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Meeting of the Regional Council for
Planning of the Latin American and
Caribbean Institute for Economic
and Social Planning (ILPES)

Brasília, 2 and 3 October 2025

Distr.
LIMITED
LC/CRP.20/DDR/2
29 September 2025
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH
2500460[E]

Twentieth meeting of the Regional Council for Planning
of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute
for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES)

Nineteenth Conference of Ministers and Heads of Planning
of Latin America and the Caribbean

Brasília, 2 and 3 October 2025

**ESTABLISHING A REGIONAL AGENDA FOR PLANNING AND PUBLIC MANAGEMENT:
TRANSFORMING THE FUTURE OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**



UNITED NATIONS



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INTRODUCTION

Planning and public management have historically been essential tools of the State for guiding development. However, their functions, approaches and scope have evolved significantly over time. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has documented how development planning in Latin America and the Caribbean became institutionalized starting in the 1960s, driven by agreements such as the Charter of Punta del Este, which promoted the creation of national planning bodies and provided countries with a shared vision of the future.

However, the limited success of those processes, combined with recurring economic crises and the adoption of models that limited the role of the State, weakened planning efforts during the 1980s and 1990s. It was not until the twenty-first century, amid greater macroeconomic stability and growing citizen demands for transparency, inclusion and sustainability, that planning began to be reassessed as a strategic function of the State, capable of coordinating structural transformations (Máttar and Perrotti, 2014).

In this period of renewal, authors such as Wiesner et al. (2000) identified core functions of planning such as incorporating a forward-looking approach through foresight tools; fostering intersectoral coordination by aligning budgets and programmes; and monitoring and evaluating plans, programmes and projects. This functional approach, intended to ensure more rational public decision-making, was a response to uncertainty and institutional fragmentation.

In recent decades, planning and public management have undergone a conceptual and operational transformation. They are no longer understood solely as technical tools for organizing State action, but as strategic capacities aimed at building shared visions of development, generating legitimacy, bringing together diverse stakeholders and anticipating complex challenges. In this context, planning must be accompanied by transformative public management, underpinned by institutional capacities that combine technical rigor, operational effectiveness, political legitimacy and a forward-looking vision. Only in this way is it possible to anticipate change, adapt to complex environments and respond strategically to the social, economic and environmental demands of both the present and the future.

This approach was endorsed by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean at the nineteenth meeting of the Regional Council for Planning of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES), held in November 2023 and chaired by the Dominican Republic. On that occasion, it was recognized that building resilient planning and public management systems requires enhancing institutional capacities to prepare for, respond to, adapt to and innovate in environments characterized by instability, uncertainty and abrupt change.

In this context, four strategic priority areas were defined to guide a renewed agenda for planning and public management:

- Governance, institutional frameworks and social dialogue
- The dimension of the future and anticipatory governance
- Coordination for comprehensive and coherent public policies
- Evaluation, public value and a culture of continuous learning

These strategic areas underpin the draft regional agenda on governance of planning and public management for sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean, which the Presiding Officers of the Regional Council for Planning will present to countries for their consideration at the twentieth meeting of the Regional Council for Planning. The proposal seeks to translate recent lessons learned into a shared road map to strengthen institutional capacities for planning and public management over the next five years.

Each priority area reflects a more complex and strategic understanding of planning, linking it directly to the State's capacity to lead legitimate and sustainable transformation processes, which in turn are directly related to the dimensions of the ECLAC approach for managing transformations and to the technical, operational, political and prospective (TOPP) capabilities of institutions, which are essential for its implementation. For example:

- Transformative governance and social dialogue require strong political capabilities to align interests, build legitimacy and sustain consensus.
- The foresight dimension calls for prospective capabilities to anticipate scenarios and guide strategic action.
- Intersectoral and intergovernmental coordination demands operational capabilities to ensure effective management and the alignment of actors and resources.
- Evaluation oriented towards public value presupposes solid technical capabilities grounded in the systematic use of evidence and the rigorous analysis of results.

The draft regional agenda thus emerges as a collective effort to consolidate this renewed approach and adapt it to a range of national contexts. It brings together the priorities identified by the planning authorities of member countries of the Regional Council for Planning and the strategic proposals of ECLAC aimed at overcoming the development traps that hinder sustainable progress in the region. The agenda does not seek to establish a uniform framework, but rather to provide strategic guidelines that can be adapted by each country according to their baseline conditions, institutional capabilities and national priorities.

This document is a substantive input for the process of building the regional agenda, drawing on an analysis of the current context and an in-depth examination of each strategic area. For each area, the document outlines key messages, core concepts, an overview of recent developments in the region and an analysis of the main challenges. Its objective is to support intergovernmental deliberations within the Regional Council for Planning and to contribute to the validation of an agenda aimed at strengthening public institutions so that they are more effective, resilient, legitimate and committed to sustainable development.

The preparation of this document was the result of a broad and iterative process of discussion and feedback, including exchanges with decision makers in the region and academic experts in the field. This process was informed, in particular, by the discussions held during the thirtieth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Council for Planning, held on 27 and 28 November 2024; by multi-

stakeholder dialogues conducted both in person and online; and by an online survey carried out within the framework of the ILPES Latin America and the Caribbean Development Planning Network¹.

These consultation and collaboration mechanisms enriched and strengthened the analysis presented, lending legitimacy and robustness to the approach of the strategic areas of the draft regional agenda, as well as the identification of achievements and challenges that will shape collective action in the coming years.

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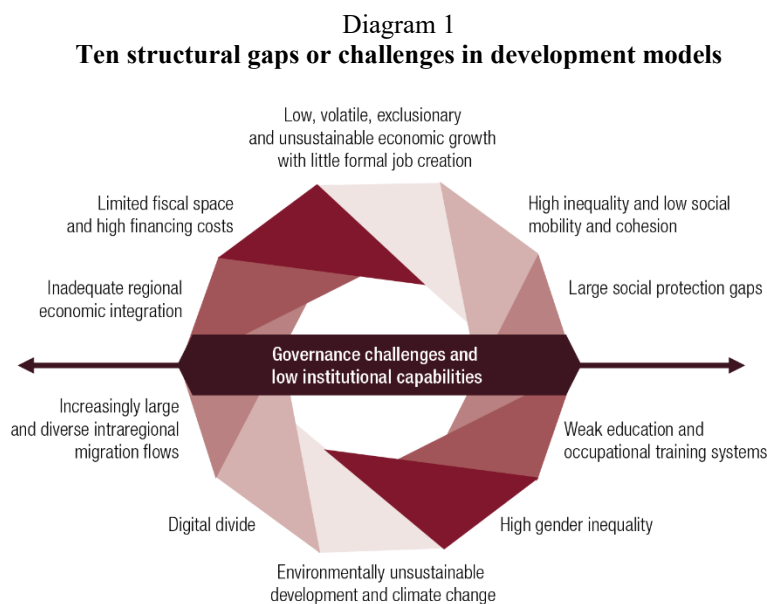
Máttar, J. and Perrotti, D. E. (Eds.) (2014). *Planificación, prospectiva y gestión pública: reflexiones para la agenda de desarrollo*. ECLAC Books (126) (LC/G.2611-P). Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Wiesner, E., Garnier, L. and Media Vásquez, J. (2000). Funciones básicas de la planificación. *Cuadernos del ILPES* (46). Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

¹ As part of the co-creation process of the draft regional agenda on governance of planning and public management, an open consultation was carried out online between April and May 2025, targeting stakeholders from various countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. The goal was to gather a wide range of perspectives on the main challenges and priorities related to the strategic areas of the draft regional agenda. A total of 115 individuals from 22 countries participated in this exercise, the majority of which were highly qualified public officials and academics, as nearly 90% of respondents held postgraduate degrees. Half of the responses came from the public sector, one third from academia and the remainder from the private sector and the consulting services sector. The questionnaire was administered in both Spanish and English, allowing for the inclusion of perspectives from the English-speaking Caribbean, which helped to ensure broader regional representation. The methodology combined closed-ended and open-ended questions, enabling both the hierarchization of strategic areas and the collection of deeper qualitative insights.

I. DEVELOPMENT TRAPS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN AND VITAL TRANSFORMATIONS

Latin America and the Caribbean faces structural traps that hinder its progress towards productive, inclusive and sustainable development: low capacity for growth and transformation; high inequality combined with low social mobility and cohesion; and weak institutional capacities and ineffective governance that constrain the implementation of transformative public policies and undermine the ability of institutions to respond to present and future challenges (see diagram 1). This problem not only reduces the effectiveness of public policies but also erodes citizens' trust—a fundamental pillar of democratic stability.

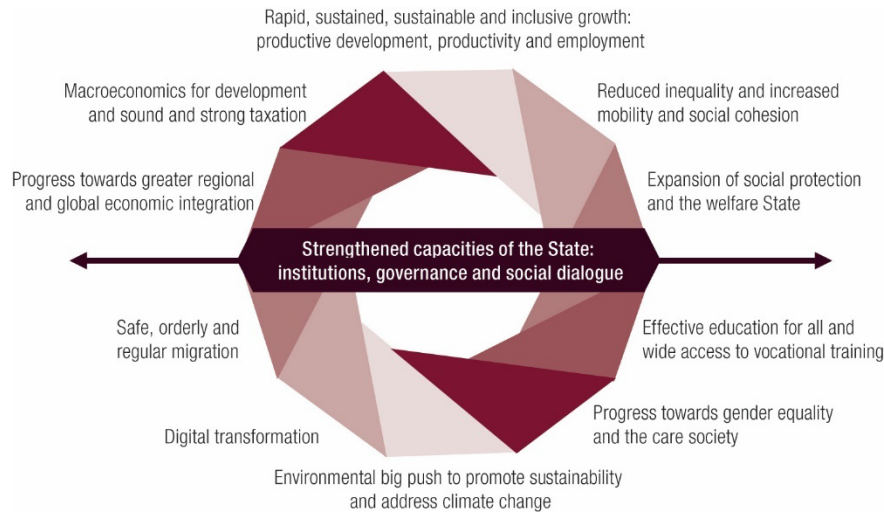


Source: Salazar-Xirinachs, J. M. (2023). Rethinking, reimagining and transforming: the “whats” and the “hows” for moving towards a more productive, inclusive and sustainable development model. *CEPAL Review* (141) (LC/PUB.2023/29-P /-*). Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Against this backdrop, ECLAC has identified 10 vital transformations that together constitute a programmatic road map for a new development model. These transformations cover a wide range of areas such as productive development, the energy transition, social protection, digital transformation, regional integration, gender equality, human mobility and environmental sustainability.

In turn, they include a cross-cutting and enabling transformation: the strengthening of institutional capabilities, the improvement of governance systems and the consolidation of effective mechanisms for social dialogue. Without progress in this critical dimension, which is necessary to lead, coordinate and sustain change processes, the other transformations risk remaining merely declarative or becoming fragmented in their implementation (see diagram 2). The proposal for a regional agenda is anchored in this cross-cutting challenge.

Diagram 2
Eleven great transformations in the development model



Source: Salazar-Xirinachs, J. M. (2023). Rethinking, reimagining and transforming: the “whats” and the “hows” for moving towards a more productive, inclusive and sustainable development model. *CEPAL Review* (141) (LC/PUB.2023/29-P /-*). Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

However, identifying the areas where transformations are needed is not enough. The real challenge—and one that is particularly urgent in contexts characterized by fragile institutions, high political fragmentation and growing social demands—is to manage these complex change processes in an effective, legitimate and sustainable manner.

This is precisely the rationale behind the ECLAC approach to managing transformations. This proposal shifts the focus from traditional discussions, which are typically centred on what to do or normative considerations, towards a more pragmatic perspective focused on the “how”; that is, towards the institutional processes, capabilities and conditions required for transformations to take place.

This approach calls for moving beyond a purely prescriptive logic, towards one that is more strategic and operational in nature. Accurate diagnostics and ambitious goals are not sufficient; it is essential to strengthen institutional capabilities to lead, coordinate and sustain change. Managing transformations, in this sense, requires a systemic and multidimensional understanding of the factors that determine their feasibility.

