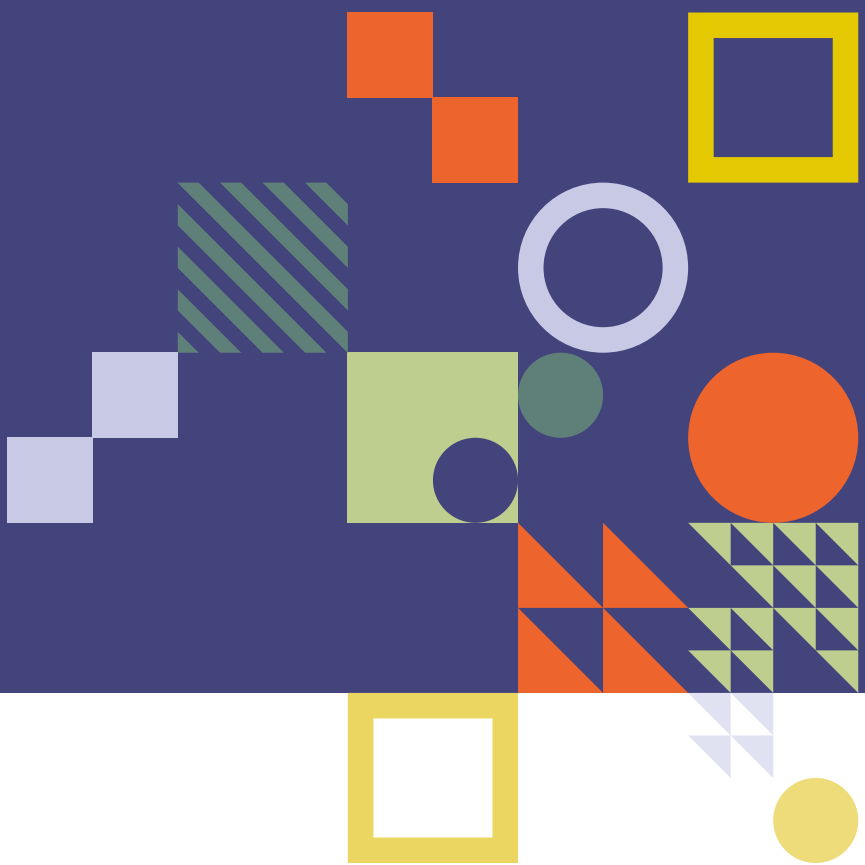
ECLAC Methodologies

Guide for designing monitoring and evaluation systems for open government interventions



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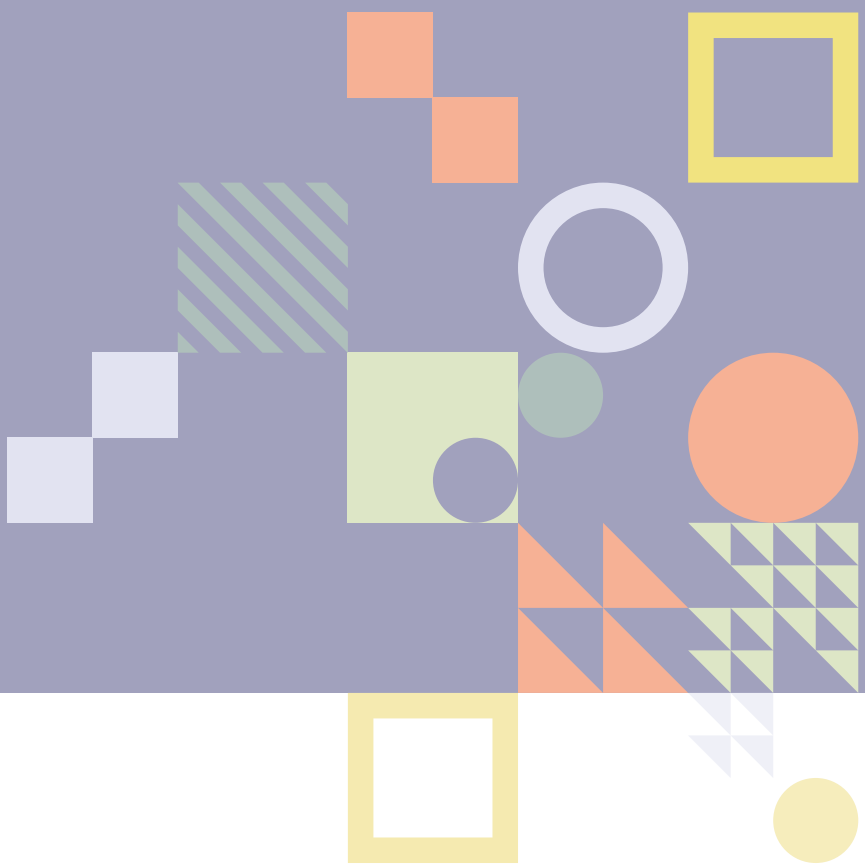

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Contents

Tables

Diagrams

Introduction

The Latin American and Caribbean region is faced with three structural traps that are hindering its progress towards a productive, inclusive and sustainable form of development: a low capacity for growth; high inequality and low social mobility and cohesion; and weak institutional capacities and ineffective governance. The last of these traps, in particular, is acting as a constraint on the implementation of transformative public policies owing to the governments' limited ability to respond to present and future challenges. This not only weakens the effectiveness of public policies but also erodes public confidence, thereby undermining one of the fundamental pillars of democratic stability.

This situation raises an important question as to what changes need to be made in order to extricate the region from these traps and —just as importantly— how to manage those changes. It thus becomes necessary to rethink planning and public management processes in order to free the region from this third trap, which is preventing the countries' governments from ensuring a better future for their citizens.

The presence of stronger, more resilient public planning and management systems increases institutions' ability to prepare for —and to respond and adapt to— unstable, uncertain environments in which they must cope with sudden changes triggered by domestic or external problems and to do so in innovative ways. As stated in the Regional Agenda on Governance of Planning and Public Management for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, adopted 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 Brasilia on 2 and 3 October 2025, there are four crucial areas that need to be addressed: (i) governance, institutional frameworks and social dialogue; (ii) anticipatory governance and the dimension of the future in the framework of sustainable development; (iii) coordination of comprehensive and coherent public policies; and (iv) evaluation, public value and establishing a culture of continuous learning.[1]

[1] LC/CRP.20/6.

Improving planning processes, anticipatory governance and public management in the region has been one of the chief objectives of ILPES ever since its founding more than 60 years ago.

Monitoring and evaluation systems are tools of key importance for the improvement of public management processes. Using those tools effectively requires the development of specific technical and operational capacities on the part of public institutions, along with the results-based management skills and tools needed to track administrative processes and the fulfilment of objectives and goals. This calls for the use of a management strategy for leveraging the creation of public value by States, their institutions and their public policies through the use of monitoring and evaluation systems that provide feedback and technical input for the planning, budgeting and implementation stages of the public management cycle (García López and García Moreno, 2010).

Monitoring and evaluation processes also provide valuable information for use in strengthening governance by facilitating citizen participation, accountability and transparency in the public policy cycle as part of an open government approach. This approach can promote citizen participation in the design and implementation of public action, proactive public accountability and the adoption of mechanisms for taking advantage of a society's abilities, experience, knowledge and initiatives in seeking solutions for collective problems (ECLAC, 2018).

Monitoring and evaluation systems provide support for internal management systems and for interaction with the population throughout the public management cycle. They do this by, on the one hand, supplying information that facilitates decision-making at the highest institutional levels and, on the other, helping to keep the general public informed.

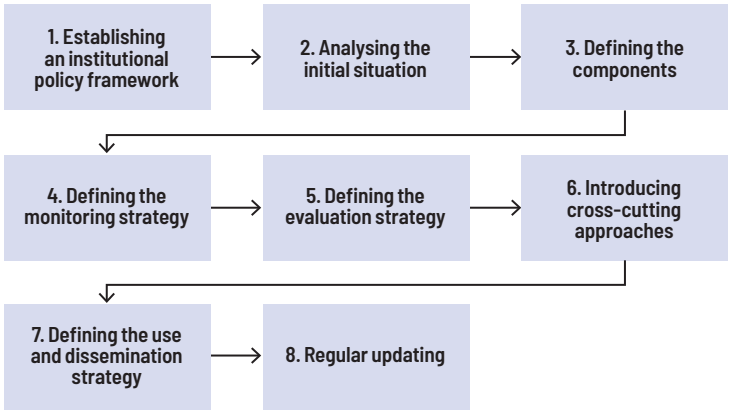
This guide draws upon an exhaustive review of the specialized literature on the design of systems for monitoring and evaluating public policies, projects and programmes. Some of the main sources of this specialized material were the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and its Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES), whose research, proposals and practical experience have provided extremely valuable conceptual, methodological and operational frameworks for the region (see, for example, Arenas, 2021, ECLAC, 2023a, Cohen and Martínez, 2004, and Martínez, 2015 and 2019). These contributions and those of other experts in the field provide a panoramic, contextualized picture of the different applicable strategies. The guide takes account of the widely varying systems of government, levels of development and policy frameworks of different countries in the region, all of which influence their possibilities, their priorities and their institutional capacities for implementing effective monitoring and evaluation systems.

This guide for the design of monitoring and evaluation systems is intended to serve as a source of support for government efforts to build an institutionalized system for monitoring and evaluating public initiatives. It also offers guidelines for the further development or improvement of existing systems, whether at the level of individual institutions —for the evaluation of that institution's own programmes and projects— or at the central level in situations where a national government is in charge of monitoring and evaluation functions across the board.

This guide outlines the main elements to be borne in mind in the development of this type of system, with special attention being devoted to the factors that play a critical role in ensuring that public institutions' monitoring and evaluation systems will be effective and transparent and will provide for full accountability.

It offers a description of the conceptual and technical framework for such a system, a section on the various stages involved in designing and implementing monitoring and evaluation systems (see diagram 1) and closes with a number of concluding observations.

■ Diagram 1
Stages in the monitoring and evaluation system design process



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The following chapters offer a description of the suggested stages in the design process and discuss the role they play in creating a well-designed monitoring and evaluation system.

Chapter I
The conceptual and technical framework

A. Open government

The open government approach and the three fundamental principles underlying that approach provide the conceptual foundation for this guide:[1]

(i) Government transparency: With few exceptions, information on the activities of public agencies is made available to the public in a timely manner in open data formats, and no restrictions are placed on its reuse. Transparency is not only a tool for combating corruption and the abuse of power; it is the right of all citizens to know how the government is using the money they pay in taxes.

(ii) Citizen participation: Citizen participation is an enforceable right and a civic responsibility. This is a two-way process based on the active exercise of citizenship and the advancement of the State. As is also true of access to information, it is a right recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

(iii) Collaboration: The joint efforts of the government and civil society to manage public affairs entails the creation of new spaces for coming together and for dialogue that provide an enabling environment for the co-creation of initiatives and the joint delivery of new public services. This also entails the recognition of the citizenry as a capable stakeholder in an open State as part of a process in which citizens' capacities, experiences, knowledge and enthusiasm are drawn upon in seeking out solutions to shared problems.

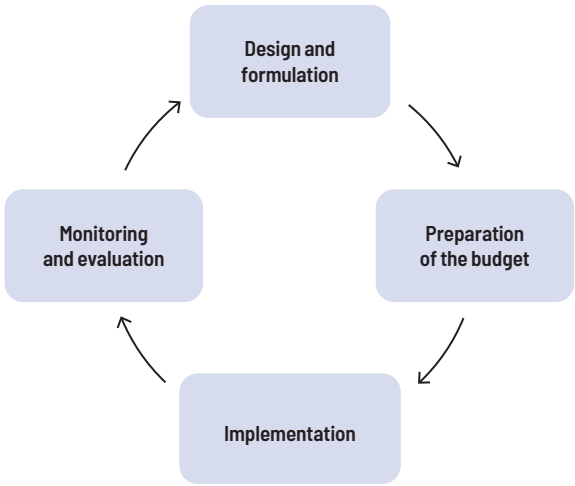
[1] See Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). https://biblioguias.cepal.org/EstadoAbierto/principios-del-estado-abierto-.

B. Results-based management and public value

This guide is also based on a results-based management approach as a strategy for creating public value and supporting the design of monitoring and evaluation systems.

In a results-based public management approach, the public policy management cycle is broken down into four stages (García López and García Moreno, 2010; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC], 2014 and 2018): (i) public policy design and formulation; (ii) budget preparation; (iii) programme and project implementation; and (iv) monitoring and evaluation (see diagram I.1). Monitoring and evaluation systems are used in the last of these stages in order to provide technical inputs for fine-tuning the other stages.

■ Diagram I.1
Stages of results-based management in the public policy cycle



Source: Prepared by the authors.

The results-based formulation of public policies involves the definition of the desired results in the medium and long terms and of possible ways of achieving them. From a country perspective, this calls for an analysis of the situation in the country and the establishment of priority objectives on a medium-term time horizon. It also involves the establishment of a results framework that indicates how the State's development objectives are to be attained and a description of the causal relationships and underlying assumptions.

The preparation of a results-based budget involves the allocation, programming and execution of budgetary resources to achieve the desired results in terms of government action and the accounting for their use for those purposes. Budget estimates should be classified on the basis of the programmes provided for in the government's medium-term strategic plans. The analysis of the budget outturn draws upon the technical inputs provided by the monitoring and evaluation system.

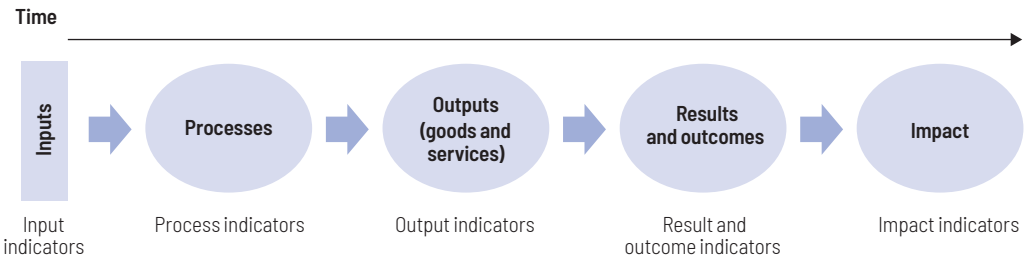
The implementation and management of programmes and projects are the main mechanism for the public sector's production of the goods and services used to achieve the results sought by the government. Thus, they play a central role in bringing to fruition the public policies that lead to the creation of public value.

In the final stage, monitoring and evaluation make it possible to gauge how much progress has been made towards achieving the desired results. They also make it possible to see what factors have had a positive or negative influence on the performance of public projects, programmes and policies, as well as providing technical inputs and additional evidence on the extent to which the other stages accomplished what they were supposed to.

1. The public value chain

Results-based management provides a panoramic picture of public sector actions because it encompasses the entire value chain. That value chain represents the logic model for public action, essentially representing what is done (processes and outputs) and why it is done (results and impact). This chain spans everything from the resources that are needed up to the results achieved and the impact that they are intended to have in terms of the desired end-situation. It includes inputs, processes, outputs, intermediate results and final outcomes (or impacts). Diagram I.2 depicts the linkages of these elements and their relationship to the performance indicators for each link in the chain.

■ Diagram I.2
Public value chain



Source: Prepared by the authors.

The creation of public value, understood as a response to problems and needs of the population that takes the form of the provision of institutional goods and services that will overcome those problems and meet those needs (Moore, 1995), is at the very heart of government management functions because it is the main intended purpose of government action.

From a development perspective, the concept of public value also presupposes a recognition of the value added by citizens to State action. This approach is marked by the convergence of social, economic and environmental objectives in the strategic

definitions and operations of public institutions. By the same token, it is associated with a view of public policy in which implementation is indivisible, universal, participatory and democratic.

Technically speaking, this value chain provides a way of transitioning from an undesirable situation as a starting point to a situation in which the initial problem has been solved.

This chain spans everything from the resources that are needed down to the results achieved and the impact that they are intended to have in terms of the desired end-situation, and it thus includes the processes that make it possible to convert inputs into goods and services for the target population. More specifically, the value chain is composed of the following elements: (i) inputs; (ii) processes; (iii) outputs; (iv) immediate and intermediate results; and (v) outcomes (impacts). The ways in which these terms are usually defined are summarized here:

(i) Inputs: The physical, human and financial resources needed to produce the proposed goods and services in the value chain.

(ii) Processes: The set of interconnected activities needed to produce and distribute those goods and services. These activities combine the supplied inputs in order to create the expected outputs.

