on gender inequality,<sup>6</sup> raising the visibility of persistent inequalities among gender and racial lines that intersect with income inequality. In recent years, many countries in LAC have introduced Multidimensional Poverty Indices (Gasparini, Santos, and Tornarolli, 2021), signaling a more encompassing and cross-cutting understanding of social deprivation. Many have also designed integrated strategies for early childhood development, in an attempt to address a major component of inequality. Unlike income poverty, which can be tackled through discrete interventions such as cash transfers, addressing multidimensional poverty requires concerted efforts from multiple MDAs and subnational governments. Similarly, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set in 2015 demand cross-government efforts, and there are indications that CoG-led approaches tend to be more effective than those led by line ministries (Breuer, Leininger, and Tosun, 2019).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For a chronicle of these protests, see, for example: "How #NiUnaMenos grew from the streets of Argentina into a regional women's movement" in <https://www.npr.org/2021/10/15/1043908435/how-niunamenos-grew-from-the-streets-of-argentina-into-a-regional-womens-movemen>.

<sup>7</sup> It can be debated whether the alignment of efforts to achieve the SDGs is substantive or purely procedural (Wong, 2019).

Climate change is another major cross-cutting issue that has gained increasing prominence in the region. Several countries in Central America and the Caribbean are among the most vulnerable in the world to the impact of climate change and extreme weather events, whose social and economic effects have become significantly more devastating (Cárdenas, Bonilla, and Brusa, 2021). For both mitigation and adaptation policies, a whole-of-government effort encompassing environmental, energy, agricultural, industrial, urban, labor, and other policy areas is indispensable.

**Tackling these challenges will demand highly skilled teams, good practices, and effective tools at the CoG, including at both the political and official levels.** Although MDAs are rightly responsible for designing and implementing policies in their respective sectors, some of these policy challenges cut across so many sectors and levels of government (and non-state actors, particularly for issues like climate change) that there is simply no way of addressing them effectively without the coordinating role of the CoG.<sup>8</sup> Making the government be more than the sum of its parts has always been the CoG's key value-added contribution<sup>9</sup>, but the current issues faced by countries in LAC (and in many other regions) raise the importance of a well-functioning CoG to even higher levels. Each country must prioritize those policy challenges that are most critical in their contexts.

**Making the government be more than the sum of its parts has always been the CoG's key value added contribution.**

**In summary, four important developments in the past decade have impacted the work of governments, specifically that of the CoG.**

These are the challenging economic and fiscal context, which demands improved prioritization and stronger interministerial synergies; the decline in trust, which requires new ways of engaging and co-creating results with citizens; the lessons from the COVID-19 regarding both anticipatory governance and crisis management; and the persistent challenge posed by cross-cutting policy problems such as economic recovery, social inequality, and climate change. These economic, social, political, and technological developments have been complemented by changes in the tools and techniques of governance.

<sup>8</sup> Some of these multidimensional problems also influence one another. Levels of crime and inequality, for example, present a significant association and likely mutual causality (Schargrodsky and Freira, 2021).

<sup>9</sup> See Alessandro, Lafuente, and Santiso (2014) on the emergence of CoG institutions in early 20th century.

## New and Enhanced Tools and Techniques of Governance

### *The Data And Digital Revolutions*

**The explosion in the availability of data and the rapid development of new digital tools are enabling governments to transform the way they operate and deliver services, as well as expanding citizens' demands.**

Sensors, wearable devices, mobile phones, WiFi hotspots, electronic health records, student digital IDs, social media, and a multitude of other technologies have massively expanded the data available to government decision-makers, while new forms of data analysis (such as machine learning and predictive analytics) promise to extract quicker and more detailed insights from these datasets. In parallel, digital tools can potentially expedite the processes of government; allow for the integration and tailoring of services to the needs of specific individuals and groups; and enhance two-way communication with citizens. The data and digital revolutions are leading to important changes at almost every stage of the policy cycle, including the possibilities for incorporating more robust evidence in policy and managerial decision-making; in designing services that better reflect the experience of citizens and beneficiaries rather than jurisdictional boundaries; in coordinating operations and services across MDAs; in measuring and monitoring performance in real time and through holistic indicators; and in communicating and engaging with citizens and being accountable to them. Of course, these transformations depend on the capacity of policymakers and practitioners to use the new data and technologies. The persistence of administrative silos is one of the key barriers to realizing these opportunities, which suggests a potential new role for the CoG.

**For the CoG, the data and digital revolutions impact: (i) how it uses the new insight for decision-making; (ii) how it performs its core functions, and (iii) its emerging role in leading these key cross-government systems.** The opportunities and tools to remake the policy process, to incorporate timely and robust data in policy advice, to coordinate the work of ministries, to monitor their performance, and to communicate with citizens are significantly greater than they were even a decade ago. This entails a revised understanding of the work of the CoG, especially in terms of the incorporation of better intelligence and analytical insights across the policy cycle. To realize the potential of the data and digital

revolution, leadership from the center and a whole-of-government perspective are needed. Cross-ministerial governance and new skills to manage across sectors are critical to minimize the emergence of data silos and fragmented digital governance. Finally, certain MDAs may also lack the capabilities to seize these new opportunities, or even to effectively roll out digital transformation, leading to notorious failures,<sup>10</sup> without effective central guidance and support.

**Therefore, an additional role for the CoG has emerged, at least in the early phases of data and digital development.** This role includes governance aspects of digital transformation for public management and service delivery, especially as a tool for joining up government, seeking efficiencies, promoting common platforms, developing digital skills and capabilities, improving the delivery of services, facilitating citizen engagement, and cybersecurity. It also refers to data governance, such as establishing and enforcing strategies and policies that promote knowledge and data sharing, integration of datasets, common methodological standards, and routines for re-utilizing data in decision-making. Performing these tasks requires new functions, tools, and skills for the CoG, while seeking to avoid overstretch in its work. It is necessary to consider the contexts in which these tasks need to be led by the CoG, and when they can be delegated.

### ***A Revised Understanding of the Tools Available to Lead Government***

**In recent years, based on considerably more experience, a renewed debate has emerged regarding some of the key CoG tools for planning and monitoring priority objectives, such as quantitative targets and key performance indicators.** The CoG typically plays a key role in establishing a performance framework<sup>11</sup> and routines for managing the government's goals. In this regard, a growing body of rigorous

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<sup>10</sup> One example of this was the failed launch of HealthCare.gov in the United States in 2013, one of the administration's highest priorities. On the first day, only six people in the whole country were able to sign up for health insurance. One of the factors for this failure was the scant involvement and oversight from the CoG: "The development of HealthCare.gov suffered from the lack of central leadership and involvement... For example, the White House chief technology officer had been kept out of the planning of the HealthCare.gov system. As a result, it was difficult for the project team to navigate the complex technical and political landscape" (Lee and Brumer, 2017).

<sup>11</sup> Performance management frameworks indicate how governments set priorities, plan for their delivery, monitor progress, and intervene when performance is insufficient. Chapter 3 discusses the best approaches to establishing an explicit and integrated framework.

evidence has emerged about the positive effects of establishing performance frameworks in the public sector (see Box 1.2). At the same time, the evidence has coincided with a growing critique of the potential unintended consequences of these tools and the gaming strategies adopted by the entities being monitored (Boswell, 2018; Lowe and Wilson, 2017; Muller, 2018; Franco-Santos and Otley, 2018). These critiques have covered a range of potential problems, including:

- “Cream-skimming” practices, by which service providers focus their attention on beneficiaries that are more likely to help them meet their targets. For example, Cilliers, Mbiti, and Zeitlin (2021) document that the publication of school performance data in Tanzania led to increased results in exams, but at the cost of reducing student enrollment. The researchers’ explanation is that schools discouraged students with weaker performance from continuing their studies in order to increase their overall scores.
- The challenge of reducing complex objectives that are the product of multiple factors and interventions into discrete quantitative metrics that are attributed to specific public agencies or interventions (Gewirtz et al., 2019; Lowe, 2013; Lowe and Wilson, 2017). There may be a growing disconnect between the simplified version of reality monitored by decision-makers as compared to the complex, adaptive problems faced by those on the front lines of service delivery (Housden, 2016).
- The discouragement to experiment, innovate, or assume operational risks when managers are held accountable for achieving results, thus leading to a more conservative focus on the objectives or tasks the organization already masters. This can further reinforce the risk aversion of public officials in countries with multiple control mechanisms; or, as popularly described in Brazil, the “pen blackout” (*apagão das canetas*) (Ramírez Gullo, 2022).

### BOX 1.2. EVIDENCE OF THE IMPACT OF PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORKS

Estimating the precise impact of performance regimes has often been challenging. In a meta-analysis of the most robust literature, Gerrish (2016) identified a small but positive effect of performance management systems, with substantially larger effects for those associated with best practices in the field. This overall assessment has recently been validated in several key policy areas and across multiple countries, mostly through experimental or quasi-experimental studies:

**Education:** Recent studies have shown increases in student performance from the use of performance information for management practices such as strategic planning in Texas (Han and Moynihan, 2022) and from increased accountability for results in New York (Wang and Yeung, 2019). In LAC, randomized controlled trials (RCTs) in several provinces of Argentina have shown reduced repetition rates and increased passing rates from the training of principals on performance management and the provision of a dashboard to monitor performance (de Hoyos, Ganimian, and Holland, 2020) and improved student performance from the recurrent measurement and provision of information to principals (de Hoyos, Ganimian, and Holland, 2021).

**Health:** Using an RCT, Dunsch et al. (2017) find that the preparation of improvement plans with intermediate goals and regular monitoring in Nigerian primary health centers led to large improvements in healthcare practices, thus improving the quality of healthcare services.

**Citizen security:** In a quantitative analysis of crime in over 300 cities in the United States, Pasha (2017) finds that performance management is significantly related to improvements in police performance.

Focusing specifically on performance practices set by the CoG for top government priorities, Bevan and Wilson (2013) demonstrate their causal impact on improved student scores and reduced waiting times in hospitals, two of the outcomes prioritized by the UK's Prime Minister's Delivery Unit. Moreover, Moynihan and Kroll (2017) show that focusing on a small set of priorities increases the probability of managers actually using performance information for decision-making.

**As new evidence emerges, it should lead CoGs to a smarter application of performance frameworks and tools.** The evidence confirms the value of performance frameworks, routines, and instruments as well as high-quality analytical functions to deliver improved outcomes for citizens. They clarify the desired direction and enable key actors to

monitor performance, enabling them to intervene and correct course when needed; they also create incentives for MDAs to sustain their focus on these goals. At the same time, evidence draws attention to the importance of continuously checking for unintended consequences and perverse incentives. If student performance is prioritized, this specific indicator needs to be analyzed in the light of a broader set of metrics, to discourage the known gaming and cream-skimming that may arise. A single indicator probably does not tell the full story. If complex and multidimensional objectives are pursued, the contribution of different actors in the delivery chain need to be considered and assessed (a task for which the CoG is well-suited, given its cross-government perspective). If new problems need to be faced, MDAs should be encouraged to innovate, pilot solutions, and learn what works before being expected to faithfully implement a delivery plan with specific targets.<sup>12</sup>

**Therefore, the CoG needs to focus on “smart” application of performance frameworks and instruments that considers these potential unintended effects, rather than abandoning this approach altogether.** Focusing specifically on LAC, moreover, it is hard to find a problem with an excessive use of performance tools. For most countries, introducing them would imply a step forward from a process-oriented approach to public management. Furthermore, in many LAC cases, the challenge is to raise service delivery from mediocre levels of performance, a task for which targets and monitoring are especially useful.<sup>13</sup> In some LAC countries, the initial challenge is to produce reliable data on which to properly measure performance.

**It is also increasingly clear that, in addition to performance frameworks, the CoG can rely on a broader set of tools to achieve its purposes, to be deployed selectively based on the needs and capabilities of each CoG.**

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<sup>12</sup> See Diamond (2021a) on the differences between different types of objectives, such as “building a rocket” (where causes and effects are well-known) and “raising a child” (more complex relationship between actions and effects). See also Hudson (2019) on the differences between a straightforward “administrative implementation” and an “experimental implementation” where cause-effect mechanisms are uncertain; also, a “political implementation” in contexts of conflict regarding the goals and activities. Similarly, Franco-Santos and Otley (2018) indicate that targets and monitoring may work best in highly programmed and well-understood situations, but they may face difficulties in contexts of uncertainty and contingencies.

<sup>13</sup> Part of the critique of targets is that they fail to move public services “from good to great,” as the quest for excellence may involve a focus on the motivation and ethos of civil servants. But when the issue is establishing basic standards of performance, setting targets can be the right approach (Barber, 2016; Davies, Atkins, and Sodhi, 2021).

Most goals do not depend entirely (or even mainly) on actions taken by central government MDAs; they depend on actions and behaviors taken by subnational governments, the private sector, community organizations, or citizens themselves. For these objectives, a command-and-control approach from the center would be ineffective, as the CoG lacks the authority to set targets and hold them accountable for delivery and may lack the understanding about local contexts to set the best targets and plans. In these cases, alternative tools, such as those proposed by the “network governance” approach (which emphasizes mutual cooperation of actors motivated by shared goals), may be the right alternative (Rhodes, 2017). For instance, in 2018 the Presidency of Chile launched the *Compromiso País* initiative with the aim of reducing poverty, bringing together different government entities, businesses, academics and civil society organizations, working together on specific aspects of social deprivation. This led to a comprehensive and collaborative plan for addressing multidimensional poverty. This approach points to the possibility of adopting a broad range of instruments as part of the CoG’s toolbox, to be applied selectively according to the objectives being pursued and their operating environments.

***New and Enhanced Approaches and Techniques: Evidence-Based Policy, Innovations Labs, Behavioral Insights, and Regulatory Governance***

**In recent years, governments have adopted a variety of new techniques to improve the quality of policymaking and service delivery.** In many countries, including in those in LAC, these have often been driven by the CoG, due to factors such as the interest in disrupting the prevailing inertia in certain sectoral bureaucracies; the need to ensure that appropriate quality controls have been carried out before decisions reach the chief executive’s desk; or the ability to summon national and international expertise that may not be present in all line ministries. Even if it seeks to disseminate and embed these practices across MDAs, the CoG is frequently an initiator of these new approaches. The following are some examples:

- *The establishment of Innovation Labs.* Although no single definition exists for these units, they tend to share a few traits (Acevedo and Dassen, 2016): they acknowledge the value of experimenting and, thus, of failure as a possibility of government action; they implement



short-term pilot programs and assess their impacts; they rely heavily on digital technologies and data science; they are multidisciplinary (compared to the more specialized nature of traditional public entities); they seek to collaborate and co-create solutions with non-government actors; and they seek to disseminate their approaches throughout the public sector. While in LAC many labs focused on open government policies, the global experience mainly focused on applying “design-thinking” approaches to problem-solving and user-centered policy design that seek to cut across ministerial silos (McGann, Wells, and Blomkamp, 2021). Therefore, innovation usually seeks to replace the traditional institutional perspective in policy design with a systems perspective that integrates services to best address the needs and experiences of citizens.

In the past decade, several LAC countries have established such units. One critical factor for their success has been the level of support bestowed by top government leaders (Acevedo and Dassen, 2016). In that regard, labs anchored in the CoG (such as Chile’s Laboratorio de Gobierno based in the Presidency until 2022, and then relocated to the Ministry of Finance) may be more effective than those housed in ministerial or sectoral entities, at least when dealing with cross-ministerial policy challenges.

- *The creation of Behavioral Units.* The appeal of behavioral economics<sup>14</sup> in public administrations in LAC has grown significantly in the past decade. By early 2022, a regional inventory of behavioral policy interventions that specifically included evaluation experiments exceeded 70 cases.<sup>15</sup> In many countries, this effort has been driven by the creation of behavioral units based in the CoG, following global examples such as the UK’s Behavioral Insights Team (established in the Cabinet Office in 2010), the United States’ Social and Behavioral Sciences Team (created in 2015 within the Executive Office of the President), and several others. These units typically work with MDAs to diagnose, design, test, and evaluate behaviorally informed interventions, providing guidance and capacity building to the implementing entities (Afif, 2017). Their focus is on improving

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<sup>14</sup> Behavioral economics or sciences consider psychological, cognitive, and social factors that shape the conduct of individuals. It challenges the assumption of pure rationality in decision-making.

<sup>15</sup> See <https://behavioral.iadb.org/en/our-projects>.

implementation through low-cost interventions rather than shaping strategic decision-making. Critics have noted that most behavioral interventions have weak effects,<sup>16</sup> but this has not prevented the creation of over 200 “nudge units” globally.

- *The adoption of stronger standards of evidence for policymaking and regulation.* Some LAC countries have strengthened their whole-of-government institutional frameworks for regulatory policy by establishing a dedicated body responsible for promoting regulatory quality. Such bodies apply a variety of tools, such as regulatory impact assessments (RIAs), administrative simplifications, *ex post* evaluations, and stakeholder engagements, and they complement the traditional CoG role of ensuring that regulations conform to the law. However, only in a few cases have these efforts led to a systematic and coherent approach to developing regulatory interventions. Ensuring high-level political support and placing the regulatory unit in the CoG can contribute to more effective embedding of these practices (Farías et al., 2022). The leadership of the CoG in these matters is also present and increasingly important in several OECD countries, such as the United States (through the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs within the Executive Office of the President) or South Korea (Regulatory Reform Office in the Office of the Prime Minister), although in others this responsibility is shared with other entities, such as Ministries of Justice or the Economy (OECD, 2018b).

In some OECD countries, such as New Zealand and the United Kingdom, the increased CoG focus on regulatory quality has been accompanied by broader efforts to improve the quality of policy advice across the government, in order to strengthen the policymaking process. This task has been done by codifying good practices for policy advice (considering multiple perspectives, establishing quality assurance processes, etc.), by sharing methods (design-thinking, behavioral insights, data analytics, etc.), and by establishing policy professions in the civil service that include specific curricula, skills, and standards for policy advice. In the United Kingdom this has been complemented by the development of a network of “What Works Centres,” based in the Cabinet Office, to share policy-related evidence.

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<sup>16</sup> DellaVigna and Linos (2022) identify a statistically significant yet small impact of 1.4 percent over control groups.

**It should be noted that these new techniques can be developed in specific sectors, with limited CoG involvement. In some cases, however, the CoG may have a role in their dissemination across the public sector.**

For example, Peru's Ministry of Education launched a Lab (MinEduLAB) in 2014 focused on innovation, behavioral approaches, and rigorous impact evaluations. It has since funded several innovative solutions tied to ministerial priorities, partnering with global leaders in evidence-based policy such as the World Bank, the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), and Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA). MinEduLAB is usually regarded as a successful case. In fact, Peru has been one of the few LAC countries to improve its performance in recent PISA scores. But there are not very many MinEduLABs out there. Part of the rationale for the CoG's engagement with innovation is to break sectoral inertia, as MDAs are encouraged to move from implementing policies similar to the ones they already know and to assume greater risks while evaluating the impact of their interventions. Therefore, the CoG's leadership can be important to break down resistance and truly disseminate these techniques throughout the public sector.<sup>17</sup>

**An important consideration is whether these tools and units actually respond to policy and managerial needs in each case, or simply to global fads.** In addition to senior leadership support, an enabling condition for the success of these units is to truly have a problem to solve and to tackle priority challenges. If they are adopted simply to follow a global trend, they may become "one more unit" that competes for the government leaders' attention and timespan, adding congestion to the center. If their MDAs have already mainstreamed the use of innovative and behavioral approaches when useful for their policy goals, the CoG would be well-advised to think hard before establishing such a unit. On the contrary, when inertia and scant use of evidence prevail, these teams can be useful promoters of new techniques and approaches. In certain cases, the CoG's leadership may be needed to provide the initial drive and build capabilities, but once they have been developed in the MDAs the CoG would be advised to devolve this task to avoid the risk of central overload.

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<sup>17</sup> Being anchored in the CoG may be not only an institutional consideration but a physical one as well: "The physical location of your special unit matters. David Halpern (founder of the UK's Behavioral Insights Unit) said that the business of government is done in building networks, in informal meetings and through bumping into people around Whitehall, not least in the lobby of Number 10 (the Prime Minister's Office). To do these things, you need to be physically close to the people who can help you get things done." <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/events/special-ones-leading-prime-ministerial-units-government>.

**In summary, many countries have been incorporating new approaches to optimize their performance frameworks and to complement them with a broader set of tools, especially for mobilizing a network of stakeholders involved in delivery.** Moreover, certain techniques have been developed, usually with CoG guidance and leadership, to expand the use of analysis and evidence in policymaking and regulation; to innovate in policy design, often through a citizen-centered perspective; and to leverage behavioral insights to maximize the impact of policy interventions. Policy should be developed in line ministries, but in certain contexts (because of the cross-cutting nature of the policy issue, the level of priority of the issue, or the persistence of inertia even under disappointing results) the CoG can assume a more influential role while seeking to build capabilities in the MDAs. Above all, the CoG needs to support, challenge, enable, and empower their work. All of these approaches and techniques have broadened the CoG's toolbox, but they demand selectivity in applying the ones that specifically tackle the gaps and challenges pertinent to their context.

## **Learnings from a Decade of Center of Government Reform in Latin America and the Caribbean and Globally**

***Reforms limited to the “apex” of government are often insufficient to produce a sustained impact***

**Efforts in CoG reform can selectively catalyze broader improvements in government performance.** As described by Lafuente and González (2018), the introduction of “delivery” approaches in certain LAC countries has led to a revitalization of planning and monitoring offices that in many cases had lost relevance. Moreover, in contexts of very low overall capacity, with no prior adoption of sound managerial practices, some of these reforms have produced a transformation in the way the public administration operates. Even if the CoG focuses on a small set of priority goals, the introduction of new routines and tools can have spillover effects and thus permeate broader aspects of the government's work.

**However, many recent CoG reforms, in LAC and globally, have faced the challenge of embedding new approaches, their institutionalization, and continuity.** To effectively align MDAs behind shared priorities and objectives, any new CoG units and processes typically require a clear government mandate and the chief executive's visible support to empower key players. They must credibly show that they enjoy the confidence and trust of the chief executive and senior government leaders. Chief executive attention on these issues is a scarce commodity; emerging issues, events and crises frequently divert their focus away from the systematic application of previous reforms. Therefore, with time many CoG-led routines tend to lose their momentum. In addition, personnel turnover is common at the top levels of the CoG, as its leaders sit at the complex intersection of politics and policy. This rotation can also exacerbate the difficulty of embedding new practices, as incoming officials may prefer to establish their own priorities.<sup>18</sup> This is obviously intensified when administrations change: chief executives generally have a political incentive not to be perceived as continuing the leadership practices of their predecessors, especially if they belong to different political parties (although sometimes these practices or units eventually reappear under different names). Inevitably, the configuration and practices of the CoG respond to the preferences of the head of government (including how inclined they are to be involved in management issues, their previous managerial experience, etc.) and are often altered when these individuals change. This combination of factors leads to a recurring challenge in CoG strengthening: the discontinuation of efforts and thus the lack of sustained impact in delivering results.

**This experience suggests the need to complement CoG reforms with broader efforts to embed the desired capabilities, skills, knowledge, routines, and culture throughout the public administration and in the engagement with external delivery partners.** If the strengthening process is restricted to the CoG itself, it is likely to remain highly dependent on the continued sponsorship of the chief executive. In certain contexts, this may be a plausible assumption (for example, if the head of government has a strong personal inclination toward management), but in many others it will prove to be unfounded. Therefore, the new

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<sup>18</sup> This phenomenon is not unique to the LAC region. Documenting Jordan's decades-long quest for strengthening its CoG, Beschel and Alhashemi (2020) point to frequent personnel turnover as a major obstacle for embedding any reforms.

**Embedding capacities throughout the delivery system can relieve the CoG from directly assuming certain tasks, and thus also minimize the risk of overload at the center.**

way of doing things needs to be supported more widely, building the right capabilities and culture across the entities that play key roles in the delivery of priority objectives. Critical to this is a deeper understanding of the various delivery systems in different policy areas that are often dependent on frontline services that are many management layers below the CoG. This is a different approach than the prevailing orientation of CoG reforms of recent years—with the possible exception of the United States federal government—which have mainly concentrated on supporting the creation of new units and teams within the center itself, but with limited engagement with the key MDAs and those that work with citizens. Experience suggests that this is not enough to produce lasting change. Moreover, embedding capacities throughout the delivery system can relieve the CoG from directly assuming certain tasks, and thus also minimize the risk of overload at the center.

***Managerial reforms also need an alignment of organizational culture***

**In addition to the previous challenge, one typically faced by new CoG practices is the conflict with the preexisting way of doing things.** Public administrations in LAC have largely been structured around procedural and formal frameworks of operation, as opposed to more flexible and adaptive approaches to problem-solving that are better suited to seeking results. Of course, these procedures coexist with informal practices that are sometimes needed for the administration to function at all; in this regard, bureaucratic formalism is complemented by clientelism, patronage, and even patrimonialism in many LAC states (Ramos and Milanesi, 2021). These administrative traditions are clearly in conflict with approaches that favor agile problem-solving delivery, unblocking obstacles, coordinating across jurisdictions, and actively engaging with citizens. Thus, the experience of CoG reform in LAC suggests a frequent tension with the norms, values, attitudes, and behaviors that have typically prevailed in the public sector in the region. When explicit reform efforts clash with the existing culture, the latter often prevails. Therefore, CoG reforms (usually focused on technical and managerial “hard” tools) should also take into consideration both the formal and informal rules of operation in the public sector. For instance, the “pen blackout” previously described can be a crucial barrier to any efforts of accelerating delivery.

**This reinforces the previous point: the need to consider the broader features of the public sector and the drivers of behavior change, including at the frontline.** This requires considering the full spectrum of factors that shape the behaviors of civil servants and frontline services and that can be influenced from the CoG, such as their capabilities, opportunities, and motivation to act in certain ways.<sup>19</sup> One of the typical CoG interventions is the introduction of a performance framework to create incentives for public servants to deliver. However, this narrow focus on one aspect of their role (delivery) and of their motivation needs to be accompanied by a consideration of the opportunities available to them (do the existing administrative procedures enable timely delivery?) and of the capabilities they possess to actually get things done. So, as with the previous finding, this learning suggests that CoG interventions should adopt a broader perspective, especially when there are reasons to believe that the existing culture may clash with the new managerial tools and routines. For the global CoG community of practice (including donors and multilaterals), it serves as a reminder that the promotion of a fixed set of tools across a diverse array of public sector traditions can lead to disappointing results if organizational culture and other formal and informal rules are not considered.

**Finally, organizational culture also matters for structuring the “public service bargain” (Schaffer, 1973) between political leaders and civil servants.** This relationship is often understood through a principal/agent framework, in which principals (political leaders) set the direction and agents (bureaucrats) implement their instructions. The problem for leaders is that agents usually have more information than principals about the motivations, capacity, and capabilities across the delivery system. In LAC, chief executives have traditionally sought to address this asymmetry of information by placing trusted political appointees in multiple layers of the governmental structure.<sup>20</sup> However, this approach presents limitations: appointees sometimes lack the technical expertise required in such positions, and eventually they face a similar principal/

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<sup>19</sup> The “COM-B” theory of behavioral change states that there are three main sources of behavior that could be intervened, focusing on Capabilities (C), Opportunities (O), and Motivation (M) (Michie, Atkins, and West, 2014).

<sup>20</sup> In an expert survey in 22 countries, Kopecky et al. (2016) find the largest proportion of party patronage appointments in high and mid-level government positions in Latin American countries, as compared to Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Southern Europe, and Africa. In this sample, the range goes from 9 percent in the United Kingdom to 98 percent in the Dominican Republic.

agent problem when dealing with the civil service implementing programs and services in the ministries. Thus, establishing new CoG routines and tools, such as setting targets and monitoring their delivery, can be a valuable complement to address the asymmetry of information, and thus to effectively align the “public service bargain” between political leaders and the bureaucracy. Given the challenges from the prevailing organizational culture, as previously described, these tools may need to be accompanied by a broader set of instruments to motivate and enable the performance of civil servants, which the CoG should consider as well (for example, those focused on the capabilities of the bureaucracy). This challenge is even more important as a broader array of external delivery partners have gained prominence.

### ***Multi-level coordination is essential for delivery***

**Recent reforms have also highlighted that central governments typically do not deliver by themselves, and therefore the coordinating role of the CoG should also apply vertically.** The largest LAC countries are federal, meaning that several key policy areas (education, health, citizen security, etc.) are managed by autonomous subnational administrations at the state/provincial or municipal levels. Many other LAC countries, while formally unitary, have decentralized service delivery to regional and local governments in several of these policy areas. In some cases, more complex service delivery chains have emerged involving private and civil society actors. Thus, restricting CoG-led routines and instruments to central government processes is often insufficient. Therefore, CoGs should consider the nature of the collaborative partnerships and the set of levers at their disposal (such as funding rules, standard setting, partnerships, and the dissemination of good practices and methodologies) to promote multi-level alignment and coordination with subnational governments, creating incentives for them to focus on the priority objectives. This is harder to do when it depends on each MDA developing such frameworks and practices, and thus the CoG is well placed to provide overall guidance and coordination to these partnerships. The high dependence of most LAC subnational governments on central government transfers (Radics et al., 2022) reinforces the need for multi-level coordination and collaboration. The more recent generation of delivery units in countries such as Peru and Colombia have explicitly focused on working in collaboration with their



subnational counterparts. Of course, this collaboration can be hampered by political conflict between different levels of government, thus necessitating a strong exercise of the CoG's political function.

***CoG reforms must be connected with the budgetary process***

**A persistent challenge for many of the CoG units created in recent years has been to connect their work with the processes led by the budget offices** (Lafuente and González, 2018). In most countries, the budgetary practices are already well-established and create, for MDAs, obvious incentives to comply. For CoG units, especially those focused on managing the performance framework for the government's priorities, the disconnect with the budget office can be critical; without a proper integration of their respective processes, it is likely that MDAs will continue to focus on what is needed for securing budget resources rather than the new CoG routines. An effective performance framework integrates the prioritization, the planning, and the budgeting in an iterative process, ensuring that plans consider the fiscal realities but also that sufficient resources are allocated to the chief executive's (and the government's) top objectives and their plans for delivery. Certain OECD countries conduct spending reviews to ensure a more strategic approach to budgeting, taking into consideration baseline expenditures and not just marginal yearly changes. Several LAC countries have adopted medium-term expenditure frameworks, but most of these cases have sought to promote macro-fiscal discipline rather than revised budget allocations to priority objectives (Izquierdo, Pessino, and Vuletin, 2019).

**An important lesson is that more effort needs to be devoted to integrating the ministries of finance (especially in their role as budget authorities) into any new CoG routines.** The diverging and sometimes conflicting priorities of the ministries of finance and of the president's or prime minister's offices is a classic theme in public administration, as the former is typically more focused on fiscal discipline and the latter on delivering results in the short term in response to the electoral cycle. These differences reflect their respective positions in the structure of government, and, if properly managed, can be a source of creative tension that improves the overall work of the government. But adopting CoG reforms in isolation from the ministry of finance seems to be an ineffective option; then the budget process will continue to dominate

the whole-of-government prioritization and coordination. Thus, a revised understanding of the tools available to manage the government should address this critical challenge.

***CoG units need to be aware of the risk of both CoG overload and mission drift***

**Another challenge for recently established CoG units has been the tendency to take on tasks outside of their original mission.** In particular, this has affected delivery units globally (Shostak, 2015) as well as in LAC: some have been tasked with tracking thousands of presidential commitments originated in visits to localities (Lafuente and González, 2018); other units have, in practice, become project management offices tracking the completion of activities and outputs, but with no cross-ministerial coordination involved nor a focus on outcomes; others have mostly focused on communications (or even “spin”); and finally others have turned into innovation units. It is inevitable that competent teams receive additional requests from chief executives. But some of these cases suggest that the units were not established with a clear need and mandate preceding them, so they had to find their place in an often-crowded CoG ecosystem. Thus, making sure that the basic enabling conditions for success are present, that is, a well-identified need for such a unit and a clear mandate, with strong political backing and visible communication to all key stakeholders, is essential in a context in which CoG reform has become a global trend.

**Furthermore, the creation of new CoG units always entails the risk of CoG overload; hence the need to be strategic and selective in the process of CoG reform.** In LAC and elsewhere, the growing interest in the work of the CoG has sometimes led to a proliferation of units and teams at the center. This can create congestion that diminishes the CoG’s overall effectiveness, fosters internal conflicts, and generates excessive reporting burdens on the MDAs. Therefore, any process of CoG strengthening or reform must consider the gaps and resources available in each context, in order to selectively approach this process.

**This chapter has outlined the basic definition of the CoG, arguing that three main sources reshaped our understanding of the CoG’s role, functions, and instruments over the last decade.** These are external

pressures from social, economic, political, fiscal, and technological changes; innovations in the tools and techniques available to the leaderships of governments; and learning from a decade of CoG reforms in LAC and around the world. The CoG's core purpose remains as critical as ever: managing and aligning the whole-of-government by steering a complex governing machinery to achieve results for, and increasingly *with*, citizens. Given these changes, it is necessary to update the CoG's key functions and tools, while acknowledging the need to prioritize and sequence them to tackle the specific issues and gaps in each case. Not every function can be strengthened simultaneously. The following chapters discuss the key components of each CoG function in detail (Chapter 2); and then present a menu of practices and instruments that can help in enhancing each function (Chapter 3); finally, a self-assessment tool (the CoG Institutional Development Matrix) is outlined to help CoG practitioners prioritize the functions that require most urgent improvement in their governments (Chapter 4). Every country has a CoG; the difference is how they perform their core functions. That topic will be directly addressed in the chapters that follow.



# 2

## The New Role and Functions of the Center of Government

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Strategic Management

Horizontal and Vertical Coordination

Monitoring and Improving Performance

Managing the Politics of Policies

Communications, Public Accountability, and Citizen Engagement

Shaping Government Capabilities and Culture

Building Intelligence and Analytical Capacity

Conclusions

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**THE CENTER OF GOVERNMENT, REVISITED**

A DECADE OF GLOBAL REFORMS

# The New Role and Functions of the Center of Government

**Given the changes and learning identified in the previous chapter, Chapter 2 offers a reassessment of the core functions that the Center of Government (CoG) must perform in the new context.** The IDB's original work on this topic (Alessandro, Lafuente, and Santiso, 2013; 2014) had identified five key functions of the CoG. That framework was later referred to or replicated, with relatively minor adjustments, by several different studies, thus reflecting the agreement that has existed about the role of the CoG.<sup>21</sup> These functions were:

- *Strategic management*, which referred to setting a coherent vision and planning the government's key priorities to ensure consistent, actionable, and measurable goals.
- *Policy coordination*, encompassing whole-of-government approaches in policy design and implementation.
- *Monitoring and improving performance*, which included the existence of a performance monitoring system, the use of performance information for decision making regarding the priorities, the periodic reporting to the chief executive, and mechanisms of intervention to improve the performance of ministries and agencies.
- *Managing the politics of policies*, meaning a coordinated strategy for negotiations with key stakeholders to ensure the approval and implementation priorities within the government's plan.
- *Communicating results and accountability*, referring to a cross-government communications strategy and being accountable to the public.

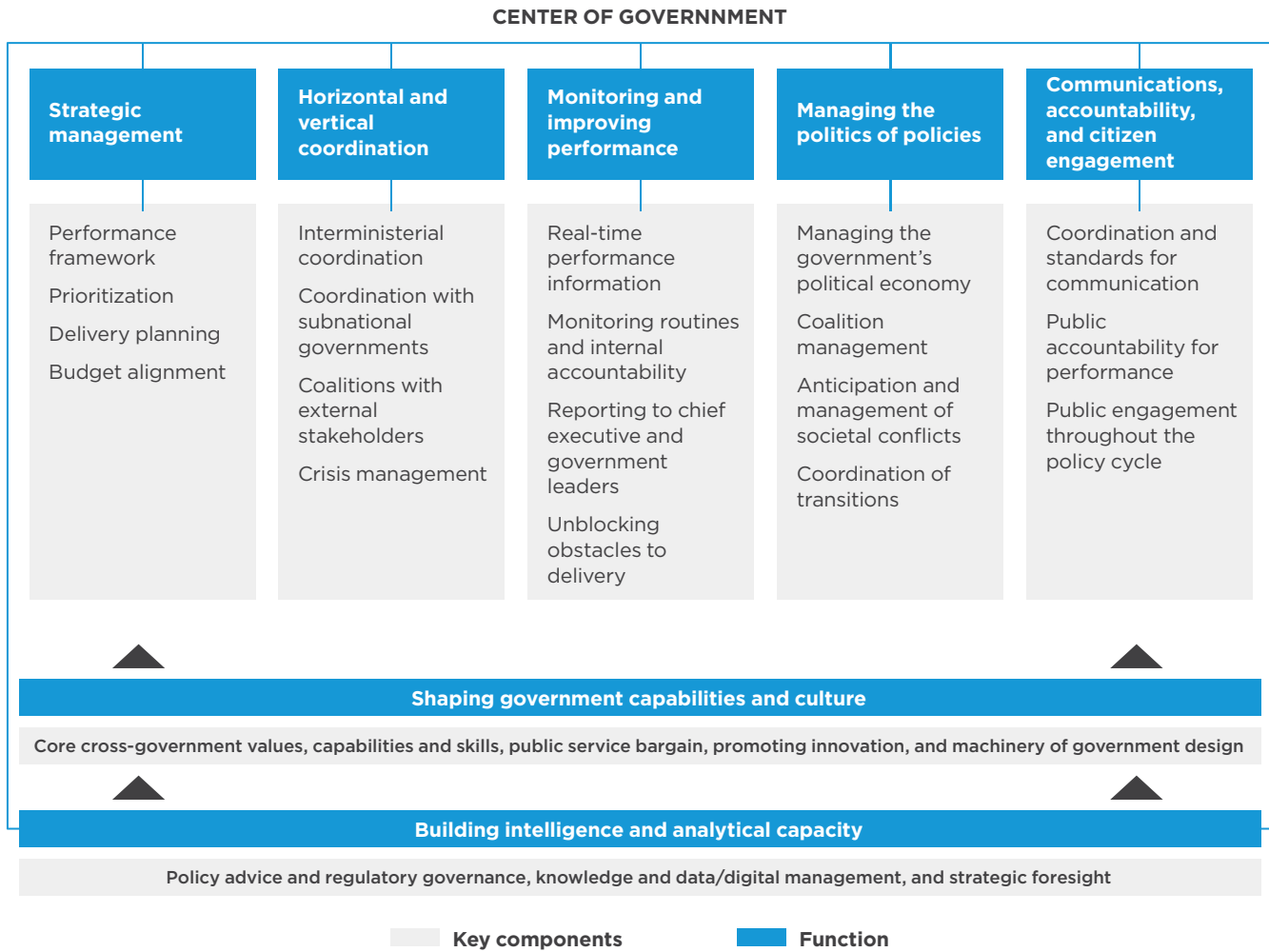
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<sup>21</sup> For example, the World Bank (2018) states that "Center of Government (CoG) institutions deal with the strategic management, coordination, monitoring, and communication of government decisions." The OECD (2021) claims that "functional definitions of the CoG can include institutions or agencies that perform core cross-cutting governmental functions, such as planning, coordination, prioritization and policy leadership role."

**The revised framework presented in this chapter builds on these five original functions while addressing recent challenges outlined in the previous chapter and innovations in CoG practice.** The chapter incorporates inputs from an extensive review of the CoG policy and academic literature, feedback from several experts and practitioners from LAC and other regions, and the IDB's own findings from its CoG work in over 15 countries. The key components within the original five functions have been revised to better reflect our new conceptual understanding. Moreover, two new functions (shaping government capabilities and culture, and building intelligence and analytical capacity) have been identified as underpinning the other five functions, to be addressed selectively according to the needs of each government and context. Collectively, performing these functions will equip the CoG to ensure *the overall vision and management of the government*: helping to set its priorities, aligning plans and resources to achieve them, coordinating the stakeholders inside and outside of government involved in their delivery, keeping track of progress, supporting the resolution of obstacles, and communicating results to the public, while ensuring that the different entities have the capabilities and the analytical intelligence that are critical to fulfill the government's mission of achieving good outcomes and results for citizens in the present and the future. In short, the CoG uses its political influence and power to get results and drive delivery, while it builds capabilities, foments a performance-driven culture, and uses its intelligence capacity to ensure that policy and decision-making are informed by sufficient evidence and expertise from inside and outside the governing machine. Figure 2.1 summarizes the updated framework.

**The chapter begins by setting out and elaborating the core functions in our CoG framework.** Then, it focuses on the major cross-cutting functions of the CoG based on shaping the right capabilities and culture and building intelligence and analytical capacity across the whole of government, with the CoG playing a leadership role. Chapter 3 presents and examines the new practices and tools available to perform these functions in the real world. This chapter includes examples to illustrate the conceptual argument.

**Figure 2.1.**  
**Core Functions of the Center of Government**

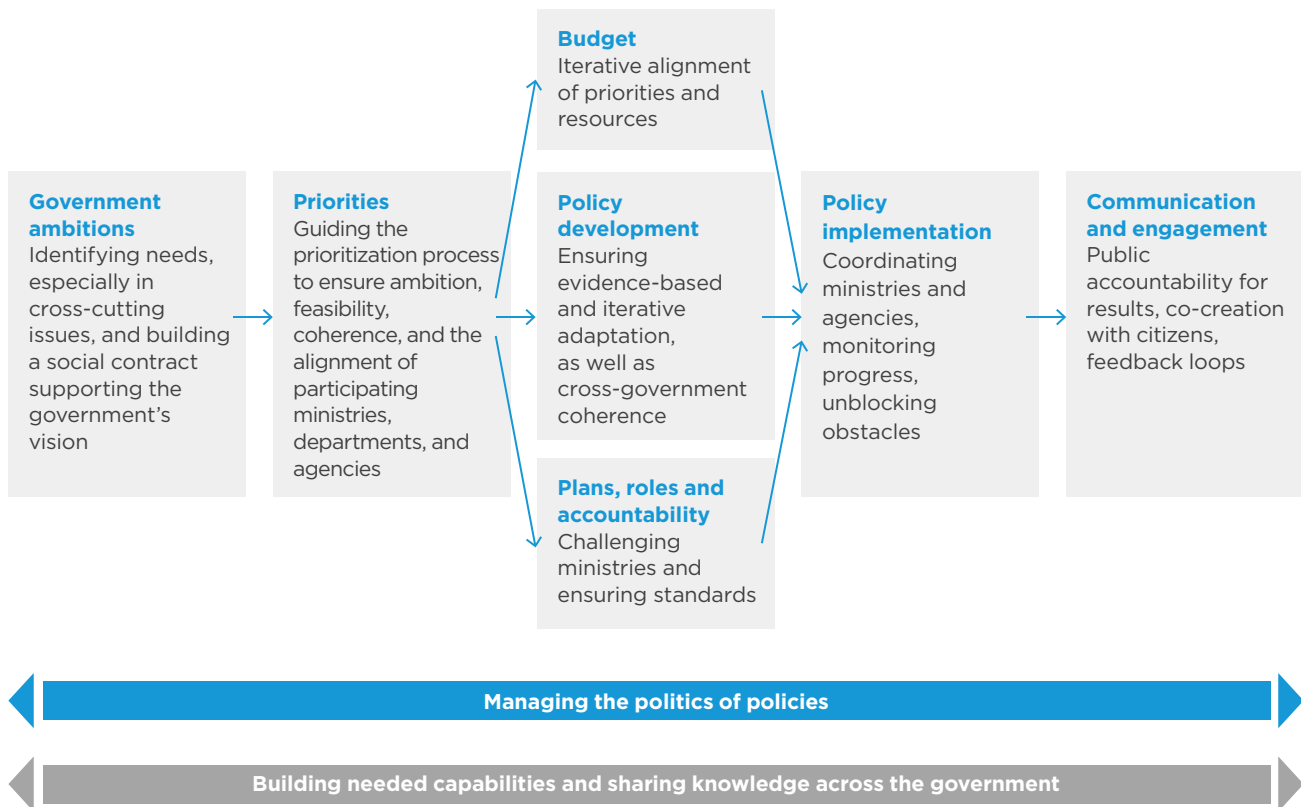


Source: Authors' elaboration.

**These functions should be performed in an integrated fashion throughout the policy cycle.** Although the functions are analytically distinct and in practice require different skill sets, knowledge, processes and tools, they also need to consider the other functions and operate consistently. For example, routines for interministerial coordination can only be effective if a shared understanding about the priorities and goals of the government has been developed; similarly, monitoring adds most value where credible and detailed implementation plans are in place. This connection between the functions underscores the value of developing

capabilities that run across multiple functions, and which the CoG should not assume that the line ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) responsible for priority objectives will already possess. Figure 2.2 presents a stylized version of the functions “in motion” across the end-to-end policy cycle. The sequence includes the CoG’s role in turning government ambitions into actionable priorities; guiding the iteration between policy development, budget allocation, and implementation planning; monitoring the execution of such plans and coordinating across the delivery chain to unblock obstacles; and finally, ensuring proper accountability and two-way communication with citizens. Throughout these processes, the CoG plays a key role in ensuring the management of political and societal stakeholders and the development of required capabilities and intelligence to effectively deliver results.

**Figure 2.2.**  
**The Center of Government Across the Policy Cycle**



Source: Authors' elaboration.



**At the same time, it is critical to stress the need for CoG practitioners to prioritize their efforts based on a clear assessment of the gaps and resources in the specific context of their work.** Although it is important to maintain an integrated approach that considers the collective impact of the CoG functions, in considering the next step in establishing or improving CoG practices, each government must identify which functions and activities most require development or enhancement. This chapter and Chapter 3 present a variety of instruments that CoGs can deploy to perform their core functions. But the selection of the right routines and tools needs to be flexible and strategic, tailored to the needs, resources, enabling conditions, and existing capabilities of each government. We do not advocate a *one-size-fits-all* approach. Chapter 4 presents a self-assessment tool to support the prioritization undertaken by practitioners. The following sections discuss the core components of each function.

## Strategic Management

The strategic management function is composed of four key components: establishing an integrated performance framework as the foundation for delivering results; the ability to set clear priorities for the government as a whole; the development of detailed implementation plans to achieve said priorities; and the alignment of the required budget resources. The CoG works on the overall management of the government, but focuses particularly on its strategic priorities.

**An updated understanding of the strategic management function includes the following key practices:**

- Greater consideration of the government's broader *performance framework* as the basic foundation for delivering results and institutionalizing a more results-driven public sector.
- A reassertion of the importance of *setting clear whole-of-government priorities* that define the "footprint" of an administration, based on a solid social contract or support coalition, preferably at the beginning of a new administration.

- The operationalization of priorities into detailed *delivery plans*, especially with a cross-ministerial and outcome-oriented focus.
- *Alignment of priorities, plans, and budget resources* through an iterative process and a closer partnership with the ministry of finance.

**These practices vary from country to country, and each country, based on its current levels of development, its needs and resources, may need to prioritize the next step on its improvement journey.**

### ***Performance Framework***

**The main focus of the Center of Government is on the top government priorities; however, the success of any government requires that a broader framework is in place to manage for results by defining and agreeing on the ministerial objectives and establishing routines that align and motivate their delivery.** For CoGs in their earlier stages of development, a basic performance framework for setting objectives and keeping track of progress can provide the building blocks for later developing more advanced practices presented in this publication. A strong performance framework brings together the government's approach to setting the objectives with each MDA and of the government as a whole; to aligning budgets; to establishing internal accountability; to tracking performance; to motivating better performance through the right incentives; and to intervening to support MDAs when performance is insufficient. Having in place a robust and coherent performance framework and its associated routines increases the likelihood that the government's ambitions will be translated into results. Setting clear objectives enables a collective understanding of what matters across all those responsible for implementation, including those at the front line. Second, it allows for the allocation of budget resources directing them toward strategic goals, and not simply based on inertia or incrementalism. Third, a performance framework defines approaches and standards for effective implementation planning, clarifying activities, roles, and responsibilities throughout the end-to-end policy cycle (to allow for proper accountability), and what is expected to be achieved by when in order to meet the government's ambition. Fourth, the framework defines metrics and routines to keep track of progress of those plans and to establish incentives for delivering on the objectives. And finally, it creates

opportunities and capacity to both capture learning and intervene, when necessary, to pull programs back on track when ambitions are not being met. The alignment of these activities into a coherent framework with a sequential logic creates a management model for the government as a whole, and it provides a strong foundation for establishing ambitious and realistic policy priorities.

**Particular Centers of Government have developed a two-tier approach to managing the overall government machine: a performance framework supplemented by a more selective set of priority goals.**

In LAC, this two-tier approach is illustrated by cases such as those of Colombia (Acosta and González, 2018), Pernambuco, Brazil (Alessandro, Lafuente, and Shostak, 2014) and Buenos Aires, Argentina (Alessandro, 2020). In Colombia, during the 2014–2018 period, the National Development Plan included 831 indicators, monitored by each respective MDA and, from the center, by the National Planning Department (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, or DNP). Within those, a newly established delivery unit in the CoG focused on 21 priorities (or “mega-goals”) and an additional set of sectoral goals. In Pernambuco, a set of outcome goals were established for three priority policy areas (pacts in citizen security, health, and education) while the broader plans focused on process and output goals, with their own routines for monitoring and improving performance. See Box 2.1 for a detailed discussion of Pernambuco’s Pact for Education and its results. Buenos Aires prioritized a set of Public Commitments within the overall ministerial plans; some of these reflected a consolidated goal to be achieved through the work of multiple ministries, reflected in their respective plans. The broader plan was tracked intensively as well. These examples illustrate how the CoG can ensure both a selective attention to top priorities and broader oversight of ministerial activity. Most LAC countries have some form of planning process in place, at least formally, and some have developed implicitly or explicitly an integrated performance framework, thus providing a foundation (in terms of culture, standards, tools, etc.) for fulfilling this function.

**BOX 2.1. IMPROVING STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN PERNAMBUCO, BRAZIL**

Since 2008, the state of Pernambuco, Brazil, has implemented a systematic framework for managing performance from the CoG. This framework, which was still in place as of 2022, includes the setting of clear and measurable targets, the identification of activities and budget resources aligned to those targets, and the periodic monitoring of progress in data-driven sessions led by the governor.

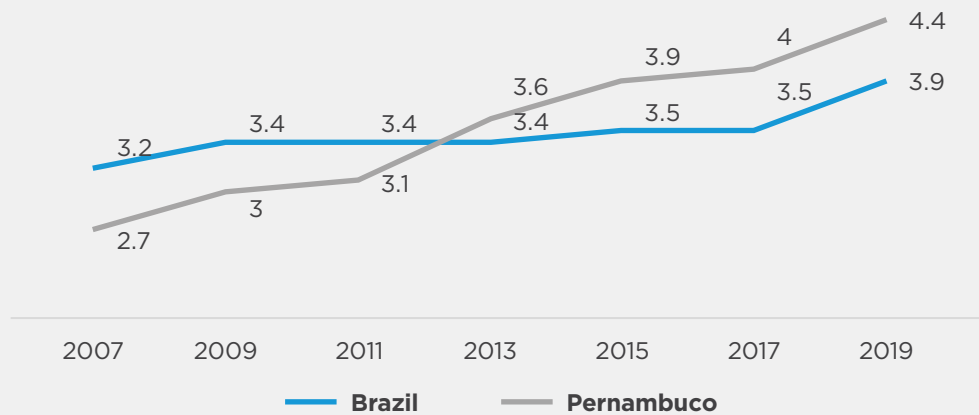
The framework also enables an even more intensive focus on a set of priority policy areas. For these, the monitoring sessions are more frequent, and the CoG has established dedicated teams (based in the Planning and Management Secretariat, SEPLAG) to support line ministries in improving delivery. In 2008, this distinctive treatment was assigned to citizen security; in subsequent years, violent crime declined significantly (Alessandro, Lafuente, and Shostak, 2014).

In 2011, the framework prioritized two additional policy areas: health and education. The “Pact for Education” involved setting targets at the state, education district, and individual school levels. They included both outcome targets (in terms of student performance) and process targets that were expected to anticipate the outcomes (student attendance rates, completion of curricula, parent attendance to parent-teacher meetings, etc.) and would thus provide early warnings for introducing corrective measures. SEPLAG’s team provided training and technical assistance in management techniques for school principals, especially for schools with the lowest baseline performance.