From this perspective, ECLAC proposes the analysis of four key dimensions:

- (i) **Transformative governance:** the capacity for coordination, leadership and institutional adaptation required to sustain transformations over time.
- (ii) **TOPP institutional capabilities:** the set of technical, operational, political and prospective capabilities needed to design and implement transformative public policies.
- (iii) **Structured social dialogue:** inclusive mechanisms for participation and consensus-building that lend legitimacy to the change process and help to manage potential conflicts.
- (iv) **Political economy of change:** strategies to negotiate interests, build support coalitions and minimize resistance in politically complex scenarios.

Taken together, this framework seeks to provide a shared perspective for thinking about, designing and implementing transformation agendas in an integrated, coordinated and strategic manner. In addition, the current international context, which is marked by geoeconomic and geopolitical shifts, increasing polarization and a reconfiguration of the rules governing trade, investment and cooperation, calls for rethinking the region's planning and public management processes. This is essential to effectively overcome the third development trap: weak institutional capacities and ineffective governance. Overcoming this trap is critical for the successful implementation of the strategies outlined above and for securing a better future for the region's inhabitants.

Building resilient planning and public management systems requires strengthening institutional capacity to anticipate, adapt and innovate amid high uncertainty. National planning authorities play a pivotal role in this context. As entities tasked with shaping strategic visions for development, leading intersectoral and territorial coordination processes and promoting the integration of capacities within the State apparatus, these authorities are particularly well positioned to drive deep institutional transformations. In contexts of weak institutional capacity and fragmented governance, they play an even more critical role in ensuring that planning and public management serve as effective tools to reduce gaps, build consensus and mobilize resources towards shared sustainable development goals.

At the nineteenth meeting of the Regional Council for Planning of ILPES (November 2023, Dominican Republic), the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean identified four key areas for advancing in this process: governance, institutional frameworks and social dialogue; anticipatory governance and the dimension of the future; coordination for comprehensive and coherent public policies; and evaluation, public value and a culture of continuous learning. These constitute the strategic areas of the draft regional agenda for planning and public management.

The following sections analyse each strategic area of this renewed approach to planning and public management, presenting an assessment of the main achievements, gaps and challenges in the region. This analysis seeks to provide substantive inputs for decision-making and facilitate the construction of agreements around a regional agenda aimed at more inclusive, sustainable and resilient development. It also outlines the institutional and functional requirements associated with the implementation of the strategic areas of the regional agenda.

II. GOVERNANCE, INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Key messages

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance to restore public trust Restoring public trust in democracy and its institutions as effective means to meet societal needs and address the development crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean requires greater transparency and accountability, as well as expanded spaces for public participation and social dialogue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New governance models for a new pattern of development There is a need for new governance models to align multiple actors, resources and efforts around strategic agendas that advance more productive, inclusive and sustainable development with a rights-based approach, using social dialogue as a mechanism for building understanding among the parties.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative governance to expand democracy Collaborative governance, which emphasizes the co-creation of public policies and the involvement of diverse societal actors, not only enhances the definition of public problems and the design and implementation of creative solutions but can also revitalize and deepen representative democracy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From open government to open State: a form of collaborative governance The paradigm of open government and its evolution towards an open State is presented as a form of collaborative governance, a renewed approach to reform of the State and the modernization of public administration, and a new way of pooling initiatives for promoting transparency, accountability, citizen participation and collaboration on the part of a range of stakeholders as a vehicle for the joint production of public value.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing the digital divide through people-centred public services It is essential to support national efforts to deliver effective and inclusive digital services for all, close the digital divide and ensure that no one is left behind. However, efforts by governments to actively engage the public in online consultations and other forms of digital participation remain limited across the region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative public leadership There is a need to promote new leadership styles that are more ethical, inclusive, horizontal, empathetic and collaborative.

A. KEY CONCEPTS FOR UNDERSTANDING GOVERNANCE, INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE

The countries of the region have made significant strides in modernizing the State and strengthening its institutions and administrative practices. This progress has transformed public management into a dynamic platform that mobilizes efforts, resources and initiatives under more robust standards for public policy design, formulation and evaluation, with greater transparency and accountability.

Nonetheless, despite these advances, public trust in democratic institutions remains low. According to Latinobarómetro Corporation (2024), the region exhibits high levels of dissatisfaction with institutions and their performance, with 72% of the population perceiving that their countries are governed by a few people for their own benefit.

Rebuilding trust in democracy and its institutions requires deepening transparency, reinforcing accountability and expanding spaces for citizen participation and social dialogue. This calls for exploring new governance models that promote multi-stakeholder management of public affairs and establish consensus-building mechanisms capable of aligning different interests, reducing structural inequalities and overcoming power and information asymmetries that constrain citizen engagement.

Exercises to co-create public policies within the open government paradigm have shown that collaboration between citizens and the State, in addition to enhancing the quality and efficiency of public interventions through innovation and creative problem-solving, acts as a catalyst to strengthen democracy.

It is therefore essential to promote new leadership styles that are more ethical, inclusive, horizontal, empathetic and collaborative. The following are the key concepts that frame this discussion:

- **Governance:** while it has no single definition, governance refers to the State's capacity to guide and lead change or transformation processes, promoting their implementation through the participation of both State and non-State actors in the design and execution of public policies across specific domains.²

Consequently, new governance approaches advocate for government leadership complemented by the participation of both State and non-State stakeholders to establish spaces for dialogue, collaboration and consensus-building. These spaces help to align interests and aspirations regarding the public good within the public agenda.

The concept of governance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1997) similarly underscores the importance of political participation and of civil society organizations making themselves heard. It also emphasizes the role of the State in advancing human as well as economic development.

- **Institutional framework:** the set of rules, resources and organizational structures that govern the management of public affairs.
- **Social dialogue:** a process through which social, economic and political actors engage to build shared visions and agree on solutions to development challenges (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC], 2024).

Good governance strengthens institutional capacity to coordinate efforts across sectors of society, enabling planning for the future and the design of sustainable policies. Key to this process are institutional frameworks, social dialogue and the development of technical, operational, political and prospective capabilities.

Collaborative governance emphasizes the co-creation of public policies and the engagement of diverse stakeholders throughout the public management cycle (planning, budgeting, investment, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). Open and transparent planning and public management not only improves the identification of problems and the design of innovative solutions but also helps to revitalize and reinforce representative democracy.

² For an overview of the scope and definition of governance, see Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2024).

B. EVOLUTION AND CURRENT STATUS OF GOVERNANCE, INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN³

Access to information and citizen participation are increasingly acknowledged as fundamental rights, as well as pivotal to effective public policy design (ECLAC, 2018). In recent decades, the countries of the region have made progress in establishing legal frameworks that safeguard these rights and facilitate collaborative governance.

The right of access to public information is enshrined in the constitution of most countries of the region and 25 of them have specific laws on the subject. Several countries have elevated the right to public participation to constitutional status and approximately one third have enacted laws guaranteeing civic involvement in public affairs. In the Caribbean, access to information and participation are often incorporated into the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. Various studies have shown that constitutional recognition of these rights is positively correlated with improved environmental performance (Jeffords and Minkler, 2016).

Moreover, countries have introduced mechanisms of direct or semi-direct democracy, such as citizens' legislative initiatives and participatory budgeting, and have established multi-stakeholder forums to address specific issues.

The region has made progress in implementing the open government paradigm promoted by the Open Government Partnership. Currently, 15 countries participate in this initiative, co-creating nearly 76 action plans over the past decade (see map 1).

Open government is a collaborative governance model that integrates transparency, citizen participation, accountability and civic and technological innovation (Naser et al., 2017). As part of this process, countries have developed ambitious strategies to digitalize government services, bringing the State closer to citizens and enhancing coverage, efficiency and social inclusion. A study by ECLAC (2023) reports that 84% of the region's countries have exclusive digital platforms for managing government procedures.

³ This section draws heavily on the reference document on the open State and citizen participation at the heart of the new public service that was presented and discussed at the seventeenth Conference of Ministers and Heads of Planning of Latin America and the Caribbean (17 and 18 January 2023), prior to the twenty-ninth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Council for Planning of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and social Planning (ILPES) (19 January).

Map 1
Latin America and the Caribbean: member countries of the Open Government Partnership



Source: Prepared by the authors.

Nevertheless, various challenges remain. The United Nations E-Government Survey 2024 shows that while Uruguay, Chile, Argentina and Brazil lead the region in the development of digital government, countries like Belize, Cuba and Honduras face substantial gaps in infrastructure and human capital (United Nations, 2024). Haiti, in particular, exhibits the lowest level of development in this area, highlighting how political crises and conflict can hinder digital progress (United Nations, 2024).

One of the main challenges is e-participation. Despite progress in digitalization, government efforts to actively involve the public in online consultations remain limited.

The region has also gained experience in involving multiple actors in long-term planning processes at the national and subnational levels (ECLAC, 2023). In countries such as Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Uruguay, mission-oriented policies have been implemented, fostering partnerships between the public and private sectors and civil society to design collective solutions (Mazzucato, 2023; Mazzucato and Penna, 2022). This approach contributes to the legitimacy of public policies and to their sustainability beyond political cycles.

A successful example is the Energy 2050 policy of Chile. Its legitimacy and continuity were ensured through the establishment of a multi-stakeholder advisory council composed of representatives from the public sector, trade associations, civil society and academia. This process made it possible to reach solid agreements that subsequently served as the basis for the design of the official energy policy.⁴

⁴ For additional information, see <https://observatoriop10.cepal.org/en/node/255>.

Similarly, other countries have promoted the establishment of multi-stakeholder councils to address development issues. A notable example is Jamaica, where Parish Development Committees bring together local businesses, civil society, elected representatives and State agencies to coordinate development at the local level.

At the international level, at least 11 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have explicitly included multi-stakeholder participation in their institutional monitoring framework for the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Others have established formal consultation mechanisms with government actors. ECLAC has emphasized that, when properly implemented, the process of preparing voluntary national reviews and voluntary local reviews strengthens multilevel and multisectoral coordination, aligns development plans with the SDGs and promotes citizen participation in the identification and resolution of territorial challenges. By fostering collaboration among actors both within and outside of government, these processes help to identify innovative solutions to public problems and build agreed road maps for advancing sustainable development.⁵

Despite these advances, traditional approaches to public participation have not yielded the expected results. While legal frameworks are necessary, they alone do not guarantee the effectiveness of mechanisms designed to address development challenges. As noted by Denhardt and Denhardt (2015), genuine citizen participation is only achieved when the engagement of multiple stakeholders fosters citizenship, trust and institutional capacity. Moreover, the attitude of public officials towards participation is essential to ensuring its authenticity and effectiveness.

The experience of ILPES, which has supported co-creation processes in policy design and long-term visioning with an open government approach, underscores the need to cultivate new forms of leadership that are more ethical, inclusive, horizontal, empathetic and collaborative.

In this regard, open government can be transformative if it progresses beyond mere citizen consultation towards a genuine sharing of power in decision-making. This can strengthen transparency, reduce inequality gaps and facilitate the active participation of citizens in the co-creation of public policies. Information technologies play a key role in this process, enhancing the efficiency, transparency and proximity of the State to its citizens.

ECLAC has highlighted the importance of extending open government efforts to all branches and levels of government (Naser et al., 2017). The interaction between citizens and government holds significant potential to drive structural changes towards more just and inclusive societies.

Currently, several governments in the region have incorporated initiatives into their open government plans that engage other branches of government and key stakeholders in the development of inclusive and sustainable public policies.⁶

A **collaborative governance** model is essential for strengthening citizenship, enhancing transparency and accountability, and creating spaces for meaningful participation. It is grounded in collaboration and sharing, implying a transformation in the working culture of public administrations and a shift in the role of citizens, who are increasingly informed, empowered and actively involved in the affairs of their own communities. This model is based on three fundamental pillars:

⁵ See ECLAC (2025).

⁶ For additional information, see the Regional Observatory on Planning for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. <https://observatorioplanificacion.cepal.org/en/opengov>.