(iii) Outputs: The goods and services produced and provided by institutions for a target population. They are the results of a specific combination of inputs and processes and are therefore directly related to those inputs and processes.

(iv) Immediate or intermediate results: Changes (in the short or medium term) in the behaviour, situation or attitudes of a population group once it has received the relevant goods and/or services from the institutions that produced them.

(v) Outcomes (impact): The results relative to the main objective that the relevant institutions sought to achieve by delivering goods and services to the population. They usually relate to long-term social and economic effects on a sectoral or multisectoral scale that can be measured with indicators that reflect a change in the problem situation that was the motive force behind the action taken.

Public value originates in the recognition of a major or central problem that constitutes the rationale for the implementation of a public project or programme.

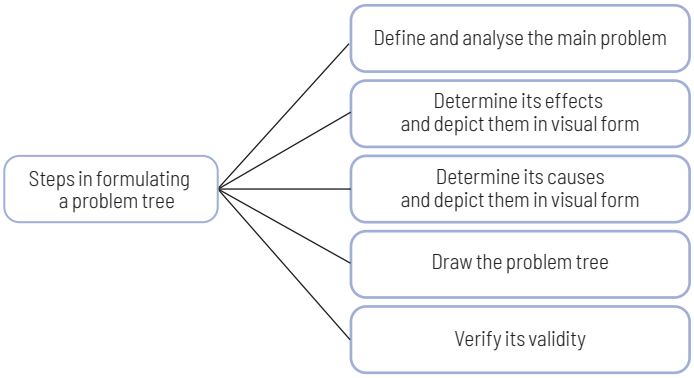
Some of the main technical standards and criteria for identifying and characterizing a problem are the following:

- The problem should be identified and prioritized on the basis of inherent conditions of key importance for the (sustainable) development of human beings, the citizenry or the environment that constitutes the setting for their interrelationship. In operational terms, this means that what ties the "condition" in with the "person" or "environment" should be explicitly detailed in the description of the problem.
- It should be characterized on the basis of the shortcoming or shortfall existing in a specific area that is having an impact on citizens or the environment.

- It should be a recurrent problem that has remained in place over time.
- It should be related to demands that have remained fairly constant over time.
- It is a negative situation.
- It is observable in an explicitly defined population group.
- It should not be characterized in terms of the lack of a specific service.

The problem tree methodology is one of the various methodologies and tools that can be used to gain a better understanding of a problem (see diagram I.3).

■ Diagram I.3
Stages in the formulation of a problem tree



Source: Prepared by the authors.

Once a central or main problem has been defined, three population groups can be identified that will serve as the main points of reference for determining the coverage of the goods and services to be furnished by the public projects, programmes or policies in question. The identification of these groups is necessary in order to establish the appropriate size of the target population.

(i) Potential population: The total population having the needs or problems that justify the delivery of goods and services by the institutions in question. This population group meets the eligibility requirements and is in a position to demand that their need and/or problem be addressed. The potential population is an approximate estimate of the potential demand for the goods and services in question. It specifically includes the total number of persons, groups or other type of subject that could access the services in question.

(ii) Target population: This is the potential population group that is eligible to receive the goods and services to be furnished by the institutions in question and that the government plans to assist within the established time frame. It may be the same group as the total potential population or a part of that population if there

are budgetary constraints and/or the population is subject to selection processes based on such criteria as vulnerability, the urgency of their situation, phased implementation (graduality), etc.

(iii) Beneficiary population: This is the group of persons who will receive the goods and services or, in other words, the people who are being or have been assisted.

2. Public policies as tools for the creation of public value

A public policy is a set of measures taken (and measures not taken) by a public authority to address a collective problem falling within its area of responsibility (Meny and Thoenig, 1992). Such policies are therefore larger in scope than government programmes or projects and include other instruments, such as plans, strategies, standards and even decisions to refrain from taking action in connection with the issue in question.

Important factors that policymakers need to bear in mind (Aguilar Villanueva, 1992) include the design of any intentional collective action, the course that any action will take as a consequence of the numerous decisions and interactions its origination entails and, hence, the actual results produced by that collective action.[2] A public policy may include projects and programmes, laws, policy frameworks and other public institutional measures.

Public policies should be reflected in government planning processes and, in order for them to outlast a given Administration's term in office, they should be backed by a broad consensus of opinion.

A number of different tools of public management can be used to deploy public policies (State Agency for the Evaluation of Public Policies and Quality of Services, 2010):

- Plans or strategies: Strategic instruments for defining general objectives that coordinate a set of measures, programmes, projects and services that are seen as a high-priority means of achieving a policy's objectives. These all have the same structure even though they may be applied at different levels (e.g. regional development strategies, national plans, sectoral policies or plans, institutional plane, annual operative plans and so on).
- Public projects: Unitary (indivisible) interventions having a defined objective, duration and budget. Such projects involve a set of interrelated, coordinated actions focused on the production of goods and services that are to be used for a shared purpose in a defined target population within a set amount of time and within the bounds of a specified budget. These are the most operational units of management for an organization and for the corresponding budget allocations (Cohen and Franco, 1993). The chief aim of a project is to provide a solution that will meet a specific need or

[2] While there are other public policy instruments that can fall within the scope of monitoring and evaluation systems (regional development strategies, national plans, an institution's annual workplans, etc.), this guide focuses on public actions in the form of government projects, programmes and policies.

resolve a specific problem of a predefined population group. This category includes public investment projects focusing on institution-building, social issues and infrastructure, for example.

- Public programmes: Actions undertaken over the medium or long term or for an indefinite period of time whose objective is to resolve complex problems or meet complex needs that are affecting a large sector of the population. In contrast to other interventions that are smaller in scope or shorter in duration, public programmes reach a broader sector of the population because they are aimed at addressing structural problems that have an impact on a significant number of people. They may take over three years to complete b17—ecause the needs that they are designed to meet or the problems that they are intended to solve may call for a sustained effort over time. Examples include housing improvement programmes, microenterprise support programmes and soil remediation programmes.
- Public actions: In addition to the public interventions mentioned above, the State may take various types of actions that do not fit in any of these categories in order to achieve a specific political objective. These kinds of actions —such as, for example, the establishment of standards, taxes or incentives, or the privatization of public utilities— are also a form of public policy.

Public projects and programmes can be generically regarded as public interventions, as they share the objective of mitigating, overcoming or resolving a collective problem or meeting a collective need. These public interventions are the main focus of the analysis of monitoring and evaluation systems presented in this guide.

A collective or public problem can be viewed in terms of a time lag between an initial situation (the present state of affairs) and a desired situation (in the future). This discrepancy is regarded as intolerable, unfair or undesirable in terms of the public agenda and is the reason why the government steps in to remedy the situation.

Thus, using results-based planning and an open government approach, the aim is to make a strategic, participatory and coordinated effort to determine the nature of the initial situation that is to be changed, the nature of the desired situation to which the public value chain is to lead and the best paths (via the design of public interventions) to take to move from that starting point to the intended end point.

A project or programme is a deliberate plan of action aimed at bringing about changes, deepening processes or reversing or rolling back given characteristics of the persons, groups or communities making up the intervention's target population.[3] Programmes and projects therefore have the following features: (i) they begin with an initial assessment of the existing

[3] These issues can be seen as "public problems" that figure on the high-priority policy agenda. They are often complex, have multiple causes and need to be addressed by means of a multidisciplinary approach. When using a results-based form of management, an accurate definition of what is considered to be a "public problem" is required because it that is the starting point for a coherent alignment of the following phases of the management cycle.

situation; (ii) they are aimed at achieving a stated outcome in the future; (iii) they provide a good or service; (iv) they entail a series of activities that are sequenced in a logical order; and (v) they require the use of resources.

Generally speaking, public projects, programmes or other interventions may take the form of State-instrumented actions, at any of the various possible levels, designed to produce specific results that will improve the quality of life of an identified population group. The concept of a value chain provides a way of arranging this wide array of features into a logical sequence so that it becomes possible to visualize the way in which the means of action and their aim or subsequent consequences are linked up with one another.

C. Public policy monitoring and evaluation systems

A monitoring and evaluation system is an ongoing organizational arrangement that is established within a coordinated institutional and operational framework to provide a regular flow of information for use in decision-making about public projects, programmes and policies. That information can then be used to improve those interventions' design, implementation and performance and to increase their accountability. This type of system requires a stable team of personnel with specifically assigned responsibilities, established workflows for the coordination of inputs and the institutional capacity to generate, systematize and analyse information.

From a technical methodological standpoint, monitoring and evaluation systems have to deal with two main challenges in order for the inputs they provide to be useful for their end users. The first challenge is to effectively track the performance of public organizations —their principal actions, programmes, projects and policies and, in particular, their processes and outputs— on a regular basis.

The second challenge is to conduct an effective evaluation of those inputs in order to generate and systematize information that provides as complete a picture as possible of a given project, programme or policy. In addition, depending on the type of evaluation being carried out, it is necessary to establish how those actions and services contributed to the achievement of the intervention's ultimate objectives and to identify the factors that may have limited or heightened their effectiveness in producing the desired outcomes.

Table I.1 sets out the factors that differentiate monitoring functions from evaluations.

Monitoring and evaluation systems must be able to guide and substantiate decisions regarding design, design modifications and improvements in the implementation of ongoing public interventions and decisions concerning the allocation of resources for public initiatives.

■ Table I.1
Monitoring versus evaluation

Dimension	Monitoring	Evaluation
Purpose	To identify progress in the implementation and results of programmes, projects and public policies in relation to their intended objectives and targets, based on their value chain, in order to enrich the dialogue among stakeholders and support any necessary management adjustments to maximize the achievement of expected outcomes.	To systematically and impartially assess the design, implementation and performance of a public intervention in order to determine its relevance, effectiveness, quality, efficiency, economic viability, impact and sustainability and to identify the factors influencing its performance, the lessons learned and good practices, all on the basis of valid and reliable empirical evidence.
Stage in the cycle	Conducted during the implementation of a public intervention and throughout the work involved in achieving the desired outcomes.	Conducted before, during and after the implementation of a public intervention, depending on the objectives and type of evaluation concerned.
Expected frequency	Continuous or regular (e.g. monthly, quarterly, annually).	At a specific point in time (not ongoing).
Responsibility	The technical team in charge of the intervention or organization, or specialized in-house or external teams.	An external team (not responsible for the intervention's execution), a mixed team or an in-house team (self-evaluation).

Source: Prepared by the authors.

1. The objectives of monitoring and evaluation systems

Because they usually must meet a range of different needs, monitoring and evaluation systems are multipurpose mechanisms. The three main purposes for which these systems may be used are as follows:

(i) Decision-making. A first objective is to provide technical inputs regarding the performance of public interventions that can contribute to (strategic and operational) decision-making. These systems are used to measure the amount, quality and targeting of the goods and services supplied by public organizations, to determine the effects of those outputs and to identify the factors influencing the level of performance that is being achieved (Mackay, 2007). These decision-making inputs are not only useful in improving public policies; they can also be used to help improve planning systems by contributing to improved alignment with medium- and long-term strategic objectives and to improve the effectiveness of expenditure if they are taken into account in the budgeting process. These are essential aspects of these systems, since their value and continued use lie in the utilization of the information they provide to enhance the performance of public policies (Mackay, 2007).

(ii) Organizational learning. Monitoring and evaluation systems also provide information that can be used to determine how proposed initiatives are working and to understand what is working, what is not working and why. Thus, the second objective is to drive organizational learning about the design, workings and results of public projects, programmes and policies.

(iii) Accountability. Since monitoring and evaluation systems involve the production, systematization and analysis of information about the performance of public policies, they provide valuable inputs for dissemination among other stakeholders. The third objective of these systems therefore has to do with transparency, which is the central pillar of the open government approach and its association with greater accountability to the population.

These objectives are not mutually exclusive. Monitoring and evaluation systems can be used to achieve all three objectives simultaneously or can prioritize one of the three.

The information supplied by monitoring and evaluation systems can be used to determine whether the public value chain is functioning and how well it is doing so. These systems can be employed to pinpoint weaknesses, provide feedback to ensure that the causal links among the various links in the chain are working as expected and, ultimately, to establish whether or not public value is being created.

Thus, what is being monitored and evaluated is the creation of public value at all stages along the chain.

2. The monitoring function

Monitoring is an ongoing activity that provides information about the progress being made in the implementation of activities that have been programmed for the purpose of producing certain outputs and public policy outcomes.

This information is useful for supervisors, directors, staff and other stakeholders taking part in initiatives for improving institutions' operational and strategic management.

Monitoring is conducted during the implementation of a programme or project to measure how well the planned activities are being carried out and how effectively the funding for those activities is being used (Cohen and Martínez, 2004; Martínez, 2015). It is also possible, however, to monitor outcomes that have already been achieved.

Effective monitoring systems are an essential component of the design of public projects or programmes. According to Martínez (2015), one of the main reasons why plans, programmes and projects fail is faulty implementation or, in other words, when executing agencies or teams do not carry out planned operations properly.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defines monitoring as a "continuing process that involves the systematic collection of data on specified indicators or other types of information" and thus "provides indications of the extent of implementation, achievement of intended results, occurrence of unintended results, use of allocated funds and other important intervention and context-related information" (OECD, 2023). This definition highlights the usefulness of indicators for stakeholders working to achieve a project's objectives.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines monitoring as "the ongoing process by which stakeholders obtain regular feedback on the progress being made towards achieving their goals and objectives" (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2009). Here, the feedback on the progress being made towards established objectives (or the lack thereof) is underscored.

ECLAC offers a different perspective in that it considers monitoring to be part of project or programme implementation. It describes the objective of monitoring as being to check on the effectiveness and efficiency of execution and to identify strengths and weaknesses with a view to recommending corrective measures for optimizing the end results. The Commission notes that monitoring can make it possible to achieve the following objectives (Ortegón et al., 2005):

- Establish how much progress has been made in the implementation of the intervention in question. There are different types of progress: physical progress, progress in terms of costs and progress measured against deadlines for different activities.
- Provide feedback. Findings can be shared with stakeholders.
- Recommend corrective measures for improving performance and increasing the likelihood that a project or programme will achieve its development objective. Project and programme directors are responsible for correcting problems detected by the monitoring system by modifying the relevant conditions to permit the initiative to be completed successfully and to keep it on track towards achieving its stated objectives.

3. The evaluation function

To evaluate something is to estimate, appraise or calculate its value. The aim of evaluating public projects, programmes and policies is to compare what was actually achieved against the intervention's planned achievements (in terms of inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts) and to determine what factors had a positive or negative influence on those results by gathering the necessary technical evidence.

The purpose of evaluations is to support decision-making by reducing the likelihood of errors and uncertainty and thereby leveraging the benefits and reducing the costs of attaining the proposed goals (Martínez, 2015).

Factors that may influence the results reflect the possible dimensions of the analysis of public interventions: (i) design-related aspects; (ii) implementation-related factors; (iii) results-related aspects; and (iv) features of the surrounding environment.

The main objectives of an evaluation are: to provide technical inputs to facilitate empirical decision-making; to facilitate improvements in design and the incorporation of design proposals; to speed up the learning process for participants; and to increase the transparency of public management functions.

Evaluation is defined as an assessment of the performance of public interventions of different sorts (programmes, projects, laws, sectoral policies, etc.). Evaluations are intended to arrive at a systematic appraisal of the concept, implementation and outcomes of an ongoing or completed public intervention (Arenas, 2021).

4. General requirements of monitoring and evaluation systems

One basic prerequisite for the proper monitoring and evaluation of a public project, programme or policy is to have clearly defined what aspects of a situation are to be modified by its implementation. Essentially, monitoring and evaluation make it possible to understand what progress is being made —or not made— in transforming a problematic situation targeted for improvement and what factors are influencing those efforts, whether negatively or positively. Hence the need to be clear about what is to be changed and how the change is to be achieved (the logic of a project or program).

Bearing in mind the different possible objectives that monitoring and evaluation systems may be used to pursue, there are five basic requirements that, if met, will make it possible to optimize the design, creation and future development of the proposed institutional mechanism: a systemic approach, relevance, honesty, timing and efficiency (see table I.2).

