



FUTURE-READY DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS



STRATEGIC
GUIDE

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FUTURE-READY DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS





Foreword

Future-Ready Democratic Institutions: A Regional Commitment to Institutional Innovation for the Integrated Advancement of Democracy, Development, and the State

Latin America and the Caribbean stand at a decisive moment in their history. The region has consolidated its position as one of the most democratic parts of the developing world, with significant progress in rights, poverty reduction, and human development. Yet these achievements coexist with challenges that test the resilience of our institutions: the erosion of public trust, the proliferation of disinformation, political and social polarization, inequality, and pressure from global forces that are reshaping the conditions for development and governance.

In this Guide, institutional resilience is understood broadly: not only as the capacity to withstand disruption or return to a previous state after a crisis, but also as the capacity to absorb shocks, adapt, and transform while sustaining an institution's essential functions. This interpretation aligns with the concept of resilient human development set out in UNDP's 2025 Regional Human Development Report—protecting hard-won gains, preventing reversals, and adapting to profound transformations and increasingly interconnected pressures—and with the resilience literature, which distinguishes among absorptive, adaptive, and transformative capacities.

In this context, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is advancing the *Future-Ready Democratic Institutions* initiative, conceived as a regional platform to support States in their institutional transformation processes. Its purpose is clear: to strengthen critical governance capacities so that public institutions can anticipate change, engage in dialogue with citizens, communicate with purpose, act with integrity, and harness technology in the service of people.

The initiative proposes a framework built on five governance accelerators—anticipatory, collaborative, communicative, integrity, and digital—and one cross-cutting accelerator, intergenerational governance. Together, they are conceived as critical levers for rebuilding democratic legitimacy and strengthening the effectiveness of the State. Each accelerator responds to a pressing need: preparing for uncertainty and shaping desirable futures; broadening citizen participation; confronting disinformation; sustaining institutional integrity under pressure; governing the digital sphere through a rights-based approach; and ensuring that today's public decisions do not compromise the well-being of future generations.

The **Strategic Guide** presented here is a central

instrument of this endeavor. It is a flexible, modular framework that allows each institution to define its own transformation pathway, whether through a comprehensive roadmap or targeted accelerator modules. It brings together evidence, international standards, and innovative experiences from across the region, offering a practical resource to guide institutional action in contexts of growing complexity.

The Guide is organized into three complementary parts: **Part I** invites readers to understand the context and the approach required of *Future-Ready Democratic Institutions*; **Part II** develops the governance accelerators conceptually and enriches them with regional experiences and relevant publications; and **Part III** presents a roadmap for institutional transformation through concrete instruments such as the *Strategic Capacity Radar* and the *Institutional Acceleration Plan*. This combination of a conceptual framework, practical references, and implementation tools gives the Guide its purpose and is intended to make it genuinely useful to institutions preparing for the future.

This proposal is not limited to a technical exercise. Above all, it is a political and ethical invitation to rethink the role of institutions in the region's democratic life. Joining this initiative means becoming part of a regional network of innovative institutions committed to building a new governance paradigm. It also means accepting responsibility for strengthening democracy and development through capacities that are observable, measurable, and sustainable over time.

This foreword invites readers to engage actively with the Guide. It presents not just another document, but a tool for action designed to support States as they reinvent themselves in response to present and future challenges. The invitation is clear: to build collectively the first generation of *Future-Ready Democratic Institutions* in Latin America and the Caribbean—institutions capable of anticipating, innovating, and delivering results that renew public trust and consolidate democracy as an engine of development.

In short, this Guide represents a regional commitment to a State that is better prepared, more principled, and closer to the people—a roadmap for democracy, development, and the State to advance in an integrated manner, fully aligned with the priorities of the Pact for the Future and the recommendations of UNDP's Democracy and Development Report.



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ACRONYMS

Acronym	Definition
AILA	AI Landscape Assessment
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
DPI	Digital Public Infrastructure
DRA	Digital Readiness Assessment
SAI	Supreme Audit Institution
AI	Artificial Intelligence
PCI	Preventive Capacity Index
DDR	Democracy and Development Report (IDD in Spanish)
YPS	Youth, Peace and Security Agenda
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UN	United Nations
OPSI	Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (OECD)
OURdata	Open, Useful and Re-usable Data Index
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
TCU	Tribunal de Contas da União (Federal Court of Accounts, Brazil)
EU	European Union



PART I.
INTRODUCTION



1.1 FROM PRESSURES ON DEMOCRACY TO DRIVERS OF RENEWAL

The 2026 Democracy and Development Report (DDR)¹ describes Latin America and the Caribbean as a region at an inflection point. The region reaches this moment with significant democratic and social assets: it remains the most democratic region in the developing world and the third most democratic region globally, behind only Western Europe and North America. Important advances are evident in human development, the expansion of rights, access to services, the reduction of multiple forms of poverty, and, ultimately, more equitable access to resources and opportunities. Democracy in the region has delivered tangible development gains that are worth preserving. As societies reach higher levels of human development, demand for more democratic governance grows substantially, and the two processes—democracy and development—reinforce one another^{2,3}.

However, that progress now coexists with signs of strain: declining trust in institutions, rising polarization, and an accumulation of complex challenges such as disinformation, the expansion of organized crime, and the effects of the climate crisis.

The latest Regional Human Development Report for Latin America and the Caribbean⁴ reminds us that the region faces a complex landscape characterized by growing uncertainty, recurrent and overlapping crises, and multiple interrelated factors—such as rapidly evolving technologies, deepening social fragmentation, and an increasingly unstable climate—

that expose structural vulnerabilities in its development trajectory. The report places resilience at the center as an essential condition for advancing human development sustainably. This, in turn, requires building for the future by strengthening innovative democratic institutions that can adapt and respond effectively to crises. Only then can institutions generate the trust on which democracy depends.

Trust is a key indicator of how people relate to public institutions and perceive their performance in democratic systems. Evidence shows that trust in public institutions has declined significantly in recent years. One of the central challenges facing democracy today is the mutually reinforcing relationship between declining trust⁵ in processes and institutions and the deteriorating quality of political representation, which together shape citizens' expectations⁶.

This pressure is compounded by phenomena that heighten democratic vulnerability in the region: polarization and the fragmentation of the public sphere through propaganda, false and misleading information, and disinformation, all of which corrode trust. These are not merely communication problems; they are transformations that affect the conditions for democratic deliberation itself. UNDP warns that the region is experiencing a paradox: while channels for self-expression and information are multiplying, the conditions for deliberating on the basis of shared facts,

Endnotes

1 UNDP (2026). *Informe sobre Democracia y Desarrollo. Democracias bajo presión: reimaginar los futuros de la democracia en América Latina* [Democracy and Development Report. Democracies under pressure: reimagining the futures of democracy in Latin America]. Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, UNDP. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/informe-sobre-democracia-y-desarrollo-democracias-bajo-presion-reimaginar-los-futuros-de-la-democracia-en-america-latina>

2 Our World in Data, 2024, Democracy Index (EIU), <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/democracy-index-eiu>.

3 UNDP, 2026, *Democracia: una piedra angular para el desarrollo humano* [Democracy: a cornerstone for human development], <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/blog/democracia-una-piedra-angular-para-el-desarrollo-humano>

4 UNDP, 2025, *Regional Human Development Report: Under Pressure—Recalibrating the Future of Development in Latin America and the Caribbean*, <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/informe-regional-sobre-desarrollo-humano-bajo-presion-recalibrando-el-futuro-del-desarrollo-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe>

5 Nearly half (48%) of those surveyed report low or no trust in national government, while local governments inspire slightly higher levels of trust (37%); national public administrations (32%) and legislatures (27%) show, on average, lower levels of trust. OECD (2025), *OECD Survey on the Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean—2025 Results*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b4dea13c-es>.

6 OECD (2025), *OECD Survey on the Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean—2025 Results*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b4dea13c-es>.

listening to others, engaging in dialogue, and building the consensus needed for collective action are weakening.⁷ New information ecosystems are therefore not a peripheral concern; they shape the very possibility of sustaining pluralism and rebuilding trust.

The current landscape compels us to rethink and renew democracy. If democracy is to remain meaningful and effective amid contemporary discontent, public institutions must improve their delivery of development results. In this regard, the DDR 2026 underscores that Democracy, Development, and the State are not separate agendas, but mutually reinforcing dimensions. Only institutions capable of responding to social expectations, building consensus, and managing complex transformations can sustain democratic legitimacy in contexts of uncertainty.

For the purposes of this Guide, and in line with the DDR 2026, democracy is understood as a political regime in which governments are formed through competitive, inclusive, clean, and periodic elections; exercise power in accordance with established rules and with respect for political pluralism; and guarantee fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, association, and the press. Its central function is to process social conflict peacefully through shared institutional frameworks. The *Future-Ready Democratic Institutions* proposed in this Guide are precisely the institutional capacities that enable such a regime to fulfill that function—to represent, deliberate, decide, and deliver results—under conditions of accelerated change.

The DDR 2026 asks whether democratic institutions can respond to these tensions not merely by containing them, but by treating them as an opportunity for renewal. Such renewal requires the deliberate transformation of key institutional capacities: the ability to anticipate change, engage in dialogue with citizens, communicate with public purpose, act with integrity, and harness technology in the service of people. At stake is the possibility of rebuilding democratic legitimacy and strengthening the State's effectiveness in delivering development results that meet citizens' expectations—and, in doing so, beginning to restore eroded trust⁸.

Against this backdrop, the Guide seeks to answer the following question: How can we build the capacities and processes that public institutions need to improve people's lives and become future-ready for democracy and development? The Guide supports public institutions by proposing transformative and innovative solutions that can better meet the needs of increasingly complex and demanding societies, including the population's emerging and future needs.

⁷ UNDP (2026), *Democracias resilientes: el papel del ecosistema informativo para recuperar el diálogo y generar puentes* [Resilient democracies: the role of the information ecosystem in restoring dialogue and building bridges]. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/dialogo-regional-democracias-resilientes-el-papel-del-ecosistema-informativo-para-recuperar-el-dialogo-y-generar-puentes>

⁸ UNDP (2026). *Informe sobre Democracia y Desarrollo. Democracias bajo presión: reimaginar los futuros de la democracia en América Latina* [Democracy and Development Report]. Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, UNDP. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/informe-sobre-democracia-y-desarrollo-democracias-bajo-presion-reimaginar-los-futuros-de-la-democracia-en-america-latina>



1.2 FUTURE-READY DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

As noted above, democracy in the region faces challenges that test its capacity to meet citizens' current expectations. These include persistent inequality, the erosion of trust in public institutions, growing polarization, and the perception that democratic processes do not always translate into concrete improvements in people's lives. These challenges inevitably affect democracy's legitimacy and its capacity to respond to citizens' demands. Addressing them requires a strategic rethinking of public institutions' capacities and how those capacities can be transformed.

UNDP defines capacity⁹ development as the process through which individuals, organizations, and societies obtain, strengthen, and maintain the capabilities needed to set and achieve their own development objectives. This approach emphasizes sustained **transformation** anchored from within, as well as shifts in mindsets and attitudes. Consistent with this long-standing UNDP approach, *Future-Ready Democratic Institutions* are those that continuously develop and strengthen the **technical capacities** needed to act in contexts of growing complexity and uncertainty, while also adapting and **transforming** in response to accelerating change. Whether through capacity strengthening or broader institutional **transformation**, these institutions turn pressure into momentum for renewal.

In practice, it is useful to distinguish between established capacities and adaptive capacities. Established capacities refer to the formal existence of structures, teams, rules, methodologies, or mechanisms; adaptive capacities refer to an institution's ability to learn, process conflict, question inherited routines, adjust its behavior, and sustain change under pressure. An institution may already have teams, protocols, platforms, participation mechanisms, or strategic plans and still operate through defensive routines, hierarchical cultures, low trust, or limited openness to uncertainty. For this reason, the Guide considers not only whether a capacity formally exists, but also whether it effectively shapes institutional behavior. This cultural and adaptive layer determines whether the accelerators move from formal design to sustained institutional renewal. Building *Future-Ready Democratic Institutions* requires innovation in both institutional capacities and public-sector processes so that institutions can deliver more efficient,

tangible results that improve people's lives and, in turn, rebuild public trust. Evidence¹⁰ shows that trust depends not only on policy outcomes, but also on how policies are designed and implemented. *Future-Ready Democratic Institutions* must therefore combine effective delivery of human development results with inclusive and participatory processes so that institutional action responds capably and coherently to society's priorities. To advance in this direction, UNDP has identified five key accelerators, plus one cross-cutting accelerator, as strategic domains in which focused institutional action can improve public performance and deliver more effective results for citizens.

The accelerators presented here are areas of institutional practice in which focused investment can unlock improvements in institutional performance and public policy, generating better results for citizens.

Each accelerator identifies a **governance domain** and **the outcome** it enables:

Number	Accelerator	What it enables
1	Anticipatory governance	Anticipating change, preparing for emerging scenarios, and influencing how the future takes shape.
2	Collaborative governance	Building multi-stakeholder coalitions and agreements that broaden citizen inclusion and participation and sustain reforms beyond electoral cycles.
3	Communicative governance	Sustaining strategic, accessible public communication that is resilient to disinformation.

⁹ UNDP (2009). *Capacity Development: A UNDP Primer*. UNDP core text. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/Capacity_Development_A_UNDP_Primer_Spanish.pdf

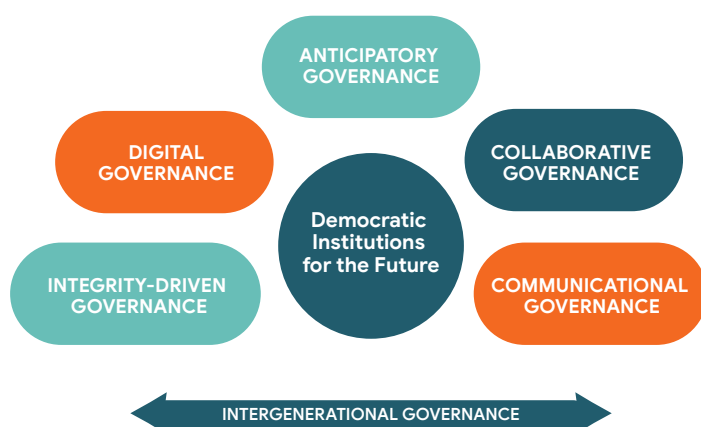
¹⁰ UNDP–IDEA, 2025, *Gobernanza democrática, gobernanza efectiva y desigualdad en América Latina* [Democratic governance, effective governance and inequality in Latin America]; <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/gobernanza-democratica-gobernanza-efectiva-y-desigualdad-en-america-latina>

4	Integrity governance	Sustaining integrity under pressure and delivering results that generate verifiable public trust.
5	Digital governance	Governing rapidly evolving data and technologies to serve people better and protect their rights.
	Intergenerational governance	Ensuring that public decisions respond to present needs without compromising those of future generations. It also recognizes young people as strategic political actors with key capacities to innovate democracy, strengthen institutional trust, and transform citizen participation.

strengthen public trust, promote participation, and harness digital transformation in the service of human development.¹¹

The six proposed accelerators not only drive specific transformations, but also directly strengthen institutions' capacity to deliver higher-quality public goods and services. In doing so, they contribute to stronger democratic institutions that can respond fairly, inclusively, effectively, and sustainably to citizens' needs. The accelerators therefore act as catalysts for future-ready governance, in which democracy's value is reflected in its ability to build trust, ensure equity, and promote collective well-being over the long term.

From an institutional-capacities perspective, these accelerators are neither exhaustive nor sector-specific. They were selected because evidence shows that democratic legitimacy and the State's effectiveness in delivering results depend on how institutions operate in these areas of governance.



The proposed accelerators cover domains that UNDP identifies as central to transforming public institutions' capacity to anticipate change, improve services and responsiveness, engage more effectively with citizens,

¹¹ UNDP (2026). *Informe sobre Democracia y Desarrollo. Democracias bajo presión: reimaginar los futuros de la democracia en América Latina* [Democracy and Development Report]. Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, UNDP. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/informe-sobre-democracia-y-desarrollo-democracias-bajo-presion-reimaginar-los-futuros-de-la-democracia-en-america-latina>



1.3. OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this Guide is to support public institutions as they transform and innovate, strategically strengthening critical governance capacities associated with the key accelerators of *Future-Ready Democratic Institutions*. Its primary objective is to improve development results, strengthen public trust, and prepare the State to act in contexts of complexity and uncertainty.

The Guide is not conceived as an external evaluation tool or an isolated self-assessment, but as a **framework for joint work** between UNDP and institutional counterparts. It is intended to facilitate a structured, evidence-based, and results-oriented conversation that first builds a shared understanding of each institution's situation—recognizing existing capacities—and then helps identify priorities and agree on viable courses of action. Ultimately, the goal is to turn evidence into an agenda for change and innovation focused on strengthening governance capacities.

This initiative provides strategic support for institutional transformation and social and digital innovation that go beyond one-off or purely training-based interventions. Capacity building is not limited to developing individual skills; it also encompasses the dynamic strengthening of an institution's capabilities, structures, processes, resources, and relationships so that it can fulfill its mandate more efficiently, effectively, and sustainably; adapt to changes in its environment; and deliver public value.¹²

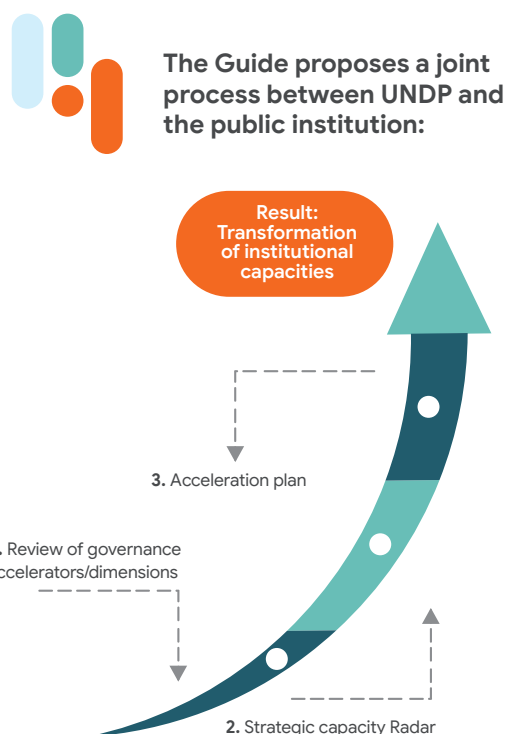
The Guide is designed for use by institutions at both **national and subnational levels**. It is organized around strategic domains of democratic governance in which focused investment can generate meaningful improvements in public performance and concrete results for citizens.

The Guide is **adaptable** and can be used by institutions at different levels of government and stages of institutional maturity. Its tools can be applied comprehensively or in modules, with a focus on particular domains or accelerators according to each institution's needs, priorities, and context.

The pathway proposed in this Guide follows a logic of co-creation and sustained support throughout implementation. On the one hand, UNDP contributes evidence, methodology, and comparative experience; on the other, the public institution contributes knowledge of its context, capacities, constraints, and opportunities. The result is a shared process

that turns joint capacity analysis into actions that support institutional transformation through two innovative tools: the Strategic Capacity Radar and the Institutional Acceleration Plan.

The scope and pace of this pathway depend on several enabling conditions that should be recognized from the outset. These include a clear institutional mandate; a minimum degree of continuity in leadership and technical teams; explicit political backing for the transformation process; and a regulatory and budgetary framework that allows decisions to be sustained over time. Where any of these conditions is only beginning to emerge, the Guide remains applicable, but initial work may focus on strengthening those foundations—for example, through internal agreements, narrowly scoped roadmaps, or demonstration pilots—before moving toward larger-scale transformation. Identifying these starting conditions is not an entry requirement; rather, it is an input for defining, together with UNDP, a realistic pace of acceleration suited to each institutional context.



¹² This conception draws on the United Nations capacity-building approach, which describes that process as the development and consolidation of capacities that enable organizations to thrive and fulfill their functions in changing contexts. United Nations, n.d., *Capacity-building*, <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/capacity-building>



1.4. STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDE

Conceived as a resource for action, the Guide supports public institutions across multiple domains as they activate and strengthen their governance capacities. It offers concrete, evidence-based guidance, tools, and regional experiences, making it useful both as a reference and as a practical resource for technical teams, public institutions, and UNDP country offices.

The three-part structure serves that purpose, not as a merely formal division, but as a logical progression. The **first part** frames the debate and establishes a common basis of understanding. The second develops the accelerators that translate that vision into concrete areas of work. The third provides instruments for launching institutional change.

THE FIRST PART FRAMES THE PROPOSAL.

It presents the context in which the proposal arises, explains why democratic institutions' capacities must now be reconsidered, and defines the Guide's overall approach. This section helps readers orient themselves before moving into the more operational content, understand the perspective that structures the document, and establish a shared vocabulary for the challenges public institutions face in a landscape marked by uncertainty, pressure to perform better, and the need to adapt and renew themselves.

THE SECOND PART DEVELOPS THE SUBSTANTIVE CONTENT.

It organizes the key accelerators that structure the proposal and that, taken together, offer a broad vision of what it means to move toward *Future-Ready Democratic Institutions*. Each dimension follows a sequence designed to facilitate its use:

- **What is it about?**

This subsection defines the accelerator and its scope and presents the key concepts needed to understand the area

clearly.

- **Why does it matter?**

It sets out the relevance of the accelerator in the current context and explains why strengthening it is important for improving the responsiveness, legitimacy and performance of public institutions.

- **What capacities does it involve?**

It introduces, from a capacity perspective, the standards an institution should develop in this dimension and provides a reference for strengthening them. Part III then explains how these standards are applied.

- **What role does it play in the public policy cycle?**

It explains how each accelerator can be integrated into the different stages of the public policy cycle, from problem definition through implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

- **How has it been put into practice?**

It presents notable experiences from countries in the region, showing how public institutions are developing these capacities in real-world contexts. The examples provide concrete references intended to inspire adaptation or replication by interested institutions.¹³

- **To learn more**

It provides practical information on resources and publications that can help institutions advance across the proposed accelerators.

In the **second part**, the document provides a conceptual foundation in service of a practical methodology. Each dimension is intended to prompt questions, identify gaps, recognize existing capacities, and point toward possible actions. The experiences are not merely illustrative; they also help institutions imagine how particular standards can be translated into concrete, real-world measures, even when starting conditions differ.

¹³ The information on the experiences gathered in this Guide was identified through a review of verifiable institutional and public sources. These include contributions from UNDP country offices and other UNDP teams at the regional and global levels, as well as additional experiences of public institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean documented by specialized bodies and networks such as the OECD, OPSI, the OAS, the DGPE, OLACEFS, CLAD, and CELAC. Official websites of public institutions, normative frameworks, reports, evaluations, specialized publications, and other materials available on institutional websites were consulted. The experiences presented seek to offer useful references for adaptation to different contexts.

THE THIRD PART DEVELOPS THE INSTRUMENTS NEEDED TO MOVE INTO IMPLEMENTATION.

This section is especially important because it connects the foundation developed for each accelerator in Part II to action. It proposes two tools for setting change in motion: first, a strategic assessment of institutional capacities and, second, an institutional acceleration pathway.

- **Strategic Capacity Radar.**

This instrument organizes an assessment of the institution's starting point, identifies strengths and areas for improvement, and builds a shared vision of the capacities that should be reinforced.

- **Institutional Acceleration Plan.**

It provides methodological guidance for converting capacity analysis into a sequence of priorities, actions, responsibilities, and implementation decisions.

Not all institutions are expected to use the Guide in the same way. Some may use it from beginning to end as a comprehensive resource. Others may find it more useful as a reference for work on a specific accelerator, support for a particular workshop, guidance for an internal conversation, or a basis for developing a roadmap. This flexibility is intentional and responds to the diversity of institutional contexts in which the Guide can be applied.

This flexibility also reflects the diverse situations that coexist in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Guide is designed to support institutions operating under relatively stable governance conditions, as well as those facing more volatile environments—territories affected by violence, post-conflict or political transitions, pressure from illicit economies, or processes of institutional reconstruction.

In these contexts, the accelerators remain relevant, although their application may take different forms: more gradual, narrowly scoped sequences; prioritization of measures that produce visible short-term results; coordination with subnational authorities and local actors who sustain an institutional presence when the central level is under greater strain; protection and continuity for the technical teams carrying reforms forward; and use of regional and peer-to-peer cooperation networks to draw lessons from institutions that have navigated similar situations.

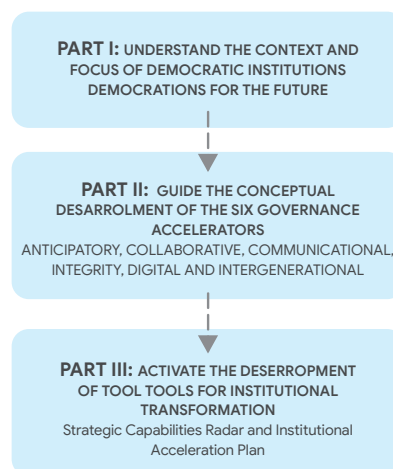
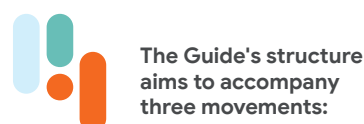
The more uncertain the environment, the more valuable capacities such as strategic anticipation, multistakeholder deliberation, and trust-building public communication become.

Throughout the Guide, governance capacities are understood as something the State apparatus cannot build alone. Civil society, academia, the private sector, the media, community organizations, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendant communities, and citizens themselves are indispensable actors in every accelerator—whether as participants in anticipation and deliberation processes,

public watchdogs for integrity and transparency, allies in communication against disinformation, or co-producers of solutions in the digital and intergenerational domains.

