

The Design of Delivery Units in Institutional Reform

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Abstract

Institutional reforms around the world are often thought to exhibit isomorphism, due both to straightforward mimicry as well as the desire for simple, well-defined solutions to cut through the complexity and messiness of bureaucratic change efforts. In this paper, we explore patterns in the adoption and design of delivery units, which are an increasingly widely used institutional reform that aims to rapidly improve policy implementation and service delivery. We conduct a systematic mapping and identify 142 cases of delivery unit adoption from 80 different countries, ranging from the center of government down to regional and local levels, with an accelerating trend of adoption since 2010. Perhaps surprisingly, we document significant variation in the goals, structure, and management approach of delivery units. These design choices are only loosely correlated with each other and with country characteristics. Delivery units are thus best understood not as a singular “off-the-shelf” institutional form or intervention, but as a design space within which governments must make difficult and context-specific judgments about priorities and approaches - as with any other complex bureaucratic reform.

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1 Introduction

Improving policy implementation and service delivery are priorities for governments worldwide, and a major trend in public administration reform over the last 25 years has been the creation of high-profile, dedicated structures that aim to improve the delivery of policies and services - either across the whole of government or for specific priority sectors. These “delivery units” (named after the United Kingdom’s Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit of the early 2000s) have become widely referenced in practitioner guidance and case-based accounts, and they are frequently presented as a recognizable reform model that can be used across a range of settings (e.g., Barber et al., 2010; Barber et al., 2011; Alessandro et al., 2014; Gold, 2014, 2017; Harrison, 2016; Lafuente & Gonzalez, 2018). Delivery units often appeal to political leaders and international donors alike because creating one is frequently perceived as a well-defined, replicable, “off-the-shelf” intervention that avoids the complexity and messiness with which public sector reform is usually perceived.

In this paper, we explore patterns in the adoption and design of delivery units by creating a worldwide database of delivery units, based on a systematic search and coding protocol applied to 199 countries at national level and at sub-national level for six countries.¹ We define a delivery unit as an institutionalized unit within a government bureaucracy that aims to rapidly improve bureaucratic functioning and policy delivery by combining a set of managerial functions in a novel way to shift attention from inputs and processes to outputs and outcomes. These may exist in presidential or prime ministerial offices with cross-government remits, or at lower levels of government and/or in specific sector ministries. Our definition is thus broad enough to capture cases that do not necessarily name themselves “delivery units” but share a recognizably similar purpose and key features, while being narrow enough to keep our analytical focus on cases that would be widely recognized by policymakers as delivery units or similar structures.

Within this common set of institutional reforms, we then code three sets of design choices: (i) the *goals* a delivery unit is established to pursue (outputs, outcomes, or a mix); (ii) its *structural and organisational set-up* (level of operation, structural set-up, staffing model, and resourcing); and

¹These countries are Australia, Canada, China, India, Pakistan, and the United States. They were selected as countries where such approaches were known to have been used at sub-national level. Our database is therefore representative and as comprehensive as possible of national-level delivery units, but is neither representative nor comprehensive for sub-national units. We typically pool all units when conducting our empirical analysis, but the main patterns hold even when we exclude sub-national units from our analysis.

(iii) its *management approach* (accountability/incentives-driven, problem-solving/organizational learning-driven, or a mix). We use these coded variables to explore patterns of similarity and variation across cases. We also examine the relationship of these design choices to each other and to country characteristics.

We identify 142 cases of delivery unit adoption in 80 countries, implying that about 40% of all countries had created at least one delivery unit as of our study’s end date in 2020. This is a considerably larger number than documented in earlier reviews (See Gold, 2014, 2017), reflecting both an acceleration of adoption in the 2010s as well as potential methodological differences in search procedure. Adoption spans all major world regions, with particularly high concentrations in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, and is distributed across all income groups, from low-income to high-income countries. Though formal comparisons across reform types are difficult, this data seems to confirm that delivery units are one of the most widely adopted institutional reforms of recent decades.

At the same time, we find that there is no single model or design that characterizes such units or the purposes for which they are adopted. Instead, there is substantial variation across every dimension of design that we code. While discussion about delivery units often revolves around outcome-type goals like improved service delivery or learning indicators, only 29% focused primarily on outcomes, while 46% focused on outputs (like the implementation of policy reforms or completion of administrative milestones) and 29% blended both roughly equally. Delivery units are most commonly located at the national center of government (47%), but a substantial share operate within sector ministries (30%) and at sub-national levels (23%).² While most delivery units are created as new or reorganized structures (80%), some are fully embedded in existing units (20%). Although delivery units are often perceived to rely heavily on externally hired staff and consultants, only 7% were staffed entirely from outside the civil service, while 52% relied entirely on civil servants and 41% employed mixed teams. Some but not all received external technical assistance (69%) or external funding (46%). Finally, there was also significant variation in the management approaches that units used to try to achieve their goals: while just over half of units relied relatively more heavily on accountability and incentive-heavy routines (58%), 11% relied mostly on problem-solving-heavy approaches and 31% employed a roughly equal mix. Despite the widespread perception that creating a delivery unit is a singular intervention that follows a specific model, these findings demonstrate that the shared reform label of a “delivery

²The sub-national figure is likely an understatement, as we only conducted systematic searches for sub-national units within six countries.

unit” actually masks a wide range of institutional configurations.

These design choices exhibit some correlations with each other and with country income, but here our analysis also reveals mostly difference rather than similarity.³ For example, low-income countries are more likely than their middle- and high-income counterparts to focus mainly on output-type goals (as opposed to outcomes), use external consultants, and utilize accountability-heavy managerial approaches. But for the most part these patterns are relatively loose and non-deterministic: there are low-income countries that pursue outcome goals and use only civil service staff and high-income countries that pursue output goals and use consultants, and so on. Similarly, some design features are correlated with each other - for example accountability-heavy units are more likely to be output-focused, whereas problem-solving-heavy or mixed approaches are more often associated with outcome-oriented or mixed goal mandates - but these correlations among design choices are even weaker and more varied. So not only is there no single model of what a delivery unit looks like, there is not even a finite set of models that correspond to different goals or levels of development.

Our findings are subject to three important caveats. First, we focus solely on understanding patterns in the design and adoption of delivery units, and make no claims about the appropriateness or impacts either of delivery units in general or of specific design choices for them. Rather, by systematically documenting cases, we aim to provide a fuller picture of countries’ efforts to improve bureaucratic functioning via delivery units and to identify common patterns that can help policymakers anticipate the choices and challenges if they are considering adopt a delivery unit in their context. Second, while our intensive and systematic search aimed to produce a comprehensive database of delivery units, it is inevitable that some cases were not possible to detect due to a lack of institutional or secondary documentation. This is particularly true of relatively small and more highly integrated initiatives, which are less likely to be documented via separate institutional websites, press releases, and so on. While we describe below the extensive efforts we made to minimize any bias resulting from differential data availability and to ensure consistency across countries, it is likely that some less-well-documented cases may exist that are not captured in the dataset. Third, the category of “delivery unit” does not correspond to an existing theoretical construct but is instead subject to varied perceptions and visions, and there is no single, universally accepted definition of the category. To the extent there are definitions,

³We also explored the relationship of design choices to other important country characteristics, such as political system variables, but found no obvious and stable patterns. In this paper we therefore focus on country income level as the main category for examining how delivery unit design choices vary across different types of countries.

these have largely been created by policy-facing individuals or organizations rather than by academic researchers. So while the boundaries of the category will always be contested, this does not obviate the need to construct them. Our definition aims to balance breadth of application with consistency and coherence, and to be theoretically coherent while also aligning with what most practitioners perceive to be the core features of delivery units.

Our paper makes contributions both to research and policy. We contribute theoretically and empirically to studies of institutional reform which have tended to focus either on the isomorphic forces that lead to similarity and context-invariance (e.g. DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Andrews, 2013) or on the local adaptation and reinterpretation processes that often accompany policy transfer (e.g. Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000; Lendvai and Stubbs, 2007; Stone, 2012). The proliferation of delivery units around the world exhibits a combination of isomorphism in name and public branding, but major substantive variation in actual form and function that goes far beyond mere “myth and ceremony” (Meyer and Rowan 1973). This pseudo-isomorphic combination of surface- and perception-level similarity (in search of external legitimation as well as conceptual simplicity) with deep underlying variation (corresponding to the real-world complexity within which each delivery unit exists) is not well described by existing theories of institutional reform, yet is plausibly present across a wide range of reform types.

At a policy level, this paper provides the most comprehensive global descriptive account to date of the adoption of delivery units and their design space. While existing discussions illustrate variations in design and purpose primarily through case-based accounts (Alessandro et al., 2014; Todd, 2014; Gold, 2014; Harrison, 2016; Gold, 2017; Lafuente & Gonzalez, 2018), our analysis demonstrates the global extent and contours of this variation. The extensive variation in the form and function of delivery units demonstrates that the question for governments considering adopting a delivery unit is not just whether to do so, but also how to design it. Contrary to the perception that creating a delivery unit is a simple “off-the-shelf” intervention, governments must therefore make conscious decisions from a broad menu of options about goals, structure, integration, and managerial approach - as with any complex institutional reform.

The remainder of our paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 discusses definitions and the scope of our review, and briefly surveys existing related literature. Section 3 lays out our methodology for the systematic search and coding of cases. Section 4 then presents our descriptive findings about patterns in the adoption and design of delivery units worldwide, and the relationships between design features of these units. Section 5 concludes by reflecting on why it is that so

many countries are using the same nomenclature for quite different institutional reforms, and the implications of this for practice, theory, and future research.

2 Delivery Units as an Institutional Reform

2.1 Definition and Scope

Delivery units are best understood as institutional reforms: deliberate attempts by governments to reshape structures, processes, or rules (formal or informal) to improve coordination, implementation, and performance in public organizations (Peters, 2002; Politt & Bouckaert, 2017). We define a delivery unit as an institutionalized unit within a government bureaucracy that aims to rapidly improve bureaucratic functioning and policy delivery by combining a set of managerial functions in a novel way to shift attention from inputs and processes to outputs and outcomes. Such units have rapidly proliferated worldwide over the past 2 decades as policymakers have often sought to improve the implementation of policy priorities by government bureaucracies, with the New York City “CompStat” policing program and the United Kingdom’s Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit as initial archetypes in the 1990s and early 2000s (Gold, 2017). Our definition allows us to capture units that “self-identify” as delivery units as well as those that use different names but share similar common features and/or would be widely perceived as delivery units. For our purposes, we believe it is more appropriate to define the category in theoretical terms rather than by the actual name of the unit or a normative definitions of what a delivery unit “should” look like. A full list of our cases is located in Appendix D.⁴

The definition above makes clear some of the features that such units share and which distinguish them from adjacent concepts, strategies, and factors that also affect coordination, implementation, and performance in public organizations. In particular, delivery units are novel in their context, relative to the status quo bureaucratic set-up; operate primarily through the exercise

⁴Overall, 62% of the cases in our sample include the words “delivery”, “effectiveness”, “results”, or “implementation” in the name of the unit, and 73% contain the word “unit” in their name. Other cases that are widely recognized to be delivery units, such as Punjab’s Education Reform Roadmap, do not have any of these words in their name. The main empirical findings we present in this paper hold even when we restrict our sample to the subset of cases that have one or both of these sets of terms in their name, which is some reassurance that our findings are being driven by substantive variation within the category rather than ambiguity over boundary cases.

of managerial tools to change bureaucratic behavior; and aim to focus attention and effort on achieving targeted outcomes and outputs at the end of the delivery chain, rather than just on controlling resource inputs or following regulations. Finally, delivery units can in principle be located at any level of government, from the center of government to national-level ministries, subnational governments, or even frontline organizations such as schools.