■ Table I.2
General requirements for monitoring and evaluation systems

Systemic approach	An integrated concept of the technical information to be produced (supply), together with the ability of persons and organizations to use that information in decision-making (demand). In the interests of the future sustainability of the system, it is important to maintain an appropriate balance between supply and demand for the information that the system is supposed to harmonize.
Relevance	The provision of the information needed to enhance the institutional decision-making process so that the decisions that are reached have a solid empirical basis.
Honesty	The information supplied by the system must provide an accurate, verifiable picture of the actual situation in terms of goals, actions or main tasks.
Timing	The pace at which the monitoring and evaluation system generates and systematizes information needs to be in step with decision-making processes so that the information is available when decision-makers need it.
Efficiency	High-quality information needs to be produced using the inputs and resources that are strictly necessary for that purpose by taking maximum advantage of existing institutional capacities.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Chapter II
Stage 1: Establishment of a political and institutional framework

The starting point for the design of a monitoring and evaluation system is a commitment on the part of the most senior authorities of the government or organization to launch an initiative. This commitment must be made before the authorities can provide the necessary overall strategic policy guidance, set up a team to be in charge of the system, start up the process, inform the various levels of the organization about the initiative and ensure that the necessary resources will be made available.

In addition to the highest authorities' political will, the support of all stakeholders across the board will also be needed. Gaining that support will entail a participatory process involving all the relevant stakeholders in which they will be provided with the information and technical elements needed to help set up an appropriate monitoring and evaluation system and have it ready by the time it is needed.

It is also very important to put in place an institutional and policy framework to support the system and endow it with legitimacy and to clearly delineate the duties and roles of each of the parties concerned. This has to be done if the system is going to be part of a sustainable policy of State that will outlast changes in Administrations and in the team in charge of the system.

The institutional framework for a monitoring and evaluation system should establish its scope in legal and structural terms, or, in other words, its governance, its operating rules and the powers and responsibilities of the operational units that will run the system.

This framework should be aligned with the country's institutional reality and the stage it has reached in the development and use of monitoring and evaluation systems. The governance of the system may be the responsibility of a designated entity, such as a central government agency, or may be divided up into different areas of responsibility assigned to different public entities.

Although such a framework is the point of departure for a monitoring and evaluation system, there are a number of other factors that should be taken into account from the very start. First of all, there is the consideration of the autonomy and independence of the State's monitoring and evaluation function and the development of a culture of evaluation in public institutions. It is extremely important for monitoring and evaluation activities to be strictly technical in nature, to have a solid empirical foundation and to enjoy a certain degree of independence within the government apparatus. While, ideally, an autonomous institution should be in charge of this kind of technical work in order to ensure that the resulting information is reliable and based on technical criteria and that the associated methodologies and data are accessible to the public, this independence needs to be balanced with sufficient proximity to the executive branch so that the results of monitoring and evaluation activities will be used as inputs for public policymaking.

Secondly, it is essential to overcome the possible resistance of government staff members to being evaluated, as evaluations are often regarded as a form of auditing or checking on staff performance rather than as a tool for providing feedback on working procedures that can leverage continuous improvement and learning. It is therefore imperative to establish a culture of evaluation based on the development of staff members' monitoring and evaluation skills. Greater familiarity will foster greater acceptance, ownership and use of these methodologies, along with the improved utilization of the results of monitoring and evaluation activities in public institutions.

Desirable components of the institutional structure for the proper performance of monitoring and evaluation systems include arrangements for coordination among the various stakeholders, which include not only those who are running the system but also those who are in charge of the programmes and projects that are to be monitored and evaluated. Collaboration should also be encouraged with offices or units in charge of planning and the budget if they are not part of the same public agency that is responsible for evaluation, as well as with institutions that are involved in consolidating official, reliable sources of information (Martínez, 2019).

Lastly, another important component of the institutional structure is a mechanism for strengthening technical capacities on an ongoing basis. This is important in order for the relevant personnel to have a solid understanding of the monitoring functions and the various evaluation methodologies being used.

Chapter III
Stage 2: Analysis of the initial situation

An analysis of the initial situation will establish the starting point for the design of a monitoring and evaluation system and will also help to define the participating stakeholders, the internal and external demand for information, the various types of information that will be needed and the capacity required to produce it. This is a very important stage in the process because it will provide technical inputs for the work to be done in subsequent stages and, in particular, because it will be a vehicle for arriving at an understanding of the system's context, the existing and potential demand for information and the actual supply of information that can be made available.

As a first step, some basic aspects of the institutional structure for the monitoring and evaluation system have to be ascertained and then analysed by the technical team in charge of designing the system.

Table III.1 lists some of the questions that need to be asked about these basic dimensions of the system. The answers to these questions will contribute to the assessment needed to form a clear idea of system requirements when the time comes to start making design decisions.

An analysis of these priority dimensions will provide an overview of the starting point for the new monitoring and evaluation system. Having clarity about these elements, incorporating them into the system's design and then managing them well will ensure the system's sustainability.

The questions shown in table III.1 are also valid for monitoring and evaluation systems that are already in operation, as the answers can provide a basis for improvements in such systems.

■ Table III.1
Analysis of the initial situation as a basis for the design of a monitoring and evaluation system

Dimensions	Key questions	Assessment		
		Yes	No	Evidence
Main end users	Have the main end users been identified? (identification and description)			
Demand for information	Have the information requirements to be met by the system been defined? (definition and description)			
Internal and external incentives	Have the external and internal incentives constituting the rationale for having a monitoring and evaluation system been delineated?			
Institution in charge	Has it been decided who will promote and regulate the monitoring and evaluation system?			
Users' actual capacity to utilize the information	Has the profile of the system's users been fully developed?			
	Has it been determined how much time the system users will have to analyse the information and what technical resources they will have available for doing so?			
	Have the information requirements in terms of amount and frequency been established?			
Positive synergies	Has it been determined how the system will enhance policymaking decisions?			
Identification of allies and sources of resistance	Which persons or entities could become key allies and help ensure that the system is a success?			
	Which persons or entities might put up resistance?			
Information supply; capacity of a monitoring and evaluation system to generate information	What information is being produced and is currently available to feed into the monitoring and evaluation system?			
	What information systems will play a key role in the monitoring and evaluation system?			
	Where is technical and institutional capacity in place for backing up a results-based monitoring and evaluation system?			
	Where will capacity need to be created? What types of capacity?			

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Technical initiatives have been launched at the regional level that can be of assistance in determining the profile of different monitoring and evaluation systems. Examples include the National Evaluation Capacities Index (INCE),[1] a collaborative diagnostic tool at the national level developed on the basis of consultations with stakeholders in the country, and the Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Analysis (MESA) initiative.[2]

1 See the World Food Programme and the German Institute for Development Evaluation (2021).
2 See the Global Evaluation Initiative (2021).

Chapter IV
Stage 3: Defining the components of monitoring and evaluation systems

Monitoring and evaluation systems have four components: their scope, their institutional framework, their operational framework and their technical framework. The steps involved in defining the constituent elements of each of those components are outlined below.

A. Harmonizing information supply and demand

Monitoring and evaluation systems are designed to generate information that can provide a sustainable flow of feedback concerning public projects and programmes. This is done by compiling a knowledge base that can be used to enhance the technical inputs provided by stakeholders. The idea is for the information supplied by monitoring and evaluation systems to enrich the frames of reference used by decision makers, the citizenry and the general public, as well as other stakeholders.

Given the above, one of the main challenges in terms of the design, implementation and sustainability of monitoring and evaluation systems is the harmonization of the need for information (demand) with the realistic possibilities for producing information (supply). In order to achieve this, a clear idea of the nature of each of these elements is needed, as discussed below.

(i) The demand for information. Among all the possible sources of demand (from management, political, social and other circles), the priority sources are the stakeholders involved in the public interventions which the monitoring and evaluation system will be used to track. Table IV.1 lists the various types of stakeholder and their possible information requirements.

■ Table IV.1
Stakeholders potentially needing information produced by the monitoring and evaluation system

Stakeholders	Examples
(i) Government officials at different levels	National, departmental or municipal political authorities
(ii) Staff of the lead agency for the monitoring and evaluation system	Senior managers of the organization, middle management, field personnel
(iii) Members of the organization in charge of the government budget	Directors or other managers of the organization responsible for sectoral budgets
(iv) Members of organizations participating in interventions covered by the monitoring and evaluation system	Senior managers of the organization, middle management, field personnel
(v) Legislative branch	Legislators, technical advisers, other staff of the legislative branch
(vi) Members of the general public	The target population as defined on the basis of various criteria (e.g. young people, adults and older adults) and specific groups (e.g. service recipients)
(vii) Organized civil society	Civil society organizations and associations of such organizations
(viii) International agencies	United Nations agencies, funds or programmes, multilateral financial institutions (World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF))

Source: Prepared by the authors.

(ii) The supply of information. The supply is a function of the capacity for generating the data needed to meet participants' demand for information. This includes a wide range of information from primary and secondary sources on many different subjects and involves various means of generating, processing, systematizing and analysing it. The supply is thus dependent on the technical capacity for conducting monitoring and evaluation functions at the systematic, institutional and individual levels, as well as the existing information and administrative recording systems, administrative record-keeping procedures and other available sources of information (e.g. censuses and household surveys).

(iii) Harmonization. The connection between the demand for and supply of available information is one of the main challenges for monitoring and evaluation systems. There is a broad range of different types of situation, including everything from a total disconnect to a harmonious convergence of the types and amounts of information, the timing of supply and the formats used, depending on the needs of each participant.

B. Constituent elements

In order to design an empirically based system for monitoring and evaluating public programmes, projects and policies, it is important to be able to answer four questions, each of which is related to one of the four basic components of the system:

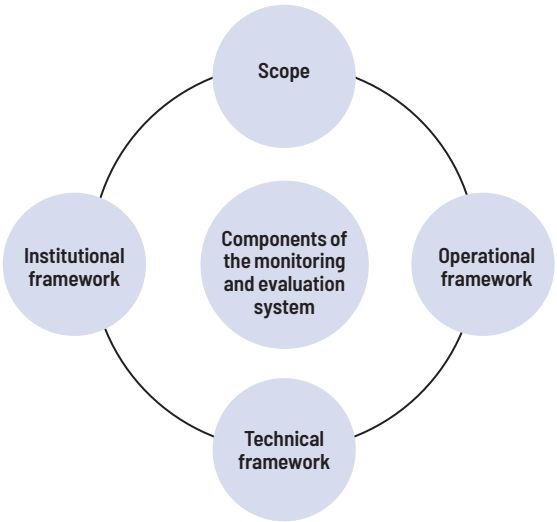
(i) What aspects of the intervention are to be monitored and evaluated? The answer to this question will help to shape the design component or dimension of "scope".

(ii) Who will be part of the system and what rules will govern their participation? The answer to this question will help to shape the design component or dimension of "institutional framework".

(iii) How will the system work? The answer to this question will help to shape the design component or dimension of "operational framework".

(iv) What basic elements, methodologies and core technical tools will be used? The answer to this question will help to shape the design component or dimension of "technical framework" (see diagram IV.1).

■ Diagram IV.1
Components of monitoring and evaluation systems



Source: Prepared by the authors.

1. Scope of monitoring and evaluation systems

The scope of these systems is defined as a function of four principal parameters: (i) the public interventions (projects or programmes) that they cover; (ii) the subjects that they focus on; (iii) their geographical coverage and the types of public institution they cover; and (iv) the time period concerned. The other components of a monitoring and evaluation system will be built within the scope defined by these parameters.

2. Institutional framework

This framework is the basis for the system's operation because it defines the arrangements for the system's governance. In particular, it establishes the identity of the participants in the system, along with their responsibilities and overall functions, and the policies and standards that will govern monitoring and evaluation practices. This includes the establishment of the organization, division or unit that will act as the lead agency responsible for ensuring the proper development and operation of the monitoring and evaluation system, as well as the other participating bodies.

3. Operational framework

This is the framework for the organization of the activities involved in running the system and fulfilling its objectives. It may be housed within an organization (institutional systems) or a number of different organizations in the case of more complex monitoring and evaluation systems (national, sectoral or multisectoral systems). At a more detailed level, it defines the specific tasks of the various units, divisions and offices of the organizations making up the system. This will entail establishing the profiles of the technical teams (at both collective and individual levels), their staffing and the design of the information flows needed for the system's operation, together with the necessary technological support.

4. Technical framework

This determines the definitions, conceptual and methodological framework and the technical standards and criteria for the production, systematization, validation and analysis of the information. It will also specify the tools to be developed for monitoring and evaluating public interventions. These tools and the associated techniques will produce the inputs needed to generate the various types of report and output to be provided by the monitoring and evaluation system. This is also the framework that will establish technical criteria and oversight mechanisms for ensuring the relevance, accuracy and timeliness of the information.

Table IV.2 lists the main aspects to be taken into consideration in the design of the different components of the monitoring and evaluation system.

■ Table IV.2
Components of the monitoring and evaluation system

Dimensions	Main aspects
Scope	What is the main purpose of these monitoring and evaluation activities?
	Which public projects and programmes will be covered by the system?
	Who will be the end users of the information? The mapping of end users is an essential part of the assessment of the baseline situation.

Dimensions	Main aspects
Institutional framework	Who will be involved in running the system at the institutional and policy levels?
	What will the relevant institutions' main areas of responsibility and functions be (institutional roles)?
	What organization or unit will be the lead agency for the system and what will be its relationship with other participating institutions?
	What incentives will there be for the production and use of the information generated by the monitoring and evaluation system?
Operational framework	How will the work of running the system be organized? This framework will establish the specific functions of the units, divisions and offices or the relevant organizations and will determine which processes they will participate in.
	What information flows will be needed for the system's operation?
	What will the profiles of the system's technical teams and their staff be?
	What capacity-building activities will be required for the teams performing the various operational roles?
Technical framework	What technical criteria and definitions must be in place for the production, systematization, validation and analysis of the information to be generated by the system?
	What monitoring and evaluation methodologies will be used?
	What other tools and techniques will be used? This includes the various types of reports and other system outputs.
	What technical criteria will be used to assess the reliability, validity and timeliness of the information that is produced?

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Chapter V
Stage 4: Defining the monitoring strategy

Once the scope of the monitoring and evaluation system has been specified, the next step is to define the monitoring strategy. This chapter will cover tools that can be used to develop that strategy so that the progress made towards achieving the objectives established for a given time period can be tracked and so that corrective actions and modifications can be introduced, as needed, in order to increase the likelihood of attaining those objectives.

To that end, this chapter will discuss the key components of the monitoring cycle, the types of performance indicator and benchmark required and the sequence of activities involved in defining reliable, valid and relevant indicators for monitoring public interventions.

Monitoring is an ongoing function that makes it possible to track the progress being made —or not being made— in the execution of public programmes, projects and policies over a given period of time in terms of inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes. This is done using indicators and targets or benchmarks that have been defined as priorities during the programming and budgeting stages. This information can then be used to introduce corrective actions and modifications to help ensure that the intended objectives will in fact be achieved.

The design of a monitoring system must therefore take a number of different aspects into account, such as the planning instruments that are linked to the projects and programmes in question, the design and selection of indicators and the information systems involved.

Table V.1 shows the technical specifications that should be incorporated into the system's design.

■ Table V.1
Specifications for monitoring systems

Monitoring is an ongoing or regularly performed activity conducted by the entities in charge of a public intervention, either directly or with the support of other units.
It involves the analysis of the advances being made in the implementation of projects, programmes and policies as measured against the planned (potential) advances at different stages of the value chain. It may be focused on the first few segments of the value chain (inputs, processes and outputs) or cover the entire chain.
It makes it possible to sound early warnings of possible setbacks or reversals and to reinforce positive results.
Monitoring paves the way for improvements and modifications in operating plans and the execution of planned activities.
It is based on the production, systematization and systematic compilation of information on key segments of the value chain.
Use is made of quantitative information (linked to performance indicators).
It provides a service to agents who are directly or indirectly participating in the management of public projects and programmes.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

A. Elements of the monitoring cycle

Monitoring is an ongoing process throughout all the stages of public project, programme and policy implementation. In general terms, it is centred around a series of requirements that must be met in order to provide feedback on the interventions' management (Valle and Rivera, 2008). Those requirements are: (i) an understanding of what information is needed and of the demand for it; (ii) an awareness of available sources and information collection capacity (the compilation of data from established sources); (iii) an ability to compare performance against established targets (identification of the gap between actual and expected progress); and (iv) decision-making concerning the measures that need to be adopted (definition of options and selection) and their implementation.