Across multiple indicators, education improved drastically in Pernambuco. In only four years, the state went from being the 18<sup>th</sup> state (out of 27) in terms of dropout rates in primary schools to being third, and from being 11<sup>th</sup> to first in high schools (Cruz, 2015). By 2014, six state-run high schools were among the ten best in all of Brazil. And, as Figure R2.1.1. shows, the improvements have been sustained over time. While prior to 2011 Pernambuco’s high schools had consistently performed below national averages in standardized tests, since 2015 they have been among the top three states every year.

In addition to the new performance framework, Pernambuco introduced specific policy reforms in the education sector. For instance, the percentage of schools with extended school time was expanded significantly. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain what proportion of the improvement can be attributed to the framework itself. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that these policy reforms could have been adopted without a clear prioritization by the CoG, as they required allocating resources selectively to this policy objective.

**Figure R2.1.1. Student Performance in Federal Standardized Tests, High-school Level**



Source: INEP (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Investigación Educativos). Resultados de nivel medio en los centros públicos. Brazil: INEP, available at: <https://www.gov.br/inep/pt-br/>.

**Although the CoG’s focus should remain with the priority goals to avoid overstretching its resources, the design and oversight of the performance framework both creates a culture that focuses on results and ensures they get attention, while contributing to the sustainability of performance routines across time.** Countries like the United States have established by law the main features of such a framework, thus favoring a continuity of key practices even when administrations change or if specific presidents are less concerned about performance (see Chapter 3 for details on the United States’ performance framework). Similarly, Chile’s [Programa de Mejoramiento de Gestión](#) was established by law in 1998 and has been enhanced since then under different administrations. Although the framework has faced certain challenges over time (see, for example, World Bank, 2011), it is a relevant regional case that shows that an explicit performance framework, codified by law, can institutionalize key practices and routines beyond a specific administration’s time in office.

**In addition to the formalization of the performance framework, Chapter 3 will present the specific elements that are part of a strong framework.** These elements seek to ensure that government objectives are well defined and specified; that cross-ministerial goals are prioritized; that the connection to budget allocation is appropriately

sequenced; and that responsibilities and accountabilities are clearly set, among other key characteristics.

### ***Prioritization***

**If everything is a priority,  
then nothing is.**

**Two distinctive attributes of the CoG are its ability to focus on top government priorities and an approach that reinforces the responsibilities of line ministries.** Making the transition from a political manifesto to a focus on the delivery of outcomes is a challenge for government, but if everything is a priority then nothing is. For new administrations, this involves specifying, within electoral platforms that typically include hundreds of aspirations (that are often couched in broad and generic terms), which ones are the flagship ambitions that will require prioritized efforts, as well as a sequencing of these efforts. The ability to identify the critical whole-of-government priority objectives from those that are managed through the business-as-usual work of line ministries and agencies is a defining feature of CoG approaches. These priorities typically include goals that could represent the identity and legacy of a government (or its “footprint,” as defined by one practitioner interviewed for this study); a subset of the major campaign promises; issues of top concern to citizens; and so-called “wicked problems”<sup>22</sup> that are often deeply entrenched. These objectives will require leveraging the political sponsorship of the chief executive and senior leaders to drive them forward; often aligning different ministries and agencies that contribute to their delivery (as well as subnational actors and non-state stakeholders); and sustaining their efforts and focus despite day-to-day events or crises. Thus, they demand a degree of attention that differs from other objectives that may be achieved by the recurring or standard operations of ministries and agencies alone (“business as usual”). This is where the CoG can bring unique assets, notably its cross-government perspective and its direct connection to the chief executive.

**While prioritization can be politically challenging, the alternative (the absence of priorities) is likely to prove very costly.** Defining priorities may be interpreted as signaling that the other objectives and projects

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<sup>22</sup> “Modern social problems are ‘wicked’ problems because stakeholders disagree about the nature of these problems, about possible solutions, and about the values or principles that should guide improvements” (Head, 2022: 21).

are unimportant; it can create a perception of “winners and losers” (Hymowitz, 2016). It can also be difficult to sustain a set of priorities as new challenges emerge (Harrison, 2016). Moreover, establishing clear priorities can increase the political cost if the government does not then deliver on them, or even if citizens do not perceive the delivery as effective (Boswell, 2018). Thus, sometimes heads of government prefer to operate with fuzzier or less explicit priorities. This approach reduces the possibility of strategically applying the political weight and the managerial tools of the CoG. Instead, the CoG’s attention and resources (which are always limited) will be *de facto* prioritized by the events or crises of the day (what Barber, 2016, defines as “governing by spasm”). This approach is not suited to achieving ambitious long-term goals that demand dedicated and sustained efforts. Thus, the machinery of government (and, often, citizens themselves) should be able to clearly identify the objectives prioritized by the government.

**A clear distinction between priorities and business as usual is essential for a successful CoG.** Across government there will be hundreds or thousands of different goals, and no CoG can keep track of them all while holding managers accountable. As such, the CoG will need to focus on the key priorities and ensure line ministries have approaches to ensure the delivery of their work. By trying to cover everything, the CoG can create the incentive for organizations themselves to select which objectives to prioritize (these could be considered “reverse priorities”: MDAs focusing on what matters to them, assuming that the CoG’s priorities will eventually be addressed anyway). It is well established that “goal inflation” reduces the effectiveness of setting goals, as officials tend to concentrate on a smaller subset, especially those that they perceive as being more within their control (Ang, 2016; OECD, 2007). Thus, establishing large numbers of goals may appear to ensure a clear direction for ministries and agencies, but in practice it can provide them with enough latitude to select their own priorities, with less regard for the priorities of the chief executive and the government as a whole. Furthermore, as the number of goals increases, it becomes more likely that some of them are in conflict with each other, thus blurring the organization’s mission and affecting its overall performance. Several practitioners interviewed for this study shared the emphasis on establishing a few very clear priorities for a successful CoG practice.

**It is critical that the CoG priorities are “owned” by the chief executive and government leaders.** As in any organization, the final mandate of priorities can only come from the top: the chief executive and other senior government leaders. However, this is necessary but not sufficient. Engagement with those with responsibility for results is what empowers their implementation and galvanizes the attention of ministries, agencies, and other stakeholders toward them. Alignment and commitment of contributing MDAs is key. The CoG needs to put in place strategies to foster them and ensure they are understood as part of their core mandate. If the priority goals arise from a purely “technocratic” process, with no visible and genuine endorsement from the top leadership, then it is unlikely they will be able to guide the subsequent policy and budgetary decisions. A public announcement can be a tangible expression of ownership by the chief executive and the cabinet (and also strengthen citizen trust). This should ideally occur at the beginning of the administration to ensure that political momentum is applied in setting the government’s policy agenda.

**At the same time, for leaders to establish sound priorities the CoG should guide a robust process that considers broader perspectives and provides evidence about potential impact and feasibility.** The priority-setting process is a critical exercise that reflects a social contract—or a broad-support coalition—to get constituencies aligned with the government’s vision and priorities. To be relevant and sustainable, priorities must reflect the needs and preferences of constituents. But governments also need to build supporting coalitions that are aligned with the priorities. This involves the creation of an “authoritative environment” across stakeholders that must contribute to their delivery, including internal government actors (e.g., MDAs that contribute to their implementation) as well as external partners. Priorities purely set from the center may suffer from a lack of commitment by key implementation stakeholders. In practice, this means that the CoG must be the broker between the ambition of political leaders (who may be less aware of the complexities of delivery) and the expertise of sectoral bureaucracies, including those on the front lines, who have direct knowledge of the realities of policy implementation. If the priorities are not recognized as important and achievable by those with the responsibility to implement them, they will lack traction. Therefore, consultation, stress testing for deliverability, and working toward consensus is critical. This interface



between the political leadership and the civil service<sup>23</sup> is a common characteristic of the CoG, arising in several of its core functions. Of course, this engagement or consultation must be complemented with clear responsibilities for specific deliverables once a priority has been set.

**Therefore, while scanning for potential priorities, the CoG can broaden the dialogue so as to learn from external perspectives as well: citizens, civil society organizations, businesses, and academic experts can all participate at different stages of the prioritization process.**

Environmental scanning has long been regarded as an important aspect of strategic management (Hambrick, 1982). As discussed later, it has become especially relevant recently due to the growing need for co-creating results with non-state actors and to enhance the legitimacy of the priorities. In a context of reduced trust, it is vital that the CoG build a social contract to support the government's vision and priorities. Chapter 3 proposes key steps and timelines for the CoG to guide the prioritization process.

### *Planning for Delivery*

**It is not the CoG's role to design these plans, but rather to set the standards, challenge and support the ministries to produce them, and to align their positions when they share the same goal.**

**Once the priorities have been identified, the next step for the CoG is to ensure that solid delivery plans are in place.** The CoG needs to make sure that ministries and agencies (where the specific sectoral expertise resides) develop strong and mutually coherent plans for delivery of those priorities, based on a consistent methodology. This usually requires the identification of clear goals, targets, and trajectories to be achieved; logical pathways of inputs, activities, processes, and outputs to achieve them; identification of those responsible for different activities; and an understanding of potential risks and obstacles. It is not the CoG's role to design these plans, but rather to specify and set the standards, challenge and support the ministries to produce them; and, importantly, to align their positions when several entities share the same goal. It is critical to avoid the proliferation of plans (sectoral, institutional, operational, territorial, etc.), as occurs in some LAC countries. The abundance of

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<sup>23</sup> In some LAC public administrations with multiple layers of political appointees, the CoG may not directly interact as frequently with the permanent civil service. Nonetheless, even if the officials in line ministries are political appointees, it is likely that they will adopt some of the positions and views of the bureaucracies they lead (i.e., "where you stand depends on where you sit"); thus, the CoG's brokering role becomes indispensable.

plans weakens their ability to be used to guide policy and budgetary decisions and frequently leads to misalignment between them. Instead, the CoG should focus its efforts on detailed *implementation planning* to achieve the government's priority objectives. Most importantly, it must create delivery plans in a way that secures commitment to their implementation and avoids over-compliance. A pragmatic approach is usually advisable: develop the best possible plans in a relatively short time frame, so that MDAs can begin implementation, adjusting them based on learning from actual execution.

**The CoG should create a culture that thinks of priorities in terms of outcomes that are logically connected to outputs, activities, and inputs.** *Outcomes*, as opposed to internal government *activities* and to the *outputs* from those activities, refer to the benefits that an intervention is designed to achieve for citizens (lower crime, better student performance, improved health indicators, etc.). Completing an output on time and on budget is an important accomplishment but, in itself, may not lead to any substantive changes to the intended beneficiaries of the intervention (or what Andrews [2021] defines as “successful failures”). Some countries, at the national and subnational levels, have established project management offices (PMOs) or similar units to disseminate the use of sound implementation methodologies, ensure a close tracking of project completion, and support ministries and agencies when operational obstacles arise. Although valuable and, in certain contexts, the right approach for CoGs, such units do not take full advantage of the CoG's potential if they focus only on outputs. Of course, to deliver outcomes it is critical to systematically plan and monitor activities and outputs; these are the elements that governments can more directly control or influence. But, when planning, it is important to consider the effects that these activities and outputs are intended to generate.<sup>24</sup> And, in monitoring, it is also important to keep track of key outcome indicators, as the delivery of outputs with no variation in

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<sup>24</sup> The CoG can support and challenge MDAs to develop robust theories of change, based on sufficient evidence, to identify the causal explanation of how the various components of a policy intervention are expected to generate the desired result. An alternative and somewhat simpler tool is the logical framework (also known as “results framework” or “results chain”), which presents the sequence that connects the inputs available to an organization (budget, staff, etc.), the activities enabled by such inputs, the outputs produced by those activities, and the outcomes that should follow from the outputs. They are developed by working backwards: starting from the final outcomes that the organization seeks to achieve, the subsequent components are derived logically. Theories of change typically add a few additional elements, such as explanations of why the desired change will be produced, and the set of assumptions and contextual factors that need to exist for it to occur (UK Aid Connect, 2016).

outcome indicators may signal the need to adjust the interventions. In summary, maintaining a focus on outcomes is an important contribution of the CoG that typically goes beyond the scope of project management offices (PMOs). Moreover, centering on outcomes means directly focusing on improving lives, which can be a powerful purpose and incentive for those involved in the delivery chain, and which can give meaning to the processes and activities performed on a daily basis.

**Most key priority outcomes require the joint contribution of several ministries and agencies, thus highlighting the indispensable contribution of the CoG.** Reducing child mortality may be the primary responsibility of the Ministry of Health, but this goal is influenced by a variety of factors and interventions that exceed its jurisdiction (access to adequate housing, nutrition, water and sanitation, parental educational attainment, etc.). Consequently, achieving outcomes usually requires the joint contribution of different ministries and agencies, aligned with a shared goal.<sup>25</sup> This alignment is typically a challenge for public administrations organized in vertical silos that have their own leadership, mandates, and resources; entities have limited incentives to coordinate with their peers, which may require them to relegate their own institutional priorities, share their resources, or yield the political credit of delivering a goal to other ministries. Given its neutral cross-government perspective and political empowerment, the CoG is uniquely placed to bring these entities to work together for shared goals by promoting an integrated, citizen-centered systems approach. Thus, CoG teams add more value when they devote their attention and resources to these types of goals (Lafuente and González, 2018). More and more, this coordination also requires the involvement of other levels of government and non-state actors, thus reinforcing the key role of the CoG.

**The role of strategic management is not simply about greater technocratic or bureaucratic efficiency in government.** It is about ensuring that the government has the capacity to intervene effectively to tackle public problems, to turn abstract plans and ideas into practical solutions, to protect citizens from insecurity and adversity, and to challenge power imbalances as well as inequalities. This requires

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<sup>25</sup> It should be noted that this challenge is not unique to governments. It has been shown in the private sector that hitting each department's targets does not imply delivering what customers are demanding. Setting cross-silo goals, adopted from the customer's perspective rather from the organization's perspective, is therefore a recommendation for private companies as well (Gardner and Matviak, 2022).

connecting policymaking and delivery, which are too often separated by a division of labor that divides policymaking tasks from policy implementation. Effective strategic management allows governments to improve the integration between these activities, and in so doing seeks to improve outcomes for the citizen. This may require alignment between different CoG teams. In the United Kingdom, for instance, separate CoG units responsible for policy, strategy, and delivery were regularly convened to agree on their work programs and establish which team would be best placed to support development.

### ***Budget Alignment***

**Delivery plans can only be effective if they are connected to a crucial component: the allocation of budget resources.** Priority goals must be priorities for the budget, so bringing this process firmly within the performance framework is vital. Too often there is a disconnect with prioritization, delivery planning, and budget making operating as separate processes. This undermines the motivation and commitment of those with the responsibility for securing results and calls into question the government's commitment to its priorities. Moreover, it limits the ability to actually deliver on those priorities.

**Connecting plans with budgets has long been a challenge for LAC governments; CoG interventions are better suited to secure this integration.** Many LAC countries have experience with a variety of planning instruments (national development plans, sector plans, strategic plans, etc.) that end up on a bookshelf and are not translated into policy. One of the reasons for this is the disconnect between the plans and the timelines of the budget process. In addition, budget incrementalism and inertia are well-known phenomena in public administration. Several factors, including the pressure exerted by interest groups and beneficiaries protecting existing activities, lead to a seeming immortality of government programs (Besharov, 2009). This implies that funding levels are often only adjusted incrementally once a year, leaving limited scope for new objectives or initiatives (even after decades of efforts toward performance budgeting). This reality is a significant challenge for the more encompassing planning efforts that

assume the ability for a significant redirection of resources.<sup>26</sup> Ultimately, discretionary spending comprises a small proportion of the overall budget. A more integrated CoG approach, with its more concentrated focus on a few select priorities, may be better suited to connect plans with budgets for top government priorities. It does not require a zero-based approach to budgeting. Instead, it offers a more realistic approach to connecting objectives and budgets by focusing on a smaller subset of priorities and resources.

**However, putting this approach into practice in many LAC governments has not been straightforward.** As discussed in Chapter 1, the experience of one of the main types of CoG reforms in recent years (the creation of delivery units focused precisely on priority objectives) has often faced a similar challenge: of insufficient integration with the budget process (Lafuente and González, 2018). This disconnect not only hampers the effectiveness of delivery plans; it can also disempower the newly established CoG units if line ministries and agencies simply continue to “follow the money”. Conceptually, the definition of priority goals and the allocation of resources should be interdependent since both need to be consistent for delivering results while maintaining the overall budgetary framework.

**Effective delivery plans begin by considering that budget programs already exist and how they can contribute to achieving the priority goals, including which adaptations are needed to enhance such alignment.** In practice, a range of tools can be applied to connect plans and budgets. Given that these are usually led by (or require the participation of) the ministry of finance (MoF), this requires active participation from the MoF across the functions outlined in this study. The MoF will have a range of technical detailed responsibilities for budget management that are not part of the CoG. However, if the MoF does not play an active role in setting priorities in stress-testing delivery plans and capabilities to deliver, then there is a risk that the government’s ambitions will not be effectively operationalized.

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<sup>26</sup> In some cases, an additional challenge is the uncertainty about the availability of resources during the fiscal year. For example, when subnational governments are highly dependent on discretionary transfers from the central government, as it is often the case in LAC, planning all ministerial activities can be impossible. In these contexts of uncertainty, a CoG approach is even more important, as it helps identify the priority objectives to be protected if resources are curtailed.



Delivery plans can only be effective if they are connected to a crucial component: the allocation of budget resources”.

## Horizontal and Vertical Coordination

The coordination function is comprised of three components: the coordination of ministries and agencies for the design and implementation of policy in cross-cutting objectives; coordinating with subnational government and other delivery partners, especially on issues that cut across ministries and agencies; and securing whole-of-government responses to major crises. As with all of the CoG's functions, it is crucial to focus coordination efforts on top priorities that demand this type of CoG brokering.

**Although coordination entails many benefits, it can also impose costs.**

Specifically, it may delay the completion of certain activities or introduce redundant checkpoints. Therefore, coordination needs to be fit for purpose. Selecting which priority goals demand coordination efforts, which stakeholders need to be included in these instances, and which decisions will be part of the agenda requires careful consideration. This section provides guidance on this matter.

**Summing up the contents of this section, an updated understanding of the “coordination” function includes the following key practices:**

- Organizational arrangements and managerial processes for *horizontal* coordination across ministries and agencies.
- Mechanisms for *vertical* coordination across different levels of government, including the tools to implement “place-based” interventions and the alignment of supranational commitments.
- Frameworks and incentives to coordinate the *collaboration with external stakeholders* who are increasingly becoming key delivery partners.
- Coordination of *crisis response* and recovery through centralized response mechanisms.

### ***Interministerial Coordination (Horizontal Coordination)***

**Coordination is a challenge for any large organization.** Organizational charts of governments or large companies depict an orderly but static

perspective, displaying boxes and their respective reporting relationships. This perspective, however, misses that the goods or services produced by any organization typically require processes that cut across those boxes horizontally. Creating a culture that supports and manages those horizontal interfaces across boxes (or what Rummier and Brache [2012] define as “the white space” on an organizational chart) is critical to improve overall performance and deliver results. In practice, organizations can focus on managing each box discretely by establishing individual goals for each of them, but by doing so the other boxes (departments, units, bureaus, etc.) become competitors for resources rather than partners for achieving shared objectives. In such cases, the boxes turn into silos, the interfaces become problematic, and disagreements can only be addressed by escalating them to a higher level.

**Policymaking presents particular difficulties for coordination, and too often governments operate in silos. The CoG has an important role in creating a whole-of-government culture and brokering across government, working at all stages of the policy to impact cycle.** Due to increased requirements for political, budgetary, and legal accountability, departments in the public sector have even greater incentives to adopt a siloed mindset than other organizations. Relationships in government bureaucracies have traditionally been hierarchical, to clarify responsibilities and accountabilities; but the delivery of public services typically cuts across multiple entities. Rigid structures and processes, usually established to manage budgets, foster transparency, and limit arbitrary decisions also hamper the feasibility of more radical approaches to incentivize coordination, such as creating temporary accountability structures for specific projects or sharing teams and funding across departments (Mulgan, 2014). As a consequence, there is frequently a mismatch between the siloed features of the governments’ structures and the cross-cutting nature of the public problems they seek to address (notably in the case of climate change, social inequality, economic recovery, etc.), especially in a world of heightened complexity with deeply ingrained “wicked” problems. This is also evident when the government deals disjointedly with populations that have multidimensional needs demanding coordinated interventions (such as at-risk youth, vulnerable groups, etc.) or when it intervenes in territories of interconnected challenges (deprived urban areas, rural development, international borders, etc.). In the absence of coordination, policies are less likely to be designed well and achieve the desired impacts, while



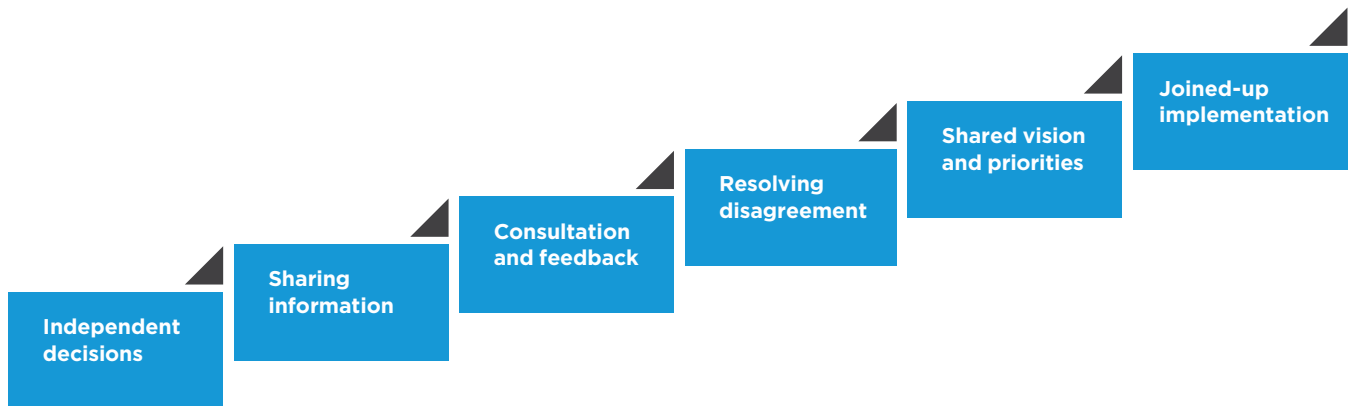
duplication and overlap (as well as lacunae) become more frequent and bureaucratic conflicts tend to increase.

**Political factors can deepen the fragmentation of government into competing silos.** As several actors interviewed for this study affirmed, a competitive instinct among those who reach the apex of politics can be a further challenge in securing effective coordination. Managing the internal politics of government is a key factor for the success of any coordinating mechanism. This competition may be exacerbated in governments where a number of ministers see themselves as policy initiators (Headey, 1974), proactively challenging their departments and the rest of the government by pursuing their own distinctive direction in policymaking. Although they can bring creative new thinking and leadership, they can also increase the risk of fragmentation across government as a whole. In many LAC countries, where several layers of officials change with each administration, this risk is particularly prominent, as the bureaucracy is less able to promote a consistent set of policies across time. Finally, the trends toward coalition governments in many countries can add further complexity to the coordination efforts, demanding strong CoG abilities to define and enforce decision-making rules among coalition partners.

**In practice, even if full coordination can never be achieved, the CoG can often make a difference by taking practical steps to move toward higher levels of coordination.** Figure 2.3 summarizes key steps for strengthening coordination. At the bottom, the stakeholders (ministries, agencies, subnational governments, etc.) make their own independent decisions. A first step toward coordination (although not always the easiest) involves *sharing information* with others and communicating through institutionalized channels. Another step is to *consult* the other stakeholders and request their feedback before making decisions. These consultations may reveal disagreements; thus, a further step is the establishment of a coordinating actor (usually, based at the CoG) to arbitrate between the stakeholders and *resolve disagreements*. A more ambitious form of coordination is to instill a *shared vision and priorities* (or adopting a systems perspective; see Box 2.2) across stakeholders, which is expected to increase the coherence of their respective interventions. Moving from an institutional view to a priority view, which in itself is a major challenge, allows teams across government to work together and secure stronger collaboration in implementation. A whole-

of-government approach to setting priorities (rather than one divided across each MDA) facilitates coordination. This shared vision can be expressed, for example, in joint delivery plans that specify the roles of the respective stakeholders. Finally, the highest level of coordination is to *join up the implementation* of such interventions at the front line, which may require the integration of resources from different departments. Of course, it can be quite demanding to take these steps. It is critical to focus, in particular, on cross-cutting priorities to minimize the risk of CoG overstretch.

**Figure 2.3.**  
**Levels of Policy Coordination**



Source: Authors' elaboration based on Metcalfe (1994) and Alessandro, Lafuente, and Santiso (2014).

**BOX 2.2. SYSTEMS APPROACHES FOR POLICY COORDINATION**

The traditional approach to planning and policy design analyzes the expected impact of each policy intervention discretely (holding all else constant, what is the expected effect of policy X on outcome Y?) and treats policymaking as a series of defined and contained phases. A systems approach, on the other hand, seeks to understand how interventions from different ministries, agencies, and levels of government interact to collectively achieve results for citizens, and treats policymaking as an integrated process. Citizen-centered and portfolio-based approaches (UNDP, 2022) share a similar perspective.

These approaches disregard institutional boundaries and consider the issue from the vantage point of the beneficiary or service user. Such reviews often notice that, in any given policy area, the government's supply of programs and services is simply the accumulation of different initiatives launched in successive years or decades by different entities, without a whole-of-government perspective that considers the interactions between those interventions or the needs of beneficiaries who must navigate such a complex ecosystem. As a consequence, citizens who for various reasons use public and welfare services more intensively find themselves subject to interventions by multiple agencies. Mapping the lived experience of customers or beneficiaries can enable a more coherent redesign of policies. In practice, the systems approach may well face resistance from ministerial bureaucracies running the existing interventions and will thus require substantial CoG leadership. For example, the Province of Salta, Argentina, sought to review and align the multiple government interventions with impact on vulnerable children by establishing a Ministry of Early Childhood (2014–2019), but it had to confront the continued durability of each MDA's goals, programs, and disciplinary focus.

Adopting a systems approach has been recommended for pursuing cross-cutting policy priorities, notably climate change (HM Government, 2021), extreme poverty (UNDP, 2022), and early childhood development (Kagan et al., 2016), as well as for dealing with those with multidimensional needs, such as senior citizens (whose requirements typically include several forms of intervention and public agencies: medical care, nutrition, social care, lifelong learnings, mobility, etc.; OECD, 2017a). In 2022, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, working with the respective agencies, focused on five “life experiences” (recovering from a disaster; facing a financial shock; approaching retirement; having a child and childhood development for low-income families; and navigating transition to civilian life for military members) to redesign service delivery from a “human-centered” perspective, thus cutting across jurisdictional silos. (<https://www.performance.gov/cx/projects/>).

### ***Coordination with Subnational Governments (Vertical Coordination)***

**The coherence of government interventions depends not only on horizontal coordination across ministries and agencies; it also requires engaging with subnational governments and delivery partners in policymaking, especially during the implementation stage.** As previously discussed, coordination in policy design can provide more commitment to the ultimate policy and more integrated interventions. But, for implementation, effective coordination matters even more. The sequence and pace of the interventions that contribute to a shared priority can be critical for success. For example, a challenge frequently faced in rural development is aligning infrastructure (schools, hospitals, etc.) with the timely completion of the roads needed to access it and the hiring of staff to provide services, all of which are executed by different agencies (Wenner, 2007). More generally, the more stakeholders are involved in a policy objective, especially if they have different interests and priorities, the more likely it is that successful implementation will be at risk (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973) unless it is effectively coordinated. Central coordination may be needed to synchronize the activities required for effective delivery, including not only the executing agencies but also other cross-cutting units (Treasury, Legal Counsel, Permits, etc.) whose input is essential to move projects forward in a timely manner.

**The existence of multiple levels of government can exacerbate the coordination challenge, especially for policy implementation.** In LAC countries, “decentralization reform has been rapid and intense over the past three decades... Subnational governments are managing a much larger share of the public sector budget than they did before... (and it) has been especially prominent in health and education expenditures... Latin America has one of the highest levels of electoral, that is, political, decentralization” (Brosio and Jiménez, 2012: 1-2). Therefore, central governments in LAC typically cannot deliver results by themselves. At the same time, most of the 17,000 subnational governments in the region are heavily dependent on budget transfers from national governments (Radics et al., 2022), which emphasizes the multi-level linkages that are needed to deliver. Thirteen countries have three levels of government: national, intermediate (state, provincial, regional, etc.), and municipal. The vertical coordination challenge is especially critical when these multiple levels of government have the resources and authority to deal

with the same issues. The mixing of jurisdictions (often described as “marble cake” federalism in federal countries) requires intense vertical collaboration across levels of government. This can be challenging not only because their different institutional perspectives can motivate disagreements, but also because they may be led by opposing political parties or leaders (11 of the 13 intermediate levels of government are popularly elected, as well as 25 of the 26 municipal levels). Securing coordination is thus a political and managerial challenge. Of course, the need for coordination is more important in countries with greater levels of subnational decentralization and autonomy.

**Given these challenges often cross-ministerial boundaries, an increasingly important type of coordination role for the CoG is multi-level, or vertical, coordination between national and subnational governments.** For many government objectives, multi-level coordination occurs directly within each sector or policy area. Each MDA is responsible for coordinating with its subnational counterparts for its institutional goals. But there are circumstances that may demand CoG involvement. For instance, policy priorities that cut across multiple MDAs demand, first, horizontal coordination within the central government to enable a consistent engagement with the subnational governments. Without this CoG guidance, there is a possibility of incoherent interventions or even of overwhelming subnational partners with fragmented requests and proposals. Moreover, investment decisions by the national government (in areas such as infrastructure, energy, housing, economic development, and others) need to be aligned among themselves and with decisions at the subnational level, such as land use planning, to enable such activities (OECD, 2019a). These investment decisions also usually entail tradeoffs across sectors, which highlights the value of the CoG to arbitrate prioritization decisions. Finally, the CoG can also establish a common framework (in terms of rules, standards, tools, or incentives) to favor consistency in the way MDAs liaison with subnational counterparts.

**Certain real-world examples can illustrate this role of the CoG.**

For instance, the priority goal of reducing mobile phone theft in Colombia (2014–2017) required significant coordination with the subnational governments, as these criminal activities had distinct local characteristics. But it also required horizontal coordination at the national level, as several institutions (related to citizen security,

technology, finance, and trade) were involved in achieving the goal (Acosta and González, 2018). The President's Delivery Unit acted as coordinator to drive progress with this priority, leading to a 12 percent reduction in yearly thefts. A more recent example, also in Colombia, refers to the horizontal and vertical coordination needed to advance the presidential priority of developing a multi-purpose cadaster (see Box 2.3 for details on this initiative). Another approach, that may be feasible for CoGs with sufficiently advanced coordination capabilities, is to promote collective impact, or "place-based" interventions at the territorial level whenever possible (see Box 2.4).

### **BOX 2.3. COORDINATION FOR A MULTI-PURPOSE CADASTER IN COLOMBIA**

As part of the country's peace process, developing a multi-purpose cadaster for managing rural land has become a presidential priority in Colombia. This cadaster is critical to secure land titling and to provide consolidated information needed for territorial planning; for designing economic, social, and environmental policies; and for optimized revenue collection. The efforts to develop the cadaster intensified following the peace agreement approved by Congress in 2016. However, this effort was hard to sustain and escalate, due to the large number of agencies and stakeholders at different levels of government, whose contribution was needed to develop the cadaster. In late 2018, the then newly created delivery unit in the President's Office took on the responsibility for coordinating this initiative, leading to a faster pace since then.

Developing the cadaster required the alignment of multiple stakeholders, including the Planning Department, the Ministries of Finance, Agriculture, Justice, Housing, and Environment, the Geographic Institute, the National Statistics Department, the National Land Agency, the Land Restitution Unit, the Public Registry, and multiple subnational governments, as well as non-state actors. This complex ecosystem hindered the consolidation of initial progress, due to diverging views among stakeholders. Since late 2018, the CoG's coordination has facilitated greater alignment and the resolution of disagreements, which has led to the passing of several institutional and regulatory reforms and to the development of an interoperable information system. Two factors appear to have hindered further progress. First, in 2020 the restrictions derived from the COVID-19 pandemic limited the field visits that are critical to update the land information; eventually, the government declared the cadaster as a public service and thus the staff working on the initiative had greater exemption from the mobility restrictions. Second, the government prioritized the areas most affected by conflict. Given the complexity of these territories (in terms of enduring violence,

continued existence of land mines, etc.), implementation of the cadaster has been slower than in other territories. Still, this is an example in which the purpose of the initiative (as part of advancing the peace process in conflict-ridden areas) is more relevant than the quantitative target itself.

Source: Authors' elaboration based on information submitted by the National Planning Department.

#### **BOX 2.4. COLLECTIVE IMPACT OR PLACE-BASED INTERVENTIONS**

Sometimes both horizontal and vertical coordination are required to obtain results. For example, certain policy problems that are concentrated in the same geographic areas (such as depressed urban areas affected by high poverty levels, crime, lack of jobs, deficient infrastructure, etc.) are so interconnected that they can only be addressed effectively through the consistent interventions of several different agencies. Place also has a major impact in shaping outcomes: for example, individuals who live in particular places are more likely to be at risk of unemployment or premature ill health. This had led to an interest in place-based approaches that seek to produce collective impacts that are greater than those obtained by each intervention alone (Crew, 2020).

In the United States, the Performance Partnership Pilots for Disconnected Youth (P3) launched in 2014 is an example of this approach (Lester, 2016). Multiple departments in the federal government funded programs, implemented by municipal governments, to address the problem of at-risk or disconnected youth. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) at the CoG coordinated with five of these departments to authorize the municipal governments to consolidate resources to better address the specific needs of their beneficiaries, seeking to enhance the alignment of the multiple systems that serve youth. This enhanced flexibility of implementation at the subnational level, in exchange for improved outcomes, required important horizontal coordination at the national level, as each department previously established its own requirements and criteria for execution.

Similar initiatives have sought to coordinate the multiple national-level programs oriented toward supporting children in deprived areas (such as Sure Start in the United Kingdom and Promise Neighborhoods in the United States), that combine efforts in education, health, housing, and other sectors. In LAC, Jamaica's [Community Renewal Programme](#) is an integrated multi-level intervention in 100 vulnerable neighborhoods, that includes specific interventions oriented to economic development, physical and social transformation, citizen security, and youth development. The Programme is coordinated by the Planning Institute of Jamaica, a key CoG institution.

**Coordinated implementation can also simplify access for service users to programs and services delivered by different entities.** If a range of ministries, agencies, levels of government, or even third-party providers manage programs for the same group of beneficiaries (senior citizens, children, vulnerable populations, etc.), a usual complication is the proliferation of different eligibility requirements and procedures to access services. The administrative burden (Moynihan and Herd, 2019) imposed by government bureaucracies on citizens limits access and thus the impact of interventions. “Joining up” services (even physically in integrated service delivery centers) can help reduce burdens and facilitate more holistic treatment of the beneficiaries.

**Multi-level coordination is important not only for implementation with subnational governments; it is also important for supranational objectives and commitments, at least those of highest importance.**

Governments are increasingly subscribing to international commitments, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) on climate change. Achieving the goals elaborated in these plans typically requires aligning efforts from multiple ministries, agencies, and levels of government. Without coordination, it is likely that some entities will be defining policies oriented toward reducing emissions while others promote and subsidize activities or sectors that increase them; in fact, this is a frequent occurrence in many LAC countries, which devote significant budget resources to policies with conflicting climate impacts (Ferro et al., 2020). Different studies argue that sector ministries (such as ministries of the environment for the NDCs, or ministries of social development for the SDGs) face challenges when producing such coordination, thus limiting the ability to deliver on these goals (Bailey and Preston, 2014; Wong, 2019). Thus, the CoG’s leadership may be needed to align government policy. Of course, given the growing number of such international commitments, the CoG must be strategic in prioritizing its interventions. Otherwise, there is a risk of CoG overload and lack of effective leadership. For example, establishing an interministerial Climate Committee is not sufficient without active engagement from the chief executive or her closest advisers (see Sasse, [2020] on the UK’s Net Zero Committee). In several LAC countries, the process of accession to the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) has been a presidential priority and, given its multisectoral nature, has rightly been led from the CoG (see de Araújo Filho and Rivas Otero, 2020, on the case of Colombia).



**Finally, a coordinating role for the CoG is not antithetical to decentralization of the public sector; indeed, by developing respectful and collaborative partnerships, it may help to improve the effectiveness of the delegation of authority by ensuring more effective coordination between different layers of government.** Multi-level governance is about different tiers of the state (each with democratic legitimacy) and other implementation partners (such NGOs and civil society) working together effectively. There need to be different mechanisms in place to align their work and resolve conflicts, such as in budgetary processes, policymaking, implementation or in crisis response. Moreover, there are numerous policy goals that can only be delivered through close cooperation between a range of stakeholders and societal actors beyond the CoG and the government itself, a so-called ‘network’ approach to governance. This implies a specific role for the CoG in creating the conditions for good practice across levels of government in networked approaches to policymaking and implementation.

### ***Coordination with External Stakeholders***

**Achieving policy integration is facilitated by cross-government horizontal and vertical coordination, and also by collaboration with key external stakeholders that increasingly matter in policy development and implementation** (UN, 2018). The “rise of governing by network” (Goldsmith and Eggers, 2004), or “indirect government” (Kettl, 2002), is not a new phenomenon anymore. However, in a context of increasing fiscal pressures, growing citizen demand for stronger delivery, and complex challenges that require a broad range of skill sets, it is likely that the collaboration with non-state actors will continue to expand. These collaborations can ensure that relevant information is available for decision-making; bring in additional resources and expertise; identify solutions that are tailored to specific contexts; expand the ability to deliver; strengthen transparency and accountability; and enhance policy ownership and, thus, support and compliance. At the same time, their contributions need to be carefully coordinated to maintain policy coherence and alignment to the government’s priorities. Although each MDA is responsible for implementing the specific collaborations needed in each sector, these may be facilitated if CoGs establish a coherent framework and incentives that apply across all priority policy areas, and if the CoG supports MDAs in developing the right capabilities to manage

these third-party engagements. Moreover, because priority goals often cut across multiple sectors, the CoG can help to ensure that the right balance of stakeholders is considered in these engagements, as well as to enable a synthesis between potentially conflicting interests. This requires instruments and capabilities that go beyond the CoG's more traditional command and control approach, thus expanding the toolbox to be developed by the center.

### ***Crisis Management***

**Finally, an increasingly important aspect of coordination is the response to and recovery from emergencies or crises.** The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to enhance the prospective analysis and risk scanning capacities of government. But, in addition to anticipating crises, the CoG has an indispensable role to play in coordinating the responses once crises have occurred, as they involve multiple sectors and stakeholders and require defining priorities and managing tradeoffs across them. This includes mobilizing non-state actors that, in many countries, have responsibilities, resources, expertise, and skills that are critical for crisis response (OECD, 2018c). The factors that are generally regarded to help secure crisis coordination include the visible commitment and backing from the leadership; governance arrangements (including a command center) with well-defined mandates and specific roles and responsibilities; clarity about shared priorities and goals; established channels and interoperable IT systems for communication and reporting with the network of actors involved in the effort; and real-time information for decision-making and clearing up bottlenecks (Kunicova, 2020; OECD, 2022a).<sup>27</sup> The recovery phase should also be coordinated from the CoG, as it usually also requires the coherent application of multiple different interventions (“all hands on deck”) and the ability to deploy them rapidly by expediting business-as-usual procedures of public administration. The CoG's political backing can be indispensable in instilling such a sense of urgency.

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<sup>27</sup> For example, in South Korea (which performed well on both health and economic indicators in 2020-2021) some of the key success factors were a centralized crisis response system, an early warning system, and the use of technology for information-sharing and communication (Bouey, 2022).

**As with other core functions, the CoG may not have particular expertise on the topic of the crisis; however, its role is to make sure that the crisis response is implemented effectively.** The United States' response to the Ebola outbreak in 2014 is often regarded as a best-practice example in crisis management of inter-agency management (Widner, 2018). To coordinate the government's interventions, the government appointed a response coordinator with no specific healthcare background: a lawyer with extensive experience in the executive branch. Addressing potential criticism, the White House emphasized that "what we are looking for was not an Ebola expert, but rather an implementation expert" (cited in Vaughn and Villalobos, 2015). As described by the "ebola czar" himself, his role was not to supplant the medical experts, who devised the technical responses to the crisis, but to quickly mobilize multiple agencies, resources, and staff behind that strategic direction.<sup>28</sup>

## Monitoring and Improving Performance

The function of monitoring and improving performance includes four components: the collection and analysis of real-time performance data, the establishment of data-driven monitoring routines for decision-making for learning about what works and for internal accountability, the continuous reporting of progress to the chief executive and the senior government leadership, and the CoG's support in unblocking obstacles that limit delivery. In recent years there has been a significant improvement in the availability of performance data. However, as is well known after two decades of improved performance management in the public sector, monitoring performance against the government's ambitions is necessary but not sufficient. Governments require approaches to improving performance that both support and challenge implementing MDAs to secure better results more quickly.

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.wired.com/story/ebola-czar-ron-klain-federal-coronavirus-response/>.

**Summing up the contents of this section, an updated understanding of the “monitoring and improving performance” function includes the following key practices:**

- The CoG (including the chief executive and senior members of the government) needs to have *routines that track the top government priorities*, while ensuring that ministries and agencies closely monitor their broader portfolios.
- The establishment of *high quality and (increasingly) real-time data flows* is the foundation of any routine to review progress with all key stakeholders.
- The *regular reporting to the Chief Executive and senior members of the government* enables appropriate action to be taken and to avoid performance drift.
- The CoG’s active *engagement in resolving bottlenecks*, although safeguarding that the responsibility for delivery always lies with the implementing entities.

### ***Real-time Performance Information***

**Once governments have established priority goals, planned for their implementation, aligned resources, and coordinated the stakeholders throughout the delivery chain, a key function of the CoG is to monitor implementation and intervene when performance is off track to accelerate progress.** Traditionally, CoG leaders have been more involved in strategy and policy development, as well as in communications and negotiating legislation, rather than in the practicalities of implementation. Recently, however, the focus has shifted in the other direction. In fact, recognizing the challenges of delivery has been one of the drivers for the revival of the CoG and its associated reform efforts in LAC and globally. The rise of delivery units, implementation units, management cells, and public policy secretariats (or similar teams devoted to improving implementation and “getting things done”) illustrates this phenomenon. Since its first incarnation in the United Kingdom in 2001, over 150 delivery units in 80 countries have

been identified globally; a fifth of these cases are from LAC countries.<sup>29</sup> Renewed interest at the CoG in the practical workings of technical delivery in government matches similar efforts in the private sector. As stated by one of Amazon’s “leadership principles” (Bryar and Carr, 2021): “Dive deep. Leaders operate at all levels, stay connected to the details, audit frequently, and are skeptical when metrics and anecdotes differ. No task is beneath them.” The performance framework must recognize that policy implementation is the responsibility of line ministries, and they will need to have arrangements in place to track the impact of their business-as-usual activity; but when the CoG takes an active (and selective) interest in results by modeling good management practices, it can pay significant dividends.

**For the first time, technology has enabled real-time monitoring of granular government performance.** As described in Chapter 1, the growing use of sensors, wearable devices, mobile phones, WiFi hotspots, electronic health records, student digital IDs, social media, and other tools has massively accelerated the collection of data about government processes, outputs, and individual and societal outcomes. The ability to scrape data from the internet changes the ability of governments to gain real insights. For example, the City of Buenos Aires tracks the deployment of police officers using GPS data produced by their mobile phones, and from this data it measures the level of completion of predesigned deployment routes at several levels (individual officers, patrols, precincts, the entire city). This is one of the process indicators used in weekly monitoring meetings. Several LAC countries have begun to establish early warning systems to anticipate and prevent student dropout from schools, a trend accelerated by the COVID-19 crisis. These systems include mostly digitized data generated by schools (such as attendance or performance) but could potentially be integrated with other databases (health, social protection) that generate valuable information about dropout risk (Perusia and Cardini, 2021). Proactively identifying red flags that can prevent teen pregnancy is another example: integrating individual and household variables and applying machine learning techniques, the Province of Salta (Argentina) built a statistical model that claimed to predict 80 percent of teen pregnancies (Abeleira, 2018). During the COVID-19 crisis, several governments

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<sup>29</sup> See Global Mapping of Delivery Approaches (<https://educationcommission.org/delivery-approach-map/>), consulted on May 4, 2022. Some of these cases are based in line ministries.

established daily monitoring routines to review real-time input, process, output, and outcome indicators, although the crisis also highlighted the challenges and limitations of existing information systems (See Box 2.5).

### BOX 2.5. THE CHALLENGES OF REAL-TIME MONITORING DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

For most senior policymakers, the COVID-19 pandemic was a game changer in terms of their frequent access and use of real-time data. At the onset of the crisis, most governments established some form of performance dashboard and routines with regular (often daily) updates to inform the decision-making processes of government leaders. In different countries or at different times during the pandemic, these dashboards typically included a combination of *input* indicators (availability of ventilators, protective equipment, etc.); *process* indicators (such as number of PCR tests applied or vaccines distributed); *output* indicators (bed occupancy rates, intensive care occupancy rates, vaccination rates); and *outcome* indicators (number of cases, positivity rates, number of deaths, etc.), as well as other *leading* indicators from different sectors (such as traffic mobility rates, viral loads in wastewaters, etc., that could predict subsequent changes in the aforementioned indicators) and indicators on other relevant policy areas, such as economic activity or employment (including the use of nowcasting tools to capture the rapid variations produced by the pandemic and the government's policy decisions).

However, the pandemic also exposed some of the challenges and limitations of the existing information systems to properly feed decision-makers with real-time inputs from automated processes (OECD, 2022b; PAHO, 2020). Many countries lacked the governance framework and technology infrastructure required to automatically integrate health data from different levels of government or types of service providers (private, community-based, etc.). The use of different definitions, methodologies, or platforms was sometimes an obstacle to interoperability. Moreover, the insufficient coverage of personal electronic health records (which break down data silos) was often a limitation. Confidentiality issues, not properly regulated, also prevented information from being shared with decision-makers. Finally, the pandemic exposed the need for greater capabilities to analyze the data.

Although the crisis led to significant efforts to improve the availability of high-quality data, these initiatives need to be sustained and extended to other policy areas. This highlights the increasingly important role of the CoG in data governance to feed into its more established monitoring function.

The potential of new digital technologies greatly expands the capacity of CoG monitoring functions. They allow for more rapid detection of obstacles; they permit a more disaggregated collection and reporting of information, enabling a more precise identification of where the specific bottlenecks are (e.g., specific regions or service providers); and they help integrate information that was previously siloed, thereby enabling more comprehensive tracking of performance. This may include connecting data on the perspective of citizens or customers and of the government's own employees, as promoted by the CoG in the U.S. federal government (Boland, French, and Gill, 2020). Of course, realizing this potential requires strong data and digital capabilities across the government and frameworks for data-sharing, which the CoG is well placed to expand.

### ***Monitoring Routines and Internal Accountability***

**Several factors appear to be important in embedding active results-focused routines in the CoG. These include the chief executive's political commitment, sustained discipline of routines, the availability of high-quality data, and the participation of all key stakeholders.** The academic literature (Behn, 2014; Moynihan and Kroll, 2017) and the direct experience of practitioners agree on the key features needed for this function to operate effectively.

- First, *the chief executive and senior leaders of the government's visible demonstration of interest* in results can shape the incentives of line ministries. While the routines of a performance framework can mitigate the lack of time a chief executive can give to overseeing performance, officials take the lead from senior members of the government. Thus, leveraging the political authority of the chief executive ensures that these routines will be impactful and lead to changes in behavior.<sup>30</sup> Of course, this will need to be limited to the government's key *priorities*; it would be impossible to extend such attention to the full government plan. For the broader set of goals,

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<sup>30</sup> In 2022, with IDB support, the municipality of Maipu in Santiago, Chile, established a CoG management model with periodic stocktakes led by the mayor. An external evaluation of the implementation of the approach identified, among its findings, that the mayor's presence at the sessions had a motivational effect on civil servants who, until then, had lacked an opportunity for direct interaction with the top leadership (Municipality of Maipu, 2022).

the CoG should ensure that there is a performance framework in place and that ministries track the implementation of the policies and programs of their jurisdiction. The role of the CoG may extend to ensuring the performance framework is in place, but typically with less direct central oversight.

- *Second, the discipline in sustaining the frequency of these monitoring routines* (even when crises or day-to-day events invite to divert the attention) is what embeds a performance culture and eventually leads to improved results. Routines need to be applied routinely. Monitoring is not a one-off type of function. Monitoring routines are an important investment of the scarce time of the chief executive and other government leaders; their returns are large. These refer not only to improved government performance; they can also include a more efficient organization of the leaders' daily schedules. Instead of having multiple separate and ad hoc discussions about performance with different ministers and officials, and instead of a reactive approach to solving problems (which often demands major efforts, as crises have already occurred), a fixed and proactive monitoring routine with all key stakeholders can greatly streamline the amount of time that leadership devotes to ensuring their priority goals are achieved.
- *Third, the availability of high-quality data* (ideally, data that is valid, reliable, timely, and disaggregated enough to be actionable) is a key ingredient of effective monitoring routines. One version of the truth across all delivery partners is needed to avoid misunderstandings and being overwhelmed by multiple data sources. This version of the truth should be based on both quantitative data and evidenced qualitative information and judgement. In its absence, anecdotes and personal perceptions will predominate, leading to arguments about what the real situation is and not about what to do to improve it. As stated by Borgonovi, Anessi-Pessina, and Bianchi. (2018: ix), "one of the pillars of management studies, theories, and practice is that 'nothing can be improved if not measured.'" In addition to strong data, the CoG needs the analytical capacity to identify the critical issues that require a high-level conversation, increasingly by incorporating big data, artificial intelligence, and predictive analytics to extract patterns and insights.
- Finally, the monitoring routines are most valuable when they include *all of the relevant stakeholders who contribute to the delivery of*

**One version of the truth across all delivery partners is needed to avoid misunderstandings and being overwhelmed by multiple data sources.**



*a key priority.* Many governments have established some form of regular review routine with each ministry or agency. However, given that every government priority often demands contributions from several entities, this monitoring arrangement does not facilitate the integrated review of progress, detection of bottlenecks, and resolution of problems; instead, it may lead to entities simply shifting the responsibility to others not present in the room. Thus, the CoG may end up chasing the problems throughout several meetings. Organizing the monitoring routines by priority rather than by ministry appears more promising. In fact, this multi-ministerial approach can serve both of the monitoring purposes: it can increase the incentive to deliver (to avoid being shamed in front of other entities) and it can facilitate learning and disseminating what works. As with all CoG functions, there is a complementarity with horizontal coordination, as these integrated routines also help cut across ministerial silos. An often-overlooked stakeholder includes mission support functions (treasury, legal, human resources, IT, etc.) which are crucial for timely delivery. Of course, trying to include every single stakeholder may lead to unwieldy sessions. The CoG needs to exercise judgment in identifying the most essential stakeholders.

**Systematic monitoring accelerates implementation through two main mechanisms: by shaping the incentives and behaviors of line ministries, and by helping to learn about what works.** Ministries too often only report positive news stories to the CoG and are sometimes incentivized to hide problems or delays; eventually, this leads to poor performance and weak delivery. As such, the CoG has an indispensable role in creating a culture of openness and opportunities to review delivery against priorities, particularly for the most important goals. This routine monitoring modifies the incentives of ministries and, as described by a practitioner interviewed for this study, it is difficult for ministers to hide a lack of progress to a chief executive if there is an expectation of successive monitoring meetings. Thus, in such situations it is likely that, before the following session, important efforts will be devoted to removing whatever obstacles are limiting progress. This logic cascades downward as officials report progress data in preparation for such sessions and face similar incentives of demonstrating improved performance within their areas of responsibility. Establishing a periodic monitoring routine for priority goals can act as a catalyzer for key actors focusing on performance throughout the delivery chain. In

this way, systematic monitoring creates a new framework of internal accountability, which routinely exposes to the CoG the work of priority program managers and poses incentives for continuous improvement, resolution of bottlenecks, and better coordination with other programs contributing to the same priority. Box 2.6 summarizes the characteristics and results of a routine established to monitor and improve the performance of state-owned enterprises in Argentina.

