

Building Capabilities of the Centre of Government to Deliver on Key Priorities

ANNEX



Annex:

Building Capabilities of the CoG to Deliver on Key Priorities

The following Annex to the Report on Building Government Capabilities to Steer and Deliver Complex Priorities presents six toolboxes covers six countries: Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, and Poland.

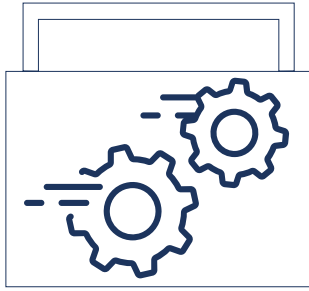
Each toolbox is based on OECD analysis and insights co-created with participating countries through peer-to-peer exchanges held between June 2025 and April 2026. The toolboxes feature practical examples from participating countries, as well as contributions from the Slovak Republic (which took part as an observer) and additional peer input from Australia, Finland, Latvia, New Zealand, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom.

Introduction

The following Annex presents a set of six practical toolboxes developed as part of the project "*Enhancing Centre of Government Capacities to Steer Complex Priorities*", funded by the European Union's Technical Support Instrument, and implemented by the OECD in collaboration with six partner countries: Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Ireland, Poland, and Portugal. The tools were co-created through a series of interactive workshops held between June 2025 and April 2026, bringing together senior officials and practitioners from participating countries, as well as a broader group of international peers including Australia, Canada, Finland, New Zealand, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, and the United Kingdom. These workshops provided a structured environment for peer exchange, allowing participants to test ideas, explore scenarios, and work through practical challenges faced by centres of government in a collaborative setting.

The Annex is structured around six toolboxes, each addressing a core dimension of how centres of government (CoGs) function in delivering core priorities. These include firstly under the rubric of re-organising government, toolboxes on guiding machinery of government change (developed in the Estonian context) and bridging the political and technical interface (developed in the Portuguese context). The second set of toolboxes focus on prioritization and planning with an emphasis on stewardship of key policy priorities (developed in the Polish context) and guiding the implementation of long-term priorities (developed in the Bulgarian context). The final set of toolboxes focus on capabilities for co-ordination and policy development with a tool on monitoring the implementation of priority reforms (developed in the Greek context) and ensuring an effective and agile centre of government (developed in the Irish context). Each of these tools set out to answer a different set of needs identified by the countries and as a result do not follow the same structure- some are constructed around a series of questions whilst others are a repository of good practices in the specific chosen area. Together, these sets of tools are designed to support CoGs in their efforts to strengthen prioritisation, coordination, delivery, and institutional alignment across government systems.

While each toolbox was developed in the context of a specific country workshop and reflects national challenges and reform priorities, many of the issues they address are shared across governments. As such, the tools, questions, approaches, and practices presented here may be of relevance not only to the six participating countries, but also to broader set of OECD and non-OECD countries seeking to build the capabilities at the centre to deliver on core government priorities.



Toolbox 1: Guiding Machinery of Government Change

Introduction

Machinery of government (MoG) change, encompassing the reorganisation of ministries, departments and government agencies, is an important instrument available to governments seeking to improve the delivery of complex, cross-cutting priorities by aligning institutional structures with political and policy objectives. When carefully designed and implemented, such changes can strengthen coordination, clarify accountability, elevate priority issues, potentially reduce costs, and improve the coherence between policy ambition and administrative capacity. However, MoG reform also carries significant costs and risks: if not well-managed it can potentially disrupt operations, put a strain on administrative systems, affect workforce morale and institutional memory, and create uncertainty or fragmentation. Decisions to restructure are therefore rarely neutral technical exercises, but involve trade-offs between political signalling, policy effectiveness and administrative feasibility. Based on OECD analysis including findings gathered as part of a peer-to-peer exchange held in Estonia in June 2025, this toolbox is designed to support both political and administrative actors in navigating these trade-offs primarily in Estonia but of relevance to other countries as well. It does so by outlining a structured set of questions to be considered before, during and after MoG change. By setting out a series of questions on policy goals, political drivers, operational feasibility, workforce implications, accountability arrangements and strategic alignment, it aims to support more informed decision-making, and to ensure that organisational reform contributes to, rather than detracts from, effective policy delivery.



Purpose and Principles

PURPOSE OF THE TOOL	GUIDING PRINCIPLES
— Provide an avenue for reflection across different implementation scenarios	— Build alignment with budget and strategic planning
— Bring clarity to all stakeholders and improving feedback loops between decision-makers and the civil service	— Focus on continuity and impacts to service provision
— Provide consistent guidance to implementers of change alongside a clear roadmap for change	— Ensure there is an effective transition planning in place
— Informing and guiding the decision and design of a machinery of government change	— Carefully consider timing and timeline for change
	— Clarify roles and responsibilities during the machinery of government change
	— Clarify political and administrative priorities
	— Provide avenues for transparent, informed decision-making process
	— Encourage investigation and critical thinking
	— Balance long-term resilience with flexibility in the short-term
	— The tool is not intended as a step-by-step manual on how to implement reform

In the Estonian context, and as outlined in the principles above, the main audience of the tool is both political and high-level decision-makers and advisors. It also sets out a valuable series of questions for line departments and agencies. The tool is intended to provide a set of questions and an overarching framework to support the decision-making process. It is a tool that supports thinking through the merits of alternatives. It is not intended to provide specific answers on alternatives or operational details of the machinery of government change. It could support the development of guidance, frameworks and manuals in the future as needed.

Tool: Setting out the Right Questions

The tool sets out the following key questions to support the decision-making process during a machinery of government change. The overall question the tool is addressing is whether the benefits are likely to outweigh the costs of undertaking such changes. The following sets out the key questions identified through OECD analysis and peer to peer exchanges focusing on each of the core questions outlined above.



1. Policy Goals: Examples of Practices

What are the policy goals behind the change?

Will this achieve beneficial policy outcomes?

- Why does today's challenge require a MoG change?
- What would success look like in terms of achieving major policy goals?
- Is there an obvious public benefit?
- Is it feasible?
- How would this change be evaluated whilst keeping reporting burdens to a minimum?
 - > If yes, is the required resourcing in place?
- Will it break down siloes or create new ones?
 - > What new siloes will be created?
- Is there a less disruptive way of achieving this goal?
 - > Have alternatives been considered?
- Will this change be able to pass effectively through legislative and regulatory procedures?
- Will it improve decision-making on the core policy issue at hand?
- How will it impact existing priorities and long-term priorities?

As outlined in Chapter 2 above, ensuring machinery changes result in genuine policy improvements requires deliberate evaluation and shared standards throughout the MoG change process. In order to improve decision making, and provide an obvious benefit post-change, the following practices could be useful in guiding ways of achieving better policy outcomes through a more effective decision-making process (including linking reforms to strategy Estonia 2035 and Principles of State Reform and Good Governance).

1-1 Evaluating policy success throughout the machinery of government change

To ensure effective MoG changes, evaluations are useful not only afterwards, but also during the design and implementation process. Decision makers could identify what success means, identify measurable outcomes, milestones, and collect the necessary data to track progress. This allows for governments to adapt to non-ideal scenarios during the implementation stage. A well-defined evaluation framework will differentiate inputs, outputs and outcomes, and have the necessary data sources, timeframes and empirical methods.



In the **United Kingdom**, evaluation planning is increasingly integrated into the design of major projects at the beginning of implementation rather than retrospectively. The UK's HM Treasury Green Book provides a framework for appraisal and evaluation that provides a cost-benefit analysis framework that is shared and consistent across government initiatives and MoG changes.

1-2 Providing a common language through shared standards and methodologies

Shared standards and methodologies can provide a common language for assessment, making it easier to compare reform options, understand trade-offs, and communicate findings to senior leaders and ministers. Such methodologies are enabling tools rather than being prescriptive, providing a reference frame to anchor context and judgments without increasing the compliance and reporting burden.



The **United Kingdom's** "Magenta Book" on evaluation across government is one such example.

1-3 Identifying benefits, risk, and challenges beforehand

Proactive risk and impact assessment can prevent MoG changes from being driven by bias or political ambition alone. Structured ex ante analysis requires the problem to be well defined, and articulated, alongside proposed solutions, their expected benefits, potential implementation risks, and the conditions that would cause a reform to fail. Such an exercise could improve the quality of decision making and the credibility of decisions when communicating to stakeholders.



In **Canada**, Memoranda to Cabinet require structured articulation of expected impacts, implementation considerations, risks and trade-offs before proposals are submitted for political decision-making.



In the **United Kingdom**, the Infrastructure and Projects Authority uses a structured gateway review process for major government programmes, including large-scale machinery of government changes. Independent reviewers assess readiness at key decision points, identifying risks and recommending conditions for proceeding.



Taking care not to increase reporting burdens, a similar structured readiness review in **Estonia's** context could provide a credible and independent check on MoG proposals before they are approved.



2. Political Goals: Examples of Practices

What are the political goals behind the change?

Is there a clear political vision?

- What is the political motivation?
- How is this perceived publicly?
 - > Will it be perceived as a legitimate change?
 - > Will the reforms last beyond the electoral cycle?
- Who are the main stakeholders proposing change?
 - > Which stakeholders will likely oppose?
- How will the media perceive the change, if at all?
 - > How will the public perceive it and will it have an impact on polling?
- Will it receive political support?
 - > Will lack of support hinder success?
 - > How will it impact on the coalition partners?
- Will it affect the balance of power across ministries?
- Will it impact international commitments?