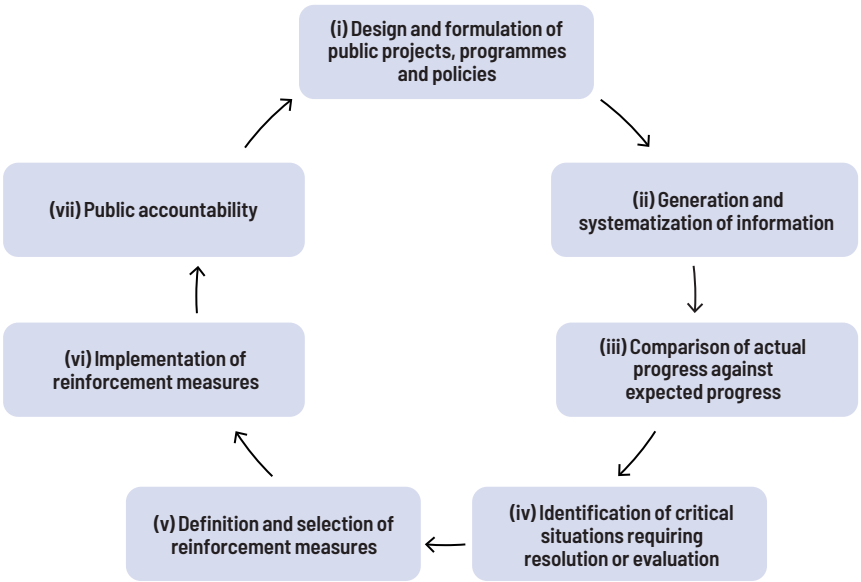
The methodological strategy that is called for in order to meet the existing needs for information at each stage in the process entails dealing with monitoring functions and evaluation functions in a coordinated manner. Monitoring is carried out throughout all stages of public project and programme implementation (see diagram V.1).

The methodological strategy for the monitoring process should take into account the needs and demand for information and the capacity for generating the data required to support both monitoring and evaluation functions.

This strategy must also be harmonized with decision-making processes pertaining to the inter-agency cycles provided for in the institutional framework for the monitoring and evaluation system. Moreover, the harmonization of the strategy with these processes

should be done in a way that will foster positive synergies. Information flows also need to be harmonized with the operational processes used to organize the workflows provided for in the system's operational framework.

■ Diagram V.1
The public project, programme and policy monitoring cycle



Source: Prepared by the authors.

The methodological strategy embedded in the monitoring and evaluation cycle and used to design the system involves seven different stages, each of which sets the stage for the one that follows. This cycle also feeds back into itself, as the last stage lays the groundwork for the initial stage in a new cycle. Each cycle is composed of the following stages:

(i) Design and formulation of public projects, programmes and policies. Each component of the multi-annual planning process marks a starting point for a monitoring cycle. This is the stage where the path that the process will follow is established, along with the means (basically, the actions and tasks) that will be used and other essential aspects (time frames, responsible parties, key indicators and so forth). While this activity is an inherent part of these kinds of strategic and operational planning processes, it is included in the cycle in order to make its importance in monitoring and evaluation processes apparent. This is also the point at which project, programme and policy formulation in keeping with established planning guidelines takes place.

(ii) Generation and systematization of information. This stage mainly deals with the measurement of key indicators. These indicators are used for monitoring progress towards established targets, in particular, but they are also used for the generation of primary information and the systematization of secondary information that can be used for evaluation purposes. The executing agencies of the interventions in question bear the main responsibility for producing information on the progress made in their implementation.

(iii) Comparison of actual progress against expected (planned) progress. This is an essential part of monitoring. It also makes it possible to see how the underlying hypotheses of the value chain fit in with or differ from the actual situation. The technical teams of executing agencies that are responsible for preparing progress reports for decision makers play an especially important role at this stage.

(iv) Identification of critical situations requiring resolution or evaluation.[1] On the basis of the results yielded by the monitoring process, decision makers and other participants can analyse the headway that has been made, problems that need to be addressed and situations calling for further analysis or evaluation. These results can serve as a basis for sounding early warnings about the need to take steps to reinforce or redirect the implementation of public projects, programmes and policies and can point up situations that need to be analysed and evaluated in greater depth. It is best if this stage coincides with the semi-annual and annual reviews provided for in the system's institutional framework.

(v) Definition and selection of reinforcement measures. If certain aspects are found to require reinforcement, options will be defined and measures selected for strengthening or reorienting the implementation of public projects, programmes and policies. It is at this point that steps are taken to ensure that monitoring and evaluation processes will produce concrete results that will lead to greater success in the achievement of policy goals all along the value chain. If reinforcement measures are not taken, the potential for improving the system will be greatly reduced.

(vi) Implementation of reinforcement measures. This is the stage at which the system will have a practical impact on the design and implementation of public projects, programmes and policies. It mainly involves the application of the selected measures for strengthening performance. Strictly speaking, this is an area that relates to other stages in the public policy cycle that extend beyond the bounds of monitoring processes, but it is included here to highlight the importance of the actions to which the monitoring and evaluation system can give rise.

[1] From the standpoint of coordination with evaluation processes, concerns may surface at this stage that give rise to specific additional evaluations. These inputs may lead to a decision to evaluate certain interventions, the formulation of specific evaluation-related questions or the identification of given dimensions of performance that require analysis in greater depth.

(vii) Public accountability. In the open government approach, the monitoring and evaluation cycle culminates with the presentation to the public and to the stakeholders in the process of the main outcomes of the public interventions whose progress has been tracked and evaluated. This accounting may be rendered by the senior officials of the relevant institutions, such as the directors or political authorities at the helm of those public institutions.

Table V.2 lists the stages of the monitoring cycle and the elements that need to be defined in the system's design.

■ Table V.2
Design of monitoring systems

Stage	Responsible party (Unit or organization responsible for this stage)	Information and technical inputs (Inputs needed for this stage)	Contributions to the monitoring cycle (Information outputs that the responsible unit produces from the inputs received)	Timetable (Time during the year when outputs are to be presented)
(i) Design and formulation of public projects, programmes and policies				
(ii) Generation and systematization of information				
(iii) Comparison of actual progress against expected (planned) progress				
(iv) Identification of critical situations requiring resolution or evaluation				
(v) Definition and selection of reinforcement measures				
(vi) Implementation of reinforcement measures				
(vii) Public accountability				

Source: Prepared by the authors.

B. Performance indicators

1. Definition of indicators and their features

The main components of a monitoring system are its indicators. Indicators are the directly observable signs of changes in the variables that reflect the performance of public projects, programmes and policies. They play an essential role in the second, third and fourth stages described in table V.2.

Indicators are thus signposts of changes in given sets of conditions or of the results of specific actions (UNDP, 2009). From a methodological perspective (Sierra Bravo, 1994), indicators are signs of other, more general variables (concepts) that can be inferred from the values shown for those indicators.

Since indicators are a measurement of probabilities (never a certainty) regarding the abstract concepts that they represent, it is often necessary to use more than one indicator in order to make very abstract elements observable (Boudon and Lazarsfeld, 1985).

An indicator is a quantitative[2] or qualitative[3] yardstick that provides signals about a given situation, activity or outcome (National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy [CONEVAL], 2013). Indicators thus provide information about one or another aspect of public interventions and their results.

2. Performance indicators

Performance indicators provide quantitative and qualitative information about how a public intervention is progressing. This is done by using a selected unit of measurement to calculate a value or magnitude that can supply relevant information (e.g. percentages, averages and rates).

Indicators that are to be used in a monitoring system should exhibit the following technical properties (Arenas, 2021):

- Clarity: The indicator should be precise and unequivocal. It should also be defined clearly and simply so that everyone involved understands what it is measuring.
- Significance: It should reflect an important dimension of progress towards the achievement of an objective. Care should be taken to ensure that the important aspects of an objective or output are what are being measured, as the indicator should be measuring the factors that are needed in order to evaluate performance.
- Reasonable cost: The cost of obtaining the information needed to construct the indicator should be reasonable and should correlate with the amount of resources being invested in the activity.

2 Quantitative data are defined as the numerical values reflecting the quantification of different aspects of the object of study.

3 Qualitative data are defined as information about the nature, characteristics or condition of an object of study. These data can also be expressed numerically by assigning a value to each defined category.

- Monitorability: The indicator should be such that it can be measured at various points in time in order to track how it changes. This has to do with the availability of necessary information.
- Contribution at the margin: If there is more than one indicator for measuring performance as it relates to a given objective, the indicator should provide additional information not provided by the other indicators. Indicators should be unique in the sense that they should not provide the same information as another indicator.
- Reliability: The indicator must be reliable, regardless of who is measuring it. The statistical base for indicators should lend itself to being audited by the institution's authorities and scrutinized by outside observers.
- Relevance: The indicator should relate to essential processes and/or outputs of each institution. The measurement of all of an institution's outputs or activities would generate an information glut both inside and outside the organization.
- Coherence: All the components of an indicator should be coherent. In other words, in addition to being significant and relevant, the name of the indicator should be aligned with its formula, it should be possible to measure its constituent variables with the indicated means of verification and all of these elements should fit in with the baseline and targets.

3. Types of indicator

Monitoring systems need to compile information on different sets of circumstances and dimensions, and this calls for the use of different types of indicator.

The most common typologies classify indicators according to the dimensions of performance they measure and the section of the value chain over which the organization can exercise a degree of control.

One method of classifying indicators is based on the dimensions of performance that they measure (Arenas, 2021):

- Effectiveness. The indicator reflects the extent to which the established objectives have been met, without necessarily taking into consideration the resources allocated for that purpose. The most common measurements of effectiveness are based on coverage, targeting and attainment of the direct objectives of projects, programmes and policies.
- Efficiency. The indicator describes the relationship or ratio between two magnitudes: the physical production of a deliverable (a good or service) and the inputs or resources used to achieve that level of production.[4]

[4] A set of efficiency indicators will correspond to unit cost and the average cost of production, which relate physical productivity to the cost of the factors and inputs used to produce a good or service. Another important group of efficiency indicators consists of indicators aimed at measuring average factor productivity, that is, the average number of units of output obtained per unit of factor.

- Quality.[5] The indicator focuses on the appropriateness and attributes of the outputs by measuring such dimensions as timeliness, accessibility, accuracy, service delivery continuity, convenience and courteous client service.
- Economical use of resources. The indicator measures the ability of the authorities directing the intervention to administer, generate or mobilize the available funds appropriately in order to attain its objectives.

Some indicator classification systems are based on the area of the value chain over which the organization can exercise a degree of control (Arenas, 2021):

- Inputs: The indicator quantifies the physical, human and financial resources used in the production of the relevant goods and services. It is used to gauge the volume of resources that are available or required to produce a final good or service.[6]
- Process: The indicator measures the performance of the activities involved in implementation or the way in which the work needed to produce goods and services is carried out, such as administrative processes, procurement procedures, communications and technological processes. It is used to learn about how the production process is being managed.
- Outputs: The indicator quantifies aspects of the goods and services that the programmes and projects have produced by combining inputs and labour. In and of themselves, output indicators do not provide information about the achievement of objectives.
- Intermediate results: The indicator measures changes in the behaviour, status, attitudes or certification status of beneficiaries once they have received the goods or services provided by the institutions running the programme or project.
- Outcome or impact: The indicator measures the indirect results that the achievement of the intermediate results are expected to have as a result of the delivery of the goods and services in question. These indicators provide verification of the intervention's long-term social and economic effects.

4. The indicator design sequence

- Determination of the segment of the value chain measured by the indicator. Once the different components of the value chain have been identified, the next step is to determine which of these components should be measured by a performance indicator, depending on what types of information are needed. At this point, it is important to review the elements in each segment of the chain to ensure that they provide an accurate representation of the planned activities, outputs and achievements and of the target population.

5 Strictly speaking, quality is a subdimension of effectiveness. It is accorded an equal level of importance here because it plays such a significant part in the way the public (beneficiaries or users) evaluates public policies.

6 In general, these indicators are expressed in terms of funding allocations, number of professional staff, number of hours of work used or available to perform a task, number of workdays used, etc.

- Definition of the dimension, name and method of calculation. The next step is to establish the dimension of performance to be analysed (effectiveness, efficiency, quality or economical resource use). Once the performance dimension has been selected, the indicator must be defined by specifying both its name and how it will be calculated, that is, the arithmetic relationship among the variables. The result of that calculation will yield the value expressed by the indicator.
- Technical validation of the indicators. After the indicator has been defined, its relevance needs to be verified. This can be done by answering the three questions shown in table V.3.

■ Table V.3
Validation of indicators

Question	Validation criterion		
Does the indicator represent the relevant factor identified in the corresponding stage of the value chain?	It represents the object of the measurement and the subject, group or segment to be measured.	Yes (Continue on to the next question)	No (Reformulate or select a different indicator)
Is the indicator clear and specific?	The indicator is not ambiguous; it is easy to understand and interpret.	Yes (Continue on to the next question)	No (Reformulate or select a different indicator)
Are sources of the information required for its measurement accessible?	In this case, there are at least three possible answers, each of which points to a different course of action.	(i) The information does not exist and cannot be produced or it would be extremely costly to do so. In this case, similar indicators that could be used in the original indicator's stead will have to be sought or the indicator will have to be reformulated (the process is begun again). (ii) The information does not exist, but it can be produced at a reasonable cost. In this case, the required information is compiled and the periodicity of its calculation is determined. The last step is to select the indicator. (iii) The information exists and can be obtained at a reasonable cost. In this case, the appropriate periodicity of its calculation is established and the indicator is selected.	

Source: Prepared by the authors.

5. Selection of the indicators

In some cases, when a monitoring and evaluation system is being designed or reformulated, a large number of indicators already exist or can be obtained from information systems that are already in operation. At times, there are so many indicators that it is difficult to analyse them all, and the process becomes too costly or interferes with efforts to provide the information needed by decision makers on time. In such instances, clear-cut criteria for screening the available indicators are required.

It is important for the set of indicators that is ultimately selected to cover all or as much as possible of the value chain. It is advisable for the work of building these indicators to be governed by an emphasis on their utility in order to ensure that the most significant data and results will be made available as quickly and as economically as possible (Billorou et al., 2011, p. 38).

C. Performance targets

Targets are objectives whose temporal, spatial and quantitative dimensions have been clearly established (Cohen and Franco, 1993; International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD], 2002; Zall and Rist, 2005). Targets establish the performance level to be achieved in relation to a given objective or output within a delimited time frame (e.g. month, six-month period and year). More precisely, a target is the specific numerical value of a performance indicator that is supposed to be reached for the corresponding objective or output.

Targets should be an expression of a quantifiable performance level to be attained by a certain date. They should be realistic and achievable but should nonetheless represent a significant challenge. In defining performance targets, it is useful to understand how the indicator has evolved over time so that reasonable target levels can be established. In particular, having a baseline and successive measurements provides the background information needed for doing so.

Once the targets have been defined, the results obtained for the various indicators should be compared. Then, on that basis, it becomes possible to identify critical situations and the measures needed to move the indicators closer to their target levels. This is the foundation of all monitoring systems.

Chapter VI
Stage 5: Defining the evaluation strategy

The evaluation strategy establishes the technical guidelines and standards for the evaluation and the tasks to be completed in order to carry it out.[1] More specifically, the strategy defines the way that the design, start-up and results of ongoing or completed projects and programmes will be analysed.

This chapter will cover the steps involved in defining an evaluation strategy, along with the main definitions and technical criteria that are commonly used in such strategies. It will also discuss the various types of evaluation that can be combined in an evaluation strategy and explain how to go about establishing a tailored evaluation programme or plan for a specific project or programme.

A. Technical specifications and criteria

A first step in designing an evaluation strategy is to determine what specifications are most appropriate from a technical standpoint. These specifications should make it possible:

- To determine how the results achieved by a public intervention compare with its planned objectives and to identify internal and external factors that have exerted a positive or negative influence on that intervention;
- To present conclusions based on valid empirical data and sound theoretical and conceptual frameworks;
- To conduct a technical assessment of the operations and performance of public interventions;

[1] The evaluation strategy can be developed at the same time as the monitoring strategy is being designed. However, if resources are in short supply, it can also be formulated at a later stage.

- To facilitate institutional learning on the part of direct and indirect participants in the projects or programmes concerned;
- To contribute to improvements in the public intervention's design, implementation and results;
- To provide technical inputs to decision-makers, society and other members of national or territorial communities that will enhance the transparency of public management.

The technical criteria for project or programme evaluation systems are focused on effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, impact and sustainability (see table VI.1).