#### **BOX 2.6. NEW COORDINATION AND PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK OF STATE-OWNED ENTERPRISES IN ARGENTINA**

In late 2015, Argentina sought to strengthen the performance of its Center of Government functions. Within the Office of the Chief of Cabinet (the main CoG institution in the federal government), two deputy chiefs were appointed to coordinate presidential priorities in economic and social policy, respectively. New processes were established to set clear objectives, coordinate ministries in their delivery, and monitor progress through periodic review routines. One of the goals prioritized by the CoG was improving the performance of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), which by then were demanding significant transfers from the Treasury due to weak management (Lopetegui and López Azumendi, 2018). A specific team in the CoG, reporting to the deputy chief of cabinet coordinating economic policy, was established to lead this priority objective.

This CoG team drove the implementation of a new performance framework to be applied across the 30 largest SOEs, which accounted for 98 percent of all employees and practically 100 percent of Treasury subsidies. This framework required the development of strategic plans for each firm, the professionalization and development of capabilities, and systematic monitoring of progress through monthly sessions and ongoing reporting of performance. It also promoted synergies across SOEs by establishing communities of practice for shared areas of corporate governance. For instance, an Integrity Network was established to disseminate and mainstream anticorruption policies across the SOEs, also including the participation of officials from the state's audit institutions. Visible political backing from the president and the chief of cabinet were critical to ensure buy-in from most SOEs and the ministries to which they reported.

Significant improvements followed the introduction of this new performance framework. While in 2016 only 36 percent of SOEs submitted monthly performance information to the Budget Office and to the Office of the Chief of Cabinet, by 2018 the proportion had increased to 97 percent. This change enabled stronger accountability for results. The Treasury subsidies to SOEs, which had

reached 1.5 percent of GDP in 2015, were reduced by half, to 0.74 percent, by 2019 (Jefatura de Gabinete de Ministros, 2019). The reduction was even greater among SOEs where the framework was applied more rapidly, such as four SOEs from the Ministry of Defense (see table R2.6.1). While the incorporation of other SOEs to the new framework was more gradual, the Defense SOEs were early adopters. Moreover, and unlike the utilities, these SOEs are not funded through user fees, which is further evidence that the reduction in subsidies was due to performance improvements and not to other factors (such as increased fees to consumers). Finally, other operational and efficiency improvements were identified across multiple companies. These outcomes are specific to each sector and thus cannot be consolidated in a single metric, but they include, for example, a 40 percent increase in the ratio of flights attended per employee (in an SOE providing logistics support in airports) and a 28 percent reduction in the proportion of employees per transported passenger in the railway company.

**Table R2.6.1 Variation in Treasury Subsidies 2015–2018**

	Variation in Treasury subsidies
All SOEs	-34%
Defense SOEs	-54%

Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from Jefatura de Gabinete de Ministros (2019).

**The second mechanism refers to the learning processes enabled by the periodic monitoring of performance.** The systematic use of performance information can help to identify recurring obstacles to delivery across government, test potential solutions, and measure their impact. There is a growing consensus that policy effectiveness requires mechanisms to facilitate the adaptation or adjustment of interventions. This approach often involves trial-and-error learning, which is discouraged by traditional practice in public administration (e.g., limited flexibility in budget management, risk aversion among officials, etc.). In coordination with the budget authority, the CoG can provide MDAs with the environment to overcome this aversion to innovation and learning. Moreover, because some of the obstacles in delivery can be common across sectors (e.g., the existence of delays in processes for recruitment, procurement, permitting or disbursement), the CoG is well placed to synthesize and disseminate these findings throughout the government and to ensure that appropriate action is taken based on this information.

No line ministry could produce such whole-of-government reach for sharing good practices. In addition, the CoG can set up the cross-government bodies (interministerial committees, working groups, task forces, etc.) where information can cut across traditional government siloes.<sup>31</sup> This active sharing of information can be particularly crucial in the public administrations of many LAC countries in which civil servants' turnover (with its concomitant loss of institutional memory) is a major challenge, due to the limited development of the permanent civil service. Corbett et al. (2020) refer to this as a dynamic understanding of institutional memory, in which the information is shared across government and not stored in a specific institution; it relies on an overall conversation, and not just a discrete end-of-project evaluation; and it includes additional actors alongside permanent civil servants.

**Part of the challenge for the CoG is to balance the challenge of accountability with support for learning and problem-solving to unblock obstacles.** The incentives that encourage efforts toward improved performance can also lead to gaming strategies by which the ministries hide problems rather than acknowledging them. If such perverse behaviors predominate, it is not possible to have the frank conversations needed to learn from the performance data. Although both mechanisms are relevant for enhanced delivery, the CoG should be aware of the tension that exists between them. Chapter 3 will cover the concrete instruments that can be used to reconcile both purposes, and at least to identify which one could be prioritized in each context. For example, when the goals being monitored refer to outputs with a well-known delivery chain, the CoG may prioritize ensuring fidelity to the programs' design (Education Commission, 2021); the first purpose would then be more relevant. But if the path to delivering the goal (as it often happens with outcomes) is less certain, the CoG may favor learning about what works to promote problem-solving and adaptive management, thus seeking the second purpose. In other words, if the goals resemble "building a rocket" (where the causal processes and solutions are known), a focus on accountability seems preferable, but if the goals are like "raising a child" (that is, complex and fluctuating) then learning may be the most critical purpose (Diamond, 2021a).

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<sup>31</sup> As established by the Evidence Act of 2018, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requires agencies to present their "learning agendas," which seek to address strategic and operational questions that matter for the effective implementation of policies and programs. OMB also publishes a cross-cutting learning agenda that covers management issues that matter across all agencies.

### ***Reporting to the Chief Executive and Government Leaders***

**In addition to managing periodic monitoring routines, the CoG should ensure that chief executives and senior members of the government are continuously updated on progress and obstacles.** This reporting is needed for both timely and evidence-based decision-making and for strengthening the incentives of ministries and agencies to deliver (which are enhanced when they know that the leadership is up to date on their priorities). The reporting can be operationalized by different tools, but for any of them it is critical to understand their audience: chief executives and other government leaders face massive time constraints. Thus, performance reports must have a clear purpose, message, and options for decision-making, incorporate qualitative insights to provide meaning to the quantitative indicators, and present the information in a concise way, using visuals and avoiding technical jargon. Online dashboards are a popular way of consolidating and displaying performance information that chief executives can access at all times through their tablet or smartphone. In practice, however, the availability of performance information is usually not sufficient to secure its *use* for decision-making unless the CoG adds context and insight to it, as well as establish routine instances to review the data.

**What matters is that reporting leads to robust action.** This means the reports need to be tailored to the individuals who receive them (in both style and content) and should contain appropriate advice regarding the action that is required. When performance is good, reporting can celebrate and recognize those who made it happen. When performance is off track, taking action to understand the reasons why will be critical to ensure that appropriate action is taken to accelerate progress.

### ***Unblocking Obstacles to Delivery***

**Finally, and unlike traditional monitoring activities, the CoG increasingly seeks to complement its “challenge” to MDAs with its selective “support” to remove obstacles to improve performance.** It is said that “weighing the pig does not fatten it,” but it does enable us to know if the growth is as expected and where there is a need to act. Similarly, monitoring or tracking performance is not an end in itself. Too often, monitoring arrangements cover hundreds or thousands of

indicators, which crowds out time to do much with the information or to provide direct support to accelerate progress. Too often this leaves the monitoring agency providing challenge without support, while enforcing compliance but with little sustained improvement. The CoG's focus on select priorities enables a more proactive engagement for improving performance. With its political empowerment and its potential to attract top managerial and analytical talent, the CoG is often well placed to assist ministries and agencies in dealing with implementation challenges.<sup>32</sup> Thus, having capacity with a discrete focus on results to work with line ministries to understand where there are obstacles to achieving the government's goals, and proactively removing barriers can add significant value to address bottlenecks by resolving disagreements between ministries; to provide political or managerial support as needed; to help identify the root causes generating any delays, even at the frontline ("deep dives"); to assist in designing corrective actions; and, more broadly, to assess and strengthen the capabilities of ministries and agencies. It is important to stress that the CoG will never have the resources or the expertise to directly implement policies itself; this is the role of line ministries and agencies, with few exceptions.<sup>33</sup> Admittedly, in practice there may be a grey area between providing delivery support and becoming fully enmeshed with implementation, but CoG teams should be advised to always ensure that the responsibility and the accountability for delivery lies with the ministries and agencies. If not, the CoG may be perceived as directly accountable for delivery, losing its indispensable role as an independent monitor of progress, which can report the unvarnished version of how things are going.

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<sup>32</sup> A former governor and secretary of planning of the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil, compared this role to a personal trainer who assists in solving day-to-day problems (cited in Marinho dos Santos, 2018).

<sup>33</sup> On specific occasions, chief executives assign the main responsibility for specific goals or projects to CoG teams. For example, leading "government reform" is a frequent role of the CoG in OECD countries (OECD, 2018b). Similar cases in different periods in LAC include Uruguay's Committee for State Reform, based in the Presidency (Lanzaro, 2016); Chile's State Modernization Unit, also based in the Presidency (Larroulet Vignau and Rios, 2016); and Argentina's privatizations' unit in the early 1990's (Chaia de Bellis, 2018). Other flagship initiatives have also been led directly from the CoG, such as Uruguay's early childhood strategy (Uruguay Crece Contigo) and one-laptop-per-child program (Plan Ceibal) (Milanesi, 2017). Similarly, many whole-of-government digital strategies are led from the CoG, at least in their early stages. These situations may respond to the cross-cutting nature of these initiatives, to the perceived lack of capacities in the potential implementing agencies, or to the chief executive's personal interest in the topic; but, in general, the CoG lacks the resources, expertise, and frontline presence needed to directly implement policy.

**As many governments have defaulted to creating new units to undertake such work, much has been learned. They have sometimes proved successful but are never a silver bullet, and many have had a limited lifespan.** A strength is often that they can bring skilled expertise to the analysis of implementation challenges. However, experience has demonstrated the importance of maintaining a tight remit, ensuring that they are populated with appropriate skills, that they are based on sound principles of operating with line ministries, and they have robust routines that are fit for purpose (Gold, 2017).

## Managing the Politics of Policies

The CoG's political functions includes four components: its role in managing the government's overall political economy and strategic direction, which includes managing key stakeholders; the aligning of intra-executive branch stakeholders, especially in coalition settings; the proactive scanning, anticipation, and management of societal conflicts, especially those of multidimensional nature; and the coordination of government transitions. The IDB's technical work has not focused on this function of the CoG, but there are lessons learned and relevant literature presented in this chapter.

**Summing up the contents of this section, an updated understanding of the CoG's political function includes the following key practices:**

- Managing the government's *political economy and strategic direction*, including continuous contact with trends in public opinion and the incorporation of political insight and advice into high-level decision making.
- *Coordinating political negotiations with key stakeholders* whose approval or support is needed to implement the government's goals, mainly to establish priorities and manage tradeoffs with a whole-of-government perspective.
- The *management of intra-executive branch politics and actors* in coalition settings.

- The proactive *anticipation and prevention of social conflicts*, and the coordination of its resolution.
- The implementation of rules and regulations governing transitions in power.

### ***Managing the Government's Political Economy***

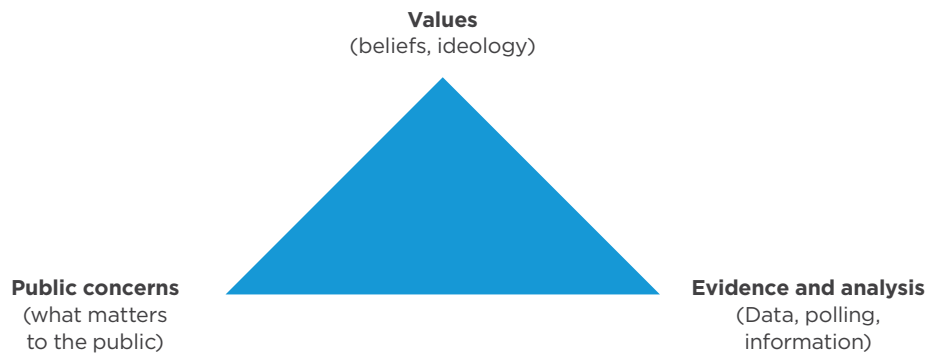
**Policymaking is an inherently political exercise which is ultimately about 'who gets what, when and how'** (Lasswell, 1956). Post-war models of policymaking in Western countries (variously applied in some LACs in more recent times) sought to strip the politics out of policymaking to make the process more consistent and rational. Yet such an approach proved to be flawed since politics is integral to effective policy design. More often than not, the actions of government take place in a political context where authority and legitimacy are vested in government by citizens through the democratic process. Governments need to be sensitive to changes in public mood while drawing on intelligence from different parts of society—which highlights the importance of public engagement—where in many democracies there is a strong tradition of secrecy and decision-making behind closed doors. Governments must navigate unpredictable shocks and events that are integral to politics while fashioning strategies for governing (Roberts, 2019).

**Due to its connection to the chief executive and cross-government perspective, the CoG is well placed to develop and oversee a government strategy that is sensitive to political dynamics and trends.** Effective strategic policymaking that takes politics fully into account brings together three points of a triangle (Figure 2.6): what the government in power believes according to its values and ideology, shaping its distinctive priorities; what the public and citizens really care about; and what evidence and expertise tells us about what is most important in policymaking (Halpern, 2009). Invariably, it is only the CoG that can adopt this strategic perspective in the politics of policymaking. Sectoral bureaucracies, for example, have access to evidence and analysis of what is important, but may be tempted to ignore or underplay what the public really cares about. Equally, departments may take a view of a policy issue that reflects the long-term position of the ministry and its related interest groups but is actually out of kilter with



the overall direction of the government. The role of the CoG is to keep the three sides of the triangle in alignment, thereby maintaining and upholding the political dimension of the policymaking process.

**Figure 2.4.**  
**The Strategic Triangle in the Politics of Policymaking**



Source: Adapted from Halpern (2009: 276).

**In managing this strategy, a critical role for the CoG is the management of political economy challenges within the executive branch.** Various practitioners interviewed for this study indicated that internal issues are often as challenging as dealing with external stakeholders. Interministerial disagreements and conflicts can delay delivery, lead to incoherent policies, and contribute to a public perception of incompetent leadership. Establishing a strategy that articulates political direction, policymaking, and communications in a consistent way is needed to align the key internal stakeholders and provide coherence to the machinery of government. At the same time, the CoG must treat its internal political role carefully. Managing a government is different from managing a political party. If governments seek to establish the strong managerial routines described above, then the CoG should devote substantial efforts to ensuring that ministers do not perceive them as an intrusion into their roles nor as an impediment to their direct access to the chief executive. Exercising this function takes time and can sometimes crowd out the more delivery-focused activity. If the CoG is perceived as an overly empowered parallel administration, as has occurred in certain LAC countries, it becomes challenging for the CoG to perform its key functions

effectively, which depend on ministerial trust and collaboration. While maintaining a low profile, the CoG needs to continuously work to maintain internal consensus and support for the government's agenda.

**Coordinating political negotiations with external stakeholders is a well-established function of CoGs.** Advancing any policy priority typically requires the support of a broad set of actors, each with their own interests and perspectives. These include members of the legislature, subnational governments, the judiciary, political parties, business groups, labor unions, civil society organizations, media organizations, international partners, and other actors. Each ministry and agency are primarily responsible for managing the key stakeholders within their policy areas. However, many of the actors have interests and positions in several policy areas, and thus the negotiations for any individual priority can affect the success of others. A whole-of-government approach and strategy, although ambitious to maintain in practice, can provide overall leadership and coordination to these sectoral negotiations, ensuring that compromises and agreements in any area consider the impacts and tradeoffs for others. With its cross-cutting perspective, its lack of any specific sectoral turf to protect, and its ability to speak on behalf of the chief executive, the CoG is the only actor able to undertake this effort.

**This function entails incorporating political insight into the government's decision-making processes.** Policymaking involves making choices between competing approaches and dealing with often intractable tradeoffs. Thus, purely technocratic approaches to policymaking, which can be a tendency in strong bureaucracies, can miss the legitimate political focus of government, which is to deliver on the administration's priorities and goals, reflecting the needs of citizens while communicating with them in a way that is most likely to establish trust. Moreover, the CoG's technical functions (planning, coordination, and monitoring) do not imply a mechanistic approach to decision-making; neglecting political economy factors can lead to failure of even the best-designed policy. For example, the way the CoG monitors and supports delivery may need to be adapted depending on the characteristics of the different priorities. For policies that require a high degree of consensus, "administrative implementation" (which seeks the strict adherence to the targets and trajectories defined in the planning stage) may be the right approach; but for more contentious policies, "political implementation" (which allows for flexibility to ensure that political factors are being

considered as implementation progresses) appears preferable (Hudson, 2019). The latter approach would seek to ensure that the evolving political context (the views of public opinion, the level of stakeholder support, etc.) is continuously being reflected in any updates to the plan. Without such flexibility, ministries may focus on hitting the target, but they may miss the broader point in terms of the government's overall success. A similar political mindset should be incorporated at all stages of the policy cycle.

### ***Coalition Management***

**The management of internal stakeholders has become increasingly important, as coalition governments are now the norm in many countries.** Due to the increased fragmentation of party systems, the formation of electoral and governing coalitions has become an increasingly common phenomenon in LAC countries, as it has elsewhere across the world (Cruz, 2019). This reality can create new challenges for leading the government consistently and with a focus on results. In addition to the coordination needed to align ministries with different institutional, organizational, or sectoral perspectives, coalitions also need to align the views of the parties that make up the government. Consequently, potentially new sources for contradiction or conflict need to be addressed. In these contexts, the role of the CoG is increasingly important. As illustrated in Chapter 3, managing coalitional politics may include setting formal or informal procedures for decision-making, to ensure that all parties are informed or have been consulted regarding key policy decisions; coordinating the government's legislative agenda; establishing routines to manage and resolve potential disagreements; and, overall, seeking to instill a shared vision and cohesive culture despite the diverse party affiliations. The lack of effective political negotiations can lead to internal conflicts and to diverging or even contradictory policy positions.<sup>34</sup> Again, there is a danger that this internal work crowds out the outcome-focused work of the government.

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<sup>34</sup> See, for example, in Argentina: "El Gobierno impulsa dos leyes vinculadas a la energía que se contradicen y marca las diferencias internas en el gabinete" ("The administration promotes two contradictory energy bills, showing the internal differences in the Cabinet"; authors' translation), in *La Nación*, January 25, 2022 (<https://www.lanacion.com.ar/politica/el-gobierno-impulsa-dos-leyes-vinculadas-a-la-energia-que-se-contradicen-y-marca-las-diferencias-nid25012022/>). The article describes the policy contradictions in two bills submitted by the Executive to the Congress. The bills were drafted by two-line ministries (Productive Development and Energy) led by different groups within the governing coalition. In August 2022, these were finally merged as part of a single Ministry of the Economy.

Moreover, because in presidential systems of government (which exist in all Latin American countries) the president's term is fixed, the eventual breakdown of a governing coalition cannot be resolved through new elections; instead, presidents may have to continue their term in a status of permanent minority. Thus, sound coalition management is even more important in presidential settings.

**The available evidence in LAC indicates that CoGs play a key role in coalition settings, although these contexts may present particular challenges.** A quantitative time-series study of Colombia's Presidential Office has identified that "the greater the number of ministers in the cabinet from parties different from the president's, the greater the transformations to the presidential office" (Mejía-Guinand, Botero, and Solano, 2018). According to the authors, the explanation to these changes is that, in contexts of greater partisan diversity, presidents rely more strongly on the CoG to collect information, coordinate, and monitor ministerial alignment with presidential priorities. A similar dynamic was identified in Brazil (Borges, 2020). The Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento (PAC) was a major infrastructure initiative launched in 2007 and relaunched in 2010. Most of the sectors covered in the initiative (ports, energy, railroads, etc.) were led by members of parties that were different than the president's party. Thus, a new PAC coordinating body was established at the CoG to ensure coherence across these actors and to closely monitor implementation. Former CoG practitioners in Chile agree with this assessment: in coalition governments, they state, "different personalities and ideas exist, and thus the coordinating role becomes essential" (Larroulet Vignau and Rios, 2016). Of course, the reverse of this is the increased likelihood of "resistance" from these actors to being coordinated or monitored from the center.

**Coalition settings can pose distinctive challenges for some other CoG functions, such as performance monitoring.** In coalition governments, chief executives are generally more restricted if they seek to remove a certain minister from a different party, and thus the CoG's monitoring may not produce the same type of incentive to improve performance as in single-party governments (see Marinho dos Santos [2018] regarding the difficulties faced by Minas Gerais' project management office in a coalition government). In some countries, the practice of allocating quotas of senior positions within the same MDAs to the different coalition partners ("*cuoteo*") can increase the complexity of delivery



The management of internal stakeholders has become increasingly important, as coalition governments are now the norm in many countries”.

chains, as certain links may be affected by political disagreements between coalition partners. In sum, the CoG's role is critical in coalition settings, but it may also face additional challenges and resistance with respect to some of its core functions.

### ***Anticipation and Management of Societal Conflicts***

**Another matter of increased interest for the CoG is the anticipation and management of societal conflicts.** The decline in citizen trust, the rise in political polarization, the growth of social unrest, and the acceleration of social interactions produced by social media highlight the increased value of the CoG's political function. Each ministry and agency is responsible for collecting and processing information from the ground up to anticipate potential conflicts in their respective policy areas. However, some emerging conflicts may not fit within any ministries' specific jurisdiction (e.g., due to their regional nature or because they involve groups of the population with multiple demands) and may be so potentially impactful in their implications that they require the CoG's antennae to elevate the issue to the government's high-level decision-making bodies. As with all CoG functions, a systematic process for scanning and elevating early warnings is preferable to ad hoc prevention activities, which probably arrive too late to be effective. The CoG's role is even more important for conflict management and resolution, both in setting standards for those cases to be addressed by each ministry (and in monitoring their effective resolution), and in ensuring a coherent response for those that demand whole-of-government interventions, managing tradeoffs across sectors, and issuing consistent public messages.

**This “firefighter” role of the CoG is critical, but it should not crowd out the routines required for delivering on medium-term objectives.** Crises and societal conflicts will inevitably arise in any country. In some of these cases the CoG plays a key role in resolving the conflict, allowing the rest of the government to continue to function. However, the CoG (particularly, the teams and officials closest to the chief executive) have sometimes been reduced to this firefighter role, acting mostly in reactive and emergency mode. It is critical that this role (which requires a combination of political, policy, and communications skills) does not crowd out the CoG's other routines and practices. For instance, efforts should be made so that the periodic stocktakes described in Chapter

3 are not suspended or delayed whenever a crisis diverts the attention of government leaders. A well-performing CoG is able to maintain such managerial routines even while a small group within its ranks is tasked with addressing day-to-day events.

### *Coordination of Transitions*

**Finally, the coordination of government transitions is a critical but underdeveloped component within this function, especially for Latin American countries.** Almost all of the current Latin American presidents belong to different parties than those of their predecessors. Between 2018 and March 2023, incumbent parties or coalitions have been defeated in presidential elections in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay; that is, in every Latin American country that held presidential elections except Paraguay, where different internal groups within the same party prevailed.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the appropriate management of transitions has become critical to ensuring the continuity of key policies and processes and to helping the incoming administration to implement its agenda as early as possible. Furthermore, the weakness of the civil service system in several LAC countries and the strong reliance on temporary political appointees, in particular at the CoG itself, exacerbates the risk of discontinuity of policies and a lag until the new administration can drive its agenda.<sup>36</sup> The CoG can support the transition process by facilitating the orderly and timely flow of information to the incoming team; organizing their access to government facilities and senior civil servants, particularly in the finance ministry; defining and/or implementing rules governing the transition period; and more generally, setting the tone for the contacts between the outgoing and incoming ministerial teams. Nonetheless, having clear rules and regulations that do not depend on the goodwill between parties can greatly strengthen this process.

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<sup>35</sup> In the Caribbean, this trend has not emerged: in this period, incumbent administrations were reelected in Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago, with the opposition prevailing in Guyana and Suriname.

<sup>36</sup> A few months after taking office in 2022, Chile's new president stated to his ministers that "the installment period is over" and instructed them "to assume a sense of urgency and let the citizens perceive the priorities for their departments." La Tercera, April 26, 2022, <https://www.latercera.com/politica/noticia/presidente-boric-tras-consejo-de-gabinete-ampliado-hemos-concordado-que-se-acabo-el-periodo-de-instalacion/HL6ZISGODVE7PO6YNINIAEPIPY/> (Authors' translation).

Most LAC countries are lagging behind in this regard. Internationally, successful transitions typically share certain elements, such as the codification of key rules, processes, timelines, resources, and roles and powers of different stakeholders; early preparations; setting mechanisms of cooperation between incoming and ongoing administrations; and the open sharing of information, which requires maintaining and managing archives. The absence of such frameworks can lead to tense and conflict-ridden transitions, in which the incoming team lacks the information and inputs needed to quickly focus on its policy priorities (NDI, 2021).

**This focus on coordinating transitions deals with several of the issues identified throughout this publication.** First, by ensuring a smooth transition, the government protects the continuity of service delivery to citizens. Second, by defining the role of civil servants to provide needed inputs for incoming administrations, especially in terms of consolidating the data and the knowledge available in government bureaucracies (for example, about successive policy interventions, their track records, lessons learned, etc.) the government creates a platform for resilience and stability. Third, the outgoing administration's online files and presence can be safeguarded through legacy websites to deepen institutional memory, as in the United States.<sup>37</sup> Finally, a more structured transition process may be critical in the effective and efficient management of the budget, minimizing the period until priorities can be reflected in government action. Overall, devoting attention to transitions means reaching a balance between short, medium, and long-term objectives. Although CoGs necessarily care about securing results during the current chief executive's term, they may also recognize that an administration is only the guardian of the government for a defined period of time. Thus, for certain functions and in certain contexts, their focus on results can also help to build lasting changes that leave the machinery and system of government stronger than the one they inherited. Several practitioners interviewed for this study identified the purely short-term focus of some CoGs as a factor that hinders the creation of more structured government capabilities. The CoG's focus on priority goals can help to identify and develop the capabilities needed for effective delivery, which in time may be embedded, replicated, and extended into longer-term changes of the public administration.

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<sup>37</sup> The National Archives freezes previous White House websites and keeps them available online, at <https://www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries/archived-websites>.



## Communications, Public Accountability, and Citizen Engagement

The revised communications, public accountability, and citizen engagement function includes three key components: the alignment of the government's communications; the building of citizen trust through systematic public accountability for performance; and the engagement of citizens throughout the policy cycle to co-create results. As governments manage the reality of a 24/7 news cycle and the demands for increased transparency and accountability, the challenges of the communication function have increased in importance. Effective oversight of this work can contribute to building trust in government—a substantial challenge worldwide.

**Summing up this section, an updated understanding of the CoG's communications function involves the following key practices:**

- *Alignment of the government's communications* through consistent narratives and messages.
- Ensuring *public accountability about the delivery of priority goals*, based on objective evidence of performance that helps build citizen trust.
- Setting standards to ensure the *engagement of citizens*, businesses, and civil society organizations across the policy cycle for all priority areas.

### ***Coordination and Standards for Communication***

**The role of the CoG in coordinating the government's communications is already well known and increasingly relevant.** The CoG has always been responsible for aligning the communications of all ministries to promote consistent messages to the public. As governments struggle with decreasing trust, and after the relevant lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2021), this coordination of communications becomes even more crucial. Each ministry is naturally eager to advance its own agenda, which could lead to a proliferation of disjointed initiatives and sometimes contradictory statements. Thus, only the CoG can ensure that coherent, whole-of-government priorities and messages take precedence in any communication to citizens. This requires the implementation of

a unified communications strategy, tied to the government's political identity and values (defining key messages, their timing, channels, spokespersons, etc.). This role has become increasingly important due to the fast-paced nature of social media, which expands the opportunities for sharing key messages and rapidly testing their reception using big data, but also amplifies the risk of adding noise to the government's communications. If ministries and officials are constantly interacting with citizens in real time, having a coordinated strategy and clear guidelines is crucial to minimize the risk of blunders and increase the confidence in the integrity and focus of the government. Additional factors have also contributed to this enhanced relevance, such as the decline in citizen trust, which demands specific strategies to address it (Keefer and Scartascini, 2022); the role of crisis communication during the pandemic; and the growing interest in the co-production of results with citizens. In fact, communication has become one of the CoG's top functions in most OECD countries (OECD, 2018b; 2021).

### ***Public Accountability for Performance***

**Making the priorities public can help align the work of line ministries and instill a sense of urgency.**

**In view of the decline in trust, adopting new approaches to communications, accountability, and citizen engagement has become more important.** As with all of the CoG's work, this function needs to be integrated with the other functions to produce results. A recent IDB study on trust recommends "encouraging governments to make promises, fulfill promises, and communicate both to citizens" (Keefer and Scartascini, 2022). To communicate results, governments also need to strategically manage their priorities, coordinate ministries behind them, and monitor their implementation to promote delivery. But honest and accurate public communications can also help with those other functions. For example, making the priorities public can help align the work of line ministries and instill a sense of urgency, as it increases the political cost of underperforming on them on a regular basis, as opposed to passing it on to the chief executive at the end of his/her term. This is the notion of "transparent performance": the idea that the proactive disclosure of data about government performance creates strong incentives to improve it (Kettl, 2013). The external communication of priorities is potentially a powerful tool for internal coordination

and monitoring, and to strengthen the orientation toward results.<sup>38</sup> In addition, communicating the priorities and the progress achieved on them can have its own independent benefits. First, it may contribute to strengthening citizen trust in government. Second, it is essential to actively engage citizens (as well as other non-state stakeholders) for priority outcomes that cannot be delivered by the government alone.

**There is robust evidence of the impact on citizen trust of actively communicating delivery and results, although this may only occur if the government is perceived as truly committed to the goals and honest about the successes and failures.** Public administration needs to identify innovative methods and techniques for engaging with citizens. Open data policies are typically not enough to enhance trust, as most citizens have limited time to acquire and process information about the workings of government. But the CoG's focus on top priorities may be better suited for this, as it concentrates on more selective objectives that generally correlate with the main concerns of public opinion (while ensuring that a framework for broader accountability is in place). These priorities can lead to greater public interest. A survey experiment in Buenos Aires tested the impact of providing information about the progress made on the mayor's Government Commitments (see Box 2.7). It found, on average, a positive and significant impact on trust, but with relevant variations: "the group that received information where the government was over-performing on its goals showed significantly higher trust than those who received information that the government was under-performing on its goals" (Alessandro et al., 2021: 3) (Box 2.7). These results confirm that trust depends not just on transparency; delivery also matters. However, even with strong delivery, this effect on trust may only occur in certain contexts. Based on an analysis of the performance targets set on immigration and asylum by two successive British governments (led by the Labour and Conservative parties, respectively), Boswell (2018) claims that the media (which influences public trust) typically relies more on perceived notions of authenticity and real commitment to a goal rather than on hard evidence of performance. If a government is seen as establishing a public goal as a defensive tool to minimize criticism on a certain issue, this may not be enough to regain trust, even if the goal is met; rather, the government

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<sup>38</sup> For example, the 2013 Big Results Now initiative in Tanzania, led by a newly established delivery unit in the Presidential Office, set a target for improvement in student scores and began publishing results by school. An impact evaluation identified positive results, motivated by the increased reputational pressure to deliver, although also some unintended consequences in terms of gaming (Cilliers, Mbiti, and Zeitlin, 2021).

needs to be perceived as truly committed to the issue. Therefore, delivery needs to be combined with coherent messaging connected to the government's core identity, as discussed earlier. This is especially critical in increasingly polarized societies (West, 2019).

### BOX 2.7. PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PRIORITY GOALS IN BUENOS AIRES

The mayor of Buenos Aires announced in 2016, within his first hundred days in office, 20 Government Commitments: a set of priorities with measurable goals and specific deadlines. These corresponded to either one of the 1,200 programs and projects of the overall government plan or, more often, reflected an aggregate goal combining several programs, sometimes involving more than one ministry.

To avoid this being “just one more announcement,” the government developed a sustained effort of public communications and accountability. It launched a [public dashboard \(www.buenosaires.gob.ar/compromisos\)](http://www.buenosaires.gob.ar/compromisos) updating progress on the Commitments. Seeking to reach a broad audience, the data were accompanied by visuals, videos, and narrative descriptions of the progress made and the obstacles faced, as well as an interactive map for users to identify the localized impacts of each goal in their communities. Moreover, the government invested heavily in the dissemination of the dashboard, which throughout 2018 and 2019 averaged 100,000 unique visitors each month, becoming by far the most visited non-transactional website of the city government.

But the most important component of public accountability, to emphasize the priority of these goals, was the ownership by the mayor and the ministers of their public agenda. In addition to their inclusion in their usual activities (speeches, site visits, etc.), the Commitments had a specific instance of dissemination and accountability: town hall sessions in which the mayor, with his cabinet, presented an update of progress and responded to inquiries by citizens (both present and through social media) and journalists. To increase the media's interest in these sessions, graphs, maps, and other visual tools were used extensively. Both TV and print media devoted significant attention to these sessions, and some even created their own scorecards of performance.

These sustained efforts were reflected in the increased citizen awareness about the existence of the public commitments and their metrics. For example, by late 2018 almost 70 percent of respondents in a representative survey could identify some of the most prominent Commitments, such as “Subway every 3 minutes in rush hour” or “100 percent of LED public lighting,” up from 40 percent in 2017.

Source: Authors' elaboration based on information from the Buenos Aires City Government.

**Making the priority goals public involves certain political risks, but with the promise for larger benefits.** If the government makes priorities public and is unable to deliver on its priorities, it can create a public perception of incompetence. But there are ways of mitigating this risk. First, engaging with the public in setting priorities provides a platform of understanding key challenges. Second, a sound process for identifying priorities and setting goals should consider their feasibility. It is true that ambitious “stretch” targets may be a stronger push for improved performance, but governments can balance this attribute with the political realities and the need to show sufficient progress. Third, governments can define the context in which priorities are presented. For example, on certain issues there may not be enough baseline information to confidently set a public target. Or even making the priority public could undermine the chances of successful delivery (e.g., a goal of “zero graffiti” could be an incentive for rebellious teenagers).

**Thus, the public announcement of priority goals is not an all-or-nothing matter.** Governments can select which priorities are mature enough for this. Moreover, the potential political benefits of strong delivery can far exceed the risks.<sup>39</sup> Even if not all goals are fully achieved, the ability to objectively demonstrate progress against a set of predefined targets can be a valuable asset for any administration. As stated by Boswell (2018) when analyzing the increased appeal of “hard” metrics of performance, “quantitative descriptions are seen as precise, unambiguous and unencumbered by the partial or emotive baggage of qualitative descriptions.” At the same time, there is a difference between “the public’s right to know” and the “private right to manage.” The CoG should be mindful not to conflate its internal monitoring and reporting of performance (which would be done for management purposes and cover detailed processes, and sometimes personnel issues) with external communications, which need to accurately portray the current performance. Nonetheless, external communications must be rooted in honest data about performance; if not, they would lose credibility and would not achieve their purpose. Practitioners need to be aware of the context in which targets are most likely to be effective – more often when applied to public services that have been struggling and need to provide a good level of service to the citizen. It is also important to

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<sup>39</sup> In the case of Buenos Aires, “Lo que me comprometo, lo cumplo” (“I deliver on my commitments”) became one of the Mayor’s key slogans in his successful reelection campaign.

be aware of the drawbacks of targets, and to have mitigations in place where targets lead to unintended consequences.

**An additional issue of emerging importance is the proliferation of “fake news” that further reduces trust; this reinforces the importance of communicating based on hard evidence.** Digital media has enabled the transmission of instantaneous messages globally. As such, it can also be a powerful channel for misinformation. The spread of false information can further exacerbate the decline in trust and, thus, it may be a matter of concern for the CoG. Proactive, timely, and transparent communication can be the primary means of preventing the spread of misinformation (OECD, 2021); the use of objective evidence to monitor progress on predefined goals (and, thus, not just on those showing good results) is a valuable tool in this regard, that strengthens the credibility of the government’s messages. In addition to preventing fake news, CoGs may set standards and guidelines to ministries on how to react to them; 38 percent of CoGs in OECD countries have done so by 2021 (OECD, 2021). Still, given that in most LAC countries the CoG is often perceived to be a highly political arena, its direct involvement on this issue could prove to be controversial and needs to be carefully analyzed, depending on the characteristics of each case.<sup>40</sup>

### ***Citizen Engagement Throughout the Policy Cycle***

**Another contribution of setting public priorities is to enable the engagement of citizens, who are often critical co-producers of outcomes.** Governments have generally been too slow to clarify the balance between rights and responsibilities—too often misleading citizens into thinking they are just passive consumers of public services. In practice, even if governments improve their performance to effectively deliver *outputs*, they need to create behavioral changes on the part of other stakeholders to achieve improved *outcomes*. Student test scores not only depend on the performance of the Ministry of Education, the

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<sup>40</sup> In Argentina, the Economic and Social Council (a public-private forum coordinated from the Presidency) announced in 2022 its intention to propose a “pact for the good use of social media”, which was criticized as an attempt to regulate the use of these tools. See “Tras las críticas, el Gobierno salió a aclarar que no busca regular las opiniones en las redes sociales” (“After the criticism, the government clarified that it does not seek to regulate opinion in social networks”; Authors’ translation), in Infobae, March 29, 2022. <https://www.infobae.com/politica/2022/03/29/tras-las-criticas-el-gobierno-salio-a-aclarar-que-no-busca-regular-las-opiniones-en-las-redes-sociales/>.

school, or even the teacher; they also rely on the commitment and effort of students and their families. Throughout their early lives, pupils spend far more time at home than in the classroom. Similar examples can be found in a range of policy areas, from public health to climate change.

**In most cases, the CoG would not lead these citizen engagements. But in certain contexts, its role is to ensure that ministries and agencies incorporate this approach within their respective priorities and have a coordinated approach across government.** As in other components of this function, it is not necessarily the CoG that should implement the citizen engagement strategies. Instead, its role is to establish and monitor standards to be adopted across the government by ministries and agencies in their respective policy areas. In this way, the government can coherently approach this matter, rather than its being dependent on the particular interests of each entity. In the current low-trust context, ensuring that citizens have a voice at different stages of the policymaking process is vital, and only the CoG can organize the machinery of government to enable this participation (Alter, 2019). Trust and citizen engagement are mutually reinforcing (Kumagai and Iorio, 2020). Moreover, citizen engagement can help develop innovative solutions to complex problems, strengthen accountability, and streamline implementation by securing the support of key stakeholders. Of course, the specific approach will vary from one country to the next. For instance, in federal countries, subnational governments may lead most of the direct opportunities for engagement with citizens.

## Shaping Government Capabilities and Culture

As discussed in Chapter 1, the application of managerial tools at the apex of government may be insufficient to secure effective whole-of-government policymaking that leads to results. Given the limited reach of the CoG, it will need to determine what will secure the greatest short-term and longer-term gain. After an assessment of the government's current practices, the CoG may prioritize a focus on developing the evidence and performance culture and capabilities of key MDAs. Without strong delivery partners, both within and outside government, the CoG cannot achieve its ambitions.

**This function involves five main components: raising the capabilities and skills of the government, promoting core values and incentives oriented toward achieving results, ensuring that the machinery of government’s design facilitates coherence and delivery, managing the “public service bargain,” and fostering innovation to break bureaucratic inertia and silos.** The value of each component in this function will vary across countries, and CoG practitioners are advised to be strategic and selective in their application. The risk of overload at the CoG and the MDAs must always be considered. Thus, each CoG must assess which specific practices require developing or strengthening in their context, based on existing gaps and needs. Chapter 4 presents a self-assessment tool (the CoG Institutional Development Matrix) to help guide practitioners in this prioritization.

### *Raising Capabilities and Skills*

**Many recent experiences in CoG reform have faced a critical challenge: limited capabilities in the ministries and agencies responsible for implementing the government’s priorities, as well as in the wider landscape of non-state partners.** Several practitioners interviewed for this study pointed to this obstacle, even after the introduction of best-practice CoG routines at the apex of government. This may be due to a range of factors, including the prioritization of policy over implementation, the lack of investment in civil service strengthening, and the high turnover of personnel, especially in managerial roles. New staff may not know how to get things done in the complicated bureaucracies of the region. In other cases, this challenge stems from the insufficient incentives for civil servants to focus on results rather than on compliance with rules and procedures, and to maintain high standards of performance or face the consequences for failure or impropriety (Khemani 2019). Although many of these challenges are structural, the CoG can potentially address them, selectively, by leveraging political backing with sound management instruments.

**Thus, an important lesson from recent years is that, when appropriate, CoGs should invest in shaping the capabilities and culture of the public administration.** There are diverging definitions of organizational capacity, but it is clearly a multidimensional notion (Cox et al., 2018). It typically entails aspects such as leadership, governance arrangements



and structure, the ability to access the right types of knowledge, managerial practices and operating procedures, the prevailing culture, and the skills of the staff. The quality of education will never be better than the quality of its teachers; the quality of healthcare will never be better than the quality of its doctors and nurses. Similarly, the quality of a government will never be better than the quality of its civil servants and service providers. Thus, in public sectors with low capabilities, even the best-performing CoG may find it difficult to successfully align the machinery of government for achieving results. Although MDAs have direct responsibility and control over most matters related to capabilities within their jurisdictions, the CoG can set standards, provide incentives, define criteria, and, for high priorities, apply its political and managerial weight to promote improvements. Chapter 3 presents tools for performing this role.

**This entails that, at least in certain contexts, institutions and teams dealing with certain key government capabilities should be regarded as part of the CoG, or at least be overseen by it.**<sup>41</sup> For instance, public offices may be part of the CoG, at least in particular moments or for selected issues within their portfolios, while many other tasks they lead are devoted to recurring operations or “business as usual” work, which is not part of the CoG. Similarly, digital transformation in government is managed from the CoG in several OECD and LAC countries, and the challenge of recruiting more digital talent and enhancing digital skills of public servants are critical issues which demand coordination between the civil service and digital government agencies (Porrúa et al., 2021). This implies that the boundaries of the CoG should not be regarded as fixed, but rather adaptable to the context and priorities of each case. In general, the focus on policy priorities acts as an anchor in the understanding of the limits of the CoG.

**At the same time, it is important for the CoG to take a disciplined perspective to avoid the risk of overstretch and overload. Thus, a planned approach, in which specific capabilities are addressed**

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<sup>41</sup> Although this report defines the CoG by a set of functions rather than structures, it should be noted that in many countries the agency responsible for managing human resources in the public sector is placed within typical CoG institutions. In LAC, half of all countries place this agency in the ministry of the presidency (or equivalent) and a quarter in the ministry of finance. In OECD countries there is greater variation, but still 20 percent are based in the MoF and 14 percent within the office of the prime minister / president (OECD and IDB, 2020).

**depending on the gaps that exist to deliver on priority goals, seems advisable.** Enhancing capabilities will entail many different issues, systems, and practices, and it will be too ambitious for the CoG to address all aspects at once. In 2017, the OECD highlighted four skills that were critical in a high-performing civil service: policy advice and analysis, service delivery and citizen engagement, commission and contracting, and managing networks. This report argues that the increasing challenges that governments face require commensurate development of those working in the public service, specifically, developing a professional, strategic, and innovative workforce. Understanding the key capability gaps (fundamentally, those that matter most for delivering on top government priorities) and focusing specifically on these appears more realistic, starting with the CoG itself.

### ***Public Administration Culture and Values***

**The CoG may also be well placed to promote a core set of values and beliefs across the public administration, which underpin all of the previous functions.** A key role for the CoG is to establish coherence in the actions of a multitude of ministries, agencies, SOEs, bureaus, offices, and other government units that, by themselves, tend to operate as discrete silos and develop their specific internal cultures. This emphasis on sustaining public values is particularly important in countries with frequent personnel turnover and that also draw on the private sector and civil society to deliver policies and programs, where there can be a risk of fragmentation and the public service ethos might be imperiled. The culture of an organization is represented by the norms and behaviors of its people. These informal elements of public administration can be understood by Andrews' (2013) iceberg metaphor: because they are implicit and unwritten, they may not be visible "above the water line," but they are nonetheless a fundamental aspect of how public administration functions. Even if norms can be shaped by the routines led by the CoG and a chief executive's personal involvement on certain goals, these drivers are difficult to sustain in the long run. Thus, behaviors may tend to revert to their previous ways of operation. In many countries, the prevailing culture is not usually geared toward coordination with other entities and toward engagement with non-state stakeholders; rather, it tends to reinforce administrative siloes. Innovation and experimentation are typically perceived as too risky.

**The CoG can influence culture through technical tools such as shared methodologies for planning and monitoring performance, and through the promotion of common values across these different entities.** The OECD identifies a key role for the CoG in mainstreaming most of its “values of sound public governance,” given its capacity to work across administrative silos (OECD, 2020a). For example, in the United Kingdom, the Cabinet Office had actively endorsed the “Four Ps” (pride, pace, passion, and professionalism) as key attributes for civil servants (O’Donnell, 2014). The New Zealand Public Service Act 2020 identifies the following values: impartial, accountable, trustworthy, respectful, and responsive. In the United States, the most recent Presidential Management Agenda led by the Office of Management and Budget defined, for the first time, a set of core values for the federal government. In many LAC countries, the promotion of core values should not be restricted to permanent civil servants (who typically constitute a smaller proportion of all government employees than in OECD countries) but should also extend to political appointees and temporary staff. To be credible, government leaders need to live by these principles and integrate them into all decision-making and managerial processes. Values can only be instilled through actions. Thus, if the CoG decides to assume an active role in value promotion, it should not simply list and communicate a set of values; it should actively monitor and—where necessary—enforce their application in practice.

**The issue of values, as well as raising capabilities and skills, touches on a broader issue: the CoG’s role in civil service management. In this regard, being selective and strategic is critical.** On the one hand, managing the civil service is comprised of several business-as-usual operational tasks in terms of establishing and enforcing rules for recruitment, promotion, transfers, compensation, and others. Even though it performs a cross-government role, the CoG is not primarily responsible for managing the permanent public service bureaucracy. On the other hand, developing a set of values and establishing the appropriate performance incentives are critical for delivering on the government’s priority goals. This is an example of where the key priority developments would be included within the purview of the CoG while others remain as business as usual. In fact, different practitioners interviewed for this study identified these factors as critical barriers in their experience with CoG reform efforts. Therefore, in certain contexts the CoG may need to intervene in this specific aspect of civil service management, to ensure

its alignment with the government's long-term ambitions, for example, by ensuring that the right leadership teams have been established in the ministries responsible for delivering on priority goals. In addition, certain competencies (use of evidence, data analysis, stakeholder collaboration, citizen engagement, etc.) are becoming increasingly relevant across different policy areas (Porrúa et al, 2021). As previously stated, being selective in this intervention (doing it in specific contexts, and for time-bound objectives) seems more appropriate for the CoG than assuming the permanent responsibility for civil service management.

### *The Public Service Bargain*

**A related matter is defining the relative roles of ministers, political appointees, and civil servants, which should be consistent to the extent possible across the machinery of government.** In well-established Western European civil service systems, a Public Service Bargain (PSB) has been developed: in exchange for loyally serving ministers and providing free and frank policy advice, bureaucrats obtained permanent careers and were appointed based on merit (Diamond, 2021b). The PSB is a comparative framework and has been applied in practice to public service organizations around the world. It seeks to delineate the functions of ministers, political appointees, and civil servants, and how they are to relate to one another. Hence, in several OECD countries an explicit but often unwritten contract regarding the roles of ministers, civil servants, and in some cases political advisers has emerged, although such a contract has been reshaped or even eroded in recent years (Savoie, 2022; Thomas et al., 2022). Due to such changes, there may well be greater convergence between the European Weberian systems and particular LAC governments, where there has long tended to be a much higher proportion of political appointees.

**The PSB is comprised of three main elements—rewards, competence, and loyalty—that should be managed consistently across the government.** Rewards relate to how those who undertake public service are incentivized, a critical issue given the competition with the private sector for top talent and the lack of personal financial incentives in the civil service. Competence refers to the effectiveness of public servants in providing robust and timely policy advice to ministers while ensuring the efficient implementation of public policies. Finally, loyalty between

ministers and permanent officials includes the role of the latter in speaking truth to power—a role that discretionary appointees may be more reluctant to play but that is critical to minimize the risk of policy and delivery blunders. In these three components, the role of the CoG is not to micromanage civil service human resources. However, it is well placed to ensure that consistent rules, values, and culture that underpin how governments operate are upheld consistently across MDAs. As with all its functions and activities, the CoG’s role is about seeking to establish coherence in a complex machinery (populated by thousands or even millions of individuals) and aligning it to the priorities set to achieve results for citizens.

**The components of the PSB are particularly important in countries with high levels of discretionary appointments to high-level public positions, as it is the case in some LAC countries (Grindle, 2012; Panizza, Peters, and Ramos Larraburu, 2023).** These appointees usually have different profiles, from political advisors and operators to policy experts, technocrats, and managers that are crucial in low-capacity public administrations, often bringing in experience from civil society or business organizations. But their role is often informally defined; even when formal regulations stipulate their responsibilities, *de facto* practices may supersede *de jure* stipulations. Therefore, there is a risk of inconsistency regarding the roles and types of engagements between these appointees and the civil service, including those at the front line. Moreover, temporary appointees may lack the institutional memory and know-how provided by the permanent civil service, and this need for a transitional period can limit the government’s ability to deliver results quickly in its priority goals. A former minister from a LAC country interviewed for this study stated that one of the main obstacles to achieving results during her tenure was the loss of the entire managerial team of her predecessor, as they were all temporary appointees that left their positions when a new minister came in. This experience appears to be generalized in many LAC countries, where discretionary appointments are “particularly high at the top and mid-levels of the administrative hierarchy” (Panizza, Peters, and Ramos Larraburu, 2023: 220). This is why the CoG could draw on the PSB framework to increase effectiveness across the machinery of government, by focusing on how to strengthen loyalty, competence and rewards while ensuring that the right capabilities and culture is in place to achieve results. Chapter 3 discusses possible tools for this purpose.

**A critical matter as part of the PSB is strengthening trust among government actors.** One of the main drivers for the prevalence of discretionary appointments in managerial positions in LAC countries is trust (Panizza, Peters, and Ramos Larraburu, 2023). Ministers who want to get things done are inclined to bring in advisers and officials who understand their personal goals and can be trusted to deliver (*personal de confianza*). Nonetheless, failing to invest in the core capacities of the permanent bureaucracy and sidelining those with institutional memory and governing experience may create the risk of policy fiascos which (at least when dealing with priority goals) are of concern to the CoG. Moreover, if strong performance frameworks are established, then ministers should be able to monitor and motivate performance without the need to resort to a personal connection with managers. Additional elements, such as integrity frameworks and the promotion of core values, can also contribute to strengthening trust between political leaders and the civil service.

### ***Promoting Innovation***

**A role of increasing interest in terms of shaping capabilities and culture relates to promoting innovation in government.** Ministerial bureaucracies are usually adept at maintaining the traditional way of doing things; change can bring uncertainty, generate controversy, or even be regarded as an implicit criticism of previous policy and managerial decisions. It is likely that this phenomenon is even more pronounced in the public administrations of the region, which have generally been regarded as rigid and rule-bound, discouraging experimentation and creativity (Ramos and Milanese, 2021). Sometimes the CoG itself can reinforce this pattern. By strictly monitoring the delivery of targets and trajectories, it may weaken the ministries' incentive to embark on new paths, where the risk of failure is greater. For all of these reasons, policy can become unimaginative and fail to respond to emerging problems (especially when they cut across administrative silos and do not have a clear owner) or not seize the opportunity to apply new tools. Moreover, lack of innovation can limit the government's ability to deliver on new, ambitious priorities which typically demand doing things differently than before.

**The CoG may have an initial role in driving this effort and may then decentralize it to the line ministries or other stakeholders once it has reached a certain degree of maturity.**

**Thus, the CoG may have an important role in incubating and catalyzing change, focusing on citizen-centered approaches that cut across the traditional institution-based approach and developing new agile ways of working.** As with all of its functions, the CoG’s key value added is its cross-government perspective that facilitates integrated interventions in multidimensional policy problems. A systematic emphasis on innovation by fostering “shake-ups on methodology, process, or policy approaches” (Thomas, 2020) can be a valuable contribution in this direction. Chapter 3 will analyze in detail the two main tools that have been implemented for this purpose: the creation of Innovation Labs (Acevedo and Dassen, 2016) and Behavioral Change Units (Afif, 2017). As with other components within this function, the core CoG may have an initial role in driving this effort and may then decentralize it to the line ministries or other stakeholders once it has reached a certain degree of maturity. For example, the Behavioural Insights Team in the United Kingdom was established in the Cabinet Office in 2010 and then partially privatized in 2013; the Chilean [Laboratorio de Gobierno](#), previously based in the Ministry of the Presidency, was relocated to the Ministry of Finance in 2022. Box 2.8 presents the results of one of the Lab’s projects from 2020, which incorporated the use of behavioral insights to improve communications with citizens and enhance trust.