Changes in how the machinery of government operates is an inherently political choice. The way governments allocate authority, organise ministerial portfolios, and communicate priorities to the public reflect the current government's political agenda. Managing this dimension, alongside technically sound policy, is important in ensuring the government has

the democratic license to make such changes. The tools below draw on various examples to help decision-makers navigate the political landscape of MoG change in a way that ensures legitimacy of the process.

2-1 Ensuring Political Feasibility

Determining where a policy or machinery of government change is politically feasible requires a broad set of calculations including stakeholder dynamics, media framing, and public perception. Governments who fail to assess political feasibility risk political backlash, resulting in external pressures that prevent any changes to be made at all.



In **Spain**, the Public Policy Department, held within the Prime Minister's Office provides a political feasibility review before any technical analysis is done on a project or policy. This assessment includes polling and political opportunity analysis, directly into its policy development cycle before proposals reach inter-ministerial negotiation. From a MoG perspective, reforms are more likely to be able to address or avoid criticisms if political feasibility issues have been acknowledged and addressed.



In **Poland**, the Chancellery of the Prime Minister uses social risk analysis tools including '5 whys' analysis to understand risks emerging from stakeholder and public reactions for key policy areas. Structured assessment of societal risks such as distributional impacts can help to anticipate resistance and refine policy design.



For **Estonia**, MoG changes must often be addressed across party lines, as a result of frequent coalition governments. The identification of political obstacles within and outside of the government before changes commence, will increase the likelihood of successful change.

2-2 Connecting the Public to Policy Changes

Internal changes on how the MoG operates can often be seen as abstract, bureaucratic, and removed from the daily lives of citizens. Therefore, actively communicating the rationale, and necessity for MoG changes to citizens, connecting how they will benefit from such changes is vital to shaping public perception and political support.



The Chancellery in **Poland** has developed tools that include values-based 'human stories' around government reforms, framing changes around themes such as justice, welfare, security, and efficiency that connect institutional decisions to citizens' priorities. It also coordinates a network of ministry spokespersons to ensure consistent messaging across government and uses a Social Opinion Research Centre and AI-assisted media monitoring to detect emerging public concerns before they escalate.



Given **Estonia's** strong digital culture, with a strong e-governance toolkit and public consultations platforms, this creates a unique opportunity to ensure strong communication, and feedback between the CoG and its citizens on machinery of government changes and rationales. Clear and public explanations on the expected benefits and why changes are necessary will help build public support necessary to advance major changes.



3. Operational Goals and Logistics: Examples of practices

What are the operational considerations?

Is there a clear path to operational success?

- What regulations, laws, strategic documents, budgetary logic will need to be updated?
- How will the change be evaluated and costs tracked?
- How complex is this operationally?
 - > Will it reduce friction across the system?
 - > What does the reorganisation of support services require (e.g. IT systems, financial resources)?
 - > How many systems will be affected across ministries?
 - > Are there risks to the capital budget?
 - > How will this affect financial stability?
- Which operational changes require designating specific leadership responsibilities (in particular for cross-sectoral areas)?

Operational and logistical goals of the machinery change is where government reforms often face their biggest challenges. If the logistics of moving from one system to another is not well managed, structural reforms can fail, even if the reforms are well designed. Ensuring operational success means updating various tools, systems, laws, regulations, and strategic frameworks to enable operational success. These new systems should aim to improve service delivery and support front line policy development. The examples below highlight a number of practices in managing the operational challenges of MoG change.

3-1 Consolidating service support centres

Across governments, the duplication of support functions such as human resources, finance, IT, and legal departments is a common challenge. When reorganising government, mergers or split of ministries may rationalise the consolidation of these support services. If done proactively, it can reduce friction, improved service delivery, and drive cost savings. However, if done incorrectly, it can lead to confusion, inefficiencies, and lack of continuity in support functions.



In **Portugal**, the creation of PLANAPP and SGGOV (see Chapter 3) show how the consolidation of support centres can improve policy coherence and operational resilience, throughout transitions. Since these support functions are housed within the CoG, the jurisdiction between ministries can shift, without disturbing the operation of support centres and services.

3-2 Ensuring continuity of services through reorganisation

During machinery change, service delivery is required to continue, even through major changes. When reorganising cross-cutting policy and service centres, the potential negative impact during transition is greater, as it affects more policy issues. To prevent this, legal protections of certain aspects of government, along with pre-agreed transition protocols, and phased implementation frameworks are useful tools to guide MoG changes.



Romania has developed legal protections to maintain continuity when reorganisation occurs, including provisions that preserve ongoing service obligations, staff employment conditions, and regulatory functions during the period between announcement and implementation of a MoG change.



In **Australia** (New South Wales), a MoG change framework has been developed to create a pre-defined formula for managing common operational hurdles. Formulated frameworks have set protocols for transferring assets, liabilities, staff, and contracts; managing the legal status of decisions made by the predecessor agency; and ensuring that regulatory and licensing functions continue without interruption. Having pre-determined processes save time and resources during MoG changes, as the design of these changes does not need to be redeveloped each time.



The **UK Cabinet Office** has developed a phased model for MoG changes organised around three stages: preparation (before the change is announced), hitting the ground running (the immediate post-announcement period), and implementation (the sustained delivery of the new structure). Each phase has a corresponding checklist covering legal instruments, financial transfers, staffing, IT, communications, and ministerial support. The phased approach is valuable because it makes explicit that operational readiness must be built before the public announcement of a change.



4. Workforce: Examples of practices

How does the change impact the workforce?

Can we address all workforce considerations?

- Which stakeholders will be impacted by the change?
- When will the changes be communicated internally and externally?
 - > How far will the change impact on public sector productivity?
 - > Are there risks to losing institutional memory?
 - > How many ministries or departments will there be as a result?
- How will they be communicated?
 - > What impact will the communication have on motivation and satisfaction?
 - > Is there a communications plan?
 - > How will the workforce be impacted?
- What cultural change is needed for success?
 - > Where will top talent go?
 - > Are there opportunities to promote and reward talent?
 - > What will this do to motivation and satisfaction?
- Will unions or collective bargaining processes affect the timeline?

The workforce dimension of MoG changes is often one of the most politically sensitive aspects of reorganisation, as workforce decisions affect the careers of public servants tasked with implementing them. Staff morale, retention of institutional knowledge, clarity of roles, and the management of workforce size are all variables that need to be acknowledged. As outlined in the Implementation Report of the Recommendation on Public Service Leadership and Capability (PSLC, 2025), improving strategic workforce planning is a condition to effective and sustainable reform efforts. Below are examples illustrating how governments currently manage workforce restructuring during MoG changes.

4-1 Aligning workforce planning with broader organisational and technological changes

One approach outlined by the OECD (2025), is to anchor broader organisational and technological changes with workforce planning, identifying tasks that can be streamlined or redefined while providing employees with appropriate opportunities for upskilling or reskilling into these emerging or redefined functions. While this may lead to downsizing in some cases, the focus remains on building and protecting necessary capabilities and supporting staff through these transitions.¹

Several countries have already begun integrating a workforce driven approach to organisational change.



In **Ireland**, the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation developed *The Civil Service People Standards Framework* to support the professional development of Human Resource (HR) professionals across the Irish public service. By defining a clear roadmap for career progression, the framework aims to strengthen the strategic capacity of HR to support the public service's efforts to navigate the future of work.²



Australia has taken a similar approach through the Australia Public Service's Workforce Strategy (APS). Delivering for Tomorrow: APS Workforce Strategy 2025 is a long-term programme aimed at creating a workforce planning system. The programme works to make data-driven workforce management practices a key aspect of planning within the APS. The strategy aims at attracting, building and retaining skills, expertise and talent, while also modernising workforce models to embrace data, technology and flexibility for public servants.³

4-2 Managing the human dimension of transition

Beyond identifying necessary roles and who will fill them, workforce changes requires active management of personal and professional uncertainties associated with reorganisation. Questions about job security, reporting lines, and career prospects can weigh heavily on employees if left unanswered. Proactive communication, intentional, and human-centred workforce transition planning, dedicated HR supports and opportunities for reskilling for new roles are necessary to ensure an active, and participatory workforce through transition periods. Formalising new roles through recognised training programmes is one way to embed this human centred approach into the structure of the reform itself.



The **United Kingdom's** professions designation, works to develop specialist skills and knowledge in people, set standards, and define career pathways within the public service. Through this programme, public servants can build interdisciplinary range from one profession to another and fill the capabilities gaps⁴.



Romania's Sustainable Development profession illustrates this well. Rather than simply assigning staff to a new function, Romania established a formally recognised profession, supported by training programmes hosted at academic institutions. By anchoring the role through a credible qualification framework, Romania ensured that the workforce changes associated with its institutional reform created lasting professional capacity rather than temporary structural adjustment.

1 OECD (2025), Workforce Insights from Central Governments: Findings of the 2024 OECD/EU Survey of Public Servants, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/2f9080b1-en>.

2 Government of Ireland (2025), People Standards Framework, <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-public-expenditure-infrastructure-public-service-reform-and-digitalisation/campaigns/people-standards-framework/> (Accessed 9 June 2026)

3 Government of Australia (2025), APS Workforce Strategy 2025, <https://www.apsc.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/aps-workforce-strategy-2025> (Accessed 9 June 2026)

4 UK Government, "Professions" Civil Service Careers, <https://www.civil-service-careers.gov.uk/professions/> (Accessed 9 June 2026)



5. Accountability: Examples of Practices

Who is accountable for the change, and how?