■ Table VI.1
Technical evaluation criteria

Effectiveness	The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and expected results, including any different outcomes across the relevant groups. An evaluation of effectiveness should analyse progress towards objectives along the results chain/causal pathway. Analysis of effectiveness involves taking account of the relative importance of the objectives or results.
Efficiency	The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way. This is, in essence, determined by the ratio between the resources used in an intervention and its achievements. As the resources used to achieve the same level of attainment decrease (the quantity:quality ratio), efficiency increases. This calculation is usually applied at the level of input-to-output ratios, since it refers to the relationship between actual expenditure and the volume of physical outputs produced. This criterion thus measures the success achieved in attaining the planned objectives at the lowest possible cost. This can also include an evaluation of operational efficiency (how well the intervention has been managed).
Relevance	The extent to which the intervention's objectives and design correspond to beneficiaries', global, country and partner/institutional needs, policies and priorities and continue to do so if circumstances change.
Coherence	The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in the same country, sector or institution. Includes internal coherence and external coherence. Internal coherence has to do with the synergies and interlinkages between the intervention and other interventions carried out by the same institution/government, as well as the consistency of the intervention with the relevant international norms and standards to which that institution/government adheres. External coherence relates to the consistency of the intervention with other actors' interventions in the same context.
Impact	The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects. An intervention's impact is understood to mean its ultimate significance and potentially transformative effects. An evaluation of impact seeks to identify social, environmental and economic effects of the intervention that are evident over a longer time horizon or are broader in scope than those already captured under the effectiveness criterion.
Sustainability	The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue to be apparent or are likely to continue to do so even if the intervention is brought to an end. Includes an examination of the financial, economic, social, environmental and institutional capacities of the systems needed to sustain net benefits over time. Involves analyses of resilience, risks and potential trade-offs.

Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2019). *Better Criteria for Better Evaluation: Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use*. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/15a9c26b-en.

B. Evaluation questions

Evaluation questions set the direction for the preparatory study and should therefore clarify the aspects of public interventions that are to be studied, the main end users to be analysed and the subjects to be covered in the study.

These questions are directly related to the evaluation criteria mentioned above and with the baseline assessment that provided the starting point and rationale for the public project or programme in the first place.

The exact nature of the questions will depend on the type of evaluation being undertaken. They may deal with subjects such as the following:

- Are the target population and the coverage strategy for the public project or programme accurately defined?
- Is the supply of the goods and services being provided in line with the problem that the intervention is intended to resolve?
- Is the intervention helping to resolve the problem? Have the users and beneficiaries experienced a significant change?
- Are the improvements that have been observed attributable to the intervention?
- Has the intervention given rise to any unforeseen benefits?
- Are the programme users and beneficiaries satisfied with the goods or service they have received?
- Have the project or programme resources been invested in a socially profitable manner?
- Are the programme or project components being produced at as low a cost as possible?

C. Types of evaluation

Different types of evaluation are used to answer the above questions. Evaluations are differentiated by the point in time at which they are carried out, their scope, the type of institution that is conducting them and the segment of the public value chain that is being examined.

1. Timing of implementation

(a) Ex ante evaluations

These evaluations are based on an analysis of the project's or programme's design and how well it corresponds to: (i) the problem to be solved; (ii) the intended results of the delivery of the planned services (vertical); (iii) its economic, financial and technical feasibility;

(iv) its political viability (understood in a broad sense to encompass agreements among stakeholders and so forth), its institutional viability (e.g. standards and institutional culture) and its organizational viability (e.g. executing agencies or units and personnel); and (v) its sustainability (and that of its effects once the project or programme has been concluded).

(b) Evaluations conducted during implementation

These evaluations focus on the implementation process and the progress being made towards the intervention's objectives with a view to the possible introduction of modifications. Some experts call these analyses "formative evaluations" (Neirotti, 2007). This type of evaluation uses many of the same inputs as monitoring activities do, since it employs monitoring indicators to analyse how the project is progressing and to examine the factors that account for any departure from the implementation plan. It also differs from other types of evaluation in that it incorporates dimensions of project management as such (management assessments), including analyses of: (i) the organizational structure for the project's implementation (the organizational chart, assigned responsibilities and staffing ranks in the organizational hierarchy); (ii) the workflows involved in delivering the planned services (the linkages and sequencing of activities and their timing); (iii) coordination mechanisms (those originally designed and those being used); (iv) the selection and training of personnel and the incentives being offered; (v) the work environment; (vi) outputs and immediate effects; (vii) political/institutional aspects; (viii) the planning, monitoring and evaluation processes themselves; and (ix) the intervention's economic and financial management.

(c) Ex post evaluations

These evaluations are conducted after the project or programme has come to an end. Their purpose is to determine what effects it has had on the beneficiary or target population. This type of evaluation looks into all the consequences and effects (whether planned or not) of the project or programme and assesses the intervention's outcomes or impact.

2. Scope

(a) Summative evaluations

The aim of these evaluations is to arrive at an overall judgment about an intervention's value in terms of its effectiveness (and the conditions that made it possible) once it has come to a close or has reached an advanced state of maturity. They are often conducted when the time comes to decide whether or not a project or programme should be extended or whether it might be possible to reproduce the intervention in other contexts.

(b) Formative evaluations

The purpose of these evaluations is to provide information that can be used to alter an intervention's implementation and possibly even its design. They are particularly useful for project and programme managers and are conducted throughout the project life cycle.

3. Type of institution conducting the evaluation

(a) External evaluations

The technical team tasked with the analysis does not belong to the institution or agency responsible for conducting the project, programme or policy to be evaluated.

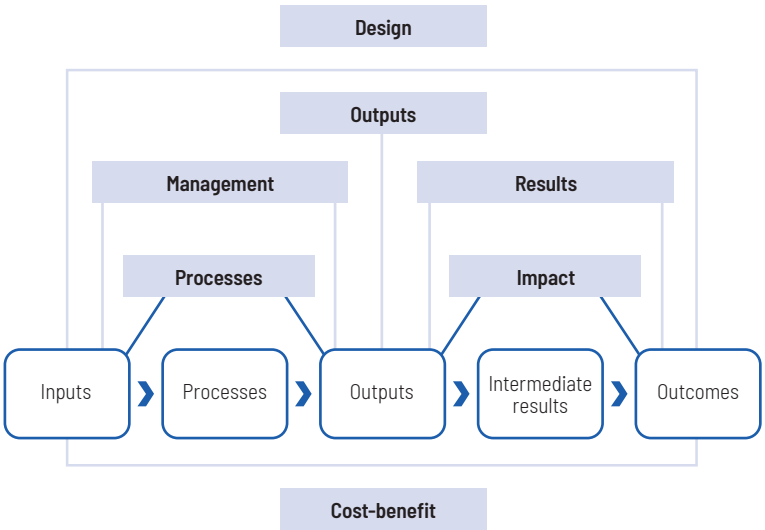
(b) Internal evaluations

The team tasked with the analysis belongs to the same executing unit or agency that is in charge of conducting the public intervention to be evaluated.

4. Segment of the public value chain being evaluated

Evaluations can also be classified by the segment of the value chain that they cover. Different types of evaluation are conducted for different purposes and concern different parts of the value chain.[2] Diagram VI.1 depicts the various types of evaluation and the different technical tools used to evaluate public projects and programmes.

■ Diagram VI.1
Types of evaluation and the evaluation



Source: Arenas Caruti, D. (2021). Evaluación de programas públicos. *Public Administration Series* (87) (LC/TS.2021/31). Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

[2] The technical criteria referred to in the preceding section are quite broad and can be applied in different types of evaluation. For example, a process evaluation can be external (conducted by a team that is not part of the executing agency) or internal (conducted by the same technical teams that are responsible for executing the intervention).

These types of evaluation are described below:

(i) Design evaluations

The purpose of this type of evaluation is to see whether public funding for the programme is justified by the contribution it will make to solving a problem or meeting a need of a group of persons or sector of society. This kind of analysis describes the nature and importance of the problem and the strategy for solving it (the goods and services it will provide). It also verifies the soundness of the programme's value chain and the associated causal relationships.

(ii) Process evaluations

This type of evaluation is intended to improve the production process for the goods and services to be provided by the programme in order to increase the quality of the products and help make sure that the desired results will be achieved. To this end, the analysis is focused on detecting the main problems or bottlenecks in the production process, establishing good practices and identifying opportunities for improvement. The design of the processes, the tools used to conduct them and the way in which they are carried out are all evaluated.

(iii) Management evaluations

This type of evaluation is aimed at improving the way in which the intervention is being managed —the series of administrative and operational actions taken to carry out the programme— as a way of improving its outputs and outcomes. The analysis covers the functions, responsibilities and performance of the programme's managers, the suitability of the management model being used, the intervention's financial management and the use of appropriate management tools for a results-based management model.

(iv) Output evaluations

This type of evaluation looks at the programme's performance from the standpoint of the amount and quality of goods and services that it is producing. In order to do this, the evaluation needs to quantify production, analyse the products, see how well both of these elements address the programme users' or beneficiaries' needs and fit in with their perceptions, and determine if the programme's outputs have been achieved with the expected effectiveness, quality, efficiency and economy of resource use.

(v) Outcome evaluations

This kind of evaluation serves to verify the extent to which the objectives or expected results and outcomes —intermediate results and outcomes over the long term— of a programme or project have been achieved. In other words, it is intended to determine whether a programme contributed to the solution of the problem or to the satisfaction of the need that was the reason that it was set up in the first place and, if so, to what extent.

This evaluation makes it possible to ascertain how successfully the intervention established the public value chain that it was supposed to create and the quality of the expenditures made to execute the programme.

(vi) Impact evaluations

These evaluations are used to determine if the outcomes for a group of persons or for a sector of society are a direct result of the programme and whether they are wholly attributable to the programme or, if not, to what extent the programme can be credited for them. Thus, these evaluations are used to verify that the programme produced the expected result and to quantify its contribution to that result. Impact evaluations therefore measure the changes in impact variables that can be directly attributed to a programme and identify any external variables that could have influenced the outcome.

(vii) Cost-benefit evaluations

This kind of evaluation is used to analyse the link between the impact that a public intervention has had and the cost of that intervention and to then conduct an economic assessment from a social perspective. This entails measuring the cost of having achieved the programme's objective in terms of the outcome variables that can be directly attributed entirely to the programme (its impact) in order to analyse the cost-benefit relationship.

D. Stages in the evaluation of public interventions

The stages involved in the process of evaluating public interventions are defined in a variety of different ways in the international literature. See, for example, Arenas (2021), Cohen and Martínez (2004), ECLAC (2024a), Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy (2017) and Mottola (2014, 2015).

While different authors hold diverging views and use of different frames of reference, a common sequence of steps can nonetheless be identified. These include: (i) the arrival at a political/institutional decision to undertake an evaluation; (ii) the setting of objectives and the determination of evaluation questions; (iii) the definition of the methodological and operational design of the evaluation; (iv) the implementation of the evaluation; and (v) the utilization of the evaluation's findings (see table VI.2).

■ Table VI.2
Stages in the evaluation of public interventions

1. Political/institutional decision to undertake an evaluation
The starting point for the process is the decision to conduct an evaluation and the selection of the public intervention to be evaluated. This stage includes the adoption of the corresponding political decision by the relevant authorities.[a] The decision may also be reached within the context of an institutional, sectoral or national evaluation programme.

2. The setting of objectives and the determination of evaluation questions
The definition of the evaluation's objective includes the formulation of the questions that the evaluation will seek to answer. According to the quality standards established by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD),[b] the objectives of an evaluation may be: (i) to ascertain results (outputs, outcome, impact) and assess the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and sustainability of a specific development intervention; and (ii) to provide findings, conclusions and recommendations with respect to a specific development intervention in order to draw lessons for application to the design and implementation of future interventions.
3. Definition of the methodological and operational design of the evaluation
The methodological strategy that is chosen should be one that can provide responses to the evaluation questions. Consideration can be given to the levels of results defined in the intervention's objectives (inputs, outputs, short-, medium and long-term effects) and, on that basis, the evaluation can be focused on one or another of the stages in the value chain, with the most usual choice being the short- or long-term effects (impact of the intervention). Concurrently, the operational model for conducting the evaluation can be defined (for example, a decision to use external or internal technical teams). This is the stage at which the evaluation matrix is drawn up. The matrix will specify such things as: (i) the evaluation questions; (ii) the indicators; (iii) information sources; and (iv) the data analysis strategy to be used. Based on the available data and the information called for by the evaluation methodology that has been chosen, and subject to the evaluation questions, a feasibility study of the proposed analysis (technical viability) is carried out. Among other factors, the possibility of conducting the evaluation will be contingent upon the availability of the necessary resources.
4. Implementation of the evaluation
This stage consists of the analysis itself. It may include activities focused on creating shared frames of reference for all the participants. Implementation will involve the compilation, systematization, analysis and interpretation of qualitative and quantitative information needed to answer the evaluation questions. This is usually accompanied by an analysis of progress reports and the final report, including their conclusions and recommendations.
5. Utilization of the evaluation's findings
Lastly, the technical inputs provided by the evaluation are used to inform decision-making. For example, consideration may be given to the main conclusions and recommendations concerning the introduction of reinforcement measures, design modifications or adjustments in the implementation process or budget allocations. These findings may also prompt the conclusion of agreements with participating institutions concerning improvements and accountability to the general public, civil society and other stakeholders.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

[a] In some cases (generally when funding is being provided by an international agency or multilateral lending institution), this decision may be predefined in the programme design.

[b] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2010). Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, *DAC Guidelines and Reference Series*. OECD Publishing.

E. The evaluation agenda

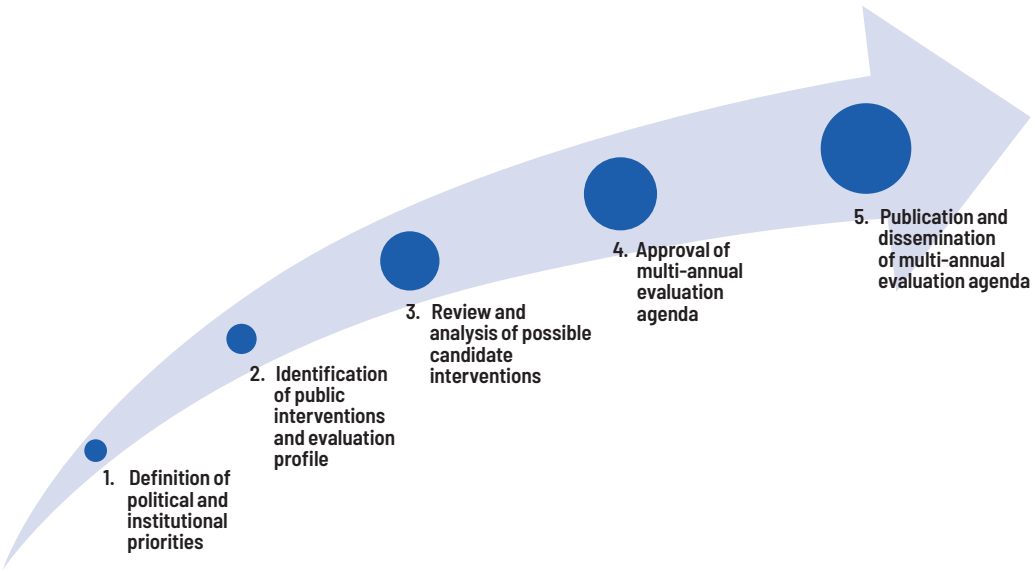
One of the most delicate stages in the evaluation cycle is the definition of the evaluation agenda or plan. In particular, one of the main challenges has to do with the periodic determination of which interventions will be monitored and evaluated. The annual or multi-annual evaluation

agenda will specify, formalize and organize the decision-making process for the selection of public interventions to be subjected to an in-depth analysis. The selection process will be informed by the use that is to be made of the resulting information, the time horizon and the types of decision for which feedback is desired.

A multi-annual evaluation agenda will identify the set of public projects and programmes that will be evaluated within a given time frame (for example, a five-year period or the length of an Administration's term in office). It is assumed that a certain number of conditions have been fulfilled: (i) there is an established public agency that supplies public institutions with a regular flow of rigorously compiled technical information on the performance of their interventions; (ii) there is a transparent mechanism for providing public agencies and civil society with advance notice of which evaluations are to be conducted; and (iii) the agenda has the explicit support of the authorities and participating institutions that determine which evaluations are to be carried out over the medium term.

Once the multi-annual agenda has been established, the next step is to define an annual evaluation programme that details the evaluations to be begun in the specified year (see diagram VI.2). This endows the system with predictability and increases the opportunities for securing funding for these types of study, especially in cases where large volumes of primary information will need to be compiled.

■ Diagram VI.2
Development of a multi-year evaluation agenda



Source: Prepared by the authors.

The development of a multi-annual evaluation agenda entails at least five different stages, as described below in table VI.3.