**BOX 2.8. INNOVATION TO ENHANCE CITIZEN TRUST IN CHILE**

In 2019–2020, Chile faced massive protests and a significant decrease in citizen trust in public institutions. As part of the priority effort to rebuild trust, Chile’s Laboratorio de Gobierno partnered with the Ministry of Finance and the Tax Agency to design a personalized Taxpayer Report, delivered by email. The Report presented details on each citizen’s contributions and on the allocation of these resources to different programs, services, and benefits, at the national and regional levels. Their design was informed by behavioral insights and by the testing of initial prototypes with 700 citizens interviewed across the country, until three final designs of the Report were approved.

The innovation was evaluated through a randomized controlled trial. Three groups of 20,000 taxpayers each received a different version of the Report, and a fourth group acted as a control group and did not receive a Report. The three treatments presented a positive impact on citizen

trust: the largest increase was of 7 percent. Given the limited cost of the initiative (as the Reports were delivered by email) such an increase shows the value of innovating in public communications.

Source: Laboratorio de Gobierno. Reporte al Contribuyente: Aumentando la transparencia del gasto público frente a los ciudadanos. Santiago: Laboratorio de Gobierno, 2020, available at: <https://www.lab.gob.cl/casos/12>.

### ***Machinery of Government***

**Another area that shapes the government's ability to deliver is the design of its organizational structures.** In recent years, the design (or redesign) of organizational structures has lost prominence in the public administration agenda as compared to the “agencification” trend of the 1990s, which led to the creation of many formally autonomous or semi-autonomous entities in several LAC countries, expanding the challenge for cross-government coordination (see Box 2.9). Nonetheless, the structure of government remains a relevant factor that can either enable or hamper both policy coherence and effective delivery. Thus, it is in the CoG's interest to verify the consistency of organizational design for entities responsible for delivering on the priority goals, both in terms of the fit of their structure to their mission and for minimizing the risk of contradiction and conflict between different entities (which can increase, for example, if they share the same goals or conduct similar activities for the same populations or territories). In Peru, the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, as the CoG's leading institution, approved in 2018 detailed guidelines and criteria for organizational design in the public sector (applicable even to autonomous bodies and subnational governments), seeking to ensure that structures correspond to each entity's priorities, types of deliverables, and operational capabilities, and that the whole-of-government distribution of functions minimizes duplication and allows for coordination (PCM, 2018). In addition, it establishes that an entity within the Public Management Secretariat is to be consulted on any proposal to modify the government's structure. Other countries in the region still lack this whole-of-government approach to organizational design, with the risk of duplication of missions and thus contradiction in policymaking. In other LAC countries, such as Chile, the challenge is the rigidity of the structure that can only be modified by law. In such cases, aligning the organizational structures with emerging priorities may be particularly challenging.



**BOX 2.9. ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN AND ITS EFFECTS ON POLICY COHERENCE AND DELIVERY**

The public administration reforms inspired by the New Public Management of the 1980s and 1990s tended toward flat organizational structures and, thus, to the creation of multiple single-purpose bodies or agencies. This approach is expected to facilitate accountability for performance and delivery, but it can also create coordination challenges. In fact, this fragmentation of the public sector was one of the drivers for the rediscovery of the CoG's critical whole-of-government role (Dahlström, Peters, and Pierre, 2011). This challenge has appeared in many LAC countries. For example, in Costa Rica, decentralized or autonomous bodies allocate and execute over half of the national budget (IDB, 2018), hampering the ability to align resources to shared priorities. The proliferation of separate entities also challenges the coherence of interventions in key policy areas. For example, 28 different bodies share competencies in the country's agricultural sector (Oviedo et al., 2015).

An alternative to this fragmentation is to establish larger ministerial structures that encompass all related sectors and functions; potentially, this could favor coordination and the development of integrated interventions in key policy areas and help minimize “turf” wars. However, this approach also presents drawbacks (Aucoin, 1997). It can lead to a lack of clear organizational priorities, to slower operations, and to the existence of competing or conflicting mandates within the ministries, which have been shown to harm performance (Carrigan, 2018). Thus, the tradeoffs associated with any reorganization in government structures must be carefully assessed, as these changes entail costs, may create internal conflicts, and usually require time before the new structures are fully operational. (See Chapter 3 regarding Brazil's recent consolidation of several ministries in a unified Ministry of the Economy; Mosqueira, Lafuente, and Gaetani, 2022).

**Given these tradeoffs, comprehensive redesigns of the structure of government have lost their appeal, but a more tailored and focused effort on the entities' leading priority goals may still be important.**

Overhauling an organizational structure is politically costly and does not guarantee success. An empirical review of the connection between structure and performance has concluded that “each of the ‘structuring’ dimensions... appears likely to have distinct contradictory independent impacts on the prospects of service improvement” (Andrews, 2010). Instead, focusing on sound managerial processes and tools can be a more promising approach for the CoG to promote both coordination and delivery, as described throughout this publication. Nonetheless, there is

a role for the CoG in minimizing duplication, overlaps, and other basic sins of organizational design, which create obstacles to policy coherence and integration. In certain cases, the CoG may also promote innovations to favor horizontal coordination, such as the use of temporary cross-ministerial structures and of shared resources for specific cross-cutting projects or objectives. And, finally, the CoG can promote types of organizational structures that are better fit for purpose according to the goals of each institution, with a focus on accelerating delivery and favoring agile implementation.

## Building Intelligence and Analytical Capacity

The changes and learning identified in Chapter 1 lead to another underpinning function for the CoG: helping to develop intelligence and analytical capacity across government. For the CoG, the systematic incorporation of knowledge and evidence underpins and can enhance all of its other functions: it shapes how the CoG sets priorities and goals, how it works with MDAs to develop plans and policies aligned to those priorities, how it coordinates their work for consistent delivery, how it appraises and supports improved performance, and how it communicates to (and engages with) citizens. The increased availability of data creates major opportunities but, without proper management of knowledge and analytical capacities, governments face the risk of being overwhelmed by information, or for knowledge to remain in silos and not to reach the right decision-makers. In addition, due to the acceleration of global transformations and disruptions, governments increasingly need stronger capacities to anticipate emerging trends and act on early warnings, which often do not fit within the purview of any single MDA but rather cut across multiple sectors.

**Therefore, this emerging CoG function includes three core components: establishing analytical capacities for effective policy advice and regulatory governance in decision-making; creating processes for knowledge sharing across silos, including the development of cross-government data and digital strategies; and developing capacities for strategic foresight, especially for cross-cutting risks and opportunities.**

**Getting things done only makes sense if they are the right things to do. As such, the CoG should play a role in shaping the policymaking process.**

### ***Policy Advice for Decision-Making***

**The CoG has traditionally played a significant role in organizing policy advice for the chief executive and the cabinet.** The renewed interest in CoG reform in the early 2000s often focused on its role in improving delivery. But getting things done only makes sense if they are the right things to do. As such, the CoG should play a role in shaping the policymaking process, especially in terms of ensuring that robust evidence and diverse perspectives have been considered before policy finalization. The CoG can ensure that a second voice is heard in addition to a ministry's preferred position, supplying potentially new perspectives and options for decision-making. In this regard, a structured interministerial process of consultation and contestability is critical to strengthen the quality of policy decisions and to minimize the risk of policy blunders that generate negative political consequences (King and Crewe, 2014). CoG units or individuals are typically tasked with managing such processes or guarding their effective realization (OECD, 2018b). Although the CoG sometimes provides specific policy directions, it is often recommended that it act as honest broker between MDAs that contribute to a shared policy priority to facilitate and arbitrate their potentially divergent positions. Moreover, the CoG can assume the task of monitoring the evidence base and quality of proposed policies and regulations. As always, the CoG must define the scope of the decisions that merit its involvement, to avoid potential overstretch. Preferably, the CoG should manage the process for decisions that require approval by the head of government or cabinet, that are connected to priority goals expected to have large political or economic impacts, or that involve significant budget resources.

**This role is increasingly relevant due to the technical complexity of economic and social life (especially in sectors such as telecommunications, big tech, artificial intelligence, finance, etc.) that demand sophisticated policy and regulatory efforts from the public sector.** Establishing common standards and methodologies across policy sectors can help improve the quality and consistency of regulations. Furthermore, the CoG is well placed to mobilize external expertise, which is often required for new and complex issues and to reduce the risk of policy capture by special interests, as the civil service may lack the expertise that can be deployed by powerful external actors, particularly in areas relating to regulation of markets. In general, the CoG should ensure that important policy and regulatory proposals are analyzed from

different perspectives, with the best available evidence, and sufficiently probed to minimize ad hoc or improvised decisions. The responsibility for producing evidence-based policies lies with line ministries and agencies, but the CoG is well placed to set standards for the approval of any policy proposals and to instill a culture of systematic use of evidence. Evaluation can help to assess the value for money of policy interventions, to determine what works, and to ensure that lessons are learned from policy implementation and delivery.

**Structuring processes that foster evidence-informed policymaking can help leaders make the right decisions and minimize costly policy blunders.** A review of international experience concludes that embedding these practices in government requires strategic and committed leadership from the CoG (OECD, 2020a). This approach may include creating specific CoG units with a mandate to support evidence-based policy, the use of evidence through performance routines, establishing learning activities for capacity-building, and passing regulatory or legislative anchors that mandate the need for using evidence in policy and regulatory decisions. Given the greater pressure on governments to base their decisions on robust evidence (including, in cases such as COVID-19, on complex scientific evidence that often involves interpretation of conflicting research findings and data), the need to embed evidence-based strategies across the public sector is likely to increase in the coming years. A major issue is how governments procure evidence from knowledge producers who are often external to government, as well as how evidence is woven into the policymaking process. Again, the CoG can establish benchmarks and protocols for best practice in evidence utilization (Bernier and Howlett, 2017). The CoG can set standards and provide coaching and support to line ministries in developing their evidence and analytical capabilities, including the need to be aware of the limits of evidence. Additionally, units in the CoG can support and challenge finance ministries to make spending decisions by using the widest possible range of evidence, evaluation, and knowledge instead of relying too narrowly on mechanistic cost/benefit analysis tools.

**Policy analysis units located in the CoG can provide guidance to line ministries, nurturing effective policy networks.** These networks can be formalized; the United Kingdom’s Cabinet Office [“What Works Centres”](#) are a relevant example of providing institutional locations around which networks can cluster (see Chapter 3). In Chile, the Studies Division

within the Ministry of the Presidency has sometimes played a similar role (Dumas, Lafuente, and Parrado, 2013). The other role of policy networks working alongside the CoG is to provide intellectual challenge in the policymaking process, specifically to widen the range of policy options available to policymakers beyond the orthodoxies perpetuated by established bureaucracy in line ministries (Howlett, 2015). They enable government entities focused on day-to-day operational responsibilities to think outside the box, to address complex challenges in new ways, and to devise new approaches to implementation of public policies (Elgin, Pattison, and Weible, 2012).

### ***Knowledge and Data/Digital Management***

**The weaknesses of civil service systems highlight a potential role for the CoG in particular contexts: advancing the production and dissemination of knowledge, and in particular preserving institutional memory within government.** The CoG can help coordinate intelligence across the machinery of government. All large organizations (and there are few larger than government) require systematic approaches to the way they capture and manage information and knowledge across the organization and over time. Governments have the greater challenge of changing their top leadership more frequently than the private sector and often with substantial turnover of managerial staff (especially in LAC countries).

**Knowledge underpins all of the CoG's functions.** The work on strategic management presents a need to understand what has worked and what has failed in previous attempts to prioritize and set the strategic direction of government. Knowledge is an indispensable component for sound decision-making throughout the policy cycle. The sharing and mobilizing of knowledge are essential for monitoring and improving performance. Communication with citizens can also be increasingly informed by strong evidence. OECD (2017a) states that “the potential for information to drive public sector innovation is immense and growing every day” and identifies four interconnected phases in organizations’ management of information: sourcing, exploiting, sharing and advancing, and the challenges that arise from each.

**A merit-based and permanent civil service is a reservoir of knowledge and institutional memory in many OECD countries, but not necessarily in the LAC region; therefore, in certain contexts, the CoG could assume a more active role.** This includes developing both the technical approaches and culture of leveraging previous knowledge. Managing knowledge includes the technical components of storage and retrieval of information and the cultural aspect of avoiding defaulting to the “not invented here” culture, seeking to actively learn from past successes and failures. This includes both its internal capacities (the recruitment of staff with the right technical skills) and its ability to mobilize the external expertise available in a network of independent non-state institutions (universities, think tanks, international organizations, and others, that is, the broader policy advisory system) to broker the connection between producers of evidence and policymakers. Policymaking increasingly relies on networks of organizational stakeholders within and beyond government: outsiders (NGOs, agencies, research institutes, public and nonprofit service providers) sometimes have more technical knowledge and understanding of the implementation challenges of specific policy issues than officials inside government (Parrado 2014).

**The mobilization of knowledge and the use of evidence are increasingly dependent on the ability to access and share high-quality data across silos; therefore, the CoG can play a key role in establishing a holistic approach to data governance.** Data can potentially become one of the government’s most valuable assets, but only if it is managed effectively. Outdated data infrastructure, regulatory barriers, skills gaps, and organizational and cultural silos still prevent many governments from sharing and extracting value from data. In recent years, some OECD countries have established integrated data strategies and defined governance roles (data stewards, chief data officers, interministerial data councils, etc.) to lead their implementation (OECD, 2019c). However, this is still an emerging agenda in LAC countries (Lafuente, 2020), and in certain cases it has led to controversy.<sup>42</sup> In this regard, practitioners interviewed for this study have expressed different views about the appropriate role for the CoG. For some, data governance should be a permanent core function of the CoG; for others, the CoG would

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<sup>42</sup> For instance, the creation of a Presidential Unit of Data Analysis in Costa Rica raised concerns about the use of citizen’s private data (<https://www.crhoy.com/nacionales/alvarado-crea-oficina-para-obtener-datos-confidenciales-de-los-ticos/>, accessed on October 7). Therefore, data governance frameworks must ensure that privacy concerns are addressed.

have to play a leading or coordinating role initially, but once the data framework has reached a certain level of maturity, it should become one of many cross-government systems (civil service, procurement, financial management, etc.) that mainly operate in business-as-usual mode and are not part of the CoG's core functions. However, and given that this is an incipient role in LAC countries, it is likely that at this stage the drive for integrated data governance will have to come from the CoG, due to the need for strong political sponsorship (see Bracken, Greenway, and Kenny, 2019; British Academy, 2017). Chapter 3 covers the range of tools at their disposal to perform this task.

**The new technologies can be powerful tools for “joining up” government, seeking efficiencies, improving the delivery of services, and facilitating citizen engagement. Consequently, they underpin many of the core functions of the CoG.**

**Data management is a part of the development and the effective implementation of digital frameworks and strategies, which have become a core government function.** Exploiting the new technologies can be powerful tools for “joining up” government, seeking efficiencies, improving the delivery of services, and facilitating citizen engagement. Consequently, they underpin many of the core functions of the CoG. The ability to collect and share data in a timely manner with all key stakeholders relies on having access to the right digital technologies and infrastructure. In over half the OECD countries, digital transformation is managed directly from the CoG, and in three quarters the CoG is involved to some extent. This centralization makes sense, considering that in many countries digital transformation was born as a fragmented agenda, with a weak governing body and digitalization initiatives being implemented in parallel (and many times with incoherent practices) from the sectors. Still, both digital innovations and data management may not be a permanent function of the CoG: “Sometimes policy initiatives led by the centre are time-limited or temporary assignments. When initiatives require ongoing attention or quasi-permanent administrative support, they are often re-housed in line departments rather than remaining with the centre.” (OECD, 2018b). Several LAC countries have developed whole-of-government digital strategies and are among the most digitized governments in the world (World Bank, 2022) and some have even prepared strategies for artificial intelligence (OECD and CAF, 2022). In terms of its governance, the units leading the digital transformation are only sometimes based within core CoG institutions (such as in Argentina, Brazil, Peru, and Uruguay, the region's top performers); in many other cases, they are based in line ministries for science, telecommunications, or information technologies (such as in Colombia, Costa Rica, and Ecuador). Therefore, the decision to engage

the CoG with digital strategies may be context dependent. For example, in the United States, placing this responsibility at the center might have allowed for the attraction of scarce digital talent. But this is a pragmatic reason for housing responsibility for it in the CoG, rather than a substantive rationale that applies in all cases.

### ***Strategic Foresight***

**In a rapidly changing world, the capacity to detect early warning signs and anticipate emerging trends from expanding sources of data can be critical to adapt and adjust a government's strategy and priorities.** Natural disasters, pandemics, shocks in international markets, supply chain interruptions, energy constraints, wars, cyberattacks, social conflict, and other potentially disruptive events can derail existing plans and priorities. As the global system becomes increasingly interconnected, complex, and susceptible to rapid and exponential change due to climate impacts and major technological advances such as artificial intelligence, the internet of things, and gene editing, among others (Schwab, 2019), the ability to set and pursue medium-term goals can become more challenging. Moreover, these transformations affect almost every sector of social and economic life and, thus, of the machinery of government. Therefore, a cross-cutting perspective is needed to anticipate, prepare for, and coordinate the eventual responses to such phenomena. Specific sectoral preparations may be needed, but they should be mutually coherent and consider the interactions and tradeoffs between different interventions.

**The COVID-19 crisis revealed that most countries were unprepared for such a high-impact disruption** (OECD, 2022b). Some countries did not have crisis preparedness plans in place; others had formal plans, but either they were not up to date, political leaders were not aware of them, or high-level officials had not been trained or empowered to ensure their implementation. It is true that devoting time and resources during normal times to prepare for low-probability events (especially in the fast pace of most CoG units and advisors) may seem difficult to justify. But, as COVID-19, the climate crisis, and other disasters have shown, the failure to plan and prepare for risks is even costlier. Moreover, even if anticipating challenges is hard, steps can be taken to build resilience and adaptability across a range of issues (Mulgan, 2020), notably,



proactively scanning for potential risks; preparing decision-makers for such scenarios (simulations, models, etc.); establishing a central unit, networked with local governments to mobilize and coordinate during a crisis; and allocating budgets for the most likely and severe threats.

**Not all CoGs have expertise across the broad range of potential risks (and opportunities), but they can facilitate a systematic and multi-sectoral effort if prospective analysis is adopted.** The CoG can connect and coordinate the expertise based in line ministries, agencies, and subnational governments, but also outside of public administration (in think tanks, businesses, community organizations, international agencies, academia and so on). It can act as the knowledge broker across the network of relevant stakeholders who operate in different sectors and domains and very often do not interact in their day-to-day work. Due to its cross-cutting portfolio, the CoG usually develops an extensive network of relationships and is better placed to access multiple sources of information and expertise. Moreover, it can connect this knowledge with political decisions at the highest level of government, so that preparedness does not become a bureaucratic exercise with no real impact. Finally, the CoG can verify that the opportunities and risks identified through prospective analyses are mainstreamed into the strategic and operational plans of line ministries and, in so doing, ensure that policy and budgetary decisions take the analysis into consideration. The CoG thus ensures that the government as a whole becomes more intelligent and capable.

## Conclusions

This chapter began by presenting an updated understanding of the key components within the CoG's core functions. Then, it presented two new cross-cutting CoG functions (shaping the right capabilities and culture and building intelligence and analytical capacity across the whole of government) that underpin the work of the other functions. The next chapter will present and examine the new practices and tools available to the CoG to perform these functions in the practical world of governing.



# 3

## The Practices and Instruments of the Center of Government

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Strategic Management

Horizontal and Vertical Coordination

Monitoring and Improving Performance

Managing the Politics of Policies

Communications, Public Accountability, and  
Citizen Engagement

Shaping Government Capabilities and Culture

Building Intelligence and Analytical Capacity

Conclusions

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**THE CENTER OF GOVERNMENT, REVISITED**

A DECADE OF GLOBAL REFORMS

# The Practices and Instruments of the Center of Government

**This chapter presents practices and instruments to perform the functions outlined in Chapter 2, focusing on recent innovations in Center of Government (CoG) practice around the world.** In reviewing the effectiveness of their CoG and identifying areas needing improvement, governments have adopted these approaches as logical next steps to strengthen their CoG functions. Not all of these instruments are unique to the CoG; they are part of general approaches to leading and managing complex public organizations. The chapter will focus on their application and value to the work of governments at the center.

**Context matters when considering these tools, and the specific characteristics and needs of each CoG must guide their prioritization and sequencing.** Throughout the chapter, the analysis of each tool includes a consideration of the factors that favor their successful adoption. Those responsible for performance at the CoG need to judge the extent to which they are a “good fit” with the institutional, political, and cultural characteristics of their own organization. Moreover, presenting a broad range of tools does not imply that they should all be adopted. As governments consider their plans to improve management and performance, they need to identify areas for improvement that enhance capabilities by applying the CoG’s self-assessment matrix, presented in Chapter 4. To avoid overload both at the CoG and at the line ministries, it is critical to focus on improving functions that are likely to have greatest impact or that address the most urgent challenges. The adoption of new tools merely to follow international trends risks leading to a proliferation of units or processes that may not be relevant. The purpose or problem that needs fixing must be clearly established from the outset, and the practices and instruments need to be adapted to the local context and institutional framework.

**The following sections are organized to cover the practices and instruments that can be deployed to perform the following CoG functions:** strategic management; horizontal and vertical coordination;

monitoring and improving performance; managing the politics of policies; communications, accountability and citizen engagement; and the two cross-cutting functions: shaping the capabilities and culture of the government and building intelligence and analytical capacity.

**Despite the diversity of tools presented in this chapter, a common thread runs through most of them.** A number of key features and principles link these instruments together. They include:

- *The CoG's role in bringing ministries and agencies together.* Almost every tool presented in this chapter seeks to better integrate the work of government entities toward collectively addressing cross-cutting problems and objectives, taking a whole-of-government systems-led approach. Because most policy priorities (especially if expressed as outcomes for citizens) involve some type of interministerial work, CoG tools are typically oriented toward this alignment. This is a defining attribute of the CoG's purpose and value added.
- *Tools that generate ownership and develop capabilities at line ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs).* The CoG is at its best when it works with and across government to set priorities, create incentives, monitor performance, and intervene when needed. It cannot enforce better delivery by decree. It needs to challenge, support, and enable ministries, agencies, subnational governments, and other stakeholders across the delivery system to motivate the development of critical capabilities. Thus, these are not just tools for the CoG; they also aim to serve the interest of its partners and of the government as a whole.
- *Processes and instruments that can be deployed to obtain feedback and learning.* Most of these tools can be deployed by incorporating mechanisms for receiving feedback, learning from what is working (and what is not), and thus tailoring their subsequent roll-out accordingly. The CoG must make sure that the purpose for each new instrument is being met and to adapt when needed.
- *A broad range of tools that enables selectivity and attention to context.* Overstretch is always a risk for the CoG. Thus, each government needs to decide which processes and instruments need to be strengthened in their context, based on a clear identification

of gaps in current practice and an understanding of the problem the tool is designed to solve. For some instruments, initial adoption from the CoG should be delegated to ministries and agencies after the capabilities have reached maturity, while retaining a role in coordination and setting standards.

- *A balance between short-term goals and longer-term capabilities.* The CoG has a natural incentive to deliver the administration's short-term priorities. Most of these tools can be rapidly deployed to advance this objective. But the discontinuity in processes and tools with each new administration limits the CoG's ability to build capability to meet its objectives when a new administration is forming. Thus, embedding these processes and tools serves the longer-term purpose of gradually developing state capacities in a sustainable fashion while ensuring that each administration bequeaths a stronger system of government than it inherited.

## Strategic Management

The *strategic management function* has four key components: (i) establishing an integrated performance framework as the foundation for delivering results; (ii) the ability to set clear priorities for the government as a whole; (iii) the development of detailed implementation plans to achieve core priorities; and (iv) the alignment of required budget resources. A range of routines and tools for each of these components are discussed next.

### ***Performance Framework***

**The performance framework integrates the government's approach to delivering results and outcomes for citizens.** It outlines how the government sets its priorities and defines goals; how it ensures the alignment of resources to priorities; how it establishes accountability for delivery; how it undertakes planning for the challenges and risks to implementation; how it tracks progress; and how it corrects course when performance is judged to be lagging. A performance framework defines how these key tasks are to be approached, avoiding a disconnect

between different processes. For example, if planning and budgeting are managed separately and not properly connected, objectives and resources will not be harmonized (and the budget will, in practice, guide the policy process). Moreover, planning and budgeting will fail to consider the reality at the frontline for those with the task of achieving results. Several countries have explicitly established an integrated performance framework (see, for example, the United States' framework described in Box 3.1).

### BOX 3.1. PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK IN THE UNITED STATES

The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993 established the key foundations for the [Federal government's performance framework](#). They were updated in 2010 through the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act (GPRMA) and enhanced in successive legislation (such as the Evidence Act of 2018) and presidential directives, covering specific matters such as program management, customer experience, and risk management.

The framework focuses on developing and implementing a limited number of actionable goals and strategies, including Agency Priority Goals (APGs) for each department, Cross-Agency Priority Goals (CAPs) for objectives that involve more than one department, and Strategic Objectives with a longer time frame that are comprehensive across the entire mission<sup>a</sup> of the agency. The framework is coordinated by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), a key unit within the Executive Office of the President. By law, each agency must appoint a performance improvement officer (PIO) to coordinate the application of the framework within the department. The PIOs collectively comprise a Performance Improvement Council that assists OMB in the implementation of the framework and share good practices. The law also establishes the need for quarterly reviews of progress between the agencies and OMB and for the periodic publication of performance data ([www.performance.gov](http://www.performance.gov)).

This basic structure has been in place under successive presidents of different political parties, suggesting an important level of institutionalization. The existence of a legislative act mandating clear and systematic performance routines (such as the quarterly reviews), as well as the dissemination of the framework across the government through the PIOs, may have contributed to this embeddedness.

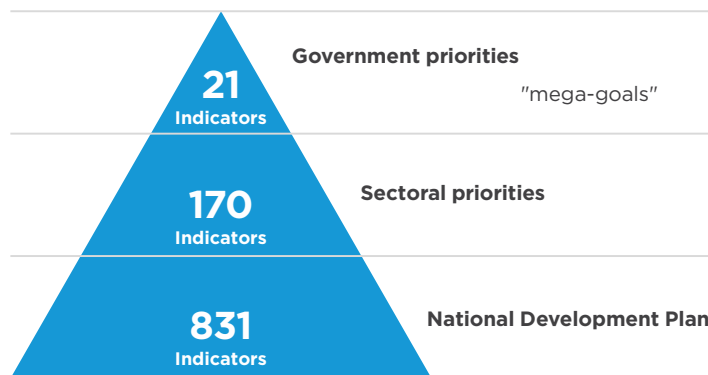
*(continued on next page)*

<sup>a</sup> For example, one CAP goal focused on reducing the aggregate time to complete federal environmental reviews and authorization processes for infrastructure projects. Traditionally, each MDA had approached these individually, leading to time-consuming, costly, and unpredictable processes. With CoG coordination, 15 MDAs were able to standardize their approaches, resolve disagreements more rapidly, share good practices, and increase accountability through an [online dashboard](#) that tracks all permitting timetables. As a result, since 2018 there has been a 45 percent reduction in average completion time and a savings of US\$1 billion (Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council, 2020).

**The most successful performance frameworks typically share a set of core features:**

- *Well-defined practices and tools for both the setting of key priorities for the CoG (government as a whole) and agreeing on the work of line ministries (their own priorities and business as usual).* The CoG, while seeking to ensure all of the work of government is managed well, focuses on the government’s core priorities. Strong performance frameworks specify how both tiers (whole-of-government priorities and the other work of line ministries) will be aligned. In 2014–2017, Colombia established three levels: 21 mega-goals for the government as a whole, 170 goals covering ministerial priorities (but that also received monitoring from the Presidency), and the remaining 831 goals to be tracked by the National Planning Department (Figure 3.1).

**Figure 3.1.**  
**Priority Levels Across Government Goals in Colombia, 2014–2017**



Source: Acosta and González (2018).

- *Clear definitions of success.* In setting priorities and goals, vague aspirations are of little use. Instead, quantitative targets, indicators, or other clear definitions of success have gained prominence as guides for policymaking and resource allocation as well as accountability (“how much of what by when”). Table 3.1 presents selected examples across different policy areas from recent practice in Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries.

**Table 3.1.**  
**Examples of Performance Targets in Latin American and Caribbean Governments**

Country	Policy Area	Target
Chile (2010–2014)	Crime	15% reduction in the victimization rate (proportion of households that are victims of crime) by 2013
Colombia (2014–2018)	Agriculture	1.5 million more hectares planted by 2018
Peru (2016–2021)	Health	55% reduction in infant chronic malnutrition by 2021
Buenos Aires, Argentina (2015–2019)	Road Safety	30% reduction in traffic fatalities by 2019
Pernambuco, Brazil (2011–2015)	Education	16% performance increase in the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB) for secondary schools

Sources: Acosta and González (2018); Alessandro, Lafuente, and Santiso (2014); Lafuente and González (2018); Trivellato (2017).

- *Increased use of cross-ministerial goals.* Given the cross-cutting nature of many of the ‘wicked issues’ addressed by governments and of those prioritized by the CoG, the traditional performance management approach of vertical, single-ministry instruments has been complemented by cross-ministerial efforts, such as the Cross-Agency Priority Goals in the United States, New Zealand’s [Better Public Services Programme](#) (or Results Programme), Colombia’s “transformational priorities,” and Peru’s cross-ministerial budgeting



for early childhood development. The “priority” (cross-ministerial) and the vertical or “institutional” visions of performance management can complement each other.

- *An explicit connection to the budget.* Performance frameworks need to formally link the processes of setting priorities with the vital function of budget allocation. Since many of the goals that the government wishes to achieve transcend annual cycles, in the United Kingdom the [Planning and Performance Framework’s](#) cycle normally begins with a Spending Review as a multi-year and whole-of-government definition of priorities and allocation of resources. This process occurs alongside the development of outcome delivery plans for each department (which may include goals led by the department but shared with others) and more detailed operational plans linked to each year’s budget. Progress in the priorities or changes in them may lead to subsequent adjustments in budget allocations.
- *Integrated and consistent planning instruments at national and ministerial levels.* Many LAC and other countries have developed multiple planning instruments (national development plans, long-term infrastructure plans, sectoral plans, institutional plans, territorial plans, etc.) and there is often a demand from external partners for more such plans. Each of these instruments requires its own guidelines, methodologies, and reporting mechanisms. Keeping track of their progress and using monitoring information to inform decision-making is virtually impossible. Instead, some of the OECD cases previously referenced are more targeted: they invariably involve fewer, more succinct planning documents. Thus, both the line ministries and the CoG can devote time and resources to the more substantive aspects of the process, rather than attempting to comply with cumbersome procedural requirements or templates.
- *Clearly defining roles, responsibilities, and accountability across the delivery system, with earlier attention to implementation challenges.* Given the increasingly complex delivery matrix (both horizontally and vertically), governments have begun to articulate more clearly, through their operational plans, each partner’s contributions. This approach creates a foundation for stronger organizational accountability. It also makes it possible to devote attention to implementation challenges more quickly at every stage of policy

development. It is crucial to verify that resources and capabilities are in place before approving new plans or initiatives. For example, the Australian CoG has defined guidelines and standards to be met by all ministries and agencies before moving to the implementation stage (Australian Government, 2014).

- *Dedicated performance teams in the CoG and the line ministries and agencies.* Strong performance frameworks are led by CoG teams with the mandate, skills, and instruments to support line ministries and agencies in defining priorities, setting goals, monitoring performance, and providing support when performance is lagging. Increasingly, similar roles are being established or enhanced across the public sector. As presented in Box 3.1., the U.S. performance framework mandates the appointment of performance improvement officers (PIOs) as senior executives in each department and agency, who coordinate the work of their entities toward performance improvement. Collectively, these officials form the [Performance Improvement Council \(PIC\)](#), a body that assists the Office of Management and Budget (OMB, the CoG unit that has overall leadership responsibility for the performance framework) in resolving cross-cutting performance issues and sharing good practice. There are clear responsibilities, not just at the CoG, for operating the performance framework.
- *A connection to staff performance goals.* Although harder to effectively implement in practice, some governments have been able to integrate the organizational performance framework with its counterpart at the human resource level, connecting the agencies' goals with those of senior managers and, to a lesser extent, their teams. That integration (at least at the managerial level) is important since organizational processes and outputs require public officials to have goals and incentives aligned with the completion of tasks. Even if the organizational goals do not automatically cascade to the individual level, frequent communication and discussion between managers and staff should help keep them aligned (Schnell, et al., 2021). In the U.S. performance framework, "priority goal leaders" are identified for each high-level priority, thus connecting them with individual staff performance.

- *Ensuring there is one version of the truth regarding performance.* Too often, governments establish several processes for collecting and reporting performance data. This leads to debates about the accuracy of the measures, rather than about how to use the data to improve performance. Strong frameworks ensure about that the same performance data is accepted by all key stakeholders as the right description of actual progress. At a minimum, the CoG would have to coordinate a forum with the units collecting performance information from MDAs to harmonize these requests; more ambitiously, it can seek to establish a clear governance for data management within the public sector.
- *Systematic routines for monitoring, learning, and internal accountability.* A core feature of the performance framework of the U.S. federal government is the legal requirement to conduct periodic data-driven reviews of progress between the CoG and the responsible departments and agencies. This can also be done outside of the legal framework, when there is political will and senior management committed to the management model, as was the case of the State of Pernambuco in Brazil (Alessandro, Lafuente, and Shostak, 2014). That process helps focus attention on the goals defined in the planning process, avoiding the risk of relegating plans during day-to-day policymaking and managerial decisions.
- *Leveraging the power of external monitoring and accountability.* In some cases, mostly in OECD countries, performance frameworks require goals to be made public and progress reports periodically updated. Performance dashboards on government websites are increasingly being used to aid transparency. This external oversight can also reinforce the incentive of ministries and agencies to deliver on these priorities. National statistics institutions, central banks, supreme audit institutions and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can also play an important role in providing or validating performance information to enhance credibility.
- *Strengthening institutionalization and continuity.* Depending on the context, consideration can be given to hardwiring performance frameworks and routines into government. An Act of Congress established the basic components of the U.S. performance framework in 1993. They were enhanced in 2010 to incorporate priority goals

and define performance management routines. Administrations from both parties have implemented the framework since then, which has embedded the framework as part of the government's organizational culture. In LAC, the performance framework of the state of Pernambuco, Brazil, has been implemented during successive administrations (from the same party). The framework was codified by the state's legislature in 2009, reflecting the support of a broad set of stakeholders (Alessandro, Lafuente, and Shostak, 2014).

**Regarding this last feature, it should be noted that formalization *per se* is not sufficient; sustained political commitment by senior leadership is vital for any performance framework to be used effectively.** Several LAC countries have passed laws establishing systems for planning, monitoring, and evaluation. In practice, however, implementing integrated frameworks that actually guide the policy and implementation processes remains a challenge. In many cases, planning and budgeting processes continue to be disjointed; multiple actors are involved without adequate coordination; and, for monitoring progress, “multiple requests for the same information, often in different formats for different systems, became a recurrent problem that organizations resented, and managers resisted, even in highly institutionalized systems. It was experienced as a waste of time and diversion away from substantive policy goals” (Ospina et al., 2021: 457). As such, although a formal codification of the framework and senior government ownership can help clarify processes and responsibilities, strong approaches to management are needed to align and integrate the multiple actors needed to improve performance. Left to their own devices, actors prefer to maintain their own processes with the ministerial or agency silo perspective. As with most CoG tools, the introduction of routines that regularly engage leadership is an innovation in itself. The visible backing of the chief executive and senior government leaders is a key factor for the success of the performance framework. That support can be conveyed through communications with ministers and by directly engaging in routines (such as monitoring sessions) that are integral to the framework. Similarly, having a senior permanent official to own the change management process until the tool/approach is embedded is critical. Finally, the silo-breaking “priority” vision for cross-agency goals is a value added that only a CoG performance framework can provide.

### ***Prioritization***

**Based on a robust performance framework, identifying and securing commitment to the government's core strategic priorities is a distinctive attribute of the CoG's approach to managing government. This section outlines concrete ideas on *how to set priorities in government*.** As

discussed in chapter 2, the priorities of any government must be defined and endorsed by senior leaders, reflect the needs of constituents through a support coalition, and understood by those that need to action them. Only the CoG can play a key role in *managing the process* through which such priorities are established. This can be done by:

- *Structuring the decision-making process* to ensure that different perspectives and a range of evidence have been considered before final approval of the priorities. A systematic process that engages a wide audience and is tested against delivery helps minimize the risk of prioritizing ill-conceived ambitions that are unfeasible or not truly impactful.
- *Brokering between the senior leadership's aspirations and the views of ministerial bureaucracies.* Inevitably, line ministries will have a perspective on what is a priority, informed by both ministerial ambition and officials in the ministry. Simply imposing a priority is not typically a recipe for success; actors may resist, or decouple, that is, a formal compliance with the stated priorities from their actual practices and agenda (Boswell, 2018). The CoG is well placed to negotiate and reconcile the aspiration of the government leadership with expertise and feedback from the sectors to ensure sufficient buy-in for effective implementation of public policies. It is also the only actor that can verify the coherence of the priorities with the government's overall strategy and agenda.
- *Stress-testing the ambitions against the reality of implementation.* Priorities need to be deliverable. Often, both the public at large and the partners with responsibility for implementing frontline services have watched government announcements without enough clarity about how delivery will happen. Engaging with those that will provide the services to fully understand what is required to meet the priority ambition will bring about a more realistic set of priorities.

**The early days of a new administration are typically the period of greatest expectation of the setting of new priorities with key stakeholders. Seizing the opportunity is critical.**

**There is no single process for setting priorities, but certain steps must be considered.** Figure 3.2 depicts a stylized version of these steps. There is no standard timeline. However, the early days of a new administration are typically the period of greatest expectation of the setting of new priorities with key stakeholders, thus seizing the opportunity is critical. If too much time passes before the administration sets its priorities, inertia or other policy agendas will fill the political vacuum. The first 100 days are sometimes used as a reference point. Depending on each country's political system, the transition period can be used to initiate the process of setting priorities (even if greater access to relevant information and expertise only becomes available once in office). For incumbent administrations, defining (or re-setting) explicit priorities may be an opportunity to regain the political initiative. The suggested steps are the following:

- *Casting a wide net to identify potential priorities.* The CoG should start the process by considering a broad range of potential “candidates” to become priorities, from sources such as the electoral platform and major campaign promises as well as citizen (or beneficiary) surveys; ideas or plans produced by the teams to be appointed in the line ministries; senior officials in line ministries; issues that can be anticipated as significant in the years ahead; priorities arising from the delivery system itself; and, finally, from the attributes that define the core strategy and identity of the administration (e.g., its desired legacy). As part of this step, the CoG may consider a formalized approach to obtaining the views of external stakeholders, including citizens themselves, on priority objectives. In Pernambuco, for example, the governor led regional workshops across the state during the first months of his mandate to receive citizens’ inputs. Before a top-down definition of priorities by the governor (supported by the CoG and other leaders) was launched, there was an outside-in process to receive ideas from civil society (Alessandro, Lafuente, and Shostak, 2014). Regardless of the tool used, it is important to ensure that the priorities connect with the needs of constituents and receive the support of a broad coalition, to ensure their relevance and sustainability. Building a social contract for the government’s vision and priorities is critical.
- *Filtering according to clear and consistent criteria.* The initial long list (which from manifestos or strategic plans alone can often range in

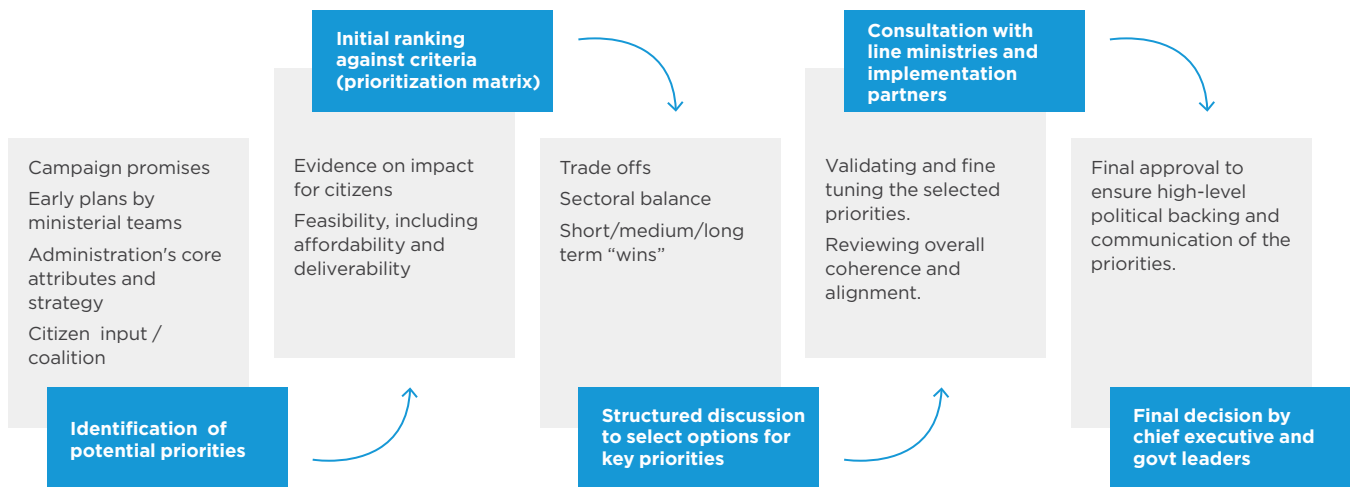
the hundreds) needs to be filtered to be useful for decision-making. Applying objective criteria will lend clarity and legitimacy to the process. For instance, a prioritization matrix can help arrange and visualize the potential priorities along two dimensions—their expected *impact* and how *feasible* their delivery might be. Of course, these terms may be understood in different ways. “Impact” can be defined as substantive policy impact, the impact on changing outcomes for citizens, or the potential effects on public opinion of improved trust in government. “Feasibility” may include elements such as the government’s direct responsibility for delivery, the capabilities to deliver, or the cost of delivering the priority. Thus, the CoG should clarify how it defines these dimensions and what sources of information and criteria it uses to rank potential priorities in each one. This methodology was used in Colombia and in the City of Buenos Aires, among other cases.

- *Establishing a structured discussion among the key CoG figures and selected government leaders.* The priority matrix produced by the CoG is the main input for the next step: a structured discussion (or, probably, sets of discussions) across the senior leadership of government to test the initial list of priorities. This can be done through a CoG awayday exercise. The matrix can help resolve difficult trade-offs and compare the potential priorities against one another based on common criteria. Given the tendency to think that everything is a priority, this visual comparison can help identify the real priorities of any government. Moreover, this discussion can help balance competing sectoral priorities while identifying both quick wins and goals that demand more sustained efforts. Key CoG stakeholders, such as those responsible for budget allocation, political negotiations, and public communications, should be part of these discussions. In coalition governments, different partners may have to be considered in these discussions as well. Box 3.2 discusses the number and types of priorities that should be selected.
- *Revising and adjusting with line ministries, agencies, and partners responsible for implementation.* Once the preliminary set of priorities has been defined, the CoG should conduct a round of consultations and negotiations with line ministries and agencies responsible for the objectives in order to validate, fine-tune, amend, or even re-draft the initial list. It should then revise the priorities to ensure their coherence

and alignment with the government’s political strategy. An approach of “successive approximations” may help fine-tune the priorities.

- *Final decision by the leadership of government.* While this rational process sounds straightforward, it is fraught with challenges, notably the diverging views and perspectives of key stakeholders. The chief executive and other senior leaders (and, depending on the political system, the full cabinet) should have the final say and approve the government’s priorities. For these to be true priorities, they need the leadership’s visible political backing and not just be perceived as a technocratic exercise. After priority setting there should be further actions in terms of internal and external communication of the priorities.

**Figure 3.2.**  
**Suggested Key Steps in the Prioritization Process**



Source: Authors’ elaboration.



### BOX 3.2. NUMBER AND TYPES OF PRIORITIES TO ESTABLISH

A recurrent question is how many priorities to establish for the government as a whole (in addition to the goals and business-as-usual operations of ministries and agencies). There is no standard answer to this question. The state of New South Wales, Australia, announced 14 [“Premier’s Priorities,”](#) and the state of Western Cape, in South Africa, launched six [“Game Changers.”](#) In LAC, Peru’s Delivery Unit focused on seven priority goals, while the City of Buenos Aires announced 20 [“Public Commitments.”](#) In some of these cases, additional priorities were established later on. In a study of Delivery Units in LAC, Lafuente and González (2018) estimated an average of 35 priorities per case, distributed across four to seven pillars or areas. The right number of priorities (5? 10? 20? 30?) varies across countries, levels of government, and capabilities and resources available in the CoG, the line ministries and at the frontline. The specificity of the priorities is hugely important. Making “education” a priority is meaningless as it will not drive behavior and will encompass multiple goals within it; instead, if the priority is defined as “improving student performance,” it becomes more focused and bounded.

Thus, defining the *right type* of priorities is more important than establishing a specific number. Strong priorities usually share certain characteristics (Barber, Moffit, and Kihn, 2010): they are expressed as outcomes that matter to citizens (e.g., they do not refer to internal government

processes or outputs such as approving a law), they are sufficiently focused (not too broad or ambiguous), they are shared by most of the stakeholders that will be involved in delivery, and they can be operationalized through measurable indicators. During the prioritization process, the CoG should periodically stress-test how the priorities are defined to ensure they meet these criteria. The worst combination, of course, is to have too many priorities and for them to be too broad or unfocused. A practitioner interviewed for this study, speaking from his own personal experience, stated that this combination involves trying to cover *everything* that a government does—the opposite of prioritizing.

**Finally, the CoG needs to maintain a prioritization mindset in all of its work.** Selecting priority *objectives* is only part of the strategic use of the CoG’s resources. Then, from a potentially wide range of indicators of performance, it should track those that best capture the aspirations and expectations of government. From the multitude of interventions and activities involved in delivery, it should monitor key actions and milestones. In instances where line ministries may require support in coordination

or unblocking obstacles, the CoG should focus on the most critical priorities. To avoid becoming dangerously overstretched, the CoG needs to “prioritize relentlessly” (Trivellato, 2017) across all of its functions.

### ***Delivery Planning***

**Implementation planning is critical for delivering on priorities, as they typically involve multiple stakeholders and a complex sequence of interconnected activities.** Developing an explicit, validated, and concrete plan can help surface assumptions and anticipate risks, clarify the needed activities and their timing, manage resource flows, establish responsibilities and accountabilities, and communicate with key stakeholders, among other benefits. In general, the existing evidence from the public sector (Bryson, Edwards, and Van Slyke, 2018) and the private sector (Greene and Hopp, 2017) indicates a positive impact of planning on performance if this is an active process and not focused on just preparing a document or filling out a form or a checklist. Plans seem particularly useful for the complex type of priorities pursued by governments, that need to align and synchronize several public, private, and community stakeholders that bring their own resources, incentives, and agendas to the table. In these complex implementation chains, the risk of failure increases unless there is clarity about who is expected to do what, by when, and using which resources.

**It falls to the CoG to signal the importance, to provide know-how and guide the process, and to verify the quality and consistency of the plans—not to produce the plans themselves.** As discussed in Chapter 2, line ministries and agencies have the primary responsibility for delivering on the government’s key priorities. This includes identifying how they plan to do it, usually in conjunction with other stakeholders. The CoG is the actor that can set quality standards for these plans and can challenge and support the entities to ensure that they have cross-government and wider sectoral ownership (as well as coherence across the different plans). Strong delivery plans share a set of core features:

- *They are developed in terms of systems or outcome-based priorities rather than institutional boundaries.* If outcomes reflect the complex interaction of multiple factors and interventions from different stakeholders, the planning process needs to evolve from the linear,

vertical approach of single-ministerial plans. Instead, a horizontal or “systems” perspective that cuts across organizational silos is required.

In New Zealand, for example, government leaders prioritized 10 cross-cutting goals (including increasing participation in early childhood education, reducing crime, facilitating transactions with the government, and so on) for the 2012–2017 term, set targets for each of them, committed to report on progress periodically and publicly, and held the leaders of the relevant agencies responsible for achieving them (Scott and Boyd, 2017). The usual approach in cross-ministerial planning is to assign the primary responsibility for delivery to a single entity. While this ensures clear accountability, it may also reduce the incentive for the other agencies to prioritize the goal in their own work. Instead, New Zealand attempted something different: to promote horizontal collaboration, it established *collective* responsibility across all of the agencies expected to contribute to the goal. This approach may pose other risks (such as misplacing rewards and penalties, as well as diminished accountability due to the absence of a single individual being named responsible). However, the case suggests that it was effective in generating cross-ministerial collaboration and achieving results, at least for the goals that involved a few ministries. As group size increases, individual efforts tend to be diluted and coordination becomes harder (see Box 3.3). Although more cases would be needed to test the value of this approach, it is an example of the potential to innovate in cross-ministerial planning.

**BOX 3.3. RESULTS FROM CROSS-MINISTERIAL PLANNING IN NEW ZEALAND**

One of the targets prioritized by the government of New Zealand was to increase infant immunization rates to achieve and maintain 95 percent coverage of eight-month-olds fully immunized with the scheduled vaccinations by 2017, up from 83 percent in 2012. This indicator had remained basically flat since 2005. Three ministries (of health, social development, and for Pacific People) were involved in delivering the goal. Partnerships with NGOs were also established to detect at-risk children and raise awareness about the issue. By the 2017 deadline, although the full target had not been met, significant improvements were achieved: the immunization rates had reached 93.5 percent, leading to a reduction in serious infectious diseases among children. These improvements were attributed to the existence of clear targets with deadlines; to public accountability, which enhanced the pressure to deliver; and to the collective responsibility of participating ministries (as long as there were no more than three), which placed the focus on achieving results rather than avoiding blame (Scott and Boyd, 2017).

In 2019, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Social Development of Peru jointly developed a cross-ministerial approach to planning and budgeting for the goal of enhancing early childhood development (ECD) (UNICEF and El Diálogo, 2021). Multi-year and outcome-based targets were set, theories of change were designed according to robust evidence, and then budget allocations were determined based on the outputs and interventions identified in the theories of change, comprising the work of multiple ministries and agencies as well as subnational governments. In addition, joint service delivery was planned for interventions with shared beneficiaries or inter-related goals. This experience was based on Peru's earlier efforts through cross-ministerial work to reduce childhood anemia, which decreased significantly after the introduction of results-based budgeting. Still, ECD is a broader and more complex policy goal than reducing malnutrition; thus, identifying the causal attributions and delivery chains required to allocate resources efficiently can be more challenging (e.g., the plan includes 30 different outputs that need to be delivered, most of which also require earlier deliverables). For such complex goals, the CoG's leadership and coordination may be even more critical to lend credibility to the process and secure buy-in.

**Delivery chains focus on visualizing the responsibilities of each stakeholder throughout the implementation process.**

Finally, when working on cross government priorities, it is critical to establish cross-ministerial technical teams who will work jointly on them. Although often counter-intuitive for line ministry staff, when it is undertaken, very positive and productive new policy and working relationship accrue. These teams would mirror the roles of the respective ministers who provide the political leadership and responsibility for each priority, as they focus on oversight of planning and achieving these goals. Cross-ministerial teams are used in Canada to identify gaps and agree on action plans, sometimes reflected in new protocols or Memoranda of Understanding among the multiple stakeholders involved.