While this definition includes delivery units of varying institutional forms that share a common goal and key features, we exclude from our global review a range of other policy tools that governments may use to try to improve outcomes in the education sector and beyond. As delivery units (by our definition) are spearheaded by government or carried out in collaboration with government, we exclude initiatives that are externally led by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), development partners, or local communities and service beneficiaries (though these groups may be involved as stakeholders or co-producers in a delivery unit). For instance, community-based approaches (e.g., community monitoring of schools) may be used by governments to try to improve education outcomes, but are excluded from our definition - although community members may play important supporting roles in a delivery unit. We also exclude initiatives based solely around financing models such as results-based financing, pay-for-performance, public-private partnerships, and social impact bonds, as well as efforts to improve performance through the allocation of additional resources. In addition, we consider delivery units to be institutionalized and intended to be continuous in nature. This excludes initiatives such as one-off training interventions, cash transfers, units set up solely to deliver the goals of a specific project (e.g., implementation units for donor-funded programs) or other discrete management reforms. However, we include delivery units that are institutionalized with the objective of existing for a relatively short time span.

2.2 Conceptual framework and design space

To document patterns in the adoption and design features of delivery units, we focus our conceptual framework primarily on the upstream design decisions that precede the formation of a delivery unit. These are the choices governments make when deciding how to structure, position, and operationalise a delivery unit. We develop three main categories of upstream decisions: (i) goals, (ii) organisational and structural set-up, and (iii) management approach.

Goals: Goals capture the “upstream” ambitions that define what delivery units aim to achieve.

Governments typically establish delivery units in response to persistent implementation failures, often driven by political urgency to ensure priority commitments are delivered (Gold, 2017). While these high-level strategic motivations articulate the aspirational goals for creating a delivery unit, they are translated into more concrete programmatic goals that specify what the unit is expected to deliver. They can focus on outcomes (e.g., improving learning) or outputs (e.g., increasing inspection rates), and the balance between the two could vary across contexts

Structural and organisational set-up. This captures the level of government at which the delivery unit is set up (for example, national or subnational), the degree to which it is integrated into existing structures and staffing arrangements, and the way in which it is resourced.

Delivery units can differ in their *level of operation*. They could sit at the centre of government (e.g., in a president’s or prime minister’s office), within a sector ministry, or at subnational or regional levels. The choice of location could reflect the nature of the priorities being pursued and the degree of political sponsorship required to deliver them.

Delivery units could also vary in their *structural integration* – they could be set-up as parallel units outside existing ministry structures, operate through reorganized components of an existing structure, or be fully integrated into an existing bureaucratic structure. The level of *staff integration* can also vary. Units can either draw heavily on civil servants, rely on externally recruited specialists and experts, or combine these in hybrid models.

Delivery units could also have different models of *financing*. They could receive dedicated budgetary support – either from existing line ministry budgets or external partners. Some delivery units are established with substantial external financial and technical assistance, enabling them to hire additional staff, develop new data systems, or run problem-solving processes (CITE).

Management approach: Finally, management approach refers to the bundle of functions that a delivery unit employs to drive implementation. Following an extensive literature in public administration, we draw a conceptual distinction between mechanisms that emphasize creating routines related to accountability and incentives (e.g., through establishing top-down targets, incentives, and controls), and mechanisms that establish routines for collaborative problem-solving and organizational learning. The distinction, and potential trade-off, between these pathways has been a central feature of public administration scholarship for decades, with an extensive literature interrogating these issues through different methodological lenses and at different levels of government (see, e.g., Friedrich, 1940; Finer, 1941; Korten 1981; Simon 1983;

Rose-Ackerman, 1986; Wilson, 1989; Rainey & Steinbauer, 1999; Carpenter, 2001; Gruening, 2001; Chun & Rainey, 2005; Dufflo et al., 2012; Andersen & Moynihan., 2016; Andrews et al., 2017; Rasul & Rogger, 2018; Rasul et al., 2020). In practice these two approaches are not mutually exclusive and indeed are often combined (whether deliberately or not). We thus distinguish between two stylized management approaches to implementation that a delivery unit could take: accountability/incentives-driven and problem-solving/learning-driven.

Table 1: Conceptual framework

Category	Sub-dimension	Variables
Goals	Goal type	Type of priorities that a delivery unit focuses on. Includes: <i>Outcome-focused</i> : Goals are primarily oriented toward citizen-level outcomes or welfare improvements (for example, learning gains, improved health, or higher incomes). <i>Output-focused</i> : Goals are primarily oriented toward implementation milestones, service delivery targets, or bureaucratic actions. <i>Combination</i> : Goals include a mix of both output- and outcome-focused goals.
	Level of operation	The institutional location of the unit within government. Includes: <i>Centre of government</i> : Unit sits in the president's or prime minister's office. <i>National ministerial</i> : Unit sits in a national ministry or agency. <i>Subnational</i> : Unit sits below the national level. <i>Frontline</i> : Unit sits at the point of service delivery.
Organisational and structural set-up	Structural integration	The degree to which the delivery unit is embedded in existing bureaucratic structures. Includes: <i>Pre-existing structure</i> : Unit operates through existing bureaucratic structures and processes. <i>New or reorganised structure</i> : Unit is newly created or formed through reorganisation of existing structures.
	Staffing model	Composition of personnel in the unit. Includes: <i>Civil service staff</i> : Staff are recruited from within the civil service. <i>Non-civil service staff</i> : Staff are external consultants, technical assistants, or other non-civil-service personnel. <i>Mixed</i> : Staff include both civil servants and external personnel.
	Financing	Whether the unit receives dedicated budgetary support from government and/or through donors. Includes: <i>External funding</i> : Unit receives financial support from development partners, NGOs, private sector actors, or other external agencies. <i>No external funding</i> : No external financial support.
	Technical assistance	Whether the unit receives external advisory, implementation, analytical, or capacity-building support for design and operations. Includes: <i>Technical assistance</i> : Unit receives external advice, training, or operational support for design and implementation. <i>No technical assistance</i> : No such support.
Management approach	Type of approach	Type of management approach that a delivery unit employs to drive implementation. Includes: <i>Accountability/incentives-driven</i> : Unit relies primarily on top-down routines such as targets, monitoring, reporting, performance management, incentives, or sanctions. <i>Problem-solving/learning-driven</i> : Unit relies primarily on coordination, collaboration, adaptive learning, feedback loops, and problem-solving routines to address implementation bottlenecks. <i>Balanced</i> : The unit combines both approaches to a broadly similar degree.

2.3 Related literature

An important literature has examined why delivery units are created and their core functions (e.g., Barber et al., 2011; Barber, 2015; Gold, 2014; Harrison, 2016; Kohli et al., 2016; Gold, 2017; Lafuente & Gonzalez, 2018). Yet, we still know relatively little about the design considerations underpinning these units or how they compare to other types of institutional reforms. This paper builds on this important existing body of policy-oriented literature, as well as relevant insights from past government and public service delivery experts. Several excellent multi-country reviews have drawn on practitioner experience, case studies, and policy surveys to present a rich picture of the use of delivery units worldwide, in the education sector and more broadly (e.g. Andrews, 2014; Todd, 2014; Shostak et al., 2014; Gold, 2014; Barber, 2015; Kohli & Moody, 2016; Harrison, 2016; Gold, 2017; Delivery Associates, 2018; Todd, 2018; Todd & Waistell, forthcoming). In particular, past efforts by Gold (2017) and Todd and Waistell (forthcoming) to map delivery units around the world have provided a wealth of qualitative information about the management functions these units leveraged to focus bureaucrats on improving implementation and about the challenges these units faced in achieving tangible results for citizens.

We build on these studies by adopting a slightly broader scope of the institutional tools available to policymakers, updating and systematizing the mapping of cases worldwide, coding the cases based on our conceptual framework, and extending their analysis of typologies and patterns. There also exist numerous case studies of specific instances of delivery unit use (e.g., Scharff, 2012; Iyer, 2012; Simson, 2013; Freeguard & Gold, 2015; CPI, 2016; World Bank, 2017; Delivery Associates, 2018; Lafuente & Gonzalez, 2018). While we draw on these in our review to support case identification and coding and for selected qualitative examples, we aim to complement these in-depth case studies through the breadth of this global review.

Our paper also relates to the literatures on policy diffusion and transfer across contexts. The policy transfer literature argues that reforms travel as knowledge about policies, institutions, and administrative arrangements moves from one setting to another, and what travels may include ideas, organisational templates, managerial instruments, or broader narratives about effective governance (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000). Work on policy translation deepens this discussion by emphasizing that policies do not move intact. They are reinterpreted and reshaped as they encounter local institutional arrangements, political incentives, and administrative traditions (Stone, 2012; Lendvai and Stubbs, 2007; Clarke et al., 2015). We study the global adoption of delivery units, along with their design features, to shed light on how the process of policy transfer

and translation takes place for this particular reform.

Finally, our paper also links to a large academic literature on bureaucratic performance and service delivery, too broad to enumerate fully here. A selected set of these linkages include: the diverse literature on public service delivery which offers a range of theoretical perspectives on patterns in implementation failures (e.g., World Bank, 2004; Brinkerhoff, 2004; Hood & Dixon, 2010; Chamber et al., 2012; Pritchett, 2015); the literature on the use of performance information and performance management techniques, mainly focused on governments in high-income countries (e.g., Bevan & Hood, 2006; Radin, 2006; Moynihan, 2008; Moynihan et al., 2008; Hammerschmid et al., 2016; Gerrish, 2016); and the literature on patterns of public sector reform since the 1990s (e.g., Andrews, 2013; Goldfinch et al., 2013; Hammerschmid et al., 2016; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). While our paper does not attempt to link upstream design choices to these downstream performance outcomes, a clearer understanding of the design space is a crucial input into efforts to understand whether and how delivery units - or any other complex institutional reform - might affect policy implementation and service delivery.

3 Search and Coding Methodology

3.1 Search

To identify cases of delivery unit use, we conducted a systematic desk-based search covering 199 countries.⁵ Our search focused mainly on delivery units located within national governments because time and resource constraints made it infeasible to conduct systematic searches of subnational jurisdictions for all countries. However, we did conduct systematic searches of subnational jurisdictions for six countries: Australia, Canada, China, India, Pakistan, and the United States. Where we were able to identify subnational cases in other countries, we also included these in our database. While our list of delivery units used at subnational level is therefore not as comprehensive as our national-level list, nor necessarily representative of the use of delivery units at subnational levels nationwide, it nonetheless allows us to provide some insight into patterns of use and design at the level of cities and provinces. We defined the start period of our search as 1990, several years before the establishment of the first self-styled delivery units, and the end in

⁵The full set of countries is listed in Appendix A and excludes occupied or disputed territories and constituent territories of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and the Netherlands.

2020.

For each country or subnational jurisdiction, our search protocol drew on a wide range of potential sources: existing lists of delivery units from prior reviews (e.g., Alessandro et al., 2014; Harrison, 2016; Gold, 2017; Lafuente & Gonzales, 2018); cases raised in meetings during discussions with delivery experts; databases of reforms, donor projects, and country case studies from sources such as the AidData donor projects database, the World Bank’s project repository, the Global Delivery Initiative database, the Inter-American Development Bank and the African Development Bank databases, and the Institute for State Effectiveness Reform Sequencing Tracker; systematic keyword searches of internet search engines (Google and Google Scholar), as well as the University of Oxford’s SOLO journal index; and targeted searches based on references to potential delivery units from other sources. This exhaustive process enabled us to build on existing lists of delivery units and identify previously unrecognized potential cases, including those that refer to themselves in non-“delivery” terms, such as “monitoring and evaluation units” and “reform secretariats”. The full search protocol is contained in Appendix B.