Are roles and measures for accountability clearly defined?

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- **How much will it cost?**
 - > What are the hidden costs?
 - > Are there non-financial costs?

 - **Who is responsible for steering the overall process?**
 - > Is there a clear designated lead for each change-related task?
 - > Who is leading at the civil service level?

 - **What is the evidence behind the change?**
 - > Does the data needed exist, or can it exist?
 - > Are there existing benchmarks for performance?
 - > Who is responsible for brokering alignment?
 - > Who is leading at the political level?

 - **How will the change and rationale be communicated?**
 - > Is the change likely to disrupt specific stakeholders or groups?
 - > What are the possible negative effects?
 - > What are the long-term ramifications?
 - > Will it damage public trust or goodwill?

Throughout MoG changes, accountability becomes difficult as reorganisation leads to overlapping mandates, lack of clarity of responsibility, and changes in authority and organisational structure. The tools below show how governments can maintain and strengthen accountability during and after MoG changes.

5-1 Tracking Delivery at the Centre of Government

When developing a tracking system for MoG changes, the centre could consider monitoring aspects of the transition such as legal and legislative changes enacted, staff transferred and where they have gone, and updates in operational systems. Furthermore, service continuity indicators would allow the public to see whether these changes result in disruptions for citizens. Finally, long-term policy indicators could provide results and data on whether specified reforms provide benefit compared to the old system. These three layers of tracking could improve accountability for results.



New Zealand's Prime Minister's Delivery Unit has determined priority areas and tracks core government actions across priority policy areas, providing progress reports fortnightly to the Prime Minister's Office and cabinet. Each quarter, summaries are posted publicly, allowing the public to see the work being done on core issues.



6. Strategic Alignment: Examples of Practices

Is there strategic alignment?

Is the change aligned with core priorities and goals?

- Are the changes aligned with broader strategic goals?
 - > Are changes in budget law or other legislative changes needed?
- How long will the change take? In particular:
 - > legislate the change?
 - > align with budgetary cycles?
 - > achieve administrative reorganisation?
 - > see policy outcomes?
- Is there evidence from previous experiences?
- Does this risk compromise other long-term goals?
 - > Are there mechanisms in place to support alignment?

Machinery of government changes that are not aligned with strategic priorities risk creating new institutional structures that do not reflect broader strategic goals. They can also risk compromising other long-term goals if there are no mechanisms in place to support alignment. If the government's stated direction is not aligned, there could be confusion around important routines such as budget development, and create potential friction between the political and technical levels of government. The tools below show how some countries advance their long-term strategic goals through MoG change, rather than treating MoG change as a separate exercise.

6-1 Anchoring institutional change in a long-term strategic framework

A long-term national strategy provides the most robust basis for a MoG change, because it allows the reform to be justified not only on immediate political grounds but as a contribution to durable national objectives that extend across electoral cycles.



The **Slovak Republic's** Vision and Strategy 2040 plan sets out a long-term vision for public policy and institutional priorities. The plan aims to set out a reference framework outlining institutional reforms and ensuring alignment with the long-term strategic framework.



In **Finland**, the Prime Minister's Office anchors institutional reform within a long-term sustainable development framework, ensuring that machinery of government changes are evaluated against long-term national priorities rather than short-term political considerations. Finland's National Commission on Sustainable Development provides a cross-government alignment mechanism, chaired by the Prime Minister and with the Prime Minister's Office playing a coordinating role that mirrors the chain-of-alignment logic seen in other long-term strategic frameworks. To ensure long-term strategic alignment, the PMO Office, includes a 2030 Agenda Youth Group that brings young people's perspectives into decision-making on long-term priorities. This institutional design extends beyond any single electoral cycle, reducing the risk of fragmentation or misalignment between new institutional structures and broader strategic goals.

Conclusion

Successful machinery of government reforms requires clarity of purpose, realistic assessment of costs and risks, strong coordination between political and administrative actors, and sustained attention to implementation and follow-through. By encouraging systematic reflection across key dimensions: including policy impact, political feasibility, operational readiness, workforce effects, accountability and long-term alignment, this toolbox developed in Estonia's context highlights the important role the centre can play in supporting decision-makers by asking the right questions and providing examples of tools that can be included as part of the reflection exercise.



Toolbox 2: Delivering on Political Priorities across Government

Introduction

Centres of government play a pivotal role in ensuring coherence across ministries, aligning political priorities with administrative delivery, and stabilising governance during crises. As governments face low public trust and increasingly complex policy challenges, CoGs are being asked to take on roles that go beyond their traditional coordination role and work to strengthen their role as strategic delivery engines. Based on OECD analysis including findings gathered as part of peer-to-peer exchanges held in Lisbon in December 2025, the following repository consolidates practical tools and institutional practices on delivering on political priorities across government. These tools, in different contexts, have proven effective in strengthening interdepartmental coordination and the management of the interface between political leadership and the civil service – a space in which CoGs are under growing pressure to operate as they navigate a complex governance landscape. The following repository of tools is set out around five relevant clusters: strategic planning; policy design; capability building; communication and legacy; monitoring and feedback.



Tools to Support the Delivery of Priorities

The following tools have been selected in the context of Portugal's efforts to enhance the strategic nature of the CoG. PLANAPP, SGGOV and REPLAN, have been established in Portugal to respond to the need to improve the ability of the public administration to deliver results. These efforts have helped to consolidate its strategic planning and foresight functions while ensuring the senior civil service is involved in policy design and implementation as early as possible in the process. These institutional innovations reflect an ambition to better align political priorities with technical expertise, foster coherence across ministries, and build a more anticipatory, evidence-informed policy system that allows for collaboration alongside political direction. The following repository of tools is intended to support the discussions under the REPLAN Network and engagement between its entities and decision-makers in the centre of government and across government.



1. Strategic Planning and Delivery Architecture

Efforts have been undertaken in Portugal, with the establishment of PLANAPP, SGGOV and REPLAN, to ensure public administration leads to results. This includes ensuring effective linkages between key government priorities as defined by the government mandate and processes that support strategic planning and policy development. The following sets out tools which support the effective role of the CoG as a bridge in this area.

1-1 Quarterly Action Plans

The introduction of quarterly action plans shared internally as well as publicly can be set out with a view to creating transparency and urgency around delivery. Inspired by delivery-unit models, these plans can clarify priorities, assign responsibilities and establish short feedback loops to track progress. The discussion of these plans at the highest level creates an effective link between data and policies driven by line ministries and decision-makers including the Prime Minister/President.



In **New Zealand**, the Delivery Unit within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet coordinates a Quarterly Plan tracking over 30 actions, reported fortnightly to the Prime Minister's Office and Cabinet, and released quarterly to the public. The plan covers priority areas such as economic recovery, law and order, and public services, with concise Red, Amber and Green (RAG) status updates ensuring a clear 'who, what, when' overview of progress.



In the **Slovak Republic**, the Government Office is working to embed quarterly delivery tracking within its broader strategic ecosystem, linking the Government Action Plan to the Vision & Strategy 2040 framework and ensuring each action is mapped to longer-term strategic objectives.

1-2 Setting out Government Targets and Monitoring through Executive Dashboards

Setting out public targets for government action can reinforce accountability, while sector-specific dashboards for the Head of Government provide real-time performance visibility. This dual-level monitoring ensures both political oversight and operational clarity for departments and policy ministries. In addition, mapping objectives to specific KPIs ensures alignment between long-term vision and operational monitoring.



In **New Zealand**, the government launched nine ambitious six-year targets in areas including health, education, crime, housing, employment and environment. Three targets were met five years ahead of schedule. Progress is reported quarterly and released publicly as outlined above, while sector dashboards track changes in key indicators across portfolios on different reporting cadences for the Prime Minister.



In **Bulgaria**, the Council of Ministers adopted in December 2025 a KPI Catalogue covering each policy area which is tracked automatically or by appointed statistical experts.⁵ The catalogue was developed under the Project “Strengthening the Capacity to Design and Monitor Public Policies”, funded by the TSI. These indicators feed into the Monitorstat information system, a centralised platform for entering, publishing and monitoring national, regional and municipal strategic documents, providing a structured overview of implementation across all levels of government.

1-3 Publicly setting out Missions to Ministers

Formal mandate letters from the Prime Minister or Head of Government at the start of a mandate can set clear expectations for ministers, aligning political commitments with administrative execution. These letters serve as performance compacts, clarifying priorities, timelines and measurable outcomes and can work both to request ministers to set out their priorities and/or to request that they respond to the Prime Minister’s core set of priorities.



In **Canada**, incoming ministers receive public mandate letters from the Prime Minister setting out specific commitments and expectations for their portfolio. This practice, introduced systematically and publicly since 2015, has created a visible accountability mechanism linking each minister’s agenda to the government’s overall programme and allowing citizens and parliament to track delivery against stated objectives.

1-4 Special coordination bodies

Dedicated coordination structures combining political representatives and senior civil servants for specific and core priorities can enable a more transparent and fluid decision-making process. At the same time, these structures should be able to adapt to current priorities and include a legacy or exit strategy to avoid additional bureaucracy.



