

## Introduction

### Objectives

The main objective of the *Government at a Glance* series is to provide reliable, internationally comparable data on government activities and their results in OECD member countries. By broadening the scope to other regions of the world, in particular to Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), the publication allows LAC countries to benchmark their governments' performance within the region and in relation to the OECD. In addition, it allows governments to track their own and international developments over time, and provides evidence to their public policy making. As a result of the successful cooperation between the OECD and the IDB this second edition for the LAC region covers a broader set of topics and includes more countries.

*Government at a Glance: Latin America and the Caribbean 2017*, recognises that governments are major actors in modern societies. Every citizen throughout his or her life interacts with governments at several stages; from the issuance of a passport to the provision of health, education and social benefits. Furthermore, as societies reach higher development levels, expectations from governments tend to increase, while at the same time becoming more complex. Good governance is critical to long term economic, social and environmental development. The ability of governments to operate effectively and efficiently depends in part on their management policies and practices. For instance, open government is key to guarantee that the adequate channels are in place to ensure citizens' participation and engagement. At the same time it permits public scrutiny which is crucial for greater integrity and accountability from government authorities, managers, and other government officials. In turn, public procurement is conducive to an efficient use of public resources but, in addition, could be used to support secondary policy objectives (e.g. support to environmental objectives or women owned enterprises). This publication provides insight into these fields of public governance, among others.

### Indicators on government activities and public management practices

LAC countries are primarily interested in collecting information to identify how public governance and, more specifically, public management practices contribute to a government's ability to achieve its objectives. *Government at a Glance: Latin America and the Caribbean 2017*, is built on the following framework, which describes the public "production" process and identifies five types of indicators: 1) contextual factors, 2) inputs, 3) processes, 4) outputs and outcomes. The current edition includes the three first components of the framework; further editions of the publication may extend to include outputs and outcomes.

#### 1) Contextual factors

Annex D presents contextual information describing some key features of the political and administrative structure for 21 LAC countries included in the publication. Situating policies and indicators within this contextual background can help us better understand differences among countries, and identify those with similar structures that might serve as better comparators for benchmarking purposes.

## 2) Inputs

Input indicators include data on government revenues, expenditures, employment and workforce characteristics. These are the main components of the government production function and provide insight into the incentives and constraints that governments face in determining what types of goods and services to provide. Furthermore, these data allow for a comparison of the proportion of the economy devoted to producing different goods and services, as well as the difference in the mix of inputs used for production. For instance, as labour is a key input in the government production process, the size of the public sector may affect government productivity and its capacity to provide goods and services.