- (i) **Transparency and accountability:** a transparent government provides accessible information on its actions and enables effective social oversight, promoting institutional responsibility.
- (ii) **Participation:** a participatory government facilitates citizens' involvement in public policymaking by incorporating their knowledge, ideas and experiences.
- (iii) **Collaboration:** a collaborative government works jointly with citizens, the private sector and civil society organizations to address national challenges in a coordinated manner.

The model also incorporates other key elements:

- **Inter-agency coordination:** promotes cooperation across different levels of government and sectors for more comprehensive management of development.
- **Sustainability:** takes into account economic growth, social well-being and environmental protection in decision-making processes.
- **Equity and a rights-based approach:** seeks to distribute the benefits of development fairly, reducing inequalities.

In short, collaborative governance provides a framework for advancing towards more equitable and sustainable societies, enabling citizens to play an active role in shaping the future.

Public institutions are increasingly recognizing the importance of involving citizens in the design, implementation and evaluation of public management tools. Such involvement allows the knowledge and experience of the main future beneficiaries of public initiatives to be incorporated into decision-making. However, despite growing interest in strengthening citizen participation, challenges continue to hinder the creation of collaborative spaces within public institutions and in the relationship with civil society.

Some of the main challenges identified include:

- Lack of experience, capacities, methodologies and tools among public officials for organizing and implementing collaborative processes.
- Unequal participation between government officials and stakeholders from civil society in the co-creation of public policies.
- Low capacity for civil society to influence public affairs, coupled with a limited civic culture of participation.
- Limited influence of social actors in the design, formulation, implementation and evaluation of public policies.
- Difficulties in ensuring the sustainability of initiatives in the face of political change.
- Insufficient resources and budgets to establish effective collaboration mechanisms.
- Disparities among countries in the adoption of information and communications technologies, the development of digital government and the incorporation of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of public sector processes.
- The need to broaden the application of information and communications technologies to optimize public service delivery and strengthen government transparency.

Strengthening collaborative governance requires addressing these challenges through capacity development, the institutionalization of citizen participation and the narrowing of technological gaps, thereby ensuring more inclusive, effective and sustainable public management processes. Overcoming the challenges of collaborative governance calls for a comprehensive approach that combines the training of stakeholders, the institutionalization of citizen participation, the allocation of adequate resources and the adoption of emerging technologies. Through these measures, it is possible to advance towards more efficient, inclusive and transparent public administration, thereby reinforcing trust between the State and society and promoting sustainable development.

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III. THE DIMENSION OF THE FUTURE AND ANTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE IN THE FRAMEWORK OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Key messages

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- **Anticipatory governance as a strategic need**
 In a world characterized by growing uncertainty, anticipatory governance enables States to proactively address emerging challenges and construct strategic responses.
 - **Foresight as a tool for informed decision-making**
 Foresight is not merely an analytical technique; it is a key process for formulating forward-looking public policies, fostering flexible, strategic and resilient planning.
-
- **From forecast to action: integrating foresight into public management**
 Institutionalizing foresight within planning and public management systems strengthens States' capacities to adapt and respond in rapidly changing contexts.
 - **Capacity-strengthening in foresight and anticipatory governance**
 Strengthening the capacity of States in foresight methodologies is essential to improving the quality of decision-making and ensuring the sustainability of public policies.
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- **Towards greater institutionalization of foresight in Latin America and the Caribbean**
 While the region has made progress in consolidating long-term strategies, challenges remain in terms of regulation, capacity-building and inter-agency coordination.
 - **Anticipatory governance as a pillar of democracy and sustainability**
 Anticipatory capacities not only enhance public management but also strengthen democratic legitimacy by promoting transparency, informed deliberation and accountability.
-
- **Foresight ecosystems: committing to innovation and participation**
 Building foresight ecosystems involving multiple stakeholders (government, academia, the private sector and civil society) facilitates the development of inclusive policies aligned with sustainable development objectives.
-

A. KEY CONCEPTS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE DIMENSION OF THE FUTURE AND ANTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

Amid accelerated change and rising uncertainty, institutions should adopt innovative approaches that enable them to anticipate emerging challenges and adapt swiftly to new realities. In this context, anticipatory governance emerges as a public management model grounded in strategic planning and proactive action. To support its implementation, foresight serves as a fundamental tool for identifying possible, probable and desirable futures and for formulating evidence-based public policies.

Anticipatory governance is an approach to public management aimed at preparing institutions for future changes through the systematic exploration of scenarios and the design of flexible policies. It is based on governments' ability to foresee emerging trends and proactively address potential challenges, thereby avoiding being forced to react to full-blown crises.⁷

According to Fuerth and Faber (2012), anticipatory governance constitutes an interconnected system of public policies and foresight that aligns with the vision, mission, budgets and feedback mechanisms of the State, including monitoring and evaluation systems. It is thus conceived as a "system of systems" that coordinates the functioning of public institutions around a shared vision of the future.

Gutiérrez (2015a) defines anticipatory governance as society's capacity to influence the political system through various inputs, facilitating the governance of knowledge-based emerging technologies while their trajectory can still be shaped.

According to Heo and Seo (2021), anticipatory governance represents a combination of decision-making (governance) and adaptive capacity in the face of new situations (anticipation). It is a sustainable policymaking process based on consensus about the future, involving multiple stakeholders such as the government, the private sector, civil society and academia.

The aim of anticipatory governance is for administrations to anticipate technological and social paradigms and adapt creatively to possible changes in the environment. One of its main advantages lies in its capacity to address volatile and uncertain contexts through flexible planning. In a world that is increasingly impacted by disruptive phenomena such as climate change, economic crises and political tensions, this capacity is vital for ensuring institutional stability and sustainability.

Herrera and García Fronti (2020) underscore that some countries have used anticipatory governance to avoid the errors of the past and get ahead of possible social changes. They also highlight its role in promoting more democratic and transparent policymaking, particularly in the governance of new technologies during their early stages of development. In this sense, anticipatory governance fosters foresight, engagement and integration capabilities, allowing all stakeholders to reflect on their role in technological and social change.

Nonetheless, implementing anticipatory governance involves significant challenges, owing to the structural rigidity of many public institutions and the prevalence of incentives that favour short-term

⁷ For a historical overview of the concept of anticipatory governance, see Fuerth (2009) and Guston (2014). For recent applications of anticipatory governance and governance and innovation in specific contemporary contexts, see Boyd and Wilson (2021), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2024a, 2024b), Tönurist and Hanson (2020) and World Economic Forum (2024).

responses over long-term planning. Overcoming these barriers requires strengthening public administration capacities in the use of data and foresight tools. This will enable more informed decision-making, better prioritization of strategic initiatives and the building of multisectoral partnerships that contribute to more effective governance of the future.

Foresight plays a key role in anticipatory governance by incorporating rationality and coherence into public policymaking and supporting decision-making for both policymakers and society as a whole (ECLAC, 2023). It is therefore a critical pillar of planning processes. Its methods and systems facilitate the analysis of future scenarios and the design of evidence-based strategies, which in turn reduces uncertainty and enhances institutional responsiveness (Medina Vásquez, 2020).⁸

Foresight exercises, such as megatrend monitoring and continuous scenario assessment, facilitate State adaptation to crises and transformations. Beyond providing technical inputs, foresight promotes a culture of flexibility and adaptability in public policymaking, fostering a long-term strategic vision (Heo and Seo, 2021).

According to Strategic Foresight (n.d.), anticipatory governance entails the systematic application of strategic foresight across all government structures, encompassing policy analysis, commitments and decision-making processes. Using this approach, governments can strengthen their capacity to continuously explore future scenarios and design more effective and prepared responses. Experiences in countries such as Canada, Finland, France, Singapore, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States illustrate how the institutionalization of foresight enhances anticipatory governance.

Anticipatory governance and foresight are closely interlinked in their objective of improving States' capacities to anticipate and manage future change. However, technocratic approaches, in which decisions are made within narrow circles of experts and legislators, are insufficient. There is a need to strengthen specific capacities for anticipation, engagement and integration to facilitate consensus-building (Gutiérrez, 2015b). While anticipatory governance provides the framework for coordinating long-term strategies, foresight offers the analytical and methodological tools required for their effective implementation.

At the international level, various organizations have promoted anticipatory governance and foresight as key tools for enhancing public management. In 2020, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development introduced the concept of “anticipatory innovation governance”, defined as an approach aimed at proactively managing uncertainty through innovation. Its purpose is to address complex and uncertain challenges in a deliberate and systemic manner (Tönurist and Hanson, 2020).

In parallel, UNDP is also advancing an agenda for anticipatory governance within public institutions, defining it as “the incorporation of foresight practices and mechanisms into public institutions to optimize planning and policy outcomes for citizens in response to emerging challenges. This allows for a better preparation toward a more just, inclusive, and sustainable future” (Freire and Ferreyra, 2024). According to ECLAC (2024c), a key strategy for strengthening anticipatory governance is the establishment of committees of the future within national parliaments. These spaces help to promote collaborative processes, build a shared agenda and facilitate informed decision-making aligned with the population's needs. Parliaments also serve as arenas for engaging diverse stakeholders in dialogue and for designing shared future scenarios that can serve as frameworks to proactively address emerging challenges. The goal is to establish a new social

⁸ For an overview of the state of the art of cutting-edge contemporary practices in foresight systems, see Djakonoff, Yi and Febriastati (2022), Gáspár and Cruz (2024), Medina Vásquez (2023), Monteiro and Dal Borgo (2023) and OECD (2022).

contract that reinforces trust and cooperation between institutions and citizens (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2024).

To consolidate this approach, it is essential to strengthen institutional capacities in foresight and promote its integration into the public planning cycle. Only through a strategic vision of the future and coordination among multiple actors will it be possible to build more resilient societies, better equipped to respond to emerging challenges.

B. EVOLUTION AND CURRENT STATUS OF THE DIMENSION OF THE FUTURE AND ANTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Future studies is a discipline that focuses on a systematic and structured exploration of the ways in which the future might take shape (Conway, 2015). It is an effort to understand, explore, map and create, but not to predict (Slaughter, 1998).

These studies emerged in the mid-twentieth century as a discipline based on the systematic interrogation of coming events (Hodara, 1984). Whereas in earlier times, concerns about the future were shaped by magical, mythical or religious practices, the availability of data and the advancement of new technologies enabled the development of long-term studies of alternative futures. In this way, the future ceased to be viewed as an inevitable destiny and began to be understood as a construct shaped by human action and social interests (Máttar and Cuervo, 2016).

In the 1940s, foresight emerged as a specific typology within futures studies. Unlike traditional approaches that relied heavily on imagination, modern foresight is based on confronting alternative futures with verifiable data (Medina Vásquez, 1996).

In Latin America and the Caribbean, two important events marked the beginning of foresight studies in the region. The first was the establishment of the Javier Barros Sierra Foundation in Mexico in 1975, the first Latin American institution dedicated to foresight. Since its creation, the foundation has generated and disseminated research in key areas such as education, science and technology, industry, energy, health and food, the environment and water resources, communications and transport, urban planning and population, as well as politics and economics.

The second major event was the publication of the report *Catastrophe or new society? A Latin American world model* (Herrera, 1977), prepared by scientists at the Bariloche Foundation in Argentina. This document was a response to the report *The Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al., 1972) presented by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Club of Rome, which predicted global collapse owing to natural resource depletion, population growth and other projections.

Between 1980 and 1990, foresight and futures studies in most Latin American and Caribbean countries were strongly influenced by the neoliberal trend that predominated among the region's governments. Over time, various methods and approaches began to coexist and expand globally. Foresight became established as a discipline which, from an epistemological standpoint, posits the existence of a variety of futures (as proposed by Berger (1957) and De Jouvenel (1966)) and the possibility of influencing them through human action.

In the early twenty-first century, in step with the new global agendas adopted within the framework of the United Nations, planning in the region was strengthened and there was recognition of the need to generate new patterns of development that would be more sustainable. Accordingly, the region's governments opted to conduct prospective studies and construct long-term visions and national development strategies.