In **Ireland**, the Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office was established within the Department of the Taoiseach in 2023 to coordinate cross-government action on a priority policy area established by the Prime Minister. The Office monitors delivery of policy commitments by departments and undertakes strategic initiatives to amplify impact. This model illustrates how the CoG can act both as a coordinator and as an incubation unit, nurturing a policy issue for a defined period before mainstreaming it into line departments. Ireland offers a complementary model through the Economic and Evaluation Service, a centrally coordinated function that facilitates cross-departmental analytical projects, always involving three or more ministries, ensuring that evaluation capacity serves whole-of-government priorities rather than individual departmental interests.



2. Policy Design

PLANAPP and SGGOV with their analytical capacities located in the centre of government, can play an important role in supporting evidence-based policy design which is both relevant and used by both the political and technical levels of government. A recurring theme in peer-to-peer exchanges in the development of this tool was the tension between analytical rigour and political usability: as participating countries noted, the challenge is to “do your work, don’t show your work”, ensuring that evidence informs decisions without overwhelming decision-makers with methodological complexity. The following sets out tools which support the effective role of the CoG as a bridge in the policy development process.

⁵ This catalogue was developed under the Project “Strengthening the Capacity to Design and Monitor Public Policies”, funded by the Technical Support Instrument of the European Union.

2-1 Policy incubators within the centre of government

Building internal incubators within the centre of government (as teams and not necessarily formal units) can enable experimentation with innovative policy solutions, pilot projects and cross-sectoral initiatives. These teams often combine analytical capacity, foresight tools and behavioural insights expertise. PLANAPP and SGGOV in Portugal function in this spirit, combining strategic planning, foresight and policy evaluation within the centre of government to inform cross-cutting policy initiatives.



In **Ireland**, the Department of the Taoiseach, in collaboration with departments, has incubated a number of cross-sector policy issues over the past years including child poverty, disability and housing.

2-2 Identifying political windows for reforms during policy preparation

Developing policy proposals that are in tune with the political cycle and mandates allows governments to ensure policy proposals are sustainable and will 'stick'. This can include identifying a small set of high-impact reform proposals capable of shifting system-wide outcomes. Rather than pursuing incremental reforms across policy areas, centres of government can concentrate resources where change produces cascading effects.



In **Spain**, the Public Policy Department within the Prime Minister's Office selects a limited number of critical political and policy themes (housing, purchasing power, public services, migration, security), and subjects each to a structured policy development process. The first analysis is political feasibility – polling, political opportunity, stakeholder mapping – before any proposal enters the technical policy design phase. The team then prepares evidence-based policy options through systematic reviews, benchmarking and modelling, and holds them ready for the right political window. This allows the centre to set an evidence-informed policy agenda months in advance rather than react to events, iterating proposals through sectorial, financial and legal ministries before they reach the formal decision-making process.

2-3 Social Risk and Political Feasibility Analysis

Structured assessment of societal risks such as distributional impacts helps to anticipate resistance and refine policy design. Integrating these analyses early prevents costly implementation failures.



In **Poland**, the Chancellery of the Prime Minister uses social risk analysis tools including '5 whys' analysis to understand risks emerging from stakeholder and public reactions for key policy areas.



3. Building capabilities at all levels of the decision-making process

The following sets out tools which support the effective role of the centre of government in building capabilities both at the technical and political levels to support the delivery of priorities. This is particularly important given that the complexity of cross-cutting policy challenges requires new competencies from both politicians and civil servants.

3-1 Developing training modules for senior civil servants

Continuous professional development strengthens leadership, strategic thinking, and delivery skills across the senior civil service. Capacity-building programmes could ensure the civil service have a good understanding of the machinery of government, their respective roles alongside the political leadership, and how best to support cross-government collaboration and data-driven decision-making. Peer to peer exchanges noted that political literacy differs across government and some ministers

might potentially underestimate implementation constraints. This gap underlines the need for structured training that helps officials understand political dynamics and decision-making timelines, while equipping political actors with realistic expectations of what the administrative system can deliver and when.

3-2 Orientation for Political Leadership

Orientation programmes for ministers and political staff on machinery-of-government structures, decision pathways, and administrative processes can be useful in shaping the bridging role of the centre. In particular, for political leaders and advisors with less government experience, these trainings can ensure a shared understanding of how to ensure an effective political-technical interface. Shared training initiatives bringing politicians and civil servants together can build mutual understanding and trust, improving coordination and contributing to reducing institutional silos.



In **Poland**, the Chancellery has identified on-the-job joint training for politicians and civil servants as a priority, focusing on practical skills such as audience management, stakeholder engagement and crisis communication.



Spain's Public Policy Department has similarly emphasised that investing in the human dimension – through structured briefings, regular meetings and shared training – is essential for line ministries to gain the ownership and political attention needed for coordination to succeed.



4. Communication and Legitimacy Tools

Governments operate in an increasingly crowded and adversarial information environment. Peer-to-peer exchanges emphasised that the 24/7 media cycle, create constant pressure on the centre of government – not only to communicate effectively, but to manage the broader information environment in which policies are received. This also may exacerbate the tensions at the political-technical interface. This observation reframes communication as a core governance function that the centre must actively manage. The following tools support this function.

4-1 Narrative framing

Clear, consistent storytelling around government priorities strengthens public understanding and support for policy priorities. Narrative framing connects policies to citizens' lived experiences, making reforms more relatable and credible.



In **Spain**, the Public Policy Department dedicates specific attention to defining frames, narratives and communicative strategies for each priority area, ensuring that the first public impression of a policy is carefully managed.



In **Poland**, the Chancellery has developed tools for building values-based 'human stories' around public policies, centred on themes such as justice, welfare and security, and coordinates a network of spokespersons across ministries to ensure consistent messaging.

4-2 Public Opinion and Dialogue Centres

Preparing concise data points, visualisations, and key messages ensures that accurate information reaches the public quickly, especially during crises or major policy announcements. Similarly, dedicated analytical units supporting the Head of Government can synthesise public opinion research, stakeholder input, and social trends, informing strategic decision-making and communication. Combining administrative data with opinion polling enables governments to track both objective outcomes and public sentiment. This dual approach helps identify gaps between policy performance and citizen perception.



In **Poland**, the Chancellery maintains multiple monitoring tools including a Social Opinion Research Centre, regular focus studies for the Prime Minister's Office, and increasingly AI-assisted analysis of media and social trends, allowing the centre to detect signs of emerging public dissatisfaction before they escalate.



5. Monitoring, Evidence, and Feedback Systems

5-1 Integrated Monitoring Platforms

Centralised information systems displaying strategic goals, indicators, responsible actors, and progress updates allow decision-makers to track implementation in real time.



In **Bulgaria**, the Monitorstat Information System, developed under the European Union's National Recovery and Resilience Plan, provides a public platform for entering and monitoring strategic documents from national to municipal level, underpinned by a formal Methodology for Strategic Planning adopted by the Council of Ministers in October 2025.



In the **Slovak Republic**, the Government Office has built a strategic pyramid linking each unit's objectives and KPIs to three overarching strategic goals, creating line of sight from individual departmental performance to the government's Vision 2040.

5-2 Systems for Implementing Long-Term Priorities

Digital platforms or institutional frameworks that track strategic projects across electoral cycles help ensure reforms persist beyond changes in government. Easy-to-access progress updates support institutional memory and accountability.



The **Slovak Republic's** strategic ecosystem, linking Vision 2040, the National & Regional Partnership Plan (NRPP), and the Investment Plan through a single coordinating framework at the Government Office, is designed precisely to anchor long-term priorities against short-term political volatility.

5-3 Leveraging Informal Channels

In administrations with collaborative cultures, informal coordination mechanisms, such as inter-ministerial networks or leadership forums, can complement formal processes, accelerating decision-making and problem-solving.



In **Finland**, the administrative culture supports coordination through rapid informal sense-checking and mutual translation between political and administrative actors.

Conclusion

The tools compiled above highlight efforts to ensure that CoGs combine strong coordination mechanisms, anticipatory policy capacity, robust monitoring systems, and meaningful public engagement. When implemented as a coherent whole rather than isolated reforms, these practices can support governments in delivering results, sustaining long-term priorities, and rebuilding confidence in public institutions.



Toolbox 3: Defining and Managing Priority Initiatives Introduction

Introduction

Centre of government institutions play an important role in helping elected governments articulate, refine, and deliver their priorities. In order to do so, they require appropriate procedures, analytical tools, coordination mechanisms, and communication cultures to ensure political leaders receive high-quality advice and maintain coherence in a complex and evolving environment.

Based on OECD analysis including findings gathered as part of peer-to-peer exchanges held in Warsaw in October 2025, the following tool sets out a pathway that can serve as an outline for the development of more detailed guidelines and capacity building initiatives for civil servants working in the Chancellery in Poland but could also be useful for other countries in asking relevant questions in the priority-setting process. It is intended to support the Chancellery throughout the full lifecycle of government priorities from identification to implementation, to managing inevitable changes.

Defining and Managing Priority Initiatives Introduction

Summary of tools

1

Identifying and Setting Priorities

Transition process and situational overview; feasibility assessment; using existing institutional mechanisms

2

Managing Priority Initiatives

User centred monitoring systems; analytical support to decision-makers; clarifying roles and responsibilities; constructing the narrative

3

Managing Changing Priorities

Training for officials and ministers; adapting to crises; managing institutional resilience and workload continuity of service



1. Identifying and Setting Priorities

Centres of government can benefit from developing a structured, proactive approach at the beginning of, and throughout, a government's term. As for Poland's Chancellery, centres of government have a role to play in ensuring that ministers and their teams receive the information, support, and situational awareness they need to make informed decisions at the beginning of their term, and at key inflection points during their mandate. To do so, the Chancellery in Poland could consider further developing the following as guidelines:

1-1 Establish a clear transition process and situational overview.