Given the persistent gender gaps documented across the region in political participation, public leadership, and access to decision-making, the balanced composition of deliberative spaces and the integration of a gender perspective into each accelerator must be treated as substantive criteria of governance quality, not optional add-ons. The multistakeholder logic that runs through the Guide is therefore an explicit invitation to open every institutional process to these voices, recognize their contributions, and protect the civic spaces in which they operate. DDR 2026 data illustrate the scale of the gaps: although the region is a global leader in women's parliamentary representation, parity remains unfinished business—36.5% in national parliaments, 30.4% in ministerial cabinets, 28.2% in supreme courts, 26.2% in municipal councils, and 15.9% in mayoral offices in 2024.

The Guide's structure is designed to support three movements:



- **PART I:** Understanding the context and the approach required of *Future-Ready Democratic Institutions*
- **PART II:** Guiding reflection through the conceptual development of five accelerators and one cross-cutting approach, together with regional experiences and publications related to each accelerator
- **PART III:** Activating institutional transformation and change through concrete instruments—the Strategic Capacity Radar and the Institutional Acceleration Plan

This combination of a conceptual framework, practical references, and implementation tools gives the Strategic Guide its purpose and is intended to make it useful to institutions seeking to become future-ready.



PART II.

**ACCELERATORS
DRIVING
DEMOCRATIC
INSTITUTIONS
FOR THE FUTURE**

The framework for action presented in Part II is structured around five accelerators and one cross-cutting accelerator. It focuses on strengthening key institutional capacities for effective governance and improving results for the public.

The accelerators incorporate an institutional-innovation perspective aimed at developing adaptive governance capacities that can respond to growing complexity and uncertainty. Taken together, they are critical levers for improving institutional performance, reinforcing public trust, and ensuring the long-term sustainability and impact of public policies.

Each accelerator rests on three components: an **analysis of regional and national evidence** based on data from the **2026 Democracy and Development Report**; a selection of **innovative practices** from **Latin America and the Caribbean** and other regions; and a set of evidence-based tools and methodologies to guide institutional transformation.

The accelerators presented below guide the work of *Future-Ready Democratic Institutions*:

Advancing each accelerator involves more than adjusting regulations or introducing new tools; it requires change processes that engage people, organizational cultures, and entrenched institutional routines.

Experience shows that reforms are more likely to endure when supported by explicit change management: active senior leadership; a shared understanding of the transformation's purpose; incentives aligned with new practices; spaces for processing legitimate resistance; continuous team development; and internal communication that recognizes progress and lessons learned.

For this reason, cultural change and internal ownership are treated throughout the following accelerators as inseparable from capacity building, not as tasks that follow a technical decision.

Institutional renewal also involves transitional periods in which old routines lose effectiveness before new ones have stabilized. These moments should not be interpreted solely as resistance, failure, or lack of capacity; they can also be understood as adaptive transitions that require support, sense-making, learning, and careful sequencing. Recognizing them in this way helps institutions avoid premature technical fixes when a more deliberate process of cultural and institutional adaptation is needed.



2.1. ANTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

Using the future to inform present-day decisions under uncertainty

2.1.1. WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

Anticipatory governance refers to the institutionalization of coordinated foresight practices in public institutions to improve planning, policymaking, and decision-making in the face of emerging challenges and to chart pathways toward a fairer, more inclusive, and sustainable future. Unlike traditional governance, this approach prioritizes anticipation, continuous learning, and adaptation under uncertainty rather than responding only after events have occurred¹⁴.

This is not about predicting the future, but about using it as an informed input to present-day decisions. It involves reading signals of change, exploring plausible scenarios, identifying risks and opportunities, and translating those insights into more robust, inclusive, and sustainable decisions. This accelerator stems from a simple observation: the challenges institutions face are increasingly interconnected, and their consequences spread faster and farther than institutions are designed to absorb. Demographic, climate, fiscal, and technological shifts rarely arrive without warning their drivers unfold over years or even decades but the cascades they trigger move quickly and increasingly occur at the same time and in interconnected ways. The task is not to keep pace with an accelerating world, but to identify these shifts early enough to act while there is still room to maneuver. This is what distinguishes anticipatory governance from conventional public management. In UNDP's recent literature, strategic foresight encompasses methodologies including trend analysis, horizon scanning, and scenario building, which are presented below:

Strategic foresight is the discipline devoted to exploring possible futures in order to anticipate change, develop transition pathways, and manage risk, enabling institutions to act in the present to build a desirable future. It is not about predicting events, but about providing strategic early warning and preparing institutions for emerging opportunities and challenges.¹⁵

Horizon scanning is the process of systematically observing the environment to identify changes, trends, risks, innovations, and emerging issues that may affect an institution. This form of contextual analysis prevents an exclusive focus on the short term and strengthens the capacity for early response.¹⁶

Signals of change are early indications of transformations that are not yet fully established but may signal significant future change. UNDP's signals system is designed to capture those signals and convert them into useful inputs for more robust decision-making.¹⁷

Scenarios are structured descriptions of plausible futures. They are not intended to predict the future accurately, but to help people think through what might happen and how to respond in each case. They broaden perspectives, support comparison among options, and allow decisions to be stress-tested before implementation.¹⁸

¹⁴ UNDP, *Gobernanza anticipatoria en el Poder Legislativo: un camino para un futuro más inclusivo y sostenible* [Anticipatory governance in the legislative branch: a path to a more inclusive and sustainable future]; <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/blog/gobernanza-anticipatoria-en-el-poder-legislativo-un-camino-para-un-futuro-mas-inclusivo-y-sostenible>

¹⁵ UNDP (2026). *UNDP's Foresight for CPD Toolkit*. <https://www.undp.org/future-development/foresight-cpd-toolkit>

¹⁶ UNDP, *Foresight in CPD Toolkit, Chapter 1: "Horizon Scanning,"* which defines horizon scanning as a foresight methodology aimed at systematically exploring emerging trends, signals of change and uncertainties in order to anticipate risks and opportunities. <https://www.undp.org/future-development/foresight-cpd-toolkit/chapter-1/chapter-1/horizon-scanning>

¹⁷ UNDP, *Future Trends and Signals System—A continuously updated intelligence base on emerging change*. It provides the "signals of change" and innovation highlights that feed each accelerator with actionable ideas. <https://signals.data.undp.org>

¹⁸ UNDP, "Chapter 2" of the *Foresight in CPD Toolkit*; "Creative approach – Archetype Scenarios", <https://>

Futures co-creation makes citizens and diverse social actors active participants in developing shared visions. Through collaborative processes, democratic institutions strengthen their capacity to integrate diverse forms of knowledge, reduce fragmentation in public debate, and build greater social ownership of collective decisions.¹⁹

Futures literacy refers to the knowledge, skills, and practices that enable people and institutions to understand, imagine, and use the future in informed present-day decision-making. It strengthens the capacity to recognize assumptions, explore alternative scenarios, manage uncertainty, and expand the range of possibilities, thereby improving the relevance of public decisions.²⁰

2.1.2. WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Latin America and the Caribbean face multiple pressures that are reshaping the foundations of democracy and development: polarization, disinformation, accelerated technological change, organized crime, migration, and climate change, among others. None of these phenomena operate in isolation; they are intertwined and alter the environment in which public institutions act. In this context, linear and reactive approaches are often inadequate for systemic, interdependent, and fast-evolving problems.

Anticipatory governance and the strategic use of futures practices allow institutions to move from a reactive mode to one of preparedness. Incorporating foresight into planning and public management broadens the analytical horizon, helps identify emerging risks and opportunities, and reduces improvisation by orienting State action toward more sustainable and inclusive responses under uncertainty.²¹

Futures practices provide an enabling framework for building **common agendas** in highly polarized contexts. When dialogue centers on shared challenges and collective aspirations for the future, these approaches support

collaborative processes involving public institutions, civil society, the private sector, academia, and citizens in the co-creation of solutions. In doing so, they reduce fragmentation in public debate and strengthen democratic legitimacy.²² The relevance of anticipatory governance grows with environmental volatility. In contexts marked by high uncertainty, rapid political transitions, pressure from illicit economies, post-conflict situations, or recurrent crises, the capacity to read early signals, explore alternative scenarios, and prepare adaptive responses is essential. Combined with the co-construction of shared futures as an exercise of responsibility toward present and future generations, this capacity helps prevent improvised decisions and sustain a strategic horizon when short-term cycles accelerate.

The more fragile or volatile the institutional context, the more valuable futures practices become as tools for preparedness, for building basic common ground from which divided actors can still act together, and for protecting strategic direction against short-term pressure. A shared assessment of plausible futures gives actors with opposing ideologies a point of convergence—what might happen—even when they disagree on values. Identifying change early shifts an organization from absorbing change after it arrives to shaping its response before options narrow. Anticipation therefore serves two functions. Its protective function involves managing risk, preparing for crises, and avoiding improvised decisions. Its generative function involves imagining and co-creating desirable futures with citizens. The Declaration on Future Generations (2024) reinforces the latter by framing the future not only as a source of threats, but also as a domain of shared responsibility toward present and future generations. This dual perspective connects anticipatory governance with the intergenerational governance accelerator in section 2.6, allowing the two to reinforce one another.

2.1.3. WHAT CAPACITIES DOES IT INVOLVE?

In this Guide, the standards for anticipatory governance are observable institutional capacities that enable a shift

www.undp.org/foresight-in-CPD-toolkit/chapter-2; and UNDP Foresight Manual (2018).

¹⁹ UNDP (2025). *Democratizar los futuros: herramientas para anticipar y cocrear políticas públicas con juventudes* [Democratizing futures: tools for anticipating and co-creating public policies with youth]. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/democratizando-futuros-herramientas-para-anticipar-y-co-crear-politicas-publicas-con-juventudes>

²⁰ UNDP (2025). *Democratizar los futuros: herramientas para anticipar y cocrear políticas públicas con juventudes*. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/democratizando-futuros-herramientas-para-anticipar-y-co-crear-politicas-publicas-con-juventudes> The *Democratizing Futures* guide places special emphasis on this point and proposes tools so that anticipation is not merely a technical exercise but also a participatory process.

²¹ UNDP (2025). *Democratizar los futuros: herramientas para anticipar y cocrear políticas públicas con juventudes*. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/democratizando-futuros-herramientas-para-anticipar-y-co-crear-politicas-publicas-con-juventudes>

²² UNDP (2025), *Exploring insights from HDR 2023/24 for innovative governance* <https://www.undp.org/publications/exploring-insights-hdr-2023-24-innovative-governance>

from predominantly reactive action to strategic action. These capacities combine institutional arrangements, methods, and tools—horizon scanning, identification of drivers of change, scenario building, risk management, and progress monitoring—with a shift in institutional mindset: a willingness to work with uncertainty, question assumptions, and explore alternative futures. Without this cultural dimension, foresight tools tend to be applied only once and lose their transformative potential^{23, 24}

It is also important to remember that anticipation is never neutral. Institutions interpret signals of change through preexisting cultural frames, institutional assumptions, and shared imaginaries that shape what is considered relevant, credible, or possible. An institution may apply foresight tools rigorously and still reproduce the assumptions that limit its ability to imagine alternatives. A cultural lens on foresight—attentive not only to external signals, but also to the internal filters through which they are interpreted, selected, or discarded—strengthens this accelerator by making explicit the culture from which an institution approaches the future.

The standards assess the extent to which an institution can make futures analysis a routine capacity in its operations, decisions, and relationships with other actors. They recognize both capacities already in place and the potential to develop others. The standards are organized into two complementary groups: **enabling capacities** (standards 1–4), which create the conditions for conducting foresight; and **observable results** (standards 5–6), which demonstrate that foresight shapes institutional decisions and instruments²⁵.

Enabling capacities:

1. A TEAM OR FOCAL POINT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR FORESIGHT.

The institution has the capacity or the potential to develop it, to coordinate anticipation exercises, organize inputs, convene relevant departments, and sustain the work over time. Where possible, this may take the form of a dedicated team; in other cases, responsibility should at least

be formally assigned.²⁶

2. The institution has mechanisms to scan and monitor trends, signals, and risks.

The institution has systematic tools—for example, a signals-and-risks matrix or periodic anticipatory intelligence reports—to scan the environment for emerging change and monitor priority trends and their effects on policies, programs, or institutional mandates.²⁷ Scenario use can then connect these inputs to planning and strengthen analysis and risk management.

3. PUBLIC SERVANTS DEVELOP FUTURES LITERACY AND FORESIGHT SKILLS.

The institution strengthens the knowledge and skills needed to understand uncertainty, question assumptions, and use the future to support better decision-making. This includes training in specific methods, such as horizon scanning, scenario development, and backcasting, as well as broader competencies for operating under conditions of complexity.²⁸

4. ANTICIPATION IS INCORPORATED INTO PARTICIPATORY DECISION-MAKING.

The institution uses foresight to support participatory planning and decision-making. It involves diverse actors, including young people where relevant; ensures balanced participation by women; and promotes representation of diverse groups, given the region's documented gender gaps in public decision-making. Such participation broadens the evidence base, reduces bias, and increases the legitimacy of the future visions developed.²⁹

Observable results:

5. INSTITUTIONAL DECISIONS AND INSTRUMENTS REFLECT FORESIGHT FINDINGS.

Verifiable evidence shows that foresight inputs—

²³ UNDP (2026). *UNDP's Foresight for CPD Toolkit*. <https://www.undp.org/future-development/foresight-cpd-toolkit>. See also Smith, S. and Cox-Smith, S. (2023). *Future Cultures: How to Build a Future-Ready Organization Through Leadership*.

²⁴ UNDP (2026). *UNDP's Foresight for CPD Toolkit*. <https://www.undp.org/future-development/foresight-cpd-toolkit>

²⁵ The distinction between enabling capacities and observable results is inspired by the OECD's FIELD/SCOPES framework. See OECD (2025). *Towards Anticipatory Governance Guidelines for Public Sector Organisations*. OECD Working Papers on Public Governance, No. 82. <https://doi.org/10.1787/a5203d0b-en>

²⁶ UNDP (2026). *UNDP's Foresight for CPD Toolkit*. <https://www.undp.org/future-development/foresight-cpd-toolkit>

²⁷ UNDP (2026). <https://www.undp.org/future-development/foresight-cpd-toolkit/chapter-1/chapter-1/chapter-1/horizon-scanning/undps-future-trends-signals-system>

²⁸ UNDP (2026). *UNDP's Foresight for CPD Toolkit*. <https://www.undp.org/future-development/foresight-cpd-toolkit>

²⁹ UNDP (2025). *Democratizar los futuros: herramientas para anticipar y cocrear políticas públicas con juventudes*. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/democratizando-futuros-herramientas-para-anticipar-y-co-crear-politicas-publicas-con-juventudes>

scenarios, signal scans, and trend analyses—have influenced concrete decisions, including strategic plans, policies, programs, budgets, or regulatory adjustments. This standard values closing the loop between analysis and action so that foresight does not become a parallel exercise disconnected from decision-making.³⁰

6. THE INSTITUTION INTEGRATES A LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE AND INTERGENERATIONAL EQUITY INTO STRATEGIC DECISIONS.

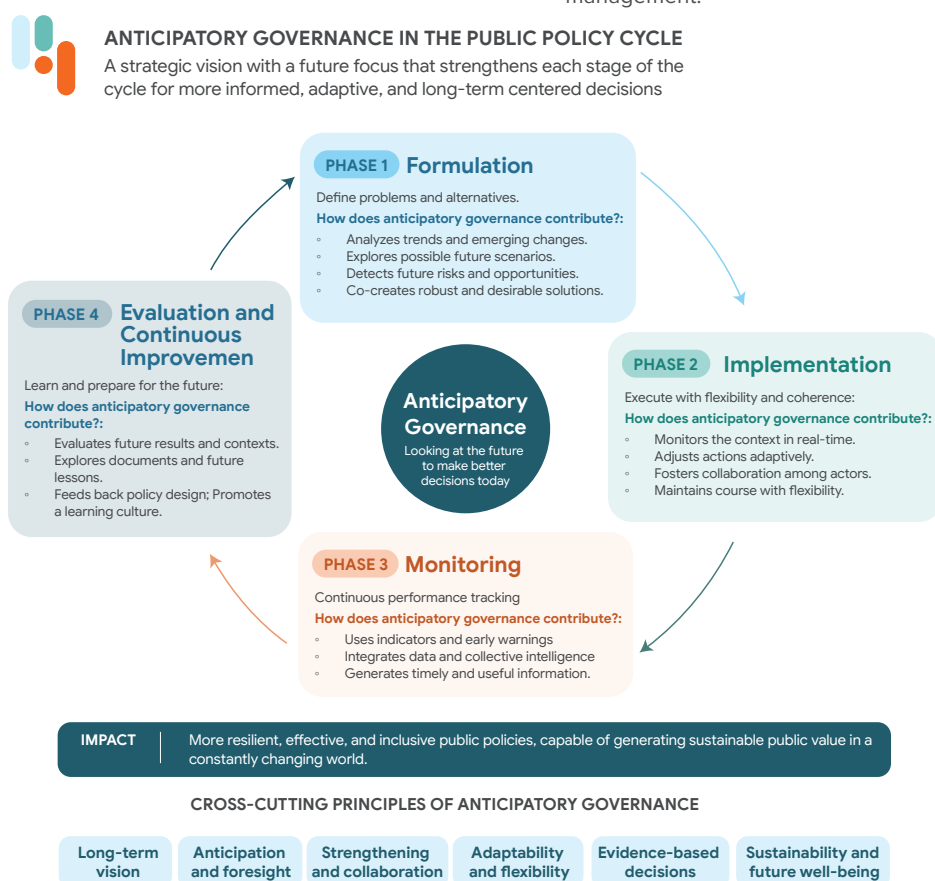
It uses instruments—multi-year plans, intergenerational impact assessments, roadmaps, and long-term strategies—that sustain strategic direction beyond the electoral cycle or current leadership and explicitly assess how today's decisions affect future generations. This standard connects directly with the cross-cutting Intergenerational Governance approach developed in section 2.6.³¹

The parameters for jointly identifying and assessing each of these six guiding standards are detailed in the Methodological Note accompanying the Guide.

2.1.4. WHAT ROLE DOES ANTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE PLAY IN THE PUBLIC POLICY CYCLE?

Anticipatory governance can be integrated across the public policy cycle, bringing a long-term strategic perspective that is sensitive to future scenarios. From strategic planning and policy formulation onward, it facilitates the identification of emerging trends, risks, and opportunities and supports more informed, resilient decisions. During implementation, it helps institutions adjust interventions as the context changes while maintaining coherence with strategic objectives.

Finally, during monitoring and evaluation, anticipatory governance strengthens continuous learning by enabling evidence to inform policy adjustments, alternative scenarios to be explored, and actions to adapt dynamically. It therefore improves institutional responsiveness while fostering a culture of continuous innovation and adaptation in public management.



Source: prepared by the authors.

³⁰ OECD (2025). *Towards Anticipatory Governance Guidelines for Public Sector Organisations*. OECD Working Papers on Public Governance, No. 82. This standard corresponds to the future-readiness, innovation and endurance dimensions of the FIELD framework. <https://doi.org/10.1787/a5203d0b-en>

³¹ OECD (2025), *op. cit.* This standard corresponds to the long-term perspective and direction dimensions of the FIELD framework.

For these reasons, integrating futures practices into public institutions should not be seen as an add-on, but as a condition for strengthening both their capacity to anticipate, adapt, and respond and the relevance of the public policies they produce.

2.1.5. HOW HAS IT BEEN PUT INTO PRACTICE?

The experiences in this section show how anticipatory governance can be translated into concrete practices that strengthen institutions' capacity to understand their environment, prepare for uncertainty, and make better decisions.

Experience 1 — Chile

Title: Future Challenges Commission (Comisión Desafíos del Futuro)

Institution: Senate of the Republic of Chile

Country: Chile

Level of government: National

Year or period: Approximately 2011–present

Main actors: Senate of the Republic; Future Challenges, Science, Technology and Innovation Commission; scientific and academic communities; research centers; civil society organizations; and citizens.

Description: The Future Challenges Commission is Chile's principal parliamentary body for integrating a long-term perspective into political decision-making. Its main objective is to study and debate potential future challenges affecting Chile and the world, incorporate them into the Senate's legislative work, and translate them into legislative initiatives that respond to the country's socioeconomic development needs. Its other objectives include promoting science, technology, and innovation and fostering joint debate across political, academic, private-sector, and social spheres.

Highlights: The experience shows how a parliament can use the future as an input to present-day decisions by establishing durable capacities to identify trends, explore scenarios, and anticipate risks and opportunities before legislating. The Commission exemplifies anticipatory governance in action: it integrates scientific evidence, dialogue with diverse actors, and long-term strategic reflection to guide decisions that affect the country's development beyond a single electoral cycle. UNDP has recognized it as one of the most advanced examples of anticipatory governance in the legislative branch.

To learn more: <https://consejofuturo.senado.cl/home/comision-desafios-del-futuro/>

Experience 2 — Dominican Republic

Title: Meta RD 2036—A Roadmap to Double GDP through a Long-Term Vision

Institution: National Competitiveness Council (CNC), in coordination with the Ministry of the Presidency and the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development

Country: Dominican Republic

Level of government: National

Year or period: 2024–present

Main actors: Presidency of the Republic; Ministry of the Presidency; Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development; National Competitiveness Council; National Council of Private Enterprise (CONEP); industry representatives; academia and civil society; and UNDP, providing technical support.

Description: Meta RD 2036 is a strategic initiative of the Dominican Government that aims to double the country's real GDP by 2036. It brings together structural reforms, investment in human capital, and public-private partnerships around a common development vision. Coordinated by the National Competitiveness Council with the Ministry of the Presidency and the Ministry of Economy, the plan sets quantifiable targets for economic growth, multidimensional poverty reduction, expansion of the middle class, educational improvement, and institutional strengthening. It links these targets to the National Development Strategy and the National Competitiveness Strategy.

Highlights: Meta RD 2036 shows how a government can use long-term horizons and growth scenarios to guide present-day decisions, translating a concrete aspiration—doubling GDP by 2036—into reforms and priorities that extend beyond a single term of government. The initiative combines foresight analysis, measurable targets, and a “virtuous circle” involving the State, the private sector, and civil society, illustrating anticipatory governance in practice.

To learn more: <https://cnc.gob.do/metard-2036/>

Experience 3 — Uruguay

Title: Special Commission on Futures (Comisión Especial de Futuros)

Institution: Parliament of Uruguay

Country: Uruguay

Level of government: National

Year or period: 2024–present

Main actors: Parliament of Uruguay; Special Commission on Futures; extra-parliamentary advisory group; academia and specialists; UNDP (technical and methodological support).

Description: The Special Commission on Futures is a parliamentary forum that incorporates futures approaches into deliberation and decision-making by preparing reports

on strategic issues and drawing on an extra-parliamentary advisory group that expands technical capacity to analyze emerging trends, risks, and opportunities.

Highlights: The Commission uses futures literacy and foresight tools to anticipate important debates—such as the future of work, artificial intelligence, and the rights of future generations—and translate them into inputs for the legislative agenda.

To learn more:

<https://parlamento.gub.uy/camarasycomisiones/asambleageneral/comisiones/1211>

This experience is also analyzed by the OECD as an international example of the institutionalization of anticipatory governance in the legislative branch (OECD, 2025).

For additional examples of anticipatory governance in public institutions, see the database in **Annex I**.

2.1.6. TO LEARN MORE

The following UNDP publications provide conceptual foundations and practical evidence for exploring anticipatory governance in greater depth:

Foresight for Strategic Planning – Toolkit

UNDP (2024). This comprehensive, modular methodology covers horizon scanning, identification of drivers of change, scenario planning, systems-focused program design, risk management, and adaptive management. The Foresight Toolkit for country-level planning is available at:

<https://www.undp.org/future-development/foresight-cpd-toolkit>

Towards Anticipatory Governance Guidelines for Public Sector Organisations

OECD (2025). A practical framework for public sector organizations to integrate strategic foresight, experimentation and innovation into policymaking. It proposes outcome dimensions (FIELD) and enabling factors (SCOPES), with self-assessment questions and cases from several countries.

<https://doi.org/10.1787/a5203d0b-en>

UNDP Future Trends and Signals System

UNDP (continuously updated). This intelligence platform systematizes development-relevant trends, emerging signals of change, and innovation highlights. Its content can support horizon scanning, trend identification, and scenario-building exercises across the accelerators in this Guide.

<https://signals.data.undp.org>

Democratizing Futures: Tools to Anticipate and Co-create Public Policies with Youth

UNDP (2024). This publication offers practical tools

for incorporating futures into participatory planning and decision-making, promoting intergenerational dialogue with a focus on transforming democratic governance and its institutions.

<https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/democratizando-futuros-herramientas-para-anticipar-y-co-crear-politicas-publicas-con-juventudes>

The Use of Futures in Parliaments – A Guide for Transformative Action

UNDP (2024). This publication examines how foresight can be integrated into the legislative, oversight, and representative functions of parliaments. It presents concepts, tools, and international experiences, together with recommendations for strengthening their institutional use. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/el-uso-de-futuros-en-los-parlamentos>

Futuros do Brasil: Sinais de Transformação

UNDP–MGI Brazil (2025–2026). This participatory report identifies signals and trends of change relevant to Brazil's development and applies UNDP's NextGen Foresight methodology.