This paradigm shift began to position foresight as a core function of public planning. The ability to anticipate future scenarios and assess potential risks and opportunities became a fundamental element of planning. ECLAC joined this process and worked alongside countries —through research, technical assistance initiatives and training programmes— to integrate foresight into planning cycles, making them more adaptive and resilient, capable of anticipating changes and evolving proactively.

The concept of foresight also evolved, drawing on the experience of Latin American and Caribbean countries in adopting foresight. Thus, in 2023, the concept of foresight for development was introduced as “a permanent and systematic process of participatory reflection on the different options for the future, in which the State takes the lead in stimulating the production of anticipatory knowledge and in forging consensus-based visions of the future. These are then turned into national and territorial public policies to achieve sustainable development” (ECLAC, 2023, p. 20).

This definition highlights that foresight for development is both a technical and political concept, as it not only seeks to construct alternative futures, but also for society as a whole to take ownership of them. This implies identifying and ensuring the feasibility conditions of scenarios to truly contribute to governance.

Foresight for development enables the design of long-term strategies and improvement of decision-making by identifying threats and opportunities. Its impact is greater when combined with strategic planning, as it generates continuous feedback that lends coherence and rationality to public policies.

To make foresight for development a reality, recent efforts have focused on promoting its institutionalization, understood as the establishment of institutional structures responsible for the foresight system (a community, sector, country, territory or other complex body) that have the authority and mandate to prepare and coordinate long-term strategies (ECLAC, 2023).

Currently, in Latin America and the Caribbean, there are relevant experiences that demonstrate ongoing efforts to institutionalize foresight. There is no single model of institutionalization, but rather a number of options that respond to each country's specific context. According to data collected through the Regional Observatory on Planning for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, the trend towards long-term planning has persisted, with the establishment of instruments to guide development beyond government terms of office.⁹ To date, 21 countries have formulated long-term strategies, plans or visions, with valuable initiatives being undertaken at the subnational level (see table 1).¹⁰

⁹ Making long-term development plans does not necessarily imply applying foresight, as this requires specific methodologies to explore possible futures and anticipate scenarios. However, the formulation of these plans is a fundamental step towards instilling long-term thinking in countries, promoting a strategic vision that transcends political cycles and facilitates the development of more sustainable and resilient public policies.

¹⁰ Data from February 2025.

Table 1
Latin America and the Caribbean: countries with long-term planning instruments

Country	Instrument
Bahamas	Vision 2040: National Development Plan
Barbados	National Strategic Plan of Barbados 2006–2025
Belize	Horizon 2030: National Development Framework for Belize 2010–2030
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Patriotic Agenda 2025 and General Economic and Social Development Plan for Living Well
Brazil	Federal Development Strategy (2020–2031)
Colombia	Vision Colombia 2050
Costa Rica	National Strategic Plan 2050
Cuba	National Economic and Social Development Plan to 2030
Dominica	National Resilience Development Strategy: Dominica 2030
Dominican Republic	National Development Strategy 2030
Grenada	National Sustainable Development Plan 2020–2035
Guatemala	K’atun National Development Plan: Our Guatemala 2032
Guyana	Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030
Honduras	Vision for the Country 2010–2038 and Plan for the Nation 2010–2022
Jamaica	Vision 2030 Jamaica: National Development Plan
Panama	“Panama 2030” National Strategic State Vision Plan
Paraguay	National Development Plan: Paraguay 2030
Peru	Vision for Peru to 2050 and 2050 Strategic Plan for National Development
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	National Economic and Social Development Plan 2013–2025
Trinidad and Tobago	Vision 2030: National Development Strategy 2016–2030
Uruguay	Uruguay 2050 National Development Strategy ^a

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. Regional Observatory on Planning for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. <https://observatorioplanificacion.cepal.org/en>.

^a Currently being updated.

Guatemala, for example, has promoted the creation of long-term municipal plans, with a strong focus on land management, within the framework of the K’atun National Development Plan. In addition, the Planning and Programming Secretariat of the Office of the President¹¹ conducts foresight analyses using tools such as trend analysis, the construction of future scenarios and the definition of strategic guidelines. These analyses guide public institutions and the updating of the National Development Priorities.

Similarly, in the Dominican Republic, Plans for Local Economic Development have been promoted at the provincial level, in alignment with the National Development Strategy 2030. In Jamaica, planning is structured around its national development plan, Vision 2030 Jamaica, which serves as a strategic framework for public policy. Its implementation takes place through the Medium-Term Socio-Economic Policy Frameworks, which are updated every three years, thus enabling regular evaluation, the identification of challenges and the building of consensus to prioritize strategies and actions.

¹¹ Through the Directorate of Strategic Analysis for Development.

In Peru, the main long-term instrument is the 2050 Strategic Plan for National Development, based on the Vision for Peru to 2050, approved in 2019. The National Centre for Strategic Planning, which oversees the Strategic Plan, designed it on the basis of a shared vision for the country, incorporating both medium- and long-term foresight.¹² The Centre is also responsible for coordinating and linking the Strategic Plan's proposals with all branches of government and public institutions across various territories. To ensure progressive implementation, it has developed innovative tools such as interactive dashboards and the National Foresight Observatory,¹³ which foster a culture of foresight in planning across all levels and sectors of the State.

Brazil has also shown interest in anticipating risks and improving its capacity to respond to future uncertainties. The country is currently developing the Brazil 2050 Strategy, a long-term planning instrument that will include the analysis of megatrends, future scenarios and an assessment of strengths and weaknesses, with a focus on development and the reduction of inequalities. This strategy, led by the National Secretariat of Planning, aims to integrate and harmonize sectoral and regional plans, enhance the predictability of government action, improve the business environment and increase transparency. The process has included opportunities for citizen participation, such as a public consultation on what Brazil should look like in the next 25 years, with the aim of constructing a shared vision of the future.

In Chile, the main efforts in this area have been made by the legislative branch.¹⁴ In 2011, the Committee on Future Challenges, Science, Technology and Innovation—the first of its kind in the region—was created with the purpose of developing evidence-based public policies. That year also saw the first Congress of the Future,¹⁵ an outreach platform on science, arts and knowledge that has become a space for public dialogue and reflection on the social, cultural and political issues that society will face in the future, featuring lectures, panel discussions and interactive events. As part of the institutionalization of forward thinking in Chile, the creation of a new knowledge-based institution for foresight and sustainable development has been proposed. This entity would be responsible for developing a national long-term strategy to guide public policy. The proposal is still under discussion, with progress expected in the short term.

The National Planning Department of Colombia also has a long-standing tradition in foresight, which it uses to coordinate and align the formulation of policies, plans, programmes, projects and other planning instruments, including those at the territorial level.

However, these efforts have evolved unevenly, have not adhered to a set formula and have encountered a range of challenges. The main challenges for the application and adoption of foresight in public administration, according to an online consultation conducted with public officials in 2025,¹⁶ are presented in table 2.

¹² In accordance with the amended version of Directive No. 001-2017-CEPLAN/PCD, approved by Resolution of the Chair of the Board of Directors No. 00009-2021/CEPLAN/PCD.

¹³ See <https://observatorio.ceplan.gob.pe/inicio>.

¹⁴ The document *Gobernanza Anticipatoria: Una Institucionalidad de Prospectiva para Chile*, prepared by the Commission on Future Challenges, Science, Technology and Innovation and published in June 2024, provides an overview of the efforts to move towards an institutional framework on foresight in Chile.

¹⁵ Organized by the Senate of Chile through the Commission on Future Challenges, Science, Technology and Innovation, the Chamber of Deputies, Fundación Encuentros del Futuro, the Chilean Academy of Sciences and universities across the country.

¹⁶ Online survey of public officials from 19 Latin American countries (Haiti not included) conducted by ILPES. The survey was conducted in August 2025 and had 412 respondents.

Table 2
Main challenges for the adoption of foresight
(Percentages)

Challenge	Percentage of respondents
Political factors: e.g. lack of political support, short-termism and changes in government	31.7
Technical factors: e.g. lack of practical knowledge of foresight and lack of staff training	18.5
Cultural factors: e.g. resistance to change and lack of knowledge of the subject	14.7
Regulatory factors: e.g. lack of regulations requiring the introduction of foresight	12.6
Financial factors: e.g. lack or shortage of financial resources and misuse of resources	9.5
Organizational structure: e.g. problems associated with monitoring mechanisms and lack of clarity regarding responsibilities	9.1
None: there are no factors that hinder the incorporation of foresight into the civil service	1.1
Other	2.9

Source: Prepared by the authors, on the basis of an online consultation on the challenges and opportunities of incorporating foresight into public service in Latin America and the Caribbean conducted in 2025 by the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The factors identified show that the barriers faced by countries of the region in institutionalizing foresight are diverse but not new. Previous studies indicate that the difficulty lies in the fact that political authorities prioritize immediate agendas over strategic long-term visions. Moreover, there are persistent challenges in generating indicators to monitor progress in foresight and in the perception of foresight as an overly academic discipline, which limit its integration into public administration (Aceituno Olivares, 2020).

At the political level, the continuity of long-term public policies is hindered not only by electoral cycles and changes in administration, but also by a limited awareness and lack of trust among decision makers regarding the benefits of foresight. This is reflected in the low priority given to foresight within national strategic planning. From a technical perspective, advancing the development of capacities in foresight methodologies is essential. However, this should be a continuous and flexible process, adapted to the specificities of different contexts.

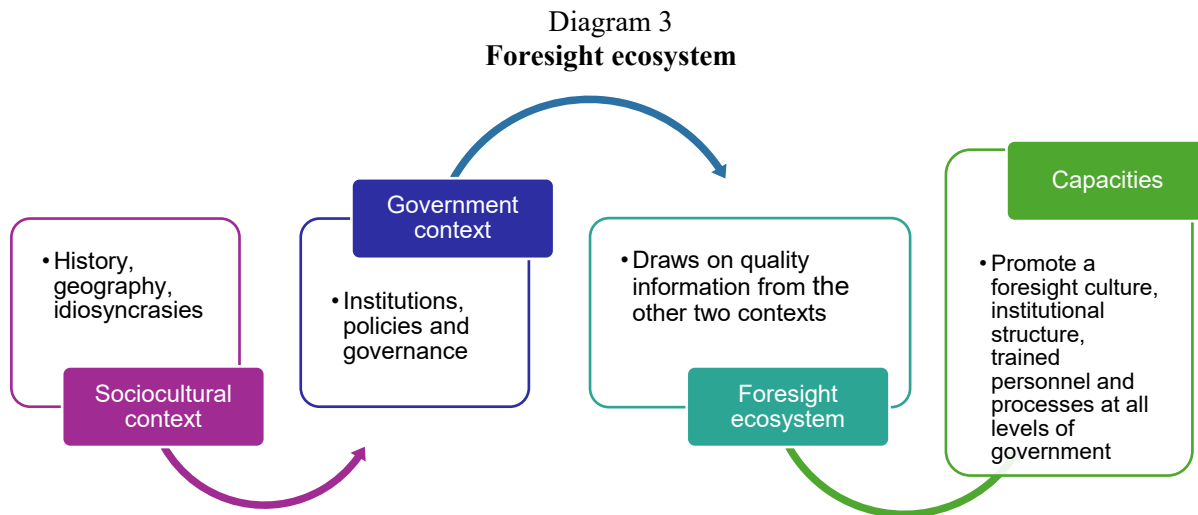
At the regulatory level, the absence of a legal framework represents a barrier to the institutionalization of foresight, as initiatives rely solely on authorities' political will and are not sustainable in the long term.

At the organizational level, institutional fragmentation leads to siloed work structures and hinders intersectoral collaboration. Furthermore, at the cultural level, resistance to change within public administration constrains the adoption of foresight strategies.