Establishing and maintaining procedures for handing over information to an incoming government is one way to better structure the prioritisation process. This includes "opening balance" briefings that clearly present existing commitments, EU/international obligations, fiscal and legal constraints, and outstanding decisions. Orientation packages can also help to equip ministers and advisors to work effectively from day one and they could consider using visual tools to help manage complexity including guides, compendia, and glossaries. This should be done in a way to help new Ministers clearly situate themselves and reflect on how/where their new priorities fit into ongoing work.



Some countries such as **Finland** prepare the ground with different political parties before the election by organising meetings to explain for example the policy development process, long-term commitments, cabinet processes, and international commitments.

1-2 Clarify political intent to identify actionable policy priorities.

Political declarations, manifestos, and coalition agreements require careful interpretation. The CoG can work with ministers early on to help to clearly identify which components represent concrete commitments and action from the civil service, which are high-level ambitions, and which are primarily communication signals. Once the priorities are clarified, they could also be categorised by level of priority and/or timeline (e.g. immediate, mid-term, longer-term etc). This can help to ensure limited civil service resources are focused on the government right priorities.

1-3 Assess feasibility, risks, and alternative approaches.

Centres of government are well placed to provide balanced, evidence-informed assessments of policy options and delivery risks. This could include systematic stakeholder and priority mapping. Mapping existing priorities, stakeholder interests, influence dynamics, and potential consequences of different policy options support more realistic and politically aware decision-making. This includes early "pain mapping" to identify the tensions, trade-offs, and enabling conditions associated with each prospective priority. This should be done in a constructive manner and with attention to clearly defining the roles of the civil service vis-à-vis political advisors, to maintain a sense of professional impartiality. Assessments by the civil service could be based on objective evidence, leaving the political strategising to the elected officials and their special advisors.

1-4 Establish a trusted communication environment.

Effective priority-setting depends on safe, confidential dialogue between senior level civil servants and political leaders. Centres of government could identify and develop secure communication channels and venues (e.g. inter-ministerial meetings and more informal structures) to avoid public disputes or media leaks that undermine trust and reduce the space for candid analysis and debate.

1-5 Consider options to design priority initiatives within existing organisational structures.

Structural reforms can be effective and necessary, but also disruptive and counterproductive. They work best when they are the result of careful reflection and cost/benefit analysis. Centres of government could minimise turbulence by thinking through options to design priority initiatives in ways that maintain institutional continuity unless structural reforms clearly contribute to solving policy problems.



2. Managing Priority Initiatives

Once priorities are defined, the centre of government's role will be to ensure coordinated, evidence-based delivery. This requires strong monitoring systems, collaboration across ministries, and ongoing support to ministers. The following sets out suggestions in support of better managing priority initiatives in Poland but could also be of relevance to a broader number of centres of government.

2-1 Build coherent, user-centred monitoring systems.

Information flows could be simplified and integrated, capable of responding to various user needs, e.g. giving detailed data for civil servants and more streamlined information for political leaders. This is necessary to allow decision-makers to track progress and identify/prevent bottlenecks. Milestones should be well-defined, meaningful, and aligned with decisive pivot points in delivery.

2-2 Strengthen cross-government coordination mechanisms.

Managing priorities requires cooperation across policy, legislative, financial, and delivery units. Centres of government could foster regular collaboration between directors, use ad-hoc working groups or task forces for complex issues, and create psychologically safe spaces for honest cross-ministerial discussions based on shared data.

2-3 Provide high-quality analytical support to decision-makers.

Ministers could receive analysis at regular intervals on the progress of their priority initiatives that includes risks, evidence, possible scenarios, and implications for stakeholders. CoG officials could help provide options to resolve emerging issues while ensuring that advice remains impartial and driven by findings and analysis.

2-4 Clarify roles between civil service and political officials.

The CoG could work with all parties to clarify roles between Ministers, their political advisors and senior civil servants, including when and how policy assessments and delivery advice are generated. Mechanisms could be in place for escalating concerns when responsibilities are not met or when delivery is at risk.

2-5 Ensure coherent communication and narrative building.

Monitoring insights could feed into internal and external narratives that explain progress, challenges, and next steps. Clear communication on which priorities continue, which are reviewed, and which are discontinued strengthens coherence across the administration.



3. Managing Changes in Priorities

Changes in political context, cabinet composition, public sentiment, or crisis conditions will inevitably require revisions to priorities. The centre of government can help to manage these shifts quickly and coherently by reflecting on the following principles.

3-1 Respond effectively to political shifts and cabinet changes.

Coalition changes and cabinet reshuffles can present risks to delivery continuity. The centre of government could assess these implications, present scenarios, and use transitions as opportunities to review action planning.

3-2 Adapt priorities dynamically during crises.

Crises require fast transition from routine operations to crisis management. The centre of government could help political officials to identify early signals, anticipate how crises reshape priorities, and rapidly mobilise expert teams to support Ministers. Clear decisions about which activities can be paused or suspended can free capacity for urgent tasks.

3-3 Reduce information uncertainty and enhance data access.

During crises, rapid data access, digital visualisation tools, and clear communication channels enable better decisions. The centre of government could ensure ministries receive updated expectations and information flows remain coherent.

3-4 Manage institutional resilience and workload.

Crises involve continuous high-intensity work. Staff rotation, support mechanisms, and attention to well-being ensure sustained performance. If the Chancellery is able to ensure this, decision-makers could focus on strategy rather than operational detail.

Conclusion

This tool provides a roadmap for the Chancellery in Poland to support its ability to effectively advise elected officials to achieve their political priorities. Achieving this depends on sound processes as much as cultivating the right skills among civil servants. Priority identification benefits from strong political awareness, analytical judgement, and the ability to assess risks and understand citizens and the confidence to provide evidence-based advice. The practices also highlight that effective management of priority initiatives is best served through agility and adaptive coordination skills, data literacy, monitoring and delivery capabilities. Finally, peer to peer exchanges have put the emphasis on managing changes in priorities relying on resilience, scenario planning, rapid problem-solving, and the ability to operate under uncertainty.



Toolbox 4: Managing Long-Term Priorities at the Centre of Government

Introduction

Long-term commitments place specific demands on the centre of government. The centre of government is asked to keep these commitments visible across electoral cycles, coordinate work that no single ministry owns, and ensure that monitoring shapes policy and budget choices. Meeting these demands requires that the centre acts not simply as a coordinator, but as a strategic steward of the reform agenda maintaining coherence, sustaining momentum, and finding the tools and practices that help to continue to focus on longer-term challenges when short-term pressures might otherwise prevail.

Based on OECD analysis including findings gathered as part of peer to peer exchanges held in Bulgaria in April 2026, this toolbox identifies four dimensions of practice through which CoGs in different settings have built and sustained this stewardship function: leadership and coordination, analysis and prioritisation, implementation support and monitoring, and the capability and institutional continuity that hold the work together over time.

Managing Long-Term Priorities at the Centre of Government *Summary of tools*

1

Leadership and coordination

Articulating long-term vision; establishing central anchor at the centre; building networks or focal points; using formal mandates and informal mechanisms risk identification

2

Analysis and prioritisation

Long-term insights briefings; methodology for strategic plans; formal monitoring and short impact briefs; apply scenario planning and analysis; structures to collect feedback from line ministries

3

Implementation Support and Monitoring

Practical training for project leaders; common methodologies; national indicator frameworks; digital platforms; annual reporting feedback from line ministries

4

Capability and Institutional Continuity

Creation of distinct professions in the policy area; networks of senior officials; onboarding new ministers and staff; using international commitments strategically



1. Leadership and coordination

Long-term cross-cutting work needs an institutional architecture that holds across mandates. OECD findings and peer to peer exchanges highlight the importance of coordination structures, formal anchors, and political-administrative bridges that hold this architecture in place. A roadmap to support leadership and coordination in this area could focus on the following areas:

1-1 Articulate a long-term vision for the country, with an intergenerational horizon.



A long-term overarching strategy setting out a vision for the country, as is the case in **Slovak Republic** (Slovakia 2040), can provide a reference point for cross-cutting work that holds across political cycles.



Finland complements this with an explicit intergenerational focus. Its National Commission on Sustainable Development, led by the Prime Minister's Office, includes a 2030 Agenda Youth Group that brings young people's perspectives into decision-making on long-term priorities.

1-2 Establish a central anchor at the CoG for cross-cutting agendas.

A well identified central unit with explicit responsibility for the cross-cutting agenda provides a recognisable convening point for line ministries and an institutional memory that outlasts political transitions.



Romania's Department of Sustainable Development at the General Secretariat of the Government illustrates this model, combining policy alignment, stakeholder engagement and coordination of implementation under a single central function.

1-3 Build networks of hubs or focal points in line ministries.

A formal network of sectoral focal points can distribute ownership across government while connecting line ministry work back to the central agenda.



Romania's National Network of Hubs for Sustainable Development, established by Law 300/2024 and supported by an ordinance and a prime-ministerial regulation, gives the network a stable legal footing. The Romanian experience also points to the challenges faced by networks that operate in the context of political changes: frequent ministerial reorganisations, migration of civil servants, and inconsistencies in institutional memory have all affected hub continuity over time.

1-4 Use formal mandates and political backchannels together.