<https://www.undp.org/pt/brazil/publications/futuros-do-brasil-sinais-de-transformacao>



2.2. COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

Opening the public policy cycle to multiple stakeholders and managing conflict democratically

2.2.1. WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

The most complex public problems—such as inequality, climate change, violence, and exclusion—are beyond any single institution's capacity to solve alone. **Collaborative governance** begins with the recognition that development challenges require agreements through which multiple stakeholders—the State at its various levels, the private sector, civil society, and academia—share information, decisions, resources, and responsibilities.

This dimension refers to public institutions' capacity to open and renew the mechanisms through which citizens and other stakeholders participate meaningfully in the public policy cycle. Such participation is neither one-off nor decorative; it is planned and institutionalized throughout the policy cycle, from problem identification to public oversight of implementation. The objective is to improve the quality of decisions, strengthen their legitimacy, and generate more sustainable results in response to social needs, especially in contexts of distrust and polarization.³²

This distinction should remain in view throughout the accelerator: opening spaces for participation is not the same as enabling genuine relational transformation. Participation mechanisms can become ritualized when they channel opinions without changing decision-making patterns, power relations, or institutional priorities—or when they fail to foster genuine dialogue among the actors involved. The key question, therefore, is whether participation produces real influence, shared ownership, and new ways of making decisions, or remains a procedural exercise with limited institutional effect. In other words, do collaborative mechanisms transform how the institution listens, deliberates, processes disagreement, and shares responsibility with other actors?

Collaborative governance can be understood through two broad, mutually reinforcing lines of action. The first is the **institutionalization of citizen participation in the public policy cycle**. This includes, for example, creating or strengthening permanent mechanisms—such as public

policy councils, national conferences, or participatory budgeting—through which citizens regularly influence agendas and decisions.

The second line is **cross-sectoral work**: mechanisms that promote integrated policy planning or implementation across ministries and levels of government, or among public institutions, the private sector, and civil society. Interministerial coordination, interinstitutional committees, and public-private-community partnerships are concrete expressions of this dimension.

Both lines pursue the same objective: broadening the legitimacy of public policies and improving their effectiveness through shared responsibility.

Collaborative governance also involves deliberative approaches, such as **citizens' assemblies** or **mini-publics**, in which facilitation, collective learning, and recommendations are linked to formal decision-making. These exercises must connect with institutional structures rather than operate in isolation, so that participatory spaces can effectively inform decisions.

To understand this dimension within the framework of the Guide, five central concepts should be clarified:

Deliberation means carefully thinking and talking through an issue before making a decision. In multi-stakeholder processes, the aim is not simply for each party to state its position, but to create an exchange in which people listen, weigh information, and reflect on the common good. **Deliberation** is characterized by open participation, mutual respect, reasoned arguments, and a genuine willingness to reconsider positions through dialogue.³³

Democratic innovation refers to renewed forms of participation, deliberation, and public decision-making that make democracy more open, inclusive, and connected to people's everyday lives. Democracy is an ongoing process—one that requires institutions to question assumptions, adapt approaches, and innovate with an eye to the future.³⁴

³² UNDP, 2025, "Democracia deliberativa para superar el bloqueo" [Deliberative democracy to overcome gridlock]. https://www.sparkblue.org/system/files/2025-04/250406_UNDP-Concept-Note-Session1.pdf

³³ UNDP, 2025, "Democracia deliberativa para superar el bloqueo". https://www.sparkblue.org/system/files/2025-04/250406_UNDP-Concept-Note-Session1.pdf

³⁴ UNDP, Abordar el reto de la participación [Addressing the participation challenge]; <https://www.undp.org/es/>

Multi-stakeholder co-creation is a joint process in which public institutions, civil society, communities, academia, the private sector, and other actors build a shared understanding of a problem and collaboratively design responses, roadmaps, or action plans.

Deliberative mini-publics are citizen-participation forums composed of a small, randomly selected group that reflects the diversity of the population. Participants receive information, hear from experts, and deliberate on equal terms to formulate recommendations on complex public issues. Their main value lies in combining inclusion, cognitive diversity, and high-quality deliberation, thereby producing conclusions with greater social legitimacy than those generated by traditional consultation mechanisms.³⁵

Meaningful participation gives people a voice, a presence, and genuine influence over decisions that affect their lives. It requires conditions that enable different groups to access information, express themselves, engage in dialogue, and contribute effectively, with particular attention to populations facing the greatest vulnerability.³⁶ UNDP links this concept to institutions that protect the right to participate and to public capacities that sustain inclusive policymaking spaces.

2.2.2. WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Collaborative governance matters because the gap between what citizens expect and what institutions deliver has widened alarmingly in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2023, **72.3% of Latin Americans** believed that their

country was governed by a few groups for their own benefit, while trust in the executive branch fell from 34% in 2008 to 26% in 2023. This institutional distrust is driven mainly by corruption and short-termism among leaders, which impede the construction of long-term social agreements.³⁷ These data reflect a perception of democracy as insufficiently responsive and participatory. Approximately three in ten eligible voters did not vote in the region's most recent presidential elections, and many people no longer see democracy and governance as means of improving their quality of life.³⁸

Collaborative governance offers an institutional response to this disconnect. When institutions open their processes to genuine citizen participation, decisions gain legitimacy, policies become more sustainable, and agreements are more likely to endure beyond electoral cycles.³⁹ This dimension is especially relevant to addressing the region's three structural development traps—low growth capacity, high inequality, and weak institutional governance—which require multi-stakeholder innovation that renews democratic practice in the face of complex challenges.⁴⁰

It also matters because polarization, which has intensified across the region, narrows the space for collective action, fuels distrust, and shifts decision-making toward confrontation rather than shared solutions.⁴¹ Collaborative governance strengthens a basic institutional capacity for managing conflict democratically: convening diverse actors, sustaining inclusive dialogue, and transforming differences into shared work agendas. Ensuring equitable conditions for participation—while addressing gender, racial and ethnic, generational, territorial, and disability-related inequalities—is essential if the resulting decisions are to reduce existing gaps.

This form of governance is built through interaction between State and non-State actors across the policy cycle. Democratic dialogue can help build consensus or prevent

[blog/abordar-el-reto-de-la-participacion](#)

³⁵ UNDP, 2025, “*Democracia deliberativa para superar el bloqueo*”. https://www.sparkblue.org/system/files/2025-04/250406_UNDP-Concept-Note-Session1.pdf

³⁶ UNDP, “*Participación significativa en ALC*” [Meaningful participation in LAC]. undp.org/es/latin-america/democratic-governance/participacion-significativa; United Nations, “*Meaningful youth engagement*”. un.org/youthaffairs/es/meaningful-youth-participation

³⁷ UNDP/CAF, 2024, “*Gobernanza para el desarrollo en América Latina y el Caribe*” [Governance for development in Latin America and the Caribbean]. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-09/gobernanza_para_el_desarrollo_en_america_latina_y_el_caribe.pdf

³⁸ UNDP, “*Participación significativa en ALC*”. undp.org/es/latin-america/democratic-governance/participacion-significativa

³⁹ UNDP, 2025, “*Informe Regional sobre Desarrollo Humano: Bajo presión*” [Regional Human Development Report: Under Pressure]. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/informe-regional-sobre-desarrollo-humano-bajo-presion-recalibrando-el-futuro-del-desarrollo-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe>

⁴⁰ ECLAC, 2025, “*Gobernanza colaborativa y deliberación democrática*” [Collaborative governance and democratic deliberation]. <https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/84485-gobernanza-colaborativa-procesos-deliberacion-democratica-transformacion-digital>

⁴¹ UNDP, 2025, “*Informe Regional sobre Desarrollo Humano: Bajo presión*”. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/informe-regional-sobre-desarrollo-humano-bajo-presion-recalibrando-el-futuro-del-desarrollo-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe>

conflict when it is open, sustained, and flexible.⁴² When it functions in this way, it lends greater legitimacy to public decisions, narrows the representation gap, and supports reforms that are more sustainable over time.

2.2.3. WHAT CAPACITIES DOES IT INVOLVE?

Strengthening collaborative governance means developing concrete institutional capacities so that collaboration becomes part of how an institution operates rather than depending solely on the political will of the moment. These capacities include new practices and work processes within technical teams and among decision-makers. The standards therefore describe what an institution should be able to do to open public decision-making and turn interaction into results: more inclusive and responsive decisions, co-designed dialogue processes, and shared action.

The composition of collaborative spaces is a cross-cutting dimension of quality. Given documented gender gaps in political participation and public leadership in Latin America and the Caribbean, dialogue mechanisms, multi-stakeholder platforms, and deliberative bodies require explicit attention to parity and to the balanced representation of women and diverse groups. They should also include women's organizations and institutional gender-equality mechanisms as legitimate interlocutors. Without such deliberate attention, collaborative spaces tend to reproduce the representational asymmetries found elsewhere in the system, weakening the legitimacy and quality of the agreements they reach. This dimension also requires a civic space that is inclusive and conducive to participation.

1. The institution has a formal dialogue mechanism.

The institution maintains a stable forum for exchange with key actors—whether civil society, academia, the private sector, territorial organizations, or other public institutions—with a defined objective, regular meetings, and a system for record-keeping or follow-up. Multi-stakeholder platforms make it possible to develop policies through dialogue and shared agendas. In highly polarized contexts, deliberative approaches can create spaces for meaningful dialogue, identify common ground, and foster recognition, understanding, and shared learning.⁴³

2. The institution uses methodologies to ensure meaningful and inclusive participation.

It is not enough to listen repeatedly to the same actors. The institution should use criteria or methodologies for broad-based outreach, bring together a diversity of voices, and facilitate dialogue and co-creation at different stages of the public policy cycle. Genuine participation requires resources, time, and deliberate institutional design.

3. The institution co-creates shared agendas and responses.

Consultation is a starting point, but this standard requires turning dialogue into joint work. Collaborative governance translates exchange into proposals, priorities, and courses of action developed by multiple actors. It therefore requires agreements, committees, roadmaps, work plans, or other mechanisms for sharing information, assigning responsibilities, coordinating resources, and reaching decisions with other institutions or social actors.

4. Participation includes systematic follow-up.

Collaboration gains legitimacy only when people can see how their contributions were considered, which decisions were based on them, and how agreements are sustained over time. The institution must therefore establish **feedback loops**—systematic mechanisms that report back to participants, document results, communicate progress, and adjust the process when necessary. This standard values collaboration that becomes a sustained institutional practice rather than a series of one-off meetings or declaratory commitments. Associated capacities include accessible in-person and digital channels and traceable documentation showing how each citizen contribution moves from receipt to institutional consideration.⁴⁴

The Methodological Note accompanying the Guide sets out the detailed criteria for identifying and assessing each of these capacities.

2.2.4. WHAT ROLE DOES COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE PLAY IN THE PUBLIC POLICY CYCLE?

Multi-stakeholder participation and collaboration are not confined to a single stage; they run throughout the public policy cycle and transform how problems are framed, solutions are implemented, progress is monitored, and lessons are drawn from results.⁴⁵

⁴² UNDP, 2025, “*Democracia deliberativa para superar el bloqueo*”. https://www.sparkblue.org/system/files/2025-04/250406_UNDP-Concept-Note-Session1.pdf

⁴³ UNDP, 2025, “*Democracia deliberativa para superar el bloqueo*”. https://www.sparkblue.org/system/files/2025-04/250406_UNDP-Concept-Note-Session1.pdf

⁴⁴ UNDP, *Abordar el reto de la participación*; <https://www.undp.org/es/blog/abordar-el-reto-de-la-participacion>

⁴⁵ UNDP/CAF, 2024, “*Gobernanza para el desarrollo en América Latina y el Caribe*”. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-09/gobernanza_para_el_desarrollo_en_america_latina_y_el_caribe.pdf

Phase 1. Formulation—Defining the problem and alternatives

Incorporating multiple voices into the problem analysis reveals dimensions that a single institution would be unlikely to identify on its own. Co-designing solutions with citizens, civil society, the private sector, and academia strengthens the legitimacy of the problem definition and builds support for the proposed alternatives. In addition, co-creating policies and strategies across government institutions helps address complex issues more efficiently by generating integrated solutions and optimizing resources.

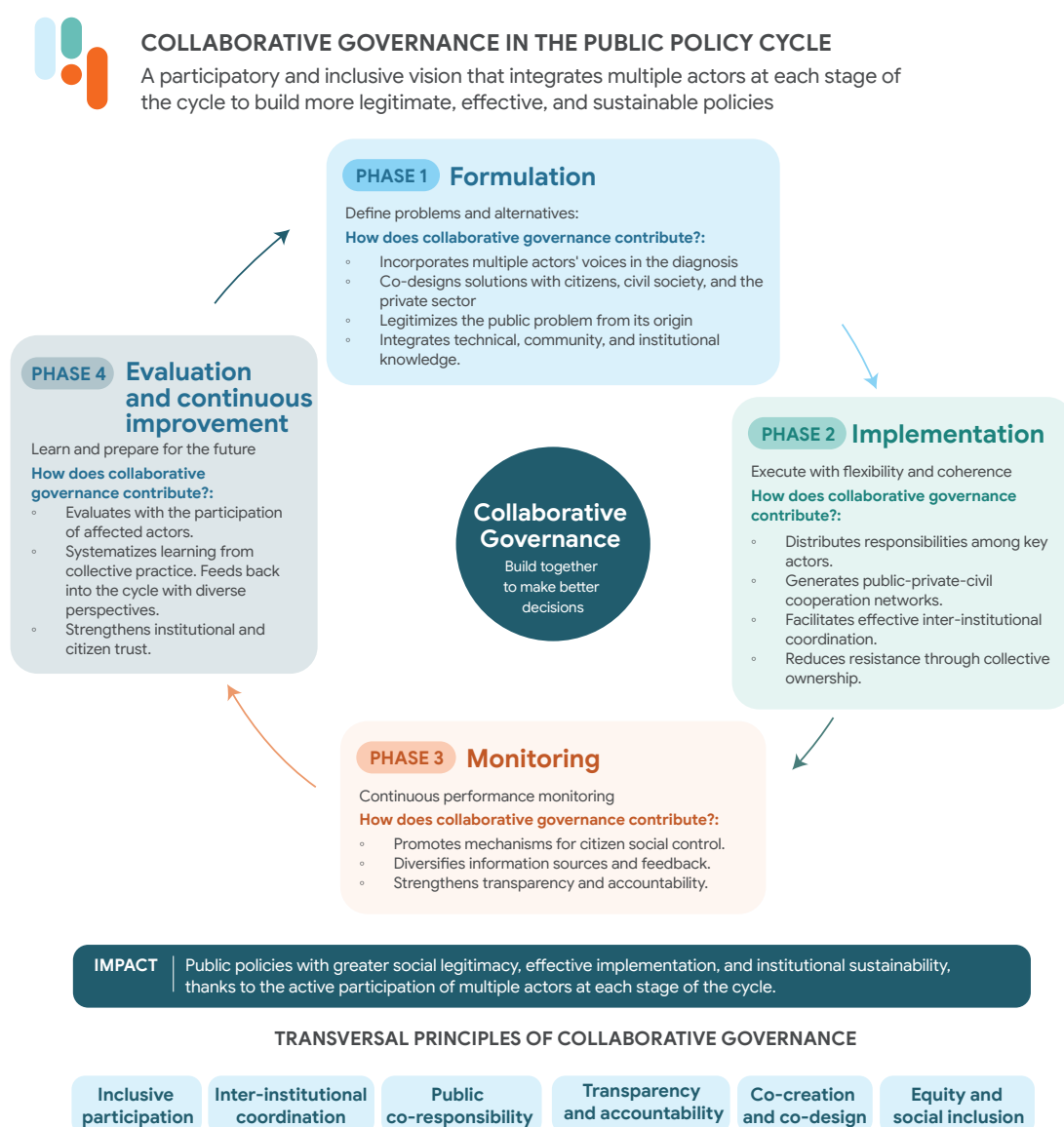
Collaboration distributes responsibilities, creates multi-stakeholder cooperation networks, and facilitates interinstitutional coordination. Sharing responsibility for implementation reduces resistance and increases collective ownership of results.

Phase 3. Monitoring—Tracking performance continuously

Collaborative monitoring incorporates citizen oversight and draws on a wider range of information sources.

Phase 2. Implementation—Acting with flexibility and coherence

Phase 4. Evaluation and continuous improvement—Learning and preparing for the future



Source: prepared by the authors.

Participatory evaluation produces broader and more legitimate learning than internal technical evaluation alone.

2.2.5. HOW HAS IT BEEN PUT INTO PRACTICE?

Experience 1 — Jamaica

Title: Vision 2030 Jamaica—National Development Plan

Institution: Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), in coordination with the Government of Jamaica
Country: Jamaica

Level of government: National

Year or period: 2009–2030 (with updated medium-term frameworks, such as the 2024–2027 MTF)

Main actors: PIOJ; the Offices of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance; sectoral ministries; local authorities; the private sector; civil society organizations; trade unions; youth; and international development partners.

Description: Vision 2030 Jamaica is the National Development Plan intended to transform Jamaica into “the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business” by 2030. Coordinated by the Planning Institute of Jamaica, the plan was developed through a broad participatory process that combined technical analysis with consultations involving public, private-sector, and civil-society actors across the country. It is implemented through Medium-Term Socio-Economic Policy Frameworks (MTFs), which are periodically reviewed and updated through new rounds of dialogue and monitoring.

Highlights: The experience shows how a national development plan can be built and managed as a long-term collaborative process in which government, the private sector, civil society, and citizens help define the country’s vision, strategic priorities, and implementation commitments. It has become a platform for joint work, with consultation, monitoring, and accountability mechanisms renewed during each medium-term cycle.

To learn more: <https://www.vision2030.gov.jm>

Experience 2 — Chile

Title: Laboratorio de Gobierno: Co-Creating Solutions and Building Public Innovation Capacity

Institution: Laboratorio de Gobierno—Ministry of Finance of Chile

Country: Chile

Level of government: National (with implementation in public services at all levels)

Year or period: 2015–present

Main actors: Laboratorio de Gobierno; participating public services; private-sector companies; academia; and citizens and service users involved in co-creation processes.

Description: This experience primarily illustrates the second line of collaborative governance described above: cross-sectoral work and coordination among public institutions and other actors to design and implement solutions to public problems. Laboratorio de Gobierno is a Chilean State agency dedicated to improving public services through co-creation. It designs solutions with government teams and users, builds innovation and design-thinking capacity among public servants, and measures institutional innovation capacity. Its model combines agile, people-centered methodologies with a systemic approach to continuous service improvement.

Highlights: Laboratorio de Gobierno is a well-established regional model for institutionalizing public innovation through co-creation. Its main contribution has been to make collaboration with citizens and multiple stakeholders a regular practice of the Chilean State rather than a one-off project, and to produce replicable methodologies and tools that have been widely adopted in other countries in the region.

To learn more: <https://www.lab.gob.cl/>

Experience 3 — Peru

Title: Participa Perú—RedPública UNDP

Institution: Presidency of the Council of Ministers (PCM)—Secretariat of Government and Digital Transformation, with UNDP

Country: Peru

Level of government: National

Year or period: 2021–present

Main actors: PCM (Secretariat of Digital Government); UNDP Peru; citizens; civil society organizations; and sectoral technical teams.

Description: The State platform Participa Perú integrates RedPública, a space developed by UNDP, so that citizens can submit proposals and contribute to a collaboratively developed public agenda. The integration creates a single access point through which the State systematically channels, manages, and responds to citizen input. The result is a digital participation mechanism directly linked to the national policy-formulation cycle.

Highlights: The experience illustrates how a State–UNDP partnership can scale up citizen participation through official platforms. By integrating RedPública into a government platform, the initiative overcomes the common disconnect between participation tools and formal government processes: citizen proposals enter the public decision-making process directly.

To learn more: gob.pe > Participa Perú · <https://redpublica.com.pe/>

Additional experiences are presented in **Annex I**.

2.2.6. TO LEARN MORE

The following UNDP publications provide conceptual foundations and practical evidence for exploring collaborative governance and deliberative democracy in greater depth:

Global Parliamentary Report 2022: Public Engagement in the Work of Parliament

UNDP and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2022). This report examines why public engagement matters in parliamentary work and how parliaments worldwide connect with the citizens they represent, including through accountability and oversight. It presents principles and practices for deepening that engagement and is available in Spanish.

<https://www.undp.org/es/publicaciones/informe-parlamentario-mundial>

Deliberative Democracy to Overcome Gridlock

UNDP (2025). This concept note examines how deliberative democracy can bring citizens' voices into governance and help overcome political polarization. It explores citizens' assemblies, mini-publics, and deliberative dialogues in Brazil, Malawi, and Uruguay, with reference to the 2023–2024 Human Development Report.

https://www.sparkblue.org/system/files/2025-04/250406_UNDP-Concept-Note-Session1.pdf

Promoting an Open and Inclusive Public Sphere

UNDP (2024). This set of three documents—a framing note, programmatic options, and a synthesis—presents UNDP's approach to promoting an open and inclusive public sphere. It treats such a sphere as a condition for exercising the right to participate in public affairs and as an important component of peace, development, and stronger governance.

<https://www.undp.org/publications/promoting-open-and-inclusive-public-sphere>

Governance for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

UNDP–CAF (2024). This publication emerged from the Governance for Development Dialogues held in six countries in the region. It analyzes State capacity, institutional legitimacy, collaborative governance, and the renewal of social contracts.

[undp.org > Governance for Development in LAC \(2024\)](https://www.undp.org/publications/governance-for-development-in-lac-2024)

Addressing the Participation Challenge

UNDP (September 2025). This institutional blog post identifies six persistent obstacles to citizen participation—power asymmetries, complexity, polarization, lack of trust, conflicting timeframes, and limitations of speed and scale—and explores innovative approaches to overcoming them. It includes examples from Argentina and other countries.

[undp.org > Addressing the participation challenge](https://www.undp.org/publications/addressing-the-participation-challenge)

Meaningful Participation in Latin America and the Caribbean

UNDP LAC (2025). This institutional page on meaningful participation in the region focuses on groups facing the greatest exclusion: women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, migrants, and persons with disabilities. It presents UNDP's framework for strengthening institutions that protect the right to participate and sustain inclusive policymaking spaces.

[undp.org > Meaningful participation in LAC](https://www.undp.org/publications/meaningful-participation-in-lac)

The following publications show how collaborative governance operates in practice and offer tools for applying it throughout the public policy cycle:

How Can Participation Deliver Just Energy Transitions?

UNDP Global Policy Centre for Governance (December 2025). This publication examines how participatory institutions operate in just energy transitions and which conditions allow participation to shape more equitable outcomes. It is a useful resource for collaborative governance in complex, cross-sectoral, and long-term policy processes.

<https://www.undp.org/publications/how-can-participation-deliver-just-energy-transitions>

On the Edge of Participation

UNDP Accelerator Labs Network (October 2025). This report explains how the Accelerator Labs network fosters civic engagement and collective intelligence through innovative participatory approaches. It examines 15 cases grouped into three patterns: enabling voice, designing collaboratively, and strengthening community organization. The lessons are directly applicable to collaborative governance.

<https://www.undp.org/publications/edge-participation>

Guide to Digital Participation Platforms

People Powered–UNDP (September 2025). This practical resource was co-designed to support governments, civil society, and public institutions in using digital platforms for more inclusive, transparent, and effective civic participation. It covers current trends—including the integration of artificial intelligence—and addresses digital inclusion, privacy, and accessibility. It is especially useful for expanding consultation, collaboration, and feedback channels throughout the policy cycle.

<https://www.undp.org/publications/guide-digital-participation-platforms-2025>

Risk and Uncertainty in Deliberative Processes

UNDP (2026). This study analyzes how deliberative processes operate in contexts marked by risk and uncertainty. It offers useful guidance for incorporating deliberative approaches into collaborative governance, especially in problem definition, response design, and follow-up to decisions in complex environments.

<https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2025-06/undp-risk-and-uncertainty-in-deliberative-processes.pdf>



2.3. COMMUNICATIVE GOVERNANCE

Building trust through accessible, truthful, two-way communication

underscore the transformative role of public, deliberative communication.

2.3.1. WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

Public communication concerns institutions' capacity to engage openly and reciprocally with citizens. An institution does more than disseminate information or explain decisions after they have been made; it communicates with public purpose by informing people about rights, services, and policies, being accountable, listening, and creating conditions in which citizens can understand, participate, and influence decisions. Public communication therefore moves beyond simple dissemination and becomes a strategic function oriented toward the common good.⁴⁶

Unlike public communication, political communication is primarily oriented toward competition for power: it seeks to persuade and mobilize support around parties, candidates, or political leaders. It is organized around electoral cycles, partisan disputes, and positioning strategies, and its purpose is not to guarantee equitable access to information about rights and public policies, but to persuade particular audiences in order to win or retain power. This Guide addresses neither electoral communication nor political marketing. It focuses on public communication as a permanent function of the State: informing, explaining, and engaging citizens in dialogue on matters of collective interest for the common good rather than partisan objectives.⁴⁷

This accelerator operates within an increasingly complex information ecosystem—marked by audience fragmentation, echo chambers, and hate speech—and against a backdrop in which disinformation often spreads faster than accurate information. In this paradoxical environment, the same tools that democratize communication can also enable manipulation and polarization.⁴⁸ These conditions

+Effective public communication rests on three pillars:

- The first is **institutional identity**: institutions act authentically and maintain coherence between what they say and what they do.
- The second is **citizen experience**: every interaction between people and the institution is useful, accessible, and of high quality.
- The third is **civic empowerment**: citizens have access to information, transparency, and genuine opportunities for participation.