For each identified potential case, we first collected as much publicly available information on the case as possible (from academic, policy, and other sources), then evaluated whether the case matched our definition of a delivery unit given in Section 2 above. Monitoring and Evaluation Units or Implementation Units that were set up to track the implementation of donor-funded projects that did not fit in with a broader national strategy were excluded from the sample. For example, Project Implementation Units (PIUs) funded and staffed by donor agencies for the narrow purpose of delivering a specific project were not considered delivery units.⁶ In total, we identified 1452 cases (at both national and subnational levels) from 80 countries as meeting our definition of a delivery unit.

3.2 Coding

After identifying these cases, we then coded a set of variables about the key characteristics and design of each case based on the publicly available data collected on each case, following the categories and variables identified in the conceptual framework above. Appendix C contains the full codebook used, as well as examples of how cases were coded for various variables, illustrating

⁶PIUs were identified in the OECD database on Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) covering data collected for the Survey on Monitoring the Paris Declaration.

how the information available was interpreted to inform coding decisions.

Coding was conducted by the members of the research team. While we began the coding with the intent to use a standard double-coding procedure, after an initial pilot on a small sub-sample of countries we opted to shift to a more iterative and discursive coding process in which each case was instead coded initially by a single coder, then discussed in a weekly research team meeting to ensure consistency of interpretation and harmonization with how other cases were coded. Where there was ambiguity in the information about specific cases, that case was subjected to further scrutiny by multiple members of the research team until a consensus judgment was reached. This discursive process was extremely time-intensive, but had two significant advantages over independent double-coding. First, it built strong mutual understanding among team members in the interpretation of information and variable definitions, which allowed us to achieve a high degree of consistency across cases. Second, it strengthened our analytical understanding of delivery units and the distinction between different codings at a qualitative level, which helped to guide our subsequent analysis. A downside of this approach is that we cannot present statistics of cross-coder reliability, but as our primary objective was analytical clarity and empirical consistency rather than to develop a measurement scale for the use of others, we judged this downside to be outweighed by the benefits. For transparency and to aid readers' own interpretation of the codings, throughout the following section and in Appendix C we give illustrative qualitative examples to indicate the interpretations we applied throughout the coding process.

Our coding relied on publicly available information, as the large number of cases made it infeasible to conduct primary data collection in a consistent manner across all cases. This meant that the volume and depth of information available differed across cases and that different sources sometimes gave different information or differed in their interpretation. We, therefore, triangulated across these various sources of information to code each case as accurately and consistently as possible. Where there was no public information, insufficient level of detail, or conflicting information on a variable, it was coded as "unclear/don't know".⁷ The reliance on public information also means that while we tried to code each variable on a *de facto* basis where possible (i.e., how it actually functioned), many cases had to be coded based mainly on official sources that tend to focus more on *de jure* (i.e., how it was supposed to function) features and practices.

⁷Given that data availability varied across variables, our descriptive trends for each variable rely on delivery units for which there was available data for the variable in question and the sample size thus differs across variables. While we have no indication that data availability is correlated with any of the characteristics we are coding, we nevertheless emphasize that the descriptive patterns we present cover only those cases with sufficient data availability to code the variable in question.

Finally, for some cases that existed for longer periods of time, the goals and/or design of the case changed over time. Where a variable could have been coded differently in different time periods, we coded it according to what pertained during the initial phase or years of the case. Given these data limitations, we focus our analysis primarily on overall patterns and trends rather than on specific cases.

4 Results

4.1 Adoption of delivery units

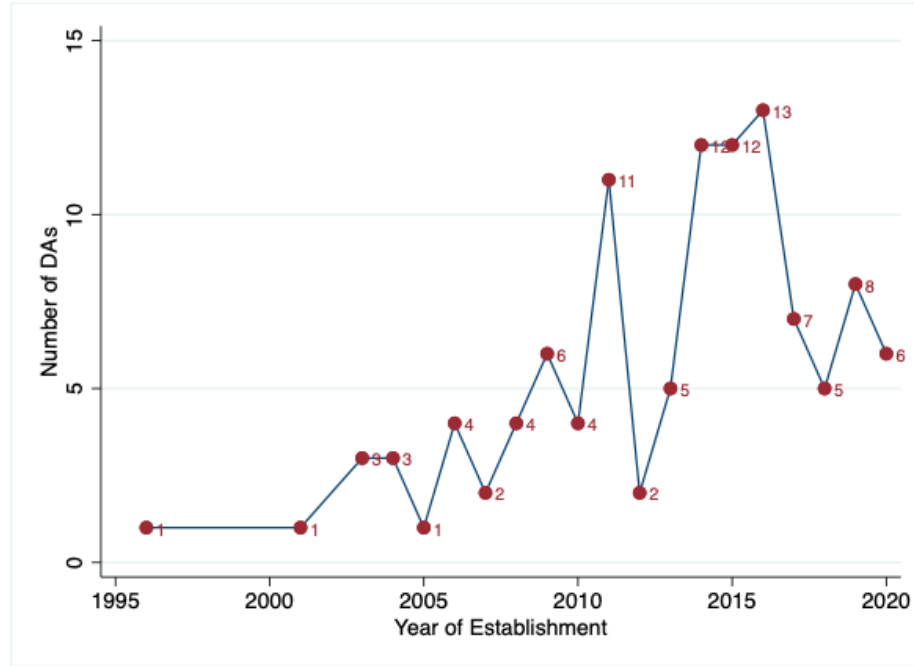
This section provides a descriptive overview of global patterns in the adoption of delivery units. Our mapping across 199 countries identified 142 cases of adoption across 80 countries, covering both national and subnational levels of government.⁸ In total, delivery units have been adopted in 40 percent of the countries reviewed, a considerably larger number than documented in earlier reviews such as Gold (2014, 2017) or Todd and Waistell (forthcoming). This is in part due to our broader geographical focus, wider definition, and also due to the increased adoption of delivery units over the last 10 years.

Figure 1 below presents the adoption of delivery units over time and highlights that the rapid proliferation of these approaches is a relatively recent trend, with the popularity particularly surging in the last decade.⁹ The novelty of this global phenomenon has also been noted in other case studies on delivery units around the world, including Gold (2017) which notes that over half of the national and regional delivery units identified were established between 2015 and 2017. This suggests that delivery units are a comparatively new governance tool that has traveled quickly across diverse institutional contexts.

⁸An additional 10 cases involved structured processes that resembled delivery approaches but did not constitute institutionalized units; these are excluded from the analysis presented here.

⁹While this historical trend is indicative of the rising popularity of delivery units in the last 10 years, our mapping is based on the availability of public data through secondary sources, so it is possible that our review is more comprehensive of relatively recent cases of DAs adopted around the world compared to earlier cases.

Figure 1: Trend in the Adoption of Delivery Units



Note. This figure is based on a sample of 113 delivery units for which we had reliable data on start dates.

Figure 2 summarises the distribution of adoption by region and income level. We find that delivery units have been adopted in all regions of the world, with especially large numbers in Sub-Saharan Africa and in Latin America and the Caribbean. These two regions account for almost half of all documented cases. Adoption is not limited to any one income group. Roughly one third of the cases are found in high-income countries, with upper-middle-income countries close behind, followed by lower-middle- and low-income settings.

This widespread adoption across regions and income groups suggests that delivery units have been used as a tool for institutional reform across highly varied contexts.

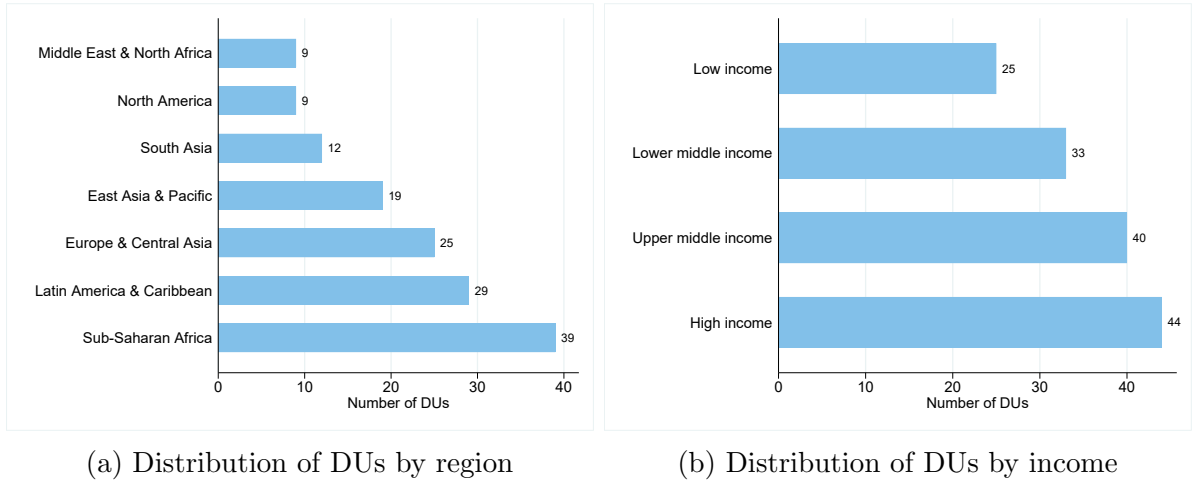


Figure 2: Distribution of Delivery Units by Region and Income

4.2 Design Choices in Delivery Units

Given the widespread adoption of delivery units, a natural question is whether these delivery units look similar or different in their design choices. This is important to understand how delivery units should be conceived of as an institutional reform. As discussed in Section 2, we differentiate between three categories of upstream design choices: (i) goals of a delivery unit; (ii) its structural and organisational set-up; and (iii) its management approach. In this section, we present descriptive patterns across this design space.

Goals of delivery units. A key distinction in public administration is between outputs, which are reforms, interventions, physical infrastructure, or actions produced by government bureaucracies themselves, and outcomes, which capture the end goals that government outputs aim to improve but which are not typically under a government’s exclusive control (e.g., student learning outcomes, poverty rates).

Across the cases in our global mapping, delivery units exhibit substantial variation in the types of goals they are created to pursue. Figure 3 (Panel A) shows that almost half of delivery units (46%) are focused primarily on output-type goals that are directly under the government’s control such as implementing particular interventions or reforms. These goals include, for example, the number of hours of training delivered to teachers, number of schools constructed, number of

emergency rooms opened in hospitals, or passing specific legislation. For example, the Results and Effectiveness (R&E) Unit embedded within the Royal Hashemite Court (RHC) in Jordan was charged with ensuring that the National Center for Curriculum Development (NCCD) was established within a year of the National Human Resource Strategy (HRD 2016-2025) being launched (NCHRD, 2016).¹⁰

On the other hand, over a quarter of DAs (29%) focused mostly on outcome-type goals. For example, the delivery unit in Pernambuco in Brazil monitored several outcomes-focused targets and was tasked with ensuring that some of the lowest performing schools in the state improved their rankings relative to other states in the national student examinations (Allesandro et al., 2014). The remaining 25% of cases combined both output- and outcome-type goals in approximately equal measure.¹¹

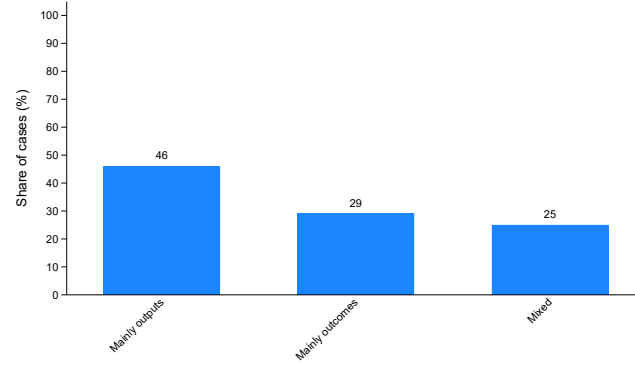
Much of the existing literature on delivery units recommends focusing on goals that improve outcomes for service beneficiaries such as boosting literacy and numeracy among school children, increasing immunization rates, and increasing the number of new jobs in the labor market (e.g., Barber et al., 2011; Barber et al., 2011; Andrews, 2014; Barber, 2015), and other management literature has emphasized the importance of balancing goals across activity types and time horizons (e.g., Kaplan & Norton, 1992, 1993). While these prescriptions do not necessarily align with our output/outcome coding distinction, we note that the relatively high percentage of delivery units focusing mainly on outputs suggests that either many governments are reluctant to foreground outcome-type goals in their delivery units, or that some governments find delivery units an attractive model for delivering on the output-type goals that tend to be more common within the public sector.