These challenges form a vicious cycle that reinforces itself, making it difficult to transition towards an anticipatory governance approach.¹⁷ To overcome these barriers, flexible methodological pathways have been developed, enabling the institutionalization of foresight according to varying contexts and institutional realities (ECLAC, 2023). These pathways are not static and can evolve over time as countries strengthen

¹⁷ For a detailed analysis of the opportunities and constraints of institutionalizing foresight in the public sector in Latin America and the Caribbean, see: Aguilar et al. (2018); Bitar (2019); Medina Vásquez, Vitale and Ragno (2022); Medina Vásquez, Patrouilleau and Vitale (2022); Patrouilleau and Albarracín Dekker (2022); Medina Vásquez and Vitale (2022); Vitale et al. (2022).

their foresight capacities. To advance its institutionalization, the creation of foresight ecosystems is proposed as a means to generate high-quality inputs for evidence-based decision-making and to stimulate demand for foresight exercises within government structures (ECLAC, 2023) (see diagram 3). For such ecosystems to be effective and relevant, they must be rooted in sociocultural and political contexts (School of International Futures, 2021).



Source: Adapted from Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2023). *Foresight for Development: Contributions to Forward-looking Territorial Governance* (LC/CRP.19/3), on the basis of School of International Futures (2021). *Features of Effective Systemic Foresight in Governments Around the World*.

An effective foresight ecosystem requires the active participation of a wide range of actors, including civil society, the private sector, academia and governments. Such collaboration enables the design of public policies with a forward-looking vision that reflects the needs and aspirations of society (ECLAC, 2024b). There is also a need to build capacities that allow for the cultivation and development of foresight allies (foresight culture); establish processes to integrate long-term thinking into the public policy cycle (processes); create infrastructures that support long-term thinking within State institutions (institutional structures) and promote the participation of individuals who will drive and advocate for foresight processes (people) (School of International Futures, 2021).

Foresight for development and strategic planning must become core tools of public affairs, transcending government terms and the political environment. This requires considering the individual, social, ideological and cultural factors that influence how future scenarios are constructed (Medina Vásquez, 2000; Vargas Lama, 2021). Foresight should not be viewed as an additional task but rather as an integrated component of planning and public management systems. The more closely foresight is integrated into planning processes, the greater the likelihood of ensuring its sustainability. Integrating foresight into public policymaking and aligning it with State objectives will enable future scenarios to be meaningfully considered in government decision-making.

In order for anticipatory governance to be effective, solutions must be participatory rather than technocratic. Transparency of information, openness in decision-making and social engagement are all essential for foresight to move beyond the academic sector and become a practical tool for transforming development (Gutiérrez, 2015a).

In a world where crises have become the new normal, adopting a strategic and anticipatory approach is essential to building a more sustainable, productive and inclusive future. Therefore, the institutionalization of foresight within public administration must be prioritized. Foresight should focus not only on long-term scenarios but also on short-term responses that are relevant to current contexts. This will allow foresight to be recognized as a key policy tool. It is critical to connect foresight processes with government planning and ensure their integration into public policies. Only then will it be possible to consolidate a model of anticipatory governance that enables States to act with flexibility and strategic vision in the face of future challenges.

The relationship between these strategic guidelines and their implementation options enables the design of concrete strategies tailored to the specific realities of each country,¹⁸ thereby advancing the institutionalization of foresight and strengthening anticipatory governance at different levels of the State. All options are complementary, and their coordination contributes to the development of more robust foresight ecosystems and the construction of a shared vision of the future.

The call is to move from the design of forward-looking policies to their implementation, recognizing that doing so requires an institutional architecture that supports a future-oriented culture. Advancing in the development of foresight ecosystems also entails creating collaborative systems that bring together government, academia, civil society and the private sector. Ultimately, foresight and anticipatory governance should not be viewed solely as technical tools but as deeply democratic processes. Democratizing the construction of the future means ensuring that all social actors have a role in the formulation of strategies and public policies. Foresight should not be an exclusive exercise of government institutions, but rather a co-creative process in which collective knowledge and the participation of all sectors contribute to building more resilient, inclusive societies that are better prepared for the challenges of the future.

To monitor the implementation of foresight and anticipatory governance in the countries of the region, regional indicators or instruments should be developed to measure progress in this strategic area and assess its impact on the governance of planning and public management.

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¹⁸ The aim is to continue promoting a flexible approach, with alternative pathways that can be adapted to the institutional reality of each country.

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IV. COORDINATION FOR COMPREHENSIVE AND COHERENT PUBLIC POLICIES

Key messages

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive approach to public policy design A comprehensive approach should be embedded in policy design from the outset, incorporating all necessary dimensions for successful implementation, from governance to financing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-agency coordination as a foundational pillar Effective coordination among institutions and sectors is essential to ensure that comprehensive public policies are coherent, sustainable and capable of delivering tangible impacts for society.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved coherence and coordination of public policies Internal and external coherence is crucial to avoid contradictions, overlaps and duplication of efforts, thereby ensuring that policies are aligned with other planning instruments and existing public policies. Political, financial and operational coordination is vital for the implementation of comprehensive public policies, enabling each level to fulfil its role effectively and contribute to the success of the strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategic role of centres of government A key element for ensuring a coherent and comprehensive approach is the active involvement of a centre of government with a clear mandate and authority. It should be capable of coordinating the actions of different institutions, levels of government and institutional cultures, while strengthening their role in translating political priorities into administrative action and maintaining continuity, particularly during changes of government or political coalitions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Towards a new public service Investing in public service training to develop technical, operational, political and prospective capabilities is essential to managing comprehensive public policies that can respond with agility and resilience to evolving challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering a culture of collaboration Building a culture of inter-agency collaboration is essential for the effective management of public policies, thus reducing barriers between stakeholders and fostering synergies that lead to more efficient outcomes.

A. KEY CONCEPTS FOR UNDERSTANDING COMPREHENSIVE AND COHERENT PUBLIC POLICIES

Coherent and comprehensive public policies¹⁹ require a political economy perspective to understand their feasibility and impact; institutional capacities for design, implementation and evaluation; governance mechanisms to ensure effectiveness; and social dialogue to provide legitimacy and support for public policies.

These concepts have gained prominence in national development agendas, especially following the global commitment to the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.

The need for a comprehensive approach responds to the complexity and multicausality of development challenges, such as territorial inequalities. Given the frequent disparities in the framing and treatment of these challenges, it is imperative to adopt collaborative approaches that promote coherent and comprehensive public policymaking (Roberts, 2014).

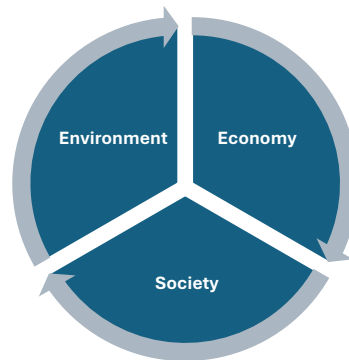
¹⁹ The position paper presented by ECLAC in Lima in 2024 includes a chapter focusing on the challenges the region faces in managing transformations. The analysis considers four areas to be addressed to manage such transformations: governance, institutional capacities, political economy and social dialogue. Each area is closely linked to the central challenge addressed in this section: adopting a coherent and comprehensive approach in the design of public policies to drive these transformations (ECLAC, 2024a).

1. Outlook for a comprehensive approach in public policy

The concept of comprehensive public policy can be approached from multiple perspectives. This document highlights two main approaches.

Thematic integration: refers to the indivisible interconnection among the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) and the need for policy coherence, understood as the complementarity between these dimensions. This perspective is reflected in United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1 (see diagram 4).

Diagram 4
Dimensions of sustainable development



Source: Prepared by the authors, on the basis of the United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1.

Procedural integration: refers to the existence of coordination mechanisms across sectors, government levels and time frames throughout the public policy cycle (design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation), as well as the involvement of diverse stakeholders in policymaking (see diagram 5).

Diagram 5
Procedural integration

Intersectoral approach	In order to effectively address public issues, policies should consider the complex intersections and interrelationships among the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development, and promote dialogue among the various sectors responsible for its implementation.
Multi-stakeholder participation	The success of public policies requires recognizing the diversity of actors involved in the policy environment and establishing meaningful citizen participation mechanisms throughout the policy cycle.
Multilevel (or multiscale) coordination	Coordinated action across different levels of government and territorial scales (subnational and national) is a critical requirement for designing and implementing public policies that respond to the specific needs and conditions of each context.
Intertemporal approach	This involves ensuring that public policies are sustainable over time, balancing immediate actions (short term), alignment with government cycles (medium term) and a vision for the future (long term).

Source: Williner, A. and Martínez, M. F. (2023). Políticas públicas integrales: el caso de las políticas de desarrollo territorial. *Territorial Development Series (22)* (LC/TS.2023/90). Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Repetto (2012) identifies the following three levels at which a comprehensive approach to public policy can be applied.

- (i) The **macro level** includes the full set of a nation State's policies, where coordination and coherence are essential. Examples of such initiatives include:
 - Social cabinets in Latin America (with limited results, according to Repetto (2012)), owing to political conflicts and weak coordination²⁰)
 - National Social Policy Council in Uruguay (2005–2020)
 - National Council on Economic and Social Policy in Colombia
 - Sectoral cabinets in Ecuador, aimed at aligning the actions of various State institutions to ensure coherent implementation of public policies

- (ii) The **meso level** is focused on the coordination of policies at the regional or sectoral level. One notable example is:
 - The social protection system in Chile, implemented by the Coalition for Democracy, with the participation of multiple ministries and coordinated by the Ministry of Social Development and Family. Today, it is a consolidated system that aims to ensure security for individuals throughout their life course.

- (iii) The **micro level** applies to specific programmes that include a comprehensive approach in their design and implementation. Key examples include:
 - Conditional cash transfer programmes in Latin America such as *Oportunidades* (which later became *Prospera*) in Mexico, *Bolsa Família* in Brazil, *Solidarity Chile* and, in Ecuador, initiatives such as the Human Development Grant and the *Bono 1000 Días* (1,000 days cash transfer programme) to combat child malnutrition. These programmes have evolved over time in response to political shifts and changing policy priorities.
 - In Ecuador, a public policy on the use of free time is currently under development, coordinated by the National Secretariat of Planning and involving the ministries of sport, tourism and culture.

These three levels, as proposed by Repetto (2012), are distinguished primarily by the scale at which they operate and the complexity of the interventions involved. Consequently, the classification of specific initiatives within one level or another may vary depending on the approach adopted by the government in power.

According to ECLAC,²¹ the **macro level** tends to face the greatest coordination challenges, often owing to political conflicts, variations in institutional structures, power asymmetries among ministries, alliance breakdowns and limited management capacities.

²⁰ According to research conducted by Repetto, these initiatives did not yield positive results owing to political factors that hindered effective action in support of comprehensive coordination by the social cabinets in several Latin American countries (Repetto, 2012, p. 113).

²¹ On the basis of various technical assistance initiatives.

In contrast, the **meso and micro levels** have achieved more effective coordination because they involve a smaller number of actors, have more specific objectives and benefit from clearly allocated resources for implementation.

2. Resources for achieving comprehensive public policies: coherence and coordination

Achieving comprehensive public policies requires two fundamental elements: coherence in the design and implementation of policies and effective coordination processes for their execution.

Coherence refers to the degree of logical alignment across the various levels of an intervention, from the foundational rationale of the policy to the operational units that implement it. As Cecchini et al. (2022) explain, there are three types of coherence in public policy:

- (i) **Internal coherence:** pertains to the logical correspondence between the public problem that the policy addresses, its objectives, strategies, actions and expected outcomes.
- (ii) **External coherence:** refers to the logical alignment between a policy or programme's rationale, objectives and actions and the country's planning instruments. For example, if a government programme seeks universal healthcare coverage, maternal and child health policy should reflect criteria of universality and not solely target specific groups. In Ecuador, for example, public policies must align with the National Development Plan.
- (iii) **Coherence between policies:** it is vital to avoid contradictions among policies within the same country, as misalignment can result in redundant resource allocation, nullified policy effects and harm to beneficiaries.