■ Table VI.3
Stages in the development of a multi-annual evaluation agenda

Stage	Description
1. Definition of political and institutional priorities	This is the stage at which political and strategic priorities are defined for the period covered by the agenda. The main inputs for this process will be the priorities of the organizations that will be taking part in the monitoring and evaluation system. Consideration will be given to their long-term objectives and strategic goals and to the priority areas that the evaluations are to focus on.
2. Definition of public interventions and evaluation profiles	At this stage, based on the political and strategic priorities that have been defined, the public interventions (projects and programmes) that fit in with those priorities will be identified. These interventions are candidates for inclusion on the evaluation agenda. Ideally, at this stage, an inventory of all the interventions that could potentially be evaluated and of the various possible evaluation profiles is available.
3. Review and analysis of possible interventions	From the viewpoint of the public institutions participating in the monitoring and evaluation system, this stage involves the consideration of the various alternative candidates and an effort to reach inter-agency agreements to provide political and institutional support for the evaluation agenda. All the different interventions proposed for evaluation are then considered and prioritized, and the selections are then endorsed as part of a government agreement concerning the initiatives to be included in the multi-annual evaluation agenda.
4. Approval of multi-annual evaluation agenda	Once the prioritized evaluations have been analysed, selected and agreed upon, the approval of the most senior governmental authorities must be sought. If approval is obtained, then the Council of Ministers is called upon to issue its final approval for the multi-annual evaluation agenda. The final version of the agenda will reflect the decisions reached concerning the evaluations to be conducted in the coming years.
5. Publication and dissemination of multi-annual evaluation agenda	The multi-annual evaluation agenda is then published and widely disseminated through institutional and public channels. This ensures the transparency of the evaluation process and promotes public participation in it by making certain that stakeholders know what the priorities of the evaluation process are and its timetable. This is also a step towards the creation of an evaluation culture in which it is understood that evaluations are a transparent, predictable process that is used for all public sector initiatives.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

1. Design of the evaluation

(a) The design: validity, reliability and accuracy

The way in which the evaluation is designed is a methodological expression of the way in which its findings will answer the evaluation questions that have been formulated. In other words, it reflects how inferences will be drawn from the data and the conceptual frameworks that will be used. It will establish the general conceptual approach and the way in which the evaluation will be organized and carried out (Mathison, 2005).

The way in which the evaluation is designed will also determine how the evaluation questions will be answered. The design should be a clear expression of the design standards of validity, reliability and accuracy as applied to the way in which the evaluation will answer those questions. Their internal validity will reflect the extent to which the findings are technically sustainable and properly grounded in the conceptual frameworks and empirical evidence used in the evaluation. The emphasis here is on the technical soundness of the evaluation.

In the quantitative experimental tradition, internal validity has to do with the extent to which the findings are attributable to the features of the programme or project (Mathison, 2005; Hernández Sampieri et al., 2014), since the results could be a consequence of the nature of the intervention or of other factors (other programmes, the surrounding circumstances and so on). In the qualitative research tradition, on the other hand, internal validity is usually associated with the idea of the credibility of the findings (Castillo and Vásquez, 2003). In this tradition, it is usually maintained that the results are an accurate reflection of the points of view or perspectives of the participants who were consulted (Creswell, 2015).

External validity has to do with the possibility of generalizing the evaluation's findings. In this case, the focus is on extrapolating the findings and applying them to other situations, population groups, territories or even other public interventions. This is a matter of particular interest if the idea is to replicate programmes or projects in other locations or for other target populations or to scale them up.

The concept of reliability, in this context, relates to the way in which different evaluations can arrive at similar results (as, for example, when the same study or the same design is used again but with a different technical team).

Accuracy refers to the soundness and specificity of the results of an evaluation. The evaluation's degree of accuracy is calibrated to the potential or expected impact of the public projects, programmes or policies in question.

The approach taken to the design of an evaluation may be either primarily quantitative or qualitative, as will be discussed in the following sections. A third approach dealt with in the specialized literature is a mixed method, which will also be described below.

(b) Quantitative designs

A quantitative design characteristically involves structured, orderly and extremely formalized stages for the compilation, systematization and analysis of the data.[3] Evaluations of this type chiefly use quantitative information (i.e. observations expressed in numerical terms). This information can be analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods.

With quantitative designs, the tools that are generally used are ones that can provide quantitative information, such as surveys, censuses and administrative records.

[3] Qualitative designs also have some of these characteristics, but the connections between the different stages of the research may be more flexible.

(i) Surveys

Surveys are used to collect quantitative data on predefined variables. They obtain information in the form, for example, of respondents' answers to the questions on a survey questionnaire and are usually applied to probabilistic samples that are representative of a target population (e.g. user satisfaction or public opinion surveys).

- Strengths: (i) they are representative of a target population, and the degree of accuracy of their representativeness is known (a quantifiable margin of error); (ii) they capture the specific information that is needed; (iii) they are less costly and can be carried out more quickly than censuses; and (iv) they can be conducted at the point in time that the information is needed for the research.
- Weaknesses: (i) they are less accurate than censuses, and their confidence level is lower; (ii) they require a reliable (up-to-date and relevant) sampling frame; and (iii) they are a less flexible tool for capturing unanticipated attitudes, knowledge or behaviours.

(ii) Censuses

A census provides a way of gathering information from all units making up a statistical universe or target population. It uses standardized counting techniques, such as structured forms, to compile information on a predefined set of variables that are the same for all respondents.

- Strengths: (i) they are very useful for describing a population; (ii) they can be used to construct sampling frames for probabilistic surveys; and (iii) their margins of error in the representation of population parameters are small.
- Weaknesses: (i) they can be expensive to carry out and difficult to organize and implement; (ii) they can take a long time to organize; and (iii) their results are for the period during which the census was taken, which is generally a medium- to long-term time frame, and they therefore do not provide useful information for decision-making in the short term.

(iii) Administrative records

Administrative records contain data on a reference unit (a physical person, household, company and so on) and are designed, compiled and kept on file by an organization for use in registering, checking and making decisions about that unit (e.g. users of public services).

- Strengths: (i) they are standardized and updated regularly, usually by the agency that uses them; (ii) they cover all of the population that is directly linked to those records; and (iii) they are backed up by institutional support mechanisms.
- Weaknesses: (i) they are not representative of the general population; (ii) the personnel in charge of compiling and maintaining them require special training; (iii) they are less flexible than other information sources if new indicators need to be added; and (iv) they may be missing key data.

(c) Qualitative designs

Qualitative designs are more flexible and open-ended than quantitative designs are. They may or may not be based on prior hypotheses, and their methodological design helps to clarify the evaluation objectives.

Qualitative evaluations focus on learning about the opinions, experiences and perceptions of the participants in public interventions. They make it possible to discern the differences in how different participants experience their interactions, the intervention itself and the specific contexts in which it takes place. The knowledge gained by this means can be augmented by field work and visits on the ground.

This design primarily uses qualitative data built chiefly on conceptual observations rather than numerical measurements. Qualitative designs usually call for the use of tailored tools for obtaining qualitative information, such as: (i) semi-structured interviews; and (ii) focus groups.[4]

(i) Semi-structured interviews

In these types of interview, interviewers ask both structured and spontaneous questions to explore subjects that they may have little or no information about at the start of the interview and to obtain a more in-depth understanding of other subjects about which they do have prior knowledge.

- Strengths: (i) interviewers have the flexibility to delve into emerging issues while also being able to interview the subject about certain predetermined matters on which information is needed; (ii) these kinds of interviews make it possible to obtain a clear idea of how much the respondents know about a given matter; and (iii) the interviewer may receive unexpected answers that enrich the analysis.
- Weaknesses: (i) they take longer to conduct, and it takes longer to analyse the responses than is the case with structured interviews; and (ii) interviewers need to be thoroughly trained to conduct this type of interview successfully.

(ii) Focus groups

This is a technique for compiling information on a given group of research subjects. A small group (from 6 to 12 people) is brought together and asked to respond, as a group, to a series of questions on pre-established subjects, although, like semi-structured interviews, they are flexible enough that other issues that may arise during the discussion can also be covered.

- Strengths: (i) group interactions may prompt a collective form of discourse that would not occur in individual interviews; and (ii) they can be useful for dealing with difficult or particularly delicate matters.

[4] Focus groups may be conducted on an in-person basis or remotely.

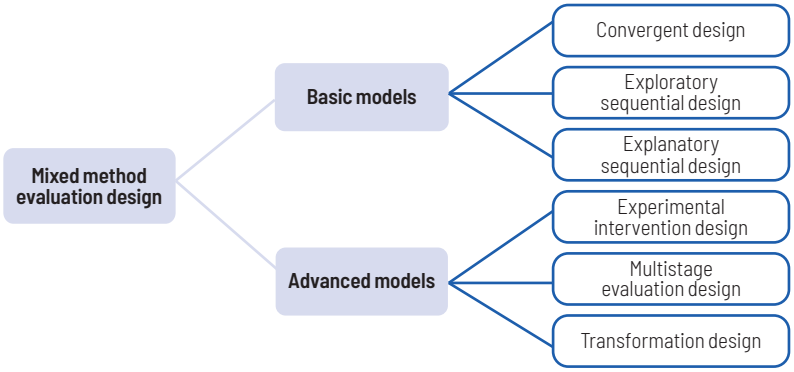
- Weaknesses: (i) there may be logistical difficulties in bringing a number of people together at a given location at a specified time when they do not know each other and may not, in some instances, be particularly interested in the selected subject; (ii) they are more costly to conduct than personal interviews; and (iii) there is a risk that some participants may dominate the discussion, influencing group dynamics or prompting responses governed by what is thought to be socially acceptable.

(d) Mixed method designs

The mixed method approach involves the compilation of both quantitative data, drawn from closed-ended questions, and qualitative information, obtained from responses to open-ended questions. These different kinds of information are then merged and analysed in order to reach conclusions or findings based on the combined strengths of these two types of source (Creswell, 2015; Bamberger, 2012).[5]

Depending on the complexity of the intersection of qualitative and quantitative data, the design of these models can be classified as either basic or advanced (Creswell, 2015). Creswell proposes three basic models: (i) convergent designs; (ii) exploratory sequential designs; and (iii) explanatory sequential designs. He divides advanced models into: (i) experimental intervention designs; (ii) multistage evaluation designs; and (iii) transformation designs (see diagram VI.3).

■ Diagram VI.3
Mixed-method evaluation designs



Source: Prepared by the authors, on the basis of Creswell, J. W. (2015). *A Concise Introduction to Mixed Methods Research*. Sage.

(i) Convergent design

Quantitative and qualitative information is gathered at the same time from the same population concerning the same subjects. Both data sets are later analysed and the results are compared by merging the two databases to see if the two validate one another.

[5] The word "methods" here refers to specific research or evaluation procedures for compiling, analysing and interpreting data.

(ii) Exploratory sequential design

A first qualitative analysis of the subject is done either because the evaluation questions need to be refined, the population has not been thoroughly studied or defined, or the intervention has taken place in a remote location. The inputs obtained at this stage can then enrich the subsequent quantitative evaluation, since the evaluation team can use the qualitative findings to construct a second quantitative phase. This will involve the design of a tool (a questionnaire, for example) to measure the variables of interest, the development of an experimental intervention or the design of a typology.

(iii) Explanatory sequential design

In this case, in contrast to the exploratory sequential design, quantitative methods are used first to measure the variables of interest and only later are qualitative methods used to gain a fuller understanding of the quantitative results.

(iv) Experimental or intervention designs

In this case, the evaluation is based on an experiment in which the technical team compiles qualitative data at one stage, either before, during or after the trial. The integration of the data is done by incorporating the qualitative data into an experimental trial. This approach may be combined with a convergent, explanatory or exploratory method.

(v) Multistage evaluation design

Ongoing studies are carried out over a period of time that connect up different stages in order to establish a continuous line of evaluation for one or more interventions. This could include the use of numerous mixed method studies (as well as separate quantitative and qualities studies) having convergent, explanatory or exploratory designs. A good example of this is an evaluation covering the entire design process, the pilot and the implementation of a programme in a community. A study of this type entails numerous stages of research: a needs analysis, the development of the conceptual framework, testing and programme monitoring. With this approach, the integration of the data is done by linking the findings from one stage with those of the following stages so that each stage draws on the preceding one and contributes to the cumulative development of the evaluation process (Creswell, 2015).

(vi) Transformation design

In this case, both quantitative and qualitative data are used in a convergent, explanatory or exploratory design for the explicit purpose of bringing about social change. This approach is oriented towards improving people's lives (by, for example, using a social justice design to improve the situation of women or early childhood services).

Triangulation —the combination of different data sources, researchers, theories or research methods in a given evaluation— is a core feature of mixed models (Forni and De Grande, 2020).

Triangulation is used to confirm the findings of an evaluation and, in particular, to eliminate biases of different types or to rule out alternative hypotheses as explanations for those findings (Mathison, 2005).

Depending on the technical elements involved, triangulation may be performed on:

(i) Data: Information from different times, territories or population groups is used;

(ii) Researchers or evaluators: Different teams or individuals carry out similar tasks;

(iii) Theories: More than one theoretical approach is applied;

(iv) Methodologies: Various research methods are used.

Table VI.4 provides an overview of the advantages of mixed methods in dealing with the methodological challenges associated with the use of quantitative and qualitative methods.

■ Table VI.4

Role of mixed method evaluations in helping to overcome the methodological challenges associated with quantitative and qualitative methods

Methodological challenge	Potential contribution of mixed methods
1. Limitations on construct validity Quantitative evaluations often use secondary data sources and have to be based on proxy variables which may not fully represent the object of study.	The use of qualitative exploratory methods may lead to a better understanding of the key concepts being studied.
	Focal groups and personal interviews can shed light on beneficiaries' perspectives on key concepts.
2. Context of the evaluation A conventional impact evaluation design may only partially capture the effect of the political, economic, institutional, sociocultural, historical and local environmental context. As a result, the same project may have different outcomes in different communities or local settings.	The ethnography, key informants and other qualitative techniques can provide information about the local context. This approach can help lead to a better understanding of the particular features of the locations where interventions are carried out.
3. Unfamiliarity with the project implementation process (the "black box" problem) Most impact evaluation designs use pre-test comparisons rather than studying how the project was actually implemented. Consequently, when a project fails to achieve its objectives, it is not possible to determine whether that failure is attributable to a faulty design or poor implementation.	Qualitative techniques, such as participant and non-participant observation and key informants, can be supplemented with programme monitoring so that use can be made of both quantitative and qualitative information on project implementation and other processes.
4. Methodological designs are not flexible enough to capture changes in design or project implementation or in the local context Examples include quantitative evaluations in which the same data collection tool (the same questions) and the same definitions of inputs, outputs and impacts are repeated. It is very difficult to adapt these designs to the changes that often occur in project frameworks or implementation policies.	Panel studies, participant observation and key informants, among others, are flexible enough to detect and observe changes in the project when it is implemented in different local settings. This approach can also capture territorial differences.

Methodological challenge	Potential contribution of mixed methods
5. Limitations in appraising the suitability of the sampling frame A government agency's records on users or beneficiaries are often used as a sampling frame for evaluations. While this is a simple, economical course of action, executing agencies or the persons in charge usually fail to realize that they may be excluding a significant number of households or communities that are eligible but do not appear in those records. What is more, these households or communities are often the most disadvantaged ones.	Small-scale studies in selected areas that can be completed quickly can be used to assess the suitability of sampling frames.
6. A failure to clearly define the time frame for measuring outcomes and impacts Generally speaking, post-trial measurements are scheduled on the basis of administrative rather than technical considerations. It often happens that these measurements are taken before enough time has passed for the intervention's outcomes to become apparent, and it is then concluded that the project did not have the desired impact.	Design evaluations can be used to determine the amount of time needed for the desired outcomes and short-, medium- and long-term results to become evident. This can help to determine the right time to carry out the evaluation and to decide which initial result and impact indicators to use.
7. Detection and observation of unexpected or unforeseen results Structured surveys can measure both positive and negative expected results and effects but cannot detect unforeseen ones.	Design evaluations can identify preliminary indicators that can be measured at the start of a project and that can provide evidence to show whether it is heading in the right direction or not. Qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews and focal groups, can also provide early-stage indicators for gauging whether a project is progressing as it should.

Source: Prepared by the authors, on the basis of Bamberger, M. (2012). Introduction to mixed methods in impact evaluation. *Impact Evaluation Notes*, *3*(3), 1–38.

Chapter VII
Stage 6: Introducing cross-cutting approaches

Monitoring and evaluation systems may fail to provide information about some issues that are of key importance for the sustainable development process, such as gender inequalities, territorial inequities and climate change adaptation. Thus, the formulation of a technically sound monitoring strategy does not necessarily guarantee a suitable treatment of key development issues —such as the situation of vulnerable groups, the protection of basic rights or the development of disadvantaged territories— or their adequate consideration in a monitoring and evaluation system.