When these three pillars come together, institutions communicate *with* people: they listen, connect, and build trust. This is the fundamental shift proposed by the accelerator—from communicating *at* citizens to communicating *with* them.⁴⁹

Closely connected to effective communication is deliberation, which involves more than expressing opinions: it requires respect, listening, reasoned arguments, and attention to the common interest. In highly polarized contexts, such practices can create space for more constructive dialogue and a better understanding of disagreement.⁵⁰ **Collaborative governance** focuses on how different actors jointly define problems, alternatives, and policy decisions; communicative governance emphasizes how those decisions are communicated and discussed so that people can understand, question, and, where mechanisms exist, influence them.

Each of the following **concepts** corresponds to a specific institutional capacity that public institutions can progressively

⁴⁶ UNDP (2026). *The Public Communication Guide: Bridging Institutions and People for Collective Action*. (forthcoming)

⁴⁷ UNDP (2026). *The Public Communication Guide: Bridging Institutions and People for Collective Action*. (forthcoming)

⁴⁸ UNDP (2026). *The Public Communication Guide: Bridging Institutions and People for Collective Action*. (forthcoming)

⁴⁹ UNDP (2026). *The Public Communication Guide: Bridging Institutions and People for Collective Action*. (forthcoming)

⁵⁰ UNDP (2025). *Deliberative Democracy for Breaking the Gridlock. Concept Note, Session 1. Exploring Insights from HDR 2023-24 for Innovative Governance. SparkBlue*. https://www.sparkblue.org/system/files/2025-04/250406_UNDP-Concept-Note-Session1.pdf

develop in dialogue with the information ecosystem in which they operate:

Public communication is the strategic use of communication by public institutions to inform, explain, and engage citizens in dialogue on matters of collective interest for the common good. By prioritizing dialogue over monologue and clarity over technical language, institutions can rebuild trust and strengthen democracy.⁵¹

Plain language uses words, structure, and design that enable people to find, understand, and use the information they need. In the public sphere, it reduces barriers, facilitates participation, and makes rights, services, and institutional decisions more accessible.⁵² Plain language must also be inclusive and recognize the different ways in which people understand and communicate ideas.

Active listening is an institution's capacity to understand its audiences, gather their questions, needs, and perceptions, and use that information to communicate more effectively and make decisions grounded in reality. Communication thus becomes an exchange with genuine mechanisms for feedback and dialogue rather than a one-way process. Genuine listening cannot be reduced to digital suggestion boxes or "leave your comment" pages. It requires cultural, policy, structural, technological, and resource conditions that allow institutions not merely to give citizens a voice, but to acknowledge, understand, and seriously consider what they say.⁵³

Information literacy is citizens' capacity to navigate the information ecosystem with critical judgment—that is, to identify reliable sources, distinguish information from opinion, and recognize divisive narratives.

In environments saturated with disinformation, translating technical matters into accessible, verifiable content is one of the most effective investments in empowering citizens to participate in public affairs.⁵⁴

Dialogue-building is the institutional capacity to create safe spaces that promote active listening, respect for pluralism, and reduced polarization. Polarization is not primarily disagreement over ideas, but an emotional distance that turns differences into zero-sum thinking and obstructs collective cooperation.⁵⁵

2.3.2. WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Today, a growing gap separates institutional communication from citizens' everyday experience. Studies show that trust in government remains below the desired threshold in most economies analyzed, while 60% of the world's population experiences moderate or high levels of social grievance. The OECD Survey (2024) complements this diagnosis, finding that only 39% of respondents trust their national government; the figure is even lower among people who experience discrimination or have lower levels of education. This erosion of institutional trust is one of the main obstacles to building more equitable societies^{56,57}.

Today's information ecosystem amplifies the risks of poor institutional communication. Audience fragmentation, proliferating echo chambers, and the speed at which disinformation spreads mean that defensive, one-way "buffering" strategies push people farther away and create fertile ground for skepticism. By contrast, a "bridging" strategy—building genuine connections, adapting communication to citizens' needs, and opening spaces for dialogue—generates greater trust and civic participation and greater openness to public policies. Communicating well is both a political decision and a public obligation: genuinely serving citizens is a defining function of the State, especially when institutions must uphold accuracy and trust in an

⁵¹ UNDP (2026). *The Public Communication Guide: Bridging Institutions and People for Collective Action*. (forthcoming)

⁵² UNDP – Catálise Social (2025). *Atlas of Innovation in Public Communication*. UNDP. <https://www.undp.org/governance/blog/atlas-innovation-public-communication>

⁵³ UNDP (2026). *The Public Communication Guide: Bridging Institutions and People for Collective Action*, citing Jim Macnamara (2015). (forthcoming)

⁵⁴ UNDP – Catálise Social (2025). *Atlas of Innovation in Public Communication*. <https://www.undp.org/governance/blog/atlas-innovation-public-communication>

⁵⁵ UNDP (2025). *Public Communication for Breaking the Gridlock. Concept Note, Session 3. SparkBlue*. https://www.sparkblue.org/system/files/2025-04/250406_UNDP-Concept-Note-Session3.pdf

⁵⁶ Edelman (2025). *Trust Barometer 2025*. <https://www.edelman.com/trust/2025/trust-barometer>; UNDP (2026). *The Public Communication Guide: Bridging Institutions and People for Collective Action*. (forthcoming)

⁵⁷ OECD (2024). *Survey on the Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions*. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-survey-on-drivers-of-trust-in-public-institutions-2024_9a20554b-en.html

increasingly complex information ecosystem⁵⁸.

A specific dimension of this capacity is the institutional response to disinformation. When false or misleading narratives can distort public debate, delay crisis responses, and erode trust in policies, public communication requires concrete operational capacities: monitoring the information environment; establishing rapid-response protocols for viral content that affects the institutional mandate; using anticipatory communication to occupy the public space before disinformation does (prebunking); and partnering with independent fact-checking organizations and the education sector to strengthen media literacy. These capacities are especially important during elections; health, environmental, or public-security crises; and debates about technically complex decisions in which information asymmetry makes citizens more vulnerable.⁵⁹

This capacity must operate within frameworks that clearly distinguish verifiable disinformation from legitimate criticism of those in power. Tools for countering false content must not be used to silence dissent or restrict public debate. Their use requires transparent criteria, safeguards for freedom of expression, and accountability mechanisms.⁶⁰

Institutions must also recognize the gendered nature of disinformation. In Latin America and the Caribbean, women in public office, journalism, and civic leadership are more likely to face smear campaigns, digital violence, online harassment, and sexualized or stigmatizing narratives intended to drive them from the public sphere. Regional evidence confirms the scale of the phenomenon: in some countries, as many as four in ten social-media interactions directed at women are considered violent (De los Santos et al., 2025, cited in DDR 2026).

These phenomena are neither isolated incidents nor purely individual matters. They erode the plurality of democratic deliberation by raising the cost of public participation for women and people of diverse identities, and they discourage new voices from entering decision-making spaces. The institutional response requires dedicated protection and rapid-response protocols, coordination with specialized organizations, accessible complaint mechanisms, dialogue with digital platforms, and alignment with existing legal frameworks on gender-based political violence.

Polarization threatens democratic cooperation and States' capacity to address major collective challenges. Disinformation and polarization reinforce one another: distrust makes people more vulnerable to misleading content, which in turn deepens distrust⁶¹.

In response to these trends, four lines of action are essential for public institutions: (1) provide verified, evidence-based information; (2) highlight shared democratic values; (3) create spaces for dialogue and mutual understanding; and (4) communicate clearly, honestly, and humanely.⁶²

2.3.3. WHAT CAPACITIES DOES IT INVOLVE?

This dimension requires a set of minimum institutional conditions for sustaining public communication that is clear, useful, and open to dialogue. Rather than isolated actions, these are capacities that an institution already has—or has the potential to develop—to communicate more effectively, listen, and create spaces for public deliberation. In practical terms, five core capacities are proposed:

1. The institution has a public communication strategy or plan.

Communication should not be improvised or reduced to day-to-day reactions. The institution should have a plan or strategy that defines objectives, audiences, messages, actions, and follow-up.⁶³ The strategy should be jointly developed and implemented by management teams and communicators and should integrate communication into the different stages of the public policy cycle.

2. Public communication has dedicated staff, time, and budget.

This requires a designated unit or team with a clear mandate and sufficient resources. Communication units are often overloaded with reactive tasks, preventing them from acting strategically. Overcoming this limitation requires elevating communication to a strategic management function that participates in policy design rather than only in

⁵⁸ UNDP (2026). *The Public Communication Guide: Bridging Institutions and People for Collective Action*. (forthcoming)

⁵⁹ UNDP (2026). *The Public Communication Guide: Bridging Institutions and People for Collective Action*. (forthcoming)

⁶⁰ UNESCO (2023). *Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms: Safeguarding Freedom of Expression and Access to Information through a Multi-Stakeholder Approach*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387339>

⁶¹ UNDP (2025). *Public Communication for Breaking the Gridlock. Concept Note, Session 3. SparkBlue*. https://www.sparkblue.org/system/files/2025-04/250406_UNDP-Concept-Note-Session3.pdf

⁶² UNDP (2026). *The Public Communication Guide: Bridging Institutions and People for Collective Action*. (forthcoming)

⁶³ UNDP (2026). *The Public Communication Guide: Bridging Institutions and People for Collective Action*. (forthcoming)

dissemination.⁶⁴

3. The institution has guidelines for clear, accessible, and coherent communication.

This means establishing clear criteria for plain language, accessibility, institutional tone, and content production across channels. Institutions should apply plain-language practices: familiar words, logical structure, minimal jargon, and accessible visual design. The 12 Principles of Public Communication—including clarity, truthfulness, and accessibility—provide a professional reference framework.⁶⁵

4. The institution has permanent mechanisms for listening, feedback, and deliberation.

This standard requires channels for receiving citizens' questions, suggestions, and perceptions, as well as dialogue spaces that enable the institution to respond, provide feedback, and learn from the interaction. UNDP's public communication guide⁶⁶ emphasizes that communicating also means listening, creating genuine opportunities for exchange, and sustaining meaningful participation. Active listening is therefore linked to institutional learning: it strengthens trust only when what is heard influences the institution's decisions, priorities, and behavior. A useful test is whether communication enables the institution to learn from citizens and adjust its services, decisions, or ways of operating; otherwise, listening risks becoming a more sophisticated form of dissemination rather than a genuine feedback system for renewal.

5. The institution can counter disinformation that affects its public mandate.

The institution has mechanisms to detect false or misleading narratives affecting its policies, programs, or services; respond promptly and proportionately with verifiable information; and prevent their spread through anticipatory communication, partnerships with independent fact-checking organizations, and civic education on recognizing reliable information. This capacity operates within transparent frameworks that protect freedom of expression, distinguish verifiable disinformation from legitimate criticism, and subject its use to accountability. It is especially important during elections and crises and around technically complex or socially sensitive decisions.⁶⁷

The Methodological Note in Annex II sets out the criteria and indicators associated with each of these capacities.

2.3.4. WHAT ROLE DOES COMMUNICATIVE GOVERNANCE PLAY IN THE PUBLIC POLICY CYCLE?

Public communication, understood as a strategic function rather than mere dissemination, runs throughout the policy cycle and reshapes how agendas are formulated and explained, decisions are implemented, performance is monitored, and lessons are drawn from results. It organizes listening, connects participation, and turns evidence and experience into inputs for public action. Public communication must therefore form part of policy strategy from the outset and help institutions achieve stronger results.

Phase 1. Diagnosis and formulation—Building the agenda and alternatives

Integrating communication from the outset enables institutions and citizens to share information, narratives, and data about the same reality, revealing dimensions that internal analysis may miss. Well-communicated deliberative processes and consultations legitimize the agenda and help policy alternatives emerge from informed dialogue among public, social, and community actors. Integrated work between management teams and communicators is also essential to ensure that policy formulation incorporates communication from the beginning.

Phase 2. Implementation—Informing and supporting

During implementation, rights-oriented communication explains what will be done, who is eligible, and how people can participate or file complaints, using accessible, multichannel formats. At the same time, listening mechanisms—including platforms, territorial forums, and participatory monitoring—gather experience and support adjustments, preventing policy from becoming rigid or disconnected from practice.

Phase 3. Monitoring—Listening, making progress visible, and correcting course

Communication systematically gathers citizen feedback and makes progress and early warnings visible. It incorporates citizens' perceptions to improve public communication about

⁶⁴ UNDP (2026). *The Public Communication Guide: Bridging Institutions and People for Collective Action*. (forthcoming)

⁶⁵ ABCPública (2023). *12 Princípios da Comunicação Pública [12 Principles of Public Communication]*. <https://abcpublica.org.br/biblioteca/principios-da-comunicacao-publica/>

⁶⁶ UNDP (2026). *The Public Communication Guide: Bridging Institutions and People for Collective Action*. (forthcoming)

⁶⁷ UNDP (2026). *The Public Communication Guide*, op. cit.

the policy, prevent disinformation, expand access to rights, and strengthen the quality of public debate.

Phase 4. Evaluation and continuous improvement—Reporting results and learning

During evaluation, communication opens data, results, and lessons to public scrutiny; explains what worked, what

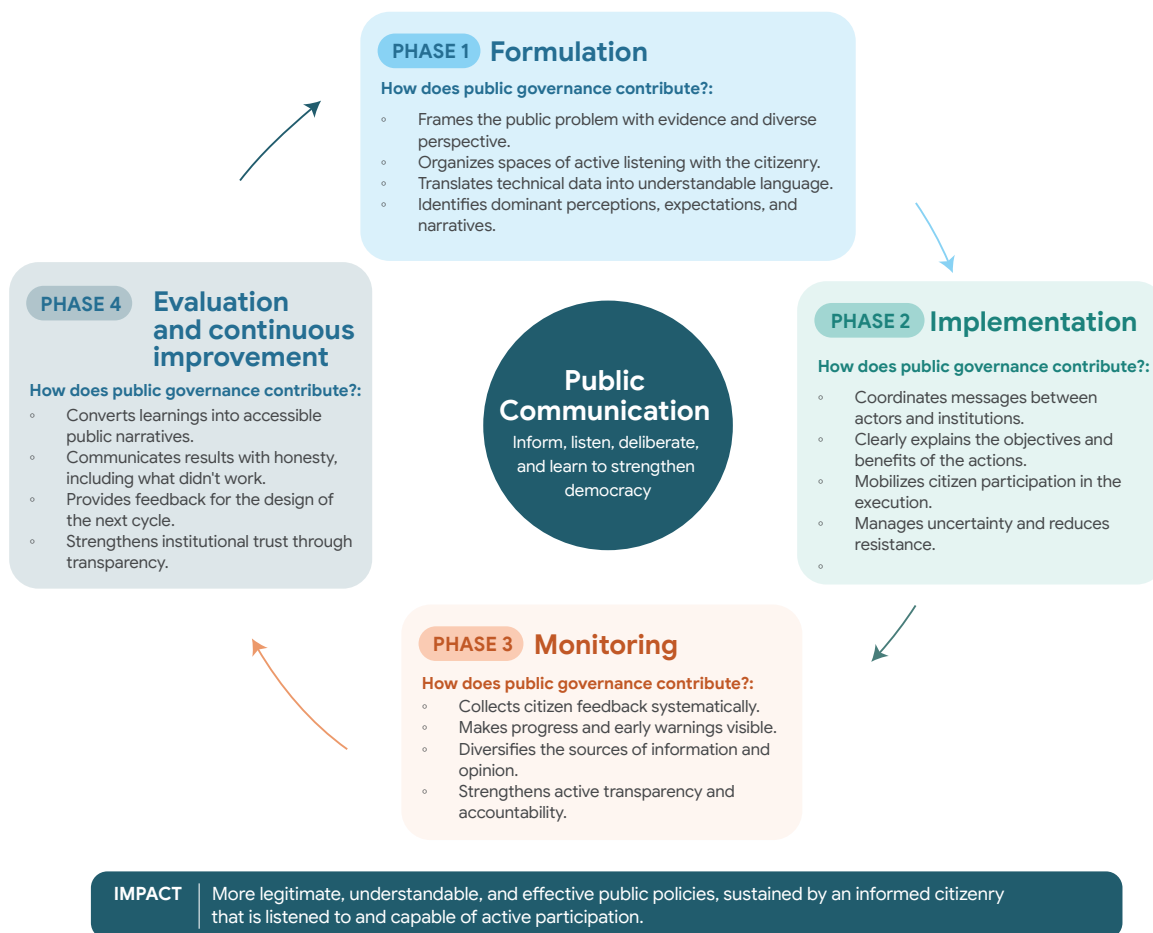
did not, and why; and links technical evaluation with citizen deliberation.

When communication is integrated throughout the cycle—with two-way exchange, clarity, and inclusion—it ceases to be an accessory and becomes strategic infrastructure that enables policies to be built with society, not merely for it.⁶⁸



Communication in the public policy cycle

A transversal function that informs, listens, coordinates, and learns at each stage of the cycle.



CROSS-CUTTING PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC COMMUNICATION



Source: prepared by the authors.

⁶⁸ UNDP (2026). *The Public Communication Guide: Bridging Institutions and People for Collective Action*. (forthcoming)

2.3.5. HOW HAS IT BEEN PUT INTO PRACTICE?

Experience 1 — Brazil

Title: Personaliza.br—Personalized Public Communication Architecture

Institution: Secretariat of Digital Government, Federal Government of Brazil

Country: Brazil

Level of government: Federal

Year or period: 2025–present

Main actors: Secretariat of Digital Government; other Federal Public Administration bodies using the platform; public IT companies; and users registered on gov.br.

Description: Personaliza.br reorganizes the federal government’s communication with citizens as an integrated digital ecosystem. It links the Caixa Postal Digital within gov.br to app notifications, authenticated emails, and other official channels. The platform sends personalized messages about services, benefits, alerts, and rights to tens of millions of people and uses delivery, readership, and satisfaction indicators to support continuous improvements to content and services.

Highlights: This is not a campaign, but permanent public communication infrastructure that unifies channels, rules, and data to provide relevant, secure, and personalized information, reduce message fragmentation, and strengthen trust in the State.

To learn more: gov.br portal, sections on the [Caixa Postal Digital](#) and the personalized notification service.

Experience 2 — Tucumán (Argentina)

Title: Community Participation and Public Security Model

Institution: Secretariat of State for Citizen Participation of Tucumán

Country: Argentina

Level of government: Provincial

Year or period: 2016–present

Main actors: Secretariat for Citizen Participation; provincial Ministry of Security; schools and universities; community organizations; municipalities and rural communes; and neighborhood and youth leaders.

Description: The model brings together, under a single strategy, programs such as Seguridad Inteligente (Smart Security), Escuela de Ciudadanía (Citizenship School), Organizando Comunidades (Organizing Communities), and Tejiendo Redes (Weaving Networks). It combines civic

education, community-based prevention, digital citizenship, innovation, and territorial work. Through workshops, laboratories, campaigns, and dialogue spaces, it builds sustained two-way channels between government and communities to address security through a rights-based, shared-responsibility approach.

Highlights: The institution does more than provide information about security: it listens, co-designs actions with communities, and maintains a continuous territorial and digital presence, thereby strengthening trust and legitimacy in contexts of conflict.

To learn more: Communications and materials from the Secretariat for Citizen Participation of the Government of Tucumán on its participation and democratic security programs. <https://www.tucuman.gob.ar/organismos/secretaria-de-estado-de-participacion-ciudadana>

Experience 3 — Uruguay

Title: Tus Acciones Cuentan (Your Actions Count)—Local Stories of Climate Action on the Uruguay River

Institution: Ministries of Environment of Uruguay and Argentina, with UNDP support

Countries: Uruguay and Argentina

Level of government: National, with territorial implementation

Year or period: 2023–2025

Description: This campaign communicates climate adaptation through stories from communities in the Uruguay River basin, presenting local impacts and solutions through audiovisual content and territorial activities. It brings together ministries, local governments, communities, and international cooperation partners around a shared climate-action narrative.

Highlights: The communication strategy draws on stories originating in the territories, produced with technical support and amplified by institutions, thereby connecting climate policy, financing, and citizens.

To learn more: information and materials on “Tus Acciones Cuentan” on the UNDP Uruguay website: <https://www.undp.org/es/uruguay/noticias/tus-acciones-cuentan-historias-locales-frente-al-cambio-climatico-en-el-rio-uruguay>

Additional cases are presented in **Annex I**.

2.3.6. TO LEARN MORE

The following UNDP publications and reference sources offer practical knowledge for exploring communicative governance in greater depth as an accelerator of democratic governance. They provide a strong starting point for institutional teams seeking to strengthen their communication capacities:

UNDP Public Communication Guide

UNDP (2026). This comprehensive guide helps public institutions develop strategic, people-centered communication that builds trust within a complex information ecosystem.

Atlas of Innovation in Public Communication

UNDP–Catálise Social (2025). This global initiative maps, showcases, and amplifies innovative public communication practices organized into five categories: clarity, inclusive voices, dialogue, trust, and new frontiers.

<https://www.undp.org/governance/blog/atlas-innovation-public-communication>

UNDP Concept Note: Public Communication to Break the Gridlock

UNDP (2025). This concept note examines strategies and steps UNDP can adopt to strengthen national public communication capacities, with an emphasis on reducing polarization and countering disinformation (Session 3, SparkBlue).

https://www.sparkblue.org/system/files/2025-04/250406_UNDP-Concept-Note-Session3.pdf

Human Development Report: Under Pressure: Recalibrating the Future of Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

UNDP (2025). This report analyzes how polarization and the erosion of public deliberation threaten democratic cooperation and proposes approaches for rebuilding public conversation.

<https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/informe-regional-sobre-desarrollo-humano-bajo-presion-recalibrando-el-futuro-del-desarrollo-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe>

12 Principles of Public Communication (ABCPública, Brazil)

ABCPública (2023). This reference framework, developed through an open public consultation, codifies principles for democratic, citizen-centered, transparent, and inclusive public communication.

<https://abcpublica.org.br/biblioteca/principios-da-comunicacao-publica/>

Regional Dialogue – Resilient Democracies: The Role of the Information Ecosystem in Recovering Dialogue and Building Bridges

UNDP–CAF (2026). This publication analyzes how polarization, information fragmentation, and disinformation weaken democratic dialogue and reduce the capacity to build consensus in Latin America and the Caribbean. It presents the information ecosystem as central to rebuilding

trust, sustaining pluralism, and strengthening democratic governance in digital environments.

<https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/dialogo-regional-democracias-resilientes-el-papel-del-ecosistema-informativo-para-recuperar-el-dialogo-y-generar-puentes>

OECD (2025). OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean. 2025 Results.

This report provides a comparative regional measure of trust in governments, parliaments, and public administrations and shows how service quality, perceptions of decision-making, and access to information influence trust. It offers useful evidence for designing public communication strategies and strengthening democratic governance in the region.

https://www.oecd.org/es/publications/2025/11/oecd-survey-on-drivers-of-trust-in-public-institutions-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-2025-results_698c3d98.html

OECD (2023). Public Communication: The Global Context and the Way Forward.

This report analyzes how public communication is organized across governments and proposes principles and good practices to make it more strategic, coordinated, and citizen-oriented. It highlights the role of evidence-based communication in reinforcing transparency, open government, and public trust.

<https://www.oecd.org/gov/public-communication-the-global-context-and-the-way-forward-8edfff0a-en.htm>



2.4. INTEGRITY GOVERNANCE

Clear rules, consistent decisions, and verifiable consequences

2.4.1. WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

Public institutions practice integrity governance when they strengthen integrity, transparency, and accountability; orient decisions toward the public interest; act openly; and answer to citizens. Integrity governance is not limited to formal compliance with rules or the publication of official information. Its demands are more structural: decisions must remain consistently oriented toward the public interest even under opposing pressure; transparency must enable effective scrutiny rather than merely make data available; and accountability must shape future decisions. This dimension depends on clear rules, ethical leadership, controls, accountability practices, and an organizational culture that prevents misconduct and guides management toward the public interest.

This accelerator integrates three closely connected elements:

- The first is the **capacity to sustain integrity under pressure**: regulatory frameworks, codes of ethics, dedicated bodies, and whistleblowing mechanisms must translate into decisions consistent with the public interest, especially when political, economic, or corporate pressures point in the opposite direction. Institutional integrity is revealed by what happens when incentives to deviate are present, not by what is declared when they are absent.
- The second is the capacity to guarantee **transparency that enables scrutiny**: public information—such as decisions, budgets, contracts, and results—must be available in formats that citizens, journalists, academic institutions, and oversight bodies can use, and

channels must allow that scrutiny to inform institutional management. Publishing information is a prerequisite; turning it into effective scrutiny is the capacity.

- The third is the capacity to ensure **accountability with consequences**: audits, citizen participation, open data, and public oversight must do more than produce reports that are filed away. They must narrow the gap between institutional promises and actual results⁶⁹ by changing future decisions, practices, and policies.

To understand this dimension within the framework of this Guide, some key concepts should be clarified:

Public integrity is the consistent application of and adherence to shared ethical values, principles, and norms in order to safeguard and prioritize the public interest over private interests in the public sector.⁷⁰

An **institutional integrity system** consists of the instruments, processes, and bodies needed to prevent misconduct within an institution and foster a public service grounded in professional ethics.⁷¹

Codes of ethics and codes of conduct are central, complementary instruments within an institutional public-integrity system. A **code of ethics** defines the general values and principles that should guide the behavior and decisions of public-sector personnel—for example, impartiality, service to the public interest, and probity—whereas a **code of conduct** translates those values into practical rules and specific guidance for everyday situations, clarifying expected and prohibited behavior in public office⁷².