The other essential resource for developing comprehensive public policies is **coordination**, defined as "the capacity of two or more institutions to perform tasks jointly and in an articulated manner to achieve a single objective" (Cecchini et al., 2022, p. 33). Coordination is thus a means and not an end in itself. The literature identifies several key conditions for efficient coordination:

- The State, as guarantor of the common good, should lead these processes, forging alliances with the private sector, civil society and local governments.
- Coordination requires political leadership, clear objectives, technical strength and a culture of collaboration. This is especially vital in many countries in the region where public administration is significantly affected by staff turnover and institutional instability, preventing efficient or effective strengthening of the career civil service and continuity of inter-agency processes and agreements. Ecuador is one such example.

Meeting these conditions enables effective coordination, which in turn strengthens comprehensive public policy. Furthermore, coordination processes among actors, for both policy design and implementation, can be categorized into different levels (see table 3).

Table 3
Levels of coordination to implement comprehensive public policies

Level	Type of action	Outcomes
I. Basic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Communication between actors and bodies – Consultation with actors 	Delimitation and clarification of roles and functions Basic agreements
II. Basic intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Negotiations to avoid divergence 	Negotiation Minutes of initial agreements
III. Intermediate advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Interorganizational consensus-building – Central government arbitration to resolve differences 	Agreement between actors and sectors Signed agreements
IV. Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Establishment of organizational parameters – Definition of government priorities – General government strategy – Assignment of responsibilities within each organization – Transparency in the use of available material and human resources – Definition of a communication strategy and appointment of an official spokesperson 	Strategic guidelines and courses of action defined

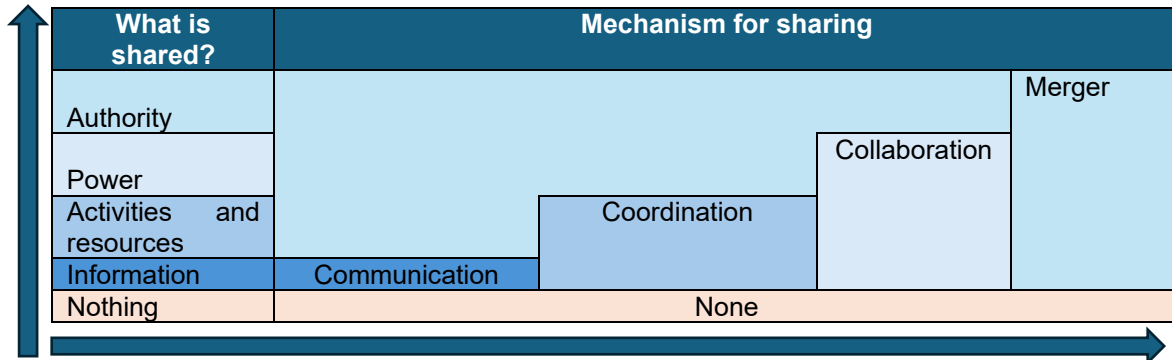
Source: Adapted from Cecchini, S., Holz, R. and Soto de la Rosa, H. (Coords.) (2022). *Toolkit. Institutional frameworks for social policies for equality in Latin America and the Caribbean* (LC/TS.2021/157). Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Coordination is primarily political, though it also involves the administration of human and material resources, as well as management capabilities. It is crucial to establish clear responsibilities across political, financial and operational spheres to ensure proper task and resource allocation, as well as accountability (Wiesner et al., 2000).

Moreover, fostering or strengthening an organizational culture that promotes and prioritizes collaboration is a key factor in the design and implementation of comprehensive public policies. Leadership must be capable of linking efforts and generating synergies with ongoing strategies and actions.

According to Crosby and Bryson (2005), fostering a collaborative culture within a shared-power context begins with clearly identifying what is to be shared. From there, the mechanisms to share resources and create a collaborative culture in public management must be defined. If the aim is to share information, the primary mechanism is communication and transparency. If activities and resources are to be shared, coordination is required. At a more complex level, when the aim is to share power, collaboration becomes essential, as it goes beyond coordination and is grounded in trust and reciprocity. Lastly, if authority (formal and informal) is to be shared, objectives, resources and strategies must be merged (see diagram 6).

Diagram 6
Mechanisms for organizational sharing



Source: Crosby, B. C. and Bryson, J. M. (2005). *Leadership for the Common Good: Tackling Public Problems in a Shared-power World*. Jossey-Bass.

In summary, to promote the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of comprehensive public policies, each level of government (national, subnational or local) should consider the following steps:

- Defining the comprehensive public policy approach —or combination of approaches— to be applied.
- Determining the level (macro, meso or micro) at which comprehensive policies should be implemented.
- Ensuring internal coherence of the public policy, external coherence with other planning instruments and alignment with other policies in the country.
- Guaranteeing effective coordination mechanisms among institutional actors responsible for comprehensive policy design, implementation and evaluation.
- Fostering a collaborative institutional culture across all levels of government.
- Implementing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that measure the impact of inter-agency coordination, identify areas for improvement and enable timely adjustments to optimize outcomes. Monitoring should be continuous and based on clear indicators that reflect progress in implementing coordinated strategies.

B. EVOLUTION AND CURRENT STATUS OF APPROACHES TO COORDINATION AND COMPREHENSIVE POLICIES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

From the 1980s to the present, Latin America and the Caribbean has taken an increasingly complex approach in coordinating, designing and implementing comprehensive and cross-sectoral policies amid the increasing complexity of traditional development problems and the emergence of new challenges, such as polycrises.

The period can be divided into several stylized stages or phases, which are analysed in this section. The examples given constitute a representative rather than exhaustive list of existing measures.

Since the 1980s, and especially in the 1990s, the region has had a range of experiences with comprehensive policies, mainly in the areas of health and education. Comprehensive health policies, for

example, have emerged in response to a growing awareness of the multifactorial and multidimensional social determinants of health. This approach recognizes the high degree of interdependence between the factors involved (Cunill-Grau, 2014).

In relation to planning, ILPES has supported countries in reflecting and acting on policy coordination and integration. The late 1990s proved to be a key time in this process, highlighting the importance of coordination as a basic planning function (Wiesner et al., 2000).

In summary, the strategic coordination function should be approached as a planning tool that helps to achieve the necessary balance between economic efficiency, social equity and political democracy. These three pillars should extend to all public management endeavours, requiring a particular effort in terms of political coordination and capacity for synthesis (Garnier, 2000).

Beginning in the late 1990s and continuing into the 2000s, comprehensive policies began to incorporate a spatial dimension (e.g. regions, territories, cities and localities) and specific groups (e.g. children, older persons and Indigenous Peoples). The plans, policies and programmes designed and implemented for these groups became more coordinated and comprehensive.

Examples of comprehensive sociospatial policies include:

- **Progresa (Mexico, 1997)**, which later became *Oportunidades* and, finally, *PROSPERA*, a programme that provided cash transfers to poor rural households contingent upon children's regular school attendance and families' regular use of health centres.
- **The “I love my neighbourhood” programme (Chile, 2000)**, implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs throughout the territory to support the comprehensive revitalization of districts experiencing urban deterioration and social vulnerability through comprehensive master plans and public investment projects.
- **Territorios da cidadania (Brazil, 2008)**, an initiative of the Ministry of Agricultural Development aimed at overcoming poverty and social inequalities in rural areas, based on the integration of public policies through territorial planning and the expansion of social participation mechanisms to include vulnerable groups, such as rural workers and Indigenous communities.
- **Conditional cash transfer programmes** provide another example of progress on comprehensive policies; they attach conditions—in areas such as school attendance and health check-ups—to direct income transfers, and represent a first step towards more complex social protection systems, which require greater coordination and integration capacities (Cecchini and Madariaga, 2011).

In this regard, ECLAC has promoted rights-based social protection policies and care policies, recognizing their connection to other critical social development challenges in the region, such as vulnerability to climate change, pandemics and the technological revolution in the world of work (Arenas de Mesa, 2023).

With the first decades of the 2000s came the building of several global and regional agendas that emphasized the role of coordination and comprehensive policies, which ECLAC has actively supported, including:

- **Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development (2014)**, which stresses the importance of universal, inclusive approaches based on solidarity and respect for human rights to address vulnerabilities and interrelated issues, such as health, education and governability.
- **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)**, which emphasizes the interdependent dimensions of sustainable development and the need for comprehensive policies to achieve it.
- **Interministerial councils on climate change**, which take a cross-cutting approach to decision-making, coordination, implementation and monitoring of climate change policies.²²

In line with these global frameworks, ECLAC has advocated a comprehensive approach to policymaking in various areas related to development, such as climate change (2019), integrated food systems (2017) and infrastructure, transport and logistics (2010).

ILPES has been working on new planning approaches since 2017, assisting governments in the design, implementation and evaluation of public plans and policies, with a particular focus on multiscale, multi-stakeholder and multisectoral integration.

Lastly, the set of guidelines proposed by ECLAC for reshaping the development model, which highlights the need to strengthen the TOPP capabilities of institutions to manage transformations, advocates the design of comprehensive policies with cross-cutting approaches in key areas of development (ECLAC, 2024a).

The above information and other available studies have made it possible to identify certain factors that have hindered the adoption of comprehensive approaches in public policy design:

- **Excessive emphasis on regulatory and legislative frameworks** at the expense of other practical aspects, such as leveraging the will and shared interests of different groups while managing conflicting interests and resources.
- **Flaws in the formation of policy and technical teams.**
- **High level of distrust among stakeholders** and between stakeholders and institutions.
- **Unsustainability of comprehensive policy initiatives** in the face of changes in government.
- **Differences and tensions within governing coalitions.**
- **Weak coordinating bodies** that lack sufficient financial resources or political priority.
- **Lack of institutional capacities** to support and strengthen coordinated and comprehensive approaches.

²² The document *Panorama de la Gestión Pública en América Latina y el Caribe, 2023: un Estado preparado para la acción climática* (ECLAC, 2024c) compiles experiences with interministerial climate change councils from 30 countries and details their composition and functions.

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V. EVALUATION, PUBLIC VALUE AND ESTABLISHING A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Key messages

-
- **Results-based management as a pillar of public value**
The monitoring and evaluation functions of the State are part of a results-based management model, designed for government institutions as a basic framework for creating public value.
 - **Culture of evaluation: learning, transparency and accountability**
A culture of evaluation enables knowledge creation and continuous learning in public institutions to improve the design and implementation of public policies, in addition to generating information to facilitate more accountable and transparent public management for citizens.
-
- **Monitoring and evaluation for inclusive and sustainable development**
The monitoring and evaluation functions are essential drivers of vital transformations for inclusive and sustainable development, contributing to institutional capacity-building and effective governance.
 - **Evolution of monitoring and evaluation systems in Latin America and the Caribbean**
Monitoring and evaluation systems in Latin America and the Caribbean are at varying stages of development, with different legal frameworks, institutional arrangements, methodologies and levels of maturity that have evolved in ways specific to each case.
-
- **Challenges and opportunities in strengthening evaluation**
Despite good practices in the region, many challenges remain, such as strengthening the institutional framework for monitoring and evaluation as a policy of the State; developing TOPP capabilities for monitoring and evaluation; leveraging new technologies and artificial intelligence to generate and analyse information; and developing innovative methodologies to address present and future public policy issues.
-

A. KEY CONCEPTS FOR UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC VALUE AND PUBLIC POLICY MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Evaluation, public value and a culture of learning are part of the **results-based management** model, understood as:

...a management strategy by which all actors, contributing directly or indirectly to achieving a set of results, ensure that their processes, products and services contribute to the achievement of desired results (outputs, outcomes and higher level goals or impact). The actors in turn use information and evidence on actual results to inform decision making on the design, resourcing and delivery of programmes and activities as well as for accountability and reporting (United Nations Development Group, 2011, p. 2).

A **result** is defined as a change in situation for a particular sector of society or target population, relative to a baseline situation, that improves a negative condition, meets a need or harnesses an opportunity, thereby helping to generate public value.

Public value refers to the capacity of government and its institutions to satisfy citizen aspirations and cultivate a fair, efficient and transparent society (Moore, 1995). It is based on the value that citizens place on goods and services received from the State, to the extent that they satisfy a specific need in a measurable, high-quality and timely manner through a rights-based approach.