- *They clarify the responsibilities of each stakeholder and their interfaces.* A systems approach should not imply diminished accountability for each stakeholder. Clarifying the responsibilities of each actor is critical for smooth implementation and effective monitoring. Mapping and analyzing the delivery chain may be useful in this regard (Barber, 2007; Lindert et al., 2020). Compared to traditional flow charts, delivery chains focus on visualizing the responsibilities of each stakeholder throughout the implementation process; they assign clear lanes for each.<sup>43</sup> Figure 3.3 displays a real-world example developed in Colombia for the priority goal of expanding technical education (2018–2022). Mapping the delivery chain has several advantages:
  - Enables the easy visualization of the key activities, who is responsible for each, and the interconnections between actors. Thus, it tends to minimize gaps or loose ends in the process.
  - Helos review existing processes and eventually simplify or redesign them (e.g., to eliminate duplication).
  - Facilitates the identification of both data capture points (which can be used to anticipate the performance trajectory in future months) and weak links and potential obstacles in the chain (e.g., stakeholders with fewer capabilities, difficult interfaces between

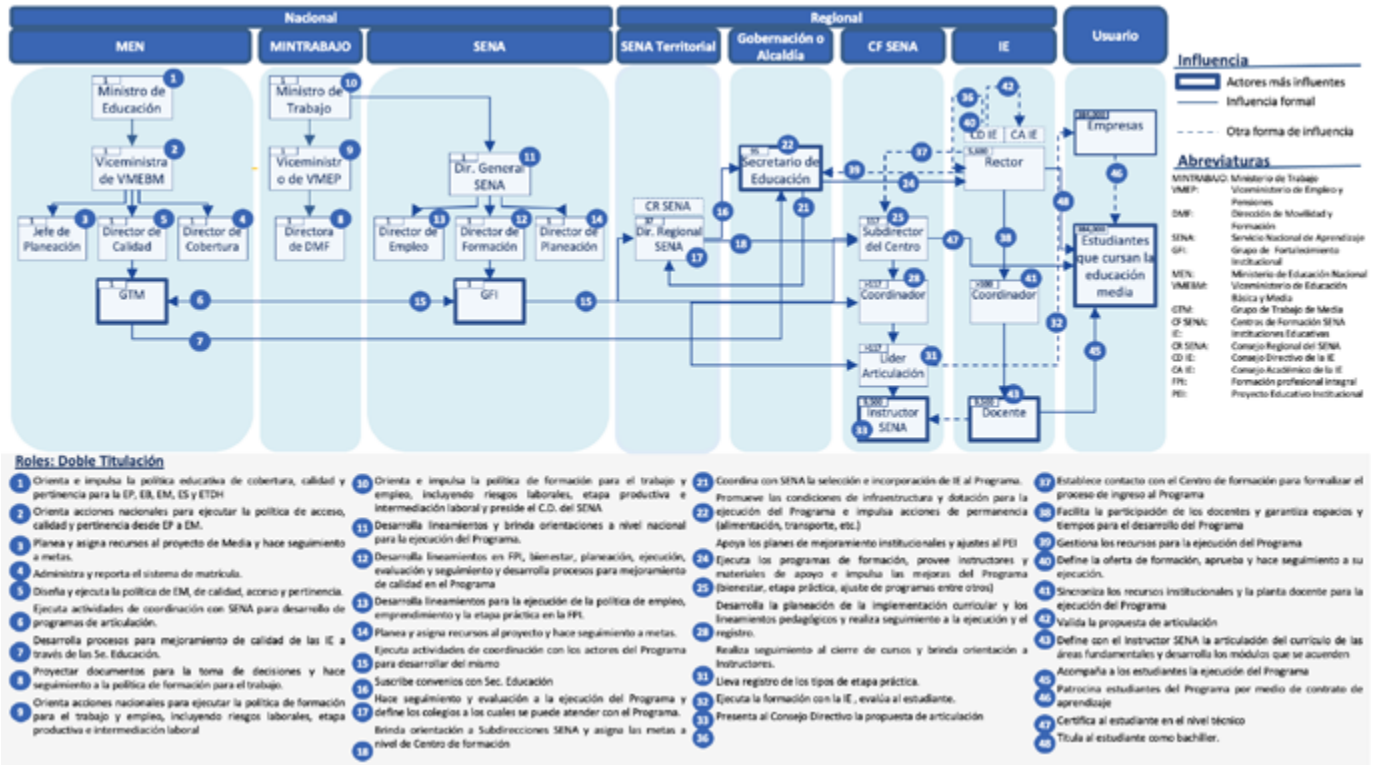
<sup>43</sup> These tools were originally developed in the private sector as cross-functional or “swim-lane” diagrams, precisely because (like in a swimming pool) they clearly mark each player’s lane to avoid collisions (see Rummeler and Brache, 2012).

actors, steps that lie outside of the government's control, etc.), to anticipate and mitigate such risks.

- Guides the selection of performance indicators to monitor implementation.

During the planning process, the CoG typically runs workshops to develop understanding of the delivery chains with the agencies responsible for the priority goals. These workshops are structured by priority, with participation of different ministries and agencies that contribute to that specific goal. As with all components of the delivery plan, the actors must fully own it. Delivery chains present a simplified version of the actual process, as do maps for the territories that they represent. The level of detail in the diagram may vary according to the complexity of the goal and the types of activities involved; some diagrams may not need to be as detailed as the example in Figure 3.3. Certain phases or activities could potentially be so intricate that the responsible entity may want to develop a more specific diagram just to visualize them and clarify the responsibilities of its subunits.

**Figure 3.3.**  
**Delivery Chain for a Presidential Priority in Colombia (2018-2022)**



Source: IDB, Government of Colombia and Tras100d.

Note: The diagram presents the set of actors involved in delivering a priority goal to expand the number of students in technical education, including national agencies and offices, subnational bodies, businesses, and students themselves. The same diagram is then used to map data capture points and risks along the delivery chain.

- *They provide a clear definition of success.* Plans should unambiguously define the aim and expected outcome(s). The usual tools for providing clarity are quantitative indicators of performance with targets or a target range attached to them and deadlines for delivery. A “20 percent increase in average student performance in PISA math tests by 2024” provides an unmistakable goal that defines expectations of the government. This clarity can help in the consensus with the ones responsible for implementing and communicating the priority to those delivering services and citizens in general. It provides a foundation for enhanced accountability, and it may incentivize a deeper analysis of performance based on hard data, in order to seek and test policy and operational improvements. At the same time, as discussed in Chapter 2, quantitative targets are susceptible to

gaming, and the CoG must be aware of their potential unintended effects (Davies, Atkins, and Sodhi, 2021). Moreover, governments must remember that targets are a tool to operationalize a substantive policy priority, and not mistake them for the priority itself.

The literature on public sector performance suggests different tools for target-setting. Among the most common approaches is the use of benchmarks: by considering comparable cases (from previous performance, from other governments, from other types of organizations, from analogous goals, etc.) it is possible to establish a preliminary target that would then be refined or fine-tuned according to the specifics of the situation (Barber, 2016). In general, ambitious stretch targets are perceived as more powerful to induce transformations in behaviors and performance, although governments need to balance this consideration with the feasibility of implementation, especially if targets are to be made public. Moreover, the ability to set such targets depends on the existence of strong benchmark evidence, which is not always available.

The proposal for targets should come initially from line ministries and agencies with relevant sectoral expertise, which will be responsible for delivery. But the CoG has a key role in probing the process by which the targets were established (Were benchmarks used? Why are those particular benchmarks applicable to the current situation? What evidence was considered? Were the key contextual factors—resources, culture, capabilities—considered to calibrate the target?). This dialogue between the ministries and the CoG should lead to a final agreement on targets that are ambitious, realistic, and mutually consistent. Of course, sometimes the targets are already defined in the priority (e.g., if it was a specific campaign promise), but in most cases the CoG is well placed to ensure a robust process of target-setting.

Finally, the CoG needs to consider whether all objectives can be effectively captured in quantitative targets. Quantifying the outputs and outcomes of certain public agencies (such as those responsible for diplomacy, intelligence, defense, or even the CoG itself!) is harder than for those that generate tangible products or that directly benefit



a measurable number of users (Schnell, et al., 2021; Wilson, 1989).<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, it is likely that government priorities are related to the latter type of work, and are more amenable to the use of targets.

- *Plans must have sufficient activity and set a measurable path to the outcome.* The plans need to provide assurance that the proposed activity will be sufficient to achieve the goals. This reassurance is critical to ensure there are sufficient resources (both human and financial) to support the effort. To enable real-time monitoring and improvement, final targets alone are not sufficient. Governments should track progress in a timely manner to check they are on a plausible path to delivery. To facilitate this monitoring, the implementation plan would have to incorporate tools such as:
  - A performance trajectory for the target. The performance trajectory is a projection in time of intermediate targets that would have to be achieved successively to meet the final target (Barber, 2007). Like the final targets, they could be developed through a combination of benchmarks and the planned timing of the activities included in the delivery plan, estimating the impact of each intervention (see Figure 3.4). Off-track performance can then be identified by comparing the actual evolution of the indicator<sup>45</sup> to the expected trajectory. Table 3.2 presents a self-assessment matrix for teams developing trajectories.

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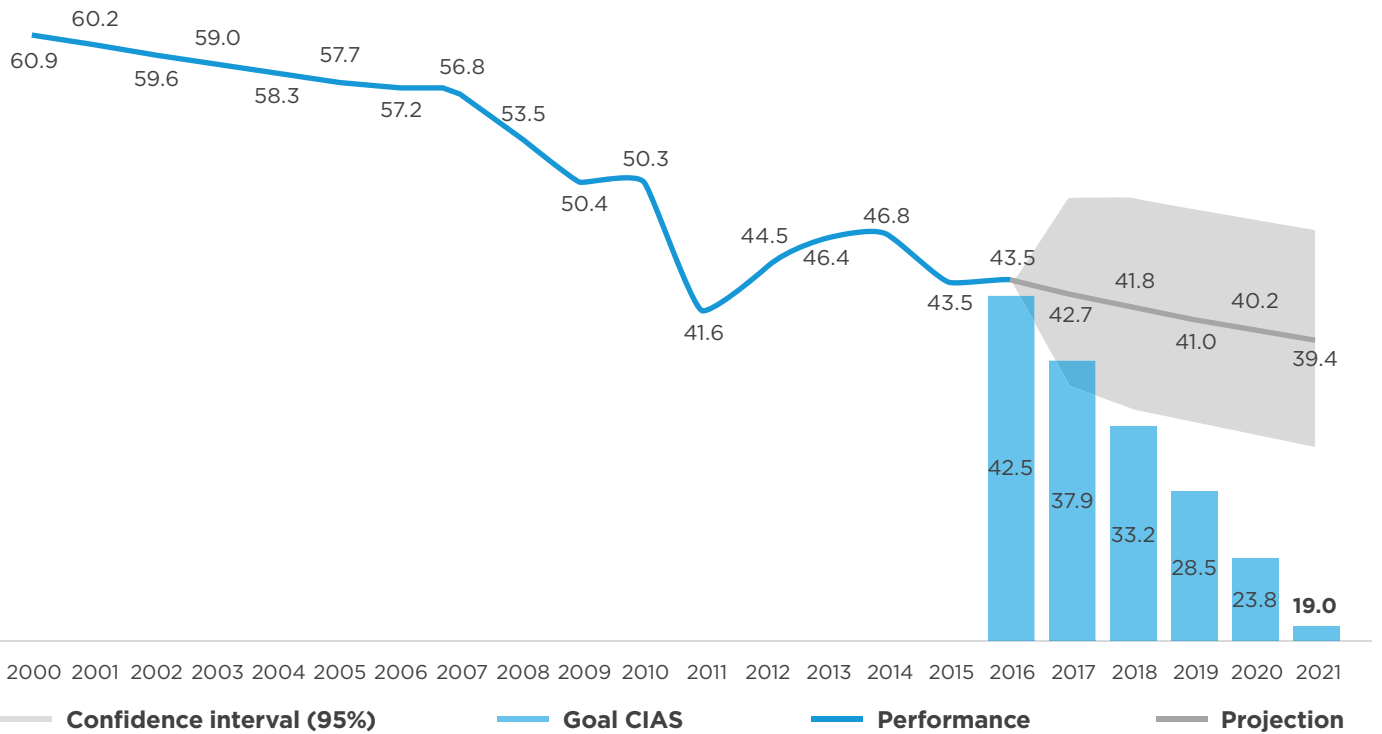
<sup>44</sup> The Cross-Agency Priority Goals in the United States, many of which focus on improvements to internal government operations rather than citizen-oriented outcomes, tend to use qualitative assessments of progress instead of quantitative targets. However, this approach has been regarded as not sufficiently transparent (GAO, 2016).

<sup>45</sup> If the indicator itself (e.g., the PISA test score) does not have sufficient intermediate points, proxy indicators (e.g., nationally administered tests) may be used to develop the trajectory, in conjunction with leading process indicators that are expected to contribute to the final outcome.



Governments must remember that targets are a tool to operationalize a substantive policy priority, and not mistake them for the priority itself”.

**Figure 3.4.**  
**Trajectory for the Priority Goal of Reducing Childhood Anemia in Peru**



Source: Peru's Delivery Unit, cited by Trivellato (2017).

Notes: CIAS: Comisión Interministerial de Asuntos Sociales. The grey line indicates a projection derived from the previous performance (blue line), while the blue bars show the trajectory for the target set by the government. The gray shade indicates a 95 percent confidence interval.

**Table 3.2.**  
**Self-Assessment Matrix for Developing Trajectories**

Self-assessment for building and using trajectories

Element	Questions	Current position	Action needed
Metric	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the metric specific?</li> <li>• Is it measurable?</li> <li>• Is it relevant to the goal?</li> </ul>		
Baseline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is baseline value clear?</li> </ul>		
Data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are data collected frequently enough to monitor trends?</li> <li>• Are data accurate enough for measurement?</li> </ul>		
Data breakdown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can data be broken down by region, locality, and policy/initiative?</li> </ul>		
Historical data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is past performance understood?, for example, causes of peaks and troughs</li> <li>• Is there a good understanding of policy-off performance, that is, of what happens if nothing is done?</li> </ul>		
Setting trajectories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ultimate goal (target or range)</li> <li>• What are the intermediate review points (as many as possible)?</li> <li>• Potential policy initiatives/actions</li> <li>• The estimated impact of each initiative / policy and by when (e.g., immediate, delayed)</li> <li>• What information about the impact of initiatives/policies will be available to take corrective action?</li> <li>• What needs adjusting to make the target/range attainable?</li> </ul>		

Source: Authors' elaboration.

- *Milestones of progress.* Milestones are significant steps reached to achieve a goal. Examples include the completion of a critical process (for example, a procurement process), the phase-end, or some important intermediate deliverable (for example, the completion of training for public servants who will then work on the implementation of the priority). As such, a schedule of milestones is a tool to monitor progress.
- *A mapping of additional leading indicators.* In addition to collecting data on intermediate values of the final target, a strong delivery plan needs to clarify which process indicators (throughout the delivery chain) will be used to assess progress in real time and anticipate any future issues. A delay in a critical activity is likely to be registered sooner than a delay in the final outcome. Therefore, process indicators may act as leading indicators, as they allow future trends to be anticipated and timely corrections and adjustments to be introduced (e.g., not having enough teachers hired and trained at the beginning of the school year for a new program may lead to a lower outcome in terms of students' performance).
- *Plans anticipate and mitigate potential obstacles.* Robust plans must seek to anticipate what might go wrong during implementation and proactively identify risks. Mapping these risks in the delivery chain is critical. Other tools, such as risk matrices, may be useful to prioritize them based on their likelihood and potential impact. However, agencies should not be able to use the identification of risks as justification for lack of delivery ("we said this could fail..."). Instead, the CoG must clarify that the purpose of the exercise is to anticipate, mitigate, and manage risks, not to excuse inadequate performance.
- *Delivery plans focus on implementation from the perspective of users and citizens.* For this, they apply tools such as customer journey mapping, which consider the full set of experiences encountered by citizens when accessing particular services. Mapping these experiences can help identify opportunities to improve and streamline these processes from the perspective of the users rather than the viewpoint of government institutions.

- Delivery plans could be formalized through performance agreements or contracts between the CoG and the line ministries and agencies responsible for delivery. Across several disciplines, the act of signing a clear and explicit commitment has been shown to increase the focus on agreed objectives (Dolan et al., 2010). Several governments have developed these instruments to formalize the objectives that ministries and agencies are meant to deliver, the activities they will implement, and the resources they will receive. These agreements are usually made public to increase the commitment of the actors. For instance, in Colombia, the president and each minister signed the contracts in a public event (see Figure 3.5). In some cases, pre-existing practices may be adapted for this purpose. In Canada, [“Mandate Letters”](#) signed by the prime minister outline the priority objectives that each minister is expected to achieve. Since 2015, these have been communicated publicly, while previously they were private communications between the prime minister and each member of Cabinet. In Rwanda, the President’s Office retooled a pre-colonial practice of establishing community goals ([Imihigo](#)) to define public targets for local mayors and MDAs, which has been credited with helping improve several indicators in the country (World Bank, 2018).*

**Figure 3.5.**  
**Signing of Public Commitments in Colombia**



Source: Acosta and González (2018).

### ***Budget Alignment***

**Aligning priorities, plans, and budgets is a critical yet challenging task.**

Too often, plans are developed with insufficient reference to costs or resource constraints, and budgets are prepared with limited connection to agreed strategic goals. This disconnect prevents ministers and officials from making significant progress on achieving the government's priorities. Moreover, it leads to dissipation of effort, especially in countries with multiple planning documents, including those developed to meet international commitments (Sustainable Development Goals, Nationally Determined Contributions for Climate Change, poverty reduction strategies, etc.). In such contexts, budget incrementalism and inertia tend to defeat the government's drive to better align resources with priorities.

**Periodic whole-of-government spending reviews may be employed to realign resources and priorities, specifically on cross-cutting objectives that relate to more than one line ministry.**

Making progress on many of the priorities identified by governments, particularly those that involve multiple ministries and delivery partners, often takes more than a single fiscal year. The challenge is to be sufficiently bold to sunset existing programs to make room for more pressing priorities. Multi-year budget frameworks, frequently used in OECD countries, provide an opportunity to comprehensively review how resources are being allocated, assess what has been achieved to date, and reallocate resources based on the government's new priorities. Some LAC countries have already established medium-term expenditure frameworks (MTEFs) that define projections of spending in key policy sectors, ministries, agencies, and even programs, although only in a few cases are the expected results from that expenditure clearly defined (Filc, 2020). Brazil has adopted multi-year planning and budgeting instruments (Box 3.4). At the beginning of each presidential term, the Congress approves a four-year plan that defines goals, programs, and investments. The chief executive reports on it annually as a basis for preparing the annual budget. Yet even in Brazil, aligning the federal budget with planning instruments has proven difficult (OECD, 2022a), and there is a risk that the process becomes a ritual rather than a useful tool. In most LAC countries, this is even more challenging, as the budget is still disconnected from the performance framework and remains indifferent to performance information (Guess and Savage, 2021). Whatever tool a country uses, priority setting, and resource allocation

should flow from a transparent process that establishes a coherent relationship between government objectives and public spending. Clear priorities reflect government decision-making on what matters most to it. The allocation of resources should reflect these priorities alongside robust analysis of the fiscal and macroeconomic constraints.

#### **BOX 3.4. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR PLANNING, BUDGETING, AND TREASURY IN BRAZIL**

In 2019, Brazil created a new Ministry of Economy by merging five pre-existing institutions, including the Ministries of Finance and of Planning. A 2022 assessment (Mosqueira, Gaetani, and Lafuente, 2022) revealed that the opportunity for linking the budget and treasury with the results framework had been enhanced, and that overall coordination had increased. Still, given the scale of the merger and the distinct administrative cultures of each institution, important challenges remained. The dispersion of processes and instruments for planning, budgeting, and treasury management continued, now across different secretariats within the Ministry. This fragmentation of capabilities also limited the CoG's ability to coherently review and challenge the plans and proposals submitted by line ministries. Finally, the evidence indicated that the actual execution of funds presented persistent gaps relative to the budget commitments.

The organizational arrangements for planning and budgeting vary across countries, but most advanced economies do not have a separate central-level planning agency, like most developing countries do (IMF, 2020). The separation between planning and budgeting can help ensure different perspectives in the decision-making process. A seminal study by Schick (1966) found that one focuses on savings and the other on spending. However, strong coordination is required to work effectively. Colombia, for example, uses two high-level interministerial committees to connect the national development plan, the MTEF, and the annual budget.

**Innovation in budgeting and spending is also needed to facilitate cross-ministerial working for horizontal priorities.** As previously discussed, Peru's performance-based budgeting for early childhood development offers a blueprint for allocating resources toward results that require cross-ministerial interventions rather than funding specific programs or institutions. This "portfolio-budgeting" approach could be adopted for



selected policy priorities to consider certain strategic policy choices more comprehensively (Redburn and Posner, 2015). Using a similar logic, some countries have established funds to foster inter-ministerial coordination. The United Kingdom established the [“Shared Outcomes Fund”](#) after a recent Spending Review by coordinating investment to test innovative ways of working across departments and agencies. In its first round, the fund supported initiatives to provide whole-system approaches to tackling drug use by joining-up efforts by law enforcement agencies, prisons, and health and social care services; multi-agency partnerships to improve the lives of adults with multiple complex needs (defined as three or more of: homelessness, criminal offending, substance misuse, domestic abuse, or poor mental health); and “Family Hubs – Growing Up Well” by improving early childhood services delivered by five departments and agencies, among other cross-cutting initiatives (HM Treasury, 2020). Budget offices will want to ensure that there is sufficient accountability for expenditure and that financial controls remain strong, while at the same time developing financial mechanisms that incentivize collaboration. Pooling cross-agency funding may be an option to encourage ministries to address key horizontal priorities collaboratively, without attempting the more comprehensive transformation of the budget process required in the Peruvian example. A potential drawback of such cross-ministerial funding streams is that the number of resources devoted to them tends to be comparatively small. However, they could be scaled up to account for a larger share of the budget devoted to key policy areas. Finally, an alternative option is to grant the CoG with sufficient funding to support cross-agency piloting related to priority goals, as is the case of the United States’ OMB.

**Of course, whole-of-government spending reviews and cross-ministerial budgets entail significant and difficult reforms. In the short term, the CoG could develop practical tools and processes to enhance the alignment between priorities and resource allocation.**

For instance, Chile’s Presidential Delivery Unit (2010–2014) had a Budget Office liaison appointed for each priority goal. This senior public official analyzed the flow of financial resources allocated, executed, and required for the priorities, enhancing the ability to reallocate resources in a timely manner. This engagement also helped the Budget Office in its negotiations with the MDAs, as it provided the Office with a clear understanding of the president’s priorities and more detailed performance information, minimizing ministerial gaming (Dumas,

Lafuente, and Parrado, 2013). In the case of Pernambuco, Brazil, the institutional co-location of the planning and budget offices within the Secretariat of Planning and Management facilitated their engagement (Alessandro, Lafuente, and Shostak, 2014).

**Finally, the budget may be a key tool for the vertical alignment of policy action.** As discussed in Chapter 2, place-based approaches seek to align fragmented interventions that operate in the same territories with similar goals or beneficiaries. The budget is a fundamental instrument to achieve this. Too often, delivery partners at the local level receive funding from a multiplicity of government agencies, which is inefficient both in allocation and reporting.

**Looking at budgets from a frontline perspective can improve the alignment of resources and priorities. In the United States, the Congress established the Performance Partnership Pilots for Disconnected Youth (P3) in 2014 to better coordinate the services of federal, state, and local agencies working with teenagers and young adults who were neither working nor in school** (Lester, 2016). Under the coordination of the OMB, P3 has provided additional flexibility to local governments to merge funds from different sources (including from five federal agencies) by waiving programmatic and administrative requirements. This integration of resources was expected to generate a stronger “collective impact” than if each program had intervened separately. P3 has been reauthorized in subsequent fiscal years, and the available evidence suggests that particular integrated interventions led to improved youth outcomes (Mathematica and Social Policy Research, 2021). In the United Kingdom, Local Area Agreements—an earlier effort at place-based policy—were three-year plans between national government and local authorities. These agreements provided greater flexibility to local decision-makers for pooling resources, tailored to local priorities. This flexibility in budget management was paired with being held accountable against clear performance indicators set in the Agreements. More recently, the UK government prioritized the goal of “levelling up” deprived areas through a whole-of-government approach, establishing the [Levelling Up Fund](#). This multi-year fund is jointly operated by three departments overseen by a cross-ministerial committee; as such, it “represents a new approach to local investment and will end silos in Whitehall that make it difficult to take a holistic approach to the infrastructure needs of local areas” (HM Treasury, MHCLC, and DoT, 2021: 4).

## Horizontal and Vertical Coordination

The coordinating function in our framework has four components: (i) the coordination of ministries and agencies at the national level for the design and implementation of policy in prioritized cross-cutting objectives (horizontal coordination); (ii) coordinating with subnational governments, especially on priority issues that cut across ministries and agencies (vertical coordination); (iii) coordinating the collaborations with external stakeholders who are increasingly key delivery partners; and (iv) securing whole-of-government responses to major crises. A range of routines and tools for each of these components are presented next.

### *Interministerial Coordination (Horizontal Coordination)*

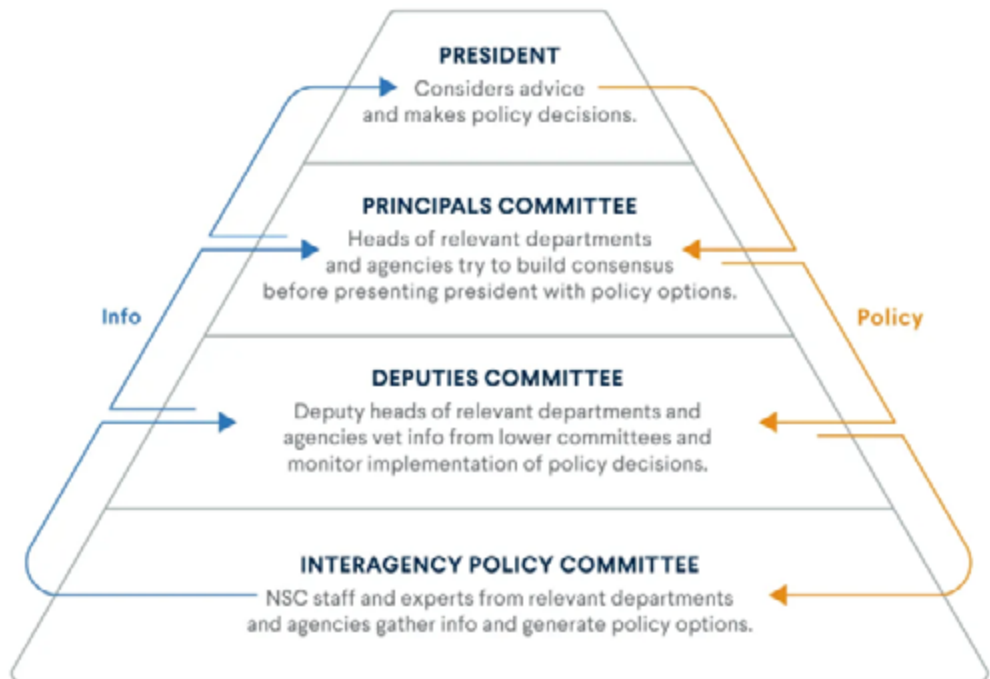
**Interministerial committees and task forces are the usual mechanism to foster horizontal coordination; good practices for their implementation can be identified.** One of the most established and structured examples internationally is the [National Security Council \(NSC\)](#) in the United States. It has operated since 1947 to coordinate the multiple departments and agencies that contribute to national security and foreign policy. It is based in the Executive Office of the President, chaired by the president, and managed day-to-day by the national security advisor (NSA). Each president defines the structure and activities of the NSC, although the following features (which, despite the particular characteristics of this body, are relevant for most coordinating efforts) are often present:

**Trying to establish too many Interministerial committees may overload the CoG's capacity to coordinate and add unnecessary burdens (and sometimes delay) to the policy process.**

- *A focus on top government priorities.* United States presidents typically devote significant attention to international matters. While the Congress, state and local governments share significant responsibility for domestic policy, in foreign affairs (and particularly national security) the president is regarded as the key decision-maker. Thus, the work of the NSC is highly connected to presidential priorities, and its relevance is clearly visible throughout the government. Trying to establish too many interministerial committees, unconnected to government priorities, may overload the CoG's capacity to coordinate and add unnecessary burdens (and sometimes delay) to the policy process.

- *A well-structured process for inter-agency discussion and contestability.* This process includes subcommittees focused on specific policy issues: a Deputies Committee that reviews and monitors the work of these subcommittees and is formed by the deputy heads of the departments and agencies that are part of the NSC; and a Principals Committee (formed by the heads of these departments and agencies), which is the most senior forum for advising the president. The NSA establishes processes and timelines to ensure that necessary papers are prepared in advance at each tier and that conclusions and decisions are communicated to the respective bodies. Therefore, each NSC meeting is well prepared in advance, and its decisions receive sufficient follow-through. Figure 3.6 depicts the processes of the NSC throughout these committees.

**Figure 3.6.**  
**Processes of the National Security Council**



Source: What Is the National Security Council? World101, available at: <https://world101.cfr.org/foreign-policy/us-foreign-policy/what-national-security-council>.

- *Coordination by a senior figure who reports directly to the president and acts as an honest broker.* The NSA is usually a senior figure with enough authority to coordinate Principals meetings in the president's absence. It is often someone personally close to the president and, being based in the White House, interacts with the president daily. The most successful NSAs have acted as honest brokers to ensure a robust process for contestability and coordination, rather than seeking to drive their own personal policy preferences (Daalder and Destler, 2011). A practitioner interviewed for this study stressed that ministers may resent the level of access to the president enjoyed by CoG advisors and may attempt to circumvent the coordination processes. Therefore, a focus on guarding the process (rather than pushing for specific policy positions) seems advisable.
- *A qualified NSC staff that is independent from those of the departments and agencies.* This staff is usually organized around key policy areas. It provides an alternative source of expertise from the one supplied by ministerial bureaucracies, especially for topics that cut across jurisdictional boundaries. For example, in 2021 and following the COVID-19 pandemic, a separate NSC Directorate for Global Health Security and Biodefense was reinstated. Nonetheless, an enlarged NSC staff (which as of 2022 comprised over 350 people) is sometimes criticized as assuming operational roles and micromanaging the departments and agencies it seeks to coordinate (CRS, 2021). Therefore, a careful balance should be sought in terms of building the CoG's internal capacity.

**LAC governments have extensive experience with interministerial committees, although in many cases, these enabling conditions are absent.** In some countries, sectoral cabinets (or ministerial subcommittees) have proliferated and have therefore become less relevant: senior decision-makers cannot attend the meetings of many coordinating bodies, and they eventually cease to operate effectively (Dumas, Lafuente, and Parrado, 2013). Reviewing several regional examples of social cabinets, Repetto (2010) identifies recurring failures to coordinate social policy. The exceptions often share key characteristics: direct presidential backing (as in Uruguay and Colombia); clear and targeted objectives, such as a focus on coordinating specific subsectors or even cross-cutting initiatives (e.g., Chile's early childhood system and Mexico's and Brazil's conditional cash

transfer programs); the direct involvement of the ministry of finance to foster coordination through resource allocation; and sufficient expertise and technical capabilities within the coordinating body. But even some of the most successful cases eventually lost coordinating power once the high-level political focus moved to other policy areas. Sometimes governments have resorted to establishing coordinating ministries for social policy, but experience also suggests that challenges can arise with this approach (see Box 3.5).

### BOX 3.5. THE EXPERIENCE WITH COORDINATION MINISTRIES FOR SOCIAL POLICY, EARLY CHILDHOOD, AND GENDER

Franco, Cohen, and Rufián Lizana (1989) were early proponents of the idea of creating a “social authority” with responsibility for coordinating the work of the multiple ministries and agencies that deliver social programs and services, including the prioritization of goals and initiatives and the allocation of budget resources based on evidence of impact. Different institutional arrangements could give life to this idea: placing this authority in the CoG (in ministries such as Planning or Finance, for example); empowering a Social Cabinet to perform this role; or creating a new Coordinating Ministry for all social policy. Various countries have attempted the latter option since the 1990s, thus leading to the creation of ministries of social development (or similar) across the region.

In some cases, ministries of social development have been able to perform this role. For example, there is evidence of the positive impact of Chile’s integrated early childhood system ([Chile Crece Contigo](#)), composed of over 20 programs and interventions from different agencies and coordinated by the Ministry of Social Development (Clarke, Cortés Méndez, and Vergara Sepúlveda, 2020). This effort had strong backing from the Presidency and the Ministry of Finance, which is often considered a key factor in its success.

In many other cases across the region, however, these ministries have faced challenges in their attempts to act as effective coordinators. One of the barriers has been the resistance of well-established ministries (Education, Health, Housing, etc.), with their own policy agendas, resources, and constituencies, to submit to the coordination of the new *primus inter pares*. In Ecuador (2007–2017) and Honduras (2014–2018), coordination ministries were established with the responsibility of coordinating the work of other ministries involved in the same sector, such as social policy. However, lacking critical levers like authority over budget allocation and facing resistance from peers that refused to subordinate themselves, their success in coordination was limited.

Furthermore, in cases when the coordination tried to encompass a wider definition of social policy (Labor, Infrastructure, etc.) the obstacles were even steeper (Lafuente, Merino, Rojas and Vasquez, 2013 for Peru's Ministry of Social Inclusion and Development [MIDIS]; Repetto, 2010).

A coordinating ministry with a more targeted focus (e.g., the Ministry of Early Childhood in the province of Salta, Argentina) was able to develop an integrated dashboard to track at-risk children through various cross-sectoral indicators, a process later replicated in other LAC countries (Lafuente, 2016). Still, in the more ambitious purpose of coordinating the policy interventions of its peer line ministries, the coordinating ministry also faced significant challenges, especially as the political priority to the issue ebbed.

In 2018, New Zealand created a [Ministry for Child Poverty Reduction](#) responsible for coordinating the government's work toward a set of measurable and public targets (Brown, Kohli, and Mignotte, 2021). To signal the priority of these goals and to empower the new entity, the prime minister herself was appointed to lead this new Ministry. Such high-level engagement is only possible for a few selected priorities. According to the government, as of 2022 (and despite the pandemic) all the metrics of child poverty have since improved, although the intermediate targets have not been fully met (see <https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/child-poverty-statistics-show-all-measures-trending-downwards-over-the-last-three-years>).

In addition to early childhood, another cross-cutting policy area of increasing interest is gender equality. Most ministries and agencies perform functions and activities with impact on gender gaps. Thus, a consistent approach and orientation toward gender equality needs to be mainstreamed across the public sector. In some countries, a coordinating body based in the CoG has been established with this mandate, such as the [White House Gender Policy Council](#) created in the United States in 2021. Alternatively, almost half of all LAC countries have a ministry dedicated to coordinating the gender agenda (Bustelo, Martínez, and Suaya, 2022). Their main responsibility is not typically on executing policy; on average, they account for less than 0.2 percent of the countries' national budgets. Instead, they mainly seek to coordinate gender policies horizontally and vertically. However, most of these ministries had not yet secured key attributes for effective coordination, such as the formulation of whole-of-government gender strategies, high-level political backing, a strong connection to the planning and budgeting processes, and the integration of data systems.

**Interministerial coordination that also happens at the official level can help develop stronger collaborative efforts.** Following the development and approval of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Government Programme (APIGP), the Public Policy Secretariat, as part of the CoG in the Government of Serbia, created four cross-government implementation groups of officials with responsibility for the delivery of the Action Plan (Connecting Serbia with Europe and the World; Creating Economic Opportunity for All; Providing Better Public Services; Security and protection of Human Rights). These were constructed on the basis of potential similar agendas and cross-ministry efforts. Implementation groups consist of assistant ministers and state secretaries who are in charge of implementation and reporting on the level of achievement of each priority goal individually. Their task is to organize and coordinate activities, monitor the implementation, prepare reports on the achievement of priority goals and, when necessary, propose changes and additions to the AIGP. Between 2017 and 2020, 30 group meetings were held with 60 participants from 30 institutions on average per meeting. External evaluation showed that the same mechanism started to be used by line ministries in resolving their internal backlogs. These groups met monthly (more frequently in the early stages) with reports submitted before the meetings to track progress against the government's 32 highest priorities and to solve specific problems that arose during implementation. They met quarterly with the prime minister and ministers. The monthly meetings were curated by the Public Policy Secretariat in the CoG and, although there was a single point of responsibility for each of the 32 priorities, collaboration across the group was a strength of the approach. As with other interministerial coordinating bodies, this approach worked because:

- Clear priorities provided a common direction and purpose.
- The senior leadership (including the prime minister) endorsed the approach.
- The CoG provided support and facilitation while maintaining the implementation responsibilities with the respective MDAs.



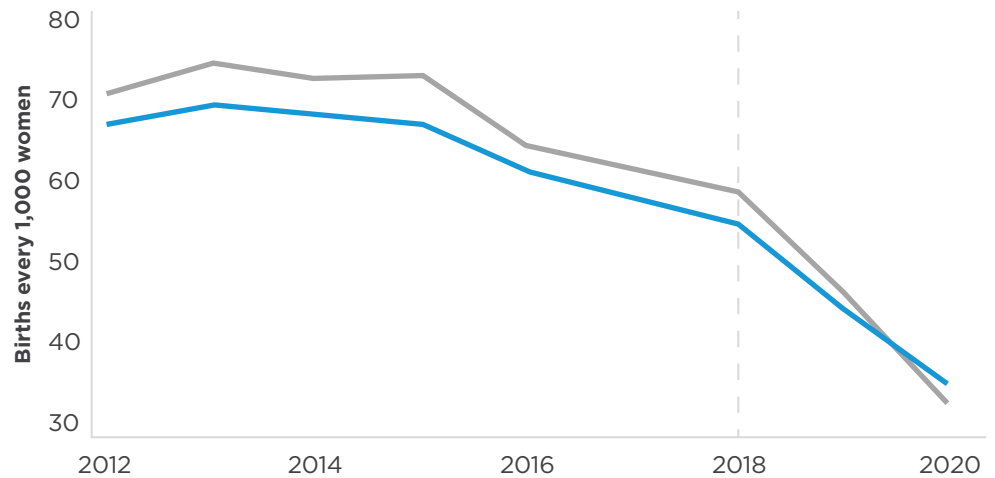
**The CoG should not over-reach by carrying out tasks already undertaken by line ministries, but participation in coordinating bodies is important to ensure their effectiveness, at least in the early phases.**

Several countries in LAC and globally have recently established “climate committees” to coordinate efforts to fulfill climate change commitments. However, ministries of the environment often assume the leading role in these committees. They typically have few levers to align the work of other powerful line ministries, such as Industry, Agriculture, Energy, etc. (Bailey and Preston, 2014; Fozzard, 2019). More direct leadership from the CoG may not be feasible due to the many competing priorities jostling to seize the CoG’s attention,<sup>46</sup> but a partnership between the CoG (providing its convening power), including the ministry of finance, and the ministry of the environment (with its specific sectoral expertise) may be an alternative approach (Elliott et al., 2019). In some cases, the initial drive from the CoG may then be delegated to one of the participating line ministries. In Argentina, in 2016, the Office of the Chief of Cabinet established an interministerial committee to address teen pregnancy. A national plan was developed, specifying interventions from the Ministries of Social Development, Health, and Education in the geographic departments with higher baseline levels of teenage fertility rates. Its implementation continued even after the change in administration in 2019; even before that, the CoG had ceased to coordinate the committee (which was then chaired by the Ministry of Social Development). A recent impact evaluation concluded that the plan had contributed to a reduction in pregnancies, stating that “an integrated and intersectoral approach centered on prevention could be the key to achieve results in such a complex and multicausal phenomenon as teenage pregnancy” (Vazquez, 2023; authors’ translation) (see Figure 3.7).

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<sup>46</sup> For example, the Prime Minister leads the UK’s Net Zero Committee, but it barely met after its creation (Sasse et al., 2021).

**Figure 3.7.**  
**Reduction in Teen Pregnancy through an Integrated Approach in Argentina**



Source: Vázquez (2023).

Note: The graph compares the fertility rates of women ages 15–19 in jurisdictions where the integrated plan was implemented (grey line) and those where it was not implemented (blue line). The reduction was steeper where the program was implemented. The impact of the plan was an estimated 6.2 percent reduction in teen pregnancy.

**Another tool is the creation of specific offices or units in the CoG to coordinate cross-cutting issues.** As with other coordinating bodies, they require political backing and must add value to what line ministries are already doing. The United Kingdom’s CoG has a long tradition of establishing units for cross-cutting issues such as social disadvantage, from the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU, 1997–2005) which focuses on problems like neighborhood renewal, rough sleepers, teenage pregnancy, and young people not in education, training, or employment, to the current Equality Hub, which seeks to reduce silos that relate to disability policy, ethnic disparities, gender equality, and LGBT rights. They work well when they have a clear mandate, the expertise to understand the implementation landscape, the ability to question existing practice, and an approach to working with policy officials in MDAs without undermining the roles and responsibilities they hold. However, with weak capacity to direct or implement policy, these coordinating units too often rely on high-level political backing and if interest eventually wanes (as it very often does due to crises, emerging priorities, and new issues), their influence diminishes rapidly. To mitigate this risk, it

is critical to expand buy-in from the ministries themselves, not just to serve the chief executive. A former head of the SEU stated that his team “worked hard to get its projects commissioned by ministers and not just Number 10” (Mulgan, 2020) (“Number 10” refers to 10 Downing Street, official residence and office of the Prime Minister). In LAC, since the early 2000s, Colombian presidents also tend to rely on Advisory Offices (*Consejerías Presidenciales*) for coordinating cross-cutting issues. As of 2022, five such *Consejerías* are operating, focused on gender equality, digital transformation, youth, regions, and information and the media, although in previous administrations the number of offices tended to be greater. Moreover, in certain contexts the *Consejerías* were a key instrument for enhancing the CoG’s ability to coordinate high-priority issues for which the responsibilities were shared by several ministries (De Araújo Filho and Rivas Otero, 2020).

**In particular contexts, cross-cutting units have assumed a more direct role in defining and implementing policy.** While in most cases the CoG usually does not formulate or implement policy, the chief executives in the region have sometimes relied on this approach for specific goals. Chaia de Bellis (2018) defines presidential “directorate agencies” as CoG units that assume direct policy roles and generally correspond to sectoral ministries and agencies. By reviewing the composition of the Argentinian CoG between 1916 and 2016, the author found that 12 percent of all CoG units corresponded to this category. One usual type of directorate agency across multiple presidencies were CoG units directing state reform, modernization, and privatization. Uruguay had a similar experience in the late 1990s: the Executive Committee for State Reform (CEPRE, in Spanish) “became a ‘super-office’ next to the President, with strong political support, that established in successive directives the technical and administrative characteristics that had to guide the restructuring and other reform areas” (Ramos and Casa, 2018: 15; authors’ translation). These were cross-cutting and time-limited reforms that were high-level priorities requiring a consistent and speedy approach throughout government. Thus, direct leadership from the CoG was the most logical option. Presidents in the region have also sometimes relied on CoG leadership for flagship initiatives or programs, such as the introduction of early childhood systems in Chile and Uruguay, or Uruguay’s one-laptop-per-child initiative (*Plan Ceibal*), originally managed from the Presidency (Lanzaro, 2016).

**However, too much direct intervention from the CoG in policymaking and implementation limits its ability to ensure effective interministerial coordination.** The CoG should assume a direct policy role only in exceptional circumstances. Diverting efforts into policymaking and execution can limit the CoG's role as a galvanizing actor that builds a culture of delivery with a whole-of-government approach with the capacity to coordinate the efforts of sectoral ministries and agencies that possess the staff, resources and mandates to deliver. However, too often the CoGs of the region are burdened with purely sectoral offices not focused on high-level priorities. For example, the main recommendation in a recent assessment of Argentina's Office of the Chief of Cabinet was to "strengthen its units in charge of strategic orientation and decentralize those of sectoral policy implementation" (Aquilino, Rubio, and Scolari, 2020). In Paraguay, 22 Executive Secretariats (many with ministerial rank) and similar entities are based in the Presidency; most implement sectoral policies that could be placed in MDAs, while only few perform coordinating CoG functions (OECD, 2018a). Conducting a functional review of the existing CoG configuration may be an important step for CoGs that, in time, have assumed sectoral policy tasks.

**Finally, the CoG can add value with *ad hoc* or informal activities.**

Although the CoG should seek to routinize key processes for coordination and resolution of obstacles, in certain contexts its convening power can be deployed in an *ad hoc* way. By itself, an interministerial session convened by the CoG signals to all participants the priority of the issue and therefore the need to focus efforts on it. It can mobilize resources toward shared objectives. This was one of the main contributions of Paraguay's formally established CoG in 2013 (Lafuente and González, 2018). Thus, even if institutional capacities are comparatively low, and therefore the full range of CoG tools cannot be applied, the CoG can still play an important coordinating role.

***Coordination with Subnational Governments (Vertical Coordination)***

**Central governments often do not deliver by themselves. There is a growing need to enhance the tools available for multi-level alignment to achieve policy priorities.** Central governments frequently rely on local government partners to secure the outcomes they prioritize for

citizens. In some cases (such as certain federal countries), the national government is increasingly adopting the role of funding services that they delegate to subnational authorities to implement. On occasions, limited capacities and capabilities at the subnational level create barriers to the effective delivery of these initiatives. An additional challenge may arise because governments at a subnational level have their own political mandate that differs from the national government. Therefore, there is a need to develop instruments and a culture of partnership between levels of government.

**To tackle these challenges, some of the most important tools for multi-level coordination include** (OECD, 2019a):

**Establishing clear and shared goals, as well as specific responsibilities, is crucial for aligning the efforts of the national government with those of subnational governments.**

- *Alignment of planning instruments through contracts that define the responsibilities of all partners.* Establishing clear and shared goals, as well as specific responsibilities, is crucial for aligning the efforts of the national government with those of subnational governments. France has formalized the alignment through a multi-year contractual arrangement between the central and regional governments ([Contrat de plan État-région](#)) that defines the major interventions to be executed in each territory, also specifying how they will be funded. Such contracts establish performance indicators and processes for collaborative monitoring of delivery.

These plans can enable an integrated approach to multi-level public investment (OECD, 2019a). An integrated strategy implies that, for instance, investments in housing in a given area will be complemented by those needed in terms of transportation for the new residents. This harmonization can be achieved through joint instances for investment planning (or at least consultation of subnational governments), pooling of investment across MDAs and levels of government, and other co-financing arrangements, all underpinned by platforms for regular intergovernmental dialogue.

- *Intergovernmental decision-making bodies.* Some federal states have established forums to connect national chief executives with their subnational counterparts to strengthen vertical policy coordination. This practice has existed in Australia for several decades, and currently operates through the National Cabinet comprised of the Prime Minister and state Premiers. The [National Cabinet](#) was

established in 2020, succeeding previous initiatives (the Council of Australian Governments since 1992, and the Premiers' Conferences before them) with the same purpose. Although activated to coordinate the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Cabinet is expected to continue operating as the main forum for multi-level coordination. Germany established a similar coordinating body, which consists of the Chancellor and state-level counterparts. These instances can provide a more integrated approach to coordination as compared to the sectoral multi-level forums that exist in many federal countries.<sup>47</sup>

- *Fiscal transfers associated with specific priorities.* Certain types of transfers or grants from national governments to subnational jurisdictions are conditional on the delivery of specific policy outputs and outcomes. Thus, they may be a useful tool to strengthen consistency in the objectives and interventions of both tiers of government. “Pay for performance” schemes may also be devised. For example, Argentina’s [Plan Nacer](#) (later renamed *Sumar*), which provides insurance for maternal and child health care to uninsured families, allocates funding to the provinces based on performance indicators of the use and quality of maternal and child health care services and health outcomes. An impact evaluation found significant effects in increasing prenatal care, reducing low birth weight, and decreasing neonatal mortality (Gertler, Giovagnoli, and Martínez, 2014). This approach may be relevant for policy priorities in which delivery occurs at the subnational level and, as such, the central government retains fewer direct levers for their implementation.
- *Flexibility in program implementation to encourage place-based approaches.* The national government may allow subnational agencies flexibility to merge funding from different programs to enhance their collective impact, as discussed in the strategic management function.

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<sup>47</sup> For example, almost 40 Federal Councils between the federal government and the provincial governments have been established in Argentina in a variety of policy areas (Cao, Rey, and Serafinoff, 2016). However, no instance coordinates across all these multi-level relations, despite their many interconnections.

**To apply these tools, sometimes a specific unit or official is appointed to coordinate the interventions from different sectors in a given territory.** This is usually established for less developed areas, or those in which the state's presence is more critically needed. In LAC, examples of these CoG-based coordinators (or “czars”)<sup>48</sup> can be identified in Argentina (2015–2019) and Colombia (2010–2018), whose Presidents appointed coordinators for the Northwest region and the Chocó and San Andrés regions, respectively, the least developed areas in each country (Colombia has also traditionally had a CoG coordinator for all regions in general). As with all coordinating bodies or individuals, they are only effective when these regions are truly a high-level government priority, and therefore they are empowered by the chief executive and senior leaders. As the coordinators usually need to rely on resources and interventions from MDAs, their ability to mobilize these efforts rests on their perceived support from the top political leadership. In certain countries, the role of “vertical” coordinators is more institutionalized. In Chile, the president appoints [Regional Presidential Delegates](#) for each of the country's 16 regions. As part of their mandate, these delegates coordinate the work of MDAs in each territory. In turn, ministers appoint Regional Ministerial Secretariats in each region, which operate as liaisons for the Presidential Delegates. Therefore, potentially this could lead to more structured processes for vertical coordination than the appointment of temporary czars.

**A more fundamental and ambitious approach involves redesigning the multi-level landscape of policy interventions on a given priority through a holistic or systems approach.** In recent years, multiple approaches (systems perspectives, portfolio-based methodologies, design-thinking, human-centered design, customer journeys, and others) have emphasized the importance of understanding the full set of factors and interventions that interact to produce policy outcomes, rather than focusing on improving discrete programs or projects. This comprehensive review and eventual redesign could help enhance the coherence of multiple efforts that simultaneously shape the results that matter to governments and

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<sup>48</sup> This term is frequently used in the United States to define “members of an administration tasked with coordination responsibilities over a particular policy problem that an administration is intent on either solving or at least addressing symbolically” (Vaughn and Villalobos, 2015). For instance, after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 a Federal Coordinator for Gulf Coast Region Recovery and Rebuilding was appointed, whose mandate was to coordinate the multitude of programs and initiatives established as part of the recovery effort for the New Orleans area.

citizens. In contexts with sufficient capabilities, they may be relevant for strengthening the end-to-end consistency of policies across levels of government, as multiple tiers often intervene and overlap in the same policy areas. Despite the obvious complexity of implementing these approaches, especially as subnational governments have autonomy from the center, they point to certain issues that arise throughout this publication: first, to the need for stronger integration between policy design and implementation, and in particular, the need to incorporate implementation considerations while developing policies; and second, to the value of engaging all actors within the delivery ecosystem in the planning process, to understand the needs, capabilities, and specific factors that determine the local impact of policy. These issues also touch on the need to enhance capabilities, particularly at the subnational level. This deficit has emerged from the interviews conducted for this study and also from studies of key multi-level policy areas in LAC, such as climate change (European Commission, 2020).

### ***Coordination with External Stakeholders***

**In addition to horizontal and vertical public sector coordination, this function also entails coordinating engagements with key nongovernment partners that contribute to delivering policy priorities in order to understand.** As discussed in Chapter 2, each MDA is responsible for engaging with the main stakeholders in their respective policy areas. But for priority goals that cut across multiple sectors, and to maintain consistency in how the government works with non-state actors, the CoG is well placed to establish a general framework, incentives, and instruments to guide these whole-of-society efforts. Both OECD and LAC countries have adopted a range of tools for this purpose (United Nations, 2018), including:

- *Consultative bodies with representatives of organized interests.* For example, national Economic and Social Councils typically involve representatives of business, civil society organizations, and trade unions to discuss economic and social issues that demand broad consensus. In Brazil, the Institutional Affairs Secretariat based in the Presidency coordinates the work of a [Council on Sustainable Economic and Social Development](#), which discusses issues across multiple policy areas. In other countries, National Councils on



Sustainable Development have played a similar role regarding the implementation and oversight of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In Finland, a country with a strong emphasis on strategic foresight and long-term planning, the National Commission on Sustainable Development is a well-established forum for government and non-state actors to discuss the country's goals and their incorporation into national policy and societal practices. The Commission is presided by the Prime Minister and supported by a CoG team in the Prime Minister's Office, as it requires the coordination of multiple MDAs and external stakeholders.