¹⁰Given that our data collection ended in 2020, we refer to all specific cases in the past tense regardless of whether or not it still exists as of the date this article was written.

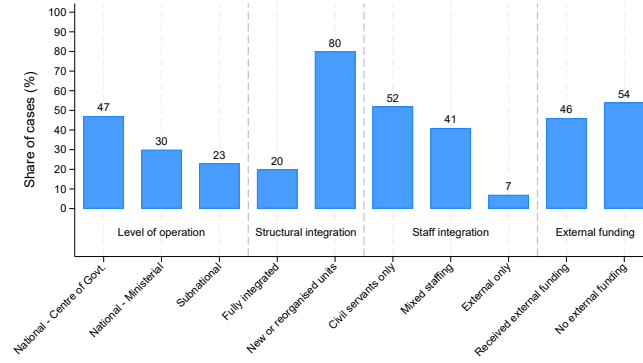
¹¹Since not all delivery units explicitly enumerated their goals and not all goals are equally important, we opted not to specify a numeric threshold for what constituted ‘mostly’ or ‘about equal’ with respect to goal type. We instead rely on coders’ judgment about the overall balance of goals espoused by each delivery unit, with frequent discussion and harmonization among coders to ensure consistency.

Figure 3: Design Choices in Delivery Units

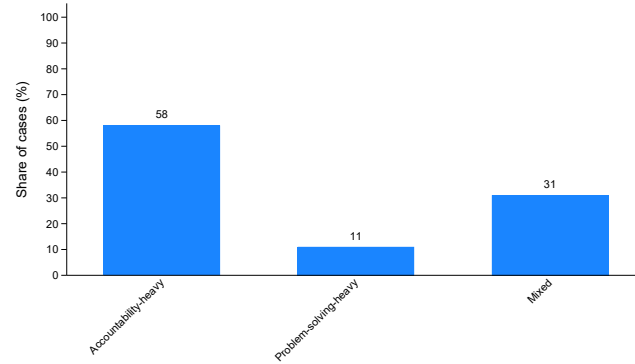
(a) Goals



(b) Structural and organisational set-up



(c) Management approach



Note: As explained in Section 3, data availability varied across variables. The percentages presented for each variable rely on delivery units for which there was available data. Hence, the sample size differs across variables. Under level of operation, subnational also includes two cases of frontline delivery units.

Structure and organization of delivery units. Delivery units also show considerable variation in their structural and organizational design (see Figure 3, Panel B). With regards to the level of government at which delivery units are established, we find that just under half of the delivery units in our dataset (47%) were established within the center of government at the national level. We observe that national-level delivery units are more likely to be set up within the President’s or Prime Minister’s Office (or equivalent) than in line ministries. Examples of such approaches include the PMDUs in the UK and in Tunisia, which were hosted in the Prime Ministry. Similarly, Sierra Leone’s Strategy and Policy Unit (SPU) was hosted within the President’s Office, delivering on the Presidential Agenda (Scharff, 2012). Since existing research on delivery units by Gold (2014, 2017), Harrison (2016), Lafuente & Gonzalez (2018), and Barber (2010, 2011, 2013, 2015) have highlighted coordination and convergence in governmental efforts as one of the main attractions of a delivery unit to policymakers, it is not surprising that most cases in our dataset are at the central level where the approach can effectively manage cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder coordination. Furthermore, since delivery units have typically been leveraged to signal political urgency of certain priority areas (Gold, 2017; Lafuente & Gonzalez, 2018), a central level delivery unit is perhaps more likely to allow for close proximity to the political sponsor.

That said, we also find a considerable number of cases set up within national-level ministries (30%). Examples of ministerial delivery units include Ethiopia’s Education Sector Delivery Unit, Kosovo’s Central Delivery Unit within the Ministry of Finance, and Macedonia’s Transport Infrastructure Delivery Unit. We also document about 23% of cases at sub-national levels such as district, provincial, state, city, and even sub-city administrations, both within the sub-national equivalents of center-of-government offices (e.g. mayor’s offices) and in sub-national sector ministries.¹² For example, the city of Baltimore in the state of Maryland in the United States established the Mayor’s Office of Performance and Innovation in 2019 and Brazil’s Sao Paulo Municipality set up its own delivery unit to monitor local services and priorities (Freeguard & Gold, 2015; Allesandro, Lafuente & Santiso, 2014).

¹²As discussed above, our search for sub-national delivery units was only conducted in six countries, and so this figure is almost certainly an underestimate of the true percentage of delivery units worldwide that exist at subnational levels. In our coding scheme (Appendix B) we included a category for ‘Frontline’ approaches, in which delivery units operate at the level at which services are delivered, such as in schools or local councils. However, for feasibility reasons our search was not comprehensive at this level. We identified only two examples of such units, in the London Boroughs of Barking and Dagenham and Haringey (LBBB 2017; Etheridge & Thomas, 2015). For simplicity, we group these together with sub-national units in our figures.

A second dimension of design choice within this category concerns integration, both structural and staffing. Structurally, most delivery units (80%) are created as new or reorganized units, rather than being embedded into existing bureaucratic departments. These units often sit alongside or above existing structures to catalyze cross-ministerial coordination. Only a minority (20%) are fully housed within existing structures. The Implementation Support and Follow-Up Unit (ISFU) in Oman is an example of a unit that was hosted in an entirely new unit that was created through legislation and given the same status as a line ministry (ISFU, 2018). Delivery units that are housed within preexisting bureaucratic structures, on the other hand, operate within the context of long-established departments such as monitoring, coordination, or implementation units. For example, the Coordinación General De Secretaría within the Ministry of Education in Ecuador was fully embedded with the organizational make-up, reporting directly to the Minister of Education and overseeing the prioritization, resourcing, and implementation challenges of reform in the sector (MoE, *Ecuador*, n.d.).

Staffing patterns show that just over half of delivery units (52%) rely entirely on civil servants, while many adopt mixed models that blend civil servants with externally hired staff, consultants, or seconded personnel (41%), and only a handful (7%) of cases are staffed entirely with non-civil servants.

The final dimension in this category relates to design choices around resourcing a delivery unit. We find that receiving external technical assistance is more common than receiving external funding, with 69% of all delivery units worldwide receiving technical assistance and 54% receiving external funding. Examples of delivery units that received external funding, such as from international donor banks, include Tanzania’s President’s Delivery Bureau, receiving funding from the World Bank, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO), and USAID, and Kenya’s Presidential Delivery Unit, with funding from the African Development Bank Group (ADB).¹³ While we did not code the objectives of external funding or technical assistance, qualitative data from our cases indicates that external funding can be used for a range of purposes such as setting up of the delivery unit structure, developing the terms of reference for the operations and staff responsibilities of the structure, and supporting staff recruitment or

¹³It is possible that some cases received external funding and/or technical assistance that was not disclosed in the public sources on which we relied. Where we were able to find information on these variables and no mention of external support was made, we coded these variables as ‘No’, and where there was inadequate information available to make a reasonable judgment about whether external report was received, we coded these variables as missing (and thus excluded them from the figures presented here).

any technical assistance requirements.¹⁴

Management approach of delivery units. A final design choice that governments adopting delivery units need to make relates to its use of different managerial functions to try to improve policy implementation and bureaucratic performance. Based on our conceptual discussion in Section 2, we explore patterns in whether the management approach is more top-down accountability and incentives or problem-solving/learning driven.¹⁵

Figure 3 (Panel C) shows that most delivery units (58%) appear to rely relatively more heavily on accountability and incentive-driven mechanisms. In contrast, approaches focused primarily on problem solving and organizational learning are rare (11%), and about 31% utilize both mechanisms in approximately equal measure. Cases coded as adopting more accountability- and incentive-type approaches were those that tended to rely more heavily on monitoring routines that involved regular updates on agency performance with the political sponsor (president, prime minister, minister, mayor, or equivalent), tools that publicly signaled performance of various line ministries (e.g., using dashboards to track progress against targets), and various means (formal and informal) of creating rewards and/or sanctions for performance (firing or promotion,

¹⁴The European Commission, for example, provided both funding and technical assistance to the PMDU staff in Jordan in key skills related to monitoring and evaluation and problem-solving with line ministries (EuroAid, 2016; European Commission, 2018). In Sierra Leone, funding from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) was used to set up a delivery unit to monitor progress towards the government’s priorities, assess implementation performance, and preemptively resolve problems (GPE, 2020). In other cases, external funding is provided to supplement staff salaries or cover salaries of staff members entirely, especially if they are recruited as consultants (Todd, 2018).

¹⁵To investigate patterns in the extent to which delivery units worldwide attempt to make use of these two mechanisms, we use publicly available documents on each case to code whether each case uses ‘mostly accountability- and incentive-driven mechanisms’, ‘mostly problem solving- and organizational learning-driven mechanisms’, or draws on both ‘about equally’. This coding scheme recognizes that while most approaches do draw on both to at least some extent (as well as on other mechanisms which we do not attempt to code) and while there are potentially important interactions between these mechanisms (e.g., Andrews, 2014; Barber, 2015; Gold, 2017; World Bank, 2017; O’Malley, 2019), the overall balance between these two mechanisms can differ significantly across different delivery units. While the overall patterns revealed at the global level are informative, we nonetheless caution that this relatively coarse coding scheme cannot capture all the intricacies and variations of these mechanisms’ design and interaction, that our coding (as with any large-scale coding exercise) is based on secondary rather than primary data, that these concepts exist on spectrums and that dividing them into discrete categories inevitably obscures some of this complexity, and that this exercise is purely descriptive and does not assume that any of these approaches is necessarily optimal. Finally, we note that ‘mostly’ and ‘about equal’ are admittedly imprecise terms, reflecting the fact that there is no natural way to measure these concepts; while they are a simple and intuitive way to analyze and communicate these global patterns, they are, nonetheless, limited in their explanatory power for any single case. Appendix B discusses this conceptual distinction and the coding process in more detail and gives illustrative examples.

improving or risking reputation, etc.). In comparison, approaches that were coded as relying more on problem-solving- and organizational learning were those that engaged in frequent and timely troubleshooting of implementation challenges and established lower-stakes collaborative forums that facilitated collective problem-solving and organizational learning.

Existing reviews of delivery units point towards a variety of ways in delivery units use problem-solving routines or combine the two different types of managerial approaches discussed above. With respect to problem-solving routines, for example, Gold (2017) discusses the use of deep-dive reviews which are organized to dissect implementation problems and plan appropriate responses. Furthermore, ‘communities of practice’ are also noted in the literature as one of the ways in which various stakeholders across agencies responsible for service delivery are able to convene and communicate key challenges for service delivery (e.g., Gold, 2017; McKay, 2017). At the same time, other authors have emphasized the potentially beneficial interactions between accountability and problem-solving focused approaches, ways in which both approaches can be integrated, as well as the potential challenges in doing so (e.g., Andrews, 2014; Barber, 2015; World Bank, 2017; O’Malley, 2019).