⁶⁹ UNDP (2025). *Fortalecimiento de los sistemas de integridad de las EFS. Guía de conceptos, prácticas y herramientas* [Strengthening SAI integrity systems. A guide to concepts, practices and tools]. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/fortalecimiento-de-los-sistemas-de-integridad-de-las-entidades-fiscalizadoras-superiores-guia-de-conceptos-practicas-y>

⁷⁰ OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (2020). *OECD Public Integrity Handbook*. OECD Publishing. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/es/publications/reports/2020/05/oecd-public-integrity-handbook_598692a5/8a2fac21-es.pdf

⁷¹ UNDP (2025). *Fortalecimiento de los sistemas de integridad de las EFS. Guía de conceptos, prácticas y herramientas*. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/fortalecimiento-de-los-sistemas-de-integridad-de-las-entidades-fiscalizadoras-superiores-guia-de-conceptos-practicas-y>

⁷² OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (2020). *OECD Public Integrity Handbook*. OECD Publishing. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/es/publications/reports/2020/05/oecd-public-integrity-handbook_598692a5/8a2fac21-es.pdf

Integrity risk management is the systematic process of identifying, assessing, and mitigating the risks of corruption, conflicts of interest, and other conduct that runs counter to institutional values through risk maps, internal controls, and oversight of vulnerable areas.⁷³

Open data and proactive disclosure are two expressions of the same institutional commitment to openness. Open data are information produced by public institutions—such as budgets, expenditures, organizational structures, and performance indicators—that anyone may freely use and redistribute. By making such information accessible and reliable, institutions not only uphold the right to information but also enable active citizenship. Publication alone, however, is not enough: without explanation, accessible design, and communication, there is no meaningful transparency. Proactive disclosure means publishing information before it is requested and ensuring that citizens can understand and act on it.⁷⁴

Accountability is an institution's capacity to explain what it does, show how it makes decisions, and allow its actions to be overseen and evaluated. A clear, accessible **accountability** system enables both institutional personnel and the public to oversee and assess institutional management.⁷⁵

Social auditing is a form of participation through which citizens and their organizations observe, review, and follow up on public management. It is an essential element of democratic life and a tool for demanding transparency, participation, and accountability.⁷⁶

2.4.2. WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Integrity, transparency, and accountability are essential principles of public management because opaque practices and misuse of power are not anomalies, but structural factors that weaken democracy, distort resource allocation, and fuel public distrust. This institutional fragility is reflected in Latin America's average score of 42 out of 100 on the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index, with most countries making little progress or recording their lowest results in years.⁷⁷

Public trust in the region's institutions has declined amid broad dissatisfaction with how public institutions conduct themselves. In the region, 75.5% of people believe that corruption is widespread in government, while average trust in national governments does not exceed 36.3%.⁷⁸ At the institutional level, only 17% of citizens trust political parties, 24% trust congresses, and 28% trust the judiciary.⁷⁹

Weak governance undermines financial integrity by enabling corruption, illicit financial flows, money laundering, embezzlement, and tax abuse. The resulting loss of resources intended for development fuels distrust and inequality.⁸⁰ This pattern can be reversed by strengthening integrity within institutions—not merely as a technical or compliance exercise, but as a commitment to democratic

⁷³ OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (2020). *OECD Public Integrity Handbook*. OECD Publishing. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/es/publications/reports/2020/05/oecd-public-integrity-handbook_598692a5/8a2fac21-es.pdf

⁷⁴ UNDP (2026). *The Public Communication Guide: Bridging Institutions and People for Collective Action*. (forthcoming)

⁷⁵ UNDP (2025). *Fortalecimiento de los sistemas de integridad de las EFS. Guía de conceptos, prácticas y herramientas*. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/fortalecimiento-de-los-sistemas-de-integridad-de-las-entidades-fiscalizadoras-superiores-guia-de-conceptos-practicas-y>

⁷⁶ UNDP, 2024. *Mapeo de iniciativas innovadoras sobre integridad, transparencia y rendición de cuentas de las Entidades Fiscalizadoras Superiores (EFS) de la Región Norte de Centroamérica (RNCA)* [Mapping of innovative initiatives on integrity, transparency and accountability of Supreme Audit Institutions in the Northern Region of Central America]. United Nations Development Programme, Guatemala. <https://www.undp.org/es/guatemala/publicaciones/mapeo-de-iniciativas-innovadoras-sobre-integridad-transparencia-y-rendicion-de-cuentas-de-las-entidades-fiscalizadoras>

⁷⁷ Transparency International (2025). *CPI 2024 for the Americas: Corruption fuels environmental crime and impunity across the region*. Berlin: Transparency International. Available at: <https://www.transparency.org/en/news/cpi-2024-americas-corruption-fuels-environmental-crime-impunity-across-region>.

⁷⁸ OECD/IDB (2024). *Government at a Glance: Latin America and the Caribbean 2024*. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2024/03/government-at-a-glance-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-2024_0d6281fd/4abdba16-en.pdf

⁷⁹ Latinobarómetro Corporation (2024). *Informe Latinobarómetro 2024: La democracia resiliente* [Latinobarómetro Report 2024: Resilient democracy]. Santiago de Chile: Latinobarómetro. <https://www.latinobarometro.org/latinobarometro-2024>.

⁸⁰ UNDP (2025). *Aprovechar los datos para mejorar la medición de la corrupción* [Harnessing data to improve the measurement of corruption]. <https://www.undp.org/es/historias/aprovechar-los-datos-para-mejorar-la-medicion-de-la-corrupcion>

values, trustworthy institutions that remain close to citizens, and responsible use of public resources for the common good.⁸¹

For societies to thrive, institutions must rebuild trust by honoring commitments and delivering positive results. Stronger internal integrity helps create more ethical and transparent institutions that answer to citizens. When people can see how institutions operate, make decisions, use resources, and prevent and correct irregularities, accountability ceases to be abstract and becomes a tangible basis for rebuilding public legitimacy. Strengthening integrity, transparency, and accountability is therefore a key accelerator of democratic legitimacy⁸².

Advancing this accelerator requires recognizing that every institutional transformation encounters internal resistance; such resistance is expected and can be managed. Changes to integrity frameworks, transparency practices, or accountability mechanisms affect established routines, discretion, and balances of power within institutions.

Sustaining these reforms therefore requires deliberate change-management strategies: visible leaders who take ownership of the agenda; staff incentives aligned with the new standards; internal dialogue spaces for processing questions and concerns; training that gives meaning to new practices; and internal communication that demonstrates progress and recognizes teams' contributions. Ownership by the people who make up the institution is what distinguishes sustainable reform from merely normative change.

2.4.3. WHAT CAPACITIES DOES IT INVOLVE?

Strengthening integrity, transparency, and accountability means developing capacities that allow an institution to act consistently, openly, and responsibly across all its functions. This dimension requires ethical principles, respect for the public interest, and a culture of responsibility and accountability to guide organizational decisions and day-to-day management.⁸³

The standards below help identify both established capacity and potential for further development in integrity, transparency, and accountability. They focus on whether these capacities operate effectively and produce consequences, not merely on whether formal instruments exist.

1. The institution has an approved and operational integrity framework.

The framework includes an integrity policy or plan, a code of ethics or conduct, responsible structures and bodies, internal whistleblowing channels, conflict-of-interest rules, a dedicated training plan, and staff-conduct guidelines. Beyond formal existence, this standard assesses consistent application: whether conflicts of interest are managed when they arise, complaints receive documented follow-up, and training reaches staff effectively.

2. A responsible body has sufficient authority, resources, and autonomy to manage the integrity system.

The organizational structure assigns clear responsibility for coordinating, implementing, and monitoring the system to an ethics committee, integrity office, or equivalent function. The body must have institutional backing, minimum operating resources, and a degree of independence from any level of authority it may need to oversee. Such autonomy enables it to act when political or hierarchical pressure points in the opposite direction.

3. The institution applies proactive transparency mechanisms that enable effective scrutiny.

Relevant information—such as decisions, budgets, contracts, and results—is published in understandable, accessible formats that citizens, journalists, academic institutions, and oversight bodies can analyze. Proactive transparency does not end with publication: it also requires institutional capacity to respond to questions raised through scrutiny and use the findings to improve management.

4. Accountability mechanisms produce a verifiable institutional response.

The institution maintains concrete, periodic, and traceable forums for public oversight—such as social audits, citizen watchdog initiatives, public hearings with follow-up on commitments, and citizen monitoring committees—that provide access to information, participation by social actors, and documented institutional responses to recommendations. This standard values not only the existence of these forums, but also the traceability of their recommendations: it should be clear what was accepted, what was rejected and why, and what changed as a result.

⁸¹ UNDP (2025). *Fortalecimiento de los sistemas de integridad de las EFS. Guía de conceptos, prácticas y herramientas*. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/fortalecimiento-de-los-sistemas-de-integridad-de-las-entidades-fiscalizadoras-superiores-guia-de-conceptos-practicas-y>

⁸² UNDP (2024). *¿En quién confiamos? Confianza institucional en América Latina y el Caribe [Whom do we trust? Institutional trust in Latin America and the Caribbean]*. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/blog/en-quien-confiamos-menos-en-las-instituciones-y-mas-en-las-comunidades-en-alc>

⁸³ UNDP, 2025. *Fortalecimiento de los sistemas de integridad de las entidades fiscalizadoras superiores. Guía de conceptos, prácticas y herramientas*. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/fortalecimiento-de-los-sistemas-de-integridad-de-las-entidades-fiscalizadoras-superiores-guia-de-conceptos-practicas-y>

5. Institutional integrity is sustained through concrete decisions and produces verifiable consequences.

Documented evidence shows that the integrity system has produced real corrections: internal investigations with resolutions, sanctions where warranted, process adjustments based on oversight findings, and changes in practice in response to recommendations from audit bodies or public oversight. This standard assesses whether integrity operates under pressure—when incentives to deviate are present—or is merely declared when no risk exists.

The Methodological Note accompanying the Guide sets out the indicators and assessment criteria for each standard.

Phase 4. Evaluation and continuous improvement—Reporting results

Evaluation grounded in responsible governance requires results—including negative results—to be communicated honestly and improvement recommendations to be tracked and implemented systematically.

2.4.4. WHAT ROLE DOES INTEGRITY GOVERNANCE PLAY IN THE PUBLIC POLICY CYCLE?

Integrity, transparency, and accountability are not confined to a single stage of public management; they run throughout the public policy cycle and shape how problems are framed, solutions are designed and implemented, and lessons are drawn from results.

Phase 1. Diagnosis and formulation—Defining the problem

During formulation, integrity requires that problems be analyzed and alternatives designed without capture by private interests, with equitable access to information and transparent management of conflicts of interest. Integrity systems that include asset declarations, interest registers, and neutrality protocols help ensure that decisions serve the public interest. Proactive transparency at this stage enables citizens to know what is being debated, who is participating, and which data are being used.

Phase 2. Implementation—Acting responsibly and openly

Responsible implementation requires public resources to be used for their intended purposes, procurement processes to be transparent, and interim results to be published regularly. Open-data portals and budget-tracking platforms make management visible and enable public oversight.

Phase 3. Monitoring—Following up

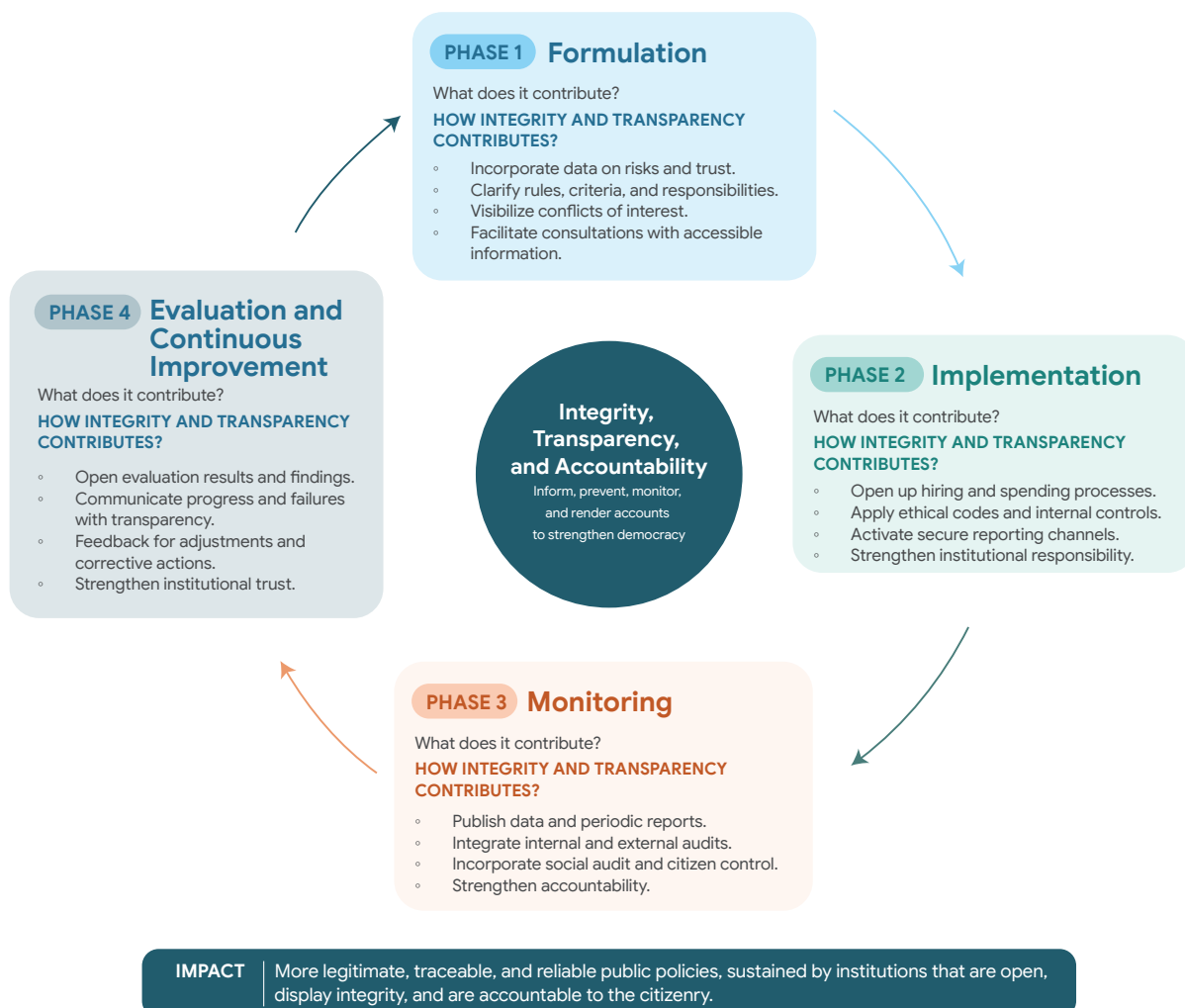
During monitoring, data are collected rigorously, published promptly, and not manipulated to present artificially favorable results. Proactive transparency—making visible what is done and how—is a prerequisite for effective accountability. Citizen participation through social audits, watchdog initiatives, and public oversight diversifies information sources and reduces incentives to manipulate data.



INTEGRITY, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE PUBLIC POLICY CYCLE

A cross-cutting function that strengthens openness, probity, and accountability at each stage of the cycle

«Inform, prevent, monitor, and render accounts to strengthen democracy»



CROSS-CUTTING PRINCIPLES OF INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY AND TRANSPARENCY



Source: prepared by the authors.

2.4.5. HOW HAS IT BEEN PUT INTO PRACTICE?

Experience 1 — Brazil

Title: Citizen Participation Portal—Tribunal de Contas da União (TCU)

Institution: Tribunal de Contas da União (TCU), with UNDP support

Country: Brazil

Level of government: National

Year or period: 2025–present

Main actors: TCU (lead); UNDP Brazil; and Brazilian citizens.

Description: The portal cidadao.tcu.gov.br is a citizen-participation platform through which people can propose and vote on priority topics for the TCU's annual audits. In 2025, the platform received more than 10,900 votes; in 2026, citizens selected five new topics for audit. Audit results are published in an accessible format on the same portal. With UNDP support, the platform and its citizen-participation strategy are being updated to expand their reach and impact.

Highlights: The experience shows how a Supreme Audit Institution (SAI) can institutionalize citizen participation in setting its oversight agenda and close the loop between public demand and accountability. Citizens do more than receive information: they help determine what is audited and learn the results, thereby strengthening proactive transparency and public oversight.

To learn more: cidadao.tcu.gov.br

Experience 2 — Costa Rica

Title: Fifth National Open State Action Plan 2023–2027

Institution: Open Government Coordination, Executive Branch; National Commission for an Open State (CNEA)

Country: Costa Rica

Level of government: National

Period: 2023–2027

Main actors: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches; National Commission for an Open State; sectoral institutions in justice, parliament, employment, security, and the economy; civil society organizations; academia; the private sector; and citizens.

Description: The Fifth National Open State Action Plan 2023–2027 is Costa Rica's first plan co-created under the National Commission for an Open State, which formally integrates the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches into the open-government and open-State agenda. The

plan includes six commitments that build on earlier areas—employment, citizen security, economic recovery, integrity and anti-corruption, open justice, and open parliament—and combine Executive actions with reforms in the Judiciary and Legislative Assembly.

Highlights: Integrity is a cross-cutting component of the plan, especially through the commitment to use open data to combat corruption. The commitment envisages publishing up to 30 strategic datasets aligned with the National Integrity and Corruption Prevention Strategy (ENIPC) and international open-data standards. The Fifth Open State Plan uses concrete commitments, open data, and interinstitutional coordination to translate the ENIPC into verifiable action and contribute to a more preventive, coordinated integrity system.

To learn more: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/es/documents/costa-rica-action-plan-review-2023-2027/>

Experience 3 — Peru

Title: Integrity Model of the Peruvian State

Institution: Presidency of the Council of Ministers (PCM)—Secretariat of Public Integrity (SIP)

Country: Peru

Level of government: National

Year or period: 2026–present (Directive No. 001-2026-PCM/SIP)

Main actors: PCM/SIP (design and leadership); public entities at the national, regional, and local levels (implementation); and oversight bodies, as provided by law.

Description: Directive No. 001-2026-PCM/SIP establishes the Integrity Model for Peruvian public-sector entities and sets mandatory implementation guidelines. Its components include integrity risk management, a whistleblowing channel, preventive measures, system governance, and results monitoring, with the aim of preventing corruption and strengthening transparency and accountability.

Highlights: The model provides a common integrity framework for the entire State, bringing together prevention, transparency, internal control, and participation. It also facilitates comparison of capacities and the scaling of good practices through tools such as the Public Integrity Portal and the Preventive Capacity Index (PCI).

To learn more: <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/pcm/normas-legales/7644478-002-2026-pcm-sip>

Additional cases are presented in **Annex I**.

2.4.6. TO LEARN MORE

The following publications and tools offer conceptual frameworks, methodologies, and practical resources for exploring institutional integrity, transparency, and accountability in greater depth:

Strengthening SAI Integrity Systems. A Guide to Concepts, Practices and Tools

UNDP (2025). This practical guide supports efforts to strengthen integrity systems in Supreme Audit Institutions. It offers a conceptual framework, international practices, and diagnostic tools to help SAIs detect and prevent integrity risks.

<https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/fortalecimiento-de-los-sistemas-de-integridad-de-las-entidades-fiscalizadoras-superiores-guia-de-conceptos-practicas-y>

Harnessing Data to Improve Corruption Measurement

UNDP (2025). This publication examines the use of big data and analytical methods to measure corruption more precisely, including through analysis of more than 70 million public contracts in 51 countries.

<https://www.undp.org/es/historias/aprovechar-los-datos-para-mejorar-la-medicion-de-la-corrupcion>

Whom Do We Trust? Institutional Trust in Latin America and the Caribbean

UNDP (2024). This regional analysis examines the levels and determinants of public trust in institutions.

<https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/blog/en-quien-confiamos-menos-en-las-instituciones-y-mas-en-las-comunidades-en-alc>

3i Organizational Diagnostic Tool

This globally adaptable tool provides actionable insights for strengthening public institutions across three transformation enablers: inclusion, integrity, and innovation.

3i Organizational Diagnostic Tool - UNDP GPGS

Government at a Glance: Latin America and the Caribbean 2024

OECD/IDB (2024). This biennial report offers comparative indicators of government performance in Latin America and the Caribbean across key dimensions, including public trust, integrity, institutional capacity, participation, and expenditure management.

https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2024/03/government-at-a-glance-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-2024_0d6281fd/4abdba16-en.pdf

Latin America and the Caribbean: SDG 16 Indicators

UNDP/OHCHR/UNODC (2026). This joint publication provides region-specific indicators for monitoring SDG 16 across peace, justice, and strong institutions, including data on corruption, access to justice, and participation.

<https://www.undp.org/policy-centre/governance/publications/latin-america-and-caribbean-indicators-peaceful-just-and-inclusive-societies>

Anti-Corruption and Integrity Outlook 2024

OECD (2024). This report offers a comparative overview of integrity and anti-corruption policies across countries, identifies gaps and emerging risk trends, and provides a useful reference for guiding reforms and strengthening national public-integrity systems.

https://www.oecd.org/es/publications/perspectivas-de-anticorrupcion-e-integridad-2024_d1153060-es.html

Mapping of Innovative Initiatives on Integrity, Transparency and Accountability of Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) in the Northern Region of Central America

UNDP (2024). This publication analyzes initiatives in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador to strengthen integrity, transparency, access to information, and citizen participation in **SAIs**.

<https://www.undp.org/es/guatemala/publicaciones/mapeo-de-iniciativas-innovadoras-sobre-integridad-transparencia-y-rendicion-de-cuentas-de-las-entidades-fiscalizadoras>

Promoting an Open and Inclusive Public Sphere: Programmatic Options
UNDP (2024). This programmatic document proposes lines of action to promote an open and inclusive public sphere through access to quality information, diverse civic spaces, and equitable participation as foundations for transparent and accountable governance

<https://www.undp.org/publications/promoting-open-and-inclusive-public-sphere>

The following recent UNDP resources—including guides for building integrity, ethics-improvement frameworks, self-assessment kits, and data dashboards on corruption risks—provide practical tools for strengthening transparency and accountability in public institutions:

Guide for Building Integrity

UNDP (2025). This practical guide proposes a model for assessing and building integrity and anti-corruption measures in public institutions, with a step-by-step methodology, diagnostic templates, and indicators.

<https://www.undp.org/montenegro/publications/guide->

building-integrity

Integrity and Ethics Agency Improvement Framework

UNDP (2023). This tool uses internal surveys, results workshops, and action plans to help public agencies strengthen their culture of integrity and ethics.

https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-08/integrity_and_ethics_agency_improvement_framework.pdf

Transparency and Integrity Self-Assessment Toolkit for Business

UNDP (2020). This UNDP–FairBiz self-assessment tool helps companies measure their integrity, transparency, and anti-corruption control standards, identify risks, and define improvement plans.

<https://www.undp.org/asia-pacific/fairbiz/publications/transparency-and-integrity-self-assessment-toolkit-business>

Tools and Data Dashboards for Assessing Integrity Risks in Public Procurement

UNDP (2025). These analytical resources enable institutions to benchmark integrity in public procurement, detect risk patterns, guide reforms, and prioritize interventions.

<https://www.undp.org/blog/benchmarking-integrity-public-procurement>

User's Guide to Measuring Corruption and Anti-Corruption

UNDP (2015). This methodological manual brings together indicators and tools for measuring corruption, transparency, accountability, and integrity and can support the design of monitoring systems for this accelerator.

<https://www.undp.org/publications/users-guide-measuring-corruption-and-anticorruption>



2.5. DIGITAL GOVERNANCE

Technology in the public interest and the protection of rights

2.5.1. WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

Digital governance is the capacity of public institutions to use digital technologies strategically, securely, and inclusively to deliver better services, coordinate policies, protect rights, and broaden citizen participation. It goes beyond digitizing procedures or adopting new technological tools. It involves strengthening institutional capacities so that digital transformation serves the public interest, advances human development, and neither reproduces exclusion nor creates new risks.

Beyond efficiency and service delivery, digital systems shape how citizens experience the State. Poorly designed digitalization can entrench distant, extractive, or bureaucratic relationships, whereas well-oriented digital governance can create simpler, more human, and more trustworthy interactions between people and public institutions. Digital transformation should therefore be assessed not only by its infrastructure, data, interoperability, inclusion, and rights safeguards, but also by the kind of relationship it creates between institutions and citizens.