The generation of public value builds trust in institutions, strengthening the citizenry and democracy.

Fostering a culture of evaluation that includes capacity-building for State institutions to monitor and evaluate public policies is essential for knowledge creation, improved decision-making and transparency in public management. It is also a key factor in managing the necessary transformations for Latin America and the Caribbean to return to the path of inclusive and sustainable development (ECLAC, 2024b). Strengthening institutional capacities means developing human capital, in the form of knowledge and skills; allocating adequate economic resources, including in terms of infrastructure, equipment and technology; and developing innovative methodologies that can be adapted according to country differences.

Within this framework, the monitoring and evaluation functions make it possible to ascertain the results of public initiatives, improve the quality of public spending and strengthen results-based planning, primarily to facilitate evidence-based decision-making. These decisions translate into concrete actions that improve public services and the State's generation of public value.

The State's evaluation function serves not only to measure the results of public policies but also to boost institutional learning, as it enables reflection on and adjustment of policy objectives on the basis of results, thus promoting a culture of continuous learning in public administration. A culture of learning is one in which lessons drawn from evaluation are incorporated into planning and management. To this end, robust monitoring and evaluation systems are essential.

Moreover, monitoring and evaluation systems generate information that facilitates the substantive participation of all public and private stakeholders in decision-making, creating favourable conditions for collaborative governance. They are also crucial for the accountable and transparent use of public resources, encouraging citizen participation in public management in accordance with open government principles.²³

1. What is monitoring and evaluation?

Monitoring (ECLAC, 2024a) focuses on systematically following up policy and programme implementation, ensuring compliance and facilitating timely corrections. Objectives include:

- Verifying the implementation or execution and financial progress of public initiatives and compliance with deadlines.

²³ As discussed in relation to area one, the open government approach promotes public management based on transparency and citizen participation, especially through the inclusion of citizens in the design and implementation of public initiatives, proactive public accountability and the implementation of mechanisms to leverage society's capacities, experience, knowledge and efforts in devising solutions to collective problems (ECLAC, 2018).

- Verifying progress in other dimensions, such as equity and transparency in the implementation of public initiatives.
- Providing feedback to stakeholders involved in public initiatives.
- Recommending adjustments to the public initiative for improved performance (processes and/or results), contributing to evidence-based decision-making.

Evaluation (ECLAC, 2024a) analyses the design, implementation and results of policies and programmes for the purposes of:

- Determining the degree of compliance with the planned objectives.
- Identifying positive or negative factors that affect results.
- Generating evidence to improve future initiatives or correct existing ones.

Monitoring and evaluation systems are institutional mechanisms designed to provide relevant and timely information on public policy performance. Their structure comprises four main components (ECLAC, 2024a):

- (i) **System scope.** Identification of projects, programmes or policies to be monitored and evaluated and users of the information generated.
- (ii) **Institutional framework.** Establishment of responsibilities of the entities involved and the system's governing body.
- (iii) **Operational framework.** Organization of work, specification of roles and identification of tools for data collection and analysis.
- (iv) **Technical framework.** Methodological criteria and tools to ensure the reliability, validity and usefulness of the information generated.

In short, monitoring and evaluation systems are essential to improving the effectiveness of public policies, strengthening transparency and contributing to sustainable development in the region, with a results-based management culture. Their institutionalization allows for better resource allocation, more strategic planning and evidence-based decision-making, thereby supporting the generation of public value and the strengthening of democracy.

B. EVOLUTION AND CURRENT STATUS OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

In recent decades, several reasons to evaluate State actions in Latin America have been identified (Wiesner et al., 2000):

- (i) The importance of a more rational approach to fiscal adjustments and corrections, which requires adequate knowledge of public sector initiatives and their impact so that cuts can be made on a differentiated basis and in alignment with well-established priorities.

- (ii) The high political cost to governments when the public perception of government programmes is one of inefficiency or ineffectiveness.
- (iii) Increased demand for transparency and accountability in societies that are more democratic.

In addition to these factors, which are still at play, new social demands have emerged, such as compliance with social equity and environmental sustainability targets and ensuring rights. These demands require constant monitoring for effective incorporation into fiscal and public policy decision-making.

Today, a number of countries in the region have monitoring and evaluation systems or institutional structures that perform these functions (see map 2). However, they vary significantly in their design, operation and level of development. Likewise, progress is not linear, depending as it does on the importance and position assigned to these functions at different points in time.

For example, Ecuador established the monitoring and evaluation subsystem within the former National Planning Secretariat²⁴ under the Organic Code of Planning and Public Finance of 2010; in Chile, monitoring and evaluation functions have been progressively assigned to the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Social Development and Family Affairs under a series of regulations since the 1990s; and Mexico had an independent monitoring and evaluation body—the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development—from 2006 to 2024.



Source: Prepared by the authors, on the basis of information provided by the countries.

²⁴ Following recent institutional reforms, the Secretariat has been absorbed into the Office of the President of the Republic and now operates as part of the General Secretariat for Public Administration, Planning and Cabinet.

Monitoring and evaluation systems in the region vary in terms of:

- **Institutional structure.** Reporting to planning entities, government centres or finance ministries.
- **Main objectives.** Setting the budget, improving management, identifying priorities, transparency and accountability.
- **Purpose or focus.** Plans, investment projects, public programmes or institutions.
- **Methodologies.** Determined according to the object of evaluation and the institutional capacities to manage monitoring and evaluation measures.

Table 4
Monitoring and evaluation systems of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean

Governance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems embedded in planning institutions (e.g. Costa Rica, Colombia, Guatemala and Honduras) • Systems embedded in budget institutions (e.g. Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay) • Systems embedded in the Office of the President (e.g. Argentina and Jamaica) • Systems embedded in independent bodies (e.g. Mexico until 2024)
Objective (non-exclusive)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency and accountability (e.g. Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Jamaica and Mexico) • Results-based budgeting (e.g. Chile, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay) • Improved public policy design and/or management (e.g. Chile, Honduras, Jamaica and Paraguay)
Object
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutions (e.g. Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Jamaica and Mexico) • Public programmes (e.g. Argentina, Chile, Mexico and Peru) • Planning instruments (e.g. Colombia, Honduras and Paraguay)
Methodology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All systems use management performance indicators in an analytical model based on the public management results chain, which differ according to the conceptual framework employed (as determined by the object of monitoring and evaluation)

Source: Prepared by the authors, on the basis of information provided by the countries.

1. Best practices and keys to success

Although the region's monitoring and evaluation systems are at varying stages of development, the body of experience has made it possible to identify good practices and keys to success in two main areas: governance and institutional capacities.

(a) Governance

- **Solid legal frameworks:** the institutionalization of the most advanced monitoring and evaluation systems was critically dependent on the establishment of clear and robust legal frameworks governing the functions, responsibilities and roles of public agencies and an accountable institution.

- Linkages with planning: the implementation of planning instruments at different levels of government (national, institutional and programmatic) has been fundamental in developing monitoring and evaluation systems with conceptual and operational linkages to planning systems for a more rational public management cycle.
- Inter-institutional coordination: adequate coordination among participating institutions —be they governing entities, monitored entities or evaluated entities— and with planning and budget systems has been essential to the sustainability of monitoring and evaluation systems.
- Continuity: enables monitoring and evaluation systems to learn, develop and mature, improving their use, quality and impact on public policies. Continuity requires these systems to be governed by State policy, sheltered from political fluctuations and not dependent on any single administration; this, in turn, requires them to be able to demonstrate their effectiveness and efficiency.
- Independence: the objectiveness and impartiality of monitoring and evaluation are basic requirements for responsible, quality systems that enjoy the respect of all public and private stakeholders. Accordingly, monitoring and evaluation must be based on technical analyses and, ideally, validated by independent experts in the areas evaluated, avoiding any conflict of interest. This ensures the generation of reliable information for decision-making.

(b) Institutional capacities

- Gradual development and learning: the gradual development of systems has facilitated an institutional learning process and enabled continuous strengthening.
- Adaptability to specific contexts: the specificities of existing systems, with their different methodological approaches and results, generate valuable information for countries just starting out, allowing them to learn from the experience of their peers.
- Sound technical basis: in the design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems, the technical nature of their governing bodies has been fundamental, enabling the development and standardization of methodologies and building internal capacities that can then be used to train other institutions.
- Development of methodological tools: the methodologies, indices, manuals and guides developed, among other tools, have been very relevant to the development of monitoring and evaluation systems, facilitating implementation and replicability among countries.
- Training human capital: capacity-building among personnel has been fundamental in creating a critical mass of evaluators who can correctly apply the methodologies and effectively carry out monitoring and evaluation processes.

2. Challenges

Conversely, despite the progress made, there are still major challenges to overcome in order to develop monitoring and evaluation systems with robust governance and institutional capacities.

(a) Governance

- Focusing on the creation of public value: monitoring and evaluation systems need to be able to determine the capacity of public policies to create public value in all its dimensions— not only traditional areas, like efficiency, but in others as well, such as equity.
- Information systems: formal and fully fledged information systems are needed to systematize and analyse information and ensure interoperability with other systems, in addition to handling data governance and protection.
- Transparency and access to information: new, modernized systems of accountability and the use of clear language when communicating results are necessary to strengthen open government.
- Linkages with decision-making: it is important to establish linkages between processes of monitoring and evaluation—and the information they yield—and processes of decision-making in planning and budget allocation.
- Cross-cutting approaches: cross-cutting integration of relevant development issues (e.g. gender, environmental sustainability and human rights) is necessary throughout the entire public management cycle, including monitoring and evaluation.
- Increasing funding: sufficient budget allocation is important to ensure the substantive development of these public functions.
- Balancing institutional independence: although a certain degree of independence is considered good practice to safeguard the objectivity and transparency of monitoring and evaluation functions, it is important to balance this consideration against the value of executive branch proximity with regard to ensuring that findings influence policy decisions.
- Identifying the object of monitoring and evaluation: a long-term perspective is needed in determining what to monitor and evaluate and how information is used, which should be a matter of State policy rather than government policy.
- Involving all stakeholders: regardless of differences in regulatory and institutional foundations, governance should always include all stakeholders, including from the public sector, academia and civil society.

(b) Institutional capacities

- Fostering a culture of evaluation: it is essential to develop a culture in which monitoring and evaluation are viewed as tools for improving institutional performance and results, rather than as just another audit or bureaucratic process to get through.
- Continuous technical training: gaps in public institutions' technical monitoring and evaluation capacities (e.g. regarding indicators and technology) should be closed through continuous training that is sustained over time.
- Capacities outside the public sector: it is necessary to recognize the need for public-private cooperation in areas where public institutions have limited capacities, for example by contracting out independent evaluations to the academic or private sectors.

- Reducing staff turnover: minimizing staff turnover in public institutions through capacity-building and incentive programmes is crucial, as turnover is detrimental to the continuity of monitoring and evaluation systems.
- Results-oriented focus: it is important to design systems with an eye towards measuring midterm and final results, rather than exclusively monitoring and evaluating outcomes and processes.
- Developing innovative methodologies: one of the region's challenges is to move forward with innovative methodologies, including in the transition from positivist to constructivist models and the incorporation of qualitative methodologies, cross-cutting approaches and participatory mechanisms in evaluations.

National implementation of monitoring and evaluation requires the development of TOPP capabilities, in particular of the technical and operational varieties, the results of which feed back into the development of political and prospective capabilities in public administration, as set out below:

- **Technical capabilities.** Systematic generation of information to evaluate public policies on a sound technical basis. One of the long-term objectives in terms of the appropriate functioning and use of monitoring and evaluation systems is to establish a culture of evaluation in public entities, involving continuous technical analysis and review of results at various stages of the public policy cycle, in order to improve and to integrate lessons learned into future design processes.
- **Operational capabilities.** As public management tools, monitoring and evaluation systems are intended for use by public managers, to facilitate their work and improve their operational management results. The information generated by these systems is subsequently made available to the public, enabling the reporting of operational public management results and facilitating transparency and accountability. Meanwhile, the synergy that exists between monitoring and evaluation systems and budget systems—their primary users— translates into better public resource access and use.
- **Political capabilities.** The objective and reliable information generated by monitoring and evaluation systems can be very useful in spaces for political, public-private and budgetary dialogue, among other areas, laying a foundation for and facilitating discussion and understanding among stakeholders, social dialogue mechanisms and all decision-making bodies involved in the formulation of public policies.
- **Prospective capabilities.** The information generated by monitoring and evaluation systems establishes a current or baseline situation for the topic concerned, which is very useful for foresight planning processes, in particular when considering multiple instruments with different timelines. It is also useful for developing anticipatory detection systems that alert authorities to emerging risks and opportunities so that they can be addressed early on in the course of monitoring different prospective scenarios.