The discussion above highlights that the design space of delivery units is vast, and that they can be designed in many different ways. This implies that the label “delivery unit” can refer to reforms that differ substantially in both form and function, even when they share similar objectives.¹⁶ We emphasize that our analysis is agnostic as to the extent to which these choices are appropriate or effective - the variation we observe could reflect optimal tailoring of structure and function to context, lack of fidelity to previously tried or espoused visions of what delivery units should be, or both. Our findings should not therefore be taken as implicit critiques, but rather as empirical observations about the high-dimensionality of the potential and actual design space of institutional reforms that share the core features of delivery units.

¹⁶For instance, a unit that is fully integrated into existing structures and staffed largely by civil servants, may resemble traditional bureaucratic institutional reforms for performance management such as “monitoring and evaluation units.” By contrast, a unit established as a parallel structure with externally recruited staff may look closer to the archetype of a delivery unit.

4.3 Relationship of design choices with country characteristics and among themselves

The section above presented patterns in the adoption of delivery units and their design choices. In this section, we examine how these design choices vary across country characteristics such as income level. We also explore how different design choices relate to one another. Given our small sample size, we refrain from estimating coefficients based on statistical correlations or regressions as they would be imprecisely estimated. Instead, we present simple cross-tabulations to illustrate broad descriptive patterns among the chosen variables.

Delivery unit design features and country income-level. Table 2 shows selected design choices by country income level. Panel A shows that more than three quarters of delivery units in low-income countries (79%) monitor outputs-focused goals, which is a much higher proportion of delivery units than in other country income categories. Higher income countries, on the other hand, have a higher proportion of delivery units which adopt mostly outcome-type or mixed goals. We test for differences in goal types using a binary indicator for output-focused goals. A two-sample t-test shows that high-income countries are significantly less likely to adopt output-focused goals than low-income countries (p-value<0.001). While this empirical pattern is broadly consistent with recommendations in the delivery unit and wider public administration literature that countries focus on the basics of reform implementation and output delivery before moving on to more sophisticated types of goals (e.g., Schick, 1998; Mourshed et al., 2010; Barber, 2015), the fact that we observe this pattern does not necessarily imply that it is optimal. Whether delivery units actually make these adaptations over time and the degree to which output versus outcome design choices are beneficial/optimal in lower-income countries are important empirical questions for future research. We return to this discussion in Section 5.

Panel B(i) shows that across all income-levels delivery units are more likely to be set-up as a new structure instead of being integrated into pre-existing bureaucratic structures. However, delivery units in high income countries are significantly more likely to have delivery units that are fully housed within preexisting bureaucratic structures as compared to low-income countries (difference significant at $p < 0.05$). In fact, none of the cases in low-income countries are fully housed within the existing bureaucracy but are instead created as new/hybrid/reorganized units. In particular, about 24% of delivery units in high income countries are fully integrated, 30% of the cases in upper middle income countries are fully integrated and about 19% of cases in lower middle income countries are fully integrated (Table 2, Panel B).

Interestingly, a majority of delivery units in low-income countries rely on human resources outside the civil service to function. Over two-thirds of delivery units (69%) in low-income countries are staffed both from within the civil service and externally. Similarly, over half of cases in lower middle-income countries rely on talent found outside the civil service. We observe an opposite pattern in high-income countries where about 88% of cases rely entirely on core public sector employees to implement the delivery unit. A two-sample t-test comparing high- and low-income countries using a binary indicator for whether delivery units are staffed entirely by internal civil service employees (as opposed to mixed or external staffing) confirms that this difference is statistically significant at the 1% level. The reliance of delivery units in low-income countries on human resources outside the civil service could be due to the relative lack of requisite skills of existing civil service staff, as well as to the frequent involvement of external donors and technical advisors (Table 2, Panel B (ii)). This is evident in Panel B(iii) which shows that external support is common across all income categories except high-income countries (Table ??, Panel B).

Panel C shows that patterns in management approach also differ across income groups, with lower-income countries relying more on an accountability-driven approach and higher income countries relying more on a problem-solving driven approach. In high-income countries, delivery units are split evenly between accountability-driven and problem-solving–or mixed–approach routines. A similar balance is observed in upper-middle-income countries, where just over half of delivery units (53%) rely more heavily on accountability-focused routines, and the rest (47%) employ problem-solving or mixed approaches. By contrast, in lower-middle-income settings, nearly two-thirds of delivery units (64%) rely primarily on accountability-driven approaches, with only around a third (36%) using problem-solving–or mixed–approach routines. This pattern is even more pronounced in low-income countries, where over three-quarters of delivery units (77%) use mainly by accountability-focused routines, and only 23% employ more flexible, problem-solving–or mixed approaches. The greater prevalence of accountability-driven approaches in lower-income settings may be due to the nature of goals that are monitored. A two-sample t-test comparing high- and low-income countries confirms that low-income countries are more likely to adopt accountability-driven approaches, with the difference statistically significant at the 10% level.

Table 2: Design Features by Country Income Group (share of cases %)

Income group			
		Output	Outcome or mixed
Panel A: <i>Goals</i>	High income	33	67
	Upper middle	37	63
	Lower middle	45	54
	Low income	79	21
		Fully integrated	New structure
Panel B(i): <i>Structure</i>	High income	24	76
	Upper middle	31	69
	Lower middle	19	81
	Low income	0	100
		Civil servants only	External or mixed
Panel B(ii): <i>Staffing</i>	High income	88	13
	Upper middle	43	57
	Lower middle	35	65
	Low income	23	77
		Received	Not received
Panel B(iii): <i>External funding</i>	High income	4	96
	Upper middle	71	29
	Lower middle	70	30
	Low income	53	47
		Accountability-driven	Problem-solving or mixed
Panel C: <i>Management</i>	High income	50	50
	Upper middle	53	47
	Lower middle	64	36
	Low income	77	23

Notes: Each panel reports the share of delivery units within an income group exhibiting the specified design feature. See text and Appendix C for variable definitions.

However, while we do observe these general differences in design choice tendencies across income groupings - in particular, between high- and low-income country delivery units - what is at least

as analytically important about Table ?? is the variation that exists within each income group in each of these variables. Only for structure in low-income countries and external funding in high-income countries do we observe no or little variation within the income category; although country income level clearly influences some of these design choices on average, it is far from deterministic in how it does so.

Relationship of design features among themselves. Our final analysis presents relationships among design features to explore whether certain design choices tend to co-exist with one another.

First, we focus on the relationship between delivery unit goal types and management approach. Table 3 shows that delivery units with output-focused goals are substantially more likely to rely on accountability- and incentive-driven approaches (73%) than on problem-solving or mixed approaches (27%). By contrast, delivery units with outcome-oriented or mixed goals are more likely to adopt problem-solving or mixed management approaches. A two-sample t-test comparing output-focused and non-output-focused delivery units indicates that those with output-focused goals are more likely to adopt accountability-driven approaches, with the difference statistically significant at the 10% level. These descriptive patterns relate to existing empirical literature which highlights that accountability-driven approaches (e.g., performance incentives) are most effective when they can be linked to clear and explicit measures (e.g., Bandiera et al., 2007; Khan et al., 2016) and the public administration literature that links managerial strategies to goal type (e.g. Wilson, 1989; Chun & Rainey, 2005; Rasul & Rogger, 2018; Rasul et al., 2020). While specific output-related goals (for example, number of textbooks delivered) can be measured explicitly, allowing for effective incentive schemes to be designed, outcome-related goals (for example, quality of teaching) are often more challenging to measure which can make designing and administering incentives harder. This can explain why managerial approaches that focus more on accountability and incentive routines tend to co-exist more commonly with output-focused goals.

One example of a delivery unit that illustrates this broader pattern is the Implementation Support and Follow Up Unit (ISFU) in Oman, which relied mostly on accountability- and incentive-driven managerial approaches. These align with the goals that the ISFU monitored, which were mainly output-focused such as completion of the master plan of the Khazaen Economic City, completion of framework for domestic tourism, and administration of training for legal researchers at the Ministry of Manpower (ISFU, 2017).

Table 3: Management Approach by Delivery Unit Goal Type

DU Goal Type	Management Approach	
	More accountability / incentives	More problem-solving / learning or mixed
Mostly outputs	73%	27%
Mostly outcomes or mixed	46%	54%

Next, we explore how the structural integration of delivery units relates to their managerial approaches. Table 4 shows that among delivery units that are fully integrated into existing government structures, 68% rely more heavily on accountability-driven routines, while 32% employ more problem-solving-driven approaches or a mix of both. By contrast, among delivery units that operate as hybrid or newly reorganized units, managerial approaches are evenly split. A two-sample t-test comparing fully integrated and non-fully integrated delivery units suggests that fully integrated units are more likely to adopt accountability-driven approaches, although the difference is only marginally statistically significant in a one-sided test ($p < 0.10$).

One potential explanation for these patterns is that newly created or reorganized structures may offer greater flexibility to experiment with problem-solving-driven routines, which often require new processes, mechanisms for collaboration, or alternative ways of diagnosing implementation challenges. On the other hand, existing bureaucratic structures may be better positioned to leverage established accountability relationships, making accountability-driven routines more amenable to implement.

Table 4: Management Approach by Delivery Unit Structural Integration (% share of cases)

Structural Integration	Management Approach	
	More accountability / incentives	More problem-solving / learning or mixed
Fully integrated	68%	32%
Hybrid/Reorganization	50%	50%

Finally, we examine how the structural integration of delivery units relates to their staffing

arrangements. Table 5 shows that among delivery units that are fully integrated into preexisting government structures, 71% are staffed entirely by civil servants, while the remaining 29% employ mixed staffing models. By contrast, among delivery units that operate as hybrid or reorganized structures, staffing arrangements are more balanced between different models. About 48% rely exclusively on civil servants, 10% recruit entirely from outside the civil service, and 42% draw on mixed teams that combine civil servants with external recruits. A two-sample t-test suggests that fully integrated delivery units are more likely to rely exclusively on internally integrated staff than hybrid or reorganized units, although the difference is only marginally statistically significant in a one-sided test ($p < 0.10$).

Table 5: Staff Integration by Delivery Unit Structural Integration (% share of cases)

Structural Integration	Staff Integration Type	
	Fully integrated staff	Mixed or external staff
Fully integrated	71%	29%
Hybrid/Reorganization	48%	52%

Qualitative accounts from practitioners reinforce this pattern. For example, policymakers involved in setting up the Strategy and Policy Unit (SPU) in Rwanda noted that its significant reorganization of the center of government required simultaneously expanding staff capabilities in planning, management, and technical functions which required a mixed staffing structure (Iyer, 2012). Similarly, insights from Barber (2015) emphasize the potential value of recruiting from the private sector to complement government capacity in delivery reforms. Given that traditional departments often operate with rigid staffing rules, the incorporation of external recruits may be practically more feasible in delivery units that are newly created or substantially reorganized.

While these relationships indicate that certain design choices are more likely to be made in conjunction with others, this does not necessarily imply that they are optimal. Nor are these relationships among design features deterministic: delivery units with fully integrated structures may be more likely to have fully integrated staff, but there are numerous cases with fully integrated structures but mixed or fully external staff and vice versa. As with country income level, the relationships among different aspects of the design choice are relatively loose, implying a large role for context-specific decisionmaking and variation in institutional form and function.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

The primary contribution of this paper has been to demonstrate that the proliferation of delivery units around the world in the last 25 years has not been the story of the diffusion of a single institutional form. Instead, delivery units take on vastly different goals, structural features, and management approaches in different countries. Countries that create a delivery unit are not adopting a singular, well-defined, “off-the-shelf” intervention but rather entering into a complex institutional reform process characterized by a highly multi-dimensional design space.