This dimension comprises three closely related components:

- The first is the capacity to develop or leverage interoperable **digital public infrastructure (DPI)** based on open standards, together with digital solutions and platforms that enable integrated management of processes, information, and services and support secure, inclusive service delivery. When designed as a public good, DPI can become a powerful enabler of digital transformation.⁸⁴

- The second is the capacity to govern rapidly evolving technologies, such as artificial intelligence, responsibly. This requires recognizing the State's different roles as both an enabler and a user and incorporating criteria for ethics, security, and accountability.⁸⁵
- The third is the capacity to formulate safeguards aligned with human rights and participation mechanisms that ensure digitalization strengthens trust, equity, and citizen participation rather than reproducing exclusion or amplifying existing risks.⁸⁶

A people-centered **digital government** designs and manages services around citizens' real needs and applies inclusion criteria through sustainable digital infrastructure, platforms, and solutions. **Digital public infrastructure** plays a central role and comprises foundational systems such as digital identity, interoperable payments, data exchange, and civil registries. When conceived as public goods, these systems can accelerate access to services for the entire population. At the same time, digital governance requires the ethical management of artificial intelligence, responsible data protection, and the development of digital talent in public-sector teams. When these conditions are combined with **collaborative governance**, technology not only makes services more efficient but also enables more inclusive and shared ways of deliberating on and deciding public policy.⁸⁷

The following key concepts help clarify **digital governance**:

A **people-centered digital government** is an approach to digital transformation that designs and manages public services around citizens' real needs, with attention to inclusion, accessibility, and rights. It entails developing digital policies and services that are inclusive and focused on results that improve people's lives.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ UNDP (2023). *The DPI Approach: A Playbook*. <https://www.undp.org/publications/dpi-approach-playbook>

⁸⁵ UNDP (2024). *AI Landscape Assessment (AILA)*. <https://www.undp.org/digital/aila>

⁸⁶ UNDP/OSET (2024). *Universal DPI Safeguards Framework*. <https://www.dpi-safeguards.org>

⁸⁷ Torres, V., Naser, A. and Valenzuela, P. (2025). *Gobernanza colaborativa y procesos de deliberación democrática: transformación digital en la participación* [Collaborative governance and democratic deliberation processes: digital transformation in participation]. *Serie Gestión Pública* (90) (LC/TS.2025/48). Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. <https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/84485-gobernanza-colaborativa-procesos-deliberacion-democratica-transformacion-digital>

⁸⁸ UNDP. *Digital Governance—Government Digital Centered on People*. <https://www.undp.org/governance/digital-governance>

Digital public infrastructure (DPI) refers to the foundational digital systems that form the backbone of modern societies—namely, digital identity, interoperable payments, data exchange, and civil registries. When designed as public goods, based on open standards, and grounded in a rights-based approach, these systems can accelerate access to services for the entire population.⁸⁹

To prevent the concept from being interpreted too loosely or equated with any isolated digital solution, DPI is best understood as an architecture organized into **complementary layers** that guide concrete institutional decisions. The **foundational layer** comprises the basic systems that support the State's digital ecosystem: digital identity, registries, interoperable payments, and data exchange. The **interoperability layer** links those systems through common technical standards, APIs, data governance, and catalogs that allow information to flow securely among institutions. The **services layer** comprises the sectoral applications—such as health, education, social protection, and civil registration—that deliver direct value to citizens by drawing on the two underlying layers. This layered approach helps translate the DPI concept into operational institutional decisions, identify where an intervention sits, and recognize the dependencies that condition its success.

The **ethical use of artificial intelligence** means adopting and governing AI in ways that capture its benefits without losing sight of risks, rights, and accountability. UNDP addresses this issue through tools such as AILA⁹⁰, which assesses countries' readiness across three pillars—government as user, government as enabler, and ethical AI—to promote the responsible, safe, and inclusive integration of this technology.

Data protection encompasses the regulations, principles, and safeguards that ensure data—especially personal data—are managed with integrity, security, accountability, and respect for people's rights.⁹¹

Digital talent is the combination of technical, leadership, and collaborative capacities that enables institutions to use data and technologies effectively in public management. UNDP links it to skills in analytics, data science, visualization, and artificial intelligence, as well as to agile teams and an institutional culture oriented toward learning and evidence.⁹²

2.5.2. WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Digital governance matters because it directly affects how people access services, exercise their rights, and relate to public institutions. Latin America and the Caribbean have made progress in connectivity, but technological adoption remains deeply unequal. Around one in three people lacks effective internet access. Only 46.4% of households in the lowest income quintile and 35.8% of rural households are connected, compared with 84.6% of households in the highest income quintile and 74.8% of urban households.⁹³

According to the 2025 Regional Human Development Report, Under Pressure, artificial intelligence is already transforming public-service delivery. Twenty-four countries in the region use AI in the public sector, but without intentional governance, it may reproduce existing biases and deepen exclusion. UNDP maintains that digital public infrastructure can help countries advance their development priorities and accelerate progress toward the SDGs, provided that the conditions for success are well understood and lessons from implementation are applied.^{94, 95}

For this reason, the **Universal DPI Safeguards Framework**⁹⁶ emphasizes that digital systems must incorporate concrete protections to mitigate risks at both the

⁸⁹ UNDP (2023). *The DPI Approach: A Playbook*. <https://www.undp.org/publications/dpi-approach-playbook>

⁹⁰ UNDP (2024). *AI Landscape Assessment (AILA)*. <https://www.undp.org/digital/aila>

⁹¹ UNDP/OSET (2024). *Universal DPI Safeguards Framework*. <https://www.dpi-safeguards.org/>; <https://www.undp.org/evaluation/digitalization-public-services>

⁹² UNDP. *Digital Hub 4—Data strategy: talent and technology*. <https://www.undp.org/latin-america/digitalhub4/projects/undp-data-strategy-transforming-institutional-management-through-governance-talent-and-technology>

⁹³ UNDP (2025). *Regional Human Development Report 2025*. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/informe-regional-sobre-desarrollo-humano-bajo-presion-recalibrando-el-futuro-del-desarrollo-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe>

⁹⁴ UNDP (2025). *Regional Human Development Report 2025*. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/informe-regional-sobre-desarrollo-humano-bajo-presion-recalibrando-el-futuro-del-desarrollo-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe>

⁹⁵ UNDP (2023). *Accelerating the SDGs through Digital Public Infrastructure*. <https://www.undp.org/publications/accelerating-sdgs-through-digital-public-infrastructure-compendium-potential-digital-public-infrastructure>

⁹⁶ UNDP/OSET (2024). *Universal DPI Safeguards Framework*. <https://www.dpi-safeguards.org>

individual and societal levels and ensure trust, equity, rights, and accountability throughout their life cycle.

The **50-in-5** campaign provides a platform for country-to-country cooperation to accelerate the adoption of digital public infrastructure components in a secure, inclusive, and interoperable manner. Strengthening this dimension enables institutions not only to digitize services but also to govern technological change more effectively, positioning the region to lead democratic governance of AI.⁹⁷

Digital governance and integrity governance reinforce each other when they are explicitly connected. Digitalization can improve transparency through traceability and open data, but it can also create new forms of opacity, such as unauditable algorithms and technological dependencies that are difficult to reverse.

Institutions should therefore incorporate a digital-integrity approach through concrete conditions: transparency in technology-procurement processes; traceability of digitized decisions and processes; audits of systems and algorithms; and publication of data in reusable formats that enable effective scrutiny. Connecting digitalization and accountability in this way prevents digital transformation from becoming a black box and instead strengthens public trust in the systems that support services.

Because risks in this field evolve rapidly, institutions should also apply the anticipatory-governance logic developed in section 2.1 to the digital sphere. Cybersecurity, technological dependence, the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence, and data protection are areas in which threats change faster than regulatory capacities.

A specific digital-anticipation component is therefore needed to systematically identify emerging technological risks, develop scenarios for the possible evolution of critical technologies, and integrate those inputs into institutional planning and regulatory processes. This practice supports a shift from reactive to anticipatory digital governance that is better prepared to uphold rights and sustain services amid rapid change.

2.5.3. WHAT CAPACITIES DOES IT INVOLVE?

Strengthening digital governance requires institutional capacities to use technology for public purposes, safeguard rights, and expand institutional responsiveness. UNDP underscores that digital transformation produces better results when it combines technological architecture, ecosystem development, and a people-centered, rights-based approach.⁹⁸

The standards below identify both established capacity and potential for further development in digital transformation, data governance, digital public infrastructure, and the responsible use of AI.

1. The institution has a digital-transformation strategy with defined leadership and responsibilities.

There must be clear institutional direction to prioritize services, organize investments, coordinate units, and sustain the digitalization process. This direction may be expressed in a strategy, plan, or roadmap with clearly defined roles and senior-management backing.

2. The institution has a digitized service or procedure that meets criteria for interoperability, inclusion, and people-centered design.

Digital capacity must translate into concrete results for citizens. This standard means that the institution can offer—or is positioned to develop—digital services supported by secure, accessible solutions or platforms that connect to other systems, use open standards, and follow a digital-public-goods approach.⁹⁹

Recognizing the region's digital access gaps—both geographic and socioeconomic—requires moving inclusion beyond a general principle and translating it into minimum service standards. In practice, an inclusive digital service must provide multichannel access (combining digital, in-person, and telephone channels so as not to exclude people without internet access); effective *accessibility* for people with disabilities; plain language and usable design that facilitate understanding and use by diverse audiences; regional adaptation for areas with limited connectivity or technical infrastructure; and an *intercultural approach* where the context requires it. Treating these criteria as operational parameters turns inclusion into a measurable institutional capacity rather than a general aspiration.

3. The institution has a safeguards framework that protects rights, data, and trust in digital systems.

This standard concerns the existence of rules, protocols, and mechanisms to protect data, manage risks, prevent exclusion, and ensure accountability throughout the life cycle of digital systems.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ UNDP / 50-in-5 Campaign. <https://50in5.net>

⁹⁸ UNDP (2023). *The DPI Approach: A Playbook*. <https://www.undp.org/publications/dpi-approach-playbook>

⁹⁹ UNDP (2023). *The DPI Approach: A Playbook*. <https://www.undp.org/publications/dpi-approach-playbook>

¹⁰⁰ UNDP/OSET (2024). *Universal DPI Safeguards Framework*. <https://www.dpi-safeguards.org>

These safeguards become more robust when they move beyond isolated guiding principles and are translated into verifiable conditions throughout the system's life cycle. During *design*, rights-based impact assessments and exclusion analyses help anticipate risks before resources are committed. During *procurement*, transparency requirements, open *standards*, and auditability criteria help ensure that the contracted solution can be inspected and improved. During *implementation*, clear data-governance rules and security protocols are established. During *operation*, continuous monitoring and incident-management mechanisms allow deviations to be corrected promptly. Across all phases, accessible complaint channels and other accountability mechanisms must be in place. This shift from declarative principles to verifiable safeguards strengthens the legitimacy of digital transformation.

4. The institution develops digital talent and applies criteria for the responsible use of artificial intelligence.

Digital governance also requires human capacities and clear decision-making criteria. This standard means that the institution has staff, training, or partnerships that enable it to use data and technologies effectively and to evaluate, procure, or deploy AI tools according to criteria for ethics, security, and accountability.¹⁰¹

As AI adoption in the public sector becomes increasingly common, institutions should use a simplified decision-making cycle to guide each use case. The cycle begins with a clear definition of the use case and the public value it is intended to generate; continues with an assessment of data quality and sensitivity; incorporates an analysis of risks related to bias, discrimination, and security; specifies transparency and explainability requirements; defines procurement or development criteria based on the level of risk and the criticality of the service; and concludes with continuous monitoring and corrective mechanisms that allow the tool to be adjusted or suspended when deviations are identified. This approach supports progress in AI governance without requiring complex regulatory frameworks and facilitates responsible institutional decision-making.

The Methodological Note in **Annex II** sets out specific parameters for assessing each of these capacities.

2.5.4. WHAT ROLE DOES DIGITAL GOVERNANCE PLAY IN THE PUBLIC POLICY CYCLE?

Digital governance can be integrated across all phases of the public policy cycle, strengthening institutions' capacity to design, implement, monitor, and evaluate policies with better evidence, greater inclusion, and more transparency. This accelerator changes how decisions are made, services are delivered, and institutions account to citizens.¹⁰²

Phase 1. Formulation—Defining the problem

Digital governance strengthens problem analysis through open public data and analysis of digital divides. It supports evidence-based policy design, helps identify groups excluded from services, and enables inclusive digital consultations that amplify voices often absent from formulation processes.¹⁰³

The experience of using a digital service is itself a form of public communication. An unclear, inaccessible, or insecure service erodes trust as much as—or even more than—a poor communication strategy. Digital-service design should therefore incorporate people-centered user experience, clear information about the handling of personal data, accessible support and feedback channels, and transparency about automated decisions that affect users. Taken together, these attributes establish digital trust as a strategic public function and connect digital governance naturally with the citizen-oriented communicative governance developed in section 2.3.

Phase 2. Implementation—Executing with inclusion and rights

Implementation is strengthened by deploying interoperable digital public infrastructure and digital solutions or platforms that enable secure, accessible, people-centered service delivery.¹⁰⁴

Phase 3. Monitoring—Continuously tracking performance

Real-time data on use, coverage, implementation, and the quality of public spending make it possible to detect gaps in access, performance, and inclusion more quickly. Artificial intelligence can generate early warnings about implementation problems. Proactive transparency in digital systems strengthens accountability and public trust.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ UNDP (2024). *AI Landscape Assessment (AILA)*. <https://www.undp.org/digital/aila>

¹⁰² UNDP (2023). *The DPI Approach: A Playbook*. <https://www.undp.org/publications/dpi-approach-playbook>

¹⁰³ UNDP (2025). *Atlas of Artificial Intelligence for Human Development in Latin America and the Caribbean*. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/atlas-de-inteligencia-artificial-para-america-latina-y-el-caribe>

¹⁰⁴ UNDP (2023). *The DPI Approach: A Playbook*. <https://www.undp.org/publications/dpi-approach-playbook>

¹⁰⁵ UNDP (2024). *AI Landscape Assessment (AILA)*. <https://www.undp.org/digital/aila>

Phase 4. Evaluation and continuous improvement—Learning and adapting

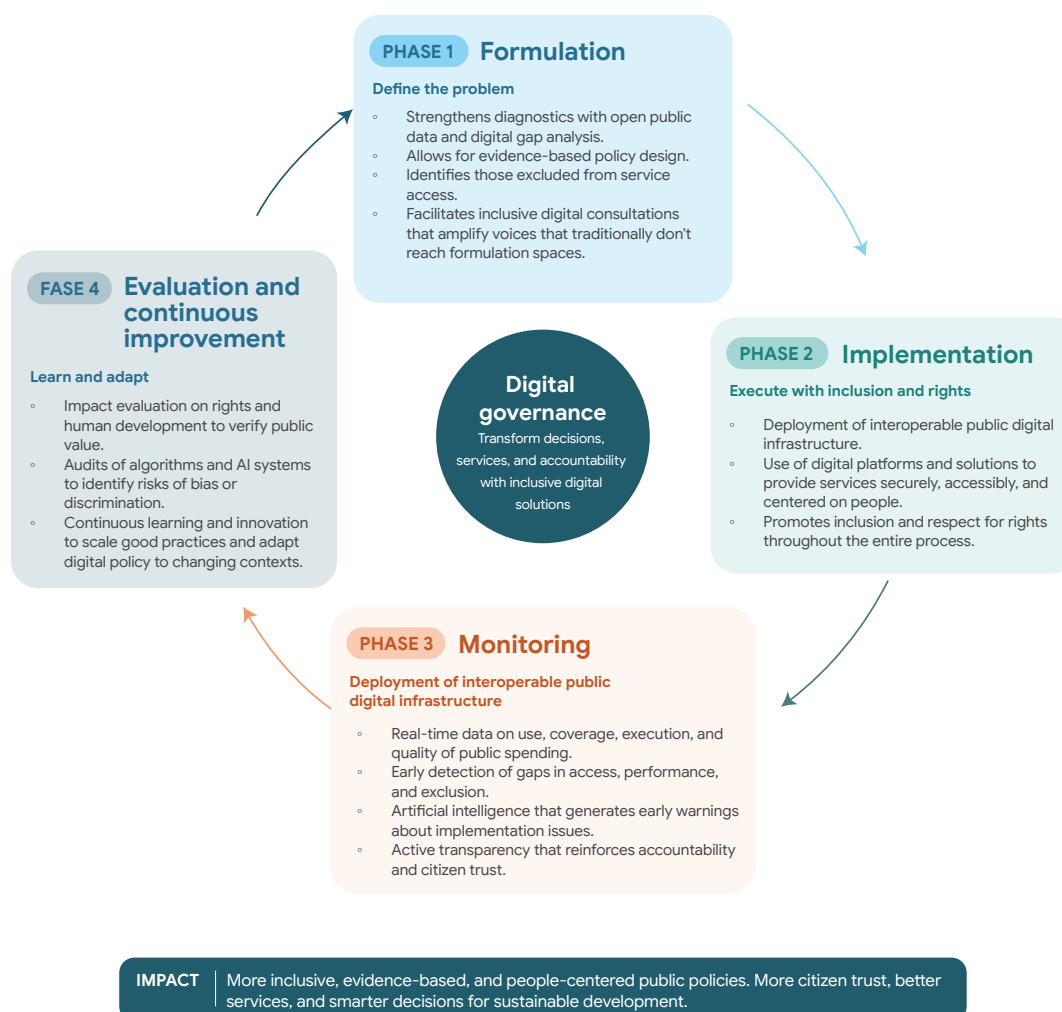
Rights- and human-development impact assessments help determine whether digital transformation is generating genuine public value. Audits of algorithms and AI systems

identify risks of bias or discrimination. Continuous learning and innovation enable institutions to scale effective practices and adapt digital policy to changing contexts.¹⁰⁶



Digital governance in the public policy cycle

A transversal accelerator for designing, executing, monitoring, and evaluating policies in a digital key



TRANSVERSAL PRINCIPLES OF DIGITAL GOVERNANCE



Source: prepared by the authors.

¹⁰⁶ UNDP (2025). *Regional Human Development Report 2025*. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/informe-regional-sobre-desarrollo-humano-bajo-presion-recalibrando-el-futuro-del-desarrollo-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe>

2.5.5. HOW HAS IT BEEN PUT INTO PRACTICE?

Experience 1 — Colombia

Title: AILA: AI Landscape Assessment — Colombia

Institution: Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MinCiencias)

Country: Colombia

Level of government: National

Year: 2024

Main actors: MinCiencias; UNDP Colombia; and public-sector, private-sector, and academic actors.

Description: This national readiness assessment identifies institutional capacities, gaps, and opportunities for adopting artificial intelligence. The process combines evidence-based analysis with a participatory, multisectoral approach to inform a national strategy for responsible AI.

Highlights: This direct Government–UNDP partnership translates assessment findings into actionable public-policy recommendations. It illustrates how the State can act as both an enabler and a user of AI while applying criteria for ethics and accountability.

To learn more: <https://www.undp.org/es/colombia/publicaciones/aila-evaluacion-panorama-inteligencia-artificial-colombia>

Experience 2 — Honduras

Title: Honduras Digital Investment Portal: Simplifying and Digitizing Services for Business Operations

Institution: Government of Honduras

Country: Honduras

Level of government: National

Year or period: 2023–present

Main actors: Secretariat of Economic Development; National Investment Council; Presidential Directorate for Results-Based Management; UNDP Honduras; and the UNDP-SIGOB Regional Project.

Description: The initiative developed an interoperable digital ecosystem to simplify, digitize, and automate procedures and services for businesses and investors, linking more than 21 public institutions through digital platforms, data exchange, and process automation.

Highlights: The experience combines digital public infrastructure, interoperability, and service-oriented digital solutions. It incorporates unified authentication, information reuse, and artificial-intelligence tools to facilitate access to procedures and reduce bureaucratic barriers. More

than 140 procedures have been digitized and automated, strengthening transparency, institutional coordination, and private-sector confidence.

To learn more: <https://www.undp.org/es/honduras/historias/se-impulsa-la-transformacion-digital-para-servicios-publicos-agiles-eficientes-y-transparentes>; <https://pdihonduras.gob.hn/consulta>

Experience 3 — Dominican Republic

Title: Digital management of public expenditure and traceability for fiscal oversight

Institution: Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic

Country: Dominican Republic

Level of government: National

Year or period: 2014–present, with successive functional expansions

Main actors: Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic; public institutions of the Dominican State; UNDP Dominican Republic; and the UNDP-SIGOB Regional Project.

Description: The initiative developed digital infrastructure and solutions for managing and overseeing public-expenditure execution, integrating contract records, payment orders, and supporting documentation through interoperable platforms and digital traceability workflows.

Highlights: The experience transformed expenditure control from manual, paper-based processes into a dynamic digital repository that strengthens traceability, monitoring, and the analytical capacity of public auditing. More than 400 institutions use the TRE system to manage contracts and payments, while approximately 334 institutions use TRANSDOC to report expenditure execution and audit supporting documentation. Digitalization has reduced response times, strengthened transparency, and improved the detection of patterns and potential anomalies in public spending.

To learn more: <https://presidencia.gob.do/noticias/contraloria-dispone-por-primera-vez-de-un-repositorio-digital-completo-de-contratos>; <https://www.undp.org/es/dominican-republic/noticias/contraloria-y-pnud-firman-acuerdo-de-cooperacion-para-la-prestacion-de-servicios-de-desarrollo-0>

Additional reference cases are presented in **Annex I**.

2.5.6. TO LEARN MORE

The following publications and tools from UNDP and other international organizations offer conceptual frameworks, methodologies, and practical resources for exploring digital governance and transformation in the service of human development in greater depth:

The DPI Approach: A Playbook

UNDP (2023). This practical guide supports the design of inclusive, rights-based digital public infrastructure. It offers a reference framework, checklists, case studies, and good practices to help governments in low- and middle-income countries advance DPI according to a public-good model.

<https://www.undp.org/publications/dpi-approach-playbook>

Universal DPI Safeguards Framework

UNDP/OSET (2024). This safeguards framework supports the design and implementation of digital public infrastructure that protects rights at both the individual and societal levels. It sets out principles, practices, and processes to ensure that digital systems are safe, inclusive, and accountable.

<https://www.dpi-safeguards.org>

AI Landscape Assessment (AILA)

UNDP (continuously updated). This diagnostic tool assesses a country's readiness to integrate AI responsibly across three pillars: government as enabler, government as user, and ethical AI. It provides an evidence base for designing indicators in country cooperation frameworks.

<https://www.undp.org/digital/aila>

AI Sprint: Country Enablement in Artificial Intelligence

UNDP (2026). AI Sprint is a structured country-enablement process that combines ecosystem diagnostics through the AI Landscape Assessment (AILA), AI-strategy development, capacity strengthening, language digitalization, and AI trust-and-safety components. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 15 applications were assessed, and eight AILA diagnostics, two AI strategies, two capacity-building pathways, two language pilots, and one integrated trust-and-safety cohort were approved, supporting 12 UNDP country offices: Barbados, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay.

<https://www.undp.org/blog/where-ai-arc-bends>

Atlas of Artificial Intelligence for Human Development in LAC

UNDP (2025). This dynamic knowledge platform maps the state of AI in the region from a human-development perspective. It provides baseline data, analysis of frontier

applications, scalable success stories, and future scenarios to inform national strategies and regional cooperation. It also provides the analytical foundation for AcademIA.

<https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/atlas-de-inteligencia-artificial-para-america-latina-y-el-caribe>

AcademIA — AI Sapiens Academy

UNDP/RBLAC. This flagship regional training initiative addresses AI for human development through five interconnected modules: AI governance, productive AI, AI for social good, environmental applications, and algorithmic ethics. It positions UNDP as a regional reference point for AI and human development.

<https://www.undp.org/latin-america/digitalhub4/atlas-ai-human-development-lac>

Regional Human Development Report 2025

UNDP (2025). This report connects digital transformation with the human-development framework underpinning the Strategic Plan and grounds digital programming in evidence about how technology interacts with inequality, institutional capacity, and people's agency.

<https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/informe-regional-sobre-desarrollo-humano-bajo-presion-recalibrando-el-futuro-del-desarrollo-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe>

Digital Readiness Assessment (DRA) and Safeguards

UNDP. This rapid, survey-based assessment covers five dimensions aligned with UNDP's Digital Transformation Framework. Its results feed into the Digital Development Compass for regional and international comparison.

<https://www.undp.org/digital/digital-public-infrastructure>

50-in-5 Campaign

UNDP and partners (active). This country-to-country cooperation platform accelerates the adoption of digital public infrastructure components in a safe, inclusive, and interoperable manner. UNDP has been a coordinating partner of the global initiative since 2023.

<https://50in5.net>

UNDP Digital Guides

UNDP. These practical frameworks help UNDP teams and their counterparts integrate digital considerations systematically across thematic areas and ensure that interventions are inclusive, rights-based, and aligned with human-development priorities.

<https://www.undp.org/governance/digital-governance>

Data to Policy Navigator

UNDP, GIZ, BMZ, and the European Union. This interactive

platform strengthens evidence-based decision-making through practical examples, an open-data repository, and an AI-powered assistant.

<https://data2policy.net>

Digital Capacity Building Modules

UNDP. This modular package contains six adaptable modules for governments at different levels of digital maturity: Digital for Government, AI for Government, AI for Parliamentarians, Digital Design Sprints, Data to Policy, and Women Digital Champions.

<https://www.undp.org/governance/digital-governance>

Regional Dialogue: The Challenges of Digital Governance in Latin America and the Caribbean

CAF–UNDP (2026). This report summarizes a regional dialogue held in Montevideo and examines digital governance as a strategic issue for human development and democratic legitimacy in the region. It identifies a “window of vulnerability” in which technological adoption is advancing faster than institutional capacities and proposes action on risk-based regulation, institutional strengthening, sovereignty and digital public goods, democratic integrity in the face of disinformation, and inclusion in State services.

<https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/dialogo-regional-los-retos-de-la-gobernanza-digital-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe>

Open Mapping and Geospatial Data

UNDP (2026). UNDP’s collaboration with the Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team (HOT) on open-mapping and community-cartography courses supports CPD results on local governance (C.1), disaster risk management (C.5), and environmental management (SO4). Open geospatial data support evidence-based planning, climate adaptation, and community-level resilience programs.