The development of monitoring and evaluation in Latin America has been key in improving public management, but considerable challenges remain to be overcome. Strengthening the institutionalization of these functions, promoting a culture of evaluation and improving linkages between monitoring and evaluation processes and decision-making will be fundamental elements for progress in the efficiency, transparency and results-oriented focus of public administration.

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VI. INSTITUTIONAL TOPP CAPABILITIES FOR A RENEWED APPROACH TO PLANNING AND PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

The implementation of the future regional agenda on governance of planning and public management for sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean relies on certain institutional capacities, which must be strengthened to ensure its effectiveness. This section presents conceptual elements to enrich the agenda’s strategic areas, in line with the ECLAC approach to managing transformations.

Linking the TOPP capabilities framework with the strategic areas of the agenda is not only a conceptual matter but an operational one as well, enabling efforts to progress from devising major strategic guidelines to developing the specific institutional capabilities that make them practicable.

This framework, introduced in an earlier section of the present document, offers an integrated view of the institutional capacities, governance processes, political forces and dialogue mechanisms that influence the possibility of advancing transformations in Latin America and the Caribbean. It approaches planning and public management as strategic State functions, not only for formulating policies but also for creating the institutional conditions necessary for their effective and sustainable implementation.

The draft regional agenda is structured along strategic areas and lines of action to operationalize the “hows” of transformation through planning and public management. These areas —relating to governance and social dialogue, the dimension of the future, policy coordination and evaluation for public value— dovetail with the main components of the analytical framework proposed by ECLAC.

More than a conceptual matter, this alignment provides a practical framework for identifying capacities in need of strengthening along each of the areas. Table 5 summarizes the elements in common between the areas of the draft regional agenda and the analytical dimensions of the ECLAC approach to managing transformations. These commonalities offer a basis for identifying the specific institutional capacities needed to operationalize the areas, as shown in table 6.

Table 5
Commonalities between the strategic areas of the draft regional agenda on governance of planning and public management for sustainable development and the dimensions of the ECLAC approach to managing transformations

Strategic area of the draft regional agenda	Dimension of the approach to managing transformations
Governance, institutional frameworks and social dialogue	Transformative governance and social dialogue
The dimension of the future and anticipatory governance	Prospective capabilities
Coordination for comprehensive and coherent public policies	Operational capabilities and multilevel governance
Evaluation, public value and a culture of continuous learning	Technical capabilities, with a focus on evidence-based monitoring and continuous improvement

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Note: Political economy is a cross-cutting dimension linked to all four strategic areas of the draft regional agenda. Incorporating this dimension enables consideration of the political and institutional factors that affect the viability, sustainability and legitimacy of transformations, and constitutes a key tool for strengthening strategic analysis and policy design in complex contexts.

Building on this conceptual alignment, the TOPP capabilities framework is proposed as an analytical and practical approach to identifying the institutional and functional needs associated with implementing the strategic areas of the future regional agenda.

The complementarities between the draft regional agenda and the TOPP capabilities framework enable the translation of broad guidelines (what to do) into specific institutional capabilities (how to do it). They also enable each country to prioritize institutional investments where they are needed most (e.g. improving data systems, improving interoperability, agreeing lasting social compacts or institutionalizing foresight) and to identify areas in which ILPES and ECLAC can support member States through cooperation and training to strengthen their planning and public management capacities for development.

This is not just a theoretical exercise; amid heightened uncertainty, institutional complexity and mounting pressure to deliver tangible results, the success of a planning and public management agenda depends not only on defining objectives but also on the existence or development of the capacities needed for their achievement. This requires not only technical know-how and management tools but also enabling organizational structures, political room for manoeuvre, social legitimacy and a future-oriented perspective to sustain transformations.

In this context, focusing on TOPP capabilities makes it possible to translate the strategic areas into concrete institutional action, adapted to national circumstances, for more localized, feasible and sustainable implementation. This approach helps to:

- **Identify key institutional gaps** that could hinder the implementation of the future regional agenda's areas.
- **Design strategies for institutional strengthening** to address these gaps, through technical assistance, training, peer-to-peer cooperation or organizational reforms.
- **Support States to foster enabling conditions**, adapted to their specific contexts, to ensure that transformations not only unfold as desired but are also viable and sustainable.

The required capacities identified through this process can help to transform the future regional agenda into an operational guide on how to build institutions that are capable of steering the region's vital transformations, with a focus on evidence, efficiency, legitimacy and foresight.

Table 6 provides a rough outline of the types of capabilities required along each of the strategic areas. This is a preliminary proposal, which may be further fleshed out through intergovernmental dialogue in the future, and is intended as a basis for concrete action by ECLAC, through ILPES, on institutional strengthening and technical cooperation.

Table 6

TOPP capabilities required to support implementation of the strategic areas of the future regional agenda on governance of planning and public management for sustainable development

Area of the future regional agenda	Technical capability (what information to seek/what to design)	Operational capability (how to execute)	Political capability (how to legitimize and sustain)	Prospective capability (how to anticipate and guide)
1. Governance, institutional frameworks and social dialogue	Design legal and institutional frameworks that ensure access to information and citizen participation	Develop methodologies and training for collaborative processes and open government	Promote ethical, inclusive and empathetic leadership; institutionalize multi-stakeholder forums	Integrate the use of emerging technologies (e.g. artificial intelligence, digital platforms) for binding participation
2. Anticipatory governance and the dimension of the future in the framework of sustainable development	Build foresight capacities (e.g. building scenarios, monitoring trends)	Create foresight units in governments (e.g. observatories, committees of the future)	Initiate multi-stakeholder anticipatory processes to strengthen legitimacy	Institutionalize foresight throughout the public policy cycle
3. Coordination for comprehensive and coherent public policies	Use integrated evidence and data to coordinate among sectors and levels of government	Link national agendas to international commitments and coordinate among stakeholders	Negotiate to establish coalitions and inter-institutional agreements	Anticipate potential interactions among sectoral policies
4. Evaluation, public value and establishing a culture of continuous learning	Design monitoring and evaluation systems focused on public value	Implement continuous institutional learning processes	Foster consensus that transcends political cycles	Encourage anticipatory learning exercises (e.g. simulations, policy labs)

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The online consultation carried out by ILPES identified a set of critical capabilities that will need to be strengthened to ensure the effective implementation of the future regional agenda. Regarding technical capabilities, the consultation highlighted the need to address the lack of robust and consistent evaluation systems, which would not only make it possible to measure results and lessons learned but also to provide feedback in the public policy cycle based on timely and reliable evidence. Regarding operational capabilities, the persistent difficulty of coordinating action between sectors, levels of government and social stakeholders was underscored, revealing an urgent need for more integrated and flexible governance mechanisms. In terms of political capabilities, the consultation stressed the need to rebuild and strengthen trust between citizens and institutions through participatory processes that help to legitimize public decisions and forge sustainable consensus over time. Lastly, with regard to prospective capabilities, the main challenge lies in institutionalizing an anticipatory approach within public management to ensure the systematic analysis of trends, risks and opportunities in order to guide strategic decisions amid heightened uncertainty.

Together, these TOPP capabilities make up a comprehensive framework that could form the backbone of the future regional agenda, providing the necessary foundations to support transformative action that integrates a long-term perspective, social legitimacy and the ability to adapt to the structural changes facing Latin America and the Caribbean.

CONCLUSIONS

In recent decades, Latin America and the Caribbean has made significant progress in institutional strengthening for a renewed planning and public management agenda in four areas. As discussed in this document, progress has been made in each of these areas, both at the conceptual and methodological levels and in the form of concrete public policy measures.

This progress is down to several factors, in particular the introduction of conceptual and methodological innovations in public management; the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the pursuit of the SDGs, which have fostered more integrated and multisectoral public policy approaches; the need to respond to adverse, uncertain and highly interdependent global conditions; and growing citizen demand for transparency, integrity, efficiency and accountability.

However, evidence also shows that progress has been unequal between and within countries, and significant gaps remain, including uneven capacities between national, subnational and local levels of government; disparities in adopting new information and communications technologies; and inequality in different social groups' ability to access and take advantage of the opportunities offered by institutional transformations. The largest gaps are seen at the territorial level, where major inequalities persist in management capacities, access to resources and levels of development among different geographical areas and communities.

These territorial inequalities have become more pronounced against a backdrop of multiple crises—economic, social, climate and political—that have challenged States to act with greater innovation, adaptability and legitimacy. All these factors reaffirm the need for institutional capacity-building strategies based on collaborative, participatory, adaptive and transparent approaches that recognize territorial differences and are capable of cultivating social trust and ensuring sustainability over time.

A major challenge facing the region is to advance simultaneously along two complementary tracks: one being the consolidation of stable, solid public institutions anchored in legitimate and effective processes with the ability to address the public problems affecting citizens; the other, the fostering of an institutional culture geared towards innovation, learning and an anticipatory approach, which will enable adaptation in the face of complexity and constant change. This requires building institutional change and experimentation into State action and recognizing territorial particularities for differentiated and more effective responses according to the local context.

Stakeholder responses to the survey carried out within the framework of the ILPES Latin America and the Caribbean Development Planning Network confirmed the relevance of the four strategic areas guiding the future regional agenda. The combined analysis of perceptions of urgency and stated levels of mastery helped to identify clear trends and priorities for action.

Governance and institutional frameworks emerged as the immediate priority, supported by the solid technical and institutional foundation already in place in the region. This suggests that initiatives aimed at

strengthening transparency, accountability and citizen participation mechanisms can have concrete and tangible impacts in relatively short periods of time, helping to strengthen the legitimacy of public action and build trust in all territories.

The second priority area —anticipatory governance and the dimension of the future — is viewed as a regional strong point. Its high rating in terms of both urgency and mastery reflects the wealth of experience in long-term strategic planning and scenario analysis that already exists, offering a solid basis for progress on foresight and resilience in public management models that integrate a territorial perspective in building shared future scenarios.

In contrast, inter-institutional coordination capacity appears to be broadly mastered by the countries and is not perceived as a priority obstacle, suggesting that the current levels of training and cooperation in this area should be maintained while additional resources are redirected to the areas with the most urgent needs and weakest existing capacities, in particular at the local and subnational levels.

Lastly, evaluation and the culture of continuous learning were identified as the weakest public policy link. Low levels of urgency and mastery indicate that capacity-building in monitoring, indicator analysis, policy evaluation and social auditing should be prioritized. Deficiency in this area hinders the effective completion of the public policy cycle —design, implementation and feedback—, in particular at the territorial level. Capacities at this level are weaker despite being more necessary, given the need to design policies that are sensitive to local realities.

The survey findings thus support the implementation of a dual strategy: capitalizing on existing strengths in governance, institutional frameworks and foresight, and simultaneously promoting the development of robust evaluation and continuous learning systems that are sensitive to territorial differences and particularities. This approach will facilitate progress towards comprehensive, coherent and sustainable public management, capable of responding in a differentiated and effective manner to the needs of citizens and the complex challenges facing the region.

The draft regional agenda submitted to the countries for their consideration is a strategic tool that will facilitate the exchange of experiences, the exploration of innovations, the prototyping of new planning and public management practices and the creation of training programmes to strengthen national, subnational and local capacities, under the auspices of the Regional Council for Planning of ILPES. These efforts will help to strengthen institutions, close territorial gaps and ensure that diversity is recognized as a key component for building sustainable and inclusive development in Latin America and the Caribbean.