- *The role of non-state actors for long-term planning is particularly important as the goals included in these plans go beyond any administration's term and require a broader mobilization of efforts.* In Peru, the National Infrastructure Plan was adopted in 2019 after a broad consultation with over 350 external stakeholders. But these engagements can also be important for specific policy initiatives. In Chile, Presidential Advisory Commissions are a usual mechanism to build support coalitions in the discussion of major initiatives. These are time-bound committees, formed by representatives of civil society, business, and other non-state actors appointed by the president, whose task is to produce recommendations on a defined policy matter. Since the return of democracy in 1990, every administration has relied on these Commissions, even if they are not formally defined in any legislation (Cisternas and Vazquez, 2018).
- *Instances for government and external stakeholders to jointly commit to selected goals.* Given that most priority goals do not depend on actions by the government alone, it makes sense to engage non-state actors in jointly committing to their delivery. For these other actors, reputational incentives may mobilize action. For instance, Finland enabled an option for individuals, businesses, and other organizations to establish their own commitments toward meeting the SDG targets. The government can introduce additional incentives. In Buenos Aires, the second phase (2019–2023) of the Government Commitments was renamed as the City Commitments to reflect the need to incorporate other stakeholders in their delivery. One of the priorities was to provide a professional practicum to every student in their last year of high school, which required businesses to be co-producers of this goal. To motivate their engagement, an award ([“Committed with](#)

[Education](#)”) was granted to the companies that joined the effort. In addition to its symbolic value, the award provided a priority to these firms in public biddings. Establishing tangible incentives is important to engage external stakeholders who may not regard the government’s policy goals as their primary responsibility.

- *Engaging external stakeholders across the policy cycle.* The participation of non-state actors can be extended throughout multiple stages of the policy cycle. This is the case of the *Compromiso País* initiative in Chile for poverty reduction, led by the Presidency. Civil society organizations, academics, and businesses were involved in:
  - Defining the problem: Fifty civil society organizations working with vulnerable populations were consulted to identify the specific needs and groups to be prioritized. This consultation was complemented by evidence from the National Statistical Institute and other sources. The nature of the policy challenge was specified by consultation with other stakeholders, namely members of Congress, mayors, and university rectors. Sixteen vulnerable populations were prioritized, including women victims of domestic violence without their own income, and children and young people outside of the school system.
  - The design of policy solutions: Committees (*Mesas*) were established to identify policy options addressing each of the 16 prioritized populations. The members included stakeholders from the public sector (including 10 ministries) and the private and nonprofit sectors, as well as academics. Although the original idea involved representatives of the 16 populations, in many cases it was not possible (e.g., for groups involving minors) (CSP, 2022).
  - The implementation of solutions: The participants were expected to contribute to implementing solutions based on their own fields of expertise and resources. Although 35 pilot projects were identified, their actual degree of implementation was uneven, depending on the effective commitment and resources of the public institutions participating in each Committee.

**Certain important factors are important for the success of these engagements; checking for the existence of these enabling conditions before launching these collaborations is an important first step.** First, high-level leadership conveys to the external partners the message that these instances truly matter for the government, thus incentivizing meaningful participation. If such leadership cannot be mobilized and sustained, the engagements are likely to lose value. Therefore, it is critical to prioritize the topics on which the CoG will deploy the engagements. Second, these work best when there is trust between the participants (United Nations, 2018). This usually requires time and successive iterations to fully develop. Third, purely formal engagements, with no obvious feedback or follow-up, can even lead to backlash and diminished support. For these reasons, the CoG should not regard these opportunities as afterthoughts or boxes to be checked or rushed reactions in contexts of crisis; instead, they require careful planning and senior leadership participation.

### ***Crisis Management***

**The need for strong leadership and consistent interventions is more obviously apparent during crisis situations, for which governments have mobilized different tools and arrangements to accelerate coordination.** In crisis situations the CoG has an indispensable role to provide leadership that facilitates coherent actions from multiple stakeholders both horizontally and vertically across different ministries, agencies, levels of government and the nonprofit and private sectors. Crisis response usually involves applying the hierarchy of a central coordinator to mobilize a network of organizations whose contributions are indispensable. For instance, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, different countries attempted a variety of arrangements to coordinate the responses (Kunicova, 2020; OECD, 2022b).

**Some countries formally appointed a key CoG institution as coordinator of the government's response, while others recruited officials or individuals from outside the CoG** (e.g., individuals with significant managerial expertise). The latter option risks that the CoG's existing relationships, networks, and knowledge of government processes may not be fully understood.

**Due to the severity of the crisis, most countries established ad hoc coordinating structures, such as interministerial task forces or multi-level committees** (to coordinate with subnational governments, which had significant responsibilities for implementing the policy responses). In other cases, preexisting units such as those for civil protection or disaster management were adapted to perform this role. Some countries applied a hybrid approach, combining *ad hoc* high-level committees with preexisting mechanisms. Keeping a relatively simple arrangement appears preferable; a complex web of bodies can, in itself, create its own coordination challenges.

**Alongside the main coordinating bodies, many countries established advisory bodies to collect and synthesize expert opinion on possible interventions.** Some countries already had similar mechanisms in place, such as the UK's [Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies \(SAGE\)](#). In other cases, informal groups of advisors were the main source of information for chief executives. This approach can preclude the discussion of a broad range of alternatives in policymaking.

**Although it is difficult to rigorously measure the drivers for successful crisis coordination,<sup>49</sup> particular factors appear to be important contributors in both anticipating potential crises and in managing them in real time.** First, the existence of foresight, planning, and scenario training activities is relevant to prepare for potential crises in order to expedite the initial response. Second, the individual responsible in the CoG for leading the coordinating body may not need specific sectoral expertise, but rather the ability to bring together multiple stakeholders and a clear understanding of how to get things done in the public sector (e.g., the “ebola czar” discussed in chapter 2). Third, decision makers need robust, timely, and granular information to make the right choices. In the fast-changing environment of crises, the available evidence may be incomplete or contradictory, and thus establishing an appropriate forum for discussion and contestability, ensuring the inclusion of different perspectives, is needed to stress-test potential decisions. Finally, internal government coordination must be integrated with other CoG functions, such as political management and public communications. These other functions are needed to mobilize external stakeholders and thus to align whole-of-society efforts.

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<sup>49</sup> In a multidimensional crisis such as COVID-19, defining “success” may be difficult, as strong performance on certain dimensions may come at the expense of relegating others.

**A related issue is the critical role of the CoG in handling crises in fragile and post-conflict situations** (ISS-UN-TBA, 2017; UNDP and World Bank, 2017). In such contexts, there is a greater tendency toward centralization than in normal situations, as the CoG may be forced to compensate for the weaknesses or resistances of line ministries. Moreover, in these contexts there are multiple stakeholders (including international donors) proposing different courses of action, and therefore establishing coordination, securing consensus, and resolving trade-offs becomes critical. The risk for the CoG, as described previously, is to overly-centralize by establishing parallel structures, rather than gradually building capabilities across government.

## Monitoring and Improving Performance

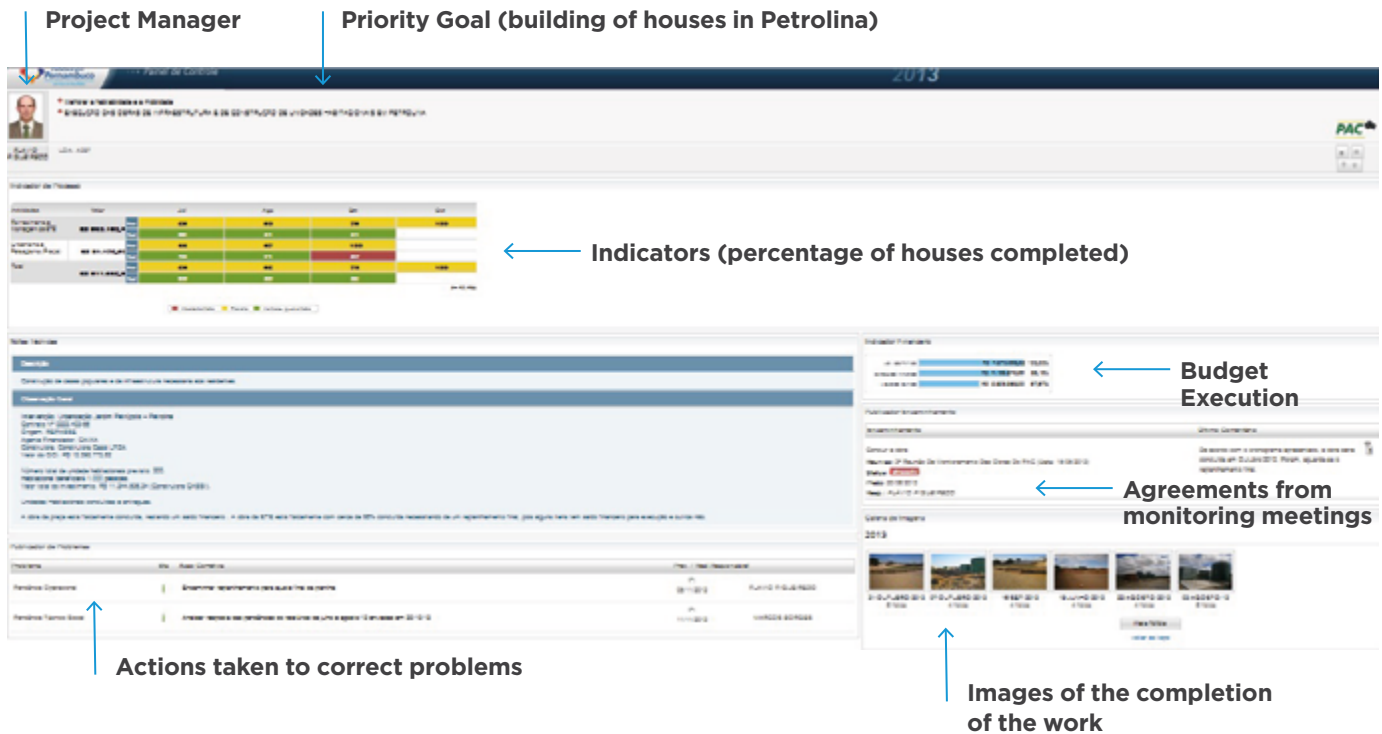
The function of monitoring and improving performance includes four components: (i) the collection and analysis of real-time performance data; (ii) the establishment of data-driven monitoring routines for decision-making, for learning about what works, and for internal accountability; (iii) the continuous reporting of progress to the chief executive and the senior government leadership to celebrate success or establish if intervention is required; and (iv) the CoG's support in unblocking obstacles that limit delivery. Routines and tools to perform these activities are presented next.

### *Real-Time Performance Information*

**CoG units in the region and globally have developed experience in the tracking and analysis of performance data.** Knowing and acting on the progress made on government priorities in real time is a key component of an effective CoG and in keeping promises made to citizens. In many countries, routines have been established for line ministries and agencies to periodically report performance information to the CoG on a suite of performance indicators. The gathering of information and flagging when things are not on track through a traffic-light system are necessary but not sufficient. Translating information into a format that can efficiently and effectively support decision-makers is critical to ensuring that this work does not default to being merely

compliance activity. This is often done by consolidating and displaying it on business intelligence dashboards. Much has been learned through emerging data visualization work (see, for example, Schwabish, 2017, on “decluttering” the visualizations to better convey the key messages). Dashboards typically present the quantitative progress achieved against predefined milestones and intermediate targets; the names of agencies and officials responsible for them; the extent of completion of activities and projects required for delivering on the goals; and, in some cases, additional pieces of information such as qualitative assessments of the status of the goal; the execution of the budget associated to the goal; documentation or images that provide validation to the data feed into the platform; and georeferenced information to enable the detection of spatial patterns. It is critical to design the dashboards with the users in mind—reflecting the balance of visuals and text, the level of detail that is required by each decision-maker, and the length of trend data needed. Figure 3.8 illustrates these features through the performance dashboard of Pernambuco, Brazil. The increased availability of free and open-source dashboards greatly enhanced the accessibility of such tools for governments at all levels.

**Figure 3.8.**  
**Performance Dashboard in Pernambuco, Brazil**



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

**Each ministry and agency is responsible for the data reported to the dashboard, but the CoG must establish a strong framework to ensure and validate the quality of the information.** Digital solutions are not sufficient to mitigate unreliable, biased, or out-of-date information. Moreover, the incentives on ministries and agencies are often to present the most positive picture and they may seek to “game” the system, as they collect and produce the data through which the CoG monitors performance. To secure the integrity of the dashboard, trust in the monitoring routines, and a single version of the truth, the CoG needs to ensure the quality of the information being tracked. This could entail establishing a data quality assurance framework, which can include components such as the following:

**As with all of the CoG’s work, collaborating with ministries and agencies is more productive than policing performance.**

- *Fostering a ‘no blame’ culture of honesty in data reporting.* As with all of the CoG’s work, collaborating with ministries and agencies is more productive than policing performance. The CoG should continuously

signal that reporting problems and delays is essential to solving them and that sanctions are only applied to entities that manipulate data or where staff make little effort to deliver the goals.

- *Formal adoption of principles of data quality.* The performance information monitored by the CoG needs to be relevant, accurate, reliable, timely, comparable, and granular. Codifying and operationalizing these principles may serve as a basis for periodically assessing the quality of the data submitted by the entities. The national statistics office can be a valuable partner in this effort. For example, the [UK Statistics Authority](#), which has a high degree of autonomy from the Executive, sets standards for producers of official statistics and performs independent assessments of the quality of official data. The Authority intervenes where ministers or officials use data in a misleading way.
- *The use of third-party data whenever possible.* This triangulation reduces the incentive to game the system. It may be more feasible for outcome indicators than for process or output indicators, as these are typically based on administrative data produced as part of program implementation. Often, these process and output indicators are of greater interest in performance monitoring, as they anticipate the evolution of outcome indicators.
- *Site visits and other methods to validate data.* Through site visits and “mystery shopping” exercises, the CoG can see for itself whether the situation on the ground matches the information reported by the agencies. Such activity has the added benefit of grounding the CoG in the reality of the various public service ecosystems. New technologies can aid in this task. For instance, Colombia’s National Planning Department has used drones to monitor progress in certain priority projects. Preferably, the direct measurement or validation by the CoG would not be perceived by the entities as an audit, as this may undermine the use of other instruments.

**For governments with strong monitoring tools, the critical next step is to leverage real-time and granular data.** As previously discussed, there are now major opportunities to collect and process real-time information in several key policy areas, notably education, health, and citizen security. This information is also granular, enabling the identification of



performance gaps in specific areas or by service providers. Furthermore, artificial intelligence and machine learning have expanded the possibilities for immediate data analysis using large-scale data sets (Deloitte Center for Government Insights, 2021). In many instances, agencies and ministries should apply these tools as part of the implementation and improvement of their operations. Increasingly, the key patterns and insights emerge from combining information from data sources managed by different ministries and agencies, and even from private sector firms and civil society organizations.<sup>50</sup> Establishing these cross-sector alliances, especially to achieve cross-cutting priority goals, is therefore a key opportunity. To take advantage of these opportunities, rules and protocols to enable horizontal collaboration are needed. In certain cases, this has involved establishing a data unit or office in the CoG which facilitates the integration of datasets from multiple entities (see Flowers, 2016, for the case of New York City; and Schenk, 2016, for Chicago).

**This holistic integration of information across sectors is particularly important for “wicked” problems that cross ministerial silos, such as inequalities in early childhood development, community regeneration of decaying urban areas, or escalating crime rates.**

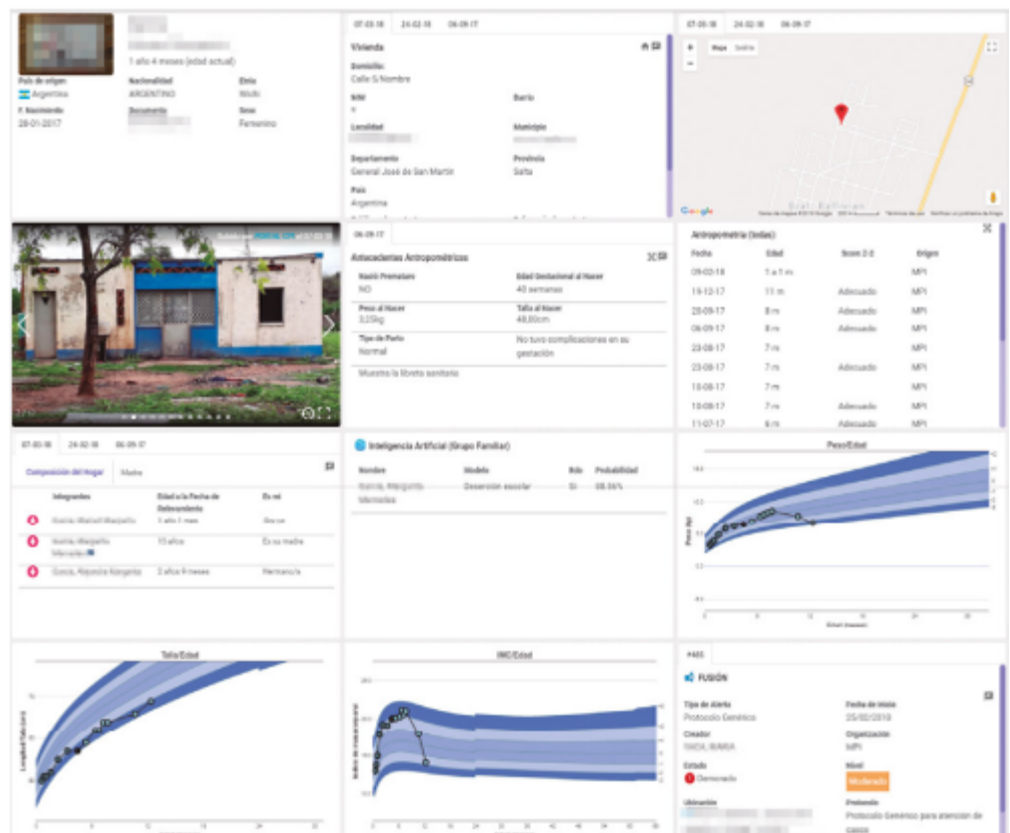
Different government agencies are typically aware of discrete aspects of their users and beneficiaries, such as educational attainment, health indicators, housing condition, or civil registration. However, individuals and families often have interconnected challenges and needs. For example, the development of a child demands that nutritional, educational, care, environmental, and housing needs are all addressed together. Identifying an at-risk child requires bringing together information from all these dimensions of disadvantage. The Ministry of Early Childhood in Salta, Argentina, developed an integrated dashboard covering multiple indicators for each child in a situation of vulnerability. The Ministry partnered with other ministries, municipalities, private sector foundations, NGOs, religious organizations, and other community organizations for the data collection process. With IDB support, this tool was later replicated in certain regions of Brazil, Colombia, and

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<sup>50</sup> For instance, private firms from the technology sector collect real-time data for several indicators of economic activity (e-commerce spending, travel and restaurant reservations, traffic mobility, job postings, etc.), that governments could traditionally only compile with significant lag. In the case of civil society organizations, they sometimes partner with government to collect data at the community level, especially for populations that may be harder to reach (see the case of Salta, Argentina, discussed later in this chapter).

Paraguay. Figure 3.9 presents an example of the dashboard. For each child, it identifies a risk level based on data from a variety of health and household indicators. Through artificial intelligence, the dashboard can quantify, for example, risk of a child dropping out of school.

**Figure 3.9.**  
**Integrated Dashboard for Early Childhood Development**



Source: Abeleira (2018).

Note: The graph is presented for illustrative purposes only.

**Once the dashboard signals an early warning, specific interventions from different agencies should be triggered, but particular challenges need to be addressed to ensure effective implementation.** First, some of these indicators could be automatically extracted from existing datasets, but others still require the periodic on-site collection of data, often in remote and rural areas. However, this may not be as challenging, as different government agencies routinely deploy agents

across multiple jurisdictions, and thus inter-agency partnerships (or partnerships with community agents) can facilitate periodic visits to vulnerable households. In addition, the increased availability of tablets has simplified the digital collection and integration of data. A second challenge is to put dashboards to use in rapidly deploying interventions. The information platform can pinpoint specific deficits or needs; but respective ministries and agencies need to act on them. This operational coordination is not always easy, especially when attempting to align large organizations and bureaucracies (in health, education, and so on) that have distinct priorities and scheduled operations. High-level backing and clear and early benefits for the participating agencies are important factors to secure their commitment.

**In addition to more traditional performance data, governments are increasingly collecting citizen experience and satisfaction data.**

This information can be crucial in guiding the reform process by making public services more responsive to their users. Australia and Canada have developed a Common Measurement Tool to collect information comparable across agencies, as well as data on the possible determinants or drivers of user satisfaction. As with other types of data, it is critical to incorporate this information into regular decision-making routines. For instance, in Punjab (Pakistan), data from the [Citizen Feedback Monitoring Program](#) was reviewed in monthly meetings between the province's chief secretary and its district heads. As one official noted, the discussion of user experience data in these meetings meant that “that way, they—the district heads—knew it was a serious program and high on the government’s agenda” (World Bank, 2018: 5). According to this study, after the introduction of this program, the percentage of patients in public hospitals receiving their prescribed medicines almost doubled, among other performance improvements.

***Routines And Stocktakes***

**A critical mechanism to foster the rigorous use of performance data is to establish a set program of regular reviews to assess progress, provide feedback, and take decisions** (stocktakes). The success of these routines rests on the visible demonstration of interest by senior government leaders signaling its importance, the discipline for sustaining the routines even under crises or day-to-day events, the availability

of high-quality data, and the participation of all relevant stakeholders in the delivery system of a given priority. For the sessions to meet these characteristics, the CoG needs to establish a “no blame” culture and implement an array of managerial tools and processes before, during, and after meeting (Behn, 2014; Freeguard and Gold, 2015). It is best to think of this process in three stages, each of which stimulates improvement activity:

- *Before the meeting.* The CoG works with respective ministries and agencies to validate and analyze the performance data while identifying issues that require the attention and/or decision of senior leaders. For instance, they may highlight the obstacles faced by MDAs whose targets and milestones have not been met and propose solutions which could not be resolved at operational levels. This CoG/MDA dialogue should guide the definition of the agenda for the meeting and the preparation of a presentation for the session. The CoG may also prepare a brief memorandum for the chair, with the key points to be covered in the meeting. Bringing external questioning of the CoG to this discussion provides an opportunity for the MDA to view progress from a different angle, and often leads to specific actions that can improve performance. If the culture is right, the relentless focus on problem-solving to improve results can motivate and mobilize new action. It is critical to resolve any discrepancies between the CoG and the agencies about the validity of the data in advance. Senior leaders need to focus on deciding what to do, rather than on hearing technical debates about data reliability.
- *During the meeting.* The CoG typically coordinates the meeting to ensure that all topics on the agenda are covered and that the attention is not diverted to other topics, anecdotes, or just “good news,” although celebrating successes is an important part of reviewing progress. In most cases, the responsible agencies present the status of the goals and raise the issues identified prior to the session. The most productive use of the time is to concentrate on the obstacles faced in delivery, the reasons for them, and the options to address them. The CoG records the agreements and decisions adopted, indicating who is responsible for implementing them and by when.

Managing the session requires a careful balance between providing feedback, solving problems, and ensuring accountability. On the one

hand, monitoring meetings should serve as a deadline for agencies to resolve bottlenecks prior to the session; on the other, excessive pressure can lead to gaming and hiding problems. The CoG must strive to maintain an appropriate tone for the session, avoiding unnecessary confrontation while avoiding the tendency to only present cases whose performance has been positive. In different countries or cultural contexts, this balance will vary.

- *After the meeting.* The CoG typically distributes the meeting's minutes to the participants and also takes an active role in supporting the implementation of decisions. For instance, these may involve brokering agreements between agencies or unlocking actions by other stakeholders. The CoG is well suited to lead this coordination.

**The physical layout of these sessions is quite standard across most cases and only demands a basic infrastructure.** In general, participants are seated at a U-shaped table, facing one or more screens that may contain the performance dashboard, the presentation prepared for the session, and the “live” minutes as they are being recorded (see Figure 3.10). The chief executive or a trusted deputy (a chief of staff, head of delivery unit, or similar) usually chairs the meeting, accompanied by monitoring staff and other CoG officials responsible for budget management, political affairs, communications, or legal matters, as they may need to weigh in on the discussions or endorse the decisions being made.<sup>51</sup> Finally, the line ministries and agencies that contribute to the priority are present. In some countries, there is broad attendance at these meetings to ensure that all those with relevant information are present, from high-level political decision-makers to project managers. Other governments prefer to restrict attendance to senior decision-makers, to encourage frank discussions. A hybrid option may also be possible: organize some meetings (or parts of meetings) with broader attendance to maximize the availability of information in the room, while other meetings (or other parts of meetings) are more restricted to facilitate candid discussions.

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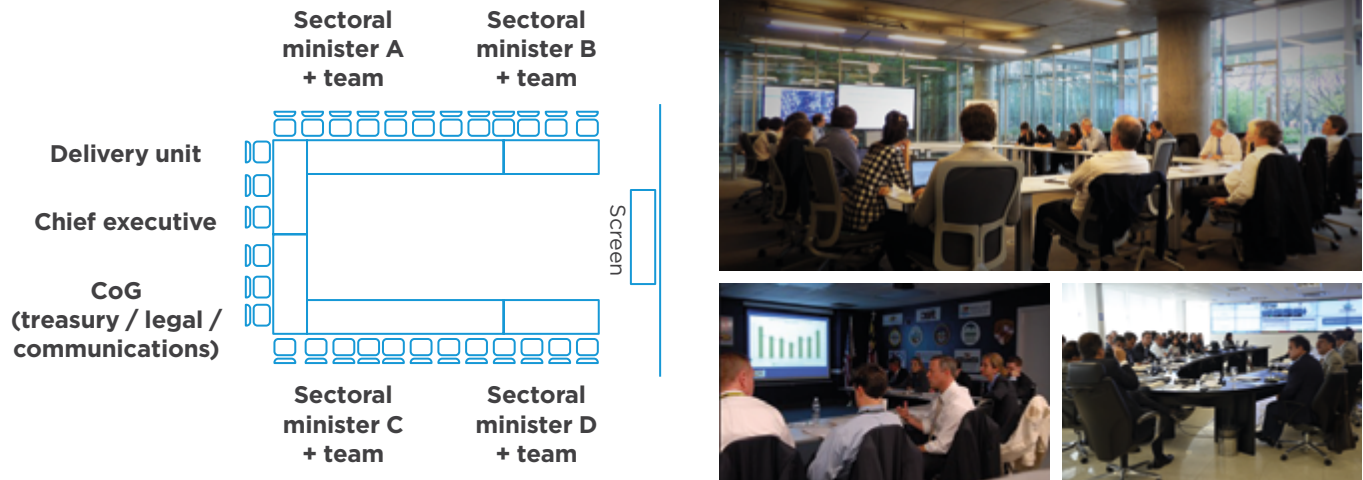
<sup>51</sup> The absence of some key central units (procurement, information technology, etc.) in the initial iterations of stocktakes in Maipú, Chile, limited the ability to make actionable decisions during the meetings (Municipality of Maipú, 2022).



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The CoG earns the right to challenge the rest of the government by providing support and standing side by side with MDAs in the task of delivering the government’s promises to citizens”.

**Figure 3.10.**  
**Typical Layout of Monitoring Sessions**



Sources: Governments of Baltimore (down left), Pernambuco (down right), and Buenos Aires (top right).

**To be effective, it is vital that these stocktakes are conducted regularly and become routine, although their frequency may vary.** Making monitoring meetings routine creates a culture and discipline of focusing on results. It stimulates a different pattern of behavior as it encourages partners to anticipate and act on problems. In the context of COVID-19, many governments established *daily* monitoring routines, as the crisis evolved quickly and demanded continuous actions and adjustments. But most policy priorities do not change as rapidly. Some governments have set *weekly* monitoring sessions for policy areas such as citizen security (where data is available on a frequent basis). This enables tight oversight and accountability and may be advisable when this is the main purpose of the routines. But it also may lead to confusing random variations in the data (“noise”) with substantive variations (“signal”), as a smaller number of data points may be prone to random volatility. Thus, for most policy priorities the stocktakes tend to be *monthly* or even *quarterly*.<sup>52</sup> These frequencies keep the attention on the goals while allowing for sufficient changes to have occurred before the next performance review.

<sup>52</sup> In sectors such as education, outcomes data may only be available once a year (for example, student performance). Therefore, the identification of more regular data sources for intermediary results or key performance indicators is critical to feed stocktake meetings at least with a quarterly basis.

Moreover, more frequent sessions may lead to a “stocktake fatigue,” as some ministries may be involved in several priorities and each session with the chief executive usually requires prior preparatory meetings within each ministry.

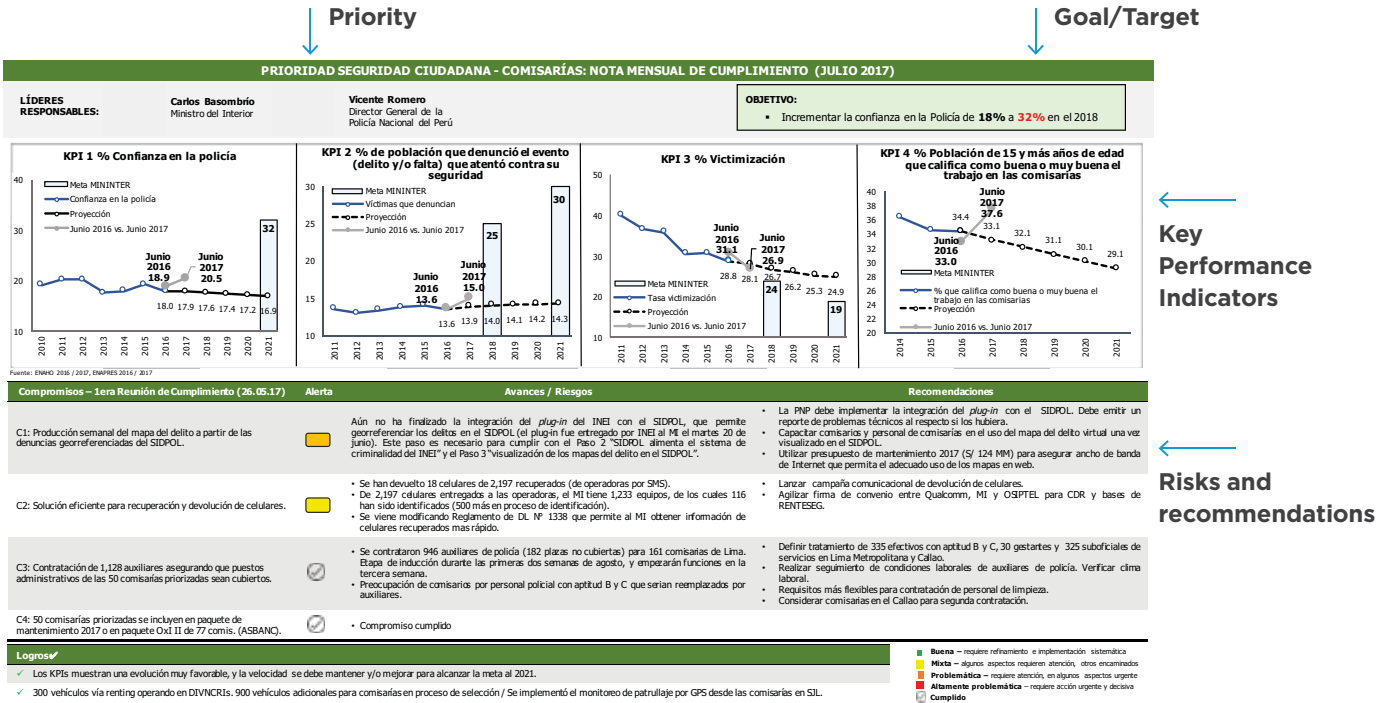
### ***Reporting to the Chief Executive and Government Leaders***

**In addition to dashboards and presentations in stocktakes, the CoG should prepare periodic reports to ensure that the chief executive and senior leaders are able to play their part in managing for results.**

This can help secure timely decisions on issues that cannot wait until the next stocktaking session, and it can also act as a “gentle nudge” (Barber, 2007) to keep the chief executive and the ministries’ attention on the priorities, especially if the chief executive does not attend every stocktake. In general, these reports (memorandums, notes, or one-pagers) are brief and focused: they typically present status of the priority against the predefined trajectory, the set of key obstacles or difficulties that may be hampering delivery, and options for the chief executive’s decision (see Figure 3.11 for an example from a delivery unit in a LAC country). Depending on the chief executive’s style and preferences, more detailed breakdowns of the data and analysis may be included in an annex. In other cases, reports have been even shorter and delivered through text messaging, although this approach may be too limited to properly convey the status and the available options.



**Figure 3.11.**  
**Example of Monthly Memorandum for the Chief Executive and Senior Leaders**



**Finally, the reports need to adapt not only to the preference of the recipient(s), but also to their intended use.** For example, some chief executives and senior leaders find that trend graphs and bullets are more efficient when they are under pressure than pages of text. Intended use (e.g., what actions are intended to follow) drives format, content, and recommendations. For instance, if the report is expected to lead to a follow-up with ministers or agency heads when performance appears off track, this calls for a basic report that highlights the key concern of underperformance and key messages for action. Alternatively, chief executives may use the reports mainly to consider broader policy and managerial decisions. In this case, the reports would require a more detailed assessment of the options available.

### ***Unblocking Obstacles***

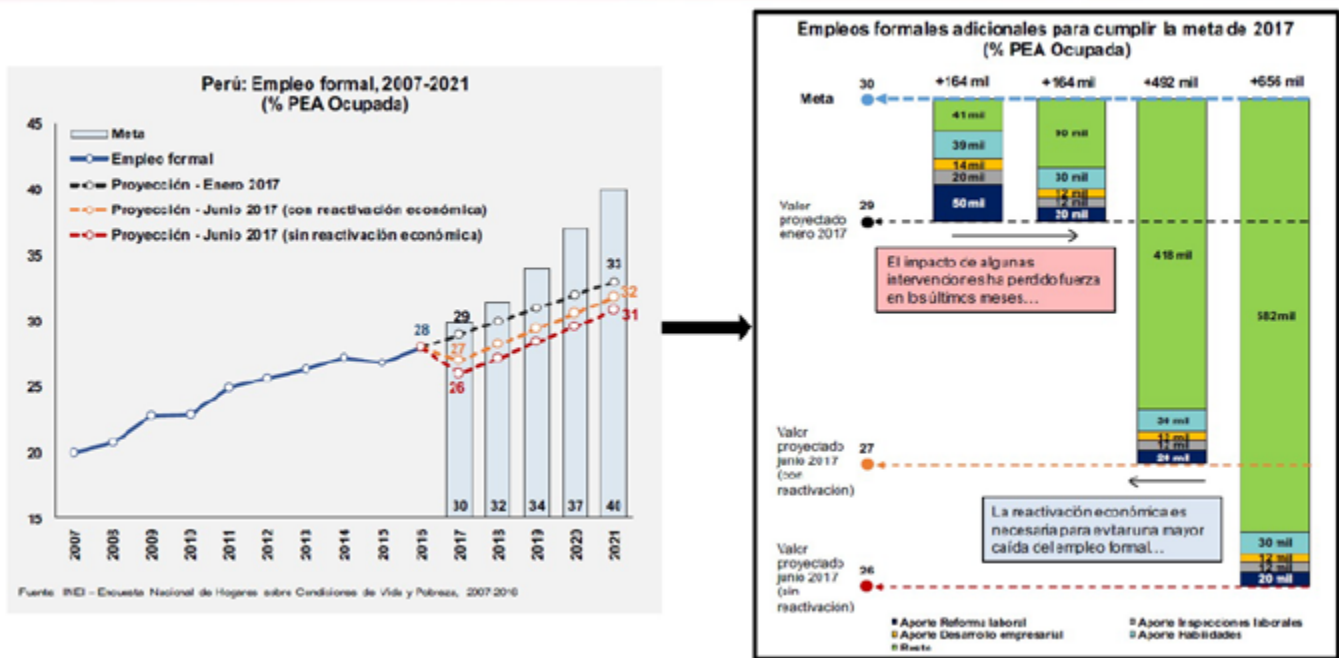
**Complementing performance tracking with a focus on improvement support is a valuable component of the CoG's work.** The CoG earns the right to challenge the rest of the government by providing support and standing side by side with MDAs in the task of delivering the government's promises to citizens. In addition to the CoG's role of bringing independent analysis to understanding what often complex delivery systems are, the CoG can play a role in brokering between agencies to remove bottlenecks. The first step is, with the implementing MDA, to understand what is getting in the way of progress. A range of tools can be deployed to fully understand the obstacles to progress. These tools typically seek to clarify the nature of the problem, develop preliminary explanations of the factors blocking progress, gather evidence to test and refine these hypotheses (including desk research, fieldwork, interviews, workshops, focus groups, surveys, journey mapping, etc.), summarize findings and report them to decision-makers, and produce recommendations for action, including different scenarios and trade-offs (see Figure 3.12). The instruments may include:

- *Issue trees* that break down a question into more specific components to identify the root cause of the problem and to separate causes from symptoms. Other tools, such as *fishbone diagrams* and *force field analysis*, have a similar purpose.

- *Delivery system mapping and analysis.* Delivery chains are a useful instrument to plan the implementation of policy objectives. Analyzing how these chains are operating in practice can also help locate where in the chain an obstacle has emerged.
- *A range of fieldwork approaches.* The most effective way to understand delivery challenges is to see the problems of implementation at the frontline and hearing from practitioners about the challenges they face. Often central government staff have little experience in the implementation of government policy. Structure visits/analysis of activity can also inform future policymaking. Since these activities are often time-consuming for the CoG staff, they should be deployed selectively.

Figure 3.12.

**Analysis of the Impact of Different Policy Options on the Prioritized Goal**



Note: Delivery Unit from a Latin American country. The graph on the left presents the planned trajectory (in bars) for the goal of formal job creation and (in lines) alternative projections based on different economic scenarios. On the right graph, each bar indicates the expected impact of certain policy options recommended to accelerate progress.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

**In addition to these tools, and for specific cases, the CoG may want to consider a more structured and intensive approach to resolving delivery challenges.** The UK's Delivery Unit codified types of problems and developed a protocol of intervention for each, ranging from simple check-ins with the implementing agencies for low-level problems, to full-scale and urgent redefinitions of policy for the most serious problems. In between these, the main tools deployed by the Delivery Unit were deep dives, or Priority Reviews, regarded as the most important and effective tool used by the Prime Minister's Performance Delivery Unit (Barber, 2016; Etheridge and Thomas, 2016). These reviews provided a rapid analysis of the state of delivery in a given priority area, identifying the cause of the delay and proposing corrective actions. Although the ministries and agencies have the sectoral expertise, the CoG, along with frontline staff, can provide external perspectives and challenge them to probe existing operations and practices. The Priority Reviews were conducted collaboratively between the CoG and the respective agencies across the delivery system through a joint team that worked together for four to six weeks and involved the following key stages:

- Data collection on the priority and development of initial hypothesis about the factors that might be limiting performance (using, for example, tools such as “issue trees”).
- Interviews and discussions with stakeholders at all points along the delivery chain, including site visits to review frontline implementation and test the hypothesis.
- Preparation of a report with concrete recommendations and trade-offs for decision makers.
- Ongoing follow-up on the execution of the approved action plan.

**These tools reflect the value of complementing quantitative performance monitoring with qualitative methods to understand the root causes of delays or problems in delivery.** Some of the most valuable items of information need to be retrieved from the frontline practitioners or from beneficiaries, through interviews or focus groups. Therefore, a strong performance team at the CoG needs to possess these skills and tools, in addition to those needed for quantitative data analysis. There are multiple techniques in social science and

management that could be deployed. For example, the CoG may consider the “five whys” interrogative technique during interviews. By this method, the interviewer keeps pressing (*why is that?*) to get to the root cause of the problems, instead of accepting superficial or immediate explanations (Bryar and Carr, 2021). Of course, each stakeholder may have a partial or biased perspective on the issue, but triangulating the views of different stakeholders can help strengthen the validity of the findings.

**As with the Policy Coordination function, even if these problem-solving tools are not readily available, the CoG can still add value in certain contexts through less formal unblocking of obstacles.** The CoG’s empowerment and cross-government perspective enables it to expedite or unblock processes that seem out of reach for most MDAs. It can even be as simple as knowing whom to call in other MDAs or offices (Finance, Legal, Human Resources, etc.), since the CoG typically has access to a broader group of contacts than officials in line ministries. Still, in more advanced settings a proactive and systematic approach would be an important supplement to these operational or less formal activities to ensure that problems can be addressed in a timely and comprehensive manner.

## Managing the Politics of Policies

The CoG’s political function includes four components: (i) its role in managing the government’s overall political economy and strategic direction, which includes managing key external stakeholders; (ii) the aligning of intra-executive branch stakeholders, especially in coalition settings; (iii) the proactive scanning, anticipation, and management of societal conflicts, especially those of multidimensional nature; and (iv) the coordination of government transitions. Although the IDB’s technical assistance work has not focused on this function, this chapter briefly summarizes potential tools to support it.

### ***Managing the Government's Political Economy***

**The key decisions regarding the government's strategy may be structured through the use of high-level political committees.** In parallel to the managerial routines previously discussed, establishing a regular forum for the government's political leaders to discuss, review, and decide on major policy and political decisions can help give structure to the decision-making process. This more orderly process can strengthen the consideration of alternative perspectives and use of evidence, the internal resolution of disagreements (minimizing public controversies), and the development of consensus within the leadership to provide sufficient backing to key policies. In each country, the composition and characteristics of such a body will reflect its own political and institutional arrangements. In LAC, among the most institutionalized examples is the "Political Committee" based in the Chilean CoG, which has existed in every administration in recent decades as a weekly forum for high-level decision-making. It is usually integrated by the following key CoG actors:

- The minister of the interior, who is typically a *primus inter pares* within the Cabinet as she is also the country's vice president.
- The minister of the presidency, who is the main CoG actor leading the government's political negotiations, including the relations with Congress.
- The minister of finance.
- The minister responsible for government communications.

**This group enables the integration of political, policy, and communications issues. A practitioner interviewed for this study regarded these as the three key factors that determine a government's overall strategy that need to be aligned by the CoG.** In some Chilean administrations, the president has included additional members in the Political Committee, such as the leaders of the parties that form the government, the congressional leadership, and sectoral ministers responsible for priority policy areas that should be mainstreamed across all major decisions. For example, as of 2022 the minister of women and gender equality was a member of the Political Committee, as this issue

was one of the key campaign promises of the new president. In some administrations, the president's direct advisors (based in the "Second Floor" of *La Moneda*) have complemented the Political Committee as a source for input in presidential decision-making (Rozas-Bugueño and Martín-Münchmeyer, 2020; Dumas, Lafuente, and Parrado, 2013; Egaña and Chateau Herrera, 2011).

**The CoG may consider using more specific tools and teams to support its role in managing the politics of policies.** Given the need to coordinate negotiations with external stakeholders relevant for the priority goals, the CoG may need to map them based on their degree of influence, their positions regarding the government's agenda, and their interest in particular priorities. There are multiple tools and matrices available for stakeholder mapping and analysis that can help visualize and stress-test this knowledge, as input for deciding on an action plan regarding stakeholder engagement and management (which, in turn, can be a useful element within a delivery plan). Network analysis, supported by dedicated software, can also help visualize the connections between stakeholders. These types of analysis are also valuable during the prioritization process itself, as the feasibility or the sequence of different policy goals may need to be filtered by political considerations. Additionally, this analysis should not only map the existing set of actors and the resulting equilibria but should also point to opportunities for expanding the space for pursuing the administration's policy priorities. A unit within the CoG could continuously update these maps as a tool for the leaders responsible for political negotiations and decisions. It can also keep track of the meetings and agreements reached with different stakeholders to preserve this critical knowledge even during CoG rotations of leadership. Finally, this team could take part in the monitoring routines to maintain close alignment between the policy agenda and the evolving stakeholder dynamics, while injecting the administration's political insights across all major governmental decisions.

### ***Coalition Management***

**In the growing number of cases where there is a coalition government, the CoG's role in internal political coordination is even more important.**

The first step is to ensure that the government's priorities and key policies are clear and agreed upon by all the members of the coalition.

The CoG may have to guide a formal process of consultation and explicit commitment to cement this overall direction. This commitment can be achieved by publishing a Coalition Agreement endorsed by all the governing parties. These tools are frequently used in European countries that are usually led by coalition governments, such as Belgium, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands. Although not legally binding, the research suggests that they effectively guide and constrain the policies pursued by coalition partners (Klüver and Bäck, 2019). Second, the CoG should establish periodic instances for review and decision-making between the parties to oversee the implementation of the Agreement and to deal with the new issues and challenges that every administration needs to address. They can also help resolve disagreements between ministers from different parties and, in cases where the political appointments within each ministry have been distributed between the parties (for example, Chile's quotas for the parties in each ministry in several administrations since 1990; see Siavelis et al., 2022), also to resolve potential vertical discrepancies between ministers and their deputies.

**These instances are usually informal and run alongside the official Cabinet and interministerial procedures (OECD, 1998), but they are critical to maintain political coordination.** The United Kingdom's coalition government (2010–2015) formally established a Coalition Committee with an equal number of members from both parties and explicit goals and rules of operation,<sup>53</sup> but in practice the top two leaders of each party (the “Quad”) handled the internal political negotiations. The specific approach and instruments vary across countries. For instance, more formalized processes may only be feasible in countries in which the parties and party systems themselves are sufficiently institutionalized. In many LAC countries, however, parties are loose organizations, characterized by informal procedures and low organizational cohesion (Davila Gordillo and Wylie, 2021). In Ecuador, for instance, low party institutionalization has been associated with the high prevalence of personal friends and family members, holding formal positions or not, as close CoG advisors to the president (Basabe Serrano, and Medina, 2022). The CoG's approach will have to adapt to

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<sup>53</sup> The Terms of Reference of the Committee stated that it would meet as required to “manage the business and priorities of the Government and the implementation and operation of the Coalition agreement.” It listed ten ministers as members of the Committee (five from each party) and required that at least two members from each party were present for the Committee to have a quorum (Cabinet Office, 2012).



the specific features of each party system. What matters is that the CoG establishes mechanisms to foster internal political coordination. Without these arrangements, governments become fragmented, there is a risk disagreement would be expressed publicly before being addressed internally, and there would not be sufficient cohesion to pursue ambitious policy priorities.

### ***Anticipation and Management of Societal Conflicts***

**Recent developments across the world have demonstrated that an important component of this CoG's function is the anticipation and management of societal conflicts.** As the challenges facing citizens become even more complex and governments grapple with addressing inequalities, resolving the challenges of social cohesion become even more critical. To detect early signs of potential conflict, the government needs to systematically collect and process information from external stakeholders. Each ministry, agency, and subnational government is expected to periodically take the pulse of key constituents and stakeholders, and the CoG should establish channels for the reporting of relevant updates. The CoG needs the capability to analyze information and identify issues that may require its intervention, due to their potential severity or cross-cutting nature (e.g., when decisions in a certain policy area may impact stakeholders from other sectors). As with most CoG functions, the critical issue is how to be systematic and proactive: reacting after a crisis has already occurred is usually too late. Obviously, unexpected crises will emerge from time to time, and the CoG has a “firefighting” role to play in addressing such situations, as it can bring together the political, policy, and communications triangle that is usually required in responding to conflicts. But even this role can be played more effectively if the anticipatory capacities are enhanced.

**This preventive capacity can be developed through a combination of old-fashioned tools and newer forecasting instruments.** Governments have traditionally detected emerging conflicts by scanning media sources, tracking public opinion, and continuously engaging with organized interest groups. More recently, data scraping of open-source social media platforms has provided early indications of growing tensions. But a key question (especially for LAC countries that have faced severe instability in recent years) is whether governments may

be able to anticipate such conflicts even before these visible signs have emerged. There is ample academic and commercial research focused on forecasting situations of major conflict or unrest. Even though these episodes cannot be perfectly predicted, certain factors have been identified as potential drivers, such as economic downturns, increasing food prices, greater inequality, and previous episodes, among others (Redl and Hlatshwayo, 2021). The availability of high-frequency data on inflation and social media opinion can help to continuously update these forecasts, as can direct engagement with citizens to hear about their own concerns and anxieties. The CoG can also complement traditional sources of information with quantitative models to monitor the likelihood of major societal conflict.

**Once a conflict has emerged, the CoG may need to oversee or directly coordinate its response, depending on the nature of the conflict.**

Ministries and agencies are primarily responsible for managing key stakeholders in their respective policy areas, including to resolve conflicts. The CoG's role means providing overarching guidance, monitoring the conflict's evolution, and intervening where appropriate. Some episodes may be so severe or multi-faceted in their impact as to require actions from multiple ministries and agencies. In these situations, the CoG is expected to coordinate the government's response, ensuring high-level political support as well as coherent interventions and messaging (politics, policy, and communications). This coordination may be provided by setting up a specific task force or contingency committee with participation of the agencies involved in the issue, or through an existing mechanism (such as a Political Committee) that is alerted to address the issue. As with all of the CoG's work, rapid response to contingencies should operate alongside the ongoing routines focused on medium-term policy priorities.

***Coordination of Transitions***

**A final component of the specific CoG political function involves coordination of transitions between outgoing and incoming administrations.** This is a cross-government function that can only be undertaken by the CoG, naturally positioned to ensure that consistent principles and approaches are being applied across sectors. A few LAC countries have legislated on the obligation by the outgoing administration

to provide information and administrative support to the incoming team. In Brazil, for instance, the Cabinet Office (*Casa Civil*) has a coordinating role (see Law N°10.609 of 2002). But in most cases, such as Colombia and Mexico, existing legislation only provides general administrative guidance regarding the reports to be produced by the outgoing administration, with no reference to a collaborative process between both teams. As such, collaboration and information sharing rely mainly on the disposition of the outgoing administration or of each individual minister. In some cases, either informal norms or presidential drive may be sufficient to build a collaborative process. For example, in the 2022 transition in Colombia, the Presidency coordinated an *empalme* process by which all outgoing ministers met with the respective incoming teams (see Figure 3.13). But in the context of increased polarization and personalized leadership styles, this openness may not necessarily be present. In certain OECD countries there are more detailed transition frameworks (see Box 3.6) which could be pertinent for LAC countries to consider.

**Figure 3.13.**

**Transition Meeting in the Presidency between Outgoing and Incoming Administrations in Colombia in 2022**



Source: MBG. At this time, the joint meeting between the outgoing government of Iván Duque and the incoming government of Gustavo Petro begins in the Presidency of the Republic. Comunicando Noticias. July 5, 2022. Available at: <https://www.comunicandonoticias.com/2022/07/05/a-esta-hora-inicia-en-la-presidencia-de-la-republica-la-reunion-de-empalme-del-gobierno-saliente-de-ivan-duque-y-del-entrante-de-gustavo-petro/>.

**BOX 3.6. GOVERNMENT TRANSITIONS IN OECD COUNTRIES**

Within presidential democracies, the United States has the most detailed framework regarding government transitions. Congress first approved the Presidential Transition Act in 1963 and has since amended it several times (CRS, 2020). In addition to specifying the services, facilities, and even funding that the incoming team is expected to receive during the transition phase, the law requests the president to establish a White House Transition Coordinating Council to provide guidance to all federal agencies. The Council is chaired by a senior official from the Executive Office of the President, who periodically reports to the Congress on the arrangements being established. In parallel, an Agency Transition Directors Council, co-chaired by the OMB, works to operationalize the guidance in practice across all agencies. Of course, despite the processes being specified by law, their implementation varies in different transitions.

In parliamentary democracies such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand or the United Kingdom, Cabinet Manuals or Handbooks underpinned by constitutional convention typically define the types of activities that outgoing administrations may engage in until the new ones take office. These guidelines may preclude the outgoing administration from adopting new policy initiatives or may require the incoming team to be consulted on them. Given the short transition period that is characteristic of parliamentary democracies, the guidelines may authorize meetings between civil servants and opposition parties prior to the election, in order to accelerate the sharing of information. This practice has existed in the United Kingdom since the 1960s, although the formal guidelines are slim and allow for important variations in their implementation, partly due to a restrained role of the CoG in coordinating a consistent approach (Haddon and Varma, 2014).

**Successful transitions enable incoming teams to consider policy, budgetary, and organizational information necessary to hit the ground running.** A recent report recommended that incoming teams in Brazil, at the federal and state levels should focus on the following types of information (Marini, Falcão Martins, and Vilhena, 2022):

- The main policies and their achievements.
- Ongoing projects and those in the pipeline.

- Budgetary information related to those policies and projects, including the pending disbursements.
- Organization and structure of each ministry and agency, to analyze their alignment with the new priorities.
- Personnel composition and profile.

