

3.1 Functions of the centre of government

The centre of government (CoG), also known as the Office of the President, the Chancellery, the Cabinet Office, the General Secretariat of Government, among others, refers to the unit or group of units that serve the Head of the Executive (President or Prime minister and the cabinet collectively). The CoG often plays an important role in bridging the relationship between administrative officials and political appointees. It serves as a conduit for translating government agendas into whole-of-government strategies that guide policymaking across government. The CoG role in steering of public administration is also increasingly expanding into other areas including policy reforms, strategic planning, policy development, coordination between ministries, monitoring and data governance (OECD, forthcoming).

CoGs are gaining greater relevance as a growing number of cross-cutting issues require whole-of-government approaches and coherent responses. In the nine surveyed Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries, the most common functions for which CoGs hold full or shared responsibility are strategic planning, defining whole-of-government strategic policy priorities, policy co-ordination across government, and monitoring the implementation of government policy. CoGs in the region play an active role in anticipating risk and strategic foresight (seven out of nine countries, 78%), as well as managing the transition between outgoing and incoming governments (six out of nine countries, 67%). They play a less prominent role in areas such as data governance, with five of the surveyed countries allocating this function to other government bodies (Table 3.1).

The way CoGs co-ordinate among line ministries and agencies takes different forms in different countries. All nine surveyed CoGs act as facilitators or provide support to line ministries. In six out of nine countries, CoGs have a leadership role, providing clear policy direction to line departments, and in the same number, they act as arbitrators or mediators in conflicts between line departments. For instance, in Brazil the CoG, with the support of the president, is in charge of mitigating and resolving disagreements between ministry interests related to cross-cutting government initiatives. Similarly, the Colombian CoG has set up the Presidential Office for Stabilisation and Consolidation, which facilitates inter-institutional co-ordination of policies to implement the final peace agreement and to stabilise and consolidate intervened territories. Interestingly, in four out of nine LAC countries (44%), CoGs actively participate in the substantive content of policy making (Figure 3.1).

To facilitate policy co-ordination between government entities, CoGs in LAC countries use a variety of tools. All nine surveyed CoGs hold regular cabinet meetings, while seven hold ad hoc

cabinet meetings to address specific public policy issues. Other commonly used strategies to facilitate co-ordination are CoG-led working groups, permanent technical committees and ad hoc cross-departmental meetings, each used by six of the nine CoGs (67%), and permanent ministerial committees, used by five (56%). In contrast, only three out of the nine CoGs (33%) rely on written guidelines or cross ministerial budgets to facilitate co-ordination across government (Figure 3.2). Despite these differences in strategies, the CoGs in seven out of nine countries report having a high level of influence over the co-ordination between line ministries while their influence is considered moderate in the remaining two. In Paraguay and Peru, their reported influence increased from moderate in 2018 to high in 2022 (Online Figure F.1.1).

Methodology and definitions

Data are from the OECD-IBD Centres of Government Survey 2022, conducted during May-July 2022 in nine LAC countries. Respondents were senior officials who provide direct support and advice to heads of government and the council of ministers or cabinet.

The survey specifically targets the centre of government. It is not concerned with other units, offices or commissions that may report directly to the president or prime minister but are, effectively, carrying out functions that might equally well be carried out by line ministries.

Line ministry refers to any ministry which exercises delegated, sectoral powers and is responsible for the design and implementation of an area or sector of public policy and administration (e.g. agriculture, education, economy, foreign affairs), in line with the government programme and strategy.

Further reading

OECD (forthcoming), *Compendium of Practices: Steering from the Centre of Government in Times of Complexity*.

OECD (2020), *Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance: Baseline Features of Governments that Work Well*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c03e01b3-en>.

Shostak, R. et al. (2023), *The Center of Government, Revisited: A Decade of Global Reforms*, Inter-American Development Bank, <https://doi.org/10.18235/0004994>.

Figure notes

F.1.1 (Centre of government's influence over co-ordination between ministries, 2018 and 2022) is available online in Annex F.