This finding suggests an obvious question: why is it that so many governments are using the same (or similar) nomenclature to undertake quite different sets of actions? One possibility is that the international legitimacy and branding of delivery units makes it appealing for leaders to package whatever they are doing under that label - isomorphism in name, but not necessarily in form or function. Another possibility is that the widespread perception of delivery units as well-defined interventions makes them appealing to political leaders who do not have the bandwidth, patience, or knowledge to engage with the full complexity of trying to reform the bureaucratic systems they sit atop. Thinking of a delivery unit as singular intervention obscures this complexity and encourages adoption, while consciously or unconsciously deferring or delegating the complex design choices that are entailed.

The empirical evidence presented in this paper demonstrates that countries are indeed going about making these design decisions in very different ways - rightly or wrongly. Thus that the relevant policy question for leaders considering creating a delivery unit is not just the binary “whether to do so?” but rather the multi-dimensional “with what goals, structure, and management approach(es)?”¹⁷ Policymakers who choose to adopt delivery units as an alternative to engaging in what they perceive as the complexity and messiness of institutional reforms are perhaps therefore displacing rather than eliminating the institutional locus of this complexity. While this observation and our findings more generally are agnostic about the impacts of delivery units and their merits relative to other approaches to trying to improve policy implementation and service delivery, it nevertheless emphasizes the inevitably complex and context-specific nature of institutional reform.

¹⁷This observation is not necessarily intended as a critique of the policy-oriented literature on delivery units referenced above (e.g., Barber et al., 2010; Barber et al., 2011; Alessandro et al., 2014; Gold, 2014, 2017; Harrison, 2016; Lafuente & Gonzalez, 201), much of which does discuss themes of difference and adaptation in delivery units across different contexts.

From a theoretical standpoint, this paper’s findings both extend and nuance existing theories of isomorphism, diffusion, and learning in institutional reform (c.f. DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000; Lendvai and Stubbs, 2007; Stone, 2012; Andrews, 2013). The proliferation of delivery units around the world exhibits some of the traits of isomorphism, but these similarities are often relatively superficial, with immense substantive variation in their actual form and function. At the same time, it is also not clear that the observed variation is driven primarily by evidence-based learning and context-sensitive adaptation, as opposed to the slightly more haphazard process of trying to fit an imagined ideal type into the realities and contingencies of a specific place and moment. This would be a fertile avenue for future research using interviews and non-public documentation with a subset of cases to explore how leaders and their advisors made these adoption and design decisions. Similarly, it would be interesting to explore whether a similar phenomenon also characterizes other institutional reforms that are commonly adopted worldwide - such as performance contracts, results-based financing, or merit-based hiring or promotion reforms - for which a common label might conceal a great deal of substantive variation.

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Appendices

Appendix A: List of countries covered in the mapping

The list of countries was derived from the World Bank's database in 2020, excluding disputed or occupied territories.

sr. no	county name	country code
1	Afghanistan	AFG
2	Albania	ALB
3	Algeria	DZA
4	Andorra	AND
5	Angola	AGO
6	Antigua and Barbuda	ATG
7	Argentina	ARG
8	Armenia	ARM
9	Australia	AUS
10	Austria	AUT
11	Azerbaijan	AZE
12	Bahrain	BHR
13	Bangladesh	BGD
14	Barbados	BRB
15	Belarus	BLR
16	Belgium	BEL
17	Belize	BLZ
18	Benin	BEN
19	Bhutan	BTN
20	Bolivia	BOL
21	Bosnia and Herzegovina	BIH
22	Botswana	BWA
23	Brazil	BRA
24	Brunei	BRN
25	Bulgaria	BGR
26	Burkina Faso	BFA
27	Burundi	BDI
28	Cameroon	CMR
29	Canada	CAN
30	Cape Verde	CPV
31	Cambodia	KHM
32	Central African Republic	CAF
33	Chad	TCD
34	Chile	CHL
35	China	CHN
36	Colombia	COL
37	Comoros	COM

38	Congo, Democratic Republic of the	COD
39	Congo, Republic of the	COG
40	Costa Rica	CRI
41	Cote d'Ivoire	CIV
42	Croatia	HRV
43	Cuba	CUB
44	Cyprus	CYP
45	Czech Republic	CZE
46	Denmark	DNK
47	Djibouti	DJI
48	Dominica	DMA
49	Dominican Republic	DOM
50	East Timor (Timor-Leste)	TLS
51	Ecuador	ECU
52	Egypt	EGY
53	El Salvador	SLV
54	Equatorial Guinea	GNQ
55	Eritrea	ERI
56	Estonia	EST
57	Ethiopia	ETH
58	Fiji	FJI
59	Finland	FIN
60	France	FRA
61	Gabon	GAB
62	Georgia	GEO
63	Germany	DEU
64	Ghana	GHA
65	Greece	GRC
66	Greenland	GRL
67	Grenada	GRD
68	Guatemala	GTM
69	Guinea	GIN
70	Guinea-Bissau	GNB
71	Guyana	GUY
72	Haiti	HTI
73	Honduras	HND
74	Hong Kong SAR, China	HKG
75	Hungary	HUN
76	Iceland	ISL

77	India	IND
78	Indonesia	IDN
79	Iran	IRN
80	Iraq	IRQ
81	Ireland	IRL
82	Israel	ISR
83	Italy	ITA
84	Jamaica	JAM
85	Japan	JPN
86	Jordan	JOR
87	Kazakhstan	KAZ
88	Kenya	KEN
89	Kiribati	KIR
90	Korea, North	PRK
91	Kosovo	XKX
92	Kuwait	KWT
93	Kyrgyzstan	KGZ
94	Laos	LAO
95	Latvia	LVA
96	Lebanon	LBN
97	Lesotho	LSO
98	Liberia	LBR
99	Libya	LBY
100	Liechtenstein	LIE
101	Lithuania	LTU
102	Luxembourg	LUX
103	Macao SAR, China	MAC
104	Macedonia	MKD
105	Madagascar	MDG
106	Malawi	MWI
107	Malaysia	MYS
108	Maldives	MDV
109	Mali	MLI
110	Malta	MLT
111	Marshall Islands	MHL
112	Mauritania	MRT
113	Mauritius	MUS
114	Mexico	MEX
115	Micronesia, Federated States of	FSM

116	Moldova	MDA
117	Monaco	MCO
118	Mongolia	MNG
119	Montenegro	MNE
120	Morocco	MAR
121	Mozambique	MOZ
122	Myanmar	MMR
123	Namibia	NAM
124	Nauru	NRU
125	Nepal	NPL
126	Netherlands	NLD
127	New Zealand	NZL
128	Nicaragua	NIC
129	Niger	NER
130	Nigeria	NGA
131	Norway	NOR
132	Oman	OMN
133	Pakistan	PAK
134	Palau	PLW
135	Panama	PAN
136	Papua New Guinea	PNG
137	Paraguay	PRY
138	Peru	PER
139	Philippines	PHL
140	Poland	POL
141	Portugal	PRT
142	Qatar	QAT
143	Romania	ROU
144	Russia	RUS
145	Rwanda	RWA
146	Saint Kitts and Nevis	KNA
147	Saint Lucia	LCA
148	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	VCT
149	Samoa	WSM
150	San Marino	SMR
151	Sao Tome and Principe	STP
152	Saudi Arabia	SAU
153	Senegal	SEN
154	Serbia	SRB

155	Seychelles	SYC
156	Sierra Leone	SLE
157	Singapore	SGP
158	Slovakia	SVK
159	Slovenia	SVN
160	Solomon Islands	SLB
161	Somalia	SOM
162	South Africa	ZAF
163	South Korea	KOR
164	South Sudan	SSD
165	Spain	ESP
166	Sri Lanka	LKA
167	Sudan	SDN
168	Suriname	SUR
169	Swaziland	SWZ
170	Sweden	SWE
171	Switzerland	CHE
172	Syria	SYR
173	Taiwan	TWN
174	Tajikistan	TJK
175	Tanzania	TZA
176	Thailand	THA
177	The Bahamas	BHS
178	The Gambia	GMB
179	Togo	TGO
180	Tonga	TON
181	Trinidad and Tobago	TTO
182	Tunisia	TUN
183	Turkey	TUR
184	Turkmenistan	TKM
185	Tuvalu	TUV
186	Uganda	UGA
187	Ukraine	UKR
188	United Arab Emirates	ARE
189	United Kingdom	GBR
190	United States	USA
191	Uruguay	URY
192	Uzbekistan	UZB
193	Vanuatu	VUT

194	Venezuela	VEN
195	Vietnam	VNM
196	Yemen	YEM
197	Yugoslavia	YUG
198	Zambia	ZMB
199	Zimbabwe	ZWE

Appendix B: Search Protocol

To identify cases of delivery units, we relied on the following sources (in this sequence):

- a) Existing lists of delivery units, from DeliverEd preliminary review or other published documents
- b) Structured desk-based search and document review, which we conducted for each country and some subnational jurisdictions
- c) References to a delivery unit from documents on another delivery unit, for example when a unit identified in the preceding steps has a website or a donor project report that mentions an earlier unit

Step (b), the structured desk-based search, which was the main component of the search, was conducted via systematic desk-based search of the following sources:

- AidData’s global database of donor projects since 1990 (Tierney et al., 2011), Research Release 3.1. We examined the subset of projects with DAC-CRS codes 15110 and 15111, which are the two codes that are most relevant to public management reforms.
- The World Bank’s database of project documents for 1990-present (using the set of key search terms defined below) (see <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/lac/projects/all>)
- Google and Google Scholar (using a set of key search terms)
- Oxford University’s SOLO index of e-journals

For gray literature and case studies on delivery units, we drew on the following databases:

- The Global Delivery Initiative Library database (<http://www.globaldeliveryinitiative.org/search/library/Prime%20Minister%27s%20Delivery%20Uni>)
- Centre for Public Policy Impact, the Public Impact Observatory (<https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/insights>)
- Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) (<https://www.iadb.org/en/projects>)

- African Development Bank Group (ADB) (<https://www.afdb.org/en?id=4338>)
- ISE Reform Sequencing Tracker (<https://reformtracker.effectivestates.org/>)

We defined a short list of key search terms we used to search each database, which we then searched for each country (and some subnational units) in the world. For example:

- “COUNTRYNAME” + “delivery unit”
- “COUNTRYNAME” + “delivery lab”
- “COUNTRYNAME” + “reform secretariat”
- “COUNTRYNAME” + “monitoring and evaluation unit”
- “COUNTRYNAME” + “implementation unit”

For completeness, we also conducted searches in these same databases for documents related to cases we already knew existed from our prior outreach or knowledge. For example:

- “GHANA” + “Presidential Delivery Unit”

Where a unit may be referred to by multiple names, we were flexible in searching to ensure that we identified the relevant documents, for example through variations in how terms are combined such as:

- “GHANA” + “Ministry of Education” + “Reform Unit”
- “GHANA” + “education” + “Reform Unit”

We then conducted a broader search using general terms to identify cases and sources that were not captured above. Using mainly Google Scholar (but using also with other search tools and specific journals), we searched the following terms in combination with the country name (i.e., “Ghana” + “TERM FROM LIST”):

- *General terms.* Delivery units, delivery labs, president’s implementation unit, implementation unit, Center of Government delivery unit, planning secretariat, National Steering Committee, reform secretariat, Premier’s Implementation Unit, Governor’s delivery unit (or other variation of the unit)

- *Institution names.* Prime Minister’s Office (PMO), Reform Secretariat, Cabinet, Results and Effectiveness Unit, National Project Implementation Unit, Performance Management Unit, Premier’s Office, etc.

We used the above as a provisional list to be used as a starting point, so that coders could also try different terms, terms in combinations, using Boolean operators to eliminate irrelevant results (e.g., using minus signs to eliminate terms that are yielding irrelevant results), and so on. Throughout the search process, we held regular team check-ins in which we discussed and harmonized search strategies to ensure consistency and maximum coverage.