**The CoG could define a common template, standards, and timeline to ensure that information is submitted to the incoming teams across all policy areas and that ministries and agencies have consistent guidelines on how to respond to additional requests.** Formalizing that arrangement through legislation and clear guidelines would reduce dependence on the goodwill of the outgoing administration and improve the performance of government in a sustainable manner.

## **Communications, Public Accountability, and Citizen Engagement**

The communications, public accountability, and citizen engagement function focuses on three key components: (i) the alignment of government's communications; (ii) the building of citizen trust through systematic public accountability for performance; and (iii) the engagement of citizens throughout the policy cycle to co-create results.

### ***Coordination and Standards for Communication***

**A whole-of-government strategy to foster a coherent narrative and communications with citizens is an important element of the CoG's communications management.** According to the OECD (2021: 42), "a communication strategy is a written, time-bound document that identifies a communication solution to a problem, sets the approach to achieve its objectives, and defines the activities and tactics to be carried out." Defining that integrated strategy can strengthen the consistency of communications across ministries and agencies, as well as the definition of a common narrative of the government's actions that resonates with citizens. It can also minimize the drift of ministries and agencies

toward focusing on their own initiatives, rather than on communicating the priorities of the government as a whole. Still, only half of OECD countries surveyed in 2020-2021 have established a cross-government communications strategy in recent years (OECD, 2021).

**In many cases, the fast-paced nature of the current media environment made it harder to define a medium-term approach to communications.**

Nonetheless, there are specific steps that CoGs could adopt toward a more holistic approach in government communications:

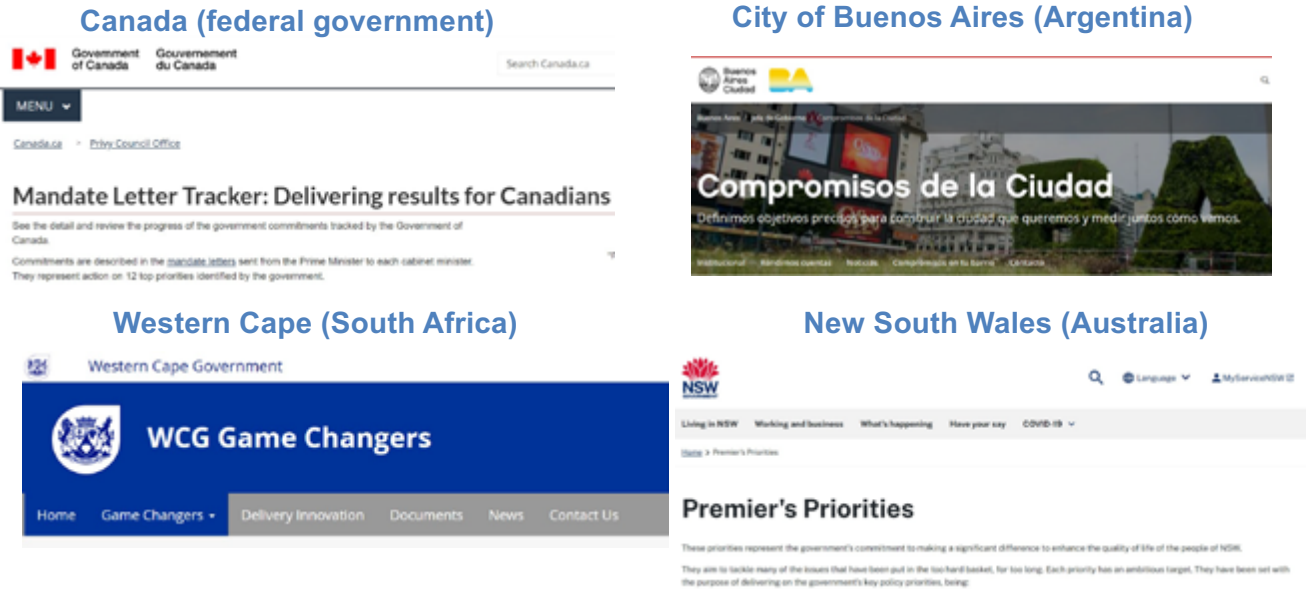
- Creating and continuously updating schedules or grids to organize government communication activities and milestones to avoid overlaps (and potential conflicts) between agencies.
- Requiring CoG coordination for public campaigns.
- Coordinating routines with ministerial communications' teams for sharing information and good practices, harmonizing contents, and overseeing implementation of the strategy.
- Establishing a framework and guidelines that are periodically updated for a purpose-oriented use of social media by both public sector institutions and civil servants, which may include regulatory provisions on data privacy, codes of conduct, and overarching communication objectives and policies; in Chile, this was defined as part of a [“Digital Kit”](#) developed for all digital communications (OECD, 2021).
- Analyzing and sharing evidence regarding what works in communications, especially as digital communications have expanded the opportunities for measuring the impacts of alternative messages. In this regard, the use of behavioral insights during COVID-19 has shown the value of evidence for shaping societal behaviors that are critical for the success of public policies (OECD, 2021).
- Integrating government sites under unified websites, as is done in Brazil, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay.
- Defining visual branding guidelines across all government materials and documents.

### *Public Accountability for Performance*

**Delivering on policy goals and communicating results has been shown to increase trust in government.**

**Effective communications that enhance trust in government should be based on robust evidence about policy interventions and their results, as well as about the challenges faced to deliver.** Delivering on policy goals and communicating results has been shown to increase trust in government. To be credible, governments need to set clear goals in advance, and report on the progress made in delivery. In a crowded news environment, this cannot be a one-off exercise: it demands continuous insistence and focus. For this, governments have more recently developed two main tools. First, they have refined the presentation of performance dashboards that provide up-to-date information regarding the implementation of the priority goals (see Figure 3.14). These dashboards typically present hard data on the delivery of these priorities against predefined targets and trajectories and supplement it with qualitative descriptions of the interventions implemented by the government and other visual materials (videos, infographics, etc.), to reach the non-expert audience. The dashboards may provide additional materials, such as georeferenced information regarding the physical location of these interventions and/or of their impacts. In some cases, the use of open-source platforms has facilitated the use of this practice by other governments. Nowadays, most governments have sufficient technological capabilities to deploy such tools.

**Figure 3.14.**  
**Examples of Public Performance Dashboards for Priority Goals**



Sources: Government of Canada. 2021. Mandate Letter Tracker: Delivering Results. Available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/campaigns/mandate-tracker-results-canadians.html>; City of Buenos Aires. 2016. Compromisos de la Ciudad. Buenos Aires. Available at: <https://buenosaires.gob.ar/compromisos>; Government of the Western Cape. 2023. WCG Game Changers. Available at: <https://www.westerncape.gov.za/game-changers/>; and New South Wales Government. Office of the Premier. 2017. Available at: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/nsw-government/premier-of-nsw>.

**The second instrument is for the chief executive and senior government leaders to periodically hold public sessions on the progress of their priorities.** This routine contributes to sustaining attention on priorities, as the voice of government leaders is typically reported and amplified by the media. This may be operationalized through specific public sessions in which government leaders present progress on their priority goals. Three recent experiences from LAC (in Colombia; in the state of Jalisco, Mexico; and in the City of Buenos Aires, Argentina) provide relevant practices in this regard (see Box 3.7).



### BOX 3.7. PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PRIORITY GOALS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

In 2015, the government of Colombia announced 21 priority goals for each ministry in the national government. Most of the goals were defined as outcomes (poverty reduction, job creation, export increases, etc.) with measurable targets. Then, the president began a tour across several regions in the country, named *Estamos Cumpliendo* (We Are Delivering) (Acosta and González, 2018). In these sessions, the president and the respective ministers signed a symbolic “check” to communicate the commitment to these goals, presented the progress achieved, and had a dialogue with citizens and stakeholders invited to the event.

In the state of Jalisco, Mexico, the *Glosas Ciudadanas* (Explanations to Citizens) were accountability sessions led annually by the governor with experts, academics, and civil society leaders to discuss the progress on the government’s development plan between 2014 and 2018 (see Figure R3.7.1). Citizens could also submit live questions to the governor and his Cabinet. The sessions were structured according to the dimensions of the development plan, with experts invited for each of them. A complete account of the sessions is available at <https://www.jalisco.gob.mx/es/noticias-referencias/glosa-ciudadana>.

**Figure R3.7.1.**  
**Town Hall Accountability Sessions in Jalisco**



Source: [www.elrespetable.com](http://www.elrespetable.com), consulted on December 22, 2022.

In the City of Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 2016 the mayor announced (within his first 100 days in office) 20 Government Commitments: a set of priorities with measurable goals and specific deadlines. To avoid this being just one more announcement, the government mounted a sustained public communications and accountability drive. In addition to the dashboard, which eventually

became the most visited non-transactional site for the city government with over 100,000 unique monthly visitors, the most important element of accountability was periodic “town hall” sessions in which the mayor and his Cabinet presented an update of progress and responded to inquiries by citizens (both present and through social media) and journalists. To increase the media’s interest in these sessions, graphs, maps and other visual tools were used extensively. Both TV and print media devoted significant attention to these sessions, and some even created their own scorecards of performance. Summaries for some of these sessions are available at <https://buenosaires.gob.ar/noticias/rendimos-cuentas>.

**A critical issue is to ensure the credibility of the data used for accountability; in this regard, the collaboration with National Statistical Offices and supreme audit institutions (SAIs) can be valuable.** Both in LAC and globally, SAIs are increasingly evolving toward “performance auditing” and thus providing valuable evidence about what works and what does not work in government policies, programs, and operations. These assessments can be more valuable if executive-branch decision makers, legislators, and citizens are effectively engaged (INTOSAI, 2019), but the evidence from LAC suggests that this connection is still limited (Jarquin, Molina, and Roseth, 2018). The National Statistical Office can be another valuable partner, at least in cases in which it is perceived as autonomous from the administration, such as the United Kingdom’s [Statistics Authority](#).

**These accountability mechanisms need to be integrated with the rest of the government’s communications strategy, as well as with other CoG functions.** Hard data about performance is more credible if it is embedded within a broader narrative that highlights the government’s commitment to such goals. Isolated sessions may not have much impact; rather, they should be connected to topics emphasized in the communications of the government and of its senior leaders (speeches, events, site visits, etc.). In turn, that approach requires governments to adopt tools for effectively setting and planning priorities and for monitoring and accelerating their delivery. Governments can only communicate results if they have established internal processes required for strong performance. In fact, a strong planning and monitoring process that defines clear milestones can be hugely valuable for the communications’ team and, pragmatically, can help secure their buy-in for the accountability sessions.

### *Citizen Engagement Throughout the Policy Cycle*

**Increasingly, priority goals (especially if defined as outcomes) require the contribution of external stakeholders, including citizens themselves.** Health outcomes are more dependent on the individual behavior of citizens than on those providing primary and secondary care; when a child reaches 18, they will have typically spent only around 15 percent of their waking hours in a classroom, underlining that outcomes are co-produced. In these and many other cases, one-way communication of what government/public services are doing (and accountability) are not enough; governments also need to establish mechanisms to incorporate the input of these stakeholders across different stages of the policy and implementation cycle. These are also critical to enhance citizen trust in the institutions and processes of government. There are many examples of participatory mechanisms developed by line ministries and agencies, but few governments have established a systematic approach to incorporating citizen input specifically for the priority goals.

**Thus, CoGs have the opportunity to revise and expand their toolbox to combine the traditional focus on internal processes (planning, budgeting, monitoring, coordinating the work of government) with instruments tailored to engaging with citizens.** In LAC, a relevant example is the role of citizens in the definition of priority goals in the state of Pernambuco, Brazil. In this case, the definition of priorities and plans began with an “outside-in” step to incorporate the perspectives of citizens. This was operationalized through a series of workshops in the 12 regions of the state, with the participation of the governor and his Cabinet. Then these inputs were filtered by the CoG, leading to a final definition of priority objectives by the government’s senior leadership. Other tools have also been used to enable a more direct and binding participation of citizens in the definition of priorities. For instance, several LAC countries have extensive experience with participatory budgeting, especially at the subnational level. In these cases, a proportion of the public budget is allocated according to the direct vote of citizens. Digital tools have been applied in recent years to complement the traditional in-person approach of this mechanism, thus facilitating broader participation. “Citizen Assemblies” (under the heading of deliberative democracy and/or citizen juries) are another recent innovation. As of 2022, over 500 assemblies had been adopted worldwide. Although

each has its own characteristics, they are typically composed of citizens selected randomly through a civic lottery, and they are expected to “create the democratic spaces for everyday people to grapple with the complexity of policy issues, listen to one another and find common ground. In doing so, they create the conditions to overcome polarization and strengthen social cohesion” (Chwalisz, 2022). In Paris, the Citizen Assembly can shape investment priorities, submit bills to the City Council, launch evaluations of existing policies, and submit questions to the Council. In other cases, these Assemblies have become part of mixed legislative committees (formed by legislators and citizens) and work as advisory panels on key policy decisions. The experience so far suggests that commitment from the leadership (e.g., the CoG) is needed for these mechanisms to effectively connect the citizens’ views with the policies implemented by governments (Chwalisz, 2022).

## Shaping Government Capabilities and Culture

This function involves four main components: (i) raising the capabilities and skills of the government; (ii) promoting core values and incentives oriented toward achieving results; (iii) fostering innovation; (iv) managing the “public service bargain”; and (v) shaping the structure of the machinery of government. This chapter presents processes and tools to perform these activities.

### *Raising Capabilities and Skills*

**As discussed in Chapter 2, the CoG’s ability to drive the government toward achieving results relies ultimately on the capabilities of the organizations and staff that implement priority policies and programs.** As mentioned in the previous chapter, quality of a government will never be better than the quality and professionalism of its ministries, agencies, civil servants, and service providers. Therefore, the CoG needs to develop instruments to identify and address capability gaps throughout the delivery chain. The CoG does not necessarily have to implement these initiatives; rather, it should ensure that the respective MDAs and teams have focused on enhancing the capabilities they need for priority goals both within government and across the delivery system.

**The CoG has developed “capability reviews”, “delivery capacity reviews” (Barber, Moffit, and Kihn, 2010), and similar tools to assess organizational capabilities and identify areas that need strengthening.**

If the CoG lacks the capabilities to implement such assessments, it may be able to partner with other stakeholders who possess the needed technical expertise, but its involvement is needed so that the assessments are perceived as consequential by the participating MDAs. For instance, Capability Reviews were originally developed in the United Kingdom and later replicated in countries like Australia, at the national and subnational levels, and New Zealand. These initiatives have been led by CoG institutions (such as the cabinet office, delivery unit, or department of the prime minister and cabinet) to assess in a consistent and comparable way the capacity to deliver results across government ministries and agencies, focusing on the underpinning factors that are relevant for all policy priorities (Panchamia and Thomas, 2014). In the international experience, these reviews typically cover issues such as:

- The *leadership* of a ministry or agency: how it sets direction, motivates and develops talent, and leads change.
- The organizational *strategies*: to what extent they focus on outcomes, are based on evidence, and involve collaboration with other agencies.
- Their *delivery models*: how they plan and manage performance, how they allocate resources and responsibilities, and how they innovate.

**Several LAC governments have conducted Delivery Capacity Reviews of their priority policy areas when redesigning their performance frameworks.**<sup>54</sup>

Like the Capability Reviews, this approach uses a standardized template applicable to all organizations and policy priorities. This framework focuses on the development of five attributes: (1) a “foundation” for delivery, including clearly defined and shared aspirations; (2) the degree of understanding of the delivery challenge, including a clear identification of the drivers of performance; (3) the development of a plan for delivery, including targets, trajectories, and delivery plans themselves; (4) how delivery is being driven (e.g., monitoring routines, problem-solving activities, etc.); and (5) the

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<sup>54</sup> As part of IDB support operations, the governments of Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Peru have implemented this tool for some of their priority objectives in recent years.

creation of a culture of delivery (the extent to which capacities are being developed, priorities communicated, and stakeholders managed). Each category is decomposed into more specific indicators, which are then scored using a four-level scale based on the information collected through interviews with agency stakeholders.

**The CoG needs to make some important decisions about how such an assessment could be implemented in each context.** The first decision involves the contents of the assessment. Capability Reviews and Delivery Capacity Reviews do not attempt to cover *all* aspects of organizational performance. Issues such as information technology management or procurement practices are not typically included. However, if these omitted aspects were *a priori* regarded as crucial to delivering results in certain contexts, the assessment may need to incorporate them. New Zealand incorporated customer experience and financial management into its 2015 diagnostic template, leading to a more comprehensive assessment (see Figure 3.15); the United States' OMB has also included customer experience assessments. Secondly, the CoG needs to decide how the reviews are going to be conducted. Pure self-assessments by the agencies may not really test their existing capabilities; instead, the CoG should partner with them (either from their own staff or by facilitating a third-party perspective) to provide an independent perspective and challenge to the process. Engagement by the agencies is critical so that the right information can be accessed; the process does not get diluted to more than two or three weeks; and the conclusions are subsequently reflected in an action plan. Finally, the CoG needs to decide how the findings of the reviews are going to be shared. The findings for one agency may be relevant to others and, furthermore, their publication may increase the incentive to implement the action plans. But a full publication of the reviews may lead to “lighter” assessments that minimize hard assessments. There is both a public right to know and a private right to manage. Therefore, the CoG may consider disseminating a summary version of the reviews, to promote transparency and the honest sharing of important findings while ensuring that the full assessments are candid and unvarnished. Moreover, it must keep track of the implementation of the reviews and associated action plans through its monitoring routines.

Figure 3.17.

**New Zealand's Performance Improvement Framework Assessment Tool**

<b>Four-year Excellence Horizon</b> What is the agency's performance challenge?		
<b>Results</b>		
Critical area	Lead Questions	
Government Priorities	1. How well is the agency responding to Government Priorities?	
Core Business	2. In each Core Business area, how well does the agency deliver value to its customers and New Zealanders?	
	3. In each Core Business area, how well does the agency demonstrate increased value over time?	
4. How well does the agency exercise its stewardship role over regulation?		
<b>Organizational Management</b>		
Critical area	Element	Lead Questions
Leadership and Direction	Purpose, Vision and Strategy	5. How well do the staff and stakeholders understand the agency's purpose, vision and strategy? 6. How well does the agency consider and plan for possible changes in its purpose or role in the foreseeable future?
	Leadership and Governance	7. How well does the senior team provide collective leadership and direction to the agency and how well does it implement change? 8. How effectively does the Board lead the Crown entity? (For Crown entities only)
	Values, Behaviour and Culture	9. How well does the agency develop and promote the organisational values, behaviours and culture it needs to support its strategic direction and ensure customer value?
	Review	10. How well does the agency encourage and use evaluative activity?
Delivery for Customers and New Zealanders	Customers	11. How well does the agency understand who its customers are and their short- and longer-term needs and impact? 12. How clear is the agency's value proposition (the 'what')?
	Operating Model	13. How well does the agency's operating model (the 'how') support delivery of Government Priorities and Core Business? 14. How well does the agency evaluate service delivery options?
	Collaboration and Partnerships	15. How well does the agency generate common ownership and genuine collaboration on strategy and service delivery with partners and providers? 16. How well do the agency and its strategic partners integrate services to deliver value to customers?
	Experiences of the Public	17. How well does the agency employ service design, continuous improvement and innovation to ensure outstanding customer experiences? 18. How well does the agency continuously seek to understand customers' and New Zealanders' satisfaction and take action accordingly?
Relationships	Engagement with Ministers	19. How well does the agency provide advice and services to Ministers?
	Sector Contribution	20. How effectively does the agency contribute to improve public sector performance?
People Development	Leadership and Workforce Development	21. How well does the agency develop its workforce (including its leadership)? 22. How well does the agency anticipate and respond to future capacity and capability requirements?
	Management of People Performance	23. How well does the agency encourage high performance and continuous improvement amongst its workforce? 24. How well does the agency deal with poor or inadequate performance?
	Engagement with Staff	25. How well does the agency manage its employee relations? 26. How well does the agency develop and maintain a diverse, highly committed and engaged workforce?
Financial and Resource Management	Asset Management	27. How well does the agency manage agency and Crown assets, and the agency's balance sheet, to support service delivery and drive performance improvement?
	Information Management	28. How well does the agency manage and use information as a strategic asset?
	Financial Management	29. How well does the agency plan, direct and control financial resources to drive efficient and effective output delivery?
	Risk Management	30. How well does the agency identify and manage agency and Crown risk?

Source: New Zealand Government, 2015.

Note: The graph is presented for illustrative purposes only.

**In addition to enhancing the capabilities of prioritized ministries and agencies, the CoG may seek to develop leadership and skills at a systems level.** Since many of the core capabilities for good government and delivery are shared across the public sector, in certain contexts it makes sense to complement the focus on specific organizations with a whole-of-government approach. In New Zealand, the Public Service Act of 2020 establishes that certain agency heads are to be appointed as system leaders who can establish mandatory standards across the public sector on cross-cutting issues, such as digital technologies or procurement. The United Kingdom and Australia have also adopted a functional approach within the civil service by defining specialist professions for cross-government functions like data and digital management, policy analysis, project management, etc., which “underpin everything we do, working to enable delivery” (Manzoni, 2015). This approach seeks to help develop areas of expertise that are required across government while also joining-up the work of ministries and agencies: functional specialists can facilitate coordination and minimize the “silo” mindset of institutional career paths. Of course, the proliferation of professions may actually create its own coordination challenges. In the highly professionalized Brazilian civil service, the existence of over 300 different careers “has led to a very fragmented workforce rather than one that can be strategically and collectively managed... In this context, leaders will likely have to manage teams from multiple careers, each with their own employment framework and own goals and objectives” (OECD, 2019b: 33). Therefore, the introduction of professions to develop cross-government capabilities should focus on the truly core skills that are needed for better policy design and implementation, and not on different contracts or benefits.

**Finally, the CoG should ensure that government departments with important roles in key priorities have the right analytical and other skills needed.** These include forecasting, trend analysis, foresight, modelling, evaluation, use of experimental techniques, econometrics and so on. “Soft” analytical skills are also required to carry out consultation, citizen engagement, stakeholder management and so on. All skills do not necessarily need to reside directly in government but in partners such as universities, research institutes and think tanks – although they need to be readily available to MDAs. The CoG’s aim in boosting analytical capability is to strengthen government’s strategic agility, creating a platform for flexible cooperation between professions and entities inside



and outside government. Major breakthroughs in knowledge and analysis often occur by bringing together disciplines and analytical approaches and encouraging linkages between government insiders and outsiders. This networked approach is the seedbed of government public policy innovation and stronger delivery.

**To avoid the risk of overstretch, the CoG needs to be strategic about its efforts to develop capabilities and skills.** Two arguments that this publication consistently makes are that context matters, and that the CoG must prioritize where it focuses with respect to improving government processes. Each CoG needs to identify the challenges to improving the management of government and delivering results in its context, as well as the resources available at the Center to address them and the complexities of embarking on such initiatives. Any reform efforts must respond to a clear and pressing need, and the instruments adopted must consider the feasibility of implementation for the CoG as well as the ministries and agencies. In many cases, the CoG does not need to establish a specific unit nor assume direct leadership over these initiatives, but rather ensure that those responsible for them are aligned with the direction and priorities set by the CoG. For example, the U.S. Federal Government established the requirement for every department and agency to name its own performance improvement officers. The CoG coordinates a [Performance Improvement Council](#) to ensure that good practices are shared, and capacities built throughout the government. This principle is particularly applicable to the issues related to civil service management that shape critical skills and capabilities. For instance, the CoG should not run a training institute or program for civil servants, but it should make sure that its contents are consistent with the needs identified in capability reviews or similar exercises. All CoG capability-enhancing initiatives need to be stress-tested against this principle.

### ***Public Administration Culture and Values***

**The CoG focusing on prevailing values, attitudes, and informal norms is an important complement to the technical tools it promotes.** They create a culture and define ‘the way of doing things’ and can be an important contributor to creating the enabling conditions for those working in government and setting the standard for those delivering public services. The CoG’s technical tools and routines may themselves help shape the

culture, as they create new incentives that alter behaviors and practices, but they may take time to become embedded. Moreover, a culture that is hostile or resistant to the technical tools outlined throughout the publication may impede their effective adoption. Therefore, in certain contexts the CoG may need to consider active leadership and an immediate focus on the public sector's prevailing culture.

**Certain governments and international organizations have defined and communicated the core values they expect from their civil service and staff.** Given their cross-cutting nature (as they apply to all ministries and agencies) and their relevance to implementing policy priorities, the CoG could consider an active role in mainstreaming change effort. In many cases, the definition of values focuses on truly basic or fundamental aspects of civil service behavior. For instance, the UN's "Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service" defines principles such as impartiality, tolerance, independence, and integrity, among others (UNESCO, 2014). These are core values and, depending on the context, ensuring their application may involve a qualitative change with significant impact on the ability to deliver policy goals. They can also be relevant to enhance citizen trust. In several OECD countries, the CoG leads the implementation of whole-of-government frameworks to enhance public integrity (see Box 3.8). But in addition to these core values, which are typically promoted by civil service agencies, the CoG may want to consider a more focused set of principles that are specifically oriented toward achieving results. For instance, in the United Kingdom the Cabinet Office had actively endorsed "Four Ps" (pride, pace, passion, and professionalism) as key attributes for civil servants (O'Donnell, 2014). The notion of "pace" conveys a sense of urgency that is critical for delivering on challenging policy objectives. It also seeks to tackle the public perception of sluggish bureaucratic processes. Therefore, the CoG's efforts to shape organizational values may go beyond the "classic" virtues of the civil service (honesty, impartiality, etc., which are often already incorporated in regulations overseen by civil service agencies and by each MDA) and drive forward a more tailored, citizen-centric, and results orientation to accelerate delivery of priority goals.

**BOX 3.8. PUBLIC INTEGRITY FRAMEWORKS AND THE ROLE OF THE CENTER OF GOVERNMENT**

In most OECD countries, a central government body or unit provides guidance to mainstream integrity policies across all line ministries (OECD, 2020a). The specific efforts typically include awareness campaigns and educational programs so that citizens can demand transparent behaviors; incorporating integrity into job-selection and promotion processes; regulations on conflicts of interest and job transitions after leaving the public sector; ensuring the enforcement of integrity standards; establishing internal and external oversight mechanisms; and introducing openness and participation through a broader accountability ecosystem. These are important elements that contribute to effective delivery by, for example, mitigating the risk of state capture.

The CoG may play two important roles in the implementation of such frameworks. First, it can provide coordination across the different agencies who are responsible for specific aspects of the integrity agenda. Certain countries, like Korea, have established inter-agency committees to foster this coordination (OECD, 2017b). Second, the visible leadership, commitment, and example from the CoG can ensure that the integrity framework is not just a formal document, but an actual guide for behavior, even of government leaders. Publishing a values statement or an integrity framework that is contradicted by the perceived behavior of government leaders can lead to cynicism and mistrust.

**A strong complement to a values statement is recognition of employees that embody those values.** Values statements must be actively communicated, even to the point of becoming repetitive. As recommended in the private sector: “Post them on the walls in offices and send each employee a wallet-sized card highlighting them. Put them on the website (potentially with deeper explainers for the simple constructs) for external clients to see. Have leaders work them into company talks, presentations, and events comprehensively. And consider some ‘swag’ (t-shirts, coffee mugs, or similar items) to celebrate their release. We often need to hear things 6–20 times before we internalize them (known as “effective frequency” in advertising) so consistent communication is key” (Coleman, 2022). Rewarding employees who live by the values is an effective tool to make abstract values more concrete. Storytelling is usually more effective as a communication device than generic concepts. Furthermore, this recognition creates a tangible incentive that can motivate adherence to the values. As stated by Brown,

Kohli, and Mignotte (2021: 29), “establishing a recognition/awards programme provides the CoG with a tangible way to reinforce priorities and create incentive for others to adopt. It both accelerates and makes change management objectives more “sticky” and will likely improve engagement of the workforce that is critical to successful delivery.” For instance, when key priority goals are met, the teams responsible for leading on their delivery may receive letters of congratulation from the chief executive (as in the United Kingdom during 2007–2010) or be granted symbolic rewards, such as awards being granted by government leaders in public ceremonies (see Figure 3.16), or even material rewards; in Pernambuco, for instance, teachers from a school that met the performance targets received a bonus (Alessandro, Lafuente, and Shostak, 2014). The applicability of these tools may vary across countries and civil service systems, and (particularly regarding material incentives) the evidence is still not settled, but if the CoG seeks to promote certain core values it also needs to consider how to create incentives that are aligned with these stated values.

**Figure 3.16.**  
**Award to Ministerial Team that Delivered on a Government Commitment in Buenos Aires**



Source: Buenos Aires City Government.

### *The Public Service Bargain*

**For all governments, ensuring effective policymaking and delivery with the right blend of capabilities in place means establishing and upholding the Public Service Bargain (PSB) between the key players in the government machinery, particularly ministers, advisers, and civil servants.** As discussed in Chapter 2, temporary appointees frequently hold upper and middle managerial positions in the public administrations of the region (Panizza, Peters, and Ramos Larraburu, 2023), and (as the PSB literature indicates) the quality and coherence of the policymaking and implementation processes may be undermined if there is uncertainty about the role of ministers, political advisers, and officials. This absence of clarity makes it more difficult to attract top talent into government service, or may weaken the capabilities, honest advice, and institutional know-how needed for effective delivery. The right tools to uphold the PSB will vary in each case, especially as some tools (such as performance-related pay for civil servants, or contractualization of senior civil service appointments, as in New Zealand) have demonstrated mixed results. But certain general principles apply broadly to most countries.

**Although the Center’s role is not to micromanage the government’s human resource decisions, in countries like the United States (with a large proportion of political appointees), the CoG takes an active role in ensuring consistency and effectiveness across government.**

For instance, the White House Presidential Personnel Office is tasked with assessing and vetting potential new political appointees, covering approximately 4,000 positions across the government.<sup>55</sup> This is likely to be an excessively ambitious task for most CoGs in LAC. However, the CoG should be able to establish guidelines or statutory codes (with sanctions for rule-breaking) clarifying the respective roles, responsibilities, values, and skills expectations of ministries, political appointees, and civil servants, while ensuring that MDAs respect certain criteria in the selection of discretionary appointments.<sup>56</sup> LAC countries already have civil service statutes in place, but the practice of patronage appointments, sometimes circumventing formal procedures, risks

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<sup>55</sup> These positions are clearly identified and updated in ever new administrations. As of 2020, 9,000 non-competitive positions exist, although typically around 4,000 are filled, due to statutory limitations. See: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-PLUMBOOK-2020/pdf/GPO-PLUMBOOK-2020.pdf>.

<sup>56</sup> Australia has been at the forefront of devising codes of conduct to ensure the integrity of advisers.

undermining the professional development of civil servants, diminishing the capabilities required to deliver on the government's priority goals. International surveys have concluded that objective performance assessment and management—recognizing and rewarding competence in particular—is important for civil service morale and effectiveness, and therefore for the effectiveness of government (Meyer-Sahling, Mikkelsen, and Schuster, 2018). The CoG should ensure that these goals are pursued by competent and experienced managers with clearly defined mandates, whether they are civil servants or temporary appointees. In recent decades, countries in LAC such as Chile have made progress in professionalizing the senior civil service tier in their governments (especially in terms of candidate selection and recruitment), with a focus on designated senior roles that are key for the implementation of public policies. Other countries have adopted, with mixed results in terms of implementation, reforms to reduce the risk of politicization and to better attract and retain talent in senior civil service positions. These efforts underline the relevance of the PSB to the governments of the region.

**In other OECD countries with well-established civil service systems, the CoG may deploy additional tools to affirm the PSB.** Complementary to the Civil Service Code, the UK's Cabinet Office defines a [Code of Conduct for Special Advisers](#) to clarify what political appointees can and cannot do within government, as well as the nature of their relation with the permanent civil service. For instance, as in the majority of OECD countries (OECD, 2011), this code restricts temporary advisors from managing public servants. In addition, countries like France and Belgium limit the number of outside appointees that can be appointed to any minister's "cabinet" or private office. In Norway, all ministerial advisers have to be approved by the Prime Minister's Office. Even if some of these tools would not be applicable in all LAC countries, they highlight the CoG's active role in upholding the PSB, and therefore the value of seeking the right instruments for each particular context.

### ***Promoting Innovation***

**The CoG may also play an important role as an incubator promoting innovation in government, leading to enhanced capabilities.** The public sector is often, sometimes wrongly, criticized for being rigid and rule-bound, avoiding the adoption of new approaches and for not having

a culture of innovation. Establishing the right balance of responsibly managing public money with taking risks requires new skills, behaviors, and capabilities that may be difficult to adopt without a consistent drive from the CoG. In recent years, CoGs in LAC and other regions have resorted to two main instruments to promote these changes in government, especially for policymaking and policy experimentation: innovation labs and behavioral units. Innovation labs typically support and coordinate the implementation of innovative solutions, experiment with new approaches to solving problems, and build capabilities and networks across the public sector (OECD, 2017a). In LAC, innovation labs have often focused on developing data and digital solutions, although some also work on (re)designing policy through approaches like design-thinking and human-centered design (Acevedo and Dassen, 2016) (see Box 3.9). Chile's Lab has also developed a [Public Innovation Index](#) that measures the government agencies' capabilities for innovation and, thus, enables the identification of specific opportunities for improvement in each organization and provides a benchmark for comparison across the public sector. The Index covers a variety of key attributes, including both the drivers for innovation (the institutional framework, the existence of a strategy, the availability of human talent, collaboration with stakeholders, and inter-agency coordination, among others) as well as the results achieved, measured by the quality of public services and the experience and satisfaction of users. So far, 30 agencies have been measured in both editions of the Index (2020 and 2021), and the average score has increased from 29 to 36 points (out of 100), a 25 percent year-to-year improvement (Laboratorio de Gobierno and IDB, 2022).

**BOX 3.9. METHODOLOGIES FOR PUBLIC SECTOR INNOVATION**

Innovation labs claim to apply a variety of methodologies for redesigning policies and services, including human-centered (or user-centered) design, co-design, and design-thinking, among others (Villa Álvarez, Auricchio, and Mortati, 2022; Howlett and Mukherjee, 2018). Although each of these terms may involve a variety of specific processes, steps, and instruments, they usually share a common set of characteristics. These include:

- An emphasis on designing policy solutions from the perspective of the users, even if it involves cutting across organizational boundaries (a feature shared by the systems approaches described above). In this regard, an innovation lab based in the CoG can facilitate this whole-of-government perspective and the coordination of the relevant agencies, which is critical for addressing “wicked” problems.
- The use of prototypes to obtain rapid feedback and iteration from users, to learn and adjust the policy solutions in a timely manner. A CoG lab can provide the flexibility required for this approach, compared to the more typical linear progression of most public projects, in which each phase is executed after completing the previous one.
- The active and early participation and engagement of actors with relevant knowledge from across the delivery chain, including those at the frontline. This enables the consideration, during the design phase itself, of the realities and risks of implementation.
- The design of interventions that allow for rigorous impact evaluations by, for example, ensuring the existence of “control groups” that act as counterfactuals.

To implement these principles, designers may use strategies and tools such as mapping (the holistic visualization of the steps involved in how individuals access certain services), participant observation (to access tacit or practical knowledge that the actors may not mention in an interview or focus group), and open-to-learning conversations, to encourage divergent thinking and challenge existing assumptions (Mintrom and Luetjens, 2018). Behavioral insights may also be a valuable complement in many of the innovation phases, as they provide information on how real-world individuals react, in practice, against different types of designs and incentives.



**Many countries have established behavioral, or “nudge” units based and the CoG for innovating in policy design and implementation.** These teams typically work with the implementing agencies to incorporate insights from behavioral economics, psychology, and neuroscience in the design and operation of public policies.<sup>57</sup> Like innovation labs, these units also generally pilot, test, and evaluate the impact of their interventions. The interventions often generate findings that are relevant not just for the implementing agency, but also for others that perform similar tasks. For example, many behavioral insights apply to how the public administration communicates and interacts with citizens, users, and beneficiaries. In LAC, some recent relevant applications include timely feedback to parents about their children’s performance, which led to improved grades and attendance in Chile; the use of messages to survivors of domestic violence, which increased their likelihood of visiting a website offering support in Honduras; and sharing parent training videos, which improved children’s cognitive development in Jamaica, Antigua, and Saint Lucia, among many other cases of enhanced interaction with citizens based on behavioral insights (IDB, 2021). In the United States, a 2021 Presidential Executive Order established that “the Federal Government’s management of its customer experience and service delivery should be driven fundamentally by the voice of the customer through human-centered design methodologies; empirical customer research; an understanding of behavioral science and user testing,” and instructed the CoG’s Office of Management and Budget to provide guidance and support across the government to implement this mandate.<sup>58</sup>

**As with any new CoG unit, these teams face the risk of overloading efforts both at the CoG and line ministries; therefore, being selective in interventions and building capabilities across the government is critical.** The proven value of innovation and of behavioral insights has led to a justified enthusiasm about these approaches. International agencies and donors have committed significant resources to their adoption, sometimes associated with specific policy areas or initiatives. The CoG needs to remain strategic and selective in their application. As discussed

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<sup>57</sup> For instance, Australia’s Behavioural Economics Team (BETA), based in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, is a “multi-disciplinary team of economists, psychologists, data analysts, policy experts and project managers providing a unique perspective on government policy.” <https://behaviouraleconomics.pmc.gov.au/about> Accessed 11 July 2022.

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/12/13/executive-order-on-transforming-federal-customer-experience-and-service-delivery-to-rebuild-trust-in-government/>

throughout this publication, the proliferation of units and projects within the CoG may eventually diminish their value and lead to internal conflicts, as each of them is seeking to find its place (and the leaders' attention) in a crowded CoG ecosystem.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, each new CoG initiative can potentially increase the requests and informational burden on ministries and agencies unless they are coordinated. The creation of innovation labs and behavioral units must respond to identified needs stemming from the government's overall strategy and priorities. Moreover, rather than supporting a variety of discrete projects, the CoG would be advised to consider a "portfolio approach" to innovation (OPSI, 2021), to ensure the coherence and alignment of its interventions. Finally, the initial drive from the CoG could be time-bound. Once these capabilities are developed across ministries and agencies, the CoG's incubating role may no longer be required, even if it retains a role in coordination and setting standards.

### ***Machinery of Government***

**The ability to deliver results for citizens can also be facilitated or undermined by the design of the government's organizational structures.** Without a whole-of-government perspective in designing the machinery of government and the mandates of its different organizations, it is likely that fragmentation, overlap, and duplication will arise. This, in turn, adds further complexity to the task of aligning the work of government behind shared objectives. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) (2015) defines fragmentation as those circumstances in which more than one agency is involved in the same broad policy area, overlap as those in which different agencies engage in similar activities or targets similar beneficiaries, and duplication as those in which different agencies are engaged in the same activities or provide the same services to the same beneficiaries. To some degree, these phenomena are unavoidable. Government structures are not designed in a lab but rather reflect a political process in which multiple stakeholders (political leaders, senior bureaucrats, legislators, interest groups, etc.) seek to influence the shape of the executive branch (Moe, 1989; Zegart, 1999).

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<sup>59</sup> This is a challenge for the CoG across the world. For instance, Beschel and Alhashemi (2020) identified 17 individual Directorates within the Prime Minister's Office in Jordan, resulting in managerial challenges, overlaps, and delays.

The “pulling and hauling” of these different actors may not necessarily lead to an optimal structure; on the contrary, fragmentation, overlap, and duplication are likely to occur. However, governments also need to ensure that their policies, especially as they relate to priority goals, are consistent and joined up. Thus, they have an incentive to introduce a whole-of-government perspective to the design of organizational structures.

**This whole-of-government perspective is usually operationalized by codifying explicit criteria for designing public organizations and through the CoG’s role in overseeing changes to the machinery of government.** Several LAC countries have developed both types of instruments. The usual criteria include the following:<sup>60</sup>

- Rationality and efficiency in the distribution of tasks.
- Grouping of tasks according to specialization and thematic similarity.
- A clear distinction between the roles of different organizations, to avoid duplication.
- A common staff hierarchy across all departments.

In addition, the CoG may seek to ensure that the criteria are correctly applied. For example, in Argentina and Peru, the Cabinet Office<sup>61</sup> has the mandate to review any proposals submitted by line ministries and other public agencies to redesign their internal structures. This clearance power enables the CoG (if it has sufficient internal capabilities for this task) to develop an integrated view and foster coherence in the distribution of policy responsibilities across the government. This role should not typically extend to autonomous public bodies, to minimize interference in operational management.

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<sup>60</sup> See Peru’s PCM Decree N°054-2018; and Colombia’s Law N°489 of 1998.

<sup>61</sup> In Argentina, this refers to the Office of the Chief of Cabinet, through its Directorate for Organizational Design; and in Peru to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, through its Public Management Secretariat.

**Functional reviews focused on comprehensive organizational redesign are another potential tool, although their popularity has diminished over time. Reviews targeted to prioritized sectors may be more relevant to the CoG.**

There are multiple types of functional reviews that serve different purposes (Manning and Parison, 2004). One is an organizational review that seeks to redesign the machinery of government to improve its alignment with the policy goals of government leaders and strengthen overall coherence. Although in theory this exercise can deliver greater effectiveness and efficiency and ensure that “form follows function,” experience has shown the difficulties in implementing such “optimal” new structures. These whole-of-government redesigns affect large numbers of stakeholders, are managerially complex, and may pose risks in terms of operational continuity. It takes time to fully set up new ministries and agencies. In addition, government reorganizations imply significant costs, often outweighing their benefits (Gash, 2015). Thus, more targeted reviews (for example, in prioritized policy sectors) may provide a more viable option. These reviews (whether for the entire public sector or for a specific policy area) typically require analysts to identify duplication in the mandates of organizational units across ministries. This task is time-consuming and difficult to conduct consistently throughout the hundreds of units to be reviewed, especially when legal mandates are ambiguous or generic. More recently, text analytics through machine learning has been used to identify these overlaps algorithmically, thus providing empirical support to (and simplifying the work of) human analysts (see Alessandro and Ortiz de Zárate, 2022, for a recent application in Argentina).

**Finally, the CoG may also promote innovative alternatives to traditional vertical organizational structures.** As in any large organization, most of the government’s work will have to be conducted through traditional structures centered on hierarchical organizations. However, for specific cross-cutting priorities, the CoG may promote or authorize the use of horizontal mechanisms to facilitate interministerial collaboration (Mulgan, 2014). These may include the following:

- Joint targets and budgets.
- Joint appointments of ministers and officials.

- Project-based work, with teams created for temporary periods drawn from different departments and from outside government.
- Shared services for back-office functions.
- Integrated information services.
- Joint delivery teams and shared front-end functions (e.g., single windows or integrated service delivery centers and co-location, integrated case management, “no wrong door policies”).
- Career rewards that value collaborative work and shared training across boundaries.

## Building Intelligence and Analytical Capacity

**The CoG needs to drive effective government performance by drawing on knowledge and analysis as the “brain” of the government** (Mulgan, 2020). This role has gained greater prominence in recent years as the demand for expertise and evidence among governmental decision-makers has grown, not least in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the threat posed by global climate change, alongside the opportunities enabled by the data and digital revolution. The government’s capacity to protect its citizens and serve the common good is powerfully determined by its collective ability to think and to understand the past, present, and future. A key plank of government competence is the ability to make high-quality decisions.

This section of the publication summarizes key tools and instruments available to the CoG in carrying out tasks in relation to analysis and intelligence across the government machinery, arranged across three components: (i) policy advice and regulatory governance for decision-making; (ii) knowledge and data/digital management; and (iii) strategic foresight.

### ***Policy Advice and Regulatory Governance for Decision-Making***

**The main responsibility for policy development typically lies with ministries, but CoG policy advice units can provide a whole-of-government perspective as well as challenge and support.** Through their whole-of-government perspective, CoG policy units can ensure that cross-sectoral impacts and trade-offs are taken into consideration. They can also use their political leverage and proximity to the chief executive to encourage MDAs to work together in developing policy through integrated approaches, such as citizen-centered ones. They can also support ministries in thinking anew or commissioning novel ideas that challenge the existing internal departmental position, offering the chief executive alternative options for decision-making. Finally, policy advice units serve the CoG directly by providing analytical material, intelligence, expertise on specialist topics, and briefing for public statements, interviews, and speeches. The policy team can help the chief executive and other senior leaders to keep thinking long-term rather than being consumed by day-to-day politics and firefighting.

**More broadly, the CoG can contribute to set the context and provide the analytical framework within which policymaking takes place across government.** Government is likely to be more effective if line ministries and government agencies adopt a shared approach to policy development. A key set of tools at the disposal of the CoG is to issue manuals, protocols, and guidelines for departments and agencies to use in policymaking<sup>62</sup> and regulatory practice. This approach can include the use of impact assessments and appraisals that analyze the impact of proposed policy and regulatory changes, such as regulatory impact analysis (RIA). Policies are more effective if the government anticipates their effect on implementation by carrying out an assessment of the likely impact of the proposed policy on a given industry or public service, especially given the likelihood of unintended policy outcomes. Such guidance provides a platform and creates incentives for the

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<sup>62</sup> For example, the Federal Government of Australia has a “Delivering Great Policy” model, based on the Australian Public Policy Handbook. According to advisers in the CoG, the model “gives us a common language and a framework to align around.” It emphasizes giving high-quality policy advice informed by multiple perspectives from affected stakeholders. The policy model also aligns a series of key processes: requesting approval for policy decisions through Cabinet, gaining budgetary agreement where funding is being sought, carrying out a regulatory impact assessment, and steering policy through the legislative process. The model also highlights critical values to provide policy advice, including a more adaptive mindset that is humble, proactive, curious, timely, collaborative, and practical.

development of analytical skills that will enhance the policymaking process. In several countries, including some LAC ones, bodies in charge of regulatory quality and oversight have been established at the CoG (see Box 3.10).

### BOX 3.10. REGULATORY GOVERNANCE FROM THE CENTER OF GOVERNMENT

Several countries have established common frameworks to minimize the heterogeneity in the quality and criteria used across sectoral regulations (Fariás et al., 2022). These frameworks are usually enforced by an office or unit responsible for coordinating and overseeing regulatory processes across the government. These bodies typically seek to improve regulatory policy by establishing guidelines to ensure the consistency of different regulations; to review the quality of proposed regulations (through RIAs, cost-benefit analyses, and similar tools), and to build capabilities across the public sector. The need for strong political empowerment and cross-government perspective makes the CoG a natural placement for these bodies. For instance, the [Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs \(OIRA\)](#) in the United States is part of the Office of Management and Budget within the Executive Office of the President. In Brazil, the creation of the Ministry of Economy in 2019, by merging five previous institutions, also enabled a centralization of the regulatory review function, and a more systematic use of RIAs (Mosqueira, Lafuente, and Gaetani, 2022).

**Another instrument is the use of consultations in the policymaking process prior to policy and regulatory approval.** As discussed in regard to the engagement of external stakeholders (see policy coordination function), the CoG can provide a template for departments and agencies to use in carrying out policy consultation exercises with stakeholders and citizens; mandate or encourage them to undertake this work; and stress test if they have. OIRA's website, [regulations.gov](#) enables citizens to find, read, and comment on proposed regulations by federal government agencies. In general, policies are more likely to be impactful and long-lasting if there is engagement prior to adoption with key groups; that is, with those who will be responsible for carrying out and implementing the policy, and those who will be directly affected by the policy, namely

citizens themselves. This also highlights the specific analytical skills and approaches that move from pure anecdote to deeper understanding. Stakeholder participation is not merely a communications exercise or an added extra but should be integral to an effectively structured policymaking process.

**The CoG’s role in policy advice for decision-making ultimately requires capability and resources; therefore, each country needs to consider how it can be implemented given their resources and needs.**

Policy units are among the most common practices to strengthen this activity. These units usually work with MDAs to develop policy and may provide an independent assessment of ministerial proposals (e.g., in terms of their alignment with the government’s overall strategy and priorities). The unit can also coordinate policy advice on specialized topics, working with other actors in the CoG, such as a “chief science adviser,” to synthesize evidence and analysis on complex topics so that ministers can make informed decisions. Several countries have established CoG offices to coordinate scientific advice to policymakers across the government, including examples in the Australia, Israel, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In LAC, the state of Ceará, Brazil, has established the [Chief Scientist Program](#) to better connect scientific expertise with policymaking across all ministries. The experience of managing the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of this role.

**Another role for the CoG is structuring the policy advisory system that is at the disposal of governments.** The expertise and analytical resources on which governments can draw relates to their internal capacity to build on knowledge, data, expertise and information from a wide variety of external sources (e.g., think tanks, research institutes, universities, management consultancies, data scientists, among others). The CoG’s contribution is to see itself as the custodian of the entire ecosystem of the government’s policy advisory system, ensuring an adequate supply of policy-relevant knowledge by drawing on the full range of networks. In the United Kingdom, for instance, the Cabinet Office coordinates the [“What Works Network”](#) comprised of research institutions committed to providing evidence tailored to the needs of policymakers.

**Finally, the CoG can provide strategic direction for the evaluation of government interventions, as is done in most OECD countries**



(OECD, 2020b). Evaluation enables decision-makers to identify what works and how best to improve the effectiveness of interventions. However, evaluations must combine two attributes that are sometimes at odds with one another. First, to be credible they must be independent and transparent. For this reason, in some countries, such as Mexico, autonomous institutions, sometimes in partnership with the supreme audit institution (SAI), lead the evaluations. Second, to actually influence decision-making, evaluations must be embedded in the policy process. This explains the prominent role of the CoG in two-thirds of OECD countries to provide strategic direction regarding evaluation. The promotion of evaluations in the budgetary process through the ministry of finance, as “modern” ministries of finance do in LAC (Arenas de Mesa and Mosqueira, 2021), can contribute to better prioritization of public spending by helping to ensure that resources are invested in the interventions with the greatest impact for achieving the government’s priority objectives. It can also generate useful data to improve the performance of these interventions. In the United States, the [OMB](#) has introduced budgetary incentives to foster the use of evaluations by departments and agencies, as well as requiring learning agendas from MDAs. Similarly, the CoG’s requirement of RIAs in the regulatory process (see Box 3.10) can also help reconcile the two key attributes previously outlined. Furthermore, the CoG can provide common standards, guidelines, and training to motivate the increased adoption of rigorous evaluations across MDAs and other stakeholders. In all cases, it is critical to ensure the right scope for the CoG in the evaluation process, to avoid the risk of politicization and to safeguard the technical credibility of the evaluations.

### ***Knowledge and Data/Digital Management***

**To effectively enhance the analytical basis of policy decisions, governments also need the ability to retrieve the right knowledge at the right time.** Knowledge management refers to the fact that the knowledge of an organization’s employees is a crucial but invariably under-exploited asset. Leveraging the knowledge assets of staff sits side by side with the crucial dimension of knowledge management for modern governments in sorting and synthesizing data. All governments now receive vast quantities of data, but the challenge is to organize it so it can be interpreted and used to effectively inform the decision-making and policy process. The CoG can help set whole-of-government

expectations to ensure that knowledge management as a set of tasks is taken seriously and effective processes are in place. One possible tool is a “knowledge asset management strategy” (UK Government, 2021) that governs the information and data held by each agency, as well as the practical know-how regarding ways of working and operations. This strategy should help identify the knowledge assets that meet the needs of each government. It should conserve resources by minimizing duplication in the acquisition or creation of information and extract greater value in policymaking and implementation by sharing knowledge assets.

**Increasingly, data is among the key types of knowledge available to governments and given its transformational potential deserves attention.** Recent developments in technologies for data collection, processing, and analysis can potentially transform how governments make policy, implement projects, monitor performance, and engage with citizens. In the Republic of Estonia, the government has adopted an approach to the digital reform of public services that focuses on service design from a user perspective, creating electronic IDs and managing data interoperability. One of greatest challenges in realizing this potential lies in the fragmented nature of the public data landscape: in most countries, government agencies have developed their own systems, methodologies, and rules for data generation and sharing. To address this challenge and to foster a whole-of-government perspective, the CoG—which often hosts the governing body or some coordination figure for digital government—adopts cross-government data principles, strategies, and policies and it can create new mechanisms for data governance, including inter-agency councils and Chief Data Offices (CDOs).