A legal mandate for the CoG's coordination role provides authority and protection; informal and formal backchannels with the political level, including parliament, sustain the political relationships that the mandate alone cannot.



In the case of **Finland**, much of the dialogue on long-term priorities runs through parliament's Committee for the Future, both formally and informally. Formal expert hearings sit alongside an informal technical-level backchannel to the Committee, which helps sustain long-term action at times of political interruption, in addition to the political backchannels between the Committee and the Prime Minister's State Secretary.

1-5 Position the CoG as facilitator and partner.

Peer to peer exchanges in preparation of this report underlined that effective central coordination on cross-cutting priorities operates more often through facilitation and partnership than through directive authority.



2. Analysis and prioritisation

Keeping long-term issues visible at the cabinet level requires deliberate instruments to surface, frame and communicate them. Peer to peer exchanges identified several practices that move beyond standard strategic planning towards a more continuous flow of analysis on cross-cutting commitments.

2-1 Use long-term insights briefings to embed futures thinking in policy.

New Zealand's former Public Service Act 2020 required chief executives to develop a Long-term Insights Briefing at least once every three years, with the explicit purpose of focusing attention on long-term issues and promoting public debate. A recent amendment shifts coordination to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet for a single briefing every parliamentary term, on the basis that long-term thinking should be a core function rather than a periodic compliance activity.

2-2 Develop a methodology for breaking down strategic plans and to streamline the planning system.

A shared methodology for defining and designing strategies and translating long-term objectives into operational steps, can allow the planning system to be more coherent and streamlined, reducing the accumulation of overlapping or disconnected strategic documents.



Both **Bulgaria** and the **Slovak Republic** have developed structured methodologies to ensure a whole-of-government understanding of how strategies should be developed and tracked.

2-3 Combine formal monitoring with short impact briefs.



Short impact briefs that pair progress data with operational options and signals about public receptiveness, as developed in **Portugal**, give decision-makers a more actionable intelligence product than standard reporting. The brief format also functions as a learning loop, surfacing implementation issues at the moment when they can still shape decisions.

2-4 Apply AI-supported analysis and scenario work to priority-setting.

AI-supported analysis of policy documents and data, scenario analysis, and evidence-based continuity tools can allow the CoG to handle large volumes of policy material and data and identify alignments and contradictions between national priorities and incoming policy issues. The capability is being developed in many of the countries participating in the peer-to-peer exchanges in preparation of this tool.

2-5 Collect feedback from line ministries through structured workshops and surveys.



Workshops and surveys with line ministries, a modality used by **Ireland** and **Poland** in some specific cases, can provide the CoG with a regular flow of information from those closest to delivery, used to refine priorities, identify risks, adjust milestones, and highlight cooperation needs across government.



3. Implementation support and monitoring

Sustained delivery on long-term cross-cutting priorities depends on the working-level tools that translate strategy into operational milestones. Peer to peer exchanges identified a set of practical mechanisms that support implementation and monitoring without requiring constant political attention.

3-1 Hold hands-on workshops with project leaders.



Practical workshops with the project leaders responsible for delivery, as used in **Ireland** Child Poverty and Wellbeing Programme and in **New Zealand's** Policy Project, provide a forum to refine milestones, risks, and cooperation needs. The format builds working relationships between the CoG and line ministry staff that more formal coordination structures cannot replicate and allows the CoG to build long-term thinking capabilities across government.

3-2 Use project preparation funds and seed funding to accelerate priorities.

Dedicated project preparation facility funds and seed funding for high-impact initiatives give the CoG a way to support specific cross-cutting projects and create focused incentives for line ministries to engage substantively with the central agenda. Ireland has implemented such an approach for its housing policy.

3-3 Develop common methodologies for indicator management.

A shared methodology for indicator management, developed in collaboration with the national statistical office, can give line ministries a consistent reference for designing and reporting on their contributions to cross-cutting goals. Portugal's indicator management cycle illustrates this approach.

3-4 Build national indicator frameworks aligned with international targets.

A national indicator framework, aligned with international targets and managed by the national statistical office, provides the analytical backbone for whole-of-government monitoring.



Romania's National Indicators for Sustainable Development is another relevant example.

3-5 Use whole-of-government dashboards and digital monitoring platforms.

Centralised dashboards can give the CoG, line ministries, and the public a common view of progress and allow risk-based follow-up.



Bulgaria's MonitorStat Information System is intended to integrate strategic documents, indicators and budget data in a single platform; **Romania's** sustainable development dashboard tracks general trends and overall performance against the national indicators.

3-6 Make strategic use of annual reporting.

Annual reporting on cross-cutting priorities, when designed to demonstrate impact and feed back into the next planning cycle, becomes a coordination instrument in its own.



This is the case in **Finland**, where each incoming government sets out in a report to Parliament how it intends to implement the country's long-term agenda over its term, and then reports annually on progress against the statement and recommendations that Parliament's Committee for the Future adopts on that report.



4. Capability and institutional continuity

Long-term commitments are expected to outlast individual officials, ministers, and governments. The capabilities and structures that hold the work together across political changes are pivotal for effective stewardship. The following were recognised as particularly important during the peer-to-peer exchanges in preparation of this tool:

4-1 Create incentives through a recognised specialist role.



Romania's Expert for Sustainable Development is a formally recognised role supported by training programmes hosted at academic institutions. The first cohort graduated at the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest in November 2022, reaching approximately 2000 graduates by September 2025. The model embeds long-term stewardship as a recognised profession within and beyond the civil service, with ownership built across central and local levels.

4-2 Maintain networks of senior officials to bridge ministerial silos.



The case of the Senior Officials Group in **Ireland** or similar settings in **Finland** and the **Slovak Republic**, show how secretary networks or equivalent senior-official forums hold the cross-ministerial conversation together when political authorities change, maintaining continuity and resolving cross-ministerial tensions on long-term commitments.

4-3 Onboard new ministers and political staff.

Structured onboarding for incoming ministers and training for new political staff have been highlighted by participants as a potential way to help them align their priorities within ongoing cross-cutting work and clarify the distinctive roles that allow the political-administrative interface to function.

4-4 Train civil servants in change management alongside technical skills.

Analytical and policy-design skills alone are insufficient for cross-cutting work. Participants highlighted that training should include change management, working across institutional silos, and managing political-administrative relationships as a way to build the capabilities that long-term stewardship requires.

4-5 Safeguard continuity through international commitments.

Anchoring long-term priorities in international commitments can safeguard continuity across electoral cycles. OECD findings identified EU commitments and international obligations, alongside embedding priorities in legislation and binding frameworks, as among the most cited mechanisms for protecting long-term agendas during political transitions or periods of instability.

Conclusion

Across the different practices and tools presented above, the relationship between political leadership and the administration emerges as a central element to ensure that long-term priorities are adopted, translated into work, and monitored over time. The routines that sustain this relationship, including regular exchanges between political and senior administrative actors, induction for incoming ministers, clear roles for political advisers and career officials, and a shared understanding of how government works are just as important, if not more, than the development of a single overarching planning document.



Toolbox 5: Monitoring Priority Reforms and Investments

Introduction

Effective tracking of progress in achieving key reforms and priorities requires not only robust data systems, but strong central steering to ensure that progress translates into meaningful outcomes. The centre of government plays a pivotal role in driving this function, providing the strategic oversight and cross-government coordination needed to move beyond tracking outputs towards a deeper understanding of what reforms are actually achieving.

Greece possesses strong foundations for monitoring reforms and investments through its Annual Action Plans (AAPs), central reporting routines, and the MAZI digital platform. Based on OECD analysis including findings gathered as part of peer-to-peer exchanges held in Athens in February 2026, this toolbox is designed to support the next stage of development: moving from monitoring delivery towards understanding outcomes and impacts, while maintaining a pragmatic and proportionate approach. The following tool sets out in the context of Greece and the General Secretariat of Coordination, practical approaches to strengthening monitoring and assessments, embedding data and analysis into decision-making, and institutionalising evaluation practices across government.

Monitoring Priority Reforms and Investments

Summary of tools

1 Defining impact	2 Prioritising impact assessment efforts	3 Building integrated monitoring platforms	4 Interoperability
5 Dashboards and visualisation tools	6 Central evaluation support functions	7 Developing common methodologies and guidance	8 Building evaluation capabilities
9 Political demand for evidence	10 Communicating results	11 Creating feedback loops	



1. Defining impact beyond milestones and outputs

Distinguishing between delivery milestones and actual impacts on citizens, businesses and public institutions is key to strengthening how the centre defines impact on major priorities and reforms. Governments often measure whether reforms were implemented, but less frequently whether they changed outcomes or improved people's lives. Several countries embed clearer impact logic into policy development from the outset.



For example, in **Canada**, Memoranda to Cabinet require structured articulation of expected impacts, implementation considerations, risks and trade-offs before proposals are submitted for political decision-making.



In the **United Kingdom**, evaluation planning is increasingly integrated into the design of major projects at the beginning of implementation rather than retrospectively.



2. Prioritising impact assessment efforts

Proportionality and focus is another key aspect of ensuring an effective definition and understanding of impact. Governments cannot evaluate every reform or investment with the same level of intensity, and overly burdensome systems risk becoming compliance exercises rather than learning tools. Several countries therefore focus deeper evaluation efforts on a limited number of strategically important reforms.



The **United Kingdom** applies stronger evaluation requirements to major projects and spending decisions, while **New Zealand** has concentrated political and administrative attention around a small number of national priorities tracked through central dashboards and delivery mechanisms.