<https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/blog/mapeo-abierto-como-infraestructura-digital-publica-un-nuevo-curso-gratuito-de-hot-y-pnud>

Digital Government in Latin America and the Caribbean

OECD and CAF (2024). This review examines how countries in Latin America and the Caribbean organize digital-government governance, strengthen institutional frameworks, and use digital technologies to transform public services, promote inclusion, and generate public value. It offers case studies and recommendations for advancing people-centered digital transformation.

https://www.oecd.org/es/publications/revision-del-gobierno-digital-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe_7a127615-es.html

OECD (2026). Digital Government Index and Open, Useful and Re-usable Data Index—2025 Results. This document presents the 2025 results of the Digital Government Index (DGI) and the OURdata Index, which assess the maturity of digital-government and open, reusable-data policies in OECD countries. Both indices help guide policy, prioritize investment, and measure progress in public-sector digital transformation across dimensions such as “digital by design,” “data-driven public sector,” “government as a platform,” and “open by default.”

https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/digital-government-index-and-open-useful-and-re-usable-data-index_6347ec74-en.html

Digital Government and Open-Data Indices



2.6. INTERGENERATIONAL GOVERNANCE

*Deciding today with responsibility
toward future generations*

“How would a 20-year-old today assess this decision?”

How would someone not yet born assess this decision?”

CROSS-CUTTING APPROACH: This accelerator is embedded in all five accelerators of the Strategic Guide on *Future-Ready Democratic Institutions*. It is not an isolated dimension, but a guiding principle that tests each of them: Whom does this process include? Which generations are missing from the decision-making table? What effects will today’s decisions have on people who do not yet have an institutional voice? This lens helps ensure that institutional transformation serves both today’s citizens and future generations.

2.6.1. WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

Intergenerational governance operates on two complementary but distinct levels. First, it requires recognition of the voice and representation of young people living today, who are systematically underrepresented in decision-making spaces. Second, it requires public decisions to consider the interests of generations not yet born, who cannot defend their own rights and therefore need specific institutional safeguards. This distinction, which is central to the intergenerational-fairness assessment framework developed by the School of International Futures (SOIF) and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, structures the Guide’s treatment of both levels as dimensions of a single cross-cutting approach¹⁰⁷.

Public-policy decisions made today are rarely designed by asking what their consequences will be in 20 or 50 years or who their ultimate beneficiaries will be. Intergenerational equity begins with an ethical and political premise: public institutions are responsible not only to today’s citizens but also to the future generations that will inherit the systems we are building—or degrading—today.

The Declaration on Future Generations, adopted at the 2024 Summit of the Future, recognizes that “the decisions, actions and inaction of present generations have an intergenerational multiplier effect” and calls for “ensuring that present generations act responsibly to safeguard the needs and interests of future generations.”¹⁰⁸

This mandate is not abstract. It affects how budgets are designed, development plans are formulated, participation mechanisms are structured, and results are evaluated.

Latin America and the Caribbean are at a historic decision point. The region has a demographic window of 10 to 15 years before population aging begins to constrain the fiscal space available for public investment.¹⁰⁹ The intergenerational choices made now therefore have structural consequences. The institutional frameworks consolidated during this decade will largely determine the State’s capacity to protect the rights of all generations once that window closes.

Against this backdrop, the region also faces what recent analyses, including those by UNDP, have described as a polycrisis: overlapping crises involving democracy, climate, inequality, and institutional trust that amplify one another. Institutions that fail to build generational bridges between their decision-making processes and young people and future citizens ultimately confront future challenges with the tools of the past. As United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres put it, “We cannot build a future for our grandchildren with a system built for our grandparents.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ SOIF / Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, *Framework for Assessing Intergenerational Fairness*. <https://soif.org.uk/igf/>

¹⁰⁸ United Nations (2024). *Declaration on Future Generations, Pact for the Future (A/RES/79/1)*, 22 September 2024. New York: United Nations. <https://www.un.org/es/summit-of-the-future>

¹⁰⁹ UNDP (2025). *Regional Human Development Report: Under Pressure. Recalibrating the future of human development in Latin America and the Caribbean*. New York: UNDP Latin America and the Caribbean. The 10–15-year demographic window refers to the period in which the region’s demographic dividend still allows public investments to be financed before population aging significantly increases spending on pensions and health. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2025-09/irdh_spa_web.pdf

¹¹⁰ Guterres, A. (2024). *Address at the Summit of the Future, September 2024*. Cited in: *Pacto Mundial* (2025). <https://www.pactomundial.org/noticia/pacto-para-el-futuro/>

As a cross-cutting approach in this Guide, intergenerational equity begins by identifying and closing gaps in youth participation in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of public policy. This helps decisions respond more closely to young people's realities, strengthens their sense of democratic belonging, and narrows the distance between them and public institutions. It also requires institutions to systematically integrate anticipatory-governance approaches so they can assess the long-term effects of their decisions, including differentiated effects on present and future generations. To ensure that such progress does not depend solely on temporary political will, institutions must establish mechanisms that guarantee young people's representation and voice in decision-making, recognize them as legitimate actors in the present, and thereby strengthen democratic legitimacy.

The following key concepts help clarify intergenerational governance within the framework of the Guide:

Intergenerational equity is the principle that present generations should meet their needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet theirs. Applied to governance, it means designing institutions, policies, and decision-making mechanisms that are accountable not only to today's actors but also to people who do not yet have a voice in formal processes. Institutions must actively assess whether the burdens and benefits of their decisions are distributed fairly across generations and avoid shifting costs into the future to secure benefits in the present.¹¹¹

Meaningful youth participation, as defined in Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 3 (United Nations, 2023), is not the formal or symbolic presence of young people in decision-making spaces. It requires participation that is concrete, informed, institutionally mandated, adequately resourced, diverse, and inclusive, together with reciprocal accountability between institutions and youth actors regarding how their contributions are used.¹¹²

Anticipatory governance is the institutional capacity to embed long-term thinking and strategic

foresight in decision-making processes and to explore possible future scenarios rather than merely respond to present problems. Futures tools enable institutions and young people to jointly develop more inclusive and sustainable scenarios for democratic governance.¹¹³

Intergenerational dialogue is a process through which people from different generations exchange perspectives, knowledge, and priorities under conditions of mutual respect and recognition in order to build more comprehensive and inclusive responses to shared challenges. **Intergenerational dialogue** and multi-stakeholder collaboration are fundamental to rethinking the region's future and ensuring that young people play a leading role in building more just, inclusive, and resilient societies.¹¹⁴

2.6.2. WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Intergenerational equity matters because the region's institutions make decisions with lasting consequences in contexts where younger generations are underrepresented in positions of power and the public-planning horizon rarely extends beyond the electoral cycle. Young people also face context-specific material conditions—including access to housing, labor markets, and education systems—that can fuel intergenerational tensions.

The intergenerational lens is not limited to youth inclusion. As many as five generations coexist in the region today amid rapid demographic aging, and older generations face their own forms of exclusion, including inadequate care systems, digital divides, and increasing social isolation. A comprehensive approach to intergenerational equity therefore addresses both tensions and solidarity among all generations, ensuring that efforts to correct youth underrepresentation do not make older persons invisible.

The question that introduces this approach—"How would a 20-year-old today, or someone not yet born, assess this decision?"—functions as an analytical tool. It requires institutions to make explicit the intergenerational assumptions underlying every public decision—assumptions that might otherwise remain invisible and unquestioned.

The region faces a troubling democratic paradox: 60% of

¹¹¹ ECLAC (2024). *Pacto para el Futuro, enfoque intergeneracional, y el envejecimiento de la población* [The Pact for the Future, the intergenerational approach, and population aging]. Policy note. Santiago: ECLAC. <https://www.cepal.org/es/enfoques/pacto-futuro-enfoque-intergeneracional-envejecimiento-la-poblacion>

¹¹² United Nations Secretary-General (2023). *Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 3: Meaningful Youth Engagement in Policymaking and Decision-making Processes*. New York: United Nations. (EOSG/2023/3). <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-youth-engagement-es.pdf>

¹¹³ UNDP (2025). *Democratizando Futuros: Herramientas para anticipar y co-crear políticas públicas con juventudes* [Democratizing Futures: Tools for anticipating and co-creating public policies with youth]. UNDP Latin America and the Caribbean. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/democratizando-futuros>

¹¹⁴ UNDP LAC (2025). *Juventudes en democracia: Reimaginando nuestro futuro* [Youth in democracy: Reimagining our future] [regional dialogue]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Br6sM8xohpg>

the population of Latin America and the Caribbean is under 35, yet young people remain nearly invisible in political decision-making at the national and subnational levels. As documented in Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 3 (United Nations, 2023), young people repeatedly express frustration with existing participation mechanisms, which they often view as merely symbolic.¹¹⁵

This generational exclusion has concrete costs. Policies formulated without considering younger generations' perspectives and priorities tend to reproduce existing inequities and generate short-term solutions that mortgage the future. An estimated 90 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators relate directly to youth, making their participation a condition not only of justice but also of effectiveness.¹¹⁶

The region still has a narrow demographic window before aging increases pressure on fiscal space. Decisions made today about debt, public services, social protection, and State capacity will shape both the burden inherited by the next generation and **the institutional capacities** available to address it.¹¹⁷

The generational representation gap also fuels **institutional distrust**. In Latin America and the Caribbean, nearly 40% of people aged 15 to 25 do not trust their governments, reflecting growing disillusionment with current power structures.¹¹⁸ This distrust may be linked to perceptions that institutions do not speak young people's language, respond to their priorities, or recognize them as legitimate actors in the present.

The Pact for the Future, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, gives youth and young people a prominent place.¹¹⁹ This multilateral milestone reinforces a global trend: intergenerational equity is no longer merely a sectoral youth-policy issue, but a cross-cutting principle of democratic and institutional reform.

An intergenerational approach matters because it not only benefits young people but also improves the quality of public decisions affecting communities as a whole. This accelerator treats gender equality as a substantive criterion for assessing the quality of intergenerational governance, recognizing that today's gender gaps become accumulated inequalities for future generations. Generational and gender-based cognitive diversity therefore supports decisions that

are more robust, more creative, and—most importantly—more socially legitimate.

Intergenerational governance is not about always reconciling present and future interests, but about making conflicts between them visible when they arise. Decisions on public debt, pension reform, energy transition, or infrastructure investment often involve real *trade-offs* between present and future generations or among current age cohorts. The institutional capacity to address these *trade-offs* transparently, deliberatively, and verifiably—rather than conceal them or resolve them by default in favor of those who have a voice today—is the operational core of this approach.

2.6.3. WHAT CAPACITIES DOES IT INVOLVE?

Incorporating intergenerational equity as a cross-cutting approach requires specific institutional capacities that operate horizontally across the institution. These capacities change how processes associated with the Guide's other accelerators are designed, implemented, and evaluated. In particular, the standards below show how this approach is expressed in anticipatory, collaborative, citizen-oriented communicative, integrity, and digital governance.

The standards are organized into two groups. The first comprises capacities specific to intergenerational governance—capacities that cannot be reduced to applying another accelerator through a generational lens—and focuses particularly on representing generations that do not yet have a voice. The second describes how the intergenerational approach modifies the other accelerators when applied across the institution.

The institution has mechanisms to represent and safeguard the interests of future generations in its decision-making processes.

Generations not yet born cannot defend their own interests. This standard assesses whether the institution has established specific mechanisms to represent them, such as ombuds institutions or commissioners for future generations; parliamentary or institutional committees explicitly mandated to examine decisions from a long-term perspective;

¹¹⁵ United Nations Secretary-General (2023). *Op. cit.*

¹¹⁶ UNICEF / United Nations (2023). *Youth participation and the Sustainable Development Goals*. Cited in: United Nations Secretary-General (2023). *Op. cit.*

¹¹⁷ UNDP (2025). *Op. cit.* See also: ECLAC (2024). *Pacto para el Futuro, enfoque intergeneracional, y el envejecimiento de la población*. *Op. cit.* <https://www.cepal.org/es/enfoques/pacto-futuro-enfoque-intergeneracional-envejecimiento-la-poblacion>

¹¹⁸ UNDP (2024). *"Juventud, democracia y desarrollo: la clave para un futuro inclusivo y sostenible en América Latina y el Caribe"* [Youth, democracy and development: the key to an inclusive and sustainable future in Latin America and the Caribbean], 29 August 2024. <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/blog/juventud-democracia-y-desarrollo-la-clave-para-un-futuro-inclusivo-y-sostenible-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe>

¹¹⁹ United Nations (2024). *Declaration on Future Generations, Pact for the Future (A/RES/79/1)*, 22 September 2024. New York: United Nations. <https://www.un.org/es/summit-of-the-future>

systematic intergenerational impact assessments¹²⁰; or intergenerational safeguard clauses in multi-year plans and fiscal frameworks. Examples include the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, the Committee for the Future of the Parliament of Finland, and assessment tools developed by SOIF and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and piloted in Portugal and the United Kingdom.

The following standards describe how the intergenerational approach modifies the Guide's other accelerators:

1. The institution integrates participatory foresight tools involving young people into the public policy cycle.

The institution incorporates scenario analysis, intergenerational impact assessments, and futures methodologies into strategic planning to anticipate consequences, reduce risks, and co-create more inclusive and sustainable visions of governance with young people.¹²¹

2. The institution operates intergenerational participation mechanisms.

It is not enough for general participation spaces to be formally open to people of all ages. This standard requires the institution to design dialogue, consultation, or co-creation spaces in which different generations—especially young people—can contribute on equal terms. The spaces should be adapted to young people's circumstances, language, and priorities. Mechanisms may include intergenerational and youth councils, participatory budgets with generational quotas, intergenerational co-design forums, and digital platforms accessible to young people and adults alike. These forums should have an ongoing institutional mandate rather than operate on an ad hoc basis.¹²²

3. Public communication is designed through intergenerational dialogue with citizens.

The institution co-designs its communication strategies—including messages, narratives, channels, and formats—with young people and other generational groups. This standard may be reflected in campaigns that explain the long-term effects of public decisions and in the complementary use of traditional and digital media.

4. Integrity systems apply a generational lens to strengthen trust.

The institution manages its integrity system and its transparency and accountability policies with explicit attention to intergenerational equity. Applying this approach requires disaggregated information that reveals how policies affect generations differently. The institution should therefore produce and use age-disaggregated data on participation, access to services, resource distribution, and public-policy outcomes. It should also involve young people in committees, ethics-advisory bodies, or other forums that help build an institutional culture of integrity.

5. Young people participate in the development and management of digital-governance solutions.

Digital-governance solutions—such as service platforms, data systems, and participation and accountability tools—are developed and managed with young people's meaningful participation at every stage.¹²⁴ The institution creates spaces for digital co-creation to ensure that its solutions reduce generational gaps in access and participation and enable young people to lead the development of civic technologies that make governance more inclusive.¹²⁵

The Methodological Note in Annex II sets out the criteria for jointly identifying and assessing each of these capacities.

¹²⁰ SOIF / Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (2021), *Framework for Assessing Intergenerational Fairness*. <https://soif.org.uk/igf/intergenerational-fairness-policy-assessment-toolkit/>

¹²¹ UNDP (2025). *Democratizando Futuros: herramientas para anticipar y co-crear políticas públicas con juventudes*. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/democratizando-futuros-herramientas-para-anticipar-y-co-crear-politicas-publicas-con-juventudes>

¹²² United Nations Secretary-General (2023). *Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 3: Meaningful Youth Engagement in Policymaking and Decision-making Processes*. New York: United Nations. (EOSG/2023/3). <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-youth-engagement-es.pdf>

¹²³ OIJ / UNDP / CAF (2023). *Gobernabilidad y Juventudes en América Latina y el Caribe [Governability and Youth in Latin America and the Caribbean]*. *Desafíos Series, Booklet 2*. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-04/es_oij_dg_cuadernillo2_desafios_juventud_1.pdf

¹²⁴ United Nations Secretary-General (2023). *Op. cit.*

¹²⁵ UNDP (2025). *Reimagining young people's role in governance through civic technology*. United Nations Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific. <https://www.undp.org/asia-pacific/news/reimagining-young-peoples-role-governance-through-civic-technology>

2.6.4. WHAT ROLE DOES INTERGENERATIONAL GOVERNANCE PLAY IN THE PUBLIC POLICY CYCLE?

Intergenerational equity is not activated in a single phase of the public policy cycle; it runs through the entire cycle. The guiding question—“How would a 20-year-old today, or someone not yet born, assess this decision?”—can and should be asked at every phase as an intergenerational quality-assurance mechanism that changes the criteria for institutional design, implementation, and learning.

Phase 1. Formulation—Defining the problem from a generational perspective

Incorporating the perspectives of young people and future generations into problem analysis reveals dimensions that conventional approaches rarely detect: fiscal and environmental burdens shifted to generations that have had no voice, access gaps that accumulate early in life, and long-term trends that are not urgent today but will be decisive tomorrow. Foresight tools and co-creation with young people are practical ways to enrich this phase.

Phase 2. Implementation—Executing with intergenerational coherence

During implementation, this approach requires institutions to verify that resources, procedures, and prioritization criteria do not reproduce generational biases that exclude young people as beneficiaries or participants. It also requires mechanisms through which young people can report access barriers and propose adjustments and receive a traceable institutional response.

Phase 3. Monitoring—Measuring what matters for all generations

Intergenerational monitoring requires tracking systems to include indicators that capture policies’ differentiated effects on age groups, especially younger groups. It also requires citizen-monitoring mechanisms that include young people.

Phase 4. Evaluation and continuous improvement—Learning for the future

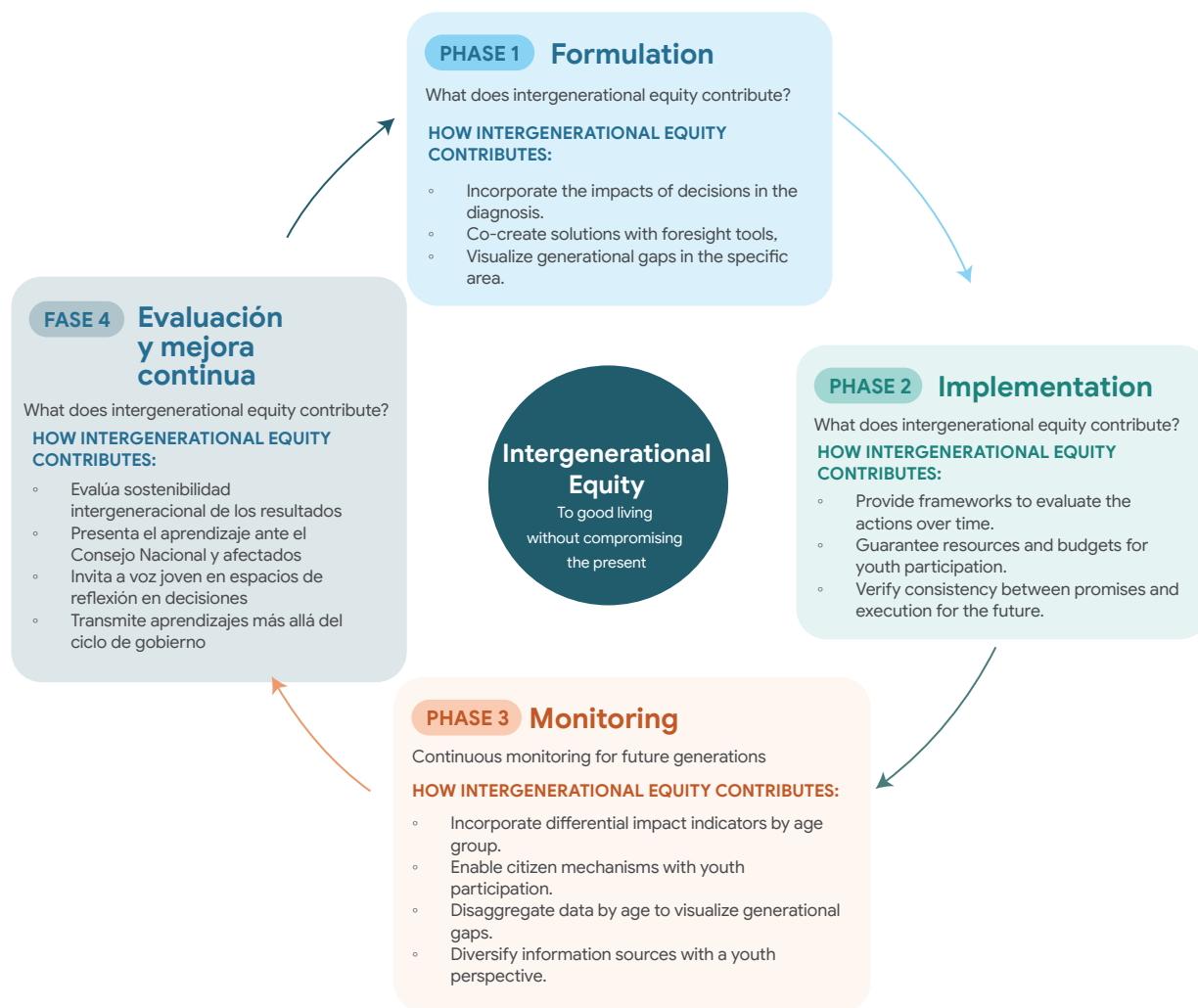
Evaluation considers not only whether objectives were met, but also whether results are sustainable and fair across generations. It examines whether youth participation was meaningful, whether young people’s contributions influenced decisions, and whether lessons learned are preserved beyond government cycles.



INTERGENERATIONAL EQUITY IN THE PUBLIC POLICY CYCLE

A transversal lens that questions each phase of the cycle: does this decision serve those who do not yet have a voice? Do they endure?

«Inform, prevent, monitor, and render accounts to strengthen democracy»



IMPACTO | Políticas públicas que vinculan a la ciudadanía del presente como a las generaciones futuras: sostenibles en el tiempo, equitativas entre generaciones y legitimadas por la participación real de las juventudes en cada fase del ciclo.

PRINCIPIOS TRANSVERSALES DE LA EQUITAD INTERGENERACIONAL

Participación significativa de las juventudes

Gobernanza anticipatoria y prospectiva

Justicia distributiva intergeneracional

Responsabilidad recíproca institucional

Sostenibilidad a largo plazo

Fuente: elaboración propia

2.6.5. HOW HAS IT BEEN PUT INTO PRACTICE?

Experience 1 — Ecuador

Title: National Council for Intergenerational Equality and National Agenda for Intergenerational Equality 2025–2029

Institution: National Council for Intergenerational Equality (CNII)

Country: Ecuador

Level of government: National

Period: 2025–2029 agenda approved in 2026

Main actors: CNII; the Presidency and branches of the State; sectoral ministries; decentralized autonomous governments; social organizations; and children, adolescents, young people, and older persons consulted through participatory processes.

Description: The National Council for Intergenerational Equality is responsible for protecting the rights of children, adolescents, young people, and older persons and for addressing relations among generations. Its mandate is to formulate, mainstream, monitor, and evaluate public policies on generational and intergenerational equality and non-discrimination. In 2026, the CNII approved the National Agenda for Intergenerational Equality (ANII) 2025–2029, a guiding instrument that coordinates and directs Ecuadorian public policy to guarantee equality and non-discrimination throughout the life cycle, in alignment with the National Development Plan “Ecuador No Se Detiene” 2025–2029. The ANII was developed through a broad process of intergenerational dialogue and territorial citizen participation that gathered the views and proposals of rights holders.

Highlights: The experience shows how a country can institutionalize intergenerational equality and justice through a national council with a constitutional mandate and a dedicated agenda that guides public policy toward protecting rights at every stage of life. The **ANII 2025–2029** incorporates the principles of intergenerational justice, intersectionality, and the life-cycle approach; defines priorities and policies for reducing gaps among generations; and aligns its proposals with national planning. In doing so, it makes intergenerational governance an explicit criterion for prioritizing State resources and decisions.

To learn more: https://www.igualdad.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2026/02/anii_comprimida_2025-2029.pdf

Experience 2 — Honduras

Title: Comprehensive Local Plan on Youth, Peace and Security (PLIJPS)—San Pedro Sula

Institution: Municipality of San Pedro Sula

Country: Honduras

Level of government: Local

Year or period: 2024–2025

Main actors: UNDP Honduras; Municipality of San Pedro Sula; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA); local youth platforms and organizations; and security and justice institutions.

Description: UNDP supported the Municipality of San Pedro Sula in developing Latin America’s first local Youth, Peace and Security plan. Through anticipatory-governance tools and the participation of youth organizations, the process identified risks, developed future scenarios, and translated them into concrete local peace-and-security actions.

Highlights: The PLIJPS takes young people’s voices as the starting point for defining the city’s peace and security priorities so that institutional responses address not only immediate needs but also the living conditions of future generations. By combining foresight, participatory analysis, and a Youth, Peace and Security Council as a follow-up mechanism, the plan makes young people co-authors of a long-term roadmap and strengthens intergenerational equity in local policy.

To learn more: <https://www.undp.org/es/honduras/noticias/san-pedro-sula-hace-historia-con-el-primer-plan-local-de-juventudes-paz-y-seguridad-en-america-latina>

Experience 3 — Uruguay

Title: Inter-party youth dialogue (Juventudes interpartidarias)

Institution: Political parties with parliamentary representation, with support from UNDP Uruguay

Country: Uruguay

Level of government: National

Year or period: 2023–2025

Main actors: UNDP Uruguay; youth wings of the Frente Amplio, Partido Nacional, Partido Colorado, and Partido Independiente; invited members of earlier political generations; and presidential candidates.

Description: This UNDP initiative created spaces for interparty and intergenerational dialogue among young political leaders to address challenges to democracy, reduce polarization, and build medium- and long-term thematic agreements.