**Several governments, including two in LAC, have developed integrated data strategies.** In the United States, the [Federal Data Strategy](#) defines 10 principles, 40 medium- and long-term goals, and 20 annual action steps to operationalize these goals. This Strategy began in 2018 as a Cross-Agency Priority Goal, with 23 agencies involved in their development, and with coordination from the Office of Management and Budget at the CoG. In 2019, Canada developed a [Data Strategy Roadmap](#), led jointly by three CoG units (the Results and Delivery Unit, the Office of the Chief Information Officer, and the Office of the Chief Statistician). The strategy defines a set of principles and desired outcomes, outlining a short- and medium-term roadmap for implementation. In 2019, Uruguay established

a [Política de Datos para la Transformación Digital](#) as part of its Digital Transformation Strategy, for which the country is considered a regional reference. The Data Policy, developed jointly by the Office of Planning and Budget of the Presidency, the Ministry of Finance, the E-Government Agency, the National Statistical Institute, and the Central Bank, elaborates key principles for government agencies. As of 2022 Uruguay is one of seven LAC countries (with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru) to have developed a National AI Strategy. All of these strategies define general objectives and actions, and some include measurable goals with responsible actors (in Argentina, Chile, and Colombia). In the case of Colombia, it also describes the funding mechanisms and monitoring instruments (OECD and CAF, 2022).

**Data strategies require clear governance and accountability mechanisms to ensure implementation.** These may be secured through the creation of a central data unit or an inter-agency committee. CDOs have been established at the national and subnational levels in approximately half of all OECD countries (OECD and CAF, 2022), including New Zealand ([Chief Data Steward](#)) and the United Kingdom ([Central Digital and Data Office](#)). At the subnational level, cities such as [Barcelona](#), [Chicago](#), and [New York](#) have created similar capabilities. Although CDOs perform different roles in each case, they typically manage key data infrastructures, establish cross-government standards and policy (in terms of data quality, privacy, security, etc.), perform data analytics tasks, train and build capacity across the public administration, and in some cases are responsible for open data, smart technologies, and digital services (Wiseman, 2018). In the United States, rather than a central CDO, the Congress has established a [Council of Chief Data Officers](#). This Council is formed by the CDOs of 84 departments and agencies. Its chair is appointed by the OMB. The Council provides collective leadership and support for implementing the Federal Data Strategy; it is internally organized in working groups focused on specific issues (data sharing, data inventory, and data skills).

**Finally, another dimension—knowledge sharing—involves establishing transnational policy networks so that lessons of policies tried and tested in a particular country can be shared elsewhere.** Some analysts have suggested that LAC governments already benefit from non-hierarchical

policy networks which enable policy diffusion across countries.<sup>63</sup> There is a much greater focus on policymaking through intergovernmental structures of regional governance.<sup>64</sup> While in the past LAC governments often imported policies from the Global North, nowadays they increasingly act as policy exporters. Notable examples include participatory budgeting (first implemented in Brazil) and conditional cash transfers (originated in Mexico), which have since been widely adopted elsewhere.<sup>65</sup> The CoG often acts as the hub for contacts with other governments, as staff in policy and strategy units develop their own relationships and networks with staff in counterpart governments both regionally and around the world. By enabling links with line ministries and government agencies, the CoG facilitates this positive sum policy transfer process.

### ***Strategic Foresight***

**In a context of rapid changes, an increasingly relevant role for the CoG is the anticipation of opportunities and risks to set and adjust the government's whole-of-government strategy and priorities.** In particular, this is needed to anticipate opportunities and risks that transcend individual ministries and agencies. Forward-facing analysis and the policymaking that flows from it provide a countervailing tendency against short-term and crisis-driven action in the CoG. As such, CoGs are increasingly developing capacity, capability, and tools to anticipate prospective challenges while factoring the analysis into their priorities, plans, and budgets. Although the future is, by definition, uncertain, as has been seen in the context of recent global public health and geopolitical shocks, governments should “identify a number of different plausible future scenarios, explore what impacts they could have, and identify potential implications for policy. It is also important to look beyond the scope of traditional policy silos and consider how multiple developments can intersect and interact in unexpected ways” (OECD, 2019c: 1). There are a range of possible methods (such as “horizon-scanning”) to identify and anticipate emerging trends. In general, these tools are based on a series of ordered steps:

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<sup>63</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/education/cei/The%20Nature%20of%20Policy%20Change%20and%20Implementation.pdf> Accessed 7 July 2022.

<sup>64</sup> <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-319-98068-3> Accessed 10 July 2022.

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.routledge.com/Latin-America-and-Policy-Diffusion-From-Import-to-Export/Oliveira-Gonnet-Montero-Leite/p/book/9781032082349> Accessed 12 July 2022.

**Natural disasters, pandemics, conflicts, and similar events typically affect multiple dimensions of social and economic life. No single ministry or agency can prepare a rapid and coherent response on its own.**

- Seeking a broad range of inputs, ideas, perspectives, and stakeholders' views<sup>66</sup> about possible futures, to challenge existing thinking and avoid the risk of assuming that current trends will continue.
- Extracting and synthesizing high-quality insights from stakeholder feedback.
- Establishing a follow-up process to translate insights into actions by, for example, “upgrading” the existing planning and policy documents and risk register (rather than expecting to redraw them from scratch) (UNDP, 2018).

**Crises force governments to redefine their priorities. Therefore, anticipating potential major risks can help prepare accordingly.** Natural disasters, pandemics, conflicts, cyberattacks, industrial accidents, and similar events typically affect multiple dimensions of social and economic life. No single ministry or agency can prepare a rapid and coherent response on its own. The CoG can lead efforts to proactively assess critical hazards, map interdependencies, allocate responsibilities, and identify capabilities, allocating resources to those risks most likely to materialize. Most OECD countries regularly conduct National Risk Assessments (NRAs) for risk anticipation (OECD, 2018d; 2019c). NRAs can help build consensus within the government regarding the most important risks to prioritize across a range of potential risks, to guide the elaboration of prevention and mitigation measures, and, more broadly, to promote a culture of risk management at the political and official levels. In most cases, the NRAs are based on the feedback of experts within government agencies, but some countries have opened up the process to draw on the knowledge of a network of outside experts. A few governments also include more complex quantitative models (OECD, 2018d). The U.S. government has developed an [Enterprise Risk Management Framework](#) to promote a consistent approach to managing risk across all MDAs. Yet all these efforts can only lead to meaningful results if there is high-level political demand and focus. Without it, they may remain interesting technical exercises with limited impact on the planning and policy process. Effectively engaging the political leadership

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<sup>66</sup> The empirical research on this topic has concluded that aggregating the independent predictions of multiple individuals leads to better forecasts than relying on single forecasters, even if they are experts on a particular field (Tetlock and Gardner, 2015).

of the government (through cabinet meetings focusing on strategy involving simulations and workshops) is critical (Mulgan, 2020).

**There are good examples of CoGs that have established dedicated “Futures” units or teams, to provide high-level leadership, cross-cutting perspectives, and a wide range of expertise.** This support can be institutionalized in strategy and foresight units with high-powered recruits who command respect across government. These units need wherever possible to work on projects endorsed by the chief executive, but they must be undertaken collaboratively with departments and line ministries. The aim is to increase the government’s capacity for long-term analysis, providing a counterweight to the short-term crisis management orientation of other parts of the CoG. In Finland, often considered the benchmark in this regard, the Prime Minister’s Office coordinates [government foresight activities](#) that are strongly embedded across all public agencies. This dissemination is critical to ensure that foresight is not an added extra or just another bureaucratic requirement from the CoG, but rather a regular component of all planning and policymaking efforts. Since the early 1990s, when Finland reversed a deep economic downturn, the government has submitted to Parliament a [“Report on the Future”](#) during each parliamentary term. Although the PM’s Office coordinates the work, preparation of the report relies on an extensive range of expertise from across government agencies, a [National Foresight Network](#) of data producers, and a [Government Foresight Group](#) of ministerial, parliamentary, and academic experts. Other cases with dedicated capacities include Portugal, Singapore, and Wales:

- The Welsh CoG has established a future trends report under the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to identify the risks and challenges that are likely to impact on Wales in the foreseeable future. The analysis is based around four megatrends: people and population, planetary health and limits, inequalities, and technology. The reporting process assesses likely sources of future demand on the public sector and the public finances of the Welsh government. The government worked with other partners to run participatory futures exercises where citizens were involved in the discussion. Such methods are vital in the era of the “expert citizen.”<sup>67</sup>

<sup>67</sup> <https://foresightprojects.blog.gov.uk/2022/05/18/tips-on-developing-a-collective-futures-vision-with-the-public/>

- The Center for Strategic Futures (CSF) is part of the [Strategy Group](#) in the Prime Minister’s Office in Singapore. The CSF is a think tank at the heart of the CoG working on government strategy. Its goal is whole-of-government coordination through the strategic planning process. The CSF defines its mission as follows: ‘The CSF’s mission is to position the Singapore government to navigate emerging strategic challenges and harness potential opportunities by building capacities, mindsets, expertise and tools for strategic anticipation and risk management; developing insights into future trends, discontinuities and strategic surprises; and communicating insights to decision-makers for informed policy planning.’<sup>68</sup>
- The Competence Centre for Planning, Policy and Foresight in Public Administration ([PlanAPP](#)) is an autonomous institution integrated in the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of Portugal. As part of its work on strategic foresight, it coordinates an interministerial network (REPlan) seeking to align the work of MDAs on prospective analysis and planning. Other countries have also established independent arms-length institutes to commission research focusing on future trends and new risks that are relevant to the government’s strategic goals. Key examples include the [Scientific Council for Government Policy](#) in the Netherlands which provides ‘science-based’ strategic policy advice to the Dutch Government; the [Institute for Future Studies](#) in Stockholm that promotes ‘future perspectives in research and public debate’; and the [France Stratégie](#) in France, a decision-making and expertise institution under the authority of the French Prime Minister. The Centre was recently replaced by the General Commission for Strategy and Economic Forecasting, which assesses the impact of major government reforms at the request of the French Prime Minister.

**Still, foresight exercises are not a luxury only undertaken in developed countries. In fact, they may be even more important in governing contexts where there is greater uncertainty and volatility.** Although most of the countries that are considered leaders in strategic foresight are OECD nations that have established foresight ecosystems with important coordination from central units or teams (SOIF, 2021), this activity is particularly relevant in developing contexts as well. For instance, the ability to anticipate economic and financial shocks can help

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.csf.gov.sg/>

build resilience and to better protect the delivery of policy priorities (see Box 3.11). Still, the creation of Futures units must respond to a real demand or need for such a role. If not, they risk mission creep as they seek to maintain their relevance by expanding their original scope. This tendency needs to be contained to avoid duplication of efforts (and subsequent congestion) with other CoG teams.

### **BOX 3.11. STRATEGIC FORESIGHT FOR ECONOMIC RISKS WITH MULTIDIMENSIONAL IMPACTS**

When trying to establish medium-term government priorities, a frequent concern for LAC policymakers is uncertainty regarding economic and financial projections. Economic shocks may alter the fiscal space available to pursue priorities and, moreover, may demand redirecting the attention to new challenges. Thus, conducting a systematic exploration of potential future scenarios can help inform present decisions and better prepare for future financial shocks. This preparation can guide a more resilient approach to delivering on policy priorities.

In this regard, the IMF has promoted the use of practical tools like “scenario planning” and “policy gaming” as part of its risk assessment framework (Behar and Hlatswhayo, 2021). For example, scenario planning may be conducted through a two-day workshop with key decision-makers. Certain steps would be followed: a discussion about perceptions of the most important trends and uncertainties; prioritization of those “unknowns” in terms of their potential impact and likelihood; the identification of two to four scenarios that may result; and finally deriving policy implications and takeaways for each. This exercise can help uncover blind spots and enable a more agile response were any of those shocks to occur.

This understanding can be strengthened using a dynamic strategic simulation exercise (“policy gaming”). Through role-play, stakeholders iteratively respond to specific shocks that are put to them (like the introduction of tariffs by another country or the disruption of a critical supply chain). These games can help uncover complex interactions among agencies and stakeholders. It is especially useful for action-reaction sequences with spillover effects across multiple policy dimensions, as typically happens during economic crises.



**In certain countries, periodic strategic audits or strategic reviews are used to support medium and long-term thinking.** These exercises are typically conducted every three to five years and updated annually. The strategic review process involves the chief executive and CoG team as well as ministers, advisers, officials, stakeholders, delivery partners, and citizens. The review seeks to assess how well the government has performed against its stated objectives; analyze key trends and developments; determine the most pertinent challenges and risks it will need to focus on in the coming period; and define the government's response. The strategic review process concludes with a distillation of the government's core priorities for the forthcoming period. The CoG in Australia, Canada, and Germany are carrying out regular strategic review exercises. LAC governments such as Chile are embracing the importance of CoG-led strategic reviews focused on economic and social development thinking long-term while attempting to create a shared vision of the future.<sup>69</sup>

**The involvement of the CoG ensures a whole-of-government approach and is a cost-effective way of bringing more specific skills to the process.** Of course, carrying out a regular strategic review is an intensive and time-consuming exercise. But complementing/supplementing ministry expertise has particular advantages. For this reason, governments could establish dedicated capacity in the CoG to oversee the strategy development process. Governments have the option of creating an in-house consultancy at the center whose role is to oversee the production and development of government strategy. This strategic review function could contain officials alongside a number of outsiders on secondment from finance, industry, the public sector, and management consultancy to provide fresh perspectives and robust intellectual challenge. The strategy review team can draw on the expertise of external organizations to feed in the latest insight and knowledge as part of the wider policy advisory system of government.

**Many LAC countries have experience with long-term plans, but current approaches and tools are different from traditional approaches.** In an

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<sup>69</sup> <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264288379-7-en.pdf?expires=1657712415&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=0D323A7DD4048FFBB940EA3F13080A6A>  
Accessed 7 July 2022.

analysis of 107 national development plans globally, Chimhowu, Hulme, and Munro (2019) concluded that 75 percent of them had no specific costing associated with them. Thus, in many countries, long-term plans have a limited relationship to the policy and budgetary process. Some countries have abandoned the preparation of all-embracing development plans that sought to orient the economy's direction, either evolving into internationally agreed-upon commitments (such as SDGs) or focusing on specific sectors that require long-term thinking, cross-ministerial interventions, and broad political consensus, such as climate change, defense, and infrastructure (IMF, 2020). For example, one of the OECD's top recommendations for improving infrastructure governance is to develop long-term, integrated plans and to coordinate their objectives with those of other planning instruments (climate plans, territorial plans, regional development plans, etc.). However, this integration is still a challenge for most countries, and government should be aware of the risk of multiplying planning efforts.

**Strategic foresight is an increasingly relevant issue for subnational governments as well.** The focus of many subnational governments in LAC has recently been building local resilience, but it is critical to integrate this effort with overall strategies and plans at the national level. The concept of resilience refers to a system's ability to absorb shocks or stresses (ecological, economic, social and so on.) and it is of increasing interest in settings affected by forces such as climate change, social inequality, and population ageing, among others. To expand these capabilities, several cities have developed long-term Resilience Strategies and created a new position: "chief resilience officer" (CROs). These offices are usually based in the CoG given the need for a cross-government effort in strengthening resilience. The Resilience Strategies typically define priority issues or pillars, goals for each, and actions aligned with them (Galderisi, Limongi, and Salata, 2020). With coordination from CROs, the formulation of these strategies usually involves stakeholder engagement, including both local government agencies and private and community stakeholders. As with all planning efforts, especially long-term ones, the connection to preexisting plans is critical for the success of the initiative. Given the proliferation of international urban networks, each with their associated planning instruments, it is essential for the CoG to prioritize efforts and provide coherence. Moreover, these subnational plans should be linked to multi-level strategies to maximize their impact. Strategy planning and

increased foresight capability will improve government effectiveness and performance where it matters most.

## Conclusions

This chapter elaborates the practical tools and techniques of governance that enable the core functions of the CoG to be achieved in the real world, drawing on international best practice. The structure reflected the organization of the main functions of the CoG outlined in Chapter 2 of this publication. The final chapter considers the main takeaways to be gleaned from more than a decade of CoG reforms and presents a self-assessment tool for governments seeking to increase the effectiveness of the CoG functions.

# Key Trends and Next Steps in Center of Government Practice

**This publication has documented a series of significant changes from the past decade that have shaped the current practices of Center of Government (CoG) institutions globally and in the region.** As discussed in Chapter 1, the environments in which CoGs operate have changed significantly in the last few years, due to changes in internal government practices and broader societal, economic, political, and technological transformations. A more pressing economic and fiscal context, the growth in data and digital technologies, a generalized decline in citizen trust, and the enduring effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and other events of global impact have all reshaped the operations and the opportunities available to the governments and, in particular, to the way the CoG provides leadership and manages the government. In addition, some public administrations have adopted stronger standards of evidence for policymaking and have placed greater emphasis on innovation, citizen-centered design, and the application of behavioral insights when developing and implementing policy. In the past decade, several countries in LAC and globally have developed frameworks to enhance coordination and delivery, established new CoG units, and expanded their efforts to engage with the public and other stakeholders. These efforts acknowledge that the CoG matters in contexts that demand consistent leadership and steering. Moreover, these experiences have enabled a better understanding about the role of the CoG and about what works in different contexts, as well as about the typical challenges to succeed in (and embed) any CoG reforms. In turn, the learning from these cases feeds back into revised CoG practice, as reflected in Chapters 2 and 3. This concluding chapter highlights some of these findings and provides guidance to CoG practitioners for focusing their reform efforts.

**Although many of these changes impact the work of all ministries and agencies, there are specific effects that matter particularly to the CoG.** As the custodian for the management of the whole of government, the CoG is the main actor that can address issues that cut across all MDAs, such as the decline in citizen trust, the dramatic rise in data



# 4

## Key Trends and Next Steps in Center of Government Practice

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Main Takeaways from a Decade of Center  
of Government Reforms

The CoG Institutional Development Matrix  
as a Self-Assessment Tool

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**THE CENTER OF GOVERNMENT, REVISITED**

A DECADE OF GLOBAL REFORMS

availability (and the barriers to unlock its potential), or the acceleration of global disruptions. Every MDA is responsible for addressing how these transformations affect their sectors, but large, cross-sectoral dynamics can only be tackled through coherent, integrated responses. This reinforces the urgency to strengthen the functions, capabilities, and instruments of the CoG.

**This chapter considers the main takeaways from the last decade of governance reform in the CoG.** It then presents the CoG Institutional Development Matrix (IDM) that practitioners can use to identify where to focus their efforts in upgrading and enhancing the work of their CoG teams and institutions. Finally, an appendix to the chapter considers how, in the future, we can strengthen the evidence base concerning what works in governance reform at the center.

## Main Takeaways from a Decade of Center of Government Reforms

**The mission of the CoG—to manage and align the complex machinery of government to achieve results for and increasingly *with* citizens—is ever more important to tackle critical economic, social, and technological challenges.** Governments continue to face enduring, and sometimes increasingly pressing, cross-cutting problems: social inequality, climate change, economic competitiveness, early childhood development, gender disparities, and many other priority challenges require consistent, whole-of-government policy interventions. Moreover, successful interventions often demand engagement and co-production with non-state actors, which in turn requires rebuilding citizen trust in institutions. Mobilizing these networks of multi-sector delivery partners, and aligning efforts and resources behind shared goals, is more likely with strong CoG steering that has the right blend of skills, attitudes, capabilities, and resources. The CoG's role is key to establish effective routines for managing; to define ambitious yet realistic priorities that guide the work of ministries, agencies, and other stakeholders; to ensure that public budgets truly reflect such priorities and that policies have been designed with sufficient analysis and evidence; to sustain incentives and promote the development of capabilities across the implementing agencies; to keep track of progress in real time through

evidence-based indicators of performance; to provide coordination, resolve bottlenecks, and arbitrate disagreements in complex delivery chains; and to communicate what has been achieved and what remains to be done. Of course, these ambitious tasks need to be undertaken with a selective focus: maintaining a conscious concentration on top policy priorities enables such deep immersion from the CoG.

**The building blocks of effective CoGs remain as crucial as ever.**

Especially for countries that are just beginning their journey of CoG strengthening, there are some key functions, components and activities that constitute the foundation of a well-functioning center. Ensuring that priorities are clearly identified, establishing a framework for setting objectives and tracking their progress, coordinating those responsible for delivery, reporting periodically to the chief executive and other leaders, and communicating results and challenges to the public are still key elements to put in place. More generally, and despite the emergence of new paradigms and techniques of public management that enhance the toolbox available to the CoG (such as networks and systems approaches), there is also strong evidence, presented throughout this publication, of the impact of sound performance frameworks to improve the way that governments implement policies and deliver services to citizens. The innovations and learnings from the past decade build on these pillars of CoG practice.

**Efforts in CoG reform have demonstrated their potential impact to improve performance and deliver results.**

**An important takeaway from a decade of CoG reforms is the need to combine high-level political engagement with broader efforts to develop capabilities beyond the apex of government.** Efforts in CoG reform have demonstrated their potential impact to improve the performance of all aspects of the government's work and deliver results. This publication has presented evidence of improved outcomes across multiple policy priorities. In many of these cases, a determined chief executive and senior leadership have been able to sustain the government's focus on delivering ambitious objectives. Still, new routines have often lost momentum due to political or personnel turnovers, distractions from the performance agenda, insufficient capabilities within delivery partners, or resistance from the prevailing way of doing things in public organizations. This loss of momentum sometimes occurs because political leaders want to move on the "next big initiative," but part of the role of the CoG is to embed a culture and way of working toward objectives that demand persistent attention. Therefore, to sustain

change in certain contexts, the CoG should expand its focus to consider the broader capabilities, skills, knowledge, values, and culture of the various delivery systems that matter to achieve priority objectives.

**Low state capacity remains a challenge globally as well as in the region** (World Bank, 2022), **and this is a driving factor for the decline in the work of government and citizen trust.** Moreover, this limitation is more salient when dealing with complex or “wicked” issues that demand consistent and high-quality whole-of-government interventions, like those that typically come to the CoG’s attention. Thus, any new way of doing things needs to be disseminated and the change managed across the ministries, agencies, and networks of delivery partners, including subnational governments and non-state actors, which increasingly co-produce results with the public sector. This requires aligning the incentives and motivations of those who do the day-to-day work of delivering public services. Rather than over-empowering the CoG, this approach is about supporting, challenging, and enabling the work of MDAs and other partners.

**Rather than over-empowering the CoG, this approach is about supporting, challenging, and enabling the work of MDAs and other partners.**

**Within these broader capabilities, there is an increasing need for the CoG to develop intelligence and analytical capacities.** The data and digital revolutions have created massive opportunities for whole-of-government strategy-setting, evidence-based policymaking, inter-agency collaboration, performance monitoring, citizen engagement, and more accessible and cost-effective public services. Knowledge has become one of the government’s key assets. Effectively managing all of this data and knowledge is critical to enable the timely sharing of relevant information, to extract relevant policy insights, and to avoid information overload. In this context, the CoG is often the key actor to implement whole-of-government knowledge, data, and digital strategies and policies required to break informational silos. In addition, phenomena such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the acceleration of climate change, the reappearance of major international conflict, renewed economic and financial turmoil, and other exponential changes have highlighted the importance of data-driven proactive foresight and prospective thinking to plan and adjust policy priorities. Successful governments are smart governments: they have the analytical capability to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to challenging and multidimensional risks and opportunities, drawing on their internal sources of knowledge and mobilizing external partners. The CoG’s cross-cutting perspective and



convening power are critical to effectively lead these efforts, as long as it has also invested in the analytical capabilities (skills, technology, and managerial routines) that are crucial in this new environment.

**This new focus by the CoG on capabilities, culture, and analytical intelligence can be a powerful pillar for its more traditional functions, but these have also been reshaped.** There are multiple ways in which recent innovations in CoG practice underpin its more well-established tasks. For instance, prospective foresight helps to better set policy priorities; data governance enables more robust monitoring; and instilling a results-orientation across key MDAs can accelerate delivery in a sustainable manner. These are just some of the ways in which traditional and novel CoG functions interact. But also, the more established functions are being revised. For example, policy coordination (a defining role of CoGs since the creation of the first units based in the Office of the Presidency, the Prime Minister, or the Cabinet) cannot be restricted to interministerial or horizontal coordination. In a context of increasingly complex delivery chains that include subnational and nongovernmental stakeholders, the CoG's tasks of brokering and aligning actors toward shared goals has become more encompassing. The work with these other actors also demands incorporating new tools and practices, oriented toward collaborating with a network of stakeholders over which the CoG does not have hierarchical control.

**The complement of these new roles is the need to focus on policy priorities effectively and selectively.** The CoG often faces two risks: the risk of CoG overload and congestion and the risk of simultaneously introducing too many changes to existing operations. Thus, it needs to be selective and strategic when assuming additional functions and tasks and when establishing new practices. The focus on policy priorities is an anchor that can mitigate the risk of overstretch. Moreover, when assuming new roles, the CoG may need to provide the initial drive to develop critical capabilities but may decentralize this responsibility to MDAs once sufficient maturity has been reached (this can also minimize the risk of excessive command and control from the CoG). This approach of building capabilities in MDAs can relieve the CoG from the risk of overload and help build sustained capabilities in the public sector that are less dependent on the interest or engagement of each chief executive. Thus, each administration can help leave the machinery of government in a better shape than the one they inherited.

**To perform its traditional and its new functions, CoG institutions have developed a range of tools and routines; a clear understanding of the context, purpose, and resources is essential to deploy the right ones.** International trends and management fads sometimes induce governments to adopt tools that have been successfully deployed elsewhere. Predictably, taking solutions off the shelf without tailoring them to the local context often leads to disappointing results. An important learning from a decade of CoG reform is that context matters. As documented in Chapter 3, a variety of instruments are available to fulfill the CoG's indispensable role in managing the government. New and enhanced techniques offer greater possibilities to devise "best-fit" approaches, avoiding "canned" solutions. For instance, although improved delivery has rightly concentrated much of the attention of CoG reforms in recent years, there are cases in which "doing things right" is not enough: instead, "doing the right things" (by, for example, redesigning the existing set of policy interventions through innovative approaches) would be as impactful. Thus, CoG officials need to clearly identify the gaps that have to be tackled and determine to what extent they can mobilize the resources, political support, capabilities, and levers required by different tools to address them. Moreover, the process of CoG strengthening is not simply about "checking boxes" or following a manual. Actively seeking feedback, learning from what is adding value (and what is not), learning from failure and tailoring the subsequent roll-out accordingly is needed to adapt the tools to the political, institutional, and cultural realities of each case. Of course, CoGs need to identify the right tools while facing the urgency to act in order to help deliver results in the short run; but "building the ship while sailing" is inevitable in such positions.

**The Institutional Development Matrix (IDM) helps CoG leaders and officials assess current performance and prioritize the functions and activities that require more urgent improvement.** As discussed throughout this publication, the *quality* of the activities that the CoG undertakes is critical. It is easy to count how many monitoring meetings have been conducted, but it is the quality of these routines (the relevance and timeliness of the data being discussed, the participation of all relevant stakeholders, the focus on unblocking obstacles, etc.) that adds value to the process. The CoG IDM presented below helps CoG officials in understanding how each function is being performed. The functions are operationalized through specific indicators and scored according to typical levels of performance. Even if performance cannot

be quantified, robust discussions within the CoG teams should produce judgements that reflect valid assessments. In addition, the teams could actively seek to collect the perspective of their counterparts in line ministries and agencies. Triangulating the views of these different stakeholders to check their consistency can provide a robust appraisal. This information may be collected confidentially or even through independent researchers, in order to elicit frank opinions.

**Without neglecting the need for specifically assessing what is most relevant in each context, a few general trends and suggestions can be identified.** For instance, in federal countries and in unitary countries with a high degree of policy decentralization, vertical coordination appears indispensable to foster consistent interventions and to minimize overlaps. For coalition governments, political coordination among partners may be a prerequisite to enable the remaining managerial and technical CoG functions. In contexts of constrained resources and capabilities, establishing the building blocks of delivery (such as a basic performance framework for setting and keeping track of priorities) is likely to be more urgent than attempting advanced tasks like strategic foresight or “systems” approaches. Finally, in low-trust countries, active communication and accountability for results can be a key practice to regain public confidence in the government.

## **The CoG Institutional Development Matrix as a Self-Assessment Tool**

**CoG leaders should focus their strengthening efforts on the functions and activities in most need of development and enhancement.** Table 4.1 presents the CoG Institutional Development Matrix with four levels of maturity (establishing, developing, strengthening, and optimized) for each component of the CoG’s functions and describes typical situations for each of them. Many real-world cases will not fit neatly within one of the four levels. Still, they provide guidance for an honest assessment of existing challenges and should thus help identify functions and practices in need of improvement.

**Table 4.1.**  
**CoG Institutional Development Matrix**

Function	Component	Establishing CoG	Improving CoG	Strengthened CoG	Optimized CoG
Strategic management	Performance framework	There is no government plan/ program defining the goals of MDAs. The budget is the plan.	The goals of MDAs are explicitly defined but weakly integrated into policy and budgetary decisions.	MDA goals are effectively integrated with budget / policy; CoG keeps track (e.g., dashboard) but with no systematic routines in place.	CoG-led routines are in place to review progress periodically on MDA goals and to make policy and managerial adjustments to unblock obstacles.
	Prioritization	The government has not stated explicit priority goals.	Explicit priorities were formally announced, but most key stakeholders could not identify them.	There are recognized priorities, although with still limited use of managerial tools to operationalize them into tangible deliverables.	Ambitious, focused, coherent priorities expressed as measurable commitments, with responsibilities identified for delivery.
	Delivery planning	Once a priority goal has been established, it is up to each MDA to decide how it intends to pursue it.	The CoG provides guidelines and templates for MDA planning, but the CoG's role is limited to compiling such plans rather than ensuring their coherence and feasibility.	Theories of change for priority goals have been developed, but not operationalized into detailed delivery plans nor stress-tested their deliverability, including clear actions, capabilities, and resources.	Detailed implementation plans (including delivery system analysis) for priority objectives have been developed and agreed between the CoG and all the key internal and external stakeholders.

Function	Component	Establishing CoG	Improving CoG	Strengthened CoG	Optimized CoG
Strategic management	Budget alignment	Changes to the national budget remain incremental or reflect across-the-board fiscal consolidation decisions rather than reflecting identified priorities.	The Budget Office reallocates resources to meet priority objectives, although funds are still assigned to specific institutions and do not facilitate multi-ministerial interventions to meet cross-cutting objectives.	Arrangements are made that enable ministries to pool resources against a common goal where there needs to be an alignment of goals, policies and budget across ministries with appropriate budget accountability.	The CoG guides the prioritization of expenditure based on high-quality performance information, allocating resources according to the contribution of each intervention to cross-government outputs and outcomes, and incentivizes results.
	Interministerial coordination	Policy priorities are addressed by each MDA separately, with frequent duplications, and interministerial instances are mostly formal and limited to information sharing rather than joint decision-making.	The CoG is able to resolve policy contradictions through informal mechanisms and has been able to instill a culture of collaboration for some but not all policy priorities; this coordination does not extend to integrated implementation or service delivery to citizens.	Priorities that involve multiple ministries and agencies are aligned at the policy-setting stage and reflect the overall direction of the government. There are protocols to manage inconsistency, duplication and conflict of policy across ministries and agencies.	Cross-cutting policy priorities are pursued with a whole-of-government or “systems” approach through shared strategies, structured interministerial processes, active CoG coordination, and joined-up delivery mechanisms.
Horizontal and vertical coordination	Coordination with subnational governments	Multi-level coordination is managed by each MDA in its respective sector, with no cross-government approach to ensure overall consistency.	The CoG addresses any obvious contradictions in different sectoral policies with localized impact, but there is no integrated strategy between relevant MDAs and subnational partners.	The CoG has been able to develop cross-sector plans with the relevant MDAs and subnational governments and manages the incentives (including financial ones) to promote vertical coordination.	The CoG promotes place-based interventions to meet policy priorities through cross-sector plans that guide resource allocation based on clear targets, and it manages multi-level forums for periodic oversight of implementation and decision-making.

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Function	Component	Establishing CoG	Improving CoG	Strengthened CoG	Optimized CoG
Horizontal and vertical coordination	Coalitions with external stakeholders	There is no framework nor incentives for MDAs to collaborate with stakeholders in their respective policy sectors.	The CoG leads collaborative efforts to mobilize external support for specific priorities, but these are <i>ad hoc</i> efforts with no established framework in place to guide MDAs.	The CoG has established a framework to motivate the engagement of external stakeholders in the design of policy interventions, without a focus on the co-delivery of solutions and results.	The CoG has established a cross-government framework to ensure that interventions are integrated with the actions of external stakeholders, leads collaborative efforts throughout the policy cycle for cross-sector priority goals, and promotes the co-production of results with non-state actors.
	Crisis management	There are no protocols for handling major crises in a coordinated manner, leading to fragmented and potentially inconsistent actions by each stakeholder.	There are protocols for crisis response coordination but, in practice, they are not followed, leading to <i>ad hoc</i> responses.	The CoG coordinates the government's response to crises following established protocols, but the engagement of key subnational and non-state stakeholders is limited, and the overall response is not as comprehensive and timely as needed.	The CoG is able to mobilize and align the network of stakeholders that are needed to address major crises, to collect timely data for decision-making, and to expedite the rapid and coherent deployment of responses.
Monitoring and improving performance	Performance information	There is no periodic collection and reporting of performance data from MDAs to the CoG, or it is limited to basic budgetary information and the CoG does not set standards for the definition of metrics.	The CoG has established monitoring systems that enable the tracking of progress on priorities; however, there are limitations to the data regarding the quality, timeliness, or reliability of the information; or there is a duplication of reports that burdens MDAs.	Performance data is regularly reported and allows for timely monitoring of progress through a range of reliable indicators (such as process, output, outcome, and value-for-money indicators).	The CoG receives real-time performance data that is segmented to pinpoint specific bottlenecks and gaps by geography, population characteristics and service providers.

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Function	Component	Establishing CoG	Improving CoG	Strengthened CoG	Optimized CoG
Monitoring and Improving Performance	Monitoring routines	Monitoring information is used by the CoG and MDAs to review progress on the priority goals only sporadically or only after failures in delivery have occurred, with no established routines in place and without sufficient preparation to allow for in-depth discussion and decision-making.	There are calendarized sessions for reviewing progress on at least some of the priority goals, but the CoG has not set guidelines on the type of information to be presented and has limited ability to challenge MDAs.	The CoG regularly brings together relevant stakeholders to assess their performance and discuss changes, and has standardized routines in the preparation of material, presentation of performance data, and the generation of potential actions arising.	The CoG has a systematic program of regular reviews of progress against all government priorities, bringing together key stakeholders in the delivery system to identify solutions to delivery challenges and take policy and managerial decisions based on the analysis of robust evidence.
	Reporting to government leaders	Performance reports to the chief executive and senior leaders are not submitted systematically, or are not based on predefined trajectories, or they do not present actionable options for decision-making when needed.	The chief executive has access to an online performance dashboard, but there is no systematic effort from the CoG to synthesize and extract the key data considering the chief executive's information-gathering preferences (length, visuals, etc.).	The chief executive and other senior leaders have a set program to access performance reports on priority goals using quantitative evidence of progress, although with limited analysis of the factors that may limit delivery, and without possible actions to address them.	The CoG submits periodic performance reports to the chief executive and other senior leaders that present evidence and insight on how things are going, identify which obstacles may have appeared, and propose what is needed from the decision-makers to address them.
	Unblocking obstacles	The CoG monitors performance but does not assume a role in unblocking obstacles when progress is insufficient, leaving this task entirely to the responsible MDAs.	When bottlenecks arise, the CoG may seek to unblock them informally or in <i>ad hoc</i> way, with no preestablished set of tools.	The CoG proactively seeks to identify the root causes of delays in delivery and deploys structured processes and tools to prepare actionable solutions in partnership with the key delivery actors, while raising their capabilities.	In addition to resolving specific bottlenecks, the CoG is a center of excellence in outcome-based management, with credible expertise that is used collaboratively by MDAs.

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Function	Component	Establishing CoG	Improving CoG	Strengthened CoG	Optimized CoG
Managing the politics of policies	Government's political economy	The CoG has no mechanisms to address potential political or policy differences, leaving each MDA to lead its own negotiations regarding its interpretation of the administration's priority goals. There is no coordinated strategy or guidance from the CoG.	The CoG provides guidance on the government's overall political strategy and seeks to resolve potential conflicts in an <i>ad hoc</i> way.	The CoG has established a Political Committee (or similar body) to periodically align the government's overall political direction.	The CoG has structured approaches to integrate its political, policy, and communications' strategies, and coordinates or oversees the political negotiations with key stakeholders that matter for the government's priority goals.
	Coalition management	Each coalition member decides unilaterally within the sectors it leads, and thus policy contradictions are frequent and publicly expressed.	The CoG provides ad hoc coordination among coalition partners, although this is often reactive and therefore disagreements are sometimes expressed publicly before being addressed internally.	The CoG has established a forum for political coordination that includes coalition partners, which is able to resolve most disagreements.	The CoG implements clear procedures (expressed in a Coalition Agreement) for decision-making among coalition members and leads political routines to maintain a shared direction.

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Function	Component	Establishing CoG	Improving CoG	Strengthened CoG	Optimized CoG
Managing the politics of policies	Anticipation and management of societal conflicts	There is no agreed protocol for managing emerging societal conflicts. Responsibility resides with a lead ministry and there is no (or weak) guidance from the CoG to ministries and agencies on how to coordinate across government.	The CoG collects information to anticipate emerging conflicts and it can support relevant MDAs in addressing them, but in an <i>ad hoc</i> way, with no established protocols, or only for particular sectors.	The CoG has the ability to convene the cross-government forum needed to address emerging conflicts in a consistent manner.	The CoG has established mechanisms to anticipate, prevent, and address potential societal conflicts in a coordinated way, with established protocols to ensure the participation of relevant stakeholders. The CoG has sufficient information from multiple sources, is able to monitor progress on putting commitment into practice, and to communicate these decisions effectively.
	Coordination of transitions	The CoG does not engage in coordinating the transition with the incoming administration.	The CoG staff provides basic administrative support to the incoming team but has not established explicit protocols or standards to guide MDAs and does not ensure consistent approaches in all ministries and agencies.	The CoG supports the meeting of standards for all MDAs to follow in respect of the information requirements to be provided to the new administration.	The CoG actively facilitates the timely flow of information and decision-making between incoming and outgoing teams while ensuring the implementation of protocols to guide the overall process in a consistent manner across all sectors.

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Function	Component	Establishing CoG	Improving CoG	Strengthened CoG	Optimized CoG
Communications, accountability and citizen engagement	Coordination of communications	There are no standards for ministries and agencies on the type of information that should be disseminated to the public while each MDA defines the contents and timing of its communication activities with no intervention from the CoG.	The CoG has established routines and standards to coordinate communications but has not developed a whole-of-government communications strategy clarifying objectives and activities to be executed.	The CoG ensures that MDAs actively manage a common strategy in their public messaging including the timing of public communication using all modalities, and technologies, monitoring all government communications, including their impact.	The CoG has sufficient expertise and capacity to coordinate and deliver the government's messages, maximizing their impact in terms of citizen trust and their alignment to priority policy goals.
	Accountability for performance	There is a lack of published data about the progress made on the priority goals. The CoG only focuses on compiling formal "compliance" reports (e.g., budget execution).	The CoG promotes that MDAs publish information regarding priority goals but has not established a shared approach (such as a common performance dashboard) to ensure this transparency across the government.	The CoG has developed an explicit policy reflecting its commitment to transparent performance. It periodically publishes information about the performance of government against priority goals and other indicators (e.g., satisfaction with government services).	The CoG regularly publishes hard data on the progress made on the priority goals, and in addition to promoting independent scrutiny of government performance (such as the work of SAIs) has established routine 'stocktakes' to explain and discuss the government's performance with citizens and external stakeholders.

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Function	Component	Establishing CoG	Improving CoG	Strengthened CoG	Optimized CoG
Communications, accountability and citizen engagement	Citizen engagement	There are no cross-government standards and incentives for MDAs to engage with citizens in their policy areas.	The CoG has set standards and developed whole of government policies and training to ensure MDAs understand the importance of engaging with citizens in the development of new policy.	The CoG ensures there are sufficient resources and capabilities in MDAs to enable the participation of citizens in both the development of policy and its implementation, especially for priority goals that demand behavioral changes in society.	The CoG promotes and monitors the implementation of MDA work in setting priorities and co-creating outcomes with citizens and has established a framework and incentives for MDAs to actively seek collaboration with citizens.
	Capabilities and skills	Each MDA is responsible for the development of capabilities and skills, while cross-government training activities are not truly aligned to the government's priority objectives.	When it identifies capability gaps that affect the delivery of priority goals, the CoG raises the issue with the relevant MDAs, but this is done informally, with no systematic approach to developing these capabilities.	The CoG has established specific activities to develop capabilities related to priority goals, although it has not consistently assessed progress in this area.	The CoG regularly assesses organizational and individual capabilities for delivering priority goals and facilitates the programs to support their development, keeping track of what works in this field.
Shaping government capabilities and culture	Core values	The CoG has not defined core values other than those named in formal civil service statutes.	The CoG has outlined a set of core values oriented toward innovation, delivery and results, but their promotion has been partial or short-lived, while many civil servants and political appointees would not be able to identify them.	The CoG has explicit mechanisms to promote a defined set of values, assess their impact within MDAs, and develop incentives and sanctions relating to the extent to which they have been applied across the whole of government.	The CoG is able to publicly celebrate the achievements of government teams and is recognized as a values-driven set of organizations by citizens. The living of these values throughout the public sector has led to enhanced performance of services and increased public trust.

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Function	Component	Establishing CoG	Improving CoG	Strengthened CoG	Optimized CoG
Shaping government capabilities and culture	Innovation promotion	Each MDA is fully responsible for policy design in their respective policy areas, with no CoG guidance or encouragement to consider innovative approaches.	The CoG has approved an “innovation strategy” or supported innovative pilots, but this has not scaled due to a lack of capabilities and/or incentives to adopt these approaches by MDAs.	The CoG actively supports the application of tools such as design-thinking and behavioral analysis, but mostly as discrete programs that have only partial alignment to the government’s priority objectives.	The CoG acts as an “incubator” for innovation, especially in addressing cross-sectoral policy challenges or those that require new solutions from citizen-centered and evidence-based perspectives, while building capabilities for MDAs to take on these approaches themselves.
	Public service bargain	There is no consideration of the clarity of the formal mandates, roles, responsibilities and relationships between the elected, politically appointed and permanent civil service.	The CoG has established and formalized guidelines for the way in which elected, politically appointed and permanent civil service work together.	The CoG has induction and development activities in place to support the effective working of elected, politically appointed and the permanent civil service.	The CoG actively monitors the impact of the day-to-day work of elected, politically appointed and permanent civil service staff against its guidance and the values the administration wishes to promote.
	Machinery of government design	Changes to the organization of government entities are not reviewed by the CoG, or its review is only focused on formal or budgetary considerations.	The CoG seeks to minimize overlaps or duplications in the machinery of government but does not analyze which structures would be best fit to each MDA’s mandate.	The CoG reviews any changes to the machinery of government to minimize overlaps or duplications and promotes guidelines to motivate a better fit between organizational structure and MDA mandates.	The CoG designs the machinery of government with a whole-of-government perspective, assessing the alignment of the structures to the policy objectives being pursued and ensuring cross-government consistency.

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Function	Component	Establishing CoG	Improving CoG	Strengthened CoG	Optimized CoG
Building intelligence and analytical capacity	Policy advice and regulatory governance	The CoG lacks the capabilities to review the substance of policy or regulatory proposals drafted by MDAs, focusing on formal or legal considerations.	The CoG reviews most high-level policy and regulatory decisions, but largely in an <i>ad hoc</i> way, with no explicit protocols or guidelines to ensure contestability, use of robust evidence, or stress-testing their quality.	The CoG has defined and enforces protocols that guide policy and regulatory development, although with modest capabilities to challenge sectoral proposals.	The CoG has established a cross-government framework for policy and regulatory development, providing support and challenge to MDAs to ensure evidence-based and coherent interventions.
	Knowledge, data, and digital management	There are no cross-government data and digital strategies nor governance arrangements, and as such knowledge sharing depends entirely on the goodwill of each MDA.	There are guidelines and interministerial fora outlining the government's approach to knowledge sharing, data sharing and digital development, but the CoG has not fully aligned most MDAs and thus knowledge sharing remains partial.	The CoG has approved a whole-of-government approach to knowledge sharing, exploiting the new technologies to both generate and use data effectively, and has promoted the use of digital advances for both internal and wider public sector delivery.	There are whole-of-government data and digital strategies with clear governance arrangements, enforced by the CoG, that facilitate knowledge sharing across MDAs. The use of data and the application of the new technologies are undertaken for the benefit of citizens.
	Strategic foresight	The CoG does not conduct any systematic prospective analyses, and any longer-term ministerial or sectoral plans that exist are not coordinated with each other.	The CoG has established strategic foresight capacities, but the analyses and plans developed by these teams are only partially "owned" by senior government leaders and as such their eventual application is limited.	The CoG has been able to establish capabilities and partnerships with MDAs to conduct strategic foresight systematically in some, but not all, of priority policy areas.	The CoG uses well-known methodologies to anticipate opportunities and risks, especially those that cut across policy areas. The CoG coordinates plans for addressing opportunities and risks ensuring that leaders and officials are prepared for these scenarios.

CoG: Center of Government; MDAs: ministries, departments and agencies.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

## Appendix: Methodological Options to Measure the Impact of the Center of Government

**In an era of evidence-based policies, there is a greater need to understand what works in managing the government.** It is now expected in many countries that robust evidence should underpin social and economic interventions. Paradoxically, however, the institutional, organizational, and managerial processes needed to successfully implement such policies are not generally supported by a robust evidence base. There are real methodological challenges to accurately measuring the true impact of these factors, including the organization and practices of the CoG. But, as this publication has shown, there are multiple cases that can guide the understanding of CoG practitioners about what works in different contexts. The onus is on international agencies, universities, think tanks, and CoG practitioners to invest in more empirical studies that use the latest techniques to measure the effects of CoG interventions, units, and instruments. This methodological appendix presents suggestions to enhance the research agenda on the CoG's work. Even if some of these options are beyond what is currently feasible in many contexts, it seeks to start a conversation on how to strengthen the collective knowledge of CoG practice. The Appendix is primarily oriented toward researchers and academics, although evidence-oriented practitioners are key partners in this conversation.

**Enhancing the quantitative evidence of impact and cost-benefit ratio of CoG interventions would be a valuable next step for the broader CoG community to undertake, although many obstacles have to be faced.** As with other institutional reforms, the research on CoG practice is still in need of more robust quantitative evaluations to better measure the impact of different interventions and to supplement the qualitative evidence documented in case studies. Evaluating the impact and the value-for-money of institutional or managerial reforms is always challenging. First, many of these reforms are implemented across the government and therefore lack an obvious control group. Even when

they are applied to specific sectors or policy priorities, this selection is not random but purposeful, and thus the comparison to other sectors or objectives may be confounded by extraneous factors. Second, these reforms also present the “small N” challenge, focusing on only a few institutions. Third, many of the expected direct effects, such as enhanced accountability, improved coordination, or more evidence-informed decision-making, are difficult to measure quantitatively. They are even harder to monetize for cost-benefit analyses. Fourth, management reforms are often adopted in conjunction with substantive policy changes, and it is difficult to disentangle their specific effects in terms of outcomes for citizens. Finally, these reforms may be adopted gradually, with no specific discontinuity from previous practice to clearly identify baseline and post-treatment periods. For all these reasons, and despite the growth in evidence-based policymaking, there are still many gaps in developing evidence-based institutional reforms.

**The rigorous evaluation of CoG interventions is therefore quite challenging methodologically, although researchers and government practitioners can jointly explore certain possibilities.** When the CoG prioritizes an objective, it is often accompanied by policy changes, budget reallocations, broader administrative reforms, and other interventions that may also influence the outcomes. Thus, the causal attribution of any variations in outcomes to the CoG’s work is harder to measure. Moreover, CoGs conduct different types of activities: they establish performance frameworks, they manage coordinating bodies, they provide delivery support to line ministries, they prepare advice for high-level decision-making, and others. Thus, it is not possible to delineate a unified methodology to evaluate the impact and value-for-money of the CoG’s work. It may be more feasible to evaluate specific CoG interventions. Since CoG practitioners may not have the time, the resources, or the expertise to focus on these matters, partnerships with researchers, think tanks or similar organizations can generate robust evidence that contributes to the CoG’s legitimacy with its key internal and external stakeholders. Practitioners should consider the following important elements prior to introducing any new CoG intervention:

- *Enable a reasonable counterfactual.* Measuring the impact of the CoG’s work requires estimating what would have happened in its absence. Simple before/after comparisons are usually a viable option. However, it is difficult to isolate the specific contribution of the

CoG in this approach vis-à-vis other factors that may have changed simultaneously (such as policy changes that the responsible line ministry would have introduced anyway). Thus, CoG practitioners may consider introducing “planned variations” (Besharov, 2009) in their interventions. These could be managerial (how the CoG intervention is implemented across different entities or programs), geographic (how it is implemented in different regions or provinces), or temporal (when the intervention is adopted, especially if resources do not allow for implementation across all sites simultaneously). This would create comparison groups that could act as potential counterfactuals to complement the basic before/after analysis.

- *Specify the expected direct outcomes.* Even if the desired direct outcomes of a new CoG routine are mostly qualitative (such as “enhanced coordination” or “improved decision-making”), it is important to operationalize them in measurable indicators. These indicators may be proxies (such as “number of overlaps between budget programs”) or even have to be complemented by process indicators (such as “percentage of Cabinet decisions with prior CoG review”) but are essential to capture variation between the pre-intervention period and the post-intervention one. The challenge with process indicators is to avoid measuring activities that do not contribute meaningfully to the desired final outcomes; the CoG should periodically review and stress-test the validity of the metrics being used. Alternatively, the CoG may use the variations in the final outcomes for its prioritized policy sectors (e.g., improved student performance, reduced crime, etc.). This approach has been used for evaluating the impact of the United Kingdom’s Delivery Unit and the impact of New Public Management (NPM) reforms (Bevan and Wilson, 2013; Hood and Dixon, 2013; Propper et al., 2010).
- *Collect baseline data.* In the rush to introduce new CoG routines, it is nonetheless important to ensure that baseline data is available for these indicators. For instance, a quick Capability Review or Delivery Capacity Review is valuable not only for targeting any capability-enhancement interventions, but also for measuring the evolution of capabilities in prioritized sectors before and after the CoG’s intervention. Ideally, baseline data from non-prioritized sectors should also be collected, to later enable more rigorous measurements (such as a difference-in-differences methodology) than simple before/after



variations in the treated sectors. When identifying potential cases for this publication, the lack of data on non-prioritized sectors was a major challenge for constructing credible counterfactuals.

**Cost-benefit analyses of CoG interventions are particularly challenging. Financial costs are usually minimal, but measuring and monetizing the intangible costs (including, particularly, the time spent by senior leaders) is very difficult.** Setting up new performance frameworks or coordination routines does not require major budget investments. CoG staff sizes vary depending on country and functions performed, but they are not massive bureaucracies when compared to most MDAs. Most delivery units in LAC have spent annually between US\$250,000 and US\$400,000 in human resources (Lafuente and González, 2018). Certain functions, such as data management, may require technological investments, but most other CoG functions do not. For example, there are multiple free and fully usable options to develop a performance dashboard. All in all, the direct financial costs of most CoG interventions are small and easy to estimate, as they consist primarily of staff salaries. However, successful CoG interventions require that government leaders and officials invest time in defining priorities, setting targets, coordinating policy, monitoring progress, unblocking obstacles, and communicating results, among other activities. Even if it were possible to estimate the hours spent on these routines across the government, several challenges remain. First, the cost-benefit analysis would also require estimating the time *saved* by these routines: for example, timely stocktakes help prevent future crises and thus minimize the need for emergency meetings by government leaders. Second, these routines not only save time but, presumably, lead to time better spent, as systematic sessions informed by data should be more productive than one-off, reactive, meetings to address emerging crises. Quantifying this improvement is exceedingly challenging. Third, monetizing all these costs and benefits is also problematic: what is the “dollar value” of the time of government leaders? What is the price of a disorganized, reactive meeting (as opposed to a systematic stocktake)?

**In summary, multiple challenges have prevented the application of evaluation techniques to the CoG’s research agenda, but certain options may be available for researchers.** Impact evaluation techniques should be considered to measure the causal effects of different CoG practices. This requires partnering with practitioners to better specify

the expected outcomes, collect baseline data, and enable sufficiently rigorous comparison or control groups. This type of evidence should inform the next decade of CoG reforms.

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