## 3) Processes

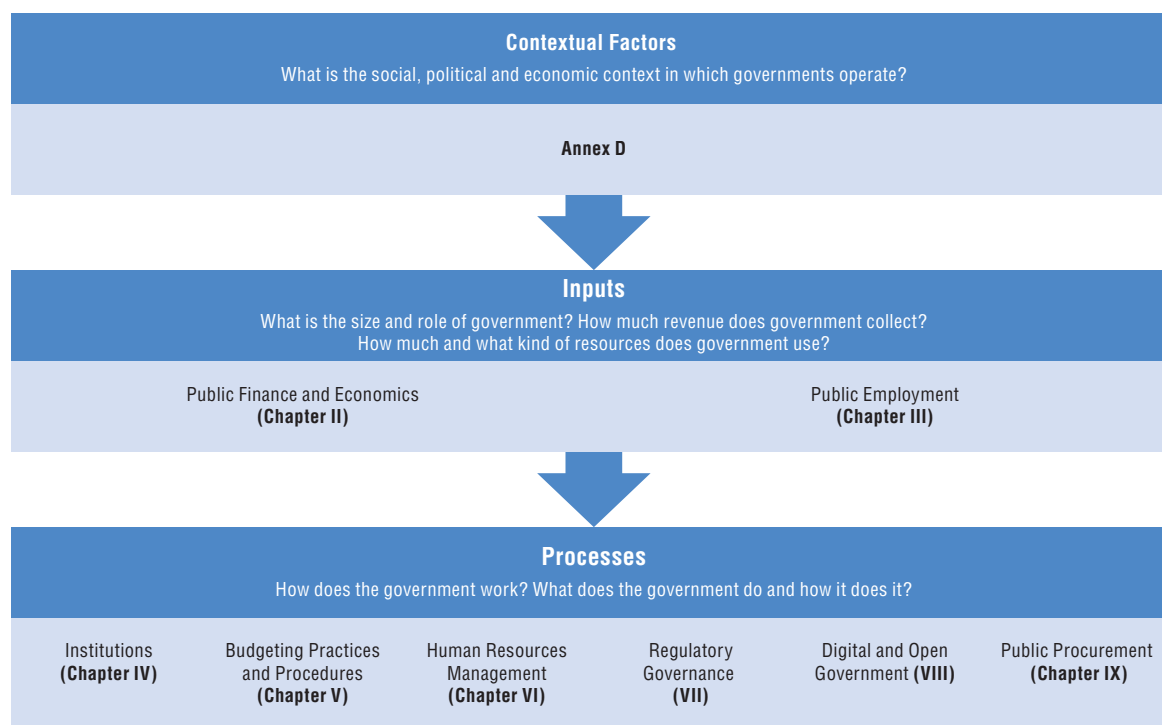
Process indicators refer to the public management practices and procedures undertaken by governments to implement policies. They describe how governments implement policies and how inputs are transformed into outputs and outcomes. Information on processes such as budgeting, public procurement, human resource management, regulatory governance and open and digital government practices allow countries to evaluate the effects of recent reforms, and identify new strategies to improve productivity. For example, effective human resource management is key for aligning people management with the strategic goals of public sector organisations. Digital government can improve public trust by using new technologies to boost the quality and tailor the provision of public services. Finally, the openness, usefulness and re-usability of public data can create new business opportunities and inform citizen engagement as well as the government decision making process.

## 4) Indicators of outputs and outcomes

The dividing line between outputs and outcomes can be blurry. While outputs refer to the quantity and type of goods and services produced by governments, outcomes show the effects of policies and practices on citizens and businesses. The success of a given policy should be measured, at a first stage, by outputs but should ultimately be judged by the outcomes it achieves. *Government at a Glance: Latin America and the Caribbean 2017*, does not include output or outcome indicators. To start, it is difficult to develop valid indicators that truly measure the outputs and outcomes of public administration. In addition, little internationally comparable information on outputs and outcomes exists for the LAC region. However, it is expected that future editions may close this gap by including some data on outputs and outcomes.

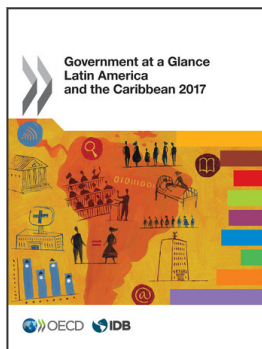
The figure below presents the conceptual framework for *Government at a Glance: Latin America and the Caribbean 2017*.

Figure 0.1. **Conceptual framework for Government at a Glance: Latin America and the Caribbean 2017**



## Structure

*Government at a Glance: Latin America and the Caribbean 2017*, starts with a policy chapter analysing the impact of fiscal policy on equity in the LAC region. Chapters 2-9 provide data on the following areas of public administration: Public Finance and Economics, Public Employment, Institutions, the public administration (CoGs), Budgeting Practices and Procedures, Human Resources Management, Regulatory Policy and Governance, Digital and Open Government and Public Procurement. Finally, there are four indicators that are included as special features, addressing topical issues such as health budgeting, cost benefit analysis, non-renewable natural resources as a source of revenue, and competition friendly regulatory environment. They are found in the Budgeting Practices and Procedures, Regulatory Policy and Governance and Public Finance and Economics chapters respectively.



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