One of the main challenges associated with monitoring and evaluation systems for public interventions is therefore the early incorporation of a cross-cutting approach into the design of monitoring and evaluation strategies.

Based on the literature on development project evaluations (Bustelo et al., 2014), a strategy for monitoring and evaluating a public intervention is understood to be responsive to cross-cutting issues when it provides for a systematic interpretation and appraisal of how that project or programme addresses or affects those issues. In other words, in order to develop a monitoring and evaluation strategy that will be sensitive to a cross-cutting issue, the persons tasked with its formulation must be able to describe, understand and judge the way in which the public intervention addresses (or fails to address) the issue and to determine how it will (or will not) help to improve the situation in that connection.

A series of suggestions and questions are presented in the following discussion that are aimed at orienting and facilitating the incorporation of three cross-cutting issues into monitoring and evaluation systems: gender issues, territorial issues and adaptation to climate change.[1]

[1] There are numerous cross-cutting approaches that can be taken within the context of monitoring and evaluation systems, but only some of those approaches are explored here.

A. A gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation strategy

The gender perspective provides a way of analysing social realities that devotes special attention to the various factors that drive and perpetuate inequalities between women and men with a view to making them visible and then changing them.

When dealing with this perspective, it is important to differentiate between sex and gender (Bustelo et al., 2014). The biological dimension of sex has to do with the physical differences between women's and men's bodies. The sociocultural dimension of gender, on the other hand, describes sex-related social categories (femininity and masculinity). It influences many different aspects of the relationships between women and men and individuals' behaviour. Gender categories are social constructs: there are no biological, genetic, natural or evolutionary reasons for these distinctions or the labels associated with them. The gender system is an artifact of the social power relationships that exist between people on the basis of society's gender constructs (Bustelo et al., 2014).

The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) has defined a set of basic criteria for use in determining the extent to which a gender approach is being applied in a given evaluation.[2] These criteria can be used to analyse how fully the gender perspective has been incorporated into public policy monitoring and evaluation systems.

Table VII.1 lists some basic questions that can be used to guide gender mainstreaming in monitoring and evaluation systems.

■ Table VII.1
Basic questions regarding gender mainstreaming in monitoring and evaluation systems

Dimension of analysis	Key questions	Responses			
		Yes	No	Actions	Back-up questions
Analysis of persons involved in designing the monitoring and evaluation system	Has an analysis of gender equality stakeholders been conducted?				
	Did the analysis of stakeholders include the definition of a diverse groups of women and men and representatives of vulnerable and other groups that are not directly involved in the intervention?				
	What steps will the technical monitoring and evaluation team take to engage with gender equality stakeholders?				
Monitoring and evaluation questions	Have monitoring and evaluation questions that specifically address gender equality been defined?				
	Have other specific aspects of the context for the intervention that relate to gender equality been identified for evaluation?				

[2] UNEG participants include the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations Organization (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

Dimension of analysis	Key questions	Responses			
		Yes	No	Actions	Back-up questions
Performance indicators	Have indicators that use sex-disaggregated data been selected?				
	Have additional monitoring and evaluation indicators that deal specifically with gender equality been defined?				
	Have plans been made for compiling data that will contribute to measurements for the additional gender equality indicators?				
Technical team	Does the technical team have expertise in the field of gender equality and is it committed to a gender approach?				
	Is the technical team composed of people of different genders, with different types of experience and of different ages and origins, among other characteristics?				
	Is the team ethically responsible and balanced and are the team members' power relationships equitable and in line with the concept of gender equality?				
Methodological monitoring and evaluation strategy	Does the methodological strategy use an appropriate mixed method design for the adoption of a gender approach?				
	Does the methodological strategy encourage stakeholder participation in a way that promotes gender equality?				
	Does the methodological strategy provide for the triangulation of the information on gender equality that is obtained?				
Data compilation and analysis	During the information compilation phase, were all the stakeholder groups identified in the analysis consulted about gender equality issues?				
	After the compilation of information had been completed, were all the gender stakeholder groups consulted in order to discuss the findings with them and hear their views on the evaluation's conclusions and recommendations?				
Reports and presentations	Do the reports address the gender equality issues that were identified as priorities?				
	Are there plans to disseminate the information compiled by the monitoring and evaluation system to a wide audience, particularly groups interested in or affected by gender issues?				
	In the case of the evaluations, how will the recommendations made in the report affect the various gender equality stakeholders in the programme?				
	In the case of the evaluations, has a management response been prepared to address the concerns regarding gender issues outlined in the report?				
	In the case of the evaluations, has a diverse group of stakeholders —including those interested in or affected by gender issues— been involved in the preparation of the management response and the discussion of action items?				

Source: Prepared by the authors.

A challenging situation can arise in the course of the evaluation of cross-cutting issues if the issue in question (in this case, the gender perspective) has not been incorporated into the public intervention's design. Some interventions include measures that explicitly address the issue of equality or provide for levelling mechanisms (e.g. the formation of teams with an equitably distributed membership). In these cases, the design deals with the issue explicitly and specifies the way in which the intervention will contribute to gender equality. There are other programmes, however, whose objectives are unrelated to gender equality in any explicit sense, but they must still be evaluated from a cross-cutting gender perspective. Given the above, it is important to identify the differentiated results that policies have for men and women.

Accordingly, it is important to clearly delimit both the analysis of affirmative or levelling actions provided for in the programmes in question and the analysis of programme actions that do not explicitly refer to the gender dimension but that may nonetheless have a positive or negative impact in that regard.

B. A territorially sensitive monitoring and evaluation strategy

A strategy for monitoring and evaluating a public intervention must capture the degree of progress made at the various territorial levels, since there may be considerable differences from one level to the next. In addition, public policies may have varying results at different territorial levels owing to their distinct characteristics. In the case of large-scale, nationwide projects and programmes, a multi-level approach is generally called for. The monitoring and evaluation strategy should therefore take the following levels into account: (i) the national (macro or country) level; (ii) the intermediate (regional, departmental or state) level; and (iii) the local (municipal, district or territorial) level (see diagram VII.1).

(i) National level: This level corresponds to results achieved at the country level (the highest level of aggregation).

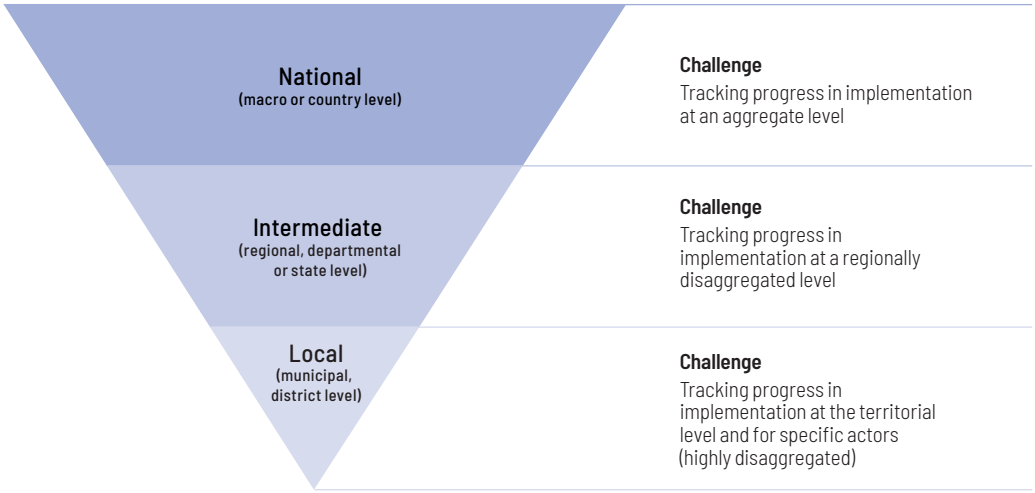
At this macro level, analyses may focus on systems involving high-ranking actors and representatives of national collectives. Accordingly, the macro level can also encompass the analysis of the actions of collective actors operating at the national level.

(ii) Intermediate level: This level corresponds to results achieved at an intermediate level of aggregation, such as the regional, departmental or state level. The evaluation therefore focuses on the performance of public policies at those levels. It is important to take into account the significant differences that may exist between federal and unitary States in terms of their forms of political and institutional organization.

As at the macro level, the intermediate level also involves systems of actors with connections to local management and communities that hold responsibilities at the regional level. These actors have opinions, beliefs and judgments regarding policy implementation processes that can be used to enrich technical analytical frameworks, and they include stakeholders that are of key importance for evaluations of policy implementation.

(iii) Local level: This level corresponds to results achieved at the territorial level. The main challenge here is having the capacity to disaggregate the information at the local level or by specific service delivery locations. This tier is a special one because it is where frontline staff, technical personnel working at the territorial level, service recipients (e.g. users and beneficiaries) and other members of the local community all come together.

■ Diagram VII.1
Intervention levels to be addressed in monitoring and evaluation systems



Source: Prepared by the authors.

This multi-level approach can be effectively incorporated into the monitoring and evaluation system by using strategies for generating, systematizing and analysing information that, first, make it possible to disaggregate the information on the extent of the progress made at the national, intermediate (regional departmental or state) and local (district or service delivery hub) levels; and, second, make provision for obtaining the opinions of the different systems of actors operating at each level regarding the implementation process and the outcomes of high-priority public policies.

As in the case of the gender perspective, table VII.2 lists a series of questions that can orient the incorporation of the territorial approach into monitoring and evaluation systems.

■ Table VII.2
Basic questions regarding the incorporation of the territorial perspective into monitoring and evaluation systems

Dimension of analysis	Key questions	Responses			
		Yes	No	Actions	Back-up questions
Analysis of persons involved in designing the monitoring and evaluation system	Has an analysis of stakeholders at the national, intermediate and local levels of the intervention been conducted?				
	Did the stakeholder analysis identify the key actors at the intermediate and local territorial levels?				
	What steps will the technical monitoring and evaluation team take to engage with stakeholders at the intermediate and local territorial levels?				
Monitoring and evaluation questions	Have monitoring and evaluation questions that specifically address territorial aspects been defined?				
	Have specific territories in which information on the intervention's performance is a high priority been identified?				
Performance indicators	Have indicators that use territorially disaggregated data been selected?				
	Have additional indicators been defined for the monitoring and evaluation system that deal specifically with territorial inequities?				
	Have plans been made for compiling data that will contribute to measurements for the additional indicators on prioritized territories?				
Technical team	Does the technical team have expertise in the area of territorial approaches and local development?				
	Do the members of the technical team have professional experience at the intermediate and local territorial levels?				
Methodological monitoring and evaluation strategy	Does the methodological strategy use an appropriate mixed method design for the incorporation of the territorial approach?				
	Does the methodological strategy encourage the participation of stakeholders, including the most vulnerable ones, at the territorial level?				
	Does the methodological strategy provide for the triangulation of the information obtained, taking into account the multi-level territorial approach of the monitoring and evaluation system?				
Data compilation and analysis	During the information compilation phase, were all the stakeholder groups identified in the territorial analysis consulted?				
	After the compilation of information had been completed, were all the territorial stakeholder groups consulted in order to discuss the findings with them and hear their views on the evaluation's conclusions and recommendations?				

Dimension of analysis	Key questions	Responses			
		Yes	No	Actions	Back-up questions
Reports and presentations	Do the reports address the territorially related issues that were identified as priorities and do they address local development issues?				
	Are there plans to disseminate the information compiled by the monitoring and evaluation system to a wide audience, particularly territorial stakeholders and groups that have been or are being affected at the territorial level?				
	With respect to the evaluations, how will the recommendations made in the report affect the various territorial stakeholders in the programme?				
	With respect to the evaluations, has a management response been prepared to address the concerns regarding territorial inequities outlined in the report?				
	With respect to the evaluations, has a diverse group of territorial stakeholders –including those interested in or affected by territorial inequities– been involved in the preparation of the management response and the discussion of action items?				

Source: Prepared by the authors.

C. A monitoring and evaluation strategy that integrates climate change adaptation

A monitoring and evaluation strategy that integrates climate change adaptation can track the effects that programmes and projects have in terms of climate change and determine whether adaptation and mitigation measures need to be incorporated into their implementation processes. In particular, it can look for evidence of any additional cross-sectoral effects of the expected outcomes in terms of:

- A reduction in vulnerability to the impacts of climate change thanks to the progress that has been made;
- A strengthening of institutional and human adaptation capacity;
- Support for the general well-being of populations affected by the impacts of climate change (Price-Kelly et al., 2015).

There is also an expectation that monitoring and evaluation systems will generate information regarding climate change that will serve at least one of the following purposes:

- Public policy lessons: Learning more about the context for policies on climate change and related needs and experiences;
- Accountability: Seeking to inform stakeholders about progress and results (or lack thereof);

- Managing climate change: Working to determine whether a policy, plan or intervention is on the right track and, if necessary, to alter its course and point it in the right direction (Hammill y Dekens, 2014; Price-Kelly et al., 2015).

As in the case of the cross-cutting approaches discussed above, table VII.3 lists a series of questions that can orient the incorporation of an approach to climate change adaptation into monitoring and evaluation systems.

■ Table VII.3
Basic questions regarding the incorporation of an approach to climate change adaptation into monitoring and evaluation systems

Dimension of analysis	Key questions	Responses			
		Yes	No	Actions	Back-up questions
Analysis of persons involved in designing the monitoring and evaluation system	Has a stakeholder analysis been conducted that takes climate change adaptation and mitigation into account?				
	Did the analysis of stakeholders include the identification of groups within the intervention's sphere of influence that are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change?				
	What steps will the technical monitoring and evaluation team take to engage with stakeholders in connection with climate change adaptation and mitigation?				
Monitoring and evaluation questions	Have monitoring and evaluation questions that specifically address climate change issues been defined?				
	Have issues relating to climate change been identified that should be taken into account?				
Performance indicators	Have indicators related to climate change adaptation/mitigation been selected?				
	Have indicators related to climate change and other relevant issues been defined?				
	Have additional indicators been defined that deal with matters related to climate change?				
	Have plans been made for compiling data that will contribute to measurements for the indicators related to climate change?				
Technical team	Does the technical team have expertise in the field of climate change and is it committed to this approach?				
	Do the members of the technical team have work experience in the areas of climate change adaptation and mitigation?				
Methodological monitoring and evaluation strategy	Does the methodological strategy use an appropriate mixed method design for addressing climate change?				
	Does the methodological strategy encourage stakeholder participation, including the stakeholders most vulnerable to climate change?				
	Does the methodological strategy provide for the triangulation of the information on climate change?				

Dimension of analysis	Key questions	Responses			
		Yes	No	Actions	Back-up questions
Data compilation and analysis	During the information compilation phase, were all the stakeholder groups identified in the analysis consulted, including those most vulnerable to climate change?				
	After the compilation of information had been completed, were all the stakeholder groups, particularly those most vulnerable to climate change, consulted in order to discuss the findings with them and hear their views on the evaluation's conclusions and recommendations?				
Reports and presentations	Do the reports address issues related to climate change adaptation and mitigation?				
	Are there plans to disseminate the information compiled by the monitoring and evaluation system to a wide audience, particularly groups interested in climate change?				
	With respect to the evaluations, was the need to present conclusions and recommendations related to climate change adaptation and mitigation established beforehand?				
	With respect to the evaluations, has a management response been prepared that takes into account the conclusions and recommendations concerning climate change made in the report?				
	With respect to the evaluations, has a diverse group of stakeholders —including those interested in climate change– been involved in the preparation of the management response and the discussion of action items?				

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Chapter VIII
Stage 7: Defining the use and dissemination strategy

One of the key determinants of monitoring and evaluation systems' sustainability is how the information that they provide is used. Hence the importance of the strategy for using and disseminating the results yielded by the system.

This chapter will discuss the main uses of this type of information which have contributed to the institutionalization of monitoring and evaluation functions. It will also outline the elements that should be taken into consideration when defining a use and dissemination strategy.

A. Uses of the results of monitoring and evaluation systems

Based on experiences with the institutionalization of monitoring and evaluation systems in the member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and in the Latin American and Caribbean countries that have done the most advanced work in this area, four main uses of the results yielded by these systems can be identified:

(i) Designing public interventions. Monitoring and evaluation systems provide technical inputs that can be used to improve public institutions' national, sectoral and multisectoral planning processes and strategies.