To search for subnational or regional DAs in our six countries in which we conducted systematic subnational mapping (Australia, Canada, China, India, Pakistan, and the United States), the following steps were taken:

- For each country, we identified the political system and the level of decentralization, as well as a list of the biggest states, cities, or provinces.
- We then developed a list of titles used for subnational or regional executives, as well as the organizational names.
- When searching for units at these subnational or regional levels, we searched on “executive title or organization name” + “general term” and on “name of State or Province/City/Region” + “general term”.

Finally, in step (c) cases and sources were compiled from incidental references we saw in documents/websites we reviewed as part of steps (a) and (b).

Appendix C: Coding Protocol and Variables

The coding of the cases relied primarily on publicly available data from secondary sources. The variables that were coded fall under two categories. The first is basic characteristics, including the start and end dates of the DA, the sector(s) in which the unit operated, and the level of government at which the unit was established. The second is design features of the unit, including the time horizon and nature of the goals (outputs vs. outcomes) the unit is trying to achieve, the staffing structure and institutional set-up of the unit, whether the unit received any external funding or technical assistance, and the managerial mechanisms through which the unit sought to improve implementation and bureaucratic performance. Judgements were made by coders based on the available data and triangulated the information across multiple sources to ensure accuracy to the extent possible. The coders aimed to ensure consistency in the coding by meeting on a weekly basis to discuss coding decisions and interpretation of data.

This appendix describes each item that was coded for each case identified by the search protocol. Items are listed in bold, with potential coding options in italics under the bullet points. For many response codes, we also provide an example to help illustrate for readers the type(s) of qualitative information that each coding option corresponds to.

Delivery approach type: Is this a unit-type delivery approach or a structured process? (Note that while our coding allowed for the possibility of delivery approaches that were not discrete units, we identified only ten of these, and this paper focuses its analysis exclusively on unit-type delivery approaches.)

- *Unit* The delivery approach is structured as a unit or a department within a bureaucracy.
- *Structured process.* The delivery unit is structured as a process that intersects with multiple units or departments within a bureaucracy to leverage key management functions fragmented across more than one bureaucratic structure but does not exclusively rely on a central team or structure.

e.g., Kuwait’s Supreme Council for Planning and Development runs a committee on monitoring and evaluation implementation performance against their Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) delivery plan. The Committee is comprised of representatives from various line ministries and organizations involved in the delivery process and runs a series of consultation workshops, target review session, and problem-solving

discussions around implementation progress and bottlenecks (KNR, 2019). The approach cuts across multiple public agencies and is not housed in a specific bureaucratic structure, but involves a series of activities and routines carried out by different departments, including monitoring, problem solving, and routine reporting to political officials (KNR, 2019).

Sector: In which sector/s does the delivery unit operate? This entails the sectors linked to the priority goals the delivery unit is tasked with overseeing.

- *Education sector.* The delivery unit is embedded exclusively within the education sector, monitoring priority goals that link to educational outputs and/or outcomes and engaging with stakeholders involved in education service delivery.

e.g., Liberia’s Ministry of Education adopted its own Education Delivery Unit (EDU), which is tasked with ensuring the implementation of the sector’s 3-year plans (MoE, *Liberia*, 2018).

- *Other single sector.* The delivery unit is embedded exclusively within a single sector, monitoring priority goals that link to that sector’s outputs and/or outcomes and engaging with stakeholders involved in service delivery under that sector’s remit.

e.g., The UK’s Department for Defense established its own Ministerial Delivery Unit, focusing on sector-specific national priority goals set by the Secretary of State for Defense (Gold, 2017).

- *Multiple sectors.* The delivery unit operates across multiple sectors, monitoring priority goals that link to more than one sector’s outputs and/or outcomes and engaging with stakeholders involved in service delivery across several sectors, line ministries and organizations.

e.g., Jordan’s Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit (PMDU) operates across all sectors within government, coordinating with over 120 line ministries to ensure the implementation of the national priority reforms (EuroAid, 2016; NCHRD, 2016).

Goal time horizon: What was the time horizon for the explicit and/or implicit goals of the delivery unit? This refers to the time period over which the goals are intended to be implemented.

- *Mostly short-term.* Policies and goals that are targeted should be achieved in the next 1-2 years

e.g., Liberia's President's Delivery Unit oversaw the implementation of President Sirleaf's 150 day plan, which laid out short-term goals such as constructing 1000 sanitation facilities (Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism, Liberia, 2012).

- *Mostly medium-term.* Policies and goals that are targeted should be achieved in the next 3-5 years.

e.g., Sierra Leone's Strategy and Policy Unit was tasked with implementing the President's Agenda for Change (2007-2012), a vision document that outlined goals for improvements in energy, transportation, health, and education (Scharff, 2012).

- *Mostly long-term.* Policies and goals that are targeted should be achieved in the next 6 or more years

e.g., Kenya's Presidential Delivery Unit is tasked with ensuring the implementation of national priorities over 5-10 years, including incrementally raising the contribution of manufacturing and agriculture to the country's GDP (PDU, n.d.).

- *Mixed.* A combination of short, medium, and/or long-term goal time horizons.

e.g., Jordan's Results and Effectiveness Unit monitored priorities with time horizons that spanned from 1 year (e.g., establishment of a National Center for Curriculum Development) to 6 years and more (e.g., universalizing enrollment in KG2.) (NCHRD, 2016).

Goal type: What was the nature of the goals being monitoring by the delivery unit? Were they mostly focused on achieving outcomes at the level of the citizen/client or were they focused on ensuring outputs from various policies, programs/interventions, and reform are produced across each level of administration (including frontline) and delivery chain?

- *Mostly outcomes-based goals.* The goals adopted by the delivery unit are mostly focused on achieving outcomes at the frontline and citizen/client level. Outcomes are defined as the impacts or benefits of policy delivery for service beneficiaries (e.g., improved test scores, increased job opportunities, higher income for workers, etc.)

e.g., Kenya's Presidential Delivery Unit is focused on ensuring effective implementation in four priority areas: manufacturing, affordable housing, universal health coverage, and food security. The majority of the goals set for each domain are outcome focused. Examples of these outcomes include the reduction of food malnutrition among children under age 5 by 27% and increasing daily income for farmers by 34% (PDU, n.d.)

- *Mostly outputs-based goals.* The goals adopted by the delivery unit are mostly focused on achieving outputs across the delivery chain, including central government, subnational, and frontline administrations. Outputs are defined as actions taken by government agencies or employees, such as the programs, trainings, materials, products and services produced from a policy, reform, or intervention.

e.g., HRD Strategy priorities monitored by the Results and Effectiveness Unit in Jordan in the short to medium term include mainly outputs. The outputs include: establishment of a Curriculum Center, establishment of an Initial Teacher Education program at the postgraduate level and increase capacity for higher student enrolment, increasing enrolment of children in KG2, increasing public school capacity for KG2 enrolment, improving governance and cross-sectoral coordination of the Technical and Vocation Education and Training (TVET) sector.

- *About equal* The goals adopted by the delivery unit are a more or less equal combination of both outcomes and outputs.

e.g., The Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit (PMDU) in the Bahamas identified 6 priority areas: Over-the-Hill Rejuvenation Project, Land Reform, Energy Reform and Infrastructure, Ease of Doing Business, Education, and Safety and Security (BIS, 2018). Within each of these domains, the goals are more or less equally focused on both outcomes and outputs. For outcomes, some examples include improving student literacy and promoting evidence-based pedagogy in the classroom. For outputs, some examples include ensuring all public schools have internet connectivity and universalising preschool education (BIS, 2018).

Staffing: Were staff recruited for the delivery unit civil servants, consultants from the private/NGO sectors or a combination of both?

- *Civil service staff.* Staff entirely recruited from the civil service.

e.g., UK’s Department for Education Delivery Unit staff are entirely recruited from within the civil service

- *Non-civil service staff.* Staff consists of consultants, technical assistants, or other external hires working outside the mainstream civil service.

e.g., An evaluation of Sierra Leone’s Strategy and Policy Unit’s functions between 2008 and 2010 commissioned by the UNDP and conducted by the African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET) found that the Unit lacked civil service representation. The staff of the SPU were recruited through a competitive process that involved

public advertisement, assessments, and screening interviews to identify experts. This staffing arrangement reportedly caused tensions between ministry staff and the SPU members, which ultimately led to inefficient ways of working and slow progress towards intended targets. An evaluation published by the African Development Bank Group in 2013 suggests that civil servants were offered the opportunity to be seconded to the SPU to mitigate the tension between SPU staff and civil servants (ACET, 2010).

- *Mixed.* Staff include both civil servants and hired consultants from outside the mainstream civil service.

e.g., The Education Beyond Aid (EBA) Programme Business Case published by the FCDO in 2019 provided detailed information about the establishment of the Reform Secretariat in Ghana, as well as the kind of technical assistance they will be receiving. The Reform Secretariat is staffed by civil service personnel and five advisers recruited from outside the civil service. The advisers provide technical support in the team’s collection and analysis of data, monitoring of implementation progress, and brainstorming solutions for implementation challenges (FCDO, 2019).

Structure: What was the institutional set-up of the delivery unit? Was it hosted in preexisting bureaucratic structures/processes within government or new/reorganized structures?

- *Using preexisting bureaucratic structures and processes.* Use of preexisting structures within the bureaucracy to execute the key functions of the delivery unit.

e.g., When Jordan adopted a new delivery unit in the Education sector in 2018, the Ministry of Education used the preexisting Development Coordination Unit (DCU) to operationalize the unit and tasked the DCU with a more active role in monitoring all sector priorities, not just donor-funded projects or disbursement-linked indicators outlined by donors as it was originally designed for. The DCU became responsible for ensuring the implementation of the Education Sector Plan (2018-2023) in 2018 and took on a broader mandate to provide oversight of delivery across the MoE, coordinating with various departments, reporting to the Minister on progress and implementation challenges, and providing support to the Technical Working Groups as needed (World Bank, 2003; MoE, *Jordan*, 2018).

- *Using new or reorganized bureaucratic structures and processes.* An entirely new bureaucratic structure or a hybrid of existing and new bureaucratic structures, or a reorganizing or shuffling of preexisting bureaucratic structures into a novel configuration.

e.g., The Indonesian President Yudhoyono established an entirely new unit within the presidency to track the President’s priority reforms. He also exercised discretion in hiring and compensating staff to ensure that the new unit attracted high calibre staff and introduced innovation to the bureaucracy which disrupted the status quo. The delivery unit emerged as a new structure within the bureaucracy that was not originally part of the organizational chart (Scharff, 2013).

- *Using structures outside the government bureaucracy.* Creation of a new unit that exists outside or in parallel to existing structures of bureaucratic hierarchy and resource allocation.

Level: The level of government at which the delivery unit is set up. The delivery unit may operate at multiple levels, but this variable was coded based on the institutional host of the delivery unit and the headquarters of its operations.

- *National-Center of Government.* The delivery unit sits primarily at the top-most level of political and bureaucratic authority, such as a president or prime minister’s office.
- *National-Ministerial.* The delivery unit sits primarily at the national-level sector ministry or other national-level agencies, such as an education ministry.
- *Subnational.* The delivery unit sits primarily at the government entity that exists below the national level. This could be states, provinces, regions, districts, or municipalities.
- *Frontline.* The delivery unit sits primarily at the level where service delivery takes place, i.e., where the front-line providers of the service directly engage with citizens. This would, for example, comprise schools in the education sector or basic health units in the health sector.

External funding: Any funding from external agencies not working within the host country government to support the set-up and operationalization of the delivery unit.