3. Building integrated monitoring platforms

Centralised monitoring systems are increasingly important tools for centres of government seeking visibility across complex reform agendas.



Greece's MAZI platform is an example of integrated monitoring infrastructure supporting implementation oversight, legislative tracking and Recovery and Resilience Plan management.



Bulgaria's Monitorstat Information System, developed under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, centralises strategic documents, indicators and monitoring information across government. Several participants noted that these systems are increasingly evolving beyond implementation tracking towards supporting outcome measurement, risk forecasting and cross-government analysis.



4. Strengthening interoperability and cross-government visibility

Fragmented systems and siloed data across ministries present a significant challenge to centres of government. Several countries are therefore working to improve interoperability, shared taxonomies and common reporting standards to enable more joined-up oversight of cross-cutting priorities.



The **Slovak Republic** is working to connect strategic planning frameworks, investment plans and long-term vision documents through a single strategic ecosystem coordinated by the Government Office.



Estonia is also focusing on ways to better coordinate cross-government reform agendas, including through its work on bureaucracy reduction.



5. Using dashboards and visualisation tools to support senior leadership

Analytical systems are most effective when they produce clear and accessible information for senior leaders. Several countries are increasing their use of dashboards and visualisation tools focused on a limited number of strategic priorities.



New Zealand for example has developed priority dashboards linked to government targets and reviewed at senior political and administrative levels. Peer-to-peer exchanges noted that dashboards are most useful when they focus on outcomes and risks rather than only implementation milestones.



6. Establishing central evaluation support functions

There is a growing role of dedicated central functions to support evaluation quality and consistency across government.



The **United Kingdom's** Evaluation Task Force for example combines guidance, advisory services, training and funding support to strengthen evaluation practice across departments. Peer-to-peer exchanges noted that these were most effective when they act as enabling and coordinating hubs rather than purely control-oriented oversight bodies. Several countries also stressed the importance of balancing external and internal evaluation approaches depending on timing, cost and operational needs.



7. Developing common methodologies and guidance

A common challenge is inconsistency in approaches, definitions and quality across ministries.



Bulgaria has introduced a mandatory methodology for strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, which now applies across ministries when preparing national strategic documents.



The **United Kingdom's** "Magenta Book" and related guidance helps to embed shared standards and practical methodologies across government. At the same time, overly rigid or technocratic systems that encourage "copy-paste" approaches and compliance-driven reporting are unhelpful in ensuring effective monitoring of key priority reforms.



8. Building evaluation and analytical capabilities

Bridging capability gaps by strengthening skills across government, including train-the-trainer programmes, evaluation academies, communities of practice and dedicated learning networks is another important focus area.



The **United Kingdom** has developed an Evaluation Academy and cross-government training system, while **Bulgaria's** Institute for Public Administration supports planners and evaluators. Several participants also stressed the importance of building multidisciplinary capabilities, including behavioural insights, sociology, communication, data analytics and AI literacy.



9. Strengthening leadership demand and incentives for evidence

Sustainable impact assessment systems depend on demand from ministers and senior officials. This includes creating cultures where evidence is valued and where public servants feel able to communicate implementation challenges honestly.



Greece's Mazi system enables the prime minister to have real-time updates on the progress made on key government priorities and is used regularly in cabinet-level meetings. This example suggests that linking evidence more clearly to strategic prioritisation, and funding decisions is a way of increasing demand and interest for decision makers. Furthermore, making evidence public and ensuring access by media helps to increase focus by senior decision makers, as well reinforcing accountability for results.



10. Improving transparency and communication of results

There is growing interest in making monitoring and evaluation systems more transparent and citizen-facing.



Ireland's example highlights that publication and public discussion of poverty indicators generated stronger societal and political attention around outcomes and distributional impacts. The increasing use of citizen satisfaction indicators, perception surveys and public dashboards alongside traditional administrative performance measures can all support better communication of results.



11. Creating stronger feedback loops and institutional learning

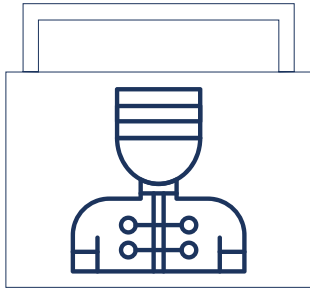
Closing the loop between assessment, decision-making and implementation also helps to ensure the sustainability of monitoring efforts. Evaluation findings should not remain isolated technical exercises, but should instead inform future planning cycles, strategic prioritisation and implementation adjustments.



The **United Kingdom's** Evaluation Registry plays a role in supporting institutional memory and cross-government learning. The United Kingdom also relies on more iterative "test and learn" approaches to policy implementation and evaluation.

Conclusion

Many CoGs possess the institutional foundations required for stronger impact assessment at the Centre of Government, including robust monitoring systems, strong political oversight mechanisms and increasingly sophisticated digital infrastructure. The next phase requires building on these systems and evolving existing approaches: moving from monitoring delivery towards understanding outcomes, from compliance towards learning, and from fragmented reporting towards integrated evidence ecosystems. The focus should also be on being pragmatic: successful systems do not attempt to evaluate everything equally. Rather, they focus effort where it matters most, integrate evidence into decision-making processes, and create institutional cultures that value transparency, learning and continuous improvement.



Toolbox 6: Stewarding cross-cutting priorities at the Centre of Government

Introduction

Centres of government play an important role in stewarding cross-cutting priorities: issues that no single ministry can solve alone, that demand attention across electoral cycles, and that require both political direction and administrative coherence. Doing so effectively requires the CoG to act as a bridge between political and administrative spheres, to coordinate across line ministries, and to combine the stewardship that long-term issues demand with the agility that complex, fast-moving policy environments impose.

This tool includes practices that reflect OECD analysis and the results of peer-to-peer exchanges held in Dublin in April 2026 and particularly relevant in the Irish context. It is organised around three areas of strategic reflection for a CoG involved in a cross-cutting priority: when it takes the priority on, how it leads, and when it steps back. It is intended as a practical aid for CoG officials, structured around strategic questions rather than prescriptions. This tool suggests working strategically through these three questions, before or alongside an assignment, to support the CoG in clarifying the institutional value it can add, anticipate the trade-offs involved, and design its approach to leadership and handover from the outset.

Stewarding cross-cutting priorities at the Centre of Government

Summary of tools

1

Taking on new topics

Why the CoG and why now?
Sponsorship, bandwidth,
success metrics, exit path

2

Approach at the CoG

*Direction, facilitation, or
brokerage?*
Role, accountability,
routines, room to innovate

3

Timing

*Handover and
institutionalisation*
Embedding, capability
transfer, evidence, learning



1. Taking on new topics: why the CoG and why now?

Before the CoG takes the lead on a cross-cutting priority, a set of decisions about its role, sponsorship, and exit should ideally be made at the outset. Peer to peer exchanges emphasised that these decisions are too often deferred or left implicit. Participants agreed that making them explicit can improve both the credibility of CoG involvement and the prospects of a clean handover later. The guiding questions are:

1-1 Why does this priority require CoG leadership, rather than a line ministry?

The CoG should be able to articulate the specific institutional value it adds, whether convening across silos, providing space and time for reflection, managing time as a strategic resource, brokering across ministries, or holding line ministries to delivery, and weigh that value against the bandwidth cost. CoG sponsorship of a priority signals a high expectation of success, and sponsorship needs to take concrete form to be effective: a codified Head of Government mandate, mandate letters with explicit coordination expectations, an appointed political “public face” for the priority, regular high-level reporting routines, an inter-ministerial committee chaired by a senior civil servant, and where appropriate dedicated implementation funding. The form of sponsorship might differ according to the priority chosen. CoG involvement also carries risks that are worth naming at the outset: diffusion of responsibility, line ministries losing ownership over policy areas, and erosion of line-ministry capacity to deliver in the long term. Sponsorship design could make the CoG’s role complementary to line-ministry accountability, not a substitute for it.



Canada has made this approach explicit. The Privy Council Office drafts the Prime Minister’s mandate letters and tracks delivery against them, convenes ministerial working groups alongside parallel committees of senior officials, and, where a priority needs a single political owner, supports the appointment of a minister as its “public face”.

1-2 What bandwidth is being traded off, and what can the CoG credibly deliver?

CoG attention is finite, and taking on a new cross-cutting priority necessarily reduces the attention available to others. The CoG could name explicitly what it will deprioritise, and what it can credibly deliver given the resources, expertise, and authority it has in practice, rather than what it would ideally have. Two practical tools help here: triaging priorities by the intensity of CoG attention they need (active political steering, periodic monitoring, or routine ministerial planning), and testing whether a lighter institutional response would be enough (cabinet committees, taskforces, joint delivery teams, or ministers without portfolio) before defaulting to direct central ownership.

1-3 At what stage of the policy is the CoG being asked to engage?

The CoG’s role differs across policy definition, design, implementation, and review. Different stages put different demands on the CoG: sense-making and problem-framing early; convening and arbitration during design; monitoring and unblocking during implementation. Naming the stage clarifies what value the CoG can add and what capabilities it needs to bring.

1-4 Have success metrics been defined, and an exit path, from the outset?

Evidence from OECD analysis suggests that exit is rarely planned, leading either to CoG involvement that drifts indefinitely or to abrupt handovers without line-ministry capability to sustain coordination. Identifying success conditions, transition triggers, and the line-ministry capabilities that must be built before work begins is a precondition for a clean transition later. Targets can be a way to operationalise this.