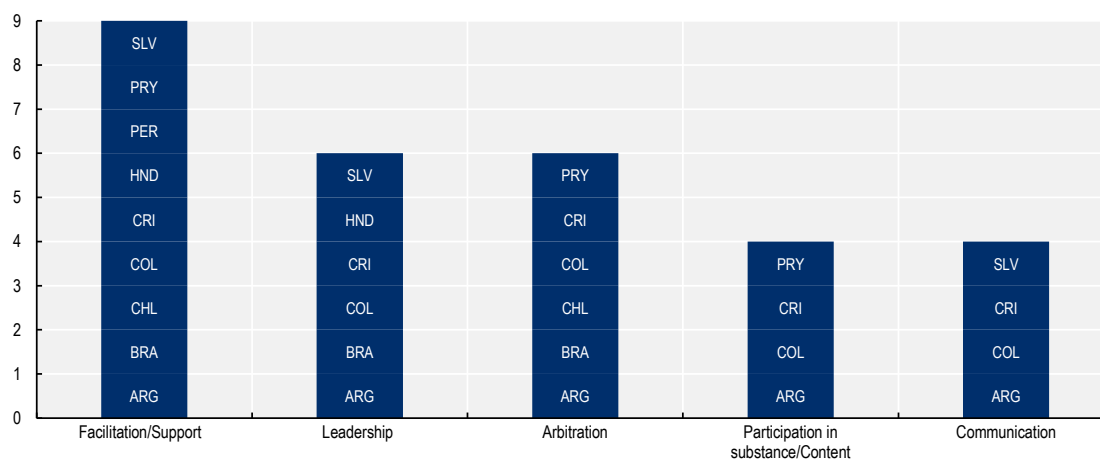
Table 3.1. Responsibilities of the centre of government, 2022

	CoG's responsibilities for the definition and design of whole-of-government national strategies						CoG's responsibilities for the implementation of whole-of-government strategic priorities					
	Identifies and defines whole-of-government strategic priorities		Co-ordinates the design of long-term strategic planning with line departments		Mandates line departments to develop long-term strategic plans in different cross-cutting areas		Monitors implementation		Collects reports on implementation and carries out evaluations		Ensures line ministries' proposals are linked to government priorities	
	2018	2022	2018	2022	2018	2022	2018	2022	2018	2022	2018	2022
Argentina	○	●	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
Brazil	●	●	○	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Chile	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
Colombia	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Costa Rica	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
El Salvador		●		○		○		●		○		○
Honduras	○	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	○
Paraguay	●	●	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	○
Peru	●	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●
LAC Total												
● Yes	6	9	4	4	2	4	8	9	8	7	7	6
○ No	2	0	4	5	6	5	0	0	0	2	1	3

Source: OECD-IBD Centres of Government Survey 2022.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/it3oww>

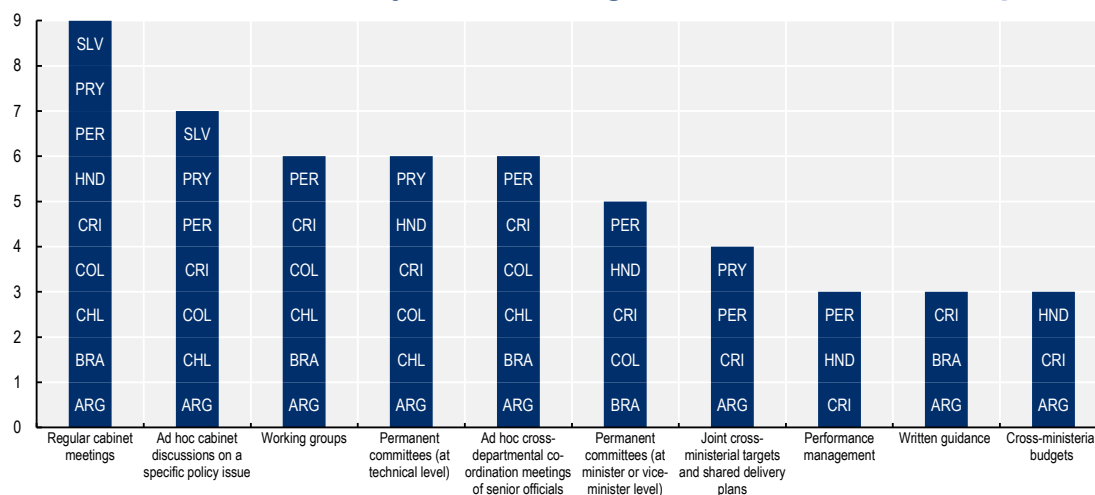
Figure 3.1. Role of the centre of government to supporting co-ordination between line ministries, 2022




Source: OECD-IBD Centres of Government Survey 2022.

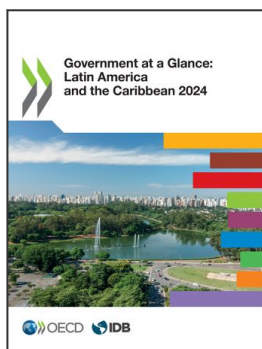
StatLink  <https://stat.link/23bf7o>

Figure 3.2. Main mechanisms used by the centre of government to co-ordinate policies, 2022



Source: OECD-IBD Centres of Government Survey 2022.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/y3a821>



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