- *Yes.* The delivery unit has received significant external funding from development banks, NGOs, and/or the private sector to support its establishment and/or its operations. The funds could be allocated towards staff, training, and other expenses needed for the delivery unit to exist and function.

e.g., The FCDO provided funding for technical assistance to staff working at the Reform Secretariat in Ghana, building their capacity in monitoring and evaluation, cre-

ating data systems and analyzing data to inform decisions and implementation (FCDO, 2019).

- *No.* Based on the information available, the delivery unit did not appear to receive significant external funding from development banks, NGOs, and/or the private sector.

Technical assistance: Technical support received by the delivery unit for advising on the institutional framework, operations, and terms of reference of the unit, as well as supporting the operationalization of the operation. Technical assistance also includes the training provided to staff working in the delivery unit by external consultant or vendors.

- *Yes.* The delivery unit received technical assistance in the form of training, seconded staff, and/or advice around the design and functioning of the delivery unit.

e.g., In Tbilisi, Georgia, the UNDP published a job posting for consultants to work on supporting the establishment and operations of a delivery unit within the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia. The scope of work published in the job posting identified 4 main areas of technical support: conducting a situation analysis of the Ministry and sector to identify the needs for the establishment of a delivery unit, development an institutional framework for the delivery unit and determining the functions and job descriptions for the delivery unit staff, developing a workplan and roadmap for the set-up of the delivery unit, and providing training to the delivery unit staff in the areas of monitoring and communications.

- *No.* Based on the information available, the delivery unit did not appear to receive any technical assistance in the form of training, seconded staff, and/or advice around the design and functioning of the delivery unit.

Managerial mechanisms: Managerial functions and routines to improve policy implementation and bureaucratic performance.

- *More accountability- and incentive-driven mechanisms.* The delivery unit relies more heavily on top-down incentives and accountability as its key function.

e.g., In 2008, Sierra Leone’s President Koroma set up the Strategy and Policy Unit (SPU) with the aim of instituting a stronger structure and greater accountability (ISS, 2011). The SPU’s managerial approach focused on more accountability-and-incentive driven routines in 2008, although after an external evaluation of the SPU in 2010 the unit was advised to include problem-solving elements as well (Simson, 2013). The

accountability routines included: performance contracts with the Minister, tracker sheets (or roadmaps) for specific priorities that outlined who was responsible for what to track progress including RAG ratings, and monthly meetings (called stocktakes) at the president’s office to review the status of each flagship project. The top-down accountability was strong. For example, the President signalled the seriousness of accountability by dismissing a Minister after learning during a stocktake meeting that this Minister was not meeting set targets (Simson, 2013).

- *More problem-solving and organizational learning-driven mechanisms.* The delivery unit relies more heavily on horizontal and vertical convening, collaboration, and problem-solving as its key function.

e.g., The Commissioner’s Delivery Unit (CDU) in the state of Kentucky, United States, was designed to primarily research the effectiveness of the administration’s delivery and adapt its strategy and delivery plans to meet the needs of their beneficiaries. The unit implemented Design-Based Implementation Research (DBIR), where research on the implementation process informed the various iterations of the implementation plan. The unit also relied on Networked Improvement Communities (NIC) to identify and solve complex problems in implementation both systematically and scientifically, using data to drive the improvement process. NICs were also leveraged for productive problem solving, capitalising on expertise of different stakeholders with a common purpose of achieving similar outcomes. This involved information sharing, consultation, and regular discussions for iterative problem solving (McKay, 2017).

- *About equal.* The delivery unit exhibits a more or less equal combination of both accountability and incentive-driven managerial mechanisms and problem-solving and organizational learning-driven mechanisms.

e.g., The PMDU in the Bahamas was designed to drive results-oriented implementation by focusing heavily on data to analyze progress and challenges, thus ensuring civil servants’ engagement in continuous problem solving throughout the implementation process. The Unit additionally leveraged high-level meetings and monitoring routines to signal accountability for results. These routines involved: periodic data collection and analysis, routine Delivery Update Meetings (between Delivery Unit and Stakeholder Delivery Teams, monthly written reports summarising updates on implementation for each priority area, Stocktake meetings between the Prime Minister and Accountable Leaders on a quarterly basis, and regular review of delivery plans based on data (PMDU, 2019).

Income level. We rely on the World Bank’s definition of country income levels, which are divided into four categories: high income, upper-middle income, lower-middle income, and low income (World Bank, 2020).

- *High-income.* GNI per capita over USD 12,535
- *Upper-middle income.* GNI per capita between USD 4,046 and USD 12,535
- *Lower-middle income.* GNI per capita between USD 1,036 and USD 4,045.
- *Low-income.* GNI per capita of less than USD 1,036.

Appendix D: List of Delivery Units

Sr. no	Country	Delivery Unit Name
1	Albania	Albanian delivery unit
2	Angola	Unidade de monitorização dos projetos do executivo (umape)
3	Argentina	Central executing unit - unidad ejecutora central (uec)
4	Argentina	Delivery unit
5	Armenia	Centre for education projects piu
6	Australia	Cabinet implementation unit
7	Australia	Strategy and delivery unit
8	Australia	Delivery unit
9	Australia	Premier's Implementation Unit
10	Australia	Implementation unit
11	Benin	Delivery unit
12	Bhutan	Economic contingency plan (ecp) delivery unit
13	Bolivia	Equipo técnico de apoyo a la reforma educativa
14	Botswana	Government implementation coordination office
15	Brazil	Delivery unit
16	Brazil	Escritório de prioridades estratégicas
17	Brazil	Secretariat of planning and management (seplag)
18	Brunei	Policy and delivery unit
19	Brunei	Monitoring and delivery unit (unit)
20	Brunei	Strategic enterprise performance and delivery unit (sepadu)
21	Brunei	Penggerak
22	Burkina Faso	Presidential program monitoring office/ bureau de suivi du programme présidentiel (bs-pp)
23	Burkina Faso	Unité d'exécution de la réforme
24	Cameroon	Ministry of agriculture delivery unit
25	Canada	Strategy and results branch
26	Canada	Delivery unit
27	Canada	Results and delivery unit
28	Chile	Presidential delivery unit
29	Colombia	Dirección de gobierno y Áreas estratégicas
30	Colombia	Delivery unit, office of the mayor
31	Colombia	Consejería de gestión de cumplimiento
32	Costa Rica	Centro de gestión de gobierno
33	Costa Rica	Performance monitoring units
34	Costa Rica	Support unit
35	Ecuador	Coordinacion general de secretaria general
36	Ecuador	Secretario generale de la presidencia de la republica
37	Ethiopia	Ministerial delivery unit
38	Fiji	National education service delivery unit
39	Georgia	(Name tba)
40	Germany	Better regulation unit
41	Germany	Political planning unit
42	Ghana	President's policy delivery unit and cabinet secretariat (pdu)
43	Ghana	Reform secretariat (ners)
44	Ghana	President's delivery unit (vice president's secretariat)

45	Grenada	Policy, monitoring and evaluation unit
46	Guatemala	Commission for strategic management
47	Guatemala	Pronade's implementation unit
48	Guinea	Strategic delivery unit
49	Honduras	Delivery facilitation unit/ president's delivery unit
50	Honduras	Secretaria de coordinacion general de gobierno
51	India	Delivery monitoring unit (dmu)
52	Indonesia	President's delivery unit (ukp4)
53	Ireland	Department of health special delivery unit (sdu)
54	Jamaica	Transformation implementation unit
55	Jamaica	Justice reform implementation unit
56	Jamaica	Programme monitoring and evaluation unit
57	Jordan	Results and effectiveness unit
58	Jordan	Prime minister's delivery unit
59	Jordan	Development coordination unit
60	Kenya	Governor's delivery unit - (nyandarua)
61	Kenya	Presidential delivery unit (pdu)
62	Kenya	Governors service delivery unit - siaya county
63	Kosovo	Infrastructure central delivery unit (icdu) within the ministry of finance.
64	Laos	National implementation unit
65	Lesotho	Pemandi/u
66	Liberia	Project coordination unit (pcu)
67	Liberia	President's delivery unit / programme delivery unit (pdu)
68	Liberia	Education delivery unit (edu)
69	Libya	Prime minister's delivery unit
70	Macedonia	Transport infrastructure delivery unit (tidu)
71	Malawi	Public sector reforms management unit
72	Malaysia	Performance management delivery unit (pemandu)
73	Mongolia	Delivery unit
74	Myanmar	Msdp implementation unit (msdp- iu)
75	Nepal	Central level project implementation unit (education)
76	Nepal	Coordination centre in office of the prime minister & council of ministers (opmcm)
77	Netherlands	Delivery unit
78	Nigeria	President delivery unit (pdu)
79	Oman	Implementation support and follow up unit
80	Pakistan	Reform support unit
81	Pakistan	Strategic support unit
82	Pakistan	Punjab education reform roadmap
83	Pakistan	Prime minister's delivery unit (pmdu)
84	Pakistan	Delivery unit
85	Pakistan	Chief minister's delivery unit
86	Pakistan	Special monitoring unit 63
87	Panama	Secretaria de metas presidenciales
88	Paraguay	Center of government, under the general secretariat of the presidency of the republic

89	Paraguay	Unidad de gestion (management unit), under the presidency of the republic
90	Peru	Unidad de cumplimiento de gobierno (ucg)
91	Qatar	Performance delivery unit
92	Romania	Romania delivery unit
93	Rwanda	Rab single project implementation unit (spiu)
94	Rwanda	Strategy and policy unit + coordination unit + ministry of cabinet affairs
95	Rwanda	Spiu-moh
96	Rwanda	Single project implementation unit (spiu) - institute of statistics
97	Rwanda	Minecofin single project management (spiu)
98	Rwanda	Single project implementation unit (spiu) in ministry of trade and industry (minicom)
99	Rwanda	Project management and monitoring unit
100	Saudi Arabia	Central delivery unit
101	Senegal	Sénégal Émergent monitoring bureau
102	Serbia	Strategic project implementation unit (delivery unit)
103	Sierra Leone	President's delivery team
104	Sierra Leone	Strategy and policy unit
105	Singapore	Municipal services office
106	Singapore	Strategy group, prime minister's office
107	South Africa	Delivery support unit
108	South Africa	Delivery support unit
109	South Africa	Delivery support unit
110	South Africa	Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation
111	South Africa	Strategic policy unit
112	Sri Lanka	Central programme management unit
113	Tanzania	President's delivery bureau
114	Thailand	Prime minister's delivery unit
115	The Bahamas	Prime minister's delivery unit
116	The Gambia	Department for strategic policy delivery (dspd)
117	Togo	Presidential delivery unit
118	Tunisia	Delivery unit
119	Tunisia	Prime Minister's Delivery Unit
120	Uganda	Prime minister's delivery unit
121	Ukraine	Reforms support office / reforms delivery office, prime minister's office
122	United Kingdom	Delivery unit - dfh
123	United Kingdom	Corporate delivery unit
124	United Kingdom	Delivery unit
125	United Kingdom	Prime minister's delivery unit
126	United Kingdom	Delivery unit – dfe

127	United Kingdom	Delivery unit - dfcl
128	United Kingdom	Delivery unit
129	United Kingdom	Heat networks delivery unit (hndu) - dfb
130	United Kingdom	Strategy and delivery unit
131	United Kingdom	Corporate delivery unit
132	United Kingdom	Implementation unit
133	United Kingdom	Delivery unit dfd
134	United Kingdom	Delivery unit - dfe
135	United States	Mayor's office of performance and innovation
136	United States	Governor's delivery unit
137	United States	Commissioner's delivery unit
138	United States	Superintendent's delivery unit
139	United States	Education delivery unit
140	United States	Massachusetts department of elementary and secondary education
141	Uruguay	Policy advisory and monitoring unit
142	Vietnam	Molisa (standing) coordination office