New Zealand’s Results programme illustrates how the choice of metric shapes both focus and exit. Ministers set a small number of five-year, cross-

agency targets pitched at the intermediate-outcome level, and committed to reporting publicly every six months; the public commitment raised the cost of quietly abandoning the work and signalled to officials that the targets were durable.



2. Approach at the CoG: direction, facilitation, or brokerage?

Once the CoG has taken on a priority, the question becomes how it operates. During peer-to-peer exchanges in the development of this tool, countries observed that effective CoG involvement is rarely pure direction or pure facilitation, but shifts between roles over the lifecycle. The questions below address the practical mechanics of CoG-led coordination in this context.

2-1 What is the CoG's role on this issue: steering, facilitating, brokering, or delivering?

Few cross-cutting priorities fit neatly into one category, and the role often shifts across phases or across the policy cycle. Being explicit about the current mode, and signalling shifts clearly to line ministries, reduces ambiguity about what the CoG is doing and what it expects from others. Clarifying the role of the CoG has been highlighted by many participants as a key priority.



Some policy challenges require the CoG only to facilitate coordination and the identification of synergies, as in the case of **Ireland's** Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office. Others may need the CoG to take a more hands-on approach.



Canada's major project office, created in 2025 within the Privy Council Office, aims to accelerate approvals for national infrastructure projects deemed "nation building projects". Acting as a dedicated central vehicle, the CoG's intervention streamlines processes, creating an environment to approve and build a small number of high-priority projects faster.

2-2 How does the CoG bridge the political and administrative spheres on this issue?

A core CoG function is translating political priorities into administrative delivery and feeding ground-level constraints back to political principals. Peer to peer exchanges among the six countries have highlighted a number of institutional arrangements such as co-chaired committees, coordination mechanisms at the senior servant level, secondments from line ministries into the CoG that make this bridging operational rather than ad hoc.



One common arrangement is a senior officials' coordination mechanism, as in **Ireland**, where each cabinet committee is supported by a Senior Officials Group, chaired by a senior official from the Department of the Taoiseach, which prepares the committee's agenda, aligns departmental positions, brokers interdepartmental compromises and escalates unresolved issues to the political level.

2-3 How does the CoG manage the knowledge asymmetry between itself and line ministries?

Line ministries hold the operational and technical knowledge of their domain; the CoG sees the cross-cutting picture. Effective stewardship requires building deliberate channels for that knowledge to flow in both directions: secondments into the CoG, embedded liaison roles, structured technical briefings. A second communication channel, separate from formal reporting lines, helps surface issues line ministries may not raise officially, and lets the CoG steer from informed ground rather than from generic principle.



The **Slovak Republic** aims to facilitate the information flow through its “once and for all” principle, under which ministries report reform and investment data once and the same data feeds the long-term vision, the investment plan, the funding framework and budget planning.



Other countries, such as **Ireland** or **Finland**, also rely on informal coordination and communication channels, which are at the core of their administrative culture.

2-4 How are line ministries held accountable while the CoG leads?

A risk of CoG leadership is that it can dilute line-ministry accountability without replacing it. Strategic coordination units embedded in line ministries, and clear one-owner/two-contacts conventions across departments help preserve line-ministry ownership while the CoG coordinates.



The **Slovak Republic** has created Strategic Coordination Units in all ministries. They form part of an integrated planning and monitoring system, established by government resolution in 2026, under which ministries report reform and investment data to the COG. The goal is to give each ministry a standing interlocutor for the CoG's cross-cutting work.

2-5 What information flows, routines, and capabilities need to be built?

Sustained coordination requires more than coordination meetings. Peer to peer exchanges among the six countries identified budget cycles and annual plan updates as natural anchors for cross-cutting work; networking and action-learning practices to build habits across ministries; and public dashboards and KPIs to lock-in shared accountability.



Ireland illustrates both anchors. Its Housing for All programme is steered by a delivery group of secretaries general that runs an annual plan update, backed by a dedicated implementation fund. Separately, the cross-government network on child poverty, hosted at the CoG, uses action-learning sets to build working habits across ministries around specific problems.

2-6 How does the CoG create space to innovate without losing coherence?

Cross-cutting priorities often demand adaptive ways of working that existing rules constrain. Peer to peer exchanges between the six countries identified sandboxes with explicit senior sponsorship, dedicated operating arrangements with flexible hiring and procurement, and innovation labs and sprints as ways to make agility legitimate rather than improvised. Access to methodological expertise (agile project managers on call-off contracts, structured frontline-exposure programmes) was identified as a precondition. These approaches work when they preserve the underlying management discipline rather than dispense with it.



Latvia runs innovation sprints through the State Chancellery's innovation laboratory, opening them to teams across public administration and pairing them with an innovation-procurement competence centre that supports market consultations and technical specifications.



3. Timing of handover and institutionalisation

Exit and institutional embedding usually receive less attention than intake or delivery. In practice, the CoG's involvement does not end completely once 'exit' has been decided. Sometimes the CoG stays for arbitrage even after delivery shifts to line ministries; sometimes attention moves because something more important arrives. The questions below treat stepping back as a phase to be designed, while recognising that the idea that the CoG could be 'done' with an issue is usually partial and subject to political dynamics.

3-1 Have the conditions that justified CoG involvement changed?

The conditions that brought the CoG in, which can include political salience, absence of a clear lead ministry, or cross-cutting scope, are also the conditions that signal when to step back. Framing involvement around outcomes rather than activities makes the exit trigger visible: when the original rationale weakens, or when a credible line-ministry home emerges, the CoG should be ready to transition. Peer to peer exchanges noted that exit is often delayed not because handover is impossible, but because no one is asking whether the original conditions still hold.



New Zealand's Results programme is instructive here too: by holding agencies collectively responsible for a defined outcome rather than for a set of central activities, it gave a clear reading of when the rationale for the shared arrangement had been satisfied.

3-2 Has the work been institutionalised into business-as-usual at the line-ministry level?

Effective handover means the line ministry has internalised the priority's processes, governance, and accountability, not simply that the CoG has stepped back. Peer to peer exchanges amongst the six countries highlighted a frequent failure mode where CoG-led arrangements collapse once the CoG turns its attention elsewhere, because line-ministry routines were never fully built.



Estonia offers an example of the planned alternative, where the eventual handover was designed from the start. Its green-transition coordination was set up in the Government Office in 2022, under a steering committee led by the Prime Minister, but always as a temporary arrangement intended to move to a dedicated ministry once the agenda had matured. That transfer took place in 2023, when the function and its lead official moved into the newly created Climate Ministry, so the priority left the centre with a permanent home.

3-3 Are line ministries equipped to sustain coordination independently?

Coordination capability lives in people, processes, and institutional memory. Strategic coordination units can explicitly build capacity for sustained coordination as their exit strategy. Other option could be spread innovations and practices developed at the CoG into line ministries through capacity building and networking. Either path requires deliberate capability transfer.



The **Slovak Republic** treats its network of Strategic Coordination Units as its sustainable exit strategy, building capacity inside ministries so that they can sustain coordination once central involvement recedes.



Latvia shows another example, as the CoG has helped line ministries to set up their own innovation laboratories, so that methods developed at the centre take root across government.

3-4 Is there a review mechanism post-handover, and has public expectation been managed through the transition?

Public-facing priorities carry political and reputational stakes that do not disappear at handover. Mechanisms to review progress after the CoG steps back, alongside narrative framing that manages public expectations through the transition, can preserve continuity in delivery and stakeholder trust. Peer to peer exchanges in the development of this tool pointed to functional reviews of public administration as a system-level review tool: reviewing not individual handovers but the wider portfolio of CoG involvements, identifying which have institutionalised, which have become less salient, and which need different attention.



Bulgaria's use of large-scale functional reviews of public administration was raised in the exchanges as one model for this kind of system-level stocktaking.

3-5 What policy outcomes, not just process, can be determined through analysis and findings?

Peer to peer exchanges in the development of this tool highlighted the risk of focusing solely on processes, where the work of coordination is reported instead of the policy outcomes it was meant to produce. Common indicators that persist beyond CoG involvement, and that measure outcomes rather than activity, are the basis for understanding whether the policy priority has been properly implemented.



New Zealand's Results programme, discussed above, shows the value of holding agencies to defined outcomes rather than to central activity.



A complementary practice are ex post evaluations, as **Ireland** does through IGEES, the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service, which conducts ex-ante appraisals and ex-post programme evaluations that feed into expenditure reviews.

3-6 What lessons and tools carry forward to the next cross-cutting priority, and what should be deliberately stopped?

Each CoG-led priority generates institutional knowledge about which coordination mechanisms worked, what sponsorship looked like in practice, and what handover patterns proved durable. Capturing and re-using that knowledge avoids reinventing approaches and builds CoG stewardship capability cumulatively. Equally important is articulating the 'negative priorities', the things the CoG should stop doing as it takes on new work.



System-level functional reviews, such as those **Bulgaria** has conducted, can help identify where central involvement no longer adds value.

Conclusion

These questions are a practical aid for center of government officials preparing for, or already engaged in, cross-cutting work. They recognise involvement as time-bound and the result of a specific 'wicked problem' that needs to be addressed. Political imperatives will of course shape what the CoG is asked to do and on what timeline, but a structured approach using the relevant questions set out above can help the CoG respond to those imperatives with clarity and strategic thinking.