Highlights: The initiative combines structured youth

participation, intergenerational dialogue, and consensus-building around the country's democratic future in a space sustained beyond electoral cycles. By bringing together young people from different parties, figures from earlier generations, and presidential candidates, it demonstrates that formal channels can enable young people not merely to be consulted on an ad hoc basis, but to co-design medium- and long-term agendas and present interparty agreements that guide current decisions with future generations in mind.

To learn more: https://www.undp.org/es/dialogo_intergeneracional_juventudes_politicas

Additional experiences are presented in **Annex I**.

2.6.6. TO LEARN MORE

The following publications offer conceptual foundations, evidence, and practical tools for exploring the intergenerational-equity approach to public governance in greater depth:

United Nations (2024). Pact for the Future and Declaration on Future Generations (A/RES/79/1).

This agreement, adopted at the Summit of the Future in September 2024, includes the first United Nations Declaration on Future Generations and establishes intergenerational solidarity, justice, and equity as guiding principles of global governance. It provides the normative frame of reference for applying an intergenerational approach to public policy.

<https://www.un.org/pact-for-the-future/es>

United Nations Secretary-General (2023). Policy brief on meaningful youth engagement (EOSG/2023/3).

This report sets out principles for ensuring that youth participation is meaningful rather than symbolic and offers concrete recommendations to States for broadening and strengthening youth participation in decision-making at all levels within the framework of the Youth 2030 Strategy.

<https://www.un.org/youthaffairs/es/meaningful-youth-participation>

UNDP (2025). Democratizing Futures: Tools for Anticipating and Co-creating Public Policies with Youth.

This practical UNDP guide presents 11 participatory exercises and foresight methods—including the Futures Wheel, Polak Matrix, Three Horizons, and backcasting—that institutions and young people can use to co-create public policy with a long-term vision at any level of government.

<https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/democratizando-futuros-herramientas-para-anticipar-y-co-crear-politicas-publicas-con-juventudes>

UNDP (2026). Safe Territories: A Guide

for Formulating Local Youth, Peace and Security Plans.

This methodological guide sets out 10 steps through which local governments and community actors can co-create local Youth, Peace and Security plans. It builds on the Security Council's YPS Agenda framework (resolutions 2250, 2419, 2535, and 2807).

<https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/territorios-seguros-guia-para-la-formulacion-de-planes-locales-de-juventud-paz-y-seguridad>

UNSSC–Global YPS Coalition (2025). Youth, Peace and Security Primer: Country-Level Implementation.

This open online resource for government, civil-society, and United Nations practitioners presents five modules for implementing the YPS Agenda nationally, with emphasis on institutional capacity, meaningful participation, and coordination and financing mechanisms. It focuses on meaningful youth participation, context analysis from young people's perspectives, and the creation of institutional capacities that recognize them as equal and essential partners in peace and development. The resource advances intergenerational equity by addressing structural barriers to youth participation in peace and security, strengthening young people's influence on long-term decisions, and connecting commitments, laws, and policies so that youth rights and contributions are sustainably integrated into national peace architecture.

<https://www.unssc.org/courses/youth-peace-and-security-primer-country-implementation-spanish>

UNDP (2022). Pathways for the Institutional Strengthening of Youth: A Look at Youth Institutional Frameworks in Ibero-America.

This report systematizes institutional-strengthening experiences in Latin America and the Caribbean that seek to improve relations between the State and young people. It analyzes regulatory frameworks, national plans, youth-participation mechanisms, and governance arrangements intended to make institutions more inclusive, responsive to generational gaps, and capable of incorporating an intergenerational perspective into public-policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. It offers practical guidance and examples for institutional reform and policy design based on intergenerational equity.

<https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-12/UNDP-RBLAC-RutasJuventud.pdf>

OIJ / CAF / UNDP (2024). Inclusion and youth in Latin America and the Caribbean. Desafíos Series, Booklet 1.

This first booklet in the series examines the educational, labor-market, and health-inclusion challenges facing young people in the region and offers proposals linked to the SDGs

https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-04/es_oij_dg_cuadernillo1_inclusion_1.pdf

OIJ / CAF / UNDP (2024). Governability and youth in Latin America and the Caribbean. Desafíos Series, Booklet 2.

This booklet examines democratic governance from young people's perspective, focusing on institutional trust, political inclusion, and youth leadership. It notes that only 3% of the region's parliamentarians are under 30 and proposes mechanisms to expand meaningful youth participation in decision-making.

https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-04/es_oij_dg_cuadernillo2_desafios_juventud_1.pdf

OIJ / CAF / UNDP (2024). Environment and youth in Latin America and the Caribbean. Desafíos Series, Booklet 3.

This booklet examines the relationship between young people and the region's environmental challenges, recognizing youth as leaders of ecological transformation. It includes recommendations for incorporating a generational perspective into environmental policy.

https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-04/es_oij_dg_cuadernillo3_medio_ambiente.pdf

UNDP/CAF (2026). Regional Dialogue—Youth That Transforms: Pathways to Inclusion, Participation and Well-Being.

This publication compiles the main contributions from the regional dialogue held in August 2025 as part of the Governance for Development initiative. It addresses young people's inclusion, participation, and well-being as pillars for strengthening democratic governance and accelerating SDG implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean.

<https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/dialogo-regional-juventudes-que-transforman-caminos-hacia-la-inclusion-la-participacion-y-el-bienestar>

UNDP (2021). Tool 0.3: Programme Manual. Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions.

This methodological manual explains how to implement the Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions, from an institution's initial commitment through certification. The Seal encourages institutions to review norms, public policies, participation mechanisms, and information systems to identify and correct bias so that public decisions are fair both across generations and among women and men in all their diversity.

https://www.gendersealpublicinstitutions.org/wp-content/uploads/assessment_docs/tools/Herramienta%200.3%20Manual%20de%20Programa.pdf

ParlAmericas (2024). Intergenerational Perspective Tool for Legislative Work.

This practical document explains the intergenerational approach, its relevance to legislative work, and ways to apply it through concrete strategies—including youth participation, intergenerational impact assessments, committee work, and anticipatory-governance mechanisms—with examples from parliaments in Latin America and the Caribbean.

<https://parlAmericas.org/uploads/documents/Publication-IntergenerationalApproaches-LegislativeWork-sp.pdf>

OECD (2025). Exploring New Frontiers in Citizen Participation in the Policy Cycle.

This study examines innovation in citizen participation across the policy cycle, from diagnosis and design to implementation and evaluation. It focuses particularly on deliberative mechanisms, such as citizens' assemblies and mini-publics, that seek to incorporate the voices of different generations into long-term decisions—for example, decisions on climate change, fiscal sustainability, or digital transition—and provides practical tools for more intergenerational governance.

<https://doi.org/10.1787/77f5098c-en>

OECD (2024). OECD Youth Policy Toolkit.

This toolkit accompanies the OECD Recommendation on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People and offers practical guidance for designing and implementing youth policy through a whole-of-government approach. It brings together policy standards, indicators, and more than 100 examples of good practice across five pillars: skills and competencies; employment; social inclusion and well-being; youth trust in institutions; and administrative capacities to address age-based inequalities and advance intergenerational justice.

<https://doi.org/10.1787/74b6f8f3-en>

European Commission (2026). Strategy on Intergenerational Fairness.

This framework document establishes the European Union's first comprehensive strategy for ensuring that today's decisions are fair to young people and future generations. It defines intergenerational fairness in European governance, introduces indicators and an intergenerational-fairness index, and proposes measures in education, employment, housing, public finance, care, the green transition, and democratic participation to systematically integrate an intergenerational perspective into EU policy.

<https://spain.representation.ec.europa.eu/noticias-eventos/noticias-0/la-comision-presenta-la-primera-estrategia-sobre-equidad-intergeneracional-2026-03-05-es>; https://policy-lab.ec.europa.eu/intergenerational-fairness_en

SOIF / Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (2021). Framework for Assessing Intergenerational Fairness and Policy Assessment Toolkit.

This methodology assesses whether a public-policy decision is fair to present and future generations. It applies five assessment questions and rests on three elements: institutional ownership, national dialogue, and an assessment tool. It has been piloted by independent institutions in Portugal—including the Banco de Portugal in relation to pension reform—and by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Future Generations in the United Kingdom. It is available under a Creative Commons license for noncommercial use.

<https://soif.org.uk/igf/intergenerational-fairness-policy-assessment-toolkit/>

SOIF (2024). Implementation Handbook: Declaration on Future Generations.

This practical handbook supports the incorporation of intergenerational equity and long-term governance at the national level, drawing on experience from more than 50 countries. It supports implementation of the Declaration on Future Generations adopted at the 2024 Summit of the Future.

https://soif.org.uk/app/uploads/2024/09/SOIF_DFG_Implementation_Handbook_Sept-2024.pdf

World Economic Forum (2026). Intergenerational Foresight: An Approach to Long-Term Responsibility in Governance.

This publication proposes an intergenerational-foresight approach that governments can use to assess policies according to their effects on future generations' well-being and decision-making capacity. It presents a conceptual framework linking long-term planning, risk management, and intergenerational equity, together with examples of countries and institutions that have incorporated futures analysis and safeguards for coming generations into their governance arrangements.

<https://es.weforum.org/publications/intergenerational-foresight-an-approach-for-long-term-responsibility-in-governance/>



PART III.
TRANSFORMING
CAPACITIES

Part III of the Strategic Guide presents two innovative tools for advancing institutional transformation. Building on the accelerators presented in Part II, the tools support (i) participatory analysis of a public institution's existing capacities and potential across the six dimensions and (ii) formulation of a concrete **roadmap** for accelerating its transformation toward a Future-Ready Democratic Institution. Both tools use an **innovation and co-creation approach** to foster a process of reflection and action that must be built from within and grounded in the institution's own knowledge of itself.

Public institutions that have worked through the accelerators in Part II of the Guide arrive at this section with a renewed understanding of the challenges of contemporary governance.

These challenges include anticipating change, opening

spaces for dialogue, communicating transparently, acting with integrity, harnessing digital technologies, and governing with future generations in mind. This understanding is the starting point for Part III, which moves from reflection to action.

The two instruments presented below—the Strategic Capacity Radar and the Institutional Acceleration Plan—are not audit tools or external diagnostic mechanisms. They are collaborative instruments designed for participatory application through a co-construction process that recognizes the timelines, priorities, and room for maneuver specific to each institutional context. The tools are complementary: the Strategic Capacity Radar identifies established capacities and the areas with the greatest potential for impact, while the Institutional Acceleration Plan activates the right levers at the right time and turns those findings into decisions and lines of action.



Source: prepared by the authors.



3.1. STRATEGIC CAPACITY RADAR

A strategic review of institutional capacities

The strategic review of institutional capacities is the entry point to Part III. Its purpose is to build, from the outset, a shared understanding between UNDP and the institution of existing capacities, areas requiring reinforcement, and domains in which focused investment can generate the greatest public value.

This is neither an external evaluation nor an audit. It is a collaborative institutional-analysis process in which the institution and UNDP work from the outset as partners with complementary roles. UNDP contributes methodology, comparative evidence, and regional experience, while the institution contributes contextual knowledge of its actual capacities, constraints, and opportunities. The result is not a closed diagnosis, but a living input that guides decisions in the Institutional Acceleration Plan.

The tool is structured around the five accelerators and one cross-cutting accelerator presented in Part II. For each accelerator, it proposes standards and indicators for observing the development of institutional capacities, identifying consolidated strengths, and recognizing areas in which support can produce meaningful improvements in public management.

Alongside the assessment of existing capacities, the Radar can incorporate a cultural-readiness layer that examines the internal conditions enabling or blocking adoption of each accelerator. Observable variables include leadership style, internal incentives, trust among units, tolerance for conflict, openness to experimentation, willingness to learn, capacity to work with uncertainty, and consistency between institutional discourse and practice. This layer helps the institution identify not only what must be established, but also the cultural and relational conditions needed to sustain renewal over time.

The tool is applied in three successive stages: preparation, a collaborative capacity-analysis workshop, and an acceleration-horizon report. This sequence moves from initial contextualization to a shared review of capacities and, finally, to an actionable synthesis that guides the Institutional Acceleration Plan.

- **Mapping of institutional signals**

This first stage provides a panoramic view of the accelerators' overall status. It opens the conversation between UNDP and the public institution, identifies visible strengths, captures initial perceptions, and locates areas for deeper exploration.

- **Strategic analysis of institutional capacities**

Building on the initial mapping, this second stage examines the accelerator prioritized by the institution in greater depth. It analyzes the associated standards and indicators, documents relevant findings, and generates robust inputs for the Institutional Acceleration Plan.

- **Acceleration horizon report**

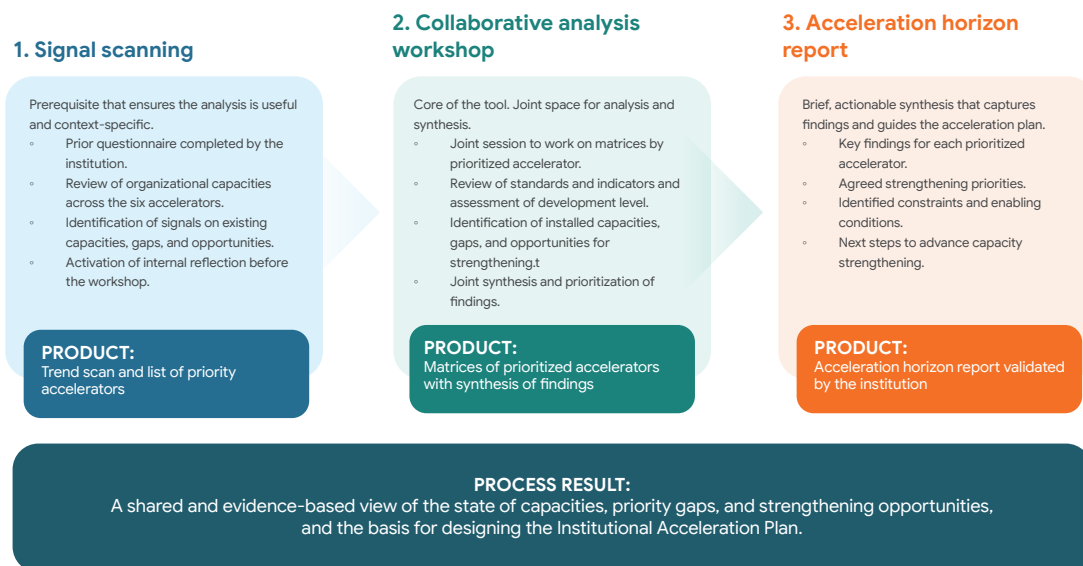
The acceleration-horizon report consolidates the main results of the institutional-capacity review. It is an actionable synthesis that captures the process's most relevant findings and guides preparation of the Institutional Acceleration Plan. The report identifies the established capacities on which transformation can build, the main gaps requiring attention, institutional constraints to consider, and opportunities for improvement with the greatest potential impact. It also defines the initial scope of support, specifies priorities, and establishes a common basis for the next phase of work.

At the end of this sequence, UNDP and the institution have a shared, evidence-based view of established capacities, priority gaps, and viable lines of action. The acceleration-horizon report, validated jointly by UNDP and the public institution, captures this shared understanding and serves as the basis for formulating the Institutional Acceleration Plan.

Beyond describing the starting point, the Strategic Capacity Radar adds strategic value by turning a discussion of "capacities" into a concrete basis for deciding where to focus time, resources, and political capital. A shared reading of strengths, gaps, and opportunities helps UNDP and the institution avoid generic diagnoses, align expectations, and prioritize areas in which targeted investment can generate the greatest public value. This prepares the ground for a realistic, results-oriented Institutional Acceleration Plan.

Figure 3.1. The Three Stages of the Strategic Capacity Radar

Tool 1 - Strategic Capacity Radar



Source: prepared by the authors.



3.2. INSTITUTIONAL ACCELERATION PLAN

Transforming institutional capacities and advancing toward an institutional design that enables more effective governance

The Institutional Acceleration Plan is the second instrument presented in Part III. Its purpose is to translate the Strategic Capacity Radar's findings into a concrete, prioritized, and feasible strengthening agenda. The result is a roadmap that the institution and UNDP build together, with a defined time horizon, assigned responsibilities, and clear criteria for measuring progress.

The tool's name reflects the logic developed throughout the Guide. The aim is not to transform the institution from scratch, but to identify leverage points at which focused intervention can produce the greatest multiplier effect. Acceleration means activating what already exists, connecting dispersed efforts, removing bottlenecks that slow change, and creating conditions in which established capacities can produce sustained results.

The plan is not a conventional planning document. It does not seek to cover every dimension of institutional management or propose exhaustive reform. Rather, it is a selective strategic instrument centered on the accelerator prioritized during the review. It defines what will be done, with which resources, in what sequence, and with what support from UNDP. Its purpose is action: every line of the plan has an owner, a deadline, and an expected result.

The Institutional Acceleration Plan is organized around three linked outputs—a strategic-priority map, an agreed action plan, and a review-and-learning mechanism. Together, they move the process from deciding what to change, through the orderly launch of actions, to monitoring and adjustment over time.

• Strategic priority map

This document summarizes the changes identified as priorities, explains why they matter, and describes the conditions for moving forward. Its distinctive feature is

that it begins not with a list of problems, but with a map of opportunities. It shows where a well-targeted decision can transform governance capacities in the short and medium terms and helps senior leadership determine where to concentrate political and technical energy.

• Institutional Acceleration Plan

This roadmap organizes priorities into concrete lines of action with expected results, owners, deadlines, resources, and defined UNDP involvement. It is a bounded set of strategic commitments designed to activate existing capacities, connect dispersed efforts, and sequence decisions realistically so that each action has a clear purpose and measurable impact.

• Review and learning mechanism

This mechanism is a simple agreement that defines how the plan will be tracked: the frequency of reviews, the minimum information to be analyzed, responsibility for updating progress, criteria for making adjustments, and the way decisions will be recorded. It incorporates a monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) approach¹²⁶ focused on institutional change. Monitoring is intended not only to identify signs of change in governance capacities, but also to extract lessons and adapt the plan as circumstances require. The mechanism turns monitoring into a space for institutional learning rather than bureaucratic control: it enables course correction when the context or priorities change, preserves what works, and documents lessons for future transformation cycles, thereby keeping the plan alive over time.

Like the review that precedes it, the Acceleration Plan is a product of collaboration between UNDP and the institution. UNDP contributes methodology, comparative experience, and technical support, while the institution contributes knowledge of its situation and room for maneuver. The result is a plan that the institution recognizes as its own because it was built from within, reflecting its voices and realities.

While developing the Acceleration Plan, teams can consult a repository of relevant experiences from Latin America and the Caribbean that provides concrete examples of how other governments have activated each accelerator. This collection offers adaptable ideas, reduces the need to start from scratch, and stimulates institutional creativity.

For decision-makers, the plan offers a focused way to transform capacities. Rather than adding another general plan, it organizes a small number of high-impact strategic commitments within a defined time horizon. It identifies the capacities in which resources will be invested, the expected changes, accountability for each line of action, and the evidence that will document results. It thereby provides a practical tool for guiding action, coordinating teams, and

demonstrating tangible progress in governance.

To engage effectively with fiscal authorities and cooperation partners, the Acceleration Plan should include a costing exercise for prioritized interventions. Given the diversity of institutional and national contexts in the region, the Guide does not propose common numerical parameters. Instead, it offers a costing logic that each institution can adapt to the scale of its mandate and the characteristics of its fiscal context.

This costing logic recognizes three tensions inherent in governance investment: the balance between start-up costs and the recurrent costs on which reform sustainability depends; the distinction between incremental resources and the reallocation of established capacities, which can create room for acceleration without additional spending; and the need to make change management visible as a budget line, since it is often the first component to go unfunded when left implicit.

A critical condition for the viability of the Institutional Acceleration Plan is adequate, predictable financing for governance innovation. Regional experience shows that fiscal constraints and annual budget cycles tend to relegate investment in institutional capacities behind operating expenses and short-term commitments.

Deliberate investment in anticipatory, collaborative, citizen-oriented communicative, integrity, digital, and intergenerational governance is not an additional expense, but a high-return investment. It helps anticipate crises whose response costs would be far higher, reduces inefficiencies in resource allocation, prevents losses associated with corruption, sustains public trust, and improves the quality and efficiency of public services.

The Acceleration Plan can therefore serve as a useful instrument for engaging fiscal and budget authorities, coordinating domestic and international cooperation financing, and exploring mechanisms such as protected multi-year budget lines, public-innovation funds, partnerships with multilateral and development banks, and co-financing arrangements with civil society, academia, and the private sector. Making the cost of underinvestment in governance capacities visible is part of the strategic conversation the Guide seeks to facilitate.

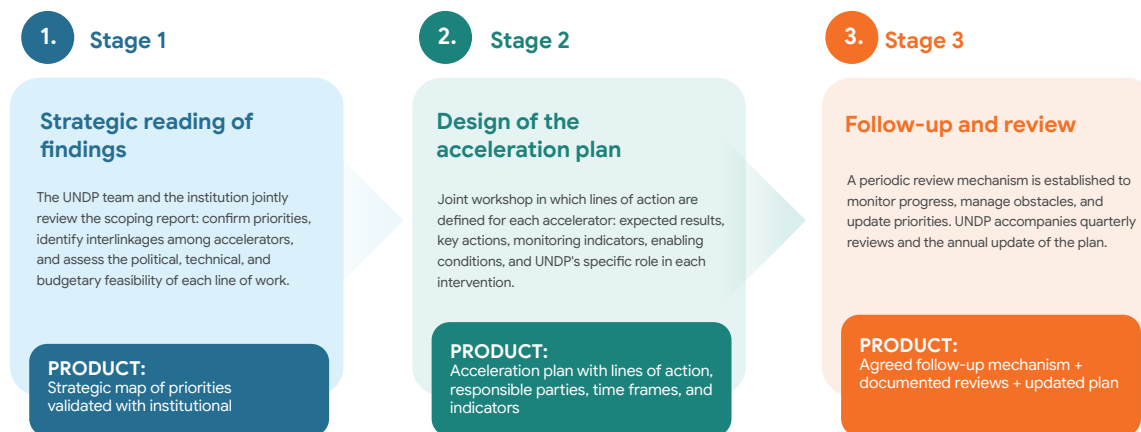
Figure 3.2. The Three Stages of the Institutional Acceleration Plan

¹²⁶ UNDP (2025). MEL 360: Monitoring, evaluation and learning for systems change. 360 Systems Guide. <https://360systemsguide.com/>. This approach is inspired by the MEL 360: Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning for Systems Change proposal developed by UNDP, which argues for complementing traditional monitoring and evaluation practices with systems-informed approaches capable of interpreting complex change, recognizing patterns, learning during implementation and adjusting the course of action, without discarding familiar tools of results-based management or traditional evaluation.

Tool 2 - Part III

Institutional Acceleration Plan

The three stages of the methodological process



APPLICATION MODALITIES



Source: prepared by the authors.



3.3. THE FULL CYCLE — FROM ANALYSIS TO ACTION

The two tools presented in Part III are not independent; together **they form a coherent methodological cycle that moves from understanding to action**. The cycle begins with a review that builds a shared understanding of the institution's situation. The Acceleration Plan then turns that understanding into a roadmap for change. In short, it is an agile cycle that converts signals into strategic decisions and strategic decisions into results that accelerate institutional transformation.

This journey reflects the central message of the 2026 Democracy and Development Report¹²⁷, which emphasizes that the region's democracies can be sustained only if their institutions can manage complex transformations rather than

merely announce new policies. The cycle proposed in the Guide—shared analysis, an acceleration plan, and monitoring with learning—offers a practical pathway for translating that call into real change: fewer reactive responses and greater capacity to anticipate, deliberate, and act with a long-term vision.

Joining the *Future-Ready Democratic Institutions* initiative means both beginning an institution's own transformation and entering a regional network of institutions that deliberately invest in innovation and stronger governance capacities. This creates value in three dimensions: substantive value, through access to a governance-innovation framework with standards, tools, and UNDP technical support; relational

¹²⁷ UNDP (2026). *Informe sobre Democracia y Desarrollo. Democracias bajo presión: reimaginar los futuros de la democracia en América Latina [Democracy and Development Report]. Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, UNDP.* <https://www.undp.org/es/latin-america/publicaciones/informe-sobre-democracia-y-desarrollo-democracias-bajo-presion-reimaginar-los-futuros-de-la-democracia-en-america-latina>

value, through shared learning and the projection of institutional experience within a peer community; and strategic value, through progress toward observable capacities to anticipate, deliberate, communicate, act with integrity, and govern the digital sphere in line with the priorities identified in the 2026 DDR:

Substantive value	Relational value	Strategic value
Access to a governance innovation framework that translates the best available evidence into operational standards, practical instruments, and sustained technical support from UNDP	Membership in a regional network of institutions committed to governance innovation, enabling peer learning, the sharing of an institution's own experiences as regional references, and visibility as part of an internationally recognized democratic-transformation agenda.	Development of observable and measurable institutional capacities to anticipate, deliberate, communicate, act with integrity, and govern the digital sphere. These capacities improve the effectiveness of the State, strengthen the delivery of development results, and contribute to stronger democracy.

The initiative is an open platform for institutions that choose to undertake this transformation. UNDP support begins by recognizing existing capacities, respecting institutional autonomy, and adapting to each country's priorities. It treats change as a sustained journey rather than a one-off project.

Participating institutions will help shape the first generation of *Future-Ready Democratic Institutions* in Latin America and the Caribbean: States that are more anticipatory, collaborative, communicative, integrity-driven, digitally capable, and intergenerationally responsible, in line with the Pact for the Future and the recommendations of the 2026 DDR. The invitation is to join and co-create this collective endeavor in pursuit of stronger democratic and development results across the regio