(ii) Promoting effectiveness and efficiency in the management of all stages of the policy and budget cycle based on empirical evidence. In cases where results-based budgeting processes have reached advanced stages of development, monitoring and evaluation systems play a pivotal role in the provision of information that can enhance decision-making on budgetary matters.

(iii) Improving management performance. The information provided by monitoring and evaluation systems on public project, programme and policy performance can be used as inputs for improving the management of public services, the implementation of supporting measures and/or specific decision-making processes.

(iv) Open government. The technical information provided by monitoring and evaluation systems furnishes evidence about how successful interventions have been in reaching their objectives. This evidence can be used to ensure greater accountability and to promote transparency (Mackay, 2010).

B. Factors supporting the success of monitoring and evaluation systems

The most successful monitoring and evaluation systems in terms of the uses made of their findings share a series of characteristics that should be taken into account when designing, refining and managing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The experience gained in the operation of the more advanced monitoring and evaluation systems also offers extremely valuable lessons for the design, management and refinement of monitoring and evaluation strategies (Zall and Rist, 2005; Mackay, 2007, 2010; López-Acevedo et al., 2012).

While experiences cannot be reproduced linearly without considering the specific national and institutional contexts of the systems concerned, they can nonetheless be helpful in expanding upon, defining or weighing the factors to be taken into consideration in specific cases in the region. The main elements needed in order to use the information supplied by monitoring and evaluation systems successfully include the following:

(i) Quality standards: In order to ensure that the information meets the requisite data quality and reliability standards, quality control mechanisms and systems for ensuring the accuracy of the information need to be in place.

(ii) Sustainability: The system must be able to weather changes in governments and in the occupants of ministerial or other senior official positions.

(iii) Explicit demand for monitoring and evaluation information: There has to be a considerable demand on the part of decision makers or institutional authorities for the information generated by monitoring and evaluation systems. This is an especially important condition if the political will exists to establish a robust policy for the establishment of sustainable monitoring and evaluation systems. This kind of backing is also needed in order to ensure that other operational and technical conditions needed for the operation of such systems are in place.

(iv) A phased approach to implementation: It is advisable for the various types of evaluation to be phased in gradually based on the level of maturity reached by existing monitoring and evaluation teams and systems. It is best to begin with an evaluation

of the design of public programmes, then to move on to the implementation of a suitable monitoring system and then work on evaluating its results before finally incorporating the evaluation of programme impacts when the time is right. The process of setting up these systems takes several years. During that interval, valuable lessons can be learned and should be systematically incorporated into the system in order to strengthen it and adapt it to the conditions existing in each country, territory or public institution.

(v) Incentives for the use of the information: A common mistake it for it simply to be assumed that potential users will be eager to use the information or that it will automatically be used just because it exists. The information produced by a monitoring and evaluation system is only valuable if it is reliable and widely used. Work-related incentives (bonuses, signs of recognition, increased responsibilities and so forth) for the use of monitoring and evaluation inputs are needed, as is a sound understanding of the information that organizations need for their decision-making processes (types of information, formats and timing of availability). The information will be in demand if the data generated by the system are a good fit for management processes, are presented in the form of inputs for management at different levels and their use in reports is required.

(vi) An accurate baselines assessment: It is highly advisable to start out with a baseline assessment of the situation (e.g. a map of monitoring and evaluation functions at the national level in public and academic sectors and in the consultant community). An awareness of supply and demand strengths and weaknesses is a fundamental condition for the design of monitoring and evaluation systems.

(vii) Leadership: One of the elements that has facilitated the development of these systems, especially in the early stages of the process, is the existence of an influential political authority (minister) or other prestigious professional (a senior official) who can convince others of the importance of this initiative and of the effectiveness and usefulness of the system. In some cases, this has been more effective than the development of special-purpose laws or regulations.

(viii) Management and guidance: Another factor that can strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems is the existence of an office or agency that can direct its design, development and administration. This kind of entity (e.g. a ministry) often has a close relationship with the Office of the President or cross-sectoral institutions, such as those in charge of finance or planning. One of the central tasks of this lead agency is to keep a constant watch over the development of the monitoring and evaluation system and, if necessary, to modify its plan of action. This, together with an analysis of potential supply and demand, will make it possible to overcome setbacks, obstacles or other difficulties that may arise during the system's implementation.

(ix) Appropriate system specifications: In the early stages of the development and operation of monitoring and evaluation systems, an overload of design specifications is often created which, in particular, includes the use of an excessive number of performance indicators for monitoring public interventions. This can increase the system's operational transaction costs and lead to a fragmentation of organizations' information systems, records and the toolkits that they use to gather information.

(x) Technical assistance and specific training: The design, management and upgrading of a system need to be supported by a training programme covering a series of monitoring and evaluation tools, methods, approaches and concepts. The scope of technical assistance and training should extend beyond the skills specific to this area, and this kind of support needs to be provided not only to the relevant technical teams but also to the authorities and the teams that are to be monitored and evaluated. All those concerned need to become familiar with the usefulness, advantages and disadvantages of the different types of monitoring and evaluation tool and technique in order to set the stage for the development of a culture of evaluation.

(xi) A long-term approach to the system's development: Monitoring and evaluation systems are institutional mechanisms whose development calls for a long-term effort backed up by patience and determination. The many different conditions that need to be in place in order to set up such a system come together gradually, and the amount of time required for that process to unfold is longer than the terms in office of national governments. The work involved in creating a monitoring and evaluation system therefore needs to be underpinned by short-, medium- and long-term objectives (Zall and Rist, 2005; Mackay, 2007, 2010; López-Acevedo et al., 2012).

C. Challenges in the use of the information generated by monitoring and evaluation systems

Ensuring that the outputs of monitoring and evaluation systems are used is an important factor in determining the success of such systems. If the information they produce is not utilized, the systems' sustainability will be under threat. Accordingly, when designing a monitoring and evaluation system, it is important to ascertain the reasons why that information might not be put to full use and then to address those problem areas.

Michael Bamberger, a member of the Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee of the Evaluation Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has analysed failures to make use of the findings of evaluations in order to understand why they happen (Bamberger, 2016). He has identified the following factors:

(i) A lack of ownership: Recipients of the reports do not feel that they are entitled to comment on the evaluation because they think it is intended only for funding sources rather for them as well. This effect is exacerbated when the information is presented in a way that does not represent the interested parties.

(ii) Poor technical quality: A failure to uphold quality standards undermines trust in an evaluation's findings.

(iii) A lack of opportunities for acting on the recommendations: Opportunities for translating such recommendations into concrete action or practical measures may be lacking if, for example, an evaluation recommends that a given process be improved but the resources, time or institutional mechanisms for doing so are lacking.

(iv) Poor communication: In some cases, findings are presented in overly technical or complex language or are disseminated through inappropriate channels, which interferes with users' attempts to understand and act upon them. It is therefore essential to identify the potential users and understand their situations so that communication styles can be adapted to their profiles and needs.

(v) Inflexibility: A monitoring and evaluation system —or a specific evaluation— may not be adaptable enough to adjust to the actual needs of end users. For example, indicators, methods or time frames may be so rigidly defined that they leave no room for the addition of new questions, modifications designed in response to changing circumstances or new information requested by users. This will reduce the information's usefulness for decision makers.

(vi) A shortage of resources: In some cases, the resources needed to act on the recommendations made in the evaluations are not available.

(vii) Irrelevance: The evaluation may not provide any information that is of interest to users.

(viii) External factors: Such factors may include, for example, changes in Administrations, changes in government policy, financial crises and natural disasters.

D. Strategies for disseminating the findings of monitoring and evaluation systems

Dissemination strategies are strategies for communicating the findings of these systems. The way that this information should be communicated depends on who will be using it. Users may include the executing agencies of projects and programmes, which use the information to improve the way that they are managing them, and other stakeholders involved in the public accountability process.

To encourage the use of the findings of monitoring and evaluation systems, the information should be as close a fit as possible for the needs, interests and analysis capacities of the main users, including decision makers and the administrators of high-priority policies. Therefore, when it comes to designing the outputs of a monitoring and evaluation system (such as reports and presentations), it is important to look at the stakeholders identified in the baseline assessment. When designing the system's reporting functions, it is advisable to consider the amount of time that the main users will have to analyse the information, along with their knowledge base and skill levels in the policy areas tracked by the system. It is also important to determine the type of information that is needed, the amount of time required to generate that information and the format in which it should be presented.

As shown in table VIII.1, different types of report can be generated to fit the professional profiles of the users and the amount of time they have available. Extensive reports written in highly specialized technical language should be produced only if the users have the technical capacity and time to make use of them.

■ Table VIII.1
Guide for the preparation of appropriate monitoring and evaluation reports for different professional profiles and time availability scenarios

Knowledge and academic preparation in relevant policy areas	Time available for analysing the information	
	Very limited	Sufficient
Very limited	- Brief format (press releases, pamphlets) - Straightforward language - Key statistics only - Press conferences - Graphics - Audiovisual materials for dissemination purposes	- Brief formats that can be expanded upon (e.g. short reports, summaries) - Straightforward language - Key statistics only
Sufficient	- Brief reports with supplementary annexes	- Complete reports
	- Sector-specific information - Freedom to use specialized technical language	- Sector-specific information - Freedom to use specialized technical language

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Table VIII.2 lists a series of practical, widely recognized, experience-based recommendations for the preparation of reports presenting the information provided by monitoring and evaluation systems.

■ Table VIII.2
Recommendations for communicating the information generated by monitoring and evaluation systems

Use straightforward language in reports but without oversimplifying the findings.
Provide a clear presentation of the findings and supporting evidence.
Present the most important and significant quantitative information (relevant figures) and avoid the overuse of statistics (statistical overload).
For quantitative evaluations, give averages but also the minimum and maximum values. Take unforeseen consequences of the intervention into account. This recommendation can also be applied to qualitative evaluations.
Use a neutral style for communicating information and presenting facts. Avoid adopting partisan positions or advocating individual views.
Prepare and present a separate technical report that documents the methodology and research techniques employed (including, for example, the questionnaires used) and the methodological decisions that were made.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Chapter IX
Stage 8: Regular updating

Once systems for monitoring and evaluating public interventions are up and running, they should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis in order to accommodate new demands and information requirements. Each of the stages described in this guide, including those involving the establishment of the system's objectives and its institutional scope and framework, will need to be re-examined. If major modifications are called for, it may also be necessary to redo the baseline assessment.

The main tasks involved in modifying and updating monitoring and evaluation systems, which may also entail the incorporation of new or different public interventions, are discussed below:

(i) Political/institutional will. Any steps to expand the system's scope will need to be endorsed by the senior authorities of the organizations administering or making use of this institutional mechanism, especially the managers of the lead agency, if appropriate. This undertaking may also benefit from technical input from the teams that are managing the system, which may, for example, suggest different options for its expansion.

(ii) Analysis of new value chains. Once a decision to expand the system's scope to include new public interventions has been made, the value chains of those interventions will have to be analysed in order to identify the key segments of the chains and understand the rationale for the interventions and their main assumptions (relationships among inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes).

(iii) Identification of new needs and stakeholders. The above analysis will make it possible to identify any new information requirements that the system should meet. It may be that these requirements can be met by existing systems, or those systems may have to be expanded and other sources and organizations found that can supply the necessary information. It may therefore be advisable to update the stakeholder map that was prepared as part of the baseline assessment.

(iv) Expansion of the monitoring strategy. Once the public interventions that are to be added into the system have been identified and the key segments of their value chains and their main underlying assumptions have been analysed, the following steps will have to be taken in order to make the necessary modifications in the monitoring system:

- Review and define new performance indicators for use in monitoring functions.
- Analyse the available information for use in calculating those indicators.
- Track the indicators to be used in monitoring reports.
- Incorporate this information into the reports.

(v) Expansion of the evaluation strategy. The design of the evaluation system can be modified at the same time that the monitoring system is being expanded by completing the following tasks:

- Analyse the new public interventions' evaluability: This will involve examining how the intervention has been designed, the available supply of information, the disposition of executing agencies and officials, and the technical and organizational feasibility of carrying out the activities involved in the evaluation;
- Prepare a proposal concerning the evaluations to be added into the multi-year evaluation agenda based on an analysis of their evaluability. Once that has been done, it is advisable to go back over the design and implementation stages covered in earlier chapters.

Concluding observations

Practical and conceptual guidelines for strengthening the design, implementation and use of monitoring and evaluation systems in public interventions are offered throughout this guide. The following observations seek to sum up the central ideas presented in its chapters and the key factors playing a part in the consolidation and sustainability of these systems in institutional contexts, while incorporating an open government approach.

Inputs for furthering the development of monitoring and evaluation capabilities. This guide for the design of monitoring and evaluation systems for public interventions offers ways of strengthening technical capacity in this area and proposes a number of methodological tools for designing and implementing such systems. To this end, it outlines a sequence of steps to be taken in order to arrive at an understanding of the particular aspects of each case and to avoid passing over key stages in the process of starting up, operating and ensuring the sustainability of monitoring and evaluation systems.

Appropriate solutions for specific cases. In order to design and implement a suitable evidence-based monitoring and evaluation system, a number of fundamental requirements must be fulfilled. This is especially true when dealing with highly specialized, broad-coverage, multilevel organizations.

Gradual implementation. The institutionalization of monitoring and evaluation systems is a highly complex, collective undertaking that requires the participating organizations to invest a substantial amount of time and resources. In order for this effort to be sustained over the long run, the process involved in setting up and running a monitoring and evaluation system must be a gradual one that progresses in step with the institutional capacities of the participating organizations.

Ownership of the system. Once the proposal for a monitoring and evaluation system has been approved, its objectives and its main technical characteristics should be made known to the members of the organizations participating in the system. It is advisable to conduct a launch of the system in order to mark its entry into operation as a milestone and to demonstrate that it has the support of the relevant authorities. This will also pave the way for the system's operation and for the use of the information that it supplies. Official and

administrative measures to disseminate information about the system should be conducted, along with in-house information and awareness-raising sessions in which system documents and guidelines are used as supporting materials.

Operational training. In-service training in the use of technical tools and specific operational procedures of the monitoring and evaluation system will be especially important in the early stages of system start-up but should also be an ongoing activity in order to ensure that the system will be able to function on a sustained basis.

Use of data generated by the monitoring and evaluation system. The system's sustainability will depend on whether or not the data it generates serve as effective inputs for decision-making processes. In order for this to occur, the supply and demand for information will have to be brought into line with one another. Striking this balance will not be a task that is confined to the system's design or start-up stages; instead, it will be an ongoing challenge as long as the system remains in operation. This will also require a use and dissemination strategy that embodies the elements that have yielded positive results in the most advanced monitoring and evaluation systems at the international level.

Continuous improvement. As the participating organizations are likely to be operating at many different levels, to be providing highly specialized services and to have different types of information requirement, a continuous improvement approach should be a hallmark of the system's development and implementation. The good practices and lessons learned in the course of the system's gradual implementation will lay the groundwork for the identification of opportunities for improving the system, making adjustments and strengthening different areas and processes.

Lastly, it is important to remember that, by facilitating informed public participation and promoting transparency and accountability throughout the public policy cycle, the information provided by monitoring and evaluation systems plays a pivotal role in strengthening democratic governance. Monitoring and evaluation systems based on an open government approach provide internal management support through their provision of information of strategic importance for decision-making and serve as mechanisms for informing the citizenry, fostering a more substantive public dialogue and building confidence in a country's institutions.

It is hoped that the use of this guide will contribute to the design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems that will help to improve public interventions for the benefit of the populations of the countries of the region.

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This guide offers a practical and conceptual road map for strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems in Latin America and the Caribbean. These systems can then be used to improve public management and promote the creation of public value. It outlines an integrated approach based on the principles of open government (transparency, participation and collaboration) and results-based management for dealing with the region's structural challenges and bolstering its presently low levels of institutional capacity. The eight stages in this road map provide governments and their institutions with a pathway to follow in designing, implementing and advancing the sustainability of systems for evaluating the performance of public policies, programmes and projects. The guide covers technical tools, evaluation criteria, mixed methodologies and cross-cutting approaches encompassing the areas of gender mainstreaming, territorial considerations and climate change adaptation. It also underscores the importance of the institutional framework, a culture of evaluation, the effective use of information and citizen participation. This step-by-step, contextualized approach offers a way to strengthen State capacity, spur organizational learning and consolidate a more effective, transparent and people-centred form of public management.

The *ECLAC Methodologies* collection describes the conceptual principles, technical specifications and applications of the quantitative and qualitative tools developed and used by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). The collection's main aim is to offer better and new policymaking tools, thus contributing to evidence-based public policymaking that fosters sustainable development with equality.

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